

The Literary Charms of *P. Oxy. 412*

I. The sense of nonsense

P. Oxy. 412 (see Appendix) is a well known fragment containing the end of Book XVIII of Julius Africanus' (III AD) *Κεστοί*¹. The fragment preserves part of the *Odyssey's Nekyia* along with details of a magical ἐπίρησις, in which Odysseus invokes not only the gods of Greece (Zeus, Hermes, Helios, etc.) and Egypt (Anubis, Phtah, Phre, Nephtu), but also the god of the Jews (Yahweh) and the "special gods of magic" (Abraxas, Ablantho, etc.)². The names of these divinities originate in diverse cultural spheres, and are infused into yet another cultural sphere, that of Homeric epic. But clearly *P. Oxy. 412's* Ἰάα (27. Commonly יָא in the Hebrew Bible)³, like the cultic Yahweh of many other "magical papyri", is no more the Hebrew divinity of the OT, who jealously forbids worship of any other god, than χθόνιος Ζεὺς (24) is the autocratic god of Homer (...πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε ...οὐδ' τε κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον)⁴. To make bedfellows of these two

¹ B. P. Grenfell / A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III (London 1903) 36–41; J.-R. Viellefond, *Les "Cestes" de Julius Africanus* (Firenze 1970) 277–91; H. D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* I (Chicago 1992) 262–264 (XXIII. 1–70). Bibliography in W. M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: an Introduction and Survey, Annotated Bibliography (1928–94)," *ANRW* II 18.5 (1995) 3547; F. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic*, *Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie* 19 (Tübingen 1984) 468–92. Matthews (*OCD*) translates: "Charmed Girdles". The title is problematic (Viellefond 29–39), as is Homer's use of the word (R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary* IV, books 13–16 [Oxford 1992] 184–85). All line-number references in text and in Appendix follow Viellefond.

² Viellefond (above, n. 1) 288, note b.

³ S. Sciacca, "Phylakterion con iscrizione magica greco-ebraica proveniente dalla Sicilia sud-occidentale", *Kokalos* 28–29 (1982–83) 87–104.

⁴ Viellefond thinks Africanus is writing for Jews in the Diaspora (above, n. 1: 17, 41–42), which is possible, except, of course, that such Jews would have to be polytheists (cf. M. Smith, "The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri", in *Studies in the cult of Yahweh*, ed. S. J. D. Cohen [New York 1996] 242–56, in poor shape but very important). Regardless, the environment would have been mixed, with strong pagan elements (Thee [above, n. 1] 193).

gods is to worship both, but to deprive each, *mutatis mutandis*, of his supremacy, or single most important divine attribute.

Such contradictions are common elsewhere in *P. Oxy.* 412. Africanus claims credit for a “rather valuable creation of epic poetry” (49, κῆμα [πο]λυτε[λ]έστερον ἐπικ[ῆ]ς). He claims to practice the preservation of an important, canonical text, but his output resembles magic writing that has never had any canonical value⁵. Africanus puts on the airs of a scholar, mentioning the Peisistratean recension (46–47), and he invokes the authority of manuscripts in official (not personal!) archives in Aelia Capitolina (Jerusalem) and Nysa, and in Alexander Severus’ library in Rome. At the same time, wherever his text correlates to otherwise extant passages of Homer, it most often follows vulgate readings⁶, and, for example, he cites *Odyssey* 11. 38–43 (*P. Oxy.* 412. 5–10), known to have been athetized by Zenodotus, Aristophanes, Aristarchus and others⁷.

These elaborate manipulations are not, of course, unique, and Viellefond is surely right when he notes that⁸. “*Les Cestes, pris à part, provoquent souvent une impression de bizzarrerie déconcertante: l’oeuvre d’une maniaque, pourrait-on croire. Mais, replacés dans leur cadre, ils s’harmonisent exactement avec lui et constituent une des plus typiques images de la pensée dans “le monde et la cour” au début du III^e siècle.*” *P. Oxy.* 412 represents the interpretive values of a broader “community” that shares a set of assumptions, beliefs, and values⁹. From this perspective Africanus’ otherwise self-contradictory actions and preposterous text may be treated as a somewhat more complex

⁵ Most Greek magical material would only be regarded as worthwhile for its ability to affect a practical, personal advantage for its user.

⁶ Viellefond (above, n.1) 284, note a.

⁷ On the basis of incongruous content: *S Odyssey* 11. 38 νόμφοι τ’ ἦϊθεοί τε] οἱ ἔξ παρὰ Ζηνοδότῃ καὶ Ἀριστοφάνει ἠθετοῦντο ὡς ἀσύμφωνοι πρὸς τὰ ἐξῆς. οὐ γὰρ μεμιγμένοι παραγίνονται αἱ ψυχαί· νῦν δὲ ὁμοῦ νόμφοι, ἦϊθεοι, γέροντες, παρθένοι. καὶ ἄλλως οὐδὲ τὰ τραύματα ἐπὶ τῶν εἰδώλων ὁρᾶται. ὄθεν ἔρωτᾷ, τίς νῦ σε κῆρ ἐδάμασσε; τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα. Η. Q. ἀθετοῦνται οὗτοι οἱ ἔξ, διὰ οὐκ ἔρχονται· καὶ διὰ ἀδύνατον φέρειν τὰς ψυχὰς τὰς τῶν σωμάτων πληγὰς. ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀνακεφαλαιώσιν πεποιήται τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα ῥηθέντων. V. As we shall see, incongruity is hardly a problem for Africanus.

⁸ Above, n.1, 65.

⁹ For “community” see S. Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Oxford 1989) 141. Homer’s epic, I would suggest, is one of the texts around which such interpretive communities would have formed. See, for example A. Kahane, “Callimachus, Apollonius, and the Poetics of Mud”, *TAPA* 124 (1994) 121–33.

act of re-appropriation of canonical icons. For while these icons ("Zeus", "Yahweh", "Homer") are denuded of their traditional signification, the loss of signification itself is quite meaningful.

This last, seemingly paradoxical statement can be illustrated by considering the interpretive foundation of one of the prominent aspects of magical papyri: the *voces magicae*, especially what Brashear calls "bona fide voces magicae", i. e. "not just letter games, permutations or palindromes, but the either longer or shorter words which for the most part defy all analysis and description."¹⁰ Take, for example, the words $\beta\epsilon\sigma\epsilon\nu\ \beta\epsilon\rho\iota\theta\epsilon\nu\ \beta\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma$ in *P. Lugd. Bat.* J 383, "The Eighth Book of Moses"¹¹. The meaning of this phrase is difficult to decipher, if not plainly obscure. $\beta\epsilon\sigma\epsilon\nu\ \beta\epsilon\rho\iota\theta\epsilon\nu\ \beta\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma$, may mean "in the name of the covenant", or "where there is no covenant there is no creation" or "in God ("the Name", *ha-Shem*) is the bond"¹². However, given the references to the Hebraic *Genesis*, the phrase should most likely be interpreted to mean "in the name of ", followed by two words that represent the first two Hebrew words of the book *Genesis*, בראשית ברא , these words being taken as emblematic of Hebrew wisdom¹³. But whichever interpretation we adopt, it is almost impossible that these words were meant to be fully "understood" in their context. The phrase as a whole almost certainly confounds the ordinary rules of Hebrew grammar and semantics. And it is unlikely that it represents a real, grammatically well-formed utterance in any other language or dialect. Now, there are two ways of interpreting these words:

¹⁰ Brashear (above, n. 1) 3434.

¹¹ K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (Stuttgart 1974) XIII. 477. Bibliography in Brashear (above, n.1) 3539–3544. Although somewhat later in date (IV AD), this text, a magical account of the creation of the world, represents a comparable tradition, and is most probably a copy of earlier material (M. Smith, "P. Leid. J 395 [PGM XIII] and Its Creation Legend," in A. Caquot, M. Hadas-Lebel, and J. Riaud, eds., *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentine Nikiprowetzky* [Leuven 1986] 491–98). It offers more or less the same mix of magical, religious, and literary jetsam and flotsam, it calls upon a motley pantheon (Zeus, Ares, Helios, Yahweh, Abraxas, etc.), reveals tensions of monotheism and polytheism (see e. g. line 1: $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma/\theta\epsilon\omicron\iota$), and has some literary pretensions (Betz [above, n. 1] 172, n. 1).

¹² See E. Riess, "Notes, Critical and Explanatory on the Greek Magical Papyri," *JEA* 26 (1940) 55; G. Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World* (Jerusalem 1977) 240; H. Jacobson, "Papyri Graecae Magicae XIII. 477", *Phoenix* 47 (1993) 3.

¹³ Jacobson (above, n. 12).

1. To follow ordinary linguistic interpretive criteria and to assume that the phrase is nonsense, or near-nonsense.

2. To abandon ordinary linguistic criteria and assume that the words obey the rules of some "other" unknown grammar in some "other", foreign or forbidden language (a "secret", "hieratic" language of power and wisdom).

Thus, paradoxically, this phrase, like most *voces*, is only meaningful to those readers who believe they "have no knowledge of what the words actually mean". These words can only "have a meaning" if they are "not understood"¹⁴! And, of course, a belief in words that are "beyond our knowledge" is merely the linguistic aspect of a general belief in magical acts. The man who affixes bats eyes onto a wax doggy with magical material and hides it at a crossroads in the hope of obtaining love (*PGM* IV 2943–66), is indeed the man who accepts an action, the logic and power of which is fundamentally, intrinsically, beyond his understanding.

The "logic of magic" is at the heart of *P. Oxy.* 412. What most *voces* are to language, *P. Oxy.* 412 is to epic. But what is the papyrus' relation to other magical papyri? Several points must be stressed. First, the author's basic end in writing the text was not to affect amorous infatuation in a woman, death in an enemy, or any other change which is a common outcome of magical activity. Rather, his aim appears to be scholarly pursuit (a perfectly non-magical activity): he wants to preserve what he claims are lost parts of epic poetry, indeed, of the *Odyssey*. Furthermore, regardless of his abilities (which are not considerable), the author's method for achieving his objective seems to conform to the conventional methodology of scholarly activity of the time: he mentions the Peisistratean recension, appeals to the authority of mss., etc.. In any case, he gives no indication that he used magic or any other paranormal means to achieve his end.¹⁵ Finally, unlike the essentially private, secret world of magic in general and Greek magic in particular, this text is not meant to be buried at a

¹⁴ Cf. P. C. Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, World Spirituality 15 (London 1986) 481–505. (Also A. Renoire's anecdote of the *Ersatz* Bugatti: A. Renoire, "Oral-Formulaic Rhetoric and the Interpretation of Written Texts", in *Oral Tradition in Literature*, ed. J. M. Foley [Columbia, MO 1984] 110–11).

¹⁵ Unlike, e. g. some of Jackson Knight's emendations of Virgil, which were claimed to have been obtained directly, through spritualistic contact.

crossroads, burned in private, *vel sim*¹⁶. Rather, as the concluding statement of the fragment purports, it is preserved, or so the author claims, in several very public places, where it can be seen, read, interpreted, by all.

What we have here is a text that follows the internal logic of magic, but avoids magical means, ends, and contexts¹⁷. In other words, not only is this a dislocated epic text, it is also a dislocated magical text.

II. Transgression and anxiety.

Africanus and his readers could not have ignored the contradictions implied by the text of *P. Oxy.* 412. It hardly requires a magician to realize that no love can be bought with this papyrus, or a scholar to understand that Yahweh is not “normally” a part of the Homeric world.¹⁸ We are faced with a critical dilemma which is in principle identical to that of interpreting the *voices*: Just as the expression βεσεν βεριθεν βεριο transgresses the rules of Hebrew grammar by which its components supposedly abide, so Africanus’ juxtapositioning of the epic world of the *Odyssey*, Yahweh, Abraxas, etc., transgresses the most obvious conventions by which *its* components abide. Either we read this fragment as “nonsense”, or we take it to be meaningful as some other “text”, knowledge of which is beyond us.

Such interpretive dilemmas will not let us be. Detached observers may be troubled by the thought of meaning buried deep within the garbled words. Devotees, like Africanus or the magical practitioners of his age, who makes sense by making “non-sense”, must also at some point feel that something is wrong, even if they will not openly admit it. Proof of the former concern lies in the labours of scholars. Proof of the latter lies in Africanus’ own endeavor.

Julius Africanus declares that his contribution to scholarship is “rather valuable”, [πο]λυτε[λ]έστερον (49), but a few lines earlier he

¹⁶ For secrecy see H. D. Betz, “Secrecy in the Greek Magical Papyri,” in Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Srounsa, eds., *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religion. Studies in the History of Religions, Numen Book Series 64* (Leiden 1995) 153–75.

¹⁷ For definitions of magic in our context, see Thee (above, n.1) 8–9.

¹⁸ Where Africanus cites known passages from Homer, the text is essentially identical to our own. Indeed, the vulgate has changed little since Alexandrian times (See S. West, *The Ptolemaic papyri of Homer* [Cologne 1967]).

implicitly admits the contrary (45–48):

...εἴτ' οὖν οὕτως ἔχων αὐτὸς ὁ ποιητῆς τὸ περίεργον τῆς ἐπιρρή-//σεως τὰ ἄλλα διὰ τὸ τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἀξίωμα σεσιώπηκεν, εἴθ' οἱ Πει-//σιστρατίδαι τὰ ἄλλα συνράπτοντες ἔπη ταῦτα ἀπέσχισαν, ἀλλότρια // τοῦ στοίχου τῆς ποιήσεως ἐκεῖ ἐπικρίναντες...

“Either Homer himself (αὐτὸς need not normally be translated, but here it is important to note that the Poet is viewed as an authoritative and distinct persona) suppressed *the magical part of the invocation* in order to preserve the *dignity of the speech*. Or the Peisistratides, as they were stitching together the rest of the verses, *cut out these because they considered them foreign to the work.*”

Africanus stands in opposition either to Homer himself, or to his supposed 6th century editors¹⁹. Consider Homer first. Περίεργον does not mean “remainder” as O’Neill translates²⁰. It most often has negative connotations: “needless”, “officious”, “futile”, “superstitious” and, indeed, “magical”²¹. Ἐπίρρησις, of course, can denote an “invocation”, and even a “spell”²², and Africanus’ interest in magic here, and in general, is a given fact²³. Thus, Homer’s silence (σεσιώπηκεν), must here be focused on magic. The cause of Homer’s silence is a desire to preserve τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἀξίωμα. Magic, in other

¹⁹ For the so called Peisistratean recension see e. g. R. Merkelbach, “Die peisistratische Redaktion der homerischen Gedichte,” *RhM* 95 (1952) 23–47; J. A. Davison, “Peisistratus and Homer,” *TAPA* 86 (1955) 1–21; Janko (above, n. 1) 29–32.

²⁰ Betz (above, n.1) 263. Thee (above, n. 1, 182) translates “overwrought part”, which is better.

²¹ *LSJ*. Not a lemma in the *Suda*, but a common element of its defining vocabulary, e. g. *s. v.* ἀκριβές: τό τε περίεργον καὶ πολύπραγμον; *s. v.* γόης, γόητος: κόλαξι, περίεργος, πλάνος, ἀπατεών. Cf. Hesychius: περίεργον περιττόν. ἢ στρεβλόν.

²² Ἐπίρρησις is rare (e. g. Philodemus, *De pietate* 74 [δτι μὲν ὄρκους καὶ // θεῶν ἐπιρρήσεσιν // ἔδοκιμασον χρῆσ-//θαι, γελοῖον ὑπομι-//μνήσκειν, cf. D. Obbink, *Philodemus on Piety: Critical Text with Commentary* (Oxford 1996); Lucian, *Philopseudos* 31.22–24: ἐγὼ δὲ προχειρισάμενος τὴν φρικωδεστάτην ἐπίρρησιν αἰγυπτιάζων τῇ φωνῇ συνήλασα κατάδων; Eusebios, *Praeparatio evangelica* 4.1.11.3 τινος ἀσήμεου καὶ βαρβαρικῆς ἐπιρρήσεως; 4.11.5.2: μυσταγωγίαν ἐπιτελοῦσι μετ’ ἐπιρρήσεων τινων. Proclus mentions a Ὀμηρικὴ ἐπίρρησις (2.79.28) but not in magical sense.

²³ For magic in the *Kestoi* in general see Viellefond (above, n. 1); Thee (above, n. 1).

words, is undignified²⁴. Although not formally marked as such ("Homer thought that...") this passage is probably meant to represent the opinions of "Homer himself". But if so, then Julius must be saying one of two things: Either that *his* judgment in matters of both epic and dignity is better than Homer's. One could hardly make a more transgressive, iconoclastic literary statement in the ancient world. Or, perhaps more reasonably, Africanus is implicitly admitting that his interests, although of value to an age preoccupied with magic, are nevertheless not quite dignified. Whether defiant or conceding inferiority, he is a self-acknowledged transgressor. Such acknowledgment would be even stronger if the opinions in the passage are thought to be, not Homer's, but Africanus' own. By contrast the opinions of the Peisistratides are explicitly marked as their own (...ἐπικρίναντες). They cut out (ἀπέσχισαν) the magical bits because "they thought they were alien to the flow of the poetry," (ἀλλότρια τοῦ στοίχου τῆς ποιήσεως). Theirs is more technical judgment, but one which nevertheless views "magic" and "epic poetry" as incompatible, and puts Africanus on the defense²⁵.

III. Images and practice

Africanus' reflections suggest a divided, anxious, but nevertheless orderly critical universe: On the one side Homer / the Peisistratean editors who view magic and epic as incompatible; on the other side Africanus, who argues that epic and magic do belong together²⁶. Indeed, the implication of his comments is that he is restoring a

²⁴ Of course, the *Odyssey* as we have it contains magic (Cf. S. Eitrem, "La magie comme motif littéraire chez les Grecs et les Romains," *Studia Oliveriana* 21 [1942] 39-83; W. B. Stanford, "That Circe's *ἄβδοξ* (Od. X, 238 ff.) was not a magic want," *Hermathena* 66 [1945] 69-71). But there is, I would suggest, a world of difference between the lofty arts of Kirke or Helen, and the real life magical practice of Graeco-Roman Egypt. Quite clearly, Africanus would like to inject elements of his immediate environment into the text of Homer. He shows no interest in Homeric magic as such.

²⁵ Not surprisingly he sees himself more at odds with the archaic poet than with Athenian editors, who are a little closer to him both in time and in disposition. Interestingly, Homer deletes by "keeping silent", while the Peisistratidai delete by "cutting out". This passage may indicate an awareness of questions of oral performance vs. text.

²⁶ As before "magic" here refers to Africanus' contemporary magic. Note the anachronism embedded in this opposition: Homer and/or the Peisistratidai object to magic that quite likely did not exist in their time.

version of the text which preceded either the Peisistratean editors, or even Homer himself!

However, such normative conceptions often diverge from actual practice²⁷, just as icons and representations differ from the objects they represent. Indeed, the only way to reconcile Africanus' contradictory normative conceptions is to suppress their contents, leaving nothing but an icon. A closer inspection of Africanus' actual epic practice will show that this is precisely what he does.

We do not know what preceded our fragment, which is the concluding part of *Kestoi* book xviii, but our extant text begins with lines known to us from Homer' *Nekyia*: *P. Oxy.* 412. 1–10 = *Odyssey* 11. 34–43²⁸. In the *Odyssey* the next four lines (11. 44–47) are:

δὴ τότ' ἔπειθ' ἐτάροισιν ἐποτρύνας ἐκέλευσα
μῆλα, τὰ δὴ κατέκειτ' ἐσφαγμένα νηλείϊ χαλκῶ,
δείραντας κατακῆαι, ἐπέύξασθαι δὲ θεοῖσιν,
ἰφθίμω τ' Ἀΐδη καὶ ἐπαινῆ Περσεφονείῃ·

Then I encouraged my companions and told them, taking
the sheep that were lying by, slaughtered with the pitiless
bronze, to skin these, and burn them, and pray to the divinities,
to Hades the powerful, and to revered Persephone.

These lines are not, however, reproduced in *P. Oxy.* 412. Agreement with the *Odyssey* is only resumed in the following lines: *P. Oxy.* 412. 11–13 = *Odyssey*, 11. 44–47 (except for the end of 13. See below). And yet the papyrus' next line strongly suggests that Africanus was familiar with *Odyssey* 11. 44–47. *P. Oxy.* 412. 14 reads: ἄ δεῖ ποιῆσαι εἶρηκεν, "he says what must be done". As an introduction the incantation that follows, ἄ δεῖ ποιῆσαι εἶρηκεν is superfluous, since the end of line 13 is a speech introductory phrase. However, these words neatly summarize the contents of the missing lines, in which Odysseus indeed "says what must be done": blood sacrifice and prayer to the nether gods. *Prima facie* the missing text deals precisely with Africanus' magical interests. Arguably, however, grand Homeric sacrifices of sheep were somewhat removed from the domesticated, essentially private rituals of Africanus time, which

²⁷ Indeed, a fundamental tension. See e. g. P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, tr. R. Nice (Cambridge 1977) 19–20 (orig. *Equisse d'une théorie de la pratique* [Paris 1972]).

²⁸ With minor variants, e. g. in v. 6, 9. For apparatus see Viellefond (above, n. 1).

involved more humble (and cheaper!) ingredients²⁹, and in any case the gist of these lines is already contained in Africanus' lines 1–2. Repeating these ideas, as it were, would draw attention away from the image of magic which Africanus is eager to promote. At the same time, we should note that no alternative magical ritual is actually supplied by Africanus. We shall presently return to this important last point.

P. Oxy. 412. 11–13 correspond to *Odyssey* 11. 48–51, except, most notably, for the final hemistich of 13, καὶ ἀμειβόμενος ἔπος ἠΐδων instead of Homer's πρὶν Τειρεσίαο πυθέσθαι. Teiresias, the seer who holds the key to Odysseus' return to Ithaca, who is the very reason for the journey to the underworld, has been cut out³⁰. Now, in the fragment's main incantation (22–36) Odysseus calls upon a whole host of divinities for assistance, a ragged band that does not, however, include the ancient seer³¹. As before, I suggest, an important element of the *Odyssey* has been quietly suppressed, in order to allow contemporary elements to take center-stage.

Let us note that the text substituted by Africanus for the latter half of line 13 is a speech introductory phrase that bears similarity to other, known hexameter verses, but has no precise equal in any extant hexameter text³². This may be significant. Speech-introductory formulae are emblematic symbols of Homeric verse³³. Surely, if the purpose is simply to integrate lost magical verses into the canonical text of Homer, it would have made sense to keep as many typically

²⁹ Already in Homer grandiose gestures were probably an idealization. See J. Griffin "Heroic and Un-heroic Ideas in Homer," in J. Boardman and C. E. Uphopoulou-Richardson, eds., *Chios: A Conference at the Homereion in Chios* (Oxford 1986) 3–13.

³⁰ There is evidence (line 18) that Africanus was aware of Teiresias and his role. See note 39, below.

³¹ Teiresias is not mentioned in *PGM*, nor, to the best of my knowledge, anywhere else in Greek magical texts.

³² No full parallels, but cf. *Odyssey* 13. 199: χερσὶ καταπρηνέσσ', ὄλοφύρομενος δ' ἔπος ἠΐδα. For a complete analysis of the overlaps of various elements of this half line and those of early epic, look up *Odyssey* 13. 199 in A. Kahane and M. Mueller, *The Chicago Homer* (an electronic database tool, forthcoming, University of Chicago Press. Beta version: <http://www.library.nwu.edu/publications/homer>).

³³ Cf. Eusebius *Praep. evang.* 10.3.21 (Cratinus fr. 355 K.–A.): τὸ γὰρ τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη κρείων Διομήδης σιγῶ, Ὅμηρου κωμωδηθέντος ὑπὸ Κρατίου διὰ τὸ πλεονάσαι ἐν τῷ τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος: ὅπερ οὕτως πεκατημένον οὐκ ᾤκησεν Ἀντίμαχος μεταθεῖναι.

Homeric lines as possible. One such is readily available: [καὶ] ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπον is a typically Odyssean expression³⁴. But Africanus, in his own feeble way, seems compelled to strip Homer of as much as possible, while still retaining a semblance of Homer. This is a matter of principle and necessity: Follow Homer too closely and the contradictions of a magical reading surface constantly; reduce Homer to an empty icon and he can be more easily injected with new content. Africanus practices what in other contexts has been called *paraformularita autoriflessiva*³⁵, a deliberate, subversive formularity which is virtually the signature of all those who would divert the course of tradition in the guise of epic's devotees.

The speech of lines 15–20 addresses the rivers and the earth. Although it is defined within the text as a “charm” (ἐπαοιδή, 20), it has little actual magical content³⁶. It does, however, savage several important aspects of the *Odyssey's* narrative. We have already seen above how Africanus suppresses Homeric magical contents, but does little to replace it. Here again Homer is being emptied of familiar contents, and again, I suggest, little is being replaced.

The first three lines (15–17) have been imported from *Iliad* 3. 278–80³⁷. They are, however, rather a poor fit. In *Iliad* book 3 the hosts take an oath of truce, and a prayer is made to divine powers to avenge all those who would break it. But who are those taking the oath in the context of the *Nekyia*? They are not known to us from *our Odyssey*³⁸. The next three lines, 18–20 summarize Odysseus' desire in

³⁴ ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπον is typically Odyssean (as opposed to Iliadic and epic in general): 1st person 16 times in *Odyssey*, not in *Iliad*, *Hymns*, etc., once in *Orphic Argonautica*. Only other variant is the 3rd person ~ προσέειπεν, most commonly, 19 times in *Odyssey*. Cf. e. g. *Odyssey* 11. 79.

³⁵ M. Fantuzzi, *Ricerche su Apollonio Rodio* (Rome 1988) 47–85 on the epic technique of Apollonius Rhodius.

³⁶ Not included by Preisendanz in *PGM*.

³⁷ The lines raised many problems, already for the Alexandrians, esp. τίνεσθον and καμόντας. See G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad. A Commentary* I, books 1–4 (Cambridge 1985) 305–306.

³⁸ Given all that has been said above, it is, I believe, unlikely that Africanus source was a substantially different *Odyssey*. Cf., however, Hesiod fr. 204. 78–84 M.–W.: Helen's suitors are made to swear an oath:

πάν]τας δὲ μνηστῆρ[ας] ἀπ[ή]τεεν ὄρκια πιστά,
 ὀ]μύόμεναι τ' ἐκέλευσ[ε] και [.]π.. ἀράασθαι
 σπονδῆι, μή τιν' ἔτ' ἄλλον [ἀ]νευ ἔθεν ἄλλα πένεσθαι
 ἀμφὶ γάμωι κούρης εὐ[ω]λ[ένο]υ· δε δέ κεν ἀνδρῶν
 αὐτόσ' ἔλοιτο βίηι, νέμεσιν τ' ἀπ[ο]θεῖτο και αἰδῶ,

somewhat Homeric language, which nevertheless is not precisely attested in Homer³⁹. Note, however, that Africanus places all emphasis on a reunion with Telemachos, leaving out Penelope and Laertes, each of which is as important as Telemachos for closure of the *Odyssey's* plot⁴⁰. But now, in the *Odyssey* Odysseus' reunion with Laertes is a matter of no practical consequence. By the time it occurs, Odysseus is already master of his house, husband and king. Rather, the hero's reunion with his old father is an event whose significance can only be understood within the social and poetic value systems of Homer's *Odyssey*⁴¹. Mention of Laertes would thus pull the reader towards the world of the "real" *Odyssey*, forcing a conflict of epic and magic agendas. This is again the kind of detail that Africanus has an interest in suppressing. By contrast, a reunion with Penelope presents a somewhat different problem. The issue here is male/female relations. Of course, many extant magical texts deal with love charms and with female objects of male longing⁴². Mention of Penelope, the object of Odysseus' longing would have brought Africanus dangerously close to a sordid magical reality, the very type which produces his implicit admission (as discussed above) that there is something "undignified" about magic. Telemachos, it seems, is Africanus' only viable option as a practical, safe, and still "Homeric" goal of Odysseus' longings.

Odysseus' second incantation (lines 22–36), with its appeal to Zeus, Yahweh, Anubis, etc., is Africanus' *pièce de resistance*, but is

τὸν μετὰ πάντας ἄνωγεν ἀολλέας ὀρμηθῆναι
κοινήν τεισομένους.

- ³⁹ For example: Line 18, cf. *Odyssey* 10. 492. 565; 11. 165; 23. 323 (variants of ψυχῆ χρησόμενος θεβαίου Τειρεσίαο, suggesting that Africanus knew Teiresias' role in the plot). γαῖαν ἰκάνω, cf. *Odyssey* 6. 119, 191; 13. 200; 24. 281. Line 19: cf. *Odyssey* 11. 68, Τηλεμάχου θ', ὃν μόνον ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἔλειπες, etc. Line 20: τέκνον ἐμόν, 11. 155.
- ⁴⁰ Reunion with Penelope was sufficiently important to the Alexandrians, that they regarded all that happens afterwards in the *Odyssey* (24. 297 ff.) as an interpolation (cf. A. Heubeck [with J. Russo and M. Fernandez-Galliano], *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* III [Oxford 1992] 342–45 for discussion and bibliography). Reunion with Laertes was the point at which the vulgate *Odyssey* ended.
- ⁴¹ For the importance of reunion of the hero with his aged, grieving father back home see J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1982).
- ⁴² It is interesting that most "real" extant love charms assume a man seeking a woman, while in literary portrayals it is women who are seeking men by magical means (e. g. Simaetha in Theocritus II).

otherwise rather plain magical fare⁴³. The incantation ends abruptly, mid-verse, perhaps mid-phrase, in line 36, with no physical damage to the papyrus itself and no evidence of scribal comment. Beyond it is a sloping return to Homer's epic. Lines 37–43 outline the congregating of the dead, with some resemblance to attested Homeric verse⁴⁴. Finally Africanus notionally re-enters the familiar narrative sequence of the *Odyssey* by citing a single line 11. 51 (the appearance of Elpenor's ghost). He has returned to that point in Homer from which he set out on his critical escapade. The next words, τὰ θ' ἐξῆς, firmly suggest that from here on a so-called "familiar sequence" resumes⁴⁵. Much, I suggest, hangs on these words that have no actual "contents", but rather refer to "the reader's notion of what lies beyond". Were we, at this point turn back to our own familiar *Odyssey*, which has no record of the actions of Abraxas, Nephtho or even Yahweh, we would consign the whole of Africanus' endeavor to the bin. This would be the equivalent of leafing through Gesenius in an attempt to parse the words βεριθεν βεριο. Africanus' work would then indeed become something ἀλλότρια τοῦ στοίχου τῆς ποιήσεως, "foreign to the sequence of the poem"! But it is no accident, I think that Africanus abandons the incantation mid-verse (36), and the whole of his epic exercise with the phrase τὰ θ' ἐξῆς. To those who would accept it, to the members of his interpretive community, it will serve as a sign of the rest of the *Odyssey*, Africanus' *Odyssey*, the poem that was there before Homer or the Peisistratean editors cut out the magically inclined parts.

IV. Literature and life, critics and magicians

P. Oxy. 412 follows the transgressive logic of magic and as such it belongs in a world of which magic was a common part. However, this text is not a "magical papyrus". Its magic is an "image" rather than the real thing⁴⁶. Indeed, its preposterous critical endeavor is to

⁴³ The only part of *P. Oxy. 412* in *PGM*.

⁴⁴ See e. g. Viellefond's apparatus (above, n. 1, 289).

⁴⁵ τὰ θ' ἐξῆς is a common way of marking a continuation familiar to the reader of the scholia (e. g. *Σ* H, Q for *Odyssey* 11. 38 ff.).

⁴⁶ Unlike much hexameter magical material, including passages from Homer. Cf. C. Faraone, "Taking the 'Nestor's Cup Inscription' Seriously: Erotic Magic and Conditional Curses in the Earliest Inscribed Hexameters," *Classical Antiquity* 15 (1996) 83 and n. 19 (citing G. Roesper, "Homerische Talisman," *Philologus* 5 [1850] 162–65 and R. Heim, *Incantamenta Magica Graeca-Latina, Jahrbücher*

the culture of magic, wax dog effigies and bats' eyes, what, for example, Alexandrian scholarship is to Hellenistic civilization: a distanced reflection of *Zeitgeist*. So long as we avoid value judgments (which would be destructive to Africanus!) and consider a reciprocal relationship between a *Weltanschauung*, verbal representation, and icons of the past, we can compare, *mutatis mutandis*, the workings of Africanus' *Nekyia*, to those, e. g. of Apollonius' *Argonautika*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, or Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. In all of these cases we find a valued icon of the past, "heroic epic", "Homer's poetry", which has been gutted, stuffed, and put on display.

The resulting object, or text, is an image, a representation, not only of the past, but also of the present. Apollonius of Rhodes, for example, preserves an icon of heroic epic, but he ejects its larger-than-life heroic contents at the first opportunity (Heracles abandons the quest), and replaces it with Jason's ἀμηχανίη and a clockwork of love⁴⁷.

Thus, while Apollonius purports to continue the epic tradition, the ethos of his hero is an open transgression of Homer's heroic code. Jason's ἀμηχανίη is, of course, a representation of Ptolemaic, Hellenistic ethos – the loss of a "primary", heroic time and place. But this ἀμηχανίη is a distanced image, an invented cultural representation: Ptolemaic Alexandria, powerful, wealthy, and cultured, learned, was not "helpless". The same analysis can be applied to Virgil, his gutting of a "Greek icon", his representation of Rome's steady progress to peace, and its relation to known vicissitudes of the Augustan age⁴⁸. Apollonius sings the epic song of secondary culture, Virgil sings the epic song of Empire. And by the same token Africanus, in a suitably ragged, croaking voice, sings the epic song of magic.

Appendix: *P. Oxy.* 412

Viellefond (above, n. 1) 285–91 (In order to facilitate reference to Viellefond, his line division was retained. Note that ll. 44–55 = papyrus ll.

für Philologie Suppl. 10 [Leipzig 1892] 414–19, nos. 151–58, and in addition noting *PGM* XXII).

⁴⁷ Cf., e. g., R. Hunter, *The Argonautica of Apollonius: Literary Studies* (Cambridge 1993); M. Margolies DeForest, *Apollonius' Argonautica: A Callimachean Epic* (Leiden 1994).

⁴⁸ Cf. e. g. M. Putnam, *Virgil's Aeneid* (Chapel Hill, NC 1995); D. Quint, *Epic and Empire* (Princeton 1993).

44–71, Grenfell and Hunt [above, n. 1] 39). I have made only minor orthographic alterations except where V.'s text cannot stand, and neither V. nor G.–H comment.

Sigla

[] restitutum e coniectura in loco ubi papyrus lacunam praebet.

† † locus corruptus qui sanari posse non videtur.

....lacuna quam praebet papyrus.

{ } delenda.

- [Τοὺς δ' ἐπει εὐχολῆσ]ι λιτῆσί τε, ἔθνεα νεκρῶν,
 [ἐλλισάμην, τὰ] δὲ μῆλα λαβῶν ἀπεδειροτόμησα
 [ἐς βόθρον ῥέε] δ' αἶμα κελαινεφές· αἱ δ' ἀγέροντο
 5 [ψυχαὶ ὑπέξ Ἑρέ]βευς νεκῶν κατατεθνηῶτων
 [νόμφαι τ' ἠϊθ]εοὶ τε πολύτλητοὶ τε γέροντες
 [παρθενικαὶ τ'] ἀταλαὶ νεοπενθέ' ἄωτον ἔχουσαι·
 [πολλοὶ δ' οὐ]τάμενο[ι χ]αλκήρεσιν ἐγγείησιν,
 [ἄνδρ]ες [ἀρ]ηήφατοι, β[εβ]ροτωμένα τεύχε' ἔχοντες·
 [οἱ πολλο]ὶ παρά βόθρον ἐφοίτων ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος
 10 [θεσπε]σίη ἰαχῆ· ἐμὲ δὲ χλωρὸν δέος ἦρει.
 [Ἀυτάρ] ἐγὼ ξίφος ὄξυ ἐ[ρ]υσσάμενος παρά μηροῦ
 [ἤμην, ο]ἴδ' εἰὼν νεκῶν ἀμενηνά κάρηνα
 [αἵματο]ς ἄσσον ἵμεν καὶ ἀμειβόμενος ἔπος ἠὔδων·
 (ἂ δεῖ ποιῆσαι εἰρηκεν)
 15 "[ᾧ ποτα]μοὶ καὶ γαῖα καὶ οἱ ὑπένερθε καμόντας
 [ἀνθρώ]πους τι[ί]νεσθον, ὅτις κ' ἐπ[ί]ορκον ὀμόσση,
 [ὑμεῖς] μάρτυροὶ ἔστε, τελείετε δ' ἄμμιν ἀοι[δῆ]ν·
 [ἦλθον] χρησόμενος ὡς ἂν εἰς γαῖαν ἰκάνω
 [Τηλεμ]άχου γ' {ε}*, ὃν ἔλειπον ἐπὶ κόλποισι τιθή[νης],
 20 [τέκνο]ν ἐμόν"· τοίη γὰρ ἀρίστη ἦν ἐπαοιδ[ή].
 (ἂ δεῖ ἐπῶσαι λέγει)
 "[κλυθ]οὶ μοι, εὐμειδῆς καὶ ἐπίσκοπος, εὖσπο[ρ] Ἄν]ουβι
 † ...αυλλίπαε παρευνεταωσι οει † ...
 25 [ἔλθ' Ἐρ]μῆ, ἄρπαξ, δεῦρ' εὐπλόκαμε χθόνιε Ζεῦ,
 [κῦρσ]αι δωσάμενοι κρηγήνατε τήνδ' ἐπαοιδήν·
 [δεῦρ' Αἰδ]η καὶ Χθών, πῦρ ἄφθιτον, Ἥλιε Τιτάν,
 [ἔλθε καὶ] Ἰάα καὶ Φθᾶ καὶ Φρή νομοσώσω[ν],
 [καὶ Νεφ]θᾶ πολύτιμε καὶ Ἀβλανθᾶ πλοούλβε,
 [πυρσ]οδρακοντόζων, ἐρυσίχθων, ἰβικαρείη,
 30 [Ἄβραξ]ᾶ, περιβῶτε τὸ κοσμικὸν οὖνομα δαίμων,
 [ἄξονα] καὶ χορίον καὶ φῶτα νέμων παγέρ' Ἄρκτων,
 [ἔλθε κ]αὶ ἐνκρατεῖα πάντων προφερέστερ' ἐμοί, Φρήν,
 † ...ωριεὺ καὶ φασιε καὶ σισυων †
 [καὶ Γε]νεὰ καὶ Ἀπηβιοτὰ καὶ Πῦρ καλλιαιθές,
 35 [ἔλθ' Ἰσι]ς χθονία καὶ οὐρανία καὶ ὄνειρα[ν]
 [ἠ μεδέει]ς καὶ Σείρι' ὄς..."

- [[Καὶ τὰδ]]ε μὲν παρὰ βόθρον ἐγὼν ἦῦσα παραστάς·
 [[εὖ γάρ]] μεμνήμην Κίρκης ὑποθημοσυνά[[ω]]ν
 40 [[ἢ τόσα φ]]άρμακα οἶδεν ὄσα[[α]] τρέφει εὐρεία χθών·
 [[ἦλθεν δὲ]] μέγα κῦμα λεον[[τ]]ομάχου Ἀχέροντος,
 [[Κωκυτὸς]] Λήθη τε Πολυφλεγέθων τε μέγιστος,
 [[καὶ νεκ]]ύων στόλος ἀμφικαρίστατο καὶ παρὰ βόθρον
 [[πρῶτη δ]]ὲ ψυχὴ Ἐλπήνορος ἦλθεν ἐταίρου.
 (τὰ θ' ἐξῆς)
 45 Εἴτ' οὖν οὕτως ἔχον αὐτὸς ὁ ποιητὴς τὸ περιεργὸν τῆς ἐπιγράμ-
 σεως τὰ ἄλλα τὸ τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἀξίωμα σεσιώπηκεν, εἰθ' οἱ
 Πει-//σιστρατίδαι τὰ ἄλλα συνράπτοντες ἔπη ταῦτα ἀπέσχισαν,
 ἀλλότρια // τοῦ στοίχου τῆς ποιήσεως ἐκεῖ ἐμικρίναντες † ἐπ[[ί]]
 50 πολλα[[ῖ]]ς ἔγνων † // ἄτε κῆμα [πολυτε]λ[έ]στερον ἐπικ[ῆ]ς αὐτὸς
 ἐνταυθοῖ κατέταξα // τήνδε τὴν σύμπασαν ὑπόθεσιν ἀνακειμένην
 ε[[ύ]]ρέσεις ἐν τε τοῖς ἀρχαίοις // τῆς ἀρχαίας π[[α]]τρίδος κολω-
 ν[[ία]]ς [[Α]]ἰλίας Καπιτωλείνης τῆς Παλαιστει-//νης κὰν Νύση
 τῆς Καρίας, μέχρι δὲ τοῦ τρισκαιδεκάτου ἐν Ῥώμῃ πρὸς // ταῖς
 Ἀλεξάνδρου θεμαῖς ἐν τῇ ἐν Πανθείῳ βιβλιοθήκῃ τῇ καλῇ ἦν //
 55 αὐτὸς ἤρχιτεκτόνησα τῷ Σεβαστῷ.
 Ἰουλίου Ἀφρικανοῦ Κεστός ιη'.

*{ε}: metri gratia

Translation (O'Neill in Betz [above, n.1] 262–264, with some variations)

[But when with vows] and prayers [I had appealed]
 [To them], the tribes of dead, I took [the] sheep
 And slit their throats [beside the trough, and down]
 The dark blood [flowed. From out of Ere]bos
 Came gathering [the spirits] of the dead:
 [New brides, unmarried yours,] toil-worm old men,
 [And] tender [maidens] with fresh-mourning hearts,
 [and many] pierced by bronze-tipped spears, [men] slain
 In battle, still in armor stained with gore.
 [These many] thronged from ev'ry side around
 The trough with [awful cry. Pale fear seized me.
 [But] having drawn the sharp sword at my thigh,
 I sat, allowing not the flitting heads
 Of the dead to draw nearer to [the blood],
 And I in conversation spoke with them.
 (He has said what must be done)
 "O rivers, earth, and you below, punish
 Men done with life, whoe'er has falsely sworn;
 Be witnesses, fulfill for us this charm.
 I've come to ask how I may reach the land
 Of that Telemachos, my own son whom
 I left still in a nurse's arms." For in

This fashion went the charm most excellent.

(He tells what charms must be sung)

“[He] me, gracious and guardian, well-born
 [An]jabis; [hear, sly] one, O secret mate,
 Osiris’ savior; come, Hermes, come, robber,
 Well-trussed, infernal Zeus; Grant [my desire],
 Fulfill this charm. [Come hither, Hades,] Earth,
 Unfailing Fire, O Titan Helios;
 [Come,] Iaweh, Phthas, Phre, guardian of laws,
 [And Neph]tho, much revered; Ablantho,
 In blessings rich, with [fiery] serpents girded,
 Earth-plowing, goddess with head high, [Abrax]as,
 A daimon famous by your cosmic name,
 Who rule earth’s [axis], starry dance, the Bears’
 Cold light. [And come] to me, surpassing all
 In self-control, O Phren. I’m calling [you],
 O B[r]]i[ar]jeus and Ph[r]asios and you,
 O Ixion and Birth and youth’s decline,
 Fair-burning Fire, [and may you come, Isis,] Infernal
 And Heav’nly One, and [you who govern] dreams,
 And Sirius, who...”
 Standing beside the trough, I cried [these words],
 [For well] did I remember Circe’s counsels,
 [Who] knew [all] poisons which the broad earth grows.
 [Then came] a lofty wave of Acheron
 Which fights with lions, [Cocytus] and Lethe
 And mighty Polyphlegethon. A host
 [Of dead] stood round the trough, [and first] there came
 The spirit of Elpenor, my comrade.
 (And so on.)

So, since this is the situation, either Homer himself suppressed the magical part of the invocation in order to preserve the dignity of the speech. Or the Peisistratides, as they were stitching together the rest of the verses, cut out these because they considered them foreign to the work. † This is my opinion for many reasons. And so † I have myself inserted the lines as a rather valuable creation of epic poetry. You will find this whole document on the shelves in the archives of our former home town, the colony of Aelia Capitolina in Palestine, and in Nysa in Caria and, up to the thirteenth verse, in Rome near the baths of Alexander in the beautiful library in the Pantheon, whose collection of books I myself built for Augustus.

Kestos 18 of Julius Africanus

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Фрагмент сочинения Юлия Африкана Κεστοί (III в. н. э.), сохранившийся на оксириинском папирусе (*P. Oxy.* 412), содержит часть XI песни “Одиссеи” (Νέκρωα), текст которой дополнен магическим заклинанием. В нём Одиссей обращается к греческим и египетским богам, иудейскому Яхве, а также к особым богам магических текстов (Абракасас, Абланфо и др.). Это соединение высокой литературы с магическими формулами, несмотря на всю его экзотичность, типично для эпохи и культурной среды, в которой действует Юлий Африкан.

Опус Африкана не преследует практических целей подобно обычным магическим текстам. Его задача является квазинаучной: он стремится “восстановить” то, что, по его утверждению, является утерянной частью “Одиссеи”. Автор чужд секретности, обычной для магических действий: составленный им текст хранился в публичных местах, где мог быть прочитан любым желающим.

Африкан сознает, что его произведение вступает в противоречие как с нормами эпической поэзии, так и с магической практикой. Поэтому он устраняет или изменяет некоторые гомеровские строки, противоречащие духу и обычаям его собственной эпохи, и, с другой стороны, опускает специфические детали современной ему магии. Один из пассажей папируса может быть истолкован таким образом, что Африкан сам признает несовместимость магических действий с требованиями, предъявляемыми к эпическому стилю.

Произведение Африкана превращает Гомера в классический образец, конкретное содержание которого устраняется и заменяется новым, соответствующим духу современной эпохи. В этом плане в более отдаленной перспективе оно может быть сопоставлено с произведениями высокой литературы, такими, как “Аргонавтика” Аполлония Родосского и “Энеида” Вергилия.