Zoïlus Zoïlus of Amphipolis was a Greek Sophist of the 4th century BCE, active in Athens, and perhaps close to the Cynic school. He was a historian (he wrote a universal history from the beginning of the universe to Philip II and a work on Amphipolis), rhetorician (he wrote epideictic orations), and philologist. In particular, he got the nickname of *Homeromastix*, "scourge of Homer," because of his harsh criticism of Homer. In his work *Against the poetry of Homer*, in nine books (which survives in fragments, especially in the Homeric SCHOLIA), he analyzed a series of mistakes in the Homeric poems, concerning the lack of consistency (e.g., schol. *Il*. 21.256, 21.454a), of decorum (e.g., schol. D *Il*. 5.4; schol. *Od*. 8.332), of linguistic correctness (e.g., schol. *Il*. 1.129a[1]), etc. Some scholars (cf. Lehrs 1882, 201–204 *contra* Friedländer 1895, 44–45) have suggested that Zoïlus' harsh criticism of Homer was to be taken as a sort of playful entertainment rather than serious scholarship. However, the fact that scholia give evidence that the Alexandrian grammarians actively confuted Zoïlus' criticism seems to confirm that his criticism was taken seriously. Certainly, his name became proverbial for a harsh critic.

Zoïlus' interest and critique against Homer is also attested in his rhetorical activity: among the titles of his epideictic orations there is an "Encomium of POLYPHEMOS" and also a "Censure of Homer," although the latter might be identified with his work *Against the poetry of Homer* under another title.

References and Suggested Readings

Friedländer 1895.

Friedländer, U. 1895. *De Zoilo aliisque Homeri obtrectatoribus*. Diss. Königsberg.

FRANCESCA SCHIRONI

The Homer Encyclopedia, edited by Margalit Finkelberg
© 2011 Blackwell Publishing Ltd.