# Returning to the Wandering Poets. Nex Poems by Dioscoros of Aphrodite

Jean-Luc Fournet

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# Late Antique Studies in Memory of Alan Cameron

*Edited by*

W. V. Harris
Anne Hunnell Chen


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CHAPTER 7

# Returning to the Wandering Poets

## *New Poems by Dioscoros of Aphrodite*

*Jean-Luc Fournet*

A tribute to Alan Cameron could not fail to evoke what is one of his most magisterial and innovative articles, 'Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt'. Moreover, it is no accident that at the end of his life and more than fifty years after he wrote it, he decided to publish a selection of his articles in a volume with a title that very symbolically picked up the title of that pioneering paper.[1] This was certainly the study that most impressed and stimulated me when I began, exactly thirty years ago, to work on a doctoral thesis about one of those 'wandering poets', Dioscoros of Aphrodite (or Aphrodito). Thus I hoped that he would agree to be a member of my thesis 'jury', without much expectation that he would accept. However he said yes, and was kind enough to cross the Atlantic to take part in the academic ritual of a thesis defence.

Remembering that first meeting, I should like to pay tribute to the memory of that great scholar by offering him a new papyrus text of the 'wandering poet' to whom I dedicated my thesis. It is true that one can ask whether some new poems by Dioscoros are really a worthy present for Alan. We know how much the compositions of this minor Egyptian poet of the sixth century—who came from a family that had Coptic as its mother tongue and is known by a dossier of papyri (one of considerable size: it contains poems in his own hand, books from his library, and also business papers)—have been the subject of scholarly mockery. Two scholars have written that Dioscoros' poems are 'the morass of absurdity into which the great river of Greek poetry emptied itself'.[2] Alan, however, in his 2016 revision of his 'Wandering Poets' wrote: 'I regret in 1965 joining in the long-standing custom of mocking Dioscoros's metrical incompetence'.[3] He had now fully realized that behind the clumsiness of form (accentuated by the preparatory nature of the rough drafts that have come

1 Alan Cameron 2016b.

2 Bell and Crum 1925, 177. On the ferocious critiques to which Dioscoros has been subjected, see Baldwin 1984a, 327–331; and more recently Fournet 1999, 1:1–3.

3 Alan Cameron 2016b, 15.

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down to us) there is much that illuminates the cultural profile of the village élites of the late Roman Empire and helps to understand their literary trends, which are too often overshadowed by the great figures that tradition has preserved. So I have no scruples about dedicating to his memory the publication of these new poetical productions of Dioscoros, whose interest he would have been the first to appreciate.

In fact I should say '*almost* new', since they have been known since the publication of the Dioscoros papyri in the Cairo museum by Jean Maspero in 1916.[4] But because of humidity the roll that contains them has deteriorated and crumbled to such an extent that it is now reduced to a series of fragments placed, not always in order, under six plates of glass (one of which disappeared several decades ago). Its reconstitution is thus quite difficult, and its very darkened colour often makes the text illegible to the naked eye. The verses of Dioscoros are concentrated in the most damaged part of the roll, so much so that Maspero, observing that they 'are now almost entirely illegible, the ink being scarcely darker than the papyrus itself', could only distinguish two titles, and that in only a partial fashion.[5] Leslie S. B. MacCoull does not even include them in her edition of the poems of Dioscoros.[6] In my edition, I have tried to go further than Maspero in proposing readings of some lines that I managed to make out, but my advances were very limited and the main word in the title, which lets us understand the subject of these texts, still escaped me.[7] It was only in 2014 that I was able to take some infrared photos of the papyrus that literally unveiled these texts, enabling me now to offer a more complete edition and above all to identify the subject.

## 1 The Texts

The sequence of the fragments that I am able to propose is based on the Coptic text on the other side of the roll (which was written first). It consists of an arbitration dated to 28 October 569 – one of the first Coptic texts that is not a letter and hence of great importance for the sociolinguistic history of that language. Since this text is known from a duplicate also found in the archive of

4 Maspero 1916.

5 Maspero 1916, 175 (= *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67353 B and C).

6 MacCoull alludes to one of the two poems (*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67353 C), but she limits herself to translating the title (MacCoull 1988, 130).

7 Fournet 1999, 1:449–450 (= *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 44 and 45).

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Dioscoros,[8] we are able to put the fragments back in their right order—except that for certain parts where we lack parallels in the duplicate. According to the reconstitution based on the Coptic text, the following is the content of the verso of our papyrus:

(1) the endorsement of the Coptic arbitration of 28 October 569 at the top of the roll;

(2) after three lines which I will return to, Poem 1 (l. 1–18) (Figure 7.1):[9]

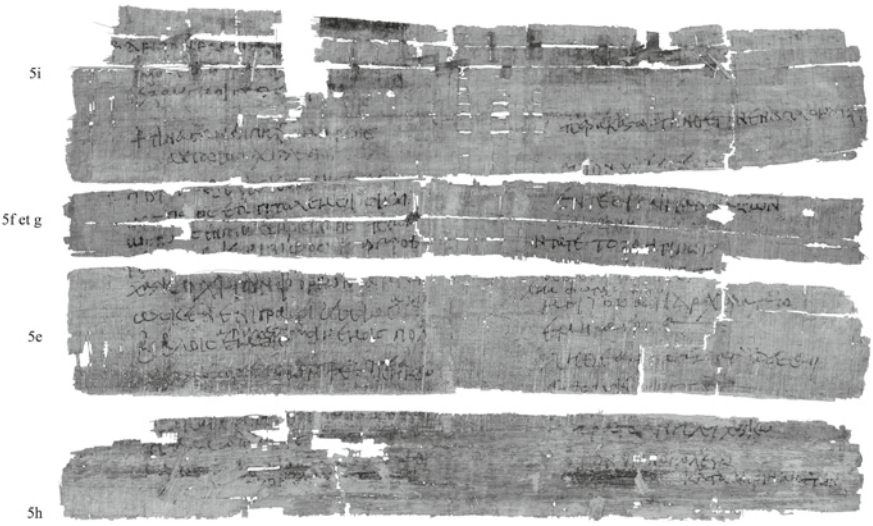


FIGURE 7.1 Poem 1. Infrared image: Jean-Luc Fournet; image processing: Fabrice Bessière, Collège de France

8 *P.Cair. Masp.* II 67176$^{r}$ + II 67275$^{r}$ + III 67351$^{r}$ + P.Alex. inv. 689$^{r}$ + *BKU* III 503 + Corpus Christi College (Cambridge), Ms. 541$^{r}$. See Fournet 2010, 125–130. I am preparing an edition of this text in collaboration with Anne Boud'hors, who has helped me greatly in the reconstitution of the fragments of *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67353.

9 One notes that the lines of the poems are almost all broken near the middle by a *vacat* that cannot be explained by reference to colometry. A *vacat* in the same place, but narrower, can also be seen in the middle of the lines of the document (3). I propose to explain this by a defect in the surface of the papyrus (absence of vertical fibres, easily visible in the first three fragments, ll. 5–14), which would have led Dioscoros to jump the defective part. But this defect then seems to disappear, while Dioscoros continues to place a *vacat* within each line. See Jones 2016, 375, for the same phenomenon in a poem of Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 46. See also *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 28 and 43, where Dioscoros again introduces metrically unjustified spaces in the middle of lines without there being, as far as I can see, any material defect that would explain the anomaly.

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Fr. 5i + f + g + e + h

↓ ⟦.....⟧

ϯ Δεῖξον ἐμοὶ . .[ ] ⟦ ⟧
[Δ]ε̣ῖξον ἐμ̣ο̣[ὶ ] *traces ?*
Δεῖξον ἐμοὶ σέθε[ν] . . .

ϯ Τίνας ἂν εἴπῃ λόγ(ους) Ὅμηρος *vac.* παρακαλῶν τὴν Θέτιν ἔνοπλον δεῖξαι αὐτῷ τὸν Ἀχιλλέα;

Πότν̣ια Θέτ̣ις, κόσμ̣ησον[?] . .ρ[1/2 ?] *vac.* . . ϊον υἱέ̣α . ε̣ .ς̣·
ὡς πά̣[ρ]ος ἐν πτολέμοισι σὺν *vac.* ἔντεσι π̣άντα δ̣α̣[μ]ά̣ζων,
ὡς πά[ρο]ς ἐν πτολέμοισιν ἀριστεύων *vac.* ἐνὶ χάρμ̣ῃ
τε .(.)[.] . . .κ[.] .ι ξίφος ⟦. .⟧ ἀργυρόε *vac.* ντά τε τόξα τιταίνων
χαλκοχίτων φορέων 1? αμι̣ . *vac.* . . . . . ς
Ἀχιλ *vac.* λῆα φῶτα χαράττω
ὥς κεν ἐνὶ γραφίδεσσιν ὁ⟦.⟧ *vac.* μοῖϊον ἄνδρα χαράττω
βίβλοις ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ἐμοῖς πολ *vac.* εμήϊα ἔργα
. .ερα
. . . . ε̣ . . . ενωντεγλιεημεν *vac.* ἀληθέα θαύματ' ἰδέσθαι
.α̣ καὶ ἐν π̣. . . . . *vac.* 1? ε.ιο. ϛκα. . ι̣ϛ̣ϛ̣ως
.ε̣αλλο̣ω̣. .ε. . . κ̣ατε̣ν *vac.* ήρατο ⟦α⟧νηλε̣ΐ̈ χαλκῷ̣.
.α.ν. . .ο̣ς Αἰακιδά̣ω̣[ν] ἄ̣φθι *vac.* τον ὑμνοπολεύω
...(.)
[ ]..ον. . . . . ι *vac.* ⟦ ± 7 ⟧ κατὰ δ̃ῆριν ἄητ{τ}α̣ν.

**5i : 5** ϰ̈ ‖ l. εἴποι ‖ **7** ϊον υϊε̣α ‖ **11** χαλκοχιτων : κοχιτων in rasura ‖ **12** μοιϊον ‖ χαρατ'τω ‖ **13** απαγγελλουσιν : απαγγελλ supra εμοις scriptum ; cf. comm. ‖ εμηϊα ‖ **14** initium in rasura (fort. . .ερα vestigia textus prioris) ‖ θαυματ' ϊδεσθαι ‖ **15** ω̄ς vel ο̄ς (ω vel ο in rasura) ‖ **16** νηλει : fort. diaeresis in lacuna ‖ **17** ϋμνοπολευω ‖ **18** αητ'τα̣ν.

'Show me [...]
Show me [...]
Show me your [...]

**1**

|[5] What words would Homer use when asking Thetis
to show him Achilles in arms?

Lady Thetis, prepare[?] [...] your son [...]. As before, in wars, conquering all with his arms, as before, in wars, excelling in the close fighting, [...] |[10] brandishing his spear and his silver bow, with his tunic of bronze, bearing [...] so that I can put in writing mortal Achilles[10] in my books that describe the works

10 Text before correction: 'so that I can describe this man just as he is'.

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of war [...] real marvels to see |[15] [...] slew with pitiless bronze. I sing of the immortal [offspring] of the Aeacids [...] in the insatiable combat'.

1–3 Cf. below, p. 123.

5 Compare the title of this ethopoia to that of, e.g., *AP* IX 465 (Τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους Ἀλθέα (l. -αία) παρακαλοῦσα τὸν Μελέαγρον;) or *AP* IX 463 (Τί ἂν εἴποι Ἕκτωρ ὁρῶν τὸν Ἀχιλλέα ἐν τοῖς ὅπλοις;).

7 Πότνι̣α Θέτ̣ις: false quantity. Dioscoros should have used the form πότνα (e.g. πότνα θεά, *Od.* V 215). But he was probably influenced by the use of πότνια at the beginning of a line, e.g. at *h.Cer.* 54 and 492 and *h.Terra* 6, as well as nine times in the *Hymns* of Callimachus.

κόμ̣ησον[?] : doubtful reading, though it seems unavoidable. Rather than 'prepare (for battle)' (cf. Peek 1973, *s.v.* I), the word has the sense of 'dress', or 'equip oneself', as in Nonnos, *D.* XLVI 92 in a similar context (ἔντεσι κοσμηθέντα 'you who are equipped with your arms').

8–9 ὡς πά̣[ρ]ος: this phrase, unknown to Homer (who uses ὡς τὸ πάρος περ), appears in the same *sedes* in AR III 635 and especially in Nonnos (nine occurrences). The repetiton of this expression indicates that the speaker wants Achilles to become again the warrior he was in the past, equipped with his new arms.

ἐν πτολέμοισι(ν): cf. ἐν πολέμοισι in Nonnos, *D.* XXVI 316 (same position) and ἐνὶ πτόλεμοις in Nonnos, *D.* XX 219 (same position), itself repeated from AR I 467 (same position) and Quintus Smyrnaeus, III 254, 394 (same position).

8 σὺν ἔντεσι: Homeric phrase, always in this position (*Il.* V 220; VI 418; XIII 331, 719), taken up by AR and Quintus but not attested in Nonnos.

π̣άντα δ̣α̣[μ]ά̣ζων: cf. Nonnos, *D.* XXXIII 139 (ξύμπαντα δαμάζω |).

9 ἀριστεύων ἐνὶ χάρμῃ: cf. the ethopoia *AP* IX 468, 2 (ἀριστεύειν ἐνὶ χάρμῃ |). The phrase ἐνὶ χάρμῃ goes back to Quintus Smyrnaeus (nine times) and Nonnos (six times), always in the same position.

10 κ[.].ι ξίφος: perhaps κ[αί] οἱ ξίφος ?

ξίφος ⟦..⟧ ἀργυρόεντά τε τόξα τιταίνων: the combination ξίφος/τόξα goes back to Homer, *Il.* III 17–18. The clausula τόξα τιταίνων goes back to *Il.* VIII 266, and is appreciated by the late Egyptian poets (Claudian, *AP* V 86, 1; Nonnos, *D.* XXVII 258, XXIX 127; Musaeus, *Hero and Leander* 17; *BKT* V/1, pp. 114–117 (Mertens-Pack[3] 349; TM 64988; Heitsch 1964, Suppl. 10), l. 40 (and 42 with another mode).

ἀργυρόεντα: rare adjective (ἀργυροειδής is preferred), attested, before Dioscoros, only in Nicander, *Alexiph.* 54; Eudocia, *S. Cypr.* II 181, and (at an unknown date) in *AP App.* II 601, 1.

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11 χαλκοχίτων: Homeric adjective, always in the plural in Homer. The nominative singular is common in Nonnos (five occurrences, three of them in the same position: *D.* XX 345; XXVIII 297; XXIX 329).

12 ἐνὶ γραφίδεσσιν … χαράττω: cf. l. 25, ἐνὶ γραφίδεσσι χαράττω. On this favourite phrase of Dioscoros, cf. *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 1, 4 n. (add as a poetical example, almost contemporary with Dioscoros, Agathias, *AP* IV 3, 118 [= 4, 72]: ὅσσαπερ ἢ γραφίδεσσι χαράξαμεν). On χαράττω 'write', which is to be found in the documentary prose of this period as well as in the poets, see *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 2, 7 n. The verb is to be found in an identical Homeric context in the ethopoia *AP* IX 455 (ἐχάρασσε δὲ θεῖος Ὅμηρος) and in *APl.* 293, 1 (Τίς ποθ' ὁ τὸν Τροίης πόλεμον σελίδεσσι χαράξας).

ὁμοΐϊον ἄνδρα: 'I describe such a man', or, much better, 'this man as he is'. The theme of resemblance is a frequent *topos* in epigrams that refer to statues (see, for example, *SEG* XIII 277, 20 [late imperial]: εἰκόνι λαϊνέῃ πανομοίιον ἐστήσαντο). But the formulation was not a very happy one, and one understands why Dioscoros made the interlinear correction Ἀχιλλῆα φῶτα.

13 Dioscoros began by writing βίβλοις ἐμοῖς, then he crossed out ἐμοῖς and wrote above ἀπαγγέλλουσιν, coming back gradually after that to the previous level of the line.

βίβλοις ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ἐμοῖς: on this phrase, cf. l. 27 n. Dioscoros here commits a heteroclisis (one expects βίβλοις ἀπαγγελλούσαις ἐμαῖς—despite the metrical mistake in βίβλοῖς!). He corrects himself at ll. 27–28 (see p. 111), where he uses the feminine form of the participle (see also ll. 34–35 and 36). It is also possible that he was thinking of the neuter βίβλον, attested in John Geometres, *Hymns* LXXIII 29 (ed. Sajdak 1931)—but that is a rare and late form.

πολεμήϊα ἔργα: Homeric phrase (*Il.* II 338; V 428; VII 296; XI 719; XIII 730, always in the same position).

14 θαύματ' ἰδέσθαι = *Batrachomyomachia* 58, adaptation of the Homeric clausula θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι | (*Il.* V 525; X 439; XVIII 83, 377; etc.).

16 κ̣ατ̣ε̣νήρατο ⟦α⟧νηλέϊ χαλκῷ: borrowed from Hesiod, *Th.* 316 (ἐνήρατο νηλέϊ χαλκῷ |), who combines two Homerisms, νηλέϊ χαλκῷ (eighteen occurrences in the same position) and κατενήρατο χαλκῷ (*Od.* XI 519, in the same position).

17 Αἰακιδά̣ω̣[ν] ἄ̣φθιτον: the form Αἰακιδάων (the ending is hard to read but is imposed by the metre) is employed only by Collouthos, 275, and Christodoros, *AP* II 296 (but always at the end of the line). The preceding word could be γένος.

ὑμνοπολεύω: cf. *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 5, 13 n.

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18 κατὰ δῆριν: expression that appears in Dionysius Periegetes, 1051 (in another position), and is picked up by Quintus Smyrnaeus (seven occurrences, in the same position as in Dionysius) and Nonnos (three occurrences, one of them in the same position as in our poem: *D.* XXX 120).
ἄητ{τ}ᾳν: I see this as an erroneous form of ἄητος, -ον (which only appears in the expression θάρσος ἄητον (*Il.* XXI 395; Quintus I 217), by analogy with ἀήττητος.

(3) a Greek document (list of persons or a rough draft of a contract) written upside down by Dioscoros;
(4) Poem 2 with the same title as the first one, on two fragments that do not join (ll. 19–31) (Figure 7.2):

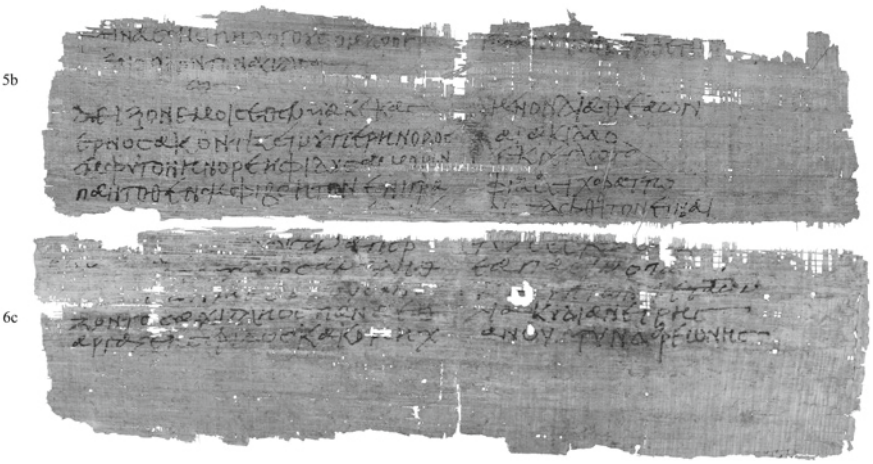


FIGURE 7.2 Poem 2. Infrared image: Jean-Luc Fournet; image processing: Fabrice Bessière, Collège de France

Fr. 5b

→ ·ϥ· Τίνας ἂν εἴπῃ λόγους Ὅμηρος *vac.* παρακ̣αλῶν τὴν Θέτιν δ̣ε̣[ῖ]ξ̣[αι αὐτῷ]
20 ἔνοπλον τὸν Ἀχιλλέ̣α;
οὕτ(ως)·

\+ Δεῖξον ἐμοὶ σέθεν υἷα κεκασ *vac.* μένον, δῖα θεάων,
ἔρνος ἀκοντίζειν ὑπερήνορος *vac.* Αἰακίδαο·
ἔμ̣φυτον ἠνορέ̣ῃφι δυσάμμορον *vac.* ἐκγεγαῶτα,

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25 πάντοθεν ἀμφιβόητον ἐνὶ γρα *vac.* φίδεσσι χαράττω
[.]…[…].[.]…[…]… ε̣…ε. *vac.* γ̣ο̣ς ἄφθιτον εἶναι
---

Fr. 6c

---
→ β̣ί̣β[λον] ἀ̣[παγγέλ]λ̣ουσαν[?] ἅπερ *vac.* τελ̣έ̣ε̣σκε̣ν.…(..),
[βίβλον] ἀ̣π̣α̣γγ̣έ̣λ̣λ̣ο̣υ̣σαν ἀ̣λη̣θ *vac.* έα πᾶσιν ὀπά[σσ]ῳ,
[πα]γ̣τ̣ο̣ί̣ω̣ν[?] μ̣ε̣θ̣έ̣π̣ο̣υ̣σαγ̣ ἀ̣ *vac.* μ̣ε̣τ̣ρήτων ἀ̣ρετάων
30 ζ̣ὸντος Ἀχιλλῆος παναέθ *vac.* λια κυδιανείρης
ἀργαλέης ἔριδος κακομηχ *vac.* άνου Τυνδαρεώνης.

**5b : 19** l. εἴποι ‖ **21** ουτ— ‖ **22** ϋϊα ‖ δῖα θεᾱ̄ων ‖ **23** ὑπερηνορος ‖ αιακιδᾱ̄ο ‖ **25** αμφιβοητον : alt. ο ex η corr. ‖ χαρατ᾽τω ‖

**6c : 29** ᾰ̣ρεταᾱ̄ων ‖ 30 l. ζῶντος ‖ l. κυδιανείρας ‖ **31** τυνδαρεωνης : τυνδα in rasura.

**2**

‘What words would Homer use when asking Thetis
to show him|[20] Achilles in arms?

Show me your son, divine among the goddesses, he who excels at hurling the javelin[?], the offspring of the arrogant Aeacides. It is a being of innate bravery, born for a wretched destiny, |[25] acclaimed everywhere, that I am writing about […] to be immortal […] book that relates what he accomplished […], I bring to all a book that recounts the truth, which contains the terrible ordeals inflicted |[30]—while Achilles, with his innumerable virtues of every sort[?], was living—by the tricky Tyndarides, so famous among humans, source of bitter quarrels.’

21 οὕτ(ως): the use of this adverb, typical of papyrus accounts, in which it constitutes the connection between the title and the document itself (the equivalent therefore of a colon), shows how much Dioscoros’ documentary practice influences the drafting of his poems (see *P.Aphrod.Lit.*, I, p. 258).

22 κεκασμένον: ‘excellent’ (Homeric) or ‘well equipped’, whence ‘well armed’. See ll. 22–23 n. The last syllable is treated as short despite the fact that it is followed by a consonant, perhaps under the influence of Homer who uses this adjective always with a short last syllable (κεκασμένε, -νŏν). Charles de Lamberterie has pointed out to me that this phenomenon occurs in

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two other Homeric words (ll. 31 κακομηχάνου and 50 κεχαρισμένην) whose last syllable is always short in Homer (κακομηχάνοῦ, -ε and κεχαρισμένε, -α, -ὅς). This systematic mistake is a further proof of Homer's impact on Dioscoros.

δῖα θεάων: clausula dear to Homer (*Il.* V 381, VI 305, XIV 184, XVIII 205, 388, XIX 6, XXIV 93). In the last two passages it is applied to Thetis.

22–23 The construction and the sense of the infinitive ἀκοντίζειν pose a problem. The simplest solution would be to take it with κεκασμένον, with this word meaning 'to excel at'. The sense is then rather flat, and the position of ἀκοντίζειν, postponed to the next line and inserted after ἔρνος, would be strange. One is tempted to consider other solutions, but none is convincing: (1) it would make a more interesting sense to see in ἀκοντίζειν an 'infinitive of destination', the subject of which would be Homer: 'show me your son (…), so that I can aim at the offspring of the arrogant Aeacid'. Dioscoros would be playing on the sense of the verb by comparing the writer's instrument, the pen, to a javelin: the target that is aimed at becomes the subject that is being treated. The image might continue with the use in l. 25 of χαράττω, which as well as meaning 'write' can also mean 'scratch', hence 'wound'. In the figurative use of ἀκοντίζειν, Dioscoros was perhaps also influenced by Nonnos' use of this verb with μῦθον ('let fly a speech', *D.* XXXIV 299) as an equivalent of 'say', or by Pindar's metaphorical use of it (*N.* IX 55 or *I.* II 35, where the javelin is a metaphor for the poet's art). (2) Keeping the same construction, one might also suppose that Dioscoros has given ἀκοντίζειν the same sense as ἀνακοντίζειν 'make [something] gush forth' (a common verb in Nonnos): 'show me your excellent son (…), so that (by means of my poem) I can make him gush forth (= so that I can make him appear, give him life)'. This solution, which I owe to Gianfranco Agosti, would be tempting if it did not rest on a lexical confusion, a minor one it is true. (3) ἀκοντίζειν also has the sense of 'cast its rays, shine' (see Euripides, *Ion* 1155), which could give us here 'show me your son (…), so that (by means of my poem) he can shine …'. (4) Achilles could equally well be the subject of ἀκοντίζειν taken in its banal sense: 'show me your son (…), so that the offspring of the arrogant Aeacides should hurl his javelin (sc. now that he is newly armed)'. But I do not understand the idea that this infinitive would add: Homer does not ask Thetis to show him Achilles in arms so that the latter can rush off to fight, but so that he can become the subject of the poem. I have hesitatingly kept the simplest construction even though it gives a very uninteresting sense.

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23 ἔρνος: the term that Thetis herself uses about her son in *Il.* XVIII 56 and 437 (ὃ δ' ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνεϊ ἶσος : 'he has grown like a young shoot').
ὑπερήνορος Αἰακίδαο: Peleus, son of Aeacus. Dioscoros has certainly misunderstood the adjective in giving it a positive sense ('very brave') which *a priori* the root could justify. However it suits Achilles well.

24 ἔμφυτον ἠνορέῃφι: it is tempting to give the adjective a passive sense, but that is not attested: 'who is naturally endowed with courage'. Should we try to connect this passive sense with the use of ἔμφυτος in the papyri to apply to a vine (*P.Hamb.* I 23, 16, from the archive of Dioscoros)?
δυσάμμορον: this adjective used in this position recalls *Il.* XIX 315, XXII 428, 485, which were followed in particular by Apollonius Rhodius (seven occurrences) and Quintus Smyrnaeus (nine occurrences).
ἐκγεγαῶτα: clausula which appears in *h.Cer.* 237. On the influence of the Homeric hymns on the poetry of Late Antiquity, see Agosti 2016c.

25 ἀμφιβόητον: for this adjective, a Dioscoros favourite, cf. *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 4, 35 n.
ἐνὶ γραφίδεσσι χαράττω: cf. l. 12 n.

26 ἄφθιτον εἶναι: same clausula in another ethopoia by Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod. Lit.* IV 43, 8 (on the subject of Achilles). Naïm Vanthieghem proposes to read immediately before this γένος 'immortal race'.

27 βί̣β[λον] ἀ̣[παγγέλ]λουσαν[?]: there is perhaps a trace of ink before βί̣β[λον]. See Paul the Silentiary, *Hagia Sophia* 779: | βίβλον ἀπαγγέλουσαν ὅσα κτλ., where the book in question is the Bible (see l. 36 n.). We find this expression in the plural at l. 13. The verb has here the sense of 'relate, describe' (cf. Lampe, *s.v.* 2). The beginning of this line (repeated at the following one) may suggest that Dioscoros knew Paul the Silentiary's poem. There would be no chronological objection: Paul's *ekphrasis* had been read in public for the inauguration of Hagia Sophia in 562 or 563. And there are other echoes of Paul in the poems of Dioscoros: besides, in our papyrus, the beginning of l. 36 (see comm. *ad loc.*), see *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 3, A[r], col. I, 1 (= *Hagia Sophia* 197). But we cannot exclude a lost common model (as is the case with *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 5, 19 = *Hagia Sophia* 213, since this poem is at least ten years earlier than Paul's; both must have been inspired by Nonnos, *D.* XXV 437, although the metrical position is different). In fact, the number of echoes of Paul in the work of Dioscoros inclines me to prefer the hypothesis of a direct influence. Paul's poem, an encomium of the emperor and his achievement, must have circulated quite quickly across the empire, probably helped by the authorities, who could justifiably see it as useful propaganda. Dioscoros, at that time in the capital of one of the provinces, could easily have had access to it.

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βί̣β[λον: singular with a collective sense (cf. ll. 34 and 36). See Garulli 2017, 142 (with other poetic examples concerning Homer) and above all Agosti 2010c, 13–14 and 22–23, for the cultural background of the use of this term to refer to the works of Homer.

28 [βίβλον] ἀ̣π̣ᾳγγ̣έ̣λ̣λ̣ο̣υ̣σαν : see l. 27.

πᾶσιν ὀπά[σσ]ῳ = Nonnos, *Par*. X 99 (same position). See also, at the end of the line, Ps.-Apollinaris, *Par.Ps.* XXXVI 47 (πᾶσιν ὀπάζει) and Sophronios, *Anacr*. IV 38 (πᾶσιν ὀπάζων). The Homeric poems are seen as giving access to the truth about humans and the world (cf. l. 40). Their encyclopaedic and moral content is privileged at the expense of their diegetic content.

29 Cf. Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 35, 4: παντοίης μεθέπεις, ὅτ᾽ ἀμετρήτων ἀρετάων. The genitive [πα]ντ̣ο̣ί̣ω̣ν̣? … ἀ̣μ̣ε̣τ̣ρήτων ἀ̣ρετάων depends on Ἀχιλλῆος in the following line or on a substantive in the preceding line.

30 ζ̣ό̣ντος: for the mistake, cf. *P.Aphrod.Lit.*, I, p. 343, § 1. The contracted form ζ̣ῶ̣ντ- is exceptional in Homer (*Il.* I 88, in a different *sedes*) who prefers the Ionian form ζ̣ώ̣ο̣ντ-. It is not found in epic poets such as Apollonius, Quintus, or Nonnos.

παναέθλια: 'terrible (παν-) ordeals/exploits', *hapax* derived from ἀέθλιον (epic form for ἆθλον or ἆθλος), which has here not the sense of 'prize' (ἆθλον) of a contest or 'contest' (ἆθλος), but of 'ordeals, exploits', which can be the meaning of ἄεθλον/ἆθλον, as it is in Nonnos (*D.* IX 181: ἄεθλα νεηγενέος Διονύσου; XXV 242: ἆθλα μὲν Ἡρακλῆος). The idea of ordeals emerges from the adjective *πανάεθλος (for πανάεθλιος), 'who has endured all the ordeals' (a synonym of ἀεθλοφόρος, which is used about Christian martyrs), which Dioscoros employs in documents (see below, p. 131). There had apparently been some variation (-ιον/-ον) in the ending of this word as in the word used in our poem.

30–31 The meaning can be also: 'the terrible ordeals caused in Achilles' life (…), by the bitter dispute over the tricky Tyndarides'. See the following notes.

30 κυδιανείρης: to be taken here in a passive sense ('glorified by men') as in its other two attestations in Dioscoros (*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 17, 25 and 51, 1). I make this adjective depend on Τυνδαρεώνης, but one could also make it depend on ἔριδος ('discord so (unhappily) celebrated among mankind'). On this word, see *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 17, 25 n. The only attested genitive is κυδιανείρας (*Scholia vetera ad Iliadem* IX 441); this hyperionism is also committed by Dioscoros with the accusative (*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 17, 25: κυδιανείρην).

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31 ἀργαλέης ἔριδος κακομηχάνου Τυνδαρεώνης: it is not clear how to understand this sequence of genitives. According to the Homeric parallels, κακομηχάνου could go equally well with Τυνδαρεώνης (Helen uses the word to describe herself at *Il.* VI 344) or with ἔριδος (cf. *Il.* IX 257: ἔριδος κακομηχάνου in the same position). We note a hyper-Homerization of language in which several Homeric references telescope themselves and overlap.
On the metrical error in κακομηχάνου, see l. 22 n.
ἀργαλέης ἔριδος: citation of Solon, *Fr.* 4, 38 West 1972 = *Fr.* 3, 38 Gentili and Prato 1988.
Τυνδαρεώνης: this appellation for Helen is typical of the poetry of late antique Egypt (Tryphiodoros 473; Collouthos 378; Christodoros *AP* II 167; Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 34, 5).

(5) an act of disinheritance (ἀποκήρυξις) in Greek dated 12 November 569, written by someone other than Dioscoros;
(6) after a long *vacat*, Poem **3** is written the other way up, on three fragments which do not join (Figure 7.3):

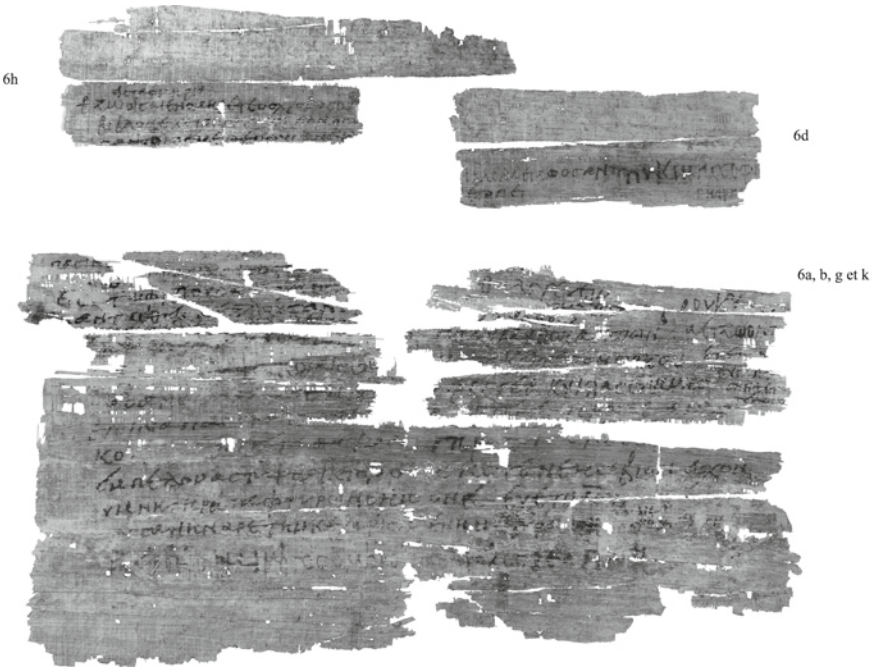


FIGURE 7.3 Poem 3. Infrared image: Jean-Luc Fournet; image processing: Fabrice Bessière, Collège de France

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Fr. 6h

→ Εἰς τὰ Ὁμήρια
Ζώοις αἰέν, Ὅμηρε, τεὸς χρόνος οὔ[ποτ' ὀλεῖται]·
βίβλον ἔχεις πολύμ̣ο̣λπον ο̣ς̣.[
παντοίως μεθέπουσαν …[
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Fr. 6d[11]

→ [β]ίβλον ἀειζώο<υ>σαν .(.) πυκίνης σοφί[ης ≍]
[.].ερπει ῥήτρης[ ]
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Fr. 6a+b+g+k

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
→ πᾶσιν̣. [ ± 6 ] ± 7 [
……π̣ρ̣…..cοç…[ ]…[
εἴ̣ς̣[ω]? τ' ἀμφιέ̣πουσαν̣ ἀ̣λ̣ηθέ[α μ]υθολογεύειν,
πάντοθεν ἀ[γ]γέλλουσαν …. *vac.* τη….ε̣νοc..
[..]…….ει….[.].[…]..ρ̣ο̣υ̣
.c……[.(.)]ν̣ *vac.* πολύμυθον ἀρίστων
…[….] ἀμφε̣κόμισσα κ̣[αὶ ὤ *vac.*]μ̣ο̣σ̣α̣ καρτερὸν ὅρκον̣·
ο̣ὐ̣ρανὸς .λ̣λ̣…ην [πολ *vac.* υ?]φεγγέα κύκλα σελήνης·
εἰσὶν ἅπα̣σ̣ι̣ν̣ ….τ. [.. *vac.*]. ἀστέρες ἥρ̣ω̣ε̣ς ἄνδρ̣ε̣[ς]
κου̣…ε̣ρ̣. ι̣ε̣ταα.ινα *vac.* γηρα……[
ἔμπεδον ἀστυφέλικτον ὅ *vac.* σης γενεῆς βίον ἔσχον
ὑμνητῆρες ἀφαυροὶ νοήμ *vac.* ονες εὐεπιάων …..
τοσσατίην ἀρετὴν κεχαρισμ *vac.* ένην..χρ…[.]..ρες̣. *vac.* α̣υ̣[.]ο̣ν̣
ἱμερόεις ἀμίμητος Ὅμηρο[ς *vac.*..]τ̣ο̣ε̣ι̣ς̣.ε….η

11 The position of this fragment is doubtful. The verso is blank, like Fr. 6h. Both of them are to be placed after the Coptic contract, the end of which is preserved in Fr. 6 a+b+g+k. But the relationship between 6h and 6d is elusive. Should Fr. 6d be placed laterally with respect to 6h?

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in the right-hand margin between ll. 42 and 46:

52 [a] οὐκ ἐᾳ̣..[---] [b] ἀεὶ ζώοντ[---] [c] ἔπειτ̣[---] [d] ουσι πτ̣[---] [e] σὴν ἀρετὴν̣ [---]
[f] τες̣ ὅσο[

**6h : 32** l. Ὁμήρεια.
**6d : 36** ζωοcαν : ω ex ο corr.
**6a+b+g+k : 49** ευεπιᾱων ‖ **51** ϊμεροεις ‖ **52** ante ουκ' signum  ‖ ουκ' ‖ ζωοντ[: ω ex ο corr.

## 3
## 'Encomium of the Homeric poems

May you live forever, Homer: your time will never perish. You are the author of a book so melodious [...],|[35] which contains so completely [...] a book of profound wisdom that lives on and on[12] [...]|[40] and contains truths for repeating, which pronounces everywhere [...] eloquent among the best [...] I have brought [...] and I have taken a powerful oath. |[45] Heaven [...] the shining disk of the moon. For all the [...] stars are heroes [...] from which lineage I/they hold an existence that is firm and untroubled. The singers of hymns, poor connoisseurs of poetry [...]|[50] so much of virtue [...] desired and inimitable Homer [...].'

32 τὰ Ὁμήρια: on how to understand this expression, see below, pp. 122–123.

33 Ζώοις αἰέν = Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 11, 51 (same position). Cf. also 6, 21; 7, 19; 10, 39; 14, 42; 18, 53; 20, 12; 30, 3 (ἀεὶ ζῴοις); 22, 6 (| Ζώοις ἀλύπως).
τεὸς χρόνος οὔ[ποτ' ὀλεῖται] = Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 10, 36 (preceded by an imperative and by a vocative). Cf. also 6, 4; 9, 1 and 17, 26 (where the subject is τεὸν or τὸ σὸν κλέος, which would have been more suitable here). The clausula οὔ[ποτ' ὀλεῖται] is borrowed from Homer, *Il.* II 325 and VII 91 and *Od.* XXIV 196, which was picked up by Hesiod, *Fr.* 70, 7.

34 βίβλον: see l. 27 n.
πολύμ̣ο̣λπον: very rare word (synonym of the no less rare πολυμελπής, Pollux, *On.* IV 67), which is first attested here (otherwise it occurs in John Geometres, *Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques*, ed. van Opstall 2008, poem 300, 51, on the subject of the swallow). Here the sense may be passive: 'very celebrated'.

35 παντοίω̣ς μεθέπουσαν: cf. l. 29 ([πα]γτ̣οί̣ω̣ν? μεθ̣έπ̣ο̣υ̣σα̣ν̣) and Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 35, 4 (| παντοίης μεθέπεις).

12 It is not certain that this line belongs here.

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36 [β]ίβλον ἀειζώο<υ>σαν: this is an echo of Paul the Silentiary, *Hagia Sophia*, 777–779 μῦθον ἀειζώοντα πιφαύσκων, | λαιῆι βίβλον ἔχων ζαθέων ἐπιίστορα μύθων, | βίβλον ἀπαγγέλλουσαν, ὅσα κτλ. (the beginning of 779 is identical to that of ll. 27–28—see also l. 13). On the substantive, see l. 27 n.

πυκινῆς σοφί[ης: cf. *Or. Sib.* 1, 91 (| καὶ πυκινὴ σοφίη). See also Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 10, 35 (τὰ μήδεα πυκνὰ σοφίης |).

37 I do not understand why these two words are separated.

ῥήτρης: cf. Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 4, 19 (Ῥήτρης εὐρυνόο[ι]ο διαμπερὲς ἔμπλεος ἦσθα).

40 ἀμφιέ̣πουσαν̣ ἀ̣λ̣ηθέ[α μ]υθολογεύειν: Dioscoros has perhaps decided to use ἀμφιέπω with an infinitive in the sense of 'try to' ('a book trying to tell truths'). Note that elsewhere in his poems (*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 24, 26; 30, 4; 34, 9; 50, B 4), he uses it in the same position as here (except in 30, 4) but with an accusative, with the sense 'to have, benefit from' (see 30, 4 n.). That is the sense that I have kept in the translation. For the idea, see l. 28.

ἀμφιέ̣πουσαν̣: the placing of the verb in this form is influenced by Nonnos, *D.* XLII 466 (| μούνην ἀμφιέπουσα μίαν Χάριν).

μ]υθολογεύειν: clausula going back to Homer, *Od.* XII 453.

43 πολύμυθον: same as in *Od.* II 200 and in Quintus Smyrnaeus XII 557.

44 This line is near to Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 35, 3 (Σὸν μέλος ἀμφεβόησε καὶ ὤμοσε καρτερὸν ὅρκον): ἀμφεβόησε has been replaced by ἀ̣μ̣φ̣ε̣κόμισσα while the second hemistich is almost identical. But I do not understand its sense in the context of the present poem.

ἀ̣μ̣φ̣ε̣κόμισσα: cf. Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 32 A 10 (same position). Dioscoros provides the earliest occurrences of this verb (which is not a *hapax*, contrary to what I claimed at 32 A 10 n.: see *LGB, s.v.*), to which he seems to give a weakened sense.

ὤ]μ̣ο̣σ̣α̣ καρτερὸν ὅρκον̣: on this Homeric expression, see Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 35, 3 n.

45–46 Is Homer here compared to a star? See, for example, Leonidas of Tarentum, *AP* IX 23; Alcaeus of Messina, *AP* VII 1; Antipater of Sidon, *AP* VII 6. For l. 45, see perhaps Philip, *AP* IX 575 (Οὐρανὸς ἄστρα τάχιον ἀποσβέσει ...| ... | ἤ ποτε Μαιονίδαο βαθυκλεὲς οὔνομ' Ὁμήρου | λήθῃ γηραλέων ἁρπάσεται σελίδων, 'Heaven will quench its stars ... before the glorious name of Homer of Maeonia falls prey to the oblivion of his ancient writings') or Antipater of Thessalonica, *APl.* 296, 7 (πάτρα σοι τελέθει μέγας οὐρανός, 'Your homeland, that is the great heaven'). These lines could also refer to a Homeric 'catasterism' (see, for example,

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Renaud 2003). N. Zito (oral communication) asks whether l. 46 might be an allusion to the myth of the Dioscuroi (who are near-homonyms of Dioscoros!), about whom Homer says (*Od.* XI 304) that after their death they alternated stays in the underworld with stays in heaven (the catasterism is thus implicitly evoked) and whom certain later texts present as stars that come to the aid of mariners. So perhaps we should read κοῦρο̣ι at the beginning of l. 47. Finally, this passage could be praising the astronomical knowledge that Homer demonstrates.

45 ο̣ὐ̣ρανός: the usual position of this word in Nonnos (eight times out of nine).

[πολυ?]φεγγέα: one could also restore [εὐ]φεγγέα (cf. Nonnos, *D.* X 191: εὐφεγγέι κύκλῳ).

κύκλα σελήνης = Moschos, *Europa* 88; Leonidas of Tarentum, *AP* IX 24, 1; *Or. Sib.* IV 57; Dionysius Periegetes 720; Nonnos, *D.* XVI 163, XXII 353, XXIV 198, XXXVI 477, XXXVIII 34, XLI 410; *AP App.* III 120, 1 (always in the same position).

48 ἔμπεδον ἀστυφέλικτον … βίον: cf. Gregory Nazianzenus, *Carmina de se ipso* II, 1, 567–568 ed. Tuilier and Bady (= *PG* XXXVII 1012, 8), βίον δ' ἐπὶ ἄλλον ἐπείγειν | ἔμπεδον, ἀστυφέλικτον. The sequence ἔμπεδον ἀστυφέλικτον at the beginning of the line is typical of Gregory: *Carmina de se ipso* II, 1, 18, 13; 2, 4, 125 and 2, 6, 11 (= *PG* XXXVII 1263, 1; 1515, 1; and 1543, 5). As for ἀστυφέλικτος, an adjective that Dioscoros was fond of (four other occurrences in his poems), cf. *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 10, 19 n.

βίον ἔσχον: cf. Theocritus, *Epigr.* VI 340, 3 (β. ἔσχε |).

49 ὑμνητῆρες: a rare word that appears in Alcman (*Fr.* 159, 1, ed. Page 1967), and then in Oppian, *Hal.* III 7 and Greg. Naz., *Carmina dogmatica* et *moralia* (*PG* XXXVII 452, 4; 515, 5; 529, 3 and 541, 14)—authors who never use the word at the beginning of a line.

νοήμονες εὐεπιάων: I understand νοήμων here as going with the genitive in the sense of 'connoisseur', which is a very rare construction (Lampe, *s.v.* 2, cites only Chrysippus of Jerusalem, *Encomium in Joannem Baptistam*, p. 37, 10–11, ed. Sigalas 1937: ὦ ἔρημος ἡ νοήμονας τῶν θείων καὶ ἐπουρανίων μυστηρίων τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐκδιδάσκουσα). Elsewhere Dioscoros uses the term in its classical sense (*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 11, 30).

εὐεπιάων: same form in the same position in Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod. Lit.* IV 11, 27. This genitive plural is typical of late poetry (Heitsch 1963, XXXIV (*Encomium Heraclii ducis*) 33; Christodoros, *AP* II 407; John of Gaza, *Ekphrasis* 39 (ἐγκύμονες εὐεπιάων) and 100; Claudian (on this post-Nonnian Claudian, cf. Alan Cameron 1970, 11–12), *AP* I 28, 1—at the end of the line in every case). On 'poetry', more specifically epic, as the

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meaning of εὐεπίη, cf. John of Gaza, *Ekphrasis* 39 n., ed. Lauritzen 2015, 74, and Magnelli 2004, 272n15.

50 τοσσατίην ἀρετήν = Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 5, 14; 14, 40; 18, 36 (and in another case, 36, 16). On τοσσάτιος, cf. *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 5, 14 n.
κεχαρισμένην: the metrical position of this participle goes back to Homer, *Od.* XVI 184 and XIX 397 (the poet usually uses it in a different position), and see also Nonnos, *Par.* XIX 51. For the last syllable treated as short, see l. 22 n.

51 ἱμερόεις = Dioscoros, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 13, 11 (also in 35, 10 in a different case, and in 35, 12–13 in a different position). This Homeric term (*Od.* X 398) is a particular favourite of Nonnos, who uses it eight times in the same position, and is followed notably by Musaeus, 20.
ἀμίμητος: this term first appears in poetry with Nonnos (*Par.* IX 114; X 149; *D.* VIII 265; XXIX 200; XXXVI 412; XLIII 402). Dioscoros only uses it elsewhere in his trimeters (*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 11, 19 ; 25 B 3).

## 2 Date

The writing of Poems **1** and **2**, framed by two dated documents, is thus situated between 28 October and 12 November 569. Poem **3** should belong to the same time or be later than 12 November. If it is later, it cannot be by much, given the commonality of content and form it shares with **1** and **2**.[13] These poems date in any case from the period when Dioscoros had left Aphrodite and was staying in the provincial capital of the Thebaid, Antinoopolis, where he practised the profession of notary (from the end of 565 or the beginning of 566 until 15 November 570 or 573).[14] It is unusual that we can date the composition of a literary work and put it in its original milieu so precisely. We shall see later how much a contextual analysis can bring to the understanding of this text.

## 3 Genre and Subjects

But precisely what kind of text are we dealing with here? We have two types of poem, all written in dactylic hexameters: the first two (**1** and **2**) belong to the genre of ethopoia, a speech put in the mouth of an individual that was considered to be appropriate to his character (*ēthos*), personality, and

13 See further, pp. 124–125.
14 Cf. Fournet 1999, 1:321.

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situation.[15] Both have the same title, beginning with a formula typical of ethopoiai:[16] Τίνας ἂν εἴπῃ (l. εἴποι) λόγους Ὅμηρος παρακαλῶν τὴν Θέτιν ἔνοπλον δεῖξαι αὐτῷ τὸν Ἀχιλλέα; ('What words would Homer use when asking Thetis to show him Achilles in arms?'). We have to do here with a completely unique poetic subject: an ethopoia that not only bases itself on a Homeric subject, like so many others (I shall return to this point), but whose speaker is the poet himself. In the vast repertory of ethopoiai known in Greek and Latin down to the thirteenth and fourteeth centuries (more than 270), there are no others that make Homer the speaker.[17] To date we only have an ethopoia of Hesiod contained in a papyrus of the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century,[18] but the fact that Hesiod introduces himself at the beginning of the *Theogony* might justify making him speak in an ethopoia. Otherwise I only know one other ethopoia in which an author is made to speak, namely Aeschines in the work of another Egyptian writer, Theodore of Cynopolis (5th–6th c.);[19] there too we have to do with an author who is in the habit of speaking in the first person and whose historical role made him a potential subject for an ethopoia. But the mysteriousness of the figure of Homer, an author who does not reveal himself in his work, did not make him a natural subject for an ethopoia. In fact, if numerous ethopoiai are put in the mouths of characters in the *Iliad*, and to a lesser extent of those in the *Odyssey*, and if, more rarely, Homer could be the subject of one,[20] our two ethopoiai are the only ones to have attempted to make Homer speak.[21] More astonishing still, Homer finds himself projected into his work and speaks to his own characters, specifically Thetis[22] (after she had provided Achilles with new arms forged by Hephaistos when the hero decided to return to the fight after the death of

15 On this genre, see Amato and Schamp 2005.

16 On this formulaic title, see Fournet 1992, 255.

17 See the exhaustive list of ethopoiai provided by Amato and Ventrella 2005.

18 *P.Oxy.* L 3537 (Mertens-Pack$^3$ 1857.320; TM64335). On this piece, see Agosti 1997 and Jarcho 1999.

19 Ed. Schissel 1929–1930. Cf. Amato and Ventrella 2005, 217n14.

20 Thus *AP* IX 455 (Τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους Ἀπόλλων περὶ Ὁμήρου;).

21 Was Dioscoros innovating? It is difficult to say. Certainly his poetical work is not characterized by its originality and it is possible that he was using a framework that others had exploited without leaving us any trace. But Dioscoros' 'Homeromania', which I shall come back to later, seems to me to account for these pieces and their atypical character.

22 That was no accident: Thetis was considered, in spite of her secondary role, as an emblematic character in the *Iliad*, if at least we believe Alcaeus of Messenia, *AP* VII 1, 5–6, who presents the *Iliad* as the 'glorification of Thetis, her son and the combats of other heroes' (Θέτιν κύδηνε καὶ υἱέα καὶ μόθον ἄλλων | ἡρώων).

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Patroclus),[23] with Dioscoros abolishing all distance between the author's present and the past of the story. To crown everything, Homer 'does a Homer', since his words are a rhapsody of Homeric syntagmas.[24]

Poem **3** belongs to another genre. Its title, Εἰς τὰ Ὁμήρια, is susceptible to several interpretations. I originally asked myself whether τὰ Ὁμήρια might refer to a festival in honour of Homer.[25] For a long time the poet was the subject of festivals, sometimes in the framework of a cult and sometimes not,[26] in which, notably at Oxyrhynchos in the second and third centuries, spectacles were organized based on episodes in the Homeric poems, acted by Homerists (ὁμηρισταί).[27] If a cult of Homer was obviously impossible at the time of Dioscoros, festivals in honour of the Poet at which there were Homeric recitations or poetry competitions are readily imaginable. It so happens that we have proof of the existence of such a festival, known precisely as Ὁμήρια, thanks to a papyrus of unknown provenance dating from the beginning of the fourth century.[28] But we are two-and-a-half centuries later, and nothing proves the existence of such events in the second half of the sixth century.[29] In the absence of proof of the survival of this festival, I think that it is more reasonable to take τὰ Ὁμήρια to mean 'Homeric poems', understanding the word ἔπη (literally 'Homeric lines') or, at a pinch, ποιήματα.[30] The εἰς at the beginning, in

23 *Il.* XVIII.

24 See the notes to ll. 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 24, 33, 40, 43, 44, 50, 51. Homerisms certainly form part of the 'epic code' conventional in hexameter epigrams, but here they are doubly motivated and invested with a strong significance because it is Homer who speaks and because his words come from a Homeric cento. Dioscoros makes use of intertextuality: thus l. 22, δῖα θεάων was used by Homer on the subjet of Thetis; l. 23, ἔρνος is used by Thetis on the subject of Achilles. Dioscoros reaches the point of saturating his verse with Homerism by putting together various Homeric expressions: see l. 31 n. on the subject of ἔριδος κακομηχάνου Τυνδαρεώνης. On the different levels of 'Homericity', see Agosti 2017, 237–241. Even Dioscoros' metrical mistakes can be explained by a Homeric influence (see l. 22 n.).

25 The expression Εἰς τὰ Ὁμήρια makes one think, *mutatis mutandis*, of the title of *P.Aphrod. Lit.* IV 21–22: Ἐγκώμια δι' ἰάμβων ἤτοι ἰαμβεῖα **εἰς τὰ γενέσια** Κωσταντίνου διοικητοῦ (*Enkōmia* or *iambeia for the birthday* of Kōstantinos the diœcētēs).

26 At Alexandria, cf. Visser 1938, 41 (on the subject of Aelian, *Varia Historia*, XIII 22); and Petrovic 2017.

27 Husson 1993; Hillgruber 2000, 2001.

28 *SPP* XX 85 (provenance unknown, date certainly 320/321 [*BL* VIII 466]): τῷ [α]ὐτῷ ἐν ἑορτῇ Ὁμηρίων κν(ίδια) κ.

29 Rita Lizzi suggests to me that we may have to do here, more modestly, with school contests. The hypothesis is interesting, but for the moment it is not supported by any document from Byzantine Egypt. I have found no trace of the use of this adjective to refer to these *certamina* in Egypt.

30 For Ὁμήρεια ἔπη, cf. Herodotus V 67, as well as Eudocia, *Homerocentones, apol.* 17, or *APl.* 125, 3. For Ὁμήρεια ποίηματα, cf. Phrynichos, *Praeparatio sophistica*, ed. J. de Borries,

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the sense of 'in honour of', is typical of eulogies.[31] So we have here an *enkōmion* of Homer's work.

## 4 The Poet at Work

Thus this papyrus offers us three compositions celebrating Homer and his work. If they are interesting for the reception and perception of Homer in early Byzantine times (I return later to this), they also provide the most eloquent testimony of ancient poetical autographs that has come down to us. Our roll allows us in fact to follow the poet's process of composition as if we were looking over his shoulder while he was writing. I shall not elaborate on the 'corrections' that Dioscoros makes between the lines[32] or on the additions in the margins:[33] this sort of thing one encounters in Dioscoros' other poems.[34] I merely point out that the first line of Poem **2** (l. 22: Δεῖξον ἐμοὶ σέθεν υἷα κτλ.) seems to have given Dioscoros some difficulty: it is repeated three times above poem **1** (ll. 2–4)—unfortunately the state of the papyrus does not allow us to follow the work of reformulation.[35]

More interesting is the relationship between the three compositions, and what we can learn from this about Dioscoros' creative processes. I mentioned that the two ethopoiai have the same title: one may ask whether Dioscoros tried to compose two ethopoiai on the same subject, or whether, dissatisfied with the first version, he decided on a second. We only have a single example of a poem he wrote in two versions:[36] a eulogy of a *dux* that has come down to us in two versions, on two different papyri, each corresponding to a stage of composition, but where, leaving aside the order of the lines, the poetic material is fairly similar in the two versions. The same cannot be said of our two ethopoiai; we are dealing with two very different poems, apart from some similarities:

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*Fr.* 33* (ἁμαρτάνουσιν οὖν οἱ λέγοντες Ὁμηρικὸν ποίημα. Ὁμήρειον γὰρ δεῖ λέγειν). On the term Ὁμήρειος, see Garulli 2017, 141–149, 152–154.

31 Cf., in Dioscoros, the titles of *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 4, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 21 and 32.

32 Lines 12, 14, 50.

33 Line 52.

34 See Fournet 1999, 1:291–297.

35 One can ask why this line, which should have introduced Poem **2**, was worked on in another location. I think that Dioscoros took advantage of the *vacat* at the top of the roll to work up the line before writing the definitive version in the correct place (l. 22).

36 *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 18 and *P.Bagnall* 26. On literary 'autographs' in general see the bibliography given in *P.Bagnall*, p. 100 n. 14.

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·**1**, l. 12 : ὥς κεν ἐνὶ γραφίδεσσιν Ἀχιλλῆα φῶτα (ex ὁμοΐϊον ἄνδρα corr.) χαράττω ≈ **2**, l. 25 : πάντοθεν ἀμφιβόητον ἐνὶ γραφίδεσσι χαράττω

·**1**, l. 13 : βίβλοις ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ἐμοῖς πολεμήϊα ἔργα ≈ **2**, l. 27 : βι̣β̣[λον] ἀ̣[παγγέλ]-λ̣ουσαν[?] ἅπερ τελ̣έ̣σκ̣ε̣ν̣ . . . .(. .)

But no line is repeated exactly. It is thus probable that Dioscoros tried to write two texts on the same subject in the manner of companion pieces or *Konkurrenzgedichte*, according to a tradition that goes back to archaic times and in virtue of which the same author composed several epigrams on the same subject, to show his skill at *variatio* and his poetic virtuosity.[37] The phenomenon intensified in Late Antiquity as we can see in the epigraphic epigrams.[38] An earlier papyrological example can be seen in the two epitaphs commissioned by Zeno from a local poet to commemorate the death of his dog Taurōn:[39] one is in hexameters, the second, introduced by ἄλλο, 'another poem', is in elegiac distichs. But by contrast with these two epitaphs, it is not the difference of metres that justifies Dioscoros' having 'doubled' his poem: how could he have honoured Homer except in hexameters? He probably tried to handle his subject in different ways for reasons I shall come back to when I examine the purpose of these pieces.

As for Poem **3**, the eulogy of the Homeric poems, we notice some cross-references when we get to the second ethopoia:

**2**, ll. 27–30 :

βι̣β̣[λον] ἀ̣[παγγέλ]λ̣ουσαν[?] ἅπερ τελ̣έ̣σκ̣ε̣ν̣. . . .(..)
[βίβλον] ἀ̣π̣ᾳ̣γγ̣έ̣λ̣λ̣ο̣υ̣σαν ἀ̣λ̣η̣θ̣έ̣α̣ πᾶσιν ὀπά[σσ]ῳ̣
[πα]γ̣τ̣ο̣ί̣ῳ̣ν̣? μ̣ε̣θ̣έ̣π̣ο̣υ̣σαγ̣ ἀ̣μ̣ε̣τ̣ρήτων ἀρετάων

can be compared with

**3**, ll. 34–36 :

βίβλον ἔχεις πολύ̣μ̣ο̣λπον ο̣ς̣.[
παντοίῳς μεθέπουσαν . . .[
[β]ίβλον ἀειζωο<υ>σαν .(.) πυκίνης σοφί[ης ≃]

37 Cf. Fantuzzi 2010.

38 Cf. Robert 1948, 81–82, and Agosti 2015b, 60–61, who takes a particular interest in the way in which these duplicates were arranged on the stone.

39 *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59532 (Mertens-Pack[3] 1761; TM 65682) = *SB* III 6754; *SP* III 109; *Supplementum hellenisticum* 9977. Cf., most recently, Pepper 2010.

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and with **3**, ll. 40–41 :

εἴ̣ʂ[ω]? τ' ἀμφιέ̣πουσαν ἀ̣λ̣ηθέ[α μ]υθολογεύειν,
πάντοθεν ἀ[γ]γέλλουσαν....τη....ε̣ν̣ος..

From one poem to the next we find the same formulations. I incline to think that the second ethopoia, notably the evocation of the Homeric poems by Homer himself, gave Dioscoros the idea of composing a third piece of a different kind, entirely dedicated to these poems. And it is not impossible that Dioscoros had sketched this poem before the writing of the Greek document that preceeds it (5), turning the roll upside down and starting writing from the other end, perhaps to compose at a same time as the second ethopoia a poem on a similar subject.

## 5 Why These Texts?

The fundamental question which now has to be asked is the purpose of these texts, which contrast sharply with Dioscoros' other poetical production. That consists mainly of poems 'de circonstance' addressed to notable persons who could help him. Homer could do nothing for him! Why then make the effort to write these epigrams on such an untimely subject?

The genres to which our three poems belong offer us the beginning of an answer: the ethopoia and the eulogy are two of those roughly twelve προγυμνάσματα or 'preparatory rhetorical exercises',[40] the list of which partly stabilizes with Theon (first century) and which were to constitute for centuries the framework for the teaching of rhetoric.[41] Thus they have an eminently educational value that the treatises on rhetoric emphasized and which emphatically conditioned the literary production of imperial and late antique times. Ethopoia, regarded by some as one of the 'most perfect *progymnasmata*',[42] is without any doubt the one that has left the greatest quantity of evidence in the papyri—an indication of the central place it occupied in the pedagogical system of those times.[43] The two ethopoiai of Homer are not the only ones we have from Dioscoros; we have four others:

40 Fable, story, saying, maxim, protest/confirmation, commonplace, eulogy/reprimand, parallel, ethopoia, description, thesis, law proposal.

41 These two exercises are combined elsewhere in the papyri: cf. *P.Oxy.* L 3537 (cited in n. 18) and the Codex of Visions in *P.Bodmer* XXX–XXXVIII (see Fournet 1991, 264).

42 Τῶν τελεωτέρων προγυμνασμάτων ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ ἠθοποιΐα (*Schol. ad Aphthonium*, ed. Walz, *Rhet. Graec.* I, p. 52, 2–3).

43 Cf. Amato and Schamp 2005.

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*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 41: ethopoia of Apollo: '<What words would be used> by Apollo after Hyacinth and Daphne had been changed into plants?' [hexameters]
*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 42: ethopoia of Achilles: 'What words would Achilles use when dying because of Polyxena ?' [hexameters]
*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 43: ethopoia on the death of Achilles (title partly lost) [hexameters]
*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 46: ethopoia of Polyxena (no title) [hexameters]

Certainly, in so far as the poets of late antiquity used the 'progymnastic' genres as the framework for a new poetic independently of their primary educational function, the ethopoiai of Dioscoros can also be considered as poems independent of their educational function, governed by the principle of *art pour l'art*. In the list of ethopoiai down to the fourteenth century, Eugenio Amato and Gianluca Ventrella classified those of Dioscoros as 'literary ethopoiai', while the others that have survived on papyrus are considered to be 'éthopées scolaires', 'school ethopoiai'.[44] This distinction, which seems artificial to me in that the distinction between a school exercise and a literary composition is difficult to put into practice,[45] has a good chance, in the case of Dioscoros, of being mistaken. I am now persuaded that the ethopoiai of Dioscoros constitute one indication among many that Dioscoros took on the functions of a teacher with a number of students. I do not have the time here to develop my argumentation or to give an account of the crucial evidence; I do this in a recent article.[46] Let it be sufficient to say that the ethopoiai of Dioscoros take on another sense besides other texts from his library such as the actual school texts written by students (conjugation tables, metrological tables), pedagogical models in Dioscoros' hand (a glossary, metrological tables, a *Life of Isocrates*, a didactic poem from the *Palatine Anthology* on the ancient Greek games), as well as non-school works that had an educational role (copies of the *Iliad* and of scholia on that work, stuffed with glosses). It is difficult not to see these ethopoiai as poems composed by Dioscoros for his pupils, to teach them rhetoric—or more exactly poetical rhetoric—at the same time as the language of Homer, as well as some mythology and mythical history. They could even

44 Cf. Amato and Ventrella 2005, 217–218 for Dioscoros and 223–225 for the other ethopoiai on papyrus. They agree with the position that I developed in my study of the ethopoia (Fournet 1992, 263). But there (263n61) I raised the possibility that these texts belong in a school setting, a hypothesis that I repeated in Fournet 1999, 2: 688–690, and developed recently in Fournet 2019, 210–213.

45 See Agosti 2005, 39–45.

46 Fournet 2019.

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be corrections to exercises that Dioscoros had set for his pupils. In the present case, the fact that the same subject is treated twice is explicable by the educational nature of these texts.

The pupils in question could have been his children. The poems were written at Antinoopolis at a time when his son Peter was receiving training there from the accountant (*psēphistēs*) of the public school of Antinoopolis, as is attested by an unpublished document in Berlin (P.Berol. inv. 25715) and another badly published one in London (*P.Lond.* V 1706).[47] We do not know whether his other children (Victor, Theodosia, etc.)[48] were then at the right age to benefit from his teaching. Dioscoros may also have had paying pupils, but we have no evidence of that.

## 6 Over-Homerizing Ethopoiai

It will have been noticed that, with one exception (*P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 41), Dioscoros' ethopoiai all centre on the main figure in the *Iliad*, Achilles, even though the situations are not always borrowed directly from the *Iliad*.[49] Thus they perfectly reflect not only the place of the figure of Homer in the Greek epigram,[50] but above all his almost exclusive place in Greek teaching.[51] They constitute an ideal complement to the study of the Homeric poem itself as carried on by Dioscoros with his pupils, which is attested by the corrections and glosses in the copies of the *Iliad* and the scholia on the *Iliad* that Dioscoros owned. They form part of a real school poetic that developed in late antiquity, of which the poet-*grammatikos* (or -*grammatistēs*) is the emblematic figure.[52]

The two new ethopoiai, with their 'over-Homerizing' tone, which adds something to the other Dioscoros ethopoiai (Homeric subject, with in addition Homer as a speaker who cites himself), are a new testimony to the hegemonic

47 See Fournet 2009, 118–119.

48 They were of an age to rent a piece of land in 580 (*SB* XXII 15522, to which we should join P.Cair. inv. SR 3733 (23a and b)).

49 On the Alexandrian legend of the love affair of Achilles and Polyxena, which was very popular in early Byzantium, Fournet 1999, 2:652.

50 See the classic study of Skiadas 1965; and more recently Pralon 2017 and Hunter 2018, 4–24.

51 With regard to the immense bibliography on the place of Homer in schools, beyond the classic study of Verdenius 1970, completed for the imperial period by Ibrahim 1976–1977 and, more specifically for Egypt by Davison 1956, I simply refer to a few recent studies: Cribiore 1994, 2001, p. 194–197, 204–205, 226; Hock 2001; Díaz Lavado 2007; Sandnes 2009.

52 See the numerous examples given by Alan Cameron 1965 (reprinted in Alan Cameron 1985, 1; and recently revised in Alan Cameron 2016b, ch. 1).

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place that Homer occupied in the inspiration of the writers of ethopoiai.[53] This is well exemplified by the ethopoiai preserved in papyri,[54] the ones in *Palatine Anthology* IX 449–480,[55] and those in prose in Libanius.[56] The reasons are mostly these:

(1) Homer was himself considered a reservoir of ethopoiai since about half of his poems are in direct speech. And because of his art of characterization, which is brought out by Aristotle (*Poetics* 1460 a 9–11), Homer was considered the ideal model for authors of ethopoiai, as the rhetoricians point out, endlessly indicating the ethopoiai in his work that correspond to their typologies.[57]

(2) Homer was the poet par excellence. The ethopoia was a *progymnasma* considered by the ancients to be one of the most useful for learning to write poems,[58] and in consequence it became a genre that was practised in verse. Homer provided his metre, his lexicon, his characters and his situations.[59]

(3) Homer was also regarded as a model orator.[60] Hermogenes for example considers him not only the best of poets but also the best orator and the best *logographos*.[61] The ethopoia is a preparatory exercise for rhetoric and was considered one of the most formative ones because, according to the fifth-century orator Nicolaos, it contributes to all branches of eloquence (encomiastic, judicial, and deliberative), not to mention the art of letter writing.[62] So Homer was essential for the practice of oratory.

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53 See Ureña Bracero 1999.

54 See Fournet 1992, 261.

55 A fairly coherent series, later than the mid-fifth century (Wifstrand 1933, 170), 'many if not all' of which 'come from the same hand, or at any rate from the same school' (Alan Cameron 1967c, 60).

56 Webb 2010. For the *progymnasmata* of Libanius, see Gibson 2008. For the attribution to Libanius, besides Gibson, p. XXIII–XXV, see Ureña Bracero 2007.

57 Ureña Bracero 1999, 319–320; Robert 2015, 79–80.

58 E.g. Quintilian, *Inst.* III 8, 49: 'utilissimum vero haec the exercitatio vel quod duplicis est operis, vel quod poetis quoque (…) plurimum confert' (this exercise is very useful, whether because it demands a double effort, or because it is also very advantageous to the poets too).

59 On the relationship between ethopoia and poetry, see Viljamaa 1968, 17–18, 116–124; and especially Agosti 2005.

60 See Knudsen 2014. For the Byzantine period, see especially Browning 1992, 135–136.

61 Hermogenes, *Περὶ ἰδεῶν λόγου,* ed. Rabe (1913), 389, 21–27: τοῦτ' ἂν Ὅμηρος εἴη κατὰ τὴν ποίησιν, ἣν δὴ πανηγυρικὸν λόγον ἐν μέτρῳ λέγων εἶναί τις οὐκ οἶμαι εἰ διαμαρτήσεται, ἐπεὶ κἀνταῦθα ὁμοίως ἀναστρέφει τὸ πρᾶγμα, καθάπερ ἀνέστρεφεν ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν κἀκεῖ· ἀρίστη τε γὰρ ποιήσεων ἡ Ὁμήρου, καὶ Ὅμηρος ποιητῶν ἄριστος, φαίην δ' ἂν ὅτι καὶ ῥητόρων καὶ λογογράφων, λέγω δ' ἴσως ταὐτόν.

62 Thus Nicolaos, *Progymnasmata,* ed. Felten (1913), 66, 16–67, 9: Ἔστι δὲ καὶ τοῦτο τὸ προγύμνασμα πρὸς τὰ τρία εἴδη τῆς ῥητορικῆς χρήσιμον· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐγκωμιάζοντες καὶ κατηγοροῦντες

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In short, everything combined to link the Homeric poems and the ethopoia closely together, to the point that, in spite of Christianity and its impact on written culture in general and on poetry in particular, there was a deliberate choice not to cut the ethopoia off from its Homeric cultural reference in order to Christianize it.[63] It can in fact seem strange that, with the exception of two ethopoiai with Old Testament subjects in the Codex of Visions in the Bodmer collection (5th c.)[64] and nine ethopoiai with Old and New Testament subjects in the Book of Chreia (Girkʿ Pitoyicʿ) preserved in Armenian but very probably going back to a Greek model of the fifth century,[65] we have to wait till the twelfth century before the ethopoia addresses Christian subjects. But all this is due to the fact that teachers very soon gave up on the synthesis that certain poets had attempted in the fourth and fifth centuries by putting biblical subjects into Homeric dress.[66] As the historian Socrates explains very well with regard to the efforts of the Apollinares, which he considers to be useless, the art of reasoning is not taught by Scripture but exclusively by Greek *paideia*.[67] So it is better to separate the two and educate oneself in both in parallel rather than attempting an empty synthesis that could only result in a reciprocal emasculation. Christianizing the *progymnasmata* made no more sense than putting the Gospels into Homeric verse. So education continued to be based on Homer, as a model of poetry and rhetoric, at the risk of a kind of cultural sclerosis that bridled imagination and paralysed originality.[68] Dioscoros, like the rest, submitted to the dictate of 'all-Homer'; but he went much further.

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καὶ συμβουλεύοντες ἠθοποιιῶν πολλάκις δεόμεθα· ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκεῖ καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἐπιστολικὸν ἡμᾶς γυμνάζειν χαρακτῆρα, εἴ γε καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῳ δεῖ τοῦ ἤθους τῶν τε ἐπιστελλόντων καὶ πρὸς οὓς ἐπιστέλλουσι ποιεῖσθαι πρόνοιαν. αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ ἐπιστολικὸν εἴτε ὑφ' ἓν τούτων τῶν τριῶν ἀνάγεται εἴτε ὑφ' ἕτερον, οὐ τοῦ νῦν ἐστι καιροῦ σκοπεῖν, ἄλλως τε ἐπειδὴ καὶ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖς περὶ ἐγκωμίων ἀρκούντως ὡς πρὸς εἰσαγωγὴν ἐλέχθη.

63 Fournet 2020.

64 *P.Bodm.* XXXIII, fol. 21$^{r}$, 17–39: τί ἂν εἴποι ὁ Καιν ἀποκτείνας τὸ[ν Ἄβηλ;] ('What words would Cain have spoken after killing Abel?'); and XXXV, fol. 21$^{v}$, 32-fol. 23$^{r}$, 2: τ[ί ἂν εἴπ]οι ὁ Αβελ ἀναιρηθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ Καιν ('What words would Abel have spoken after being killed by Cain?').

65 Fournet 2020, 80–82.

66 Besides the paraphrases of the Old and New Testaments that Apollinaris, father and son, are supposed to have written in Homeric, tragic, comic, and Pindaric verse (Socrates, *HE* III 16, 3–5, and Sozomen, *HE* V 18, 3–4; see Agosti 2001) and the ethopoiai in *P.Bodm.* just referred to, one can cite the *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* of Nonnos (ca. 440–450), the *Paraphrase of the Psalms* of Pseudo-Apollinaris (ca. 460), the *Homeric Centones* of Eudocia (ca. 440–460), not to mention hagiographies in hexameters such as the *De Sancto Cypriano* by Eudocia, the lost *patria* by Theodorus of Alexandria (Fournet 2003) or the *Life and Martyrdom of Saint Thecla* by Basil of Seleuceia, known only from Photius (see Fournet 2003, 532n49).

67 Socrates, *HE* III 16, 7; 17–18.

68 See Robert 2015, 80: 'Quoique la personne d'Homère fût ainsi vénérée et encensée, son texte n'en était pas pour autant figé dans un respect sclérosant, annihilant toute velléité

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## 7 Dioscoros Homer-mad?

His dossier testifies in fact to the invasive presence of Homer in every area of written culture, not only the educational and the literary, but the quotidian as well. Dioscoros adapted Homerism to every form of writing. I will not enlarge on the subject because I have dealt with it elsewhere.[69] It will be enough to summarize the facts:

– Homer was present in his library in the form of a codex containing the *Iliad* and another containing *scholia ad Iliadem*, with which he must have educated himself and which he used in turn in his teaching.[70]
– Homer is the author who most influenced his poems.[71] Dioscoros even cites him by name as a model of eloquence in general.[72]
– Homer was one of the criteria of selection according to which Dioscoros constructed a little anthology of documents (one petition and three letters) which could be useful to him in his own writing: the two letters that have been preserved (the third is damaged and unpublished) have in common that they contain a Homeric citation.[73] Homer is an ornament that the letter-writer cannot do without.
– Not only the letter writer, but also the writer of petitions, another genre very much practised by Dioscoros: Homer appears a number of times in Dioscoros' petitions, in citations, syntagmas, and echoes.[74]

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de création ou tout effort d'imagination. De fait, les poèmes homériques étaient perçus comme un entrelacement d'épisodes, de thèmes, que rhéteurs et étudiants pouvaient à loisir reprendre : ils avaient toute licence de jouer avec le texte homérique, de s'en inspirer, de le considérer comme un matériau de travail. Comme référent culturel fondamental, les poèmes homériques étaient parfaitement connus des étudiants, c'est pourquoi il était intéressant de s'appuyer sur eux pour les sujets d'exercice : la signification des situations ou des personnages prélevés devait leur apparaître immédiatement. Les rhéteurs envisageaient donc les textes homériques comme un vivier de formules, d'histoires, de passages remarquables, permettant de s'entraîner à développer une virtuosité oratoire, mais n'en fournissant pas un modèle à proprement parler.' This Homerism was so omnipresent that it became insipid and quasi-mechanical, to the point that Palladas mocked it in his epigrams (see, for example, Alan Cameron 1967c and the note to *Anthologia Graeca* IX 395 (VIII, p. 193 in the Budé edition)).

69 Fournet 1995, 2012, 146–150.

70 *P.Aphrod.Lit.* I and II. See Fournet 1995, 302–306; 2019, 203–206.

71 See Fournet 1995, 306–310; 1999, 1:298–303; 1999, 2:673–676.

72 *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 4, 22. See also 6, 11 and 9, 4 (on these passages see Livrea 2001), where, according to the procedure of the lop-sided *synkrisis*, Homer seems to serve as a supporting character for the recipient of the poem.

73 *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67295, III, 2–3 and 28. See Fournet 2012, 142–144, 147.

74 Fournet 2012, 144–148.

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Certainly all this corresponds quite well with the cultural tendencies at work in late antique prose, which was marked both by a recovery of Atticism and by an infatuation with a sophistic, archaic, and poetic lexicon.[75] Dioscoros' archive contains documents written by people other than Dioscoros that attest to the impact of Homer on the lexicon.[76] But Dioscoros seems to me to testify to an influence of Homer that, because of its outrageous and untimely nature, goes beyond the aesthetic canons of the period. I will simply give three examples:

(1) The first is the division of an inheritance that is not in Dioscoros' hand but which I think he helped to draw up (*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67313):[77] here we encounter the Homeric word αὐτοκασίγνητος to designate the banal term 'brother'.[78] The word is of course unknown in the papyri and is not attested, to my knowledge, in the prose literature (except when there is a reference to Homeric usage). It is hard to understand the use of this term, which adds nothing whatsoever, in a genre of document that, unlike a petition, has no use for *pathos* or rhetoric.

(2) In the same document, we meet the very curious adjective, similar to the one in Poem **3,** line 30, πανάεθλος, 'who has endured everything', denoting the eponymous martyr of a church.[79] This term derives from the Homeric word ἄεθλος 'ordeal' (Attic ἆθλος), used here in place of ἄεθλιος ('struggling, enduring hardships'). This is not a *lapsus calami* because the expression is attested two other times, both in the archive of Dioscoros, one of them in his own hand.[80] That is what according to me confirms that the text of this division of an inheritance was indeed devised by Dioscoros even though it was not written by him.

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75 For the development of a poetic lexicon in the documentary papyri, Zilliacus 1967, 71–83.

76 I gave an example in Fournet 2012, 149–150, namely λήϊα, a Homeric term that one meets in an affidavit written by someone other than Dioscoros and in various authors such as John Chrysostom.

77 This is a notarized document very probably drawn up in the *statio* where Dioscoros worked at Antinoopolis. Parallels such as *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151–67152 show that Dioscoros drafted a first version that was then copied out neatly by another person. See also *P.Cair. Masp.* III 67315 (in the hand of Dioscoros) next to II 67156–67157 (both in another hand, but with additions by Dioscoros). Work on these *duplicata* in Dioscoros' archive remains to be done.

78 L. 64–65: κ̣αὶ προσεπὶ τούτοις λελ̣ε̣γ̣χ̣έναι | ὁ[μοίως πρόσωπ]α̣ δύο αὐτοκασίγ̣ν̣η̣τ̣α.

79 L. 55: ἐκκλησίας τοῦ παναέθλου μάρτυρος Ἄπα Θεοδώρου.

80 *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67162, 8 (Antinoopolis, 568), loan contract in the hand of Dioscoros: πανσέπτου Θεοῦ οἴκου τ̣ο̣ῦ̣ [πα]γ̣αέθλου μάρτυρος ἄπα Βίκτορο\ς/; *SB* XVIII 13298$^{v}$, 1–2 (Antinoopolis, 556–570), loan contract:] τοῦ παναέθλου | [μάρτυρος.

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(3) In another division of an inheritance, this time in his own hand, Dioscoros uses in a banal expression the Ionian form of the word ὄνομα (used by Homer), which is entirely inappropriate.[81] Here too nothing motivates the recourse to this form in such an anodyne document and in such a hackneyed expression.

We are dealing here with unmotivated, forced, parasitic Homerisms which, in my view, are part of a phenomenon that has not so far been looked at closely enough and is totally separate from the Homerizing practices of the educated milieux of Late Antiquity. You almost have the impression that these Homerisms are stylistic slips of the pen due to a sort of uncontrolled 'Homeromania' and that they are the result of a failure to appreciate and distinguish different linguistic registers or to gauge the stylistic differences that normal practice required. Dioscoros knew Homer well, and that it was *de bon ton* to Homerize, but he did not always understand when to do it and when he was over-stepping the conventionally imposed limits. In fact, his Homerizing excesses paradoxically could be evidence of imperfect linguistic knowledge. In that respect it is good evidence of the limits of a Copt's Hellenism, notwithstanding his high level of education.

His 'Homeromania' is sometimes involuntary or untimely, but its excesses remain nonetheless a sign of the strong desire on the part of these Coptophone élites to participate fully in Byzantine Hellenism, to be part of the culture of the Empire. Their Egyptian origins and their distance from the centre of power only accentuated their determination to be in line with this common culture—a determination which could sometimes translate into excesses or clumsiness.

This is what seems to me to be the cultural background of Dioscoros' poems, which are like poetic UFOs as far as their subjects are concerned but are symptomatic of a culture still obsessed by the great poet and by poetry.[82] Apart from the fact that they are the only 'archaeological' evidence for a certain poetic-rhetorical form of instruction, they are the last witnesses of cultural values that the age of Justinian wished to display, and which were soon to enter a decline that the Arab conquest irremediably confirmed.

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81 *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67314, Fr. 3, 7–8: ἀνθομολογοῦμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς οἱ προγ[εγρα]μμέν[οι] | κατ' οὔνομα ὁμογνήσιοι ἀδελ̣φ̣[οὶ] καὶ υ̣[ἱοί] σ̣ου π[έντε τὸν ἀριθμόν] 'we too recognize each other in turn, we five brothers, your legitimate sons whose names have severally been given above …'.

82 The eulogy of the Homeric poems is to be related to the epigram on Homer in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* 309–314 (ed. Allen) that was still being copied in the 6th/7th century, as we know from P.Duk. inv. 665 (Mertens-Pack$^3$ 77.02; TM 64713), ed. Menci 2012.

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