

# Between Necromancers and Ventriloquists: The ἐγγαστρίμυθοι in the *Septuaginta*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ἐγγαστρίμυθος is the Greek word chosen by the LXX to render the Hebrew term *’ōb*. The object of this contribution is to explore the development of the word ἐγγαστρίμυθος ‘ventriloquist’, from its earliest occurrences to its later uses by lexicographers and commentators.

Other terms related by extant sources to the word will also be brought into the picture. Interesting cultural and linguistic questions will be tackled in the course of our enquiry: what was the contribution of the LXX to the semantic history of the word? Was it coined with a new, broader meaning? Does the association of the two terms have consequences for the view of necromancy or ventriloquism during Hellenistic times and later? What are the cultural realities lurking behind the words? Our suggestion is that in the melting-pot of Hellenistic Egypt, two previously unrelated forms of divination come to be fused and a new view of both emerges, as a result.

## 2. EARLY OCCURRENCES

The word is a semantically transparent compound meaning ‘the one who has words in his belly’, the ventriloquist. The earliest extant occurrence of the term is in a medical text. The author of the Hippocratic treatise *Epidemiae* (book 5, 63 and book 7, 28) describes,

sometime towards the middle of the fourth cent. BC <sup>1</sup>, the clinical condition of a woman suffering from quinsy: «she breathed as those who are plunged into water and drawn out; and she produced low, indistinct sounds from the chest similar to those produced by the females we call ventriloquists (ἐγγαστρίμυθοι)» <sup>2</sup>. The restriction of the practice to females is noteworthy <sup>3</sup>.

Philochoros (fourth-third cent. BC) might also have used the term, again with reference to female ἐγγαστρίμυθοι. The actual passage from Philochoros' Περὶ μαντικῆς (*On Divination*) has not been preserved; the information comes indirectly from later sources: possibly Aelius Dionysius <sup>4</sup>, the scholia to Plato's *Sophist* 252C <sup>5</sup>, the Byzantine scholar Photius (mid-ninth cent. AD) and the encyclopaedic dictionary Suidas (late tenth cent. AD) <sup>6</sup>. Not much is known about the contents of Philochoros' treatise <sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> According to experts on the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, the fifth and seventh books of the *Epidemiae* are clearly different from the others in their content and style. They are attributed to Hippocrates' disciples (cf. W. D. SMITH, *Hippocrates* vol. VII [London, Cambridge Massachusetts: LOEB 1994] pp. 7-10) and date from ca. the middle of the fourth century BC or shortly after (cf. J. JOUANNA, *Hippocrate* [Paris: Fayard 1992] pp. 537-538, and «La nascita dell'arte medica occidentale», in M. GRMEK [ed.], *Storia del Pensiero Medico Occidentale: I, Antichità e Medioevo* [Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza 1993] pp. 3-72: p. 19).

<sup>2</sup> *Epidemiae* (ed. SMITH, cf. n. 1) 5, 63, 6: καὶ ἀνέπνεεν ὡς ἐκ τοῦ βεβαπτίσθαι ἀναπνέουσι, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στήθεος ὑπεψόφεεν, ὡσπερ αἱ ἐγγαστρίμυθοι λεγόμεναι. 'Peritonsillar abscess (quinsy)' is described in a modern medical manual (R. BERKOW and J. TALBOTT [eds.], *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy* [Rahway, N. J.: Merck Sharp and Dohme Research Laboratories <sup>13</sup>1977] p. 1645) as «an acute infection located between the tonsil and the superior constrictor muscle». One of its symptoms is that the patient «shows marked trismus», i.e. a spasm of the jaw muscle that makes it difficult to open the mouth. This indicates that the similarity between the condition of the Hippocratic patient and the characteristics connected with ventriloquism includes more points than the one explicitly mentioned (sounds).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. L. MAURIZIO, «Anthropology and spirit possession: a reconsideration of the Pythia's role at Delphi», *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995) pp. 69-86: pp. 69-70, 75.

<sup>4</sup> Ἀττικὰ Ὀνόματα (*Attic Words*), *Epsilon* 2, 2 (H. ERBSE [ed.], *Untersuchungen zu den attizistischen Lexika* [Berlin: de Gruyter 1950]).

<sup>5</sup> Φιλόχορος δὲ ἐν τρίτῳ Περὶ μαντικῆς καὶ γυναικῆς ἐγγαστρίμυθους φησὶν ('Philochoros in the third book of his treatise *On Divination* mentions female ventriloquists').

<sup>6</sup> *Photii Patriarchae Lexicon*, *Epsilon* 20 (C. THEODORIDIS [ed.] [Berlin - NY: de Gruyter 1982]; and *Suidae Lexicon*, *Epsilon* 45, 2 (A. ADLER [ed.], 5 vols. [Leipzig 1928-1938; reed. Stuttgart: Teubner 1967-1971]).

<sup>7</sup> Fragments in *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (henceforth *FGrH*), F. JACOBY (ed.) (Leiden: Brill 1954) vol. IIIa, 328, fr. 76-79.

There are, however, some good reasons for accepting that Philochoros was likely to have actually included such information in his treatise. He was a prominent religious figure of his time and held the office of prophet and diviner in 306 BC. His knowledge of the field of divination, its types and ramifications must therefore have been very deep and detailed. If his treatise was as «voluminous and comprehensive of all kinds of divination»<sup>8</sup> as it seems, the ἐγγαστρίμυθοι would not have been omitted. His description, which might well have functioned as the source for later information, has however perished.

### 3. ἐγγαστρίμυθος / 'ōb IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE SEPTUAGINTA

A turning point is marked by the use of the word by the translators of the OT from Hebrew into Greek (LXX or *Septuaginta*)<sup>9</sup>, a project fulfilled at different stages between the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphos in the third cent. BC and the beginning of the Christian Era. The Greek term ἐγγαστρίμυθος in the LXX basically renders 'ōb<sup>10</sup>, the meaning of which is somewhat unclear: it is generally translated as 'soothsayer' or 'magician'.

<sup>8</sup> JACOBY stipulates on the basis of the extant fragments that «the work was arranged according to the several species of divination with perhaps a general historical introduction about the art and its 'inventors', *i.e.* its earliest known representatives» (*FGrH* IIIb [Suppl.] 328 vol. I [Text], 356). JACOBY maintains that Philochorus may well have given particulars, even names of female ventriloquists (*Ibid.*, p. 358), but he categorically denies any possibility of Philochorus having adscribed to them necromantic activities (*FGrH* IIIb [Suppl.] 328 vol. II [Notes-Addenda-Corrigenda-Index] 263 n. 1).

<sup>9</sup> On the historical background of the translation and the controversial *Letter of Aristeas* cf. A. LESKY, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* (3rd ed.; Bern, Munchen: Franke Verlag 1971) pp. 894-896; G. CAIRD, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth 1980) pp. 122-128; H. ORLINSKY, «The Septuagint and its Hebrew text», in W. DAVIES and L. FINKELSTEIN (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism: vol. II, The Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: CUP 1989) pp. 534-562; D. NORTON, *A History of the Bible as Literature* (Cambridge: CUP 1993) pp. 5-9; N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *Introducción a las versiones griegas de la Biblia* (Madrid: CSIC 1998) pp. 31-62.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. a commentary on the Greek translation of the passage of 1Samuel 28: B. GRILLET and M. LESTIENNE, *La Bible d'Alexandrie. Premier Livre des Règnes* (Paris: Du Cerf 1997) pp. 393-400.

One of the meanings <sup>11</sup> of 'ôb is 'wine-skin' as in *Job* 32,19. In consequence, some scholars have interpreted the term as a sort of device used by the necromancer to fake the voice of the spirit, like a hollow tubular object. The 'ôb has also been interpreted as a point of contact between the living and the dead <sup>12</sup>. Others prefer to see the term related to the Arabic term *âba* 'return', thus the 'returning spirit'; or as 'hostile', based on 'yb 'to be an enemy', or «a sort of subterranean spirit which seems to speak from the ground with a twittering voice» <sup>13</sup>. A connection has been made between 'ôb and 'ab 'father, ancestor'. This thesis is also reinforced by the fact that in the Ancient Near East, necromancy was a part of the cult of the ancestors <sup>14</sup>.

Certain words sometimes appear attached to 'ôb. For instance, *yidde'onî* 'the knowing one', appears eleven times following 'ôb. Others are *metîm* 'the dead', *'ittîm* 'ghosts' (*Isa* 19,3), *têrafîm* 'teraphim', *'elohîm* 'gods' (*Isa* 8,19), *'elîlîm* 'false gods' (*Isa* 19,3), *gil-lûlîm* 'idols' and *šiqqûšîm* 'abominations' (*2Re* 23,24). These words indicate that the term must be considered as a personified being, rather than as an object.

In the OT, the term 'ôb appears seventeen times: in a legal context: *Lev* 19,31; 20,6; 20,27; *Deut* 18,11 (in one case *ba'alat-'ôb*

<sup>11</sup> On the meanings of the term and a complete bibliography on the matter, cf. J. TROPPER, *Nekromantie: Totenbefragung im Alten Orient und Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1989) pp. 189-201; see also T. W. DAVIES, «Divination», in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (London 1899) vol. I p. 1120; S. CAVALLETTI, «Di alcuni mezzi divinatori nel Giudaismo», *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 29 (1958) pp. 77-91: pp. 85-88.

<sup>12</sup> As in Hurrite/Hittite *api*; Akkadian *apu*, meaning 'offering pit', paralleled by Greek βόθρος, cf. G. COACCI POLSELLI, «*Ilib, gb, 'b* tra ugaritico, fenicio ed ebraico», *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 56 (1982) pp. 21-26: pp. 22-23.

<sup>13</sup> W. ROBERTSON SMITH, «On the Forms of Divination and Magic enumerated in *Deut.* XVIII. 10, 11, Part II», *Journal of Philology* 14 (1885) pp. 113-128: pp. 127-128. He draws in fact a distinction between the consultation of an 'ôb, 'subterranean spirit', and a *yidde'onî*, a 'familiar spirit' which «speaks in the belly of the wizard whom he possesses».

<sup>14</sup> J. TROPPER, «Spirit of the Dead», in eds. K. VANDER TOORN, B. BECKING, P. W. VAN DER HORST, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: Brill 1995) coll. 1524-1530: 1525-1526; TROPPER *Nekromantie* pp. 165, 191-192; J. LUST, «On wizards and prophets», *VT suppl.* 26 (1974) pp. 135-142; T. J. LEWIS, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (Atlanta: Scholars Press 1989) pp. 95-96, 171-173; B. B. SCHMIDT, «The Witch of Endor, I *Samuel* 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy», in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, eds. M. MEYER and P. MIRECKI (Leiden: Brill 1995) pp. 111-129, deals with the origins of the episode of I *Sam* 28, through an examination of the Canaanite and Mesopotamian evidence.

‘the mistress of the spirit’); in narrative literature: 1*Sam* 28,3; 28,8; 28,9; 2*Re* 21,6; 23,24; 1*Chr* 10,13; 2*Chr* 33,6; thrice in *Isaiah*: 8,19; 19,3; 29,4; once in *Job* 32,19, but this reference is uncertain.

Followed by *yidde'oní(m)*, and generally in the plural, it refers to the cult of other gods and idols. The vocabulary used in these contexts is typical of OT pronouncements against idololatry<sup>15</sup>. In this format, we find the good kings, like Saul (1*Sam* 28,3,9) and Josiah (2*Re* 23,24) banning the 'ôb-cult, and the evil kings, like Manasseh (2*Re* 21,6) promoting it. This ancestor-cult was considered polluting and the practitioners were unclean (*Lev* 19,31); the punishment reserved for necromancers was lapidation (*Lev* 20,27).

When referring to necromancy, the term appears in the singular. The person who invokes the dead is called *ba'alat-'ôb* the ‘mistress of the 'ôb’<sup>16</sup>. This implies the existence of a specialist who has the knowledge of certain rituals of invocation. It is ambiguous, from the passage in the book of *Samuel* (1,28)<sup>17</sup>, whether the necromancer acted as a medium of the ghost, because no details of the ritual itself are given.

According to *Lev* 20,2, some people have an 'ôb in themselves, which enables them to be a medium for the dead. The actions of the 'ôb (*těšafšef* / *ha-měšafšěfîm* ‘softly whispering’ and *hamahgîm* ‘murmuring’ *Isa* 29,4 and 8,19) may be pointing to the fact that the phenomenon of necromancy was transformed in the late OT-period, and the ancestor-cult had become mere soothsaying by means of a medium<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> TROPPER «Spirit» coll. 1526-1527.

<sup>16</sup> This is a parallel to the Sumerian-Akkadian *lú gidim.ma* ‘master of the spirit of the dead’, the necromancer; E. REINER and M. CIVIL (eds.), *Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum 1969) vol. XII p. 168, n. 356; cf. XII p. 226, n. 148.

<sup>17</sup> On this passage, invaluable as a literary testimony for the practice of necromancy, cf. J. TRENCSENYI-WALDAPFEL, «Die Hexe von Endor und die griechisch-römische Welt», *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 12 (1961) pp. 201-222; M. L. WEST, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford 1997) pp. 550-553; C. GROTTANELLI, «Messaggi dagli Inferi nella Bibbia ebraica: la necromante di En-dor», in P. XELLA (ed.), *Archeologia dell' inferno* (Verona 1987) pp. 191-207; A. BEUKEN, «I Samuel 28: the prophet as a “Hammer of Witches”», *Journal for the Study of Old Testament* 6 (1978) pp. 3-17; SCHMIDT «Witch of Endor» pp. 111-129; TROPPER *Nekromantie* pp. 166-178.

<sup>18</sup> TROPPER «Spirit» col. 1528. TROPPER *Nekromantie* p. 174, where he states that the Greek translation is filling the gaps of the ambiguous original and interprets the witch as a medium through whom the spirit speaks, hence ἐγγαστήριμος.

In *Isa* 29,4, the word 'ōb in the singular is rendered οἱ φωνοῦντες ἐκ τῆς γῆς ('those who produce voices from the earth'), perhaps as an influence of the context: «And thy [*sc.* the city of Ariel] words shall be brought *down to the earth*».

The Greek ἐγγαστρίμυθος renders also the word *bad* in *Isa* 44,25, as meaning 'magician, false magician, diviner'. But this is a very unclear passage, and the sense is conjectural<sup>19</sup>, other meanings of the word being 'lie, stone, power'. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that the translator of *Isaiah* was translating very freely<sup>20</sup>.

Other versions of the Greek translations produce other terms. The version of Aquila when translating 'ōb: 1*Sam* 28,3; 28,8; 28,9; *Isa* 29,4; *Deut* 18,11, etc., uses the Greek word μάγος ('magician, wizard')<sup>21</sup>. There are also some instances of 'ōb, not rendered in the LXX as ἐγγαστρίμυθος 2*Re* (4*Re*) 21,6, on King Manasseh, who used divination and auspices: ἐκληδονίζετο καὶ οἰωνίζετο, καὶ ἐποίησε θελητήν, καὶ γνώστας ἐπλήθυνε<sup>22</sup>. Aquila again translates μάγος, while the Antiochian version translates ἐγγαστρίμυθος. In the passage 2*Re* (4*Re*) 23,24: on Josiah, who «removed the sorcerers, and the wizards, and the *theraphim*, and the idols» the text we find is: καὶ γε τοὺς θελητάς, καὶ τοὺς γνωριστάς, καὶ τὰ θεραφίν, καὶ τὰ εἰδωλα. In this passage, Symmachus<sup>23</sup> and the Antiochian text give the translation ἐγγαστρίμυθος, while Aquila gives μάγος.

In the passages of the *Leviticus*, the manuscript M gives some variant translations: in *Lev* 19,31 μάντεις ('diviners'), and in *Lev* 20,6 and 20,27 θελητής ('sorcerer').

There is also an instance of ἐγγαστρίμυθος with no correspondence in Hebrew: 2*Chr* 35,19, about King Josiah.

The choice of ἐγγαστρίμυθος can, according to all likelihood, be ascribed to the translators of the Pentateuch already in the third

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ier* 50,36: omitted by the LXX, where *badim* means also 'diviners'.

<sup>20</sup> The evaluation of the competence of the translator varies greatly: cf. CAIRD *Language* p. 124, ORLINSKY «Septuagint» p. 551, n. 2.

<sup>21</sup> On this translation, FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS *Introducción* pp. 119-132. We would like to point out that the term μάγος is used by Lucian in second century AD as well, in his *Menippus*, for the guide into the Netherworld.

<sup>22</sup> 'And he used divination and auspices, and he acted the sorcerer and multiplied the diviners'.

<sup>23</sup> Only deduced from the Syrohexaplar version: the Syriac term is retranslated by F. FIELD, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt* (Oxford 1875) s.v. into Latin *ventriloquus*.

cent. BC. It is however not easy to establish with certainty the reason behind the general predilection for the term ἐγγαστρίμυθος, instead of –for example– the more appropriate Greek word ψυχαγωγός<sup>24</sup> or others. Perhaps it was due to a lack of accurate knowledge or a lack of interest to seek exact correspondences.

Biblical scholarship has established that «the translators were diplomatic legal scholars and the translation was the product of consensus as to the meaning of the Law. [...] The way Aristeas elaborates on their abilities makes it certain that he has in mind an essentially diplomatic quality in dispute and so he is not commenting on their use of Greek»<sup>25</sup>. Although their translating principle was to reproduce the original word by word<sup>26</sup>, not infrequent misreadings of the Hebrew text have been verified; in the same way, inaccurate knowledge of the corresponding Greek terminology in the field of divination could have led them to a mistake in the present case<sup>27</sup>. Alternatively, their choice could have been based on contemporary reality, namely that in Hellenistic Alexandria divination through the dead had been taken over by private sorcerers, branded ventriloquists by the religious authorities<sup>28</sup>. The aim of the translators was evidently to single

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by H. G. LIDDELL and R. SCOTT, revised and augmented throughout by Sir H. S. JONES, with the assistance of R. MCKENZIE (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1976) s.v., for the meaning of the word and derivatives; a possible reason for avoiding this word is that the old meaning ‘the conjurer of the souls’ has given way to new meanings (‘the one who wins over men’s souls, who persuades’) developed through use in philosophy and rhetoric. An interesting lexicographical entry (cf. I. BEKKER, *Anecdota Graeca* [Berlin: G. C. Nauckium 1814] vol. I p. 73, 13) informs us that in Alexandria the word signified ‘the educator of children’ while at times past it denoted ‘the conjurer of the souls’: ψυχαγωγός· οἱ μὲν Ἀλεξανδρεῖς τὸν τῶν παίδων ἀνδραποδιστὴν οὕτω καλοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ ἄρχαῖοι τοὺς τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν τεθνηκότων γοητείαις τισὶν ἄγοντας· τῆς αὐτῆς ἐννοίας καὶ τοῦ Αἰσχύλου τὸ δρᾶμα ψυχαγωγός (*psychagogos*: the term is used in Alexandria for the educators of children, while in times past it denoted those who by magical means conjured up souls of the dead; Aeschylus’ play *Psychagogos* has this meaning’).

<sup>25</sup> NORTON *History* pp. 7-8.

<sup>26</sup> CAIRD *Language* p. 125; ORLINSKY «Septuagint» pp. 548-552.

<sup>27</sup> V. NIKIPROWETZKY, *La troisième Sibylle* (Paris, Hague: Mouton 1970) p. 338: «Le vocabulaire hébraïque de la divination ne s’accorde pas avec la terminologie grecque et la traduction des Septante a eu recours à des à-peu-près».

<sup>28</sup> TROPPEL «Spirit» col. 1528. In his subsequent discussion of *Job* 32,19, where ‘*ḡb* means ‘wine-skin’ in state of fermentation: ἡ δὲ γαστήρ μου ὡσπερ ἄσκος γλεύκου ζέων δεδεμένος ἢ ὡσπερ φουσητήρ χαλκῶς ἐρρηγός (‘my belly is like a

out the conjurers of the dead as deceitful and the term ‘ventriloquist’ serves their purpose well <sup>29</sup>. Despite Bouché-Leclercq’s opinion to the contrary <sup>30</sup>, it is our belief that the necromantic connotations of the term definitely came about later. They were perhaps motivated by the text of *Septuaginta* and did not belong to the initial meaning of the word.

#### 4. THE TERM ἔγγαστρίμυθος IN GREEK LITERATURE: TWO TRADITIONS

Following the association of ventriloquism and necromancy by the translators of the Sacred Scripture, the term ἔγγαστρίμυθος passes into the exegetical literature that either draws directly or is inspired by the LXX. In these texts, the word bears consistently its necromantic connotations. In particular the necromantic episode of 1*Sam* 28 triggered the exegetical zeal of both Christian fathers

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wine-skin in a state of fermentation or like a blacksmith’s bellows bulging’), Tropper considers this passage a textual corruption for *no’dôt* ‘skin’, influenced by the expression *rûah bitnî*, appearing in the preceding verse; the expression confirms, in his mind, the fact that the later OT period considered the invocation of the dead as practiced by means of a medium or ventriloquist.

Perhaps a testimony of a similar practice –albeit later than the period examined– is *PGM* IV 850 (fourth century AD), the *Solomon’s collapse* (*Papyri Graecae Magicae: die griechische Zauberpapyri*, K. PREISENDANZ- A. HEINRICHS [eds.] [Stuttgart: Teubner 1973]). It is a charm on papyrus, belonging to a magical handbook, which produces a trance or ecstatic seizure. It can be used for boys or adults, not for trivial consultations, but for ‘matters of necessity’ (πράγμα ἀναγκαῖον). There is a spell asking the gods to inspire the adult or boy in question and talk through him: ἐμπνευσον τῷ δεῖνα ἀνθρώπῳ ἢ παιδί ... δεῦρο μοι διὰ τοῦ δεῖνα ἀνθρώπου ἢ παιδίου καὶ ἐξηγησόν μοι μετὰ ἀκριβείας (‘inspire the X person or child come to me through the X person or child and tell me in detail’). There is a formula for the dismissal of the possessive god or spirit and for the awakening of the medium. The elements of this ritual –libations and offerings similar to those used when the dead are summoned up– are not far away from what could be understood as necromantic ventriloquism or possession by the spirit of a dead person. In the corpus of the magical papyri from Egypt the spirits of the dead are generally considered as demons and gods that can be ‘consulted’.

<sup>29</sup> The absence of the term in the Greek papyri recovered so far is an indication of its rareness. In particular we are inclined to interpret the fact that the word is unattested in the corpus of the magical papyri as an evidence of its being a derogatory, polemical term used by the opponents of sorcery in their attacks against its practitioners.

<sup>30</sup> A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ, *Histoire de la Divination dans l’Antiquité* (Paris: Ernest Leroux 1879) vol. I p. 338.

and Jewish writers <sup>31</sup> who were faced with the dogmatic paradox that a mere sorcerer had managed to invoke a prophet like Samuel <sup>32</sup>. We mention by way of example: Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica* 6.20ff.; Origenes' *De Engastrimytho*; Hippolytus' fragment *De Engastrimytho*; Gregorius of Nyssa's *Epistula ad Theodosium Episcopum de Pythonissa*; Ioannes Damascenus' *Epistula ad Theophilum Imperatorem de Sanctis et Venerandis*; Georgius Monachus' *Chronica* 168ff. and others <sup>33</sup>.

On the other hand, authors who belong to the pagan tradition or comment on pagan literature are clearly unfamiliar with the necromantic content of the word. The lexicographer Erotianus enters in his lexicon to the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, probably with reference to the passage from *Epidemiae* V: «engastrimythoi: also called *pythons* by some; the word occurs only once [*i.e.* in the

<sup>31</sup> The word is used by Jewish authors who write in Greek: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* VI 327ff. (J. THACKERAY, R. MARCUS, L. H. FELDMAN and A. WIKGREN [London, Cambridge, Massachusetts: LOEB 1926-1965]); Philo, *De Somniis* I 220, 8 (P. SAVINEL [Paris: Du Cerf 1962]), (both connected with the LXX and commenting on parts of it); *Oracula Sibyllina* III 226 (J. GEFFCKEN, *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* [Leipzig 1902]) –all based in Alexandria. See the description in Josephus, who has already taken the meaning from the LXX *AJ* VI 330: τὸ γὰρ τῶν ἐγγαστριμύθων γένος ἀνάγον τὰς τῶν νεκρῶν ψυχὰς δι' αὐτῶν προλέγει τοῖς δεομένοις τὰ ἀποβησόμενα ('the *engastrimythoi* conjure up the souls of the dead and through them foretell what is to happen in the future to those who are in need of knowing'). Surprisingly, Philo never makes the connection between necromancy and ventriloquism, and when he mentions necromancy, he does not use the word ἐγγαστριμύθος; *De Specialibus Legibus* I 62-63 (S. DANIEL [ed.] [Paris: Du Cerf 1975]).

<sup>32</sup> On the afterlife of the episode in Christian and Rabbinic literature *cf.* the extremely illustrative article by K. A. D. SMELIK, «The Witch of Endor: I Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis till 800 AD», *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (1977) pp. 160-178.

<sup>33</sup> Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, in I. A. HEIKEL (ed.), *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (= *GSC*) (Leipzig 1913); Origenes, *De engastrimytho*, E. KLOSTERMANN and P. NAUTIN (eds.), *GSC* 3 (Leipzig 1983); Hippolytus, *Fragmentum de engastrimytho*, G. H. BONWETSCH and H. ACHELIS (eds.), *GSC* (Leipzig 1897); Gregorius, *Epistula ad Theodosium Episcopum de Pythonissa*, J. K. DOWNING, J. A. MCDONOUGH and H. HÖRNER (eds.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, III 2 (Leiden: Brill 1987); I. Damascenus, *Epistula ad Theophilum*, *Patrologia Graeca* vol. 95, col. 345; Georgius Monachus, *Chronica*, C. DEBOOR (ed.) (Leipzig: Teubner 1904). The only Christian father who mentions the ventriloquists in a context independent of the LXX is Clemens (O. STÄHLIN [ed.] [Leipzig: Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung 1936]). The association with necromancy is nevertheless still present as the necromancers are listed immediately after the ventriloquists (*Exhortation* 2.11.2.8). In his *Paedagogus* 2.1.15.4 the demon of gluttony is compared with the demon of the ventriloquists.

*Corpus Hippocraticum*]]»<sup>34</sup>; at about the same time (first cent. AD) Plutarch speaks about the ventriloquists in similar terms: «For it is silly and utterly childish to believe that God himself, like the ventriloquists called *Eurykleis* in the past and now *pythons*, enters the bodies of the diviners and speaks using their mouth and voice as instruments»<sup>35</sup>. This is a most interesting testimony for us, as he connects the term with the oracles of the gods, probably in the original sense of these ventriloquists, who claimed to be possessed by the god<sup>36</sup>, who spoke through them. In fact, the term is regularly connected by the lexicographers with *python*, an inspired prophet or soothsayer, and with Eurykles, well-known to be a ventriloquist, but not a necromancer.

The sound effects produced during ventriloquism become the target of Lucian's humour in *Lexiphanes* 20, 23: «Lex.: There you are! You convinced me! I am drinking! Alas! What is this? Lots of stomach rumbling! As though I had swallowed a ventriloquist!»<sup>37</sup>.

Galen in his lexicon to the *Corpus Hippocraticum* –compiled sometime in the course of the second cent. AD– provides a concise description of the ventriloquist: «*engastrimythoi*: those who speak with the mouth closed so as to give the impression that they speak from the belly»<sup>38</sup>.

While necromantic connotations are impressively absent in the pagan line of tradition, the Christian exegesis also ignores the pagan terms of the discussion. Three exceptions will be mentioned:

<sup>34</sup> *Fragmenta* 21, 1 (E. NACHMANSON [ed.] [Gotemburg 1918]): ἐγγαστρίμυθοι ἄς πύθωνάς τινες καλοῦσιν. ἔστι δὲ τῶν ἀπαξ εἰρημένων.

<sup>35</sup> *De defectu oraculorum* 414E (*Moralia* vol. V, F. C. BABBITT [ed.] [London, Cambridge Massachusetts: LOEB 1962]): εὐηθες γὰρ ἔστι καὶ παιδικὸν κομιδῆ τὸ οἶεσθαι τὸν θεὸν αὐτὸν ὡσπερ τοὺς ἐγγαστρίμυθους Εὐρυκλέας πάλαι νυνὶ δὲ Πύθωνας προσαγορευομένους ἐνδύομενον εἰς τὰ σώματα τῶν προφητῶν ὑποφθέγγεσθαι τοῖς ἐκείνων στόμασι καὶ φωναῖς χρώμενον ὄργανοις.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. also Cyrillus, *Commentarius in Isaiam* 70, 240 (*Patrologia Graeca* vol. 70, coll. 9-1449).

<sup>37</sup> M. D. MACLEOD (ed.) (Oxford Classical Texts, Oxford 1972-1987): Ἰδοὺ πείθομαι καὶ πίομαι, φεῦ, τί τοῦτο; πολὺς ὁ βορβορυγμός. ἐγγαστρίμυθὸν τινα ἔοικα πεπωκέναι.

<sup>38</sup> *Linguarum seu dictionum exoletarum Hippocratis explicatio* 19, 94, 10 (in C. G. KÜHN [ed.], *Galenus opera omnia* [Leipzig 1821-1823]): οἱ κεκλεισμένοι τοῦ στόματος φθεγγόμενοι, διὰ τὸ δοκεῖν ἐκ τῆς γαστρὸς φθέγγεσθαι.

A) Photius in his *Bibliotheca* (ninth cent. AD) lists various types of magic mentioned by Iamblichus in his *Babyloniaca*, a second cent. AD novel in Greek. The author of this novel claims Babylonian origin «and he mentions magic by hail, magic by reptiles, necromancy and the ventriloquist, called *Eurykles* by the Greeks and *Sakchouras* by the Babylonians»<sup>39</sup>. If Photius has reproduced the original with accuracy<sup>40</sup>, then the juxtaposition of necromancy and ventriloquism could mean that in Iamblichus' mind the two activities were closely associated. But Iamblichus was undoubtedly «an Oriental by birth»<sup>41</sup> (either Babylonian or Syrian) writing in Greek in the second half of the second cent. AD; in this context, his familiarity with the fusion of the two forms of divination is not difficult to comprehend.

B) In the biblical commentaries of Theodoretus, bishop of Cyrus (fifth cent. AD), the identification of ventriloquists and necromancers coexists with a range of pagan terms, never before associated with necromancy. In *QOct* 181, he asks: «What is a ventriloquist? Certain people, urged by demons, cheated many a fool, alleging that they could prophesy; these were called ἐντερομάντειες [‘diviners through the innards’] by the Greeks because they gave the impression that the demon spoke from inside them»<sup>42</sup>. In the *CommIsa*, he writes: «... who [*sc.* the Jews]

<sup>39</sup> Photius *Bibliotheca* 94, 75b 25 (R. HENRY [ed.] [Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1959-1981]: Καὶ μάγον δὲ λέγει χαλάζης καὶ μάγον ὄφρων, καὶ νεκρομαντείας καὶ ἐγγαστριμυθον, ὃν καὶ φησιν ὡς Ἕλληνες μὲν Εὐρυκλέα λέγουσι Βαβυλώνιοι δὲ Σάκχουραν ἀποκαλοῦσι. M. Such (CSIC, Madrid) suggests orally that the term *Sakchouras* can be reproducing the Sumerian *sag-ur-sag*, or *sag-bur-ra*, with all its difficulties, corresponding to Accadian *assinnu*, meaning a sort of ‘cultic performer’ (REINER - CIVIL *Materials* vol. XII p. 134, ns. 184-185; cf. A. L. OPPENHEIM, «Mesopotamian Mythology III», *Orientalia* 19 [1950] pp. 129-158: p. 135).

<sup>40</sup> Photius is familiar with Eurycles as is evident from his letter to a certain Theodotus (vol. II Ep. 151, *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, B. LAURDAS et L. G. WESTERNIK [ed.] [Leipzig: Teubner 1984]), and the entry *ventriloquist* in his *Lexicon*, *Epsilon* 20 (cf. n. 6).

<sup>41</sup> R. HÄGG, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell 1983; original publ. in Swedish, Uppsala 1980) pp. 32-34.

<sup>42</sup> Theodoretus, *Quaestiones in Octateuchum* 181 (N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS - A. SAENZ-BADILLOS [eds.] [Madrid: CSIC 1979]): Τινὲς ὑπὸ δαιμόνων τινῶν ἐνεργούμενοι, ἐξηπάτουν πολλοὺς τῶν ἀνοήτων, ὡς δῆθεν προαγορεύοντες οὗς ἐντερομάντειες οἱ Ἕλληνες προσηγόρευον, ὡς ἐνδοθεν δοκοῦντος τοῦ δαίμονος φθέγγεσθαι. Cf. *Quaestiones et responsiones ad Orthodoxos* 87, 8 (*Patrologia*

were always slaves of false belief and trafficked with the dead asking them about the living and looked around for στερνομάντις [‘diviners from the chest’], but did not believe in the true miracles of the Apostles»<sup>43</sup>. And further: «And they will consult their gods and idols, the ones who speak from the earth and the ventriloquists. He says that they who lack faith will resort to oracles and to the dead, they will call the στερνομάντις ...»<sup>44</sup>. Theodoretus’ wide ranging knowledge of Greek authors, especially Plato, is well-known. The question of his familiarity with Greek terms of divination is in itself intriguing.

C) Cyrillus too seems to have an acquaintance with the pagan tradition, when he describes the ventriloquists as those claiming to be possessed by «some gods» who dwell in their bellies and talk through them<sup>45</sup>. His knowledge of the «pagan» meaning of the term proves, as in the case of Theodoretus, his double source of information.

## 5. THE EVIDENCE OF THE LEXICOGRAPHERS

The picture that has emerged so far is the following: in the pagan tradition, the term ἐγγαστρίμυθος was applied to the inspired diviner who delivered his prophecy without opening his mouth (Galen). Noises were audible either from the chest (*Corpus*

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*Graeca* vol. 6, coll. 1249-1400): πῶς διὰ τῶν καλουμένων ἐγγαστρίμυθων οἱ δαίμονες φθέγγονται (‘how do the demons speak through the so-called engastrimythoi?’).

<sup>43</sup> *Commentarium in Isaiam* 3, 696-705 (*Patrologia Graeca* vol. 81, coll. 216-493): τῇ γὰρ πλάνη παρὰ πάντα τὸν βίον δεδουλευκότες καὶ νεκυίαις κεχρημένοι καὶ τοὺς νεκροὺς περὶ τῶν ζώντων ἐρωτῶντες καὶ τοὺς στερνομάντις περισκοποῦντες τοῖς ἀληθέσι τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν θαύμασιν.

<sup>44</sup> *CommIsa* 6, 234: Καὶ ἐπερωτήσουσι τοὺς θεοὺς αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτῶν καὶ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς γῆς φωνοῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἐγγαστρίμυθους. Οἱ δὲ ἀπιστοῦντές φησι τὰ μαντεία περιουσιάζουσι καὶ νεκυίαις χρῆσονται καὶ στερνομάντις καλοῦσι ...

<sup>45</sup> *CommIsa* 70, 240 (*Patrologia Graeca* vol. 70, coll. 9-1449): Ἄλλ’ ὑμεῖς, φησί, κἂν εἰ προσίοιτό τις, λέγων· Ζητήσατε τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς φωνοῦντας, τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ, τοὺς προσπομένους ἀναφέρειν τοὺς νεκροὺς, καὶ ὡσπερ ἐξ ᾧδου ποιεῖσθαι τὰς μαντείας. ἤγουν τοὺς ἐγγαστρίμυθους· οἱ προσποιοῦνται μὲν θεοὺς τινας ἔχειν εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν, οὕτω τε τοῖς προσιοῦσι τὰ παρ’ ἐκείνων λαλεῖν, μὴ προσέσθε τὴν συμβουλὴν. Φωνοῦσι γὰρ ἀπὸ μόνης τῆς ἑαυτῶν κοιλίας (‘If somebody approaches you, says the prophet, urging you to seek help from those who speak from the earth, i.e. those who pretend to conjure up the dead and to produce oracles from Hades, i.e. the *engastrimythoi* who pretend to have some kind of gods in their belly and to convey to the consultants their messages- do not accept their advise. For they simply speak nonsense’).

*Hippocraticum*) or the belly of the diviner (Lucian). As for the prophesying voice, the crucial question is whether one or two voices are audible and where the voice was perceived to be located<sup>46</sup>. *Python* is the alternative name for these diviners, current from at least the first cent. AD onwards.

From the second century AD onwards, the word becomes the subject of a number of lexicographical entries which yield some related terms. The entry *engastrimythos* in Aelius Dionysius' atticistic compilation *Ἀττικὰ Ὀνόματα* (*Attic Words*)<sup>47</sup> was the first of this sort. If its reconstruction by modern scholarship is accurate and the attribution correct<sup>48</sup>, subsequent entries in Hesychius, Photius, Suidas and partly the Platonic scholia, stem –albeit not in a straightforward way– from Aelius Dionysius. The term στερνόμαντις first occurs in the above entry; Pollux, who also mentions it, attributes it to Sophocles<sup>49</sup>.

Hesychius, the fifth cent. AD lexicographer from Alexandria, includes the word in his lexicon of rare poetic and dialectical words: «*engastrimythos*: called *engastrimantis* by some, *sternomantis* by others.

<sup>46</sup> E. DODDS, «The Blessings of Madness», in *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley - Los Angeles: University of California Press 1963) pp. 64-101: pp. 71-72, is inclined to interpret ὑποφθέγγεσθαι (Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum* 414E) as 'to speak with a hoarse belly-voice', and refers it to the voice of the demon. Yet, when it comes to the same verb in Plato (*Soph.* 252C), he sides with Cornford's interpretation 'to carry on a dialogue with him' (*Ibid.*, n. 49).

<sup>47</sup> H. ERBSE (ed.), *Untersuchungen zu den attizistischen Lexika* (Berlin: de Gruyter 1950), *Epsilon* 2, 2: ἐγαστρίμυθος ὁ ἐν γαστρὶ μαντευόμενος: τοῦτον καὶ ἐγαστρίμαντιν <καλοῦσιν>, ὃν νῦν τινες Πύθωνά φασιν, Σοφοκλῆς δὲ στερνόμαντιν, Πλάτων ὁ φιλόσοφος Εὐρυκλέα ἀπὸ Εὐρυκλέους τοιοῦτου μάντεως, Ἀριστοφάνης Σφηξί: ἡμιησάμενος τὴν Εὐρυκλέους μαντείαν καὶ διάνοιαν'. Φιλόχορος δὲ ἐν τρίτῃ Περὶ μαντικῆς καὶ γυναικῆς ἐγαστρίμυθους φησὶν ('*engastrimythos*: the diviner by means of the belly; called also *engastrimantis* and nowadays *python* by some, *sternomantis* by Sophocles and *Eurykles* by Plato on account of a diviner called Eurykles. Aristophanes in the *Wasps* writes: «taking his cue from the prophetic device of Eurykles». Philochoros in the third book of his treatise *On Divination* mentions women ventriloquists').

<sup>48</sup> *Pollucis Onomasticon* 2. 162; 7. 189 (E. BETHE [ed.] [Stuttgart - Leipzig: Teubner 1998]). Cf. ERBSE *Untersuchungen* 52; on Aelius Dionysius in general and the problems of reconstructing his lexicon cf. L. COHN s.v. «Dionysios» (142), in *Real Encyclopedie* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Buchhandlung 1905) vol. V, coll. 987-991.

<sup>49</sup> *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*: vol. IV, *Sophocles*, S. RADT (ed.) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht 1999) fr. 59; cf. also *The Fragments of Sophocles*, A. C. PEARSON (ed.) (Cambridge: CUP 1917) vol. I fr. 59.

The mode of divination is also mentioned by Plato in the *Sophist*. This sort of diviner is called nowadays *python*»; «έν στερνομάντισιν· ένγαστρίμυθοις; used by Sophocles in the play *Αίχμαλωτίδες* (*The Captive Women*); «*python: engastrimythos* or *engastrimantis* or in Byzantine terms *python*; a prophesying demon»<sup>50</sup>.

Photius, the patriarch and scholar, speaks in detail about the ‘spirit of the belly’ (*Epist.* 151 L.-W.). He refers to the use of the terms *enteromantis* and *engastrimantis* as alternatives for *engastrimythos*. His explanation, however, that Sophocles and Plato replaced the above terms with *sternomantis* and *Eurykles*, respectively, because the former sounded vulgar, is an exercise in subjective aesthetics<sup>51</sup>.

The encyclopaedic dictionary Suidas reads: «*engastrimantis*; called *python* by some, *sternomantis* by Sophocles and *Eurykles* by Plato on account of a diviner called Eurykles. Aristophanes in the *Wasps* writes: “taking his cue from the prophetic device of Eurykles”. Philochoros in the third book of his treatise *On Divination* mentions women ventriloquists. The latter summon up the souls of the dead; one of them was consulted by Saul to conjure up the ghost of prophet Samuel»<sup>52</sup>. The word *ένγαστρίμυθος* further occurs in Suidas three times, once *s.v. telesphoros*: «perfect, diviner, *engastrimythos*»<sup>53</sup> and twice in entries reproducing the text of the LXX. In the light of all this, the association of ventriloquism with

<sup>50</sup> *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, K. LATTE (ed.) (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard 1953), *Epsilon* 123, 1: *ένγαστρίμυθος*: τοῦτον τινες *ένγαστρίμαντιν*, οἱ δὲ στερνομάντιν λέγουσι. Φησὶ δὲ περὶ τοῦ τρόπου τῆς μαντείας καὶ Πλάτων έν τῷ Σοφιστῇ. τοῦτον ἡμεῖς Πύθωνα νῦν καλοῦμεν. *Epsilon* 3307, 1: έν στερνομάντισιν· ένγαστρίμυθοις. Σοφοκλῆς Αίχμαλωτίσιν. Στερνομάντιες is a conjecture by A. NAUCK, «Zu den Fragmenten der griechischen Tragiker», *Philologus* 4 (1849) pp. 533-560: p. 538, instead of *ενστερνομαντιας* of the manuscript tradition. *Pi* 4314: Πύθων· ὁ *ένγαστρίμυθος* ἢ *ένγαστρίμαντις*. ἢ Βυζάντιος τὸ γένος. πύθων· δαιμόνιον μαντικόν.

<sup>51</sup> Edition by LAURDAS - WESTERNIK (*cf.* n. 40). Similar information in his *Lexicon*, *Epsilon* 20.

<sup>52</sup> *Suidae Lexicon*, *Epsilon* 45, 2 (*cf.* n. 6): Ἐγαστρίμυθος: *ένγαστρίμαντις*; ὁ νῦν τινες Πύθωνα, Σοφοκλῆς δὲ στερνομάντιν, Πλάτων, ὁ φιλόσοφος Εὐρυκλέα ἀπὸ Εὐρυκλέους τοιοῦτου μάντεως. Ἀριστοφάνης Σφηξί· μιμησάμενος τὴν Εὐρυκλέους μαντεῖαν καὶ διάνοιαν. Φιλόχορος δ' έν γ περὶ μαντικῆς καὶ γυναικας *ένγαστρίμυθους*. αὐται τὰς τῶν τεθνηκότων ψυχὰς *έξεκαλοῦντο*. μᾶ δὲ αὐτῶν *έχρησατο* Σαούλ, ἥτις *έξεκαλέσατο* τὴν ψυχὴν Σαμουὴλ τοῦ προφήτου.

<sup>53</sup> *Suidae Lexicon*, *Tau* 266, 1: τελεσφόρος· τέλειος, μάντις, *ένγαστρίμυθος*.

necromancy in the last part of the entry *ἐγγαστρίμυθος* clearly originates from the compiler's Christian sources <sup>54</sup>.

## 6. EURYKLES

Eurykles emerges for the first time in the parabasis of Aristophanes' *Wasps* <sup>55</sup> (1015-1022). The poet rebukes his audience and complains that he has been wronged by them. In the past, he explains, he did good to them secretly, *ἑτέροις ποιηταῖς* <sup>56</sup>: in emulation of the diviner Eurykles, he slipped into other poets' bellies and poured out lots of comic material <sup>57</sup>; after that, he took his chances openly and held the reins of his own Muse and not those of other poets'. The passage does not lend itself to easy interpretation and has perplexed both ancient and modern interpreters: «Eurykles was a diviner manifesting himself through others; the poet says that like Eurykles I also gave to others» explain the scholia R (1019b, 2R); «that person, Eurykles, was called *engastrimythos* because he delivered prophecies to the Athenians by means of a demon inside him. The poet claims that he did the same thing in his poetry, using others as helpers ... hence all diviners assumed the collective name *Eurykleidai* or *engastritai*» <sup>58</sup> explain another group of scholiasts. W. Starkie and D. McDowell <sup>59</sup> agree in that the voice came from the belly of other people as the diviner placed his familiar spirit inside them. Sommerstein maintains that «... Eurycles was not a human practitioner of prophecy, but the name of the spirit who was supposed

<sup>54</sup> In the same vein cf. JACOBY *FGrH* IIIb (Suppl.) 328 vol. II (Notes-Addenda-Corrigenda-Index) p. 263, n. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Staged at the Lenaea of 422 BC. Edited by V. COULON (Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1923-1930). For more editions, see below, ns. 59-60.

<sup>56</sup> τὰ μὲν οὐ φανερώς ἐπικουρῶν ἀλλὰ κρύβδην ἑτέροις ποιηταῖς.

<sup>57</sup> *Vespae* 1019-20: ... μιμησάμενος τὴν Εὐρυκλέους μαντείαν καὶ διάνοιαν, εἰς ἀλλοτρίας γαστέρας ἐνδὺς κωμωδικά πολλὰ χέασθαι ...

<sup>58</sup> In *Vespae* 1019b, 8 (W. J. W. KOSTER [ed.], *Scholia in Aristophanem*, Pars II. Fasc. I. *Scholia uetera et recentiora in Aristophanis Vespas* (Groningen 1978): ἐγγαστρίται δὲ καὶ Εὐρυκλεῖδαι ἐκαλοῦντο ἐντεῦθεν πάντες οἱ μαντευόμενοι.

<sup>59</sup> W. J. M. STARKIE, *Aristophanous Sphekes: The Wasps of Aristophanes with introduction, metrical analysis, critical notes, and commentary* (Amsterdam: Hakert 1968; reprint of the 1897 London edition) pp. 310-311; D. M. MACDOWELL, *Aristophanes Wasps with introduction and commentary* (Oxford, NY: Clarendon Press 1988; reprint of 1971 edition) p. 264.

to speak through mediums giving tongue to a voice not their own»<sup>60</sup>.

The same Eurykles appears in Plato's *Sophist* 252C. One of the conversants comments on the contradictions arising from the position that no alternative names for things can be used because then things partake of the effect produced by other things. «... and they [sc. those holding this position] do not need others to refute them but, as the saying goes, they have the enemy and future opponent in their own home and always carry him around, muttering indistinctly from within like the absurd Eurykles»<sup>61</sup>.

The Platonic analogy between the inward voice of opposition and the voice that comes from Eurykles' belly, suggests ventriloquism, rather than the intrusion of the spirit of Eurykles in other people's bellies. This is corroborated by the scholia to the passage: «The expression Eurykles is proverbial, applied to those who with their prophecies cause harm to themselves. For Eurykles claimed that he had a demon in his belly urging him to prophesy; hence he was called *engastrimythos*. He once prophesied unpleasant things to someone and was badly dismissed [...]. Another group of scholia reads: «This is a proverbial expression applied to those who cause harm to themselves through prophecy. It originated from the diviner Eurykles, a seer-ventriloquist; hence all seer-diviners came to be called *Eurykleis*. Ventriloquist is the one who divines from the belly. Also called *engastrimantis* and now *python*; Sophocles *sternomantis* ...»<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> ALAN H. SOMMERSTEIN, *Aristophanes' Wasps*, edited with translation and notes (Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd 1983) p. 216.

<sup>61</sup> Plato *Sophista* 252C: οὐκ ἄλλων δέονται τῶν ἐξελεγχόντων, ἀλλὰ τὸ λεγόμενον οἴκοθεν τὸν πολέμιον καὶ ἐναντιωσόμενον ἔχοντες, ἐντὸς ὑποφθεγγόμενον ὡσπερ τὸν ἄτοπον Εὐρυκλέα περιφέροντες ἀεὶ πορεύονται.

<sup>62</sup> *Scholia in Platonem vetera Dial. Sph Stephanus* 252c 11 (G. C. GREENE [ed.] [Haverford 1938]): Εὐρυκλέα. (1) παροιμία Εὐρυκλῆς ἐπὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῖς κακὰ μαντευομένων. Εὐρυκλῆς γὰρ ἐδόκει δαίμονά τινα ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ ἔχειν, τὸν ἐγκελευόμενον αὐτῷ περὶ τῶν μελλόντων λέγειν· ὅθεν καὶ ἐγγαστριμύθος ἐκαλεῖτο. οὗτος δὲ προειπὼν ποτὲ τινὶ τὰ μὴ καθ' ἡδονὴν κακῶς ἀπήλλαξεν. ἄτοπον δὲ τὸν μὴ ἐδραῖον ἀλλ' ἀεὶ ἐκτοπίζοντα λέγει. (2) παροιμία ἐπὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῖς τινα κακὰ μαντευομένων, λεγομένη ἐξ Εὐρυκλέους ἐγγαστριμύθου μάντεως, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ γένος τι μάντεων Εὐρυκλεῖς ἔλεγον. ἐγγαστριμύθος δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν γαστρὶ μαντευόμενος. τοῦτον καὶ ἐγγαστριμαντίνον ἔνιν τινες Πύθωνα φασί, Σοφοκλῆς δὲ στερνόμαντίνον, καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης ἐν Σφηξί- μιμησάμενος τὴν Εὐρυκλέους μαντείαν καὶ διάνοιαν. Φιλόχορος

The proverbial status of the expression is also attested by Pseudo-Plutarch in the treatise *On the Proverbs used by the Alexandrians* <sup>63</sup>, a collection of proverbs arranged probably by Seleucus (early first cent. AD) <sup>64</sup>.

## 7. INTERPRETATION

The nature of ventriloquism and its place in Greek divination appears to be a nebulous matter. The term *ἐγγαστρίμυθος* is firmly attested in the fourth cent. BC. Its status in the lexicographic tradition is that of a rare word. Late Antiquity and Byzantine sources, the mutual dependence of which cannot be established with certainty, mention as alternatives the terms *engastrimantis*, *engastrites* and *enteromantis*. *Sternomantis* and generic term *Eurykleis* are, according to some of the same sources, the corresponding terms for ventriloquist in the fifth cent. BC. The expression *Eurykles* seems to have acquired a certain proverbial status at some stage (Ps.-Plutarch and *Schol. Plat. Soph.* 252C) <sup>65</sup>. *Python* becomes current from the first cent. AD onwards.

It is further unclear whether the above terms were originally equivalent to each other or whether they came to be associated later by lexicographers and commentators. The initial meaning of *στερνόμαντις* is bound to remain obscure due to a lack of context <sup>66</sup>. The references to *Eurykles* in Aristophanes and Plato are hard to reconcile. The Platonic picture is that of a seer with an inner divinatory voice. In the *Wasps*, on the contrary, an analogy

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Plutarch, *Paroimiae* 2, 22: 'Ἐπὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῖς τινα καταμαντευομένων· Εὐρυκλῆς γὰρ τις ἐγένετο μάντις ἐγγαστρίμυθος.

<sup>63</sup> *Paroimiae*, Lamprias' catalogue no. 142. (E. L. VON LEUTSCH and F. G. SCHNEIDEWIN [eds.], *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum* [Gotinga 1851; reed. Hildesheim: Georg Olms 1958] vol. I).

<sup>64</sup> F. H. SANDBACH, Plutarch's *Moralia*, vol. XV (Cambridge, Massachusetts: LOEB 1969) pp. 404-405.

<sup>65</sup> The proverbial status of the expression is implied by Platonic formulation τὸ λεγόμενον. Alternatively, the proverb could have been invented *ad hoc* by later commentators and passed into the paroemiographic literature. A possible link between the Platonic scholia and paroemiographic literature could have been Pausanias' atticistic lexicon (Cf. G. WENTZEL, «Über den attizistischen Glossen in dem Lexikon des Photios», *Hermes* 30 [1895] pp. 367-384: p. 373).

<sup>66</sup> Could it be associated with *θυμόμαντις* 'following the commands of my heart' (Aeschylus *Persae* 224) as suggested by LIDDELL - SCOTT, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, given that *στέφνα* in Sophocles is the seat of the emotions?

seems to be drawn between the voice of the poet heard through other poets and that of the seer. However, the formulation εἰς ἀλλοτρίας γαστέρας ἐνδύς does not of necessity establish a full analogy with Eurykles. The expression μμησάμενος τὴν Εὐρυκλέους μαντείαν καὶ διάνοιαν could well operate as a proverb meaning ‘causing harm to myself like Eurykles’; then a broad, two-fold analogy might be at work in the passage between: a) the harm that both poet and Eurykles suffered, and b) the idea of the poet’s voice coming through other poets’ mouths and that of Eurykles’ demon speaking through the seer’s mouth.

Two further considerations might reinforce this argument: first, that the formulations of the passage are determined by the fact that the poet and not Eurykles is at the center of the description and second, that the ideas of harm and risk are instrumental for the passage (lines 1017, 1021).

Dominance of the field by female practitioners is weakly attested (Hippocratic author <sup>67</sup> and perhaps Philochoros). When it comes to the description of the voice or noises produced by the ventriloquist, the vocabulary suggests abnormal, muffled, almost imperceptible undertones.

Plato and Plutarch use forms of the verb ὑποφθέγγεσθαι, the Hippocratic author a form of the verb ὑποψοφεῖν, the implication being that the voice or noise produced is slight, obscure, barely audible <sup>68</sup>. Plutarch speaks of temporary possession of the bodies of the prophets by the divining god; by analogy, the ventriloquists were private diviners who claimed possession by a divining spirit <sup>69</sup>. The possibility of a dialogue between the spirit and diviner during the consultations seems very remote <sup>70</sup>. As to what really hap-

<sup>67</sup> The author of the passage of *Epidemiae* V could have chosen the feminine by analogy to the gender of the patient.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. similar compound verbs ὑπορρέγγειν and ὑποβορβορούζειν in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*; ὑποβρέμειν Aeschylus *Prometheus vincetus* 433; ὑπογελάν Plato *Charmides* 162B; ὑποκλάζειν Sophocles *Ichn.* 171; ὑποκλαίειν Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 69; ὑποκρώζειν Lucianus *Dialogi mortuorum* 6.4; ὑποστενάζειν Sophocles *Ajax* 322, 1001; etc. The nuance common to all those compounds is ‘low, discreet, secret, slight, almost imperceptible’.

<sup>69</sup> The sources are not explicit as to whether the spirit dwelt permanently in them or possessed them during the divining sessions.

<sup>70</sup> The impression that ὑποφθέγγεσθαι might mean ‘to carry on a dialogue with them’ is conveyed in Plato by the context, *i.e.* the idea of a secret inward opposition, while in Plutarch it is simply not there.

pened, Dodds <sup>71</sup> was probably right to suggest trance. What remains unclear is whether the notion of *ventriloquism*, *i.e.* the idea that the voice is produced in the belly, originated in the claims of the ventriloquists themselves or represents a contemptuous dismissal of their art as deceitful.

No compelling evidence suggests that these diviners were associated with conjuration of the dead during classical times. Their involvement in such activities might have increasingly been the case in Hellenistic Alexandria. This fact was consolidated in the literary tradition through the choice of the term ἐγγαστριμυθος by the translators of the LXX to render Hebrew terms with unambiguous necromantic associations. Thus, the image of the seer-ventriloquist is radically transformed in Late Antiquity. He is not the *atopos*, the 'strange, paradoxical' medium, divining by means of his belly-voice, but the dark conjurer of the dead, an abhorrent and condemned sorcerer <sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> «Blessing» pp. 71-72.

<sup>72</sup> We would like to thank Natalio Fernández Marcos for his advice and help, and Abraham Marrache for the revision of the English expression in this paper.

The article by J. T. KATZ and K. VOLK, «Mere bellies?: A new look at Theogony 26-8», *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 120 (2000) pp. 122-131, appeared in print after the first submission of the present paper. Our point of view is that the passage of *Job* 32,19 did not generate the rendering of Hebrew 'ōb as *engas-trimythos* in the translation of the LXX (KATZ - VOLK p. 126, n. 33; *cf.* our n. 28). We also disagree with these scholars' interpretation of Eurykles as 'the name of the demon inside the belly' (p. 125).

## RESUMEN

Esta contribución ha pretendido rastrear el término griego ἐγγαστρίμυθος, utilizado por los traductores de *Septuaginta* con claras connotaciones necrománticas. Sin embargo, la literatura griega anterior a esta traducción no proporciona elementos de juicio para pensar que estas connotaciones ya eran inherentes en época clásica a un término, que significaba 'adivino inspirado', aunque sus características tampoco quedan demasiado claras.

## SUMMARY

This contribution pursues a lexicographical study of the Greek term ἐγγαστρίμυθος, used by the translators of *Septuaginta* to render Hebrew terms with unambiguous necromantic connotations. However, the Greek literature previous to this translation cannot yield sufficient evidence that these connotations were inherent to the term in the Classical period. The term signified initially a sort of 'inspired diviner' who prophesied by means of a belly-spirit; further details about his profession are however somewhat unclear.