The Babylonian Talmud and Late Antique Book Culture

Monika Amsler

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009297349

The Babylonian Talmud and Late Antique Book Culture

In this book, Monika Amsler explores the historical contexts in which the Babylonian Talmud was formed in an effort to determine whether it was the result of oral transmission. Scholars have posited that the rulings and stories we find in the Talmud were passed on from one generation to the next, each generation adding their opinions and interpretations of a given subject. Yet such an oral formation process is unheard of in late antiquity. Moreover, the model exoticizes the Talmud and disregards the intellectual world of Sassanid Persia. Rather than taking the Talmud's discursive structure as a sign for orality, Amsler interrogates the intellectual and material prerequisites of composers of such complex works, and their education and methods of large-scale data management. She also traces and highlights the marks that their working methods inevitably left in the text. Detailing how intellectual innovation was generated, Amsler's book also sheds new light on the content of the Talmud. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Monika Amsler is Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Ancient History at the University of Bern. A historian of ancient religion, she is the editor of *Knowledge Construction in Late Antiquity*, published in the *Trends in Classics* Supplementary Volume Series.

The Babylonian Talmud and Late Antique Book Culture

MONIKA AMSLER
University of Bern

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009297332

DOI: 10.1017/9781009297349

When citing this work, please include a reference to the
DOI 10.1017/9781009297349

First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

*A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the
Library of Congress.*

ISBN 978-1-009-29733-2 Hardback

Published with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

To Martin,
Emelina, Gwendolin, Filippa, and Charlotte

Contents

Acknowledgments

This book is "based on a true dissertation," advised by Christoph Uehlinger and Michael Satlow (University of Zurich, 2018). I am grateful for their kind but critical feedback, and for their ongoing support and advice. The dissertation was funded by the University of Zurich's Research Priority Point (URPP) "Asia & Europe" and a Marie Heim-Vögtlin scholarship by the Swiss National Scientific Foundation (SNSF). The inclusion of the dissertation project into the URPP's research field "Concepts and Taxonomies" offered a stimulating intellectual environment and left distinct marks on its course. I am thankful to all involved for this great opportunity and experience.

I am grateful to the SNSF for funding the open-access publication of this book. The Meyerhoff Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Maryland, the Doctoral Program Asia and Europe, and *Fonds für Altertumswissenschaft* hosted by the Department of Greek and Latin Philology at the University of Zurich (funded by Walter Burkert) paid for the copyediting and indexing at different stages in the process of the book's genesis.

Regarding copyediting and indexing, Adina M. Yoffie, William H. Brown, and Katherin Papadopoulos (and her helper John Keily) have done more for this book than cleaning up my English, detecting typos, and producing a useful index, and I am most thankful for your careful work, personal interest, and prompt delivery. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers from Cambridge University Press for their insightful remarks and the editor, Beatrice Rehl, for her support and patience with a first timer. Susan Marks was a great mentor "on the go."

Hayim Lapin has read a prior draft of this manuscript and provided substantial feedback, and Maxine Grossmann has helped me to digest

setbacks and to reframe frustration and despair. Thank you both "a google times" as my kids would say. Speaking of which: My girls grew alongside this book. Just in time for its publication, they are now old enough to understand what this means. And I am so sorry that this discovery ended only in a series of frustrations! No, there are no pictures in the book and there is nothing to color; no, it's not a story with some fancy main characters, a brave heroine, or a funny prince; no, we won't be giving a copy to your teachers for Christmas or deposit one in the school library. Honestly, I don't think they will ever read it. I am still dedicating it to them. And to their father, my best friend, Martin Ferrazzini, who really wants to see his name in it and deserves it more than anyone else. He had many chances and reasons to vote against this project but never did, and instead chose encouragement. Merci tuusig!

Abbreviations

AJEC	*Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*
AJSR	*Association for Jewish Studies Review*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
DJBA	Michael Sokoloff. *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002
DJPA	Michael Sokoloff. *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990
EIr	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Edited by Ehsan Yarshater. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
Hug	*Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*
Jastrow	Jastrow, Morris, comp. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature with an Index of Scriptural Quotations*. London: Luzac; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSJSup	*Supplements to Journal for the Study of Judaism*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996

NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OECS	*Oxford Early Christian Studies*
SFSHJ	*South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism*
SJLA	*Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*
SLA	*Studies in Late Antiquity*
STAC	*Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum*
SyrLex	Sokoloff, Michael. *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's* Lexicon Syriacum. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009
TSAJ	*Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism*
TSJTSA	*Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*
WGRW	*Writings from the Greco-Roman World*
WUNT	*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*

TALMUDIC TRACTATES

Avod. Zar.	*Avodah Zarah*
Avot	*Avot*
B. Bat.	*Bava Batra*
B. Metz	*Bava Metzi'a*
B. Qam	*Bava Qamma*
Ber.	*Berakhot*
Betzah	*Betzah*
Eruv.	*Eruvin*
Git.	*Gittin*
Hor.	*Horayot*
Hul.	*Hullin*
Kelim	*Kelim*
Ketub.	*Ketubbot*
Meg.	*Megillah*
Mo'ed Qat.	*Mo'ed Qatan*
Ned.	*Nedarim*
Nid.	*Niddah*
Pesah.	*Pesahim*
Qidd.	*Qidushim*
Rosh Hash.	*Rosh Hashanah*
Sanh.	*Sanhedrin*
Shabb.	*Shabbat*

Ta'an.	*Ta'anit*
Tem.	*Temurah*
Ter.	*Terumot*
Yevam.	*Yevamot*
Yoma	*Yoma*

Prefixes to the tractates are used as follows:

m.	= *Mishnah*
t.	= *Tosefta*
y.	= *Palestinian Talmud*
b.	= *Babylonian Talmud*

Introduction

I always have a quotation for everything – it saves original thinking.
Dorothy L. Sayers

What does this quotation, merely by its form and place at the top of this page, suggest about the education and scholarly training of me, the author of this book? It may suggest that I have enjoyed a certain degree of education, since I am apparently familiar with the work of Dorothy L. Sayers and her locked-room mystery, *Have His Carcase* (1932), and can cite it in English. The quotation may further suggest that I have the leisure to read. When compared to other academic books, placing a quotation at the beginning of an introduction seems an acceptable convention. That I followed this convention suggests that I, the author, was either trained to do so or have absorbed the habit by imitation.

Some of these assumptions are true; others are not. I chose to begin my introduction with a quotation because I have seen this practice elsewhere and have found it to be a pleasant, low-threshold way to start a conversation. Yet I have not read this or any other of Sayers's books. Rather, I came across another quote by Sayers in the header of an introductory chapter in an academic book. I then looked the name "Dorothy Sayers" up using a search engine and found a website with her quotations. I skimmed the quotations, chose a fitting short one that said something about quotations, and copied and pasted the quote at the top of this page using the appropriate function of my MacBook Air. I have no idea what the rest of the book is about; I just used the excerpt. It may even be possible that the attribution is wrong and that it is a quote from some other book or author.

This type of background information is usually withheld from the reader, and for good reason: It is tedious and breaks the spell of reading. It may even harm my reputation as a serious scholar. For someone interested in the history of the book, however, such information is key to understanding the intellectual, physical, and material processes that have generated a certain book. *The Babylonian Talmud and Late Antique Book Culture* explores such background information about text production and how missing information may be reconstructed. The book under investigation here is the Babylonian Talmud (henceforth "the Talmud"), a text that offers no or lacunose information as to how it was composed, by whom, or why.

How can answers to these questions be derived from a text that is obviously unwilling to share these secrets? By analyzing content, structure, or form. Traditionally, studies that have inquired into the Talmud's formation have prioritized content and structure over form. This book takes the reverse approach, prioritizing form over content – so much so that I will quote talmudic passages simply to discuss their form, even their size and physicality, while discussing the content of those passages merely to explain compositional strategies. In the same vein, I have not yet discussed the content of the above quote by Sayers but rather the implications of the quote's position and its function in marking the beginning of a chapter, and in asserting that I, the author, am well read, thereby revealing at least partly my intellectual background.

Although somewhat randomly chosen, the content of Sayers's quotation is, of course, not entirely unrelated to the concerns of the present book. *The Babylonian Talmud and Late Antique Book Culture* is about quotations and how the use of citations as excerpts from someone else's work may reflect hard work and original thinking rather than help avoid it, as Sayers implies. Indeed, Sayers's assertion reflects the early-twentieth-century notion that late antique habits of working with excerpts were dull, repetitive, and synonymous with the decline of the Roman Empire. The last century, however – and remember that the quote dates to 1932 – has almost completely inverted this understanding. Scholars are now of the opinion that excerpt literature had its own aesthetics, and that authors often made ingenious use of excerpts, sometimes collating pieces as small as half-sentences.[1] Because imperial period and late antique authors tended to work with excerpts – that is, already

[1] E.g., in the form of the *cento*, see Marco Formisano, "Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity," *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 284.

written text – content was often subordinate to form and method or equivalent with them.[2] This book will explore the historical implications of considering the Talmud a piece of such excerpt literature.

I suggest that we can learn much about how the Talmud was made by focusing less on its content and more on its form. In other words, I suggest that the form of the Talmud, as a whole and in its parts, tells the story of the education of the authors of its texts, and the material and organizational challenges faced by its composers. Education provided the intellectual tools people needed to create or contribute to such a work. The form and structure, that is, the work's makeup, tell us about the materiality, methods, and technology in play to produce a monumental work such as the Talmud. Form and structure make us think further about the material resources at the disposal of composers and authors and raise questions about libraries, archives, and data management and possible links to everyday bookkeeping, letter writing, book acquisition, and storage.

HOW WAS THE TALMUD "MADE"? MODELS OF FORMATION

This book argues that existing models of the formation of the Talmud might benefit from engagement with intellectual and material aspects of late antique book production more broadly. Previously, models of formation have been based almost exclusively on the talmudic text, with occasional comparisons with the text of the Palestinian Talmud and other rabbinic texts. This somewhat "intra-familial" perspective has contributed to the – often subconscious – notion "that the Babylonian Talmud is indeed sui generis."[3] Other books with long reception histories, not least the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, are perceived in similar ways.[4] The unique reception history of these works seems to suggest that not only their reception history but the works themselves are singular and that they came into being in ways that differed considerably from the production of ordinary books. As a result, these texts have, for a long time, not been analyzed as material artifacts. Recent awareness of this neglect has caused scholars to develop historically more embedded models for the genesis of the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament, for

[2] See Formisano, "Aesthetic Paradigm," 283.

[3] Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 21.

[4] Robert A. Segal refers to this phenomenon as "textualism." It is also well known from other classical works. Robert A. Segal, "How Historical Is the History of Religions?," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 3.

example, thereby advancing these works' integration into the material and scribal culture of their time.[5]

The present scholarly consensus as to how the talmudic text came into being and how it must be analyzed leans toward the "two-source theory."[6] This theory basically divides the text into three layers: an early layer, which attributes sayings and tenets formulated in mishnaic Hebrew to scholars classified as Tannaim; a later Aramaic stratum of sayings, which are attributed to the scholarly generation of the Amoraim; and a final closing layer, which negotiates anonymously between the different dicta.[7] Although these seem to be three sources, the decisive divide is the one between attributed statements (i.e., tannaitic and amoraic) and an anonymous voice that comments upon them, often bringing these quotations into conversation with each other, thereby contributing to the Talmud's characteristic dialectic form. This mediating, explanatory layer must obviously be the latest layer. Additionally, one can differentiate between concise tenets and sayings attributed to rabbinic sages, short stories, and lengthy narratives. The latter are usually also attributed to the latest layer. The dating of this final layer is a matter of debate. Since it connects to the final formation of the Talmud, the stratum is usually seen as a lengthy process that scholars place somewhere between 450 and 750 CE.[8]

Because the earlier two layers are traditionally attributed to generations of scholars (i.e., Tannaim and Amoraim), David Weiss Halivni proposed to attribute the final, unattributed stratum similarly to such

[5] See Raymond F. Person, Jr., and Robert Rezetko, introduction to *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism*, ed. Raymond F. Person, Jr., and Robert Rezetko, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 25 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 1–35. For text-critical approaches that account for the materiality involved in writing processes and the hazards that come with it, see Idan Dershowitz, *The Dismembered Bible: Cutting and Pasting Scripture in Antiquity*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 143 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2021); or Chris Keith, *The Gospel as Manuscript: The Jesus Tradition as Material Artifact* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), and Matthew D. C. Larsen, *Gospels before the Book* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[6] See David Goodblatt, "A Generation of Talmudic Studies," in *The Talmud in Its Iranian Context*, ed. Carol Bakhos and M. Rahim Shayegan, *TSAJ* 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 11–12.

[7] The Tannaim and Amoraim are dated, according to the medieval genealogy, to the first through early third centuries CE and the early third through fifth centuries CE, respectively. Dicta attributed to Tannaim are formulated in the late Hebrew of the Mishnah, while dicta attributed to the Amoraim are in Aramaic.

[8] E.g., David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8, suggests 550–750 CE; Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in the Aggada," in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *TSAJ* 114 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 417, suggests 450–700 CE.

an intellectual generation. He called this generation the Stammaim, after the Aramaic *setam*, or "anonymous," the name also given to the mediating voice. Unlike the generations of the Tannaim and Amoraim, then, the Stammaim were not identified by medieval historiographers. According to Halivni's thesis, the Stammaim reconstructed the dialectical argumentation that had been lost in the process of oral transmission. In this process, he argues, reciters had mostly memorized concise dicta by Tannaim and Amoraim.[9] Based on the knowledge of these reciters, then, the Stammaim completed the arguments and wrote down the Talmud.

Other scholars, most notably Shamma Friedman and Jeffrey Rubenstein, have combined the thesis of the stammaitic redaction with tools of higher criticism developed in biblical studies. These tools have proven helpful for isolating certain patterns and, especially, for systematizing a set of questions with which to confront the text and to distinguish between earlier and later stammaitic narratives.[10] Friedman disagrees with Halivni over the origins of the dialogue structure, which he does not understand as an artificial stammaitic reconstruction of a lost discussion. Friedman, rather, attributes the characteristic dialectic structure to the creativity of the stammaitic "commentators" who redacted the Talmud.[11]

Richard Kalmin has proposed yet another way to disentangle the Talmud's obviously quite disparate – in terms of language, style, and content – pieces. Kalmin's model mediates between the medieval tradition and higher criticism. He uses attributions to certain rabbis to identify the chronological and local background of the material. In his words, he looks for "general patterns characterizing Palestinian and Babylonian and early and late rabbis, all the while remaining alert to the possibility that the transmitters and editors of these traditions altered them in subtle or not so subtle ways."[12]

[9] Halivni, *Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, 3.

[10] E.g., Shamma Friedman, "A Good Story Deserves Retelling: The Unfolding of the Akiva Legend," in Rubenstein, *Creation and Composition*, 79–80; his fourteen criteria for distinguishing stammaitic redaction were translated in Rubenstein, "Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention," 419–420; Shamma Friedman, "Now You See It, Now You Don't: Can Source-Criticism Perform Magic on Talmudic Passages about Sorcery?," in *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, ed. Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan, *AJEC* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Stories of the Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

[11] Friedman, "Good Story," 56.

[12] Richard Kalmin, "The Formation and Character of the Babylonian Talmud," in *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz, vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 861.

These models are in continuation of earlier ones that stressed the chronological succession and local nature of certain compositions and editorial processes. Isaac Halevy and Zacharias Frankel, for example, emphasized the contributions by scholarly generation: each generation would have their own Talmud, since they continued working on the one transmitted and organized by the previous generation.[13] Jacob Epstein and Eliezer S. Rosenthal broke this model down to local teachers, each of which taught his own version of the Talmud. Although eventually merged into a single work, every tractate was a book on its own and with its own editorial story.[14]

Jacob Neusner contested the positivistic interpretation of medieval historiographers and criticized the practice of focusing on details within the text before proceeding to the work as a whole.[15] He held that the whole of the composition should be considered before moving on to a detailed analysis. Following this path, he pointed to the distinct overall style of the Talmud and argued that the Talmud had been written and composed according to an identifiable set of rules.[16] These rules produced two different sets of documents: documents that concentrated on the Mishnah and documents that focused on other things, which Neusner called "miscellanies."[17] According to his thesis, then, the Talmud's authors composed the work from documents of various sizes according to a detailed and specific program responsible for the characteristic pattern in the arrangement of the different documents.[18]

The models obviously agree that the Talmud is a composite document, a patchwork made of many different sources. These sources have

[13] Isaac Halevy, *Dorot ha-rishonim* (Frankfurt: Jüdische Literarische Gesellschaft, 1906); Zacharias Frankel, *Introduction to the Yerushalmi* [in Hebrew] (Breslau, 1870).

[14] See Jacob N. Epstein, *Introduction to Amoraitic Literature: Babylonian Talmud and Yerushalmi* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at sefarim 'al shem Y. L. Magnes, 1962), 12; Eliezer S. Rosenthal, "The History of the Text and Problems of Redaction in the Study of the Babylonian Talmud" [in Hebrew], *Tarbiẓ* 57 (1988); for summaries of the history of talmudic redaction criticism, see Mira Balberg, *Gateway to Rabbinic Literature* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: The Open University of Israel Press, 2013), 214–223, and Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 9th ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011), 213–218.

[15] See Jacob Neusner, *The Rules of Composition of the Talmud of Babylonia: The Cogency of the Bavli's Composite*, *SFSHJ* 13 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 209–235.

[16] See, e.g., Jacob Neusner, *The Principal Parts of the Bavli's Discourse: A Preliminary Taxonomy; Mishna Commentary, Sources, Traditions, and Agglutinative Miscellanies*, *SFSHJ* 53 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 128–129.

[17] Jacob Neusner, *The Bavli's Massive Miscellanies: The Problem of Agglutinative Discourse in the Talmud of Babylonia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 17–22.

[18] See Jacob Neusner, *The Bavli's One Voice: Types and Forms of Analytical Discourse and Their Fixed Order of Appearance*, *SFSHJ* 24 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).

been interpreted in different ways, as being reflective of different places of origin, times, or teachers. Unarguably, the production of this material, whether written or oral, took time and was carried out in different locations. The question that remains to be answered is how the Talmud was actually produced. Only Neusner's admittedly vague "documentary hypothesis" differs in that it reckons with an active, strategic production of the Talmud out of written texts. The other models have a rather sedimentary view of how the material came together, maybe intermitted by an occasional organization and systematization, and a final overhaul by the Stammaim. The reason for this complicated, undecided, and somewhat singular model is the fact that many scholars reckon with an oral tradition of the Talmud.[19] If, of course, the bits and pieces that constitute the Talmud were not written texts but oral traditions, the production of the final written composition of the work is a highly complex project.

Indeed, oral transmission may explain the overall oral notion of the Talmud's dialectic form, the sayings, the reciting, and, most of all, the concept of "oral Torah" that has lingered over rabbinic literature since mishnaic times.[20] Then again, oral transmission is suggested by a text that is unwilling to tell us anything about its genesis; a text that is more often than not *not* corroborated by archaeological evidence such as inscriptions or graffiti;[21] a text whose historical reliability has been questioned in many ways.[22]

[19] The scholarly consensus tends currently to be shaped by Yaakov Sussman, "The Oral Torah in the Literal Sense: The Power of the Tail of a Yod" [in Hebrew], in *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach,* ed. Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005). Earlier scholarship (e.g., Epstein) reckoned with written material. Sussman connects the earlier scholarly consensus to the endeavor of the Maskilim, representatives of Jewish "Enlightenment" (Haskalah) (232–236). For now, however, Sussman sees the burden of proof on "those who advocate a written text in the time of the Amoraim" (238).

[20] See Sussman, "Oral Torah in the Literal Sense."

[21] See, e.g., Karen B. Stern, *Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Forgotten Jews of Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 32. Stern writes, "Even in Beit Shearim – a cemetery with strong and documented links to populations of rabbis (whether of Talmudic, alternative, or complementary orientation) – works of Jewish commemorators and inscribers reflect understandings about death, corpse contagion, and commemorative practice with closer ties to regional non-Jewish behavior than to rabbinic textual prescriptions. These perspectives, in turn, permit a rare reversal of scholarly practice: a rereading of rabbinic texts in light of archaeological findings." See also Hayim Lapin, "Epigraphical Rabbis: A Reconsideration," *JQR* 101, no. 3 (Summer 2011).

[22] See, e.g., William S. Green, "What's in a Name? The Problematic of 'Rabbinic Biography,'" in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. William S. Green, BJS 1, vol. 1 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 77–96; Sacha Stern, "Attribution and Authorship in the Babylonian Talmud," *JJS* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1994).

WHAT IF THE TALMUD HAD BEEN COMPOSED LIKE A LATE ANTIQUE COMPILATION?

This study considers the possibility of bringing the Talmud's characteristic features, its overall structure and outlook, into conversation with imperial period and late antique literary production. For this purpose, I will have to reconfigure some of the models discussed above. I am aware that this may be a stretch in some areas and for certain readers. Yet such a turnaround might offer possibilities for expanding the tools currently available for analyzing the Talmud. These tools, as Moulie Vidas has insightfully observed, have been shaped in ways that direct the user, apparently inevitably, to see layers, and, especially, the seemingly earliest ones among them.[23]

There is, in fact, good reason to approach the Talmud simply as a late antique compilation, that is, a book assembled according to an elaborate plan that followed upon a period of sorting excerpts according to keywords. First of all, compilations were a popular genre from the imperial period through late antiquity. They ranged from a simple mix of excerpts from other works and personal notes to structured compositions in which an explanatory voice guided the reader or listener from one excerpt to the next where necessary. Excerpts from the same source ended up in different places: divided and yet connected through style and content, same-source excerpts covered compilations with a net of recurring motives and linguistic tropes that sometimes ran counter to the structure and topic of their newly assigned place in a compilation. A similar connectivity throughout the work can be observed in the Talmud, where words, phrases, bits, and pieces of the very same source span an interlocking web over the text and, in fact, define it as a "book."[24] Indeed, the overall organization, the use of the very same or slightly adapted narrative in different places just because it makes a point in both cases, is stunning.[25] Then again, logical gaps as well as stylistic and linguistic differences point to the fact that the material had not been written for the particular place where it ended up.[26] All of these observations

[23] Moulie Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 45–50.

[24] See Zvi Septimus, "The Poetic Superstructure of the Babylonian Talmud and the Reader It Fashions" (PhD diss., University of California, 2011); Zvi Septimus, "Trigger Words and Simultexts: The Experience of Reading the Bavli," in *Wisdom of Bat Sheva: The Dr. Beth Samuels Memorial Volume*, ed. Barry S. Wimpfheimer (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2009).

[25] See Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, introduction, in Rubenstein, *Creation and Composition*, 7; and the examples in Friedman, "Good Story."

[26] See, e.g., Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*, 12; Jacob Neusner, "The Talmuds of the Land of Israel and of Babylonia," in *The Generative Premises of Rabbinic Literature: The Judaism behind the Texts*, *SFSHJ* 101 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 5:10.

give reason to compare the Talmud to late antique compilations and the material and intellectual preconditions for book production.

Recent scholarship has pointed to the talmudic texts' multiple entanglements with its literary co-world, and that the rabbinic movement itself may be framed as an association in the form of an exclusive study group.[27] Whether such groups had a wider social impact or not, their members tended to entertain and challenge one another not just with arguments and expositions but also with riddles or astute stories, which were prepared in advance and then read or recited from memory.[28] It is also conceivable that people took notes from such meetings and transferred the most compelling contributions into more concise forms, that is, sayings or maxims, which ended up in collections at a later date. Most likely, the members of this rabbinic association were also members of other consortia, and their personal notebooks may have offered an interesting mix of topics. The synagogue, for instance, does not seem to have been identical with rabbinic forms of organization. Still, some rabbinic sages appear to have given public lectures in synagogues, given legal (halakic) advice, or consulted with teachers of children.[29] The preparations for such lectures may have yielded some form of text, which eventually provided teachers with a model or exercise text, thereby multiplying its influence. The cases brought before the rabbinic sage may have been cause for halakic discussion with colleagues, which also resulted in the jotting down of some thoughts.

I do not claim here that rabbinic sages composed elaborate texts the length of a scroll or even a whole tractate, as cautioned by Sussman.[30] Rather, I think of tablets, ostraca (pottery shards used for writing), and rotuli (a long, narrow strip of [waste] parchment or papyrus that opened

[27] On associations and the rabbinic movement, see Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 77–98.

[28] See Monika Amsler, "The 'Poetic Itch' and Numerical Maxims in the Talmud: An Inquiry into Factors of Knowledge Construction," in *Knowledge Construction in Late Antiquity*, ed. Monika Amsler, Trends in Classics 142 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2023), 189–218. An example for such an exclusive intellectual group would be the "water-clock group" (*Klepsydrion*) described by Philostratus (*Vit. Soph.* 2.10 [Wright, LCL]). The group consisted of ten of Herodes Atticus's best pupils, who listened to his expounding in 100 lines during a time span limited by a water clock.

[29] On the attitude of rabbinic sages toward the synagogue, see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 476–478, 486–491.

[30] Sussman, "Oral Torah in the Literal Sense," 217n28: "There is no doubt that the sages wrote down halakhot here and there but only as short lists in notebooks [*pinqasim*] or letters etc. … But we cannot derive from this that they wrote books of halakhot, a whole composition of halakah" (author's translation).

vertically), or papyrus scraps, material suited for short compositions, and private notes. These were not fair copies destined for formal use and dissemination ("publishing"); rather, they were forms of texts that even today would not be considered "real writing."[31] Nevertheless, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, these notes reflected one's personal achievement and were held dearly. The compilation of the Talmud would have required that these compositions were eventually gathered in an archive or a sort of library that served students and scholars even prior to this endeavor.

For the purpose of producing the Talmud, the material was sorted, significant passages were excerpted and these were arranged according to keywords. Since the work was to follow the text of the Mishnah – which was maybe only available from memory, maybe in the form of the notes just described – lemmas were identified. Keywords were assigned to the lemmas, and commentaries were crafted with the material yielded through the keywords. Although connected through keywords, the material assembled in this way was, of course, inconsistent, and the composers had to add editorial notes in order to connect the pieces. Questions, objections, and clarifications seem to have been quick strategies for solving these problems. Lengthy excerpts such as stories were taken apart when needed and rearranged. Names could easily be exchanged or added as another means to create connectivity through association.

This model for the formation of the Talmud would account for several of the work's main features observed in earlier models: The used texts were chronologically and geographically diverse and there were older texts and more recent ones, although style should not be used as the only decisive factor for dating, as Robert Brody and Vidas have pointed out.[32] An active

[31] A hierarchy between "private" and "published" notes was introduced by Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission of Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.–IV Century C.E.*, *TSJTSA* 18 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 87, and further corroborated by Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 256–257. In addition to the distinction between private and public, I suggest that the materiality and formal aspects of texts, their social function, were decisive in the distinction between formal and informal, even so-called "oral" writing.

[32] Robert Brody, "The Anonymous Talmud and the Words of the Amoraim" [in Hebrew], in *The Bible and Its World*, *Rabbinic Literature and Jewish Law, and Jewish Thought*, ed. Baruch J. Schwartz, Avraham Melamed, and Aaron Shemesh, vol. 1 of *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish* Studies, ed. Baruch J. Schwartz, Avraham Melamed, and Aaron Shemesh (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2008), 223; Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*, 54–58.

composition process, which left the excerpts mostly intact, took place.[33] The composers had an overall plan, a point on which Neusner insisted, and they applied the same strategies over and over again, as observed by Friedman. The excerpts are apodictic in form, and the explanations added by the composers are often forced, since they are no longer aware of the context, both points that are important to Halivni's thesis. This model agrees further with Boyarin and Vidas that the authors of stories are not, at least not necessarily, identical with the composers of the Talmud.

METHOD AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

This book explores avenues into background information about the production of the talmudic text. As noted, the text itself is reluctant to provide such information, and where it seems to do so, we may be facing ideology, literary convention, or imagination rather than a historical account. The method suggested here is, therefore, a focus on form and convention rather than on content, the content's attribution to a certain sage, his generation, or his geographical location. This approach allows us to identify the intellectual and material preconditions that are responsible for the text's composition and structure. The way I look at the texts, then, is informed by form and source criticism and thus focuses on literary patterns, style and vocabulary, and genre. This focus on form cannot, of course, happen in a vacuum if there is to be any historical validity to it. In this regard, I clearly must compare the Talmud to other late antique works as the scaffolding for a thesis about the Talmud's production.

Although comparison is probably the most ubiquitous scholarly practice, it is often not recognized as a method.[34] Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber have recently rehabilitated the use of comparison as a worthy academic method that can even be used to compare the proverbial apples and oranges, if applied correctly.[35] They emphasize the importance of defining the *tertium comparationis*, a third element regarding which a comparison is carried out. This "third in comparison" provides the analyst with "a neutral third place or at least a third philosophical

[33] Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*, 23–44.

[34] See J. Z. Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[35] Ralph Weber, "On Comparing Ancient Chinese and Greek Ethics: The *tertium comparationis* as Tool of Analysis and Evaluation," in *The Good Life and Conceptions of Life in Early China and Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. R. A. H. King (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015).

point of view."[36] It defines and clarifies with regard to *what* two comparanda are compared to each other. The *tertia* used in this study to compare talmudic texts to others are hence primarily form and structure, genre, and practice.

By so doing, however, I also compare the textual productions of different cultures and subcultures to each other, Babylonian Aramaic texts to Palestinian Aramaic, late Hebrew, Syriac, Latin, Greek, and even Coptic texts. The *tertium* in that regard is similarity, that is, what is similar in form and practice, not necessarily (and, indeed, often not at all) in content. The liberty I take in comparing texts across geographical and linguistic boundaries, even across a certain time period (mostly the first through the sixth centuries CE), is motivated by two facts. The first and rather simple fact is that intellectual and technological inventions, the focus of the present book, travel notwithstanding their origin. A clear sense of origin often withers quickly; the source of innovation becomes intractable and is reattributed to the same degree its success grows.

Second, by comparing the Talmud as a book to other books, the study partakes in the recent scholarly endeavor to bring the Babylonian Talmud into conversation with texts written in other languages and under different ideological perspectives, that is, the work's cultural context and social history.[37] How cultural and ideological boundaries are defined and drawn and how the relationship between such entities is imagined governs the choice of comparanda, which are chosen based on aspects that are "presumed to be common to both" – the *tertium comparationis*.[38] Thus, for example, it is well known that rabbinic literature expresses an ambivalent relationship toward Greek language.[39] Together with the rabbinic emphasis of "oral Torah," this can quite easily lead to the notion that rabbinic learning operated on completely different premises and in different settings, and that similarities came into being by way of an elusive and indescribable osmotic process. Recent comparisons between rabbinic literature and Roman schooling standards (i.e., rhetoric) have proven fertile and justify positioning the curricular standards described in the *progymnasmata*, treatises describing preliminary rhetorical exercises, as a *tertium comparationis*

[36] Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber, "Introduction," in *Comparative Philosophy without Borders*, ed. Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 6.

[37] On cultural entanglements, see the summary of this scholarship in Matthew Goldstone, "The Babylonian Talmud in Its Cultural Context," *Religion Compass* 13, no. 6 (June 2019).

[38] Chakrabarti and Weber, "Introduction," 6.

[39] See Richard Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 10–15.

between Roman and Persian or rabbinic literature.[40] Thereby discussion about ideology and language become secondary, since the focus shifts to style, and ultimately also to modes of production.

The problem with reconstructing the ways in which complex, excerpt-based books were produced in late antiquity is that there exists no account of how this was done. In this regard, the Talmud does not differ from other books. Not a single "author-composer" felt the need to inform posterity or even their contemporaries about how they came up with the idea for a certain book project, how they planned it, how much money and time it cost, whether they received help from slaves or hired personnel, how they managed their data, and how they finally went about composing their work. There is, therefore, no account that can be compared to the structure of the Talmud in order to see whether there are similarities. Comparison between the Talmud and other compilations has therefore led to observations regarding the production of compilations that are relevant to the study of book history more broadly.

The "third in comparison" that I use in Chapter 1 is genre, or, since genre is an elusive category, structure and outlook. In that chapter, I compare books that convey knowledge using mostly excerpts from other works. Some of these works adhere to a fixed structure, such as Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, which, in thirty-six books, proceeds through all kinds of natural substances, starting with the planets and ending with minerals. Other works, such as Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*, are purposefully unstructured. Two works are particularly interesting comparanda, since, like the Talmud, they arrange excerpts into a long dialogue that covers all kinds of topics: Athenaeus's *The Learned Banqueters* and Macrobius's *Saturnalia*. The latter basically turned Gellius's *Attic Nights* into a symposiac dialogue. The arranging of excerpts to form a conversation was a method that was widely known and praised for its pedagogical value. Analysis of these works shows that the compilation of pieces of knowledge into a meaningful, dialectical work had several possible motivations, including antiquarianism, a pressing need for preservation, personal ambition, and/or the wish to bequeath knowledge to the next generation in a simple and compact manner.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the data management needed to compile coherent works out of excerpts. So far, there is only one specific theory to this issue, established by Albrecht Locher and Rolf Rottländer based on

[40] See Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, esp. 15–18, for a summary of earlier scholarship on the subject; David Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse: Progymnasmata and the Evolution of a Rabbinic Genre," in Nikolsky and Ilan, *Rabbinic Traditions*.

Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*.[41] They proposed that Pliny first set out to roughly list the categories he wanted to cover. Over many years, Pliny then collected passages from books he read or that were read to him, and that addressed a topic relevant to his project. Locher and Rottländer suggested that these excerpts were copied on thin, small wooden slats, such as those found in Roman military camps at the time. Because he stored the excerpts according to keywords, Pliny was able to retrieve the material once he started writing about a given subject. Every excerpt was written on an individual slat, which allowed moving them around until a rhetorically appealing structure was achieved. Without wasting much paper or even parchment, Pliny could now add complementary information or transitioning remarks to round off the paragraph.

The thesis is compelling but maybe a little bit too "neat" in the way it reckons with a wooden form of index cards and matching boxes. A closer look at the materiality of late antique writing culture shows that writing generally happened "on bits and pieces": on wooden tablets, ostraca, or papyrus scraps. Much writing was thus already portioned and, as a result, could easily be stored according to keywords. Bookkeeping practices further substantiate Locher and Rottländer's thesis. Receipts were collected and drafted into weekly and monthly accounts that were eventually assembled into an account of expenses and income for the whole year, which, in turn, was transmitted as a fair copy to the landlord.

Chapter 3 analyzes three talmudic passages, which I will call commentaries, that run from one mishnaic lemma to the next according to the model outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 asks how keywords were assigned and whether the composers pursued a certain structure with the excerpts, such as the rhetorical four-part structure: proem, narration, proofs, and peroration. The chapter shows that the assigned keywords usually go far beyond the one suggested by the mishnaic lemma. This is most obvious in the cases in which a commentary to the same lemma exists in the Palestinian Talmud. In these cases, the keywords also relate to the issues raised by the commentary of the Palestinian Talmud to the respective lemma. This creates the oft-observed notion that the Babylonian commentary is, in very subtle ways, similar to the Palestinian one. Moreover, this move beyond the mishnaic lemma is responsible for the notion that the Talmud is a "commentary plus."

[41] Albrecht Locher and Rolf C. A. Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia* des älteren Plinius und die Schrifttäfelchen von Vindolanda," in *Lebendige Altertumswissenschaft: Festschrift für Hermann Vetters*, ed. Manfred Kandler (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1985).

Chapter 4 looks at the intellectual premises needed for a project such as the compilation of the Talmud and how they play out in other, smaller literary forms such as talmudic stories. The preliminary rhetorical exercises, the *progymnasmata*, provide insight into the late antique curriculum. The *progymnasmata*, of which copies from several different authors and in several translations survive, do not just offer exercises but discuss what these exercises are designed to achieve in students. They give us a glimpse into the intellectual principles according to which late antique authors operated. Taking the progymnasmatic principles as a *tertium comparationis* between late antique narratives and the narratives in the Talmud, I show how the latter were created according to the same principles, and how this reflects the training that the authors of these narratives received.

The chapter further shows how the methods applied to the sorting and arrangement of excerpts into a book were also used on a microlevel to fashion stories. Rather than writing a story from scratch, students learned to work with already existing plots and enhance them with quotations or to combine them with another plot, thereby working with excerpts from other texts. Like authors of whole compilations, authors of short compositions would start with an inquiry into other works, collecting small excerpts that would substantiate the case they were about to make with their story. The story about Ashmedai, Solomon, and Benaiah (b. Gittin 68a–b), for instance, turns out to have been crafted based on a Persian narrative, into which the biographical details of these three protagonists were meticulously integrated.

In Chapter 5, I reverse the process of excerpting and compiling according to the observed methods by following the structure of a particular medical recipe throughout the Talmud and by reassembling an Aramaic treatise of fifty-seven simple remedies. Such treatises were rather popular between the fourth and early seventh centuries CE, and the treatise presented here is the first Judeo-Aramaic exemplar of this kind. The reassembling of a source that was dissected for compilatory purposes reveals further strategies employed by the composers of the Talmud, who seem to have worked at quite a fast pace, often repetitively, but without neglecting the attempted impression of an overall conversation.

Seen from this perspective, the use of texts written by someone else, quotes and other excerpts, appears as highly sophisticated, with a lot of innovative potential, and not at all "unoriginal," to paraphrase the introductory quote. Measured against the available technologies of the time, the Talmud appears to be one of the time's finest compilations.

1

The Talmud's Genre among Imperial Period/Late Antique Genres

This chapter asks whether and how the Babylonian Talmud could be integrated into the literary culture of the late antique Mediterranean world by looking at the work's genre from a comparative point of view. These questions about the work's genre will be posed with the recognition that they are ahistorical and originate from our contemporary way of classifying books. Accounting for classification is important since it facilitates, but also decisively governs, "the way [we] read a text, the expectations [we] form of it, the questions [we] pose to it, and the sort of information [we] deem it will yield."[1] Discussing the genre of the Talmud will, then, not yield a precise historical answer but will allow us to situate the work in the literary landscape of its time. This, in turn, will support a historical model to answering the seminal question of how the Talmud was produced, and that will be discussed in the next chapters.

Navigating between our present need to classify a text and the fact that ancient texts tend to evade any such classification, this chapter engages a conversation between modern and ancient ways of classifying texts. For this purpose, the chapter first surveys the modern genres mostly associated with the Talmud, namely, the commentary and the encyclopedia, and proceeds to explore the imperial period and late antique structural counterparts of these genres. By adding symposiac literature as an insightful *comparandum* to the range of literary forms usually compared with the Talmud, I will argue that the Talmud is best

[1] Philip S. Alexander, "Using Rabbinic Literature as a Source for the History of Late-Roman Palestine: Problems and Issues," in *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine*, ed. Philip S. Alexander and Martin Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.

classified as a commentary in form, an encyclopedia in content, and a symposiac work in its literary mode.

THE TROUBLE WITH GENRE

The difficulties with defining a "genre" start with the fact that every text contains several characteristics that may prompt its identification with a certain genre, as the assignment may be based on form, mode, or content. Not only do these different criteria already seem confusing and imprecise, but they are additionally "usually understood to be distinct from genre."[2] Still, libraries, bookstores, and their customers seem to be comfortable and successful with the assignment of genres for customers' use. Rather than firm and scientifically explorable categories, genres are social conventions negotiated in mutual, yet time- and culture-bound, agreements between authors and readers.[3]

Today, the major categories into which literary works are divided are poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and drama. In antiquity, Plato distinguished between lyric poetry, epic, and tragedy, while his student Aristotle differentiated between epic, tragedy, and comedy.[4] This alignment of contemporary and ancient genres may imply a certain overlap and continuity. Yet there is a major difference between contemporary and ancient classification regarding the range of texts being classified. While contemporary classification aims to cover every type of text, Plato's and Aristotle's classifications cover only poetry, that is, texts that make use of a metrical language. Metrical language, in its different manifestations, was reserved for texts that related in a different way than others to truth and reality.[5] Ancient Greek taxonomies of texts, then, focused on the mode of a text, its use of language. Roman librarians appear to have made the same basic distinction in that they mostly separated poetry from prose texts.[6] In a certain sense, this division may be compared to the contemporary distinction between fiction and nonfiction. Indeed, in the

[2] John A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, see "Genre."
[3] See Cuddon, *Dictionary*, see "Genre Theory."
[4] For these distinctions, see Cuddon, *Dictionary*, see "Genre."
[5] On myths, for example, see Bruce D. MacQueen, "The Stepchildren of Herodotus: The Transformation of History into Fiction in Late Antiquity," in *The Children of Herodotus: Greek and Roman Historiography and Related Genres*, ed. Jakub Pigoń (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).
[6] George W. Houston, *Inside Roman Libraries: Book Collections and Their Management in Antiquity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 44.

early imperial period, some authors began to criticize poetry as a medium used to impart false truths. Nevertheless, others, such as the anonymous author of the poem "Aetna," tried to preserve the didactic merits of metrical language to describe natural phenomena – a topic which, on account of its content, would be classified today as nonfiction.[7]

Slowly but surely classical poetry went out of fashion in late antiquity. Around 29 BCE, the last classical drama was staged in Rome, thereby introducing the looming turn from poetry to prose onto the theater stage.[8] The ubiquitous use of prose in late antiquity makes the historical analysis of the relationship between texts and reality much more complicated, with the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction often seeming blurred. Plausibility (*verisimilitude*) and implausibility are terms better suited to explain the literary sensibilities of a rhetorically trained and accustomed audience than modern ideas of fiction and nonfiction as a contrast between imagination and fact. Indeed, the creation of plausibility and the detection of implausibility was at the heart of rhetorical education.[9]

Literary plausibility did not refer to a distinction between credible and incredible but to the way in which an argument or story was constructed. In his work of what are obviously not *True Histories*, for example, Lucian of Samosata (second century) could send people to the moon and still remain plausible within the literary fabric of other marvelous adventures described in his book.[10] The same accounts for the fantastic sea voyages of

[7] See Liba C. Taub, "Explaining a Volcano Naturally: Aetna and the Choice of Poetry," in *Authorial Voices in Greco-Roman Technical Writing*, ed. Liba C. Taub and Aude Doody, AKAN-Einzelschriften 7 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2009). Nicander of Colophon, Servilius Damocrates, Heraclitus of Rhodiapolis, Marcellus of Side, and Quintus Serenus Sammonicus wrote medical recipes in verse.

[8] For the shift from poetry to fictional prose, see MacQueen, "Stepchildren of Herodotus"; for the development of drama in late antiquity, opening up to prose and forms of rhythmical prose, atypical iambics, as well as the *cento*, see Eva Stehlíková, "Drama in Late Antiquity," *Listy filologické* 116, no. 1 (1993). Another transitory form seems to have been the (at-first) indecorous form of the *prosimetrum*, a mixture of prose and verse, known as the "Menippean satire"; see Joel C. Relihan, "Prosimetra," in *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, ed. Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018).

[9] George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, *WGRW* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), x.

[10] Karen ní Mheallaigh, *The Moon in the Greek and Roman Imagination Myth, Literature, Science and Philosophy*, Greek Culture in the Roman World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 205, notes that Lucian's "work is … most complex, engaging with the entire preceding selenographical tradition in surprising and sophisticated ways, as well as with complex literary-critical matters in his own society." Through his engagement with previous narrators of trips to the moon (e.g., Varro, Antonius Diogenes), Lucian remains plausible.

Rabah bar bar Hanah in the Talmud, which, combined with other fantastic stories, biblical proof, and eyewitness markers, remain within the framework of the "plausible implausible" created in this passage.[11]

Catalogues produced by libraries and collectors offer further information on late antique classifications of texts. Apart from the already-mentioned basic distinction between poetry and prose works, they focused on content for additional subclassification; bibliographical information about the function of a text is rare.[12] Ancient readers did not pick their reading by form – such as, commentary, letter collection, manual, and the like – but according to topic.

Apart from the lack of generic terms for literature, Mediterranean languages complicate the matter further in that they do not have an emic term for scholarship, and certainly not for scholarly literature. Historians have, therefore, proposed to use the term "erudition" for activities such as textual interpretation, linguistic inquiry, compilation, annotation, summarizing, investigation, argumentation, and the production of catalogues and lists.[13] The erudite man – indeed, in the imagination of the time and its social reality, erudition was predominantly male – mastered a bookish versatility. The erudite man was able to cite from various works and was able to compose his own rhetorical and literary contributions.[14]

Literary works of systematic erudition are basically the commentary, the encyclopedia, and "works of antiquarian erudition" or "miscellanies."[15] These three forms differ in their organizational principles and their scope, but each is essentially connected to some type of list that serves as a sort of

[11] b. Bava Batra 73b. See Dina Stein, "Believing Is Seeing: A Reading of Baba Batra 73a–75b," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 17 (1999). In their concealment of "verifiable, historical and factual accuracy," that is, date or precise location, these stories adhere to what Koen De Temmerman labeled "fictiveness" in order to do justice to the aspiration of *verisimilitude*, which is inherent in these narratives; see Koen De Temmerman, "Ancient Biography and Formalities of Fiction," in *Writing Biography in Greece and Rome: Narrative Techniques and Fictionalization*, ed. Koen De Temmerman and Kristoffel Demoen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 5.

[12] Houston, *Inside Roman Libraries*, 113; see also 44 and 44n14.

[13] See Robert A. Kaster, "Scholarship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies*, ed. Alessandro Barchiesi and Walter Scheidel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and James E. G. Zetzel, *Critics, Compilers, and Commentators: An Introduction to Roman Philology, 200 BCE–800 CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3–5.

[14] This is the bookish ideal described, in various ways, in Athenaeus's *The Learned Banqueters* (*Deipnosophistai*); see Christian Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. David Braund and John Wilkins (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).

[15] Zetzel, *Critics*, 6; and see Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 331–332, for a description of miscellanies.

index or aid for better orientation within the text. Thus, the commentary is built around the "systematic glossographical analysis," the scholion; the encyclopedia relates to a thematic glossary; and the miscellany is generically connected to the inventory lists of book collections.[16] These relationships are, of course, in no way linear or evolutionary, moving from list to corpus. Rather, as will be discussed in more detail below, the list and its more elaborate forms each represent distinct and conscious approaches to textual knowledge. Interdependencies exist in that a list may lead to an elaboration of its entries (commentary or encyclopedia), which, at some point, may be summarized into another list again, or in that the list comes to represent the logical structure of the flow of knowledge adopted by other genres.

The literary methods favored by, and characteristic of, late antique erudite authors were "epitomizing, abbreviating, compressing, paraphrasing, anthologizing, excerpting, and fragmenting."[17] Rather than focusing on independent writing projects, authors concentrated on already-written texts, generating new insights from different arrangements, adding their own conclusions, opinions, and observations. To produce new compositions by way of old texts, they used principles that allowed for "mobility within and between the topics," such as "rules of analogy, of complementarity, of digression, [and] of metonymy."[18] While aiming at a compression of knowledge, these techniques simultaneously fostered a comparatively rapid production of bulky multivolume works. In addition, due to these methods, late antique literature is generally highly self-referential and text focused, with the texts' learning "more from each other than from experience, and despite the claim of *usus*, [they] may owe more to literature than to life."[19]

An example will serve to illustrate how the same story is consciously and plausibly reworked and used to make different points in different contexts. Aelian (second/early third century), in his paradoxographical work *On the*

[16] Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 207. For examples of inventory lists, see Houston, *Inside Roman Libraries*, 39–86.

[17] These methods were collected by Katerina Oikonomopoulou from a collection of essays on condensing texts in (late) antiquity; see Katerina Oikonomopoulou, review of *Condensing Texts – Condensed Texts: Palingenesia, Bd 98*, ed. Marietta Horster and Christiane Reitz, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 38 (October 2012).

[18] Jacob, "Athenaeus," 104.

[19] Holt N. Parker, "Love's Body Anatomized: The Ancient Erotic Handbooks and the Rhetoric of Sexuality," in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. Amy Richlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 96. (Parker was imprisoned in 2016 for the possession of child pornography.) See also Zetzel, *Critics*, 4, on self-referentiality.

Nature of Animals, tells the story of the guard of a castle who observed a hoopoe nesting in a crack in the wall.[20] Upon seeing this, the guard covered the nest with mud. The bird fetched a certain herb and placed it on the mud, and the mud dissolved. The guard took the herb and found many treasures with it. The Palestinian midrash Leviticus Rabbah (fourth/fifth century) tells the story of Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta observing a hoopoe building a nest in a tree in his garden.[21] Upon witnessing this, the rabbi (Aram. for teacher, [land]lord) takes a plank and nails it on top of the nest. After finding out, the hoopoe flies away, fetches an herb, and places it on the nail, which breaks apart. Seeing this, Rabbi Shimon b. Halafta decides to conceal this herb lest someone use it to harm others. The Babylonian Talmud, again, tractate Gittin, recounts how King Solomon's servant tricked a hoopoe into fetching the mythical *shamir*, a stone with which to carve and break other stones, by placing a glass plank on the bird's nest.[22] In the anonymous *Syriac Book of Medicines*, the same motif is part of a cure: One who suffers from an eye disease is advised to blind the young of a dove and put it back into the nest. The patient is instructed to wait until the mother fetches a certain root to cure the eyes of her young. He should then go and find the same root.[23] We see how the plot has been adopted by several authors, each extracting from it the lesson of their interest: the guardian finds treasures with the herb; Rabbi Shimon b. Halafta hides it to prevent harm; King Solomon will use the "treasure" (*shamir*) to build the temple in Jerusalem; and the recipe book extracts from the story the practical aspects of how to obtain a healing root. With small twists, the excerpt, whichever it may have been, is turned into an original and seemingly new story. This was quite an efficient way to produce text. Then again, the challenge was to remain plausible in every detail when introducing a story into a completely new literary or even cultural context.

[20] Aelian, *De natura animalium* 1.3.26. Paradoxographical works are generally concerned with noteworthy, wondrous, and hence paradoxical phenomena.

[21] Lev. Rab. 22:4. The bird's name, *dukifat* (דוכיפת), is Hebrew. It appears in the Bible in the list of unclean birds in Lev. 11:19. The translation "hoopoe" is supported by the Septuagint and Vulgate; see Emil G. Hirsch and Immanuel M. Casanowicz, "Lapwing," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Isidore Singer (Saint Petersburg: Brokhaus and Efron, 1906), www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9636-lapwing. For the dating of Lev. Rab., see Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 9th ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011), 323.

[22] b. Gittin 68b.

[23] See Ernest A. W. Budge, *The Syriac Book of Medicines: Syrian Anatomy, Pathology and Therapeutics in the Early Middle Ages with Sections on Astrological and Native Medicine and Recipes, by an Anonymous Physician* (London, 1913; repr., Amsterdam, 1976), 2:662.

The genre of the Babylonian Talmud has so far been characterized from the point of view of modern genres as a "commentary plus," an "encyclopedia (minus)," and a "modest form of anthology." The obvious reason why the Talmud is associated with the commentary is its form of organization, which follows the textual sequence of the Mishnah, a Palestinian work from about the second century. The fact that the Talmud hardly ever does what the modern reader expects of a commentary, namely, explain the mishnaic text, gives reason for the "plus."[24] Comparisons of the Talmud with the encyclopedia were generated by the work's variegated nature, associative structure, and scientific interest.[25] The notion of anthology, again, was evoked on account of the Talmud's display of linguistically and stylistically different texts, which makes the work look like an eclectic collection.[26] In light of the fact that the anthology is a form of the miscellany, the proposed genres all fall into the realm of erudite works and the particular methods applied for their production. A closer look at the forms and makeup of these genres in the imperial period and late antiquity might, therefore, also shed new light on the Talmud's purpose and nature as a late antique work. Actually, the fact that none of the modern taxonomic straitjackets of "commentary," "encyclopedia," or "anthology" really fit the Talmud is a feature shared by its ancient cognates and is a decisive link to the literary production of its time.[27] In what follows,

[24] E.g., David C. Kraemer, *Reading the Rabbis: The Talmud as Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7; Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), viii; Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1–2; Eliezer Segal, "Anthological Dimensions of the Babylonian Talmud," *Prooftexts* 17, no. 1 (January 1997): 33–34.

[25] On the Talmud's encyclopedic traits, see Wout J. van Bekkum, "Sailing on the Sea of Talmud: The Encyclopaedic Code of Early Jewish Exegesis," in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1–4 July 1996*, ed. Peter Binkley (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Dagmar Börner-Klein, "Assoziation mit System: Der Talmud, die 'andere' Enzyklopädie," in *Archivprozesse: Die Kommunikation der Aufbewahrung*, ed. Hedwig Pompe and Leander Scholz, Mediologie 5 (Cologne: DuMont, 2002); and Lennart Lehmhaus, "*Listenwissenschaft* and the Encyclopedic Hermeneutics of Knowledge in Talmud and Midrash," in *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia*, ed. J. Cale Johnson (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015). En passant see also Samuel J. Kottek, "Concepts of Disease in the Talmud," *Korot* 9, nos. 1–2 (1985): 7.

[26] On the Talmud as anthology, see especially Segal, "Anthological Dimensions," esp. 34–37.

[27] I borrowed the terminology "taxonomic straitjacket" from Geoffrey Greatrex's introduction to *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*, ed. Geoffrey Greatrex and Hugh Elton (Ashgate, UK: Routledge, 2015), 4 (discussing the incommensurability of late antique and modern genres).

the forms that commentaries, encyclopedias, and miscellanies took in the imperial period and late antiquity will be discussed in more detail to generate a comprehensive understanding of their potential and aims. This understanding will then be compared to the form of the Talmud, and based on commonalities, it will be inferred what the work had to offer to readers/listeners and what the aims of its composers might have been.

THE COMMENTARY IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Much of the literary output of late antiquity revolves around exegesis and/or a text's transformation according to the personal understanding of another author.[28] One of the most obvious literary forms in which exegesis occurs is the commentary. This makes the commentary "the primary facet" or even "a metaphor of the literary system" of late antiquity, a time predominantly concerned with its antecedents' literature.[29] Commentaries as elaborative explanations of other texts can be found within every literary form, including stories (see Chapter 4). The commentary under discussion here is, more precisely, a text that follows the structure of another text in some way.

The foremost intellectual work of commentators was the fragmentation of their chosen base text into meaningful lemmas, or line references.[30] This operation may have been assisted in some cases by already-existing scholia, that is, lists of linguistically problematic instances in a text. In other cases, the crafting of such a list may have been the first step in the process of writing a commentary. Dissection of texts thus appears closely related to the grammarian and grammatical training, which focused on "the parts of speech and their correct inflection."[31] This training thereby provided future authors with literary tools and trained their eyes and ears for the dissection of language. A certain standardization in education resulted in authors applying the same grammatical and rhetorical

[28] See also Ilaria L. Ramelli, "Late Antiquity and the Transmission of Educational Ideals and Methods: The Western Empire," in *A Companion to Ancient Education*, ed. W. Martin Bloomer (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

[29] Marco Formisano, "Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity," *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 283.

[30] See Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 1–2.

[31] Zetzel, *Critics*, 15.

principles.[32] These left a characteristic imprint on the time's written output. Thus, as Marco Formisano noted, "It is just this ability to read a work analytically and decode it – be it Virgil, the Bible, or 'scientific' texts – that presents a characteristic of Late Antiquity."[33]

The ancient genre that actually meets the expectations of modern readers regarding the genre "commentary" as a straightforward clarification of a text are auxiliary lists, the "marginal notes (*paratithesthai*), clarifying notes (*scholia*)," or the slightly more expansive *scholia vetera*, with their indications of grammatical inconsistencies, rare and foreign words, and so on.[34] The more elaborate, exegetical form of the late antique commentary, which I will call the "erudite commentary" to distinguish it from said lists, departs from these linguistic and text-based concerns. Late antique commentators themselves distinguish "between the explication of words (*lexis*) and the explication of points of doctrine (*theōria*)."[35]

Erudite commentaries were not written in the margins or side columns of the text with which they were concerned. In fact, "not before the fifth century is there any sign of books being organized with wide enough margins to hold more than occasional notes."[36] Consequently, the text was not "physically tied" to its base text; this offered considerable freedom to the commentator, who could dwell on or skip certain passages, paraphrase or summarize, and cover a text selectively or continuously.[37] The erudite commentary was foremost a monographic and independent work, unrestricted in its own size or scope, with or without distinct links to the base text. These links could take the form of clear or

[32] Grammarians benefitted from priviledges from the first century onward, and publicly sponsored schools followed; see Noel Lenski, "Searching for Slave Teachers in Late Antiquity," in "Ποιμένι λαῶν: Studies in Honor of Robert J. Penella," ed. Cristiana Sogno, special issue, RET Supplément 7 (2019): 133–135.

[33] Formisano, "Aesthetic Paradigm," 283.

[34] Han Baltussen, "Philosophical Commentary," in *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, ed. Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018), 306. On *scholia vetera*, see Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 207.

[35] See Philippe Hoffmann, "What Was a Commentary in Late Antiquity? The Example of the Neoplatonic Commentators," in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Mary Louise Gill and Edward J. Watts (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2006), 616. Origen, for example, pointed out that "some problems cannot fit into a running commentary and would require specially dedicated treatises" (Marie-Pierre Bussières, "Biblical Commentary," in McGill and Watts, *Companion to Late Antique Literature*, 315, and see references there).

[36] Zetzel, *Critics*, 126.

[37] See Zetzel, *Critics*, 126–127; Baltussen, "Philosophical Commentary," 302–303.

embedded references to lines or words in the base text (lemmas), which connected the two texts and provided orientation for the reader.[38]

Contemporary scholarship still struggles to find the appropriate terminology with which to describe and explain the erudite commentary.[39] Across late antique disciplines they are described as something like "a jumping-off point to develop his [i.e., the philosopher's] own philosophy."[40] The matter becomes more lucid if the Greco-Roman curriculum for students who mastered basic grammar is considered: the *progymnasmata*. These "preliminary rhetorical exercises" prepared students for subsequent training with a rhetor.[41] As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, the *progymnasmata* are an indispensable point of reference for the analysis of late antique literature on any topic, since they provided the basic literary methods underlying all literary enterprises. These curricula describe the intellectual framework of authors. Generally, rhetorical training appears to have become increasingly widespread and standardized in late antiquity, and its standards have been observed in technical, juridical, monastic, and private texts, including commentaries.[42] Commentaries, by the very fact that they are concerned with another literary text, attest to their authors' completion of the *progymnasmata* stage.

One of the last exercises in this curriculum was inquiry (*thesis*), which is described by one author, Aelius Theon, as follows: "Thesis is a verbal inquiry admitting controversy without specifying any persons and circumstance" (*Progym.* 120).[43] Although Theon refers to the thesis as a verbal inquiry, "verbal" refers only to the purpose of the exercise, its final oral delivery: The speeches themselves were composed in writing. Extant orations and sermons by orators and church fathers testify that

[38] For examples, see Zetzel, *Critics*, 127.

[39] See, e.g., the collection of essays in Glenn W. Most, ed., *Commentaries–Kommentare*, Aporemata: Kritische Studien zur Philologiegeschichte 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999), and basically in most essays on the topic, e.g., Bussières, "Biblical Commentary," 313–314.

[40] Baltussen, "Philosophical Commentary," 301, regarding the commentaries written by the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (third century).

[41] More information on the *progymnasmata*, their influence, and their scope is provided in Chapter 4.

[42] See Marco Formisano, "Literature of Knowledge," in McGill and Watts, *Companion to Late Antique Literature*, 491–504; Charles N. Aull, "Legal Texts," in McGill and Watts, *Companion to Late Antique Literature*, 417–430; Lillian I. Larsen, "School Texts," in McGill and Watts, *Companion to Late Antique Literature*, 471–491; and Bussières, "Biblical Commentary."

[43] Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 55.

they were first written and only then memorized.[44] Indeed, as Theon specifies in the sequel, *thesis* is a means for every citizen to persuade any audience, not just the one in a law court. As examples he mentions the audience of an assembly or lecture.

The inquiry is generally introduced as an investigation into a topic that concerns a broader audience, as opposed to the argumentation of a juridical case. The topic can be theoretical, philosophical, practical, or political, but it should be raised by doubt, not by agreement, as would be the case with the exercise called *topos*.[45] Theon further distinguishes between the theoretical and the practical inquiry: The theoretical inquiry focuses on arguments alone, while the practical one may find support in the evidence from "famous men, poets and statesmen, and philosophers."[46] As theoretical examples, Theon's *progymnasmata* suggest topics such as "whether the gods provide for the world" and, for a practical one, "whether one should marry."[47]

Regarding the composition of such an inquiry, Theon suggests that the proem should consist of a saying, maxim, or *chreia* in support of the inquiry. The *chreia* was an important and fundamental stylistic device consisting of an action and a saying, or a speaker and a saying. Alternatively, the inquiry could also begin with praise or rebuke of a topic.[48] It is especially this suggestion – namely, that the *thesis* take its departure from the snippet of a preexisting literary text (i.e., a saying, maxim, or *chreia*) – that links it to the commentary and its lemmas. According to the procedure of the *thesis*, whatever had been written

[44] On the orations of the fourth-century Athenian orator Himerius, teacher of the bishops Basil (Caesarea) and Gregory of Nazianzus (Constantinople), see Robert J. Penella, *Man and the Word: The Orations of Himerius*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 43 (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007). On Themistius of fourth-century Constantinople, see Robert Penella, *The Private Orations of Themistius*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 29 (Berkley: University of California Press, 2000). Many of Libanius's orations are extant as well; see Raffaella Cribiore, *Libanius the Sophist: Rhetoric, Reality, and Religion in the Fourth Century*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); or Apuleius's (second century CE) Latin orations collected in his *Florida*.

[45] Hermogenes (25) distinguishes between political topics and those referring to physics, e.g., "whether the sky is spherical, whether there are many worlds, whether the sun is made of fire" (translated in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 87).

[46] *Progym.* 122. Translation follows Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 57.

[47] *Progym.* 121. Translation follows Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 56; for the Greek text on "Thesis," see Aelius Théon, *Progymnasmata*, ed. and trans. Michel Patillon with the assistance of Giancarlo Bolognesi, Collections des Universités de France (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1997), 82–94.

[48] See Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 55–56.

about the subject of the "snippet" in prior works was collected and juxtaposed. These excerpts were alternatively treated as arguments or evidence by famous philosophers, poets, and other authors, from which the orator distilled a conclusion. The training in *thesis* seems, therefore, to have been the decisive device in the development of the erudite commentary, in that doubtful terms or sentences were treated as subjects of an inquiry.

Although this was neither the origin nor necessarily the purpose of this exercise, *thesis* trained students to understand that they could make a case for a certain argument if they found enough text witnesses in its support. The original basis of this exercise in the court is still obvious: it is a text-based dry run for a court hearing. Applying the same method to their inquiry into the subject matter of a lemma, commentators searched for support in other texts according to availability and preference. As authors provided a full-blown *thesis* for their chosen lemmas, it follows naturally that "commentaries often deployed a huge documentation, and we know that ... commentaries abound with quotations and paraphrases of philosophers."[49] In the middle of all these arguments, then, the author-composer of a commentary could choose his role, assuming, for example, the role of the trenchant advocate, in which case the a commentary took a polemical tone in favor of certain opinions. Or he could take the role of the defender and turn the commentary into an apology. Or he could take the role of the neutral judge, weighing the arguments against one another in pursuit of truth. These roles could vary from lemma to lemma or from one work to the next.

The different roles assumed by commentary-composers are well observed and discussed in a Neoplatonic commentary from the late sixth century ascribed to a – perhaps fictional – Elias.[50] This Elias writes that the exegete "must not sympathize with a philosophical school, as it happened to Iamblichus, who out of sympathy for Plato is condescending in his attitude to Aristotle and will not contradict Plato in regard to the theory of ideas. He must not be hostile to a philosophical school like Alexander [of Aphorisia was]."[51] Rather, as Elias noted beforehand, the exegete needs to be like a judge, that is, in pursuit of truth:

[49] Hoffmann, "What Was a Commentary?," 616.
[50] See Baltussen, "Philosophical Commentary," 308.
[51] Translated by Christian Wildberg, "Philosophy in the Age of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 327, cited in Baltussen, "Philosophical Commentary," 308.

> The commentator should be both commentator (*exēgētēs*) and scholar (*epistēmōn*) at the same time. It is the task of the commentator to unravel obscurities in the text; it is the task of the scholar to judge what is true and what is false, or what is sterile and what is productive .... He must not force the text at all costs and say that the ancient author whom he is expounding is correct in every respect; instead he must repeat to himself at all times "the author is a dear friend, but so also is the truth, and when both stand before me the truth is the better friend." (Elias, *Cat.* 122–123)[52]

Erudite commentaries offer inquiries into the selected lemmas of a certain text, provide an assessment of what has already been said about this topic, and provide fair judgement. Next to truth or fairness, an inquiry's goal can also be the harmonization of different standpoints, as increasingly became the case in Neoplatonic commentaries. Harmonization of arguments is also a distinct feature of inquiries in the Babylonian Talmud, in contrast to those in the Palestinian Talmud.[53] I would therefore suggest that the erudite commentary be seen not primarily as an antiquarian work that seeks to preserve a society's intellectual heritage and keeps it updated by way of new arrangement – what is sometimes referred to as the "actualization of a text" – but, rather, as an intellectual endeavor in its own right. This endeavor consisted of passing judgement on earlier opinions. The purpose of the commentary might even have been identical with the purpose of the *thesis*, in that its entries were read to an audience. This would have affected the selection and weighing of arguments by the composers and influenced the style.

Assembling and culling different opinions, astute maxims, sharp replies, and general information relating to a certain lemma across the private or public library marks the production of an erudite commentary. For a long time, this procedure has been reduced by scholars to epitomizing/excerpting and frugal compiling. The method was criticized as uncreative and deficient in comparison to the ancient and seemingly more original texts from which the excerpts were taken. More recent scholarship has come to acknowledge and even praise the creative potential of epitomizing and compiling, and to appreciate the sophisticated and aesthetic use of excerpts, which are sometimes only as long as a pointed remark or a poetic line.[54] Indeed, "the very act of

[52] Translated by Wildberg, "Philosophy in the Age of Justinian," 327, cited in Baltussen, "Philosophical Commentary," 308.

[53] See Daniel Boyarin, "Dialectic and Divination in the Talmud," in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[54] See Formisano, "Aesthetic Paradigm."

selection can be a powerful instrument for innovation; juxtaposition and recombination of discrete passages in new contexts and combinations can radically alter their original meaning."[55] Rather than as a compilation of texts, the treatment of excerpts in late antiquity may more accurately be described as the orchestration of different voices. This orchestration could be achieved in various ways, such as the explanation of one excerpt with another, the construction of entirely new texts out of bits and pieces of others (e.g., the *cento*), the integration of one or several excerpts into the deliberations of an author, the exchange of a dialogue in one excerpt with a quote from another, and so on.[56]

These compilatory methods do not have emic designations, apart from the mere *excerpere*, and scholars have struggled to name both the practice and the practitioner accurately. The terms used include "antiquarian," "epitomizer," "compiler," "redactor," "collector," "anthologist," "editor," and "composer." Some of these terms are unfortunate in that they narrow down the actual intellectual effort of authors working with excerpts by highlighting a single activity of what was a complex process of anthologizing, epitomizing, collecting, storing, arranging, perhaps further dissecting, and editing. In the end, "composer" may be the most all-encompassing title for an author working with excerpts. It will, therefore, be used throughout this book to refer to an author who produced a text by applying these methods.

The use of excerpts is challenging in many ways, depending on what a composer wants to achieve. The mediation of unrelated sources requires creativity and ingenuity, as well as a clear idea of one's own stance on the topic, contribution, or specific argument. Writing by means of excerpts is demanding, not least because composers must work with "a fund of completed compositions of thought, compositions that have taken shape without attention to the need of the compilers."[57]

[55] David Stern, introduction to *The Anthology in Jewish Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7.

[56] On the Virgilian *cento*, see Formisano, "Aesthetic Paradigm," 283–284; on the *cento* tradition in Byzantium, see Herbert Hunger, "Profandichtung," in *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, ed. Herbert Hunger, Byzantinisches Handbuch 5.2 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1978), 98–107.

[57] Jacob Neusner, "The Talmuds of the Land of Israel and of Babylonia," in *The Generative Premises of Rabbinic Literature: The Judaism behind the Texts*, *SFSHJ* 101 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994), 5:10.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA AND THE MISCELLANY IN THE IMPERIAL PERIOD AND LATE ANTIQUITY

Like the commentary, the late antique encyclopedia produces a form of a *thesis* but on a topic unrelated to another text and not necessarily with the same argumentative aspirations. The organization of an encyclopedic work is more demanding than that of a commentary, which is organized around a text. The intellectual activity of composers of encyclopedic works starts before they even begin to collect relevant information since they need to outline and circumscribe the topics they want to cover. Closely related to the encyclopedia, but without obvious structure, is the miscellany, in which variegated "things worth knowing" are collated and organized associatively. It can be composed at any given time from someone's *collectanea*.

Designing a structure of organization for a specific set of information was (and still is) a major intellectual challenge. Because of that difficulty, plausible structures for encyclopedic works were mimicked and adapted by other composers for their own project. Examples are arrangement according to the seven liberal arts (grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy); peoples; geography; natural substances; medical herbs; the alphabet; or the map of the body, head to foot.[58]

Yet even miscellanies are often not exactly without structure. Rather, the structure falls outside of the just-mentioned arrangements and may address various unrelated topics, such as "women," "grammar," and "wine," categories that have emerged through sorting and association. Interestingly, authors of miscellanies repeatedly emphasize the unstructured nature of their work, priding themselves on the work's random and variegated "poikilographic" nature.[59] In his prologue to his *Attic Nights*, for example, Aulus Gellius writes:

[58] The structure according to the free arts is found in Varro's *Disciplinarum Libri IX* (first century CE) and Celsus (first century BCE/CE). It was subsequently also adapted by Martianus Capella for his *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (fifth century CE). Polyaenus's *Strategemata*, a compilation of military strategies (second century CE), was structured according to peoples. Rutilius T. A. Palladius's work on agriculture, *De re rustica* (fourth/fifth century CE), follows the months of the year. Apuleius's *Herbarius* (fourth century CE) was structured according to medical herbs. The anonymous *Medicina Plinii* (third century CE) proceeds head to foot and then to the whole body. For authors who ordered according to topographical or hodographical principles, see Klaus Geus and Colin Guthrie King, "Paradoxography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, ed. Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 438.

[59] Another example is Clement of Alexandria's *Stromates*, the variegated (*poikilōs*) nature of which he points out repeatedly. Despite this claim, the work seems quite structured; see Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 268–269.

> But in the arrangement of my material I have adopted the same haphazard order that I had previously followed in collecting it. For whenever I had taken in hand any Greek or Latin book, or had heard anything worth remembering, I used to jot down whatever took my fancy, of any and every kind, without any definite plan or order; and such notes I would lay away as an aid to my memory, like a kind of literary storehouse, so that when the need arose of a word or a subject which I chanced for the moment to have forgotten, and the books from which I had taken it were not at hand, I could readily find and produce it. (Praef., sec. 2 [Rolfe, LCL])

The declared goal of Gellius as outlined in his previous paragraph (sec. 1) is to provide a work with which his children could busy themselves in order to delight their hearts, a work that would turn their reading into "recreation" (*remissio*). A structure according to topics could not help him reach this goal as well as could a varied one, according to Gellius's pedagogical reasoning. Apparently, he wants to play with the tension and surprise prompted in the reader who does not know what is to follow. Monotony is thereby avoided, as is Gellius's children's loss of interest. This aim stands somewhat in contrast to the other one expressed in this same passage, namely, that the work should serve as an aide-mémoire. To provide an orientation aid in his apparently accidentally organized work, Gellius therefore enhanced each chapter with a very brief summary of its content.

Aelian, who wrote the poikilographic miscellany *On the Nature of Animals*, similarly worried about people's interest in the topic. The reason for his concern was the narrow outlook of his work, which focused only on animals: "For not all things give pleasure to all men, nor do all men consider all subjects worthy of study" (Prologue [Scholfield, LCL]). Conversely, it can be deduced that a mixture of "all things" would attract more readers. The recipe for a bestseller in the imperial period was apparently variegated content, even without discernible structure: Gellius knew the titles of thirty other such miscellanies.[60]

As the examples of *Attic Nights* and *Nature of Animals* show, there were different types of miscellanies: those focusing on a specific topic, such as animals, anecdotes, or paradoxes, and those interested in all sorts of things.[61] On these grounds, the distinction between encyclopedia and miscellany becomes difficult. It seems possible, however, to differentiate between encyclopedic works with an overriding topic, with or without a subsequent distinct arrangement by subtopic, and miscellanies,

[60] These titles, which will be considered in more detail in the next chapter, point to overt *poikilia*: "Miscellaneous Queries," "Incidentals," or "Discoveries."

[61] For examples of paradoxographies, see Geus and King, "Paradoxography."

whose topical range is unrestricted. Although certain chapters or books of miscellanies may be arranged around a theme – wine, for example – the material often flows associatively from one topic to the next, from wine as drink to wine as medicine, from stories involving wine to toasts, blessings, mysteries, and festivals relating to wine.[62] The starkest contrast between the modern encyclopedia and the imperial period and late antique one is that the latter is confined to a topic, to a certain aspect of knowledge, while the modern encyclopedia is expected to say something about everything. This all-encompassing approach to knowledge is rather characteristic of the imperial period and late antique miscellany.

Although the encyclopedia and the miscellany both offered memorable knowledge, the usefulness of such a document as a reference work was limited. William Johnson observed that "The bookroll's lack of structural devices that might assist in reference consultation mirrors the ancient reader's apparent indifference to the use of books for random retrieval of information." He adds, "That does not mean that reading was not done for personal profit (such as to increase one's knowledge or to gain information), but rather that the reader's attitude toward what the text represents is subtly different."[63] Compared to the use of a library for reference, comparatively concise works such as Pliny's *Natural History* in thirty-seven books, or Macrobius's even briefer *Saturnalia* in seven books, were much easier to handle, a claim both authors actually make in their preface.[64] Such practical considerations highlight the importance and necessity of taking notes and excerpting relevant information onto a more convenient and confined surface while reading. Excerpting as the process of copying text passages on a wooden tablet was, then, a practice that somewhat naturally accompanied purposeful reading and not just a fancy habit of prospective authors of erudite works.

In addition to being of practical utility, books were a luxury and served as a display of knowledge and a source of entertainment.[65] Although today we may not necessarily associate the commentary or the encyclopedia with leisure or a delightful reading experience, the ancients certainly did. The wealthy had educated servants read even technical treatises to their guests over a meal or enjoyed having someone read to them as

[62] E.g., *The Learned Banqueters* 1.26ff.
[63] William A. Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity," *American Journal of Philology* 121, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 616.
[64] Macrobius, *Sat.* praef. 2; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* praef. 33.
[65] See also Peregrine Horden, "Prefatory Note: The Uses of Medical Manuscripts," in *Medical Books in the Byzantine World*, ed. Barbara Zipser (Bologna: Eikasmos Online II, 2013).

recreation.[66] Pliny the Elder, for instance, missed no occasion to have things read to him and often took notes *en route* and even in the bath.[67]

Especially casual or even unrecognizable structures were acknowledged to be a very entertaining form of arrangement, and so was diversified content, as poikilographic authors emphasized. Engaging content was indeed indispensable if authors wanted people to read their whole work. If a work did not promise to be of benefit to the reader – a recurring issue in the prefaces, the "blurb" written by the authors themselves – and if it did not keep this promise in its first few lines, it was likely to be put aside. The Roman poet Martial (first century CE) even appended epigrams of merely two lines' length with a title in order not to tire and bore the reader and to facilitate their decision making as to what they wanted to read (*Epigrams* 14.2).

Another engaging way to combine a wealth of issues with an entertaining *and* educational structure was to stage a symposium. This type of literature arranges excerpts into fictive conversations and speeches held at a festive banquet, thereby mimicking a symposium. The resulting miscellany should, however, not be confused with literature written *for* the symposium, that is, to entertain its guests.[68] To clarify this issue, it was suggested that the adjective "sympotic" be used "to refer to the actual cultural institution, which is the symposium, and 'symposiac' to refer to the literary genre, which is the symposium."[69] This convention will be adopted in the subsequent discussion of symposiac literature.

Symposiac literature has a long tradition, going back to Plato's literary *Symposium* (fourth century BCE), as Macrobius notes in the preface

[66] See Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading," 616–618. On the anticipated entertaining aspect of his work, see Gellius's prologue to *Attic Nights*, where he states, "Other more entertaining writings may be found, in order that like recreation might be provided for my children, when they should have respite from business affairs and could unbend and divert their minds" (translated in Eleni Bozia, *Lucian and His Roman Voices: Cultural Exchanges and Conflicts in the Late Roman Empire*, Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies 19 [New York: Routledge, 2015], 62). Bozia stresses the comparative structure of the phrase, which implies that Gellius sees his work as entertaining in relation to that of others.

[67] See Albrecht Locher and Rolf C. A. Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia* des älteren Plinius und die Schrifttäfelchen von Vindolanda," in *Lebendige Altertumswissenschaft: Festschrift für Hermann Vetters*, ed. Manfred Kandler (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1985), 141.

[68] On the symposium and its literature, see the concise discussion in Tim Whitmarsh, *Ancient Greek Literature*, Cultural History of Literature Series (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004), 52–67, and Joel C. Relihan, "Rethinking the History of the Literary Symposium," *Illinois Classical Studies* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1992).

[69] Relihan, "Rethinking the History of the Literary Symposium," 213.

to his own symposiac work.[70] Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales* (first/second century CE) or Lucian's *Symposium* (second century CE) take on Plato's model. These works engage several guests in a debate over different topics. The speeches of these banqueters are sharp and interlocking models of how to use rhetoric for social display. Plutarch and Lucian use parody, allusion, and exaggerated paraphrase but rarely actual excerpts from other authors. More interesting for the present argument, therefore, are those authors who created symposia out of their miscellaneous collections of excerpts. The ones whose works have come down to us are Athenaeus with his *The Learned Banqueters* (*Deipnosophistiai*; late second/early third century) and Macrobius with his *Saturnalia* (early fifth century). The banquet designed by Athenaeus focuses on topics related to food and banqueting. Within this framework, his literary guests discuss whatever has been said in prior Greek works about these issues. For this purpose, Athenaeus puts "over 1000 authors and over 10,000 lines of verse, many of them known from no other source," in the mouths of fictive symposiasts.[71] As Christian Jacob observed, "This compilation is at the same time the collecting pool of previous knowledge, and a starting point for multiple new traditions: the Deipnosophistae is a perfect case-study of devices which provide their readers with a digest of a wide range of literary and scholarly data, that could then be used and circulated for its own sake."[72]

Athenaeus's symposiac discourses start out with Homeric heroes and wine, vegetables and meat (books 1–3), before turning to frugality (4), meals in history, ships, and philosophers (5), drunkenness (10), drinking vessels (11), and the pleasures of love (12) or (female) beauty (13), just to give an impression of the range of themes.[73] All of these topics relate to the symposium while, at the same time, being broad enough to encompass all kinds of technical information, such as medicine, astronomy/astrology, geometry, tactics, and painting. A story included in *The Learned Banqueters*, attributed to a certain Nicomachus and his work *Eileithuia*, nicely illustrates how all these subjects were thought to relate to food and could improve the experience of dining. The story stages a

[70] Xenophon wrote a work by the same title.
[71] Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters* (Olson LCL, ix).
[72] Jacob, "Athenaeus," 86–87.
[73] The summaries follow Jean-Nicolas Corvisier, "Athenaeus, Medicine and Demography," in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. David Braund and John Wilkins (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 493. A similar range of topics is discernible in Julius Africanus's miscellany *Embroidered* (*Kestoi*) from the early third century.

dialogue between the host of a banquet and the cook he hired for this occasion. The cook (A) is actually blaming his temporary master (B) for not having inquired enough about his abilities in advance and is now describing his prowess. He explains what makes a good cook by taking himself as the example:

A. A fully-trained cook's a different matter. You'd need to master a large number of quite significant arts; and someone who wants to learn them the right way can't take them on immediately. First you have … to take up painting these things …; and before the Art of cooking you have to master others, some of which it would be better to understand before … talking … to me, like astrology, geometry, and medicine. Because that's how you'll understand the capacities and tricks to handling the fish—you'll pay attention to the time of year, when each type is out of season and when it's in. Since there are huge differences in how they taste: sometimes a bogue's better than a tuna.

B. Granted. But what use do you have for geometry?

A. We set up the kitchen-area as a sphere; dividing it into sections and assigning each spot the type of job that matches it in the most advantageous way—this all comes from there.

B. Hey; I'm convinced, even if you don't tell me the rest.

A. As for medicine: Some foods produce gas or indigestion, or punish a person instead of nourishing him, and anyone who eats what's wrong for him becomes cranky or out of control. Medicine's where you'd find antidotes for this kind of food. My training's where I get this from; what I do involves insight and a sense of proportion. As for tactics: The question is where everything's going to be put; and counting the crowd is part of a cook's job. (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 7.290d–291a [Olson, LCL])

The passage not only shows how and why a surprising amount of knowledge can be related to food and cooking but also in what ways broad poikilographic knowledge is useful. The ideal of such vast learning is already found in the writings of the first-century BCE architect Vitruvius, who was of the opinion that "the architect must have some knowledge of writing, draftsmanship, geometry, arithmetic, history, philosophy, physiology, music, medicine, law and astronomy."[74] This is in addition to the fact that the would-be architect must also possess knowledge of the theoretical as well as practical aspects of his field.

There are, however, bodies of knowledge that even Athenaeus could not relate to food. In these cases, the symposium, because of its increasingly

[74] Daniel Harris-McCoy, "Making and Defending Claims to Authority in Vitruvius' *De architectura*," in *Authority and Expertise in Ancient Scientific Culture*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 110.

drunken guests, and especially the uncontrollable nature of discourse, justifies all sorts of digressions. Indeed, digression and faulty speech, possibly with subsequent rebuke, only adds to the vivid nature of the ongoing literary discourse. Here is a passage from book 15, just to give an impression of the realistic nature of the exchange Athenaeus managed to craft between his guests in spite of their talking mostly in citations (qua excerpts):

> After Democritus completed these remarks, Ulpian glanced at Cynulcus and said: "What a philosopher the gods forced me to share a house with!
>
> To quote the Phantom of the comic poet Theognetus (fragment 1.6–10): ....
>
> Where did you get this 'chorus of pipers [surbênes]'? What authority that deserves mention refers to a musical group of this sort?"
>
> Cynulcus replied: "I will offer you no answer, sir, until you pay me the appropriate amount. For I do not pick out the thorny passages from my books when I read, as you do; I look instead for those that are most useful and worth hearing."
>
> This upset Ulpian, and he shouted out the passage from Alexis's Sleep (fragment 243): "…"! (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 15.671b–d [Olson, LCL])

The symposiac dialogues created by Macrobius are similarly encompassing in their outlook. His work spans a three-day-long symposium held on the occasion of the Roman feast called Saturnalia. Since the work's purpose is to introduce Macrobius's son to the art of banqueting, it is organized around the three days of the festival, dividing up each day into a morning, afternoon, and evening session with distinct topics for discussion. Although the Neoplatonist Macrobius does not allow his guests to behave in the same libertine manner as Athenaeus's symposiasts, there is still plenty of room for digression into technical matters, but also for jokes and funny anecdotes.[75] This somewhat natural mix of topics is the primary benefit of presenting the material as a conversation. The dialogue structure further has the advantage of mirroring what the author himself considers to be the appropriate flow of conversation in gatherings of educated men: "At a banquet the conversations should be as pleasurably beguiling as they are morally unimpeachable; the morning's discussion, on the other hand, will be more vigorous, as befits men both learned and very highly distinguished" (*Sat.* 1.4 [Kaster, LCL]).

The *Saturnalia* relies heavily on the material of Gellius's *Attic Nights*. By arranging the material in the form of conversations, Macrobius adds to the engaging factor of the content, thereby increasing the pedagogical

[75] On the Neoplatonic program of Macrobius's work, see Paula Olmos, "Two Literary Encyclopaedias from Late Antiquity," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* Part A 43, no. 2 (June 2012): 285 and 285n6.

value of the work.[76] Moreover, Macrobius's work does not only offer the content for a sophisticated conversation but also a rhetorical model for imitation.

THE TALMUD: A RARE CASE OF A COMMENTARY ON AN ENCYCLOPEDIA?

The structure, style, content, and scope of the talmudic text resembles in many ways the erudite genres discussed above. According to this assessment, the Talmud is broad in its outlook like a miscellany, presents its material as a conversation like a symposiac text, and follows the content of the Mishnah, a second-century, late Hebrew work from Roman Palestine, like a commentary.[77] The Talmud's distinct units are introduced by consecutive but select lemmas derived from the Mishnah. Since the Mishnah is organized by topic, the Talmud inherited that encyclopedic structure. It is therefore necessary to briefly discuss the genre of the Mishnah before returning to the Talmud.

The Mishnah is basically a collection of *sententiae* expounding the laws of the Torah by means of cases, each of which required an appropriate ruling, adages, and reminiscences of teachers. In order to give an impression of the texture of the Mishnah, a randomly chosen example will suffice to highlight its characteristic features. The main body of the text is a running exposition of laws and cases, with interwoven citations of distinct opinions on the matter by earlier teachers:

> On the three days preceding the festivals of gentiles, it is forbidden to engage in business transactions with them, to lend to them or to borrow from them, to lend or borrow any money from them, to repay debt, or receive payment from them. Rabbi Judah says: "We should take repayment from them, since this restricts them financially." But they said to him: "Although it restricts them for now, it will cause them joy afterwards."

[76] Olmos, "Two Literary Encyclopaedias," 286.

[77] Whether or not the Mishnah was available to Babylonian rabbinic sages as a book or as a memorized "text" as a – more or less fixed – sequence of transmitted knowledge is a matter of debate. See Yaakov Sussman, "The Oral Torah in the Literal Sense: The Power of the Tail of a Yod" [in Hebrew], in *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, ed. Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005); and Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission of Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.–IV Century C.E.*, *TSJTSA* 18 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 87

Rabbi Ishmael says: "On the three preceding days [of the festival] and the three following days it is forbidden." But the sages say: "It is only forbidden before their festivities; afterwards it is permitted."

These are the festivals of the gentiles: Kalenda, Saturnalia, Kratesis, the anniversary of accession to the throne, and birthdays and anniversaries of deaths, according to Rabbi Meir. (m. Avod. Zar. 1:1–3a)[78]

This passage is taken from tractate Avodah Zarah, which is included in the order Neziqin. The Mishnah encompasses sixty-three thematically distinct tractates grouped into the following six orders: Seeds (agricultural matters), Festivals, Women (matters of marriage and divorce), Damages (civil and criminal law), Holy Things (temple matters), and Purities (matters of ritual purity and impurity).[79] This highly ordered structure is possible because the material that the Mishnah displays is very focused. Indeed, there is hardly any digression from the main topic and its implications for court matters or everyday life. In that the text avoids the sort of digressions often observed in both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, the Mishnah should be classified as an encyclopedic work due to its narrow focus. Indeed, the six orders seem to adopt the structuring principle of *ordo rerum*, the order of things, which was in differing variations also used by Cato, Columella, Pliny the Elder, and Celsus, as opposed to the *ordo atrium*, for example, the order according to the seven liberal arts.[80]

Since the Mishnah, just like the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, did not come down to us with a sort of a "preface" (whether it never existed or was lost we will probably never know), we know next to nothing about its original purpose, its addressees, the choice of material, or how the structure came into being.[81] It has been suggested that the individual rulings and cases originated in the household as the most important

[78] Unless noted otherwise, the translations are mine.

[79] The summaries of the contents of the orders follow van Bekkum, "Sailing on the Sea of Talmud," 207.

[80] Christel Meier, "Organisation of Knowledge and Encyclopaedic *Ordo*: Functions and Purposes of a Universal Literary Genre," in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1–4 July 1996*, ed. Peter Binkley (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 105–107.

[81] For concise accounts of the events that might have led to the compilation of the Mishnah (with different foci), see Michael Satlow, *How the Bible Became Holy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 262–269, and Hayim Lapin, "The Origins and Development of the Rabbinic Movement in the Land of Israel," in *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz, vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 206–215.

economic unit of the time, in the Sanhedrin (the Jewish court under Roman rule), or in theoretical deliberations in teacher–student settings.[82]

The stringent nature of the Mishnah seems to indicate that it is the result of a condensation of traditions. This notion is supported by another extant text, the Tosefta (lit., "addition"), which originated at approximately the same time and in the same place as the Mishnah. The Tosefta is organized around the same orders as the Mishnah but with more ancillary material.[83] The condensation of texts would match the contemporary trend toward brevity in the Roman Empire, which affected every realm, including juridical sentences.[84]

Although the Mishnah makes use of sayings, that is, attributed maxims called *chreia* in Greek grammatical language, the work is not arranged to give the impression of a vivid debate as observed above for the symposiac works and, as will be discussed later, is also characteristic for the Babylonian Talmud. The one direct reply in the above example, in which "the sages" respond to Rabbi Ishmael's ruling, is a double *chreia*, a figure of speech, "in which one line is cited by one πρόσωπον [character], the second by another."[85] The Mishnah does not create a

[82] See Stephen G. Wald, "Mishnah," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Wald Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2006); Alexei M. Sivertsev, *Households, Sects, and the Origins of Rabbinic Judaism*, *JSJSup* 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 211–218; Catherine Hezser, "Mobility, Flexibility, and Diasporization of Palestinian Judaism after 70 CE," in *Let the Wise Listen and Add to their Learning (Prov 1:5): Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday*, ed. Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer, Studia Judaica 90 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 211–214. On legal fictions in Tannaitic and post-Tannaitic works, see Leib Moscovitz, *Talmudic Reasoning: From Casuistics to Conceptualization*, *TSAJ* 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 163–199, and see Sivertsev, *Households*, 255. All these settings are basically connected to the position of the paterfamilias.

[83] The relationship between the two works is still unclear; see the summary in Stemberger, *Einleitung*, 170–173. Michael Sperling's computerized analysis of the texts of the Mishnah and Tosefta, however, has shown that the long-held assumption that the Tosefta was three to four times larger than the Mishnah, and therefore contained additional material, is wrong. The Tosefta is only about one-and-a-half times the size of the Mishnah and contains additional material where the Mishnah has not much to say. Michael Sperling, "Myth of the Gargantuan Tosefta" (paper presented at Association for Jewish Studies 50th Annual Conference, Boston, MA, 2018).

[84] Stephan Dusil, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter, "Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter," in *Exzerpieren – Kompilieren – Tradieren: Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, ed. Stephan Dusil, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 18–20. The earliest examples they could find date back to the end of the third century.

[85] Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil, eds. and trans., *Classroom Exercises*, vol. 2 of *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, *WGRW* 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 351.

dialogue between such figures of speech but contextualizes and frames fixed maxims and *chreia*.

All in all, the Mishnah may perhaps best be classified as a Jewish *oeconomica*, intended to guide the paterfamilias in his daily business, with all of its juridical and other far-reaching decisions, such as, for example, which festivals to observe and how to treat his Jewish and gentile servants in accordance with the Torah.[86] The Mishnah may be a cultural and ideological translation of the issues addressed in the three books of *Oeconomica* attributed to Aristotle.

Strikingly, however, none of the above-mentioned Greco-Roman encyclopedias, and certainly no miscellany, are known to have been the subject of a commentary, or, somewhat consequentially, to have become canonized. Although the information provided by encyclopedias was widely excerpted and reused, nobody bothered to write a commentary on an encyclopedia, a practice that would place this particular encyclopedia into some sort of canonized status.[87] Jason König and Greg Woolf assume that this was because people could easily create their own encyclopedia, which was easier than writing a commentary on someone else's.[88]

As discussed above, the commentary in the imperial period needs to be treated as part of a continuum between the scholion, the straightforward explanation of difficult terms, and the erudite commentary that provides inquiries into subjects raised by the base text. Unsurprisingly, the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds contain aspects of both types of commentaries. Like the words addressed by a scholion, the Talmuds often chose difficult, technical or foreign mishnaic terms as their lemma, or unclear and doubtful legal cases in need of explanation.[89] Yet neither Talmud contends with marginal comments on these issues, as a scholion would. Rather, like other erudite commentaries, they present an extensive inquiry into the subject of the lemma, using the mishnaic

[86] On the *oeconomica* as domestic encyclopedia, see Meier, "Organisation of Knowledge," 124–125, and references there. Most of the extant works of that genre, however, date to medieval times.

[87] E.g., Columella drew from Cato and Varro; Pliny's material was successfully condensed and enriched in Solinus's *Collectanea rerum mirabilium* (also known as *Polyhistor*); Cato's material was used and rearranged by Oribasius; and so on.

[88] See Jason König and Greg Woolf, "Encyclopaedism in the Roman Empire," in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 63.

[89] See Baruch M. Bokser, *Samuel's Commentary on the Mishnah: Its Nature, Forms and Content*, Part One; *Mishnayot in the Order of Zera'im*, *SJLA* 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 178–186 and 235.

text as an index.[90] Related issues, and not just the lemma alone, are associated and spread out. Indeed, often only the statements following immediately upon the mishnaic lemma relate directly to it. The rest of the commentary that follows the lemma, although following a distinct plan, often seems far-fetched.

To illustrate the case, I will take the beginning of a commentary in the Babylonian Talmud to a mishnaic lemma. The example quite typically shows how the commentary subtly bends away from the lemma toward an inquiry into two other subjects. This particular commentary comes from tractate Gittin, which deals with bills of divorce. The whole passage ("Mishnah") from which the lemma is taken reads as follows: "One who is seized by *qordiaqos* and says: 'Write a *get* [divorce document] for my wife!' did not truly say anything. If someone says: 'Write a *get* for my wife!' and is then seized by *qordiaqos* and says: 'Do not write a *get* for my wife!' – his last words mean nothing" (m. Git. 7:1, author's translation). The problematic word that will serve as the lemma is *qordiaqos*, a Greek or Latin loanword, and the Talmud raises it in a question, citing only this word from the Mishnah:

> What is *qordiaqos*?
> Samuel said: "The one who is bitten by new wine from the wine press."
> [If this is so, then] let the Mishnah state: "the one who was overcome by new wine."
>
> [No, rather,] this is what it teaches us: the name of the spirit [who seized the man] is Qordiaqos.
> From this [statement] it can be inferred [that this knowledge serves for writing] an amulet.
>
> What is his [the man affected with *qordiaqos*] cure?
> Red meat on coals and diluted wine.
>
> Abaye said: "Mother told me: For the sun[stroke?] of one day: a pitcher of water; for that of two days: bloodletting; for the one that lasts three days: red meat on coals and diluted wine." (b. Git. 67b)

Although *qordiaqos* is immediately explained, in the manner of a scholion, as the condition of someone being drunk from drinking too much new wine, the explanation is refuted. It is argued that if *qordiaqos* simply referred to this condition, then the Mishnah would have said so instead of using a cryptic term. Thereupon another explanation infers that the

[90] See Alexander Samely, "Educational Features in Ancient Jewish Literature: An Overview of Unknowns," in *Jewish Education from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Philip S. Alexander*, ed. George J. Brooke and Renate Smithuis (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 180–181.

importance of the mishnaic formulation lies in the very term it uses: it is the name of a spirit. Another question then asks about the cure that the person afflicted with *qordiaqos* obviously needs, whether he or she is drunk or seized by a spirit. The contents of the cure lead, by way of association, to a medical recipe against sunstroke that lasts for three days, whose cure is exactly the same. The cure's two ingredients, meat and wine, will continue to dominate the subsequent commentary, running over nearly seven folia. Starting from *qordiaqos*, the commentary will finally provide a full inquiry in the manner described above into the medical properties of wine and meat (see Chapter 3).

This short passage already shows how the talmudic text was created out of small but significant units that were associatively strung together and supplemented, when necessary, with a comment or question. These units mostly have the form of sayings, maxims, reminiscences, stories, or even medical recipes. The structural makeup of the Talmud does therefore not seem to differ much from works such as *The Learned Banqueters* or the *Saturnalia*, which arrange excerpts into conversations. As in the case of these other works, individual excerpts remain generally identifiable and are often distinctly different in style or even language (Hebrew or Aramaic), their careful arrangement and the necessary mediation pointing to a meticulous craftsmanship in the art of compilation. These preliminary observations are suggestive of a shared approach to text production and invite further comparison.

The Talmud's dissolute nature suggests that the work was not meant as a *brevarium* of Babylonian rabbinic teaching and learning. Rather, the purpose seems to have been the organization of rabbinic intellectual output around the Mishnah. Judging from the result, this learning was rather holistic, a poikilographic mix of topics typical for the time. Similar to the cook in the work of Athenaeus, for example, the Talmud encourages broad knowledge not only with its very content and scope but also through the words of its protagonists, as in the following excerpt in tractate Shabbat:

> Rav Huna said to his son Rabba: "Why are you not to be found in front of Rav Hisda, whose teaching is sharp?"
>
> He said to him: "Why should I go to him? If I go to him, he teaches me worldly matters.[91] He told me: 'One who goes to the toilet should not sit down immediately and should not extend, since the large intestine is placed on three teeth. Maybe [if one sits down immediately or overly extends his stay] the large intestine may become dislocated, and he would be endangered.'"

[91] מילי דעלמא.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009297349 Published online by Cambridge University Press

He said to him: "He cares for people's lives and you call this 'worldly matters?!' All the more should you go before him!" (b. Shabb. 82a)

Clearly, the Talmud as a whole, and its excerpts, expresses the opinion that all knowledge somehow relates to Torah and the intent of the creator. This outlook concurs especially with that of miscellanies. And with two of the above discussed miscellanies, with Athenaeus's *The Learned Banqueters* and Macrobius's *Saturnalia*, the Talmud shares yet another feature: the dialectic structure.

THE TALMUD: A SYMPOSIAC COMMENTARY?

The text of the Mishnah is comprised of an editorial voice that introduces cases and laws, as well as dicta attributed to named individuals or schools, such as the "house of Shammai" and the "house of Hillel." Exempla and reminiscences sometimes enhance the arguments. Yet there is no effort made to give the impression of a direct interaction between different opinions, except for the already discussed case of double *chreia*, which is a stable compound in itself. Quite contrary to the sequence of *chreia* and double *chreia* in the Mishnah, the Babylonian Talmud creates a vivid conversation between rabbinic sages, many of them bearing the title "Rabbi" (in Hebrew) or "Rav" (in Aramaic). Additionally, the Talmud uses an anonymous editorial voice (the so-called stam) to keep the discourse going. Such "off-excerpt" voices are also known from Pliny's *Natural History*, Gellius's *Attic Nights*, or Julius Africanus's *Cesti* ("Embroideries"). The construction of a discourse by means of this unattributed voice and attributed interjections has led to theories regarding the chronological layering of the Talmud, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Here it will suffice to point to this distinctive discursive structure, which the Babylonian Talmud shares with the Palestinian one. It is, however, more pronounced in the former.

The anonymous voice in the Talmud usually stimulates the discourse by using a recurring pattern of questions and phrases. This set of stock phrases used in the Talmud is more engaging than the one used in the Mishnah in that it asks for reasons, invites further analysis, introduces more arguments or alternatives on the subject, or draws conclusions.[92] The stock questions are reminiscent of the ones that had been introduced

[92] See Jack N. Lightstone, "The Rhetoric of the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud: From Rabbinic Priestly Scribes to Scholastic Rabbis," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 21, no. 1 (1995): 86–87.

by Aristotle to conduct investigations and were still used by late antique doxographers. They revolve around quality (How is it? Does it exist? From what is it different?); quantity (How many?); and place (Where does it occur? Under what circumstances?).[93] Similarly, frequent questions in the Talmud are as follows: Why (אלמא)? What is the reason (מאי טעמא)? What is similar (מאי דמי)? And what is the difference (מאי שנא)? These questions facilitated the arrangement of excerpts in a discursive form but are also reflective of the intellectual process that underlies the arrangement of these passages.

There is, however, not just a dialogue going on between composers and excerpts, since even the sages to whom certain dicta are attributed are presented as conversation partners. This is a feature that is already perceivable in the Palestinian Talmud but is, again, more nuanced in the Babylonian one.[94] The Babylonian Talmud, then, entertains a more elaborate discursive style in the way the authorial voice is deployed *and* in the way in which the sages are staged to be engaged with one another – just like the guests in symposiac works. The following example will give an impression of the vivid interactions constructed out of and between excerpts:

> For a fluttering heart: Bring three barley cakes and soak them in a *kamka*-dish that is no older than forty days, eat them, and afterwards drink watered-down wine.
>
> Said Rav Aha from Difti to Ravina: "Of course their heart will be fluttering [if they do that]!" [Ravina] said to him: "I said 'for the heaviness of the heart' [not 'for a fluttering heart']!" (b. Git. 69b, author's translation)

Here, a (fictitious) misunderstanding is used to interrupt a sequence of unattributed medical recipes, the excerpts, to remind the audience that they are in the middle of a conversation between learned men. This format, as was pointed out for *The Learned Banqueters* and the *Saturnalia*, has the advantage of providing the reader/listener with information in an engaging way, while at the same time teaching the art of argumentation and conversation.

[93] On this subject, see David Leith, "Question-Types in Medical Catechisms on Papyrus," in *Authorial Voices in Greco-Roman Technical Writing*, ed. Liba Taub and Aude Doody, AKAN-Einzelschriften 7 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2009), 113; see also my discussion in Chapter 5 of this book.

[94] See Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, introduction to *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *TSAJ* 114 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 18. Contrary to David Weiss Halivni's assessment that dialectics represent an advanced and hence younger stratum of Talmudic literature, I suggest that the creation of dialectics is a distinct choice by the author and a method that has been known since antiquity; see references discussed above.

In many ways, the talmudic conversation reminds one of the staged symposia of Athenaeus and Macrobius, who created characters to attend their banquets and placed excerpts from other authors into their mouths, either as attributed speeches or as direct remarks. The talmudic conversation partners are the rabbinic sages, who may have figured as the authors of some excerpts or in prior rabbinic works. Some anonymous material was probably also assigned to them based on style or content.[95] Pseudepigraphy, that is, writing in the same style and along the same argumentative lines as someone else, must also be assumed.[96] In general, the attributions follow quite stereotypical patterns.[97]

Chronological, geographical, or biographical accuracy, however, seems not to have dominated the construction of dialogues.[98] Rather, what seems to have mattered was the thematic relationship of the sayings. Thus, in the next example, the Palestinian Rabbi Yohanan replies to a statement attributed to the Babylonian sage Abaye, who, according to the traditional dating, was born a year after Yohanan had died:[99]

> Abaye said: "The one who is not healthy in the way of the world: bring three *qpiza*-measures of safflower seeds, grind them, boil them in wine, and drink it."
> Rabbi Yohanan said: "Exactly this [recipe] returned my youth to me!" (b. Git. 70a)

The same exclamation by Rabbi Yohanan is also used in a different but equally fitting context.[100] Snippets suitable for interjection were obviously recycled. Similarly, Rav Nahman bar Yizhaq laconically comments

[95] Such reassignments continue throughout the manuscript traditions, which vary not rarely in their attributions.

[96] On the subject of imitation of style (*mimesis*) and speech in character (*ethopoeia*), see Chapters 3 and 4. This definition of pseudepigraphy, which aligns with the ancient idea of pseudepigraphy as art, complements earlier scholarly ideas of pseudepigraphy and that located pseudepigraphy exclusively in instances of exaggerated and unlikely attributions, or explicit confusion over a source, see Louis Jacobs, *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6–17.

[97] See Richard Kalmin, "Quotation Forms in the Babylonian Talmud: Authentically Amoraic, or a Later Editorial Construct?," *HUCA* 59 (1988); Barak S. Cohen, "Citation Formulae in the Babylonian Talmud: From Transmission to Authoritative Traditions," *JJS* 70 (2019).

[98] Even within chains of transmission (i.e., sages citing other sages), which seem to be the most reliable source for network analysis, (traditional) chronology, geographical data, and biographical data are not always congruent. Thus, Michael Satlow and Michael Sperling's sophisticated digital analysis led to interesting, but at times also puzzling, results. See Michael Satlow and Michael Sperling, "The Rabbinic Citation Network," *AJSR* (forthcoming).

[99] For these dates, see Stemberger, *Einleitung*, 101 and 110, respectively.

[100] b. Shabb. 111a.

in tractate Shabbat, "The madder fell into a pit," while, in tractate Hullin, it is the rumen that fell into a pit, according to the mouth of the same sage.[101]

Macrobius was aware of the chronological conflict that sometimes arose between the literary guests at his symposium, and he apologetically addressed the issue in his preface:

> And let no one fault me if one or two of those whom this gathering has brought together did not reach their maturity until after the age of Praetextatus [320–384 CE]. This is permitted, as Plato's dialogues testify: Parmenides was so much older than Socrates that the latter's boyhood scarcely overlapped the other's old age—and yet they discussed difficult issues; Socrates spends a glorious dialogue in discussion with Timaeus, though it is common knowledge that they did not live at the same time. Indeed, Plato has Paralus and Xanthippus, Pericles' sons, converse with Protagoras on his second visit to Athens, though the ill-famed Great Plague at Athens [430–429 BCE] had carried them off long before. So, with Plato's example as my support, I did not think it appropriate to tote up the guests' ages on my fingers. (*Sat.* 1.5–6 [Kaster, LCL])

Indeed, a dialogue constructed out of excerpts from different sources requires astute methods of those who would weave them together meaningfully, and, at times, one might observe rather irregular and cramped seams between excerpts from different sources.[102]

Against the distinct setting of the symposium in Athenaeus's and Macrobius's work, however, there is no indication of the social setting in which the Talmud imagined "its" sages to have conversed. Were they pictured sitting in places and settings frequently mentioned in the excerpts, such as the study house (*bet midrash*), the great assembly (*kallah*), or the assembly house (*bet hava'ad*)? Yet if we imagine such comparatively stern settings for the staged conversations, we might automatically expect content that is much more serious than what we often encounter between the pages of the Talmud.

Composers of symposiac works explicitly chose the format of the symposium because it allowed them to include a lighter tone in their work, as opposed to the occasionally highly technical and informative content of other erudite texts. As a counterpoint to the rather excessive symposiac works, Methodius of Olympus (third/fourth century) chose exactly this format to write a *Symposium on Chastity*, using an equal number

[101] b. Shabb. 66b and b. Hul. 50b, respectively.

[102] E.g., David Weiss Halivni's examples of "forced explanations" and "forced responses." *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 143–149.

of excerpts from Plato and Christian sources to support his point.[103] Methodius's countereffort underlines the informal setting of the table talk, which involved lightness and frivolity but also alcohol-induced aggression. Macrobius is aware of the frivolity at symposia but also of the possibilities that such a literary setting holds for him as a composer. He reflects on this point in his introduction:

> The conversation at table is of a lighter sort, more pleasurable and less austere. For not only in the works of others who have described banquets, but especially in the great Symposium of Plato, the banqueters did not converse about some more serious subject but described Love in various witty ways: in that setting Socrates does not, in his usual way, press his opponent and tie him up in tight argumentative knots but—in a way more playful than combative—almost offers those in his grasp the chance to give him the slip and get away. (*Sat.* 1.2–3 [Kaster, LCL])

Nonetheless, the Neoplatonist Macrobius introduces his section of jokes in his usual sober way, presenting them as rhetorical devices (*Sat.* 2.1–2.7). Athenaeus, by contrast, weaves them into his text without preparing the reader. The Babylonian Talmud operates along similar lines as Athenaeus, thereby increasing the tension in the audience (the readers or listeners), who, just as in a real conversation, can only hope to anticipate what comes next. In both works, literally anything can happen next, from a joke to a comical story, a philosophical exposition, a juridical discussion, or even a math exercise.[104]

Graham Anderson has mapped the humorous instances in Athenaeus as follows: social gaffes; slapstick often relating to drunkenness or sexual behavior; excerpts from comedies and prior sympotic literature; and a seriocomical overtone in the arrangement of excerpts, the *spoudaiogeloion*.[105] Due to the nature of the work, there are two levels of humor present in *The Learned Banqueters*: the humor already present in the excerpts used by Athenaeus and his own humorous contribution, which results mostly from the way he brought the material into conversation.

[103] See Jason König, *Saints and Symposiasts: The Literature of Food and the Symposium in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Culture*, Greek Culture in the Roman World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 151–176.

[104] On mathematical exercises and elaborations in the Talmud, see Benedict Zuckermann, *Das Mathematische im Talmud: Beleuchtung und Erläuterung der Talmudstellen mathematischen Inhalts* (Breslau: F. W. Jungfer's Buchdruckerei, 1878).

[105] Graham Anderson, "The Banquet of Belles-Lettres: Athenaeus and the Comic Symposium," in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. David Braund and John Wilkins (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 318–319.

The latter exposes traits of *spoudaiogeloion*, the seriocomical, a neologism of the Greek *geloion*, "laughable," and *spoudaion*, "serious."[106]

The term *spoudaiogeloion* has already been used by Daniel Boyarin to explain the very feature that, as I suggest, connects the Babylonian Talmud as much with symposiac literature as does its dialogue structure. Talmudic *spoudaiogeloion* is created by "the presence of narratives that not only celebrate the lower part of the body but actively portray the rabbis, the very heroes of the Talmud, in grotesque, compromising, or ethically problematic light."[107] The alternating of these stories with more serious content suggests that the Talmud, like Athenaeus and, to a lesser degree, also Macrobius, intentionally uses *spoudaiogeloion* to navigate different sources.

Not only the alteration between serious, less serious, and even humorous material connects the Talmud with the literature of its time; the very existence of these types of sources is interesting. This is especially true because stories about "sinful saints" are more pronounced in the Babylonian Talmud than in the Palestinian one.[108] Boyarin suggests analyzing their literary footprint alongside the one left by writers, such as Lucian, who made use of Menippean Satire or, to a certain extent, even Philostratus in his *Lives of the Sophists*.[109] It may be noteworthy that Lucian was originally from Samosata, a town located at the Upper Euphrates River. The style seems indeed to have been popular in the East, since similar outspoken, comical, and even somewhat grotesque stories are also found among the stories about anchorite monks, such as the following reminiscence of Abba Anthony:[110]

[106] See Lawrence Giangrande, *The Use of* Spoudaiogeloion *in Greek and Roman Literature*, Studies in Classical Literature 6 (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 15.

[107] Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 22. Instances that entangle a graphic voyeurism and create what may appear to the modern reader as a "hyper-sexualization" of the text are much more pronounced in the Babylonian than in the Palestinian Talmud; see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: "Yetzer Hara" and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 112–119, and esp. 116, for examples.

[108] See Richard Kalmin, "Doeg the Edomite: From Biblical Villain to Rabbinic Sage," in *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 33, Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 7 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

[109] Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*, 24–32 and 179–181.

[110] For a general discussion of shared style, form, and common themes between the Apophthegmata Patrum and the Babylonian Talmud, see Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 64–100.

A hunter in the desert saw Abba Anthony enjoying himself in the desert with the brethren and he was shocked. Wanting to show him that it was necessary sometimes to meet the needs of the brethren, the old man said to him: "Put an arrow in your bow and shoot it." So he did. The old man then said: "Shoot another," and he did so. Then the old man said: "Shoot yet again," and the hunter replied: "If I bend my bow so much I will break it." Then the old man said to him: "It is the same with the work of God. If we stretch the brethren beyond measure they will soon break. Sometimes it is necessary to come down to meet their needs." When he heard these words, the hunter was pierced by compunction and, greatly edified by the old man, he went away. As for the brethren, they went home strengthened. (*Apophthegmata Patrum*, Antony 13)[111]

Spoudaiogeloion as a principle for arranging excerpts still cannot explain why philosophers, sophists, desert fathers, and rabbinic sages were depicted in obviously embarrassing situations. Rather, there must also be a mimetic and pedagogical purpose involved. The goal of education, which is similarly reflected in the above-discussed erudite compilations, is the "accomplished man," brilliant and rhetorically versed in every situation. Accordingly, the learned men in these stories usually escape the situation with a great deal of wit, thereby showing the value of their learning. Just as Athenaeus's audience learns from his sophists how to behave and converse at a symposium, the talmudic audience learns from rabbinic sages how to master tricky situations. And just like Athenaeus's work is not about his guests but rather about their words and actions and how they set examples to mimic or avoid, so too the Talmud is not primarily concerned with learning *about* rabbinic sages, but *from* them and *with* them.[112] The advantage of the Talmud not specifying a distinct setting for this learning is that its audience will learn how to act anywhere, not just at the banquet or in the study house.

According to ancient definitions, *spoudaiogeloion* is not only a matter of arrangement, alternating between verse and prose, between comedy and tragedy, and between surrealism and realism, but it can also affect various literary forms. Thus, the fable or story (*ainos*), the saying (*chreia*), or the parody, the exaggerated and incongruent imitation of someone or something, may be funny but still convey a serious moral.[113] Similarly, the Talmud "regularly forced God, angels and biblical characters to speak

[111] Translation follows Lillian Larsen, "School Texts," in *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, ed. Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018), 486.

[112] On this issue in Athenaeus, see Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," 107.

[113] See Giangrande, *Use of* Spoudaiogeloion, 19–31. On parodies in the Talmud, see Holger M. Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature*, *TSAJ* 139 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

the 'language of the sages,' even the language of the Roman court and the Hellenistic school of rhetoric."[114]

Orators, who always searched for a balance between message and entertainment, found the laughable exploitable for serious matters in the same way meaningful equivocation could result in a laugh. Cicero, for example, writes in *On the Orator*: "Bons-mots prompted by an equivocation are deemed the very wittiest, though not always concerned with jesting, but often even with what is important .... So, to bore you no further, there is no source of laughing-matters from which austere and serious thoughts are not also to be derived" (2.250 [Sutton and Rackham, LCL]).

The distinction between a saying and a joke thus becomes rather blurred. Macrobius, for example, found the joke he was looking for in a collection of sayings:

> Take the case of Lucius Flaccus, for example, whom Cicero successfully defended with a timely joke when he was on trial for extortion, and his crimes were as plain as black and white – the joke is not found in the speech itself, but I learned of it from Furius Bibaculus's book, and it's among his celebrated sayings [*dicta*]. I use the word 'sayings' [*dicta*] not by chance but intentionally, since our ancestors used that term for jokes [*iocus*] of this sort. (*Sat.* 2.1.13–14 [Kaster, LCL])

This quote underlines what appears to be a prevailing late antique opinion, namely, that witty dicta could be as useful as serious proverbs, or, in this case, as an appeal to the law or defense arguments. Unsurprisingly, many collections of such bon mots circulated; they would be used as is or, slightly modified, would be attributed to someone else.[115] The joke as it is encountered in erudite works, then, is predominantly focused on the right choice of words, that is, "clever repartee."[116]

Some jokes involve figures of inferior or marginal status and reverse the conventional roles, in that the wit is attributed to the one thought inferior. These include slaves, uneducated people, foreigners, and women and may take the following form:

[114] Arkady Kovelman, *Between Alexandria and Jerusalem: The Dynamic of Jewish and Hellenistic Culture*, Brill Reference Library of Judaism 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 54.

[115] Giangrande, *Use of* Spoudaiogeloion, mentions as collections of *chreia* by Latin authors "the *faceta dicta* of Cicero and the collected apophthegms or *disticha* of Cato the Elder and Publius Syrus" (23). Jokes are collected and their style discussed in the already-discussed Cicero, *De or.* 2; Macrobius, *Sat.* 2; and Quintilian, *Inst.* 6. Apart from his many interspersed jokes, Athenaeus has a long list of witty replies by courtesans in *Deipn.* 13. In *De illustribus grammaticis* 21, Suetonius recalls a certain Gaius Maecenas Melissus, who produced a collection of jokes in 150 books.

[116] Larsen, "Early Monasticism," 25.

It happened at one point, therefore, after he thoroughly disgraced himself and had been thrown out of the Theater, that Diphilus went to visit [the courtesan] Gnathaena anyway. So when he asked Gnathaena to wash his feet, she said: "Why? Didn't you travel here by air?" (*Deipn.* 13.583 [Olson, LCL])

It once happened that a man asked a woman for an act of sexual immorality. She said to him: "Fool! Do you have forty *seah* of water in which you can immerse [in order to free yourself from the sin according to rabbinic law]?!" He withdrew immediately. (b. Ber. 22a)[117]

In these two examples, men are outsmarted by their inferiors, in this case women. In others, however, philosophers and sophists are depicted as doing the outsmarting. Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists*, for example, is full of witty *chreia* and double *chreia* embedded in the daily affairs of the sophists.

When this Leon came on an embassy to Athens, the city had long been disturbed by factions and was being governed in defiance of established customs. When he came before the assembly, he excited universal laughter, since he was fat and had a prominent paunch, but he was not at all embarrassed by the laughter. "Why," said he, "do ye laugh, Athenians? Is it because I am so stout and so big? I have a wife at home who is much stouter than I, and when we agree the bed is large enough for us both, but when we quarrel not even the house is large enough." Thereupon the citizens of Athens came to a friendly agreement, thus reconciled by Leon, who had so cleverly improvised to meet the occasion. (*Vit. Soph.* 1.2.2 [Wright, LCL])

Again, the literary approach to learned men is much the same in Philostratus as in the Babylonian Talmud: both works repeatedly get their sophists into trouble, only to let them escape triumphantly with a witty word:

Just then, Rabbi came to the academy. Those who were light ran and sat in their places. Rabbi Yishmael ben Rabbi Yose, because of his weight, was treading as he went.
Abdan said to him, "Who is this one who treads on the heads of the Holy People?"
He said to him, "I am Ishmael, son of Rabbi Yose, who has come to learn Torah from Rabbi."
He said to him, "And are you worthy to learn Torah from Rabbi?"
He said to him, "And was Moses our Master worthy to learn Torah from the mouth of the Almighty?"
He said to him, "And are you Moses?"
He said to him, "And is your master God?" (b. Yevam. 105b)[118]

[117] Hebrew. Translated according to Ms. Munich 95.
[118] Translation follows Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Stories of the Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 21–22. As the story continues, the fat Abdan is shamed in the academy, just like the fat Naucleides son of Polybiades is in a story appearing in *Deipn.* 7.550d.

These snappy stories are not simply entertaining but model, just like the symposiac texts, what rhetorical proficiency should look like. They stimulate imitation and encourage personal improvement. Indeed, the punchlines themselves suggest improvement: they are built to be transformed, to be rendered snappier, cleverer. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, late antique teachers generally encouraged students to rewrite rather than to write. Authors such as Lucian, for example, constantly reworked and recycled the work of others as well as their own.[119] Apart from multiple reworkings of stories known from other sources, rabbinic and otherwise, then, the Talmud often provides several possible endings to a story. The following witty story from tractate Bava Metzi'a even provides three different crafty endings:

> When Rabbi Ishmael the son of Yose and Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Shimon used to meet each other, an ox team could walk between them [under the arch formed by their bellies] and not touch them.
> A certain matron said to them, "Your children are not yours."
> They said, "Theirs [our wives' bellies] are bigger than ours."
> "If that is the case, even more so!"
> There are those who say that thus they said to her: "As the man, so his virility."
> And there are those who say that thus did they say to her: "Love compresses the flesh." (b. B. Metz. 84a)[120]

Some stories, however, depict rabbinic sages in such messy situations that no rhetoric can save them. In such cases, prior merits, reputation in heaven, and overall sincere study come to the sage's rescue.[121] Indeed, in talmudic stories, there is always something to be learned about the benefit of learning, learning that ultimately leads to said merits and reputation in heaven. The intellectual agon in which the Talmud itself and its sources participate does not seem to differ much from the one in the Greco-Roman world.[122]

[119] See Graham Anderson, *Lucian: Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic*, Mnemosyne Supplement 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 1–22.

[120] Translation follows Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*, 178–179. Boyarin (180) also highlights the similarity of the second response to Leon of Byzantium's *simile*, which he used to explain to the Athenians that even two fat people could find room in one bed if they agreed; see above, Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.*, 1.2.2.

[121] E.g., b. Pesah. 112b, or b. Hag. 15a–b, discussed in Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 64–82.

[122] On the literary agon emerging in the early Roman Empire, see Helmut Krasser, "*Me manus una capit*: Von kleinen Büchern und ihren Lesern in Martials Epigrammen," in *Techniken und ihre Materialität: Alltägliche Präsent, mediale Semantik, literarische*

Whether the authors who wrote the texts presented in the Babylonian Talmud knew about *spoudaiogeloion* or not, they lived in a time in which the precise word was highly appreciated. No talmudic story goes without pun, reference to rabbinic law or its distinct legal vocabulary, a saying (*chreia*), or quote from the Bible. To make a point, many talmudic authors did not refrain from using humor, which, "when the ratio is proper between the laughable and the serious … is functioning at its highest peak of efficiency."[123]

Some humor, then, was in many ways already part of the material used to compose the Talmud. Yet much seriocomic effect was added, as Daniel Boyarin has pointed out, by the choice to produce one single work in spite of the variegated nature of the excerpts.[124] After the present analysis of imperial period and late antique genres, as well as writing and compilation habits and ideals, the program of the Babylonian Talmud can be described as an innovative combination of the features of a symposiac miscellany with the structure of a commentary.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has been dedicated to an investigation into the forms and purposes of three late antique genres, which, by modern standards, have been labeled commentary, encyclopedia, and miscellany. Although these genres did not exist in their present outlines in late antiquity, the investigation offered a useful platform for discussing how the Talmud might fit into this picture. As it turned out, the imperial period knew basically two types of commentary: the scholion, with its focus on language and grammar; and the exegetical or erudite commentary, with its inquiries into the deeper meaning of a lemma. The thematically focused encyclopedia, organized around a specific topic, was much narrower in its perspective than the miscellany, which was then the preferred format of fathers writing for their children.[125] Thus, the miscellany seems to satisfy modern

Reflexion, ed. Cornelia Ritter-Schmalz and Raphael Schwitter, Materiale Textkulturen 27 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), 159; on the agonistic atmosphere in rabbinic learning culture, see Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 64; and Richard Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 108.

[123] Giangrande, *Use of* Spoudaiogeloion, 123.

[124] Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*, 22.

[125] Gellius, Macrobius, and Martianus Capella (*De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, fifth century) dedicated their miscellanies to their sons, while Athenaeus dedicated his to a

expectations with regard to the content and purpose of an encyclopedia, but it remains puzzling to current readers due to its lack of structure, which impedes its use as a reference work. Yet these genres, which are all "erudite works," meaning that they make use of excerpts from other books, were intended as displays of knowledge that could be used for one's own social benefit. Erudite works served contentwise, and in some cases also structurally, as rhetorical models. They were not, at least not primarily, designed to help readers retrieve a single specific quote or piece of information but rather to direct them to a whole cluster of knowledge. In many ways, these works did a far better pedagogical job by offering knowledge in context than does the modern encyclopedia, which provides a mix of random but alphabetically ordered subjects. The late antique miscellany, with its associative structure and multiple digressions as the natural result of this sort of "stream of consciousness," keeps the reader's curiosity awake and their attention focused.[126]

Humor was also highly valued for conveying difficult matters in a light tone. Jokes were thought to teach at least as good a lesson in clever repartee and mannerisms of life as did dry rhetorical theory. To that end, miscellanies usually presented their material as an alternating but unpredictable mix of humorous and serious matters called *spoudaiogeloion*. The dialogue structure offered additional didactic advantages and enhanced the entertaining aspect of a work. The reader could toil through the content while simultaneously learning from the protagonists about how to debate and behave when in a similar position.

The logic behind this literary – or even oral – technique seems to have been entwined with an aesthetic ideal of the time, which suggested that true perfection could be obtained, and natural beauty surpassed, with an eclectic combination of the most beautiful parts.[127] By assembling the most astute, perceptive, educated, and witty expositions, comments, and exegeses "of all times" into one discourse, a composer was able to create the perfect discourse.

friend. Pliny the Elder, who highlights the indigenous achievement of the Roman people throughout his *Natural History*, dedicates it to the emperors.

[126] On digression (παρέκβασις) as a purposeful and efficient rhetorical tool to keep the audience interested, see Peter S. Perry, *The Rhetoric of Digressions: Revelation 7:1–17 and 10:1–11:13 and Ancient Communication*, *WUNT* 2/268 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 107–141.

[127] See Balbina Bäbler, "The Image of Panthea in Lucian's *Imagines*," in *Intellectual and Empire in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Philip R. Bosman (London: Routledge, 2019), 195–196.

The Babylonian Talmud, in an original but (with an eye to the Palestinian Talmud) not exactly unprecedented way, writes an erudite commentary on the Mishnah by treating each lemma as the starting point for an inquiry (*thesis*), while at the same time embracing the associative and variegated (poikilographic) focus of a miscellany and adding the benefits of a symposiac dialogue. To create the impression of the latter, the work engages the protagonists with each other as well as with a narrative voice. The Babylonian Talmud's original mixing and matching of excerpts, its creative adaptation, and its improvement of what had already been written thus far, marks this work with the characteristics of the erudite literature of Mediterranean late antiquity.

2

Late Antique Data Management

This chapter will discuss how imperial period and late antique authors of erudite compilations, that is, authors composing works out of excerpts of variegated content and size, tackled their projects. At the same time, there can be no discussion of the issue of data management unless we also address concepts of orality, oral transmission and formation that pervade the talmudic text as well as its scholarship. A discussion of the most pertinent arguments for an oral transmission of the Talmud will therefore open the chapter and propose ways in which the talmudic evidence for such a transmission could be read considering the work's cultural context. To some extent, then, this chapter will open a world of fragments and fragmentary knowledge that are still challenging – but that enable contemporary scholarship to arrange them in many different ways and to different ends.

THE PERENNIAL APPEAL OF ORALITY

The blind, unfit, or unlearned teacher represents the ideal of unmediated knowledge that persisted throughout antiquity and late antiquity. The blind Homer, innocent children as arbiters of oracles, Moses with the "heavy tongue," a simple carpenter and a fisherman from Galilee, the anchorite monks of the Egyptian desert, female martyrs expounding Christian doctrine, and the illiterate Muhammad are but a few examples. The Mishnah makes a somewhat different case, yet with similar ideological consequences: the work claims to be Oral Torah, a recording of the laws that God gave orally to Moses on Mt. Sinai and that were

transmitted from Moses all the way down to rabbinic sages.[1] Contrary to the above examples, knowledge does not appear as necessarily unmediated in the Mishnah and later rabbinic texts. Yet, along similar lines, oral transmission makes this particular kind of knowledge available only to an exclusive group of people. The basic question, then, is whether this tenet of an oral tradition is mainly aetiological or whether it implies an actual prohibition of writing down decisions, even narratives pertaining to rabbinic law.

The reasons for such a tenet have been variously discussed. Its cause could have been the necessity to distinguish rabbinic (Oral) Torah from Mosaic (Written) Torah, especially vis-à-vis the nonrabbinic environment, or for the sake of the reinforcement of the teacher–student relationship.[2] The problem is that neither the Mishnah nor the later Talmuds are in any way specific about the implications of Oral Torah. The concept is clearly a rabbinic invention, however, as Second Temple sources are silent on the subject.[3] Scholars are thus left with their own judgement regarding how to evaluate the evidence.

A dominant pedagogical device in the Mishnah and, since they are based on it, also in both the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud, is repetition. The root of the Hebrew verb *šnh* (שנה) is also the basis of the word *mishnah* (lit., "repetition," "repeated tradition"). Another prominent verb in the Mishnah as well as the Talmuds is *tny* (תני), which similarly refers to "repeat, learn a Tannaitic tradition, to recite, to report a tradition."[4] Individuals are repeatedly called reciters of tradition, that is, *tannay* (in the Palestinian Talmud) or *tanna* (in the Babylonian Talmud). As Moulie Vidas recently pointed out, there is a notable distinction between the Palestinian Talmud's *tannay* and the Babylonian Talmud's *tanna*.[5] Being a *tannay* is part of being and certainly of becoming a sage, whereas the *tanna* seems to be a person with a distinct occupation.[6] Some Babylonian households appear to have had a *tanna* in residence.[7] Maybe the task of the

[1] m. Avot 1:1.

[2] See Peter Schäfer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Literatur des rabbinischen Judentums*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums XV (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 153–197; Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 147–152.

[3] See Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 7.

[4] *DJBA*, see "תני."

[5] Moulie Vidas, "What Is a *Tannay*?," *Oqimta* 7 (2021).

[6] See b. Qidd. 49b, and Vidas, "What Is a *Tannay*?," 25, as well as 28n23. In general, the Babylonian *tanna* is described as inferior to the sage; see Moulie Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 113–214.

[7] E.g., b. Ber. 14a; see Vidas, "What Is a *Tannay*?," 28.

Babylonian *tanna* was similar to the precious (and expensive) educated slaves who were capable of reciting the entire work of Homer, Hesiod, or other lyrical poets.[8] These slaves served as aide-mémoires to their masters or performed at banquets.[9] Although sometimes brought into the conversation about the formation of the Talmud, the *tanna* appears to have served a specific function in his own time rather than working towards a future project (the Talmud) by serving as "human tape recorder."[10]

The idea of an oral learning culture and a prohibition against committing to writing anything associated with it is strongest in the Babylonian Talmud.[11] Evidence for an actual ban, however, is very sparse. Only in two instances does the Talmud refer to such a ban, and these instances are reworkings from parallel passages in the Palestinian Talmud (b. Tem. 14b; b. Git. 60b). Tendentious reworkings are generally ascribed to authors' changing attitudes and life circumstances. In this case, the foregrounding of orality seems to relate to the pedagogical standards imposed by the Sasanian cultural hegemony.[12] The Palestinian Talmud allows at least occasional or private documentation of law.[13]

Yet both passages in the Babylonian Talmud that are critical of writing Oral Torah or *halakhot* allow for interpretations that do not constitute a general ban. The passage in b. Gittin 60b is concerned with Oral Torah and may refer not to the interpretation of law (*halakhah*), but, rather, simply to the public translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic during the Shabbat liturgy. The reader of the assigned portion from the Torah was not allowed to recite from memory, while the translator was not allowed to translate from writing. Rather, translators prepared themselves in the Beit Midrash with the help of written translations, glossaries, and commentaries.[14] The maxim in b. Temurah 14b, again, prohibits the writing down of

[8] See Christian Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. David Braund and John Wilkins (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 109, referring to a letter that Seneca wrote to Lucilius (*Ad Lucil.* 3.27.5).

[9] See Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*, 75.

[10] Ari Bergmann, *The Formation of the Talmud: Scholarship and Politics in Yitzhak Halevi's Dorot Harishonim*, Perspectives on Jewish Texts and Contexts 17 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 92, tracing this interpretation back to Y. I. Halevy.

[11] See Steven D. Fraade, "Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim," *Oral Tradition* 14 no. 1 (1999): 35n6; Vidas, "What Is a *Tannay*?," and Yair Furstenberg, "The Invention of the Ban against Writing Oral Torah in the Babylonian Talmud," *AJSR* 46, no. 1 (2022).

[12] See Yaakov Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," *Oral Tradition* 14, no. 1 (1999): 45.

[13] See Furstenberg, "Invention of the Ban."

[14] See Shifra Sznol, "Text and Glossary: Between Written Text and Oral Tradition," in *Greek Scripture and the Rabbbis*, ed. Timothy M. Law and Alison Salvesen (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 226. She refers to b. Git. 60b as the golden rule for readers and translators. Sznol

halakhot, in contrast to the already written Torah.[15] *Halakhot* were, as is implied by the word's root "to go" (הלך), inquiries sent to experts of Torah. Terminologically, *halakhot* were distinguished from the *mitzvah*, the ruling with a biblical basis.[16] The situation seems mirrored in Roman law, where laws registered in a codex were occasionally enhanced and adapted for certain cases and individuals. Yet these private rescripts and "letters from the emperor responding to legal questions from private citizens" were collected separately from the codex.[17] The prohibition of writing down *halakhot* might similarly have referred to the insertion of such situational rulings into a document of collectively sanctioned rulings.[18]

Undeniably, there are many implicit references to oral transmission.[19] The Talmud clearly imagines the rabbinic world to be an oral one.[20] Students are sitting at the feet of their masters; they are listening and repeating. The setting is rather pastoral, no libraries are described, and references to writing material are, although present, marginal. In fact, we do not even know if there was an economic benefit to this learning, because the picture that is raised is one of men "immersed and soaked in learning" with nothing in their lives other "than Torah – day and night."[21] The talmudic schooling system that emerges from these

translates the passage as: "The words which are written thou art not at liberty to say by heart, and words transmitted orally thou art not at liberty to recite from writing" (224).

[15] b. Temurah 14b reads as follows: "Rabbi Abba son of Rabbi Hiyya said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan: Those who write down the words of *halakhot* are likened to one who burns the Torah. Rabbi Yehuda son of Nahum, the declaimer of Resh Lakish, expounded: … One may not recite oral teachings from memory. The school of Rabbi Ishmael taught: 'Write for yourself these words' [Exodus 34:27]. 'These words' you may write, but you may not write *halakhot*." Translation follows Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, "The Orality of Rabbinic Writing," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 46.

[16] See Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 76–77.

[17] Charles N. Aull, "Legal Texts," in *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, ed. Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 418.

[18] The "Scroll of Fasting" referred to in b. Eruv. 62b might be considered such a sanctioned document.

[19] See the evidence collected by Yaakov Sussman, "The Oral Torah in the Literal Sense: The Power of the Tail of a Yod" [in Hebrew], in *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, ed. Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 232–233, and Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 54–56.

[20] This imagining of an oral past and present might be comparable to the imagined "legal role the rabbis claimed for themselves" within the "highly variegated and diverse Judean (or, Jewish) society in third-century Roman Palestine." Naftali S. Cohn, "Sectarianism in the Mishnah: Memory, Modeling Society, and Rabbinic Identity," in *History, Memory, and Jewish Identity*, ed. Ira Robinson, Naftali S. Cohn, and Lorenzo DiTommaso (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), 33.

[21] Sussman, "Oral Torah in the Literal Sense," 246–247 (author's translation).

depictions caused David Goodblatt to conclude that it looked rather underdeveloped compared to other contemporary institutions.[22]

Yet this picture, although uncontested given the lack of archaeological and textual evidence for the educational culture in Sasanid Mesopotamia, does not seem to do justice to the result. The Talmud is too elaborate and too deeply in conversation with the literary standards of its time to be the result of an educational system that focuses on the memorization of laws that either were or were not, or maybe only temporarily, relevant. Moreover, the model for oral transmission developed based on this evidence cannot account for the formation of the Talmud unless we assume that the sages were working towards this collaborative outcome from the very beginning. In that case, as David Weiss Halivni suggests, professional memorizers would have traveled from the school of one rabbinic sage to the next while memorizing the focal points of the ongoing discussions.[23] Memorizing a live discussion is, however, something different than learning an epic song (Homer) or any other fixed sequence of information. The raw memories of these memorizers would then have been smoothed out by a severe redaction, when, under circumstances that remain unclear, the sages decided to write down the oral recollections.[24] The model is shaky in its reliance on human capacity: Not only would the memorizer's recollections have been imprecise at times, but the sudden death of a memorizer would have further jeopardized the transmission of knowledge and the project as a whole.

Up to this day, spontaneous retrieval of knowledge is what makes or breaks the impression of an accomplished scholar.[25] Imperial period and late antique pedagogy fostered and relied on memorization to a much

[22] David M. Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia*, *SJLA* 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 284–285.

[23] See David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3–4 and 133–143.

[24] See Shai Secunda, "The Sasanian 'Stam': Orality and the Composition of Babylonian Rabbinic and Zoroastrian Legal Literature," in *The Talmud in Its Iranian Context*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Rahim Shayegan, *TSAJ* 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 150 and 152. See also Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 84. The oral model is, however, very challenging for scholars, who are accordingly forced "either to abandon research into the formation of the Talmud entirely, or to focus research on the redacted Bavli alone." Alyssa M. Gray, *A Talmud in Exile: The Influence of Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah on the Formation of Bavli Avodah Zarah*, BJS 342 (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2005), 4.

[25] See also Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): "Although a literate culture has the capacity to store information in written texts, those texts often do not displace the adept memorizer; intellectuality is still conceived in terms of the scholars of memorized text" (36). Similarly, Jocelyn P. Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1997), 84–85.

greater extent than does its modern counterpart: today, digital tools, dictionaries and handbooks, help to bypass embarrassment. In late antiquity, on the other hand, if people wanted to appear erudite, they were usually entirely dependent on their memory. Mnemotechnics were therefore essential for personal and social advancement, and elaborate systems of remembering knowledge based on places, symbols, and letters were developed since antiquity.[26] What the ancients were able to master from memory – judging from their written record – was certainly impressive. But there is a difference and a certain imbalance between, on the one hand, recognizing elaborate techniques for memorizing and retrieving knowledge and, on the other, the claim that Quintilian's "equation of treasury directly with memory and only indirectly with writing depends on the fact that it is memory and *not* a superior filing technique that allows the classical writer to retrieve the appropriate excerpt" (emphasis added).[27] Filing and notation techniques underwent many improvements from the early imperial period onward, as will be shown in the second half of the chapter. They did not and could not replace memorization for the obvious reason that filing and notation techniques could not be deployed as spontaneously. But they made elaborate written productions – such as the Talmud – possible.

Mental capacities and oral cultures have fascinated ancient and recent thinkers alike, and for much the same reason: Prominent examples of texts that teem with sayings are monastic and rabbinic ones. Both text corpora suggest that the knowledge they portray is the result of oral transmission. The anchorite monks are said to have been illiterate, whereas rabbinic literature is said to be the result of oral transmission. For both corpora, sayings have been interpreted to be a sort of an oral recording and hence the earliest layer, while more elaborate stories and homilies are thought to form the latest stratum.[28] With regard to monastic literature, however, Lillian Larsen has convincingly shown that the use of sayings does not

[26] See Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind*, 82–94.

[27] Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind*, 179, referring to Quintilian, *De orat.* 11.2.1 and 3.

[28] On this interpretation of monastic texts, see Lillian Larsen, "The *Apophthegmata Patrum* and the Classical Rhetorical Tradition," in *Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2003: Historica, Biblica, Ascetica et Hagiographica*, ed. Frances Young, M. J. Edwards, and P. Parvis (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 409–411; and Lillian Larsen, "The *Apophthegmata Patrum*: Rustic Rumination or Rhetoric Recitation," *Meddelanden* 23 (2008): 21–30. The authors of the sayings are generally classified as Amoraim and, accordingly, are thought to have transmitted these sayings orally; see Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 59–60, and discussion later on.

attest to oral culture, but, rather, to students trained according to Greek and Latin writing practices, who made extensive use of *chreiai*.[29] Scholars of Talmud may never be as fortunate as Larsen, who was able to prove her claim with exercises, ostraca, wooden tablets, and papyri found in monasteries. Yet they can still follow her proposition and see what happens if they read the Talmud "in light of 'the literary genre to which [it] belong[s].'"[30] In this case, the analysis of the talmudic genre in the previous chapter suggests a comparison with symposiac compilations and erudite commentaries. Interestingly, oral transmission has not been suggested for any of the books classified under these labels. This contrasts with texts of religious standing, such as the Mishnah and the Talmuds, monastic literature, the New Testament, and the Qur'an.[31]

The next section will consider the arguments that have been raised so far for an oral transmission and formation of the Talmud from a comparative perspective. Yaakov Elman, who argued for an oral transmission history of the Talmud, corroborated his argument by comparing the work to the Zoroastrian compendium *Dēnkard*. I will contest his conclusions with observations derived from a comparison of the Talmud with erudite compositions from the Roman Empire. This is again due to the lack of comparable sources in Sasanid Mesopotamia, although we should assume that they existed. The Babylonian Talmud was most likely not the region's sole monumental compilation.

ARGUING WITH YAAKOV ELMAN

In a lengthy article titled "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud" (1999), Yaakov Elman advanced several arguments that seem to speak for an oral tradition and even formation of the Talmud. Elman's arguments summarize the main ideas about the oral nature of

[29] See Lillian Larsen, "Early Monasticism and the Rhetorical Tradition: Sayings and Stories as School Texts," in *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen (New York: Routledge, 2016), 21–27.

[30] Larsen, "*Apophthegmata Patrum* and the Classical Rhetorical Tradition," 30, citing from Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 65.

[31] On orality and the New Testament see, e.g., James D. G. Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013). These are also the books most prone to "textualism," i.e., the treatment of "works as sheer texts, in isolation from both their authors and the world in which those authors lived." Robert A. Segal, "How Historical Is the History of Religions?," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 3.

the Babylonian Talmud and thereby provide a good platform to reflect on the implications of these objections for a written model.

Elman's first argument concerns the position of the Talmud as a written document between the oral culture of the Amoraim, the assumed originators of the sayings, and the Geonim, post-talmudic rabbinic scholars living under the Abbasid Caliphate. Since both of these generations of sages emphasize orality, Elman does not see how a work the size of the Talmud could have originated in written form in between the two eras.[32] Elman's second argument is based on the fact that rabbinic literature is replete with variant readings, which, according to him and many other scholars, are a sign of an oral transmission that led to the transformation of an original version through the loss or addition of pieces of information.[33] In his third argument for an oral genesis of the Talmud, Elman points to the absence of "a terminology for copying, arranging, editing, and redaction" and argues further that the size of the Talmud does not comport with late antique writing technology.[34] Finally, Elman noted that the talmudic lines of argument (*sugyot*) are often formulaic and stereotypical. Ring structures, chiastic structures, and the segmentation according to numbers are encountered: features that facilitate memorization.[35] Elman's arguments are very suggestive – not only in support of oral transmission and formation but also as a basis to discuss alternative interpretations.

The first argument relies on the assumed oral culture of the Amoraim and Geonim. The Amoraim bear that name because they are the originators of sayings in Aramaic. The name derives from the standard use of *amar* (אמר), meaning "he said." Since "XY says" is the earmark of *say*ings, however, the formulation may have been generated by style and convention rather than actual speaking by word of mouth. Indeed, the sayings are concise and very much to the point, so much so that heavy reworking or editing would have to be assumed as an intermediary step between the actual uttering of the content and the version that ended up as saying or maxim in the Talmud. The intellectual work necessary to mentally turn an utterance into a saying would have been enormous. It is much easier to work with templates and to arrange thought in written form. Martin Jaffee and Steven Fraade have therefore suggested that orality in this case should

[32] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 59–60.
[33] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 55–56.
[34] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 65 and 68–74.
[35] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 81–93.

be imagined as a process of alternating between writing and oral discussion.[36] In particular, Fraade's model, characterized by Elizabeth Shanks Alexander as an "orality that lies both behind and in front of the extant rabbinic texts," seems appealing here.[37] The orality before the saying would be a discussion, the solution to a puzzle assigned by a teacher, or even a game. Then again, purely written settings, such as personal musings over other texts, reformulated quotes, or summaries, are also feasible.

The post-talmudic generation of sages, the Geonim, promoted oral tradition over the written. This tendency is best seen in the context of the theological discussions of their time and place: oral versus written transmission preoccupied Islamic and rabbinic scholars alike.[38] Moreover, when the Geonim speak about their own oral culture, they usually refer to the memorization of the Mishnah and corresponding drills, not an oral composition.[39] As Uziel Fuchs has recently shown, they were most likely in possession of the Talmud in written as well as oral form.[40]

The second argument is more focused on the talmudic text and is based on the multiple variants within the Talmud, and between the Babylonian Talmud and rabbinic literature from Palestine. These variants gave rise to the above-mentioned models by Jaffee and Fraade whereby written texts were transformed through oral transmission before they were written down again. Acknowledging the limits of human memory but also the marks of Roman writing habits within the text, these models consider writing to be an intermediary stage that is then transformed again through oral transmission.[41]

One would expect variants resulting from oral transmission to be arbitrary. Yet, as it turns out, in most cases (if not all of them), the variants

[36] Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, and Fraade, "Literary Composition and Oral Performance." See also the summary by Alexander, "Orality of Rabbinic Writing," 53–55.

[37] Alexander, "Orality of Rabbinic Writing," 55.

[38] See Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Oral to the Read*, New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), and Talya Fishman, "Claims about the Mishna in the *Epistle* of Sherira Gaon: Islamic Theology and Jewish History," in *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World*, ed. David M. Freidenreich and Miriam Goldstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[39] For the geonic emphasis on memorization, see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (1998; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 155–161.

[40] See Uziel Fuchs, *The Geonic Talmud: The Attitude of Babylonian Geonim to the Text of the Babylonian Talmud* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Herzog Academic College, 2017).

[41] See Alexander, "Orality of Rabbinic Writing," 55, and Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 128–140.

are not haphazard deviations but, rather, versions exposing a new take on the subject. With regard to talmudic stories with obvious parallels in the Palestinian Talmud, for example, Jeffrey Rubenstein was able to establish a list of recurring features and devices used to give these stories a new twist.[42] Shamma Friedman recognizes a "typical intervention" in stories (as well as in the legal parts) by the commentators or redactors.[43] As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, the creation of variants was a lesson in its own right in the Roman curriculum and was artfully professionalized. To bring a story to a different conclusion, for example, was a way of learning how to turn a given argument in one's own favor, just as the original purpose of rhetorical training was juridical argumentation.[44] The techniques were fairly standard and resonate with the way in which talmudic stories were recast. Rather than the product of a commentator or redactor, these story variants look like the result of rhetorical exercises, or the implementation of this very learning, both trained and executed in writing. This does not, of course, rule out the possibility that an author may, at times, have relied on additional oral information regarding the case described in a story.

Recent scholarship on ancient literacy has repeatedly referred to empirical research among illiterate and semiliterate people to strengthen the argument for a literate mindset. Paul Evans, for example, drew attention to the work of Aleksandr Romanovich Luria, who "found that nonliterate persons strongly resisted requests for word definitions."[45] Not only did they find the task of defining a word nonsensical but they were also unable to describe a word without using it. Literate people, on the other hand, solved the same problem with considerable ease. The same was true for syllogistic exercises.

[42] E.g., "wordplay or paranomasia; symbolic character names; irony; keywords and repetitions; dialogue; interior monologue, order, structure." Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Stories of the Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 203.

[43] Shamma Friedman, "A Good Story Deserves Retelling: The Unfolding of the Akiva Legend," in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *TSAJ* 114 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 57, and see further Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in the Aggada," in Rubenstein, *Creation and Composition*.

[44] See Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny*, Routledge Library Editions: Education 91 (London: Methuen, 1977), 253–263, for a summary of exercises on providing sound variants of sayings and narratives.

[45] Paul S. Evans, "Creating a New 'Great Divide': The Exoticization of Ancient Culture in Some Recent Applications of Orality Studies to the Bible," *JBL* 136, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 759.

The question remains, however, to what extent the execution of these tasks relates to literacy qua alphabetization or, rather, to the syllogistic sense of how to handle the range of exercises that accompany alphabetization in Westernized societies. For example, Luria asked non- and semiliterates the following syllogistic question: "Bears in the north, where there is snow, are white. The city XY is in the north, where there is always snow. What color are the bears there?"[46] The answer was unanimously "brown." The questioned people relied on their own knowledge about bears instead of focusing on the syllogistic and tricky nature of the question. The results are interesting but perhaps in a slightly different way than Luria and, for that matter, Evans, used them. The definition of words and the solving of simple syllogisms may be part of the primary curriculum in Westernized societies but they are not related, per se, to the basic ability of reading or writing. The distinction, then, should not be between literates and illiterates but between those who received literacy training beyond mere recognition and use of letters and those who did not. In fact, Luria's fieldwork shows to what extent continuous exercises based on the same syllogism affect the mind. Indeed, when he performed the syllogistic exercise with people whose reading and writing abilities had dwindled during years of neglect, they were still able to follow this distinct pattern of thought and to understand the task.[47] In addition to proving what he anticipated, namely, that knowledge of writing had a decisive effect on reasoning processes, Luria's study also highlightes the lasting effect of repetitive exercises.[48] Late antique teachers envisioned exactly this effect on their students' minds when they anticipated that "Dexterity of mind and an almost mathematical ability in dealing with the elements of learning" would result from their letting the students toil through endless repetitive exercises.[49]

David Olson's empirical research has shown that literates are much more sensitive toward language. Illiterate people, for example, are not capable to the same extent as literates of associating letters with words (e.g., *b* with baby, ball, or rabbit) or of isolating a letter from the rest of a word (e.g., *f*-ish). Olson's most telling example is an exercise he performed with his preliterate grandchild: "I showed her a card on which I had written

[46] My paraphrase from Evans, "Creating a New 'Great Divide,'" 760.
[47] Evans, "Creating a New 'Great Divide,'" 760.
[48] On Luria's intent, see David R. Olson, "Why Literacy Matters, Then and Now," in *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, ed. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 388.
[49] Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 223.

'Three little pigs.' I read it to her and had her say back to me what it said. I then covered up the last word and asked her to tell me what it now said, to which she replied, 'Two little pigs.' She assumed that the written marks represented objects, pigs, not words, a kind of picture writing."[50] Olson's examples substantiate the claim of the literacy hypothesis that "a writing system and a tradition of writing is not a neutral practice."[51] Rather, language and mind are connected in ways that are still to be further explored.

Oral transmission and formation are, of course, not necessarily tied to illiteracy. Indeed, regarding rabbinic sages, many scholars appear to assume a voluntary refusal to read and write *halakhot* or Oral Torah more broadly. The mindset of rabbinic sages would in that case be literate and explain the saturation of rabbinic literature with comments and jokes that rely on wordplay and paronomasia, which are inextricably related to the ability to understand the anatomical makeup of a word or phrase. Indeed, puns, explanations based on homonyms, mute letters, and the like are exactly the features that dominate talmudic stories and arguments.[52] If these features were later redactional additions, it needs to be asked what the original message of these stories would have been. Equally obtrusive as these wordplays are certain types of syllogistic reasoning that the *progymnasmata* introduced at an early stage of education.[53] Thinking along the oral tradition model, these features may have diffused into oral culture through a literary education gained elsewhere. Still, it needs to be asked how these linguistic adornments came into being if not through writing and how they lasted transmission by tradents, who did not necessarily have the same education and could not imagine a silent letter in a word.[54]

[50] Olson, "Why Literacy Matters," 392.

[51] Olson, "Why Literacy Matters," 393.

[52] On the omnipresence of (complex) paronomasia in stories throughout rabbinic literature, see Jonah Fraenkel, "Paronomasia in Aggadic Narrative," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 27 (1978). On syllogism in the Talmud, see Adolf Schwarz, *Der Hermeneutische Syllogismus in der talmudischen Litteratur: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Logik im Morgenlande*, Jahresbericht der Israelitisch-Theologischen Lehranstalt in Wien, vol. 8 (Vienna: Verlag der Israelit.-Theolog. Lehranstalt, 1901). For lists of hermeneutical rules, see Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 9th ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011), 26–33.

[53] E.g., Theon, *Progym.* 124–125, and Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission of Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.–IV Century C.E.*, *TSJTSA* 18 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 47–68. Schwarz, *Der Hermeneutische Syllogismus*, 190, however, concludes that it is exactly in the occasional deviations that the main syllogism used in rabbinic text, the so-called *qal wahomer*, underlines the consubstantiality between the Aristotelian application and the rabbinic one.

[54] Albert Lord, for example, studied illiterate Serbo-Croatian poets who were professional memorizers of lengthy songs and found that they revealed completely different assumptions

Would it not have been more efficient to focus on rhythm and meter if the goal were to remember and retain the old traditions, and even continuously add new elements, instead of preserving linguistic puns that primarily excite the one who sees them in written form?

It is indeed quite difficult to imagine that a completely alphabetized person would refuse to write down their insights for posterity and, instead, prefer to rely on the fragility of another mortal's mind or on occasional notes. Now that we have the Talmud in front of us as a complete work, it is easy to muse about a possible oral transmission and formation, possibly with a redaction of some sort. But the rabbinic sages could not anticipate that this project would succeed; maybe they would not even have dared. They were confronted with many hazards, not least a higher mortality rate. It seems more likely that the sages were not, from their perspective, working toward the or even a Talmud, but that they studied, composed, and taught for their own benefit, not knowing what would become of their efforts.

"Learned orality" in late antiquity can generally be described in terms of the declamation of a previously memorized text or as the reading of a text before an audience. Such performative reading is rendered as reciting (*recitatio*) in Latin.[55] Audiences immersed themselves in content to observe the reciter's skill in making an argument rather than focusing on the memorization of the exact content of the performance. Indeed:

> Did the audience (in a strict sense) for Roman poetry go to hear a performance, learn the song/poem by ear, and then go home with it in their memories, to perform it later to others? It is clear that they did not. There is no example known to me of any person who performed a Latin poem or a speech before a second person, who in turn transmitted it orally to a third. Instead, authors or other performers read from written texts to audiences, who, if they wished to experience that text again, obtained a written copy.[56]

Still, Theon's – and only Theon's – *progymnasmata* suggest an exercise in attentive listening, or *akroasis* (*Progym.* 106–107 P). Students were

about language and its structure than did literate people. He concluded that "the written technique … is not compatible with the oral technique, and the two could not possibly combine, to form another, a third, a 'transitional' technique. It is conceivable that a man might be an oral poet in his younger years and a written poet later in life, but it is not possible that he be both an oral and a written poet at any given time in his career. The two by their very nature are mutually exclusive." Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 129, quoted in Evans, "Creating a New 'Great Divide,'" 759.

[55] See Emmanuelle Valette-Cagnac, *La lecture à Rome: Rites et pratiques*, L'antiquité au présent (Paris: Belin, 1997), 111–115.

[56] Holt N. Parker, "Books and Reading Latin Poetry," in Johnson and Parker, *Ancient Literacies*, 193. (Parker was imprisoned in 2016 for the possession of child pornography.)

trained to listen so carefully that they were able to recall the structure of a speech and the most important arguments. The purpose, however, was not memorization but imitation of style, which in this context can also refer to the succession of arguments, intonation, and gesture: "Some younger orators acquired so good an ability by listening to famous orators that their works were attributed to their masters."[57] Although students recalled speeches in written form, and not orally, quickness of the mind and eidetic memory was obviously the ideal – then and now.[58]

This ideal brings us to Elman's third argument for an oral transmission of the Talmud, the absence of "a terminology for copying, arranging, editing, and redaction."[59] Several factors may account for this absence without necessarily implying actual oral transmission. First, the texts collected in the Talmud reflect a belief in an originally oral conception of the early texts. Following up with this textual "truth," the talmudic texts imagine pastoral settings in which genuinely wise and quick-witted teachers instruct their students. Second, antique and late antique texts do not seem to make "the slightest distinction in kind between writing on the memory and writing on some other surface," as Mary Carruthers observed.[60] This "exact correspondence between the material and the mental library" is then also reflected in the vocabulary used for book production, which converges with the processes of memory and memorization.[61] A separation between the two is not always possible. Third, terminology of book production is generally absent from imperial period and late antique literature, a fact that will be the subject of the second half of this chapter. Apparently, processes of book production were so evident that they did not need to be discussed (just as I do not see a reason to inform the reader about how I produced this manuscript).

Similarly, the Gospels have been said to have emerged out of successive performances; see a summary of arguments and their refutation in Larry W. Hurtado, "Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies? 'Orality,' 'Performance' and Reading Texts in Early Christianity," *NTS* 60, no. 3 (July 2014). As he points out, orality in the imperial period can best be described as "enjoyment of the spoken word" (323).

[57] Theon, *Progym.* 106–107 P. Translation follows George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, *WGRW* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 69. The exercise is only extant in the Armenian translation edited and translated in Patillon, *Progymnasmata*.

[58] On written recalling, see Patillon, *Progymnasmata*, c–cvi.

[59] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 65.

[60] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: The Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed., Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 34.

[61] Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," 109.

Elman sustains this argument further with the observation that the verb "to write" is used approximately 3,000 times, while the verb "to say" appears over 70,000 times by his count.[62] Again, I would hold that the structure "XY says" is, first and foremost, the defining structure of the literary unit "saying," rather than a reflection of actual speech. The saying as a rhetorical device was very popular in the imperial period and late antiquity and was highly theorized.[63] The declarative saying, for example, the *apophantikon*, was conceptualized as consisting of a speaker (*prosopon*) and a meaningful sentence (*logos*). Speaker and content are unrelated in the sense that the same sentence could be attributed to various people to suit different contexts.[64] Indeed, a saying could make "different points on different occasions. But they are only used to make one point on any one occasion."[65] The saying had the pedagogical function of associating figures of the past with prevailing standards of correct behavior and speech in the present.[66] Because of these advantages, sayings were used from the very beginning of education. Wooden tablets used by students testify to their struggle to conjugate the verb "to say" in all its variants in order to produce appropriate *chreiai*.[67]

Chreia is the generic term for a literary form that is best explained in the words of a first-century author, since it is a form that is no longer distinguished in this way. The *progymnasmata* of Hermogenes explain it as follows:

> A chreia is a reminiscence of some saying or action or a combination of both which has a concise resolution, generally for the purpose of something useful. Some are sayings-chreiai, some action-chreiai, some mixed chreiai. Sayings-chreiai are those in which there is only speech; for example *Plato said that the Muses dwell in the souls of the gifted*. Action-chreiai are those in which there is only action; for example *Diogenes, on seeing a youth misbehaving, beat the paedagogus*. Mixed chreiai are those with a mixture of speech and action; for

[62] See Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 64–65.

[63] See the material concerning the "saying-chreia" collected in Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil, eds. and trans., *The Progymnasmata*, vol. 1 of *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, SBL Texts and Translations 27/Greco-Roman Religion Series 9 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), and Hock and O'Neil, eds. and trans., *Classroom Exercises*, vol. 2 of *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, *WGRW* 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

[64] See Larsen, "Early Monasticism," 23.

[65] Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21, referring to sayings *and* stories. These were, in fact, the same accounts for any one excerpt, if well executed. See also Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," 107, on Athenaeus's use of doublets.

[66] See also Larsen, "Early Monasticism," 21.

[67] See Hock and O'Neil, *Classroom Exercises*, 51–78.

example *Diogenes, on seeing a youth misbehaving, beat the paedagogus and said "Why were you teaching such things?"* (*Progym.* 6.3–14 R)[68]

Aelius Theon further explains in his *progymnasmata* that the *chreia*, contrary to the maxim (*gnōmē*) or reminiscence (*apomnēmoneuma*), is always attributed to a person. Theon praises the usefulness of the *chreia* not only for pedagogical purposes but for life in general: "A chreia is given that name *par excellence*, because more than the other [exercises] it is useful [*khreiôdês*] for many situations in life, just as we have grown accustomed to call Homer 'the poet' because of his excellence, although there are many poets" (*Progym.* 97).[69]

Seen from this perspective, if certain rabbinic sages are portrayed to have said something, this relates foremost to the author's choice to cast a certain *logos*, often a maxim, as a *chreia*. The *logos* benefits from the attribution in at least two ways: First, it is enhanced with an esteemed authority that is thought to support its content. Second, the *logos* is more easily memorized if it can be associated with the mental picture of a person. Yet, as pointed out above, there is no natural connection between the speaker and the *logos*. The speaker may, therefore, easily be substituted if they are no longer suitable. Similarly, identical maxims are often attributed to different rabbinic sages within the Babylonian Talmud but also between the Talmud and other rabbinic texts. These changes never affect or distort the content of the sayings, since the characters are, in their function as speakers, without character.[70]

In his fourth argument, Elman discusses the size of the Talmud. According to Elman, the Talmud's size, slightly over 2,000 folia in a codex, does not comport with the writing and book production technology of late antiquity.[71] Based on word count, Elman provides an estimate of the length of the Babylonian Talmud in Torah scrolls. In his 1999 article, the estimate was eighteen Torah scrolls; another estimate, in 2007, based on a large, possibly eighth-century fragment of the Talmud, yielded ten and a half scrolls.[72] If we follow another suggestion by Elman, namely, that

[68] Translated by Hock and O'Neil, *Progynasmata*, 175.
[69] Translation follows Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 15.
[70] See also Sergey Dolgopolski, *The Open Past: Subjectivity and Remembering in the Talmud* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 126. He notes that "the Amoraic speakers do not have personalities. Rather they function as placeholders defined by the difference in their choreographed roles, not by their identities or by any content or structure of their argument."
[71] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 68–74.
[72] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 74; and Yaakov Elman, "Middle Persian Culture and Babylonian Sages: Accommodation and Resistance in the

"each tractate would have been copied separately," we have thirty-two scrolls or "books," for that matter, of different sizes.[73] Elman's comparison with the Zoroastrian compendium *Dēnkard*, composed in the ninth and tenth centuries, supports the notion that the Talmud is indeed of an impressive size, since the *Dēnkard* consists of 169,000 words, whereas the Talmud contains 1,836,000 words.[74] If, on the other hand, the Talmud is compared to Greek and Latin *oeuvres*, the former's size is put into considerable perspective.

The draft commentaries of Pliny the Elder (first century), for example, on which his *Natural History* is based, were written in tiny script on both sides of 160 papyrus scrolls, each 6–10 meters in length.[75] Except for this example, however, calculations as to the original sizes of works are rare.[76] Nevertheless, Manfred Landfester's *Autoren- und Werklexikon* gives a good impression of the productivity of Greek and Latin authors or,

Shaping of Rabbinic Legal Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 178. Unfortunately, Elman does not provide the size of a Torah scroll, and the estimate remains somewhat imprecise.

[73] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 74. In this count, I did not include the five tractates that make use of a different technical language compared to the other tractates: Nedarim, Nazir, Kerithot, Me'ilah, and Tamid. See Stemberger, *Einleitung*, 216. These five tractates are also characterized by a generally very low number of loanwords; see Theodore Kwasman, "Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic: Some Preliminary Observations," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Markham J. Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 336. Kwasman further points out "that a part of the language used in these tractates is a standard literary Eastern Aramaic" and that they were older than the other tractates (336 and 336n4). Although the matter is not completely resolved, a truncated source indicates that these tractates were not taught in Babylonia (see Brody, *Geonim of Babylonia*, 156).

[74] Elman, "Middle Persian Culture and Babylonian Sages," 178. On the *Dēnkard,* see also Jason S. Mokhtarian, *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings, and Priests: The Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 35–37.

[75] Albrecht Locher and Rolf C. A. Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia* des älteren Plinius und die Schrifttäfelchen von Vindolanda," in *Lebendige Altertumswissenschaft: Festschrift für Hermann Vetters*, ed. Manfred Kandler (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1985), 143.

[76] One exception is an estimation of the length of one of Julius Africanus's *cesti*. This estimate is, however, based on a piece of the whole work; the rest of the presumably twenty-four *cesti* are only extant in a very fragmentary form; see Martin Wallraff, Carlo Scardino, Laura Mecella, and Christophe Guignard, *Iulius Africanus Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, trans. William Adler, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 15 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), xxxiv. The estimate for the eighteenth *cestus* is a scroll of 3.30 meters long, which would add up to a total of 79.20 meters if an equal size is assumed for every *cestus*.

more likely, authors and their teams of slaves and hired personnel.[77] To give just a few examples, Columella (first century) wrote twelve books on agriculture and one on trees.[78] Josephus Flavius (first century) wrote *The Antiquities of the Jews* in twenty books, *The Jewish War* in seven books, and the treatise *Contra Apionem*.[79] In addition to the thirty-seven books (including the book-length introduction) of *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder, who died at the age of 55, authored one book on javelin throwing from horseback, two books on the life of Pompenius Secundus, twenty books on the Germanic wars, three books (covering six scrolls due to their bulky nature) called *Studiosus*, eight books on grammar, and thirty-one books continuing the historical work started by Aufidius Bassus.[80] That is a total of 102 books! Aelian (second to third centuries) composed seventeen books on the *Nature of Animals* and fourteen books on *Variegated History*.[81] The physician Galen (second to third centuries) is said to be the author of over 250 works.[82] Libanius (fourth century) wrote 1,544 letters (though the originality of two may be doubted) and 144 school exercises (*progymnasmata*). Augustine of Hippo (fourth to fifth centuries) wrote his *Confessions* in thirteen books, *Contra academicos* in three books, *De civitate Dei* in twenty-two books, *On Christian Doctrine* in four books, *De Trinitate* in fifteen books, and five single books. That is a total of at least sixty-two substantial works.[83] John Chrysostom (fourth to fifth centuries) is the author of 700 orations, twenty sermons, six books of theological discourse, and probably 241 epistles.[84]

Another striking feature of these lifetime achievements, apart from their impressive size, is the wide range of topics they cover. A certain polymathy was clearly the intellectual ideal. Given these numbers, Elman's *comparandum*, the *Dēnkard*, may have been an unfortunate choice,

[77] See Joseph Howley, "In Rome," in *Further Reading*, ed. Leah Price and Matthew Rubery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); and Candida Moss, "Fashioning Mark: Early Christian Discussions about the Scribe and Status of the Second Gospel," *NTS* 67, no. 2 (2021).

[78] Manfred Landfester, ed., *Geschichte der antiken Texte: Autoren- und Werklexikon*, Der Neue Pauly, Supplemente 2 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2007), 183.

[79] Landfester, *Geschichte der antiken Texte*, 328.

[80] This list is found in a letter by Pliny the Younger, *Letter* 3.5; see Roderich König and Gerhard Winkler, eds. and trans., *C. Plinius Secundus d. Ä., Naturkunde, Lateinisch-Deutsch Buch I: Vorrede, Inhaltsverzeichnis des Gesamtwerkes, Fragmente, Zeugnisse*, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter 1997), 312–315.

[81] Landfester, *Geschichte der antiken Texte*, 5.

[82] Landfester, *Geschichte der antiken Texte*, 254.

[83] Landfester, *Geschichte der antiken Texte*, 90, estimating a total of over 100 texts.

[84] Landfester, *Geschichte der antiken Texte*, 324.

since it appears that the time's book production technology was perfectly capable of composing a work the size of the Talmud, so much so that it even becomes feasible to argue that a single person, with the appropriate amount of help, would have been capable of composing a work the size of the Talmud (and more!) during their lifetime. This would challenge the traditional assumption that generations of sages were involved in the work's final process of redaction and formation.

Elman's last argument concerns structures that seem to have a mnemotechnical background, such as stereotypical structures and lists, ring and chiastic structures, and segmentation according to numbers.[85] It is during this discussion of complex structures, however, that Elman concedes that "some written components may well have played a role in the ultimate form" of the Babylonian Talmud.[86] Indeed, while clear structures may facilitate memorization, their artificial makeup does not reflect speech and is more easily conceptualized in writing. Orators composed their speeches in written form precisely because this allowed a conceptualization according to structures that facilitated easy memorization and apparent sophistication.[87] Mnemotechnical structures, therefore, refer foremost to a carefully designed written composition intended to be memorized. However, since these patterns were the ones according to which people learned how to write, and which also defined style, authors customarily used them even when they wrote commentaries or letters.[88] Cause and effect of this entanglement was that, "[e]ven in their most literary moments, Romans preferred imagining texts (at least potentially) as speech acts."[89]

The formulaic, stereotypical formulation of lines of argument in the Talmud, called *sugyot* (sing. *sugya*), is another feature Elman raises to sustain his argument. The sugya is a post-talmudic expression used for units that resemble the classical juridical argument composed of "a statement with a support (usually a scriptural or Tannaitic prooftext) followed by a challenge (*qushya*, קושיה), a resolution (*teiruts*, תירוץ) of the challenge,

[85] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 81–93.
[86] Elman, "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," 93.
[87] See Giuseppe La Bua, "Aiebat se in animo scribere (Sen. Contr. 1 praef. 18): Writing in Roman Declamations," in *Papers on Rhetoric 10*, ed. Lucia Calboli Montefusco (Rome: Herder, 2010).
[88] See Marie-Pierre Bussières, "Biblical Commentary," in McGill and Watts, *Companion to Late Antique Literature*, 313–314.
[89] Andrew M. Riggsby, *Mosaics of Knowledge: Representing Information in the Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 8.

another challenge, another resolution, and so forth."[90] David Brodsky has shown that this structure parallels the teaching in the progymnasmatic exercises "On Thesis" and "On Introduction of Law."[91] These were written exercises for students in a developed stage of the Greco-Roman curriculum. The stereotypical structure of the sugya is, if anything, primarily indicative of rhetorical training and not of an oral learning culture.

The discussion of Elman's arguments for an oral Talmud has shown that the Talmud can be considered congruent with much of imperial-period and late antique literature precisely because of its preference of the spoken word over the written one. Like other works, the Talmud is silent about technologies of data management and composition. The Talmud further anatomizes language in ways that can only be achieved by literate and particularly schooled minds that "see" words. It takes similarly schooled minds to appreciate respective puns. One would need to assume a voluntary waiver of literacy, which seems tricky in the face of the mortality rate in late antiquity. Indeed, the size of the Talmud seems to suggest a composition from written excerpts rather than oral tradition. And even in that case, data management was a highly sophisticated matter that left clear marks on the text.

LOOKING OVER AND BEYOND PLINY'S SHOULDER: DATA MANAGEMENT IN THE IMPERIAL PERIOD AND LATE ANTIQUITY

How are we to imagine the process of compiling in the sense of writing with excerpts? There was no formal training for compiling; at least, no school curriculum attests to such. Additionally, authors of compilations often used metaphors when describing their procedures. Macrobius, for example, describes his plan of action for the *Saturnalia* as follows: "We ought to imitate bees if I can put it that way: wandering about, sampling the flowers, they arrange whatever they have gathered, distributing it among the honeycomb's cells, and by blending in the peculiar quality of their own spirit they transform the diverse kinds of nectar into a single taste" (*Sat.* praef. 5 [Kaster, LCL]). If we are to make something out of this metaphor,

[90] David Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse: Progymnasmata and the Evolution of a Rabbinic Genre," in *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, ed. Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan, *AJEC* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 173.

[91] See Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse," 173–206. In the second part of his article, Brodsky argues that even certain shifts in the hermeneutics that the Babylonian Talmud applies to the Bible have their roots in the claim for clarity of argument as emphasized in the *progymnasmata*.

then Macrobius collected data, stored it, and subsequently redistributed and reorganized it in his book, together with his own thoughts.

The image of the honeycomb is also found among the titles of miscellanies known to Gellius:

> Thus, some called their books "The Muses," others "Woods," one used the title "Athena's Mantle," another "The Horn of Amaltheia," still another "Honeycomb," several "Meads," one "Fruits of my Reading," another "Gleanings from Early Writers," another "The Nosegay," still another "Discoveries." Some have used the name "Torches," others "Tapestry," others "Repertory," others "Helicon," "Problems," "Handbooks," and "Daggers." One man called his book "Memorabilia," one "Principia," one "Incidentals," another "Instructions." Other titles are "Natural History," "Universal History," "The Field," "The Fruit-basket," or "Topics." Many have termed their notes "Miscellanies," some "Moral Epistles," "Questions in Epistolary Form," or "Miscellaneous Queries," and there are some other titles that are exceedingly witty and redolent of extreme refinement. (Gellius, praef. 6–10 [Rolfe, LCL])

Titles like "Meads," "The Field," and "Fruit-basket" relate graphically to the etymology of Latin *lego*, to read (lit., "to collect" or "to cull, pluck"), as well as to the variegated and colorful nature of the miscellany.[92] Other titles reflect the reason for the production of the book, what it means to the author, or what the book should come to signify to the reader. The honeycomb, like the others, is a repository and display of personal *collectanea*, "the fruits of reading." One work simply refers to its material form, the wooden tablets from which it is made, hence "Woods."

As already pointed out in the previous paragraph, data management of literary excerpts was apparently not an ingenious invention but, rather, something quotidian that was not worth an explicit outline. Scholars interested in how ancient authors progressed in fashioning what we, in the last chapter, termed an erudite compilation must cull information from indirect references by authors, the makeup of the text, that is, remains of its original physicality, the text's shape, its regularities and irregularities, and also from archaeological cues.

Pliny the Elder's preface to his *Natural History* and a letter by Pliny the Younger are the most explicit literary sources at our disposal about data gathering in the imperial period. Still, they do not paint a clear-cut picture of how Pliny the Elder managed the production of such a complex work. In the (book-long) preface to *Natural History*, Pliny states the following

[92] On the etymology of *lego*, see Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 34. Similarly, "ancient Greek had no verb meaning 'to read' as such: the verb they used, *anagignōskō*, means 'to know again,' 'to recollect'" (34).

with regard to the goal he pursued with his ambitious work: "From a reading of approximately 2,000 volumes … written by one hundred select authorities, I have comprised in thirty-six volumes 20,000 things worthy of consideration – since, as Domitius Piso says, we have need of storehouses, not of books."[93] So, Pliny uses a metaphor to describe the type of book he wants to create, a storehouse, and provides a specific number of items he wants to store in this house, 20,000. Obviously, he tried to keep track of the information he had gathered. Judging from a modern recount, however, it appears that Pliny lost track of his data at some point. The numbers, which appear highly exaggerated, are, in fact, not exaggerated at all. The things (*rerum*) Pliny discusses amount to approximately 34,000.[94] Considering this extremely high number of topics, it is not surprising that Pliny's method of keeping track collapsed at some point. Nevertheless, he managed to write a pretty consistent work from the thousands of excerpts that he collected over the years. How did he do it?

A letter by Pliny's nephew and adopted son, Pliny the Younger, is the only testimony for the elder's method. Alas, many questions remain open since the letter focuses on work ethic and not on compilatory techniques. At least, the information indicates how the elder was able to gather such a vast amount of material within a reasonable time frame: Pliny the Younger describes his uncle (eulogizing) as a ceaseless and driven student who would not waste a single minute. He had the *notarius* (secretary) by his side at all times with books to read from and wax tablets (*pugillares*) on which to copy relevant excerpts. A slave read while Pliny indicated the passages that should be copied by the secretary, and although it is possible that Pliny also read by himself, Pliny the Younger generally refers to the books as *being read*.[95] The relief from reading enabled him to concentrate solely on the content, which he scanned for references to natural substances according to his book project. What can be gathered from this account of Pliny's method is lacunary, but it nevertheless offers the scaffolding from which to paint a more coherent picture. Based on the information in the letter, a close analysis of *NH*'s text, and archeological finds, Albrecht Locher and Rolf Rottländer have

[93] Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, praef. 17, cited according to Trevor Murphy, "Pliny's Naturalis Historia: The Prodigal Text," in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. Anthony Boyle and William J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 302. In the indices of his sources, Pliny the Elder lists 146 Latin and 327 Greek authors.

[94] See König and Winkler, *C. Plinius Secundus*, 390.

[95] Pliny the Younger, *Letter* 3.5; see König and Winkler, *C. Plinius Secundus*, 313–318.

made specific suggestions as to how Pliny organized his data and finally arranged it into a coherent text.[96]

Locher and Rottländer begin their analysis by noting that it is inconceivable that Pliny owned all his 2,000 sources. Otherwise, Pliny the Younger would certainly have mentioned the vast private library he had inherited to a friend in one of his many letters. Instead, he mentions "only" the 160 *commentarii* with notes that came down to him.[97] Since books needed to be returned to their owners, to a public library, or to a friend, it was necessary to copy relevant passages. Indeed, recurring mistakes such as wrong associations and the misclassification point to the fact that the context of the excerpts was no longer available to Pliny when he finally composed *Natural History*.[98] Excerpting information was thereby an everyday practice, even a necessity that Pliny turned into the basis and goal of his work, which should function as a storehouse of organized, preexisting knowledge. Excerpting and compiling were both a stylistic choice and a necessity.

Since many of Pliny's excerpts were apparently taken en route, the *notarius* must first have made a copy of a certain passage on a wax tablet that could conveniently be carried along. Generally speaking, wooden tablets, waxed or unwaxed, were predominantly used for notes because they could either be covered with another layer of wax or simply be scrubbed off for reuse. Papyrus, by contrast, did not allow for as many reutilizations, and parchment was too expensive.[99] Yet only a restricted number of wooden tablets could be carried along together with book manuscripts; consequently, a single tablet may have served for the copying of several different excerpts. In this manner, completely unrelated excerpts were collected on a single tablet. *Descriptores* (keywords) had to be added immediately to an excerpt in order for Pliny and his servants to associate them later with the correct main topic and entry. These keywords were important to remember the reason why a particular text had been excerpted, and they helped to distinguish between the mix of excerpts that ended up on the same tablet during one reading session.

[96] See Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*."

[97] Pliny the Younger, Letter 3.5; see König and Winkler, *C. Plinius Secundus*, 316.

[98] E.g., the confusion of *magnes lapis* and magnesite; see Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 140.

[99] On the advantages of using reusable wooden tablets instead of papyrus, see William Brashear and Francisca A. J. Hoogendijk, "Corpus Tabularum Lignearum Ceratarumque Aegyptiarum," *Enchoria* 17 (1990): 22.

Locher and Rottländer suggest that the process of excerpting and organizing the collected data did not end with the wax tablets. It could not have ended there, since the information on the tablets was mixed and the tablets themselves bulky: It would have been difficult to keep track of the keywords, and storage would have taken up a considerable amount of space. In particular, wax tablets need to be protected from anything pressing down on them. This was usually achieved with a rim between the two waxed surfaces that faced each other in a diptych, or with a small wooden cube in the middle of the tablet.[100] This characteristic did not pose a problem in everyday use but it is rather impractical for storage. It appears more likely that the excerpts were copied, one at a time, onto another writing surface, before sorting and storing them according to the keywords.[101]

For this intermediate step, scholars have proposed different kinds of writing material, such as "papyrus off-cuts, slates, ostraca, or individual palimpsest sheets of parchment" – materials widely used for taking notes.[102] Depending on the size of the literary enterprise and the financial situation and preferences of the author, different and even mixed writing surfaces are indeed conceivable for this step. In the case of Pliny and the enormous number of excerpts he used, Locher and Rottländer assume that a uniform writing surface that facilitates storage and review would have been most suitable. Based on discoveries of wooden slats in the Roman military camps of Vindolanda (England) and Vindonissa (Switzerland), the two scholars propose that Pliny copied individual excerpts onto such thin (0.25 mm/0.01 inch) and very small (20 cm/7.9 inch by 10 cm/3.9 inch) "wooden leaves."[103]

The slats were found in large quantities in the camps; many of them are inscribed with lists and notes pertaining to the organization of the camp, thereby testifying to their usefulness for data management. One

[100] On the makeup of wax tablets, see Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 154–155.

[101] See Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 142. Regarding Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistai*, yet without further discussion of the material aspects of the process, see Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," 104. He suggested that Athenaeus "started to organize his reading notes and collection of excerpts in categories such as 'wine,' 'cups,' 'fishes,' 'courtesans,' 'water,' 'parasites,' etc." (551n182).

[102] Peregrine Horden, "Prefatory Note: The Uses of Medical Manuscripts," in *Medical Books in the Byzantine World*, ed. Barbara Zipser (Bologna: Eikasmos Online II, 2013), 3.

[103] See Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 146. Not everybody agrees with Locher and Rottländer on this issue. Relying strictly on Pliny the Elder and, especially, Pliny the Younger's sparse information and little glimpses from other authors, Tiziano Dorandi, *Nell' officina dei classici: Come lavoravano gli autori antichi* (repr., Rome: Carocci Editore), 13–28, suggests that the excerpts were not transferred on slats but written on scrolls, the *commentarii*.

such slat also contained a line of Virgil's *Aeneid* (9.473), which shows that they were also used for mnemotechnical purposes.[104] The slats were light and easily inscribable with ink. Lengthier texts would run over several of these tablets. The sequence in which they had to be read was then marked by diagonal cuts in the corners.[105] In other cases, the tablets were bound together in a concertina-like form, a method also known to the writers of the texts collected in the Babylonian Talmud.[106]

Locher and Rottländer assume that the slats were a phenomenon of the north with its suitable wood and that they served the special needs of the military camps in which they were found. They proposed that Pliny learned about their usefulness when he served as an officer in a camp that sent troops to Vindolanda. Since the tablets in Vindonissa can be dated to the middle of the first century CE, and those from Vindolanda to the latter part of the same century, Locher and Rottländer think they were a recent invention.[107]

There is at least one other first-century source that mentions small and thin slats and seems to corroborate Locher and Rottländer's dating. The context of this mention, however, is far removed from the organization of military camps, although not necessarily from the private preoccupations of their inhabitants. In three of his epigrams, the Rome-based poet Martial mentions such wooden slats to which he refers as Vitellian tablets, a name that may have been derived from their manufacturer.[108] In book 2, epigram 6, Martial describes how his friend Severus had been so fond of his, Martial's, epigrams that he copied them on Vitellian tablets and carried

[104] See J. David Thomas, "The Latin Writing-Tablets from Vindolanda in North Britain," in *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, ed. Elisabeth Lalou, Bibliologia 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 204. The tablets have been published by Alan K. Bowman and James D. Thomas in *Vindolanda: The Latin Writing-Tablets*, Britannica Monograph Series 4 (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1983).

[105] See Thomas, "Latin Writing-Tablets," 205.

[106] A passage in tractate Nid. 30b // Lev. Rab. 14:2 compares the fetus in the womb to a folded notebook (פינקס שמקופל, *pinqas shemequpal*); see Menahem Haran, "The Codex, the Pinax, and the Wooden Slats" [in Hebrew], *Tarbiẓ* 57, no. 2 (1988): 157. Haran further points to Hul. 91b, which alludes to Gen. Rab. 69:3 and God's folding of the land of Canaan like a notebook (*qiplah kepinqas*, קיפלה כפינקס). y. Ma'aser Sheni 4:10 (55b) // Exod. Rab. 1:15 refer to a concertina-like *pinax* made of twelve (twenty-four in Exod. Rab.) tablets. For an illustration of a notebook, see Haran, "The Codex, the Pinax, and the Wooden Slats," 163, or Bowman and Thomas, *Vindolanda*, 39, fig. 7.

[107] See Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 146.

[108] See Martial, *Epigrams*, ed. and trans. David Roy Shackleton Bailey, LCL 480, 233n11.

them around in the puff of his garment. In a section of epigrams devoted to different forms of tablets, two refer to the usefulness of said tablets:

Vitellian tablets
Although she may not have read them yet, a girl knows what Vitellian tablets want. (*Epig.* 14.8 [Bailey, LCL])

The delicate tablets were apparently the preferred means for conveying secret messages of love and desire – but not exclusively so, as Martial specifies in the next epigram:

The same
Because you see we are very small, you think we are being sent to somebody's mistress. You are wrong. This tablet asks for money also. (*Epig.* 14.9 [Bailey, LCL])

Thin wooden slats thus seem to have served very different purposes throughout the Roman Empire. They met the administrative needs of military camps, served admirers of fine poetry as aide-mémoires, and helped lovers and embarrassed supplicants achieve their secret goals.

Locher and Rottländer are mistaken when they confine the slats to the northwestern Empire. The Palestinian revolutionary Bar Kokhba, for example, wrote a letter on such a thin wooden leaf.[109] In fact, the talmudic use of the term *pitqa* (פיתקא), a loanword from Greek *pittakion* (πιττάκιον), may refer to a similar, if not identical, lightweight carrier of text. The Greek usage of the term refers to a "tablet, label, ticket, promissory note or receipt."[110] Similarly, the Talmud mentions it as a carrier of a writ of summons (b. Rosh Hash. 31b; b. Qidd. 70a), an apotropaic pendant (b. Qidd. 73b), a note shot by an arrow (b. Sanh. 26a), a farewell note (b. Sanh. 96b), and a promissory note (b. Bek. 8b). In three stories, such notes fall from the sky, informing the protagonists about what to do (b. B. Metz. 86a; b. Sanh. 64a; b. Yoma 69b). In yet another story, such *pitqa*-tickets help two teachers who were banned from the study house communicate with those still inside (b. Hor. 13b). It seems, therefore, that the *pitqa* is a lightweight "slip."[111] Besides wood, other materials such as leaves, papyrus, or even parchment snippets, may also have been used to fashion suitable tickets.

Imperial period and late antique epitomizers possessed writing surfaces that supported the collection and storage of excerpts. Copied on lightweight and thin material, excerpts were much easier to handle than

[109] See Haran, "The Codex, the Pinax, and the Wooden Slats," 161–162.
[110] LSJ, see "πιττάκιον."
[111] *DJBA*, see "פיתקא."

bulky wax tablets and could be stored according to main, secondary, and maybe even tertiary keywords. Locher and Rottländer base their thesis of keywords on the mistakes in Pliny's text, which are likely to happen when using this method, such as wrongly interpreted descriptors, questionable connections, and false comments.[112] Pliny must have gathered excerpts until his collection seemed exhaustive enough for the project he envisaged. By the time he finally started to arrange commentaries on specific lemmas for *Natural History*, he had long forgotten about the context of the excerpts, and the books had been returned. The only thing he could do at this stage was verify the keywords and reassign the excerpts, if needed. At this stage it was impossible to make the connection between the Greek name of a plant and its Latin counterpart, for example, if he had only noted either the Greek or the Latin name as a descriptor and stored the excerpts accordingly in separate places. This led to two separate entries on the same plant in two different locations.[113] The same happened at times with Greek and Latin city names or names of people. Keywords that could refer to either of two things also challenged this system. *Electrum*, for example, can refer to both an alloy of silver and gold and to amber.[114]

Although not free from mistakes, the keyword system allowed Pliny to organize vast amounts of excerpts. When he finally started to compose *Natural History*, which begins with the cosmos and ends with precious stones, he was able to consult the excerpts referring to specific categories and subcategories according to keywords. The slats further allowed him to arrange and rearrange a selection of excerpts until the most meaningful and appealing composition for the entry on a given subject was achieved. It appears that Pliny generally attempted to follow the rhetorical structure (introduction, narration of the case, proofs, and peroration), adding excerpts that did not fit loosely at the end.[115] Frictions were glossed over by an original commentary.

[112] See Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 143.

[113] There are, for example, separate entries for the Greek *raphanos* and the Latin *brassica*, both referring to the same vegetable (cabbage/radish). Yet the excerpt used for the Latin entry states that the Greeks had no use for the plant; see Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 143–144.

[114] See Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 144.

[115] See Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 145.

The literary style of the initial sources, however, still shines through in the final version.[116]

The flexible and easily transferable nature of separately copied excerpts helps to account for the complex structure of many texts from the imperial period and late antiquity. Without wasting expensive writing materials, the slats allowed authors to experiment with different arrangements until they found the most suitable structure. To what extent and how – if at all – they included their own voice to link one excerpt with the next remained, of course, an individual choice.[117]

Most of all, the model of excerpts written on light, easy-to-transport materials may account for the complex structures of excerpt-rich texts such as the symposiac works by Athenaeus and Macrobius, or the Babylonian Talmud. It explains how the composers of these works were able to create meaningful units out of a large selection of excerpts because they were able to juggle the excerpts and to experiment with different versions before settling for one and finalizing a subsection. Regarding the Talmud, this would explain subsections (*sugyot*) that are almost identical but differ in arrangement (e.g., reversed).[118]

To make a case for the Talmud similar to the one made by Locher and Rottländer for Pliny's *Natural History*, their thesis needs to be expanded and further substantiated. New evidence, together with a somewhat broader perspective on the subject, allows us to distance Locher and Rottländer's thesis from an all-too-neat model of index cards and boxes. Rather than on leaf tablets alone, excerpts were probably stored on writing materials of very different shapes and sizes – mostly the material on which they were composed in the first place. This expanded thesis will be the subject of the next paragraph.

THE UBIQUITY OF EXCERPTING AND REASSEMBLING: WRITING MATERIAL IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Two distinct practices governed the literary productivity of the imperial period and late antiquity: excerpting and reassembling. By focusing on

[116] See Locher and Rottländer, "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia*," 145.

[117] Julius Africanus, for example, provides the reader of his poikilographic work *Cesti* with a voice "in the persona of an educator and omniscient narrator with advice to give and, above all, a solution for all of the problems discussed." Wallraff et al., *Iulius Africanus Cesti*, xxvi.

[118] On the phenomenon of the so-called *sugyot mukhlafot* or *afukhot*, see Yehonathan Etz-Chayim, *Introduction to the Oral Law*, Unit 5: *The Babylonian Talmud* (Tel Aviv: The Open University, 1992), 62–64.

the small and significant unit, by way of "fragmentation," "miniaturization," and "condensation," authors produced massive works. The procedure appears to point to a Roman-era "connection between acquisition of territory and acquisition of knowledge."[119] Yet neither this connection nor the elaborate methods used to excerpt and reassemble are mentioned by authors. This fact may be worthy of closer consideration since authors were otherwise rather keen to highlight the innovative traits of their works. Pliny, for example, praises the index of book titles he provides for the readers of *Natural History* with the aim of sparing their time. According to Pliny, only Valerius Soranus had provided such an index before he did.[120] Only a few years later, Martial lists a number of reasons why he did not publish more than 100 epigrams in his second book: to save paper, to save on the expenses for a copyist, and to ensure that the book would be short enough not to anger the reader should it turn out that it was not worth the time spent reading it.[121] Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, consistently highlights the merits of his variously applied tabular methods.[122] But neither data management nor excerpting and reassembling was apparently considered innovative enough to be mentioned. Could it be that these practices were common knowledge, something quotidian, self-evident, and simple, as if they were the only way to produce respective books and texts?

Scholarship justifiably tends to focus on ancient texts that, at some point or another, were copied onto fine parchment or papyrus, either as scrolls or codices. Less prestigious materials, such as palm panicles, bones,

[119] Jason König and Greg Woolf, "Encyclopaedism in the Roman Empire," in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 29. For fragmentation, see Marco Formisano, "Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity," *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 283. For "miniaturization," see Jacques Fontaine, "Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons chez quelques écrivains latins de la fin du IVe siècle: Ausone, Ambroise, Ammien," *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* 23 (1977): 444–445 (with n1) and 451. On "condensation," see Stephan Dusil, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter, "Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter," in *Exzerpieren – Kompilieren – Tradieren: Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, ed. Stephan Dusil, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 12.

[120] Pliny, *Naturalis historia* praef. 32–33, and König and Winkler, *C. Plinius Secundus*, 22–23. For a brief discussion of the Roman history of the table of content, see Riggsby, *Mosaics of Knowledge*, 22–29.

[121] See Martial, *Epig.* 2.1.

[122] See Matthew R. Crawford, *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*, *OECS* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 75–78.

soft and hard clay, loose stones (not graffiti on walls, rock, or statues), fabric, gems and semiprecious stones, (noble) metal, leather, skin, ivory, glass, and wood are usually not associated with the production of literary texts but, rather, with school exercises, notes, and amulets.[123] Yet these materials, the use of which is also attested across texts in Hebrew square script, stand at the beginning of every lengthy text, guiding and shaping its development.[124] Among these, the most common writing materials were wooden tablets, shards of broken pottery (ostraca), and papyrus scraps.

Ostraca were in use throughout the Mediterranean area, the earliest dating to the second millennium BCE and the latest to the eighth century CE, when paper replaced them.[125] Although ostraca have been found with inscriptions in every language spoken in the Roman and Sasanid Empires (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Parthian, Latin, Latin-Punic, Middle Persian, Demotic, and Coptic), the archaeological finds decrease significantly outside of Egypt but cover the modern territory of Iran.[126] The geography of the finds, however, does not represent the actual use of ostraca, which were most likely equally ubiquitously used in the Mediterranean and adjacent areas. Rather, ostraca were subject to decay or the gradual degradation of the script due to unfavorably wet weather conditions. Most importantly, they suffered scholarly neglect until recently.[127]

For administrative purposes, such as bills, receipts (bookkeeping), lists, tokens, letters, exercises, testaments, and notes, ostraca were the preferred writing surface.[128] Ostraca lent themselves to writing because of

[123] The list of materials is an almost verbatim translation of Brashear and Hoogendijk, "Corpus Tabularum Lignearum," 21.

[124] On materials attested to transmit texts in Hebrew square script (including mosaics), see Philip Alexander, "Oral Tradition and Writing in the Rabbinic Culture of Late Antiquity: Between Qumran and the Cairo Genizah," in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Book Cultures Online*, ed. Emile Schrijver (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[125] See Roger S. Bagnall, *Everyday Writing in the Greco-Roman East*, Sather Classical Lectures 69 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 123–135.

[126] See Bagnall, *Everyday Writing*, 130. On Pahlavi (Middle Persian) ostraca, Bagnall writes: "Nearer to the conventional end of antiquity, ostraca were in use in Iran, where a trove of merely two hundred Pahlavi ostraca was found in excavations at ancient Rhagai or Ray, on the south side of the Elburz mountains and twelve kilometers south of modern Teheran. These are in the main short memoranda of rations, mostly in bread and wine, dating to the sixth century" (125). Pahlavi ostraca were published by Dieter Weber, *Ostraca, Papyri and Pergamente: Textband*, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicum III, Pahlavi Inscriptions 4/5, Ostraca & Papyri 2: Texts (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992).

[127] See Bagnall, *Everyday Writing*, 121–122, for a discussion of ostraca finds in archeological digs, both past and recent.

[128] See the tables in Bagnall, *Everyday Writing*, 132.

their smooth surface, because of their abundant availability, and because they were free of charge. These, however, were not the only qualities of ostraca. Compared to papyrus, parchment, or wood, they are very durable and therefore suitable for documents meant to last. This explains why they were predominantly used for civil affairs.[129] Archives of ostraca show that ostraca were often further broken and shaped into rectangles to facilitate their use and subsequent storage.[130] Since the ink could easily be washed off, ostraca often show signs of correction and reuse.[131] Changes and additions to content attest to the repeated consultation of some, while others were marked consecutively as belonging together.[132] This attests to the sophisticated ways in which pieces of information were collected and stored in a way that made retrieval possible. If necessary, the content of ostraca was copied and systematically gathered on papyrus, while the shards were discarded or reused.[133]

Wooden tablets also had their specific advantages and disadvantages compared to other writing surfaces. It was easier to write on them than on papyrus, they could be reused like ostraca, and they were not as heavy as the latter but more prone to decay. Like ostraca, wooden tablets served very different purposes. Testaments, birth announcements, bills, receipts, and contracts but also sermons, hymns, prayers, and excerpts of literature, exist on wooden tablets.[134] Although wooden tablets continued to be in

[129] On qualities of ostraca other than availability and lack of cost, see Julia Lougovaya, "Writing on Ostraca: Considerations of Material Aspects," in *The Materiality of Texts from Ancient Egypt: New Approaches to the Study of Textual Material from the Early Pharaonic to the Late Antique Period*, ed. Francisca A. Hoogendijk and Steffie M. van Gompel, Papyrologica Lugduna-Batava 35 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[130] E.g., the so-called Racing Archive of Oxyrhynchus (150 ostraca, fourth century CE) or, already in the third to second centuries BCE, the Philadelphia Cellar Archive (see Lougovaya, "Writing on Ostraca," 54–55).

[131] See Clementina Caputo and James M. S. Cowey, "Ceramic Supports and Their Relation to Texts in Two Groups of Ostraca from the Fayum," in Hoogendijk and Gompel, *Materiality of Texts from Ancient Egypt*, 74–75.

[132] See Paolo Gallo, *Ostraca demotici e ieratici dell'archivio bilingue di Narmouthis II* (nn. 34–99) (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1997), l–li.

[133] See Bagnall, *Everyday Writing*, 133.

[134] See the list in Brashear and Hoogendijk, "Corpus Tabularum Lignearum," 34–35; Patrice Cauderlier, "Les tablettes grecques d'Egypte: inventaire," in Lalou, *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, 74–94, for a list of Greek tablets from Egypt. For a list of mentions of tablets by Greek and Roman writers, see Paolo Degni, *Usi delle tavolette lignee e cerate nel mondo greco e romano*, Ricerca Papirologica 4 (Messina, Italy: Sicania, 1992), 73–146. On the production of wooden tablets, see Carlo Federici, Lucia Mita, and Michelangelo Pezzano, "Nota sulle caratteristiche tecnologiche delle tavolette lignee vaticane," in *Tavolette lignee e cerate da varie collezioni*, ed. Rosario

use at least until the fourteenth century CE, a sharp decrease is observable from the eighth and ninth centuries onward.[135] It appears that everyday writing in late antiquity was governed by independent pieces of written information, which had to be managed and meaningfully stored.

Empirical support for Locher and Rottländer's thesis may thus be found in the way people organized their daily receipts, that is, in their bookkeeping practices. The "Heroninos archive," an exceptionally vast and intact collection of letters, documents, and accounts found in the Fayum area in Egypt, provides a rare glimpse into how an estate was managed.[136] The documents, dating to the third century CE, are especially interesting for the present purpose, since erudite works similarly dealt with "big estates" in terms of the number of books and excerpts they handled.

Judging from that evidence, it appears that the managers of subunits of the estate had to account for their expenses and profits on a daily basis. They produced quite short accounts from receipts, which were most likely written on the small and cheap materials discussed above. These accounts were then collected by accountants and merged into a detailed monthly account of all the revenues and expenses effected by the estate. These monthly accounts were consolidated once more at the end of the year before a final fair copy of this annual report was produced for the landowner.[137]

This process parallels the one described above for the management of literary data in many ways. Accountants needed to identify a system by which to arrange and store different pieces of information, that is, agree on a shorthand for labeling receipts and entries.[138] The system had to allow for a subsequent, sometimes much later, collation of the information. Similarly, composers sorted their excerpts according to keywords before arranging individual commentaries, drafting, and finally copying them onto a single writing surface. And like the receipts on shards, scraps, and slats that were eventually discarded, the excerpts

Pintaudi, Pieter J. Sijpesteijn, and Roger S. Bagnall, Papyrologica Florentina 18 (Florence: Edizioni Gonnelli, 1989), 203–211 and 221–223, for an illustration of how tablets were made.

[135] See Caroline Bourlet, "Les tabletiers parisiens à la fin du moyen âge," in Lalou, *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, 338–341.

[136] See Dominic Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-Century A.D. Egypt: The Heroninus Archive and the Appianus Estate*, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.

[137] See Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism and Rural Society*, 335–341.

[138] For examples of shorthand in bookkeeping, see Roger S. Bagnall, *The Kellis Agricultural Account Book (P. Kell. IV Gr. 96)*, Dakhleh Oasis Project: Monograph 7, Oxbow Monograph 92 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997), 70.

of a composer, if not purposely discarded, fell prey to decomposition over time. The composers of erudite compilations may not have enjoyed as comprehensive trainings as the *phrontistes* themselves, but they were certainly aware of the standard methods for archiving documents.

The composition and success of lengthy works, whether yearly accounts or literary works, obviously relied on the production of multiple drafts. As Locher and Rottländer have pointed out, a mobile writing carrier that enabled the arrangement of excerpts before fixing them would have facilitated the production of such a coherent work made from excerpts considerably. Tablets, ostraca, and scraps of papyri would easily have allowed for this sort of mobility. Wooden tablets, in particular, are suggestive of such mobility *and* suited for convenient storage, since they allow for the drilling of sturdy holes and subsequent bundling by means of strings. Although tablets have been in use for a long time, the small format appears to have been established in the early imperial period.[139]

This technology had several advantages. Confidential texts were bound together with their messages facing inward and tied with strings on both sides and/or with a cord and sealed.[140] The holes allowed the owner to attach a string and carry the notebook by it.[141] They could serve the purpose of suspending the tablet on a wall for storage in a school or at home to facilitate repeated reading and memorization.[142] Most significant for the present argument, however, is not the fact that tablets with individual content could be tied together but that they could be untied again. If one wanted to change the sequence of the content of such a wooden notebook,

[139] See Andrea Jördens, "Codices des Typs C und die Anfänge des Blätterns," in *Material Aspects of Reading in Ancient and Medieval Cultures. Materiality, Presence and Performance*, ed. Anna Krauss, Jonas Leipziger, and Friederike Schücking-Jungblut, Materiale Textkulturen 26 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 116–117. On prior use of writing tablets, see John Z. Wee, "Phenomena in Writing Creating and Interpreting Variants of the Diagnostic Series Sa-gig," in *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia*, ed. J. Cale Johnson, Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 251–255; or Dorit Symington, "Late Bronze Age Writing-Boards and Their Uses: Textual Evidence from Anatolia and Syria," *Anatolian Studies* 41 (1991): 111–123.

[140] See Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 153. See also Michael A. Speidel, *Die römischen Schreibtafeln von Vindonissa: Lateinische Texte des militärischen Alltags und ihre geschichtliche Bedeutung*, Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft Pro Vindonissa 12 (Brugg, CH: Gesellschaft Pro Vindonissa, 1996), 22–23, for illustrations of sealed tablets.

[141] For the carrying of wooden notebooks on cords, see Brashear and Hoogendijk, "Corpus Tabularum Lignearum," 26, or the picture in Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 154.

[142] On the purpose of the holes in the wood, see Brashear and Hoogendijk, "Corpus Tabularum Lignearum," 26.

or add or remove content, the binding could simply be detached and then retied. In this way, personal *collectanea* could eventually be organized according to topic and disseminated as an encyclopedic work.

The compilation of notes, literary and otherwise, was thus an everyday practice, and it is not surprising that the codex used for literary texts was a development of the account book rather than a prestigious invention in itself.[143] Indeed, references to such *polypticha* point out that literature often took form on this basis. Aulus Gellius's reference to miscellany titled "Woods" (*silva*) was already mentioned. In his work *On Grammarians*, Suetonius similarly quotes from a letter that the *philologus* Lucius Ateius wrote to a certain Hermas: "Remember to recommend my *Hyle* [woods] to others; as you know, it consists of material of every kind, collected in eight hundred books [*libros*]."[144] The seemingly exaggerated number of 800 books becomes more feasible if one conceives of the work as comprised of wooden notebooks of a more resilient making, holding together a mere handful of wooden tablets. Quintilian associates "woods" with draft versions of personal compositions: "An opposite fault is committed by people who elect to make a draft of the whole subject as rapidly as possible, and write impromptu, following the heat and impulse of the moment. They call this draft their 'woods [*silva*]'" (*Inst.* 10.3.17).[145] Still, some people obviously considered even their drafts worthy of a broader audience.

Personal notes, smaller or longer compositions, adapted or paraphrased excerpts, or actual copies appear to have been the basis for larger compositions. This further modifies Locher and Rottländer's thesis about the practice of excerpting directly, and somewhat exclusively, from books. Indeed, erudite compilations often feature what appear to be distinct excerpts from a well-known author but in a version different from what is considered the original or standard version. This has been observed in Julius Africanus's *Cesti* as well as in Ioannes Stobaeus's *Anthology*. Africanus even acknowledges at some point that he uses his own version of the *Nekyia* (Odyssey).[146]

[143] See Jördens, "Codices des Typs C und die Anfänge des Blätterns."

[144] Suetonius, *De illust. gramm.* 10 (Rolfe, LCL).

[145] Translation slightly adapted from Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume 4: Books 9–10*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, LCL 127 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 345. Clearly, then, wooden tablets also served students at a much more advanced stage, who drafted their orations on such tablets. See Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 156, also with reference to Libanius, who mentions tablets in one of his letters (*Ep.* 911.1) and in an oration (*Or.* 35.22) .

[146] In the eighteenth Cestus; see Wallraff et al., *Iulius Africanus Cesti*, xxiv.

Through inheritance, endowment, or copying the *collectanea* of others, people came into the possession of a sort of prefabricated excerpt, which further facilitated the process of compilation and helps account for the speed and productivity of authors. Rosa Maria Piccione suggests that the use of such short anthologies was the reason for Stobaeus's many dittographies.[147] The same practice can account for parallel or almost parallel stories and sayings in rabbinic literature. If a composer (or someone of their staff or team) did not remember or know that the same or similar content they found on a tablet had already been stored in the archive and assigned a different keyword, the piece was inevitably going to end up in a completely different context than its cognate.

Whether draft or fair copy, tablets represented and were associated with people's personal achievements. This notion manifests itself in the few instances in which the Talmud mentions tablets and notebooks, referring to them as *pinqsa* (פינקסא), a loan word from Greek *pinax* (πίναξ). First, the *pinqsa* are usually attributed to their owner. The notebook of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi (b. Shabb. 156a) is mentioned, or the one by Ilfa (b. Menah. 70a). Rabbi Hiyya is said to have had a notebook in which he wrote down his business transactions (b. B. Qam. 99b). The image of personal achievement being visible by the sheer possession of a notebook or through its content stretches into the heavenly realm, where everybody is said to have their own tablet on which their deeds are recorded. This confidential tablet is opened each time someone makes a vow (b. Ned. 22a).[148]

Beyond the association of tablets with memory as internalized knowledge (e.g., Prov. 3:3 and 7:3: "Write [my commandments] on the tablet of your heart"), the examples discussed here show that tablets were the material locus of personal knowledge and achievement.[149] A similar notion can be observed in the Hadith collection *Ṣaḥīḥal-Bukhārī* (d. 870), which lists the different writing surfaces from which the Qur'an was compiled. The list moves from materials directly to the "hearts of men," thereby again drawing a direct line between the physicality of writing and the physicality of the human being: "Then I searched out and collected the parts of the Quran, whether they were written on palm leaves or flat stones or in the

[147] Rosa Maria Piccione, "Sulle fonti e le metodlogie compilativi di Stobaeo," *Eikasmós* 5 (1994): 286–287.

[148] For mentions of wooden tablets in Palestinian rabbinic literature, see Colette Sirat, "Les tablettes à écrire dans le monde juif," in Lalou, *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, 56–58.

[149] Prov. 3:3 (// 7:3) is discussed in Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 34. The terminology "locus of knowledge" is borrowed from Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," 109.

hearts of men."[150] A later recension of Hadith by Ibn 'Atiyya (d. 1147) expands the list of materials: "At the time of the messenger of God, the Qur'an was dispersed in the hearts of people. People wrote some of it on sheets, on palm-leaf stalks, on pumice stone, on baked clay, and on other items like that."[151] Beyond their religious significance, these passages can be read as sources of information about writing culture, data gathering, and compilation during and after late antiquity.

It may be concluded that taking notes, or even composing lengthy literary pieces, on writing surfaces with limited space, such as slats, scraps, or shards, was a practice that accompanied almost any process of writing and studying in late antiquity. This "piecemeal writing practice" resulted from the material circumstances of the time, from the availability and cost of writing surfaces combined with the increased prestige of literacy and the political need for administrators. These givens simultaneously prompted, suggested, and enabled authors' work with excerpts. Although the fair copies in the manuscripts or even prints before us still bear the imprints of these intermediate auxiliary steps, the auxiliaries themselves appear to have been left to decay or were reused once a project had been successfully finished. Regarding rabbinic texts that claim oral transmission, it should be asked to what extent these intermediary stages were considered proper writing at all.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with many intermediate and unobtrusive steps in the creation of complex works such as Pliny's *Natural History* or the Babylonian Talmud. These steps relate mostly to data management which appears to have been a version of the methods applied in bookkeeping. Accountants needed to store receipts and other data retrievably so that they were able to draft a weekly, a monthly, and finally a fair copy of the yearly income and expenses for the landlord. The fact that data management is not discussed by any author of the imperial period or late antiquity confirms the perceived ordinariness of the procedure. A similar sense of ordinariness may also have pervaded the attitude toward the intermediary bits and pieces of information that preceded erudite literary

[150] Francis E. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 180. My thanks to Liran Yadgar for pointing this out to me and providing me with the relevant texts.

[151] Norman Calder, *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature*, ed. and trans. Jawid Mojaddedi and Andrew Rippin (London: Routledge, 2003), 121.

compositions, or a fair copy of the revenue of an estate, for that matter. It should, therefore, be asked whether what rabbinic ontology considers "writing" includes these preliminary notes and compositions, or if the focus is only on fair copies or even only the process of copying the Torah.

This sense of ordinariness is also entangled with the observation that late antiquity's dominant play with excerpts, its perfection of the "jeweled style," is simultaneously the result *and* cause of the era's material givens for writing.[152] Writing on tablets, ostraca, and scraps of papyrus requires precision and brevity, which was converted into a virtue, while the restricting shape of tablets and shards also stimulated creativity.[153]

Such small, intermediate writing surfaces are suggestive of the above-outlined thesis by Locher and Rottländer. According to their model, composers of erudite compilations (commentaries, miscellanies, encyclopedic works) collected excerpts on small surfaces and stored them according to keywords. Once composers set out to write an entry or commentary on a specific topic, they gathered the excerpts with the appropriate descriptor and assembled them in a meaningful way. Thanks to the flexible and loose nature of the excerpts, composers could play with different arrangements without spoiling parchment or paper, and without wasting much time until they settled for one. Finally, the composer compensated for any remaining friction, break, or contradiction between the excerpts by adding remarks, explanations, and objections, or by introducing the perspective that was to follow.

Because of the already-mentioned ordinariness of this method, it is only alluded to or described in metaphorical terms by imperial period and late antique authors. Macrobius, for example, describes the pedagogical program behind *Saturnalia* by invoking the image of the bee. A similar pastoral metaphor appears in the rabbinic treatise *Avot de Rabbi Natan* (A18), an extra-talmudic tractate concerned with the mishnaic tractate Avot (*Sayings of the Fathers*):

> What was Rabbi Akiva like? A worker, who took his basket and went outside. When he found wheat, he put it in the basket. When he found barely, he put it

[152] The term "jeweled style" was coined by Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), who related the habit of using excerpts to the time's literary aesthetics.

[153] On the virtue of brevity, see Quintilian, Inst. 10.3.32–33 [Russel, LCL]): "I do not advise unduly wide wax tablets [*ceras*], because I knew a young man, otherwise a good student, who wrote excessively long pieces [*sermones*], because he measured them by the number of lines; this fault, which could not be corrected by repeated warnings, disappeared when his notebook was changed." For the observation that some texts seem to be in dialogue with the form of the shard on which they are written, see Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 151–152.

in it. Spelt—he put it in. Beans—he put them in. Lentils—he put them in. When he came home he sorted out the wheat by itself, the barley by itself, the spelt by itself, the beans by themselves, and the lentils by themselves. This is what Rabbi Akiva did; he made the entire Torah into rings upon rings.[154]

If the "basket" is taken as metaphor for a miscellaneous notebook, then Rabbi Akiva is here depicted as taking excerpts from different books, metaphorically referred to as wheat, barley, spelt, beans, and lentils. He pools them in a miscellany (the basket) before sorting them out again to provide a commentary on the Torah (the rings). This method matches the one presumably applied by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*.

So far, the metaphor concerning Rabbi Akiva has been read in reference to mnemotechnics and the ancient method of memorizing according to loci. As reported by Cicero, Simonides invented this method when he identified mutilated corpses by recalling where people had been reclining at the banquet before the roof buried them. Cicero concludes that:

for those who would train this part of the mind, places [*locos*] must be selected and those things [*rerum*] which they want to hold in memory must be reproduced in the mind and put in those places: thus, it would be that the order of the places would preserve the order of the things; moreover, the likeness of the things would represent the things themselves, and so we use places instead of a wax tablet, images instead of letters.[155]

The problem with ancient imagery of cognitive processes is that it is based on and shaped along writing processes as Cicero's quote shows. If tablets are a symbol of personally acquired knowledge just like memory, the "tablets of the mind," and if honeycombs refer as much to mentally created loci as to the material locus which is the tablet (or the like), it becomes almost impossible to distinguish where a text speaks of the cognitive ownership of knowledge and where knowledge is owned in a material way. In the end, the value of memorization and, even more so, exegesis remains questionable without the verifiable counterpart of a text.[156]

The next chapter will probe the relationship of the talmudic text to the method of data management described in the present chapter. Since the Talmud itself adheres to the ideology of Oral Torah, it is the text's form and, quite literally, its "texture" that can tell us something about the processes that led to its construction.

[154] Translation follows Barry W. Holtz, *Rabbi Akiva: Sage of the Talmud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 180.
[155] Cicero, *De oratore* 2.353–354, quoted according to Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind*, 83.
[156] See Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," 109.

3

Manufacturing the Talmud

This chapter will apply the insights into imperial period and late antique data management and methods of compilation gained in the previous chapter to the Babylonian Talmud and ask if and how the text's texture reflects these methods. A special focus will be placed on the assignment of keywords and possible methods for arranging the excerpts. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and develop an account of text production that does justice to the microstructure of the text (its texture) and cultural ideals of text composition, as well as material and practical aspects in play.

The arguments put forward here elaborate on the premise laid out in the previous two chapters, namely, that the Babylonian Talmud is an erudite commentary with a discursive (symposiac) structure composed of excerpts taken from simple books made from wooden tablets, single quire papyrus books, rotuli and other small scrolls, as well as individual, piecemeal compositions and notes written on all kinds of small surfaces. From a comparative perspective it must be assumed that the person in charge of the project, was assisted by educated servants, family members, students, or copyists, as need be. Whenever I refer to "the composers" I have this heterogenous group in mind and not necessarily a whole generation of rabbinic sages.

The present chapter will discuss the structure of three commentaries to mishnaic lemmas. Based on their structure, it will be shown how the composers proceeded and how material auxiliaries can be gleaned from the text or, more specifically, the text's texture. In the last section, the chapter will, from the same comparative perspective, briefly address the Babylonian Talmud's relationship to the Palestinian Talmud.

ESSENTIAL BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE TALMUDIC COMMENTARY: LEMMAS, KEYWORDS, AND EXCERPTS

Like other erudite composers, the composers of the Babylonian Talmud must have spent some time collecting and toiling through the written output of men who had studied Palestinian rabbinic traditions and reflected on them in their own writings. They had collected, read, and sorted drafts, orations, eulogies, exegetical stories, medical recipes, and collections of sayings. They dissected the material into meaningful units of quite different sizes and shapes. Some tablets or other loose writing surfaces could certainly be sorted in their entirety as they represented a thematic unit or formed a distinct composition. The content of others was divided into distinct units and then copied onto another surface. Each of these units was given a main, most likely also a secondary and even tertiary, keyword and stored accordingly. These descriptors might have included references to a particular Mishnah, section from the Bible (parashah), a biblical character, a rabbinic sage, a difficult word, or a topic.

To someone with a certain degree of literary training – of which we suspect not only the composers of the Talmud but most, if not all, rabbinic sages – annotating a text was not something peculiar. Quintilian, for example, advised his students always to leave a margin for attaching keywords:

> Space should also be left for noting points which (as often happens) occur to the writer out of order, that is to say belonging to contexts other than those which are being worked on. Sometimes excellent ideas force themselves upon us, which it is wrong to include at this point and yet unsafe to postpone, because they sometimes escape the memory, and sometimes distract us from other lines of thought because we are concentrating on remembering them. They are therefore best put in store. (Inst. 10.3.33 [Russel, LCL])

Martial annotated even the shortest of his epigrams with titles. These might not only have helped readers to choose what to read as Martial hoped (*Epig.* 14.2) but helped the systematic excerption by prospective authors as well. It is therefore quite possible that the talmudic composers sometimes found titles or notes next to the passages they wished to excerpt that were useful for determining keywords.

We do not know how composers determined that they had collected sufficient data to start their projects. Some may have had in mind a certain set of books and compositions ("woods") they wanted to read thoroughly before starting; for others, the determining factor may have been a certain time frame or money. Neither do we know if the composers of the Talmud were restricted by available sources, or if they restricted

themselves, whether they classified every single meaningful unit in a library or archive, or whether they made choices. Once the data was gathered, however, it may be assumed that, like Pliny, they attempted to make use of every excerpt in the database, even though it was sometimes difficult to adequately use them.

Once the material was annotated with keywords and stored accordingly, the composers could begin their project. The basic structure was clear: the work should follow the order and "text" of the Mishnah.[1] The identification of significant lemmas, on the other hand, was probably less obvious. It is possible that there existed lists of problematic words (*scholia*) for the Mishnah, maybe even a sort of doxography, that were used to choose lemmas. Then again, the lemmas in the Babylonian Talmud are often identical with those in the Palestinian Talmud. It would indeed have made sense to consult the Palestinian predecessor in terms of structure and selection of lemmas, since this would have considerably eased the burden of the intellectual work to be done. Indeed, as will be shown further below, without ever openly referring to the Palestinian Talmud, the composers of the Babylonian Talmud made significant use of it in exactly such subtle ways.

It should be noted that when I refer to lemmas, I do not refer to the mishnaic text as it appears in our printed editions, which usually render the whole Mishnah even where the Talmud comments only on a single word in it or a single sentence. The mishnaic text was absent from the original talmudic text; medieval manuscripts sometimes provide the portion of the Mishnah that will be discussed at the beginning of a chapter. In fact, the text from the Mishnah that is inserted in the printed editions is often disruptive to understanding the original arrangement of the talmudic text. Rather, the lemma relevant to the composers is the word or semisentence from the Mishnah that is taken up and cited in the talmudic text – sometimes abruptly, sometimes as a question.

Confusingly, the lemma is *not* identical with the keywords by which the excerpts were chosen for the commentary that follows it. Although a lemma often matches one of the descriptors, it may also just not do that. The reason for this is that the material collected by the composers did not necessarily match the chosen mishnaic lemmas, since lemmas and excerpts resulted from different selection processes. In other words, the collection of excerpts grew somewhat organically around meaningful descriptors

[1] As pointed out above, it is not clear to what extent and in what form the text of the Mishnah was available.

and not around lemmas from the Mishnah. These two things – the excerpts and the lemmas – were only brought together once the composer started working on the actual book, the Talmud.

This is a difficulty that Pliny, for example, did not face, since he could adapt his lemmas according to the descriptors that he had only roughly determined prior to starting his collection of natural things. With the choice for the commentary structure, however, the composers of the Talmud were bound to choose lemmas from the mishnaic text while being tied to their set of excerpts with its own keywords. Therefore, they had to resort to additional descriptors apart from the obvious ones provided by the lemmas in order to make good use of the collected excerpts. Voluntarily or involuntarily, this resulted in a work of miscellaneous scope, rather than just a slightly more extensive scholion.[2]

A first and detailed example from tractate Gittin 67b will now serve to illustrate the strategies used to assign descriptors. This passage is the beginning of a commentary on the lemma *qordiaqos* already known to the reader from Chapter 1. The lemma *qordiaqos* appears in m. Gittin 7:1 and is a corruption of a Greek or Latin technical term.[3] The composers introduce the new lemma in the form of a question – quite an easy and fertile way to start a dialogue with and between excerpts. Upon the question "What is *qordiaqos*?" follow multiple answers, which are subsequently discarded or approved. As will be shown subsequently, the composers introduce the keywords that will dominate the rest of the commentary that runs through b. Gittin 70b by way of these answers. I will support my arguments for the text's makeup visually by rendering

[2] See discussion in Chapter 1.

[3] קורדיקוס. Scholars have tried to reestablish the etymology of the term *qordiaqos* in different ways. Julius Preuss, *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Heilkunde und der Kultur überhaupt* (Berlin: S. Krager, 1911), 368–369, suggested a transliteration from the ancient Latin indication *morbus cardiacus*, a disease that is described by Caelius Aurelianus as relating to the heart and stomach. Samuel Kottek, on the other hand, proposed a derivation from the Greek *kórdax*, *kórdākos*, describing a dance performed in drunkenness. "Selected Elements of Talmudic Medical Terminology, with Special Consideration to Greco-Latin Influences and Sources," *ANRW* 37.2:2924–2925. In the Latin lists of home remedies, an indication termed *ad cardiacos* appears either before (e.g., in Pseudo-Pliny) or after (e.g., in Pseudo-Apuleius) epilepsy (*ad comitialem morbum*). This stresses the notion of a sudden and upsetting condition. Kai Brodersen translates it in both instances as "for the diseased of the heart [*Herzkranke*]." Kai Broderson, ed. and trans., *Plinius' kleine Reiseapotheke* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2015), 123. On Pseudo-Apuleius, see Kai Broderson, ed. and trans., *Pseudo-Apuleius Heilkräuterbuch (Herbarius)* (Wiesbaden: Marixverlag, 2015), 31. However, *cardiacus*, as against *cordis, heart*, generally appears in Latin dictionaries as referring to a sick stomach; also consider the French metaphor "avoir mal au coeur," which refers to the same ailment. *Qordiaqos* could thus refer to both a heart attack and a sudden sickness.

the excerpts with which I believe the composers worked in italics, while rendering their own additions in Roman.

What is *qordiaqos*?
Samuel said: "*The one who is bitten by new wine from the wine press.*"
If so, then let [the Mishnah] teach "the one who is 'bitten' by new wine" [instead of using the term *qordiaqos*].
[Rather] this is what [the Mishnah] teaches us: "*The name of the spirit is Qordiaqos*."
From this [statement] it can be inferred [that this knowledge serves to write] an amulet [against the spirit named Qordiaqos]. (b. Git. 67b)

The most straightforward keyword to look for in the collection of excerpts is, in this case, obviously *qordiaqos*. Yet, it seems that the search for the descriptor *qordiaqos* yielded only two excerpts. One is the statement attributed to Samuel, the very first excerpt used in this passage. As it stands now, this excerpt feels truncated. This can be confirmed based on two other statements that follow much later in the commentary. These statements make use of the same stereotyped language and are likewise introduced with the formula "The one who …." Yet, while these two sayings about seizures have a message, the truncated one attributed to Samuel does not. The two sayings read:

Mar Uqba said: "The one who drinks white tilia will be seized by *witeq*."[4]
Rav Yehuda said: "The one who sits on Nissan mornings next to a fire, rubs oil [on his body], goes out, and sits in the sun will be seized by *witeq*." (b. Git. 69b)

In all likelihood, then, the original saying by Samuel stated:

Samuel said: "The one who is bitten by new wine from the wine press will be seized by *qordiaqos*."

Another proof that Samuel's answer is a truncated excerpt is that it talks past the question "What is *qordiaqos*?" The answer, "The one who is bitten by new wine," is describing the cause of *qordiaqos*, not what it actually *is*. The appropriate question to match this answer would have been "Who is seized by *qordiaqos*?" but the answer to this question would have brought about the logical end of this commentary. Rather, the composers were only able to move beyond the issue of who is seized by *qordiaqos* and use the rest of their selected excerpts by asking about the nature of *qordiaqos*. This is at the same time a clever and a stereotypical move. If the lemma is an unintelligible word, the composers usually introduce it with

[4] Alternatively, "… and *ytq*." Verb (יתק) and noun (יתק) remain untranslated in *DJPA* and in *DJBA*. Jastrow, see "יתק," translates the noun as "senility, debility," based on context.

the open question "What is XY?"[5] In addition, the first explanation of a lemma is often attributed to Samuel.[6]

The other excerpt containing the term *qordiaqos* that the composers found in their collection was the sentence "*The name of the spirit* [*ruha*] *is Qordiaqos*." This sentence also seems to be an epitome from an excerpt that is used elsewhere in the Talmud. This excerpt discusses the features of three types of demons, the *ruha* (רוחא), the *shida* (שידא), and the *rishpa* (רישפא), and explains where the respective demons reside (b. Pesah. 111b). In tractate Pesahim as well as in Gittin, the composers infer that this kind of information is useful to write an amulet. In both cases, the composers use the very same terminology.[7]

It appears, therefore, that the composers found in their collection only two excerpts that referred directly to *qordiaqos*: the saying which they attributed to Samuel and the one that interprets *qordiaqos* as the name of a spirit. The composers could have stopped the commentary after adding these two excerpts to the lemma and moved to the next lemma, since they had used the total number of excerpts with corresponding descriptors. Yet, as we saw in the first chapter, composers of erudite commentaries considered each of their lemmas like a topic of inquiry (*thesis*).[8] From the next few lines of the commentary, the keywords that governed this inquiry and the choice of excerpts can be inferred:

> What is his [i.e., the one suffering from *qordiaqos*] cure?
> Red meat on coals and diluted wine. (b. Git. 67b)

This new take on *qordiaqos* seems to imply "that the term אסותא ('cure') refers here both to the healing of the malady, that is, the drunkenness brought on from the drinking of new wine, and the removal of the offending *kordiakos* spirit."[9] Yet the initial definition of *qordiaqos* as a form of

[5] E.g., b. Avod. Zar. 8b ("What are *qartesim*?") or b. Avod. Zar. 10a ("What does *ginusiah* mean?").

[6] This feature led Baruch Bokser to propose that among the sources used by the composers was a scholion on the Mishnah written by or at least attributed to Samuel; see Baruch M. Bokser, *Samuel's Commentary on the Mishnah: Its Nature, Forms and Content, Part One; Mishnayot in the Order of Zera'im*, *SJLA* 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1975).

[7] נפקא מינה לקמיעא.

[8] *Locus* in Cicero's terms; Cicero, *Part. or.* 5.

[9] Dan Levene, "'A Happy Thought of the Magicians': The Magical Get," in *Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff*, ed. Robert Deutsch (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2003), 179. In my opinion, this friction arises from the composers' need to respond to every single one of their selected *descriptores*.

drunkenness had been discarded, while the demon named Qordiaqos was said to be warded off with an amulet. Instead, the composers introduce here a new definition of *qordiaqos* as an affliction that can be cured with red meat and diluted wine. The excerpt that follows *after* this statement seems to be the original source of this turnaround:

> Abaye said: Mother told me: *For the sun[stroke] of one day: a pitcher of water; for that of two days: bloodletting; for the one that lasts three days: red meat on coals and diluted wine*. (b. Git. 67b)[10]

The composers connected *qordiaqos* to a sunstroke that lasts for three days. This is a distinctly different explanation, unrelated to the previous ones, and particularly striking since this recipe excerpt does not refer to *qordiaqos* at all. Moreover, as we shall see, the keywords that will govern the commentary from here onward are derived from this therapy for a sunstroke "that lasts three days" and its cure. They are "cure," "meat," and "wine."

Scholars have long noted that in otherwise inexplicable thematic leaps in the Babylonian Talmud, it is often useful to consult the Palestinian Talmud and its commentary on the same lemma, the same Mishnah, or related topics. Leib Moscovitz noted that without consideration of parallels in the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud's procedures for generating arguments often remain obscure.[11] Moulie Vidas observed that the "anonymous stratum" often draws from the Palestinian Talmud for objection and proof.[12] And Alyssa Gray has shown that the Babylonian Talmud appears to look to the Palestinian Talmud to arrange "a complex sugya using materials marked as relevant to the issue."[13] The following analysis will corroborate these observations: The turn against the other two opinions about the meaning of *qordiaqos* is fueled by an

[10] The association with heat seems to suggest that the term שמשא (lit., sun) might refer to fever. Yet the term אישתא (fire) is used to indicate fever as well (e.g., in b. Shabb. 66–67a). The difference in terminology may refer to the cause of the fever: "sun" refers to a fever caused by sunstroke, and "fire" refers to a fever caused by inflammation.

[11] See Leib Moscovitz, "'Designation Is Significant': An Analysis of the Conceptual Sugya in bSan 47b–48b," *AJSR* 27, no. 2 (November 2003).

[12] See Moulie Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 52–53.

[13] Alyssa M. Gray, *A Talmud in Exile: The Influence of Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah on the Formation of Bavli Avodah Zarah*, BJS 342 (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2005), 240. See also Martin S. Jaffee, "The Babylonian Appropriation of the Talmud Yerushalmi: Redactional Studies in the Horayot Tractates," in vol. 4 of *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989).

impulse from the Palestinian Talmud. I will further build on Gray's claim by showing how the composer uses the Palestinian Talmud to determine the keywords for his own inquiry.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PALESTINIAN TALMUD ON THE KEYWORDS

There is no real parallel commentary on the lemma *qordiaqos* in the Palestinian Talmud. This renders the case even more interesting. Rather than just *qordiaqos*, the Palestinian commentary takes the whole Mishnah as its lemma (y. Git. 48c). The Babylonian Talmud, on the other hand, focuses first on *qordiaqos* alone and follows up on the rest of the Mishnah only in its next commentary (b. Git. 70b–71a).

For the commentary on m. Git. 7:1, the Palestinian Talmud falls back on the same commentary it uses for y. Ter. 40b, which follows upon the lemma "Five persons cannot make a heave offering, etc." Although the one seized by *qordiaqos* is not among these five people, he is mentioned later in the commentary when the discussion turns from heave offerings to divorce. This brief mention of *qordiaqos* was most likely the reason for the reuse (or initial use) of this commentary in y. Gittin. This may indicate that the author of the Palestinian Talmud also composed based on keywords.

The Palestinian commentary briefly discusses the signs denoting a *shoteh*, an "insane person" relevant to the y. Terumot lemma, before turning to the one seized by *qordiaqos*. The discussion concludes that none of the characteristics of a *shoteh* apply to the one seized by *qordiaqos*. Significantly, the Palestinian commentary then asks the question with which the Babylonian one started. The answer, however, is quite different:

> What is *qordiaqos*?
> Rabbi Yose said: "*hi*[*a?*]*mmim* [המים]."[14] (y. Git. 48c)

Unfortunately, the answer is unintelligible and either a corrupt term or a *hapax legomenon*.[15] Julius Preuss translated the word via a term from

[14] Due to the absence of vocals in the Aramaic script, the term could read *himmim* or *hammim*.

[15] The manuscripts of y. Git. 48b–c and y. Ter. 40b read המים, except for Ms. Vatican on Terumot, which reads המיני. For המים, see Peter Schäfer and Hans-Jürgen Becker, eds., *Ordnung Zera'im: Terumot, Ma'aśerot, Ma'śer Sheni, Ḥalla, 'Orla und Bikkurim*, vol. 1 of *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans-Jürgen Becker, *TSAJ* 35 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992). For המיני, see Peter Schäfer and Hans-Jürgen Becker, eds., *Ordnung Nashim*, vol. 3 of Schäfer and Becker, *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi*.

biblical Hebrew as *hamim* [חמם], hot, like in "to be hot, febrile."[16] *Hamim* might then be translated as a plural, meaning "heats." The composers of the Babylonian Talmud must also have reached the same conclusion, since they turned to the medical recipes within their collection to find a cure for "heats."

But why did they decide that a recipe against a three-day-long heatstroke would be the one that cured *qordiaqos*? Again, the answer seems to be given by the story that follows next in the Palestinian commentary. Most manuscripts read the account, which is again corrupt, as follows: "There was a Tarsian and they brought him red in *avus* [אבוס] and he was weary [or: he worked], *avus* in red and he was weary [or: he worked]" (y. Git. 48b–c).[17] The context implies that the Tarsian was seized by *qordiaqos* and that people tried to cure him.

Regrettably, the ingredients of the cure and its outcome are not obvious, and many questions remain. What is red in *avus*? Does "red" refer to wine or to a spice? And what is *avus*? Neither is it entirely clear whether the outcome was positive or negative.[18] What appears, however, is that in their version of the Palestinian commentary, the composers of the

[16] Cited and contested in Fred Rosner, *Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud: Selections from Classical Jewish Sources, Augmented Edition*, Library of Jewish Law and Ethics 5 (New York: Ktav; New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1977), 62.

[17] Mss. Venice, Leiden, Moskva, London, Amsterdam, and Constantinople. For the arbitrary meanings of the verb לעי, see *DJBA*, see "לעי." The Vatican manuscript, on the other hand, has a slightly different version: "There was a Tarsian and they brought him red in a cup [גוא סמוק] and he was weary [or: he worked], *avus* in red [אבוס גו סמוק], and he … [unclear, maybe: prophesied?]."

[18] Some translators tried to solve the riddle by collating this story with the recipe of the Babzlonian Talmud. Jastrow, see "סימוק, סימוקא," for example, translated, "they gave him dark wine after red meat," reading סימוק גו אכים in his text. Gerd Wewers in *Terumot: Priesterhebe*, trans. Gerd A. Wewers, vol. 1 of *Übersetzung des Talmud Yerushalmi*, ed. Friedrich Avemarie, Hans-Jürgen Becker, Martin Hengel, Frowald Gil Hüttenmeister, and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 8, reads, "Einem Weber gab man rotes (= mageres) Fleisch und fettes Fleisch, und er wurde müde; (man gab ihm) fettes und rotes Fleisch, und er wurde müde." Similarly, also Bill Rebiger, trans., *Gittin: Scheidebrief*, vol. 3 of *Übersetzung des Talmud Yerushalmi*, ed. Friedrich Avemarie, Hans-Jürgen Becker, Martin Hengel, Frowald Gil Hüttenmeister, and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 158, translates: "A weaver was given red (=lean) meat and fatty meat and he became tired. Fatty meat and red meat and he became tired." *DJPA*, see "לעי," on the other hand, refers to the passage as too "uncertain" to be translated. Interestingly, a story in Aristotle, *On Marvellous Things Heard*, shares some of the features of the story about the Tarsian and is somewhat similarly confusing: "In Tarentum they say that a seller of wine went mad at night but sold wine by day. For he kept the key of his room at his girdle, and, though many tried to get it from him and take it, he never lost it" (Aristotle, *On Marvelous Things Heard*, 32) [Hett, LCL]). Although the story is originally in Greek, it is interesting to note that key in Latin is *clavis* and hence not too far from *avus* (possibly *avis*).

Babylonian Talmud understood "red" as referring to red meat, or wine, or to red meat and "diluted wine" (*avus*). In any event, "red" and "wine" appear only as cures for a sunstroke of three days, and so the composers settled on this affliction as being equal to *qordiaqos*.

The story about the Tarsian in the Palestinian Talmud further contains an inversion of the cure. The Tarsian was first treated with "red in *avus*" and then with "*avus* in red." In overt imitation of the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian composers similarly add a story to their commentary in which a reversed recipe plays a role. The effect of the inverted recipe, however, is here also inverted, a punch line that is (now?) missing in the story related in the Palestinian Talmud.

> Rav Amram the Pious: When those from the house of the exilarch wanted to cause him physical pain, they made him sleep in the snow. The following day they asked him: "What would be satisfactory to the master that we could bring him?" He said [to himself]: "These [men]! Everything I tell them, they will reverse it to its contrary." [Therefore] he told them: "Red meat on coals and diluted wine." They brought him fatty meat on coals and undiluted wine. (b. Git. 67b)

Allusions to the Palestinian commentary continue to show up throughout the Babylonian commentary on *qordiaqos*. An inverted statement similar to "red in *avus* … *avus* in red" appears subsequently in the Babylonian commentary in a story about Rav Sheshet, who is eating different kinds of meat in the house of the exilarch ("black in white and white in black"). The otherwise completely unrelated *shoteh*, the "insane person" who dominates the commentary in y. Git. 48b–c, turns up in the Babylonian commentary as well (b. Git. 68b). In the story in which the *shoteh* is mentioned, he is characterized as a person who does not stick to his word and constantly changes his opinion. The *shoteh* is thereby placed in the same category as the one seized by *qordiaqos* as he is described in the Mishnah, a man unable to stick to his decision to get divorced. This opinion will explicitly be attributed to Rabbi Yohanan in the Babylonian Talmud's next commentary (b. Git. 70b) but is unknown to the Palestinian Talmud, which, in fact, states the opposite, namely, that the signs for the *shoteh* differ from those characterizing the one seized by *qordiaqos* (y. Git. 48b).

Throughout, it appears that the composers of the Babylonian Talmud both depend on the Palestinian Talmud and constantly demonstrate their independence from it, using the predecessor variably as a source of inspiration, a template, or even a foil.[19] As will be discussed later, this

[19] See also the conclusion by Gray, *Talmud in Exile*, 241.

literary behavior points to a chronological proximity of the works rather than the opposite.

Two factors seem to have been decisive for the Babylonian composers' choice of keywords: the mishnaic lemma, and the content and focus of the Palestinian commentary on the same Mishnah. In the present example, the latter pointed to an identification of *qordiaqos* with a three-day sunstroke, curable by lean meat on coals and diluted wine. The composers' analysis of the Palestinian Talmud's knowledge of *qordiaqos* added the keywords "cure," "meat," and "wine" to the straightforward lemma "*qordiaqos*." There is not a single excerpt in this Babylonian commentary on *qordiaqos* that will not correspond to one or even two of these keywords.

THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF THE TALMUDIC COMMENTARIES

Now that we have identified the keywords as "cure," "meat," and "wine," we can focus on the way in which the excerpts were arranged and ask if the composers followed a certain pattern. Such a pattern would ideally have met the needs of both composers and users. It would have assisted the composers in choosing how to arrange the excerpts in a meaningful order, at the same time facilitating the users' future recollection of the content. Ideally, and this is the purpose and advantage of pursuing a dialectic form as discussed in the Chapter 1, the arrangement would simultaneously teach the art of learned conversation and content.

Classical rhetoric with its five stages of composition, one of which is "arrangement," might be a profitable place to look for such a pattern. The five stages were (1) the search for arguments, (2) their arrangement, (3) refined work on their expression, (4) memorization, and (5) delivery.[20] Cicero explains the stages' meaning as follows:

> Invention [*inventio*] is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible. Arrangement [*dispositio*] is the distribution of arguments thus discovered in the proper order. Expression [*elocutio*] is the fitting of the proper language to the invented matter. Memory [*memoria*] is the firm mental grasp of matter and words. Delivery [*preceptio*] is the control of voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subject matter and the style. (*De inventione* 1.7 [Hubbell, LCL])

[20] See Erik Gunderson, "Rhetorical Terms," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, ed. Erik Gunderson, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 292–293.

These steps are meant to guide the orator in the creation of a plausible and persuasive speech conceived in writing but delivered from memory. The structure of the speech had to facilitate the orator's memorization and the audience's recollection. Most of these aims were shared by composers and authors alike. Whether the work was being studied in private or read to someone else, performativity, persuasion, and recollection were most welcome benefits. In fact, the Talmud's engaging dialectic structure seems to be at its best when read out loud.

At the stage of composing the commentary presently under discussion, the composers have identified the keywords for their commentary on *qordiaqos* and collected the relevant excerpts. They have thus completed the stage of "invention," the search for arguments, a stage that shares considerable overlap with "inquiry" (see Chapter 1). They are now ready to start working on the arrangement of "arguments" which are, in the case of a compilation, excerpts. Indeed, although rhetoric left the confinements of the courtroom in the imperial period and "argument" can reasonably be exchanged here for "excerpt," the juridical impetus remained in place.[21] Excerpts are often treated as witnesses and the audience took over the position of the judge.

The four basic elements of arrangement are the introduction (*prooimion/exordium*), the narration of the case (*diēgēsis/narratio*), the proofs (*probatio/pistis*), and the peroration (*epilogos/peroratio*). All of these elements have their designated function: The proem should secure the attention of the audience by pointing to the necessity of what is to follow. Asking and expounding on a pressing question, quoting a proverb, or telling a short story often achieves this purpose. After the introduction, the narration recounts the facts of the case selectively and tendentiously in order to influence the audience. The names of people involved, as well as times and places where the case happened, are explicitly mentioned. This narration of facts is followed by the proofs, "generally the most substantial portion of a speech."[22] The proofs are elaborately illustrated in order to persuade and teach the audience. Finally, to conclude the presentation, the peroration recapitulates the main points and often makes "vigorous efforts to move the passions of the audience by stirring up anger or pity."[23]

[21] See Jaś Elsner, introduction to *Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture*, ed. Jaś Elsner and Michel Meyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3.
[22] Gunderson, "Rhetorical Terms," 292.
[23] Gunderson, "Rhetorical Terms," 292.

Although it had been developed for and in the courtroom, the art of rhetoric emancipated itself from any specific topic of speech.[24] Once trained in these four elements, students could use them to compose their own pieces on whatever subject piqued their interest. The orators of the Second Sophistic contributed significantly to the popularizing of rhetorical strategies for anybody who wanted to speak persuasively in public about anything.[25] As students grew acquainted with the standard model, they started taking the liberty of expanding, contracting, rearranging, or omitting elements (Quintilian, *Inst.* 4–6). At a minimum level, however, "the strongest arguments should come at the beginning and end of the proof, and weaker points should be placed in the middle."[26]

Coming back to the commentary on *qordiaqos*, it appears that the material can roughly be divided into four sections: an introduction (b. Git. 67b), a section with two lengthy stories (b. Git. 67b–68b), a section with medical recipes (b. Git. 69a–70a), and a section with sayings that caution against unhealthy – including immoral – behavior (b. Git. 70a–b). This structure could, of course, just be coincidental. Yet the carefully crafted introduction gives the plan of the commentary away – in artfully reversed order.

A proem, as we have seen, should draw the audience's attention to the topic and lay out the arguments in a preliminary, "humble," way, so as to pretend to be spontaneous and not prepared in advance (Cicero, *De*

[24] See Catherine Steel, "Divisions of Speech," in Gunderson, *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, 78.

[25] On the Second Sophistic, see Ryan C. Fowler, "The Second Sophistic," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Ryan C. Fowler and Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas, "A Prolegomena to the Third Sophistic," in *Plato in the Third Sophistic*, ed. Ryan C. Fowler, Millennium-Studien/Millennnium Studies 50 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), on the subsequent Third Sophistic. They distinguish the Third from the Second Sophistic mainly on the basis of the content of the orations, which, after Constantine, turned into what are usually labeled "sermons." The critique – by Lieve Van Hoof, "Greek Rhetoric and the Late Roman Empire: The 'Bubble' of the 'Third Sophistic,'" *L'Antiquité Tardive* 18 (January 2010), and Averil Cameron, "Culture Wars: Late Antiquity and Literature," in *Libera Curiositas: Mélanges d'histoire romaine et d'Antiquité tardive offerts à Jean-Michel Carrié*, ed. Christel Freu, Sylvain Janniard, and Arthur Ripoli, Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive 31 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 311–313 – concerns the danger that the concept of the Third Sophistic might pen late antique rhetoric into rather classicizing forms. Indeed, Henry Fischel referred simply to "popular rhetoric," which became "the usual medium of the Greco-Roman writer-scholar-administrator classes." "Story and History: Observations on Greco-Roman Rhetoric and Pharisaism," in *American Oriental Society, Middle West Branch, Semi-Centennial Volume: A Collection of Original Essays*, ed. Denis Sinor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 65n31.

[26] Steel, "Divisions of Speech," 83.

inv. 1.17). One way of opening an oration is to address the audience with a pressing question. This is precisely the case in the Gittin commentary under discussion, which opens with "What is *qordiaqos*?" Indeed, there is not just a hint of a proem discernible in this commentary: it is a masterpiece composed of one miniature excerpt from each one of the three sections that are to follow, that is, narration, proofs, and peroration. The excerpts chosen for the proem reference the keyword "cure" and, within this category, "bodily warmth," as the curative side of the destructive *hamim* of the Palestinian Talmud.

In the following review of the entire proem to the *qordiaqos* commentary, miniature excerpts of larger text chunks that will be used later in the commentary are rendered in italics and are marked by a bold letter to facilitate the discussion in the next section:

Proem

What is *qordiaqos*?
Samuel said: "The one who is bitten by new wine from the wine press." (**a**)
If so, then let [the Mishnah] teach "the one who is 'bitten' by new wine" [instead of using the term *qordiaqos*].

[Rather] this is what [the Mishnah] teaches us: "The name of the spirit is Qordiaqos."

From this [statement] it can be inferred [that this knowledge serves to write] an amulet [against the spirit named Qordiaqos].

What is his cure?

Abaye said: Mother told me: For the sunstroke of one day: a pitcher of water; for that of two days: bloodletting; for that of three days: red meat on coals and diluted wine; *for a longer sunstroke: Bring a black hen, tear it open crosswise. Shave the middle of [the patient's] head and place [the hen] on [the head] until it sticks. Then [the patient] should go down and stand neck-deep in water until [the patient] becomes tired from the world upon him. Then [the patient] should submerge himself, ascend, and sit down. And if not, he should eat leeks and go down and stand neck-deep in water until he becomes tired from the world upon him.* (**b**)

Against the "sun": red meat on coals and diluted wine; against the "snow": fatty meat on coals and undiluted wine.

Rav Amram the Pious: When those from the house of the exilarch wanted to cause him physical pain, they made him sleep in the snow. The following day they asked him: "What would be satisfactory to the master that we could bring him?" He said [to himself]: "These [men]! Everything I tell them, they will reverse it to its contrary." [Therefore] he told them: "Red meat on coals and diluted wine." They brought him fatty meat on coals and undiluted wine. (**c**)

Yalta heard [this]. She brought him into a bathhouse. She made him stand in the water of the bathhouse until the water of the bathhouse changed and became blood,[27] and it fell off from him "coin by coin."

Rav Yosef would busy himself with the grindstone; Rav Sheshet would busy himself with logs. He said: "Great is the work that warms its performers!"[28] (b. Git. 67b)

Excerpts (a), (b), and (c) can each be linked to one section: (a) to the peroration; (b) to the proofs; and (c) to the narration. The order of topics to be addressed is thereby nicely reversed in the proem, since it starts with an excerpt belonging to the final section.

The saying attributed to Samuel (a) was already discussed above and seems to be part of a tripartite sayings composition on things causing seizures. The other two sayings on seizures are used in the fourth part of the commentary, the peroration, which runs from b. Git. 70a until the next mishnaic lemma is raised in b. Git. 70b. Together with other sayings, which essentially relate to the encouragement of a healthy lifestyle by means of avoidance of certain foods or behaviors, the two statements are part of the concluding paragraph of the commentary. After an account of many unhealthy choices in the narration and a long series of medical recipes in place of the proofs, the composers apparently thought such preventive statements suitable for ending the commentary. The sayings thereby stand in place of the recapitulation and confirmation of arguments characteristic of the juridical peroration. The latter are often used to stir up anger, disgust, or pity in the audience.[29] In fact, this may well have been the reaction of the audience to this listing of health issues provoked by the combination of certain foodstuffs or by performing certain sexual acts.

Significantly, the commentary closes with a series of numerical sayings that follow the formula "Three things wither the strength of man, and they are these: fear, travelling [lit. road], and sin" (b. Git. 70a–b). These seem to pick up on the way memorable and memorizable endings had to be created in preliminary rhetorical exercises (*progymnasmata*) for fables. If there was a place according to rhetorical standards for this excerpt with numerical sayings referring to health issues, it was clearly the peroration. Yet even this excerpt is interrupted by other miniature

[27] Mss. Munich 95 and Arras 889: "She made him stand in the water, and it was blood."

[28] A slight variant of this Hebrew saying is found in b. Ned. 49b: "Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Shimon, when carrying goods to the study house, used to say: 'Great is the labor that honors its performers!'"

[29] See Gunderson, "Rhetorical Terms," 292.

excerpts and comments, which not only relate to the same content but, most importantly, maintain the ongoing dialogue structure.

The second excerpt in the proem (b) is a medical recipe against extended sunstroke, which the composers added to another recipe against one-, two-, and three-day-old sunstroke. The distinctly different style of the recipe, in spite of it addressing the same condition, betrays it as yet another originally distinct excerpt. A lengthy list of recipes with this exact same structure is most likely the source of this recipe. A big chunck of this list, which is again occasionally interspersed with excerpts from other sources and miniature dialogues, stands in the *qordiaqos* commentary in the place of the proofs. In rhetorical speeches, the proofs aim to persuade the public of the speaker's opinion. Within this commentary, the list of recipes similarly takes the form of an accumulation of facts. Twenty-two recipes with, at times, multiple therapies make a case for the fact that there is a cure for every disease, every budget, and every season. They persuade the reader of the validity of the cure given for *qordiaqos* and teach the basics of self-medication to cure the most common diseases.[30]

The third miniature excerpt in the proem (c) was part of a long story that now forms the bulk of the narration. Aelius Theon introduces the basic components of the narration in his rhetorical exercises as follows:

> Narrative is language descriptive of things that have happened or as though they had happened. Elements of narration [*diēgēsis*] are six: the person, whether that be one or many; and the action done by the person; and the place where the action was done; and the time at which it was done; and the manner of the action; and sixth, the cause of these things. (*Progym.* 78)[31]

The narration draws attention to people, location, cause, and manner. Indeed, as we have seen, both the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmuds make their cases for *qordiaqos* based on stories – one about a Tarsian weaver and the other about Rav Amram and the exilarch's household staff. Significantly, the exact date and geographical location, crucial for the narration of facts before a judge, is usually omitted in literary contexts. Moreover, the narration did not necessarily have to be true; plausibility was sufficient. This is certainly problematic and was repeatedly criticized, causing orators to defend their use of rhetoric

[30] The list and the type of medicine it embraces will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.
[31] George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, *WGRW* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 28.

in public speeches.[32] This nonrestriction to true events, together with rhetoric's focus on persuasion, was productively exploited in literary compositions.[33]

The narration section of the *qordiaqos* commentary was clearly assembled according to the keywords "meat" and "wine." The first paragraph, which follows directly upon the proem, lists two case stories, both of which involve significant consumption of meat and wine. In one story, Rav Sheshet wittily avoids being tricked by the household staff of the exilarch into eating non-kosher as well as unhealthy pieces of meat. In the other story, Solomon's servant Benaiah only overcomes the demon Ashmedai because the latter became intoxicated with wine. Later in that same story, the biblical King Solomon drank and ate too much and is unable to meet the king of the demons.[34] The stories that constitute the section of the narration (b. Git. 67b–70b) thereby provide cases of wrong meat and wine consumption, all while naming people and vague locations.

The juxtaposition of the paragraphs with a discussion of the rhetorical division of speech points to the fact that the composers aimed at arranging the excerpts according to the pattern of proem, narration, proofs, and peroration. The analysis has further shown that for an investigation into the compositional procedures of compilers, it is the commentary running from one mishnaic lemma to the next that is decisive, rather than the individual arguments (*sugyot*). Since the composers worked with varying amounts of excerpts for each talmudic commentary, distinct rhetorical structures were not always possible. Two more analyses of talmudic commentaries will help to broaden the idea of how the composers dealt with the split between the available excerpts, the composition and maintenance of a dialectic structure, and the creation of an appealing rhetorical arrangement.

[32] Quintilian, for example, conceded: "I admit that in rhetorical discourse sometimes false things are presented as true, but I do not concede that, for that reason, rhetoric itself is based on false opinions" (*Inst.* 2.17, quoted in Paula Olmos, "Two Literary Encyclopaedias from Late Antiquity," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43, no. 2 [June 2012]: 287).

[33] E.g., Fowler, "The Second Sophistic," 104: "What would have been a conflicting mixture of reason and persuasion for Plato was by the first century a common aspect of the literary landscape. This shift combined the two established correlates of the educational system during the Empire; after the second century BCE, any author would have had some training in both rhetoric and philosophy. The pedagogical interest in 'ancient' orators and philosophers, coupled with an emphasis on epideictic exercises (*progymnasmata*), developed into an influential and lucrative profession in the Second Sophistic."

[34] These two stories will be discussed in much detail in Chapter 4.

THE COMMENTARY IN B. SANHEDRIN 67B

In order to further support the present argument for the composers' use of keywords and subsequent rhetorical arrangement of excerpts, I will discuss two more talmudic commentaries. The example in this paragraph is a commentary in Sanh. 67b. I chose it at random because it is very short and therefore suitable to be reviewed within the scope of this chapter. A random choice has the benefit that it may raise questions and pose problems that a conscious choice does not. Indeed, a particular feature of this commentary is that it shares several excerpts with other commentaries in both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud. This feature demands explanation within the framework of the compositional procedures that I have proposed. Since I am using this commentary merely as an example for the outlined compositional features, I will discuss its content only if it is vital to the argument.[35]

The lemma of this commentary is longer than the one of the *qordiaqos* commentary and reads as follows: "The sorcerer [*mekhashef*] who does a deed is liable [to be stoned], but not the one who captures the eye" (m. Sanh. 7:19). The Mishnah distinguishes here between two different activities of a sorcerer: a real act of change and a trick performed before the amazed eyes of the audience. Although this distinction seems interesting and rewarding, the commentary opens with the same excerpt as the Palestinian Talmud and parallels the latter for quite a bit, yet the text was slightly modified. The Palestinian Talmud's use of the biblical terminology for sword, *ḥerev*, is replaced with the Late Hebrew term *sayyf*, and the attributions to the rabbinic sages are reversed.

The excerpt with which the commentary begins is marked as a baraita, a teaching in Hebrew that is not recorded in the Mishnah. This excerpt has the exact same dialectical form as the composers' Aramaic commentary. Objections are raised and then refuted, with and without recourse to sayings. This shows how indebted the style of the composers of the Babylonian Talmud was to that of their literary predecessors, who may have been their teachers. The excerpt does not relate to the content of the lemma other than through the keyword *mekhashef*, more specifically, the *mekhashefah*, the sorceress. In addition, the excerpt makes use of verses from Exodus and Deuteronomy.

[35] For a discussion of this commentary, see, for example, Shamma Friedman, "Now You See It, Now You Don't: Can Source-Criticism Perform Magic on Talmudic Passages about Sorcery?," in *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, ed. Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan, *AJEC* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

As the accentuations will show, the dominant keyword for this commentary was *keshafim* or a derivative noun (*mekhashef*, *mekhashefah*), as determined by the Palestinian Talmud. In one excerpt, "capturing the eye" is mentioned; others refer to the section of the Bible (parashah) to which the mishnaic lemma refers (Exod. 22). Most interesting for an investigation into the reasoning of the composers are the excerpts that do not contain a cognate term to *keshafim* but were nevertheless associated with the practice.

The challenges the composers faced with this commentary were quite different from the ones observed in Gittin. First, they obviously had not found many excerpts referring to the respective keywords. Second, the overlap with the Palestinian Talmud seems to have dictated the placement of the shared excerpt in the same position. This resulted in what seem to be two proems that open the same case. In the following presentation of the commentary, what I see as individual segments are divided by line spacing, while excerpts are rendered in italics:

Proem I

The rabbis taught: "A sorceress [mekhashefah] you shall not let live" (Exod. 22:17)—[this refers to] either man or woman.

[In that case] why does it teach "sorceress"?
Because most of the women take the opportunity to perform sorcery [*keshafim*].
How are they killed?

Rabbi Yose the Galilean says: "It is said here: 'A sorceress you shall not let live' (Exod. 22:17). And it is said elsewhere: 'You shall not let live any soul' (Deut. 20:16). Just as there [in Deut. 20:16] the intention is by the sword, so here [in Exod. 22:17], too, by the sword."
Rabbi Akiva says: "Here it is said: 'A sorceress [mekhashefa] you shall not let live' (Exod. 22:17). And it is said elsewhere: 'Whether animal or human, they shall not live' (Exod. 19:13). Just as there [in Exod. 19:13] the intention is by stoning, so here [in Exod. 22:17], too, by stoning."
Rabbi Yose said to him: "I derived my argument from [a verse stating] 'You shall not let live' from [another verse stating] 'You shall not let live.' I derived [a law] for Israel from Israel, which included their death in this very Scripture. But you derived [a law] for Israel from [a law pertaining to] gentiles, for which Scripture includes only one form of execution." (b. Sanh. 67a // y. Sanh. 7:19, 25d)[36]

Here ends the (almost) parallel with the Palestinian Talmud. The latter's commentary proceeds now to the narration of two stories, which

[36] Translation follows Ms. Munich 95. Major variant readings in other Mss. will be indicated if significant.

are introduced as examples. Unlike the composers of the Palestinian Talmud, however, the Babylonian composers are in possession of yet another excerpt that refers to Exod. 22:17. This excerpt is used in two other commentaries as well (b. Ber. 21b; b. Yevam. 4a). In these commentaries, the excerpt represents an example for the derivation of a lesson from the juxtaposition of Torah verses, a method called *semukhim*. The excerpt, that is, at least the part discussing the juxtaposition, was apparently stored under two different keywords, namely, *semukhim* and *parashat Mishpatim* (i.e., Exod. 21:1–24:18). Thus, before proceeding to the narration, the composers had to place the following excerpt:

Ben Azzai says: "'A sorceress [mekhashefah] you shall not let live' (Exod. 22:17). *And it is said: 'Anyone who lies with an animal shall die'* (Exod. 22:18). *[The biblical text] brings [these two statements] under the same rule [by stating them next to each other]. Just as the one who lies with an animal [is put to death] by stoning, so, too, the sorceress is put to death by stoning."*
Rabbi Yehuda said to him: "Just because they are placed next to each other you derive from it death by stoning?! Rather, Ov and Yidoni are included under the general rule for sorcerers (Lev. 20:27). *And why are they singled out? To conclude from them and to tell you that just as Ov and Yidoni were liable to stoning, so, too, any sorcerer is liable to stoning."*

Yet, likewise, there is a difficulty involved in the conclusion of Rabbi Yehuda. *Ov and Yidoni* should be considered as representing two different biblical statements that come as one. And any two statements that come as one cannot teach [with regard to a third case].

Rabbi Zekariah said: "This is to say that Rabbi Yehuda thinks that two statements that come as one do teach [with regard to a third]." (b. Sanh. 67a // b. Ber. 21b // b. Yevam. 4a)[37]

But there is also a difficulty with Rabbi Yehuda's explanation, since Ov and Yidoni should be considered as two statements from the Torah that come as one (Lev. 20:27). *And two such statements that come as one cannot be used to teach* [*with regard to another statement*].

Rabbi Zekariah said: "This is to say that Rabbi Yehuda is of the opinion that two statements that come as one do teach [*with regard to another statement*]." (b. Sanh. 67b)

Like in the commentary on *qordiaqos*, excerpts that refer most directly to the keywords derived from the mishnaic lemma (*keshafim* or Exod. 22:17–18) are added in direct response. Because the excerpts that refer directly to

[37] Since the juxtaposition ends here, the passages in Berakhot and Yevamot do not render the whole excerpt.

the lemma are far more numerous and elaborate here than in the *qordiaqos* commentary, they basically stand in place of a proem. This leaves the composers to create the narration of the facts, the proofs for the argument, and an epilogue with the remaining excerpts they found based on the keywords.

It seems, however, that, as in the commentary on *qordiaqos*, the composers start anew once their obligations with regard to the lemma are fulfilled. Instead of concentrating on the narration of the facts, the composers create another proem. Although the excerpts still focus on the keyword *keshafim*, "capturing the eye" now plays a role in what follows; it apparently served as a second keyword. Moreover, the new opening paragraph introduces another perspective on the subject by addressing the relationship between God and *keshafim*. Like in the previous example from Gittin, the second (original) proem opens with a question. The second proem and the section of the narration with an exemplary case of the behavior of a sorceress are considerably short; apparently there was only one story that made the case for what a sorcerer or a sorceress actually did. All the more numerous are the proofs for sorcery or "capturing of the eye" from the Torah, attributed rulings, and eyewitness stories. The commentary is concluded with a memorable controversy fitting for an epilogue.

Proem II

Rabbi Yohanan said: "Why are they called 'sorcery [***keshafim***]*'? Because they contradict* [***khsh***] *the household* [*familia*] *above* [***ma'alah***]*."*

"There is none besides him"?! (Deut. 4:35)

Narration

Rabbi Hanina said: "Even in regard to sorcery [***keshafim***]*!"*
There was a certain woman who sought to take dust from beneath the feet of Rabbi Hanina. He said to her: "If you succeed, go and do your work. It is written: 'There is none besides him!'" (Deut. 4:35)

Is it so?! And what about Rabbi Yohanan, who said: "Why are they called 'sorcery [**keshafim**]'? Because they contradict the household above?"
The case of Rabbi Hanina was different, because of his great merit. (// b. Hul. 7b)[38]

Proofs

*Rabbi Ayyvu bar Nagri said in the name of Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba: "'Belateyhem' (**Exod. 7:22; 8:3, 14**): This refers to acts by demons.*[39] *'Belahteyhem,' on*

[38] Interestingly, here as well as in the parallel in b. Hul. 7b, the biblical verse cited in the reminiscence is attached to it like a title or lemma.
[39] בלטיהם.

the other hand, these are acts of sorcery [***keshafim***]. *And so it says: 'The lahat of the revolving sword* [*of the cherubim*].'"[40] (**Gen. 3:24**)

Abaye said: "If he is particular about a certain vessel, it is a demon. If he is not particular about a certain vessel, it is sorcery [***keshafim***]."

Abaye said: "The laws concerning sorcery [***keshafim***] *parallel those of the Sabbath. Among these laws, some are punishable by stoning, some are considered not liable* [patur], *but forbidden* [asur], *and others are permitted*." (structural parallel: Mo'ed Qat. 12a–b)

The one who does the deed: by stoning.
The one who captures the eye: "not liable" but forbidden.
Permitted *a priori*, like *Rav Hanina and Rav Osh'aya, who would busy themselves with the laws of formation every Friday and create for themselves the third of a calf and eat it*.

Rav Ashi said: "I saw the father of Qarna blow [his nose] and pull out bundles of silk from his nostrils."

And the hartumim said to the pharaoh [after they failed at creating lice]: "This is the Finger of God!" (Exod. 8:15)[41]
Rabbi Elazar said: "From here we can derive that demons are not able to create a creature smaller than a barleycorn."

Rav said to Rabbi Hiyya: "I myself saw a certain Arab [tayyʿa] who took a sword and hamstrung a camel.[42] *He knocked it with a t-instrument and it rose."*[43]
*Rabbi Hiyya said to Rav: "Were there blood and excrement coming from it after this? Rather, it was '**capturing the eye**.'"*

Zeiri happened to come to Alexandria in Egypt and bought a donkey. When he arrived at some water and wanted to give it to drink, the spell broke, and it turned into a plank of o-wood. [The sellers] said to him: "If you were not Ziʿyry, we would not return [the money] to you! For who buys anything here without testing it in water?!"

Yannai happened to come to a certain inn. He said to [the waiters]: "Give me water to drink!" They approached him with porridge. He saw her lips moving. He spit out a little bit [of the porridge], and it turned into scorpions. He said to them: "I drank from yours; now you drink from mine." He gave her to drink, and she turned into a donkey. He rode on it and descended on the marketplace. Her friend came and broke the spell. Thus, he was seen riding on a woman in the marketplace.

[40] להט.
[41] It is not entirely clear to what *hartumim*, a term otherwise unattested in the Torah, actually refers. The Septuagint translates the term as *epaoidoi*, and the Vulgate translates accordingly as *incantations*. See C. A. Hoffman, "Fiat Magia," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 187–188.
[42] This translation follows *DJBA*. The word used for *sword*, ספסירא, is a Greek borrowing (σμψήρα); see *DJBA*, see "ספסירא."
[43] *Tabla* may be a sort of a drum. See *DJBA*, see "טבלא."

Epilogue

"*The frog [sic!] ascended and covered the land of Egypt.*" (Exod. 8:2)
Rabbi Elazar said:" It was only one frog. It bred and filled the entire land of Egypt."

This is like in the dispute between two Tannaim: *Rabbi Akiva said: "There was one frog, and it filled the whole land of Egypt." Rabbi Elazar the son of Azaryah said to him: "Akiva, what do you have to do with Haggada? Cease to intrude in these things and go to [discuss] the tractates Negaim [Plagues] and Ohalot [Tents]! There was one frog, and it croaked to [call] the others and they came."* (b. Sanh. 67b)

The commentary concludes with the most controversial and therefore most fitting excerpt for the epilogue. Short as it is, the commentary can quite easily be divided up into excerpts that relate to the same descriptors, and an arrangement according to rhetorical units can be detected. Again, it looks as if the composers somewhat perfunctorily paid their duty to the lemmas derived from the Mishnah before moving on. The example further suggests that some of the excerpts employed by the composers utilized the discursive style that they themselves had adopted.[44] Especially excerpts in Aramaic may even have been earlier compositions by some of the composers themselves that were classified and used. In any case, the composers and authors of the sources had obviously been exposed to similar training.

THE COMMENTARY IN B. SHABBAT 30A–31B

I would like to further illustrate my point about the composers' use of keywords and rhetorical principles with an example previously analyzed by Richard Hidary. In his analysis of rhetorical structures found in rabbinic literature, Hidary focused especially on orations that expound a biblical verse, a Mishnah, or a maxim. In so doing, Hidary found the characteristic opening sentence of homiletic orations from a Palestinian collection called *Yalamdenu* or *Tanhuma* in tractate Shabbat 30a.[45] These orations typically begin with a question followed by "He opened" (*patah*) and are usually attributed to Rabbi Tanhum. Hidary analyzed the passage

[44] On the existence of anonymous comments in older material (which, according to the thesis outlined here, were already present in excerpts and not added by the composers), see Robert Brody, "On Dating the Anonymous Portions of the Babylonian Talmud" [in Hebrew], *Sidra* 24–25 (2010).

[45] See Richard Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 60. On the Tanhuma collection, see also Günter Stemberger, *Midrasch: Vom Umgang der Rabbinen mit der Bibel; Einführung – Texte – Erläuterungen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989), 47–48.

according to the classical rhetorical sections. He did so from beginning to end, that is, from the initial question and the characteristic opening formula until the answer to this very question is finally given. Despite the familiar opening, however, Hidary conceded that the supposed oration in the Talmud looked significantly different from other *Yalamdenu* orations: "Unlike the typical *yalamdenu* form in which the halakhic question is answered immediately and only then followed by further homiletic material, in this example, the aggadic material precedes the answer and builds up to it."[46]

The thesis put forward in Chapter 2 and the current chapter helps clarify the somewhat puzzling organization of this oration. According to this thesis, the composers, although using the *Yalamdenu* oration for their commentary, used other excerpts as well with which they interrupted and complemented the original flow of the oration. Indeed, the commentary to the mishnaic lemma in b. Shabb. 30a does not begin immediately with the oration's question and the signature beginning ("He opened"). Although using an oration, the composers restructured it to accomodate their other excerpts. Indeed, if the whole commentary running over four folia (b. Shabb. 30a–31b) is taken into consideration, then what Hidary found to be a somewhat atypical oration is, in fact, only the commentary's proem.

Again, I suggest starting the analysis of the composition of the commentary with the lemma from the Mishnah and an assessment of the assigned descriptors. This particular commentary starts rather abruptly, jumping directly into the matter without repeating much of the context of the lemma. The Mishnah from which the lemma is taken reads as follows: "One who extinguishes a light because he is afraid of Gentiles, of robbers, of evil spirits, or because of a sick person, to let him sleep, is not liable [*patur*]. If to save the light, to save the oil, to save the wick, he is liable [*hayav*]" (m. Shabb. 2:5).[47]

The composers open the commentary mostly in their own words, seemingly frustrated with the content of the lemma. It is in instances like these that it becomes obvious that the composers are perfectly capable of arguing in the exact same way as the people who authored the excerpts. These instances mirror the composers' mastery of rhetorical dispute and conversation, while at the same time exhibiting their ideals concerning these very debates. Similarly, the sophisticated dialogues between

[46] Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, 60.

[47] Translation follows Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, ed. and trans., *The Jerusalem Talmud: Second Order; Mo'ed; Tractates Šabbat and 'Eruvin* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 88. I omit the last sentence of this Mishnah because it is not relevant to the lemma.

Athenaeus's guests are not "a neutral mirror of Graeco-Roman scholarship, but … a textual construction, where erudition is part of the aesthetics of the work and of the fun of dinners."[48] Consequently, whenever the composers cannot make their excerpts go in the direction they want, or if they see the dialectic aesthetic to which they aspire jeopardized, they intervene on their own terms, supplementing the excerpts with an authorial voice (the *stam*). The commentary opens as follows, with the lemma printed in bold:

> Since it is taught in the latter clause that "**he is liable**," derive from it that it follows the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda [expressed in an earlier Mishnah].
> And with what are we dealing here? If it is with an imperiled ill person, then he should have said that it is "permitted [*mutar*, i.e., to extinguish a light]"; instead, he said "not liable [*patur*]." If, on the other hand, we are dealing here with an ill person whose life is not in danger, he should have said: "liable of a sin-offering [*hayav hatat*]." (b. Shabb. 30a)[49]

The composers of the Babylonian Talmud object to the legal terminology used in the Mishnah, which they find wanting in precision regarding to the severity of the disease. If the light of the lamp is a crucial factor in keeping the patient alive, the Mishnah should state "permitted" (*mutar*). If, on the other hand, the light is not vital but only a convenience, the person should be "liable for a sin-offering" (*hayav hatat*) for kindling a fire on the Sabbath. The focus on what is perceived as inaccurate legal language used in the Mishnah is shared by the comparatively short commentary in the Palestinian Talmud on the same lemma from the Mishnah. Yet, the Palestinian Talmud does not find fault with the wording regarding the ill person but the robber (y. Shabb. 2:3, 5a). Again, the composers of the Babylonian Talmud imitate the Palestinian Talmud while also departing from the latter's model. We shall see in due course why the Babylonian composers chose the imperiled patient and the lamp instead of the robber.

The Babylonian Talmud's proem will continue to debate the wording of that Mishnah, ultimately suggesting a reason for the unjust ruling: "Of course, it would have been reasonable [according to more pertinent laws] that in the case of an imperiled ill person, it should have been stated 'permitted' [*mutar*]. But since it stated 'liable' [*hayav*]

[48] Christian Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. David Braund and John Wilkins (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 101.

[49] My translation is based on Ms. Friedberg (Geniza) 9–002.

in the latter clause, 'not liable' [*patur*] was used in the former." The composers thereby explain the text of the Mishnah with the fact that terms have their opposites: Since the second statement uses "liable" (*hayav*), the former had to use "not liable" (*patur*). The whole commentary will continue to focus on affiliated oppositions and opposed affiliations, as well as their resolutions. The expression "contradictory words" [*devarim sotrim*] appears six times in the first half of the commentary, that is, in the proem, the narration, and in the beginning of the proofs (b. Shabb. 30a–b).

The expression "contradictory words" was obviously selected as a keyword. Many excerpts do not refer explicitly to contradictory terms but, nonetheless, discuss conflicting or otherwise difficult verses from the Hebrew Bible. These verses happen to come predominantly from two books ascribed to Solomon, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, which, according to two excerpts in this commentary, were at one point in danger of being excluded from the biblical canon by rabbinic sages (b. Shabb. 30b). As the commentary shows, however, a witty mind can resolve every contradiction and draw lessons even from those books.

Yet, before turning to the contradictions within Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, the proem contrasts Solomonic books with those attributed to his father David, thereby exposing a number of additional, content-related contradictions. Significantly, these excerpts concern contradiction *and* death, two topics that can be derived from the Mishnah (the patient endangered by death) and the Palestinian commentary (conflicting formulation of the Mishnah). In addition, the only excerpt in the hands of the composers that referred directly to the mishnaic lemma concerns the patient (below in bold). Thus, as in the commentary in Gittin and Sanhendrin, here too the composers use excerpts that refer directly to the lemma in the very beginning of the proem. And, once again, the Palestinian Talmud plays a crucial role in the choice and interpretation of the lemma and hence in the selection of descriptors.

The next section in the commentary, which Hidary classified as being an oration, begins and ends as follows:

This question was asked before Rabbi Tanhum of Newai: "May one extinguish a lit lamp for a sick person on the Sabbath?"
He expounded [*patah*] and said: "You, Solomon, where is your knowledge? Where is your wisdom? Is it not enough that your words contradict those of David your father, but your words even contradict themselves! David your father said: 'The dead cannot praise the Lord' (Ps. 115:17]). But you said: 'I praise the dead who have already died' (Eccl. 4:2]). Then you went back and said: 'Even a live dog is better than a dead lion'" (Eccl. 9:4).

[Follow one or more interpretations of each one of these verses.]

Solomon sent [a query] to the house of study: "My father died and is lying in the sun, and the dogs of my father's house are hungry. What should I do?" They sent to him: "Cut up a dead animal and leave [*hanah*] it for the dogs. As for your father, place [*hanah*] a loaf of bread or a baby on him and carry him."
Has Solomon not said correctly, "Even a live dog is better than a dead lion?" (Eccl. 9:4)
Regarding the question that I asked you: "**A lamp is called a lamp, and the soul of a person is called 'lamp'"** [in Prov. 20:27].
It is better that the lamp of flesh and blood should be extinguished before the lamp of the Holy One, blessed be He. (b. Shabb. 30a–b)[50]

Several aspects in the beginning and end of this passage are unpolished, too unpolished, in fact, for an oration. The unevenness of the text reveals the paper-cut approach that the composers took toward entire compositions, or even just excerpts, by dividing them up, sometimes into units of individual phrases. The frictions and inconsistencies include Rabbi Tanhum, who addresses his answer directly to Solomon, although the question had been asked anonymously, and Solomon had not been mentioned previously in the commentary. In lieu of an answer follows a series of clarifications of apparently contradictory verses attributed to Solomon and David. When the question is finally addressed and answered, the commentary takes it up with "Regarding the question that *I* asked you," as if Solomon would now answer the question he had previously asked Rabbi Tanhum. At the same time, Solomon is referenced as a person of the past: "Has Solomon not said correctly, 'Even a live dog is better than a dead lion?'" (Eccl. 9:4). Rather, the original "oration" was most likely only a very short excerpt in the collection of the composers:

This question was asked before Rabbi Tanhum of Newai: "May one extinguish a lit lamp for a sick person on the Sabbath?" (b. Shabb. 30a)

He expounded [*patah*] and said: "A lamp is called a lamp and the soul of a person is called a lamp. It is better that the lamp of flesh and blood should be extinguished before the lamp of the Holy One, blessed be He." (b. Shabb. 30b)

The reason for the segmentation of the oration may have been Eccl. 9:4, which concludes the last excerpt before Rabbi Tanhum's answer. Both Eccl.

[50] Translated by Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, 61–64, based on Ms. Friedberg 9–002 (Geniza), with emendations from other mss.; see Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, 61n107.

9:4 and Rabbi Tanhum's answer use the comparative form "better than/that" (*mutav/tov min*):

Even a live dog is **better than** …
It is **better that** the lamp …

Again, most interesting are the excerpts, which were classified under "contradictory words," but they do not actually use this terminology and thereby expose the composers' very own associations. The commentary concludes with a series of excerpts beginning with the question "What does the verse … mean," after which an interpretation is suggested. "Difficult verses" may therefore have been another descriptor associated with "contradictory words." The use of difficult verses in the peroration leaves the audience thinking and judging the given interpretations.

Hidary was certainly right to identify rhetorical features in this commentary and to consider the oration as distorted. The reason for this distortion is that the composers' rhetorical unit runs from one mishnaic lemma to the next. Although entire orations may have been among the excerpts in the composers' archive, these orations nevertheless became subject to the composers' own oration-like commentaries. To analyze the method of text composition, the commentary running from one mishnaic lemma to the next, and not the sugya (line of argument), is the decisive unit. Not only does the individual argument not mark the composers' point of departure, but its beginning and end are often difficult to grasp, since associated arguments interrupt the logical structure. The extent of the argument (sugya) is, as a result, often subject to the interpretation of modern scholars.[51] That the sugya does not align with the process of composition is not surprising given the fact that the sugya is a unit that emerged not from historical text analysis but from the practical use of the text and was established by convention.[52]

In summary, the three examples of commentaries discussed here have shown that the composers of the Talmud, like Pliny and others, worked with keywords and loose excerpts to compose commentaries

[51] See also Alexander Samely, "Educational Features in Ancient Jewish Literature: An Overview of Unknowns," in *Jewish Education from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Philip S. Alexander*, ed. George J. Brooke and Renate Smithuis (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 185n95. Cf. the vague description of the unit in Louis Jacobs, *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5: "The Word *sugya* (pl. *sugyot*) … is the technical term for a Talmudic unit complete in itself, though it might also form a part of a larger unit; that is to say, a Talmudic passage in which a particular topic is treated in full."

[52] See Jacobs, *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud*, 5.

to mishnaic lemmas. They then tried to create an appealing and memorable text by way of arranging the excerpts according to the rhetorical structure proem, narration, proof, and peroration. This rhetorical sequence was both the text structure known to the composers and the structure expected by readers or listeners. Indeed, by way of implemented rhetorical strategies to engage with the public, the text somewhat automatically turns it being read publicly into a demonstration of model speech.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE DATE AND RELATIONSHIP OF THE TWO TALMUDS

The present chapter and Chapter 2 have suggested that the Talmud's commentaries conform to the techniques commonly used by late antique composers to craft erudite texts. The observation that the Babylonian Talmud would fit in nicely with texts that were produced from the first through the sixth centuries CE raises the question of the work's chronological integration. The Babylonian Talmud's distinct conceptual reliance on the Palestinian Talmud, which has been suggested by prior scholarship and was corroborated by the above analyses, additionally calls for a comparative investigation into the literary relationship between the two cognates. I will again use Greek and Latin texts to compare and complement the scarce talmudic evidence regarding these questions.

Medieval historiography lets the arrival of the Mishnah in Babylonia, and hence the beginning of related scholarly activity, coincide with the rise to power by the Sasanians in 224 CE.[53] This coincidence is conspicuous and probably the stuff of legends: rabbinic scholarship in Sasanid Mesopotamia may have started earlier or later. Similarly unclear is the date for the genesis of the Babylonian Talmud, which is, based on two primary reasons, usually given in the form of a time frame rather than a specific point in time: the Talmud's lack of a date or a datable author, and the previously discussed supposition of an oral and time-consuming transmission process. While earlier scholarship tended to place the date of a "final redaction" in the mid-sixth century based on medieval pedigrees of talmudic sages, some recent scholarship has assigned dates ranging from the mid-seventh

[53] See Isaiah Gafni, "The Political, Social, and Economic History of Babylonian Jewry, 224–638 CE," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein, vol. 4 of *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 792.

century to the second half of the eighth century.[54] The latter dates would imply that the Talmud was written down and redacted after the Arab conquest of Mesopotamia.

The assignment of a date after the Arab conquest is contradicted, however, by the fact that the Talmud does not contain Arabic loanwords or syntax.[55] Such loanwords should be expected to be found in a text that went through the last stages of oral transmission after the (final) Arabic conquest, or at least in the notes added by the final redactors. Arabic as the new lingua franca was widely embraced, and by the tenth century, even the non-Semitic Persian language used 30 percent Arabic words, while Aramaic had completely disappeared.[56] Texts authored by post-talmudic rabbinic sages (Geonim) were exclusively written in Arabic by the eighth century. This would point to a *terminus ad quem* for the composition of the Talmud in the early seventh century. Although it is not clear how and if unstable political circumstances affected literary productivity, it seems noteworthy that the Sasanid and Byzantine Empires had been on increasingly hostile terms since 520 CE, with back-and-forth conquests leading to a period of continuous wars in the first quarter of the seventh century.[57]

The traditional dating of the Talmud relies heavily on three texts: a post-talmudic school pedigree called *Seder Tannaim veAmoraim* (end of the ninth century); a letter by Sherira Gaon to the community in Qayrawan after they had asked about the formation of the Babylonian Talmud (end of the tenth century); and Avraham Ibn Daud's division of

[54] On earlier scholarship (e.g., Isidore Epstein and Hanoch Albeck), see Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 9th ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011), 215. Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9, give the seventh century as a closing date for the Talmud; Richard Kalmin, *Migrating Tales: The Talmud's Narratives and Their Historical Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), ix, reaches the date 651 CE; David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xxix, moves the date back to the second half of the eighth century. See also Halivni, *Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, 9, for the length of the period during which Halivni conceives of the Stammaim as being active.

[55] The very rare cases that seem to render a word in Arabic are doubtful. They are either "Aramaic or altogether unknown." See A. Cohen, "Arabisms in Rabbinic Literature," *JQR* 3, no. 2 (October 1912): 222.

[56] See A. A. Ṣādeqī, "Arabic Language i. Arabic elements in Persian," *EIr* 2:229–231.

[57] See Geoffrey Greatrex, "Byzantium and the East in the Sixth Century," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), for a detailed account of the relationships between the Byzantine and Persian emperors, especially in the sixth century, and Robert G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Ancient Warfare and Civilization (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10–12.

the sages mentioned in the Talmud into rabbinic generations with the assignment of respective time frames of activity (*Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, of the *Seder Tannaim veamoraim*, twelfth century).[58] Given the fact that these chronologies are post-talmudic reconstructions, other evidence for dating the Talmud might be worthy of consideration.

It is true, however, that such evidence is difficult to find, since contemporary references to the Talmud or its authors do not exist, nor are the people it mentions attested in a nonliterary document, such as a contract or an epitaph. The only extra-talmudic attestation of talmudic sages is found on amulet bowls. Since these bowls, by definition, mediate between different and historically inaccessible realms, their use for historical purposes is questionable, not least also because the bowls are difficult to date and often come from illicit and unsystematic excavations.[59]

David Weiss Halivni took a first step toward theorizing late antique rabbinic scholarship when he proposed to distinguish between an amoraic layer of the Talmud, marked by attributed Aramaic statements, and an anonymous Aramaic layer (lengthy stories, interjections, summaries, conclusions).[60] He attributed this layer to what he termed the Stammaim, a generation of scholars not mentioned by medieval sources.[61] The distinction between amoraic and stammaitic material allowed for a new comparative perspective. Stammaitic texts have been compared to one another as well as to their Palestinian parallels, and differences between amoraic and stammaitic learning culture have been highlighted.[62]

[58] See Stemberger, *Einleitung*, 17.

[59] Thus, preference is given in the bowls to two enigmatic figures: Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa and Rabbi Joshua ben Perahia are mentioned on bowls. See Shaul Shaked, James N. Ford, and Siam Bhayro, eds., *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, vol. 1 of *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 52–96 and 101–154, respectively. Other names similar to those mentioned in the Talmud are discussed by Shaul Shaked, "Rabbis in Incantation Bowls," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Markham J. Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), yet without significant evidence for the dating of either the bowls or the Talmud.

[60] On this "two-source theory" (Tannaitic/Amoraic layer and Stammaitic, anonymous, layer) and the remaining open questions pertaining foremost to the dating of the anonymous layer, see David Goodblatt, "A Generation of Talmudic Studies," in *The Talmud in Its Iranian Context*, ed. Carol Bakhos and M. Rahim Shayegan, *TSAJ* 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 11–20.

[61] See Halivni, *Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, 4–64, and esp. 54–57.

[62] See, for examples, the edited volume by Jeffrey Rubenstein, ed., *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, *TSAJ* 114 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), or Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

Yet this model still depends heavily on the medieval one, in that it assumes that whole generations of rabbinic sages were responsible for a distinct layer in the Talmud. To some extent, the model is simply reworking the traits of the generation of Saboraim, which early medieval sages had posited between the Amoraim and themselves (the Geonim).[63] Moreover, to some extent, the stammaitic thesis remains informed by the idea of an ur-layer in the Talmud in the attempt to distinguish between earlier amoraic and later stammaitic material.[64]

I would like to propose a different viewpoint, namely, that different styles are not necessarily markers of chronological separation but, rather, of different literary purposes.[65] Attribution and nonattribution of maxims, for example, were both writing techniques that had distinct functions in a text and could be deployed by any educated person at any given time. The same applies to the use of a more restrictive and summarizing style in one place and a verbose style in another; these differences reflect distinct authorial choices rather than the conventions of a school or epoch.[66]

Another important pedagogical principle of the time was mimesis, the imitation of someone else's style. From their first lessons in writing to their training with an orator, students around the Mediterranean area copied model texts by their teachers or by ancient and esteemed authors.[67] This process would eventually lead to mature works in which "imitation was a subtle affair and was not confined to one author: not only did linguistic and stylistic borrowings encompass a large horizon, but the process of complete digestion of the sources conferred a novel identity on the new product."[68] The more an author broadened his array of models for imitation, the richer he became in terms of stylistic techniques.

[63] See Richard Kalmin, *The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud: Amoraic or Saboraic?*, Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 12 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1989).

[64] See the discussion in Adiel Schremer, "Stammaitic Historiography," in Rubenstein, *Creation and Composition*, 219–223.

[65] Similarly, and yet different, Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*, suggested that the difference in style may foremost be a way of differentiating "between the Talmud's own voice and the voice of the sources it cites" rather than purely chronological (14).

[66] The progymnasmatic exercises of paraphrase and elaboration, for example, allow the writer to transform sayings and short stories (reminiscences) into more verbose literary formats. See Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 70–72, for Theon's description of these exercises.

[67] See Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 132–136.

[68] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 236.

Considering the importance attributed to imitation in late antique pedagogy, it may not have been very difficult for a student versed in the content and style of the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and even the Palestinian Talmud to imitate the style of earlier sages and to present arguments in the form of maxims. Reusing sentences and idiomatic expressions would have helped in the process of archaization. Such activities may seem like fraud from a contemporary perspective, but it was considered art and mastery of language in the imperial period and beyond. Many pseudepigraphic texts attest to this fact, such as the pseudo-Pauline letters and the pseudo-Aristotelian or the pseudo-Platonic writings: the atticism of the Second Sophistic represents one single effort to imitate Plato's style.[69] The *Life of Helia* and the *Acts of Thecla* were both written by male authors who wrote from a female perspective.[70]

It follows that an argument based on style cannot necessarily serve to distinguish chronologically between texts or to assign the sage to whom a text is attributed to a certain period.[71] Then again, it is quite obvious that the anonymous voice that mediates between the maxims must be the most recent addition to the text. But sometimes it has been added at an earlier stage and was already part of an excerpt used by the composers.

Another ubiquitous approach to dating talmudic texts or excerpts follows the previously mentioned medieval treatises in using rabbinic names and their reconstructed lifetimes. Yet, as pointed out, these dates have been assigned based entirely on the mishnaic and talmudic texts, and there is considerable scholarly dissent over the reliability and validity of

[69] See Fowler, "The Second Sophistic," 103–106.

[70] See Virginia Burrus, "Socrates, the Rabbis and the Virgin: The Dialogic Imagination in Late Antiquity," in *Talmudic Transgressions: Engaging the Work of Daniel Boyarin*, ed. Charlotte E. Fonrobert, Ishay Rosen-Zvi, Aharon Shemesh, and Moulie Vidas, *JSJSup* 181 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 201, on the *Life of Helia*. See Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of St. Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*, *OECS* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10–18, on the author and his thoroughly favorable assessment of everything female in the *Acts of Thecla*.

[71] Similar arguments have already been proposed by Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*, 54–58, who cautioned against an a priori chronological distinction between the traditional layers (tannaitic, amoraic, stammaitic, or saboraic) on the grounds that the composers ("creators") may have consciously fashioned them and used them as a literary strategy. Robert Brody, "The Anonymous Talmud and the Words of the Amoraim" [in Hebrew], in *The Bible and Its World*, *Rabbinic Literature and Jewish Law, and Jewish Thought*, ed. Baruch J. Schwartz, Avraham Melamed, and Aaron Shemesh, vol. 1 of *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish Studies*, ed. Baruch J. Schwartz, Avraham Melamed, and Aaron Shemesh (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2008), 223, assumed that the difference in style (attributed versus anonymous) might simply be the result of (rabbinic) convention.

attributions in the first place.[72] Are attributions fictitious, serving merely discursive purposes, or did the portrayed individuals really say or write these things? As we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, there is ample evidence to reckon with many artificial but well-chosen attributions. Trained in mimesis and speech in character (*ethopoeia*), the composers of the Talmud, as well as the authors of the excerpts they used, knew what they were doing. The attributions, even if they are obviously secondary additions, always offer a "*possible* or even a *plausible* truth."[73] Overlaps in argumentation and attitudes may therefore be due to literary craftsmanship as much as to historical circumstances and are not suited to anchoring the Talmud chronologically.[74] Still, the model outlined here is also suggestive of at least some attributions referring to the original authors of the texts from which excerpts were taken.

With regard to dating, the Palestinian Talmud offers at least a historical *terminus post quem*, in that the work mentions the historically attested Roman general Ursicinus several times (y. Meg. 3:1, 74a; y. Betzah 1:6, 69c; y. Sanh. 3:3, 21b // y. Sheb. 4:2, 35a; y. Yevam. 16:3, 15d // y. Sotah 9:3, 23c).[75] Ursicinus served under the emperor Gallus and played a public role from 351 CE until approximately 359 CE. Since the mentions appear to be legendary rather than contemporary to Ursicinus, Hayim Lapin has suggested an end date for the Palestinian Talmud somewhere "at the turn of the fifth century."[76] Since the composers of the Babylonian Talmud

[72] The discussion was essentially started by Jacob Neusner, *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai* (Leiden: Brill, 1970). On the issue of anachronism and arbitrariness in attribution, resulting in what may seem to be distorted biographies, see especially William S. Green, "What's in a Name? The Problematic of 'Rabbinic Biography,'" in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, ed. William S. Green, BJS 1, vol. 1 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), and William S. Green, "Context and Meaning in Rabbinic 'Biography,'" in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, ed. William S. Green, BJS 9, vol. 2 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980).

[73] Sacha Stern, "Attribution and Authorship in the Babylonian Talmud," *JJS* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 33 (emphasis in the original). See similarly Martin S. Jaffee, "Rabbinic Authorship as a Collective Enterprise," in Fonrobert and Jaffee, *Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, 22.

[74] Such consistencies have been observed by Kalmin, *Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud*, and Richard Kalmin, "The Formation and Character of the Babylonian Talmud," in Katz, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*.

[75] On these traditions and their purpose as well as their relationship to other reminiscences of Ursicinus, see Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 144–149, and Hayim Lapin, "Toward a History of Rabbinic Powerlessness," in *Strength to Strength: Essays in Honor of Shaye J. D. Cohen*, ed. Michael Satlow (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), esp. 331–333.

[76] Lapin, "Toward a History of Rabbinic Powerlessness," 332.

appeared to have profited from having the Palestinian Talmud as a model (see discussion above), it needs to be asked how much time may reasonably be posited between the two works.

The traditional explanation for a considerable temporal gap between the two Talmuds is based on the "Letter of Baboi" (mid-eighth century). In this letter, Baboi claimed that the Palestinian rabbis had been forced to write down their knowledge because of the political instability of Palestine, whereas the Babylonian rabbis continued to adhere to oral transmission. In Baboi's opinion, this rendered the Palestinian Talmud inferior to the Babylonian one. The letter is spurred by the ongoing theological discussions about the superiority of the unwritten in Baghdad at the time.[77] Still, Baboi's letter left posterity with the notion "that literary production is a rearguard action, a textual encapsulation – and in the case of the Palestinian Talmud, a hasty and haphazard one – of a once vibrant tradition put in jeopardy by outside forces or by unfulfilled messianic expectations."[78]

Rather contrary to this notion, however, the composition of the Palestinian Talmud appears to have boosted the production of other rabbinic texts, and members of the rabbinic sages became increasingly visible "in epigraphic, patristic, and legal texts."[79] The written Palestinian Talmud seems to have had a twofold effect: it secured and stabilized the text of the Mishnah; and it defined the contours of the associatively organized rabbinic teachers and experts of halakah vis-à-vis Roman authorities.[80]

Considering the ongoing textual production in Palestine and the general mobility of the educated in late antiquity, who traveled for business

[77] See Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Oral to the Read*, New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), and Talya Fishman, "Claims about the Mishna in the *Epistle* of Sherira Gaon: Islamic Theology and Jewish History," in *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World*, ed. David M. Freidenreich and Miriam Goldstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[78] Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 153, and the discussion there (155–162). See on the same issue also Gafni, "The Political, Social, and Economic History of Babylonian Jewry, 224–638 CE," 801. For the superiority of oral transmission in early Islamic and rabbinic circles, see Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature in Islam*, and Fishman, "Claims about the Mishna."

[79] Hayim Lapin, "The Origins and Development of the Rabbinic Movement in the Land of Israel," in Katz, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, 225.

[80] On the Mishnah as a "basically stable work" after the Palestinian Talmud, see Christine E. Hayes, *Between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds: Accounting for Halakhic Difference in Selected Sugyot from Tractate Avodah Zarah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 193. On the latter point, see Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 168.

and education, it seems implausible that rabbinic sages from Babylonia would not know about the literary productions of their peers in Palestine and that they would not have felt the need or even the ambition to do the same. Texts – letters, private notes, copies of whole works or excerpts, and self-authored monographs – were widely shared among friends, associated communities, or schools.[81] The Babylonian Talmud itself refers to scholars' movement back and forth between Mesopotamia and Palestine, with some of them, the *nahote*, specializing in the exchange of knowledge.[82]

What might most reliably attest to a chronological proximity between the two works, however, is a fact that has long been interpreted as evidence for the contrary, namely, that the Babylonian Talmud never mentions the Palestinian Talmud. After all, the Babylonian Talmud obviously has an antiquarian inclination and generally does not refrain from distinctly framing its sources, be they the Mishnah or baraitot, or the – true and supposed – originators of the maxims that are quoted. An alternative explanation for this missing reference is that the Palestinian Talmud was too recent to be considered a work of antiquarian authority. The latter is an authority in the sense of an established seniority that can no longer be challenged but has also ceased to challenge and compete with other books. In other words, the author of such a work is no longer part of the competition over patronage, fame, and influence. Citing the work of a contemporary or admitting mimicry might have cast a favorable light on the work of said competitor and disqualified one's own work.

Pliny the Elder, for example, while making extensive use of older authors, is more reserved regarding the inclusion of excerpts from contemporary authors. Most strikingly, he makes practically no use of the contemporary work most similar to his, that is, L. Annaeus Seneca's *Naturales quaestiones*, which appeared in 63 CE, a decade or so before Pliny's *NH*.[83]

[81] See Larry Hurtado and Chris Keith, "Writing and Book Production in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. James Carleton Paget and Joachim Schaper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 73–75.

[82] See Gray, *Talmud in Exile*, 5–7; Tziona Grossmark, "The *Nehutei* as Traveling Agents and Transmitters of Cultural Data between the Torah Study Centers in Babylonia and in the Land of Israel during the Third and Fourth Centuries CE," in "The Mediterranean Voyage," ed. Susan L. Rosenstreich, special issue, *Mediterranean Studies* 23, no. 2 (2015); and Catherine Hezser, "Mobility, Flexibility, and Diasporization of Palestinian Judaism after 70 CE," in *Let the Wise Listen and Add to their Learning (Prov 1:5): Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of his 75th Birthday*, ed. Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer, Studia Judaica 90 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).

[83] See Roderich König and Gerhard Winkler, eds. and trans., *C. Plinius Secundus d. Ä., Naturkunde, Lateinisch-Deutsch Buch I: Vorrede, Inhaltsverzeichnis des Gesamtwerkes, Fragmente, Zeugnisse*, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 355.

Athenaeus seats his contemporary, the physician Galen, among the sophists at his symposium in *The Learned Banqueters*. Yet not once does this fictional Galen cite his own works, either because Athenaeus had no access to them or, more likely, because he did not want to promote Galen's work in his own.[84] He also mentions "Oppian of Cilicia, who lived shortly before our time," but discredits him and other writers of didactical poems for not being as accurate as Homer.[85] Vitruvius's ten-book-long treatise on architecture was one in which "references to competing texts on architecture, whether or not they appear in the bibliography, are quite rare."[86] And, to give an example that is chronologically much closer to the Babylonian Talmud, Macrobius, although following the thematic structure of Aulus Gellius and often borrowing directly from the latter's *Attic Nights*, never mentions Gellius. In fact, Macrobius never mentions the intermediary sources, that is, other miscellanies, from which he excerpts original quotes either.[87] Patronage and agonistic learning culture did not cease throughout late antiquity and provided the social background of many talmudic stories, and it is reasonable to suspect that the composers of the Babylonian Talmud did not mention the Palestinian Talmud for a similar reason.[88]

Although the question needs further investigation, it seems that there was a general reluctance to openly refer to the work of contemporaries, especially in a favorable way. The Babylonian Talmud's obvious reliance on the Palestinian Talmud, its silent mimesis and stubborn transformation and even inversion of the latter's material, points to chronological proximity rather than distance. The composers were most likely part of the same competitive network, and perhaps they were even making use of the same private libraries and archives. Given that the Talmud could have been

[84] On Athenaeus's Galen, see Rebecca Flemming, "The Physicians at the Feast: The Place of Medical Knowledge at Athenaeus' Dinner-Table," in Braund and Wilkins, *Athenaeus and His World*, 476 and 478.

[85] Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 1.13c (Olson, LCL).

[86] Daniel Harris-McCoy, "Making and Defending Claims to Authority in Vitruvius' *De architectura*," in *Authority and Expertise in Ancient Scientific Culture*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 115.

[87] See Katarina Petrovićová, "Intellectual and Social Background of Aulus Gellius's and Flavius Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius's General Educational Scientific Writings," *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity, řada klasická N, Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 11 (2006): 50, and Alan Cameron, "The Date and Identity of Macrobius," *Journal of Roman Studies* 56, parts 1 and 2 (1966): 25–38, esp. 28n33, 32, and 35.

[88] On the agonistic atmosphere in rabbinic learning culture, see Rubenstein, *Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, 64; and Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, 108.

composed within a single man's lifetime, as pointed out in the previous chapter, it follows that the Babylonian Talmud might have been completed before the middle of the fifth century.

CONCLUSION

The model proposed in this book for the composition of the Babylonian Talmud differs from prior ones in that it takes the Talmud to be a compilation that was consciously composed out of excerpts. The basic unit by which the composers proceeded was the commentary running from one mishnaic lemma to the next. Based on the content of the lemma itself, yet also on the Palestinian Talmud's parallel commentary on the same Mishnah, and/or scattered material on corresponding matters, keywords were assigned. The composers then searched the previously established collection of excerpts, which was similarly organized around keywords. This search yielded varying numbers of excerpts that responded to the assigned descriptors. With these excerpts in hand, the composers then aimed to create a persuasive and conveniently structured commentary according to the rhetorical divisions of speech: proem, narration, proofs, and peroration.

As the analysis of three talmudic commentaries in this chapter has shown, the proem usually introduces the lemma and comments on it by way of excerpts that relate directly to it, before excerpts are added that respond to more remote descriptors assigned to the matter. Narration and proof may follow in their original sequence or in reverse order. Proof may also be given in the form of stories. The most controversial excerpts are typically used for the peroration to leave the audience, the readers or listeners, puzzled, amazed, or challenged. The choice of the rhetorical structure for the commentaries was most likely not even a conscious one. Rather, this seems to reflect the composers' rhetorical training. Consequently, the rhetorical arrangement came somewhat naturally to them as the only thinkable option. As an additional benefit, this arrangement turns every commentary into a short oration appealing to both reader ("performer") and listener.

In this model, the composers worked their way through the material by crafting commentaries to lemmas from the Mishnah. For an analysis of the makeup of the talmudic text, these commentaries are decisive, not the sugya as a line of argument.

Originally, the talmudic text did not offer the entire Mishnah from which a certain lemma was taken. One might therefore rightly wonder

how this gap was addressed for the unknowing public. Yet, as it turns out, supplementation of the Mishnah was not even necessary, since the mishnaic lemma plays a role only in the very beginning of the commentaries, which remain interesting and instructive even without context.

The chapter further proposed to decrease the assumed chronological gap between the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. Although imperial period and late antique authors vastly copied from and imitated their contemporaries or recent predecessors' works, they were most reluctant to cite those or even to acknowledge their existence. The Babylonian Talmud's non-reference of the Palestinian Talmud while obviously mining it for material, structure, and style, may therefore reflect chronological proximity.

4

The Making of the Talmudic Narrative

The previous chapters have examined the macrostructures of imperial period and late antique works of scholarly erudition – their genre – before moving to microstructures and looking at their organization, and their formation, and how these structures may relate to and explain the Babylonian Talmud. The present chapter will examine the structure of one distinct part of erudite compilations: the story or narrative.

The tale (*mythos/fabula*) and its close relative, the narration (*diēgēsis/narratio*), were crucial components of imperial period and late antique education.[1] In order to assess, from scratch, how stories, and in particular the erudite story, were constructed, this chapter will start with a brief discussion of the Greco-Roman curriculum, its singular nature, and its impact on other language cultures in the Mediterranean area. A brief survey of the time's aesthetics will show in what ways they are reflected in the conceptualization and makeup of stories, including talmudic stories. It will be shown that the same methods employed to produce complex erudite books such as the Talmud are at work, in miniature, in stories. This significantly facilitated their integration into a composite text.

[1] Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus suggested starting with the tale, while Theon began with the saying (*chreia*) and the maxim (*gnōmē*) and only then proceeded to the tale. All of them let the narration follow the tale (see the chart in George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, *WGRW* 10 [Leiden: Brill, 2003], xiii).

THE LATE ANTIQUE STORY AND PROGYMNASMATIC TRAINING

Recent scholarship has called new attention to the fact that the Babylonian Talmud, as well as rabbinic literature in general, show clear signs of the use of rhetorical patterns in the composition of arguments (*sugyot*) and homilies.[2] This interest goes hand in hand with a renewed focus on rhetoric in classics as well as in patristics, which increasingly engage each other in the concept of the "Third Sophistic."[3] The consensus that rhetoric, despite having originated in the law courts of the Greek polis, later became "the bedrock upon which the composition of orations, speeches and sermons was built at a time when opportunities for public speaking were numerous" is growing.[4] Indeed, rhetorical speaking was an essential part of late antique entertainment, the court system, education, and politics.[5] Different reasons have been identified for this increasing popularity of rhetoric and its spread beyond the courts, including the "massive administrative organization of the Roman Empire and its cultural system," which necessitated and produced a standardized way of communication, or the public competition between "sophists, bishops, philosophers and other public figures."[6] These deeply connected factors

[2] See David Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse: Progymnasmata and the Evolution of a Rabbinic Genre," in *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, ed. Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan, *AJEC* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), and Richard Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), respectively.

[3] See Robert J. Penella, prologue to *The Purpose of Rhetoric in Late Antiquity: From Performance to Exegesis*, ed. Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas, *STAC* 72 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013). See also Ryan C. Fowler and Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas, "A Prolegomena to the Third Sophistic," in *Plato in the Third Sophistic*, ed. Ryan C. Fowler, Millennium-Studien/Millennnium Studies 50 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014); the concept has been criticized by others for its terminology, which seems to suggest "that there had been a break when in fact there was continuity" (Averil Cameron, "Culture Wars: Late Antiquity and Literature," in *Libera Curiositas: Mélanges d'histoire romaine et d'Antiquité tardive offerts à Jean-Michel Carrié*, ed. Christel Freu, Sylvain Janniard, and Arthur Ripoli, Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive 31 [Turnhout: Brepols, 2016], 310).

[4] Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas, foreword to *The Purpose of Rhetoric in Late Antiquity: From Performance to Exegesis*, *STAC* 72 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), esp. vii.

[5] My paraphrase of Jaclyn Maxwell, "Sermons," in *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, ed. Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 348.

[6] Cited according to Quiroga Puertas, foreword, vii and viii, respectively. On the increasing standardization of education, which was responsible for the distinct literary culture of late antiquity, see Lieve Van Hoof, "Performing Paideia: Greek Culture as an Instrument for Social Promotion in the Fourth Century A.D.," *Classical Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (May 2013).

ultimately led to a comparatively uniform curriculum shaped by "publicly funded and managed schools … attested all across the Empire."[7]

Administrative needs alone can be met with alphabetization, grammatical training, and the introduction of basic protocols, that is, the type of writing necessary for everyday bookkeeping, formal letters, and documents.[8] There is no practical need to go beyond such basic abilities, particularly because there existed no obvious link between wealth and education prior to the imperial period: trades and specialized crafts, which did not necessarily require full literacy, were passed on within the family. The wealth of those who held offices was also inherited or acquired through booty, the discovery of mining deposits, or tax revenues.[9] The increased competition among the elite in the wake of the Roman Empire's expansion may have been one reason for the investment in literacy and, especially, literary production as a means for building reputation.[10] Another reason was the competition between Alexander's heirs about the true successors of the Greek heritage, to which the Ptolemies responded with an unprecedented investment in intellectual sponsorship.[11] Patronage would continue to allow people to have a profitable occupation as an orator, author, or even "literary manager of others," as imperial education could include everyone, "slaves and freedmen as well as the elite."[12] With literacy becoming a prestigious social pursuit, it is not surprising, then, that the imperial-period curriculum went far beyond basic alphabetization.

Rhetoric, which penetrated speech as well as writing, promised defense and persuasion, both crucial abilities in a world where quarrels were likely to end up before a judge. Rhetoric made people believe that the

[7] Noel Lenski, "Searching for Slave Teachers in Late Antiquity," in "Ποιμένι λαῶν: Studies in Honor of Robert J. Penella," ed. Cristiana Sogno, special issue, RET Supplément 7 (2019): 134–135.

[8] See, e.g., the examples in Roger S. Bagnall, *Everyday Writing in the Greco-Roman East*, Sather Classical Lectures 69 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 27–53.

[9] Robin Barrow, "The Persistence of Ancient Education," in *A Companion to Ancient Education*, ed. W. Martin Bloomer (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 281.

[10] See Helmut Krasser, "Universalisierung und Identitätskonstruktion: Formen und Funktionen der Wissenskodifikation im kaiserzeitlichen Rom," in *Erinnerung, Gedächtnis, Wissen: Studien zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Gedächtnisforschung*, ed. Günter Oesterle, Formen der Erinnerung 26 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

[11] See Francesca Schironi, "Enlightened Kings or Pragmatic Rulers? Ptolemaic Patronage of Scholarship and Science in Context," in *Intellectual and Empire in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Philip R. Bosman (London: Routledge, 2019).

[12] Jaś Elsner, introduction to *Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture*, ed. Jaś Elsner and Michel Meyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 2.

right words, written or spoken, had the power to subdue enemies, physical or metaphysical, and to effect substantial change.[13] Written amulets, so-called *voces magicae*, and theurgy testify to the importance of persuasive language in what might be termed "cosmic courtrooms."[14] These were skills of interest to everyone.

Yet rhetoric served not only the purpose of persuasion but also entertainment. Rhetoric changed the way in which diverting texts were written and presented. One influential example is the sophist Lucian, an author famous for his pastiches of well-known scenes, full of allusions and comic exaggerations. Lucian saw an excellent mastery of language as a form of delightful acumen. This is perhaps best illustrated in the *hommage* he wrote for his teacher Demonax, whom Lucian characterizes primarily as a master of quick-witted responses.[15]

The appealing promises of the late antique, Greek-based rhetorical curriculum were manifold, and there does not seem to have been an alternative curriculum in the Mediterranean and adjacent areas. Thus, while some bishops may have considered adapting the curriculum, that is, replacing Greek and Roman myths and tales that served as exercises with biblical ones, they did not and could not think of replacing its rhetorical goals.[16]

The critical steps in shaping students' ability to craft their own texts was taken in the formative process between the beginner's curriculum – that

[13] Catherine M. Chin, *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World*, Divinations: Rereading Late Antique Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 2.

[14] See Árpád M. Nagy, "*Daktylios Pharmakites*: Magical Healing Gems and Rings in the Greco-Roman Worlds," in *Ritual Healing: Magic, Ritual and Medical Therapy from Antiquity until the Early Modern Period*, ed. Charles Burnett and Ildikó Csepregi, Micrologus' Library 48 (Florence: Sismel – Ed. del Galluzzo, 2012), on the transformation of gems and amulets in late antiquity. Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler refers to theurgy as a "ritual in ink" in *Theurgy in Late Antiquity: The Invention of a Ritual Tradition*, Beiträge zur europäischen Religionsgeschichte 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), esp. 278–285. East Syrian schools promoted studying to "strip off the old man with all his ways" and "to put on the new man who through knowledge is renewed in the likeness of his Creator [see Eph. 4:22–24]." Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 209.

[15] Graham Anderson, *Lucian: Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic*, Mnemosyne Supplement 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 64–66.

[16] See Jan R. Stenger, "Athens and/or Jerusalem? Basil's and Chrysostom's Views on the Didactic Use of Literature and Stories," in *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen (London: Routledge, 2016).

is, alphabetization and acquaintance with grammar – and the more advanced study of rhetoric for juridical or deliberative purposes with an accomplished orator. This formative process, in which students learned how to go about their own written compositions, has been described in various *progymnasmata*, "preliminary rhetorical exercises." Still extant *progymnasmata* in Greek are those ascribed to Hermogenes (second century), Aphthonius (fourth century), Libanius (fourth century), Nicolaus (fourth to fifth centuries), and Aelius Theon (fifth century).[17] Except for the exercises ascribed to Libanius, however, no treatise comes with an actual set of exercises. Rather, they describe the literary forms to be studied and how to teach them only in technical terms, usually on the basis of a single example. This implies that teachers were forced to choose their own examples based on which they would teach rhetorical principles. Considering the above-mentioned discussion among bishops, it may therefore be assumed that teachers who taught Hebrew or Aramaic composition chose examples from the Hebrew Bible or the Mishnah to teach rhetoric.[18]

The *progymnasmata* did not train students to freely write their own stories. Quite the opposite: they were taught how to transform other stories or to enhance a maxim (*gnōmē*) with an action and a speaker, thereby creating a *chreia*. The bulk of the plot was thereby already given, forcing students to practice not originality but exegetical flexibility. In a juridical context, this flexibility served to transform the argument of an adversary into its contrary by artfully highlighting and enhancing certain points, or to reveal contradictions. Although this method could produce quite creative outcomes, the art of bending meaning was taught very mechanically at an early stage.

People wrote (and still write) according to their training. The somewhat mechanical methods applied to transform motifs were certainly responsible for the enormous number of books and treatises that late antique authors were able to produce. Lucian, for example, wrote variant after variant of motifs and twists found in earlier stories, and then he wrote again variants of

[17] On the lifetime of Nicolaus, see Craig A. Gibson, "The Alexandrian Tychaion and the Date of Ps.-Nicolaus 'Progymnasmata,'" *Classical Quarterly*, 59, no. 2 (December 2009). Aelius Theon has long been dated to the first century. Yet the prosopographic investigation by Malcolm Heath points, rather, to the fifth century; see Malcolm Heath, "Theon and the History of the Progymnasmata," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 43, no. 3 (2002).

[18] Interestingly, the bishops did not reach the same conclusions: Chrysostom wanted to exchange the texts, while Basil thought it better to reserve biblical texts for higher education; see Stenger, "Athens and/or Jerusalem?"

these variants. Graham Anderson illustrates Lucian's stereotyped reworking by showing how Aphthonius suggested reworking a maxim.[19] According to Aphthonius, a maxim could be altered by adding praise for its author, paraphrasing it, explaining the reason for the maxim, proving it right by virtue of the truth of its contrary, comparing it to a similar case, giving an example of a situation/action in which the maxim fits, adding a similar statement by another person as testimony to its truth, or by appending an epilogue to it.[20] A maxim (*gnōmē/sententia*) could be true, plausible, or hyperbolic in its content, and simple or composite in its style.[21]

Similar exercises were also suggested by different *progymnasmata* as exercises for the *chreia*. The *chreia*, a saying attributed to a person and sometimes enhanced with an action, can be considered the most prominent form of a miniature story in late antiquity. In modern scholarship, it has often been translated incorrectly as "anecdote," which is likely to provoke incorrect assumptions regarding the truthfulness or the amusing character of its content.[22] Most of all, a translation of the *chreia* as "anecdote" hides the highly technical makeup of these short stories. The set of methods for slight change (*exergasia*) of the *chreia* was the same for maxims or sayings. Hermogenes provides a nice example of how these methods affect a saying (*logikon*):

[*Logikon*] Isocrates said that the root of education is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.

Praise (*epainos*): "Isocrates was wise," and you will slightly develop the topic. Then the *chreia*, "He said this," and you will not state it in bare form but expand the statement. Then the **cause** (*aitia*), "For the greatest things are wont to succeed through toil and in the end given no pleasure, but things of importance are the opposite." Then from a **comparison** (*enantion*), "For just as farmers need to reap fruits by working the soil, so also with speeches." Then from an **example** (*parabolē*), "Demosthenes, by shutting himself up at home and working hard, later reaped the fruit in the form of crowns and testimonials." It is also possible to attempt [to bring **proof**] from other [sources]; for example, "Hesiod said,

[19] See Anderson, *Lucian*, 3.

[20] See Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 100–101.

[21] See Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 99 (Aphthonius the Sophist [§7R]).

[22] Henry A. Fischel, "Studies in Cynicism and the Ancient Near East: The Transformation of a Chria," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Studies in the History of Religions 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 372–411, translated *chreia* as "anecdote," which seems to have had a great impact on the study of rabbinic texts. He further associated the *chreia* (or "*chria*") with the *exemplum* (Greek: *paradeigma*), a figure of different purpose and structure. Fischel similarly used this notion of *chreia* in his monograph, *Rabbinic Literature and Greco-Roman Philosophy: A Study of Epicurea and Rhetorica in Early Midrashic Writings*, Studia Post-biblica 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

'The gods put sweat before virtue,' and another poet says, 'The gods sell all good things to us for toil.'" At the end you will put an **exhortation** (*prosthēseis*) to the effect that one must be persuaded by the person who has said or done this. (Hermogenes, *Progym.* [7–8])[23]

The tale (*mythos/fabula*) and the narration (*diēgēsis/narratio*) were similarly subject to this systematic change by students. The narration had as its distinctive features the identification of the protagonists and indications as to where and when a certain event took place. The event itself did not need to be true but had to be plausible. The tale, on the other hand, is described as plainly fictitious in the *progymnasmata*. But the quality of a tale was likewise assessed by its plausibility. Such plausibility could be achieved by associating certain traits with suitable characters, like beauty with the peacock and cleverness with the fox, or by adapting a given plot to accommodate new protagonists.[24] For some writers of *progymnasmata*, a tale, by definition, featured animals, a definition refuted by Theon and Aphthonius.[25] Aphthonius further distinguished between the rational, the ethical, and the mixed tale. In the rational tale, humans *do* something, while the ethical tale transfers human characteristics to animals, and both features appear together in the mixed one.[26]

According to the *progymnasmata*, tales have a didactic purpose, and the lesson should be highlighted either in the beginning or in the end, in the form of a saying or maxim. These sayings or maxims can be replaced at will to give a tale a different direction, depending on the point somebody wishes to make. An *epimython*, a tale followed by a gnomic statement, might then read as follows:

It was the height of summer and the cicadas were offering up their shrill song, but it occurred to the ants to toil and collect the harvest from which they would be fed in the winter. When the winter came on, the ants fed on what they had laboriously collected, but the pleasure of the cicadas ended in want. Similarly, youth that does not wish to toil fares badly in old age. (Aphthonius, *Progym.* 2R)[27]

[23] Translation follows Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 77, with slight emendations based on Hugo Rabe's edition, *Hermogenis opera*, Rhetores Graeci 6 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1913), 7–8.

[24] Hermogenes 2; see Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 74. The attribution of human qualities to animals made the beastly figures prone to being turned into humans for other purposes. Henry A. Fischel, "Story and History: Observations on Greco-Roman Rhetoric and Pharisaism," in *American Oriental Society, Middle West Branch, Semi-Centennial Volume: A Collection of Original Essays*, ed. Denis Sinor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 65–66, considers the possibility that the replacement of animals in political fables with names of rabbis may be responsible for certain stories.

[25] See Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 24.

[26] See Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 96.

[27] Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 96.

Tales could further be enhanced with descriptions and additional dialogue, or they could be shortened by the omission of these very features.[28] Apparently, then, late antique stories were defined and structured by a distinct and qualified set of methods for variegation.

The language of a tale should be clear and simple, as Nicolaus emphasized, and deviate "little from that used in ordinary conversations."[29] The moral value of the tale or its consistency could be acclaimed or refuted. This was an important exercise, as Theon explained, since it prepared students for the refutation or confirmation of a juridical argument.[30] The purpose of these exercises was to help students realize that statements and actions could be used independently from their original context to create a different meaning. At this stage, sayings and actions from a "textual witness" were used as stand-ins for the juridical argument or case. The examples were wisely chosen so that their moral and instructive content offered an additional pedagogical benefit. This instructional habit of using quotations as proof obviously left its mark on late antique writing culture. *Chreia* and maxims have been found to underscore arguments in texts as diverse as private letters, amulets, or incantations, where they were used as claims to tie someone down (as in *defixiones*) or to set someone free (as in amulets).[31] The same sort of intercessional authority was transferred to whole books, which were worn as pendants for apotropaic purposes.[32]

It appears that the late antique story was built with or around sayings and maxims: they constituted a small unit (the *chreia*), introduced or appended the plot, or appeared in dialogues in the form of quotes or direct speech. Yet the progymnasmatic curriculum had more to offer regarding crafting a plausible story. In later stages, students were trained

[28] E.g., Hermogenes on fable (Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 74–75) or Theon on the same subject (23–28).

[29] Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 136.

[30] See Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 23–28.

[31] See Lillian I. Larsen, "School Texts," in *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, ed. Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018) for two examples of maxims in letters (477) and for the discussion of a *historiola* in the text from an amulet bowl that relies on a biblical verse as proof (477n127). Incantations were generally replete with verses from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, or Homer; see Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory*, *STAC* 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

[32] John Chrysostom, *Stat.* 19.14 (NPNF 9:470). Miniature codices: P. Oxy. I 0006 (Acts of Paul and Thecla); P. Ant. 1.13 (Acts of Paul and Thecla); P. Oxy. XIII 1594 (New Recension of Tobit); P. Oxy. VI 0850 (Acts of John); P. Oxy. VI 0849 (Acts of Peter); P. Oxy. III 0404 (Shepherd of Hermes); P. Oxy. VIII 1080 (Revelation I); and P. Oxy. VII 1010 (6 Ezra).

in "vivid description" (*ekphrasis*) and in speech in character (*ethopoeia*). Accomplished students of progymnasmatic training thus had a useful and certified set of tools at their disposal that allowed them to make sense of a text, to use it as proof for or against an argument, or simply to compose a plausible new version of an old story. They were also able to mix and match the learned writing methods for different purposes. In fact, students had no choice but to write along these lines even if they did not choose a career in the courtroom; this was how they were trained, what they knew, and what the audience expected.

One result of progymnasmatic training in a nonjuridical context is what I will call the "exegetical story." This type of story combines the inquiry (*thesis*, discussed in detail in Chapter 1) with a tale or narration. It is found specifically in rabbinic and monastic literature. Like the "exegetical inquiry," the exegetical story takes as its starting point one or two conflicting sentences from works considered to be "textual witnesses," such as the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament. These conflicting "testimonies" are explained through a story, that is, a rather elaborate simile, before concluding with a maxim, saying, or quote from a "witness." As I will discuss an exegetical story from the Talmud further below, I will illustrate this point here with an example from the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (*Apophthegmata Patrum*), a work written around the end of the fifth century:

> A brother visited Abba Silvanus at Mount Sinai; he saw the brothers working and said to the elder, "Labor not for the meat that perishes (John 6:27); Mary has chosen the good part" (Luke 10:42). The elder said to Zachariah, his disciple, "Give the brother a book and put him in a cell without anything else."
> So, when the ninth hour came the visitor watched the door, expecting someone would be sent to call him to the meal. When no one called him he got up, went to find the old man and said to him, "Have the brothers not eaten today?" The old man said to him, "Because you are a spiritual man and do not need that kind of food. We, being carnal, want to eat, and that is why we work. But you have chosen the good portion and read the whole day long and you do not want to eat carnal food." When he heard these words the brother made a prostration saying, "Forgive me, abba." The old man said to him, "Mary needs Martha. It is really thanks to Martha that Mary is praised." (*Apophthegmata Patrum*, Silvanus 5)[33]

[33] Larsen, "School Texts," 479. Translation by Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (London: Mowbrays, 1984), 223. Larsen quotes this story as an example of narration (*diēgēsis*), since it indicates the place (Mt. Sinai) and time (the ninth hour). For a discussion of parallels between this story and the criticism of physical work expressed in a story in b. Shabb. 33b, see Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 159–160.

The story starts with two verses from the New Testament (John 6:27; Luke 10:42). These verses do not conflict with each other but, rather, with the physical labor that monks must perform. The story needs to bring proof against the two textual witnesses. This proof is found in the physical needs of man and in a contextual interpretation of the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42). Exegetical stories in the Talmud proceed in the exact same way, always aiming at proving or disproving a conflict, either between textual witnesses or between such a witness and daily experience.[34] These conceptual parallels between rabbinic and monastic "exegetical stories" are suggestive of a literary training that adhered to the same stylistic concepts and objectives.

THE LARGER IMPACT OF THE *PROGYMNASMATA*

There is no evidence of a conceptually different curriculum that would compare to the *progymnasmata*. It was the only curriculum proposing a continuation of literary training after basic alphabetization. In addition to the preserved *progymnasmata*, many others, now lost, seem to have circulated. The uniformity among the proposed exercises in the extant treatises, however, suggests that the lost curricula must not have differed much in content either.[35] The exercises covered rhetorical subjects such as the attributed saying or action (*chreia*); the maxim (*gnōmē*); the reminiscence (*apomnēmoneuma*); the fable (*mythos*); the narration (*diēgēsis*); refutation (*anaskeuē*); confirmation (*kataskeuē*); the amplification of a brave or faulty deed (*topos*); vivid description (*ekphrasis*); the introduction of a speaker (*prosōpopoeia*); praise of living people (*encomion*); of the dead (*epitaphios*); of the gods (*hymn*); invective (*psogos*); comparison (*syncrisis*); imitation and speech in character (*ethopoeia*); inquiry (*thesis*); the introduction of a law (with focus on refutation or confirmation); as well as paraphrase and elaboration (*exergasia*).[36]

[34] For typical exegetical stories, see the samples in Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Stories of the Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010): b. Yevam. 105b (two biblical verses), b. Ta'an. 21a (two biblical verses; like in the monastic example above, the topic can similarly be phrased as "to work or not to work"), b. Ta'an. 23a (exegesis of a baraita), and b. Shabb. 156b (exegesis of a maxim).

[35] See Robert J. Penella, "The *Progymnasmata* and Progymnasmatic Theory in Imperial Greek Education," in Bloomer, *Companion to Ancient Education*, 163.

[36] See the list in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, xiii.

The curricula were translated into other languages in the Mediterranean. There is an Armenian translation of Aelius Theon's *progymnasmata*, carried out by the so-called "Hellenizing School" (ca. 570–730 CE).[37] A Latin translation was produced by Priscian (ca. fifth century CE) of (pseudo-)Hermogenes's treatise. Worth noting is the fact that Priscian substituted the Greek examples with examples from Latin authors, such as Terence, Sallust, Virgil, and Cicero.[38] It was indeed not difficult to substitute the exercises' few suggested literary examples with those from a different body of literature, since the treatises, with the exception of Libanius's *progymnasmata*, were mainly theoretical. As mentioned above, even instructors who wanted to teach based on Greek examples had to come up with additional examples themselves. Based on the popularity of the *progymnasmata*, it seems feasible that the curriculum was translated into Aramaic, the Sasanid *lingua franca*, as well. Jewish teachers would have substituted the original examples from Greek (or Persian) poets with examples from the Hebrew Bible, Aramaic texts written by Jews ("Judaized texts"), and maybe early rabbinic texts (pending the teacher's involvement in this tradition).

Admittedly, there is no evidence of an Aramaic, Syriac, or Coptic translation of these curricula. Then again, there is ample evidence in Jewish Aramaic, Syriac, and even Coptic texts for the application of the writing standards taught through *progymnasmata*.[39] In the case of Syriac, even without proof of an extant translation of *progymnasmata*, by the sixth century, "Syriophone education" spread "even amongst the lower end of the literacy spectrum … being increasingly assigned a prestige equal to that of Greek."[40] Teachers might also have translated the Greek standards directly into the local language without writing a formal translation of the curriculum. In any event, bilingual learning

[37] See Philonis Alexandrini, *De Animalibus: The Armenian Text with an Introduction*, trans. Abraham Terian, Studies in Hellenistic Judaism 1 (Ann Arbor, MI: Scholars Press, 1981), 7.

[38] See Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 73.

[39] See Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse," on *progymnasmata* and the construction of the argument in both Talmuds. See Catherine M. Chin, "Rhetorical Practice in the Chreia Elaboration of Mara bar Serapion," *Hug* 9, no. 2 (2008), on a Syriac letter marked by progymnasmatic training, and Janet Timbie, "The Education of Shenoute and Other Cenobitic Leaders inside and outside the Monastery," in Gemeinhardt et al., *Education and Religion*, on such features in a Coptic text.

[40] Daniel King, "Education in the Syriac World of Late Antiquity," in Gemeinhardt et al., *Education and Religion*, 176.

had become the standard rather than the exception since the translation of the Greek curriculum into Latin.[41] Many texts testify to bilingualism and immediate translation of Greek script, grammar, and style into another language.[42] Transfers of Greek idioms to late Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic have been observed in abundance, and Mesopotamian incantation bowls bear witness of people with the ability to write in several languages and scripts.[43]

Learning in late antiquity involved traveling, which meant that many students acquired their knowledge from different teachers and in various settings.[44] In the case of Sasanid Babylonia, cultural fluidity was also promoted by geography: the Mesopotamian plain was a flat border area between the Roman and the Sasanid Empires. There was no exact demarcation or closable frontier, and the region allowed for and benefited from considerable exchange.[45] Indeed, cultural boundaries seem to have been defined less by territorial frontiers than by foundational myths that were, again, the basis of grammatical learning. For Priscian, it

[41] See Dennis Feeney, *Beyond Greek: The Beginnings of Latin Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 119–121.

[42] See Bagnall, *Everyday Writing*, 75–94, on bilingual Greek and Coptic as well as Greek and Syriac texts (95–116). On the influence of Greek on Syriac, see Aaron M. Butts, *Language Change in the Wake of Empire: Syriac in Its Greco-Roman Context*, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016).

[43] See the many examples of Greek idioms in mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic collected in Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission of Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.–IV Century C.E.*, *TSJTSA* 18 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962). On the bowls, see Jason S. Mokhtarian, *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings, and Priests: The Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 128–137, and Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 34–63. Fergus Millar, "Transformation of Judaism under Greco-Roman Rule: Responses to Seth Schwartz's *Imperialism and Jewish Society*," in *Empire, Church, and Society in the Late Roman Near East: Greeks, Jews, Syrians and Saracens (Collected Studies 2004–2014)*, ed. Fergus Millar, Late Antique History and Religion 10 (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 328–330, describes the bilingual and bicultural environment of Jews in Palestine.

[44] See Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny*, Routledge Library Editions: Education 91 (London: Methuen, 1977), 90–96, and Edward Watts, "Education: Speaking, Thinking, and Socializing," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott F. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 472–474.

[45] See Jan Willem Drijvers, "Rome and the Sasanian Empire: Confrontation and Coexistence," in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 449.

was important that students studying the Latin language became simultaneously acquainted with the Latin poets. Similarly, there are no translations of Greek myths found in rabbinic literature, only isolated and reappropriated motifs barely recognizable as such.[46] Clearly, as Blossom Stefaniw observed, "texts which were the object of grammatical study bound their readers into a historical and cultural lineage: the reader was connected to the past, in that she was brought into a relationship with the moral and literary patrimony passed down through ancient texts."[47]

A fully historical understanding of late antique texts is only possible if the formative training of their authors is considered. Based on Theon's remark that "training in exercises is absolutely useful not only to those who are going to practice rhetoric but also if one wishes to undertake the function of poets or historians or any other writers," Robert Penella posited an "abiding influence of these rhetorical exercises on the ancient mind."[48] Indeed, the formative impact of the *progymnasmata* is most evident in the uniformity with which late antique literary culture presents itself. It was this uniformity, in fact, the overall notion of borrowing, fragmentation, and heterogeneity, which generated the long-held assumption of an intellectual decline in late antiquity, in contrast to the perceived originality and creativity of ancient authors. More recently, however, this mannerism has been acknowledged for its own beauty, which simultaneously coined and expressed the taste of the time.[49]

In his seminal article "The Treatment of Narrative in Late Antique Literature" (1988), Michael Roberts pointed to some shifts responsible for the distinct style of late antiquity as compared to classical antiquity. These shifts, he argued, are not only visible in the way the structure of narratives changed but, tellingly, also in works of art. Late antique art seems to contrast the harmony and internal order of antiquity with discontinuities, fractures, and a "preference for juxtaposition over continuity."[50]

[46] E.g., Samuel T. Lachs, "The Pandora-Eve Motif in Rabbinic Literature," *HTR* 67, no. 3 (July 1974); or Maren R. Niehoff, "The Phoenix in Rabbinic Literature," *HTR* 89, no. 3 (July 1996).

[47] Blossom Stefaniw, "Knowledge in Late Antiquity: What Is It Made of and What Does It Make?" *SLA* 2, no. 3 (2018): 272.

[48] *Progym.* 70, translated by Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 13; Penella, "The *Progymnasmata* and Progymnasmatic Theory," 168.

[49] Marco Formisano, "Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity," *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 283.

[50] Michael Roberts, "The Treatment of Narrative in Late Antique Literature: Ammianus Marcellinus (16.10), Rutilius Namatianus and Paulinus of Pella," *Philologus* 132, no. 2 (1988): 185.

These changes, which seem to have occurred in tandem in art and speech, did not escape the notice of attentive contemporaries. Quintilian (first century), for example, criticized an overuse of *sententiae* (*gnōmai* in Greek), which led, in his assessment, to an uneven style.[51] The trend nevertheless continued. *Sententiae* saturate late antique literature not only in the form and content of classical maxims with their general and moralizing character but also in the form of statements of a more technical nature (i.e., medical, architectural, agricultural, and so on).[52] In general, there was an increasing trend toward the concise, short text, a phenomenon referred to by some scholars as "miniaturization."[53] Preference was given to the condensed work and the short treatise. The fact that many brief stories or small excerpts eventually added up to multivolume *breviaria* sometimes masks this trend.[54]

The diversity of the short *sententiae* that made late antique literary culture look like a patchwork quilt also found its reflection in fashion trends. Thus, Quintilian further lamented the new trend of exchanging the classical purple stripe of the toga for "multi-colored patches, *panni* or *segmenta*, applied to or embroidered on clothing."[55] The taste for colorful and variegated "patches" apparently penetrated several areas of life. In literary compositions, these patches were reflected on a macrolevel by excerpts and on a microlevel by proverbs, recipes, or brief technical instructions.

[51] See Roberts, "Treatment of Narrative," 190.

[52] See Marco Formisano, "Introduction: The Poetics of Knowledge," in *Knowledge, Text and Practice in Ancient Technical Writing*, ed. Marco Formisano and Philip van der Eijk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 14. Thus, for example, Ammianus used eight times more *sententiae* in the fourth century than Tacitus did in the second; see Martin Hose, "Intertextualität als hermeneutisches Instrument in spätantiker Literatur: Das Beispiel Ammianus Marcellinus," in *Spätantike Konzeptionen von Literatur*, ed. Jan R. Stenger, Bibliothek der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaften Neue Folge, Series 2, 149 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2015), 89.

[53] E.g., Jacques Fontaine, "Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons," in *Christianisme et Formes Letteraires de L'Antiquite Tardive en Occident*, ed. Manfred Fuhrmann and Alain Cameron (Vandoeuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1977), 444–445, comparing three different Latin authors of the fourth century. Similarly, the miniaturization of rituals has been observed in the so-called PGM (Papyri Graecae Magicae, or Greek magical papyri) from Egypt; see Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 129 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 23–27, and Athanassia Zografou, "La nourriture et les repas dans les Papyri Graecae Magicae," *Food & History* 6, no. 2 (January 2008): 59–60.

[54] See Thomas M. Banchich, "The Epitomizing Tradition in Late Antiquity," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. John Marincola, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

[55] Roberts, "Treatment of Narrative," 190, and references to such depictions in 190n28.

Like taste in clothing, taste in mosaics changed. Irving Lavin describes late antique mosaics as appearing amorphous and depthless at first, since they aim at assuring not one but multiple possible viewpoints.[56] This tendency is also reflected in the time's philosophy and its approach to truth and truth claims: whereas "Plato taught that truth is singular, objective and unchanging … the sophists viewed reality as being multifaceted, relative and in constant flux."[57] Similarly, mosaics are characterized by their division of space into single blocks, while they also maintain a superior thematic unity. It was a design that "offered yet another possibility of which the classic system was incapable …. The composition could be extended infinitely in any direction without prejudice to the unity of the surface as a whole."[58]

These mosaics, then, mirror the already familiar literary pattern of miniature units, such as excerpts, short stories, or *chreia*, which can – but do not have to – be strung together endlessly. Indeed, stories often seem to be constructed from individual scenes that make independent points. With only minor changes, one or more of these scenes can easily be used in another catena-like story. Roberts linked the possibility for dissection and the focus on the description of single parts to the progymnasmatic exercise called *ekphrasis* (description), and especially to the process *leptologia*, or *descriptio per partes*. *Leptologia* is the division of a scene "into its constituent parts which will then be enumerated in elaborate detail."[59] *Ekphrasis* marked the interface between art and narrative, vision and text, since it aimed at describing something so vividly that listeners and readers turned into spectators.[60] Training in *ekphrasis* seems also to have been the reason for the increasingly sensual and graphic stories in late antiquity.[61]

[56] See Irving Lavin, "The Hunting Mosaics in Antioch and Their Sources: A Study of Compositional Principles in the Development of Early Medieval Style," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 186–188.

[57] See Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, 24. This move toward inclusion of multiple viewpoints rather than a conclusive resolution of a problem is also manifest in the Babylonian Talmud, especially when compared to the Palestinian Talmud. See Daniel Boyarin, "Dialectic and Divination in the Talmud," in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 223–224. Boyarin, however, interpreted this feature differently, as a deficient form of dialectics, which is robbed "of its ultimate legitimacy as a method for arriving at truth" (224).

[58] Lavin, "Hunting Mosaics in Antioch and Their Sources," 188.

[59] Roberts, "Treatment of Narrative," 193.

[60] See Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 8.

[61] See Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion*, 167–191.

The late antique story preferred thematic unity even over chronological order.[62] This observation finds support in Theon's *progymnasmata*, where he writes regarding the narrative:

> It is possible to begin with events in the middle, go to the end, and stop with things that happened first, or, again, beginning from the end to go back to the beginning and stop in the middle, and also starting from the first events to change to the last and stop with those in the middle. So much for the arrangement of the order. (§87)[63]

Similarly, the talmudic story deviates "from the strict temporal order, most often through flashbacks, such that events that occur later in the story are recounted earlier in the text."[64]

These few but significant observations show how much of late antique writing culture can be understood through the lens of the *progymnasmata*. They provided students with the intellectual tools for purpose-driven writing, classification, and problem-solving, and, in many ways, culture *tout court*.

THE TALMUDIC STORY

In the last sixty years or so, considerable scholarly effort has been devoted to explaining the nature and purpose of rabbinic stories. Comparative historical approaches spurred by Henry Fischel and literary analysis promoted by Yonah Fraenkel emerged simultaneously in the late 1960s.[65] These two schools, the former of which has since been criticized for its positivism and the latter for its decontextualizing approach, appear to have merged in recent years. They produced an approach that is critical regarding the historical reliability of the stories while also being sensitive to their cultural

[62] Roberts, "Treatment of Narrative," 194.
[63] Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 35.
[64] Rubenstein, *Stories of the Talmud*, 205.
[65] On comparative scholarship on rabbinic and Graeco-Roman texts in general, see Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, 15–23. On Fischel's and Fraenkel's contributions regarding talmudic stories, see Rubenstein, *Stories of the Talmud*, 7–10. On Fraenkel, see also Hillel I. Newman, "Closing the Circle: Yonah Fraenkel, the Talmudic Story, and Rabbinic History," in *How Should Rabbinic Literature Be Read in the Modern World?*, ed. Matthew Kraus (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006). Another approach to the stories has been taken in folklore studies, which "views folk narratives as woven into the very fabric of rabbinic Aggadah and rabbinic literature in general and not merely as an amusing digression providing relief from heavier and more important matters" (Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*, trans. Batya Stein, Contraversions [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000], 2). See there (1–15) for a summary of folklore studies and rabbinic literature.

context.[66] The purpose of the remainder of this chapter is to enhance these prior studies with an explanation of why the stories appear in their particular shape, how they were composed, and why we usually only find near or quasi parallels of certain motifs or stories in other works.

Most of the above-mentioned stylistic features of late antique stories have also been observed in talmudic stories but, to date, have not been linked to these. Based on the conclusions drawn in the previous chapters, an analysis of "the talmudic story" must consider the fact that the stories do not necessarily appear in the Talmud in the form in which they were originally composed. Instead, the stories may appear as excerpts in the shape that best suited the composers when arranging an adequate commentary on a certain lemma. In fact, the chain-like structure of late antique stories, with their easily detachable segments, makes them suitable for exactly such breakups and rearrangements. This obviously complicates the assessment of the actual story, especially since, as we shall see, the composers will apply – by default and similar training – the very same compositional methods to the story as the original author did. They will substitute dialogues or characters, if necessary, interrupt the story with associatively fitting excerpts, or add sayings to the concluding moral of the story. Then again, it is precisely the fact that the composers use the very same methods as the story's author that enables an analysis of the story behind this tampering: the possibilities are limited and repetitive.

I will illustrate this point with a lengthy story found in the commentary to the lemma *qordiaqos* (b. Git. 67b–70b), with which the reader is already familiar through the discussion in Chapter 3 of that commentary's structure and its assigned keywords ("cure," "meat," and "wine"). Familiarity with the story's co-texts will facilitate its analysis from a compositional point of view. The story begins with two enigmatic biblical verses, which are used to explain each other. One of the verses is 1 Kgs. 6:7, where it is written that Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem out

[66] See Tal Ilan and Ronit Nikolsky, "מהתם להכה, From There to Here (bSanh 5a): Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia; An Introduction," in Nikolsky and Ilan, *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, 7–18. Examples of this approach include the following: Rubenstein, *Stories of the Talmud*; Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature*; Richard Kalmin, *Migrating Tales: The Talmud's Narratives and Their Historical Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Reuven Kiperwasser and Serge Ruzer, "Zoroastrian Proselytes in Rabbinic and Syriac Christian Narratives: Orality-Related Markers of Cultural Identity," *History of Religions* 51, no. 3 (February 2012); and the essays in the volume by Geoffrey Herman and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, eds., *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, BJS 362 (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2018).

of stones so perfectly hewn that no sound of a chisel was heard while it was being built. In Eccl. 2:8, a book ascribed to Solomon's authorship, we read that he busied himself with *shidah* and *shidot*.[67] Both words, *shidah* and *shidot*, are unintelligible, biblical *hapax legomena*. The story's author(s) will interpret the terms as referring to male and female demons, based on the Aramaic word for demon, *shed*. This interpretation will first be contrasted but finally harmonized with a somewhat older rabbinic tradition, which claims that Solomon achieved this temple miracle by using the *shamir*, a mysterious "something" that carves even the hardest of stones.[68] Thus, like the above example from *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, this story follows the pattern of the "exegetical story" that takes as its point of departure biblical verses but also conflicting statements by long-gone teachers.

For the sake of clarity in the discussion following the story, distinct parts are labeled with letters. The very fact that it is possible to label the story's components in this way points to a similarity with the above-discussed feature of mosaics. Both, story and mosaic, are composed of distinct units. These units are, as shall be shown in due course, extractable and rearrangeable without disrupting the story – with the exception of the proem. Just as Theon suggested in his *progymnasmata* regarding proems in general, the proem in this story is a unique composition (*Progym.* §76).

THE CASE EXAMPLE: SOLOMON, ASHMEDAI, AND THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

The composers placed the following story about Solomon and the demon Ashmedai in the narrative section of the composition. It follows upon a story about Rav Sheshet's dining at the exilarch's house, where the latter's servants tried to harm or even kill him, mostly by means of meat. The lengthy story, or rather story cycle, seems to have been chosen based on the keyword "wine," or "wine" and "cure." Within the commentary on *qordiaqos*, the story cycle will be followed by the "proofs," a list of recipes. The story comprises eight units (A–H), two of which belong together (D^G and G^D).[69]

[67] שידה ושידות.

[68] This description can be derived from the Hebrew wording of the tradition and the parallel in the Palestinian Talmud (see b. Sotah 48b and y. Sotah 9:13–14).

[69] My translation is based on Ms. Munich 95; significant variant readings are indicated in footnotes.

A) "I busied myself with male and female singers and the delights of the sons of Adam: *shidah* and *shidot*" (Eccl. 2:8). "Female and male singers" belong to the category of singing. And the "delights of the sons of Adam" are ponds and baths. "*Shidah* and *shidot*" we translate here as "male demons and demonesses [*shidah v-shidatin*]," while in the west they say [it is] "a chest [*shidat*]."[70]
Rabbi Yochanan said: "In Shihin, there were three hundred kinds of demons, but I do not know what such a demon [*shidah*] itself should be like."[71]
The master said: "Here we translate as 'male and female demons.'"
For what did he require them? For it is written: "And the house, when it was built, was made of finished, hewn stones," etc. (1 Kgs. 6:7).

B) He said to the rabbis: "How should I do this?" They said to him: "There is the *shamir* that was used by Moshe for the stones of the *efod*. Bring a male demon and female demons; maybe they know and will reveal [it] to you." He went and brought them, and they applied pressure. They said: "We do not know, but maybe Ashmedai, the king of the demons, knows." He said to them: "Where is he?" They said to him: "He is on such-and-such a mountain. He dug a cistern for himself and filled it with water and covered it with a flint rock and sealed it with a seal [*gushpanqa*].[72] And every day he ascends to heaven and studies the literary unit of the heavens, and [then] he descends to the earth and studies the literary unit of the earth. Then he examines his seal, uncovers [the cistern] and drinks, covers and seals it [again], and sleeps."

C) He sent Benaiah ben Yehoiada. He gave him a chain upon which the name was engraved and a signet ring (*yzqta*) upon which the name was engraved, tufts of wool, and skin-bottles of wine.[73] He went and dug a pit below [the cistern of Ashmedai] and let the water flow and stopped it up with tufts of wool. Then he dug a pit above [Ashmedai's cistern] and let the wine flow [through this pit into the cistern of Ashmedai]. Then he filled them [both of his pits] up. Then he ascended and sat in a tree. When [Ashmedai] came, he inspected the seal, uncovered [the cistern], and found the wine. He said: "It is written: 'Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is a roisterer, and everyone who is led astray by them will not grow wise' (**Prov. 20:1**). And [further] it is written: 'Fornication, wine, and fresh juice seize the heart' (**Hos. 4:11**). I will not drink!" [But] when his thirst overcame him, he said: "'Wine gladdens the heart of man and makes it cheerful' (**Ps. 104:15**])."[74] I will drink!" He became intoxicated and fell asleep.

[70] The neglected grammatical concern for singular and plural here – at best, the terms could be translated with *a* male and female demons; see *DJBA*, see "שידתין" – is a somewhat notorious feature regarding demons. The Middle Persian word for *dēw* is variably rendered with the Aramaic "ideogram *ŠDYA*, more often in the pl. ŠDYA'n', often to be translated 'demons' even in the sg" (Alan V. Williams, "Dēw," *EIr* 7:333–334).

[71] This refutation is most likely based on y. Ta'an. 4:8 (79a), which reports that Rabbi Yohanan saw eighty chests of metal (שידתן). See Dan Levene, "'A Happy Thought of the Magicians': The Magical Get," in *Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff*, ed. Robert Deutsch (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2003), 180n26.

[72] גושפנקא.

[73] עיזקתא, signet ring.

[74] This citation from Ps. 104:15 is missing in Ms. St. Petersburg and Ms. Vatican 140.

Benaiah came, threw the chain upon him, [and] shackled him. When [Ashmedai] woke up, he struggled [with the chain]. [Benaiah] said to him: "The name of your master is upon you! The name of your master is upon you!"

D[G]) When [Benaiah] was dragging him, [Ashmedai] came along. Every tree he passed, he rubbed against it and pulled it down. Every house he reached he pulled down.[75] He reached the hut of a certain old woman.[76] She came out and beseeched him. He bent his body over [the hut] and broke a bone on it. He said: "This is what is written: 'A soft tongue can break a bone'" (**Prov. 25:15**). He saw a blind man lost on his journey, and he brought him back. He saw a drunken person and brought him back. He saw a bride whom they were celebrating and cried. He heard a certain man who was saying to a shoemaker: "Make me shoes that will serve me for seven years!" [and] he laughed. He saw a certain diviner who was divining over bread, [and] he laughed.[77]

E) When he arrived there, they did not bring him in before Solomon for three days. On the first day he asked: "Why am I not being summoned to the king?" They told him: "He has been overpowered by drinking." [Ashmedai] took a brick and placed it on another one. They told Solomon. He said to them: "This is what he told you: 'Force him again [to drink]!'" The next day [he asked: "Why am I not being summoned to the king?" and] they told him: "He has been overpowered by his eating." He took a brick [away] from the other. They told [Solomon]. He said to them: "This is what he told you: 'Take the food away from him.'" After three days they brought [Ashmedai] in before [Solomon].[78]

F) He [Ashmedai] took a measuring rod and measured four cubits and threw it in front of [Solomon]. [Ashmedai] said to him: "Indeed, when this man dies, he will have in this world only these four cubits [his grave]. Now that you have subdued the whole world, you are not satisfied until you subdue me?!"
He said to him: "I do not want anything from you. I want to build the temple, and I need the *shamir*."
"It was not handed over to me. It was handed over to the prince of the sea, and he only gives it to the hoopoe because he trusts him to keep what he has sworn to him."
"And what does [the hoopoe] do with it?"
"He brings it to the 'mountains of nothing,' where it resides. He places it on the tooth of the mountain, and the mountain splits. Then he gathers and brings seeds from trees, throws [them] there, and they sprout in it." [And there are those who translate [its name as] "carpenter of the mountain."][79]

[75] Ms. Vilna speaks of only one palm tree and one house. The translation here follows Ms. Munich 95.
[76] According to Mss. Arras 889, St. Petersburg, Vatican 140, and Bazzano 21. Ms. Munich 95 has סיבתא דההוא, an old woman.
[77] The word "bread [אריפתא]" is absent from the printed editions (Soncino and Vilna), but see Mss. Munich 95, Arras 889, Vatican 140, and Bazzano 21.
[78] Following Mss. Arras 889, Vatican 130, Bologna 145, and Vatican 140. Ms. Munich 95 reads: "At the beginning of the third day."
[79] This addition appears in Mss. Arras 889, Bazzano 21, and Vatican 130.

They inspected the nest of the hoopoe, and there were hatchlings in it.[80] They covered the nest with translucent glass. When [the hoopoe] wanted to enter [the nest], it was not able to.[81] It went and brought back the *shamir* in order to place it on the nest. He shouted at it, and [the *shamir*] dropped, and he took it. [The hoopoe] went and hanged itself because of its oath.

G^{D}) Benaiah the son of Yehoiada said to [Ashmedai]: "Tell me the meaning of all the words and deeds that astonished me."
"What is the reason that you brought this blind man back when you saw him lost on his journey?"
[Ashmedai] said to him: "There was an announcement about him in heaven that he is completely righteous. And whoever provides him with satisfaction is entitled to the world to come."
"And what is the reason that you brought this drunken person back when you saw him erring on his journey?"
"There was an announcement about him in heaven that he is completely evil. And I comforted him in order that he should already consume [his reward for] the world to come."
"What is the reason that you cried when you saw this bride?"
"The husband will die within three days, and it will take thirteen years to wait for the *yavam* [to be old enough to get married]."[82]
"What was the reason that you laughed when you heard a man say to the shoemaker, 'Make me shoes [that last] for seven years?'" He said to him: "He has not seven days left, and he asks for shoes [that last] seven years!"
"And what was the reason that you laughed when you saw the diviner?"
He said to him: "He sits on the treasury; let him divine what may be below him!"

H) [Solomon] made him remain before him until he had built the temple.[83] One day, he was by himself. [Solomon] said to [Ashmedai]: "It is written: 'Like the *toafot re'em* for him' (Num. 23:22), and it is said that *ktoafot* are the servant angels, and *re'em* are the demons. How are you superior to us?"[84]
"Cut the chain off from me and give me your seal ring (*yzqta*), and I will show you my superiority!" He cut the chain off and gave him his seal ring. [Ashmedai] swallowed [Solomon]. He placed one of his wings on the earth and one of his wings on the sky. He hurled him four hundred parasang away.[85]

[80] Ms. Munich 95 continues F with: "and in it …." The translation here follows Ms. Arras 889, T-S F1: בדקו.
[81] Following Ms. Arras 889, T-S F1.
[82] The *yavam* is the bridegroom's younger brother, destined to marry his brother's widow (see Deut. 25:5–10).
[83] Mss. Arras 889, Vatican 130, and Vatican 140 add, "until the end of Solomon's kingship."
[84] The translation of כתועפות ראם is uncertain. Wilhelm Gesenius, ed., *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (Göttingen: Springer, 1962 [1915]), see ראם and תועפת, proposes "horns of a wild bull," as the context suggests a wild, untamable beast with horns. Note that this is the second time that the story makes use of an unclear quotation, which it will interpret according to its own needs. In Solomon's interpretation he treats the preposition -כ (like) as if it were an integral part of the word: *ktoafot* and not *k-toafot*.
[85] "Parasang" is the Persian mile; see *DJBA*, see "פרסא #1."

Wherever [Solomon] arrived, he said: "I, Qoheleth, was king over Israel in Jerusalem (Eccl. 1:12), and this is my portion for all my toil" (**Eccl. 2:10**).
What does "and this" mean? Rav and Samuel; one said: "his stick," and one said: "a leather bottle."[86]
[When he arrived before the Sanhedrin],[87] the rabbis said: "Since a madman [*shoteh*] does not adhere to one word alone, as what should he be classified?"
They said to Benaiah: "Does the king want you in his presence?"
He said to them: "No."
They sent [a query] to the queens: "Does the king approach you?" They sent back: "Yes, he does." [The rabbis] sent [a request] to them: "Examine his feet!" They said: "He comes in *moqa*-shoes.[88] And he solicits them during their menstrual period, and he even solicits Batsheva, his mother!" [The rabbis] brought Solomon and gave him a ring on which the name was engraved and a chain on which the name was engraved. When [Solomon] entered, [Ashmedai] saw him and flew away.
But even after these events, [Solomon] still feared [Ashmedai], as it is written: "Behold! The bed of Solomon is surrounded by sixty men of Israel. All of them carry a sword and are trained in warfare. Each has a sword on his side because of the fear in the night." (Song. 3:7–8)
Rav and Samuel: One said: "a king [and then] a commoner," and the other one said: "a king and [then] a commoner and [again] a king." (b. Git. 68a–b)

I have already suggested in the introduction to this section that this story cycle made it into the commentary based on the keyword "wine." Based on the fact that this story is followed by medical recipes, several scholars have argued that the story was added to the Gittin commentary on *qordiaqos* because of Solomon's reputation as a healer and subduer of demons.[89] This argument may be strengthened by the fact that the proem to the commentary (not the proem to the story!) reads *qordiaqos* as *Qordiaqos*, the name of a spirit (*ruha*).[90] This interpretation was, however, already refuted in the proem itself (see Chapter 3), and Ashmedai,

[86] Ms. Vatican 140: גונדו, followed by the explanation אחרינא לישנא קודי: "a *gondo*-leather bottle, which is called *qodi* in another language [dialect]."
[87] Missing in Ms. Munich 95 but present in Mss. Arras 889 and Bologna 145.
[88] From Middle Persian *mōg*, shoe (*DJBA*, see "מוקא").
[89] See David L. Freeman, "The Gittin 'Book of Remedies,'" *Korot* 13 (1998), and Gilad Sasson, "In the Footsteps of the Tradition about Solomon the Magician in the Literature of the Sages" [in Hebrew], *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* 6 (2007). On late antique Solomonic traditions, see Raʿanan Boustan and Michael Beshay, "Sealing the Demons, Once and for All: The Ring of Solomon, the Cross of Christ, and the Power of Biblical Kingship," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16, no. 1 (2015).
[90] See Lennart Lehmhaus, "*Listenwissenschaft* and the Encyclopedic Hermeneutics of Knowledge in Talmud and Midrash," in *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia*, ed. J. Cale Johnson (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 87–88.

with whom Solomon has to deal, is called a demon, *shed*, not a spirit, *ruha*. Based on the clear distinctions between types of demons made elsewhere in the Talmud, this link seems weak.[91] Moreover, the story makes no effort to depict Solomon as a healer and only makes a feeble attempt to portray him as a master of demons (B). And it is Ashmedai who cures the king's hangovers with his remedies (E). The story itself may indeed be satirically reversing the positions, but by way of the keyword method a purposeful satirizing of a whole talmudic commentary would not have been possible; if it happened, it was by coincidence. Based on the keywords, it may have been the recipes provided by Ashmedai, situated at the apogee of the story (E), that were responsible for the inclusion of the story cycle into the commentary on *qordiaqos*. Indeed, the first of these recipes refers not just to one but to two of the three assigned keywords: "cure" and "wine." Although the keyword method may appear mechanical and somewhat uninspired, it is the method's reliance on association and chance that, nevertheless, creates numerous exegetically inspiring links between excerpts.

Like a typical late antique story, the narrative has a thematically compelling plot, while at the same time being divided into independent scenes or miniature stories. Each miniature (labeled with letters above) contains a distinct plot and contains an exegetical, instructive, or moral statement of its own. Even the parts D^G and G^D, which clearly belong together, have been fashioned as two pieces that can be used individually, just as they actually are. It seems as if the author of the story was already generating excerpts for the next composer. Indeed, not infrequently, authors would reuse such excerpts themselves in future compositions.[92]

The story's patterning further seems reflective of the writing surface on which it was composed: wooden tablets. Tablets were not only suitable for the composition of such concertina-like stories but dictated this very style. Indeed, if we think of the story's original surface as a wooden codex or a concertina-like notebook (*polyptychon*) that consist of tablets that are strung together, we can easily imagine each tablet to contain one scene. If so, excerpting and rearranging was not only a natural but also a

[91] b. Pesah. 111b.

[92] Philo of Alexandria's work *On Animals* is a good example of the versatility of an excerpt collection that resulted from an author's own compositions. Philo obviously went through the drafts of his works (which were apparently also classified), selected and digested the instances in which an animal was mentioned, and composed a book on the latter; see the index of Philonic texts used in Philo's work *De animalibus*.

noninvasive act. The tablets, each carrying a miniature story, could easily be detached, rearranged, tagged with a keyword, stored, and repurposed.

These material factors were simultaneously the cause and effect of late antique compositions, suggestive of the constant reuse of – literally – bits and pieces of stories in other compositions. For the proem of the *qordiaqos* commentary in b. Git. 67b, for instance, the composer of the Talmud excerpted one of the miniature stories of the Solomon-Ashmedai cycle, changed the name of the main protagonists, and substituted a medical recipe for the dialogue. This claim obviously needs substantiation since the story about Rav Amram being chased through the snow by the exilarch's household (b. Git. 67b) seems at first unrelated to the Ashmedai-Solomon cycle. The connection appears only after a thorough analysis of the characters and their verisimilitude. In late antique stories, "verisimilitude" refers to conformity with what is known about a certain character from earlier works. In the case of Solomon and Benaiah, the sources are the Hebrew Bible and earlier rabbinic traditions; in the case of Ashmedai, it might be the book of Tobit together with earlier rabbinic traditions.

As pointed out previously, verisimilitude was highly valued and encouraged by the *progymnasmata* because it was the decisive factor for the success of a story, the focal point of critics. In what follows, I will show how carefully, and in how much alignment with known biographical "facts," the characters in the present story were created. The connections between the above piece and the Solomon-Ashmedai story cycle can then be shown to have been based on careful research into its protagonists' prior literary lives.

CREATING A PLAUSIBLE CHARACTER

Solomon is a well-known biblical figure, and he appears in the above narrative in accordance with the biblical description of him as the king who built the temple in Jerusalem. He is also regarded here and elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud as the author (and "I") of the book of Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth (Shabb. 30a–b). Other than that, Solomon is rarely mentioned in rabbinic works, as Gerhard Langer's study has shown.[93]

[93] See Gerhard Langer, "Solomon in Rabbinic Literature," in *Solomon in Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Themes in Biblical Narrative 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 127. An increased focus on Solomon can likely be observed from approximately the sixth to the ninth centuries, when *midrashim* (exegetical commentaries) were dedicated to books attributed to Solomon. Shir Hashirim Rabbah, Ecclesiastes Rabbah, and Midrash Mishle all likely date to this period (see Langer, "Solomon in Rabbnic Literature," 128).

The portrayal of Solomon is, in fact, ambivalent throughout rabbinic literature, which is consistent with the biblical account of his persona. The Bible says that Solomon built the temple (1 Kgs. 9), and God blessed him with incomparable wisdom (1 Kgs. 10), yet he loved women more than the God of Israel and committed idolatry in his later days (1 Kgs. 11). The story in Gittin presents Solomon exactly along these lines; he has a wanton lifestyle, including many women (E/H), but he is also wise enough to interpret Ashmedai's riddles (E) and to equip Benaiah with the tools necessary to catch the demon (C). Then again, he is not able to expound Scripture and foolishly asks Ashmedai for explanation (H). In addition, Solomon repeatedly depends on the help of the rabbis, first to tell him about the *shamir* (A) and then to restore the kingdom to him (H).

The dominant motif in segment (H), Solomon's replacement on the throne by a nonhuman being, is borrowed from a story recorded in the Palestinian Talmud.[94] Again, the Babylonian story takes a different turn than the Palestinian one, where the rabbinic sages beat up Solomon (y. Sanh. 2:6) rather than helping to restore his kingship. Instead, part (H) is clearly designed to support the quote with which it ends, a saying attributed to the Babylonian sage Samuel: Solomon was first "a king and [then] a commoner and [again] a king" (// b. Sanh. 20b). This move is suggestive of the author's obligation to incorporate everything that was known about a situation or a person. Indeed, the way in which Solomon's character is constructed points to the author having thoroughly examined biblical and extrabiblical sources concerning Solomon before he (or she) began to compose the story – just like the composers of the Talmud who went through their archive. Interpretations of 1 Chr. 29:23 and 1 Kgs. 5:4, now rendered in b. Sanh. 20b and b. Meg. 11b, for example, state that Solomon reigned first over upper and later over lower beings. This "fact" has been incorporated into Solomon's constant struggle over power with Ashmedai. Both Talmuds also state elsewhere that Solomon used the *shamir* to build the temple from hewn stones, while Moses used it to make the *efod* (b. Sotah 48b; y. Sotah 9:13–14). There was even

[94] The unnoticed usurpation of a king by someone in his likeness may be a plot of Persian origin, as reported by Herodotus (*Histories* 3.68–69); see Armand Kaminka, "The Origin of the Ashmedai Legend in the Babylonian Talmud," *JQR*, 13, no. 2 (October 1922): 222–224. While this might indeed have been, in some form or another, a stimulus for the Palestinian motif, the Babylonian story is clearly a variant of the latter. For a different opinion, cf. Yishai Kiel, "The Usurpation of Solomon's Throne by Ashmedai (b. Giṭ. 68a-b): A Talmudic Story in Its Iranian and Christian Contexts," *Irano-Judaica* 7 (2019).

more information available about the *shamir*: In order to be stored safely and without harming anyone, the *shamir* needed to be wrapped in tufts of wool, placed in a box made of lead that was filled with bran from barley (b. Sotah 48b). Even that knowledge shaped the course of the present story. Although the story does not specify how the *shamir* was hauled to Solomon after it was obtained from the bird, the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew term for "tufts of wool" in the baraita in b. Sotah 48b appears in the list of equipment given by Solomon to Benaiah (C).[95] The connection of a bird with the *shamir* is made in a baraita in b. Hul. 63a, where a *dukifat*-bird is said to have brought the *shamir* to the temple.

Athough the story alters and recontextualizes some elements, it stays completely within the plausible, taking into consideration what has been said earlier about a certain character or topic. In fact, *everything* that was previously said about a pertaining subject is taken into consideration at some point or another in the story. It looks like the author of this particular story had an archive at his disposal that was at least very similar to the one used by the composers of the Talmud. It is also conceivable that there existed tables and lists, created by users of the archive as they were studying, and that indicated which documents contained information on a given subject or even on a mishnaic term or lemma.[96] Whatever the auxiliary tool may have been, it seems that both the author of this story and the composers of the Talmud had access to the same sources: the story neither misses a reference to Solomon present in the Talmud, nor does it add a completely novel feature to his character. The same is true for the other two main characters, as we shall see.

Compared to King Solomon, Benaiah son of Yehoiada is a rather marginal figure in the Bible, with "only" eighteen mentions. Correspondingly, he is not often mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, but when he is, the references are very precise. In fact, every single one of Benaiah's outstanding actions is remembered in the Talmud: that he smote the two "lion-like men of Moab," that he killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day, and that he slew an armed Egyptian with the latter's own spear (2 Sam. 23:20–21, expounded in b. Ber. 18a–b).[97] He is also compared to a robber

[95] Tufts of wool in Hebrew: צמר של ספוגין; in Aramaic, דעמרא גבבי.

[96] On late antique tables and tabular organization in late antiquity, see Andrew M. Riggsby, *Mosaics of Knowledge: Representing Information in the Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 42–82; on tables that facilitated lectures and literary productivity, see Matthew R. Crawford, *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Knowledge in Late Antiquity*, *OECS* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Jeremiah Coogan, "Transforming Textuality: Porphyry, Eusebius, and Late Ancient Tables," *SLA* 5, no. 1 (2021).

[97] The translation "lion-like men of Moab" is uncertain; the original reads אראל מואב

(b. B. Qam. 79b) and to the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin (b. Ber. 3b–4a, in an interpretation of 1 Chr. 27:34). Both of these instances refer to the fact that Benaiah served as Solomon's assassin (e.g., 1 Kgs. 2:25, 29). Only the biblical mention of Benaiah as famous among the thirty brave men at David's court is not reiterated in the Talmud (2 Sam. 23:22–23).

In complete agreement with these biblical characterizations, Benaiah serves in the story under discussion as Solomon's hero, whom the latter sent to catch a lion-like figure, Ashmedai. Indeed, the king of demons seems to be of gigantic size when he is described brushing against trees and bending over a house (D^G), and animal-like when he hides his non-human feet in shoes (H). In addition, just as the biblical Benaiah kills a lion in a pit (Hebr. *bor*, 2 Sam. 23:20), Benaiah catches Ashmedai by digging one pit (Aram. *bira*) above and one beneath the cistern.

Ashmedai, by contrast, is absent from the biblical plot. His name is the Aramaic translation of the Greek name "Asmodeus," a demon who appears in the Hellenistic novel *Tobit*. The Asmodeus in *Tobit* kills the female protagonist's newlywed husbands on their wedding night, seven in a row. By contrast, the Ashmedai of the Gittin story cries over the bride who will soon be a widow and will have to wait thirteen years to marry the *yavam*, the groom's younger brother (D^G/G^D). He is portrayed as studying his daily portion of Torah in the heavenly academy, as well as in the academy on earth (B). He lives in a sober manner (C) and reasons based on biblical verses (C). Rather than destroying others, he hurts himself (D^G) and gives medical advice (E), while Tobit had to be given advice by an angel on how to get rid of Asmodeus. In his secluded lifestyle and seemingly deep and supernatural knowledge, Ashmedai comes much closer to the description of an anchorite monk in stories of the time than to contemporary portrayals of demons.[98] He predicts Solomon's end in the same way it is described in the Bible (F). When he tricks Solomon and usurps his throne, Ashmedai exposes the king's foolishness as much as his own deviousness, and when he solicits Solomon's wives, it is Solomon's accumulation of women rather than Ashmedai's behavior that is criticized. The only thing that is, from the perspective of rabbinic teaching, really worthy of contempt is that he does not care whether or not the women he is soliciting are menstruating.

If Ashmedai is not or at least not only Asmodeus by character, then who or what is he? The only other instance in which the Talmud mentions Ashmedai is quite telling. In b. Pesah. 110a, Ashmedai is said to

[98] See Kalmin, *Migrating Tales*, 116–118.

be the king of the demons.[99] A subsequent commentary discusses the nature of a king; some hold that "king" does not refer to someone causing harm, while others hold that a king is quick-tempered and does what he wants. The passage seems suggestive of the ambivalence that surrounded Ashmedai's kingship, as well as kingship in general. In line with the excerpt now found in tractate Pesahim, the author of our story describes Ashmedai as unstable and untrustworthy like Solomon. Like Solomon, Ashmedai gets drunk, lusts after women, is at the same time pious and friendly, and knows remedies and the future. He is wise and foolish, kind and evil, rises to power and loses it again.

Additionally, Ashmedai is portrayed as being Persian throughout the story.[100] He seals the cistern with his *gushpanqa*, while Solomon gives his *yzqta* to Benaiah. Both terms refer to a signet ring, but one word is of Persian origin (*gushpanqa*), while the other is Aramaic (*yzqta*). Ashmedai also wears Persian *mōg*-shoes to hide his feet. He is obviously Persian, even a Persian demon, as other details reveal: He has wings like Persian demons and dragons do, and he swallows Solomon, just as, in Middle Persian literature, the demon Āz swallows Xēšma, or Ahriman swallows Tahmuras.[101] Like Persian demons, Ashmedai dwells on a mountain.[102] In fact, even the name "Asmodeus" is apparently a Greek translation of "Aēšma," the name of the Persian demon of wrath. Based on the above-outlined late antique habit of writing a story based on another, it should be asked if maybe a story of Persian/Sasanid origin was decisive for Ashmedai's character and the plot.

[99] Ashmedai is also named "king of the demons" on some Babylonian incantation bowls; see Shaul Shaked, James N. Ford, and Siam Bhayro, eds. *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, vol. 1 of *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 1(Leiden: Brill, 2013), 153 (JBA 26) and 222 (JBA 49). There are, however, other demonic kings mentioned; see Uri Gabbay, "The King of the Demons: Pazuzu, Bagdana and Ašmedai," in *A Woman of Valor: Jerusalem Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Joan Godnick Westenholz*, ed. Uri Gabbay, Wayne Horowitz, and Filip Vukosavović, Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 8 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2010), 58. For an assessment of references to Ashmedai in the Talmud and on the bowls, in an attempt to create a genealogy, see Alon Ten-Ami, "Further Discoveries Concerning Ashmedai: Ashmedai in Babylonian Incantation Bowls" [in Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 133–134 (2012), 185–208.

[100] Kalmin, *Migrating Tales*, 104.

[101] See Jes P. Asmussen, "Aēšma," *EIr* 1:479–480. See also Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Ahriman," *EIr* 1:670–673 (referring to the Pahlavi Rivayat [48, 93–95]: "I created this creation; and Āz, the demon-created, who has swallowed my creation, now desires to swallow me: I make thee judge over us"). For Tahmuras and Ahriman, see Götz König, *Die Erzählung von Tahmuras und Ǧamšid: Edition des neupersischen Textes in Pahlawi-Schrift (MU 29) nebst zweier Parallelfassungen*, Iranica 14 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 29–31.

[102] Persian demons live on Mount Arzūr; see Jes P. Asmussen, "Arzūr," *EIr* 2:691–692.

FINDING THE TEMPLATE

The *progymnasmata* did not encourage students to write freely. Instead, students transformed stories by substituting characters or dialogues, adding a moral, or merging one plot with another. If the authors of talmudic stories had a background in rhetorical training, then they would have used templates for their stories as well. Indeed, many stories in the Babylonian Talmud appear to have such templates in the Palestinian Talmud. Then again, many do not. Except for the already discussed motif of Solomon's replacement by a nonhuman being in (H), for example, the scenes in the story cycle under discussion have no parallels in the Palestinian Talmud. We must therefore look elsewhere to find the model story or model stories for the scenes. Judging from Ashmedai's Persian attributes, at least some templates might come from Sasanid lore.

Sasanid lore is replete with stories of human heroes fighting demons, and one of these stories is indeed a near-complete match to one of the miniature stories in the Gittin commentary on *qordiaqos*. Yet, surprisingly, the episode is not found in the Solomon-Ashmedai story cycle (b. Git. 68a–b) but, rather, in the proem of exactly this commentary (b. Git. 67b). Reference is made to the above-cited story about Rav Sheshet, who flees from the exilarch's servants. Although the Solomon-Ashmedai story cycle seems to be sound and complete in its present state, one piece had been excerpted, and is now part of the proem together with several other excerpts that foreshadow the major "arguments" that will follow (see the discussion in Chapter 3). As discussed above, the distinct shape of late antique stories allows excerption of scenes without damaging the composition as a whole.

The template for this excerpt is found in Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*, a tenth-century collection of stories concerned with the deeds of Sasanid heroes and demons. Although the source is considerably later than the Babylonian Talmud, it is obvious that Ferdowsi did not invent the stories from scratch, since the Avesta already alludes to some of them. Rather, Ferdowsi collected the stories, wrote them down or rewrote them in verse form, and "composed the innumerable speeches he put into the mouths of his heroes, as well as the many long letters written at the dictation of the kings and other principal characters."[103] What may, therefore, be used for comparison with talmudic stories is the very basic storyline of Ferdowsi's narratives, not his embellishments.

[103] Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *The Epic of the Kings: Shah-Nama, the National Epic of Persia*, trans. Reuben Levy, rev. Amin Banani, Persian Heritage Series 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967; repr., 2011), xvi.

The story in question, however, does not feature a figure mentioned in the Avesta but a popular Iranian hero named Rustam. Rustam, whose origins are still unclear, became the hero of many fights with demons. The onomastic and literary evidence points to the fact that "the Rustam legend was fully formed and well known in Western Iran by the seventh century."[104] The parallel in the Talmud would represent an early testimony to these Rustam legends.[105]

In this particular story, King Tahamtan sends Rustam to capture the demon (*dīv*) Akvān, who had appeared among the king's herds in the shape of an onager. Rustam is given a royal lasso in order to capture the demon alive. When Rustam sleeps near the cistern, Akvān digs a hole around him until he can seize Rustam together with the soil on which he sleeps and carries him high up into the air.[106] Up in the air, the demon asks Rustam where he wants to be dropped: on a mountain or into the sea? Rustam reasons to himself that the demon will most likely do the exact opposite of whatever he tells him.[107] Thus, while secretly choosing the sea, he tells the demon to cast him onto a mountain. Immediately the demon drops him into the sea. Rustam swims back, fighting off the sea monsters with sword in hand. When he comes back to the cistern, he catches Akvān with his lasso and brings him to King Tahamtan, who finally slays him.[108]

[104] Nicholas Sims-Williams and Ursula Sims-Williams, "Rustam and His zīn-i palang," in *From Aṣl to Zā'id: Essays in Honour of Éva M. Jeremiaś*, ed. Iván Szánto, Acta et Studia 13 (Piliscsaba, Hungary: The Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2015), 252. On the one hand, the name "Rustam" became increasingly popular by the end of the Sasanid Empire; on the other, the earliest literary attestations of Rustam, a Sogdian text from approximately the eighth century, seem to be based on a Persian text (252). For an edition of the Sogdian fragment and a translation, see Nicholas Sims-Williams, "The Sogdian Fragments of the British Library," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 18, nos. 1–2 (June–July 1976): 54–61. (My thanks to Sepideh Taheri, Tehran, for pointing this out to me.)

[105] In other cases as well, the Talmud has been said to provide the earliest references to Sasanid culture, as with the characteristic Persian belt, the *kustīk*, mentioned in b. Sanh. 39a; see Jean-Paul de Menasce, "Early Evidence for the Symbolic Meaning of the Kustīk," in *Sir J.J. Zarthoshti Madressa Centenary Volume*, ed. Jivanji Jamshedj Modi (Bombay: Trustees of the Parsi Puchayet Funds and Properties, 1967), 17–18.

[106] The cistern plays only a marginal role in this story, but another story reports that Akvān and his son oversaw a cistern. Once, the prince Bīžan was kept prisoner. On top of the cistern, his enemies placed a stone that had previously been hurled from China to that place by Akvān. See Dj. Khaleghi-Mothlagh, "Akvān-e Dīv," *EIr* 1:740, and Ferdowsi, *Epic of the Kings*, 164.

[107] This theme is very common in Persian literature on demons. Thus, "they are often called *vārūna*, [backwards, inside out], or *vārūna-x̌ūy* [contrary]." See Mahmoud Omidsalar, "Dīv," *EIr* 7:428–431.

[108] See Ferdowsi, *Epic of the Kings*, 146–151.

Based on this narrative, it is possible to suggest that when the Gittin story cycle originally reached the hands of the composers of the Talmud, it depicted Ashmedai chasing Benaiah through the snow, in an episode between what are now segments (B) and (C). Accordingly, Benaiah initially failed to capture Ashmedai but then outwitted him by filling up his cistern with wine and only then succeeded (C). The excerpt under question that was detached from the story cycle and used in the proem reads:

> Rav Amram the Pious: When those from the house of the *resh galuta* [exilarch] wanted to cause him physical pain, they made him sleep in the snow. The following day they asked him: "What would be satisfactory to the master that we could bring him?"
> He said [to himself]: "These [men]! Everything I tell them they will reverse to its contrary." [Therefore] he told them: "Red meat on coals and diluted wine." They brought him fatty meat on coals and undiluted wine. (b. Git. 67b)

If Rav Amram the Pious is replaced with Benaiah, we also find an explanation for the somewhat unusual appearance of snow in the story. As mentioned above, the Bible states that Benaiah killed a lion in a pit on a "day of snow" (2 Sam. 23:20). Considering the fact that the Aramaic word for "snow," *talga*, appears only five times in the entire Talmud, this cannot be a coincidence. We may therefore conclude that it was not Rav Amram who was chased through the snow by the exilarch's servants; it was Benaiah who was pursued by Ashmedai. Benaiah, the biblical slaughterer of lion-like men *and* a lion, seems, indeed, to have been a fitting and carefully chosen cultural translation of Rustam, who, in turn, is famous for seven heroic deeds, one of which is the killing of a cruel lion.[109]

Based on the above analysis, it appears that the composers excerpted one of the miniature stories of the story cycle, changed the names of the protagonists and the dialogue, and placed a recipe against freezing into the new main protagonist's mouth. It remains to be asked why the composer specifically chose to substitute Benaiah for Rav Amram the Pious. After all, the two figures do not seem to have much in common. But the choice was most likely not motivated by Rav Amram's character but by the excerpt the composers wanted or had to use after the one about the chase through the snow. Such a technical and practical motivation would also

[109] See Abū'l-Qāsem Ferdausi, *Rostam: Die Legenden aus dem Šāhnāme*, ed. and trans. Jürgen Ehlers (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002), 75–77. Rustam was also known for deeds in which he would transform a "desolate poison-aired, waterless desert, combat a dragon, slay a sorceress, and kill the Great White Div who had taken Kāvus prisoner" (Ferdowsi, *Epic of the Kings*, 52).

explain the friction between the two excerpts, which remains despite the alignment of names. As the two excerpts are arranged now, we learn that after Rav Amram successfully tricked the exilarch's servants into giving him food that sustained his body temperature (fatty meat on coals and undiluted wine), "Yalta heard. She brought him into a bathhouse. She made him stand in the water of the bathhouse until the water of the bathhouse changed and became blood, and it fell off from him 'coin by coin'" (b. Git. 67b).[110] There is an obvious inconsistency between Rav Amram successfully tricking the exilarch's servants into giving him what he needed to stay warm (fatty meat on coals and undiluted wine) and the woman Yalta hearing that Amram was in pain. In an obvious rupture with the prior plot, the sequel negates the prequel's punchline. It is in instances like these that we encounter the sort of paper-cut method implemented by the composers: the Yalta sequel must be an excerpt or literal piece from another story. This notion is further substantiated by the lack of the usual semantic puns that often connect independent scenes.[111]

If the thesis outlined in this book is more or less correct, and the composers worked with excerpts, it should be possible to find the rest of this Yalta and Rav Amram story. As it turns out, there is indeed a story that is a much better fit for the scene in which Yalta takes Rav Amram to the bathhouse:

> Certain captive women came to Nehardea. They were brought up to the house of Rav Amram the Pious, and the ladder was removed from under them. As one passed by, a light fell through the opening; Rav Amram seized the ladder, which ten men could not raise, and he alone set it up and proceeded to ascend.
> When he had gone halfway up the ladder, he cried out, "A fire in the house of Amram! Fire in the house of Amram!" The rabbis came and told him, "We are embarrassed [by you]!" He said to them: "It is better that you be embarrassed by me in this world than that you be embarrassed by me in the world to come." He adjured his evil inclination [*yetser*] to depart from him, and it issued forth from him in the shape of a fiery branch of the date tree. He said to it: "Behold! You are of fire and I am of flesh, yet I am preferable to you." (b. Qidd. 81a)[112]

[110] Translation follows Mss. Arras 889, Vatican 130, Vatican 140, and St. Petersburg. Ms. Munich 95 has: "… in the bathhouse, and it was blood [והוה דמא]. …"

[111] For examples of such paronomasia in talmudic stories, see Jonah Fraenkel, "Paronomasia in Aggadic Narrative," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 27 (1978), or Galit Hasan-Rokem, "An Almost Invisible Presence: Multilingual Puns in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[112] Translation follows Reuven Kiperwasser, "Narrative Bricolage and Cultural Hybrids in Rabbinic Babylonia: On the Narratives of Seduction and the Topos of Light," in Herman and Rubenstein, *Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, 32–33.

Yalta heard. She brought him into a bathhouse. She made him stand in the water of the bathhouse until the water of the bathhouse changed into blood and it fell off from him "coin by coin." (b. Git. 67b)

Although one might argue that Rav Amram was already free from his evil inclination by the end of the story in Qiddushin as well, several things tie in better here. First, it is a woman, Yalta, who wants to make sure that Rav Amram has really eradicated his uncontrolled lust for women. Second, the therapeutic measure, water, stands in direct relationship to the cry "Fire in the house of Amram," which, Reuven Kiperwasser has shown, is a metaphorical reference to Rav Amram's body.[113] Third, a therapy against extended sunstroke, rendered in the proem of the commentary on *qordiaqos* and placed right before the story of Rav Amram in the snow, states that the patient should "go down and stand in water until his world becomes weak" (b. Git. 67b). This is exactly what Yalta does here, with the telling difference that Rav Amram is cold in the Gittin story, and only in the Qiddushin story is he hot ("on fire") and in need of the indicated treatment. Fourth, there is a pun on the word "flesh" (*bissra*): while Rav Amram claims that his flesh is preferable to the fiery *yetser*, Yalta exposes the very weakness of this very flesh. It seems, therefore, more in accord with the literary ambition and aesthetics of talmudic stories to view the excerpt as an original scene of the Rav Amram story in Qiddushin rather than of the one in Gittin. This observation raises questions regarding the procedures and aspirations of the composers: how did this mix of story lines in Gittin happen, and how does it tie in with the composers' *modus operandi*?

As discussed in Chapter 3, the composers, based on clues in the Palestinian Talmud, reached the conclusion that *qordiaqos* was a disease equal to a sunstroke that lasted three days. Accordingly, *qordiaqos* could be cured with the same therapy, "red meat on coals and diluted wine." The composers then had to look for case stories with which to substantiate their claim, just as the Palestinian Talmud did with the story about the Tarsian weaver seized by *qordiaqos*. Although the text is corrupt, it appears that they gave him "red in something" and then "something in red" to drink. Going through their excerpt collection based on the selected keywords, they came across the Solomon–Ashmedai story with the scene in which Ashmedai asks Benaiah where he wants to be dropped, or something similar. The scene lent itself perfectly to such a recipe reversal. The fact that there was snow in the story allowed the composers to reverse not only the therapy but also the indication, as is reiterated by way of summary

[113] See Kiperwasser, "Narrative Bricolage and Cultural Hybrids," 34.

right before the excerpt: "Against the 'sun': red meat on coals and diluted wine; against the 'snow': fatty meat on coals and undiluted wine" (b. Git. 67b). The composers excerpted the passage with Yalta and Rav Amram in the bathhouse from the Qiddushin story, which was apparently classified under "cures." They did this at first, perhaps, because they wanted to use the excerpt as proof of the efficacy of the recipe for extended sunstroke ("stand in water, etc.") and then because it allowed them to show that the water therapy could also be used in reverse, against cold. The rest of the Rav Amram story, the part in which he is seduced by captive women, must then have been reclassified under "women" without the therapeutic part.

The Solomon–Ashmedai cycle is thus a good example of how the concise and independent nature of catena-like late antique stories allowed for migration into other contexts. In a few steps, including a plausible change of characters and a different dialogue, a whole new story could be created. Certainly, the composition of such a lengthy narrative required much research, since everything had to remain plausible and in harmony with earlier traditions, including the Hebrew Bible. Recognition of authors' careful investigations into the prehistory of characters in talmudic stories, in turn, may help explain features that have left scholars puzzled. It may explain, for example, why Rav Kahana is called "Rav Kahana" in b. Bava Qamma 103a and not simply "Kahana," as in the Palestinian parallel (y. B. Metz. 5:6, 10c): the Babylonian author aligned his take on the Palestinian with other traditions in the Babylonian, in which Kahana is called "Rav" throughout.[114] Inquiry into a protagonist's previous literary life to stay in character further explains why the Babylonian exilarch seems to be modeled on the Palestinian one.[115]

SUMMARY AND REPETITION: POTENTIAL AND LIMITS OF TALMUDIC STORIES

Jacques Fontaine has pointed out that late antique literature reveals an "extreme refinement" in the methods applied to generate allusion.[116] In the above example, we saw how allusions to other stories and motifs

[114] This difference was noted by Catherine Hezser, *Form, Function, and Historical Significance of the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Neziqin*, *TSAJ* 37 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 352.

[115] On this resemblance, see Isaiah Gafni, "The Political, Social, and Economic History of Babylonian Jewry, 224–638 CE," in *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz, vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 792 and 802.

[116] See Fontaine, "Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons," 442.

came into being, even though allusion was not what the authors of the stories had in mind. Rather, a careful search into the previous literary life of a character and the joining of these characters in any one story, together with the author's method of writing based on templates, inevitably produced this dense and complex web of allusions.

The procedures applied by the authors of talmudic stories were complex but consistently the same. One was expansion by addition of a dialogue, namely, speech in character as taught in the *progymnasmata*.[117] This is a frequent feature of stories in the Babylonian Talmud that becomes obvious when (quasi-) parallel stories from both Talmuds are compared. But examples of such expansions by means of dialogue can also be found among stories within the Babylonian Talmud. The following example is a rare case in which the statement in Hebrew (*baraita*) that served as the basis for the expansion, as well as two expanded versions, ended up right next to each other due to their identical keyword ("demon"). The statement in Hebrew is as follows: "A single person should not go out at night, not on the night of the fourth day or the night of the Sabbath. Because Agrat bat Mahlat and eighteen myriads of angels of destruction go out [on these nights], and each and every one has permission to destroy in his own right" (b. Pesah. 112b). The account is brief and without dialogue. The only named character is the demoness Agrat bat Mahlat. Right after this baraita follows an expanded version:

> Originally it was common for them [to swarm out] daily. One time she met Hanina ben Dosa and said to him: "If it were not publicly announced in heaven: 'Beware of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, my son!' your blood would be valued in two small coins." He said to her: "If I am so important in heaven, I decree upon you that you shall never cross the world again." She said to him: "Leave a little room for me!" He left for her the fourth night and the night of the Sabbath. (b. Pesah. 112b)[118]

The purpose of this short inquiry is to explain why these demons would swarm only two nights per week. The reason is given in the demoness's encounter with Hanina ben Dosa, a figure known from the Mishnah. Hanina ben Dosa is a "man of the deed," a man through whom and for whom God performs miracles.[119] This was apparently reason enough to choose him to stand up against the demoness.

[117] For examples, see Libanius, *Libanius's Progymnasmata: Model Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, trans. Craig A. Gibson, *WGRW* 27 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 355–426.

[118] Translation based on Ms. New York Columbia.

[119] The figure appears repeatedly in the Talmud, in baraitot (b. Ber. 34b; b. B. Qam. 50a // b. Yevam. 121b; b. Ber. 33a) and in miniature stories, several of which are strung together in b. Ta'an. 25a.

Before analyzing the dialogue, a quick look at the *progymnasmata* may clarify the author's task at hand, namely, *ethopoeia*, the "imitation of the character of a proposed speaker" (Aphthonius, *Progym.* §34R).[120] The authors of the *progymnasmata* agree that the speech must be written from the perspective of the speaker in accordance with – and this point is most elaborated by Theon – age, gender, social status, and occasion, that is, with everything "aiming at what fits the speaker and his manner of speech and the time and his lot in life" (*Progym.* §116).[121] The exercise basically asks authors to step into the shoes, as it were, of the conversation partners in the plot and, in our case, must figure out how a demoness would speak, and what she would say to Hanina ben Dosa, and what he would reply. The result is a combination of what is known about the demoness from the baraita, namely, that she is extremely dangerous and harmful, and what is known about Hanina ben Dosa, a wonderworker in special proximity to God. Thus, while the demoness expresses her desire to kill Hanina, heaven refers to the rabbi as "son." The motif of intermediary beings' hearing announcements in heaven about humans is a recurring one (see passage G^D in the Solomon–Ashmedai story above, b. Git. 68b). The heavenly decree gives Hanina the authority to negotiate with the demoness, leaving her certain nights to roam. In this way, the expanded story remains in agreement with the baraita stating that the demoness and her army roamed the earth two nights per week. Thus, here as well, depending on how much is known about the characters, speech in character has many restrictions but also innovative potential through the choice of character.

A version of this story underlines the restrictive nature of speech in character when the Palestinian "man of the deed," Hanina ben Dosa, is replaced by the Babylonian teacher Abaye:

> And again, on another day she met Abaye. She said to me: "If it were not publicly announced in heaven: 'Beware of Nahmani and his Torah!' I would endanger you!" I said to her: "If I am so important in heaven, I decree upon you that you shall never cross the world again." (b. Pesah. 112b)[122]

[120] Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 115.

[121] Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 48.

[122] Translation based on Ms. Munich 95. Ms. Munich 95 is the only text to read "me" in the first line. This may not be accidental, since it underlines the Babylonian outlook of the story. The same story also appears on several incantation bowls (by the same hand). That particular *historiola* is present in bowls JBA 1–JBA 10, as discussed in Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 56–85. It reads: "I adjure you, and I beswear you, you evil spirit, who met Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, and Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa said to her, to the

The announcement in heaven emphasizes Abaye's learning by identifying him with his teacher, Nahmani, thereby relating Abaye's authority to his teacher. The learned Abaye, then, does not leave "room" for the demon. In that sense, the Babylonian looks more heroic than the Palestinian Hanina ben Dosa, but the story as such fails, since it does not prove the baraita right. This problem is fixed by the composer, who adds a commentary to the story. In a question-and-answer format, this commentary clarifies that the demoness would nevertheless roam about on the fourth night and the night of the Sabbath, yet only on narrow streets.

I would like to return now to the issue of reusing lines (*exergasia*), which is ultimately a miniature version of the use of templates and excerpting. For example, a structurally identical sentence to the one attributed to Agrat bat Mahlat, "If it were not publicly announced in heaven …," is placed into the mouth of Satan in b. Qidd. 81a. Satan says: "If it were not publicly announced in heaven: 'Beware of Rabbi Meir and his Torah!' I would value your blood [only] as much as two coins!" In spite of their identical formulation, however, the three statements each make recourse to another threat. The example exposes the creativity inherent in the convention of reusing well-made and successful scenes or even sentences in a different way. Most of all, the method is, again, timesaving and economical. At the same time, the method may easily result in tedious repetitions.

Yet there seems to be a certain restriction in play with regard to repetition: parallelisms are usually executed in sets of three, even if they are dispersed all over the Talmud. To give some examples: In the story discussed above, Rav Amram's skin falls off "coin by coin [*peshitti peshitti*]." In another story, a man swallows a snake that comes out after the treatment "piece by piece [*guva guva*]," while jaundice

evil spirit who met him in this very hour [בההיא שעתא] the verse that is written: 'You make darkness, and it is night, wherein all the animals of the forest creep.' And again, I adjure and again I beswear you, you, evil spirit, that you should not go and not become to Mihranahid daughter of Aḥat, who is called Kutus, neither a companion of the night nor a companion of the day." (The translation follows Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 60, with slight adaptation: "this very hour" instead of their reading, "at that time.") The writer of this adjuration emphasizes the time of the encounter as necessary for a juridical *diēgēma/narratio*. "The spirit," on the other hand, goes unnamed, apparently because it is not identical with Agrat bat Mahlat, who is of Palestinian origin. Hanina ben Dosa uses an authoritative biblical verse to ban the demon to the night (and thus to keep her away from the patient during the day), on the basis of which the advocate adjures the spirit to keep away from the patient *also* during the night. We do not know whether or not the people who wrote these bowls were identical with those whose exercises ended up in the Talmud. But it seems quite clear that they had enjoyed a similar rhetorical training.

leaves an affected Arab "little by little [*purta purta*]" after the appropriate therapy.[123] Two men, a demon, and a cedar "burst."[124] Illness, discharge, and evil inclination each issue forth like branches, but like different types of branches in each case.[125] In three different stories, a wooden slip (*pitqa*) falls from the sky with a heavenly note on it.[126] There are so many such stock phrases and familiar motifs that they evoke the impression that everything is connected to everything in the Talmud.[127] According to the thesis for the formation of the Talmud put forward in this book, the sense of a web spanning the whole Talmud was generated by the detachment of stories and other pieces of information from their original compositions, in which the same idea or phrasing was reused several – mostly three – times, each time making a somewhat different point.

Late antique authors often reused catchphrases, and their stories repeatedly took similar turns and describe encounters between comparable protagonists or places. With regard to Lucian's works, Graham Anderson referred to this feature as "self-pastiche." Lucian repeatedly took his own literary creations as templates for new ones. He subjected his stories to the same methods of alteration and adaptation he had used when first fashioning individual scenes on the basis of scenes written by others.[128] This constant alienation of the same plot prevents the establishment of a chronology between the stories and the reconstruction of their actual source or sources: One might be tempted to propose an external source when, in fact, Lucian simply reused his own work.

[123] b. Shabb. 109b and b. Shabb. 110b, respectively.

[124] b. Shabb. 30b; b. Pesah. 110a; and b. Sanh. 101a, respectively.

[125] b. Shabb. 109b; b. Yevam. 64b; b. Qidd. 81a. It is probably no coincidence that these random examples come in groups of three, an important number in the structuring and organization of many things, and texts. See Louis Jacobs, "The Numbered Sequence as Literary Device," *Hebrew Annual Review* 7 (1983), on numbers as structuring elements in the Babylonian Talmud. See also Ausonius's *Riddle of the Number Three* (*Book* Location) for his perception of the omnipresence of this number. However, the examples here refer to an arrangement of threes that predates the Talmud, since the stories with identical motifs are now separated and part of different tractates. The convention not to reuse a motif more than three times, or to use it three times, may have been the author's/authors', or a school's.

[126] b. Yoma 69a; b. Sanh. 64a; and b. B. Metz. 86a, respectively.

[127] For the term "stock phrases," see also Rubenstein, *Stories of the Talmud*, 53. See Zvi Septimus, "Trigger Words and Simultexts: The Experience of Reading the Bavli," in *Wisdom of Bat Sheva: The Dr. Beth Samuels Memorial Volume*, ed. Barry S. Wimpfheimer (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2009), on the interrelatedness of stories in terms of shared vocabulary.

[128] See Anderson, *Lucian*, 1–22, esp. 7.

Lucian's external sources seem to have been quite a manageable supply of works, including the Greek myths of Homer, some comedies, and the Platonic myths.[129] Others, too, departed from and relied on such a comparatively modest set of works. The Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry, for example, was able to list the set of works with which his teacher Plotinus had been engaged when writing his commentaries (*Plot.* 14.3).[130] The authors of the stories included in the Talmud may have had a similarly limited supply of works at their disposal, including the Hebrew Bible, baraitot, and the Palestinian Talmud, along with some story and maxim collections.

So much literature has been lost, however, that it is impossible to even approximate the stories and collections available to these authors. In the *Institutio oratoria*, for example, Quintilian mentions the value of excerpting passages from the works of a comedian named Philemon (10.1.72). Said Philemon apparently wrote ninety-seven plays, of which not a single work survived in its entirety; only fragments or merely the titles of fifty-three of his works are extant. He also had a son who, under the same name, wrote a total of fifty-four plays, of which only two fragments and no titles survived.[131] The paradoxographical work *Rivers and Mountains and What Is Found in Them*, written around 300 CE, cites a wealth of authorities and works that are mostly unknown.[132]

One may wonder how such works would relate to the concise stories that we find in the Talmud, which often have the shape of plot summaries rather than fully fleshed-out stories. Indeed, even comparatively long stories in the Talmud as the one discussed above only cover a few folia. Yet it seems inconceivable that authors of talmudic stories would, after conducting exhaustive searches for plot, summarize whole books only to obtain a concise template for a story they then rewrote. The possibility of collections of ready-made plot summaries seems more reasonable. Such plot summaries began to emerge in the second century as prefixes to comedies.[133]

[129] Anderson, *Lucian*, 7.

[130] See Han Baltussen, "Philosophical Commentary," in McGill and Watts, *Companion to Late Antique Literature*, 301.

[131] *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, vol. 3, ed. William Smith (London: Taylor & Murray, 1849), see "Philemon."

[132] Paul T. Keyser, "Science in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries CE: An Aporetic Age," in *The Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, ed. Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 837.

[133] For the plot summaries to Plautus's plays, or those crafted by C. Sulpicius Apollinaris for the comedies of Terence, see Gesine Manuwald, "The Reception of Republican Comedy in Antiquity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy*, ed. Martin T. Dinter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 272.

Because of the previously described loss of many relevant sources, it is rather rare that we come across an obvious case of plot-summary use. Yet a story in one of the talmudic commentaries discussed in Chapter 3 appears to build upon what may originally have been such a plot summary, in this case a summary of (pseudo-)Lucian's version of Lucius's metamorphosis into an ass:

> Yannai happened to come to a certain inn. He said to [the waiters]: "Give me water to drink!" They approached him with porridge. He saw her lips moving. He spit out a little bit [of the porridge], and it turned into scorpions. He said to them: "I drank from yours, now you drink from mine." He gave her to drink, and she turned into a donkey. He rode on it and descended on the marketplace. Her friend came and broke the spell. Thus, he was seen riding on a woman in the marketplace. (b. Sanh. 67b)

Short as it is, the story contains the most prominent scenes of (pseudo-) Lucian's novel *Lucius or the Ass*. These include the transformation of a human being into a donkey, a person of the opposite sex's riding on it, and the public humiliation following the revelation of the donkey's actual human nature.[134] Like Lucius, Yannai is not at home when the transformation happens and, in both stories, women are involved in the metamorphosis in some way. Significantly, the actual process leading to transformation is different, most likely because (pseudo-)Lucian describes a method unmentioned by rabbinic literature. In this scene, Lucius rubs himself with oil, a practice that could too easily be confused with the biblical anointing of a king. Rather, substantial change is brought about in the Mishnah and elsewhere in the Talmud by murmuring.[135] In keeping with these literary standards, here, too, murmuring charges the porridge with change-effecting potency.

All in all, it seems that the more rhetorical the role of the story is, the shorter it becomes, since the story is used as an argument, and not primarily to entertain people. The story about Lucius, how he turned into an ass, and his long period of suffering until he finally regained his human form, makes the same point as the short story about Yannai in the Talmud, namely, that witchcraft is not to be engaged in lightly. However, while (pseudo-)Lucian's version of the story and the even longer Latin one by Apuleius elaborate on their morals in a verbose style that requires several hours of serious reading, the talmudic version makes an instant point, allowing for even more proof to be added to the same argument in a fraction of that time.

[134] See Lucian, *Lucius or The Ass* (MacLeod, LCL), §13, §23, and §54.
[135] E.g., m. Sanh. 10:2, and b. Ta'an. 22b.

In conclusion, it can be said that the distinct style of the late antique story – a concise but apt scene that can be attached to others to create lengthy story cycles – seems to be the result of at least three major factors: (1) the territorial expansions of the Roman Empire that led to an increase in knowledge, and which then had to be condensed again in order to remain useful (Chapter 1); (2) the limitations imposed by accessible, convenient, and cheap writing material such as wooden tablets and other flexible, portable writing surfaces (Chapter 2); and (3) the impact of the rhetorical, and still court-influenced, curriculum, which focused on the argumentative potential of the story.

The content of the stories was shaped against two factors that could be seen as restricting the story's potential: a set of authoritative texts that dictated and framed plausibility, and the author's use of templates. Yet an author's in-depth inquiry into characters and plot could unearth unexpected connections to other topics and lead to a substantial and informed transformation of the template. Authors, talmudic and else, seem to have been supported in their search for plot and moral by collections of stories, gnomologies, sayings, and glossaries.[136] Both the limits and the potential of the late antique story resulted from the fixed set of methods outlined in the *progymnasmata*, all the way supported and pressed by the materiality of writing.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that the Talmud is not only an erudite construct in its entirety but that this erudition is likewise mirrored in its parts, that is, the excerpts used by the composers. The compositional

[136] E.g., the *Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea* (Egypt, late fourth century), see Alistair C. Stewart, *The Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea (CC 0021): Critical Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 35 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2015). Collections of sayings are, for example, m. Avot, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, or the late antique and Byzantine collections of the *paroimographoi*. For a Greek edition of the *paroimographoi*, see Ernst von Leutsch and Friedrich W. Schneidewin, eds., *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum* (1839; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 257, mentions collections by Didymus Chalkenterus (Alexandria) and by Lucillus of Tarrha (Crete). On glossaries, see, in general, James E. G. Zetzel, *Critics, Compilers, and Commentators: An Introduction to Roman Philology, 200 BCE–800 CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 234–252, who delineates the different types of glossaries, such as *differentiae*, lists of identical words with different meanings; or the opposite, *synonyma*; bilingual glossaries; and *notae*, instructions about abbreviations. As examples of orations, see, for example, those by Himerius (Robert J. Penella, *Man and the Word: The Orations of Himerius*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 43 [Berkley: University of California Press, 2007]).

processes evident in talmudic stories, for example, are not much different from the ones applied by the composers of the Talmud to compile the work. Thus, the author of a story similarly started off with pieces of other people's writings, such as a template story and one or more maxims or sayings, arranging the two in the most plausible way and enhancing them with details of an inquiry into the chosen topic's or protagonist's prior literary life. Flexible and size-limited writing surfaces, such as tablets, ostraca, papyrus scraps, and the like affected the morphology of the story, its concise style and individual scenes, but also facilitated the arrangement of several such scenes into a whole, and their possible subsequent rearrangement or exchange.

Like Chapter 3, this chapter has highlighted the deep connection between rhetoric and writing, as well as the relationship of late antique rhetoric to its original purpose, namely, advocacy and defense in court. The stories of the Talmud mostly – if not always – argue for something. The dialogues they feature are elaborate, sharp, and filled with clever repartee: exemplary rhetoric, in sum. We might, therefore, ask whether some, if not all, of the texts used in the Talmud are the leisurely product of rhetorically trained men, or men *in* rhetorical training.

Indeed, Catherine Hezser has described the most typical talmudic stories as "case-stories consisting of a case-description … and a decision part."[137] The following passage, which has two quasi parallels in the Palestinian and one in the Babylonian Talmud, is a good example. The parallels illustrate not only the adjustments made by the respective composers – a corrective discursive note in the Palestinian Talmud (y. Pesah.) and a discursive introduction in the Babylonian – but also how scribal methods and content were taught.[138]

As is the case with most stories in talmudic literature, the stories of the following example are not integrated without slight friction into the commentaries in tractates y. Bava Metzi'a, y. Pesahim, or b. Pesahim. The texts were obviously written for their own sake and not to fill their present spots. This justifies thinking of them as individual texts, that is, school exercises. If so, they were not excerpts taken from longer texts but, rather, were stored directly with the tablet or ostracon on which they were written.

I would suggest the following scenario to explain the shape of this and many similar short exercises. First, the teacher discussed the case (now found in y. Pesahim) with the students. Then they dictated the case to the class and asked the students to devise a resolution for it: Somebody

[137] Hezser, *Form, Function, and Historical Significance*, 97.
[138] Translation follows Hezser, *Form, Function, and Historical Significance*, 95.

y. Pesah. 1:4/27c)	y. B. Metz. 3:4/9a–b	b. Pesah. 13a
		For Rabin ben Rabbi Adda said: "An event."
A person deposited a double sack of breadcrumbs with Rabbi Hiyya the Elder.	Rabbi Yohanan Haqoqah deposited with Rabbi Hiyya the Elder a double sack filled with leaven.	A person deposited a double sack filled with leaven with Yohanan Haquqah. And mice perforated it, and the leaven was bursting forth and came out.
Rabbi Yose ben Rabbi Bun said: "It was Yohanan Hiquqiah."		
He went [and] asked Rabbi.	He went [and] asked Rabbi.	And he went before Rabbi.
He said to him: "Let it be sold through the court at the time of the removal [of leaven]."	He said to him: "It shall be sold through the court at the time of the removal [of leaven]."	The first hour he said to him: "Wait!" The second, he said to him: "Wait!" The third, he said to him: "Wait!" The fourth, he said to him: "Wait!" The fifth, he said to him: "Go out and sell it in the market."

deposits bread with a sage and does not collect it before Passover Eve. Who would the sage ask for advice and what would be the ruling?[139] Such an example mostly tested the ability to build a conclusive argument. All three examples succeeded, which was most likely the criterion for their inclusion in the Talmuds. In terms of elaboration and style, the Babylonian example clearly surpasses the other two with its miniature *ekphrasis*, a vivid description, regarding the bag damaged by mice, as well as with the suspense created in the last part, when the answer is

[139] Indeed, the exact shape of the deposited leaven was apparently left to the students' imagination. One thought that breadcrumbs would be a plausible option, two thought more straightforwardly about leaven, and one thought about *kutah*, a Babylonian speciality made from old bread. This example is added in y. Pesah. 1:4/27c.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009297349 Published online by Cambridge University Press

withheld until the right time has come to act. Rhetoric is about the ability to produce a sound argument. The topic with which rhetoric is most profitably matched is law, its original source. Rabbinic concern for law and rhetoric were a perfect match.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that scholars of rabbinic texts increasingly treat rhetorical training as the cause and effect of rabbinic literature, instead of thinking of rhetoric as something that merely left traces in that literature. Rhetoric defined literate and argumentative thought; it was not merely a method for composing and performing orations. In 1949, David Daube made a similar claim: "Hellenistic rhetoric is at the bottom both of the fundamental ideas, presuppositions, from which the Rabbis proceeded and of the major details of application, the manner in which these ideas were translated into practice."[140] There may be a wealth of different cultural influences in the Talmud, but the way in which they were analyzed, scrutinized, and matched with older traditions is clearly based on educational principles outlined in the *progymnasmata*. These, as we have seen, were adopted and translated freely by other language cultures, who detached them from their basis in Greek grammar and myth.

[140] David Daube, "Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric," *HUCA* 22 (1949): 240.

5

Medical Recipes and the Composition of the Talmud

This chapter will demonstrate that it is possible to reconstruct the sources that were dissected by the composers of the Talmud for the purpose of compiling an erudite symposiac commentary. Reassembling should be possible, and quite easily so, if there was some truth to the thesis outlined in the previous chapters. According to this thesis, the composers arranged the Talmud from excerpts. The final work, then, brought together different languages and dialects but also different literary forms and styles. The fact that the composers altered their excerpts as little as possible should enable the reassembling of original sources based on language, style, and/or distinct use of vocabulary. In many cases, however, the result may not turn out as smoothly as the example given here, a medical treatise. Many sources may have preserved heterogeneous content in a uniform style, a consistent thematic thread throughout different styles, or a mix of both. This may be ascribed to the fact that most excerpts were likely taken from people's notebooks of *collectanea*, that is, already excerpts.

The recomposition and discussion of the medical treatise here has two main objectives. First, it serves as an argument that underlines the claims made in the previous chapters that the Talmud is thoroughly composed of excerpts, many of which were attributed to a certain sage in a secondary step by the composers to maintain the dialectic structure. Second, the contextualization of the treatise within cognate Greek and Latin examples provides further grounds for connecting the Talmud with the premises of Greco-Roman intellectual culture.

THE LIST OF RECIPES IN TRACTATE GITTIN IN PRIOR SCHOLARSHIP

The proof section of the Gittin commentary on *qordiaqos*, familiar by now through the discussions in the previous chapters, offers a list of medical recipes (b. Git. 68b–70a). This accumulation of recipes, most of them unattributed, clearly differs and stands out from the Talmud's usual dialectic structure. Scholars, most notably Giuseppe Veltri, David Freeman, and Markham Geller, have therefore concluded that the passage constitutes an independent medical source.[1] Veltri, for one, provides an annotated translation of the recipes and points to numerous near parallels in other rabbinic works and in Greek and Latin medical texts to make sense of the many *hapax legomena* in the recipes. He describes the intellectual background of the recipes as empirical and considers the passage to be a first attempt by rabbinic sages to codify their medical knowledge. The passage, in his assessment, is therefore not a medical treatise predating the composition of the Talmud but, rather, a collection of recipes that was systematically arranged by rabbinic scholars for b. Git. 68b–70a and its textual purpose there.[2]

Freeman, on the other hand, defines the boundaries and content of the passage and concludes that it was "an entire, complete treatise with a beginning and an end."[3] Freeman finds the potential origins of the passage in folk medicine, a type of medicine that he locates in opposition to professional and theorized Greek medicine. Following this line of argument, Freeman concludes that folk medicine is "transmitted orally and not textually."[4] Nevertheless, Freeman points to the invention of "compendia of domestic medicine," which resulted from Cato's and Varro's works on agriculture, in which they also presented veterinary cures.[5] As to why the treatise was included in the Talmud, Freeman suggests that there may have been a lack of reliable medical professionals and that

[1] Giuseppe Veltri, *Magie und Halakha: Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum*, *TSAJ* 62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); David L. Freeman, "The Gittin 'Book of Remedies,'" *Korot* 13 (1998); Markham J. Geller, "An Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud," in *From Athens to Jerusalem: Medicine in Hellenized Jewish Lore and in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Samuel Kottek, Manfred Horstmanshoff, Gerhard Baader, and Gary Ferngren (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Erasmus, 2000).

[2] See Veltri, *Magie und Halakha*, 261.

[3] Freeman, "Gittin 'Book of Remedies,'" 157.

[4] Freeman, "Gittin 'Book of Remedies,'" 160.

[5] Freeman, "Gittin 'Book of Remedies,'" 161.

the recipes provided "straightforward information" and "came without abstraction, rhetoric, theory, dogma, or appeals to pagan gods."[6]

Geller similarly looks at the passage with a comparative eye – in his case to Akkadian medical texts. He finds many Akkadian loanwords and calques in the recipes and concludes "that the Talmudic *Vademecum* is based either upon Akkadian sources, or alternatively on Aramaic translations from Akkadian medical texts, which preserved both Akkadian loanwords and calques."[7]

Despite their different perspectives on the passage, the three scholars agree that the Gittin commentary contains a "Book of Remedies" (Freeman), a "Medical Handbook" or "*Iatrosophion*" (Veltri), or a "*Vademecum*," that is, a concise, practical, and systematic arrangement of cures (Geller). The approach taken in this chapter differs from these prior ones, while at the same time continuing some of the research paths these scholars initiated. Thus, following Veltri, it will be argued that the treatise shares strong ties with Greek and Latin treatises; following Freeman, the passage as such will be assessed within the late antique fashion to produce concise treatises of simple remedies; and, in the wake of Geller, the local nature of the treatise will be highlighted.

To reassemble a source based on its distinct style is, of course, to apply form criticism. Form criticism as a method to study talmudic literature has been advanced most notably by Abraham Weiss, who distinguished among "collections," midrashim, and aggadot as possible external literary sources.[8] As an example of a medical collection, Weiss mentioned passages that contain most of the recipes in the original treatise that has been reassembled in the appendix to this chapter: b. Shabb. 110a–b; b. Git. 67b; and b. Avod. Zar. 28a.[9] He further observed that variation among attributions

[6] Freeman, "Gittin 'Book of Remedies,'" 164.

[7] Geller, "Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud," 16.

[8] Midrashim, for example: b. Meg. 10b–17a (Esther); b. Shabb. 113b–114b (Ruth); b. B. Batra 13b–17a (parts of Job); see David Goodblatt, "Abraham Weiss: The Search for Literary Forms," in *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud: Studies in the Achievements of Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Historical Literary-Critical Research*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 99–100. On the use of halakic midrash collections in the Talmud and how to disentangle them from (in his words) "the redacted text," see Menahem I. Kahana, "The Halakhic Midrashim," in *The Literature of the Sages; Second Part: Midrash and Targum; Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism; Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science; and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Ze'ev Safrai, Joshua J. Schwartz, and Peter Tomson, vol. 3 of *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud*, Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 2/3/2 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 58–67.

[9] See Abraham Weiss, *Studies in the Literature of the Amoraim* [in Hebrew] (New York: Yeshiva University, 1962), 174 and 264n2.

diminishes in clusters of text material that shares certain criteria. This material might, therefore, constitute a source external to the rest of the text, which Weiss conceived of as having grown layer by layer. For Weiss, the prime indicators of an external source were mainly (1) attribution to a certain sage and (2) content. Weiss thus found that an excursus might be indicative of an external source but remained critical of that idea.[10] More recently, Catherine Hezser enlarged the toolbox of talmudic form criticism by clearly pointing to stylistic features: "If neither technical terms nor attributions are available for separating a text from its context, a change in formulation and style may help to determine its beginning and end."[11]

My intention here is to integrate these prior approaches to form criticism into the empirical model of book production outlined in Chapter 2. Based on this model, every distinguishable literary unit is either already a source or part of a larger composition, since the composers worked with excerpts. There are no "external sources," since no text is more external than another: they are all equally external and are all subject to being compiled into a whole. Attributions thereby become the least indicative factor for an external source, since they are most prone to having been added or adapted by the composers. Content may be indicative but not necessarily, considering the late antique intellectual aspiration for *poikilia*, thematic variegation. Following this argument, most indicative for a distinct source are style, shared vocabulary, and reused motifs. For the reassembly of the medical treatise, the distinct style of the recipes, not their attribution, is decisive. This argument is supported by the presence in the Talmud of differently worded recipes that are similarly sometimes attributed and sometimes anonymous, as well as by comparison with contemporaneous medical treatises.

DIFFERENTLY STRUCTURED TALMUDIC RECIPES IN THE HANDS OF THE COMPOSERS

The commentary on the lemma *qordiaqos* in tractate Gittin (68b–70a) contains therapies for twenty-five conditions. That said, I would like to clarify that I use the term "recipe" to refer to a compound unit consisting

[10] Weiss, *Studies in the Literature of the Amoraim*, 184–190. On the implications and complications of working with attributions in form criticism, see Anthony J. Saldarini, "'Form Criticism' of Rabbinic Literature," *JBL* 96, no. 2 (June 1977). Saladrini eventually suggests a focus on comparison but also a consideration of the "relative date" (274).

[11] Catherine Hezser, "Form-Criticism of Rabbinic Literature," in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt, and Peter J. Tomson, *JSJSup* 136 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 100.

of a condition and a therapy. The conditions in Gittin are first arranged according to the body part affected by the disease, thereby proceeding from head to foot. Then follow conditions like fever or skin diseases that concern the body as a whole. The sequence of recipes is interrupted by small dialogues, which engage the recipes in the overall talmudic discourse, and by stories, which appear to prove the effectiveness of the recipes. The literary structure of the recipes follows two different patterns. Thus, the passage, thematically consistent as it may seem, is again shown to be a cluster of excerpts and editorial remarks.

One of the two recipe types is clearly more dominant than the other, with its listing only sporadically interrupted by the other one. The basis of the passage thus seems to be a treatise of recipes with an identical style. Consistent with their *modus operandi*, the composers of the Talmud treated every recipe as a single thematic unit. If the other excerpts they had selected for this particular commentary yielded recipes with matching or complementary conditions, or additional information, they interrupted and enhanced the list or even a recipe. In fact, we already encountered such an instance in the proem to the commentary on *qordiaqos* discussed in Chapter 3. There, one type of recipe against sunstroke (in roman) was supplemented with another one (in italics):

> Abaye said: Mother told me: For the sunstroke of one day: a pitcher of water; for that of two days: bloodletting; for the one that lasts three days: red meat on coals and diluted wine; *for a longer sunstroke: bring [ליתי, leity] a black hen and tear it open crosswise. Shave the middle of [the patient's] head and place [the hen] on [the head] until it sticks.*[12] *Then [the patient] should go down and stand neck-deep in water until [the patient] becomes tired from the world upon him. Then [the patient] should submerge himself, ascend, and sit down.*
>
> *And if not, he should eat leeks and go down and stand neck-deep in water until he becomes tired from the world upon him.* (b. Git. 67b)

From the way in which the composers present the two recipes, they seem to belong together. Yet their stylistic forms are so distinct that, upon closer investigation, it becomes clear that they are excerpts from two different sources.

In both sources, conditions are preceded by the preposition "for" (-ל, *le*), as in "for the sun[stroke]" (לשמשא, *le-shimsha*) or "for the ear" (לאודנא, *le-udna*).[13] The introduction of the therapies, on the other hand, varies and thus offers a first criterion for differentiation. One type of

[12] According to Mss. Arras 889, Vatican 140, and Vatican 130.
[13] b. Avod. Zar. 28b.

therapy, to which the one in italics above belongs, is introduced with a verb, most often the verb *leity* [ליתי] in the third-person masculine future, with the intention of issuing a directive, meaning "he shall bring." The other recipe type, the one printed in roman, lists the necessary ingredients for the therapy immediately following the condition. This recipe type does so without addressing anyone, as if an invisible colon (such as the one I inserted in the English translation above after "For the sunstroke of one day") marked a pause between the end of the condition and the beginning of the therapy. This distinction is indicative of the source of each recipe, as further analysis of their structure will show.

Both types of recipes sometimes offer alternative therapies to cure a condition, but they are more common in what I will call the "verb recipe" because it introduces therapies with a verb (usually "bring") in contrast to the "pause recipe" (with the invisible colon). Verb recipes may amass up to eleven alternative therapies for a single condition. In the appendix to this chapter, the reader will find fifty-seven verb recipes for reference. Numbers given in parentheses in the following discussions refer to the recipe's number in the appendix. The recipe listing eleven alternative therapies is number 36. Alternatives to the verb recipe are always introduced with "and if not [לא ואי, *ve-y lo*]." The "pause recipe," on the other hand, introduces its occasional alternatives with "or [או]." Here are two examples of the two types, starting with the "verb recipe":

For [-ל] the blood of the head:
Bring cypress, tamarisk, one myrtle, marsh grass, and *yabla*. Boil them together and pour 300 cups over one side of the head and 300 cups over the other side of the head.
And if not, bring a white rose and boil it. Pour 60 cups over one side of the head and 60 over the other. (b. Git. 68b; recipe no. 1 in appendix)

Since all of the pause recipes in the Gittin passage are without alternatives, I will add an example from tractate Avodah Zarah:

To [-ל] stop the blood [from flowing out of a wound]: cress in vinegar.
To [-ל] heal the wound**:** scraping of cynodon and scrapings of a thornbush **or** a compress from a garbage dump.[14] (b. Avod. Zar. 28a)

[14] The term ניקרא, translated as "compress," is inferred from a passage in b. Shabb. 134b (*DJBA*, see "ניקרא"). The components of the recipes vary considerably between the manuscripts and the prints. Yet the main features I wish to present here, the invisible colon before the pause and the introduction of the alternative, remain the same. Since the manuscripts do not help in providing an intelligible translation, the translation follows the text of the Vilna standard printed edition.

As becomes clear from these two examples, the verb-recipe type tends to be much more detailed. In addition to offering a list of ingredients, it also states the actions to be taken to process the ingredients. This contrasts with the pause-recipe type, in which even information concerning the exact posology (dosage) of ingredients is reduced to a minimum.

The two types of recipes appear repeatedly throughout the Talmud. Apparently, the composers of the Talmud had two different treatises of medical recipes at their disposal with some overlapping conditions, but they never presented one recipe type as if it were an alternative to the other. Instead, they left the excerpts intact and placed them next to each other. Even if they used single recipes in a dialogue, they did not change the original structure. An example for the use of a recipe in a dialogue is found in tractate Avodah Zarah, where the composers apparently found three excerpts concerning the "pustule" under the keyword "harvest": one saying (in roman), one pause recipe (in italics), and one verb recipe (in bold). From these they created the following piece:

Rav Safra said: "This pustule is a precursor of the angel of death."[15]
What is its cure?
Rue in honey or parsley in tilia-wine.
In the meantime, **bring a grape similar to the pustule and roll it on the pustule: a white [grape] for a white pustule and a black one for a black pustule**. (b. Avod. Zar. 28a)

To bring together the pause recipe and the verb recipe, both of which apparently referred to the same condition, the composers draw on a structure known from three other excerpts. In doing so, they resort to a method of composition already discussed in the previous chapter: the use of a template. Two excerpts of this pattern are now found in tractate Gittin, one in Avodah Zarah.[16] In each of these excerpts, someone is inflicted with a deadly disease. Therefore, the recipes do not offer therapy but, rather, a means to prolong the patient's life so that he can make a will. Each time, these measures are introduced with the term used here: "in the meantime."[17] It follows that the original formulation of the

[15] Similarly, the next passage in b. Avod. Zar. 28a calls another boil a "precursor of the angel of death," while a saying in b. Ned. 41a and attributed to Rava holds that "if fever were not a 'precursor of the angel of death,' it would be beneficial."
[16] b. Git. 70a and b. Avod. Zar. 12b.
[17] והכי אדהכי.

recipes before they were used in this discursive structure was most likely as follows:

For the pustule: Rue in honey *or* parsley in tilia-wine. (pause recipe)

For the pustule: **Bring** a grape similar to the pustule and roll it on the pustule: a white [grape] for a white pustule and a black one for a black pustule. (verb recipe)

Here, as elsewhere, the composers are very reluctant to interfere with the content of the recipes or to change their style. In this case, however, the addition of "in the meantime" distorts the usefulness of both therapies by burdening the patient and especially their caregivers with procuring both sets of ingredients. Presented as alternatives, by contrast, the therapies would have enabled the choice of the more convenient and available set of ingredients. But the composers' priority is obviously not to present practical medicine, which was likely the objective of the original treatises, but to use medical knowledge rhetorically and to keep up with the discursive structure. Otherwise, they would have left the treatises intact.

The separation of condition and therapy lends itself to creating a question-and-answer format. Elsewhere, a disease named *tsafdina* (צפדינא) is the object of discussion.[18] The issue is raised by a story that has its template in the Palestinian Talmud.[19] In both stories, Rabbi Yohanan is treated by a woman for his *tsafdina*, and both times he reveals her secret despite his initial promise that he would not. The consequences for the woman differ in the two stories. The identity of this *tsafdina* disease does not, however, become clear from the story. Fortunately, the composers of the Babylonian Talmud found an excerpt with a saying in Hebrew with the information that the disease begins in the mouth and ends in the bowels. Based on this saying, the composers focused on diseases of the mouth, equating *tsafdina* with hypersensitive gums. Drawing from both medical treatises, two pause recipes (in italics below) and one verb recipe (in bold below), the composers culled symptoms and three causes for the disease. Constructing a question-and-answer pattern, the composers attributed each of the three recipes for the treatment of gums to a different rabbinic sage.

Rav Nahman bar Yitzhaq said [Hebr.]: "*Tsafdina* is different because it starts in the mouth and ends in the bowels."

What is its symptom [lit., "sign"]?

[18] b. Avod. Zar. 28a // b. Yoma 84a.
[19] y. Shabb. 14:4 (14b) // y. Avod. Zar. 2:2 (40d).

[If] too much is placed on the gums, blood issues from between the rows [of teeth].

From what does it come?

From [eating] very cold wheat, or from [eating] very hot barley, or from [eating] leftover fish hash.

What did she [i.e., the female healer from the story] do for him [Rabbi Yohanan]?

Rav Aha, the son of Rava said [Hebr.]: *"Yeast water, olive oil, and salt."*

And Mar bar Rav Ashi said: "*Fat from the goose in the wing of the goose.*"

Abaye said: "I did all of these, and I was not cured. Until this *tayya'a* told me: **'Bring pits from olives that have not finished ripening more than a third. Burn them on a new hoe and affix [the residue] to the [affected] row [of teeth].'** I did this, and I was cured!" (b. Avod. Zar. 28a // b. Yoma 84a)

Here we can observe the application of the same methods we saw in the previous chapters. Based on an earlier statement, the excerpt in Hebrew, the composers defined the mysterious disease *tsafdina*. According to this definition, they chose cures and transformed them into sayings – in the case of Abaye even into a *chreia* – in order to sustain the dialogic structure of their symposiac work.

Again, the method is productive and engaging: with considerably little effort, three cures are added to the ongoing discourse. At the same time, the composers' procedures are highly repetitive. For example, it is quite common for the composers to ask, "What is its cure?" and then immediately insert a therapy, either attributed or unattributed.[20] Repetition can also be observed in the way in which the above verb recipe is framed as an account of Abaye's personal experience in the form of a *chreia*. The composers use the exact same formula elsewhere, where they let a *tayya'a*, a nomadic Arab, and Rav Papa recount their application of a verb recipe and exclaim, "I did this, and I was cured!"[21]

The passage cited above is further instructive since it exposes an irregularity with regard to the posited treatise of pause recipes: one of the recipes is not in Aramaic but in Hebrew. The matter deserves further investigation, which cannot be undertaken here. The change in language points to the possibility that the treatise with pause recipes was either bilingual or partly translated or the composers had both an Aramaic and Hebrew treatise at their disposition.

[20] E.g., b. Ketub. 77b; b. Git. 67b, 70a; b. B. Qam. 85a; b. Avod. Zar. 28a, 29a.
[21] b. Avod. Zar. 29a.

PAUSE- AND VERB-RECIPE TREATISES AND THEIR LITERARY CONTEXT

Due to its more elusive structure, which can be absorbed completely in a dialogue, the pause recipe is less easily detectable in the talmudic corpus than is the more distinct verb recipe. I will, therefore, conclude my observations on the pause recipe with some further remarks before focusing exclusively on the verb recipe.

Strikingly absent from pause recipes are (often) indications concerning the necessary amount (posology) of any given *materia medica* and, almost always, their specific preparation. The recipes therefore seem somewhat deficient and inferior to verb recipes. In addition, one may wonder how the recipes could have worked without instructions with regard to posology, preparation, and ingestion or application. An answer to this mystery can be found by comparing the recipes to cooking recipes such as those collected in the cookery book called *Apicius*.[22] In fact, many of the recipes in *Apicius* have the same structure as the verb recipes, in that they begin with an instructive verb and offer alternatives introduced by the Latin *aliter*, meaning "otherwise." The structure of the pause recipe is also present among the cooking recipes, although almost exclusively concerning sauces. This explains fairly well why these recipes need no posology and no, or not much, instruction as to their preparation: The categorization as sauce already refers to the main characteristics of the final outcome. Ingredients need only be listed, and it is evident that they need to be cooked or at least stirred together to produce a sauce; posology can be adapted individually according to taste. We read, for example, in *Apicius* the following recipe: "Sauce for wild goat: pepper, lovage, caraway, cumin, parsley, rue seed, honey, mustard, vinegar, liquamen, and oil" (8.3.1).[23]

It appears that the pause recipes were excerpted from a source that classified recipes not according to condition but by the type of remedy they yielded: potions, broths, poultices, balms, or suppositories. A fourth-century papyrus from Egypt suggests the existence of such structures in medical treatises, although its prescriptions are admittedly more complex than those in *Apicius* or the talmudic pause recipes. Judging from the remaining corrupt thirteen folia, the Michigan Medical Codex

[22] See Christopher Grocock and Sally Grainger, *Apicius: A Critical Edition with an Introduction and an English Translation of the Latin Recipe Text* (Totnes, UK: Prospect Books, 2006), 13–22, for a recent introduction to the work.

[23] Translation follows Grocock and Grainger, *Apicius*, 267.

(P. Mich. 758 = P. Mich. inv. 21) appears to have presented recipes "according to type of medication, with pills and lozenges preceding wet and dry plasters. A similar pattern was used by Galen in his *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locus*."[24] The treatise prefaces recipes with headings such as "A plaster, which promotes cicatrization" (Inv. 21 B verso, Plate 2b).[25] As with the sauces in the cookbook, then, these headings already indicate the consistency and final use of the medication. A simple list of ingredients was enough, perhaps with occasional recommendations as to their posology in case of an aggressive substance.

In at least one instance, the composers of the Talmud included such a pause recipe together with its original heading. Along with the attribution, which the composers appended to the recipe, it reads as follows:

ABAYE SAID: "Mother told me: One salve for every pain: Seven measures of [forbidden animal] fat and one of wax." Rava said: "Wax and pitch."[26] (b. Shabb. 133b)

The original recipe most likely read:

> One salve for every pain
> Seven measures of [forbidden animal] fat and one of wax.
> Or: wax and pitch.

The component "forbidden animal fat" supports yet another connection to healing salves as they are prescribed in Codex Michigan (Inv. 21 A recto, Plate 1a) and in similar treatises by authors such as Galen, Oribasius, Aetius, and Paulus Aegineta, who list recipes for salves made from pig fat, wax, white lead, and lithargo.[27]

I suggest, therefore, that the composers of the Talmud had access to two medical treatises with different outlooks and hence different structures for their recipes which they have integrated into their collection of excerpts. They used them, especially the pause recipes, in the form of single excerpts, and there may be fewer pause recipes than verb recipes included in the talmudic text. In some cases, both recipes list therapies for the same condition. Such recipes were either used in combination, as we have already seen, or separately, as the next example shows.

[24] Ann E. Hanson, introduction to *The Michigan Medical Codex (P. Mich. 758 = P. Mich. inv. 21)*, ed. Louise C. Youtie, Michigan Papyri 7, American Studies in Papyrology 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), esp. xx.

[25] Youtie, *The Michigan Medical Codex*, 18.

[26] The etymology of the Aramaic word that is traditionally translated as "pitch" is unknown (see *DJBA*, see "קלבא").

[27] See Hanson, introduction to *The Michigan Medical Codex*, esp. xviii.

In tractate Shabbat, the composers use a verb recipe, and in tractate Gittin a pause recipe, to counter the effects of drinking water that has been left uncovered overnight (called *giluya* in rabbinic terminology).[28] Such water may have become unsuitable for drinking due to pollution overnight. In Gittin, the pause recipe is just appended to the therapy of a preceding verb recipe, which makes use of *giluya*-water to treat "the arrow," probably a piercing pain in the heart (recipe no. 16). The composers added the pause recipe to counter the side effects of this therapy. Why do the composers not use the recipe against the effects of *giluya*-water from the verb-recipe treatise from which they took most of the Gittin recipes? Either because they had already finished writing up the commentaries for tractate Shabbat, and so the excerpt was marked as "used," or because they did not want to disturb the original structure of the verb-recipe treatise by moving up the recipe against *giluya* to the section on heart diseases. Both possibilities are equally justifiable, but the former is more likely because, unlike sayings, catchphrases, or stories, which make different points in different contexts, recipes make only one distinct point and hence need not be repeated. Indeed, I am unaware of the repetition of a recipe within the Talmud – in the case of medical recipes, the keywords were unambiguous.

Interestingly, the pause recipe against *giluya* does not come alone but with another pause recipe that most likely followed it in the original treatise. The excerpt obviously disturbs the logical order of the verb recipes that form the bulk of the section. Here is the passage with the pause recipes in italics:

For the "arrow" [piercing pain in the heart]:
Bring the "shaft of an arrowhead," turn it upside down with the bottom on top. Pour water over it and drink it.
And if not, bring water from which a dog drank at night—but beware of [the possible effects of] *giluya*.

For the effects of drinking giluya: one anpaq [a measurement] of undiluted wine.
For a boil: one anpaq of wine with a worm-colored alkaline plant.

For a fluttering heart:
Bring three barley cakes and soak them in a *kamka*-dish that is no older than 40 days, eat them, and afterwards drink watered-down wine. (b. Git. 69b)

[28] b. Shabb. 109b and b. Git. 69b.

Both pause recipes propose a potion. This must be the reason why they were grouped together in the original pause-recipe treatise. The composers of the Talmud clearly excerpted them together and here use the entire excerpt, although the recipe to cure a boil clearly interrupts the section of cures for heart diseases.

Treatises of medical recipes tend to list all their recipes in the same form, a practice that should facilitate the reader's understanding of each one's beginning and end. This literary form goes hand in hand with developments in the graphical depiction of the recipes. These involved writing the condition on a separate line, with a different color and/or in the margins, and isolating individual recipes "by an interlinear stroke (paragraphos), or stroke plus double dot (dicolon)."[29] The same devices are also used to separate individual *gnōmai* in gnomologies and dialogues in dramatic or platonic texts.[30] Similar to these parallel graphic developments and treatments of recipes and maxims, we have observed in Chapter 4 that recipes and maxims are treated equally in the Talmud in that both may stand in place of direct speech. Several examples presented above place recipes into the mouths of sages, thereby turning the recipe into a saying. Like medicine more generally, the recipes made their way into literary performativity.

A particular development observable in medical papyri from Egypt should be associated with the composers' habit of using recipes as discursive items. The phenomenon to which I am referring seems to have been prominent from the second to early fourth centuries, although most manuscripts were copied in the second and third centuries.[31] These texts present medical knowledge in question-and-answer form, called

[29] Anne E. Hanson, "Fragmentation and the Greek Medical Writers," in *Collecting Fragments – Fragmente sammeln*, ed. Glenn W. Most, Aporemata 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 310. For an example of such an arrangement, see the fragments discussed by Nicholas Sims-Williams, "Early New Persian in Syriac Script: Two Texts from Turfan," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74, no. 3 (October 2011). For a general survey of developments, see Isabella Andorlini, "Il 'gergo' grafico ed espressivo della ricettazione medica antica," in *Medicina e Società nel Mondo Antico: Atti del convegno di Udine (4–5 Ottobre 2005)*, ed. Isabella Andorlini and Arnaldo Marcone, Studi udinesi sul mondo antico no. 4 (Florence: Le Monnier Università, 2006), 147–152.

[30] See Hanson, "Fragmentation and the Greek Medical Writers," 310.

[31] David Leith, "Question-Types in Medical Catechisms on Papyrus," in *Authorial Voices in Greco-Roman Technical Writing*, ed. Liba Taub and Aude Doody, AKAN-Einzelschriften 7 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2009), 108.

erōtapokriseis.[32] The papyri displaying this format relate to different medical topics, but the most interesting ones for the present purpose are those concerned with individual diseases.

The questions in these "question-and-answer formats" examined diseases in a logical way, while at the same time imposing a recurrent structure on medical knowledge, thereby offering scaffolding for (future) arguments. The fragment P. Mil. Vogl. I 15, for example, proceeds with the following set of questions:

> What is [name of disease]?
> What is the cause of [name of disease]?
> What are the signs of [name of disease]?
> In what way does [name of disease] differ?
> What is the treatment of [name of disease]?

The defining contours of the disease, such as its cause, signs, and criteria for differentiation from other diseases, but also its treatment (antidote), are consecutively addressed by these questions. Other fragments may formulate their questions slightly differently, but the pattern remains the same.[33] There are several instances in which the Talmud adopts this structure, as can already be seen in some of the above examples. An almost complete match to the structure adapted by P. Mil. Vogl. I 15 is present in tractate Shabbat:

> [Lemma from the Mishnah; Hebr.] But one may eat *yo'ezer*.
> [Aram.] **What is *yo'ezer*?**
> Pennyroyal.
> **For what is it eaten?**
> For the fluke worm.
> **On what is it eaten?**
> On seven white dates.
> **What is the cause?**
> [Six causes follow.]
>
> Alternatively, swallow white cress.
> Alternatively, let [the patient] fast and bring fatty meat and roast it on live coals. Let him then suck a bone and swallow vinegar. But there are those who say no to vinegar because it is harmful to the liver.

[32] For a contextual survey of the twenty-three papyri that belong to this genre, see Nicola Reggiani, "Digitizing Medical Papyri in Question-and-Answer Format," in *Ancient Greek Medicine in Questions and Answers: Diagnostics, Didactics, Dialectics*, ed. Michiel Meeusen (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[33] See the chart in Leith, "Question-Types in Medical Catechisms on Papyrus," 110–111.

Alternatively, bring scrapings of *Dilum* dates that have been scraped off from top to bottom.[34] Maybe they will come out through his mouth. Boil it in beer from the neighborhood. On the next day, block the holes of [the patient's] hands, and [the patient] should drink [from his hands]. And when he excretes, he should excrete on the date palm. (b. Shabb. 109b)

The composers obviously used here the same method as the medical question-and-answer format to connect the recipe to the mishnaic lemma through the form of a dialogue. Yet because only one of the four therapies mentions the lemma "pennyroyal," the alternatives are stated with no further questions, right next to the causes. The original recipe probably had the following format:

For the fluke worm, which comes from [six causes follow]: Eat Pennyroyal on seven white dates. And if not, swallow white cress … [three alternatives follow].

Thus, while the parallel to the Egyptian *erōtapokriseis* is striking, the talmudic examples might be better explained not as excerpts from an Aramaic medical catechism but as ad hoc creations by the composers.

David Leith has proposed viewing the medical *erōtapokriseis* as a result of the application of a set of questions that goes back to Aristotle but is still the basis of late antique doxographies. According to Leith, when "faced with a problematic scientific or practical issue, one should ask: Does it exist? What is it? How is it? Why is it? How big is it/How many are there?"[35] To these, the authors of *erōtapokriseis* also added the question: "From what does it differ?" The composers of the Talmud, just like the authors of many excerpts they used, asked the very same questions in order to investigate all kinds of "matters."[36] Clearly, as Leith notes, question-and-answer structures are more reflective of the structure of the authors' thinking, of the way they fashioned their argument, than of a direct teacher–student contact, although these dialogues are usually interpreted as originating from the latter and were even called "catechism" by earlier scholarship.[37] In the above example as well, the primary concern of the composers was to plausibly explain the lemma *yo'ezer* in the most conclusive and discursive manner as possible. That, by so doing, they exposed their own reasoning may be an intended pedagogical side effect.

[34] The printed editions, several Mss. (Oxford Opp. fol. 23; JTS Rab. 501:1–6; and Oxford Heb. c. 27/10), and the early print editions Soncino and Bomberg read the introductory formula as אי לא, while Mss. Munich 95 and Vatican 108 read אלא, rather.

[35] Leith, "Question-Types in Medical Catechisms on Papyrus," 113.

[36] For examples, see Yitzhak Frank, *The Practical Talmud Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Ariel, United Israel Institutes, 1994 [10th printing 2001]), see מאי (*what*).

[37] See Leith, "Question-Types in Medical Catechisms on Papyrus," 122.

REASSEMBLING AND PLACING A MEDICAL TREATISE USED BY THE COMPOSERS OF THE TALMUD

The above observations are indicative of the fact that the composers of the Talmud used at least two stylistically different medical treatises. In this section, I will propose that the verb-recipe treatise can be reassembled based on the distinct style of its recipes and the lengthy and substantial excerpt of this treatise in tractate Gittin 68b–70a. This excerpt is indicative of the overall structure of the treatise and facilitates the search for suitable comparanda. These, in turn, are necessary to justify the reconstruction.

Indeed, the formulaic style of the verb recipe follows the pattern of Greek *euporista*, simple remedies. These are often structured along the lines of the formula: "For [Πρὸς] XY, take [Λαβὼν] … or [ἄλλο] …," which corresponds to the Aramaic pattern of the verb recipe "For [-ל] XY, take/"bring" [לייתי] … and if not [ואי לא] …"[38] Next to the Greek cognates, there are also some Syriac recipes of this structure found in the third part of the collection called *Syriac Book of Medicines*. This section contains a similar yet, like the whole book, eclectic list of simple remedies which are less consistent in their literary structure. Only some of these recipes begin their therapies with a verb, while others first state the ingredients before proceeding to their preparation. This latter structure is reminiscent of the talmudic pause recipes and yet different, since the Syriac recipes add the mode of preparation. The conditions are introduced with *le* (ܠ), "for," alternatives with *o* (ܐܘ), "or."[39] We can quite

[38] …ואי לו … ליתי … –ל. See, as an example of this structure in Greek, PGM VII, lines 193–214, in Karl Preisendanz, ed. and trans., with Albert Heinrichs, ed., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* I, 2nd rev. ed., Sammlung wissenschaftlicher Commentare (Leipzig: K. G. Saur Verlag, 1973). A good example is already one of the earliest Greek recipe books, P. Ryl. III 531 (third century BCE), which contains prescriptions partially parallel to the Hippocratic gynecological treatises. The following recipe can be found in the best-preserved section: **πρὸς** τοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστέρων πνιγμούς· ἐνυδρίδους τοὺς νεφροὺς ξηράνας δίδου ὅσον τοῖς τρισὶν δακτύλοις **λαβεῖν** ἐν οἴνωι εὐώδει. τοῦτο καὶ πρὸς τοὺς τῶν διδύμων πό- νου⟨ς⟩ βο{ι}έθει καὶ κλυστήριον ἔστιν ὕστερων. This translates as, "Against suffocation from the uterus. After desiccating otter's kidneys, give them in the quantity of a three-finger pinch, to take with perfumed wine. This also helps against the pains at the testicles and is a washing for the uterus." The next recipe starts with **ἄλλο** (*allo*). Both *pros* and *allo* are set apart from the rest of the recipe in the margins to indicate the beginning of a new recipe. Many thanks to Prof. Nicola Reggiani (University of Parma) for providing me with this reference, the transliteration, translation, and an image of the particular section.

[39] Ernest A. W. Budge edited and translated a manuscript of the *Syriac Book of Medicines* (SBM) in two volumes, originally published in London (1913). A partial edition with translation of a different manuscript was published by Richard Gottheil ("Contributions

confidently conclude that the verb recipes belonged to or even constituted an Aramaic *euporiston*, a treatise of simple remedies. Such treatises were quite popular throughout the Mediterranean and adjacent areas, especially between the fourth and seventh centuries.[40]

Unfortunately, collections of simple remedies (*euporista*) suffered considerable neglect by scholars in the past, when historians of medicine were primarily interested in theory-based medicine, of which these recipes were not seen to be a part. Scholarly interest has turned only very recently to these recipes – and this time not only with regard to their biochemical effectiveness or relationship to Hippocratics or Galen but also in consideration of their literary makeup, their structure, their deviation from a *Vorlage* or main source, the strategies followed by collectors, and, more generally, what these recipes tell us about everyday life in late antiquity.[41] Yet many euporistic treatises have, to date, not been edited, let alone translated, and the growing bulk of medical papyri from Egypt is only now being digitized.[42] Many may also have been lost, since the extant treatises attest to a wide geographical dispersion. The treatises at our hands can, nevertheless, assist in recomposing the Judeo-Aramaic treatise that was divided by the composers of the Talmud into useful excerpts and in reintegrating it into its initial intellectual context.

Treatises of simple remedies are well-structured collections of recipes that are usually based on prior (minor) collections by either laypeople or doctors. Recipes could be obtained through personal expertise or exchange, or collected through careful reading. The author of the *Medicina Plinii*, composed in the third or fourth century, for example,

to Syriac Folk-Medicine," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 20, no. 1 [January 1899]). For an updated review of scholarship on this section of the SBM, see Stefanie Rudolf, *Syrische Astrologie und das Syrische Medizinbuch*, Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 7 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 113–116. My thanks to Marion Pragt (KU Leuven) for helping me with my reading of the Gottheil manuscript. The mix of recurring styles in the SBM recipes is worth a closer analysis. Moreover, the therapies noticeably often use eggs, quite in contrast to those in the Talmud.

[40] See Burkhard Meissner, *Die technische Fachliteratur der Antike: Struktur, Überlieferung und Wirkung technischen Wissens in der Antike (ca. 400 v.Chr.-ca. 500 n.Chr.)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 328, and Christian Schulze, *Die pharmazeutische Fachliteratur in der Antike: Eine Einführung*, 3rd ed., Beihefte zum Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft 10 (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2007), 101–108.

[41] See, e.g., the collected essays in the volume edited by Lennart Lehmhaus and Matteo Martelli, eds., *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue*, Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017).

[42] See Nicola Reggiani, ed., *Digital Papyrology*, 2 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), as well as the project "Medicalia Online," www.papirologia.unipr.it/CPGM/medicalia/vocab/index.php.

created a condensed *brevarium* out of Pliny the Elder's pharmacognosy in books 20–32 of the *Natural History*. "Pseudo-Pliny" turned Pliny's information into recipes by enhancing the ingredients with a posology and explanations regarding weights and measures.[43] He also used the structure, discussed above, which proceeds from head to foot, before moving to diseases and deficiencies affecting the whole body, adding a short list of antidotes at the end.

In general, the diversity in the organization of recipes in these treatises is striking. Pseudo-Apuleius (fourth century) organized his recipes in the *Herbarius* according to medical plant, while Sextus Placitus's collection (also fourth century) lists them according to beneficial substances derived from animals.[44] Four fragments in Early New Persian written in Sogdian Script appear to be part of a recipe treatise arranged according to substances, or, at least, oils, similar to the Michigan Codex discussed above.[45] A short manuscript (Ms. Cairo 45060) dating from the sixth or seventh century and found "in a jar, buried in the floor of a monk's cell," offers a miscellaneous range of conditions, from eye disease to the draining of a cistern, conception, or leading someone astray, and may reflect the needs with which supplicants tended to confront the monk.[46] The basic structure of the Coptic recipes is again identical to that of the Talmud's verb recipe: For [condition] + therapy, with the therapy starting with a verb. Most of the very concise recipe books, however, adopted the top-down structure as a way of orientation, proceeding from there to diseases affecting the whole body, adding recipes that belonged in neither category in the end.

As the above examples show, recipe treatises were composed all around the Mediterranean and adjacent areas.[47] The geographical range

[43] Like other Latin treatises, it is stylistically inconsistent.

[44] On the *Herbarius*, see Schulze, *Die pharmazeutische Fachliteratur in der Antike*, 102, and the foreword to his recent edition and German translation by Kai Brodersen, *Pseudo-Apuleius Herbarius*. The *Herbarius* offers an index of diseases and deficiencies in a top-down manner with reference to the particular beneficial herb. On Sextus Placitus, see also Schulze, *Die pharmazeutische Fachliteratur in der Antike*, 106–107.

[45] Sims-Williams, "Early New Persian in Syriac Script," 362.

[46] Marvin Meyer, ed., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts and Ritual Power*, Mythos: The Princeton/Bollingen Series in World Mythology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 270.

[47] Further examples are Marcellus Empiricus, *De medicamantis* (Byzantium); Cassius Felix, *De medicina* (Cirta, North Africa); Theodorus Priscianus, *Euporiston* (books 1 and 3, probably North Africa); or a fragment in PGM VII, lines 193–214 (eight recipes, two variants, Egypt; see Schulze, *Die pharmazeutische Fachliteratur in der Antike*, 101–108). For PGM VII, see Hans D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 112–124.

of the treatises and the recurring similarities in their structure make it very likely that someone would have collected recipes and created a Jewish-Aramaic *euporiston*, thereby following the mannerisms and needs of their time. Indeed, the time frame of the treatises is also fitting: the shorter ones all range from the third to the sixth centuries.

The conditions listed in the talmudic treatise seem to be a mixture of technical terms (e.g., *zilhata* [no. 2 in the appendix], *shavriri* [nos. 4–5], and *shigrona* [no. 26]); colloquial terms (e.g., "cooking" [no. 11], "arrow" [no. 16], and "sting" [no. 21]); and descriptive ones (e.g., "For the blood of the head" [no. 1] or "For blood that comes from the nose" [no. 6]).[48] The technical terms may be translations (and later corruptions) from Greek or Akkadian medical vocabulary, as both languages were spoken at some point in the Mesopotamian plain. In recipe no. 2, for example, *tsilhata* (צילחתא) seems to be derived from the root *ts-l-h* (צלח), "to cleave, split," which links the condition to the Greek term *hemicrania*, "half head." The term captures the feeling that people experience when suffering from a severe headache ("migraine"). *Shavriri*, on the other hand, is likely a corruption of Akkadian *sí-nu-ri* or *Sin-lurmâ*, a term referring to occasional blindness.[49] This presumption finds even further support in two Akkadian instructions on how to cure a patient from this very affliction, which use elements similar to the ones in talmudic therapies for "*shavriri* of the night" and "*shavriri* of the day." These elements concern the cord and the children (in recipe no. 4), the mention of a door and the placing of something into the patient's hand, which they should eat (in recipe no. 5). The condition and the therapies, however, underwent considerable change during the several hundred years that separate them.[50]

The case of the Akkadian similarities certainly testifies to the local origins of these recipes, as Marten Stol pointed out. But they do not justify the assumption that the whole treatise is based on an Akkadian *Vorlage,* as has been proposed by Markham Geller.[51] Evidence of a similar mix of Akkadian and Greek terminology and concepts is also present in the Mandaic *Book of the Zodiac* (*Sfar Malwašia*) and is likely the natural

[48] See the appendix for the recipe corresponding to the number.

[49] See Marten Stol, "Blindness and Night-Blindness in Akkadian," *JNES* 45, no. 4 (October 1986).

[50] E.g., the condition is specified as night blindness and day blindness, a distinction that cannot be found regarding this condition in cuneiform treatises. See Stol, "Blindness and Night-Blindness in Akkadian," 297. Moreover, the talmudic therapies do not smear anything in or on the eye, while both Akkadian instructions include this measure.

[51] See Stol, "Blindness and Night-Blindness in Akkadian," 298, and Geller, "Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud."

consequence of a thorough investigation into a natural topic by people living in a diverse culture with a mixed heritage.[52] Generally, most of the loanwords or cognates in the Talmud are of Akkadian origin: an estimated 4.6–4.7 versus 3.6–3.7 percent of Iranian origin and 2.0–2.1 percent of Greek origin.[53] An exceptionally high percentage of Akkadian loans and calques is present in the vocabulary for local plants and trees, which form the bulk of the vocabulary used in the therapies.[54] Since the same names for plants and trees are used throughout the Talmud and not just in the recipes, they appear to have been part of the standard language and do not necessarily point to an Akkadian treatise as the basis of the talmudic one. Similarly, units of measurement and household items are, in the treatise as elsewhere in the Talmud, often Persian calques.[55] The recipes also make use of local goods, such as the "drinking cup from Mahoza" (no. 14), an oft-mentioned place in the context of rabbinic activity, or the typically Babylonian sauce *kamka*, made of vinegar or sour milk, which also finds its use (no. 17).[56] Rather than the translation or mere adaptation of an older treatise, the recipes appear to be local and recent but, like the rest of the texts assembled in the Talmud, broadly informed.

Not only ingredients and measuring vessels are culturally marked. The methods to prepare ingredients are bound to local customs as well. This is evident where ingredients and foodstuffs overlap and are thus intertwined with local food-preparation customs. Less evident are cases in which practical knowledge is transferred from the household to

[52] See Mladen Popović, *Reading the Human Body: Physiognomics and Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic-Early Roman Period Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 74n23 and 108n205.

[53] See Theodore Kwasman, "Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic: Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic: Some Preliminary Observations," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Markham J. Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 336.

[54] See Kwasman, "Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic," 340–341. Interestingly, names for local fauna reveal an exceptionally high number of Greek calques (Kwasman, "Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic," 359–361).

[55] See Kwasman, "Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic," 341. To give some examples, *šustag* (hankerchief) is mentioned in recipe no. 21; *angustbān* (signet-ring, seal) in no. 31; *bārag* (horse) in nos. 30 and 31; and *ātrung* (citron, probably Middle Iranian) in no. 38. Recurring measures are the *anpaq*, the *kabīz*, and the *griv*.

[56] Mahoza is not the name of one city but of the five or, according to another source, seven cities forming the conurbation of Ctesiphon; see St. John Simpson, "The Land behind Ctesiphon: The Archaeology of Babylonia during the Period of the Babylonian Talmud," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Markham J. Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 7. For *kamka*, see *DJBA*, see "כמכא." Other mentions include b. Avod. Zar. 35b, b. Pesah. 76a, and b. Hul. 112a.

medicine, or vice versa. A "rim of dough," for example, is used to keep a mixture of garlic, salt, and oil in place on the aching molar tooth (no. 9). Such a "ring of dough" also effectively separates two vessels when the impure vessel needs to be scalded in the pure one.[57] Thus, it appears that while the author of the talmudic *euporiston* was obviously aware of other medical treatises, he or, perhaps, she was genuinely interested in composing a local one.[58]

Several authors of euporistic treatises explicitly state the purpose of their work. Some want to provide travelers with a literary first-aid kit (e.g., Pseudo-Pliny, Marcellus), while others want to make medical knowledge accessible to a broader public (Priscianus, Marcellus, Pseudo-Apuleius). The treatises of professional doctors, however, aimed not at informing the public but at providing friends – often patrons – sons, or students with basic medical knowledge (Oribasius, Serenus Sammonicus, Scribonius Largus). Since the recipes of the talmudic treatise do not express a special concern for injuries and diseases that are more likely to occur en route than at home, it does not seem to fall into that category.[59] Rather, the concise nature of the treatise, the use of colloquial language, and the absence of any surgical measures associate the treatise with those aiming to provide laypeople with access to therapies, thus granting them independence from doctors, a concern expressed in Priscianus, Marcellus, Pseudo-Apuleius, and Pseudo-Pliny.[60]

[57] b. Avod. Zar. 76a–b.

[58] There is one gynecological treatise attributed to an otherwise unknown Metrodora, probably dating to the sixth century. See Laurence M. Totelin, "The Third Way: Galen, Pseudo-Galen, Metrodora, Cleopatra and the Gynecological Pharmacology of Byzantium," in Lehmhaus and Martelli, *Collecting Recipes*, 104 and 108. It seems, however, that attributions of treatises to women also occurred because this seemed more appropriate, as in the case of sex manuals. See Holt N. Parker, "Love's Body Anatomized: The Ancient Erotic Handbooks and the Rhetoric of Sexuality," in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. Amy Richlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 96. (Parker was imprisoned in 2016 for the possession of child pornography.) Somewhat more reliably, epitaphs and statues honor female doctors, who apparently worked side by side with their husbands or fathers, and several male authors give credit to women (Parker, "Love's Body Anatomized," 122–124).

[59] The recipes given in the *Medicina Plinii*, for example, address all kinds of sore feet, which are likely to occur when people walk a lot. Some address injuries that may result from a considerable amount of horseback riding. Interestingly, gynecological diseases are omitted, as if the author assumed that women would not travel, while some recipes for small children (e.g., teething) are present; see Kai Broderson, ed. and trans., *Plinius' kleine Reiseapotheke* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2015), 11–13.

[60] Absence of technical instruments is a distinct feature of euporistic treatises. See Meissner, *Die technische Fachliteratur der Antike*, 270.

The intent to instruct sons and students, however, may have been the reason why the composers of the Talmud included the treatise because the recipes, in their own way, enable people to care and judge for themselves. This intent appears to converge with the overall purpose of the Talmud, which generally discusses topics from different angles and leaves the final reasoning to the reader. The inclusion of medical recipes further supports the aspiration to polymathy and strengthens the link between the Talmud and the symposiac works mentioned in Chapter 1. These make equal use of medical knowledge, which they place into the mouth of doctors as well as laypeople.[61] Indeed, one dialectic ("symposiac") intervention may point at how the composers saw the nature of the recipes and the people who use them:

> … and if not, open a jug of wine in [the patient's] name.
>
> Rav Aha son of Rava said to Rav Ashi: "If someone had a jug of wine he would not come before the master. Rather, he should become accustomed to eating morning bread, since it is beneficial for the entire body." (b. Git. 69b)

The composers let Rav Aha express concern about the costly nature of the therapy. People, it is implied, who prefer the free medical advice of a rabbinic sage over a physician's costly counsel obviously do not have money to buy a jug of wine. The composers thus subtly criticize the fact that the treatise does not live up to its promise of offering "simple and procurable recipes", since some therapies are simply not affordable to everyone. By way of correction, the composers subsequently refer to a baraita (now found in tractate Bava Metzi'a 107b) that lists a total of fourteen advantages of "morning bread" and suggest the patient should stick to this cheaper option.

CROSSING GENRES AND EXPANDING THE CLASSIFIABLE

Medical recipes were a recurring part of erudite literature in late antiquity. They had made their way from a specialized expert community into general knowledge. Educated people were expected to know about diseases and cures. There were several reasons for this change in approaching medicine or, rather, displaying knowledge. One was certainly the imperial and private sponsorship of "Greek heritage" by the Ptolemies, which turned several previously nonperformative arts, among them

[61] See Rebecca Flemming, "The Physicians at the Feast: The Place of Medical Knowledge at Athenaeus' Dinner-Table," in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, ed. David Braund and John Wilkins (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 478–479.

rhetoric and medicine, into public spectacles.[62] Similar to the orators of the Second Sophistic, for example, Galen staged public anatomical performances.[63] Another reason is that the recipe, in its concise form, lent itself to the style of literary composition in the imperial period and late antiquity. Like the saying or maxim, it is a ready-made piece of information, an excerpt par excellence, so to speak, that can be used in the beginning of a story or inquiry into a topic, as part of a dialogue, or as part of the conclusion. While recipes can be observed to have been used as sayings and like maxims, they engaged in other literary and logical ways with their new literary contexts and seemingly inspired the reformulation of literary givens in the form of recipes.

The many alternative therapies sometimes stated for a single condition show that medicine was not perceived as static. Rather, attention was paid to the patient's age, temperament, temperature, bodily condition, and even character; some physicians also cared about the sex of the patient, the location, the season, or the lifestyle.[64] The choice of therapies enabled people to pick the appropriate one. Moreover, as Columella (first century) explains in his agricultural treatise *De re rustica*, region and season may also be a problem and impede the procurement of a certain ingredient.[65] Case stories that sometimes follow a recipe in the Talmud to prove its efficacy are in line with this ideological and sometimes inevitable alteration and adaptation of ingredients: They never make use of the exact same therapy given in the recipe. A certain Ravin from Naresh, for example, is said to have cured Rav Ashi's daughter of intestinal pain with a potion made with only half the number of peppers stated in the preceding recipe (b. Git. 69b; recipe no. 20).[66]

[62] See Francesca Schironi, "Enlightened Kings or Pragmatic Rulers? Ptolemaic Patronage of Scholarship and Sciences in Context," in *Intellectual and Empire in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Philip R. Bosman (London: Routledge, 2019).

[63] See Daryn Lehoux, *What Did the Romans Know? An Inquiry into Science and Worldmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 6–7; on the spectacles, see specifically Katharina Luchner, *Philiatroi: Studien zum Thema der Krankheit in der griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit*, Hypomnemata 156 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 77–87.

[64] See Galen, *Glaucoma* 1.1, and the Hippocratic Corpus in *Epidemics* 1.3.10. On lifestyle, see Celsus, *De medicina*, proem. 52–53.

[65] *Rust.* 7.7–8.

[66] Other examples include the following: in b. Yoma 84a, the mother of Abba ben Martha (or Abba Minyumi) uses gold/copper instead of straw; in b. Shabb. 109b, the mother of Rav Aḥadvoi bar Ami reduces the amount of ingredients (she takes only a fifth) and additionally places a brick in the oven; and in b. Shabb. 110b, an Arab (*tayyʾa*) enhances the recipe with sleep and warmth.

Thus, we see that recipe medicine was not static but, rather, considerate of the individual patient on a case-by-case basis. This type of medicine corresponds on a logical level to the form of legislation adopted in rabbinic literature, which is also case based. Casuistic law, as opposed to principle-based law, attends to the need of the individual and, therefore, has its own advantages.[67] The recipes thereby match the premises governing the Talmud on a logical level in the way they have to be adapted and decided but also on a compositional and quite physical level as distinct units that can be used as building blocks in the production and deduction of arguments, like sayings or maxims. Similar hermeneutics were therefore applied to the recipes by authors of the texts compiled in the Talmud, but also by the Talmud's composers.

Therapies, then, were individually adapted. But what about conditions? A distinct linguistic marker seems to indicate that conditions were indeed sometimes altered to meet individual circumstances. The way in which recipes distinguished between general conditions and more specific, individual ones can be illustrated based on the Pseudo-Galenic *Euporista II* (approximately fourth century) and the gynecological treatise *Metrodora* (approximately sixth century). Both treatises generally introduce their recipes with "for" (*pros*, πρός).[68] Thus, the recipe "For the damaged virgin" in *Metrodora* similarly starts with said *pros* – the condition refers to virgins in general. In contrast, a recipe in *Euporista II* concerns not "damaged" virgins in general but virgins damaged by rape, and it reads: "The woman who was raped that she may appear like a virgin [again]." The formulation of the condition has been changed from "For XY" to the more individualizing "The woman who ...."[69]

A similar linguistic turn is perceivable in the Talmud regarding very specific afflictions but also conditions that result from someone's behavior. This differentiation between general and individual afflictions allows for an expansion of the catalogue of treatable conditions. Since the purpose of adapting the condition is to individualize, the introduction is sometimes further adapted. Thus, we find "The one who ..." used for

[67] This is the explanation of Javolenus, a Roman senator and jurist of the first century, who cautioned against the dangers of rigid principles; see Leib Moscovitz, *Talmudic Reasoning: From Casuistics to Conceptualization*, *TSAJ* 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 92. Moscovitz himself remains skeptical about this explanation, since "many tannaitic laws were apparently not motivated by functionalist considerations" (92).

[68] On the dating of these works, see Totelin, "Third Way," 108 and 104, respectively.

[69] Ὡς γυνὴ ἡ ..., see Totelin, "Third Way," 111–112, for these recipes.

male patients or people in general suffering from very specific conditions but also "The woman who …" or "The nursling who …."[70]

A list of seven such recipes addressing the nursling appears in tractate Shabbat 134a, while another list of seven recipes, five addressing conditions affecting men or men and women, and two recipes concerning only women, are found in tractate Shabbat 109b–110a. As I have argued elsewhere, the list of recipes that address the newborn seems to have a non-human empirical basis. Most likely, the recipes were developed not for newborn babies but for young goats.[71] It may be asked, therefore, if recipes with individualizing conditions such as "The one who …" are situated in a somewhat liminal space between tested medicine and projected, probable, and hermeneutic medicine. This notion can be illustrated with an analysis of the other list of seven recipes in Shabbat 109b–110a. The number seven already betrays the artificial and artful nature of the list and provides the recipes with a certain cosmic integrity.[72]

The seven recipes in this passage can be summarized as concerning, roughly speaking, "problems with snakes":

1. The one who swallows a snake.
2. The one who was bitten by a snake.
3. The one who has a snake wrapped around him.
4. The one of whom a snake wants to take possession/is jealous.
5. The one after whom a snake is running.
6. The woman who has seen a snake and does not know whether [the snake] has set its mind on her or not [in a sexual manner].
7. The woman who is mounted by a snake.

Only one of these conditions is paralleled in other recipe books, namely, "The one who was bitten by a snake." And indeed, apart from the different introductory formula for the condition – "The one who …" instead of "For …" – the structure of this particular recipe is identical with the structure of verb recipes. I therefore included it in the reassembled Aramaic treatise, from which the composers most likely took it (no. 44). The composers must have adapted the introductory formula for the recipe to match this snake list.

[70] מאן האי, איתתא האי, and ינוקא האי, respectively.

[71] See Monika Amsler, "Babies or Goats?! A Critical Evaluation of b. Shabb. 134b and the Question of the Relationship between Veterinary and Human Medicine in the Talmud," in *Female Bodies and Female Practitioners in the Medical Traditions of the Late Antique Mediterranean World*, ed. Lennart Lehmhaus (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

[72] See Lehoux, *What Did the Romans Know?*, 176–199, esp. 192, on numerology as a theory of broad applicability in late antiquity, and Catherine Michael Chin, "Cosmos," in *Late Ancient Knowing: Explorations in Intellectual History*, ed. Catherine Michael Chin and Moulie Vidas (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), on cosmic symmetry.

The recipe against snake bite, and the first on the list, the one against swallowing a snake, are both appended with a story that seemingly illustrates their actual implementation and effect. While the recipe for the snake bite needs to be enhanced with a clause to match the story (2b, below), the stories that follow on the recipe against the effects of swallowing a snake (1a–c, below) implement the recipe as it has been stated, a rare and singular case, as proof stories normally deviate in some details from the prescribed therapy (see discussion above). Most likely, recipe 1a was derived from the stories (1b–c, below) by the composers of the Talmud in order to create a list of seven, rather than that the recipe was proven by the stories.

"Problems with Snakes" I

1a. The one who swallows a snake should be fed with dodder in salt and then run three [Roman] miles (מילי).
1b. Rav Shimi bar Ashi[73] saw a certain man who swallowed a snake. He appeared to him as a horseman (פרשא). He gave him dodder in salt to eat and made him run three miles in front of him. And [the snake] came out of him, piece by piece.
1c. There are also those who say that Rav Shimi bar Ashi swallowed a snake. Elijah came and appeared to him as a horseman. He gave him dodder in salt to eat and made him run three miles in front of him. And [the snake] came out of him piece by piece.[74]

2a. The one who was bitten by a snake: Bring (*leiti*) the embryo of a white female donkey, tear it, and place it [on the bite].
2b. However, these words apply only if [the jennet] was not found to be *terefah*.
2c. There was a Bar Qasha in Pumbedita who was bitten by a snake. There were thirteen white donkeys in Pumbedita, and they tore them all open, but each one was found to be *terefah*. There was [a donkey] left in the vicinity of Pumbedita. But by the time they went there [to fetch it], a lion had eaten it.
2d. Abaye said: "Maybe the snake of the rabbis bit him, as it is written: 'The one who tears down a fence shall be bitten by a snake'" (Eccl. 10:8) (b. Shabb. 109b–110a).

The straightforward transformation of the content of stories 1b and 1c into a recipe (1a) clearly reflects the work of the composers: The case of someone swallowing a snake is unheard of in medical treatises and is at best a singular and unlucky case, therefore suitable to be introduced by the formula "The one who." After having culled their excerpts relating to snakes for this commentary, the composers had several recipes in front of

[73] Ms. JTS Rab. 501:1–6 has "Rav Hiyya bar Ashi."
[74] Elijah is reported in 1 Kgs. 18:46 to have fled King Ahab from the Carmel all the way to Jezreel.

them and two stories mentioning a cure. It was considerably easy to transform the information they provided into a recipe, thereby making it a list of seven recipes.[75] The recipe against a snake bite (2a) could be made to match the story (2c) with the addition of the condition "if [the jennet] was not found to be *terefah*."

Similarly unparalleled in other treatises is the third condition on the list, a snake wrapped around a person, or conditions 4–7, which appear to envision a personified snake with intention and will, pursuing men and raping women. Rather than reflective of a medical school or empirical expertise, the recipes are apparently the result of an exegetical tradition that is accustomed to considering even the most unlikely and even paradoxical cases. In this vein, for example, we find in the Talmud the discussion of a case in which someone intends to thrust a knife into a wall and, in so doing, accidentally slaughters an animal in the proper way.[76] This is intellectual exercise par excellence, stretching the bounds of possibility toward the plausibly paradoxical.

Recipes 4–7 become indeed plausible if their ideas about snakes are examined as being constructed like the characters of Solomon, Ashmedai, and Benaiah (Chapter 4), that is, based on an inquiry into the literary biography of snakes. Thus, if we turn to the biblical book of Genesis, we find the exegetical reasons for some of the conditions and the basis for their plausibility. According to Genesis 3:1–6, a snake seduced Eve into eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. This snake had apparently been able to walk, since God cursed it with crawling on its belly after the incident (Gen. 3:14). From this information it can be inferred that snakes have intention and will, as well as "cursed feet." They target humans in order to seduce them into doing something against God's command. Rabbinic literature repeatedly makes the case that the snake seduced Eve in a sexual manner, since the verb used in Genesis 3:13, when Eve explains to God what the snake did to her, allows such an interpretation.[77] Accordingly, rabbinic hermeneutics posit that the snake was punished because it wanted to mate with Eve; it became lascivious when it saw Adam and Eve copulate and then seduced Eve while Adam was sleeping; and, finally, it left a foul smell in Eve after copulating with her.[78]

[75] This aspiration is similarly observable in the list of seven recipes concerning the newborn in b. Shabb. 134a; see Amsler, "Babies or Goats?!"

[76] b. Hul. 31a; cf. also the cases of accidental intercourse in b. Yevam. 54a.

[77] The root is נשא.

[78] The snake wanted to mate with Eve (t. Sotah 4:17–18); the snake seduced Eve while Adam was sleeping (Gen. Rab. 18:6–19:3); after copulating with her, the snake left a foul smell in Eve (b. Shabb. 146a // b. Yevam. 103b).

Given this information, it becomes more plausible that a snake would be jealous of a man and pursue him, most likely because of his wife. This brings us to the fourth recipe on the list:

"Problems with Snakes" II

The one of whom a snake is jealous: If there is a friend with him, he should ride on him for four cubits.
And if not, he should jump across a channel.
And if not, he should cross a river at night and place his bed on four jugs and sleep under the stars. He should bring four cats and tie them to the four legs of his bed.
He should then bring papyrus reed and throw it there so that the cats will hear [the snake] when it approaches and eat it. (b. Shabb. 110a)

The snake is depicted here as having a very good sense of smell: It pursues the man just like a hound pursues its prey. It is, therefore, enough that the chased man takes his feet off the ground, or jumps over or walks through water, to distract the reptile. This characterization appears to be a rather peculiar understanding of the snake's senses, comparable to Aelian's characterization of the serpent as having very good eyes and hearing. Yet Aelian did not derive this information from observation but from a story, and the same may be true for the talmudic recipe.[79] The idea that cats eat snakes, which is expressed in the third and last therapy of this recipe, is found in, maybe derived from, a talmudic story that claims that cats are immune to snake venom.[80]

Recipe 5 clearly focuses on the snake in Genesis as well. The condition requires a snake with legs who can "run" after a man: "The one after whom a snake is running: He should run on buckets." An alternative therapy clearly invokes God's curse, which made the snake lower than all the animals of the field, allowing man to trample on its head (Gen. 3:14). The spell turns the field into the courtroom of the biblical God, the judge of the earth: "And if not, say to him [the snake]: 'The host of the judge of the earth is the field!'"[81]

[79] Aelian (*De natura animalium* 6.63 [Scholfield, LCL]) tells the story of the friendship of a young man and a snake in which the snake saves its friend from brigands due to its extraordinary ability to hear and see. Aelian turns the qualities of this snake into a universal quality of all snakes: "Now it seems that the snake has the sharpest sight and the keenest hearing of all creatures."

[80] b. Pesah. 112b and b. Shabb. 128b.

[81] This alternative therapy is present only in Mss. Vatican 108 and JTS Rab. 501:1–6. But the formulation, especially the appeal to the judge, seems too much in agreement with other late antique spells to be a later addition.

The last two recipes obviously relate to the snake's sexual inclination toward women, derived from the primordial snake's seduction of Eve.

"Problems with Snakes," III

The woman who has seen a snake and does not know whether [the snake] has set its mind on her or not: She should remove her clothes and throw them in front of the snake. If [the snake] wraps itself around the clothes, it has set its mind on [the woman], and if not, it has not set its mind on her.
What is the solution?
Have intercourse in front of [the snake].
And there are those who say that this will only increase [the snake's] passion.[82]
Rather, she should take [pieces] from her hair and nails, throw them in front of [the snake], and say to it: "I am menstruating!"[83]

The woman who is mounted by a snake: Make her step on and sit on two jugs. Bring fatty meat and throw it on coals. Bring a basin with cress and spiced wine and place it there [underneath the woman] and stir. She should hold tongs made of iron in her hands so that she can catch the snake when it smells [the smell of the essence and comes out of her]. She should catch it and throw it into the fire and burn it.
And if not, it will mount her again. (b. Shabb. 110a)

The first of the above recipes again shows to what extent these texts are the result of a careful study of sources. Thus, people who are aware of the story now recorded in Genesis Rabbah know that intercourse in front of the snake will only make it more lascivious. That story, mentioned above, tells of Adam and Eve's intercourse in front of the snake, which ignited the whole problem. The second therapy basically agrees with Pliny's recipe for repelling snakes: burnt female hair (*Natural History* 28:20). The burnt hair is supported by the woman's cry that she has her period. Interestingly, unlike the demon Ashmedai, who was depicted as having no issues with entertaining sexual relationships with menstruating women (Chapter 4), the snake is thought to withdraw from a menstruating woman. The therapy in the second recipe suggests fumigation, as is also suggested for gonorrheal issues (no. 36, in appendix). It harkens back to the idea that snakes have a good sense of smell.

[82] On the sexualization of the term יצר, see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: "Yetzer Hara" and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 102–119.

[83] דשתנא אנא, an amalgam of Persian and Aramaic (see Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014], 39 and 169n43). The terminology appears also in b. Ta'an. 22a and b. Avod. Zar. 18a.

The idea that snakes would rape women is also repeated in other works. Plutarch and Aelian both report such incidents and testify to the fact that the rabbinic idea of snakes was not an isolated case.[84] Aelian located his report, perhaps tellingly, in the land "of the Judeans or Edomites."[85]

Aelian's compilation generally follows the Aristotelian tradition of writing down things "worthy of report, not because extraordinary, but because significant in the philosophical acquisition of knowledge."[86] Bestiaries have this in common with collections of wonders and miracles, so-called paradoxographies. With approximately eighty known authors of straightforward paradoxographies and many mixed formats, the genre seems to have constituted a "thriving literary field" from Hellenistic times onward.[87] Although primarily focusing on *thaumata*, wonders, these works were not intended to amaze people but, rather, to collect and systematize what the modern mind would call "noteworthy natural phenomena." Some authors, such as Phlegon of Tralles (second century), also screened the material for medical knowledge or unheard-of afflictions.[88] Klaus Geus and Colin Guthrie King provide a good example of this condensation of medical knowledge derived from paradoxographical collections that can be traced from Aristotle's *History of Animals* onward:

> The marten is about the size of a small Maltesian lap-dog, white and hairy on the underside, and in character nasty like the weasel; even if it becomes domesticated it will still ruin hives, for it loves honey. It is a bird-eater, like the cat. Its sexual organ is bony, as has been said, and the penis of the marten seems to be a remedy for strangury; they administer it in pulverized form. (9.6, 612b10–17)

Compare the following paradoxographical extracts:

> It is said that the sexual organ of the marten is not similar to the nature of other animals, but that it is rigid throughout like bone, no matter what state it happens to be in. They say that it is one of the best remedies for strangury, and that it is administered in pulverized form. (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Mir. ausc.* 12)

[84] Plutarch, *De sollerita animalium* 972E, and Aelian, *De natura animalium* 6.17.
[85] Aelian, *De natura animalium* 6.17.
[86] Roger French, *Ancient Natural History: Histories of Nature*, Sciences of Antiquity (London: Routledge, 1994), 14.
[87] See Klaus Geus and Colin Guthrie King, "Paradoxography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, ed. Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 438.
[88] See Julia Doroszewska, "Beyond the Limits of the Human Body: Phlegon of Tralles' Medical Curiosities," in *Medicine and Paradoxography in the Ancient World*, ed. George Kazantzidis, Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes 81 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019).

The sexual organ of the marten [is said] to be bony; it seems to be a remedy for strangury. (Antigonus, *Historiae mirabiles* 108)[89]

The last statement could easily be turned into a systematic recipe (e.g., For strangury: Take the sexual organ of the marten). Philip Thibodeau has observed how authors of agricultural treatises took material from paradoxographies and turned them into practical recipes. As an example, he discusses *bougonia*, the idea that bees could be born from the carcass of an ox. The paradoxographer Antigonus of Carystus (third century BCE) noted that a decomposing ox buried in sand had produced bees in Egypt. This information was turned into a recipe by Democritus in his *Geoponica*: "If any beekeeper loses his hive, he should build a small, airtight wooden house and place a freshly slaughtered ox inside, surrounding it with fragrant herbs; after a few days the flesh will dissolve and turn into bee larvae, then into bees" (15.2.21–36).[90] Another transformation from paradoxography (also Aelian's) into rabbinic stories and a recipe now collected in the *Syriac Book of Medicines* was discussed in Chapter 1.

The list with seven therapies for conditions caused by snakes is thus best understood in relation to both the rabbinic interpretation of the properties of the biblical snake and paradoxography. The way in which information about the characteristics of snakes was obtained is again reflective of "inquiry into literary character/history" described in the previous chapter. This inquiry created the picture of the snake as an animal with human desires and astonishing sensory capacities. The stories, which, in their present position in the talmudic text, prove the efficacy of the preceding recipe, are in some cases the cause, rather than the result, of these very recipes. In the Talmud and elsewhere in ancient literature, recipes were turned into stories, and stories were turned into recipes.[91]

"The one who …" recipes open a window into how established catalogues of conditions and other "things" were extended and supplemented. In the case of the recipes, the trajectory of this activity is not just immediate but also prognostic: What happened could happen again. What happened to Adam and, especially, Eve, could happen again. This medicine is, therefore, anticipatory and precautionary. Then again, it is also very much text oriented and dependent on basic rhetorical and hermeneutical methods.

[89] Geus and King, "Paradoxography," 435.
[90] Translated by Philip Thibodeau, "Ancient Agronomy as a Literature of Best Practice," in Keyser and Scarborough, *Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, 476.
[91] See Thibodeau, "Ancient Agronomy," 476.

CONCLUSION

The recipes collected in the appendix to this chapter are spread throughout the Talmud. They were used by the composers in the most suitable places according to keywords and were placed into the mouths of rabbis or cited anonymously. Interestingly, each recipe is only used once in talmudic commentaries in contrast to many dicta, some of which have been used multiple times. This is again indicative of a highly organized data-management system in which already-used excerpts were tagged accordingly. This feature connects with David Weiss Halivni's observation that sayings are usually only attributed to "the master" (Aram. *mar*) if they had already been used.[92] Similarly, Athenaeus kept track of the passages he had previously used, either calling attention to the versatility of a particular text's content or referring in an anaphoric manner to other texts by the same author he had already used.[93] Julius Africanus was also perfectly capable of referring back to already-used material with terms such as "elsewhere" or "as shown previously."[94] Unlike maxims or sayings, which may make different points in different contexts, a recipe makes one and the same point in any given context. It is therefore unnecessary to repeat it. Moreover, it is unlikely that the recipes were subject to school activity, which may be responsible for the reuse of the same maxim in several different contexts. Rather, the composers of the Talmud were the ones to use the treatise associatively in the form of excerpts.

The stereotypical character of many medical recipes in b. Git. 68b–70a is conspicuous, and the passage has long been identified as an independent source. This chapter has investigated the passage in accordance with the suggestions made in the previous chapters and found that the composers of the Babylonian Talmud worked with excerpts from distinct sources, which they associatively mixed and matched. Thus, while I acknowledge that the bulk of the passage is an independent source, a medical treatise, I pointed to the presence of excerpts external to it with which the composers complemented the longer excerpt, either associatively and

[92] See David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 46–47.

[93] Christian Jacob, "Athenaeus the Librarian," in Braund and Wilkins, *Athenaeus and His World*, 107 and reference at 552n199.

[94] E.g., fragments F12.2 line 119; F12.11 line 38; F12.12 lines 48–49; F12.14 line 24; see Martin Wallraff, Carlo Scardino, Laura Mecella, and Christophe Guignard, eds., *Iulius Africanus Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, trans. William Adler, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte Neue Folge 18 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), xxii and xxiin73.

supplementarily or to maintain the overall impression of an ongoing conversation. To disentangle the different excerpts, I focused on the literary structure of the most frequent recipe type in the Gittin passage, which I called the verb recipe, because the part with the therapy is introduced by a verb (usually "bring"). Based on comparable late antique medical treatises of simple remedies (*euporista*), some of which even use the same literary structure ("For X bring Y … and if not bring Z"), the verb recipes were shown to belong to the same Jewish Babylonian Aramaic *euporiston*. The collected recipes match the array of conditions mentioned in other treatises fairly well.

The recipes that are somewhat at the fringe of this treatise with structures that are also present in rabbinic dicta, those with individualizing conditions, further reflect the literary education discussed in the previous chapters. Relying heavily on prior sources, they engage with what happened and how it should be cured. By so doing, the recipes simultaneously explore what could happen based on what has happened once in their sources. The sages, like others, used ancient texts, in their case especially the Bible, to predict the medical future. Taking medical recipes as a template, these prognostic conditions enrich and enlarge the possibilities of the curable by inquiring into texts. Again, we see the background of progymnasmatic training, which taught students to inquire into literary and other witnesses.

Consolidation and Further Research Paths

This book has argued that the Babylonian Talmud was conceptualized as a symposiac miscellany with the basic structure of a commentary on the Mishnah. Thereby, the Talmud's production process is comparable to the one implemented by composers of similar imperial period and late-antique works. These processes involved extensive data collection in the form of excerpts; management methods known from agricultural contexts, such as assigning keywords (numbers, in the agricultural context) and corresponding storage; arranging and rearranging tablets, ostraca, or papyrus scraps to find a decent structure; language editing and inserting comments to make breaks between the excerpts smooth and to maintain the symposiac (dialectic) style; drafting; and, finally, preparing a fair copy. To collate their archive around lemmas from the Mishnah, the composers (most likely a head composer and some helpers) worked from one lemma to the next. They selected keywords for a lemma and chose the excerpts to craft that particular commentary accordingly. To understand the production of the Talmud, these commentaries would then be the decisive units, not arguments (*sugyot*). Moreover, the project would (easily) have been executed in a man's lifetime.

The principle of working with preexisting units such as excerpts (or, in the agricultural context, receipts) is mirrored in the pedagogy of the *progymnasmata*, treatises that promoted and discussed the methodological benefit of certain preliminary rhetorical exercises. The exercises suggest and encourage working with preexisting stories rather than composing new ones. Template stories are combined with others – or, alternatively, amplified with dialogue, enhanced with sayings, maxims, recipes, or jokes – or summarized into bits the size of a *chreia*. Once these methods

are recognized, the text critic can attempt to reverse the process and reassemble dissected sources or delineate possible templates.

Accordingly, a possible further research path would be to work backward to reassemble and recompile the texts that have been disseminated into excerpts. Indicators for such sources are foremost style and vocabulary, maybe content and attributions. A generic similarity to other late-antique works can assist in the processes of reassembling sources. These sources, like the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic medical treatise, can then be analyzed in their own right. The reassembling of such treatises may also show how these texts were structured prior to their dissection and whether and how they were manipulated by the composers. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 5, one might find integrated headings and notes that were present in the original version.

Several avenues of research also emerge regarding materiality. I have made several assumptions in this book about the materiality that preceded the talmudic text. I have advanced the idea that we should think in terms of tablets, ostraca, papyrus scraps, rotuli, and the like, rather than entire scroll-length compositions, when imagining written transmission. Although not as elegant in appearance, these writing surfaces were, according to the thesis presented here, carefully stored. Such storage, again, raises questions about the existence of libraries and archives. Private libraries in particular may have taken hybrid forms, having been used to display renowned works but also as repositories for one's own writings or the legacies of deceased relatives and friends. Libraries were popular not only in the Roman Empire at the time; the Sasanid dynasty likewise invested in libraries, with a notable institution in Ctesiphon.[1]

As in Roman libraries, there must have existed some form of bookkeeping, maybe written tables, that indexed the topics available in the library/archive and where they could be found.[2] Such tables would have helped students of the Mishnah to perform inquiries into certain topics in order to write specific compositions. Conversely, such inquiries may have resulted in updated or new tables. Recent work on the Eusebian and other late antique tables could be helpful in that regard.[3]

[1] Ibrahim V. Pourhadi, "Iran's Public and Private Libraries," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 25, no. 3 (July 1968): 220.

[2] E.g., George W. Houston, *Inside Roman Libraries: Book Collections and Their Management in Antiquity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 39–86.

[3] See, e.g., Matthew R. Crawford, *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*, *OECS* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Andrew M. Riggsby, *Mosaics of Knowledge: Representing Information in the Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 42–82; Jeremiah Coogan, "Transforming Textuality: Porphyry, Eusebius, and Late Ancient Tables," *SLA* 5, no. 1 (2021).

Reckoning with such technical aids would also do justice to what Adam H. Becker has observed, namely, that late antique learning saw a transition from reliance on a teacher to a reliance on infrastructure, that is, the place of learning.[4] This transformation was a result of the learning culture that became feasible with the advent of libraries, public as well as private, in the imperial period. Private libraries often attracted other literati and fostered self-supporting circles "in the sense that the activities of reading, writing, sharing, vetting, comparing, researching, all took place within the circle, using shared resources (meaning lectors and books, but also the *amici* themselves, a resident intellectual or two, and suitable venues such as a large house with porticoes to walk in and dinners over which to talk)."[5] These libraries offered a platform for authors to present their work, that is, read and thereby perform it in public.[6] The synagogue, which emerged somewhat contemporaneously with the libraries and spread throughout the Roman Empire, served, among other things, the same purpose, of making adult education publicly accessible and, accordingly, serving as a platform to exhibit one's learning.[7] This is not least exemplified in the fact that "most of the physical evidence for communal dining by Diaspora Jews (e.g. synagogal triclinia) dates from the third century or later."[8] More generally, it can also be observed that once people were in possession of an excerpt collection or a library with a corresponding inventory, even if it consisted of their own writings, they could compose new works quite rapidly by simply slightly diversifying the topic or genre. Thus, Philo of

[4] Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 167.

[5] William A. Johnson, "Libraries and Reading Culture in the High Empire," in *Ancient Libraries*, ed. Jason König, Katerina Oikonomopoulou, and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 363.

[6] See Fabio Tutrone, "Libraries and Intellectual Debate in the Late Republic," in König et al., *Ancient Libraries*; Johnson, "Libraries and Reading Culture." Johnson points to the importance of display in public libraries, whereas the actual intellectual engagement with books took place in private and exclusive environments.

[7] Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 292. Levine references Jerome's *Letter* 36.1, in which he writes that he encountered a *Hebraeus* "with many books (*volumina*) that had borrowed from the synagogue."

[8] Margaret H. Williams, "Alexander, *bubularus de macello*–Humble Sausage Seller or Europe's First Identifiable Purveyor of Kosher Meat," in *Jews in a Graeco Roman Environment*, *WUNT* 312 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 165. For the *triclinium* as a locus of (Palestinian) halakic discussion, see Gil Klein, "Torah in Triclinia: The Rabbinic Banquet and the Significance of Architecture," *JQR* 102, no. 3 (Summer 2012).

Alexandria's *On Animals* consists almost entirely of stories and facts about animal behavior that are also found in his other works. Philo similarly must have arranged his notes according to keywords and later associated them with different thematic threads. Indeed, this is one way of explaining the recurrent imperial period and late antique self-pastiche.

Daniel Picus has recently pointed out that knowledge in the Talmud is generally depicted as the product of reading and writing.[9] To this end, it would be worth continuing to explore the significance and status of drafts versus fine copies and to ask whether the concept of Oral Torah may have covered such personal notes and drafts, and maybe even a fine copy on a scroll that differed in size and quality from a Torah scroll. A similar idea of a "dislocated" orality has already been observed in Chapter 2, where I briefly mentioned Shifra Sznol's research on the translation of the *parashah*, the Torah portion read in the synagogue on Sabbath. The translators were not allowed even to look at the biblical text while translating but, rather, prepared themselves with written translations, commentaries, and, mostly, glossaries for their task.[10] The inferior status attributed to tablets, ostraca, and nonstandard scrolls would also explain why no such evidence has been found, since they were left to decay after the composition was completed. This research path is ultimately also entwined with notions of aesthetics and the visual perception of what is considered established and authoritative knowledge as opposed to what is considered "preliminary notes" or "knowledge in the making."[11] What I have in mind is, however, not an intermediary and passing step within oral transmission.[12] Rather, I am suggesting that a value system was in play, a hierarchy, along which texts were classified based on material, size, and/or stage of refinement. In other words, texts that were not written with the same care as the Torah, or that were not written on a scroll that approximated the quality or size of a Torah scroll, were not considered Written but Oral Torah.

I have pointed out that students were generally trained to modify existing stories rather than to invent stories of their own. From the ways a story was modified, as has long been noted, one can detect the personal

[9] See Daniel Picus, "Better Left Unread: Rabbinic Interpretations of Prophetic Scrolls," in *Knowledge Construction in Late Antiquity*, ed. Monika Amsler, Trends in Classics 142 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2023).

[10] See Shifra Sznol, "Text and Glossary: Between Written Text and Oral Tradition," in *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis*, ed. Timothy M. Law and Alison Salvesen (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 223–227.

[11] On theories of vision, see Rachel Rafael Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 18–40.

[12] Thus, for example, Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 124–125.

and cultural taxonomies that shaped the author's choices. Moving beyond "cultural appropriation," however, active scholarly search for templates might reveal patterns of availability and translation efforts. An interesting case would be a comparison with fable collections such as the ones by Phaedrus or Babrius. As noted in Chapter 4, Henry Fischel has long since suggested that some rabbinic stories might be modeled after fables.[13] A story in tractate Bava Qamma 60b, for example, employs an Aesopian parable.[14] The literary context in which the parable is embedded is Aramaic, whereas the parable itself is in Hebrew. The parable was apparently available to the Aramaic author in a Hebrew translation. Such instances lead to thinking about the availability of sources, organized and occasional translation work, archives, and libraries, and ultimately also to considering Sasanid infrastructure and education more broadly.

Indeed, we know very little about how and why people learned in Sasanid Mesopotamia, where Aramaic and Persian were crucial languages if one aspired to social relevance – and social and economic factors have always been attached to education to some degree.[15] Sasanid Mesopotamia, in spite of its learned heritage, is often depicted as an illiterate place, since Pahlavi script was developed considerably later than Aramaic script and relies on the latter.[16] Yet if the focus is shifted away from Persian language, we find an explicit accent on writing, book production, and text adornment among the Manicheans.[17] Less pronounced

[13] Henry A. Fischel, "Story and History: Observations on Greco-Roman Rhetoric and Pharisaism," in *American Oriental Society, Middle West Branch, Semi-Centennial Volume: A Collection of Original Essays*, ed. Denis Sinor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 65–66.

[14] Babrius, Fable 22; Phaedrus, Fable 2.2, see Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 17–18. This particular fable does not involve animals.

[15] The degree to which education was socially relevant seems to have increased after Alexander the Great died unexpectedly and left his successors in a physical and intellectual fight over his heritage. See Francesca Schironi, "Enlightened Kings or Pragmatic Rulers? Ptolemaic Patronage of Scholarship and Sciences in Context," in *Intellectual and Empire in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Philip R. Bosman (London: Routledge, 2019); Helmut Krasser, "Universalisierung und Identitätskonstruktion: Formen und Funktionen der Wissenskodifikation im kaiserzeitlichen Rom," in *Erinnerung, Gedächtnis, Wissen: Studien zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Gedächtnisforschung*, ed. Günter Oesterle, Formen der Erinnerung 26 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

[16] Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Iran VI. Iranian Languages and Scripts (3) Writing Systems," *EIr* 13:366–370.

[17] See Iris Colditz, "'… werdet mit den Schriften vertraut': Schriftgelehrtheit, Mehrsprachigkeit und Bildungsvermittlung in manichäischen Gemeinden," in *Iran und Turfan: Beiträge Berliner Wissenschaftler, Werner Sundermann zum 60; Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. Christiane Reck and Peter Zieme, Iranica 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995).

but similarly productive were the Mandeans, who wrote in "an eastern Aramaic dialect (the closest to the Babylonian Talmud)."[18] Indeed, the rhetorical training that shines through in the Talmud is also observable in other texts that are close to it in location and time and which omit details as to the educational background of their authors.[19] These include Syriac monastic as well as Coptic texts or texts emerging in the Arabian Peninsula and Transoxania.[20] Although no nearby academy is attested, extensive works survive from Dadīšō and Isaac of Nineveh, two East Syrian Christians of remote Qatar.[21] It seems that what Becker observed regarding East-Syrian schools was also true for the schools throughout Aramaic-speaking Mesopotamia, namely, that "some of the East-Syrian schools, even the smaller, less attested village schools, developed into centers for a learning more sophisticated than the mere acquisition of literacy, elementary church doctrine, and a foundational knowledge of liturgy. Centers of learning were often more fluid than not, evolving into institutions simultaneously offering both elementary and higher learning."[22]

The little evidence we have for a Jewish presence in rhetorical schools comes from a letter by the rhetor Libanius. The letter concerns a student, presumably the son of the Jewish patriarch Rabban Gamaliel V,

The same emphasis on writing and reading can also be observed in private letters from what appears to be a Manichean community in the village of Kellis in Egypt. See Mattias Brand, *Beyond Light and Darkness: Religion and the Everyday Life of Manichaeans*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies Series 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

[18] Birkha H. S. Nasoraia, "The Mandeans: Writings, Ritual, and Art," in *The Gnostic World*, ed. Garry W. Tromp in collaboration with Gunner B. Mikkelsen and Jay Johnston, Routledge World Series (London: Routledge, 2019).

[19] On rhetorical structures in the Talmud, see Richard Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 106–130.

[20] For progymnasmatic features in monastic texts, see Lillian I. Larsen, "Early Monasticism and the Rhetorical Tradition: Sayings and Stories as Schooltexts," in *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen (New York: Routledge, 2016). For the example of a Coptic text, see Janet Timbie, "The Education of Shenoute and Other Cenobitic Leaders inside and outside the Monastery," in Gemeinhardt et al., *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity*. And see, further, Robert G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Ancient Warfare and Civilization (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 219–222, for education on the Arabian Peninsula and Transoxania.

[21] See Martin Tamcke, "Wie der Islam die christliche Bildung beflügelte," in *Von Rom nach Bagdad: Bildung und Religion von der römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum klassischen Islam*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt and Sebastian Günther (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 247–252.

[22] Becker, *Fear of God*, 209 and 167.

who ran away from Libanius's school.[23] The evidence seems to refer to a single case where a rabbinic sage unsuccessfully tried to familiarize his son with Greek rhetoric. Yet the case could also be used to argue for the opposite, since the letter was written because the boy *ran away*. If he had stayed, we would know nothing about his attendance at Libanius's school in Antioch. There might have been thirty other Jewish boys at the school with him, but we do not know about them because they did *not* run away. In Hayim Lapin's words: "When people we would otherwise classify as Jews did things that failed to leave a record, or did them in ways that were not culturally distinctive, they are invisible to us as Jews."[24]

In Sasanid Mesopotamia, where different ethnic groups had their own character fonts, it is somewhat obvious that categorization would follow these fonts. But overreliance on script or language can also distort the historiographical account. As in Islamic historiography, the period and place's multilingualism has not yet been sufficiently acknowledged in rabbinic studies.[25] Following this line of thought, the broader educational landscape of late antiquity comes into view and offers further avenues for research. Sons from rabbinic households may also have attended rhetoric schools outside of Mesopotamia. In the fourth and fifth centuries, rhetorical schools existed in Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Rome, Carthage, Bordeaux, Berytus, Cappadocia, Gaza, and the school associated with the East Syrian church in Sasanid Nisibis.[26] Unless there is historical evidence to the contrary, there is no reason to imagine a rabbinic sage as a one-sidedly focused entity, exclusively trained and vested in rabbinic exegesis – an ideal forced upon us by the talmudic text itself. Rather, it is conceivable that there were multiple platforms, among them also marketplaces and what seems to have been a sort of Persian

[23] Libanius's Letter 1098, see the discussion and references in Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, 7, and David Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse: Progymnasmata and the Evolution of a Rabbinic Genre," in *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, ed. Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan, *AJEC* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 188–189. The exact addressee of the letter remains a matter of debate.

[24] Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

[25] See Antoine Borrut, "An Islamic Late Antiquity? Problems and Perspectives," in *The Byzantine Near East: A New History*, ed. Scott Johnson, Elizabeth Bolman, and Jack Tannous (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[26] See Jan R. Stenger, "Learning Cities: A Novel Approach to Ancient *paideia*," in *Learning Cities in Late Antiquity: The Local Dimension of Education*, ed. Jan Stenger (London: Routledge, 2019), esp. 9; and Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric*, 7.

convention house, the *bei abeidan*, that ultimately added to the skills learned in rabbinic circles.[27] Gravestones in North Africa show that some Jews, similar to some gentiles, were members of multiple associations.[28]

(Even) non-rabbinic Jewish Aramaic texts, such as incantation bowls or poetry (*piyyut*), show the imprint of progymnasmatic training in their use of *energeia* (vividness) and *ethopoeia* (speech in character).[29] Whether they went to Greek rhetorical schools or Aramaic rhetorical schools, the authors of these texts were clearly versed in those methods. They were part of a culture where the spoken and written word were very important, with the latter supporting the accuracy and rigor of the former.

The meaning of the talmudic idea of reciting and transmitting could also be questioned a little further. The verb *tny* is usually translated as "to recite," but, at least in some instances, it refers to reading. The semantic field of words used to denote reading in Greek and Latin is indicative of what people thought reading did or should do to the mind. Mary Carruthers has argued, "Ancient Greek had no verb meaning 'to read' as such; the verb they used, *anagignōskō*, means 'to know again,' 'to recollect.' It refers to a memory procedure."[30] Similarly, the Latin verb *lego* means "to collect" or "to cull, pluck," thus referring less to a "memory procedure" than to the acquisition of new knowledge.[31] Together, the Greek and the Latin notions of reading describe two functions: reading to recall what was already learned and reading to learn new things. The

[27] On the various markets attested in the Talmud, see St. John Simpson, "The Land behind Ctesiphon: The Archaeology of Babylonia during the Period of the Babylonian Talmud," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Markham Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 20–29; on the *bei abeidan*, see Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 50–58. Susan Marks, "Who Studies at the Beit Midrash? Funding Palestinian Amoraic Education," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 12 (2021), has recently complicated the story of the education of rabbis and scribes in Palestine.

[28] See, e.g., Philip A. Harland, "Acculturation and Identity in the Diaspora: A Jewish Family and 'Pagan' Guilds at Hierapolis," *JJS* 47, no. 2 (Autumn 2006), for a discussion of the gravestone of a Jewish family whose members belonged to the local synagogue but also to the professional association of carpet weavers.

[29] See Laura S. Lieber, "Setting the Stage: The Theatricality of Jewish Aramaic Poetry from Late Antiquity," *JQR* 104, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 553; or the example of the bowl with the *historiola* about Hanina ben Dosa, discussed above, in Chapter 3, n59.

[30] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: The Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed., Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 34.

[31] My interpretation of the term's point of reference differs from Carruthers's interpretation, as Carruthers again connects it with a "memory procedure," namely, "the recollection or gathering up of material" (*Book of Memory*, 34).

repetitive nature of reading is equally captured by the Aramaic verb *tny* (תני), translated in the *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* as "to repeat, learn a Tannaitic tradition, to recite, to report a tradition."[32] A translation that also includes "secular/mundane reading" or "reading aloud" may explain passages in which the passive *mtny* (מתני) and the active *tny*, or even *tny*, *mtny*, and the verb expressing reading of scripture, *qry* (קרי), are contrasted.[33]

Looking at and understanding the Talmud as a distinct part of late-antique book culture would not only shed new light on the work itself but simultaneously benefit other Jewish texts and communities that often remained in the work's shadow.[34] Only through a simultaneous and equal reading of liturgic poetry (*piyyutim*), bowls, *hekhalot* literature, graffiti, art, and artifacts, alongside texts from the surrounding environment, can an intellectual history be written that does true justice to similarities, differences, and innovation.[35] By so doing, scholars can make a contribution both to the intellectual history of Jews in Sasanid Mesopotamia and to the history of Sasanid Mesopotamia more generally.

[32] *DJBA*, see "תני." Cf. also the meaning attested to the verb in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, where it includes learning in general as well as teaching and telling; *DJPA*, see "תני." And see also the verb's meaning in Syriac: "to repeat; to tell, relate; to say, speak; to recite; to recall, learn" (*SyrLex*, see "ܬܢܐ"). In his assessment, Sokoloff may have shared the traditional premises of rabbinic studies regarding this verb.

[33] See b. Meg. 28b, b. Ned. 8a, and b. Meg. 29a//b. Ketub. 17a, respectively. A change in premises as to the semantic field of the verb may also shed light on a story told in Syriac, in which תני and קרא are referred to as subsequent steps in learning to read the Bible, against the רשן of the Zoroastrian magi, who relied on oral transmission (qua repetition) because they had no alphabet. See Moulie Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 162–163 and references there.

[34] On the difficulties but also the possibilities of countering the hegemony of the Talmud in reconstructing Jewish life in Sasanid Mesopotamia, see Geoffrey Herman, "In Search of Non-Rabbinic Judaism in Sasanian Babylonia," in *Diversity and Rabbinization: Jewish Texts and Societies between 400 and 1,000 CE*, ed. Gavin McDowell, Ron Naiweld, and Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures 8 (Cambridge, UK: Open Book, 2021).

[35] Mika Ahuvia's book *On My Right Michael, On My Left Gabriel* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021) is a prime example of this approach. For an investigation into the social world of Babylonian Jews through incantation bowls, see Geoffrey Herman, "Jewish Identity in Babylonia in the Period of the Incantation Bowls," in *A Question of Identity: Social, Political, and Historical Aspects of Identity Dynamics in Jewish and Other Contexts*, ed. Dikla Rivlin Katz, Noah Hacham, Geoffrey Herman, and Lilach Sagiv (Berlin: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

Appendix

The Talmud's Aramaic Treatise of Simple Remedies

PROLEGOMENA

The basis for the following reassembly of the medical treatise is its longest and almost continuous excerpt, now found in b. Git. 68b–70a. Just as the composers used this particular excerpt of the treatise in the Gittin passage because it fit the topic there, so too did they use other excerpts from the treatise in other parts of the Talmud. The recipes showing the structure "For X, bring (verb) Y, alternatively Z," which I termed the "verb recipe" in Chapter 5, are collected here and ordered in what seems to have been the treatise's original top-down structure, of which the Gittin passage is suggestive. However, like the other treatises of simple remedies discussed in Chapter 5, this one does not follow the top-down structure *ad calcem* but ends with the genitals and then moves to fevers and diseases pertaining to the whole body. For the following arrangement, then, the comparanda discussed in Chapter 5 – and, of those, I particularly considered the *Syriac Book of Medicines* – were more instructive than a focus on head-to-foot organization alone.

The translation takes as its basis the Talmud manuscript Munich 95, which is the only manuscript spanning almost the whole Talmud; it is dated to the year 1342. It is, therefore, suitable for the basis of a text that appears in several tractates. Unfortunately, manuscript Munich 95 is marked by many careless mistakes, and the text below benefitted from the parallel reading of other manuscripts. The relevant manuscripts are the following: Arras 889 (fourteenth century); Bazzano, Archivio Storico Comunale Fr. ebr. 21 (twelfth to fifteenth centuries,

Italy);[1] Bologna, Archivio di Stato Fr. ebr. 145 (thirteenth century);[2] Cambridge T-S F1 (1) 31 (medieval);[3] New York JTS ENA 3112.1; Vatican 130 (dated 14.1.1381);[4] Vatican 140 (late fourteenth century);[5] Oxford Opp. 38 (368) (fourteenth century);[6] and St. Petersburg, RNL Evr. I 187 (thirteenth or fifteenth century).[7] With the exception of the T-S fragment and St. Petersburg I 187, all of the manuscripts are ashkenazic. This explains the relatively few and minor textual variants and, unfortunately, minimizes the representativeness of the results achieved through comparison of the extant manuscripts.

Because of their particular technical content, the recipes under discussion contain many ingredients that appear only once in the Talmud (*hapax legomena*). The significance of many of these ingredients has been lost for this and other reasons. Some ingredients seem to bear colloquial names, and other names seem to have suffered corruption in the process of manuscript transmission. But comparative work with other Aramaic dialects and consideration of loanwords, both provided by Michael Sokoloff's dictionary, have done much to improve this situation.[8]

[1] See Mauro Perani, "I frammenti ebraici di Bazzano: Un piccolo tesoro nella 'Genizah Italiana,'" in "Atti del Forum internazionale, Bazzano (Bologna) Rocco dei Bentivoglio, Sala dei Giganti, 25 Maggio 2000," ed. Mauro Perani, special issue, *Materia giudica* 6, no. 2 (2001): 193–199.

[2] See Mauro Perani and Enrico Sagradini, *Talmudic and Midrashic Fragments from the "Italian Genizah": Reunification of the Manuscripts and Catalogue*, Quaderni di materia giudaica 1 (Florence: Giuntina, 2004), 51.

[3] See Shelomo Morag, *Taylor-Schechter Old Series*, Vol. 1 of *Vocalised Talmudic Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collection*, Cambridge University Library Genizah Series 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2.

[4] See Benjamin Richler and Bet-Aryeh Mal'akhi, eds., *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library Catalogue*, *Compiled by the Staff of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts*, Studi e testi/Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 438 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008), 93–94.

[5] See Richler and Mal'akhi, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library Catalogue*, 98–99. The manuscripts' order of words is often reversed in comparison to Ms. Munich 95, and it writes ס for ש (e.g., ביסרא for בישרא).

[6] See Michael Krupp, "Manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud," in *Literature of the Sages, First Part: Oral Torah, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, Exteral Tractates*, ed. Shmuel Safrai, Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum (Assen, Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 1987), 355.

[7] See Krupp, "Manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud," 353. Krupp refers to this Ms. as Leningrad-Firkow I 187.

[8] Still, Sokoloff's *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* is used here with caution, since it is, as any dictionary of languages past, eclectic and, at times, relies heavily on Geonic and even later medieval commentators for the reconstruction of meaning. See Theodore Kwasman, "Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic: Some Preliminary Observations," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Markham J. Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 335.

THE TREATISE

1. For blood of the head (b. Git. 68b)

Bring cypress, tamarisk, one myrtle, willow of the sea,[9] and *yabla*.[10] Boil them together and pour 300 cups over one side of the head and 300 cups over the other side of the head.

Alternatively, bring a white rose [with leaves on/to one side?][11] and boil it. Pour 60 cups over one side of the head and 60 over the other.

2. For migraine[12] (b. Git. 68b)

Bring a wild cock and slaughter it with a white *zuz* over the side of the head that hurts. Beware that the blood does not blind the eyes. Hang it onto the door casing for the patient to rub his head against it when he enters and leaves.

3. For flashes in the eye[13] (b. Git. 69a)

Bring a scorpion of seven joints and dry it in the shadows. Crush two parts of *kohl* with one part of the former. Put three make-up spoons' full in that eye. Do not use more than that, as the eye may burst.[14]

4. For night blindness[15] (b. Git. 69a)

Bring a string made of white animal hair and tie with it one leg of the patient to the leg of a dog. Children should rattle potsherds behind him

[9] Giuseppe Veltri, *Magie und Halakha: Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum*, TSAJ 62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 239, translates with "camel grass" (*cymbopogon schoenanthus*). The term is here translated as "willow of the sea," according to *DJBA*, see "חילפא דימא."

[10] Markham J. Geller translates "and dries it." "An Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud," in *From Athens to Jerusalem: Medicine in Hellenized Jewish Lore and in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Samuel Kottek, Manfred Horstmanshoff, Gerhard Baader, and Gary Ferngren (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Erasmus, 2000), 17.

[11] Unclear. See Veltri, *Magie und Halakha*, 239n148.

[12] From Aramaic צלח, to cleave, split (*DJBA*, see "צלח #1"). Greek *hemicrania*, "half head," seems to express the same pain (DJBA, see "צילחתא"). The condition is also found in a number of Babylonian bowl-amulets, see Geller, "Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud," 18n23.

[13] Although the term is unclear, this interpretation, based on contextual interpretations of Akkadian *burruqu*, seems to fit the context best (see Geller, "Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud," 19).

[14] The mixture used by women to paint their eyes was called *kohl* (כוחלא), and the instrument with which it was applied was called *makhol* (מכחול). The instrument is described in m. Kelim 13:2 as having a palm of a hand (כף) and a part that apparently looks like the male member, for it is called זכר. *Kohl* was typically made from charcoal, lead, copper, and antimony; see Nathan Wasserman, "Piercing the Eyes: An Old Babylonian Love Incantation and the Preparation of Kohl," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 72, nos. 5–6 (2015): 608–609. These ingredients are rather toxic and usually not meant to enter the eye, hence the warning.

[15] For a detailed discussion of the Akkadian *sí-nu-ri* or *Sin-lurmâ*, night blindness, becoming *sanwērīm* in Hebrew and *šabrīrē* in Aramaic, see Marten Stol, "Blindness and

and say: "Old Dog! Mad Hen!" He should then take seven pieces of raw meat from seven houses. They should be placed at the doorpost, and he should eat them on the town's trash pile. Then he should remove the string and say: "Blindness of PN, son of PN, may you leave PN, son of PN."[16] Then blow into the dog's eye.

5. For day blindness (b. Git. 69a)

Bring seven "reds" from inside the animals and roast them in the sherd of an *umana*.[17] He should sit inside the house and another person outside the house, and the blind man should say to the other: "Give me something to eat!" Then the other person should say: "Take and eat!" After he has eaten, he should break the sherd – otherwise, it will return to him.

6. For blood that comes from the nose (b. Git. 69a)

Bring a priest by the name of Levi and let him write his name backwards.

Alternatively, one should write for him backwards "I am Papi Shila son of Sumqi."[18]

Alternatively, one should write for him: "The taste of [dli?] in silver-water; the taste of [dli?] in damaged water."

Alternatively, bring a root of [old] alfalfa, rushes from an old bed, safflower seed, [unknown ingredient], and the red covering on the pith of the date palm and burn them. Then he should take a tuft of wool and twist it into two wicks. They should be dipped in vinegar and then rolled in the ashes and inserted into the nostril.

Alternatively, look for a canal flowing east to west. Step over it and stand with one foot on this side and with the other on that side. Take mud with the right hand from beneath the left foot and take mud with

Night-Blindness in Akkadian," *JNES* 45, no. 4 (October 1986). In b. Pesah. 112a (//b. Avod. Zar. 12b), the reason for *shavrirei* is related to the nightly drinking of uncovered water. In this case, the remedy (תקנתא) consists of a spell.

[16] A common feature of texts using words to induce change is that they address a person with his or her matronym. This stands in contrast to juridical text, which makes use of the patronym. Hendrik Versnel has convincingly explained this feature in the context of a general reversal of standard habits in texts that try to persuade the divine or demonic. See Hendrik S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay on the Power of Words," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 144 and 146.

[17] The *umana* seems to have had very diverse functions. *DJBA*, see "אומנא," notes the following: "artisan, bloodletter, circumciser, barber." In Syriac sources, the term is also used for the surgeon (*DJBA*, see "אומנא"). Like the barber surgeon in the Middle Ages, the *umana* seems to have been the one in possession of sharp knives, even scissors.

[18] See Veltri, *Magie und Halakha*, 241n168, for the interesting reference to the Tetragrammaton in the Septuagint, which did not translate the latter literally but, rather, graphically, as ΠΙΠΙ (*pipi*).

the left hand from beneath the right foot. Twist a wick, dip it into the mud, and then insert it into the nostril.

Alternatively, let him stand under a rain spout[19] and pour [water] on him and say: "In the same way as these waters stop, so too should the blood of PN son of PN stop."

7. For the ear (b. Avod. Zar. 28b)

Bring the kidney of a bald buck and tear it open crosswise and place it on glowing coals. The fluid that comes out of it should be poured into the ear. But it should not be hot, but lukewarm.

Alternatively, bring the fat of a large beetle, melt it, and pour it into the ear.

Alternatively, fill the ear with oil and bring [cloves?][20] of garlic that were violently torn out of the garden bed; stick one [garlic] head into the fire and one into the ear. Then remove one and leave the other.

Alternatively, make seven wicks of alfalfa and tie them with animal hair at their head [i.e., one end]. Set the wick afire while the other head sticks in his ear.

Alternatively, bring seven wicks made of animal hair and smear them with alfalfa oil and place one end into the fire and the other end into the ear. Remove one and leave the one and fill the ear with oil. Beware of the *maziq*-demon!

Alternatively, bring wool into the fire that has not been combed and let him place the ear towards the fire. Beware of the *maziq*-demon!

Alternatively, bring a hundred-year-old reed tube, fill it with rock salt,[21] burn it, and stick it into it [the ear]. The mnemonic is: the dry for the moist and the moist for the dry.

8. For blood coming from the mouth (b. Git. 69a)

The patient should be tested with a wheat straw. If it [the blood] sticks to it, it is coming from the lungs, and there is a remedy for it. Alternatively, it is coming from the liver, and there is no remedy for it.

Bring seven fistfuls of chopped mangelwurzel, seven fistfuls of chopped leeks, five fistfuls of pomegranate seed, three fistfuls of lentils,[22] one fistful of cumin, and a fistful of spices and the same amount [as all this]

[19] See *DJBA*, see "מרובא."

[20] The meaning of שובתא is unknown (see *DJBA*, see "שובתא").

[21] See *DJBA*, see "מילחא גלליתא."

[22] Ms. Munich 95 here reads שלפוחא, *bladder*. Yet most Mss. (Arras 889, Vatican 130, Vatican 140, and Bologna 145) read דטלפחי, "lentils," which seems to make more sense given the posology of "a fistful."

of unleavened bread.[23] Cook and eat it and drink strong beer of good quality.[24]

9. For a molar tooth (b. Git. 69a)[25]
Bring a garlic clove and grind it together with oil and salt. Place [the mixture] on the nail of the thumb on the side where the ache is and surround it with a ring of dough. And beware of leprosy![26]

10. For toothache [*tsafdina*][27] **(b. Avod. Zar. 28a//b. Yoma 84a)**
Bring pits of olives that have not finished ripening [for] more than a third [of their actual maturing time], burn them on a new hoe, and affix [the residue] to the [affected] row [of teeth].

11. For "cooking"[28] **(b. Git. 69a)**
Bring bran from the top of the sieve and lentils in their earth, fenugreek, a dodder seed, and [the patient] should keep a nut[-sized] amount [of the mixture] in his mouth.

12. For the opening (b. Git. 69a)
Someone knowledgeable[29] should blow white cress through a wheat straw.

13. For closing of the wound[30] **(b. Git. 69a)**
Bring dust from the shade of a toilet, mix it with honey and eat in order to fill [the wound] up.[31]

[23] See *DJBA*, see "פטירתא כנתא."
[24] Here I follow Geller in his argument that טבת does not refer to the month of Tevet but is a calque (i.e., a literal translation) of the Akkadian standing expression *šikaru tābu*, "fine quality beer." See Geller, "Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud," 22.
[25] See *DJBA*, see "ככא."
[26] Mss. Arras 889, Vatican 130, Vatican 140, and JTS 3112.1 here add דקשי לבישריה, that is, beware of his flesh, because it could cause leprosy.
[27] The condition was subsumed into the foregoing discussion of the *tsafdina*-disease, which most likely concerns tooth or gum problems. On this condition see esp. Samuel Kottek, "Selected Elements of Talmudic Medical Terminology, with Special Consideration to Greco-Latin Influences and Sources," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Roemischen Wel*, Vol. 37, bk. 2, pt. 3, *Principate*, ed. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 2925–2926.
[28] This condition seems to express the symptoms of the disease, which is most likely to be located in the mouth or in the throat, according to the therapy.
[29] See *DJBA*, see "חברא," for the many different meanings of *haver*, including "friend," "sage," and "associate."
[30] See *DJBA*, see "סלק #1."
[31] Since the mixture needs to be eaten in order to fill the wound, the condition still seems to be one affecting the mouth.

14. For pleurisy[32] (b. Git. 69a–b)

Bring some sal ammoniac, about the size of a pistachio, and a few nut-sized amounts of honeyed galbanum, a spoonful of white honey and a full drinking cup from Mahoza of clean wine. Let them boil together. When the sal ammoniac is cooked, everything is cooked.

Alternatively, bring a fourth of the milk of a white goat and let it drip over three cabbage stalks and stir with a stem of marjoram. And when the stem of marjoram is cooked, everything is cooked.

Alternatively, bring the excrement of a white dog, knead it with a solution of dates. But if possible do not eat [excrement], because it may [expedite the process in an unhealthy way].[33]

15. For jaundice[34] (b. Shabb. 110b)

Alternatively, bring the head of a salted *shibuta*-fish,[35] boil it in beer, and drink it.

Alternatively, bring a brine of locusts, take [the patient] to a bath-house, and smear it on him. If there is no bathhouse, stand him between the oven and the fire.[36]

Alternatively, bring a *qpiza*[37] of Persian dates, three *qpiza* of bitumen of *n*-,[38] [and] three [*qpiza*] of worm-colored alkali plant. Boil them in beer and drink.

Alternatively, bring a donkey, the foal of a donkey, and shave the middle of its head. Let blood from the forehead [of the donkey] and put it on the head [of the patient].

Beware that the patient's eyes do not get blinded [by the blood].

Alternatively, bring the head of a buck placed in a […],[39] boil it in beer, and drink.

[32] See *DJBA*, see "ברסם."

[33] This is *DJBA*'s interpretation of the verb פרש here. The use in the sense of "expedite" is, however, singular. The verb usually refers more generally to the notion of separating or setting aside. See *DJBA*, see "פרש."

[34] The recipe introducing the condition "jaundice" is a pause recipe and not a verb recipe. (On this terminology, see Chapter 5.) Therapies from a verb recipe against jaundice appear to have been added by the composers as alternatives.

[35] See *DJBA*, see "שיבוטא."

[36] Apart from Ms. Munich 95, which reads לנורא, *for the fire*, the Mss. read לגודא, *for the wall*, which seems more likely here.

[37] From Middle Persian *kabīz*, "a small measure, equal to one tenth *griv*" (*DJBA*, see "קפיזא"). A *griv*, on the other hand, is an otherwise undefined dry measure (see *DJBA*, see "גריוא").

[38] Uncertain. See *DJBA*, see "נישתרופא."

[39] Uncertain. See *DJBA*, see "יבשא."

Alternatively, bring another thing[40] that is hunchbacked, tear it, and place it on his heart.

Alternatively, eat leek from the […][41] of garden beds.

16. For the "arrow"[42] (b. Git. 69b)

Bring the "shaft of an arrowhead," turn it upside down with the bottom on top. Pour water over it and drink it.

Alternatively, bring water from which a dog drank at night – but beware of [possible effects of] *giluya* [i.e., the talmudic term for uncovered water].

17. For heaviness of the heart[43] (b. Git. 69b)

Bring three barley cakes and soak them in a *kamka*-dish that is no older than forty days, eat them, and afterward drink watered-down wine.

18. For a fluttering [heart] (b. Git. 69b)

Bring three wheat cakes and soak them in honey and eat them and afterward drink strong wine.

19. For a weak heart (b. Git. 69b)

Bring three "eggs": an egg[-size] of *ammi copticum*,[44] an egg[-size] of cumin, and an egg[-size] of sesame.

20. For pain in the intestines (b. Git. 69b)

Bring three hundred long peppers and drink every day one hundred of them in hot water.

21. For a fierce stinging[45] (b. Git. 69b)

Bring a seed of a rocket, wrap it in a handkerchief,[46] soak in water overnight, and drink. Beware of the kernels [so] that they do not pierce [the intestines].

[40] The euphemism for a pig.

[41] Uncertain. See *DJBA*, see "בובתא."

[42] It does not seem from the context that this condition has to be taken literally as referring to the injury from an arrow (cf. *DJBA*, see "גירא"). Rather, pain in the heart may be felt to be as piercing as an arrow.

[43] Adjusted according to the correction of the original condition as it appears later in the talmudic text (b. Git. 69b).

[44] See *DJBA*, see "ניניא."

[45] Following *DJBA*, see "כירצא," Veltri (*Magie und Halakha*, 246) translates the condition as "white intestinal worm," whereas Geller ("An Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud," 26) concludes that this "should refer to an abdominal condition." It seems that it would be best to think of the condition as a fierce stinging in the intestines – which may also result from worms.

[46] From Middle Persian *šustag*. See *DJBA*, see "שוסתג."

22. For the spleen (b. Git. 69b)

Bring seven aquatic leeches and dry them in the shade. Drink two or three of them in wine every day.

Alternatively, bring a spleen from a virgin she-goat and stick it to the oven. Stand directly next to it and say: "Just as this spleen dries out, thus should the spleen of PN son of PN dry out."

Alternatively, he should stick it between the bricks of a new house and say this.

Alternatively, search for a corpse of one who died on the Sabbath, place his hand on the spleen, and say: "Just as this hand dried out, thus should the spleen of PN son of PN dry out."

Alternatively, bring a small fish and roast it in the blacksmith's workshop and eat it in the water [coming from] the blacksmith's workshop and drink from the water coming from the blacksmith's workshop.

Alternatively, open a jug of wine in [the patient's] name.

23. For hemorrhoids[47] (b. Git. 69b)

Bring acacia, aloe, white lead, silver dross, a bead of malabathrum, salves of glaucium. Keep this in rags of linen in summer and [rags of] wool in winter.

Alternatively, drink watered-down beer.

24. For an upper anal fissure (b. Avod. Zar. 28b)

Bring seven seeds of worm-colored alkaline plant and tie them up. Bring "the empty space of the neck area"[48] and wrap it around [the neck] with animal hair. Dip it into white naphta and burn it. Spread [the ashes] on him.[49] In the meantime, bring the pits of a Dilmun date and place its fissure on the [anal] fissure.

25. For a lower anal fissure (b. Avod. Zar. 28b)

Bring the fat of a virgin goat, melt it, and smear [the fat] on it.

[47] This is a Geonic explanation of the term שחתא, which in Syriac refers to "rust, verdegris, or foulness" according to *DJBA*, see "שחתא." Sokoloff, therefore, translates the term rather generally with "illness." However, the condition "hemorrhoids" would fit the order of the recipes here.

[48] *DJBA*, see "חללא."

[49] See also recipe no. 43. For the cultural residues behind the "cremation" of *materia medica* in Latin euporistic treatises, see Patricia Gaillard-Seux, "La crémation des remèdes dans les textes médicaux latins," in *Manus medica: Actions et gestes de l'officiant dans les texts médicaux latins; Questions de thérapeutique et de lexique*, ed. Françoise Gaide and Frédérique Biville, Collection Textes et Documents de la Méditerranée Antique et Médievale (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2003).

Alternatively, bring three leaves of gourds that have been dried in the shade, burn them, pound [the ashes] in a mortar, and attach [the ashes] to it.

Alternatively, bring shells of snails, burn them, and affix them to it.

Alternatively, bring an anointment of bitumen. Keep this in rags of linen in summer and [rags of] wool in winter.

26. For *shigrona*[50] (b. Git. 69b)

Bring a bucket of brine and roll it sixty times over one thigh and sixty times over the other.

27. For strangury[51] (b. Git. 69b)

Bring three drops of the salve of henna, three drops of leek juice, and three drops of clear wine. If the patient is a male, insert it [into his member]; if the patient is female, in her place.

Alternatively, bring the handle of a skin-bottle. Let it hang from a man's member, or from a female's breast.

Alternatively, bring a crimson thread, which PN daughter of PN spun, and let it hang from a man's member, or from a female's breast. And when they urinate, they should urinate on bramble [twigs] on the door socket.

Keep an eye on the stone that will be falling out from it, because it improves all kinds of fevers.

28. For the outer strangury[52] (b. Git. 69b)

Bring three *griwa*-measures of the *supala*-plant,[53] three *griwa*-measures of a leaf of the *adra*-plant,[54] and boil each one by itself. Pour them into two washbasins. Bring a table and place it over [the basins] and sit on it. Then get up and sit on [a table] over the other basin until the vapor enters [the body]. Then bathe in them.

If [the patient] drinks, he should drink from the *adra*-plant water and not from the *supala*-plant water, because it causes sterility.

[50] The disease (*shigrona/shigdona*) cannot be identified on etymological grounds (see *DJBA*, see "שיגדונא"). However, in b. Hul. 51a, an ewe dragging her hind legs is assumed to suffer from this *shigrona*-disease. This assumption is qualified and verified when the ewe is slaughtered. It appears that the cause was a severed spinal cord and *not* the *shigrona*-disease. However, it seems that *shigrona*-disease bears on the duct of a person.

[51] See *DJBA*, see "צימרא #1."

[52] See *DJBA*, see "צמרתא" (Akkad. *ṣemertu*).

[53] Unidentified. See *DJBA*, see "ספלא."

[54] Unidentified. See *DJBA*, see "אטרפא."

29. For the inner strangury (b. Git. 69b–70a)
Bring seven roots [fistfuls] of mangel-wurzel from seven garden beds and boil them with their earth and eat them. Drink leaves of the *adra* plant in beer or nightshade (*solanum nigrum*) in water.

30. For the fever caused by strangury[55] (b. Shabb. 67a)
Take a knife that is completely made from iron and go to a place with bramble and knot upon it a cord of horsehair.[56] On the first day he should notch a small amount of it and say: "And an angel of God appeared to him in a flame of fire" (Exod. 3:2). On the next day, he should notch a small amount of it and say: "And Moses said: let me turn aside and see" (Exod. 3:3). On the next day he should notch a small amount of it and say: "And God saw that he turned aside to see" until "and he said: here I am" (Exod. 3:4).

31. For a fever of one day (b. Shabb. 66b)
Take a silvered *zuz*[57] and go to the salt pit and exchange the weight of the *zuz* in salt. Tie it around the empty space of the neck area with a horsecord made of horsehair.

Alternatively, sit [the patient] at a crossroads. And when he sees a large ant carrying something, he should take it and put it into a copper tube. Close it with lead and seal it with sixty seals. He must shake and carry it and say: "My burden upon you and your burden upon me!"

Alternatively, take a new pitcher and go to the river and say: "River, river, lend me a pitcher of water for the guest that came to me!" Turn the vessel seven times around the head and empty the pitcher into the river behind him. Say this: "River, river, take back the water that you lent me, for the guest that came to me came in its day and left in its day."

32. For a fever of three days (b. Shabb. 67a)
Bring seven thorns from seven palm trees, seven ashes from seven ovens, seven dusts from seven dams, seven chips from seven logs, seven pegs

[55] Fever has many names in the Talmud as well as in Akkadian: "The cuneiform medical sources refer to the patient's high temperature with the following Akkadian lexemes: 1) *emēmu* 'to be hot' and *ummu* 'heat'; 2) *ḫamātu* 'to be inflamed' and *ḫimtu* 'inflammation, burning'; 3) *ṣarāḫu* 'to heat up' and *ṣirḫu* or *ṣiriḫtu* 'heat'; 4) *ṣētu* 'heat-radiance."' András Bácskay, "The Natural and Supernatural Aspects of Fever in Mesopotamian Medical Texts," in *Demons and Illnesses from Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period*, ed. Siam Bhayro and Catherine Rider, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 42.

[56] ברקא may refer to Middle Persian *bārag*, "horse." See *DJBA*, see "ארג #1." However, it remains unclear if the cord is from the horse (i.e., made of hair) or for the horse (i.e., to tie it up, etc.).

[57] *Zuz* is the Aramaic term for the Sasanian drachma. See *DJBA*, see "זוזא."

from seven bridges, seven [pieces of] pitch from seven boats, seven kernels of cumin, and seven hairs from the beard of an old dog. Tie it around the empty space of the neck area with a horse-cord.

33. For an extended sun[-stroke] (b. Git. 67b)
Bring a black hen and tear it open crosswise. Shave the middle of the head [of the patient] and place [the hen] on it. Let [the patient] go down and stand in water until his world becomes weak [i.e., until he feels faint]. Then, he should stand, get up [out of the water], and sit down.

Alternatively, eat leeks and swim and stand in water until he feels faint, stand and get out and sit.

34. For a skin disease[58] (b. Git. 70a)
Bring seven [stalks] of *a*-wheat,[59] roast them in a new pan. Draw out the fat that is in them and smear it [on the skin].

35. For "uprooting" [i.e., abortion][60] (b. Shabb. 110a)[61]
Bring the weight of a *zuz* of Alexandrian gum Arabic, [the weight of] a *zuz* of a tuft of wool, [the weight of] a *zuz* of saffron fiber and grind them together.

36. For gonorrheal issues (b. Shabb. 110a–b)
[Alternatively], bring three *qpiza* of Persian onions, boil them in wine and let her drink and say to her:[62] "Cease from your gonorrheal discharge."

Alternatively, sit her[63] at a crossroads. She should hold a cup with wine in her hand and someone should come from behind and frighten her and say: "Cease from your gonorrheal discharge."

[58] See *DJBA*, see "חוויתא."
[59] *DJBA*, see "ארונאה."
[60] The condition and its meaning have been reconstructed from context.
[61] See John M. Riddle, "Women's Medicines in Ancient Jewish Sources: Fertility Enhancers," in *Disease in Babylonia*, ed. Iriving L. Finkela and Markham J. Geller (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 205–208, for a contextual analysis of this drug. *Crocus sativus*/saffron was known to have an abortive effect (208). On the terminology (עיקרין-roots), see most recently Aaron Amit, "Methodological Pitfalls in the Identification of the כוס עיקרין," in *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue*, ed. Lennart Lehmhaus and Matteo Martelli, Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017).
[62] Mss. Oxford Heb. c. 27/10–15, JTS Rab 501:1–6, and the Soncino print edition here read לה, *to her*. Mss. Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 and Vatican 108, on the other hand, read ליה, as does the above Ms. Munich 95.
[63] Here, all the witnesses agree that the talk is about a female patient. When it comes to "say to *her*," however, the manuscripts differ.

Alternatively, bring a fistful of cumin, a fistful of safflower [*carthamus tinctorius*], and a fistful of fenugreek. Boil it in wine and let her drink and say to her: "Cease from your gonorrheal discharge."

Alternatively, bring sixty seals from clay vessels and rub them [on the patient] and say: "Cease from your gonorrheal discharge."

Alternatively, bring a *p*-plant,[64] spread it out, and say: "Cease from your gonorrheal discharge."

Alternatively, bring thistles from a Palestinian carob tree, burn them, and keep this in rags of linen in summer and [rags of] wool in winter.

Alternatively, dig seven pits and burn in them branches of *orla*. Let her keep a cup of wine in her hand. And she should get up [from crouching over one pit] and crouch over another, and each time, when she gets up from a pit, one should say: "Cease from your gonorrheal discharge."

Alternatively, bring fine flour and smear it onto the lower part of her body.

Alternatively, bring an ostrich egg, burn it, and keep this in rags of linen in summer and [rags of] wool in winter, and say to her: "Cease from your gonorrheal discharge."

Alternatively, open a jug of wine.

Alternatively, take barley found in the excrement of a white mule. If she holds it for one day, it will stop for two days. If she holds it for two days, it will stop for three days. If she holds it for three days, it will stop forever.

37. For the fluke worm[65] (b. Shabb. 109b)

Alternatively,[66] swallow white cress.

Alternatively, let [the patient] fast and bring fatty meat and roast it on live coals. Let him then suck a bone and swallow vinegar.

But there are those who say no to[67] vinegar, because it is harmful to the liver.

Rather, bring the scraping of *Dilum*-dates that have been scraped off from top to bottom. Maybe they will come out through his mouth. Boil it in beer from the neighborhood. On the next day, block the holes of [the patient's] hands, and [the patient] should drink [from his hands]. And when he excretes, he should excrete on the date palm.

[64] Unidentified. *DJBA*, see "פשיטנא."
[65] *DJBA*, "ארקתנא #2."
[66] The recipe's first therapy, "pennyroyal with seven white dates," and the indicated condition have been split into a dialogue structure (see the discussion in Chapter 5).
[67] Ms. Munich 95 omits this "no."

38. For the effects of drinking uncovered water [giluya] (b. Shabb. 109b)
Bring fifteen melilots and fifteen cups of beer and boil them together until it is [boiled down to] one *anpaq* [of the solution] and drink it.

[Alternatively,][68] bring a sweet citron, carve out a portion from it, fill it with honey, and put it on the coals in the oven.

39. For intoxication (b. Shabb. 66b)[69]
Bring salt and oil and smear it on the inside of their hands and on the base of their feet and say this: "Just as this oil dissolves, so let the wine dissolve in PN son of PN."

Alternatively, bring the sealing clay of a vat and soak it in water and say this: "Just as this sealing clay dissolves, so let the wine dissolve in PN son of PN."

40. For a crack in the skin (b. Avod. Zar. 28a)[70]
Hit it sixty times with a finger and tear it open cross-wise with a barley-corn.

But this was not said for a crack that did not have a white head, but for one with a white head.

41. For [recovery after] bloodletting (b. Avod. Zar. 29a)[71]
Bring a quarter of wine and a quarter of beer and mix them together and drink. And if he is relieving himself, he should relieve himself to the east because of the strong odor.

42. For the heart?/wind? (b. Avod. Zar. 29a)[72]
Bring a new cup and fill it with water. Bring [it] and let it rest under the stars until the morning.[73] Add a spoonful of honey.

43. For the bite of a mad dog (b. Yoma 84a)[74]
Take the hide of a male hyena and write on it: "Hide of the male hyena we write on you: '*qngi, qndi, qlidis*.'" And say to it: "*qntu, qnti, qliris*,

[68] Omitted by the composers of the Talmud in favor of an attribution to Rav Huna bar Yehuda.
[69] Condition reconstructed from context.
[70] See *DJBA*, see "סימטא #1." Condition reconstructed from context.
[71] Condition reconstructed from context.
[72] It is difficult to reconstruct the condition addressed by this particular recipe, since several conditions are discussed in this context.
[73] This sentence is missing in Ms. New York-JTS Rab. 15 and the print editions. A similar instruction can also be found in one of Columella's recipes (*Rust.* 6.35).
[74] Reconstructed from context. The recipe is attributed to Abaye in Mss. Munich 6, New York JTS Rab. 218 (EMC 270), and London-BL Harl. 5508 (400). Mss. Munich 95 and Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23, on the other hand, state the recipe anonymously.

God, God, God of hosts, amen, amen, selah." Bury this at a crossroads[75] for twelve months of the year. And after the twelve months of a year have passed, dig it out again and burn it and scatter the ashes. And during the twelve months of the year, he should only drink through a small tube. [Otherwise] it may return and endanger him.[76]

44. The one who was bitten by a snake (b. Shabb. 110b)[77]
Bring the embryo of a white jennet, tear it, and place it [on the bite]. However, these words apply only if [the jennet] was not found to be *terefah*.

45. For the fire of the bones (b. Git. 70a)[78]
Bring him a *k*-measure[79] of *sh*-porridge[80] and a *k*-measure of aged wine. He should knead them together and eat it. Then he should be wrapped in an *s*-cloth[81] and sleep. And he should not be awakened until he wakes up on his own. When he gets up, he should take off the *s*-cloth immediately – if not, it will return to him.

46. For invirility (b. Git. 70a)[82]
Bring three *qpiza*-measures of safflower seeds, grind them, boil them in wine, and drink it.

Recipes with Spoken Therapies

47. For a crack in the skin[83] **(b. Shabb. 67a)**
Say this [לימא הכי]: "Baz Bazyyah, Mas Masyya, Kas Kasyyah, Sadlay and Askalay. These are the angels [מלאכיא], which have been sent from the earth of Sodom to heal boils and sores. Bazah Bazih, Bazih Bazah, Kaman Kamin, Kamin Kaman: Your [investigative] look upon yourself, your place to yourself, your place to yourself!"

[75] Instead of *crossroads*, Ms. Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 has *at a grave* (בקברא). Ms. Munich 6 does not indicate a place.
[76] Use of the hide of a hyena to cure rabies is also mentioned by Scribonius Largus, albeit without further specification; see Scribonius Largus, *Der gute Arzt: Compositiones*, trans. Kai Brodersen (Wiesbaden: Marix Verlag, 2016), 243 (recipe C 172).
[77] Condition reconstructed from context.
[78] Condition reconstructed from context.
[79] Unknown. See *DJBA*, see "כונא."
[80] "A porridge made from the meal of various grains or dried fruits." *DJBA*, see "שתיתא."
[81] "A cloth made of a light material and worn by wrapping it around the body or the head." *DJBA*, see "סדינא."
[82] Condition reconstructed from context.
[83] See *DJBA*, see "סימטא #1."

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009297349 Published online by Cambridge University Press

"May your seed be like the earth of Sodom, like *saris* and *qalut*. May you be like a mule, which does not reproduce itself and multiply. In the same way you shall not reproduce yourself and multiply on the body of PN son/daughter of PN."[84]

48. For [a disease or demon: ביסא][85] (b. Shabb. 67a)
Say this [לימא הכי]: "A drawn sword and a flying sling:[86] His name is not Yohav, you painful illnesses!"

49. For a demon (b. Shabb. 67a)
Say this [לימא הכי]: "You were stopped up, stopped up you were! Cursed, broken, and banned, son of Tit, son of Tam'e, in the name of Margiz, Murifat, and Isttamtiah."

50. For a demon of the privy (b. Shabb. 67a)
Say this [לימא הכי]: "On the skulls of lions and on the nostrils of their cubs shall be found the demon Siriq'a Pand'a. On a garden bed of leeks did you throw him, with the jawbone of an ass did you strike him."[87]

51. For a thin fish bone[88] [stuck in the throat] (b. Shabb. 67a)
Say this [לימא הכי]: "You are stuck like a needle, locked in like in a cuirass: Go down, go down!"

52. [Hebr.] The one who has a bone stuck in his throat should bring one of the same type and place it on his head (b. Shabb. 67a)
[Here follows a parenthesis in the talmudic text]
[Aram.] and say this [לימא הכי]: "One by one,[89] go down and be swallowed, be swallowed, go down, one by one."

[84] For an analysis of this incantation, see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 414–417.
[85] See *DJBA*, see "כיסא." Ms. Vatican 108 reads כיסא, whereas the Soncino and Vilna printed edition render כיפה.
[86] קלע (Hebrew).
[87] On the possible Mesopotamian (Akkadian) background of the demon, see Avigail Manekin Bamberger, "An Akkadian Demon in the Talmud: Between Šulak and Bar-Šhiriqa," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 44, No. 2 (2013). The incantation is also alluding to Judge 15:15, where Samson smites the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.
[88] The meaning of the condition is entirely derived based on context. See *DJBA*, see "אדרא."
[89] After each *one by one* (חד חד), Ms. Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 adds חר חר.

53. The one who (מאן האי) encounters a sorceress (b. Pesah. 110a–b)
Say this [לימא הכי]: "Hot excrement in a perforated *d*-basket[90] in your mouths! Here, women of sorceries, may your baldness be bald,[91] may your crumbs fly away, and your spices be scattered, the wind carry off the new saffron you are holding, you sorceresses! As long as he showed grace to me and to you, I did not find myself in your midst. But now that I am in your midst, your grace and my grace have cooled down."[92]

54. The one who (מאן האי) is frightened (b. Meg. 3a//b. Sanh. 94a)
Although he does not see [his guardian angel], the guardian angel sees him.
What is the remedy [תקנתיה]?
He should recite the *Shema*. And if[93] he is standing in a filthy place, he should remove himself by four cubits.
Alternatively, he should say this [לימא הכי]: "The goat in the slaughterhouse is fatter than I am."

55. [Hebr.] Ben Azzai taught this: "Go there [i.e., to the privy] early and go there in the evening so that you will not[94] be far away from it. Feel yourself and only then sit down and do not sit down and only then feel yourself. For even if someone is performing harmful charms [כשפים] against him in Aspamia they will come upon him" (b. Ber. 62a).
[Aram.] What is the remedy [תקנתא] **if he did feel himself after sitting down?**
He should say the following [לימא האי כי]: "Not me, not me, not *tahus*, not *tatahus*,[95] not these and not from those, not sorceries for sorcerers [חרשי] and not sorceries from sorceresses."

[90] See *DJBA*, see "דיקולא #1."
[91] קרח קרחייכו. On the basis of the text found on a bowl, Sokoloff (*DJBA*, see "קרח") suggests that the text in b. Pesah. was corrupt and should be read according to the bowl as קר קדריכי: "excrement to your cooking pots."
[92] On this recipe, see also Yaakov Elman, "Saffron, Spices, and Sorceresses: Magic Bowls and the Bavli," in *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 370–373.
[93] Some Mss. take this as the introduction to an alternative therapy and dispense with another "alternatively."
[94] The negation is missing in Ms. Munich 95.
[95] Ms. Paris 671 here renders *hus hus* (חוס חוס).

56. [Hebr.] The rabbis taught: A human should not drink water: not in the nights of the fourth day [i.e., Wednesday] nor in the nights of the Shabbat. And if he did drink, then his blood is on his head (b. Pesah. 112a).
[Aram.] What is the danger?
An evil spirit.
And **if he did drink**, what is the remedy [תקנתיה]?
He should say [נימא] "the seven voices" that David said over the water and then drank, as it is written: "The voice of God is upon the water, the God of glory thunders, God dwells on mighty waters. The voice of God comes in strength, the voice of God swells up. The voice of God breaks cedars, and God scatters the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of God splits with flames of fire. The voice of God governs the desert: The voice of God governs the desert of Kadesh. The voice of God frightened the hinds and strips the forests bare, and in his Temple everyone will proclaim: 'Glory!'" (Ps. 29:3–5, 7–9).
Alternatively, he should say [נימא] this: "*Lul*[96] *Shafan, Enigaron, Andariga*: I sit between the stars, between thin and fat."[97]
Alternatively, he should rattle the cover of the jar and then drink.[98]
Alternatively, if there is someone with him, he should wake [the person] up[99] and say to him: "PN son/daughter of PN is thirsty for water," and only after that he should drink.[100]

57. [Hebr.] The rabbis taught: "No human should drink from rivers or ponds at night. And if he did drink, his blood is on his head" (b. Pesah. 112a).
[Aram.] What is the danger? The danger of *shavriri*.
And **if he did drink**, what is the remedy [תקנתיה]?
If there is someone with him, he should wake [the person] up and say to him: "PN son/daughter of PN is thirsty for water," and only after that he should drink.
Alternatively, he should say to himself: "PN son/daughter of PN, as his mother told him:[101]
'Beware of shavriri, vriri, riri, iri, ri in white cups.'"[102]

[96] Ms. Munich 95: *Lyl*.
[97] Ms. Vatican 109 here adds another therapy: "alternatively, he should spit into it."
[98] This therapy is after the next one in the printed edition and is absent from Ms. Munich 95 altogether.
[99] This verb is missing in Ms. Munich 95. Ms. Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 further specifies that the person is sleeping.
[100] This therapy is absent from Ms. Vatican 109. Ms. Vilna adds here: "Alternatively, he should throw something into the water and only then drink."
[101] Ms. Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 reads, "as your mother told you."
[102] The oft-observed decrease of letters in words has been associated with the "desired decline of the illness" (Versnel, "Poetics of the Magical Charm," 130).

Bibliography

Ahuvia, Mika. *On My Right Michael, On My Left Gabriel*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021.

Alexander, Elizabeth Shanks. "The Orality of Rabbinic Writing." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, 38–57. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Alexander, Philip S. "Oral Tradition and Writing in the Rabbinic Culture of Late Antiquity: Between Qumran and the Cairo Genizah." In *Encyclopedia of Jewish Book Cultures Online*, edited by Emile Schrijver. First published online in 2019. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Alexander, Philip S. "Using Rabbinic Literature as a Source for the History of Late-Roman Palestine: Problems and Issues." In *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine*, edited by Philip S. Alexander and Martin Goodman, 7–24. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Amit, Aaron. "Methodological Pitfalls in the Identification of the כוס עיקרין." In *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue*, edited by Lennart Lehmhaus and Matteo Martelli, 255–271. Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 4. Boston: de Gruyter, 2017.

Amsler, Monika. "Babies or Goats?! A Critical Evaluation of b. Shabb. 134b and the Question of the Relationship between Veterinary and Human Medicine in the Talmud." In *Female Bodies and Female Practitioners in the Medical Traditions of the Late Antique Mediterranean World*, edited by Lennart Lehmhaus. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming.

Amsler, Monika. "The 'Poetic Itch' and Numerical Maxims in the Talmud: An Inquiry into Factors of Knowledge Construction." In *Knowledge Construction in Late Antiquity*, edited by Monika Amsler, 189–218. Trends in Classics 142. Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming.

Anderson, Graham. "The Banquet of Belles-Lettres: Athenaeus and the Comic Symposium." In *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, edited by David Braund and John Wilkins, 316–326. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

Anderson, Graham. *Lucian: Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic*. Mnemosyne Supplement 41. Leiden: Brill, 1976.

Andorlini, Isabella. "Il 'gergo' grafico ed espressivo della ricettazione medica antica." In *Medicina e Società nel Mondo Antico: Atti del convegno di Udine (4–5 Ottobre 2005)*, edited by Isabella Andorlini and Arnaldo Marcone, 142–167. Studi udinesi sul mondo antico no. 4. Florence: Le Monnier Università, 2006.

Asmussen, Jes P. "Aēšma." *EIr* 1 (1983): 479–480. https://iranicaonline.org/articles/aesma-wrath.

Asmussen, Jes P. "Arzūr." *EIr* 2 (1987): 691–692. https://iranicaonline.org/articles/arzur-mid.

Aull, Charles N. "Legal Texts." In *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, edited by Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts, 417–430. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.

Bäbler, Balbina. "The Image of Panthea in Lucian's *Imagines*." In *Intellectual and Empire in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, edited by Philip R. Bosman, 189–201. London: Routledge, 2019.

Bácskay, András. "The Natural and Supernatural Aspects of Fever in Mesopotamian Medical Texts." In *Demons and Illnesses from Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period*, edited by Siam Bhayro and Catherine Rider, 39–52. Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 5. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Bagnall, Roger S. *Everyday Writing in the Greco-Roman East*. Sather Classical Lectures 69. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Bagnall, Roger S. *The Kellis Agricultural Account Book (P. Kell. IV Gr. 96)*. Dakhleh Oasis Project: Monograph 7; Oxbow Monograph 92. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997.

Balberg, Mira. *Gateway to Rabbinic Literature*. Tel Aviv: The Open University of Israel Press, 2013.

Baltussen, Han. "Philosophical Commentary." In *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, edited by Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts, 297–312. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.

Banchich, Thomas M. "The Epitomizing Tradition in Late Antiquity." In *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, edited by John Marincola, 283–289. Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007.

Barrow, Robin. "The Persistence of Ancient Education." In *A Companion to Ancient Education*, edited by W. Martin Bloomer, 281–291. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

Becker, Adam H. *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

Bergmann, Ari. *The Formation of the Talmud: Scholarship and Politics in Yitzhak Halevi's Dorot Harishonim*. Perspectives on Jewish Texts and Contexts 17. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.

Betz, Hans D., ed. *The Greek Magical Papyri, Including the Demotic Spells*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Bloomer, W. Martin, ed. *A Companion to Ancient Education*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

Börner-Klein, Dagmar. "Assoziation mit System: Der Talmud, die 'andere' Enzyklopädie." In *Archivprozesse: Die Kommunikation der Aufbewahrung*, edited by Hedwig Pompe and Leander Scholz, 113–120. Mediologie 5. Cologne: DuMont, 2002.

Bohak, Gideon. *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Bokser, Baruch M. *Samuel's Commentary on the Mishnah: Its Nature, Forms and Content, Part One; Mishnayot in the Order of Zeraʿim*. SJLS 15. Leiden: Brill, 1975.

Bonner, Stanley F. *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny*. Routledge Library Editions: Education 91. London: Methuen, 1977.

Borrut, Antoine. "An Islamic Late Antiquity? Problems and Perspectives." In *The Byzantine Near East: A New History*, edited by Scott Johnson, Elizabeth Bolman, and Jack Tannous. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

Bourlet, Caroline. "Les tabletiers parisiens à la fin du moyen âge." In *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, edited by Elisabeth Lalou, 323–341. Bibliologia 12. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1992.

Boustan, Raʿanan, and Michael Beshay. "Sealing the Demons, Once and for All: The Ring of Solomon, the Cross of Christ, and the Power of Biblical Kingship." *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16, no. 1 (2015): 99–129.

Bowman, Alan K., and James D. Thomas. *Vindolanda: The Latin Writing-Tablets*. Britannica Monograph Series 4. London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1983.

Boyarin, Daniel. *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Boyarin, Daniel. "Dialectic and Divination in the Talmud." In *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, edited by Simon Goldhill, 217–241. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Bozia, Eleni. *Lucian and His Roman Voices: Cultural Exchanges and Conflicts in the Late Roman Empire*. Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies 19. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Brand, Mattias. *Beyond Light and Darkness: Religion and the Everyday Life of Manichaeans*. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies Series 102. Leiden: Brill, 2022.

Brashear, William M., and Francisca A. J. Hoogendijk. "Corpus Tabularum Lignearum Ceratarumque Aegyptiarum." *Enchoria* 17 (1990): 21–53.

Broderson, Kai., ed. and trans. *Plinius' kleine Reiseapotheke*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2015.

Broderson, Kai., ed. and trans. *Pseudo-Apuleius Heilkräuterbuch (Herbarius)*. Wiesbaden: Marixverlag, 2015.

Brodsky, David. "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse: Progymnasmata and the Evolution of a Rabbinic Genre." In *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, edited by Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan, 173–231. AJEC 89. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Brody, Robert. "The Anonymous Talmud and the Words of the Amoraim." [In Hebrew.] In *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish Studies*, edited by Baruch J. Schwartz, Avraham Melamed, and Aaron Shemesh, Vol. 1: *The Bible and Its World, Rabbinic Literature and Jewish Law, and Jewish Thought*, edited by Baruch J. Schwartz, Avraham Melamed, and Aaron Shemesh, 213–232. Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2008.

Brody, Robert. *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. Originally published in hardcover in 1998.

Brody, Robert. "On Dating the Anonymous Portions of the Babylonian Talmud." [In Hebrew.] *Sidra* 24–25 (2010): 71–82.

Budge, Ernest A. W. *The Syriac Book of Medicines: Syrian Anatomy, Pathology and Therapeutics in the Early Middle Ages with Sections on Astrological and Native Medicine and Recipes, by an Anonymous Physician*. 2 vols. Amsterdam: APA-Philo Press, 1976. Reprint of the 1913 edition.

Burrus, Virginia. "Socrates, the Rabbis and the Virgin: The Dialogic Imagination in Late Antiquity." In *Talmudic Transgressions: Engaging the Work of Daniel Boyarin*, edited by Charlotte E. Fonrobert, Ishay Rosen-Zvi, Aharon Shemesh, and Moulie Vidas, 457–474. JSJSup 181. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Bussières, Marie-Pierre. "Biblical Commentary." In *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, edited by Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts, 313–325. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.

Butts, Aaron M. *Language Change in the Wake of Empire: Syriac in Its Greco-Roman Context*. Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 11. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016.

Calder, Norman. *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature*, edited and translated by Jawid Mojaddedi and Andrew Rippin. London: Routledge, 2003.

Cameron, Alan. "The Date and Identity of Macrobius." *Journal of Roman Studies* 56, parts 1 and 2 (1966): 25–38.

Cameron, Averil. "Culture Wars: Late Antiquity and Literature." In *Libera Curiositas: Mélanges d'histoire romaine et d'Antiquité tardive offerts à Jean-Michel Carrié*, edited by Christel Freu, Sylvain Janniard, and Arthur Ripoli, 307–316. Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive 31. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2016.

Caputo, Clementina, and James M. S. Cowey. "Ceramic Supports and Their Relation to Texts in Two Groups of Ostraca from the Fayum." In *The Materiality of Texts from Ancient Egypt: New Approaches to the Study of Textual Material from the Early Pharaonic to the Late Antique Period*, edited by Francisca A. Hoogendijk and Steffie M. van Gompel, 62–75. Papyrologica Lugduna-Batava 35. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory: The Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. 2nd ed. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Cauderlier, Patrice. "Les tablettes grecques d'égypte: inventaire." In *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, edited by Elisabeth Lalou, 63–94. Bibliologia 12. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1992.

Chakrabarti, Arindam, and Ralph Weber. "Introduction." In *Comparative Philosophy without Borders*, edited by Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber, 1–34. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
Chin, Catherine Michael. "Cosmos." In *Late Ancient Knowing: Explorations in Intellectual History*, edited by Catherine Michael Chin and Moulie Vidas, 99–116. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.
Chin, Catherine Michael. *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World*. Divinations: Rereading Late Antique Religion. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
Chin, Catherine Michael. "Rhetorical Practice in the Chreia Elaboration of Mara bar Serapion." *Hugoye* 9, no. 2 (2008).
Cohen, A. "Arabisms in Rabbinic Literature." *JQR* 3, no. 2 (October 1912): 221–233.
Cohen, Barak S. "Citation Formulae in the Babylonian Talmud: From Transmission to Authoritative Traditions." *JJS* 70 (2019): 24–44.
Cohn, Naftali S. "Sectarianism in the Mishnah: Memory, Modeling Society, and Rabbinic Identity." In *History, Memory, and Jewish Identity*, edited by Ira Robinson, Naftali S. Cohn, and Lorenzo DiTommaso, 31–54. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016.
Colditz, Iris. "'… werdet mit den Schriften vertraut': Schriftgelehrtheit, Mehrsprachigkeit und Bildungsvermittlung in manichäischen Gemeinden." In *Iran und Turfan: Beiträge Berliner Wissenschaftler, Werner Sundermann zum 60; Geburtstag gewidmet*, edited by Christiane Reck and Peter Zieme, 35–57. Iranica 2. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995.
Coogan, Jeremiah. "Transforming Textuality: Porphyry, Eusebius, and Late Ancient Tables." *SLA* 5, no. 1 (2021): 6–27.
Corvisier, Jean-Nicolas. "Athenaeus, Medicine and Demography." In *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, edited by David Braund and John Wilkins, 492–502. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.
Crawford, Matthew R. *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*. OECS. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
Cribiore, Raffaella. *Libanius the Sophist: Rhetoric, Reality, and Religion in the Fourth Century*. Cornell Studies in Classical Philology. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.
Cribiore, Raffaella. *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
Cuddon, John A. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
Daube, David. "Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric." *HUCA* 22 (1949): 239–264.
Davis, Stephen J. *The Cult of St. Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*. OECS. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
Degni, Paolo. *Usi delle tavolette lignee e cerate nel mondo greco e romano*. Ricerca Papirologica 4. Messina: Sicania, 1992.
De Menasce, Jean-Paul. "Early Evidence for the Symbolic Meaning of the Kustīk." In *Sir J.J. Zarthoshti Madressa Centenary Volume*, edited by Jivanji

Jamshedji Modi, 17–18. Bombay: Trustees of the Parsi Puchayet Funds and Properties, 1967.
Dershowitz, Idan. *The Dismembered Bible: Cutting and Pasting Scripture in Antiquity*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 143. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021.
Dolgopolski, Sergey. *The Open Past: Subjectivity and Remembering in the Talmud*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.
Dorandi, Tiziano. *Nell' officina dei classici: Come lavoravano gli autori antichi*. Repr. Rome: Carocci Editore, 2017.
Doroszewska, Julia. "Beyond the Limits of the Human Body: Phlegon of Tralles' Medical Curiosities." In *Medicine and Paradoxography in the Ancient World*, edited by George Kazantzidis, 117–140. Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes 81. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019.
Drijvers, Jan Willem. "Rome and the Sasanian Empire: Confrontation and Coexistence." In *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, edited by Philip Rousseau, 441–454. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
Duchesne-Guillemin, Jacques. "Ahriman." *EIr* 1:670–673. https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ahriman.
Dunn, James D. G. *The Oral Gospel Tradition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013.
Dusil, Stephan, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter. "Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter." In *Exzerpieren – Kompilieren – Tradieren: Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, edited by Stephan Dusil, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter, 1–22. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016.
Elman, Yaakov. "Middle Persian Culture and Babylonian Sages: Accommodation and Resistance in the Shaping of Rabbinic Legal Tradition." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, 164–197. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
Elman, Yaakov. "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud." *Oral Tradition* 14, no. 1 (1999): 52–99.
Elman, Yaakov. "Saffron, Spices, and Sorceresses: Magic Bowls and the Bavli." In *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient Worlds*, edited by Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres, 365–385. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
Elsner, Jaś. *Introduction to Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture*, edited by Jaś Elsner and Michel Meyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
Epstein, Jacob N. *Introduction to Amoraitic Literature: Babylonian Talmud and Yerushalmi*. [In Hebrew.] Jerusalem: Hotsa'at sefarim 'al shem Y. L. Magnes, 1962.
Etz-Chayim, Yehonathan. *Introduction to the Oral Law, Unit 5: The Babylonian Talmud*. Tel Aviv: The Open University, 1992.
Evans, Paul S. "Creating a New 'Great Divide': The Exoticization of Ancient Culture in Some Recent Applications of Orality Studies to the Bible." *JBL* 136, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 749–764.

Federici, Carlo, Lucia Mita, and Michelangelo Pezzano. "Nota sulle caratteristiche tecnologiche delle tavolette lignee vaticane." In *Tavolette lignee e cerate da varie collezioni*, edited by Rosario Pintaudi, Pieter J. Sijpesteijn, and Roger S. Bagnall, 199–242. Papyrologica Florentina 18. Florence: Edizioni Gonnelli, 1989.

Feeney, Dennis. *Beyond Greek: The Beginnings of Latin Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Fischel, Henry A. *Rabbinic Literature and Greco-Roman Philosophy: A Study of Epicurea and Rhetorica in Early Midrashic Writings*. Studia Post-biblica 21. Leiden: Brill, 1973.

Fischel, Henry A. "Story and History: Observations on Greco-Roman Rhetoric and Pharisaism." In *American Oriental Society, Middle West Branch, Semi-Centennial Volume: A Collection of Original Essays*, edited by Denis Sinor, 59–88. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969.

Fischel, Henry A. "Studies in Cynicism and the Ancient Near East: The Transformation of a Chria." In *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, edited by Jacob Neusner, 372–411. Studies in the History of Religions 14. Leiden: Brill, 1968.

Fishman, Talya. "Claims about the Mishna in the *Epistle* of Sherira Gaon: Islamic Theology and Jewish History." In *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World*, edited by David M. Freidenreich and Miriam Goldstein, 65–77. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Flemming, Rebecca. "The Physicians at the Feast: The Place of Medical Knowledge at Athenaeus' Dinner-Table." In *Athenaeus and his World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, edited by David Braund and John Wilkins, 476–482. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

Fonrobert, Charlotte E., and Martin S. Jaffee, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Fontaine, Jacques. "Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons chez quelques écrivains latins de la fin du Ive siècle : Ausone, Ambroise, Ammien." *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* 23 (1977): 425–482.

Formisano, Marco. "Literature of Knowledge." In *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, edited by Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts, 491–504. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.

Formisano, Marco. "Introduction: The Poetics of Knowledge." In *Knowledge, Text and Practice in Ancient Technical Writing*, edited by Marco Formisano and Philip van der Eijk, 12–26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Formisano, Marco. "Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity." *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 277–284.

Fowler, Ryan C., ed. *Plato in the Third Sophistic*. Millennium-Studien/Millennium Studies 50. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014.

Fowler, Ryan C. "The Second Sophistic." In *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, edited by Lloyd P. Gerson, 100–114. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Fowler, Ryan C., and Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas. "A Prolegomena to the Third Sophistic." In *Plato in the Third Sophistic*, edited by Ryan C. Fowler, 1–30. Millennium-Studien/Millennium Studies 50. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014.

Fraade, Steven D. "Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim," *Oral Tradition* 14, no. 1 (1999): 33–51.

Fraade, Steven D. "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries." In *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, edited by Lee I. Levine, 253–286. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992.

Fraade, Steven D. *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Fraenkel, Jonah. "Paronomasia in Aggadic Narrative." *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 27 (1978): 27–51.

Frank, Yitzhak. *The Practical Talmud Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Jerusalem: Ariel, United Israel Institutes, 1994.

Frankel, Zacharias. *Mavo ha-Yerushalmi: Einleitung in den jerusalemischen Talmud*. [In Hebrew.] Breslau: Schletter, 1870.

Freeman, David L. "The Gittin 'Book of Remedies.'" *Korot* 13 (1998): 151–164.

French, Roger. *Ancient Natural History: Histories of Nature*. Sciences of Antiquity. London: Routledge, 1994.

Friedman, Shamma L. "Now You See It, Now You Don't: Can Source-Criticism Perform Magic on Talmudic Passages about Sorcery?" In *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, edited by Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan, 32–83. AJEC 89. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Friedman, Shamma L. "A Good Story Deserves Retelling: The Unfolding of the Akiva Legend." In *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, edited by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, 71–100. TSAJ 114. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.

Fuchs, Uziel. *The Geonic Talmud: The Attitude of Babylonian Geonim to the Text of the Babylonian Talmud*. [In Hebrew.] Jerusalem: Herzog Academic College, 2017.

Furstenberg, Yair. "The Invention of the Ban against Writing Oral Torah in the Babylonian Talmud." *AJSR* 46, no. 1 (2022): 131–150.

Gabbay, Uri. "The King of the Demons: Pazuzu, Bagdana and Ašmedai." In *A Woman of Valor: Jerusalem Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Joan Godnick Westenholz*, edited by Uri Gabbay, Wayne Horowitz, and Filip Vukosavović, 57–72. Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 8. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2010.

Gafni, Isaiah. "The Political, Social, and Economic History of Babylonian Jewry, 224–638 CE." In *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, edited by W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein, Vol. 4: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, edited by Steven T. Katz, 792–820. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Gaillard-Seux, Patricia. "La crémation des remèdes dans les textes médicaux latins." In *Manus medica : Actions et gestes de l'officiant dans les texts médicaux latins; Questions de thérapeutique et de lexique*, edited by Françoise Gaide and Frédérique Biville, 69–86. Collection Textes et Documents

de la Méditerranée Antique et Médievale. Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2003.
Gallo, Paolo. *Ostraca demotici e ieratici dell'archivio bilingue di Narmouthis II* (nn. 34–99). Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1997.
Geller, Markham J., ed. *Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*. IJS Studies in Judaica 16. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
Geller, Markham J. "An Akkadian Vademecum in the Babylonian Talmud." In *From Athens to Jerusalem: Medicine in Hellenized Jewish Lore and in Early Christian Literature*, edited by Samuel Kottek, Manfred Horstmanshoff, Gerhard Baader, and Gary Ferngren, 13–32. Rotterdam: Erasmus, 2000.
Gemeinhardt, Peter, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen, eds. *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
Gesenius, Wilhelm, ed. *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*. Göttingen: Springer, 1962. Reprint of the 1915 edition.
Geus, Klaus, and Colin Guthrie King. "Paradoxography." In *The Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, edited by Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough, 431–444. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
Giangrande, Lawrence. *The Use of Spoudaiogeloion in Greek and Roman Literature*. Studies in Classical Literature 6. The Hague: Mouton, 1972.
Gibson, Craig A. "The Alexandrian Tychaion and the Date of Ps.-Nicolaus 'Progymnasmata.'" *Classical Quarterly*, 59, no. 2 (December 2009): 608–623.
Goldstone, Matthew. "The Babylonian Talmud in Its Cultural Context." *Religion Compass* 13, no. 6 (June 2019).
Goodblatt, David. "A Generation of Talmudic Studies." In *The Talmud in Its Iranian Context*, edited by Carol Bakhos and M. Rahim Shayegan, 1–20. TSAJ 135. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.
Goodblatt, David. *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia*. SJLA 9. Leiden: Brill, 1975.
Goodblatt, David. "Abraham Weiss: The Search for Literary Forms." In *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud: Studies in the Achievements of Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Historical Literary-Critical Research*, edited by Jacob Neusner, 95–103. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970.
Gottheil, Richard. "Contributions to Syriac Folk-Medicine." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 20, no. 1 (January 1899): 186–205.
Gray, Alyssa M. *A Talmud in Exile: The Influence of Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah on the Formation of Bavli Avodah Zarah*. BJS 342. Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2005.
Greatrex, Geoffrey. "Introduction." In *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*, edited by Geoffrey Greatrex and Hugh Elton, 1–7. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2015.
Greatrex, Geoffrey. "Byzantium and the East in the Sixth Century." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, edited by Michael Maas, 477–509. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
Green, William S. "Context and Meaning in Rabbinic 'Biography.'" In *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, edited by William S. Green, 97–111. Vol. 2. BJS 9. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980.

Green, William S. "What's in a Name? The Problematic of 'Rabbinic Biography.'" In *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, edited by William S. Green, 77–96. Vol. 1. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978.

Grocock, Christopher, and Sally Grainger. *Apicius: A Critical Edition with an Introduction and an English Translation of the Latin Recipe Text*. Totnes, UK: Prospect Books, 2006.

Grossmark, Tziona. "The *Nehutei* as Traveling Agents and Transmitters of Cultural Data between the Torah Study Centers in Babylonia and in the Land of Israel during the Third and Fourth Centuries CE." In "The Mediterranean Voyage," edited by Susan L. Rosenstreich. Special issue, *Mediterranean Studies* 23, no. 2 (2015): 125–148.

Gunderson, Erik. "Rhetorical Terms." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, edited by Erik Gunderson, 291–298. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

Halevy, Isaac. *Dorot ha-rishonim*. Frankfurt: Jüdische Literarische Gesellschaft, 1906.

Halivni, David Weiss. *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*. Translated and annotated by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Hanson, Anne E. "Fragmentation and the Greek Medical Writers." In *Collecting Fragments – Fragmente sammeln*, edited by Glenn W. Most, 289–314. Aporemata 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997.

Hanson, Anne E. *Introduction to The Michigan Medical Codex (P. Mich. 758 = P. Mich. Inv. 21)*, edited by Louise C. Youtie, xv–xxv. Michigan Papyri 7. American Studies in Papyrology 35. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.

Haran, Menahem. "The Codex, the Pinax, and the Wooden Slats." [In Hebrew.] *Tarbiz* 57, no. 2 (1988): 151–164.

Harland, Philip A. "Acculturation and Identity in the Diaspora: A Jewish Family and 'Pagan' Guilds at Hierapolis." *JJS* 57, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 222–244.

Harris-McCoy, Daniel. "Making and Defending Claims to Authority in Vitruvius' *De architectura*." In *Authority and Expertise in Ancient Scientific Culture*, edited by Jason König and Greg Woolf, 107–128. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Hasan-Rokem, Galit. "An Almost Invisible Presence: Multilingual Puns in Rabbinic Literature." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, 222–240. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Hasan-Rokem, Galit. *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*. Translated by Batya Stein. Contraversions. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Hayes, Christine E. *Between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds: Accounting for Halakhic Difference in Selected Sugyot from Tractate Avodah Zarah*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Heath, Malcolm. "Theon and the History of the Progymnasmata." *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 43, no. 3 (2002): 129–160.

Herman, Geoffrey. "In Search of Non-Rabbinic Judaism in Sasanian Babylonia." In *Diversity and Rabbinization: Jewish Texts and Societies between 400 and 1,000 CE*, edited by Gavin McDowell, Ron Naiweld, and Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, 121–137. Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures 8. Cambridge: Open Book, 2021.

Herman, Geoffrey. "Jewish Identity in Babylonia in the Period of the Incantation Bowls." In *A Question of Identity: Social, Political, and Historical Aspects of Identity Dynamics in Jewish and Other Contexts*, edited by Dikla Rivlin Katz, Noah Hacham, Geoffrey Herman, and Lilach Sagiv, 131–152. Berlin: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019.

Herman, Geoffrey, and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, eds. *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*. BJS 362. Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2018.

Hezser, Catherine. "Mobility, Flexibility, and Diasporization of Palestinian Judaism after 70 CE." In *Let the Wise Listen and Add to their Learning (Prov 1:5): Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday*, edited by Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer, 197–216. Studia Judaica 90. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016.

Hezser, Catherine. "Form-Criticism of Rabbinic Literature." In *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt, and Peter J. Tomson, 97–110. JSJSup 136. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Hezser, Catherine. *Form, Function, and Historical Significance of the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Neziqin*. TSAJ 37. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993.

Hidary, Richard. *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Hirsch, Emil G., and Immanuel M. Casanowicz. "Lapwing." In *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, edited by Isidore Singer, 619. Saint Petersburg: Brokhaus and Efron, 1906. www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9636-lapwing.

Hock, Ronald F., and Edward N. O'Neil, ed. and trans. *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, Vol. 2: *Classroom Exercises*. WGRW 2. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Hock, Ronald F., and Edward N. O'Neil, ed. and trans. *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*,Vol. 1: *The Progymnasmata*. SBL Texts and Translations 27/Greco-Roman Religion Series 9. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.

Hoffman, C. A. "Fiat Magia." In *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, edited by Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer, 179–194. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Hoffmann, Philippe. "What Was a Commentary in Late Antiquity? The Example of the Neoplatonic Commentators." In *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, edited by Mary Louise Gill and Edward J. Watts, 597–622. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.

Holtz, Barry W. *Rabbi Akiva: Sage of the Talmud*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Horden, Peregrine. "Prefatory Note: The Uses of Medical Manuscripts." In *Medical Books in the Byzantine World*, edited by Barbara Zipser, 1–6. Bologna: Eikasmos Online II, 2013.

Hose, Martin. "Intertextualität als hermeneutisches Instrument in spätantiker Literatur: Das Beispiel Ammianus Marcellinus." In *Spätantike Konzeptionen von Literatur*, edited by Jan R. Stenger, 81–96. Bibliothek der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaften Neue Folge, Series 2, 149. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2015.

Houston, George W. *Inside Roman Libraries: Book Collections and Their Management in Antiquity*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Howley, Joseph. "In Rome." In *Further Reading*, edited by Leah Price and Matthew Rubery, 15–27. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Hoyland, Robert G. *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*. Ancient Warfare and Civilization. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Hunger, Herbert. "Profandichtung." In *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, edited by Herbert Hunger, 87–182. Byzantinisches Handbuch 5.2. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1978.

Hurtado, Larry W. "Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies? 'Orality,' 'Performance' and Reading Texts in Early Christianity." *NTS* 60, no. 3 (July 2014): 321–340.

Hurtado, Larry W., and Chris Keith. "Writing and Book Production in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods." In *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, edited by James Carleton Paget and Joachim Schaper, 63–80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Ilan, Tal, and Ronit Nikolsky. "מהתם להכה, From there to here (bSanh 5a): Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia; An Introduction." In *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, edited by Tal Ilan and Ronit Nikolsky, 1–31. AJEC 89. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Jacob, Christian. "Athenaeus the Librarian." In *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, edited by David Braund and John Wilkins, 85–110. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

Jacobs, Louis. *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Jacobs, Louis. "The Numbered Sequence as Literary Device." *Hebrew Annual Review* 7 (1983): 137–149.

Jaffee, Martin S. "Rabbinic Authorship as a Collective Enterprise." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Martin S. Jaffee and Charlotte E. Fonrobert, 17–37. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Jaffee, Martin S. *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Jaffee, Martin S. "The Babylonian Appropriation of the Talmud Yerushalmi: Redactional Studies in the Horayot Tractates." In *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism*, edited by Alan J. Avery-Peck, Vol. 4: *The Literature of Early Rabbinic Judaism: Issues in Talmudic Redaction and Interpretation*, 3–27. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989.

Johnson, William A. "Libraries and Reading Culture in the High Empire." In *Ancient Libraries*, edited by Jason König, Katerina Oikonomopoulou,

and Greg Woolf, 347–363. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013.
Johnson, William A. "Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity." *American Journal of Philology* 121, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 593–627.
Jördens, Andrea. "Codices des Typs C und die Anfänge des Blätterns." in *Material Aspects of Reading in Ancient and Medieval Cultures. Materiality, Presence and Performance*, edited by Anna Krauss, Jonas Leipziger, and Friederike Schücking-Jungblut, 115–148. Materiale Textkulturen 26. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020.
Kahana, Menahem I. "The Halakhic Midrashim." In *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud*, Vol. 3:*The Literature of the Sages; Second Part: Midrash and Targum; Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism; Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science; and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Ze'ev Safrai, Joshua J. Schwartz, and Peter Tomson, 1–105. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, 2/3/2. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
Kalmin, Richard. *Migrating Tales: The Talmud's Narratives and Their Historical Context*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.
Kalmin, Richard. *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
Kalmin, Richard. "The Formation and Character of the Babylonian Talmud." In *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, edited by W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein, Vol. 4: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, edited by Steven T. Katz, 840–876. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
Kalmin, Richard. "Doeg the Edomite: From Biblical Villain to Rabbinic Sage." In *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition*, edited by Craig A. Evans, 390–405. Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 33. Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 7. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
Kalmin, Richard. *The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud: Amoraic or Saboraic?* Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 12. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1989.
Kalmin, Richard. "Quotation Forms in the Babylonian Talmud: Authentically Amoraic, or a Later Editorial Construct?" *HUCA* 59 (1988): 167–187.
Kaminka, Armand. "The Origin of the Ashmedai Legend in the Babylonian Talmud." *JQR*, 13, no. 2 (October 1922): 221–224.
Kaster, Robert A. "Scholarship." In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies*, edited by Alessandro Barchiesi and Walter Scheidel, 492–504. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
Keith, Chris. *The Gospel as Manuscript: The Jesus Tradition as Material Artifact*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
Kennedy, George A. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. WGRW 10. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
Keyser, Paul T. "Science in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries CE: An Aporetic Age." In *Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, edited by Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough, 829–844. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Khaleghi-Motlagh, D. J. "Akvān-e Dīv." *EIr* 1:740. www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akvan-e-div-the-demon-akvan-who-was-killed-by-rostam.

Kiel, Yishai. "The Usurpation of Solomon's Throne by Ashmedai (b. Giṭ. 68a–b): A Talmudic Story in Its Iranian and Christian Contexts." *Irano-Judaica* 7 (2019): 439–471.

King, Daniel. "Education in the Syriac World of Late Antiquity." In *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*, edited by Peter Gemeinhardt, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen, 171–185. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Kiperwasser, Reuven. "Narrative Bricolage and Cultural Hybrids in Rabbinic Babylonia: On the Narratives of Seduction and the Topos of Light." In *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, edited by Geoffrey Herman and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, 23–45. BJS 362. Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2018.

Kiperwasser, Reuven, and Serge Ruzer. "Zoroastrian Proselytes in Rabbinic and Syriac Christian Narratives: Orality-Related Markers of Cultural Identity." *History of Religions* 51, no. 3 (February 2012): 197–218.

Klein, Gil. "Torah in Triclinia: The Rabbinic Banquet and the Significance of Architecture." *JQR* 102, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 325–370.

König, Götz. *Die Erzählung von Tahmuras und Ǧamšid: Edition des neupersischen Textes in Pahlawi-Schrift (MU 29) nebst zweier Parallelfassungen*. Iranica 14. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008.

König, Jason. *Saints and Symposiasts: The Literature of Food and the Symposium in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Culture*. Greek Culture in the Roman World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

König, Jason, and Greg Woolf. "Encyclopaedism in the Roman Empire." In *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, edited by Jason König and Greg Woolf, 22–63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

König, Roderich, and Gerhard Winkler, ed. and trans. *C. Plinius Secundus d. Ä., Naturkunde, Lateinisch-Deutsch Buch I: Vorrede, Inhaltsverzeichnis des Gesamtwerkes, Fragmente, Zeugnisse*. 2nd rev. ed. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997.

Kottek, Samuel. "Selected Elements of Talmudic Medical Terminology, with Special Consideration to Greco-Latin Influences and Sources." *ANRW* 37.3. Part 2, *Principat*, edited by Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini, 2912–2933. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996.

Kottek, Samuel. "Concepts of Disease in the Talmud." *Korot* 9, nos. 1–2 (1985): 7–33.

Kovelman, Arkady. *Between Alexandria and Jerusalem: The Dynamic of Jewish and Hellenistic Culture*. Brill Reference Library of Judaism 21. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Kraemer, David C. *Reading the Rabbis: The Talmud as Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Krasser, Helmut. "*Me manus una capit*: Von kleinen Büchern und ihren Lesern in Martials Epigrammen." In *Techniken und ihre Materialität: Alltägliche Präsenz, mediale Semantik, literarische Reflexion*, edited by Cornelia Ritter-Schmalz and Raphael Schwitter, 159–174. Materiale Textkulturen 27. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019.

Krasser, Helmut. "Universalisierung und Identitätskonstruktion: Formen und Funktionen der Wissenskodifikation im kaiserzeitlichen Rom." In *Erinnerung, Gedächtnis, Wissen: Studien zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Gedächtnisforschung*, edited by Günter Oesterle, 357–376. Formen der Erinnerung 26. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005.

Krupp, Michael. "Manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud." In *Literature of the Sages, First Part: Oral Torah, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*, edited by Shmuel Safrai, 346–366. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum. Assen, Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 1987.

Kwasman, Theodore. "Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic: Some Preliminary Observations." In *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, edited by Markham J. Geller, 333–386. IJS Studies in Judaica 16. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

La Bua, Giuseppe. "Aiebat se in animo scribere (Sen. Contr. 1 praef. 18): Writing in Roman declamations." In *Papers on Rhetoric 10*, edited by Lucia Calboli Montefusco, 183–199. Rome: Herder, 2010.

Lachs, Samuel T. "The Pandora-Eve Motif in Rabbinic Literature." *HTR* 67, no. 3 (July 1974): 341–345.

Lalou, Elisabeth, ed. *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*. Bibliologia 12. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1992.

Landfester, Manfred, ed. *Geschichte der antiken Texte: Autoren- und Werklexikon*. Der Neue Pauly, Supplemente 2. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2007.

Langer, Gerhard. "Solomon in Rabbinic Literature." In *Solomon in Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Joseph Verheyden, 127–142. Themes in Biblical Narrative 16. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Lapin, Hayim. "Toward a History of Rabbinic Powerlessness." In *Strength to Strength: Essays in Honor of Shaye J. D. Cohen*, edited by Michael Satlow, 329–339. BJS 363. Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018.

Lapin, Hayim. *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100–400 CE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Lapin, Hayim. "Epigraphical Rabbis: A Reconsideration." *JQR* 101, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 311–346.

Lapin, Hayim. "The Origins and Development of the Rabbinic Movement in the Land of Israel." In *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. 4: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, edited by Steven T. Katz, 206–229. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Larsen, Lillian I. "School Texts." In *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, edited by Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts, 471–491. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.

Larsen, Lillian I. "Early Monasticism and the Rhetorical Tradition: Sayings and Stories as School Texts." In *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*, edited by Peter Gemeinhardt, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen, 13–33. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Larsen, Lillian I. "The *Apophthegmata Patrum*: Rustic Rumination or Rhetoric Recitation." *Meddelanden* 23 (2008): 21–30.

Larsen, Lillian I. "The *Apophthegmata Patrum* and the Classical Rhetorical Tradition." In *Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2003: Historica, Biblica, Ascetica et Hagiographica*, edited by F. Young, M. Edwards, and P. Parvis, 409–415. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2006.

Larsen, Matthew D. C. *Gospels before the Book*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Lavin, Irving. "The Hunting Mosaics in Antioch and Their Sources: A Study of Compositional Principles in the Development of Early Medieval Style." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 179–286.

Lehmhaus, Lennart. "*Listenwissenschaft* and the Encyclopedic Hermeneutics of Knowledge in Talmud and Midrash." In *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia*, edited by J. Cale Johnson, 59–100. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.

Lehmhaus, Lennart, and Matteo Martelli, eds. *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue*. Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 4. Boston: de Gruyter, 2017.

Lehoux, Daryn. *What Did the Romans Know? An Inquiry into Science and Worldmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Leith, David. "Question-Types in Medical Catechisms on Papyrus." In *Authorial Voices in Greco-Roman Technical Writing*, edited by Liba Taub and Aude Doody, 107–124. AKAN-Einzelschriften 7. Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2009.

Lenski, Noel. "Searching for Slave Teachers in Late Antiquity." In "Ποιμένι λαῶν. Studies in Honor of Robert J. Penella," edited by Cristiana Sogno. Special issue, *RET Supplément* 7 (2019): 127–191.

Levene, Dan. "'A Happy Thought of the Magicians': The Magical Get." In *Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff*, edited by Robert Deutsch, 175–184. Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2003.

Levine, Lee I. *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Lieber, Laura S. "Setting the Stage: The Theatricality of Jewish Aramaic Poetry from Late Antiquity." *JQR* 104, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 537–572.

Lieberman, Saul. *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.–IV Century C.E.* TSJTSA 18. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962.

Lightstone, Jack N. "The Rhetoric of the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud: From Rabbinic Priestly Scribes to Scholastic Rabbis." *Historical Reflections/ Réflexions Historiques* 21, no. 1 (1995): 77–112.

Locher, Albrecht, and Rolf C. A. Rottländer. "Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *Naturalis Historia* des älteren Plinius und die Schrifttäfelchen von Vindolanda." In *Lebendige Altertumswissenschaft: Festschrift für Hermann Vetters*, edited by Manfred Kandler, 140–147. Vienna: Holzhausen, 1985.

Lord, Albert B. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.

Lougovaya, Julia. "Writing on Ostraca: Considerations of Material Aspects." In *The Materiality of Texts from Ancient Egypt: New Approaches to the Study of Textual Material from the Early Pharaonic to the Late Antique Period*, edited by Francisca A. Hoogendijk and Steffie M. van Gompel, 52–61. Papyrologica Lugduna-Batava 35. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Luchner, Katharina. *Philiatroi: Studien zum Thema der Krankheit in der griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit*. Hypomnemata 156. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004.

MacQueen, Bruce D. "The Stepchildren of Herodotus: The Transformation of History into Fiction in Late Antiquity." In *The Children of Herodotus: Greek and Roman Historiography and Related Genres*, edited by Jakob Pigoń, 329–348. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.

Manekin Bamberger, Avigail. "An Akkadian Demon in the Talmud: Between Šulak and Bar-Šhiriqa." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 44 (2013): 282–287.

Marks, Susan. "Who Studies at the Beit Midrash? Funding Palestinian Amoraic Education." *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 12 (2021): 281–312.

Manuwald, Gesine. "The Reception of Republican Comedy in Antiquity." In *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy*, edited by Martin T. Dinter, 261–275. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Maxwell, Jaclyn. "Sermons." In *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, edited by Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts, 343–357. Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.

McGill, Scott, and Edward J. Watts, eds. *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*. Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.

Meier, Christel. "Organisation of Knowledge and Encyclopaedic *Ordo*: Functions and Purposes of a Universal Literary Genre." In *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1–4 July 1996*, edited by Peter Binkley, 103–126. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Meissner, Burkhard. *Die technische Fachliteratur der Antike: Struktur, Überlieferung und Wirkung technischen Wissens in der Antike (ca. 400 v.Chr.-ca. 500 n.Chr.)*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999.

Meyer, Marvin, ed. *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts and Ritual Power*. Mythos: The Princeton/Bollingen Series in World Mythology. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Millar, Fergus. "Transformation of Judaism under Greco-Roman Rule: Responses to Seth Schwartz's *Imperialism and Jewish Society*." In *Empire, Church, and Society in the Late Roman Near East: Greeks, Jews, Syrians and Saracens (Collected Studies 2004–2014)*, edited by Fergus Millar, 313–337. Late Antique History and Religion 10. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2015.

Mokhtarian, Jason Sion. *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings, and Priests: The Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

Morag, Shelomo. *Vocalised Talmudic Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collection*, Vol. 1: *Taylor-Schechter Old Series*. Cambridge University Library Genizah Series 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Morgan, Teresa. *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
Moscovitz, Leib. "'Designation is Significant': An Analysis of the Conceptual Sugya in bSan 47b–48b." *AJSR* 27, no. 2 (November 2003): 227–252.
Moscovitz, Leib. *Talmudic Reasoning: From Casuistics to Conceptualization*. TSAJ 89. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002.
Moss, Candida. "Fashioning Mark: Early Christian Discussions about the Scribe and Status of the Second Gospel." *NTS* 67, no. 2 (2021): 181–204.
Murphy, Trevor. "Pliny's Naturalis Historia: The Prodigal Text." In *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, edited by Anthony Boyle and William J. Dominik, 301–322. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
Nagy, Árpád M. "*Daktylios Pharmakites*: Magical Healing Gems and Rings in the Greco-Roman Worlds." In *Ritual Healing: Magic, Ritual and Medical Therapy from Antiquity until the Early Modern Period*, edited by Charles Burnett and Ildikó Csepregi, 71–106. Micrologus' Library 48. Florence: SISMEL – Ed. del Galluzzo, 2012.
Nasoraia, Birkha H. S. "The Mandeans: Writings, Ritual, and Art." In *The Gnostic World*, edited by Garry W. Tromp in collaboration with Gunner B. Mikkelsen and Jay Johnston, 187–199. Routledge World Series. London: Routledge, 2019.
Neis, Rachel Rafael. *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
Neusner, Jacob. *The Bavli's Massive Miscellanies: The Problem of Agglutinative Discourse in the Talmud of Babylonia*. SFSHJ 43. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992.
Neusner, Jacob. *The Bavli's One Voice: Types and Forms of Analytical Discourse and Their Fixed Order of Appearance*. SFSHJ 24. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991.
Neusner, Jacob. *The Judaism Behind the Texts: The Generative Premises of Rabbinic Literature*, Vol. 5: *The Talmuds of the Land of Israel and of Babylonia*, edited by Jacob Neusner. SFSHJ 101. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.
Neusner, Jacob. *The Principal Parts of the Bavli's Discourse: A Preliminary Taxonomy; Mishna Commentary, Sources, Traditions, and Agglutinative Miscellanies*. SFSHJ 53. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992.
Neusner, Jacob. *The Rules of Composition of the Talmud of Babylonia: The Cogency of the Bavli's Composite*. SFSHJ 13. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991.
Neusner, Jacob. *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions Concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai*. Leiden: Brill, 1970.
Newman, Hillel I. "Closing the Circle: Yonah Fraenkel, the Talmudic Story, and Rabbinic History." In *How Should Rabbinic Literature Be Read in the Modern World?*, edited by Matthew Kraus, 105–135. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2006.
Niehoff, Maren R. "The Phoenix in Rabbinic Literature." *HTR* 89, no. 3 (July 1996): 245–265.
Nikolsky, Ronit, and Tal Ilan, eds. *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*. AJEC 89. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
Ní Mheallaigh, Karen. *The Moon in the Greek and Roman Imagination Myth, Literature, Science and Philosophy*. Greek Culture in the Roman World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Oikonomopoulou, Katerina. "Review of Condensing Texts – Condensed Texts: Palingenesia, Bd 98, edited by Mariette Horster and Christiane Reitz." *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 38 (October 2012).

Olmos, Paula. "Two Literary Encyclopaedias from Late Antiquity." *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43, no. 2 (June 2012): 284–292.

Olson, David R. "Why Literacy Matters, Then and Now." In *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, edited by William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker, 385–404. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Omidsalar, Mahmoud. "Dīv." *EIr* 7:428–431. www.iranicaonline.org/articles/div.

Parker, Holt N. "Books and Reading Latin Poetry." In *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, edited by Holt N. Parker and William A. Johnson, 186–227. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Parker, Holt N. "Love's Body Anatomized: The Ancient Erotic Handbooks and the Rhetoric of Sexuality." In *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, edited by Amy Richlin, 90–111. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Penella, Robert J. "The *Progymnasmata* and Progymnasmatic Theory in Imperial Greek Education." In *A Companion to Ancient Education*, edited by W. Martin Bloomer, 160–171. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

Penella, Robert J. *Prologue to The Purpose of Rhetoric in Late Antiquity: From Performance to Exegesis*, edited by Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas, 1–7. STAC 72. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.

Penella, Robert J. *Man and the Word: The Orations of Himerius*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 43. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Penella, Robert J. *The Private Orations of Themistius*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 29. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Perani, Mauro. "I frammenti ebraici di Bazzano: Un piccolo tesoro nella 'Genizah Italiana.'" In "Atti del Forum internazionale, Bazzano (Bologna) Rocco dei Bentivoglio, Sala dei Giganti, 25 Maggio 2000," edited by Mauro Perani. Special issue, *Materia giudica* 6, no. 2 (2001): 193–199.

Perani, Mauro, and Enrico Sagradini. *Talmudic and Midrashic Fragments from the 'Italian Genizah': Reunification of the Manuscripts and Catalogue*. Quaderni di materia giudaica 1. Florence: Giuntina, 2004.

Perry, Peter S. *The Rhetoric of Digressions: Revelation 7:1–17 and 10:1–11:13 and Ancient Communication*. WUNT II/268. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

Person, Raymond F., Jr., and Robert Rezetko. *Introduction to Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism*, ed. Raymond F. Person, Jr. and Robert Rezetko, 1–35. Ancient Israel and Its Literature 25. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016.

Peters, Francis E. *A Reader on Classical Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Petrovićová, Katarina. "Intellectual and Social Background of Aulus Gellius's and Flavius Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius's General Educational Scientific Writings." *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity, řada klasická N, Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 11 (2006): 49–59.

Piccione, Rosa Maria. "Sulle fonti e le metodlogie compilativi di Stobaeo." *Eikasmós* 5 (1994): 281–317.
Picus, Daniel. "Better Left Unread: Rabbinic Interpretations of Prophetic Scrolls." In *Knowledge Construction in Late Antiquity*, edited by Monika Amsler, 29–56. Trends in Classics 142. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2023.
Popović, Mladen. *Reading the Human Body: Physiognomics and Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic-Early Roman Period Judaism*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
Pourhadi, Ibrahim V. "Iran's Public and Private Libraries." *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 25, no. 3 (July 1968): 218–229.
Preisendanz, Karl, and Albert Heinrichs, eds. and trans. *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri I*. 2nd rev. ed. Sammlung wissenschaftlicher Commentare. Leipzig: K. G. Saur Verlag, 1973.
Preuss, Julius. *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Heilkunde und der Kultur überhaupt*. Berlin: S. Krager, 1911.
Quiroga Puertas, Alberto J., ed. *The Purpose of Rhetoric in Late Antiquity: From Performance to Exegesis*. STAC 72. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.
Ramelli, Ilaria L. "Late Antiquity and the Transmission of Educational Ideals and Methods: The Western Empire." In *A Companion to Ancient Education*, edited by W. Martin Bloomer, 267–278. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.
Rathbone, Dominic. *Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-Century A.D. Egypt: The Heroninus Archive and the Appianus Estate*. Cambridge Classical Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
Reggiani, Nicola, ed. "Digitizing Medical Papyri in Question-and-Answer Format." In *Ancient Greek Medicine in Questions and Answers: Diagnostics, Didactics, Dialectics*, edited by Michiel Meeusen, 181–212. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
Reggiani, Nicola, ed. *Digital Papyrology*. 2 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017–18.
Relihan, Joel C. "Prosimetra." In *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, edited by Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts, 281–295. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.
Relihan, Joel C. "Rethinking the History of the Literary Symposium." *Illinois Classical Studies* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 213–244.
Richler, Benjamin, and Bet-Aryeh Mal'akhi, eds. *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library Catalogue, Compiled by the Staff of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts*. Studi e testi/Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 438. Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008.
Riddle, John M. "Women's Medicines in Ancient Jewish Sources: Fertility Enhancers and Inhibiters." In *Disease in Babylonia*, edited by Iriving L. Finkela and Markham J. Geller, 200–214. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
Riggsby, Andrew M. *Mosaics of Knowledge: Representing Information in the Roman World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
Roberts, Michael. *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.
Roberts, Michael. "The Treatment of Narrative in Late Antique Literature: Ammianus Marcellinus (16.10), Rutilius Namatianus and Paulinus of Pella." *Philologus* 132, no. 2 (1988): 181–195.

Rosenthal, Eliezer S. "The History of the Text and Problems of Redaction in the Study of the Babylonian Talmud." [In Hebrew.] *Tarbiẓ* 57 (1988): 1–36.
Rosen-Zvi, Ishay. *Demonic Desires: "Yetzer Hara" and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.
Rosner, Fred. *Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud: Selections from Classical Jewish Sources, Augmented Edition*. Library of Jewish Law and Ethics 5. New York: Ktav; and New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1977.
Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., ed. *Stories of the Talmud*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., ed. *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*. TSAJ 114. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.
Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., ed. "Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in the Aggada." In *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, edited by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, 417–440. TSAJ 114. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.
Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., ed. *Introduction to Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, edited by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, 1–20. TSAJ 114. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.
Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., ed. *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., ed. *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
Rudolf, Stefanie. *Syrische Astrologie und das Syrische Medizinbuch*. Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 7. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018.
Ṣādeqī, A. A. "Arabic Language i. Arabic elements in Persian." *EIr* 2:229–231. www.iranicaonline.org/articles/arabic-i.
Saldarini, Anthony J. "'Form Criticism' of Rabbinic Literature." *JBL* 96, no. 2 (June 1977): 257–274.
Samely, Alexander. "Educational Features in Ancient Jewish Literature: An Overview of Unknowns." In *Jewish Education from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Philip S. Alexander*, edited by George J. Brooke and Renate Smithuis, 147–200. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
Sanzo, Joseph E. *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory*. STAC 84. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
Sasson, Gilad. "In the Footsteps of the Tradition about Solomon the Magician in the Literature of the Sages." [In Hebrew.] *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* 6 (2007): 51–53.
Satlow, Michael. *How the Bible Became Holy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
Satlow, Michael, and Michael Sperling. "The Rabbinic Citation Network." *Association for Jewish Studies Review* (forthcoming).
Schäfer, Peter. *Studien zur Geschichte und Literatur des rabbinischen Judentums*. Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums XV. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978.

Schironi, Francesca. "Enlightened Kings or Pragmatic Rulers? Ptolemaic Patronage of Scholarship and Science in Context." In *Intellectual and Empire in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, edited by Philip R. Bosman, 1–29. London: Routledge, 2019.

Schoeler, Gregor. *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Oral to the Read*. The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002.

Schremer, Adiel. "Stammaitic Historiography." In *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, edited by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, 219–235. TSAJ 114. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.

Schulze, Christian. *Die pharmazeutische Fachliteratur in der Antike: Eine Einführung*. 3rd ed. Beihefte zum Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft 10. Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2007.

Schwarz, Adolf. *Der Hermeneutische Syllogismus in der talmudischen Litteratur: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Logik im Morgenlande*. Jahresbericht der Israelitisch-Theologischen Lehranstalt in Wien. Vol. 8. Vienna: Verlag der Israelit.-Theolog. Lehranstalt, 1901.

Secunda, Shai. *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context*. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Secunda, Shai. "The Sasanian 'Stam': Orality and the Composition of Babylonian Rabbinic and Zoroastrian Legal Literature." In *The Talmud in Its Iranian Context*, edited by Carol Bakhos and Rahim Shayegan, 140–160. TSAJ 135. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Segal, Eliezer. "Anthological Dimensions of the Babylonian Talmud." *Prooftexts* 17, no. 1 (January 1997): 33–61.

Segal, Robert A. "How Historical Is the History of Religions?" *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 2–19.

Septimus, Zvi. "The Poetic Superstructure of the Babylonian Talmud and the Reader It Fashions." PhD diss., University of California, 2011.

Septimus, Zvi. "Trigger Words and Simultexts: The Experience of Reading the Bavli." In *Wisdom of Bat Sheva: The Dr. Beth Samuels Memorial Volume*, edited by Barry S. Wimpfheimer, 163–185. Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2009.

Shaked, Shaul. "Rabbis in Incantation Bowls." In *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, edited by Markham J. Geller, 97–120. IJS Studies in Judaica 16. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Shaked, Shaul, James N. Ford, and Siam Bhayro, eds. *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, Vol. 1: *Aramaic Bowl Spells*. Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection 20/Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 1. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Siegal, Michal Bar-Asher. *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Simpson, St. John. "The Land behind Ctesiphon: The Archaeology of Babylonia during the Period of the Babylonian Talmud." In *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, edited by Markham J. Geller, 6–38. IJS Studies in Judaica 16. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Sims-Williams, Nicholas. "Early New Persian in Syriac Script: Two Texts from Turfan." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74, no. 3 (October 2011): 353–374.
Sims-Williams, Nicholas. "The Sogdian Fragments of the British Library." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 18, nos. 1–2 (June–July 1976): 43–82.
Sims-Williams, Nicholas, and Ursula Sims-Williams. "Rustam and His zīn-I palang." In *From Aṣl to Zā'id: Essays in Honour of Éva M. Jeremiáš*, edited by Iván Szánto, 249–258. Acta et Studia 13. Piliscsaba, Hungary: The Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2015.
Sirat, Colette. "Les tablettes à écrire dans le monde juif." In *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, edited by Elisabeth Lalou, 53–59. Bibliologia 12. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1992.
Sivertsev, Alexei M. *Households, Sects, and the Origins of Rabbinic Judaism*. JSJSup 102. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
Skjærvø, Prods Oktor. "Iran VI. Iranian Languages and Scripts (3) Writing Systems." *EIr* 13:366–370. www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iran-vi3-writing-systems.
Small, Jocelyn P. *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity*. London: Routledge, 1997.
Smith, Jonathan Z. "Trading Places." In *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, edited by Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer, 13–27. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 129. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
Smith, Jonathan Z. "In Comparison a Magic Dwells." In *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, edited by Jonathan Z. Smith, 19–35. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
Speidel, Michael A. *Die römischen Schreibtafeln von Vindonissa: Lateinische Texte des militärischen Alltags und ihre geschichtliche Bedeutung*. Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft Pro Vindonissa 12. Brugg, Switzerland: Gesellschaft Pro Vindonissa, 1996.
Sperling, Michael. "Myth of the Gargantuan Tosefta." Paper presented at the Association for Jewish Studies 50th Annual Conference. Boston, MA, 2018.
Steel, Catherine. "Divisions of Speech." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, edited by Erik Gunderson, 77–91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
Stefaniw, Blossom. "Knowledge in Late Antiquity: What Is It Made of and What Does It Make?" *SLA* 2, no. 3 (2018): 266–293.
Stehlíková, Eva. "Drama in Late Antiquity." *Listy filologické* 116, no. 1 (1993): 1–9.
Stein, Dina. "Believing Is Seeing: A Reading of Baba Batra 73a–75b." [In Hebrew.] *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 17 (1999): 9–32.
Stemberger, Günter. *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*. 9th ed. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011.
Stemberger, Günter. *Midrasch: Vom Umgang der Rabbinen mit der Bibel; Einführung – Texte – Erläuterungen*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989.
Stenger, Jan R. "Learning Cities: A Novel Approach to Ancient *paideia*." In *Learning Cities in Late Antiquity: The Local Dimension of Education*, edited by Jan R. Stenger, 1–23. London: Routledge, 2019.

Stenger, Jan R. "Athens and/or Jerusalem? Basil's and Chrysostom's Views on the Didactic Use of Literature and Stories." In *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*, edited by Peter Gemeinhardt, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen, 86–100. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Stern, David. *Introduction to The Anthology in Jewish Literature*, 3–14. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Stern, Karen B. *Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Forgotten Jews of Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Stern, Sacha. "Rabbinic, Christian, and Local Calendars in Late Antiquity: Influence and Shared Culture." In *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, edited by Markham J. Geller, 260–288. IJS Studies in Judaica 16. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Stern, Sacha. "Attribution and Authorship in the Babylonian Talmud." *JJS* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 28–51.

Stewart, Alistair C. *The Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea (CC 0021): Critical Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary*. Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 35. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2015.

Stol, Marten. "Blindness and Night-Blindness in Akkadian." *JNES* 45, no. 4 (October 1986): 295–299.

Sussman, Yaakov. "The Oral Torah in the Literal Sense: The Power of the Tail of a Yod." [In Hebrew.] In *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, edited by Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal, 209–384. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005.

Swartz, Michael D. *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Symington, Dorit. "Late Bronze Age Writing-Boards and Their Uses: Textual Evidence from Anatolia and Syria." *Anatolian Studies* 41 (1991): 111–123.

Sznol, Shifra. "Text and Glossary: Between Written Text and Oral Tradition." In *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis*, edited by Timothy M. Law and Alison Salvesen, 217–232. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012.

Tamcke, Martin. "Wie der Islam die christliche Bildung beflügelte." In *Von Rom nach Bagdad: Bildung und Religion von der römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum klassischen Islam*, edited by Peter Gemeinhardt and Sebastian Günther, 243–268. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.

Tanaseanu-Döbler, Ilinca. *Theurgy in Late Antiquity: The Invention of a Ritual Tradition*. Beiträge zur europäischen Religionsgeschichte 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.

Taub, Liba C. "Explaining a Volcano Naturally: Aetna and the Choice of Poetry." In *Authorial Voices in Greco-Roman Technical Writing*, edited by Liba C. Taub and Aude Doody, 125–141. AKAN-Einzelschriften 7. Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2009.

Temmerman, Koen de. "Ancient Biography and Formalities of Fiction." In *Writing Biography in Greece and Rome: Narrative Techniques and Fictionalization*, edited by Koen De Temmerman and Kristoffel Demoen, 3–25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Ten-Ami, Alon. "Further Discoveries Concerning Ashmedai: Ashmedai in Babylonian Incantation Bowls." [In Hebrew.] *Pe'amim* 133–134 (2012): 185–208.

Thibodeau, Philip. "Ancient Agronomy as a Literature of Best Practice." In *Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, edited by Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough, 463–480. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Thomas, J. David. "The Latin Writing-Tablets from Vindolanda in North Britains." In *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, edited by Elisabeth Lalou, 203–209. Bibliologia 12. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1992.

Timbie, Janet. "The Education of Shenoute and Other Cenobitic Leaders inside and outside the Monastery." In *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*, edited by Peter Gemeinhardt, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen, 34–46. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Totelin, Laurence M. "The Third Way: Galen, Pseudo-Galen, Metrodora, Cleopatra and the Gynaecological Pharmacology of Byzantium." In *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue*, edited by Lennart Lehmhaus and Matteo Martelli, 103–122. Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 4. Boston: de Gruyter, 2017.

Tutrone, Fabio. "Libraries and Intellectual Debate in the Late Republic." In *Ancient Libraries*, edited by Jason König, Katerina Oikonomopoulou, and Greg Woolf, 152–166. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Valette-Cagnac, Emmanuelle. *La lecture à Rome: Rites et pratiques*. L'antiquité au resent. Paris: Belin, 1997.

Van Bekkum, Wout J. "Sailing on the Sea of Talmud: The Encyclopaedic Code of Early Jewish Exegesis." In *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1–4 July 1996*, edited by Peter Binkley, 201–211. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Van Hoof, Lieve. "Performing Paideia: Greek Culture as an Instrument for Social Promotion in the Fourth Century A.D." *Classical Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (May 2013): 387–406.

Van Hoof, Lieve. "Greek Rhetoric and the Late Roman Empire: The 'Bubble' of the 'Third Sophistic.'" *L'Antiquité Tardive* 18 (January 2010): 211–224.

Veltri, Giuseppe. *Magie und Halakha: Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum*. TSAJ 62. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997.

Versnel, Hendrik S. "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay on the Power of Words." In *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, edited by Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer, 105–158. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Vidas, Moulie. "What Is a *tannay*?" *Oqimta* 7 (2021): 21–96.

Vidas, Moulie. *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Von Leutsch, Ernst, and Friedrich W. Schneidewin, eds. *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Reprint of the 1839 edition.

Wald, Stephen G. "Mishnah." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Wald Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 319–331. 2nd ed. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2006.

Wallraff, Martin, Carlo Scardino, Laura Mecella, and Christophe Guignard, eds. *Iulius Africanus Cesti: The Extant Fragments*. Translated by William Adler. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte Neue Folge 18. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012.

Ward, Benedicta. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*. London: Mowbrays, 1984.

Wasserman, Nathan. "Piercing the Eyes: An Old Babylonian Love Incantation and the Preparation of Kohl." *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 72, nos. 5–6 (2015): 601–612.

Watts, Edward. "Education: Speaking, Thinking, and Socializing." In *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, edited by Scott F. Johnson, 467–486. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Webb, Ruth. *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009.

Weber, Dieter. *Ostraca, Papyri and Pergamente: Textband*. Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicum III. Pahlavi Inscriptions 4/5. Ostraca & Papyri 2: Texts. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992.

Weber, Ralph. "On Comparing Ancient Chinese and Greek Ethics: The *tertium comparationis* as Tool of Analysis and Evaluation." In *The Good Life and Conceptions of Life in Early China and Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, edited by R. A. H. King, 29–56. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.

Wee, John Z. "Phenomena in Writing Creating and Interpreting Variants of the Diagnostic Series Sa-gig." In *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia*, edited by J. Cale Johnson, 247–287. Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures 3. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.

Weiss, Abraham. *Studies in the Literature of the Amoraim*. [In Hebrew.] New York: Yeshiva University, 1962.

Whitmarsh, Tim. *Ancient Greek Literature*. Cultural History of Literature Series. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004.

Wildberg, Christian. "Philosophy in the age of Justinian." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, edited by Michael Maas, 316–340. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Williams, Alan V. "Dēw." *EIr* 7:333–334. www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dew.

Williams, Margaret H. "Alexander, *bubularus de macello*–Humble Sausage Seller or Europe's First Identifiable Purveyor of Kosher Meat." In *Jews in a Graeco Roman Environment*, edited by Margaret H. Williams, 155–166. WUNT 312. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.

Young, Brad H. *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008.

Youtie, Louise C. *The Michigan Medical Codex (P. Mich. 758 = P. Mich. inv. 21)*. Michigan Papyri 7. American Studies in Papyrology 35. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.

Zellentin, Holger M. *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature*. TSAJ 139. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.

Zetzel, James E. G. *Critics, Compilers, and Commentators: An Introduction to Roman Philology, 200 BCE–800 CE*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Zografou, Athanassia. "La nourriture et les repas dans les Papyri Graecae Magicae." *Food & History* 6, no. 2 (January 2008): 57–72.
Zuckermann, Benedict. *Das Mathematische im Talmud: Beleuchtung und Erläuterung der Talmudstellen mathematischen Inhalts*. Breslau: F. W. Jungfer's Buchdruckerei, 1878.

PRIMARY TEXTS

Greco-Roman and Persian Texts

Aelian. *On Animals*, Vol. 2: *Books 6–11*. Translated by Alwyn F. Scholfield. LCL 448. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959.
Aelius Théon. *Progymnasmata*. Edited and translated by Michel Patillon with the assistance of Giancarlo Bolognesi for Armenian. Collections des Universités de France. Paris: Les belles lettres, 1997.
Aristotle. *Minor Works: On Colours. On Things Heard. Physiognomics. On Plants. On Marvellous Things Heard. Mechanical Problems. On Indivisible Lines. The Situations and Names of Winds. On Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias*. Translated by W. S. Hett. LCL 307. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936.
Athenaeus. *The Learned Banqueters*, Vol. 8: *Books 13.594b–14*. Edited and translated by S. Douglas Olson. LCL 519. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
Athenaeus. *The Learned Banqueters*, Vol. 4: *Books 12–13.594b*. Edited and translated by S. Douglas Olson. LCL 327. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.
Athenaeus. *The Learned Banqueters*, Vol I: *Books 1–3.106e*. Edited and translated by S. Douglas Olson. LCL 204. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
Cicero. *On Invention; The Best Kind of Orator; Topic*. Translated by Harry M. Hubbell. LCL 386. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949.
Cicero. *On the Orator: Books 1–2*. Translated by E. W. Sutton and Harris Rackham. LCL 348. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.
Cicero. *On the Orator: Book 3; On Fate; Stoic Paradoxes; Divisions of Oratory*. Translated by Harris Rackham. LCL 349. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.
Ferdausi, Abū'l-Qāsem. *Rostam: Die Legenden aus dem Šāhnāme*. Translated and edited by Jürgen Ehlers. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002.
Ferdowsi, Abolqasem. *The Epic of the Kings: Shah-Nama, the National Epic of Persia*. Translated by Reuben Levy. Revised by Amin Banani. Persian Heritage Series 2. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2011. First published 1967.
Gellius. *Attic Nights*, Vol. 2: *Books 6–13*. Translated by John C. Rolfe. LCL 200. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927.

Hermogenes Tarsensis. *Hermogenis opera*, edited by Hugo Rabe. Rhetores Graeci 6. Leipzig: Teubner, 1913.
Libanius. *Libanius's Progymnasmata: Model Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. Translated with an Introduction and notes by Craig A. Gibson. WGRW 27. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008.
Lucian. *Soloecista. Lucius or The Ass. Amores. Halcyon. Demosthenes. Podagra. Ocypus. Cyniscus. Philopatris. Charidemus. Nero*. Translated by M. D. MacLeod. LCL 432. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.
Macrobius. *Saturnalia*, Vol. 1: *Books 1–2*. Edited and translated by Robert A. Kaster. LCL 510. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
Martial. *Epigrams*, Vol. 3: *Books 11–14*. Edited and translated by David R. Shackleton Bailey. LCL 480. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
Philonis Alexandrini. *De Animalibus: The Armenian Text with an Introduction*. Translated by Abraham Terian. Studies in Hellenistic Judaism 1. Ann Arbor, MI: Scholars Press, 1981.
Philostratus. *Lives of the Sophists: Eunapius; Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*. Translated by Wilmer C. Wright. LCL 134. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921.
Quintilian. *The Orator's Education*, Vol. 4: *Books 9–10*. Edited and translated by Donald A. Russell. LCL 127. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars*, Vol. 2: *Claudius; Nero; Galba, Otho, and Vitellius; Vespasian; Titus, Domitian; Lives of Illustrious Men; Grammarians and Rhetoricians. Poets (Terence; Virgil; Horace; Tibullus; Persius; Lucan). Lives of Pliny the Elder and Passienus Crispus*. Translated by John C. Rolfe. LCL 38. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.

Editions and Translations of Rabbinic Literature

Guggenheimer, Heinrich W., ed. and trans. *The Jerusalem Talmud: Second Order; Mo'ed; Tractates Šabbat and 'Eruvin*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012.
Rebiger, Bill, trans. *Gittin: Scheidebriefe*, Vol. 3: *Übersetzung des Talmud Yerushalmi*, edited by Friedrich Avemarie, Hans-Jürgen Becker, Martin Hengel, Frowald Gil Hüttenmeister, and Peter Schäfer. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
Schäfer, Peter, and Hans-Jürgen Becker, eds. *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi*, Vol. 1: *Ordnung Zeraʿim: Terumot, Maʿaśerot, Maʿśer Sheni, Ḥalla, ʿOrla und Bikkurim*. TSAJ 35. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992.
Wewers, Gerd A., trans. *Übersetzung des Talmud Yerushalmi*, Vol. 1: *Terumot: Priesterhebe*, edited by Friedrich Avemarie, Hans-Jürgen Becker, Martin Hengel, Frowald Gil Hüttenmeister, and Peter Schäfer. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985.

Ancient Source Index

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009297349 Published online by Cambridge University Press

General Index