

**“A Sweat like Drops of Blood” (Luke 22:44):
at the Crossing of Intertextual Reading and Textual Criticism**

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Unit: Formation of Luke-Acts (Thomas L. Brodie – Gregory E. Sterling)

Beginning with some methodological remarks, this paper will then examine the recent intertextual readings of the Lukan prayer at Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46), evaluating the expression “the sweat like drops of blood”. Finally, it will analyze the way in which the suffering could have been expressed and heard in a context deeply marked by stoicism: these observations will allow us to reconsider the P<gothic>⁶⁹ in the textual criticism of the famous verses of Luke 22:43-44.

1. Intertextuality, Intertexture and Exegesis: for a Pragmatic Approach from Antiquity’s Readers

Since the nineties, two words have conveyed the same hermeneutical concerns in the exegetical research: *intertextuality* and *intertexture*. Indeed both terms signal the meeting between a literary concept and a historical concern: the French-speaking exegesis is

¹ Thank you to Claire Martinet and Sabrina Inowlocki for the English proof reading of this paper.

particularly receptive² to a restricted definition of intertextuality, such as defined by Gérard Genette. The narratologist maintains a chronological distinction between hypotext and text,³ keeping at the same time the intertextuality rooted in the reader's point of view: Daniel Marguerat and Alan Curtis consequently precise that “every text calls other texts to the memory of the reader”.⁴ In Genette's model, the author is seen above all as a reader of hypotexts, who obscures his/her own work's relation to the literary system, whereas the critic “takes the work and returns it to the system, illuminating the relations between work and system obscured by the author”.⁵

² Cf. as reference book: Daniel Marguerat and Alan Curtis, eds., *Intertextualités. La Bible en échos (MdB 40)*; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2000).

³ The word “intertextuality” has first been used by Julia Kristeva in a wide open meaning, as a “crossing of textual surfaces”, independently of a chronological frame (cf. *Σημειωτική. Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 144). But Gérard Genette suggested in the eighties to reconfigure the Poetics field through the concept of “transtextual relations” (architextuality, hypertextuality, metatextuality, intertextuality, and paratextuality). In this textual relations web, “intertextuality” refers to a “relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts” and an “actual presence of one text within another”, on the modes of quotation, plagiarism or allusion (*Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (trans. C. Newman and C. Doubinsky; Lincoln, London: Nebraska Press, 1997), 1-2).

⁴ Marguerat and Curtis, *Intertextualités*, 5; my own translation.

⁵ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (The New Critical Idiom; London, New York: Routledge, 2000), 96-97.

Promoted by Vernon K. Robbins,⁶ the concept of *intertexture* particularly influences the Anglo-saxon exegesis, adding a socio-historical dimension to a restricted notion of intertextuality:⁷ looking for “intertexture” notably means to light up a text from contemporary sources that do not have necessarily a literary dependence on it.⁸ Francis G. Downing well underlined the problem raised by this suggestive approach: the intertextual links can always be developed “wider and on a deeper way”, what raises the question of interpretation’s limits and verification’s possibilities.⁹ Indeed it could create a bottomless abyss between a supposed and unreachable first audience or readers, and the so particular critical reader:¹⁰ from my point of view, an academic reading¹¹ can’t serve as a tiny rope

⁶ Cf. Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London, Routledge, 1996); idem, *Exploring the Texture of the Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge: TPI, 1996).

⁷ But what Vernon K. Robbins means as “intertexture” can take place in Genette’s complete system of transtextual relations, particularly under the modes of architextuality and paratextuality (cf. n. 3 and n. 5).

⁸ Cf. Francis G. Downing, “Le problème du choix de l’intertexte: Paul s’oppose-t-il radicalement ou superficiellement à la culture de son temps?”, in Marguerat and Curtis, *Intertextualités*, 237.

⁹ Cf. Downing, “Le problème”, 250 (my own translation) and 238.

¹⁰ What precisely appears by Matthew L. Skinner, who tries using together social, historical and literary methodologies, in order to trace the figure of Paul in Acts 21-28. He adopts John A. Darr’s concept of “hybrid reader”, “part ancient, part modern, part reader, part critic” (cf. *Locating Paul. Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21-28* (Academia Biblica 13; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2003), 16).

¹¹ The point of view of a present occidental historian is a relative, incomplete, but positive starting point, cf. Frank Ankersmit, *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 152.

over a bottomless abyss, without places of support, or places of *verification*, as Francis G. Downing said. Choosing a concrete and pragmatic approach to cope with this problematic, I suggest to use Antiquity's readers as places of verification: the diversity of the ancient readership provides us with an endless stock of theoretical and heuristic information.

First of all, on the theoretical level, it is worth remembering that Socrates already privileged the role of the reader over the written speech, that "drifts all over the place [...and is] unable to defend or help itself"; he considered as superior to the written text the speech "which is written with intelligence in the mind of the learner".¹² In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates even claims the partition of the readership in two different categories: the free man who can be called "philosopher", and an emotive and lower category, which includes women and slaves.¹³ If the diversity of the readership is not only a diachronic variable, but also a synchronic one,¹⁴ we should keep in mind the point of view of this so privileged reader *and* this one of the *other* readers, whoever they are. Secondly, on a heuristic level, the pericope of Luke 22:39-46 gives us a perfect opportunity to study the textual phenomenon with the Ancient readership as starting

¹² *Phaedr.* 275e and 276a (Lamb, LCL).

¹³ *Theaet.* 175d (Fowler, LCL).

¹⁴ The definition of a "right" reading is however guaranteed for Socrates by the clearly established norm of the philosopher: the present historical critic is warned against the ideological connotation of this norm, but stays "governed by expectations established by a critical consensus or tradition" (Skinner, *Locating*, 11).

point: the textual problem of Luke 22:43-44 -the “strengthening angel” and the “sweat like drops of blood”- has been subject of countless attempts to grasp the historical and hermeneutical background *before* the writing of the third Gospel, *at the moment of its writing*, and *at the moment of its early reception*. The concepts of “intertextuality” and “intertexture” allow us to express the existent but often non-explicit links between what we usually call *Quellenforschung*, *Redaktionskritik*, *Wirkungsgeschichte*. In order to underline these links, it is sufficient to remind the influence of Origen’s *Contra Celsium*¹⁵ and of Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*¹⁶ on the interpretation of this text. An intertextual approach enables us using consciously and fruitfully these links. Thus I will particularly refer in this paper to four Antiquity’s readers: Aristotle, Justin, Celsius and Origen. But let’s start with contemporaneous readers, beginning with a proposition that I recommend to reject. The presentation of an interpretative space crossed by the axis “hero/anti-hero” will follow.

¹⁵ Cf. *Cels.* 2.23-27 and 7.53-55. For a use about Gethsemane, cf. notably R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (ABRL 1-2; vol. 1.; Doubleday: ABRL Press, 1994), 218; A. Y. Collins, “From Noble Death to Crucified Messiah”, *NTS* 40 (1994): 481-503; G. E. Sterling, “*Mors philosophi*: The Death of Jesus in Luke”, *HTR* 94 (2001/4): 383-402. The exegesis didn’t wait for intertextuality or intertexture to use other texts from the history of reception, or from the cultural background. What seems to be new is the input from the reader.

¹⁶ Cf. the earlier attestation of Luke 22:44 in *Dial.* 103.8.

2. The recent intertextual readings for the Lukan prayer at Gethsemane

2. J. Pilch and the intertextuality of the Tascodrugits: to whom and on which way was the “sweat like drops of blood” understandable?

Among the recent intertextual readings of the Lukan prayer at Gethsemane, the most surprising is probably this one of J. Pilch: he relates the “sweat like drops of blood” to Epiphanius’ account on the Tascodrugits, with the help of the neurosciences.¹⁷ According to Epiphanius, the etymology of the “Tascodrugits” refers to a particular prayer habit in this group: they pray putting their forefinger in their nostril,¹⁸ a gesture that Pilch indicates as provoking an altered state of consciousness.¹⁹ This first step in the argumentation of Pilch is suggestive, but I don’t agree with him when he understands the “drops of blood” in Luke 22, 44 as a result of this trance experience: first of all, Pilch artificially links crucial elements, such as the nose and bleeding -which are not associated by Epiphanius-²⁰ or such as the provocation of an altered state of consciousness by the

¹⁷ Cf. John J. Pilch, “The Nose and Altered States of consciousness: Tascodrugites and Ezekiel”, *HTS* 58/2 (2002): 708-720. This author already used neurosciences in exegesis in Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social science commentary on Revelation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). Cf. too: John J. Pilch, *Acts of the Apostles: How the Early Believers encountered God* (Collegeville: the Liturgical Press, forthcoming).

¹⁸ Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.14.3.

¹⁹ Cf. Pilch, “Nose”, 713. The same gesture could be evoked in Ezek 8, 17 (cf. Pilch, “Nose”, 714-715).

²⁰ Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.14.5. Nose and bleeding are not more linked in Ezek 8:17 (cf. n. 19).

nose and the prayer at Gethsemane.²¹ Secondly, we can regret that Pilch didn't consider the report by Philastrius about the Passalorinchitae, who put their finger in their nostril while they were praying,²² but don't seem to be associated with any "bloody" element: all the available sources should be considered, if the purpose of a neuroscientific reading is identifying the human biological and physiological frame that we have "in common with persons of antiquity", as expresses it Pilch himself.²³ Finally, the scholar doesn't help the neophyte reader to be confident in his approach of the neurosciences: for example, he assigns the phenomenon of nose's bleeding once to the blocking of the right nostril, and once to the blocking of the left nostril, even if this precision seems to be decisive.²⁴ In short, I am not convinced by Pilch's explication for the «sweat like drops of blood», and I wonder if this quest of a biological continuity is not the latest version of the temptation to reach a new "objectivity" and coherence, beyond all historical particularities.

²¹ John J. Pilch estimates that he has to "correct" Luke on a point: the mentioning in Mark and Matthew that "Jesus fell on the ground" would indicate for him that Jesus blocks his left nostril to obtain an altered state of consciousness, attested by the "drops of blood" in Luke (cf. "The Nose", 716). This selection in the diverse reports of the scene keeps silent a lot of elements in the three synoptic accounts (e.g. the quotation of Psalm 42, 6.12 or 43, 5; the content of the prayer, the temptation, aso.): in which way could these elements be associated or not with the research of a state of trance? What do mean the differences between the three synoptic versions?

²² Cf. Philastrius (IVth century C. E.), *Diversarum Hereseon Liber* 76. In paragraph 75, he speaks about the "Ascodrugsits", but without mentioning any habit of prayer, or any bloody element.

²³ Pilch, "Nose", 709.

²⁴ Cf. Pilch, "Nose", 712 and 716.

In any case John J. Pilch has the merit of asking on a very concrete level to whom and in which way the “drops of blood” could have been significant, without having to take position about the evidence of Luke 22:43-44.²⁵ But is it so clear that, for Luke and / or his original readers, the “sweat like drops of blood” indicated the “description of a trance experience”?²⁶ Raymond E. Brown - and a lot of scholars before him²⁷ - remembered that Aristotle mentioned a phenomenon of bloody sweat:²⁸ but the reference doesn't seem to have obtained the consensus, or Pilch wouldn't have needed to propose his own. Here a philological approach is indeed not sufficient: the French literary critic Michel Riffaterre clearly demonstrated that a text is able to transform a cultural matrix. Consequently, it is not sufficient to consider that Aristotle attests the expression “bloody sweat”; we have too to observe in which way Aristotle's text uses it and copes with it.²⁹ Let's try to start from ancient readership's viewpoint. First of all, we can observe that it has been difficult to link Jesus' “sweat like drops of blood” with the concrete and common experience: as

²⁵ The question is not crucial in this reading, cf. Pilch, “Nose”, 717.

²⁶ Pilch, “The Nose”, 717.

²⁷ Cf. for example at the 17th century H. Grotius, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (vol. 1; Erlangae in Ptochotrophio et Lipsiae: Apud Ioannem Carolum Tetzschnerum, 1755) 910.

²⁸ Cf. Brown, *Death*, 185: he signals *Hist. an.* 3.19.10. But cf. too Aristotle, *Part. an.* 3.5.668b.

²⁹ Cf. Michel Riffaterre, “Intertextual representation: on mimesis as interpretive discourse”, *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 141-162.

first witness of the expression³⁰, Justin Martyr doesn't keep the whole statement, but only mentions the "sweat like drops",³¹ interpreting it as an illustrating "I am poured out like water" (Ps 22:14 NRSV). Many others early readers only kept the sweat, quoting or alluding to Luke 22:44 (e.g. Hippolytus, Athanasius, Cyrillus).³² These readers simply

³⁰ Cf. *Dial.* 103.8. *Dial.* 99-107 represents an independent and anterior treatise about a Christian interpretation of Psalm 22. Helmut Koester underlined that it uses thirteen times the designation "Memoirs of the Apostles", and that "in each instance the materials quoted derive from written gospels, usually from Matthew and Luke, in one instance from Mark" (Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels. Their History and Development* (London, Philadelphia: SCM Press, Trinity Press, 1990), 38). I consider the term παρακολουθησάντων in *Dial.* 103.8 as a possible allusion to the term παρακολουθηκότι in Luke 1:3: the "Memoirs of the Apostles" in *Dial.* 103.8 could effectively refer to Luke 22:44.

³¹ Cf. *Dialogue with Trypho* 103.8. H. Grotius already underlined the absence of the "blood" by Justin (cf. *Annotationes*, 910), but the modern translators of Justin seem not to have been attentive to this absence and translated "the sweat like drops of blood" (cf. e.g. Georges Archambault, *Justin: Dialogue avec Tryphon* (vol 2; Paris: Librairie Alphonse, 1909; reprinted Paris: Migne, 1994), 141; Philippe Bobichon, *Justin Martyr. Dialogue avec Tryphon (Paradosis 47/1; vol. 1; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2003), 465; Thomas B. Falls, St. Justin Martyr. Dialogue with Trypho (Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3; Washington: The Catholic University Press of America, 2003), 157). Two elements can explain this absence of the "blood": the context of Ps 22:14 in *Dial.* 103.8, and the fact that Justin considered the blood of Jesus not as a human blood, but as a special divine δύναις (cf. *Apol.* 32.9; *Dial* 54.2; 63.2; 76.2).*

³² Cf. Hippolytus, *Frag. in Ps. Ach.* 18.3-5; Athanasius, *C. Ar.* 441.11 (PLG 26); Cyrillus of Alexandria, *Expositio in Psalmos* 1161.18-25 (PLG 69). Irenaeus seems to be an exception simply mentioning "he sweated drops of blood" (cf. *Haer* 3.34.17). He has probably a less "scientific" look at what happens in reality (cf. e. g. his representation of an unsalted sweat in *Haer* 1.4.4).

attempted to link the Lukan description to what they knew: a sweat caused by a feeling of anxiety, which is clearly attested by Aristotle,³³ Philo³⁴ or Irenaeus.³⁵

Secondly, a careful reading of Aristotle shows that sweat stems *from* blood for him;³⁶ another author moreover mentions the phenomenon, Theophrastus in his *De Sudore* 11-12.³⁷ both elements strengthen the plausibility of the bloody sweat notion for Antiquity's readership. But in order to evaluate carefully this plausibility, it must be noted that Aristotle and Theophrastus both need to mention eyewitnesses in support to their description:³⁸ the "bloody sweat" requires eyewitness to be plausible. This point is problematic in the Third Gospel, because Jesus' prayer doesn't seem to have any

³³ Cf. {*Probl.*} 2.26; cf. too Theophrastus, *De Sudore* 36; William W. Fortenbaugh precises: "It is the only discussion in *On Sweat*, in which a particular emotional condition is explicitly related to sweating" (*Theophrastus of Eresus. On Sweat, on Dizziness and on Fatigue* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 135).

³⁴ Cf. *Legat.* 243: Ταῦτα δὲ διεξήρῃσαν ὑπ' ἀγωνίας καὶ περιπαθήσεως ἄσθματι πολλῶ, κεκομμένω τῷ πνεύματι, ρέόμενοι κατὰ τῶν μελῶν ἀπάντων ἰδρῶτι, μετὰ φορᾶς ἀπαύστων δακρύων (I underline).

³⁵ Cf. *Haer* 1.4.4, 8-9.

³⁶ Cf. *Part. an.* 3.5.668b.

³⁷ The comparison of this description with the modern medicine seems possible, as William W. Fortenbaugh argues: "Here Theophrastus seems to be describing eccrine sweat or a combination of eccrine and apocrine sweat, in which the solute content is unusually large" (Fortenbaugh, *Theophrastus*, 53).

³⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Hist. an.* 3.19.521a, 14; Theophrastus, *De Sudore* 11-12: Theophrastus even gives two names of eyewitnesses, a sport trainer (Diotimus) and a doctor (Monas), who are otherwise unknown.

eyewitness, as may imply the specific Lukan mention “Jesus withdrew from them about a stone’s throw” (Luke 22:41 NRSV).³⁹ The Emperor Julianus underlines the problem, saying “but who has told you, Luke (this narrative) about the angel?”.⁴⁰ Moreover, the expression ὡσεὶ θρόμβοι αἵματος precisely is a comparison or a simile: Aristotle reminds us in the *Rhetoric* that the comparison “is also useful in prose, but should be less frequently used [than in poetry], for there is something poetical about it”.⁴¹ This remark is confirmed by the fact that some ancient readers interpreted the Lukan bloody sweat on a poetical level, associating it with the well-known expression “to cry blood”.⁴² This expression reminds the “tears of blood” which Zeus sheds on his dead son Serapio (*Il.* 16.460). We notably find a poetical reception of Luke 22:44 in the longer version of the

³⁹ The distance of “a stone’s throw” is evaluated on diverse modes, but seems in any case consequent: it represents the reach of a bow in Gen 21:16 LXX, and the maximal distance for the vision of a man in *Il.* 3.12.

⁴⁰ Cf. Tjitze Baarda, “Luke22:42-47a. The Emperor Julian as Witness to the Text of Luke”, *NT* 30 (1988), 292.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.4.4, 2 (Freese, LCL). Both comparisons ὡσεὶ λίθου βολήν and ὡσεὶ θρόμβοι αἵματος underline, on a narrative level, that the point of view is here this one of the *narrative voice* as explanatory gloss (cf. for these terms Daniel Marguerat – Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories. An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1999), 15 and 104-105).

⁴² Cf. Pausanias, Ἀττικῶν ὀνομάτων συναγωγή, alphabetic letter alpha 46: οὕτω λέγουσιν οἱ ἀρχαῖοι· ‘οὐδ’ ἂν πείσειας αὐτὸν οὐδ’ αἵματι κλαίων’ (“as say the elders: ‘you wouldn’t persuade him, not even crying blood’”; my own translation); cf. too *Suda*, alphabetic letter alpha iota 192.

Testament of Abraham 20.5, where Abraham has a liquid (ἰδρῶς) that seeps “from his eyes like drops of blood” (see 2.2. below).⁴³

In short, “the sweat like drops of blood” has been understood by most ancient readers as a limit-statement, between real description and poetical language: it needed either to be adapted to the common experience (a sweat provoked by anxiety), or to be associated to a well known poetical expression (“to cry blood”). The ambiguity comes on the one hand from the absence of a precise eyewitness for the Lukan prayer at Gethsemane, and on the other hand, from the comparative ὡσεὶ (Luke 22:44), that introduces a poetical openness: these textual elements allow us to grasp how the cultural matrix of the bloody sweat is reworked by the Lukan text.

2.2. *The noble death and the anti-hero*

In the last twenty years, scholarship on Luke 22:39-46 has been deeply marked by Jerome Neyrey’s reading: Jesus’ death without emotions, or the noble death, with 4 Macc

⁴³ Dionysius of Alexandria links the expression “to cry blood” with Luke 22:44, that he considers as a simile, because of the ὡσεὶ (cf. *Exegetical Fragments of Luke 22:42s 2*, in *The Letters and Other Remains of Dyonysius of Alexandria* (ed. Charles L. Feltoe; Cambridge: University Press, 1904), 239-240). Wolfgang Bienert reminds the very doubtful attribution of this text to Dionysius of Alexandria, which doesn’t influence the present discussion (cf. Wolfgang Bienert, *Dionysius von Alexandrien. Zur Frage des Origenismus in dritten Jahrhundert (Patristische Texte und Studien 21)*; Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), 43).

as intertextual background.⁴⁴ This interpretation has been used as an important argument by Bart D. Ehrman in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scriptures*, but he disagrees with Neyrey on the evidence of Luke 22:43-44,⁴⁵ and on the evaluation of the term ἀγωνία (Luke 22:44).⁴⁶ Following Ehrman's textual criticism, Gregory E. Sterling has recently proposed another intertextual background: the *Mors philosophi*, and particularly the death of Socrates, that he convincingly presents as cultural scheme.⁴⁷ Even if these three authors don't agree on the evidence of Luke 22:43-44, their interpretations can be seen as representative of the same interpretative struggle: Jesus as imperturbable hero. Recently Ehrman even declared that in the Gospel of Luke, "Jesus never appears to become

⁴⁴ Cf. as starting point Jerome Neyrey, "The Absence of Jesus' Emotions - The Lukan Redaction of Luke 22, 39-46", *Biblica* 61 (1980), 153-171.

⁴⁵ Cf. Bart D. Ehrmann and Mark A. Plunkett, "The Angel and the Agony: the Textual Problem of Luke 22:43-44", *CBQ* 45 (1983/3): 401-416.

⁴⁶ "Neyrey has done a commendable service in collecting the various ἀγωνία texts in Stoic and other Greco-Roman documents, but how one can read the present passage in this way puzzles me. A key element of ἀγωνία motif is "courage", which is never mentioned here" (Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture. The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 248, n. 48).

⁴⁷ Cf. Gregory E. Sterling, "*Mors philosophi*: The Death of Jesus in Luke", *HTR* 94 (2001/4): 383-402. For him, Luke "softened the hard reality of the cross by associating it with a death that was viewed positively, the *mors Socratis*" (Sterling, "*Mors*", 402).

disturbed at all, in any way”,⁴⁸ except in Luke 22:43-44 which he doesn’t maintain in the text.

François Bovon obviously chooses the opposite meaning in his forthcoming commentary about this pericope, that he kindly lent me.⁴⁹ He underlines the intertextual background of the *Testament of Abraham*, whose longer version offers the verbal parallel most similar to Luke 22:44 (cf. 2.1. above).⁵⁰ David Allison states that we probably have here an echo of Luke 22:44:⁵¹ in this case, we can only be impressed by the way in which the longer

⁴⁸ Bart D. Ehrman, “Text and Interpretation: The Exegetical Significance of the "Original" Text”, *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 5 (2000): §32, n. p. Online: <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol05/Ehrman2000a.html>. We can only be surprised in front of a so massive argument: what about the weeping of Jesus in Luke 19:41 or about the cry on the cross in Luke 23:46? What about ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα in Luke 22:15, while ἐπιθυμία is one of the four rejected by Stoicism passions?

⁴⁹ F. Bovon has already published three volumes of his commentary in French (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1991s), in German (Zürich, Neukirchener-Vluyn: Benziger Verlag, Neukirchener Verlag, 1989s) and the first volume in English (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002). He is preparing now the last volume.

⁵⁰ *T. Ab.* 20.5: κατῆλθε ὁ ἰδρώς ἐκ τῆς ὀψεως αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ θρόμβοι αἵματος, “a liquid seeped from his eyes like drops of blood”. For the edition of the Greek versions, cf. François Schmidt, *Le Testament grec d'Abraham. Introduction, édition critique des deux recensions grecques, traduction (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 11; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1986).

⁵¹ Cf. David Allison, *Testament of Abraham* (CEJL; Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 393. Allison estimates that the longer version belongs to an “early byzantine period” (Allison, *Testament*, 412). Jared W. Ludlow tried to show from literary criteria the anteriority of the longer version (cf. Jared W. Ludlow, *Abraham Meets Death. Narrative Humor in the Testament of Abraham* (JSPS Supp. Series 41;

version of *T. Ab.* echoes to the prayer at Gethsemane. Indeed it presents the theme of the cup (as “bitter cup of death” in 16.11; 16.16); the confrontation between the will of Abraham and the will of the Lord (8.8; 9.4-5; 20.3); and Abraham’s triple request to Death for going away (ἀπελθε ἀπ’ ἐμου: 17.2; 19.2; 20.4). For François Bovon, the *T. Ab.* shows that “at the turning point of the common era, at the same time [...] as a theology of the martyr develops, the refusal to die can be expressed by the bravest and the more saint men”.⁵² Considering the desperate and almost cowardly attitude of Abraham in front of Death, I will add that the title of the longer version even shows some irony in front of a martyr death: “Sustaining the test of Death, [Abraham] showed the way in which everyone should die”.⁵³ Nevertheless the longer version of the *T. Ab.* has been transmitted with “serious” texts of martyrs, as the *Martyrdom of Andrew*, the *Martyrdom of Barbara* and the *Martyrdom of Philip*.⁵⁴ Evaluating the humor or the irony of a text asks to consider the diversity of a readership, because “what is a joke for one reader will fall flat with another”.⁵⁵

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). But he surprisingly doesn’t discuss what should at least be designed as “Christian interpolations”, or even as “Christian reconstruction” (cf. Allison, *Testament*, 19).

⁵² My own translation from the forthcoming French text of François Bovon. He adds in footnote the examples of *Apoc. Sedr.* 9-15 and *Apocalypse Greek of Esdras* 6.

⁵³ Cf. Schmidt, *Testament*, 96; my own English translation.

⁵⁴ Cf. Allison, *Testament*, 52.

⁵⁵ Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 136.

This inescapable diversity of the ancient readership finds probably its mirror in the interpretative space of Jesus hero/anti-hero, as represented by the contemporaneous scholars. This hermeneutical axis was already present in the discussion between Ernest Renan and Nietzsche, who said: “Aber wenn irgend etwas unevangelisch ist, so ist es der Begriff Held!”.⁵⁶ The struggle of Jesus hero afterwards seems to have been present in the different Quests of the Historical Jesus, as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza convincingly argued it.⁵⁷ From these remarks, that show the recurrence of topics in exegesis, we can consider the difficulty raised by the intertextuality of *T. Ab.*: we are here confronted to a *posterior* intertextuality, but it contains a precise verbal link to Luke 22:44 and echoes to the idea that Jesus feared death, as in Heb 5:7. I am convinced that a posterior intertextuality can make us attentive to anterior forgotten interpretative struggles. The longer version of the *T. Ab.*, with its allusions to the prayer at Gethsemane, offers many tracks to trace.⁵⁸ I choose to trace for the last part of this paper the way in which the

⁵⁶ Cf. Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist. Fluch auf das Christentum. Studienausgabe* (ed. H. H. Holz; vol. 3; Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer-Bücherei, 1968), 202. «If there is something unevangelical, it is the concept of hero!» (my own translation).

⁵⁷ Cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Rhetorics and Politics of Jesus Research: a Critical Feminist Perspective”, in *Jesus, Mark and Q. The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records* (eds. M. Labahn and A. Schmidt; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 259-282.

⁵⁸ For example the enigmatic figure of the archangel Michael, who refuses to pick up Abraham to death. Darrell D. Hannah has published a fascinating study about the comparison and the distinction between

suffering could or couldn't be expressed in front of the cultural scheme of the noble death. The longer version of *T. Ab.* underlines the request ἄπελθε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ⁵⁹ as indicating an intense suffering and a refusal of death. What about this idea by Celsius in link to the word on the cup (Matt 26:39)? The question seems all the more important that the P<gothic>⁶⁰ transmits our Lukan pericope omitting the whole content of the prayer, from Luke 22:42 until Luke 22:45a. In this papyrus of the third century, - often neglected by the critic-,⁶⁰ the prayer of Jesus is so totally silent: I'll propose the following intertextual background in order to understand this particular textual version.

Michael and Christ in the Early Christianity, illuminating the little known field of the early interpretation of Christ as angel. Cf. Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 109; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).*

⁵⁹ *T. Ab.* 17.2, very similar to Matt 26:39.

⁶⁰ Joseph van Haelst considers it as an "absurd text, very different from this one of the major onicals" (*Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens (Papyrologie 1; Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1976), 419; my own translation).* The critical apparatus of Nestle-Aland even doesn't mention the papyrus 69 about Luke 22:43-44. However, Kurt Aland estimates the omission of Luke 22:42-45a doesn't have any mechanical origin, but comes "from a conscious hand" (Kurt Aland, "Atler und Entstehung des D-Textes im Neuen Testament. Betrachtungen zu P<gothic>⁶⁹ und 0171", in *Miscellània papirologica Ramon Roca-Puig* (ed. S. Janeras; Barcelona: Fundacio Salvador Vives Casajuana, 1987), 59). In the discussion of the evidence of Luke 22:43-44, the P<gothic>⁶⁹ is in general assimilated to the manuscripts that omit both verses, with the only precision of *vid*, *videtur* (cf. e. g. Ehrman and Plunkett, "Angel", 409; Brown, *Death*, 180).

3. Expressing and Hearing Suffering in a Context Deeply Marked by Stoicism

The way in which it was tolerated in Antiquity for a man to express his suffering, is particularly well illustrated by the evolution of Philoctetes' representations, a minor character in the Homeric work,⁶¹ whose story has been often expressed in tragedies and sculptures:⁶² bitten by a snake, Philoctetes had been abandoned on the desert island of Lemnos by the Greek on the way to Troy, because of his unbearable lamentations and of the smell of his incurable wound. But ten years later, the Greek got him back, because they needed the invincible bow of Philoctetes to win the war. This wounded figure as an example of an uncontrolled manly grief will have a wide success: Cicero uses it in his *De Finibus* to illustrate why it is forbidden for "a man to behave like a woman in grief. Accordingly we must judge disgraceful - not grief itself, for sometimes that is indeed necessary - but filling the rocks of Lemnos with the foul clamor of a Philoctetes".⁶³ In this statement appears what becomes the acceptable norm in the Roman imperial age for the

⁶¹ Cf. *Il.* 2.718; *Odys.* 3.190, 8.219.

⁶² Cf. Luigi A. Milani, *Il Mito di Filottete nella letteratura classica e nell'arte figurate* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1879) and *Nouvi Monumenti di Filottete e considerazioni generali in proposito* (Roma: Salviucci, 1882); Glenn W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History. Nero to Julian* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994), chapter 3.

⁶³ *Fin.* 2.29.94 (Rackham, LCL); cf. too Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.14.33.

representation of the manly suffering: the silence. Next to the noble last words of the stoic men,⁶⁴ the suffering of a man can be mentioned and showed, but only in silence:⁶⁵ this current point of view is shared by the *Gospel of Peter* (*Gos. Pet.* 4.10b) and by Origen,⁶⁶ who introduces his apology in the *Contra Celsium* enhancing the silence of Jesus at his passion.⁶⁷ But even tolerated, the silence remains an ambiguous notion: Euripides evaluates it as a manifestation of “sensitivity” in his *Hippolytus*.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Cf. *Cels.* 7.53, where Celsius quotes the last words of Anaxarchos and Epictetes.

⁶⁵ As the classic historian Glenn Bowersock expresses it, “the morality of the Greco-Roman world gradually silenced Philoctetes’ cries and left only the image of suffering gradually courageously endured” (Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 74). In the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, the attitude of the suffering man is made “stoico-compatible”: Philoctetes never gives any cry of lamentation (cf. Philostratus, *Heroikos* 5).

⁶⁶ Cf. *Mart.* 4.14-16.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Cels.* Proemium, 1-3: “When false witnesses testified against our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, He remained silent; and when unfounded charges were brought against Him, He returned no answer” (trans. Henry Chadwick; Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, reprinted 1980). This apologetic strategy is developed in *Cels.* 7.55, where Origen discusses the word on the cup (Matt 26:39 and par.).

⁶⁸ Cf. *Hippolytus* 902-920 (Kovacs, LCL). Hippolytus reproaches his father Theseus to stay silent in front of the corpse of Phaedra: “Silence is no use in misfortune!” (911); Theseus answers: “How to teach the senseless to be sensible!” (920).

Nevertheless all Antiquity's readers didn't subscribe to this dominant ideal of the "noble death", escorted by the reduced to silence suffering:⁶⁹ Aristotle asserts that "it is not surprising that a man should be overcome by violent and excessive pleasures or pains: indeed it is excusable if he succumbs after a struggle, like Philoctetes in Theodectes when bitten by the viper".⁷⁰ In the referred play of Theodectes, Philoctetes seems thus to have bravely "struggled" against the suffering, except for one word that he can't contain:⁷¹ "Let me cut the hand!".⁷² But one word is already too much in front of the noble death's ideal, and so the Philoctetes of Theodectes needs Aristotle's help to be defended. From this intertextual background, I would say that I don't agree with Gregory E. Sterling, when he affirms that Celsius "would have been reduced to silence" on his critic about Jesus' death, "if [he] only had Luke at hand",⁷³ without the angel and the

⁶⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Eth Nic* 1153b, 19-21: "Those who say that, if a man be good, he will be happy even when on the rack, or when fallen into the direst misfortune, are intentionally or unintentionally talking nonsense". Transl. H. Rackham, *Loeb Classical Library* 19, London / Cambridge: W. Heinemann / Harvard University Press; 1975².

⁷⁰ *Eth Nic* 1150b, 7-9.

⁷¹ Cf. schol. on *Eth Nic* 1150b, 9 (John A. Cramer, (ed.), *Anecdota graeca. Bibliothecae Regiae parisiensis* (vol. 1; Oxford: 1839), 243); O. Ribbeck, *Die römische Tragödie im Zeitalter der Republik* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968), 376-377; reprint of *Die römische Tragödie im Zeitalter der Republik*, (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von B. G. Teubner, 1875).

⁷² Theodectes, *Fragmenta* 5b.

⁷³ Sterling, "Mors", 402.

bloody sweat. I will argue that the word of the cup (Luke 22:42) is already too much for the model of the noble death, that can only be escorted by a silent suffering.

We already know that the cup is too much for Celsius,⁷⁴ and we can verify it is also too much for Origen, Porphyrius and the P<gothic>⁶⁹. First of all, Origen says twice in the *Contra Celsum* that he has a special interpretation for this word, an explanation for the “perfects”. We can find it⁷⁵ in his *Exhortatio ad Martyrium*, written about 10 years before in a context of new persecutions:⁷⁶ insisting on the qualification “this” cup, Origen argues that the Savior “asked to be excused from martyrdom with this particular issue; asked in secret for a form of martyrdom much severer, to that through this other chalice might be wrought a benefit more universal, one reaching to a greater number of men”.⁷⁷ This tortuous explanation confirms that for Origen, who shares the ideal of the noble death and the silent suffering,⁷⁸ the word on the cup is already too much, if it means

⁷⁴ Cf. *Cels.* 7.24; 7.53.

⁷⁵ A most conventional and anterior to him explanation is reported too by Origen in *Cels.* 2.25 and *Comm. Matt. Serm.* 92 (GCS 38.209): Jesus wanted to delay the cup in order saving as most Jews as possible.

⁷⁶ Cf. Pierre Nautin, *Origène. Sa vie et son oeuvre (Christianisme Antique 1; Paris: Beauchesne, 1977)*, 411.

⁷⁷ *Mart.* 29.32-37; trans. John J. O’Meara (*Ancient Christian writers: the works of the Fathers in translation* 19; Westminster: Newman Press, 1954).

⁷⁸ Cf. *Cels.* 7.56, 15-20 (Chadwick): “Jesus did indeed meet with a most sad death; but the same might be said of Socrates, and of Anaxarchus, whom he had just mentioned, and a multitude of others. If the death

suffering.⁷⁹ This evaluation is confirmed by the fact that Origen doesn't have any problem with the physical signs of Jesus' distress: in his commentary on Matt 26:37,⁸⁰ he copes with ἀδημονεῖν using an argumentation reflecting the *propatheia*, a stoic notion developed for example by Seneca:⁸¹ “even a sage can experience involuntary physical reactions because of the swift and unexpected attacks that interrupted the processes of reason”.⁸² Some irrepressible physical signs don't express the lost of the self-control, but conscious words signal the failure of reason in front of passion.

of Jesus was a miserable one, was not that of the others so too? And if their death was not miserable, can it be said that the death of Jesus was?”.

⁷⁹ Origen has a lot of difficulties to deal too with the quotation by Jesus of Ps 22:2: he avoids first the interpellation of Celsius on this point (cf. *Cels.* 2.36). He interprets afterwards the “Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” as a sign that Jesus controls the rendition of his soul, at the light of John 10:28 (*Cels.* 3.32). This last word on the cross and the word on the cup were two main problematic points for Justin too: he quotes both in the introduction to his treatise on Psalm 22 (cf. *Dial.* 99.1-2). The Gnostic figure of Achamoth shows from another point of view that these words were emotionally evaluated and judged as excessive (cf. Irenaeus, *Haer* 1.8.2, 51-61).

⁸⁰ Origen, *Comm. Matt. Serm.* 92 (GCS 38.205-206).

⁸¹ Seneca, *Ira*, 2.2.1-2.2.6.

⁸² Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antiquity Alexandria. Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 115.

Secondly, the pagan philosopher Porphyrius⁸³ refers on this way to Gethsemane: “When [Jesus] himself agonizes sleepless in expectation of terrors, he prays that his suffering might be eliminated, saying to his friends, ‘Wait and pray, so that temptation may not overcome you’. Surely such sayings are note worthy of a son of God, nor even of a wise man who despises death”.⁸⁴ Porphyrius clearly shows that the entire scene means for him that Jesus feared the death: indeed the sleepless night of Jesus contrasts with the quiet sleep of Socrates, just before his death.⁸⁵ But what Porphyrius explicitly contrasts with the attitude of the sage who despises death, are precisely the words of Jesus (τὰ ῥήματα), including the avoiding of the cup, which Porphyrius expresses as τὸ πάθος αὐτὸν παρελθεῖν.

⁸³ The attribution to Porphyrius of fragments in the *Apocritus* of Macarius Magnes has been widely discussed. Recently R. Joseph Hoffmann argued for their authenticity, particularly for this one quoted below (cf. R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Porphyrius Against the Christians. The Literary Remains* (Prometheus Books; New York: Amherst, 1994), 22 and 40-41, n. 16). The question of the authenticity is not decisive here: the expressed opinion is in any case this one of a pagan.

⁸⁴ Porphyrius, *Contra Christianos*, frag. 62, 3-6: καὶ αὐτὸς ἀγωνιῶν καὶ τῆ προσδοκίᾳ τῶν δεινῶν ἐπαγρυπνῶν καὶ δι’ εὐχῆς παρακαλῶν τὸ πάθος αὐτὸν παρελθεῖν <καὶ> λέγων τοῖς γνωρίμοις· Γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε, ἵνα παρέλθῃ ἡμᾶς ὁ πειρασμός. ταῦτα γὰρ οὐκ ἄξια παιδὸς θεοῦ τὰ ῥήματα, ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ ἀνθρώπου σοφοῦ θανάτου καταφρονούντος. Edited by Adolf von Harnack, *Porphyrius. Gegen die Christen (Abhandlungen der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosoph.-hist. Kl. 1; Berlin: Reimer, 1916)*. The English translation is this one of R. Joseph Hoffmann (Hoffmann, *Porphyrius*, 40), with my own modifications.

⁸⁵ Cf. Plato, *Crito* 43b.

Finally, the P<gothic>⁶⁹ offers us a witness of the possibility of whole's prayer omission, including the word on the cup. Celsius allows us to give a frame to this papyrus: he concludes his attack against the prayer at Gethsemane saying precisely that "some of the Christian believers, like persons who in a fit of drunkenness lay violent hands upon themselves, have corrupted the Gospel from its original integrity, to a threefold, and fourfold, and many-fold degree, and have remodeled it, so that they might be able to oppose negations to the objections".⁸⁶ This strategy of objection by negation could be useful only if the worst element was omitted, that is the word on the cup. So in my opinion, only the P<gothic>⁶⁹ really corresponds to the ideal of the noble death, with a prudent silent prayer at Gethsemane, the only acceptable confession of "sensibility" in a noble death's frame. In consequence, the file of the textual criticism of Luke 22:43-44 should be reopened, considering that around 300 C.E., we have in Egypt three versions of the text: the P<gothic>⁶⁹ without the content of the prayer, the P<gothic>⁷⁵ without the angel and the bloody sweat, and the ancient uncial 0171, with the complete text. Thus the textual criticism of Luke 22:43-44 could be more complicated than expected, particularly if Celsius is right suggesting diverse steps of corrections in the manuscript tradition.

Concluding this paper, I would like to underline that, if the word on the cup is already excessive in a stoic frame, we have to reconsider the way in which Luke expresses the suffering of Jesus at Gethsemane: the sweat like drops of blood is obviously a silent way

⁸⁶ *Cels.* 2.27 (Chadwick).

to show suffering, and could confirm a sensibility to the stoic standards. But whatever the evidence of Luke 22:43-44, Luke goes beyond the noble death's model keeping the word on the cup, or the weeping of Jesus in Luke 19:41, or the cry on the cross in Luke 23:46. In order to grasp the complexity of the Lukan thinking, we would be wrong forgetting the Jewish background, such as the intertextuality of Isa 41:9b-10 LXX:⁸⁷ “You are my servant; I have chosen you, and I have not forsaken you (οὐκ ἔγκατέλιπόν⁸⁸ σε). Fear not: for I am with you; wander not: for I am thy God, who have strengthened you (ὁ ἐνισχύσας⁸⁹ σε)”. These remarks invite us to a further inquiry rather than to an end,⁹⁰ but honoring the diversity of the readers that I postulated in my first point, I will conclude considering this interpretative space “hero/anti-hero” for the Lukan prayer at Gethsemane: hearing Antiquity's readers, gathering together a cultural intertexture, the contemporaneous critic readers probably don't do anything else than understanding the text in a space already delimited by others. Inviting us to the “modesty” of the present

⁸⁷ Trans. Lancelot Charles L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (London: Hendrickson publishers, 1999; reprinted from 1851). Cf. David W. Pao for the intertextual links between Luke-Acts and Isaiah 40—55, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 130)*; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁸⁸ The same verb than in Mark 15:39 and Matt 27:46.

⁸⁹ The same verb than in Luke 22:43.

⁹⁰ I am ending a ThD at the University of Lausanne (CH): “*Asleep of Grief*”: *History and Poetics at the Crossroad of the Emotions according to Luke 22:39-46* (in French).

historian (as says François Hartog),⁹¹ this already delimited space represents finally our opportunity to grasp a thin rope over the bottomless abyss of the historical meanings.

⁹¹ Cf. François Hartog, *Régimes d'Historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps* (*La librairie du 21^e siècle*; Paris: Seuil, 2003), 158.