Talking to books

Some basic principles of the literary genre of book dialogues*

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I. What is, and what is not, a book dialogue?

> IUL. *lege et de hoc quartum operis mei librum: quantum diabolo, quem patrem tuum dicis, ac libidini, matri tuae, sub criminandi specie blandiaris, intelleges.* AUG. *legi etiam quartum tuum et meo sexto ad eius tibi cuncta respondi; quis autem nostrum uicerit, iudicet pius lector amborum.*
>
> Jul. Read on this point also the fourth book of my work, and you will understand how much favor you show to the devil whom you call your father and to sexual desire, your mother, under the pretext of bringing accusations against them. Aug. I did read your fourth book also, and in my sixth book I replied to you on every point in it. But let the believing reader of both judge which of us is the winner.[1]

This passage from *Contra Iulianum Opus imperfectum* by Augustine at first glance seems to be the representation of a dialogue between two present speakers arguing over their literary products, but in fact it stems from a book which belongs to the genre of "book dialogues".[2] This genre is used first by Augustine of Hippo, who consecutively quotes the text of a current work, interrupts the text as if in a conversation and then replies to each quotation. While doing so, he addresses the quotation using the second person, thus making the author of the incorporated text speak. In the present paper we

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1 A. c. Iul. imp. 2,34, transl. Teske.

2 Here we follow the terminology of Peter Lebrecht Schmidt, who gives a classification of the early Christian Latin dialogues and distinguishes between Christian-philosophical and polemical dialogues. The book dialogues belong to the latter category (cf. Schmidt 1977, 106).

would like to investigate which might be the reasons why Augustine – or any author – chose to "talk to a book" and whether or not there are predecessors to this strategy which may have influenced Augustine's book dialogues.

1. Distinguishing book dialogues from other literary phenomena

There are a number of stylistic devices and forms of literary dialogues between a present speaker and a physically absent addressee in the history of literature before Augustine which may have contributed to the development of these book dialogues. First, there is the stylistic device of prosopopoeia, described by Quintilian as impersonisation,[3] referring to the following example from Cicero (Quint. inst. 9,2,32):

> *etenim si mecum patria mea, quae mihi vita mea multo est carior, si cuncta Italia, si omnis res publica sic loquatur: "Marce Tulli, quid agis?"*
>
> For if my country, which is far dearer to me than life itself, if all Italy, if the whole commonwealth were to address me thus, "Marcus Tullius, what are you doing?".[4]

Yet, prosopopoeia commonly deals with words (and often persons) that are fictitious,[5] which also holds true for imaginary dialogues: All of these texts are written by one author, who puts his speech in the mouth of other, imaginary or real conversants.

For another example, one might think of the stylistic device of apostrophe, which according to Quintilian (inst. 9,2,38f.) describes invocations such as: *uos enim iam ego, Albani tumuli atque luci, ... o leges Porciae legesque Semproniae!* ("For I appeal to you, hills and groves of Alba," or ... "O Porcian and Sempronian laws").[6]

The development of the genre of book dialogues could have taken its start from devices like this. The present genre is in a grey area, which is surrounded by several literary phenomena. But neither the device of prosopopoeia (along the lines: "Italia says: O Cicero!") nor the device of apostrophe

3 Cf. Quint. inst. 9,2,29-33.

4 Transl. Butler, revised by the authors.

5 Cf. Quint. inst. 9,2,31: *in quibus et corpora et verba fingimus.*

6 Transl. Butler.

("Cicero says: O Italia!") fully applies to Augustine's approach in *Contra Iulianum Opus imperfectum*. What we are looking for is something quite different and, comparatively, new: texts written by authentic persons that are incorporated into a new form of dialogue. In consequence, this dialogue is neither entirely imaginary nor entirely authentic. It is a discussion between two existing dialogue partners – only that one of them merely takes part in the discussion in quotation marks.

2. Examples of book dialogues and motivations for using this genre

Augustine applied the described method in four of his works. Struggling against several heretical groups, he used this strategy to invalidate the doctrines of single heretics on the one hand and to defend his own exegesis as the truly catholic one on the other hand.

It first appears in *Contra Faustum*: This work was written when Augustine distanced himself from Manicheism. He had himself been a member of this sect for several years and tells us in his *Confessiones* about his meeting with Faustus of Mileve, a Manichean bishop. [7] When he had converted to Christianity, he wrote the thirty-three books *Contra Faustum* in response to this bishop. In the book quoted in this treatise, Faustus goes through a number of questions which would need a good answer in the case of a meeting with an opponent. This work, the so-called *Capitula*, was obviously a guide on argumentation for Manichees.[8] Each item Faustus deals with and the answer of Augustine to it represents one book in Augustine's work *Contra Faustum*.

Further book dialogues would be the work *Contra Gaudentium* and the second book of *Contra litteras Petiliani*, which were written against the Donatists.[9] Although the Donatist point of view was condemned as heretic by

7 Cf. A. conf. 5,10-13.

8 Cf. Wurst 2007, 312-316. Wurst also remarks that Augustine did not change the order of the *Capitula*, which obviously were not arranged according to thematic aspects but rather seem to reflect real situations (ib. 314).

9 Augustine here replies to letters of Petilian and Gaudentius. The Donatists thought that the effectiveness of baptism is based on the uprightness of the priest, a belief that Augustine wants to refute. The Donatists thought that priests who fell away from Christianity for the time of persecutions under Diocletian (303-305), the so-called *traditores*, were no longer able to celebrate the sacraments (cf. Fuhrer 2004, 39).

emperor Constantine I in the synod of Arles[10], this religious movement continued to exist in Augustine's time. To establish the unity of the Church he tried to convince the Donatists of the veracity of the Catholic belief.[11]

Finally, there is the *Contra Iulianum Opus imperfectum*, which stems from the time of the struggle with the Pelagians.[12] Augustine had written the first book of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, in which he defends his position on marriage and desire against the Pelagian point of view.[13] In reaction to this book, Julian of Eclanum, condemned of heresy,[14] wrote the book *Ad Turbantium*, in which he holds the view, that Augustine's concept of original sin denigrates marriage. Augustine himself got hold of some excerpts of *Ad Turbantium* and directed the paper of the second book of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* against *Ad Turbantium*. Between 423 and 426 Julian wrote the 8 books *Ad Florum*,[15] in which he defended himself against Augustine's reproaches made

10 Cf. Lancel 1992-2002, 610f. and A. c. litt. Pet. 2,205.

11 Augustine later agreed to force them into the Catholic church even with state violence. He justified this with the reference to Lc. 14,23, which says that persons should be forced to participate in a wedding reception with the words *compelle intrare*. Cf. Horn 1995, 18f.

12 The name "Pelagians" stems from Pelagius, a monk who thought that man has a free will and is able to become virtuous even in earthly life. After Pelagius and his pupil Caelestius had been condemned of heresy at the ecclesiastical council of Mileve in 417 by pope Innocent I., his successor Zosimus rehabilitated them. Under pressure from the African bishops, Zosimus condemned Pelagius and Caelestius a second time but without a fair trial in a meeting with bishops. Because of this injustice, Julian of Eclanum and 17 other bishops refused to sign the edict of the pope. Julian tried to intervene in a document that is addressed to Count Valerius and in letters to Zosimus, but as a consequence, was condemned, too (cf. Fuhrer 2004, 44; Lamberigts 2004-2010, 838).

13 Cf. Lössl 2001, 280f.: Julian had tried to convince Count Valerius of Ravenna, obviously a person with influence on the decisions of the emperor, of his own point of view. Valerius turned to Augustine himself and asked for help in judging Julian's arguments.

14 Lamberigts 2004-2010, 838. Wermelinger 1975, 233: „Julian bedauert, daß es nicht zu einem Gespräch zwischen den einzelnen Parteien gekommen ist und nicht kompetente Richter zur Beurteilung der Streitfragen angerufen wurden. Die Verurteilung ist in völliger Unkenntnis der Tatsachen und auf Grund von Vorurteilen geschehen. An Stelle einer bischöflichen Untersuchung hat ein kaiserliches Dokument entschieden." Cf. A. c. Iul. 3,2; 2,37; c. Iul. imp. 2,1; c. ep. Pel. 4,20.

15 Zelzer 2004-2010, 824.

in the second book of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*. In *Ad Florum*, Julian quoted some passages of the second book of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, with which he wanted to prove, that Augustine was negligent in relying on the so-called *chartulae*, the excerpts of his work *Ad Turbantium*. He blamed Augustine for having taken passages of *Ad Turbantium* out of their context intentionally. In his last and unfinished work, the so-called *Contra Iulianum Opus imperfectum*, Augustine answered *Ad Florum* and quoted the full text of this work.

All these book dialogues have in common that Augustine writes in a polemical context, that he quotes his opponents' text in full, that he gives a reply to every passage and predominately addresses the author of the criticised text in the second-person.

There are some plausible motivations for Augustine to write these dialogues, which can be extracted from the order of the quoted text and from Augustine's own statements in his introductions.

In his days it was not unusual to dispute with heretics in public, so that they could be refuted with the aim of minimizing their influence in the community.[16] These face-to-face-discussions were noted by a secretary and were subscribed by both participants of the conversation.[17] Augustine himself emphasizes the similarity of the book dialogue to a public meeting and remarks on the similarity to reports of public discussions in the following statement (A. c. litt. Pet. 2,1):

> *Verba ex epistula eius ponam sub eius nomine et responsionem reddam sub meo nomine, tamquam, cum ageremus, a notariis excepta sint.*
>
> I will set down the words of his epistle under his name, and I will give the answer under my own name, as though it had all been taken down by reporters while we were debating.[18]

16 Cf. Lim 1995, 93-96 about the public disputation with the Manichean Fortunatus.

17 There are some reports of public disputations transmitted in Augustine's œuvre, like *Contra Felicem*, *Contra Fortunatum* or the *Conlatio cum Maximino Arianorum episcopo*.

18 Transl. King.

This technique allows Augustine to argue with the Donatists, who refused to take part in public meetings.[19] His writing book dialogues could be considered a substitution for verbal debate.

Another motivation might have been the wish to fully refute a text. This becomes apparent when we compare the introduction of the first book of *Contra litteras Petiliani* with Augustine's statements in his *Retractationes*, a book which Augustine wrote in his old age and which contains reflections on and corrections to every book he had written up to then. Thus, in the first book of *Contra litteras Petiliani* he says after the first indirect quotation from Petilianus in a polemical way (A. c. litt. Pet. 1,2):

> *Quid autem prodest omnia contumeliosa uerba retexere? nam quoniam aliud est documenta firmare, aliud maledicta refellendo tractare, illud potius attendamus, quo pacto demonstrare uoluerit nos baptismum non habere ...*
>
> But to what profit is it that I should reproduce all his insulting terms? For, since it is one thing to strengthen proofs, another thing to meddle with abusive words by way of refutation, let us rather turn our attention to the mode in which he has sought to prove that we do not possess baptism ...[20]

But once he had obtained the complete letter, he decided to refute it again in form of a book dialogue in the second book of *Contra litteras Petiliani*. In the *Retractationes* he explains his approach (A. retr. 2,25):

> *Postea quippe inuenimus totam (sc. epistulam), eique tanta diligentia respondi quanta Fausto Manicheo, uerba scilicet eius sub ipsius nomine prius ponens particulatim et sub meo per singula responsionem meam.*
>
> Afterwards, in fact, we found the whole (letter of Petilian), and I responded to it as carefully as I had to the Manichean Faustus by placing what he wrote first, in segments, under his name and giving my response to each segment under mine.[21]

We read here that he sees the method of quoting the whole text as an attempt at exactness. One could come to the conclusion that Augustine's judgment in the introduction of the first book of *Contra litteras Petiliani* had

19 Voss 1970, 300.

20 Transl. King.

21 Transl. Ramsey.

been a little hasty. The reason why he cites the full text of the letter in book two could be that the argumentation of Petilian was not as trivial as he had thought when writing the first book having only the incomplete text before him. Besides, the book dialogue has another advantage over a treatise that quotes only the crucial opinions of the opponent's text. The author of the book dialogue makes sure that he did not forget anything and therefore renders himself in a sense inviolable. For even compared with an imaginary dialogue this is a striking advantage. If Augustine had written a fictitious dialogue, he could have been accused of writing the reasoning of his opponent weaker than it would have been in a book dialogue and much weaker than in a face-to-face debate.[22]

Also, theoretically, the reader has the possibility to become acquainted with both positions and to decide between them as a critical reader.[23] This, of course, does not mean that Augustine actually leaves the decision on which side is the right one to the reader. On the contrary, as can be seen in the introduction to *Contra Faustum*, in his replies to the quotations he is determined to protect the reader from the Manichean sect, which would lead them away from the truth of Christianity.[24]

[22] Cf. Voss 1970, 301. Hieronymus, for example, has written fictive dialogues in the form of a report of a verbal debate, as the *Dialogus contra Pelagianos* or the *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi*.

[23] This kind of caring for the reader reminds one of the philosophical dialogues of Cicero, especially of the *disputatio in utramque partem*; it is also expressed in the *Octauius* of Minucius Felix (cf. Min. Fel. 14), where a warning concerning the danger of rhetoric is issued.

[24] A. c. Faust. 1,1: *hoc adgrediar nunc in nomine atque adiutorio domini et saluatoris nostri Iesu Christi, ut omnes, qui haec legent, intellegant, quam nihil sit acutum ingenium et lingua expolita, nisi a domino gressus hominis dirigantur. quod multis etiam tardioribus et inualidioribus occulta aequitate diuinae misericordiae praestitum est, cum multi acerrimi et facundissimi deserti adiutorio dei ad hoc uelociter et pertinaciter currerent, ut a ueritatis uia longius aberrarent. commodum autem arbitror sub eius nomine uerba eius ponere et sub meo responsionem meam.* Transl. Teske: "I shall now undertake this reply in the name and with the help of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, so that all who read this may understand how a clever mind and a polished tongue are nothing unless a man's steps are guided by the Lord. The hidden justice of the divine mercy has granted this guidance to many persons who are even slower and weaker, while many very keen and clever persons have been abandoned by God's help and run swiftly and

The three considerations mentioned must have played a major role in Augustine's motivation to write his book dialogues. Keeping them in mind can be of help when trying to trace back the origins of this genre to situations in the history of literature where similar motivations led to similar phenomena in other, preceding genres. In the following part we would like to point out three such traces and demonstrate how they could be linked to Augustine's book dialogues:

1) Substituting a face-to-face debate by a written debate is a method resorted to very naturally in oratory when the documentary evidence commented on by an orator is suddenly used as a substitute for an absent opponent; this phenomenon which we will call "An orator turning into a commentator", can be found in Cicero. Eristic elements in book dialogues can easily be explained from the wish to resemble a live debate.

2) The intention to thoroughly deal with the text of another author lies at the core of another genre, that of the commentary. A certain lemmatic structure that can be observed in the book dialogues reminds one of written commentaries. The exemplary function of this genre for the development of book dialogues becomes striking when considering passages where the commentator suddenly starts addressing the commented book in the second person; this phenomenon we will call "Commentaries turning into dialogues with a book".

3) The method of addressing a commented text is often used in contexts where the commentator especially wants to direct or even protect his reader against the dangers of a text. There are some passages in Plutarch (especially in *De audiendis poetis*) which can be seen as a theoretical background to this method. We will call this theory "Educating the polemical commentator".

stubbornly so that they wander further from the path of the truth. I think it useful to put his words under his name and my reply under mine." There also should be mentioned, that the arrangement of Faustus' *Capitula* could have been a starting point for Augustine's book dialogue. "Augustine was willing to provide others with ready-made arguments against Manicheans ..." (Lim, 1995, 98), just in the way Faustus provided the Manicheans with arguments against Christians.

II. Possible influences on Augustine's book dialogues

1. An orator becoming a "polemical commentator" – Cicero's Thirteenth Philippic

As has been argued, Augustine in his book dialogues creates the impression that his treatise is the reproduction of a face-to-face debate. A similar approach is made by Cicero in his *Thirteenth Philippic* in the year 43 B.C. The situation is as follows: About half a year ago, Cicero's arch enemy Mark Antony had proposed a face-to-face debate with him to take place in the senate. But since he feared for his safety, Cicero had not attended the meeting in which Antony delivered "a well-rehearsed invective against Cicero".[25] Half a year later, Mark Antony, now being in Cisalpine Gaul with his troops and time for a response from Cicero running out, Cicero, as is argued by Philipp Ramsey, resorted to a "structural innovation found ... nowhere else in the corpus of extant classical oratory"[26] in order to "convey the closest thing possible to a face-to-face debate":[27] Before the senate he reads out aloud a letter from Mark Antony to (the consuls) Hirtius and Octavian (Caesar) and comments on every passage with a few sentences, "almost line by line",[28] giving something like a running commentary on the text.[29] After having done so for the length of two passages using the third person narrative, Cicero suddenly addresses Mark Antony directly as if he had suddenly appeared before him in the senate to take up the challenge and face Cicero in a rhetorical combat. To reinforce this impression, Cicero uses certain eristic elements: He is making up an *altercatio* with an absent opponent.

25 Ramsey 2010, 156 with further information on the historical circumstances, cf. Cic. Phil. 5,19f. His speech also featured the contents of a letter by Cicero, cf. Att. 14,13B.

26 Of course, letters are written to be answered, they are in themselves one half of a dialogue and as such an invitation to take up the other part of that dialogue, albeit usually not a public one. There are other letters Cicero refers to in his speeches which one could call methodical predecessors to the *Thirteenth Philippic* (cf. the letter by L. Metellus in *In Verrem* 2,3,45. 123-128), but here Cicero devotes more than half his speech to the letter; cf. Ramsey 2010, 158.

27 Ib. 155.

28 Wooten 1983, 162.

29 Cic. Phil. 13,22: *Eas dum recito dumque de singulis sententiis breviter disputo ...*

Augustine, too, may have thought of a kind of *altercatio*, not in a judicial sense, but as the typical face-to-face disputation in the Latin Christian literature between Christians and pagans or Orthodox Christians and heretics. Two of these reports in Augustine's work were analyzed by Michael Erler,[30] who has pointed out that the conversations with the Manichees Fortunatus and Felix, which are noted in the reports *Contra Fortunatum* and *Contra Felicem,* are based on the same rules as the eristic debate portrayed in Plato's *Euthydemus*[31]: Two persons talk with each other and one has the right to ask questions, which have to be answered by the other.[32] The questions often pose dilemmata. An unevasive answer is expected, otherwise the person asked is reproached for avoiding the question and for verbosity without content.[33] The same holds true if the person asked returns a question to the inquirer. Another very important point is the use of picking up catchwords in a stichomythy, which shows that in these debates it was not the objective to convince the other person of something but to make the other stop answering by driving them into a corner, where they contradict themselves or are unable to vary from the preset statement.

Some of these rules seem to be adhered to by Augustine in the book dialogues, as well as by Cicero, in order to suggest a verbal conversation, i.e. to make their quotations from other texts "speak":

For instance, the strategy of demanding an answer from the quoted text drags the reader into the imaginary disputation, as can be seen in the *Thirteenth Philippic* where Cicero interrupts the quotation with a question (Cic. Phil. 13,26): *"Nimirum eodem modo haec adspicitis, ut priora." Quae tandem?* ("'I suppose you look at the present circumstances just as you did at those of the past.' What circumstances, pray?").[34]

The same strategy is used by Augustine in his book dialogues, as for example in the *Contra Iulianum Opus imperfectum*:[35] Julian had promised to in-

30 Erler 1990.

31 For the following rules cf. Erler 1986, 85f.; id. 1990, 286.

32 Cf. Pl. Euthd. 275b-c. 278e.

33 Cf. ib. 287c.

34 Transl. Shackleton Bailey.

35 Other passages e.g. A. c. Iul. imp. 5,25, where Augustine quotes a passage of the second book of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* and reproaches Julian for not having quoted

terpret a passage in the epistle to the Romans which Augustine takes as evidence for the existence of original sin, but Julian first refutes some passages of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* before he turns to the words of the apostle. Augustine interrupts Julian 10 times making the same demand and giving the impression that he is impatient with the text:

> ... AUG. *dixisti uerba libri mei; dic iam, quemadmodum accipienda sint, quae ibi posui uerba apostoli* ...
>
> ... Aug. You have quoted the words of my book; now tell us how the words of the apostle which I quoted there are to be interpreted ... (A. c. Iul. imp. 2,35)
>
> ... AUG. *rogo, dic iam quomodo intellegendum sit: per unum hominem peccatum intrauit in mundum* (Rm. 5,12);
>
> … Aug. I beg you, tell me now how one should interpret, Through one man sin entered the world.[36] (A. c. Iul. imp. 2,35)

The effect of this method on the reader is clear: Augustine evokes the impression that the author of the quoted text is not able to express things as they are. An impression that would not have been evoked in a running text quoted without interruptions or at least not in that way. This demand for getting a quick answer is connected with a reproach for *loquacitas* and for avoiding the question.[37] The disputations with the heretics served to show

it in his work *Ad Florum*. The fact that Julian did not respond to all of the statements in the second book of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* Augustine sees as a sign that he is not able to give an answer. This is what he ought to have done in a verbal debate, the quotation playing the role of a conversant's question. Cf. also e.g. c. Faust. 12,43; c. litt. Pet. 2,54. 232; c. Gaud. 1,41. 54; 2,4. 8; c. Iul. imp. 2,113; 3,39. 141. 144; 4,77. 121.

36 Transl. Teske.

37 The following passages of the *Opus imperfectum* stress this point (A. c. Iul. imp. 5,20): AUG. *tergiuersatorias aufer ambages, remoue loquaces et fallaces fumos uanitatis tuae*; ib. 2,143: IUL. *uerum, quia hic fui longior, pergamus ad reliqua.* AUG. *ita hoc dicis, quasi alibi breuior sis futurus, cum loquacissime inquiras, quemadmodum apostoli manifestissimis uerbis nebulas ingeras uanitatis*; cf. also ib. 2,24. 28. 105; 3,20. 34. 38; 4,20. 34. 38; 5,23; 6,9; c. litt. Pet. 2,221.

that the exegesis of the opponent was not the right one. Therefore, an evasive answer could be an indication that the respondent was verbally defeated,[38] resorting to lies and concealment instead.[39]

A further oral element in the book dialogues is the catchword-technique: The author who "talks" to the text picks up words or statements from the quotation and includes them in his own text. The use of this method is often polemical and serves to refute and attack the opponent by turning his own arguments, his own words against him.[40] An example for this can be seen in the following passage from Cicero's *Thirteenth Philippic* where he uses the technique to stress the dialogic character of his comment on the letter (Cic. Phil. 13,26)[41]: "*Castra Pompei senatum appellabatis." An vero tua castra potius*

38 This goes well together with the assertions Quintilian (inst. 8,2,17f.) makes about the *loquacitas* in his *Institutio Oratoria*. There he says that it leads to obscurity and that Livy names a teacher who taught his pupils to be verbose intentionally in order to obscure what they wanted to say.

39 Cf. A. c. Faust. 23,6: *hunc sane miserum delire garrulum debemus intueriatque obseruare non praetermittentem, ubi potuerit, lectori uaniloquiorum suorum etiam de scripturarum testimoniis nebulas offundere falsitatis.* Transl. Teske: "We certainly ought to watch and observe this wretch, who chatters away so insanely and does not pass over a chance to produce clouds of error, even from the testimonies of the scriptures, for the reader of his foolish writings." Augustine implies that Faustus intentionally wants to obscure the words of the Bible. cf. also c. Faust. 11,3; 16,26. c. Gaud. 1,12.

40 Seidensticker describes this as "Stichworttechnik", cf. Seidensticker 1969, 26. 44.

41 In almost any passage in Phil. 13,22-48 in which the letter is quoted, Cicero picks up words from the letter and resorts to them in his answers, cf. e.g.: *"A senatu iudicatum hostem populi Romani Dolabellam ... ingemiscendum est." Quid ingemiscis? Hostem Dolabellam?* (ib. 23); *"Acerbissimum vero est te, A. Hirti, ornatum beneficiis Caesaris ..." Equidem negare non possum a Caesare Hirtium ornatum, sed illa ornamenta in virtute et in industria posita lucen*t. (ib. 24). *"nec Lepidi societatem violare, piissimi hominis," – Tibi cum Lepido societas aut cum ullo non dicam bono civi, sicut ille est, sed homine sano? Id agis, ut Lepidum aut impium aut insanum existimari velis. Nihil agis (quamquam adfirmare de altero difficile est), de Lepido praesertim, quem ego metuam numquam, bene sperabo, dum licebit. Revocare te a furore Lepidus voluit, non adiutor esse dementiae. Tu porro ne pios quidem, sed "piissimos" quaeris et, quod verbum omnino nullum in lingua Latina est, id propter tuam divinam pietatem novum inducis.* (ib. 43). The catchword-technique can be seen as a typical form of answering in an *altercatio*, as Cicero himself shows in a letter to Atticus, where he speaks of an *altercatio* between him and Clodius (cf. Cic. Att. 1,16,10).

senatum appellaremus? ("you call Pompeius' camp 'the senate'. Well, were we rather to call your camp 'the senate'?").[42]

In a verbal debate this technique is used to astonish the opponent and to silence him. In the book dialogue, the catchword-technique, however, is used to belittle the author of the speaking text by making sarcastic comments about character traits, which often have an aggressive tone. In the *Opus imperfectum* the polemical catchword style is used to the highest perfection, as we can see in the following example (A. c. Iul. imp. 3,101):[43]

> IUL. *natare te quidem in impietatis tuae et formidinis palude frequenter ostendi nec super hoc dubitaturum prudentem constat esse lectorem.* AUG. *nec natare te posse, sed mergi alii nouerunt, qui haereticum te esse cognoscunt; nam tu eadem submersione sensum etiam perdidisti.*
>
> Jul. I have often shown that you are swimming in the swamp of your impiety and fear, and it is clear that a wise reader will have no doubt about this. Aug. Others have known that you cannot swim, but are drowning; they recognize that you are a heretic, for you have lost your good sense as well in that same drowning.[44]

The advantages of this procedure are clear: By addressing their opponents in the second person Cicero and Augustine give the impression that the audience is dealing with an equal and fair debate.[45] But in fact, they both have absolute control over the opponent's text and its interpretation: They

42 Transl. Shackleton Bailey.

43 Cf. also A. c. Iul. imp. 1,68: IUL. ... *conscius enim forte esse potes matris tuae morbi alicuius occulti, quam in libris confessionis, ut ipso uerbo utar, meribibulam uocatam esse signasti* ... AUG. ... *ego uero parentes tuos tamquam catholicos christianos honorabiles habeo eisque gratulor, quod ante defuncti sunt quam haereticum te uiderent* ...; ib. 1,7: IUL. *uerum quia id impendio poposcisti, immo indixisti auctoritate patria, ut libro tractatoris Poeni (sc. Augustini)* ... AUG. *magna tibi poena est disputator hic Poenus, et longe antequam nasceremini, magna poena haeresis uestrae Poenus praeparatus est Cyprianus*. Cf. also e.g. ib. 2,1; 3,99f. 4,92. 99; 5,13. 42; c. litt. Pet. 2,2; c. Gaud. 1,3f. 9. 27.

44 Transl. Teske.

45 Petilian himself observed the unfairness of Augustine's refutation in c. litt. Pet. 2, and Augustine refers to this criticism in the *Contra Gaudentium* (c. Gaud. 1,1) as he says that Petilian complained that Augustine pretended that they met in a verbal debate. Amusingly Augustine's consequence is to use the same method in c. Gaud. but without putting the name *Gaudentius dixit* in front of the quotations; instead he writes *epistula dixit*, to mark the words of Gaudentius' letter.

choose how much they quote and where they interrupt, they know the line of argument in advance. In the case of Cicero, that strategy clearly proved successful.[46]

2. Commentaries turning into dialogues with a book

While it has become clear that both Cicero and Augustine use eristic strategies to create the impression of an authentic oral debate, it has to be kept in mind that in the case of Cicero this "face-to-face debate" was a typical clever move of rhetoric, intended to denigrate a single person in public out of political reasons and not so much concerned about a refutation of the exact content of the letter. But this is exactly the aim of Augustine's book dialogues: In order to guarantee the completeness of his argument, he cites his opponent's text in full and comments on every detail he considers important. One might well conclude that he had in mind to write a kind of commentary. This conclusion is stressed by the observation that Augustine uses the word *respondere/responsio* with a special connotation that reminds one of commentaries: In general, the verb *respondere* and the noun *responsio* already in classical Latin literature are sometimes used in the sense of "to deal with". This can be seen for example in the following interruption in Cicero's thirteenth *Philippic*, where there is no question on the part of Mark Antony to be answered (Cic. Phil. 13,33):

> *"Ser. Galbam eodem pugione succinctum in castris videtis." Nihil tibi de Galba respondeo, fortissimo et constantissimo civi: coram aderit; praesens et ipse et ille quem insimulas pugio respondebit.*
>
> "You see in your camp Servius Galba still wearing that same dagger." I (sc. won't say anything) ... about our most gallant and resolute countryman Galba. He will be present in person. He himself and that 'dagger', with which you reproach him, will reply on the spot.[47]

In Augustine, this use of *respondere* goes even further and acquires a connotation of "to give a comment to a statement" or "to comment". This can

[46] Wooten 1983, 163f.

[47] Transl. Shackleton Bailey, revised by the authors.

be illustrated by a passage from the book dialogue against the Donatist Petilianus (A. c. litt. Pet. 2,247):

> *Augustinus respondit: contra istum quidem errorem multa iam diximus et in hoc opere et alibi. sed quia ita magnum firmamentum uanitatis uestrae in hac sententia esse arbitramini, ut ad hoc tibi terminandam putares epistulam, quo quasi recentius in animis legentium remaneret, breuiter respondeo.*
>
> Augustine answered: Against this error I have said much already, both in this work and elsewhere. But since you think that in this sentence you have so strong a confirmation of your vain opinions, that you deemed it right to end your epistle with these words, that they might remain as it were the fresher in the minds of your readers, I think it well to make a short reply.[48]

In the *praefatio* of the *Opus imperfectum* Augustine also calls his interjections *responsiones* (A. c. Iul. imp. praef.):

> *his nunc respondeo eius uerba praeponens eisque subiungens responsionem meam ad loca singula, sicut refutatio eorum uisa est esse reddenda ...*
>
> I now give my statements to these, first quoting his words and then adding my reply to them for the individual passages, as I thought that I should refute them.[49]

Seen from this point of view, Augustine's strategy of quoting his adversary and giving his reply while taking up catch-words, can easily be compared to the technique found in ancient scholia and commentaries (hypomnemata) by which the commented text is connected to the comment with lemmata (i.e. "short quotations indicating the word or passage under discussion").[50] Since it seems plausible that anyone writing a commentary on a single author for more than a year might easily start to talk (if only in his head) with that

[48] Transl. King.

[49] Transl. Teske. It makes sense that Augustine knew commentaries having been a rhetoric teacher; Hagendahl 1967, 690.

[50] Dickey 2007, 12.

author (even if he is already dead),[51] Augustine may well have derived his idea (citing and going through an opponent's entire book line by line, commenting on passage after passage, until a written dialogue with that book emerges) from commentary literature. But do we actually find second person-addresses in ancient commentaries and scholia?

A superficial survey of the ancient commentaries and the *scholia vetera* on significant authors up to Augustine and beyond (searching for the commented author's name in the vocative) led to the result that, although, of course, the ancient scholiasts and commentators use the third person narrative most of the time when speaking of their commented author, in a considerable amount of passages the commentators start addressing their authors like Homer, Thucydides, or Aristotle directly. There seem to be two kinds of motivations causing them to do so:

a) Addressing the author as an authority

It seems to be a general approach of commentators and scholiasts who have a high regard for their annotated author to address him with a reverent second-person-address. Two examples of comments on Homer may suffice to illustrate this category; one (Schol. Hom. Od. 8,63 = p. 360f. Dindorf)[52] stems from the Homer scholia.[53] The scholiast comments on the following lines from the *Odyssey* (8,62-64) concerning the singer at the court of Alcinous, Demodocus,

[51] E.g. "O Plutarch, why is it that you never remember in your *Lives* what you said in your *Moralia*?!", "O Augustine, why don't you ever show mercy to people with a positive attitude towards life?!"

[52] The hint to this passage I owe to a paper given by Peter Toth at the conference "Shaping Authority" at the KU Leuven, 5-6 December 2013: "Playing on prophetic authority. Shifting the speakers' identities in Christian 'questions and answers' literature" (unpublished).

[53] The Homer scholia are not easily dated in detail (cf. Hunter 2011, 9), so that, of course, one cannot be sure that this quotation predated Agustine; but "given the conservatism of the tradition", and much comparable material, it nevertheless may be of use as an illustrative example that may be suggestive for the whole tradition, cf. ib. 10. On the general worth of medieval scholia and of the Homer scholia in particular compare Dickey 2007, 13f.

κῆρυξ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἦλθεν ἄγων ἐρίηρον ἀοιδόν,
τὸν περὶ Μοῦσ' ἐφίλησε, δίδου δ' ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε·
ὀφθαλμῶν μὲν ἄμερσε, δίδου δ' ἡδεῖαν ἀοιδήν.

Then the herald drew near, leading the good minstrel, whom the Muse loved above all other men, and gave him both good and evil; of his sight she deprived him, but gave him the gift of sweet song.[54]

with the following remark:

τὸν πέρι Μοῖρ' ἐφίλησε] οὔκουν, ὦ Ὅμηρε, θαυμασίως αὐτὸν ἡ Μοῖρα ἐφίλησεν, εἰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν μὲν ἐστέρησεν, ἀοιδὴν δὲ ἀντὶ τούτου ἐχαρίσατο, ὥσπερ δῆτα καὶ σὲ ὕστερον;

whom the Muse loved above all other men] Did not, o Homer, the Muse love him in an amazing way, if she robbed him of his sight, but instead of that bestowed on him the gift of song, as later she did for certain with you.[55]

The second example comes from the *Homeric problems or Allegoriae* of Heraclitus (end of 1st/beginning of 2nd century A.D.).[56] At one point in his defence of the poetry of Homer against the accusations of philosophers like Plato and Epicurus by means of allegorical interpretation (*Quaestiones Homericae* 18,5-7) he cites a line from the *Odyssey* (Od. 11,578):

Τόν γε μὴν Τιτυὸν ἐρασθέντα τῶν Διὸς γάμων, ἀφ' οὗ μέρους ἤρξατο νοεῖν, εἰς τοῦτο ὑφίσταται κολαζόμενον· "Γῦπε δέ μιν ἑκάτερθε παρημένω ἦπαρ ἔκειρον".

Again, Tityus, who was in love with the wife of Zeus, is represented as punished in the organ where his disorder originated: "Two vultures, on each side, tore at his liver."

To make his point clear, Heraclitus turns to the author himself to ask him: Ἀντὶ τίνος, Ὅμηρε; ("What for, Homer?"). Homer complies with the request of his loyal ally and answers with one of the next lines of the *Odyssey*

54 Transl. Murray.

55 Transl. M.S. The passages in bold serve to illustrate the lemmatic structure of these texts.

56 Konstan 2005, XI.

(Od. 11,580): Λητὼ γὰρ εἴλκυσε, Διὸς κυδρὴν παράκοιτιν ("For he had assaulted Leto, Zeus's good wife"). Backed this way, Heraclitus concludes:

> Ὥσπερ δὲ οἱ νομοθέται τοὺς πατροτύπτας χειροκοποῦσιν, τὸ δυσσεβῆσαν αὐτῶν μέρος ἐξαιρέτως ἀποτέμνοντες, οὕτως Ὅμηρος ἐν ἥπατι κολάζει τὸν δι' ἣπαρ ἀσεβήσαντα.
>
> So, just as lawgivers amputate the hands of father-beaters, thus cutting off precisely the member that committed the offence, so Homer punishes in the liver the man who offended because of his liver.[57]

One might well classify respectful addresses like these to Homer, where the author of the commented book is called upon as an authority to answer questions concerning the text[58] or to back certain positions held by the commentator, as a special form of the stylistic device of apostrophe, although it is used in a striking way. This kind of address is especially popular in philosophical commentaries written by followers of the commented philosopher's school, like, for example, the great Aristotelian commentator of the second century A.D., Alexander of Aphrodisias[59]; but it is also used by sympathising philosophers who want to show the actual agreement between two differing schools, as did the Neoplatonists Olympiodorus of Alexandria (late fifth/early sixth century) or Asclepius of Tralleis (sixth century A.D.) concerning the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle.[60] But since in these latter commentaries on Aristotle not all addresses to the author are of the reverent type

[57] Transl. Konstan. There are more cases where Heraclitus gets an answer to his questions from the text without a direct address to Homer, cf. 48,3-5. Interestingly, Heraclitus even makes the books he comments on speak for themselves, cf. 2,1.

[58] The answer, however, in most cases is not provided by the commented author but by the scholiast/commentator himself, cf. e.g. Schol. E. Hipp. 385 = 2, p. 52f. Schwartz).

[59] Cf. Alex. Aphr. in Metaph. 469,6.

[60] Second person addresses mostly used for approval: Ascl. in Metaph. pp. 30,13; 44,36; 45,13f.; 56,21ff.; 83,1; 98,2ff.; 99,5f.; 111,3 Hayduck; second person addresses mostly used for disapproval, question, and doubt: Olymp. in Mete. pp. 144,12; 187,16. 23. 32; 232,26; 242,27f.; 313,18; 332,27; 336,6 Stüve. *Aporia* herself addressing Aristotle: 67,21.

of ὦ δαιμόνιε or ὦ σοφώτατε Ἀριστότελες ("o godlike" or "o wisest Aristotle"),[61] but often display a certain critical tone, these Neoplatonist commentaries already lead to the second category of author's addresses, which is much closer to the tone of Augustine's book dialogues.

b) "Addressing the commented author to argue with him"

Under this category can be subsumed all critical, often rhetorical questions posed to the author, passages where inconsistencies are pointed out to him and lessons given to him, and all passages of open disagreement.

This category can be illustrated again first with a suggestive example from the often neglected scholia on Thucydides (Schol. Th. 1,138,4 = p. 101 Hude), on the passage where he tells of the death of Themistocles in book 1:

> νοσήσας δὲ τελευτᾷ τὸν βίον· λέγουσι δέ τινες καὶ ἑκούσιον φαρμάκῳ ἀποθανεῖν αὐτόν, ἀδύνατον νομίσαντα εἶναι ἐπιτελέσαι βασιλεῖ ἃ ὑπέσχετο.
>
> But falling sick he (sc. Themistocles, M.S.) ended his life; some say he died voluntarily by poison because he thought himself unable to perform what he had promised to the king."[62]

This end of Themistocles' seems to the commentator inconsistent with what Thucydides had reported about him before, and he tells him so:

> ἀδύνατον νομίσαντα κτέ.] τοὺς μακροὺς ἐπαίνους ἐν τούτοις ἀνέτρεψας, Θουκυδίδη, ἄφρονος ἔργον ἀνδρὸς δεδρακέναι δείξας. εἰ γὰρ τὸ μέλλον, ὡς ἔφης, προέβλεπεν ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς, πῶς ἃ μὴ ἦν δυνατὸς τελέσαι ὑπέσχετο, μὴ προγνοὺς ὡς ἡ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἰσχὺς ἀκαταγώνιστος ἦν ἐκ τῶν προλαβόντων;
>
> because he thought himself unable etc.] In this, Thucydides, you refuted your great songs of praise (sc. of Themistocles), having demonstrated, that he had done the deed of a foolish man. For if Themistocles had foreseen the future, as you said, how could he have promised, what he was not able to fulfill, since he could not foresee from the preceding events that the force of the Greeks was unconquerable?[63]

61 Cf. Olymp. in Mete. p. 144,12 Stüve; Ascl. in Metaph. p. 30,13 Hayduck.

62 Transl. Hobbes.

63 Transl. M.S.

But again, the best examples for this category can be found in the (Neo-) Platonist commentaries on the writings of Aristotle from the fifth and sixth century.[64] First a few words on the commentators who sympathise with Aristotle: here the developing dialogic structure of commentaries can be observed particularly well.

The general procedure of these commentaries is to make out seeming inconsistencies in Aristotle's own work or passages in which he contradicts or seems to contradict Plato in a first step; often these dilemmata (or ἀπορίαι, as they are called) are phrased as a simple question, like these in Olympiodorus' commentary on the *Meteora*: τί οὖν φησιν; ("Why does he say so?") or Διὰ τί, Ἀριστότελες; ("Why, Aristotle?") or πῶς λέγεις, Ἀριστότελες ("how can you say that/how do you mean that, Aristotle?").[65] In a second step, an answer is attempted: the commentators try to reconcile the seeming inconsistencies and dilemmata with Aristotle's own writings or with Plato's doctrines.[66] There are other recurring phrases or *formulae* with which possible disagreements with the commented text of Aristotle are marked and which can be found in similar forms in different commentators (like Olympiodorus,[67] Philoponus, or Ps.-Philoponus[68]); in Asclepius, for example, disagreement is often phrased in a *formula* along the lines καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης· ἡμεῖς δέ φαμεν ὅτι ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ...[69] ("So this is what Aristotle says; but we say that Aristotle ...") or καὶ οὕτως ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης· φαμὲν δὲ ἡμεῖς πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγοντες ὅτι ... ("Aristotle puts it this way but we reply to him/contradict him saying that ...").[70]

Even if *formulae* like these are not followed by a second-person address to the author or a vocative, it cannot be denied that phrases like φάναι πρός,

64 On Platonists commenting on Aristotle in general Karamanolis 2006, esp. 1-43 ("Introduction").

65 Cf. Olymp. in Mete. pp. 160,29; 187,16; 313,18 Stüve and other places.

66 On Platonists considering Aristotle's philosophy to be compatible with Plato and on Platonists who refused this idea cf. Karamanolis 2006, 3-5.

67 Cf. e. g. Olymp. in Cat. pp. 60,7; 117,32; 248,8 Busse.

68 Cf. Phlp. in de An. p. 111,11 Hayduck; Ps.-Phlp. in de An. 456,4ff.; 509,12ff. Hayduck.

69 Ascl. in Metaph. p. 51,24 Hayduck;

70 Ib. p. 159,16 Hayduck; cf. pp. 72,38; 76,10; 78,24; 85,26; 87,25; 88,4; 89,17; 90,6; 140,16; 148,24; 149,34; 151,1; 159,16; 163,11; 171,l; 178,34; 180,34; 181,16. 32; 190,5; 191,7; 194,12; 195,25; 198,12; 209,31; 216,35; 217,17. 32; 259,13 Hayduck.

which contains both an element of oral speech in the sense of "to say something to someone" (without hostile connotation) and an element of written comment in the sense of "to contradict someone", has a ring of orality to it. The dialogic nature of phrases like this lends a new note to the lemmatic structure of commentaries as well, since in that way the taking up of quotations from the original text in the comment suddenly becomes similar to the rhetorical or eristic strategy of taking up catch-words from the opponent. This interplay between lemmatic structure and catchword-technique can be observed in the following example from a commentary (Ascl. in Metaph. p. 44,11f. Hayduck): ... καί φησιν ὅτι τὰ πολλὰ τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις ἠκολούθησεν. ἡμεῖς δέ φαμεν ὅτι οὐ τὰ πολλά, ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα.[71] It recurs in a more elaborated form in Augustine (A. c. Iul. imp. 5,9):

> IUL. ... *ergo iure dicitur: confitearis necesse est naturale, quod Manicheus finxerat, sed tu nomine commutato originale uocas, interisse peccatum* (Iulian. ad Turb. Fr. 42 de Coninck = CCL 88, p. 351) ... AUG. *originale peccatum propterea significatius quam naturale dicimus, ut non diuini operis, sed humanae originis intellegatur maxime propter illud significandum quod per unum hominem intrauit in mundum* (Rm. 5,12)*, quod non interit disputatione Pelagiana, sed regeneratione christiana. quare autem uos dicatis renasci omnes paruulos debere baptismate, satis nouimus; inde quippe haeretici estis ac peste nouitia contra antiquitatem catholicae ecclesiae disputatis, dicentes non erui paruulos de potestate tenebrarum* (Col. 1,13) *gratia redemptoris, cum catholica in eis exsufflet et exorcizet utique potestatem diaboli neque enim imaginem dei.*
>
> Jul. ... It is, then, you must admit, right to say that we have destroyed the natural sin which Mani intervented, but which you call original by changing its name ... Aug. We speak quite deliberately of original sin rather than of natural sin precisely so that it is understood to be a sin, not of God's work, but from our human origin, especially to signify that sin which entered the world through one man. That sin is not destroyed by the Pelagian argumentation, but by Christian regeneration. We know well enough, however, why you say that all little ones must be reborn by baptism. That is the reason you are heretics and argue against the ancient teaching of the Catholic Church with your newfangled plague. You say that little ones are not rescued from the power of darkness by the grace of the redeemer, though the Catholic Church subjects to the rites of exorcism and exsufflation the power of the devil, not the image of God.[72]

71 Cf. ib. p. 74,19ff. Hayduck

72 Transl. Teske.

Looking at commentaries again, the dialogic nature of such passages can finally be stressed by pointing out the fact that there are indeed quite a few examples in which the phrase φάναι πρός leads to a direct address to the commented author in the second person,[73] as in the following example from the anti-Aristotelian[74] commentator Ps.-Philoponus (*alias* Stephanus of Alexandria) in his commentary on Aristotle's *On the soul*.[75] The commentator here (p. 486,18-26 Hayduck) paraphrases a passage from Aristotle (de An. 427a17-19), in which two lines from the *Odyssey* (18,136f.) are quoted and interpreted to support Aristotle's argument. Ps.-Philoponus corrects Aristotle's interpretation and gives his own interpretation of the line:

> ...καὶ Ὅμηρος αὐτός φησι "τοῖος γὰρ νόος ἐστὶν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων, οἷον ἐπ᾽ ἦμαρ ἄγῃσι πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε". νόον γὰρ νῦν λέγει τὴν αἴσθησιν, ἐπ᾽ ἦμαρ δὲ τὸ αἰσθητόν· τοιαύτη οὖν ἐστιν ἡ αἴσθησις οἷον τὸ αἰσθητόν. ἰδοὺ οὖν, φησί, καὶ Ὅμηρος τὴν αἴσθησιν νοῦν καλεῖ, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν τύρβη γέγονε τῶν ὀνομάτων.
>
> λέγομεν δὲ ἡμεῖς ὑπὲρ Ὁμήρου ὅτι, ὦ Ἀριστότελες, κακῶς ἐνόησας τὸ διστίχιον· νόον γὰρ λέγει τὸν νοῦν, ἐπ᾽ ἦμαρ δὲ οὐ τὸ αἰσθητόν, ἀλλὰ τὴν τύχην ἤτοι τὴν εἱμαρμένην. οἱ στίχοι οὖν τοιαύτην ἔννοιαν ἔχουσιν ὅτι ὁ νοῦς τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοιοῦτός ἐστιν, οἵα καὶ ἡ τύχη αὐτῶν.'

> ... Homer himself says: '*Such is the mind of earth-dwelling men as the father of gods and men directs each succeeding day*.' By '*mind*' he here means sense, and by '*day*' the sense-object. See then, he [i. e. Aristotle] says, Homer too calls perception 'mind' and there has arisen here a disturbance of names.
>
> We, however, say on Homer's behalf: 'O Aristotle, you have understood the distich ill. By "*mind*" he means "mind", and by "*day*" he means not the sense-object but fortune or fate. The idea behind the lines is this, that the mind of human beings is as their fortune determines.'[76]

[73] Cf. Phlp. in de An. pp. 127,1ff.; Ps.-Phlp. in de An. 463,13; 464,13ff.; 563,34f. Hayduck; address cited from Empedocles p. 452,7ff. Hayduck.

[74] Or at least: critical; on the differing views cf. Sorabij 1987.

[75] We would like to thank Christian Tornau for the kind hint to take a look into this author especially.

[76] Transl. Charlton.

This example illustrates perfectly, how the tradition of literary criticism on Homer and that of critical philosophical commentaries on preceding philosophers fuse into one here and become a direct argument between two philosophers and interpreters through the strategy of addressing the commented author directly.[77] A similar "lesson on the meaning of words" a typical gloss, is given by Augustine to Julian in the following example of the *Opus imperfectum* on his interpretation of the word *misericordia* (A. c. Iul. imp. 1,39):

> IUL. *testimonium uero ut ab auctore suo ita etiam uel a probis uel ab improbis meretur, quod et illos iure prouexerit et istos iure damnauerit. cum uero per se nec boni quicquam nec mali merentibus misericordiam liberalem esse permittit, nihil sentit iniuriae, quia et hoc ipsum ut sit clemens operi suo deus, cum in seueritatem non cogitur, pars magna iustitiae est.* AUG. *saltem misericordiae nomen attende et unde dicta sit respice. quid igitur opus est misericordia, ubi nulla est miseria? miseriam porro in paruulis si nullam esse dicitis, eis misericordiam praebendam negatis; si ullam esse dicitis, malum meritum ostenditis; neque enim sub deo iusto miser esse quisquam, nisi mereatur, potest.*
>
> Jul. As justice merits testimony from its source, so it merits it both from good peoply and from bad ones, for it rightly exalts the former and rightly condemns the latter. When it permits mercy to be generous to those who by themselves merit nothing either good or bad, it suffers no injury, because the very fact that God is merciful to his own work when he is not forced to be severe is a large part of justice. Aug. At least pay attention to the name "mercy", and see the root from which it is taken. What need is there for mercy where there is no misery? If you say that there is no misery in little ones, you deny that they should be shown mercy. If you say that there is any misery, you point to their evil merit. For under a just God none can be wretched unless they have merited it.

As can be seen, a certain "scholiastic" nature seems to be immanent to the book dialogues of Augustine, while a certain dialogic nature seems to be immanent to the genre of scholia and commentaries. In commentaries, second person addresses often even seem to serve as a kind of marker for disagreement with the text, especially where the commentator is not impartial to the commented author. Commentaries by such partial authors may well

[77] Interestingly, in his commentary on Aristotle's *On the soul* Ps.-Philoponus switches to the second person when finding fault with Plato, as well (in de An. p. 575,1 Hayduck). Otherwise, addressing Plato seems to have been far less common than addressing Aristotle.

be termed "polemical commentaries" – and they share a range of characteristics with Augustine's book dialogues.

The cited commentators in which significant character traits of such a "polemical commentary" could be found, (with the exception, perhaps, of Olympiodorus) must be dated later than Augustine's book dialogues. But there is one treatise on this critical attitude towards written texts, one that is itself deeply influenced by the scholiast tradition on Homer and other ancient poets,[78] rooted firmly in the Platonist tradition preceding the Neo-Platonist commentators of Aristotle, which demonstrates that the idea of talking to a written text when disagreeing with it is a common feature in the tradition of the philosophical literature of later antiquity prior to Augustine.

3. Educating the "polemical commentator" – Plutarch's De audiendis poetis

In Plutarch's early essay *De audiendis poetis* ("How to study poetry"), which can be dated to the late first century A.D., Plutarch takes up the challenge of defending poetry against Plato's critical assessment of the dangers of poetry in his *Republic* (607d-e).[79] Plutarch shares Plato's moral reservations, but unlike him he does not want to protect his pupils from the dangers of poetry "by eliminating access [to it] altogether, but by placing between poetry and its young audience the barriers of critical interpretation"[80]. In *De audiendis poetis* he offers to his pupils a box of tools or weapons of literary criticism which allow them to decide for themselves which lessons to take from poetry and what to reject. For reasons like this, interpreters of the essay such as David Konstan have called Plutarch something like the inventor of the "resisting reader"[81] as it is called in modern literary theory[82], since here for the first time "accountability for the meaning or message of the text is ... shifted from the poet to the audience".[83] This attitude of Plutarch corresponds very well to that of Augustine when he appeals to the *pius lector*, the attentive and

78 Cf. Hunter 2011, 2f.

79 Cf. ib. 4.

80 Ib. 8; cf. Konstan 2004.

81 Cf. ib. 7.

82 Cf. Winkler 1990, 126; Fetterley 1978; cf. also theories of reader response criticism as those of Wolfgang Iser; Konstan prefers the term "resisting reader" to Halliwell's term "self-censorship", cf. Konstan 2004, 7 n. 8 with Halliwell 2002, 297.

83 Konstan 2004, 8.

devout reader, to judge whether they trust him or Julian (Aug. C. Iul. Imp. 2,34,see above), meaning of course, that they should decide in favour of the right, "non-heretic" side.

What Plutarch wants the young readers of poetry to do, as Konstan puts it, is to "always demand a reason for what is said" (*How to study poetry* 28a-d), "opposing and resisting" the text (ἀπαντῶν καὶ ἀντερείδων, 28d). The vocabulary Plutarch uses for the attitude of this "resisting" audience is one of active, open combat: ἀπαντᾶν means "meeting one's enemy in battle or in open court", ἀντερειδειν means "resisting to pressure" – only that in this case, the audience's opponent who shall be met in battle is the book before them.

One of the many tricks with which Plutarch wants to teach his pupils to achieve this goal of becoming a "resisting reader", is the advice to look out for contradictions or inconsistencies within the oeuvre of an author (he uses the term ταραχή, 25a) and to refute morally incorrect statements using other correct ones (20c). This is easily done when dealing with a stichomythic passage in a tragedy, as Plutarch declares (20d-e),

> ὅσα δ' εἴρηται μὲν ἀτόπως εὐθὺς δ' οὐ λέλυται, ταῦτα δεῖ τοῖς ἀλλαχόθι πρὸς τοὐναντίον εἰρημένοις ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀνταναιρεῖν ...
>
> But whenever anything said by such authors sounds preposterous, and no solution is found close at hand, we must nullify its effect by something said by them elsewhere to the opposite effect ...

Plutarch demonstrates this second method of "nullifying" immoral effects using examples from Homer (20e-f):

> εὐθύς, εἰ βούλει, πρὸς τὰς Ὁμηρικὰς τῶν θεῶν ῥίψεις ὑπ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τρώσεις ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων καὶ διαφορὰς καὶ χαλεπότητας
>
> "οἶσθα καὶ ἄλλον μῦθον ἀμείνονα τοῦδε νοῆσαι" (Il. 7,358; 12,232)
>
> καὶ νοεῖς νὴ Δία καὶ λέγεις κρεῖττον ἀλλαχόθι καὶ βέλτιον τὰ τοιαῦτα
>
> "θεοὶ ῥεῖα ζώοντες" (Il. 6,138; Od. 4,805; 5,122)
>
> καὶ
>
> "τῷ ἔνι τέρπονται μάκαρες θεοὶ ἤματα πάντα" (Od. 6,46)
>
> ... αὗται γάρ εἰσιν ὑγιαίνουσαι περὶ θεῶν δόξαι καὶ ἀληθεῖς, ἐκεῖνα δὲ πέπλασται πρὸς ἔκπληξιν ἀνθρώπων.

> As an obvious illustration, if you wish, over against Homer's accounts of the gods being cast forth by one another, their being wounded by men, their disagreements, and their displays of ill-temper, you may set the line:
>
> "Surely you know how to think of a saying better than this one,"
>
> and indeed elsewhere you do think of better things and say more seemly things, such as these:
>
> "Gods at their ease ever living,"
>
> and
>
> "There the blessed gods pass all their days in enjoyment" ...
>
> These, then, are sound opinions about gods, and true, but those other accounts have been fabricated to excite men's astonishment.[84]

When pointing out the contradictions in Homer, Plutarch resorts to addressing Homer in the second person. Only a few lines later (21a), he uses the same method again when commenting on passages from Pindar and Sophocles:

> καὶ τοῦ Πινδάρου σφόδρα πικρῶς καὶ παροξυντικῶς εἰρηκότος "χρὴ δὲ πᾶν ἔρδοντ' ἀμαυρῶσαι τὸν ἐχθρόν" (Pi. I. 4,48), ἀλλ' αὐτός γε σὺ λέγεις ὅτι
>
> "τὸ πὰρ δίκαν
>
> γλυκὺ πικροτάτα μένει τελευτά" (Pi. I. 7,47),
>
> καὶ τοῦ Σοφοκλέους
>
> "τὸ κέρδος ἡδύ, κἂν ἀπὸ ψευδῶν ἴῃ" (S. Fr. 749 Nauck),
>
> καὶ μὴν σοῦ γ' ἀκηκόαμεν ὡς
>
> "οὐκ ἐξάγουσι καρπὸν οἱ ψευδεῖς λόγοι" (S. Fr. 750 Nauck).
>
> And when Pindar very bitterly and exasperatingly has said,
>
> "Do what you will, so you vanquish your foe,"
>
> "Yet," we may reply, "you yourself say that
>
> Most bitter the end Must surely await Sweet joys that are gained
>
> By a means unfair."
>
> And when Sophocles has said, "Sweet is the pelf though gained by falsity."
>
> "Indeed," we may say, "but we have heard from you that
>
> False words unfruitful prove when harvested".[85]

[84] Transl. Babbitt.

[85] Transl. Babbitt.

So in fact, what Plutarch advises his pupils to do is to make up their own stichomythic dialogue with the author they are reading, using the author's own words as an antidote against himself, developing a dialogue or battle of quotations to argue with the commented author. If there are no contrary statements to be found within the work of one author, other authorities can be consulted (cf. 21dff.). That is exactly the same method Augustine applies whenever he uses testimonies from the *Bible* or church fathers as weapons against opponents.[86]

The same or a similar method is adopted by Plutarch when he encourages his pupils to correct or even rewrite passages considered to be morally wrong (33e):

καὶ

> "οὐκ ἐπὶ πᾶσίν σ' ἐφύτευσ' ἀγαθοῖς,
> Ἀγάμεμνον, Ἀτρεύς. δεῖ δέ σε χαίρειν
> καὶ λυπεῖσθαι" (E. IA 29-31).

[86] Cf. A. c. Iul. imp. 4,104: IUL. *quod uero addidisti: per unum hominem peccatum intrauit in mundum* (Rm. 5,12)*, ut hic ostensum est inconuenientissime collocatum, ita in secundo libro quemadmodum intellegatur expositum est.* ... AUG. *per unum hominem, in quo omnes peccauerunt, in mundum intrasse peccatum* (Rm. 5,12) *dixit apostolus, intellexit Ambrosius; sed eadem uerba apostolica in suum peruersum sensum conatur peruertere Iulianus. cur ei non ipse potius respondet Ambrosius? audi ergo, Iuliane: omnes, inquit, in Adam moriuntur, quia per unum hominem peccatum intrauit in mundum et per peccatum mors et ita in omnes homines pertransiit in quo omnes peccauerunt* (Rm. 5,12). *illius ergo culpa mors omnium est* (Ambr. in Luc. 4,67). ... *huic dic, si audes, quod una anima propria uoluntate peccante non potuerunt perire tot animae nondum habentes proprias uoluntates.* Transl. Teske: "Jul. But the text which you added, Through one man sin entered the world, as we have shown here that it was cited most inappropriately, so in the second book we explained how it should be interpreted ... Aug. The apostle said that sin entered the world through the one man in whom all have sinned, and Ambrose understood him. But Julian tries to twist the same words of the apostle into his own perverted meaning. Why does Ambrose himself not reply to him instead? Listen, then, Julian; he says, 'All die in Adam because through one man sin entered the world and through sin death, and in that way it was passed on to all human beings, in whom all have sinned; that man's sin is the death of all.' ... Say to him, if you dare, that, because one soul sinned by its own will, so many souls which did not as yet have their own wills could not have perished."

"μὰ Δία," φήσομεν, "ἀλλὰ δεῖ σε χαίρειν, μὴ λυπεῖσθαι, τυγχάνοντα μετρίων·
οὐ γὰρ 'ἐπὶ πᾶσίν σ' ἐφύτευσ' ἀγαθοῖς
Ἀγάμεμνον, Ἀτρεύς.'"

Again,

"Not for good and no ill came thy life from thy sire,
Agamemnon, but joy Thou shalt find interwoven with grief."

"No, indeed," we shall say, "but you must find joy and not grief if your lot be but moderate, since

'Not for good and no ill came thy life from thy sire,
Agamemnon"'.[87]

Augustine, too, sometimes completes and corrects in a schoolmasterly way the statements of the opponent's text as in c. Iul. imp. 1,60:[88]

IUL. *nihil est peccati in homine, si nihil est propriae uoluntatis uel assensionis; hoc mihi hominum genus, quod uel leuiter sapit, sine dubitatione consentit. tu autem concedis nihil fuisse in paruulis propriae uoluntatis* ... AUG. ... *ubi autem dixisti: nihil est peccati in homine, si nihil est propriae uoluntatis uel assensionis, plenius uerum diceres, si adderes: uel contagionis.*

Jul. There is no sin in human beings if they have no will or assent of their own. The whole race of human beings, even those who are only slightly intelligent, undoubtedly agrees with me on this. But you grant that little ones have had no will of their own ... Aug. ... But where you said, "There is no sin in human beings if they have no will or assent of their own," you would have spoken the truth more completely if you had added, "or infection".

Thus, what Plutarch offers to his pupils could be seen as something like the theoretical background or the guidelines to the approach made by Augustine, since Plutarch is encouraging his pupils to talk back at the texts they are reading and to engage in a discussion with their authors. In the words of David Konstan: "The task is to find a counterweight to philosophically unsuitable views. If you find one, shout it out".[89] This is the attitude that makes

87 Transl. Babbitt.

88 See also c. Iul. imp. 4,81. 98; c. litt. Pet. 2,12f.

89 Plutarch already encourages his readers to ward off the charms, sorceries, and lies of poetic texts by addressing it in 16e: ... ὁ δὲ μεμνημένος ἀεὶ καὶ κατέχων ἐναργῶς τῆς ποιητικῆς τὴν περὶ τὸ ψεῦδος γοητείαν καὶ δυνάμενος λέγειν ἑκάστοτε πρὸς αὐτὴν "ὦ μηχάνημα λυγκὸς αἰολώτερον, τί παίζουσα τὰς ὀφρῦς συνάγεις, τί δ'

"talking to books" not a crazy habit to be laughed at, but a serious approach to literature and a serious alternative to oral philosophical debate, as has been noted in the polemical Platonist commentaries on Aristotle.[90]

The method Plutarch advocates in *De audiendis poetis* can be detected in other writings of his out of polemical contexts. In *On the malice of Herodotus*, for example, where Plutarch discusses and denigrates the "father of history" for the malice with which he indulges in always telling the most immoral stories while leaving out the morally uplifting ones, the object as well as the method is very similar to the warning and advice Plutarch gives to his pupils on handling improper literature. He goes through the œuvre of Herodotus, to a great extent even following the order of the Herodotean books, and criticises critical statements chosen according to his own criteria, passage by passage. While doing so he usually speaks of Herodotus in the third person-narrative, but again there are several prominent passages in the text where he turns to addressing the author directly. [91] Inconsistency (ταραχή) seems to be one of the cues for calling up to the stage "the resisting reader", who shouts at Herodotus in anger (cf. 826f-863b). The interplay between the lemmatic structure known from the commentary tradition and the playing with catch-words known from eristic rhetoric can be observed in the polemical author-addresses in *De Herodoti* as well (cf. 867df.).

ἐξαπατῶσα προσποιῇ διδάσκειν;" Transl. Babbitt: "... whereas he who always remembers and keeps clearly in mind the sorcery of the poetic art in dealing with falsehood, who is able on every such occasion to say to it, '*Device more subtly cunning than the lynx*, a why knit your brows when jesting, why pretend to instruct when practising deception'?" Plutarch encourages his pupils again to interrupt the course of a text when he warns them not to admire too much the heroes of old despite their immoral deeds (26b): δεῖ δὲ μὴ δειλῶς μηδ' ὥσπερ ὑπὸ δεισιδαιμονίας ἐν ἱερῷ φρίττειν ἅπαντα καὶ προσκυνεῖν, ἀλλὰ θαρραλέως ἐθιζόμενον ἐπιφωνεῖν μηδὲν ἧττον τοῦ "ὀρθῶς" καὶ "πρεπόντως" τὸ "οὐκ ὀρθῶς" καὶ "οὐ προσηκόντως." Transl. Babbitt: "One ought not timorously, or as though under the spell of religious dread in a holy place, to shiver with awe at everything, and fall prostrate, but should rather acquire the habit of exclaiming with confidence 'wrong' and 'improper' no less than 'right' and 'proper'."

90 Tuominen 2009, 9. It may even be seen as a kind of implicit correction of Plato's critique of written texts in the *Phaedrus* 274bff.

91 Cf. *On the malice of Herodotus* 861f-862a and 872f-873c.

Another kind of polemical commentary of a "resisting commentator", which can only be hinted at, could be seen in Plutarch's *Reply to Colotes*. Here, after a reading of the book of the Epicurean Colotes, in which he criticizes harshly all other ancient philosophers, one of Plutarch's friends asks the audience (1107f): "εἶεν" ἔφη, "τίνα τούτῳ μαχούμενον ἀνίσταμεν ὑπὲρ τῶν φιλοσόφων;" ("Very well: Whom do we appoint our champion to defend the philosophers against this man?"). What he seems to be looking for is just the kind of "resisting reader" or "polemical commentator" Plutarch had set out to educate in *De audiendis*. Plutarch is chosen as the one and so he starts out to demonstrate the errors of the Epicurean writer like a champion going into battle. As he sets out to go through the book, one may compare him with a commentator who disagrees with his text. In the end, Plutarch's introductory words to the dialogue, in which he defined what will follow as ἃ δ' ἡμῖν ἐπῆλθεν εἰπεῖν πρὸς τὸν Κωλώτην ("what came into my mind to speak against this Colotes"/"the answer it occurred to me to make to Colotes"; 1107 e)[92] could be one more example found in Plutarch and in later Platonist commentators describing the idea of a polemical commentary on an opponent's writing. He will again and again resort to shouting out loud his reply at Colotes in person.[93] All this comes strikingly close to Augustine's approach in the book dialogues.

III. Conclusion

To conclude then, the genre of book dialogue is not as devoid of literary predecessors as it seems at first glance: It shares striking characteristics with at least three other genres that may well have influenced Augustine in shaping his book dialogues. Although this influence led to the "invention" of a new literary genre, it need not necessarily have come about *via* the written tradition: One finds that Platonist commentaries often are only reproductions of the oral lectures given by Platonist philosophers and recorded by their students.[94] These lectures, as well as commentaries originally written by

92 Transl. Fetherson and Einarson/De Lacy.

93 Cf. *Reply to Colotes* 1117d-e. 1119c-1120a. 1122e-f. 1122f-1123a.

94 The Greek term for that would be ἀπὸ φωνῆς; it certainly applies to Ps.-Philoponus and Olympiodorus; Asclepius' commentary on Aristotle is considered to be based on notes made during the lectures of Ammonius.

the masters, were meant to assist students in studying Plato – and Aristotle, who seems to have formed part of the Platonist *curriculum*.[95] Thus, both Plutarch and the commentators on Aristotle seem to refer us back to the classrooms of Platonist masters and students, reading texts together and developing a critical mind towards them; the stylistic device of talking back at the text may have come natural in these situations (always considering the fact that the ancients used to read out loud). It was propagated theoretically by Plutarch and may have been a common feature in Platonist teaching circles, as mirrored in the written commentaries. Knowing that Augustine's way of thinking was deeply influenced by the Platonist tradition,[96] it is not implausible that he took up some ideas from the Platonist tradition of critically dealing with a controversial text.

The example from the beginning of this paper serves very well to illustrate and to sum up the various elements of a book dialogue that point back to the tradition of oratory, commentary literature, and Plutarch (A. c. Iul. imp. 2,34):

> IUL. *lege et de hoc quartum operis mei librum: quantum diabolo, quem patrem tuum dicis, ac libidini, matri tuae, sub criminandi specie blandiaris, intelleges.* AUG. *legi etiam quartum tuum et meo sexto ad eius tibi cuncta respondi; quis autem nostrum uicerit, iudicet pius lector amborum.*

There is the twofold meaning of *respondere* in the sense of to answer or in the sense of to comment, and the interplay between lemmatic structure and polemical use of catchwords (as to be seen in *legere; quartum*); the eristic goal of winning the argument and the reader as responsible judge.

All of these elements show Augustine as a kind of Plutarchan "polemical commentator" cunningly using rhetoric strategies to create the impression in the reader that he is witnessing a fair debate between equal opponents, while all advantages are on Augustine's side. In using this new literary genre Augustine could fulfill what Hieronymus once had named as the goal of oral dogmatic disputations (Hier. c. Lucif. 14 = PL 23, p. 176): *adversarius enim vincitur, discipulus docetur*.[97]

95 Cf. Karamanolis 2006, 3f.; Clarke 1971, 104-108.

96 Cf. the *Platonicorum libri* in conf. 7,13; 7,25f.; 8,3 etc.; cf. Schäublin 1989, 61-63.

97 Cf. Erler, 1990, 292f.

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Zusammenfassung

Das im 4. Jahrhundert von Augustinus von Hippo geprägte Genre des Buchdialogs scheint auf den ersten Blick ohne direkte literarische Vorbilder zu sein. Dieser Artikel legt dar, dass sich bestimmte Elemente des Buchdialogs (Vorspiegeln von Mündlichkeit, Adressierung eines kommentierten Autors in der zweiten Person) als Randphänomene bereits in anderen literarischen Gattungen wie den Reden Ciceros oder in antiker, v.a. platonischer Kommentarliteratur finden lassen. Wie ein Blick auf Plutarchs theoretischen Essay *De audiendis poetis* zeigt, könnte Augustinus die Grundidee, den Text eines anderen Autors gerade in polemischem Kontext als gleichwertigen Dialogpartner zu betrachten, bereits in Unterrichtssituationen der platonischen Schule kennengelernt haben.