Spring 2007

Writing and Imitation: Greek Education in the Greco-Roman World

Rubén R. Dupertuis
Trinity University, rdupertu@trinity.edu

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INTRODUCTION

The imitation of a handful of accepted literary models lies at the core of the Greco-Roman educational process throughout all of its stages. While at the more advanced levels the relationship to models became more nuanced, the underlying principle remained the imitation of those authors who had achieved greatness.[1] Quintilian explains the rationale as follows:

> For there can be no doubt that in art no small portion of our task lies in imitation, since although invention came first and is all-important, it is expedient to imitate whatever has been invented with success. And it is a universal rule of life that we should wish to copy what we approve in others. It is for this reason that boys copy the shapes of letters that they may learn to write, and that musicians take the voices of their teachers, painters the works of their predecessors, and peasants the principles of agriculture which have been proved in practice, as models for their imitation. (*Inst. or.* 10.2.1–2)

The emphasis on the imitation of models does not stop with a student's education. The primary and secondary stages of education were specifically designed to lay the groundwork for rhetorical training, where a would-be *rhetor* or writer would learn the subtle art of imitation more fully. Students approached what is essentially the same set of texts at all stages of their education, but in increasingly complex and nuanced ways. The end result was what might be thought of as a mimetic compositional ethos. As *rhetors* and writers began to practice their craft, the years of training and preparation created, as Ruth Webb puts it, "certain modes of thinking about language, about the classical texts which served as models and about the relation to language in general."[2] These modes

1. For discussions of literary *mimesis* or imitation see Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace*, esp. 25–58; Elaine Fanthan, "Imitation and Decline," 102–16; Russell, "De Imititatione," 1–16; Brodie, "Greco-Roman Imitation of Texts," 17–46; MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 3–7.

2. Webb, "The *Progymnasmata* as Practice," 290.

of thinking are evident in the widespread imitation of literary models in the literature of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

In what follows I will examine how one learned to read and write Greek in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods with an eye on the implications these educational practices may have on the study of Jewish and Christian texts of the period. In particular, I am interested in the mimetic compositional ethos created by the centrality of a small group of classical texts that served as models in education, and later, in literary practice.

GREEK EDUCATION in the LATE HELLENISTIC and ROMAN PERIODS

Evidence for education in the Greco-Roman world comes primarily from two different types of sources. To the information provided by elite writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Quintilian, and Cicero, among others, has been added in recent study the data from Greek educational papyri (mostly from Egypt) representing, by and large, both a different geographical region and a different segment of society.[3] The latter have helped balance out the somewhat idealizing tendencies among the elite educationalists—the system proposed in the *Republic* was, after all, designed to produce philosopher-kings, and Quintilian's educational program in his *Institutio oratoria* was designed to produce the ideal orator. Despite differences in scope, the portraits of education that emerge from both sets of evidence are similar.

Literate education was divided into three mostly-fixed stages. There was some flexibility, however, in how and when some of the elements could be covered, especially in the early stages of the progression. The first elements could be taught in homes or subsumed by teachers of the second stage of education. Furthermore, the first stage need not last five to six years, as the basic tools needed to move on could be acquired in two or three years.[4]

At the primary level of education students—mostly boys[5]—first learned the alphabet, then worked their way through various increasingly difficult syllable combinations.[6] They then copied and memorized lists of words arranged alphabetically or, in some cases, thematically. Janine Debut has suggested that the word lists were used by teachers for more than just practicing reading and

3. Until recently, the standard studies of Greek and Roman education were those of Marrou (*Education in Antiquity*) and Bonner (*Education in Ancient Rome*); both drew primarily from the elite educationalists. The evidence provided by the extant educational papyri is incorporated into the more recent treatments of education by Morgan (*Literate Education*) and Cribiore (*Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*; and idem, *Gymnastics of the Mind*).

4. Booth, "Elementary and Secondary Education in the Roman Empire," 1–14.

5. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 74–101.

6. For discussions of the first stage of education, see Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 50–53, 160–84; and Marrou, *Education in Antiquity*, 142–49.

expanding vocabulary; they were probably used to teach students basic knowledge of the world. Among the areas covered by the vocabulary words in the extant lists are mythology, history, geography, names of philosophers associated with the well-known schools, and the names of things.[7] After word lists, students copied and memorized short passages from poetry, maxims and *chreiai,* then longer passages taken, most often, from Homer. Already at the first stage can be seen the importance of the imitation of models, as well as the creation of a fairly manageable understanding of the world drawn predominantly from the world of poetry and myth. While the above represents the typical or ideal progression, some of the papyri indicate that students could begin to learn to write their names or copy brief passages while learning the letters or immediately after.[8] The emphasis at this stage on copying did not necessarily imply an understanding of the model texts. At the completion of this stage, students' ability to read and write was still somewhat limited.

At the second level of education a significantly smaller number of students began to apply knowledge of grammar to the material they had already covered at the primary stage.[9] Letters were classified into consonants and vowels, syllables were assigned their metric value, words were divided into parts of speech—nouns, verbs, participles, etc.—based, by the first century BCE, primarily on Dionysius Thrax's grammar.[10] In addition, short sentences were declined through the different cases and longer passages, almost exclusively from the poets, were copied, memorized, studied and paraphrased. At this point, *scholia* appear, predominantly on Homer.[11]

The third level of education was usually either rhetorical or philosophical training—most chose rhetoric because it provided the basic course of training for public life. In addition to giving (mostly) elite men the tools needed for careers in politics, rhetorical training was the basic course for literary composition.[12] The transition from the secondary stage of education, with its emphasis on grammatical analysis, to training in composition and declamation was accomplished through preliminary rhetorical exercises known as *progymnasmata.*[13] These exercises were designed to equip students with the building

7. Debut, "De l'usage des listes de mots," 261–74.

8. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 167–71.

9. For discussions of the second stage of education, see Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 185–219; Marrou, *Education in Antiquity,* 160–75.

10. Morgan argues that grammatical texts are unattested before the Roman period (*Literate Education,* 58, 154–62).

11. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 206.

12. Luce, *The Greek Historians,* 113–15; Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography,* x.

13. Four manuals of these exercises survive. For a discussion and summary of the extant *progymnasmata,* see Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors,* 54–72; Webb, "The *Progymnasmata* as Practice," 289–316; and Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 221–30. The most relevant of the four for this study is the text of preliminary exercises by Aelius Theon, as it is typically dated to the first century CE; for the most recent critical edition, see Patillon and Bolognesi, *Aelius Théon: Progymnasmata.* For a recent English translation of the four extant *progymnasmata,* see Kennedy, *Progymnasmata,* 3–72.

blocks for later compositions by marching them through a rigorously controlled process that gradually increased in difficulty. Although ordered differently in the extant *progymnasmata*, students at this stage worked their way through different types of exercises starting with *chreia*, narrative, fable, *topos*, *prosopopoeia*, *syncrisis*, *encomion* and invective, and speeches on law. Each of these elements could be expanded, reduced, refuted, or defended based on a rather rigid set of guidelines given to students. Students could also be asked to rewrite the model in various tenses and numbers.

As was the case with the first two stages of education, at the heart of the *progymnasmata* was the imitation of literary models taken from a store of classical and Hellenistic texts, most of which were poetry. In addition to giving students facility in a literary language modeled on classical authors, the exercises provided them with a repertoire of narratives drawn principally from Homeric epic and tragedy. The texts students encountered in the *progymnasmata* consisted of an expanded version of the material to which they had been introduced through the word lists, short passages of poetry, and *chreia* of the first and second stages of education. As Webb notes, "the *progymnasmata* presented the students with a closed, fictional universe, with predictable values and roles for characters, and an imaginary world, with set rules of engagement with which they can work."[14] After the *progymnasmata*, when students moved on to more complex rhetorical training and the actual composition of their own speeches, the compositional ethos of the preliminary exercises continued.

The Models

One of the striking features of Greco-Roman education is its essentially static nature from the fourth century BCE to about the fifth century CE, a remarkable feat for what was essentially a private institution. Cribiore notes that education in the Greco-Roman world functioned "largely independent of societal changes and geography. An attempt at a more defined periodization would not capture the substantially 'frozen' quality of education, particularly in the provinces."[15] The inflexibility of the system and the lack of local color in the examples and models from which students learned may be partly the result of the role of education as a tool of enculturation and as a marker of status and of Greek identity. As such, education was concerned with transmitting and protecting a carefully circumscribed body of texts and attitudes towards those texts.[16] Furthermore, education codified and preserved a somewhat artificial mode of the language that was not subject to the typical linguistic changes over time.[17]

14. Webb, "The *Progymnasmata* as Practice," 304.
15. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 8.
16. Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 90–130.
17. See the discussion of this phenomenon as late as the fifth and sixth centuries CE in Heather, "Literacy and Power in the Migration Period," 177–97.

The sourcebooks and texts used by students and teachers throughout all stages of education were primarily Attic Greek writers. As with knowledge of Greco-Roman education in general, information about which texts were used at different stages of education comes primarily from two different sources. The educational papyri are helpful for gaining an understanding of which authors and texts were used in the early stages of education, while the writings of the elite educationalists, the *progymnasmata,* and rhetorical manuals allow an entry point at a more advanced stage of the same process.

The preeminence of Homer as a literary model in education and literature in the Greco-Roman world is unparalleled. Ronald Hock has shown that Homer is, indeed, the most attested educational text at both the primary and secondary levels, and was prominent as a literary model for students working through the exercises of the *progymnasmata.*[18] In her study of educational papyri from Egypt, Morgan found that where authors can be identified in the school texts, fifty-eight texts are from Homer, twenty are from Euripides, seven are from Isocrates and seven are from Menander.[19] Many other authors are represented just once or twice. In addition, certain works and particular sections within works were more popular in educational settings than others. The *Iliad,* especially its first six books, appears far more often than the *Odyssey.*[20] Euripides is by far the most popular of the tragedians, with his later plays, especially the *Phonissae,* generally being favored over his earlier works.[21] From this evidence, Morgan suggests that in the predominant curricular model in ancient education there were core and peripheral texts used for classroom instruction. Homer stood very firmly at the center of this core, as he was expected to be taught to all students. Outside of that, a few authors formed a second tier. This second grouping of texts, which includes Euripides, Isocrates and Menander, can be placed somewhat closer to the core than Hesiod, who is found in the school texts more infrequently.[22] All other authors belonged to a third tier of even more peripheral texts from which teachers could choose in order to supplement the core texts.[23]

18. Hock, "Homer in Greco-Roman Education," 56–77; see also Marrou, *Education in Antiquity,* 161–63.

19. Morgan, *Literate Education,* 69, 313. On which authors are used in education, see also Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 197–205.

20. Mogan, *Literate Education,* 115–16.

21. Cribiore, "The Grammarian's Choice: The Popularity of Euripides' *Phonissae,*" 241–59.

22. But see Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 197–98.

23. For Morgan this model is part of the unifying and differentiating function of education. Those who made it past the initial stage of education started to become familiar with more "peripheral" authors. This broader knowledge of literature functioned as a passport, of sorts, into elite circles; it was a form of authentication and a mark of "Greekness" (*Literature Education,* 71–89). That literary knowledge could function in this way is supported by Athaneus' *Deipnosophistae,* in which the proceedings of a symposium are narrated, showing how at every turn the participants were expected to have a line from Homer or other (primarily Attic) literature on the tips of their tongues; see the discussion in Hock, "The Cynic Cynulcus among Athenaeus's Deipnosophists," 20–37.

The authors that appear with most frequency in educational texts also correspond to the authors recommended by elite writers on education. The list of recommended reading put forward by Dionysius of Halicarnassus survives only in an epitome. As for poets, he lists Homer first, then Hesiod and Antimachus among others; for drama he lists Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; for comedy he lists only Menander; for history he lists Herodotus, Thucydides, Philistus, Xenophon, and Theopompus; for philosophy he recommends Xenophon and Plato above all others; and finally, he includes Lysias and Demosthenes among rhetors to be read and imitated (*De imitatione* 9.1.1–5.6).[24] For his part, Quintilian actually has two lists in the *Institutio oratoria*. The first is a short starter list for beginning students (*Or.* 1.8.5–12). The second and more complete list, given in the context of his most extended discussion of imitation, is similar to Dionysius' list, the central difference being the inclusion of an analogous list of Latin authors (Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 10.1.45–131).[25] The authors suggested as models in the lists by Dionysius and Quintilian differ very little from those recommended by Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 18.6–19), suggesting that there was general agreement regarding which authors were to be considered good models.

Because I will explore the centrality of Plato's *Republic* for later images of ideal communities in the final section of this study, at this point I want to briefly look at evidence for Plato in education and suggest that Plato should be added to the short list of principal authors students could be expected to encounter in their training. The evidence for knowledge of the writings of Plato is more difficult to find and assess than it is for Homer, whose influence in Greco-Roman education and literature is unequalled. However, by the early stages of rhetorical training Plato belongs among a handful of writers who rank in second place after Homer in popularity. Furthermore, for a general, cultivated audience, Plato's identity as a writer or *rhetor* is at least as important as the philosophical content of his writings.

As one would expect, in the first two centuries CE there was great interest in Plato in philosophical circles.[26] However, as Phillip De Lacy has noted, while Plato's writings were of obvious interest to philosophers, "beyond those circles he had the considerable advantage of being good reading."[27] It is this aspect of Plato's popularity that is of interest here.

There is almost no evidence for the use of Plato's writings in the first and second educational stages. However, in these early stages students might be

24. For the Greek text and French translation, see Germaine Aujac, Ed., *L'Imitation (Fragments, Épitomé)*, 25–40.

25. The list in Dionysius probably served as the basis for the one proposed by Quintilian (Russell, "De Imititatione," 6).

26. See the discussion in Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World*, 93–121. For discussion of the importance of Plato as a source of the images of Socrates in the Hellenistic period, see Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 150–71.

27. De Lacy, "Plato and the Intellectual Life of the Second Century AD," 5.

introduced to Plato indirectly in two ways. First, if the word lists students typically encountered at the first stage of education were also used as the starting point for lessons on mythology, history and names of things, as Debut has suggested, then students might be at introduced to basic aspects of Plato's thought at this point. Most of the lists are dominated by mythological names clustered around different myth cycles or characters and are arranged either alphabetically or thematically. In addition to the mythological themes, moral and democratic principles could be introduced. In the school text known as P. Bour. 1, for example, major philosophical schools are represented by the figures of Thales, Socrates, and Zeno.[28] Furthermore, in this and other lists can be found the names of Gorgias and other historical figures whom Plato makes characters in his dialogues.[29] It is at least possible that some key ideas from Plato could be introduced at this time. Second, students might be introduced to the figure of Plato, though not yet his writings, in the *chreiai* used for various writing exercises. I was unable to find evidence of Plato as the subject in a *chreia* in the extant texts from the early educational stages, but given that Plato is the subject of several *chreiai* in the extant *progymnasmata*, it is likely that students would have been introduced to him as a literary and philosophical figure by the second educational stage.[30]

Clearer evidence for Plato as a target of imitation emerges in the early stages of rhetorical training. In his section on pedagogy, unique among the extant *progymnasmata*, Theon asserts the importance of choosing good models to place before the students: "First of all, the teacher must choose good examples of each exercise from ancient works and make the young learn them by heart" (65.30–66.2).[31] As George Kennedy notes, "by 'ancient' Theon means Attic writings by philosophers, historians and orators of the fifth and fourth centuries BC," since they represent the majority of his ensuing examples.[32] The first example Theon gives is the "*chreia*" found in *Rep.* 1.329c. He also proposes that good examples of mythical narration can be found in Plato's accounts of the ring of Gyges (*Rep.*

28. Debut takes the name of Socrates as representative of Platonism, which is certainly possible, but, as Long has shown, in the Hellenistic period Plato was not the only source of knowledge and images of Socrates ("Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 150–71). For the text of P.Bour. 1, also known as P.Sorbonne 826, see Collart, *Les Papyrus Bouriant*, 17–27.

29. See, for example, P.Chester Beatty, published by Clarysse and Wouters, "A Schoolboy's Exercise," 210–17.

30. Theon, for example, has the following *chreiai*: "Once, when Diogenes was lunching in the *agora* and invited Plato to join him, 'Diogenes,' Plato said, 'how pleasant your lack of pretension would be were it not so pretentious" (98.14–17; Patillon, 21); and "Plato the philosopher used to say that the buds of virtue grow with sweat and toil." (100.14–15; Patillon, 23). Hermogenes has the following: "Plato said that the muses dwell in the souls of those naturally clever" (3.6; Kennedy 76), which can also be found in Nicolaus' *progymnasmata* (4.23; Kennedy, 142). This last example appears elsewhere with Diogenes as the subject; see Hock, and O'Neil, Ed., *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 46–47.

31. Patillon, *Aelius Theon*, 9.

32. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 9 n. 28.

2.359b–60a), the birth of Eros (*Symp.* 203b–c), those in the underworld (*Phd.* 107d–8c, *Grg.* 523a–24a), and the myth of Er in *Rep.* 10.614a–21b (66.2–21).[33] Elsewhere, Plato's description of Sais in *Ti.* 21e–25d is suggested as a model of *ecphrasis* (68.10–12),[34] and both the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic* are put forward as models of rhetorical elaboration and contradiction (95.19–23).[35] Throughout the exercises, Theon treats Plato as a prose writer on whom students should model their style, not necessarily as a philosopher. Plato is most likely one of the "ancient rhetoricians" to whom Theon refers in the opening line of his manual.[36] Only in the *chreiai* in which he is a subject is Plato specifically identified as a philosopher.

While a distinction between the different types of writers is made in the lists of models proposed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Quintilian, the primary reason both writers recommend reading Plato is for his style, not necessarily for the content his philosophy. Dionysius recommends Xenophon and Plato, above all others, for the "grace of their characters, pleasure and grandeur in their writing" (*De imit.* 9.5.1). Quintilian places Plato first, stating, "As to the philosophers, from whom Cicero confesses that he derived much of his own eloquence, who would doubt that Plato is supreme either for acuteness of argument or for his divine, Homeric gift of style. He soars high above prose—'pedestrian language' as the Greeks call it—and seems to me to be inspired not by human genius, but as it were by the oracle of Delphi" (*Inst.* 10.1.81). Quintilian then goes on to recommend Xenophon, Aristotle, and Theophrastus, before noting that the early Stoics paid very little attention to their style, being "shrewd thinkers rather than grand speakers" (10.1.82–84). In Hermogenes' *Peri ideōn,* Plato is similarly recommended as an example of good style. In his discussion of how one attains sweetness of style, Hermogenes cites several passages in Plato as examples of successfully integrating references to poets (1.12.297).[37] And in an extended discussion of panegyric style, Hermogenes identifies Plato as the unrivaled master, specifically citing passages from the *Phaedrus, Gorgias* and the *Symposium* (2.10.386–89). In *On the Sublime* Plato is put forward by Pseudo-Longinus as both the pre-eminent example of literary mimetic emulation or rivalry for his imitation of Homer and as an author who is a fitting target of imitation (13–14). Finally, that Plato was often read for his style and not his philosophical content is suggested by Aulus Gellius' remark that one of his teachers complained that another student's interest in Plato was limited to Plato's style, with no concern for his philosophy (*Noctes Atticae* 1.9.10).

33. Patillon, *Aelius Theon,* 9–10.
34. Patillon, *Aelius Theon,* 12.
35. Patillon, *Aelius Theon,* 60.
36. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata,* 3 n. 4.
37. The passages that are highlighted are *Symp.* 174d citing Homer, *Il.* 10.224; *Rep.* 5.468c–d citing *Il.* 7.321; *Rep.* 5.468e citing Hesiod, *Op.* 122–23; *Symp.* 197c; and *Phaedr.* 241d.

Plato's place in the small group of authors who rank second to Homer is also suggested by the number of surviving fragments listed in Roger Pack's index of Egyptian papyri. By his count there are over six-hundred and seventy extant fragments of Homer, while there are over eighty of Demosthenes, over seventy of both Euripides and Hesiod, forty-three of Isocrates, and forty-two of Plato. By way of comparison, Pack lists twenty-eight of Aeschylus, twenty-seven of Xenophon, twenty of Aristophanes, and ten of Aristotle.[38]

The role of Plato's dialogues as literature and examples of good style cannot be separated from their content and ideas. Nevertheless, the importance of Plato as a rhetorical and literary model made some dialogues more well-known than others. In his study of Plato's dialogues in Dio Chrysostom, Michael Trapp suggests that Dio reveals a preference for six of them: the *Republic, Phaedrus, Phaedo, Gorgias, Clitophon,* and *First Alcibiades.* In addition, Dio displays some knowledge of ten others. Regarding those dialogues of which Dio makes more frequent use, Trapp states, "These are dialogues generally known and read by the cultivated person as part of literate education. The hard, technical dialogues such as *Philebus, Parmenides, Sophist,* and *Cratylus,* the territory of the real philosopher, are conspicuous by their absence. Moreover, in what he chooses to discuss in those dialogues he does call up, Dio keeps firmly to a grammarian's rather than a philosopher's agenda."[39] Dio's use of "mainstream Plato, the works most familiar to rhetorical education and the cultivated general public,"[40] reflects a pattern found elsewhere as well. De Lacy has argued that, while the use of all Plato's dialogues are attested in second-century CE writers, four of them—the *Republic,* the *Phaedrus,* the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*—were among the most favored. Roughly the same dialogues appear with most frequency among second-century Christian writers.[41]

A Mimetic Compositional Ethos

The increasingly complex modes of imitation students learned in the early stages of rhetorical training carried over into rhetorical and literary practice. Citations and allusions of classical authors in elite writers of the Greco-Roman period roughly correspond with the texts used in education.[42] But beyond the specific texts that served as models, the same critical engagement with models attested in the *progymnasmata* can be seen in, for example, writers like Lucian

38. Pack, *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt.* There are limits on how much can be made of this type of evidence, particularly because Pack's index could reflect particularities of Egyptian political and geographical concerns. However, the numbers of identifiable fragments do correspond with popularity in school texts and elite authors, making some generalization possible.

39. Trapp, "Plato in Dio," 236–37.

40. Trapp, "Plato in Dio," 238.

41. Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture,* 2:107–27.

42. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 192–93.

and Dio Chrysostom.[43] Thus, the mimetic ethos of Greco-Roman composition created complex literary and intertextual relationships between authors and their models, typically marked by the following features:[44]

1. *Close familiarity with the predominant models.* The type of reading recommended to students was virtually indistinguishable from memorization. On the subject of reading the masters, Quintilian suggests the following:

> . . . what we read must not be committed to memory for subsequent imitation while it is still in a crude state, but must be softened and, if I may use the phrase, reduced to a pulp for frequent re-perusal. For a long time also we should read none save the best authors and such as are least likely to betray our trust in them, while our reading must be almost as thorough as if we were actually transcribing what we read. (*Inst.* 10.1.19–20)

Similarly, in the context of explaining the benefits of Greek over Latin models, Horace advises would-be writers, "For yourselves, handle Greek models by night, handle them by day" (*Ars poetica* 268–69). In addition to reading and memorization, educationalists advocated paraphrase and translation of the masters.[45]

2. *The imitation of multiple models.* Authors were urged to be familiar with multiple models and to cull the best features from each for their own writing. Cicero gives the example of Zeuxis the painter who chose the best features of five different models for his painting of Helen (*De inventione* 2.1–2). Seneca expresses a similar idea using the metaphor of bees making honey:

> We should follow, men say, the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought it. . . . It is not certain whether the juice which they obtain from the flowers forms at once into honey, or whether they change that which they have gathered into this delicious object by blending something therewith and by a certain property of their breath. . . . We should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is a clearly different thing from that whence it came. (*Epistulae* 84.3–5)

Furthermore, it was important that one model not be singled out above all others, since even great writers had occasional missteps—only the very best of the very best was to be the target of imitation (Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 10.2.24). Imitation was also to be done across genres, as "each branch of literature has its own laws and its own appropriate character. . . . But all forms of eloquence have something in common, and it is to the imitation of this common element that our efforts should be confined" (*Inst. or.* 10.2.22). The imitation of multiple

43. Webb, "The *Progymnasmata* as Practice," 302.

44. I addressed this topic in an abbreviated form in "The Summaries of Acts 2, 4 and 5 and Plato's Republic," 278–80.

45. See, for example, Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.5.4. On the importance of paraphrase and translation, see Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education*, 169–76; and Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace*, 36.

models was also important in order to avoid crossing the (somewhat moveable) line between creative imitation and plagiarism.[46]

3. *Advertising or concealing the imitation.* The relation to a particular model was often obvious. Authors could advertise their dependence, expecting the reader to be aware of the allusion, as in many of Virgil's structural similarities to Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. The ways in which the dependence was advertised could range from the obvious to the subtle—it sufficed for an author to make clear to the reader that he was aware of his resources.[47] Quintilian comments on one such dependence by noting that Menander "often testifies to his admiration for Euripides" (*Inst.* 10.1.69). According to the Seneca (the Elder), "The poet [Ovid] did something he had done with many other lines of Virgil—with no thought of plagiarism, but meaning that his piece of open borrowing should be noticed" (*Suasoriae* 3.7). But just as the imitation of a model could be advertised, it was also often disguised. Macrobius, for example, reports the following: "Sometimes Vergil conceals his imitation of Homer by simply changing the presentation of a passage which he has copied so giving it a different look" (*Saturnalia* 5.16.12–14). Macrobius goes on to give two examples of such theft. In the first Virgil transforms a narrative (*Il.* 20.61) into a simile (*Aen.* 8.243), and in the second Virgil (*Aen.* 10.758) simply says the same thing as Homer regarding the toil-free life of the gods (*Il.* 6.138), but he says it "darkly [*occultissime*]" (*Sat.* 5.16.16).

4. *Measuring creativity.* Given the emphasis on imitation, creativity was measured by how writers handled traditional subjects and themes, not by the originality of the subject matter. Fiske notes that "both creative art and critical theory combined to regard μίμησις τῶν ἀρχαίων, the imitation of the great masters, as the final criterion of a work of art."[48] New stories, in fact, were discouraged, which led to a search for obscure myths.[49] Seneca advises a young writer, "it makes a great difference if you approach a subject that has been exhausted or one where the ground has merely been broken; in the latter case, the topic grows day by day, and what is already discovered does not hinder new discoveries" (*Ep.* 79.6). It is interesting to note that Seneca does not offer the option of writing on something completely new, just topics either often imitated or obscure. "Besides," Seneca continues, "he who writes last has the best of the bargain; he finds already at hand words which when marshaled in a different way, show a new face. And he is not pilfering them, as if they belonged to someone else, when he uses them" (*Ep.* 79.6). The pressing question for a writer was not what subjects to write about, but how to write them.

5. *Rivalry with the masters.* A competitive relationship with the targets of imitation—*aemulatio* in Latin or *zēlos* in Greek—is an integral part of Greco-Roman

46. For a discussion of plagiarism, see Fantham, "Imitation and Decline," 104–11.
47. Russell, "Creative Imitation," 12.
48. Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace*, 37.
49. Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace*, 33.

literary imitation.[50] Literary models provided both a standard toward which to strive as well as a target the student sought to surpass. In *On the Sublime* Pseudo-Longinus suggests thinking about the act of writing as kind of competition in which the masters are present:

> We too, then, when we are working at some passage that demands sublimity of thought and expression, would do well to form in our hearts the question, 'How perchance would Homer have said this, how would Plato or Demosthenes have made it sublime or Thucydides in his history?' Emulation will bring those great characters before our eyes, and like guiding stars they will lead our thought to the ideal standards of perfection. Still more will this be so, if we give our minds the further hint, 'How would Homer or Demosthenes, had either been present, have listened to this passage of mine? How would it have affected them?' (14.1–2)

Writing with Homer or Demosthenes in mind at the level suggested by Pseudo-Longinus would not have been a new experience; rather, it was a more complicated and nuanced instance of the encounter with a carefully guarded and extensively promoted group of literary models that was central in all stages of literary education and continued in literary and rhetorical practice.

JEWISH and CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Perhaps the most significant implication for the study of literature of the period, including Jewish and Christian literature, is that we should expect to find writings that conform to the principles of composition instilled throughout the various stages of education, including attention to the classical models that were the typical targets of imitation in education. Put simply, if someone learned to write Greek, they are highly likely to know those texts typically used in education and rhetorical training. This is virtually assumed in the study of "pagan" literature, but it is not as readily granted for Jewish and Christian literature of the period. The recent work of Dennis R. MacDonald has focused attention on the importance of imitation in education and literary practice, especially for the study of early Christian narrative. MacDonald first applied the understanding of literary imitation to a Christian text in his study of the *Acts of Andrew*, showing it to be a mimetic transformation of multiple models, especially Homer, Euripides, and a handful of Plato's dialogues—precisely those texts that appear most frequently in educational texts. He has subsequently argued that much of the Gospel of Mark and parts of Luke and Acts are creative imitations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[51] MacDonald's work calls into question the use of religious boundaries

50. Russell, "Creative Imitation," 12; and Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace*, 43–45.

51. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer*; idem, "Luke's Eutychus and Homer's Elpenor," 5–24; idem, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?* Thomas Brodie has also been instrumental in calling attention to the importance classical *mimesis* for the study of early Christian literature ("Greco-Roman Imitation," 17–46).

to decide whether a Christian or a Jewish author would have been familiar with certain classical texts. It is more likely the dominant mimetic, literary ethos, not exclusively piety, which determines an author's literary models.[52]

Attention to the mimetic ethos in education and literary practice also has implications for assessments of literary influence. The problem of how to account for literary parallels and how to understand the interrelationships between texts is not a new one, particularly in the related fields of literary criticism, and classical and biblical studies. Classicists have long debated if and how one can precisely determine the intentional use of one text by another, proposing numerous models and criteria for assessing the relationship between texts. For some, establishing a direct literary relationship between two texts requires clear philological dependence,[53] while for others, particularly those influenced by discussions of "intertextuality," such identification is an impossibility since all texts exist in an interconnected web of meaning in which each individual text is a mosaic of quotations and allusions to earlier (unidentifiable) texts.[54] The tendency in biblical studies has been closer to the former model, requiring clear, philological dependence in order to determine direct literary influence. If dependence cannot be established by lexical similarities, the parallels are typically accounted for by the requirements of a genre or the use of literary *topoi*.[55] But the structure of Greco-Roman education, with its emphasis on imitation, complicates matters. Repeated imitations of, allusions and references to a particular author likely lead to the creation of a literary commonplace over time, but do not necessarily diminish the influence of the original target of imitation. As Stephen Hinds and others have shown, in the carefully circumscribed world of Greco-Roman literature both direct allusion and the more general literary *topos* co-exist. He makes a distinction between composition based on "source

52. For imitations of Homer in Jewish texts, see Cousland, "Dionysus Theomachos?," 539–48; and MacDonald, "Tobit and the *Odyssey*," 11–40. See also Hadas, "Plato the Hellenizer," 72–81.

53. For Thomas, for example, there are two possibilities for understanding the similarities between two texts: there is a reference, which he understands as a clear and direct connection, and there is accidental confluence, with no other possibilities in between ("Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference," 171–98, esp. 173). Morgan similarly requires clear philological dependence in order to support claims for a literary allusion (*Ovid's Art of Imitation*, 3).

54. See, for example, Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation*, 23–99.

55. Conzelmann, for example, consistently chooses the use of a *topos* over a direct literary connection when encountering parallels with Greek literature in his work on the Acts of the Apostles. After noting the presence of the term θεομάχος in 5:39, a term prominent in Euripides' *Bacchae*, he is quick to point out that there is no literary dependence. Similarly, Conzelmann does not understand the phrase, "it hurts to kick against the goads" (Acts 26:14), which is found in the *Bacchae* in a similar context, to be the result of a direct literary connection (*Acts of the Apostles*, 43, 210–11). In contrast, MacDonald has argued that both of these instances, along with Paul and Silas' adventures in Philippi (16:11–34), are best read as the author of Acts' imitation of the *Bacchae* ("Lydia and Her Sisters as Lukan Fictions," 105–10).

passages" and composition based on "modeling by code."[56] Thus, an author may invoke a common motif, such as a shipwreck, or he or she may model a particular episode on a specific author's account of a shipwreck.[57] And since a range of relationships exists, each instance of a possible imitation or allusion should be assessed individually. A quick look at a few examples will help illustrate some of the interpretive issues raised by the prominence of imitation in Greek education.

PLATO'S GUARDIANS and the COMMUNAL IDEAL

Descriptions of idealized places and communities are part of a long and rich tradition in Greek literature, present already in Homer and Hesiod, and certainly still thriving in first three centuries CE.[58] Utopian ideals in Greek literature emerge out of a number of different strands or trajectories, the boundaries between which are rather fluid, making tracing out lines of influence difficult. Nonetheless, some works stand out for their influence on the later tradition. Some of Plato's works, principally the *Republic* and related dialogues, represent a high point of philosophical utopianism that will cast a long shadow on subsequent utopian writings of all types.

In particular, Plato may be largely responsible for the recurring presence of concerns with the corrupting effects of wealth and personal possessions in subsequent philosophical discussions, golden age images, and idealized remote lands. In earlier traditional images of a paradise in the distant past in which humans and gods lived simply and in harmony with nature and each other, as preserved in Homer, Hesiod and Pindar, there is no concern with the corrupting power of wealth.[59] In Hesiod, for example, the reason for the loss of the earlier and easier existence is not human action but the machinations of the gods. By the time of Plato's "utopian" dialogues, something has changed. In the *Republic* the absence of private property and the dissolution of traditional family structures are the primary mechanisms by which to ensure that the ideal state's leaders do not succumb to corruption. Indeed, Plato's rulers are ideal specifically because they are free from dissension typically arising from concerns for

56. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, Roman Literature and its Contexts, 40–49. See also, Finkelpearl, "Pagan Traditions of Intertextuality," 78–90.

57. MacDonald, "The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul," 88–107.

58. For a discussion of Greek utopianism, see Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World*; Baldry, *Ancient Utopias*; Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*; and Giangrande, "Les Utopies hellenistiques," 17–33.

59. See Homer's descriptions of Syria (*Od.* 15.403–14), the Elysian plain (*Od.* 4.563–69), Olympus (*Od.* 6.43–46), and Scheria, the home of the Phaeacians (*Od.* 6–7). See also Hesiod's myth of the devolving races (*Op.* 106–200) and Pindar's portrait of the Isles of the Blessed in his *Olympian Odes* (2.67–73).

private property (*Rep.* 5.464c). And it is precisely at the point when the guardians acquire property that they stop being guardians (3.417a). The mechanism by which the inhabitants of the ideal city are to be persuaded to accept the necessary conditions to achieve justice is the so-called "noble lie," wherein the inhabitants of the ideal city are to be told that they are sprung from the earth containing the properties of a metal that corresponds to the role they are to play in the society. Ruler guardians contain gold within their natures, warrior guardians contain silver, and the producers contain bronze (3.414b–415a). This myth is used to justify the rather austere life the guardians are asked to lead: they are not to have private property or possessions, houses are to be open for any to enter at will, they are to have sufficient but never excessive supplies of food, and are to eat communally (3.416d–e). By means of the "noble lie" the guardians are to be convinced that they need no actual gold or silver since they have these metals in their very natures. What might appear to be a great sacrifice on the part of the guardians is what allows them to serve a much more important role, nothing less than achieving the one truly just society (3.417a). The sustainability of the just *polis* as Plato envisions it depends on understanding the corrupting nature of personal wealth for the rulers and structuring their lives in such a way that they are removed from its potentially corrupting influence.[60]

Plato's suspicion of personal wealth and was not entirely novel. *The Republic* and related utopian dialogues are part of a tradition of philosophical discussions of the best possible city.[61] The shift in attitudes toward personal wealth and possessions has been located, at least in part, in the circle of Socrates.[62] But placed within a broader context, the concern for individual wealth and its effect on the *polis* is made possible by the rise of a money-driven economy in the sixth

60. The concern with the corrupting power of wealth appears elsewhere in Plato's dialogues, notably in the *Critias*, where primeval Athens' greatness is specifically linked to the inhabitants' refusal to accumulate personal wealth (*Criti.* 112c) and the corruption of Atlantis is linked to the Atlantans' succumbing to the burden of their excessive wealth (114d, 120e–121b). The role of wealth in the creation and maintenance of an ideal state reappears in the lengthy and complex *Laws*. The absence of gold or silver is given as the reason primitive man fared as well as he did since he was able to avoid the extremes of poverty and riches (*Laws* 679 b–c). Indeed, the ideal *polis* of the *Laws*, Magnesia, is to have a rather basic economic structure in which no one is allowed to accumulate money in the form of gold and silver (741e).

61. Aristotle reports that Hippodamus had proposed that at least a third of the land of his ideal state be held as common possession to support the warrior class (Aristotle, *Pol.* 1267b 22–1268 16). Phaleas of Chalcedon had identified personal wealth as the issue that divides states. Accordingly, he proposed an egalitarian society brought about by a rather novel system of dowry exchange between the rich and the poor that would, over time, eliminate both classes leaving a single group (Aristotle, *Pol.* 1266a 39–b 6). The organization of guardian life in the *Republic* and subsequent dialogues may also owe something to existing states with political structures different from Athens; many find a number of Spartan features in Plato's proposals; see Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*, 35–36; Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World*, 29.

62. On Socrates as the center of the shift in attitudes, see Schaps, "Socrates and the Socratics," 131–59.

century BCE.[63] Regardless of the reasons for which Plato was concerned with personal wealth, it is probably as a result of Plato's subsequent literary influence, not least in the educational curriculum, that the connection between idealized primitive ages or (quasi-)contemporary idealized peoples and communism of property becomes more and more common, becoming a *topos* in the literature of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

At the very least we can say that Plato influenced some of the particular ways in which this concern was later expressed. By the first century CE golden age imagery in literature routinely includes the absence of private property.[64] Most often, the cause for the loss of that early idealized existence was understood as the personal accumulation of possessions.[65] Descriptions of more contemporary idealized people and lands also routinely feature property sharing. Gregory Sterling has argued that descriptions of leaders of religious-philosophical groups from the period are part of a *topos* or literary tradition.[66] Sterling finds many of the same features—including the absence of personal possessions—in descriptions of the Egyptians priests in Chaeremon, the Essenes in Philo, Josephus and Pliny, Arrian's description of the Indian sages, Philostratus' descriptions of the Indian and Egyptian sages, Iamblichus' description of the original Pythagoreans, and the descriptions of the early Christian community in Jerusalem in Acts 2 and 4.[67] Certainly such a *topos* existed, but given Plato's widespread influence and prevalence as a literary model in educational settings it may be possible to see the more direct influence of Plato on some of these descriptions.

Plato's influence can be seen, for example, in the description of early Christian community life in the so-called "major summaries" in the early chapters of Acts of the Apostles in language that has long been understood to evoke Greek utopian and golden age ideals.[68] I have argued elsewhere that the description of the early Christian community in the summaries of Acts is modeled on Plato's description of the guardians in the *Republic* and related dialogues.[69] Key terms in Acts echo distinctive and characteristic language for the

63. Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*.

64. See Virgil, *Georgics* 1.125–128; Tibullus, *Elegies* 1.3.35–52; Pompeius Trogus (preserved in Justinius, *Epit.* 43.1.3–4.

65. Seneca, for example, characterizes the golden age as a time marked by "no blind love of gold" (*Phaedra* 525) that comes to an end thanks to human greed: "Impious passion for gain broke up this peaceful life, headlong wrath, and lust that sets men's hearts on fine" (540–542). See also Seneca, *Ep.* 90; Ovid, *Met.* 135–40; *Amores* 38.35–36; Pseudo-Seneca, *Octavia* 403,420–422.

66. Sterling, "Athletes of Virtue," 679–96.

67. Chaeremon as cited in Porphyry, *De Abstinentia* 4.6–8; Philo, *Good Person* 75–91, *Hypoth.* 8.11.1–18; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.73; Josephus, *JW* 2.120–161, *Ant.* 18.18–22; Arrian, *Indica* 11.1–8; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 3.10–51, 6.6; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 96–100; Acts of the Apostles 2:42–47, 4:32–35.

68. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 23–24, 32; Dupont, "Community of Goods in the Early Church," 85–102.

69. "The Summaries of Acts 2, 4 and 5 and Plato's Republic," 275–95. See also Mealand, "Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions," 97–99.

description of the guardians.[70] In addition, both Plato and the author of Acts describe the founding of a *politeia* at the center and top of which is a collective leadership distinguished by its extraordinary unity, which is in turn made possible by the absence of private possessions and property. The large number of parallels, both lexical and thematic, suggested to me that whatever the realities behind the account of early Christian property sharing, the author of Acts has emphasized the similarities to the guardians of Plato's *Republic.* The purpose in Acts is likely apologetic.[71] Largely through Plato's influence, by the second century CE Socrates represented the prototypical image the philosopher. By modeling his description of the early Christian community in Acts on Plato's ideal leaders, the author of Acts invests them with significant leadership credentials. Additionally, this is in keeping with the argument of some early Christian apologists that Christianity represents the true philosophy.[72]

70. The term κοινωνία (Acts 2:42) occurs in *Rep.* 2–5 primarily in relation to a very specific form of property sharing among the guardians (*Rep.* 5.449c, d; 450b; 461e; 464a, b; 466d; 476a). The phrase ἅπαντα κοινὰ (Acts 2:44, 4:32) can be compared to repeated Plato's repeated characterization of the guardians' living arrangements: the guardians are to live together (κοινῇ ζῆν) (3.416e); Plato twice uses the proverb, κοινὰ τὰ φίλων, regarding sharing of all things, including wives and children (4.424a, 5.449c); both male and female guardians are to have κοινῇ . . . πάντα and are to be given the same nurture and education (5.451e); females and males should share all tasks (ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα) (5.453a); all women shall be κοινάς to the men (5.457d); having houses and meals in common (οἰκίας τε καὶ ξυσσίτια κοινὰ ἔχοντες) (5.458c–d); and all are to spend their stipend in common (κοινῇ πάντας) (5.464b–c). The construction in Acts 4:32, οὐδὲ . . . ἴδιον, closely resembles the way in which Socrates repeatedly describes the absence of possessions among the guardians: this is first described as οὐσίαν κεκτημένον μηδεμίαν μηδένα ἰδίαν (*Rep.* 3.416d); in extending the communalism to wives and children, ἰδίᾳ δὲ οὐδενὸς οὐδὲν τοιοῦτον κεκτημένου (5.458c); and in repeating the requirements in order to show that the guardians achieve the greatest good as a result of their polity, μηδὲν ἴδιον ἐκτῆσθαι (5.464e)

71. Countryman has suggested that most instances of the use of the language of communism among early Christian writers are part of an argument for almsgiving. But when they do use it differently, "their object was to impress a pagan audience accustomed to the fact that some philosophers advocated communism, with the philosophical character of Christianity" (*The Rich Christian in the Church of the Early Empire,* 77).

72. Justin Martyr notes the transformation effected by the gospel by boasting, "we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock, and communicate to every one in need" (*1 Apol.* 14.2). Other Christian authors also appear to use property sharing for apologetic purposes, sometimes appearing sensitive to the link between the practice and Socrates. The *Epistle to Diognetus,* clearly understands references to communal sharing in light of the *Republic*—or at least those traditions influenced by it—for he notes that Christians have "a common table; but not a common bed" (5.7). In Tertullian's *Apology* that link is even clearer; he boasts, "So we, who are united in mind and soul, have no hesitation about sharing property. All is common among us—except our wives" (39.11). As in the *Epistle to Diognetus,* Tertullian appears to be anxious about the connection between the sharing of property and the sharing of wives. He then explicitly identifies the latter with Socrates:

> "At that point we dissolve our partnership, which is the one place where the rest of men make it effective. Not only do they use the wives of their friends, but also most patiently yield their own to their friends. They follow (I take it) the example of those who went before them, the wisest of men—Greek Socrates and Roman Cato, who shared with their friends the wives they had taken in marriage, to bear children in other families too. And I don't know whether the wives objected; for why should

Philosophical and utopian ideals serve a similar apologetic function in the writings of Philo and Josephus. Both authors' descriptions of the Essenes are influenced by Greek utopian ideals and by Plato in particular, but in different ways. As noted above, the mimetic compositional ethos of Greco-Roman education creates a situation in which authors may use a particular literary text as a model or, after repeated imitation of the model over time, may evoke a *topos* more generally. The descriptions of the Essenes by Philo's *That Every Good Person is Free* (75–88) and Josephus' *Jewish War* (2.119–161) illustrate this point.

If one grants that the Qumran sectarians should be identified with the Essenes,[73] then the differences between the images of the Essenes in the Qumran sources and descriptions of the Essenes in Philo and Josephus sources can justifiably be accounted for by the apologetic goals of the latter two writers, resulting in what Todd Beall termed, in the case of Josephus, a "dual tendency towards idealization and accommodation to Greek thought. . . ."[74] But this raises the question of how much of the descriptions of the Essenes in Philo and Josephus is to be considered the creation of the respective authors and how much is traditional material drawn from sources. Some have suggested that Josephus' *Jewish War* 2.119–161 in its entirety is a later interpolation[75] or is dependent on a Gentile source.[76] More recent proposals have put forward more nuanced and at times much more complicated theories, including the suggestions that Josephus is drawing on four distinct sources including a Hellenistic Jewish source shared by both Philo and Josephus,[77] that the shared source is Strabo,[78] or the idea that Philo served as central source for Josephus for one but not both of his accounts.[79] Identifying the sources for Philo's and Josephus' descriptions of the Essenes remains an important, if unsettled, subject of study. I do not claim to be able to solve the issues here, but I can suggest that in keeping with the mimetic compositional ethos instilled throughout all stages of education, attention to an

> they care about a chastity which their husbands gave away so easily? O model of Attic wisdom! O pattern of Roman dignity! The philosopher a pander, and the censor, too!" (39.12–13).

By excoriating Plato's Socrates for his immorality, Tertullian turns the differences between the communities of goods among the guardians the Christians into an extraordinary improvement.

73. Although the debate on the identification of the Essenes with the Qumran materials continues, in this study I suppose, like Rajak, "that Josephus was describing Jewish ascetics who were, at the very least, part of the same tradition as those who, over the generations, wrote the sectarian scrolls from Qumran" ("Josephus and the Essenes," 142).

74. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes*, 2–3. See also Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 226–308.

75. Del Medico, "Les Esséniens dal l'oeuvre de Flavius Josèphe,"1–45.

76. Smith, "The description of the Essenes," 273–313.

77. Bergmeier, *Die Essener-Bericht des Flavius Josephus*; Argall, "A Hellenistic Jewish Source," 13–24.

78. Goranson, "Posidonius, Strabo and Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa as Sources on Essenes," 295–98.

79. Rajak, "Josephus and the Essenes," 141–60.

author's literary models is as important as looking for written sources. For both Philo and Josephus Plato is not far from the scene.

In *Every Good Person is Free* (75–88) Philo presents the Essenes as the supreme example of high moral excellence.[80] The centerpiece of Philo's description is their communalism, which he addresses twice. The second, longer note is introduced by a list of the Essenes' virtues that culminates in the note that their fellowship (κοινῶνία) exceeds description (84). Nonetheless Philo does elaborate and does so in a way that evokes Plato's first description of the property sharing among the guardians in the *Republic* (3.416d–417b).

After establishing the guardians are to live in an area of the city separated from the workers, Socrates' describes the guardians' way of life as follows: "In the first place, none must possess any private property [πρῶτον μὲν οὐσίαν κεκτημένον μηδεμίαν μηδένα ἰδίαν] save the indispensable [ἀνάγκη]. Secondly, none must have any habitation [οἴκησιν] or treasure-house [ταμιεῖον] which is not open for all to enter at will" (*Rep.* 3.416d). Philo's first point in the description of the community of goods appears to combine Plato's first two points: "First of all then, no one's house is his own [πρῶτον μὲν τοίνυν οὐδενὸς οἰκία τίς ἐστιν ἰδία] in the sense that it is not shared by all, for besides the fact that they dwell together in communities, the door is open to visitors from elsewhere who share their convictions" (*Good Person* 85). Philo uses some of the same terms as Plato, as well as some of the same constructions.[81] Plato's next points emphasize food supplies which are to be neither excessive nor scarce, communal meals (συσσιτία) and living together (κοινῇ ζῆν) (416e). Philo has already noted that the Essenes' communism includes living together (*Good Person*, 85). He then gives some of the details, principally the Essenes' "single treasury and common disbursements" including common clothes, meals [συσσιτία], earned wages placed into a common stock, and sick who are treated from the common treasury (*Good Person* 86–87).

Several other points in Philo bear striking similarities to Plato's first description of the guardians (*Rep.* 3.416d–417b), but they stand toward the beginning of his description in *Every Good Person is Free.* After telling of the Essenes' various forms of labor, with which he opens his description, Philo notes that they do not hoard silver and gold, accumulating only what is necessary [ἀναγκαίας] for their survival, and concluding that: "For while they stand almost alone in the whole of mankind in that they have become moneyless and landless by deliberate action rather than by lack of good fortune, they are esteemed exceedingly rich" (*Good Person 77*). First, it is worth noting that Philo uses the same word as Plato does for the group's accumulating only what is needed—ἀνάγκη (*Rep.* 3.416d)—and though worded differently, the same idea is stressed in

80. Philo also discusses the Essenes in *Hypothetica* 11.1–18, which is largely a repetition of the slightly longer and probably earlier description in *Good Person.*

81. See my note n. 70 above.

the requirement that the guardians live modestly, receiving from the working classes just enough to live as soldiers at war (*Rep.* 3.416d). The reference to silver and gold recalls Socrates' prohibiting the guardians from handling gold and silver, since they have it in their natures.[82] Accordingly, Plato's "noble lie" justifies the guardians not handling money or accumulating wealth by positing a kind of inner wealth (*Rep.* 3.414b–415a). Similarly, for Philo it is the Essenes' lack of external wealth, including the accumulation of possessions and money, which makes them truly wealthy and free. It is also worth noting that the Essenes' respect and treatment of their elders as though they were truly their parents (*Good Person* 87) echoes the notion in the *Republic* that the community of wives among the guardians would lead to a situation in which no one knows who their true parents are, thus requiring that younger guardians treat all of their elders with respect in order to avoid accidentally hurting or offending a parent (*Rep.* 5.465b).

Philo concludes his description of the Essenes with what I take as an allusion to Plato. Whereas the *Republic* likens the guardians' modest living conditions to "athletes of war [ἀθληταὶ πολέμου]" (*Rep.* 3.416d), Philo's Essenes are called "athletes of virtue [ἀθλητὰς ἀρετῆς] produced by a philosophy free from pedantry and Greek wordiness, a philosophy which sets its pupils to practice themselves in laudable actions . . ." (*Good Person* 88). In keeping with the typical mimetic practice, Philo here uses a model and improves upon it by claiming that his philosophers actually exist, in contrast to Plato's hypothetical guardians constructed in words or in theory [τῷ λογῷ] (*Rep.* 2.239c).

It is unclear whether the actual Essene practice was that property was owned by all. There are a number of instances in the *Rule of the Community* that appear to describe the absence of private property (1QS 1:11–12; 1QS 5:1–2; 1QS 6:17–22). However, there are also indications that some members of the community may have had some personal property (1QS 7:6–7; CD 9:10–16).[83] Whatever the actual practice, Philo emphasizes the Essenes' communalism in ways characteristic of the communalism of the *Republic.* As Rajak notes, "Philo's judgment of the Essenes carries marked Platonic echoes."[84] I would go further, suggesting that Philo's account of the Essenes in *Every Good Person is Free* is a literary imitation of parts the *Republic.* Like Acts' description of the early Christianity community, the imitation is designed to invest the Essenes with accepted leadership characteristics. I would also suggest that given the structure and process of Greek

82. In what I consider an analogous imitation of the *Republic,* the Acts of the Apostles also has a reference to gold and silver in the context of the first description of property sharing among the early Christian community in Jerusalem (2:42–3:10). See Dupertuis, "The Summaries of Acts 2, 4 and 5 and Plato's Republic," 282.

83. Beall suggests that the differences between the practices could possibly be explained by ascribing the texts to different stages of the community (*Josephus' Description of the Essenes,* 44–45).

84. Rajak, "Josephus and the Essenes," 153.

education, especially the importance of imitating a handful of literary models, Philo's reliance on Plato in his description of the Essenes is to be expected.

Josephus' descriptions of the Essenes also evoke Greek utopian and philosophical ideals, the latter explicitly (*Jewish War* 2.119). Josephus' two lengthiest accounts are quite different from each other, something that has long led to speculation regarding sources. The description in *Antiquities* 18.18–22 appears to incorporate information from Philo's description in *Every Good Person is Free*,[85] which then raises questions as to the origins and structure of Josephus' description in *Jewish War* 2.

In the context of describing the major Jewish philosophical schools (*Jewish War* 2.119–61), Josephus begins with the Essenes, devoting considerable space to their various practices and highlighting their lack of attachment to wealth:

> "You will not find one among them distinguished by greater opulence than another. They have a law that new members on admission to the sect shall confiscate their property to the order, with the result that you will nowhere see either abject poverty or inordinate wealth; the individual's possessions join the common stock and all, like brothers, enjoy a single patrimony." (*Jewish War* 2.122)

As mentioned above, the evidence for the absence of private property in the Qumran texts is mixed, which suggests that the emphasis Josephus places on this aspect of the community may owe more to the models he is following than to historical reality. However, unlike Philo's description in *Every Good Person is Free*, Josephus' account does not appear to be directly modeled on Plato's description of the guardians. This description is probably influenced by Greek utopian traditions, but not on the level of direct imitation; rather, here we have Josephus having recourse to a more general *topos* of idealized, utopian communities. One could also say, as Rajak has argued, that the description of the Essenes in *Jewish War* 2 also displays a degree of Hellenization operating on larger structural levels. For it is especially in the account in *Jewish War* that what Josephus says about the Essenes appears different from what he could have said, particularly if Josephus possessed first-hand knowledge of his subject. What Josephus says of the Essenes here is limited by his apologetic, and perhaps more importantly, rhetorical and literary *modus operandi*. Rajak suggests that in *Jewish War* 2

> the themes are those favoured in descriptions of ideal states in Greek political thought, and the organization corresponds to a progression appropriate in studying a polity. Greek ethnographic writing, with its large component of idealization and eulogy, was heavily influenced by the philosophers, and Josephus' Essene communities are depicted, like those of other writers on the subject, as a form of ideal society.[86]

85. Ibid., 146
86. Rajak, "Josephus and the Essenes," 149.

Rajak goes on to argue that the description in *Jewish War* 2 follows a standard arrangement of themes: the first theme is family, then the household, which for the Essenes will include their communal organization, followed by the city, in turn followed by trading practices, which for the Essenes are expressed negatively. These are followed by cultic habits, the social hierarchy, education, and the political and legal system. Josephus' description of the Essenes in *Jewish War* 2 largely follows this pattern, and, at the same time curiously omits other distinctive features of Essene belief and practice such as the solar calendar. The likely reason for these omissions is that they do not fit the scheme Josephus is following.[87]

Rajak also suggests that the origin of this scheme or pattern can be traced at least in part to Plato:

> The various themes under which the model city is discussed in Plato's *Republic* and in his *Laws*, together with the analysis of the elements of the city in Aristotle's *Politics* (from couple to household to city and so on), probably lie behind all such designs, although the philosophers operate, of course, on a much bigger scale than any ethnographic work seems to have done. Much ethnography appeared in digressions comparable in length to Josephus' miniature composition. The constructions of the philosophers influenced the historians.[88]

Given the prominence of Plato in the educational and literary environment of the Greco-Roman world, it is not necessary, as Rajak rightly notes, to posit that when writing of the Essenes Josephus was in the process of rereading Plato's *Republic*. Rather than posit a source, she attributes the organization of *Jewish War* 2 to Josephus himself, understanding the Platonic influence to be filtered through the historiographic and ethnographic writings with which Josephus was no doubt familiar.

CONCLUSION

The implications of the awareness of the Greek educational process and the resulting compositional practices are only recently beginning to be explored in the study of Jewish and Christian literature from this period written in Greek. The central point I have sought to illustrate in this study is the idea that how one learns to read and write affects later compositional practice. Among the effects of the emphasis on imitation in Greek education in the Greco-Roman world is what I have called a mimetic compositional ethos in which students were taught to write in relation to a relatively small list of classical authors. Repeated imitation and allusion to these acknowledged masters created literary *topoi* over

87. Rajak, "Josephus and the Essenes," 151.
88. Rajak, "Josephus and the Essenes," 151.

time, but did not eliminate the direct imitation of particular models. The possibility of the latter applies to the study of Jewish and Christian literature. To be sure, not every parallel between a Jewish or Christian text and one of the prominent literary models promoted in the educational system should understood as an literary imitation, but the compositional ethos created by the educational process would suggest that this is indeed possible, if not likely.

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