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Lawrence Kim

Trinity University, lawrence.kim@trinity.edu

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Repository Citation

Kim, L. (2007). The portrait of Homer in Strabo's *Geography*. *Classical Philology*, 102(4), 363-388.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/588505>

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THE PORTRAIT OF HOMER IN STRABO'S *GEOGRAPHY*

LAWRENCE KIM

STRABO'S *GEOGRAPHY*, as anyone who has perused it will know, is suffused with a profound, nearly obsessive, interest in Homer.¹ The desire to demonstrate Homer's knowledge of geographical information at every turn (even where it seems *prima facie* unlikely) is matched only by the determination with which Strabo "solves" notorious problems of Homeric geography such as the location of Nestor's Pylos or the identity of the "Ethiopians divided in twain" visited by Poseidon.² Strabo's concentration on such arcana, often to the exclusion of more properly "geographical" material, has understandably exasperated many modern readers with different ideas about what constitutes geography. On the other hand, the overwhelming geographical focus of his Homeric criticism has rendered his extensive comments of only passing interest to scholars of ancient poetic criticism; at best they provide evidence for the methodological principles of a writer "conditioned by the dominant position of Homer's poetry in Greek life to regard Homer as knowledgeable and trustworthy in matters of geography also."³

Recently, however, a more sophisticated understanding of the historical (or temporal) dimensions of Strabo's geographical project has better integrated his Homeric fixation into the work as a whole.⁴ We see now that his reverence for Homer is linked to the importance of historical memory (*παλαιὰ μνήμη*: 1.1.16) within his notion of geography.⁵ If, as Katherine Clarke writes, "the stories told about the past were precisely what gave a place its present identity [to Strabo]," the stories told by Homer would naturally be

1. Homer is mentioned in the *Geography*'s opening paragraph, and nearly the entire first book is taken up with discussions of Homer's geographical knowledge. The books on Greece (7–9) and northwestern Asia Minor (12–13) are closely tied to discussions of the Catalogues of the Greeks and Trojans in *Iliad* 2. For an introductory overview, see Dueck 2000, 31–40; Kahles (1976) surveys Strabo's numerous Homeric citations.

2. Nestor's Pylos: 8.3.24–29 (see Biraschi 1994); Ethiopians divided in twain: 1.2.24–28.

3. Schenkeveld 1976, 63–64; cf. Engels 1999, 115–20. Schenkeveld is one of the few who have attempted to analyze Strabo's method of interpreting Homer in Book 1 in any detail. Very little work has been done on the specifics of Strabo's Homeric interpretation elsewhere in the *Geography*; a notable exception is the important series of articles by Biraschi (1992, 1994, 2000).

4. Van Paassen (1957, 1–32) anticipates much of the recent work; Biraschi 1988; Clarke 1999, 245–93 (esp. 248–51).

5. A slightly different approach is found in Gabba (1982, 59–61), who sees both Strabo's "high opinion of Homer" and his contemporary Dionysius of Halicarnassus' advocacy of classical models as evidence of a "classicistic" revival in the Augustan period; cf. Desideri 1999.

vital to his descriptions of those places.⁶ In addition, interest in Homeric geography could boast of a healthy intellectual lineage.⁷ Geographical problems had always been important to Homeric critics, and conversely a desire to identify the cities, regions, and peoples of the heroic age had informed geographical inquiry from its earliest stages.⁸ In such a context, Strabo's claim that Homer was the founder of geography and his interest in defending the accuracy of the poet's information become more comprehensible, and indeed constitute integral parts of his project.

In this article, however, I am not so much interested in Strabo's thoughts about Homeric poetry or its content (the geographical data he believes it preserves) as I am in the idiosyncratic and selective portrait of Homer that he constructs in order to justify his faith in the poetry's reliability.⁹ In the first part of this article, I analyze this vision of Homer as outlined in *Geography* 1.1.2 and expanded upon throughout the rest of Book 1. Strabo's Homer is not some Stoic sage, nor the blind and divinely inspired mendicant of the biographical tradition, but very much a traveler, historian, and (no surprise here) geographer who embodies the ideals embraced by Strabo himself in his own work and self-image. Furthermore, I want to show how, just as his geographical project is a conscious extension and reworking of his forerunners, Strabo's construction of Homer as historian and traveler (and only incidentally as a poet) arises from his reading of the "Homer" articulated at key points in the work of his great model and predecessor, Polybius.¹⁰ In part two, I turn to his famous debate with Eratosthenes on Homer's geographical knowledge, focusing on the important opening section (1.2.3 5) to show how Strabo's discussion of Homer's didactic concerns can perhaps be better understood as an extension of this new portrait of Homer. Rather than an isolated argument about the purpose of poetry, this debate, viewed in a geographical and historiographical context, forms an essential part of Strabo's attempt to cast Homer as the "founder" of geography by defending his erudition and "useful" objectives—both characteristics delineated earlier by Strabo as those of the ideal geographer.

6. Clarke 1999, 281; cf. Strabo 2.5.17: "And of these latter attributes [the geographer] should indicate those which are able to persist for a long time, or else those which, although unable to persist, somehow possess a certain distinction and fame [ἄλλως δ' ἐπιφάνειαν μὲν ἐχούσας τινὰ καὶ δόξαν]; this fame by enduring [παρამένουσα] to later times, makes a work of man, even when it no longer exists, a kind of natural attribute of a place [τρόπον τινὰ συμφορῆ]"; cf. also the remarks of Biraschi (1988).

7. Prontera 1993. As he notes, identifications of Homeric sites and peoples with their "real" counterparts—e.g., Scheria with Kerkyra, the Hippomolgi with the Scythians—appear as early as Hesiod and figure frequently in early prose writers.

8. The Hellenistic period saw a marked increase in scholarship devoted to such topics and the inevitable debates to which they gave rise. In fact, Strabo is the major source for works such as Apollodorus of Athens' commentary on the Catalogue of Ships or Demetrius of Scepsis' thirty-book treatise on the Trojan Catalogue, as well as other material testifying to Homer's significance in Hellenistic cultural and intellectual discourse; see Pfeiffer 1968, 249–51 and 257–63, respectively, with bibliography.

9. Aujac (1966, 34–36) provides a brief overview of Strabo's picture of Homer; cf. Dueck 2000, 39.

10. Strabo's first work was a history (now lost) continuing that of Polybius (on which see Engels 1999, 59–114 with bibliography), and his *Geography* is deeply indebted to that author as well. On Polybius' influence on Strabo, see Clarke 1999; Engels 1999, 145–65; Dueck 2000, 46–53.

STRABO'S HOMER AND POLYBIUS' IDEAL HISTORIAN

Homer: The Founder of Geography

The opening section of Strabo's work (1.1.1 23) is simultaneously a definition and a defense of his geographical project; it professes to explain what "geography" is by detailing the sort of training it requires, what its aims should be, and what sort of readers it seeks, but in doing so gradually evolves into an apology for the treatise in hand, which is "a serious work, worthy of a philosopher."¹¹ The initial half of this long methodological introduction (1.1.2 11) is devoted to establishing Homer's position as the first geographer, primarily by demonstrating the poet's knowledge of "the remote ends [τὰ ἔσχατα] of the οἰκουμένη, what surrounds it [τὰ κύκλω], as well as the regions around the Mediterranean Sea" (1.1.10).¹² The far-fetched interpretations of Homeric poetry that Strabo provides in this section to establish rather obscure points, such as Homer's awareness of Iberia (not mentioned by name in his poems), or that "by the term ἄρκτος [the constellation "the Bear"] . . . he means τὸν ἄρκτικόν [the northern polar zone],"¹³ have not endeared this section to scholars, but there is more at stake here than initially meets the eye. After all, the positioning of an extended treatment of Homer right at the beginning of his work suggests that the importance of Homer to the *Geography* cannot be explained simply as a nod to an illustrious predecessor or an attempt to co-opt a cultural authority for a novel project. In fact, the entire series of arguments rests on an explicit, detailed assumption about what kind of man Homer was, presented right at the beginning of Strabo's discussion and gradually supplemented and clarified throughout the entire first book. This suggests that Strabo knew very well that proving Homer's geographical knowledge was not enough to make him the first geographer only as an embodiment of those virtues proper to the geographical τέχνη can Homer rightly be called its "founder." In fact, it is via his description of Homer that Strabo manages to address a central issue that he omits from his more explicit discussion of the "philosophical" nature of geography, namely, the type of person a geographer should be.¹⁴

But before we go any farther, we should look at Strabo's sketch of Homer (1.1.2):

καὶ πρῶτον ὅτι ὀρθῶς ὑπελήφθαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ πρὸ ἡμῶν ὃν ἔστι καὶ Ἰππάρχος ἀρχηγέτην εἶναι τῆς γεωγραφικῆς ἐμπειρίας Ὁμηρον. ὃς οὐ μόνον τῆ κατὰ τὴν ποίησιν ἀρετῇ πάντας ὑπερβέβηται τοὺς πάλαι καὶ τοὺς ὕστερον, ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν τι καὶ τῆ κατὰ

11. 1.1.23. I discuss the second half (1.1.12–23) of this methodological preface below, in the second part of this article. Translations of Strabo are taken, often modified, from Jones' Loeb edition of Books 1–2 (1917) and, for 1.2.3–9, the more fluent rendition of Russell and Winterbottom (1970, 300–305). For the Greek I use the recent edition of Radt (2002).

12. See Aujac 1966, 20–26, for a succinct overview of this section.

13. Iberia: 1.1.4; the Bear: 1.1.6. The latter is part of Strabo's solution to the problem (also solved by Arist. *Poet.* 1461a20) caused by Homer's claim (*Il.* 18.489; *Od.* 5.275) that the Bear alone of all the constellations never sets.

14. Siviglia (1987, 48) sees in Strabo's grouping of Homer, Anaximander, and Hecataeus as the first geographers an idea of geography "as the expression of a fundamental attitude of the human spirit."

τὸν βίον ἐμπειρία τὸν πολιτικόν, ἀφ' ἧς οὐ μόνον περὶ τὰς πράξεις ἐσπούδασεν ἐκεῖνος ὅπως ὅτι πλείστας γνοίη καὶ παραδώσει τοῖς ὕστερον ἐσομένοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ περὶ τοὺς τόπους τοὺς τε καθ' ἕκαστα καὶ τοὺς κατὰ σύμπασαν τὴν οἰκουμένην γῆν τε καὶ θάλατταν· οὐ γὰρ ἂν μέχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων αὐτῆς περάτων ἀφίκετο τῆ μνήμη κύκλῳ περιού.

I say that both I and those before me, one of whom was Hipparchus himself, correctly regard Homer as the founder of the practice of geography. For Homer has surpassed everyone, ancient and modern, not only in the excellence of his poetry, but also, I might say, in his experience of all that pertains to public life. And from this experience he eagerly pursued not only public affairs to the end that he might learn of as many of them as possible and give an account of them to those who came after him, but also the things about places, both on an individual basis and with regard to the whole οἰκουμένη, both land and sea. For otherwise he would not have gone to its farthest borders, encompassing the whole of it in his description.

We should note several things here. First of all, Strabo distinguishes Homer's abilities as a poet (ἀρετὴ κατὰ τὴν ποίησιν) from his experience of public life (ἢ κατὰ τὸν βίον ἐμπειρία τὸν πολιτικόν). With poetic "excellence" bracketed,¹⁵ Strabo concentrates on Homer's other assets: he is a man well versed in the political life, who is keen to investigate "deeds" (περὶ τὰς πράξεις) in order to learn about as many of them as possible and pass his knowledge down to future generations. And of course, included among the things to be learned are geographical matters (τὰ περὶ τοὺς τόπους) understood in the broadest sense. The Homer we see fleshed out here is not an inspired poet or inventive raconteur, but a learned, intrepid explorer who has "gone to the farthest borders" of the world.

Strabo's initial portrait of Homer emphasizes three interwoven qualities that will be reiterated and further elaborated in the course of his discussion: (a) his ἐμπειρία, or experience, of life, from which he developed (b) his eagerness to learn, and (c) his willingness to travel great distances to learn about "deeds" and "places." In particular, these last two speak to a certain geographical *desire* that lies at the heart of Strabo's conception of Homer, often stressed throughout the *Prolegomena*, and rendered more notable by the use of rare and unusual terminology. In 1.1.10, for instance, Strabo points to Homer's alleged description of the tides as "another proof of the same zealous curiosity" (τῆς αὐτῆς φιλοπραγμοσύνης) that he had alluded to a few pages before, and at 1.2.29 Strabo speaks of the poet's "love of learning" (τὸ φιλέιδμημον), coupling it this time with his "love of travel" (τὸ φιλέκδημον), using two words that are unique to this text.¹⁶ Strabo establishes the parameters of the knowledge to which this desire is directed as he discusses Odysseus' wanderings (1.2.13):

For we do not demand [ζητοῦμεν] that the poet should have inquired accurately into each particular [ἀκριβῶς ἕκαστα πυθέσθαι], nor demand accuracy from him [παρ' ἐκείνου τὸ

15. On this term, see below and Biraschi 1984.

16. φιλέιδμημον appears only in Strabo, here and at 1.1.23, 1.2.8 (twice), and 3.4.19; φιλέκδημον only here and at 2.3.5. The astrologer Vettius Valens (second century C.E.?) uses the cognates φιλεκδημητής and φιλεκδημία.

ἀκριβές]; yet even so, we surely are not entitled to assume that he composed the story [ῥαυφδεῖν] without having inquired at all [μηδὲν πεπυσμένον] about the wandering, either as to where or how it occurred [μήθ' ὅπου μήθ' ὅπως γεγένηται].

The inclusion of ὅπως in addition to ὅπου reminds us that Homer's "learning by inquiry" (πεπυσμένον) includes not only identifying the location of Odysseus' travels, but also ascertaining "how" the wanderings occurred. Homer, as Strabo's initial portrait (1.1.2) had already asserted, is concerned with πράξεις in addition to τόποι—a pairing that corresponds with Strabo's own professed interest in both geographical detail and the historical "deeds" that took place in the sites that he discusses.

We see a similar emphasis on inquiry into both deeds and places when Strabo turns to the poetry to prove the poet's love of learning and travel: "the poets show that the wisest [φρονιμωτάτους] heroes were those who visited many places and wandered [τοὺς ἀποδημήσαντας πολλαχοῦ καὶ πλανηθέντας]; for they hold it as a great thing to have 'seen the cities and known the minds of many men'" (πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων ἰδεῖν ἄστεα καὶ νόον γνῶναι, *Od.* 1.3).¹⁷ So Nestor, according to Strabo, "boasts [σεμνύεται] of having lived among the Lapiths" at *Iliad* 1.270, while Menelaus evinces pride in his travels at *Odyssey* 4.83, and often takes care to mention "the distinctive peculiarity" (τὸ ἰδίωμα) of the places he has visited.¹⁸ In each of these citations, the connection between travel and knowledge or wisdom is emphasized; the heroes demonstrate an interest both in foreign lands and in what occurs there. In a final example, Strabo claims that "it is likely [εἰκός] that Heracles is spoken of [by Homer] as 'familiar with great deeds' (μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων, *Od.* 21.26) from his wide experience and inquiry" (ἀπὸ τῆς πολλῆς ἐμπειρίας τε καὶ ἱστορίας λεχθῆναι, 1.1.16). Note here, after the citations of the geographical interests of heroes, how Strabo extends the connotation of the Homeric hapax ἐπίστορα beyond the notion of ἱστορία (inquiry) to encompass also the ἐμπειρία that he assumes lies behind Heracles' knowledge.¹⁹

Inferring Homer's character from the sentiments expressed in his poetry, as Strabo does here, was a common method of ancient biographical inquiry,²⁰ a fact that should remind us that Strabo's vision of Homer as traveler and investigator was not completely novel.²¹ Strabo himself claims that "all those who have written about Homer's life testify" (μαρτυροῦσιν ὅσοι τὸν βίον

17. 1.1.16. Translations of Homer are those of Lattimore. Schol. E ad *Od.* 1.3 Dindorf echoes Strabo's interpretation of this passage; after explaining that there are three types of νοῦς (θεωρητικός, φυσικός, and πραγματικός), the scholiast defines the "practical" sort as "whenever someone, having seen many cities and countries and thereby becoming experienced [ἐμπειρός], obtains knowledge [γνώσις] from them; for knowledge is obtained from experience [ἐκ τῆς ἐμπειρίας]."

18. 1.1.16: "So too Menelaus: 'I roamed over Cyprus, Phoenicia and Egypt, and came to the Ethiopians, Sidonians, Erembians and Libya' [*Od.* 4.83]." Among the peculiarities are the birth cycles of sheep in Libya, the herbs of Egypt (*Od.* 4.229), and the gates of Egyptian Thebes (*Il.* 9.383). Van Paassen (1957, 17–18) has noted Strabo's interest in the "particularity" (ἡ ἰδιότης) of a place as well as its central importance to his notion of geography.

19. The meaning of ἐπίστορα is still debated; cf. Russo et al. 1992, 151.

20. See Lefkowitz 1981 and Fairweather 1974, 1983.

21. And of course the association of travel and knowledge was a familiar one in Greek culture at large; Solon's journeys are a good example.

ἀναγράφουσι, 1.2.29) to his eagerness for travel and knowledge, and the Homeric *Vitae* bear traces of such interest.²² The Herodotean life, for example, tells us that a certain Mentès (intriguingly described as πολυίστωρ) allowed Homer to accompany him on his ship, and that “wherever they landed, [Homer] saw clearly all of the local customs and he learned of them by inquiry” (καὶ ὅπου ἐκάστοτε ἀφίκοιτο πάντα τὰ ἐπιχώρια διεωρᾶτο, καὶ ἱστορέων ἐπυνθάνετο).²³ The emphasis not only on travel, but on Homer’s desire to investigate, question, and learn things closely parallels the image Strabo provides us, as does the choice of vocabulary. The *Vita* of Proclus suggests that such notions were probably derived from the *Odyssey*’s breadth of geographical scope (Proclus *Chrestomathia*, pp. 101.21–102.2 Allen):

It is evident from Homer’s detailed knowledge of places that he traveled over a great part of the inhabited world [πολλὰ δὲ ἐπεληλυθὼς μέρη τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐκ τῆς πολλῆς περιείας τῶν τόπων εὕρισκεται]. It may further be deduced from this that there was plenty of money at his disposal. For long journeys involve great expenditure, all the more so in that period when it was not possible for everyone to sail without risk, and when men could not easily visit just any people they pleased.²⁴

Proclus’ deadpan “economic” inference also shows us that very different conclusions could be drawn from similar starting points.²⁵ Even, then, if the idea of an intrepid Homer is not particularly new, what is quite striking is Strabo’s radical transformation of this minor biographical datum into the focal point of Homer’s life and character. Furthermore, the rest of Strabo’s vision betrays a rather deliberate neglect of the more celebrated aspects of the poet’s life. In popular tradition, of course, Homer was a blind poet, often poor, occasionally divinely inspired, who wandered the Mediterranean literally singing for his supper—a picture considerably at odds with the one Strabo puts on display.²⁶ And while his travels and inquiry are mentioned in the two *Lives* discussed above, the shorter biographies ignore them. More significantly, other texts that defend Homeric passages, geographical or otherwise, such as Heraclitus’ *Homeric Problems* (an allegorical defense of Homer) and Pseudo-Plutarch’s *On the Life and Poetry of Homer* (a systematic demonstration of Homer as the source of all knowledge), make no mention of this kind of biographical detail.

Polybius, Strabo, and Homer the Historian

If the *Vitae* and the usual suspects of Homeric criticism fail to provide a relevant context for Strabo’s Homeric portrait, a glance at the historio-

22. Aujac and Lasserre 1969, 197. While the *Vitae* as we have them most likely postdate Strabo, much of their content derives from a tradition that extends as far back as the sixth century B.C.E.

23. Ps.-Hdt. *Vit. Hom.* 6. On Homer and his travels in the *Lives*, see Fairweather 1974, 235–36, and 1983, 326–27 (on the general issue of travel in ancient biographies of poets).

24. Translation in Fairweather 1974, 236; not mentioned in the list provided by Aujac and Lasserre 1969, 197. Fairweather (1974, 236) notes the Thucydidean tinge of Proclus’ argumentation here. This *Vita* is much later than Strabo, but I quote it here as an example of a way of thinking about Homer that was presumably conceivable much earlier.

25. Cf. Polybius’ remarkably parallel comments at 3.58, discussed below.

26. See Graziosi 2002, 125–63, on Homer’s blindness, poverty, and divinity.

graphical tradition proves more illuminating; after all, historians since Herodotus had emphasized the importance of travel and personal investigation. But the most direct parallels are found in Polybius, who was the first to systematically discuss such activities as historiographical prerequisites. While Strabo's new Homer stands in contrast to traditional biographical portraits of Homer, his salient qualities of effort, political experience, and interest in inquiry and knowledge accord remarkably well with the characteristics required of the proper *historian* as prescribed by Polybius, who was, after all, one of Strabo's primary sources and models. And although it is well known that Polybius took a great interest in Homeric geography (as evidenced, in a rather circular fashion, by the fragments of Book 34 preserved by Strabo),²⁷ surprisingly little attention has been paid to Homer's presence in his methodological discussions of historiography or to the importance of Polybius' Homer to that of Strabo.

First of all, let us take a look at Polybius' famous delineation of the three essential components of *πραγματική ιστορία*.²⁸ Guido Schepens has proposed that this tripartite definition (in contrast to the later bipartite division according to historical technique at 12.27) is based on an evaluation of the historian's proper disposition or character.²⁹ This is, of course, the very aspect of Homer emphasized by Strabo, and the similarities between this description of the qualities necessary for a historian and Strabo's characterization of Homer's attributes in 1.1.2 are striking on both the conceptual and terminological level (12.25e.1):

... τῶν δὲ μερῶν αὐτῆς ἑνὸς μὲν ὄντος τοῦ περὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι πολυπραγμοσύνην καὶ τὴν παράθεσιν τῆς ἐκ τούτων ὕλης, ἑτέρου δὲ τοῦ περὶ τὴν θεὰν τῶν πόλεων καὶ τῶν τόπων περὶ τε ποταμῶν καὶ λιμένων καὶ καθόλου τῶν κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν ἰδιωμάτων καὶ διαστημάτων, τρίτου δὲ τοῦ περὶ τὰς πράξεις τὰς πολιτικές . . .

... the first part of it [history] being the industrious study of written sources and a comparison of their contents, the second the survey of cities, places, rivers, harbors and generally the peculiarities of land and sea and the distances between them, and the third that concerning political actions . . .³⁰

To Polybius' first and third "parts" *περὶ τὴν πολυπραγμοσύνην* (concerning eagerness, or, industriousness) in matters of written evidence, and *περὶ τὰς πράξεις τὰς πολιτικές* we can compare Strabo's praise of the poet's *φιλοπραγμοσύνη* (a rare word equivalent in this context to *πολυπραγμοσύνη*) as well as his insistence on how Homer "had busied himself about deeds" (*περὶ τὰς πράξεις ἐσπούδασεν*) and his "experience of political life" (*τῆ κατὰ τὸν βίον ἐμπειρία τὸν πολιτικόν*).³¹ As for the second, geographical, part of

27. Verduyck 1990 examines Polybius' Homeric citations and his critique of Homeric geography in Book 34. The extent to which Strabo is dependent upon Polybius' Book 34 continues to be debated; see Walbank 1956-79, 3:577-79, and most recently Engels 1999, 164-65.

28. On the meaning of this much-debated term, so important to Polybius, see the discussion in Sacks 1981, 178-86.

29. Schepens 1974, following the division laid out in Isnardi 1955; cf. Schepens 1990.

30. Translations of Polybius are from Paton's Loeb, with modifications, and with reference to Walbank 1956-79. Greek is cited from Büttner-Wobst's Teubner.

31. *φιλοπραγμοσύνη*, 1.1.10; political experience, 1.1.2; see discussion above, p. 366.

history, note the close verbal parallels between Polybius' text *περὶ τὴν θέαν τῶν πόλεων καὶ τῶν τόπων περὶ τε ποταμῶν καὶ λιμένων καὶ καθόλου τῶν κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν ἰδιωμάτων* and Strabo's description of Homer's interest in *τὰ περὶ τοὺς τόπους τοὺς τε καθ' ἕκαστα καὶ τοὺς κατὰ σύμπασαν τὴν οἰκουμένην γῆν τε καὶ θάλατταν* (matters of places, both individually and with regard to the whole inhabited world, land and sea).³²

Strabo, whether consciously or not, appears to have fashioned Homer as a historian who stands in conformity with Polybius' prescriptive guidelines, so that in Strabo's new vision of the genealogy of the geographical *τέχνη* Homer is paradoxically constituted, after the fact, as having anticipated and served as the model for Polybius' ideal historian. But Strabo's re-inscription of Homer into the historiographical tradition has an even deeper resonance with Polybius' work. Homer also figures prominently in other Polybian discussions of three essential historiographical issues *ἐμπειρία*, *πολυπραγμοσύνη*, and *travel* that we have identified as central to Strabo's vision of the poet, a correspondence that suggests that Strabo's Homer perhaps owes a more extensive debt to the Homer of the *Histories*.

As is widely recognized, *ἐμπειρία* (experience) is one of the Polybian historian's most important assets.³³ For Polybius "it is neither possible for a man without experience [*ἐμπειρίαν*] of military matters to write well about what goes on in a war, nor for one unversed [*τὸν μὴ πεπειραμένον*] in the practice and circumstances of politics to write well on that subject" (12.25g.1). Historians without such experience (Timaeus, naturally, is the primary target here) not only are prone to frequent errors of fact, but also remain unable to "arouse the interest of their readers" because their writing lacks a certain "vividness" (*ἔμφασις*, 12.25h.4), likely to be found among only those historians "who have played some part in affairs themselves and made this aspect of history their own" (*τοῖς δι' αὐτῶν πεπορευμένοις τῶν πραγμάτων τοῦτο τὸ μέρος περιπεποιημένοις τῆς ἱστορίας*, 12.25h.6).³⁴ Vividness in writing about politics, war, or even domestic matters, then, usually arises from participation in, and familiarity with, these activities, even if not necessarily in the specific events one was actually writing about.³⁵ Such a stance is in keeping with Polybius' general privileging of political and military experience for those writing history, but when he goes on to provide an example of such a man, he turns not to a historian, but to Homer (12.25i.1):

The poet is sufficient proof that what I am saying is by no means impossible [*ὄτι δὲ τὸ λεγόμενον οὐκ ἄδύνατον, ἴκανὸν ὑπόδειγμα πρὸς πίστιν ὁ ποιητῆς*], for in his poetry

32. Note the similar language at Strabo 10.3.5, where he specifically mentions Polybius.

33. On the importance of experience in Greek historiography, see Marincola 1997, 133–36 (and further pp. 71–75 on Polybius). Both he (p. 73) and Schepens 1970, 173–75, in a stronger formulation, note Polybius' use of the term *ἐμπειρία* in a new, important way, tied specifically to the historian's skill in investigation.

34. On the term *ἔμφασις* as used by Polybius, see Schepens 1975.

35. "Hence our predecessors considered that historical memoirs should possess such vividness [*δεῖν ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν ὑπάρχειν ἐμφάσεις*] as to make one exclaim when the author deals with political affairs that he necessarily had taken part in politics and had experience [*πείραν ἔσχκε*] in matters of that sort, when he deals with war that he had been in the field and risked his life, and when he deals with private life that he had reared children and lived with a wife, and so on regarding the other parts of life" (12.25h.5).

one sees much of this kind of vividness (παρ' ὅ πολλὸ τὸ τῆς τοιαύτης ἐμφάσεως ἴδοι τις ἂν ὑπάρχον).

The implication here is that Homer's poetry has vividness because Homer was familiar, as all historians should be, with τὰ πράγματα, and versed in worldly and domestic life in short, because he possessed ἐμπειρία.

A short while later, the discussion has moved on to πολυπραγμοσύνη (literally, "curiosity," but here meaning something closer to "personal investigation"), which "requires great labor and expense [πολλῆς ταλαιπωρίας καὶ δαπάνης] . . . but is the most important part of history [μεγιστόν ἐστι μέρος τῆς ἱστορίας]."³⁶ In support of his claim, Polybius quotes passages from Ephorus and Theopompus asserting the superiority of knowledge gained from physical presence. But his third authority is Homer (12.27.10):

The poet has spoken even more vividly [ἐμφαντικώτερον] on this aspect than the others. When he wishes to set before us the qualities that the man of action [τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν πραγματικόν] should possess, he presents the character [τὸ πρόσωπον] of Odysseus in these words: "Tell me Muse, of the man of many ways, who was driven far journeys" [*Od.* 1.1], and further on, "many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of and many the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea" [*Od.* 1.2 3] and again: "For I had much to suffer: the wars of men; hard crossing of the big waters" [*Od.* 8.183].

"It appears to me," Polybius gravely concludes, "that the dignity of history demands such a man" (12.28.1). Here, as previously, Homer is implicitly a man versed in the same fields and sharing the qualities of the best historians of the past. While in 12.25, Polybius had turned to Homer as an example of a historian who achieved an ἔμφασις τῶν πραγμάτων that can only be produced ἐκ τῆς αὐτοπαθείας, locating in the poet the consummate "experienced" writer, he here uses Homer as the crowning example of a series of historians who emphasize the need for personal inquiry into political and military affairs. Homer not only is a model for historiographical practice, but also theoretically reflects on this practice in his descriptions of Odysseus.³⁷ Homer's remarks, however, are slightly different from those of Ephorus and Theopompus, who focus on the importance of presence for historical inquiry.³⁸ The sense from the *Odyssey* passages is rather that πολυπραγμοσύνη requires hardship and effort and is closely tied to travel, recalling the references to personal investigation's "great labor and expense" with which Polybius had begun his discussion.

This emphasis on the travel and effort involved in proper historical inquiry appears again in Polybius' well-known excursus on geography in 3.56.³⁹

36. 12.27.6. Again the target is Timaeus and his propensity to read books instead of interrogating witnesses. As if to reiterate the importance of πολυπραγμοσύνη, Polybius repeats the term (or its cognates) four times in chap. 27.

37. Here Polybius shares with Strabo and the biographers the widespread assumption that Homer's descriptions of characters could be used as evidence of his own beliefs. Note also that Polybius quotes the very same lines of the *Odyssey* as Strabo does in 1.1.16, to prove the same point. These lines, however, are frequently cited in antiquity and do not necessarily suggest any direct connection between the two authors.

38. See Schepens 1970 on Ephorus' statement.

39. On Polybius and geography, see Pédech 1964, 588–96; Walbank 1972, 114–29; and the important analysis of Clarke 1999, 79–97.

Although he advocates postponing systematic discussion to a separate book (i.e., 34), Polybius insists that no other field is in as much need of correction or has enjoyed such an increase in knowledge (a sentiment echoed by Strabo at, e.g., 1.2.1 and 2.5.12). He demonstrates this through a brief speculative description of the difficulties of early exploration somewhat reminiscent of Thucydides' "Archaeology": in earlier times, very few Greeks tried to "inquire into the ends of the world" (πολυπραγμονεῖν τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἐσχατίας) because of the danger. If someone had reached "the boundaries of the world" (πρὸς τὰ πέρατα τῆς οἰκουμένης), he could not have seen things with his own eyes, and even if he had seen them, he couldn't have received accurate information about those things due to his inability to speak the local language. Moreover, even were he to have obtained trustworthy data, he would have most likely embellished these facts with monsters and marvels. But, Polybius concludes, we should not criticize those early writers, but praise them for how much they did manage to learn in less-than-ideal circumstances. Leaving aside Polybius' remarkable rhetorical argument and its dizzying series of counterfactuals, it is difficult, in the light of all that we have been discussing (especially Proclus' Homeric *Vita*), not to imagine Homer as the primary object of this ambivalent apology. Or we might say at least that it would have been difficult for Strabo, as he was reading this passage, not to have done so — after all, Strabo's initial portrait uses similar language in emphasizing Homer's journeys to the ends and boundaries of the world (μέχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων αὐτῆς [sc. τῆς οἰκουμένης] περάτων ἀφίκετο).

Immediately after this passage, Polybius offers a testimonial of his own intrepid nature, characterizing himself as a traveling geographical inquirer engaged in a quest for knowledge: "It was in fact with this express object [to give an accurate description of the world] that I underwent the dangers and hardships of making journeys through Africa, Spain, and Gaul, and voyages on the sea which adjoins these countries on their western side" (3.59.7–8). F. W. Walbank has plausibly suggested that Polybius is casting himself in a Homeric mode here and that the Odyssean model of a wise wanderer of distant lands, experienced in war and strategy, resonated with Polybius' self-conception.⁴⁰ One could add that the emphasis here on "dangers and hardships" recalls (or foreshadows) the "severe labor and great expense" required by a historian's "personal investigation" evidenced by the *Odyssey* quotations of 12.27.

As even this brief treatment reveals, for Polybius, experience, personal investigation, travel, and industriousness are closely linked — none can stand on its own (even autopsy, that object of every historian's desire, remains useless in Polybius' eyes if employed by an inexperienced man). The concept of personal investigation so highly praised in 12.27 naturally binds together the geographer and the historian (πολυπραγμονεῖν, above and at 3.59.4). But I hope to have demonstrated that Polybius' idea of the proper historian is constantly informed, implicitly or explicitly, by the figure of

40. Walbank 1948, 181, somewhat modified in Walbank 1972, 51–52.

Homer, even if he is often in the background. In his aspect as a historian, Homer exemplifies the qualities that Polybius holds as essential to his own work.⁴¹

Strabo's depiction of Homer in 1.1 thus stems from his reading of Polybius—not in the sense of using him as a "source," but inasmuch as Strabo's sense of historical and geographical inquiry owes so much to the Polybian sensibility.⁴² Strabo builds his Homer upon the hints and traces found in the Polybian text; he makes explicit and expands upon what was only (unconsciously?) suggested in Polybius' work—that Homer was the man who embodied all of the characteristics of the ideal historian and geographer before they had even been enumerated and systematized by Polybius himself.⁴³ In particular, he seems to have come to the conclusion that Homer's excellence lay first and foremost in the kind of person he was, marked by the historiographical desire that led him to experience life, be a man of action, and spend considerable effort and expense in travel, all in the pursuit of knowledge.⁴⁴

To bring the interplay of Strabo, Homer, Polybius, and geography to a fitting climax, we might conclude this section with a glance at Strabo's description of his own qualifications as a geographer in the so-called second introduction at 2.5, a reminiscence of Polybius' geographical self-characterization at 3.59, which we have just examined. Strabo boasts that "one could not find another geographer who has traveled over much more than I have,"⁴⁵ and he backs up his assertion with an itinerary of precisely where he has traveled (2.5.11).⁴⁶ From this declaration of his own love of travel Strabo turns to his love of knowledge (Homer's τὸ φιλέκδημον and τὸ φιλεῖδημον). Just as he had imagined Homer inquiring after places and events the poet was unable to witness himself, Strabo argues that geographers (glossed as "serious students" οἱ φιλομαθεῖς—a favorite term of Polybius for his ideal audience) must rely, not only on *autopsia*, but also on second-hand witnesses (2.5.11):

However, the greater part of our material both they and I receive by hearsay [ἄκοῆ παραλαβόντες] and then form our ideas of shape and size and also other characteristics, qualitative and quantitative, precisely as the mind forms its ideas from sense impressions [ἢ διάνοια ἐκ τῶν αἰσθητῶν συντίθησι τὰ νοητά]. . . . And serious students [οἱ φιλομαθεῖς] proceed in just that way, trusting in, just as sense organs [αἰσθητηρίοις], those who have seen and traveled over places, some here, some there, and form in one diagram their mental image of the whole inhabited world.

41. It is significant that Polybius mentions Homer in the two most important methodological passages in Book 12. For a lucid reading of the two (which, however, ignores the Homeric references), see Schepens 1974.

42. See Dueck 2000, 47, and Engels 1999 on the methodological similarities between Polybius and Strabo.

43. Of course, Polybius may have made such links explicit elsewhere in the lost portions of his *Histories* (e.g., Book 34).

44. As Aujac (1966, 34) notes, the qualities by which Homer surpasses other poets arise directly from his personality.

45. He clarifies this by claiming: "those who have traveled more than I in the western regions have not covered as much ground in the east" and vice versa, "and the same holds true in regard to the regions to the south and the north" (2.5.11).

46. 2.5.11: "I have traveled westward from Armenia as far as the regions of Tyrrhenia opposite Sardinia, and southward from the Euxine Sea as far as the frontiers of Ethiopia." On Strabo's travels see Clarke 1999, 240–42; Engels 1999, 26–36; and Dueck 2000, 15–30.

While Polybius perhaps saw himself as an Odysseus, suffering the perils of wanderings and war, Strabo seems to envision his own activity more in line with Homer's. His gesture towards secondhand witnesses could be seen on the one hand as an apology for his own dependence on Homeric testimony, but also accords with the Homeric rather than the Odyssean model of inquiry. Homer did not experience, nor necessarily "see" everything himself (a reference to his blindness?), but nevertheless did his best to learn them by inquiry. After all, Strabo asserts, "he who claims that only those who have seen [τοὺς ἰδόντας] have knowledge [εἰδέναι] destroys the criterion of hearing [ἀναίρει τὸ τῆς ἀκοῆς κριτήριον], which is much more important than sight for science [ἥτις πρὸς ἐπιστήμην ὀφθαλμοῦ πολὺ κρείττων ἐστί]."⁴⁷

STRABO, HOMER, AND THE IDEAL GEOGRAPHER

Instruction, Benefit, and Erudition (ὠφέλεια and πολυμάθεια)

Near the end of his defense of Homer's status as the first geographer, Strabo pauses to pardon Homer's practice of "mixing some mythical things into those told historically and instructively" (μυθώδη τινὰ προσπέλεκται τοῖς λεγομένοις ἱστορικῶς καὶ διδασκαλικῶς) and to record his disagreement with Eratosthenes' claim "that every poet aims at entertainment, not instruction" (ὅτι ποιητῆς πᾶς στοχάζεται ψυχαγωγίας, οὐ διδασκαλίας, 1.1.10). He promises to treat the matter in more detail at a later point and spends the long second chapter of Book 1 (1.2.1–40), the beginning of which I will be examining below, doing so. But for now I want to point out that these early references, both to material that Homer narrates διδασκαλικῶς and to his concern for "instruction" (διδασκαλία), allude to an integral part of Strabo's portrait of the poet, which we have not yet considered. Homer, as we recall, directed his energies toward gaining as much knowledge as possible *so that* he might "give an account [of that knowledge] to those who came after him" (καὶ παραδώσει τοῖς ὕστερον ἐσομένοις, 1.1.2). This didactic desire to transmit the historico-geographical knowledge acquired through travel, inquiry, and industry to his audience for their benefit is another essential element in Strabo's vision of Homer, because, as I will argue, it is so closely linked to Strabo's attempt to construct the ideal geographer.

To demonstrate this, we should turn back to 1.1.1, the paragraph immediately preceding the Homeric portrait, where Strabo sets out three reasons why he believes that geography is "the business of the philosopher" (τῆς τοῦ φιλοσόφου πραγματείας). The first is that all previous geographers have been philosophers; the second, that geography requires πολυμάθεια (wide learning), which "belongs to none other than the one who has examined both human and divine affairs," i.e., the philosopher; the third, because it aims at a goal ὠφέλεια ποικίλη (multifaceted utility) that "presupposes the same man, the one who reflects upon the art of life" (τὸν φροντίζοντα τῆς περὶ τὸν βίον

47. In contrast to Polybius' interest in autopsy and participation: Engels 1999, 157–65.

τέχνης, 1.1.1).⁴⁸ The rest of 1.1 is devoted to explaining these three claims as we have seen, his initial concern is to establish Homer as the first of the geographer-philosophers (1.1.2–11); he then moves on to specify the πολυμάθεια necessary for the geographer (1.1.12–16) and the ὠφέλεια that is his object (1.1.17–23).⁴⁹

Strabo's treatment of ὠφέλεια and πολυμάθεια is essential to understanding his definition of geography and has often attracted scholarly interest.⁵⁰ The relationship of these ideals in regard to his conception and interpretation of Homer, however, has rarely been examined, and then only in the most general of terms.⁵¹ This is odd, because his methodological remarks seem to have clear connections both with the portrait of Homer that precedes them and with the long discussion of Homeric poetry that follows in 1.2. On the one hand, the lengthy analysis in 1.1.3–11 shows that Homer possessed wide-ranging knowledge, and the portrait in 1.1.2 speaks of his desire to transmit this knowledge to posterity. Furthermore, even though Strabo's subsequent discussion of ὠφέλεια and πολυμάθεια is geared toward constructing the ideal geographer of his own day, he continues to cite Homer in support of his arguments,⁵² leading one to presume that Homer, as the founder of geography, would also conform to Strabo's guidelines. In this light, the following chapter, 1.2, where Strabo upholds Homer's geographical knowledge and his poetry's useful and instructional value against Eratosthenes, looks like a defense of Homer based precisely on the notions of ὠφέλεια and πολυμάθεια that Strabo has just been discussing in 1.1.12–23. In what follows, I want to demonstrate that Strabo's defense of Homer against Eratosthenes in 1.2, rather than an independent excursus on poetic interpretation, is part of his larger concern to establish Homer not simply as the *first* geographer, but as a man who had the same qualifications and intentions (ὠφέλεια and πολυμάθεια) as Strabo's *ideal* geographer.

Instruction, Polymathy, Experience, and Utility

We should begin by outlining what exactly Strabo means by πολυμάθεια and ὠφέλεια, which he sees respectively as the prerequisite and objective of geography. Πολυμάθεια comprises fluency in both celestial and terrestrial matters, and in particular a mastery of ἡ ἐπίγειος ἱστορία, that is, knowledge of “what lives on the earth” (1.1.16). This “wide learning” required of the geographer corresponds to those things “useful [χρήσιμα] for the statesman

48. Strabo's notion of “philosophy”: French 1994, 123–30; Engels 1999, 40–44.

49. See Aujac and Lasserre 1969, 4–11, for a diagrammed breakdown of Strabo's argument in the *Prolegomena* (i.e., Books 1–2).

50. Van Paassen 1957, 1–32; Prontera 1984, 211–16; Biraschi 1988; Engels 1999, 90–102; Dueck 2000, 154–64.

51. For instance, Biraschi (1988) reconciles Strabo's interest in Homer with his definition of practical “utility” aimed at statesmen by showing (with especial attention to 2.5.17) how Strabo believes that utility also demands the inclusion of traditional material such as Homeric geographical information; see further below in the conclusion.

52. For instance, he speaks in 1.1.16 of the demands that utility places upon a geographer and at 1.1.20 concerning the kind of knowledge with which one should expect a geographer to be familiar.

and the general,” whom Strabo imagines as his ideal readers (1.1.21).⁵³ Strabo emphasizes the pragmatic cast of this knowledge; geography, for the most part, is geared towards political needs (πρὸς τὰς χρείας τὰς πολιτικάς), and clearly bears upon the activities of leaders; “for thus they can manage their affairs in a more satisfactory manner, if they know how large a country is, how it lies, and what its peculiarities are” (1.1.16). Such a practical utility is the standard by which geography must be measured (μέτρον . . . τῆς τοιαύτης ἐμπειρίας) and is illustrated with a series of examples: the knowledge of the forest is essential to a hunter, just as a sure grasp of the land is to the leaders of military expeditions.⁵⁴ Utility is thus the overarching aim of the *Geography*; the geographer should direct his attention to “the useful” (τὰ χρήσιμα, 1.1.19), and Strabo’s work τὸ σύγγραμμα, as he calls it should be “useful alike to the statesman and the public at large” (δεῖ καὶ πολιτικὸν καὶ δημωφελὲς ὁμοίως, 1.1.22).

How, then, does such a pragmatic, geographical sense of πολυμάθεια and ὠφέλεια apply to Homer? In the section immediately following this outline of the ideal geographer, Strabo begins an extensive critique of his predecessors, from Eratosthenes to Posidonius, that stretches from 1.2 to 2.4. The first item of business, however, is a long and detailed defense of Homer from Eratosthenes’ contention that “poets aim at entertainment not instruction” (στοχάζεσθαι ψυχαγωγίας, οὐ διδασκαλίας, 1.2.3 = frag. 1A.20).⁵⁵ Most scholarship on this part of the *Geography* treats it as if it were an independent excursus about the purpose of poetry, linked to the long-standing controversy over poetry’s claims to instruct its readers in everything from morals and religion to technical knowledge.⁵⁶ In his influential summary of this debate, Rudolf Pfeiffer reflects a long-prevailing attitude, praising Eratosthenes’ “fearless” and “scientific” declaration of poetic autonomy, while dismissing Strabo as a “Stoic ‘convert’” determined to defend Homer’s universal wisdom at any cost.⁵⁷

To some degree Strabo provides grounds for such a characterization; he quotes commonplaces of Stoic poetic criticism and occasionally couches his defense of Homer in moralizing terms. Witness his opening remarks against Eratosthenes (1.2.3):

53. As Biraschi (1988, 129–32) notes, Strabo envisions readers similar to those that Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes in his *Antiquitates Romanae*; there are parallels also with Polybius, as is to be expected; cf. Gabba 1982, 60: “Strabo distinguishes between the specialized scientist and the intelligent political uses of geographical doctrine.”

54. To put emphasis on the practical benefit of geographical knowledge, Strabo points to famous military expeditions that failed due to lack of such information, from Agamemnon’s mistaken invasion of Mysia (in the belief that it was Troy) to Crassus’ disastrous campaign against the Parthians.

55. Eratosthenes’ fragments are cited according to Berger 1880.

56. See Koster 1970, 143–51, on the ancient debate on the purpose of poetry, and Hillgruber 1994, 1:5–35, on the idea of Homer as the source of all knowledge; cf. Russell 1981, 84–98.

57. Pfeiffer 1968, 154, 166–68; cf. similar comments in the standard handbooks on ancient literary criticism: Grube 1965, 128; Russell 1981, 42 and 95; Innes 1989, 272. De Lacy (1948) uncritically uses Strabo as evidence for Stoic poetics; Walbank (1956–79, 3:577) thinks that Strabo sees Homer as the “prototype of the Stoic σοφός”; Russell and Winterbottom (1970, 300) introduce their translation of 1.2.3–9 as “a statement of the Stoic position about the didactic value of poetry. . . .”

The ancients, in contrast [to Eratosthenes], say that poetry is a sort of primary philosophy, which is supposed to introduce us to life from our childhood, and teach [διδάσκουσιν] us about character, emotion, and action [ἦθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις] in a pleasurable way [μεθ' ἡδονῆς]. My own school [the Stoics] actually said that only the wise man could be a poet [μόνον ποιητὴν ἔφασαν εἶναι τὸν σοφόν]. This is why Greek communities give children their first education through poetry [πρώτιστα διὰ τῆς ποιητικῆς παιδεύουσιν], not for simple entertainment of course, but for moral improvement [οὐ ψυχαγωγίας χάριν δῆπουθεν ψιλῆς, ἀλλὰ σωφρονισμοῦ].

First of all, it should be pointed out that Strabo's moralizing stance in this passage is not strictly due to his Stoic allegiances (even if it is compatible with it), since he goes on to attribute this position also to the Pythagoreans and the Peripatetic Aristoxenus.⁵⁸ More significant, however, is the incongruity of this introductory passage with the thrust of Strabo's subsequent claims. The abrupt transition to the next argument "But even apart from this, Eratosthenes contradicts himself" (1.2.3) reflects the lack of continuity with the wholly geographically tinged discussion that follows. And indeed, as Anna Maria Biraschi has observed, Strabo's "philosophical" justifications in this passage do not accord with his actual method of defending Homer in the latter portions of the chapter (not to mention the rest of the *Geography*), where Homer is never interpreted in moralizing terms by Strabo nor imagined as an ideal Stoic sage, but always treated strictly as a geographer.⁵⁹ If Strabo chooses on occasion to have recourse to such familiar moralizing defenses of poetry's instructional value, those comments should not necessarily be taken as more indicative of his poetic "beliefs" than his more consistent pragmatic position expressed elsewhere.

As we have seen, Strabo has been envisioning Homer as an exemplar of historiographical and geographical practice up to this point; any reference to Homer's "instructional" or "entertainment" aims should refer primarily to his work not qua poetry, but qua geography. In fact, this whole section (1.2.3–40) can be read in a largely geographical context, as directly linked to the discussion of the ideal geographer in 1.1 and dedicated to proving that Homer not only knew a lot of geographical, meteorological, and climatic facts (πολυμάθεια), but that he intended to pass along this information to his readers for their practical, rather than moral, benefit (ὠφέλεια). A connection between the διδασκαλία here in 1.2 and the ὠφέλεια of 1.1.17–23 is already

58. Plutarch makes virtually the identical claims in *Quomodo adul.* 1 (14F). See Aly 1957, 376–85, for a discussion of possible sources. Strabo's following citation of *Od.* 3.267–70, on the *aoidos* left by Agamemnon to watch over Clytemnestra, is likewise paralleled in a wide range of critics (see Gostoli 1986 and Montanari 2001 on Demetrius of Phalerum). This is not to say that Strabo did not consider himself a Stoic, nor that his geography is not informed by a Stoic view of the world, but only that his understanding of Homer is not necessarily representative of or consistent with Stoic poetics (Koster [1970, 144–45] calls it a mixture of Stoic and Peripatetic thought). On Strabo's philosophical allegiances, see Aly 1964 and Aujac 1983.

59. Biraschi 1984, 152. The same could be said for some of Strabo's other excursions, such as that at the end of 1.2.5 discussed below, and 1.2.8, which veers off into a theory of myth that is incompatible with Strabo's understanding of Homeric myth elsewhere. Following Floratos 1972, 60, Biraschi does, however, see Strabo's position as possessing affinities to that of the oldest Stoics, emphasizing the unity of wisdom and the ties between philosophy, poetry, and science.

evident in Strabo's treatment of the ideal geographer at 1.1.15, where he states that the geographer must present things clearly and use things "for the purposes of instruction" (πρὸς τὴν διδασκαλίαν) and 1.1.14, where he asks "how [the geographer] can instruct correctly and adequately [καλῶς καὶ ἱκανῶς διδάσκει] if he has paid no attention, even superficially, to any of these matters?"⁶⁰ These references to the objective and activity of geographers as "instruction" suggest a close relation with the more explicit geographical goal of "utility"; in essence, ὠφέλεια is the expected result of διδασκαλία.

If we turn to his quarrel with Eratosthenes in 1.2, we witness Strabo demonstrating the close association of the two terms in his mind when he mockingly paraphrases Eratosthenes' original assertion on entertainment and instruction (1.2.19 = frag. 1A.14):

... ὁ Ἐρατοσθένης . . . φησὶ τὸν ποιητὴν βούλεσθαι μὲν ἐν τοῖς προσεπερίοις τόποις τὴν πλάνην τῷ Ὀδυσσεὶ ποιεῖν, ἀποστῆναι δ' ἀπὸ τῶν ὑποκειμένων τὰ μὲν οὐκ ἀκριβῶς πεπυσμένον, τὰ δὲ οὐδὲ προσελόμενον οὕτως, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ δεινότερον καὶ τὸ τερατωδέστερον ἕκαστα ἐξάγειν, τοῦτο μὲν αὐτὸ εὖ, τὸ δ' οὐ χάριν τοῦτ' ἐποιεῖ κακῶς δεξάμενος· οὐ γὰρ φλυαρίας, ἀλλ' ὠφελείας χάριν.

. . . Eratosthenes says . . . that the poet wished to represent Odysseus' wanderings in far western places, but abandoned this scheme, partly having gained inaccurate information, and partly not even having preferred to be accurate but rather to lead each incident away toward the more awe inspiring and the more marvellous. Now Eratosthenes understands well what Homer actually did, but wrongly his motive in doing it; it was not for the sake of nonsense, but for utility.

When Strabo claims that Homer wrote "not for the sake of nonsense, but for utility" (οὐ γὰρ φλυαρίας, ἀλλ' ὠφελείας χάριν), he is evidently substituting the terms φλυαρία and ὠφέλεια for Eratosthenes' entertainment (ψυχαγωγία) and instruction (διδασκαλία) (cf. 1.2.18).

This passage also demonstrates that the debate revolved around more than simply Homer's knowledge of geographical matters. On most issues, Strabo and Eratosthenes agree on Homer's geographical accuracy, but differ over *why* he chose to be accurate (οὐ χάριν τοῦτ' ἐποιεῖ). Such a divergence over Homer's intentions can be located right at the beginning of the dispute in 1.2.3. Eratosthenes, according to Strabo, had admitted that "Homer had found room in his poetry for what he had found out about Ethiopia and Egypt and Libya, and went into extraordinary detail on Greece and adjacent areas . . ." (1.2.3 = frag. 1A.4). Strabo cannot understand how Eratosthenes admits this yet denies that Homer included such information for instructional purposes.⁶¹ While Eratosthenes sees Homer's geographical accuracy

60. Geographers are also referred to as "instructing" at 1.1.12: "Hipparchus and Eratosthenes instruct [διδάσκουσι] that it is impossible for any man . . . to attain to the requisite knowledge of geography, without . . ."

61. "Well, is the poet who does this [i.e., introducing correct geographical information] offering entertainment or instruction? Instruction, of course . . ." (πότερον οὖν ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα ψυχαγωγῶντι ἔοικεν ἢ διδάσκοντι; νῆ Δία . . . , Str. 1.2.3); see Meijering 1987, 58–59. I should note that my concern is not with Eratosthenes' view of Homeric poetry, but with how Strabo polemically interprets that view.

as incidental to his poetic aims, it is essential for Strabo not only that Homer included correct facts, but that he had an instructional, useful goal in mind as well. Homer, like the ideal geographer, aims at *ὠφέλεια*.⁶²

The close relation of Homer's knowledge, instruction, and concern for utility is best demonstrated by Strabo's arguments on behalf of Homer's instruction in the sections (1.2.3–5) that immediately follow this passage. Eratosthenes had offered two specific criticisms: first he had asked "what does it contribute to the excellence of a poet [πρὸς ἀρετὴν ποιητοῦ] to have experience [ἐμπειρον] of many places, generalship, farming, rhetoric or whatever it is that people have wanted to secure [περιποιεῖν] for him?" (1.2.3 = frag. 1A.21); he had then gone on to declare that "poetry is a fable-mongering old woman, to whom it has been allowed to invent . . . whatever she deems suitable for entertainment" (τὴν ποιητικὴν γραῶδη μυθολογίαν ἀποφαίνων, ἣ δέδοται πλάττειν . . . ὃ ἂν αὐτῇ φαίνεται ψυχαγωγίας οἰκεῖον, 1.2.3 = frag. 1A.19). In his initial response, Strabo concedes that Homer should not be granted all knowledge, but maintains that Eratosthenes is wrong to "deprive Homer of so much *πολυμάθεια*."⁶³ This rephrasing of Eratosthenes' accusation as a specific attack on Homer's *πολυμάθεια* suggests that Strabo is thinking about the argument in terms of his just concluded discussion in 1.1,⁶⁴ a suggestion confirmed in Strabo's vehement conclusion to 1.2.3:

Is no contribution made towards the excellence [οὐδὲν συμβάλλεται πρὸς ἀρετὴν] of the poets' audiences? I mean his having experience of many places [λέγω δὲ τὸ πολλῶν ὑπάρξαι τόπων ἐμπειρον], generalship, farming or rhetoric, which listening, as is likely, secures [in the audience] [ἄπερ ἡ ἀκρόασις, . . . ὡς εἰκός, περιποιεῖ].⁶⁵

Eratosthenes' criticism of poets' being "experienced" (ἐμπειρος) has struck a chord with Strabo, for whom, as we have seen, ἐμπειρία is an essential part of Homer's character.⁶⁶ Strabo links such knowledge based on "experience" to Homer's capacity as an instructor at the beginning of 1.2.5, when he speaks of "the whole educated world which trusts his evidence as

62. Koster (1970, 145) discusses *ὠφέλεια* in Str. 1.2, but takes it in a moral sense.

63. Strabo remarks that trying "to assign [περιποιεῖν] every art and all knowledge [πᾶν μάθημα καὶ πᾶσαν τέχνην] to him would be the act of a man whose zeal brings him to grief." This explicit criticism of the conception of Homer as the source of all knowledge is another sign that Strabo's position is more complicated than Pfeiffer and others would have it. In a similar fashion, Strabo thought it ridiculous to assume that everything, even nonfantastic episodes such as the battle with the suitors, happened in the *Odyssey* exactly as described (1.2.11).

64. Cf. 1.2.20: "Again, in the case of the *climata* and of the winds, Homer displays his wide learning concerning geography" (τὸ πολυμαθὲς τὸ περὶ τὴν γεωγραφίαν).

65. As his examples show, Strabo here takes *ἀρετή* to mean not *moral* excellence or virtue (as Floratos 1972, 61, claims), but strictly practical skill; Biraschi (1984) sees Strabo's understanding of *ἀρετή* differently, as retaining a moral sense separate from the technical notion of "virtue," a distinction, moreover, that orthodox Stoics would not have maintained; on this distinction, see also Aujac 1969. Eratosthenes, on the other hand, seems to be referring to *poetic* excellence in a more Aristotelian sense, although there is no way to be sure.

66. Strabo formulates Eratosthenes' accusation even more clearly at 1.2.12 = frag. 1A.12: "He declares that all poets are dealers in absurdities [ποιητὴν τε ἅπαντα ἀποφήνας φύλαρον] and thinks that their knowledge either of places or *technai* [καὶ μήτε τόπων ἐμπειρίαν μήτε τεχνῶν] does not conduce to excellence [πρὸς ἀρετὴν συντείνειν νομισας]."

embodying right judgement on the great contribution to wisdom made by such experience” (πάντες οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι μάρτυρι χρῶνται τῷ ποιητῇ ὡς ὀρθῶς λέγοντι περὶ τοῦ τὴν τοιαύτην ἔμπειρίαν εἰς φρόνησιν συντείνειν μάλιστα).

The focus on “experience” lies at the heart of the next argument as well and connects Homer’s πολυμάθεια with his concern for ὠφέλεια. At 1.2.5, Strabo maintains that there is no “poetic excellence” (ἀρετὴν ποιητοῦ) better than Homer’s “skill to represent life by the medium of words” (τὴν μιμητικὴν τοῦ βίου διὰ λόγων). This mimetic talent, however, is explicitly tied to Homer’s life experience in a formulation reminiscent of Polybius: “How,” Strabo asks, “can [Homer] represent [μιμοῖτο], if he is inexperienced in life [ἄπειρος ὦν τοῦ βίου] and foolish?”⁶⁷ Moreover, Homer’s unparalleled mimetic ability is assumed to have “utility” as its goal; in another paraphrase of Eratosthenes, Strabo wonders how a poet so skillful at representation could be “only capable of bewitching and cajoling [γοητεύειν μόνον καὶ κολακεύειν] his audience and not benefiting them [ὠφελεῖν δὲ μηδέν]?” The language of this section (πολυμάθεια, ἔμπειρος, ἄπειρος, ὠφελεῖν) indicates that we are indeed still in the conceptual realm of the intrepid Homer and the ideal geographer. Seen in this light, even Strabo’s Stoicizing aphoristic remark at the conclusion of 1.2.5 that only a good man can be a good poet (οὐχ οἷόν τε ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ποιητὴν μὴ πρότερον γενηθέντα ἄνδρα ἀγαθόν) could be taken in a more “technical” way, rather than as an example of his moralizing tendencies. The excellence of a poet, as we have seen, refers to his mimetic, not his moral, excellence; since mimetic ability is the result of experience, the “poet” and the “man” are “good” inasmuch as they are experienced.⁶⁸

Strabo’s opening remarks in 1.2.3–5, then, answer Eratosthenes’ general questioning of Homer’s knowledge and instructive intent as if he were specifically impugning the πολυμάθεια and ὠφέλεια proper to the geographer. In this light, Strabo’s positing of entertainment and instruction as Homer’s goals, his pragmatic sense of “utility,” and his vigorous defense of Homeric διδασκαλία have a consistent basis in his understanding of Homer’s role as an ideal geographer.⁶⁹ When Eratosthenes casts doubt on Homer’s concern for “instruction,” he undermines Homer’s fulfillment of the “utility” that forms the ideal geographer’s primary goal. Eratosthenes’ attack on Homer thus goes to the heart of Strabo’s conception of himself and his own geographical

67. Halliwell (2002, p. 270, with n. 21) sees this as an implicit response to Pl. *Resp.* 10.598–600, presumably transmitted via Hellenistic sources.

68. Alternatively, one could see the last sentence of 1.2.5, in which Strabo, backtracking, differentiates poetic virtue from that of a carpenter, “which depends on no inherent nobility or dignity, whereas the excellence of a poet is inseparably associated with the excellence of the man himself,” as another of Strabo’s attempts to frame his arguments in Stoicizing terms that are nevertheless starkly incompatible with his focus on Homer’s technical knowledge and experience.

69. Strabo devotes 1.2.8–9 to developing his idea of Homer’s dual purpose of entertainment *and* instruction with his well-known excursus on the origins of myths, while much of the ensuing discussion of Odysseus’ wanderings (1.2.10–19) further explicates Strabo’s method of separating “entertaining myth” from “instructive history” in counterpoint to Eratosthenes and Polybius.

project; Strabo's defense, while far from satisfactory in its frequent digressions, confusions, and prolixity, is not simply a long-winded apology for Homer's knowledge of geography, but a defense of the principles of geography itself as embodied in the founder of the science. For Strabo being a proper geographer is not simply a matter of getting the facts right, but having the right attitude; as a result Eratosthenes' claim that Homer had no concern for instruction and did not even have the experience and knowledge to impart such instruction had to be refuted at all costs.

Ψυχαγωγία, διδασκαλία, and ὠφέλεια in Historiography

Strabo's debate with Eratosthenes can thus be seen as deeply connected to his ideas about Homer and geography. This should not really come as a surprise. Although many scholars have recognized that the language employed by Strabo and Eratosthenes ψυχαγωγία, διδασκαλία, ὠφέλεια is paralleled in ancient literary criticism, we should remember that Strabo's argument with Eratosthenes takes place in a geographical context. Like Strabo, Eratosthenes had made his comments on poetry in the first book of his *Geographica*, not in his philological work.⁷⁰ In fact, the only writers other than Strabo to mention any of Eratosthenes' allegedly "famous" bons mots on poetry are Hipparchus and Polybius, who were both responding to Eratosthenes' *Geography*, and who, moreover, are preserved only in Strabo. The closest allusion to, or reformulation of, Eratosthenes' statement occurs in another geographical work, Agatharchides of Cnidus' *On the Erythraean Sea*: "Every poet aims at entertainment rather than truth" (πᾶς ποιητῆς ψυχαγωγίας μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθείας ἐστὶ στοχαστῆς).⁷¹ Whatever their origin or relation to literary-critical discussions, Eratosthenes' comments thus seem to have been primarily targeted at and received by those interested in Homeric geography.⁷²

But Strabo was a historian before he became a geographer, and, as we have seen in the first half of this article, he owes much of his picture of Homer to historiographical terms and concepts. I want to close this section by exploring the possibility that Strabo's ideas about Homeric instruction, utility, and entertainment owe something to discussions of these notions in historiographical discourse. After all, Strabo explicitly declares that the *Geography* can be compared to his *History*, which he similarly conceives as "useful" (χρήσιμα),⁷³ and his emphasis on geography's utility derives from historiography, where it had become virtually de rigueur to proclaim the usefulness

70. Geus (2002, 264–67), who perhaps goes too far in removing Eratosthenes from the field of literary debate completely: "the single statement in the *Geographica* suggests an exaggerated formulation, rather than a carefully thought-out debate with older and contemporary philologists . . . the so-called *Dichtungs-theorie* of Eratosthenes is scarcely more than an empty formula" (p. 267).

71. Agatharchides frag. 8 = Phot. *Bibl.* 250.8, 444b. See Fraser 1972, 548, and Verdin 1990.

72. This is not to say that literary-critical principles stated by geographers have no relation to formulations of those working on Homeric or poetic criticism (like Aristarchus and Crates, who also often weighed in on Homeric geography, or Philodemus), only that they necessarily are adapted to the geographical context of the discussion.

73. 1.1.23. Strabo envisions a similar audience for both works: the *Geography* "is addressed to the same class of readers and particularly to men of exalted stations in life" (1.1.23) as his historical work.

of one's work since the days of Thucydides.⁷⁴ The "utility" of history, however, could be construed in a number of different ways. Diodorus, for instance, speaks of his history's usefulness in a moral sense,⁷⁵ and the primary "utility" of history for Dionysius of Halicarnassus seems to have lain in its ability to provide exempla for rhetorical speeches.⁷⁶ Strabo's "practical" idea of utility, however, is indebted to Polybius,⁷⁷ who not only consistently takes *ὠφέλεια* in a similarly pragmatic fashion, but also repeatedly stresses the practical benefit of his history to his readers.⁷⁸

Polybius also provides the best parallels for Strabo's vocabulary of entertainment, instruction, and utility. Compare his famous formulation of the difference between tragedy and history (2.56.11–12):

The tragic poet should thrill and entertain his audience for the moment [*ἐκπλήξει καὶ ψυχαγωγῆσαι κατὰ τὸν παρὸν τοὺς ἀκούοντας*] by very persuasive speeches, but the historian should instruct and persuade serious students [*διδάξαι καὶ πεῖσαι τοὺς φιλομαθοῦντας*] for all time by true facts and speeches, since in the one case it is the probable that takes precedence, even if it be untrue, the purpose being to create illusion in spectators [*διὰ τὴν ἀπάτην τῶν θεωμένων*], in the other it is the truth, the purpose being to confer benefit on serious students [*διὰ τὴν ὠφέλειαν τῶν φιλομαθοῦντων*].

Polybius' parallel sentence structure sets up an opposition between the tragic poets' concern to *ἐκπλήξει καὶ ψυχαγωγῆσαι* and the historians' to *διδάξαι καὶ πεῖσαι* as well as their respective purposes: *ἀπάτη* and *ὠφέλεια*. We thus have *ψυχαγωγία* arrayed on the one side and *ὠφέλεια* and *διδασκαλία* on the other in a fashion that corresponds with Strabo's usage.⁷⁹ While this example assigns one set of terms to tragedy and the other to history, Polybius uses *ψυχαγωγία* and *ὠφέλεια* similarly when he is talking about history on its own; for instance, during his criticism of Timaeus, he explains that historians must supply both facts and explanations, "for the mere statement of a fact may entertain us but is of no benefit to us" (*ἐπεὶ ψιλῶς λεγόμενον αὐτὸ τὸ γεγονός ψυχαγωγεῖ μὲν, ὠφελεῖ δ' οὐδέν*, 12.25b.2).⁸⁰ In the same vein, Polybius asserts elsewhere that the study of causes is "what at one and the

74. Thuc. 1.22.4: "it will be sufficient if those wishing to have a clear idea of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future . . . judge my history as useful [*ὠφέλιμα*]"; for the evidence, Avenarius 1956, 22–26.

75. Diodorus, writing shortly before Strabo, defines history as *ἀκίνδον διδασκαλίαν* (risk-free instruction) that aims to present *τῶν χρησίων*, "useful" things (1.1). See Sacks 1990, 23–35, for a nuanced treatment of Diodorus' particular understanding of moral utility and its relation to that of Ephorus.

76. Although cf. *Pomp.* 6.734, cited below. For Dionysius, see Verdin 1974.

77. Prontera 1984, 211–16; Biraschi 1988; Dueck 2000, 47 and 162. On Polybius' "pragmatic" attitude, see Walbank 1990 and Sacks 1981, 133–44; on Strabo's notion of utility in relation to Polybius, see Dueck 2000, 47–48; and Biraschi 1988 on Strabo, Polybius, and Dionysius.

78. E.g., Polybius' sort of "political history" is *ὠφελιμώτατον* at 9.2.6 and history's *telos* is *ὠφέλεια* at 15.36.3. See Sacks 1981, 120–44, on utility in Polybius (list of occurrences of *ὠφελ-* words: p. 122, n. 1); his analysis of the benefit stemming from the proper use of *emphasis* provides another link between utility, history, and Homer, whom Polybius sees as particularly skilled at *emphasis*.

79. Cf. Meijering 1987, 10–11.

80. Cf. 11.19a.2: "the results of actions only entertain [*ψυχαγωγεῖ*] one's audience, while the anticipation of what is to follow, when investigated properly, benefits serious students [*ὠφελοῦσι τοὺς φιλομαθοῦντας*]."

same time delights and benefits serious students" (τὸ ψυχαγωγῶν ἅμα καὶ τὴν ὠφέλειαν ἐπιφέρων τοῖς φιλομαθοῦσι, 6.2.8).

In each of these cases, Polybius shows that the conceptual pairing of *ψυχαγωγία* and *ὠφέλεια* had historiographical currency, but the last quote also indicates that Strabo's compromise claim that Homer strove both to instruct and to entertain could directly apply to historiographical activity here to the study of historical causes. Strabo's formulation, however, has always been treated as part of the history of poetic criticism, in which the dual view of poetry's requirement to benefit and delight has a long history.⁸¹ Many scholars have pointed out the similarity of Strabo's position with those of Neoptolemus of Parium (third or second century B.C.E.) and, to a lesser extent, Heraclides Ponticus (fourth century B.C.E.), criticized in Philodemus' *On Poems* 5, written not long before Strabo's time. Both Heraclides and Neoptolemus seem to have subscribed to a version of Strabo's thesis that a poet both pleases and instructs, in language that corresponds to Strabo's.⁸² But as Philodemus' criticisms of both writers demonstrates, neither specified precisely what sort of benefit is bestowed by a poet's instructive objectives; Strabo's narrowing of the scope to practical geographical utility demonstrates that even if he was aware of such work, he has elaborated it for his own particular purposes.⁸³ Moreover, Polybius' remarks quoted above show that the linking of entertainment and utility was already so familiar that it could be used of virtually any activity (e.g., studying causes or historical facts), rather than poetry per se.⁸⁴

So Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a contemporary of Strabo, conceives of Theopompus' historical work as having the same dual objective: "And nobody should suppose that this is purely for entertainment [*ψυχαγωγίαν*]: this is not the case, but the material contained in it is virtually all for our benefit [*ὠφέλειαν*]" (*Pomp.* 6.4). Polybius also identifies two "ends" (*τέλη*) *ὠφέλεια* and *τέρψις* for all intellectual pursuits, but especially history (15.36.3), and frequently lists utility and pleasure as the two ends of

81. See, e.g., Hor. *Ars. P.* 333–34; 343–44. Cf. Pl. *Resp.* 10.607d: "not only pleasant but also beneficial for states and human life" (οὐ μόνον ἡδέια ἀλλὰ καὶ ὠφελίμη πρὸς τὰς πολιτείας καὶ τὸν βίον τὸν ἀνθρώπινον). Earlier Plato differentiates between moral and technical utility, and requires only the moral kind of the poet (10.599b–d).

82. Neoptolemus' formulation, though fragmentary, is closest to Strabo's, and has often been compared to it: "... for the perfect poet along with his entertaining qualities to benefit his hearers and tell them useful things, and that Homer . . ." (τῷ τελείῳ ποιητῇ μετὰ τῆς ψυχαγωγ[γί]α[ς] τὴν τῶν ἀκουόντων[ν] ὠφέλειαν καὶ χρησιμολογίαν καὶ τὸν Ὀμηρον . . . , Philodemus *On Poems* 5, col. xvi.9–15 Mangoni; trans. Armstrong 1995). Note that Mangoni's text is significantly different from Jensen's, usually cited in this context. In fact, although the dating of both writers remains uncertain, many (Pfeiffer 1968, 166–67; Meijering 1987, 6; Kennedy 1989, 206) have assumed that Neoptolemus' remarks are a direct riposte to Eratosthenes. As my earlier remarks demonstrate, I believe this to be unlikely. Heraclides seems to have espoused an almost identical position as Neoptolemus and also to have required the poet to know geography (Philodemus *On Poems* 5, col. v. 27 Mangoni). See Asmis 1995 for a lucid attempt to reconstruct the positions of Heraclides, Neoptolemus, and Philodemus.

83. Asmis 1995, 149–51.

84. In fact, the formulation might have been older; cf. Halliwell (2002, pp. 269–70, n. 19), who points to some lesser known possible parallels: Isoc. 2.49 and 9.10, [Pl.] *Minos* 321a, Timocles frag. 6.6 *PCG*.

history.⁸⁵ Roos Meijering's pithy appraisal of Strabo's view of Homer namely, that his "final goal is διδασκαλία, or, in other words, τὸ τέρπειν must serve τὸ ὠφελεῖν" could reasonably be Polybius' appraisal of his own historical work.⁸⁶ At 1.2.18 Strabo even describes Homer's "utility" as historical: "we should neither scrutinize rigorously Homer's stories of . . . Scylla, Charybdis, and Aeolus nor set them aside as baseless and . . . as having no claim to truthfulness or to historical utility" (ἀληθείας μηδὲν προσαπτόμενα μηδ' ὠφελείας ἱστορικῆς). These parallels suggest that Strabo's thinking about the relation between benefit, instruction, and entertainment and his notion of Homer's dual objectives resonate as much with historians' formulation of *history's* purpose as with the literary-critical discussion of poetry's. After all, while Strabo acknowledges that Homer was indeed a poet, we have seen that he consistently treats him as a historian and geographer: a man who "looks to the same end as the historian and the one speaking the facts" (πρὸς δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ τέλος τῷ ἱστορικῷ καὶ τῷ τὰ ὄντα λέγοντι βλέπων, 1.2.9).⁸⁷

CONCLUSION

Strabo's decision to focus on Homer's historico-geographical zeal and his instructional objectives takes on an essential role in his own work that goes beyond simply acknowledging Homer's position as both "author of the first and greatest periegetic composition," and the founder of geography.⁸⁸ The *Geography* constitutes Strabo's attempt to forge a new type of universal geography to describe the changed world of the late Hellenistic period. In doing so he builds upon the geographical literature of the past—periegeses, universal histories, mathematical geographies—while disavowing the ability of any one of those to adequately treat his more expansive understanding of geography, one which is simultaneously historical, descriptive, and normative. Strabo's work dictates both what geography has been and what it must be, both who geographers were in the past and who they must be in the future.⁸⁹

Within such a framework, I propose, Strabo pays so much attention to sketching Homer's attitude and intentions because he is making a conscious effort to renew the tradition by "returning" to the Homeric model of inquiry, not only in terms of content—both geographical and historical in equal

85. In 1.4.11, he says that only by studying universal history can we "receive τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ τὸ τερπνὸν from history;" and at 7.7.8, he describes an episode of his work as "more pleasurable [ἡδίστον] to those fond of tales [φιληκόους] and more useful [χρησιμώτερος] to those who want to learn." Moreover, just as in Strabo, the pleasure or entertainment of history is usually subordinate to its utility. On Polybius' views of this matter, see Walbank 1990.

86. Meijering 1987, 6.

87. Strabo does of course realize that Homer was a poet; he argues, however, in 1.2.6–8 that he only wrote in verse because prose did not yet exist. Space precludes me from discussing the difficult question of the place of myth in Strabo's conception of Homeric composition, which to some extent is the content that corresponds to the goal of entertainment or pleasure in history and poetry. I hope to do so in a future contribution.

88. Clarke 1999, 334.

89. Prontera 1984, 211–16; cf. Clarke 1999, 294–99.

measure but in terms of the coherence bestowed upon that content by the character of the inquirer.⁹⁰ To cast doubt on Homer's accuracy, then, would also call into question Homer's desire for truth. I hope to have shown that a consistent portrait of Homer lies behind Strabo's use of Homeric poetry in the *Geography*, depicting a man who, in his zeal for travel, knowledge, and instruction bears a great resemblance both to the model historian outlined by Polybius in his *Histories* and to the ideal geographer set out by Strabo in his preface. Even his lengthy defense of Homer from Eratosthenes' accusations can be seen as part of this vision, through its emphasis on Homer's concern for the utility so central to Strabo's conception of both historical and geographical inquiry. Strabo insists not only that Homer was correct, but that he *wanted* to be correct, not only that he was content to hear about things, but that he had made an effort to verify such information and to pass it on to his audience. Such a conception of Homer lies at the heart of Strabo's deployment of Homeric poetry as evidence throughout the rest of the *Geography* and suggests an attitude very different from that of other ancient Homeric exegetes, who posit Homer's words as a priori authoritative or "scriptural," whether in moral, scientific, or other terms. Homer retains his authoritative status, but is given occupational specificity—Strabo envisions a Homer endowed with all the qualities of the best historian and geographer, and this fashioning of Homer in his own image is a striking testament to the poet's continuing power in Greek intellectual life.

James Porter has pointed out how Homer's canonicity in Western culture has always strangely been tied to his lack of identity; the mystery surrounding this founder of literature has made him something of a blank slate on which people can project their own fantasies, desires, or fears.⁹¹ While Homer's status and centrality compelled writers, poets, and artists to grapple with him, his fundamental emptiness meant that those who came after him were free to imagine him in ways suited to their intellectual projects, whether casting him as authority or disavowing him. Each of these treatments, however, is necessarily particular and different because Homer himself was not a stable identity. Furthermore, as Barbara Graziosi's *Inventing Homer* has demonstrated, writers who discussed and constructed Homer's life were necessarily engaged in interpretive interventions—because the details of Homer's life could only be inferred from his poetry, to write Homer's biography was also to say something about his poetry.⁹² For Strabo, as for every ancient author who thought about Homer, the poet was not a static figure with stable characteristics inherited from tradition; to properly engage with Homer meant taking a stance as to who he was, what he stood for—to construct an image of Homer out of his poetry, the biographical lore, and one's own desire.⁹³

University of Texas at Austin

90. Cf. Bruno Sunseri 1997 on Ephorus' "return to Homer."

91. Porter 2002.

92. Graziosi 2002.

93. I would like to thank Jim Porter and Egbert Bakker for reading and commenting on an early version of this article.

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