

# ODYSSEAN MEDIATIONS IN EUDOCIA'S MARTYRDOM OF ST CYPRIAN

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ὕμετέρης γενεῆς τε καὶ αἵματος εὐχόμεαι εἶναι  
(Eudocia's *Laudes Antiochiae*; cf. Il. 6.211, 20.241).<sup>1</sup>

The article argues that in Eudocia's fifth-century *Martyrdom of St Cyprian* – the only surviving Greek verse paraphrase of a hagiography – certain Odyssean lexical items and intertexts may be thematically grouped. A new category, the 'diatext', is introduced to describe this function of the *Odyssey* as an intermediate thematic model used to transpose the Cypriatic hagiographies (the 'hypotext') into Eudocia's verse paraphrase (the 'hypertext'). A particularly important and complex example is the way in which Eudocia's metapoetic/narratorial and biographical alter ego, the ex-pagan Christian convert Cyprian, is modelled after Odysseus (especially in book 2).

## 1. Introduction

The recent boom in scholarship concerned with imperial Greek poetry has lighted on important and influential figures of classical antiquity, including one of its best-preserved female poets and the main extant hexameter one, Eudocia Augusta, wife of the Emperor Theodosius II.<sup>2</sup> The poet, a coeval of Nonnus, provides a distinctive and fascinating test

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- 1 Translations are the author's (unless otherwise specified). This article uses the Ludwich (1897) edition of the *Martyrdom* (Bevegni (1982) for its recently discovered, first 99 lines – hereafter cited in the form '[line number] B'; the Bailey (2017) edition of the Cypriatic hagiographies (the Bevegni (2006b) hypothesis that Eudocia follows missing redactions is yet to be conclusively demonstrated). The article defines the *Martyrdom* as a paraphrase, though Choeroboscus would call it a *metaphrasis* (for the source text's 'quantitative' alteration: *περὶ τρόπων ποιητικῶν* 251.9–30): the concepts are practically interchangeable (Roberts (1985) 25–6).
- 2 On imperial Greek poetry, see e.g. Miguélez Caveró (2008); Cameron (2015 (1982)); Kröll (2020), Whitmarsh et al. (forthcoming). On Eudocia, see e.g. Avlami (2016b); Sowers (2020); Lefteratou (forthcoming).

case for the imperial reception of Homer, particularly via her *Homeric centos*. Another poem of hers, currently attracting ever-greater attention among Greek scholars, is the *Martyrdom of St Cyprian*, the only Greek verse hagiographical paraphrase that has come down to us from antiquity.<sup>3</sup> This gripping and fast-paced fifth-century epic has the ‘*mérite [...] de faire penser [...] à Dante, à Goethe, à Milton*’.<sup>4</sup> In it, the wizard Cyprian tries to help the young Aglaïdas win over the newly converted Justa in Antioch jointly with some demons and Satan himself, then converts (book 1) and regretfully relates his travels (book 2, partially extant), a ‘late antique doctorate in occult science’<sup>5</sup> and pagan cults, before his and Justa’s final martyrdom (book 3, missing).<sup>6</sup>

The *Martyrdom*’s 900 hexameters, nevertheless, have often been situated ‘auf der untersten Stufe der Kunst’,<sup>7</sup> and not only on account of their grammatical, lexical and metrical flaws, which make their composer seem ‘uncouth and ignorant’, to quote Alan Cameron.<sup>8</sup> Eudocia – Ludwig writes – recycles other poets’ material ‘in servilem modum’,<sup>9</sup> particularly Homer’s. Eudocian scholarship has frequently discussed the *Martyrdom*’s debt to Homer in relation to its grammar,<sup>10</sup> lexicon,<sup>11</sup> formulas and more elaborate yet isolated intertextual allusions.<sup>12</sup> The question remains, however, as to whether the *Martyrdom*’s engagement with Homer is more fine-grained, creative, and profound – a question which the present article aims to explore. In this regard, it is worth noting that Eudocia’s engagement with Homer is not superficial in her *Centos*, as demonstrated by several contemporary scholars, including Lefteratou.<sup>13</sup> As the article will proceed to argue, two types of Odyssean intertextuality run across the poem: a ‘thematic’ and a metapoetic one.

Section 2 contends that certain Odyssean lexical items and intertexts may be thematically grouped: they collectively echo the Suitors’ wooing of Penelope in association with the demonic and non-demonic assaults on Justa and her *oikos* (as part of their attempt to help Justa’s suitor Aglaïdas win her over). The section introduces a new ‘transtextual’<sup>14</sup> category, which will be called ‘diatext’, to describe this function of the Homeric poems as an intermediate thematic model used to transpose the hypotextual Cyprianic

3 Recent studies on the *Martyrdom* – in addition to Bevegni’s – include Avlamiš (2016a), Rigo (2020), Faulkner (2021). Salvaneschi has published important studies right from the eighties (e.g. (1982b)). An English translation will be published in Whitmarsh et al. (forthcoming).

4 Diehl (1913) 47.

5 Jackson (1988) 34.

6 Summarised in Phot. Bibl. 184.

7 Mommsen (1895) 247.

8 Cameron (1982) 279 (a criticism that is absent in the article’s later revision (2015)).

9 Ludwig (1897) 7.

10 Van Deun (1993) 279.

11 Bevegni (2006a) 34–8. Sometimes Christianised (see e.g. Salvaneschi (1981) 151 on ἀντιθεός).

12 Bevegni (2006a) e.g. 38.

13 See e.g. Usher (1998), Pralon (2003), Sowers (2010), Lefteratou (2017), Lefteratou (2019), Lefteratou (forthcoming).

14 ‘[A]ll that sets the text in relationship [...] with other texts’ (Genette (1992) 83).

hagiographies (*Conversio Cypriani*, *Confessio C.*, *Martyrium C. et Iustinae*) into an epic paraphrase, their hypertext.

Section 3 will argue that Eudocia's metapoetic/narratorial (and biographical) alter ego, the (ex-pagan) Christian convert Cyprian, is modelled after Odysseus. The key example is Cyprian's extended ego-narration throughout book 2 echoing that of Odysseus in the *Apologoi*, one of the key episodes in the *Odyssey*.<sup>15</sup> It will concurrently be argued that the overlap between Cyprian and the *Apologoi*'s Odysseus, a 'Homer in disguise', underscores the overlap between Cyprian and Eudocia.

Throughout the article, the terms 'Christianity' or 'Christian' shall be used in a broad sense, although there were a vast range of 'Christians' and approaches to Christianity in the fifth century.<sup>16</sup> For the sake of brevity, certain theological issues, such as those concerning Eudocia's own religious life (for instance, her support and subsequent rejection of Eutychnianism),<sup>17</sup> cannot be pursued in the depth and detail they deserve. The overall aim of the present article remains to elucidate an imperial Christian poet's use of Homer. More specifically, the article argues that Homer – in particular the *Odyssey* – is more than just an 'instrument' to 'modify', 'strengthen' and 'enrich' the paraphrastic hypotexts, as has recently been argued.<sup>18</sup> Rather, Homer provides a series of mental schemes and filters through which the ex-pagan, classics-educated Eudocia conceptualises a Christian story, particularly through book 2's triple overlap Eudocia-Odysseus-Cyprian. Such a pervasive and complex overlap shows the deeply sophisticated nature of the *Martyrdom* and builds on the only (double) overlap that has extensively been studied so far, namely that between Eudocia and the Homer-looking minor character Praulius.<sup>19</sup> More generally, this interpretation, together with the 'diatextual' reading model, prompts us as modern readers to interpret imperial poems in more complex and unexpected ways than through the lenses of standard intertextuality or deliberate 'nonreferentiality', a type of reading recently proposed by Pelttari.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. The *Odyssey* within: a thematic intertextual program

This section contends that Eudocia's *Martyrdom* is characterised by a meaningful, thematically designed use of certain Odyssean intertexts, primarily operating at the level of single words and phrases spread across the text. It is up to the alert late antique

15 This similarity has received no detailed investigation, unlike the wizard's ties to Apollonius of Tyana and Pythagoras (on both, see Reitzenstein (1917); Nock (1927)) or Simon Magus (Sowers (2008), esp. 206–7). On Faust, see Zahn (1882); Salvaneschi (1982a)). It casts doubt on the increasing consensus that hagiographical ego-narration is chiefly a product of the ancient novel's influence. See e.g. Berranger-Auserve (2001) 302 (*Confessio Cypriani*); Šubr (2014) 207 (*Life of Malchus*).

16 For an overview, see Trombley (1995); on the Council of Chalcedon, see Price (2009).

17 Bevegni (2006a) 18.

18 Rigo (2020).

19 Faulkner (2021).

20 Pelttari (2014).

reader to draw these basic textual units together and perceive the echoes they collectively evoke in relation to the poem's narrative. The intertextual echoes of Odysseus and Nausicaa's story scattered throughout Musaeus' *Hero and Leander*, not much shorter than Eudocia's extant poem,<sup>21</sup> are a good parallel to this.

In the *Martyrdom*, a paraphrastic 'hypertext' (i.e. target text) transforming the Cyprianic hagiographies (its 'hypotexts', i.e. source text),<sup>22</sup> Homer's function as an *intermediate* model differs from the one detectable in Eudocia's other major surviving composition, the *Homerocentones*, a hypertext of the Gospels. Whereas the centos' discourse is obviously and ubiquitously Homeric, in the *Martyrdom*, Homer's presence (albeit quasi-automatic in any Greek hexameter poem) is more subtle and complex. The paraphrase's engagement with the *Odyssey* in particular works through Homeric echoes and thematic clusterings: it deals with meaning.

Genette, who introduced the concepts of hypotext and hypertext (the latter being 'un texte B' based on/alluding, relating to 'un texte antérieur A' without commenting on it),<sup>23</sup> did not create a term to describe a substantial, thematic and/or structural intermediate model used for composing a hypertext. Throughout section 2 below, this function of the *Odyssey* in the *Martyrdom* will be called 'diatextual', a term that has been used in psychopragmatics,<sup>24</sup> but which this article uses in a very different sense. In the *Martyrdom*, the *Odyssey* is diatextual inasmuch as it sometimes acts as a bank of *themes*, *motifs* and concatenated intertexts through which (διό) the Cyprianic hagiographies are filtered and turned into an epic paraphrase.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, the *Martyrdom* is different from Venantius Fortunatus' epic paraphrase *Life of St Martin*, in which Virgil is a merely linguistic model.<sup>26</sup>

A key difference between the diatext and an 'intertext', namely a standard intertextual allusion, is that the latter usually involves texts composed entirely within one tradition. The 'diatext' aptly describes an intermediate text, a *medium* that can be culturally distinct from the source and target texts, while interacting with them in unpredictable, tradition-breaking ways; the *Martyrdom*'s *Odyssean diatext* is a detour away from the poet's expected trajectory, an unnecessary yet striking and significant form of mediation.

It is worth observing that the diatext is a particularly effective tool to analyse hagiographical paraphrases, as opposed to other types of paraphrases, such as Nonnus' neo-testamentary one. Indeed, the potential intermediate models used by Nonnus to paraphrase the Gospel of John are more disguised, obscured in the eye of the reader by

21 See Hopkinson (1994) 138.

22 See paragraph below.

23 Genette (1982) 5.

24 A 'device to understand the context as it is perceived' by the text's 'utterers' [...] and show that they take it into account' (Mininni (2001) 110).

25 Cf. Thomas' (different) 'window reference' (intertextual allusion to a model, 'interrupted' to refer back to its source ((1986) 188, e.g. the allusions at Virg. *Aen.* 1.373–82 to Varro Atacinus, Aratus).

26 Nazzaro (1998) 97.

the radical juxtaposition of the biblical hypotext and the Nonnian verses' hypertext. Hagiographies are not 'holy scriptures' or, for that matter, an entirely Christian genre, indebted as they are to the (pagan) ancient novel,<sup>27</sup> itself a hybrid container of other (pagan) genres,<sup>28</sup> including epic, both intertextually<sup>29</sup> and 'megatextually'.<sup>30</sup> Given the source material's generic complexity, in a hagiographical paraphrase, a diatextual engagement with a model like Homer is likely to resonate more and play a more important role.

In general, to examine the phenomenon of diatextuality in the *Martyrdom*, some convenient starting points are works such as Bevegni's Italian commentary (2006a) or his article 'Il *De sancto Cypriano* dell'imperatrice Eudocia. Questioni aperte' (2006–2007), offering short lists of the text's lexical borrowings and intertexts, thereby tracing its (direct or indirect) connections to authors such as Hesiod, Apollonius, Callimachus, Nossis, Nicander, Oppian and Claudian, as well as classical tragedians, Aristophanes and classical and post-classical prose authors.<sup>31</sup> I use texts such as Bevegni's (2006a; 2006–2007) qua datasets of lexical borrowings and intertexts from which the present article can draw paradigmatic examples and case studies to examine the *Martyrdom*'s diatextual models; many other intertexts will be unearthed in the present article for the first time. Notwithstanding the poem's intertextual richness, given Eudocia's preponderant, pervasive use of Homeric phrases and imagery, it is natural and fruitful for the present article to focus on Homeric diatextuality.

To exemplify the idea of a Homeric diatext, a medium for transforming the Cypriatic hagiographies into the *Martyrdom*, let us turn to the demons' assaults on Justa – assaults (supported by Cyprian) aiming to force the virgin to accept Aglaídas as her husband. At first glance, a potential Homeric diatext could be Iliadic, with Justa being associated with the besieged Troy. The link is present in Eudocia's hagiographical model itself, the *Confessio Cypriani* (8), which features the metaphor of Justa's 'doors' (θύρα; the door's σανάδιον, 'board'; cf. προαυλίφ, 'vestibule'), through which the Devil and the demons try and fail to break; the parallel here might be Jerusalem's 'Golden Gate' (Ezekiel 44:2),<sup>32</sup> often linked to Mother Mary's virginity,<sup>33</sup> but also Troy's Scaean Gate.<sup>34</sup> The connection is emphasised by Eudocia's Iliadic language, associating Justa with Troy. For example, Justa

27 Burrus (2004) 18.

28 Ruiz-Montero (1996).

29 E.g. Chariton (Müller (2006) 467).

30 Segal's (1983) construct (176: 'patterns [...] which tales of a given type share'); e.g. 'Penelope/Helen pattern' in Heliodorus (Lefteratou (2018) 297). On the generic complexity of Eudocia's *Martyrdom*, see Aleksandrova (2018).

31 See esp. Bevegni (2006–2007) 159–60.

32 Salvaneschi (1981) 159.

33 E.g. Ambrose *De inst. Virg.* 8.53.

34 There is a traditional literary connection between 'assaults' on doors and sexual violence (e.g. Ter. *Ad.* 88.102; Tib. *I.* 1.73–4), but also between women and cities (e.g. in Eupolis' *Poleis*; see Rosen (1998)). In Virgil's *Aeneid* (2.469–505), the invasion of Priam's palace – and, by extension, Troy – is portrayed as a male-on-female rape (Whittaker (2009) 234).

invokes her main defender, God, by calling him ‘heaven’s’ ally, ἐπίκουρε (1.116), a term that in the *Iliad* denotes the warlike Ares (Aphrodite’s ἐπίκουρος)<sup>35</sup> and, in every other occurrence, Troy’s military allies.<sup>36</sup> Earlier on, Justa is protected by some armed followers of hers, who αἰπὺ βόησον (‘screamed greatly’) upon seeing Aglaïdas’ band attacking her (1.5), a Eudocian phrase which could recall ὀξὺ βοήσας (‘shouting with a shrill voice’), the Trojan Hector’s battle-cry at Il. 17.89, in the same metrical *sedes*.

It might be argued that standard *Iliadic* vocabulary has been chosen simply because the author is composing in Homeric hexameters. Indeed, the language of the *Iliad* is ubiquitously baked into the *Martyrdom*’s text and it would be challenging to identify meaningful *Iliadic* diatextual patterns. What is more complex and ultimately persuasive, however, is the *Odyssean* characterisation of the conflict between Justa and her assailants. The clash manifests itself as a struggle for control of Aidesius’ *oikos* through the wooing of his daughter Justa – a typically *Odyssean* dynamic.<sup>37</sup> This case is a very marked and specific one and therefore renders the text’s (diatextual) engagement with the *Odyssey* more eloquent and meaning-bearing than the one with the *Iliad*. The rest of the present section will present and examine a selection of paradigmatic examples of Eudocia’s diatextual engagement with the *Odyssey* in relation to the characterisation of the conflict between Justa and her assailants.

Christ himself, involved in a *macrocosmic* conflict against everything non-Christian throughout the poem, subverts the *oikos* of Aidesius, Justa’s father. He does it by converting it. Justa’s conversion is described as a *marriage*: Jesus is described as Justa’s husband (a *topos* amongst Christian writers),<sup>38</sup> towards whom she feels a ‘passion full of desire’.<sup>39</sup> Aidesius’ *oikos* fully becomes Christ’s upon the man’s own conversion, occurring when Christ accesses his οἶκῳ in a dream (1.67 B) and opens the ‘gateways’<sup>40</sup> of his eyes (πυλεῶνες: 1.71 B) and, indirectly, of his *oikos*, immediately left by Aidesius to reach the temple of God (1.75 B: οἶκον). Aidesius becomes a Christian *paterfamilias*, ultimately subordinate to God,<sup>41</sup> and Justa replaces her old ‘lord’, her father, with a new one, her ‘husband’ Christ.<sup>42</sup>

The *Odyssey*’s diatextual function is most evident as far as the *microcosmic* struggle between Justa and her assailants is concerned (I define this struggle as ‘microcosmic’ because it mirrors the large-scale conflict intrinsic to the world and the poem between Good and Evil, God and the Devil). For example, Aglaïdas – nearly trying to break into

35 Il. 21.430–1.

36 E.g. Il. 2.815.

37 Cf. Sowers (2008) 186, who mainly discusses the *oikos* as the ‘locus of power’ on which ‘Justa’s chastity depends’.

38 1.129. For instance, the image of Christ as the bridegroom occurs in Methodius’ *Symposium* 7.1, 7.3 and Basil of Ancyra’s *De virginitate* 27.

39 1.83 B.

40 Metaphor absent in *Conversio* 2.

41 Cf. Eph. 6:9. On God as *paterfamilias* in late antiquity, see Traninger (2015) 114.

42 Cf. Eph. 5:23: ‘[f]or the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church’ (NIV).

Justa's *oikos* at 2.363 (cf. *Confessio* 10), when he perches on her roof in the shape of a bird (cf. Odysseus as an eagle killing Penelope's geese (i.e. Suitors) and sitting on her roof at *Od.* 19.535–559) – originally promises to Cyprian *δοιὰ χρυσοῖο τάλαντα* (1.18) for his help with the girl. The phrase harks back to the *χρυσοῦ δοιὰ τάλαντα* that Aegisthus would give to a watchman to be informed of Agamemnon's arrival at *Od.* 4.526, as part of his attempt to subvert the king's *oikos* – a meaningful evocation of the *Odyssey*, considering that Agamemnon and Clytemnestra's story is a foil for Odysseus and Penelope's.<sup>43</sup> The allusion to the *Odyssey* might be even more meaningful and overtly intentional if Eudocia is transposing a version of the *Conversio* featuring ἀργυρίου as opposed to χρυσοῖο (e.g. the third recension's copy in the codex Barb. gr. 517);<sup>44</sup> this is possible, as the *Martyrdom's* hypotext must have shown links to all of the three recensions of the *Conversio*, according to Bevegni.<sup>45</sup>

Most importantly, a consistent thematic intertextual thread assimilates Justa's assailants to Penelope's Suitors. Manifold examples may be mentioned. Aglaïdas' cheeks are rent by Justa to defend herself and humiliate him (1.11–12: *χερσὶ δ' ἔδρουψε / [...] παρειάς*) just like the eagles' cheeks in the *Odyssey* 2 omen (*Od.* 2.153: *δρουσμένω δ' ὀνύχεσσι παρειάς*), portending Odysseus' arrival and the Suitors' downfall. This constitutes Eudocia's original contribution to *Conversio* 3, which omits this detail, like the models inspiring the story, namely *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 26, where Thecla wrestles against her suitor Alexander.<sup>46</sup> The *Conversio* merely states that, 'with her fists', Justa 'beat his [Aglaïdas'] face [...] black and blue' (*πυγμαῖς τὴν ὄψιν αὐτοῦ [...] ἠφάνισε*) and 'tore off his garment' (*περιρρήξασα τὸν χιτῶνα αὐτοῦ*).

The demons' assaults on Justa fail too, as she drives them away ἀνήνυτοι (2.306: 'inefficient', 'never-ending'), a Homeric *hapax* describing the Suitors' misdeeds in Odysseus' *oikos* at *Od.* 16.111 (*ἀνήνυστω ἐπὶ ἔργῳ*). Eudocia's use of this adjective is particularly marked and meaningful, as it could be a case of *interpretatio Homerica*, subtly supporting the translation 'unsuccessful, ineffectual' (the only plausible one when the adjective is referred to a person) for the Homeric ἀνήνυστος (referred to an action).<sup>47</sup> Indeed, in Homer, the term could have slightly different meanings too, such as 'never-ending' (like Penelope's web at *Pl. Phd.* 84a; see also *Soph. El.* 167), 'impossible to accomplish', or 'unaccomplished' (these last two meanings are intrinsic to ὄπρακτα, synonymous with ἀνήνυτα in *Hsch. A* 5070).

The first demon summoned by Cyprian is characterised by ἀτασθαλίην (1.60: 'wickedness'), a term associated fifteen times with the Suitors in the *Odyssey*.<sup>48</sup> It is

43 On this last topic, see Danek (1998) 97; de Jong (2001) 287–9.

44 The *Conversio's* extant Syriac version features δύο τάλαντα ἀργυρίου. The copy is discussed by Bailey (2017) 41.

45 See e.g. Bevegni (2006b) and (2006–2007).

46 On the connection to the Acts, see Bailey (2017) 117, 119 n. 17.

47 For a list of key studies of the phenomenon called *interpretatio Homerica* (but primarily in Hellenistic poetry), see Rengakos (1992) 21 n. 3.

48 Full list in Elmer (2015) 178 n. 65.

defined as νήφρων (I.28), a rare adjective most probably drawn from Claudian's *Gigantomachy* 2.23, where it is positioned at the beginning of the line (νήφρονες, ουδὲ [...] ἤδεσον: 'foolish, [...] they did not know'), recalling the νήπιος (/οι) + ουδέ + verb 'to know' epic formula (e.g. Hes. *Op.* 40; Ap. *Rhod. Argon.* 2.137).<sup>49</sup> Even if Eudocia does not directly borrow the adjective from Claudian, it is worth noting how Claudian associates it with νήπιος; moreover, Eudocia's preference itself of νήφρων over the common, metrically equivalent ἄφρων (never referring to the Suitors in the *Odyssey*) reinforces the link to νήπιος, built with the same prefix.<sup>50</sup>

It should be observed that the Suitors are defined as νήπιοι at *Od.* 22.32 and 22.370 (cf. 24.469) and that the etymologically related term νηπίοχος, 'child(ish)' (2.13; cf. *Confessio* 1, ἐξ ἀπαλῶν ὀνύχων),<sup>51</sup> is interestingly used to describe the young Cyprian – the future assailants' mastermind – learning some pagan rites.<sup>52</sup> Other Homeric characters are likewise characterised as νήπιοι, most notably Odysseus' companions,<sup>53</sup> who nevertheless consistently 'mirror' the Suitors' behaviour and *atasthaliaí* throughout the *Odyssey*.<sup>54</sup> The reason why Eudocia does not use the obvious νήπιος in line 1.28 (νήφρων δ' ἀντίπαλος δώσειν κατένευσεν ἄελπια) is not necessarily metrical, though the hexameter could not begin with νήπιος if Eudocia wants to keep δέ to avoid asyndeton (Homeric verses are usually connected to each other through connective particles or adverbs). Like ἀνήνυτοι, νήφρων could be an *interpretatio Homerica*, subtly emphasising the original (Homeric) Suitors' fundamental mindlessness (in a Christian sense) more than the Homeric νήπιος does (the word is probably constructed from φρήν and an ancient speaker could connect it with φρονέω).

Another example of an Odyssean association is Justa's indirect assimilation to Penelope when Thecla, Justa's undisputed hagiographical model,<sup>55</sup> is defined as ἀντιθέης ('akin to a goddess') at 1.14, an epithet which renders her *speculare*<sup>56</sup> to the Ithacan queen, according to Bevegni (cf. *Od.* 11.117, 13.378).

This example and the previous observations, nevertheless, do not imply a rigidly schematised association between the *Martyrdom's* characters and the Homeric ones. By way of example, notwithstanding the aforementioned link between Justa and the Trojan side of the conflict, Cyprian, initially Justa's enemy, is described as παρβεβωός to the Devil (2.358: 'standing beside'), a phrase harking back to the Trojan Cebriones Ἔκτορι παρβεβωός (*Il.* 11.522). In Eudocia's *Homerocontones* itself, as Usher observes, 'there is no

49 On Claudian's passage, see Giomi (2003) 369.

50 At the same time, it is worth noting that the prefix νη- was not uncommon in postclassical epic lexicon, e.g. Lycophron's νητρικῶς for ἀτρικῶς (*Alex.* 1).

51 'Since (he had) soft nails' (i.e. since childhood).

52 Perhaps concerning Delphi's Python: see Bevegni (2006a) 142 n. 5.

53 E.g. *Od.* 1.8.

54 Nagler (1990).

55 Bailey (2017) 117–19 n. 17.

56 Bevegni (2006a) 75 n. 76.



one-to-one correspondence between Homeric and Biblical characters'; for instance, 'both Christ and the demoniac are compared to Achilles; [...] both Christ and Judas were compared to Hector'.<sup>57</sup> Yet already in the centos an alert late antique reader can grasp the attention paid by Eudocia in choosing certain Homeric lines. It is worth mentioning the assimilation of the Serpent's promises in the book of Genesis to *loci amoeni* linked to ruinous prophecies, such as the land of the Cyclopes (HC51–2; Telemus' prophecy (Od. 9.508–12)) and Scherie (HC, 55–6; Nausithous' prophecy (Od. 8.564–71)).<sup>58</sup>

To recapitulate, an Odyssean diatext, namely the Suitors' attempt to marry Penelope and take hold of her *oikos*, is used to characterise the conflict in book 1 between Justa and her assailants. Section 3 will consider the triple overlap between Eudocia, Cyprian and Odysseus.

### 3. Eudocia, alias Cyprian(-Odysseus)

In order to investigate further the function of Homer in the poem, it is necessary to think about how Eudocia, a seemingly recessive author, reveals, inserts herself in her texts and, more specifically, in the *Martyrdom*. Eudocia appears to withdraw behind Homer's language and hence her self-fashioning, her textual presence has to be subtly mediated and conveyed by it. A way of approaching this complex question is to look at Eudocia's characterisation of Odysseus, a metapoetic channel par excellence and, crucially, a sophisticated hero who disguises himself, just as Eudocia does in her hypertextual works and just as the paraphrastic genre itself conceals its hypotexts.

Being *πολύτροπος* ('versatile'), Odysseus can be associated with a vast array of characters, particularly via his Homeric epithets: Aglaïdas (2.367: κάμορος, 'ill-fated');<sup>59</sup> Justa (1.158: her living condition is ἀυστολήης, 'squalid', a Homeric *hapax* describing Odysseus at Od. 19.327; 2.368: πινυτόφρων, 'wise');<sup>60</sup> the Devil (2.408: οὔτιδανός καὶ ἄκυκος, 'worthless and powerless').<sup>61</sup> Yet it is Cyprian who is most extensively assimilated to Odysseus. As a matter of fact, the entire book 2 of the *Martyrdom* and its model, the *Confessio*, structurally echo Odysseus' first-person flashback narrative of his adventures, introduced by the Ithacan's 'confession' εἶμι 'Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν [...] (9.19: 'I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, who with many devices [...]), in turn preceded by a short description of an ideal symposium (9.2–18). The same structure characterises the *Martyrdom*, with Cyprian's onomastic self-presentation and reference to his parents occurring at 2.11–12, before the narration of his wanderings and after a brief introduction explaining the reasons for his confession (2.1–10): οὗτος ἐκείνος ἔφυν Κυπριανός τόν ποτε κοῦρον / ἡμέτεροι τοκέες δῶρον δόσαν Ἀπόλλωνι.<sup>62</sup> ('I am that

57 Usher (1998) 144.

58 The article uses the Schembra (2007) edition (but the text of the Usher (1999) *praefatio*) for the HC.

59 Odysseus' Homeric epithet.

60 Odysseus at Quint. Smyrn. 14.630; Anth. Pal. 3.8.1.

61 Odysseus at Od. 19.480.

62 Cf. *Confessio* 1: ἐγὼ εἶμι Κυπριανός ὁ ἐξ ἀπαλῶν [...].

Cyprian, whom as a child my parents dedicated to Apollo').<sup>63</sup> Cyprian's similarity to Odysseus is manifest. He displays superior knowledge, as evidenced by the abundance of knowledge-related terms at 2.418–19 (ἐπίστωρ, ἐπίστομοι, οἶδα). Furthermore, in his travels, Cyprian has learned many deceitful crafts (2.78–9: every 'shifty (πολύτροπον) apparition' and 'deceitful (δολόεις) / mind'), as well as μῆδεα φωτῶν (2.76: 'counsels of men'), just as Odysseus 'learned the minds (νόον) of men' (*Od.* 1.3; ironically, cf. Odysseus' genitalia at *Od.* 6.129: μῆδεα φωτός).

On the one hand, it comes as no surprise that Odysseus is assimilated to the martyr Cyprian or indeed his co-protagonist Justa, whose κακὰ μυρία, 'countless disgraces' (2.373), recall πολλά [...] ἄλγεα, 'many sorrows' at *Od.* 1.4. Let us think of Cyprian's assertion διζήμοι γὰρ Χριστόν (1.218: 'For I seek Christ'), a phrase perhaps modelled after Nonnus' *Paraphrase* 18.42,<sup>64</sup> but harking back to Odysseus νόστον [...] διζήμενος ('seeking a return': *Od.* 23.253, cf. 11.100), whose theme is in turn echoed in the description of post-conversion Cyprian 'returning (ἄψορος ἰών [...] αὐτίς) home' (*Mar.* 1.243). Odysseus' travels were extremely important models for Christians, as they prefigured 'the search through the voyage of life of the Christian soul for its heavenly home',<sup>65</sup> the sufferings of Jesus<sup>66</sup> and the martyrs' Christomimetic ones. On the other hand, a sophisticated literary operation takes place in modelling Cyprian after Odysseus, whose voice is constructed 'in bardic terms'<sup>67</sup> in the *Apologoi*, thereby overlapping with Homer's. This overlap mediates and reinforces the one between Cyprian and Eudocia, which is narratorial in book 2 and biographical throughout the poem, particularly given their pagan education, travels and 'late' conversion to Christianity (Odysseus' own overlap with Homer is not just narratorial: let us think of the *Odyssey's* ancient reception, e.g. Strabo's view that 'Odysseus' φρόνησις ('wisdom') is also Homer's').<sup>68</sup> A comparable yet non-identical process takes place in the tenth-century *Life of Theoktiste*, in which the character Niketas' similarities with the metapoetically significant Odysseus subtly assimilate him to the author of the *Life* (Niketas himself, in this case).<sup>69</sup>

It would not be the only time that Eudocia uses Odysseus to characterise her own voice or the voice of a metapoetic alter ego of hers. She implicitly presents herself as a novel Odysseus in the Hammat Gader epigram, which begins with her claim to have seen 'many marvels' during the course of her life (2: πολλά [...] θαύματ' ὅποια; cf. *Od.* 1.3).<sup>70</sup>

63 Translation adapted from Sowers (2008). Note the unusual, hence emphatic, scansion of Cyprian's name. More typically: - - - - .

64 If the *Paraphrase* antedates the *Martyrdom*.

65 Hunter (2018) 218.

66 πολύτανε (1.87), 'much-praised', like Odysseus (Homeric epithet).

67 Kelly (2008) 198.

68 Hunter (2012) 101. On the overlap between Eudocia and Cyprian, see Livrea (1998) 81; Karanika (2014) 105. Cf. the *Peristephanon* (hagiographical hymns), where Prudentius is thought to deploy some unofficial, fictitious biographical information to make St Cyprian's life look like his own (Costanza (1978)).

69 See Jazdzewska (2009) 263.

70 This article uses the Green and Tsafirir (1982) edition for the Hammat Gader epigram.

Moreover, in the *Homeric centos*, Eudocia overlaps with her metapoetic alter ego Jesus, in turn more markedly assimilated to Odysseus than other characters of the *Centos* such as the Devil (e.g. Christ, defined as κάμμορε at 206I, hides himself like Odysseus at 33I).<sup>71</sup> An example of the (Odysseus-mediated) narratorial overlap between Eudocia and Jesus is Christ's statement οὐ γὰρ ἀπείρητος μυθήσομαι (476: 'I will not speak without knowledge'), introducing the Calling of the Disciples' speech, wherein he presents his own life story, starting with his son-father relationship to God (480–8) and ending with a discussion of resurrection (494–518), which acts as a flash-forward to his own. Jesus' speech constitutes a *mise en abyme* of the Gospel-based narrative of the *Homocentones* and has a meta-narrative function, conducive to the overlap between Christ and the centonist herself.<sup>72</sup> It is worth adding that Jesus' statement clearly echoes or is echoed by the Odyssean Cyprian's ἀληθέα μυθεομαι (4: 'I tell the truth'), introducing his *Apologoi*-inspired tale in the *Martyrdom*, a tale which narratorially and biographically reflects Eudocia herself.

The (narratorial) overlap between Cyprian and Eudocia in book 2 is underscored by the wizard's (implicit) characterisation as a poet at 2.57. Here, Cyprian's claim to have seen the union of 'dew (δροσερῶν) rivers' and the 'divine air' (εἰς ἥερα δῖαν) harks back to the programmatic *Aetia* 1.1, wherein Callimachus wishes to 'sing living on dew-drops (33: δρόσον), free sustenance from the divine air (34: ἐκ δίης ἥερος)'.<sup>73</sup> More than a Callimachean poet (cf. 2.79: 'skilful (τεχνήεις) mind'),<sup>74</sup> however, Eudocia's narratorial alter ego is chiefly an Odyssean one and the assertion – in this last passage of the *Martyrdom* – that the wizard is likewise knowledgeable about every 'shifty (πολύτροπον) apparition' (2.78) and 'deceitful (δολόεις) mind' (2.78–79) confirms such a notion.

The association between Cyprian and Odysseus might at first seem quasi-sacrilegious, in that it associates a martyr with a deceptive pagan hero. However, the overlap is in fact compatible with the Christians'<sup>75</sup> (and the Neoplatonists')<sup>76</sup> allegorical interpretation of Odysseus' story as the symbol of the soul's journey in search of the divine. Indeed, this constitutes an apt description of Cyprian's journey from paganism to the Christian faith throughout the *Martyrdom* – a journey made by Eudocia herself.

71 For the Devil, see e.g. 957–8; for Judah, see e.g. 1335, 1710.

72 Though it is uncertain to what extent Eudocia can be credited with the composition or modification of the lines in question; on this issue, see e.g. Usher (1997); Rey (1998) 16–28; Schembra (2007) cxxxiii–clxxxi.

73 The only other pre-Eudocian pairing of δῖος with ἄηρ is in Quintus Smyrnaeus (ἐς ἥερα δῖαν: 3.715, 13.464), who often 'reconfigures symbolic imagery from Callimachus' *Aetia*' (Greensmith (2017) 20). Quintus, as in *Confessio* 2, does not mention dew in this context. The Callimachus translation is from Trypanis et al. (1973). Cyprian's association with Callimachus may newly emerge at 2.78, where the wizard is said not to be ignorant of any κρύφιος νοῦς ('hidden mind'). This phrase is original to Eudocia and resembles the Cyrenean poet famously being called ξύλινος νοῦς (1: 'wooden head') in the same metrical *sedes* in Anth. Pal. 11.275 ('Apollonius'), a two-line (dictionary-shaped) anti-Callimachean epigram ironically mentioning the *Aetia* in line 2.

74 Cf. other borrowings from Hellenistic epic (Bevegni (2006–2007) 159).

75 See Hunter (2018) 218.

76 Plotinus *Enn.* 5.9.1.20–1; Porph. *De antr. nymph.* 24–5.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that the *Martyrdom's* engagement with Homer and the *Odyssey* in particular is not just a 'superficial' one, contrary to what Eudocian scholarship's *communis opinio* tells us by focusing on grammatical and lexical similarities. Eudocia's use of Homer even transcends some standard hermeneutic frameworks used to read early imperial and late antique poetry.<sup>77</sup> He is neither (reverentially or playfully) imitated nor agonistically emulated,<sup>78</sup> neither used to make the Christian poem more authoritative nor used primarily as a source of formal and narrative material,<sup>79</sup> neither made the *object* of a Christianising appropriation process nor resisted and rejected *tout court* qua the supreme emblem of paganism. More crucially, Homer is not a mere literary 'instrument' used to 'modify' and 'enrich' some paraphrastic hypotexts.<sup>80</sup> He is the *medium* used by Eudocia to re-think and *conceptualise* a Christian narrative and perhaps, indirectly, her own personal experience with Christianity.<sup>81</sup> In short, the Homeric poems provide themes through which the Cyprianic hagiographies are filtered and 'converted' into an epic martyrology.

Homer therefore plays a significant role in the two parallel 'conversion' processes characterising the poem, namely the textual act of paraphrasing and Cyprian's gradual journey towards God, both of which inevitably reach their completion in the final book, which describes Cyprian's and Justa's martyrdom. Since this book is missing, we do not know *how* the conclusive stage unfolds.<sup>82</sup> Yet we do know that book 3 marks the end of a 'triumphalist' conversion narrative.<sup>83</sup> This triumph may mirror the completion of the long-desired project to convert the Empire to Christianity, a 'victory' that surfaces under Theodosius I (the 380 CE Edict of Thessalonica) and is consolidated under Theodosius II, Eudocia's husband, who in 423 CE *hyperbolically* yet significantly declares: '[P]agans no longer exist' (CTh 16.10.22). The language of *victory* and *competition* characterises the entire poem. For instance, Justa's attempt to preserve her virginity against her assailants is an ἀθλοθέτημα (1.160), in which she wants to succeed so as not to be 'won' by blame (1.83-4: μη δέ με δεινός / μῶμος νικήση).<sup>84</sup> The language of this last passage is similar to that deployed by Cyprian in his address to Satan in *Conversio* 10 – ἐνικήθης ὑπὸ μᾶς

77 For an overview, see Elsner and Hernández Lobato (2017) 1–24.

78 On imitation and emulation, see Hose (2014). On Kontrastimitation, see Paschalis (2020).

79 On authority in late antique Latin poetry, see Pollmann (2017). On formal intertextuality and intertextuality related to content, see Kaufmann (2017).

80 Rigo (2020).

81 Interestingly, the first major autobiographical paraphrase in hexameters, the Eucharisticus, was written in the same period by Paulinus of Pella.

82 See Bonner (1984) 350 on paganised Christians (converts retaining pagan beliefs/practices; n.b. *conversio* (cf. μετόνοια) suggests 'alteration of principle, but not a metamorphosis': Edwards (2015).

83 Avlami (2016a); emphasis mine.

84 Another example is Eudocia calling the 'cosmos' βολβίς at 1.82 (translation by Bevegni (2006a) 132 n. 64), literally the 'rope drawn across the race-course' (LSJ; emphasis mine). This use spatialises Nonnus' metaphorical use of its synonym νύσσα to denote time. On its metaphorical uses in the *Dionysiaca*, see Gigli Piccardi (1985) 180–1.

παρθένου τῶν Γαλιλαίων; – itself ‘reminiscent’<sup>85</sup> of the last pagan emperor Julian’s ‘apocryphal last words’ (νεκίηκας, Γαλιλαίε).

Future studies may wish to consider the potential anti-Julianic nature of the *Martyrdom* not only qua epic (Homeric) paraphrase – a genre which flourished ‘as a reaction’<sup>86</sup> against Julian’s edict against Christian teachers of the classics<sup>87</sup> – but also qua Christian martyrology set in Antioch. Julian plays a key role in the city’s history (cf. *Misopogon*), especially in relation to the area called ‘Daphne’, where the *Martyrdom* is set and he ‘aimed to revive the famous oracle of Apollo’,<sup>88</sup> eventually removing from the ground the martyr St Babylas’ relics ‘polluting’ the site.<sup>89</sup> A natural progression of the present article, nevertheless, should also focus more generally on the role of Antioch as the setting (and audience in book 2) of a ‘Homeric’ conversion narrative. Antioch, still a ‘battleground [...] between pagans and Christians’<sup>90</sup> in the later Roman Empire, is a ‘Greek polis’,<sup>91</sup> preserving the ‘fortunes of Greece’ together with Athens (184), as well as ‘Hellenic education and literature’ (270),<sup>92</sup> to quote the pagan Antiochene Libanius (*Oration 11*, i.e. *Antiochikos*). Eudocia herself, by virtue of having been born and educated in Athens,<sup>93</sup> claims with a ‘Homero-centric’ line to have Antiochene blood in her *Encomium* of the city (and in the present article’s epigraph). Conceptualising and telling an Antiochene conversion story via a Homeric diatext may just be the natural thing to do.

Finally, as for the category of ‘diatextuality’ introduced and utilised in the present study, it is worth adding that it could similarly be helpful to study literary works other than paraphrases, whose analysis, so far,<sup>94</sup> has mainly dealt with the Genettian concepts of hypotext, hypertext and ‘metatext’.<sup>95</sup> According to Genette, the *Aeneid* and Joyce’s *Ulysses* are hypertexts of the *Odyssey*;<sup>96</sup> yet it could be argued that Virgil’s Aeneas is ‘an alter Odysseus’ (diatextually) ‘seen through the prism of [Apollonius’] Jason’,<sup>97</sup> and that in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, even though the everyman’s mid-life crisis theme may ultimately be drawn from the *Odyssey*, it is diatextually filtered through Dante’s *Divine comedy*.<sup>98</sup>

85 Bailey (2017) 131 n. 42.

86 Van Deun (1993) 282.

87 362. It should be observed that the decree ‘ya no tenia vigencia’ in Eudocia’s time (Egea and Vidal (2014) 407).

88 Lieu (1986) 46.

89 Lieu (1986) 49–50. Cf. John Chrysostom’s *Homily on St Babylas*.

90 Sandwell (2004) 43. The disciples were first defined as ‘Christians’ here (Acts 11:26).

91 Downey (1962) 91.

92 Translations from Downey (1959).

93 Evagrius *Hist. Eccles.* 1.20.

94 See e.g. Sieber (2013).

95 A text commenting on another text (Genette (1982) 4).

96 Genette (1982) 5–6.

97 Cairns (1989) 195.

98 On Dante and *Ulysses*, see Reynolds (1981).

## Competing interests

The author(s) declare none.

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