

‘INTERPRETING HOMER FROM HOMER’

ARISTARCHUS OF SAMOTHRACE AND THE NOTION OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Summary

This study attempts to explore certain exegetical arguments within the New Testament that operate upon the basis of an assumption that a scriptural text’s meaning is in some way contingent upon its author. The exegetical and text-critical Homeric scholarship of Aristarchus of Samothrace is examined as a possible parallel to this assumption of authorial contingency. Aristarchus makes exegetical and text-critical decisions about the Iliad by means of a conception of Homer as the perfect writer. Whilst it is unlikely that any New Testament writer was aware of Aristarchus’ work, Aristarchus undoubtedly represents more widespread Greek thought about authorship and meaning that may have been shared by certain New Testament writers.

1. Introduction

An often overlooked aspect of the interpretation of Scripture in the New Testament is the exegetical use of ideas about scriptural authorship. The author of Hebrews claims that the phrase κατάπαυσίν μου (‘my rest’) in Ps. 95:11 (LXX Ps. 94:11) refers to an eschatological rest, rather than a temporal Promised Land, because it is spoken or written by David who already resided in such a temporal Promised Land (Heb. 4:6–10). Peter and Paul both present Ps. 16 as a prophetic utterance because they assume that it is spoken or written by David whom they present as a prophet (Acts 2:29–36 and 13:35–37). In what is often known as the *Davidsohnfrage* (Mark 12:35–37; Matt. 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–44), Jesus is seen to interpret Ps. 110:1 (LXX Ps. 109:1) from the assumption that it was spoken or written by David: ‘if

David calls him Lord, how can [the Christ] be his son?’¹ In each of these interpretations of Scripture there is an assumption that the Davidic origin of the lemma is decisive in its interpretation.

To interpret Scripture by means of explicit assumptions about authorship is certainly unusual in the New Testament. It is quite distinct from the direct eschatological interpretation of Scripture in 1 Peter, with its claim that the meaning of Scripture was unknown to prophetic authors or speakers (1 Pet. 1:10–12).² Likewise, the desire to explain how an interpretation works by means of reference to an assumed author is quite alien to the simple use of *καθὼς γέγραπται* (‘as it is written’) in the Pauline Corpus. If this approach to scriptural interpretation is unusual in the New Testament, it is almost totally absent outside it. It is quite at odds with the authoritative and unexplained exegetical claims of the Qumran *pesharim*. It could scarcely contrast more with Philonic allegorical interpretation of Scripture with its frequent disparagement of plain or literal meaning. Exegetical interest in authorship is a feature of the interpretation of Scripture in the New Testament which lacks attestation in the exegetical literature with which it is traditionally compared. Nowhere within the literature of Second-Temple and Hellenistic Judaism is the meaning of a cited scriptural text explained with reference to an assumed author of that text. This is, however, a minor but significant characteristic of some interpretation of Scripture within the New Testament. Some have argued that these interpretations of Scripture are New Testament examples of Hillel’s *דבר הלמד מענינו* (‘a word learned from its context’), though this is extremely unlikely since there are no other instances where this rule is used to interpret a text on the basis of assumed authorial context: it always features literary context instead.³

¹ For a detailed study of these modes of exegetical argumentation, see Benjamin Sargent, *David Being a Prophet: The Contingency of Scripture upon History in the New Testament* (BZNW 207; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).

² Benjamin Sargent, ‘The Narrative Substructure of 1 Peter’, *ExpTim* 124:10 (2013): 485–90 and idem., *Written to Serve: The Use of Scripture in 1 Peter* (LNTS; London: T. & T. Clark, forthcoming 2014).

³ R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975): 182 and idem., ‘Early Church Interpretation’ in *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. S. Porter (New York: Routledge, 2007): 87. Cf. G. R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downer’s Grove: IVP, 2006): 338 and J. Jeremias, ‘Paulus als

However, one ancient writer is known to have employed a similar interest in a text's author to decide how that text might be interpreted. Aristarchus of Samothrace, well-known to classicists but less well-known to New Testament specialists, was one of the Alexandrian Grammarians of the second century BC. Aristarchus probably produced a critical edition and two commentaries on the *Iliad*, notes from which survive in the scholia of Codex Marcianus Graecus 454, otherwise known as Venetus A. Because a certain resemblance between the Alexandrian Grammarians and rabbinic exegesis has been observed, it is important not to ignore the former as a possible influence upon the New Testament.⁴ Aristarchus made interpretive decisions on the basis of an idea of Homer's identity as the author of the *Iliad*. Aristarchus is certainly not unique in employing a sense of Homer's identity exegetically; indeed there is a significant amount of literature prior to Aristarchus making a similar use of Homer's identity. Yet Aristarchus represents the most extensive and thorough application of this type of hermeneutic to a particular text. It will be suggested in this study that there are significant areas of similarity between the assumptions of Aristarchus and the few instances of New Testament scriptural interpretation mentioned above. However, the likelihood that New Testament authors knew Aristarchus' Homeric scholarship directly, or other similar traditions, is decidedly remote.

1. Exegetical Interest in the Authorship of a Text Prior to Aristarchus

Aristarchus of Samothrace was by no means the first or only Greek writer to demonstrate an interest in using the identity of Homer to understand Homeric literature. Ancient writers were often fascinated by

Hillelit' in *Neotestamentica et Semitica* (Matthew Black Festschrift; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969): 94.

⁴ The resemblance is particularly noted by D. Daube, 'Alexandrian Methods of Interpretation and the Rabbis' in *Essays in Greco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature*, ed. H.M. Orlinsky (New York: Ktav, 1977): 240 and P.S. Alexander, "'Homer the Prophet of All" and "Moses Our Teacher": Late Antique Exegesis of the Homeric Epics and the Torah of Moses' in *The Uses of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. T. Baarda, A. van der Kooij and A.S. van der Woude (Leuven: Peeters, 1998): 138. Cf. M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period, Vol I* (London: SCM, 1974): 65–77 and S. Zeitlin, 'Hillel and the Hermeneutical Rules', *JQR* 54 (1964): 166.

the question of the identity of Homer, the poet who produced works which were the very foundations of Hellenic identity. M. R. Lefkowitz provides a useful analysis of a significant amount of literature attempting to define the life of Homer.⁵ Much of this material could perhaps be described as ‘hagiographical’, demonstrating no real interest in using Homer’s life to explain his work. For example, Aristotle (fr. 76) offers a description of Homer’s birth and an explanation of how he came to be called Homer, following a period in captivity, yet does not do so to explain any particular text or Homeric problem. Likewise, Lefkowitz suggests that claims made by Ephorus and Antimachus regarding Homer’s birthplace are primarily patriotic rather than exegetical.⁶

The identity of Homer is also, however, frequently asserted to discuss Homeric interpretive problems. For example, Homer’s knowledge of Ithaca is explained by associating the life of Homer with Ithacan characters such as Telemachus or Penelope.⁷ Likewise, the supposed circumstances of the life of Homer are used to claim certain works as Homeric, such as the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (*Cert.* 18), the poem Sack of Oechalia (*Strabo* 14:638) and the Cypria (*Callicles* 758f13). In each of these arguments, it is the association of particular places with Homer which is seen to provide evidence for Homeric authorship. This is significant as the personal circumstances of the author are seen to be reflected in the text itself, suggesting the contingency of the text upon its author. This notion of contingency is elsewhere employed as an aid to the interpretation of a text. The theoretical notion that knowledge about an author might aid interpretation or performance (as an act of interpretation) appears to find expression in Plato who writes in *Ion* 530c:

Τὸν γὰρ ῥαψῳδὸν ἐρμηνεῖα δεῖ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς διανοίας γίνεσθαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι τοῦτο δὲ καλῶς ποιεῖν μὴ γινώσκοντα ὅτι λέγει ὁ ποιητὴς ἀδύνατον.

⁵ M. R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1981): 12–24.

⁶ Lefkowitz, *Greek Poets*, 14–18. In the Hellenistic period ‘epigrams listed the names of all the cities that claimed Homer as their son, and concluded that he belonged to no one city but to all of Greece’. Aristarchus was perhaps also interested in this question of Homer’s birthplace, as A 13.195–7 refers to a possible monograph by Aristarchus on this subject.

⁷ Cf. Hermesianax fr. 7:29–30 and *Cert.* 3

For the rhapsode, it is necessary to become an interpreter of the mind of the poet to those who hear, and to do this well without knowing what the poet says is impossible.⁸

Here, a grasp of a poet's intention or thought is essential for anyone who wishes to relate the work of that poet to an audience. This suggests that knowledge about the life of a poet may serve the task of interpretation. Yet it is with Aristotle that ideas about the identity and function of the poet receive their greatest exposition prior to Aristarchus. Aristotle does not expound a clear theory of literary interpretation based upon his interest in poets in his most significant extant work on literature: his *Ars Poetica*.⁹ Instead, *Poet.* contains many important discussions of literary problems in which the identity or function of the poet features. For example, Aristotle argues, in *Poet.* 25 (1460b5), that factual inaccuracy in poetry can be excused if the text creates the effect desired by the poet.¹⁰ He suggests that Euripides' factual errors are due to his artistic desire to portray things as they really are.¹¹ This approach seeks to defend the poet from accusations of ignorance or immorality, a cause often taken up by Aristarchus. In *Poet.* 1451a22, Aristotle asserts Homer's superior poetic ability by noting that he did not consider narrative unity to consist in a text's concentration upon a single character, rather a single act or event.¹² To this end, so Aristotle claims, Homer did not need to detail the origins of

⁸ Author's translation. Interestingly, this passage of Plato is cited in the famous defence of authorial intention by E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1967): 127.

⁹ It is worth noting that *Poet.* was certainly not the only work of Aristotle's on literature. Aristotle also produced six books of homeric problems and the dialogue *On Poets* which, if extant would undoubtedly be of greater value to a study of Aristotle's literary hermeneutics than *Poet.*

¹⁰ J. I. Porter, 'Hermeneutical Lines and Circles: Aristarchus and Crates on the Exegesis of Homer' in *Homer's Ancient Readers: The Hermeneutics of Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes*, ed. R. Lamberton and J. J. Keaney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992): 74 also links Aristarchus' use of 'Homer from Homer' to Aristotle's *Rhet.* 1374b11. Alexander, 'Homer the Prophet', 138 demonstrates the Rabbinic parallels to this rule. D. Daube, 'Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric', *HUCA* 22 (1949): 240 argues that the Middoth are in fact dependent on the Alexandrian grammarians. Cf. S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission of the Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.–IV Century C.E.* (New York: Jewish Theological Society of America, 1962): 47–66.

¹¹ Though this sentence on poetic realism and idealism is ambiguous. Cf. H. Rackham, 'Aristotle Poetics, XXV. 6, 1460b 34', *CR* 46:4 (1932): 156.

¹² This claim is used again in *Poet.* 1462b9–11 in praise of Homer's creation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

the scar by which Odysseus is finally identified when he returns to Ithaca.¹³ A text which is seen to illuminate the poetic or moral qualities of its author must be understood as fundamentally contingent upon that author.

Another interesting assertion related to Aristotle's defence of Homer is made in *Poet.* 1448b23–27.¹⁴ Here Aristotle describes the origins of poetic forms by referring to the character or disposition of particular poets.¹⁵ Likewise, in *Poet.* 1451a36–1451b8, it is the poet's function which determines the nature of his or her work.¹⁶ Aristotle seems to make it clear in *Poet.* that poetry must be considered as the contingent product of authors whose identity is a significant feature in a reader's understanding of their work. However, his development of the idea of textual analogy in *Poet.* 1450b20 seems to militate against such an understanding of the text's contingency upon its author.¹⁷ If a text is analogous to a living creature whose significance or φύσις ('nature/power') is developed after its creation, perhaps reference back to its creator is not that important when discussing its meaning. Yet, as seen, a clear relationship of contingency between text and author is

¹³ *Poet.* 1451a22 has been a significant text in discussions of the textual history and unity of the *Odyssey* due to its suggestion that the *Odyssey* does not explain Odysseus' scar, which it certainly does in later versions. Moreover, the precise meaning of 1451a25–26 has warranted a number of diverse conclusions. See J. A. Davison, 'Aristotle's Homer: Poetics 1451a26–27', *CR* 14:2 (1964): 132–33 and M. Chambers, 'Aristotle's Homer: Poetics 1451a24–27', *CP* 61:3 (1966): 186–87.

¹⁴ Aristotle continues to illustrate this claim by referring to Homer's preeminent ability as a poet. Likewise, in *Poet.* 1460a6, Aristotle gives unique credit to Homer for realising the true, hidden place of the poet's voice. A defense of the success of Homer's narrative is offered in *Poet.* 1452b32–1453a13 where Aristotle discusses the various forms of literary plot, ranking them on the basis of their aesthetic appeal.

¹⁵ This is no doubt reflected in Longinus' treatise *Περὶ ὑψους* 9.3–4: μεγάλοι δὲ οἱ λόγοι τούτων κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ὧν ἂν ἐμβριθεῖς ὧσιν αἱ ἔννοιαι. ταύτη καὶ εἰς τοὺς μάλιστα φρονηματίας ἐμπίπτει τὰ ὑπερφυᾶ. This is later illustrated by a possibly spurious reflection on Moses (ὁ τῶν Ἰουδαίων θεσμοθέτης, οὐχ ὁ τυχὼν ἀνὴρ, ἐπειδὴ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δύναμιν κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἐχώρησε κάξέφηνεν) as the author of Gen. 1:3–9.

¹⁶ Though here the function of poets in general is discussed in contrast to the function of historians, rather than the specific function of different kinds of poet. Cf. *Poet.* 1448a25: ὥστε τῇ μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς ὥω εἶη μυμητῆς Ὀμήρω Σοφοκλεῖς, μιμοῦνται γὰρ ἅμφοι σπουδαίους.

¹⁷ R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968): 68–69. 'The living organisms have their τέλος ('end'), so to speak, inside them from the very beginning, but the literary formations (and all other artificial ones) are originated from outside, by a 'maker', a ποιητής; their development thereafter is supposed to be 'analogous' to that of a ζῷον'.

demonstrated here. Whether or not Aristotle can be described as detailing an ‘authorial’ type of hermeneutic here, it is clear that his contributions to the discussion of epic were a significant influence upon the later grammarians and scholiasts.¹⁸

2. Aristarchus’ Use of Homer

Is it possible that the methods of the Alexandrian grammarians, in particular those of Aristarchus of Samothrace, might have influenced the exegetical technique employed in the instances in the New Testament where a scriptural text is interpreted on the basis of a clear understanding that it is contingent upon an historically identifiable personality?¹⁹ Aristarchus is particularly interesting as a grammarian who uses an estimation of an historical author’s identity to explain a text. Of course, his pupils also approach Homer in the same way, yet it is partly the relative fame of Aristarchus in antiquity which makes him of interest to this study. However, it is worth noting that to speak of ‘Aristarchus’ use of the identity of Homer’ is not without certain difficulties. Aristarchus’ work exists only in that of others, as well as through the scholia on the *Iliad* contained in Codex Marcianus Graecus 454.²⁰ Neither Aristarchus’ *ekdoseis* (‘critical editions’) nor his

¹⁸ N. J. Richardson, ‘Literary Criticism in the Exegetical Scholia to the *Iliad*: A Sketch’, *CQ* 30:2 (1980): 265–87. Richardson concentrates particularly on Venetus B and the Towneleian manuscript (T) which limits the significance of his argument for a study on Aristarchus. He does note, however, that Aristarchus follows some of Aristotle’s ideas about poetic freedom, especially in his concept of τὸ σιωπώμενον in, for example, B 1.449. Likewise, the importance of ἥθος in Aristotle is reflected in Aristarchus’ defence of Odysseus’ character in A 8.97.

¹⁹ E. B. Aitken, ‘Tradition in the Mouth of the Hero: Jesus as an Interpreter of Scripture’ in *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory and Mark*, ed. R.A. Horsley, J.A. Draper and J.M. Foley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006): 102 and D. R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (Yale: Yale University Press: 2000) also argue for the influence of Homeric literature upon the scriptural hermeneutics of the New Testament, though not from the Scholia. Of course, Homeric and Rabbinic hermeneutics ought not to be seen in isolation from each other. See, for example, P. S. Alexander, ‘Homer the Prophet of All’ and Jane Heath, ‘Homer or Moses? A Hellenistic Perspective on Moses’ Throne Vision in Ezekiel Tragicus’, *JJS* 58:1 (2007): 1-17.

²⁰ There is also some limited reference to Aristarchus and his comments on specific texts in a number of papyri. These include, P.Hawara., P.Oxy. VIII 1086, P.Tebt. I 4, P.Ryl. I 51, P.Oxy. IV 687, P.Lond.Lit. 27, P.Köln. I 37, P.Hawara., P.Lund. I 1, P.Oxy. III 445 and P.Lond.Lit. 11. Of these, P.Hawara and P.Oxy VIII are worthy of particular note since they contain much fuller reference to Aristarchus. However, K. McNamee, ‘Aristarchus and “Everyman’s” Homer’, *GRBS* 22:3 (1981): 250 points out

commentaries survive and even in the scholia his contributions are mediated through others such as Didymus, Aristonicus, Nicanor and Herodian, whose ‘Aristarchian’ allegiance may serve to obscure that which originated from Aristarchus’ own work.²¹ A quest for the ‘historical Aristarchus’ would simply be impossible. Gregory Nagy argues that Aristarchus was primarily occupied by the production of an authoritative κοινή (‘common/popular’) text, based upon a significant collection of received standard texts, rather than an historically authentic original text.²² Yet Aristarchus was also interested in establishing the authenticity of material, judging whether or not it was Homeric. Problematic phrases or sentences in the κοινή text were athetised by Aristarchus: marked with an *obelos* and discussed elsewhere. These discussions of Homeric authenticity are of particular interest to this study.

In the scholia associated with Aristarchus, a theory of Homer’s identity is employed to decide which parts of the *Iliad* are authentically Homeric and to explain problems in the interpretation of Homer. Certainly, this is not the only approach used by Aristarchus, though it is possible to understand much of his work as dependent upon a conception of Homer as the historical author of the *Iliad*.²³ For

that these references are primarily aimed at providing supplementary information for a popular audience, rather than critical discussion as seen overwhelmingly in the Scholia. Cf. J. A. Davison, ‘The Transmission of the Text’ in *A Companion to Homer*, ed. A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings (New York: Macmillan, 1962): 224 and Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 215 who writes: ‘Towards the middle of the second century the imperative demand was not for editing the text anew, but for explaining it in its entirety; the absence of a more or less authoritative text arranged by the γραμματικώτατος would make it easier to understand why the textual criticism of the Alexandrian grammarians had relatively little influence on the Homeric text itself, as it is preserved in papyri and manuscripts.’). For example, in P.Oxy VIII (a commentary on *Iliad* book 2) the identity of Myrine, featured in Il. 2.813–814, is discussed as a point of interest to the popular reader. Because of this, little of Aristarchus’ exegetical and text-critical reasoning is displayed here and consequently suggests that the papyri are of little interest to this study.

²¹ Yet even the extent to which the Scholia represent the work of such Scholars as Didymus and Herodian, rather than simply a 10th Century collector is open to question. N. G. Wilson, ‘A Chapter in the History of Scholia’, *CQ* 59:2 (1967): 244–56 makes a good case for regarding the Scholia as representing much earlier traditions than often thought, on the basis of P.Oxy. 2258.

²² Gregory Nagy, *Homer the Classic* (Hellenic Studies 36; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009): 9–66. H. Erbse, ‘Über Aristarchs Iliasausgaben’, *Hermes* 87 (1959): 275–303 argues that Aristarchus’ text was never his own *ekdosis* but rather a collection of ‘vulgata’ texts.

²³ One such approach used by Aristarchus depends primarily upon post-Homeric readings of Homer as a means of establishing his *ekdosis*. Aristarchus referred to the

example, Aristarchus' extensive use of comparison and his related desire to grasp a distinctive and concrete Homeric style (seen for example in A 2:662a1), possibly reflects a definite conception of an historical Homer whose style must be as precise and limited as any poet's.²⁴ Why impose any limits of style and vocabulary upon a text if it is not understood as originating with a single poet? Aristarchus' 'text-critical' assessments, though often lacking any clear theoretical basis stated in the scholia themselves, no doubt operate upon the assumption of a single and consistent author for the *Iliad*. In this sense the very nature of the postulated unitarian *ekdoseis* of the *Iliad* is contingent upon the notion of the single author. This is what Rudolf Pfeiffer suggests:

Aristarchus' main object was to discover the Homeric usage; for the explication of words and facts he collected all the parallels in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, treating any without parallels as ἅπαξ λεγόμενα of the poet. But when he encountered something which seemed not to fit at all into the pattern of the Homeric language or the Homeric life, he termed it κυκλικώτερον in contrast to Ὀμηρικώτερον, the genuinely Homeric.²⁵

Aristarchus worked with an understanding of Homer as the perfect poetic craftsman, an understanding which may be seen to influence many areas of his scholarship on the *Iliad*. A good example of the principle expressed quite clearly is in A 2:681a, where a description of Homer as φιλοτέχνης ('lover of craft/artist')²⁶ is used to argue that Zenodotus is wrong to regard *Il.* 2:681 τὸ Πελασγικὸν Ἄργος ἔναιον ('those who live in Pelasgian Argos'), as referring quite literally to the

Homeric traditions employed within Hellenistic poetry as a means of establishing certain features of this text. Cf. A. Rengakos, 'Aristarchus and the Hellenistic Poets', *SemRom.* 3:2 (2000): 325–35.

²⁴ This seems to be reflected in Janko, *Iliad*, 27. 'Like his predecessors, Aristarchus reasoned like a good nineteenth-century scholar: verses are spurious because they are linguistically odd, repetitive, inconsistent, or improper. He was keen to identify language and ideas proper to the Cyclic and post-Homeric poets (οἱ νεώτεροι).'

²⁵ Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 227.

²⁶ This notion is by no means a novel invention of Aristarchus'. Gregory Nagy, 'Early Greek Views of Poets and Poetry' in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol I: Classical Criticism*, ed. G. A. Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 19 notes that τέχνης was a common early metaphor for the work of the poet, seen for example, in Pindar *Pythian* 3.113. Despite the use of a term like φιλοτέχνης, Aristarchus never elaborates a theory of poetics (though this does not mean that he did not have one). The use of this term, however, illustrates Aristarchus' understanding of Homer as the 'serious, perfect craftsman' who is unlikely to be inconsistent. D. M. Schenkeveld, 'Aristarchus and ΟΜΗΡΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΤΕΧΝΟΣ: Some Fundamental Ideas of Aristarchus on Homer as a Poet', *Mnem* 23:2 (1970): 162 & 176.

Pelasgians living on the Peloponnesian mainland, rather than the islands near the Peloponnese as suggested by Aristarchus.²⁷ Homer's presumed love of simple style is employed by Aristarchus to defend the text from misinterpretation, as the Pelasgians are the enemies of Argos in the *Iliad* and would not logically be said to occupy their land. Aristarchus appears to have kept the idea of Homer the φιλοτέχνης in mind when dealing with such problems. As J. A. Davison notes,

Even when Aristarchus had succeeded in establishing a text which later scholars generally accepted as authoritative, there remained a great many points which were hard to reconcile with the fundamental conception of Homer as a great poet, and many lines had to be 'athetized' (i.e., retained in the text, but marked as for one reason or another difficult to explain).²⁸

Further evidence of Aristarchus' concept of Homer as influencing his work on the *Iliad* may also be seen in the deletion of the repeated line in A 2:160. Though Aristarchus does not make this clear, it is likely that such a repeated line could not be regarded by him as the work of a perfect craftsman. In cases such as these, Aristarchus appears to operate with a concept of Homer's identity, a concept which significantly influences the decisions he makes concerning the text of the *Iliad*. Pfeiffer, for example, notes that Aristarchus constructed a clear definition of Homer's style which he was able to contrast with the specific style of Hesiod. He used this concept of a Ἡσιόδειος χαρακτήρ ('Hesiodic imprint') to athetise *Il.* 18:39 and 24:614 as 'un-Homeric'.²⁹ Again, this may be an example of where the notion of the *Iliad* as the creative product of Homer (as a particular and limited author) has

²⁷ See also, D 5.385. Porter, 'Aristarchus and Crates', 70 suggests this passage demonstrates knowledge of the 'Homer from Homer' rule later seen in Porphyry's *Quaest. Hom.* II. 297. Aristarchus also attempts to grasp Homer's intentions in A 16.747a, to explain why the heroes of the *Iliad* are justified in eating fish, despite his clearly defined heroic diet of roasted meat. See M. Heath, 'Do Heroes Eat Fish? Athenaeus on the Homeric Lifestyle' in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Braund and J. Wilkins (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000): 343. A definite conception of Homer's art (or possibly that of poets in general) is also employed to decide the authenticity of *Il.* 23.471 in the A Scholia: ἀθετεῖται, ὅτι τὸ ἐπεξηγεῖσθαι ποιητικόν, οὐχ ἡρωικοῦ προσώπου. Cf. R. Nünlist, 'The Homeric Scholia on Focalisation', *Mnem* 56:1 (2003): 69–70 who regards this passage as an example of an undeveloped consciousness of the idea of focalisation, along with A 11.747a and 2.570a.

²⁸ J. A. Davison, 'The Homeric Question' in *A Companion to Homer*, ed. A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings (New York: Macmillan, 1962): 240.

²⁹ Davison, 'Homeric Question', 220.

influenced Aristarchus' approach to the text. Aristarchus appears to be keen to attempt a clear definition of Homer as a poet. This can also be seen in his characterisation of Homer as ὀνοματοθετικός ('name-giver') in A 5:60, 6:18 and 12:342. Once constructed from such observations on the text, Aristarchus uses his definition of Homer to interpret the text, particularly in respect to its variant readings.

Athenaeus also provides significant evidence of this aspect of Aristarchus' hermeneutics.³⁰ In *Deipn.* 15:671 Aristarchus, referred to using the superlative γραμματικώτατος ('most grammarian/best grammarian'), solves an interpretative problem by referring to an ancient practice, looking back to the assumed epic and Homeric period. In *Deipn.* 11:493a, regarding the famous problem of Nestor's cup, Aristarchus makes use of a knowledge of Homer's personal preference for certain terms to refute the idea that Nestor is only claimed to be stronger than the injured Machnon.³¹ Again, Aristarchus' constructed view of Homer is crucial to his interpretation.

Another example of Aristarchus reading the *Iliad* with an idea of Homer in mind, is in A 2:558 where evidence is provided for Aristarchus' belief that Homer was Athenian, a belief employed to assert the authenticity of material displaying an Attic interest or influence in the *Iliad*.³² Such passages had been rejected by Zenodotus (who presumably also had an idea of Homer in mind) who regarded them as inauthentic because they did not appear to be characteristic of the generally Ionian material of the *Iliad*. It is worth noting that Pseudo-Herodotus' *Life of Homer* 28 also discusses the problem of Athenian material in the *Iliad* by referring to the person of Homer, suggesting that it was Homer's intention to honour Athens, knowing that the city had so far been neglected in the *Iliad*. For this reason, 'Herodotus' suggests that the catalogue of ships in *Il.* 2:2547–8 contains a later Homeric insertion glorifying Erechtheus, the legendary founding king of Athens.

³⁰ D. Thompson, 'Athenaeus in His Egyptian Context' in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Braund and J. Wilkins (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000): 84, his *Deipnosophistae* is almost entirely devoted to Hellenistic thought, despite his Egyptian context.

³¹ Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 228–30 notes Aristarchus' use of this grammatical knowledge of Homer in textual decisions, designating variants as κυκλικώτεροι.

³² J. L. Myres, *Homer and His Critics* (London: Routledge, 1959): 31.

James I. Porter identifies the exegetical statement of Porphyry, Ὅμηρον ἐξ Ὀμήρου σαφηνίζειν ('to make clear/interpret Homer from Homer'), as a probable Aristarchian maxim, particularly prominent in the D Scholia.³³ Homer consistently interprets problematic passages or terms in Homer by referring to parallels in Homer. According to Porter, this principle (derived from Aristotle) appears to be defended in A 6:265 where Aristarchus explains an apparent contradiction by noting that the contradiction occurs due to the speech of the protagonists, thereby distancing it from the consistent voice of Homer the narrator.³⁴ Whilst Porter suggests that the consistency of 'Homer' refers primarily to the text as a unified document, rather than the poet, this defence in A 6:265 seems to suggest that it is the poet Homer that Aristarchus is interested in defending. After all, Homer is regarded as φιλοτέχνης by Aristarchus. The maxim Ὅμηρον ἐξ Ὀμήρου surely depends upon a conception of Homer as an author with a specific style and intention who provides consistent material against which spurious material may be judged. If the personal author is removed from the maxim, there is less reason for Aristarchus to see the need for 'Homer' to be consistent.

3. Aristarchus and the New Testament

The scholia attributed to Aristarchus certainly provide the most sustained use of the figure of an author in textual interpretation in the centuries prior to such instances in the New Testament.³⁵ Aristarchus appears to understand the text and meaning of the *Iliad* as contingent upon Homer the poetic author. Estimations of Homer's ability and function are often used by Aristarchus to decide whether certain problematic texts can be attributed to Homer and the notion of Homer as an individual poet with a consistent and specific style serves to limit

³³ Porter, 'Aristarchus and Crates', 73. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 226–27 questions whether the formula itself is Aristarchian, noting that whilst it is absent in extant sources on Aristarchus it is no doubt present as an exegetical principle in, for example D 5.385: Ἀρίσταρχος ἀξιοῖ τὰ φραζόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ μυθικώτερον ἐκδέχεσθαι κατὰ τὴν ποιητικὴν ἐξουσίαν, μηδὲν ἔξω τῶν φραζομένων ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ περὶεργαζομένου.

³⁴ Porter, 'Aristarchus and Crates', 78

³⁵ Aristarchus' aversion to allegory could perhaps also be seen as a potential area of similarity to the majority of scriptural interpretation in the New Testament. See, K. Snipes, 'Literary Interpretation in the Homeric Scholia: The Similes of the *Iliad*', *AJP* 109:2 (1988): 203.

possible variant readings. Whilst it is immediately clear that none of the New Testament authors have such a 'critical' interest in the texts they discuss, the idea of the text as contingent upon its author appears to be a common feature of both Aristarchus and the principal New Testament texts mentioned above and others: Heb. 4:6–10; 7:11; 20–21; 28; Acts 2:29–36; 13:35–37 and the *Davidssohnfrage*.³⁶ In most of these New Testament examples, the scriptural text is explained by being put on the lips of David as assumed author and read in the light of his identity. Likewise, Aristarchus consistently imagines the *Iliad* in the hand or mouth of Homer and asks what his identity means for the portions of text under discussion.

This precise comparison has not been made so far in the scholarly literature on the treatment of Scripture in the New Testament. The reason for this is straightforward: Aristarchus' work is primarily complex literary and textual criticism quite alien to the concerns and style of the New Testament literature, or indeed any early Christian literature before Origen. However, apart from the obvious difference in the relative sophistication of Aristarchus and the New Testament authors, there is another more subtle difference. In the Aristarchian scholia, an idea of the author's setting in history is not used to interpret the text; rather a theory about the author's intention or function defends the text from attack, provides interpretative aid and informs 'textual-criticism' and interpretation. In terms of his exegesis, Aristarchus is more interested in the nature of Homer's art than Homer's historical situation in relation to events of the past. Because of this, Aristarchus' use of Homer the poet has quite a different emphasis to the author of Hebrews' use of David in, for example, Hebrews 4:6–10 where David is positioned historically after the entry of Israel into the Promised Land.³⁷ Likewise, the arguments of both Acts 2:29–36 and 13:35–37 depend upon David's death being an historical event which took place prior to the life of Jesus. Is there such an historical consciousness in Aristarchus' use of Homer? Does Homer the poet occupy a distinct past to be contrasted with the present setting of Aristarchus as an interpreter

³⁶ Perhaps there is some degree of similarity also in the common rejection of allegorical reading. D 5.385 is a good example of Aristarchus' anti-allegorical reading as he discusses the mythic material on Otus and Ephialtes.

³⁷ The argument of Acts 2:30 has a greater degree of similarity to Aristarchus' argument based on an author's identity or function. Here, an understanding of David as a prophet is used to explain why Ps. 16:8–11 properly refers to Jesus of Nazareth. Cf. Sargent, *David Being a Prophet*, 58–67.

of the *Iliad*? It seems likely that Homer could have lived at any time for Aristarchus. The meaning of the *Iliad* is clearly contingent upon the identity of Homer, but it seems unlikely that Homer is seen to be significantly contingent upon a setting in the past.³⁸

Yet, despite this apparent dissimilarity, the use of an author's identity as either φιλοτέχνης in A 2:681a or προφήτης ('prophet') in Acts 2:30 is striking. Both contemplate an assumed author's identity as the basis for interpretation. Could it be that this feature suggests that Luke shared some of the same literary assumptions evident in the work of Aristarchus in particular or even Homeric criticism in general? It seems unlikely that Luke would have known Aristarchus' work itself, in spite of the apparent literary sophistication of Luke-Acts. The social and intellectual worlds of Aristarchus and the New Testament are simply too remote.³⁹ As is noted above, the contemporary significance of Aristarchus' scholarship seems to be limited. Despite his apparent fame, the popular interest was not in Aristarchus' text-critical reasoning, but in the supplementary insights into Homeric characters and events that he could offer to an ordinary reader.⁴⁰ Even if Luke (an apparently well-educated Hellenist) did know of Aristarchus, it is unlikely that he would have been familiar with Aristarchus' exegetical use of his understanding of Homer's identity.⁴¹ Whilst it is generally

³⁸ One notable exception to this might be Aristarchus' explanation of ἡγνοίησεν from Il. 2.807 in P.Hawara. Cf. McNamee, 'Aristarchus', 248. Here, Aristarchus rejects a passage which explains this term, noting that its later meaning differs from its meaning in the time of Homer, and that its explanation in the *Iliad* which brings Homer's use to a later audience must be a later insertion. Cf. D 14.499 for another contrast of Homeric and Hellenistic uses of a term.

³⁹ However, B. Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 94–95 notes that both Clement of Alexandria and Tatian show an awareness of Greek scholarship on the dating of the life of Homer. Both theologians were interested in demonstrating that Homer could have learned from Moses, similar to the manner in which earlier theologians such as Justin Martyr had wished to claim Plato as dependent on Moses, so as to show the superiority of Judaeo-Christian religion over Greek culture. Tatian's *Oratio ad Graecos* 32:4–6 is particularly interesting as Aristarchus is referred to by name (οἱ περὶ Ἀρίσταρχον, as in *Vita. Plut.* 2.17).

⁴⁰ Cf. McNamee, 'Aristarchus', 250

⁴¹ Cf. O. Padilla, 'Hellenistic Παιδεία and Luke's Education: A Critique of Recent Approaches', *NTS* 55:4 (2009): 416–37 which serves as a rejoinder to estimations of Luke's education which regard him as intellectually and rhetorically sophisticated. Padilla questions whether Luke reached tertiary education, presumably a given for scholars such as Loveday Alexander (*The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1* [SNTSMS 78; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993]) and Daniel Marguerat (*The First Christian*

accepted that Virgil was well acquainted with the work of the Alexandrian grammarians and Aristarchus in particular,⁴² there is no reason to assume that any of the New Testament writers were so well educated. Of course, one example of an interpretive interest in David as author or speaker of Scripture can plausibly be linked to the teaching of the historical Jesus: the *Davidssonfrage*. The idea that Jesus of Nazareth might have been familiar with Aristotle or Aristarchus' approaches to Homeric literature is simply implausible by any reckoning. Likewise, whilst it is clear that Alexandrian scholarship may have been an influence on Old Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures,⁴³ and perhaps even Origen's Hexapla and the Antiochene school of Christian biblical interpretation, it is hard to claim this for the New Testament. Whilst the Epistle to the Hebrews and Luke-Acts certainly belong to quite well-educated authors, the Homeric scholia and their antecedents are simply too specialised to have been of interest to these New Testament authors whose exegetical influences are primarily from Semitic literature. However, interest in Homer's identity as an aid to interpreting Homer be may wide enough to suggest a broader Hellenistic assumption about authorship and interpretation shared by Luke-Acts, Hebrews and Aristarchus. Since there is no apparent explanation of the Semitic background of these New Testament texts, this Hellenistic view might be the most fitting.

Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles' [SNTSMS 121; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002]).

⁴² R. R. Schlunk, 'Virgil [*sic.*] and the Homeric Scholia: A Comparative Study of the Aeneid, XII, 216–467 and Iliad, IV, 86–222', *AJP* 88:1 (1967): 33–44. However, this article argues that Virgil wrote the Aeneid with some awareness of the need to avoid the flaws of Homer noted by the grammarians and this indicates that Virgil's more popular audience also had some acquaintance with Homeric criticism. Cf. Nagy, *Homer the Classic*, 73.

⁴³ As suggested in Kennedy and Innes, *Hellenistic Scholarship*, 209.