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Farcical Philology: Alexander Shewan's
Homeric Games at an Ancient St. Andrews

Thomas E. JENKINS

It is one of the many ironies of the term “philology” that what to the untrained ear may connote a dry and lifeless field of study was once the fightingest of fighting words; indeed, *philology* has been only recently retired as a field with an especial love for internecine warfare. “Love of literature,” it seems, could spawn loathing of fellow literature-lovers, and as philology grew as a discipline and even academic profession, the stakes were high. Any examination of *metaphilology*, then, must include a glance at philology’s discourses of error and detection, of correction and humiliation: philology—if dedicated to recovering a singular truth concerning texts—can be a zero-sum game. In the field of classical studies, questions of literary interpretation have necessarily been wedded to such texts’ often shadowy social contexts, and it is no coincidence that the most bitter battles have been fought where there is the least available evidence. The greater the evidential void, the greater the opportunity for hermeneutic ingenuity—and for equally pitched polemic.¹

This essay therefore examines a hitherto obscure, but revealing, salvo in the philological battles of the last century: Alexander Shewan’s *Homeric Games at an Ancient St. Andrews, an Epyllion Edited from a Comparatively Modern Papyrus and Shattered by Means of the Higher Criticism* (1911). Putatively a straight-laced philological commentary on a (fabricated) Greek epic of golfing and cricket, “Homeric Games” skewers a whole host of scholarly fetishes, including exhaustive yet pointless parallels, far-fetched archaeolog-

1 In a review of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s “The Powers of Philology,” Ziolkowski notes that Gumbrecht’s tendentious overview of philology—in which theorists and traditional critics remain at daggers drawn—constitutes a type of “metaphilology, although other possibilities would be paraphilology, hypophilology, and pseudophilology” (2005: 239, 258). Whatever our philological leanings, however, Ziolkowsky urges: “let us love the *logos!*” (2005: 272)

ical extrapolations, loopy etymological inquiries, and inappropriate modern *comparanda*. The title is something of a double-entendre: as a text, *Homeric Games* is almost entirely ludic—a massive word game—but also entirely serious as a commentary on everything that Shewan despises about contemporary Homeric (or even just classical) philology.² Shewan has thus taken great pains to mimic *exactly* the type of literary commentaries currently in vogue; indeed, *Homeric Games* apes the gold standard of classical commentaries, R.C. Jebb's seven volume *Sophocles*, by including a running commentary, appendices, and a facing Ancient Greek text and translation.³ Shewan's minor swipes at syntactical fetishes, however, only scratch the surface of *Homeric Games*: beneath the jollity lies a real venom aimed at Homeric scholars and critics who—on Shewan's view—were destroying his beloved *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. So-called Analysts, building largely on the research begun with Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer* (1795) were dedicated to the principle that the Homeric poems gradually accreted linguistic and narrative strata over time; the poems were thus the result of many composers and redactors, some of noticeably greater talent, facility and even honesty than others. A confirmed Unitarian, Shewan argued that the Homeric poems were largely those of a single, master poet; the poems may be imperfect in parts, but still exhibit a “unified” structure, language, and artistry. In short, the poems are genius; and the analytic drive to reduce the poems to ever-smaller kernels and layers is nothing less than the demolition of art.⁴

- 2 Indeed, excerpts from *Homeric Games* re-appear, in excerpted form, in Shewan's *Lusus Homericum* (1928), alongside Homeric crossword puzzles, anagrams, and an exuberant poem in celebration of grouse-hunting.
- 3 The third edition of Jebb's magisterial commentary appeared in 1893. See Stray 2007: 90 on the ways in which Jebb's commentary “provides a classic page layout that we now take for granted, but which was in some ways new for its own time.” In reaching for the “perfect” form of a commentary, Stray notes that Jebb was attempting, in a sense, to create the “Sophoclean” form of a classical commentary (2007: 92). Kraus 2002, in her broader overview of the classical commentary form (“Introduction: Reading Commentaries/Commentaries as Reading”), traces as well the curious development of a new type of philological language, which she wittily dubs “commentese” (20). See also Most's edited volume *Commentaries-Kommentare* (1999).
- 4 As we shall see, the number of Shewan's scholarly foes is legion, and including some of the greatest names in Greek philology. For instance: “[Professor Gilbert Murray's] capacity for the deglutition of revolutionary views regarding Homer is great” (Shewan 1935: 105); even the mighty Wilamowitz-Moellendorf is “capable of what must be described as mere absurdities” (Shewan 1935: 199). Or, more generally: “The Homeric criticism of the nineteenth century left a wreck; the twentieth is ‘finding a way, after the wreck, to rise in’” (Shewan 1915: 309). For a macroscopic overview of the development of the Analytic tradition (through Grote to Wilamowitz) see Turner 1997: 123-145 as well as the more theoretically focused analysis by Porter 2002 on the poem's

Analysts were nothing if not upfront about their philological principles. In a school edition produced eight years after his Iliadic *opus* of 1900, the Analyst Alexander Leaf—and *bête noire* to Shewan—clearly laid out his editorial scheme. As the introduction adumbrates, philology—that is to say, a meticulous reading of the text—proves that the *Iliad* is anything but unified: “A careful examination of the structure of the *Iliad* shews that it cannot be the work of a single poet composing *uno tempore* on a preconceived plan ... It is on the contrary the expansion, by successive additions, of an original poem of much smaller dimensions. This original poem was the Μῆνις or *Wrath of Achilles*, to whose great quarrel with Agamemnon the enlargements are nevertheless so subordinated that it remains the dominant *motif* of the whole.”⁵ Leaf goes on to argue that only books 1, 2, 11, 15, 16, 18, and 22-24 comprised the original kernel of the *Iliad*—and of those, only dribs and drabs. Drawing on German philological traditions traceable to Wolf’s *Prolegomena*, Leaf thus continues the work of his predecessor and fellow countryman George Grote, who imported from Germany the analytic tradition of dissecting the poem into constituent lays and occasional interpolation.⁶ Leaf further contends that the next accretion to the kernel were the tales and traumas of individual heroes: the second stratum’s “immediate occasion was no doubt to glorify the heroes of the great Achaean families who seemed to have received too scanty notice.”⁷ Thus the kernel grows, in the hands of later redactors, into a larger narrative incorporating the *kleos*, “glory,” of individual heroes who were tied to the smaller or less well-represented city-states of Greece. (A perfect example is Book 10, the so-called *Doloneia*, which—in the mind of analysts—is a later, inconsistent addition to the kernel, however much it adds to the *kleos* of Odysseus and Diomedes.)⁸

cultural contestation (especially 2002: 70-71). Even contemporary critics noticed Shewan’s delight in antagonizing his literary foes; see Prentiss 1913: 337.

5 Leaf and Bayfield 1908: xv.

6 For Wolf’s legacy on the later analytic tradition, see Clarke 1981: 158-161, esp. 161: “By stressing logic and consistency rather than morality and meaning, Wolf provided Homer’s readers with an entirely new and basically genetic perspective on the poems.” For a typical late nineteenth century resolution of the problem, there’s Geddes’ analysis: “That there is a double authorship in [the *Iliad*], an Achilleid within the *Iliad*, forming its kernel, and by a different author from that of the surrounding *integumenta*, I believe facts not only indicate but demonstrate ...” (1878: iv) The research of Milman Parry (and his disciple Albert Lord) on South Slavic epic obviously contributed to a paradigm shift in evaluations of Homeric authorship in the later twentieth century. For an “evolutionary” model of Homeric composition based on oral theory, see Nagy 1996: 29-63; for Parry’s work as the culmination of European research on Homeric epithets, see Hummel 1998. Ferrari 2007 explores the parameters of the Homeric Question in the three centuries prior to Wolf’s treatise.

7 Leaf and Bayfield 1908: xviii-xix.

8 Danek 1988.

Intriguingly, Leaf's third stratum does not constitute (necessarily) the dregs of Homer, but often betrays the touch of a master artist: "[The episodes of the third stratum] bear the stamp of creations composed solely for the sake of the delight in beautiful poetry."⁹ For Leaf, this stratum includes such highlights as Book Nine's Embassy Scene; Book Eighteen's Shield of Akhilles; and Book Twenty Two's ransoming of Hektor: among the most celebrated passages in Western poetry. (Leaf also includes in the third stratum what he views as some unfortunate touches, including the Catalogue of Ships—an extension of the second's stratum's penchant for local color—and Achilles' surreal fight with the river Xanthus.) Thus, it is not the case that the analysts demonize every aspect of subsequent strata—or fetishize every aspect of the kernel—but that they have a clear (even confident) assessment of the *Iliad's* compositional history, of narrative harmony, and of logic. Accretions to the *Iliad* are thus a matter of discrimination, to be vetted and measured by the science of philology and the knowledge of the past.

Shewan's *Homeric Games*—which razes an already ridiculous poem to complete nonsense—is then largely a parody of Analytic scholarship, and it's hard to say that Shewan much exaggerates the rhetoric of analysts such as Leaf; when in fullest feather, analysts could produce some breathtakingly harsh verdicts on the efficacy and even competence of their poet(s). For instance, on *Iliad* 8.184-212 (concerning a boast from Hektor, and Hera's subsequent outrage), Leaf complains the lines are "confused and absurd," "exaggerated," and that they are "weak in themselves, contradict the fine introduction to the book, and have no bearing whatever on the story."¹⁰ Line 9.320 introduces "a pointless generality" that "terribly weak[ens]" Achilles' speech and should therefore be struck from the text; the whole of Book 10 "forms no essential part of the story of the *Iliad*" (423). Book 14 is a fount of aesthetic offense: individual lines and scenes are by turns "interpolated" (14.40); "very suspicious" (14.49-52); "needless" and "incongruous" (14.114-25); or even simply and damningly "not Homeric" (14.136), though this last verdict rather begs the question.¹¹ All of Book 9—assigned by Leaf to the Third Stratum—"intruded" onto the main story at a late date, piggy-backing onto the aesthetically lacking Book 8, which is "destitute of claims to be an original work" (1.370-371). A particularly ingenious bit of untangling takes place in Book 13, in which Leaf must assign the *Aristeia of Idomeneus* to the Second Stratum—a bit of localized hero worship—while

9 Leaf and Bayfield 1908: xx.

10 Unless otherwise noted, condemnations of individual lines and books are from Leaf 1900.

11 For my own attempt to resurrect a line deemed a later Athenian interpolation by Leaf—*Iliad* 3.144—see Jenkins 1999: 207-226.

the adjacent third-stratum *Deceiving of Zeus* includes a “violent regression” of time that would seem “beyond all reason” to the poem’s first listeners (2:62). With the philological equivalent of a *cri de coeur*, Leaf says of the end of the *Aristeia* (2:2): “All is confusion.”

Shewan’s *Homeric Games at an Ancient St. Andrew’s*, then, takes the rhetoric, haughtiness, and even angst of Leaf’s analytic position and (amusingly) incorporates it into the commentary itself; in fact, the very first sentence emphasizes that the preface serves “to make some things clearer from the outset to the ordinary human reader who is not endowed with the intuitive powers of a Higher Critic” (v). That is to say, Shewan wittily divides the reading public into the ordinary and the high—and we ordinary souls have little chance of understanding the work on our lonesome, so to speak. Therefore, the commentary introduces an exuberant interpreter of a recently discovered Homeric fragment on the Homeric games of *kriket* and *goff* (*cricket* and *golf*); for simplicity’s sake, we shall dub this interpreter “Shewan,” though this narrative voice tends to swing widely from caustic commentary on analytic methods to faux-naïve endorsement of them.¹² Throughout this fake—or, better, metaphilological—commentary, Shewan provides a running polemic against Higher Criticism: unable to make much headway against the Analytics in “traditional” scholarship, Shewan thus turns to humor and parody to make (for him) a deadly serious point. In a surprising moment in the introduction, he offers to his students what appear to be sincere condolences: “If haply, [this commentator] should tender to generate or stimulate in their youthful hearts an interest in, and possibly a determination to solve, the Homeric Question, he expresses his regret and pity in advance.” (vii) This “Analytic” commentary, then, is intended to squash admiration for Analytic theory.

The commentary is divided into two parts: a running textual exegesis of the 573-line poem, and a host of appendixes and additional matter, mostly relegated to an amusingly placed *Prolegomena* (located, ironically, at the end of the work). It begins, however, with a prefatory 28-line poem that differs from the rest of the commentary because it is composed in elegiac couplets (not Homeric hexameters) and because it is naked of both a translation and commentary: presumably, this is the voice of Shewan, not “Shewan.” Notably, after an invocation to the muses of writing (Μοῦσαι Γραμματικάί, 1), in which he invokes their aid as he travels down Homeric pathways (Ὀμη-

12 In this respect, “Shewan” prefigures the eccentric commentator in Vladimir Nabokov’s novel *Pale Fire*, which purports to be a standard academic commentary on a recent poem, but which reveals itself as a damning—and often hilarious—psychological portrait of the philologist Charles Kinbote, who fancies himself the King of Zembla.

ρείους ὁδοῦς, 8), Shewan next constructs the character of the invidious Higher Critic (such as, for example, Walter Leaf):

μή ποτέ τις εἴτησιν ἐμὲ πταίσαντα νοήσας
 οἰμῶν πορθήτωρ παντόσοφος Κριτικός
 (ἐκ γένεος Κριτικῶν οὗς Ὑψιτέρους καλέουσιν
 οὐνεκ' ἐς αἰπήεντ' οὐρανὸν ἴκεθ' ὕβρις·)
 μουσοπάτακτε Σκῶτε, ἄλις· τίπτ' οὐατ' ἀνιᾶς
 οὕτω ἄμουσα πλέκων βαρβαρόφωνος ἔπη;
 μέτρα δὲ νηλειῶς παναπήμονα τίπτε φονεύεις
 οὔτε τι συηκρούσεων ἔμπαιος οὔτε τομῶν;...
 ὡς ποτέ τις ἐρέει, ψογερός θήρ· (13-20, 23)

I hope that no all-knowing Critic, out of that tribe of critics called “The Higher” on account of their *hubris* that touches lofty heaven, may see me stumble and say: “You Muse-clobbering Scotsman, enough! Why are you assaulting our ears with words so unmusical, singing in a language not your own? Why do you heartlessly slaughter the meter—a meter totally defenseless!—when you’ve no skill in either the joins or the enjambements? ...” Whoever says such a thing: why, he’s a querulous cur.

For the bulk of the commentary, Shewan promulgates the fiction that the poem is really that of Arctinus of Miletus, an otherwise shadowy presence and a purported student of Homer;¹³ in this prefatory poem, however, the “voice” is Shewan’s, “the Muse-clobbering Scotsman,” whose metrical and tonal infelicities can only attract the scorn of critics. And not just any critics, but the so-called “Higher Critics” of Shewan’s scholarly circle: Shewan’s enmity is thus personal. In fact, the preface seems a riff on Callimachus’ similar complaint in the prologue to his Hellenistic poem the *Aitia*, a preemptive strike against presumable critics: “The Telchines grumble at my song: fools who’ve never been chummy with the Muse ...” (*Aitia* 1-2)¹⁴ Shewan thus aligns himself the voice (and the sensibilities) of an artist, defending the Muse, paradoxically, against the excesses of Criticism. Shewan’s characterization of higher criticism here is of a piece with his later, humorous, exaggerations: to wit, that higher critics exist only to belittle and dissect original poetry, whether works on a macro-scale—like the Homeric poems—or even this modern, slighter preface. For Shewan, the Higher Critics exist chiefly to complain and deride.

“Shewan’s” commentary on Arctinus’ *Homeric Games* thus constitutes a running polemic with the type of Analytic criticism that was, on Shewan’s view, destroying the proper appreciation of Homeric poetry. On lines 70-87,

13 From the entry in the *Suda*, itself quoting Artemon Fr. 2 FHG: “Son of Teleus, descendant of Nauteus, Milesian, an epic poet (ἔποποιός), and a student of Homer.”

14 For a massive exploration of the literary brawls between Callimachus and his detractors, see Cameron’s *Callimachus and His Critics* (1995).

we see something both of Shewan's wit and his *modus operandi*: the passage—on a particularly pitched game of cricket between older “Phosils” and St. Andrews’ Amazons—introduces the lead male, Melanippus, as he prepares his bat, and dons his *kriket* gear (κρικετέντεα, 79). The passage is chocka-block with new-fangled Greek (including a sporting blazer, βληζήρα, 80, flannel “unmentionables,” φλανέλησιν οὐκ ὀνομαστήσιν, 82-83, and, naturally, a wicket, φικέτη, 92, with a lovely introductory digamma); the passage naturally earns the scorn of Higher Critics. On 71-76: “Here we have, for the critics’ great delectation, a genuine Ὀμηρόκεντρον or cento, made up of lines from the *Iliad* and Aristophanes ... It does not seem to be altogether true that it is easier to steal his club from Hercules than a verse from Homer. But it is very difficult to spare our lines. They are not mere στοιβή or ‘padding.’ They introduce the Phosil protagonist. Still they must go. αἰδέομαι κριτικούς!” The price of revering the critics, over revering the text, is steep: though the passage is essential and makes crucial *dramatic* sense, still it must go, on the basis of too many parallels (and purported plagiarism) from other texts. This will leave the work with a gaping hole in its narrative, but that lamentable lacuna—as Shewan wittily intimates—is the price of analysis. Shewan continues in this vein on lines 80-87: “[A]n evident interpolation. It is hard to have to jettison so interesting a description, but the Higher Criticism has to steel its heart against all emotion except spite against the text.” The fangs, as they say, are bared: for Shewan, Higher Criticism is primarily anti-art, propelled by screwy logic, and culminating, sadly, in spite.

Shewan's criticism need not be of anonymous Critics; in fact, he gleefully tweaks the scholarship of Leaf himself. As the cricket match swings into full gear, Polemusa—the Amazon antagonist to our beloved, if cranky, Phosil—unexpectedly rhapsodizes on the inevitability of aging, and the ineluctable passage of time. Even her beauty shall fade, though her “golden locks [are] as pretty as ever the Graces knew” (144). The commentator's verdict? Lines 141-8 are “inorganic and probably interpolated ... Then there is an outrage on good taste such as never disfigures the genuine old epic, in the shape of two *puns*. (All the passages in which Homer indulges in *paronomasia*, and these are a good many, must be ‘late.’)” Again, Shewan takes aim at what he views as an arbitrary rule of Higher Criticism: that genuine epic doesn't pun, therefore any puns (such as the passage's κουρείω/κουράων and Πριάμοιο/πριάμην) must be late and excised. Worse yet, the passage boasts a “wrong” Indo-European morphology: “τρύχεσσι in 148 is a wrong formation and therefore a ‘false archaism.’ Such a *faux pas* is a fault so glaring, and of consequences so damning to a passage that the critics do not trust themselves to say much about mistakes of this kind. We follow their example. We can correct to κιβδήλησι τρύχεσσι, but (as Dr Leaf says of the Doloneia, the one lay that is a disgrace to the *Iliad*) the passage is ‘not worth’ the

trouble.)” There is a lot to unpack here. First, there is Shewan’s engagement with linguistics: he accepts that certain formulations are more likely than others, and proposes a possible solution by dropping an optional iota from the previous word. Shewan is thus reconciled to the notion that there’s some work to be done on the Homeric texts. But then the twist of the knife: it’s so much *easier* to follow the example of the Higher Critics and simply jettison the whole shebang, as Leaf did in his analysis of Book 10 of the *Iliad*. The charge: laziness, as Shewan uses Leaf’s own language against him.

Contradictions and aimless juxtapositions form no small part of “Shewan’s” catalogue of Homeric offenses. Thus his condemnation of line 176, concerning the thundering of Zeus and its likeness to the rumbling of a morning coal-cart: “The contrast between Zeus and a coal-cart is ridiculous.—This reminds us that effects from contrast are rightly banned by the Higher Criticism, though writers in all literatures and in all ages are not averse to them.” Here, a purely subjective argument is used to scuttle a line from the poem; “Shewan” admits that other literary artists may mix high and low linguistic registers, but never (he asserts without proof) a Homeric one. Moreover, “Shewan” notes that Jebb and Leaf are particularly exercised over such contradictions in *Iliad* 9, 10, and 24, even though the first book—the core of their *Ur-Ilias*—is just as contradictory. Shewan is outraged by what he considers to be purely arbitrary considerations of decorum and applicability.

Leaf, Jebb, and the Analytics are not the only target of Shewan’s wrath: the so-called *Cambridge Ritualists*—a loose-knit group of Cambridge scholars with ties to anthropology—also bear some blame for the desecration of classical literature. At 167-72, a particularly well-hit ball flies heavenward to Olympus, nearly striking—and potentially killing—Zeus. This passage is not altogether to the commentator’s liking: “The name Δεὺς, which recurs [at] 497, seems to savour of the New Theology. The lines can be cut out, and the passage reads better without them ... Yet the incident is an interesting one, and we can hardly avoid speculating as to its origin ... [I]s the flight of the ball to the clouds a reminiscence of the ancient rain-making by the Phosil Medicine-Man Melanippos? Or is it one more instance of King-killing? If so, it will be welcome by Mr. Frazer and Mr. A.B. Cook, with whom instances do not abound.” This is, of course, a joke: Frazer’s voluminous *The Golden Bough* in fact abounds with ur-myths of King-killing, and Cook’s still-nascent *Zeus* likewise draws on legend and ritual as an integral part of Greek myth.¹⁵ One doesn’t detect here the level of malice aimed at the Analytics,

15 On Frazer’s posthumous reputation, see Ackerman 1991: 46: “... *The Golden Bough* is both the culmination and the swan song of old-style evolutionary anthropology. Nineteen eleven, when the third edition (in twelve volumes) began to appear, was one of the

but the metaphilological strain still runs strong: Shewan uses his commentary to comment on schools of criticism as much as—perhaps more than—the putative “text” itself.

One senses a certain amount of the commentator’s exhaustion towards the end of the commentary: there is only so much pique that can be slathered over 600 lines. In a scene of humiliation near the end of the epic—in which particularly rambunctious *goffers* are publicly rebuked—the crowd jeers bitterly and laughs sweetly at once (αὐτὰρ ἑταῖροι/πικρὸν κερτομέοντες ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς ἠδὺ γέλασσαν, 551-2). The commentator opines: “Something of an *oxymoron* ... The absurdity is so great that the rules of the Higher Criticism require that the line should go. But it cannot be got rid of. Let us say that the line was written when Sappho’s γλυκύπικρον ἔρος was in fashion, and *volitabat per ora virum*. That would help to date the passage, as the lion-skins help the critics with the Doloneia. (We have referred to that before, but we really can’t get over it.)” On the one hand, the commentator locates a possible interpretative crux in the text: the tension between the sweetness of the laughter and the sting of the criticism. (We could, if we wish, attempt a meta-metaphilological reading here: are these not *exactly* the twin artistic aims of Shewan’s commentary as a whole?) The line is allowed to stay, however, *not* because it is an interesting or arresting transformation of a Sapphic theme—of *eros*, the bittersweet—but simply because it might help *date* the poem. In Higher Criticism, literary concerns always take a backseat to a timeline.

“Shewan’s” ninety-odd pages of pseudo-commentary manage an impressive number of variations on satire, outrage, and sarcasm; but there is a limit to this parodic structure, and Shewan wisely changes tactics after the completion of the poem. In his *Prolegomena*—which wittily chases the commentary—Shewan adopts a different rhetorical tact, but still manages to combine the *form* of scholarly argument with the *content* of satire and rebuke. By comparison, the blows in the commentary are merely glancing: the *Prolegomena* tackles the Analysts head on. By composing two different, yet clearly interrelated idylls, on *kriket* and *goff*, Shewan thus invites a miniature version of “The Homeric Question,” or something like “The Arctinus

last years in which such a book could have been greeted with enthusiasm by (some of) Frazer’s colleagues and the general public.” Frazer’s rhapsody on the ill-fated King of the Woods still has the power to charm (Frazer 1911: 9): “He was a priest and a murderer; and the man for whom he looked was sooner or later to murder him and hold the priesthood in his stead ... Surely no crown ever lay uneasier, or was visited by more evil dreams, than his.” On Cook’s *Zeus* (first finding monograph form in 1914), Ackerman 1991: 120 offers: “It is, quite simply, an unreadable book.” For Cook’s own stab at the “King-of-the-Woods” problem—with Virbius as a refraction of the double-faced god of the sky—see Cook 1925.2: 417-422.

Question”: are these two poems the work of one hand or many? Shewan’s narrator naturally adopts the principles of Homeric Higher Criticism, which has miraculously “*e coelo descendit!*” (The narrator continues his rhapsody: “Its light [is] our guide on our *tenebricosum iter*; be it our Ariadne’s thread as we wander through the mazes of our proof that the *Alexad* was a Traditional Book ...” (97-98)) Shewan thus alternately compares Higher Criticism to *anabasis*—an ascent from the underworld of ignorance—and to a friendly, interpreting thread: the solution to a literally labyrinthine problem. As the narrator laments, the precepts of the Higher Criticism have been “enshrined in many German, British, and Dutch treatises” but have not, alas, been “formally codified,” thus opening Higher Criticism to misrepresentation. By setting out their canonical rules in “handy, authoritative form”—as in a brochure or advertisement—the narrator thus attempts “to help clear” Higher Critics from “slander.”

What follows, of course, is slander.

The next fifteen precepts for Higher Criticism are lengthy, erudite, and almost entirely facetious; for malice, however, none can match Precept Number one: “If a thing can be described as peculiar or rare, the passage in which it occurs is late or spurious or both. If a thing is not peculiar or rare, but occurs more than once, that is clearly due to plagiarism or imitation. These two propositions are the Alpha and Omega of Homeric Criticism.” (99) Shewan’s language here is both lofty—“the Alpha and Omega”—and deeply absurd: taken together, these two propositions ensure that nearly *every word* of classical poetry is either late, spurious, plagiarized, or imitated. In other words, Higher Criticism cannot, on Shewan’s view, account for traditionality, originality or, certainly, for genius; and Precept Number One, though amusingly cast in the form of a logical syllogism, in fact argues for the illogicality of *all* Higher Criticism. Its ironclad precepts can never accept an efflorescence of true art.

Certain aspects of “Shewan’s” commentary receive even bolder treatment in the *Prolegomena*. Precept number five points out the inconsistencies in arguing for early or late lays—Critics can bend any argument to their will—and especially enjoins a Higher Critic to appeal to a personage of unimpeachable clout: if someone tries to defend the authenticity of a “late” passage, “the reply should be that the verse has been suspected by Zenodotus, Bentley, Nauck, Fick, Leaf or some other authority ... [T]hose who descend to the defence of what is late cannot be too severely dealt with” (101). For Shewan, the invocation of e.g. Johann August Nauck¹⁶ is something akin to capital punishment: the truant defender of “late” Homer must

16 See Sandys 1908: 149-152 for an overview of Nauck’s prodigious philological output, including editions of the *Odyssey* (1874) and *Iliad* (1877).

be disciplined with the critical equivalent of an H-bomb. The Higher Critics have thus developed a cliquish hagiography, with modern critics joining ancient critics as sovereign authorities on the Homeric-ness of Homer. For someone like Shewan—on the outside of the circle, so to speak—this alliance of critics must have seemed particularly galling.

As in the commentary, Shewan appeals to comparative literature as a defense against the Critics; as he has previously invoked Shakespeare and Milton so too does he point out the irregularities in modern works, which abound still in “inconsistencies, discrepancies, contradictions, [and] duplications,” even through the invention of printing (101). However, as a precept, “Shewan” argues that any discrepancies point to a passage that is “obviously ungenune”; in Arctinus’ own poem, the episode of the goddess Athene’s intervention in the *kriket* contest is impossible to reconcile with the description of the gods’ (non-interventionist) gaze from Olympus. Therefore: “It is impossible that both passages can be original. One or other must be spurious. We have condemned both. It seemed the simpler way.” (102). In contradistinction to Shewan’s more leisurely, periodic sentences, this particular precept jabs the reader with its punchy faux-simplicity, which mirrors “the simpler way” of the logic. If there is a problem, condemn everything. Problem solved.

Precepts 13 and 14 are (amusingly) banished to the back of the book—even further than the *Prolegomena*—while the final precept concludes with a bang: “... as a general working principle, you must be extremely strict with your poet. Do not treat him *as* a poet. Do not admit that he has any art or technique. Explain everything by interpolation, or botching, or harmonizing, or baffled expurgation.” (108) An expository footnote is even more pointed: “It is right—for the purposes of Dissection—to presume guilt and leave innocence to be established by some cranky Unitarian.” Higher Critics rightly treat texts like criminals—conniving and deceptive—to be occasionally defended by mean-spirited Unitarians. Here, the emotional aspects of the debate are turned on their head: the Unitarians as portrayed as curmudgeonly, the Higher Critics as dispassionate and reasonable.

One might think that after this final precept, Shewan might start wrapping matters up; but lo!, he has just begun to fight. He moves from the Higher Criticism’s inviolate principles to the ongoing fights within Homeric Criticism: the argument thus moves from the abstract to the very personal and contemporary. Higher Critics, after all, had only been working at the kernel for about a century; the “present evisceration” of Homer is thus “merely provisional” (112). Happily chopping away at Homer, Higher Criticism must be followed “to the death, as we follow our political leaders, through bad and good report, though every twist and turn...” In other words, Higher Critics prove their academic *bona fides* by remaining imper-

vious to persuasion; this also hints at Shewan's frustrations as an increasingly ostracized scholar in an increasingly polarized academy. In a tour-de-force of showmanship, Shewan attacks one dating of Homer's kernel by dissecting the fictional Arctinus in the same fashion. This particular argument hinges on Hempl's dating of the disappearance of the digamma to as early as 1800 BCE, based on the evidence of the Phaistos disk. "Shewan" therefore dates the kernel of Arctinus' poem to about 2000 BCE. Ever a careful scholar, "Shewan" anticipates a possible counter-argument: "But it will be objected that Arctinus was not born till twelve centuries after that. The objection is trivial. It only shews that Arctinus did not compose the *Kern* ... He was a *Bearbeiter*. That is the answer. You do not easily catch a man napping who works by the Higher Criticism." (114)

Accordingly, Shewan next turns to a preoccupation of Higher Criticism—the gaggle of possible interpolators that has adulterated our beloved Arctinus: a Deipnosophist (D), a Sportsman (S), a Dress and Toilet specialist (DT), and a Joker (J). DT, in particular, is envisioned by "Shewan" as a woman who flourished during the Greek zenith of dress, that is to say, Minoan times. This gendering of DT seems a transparent swipe at Butler's *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897); if not exactly an analyst, Butler was nevertheless willing to entertain an eccentric notion of Homeric authorship, as he argued that the *Odyssey* was most likely composed by a young girl raised in Trapani, on the Western coast of Sicily. Butler's apparently sincere work seems to vacillate between admiration for women and a strangely blinkered evaluation of their artistic abilities. The following remark is, alas, typical: "Phenomenal works imply a phenomenal workman, but there are phenomenal women as well as phenomenal men, and though there is much in the 'Iliad' which no woman, however phenomenal, can be supposed at all likely to have written, there is not a line in the 'Odyssey' which a woman might not perfectly well write, and there is much beauty which a man would be almost certain to neglect."¹⁷ Butler especially delights in pointing out the authoress' mistakes concerning animal husbandry, ship-construction, falconry, and other realms of masculine expertise; but the *Odyssey's* "charm" is in abundance, and so points to female authorship. Likewise, Shewan's Toilette expert is responsible for "absurd" scenes of dressing and disrobing, "frivolities" that later male redactors would attempt to excise from the work itself. Shewan thus applies exactly the same standards of artistry and gender to Homer that Butler does, puncturing both Butler's logic and his flowery rhetoric.

17 Butler 1897: 9. I quote from the appallingly titled section "A Woman's natural Mistakes."

Having lambasted the Higher Critics, Shewan returns again to the “new school” of anthropologically-inflected critics whom he had already ridiculed in the commentary. The inclusion of Amazon cricketers naturally reflects the temporary efflorescence of a *Gynaekokrateia*, or rule-by-female (thereby tweaking Johann Bachofen’s 1861 *Mother Right: An Investigation of the Religious and Juridical Character of Matriarchy in the Ancient World*); *gynaekokrateia* is neatly supported by archaeological evidence, including a painting of a tentatively identified “ancient lady *Goffer*” with an ancient driver—or perhaps putter—in hand.¹⁸ (It’s unclear how Shewan feels about data from material culture in general; but the patently goofy painting doesn’t inspire confidence.) In the meantime, Shewan argues that a more abstract rendering of the poem’s narrative structure reveals an *Urmythos* in which the hero “Alexos will be old Sol himself changing from south to north at the solstice” (128) while hounded by Zeus’ bolts—another jab at Cook’s theories of sky-worship.¹⁹

By this point, one feels that Shewan—if not “Shewan”—has fairly well shot every arrow in his quiver; and so he has. The conclusion of the “Prolegomena”—except the additional ethnographic appendices on golf, bridge, smoking, and the like—rehashes many of Shewan’s criticisms of current Homeric philology. His alter ego, “Shewan,” meanwhile identifies “the audacity of the Higher Criticism” as “its greatest asset”: “the greater the audacity of the theory, the greater the certainty that brother Dissectors will style it ‘brilliant.’” (132) The inclusion of “brother” is telling: there is a fraternity of critics to which Shewan will never belong, and this ostracism obviously eats at his soul. “Shewan” might have fast friends on the continent, but “Homeric Games” leaves the impression that Shewan the scholar is fighting the

18 As Bachofen outlines in his introduction to *Mother Right*, “The main purpose of the following pages is to set forth the moving principle of the matriarchal age, and to give its proper place in relationship both to the lower stages of development and to the higher levels of culture.” (1967: 69-70) For a surprisingly matriarchal account of Hesiod, see 1967: 81; for ruminations on the chthonian-maternal mysteries of pre-history, see 1967: 90. For Bachofen, matriarchy constitutes “a sign of cultural progress, a source and guarantee of its benefits, [and] a necessary period in the education of mankind” (1967: 91).

19 On Cook’s theories of a purely astral Zeus *Keraunós*, “the destroyer,” see 1925.2: 11-13. “At the very moment when the sky was darkest Zeus vindicated his character as ‘the Bright One.’ The brilliant flash that glittered for an instant against the lowering storm sufficiently proved his presence and his power.” In similar vein, Jane Ellen Harrison’s *Prolegomena to the Study of Religion* excavates the underlying myths of such “classical” authors as Homer. An example: “Homer himself is ignorant of, or at least avoids all mention of, the dark superstitions of a primitive race; he knows nothing at least ostensibly of the worship of the dead, nothing of the cult at [Aigisthos’s] tomb, nothing of his snake-shape; but Homer’s epithets came to him already crystallized and came from the underlying stratum of religion which was based on the worship of the dead.” (1922: 336)

good fight absolutely alone. Ignored for his sober, philological work on Homer, Shewan fights back—metaphilologically—with scholarly satire, sarcasm, travesty, and caricature. The parody is only effective because the classical commentary—especially as adopted by Analysts—was already ingrained as an essential part of the education of an Oxbridge scholar and thus had a built-in community of philologists both as audience and as targets. “Shewan’s” use of the line-by-line commentary is especially pointed, since a line-by-line commentary naturally lends itself to minute observations about individual words, and not necessarily to a coherent or unified vision of the whole. Applying analytic principles in a way even an analyst might find dismaying, Shewan sends up—and destroys—the Analytic pretense to reasonable philological method.

In the final (meta)analysis, it’s only fitting for our long-suffering and “Muse-clobbering Scotsman” to have the last word. After demolishing his own “Homeric Games” with an unbridled zeal, “Shewan”—or perhaps Shewan?—delicately, if archly, tips his hat towards the Higher Critics and their Homeric legacy: “[W]e have baked the cake on their principles. Let them eat, and if they can, digest it.” (127)²⁰

20 Many thanks to Erwin Cook for his astute observations and comments on this piece; the remaining errors, philological or metaphilological, are my own.

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