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Reviewed by Bruce Heiden, The Ohio State University (heiden.1@osu.edu)
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Table of Contents
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Homerists and others interested in the history of classical scholarship know the story of "The Homeric Question" --a rhetorical question asserting that the Iliad and Odyssey had no author--in two closely related versions that both ascribe the Question's genesis primarily to

the insight of a single iconoclast. The older and more familiar version credits paternity to F.A. Wolf and his *Prolegomena ad Homerum* of 1795; the alternative version awards paternity to the abbe/d'Aubignac and his *Conjectures Académiques ou Dissertation sur l'Illiade* (written and privately circulated 1660s, published posthumously 1715). The older version, which originated with Wolf himself, has never ignored d'Aubignac or denied that he and some others had doubted the existence of Homer before Wolf did, but it incorporates Wolf's apparent predecessors as forerunners whose partial glimpses of truth were completely superseded by Wolf's uncompromising research and its discoveries. Grafton and others have modified these narratives by broadening their historical context, but the fixation upon the figures of Wolf and d'Aubignac has not yet been overcome.

In the book here under review Luigi Ferreri has taken The Homeric Question back to the drawing board and subjected its history to a thorough reconceptualization, reinvestigation, and rewriting. In Ferreri's telling the Homeric Question had no father at all, for it sprouted (as it were) from seeds carried westward with the Byzantine scholarly tradition, and by the mid-16th century it was flourishing visibly in many works of scholarship and commentary. The scholars who nurtured its growth were no small band of heroes, but numerous and often undistinguished. When d'Aubignac and Wolf do finally enter Ferreri's story they do not transform it especially more than many other contributors, while in contrast some figures previously considered less important (or hardly known at all) receive merited attention. One might almost say that in Ferreri's study the question of authorship rebounds upon The Homeric Question itself. But no cleverness is needed to praise Ferreri's book. It is an impressive display of learning that exposes forgotten pathways on the journey that Homeric scholarship still travels.

Ferreri's fresh approach to the Homeric Question's development is enabled by his insight that the Question was never actually one question about the existence of an author, but several different historiographical topics that scholars connected gradually. Ferreri therefore organizes his investigation by teasing apart some of the classical Question's constituent strands and tracing their courses separately. His most novel finding is that by the mid-16th century the idea that Homer's epics were compiled from once-dispersed poems was already widely known to scholars and accepted as historical fact without much controversy. The claim that Homer composed orally, originally suggested by one now-famous passage in Josephus, entered modern discussion as early as the 1580s. Ferreri relates its ascending importance to extra-philological factors such as contemporary ethnographic reports of indigenous peoples in the New World and philosophical speculation about the origins of human institutions. The Homeric Question, which in the 19th century context is sometimes portrayed as a fundamentally philological issue whose far-reaching implications affected other fields, here appears rather more as a symptom of issues that impinged upon philology from outside.

The basis of Ferreri's exposition is an extremely meticulous inventory of primary sources; his bibliography and notes are astonishingly thorough, unearthing positions pertinent to the Homeric Question in works not especially devoted to Homer and in some now apparently lost.

Each chapter consists of a quasi-doxographical survey of sources relevant to particular aspects of the Question during a period of its development. Ferreri summarizes each source carefully and comments on its use of testimonia, logical inferences, and relationship to other sources. He avoids subordinating individual sources to narrative trajectories or quantitatively defined trends, and analyzes unrepresentative positions without making them seem either secondary or uniquely inspired. The following outline is a selective digest of highlights.

Ferreri's Chapter One examines the many 16th-17th century discussions of the rhapsodes, the Homeridae, and the Homeristae. These discussions fundamentally aimed at defining what those three Greek words meant; they were prompted by entries in Byzantine lexica and sought clarification from other testimonia such as Eustathius and the scholium on Pi. N. 2.1. Ferreri stresses how heavily Renaissance scholars relied upon etymology in reaching the conclusion that rhapsodes were much like performers of centos. By 1698 standard reference works reflected the communis opinio that the transmission of Homer's epics had been seriously compromised by the modifications of rhapsodes during performances.

Chapter Two traces the propagation of the "Pisistratean Compilation" stories during the 16th and 17th centuries, as they were taken from the Vitae Homeri and repeated, usually quite uncritically. Versions of the compilation story routinely appeared in the prolegomena of early printed editions of Homer, where readers expected find explanation of the text's authority; scholars told them why the original sources of these poems were in doubt. The formation of Homer's epics through compilation was such a commonplace it supplied a topic for exercise questions in an early 17th-century textbook. Ferreri identifies Camerarius (1538) as the first scholar to suggest that the unusual transmission of the Iliad and Odyssey posed a serious obstacle to their restoration; less than a century later Heinsius concluded that the epics had been so corrupted, both by the compilation and after it, that the original texts could never be recovered. Here Ferreri sees the emergence of the "ecdotic perspective" in which the philological goal of fidelity to the author gives way to reconstruction of a text's diachronic transformation. Ferreri suggests that Heinsius was affected by parallel developments in textual criticism of the Bible.

Chapter Three observes how 17th century French "antihomerists" put the philological commonplaces about the epics' genesis and performance to use in polemics against Homer's reputation. The controversy was fed by extra-philological factors that included valorization of Aristotelian ideas of formal unity, Calvinist rejection of all authority except holy scripture, and the rationalist law of universal progress that required an early poet like Homer to be backward. It is in this period that Homer is first likened to local folk-balladeers. Ferreri argues that d'Aubignac probably drew many of his positions from predecessors now only indirectly traceable; investigating the 18th century printings and notices of d'Aubignac's essay, he concludes that its circulation and influence have been exaggerated. Antihomerism provoked a reaction from writers such as Boileau and Anne Dacier, who not only defended the transmitted epics' artistic integrity but discerningly criticized scholars' use of the ancient testimonia about the compilation.

Ferreri's fourth chapter observes the "oral" strand of the classical Homeric Question as it developed in an "embryonic" phase. Josephus's claim that Homer did not write attracted comment as early as 1583, and between 1590 and 1685 at least four writers drew upon Josephus' authority to declare that Homer composed orally. Ferreri stresses that the growing conviction that Homer composed orally symptomatized contemporary philosophical preoccupations with the progress of civilized institutions from primitive origins. He also notes how 17th century discussions of Homeric orality drew upon comparative ethnography, including reports of oral cultural memory among indigenous peoples of the Americas. Ferreri's discussion of Vico includes an interesting digest of 20th century positions on the question of whether Vico's Homeric speculations were central or marginal to his philosophical project. In his section on MacPherson's forged compilation of the heroic poems of "Ossian," which had supposedly been preserved as an oral tradition among Scottish countryfolk, Ferreri notes how Macpherson's admirers likened his work to the compilation of the Homeric poems by Lycurgus and/or Pisistratus.

In his fifth chapter Ferreri shows how during the second half of the 18th century the conviction that Homer could not have written was fed by the speculations of Condillac and Warburton about the slow evolution of alphabetic writing from hieroglyphic inscription. Ferreri accords much attention to Rousseau, who like Vico conceptualized the orality of Homeric poetry as proximity to natural passion. Heyne emerges from his rival Wolf's shadow as a pioneer of comparative ethnography in Homeric studies. Bajamonti, a follower of Vico who claimed that a poetic art like Homer's survived in rural Dalmatia, seems to have been the first to regard Homeric repetitions as formulas (1797). Ferreri also observes developments that did not focus upon orality. Readers may recognize (though Ferreri does not) perhaps the earliest appearance of Homeric Analysis in Ferreri's summary of a 1785 essay by the neo-d'Aubignachian Mercier, who claimed not only that the Iliad was an inept compilation, but that it developed over centuries, and that its constituent poems revealed traces of their different periods of composition. In 1787 Cesarotti responded to the provocation with a systematic critique of d'Aubignac, Vico, and Mercier; this essay, a preface to Cesarotti's Italian translation of the Iliad, identified and publicized the already longstanding academic argument against Homer's authorship. Here the Analyst-Unitarian controversy is visible, outside the time, region and institutional setting with which it is usually associated.

The sixth and final chapter centers upon Wolf's Prolegomena of 1795, which Ferreri approaches through the immediately preparatory event of Villoison's publication of the Codex Venetus A of the Iliad with its abundant scholia (1788). Ferreri reminds readers that Villoison did not "discover" the Venetian Codex, whose existence was known since the 15th century and whose scholia had occasionally been consulted and cited by scholars with access to the manuscript. Villoison hoped that information about Aristarchus' criticism would facilitate restoration of the Iliad to its original form; but Wolf drew the opposite conclusion, that the work of the Alexandrian critics made restoration impossible. Ferreri analyzes Wolf's positions at length; among the features he emphasizes is Wolf's revisionist view of early rhapsodes,

who Wolf argued were also composers. Following Timpanaro Ferreri finds Wolf's greatest significance in his adoption of the "ecdotic" perspective that shifted the goal of textual criticism from restoration of an original to historical accounts of transmission. Ferreri also discusses Wolf's dependence upon Eichhorn's Biblical criticism and Cesarotti's response to Wolf's *Prolegomena*.

There should be no doubt that in my view *La questione omerica* successfully improves upon the received narratives of the Homeric Question by extending their temporal span and distributing attention among many more contributors and factors. Ferreri's book is immensely learned and intelligent, and I read it with pleasure. I look forward to the further research into Homeric scholarship it has made possible.

Ferreri's successes do also reveal some of the difficulties inherent in his project. *La questione omerica* displays a certain tension between the monographic format of a specialized historical study and the broad cultural developments whose relevance Ferreri incorporates in lengthy digressions. A reader's perspective, and perhaps even Ferreri's, might have benefited from an introductory chapter that briefly surveyed the major ecclesiastical, political and scientific controversies that animated Europe during the period of Ferreri's study, and situated the Homeric Question among them. Such a survey might have brought into better focus a feature of the Homeric Question that in Ferreri's presentation emerges piecemeal and incompletely, namely how the significance and dynamism of the Question were affected by early modern science's integral negative pole, the "superstition" it was determined to banish. It might be said that historical claims about Homer's epics contended less against one another than against an image of Homer whose character and ideological affiliations aligned it with the authority of the sacred. This negative factor never fully surfaces in *La questione omerica*, where the indirect linkage between Homer and the Bible seems to press against Ferreri's narrative like a strong wind behind a wall; for example, Ferreri astutely suggests that textual criticism of the Bible influenced Heinsius' textual criticism of Homer, but his intra-philological standpoint registers the event as an instance of scientific method developing through communication between neighboring spheres. Here, but especially in an introduction, it would have been worthwhile to emphasize the deauthorization that historical investigation of the Bible implied, because the dynamic of deauthorization does a lot to explain how a few ancient reports about the Homeric epics were made to suggest a virtual heresy, and why some Homerists cast longer or shorter shadows than their substantive contributions to scholarship would seem to merit.

La questione omerica offers much to ponder. Its thorough research allows us to behold the history of Homeric scholarship with fresh eyes.

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Prof. Franco Montanari
Via San Luca 8
56011 Calci (PI)
tel./fax + 39 050 939319

Universita' degli Studi di Genova
Facolta' di Lettere e Filosofia
Dipartimento di Archeologia e Filologia Classica
Via Balbi, 4
16126 Genova (Italia)
Tel. + 39 010 2099724 / 010 2099947 / 010 2099728