

Inclusion and Exclusion in Baebius Italicus' *Ilias Latina* and the Homeric Exegetical Tradition

If Homer is praised in antiquity for his selectivity (e.g., Schol. bT *ad Il.* 24.804a *ex.*; Hor. *Ars P.* 131-9), Baebius Italicus' *Ilias Latina* takes Homer's virtue of selectivity to extremes, reducing the *Iliad* to just 1,070 lines. Following recent scholarship that places the *Ilias Latina* within the genre of ancient epitome (Cè 2021, Reitz 2007), this paper analyzes the poem's connection to a related subliterate tradition, exegesis in ancient literary criticism. The *Ilias Latina*, I argue, is sensitive to the controversies of Homeric scholarship and chooses its points of focus accordingly.

Whereas some scholarship criticizes Baebius for what his text excludes (e.g., Andromache's speech in *Iliad* 6; Gleis 2018, 41-2), I direct attention toward instances of selectivity that address perceived problems within Homer's text. For example, Aristarchus criticized *Il.* 9.222 as redundant because it states that the Greek heroes ate in Achilles' hut when they had just done so in Agamemnon's (Schol. A *ad Il.* 9.222a *Ariston.*). In Baebius' version, the Greek leaders pointedly do not eat when they first gather; they are too anxious over the state of their army ("Nor with feasts do they lift their spirits or care for their bodies, but miserable they lament their fate;" *nec dapibus releuant animos nec corpora curant, | sed miseri sua fata gemunt* 687-688). Elsewhere, the practice of brevity obviates the need for divine speeches that recapitulate or anticipate the plot. For an ancient oral audience, or indeed for a reading audience who has access only to individual books, these speeches oriented the audience within the wider story (e.g., *Il.* 7.443-64, 8.371-2, 18.444-56). But for the hyper-literary Alexandrians, they could seem superfluous, tedious, and prone to introduce minor inconsistencies (Schironi 2018, 452-96). In Baebius' *Ilias Latina*, they are removed, for they are unnecessary. Thanks to the epitomizing

format, readers are not at risk of forgetting where the plot stands. In other respects, however, Baebius flouts the opinions of ancient critics. Aristarchus athetized *Il.* 1.29-31, in which Agamemnon alludes to his lust for Chryseis (Schol. A *ad* 1.29-31 *Ariston.*), but Baebius doubles down on this characterization: “untamed love sticks deep in his bones, and toxic lust rejects their entreaties” (*ferus ossibus imis | haeret amor spernitque preces damnosa libido*, 25-26). With these lines’ prominent placement in the *Ilias Latina*, Baebius insists on an interpretation of Agamemnon’s motivations that Aristarchus sought to diminish.

The *Ilias Latina* is the only surviving example of a genre that flourished in Roman epic, from its putative origins with Livius Andronicus’ *Oduvia* through Attius Labeo’s Latin *Iliad*, which Persius reviled (*Sat.* 1.4-12, 44-55). Once regarded as an “unattractive compendium” of rhetorical showpieces (Marshall 1983, 191), the *Ilias Latina* has been increasingly recognized for its artistry over the last three decades (Scaffai 1997). Baebius writes the tendentious re-readings of the *Iliad* in Roman lyric and elegy into Homer’s narrative (Green 2019; Fabre-Serris 1998, 153-9) and projects Vergil’s *Iliadic* patterning in the *Aeneid* back onto Homer’s heroes (Putnam 2018). By placing Baebius’ choices of inclusion and exclusion within the critical discourse found in Homeric scholia, I show that the *Ilias Latina* incorporates Homer’s reception not only in poetry but also in exegesis into its miniaturized and Romanized *Iliad*.

Works Cited

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