Alexander of Cotiaeum Teacher, Exegete, *Diorthotes*

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Abstract

Alexander of Cotiaeum, the cultivated *sophistes* and one among the teachers of Aelius Aristides and Marcus Aurelius, distinguished himself in linguistic and literary studies, teaching, and cultural communication. Though without achieving brilliant results, he also engaged in some of the questions previously discussed by the most learned scholars. This cultural figure displays some typicality with respect to the average educated personalities (*grammatikoi*) of the Antonine renaissance. However, current studies are revealing a possible specificity of Alexander's role: his influence, by way of educational approach, on the making of literary trends and models (canons) of the concurrent high culture, between New Sophistic and Atticism. This paper focuses on the very philological side (*diorthosis*, or textual criticism) of the composite and complex intellectual profile of Alexander.

Keywords

Alexander of Cotiaeum – Teaching – Exegesis – Textual criticism – Graeco-Roman culture

The figure of the *grammatikos* Alexander of Cotiaeum is highly considered in modern studies, compared to other similar ('minor') personalities of the Graeco-Roman culture in the first centuries of the Empire. This fame is especially due to the good personal relations maintained by Alexander, as teacher of grammar and literature, with two outstanding students, the young Aelius Aristides and the future Emperor Marcus Aurelius.¹ In recent times, while the attention towards Alexander has continued to be developed within the

¹ For example: Sandys 1921³, 312; Boulanger 1923; Behr 1968 and 1981–1986; Cortés Copete 1995.

context of the studies on his two eminent disciples, at the same time his personality and his work have been the object of a specific critical interest and have been finding an autonomous place in the historiographic reconstruction of the literary and rhetoric culture of the Antonine Age. As to the first aspect, the crucial step towards a specific interest for Alexander is represented by the critical edition of the testimonies and surviving fragments of his work edited by Andrew R. Dyck in 1991, and integrated in 1998 by Klaus Alpers with the addition of four other fragments.² With regard to the second aspect, that is considering the *grammatikos* within the historical context of his time and finding his specific cultural contribution, important acquisitions have been obtained thanks to the enquiries by Jean-Luc Vix, Laurent Pernot and Elisabetta Berardi devoted to grammatical and rhetorical teaching in the 11 century AD.³ If we wanted to get a snapshot of Alexander's historiographical profile coming out from these studies, we might reconstruct a learned and therefore admired personality, a γραμματικὸς πολυμαθέστατος, as defined by Stephanus of Byzantium,⁴ who expressed his best talents in linguistic and literary studies, in teaching and cultural communication, without refraining from competing with the most learned and authoritative philological and exegetical tradition, though without achieving quite brilliant results.⁵ Even if Alexander's exceptional connections have determined or at least greatly favoured his reputation both in ancient and modern times, we can go as far as seeing him as a typical figure representing the most educated class of *grammatikoi* of the Antonine renaissance. However, the most recent investigations are also revealing his specificity in the influence he probably had on the making of linguistic-literary trends and models or canons of outstanding representatives of the coeval high culture, between New Sophistic and Atticism. As a matter of fact, we can argue that Alexander was an exponent of the cultural 'underworld' in the period of great ferment between the reigns of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, whose impulses from below contributed to shaping and substantiating the features of other, high culture figures – that is, of figures who, later on, established themselves in cultural history and historiography with the standing and weight of absolute protagonists.⁶ This paper will focus on well-documented aspects of Alexander's multifaceted activity which seem to confirm this interpretation.

2 Dyck 1991; Alpers 1998.

3 Vix 2004 and 2010; Pernot 2008; Berardi 2002, 2013 and 2016.

4 Steph. Byz. s.v. Κοτιάειον (x 188 Billerbeck) = Test. 5 Dyck.

5 For this opinion cf. Dyck 1991, 333–335; Alpers 1998, 102; Matthaios 2015, 239. Much more laudatory Vix 2004, 369–372.

6 A thorough and non-prejudicial study of the biographical and intellectual circumstances concerning the ancient scholars can help overcome the traditional historiographic dichotomy,

I think it would be useful, first of all, to recall Alexander's biographical data and composite intellectual portrait; and to highlight both the ordinary side of his profile and the distinctive qualities that we recognize as influential and fecundating for his historical *milieu*.⁷ Native of the Phrygian city of Κοτιάειον,⁸ he was the son of a man named Asclepiades according to the testimony of Stephanus of Byzantium and of the *Etymologicum Genuinum*.⁹ The chief and generous source for his biographical and cultural profile is the epitaph pronounced in his honour by Aelius Aristides, who had been his disciple.¹⁰ Aristides' own biography and the dating of the epitaph from the year 150 AD provide the essential coordinates for Alexander's lifetime: he was probably born between 70 and 80 AD and died in 150.¹¹ He lived in Rome, where he engaged in a successful and prestigious activity of remunerated teaching, which enabled him to amass a huge fortune and be well known in the intellectual landscape of the capital. Antoninus Pius chose him as tutor of his adoptive sons Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius. The latter, at the beginning of his *Thoughts*, recalls with affectionate admiration Alexander's human qualities and his valuable teaching.¹² From Aristides' oration we learn that the city of Cotiaeum paid tribute to him posthumously, as a reward for the intense mediation he had conducted at the imperial court, as well as for his evergetism to the homeland.

Aristides addresses his epitaph in the form of an epistolary *consolatio* τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Κοτυαέων. While giving biographical information about Alexander, he depicts his intellectual portrait in encomiastic terms. Alexander is qualified as τῶν Ἑλλήνων ... πρῶτος (32, 1), τροφεύς, διδάσκαλος, πατήρ, ἐταῖρος (32, 2), ἀνὴρ τίμιος (32, 30), μακαριστός (32, 33); and is praised for honouring Cotiaeum by associating its name to his own 'in the books he submitted to *diorthosis*' (32, 21: ἐπεὶ κὰν τοῖς βιβλίοις ἃ διωρθοῦτο τοῦτο ἐγκαταλέλειπται σύμβολον. ἐπὶ γὰρ τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ παράγραμμα ἦν ἡ πατρίς). From this, we learn

so comfortable but often arbitrary, between 'major' and 'minor' figures: cf. Montana 2015, 67–68, with regard to the history of Hellenistic scholarship.

7 The essential data, texts and bibliography are available in Montana 2018a; cf. Wentzel 1894; Montanari 1996.

8 This is the proper form of the toponym, as drawn from Strabo XII 8, 12, against Κοτυαίον and Κοτιάεον coming from the late-antique and Byzantine tradition.

9 Steph. Byz. s.v. Κοτιάειον (x 188 Billerbeck) = test. 5 Dyck; *Et. Gen.* (A), s.v. δίχρον καὶ δίχροον = fr. 4 Dyck.

10 Or. 12 Dindorf = 32 Keil Ἐπὶ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐπιτάφιος = test. 1 Dyck. Presumably Aelius Aristides listenend to Alexander's lessons in his own home town, Smyrna. Boulanger 1923, 114, thinks, instead, that Aristides went expressly to Cotiaeum.

11 For dating: Behr 1968, 51 and 76; Vix 2010, 65–66.

12 M. Aur. 1, 10 = test. 2 Dyck; cf. *Hist. Aug. Aur.* 2, 3 = test. 3 Dyck. Pernot 2008.

that Alexander – rather than preparing real new editions of ancient writings – made textual analyses and amendments on the works he used for teaching, and authenticated the copies he had corrected by affixing a *subscriptio*. Moreover Aristides documents that Alexander's competences concerned both poetry and prose and resulted in masterful oral teachings more than (or rather than) in writings. Aristides provides a sort of canon, admittedly not exhaustive, of the authors Alexander was used to explain and comment on (cf. 32, 24, where it is worth noting the words κοσμήσαντι καὶ δείξαντι; cf. 32, 32 ἐξηγητής). The list expressly includes Homer, Archilochus, Hesiod, Simonides, Stesichorus, Pindar, Sappho and Alcaeus, and intentionally overlooks Attic authors, whose obvious presence does not need to be mentioned (τὰς γὰρ Ἀθήνας ἐὼ τὰ νῦν).¹³ A little further, Aristides praises Alexander's acquaintance with Plato's works (32, 25, cf. 32, 34) and mentions an Αἰσώπου πρᾶγμα (32, 27), whose nature is unknown to us – unless supposing with Cortés Copete that the paraphrase and the explanation of Aesop's fables may represent the first step in the *grammatikos*' teaching on poets.¹⁴

Apart from the magniloquent style of the encomium and from the emphasis on the high level of Alexander's qualities, the wealth of competences and activities reported by Aristides do not appear, as a whole, very far from the expected model of *grammatikos* according to the Greek educational *curriculum*, concerning higher education performed through reading of and comment on literary texts.¹⁵ We are going to examine first these 'ordinary' aspects of Alexander's activity. The main professional practice is the reading of authors and works of the long-established canon, resulting from the erudite work performed by generations of scholars, especially the Alexandrian ones, since the Hellenistic Age and, under the impulsion of different intellectual suggestions, again in the days of Alexander. The areas of education include epics and lyric poetry and the fundamental Attic literature. Prose is not absent and in this field Aristides puts emphasis on Plato, as master of thought and of Attic

13 καὶ μὴν εἰ Ὅμηρον Συμυρναίοις παρασχέσθαι καὶ Παρίοις Ἀρχίλοχον καὶ Βοιωτοῖς Ἡσίοδον καὶ Κεῖοις δὴ Σιμωνίδην καὶ Στησίχορον Ἱμεραίοις καὶ Θηβαίοις Πίνδαρον καὶ Μυτιληναίοις Σαπφῶ καὶ Ἀλκαῖον καὶ ἑτέροις ἑτέροισιν τινὰς φέρει φιλοτιμίαν, τὰς γὰρ Ἀθήνας ἐὼ τὰ νῦν, ἥ που καὶ ὑμᾶς μέγα φρονεῖν εἰκὸς ἐπὶ τῷ τούτοις ἅπαντας κοσμήσαντι καὶ δείξαντι.

14 Cortés Copete 1995, 174–175 n. 20. It is worth noting that, according to an ancient tradition, Aesop himself was native of Κοτιάειον (*Suda* αἰ 334 Adler).

15 The choice of Greek authors read by Alexander according to the testimony of Aelius Aristides is comparable, for instance, with the canon attested by Papinius Statius for his father, emphatically commemorated as a successful poet, esteemed teacher and exegete of Homer, Hesiod, Epicharmus, Pindar, Ibycus, Alcman, Stesichorus, Sappho, Callimachus, Lycophron, Sophron, Corinna (Stat., *Silv.* v 3, 146–158). I am grateful to Giancarlo Abbamonte for suggesting this comparison.

language. Alexander's specificity that we can infer in this field from Aristides' encomium appears not so much related to the identity of the authors read by the teacher, but rather to the extension of the programme conducted by him in his courses.

Reading means explanation, therefore essentially literary exegesis including linguistic analysis, observations on morphology and interpretation of the content. It is evident from Aristides' words that it was a professional practice mainly conducted on the plan of oral communication in the classroom. However, these are in fact the fields represented by most of the about twenty surviving fragments of Alexander's writings,¹⁶ as can be illustrated by the analysis of a sample. Three fragments of etymological content are explicitly connected by the witnesses to the same work, entitled Παντοδαπά or else Περί παντοδαπῆς ὕλης – a title recalling that of the Λέξις παντοδαπὴ κατὰ στοιχείον, the epitome in 5 books of Pamphilus' great lexicon produced by Diogenianus,¹⁷ who was probably a younger contemporary of Alexander. According to Stephanus of Byzantium (test. 5 Dyck), Alexander's Παντοδαπά were of remarkable size, consisting of 24 books. One of the fragments (16 Alpers) discusses the etymology of the proper noun Ἄρητος (*Il.* xvii 535); it is reported in the *Etymologicum Genuinum* and from there repeated in the posterior etymological works. We learn from the witnesses that Alexander drew the etymology on Cratinus, a grammarian about whom we only know that he had realized an epitome of the Περί Ὀμηρικῆς λέξεως by Basilides, a figure equally evanescent for us.¹⁸ However, our lack of information does not prevent us from appreciating two significant factual data: that in the Παντοδαπά Alexander drew on works of specialized lexicography; and that his collection was taken into consideration by later compilers as a vehicle, clearly considered reliable, of the lexicographical and etymological tradition. The other two fragments expressly referred to the Παντοδαπά are 4 and 5 Dyck, concerning respectively the etymology of δίχρος¹⁹ and the Homeric form ἐπίσχοις. This second fragment is remarkable for the critical instruments used by Alexander. He interprets ἐπίσχοις found in *Il.* xiv 241 as second person singular optative, written with *epsilon* in the inflection and with accent retraction, instead of ἐπισχοίης, and he explains

16 Cf. Vix 2004, 364.

17 For the title: *Suda* δ 1140 Adler.

18 About these two grammarians: Meliadò 2018 (Basilides) and Meliadò forthcoming (Cratinus).

19 Connected to κόρος = κλάδον: *Et.Gen.* (A), s.v. δίχρον καὶ δίχροον, unde *Et.M.* 276, 21–32 = Hdn., *Path.* III 2, 385, 21–25 Lentz: Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ ὁ τοῦ Ἀσκληπιάδου ἐν τῷ ἰ' τῶν παντοδαπῶν παρὰ τὸ κόρος, ὃ σημαίνει τὸν κλάδον (ἐνθεν καὶ κορυθαλὶς ἡ δάφνη λέγεται) καὶ κορεῖν τὸ τοῖς κλάδοις σαροῦν. On this fragment cf. Vix 2004, 365–366.

it as a transliteration error occurred when shifting to the Attic vowel system (παρεφθάρη δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν μεταχαρακτηρισάντων).²⁰ Apart from the complex textual issue, and therefore from the plausibility of the solution suggested by Alexander,²¹ here it is interesting to stress that the argument, based on the knowledge of a datum of phonetics and of the history of language and writing, draws once again on specialist proficiency.²² Therefore the Παντοδαπά were probably an etymological lexicon, far from being elementary. The fact that two lemmas, starting respectively with δ and ε, come from the same book of the collection rightly leads Dyck to suppose that the lexicon was organized in alphabetical order.²³ I would also argue that the book in question, the tenth, is congruent with an alphabetical sylloge comprising 24 books.

It is quite probable that the other etymological remarks attributed to Alexander in the sources,²⁴ which essentially concern Homeric words, also belonged to the Παντοδαπά. The fr. 7 Dyck is an explanation, shared with

20 Sch. Porph.? ex.? *Il.* XIV 241c (A): ἐπίσχοις: τῷ ἐπίσχοιμι ἀκόλουθόν ἐστι τὸ ἐπίσχοις, τῷ δὲ ἐπισχοίην τὸ ἐπισχοίης· καὶ ἴσως ἔδει οὕτως ἔχειν, παρεφθάρη δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν μεταχαρακτηρισάντων· τῷ δὲ χαρακτῆρι γενόμενον ὅμοιον τῷ ἰοίην· καὶ ἄγαγοίην· παρὰ Σαπφοῖ (fr. 182 and 169 Voigt) καὶ τῷ ἑπεαγοίην· παρ' Εὐπόλιδι (fr. 472 Kassel-Austin) εἰκότως ἐβραρυτονήθη τὸ ἐπισχοίης, γενόμενον ἐπίσχοις ὡς Αἰολικόν. οὕτω καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Κοτιαεὺς ἐν τῷ ι' τῶν Παντοδαπῶν (the connection of the scholium with Porphyry, argued by Erbse 1960, 97–98, is questioned by Valk 1963–1964, I, 113–114). Cf. sch. Did.? *Il.* XIV 241a (T): ἔνιοι δὲ ἐπίσχοις (ἐπισχοίης cod., corr. Erbse). According to sch. Hrd. *Il.* XIV 241b¹ (A), also Herodian (I, 469, 14 Lentz) read ἐπίσχοις, but he explained it as a form derived either from ἐπίσχοις by adding ε, or from ἐπισχοίης by shortening η.

21 Alexander's correction ἐπισχοίης, which is prevailing in the medieval paradosis (and is included in Hesychius' *Lexicon*, ε 5284 Latte), is the reading also preferred by the modern critical editors of the *Iliad* (e.g. Dindorf, Monro-Allen, Allen in the *ed. maior*, van Thiel) and is considered plausible by Chantraine 1958, 464; Valk 1963–1964, II, 215 with n. 590; Janko 1991, 189. Instead West 2000 chooses ἐπίσχοιας, a reading sporadically documented in the pre-medieval tradition (ἐπίσχοιας in PSI X 1169, of the 3rd century AD; ἐπισχοίης in Bibl. Brit. Add. ms. 17210, of the 6th century), in the footsteps of Wackernagel 1897, 45–46 (= *Kleine Schriften*, I, 806–807) and 1916, 14 and 16 (but already 1878, 272 = *Kleine Schriften*, III, 1525), who considered ἐπισχοίης as a later Attic form incompatible with the Homeric morphology; cf. Schulze *apud* Premierstein 1909, 259 (= Schulze 1934, 404); Schwyzler 1939, 660 with n. 7.

22 The ancient exegetes were well aware of the text alterations that could be derived from the *metacharacterismos*, at least starting from Aristarchus: sch. Ariston. *Il.* XI 104a¹. Cf. Dyck 1991, 319. Alexander's interest in the morphological and lexical observation is also witnessed by Georgius Choeroboscus (fr. 10a Dyck, cf. fr. 10b Dyck), who attributes to him the theory of the formation of verbs with the present indicative ending with -κω and -χω from sigmatic futures, such as for instance σμήχω from σμῶ σμήσω, δλέκω from δλῶ δλέσω (on fr. 10 Dyck cf. also Vix 2004, 366–367).

23 Dyck 1991, 318.

24 Frr. 9–14 Dyck and fr. 17–19 Alpers. Cf. Dyck 1991, 324; Alpers 1998, 98 and 100.

Didymus Chalcenterus, of the metaphorical meaning of the syntagm ἀρμάτειον μέλος in Euripides' *Orestes* (v. 1384): the hypothesis that also this note was included in the Παντοδαπά is undoubtedly more convenient than supposing a specific work on the tragedian, that is not attested. As to fr. 6 Dyck, concerning a variety of the vine plant named ἀμαμαξύς, Alpers thinks that it is not to be attributed to Alexander of Cotiaeum, arguing that it should rather be attributed to the Polyhistor, on the basis of the content and of traditional reasons: the source, an entry of the *Etymologicum Magnum*, thanks to the comparison with Hesychius, is to be traced back, through Diogenianus, to Pamphilus' lexicon, therefore to a source preceding the times of Alexander of Cotiaeum.²⁵ Instead the gateway to Alexander's etymologies in Byzantine lexicography is to be found in Oros, the grammarian of the 5th century, thanks again to a testimony of the *Etymologicum Magnum*, which under the entry περιρρηδής reports the explanations of Alexander and Pius and mentions Oros as its source (664, 39–41 Gaisford; fr. 14 Dyck): περιρρηδής: περιρραγείς, περιρρυείς. οὕτως Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Κοτιαεύς· Πίος δέ (fr. 14 Hiller) περιφερής, περιρρυής. Ὅρος. For the period prior to Oros, a possible step in the reception of Alexander's lexical studies is the Atticist glossary named Φιλέταιρος transmitted under the name of Herodian²⁶ and edited by Alphonse Dain:²⁷ accepting a hypothesis advanced by Reitzenstein,²⁸ Alpers suggested to recognize the Φιλέταιρος as a 3rd century *excerptum* of an Atticist writing composed by Alexander.²⁹ Another early hypothesis, recently resumed by Elisabetta Berardi with new arguments, supposes that the fortune of Alexander's lexicography may have been supported by the active appreciation of Phrynichus the Atticist: there is no positive evidence of a relationship between them, but it can actually be inferred from Phrynichus' close connections with Aelius Aristides and with Cornelianus, the secretary *ab epistulis* of Marcus Aurelius and dedicatee of the *Eclogue*.³⁰

So, this thin and frayed network of documented or plausible relations of lexicographical traditions and of personalities allows to guess that Alexander had high quality learned and intellectual acquaintances and knowledge. This eloquent teacher, vigorously praised by Aristides as a brilliant reader and oral commentator of classics, and remembered by Marcus Aurelius for the polite sense of tolerance he showed towards those who, in his presence,

25 Alpers 1998, 100–102.

26 On this attribution see Dyck 1993, 791–792.

27 Dain 1954.

28 Reitzenstein 1897, 389.

29 Alpers 1998, 107–108; cf. Berardi 2016, 260–261.

30 Naechster 1908, 85–87; Boulanger 1923, 41; Berardi 2016, 250, 258–262. In general on Phrynichus as a source of Oros: Tosi 1984, 182 and 186–187.

used barbarisms and solecisms, thanks to his lexical studies consigned to the Παντοδαπά was highly considered for centuries, between Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Age, by the compilers of etymological sylloges; and, quite unexpectedly, he might even have had an influence on Phrynichus, the austere prophet and guardian of the most intransigent Atticism.

Furthermore, there are repeated positive testimonies of the consideration and fortune also enjoyed by Alexander's exegesis of literary contents in 'upstairs' of learned culture. At least five of his explanations of passages of the *Iliad* are endorsed by Porphyry in his 'Ομηρικὰ ζητήματα or transmitted by Homeric scholia that might be traced back to Porphyry.³¹ In introducing one of these fragments, dedicated to the explanation of a scene depicted on the shield of Achilles,³² Porphyry says expressly that it is drawn on Alexander's 'Εξηγητικά, in at least two books, that are probably to be identified with the work mentioned by Aelius Aristides in the epitaph as 'Ομηρικὴ συγγραφή.³³ Two other fragments of Alexander's Homeric exegesis transmitted among the scholia of the *Venetus A* manuscript of the *Iliad* are likely to come from this work; they concern respectively the meaning of the metaphor of the 'knot of the conflict' in *Il.* XIII 358–359³⁴ and the form Ἀχιλῆος, with a single *lambda* for metrical reasons, in the first verse of the poem.³⁵

To make an assessment of this quick review on the 'conventional' side of Alexander's activity, we can recognize in what remains of the Παντοδαπά and of the 'Εξηγητικά the traces, shall we say, of an intermediate socio-cultural condition between school and scholarship, between the tasks of oral didaxis and written erudite memory. The Παντοδαπά appear to us as the product of linguistic-etymological skills presumably exerted in school teaching and, at the same time, applied to matters and with methods not free from some philological ambition and sophistication – as, for instance, the consideration of problems

31 Fr. 1–3ab, 5 and 8 Dyck. Cf. Erbse 1960, 53–55 and 96–98; *contra* Valk 1963–1964, I, 113–114 (cf. *supra*, with regard to *sch. Il.* XIV 241c = fr. 5 Dyck).

32 *Il.* XVIII 509ff.; test. 6 = fr. 2 Dyck. On the passage, see Vix 2004, 367–369.

33 Test. 4 Dyck; cf. Lehrs 1837, 11. On the 'Εξηγητικά, see Erbse 1960, 53–56. This title might identify a section of the Παντοδαπά in the view of M. Haslam *apud* Dyck 1991, 308 n. 5.

34 Fr. 1 Dyck = *sch. Porph.?* *Il.* XIII 358–359 (A). As to the traditional path followed by these fragments to be conveyed to the *Venetus A* manuscript, either through Porphyry or through other channels (for example the *scholia exegetica*: Dyck 1991, 320 with n. 34), a clue supporting the hypothesis of Porphyry is the fr. 3ab Dyck (on the posture of Achilles and Agamemnon during their speeches at the Achaean assembly in *Il.* XIX 79ff.), transmitted both by the *Venetus* manuscript (3a) and by the direct tradition of the 'Ομηρικὰ ζητήματα (3a: *Porph. ad Il.* I 234, 10 Schrader = 112, 7 Sodano).

35 Fr. 8 Dyck = *sch. Porph.?* *Il.* I 1ⁱ (A^{im}): the form Ἀχιλῆος is justified by the same metrical reason that explains Κάμανδρος instead of Σκάμανδρος.

of writing, copy and transmission of literary texts in fr. 5 Dyck. These concepts and categories were particularly stimulating for the rising stars of Atticism and New Sophistic in the Antonine Age. Indeed, in the light of the hypotheses of personal and intellectual connections mentioned above, it cannot be excluded that the *vedettes* of high culture had become aware of this type of concepts just thanks to their relations with learned teachers like Alexander. Likewise, in the Ἑξηγητικά he had to take advantage of the lively routine experience of school explanation, so praised by Aristides, without renouncing to dialogue and compete with the specialized and professional exegesis that, later on, selected and coopted some of his interpretations. It is undoubtedly in the field of teaching, in its development and in relation to it, that Alexander met opportunities to also perform text *diorthosis*; and with sufficient frequency, to induce Aristides to record this activity among the stable and qualifying features of the cultural and professional profile of his teacher (32, 21 *κάν τοῖς βιβλίοις ἃ διωρθοῦτο*).

On Alexander's diorthotic attitude, which appears as the less common aspect of his activity, it is worth paying greater attention. By a rare stroke of luck, Aristides' generic testimony on Alexander's habit to amend the literary texts he used for his lessons is supported and exemplified by a specific case well documented by Porphyry. The eighth question of the first book of the Ὀμηρικὰ ζητήματα dwells on the problems posed by the *diorthosis* of the Homeric text, in particular with regard to the impact of corruption on the text quality of the poems. Porphyry considers instructive to make a comparison with a different but in his view parallel field, that is, the tradition of the writings of Greek historians; and he reports as an example a long extract from an erudite work entitled Σύμμικτα περὶ Ἡροδοτείου διορθώματος, written by the Atticist lexicographer Philemon, active around 200 AD, therefore half a century after Alexander's death.³⁶ It is worth reporting Porphyry's passage here below (286, 19ff. Schrader = 35, 9ff. Sodano).

ἐν τοῖς Φιλήμονος συμμίκτοις περὶ Ἡροδοτείου διορθώματος ὁ γραμματικὸς διαλεγόμενος πειράται καὶ Ὀμηρικὰ τινα σαφηνίζειν. οὐδὲν δὲ χεῖρον καὶ τὸν Ἡρόδοτον φιλοῦντί σοι τὴν πᾶσαν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀναγράφαι ζήτησιν. φησὶ γάρ ὅτι ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ (1 92, 2) Ἡρόδοτος τῶν ἱστοριῶν περὶ Κροίσου τοῦ Λυδοῦ πολλά τε ἄλλα διείλεκται, καὶ μὴν ὅτι θεοσεβέστατος γένοιτο καὶ διαπρεπῶς τιμῆσαι τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ μαντεῖα, τὰ ἐν Δελφοῖς, τὰ ἐν Θήβαις, τὸ τοῦ Ἀμμωνος,

36 Philemon's lexicographical fragments are edited by Reitzenstein 1897, 392–396; Cohn 1898. For the identification of the author of the Σύμμικτα with the Atticist: Cohn 1898, 363–366. Recent overview in Ucciardello 2007. For a sketch of the erudite reading of Herodotus in the Hellenistic and Roman Ages, see Montana 2018b, 17–30.

τὸ τοῦ Ἀμφιαράου· τοῦτο μὲν δὴ ἄλλοις ἄλλα πέμψαι δῶρα, ἀνέθηκε δέ τινα καὶ ἐν Βραγχίδῃσι τῇσι Μιλησίων· καὶ γέγραπται ἤδη κατὰ πάντα ἀπλῶς τὰ ἀντίγραφα τὸ τῆς ἄρθρον σὺν τῷ ἰῶτα ἰσοδυναμοῦν τῷ ταῖς. οὐδένα γε μὴν Ἑλλήνων ὑπομεῖναι θηλυκῶς τὰς Βραγχίδας ἂν εἰπεῖν, Ἡρόδοτον δὲ μᾶλλον ἂν ἐτέρων φυλάσσειν, ἀκριβῆ τε ὄντα περὶ τὰ ὀνόματα καὶ πάνυ ἐπιεικῶς φροντιστικόν. τοῦτο δὴ θεραπεύων τις οὐχ Ἡρόδοτου, φησὶν, ἀμάρτημα γεγονέναι, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸν συγγραφέα φησὶ διαμαρτεῖν παρεμβαλόντα τὸ σι. πολλὰ δὲ φέρεσθαι μέχρι νῦν ἀμαρτήματα κατὰ τὴν Ἡροδοτου συγγραφὴν καὶ ἔτι τὴν Θουκυδίδου καὶ Φιλίστου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀξιολόγων συγγραφέων. τί δ' οὐχὶ καὶ τὰ ποιήματα σχεδὸν ἀνάπλεω πάντα τυγχάνει ἀμαρτημάτων γραφικῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων παραδιορθωμάτων πάνυ ἀγροίκων; [...]

ἐπανάγωμεν δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἡρόδοτον καὶ τὸν διορθωτὴν τὸν Κοτυαέα Ἀλέξανδρον. ἡξίου γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ γράφειν τὸ 'τῇσι Μιλησίων' χωρὶς τοῦ ἰῶτα 'τῆς Μιλησίων', ὑποκειμένης ἔξωθεν χώρας ἢ γῆς. καὶ ἐγὼ δέ, φησὶν (*scil.* ὁ Φιλῆμων), ἐπειθόμην οὕτως ἔχειν τὰ τῆς γραφῆς, τὸν δὲ ἄνδρα τῆς ἀκριβοῦς συνέσεως ἐτεθαυμάκειν. ἐντυχῶν δὲ τοῖς Ἡροδοτείοις αὐτοῖς ἔπεσι, καὶ γενόμενος ἐπὶ τέλει τῆς Αἰγυπτιακῆς βίβλου, ἥτις ἐστὶ δευτέρα τῇ τάξει, εὗρίσκω πάλιν κατὰ τὴν αἰτιατικὴν πτώσιν εἰπόντα τὸν Ἡρόδοτον· ἀνέθηκεν εἰς Βραγχίδας τὰς Μιλησίων' (II 159, 3). οὐκέτι οὖν ὥμην ἀμάρτημα εἶναι γραφικόν, Ἰωνικὸν δὲ μᾶλλον ἰδίωμα. πολλὰ γὰρ οὗτοι τῶν ὀνομάτων χαίρουσι θηλυκῶς ἐκφέροντες, οἷον τὴν τε λίθον καὶ τὴν κίονα καὶ ἔτι τὴν Μαραθῶνα· Κρατῖνος (fr. 506 Kassel-Austin) εὐπιποτάτη Μαραθῶν, Νίκανδρος (fr. 111 Gow-Scholfield) εὐκτιμένην Μαραθῶνα. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἃ ἡμεῖς εὕρομεν καὶ ἐκρίναμεν ὑγιῶς [ἔχειν]. τοιαῦτα δὲ τοῦ Φιλῆμονος λέγοντος, ἃ μὲν πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον περὶ τοῦ Ἡροδοτείου διορθώματος εἴρηκεν, οὐκ οἰκτεῖον κρίνω τῇ παροῦσῃ ὑποθέσει ἐξετάζειν.

'During his discussion of an emendation in Herodotus in his *Miscellanea*, Philemon the Grammarian attempts to clarify certain points in Homer as well. Since you are also fond of Herodotus, it will be none the worse if I record for you the whole of the scholar's investigation. He says that in Book I (92) of the *Histories*, Herodotus narrated many things about the Lydian, Croesus, among them that he was very pious and that he had magnificently endowed the oracles of the Greeks at Delphi and Thebes as well as those of Ammon and Amphiaraus: «for this reason, he sent various gifts to various places and also made some dedications in Branchidai of the Milesians (ἐν Βραγχίδῃσι τῇσι Μιλησίων)». Now, in all editions without exception, the article τῆς was written with an iota, making it the equivalent of ταῖς (dative plural, feminine). No Greek, however, would have said that Branchidai can be feminine, he says, and Herodotus would be

more on his guard than others since he was precise and extremely careful with names. «Mindful of this», (Philemon) says, «someone (explained) that the error was not Herodotus' but rather that a scribe erred by inserting the -σι and that many errors are still being committed throughout Herodotus' history as well as in Thucydides, Philistus, and other prominent historians. Why, then, should it not also happen that virtually all poetry is full of errors of transcription and other blundering (attempts at) correction, which are perfectly insensitive?».

(Philemon continues:) «Let us return to Herodotus and his editor, Alexander of Kotiaion. The learned gentleman thought it fit to write τῇσι Μιλησίωv, without the iota, τῆς Μιλησίωv, with χώρης or γῆς (i.e., 'region' or 'land') understood. And I», he says, «was persuaded that his reading was correct, and I admired the learned man for his keen intelligence. However, I happened upon these same Herodotean words at the end of the book on Egypt, which is the second book (159), and again I find Herodotus using them in the accusative case: 'Branchidai τὰς of the Milesians.' I no longer thought that it was a spelling error but rather that it was an Ionic idiom. (The Ionians) are fond of expressing many nouns in the feminine, such as 'stone,' 'column,' and even 'Marathon.' Cratinus: 'Marathon, most famed for (her) horses;' and Nicander: 'well-built(f.) Marathon.' This, then, is what we have discovered and we have judged it sound». Such were the words of Philemon, but I do not judge it appropriate for the present discussion to examine closely what he said against Alexander concerning the correction in Herodotus' (transl. Schlunk 1993, 31 and 33).

In his *Σύμμικτα* – a sort of collection of critical *adversaria* dedicated, entirely or in part, to the *diorthosis* of Herodotus' *Histories* – Philemon defended the paradox of a Herodotean passage (I 92, 2), that had been questioned by Alexander. It should be stressed that the Atticist, in a work expressly dedicated to textual problems in the *Histories*, qualifies Alexander as *θεραπεύων* of Herodotus' passage and then *tout court* as *ὁ διορθωτής* (in the accusative). Philemon reports that in the Herodotean expression ἐν Βραγχίδῃσι τῇσι Μιλησίωv Alexander considered unacceptable the use of the feminine gender for Βραγχίδαι and thought that the article τῇσι was a corruption (γραφικὸν ἀμάρτημα); therefore he corrected it to τῆς, thus obtaining ἐν Βραγχίδῃσι τῆς Μιλησίωv (*scil.* χώρης or γῆς). Philemon admitted that at first he had the same perplexity, until he found another passage of the *Histories*, within the Egyptian *logos*, where Βραγχίδαι is unequivocally used in the feminine gender (II 159, 3): ἀνέθηκεν εἰς Βραγχίδας τὰς Μιλησίωv. Philemon observed that in this case the expression is κατὰ τὴν

αἰτιατικὴν πτώσιν, 'in the accusative', clearly meaning that the article τὰς is free from phonic and graphic ambiguities which, on the contrary, can act in the manuscript transmission of forms like the genitive singular τῆς and the Ionic dative plural τῇσι; and therefore that in this case it is not possible to identify a plausible origin of textual corruption and the feminine article τὰς is to be undoubtedly considered as the correct reading. The passage from the second book of the *Histories* clearly supports the genuineness of the reading τῇσι in the first book. Philemon justifies this linguistic behaviour of Herodotus as Ἰωνικὸν ἰδίωμα, precisely the preference for the feminine gender of nouns by the Ionians (πολλὰ γὰρ οὗτοι τῶν ὀνομάτων χαίρουσι θηλυκῶς ἐκφέροντες, οἷον τήν τε λίθον καὶ τὴν κίονα καὶ ἔτι τὴν Μαραθῶνα; then two examples follow from Cratinus and Nicander).

διόρθωσις δὲ κακὴ γραφικὰς ἀμαρτίας ποιεῖ, 'a bad *diorthosis* produces corruptions'. This lapidary sentence can be read in a writing transmitted in *P.Herc.* 1012 (col. XXI 3–4), probably a work by Demetrius Lacon, in a point where a passage of the sixth book of Hippocrates' *Epidemics* (VI 5, 15) is discussed. We can wonder whether Philemon knew this sentence, and if he remembered it when he decided to refuse Alexander's correction in *Histories* I 92, 2. The malignant irony of the *gnome* resides in indicating paradoxically as an effect of bad *diorthosis* the same thing that the *diorthosis* claims to cure, namely the γραφικαὶ ἀμαρτίαι. This is precisely the case of Alexander, in the eyes of Philemon and according to his words reported by Porphyry.

Unfortunately we are not able to determine the exact context, character and extension of Alexander's diorthotic activity on the *Histories*. This does not prevent, however, from getting some concluding remarks from this ancient technical discussion on a circumscribed textual problem. The episod documents first of all, in rather detailed manner, that the *diorthosis* was an integral part of the practice of reading and comment on literary texts usually performed by Alexander. It confirms what had been generically said by Aelius Aristides in his overview of the professional activity of his teacher, when in the funeral epistle mentions the books that Alexander 'corrected' (διωρθοῦτο) and then signed with his own name and with that of his homeland (*Or.* 32, 21).

Secondly, thanks to this example reported by Porphyry, we get some information on the history of the literary culture during the Antonine age, and more specifically on the areas in which were probably engaged at least some of the teachers of literature at that time, between educational practice and philological debate. On the one hand, issues of literary dialectology: in the case under examination, defining the linguistic and lexical correctness of Ionic; on the other hand, the doubts on the genuineness of the vulgate text of the works of the canon, which obliged to take into account the errors of the manuscript

transmission, so that the most cultivated, or audacious and reckless teachers were induced to make diorthotic interventions on a text. The case under study shows that these actions, though appearing bold and extemporaneous, on the contrary were based on the conscious need for an informed and well supported foundation – in other words, for a ‘method’. Alexander was convinced of the presence of a textual corruption because of a linguistic behaviour (Βραγχίδαι used in the feminine) that probably appeared to him dubious whenever he read and commented on that passage of Herodotus with his disciples; so he decided to ‘cure’ the presumed error in his personal copy of the *Histories*, on the basis of a philological reasoning, that is, the most advantageous reconstruction of the origin of the error: in this case, the passage of τῆς to τῇσι after Βραγχίδησι, by homeoteleuton. We should wonder whether this specific case presupposes a higher level of critical awareness: supposing that in Herodotus a genuine Attic form was corrupted to a Ionic form implies knowing and admitting the possibility – in fact envisaged and debated in modern studies – of a hyper-Ionisation of the textual *facies* of the *Histories* in the manuscript tradition.

Finally, another significant implication of Porphyry’s testimony resides in the association made between Homeric and Herodotean scholarship. The status of the vulgate of Herodotus at the time of Alexander and Philemon, and the resulting discussions, are proposed by Porphyry as examples of the situation that was equally observed for the Homeric text. Porphyry informs that the parallel had already been established by Philemon, but in an opposite direction: referring to Homeric textual problems in the field of Herodotean scholarship (ἐν τοῖς Φιλήμονος συμμίκτοις περὶ Ἡροδοτείου διορθώματος ὁ γραμματικὸς διαλεγόμενος πειράται καὶ Ὀμηρικὰ τινα σαφηνίζειν).³⁷ In the association and the osmosis of these two areas of ancient philology we find reused and adapted the Hellenistic *topos* of the Homeric character of Herodotus’ work.³⁸ The eminent archetype of this method, consisting in *explaining Homer through Herodotus* and vice versa, is ‘the best of the grammarians’ Aristarchus, the

37 Porphyry’s words sound as a sort of variation of the famous Ὀμηρον ἔξ Ὀμήρου σαφηνίζειν, transmitted by himself (*gh* 1 11, p. 297, 16 Schrader = p. 56, 3–4 Sodano; cf. the *incipit* of the prefatory epistle to book I addressed to Anatolius, p. 281, 2–3 Schrader = p. 1, 12–14 Sodano), which for the concept, if not even for the expression, dates back to Aristarchus (cf. Pfeiffer 1968, 225–227; Wilson 1971; Porter 1992, 70–85; Montanari 1997, 285–286; MacPhail 2011, 3–4).

38 *Subl.* 13.3. In the inscription from Halicarnassus (2nd/1st century BC) edited by Isager 1998, at line 43 Herodotus is defined τὸν πεζὸν ἐν ἱστορίαισιν Ὀμηρον. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Pomp.* 3) states that Herodotus composed his work in a varied way, because he was an admirer of Homer (ποικίλῃν ἐβουλήθη ποιῆσαι τὴν γραφὴν Ὀμήρου ζηλωτὴς γενόμενος). Cf. Pfeiffer 1968, 224; Boedeker 2002; Isager-Pedersen 2004. More bibliography in Montana 2018b, 17–18 n. 4.

greatest Homerist of the antiquity and author of the most ancient commentary known to us on a literary work in prose, the *hypomnema* to the first book of the *Histories*. The surviving fragment (*P.Amh.* II 12, of the 3rd century AD) brings evidence of the use of an epic-Homeric parallel to illustrate a military habit of the Massagetae reported by Herodotus (I 215, 1).³⁹ Perhaps it is not by chance that the study of the Homeric lexicon and the *diorthosis* of the *Histories* stand out jointly as the two qualifying fields in what has been transmitted of Alexander's professional *curriculum* and writings.⁴⁰

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39 A new critical edition of the *hypomnema*, with commentary, in Montana 2018b, 39–61 (Herodotus 4 CLGP). It is possible to trace back to Aristarchus other associations between Homeric and Herodotean languages reported in some VMK-scholia to the *Iliad*: Montana 2016, 543–546.

40 Erbse 1960, 53–54, is skeptical about the connection. But cf. Montana 2018b, 18 n. 17.

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