Scholar or Scribe?

A Case Study in the Formation of the Venetus B Manuscript of the Iliad

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Introduction

Most people assume that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written by a particular poet named Homer. The probable situation is hardly that simple, however. Much work has been done by scholars, building especially on the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, arguing that these poems are instead the product of a rich and complex tradition of oral narrative poetry. What do I mean by oral poetry? In the words of Lord,

“One often hears that oral poetry is poetry that was written to be recited. Oral, however, does not mean merely oral presentation…What is important is not the oral performance but rather the composition during oral performance” (Lord 2000: 5).

In oral poetry, the poet does not memorize the exact lines, but instead knows the story, and knows a system of ‘formulae’ to help him compose as he sings. A formula in oral narrative poetry, as defined by Parry, is “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (Parry 1930: 80). This system of formulae gives him a framework with which he can build the narrative. It gives him certain phrases that he does not have to think about where they fit metrically, but can employ without a second thought as needed. For a more detailed description of formulae and their use in Homeric epic, see Parry’s *Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making I* and *II*. As a result of this method of composition, “no one performance - or any written record of it - could lay claim to possessing ultimate and unique authority as being the ‘original version’ of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*...It seems that only with the appearance of the ‘vulgate’ did any such authoritativeness become attached to a written text of Homer” (Bird 2010: 29).

Since the basis for the view of Homeric composition as oral has been argued extensively elsewhere (see especially the work of Lord, Parry, and Gregory Nagy), for the purposes of space I assert that these
If the Iliad was written by a person named Homer, we would expect that variants would emerge throughout the history of its transmission, but the farther back we looked, the closer the versions would be to each other, leading back to one original text during the author’s lifetime. The facts of the case are just the opposite, though. “The further back in time we go, the more multiform—the more ‘wild’—our text of Homer becomes.” (Dué 2009: 25) While the texts in the medieval manuscripts studied here are almost identical, papyri fragments from as early as the eighth century B.C.E. contain significantly different versions from anything found in the standard, or ‘vulgate,’ text. This is opposite what we should expect if there was one original text, which should show changes creep in as it was copied throughout history. Rather we find less variation later the later we look in history, as scholars stopped looking at the Iliad as a multiform, fluid oral tradition, and started trying to come up with the ‘definitive version.’

If these poems were part of an oral tradition, how did we come to know them through these manuscripts, written thousands of years after the height of oral performance in Greece? Though we do not know what prompted the Greeks to begin transcribing the poems, Homeric texts began to be produced sometime during the Archaic or early Classical period. (Dué 2009: 23) Though most of these have been lost, we have many papyrus fragments bearing pieces of the epics from this early period of transcription. Some of these are strikingly different from the standardized version that has come down to us in the later manuscripts, giving more credence to the theory that Homeric composition was a tradition of oral narrative poetry.
The array of variations found in the early papyri suggest that these were merely transcriptions of specific performances, and the oral composition-performance tradition was still the way most people experienced these epics. At some point after the poem began to be transcribed, however, a shift in perception must have occurred, separating composition from performance in people’s thoughts. Gregory Nagy suggests that “the Panathenaic festival in Athens, where strictly regulated contests in the performance of Homeric poetry were taking place as early as the Archaic period, was the context within which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* became crystallized into a relatively fixed form” (Dué 2009: 22. See also Nagy 2002: 5-6), though when and how exactly this crystallization occurred is unknown.

Though the shift in perceptions - and consequently the extent of variations of the text - probably happened over an extended period of time, there is “a distinct terminus at around 150 BCE” in both frequency and extent of variations (Bird 2010: Chapter 2). This is around the time when one of the greatest Alexandrian scholars, Aristarchus of Samothrace, was working to produce a standard (‘vulgate’) text of Homer, choosing which forms he liked and eliminating the “‘eccentric’ variations” (Bird 2010: Chapter 2). As a result of Aristarchus’ work, the multiform nature of the Homeric epics became much harder to see, since he touted his version as being the authoritative Homeric text.

Even after Aristarchus worked to establish a standard text, however, the multiform nature of the *Iliad* was not quite lost until the advent of the printing press fundamentally changed the way information was passed on. Before the printing press manuscripts were copied by hand, requiring an immense amount of time and effort on the part of the scribe. This resulted in an approach to the texts, however, in which the scribes could put their own personality into each manuscript. Each manuscript was different; even if copied by the same scribe, it was done at a different time, and thus could reflect his mood on a particular
day, on a particular passage. The history of the poems, and the effect the printing press had on their transmission, has been beautifully summarized by Christopher Blackwell and Casey Dué:

“The printing press, with its promise of rapid, exact copies of a literary work, marked the end of a tradition for the Homeric poems. They had arisen in the Greek Bronze Age as performances on heroic themes; they had coalesced into recognizable and discrete songs of the heroes of the Trojan War, their battles and their journeys home from battle; they had solidified into canonical poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, still sung but from scripts rather than out of the improvisational genius of singers working with a traditional art. These scripts gave way to texts, copied by hand in distinct versions city by city, fancy versions and popular versions. This multiplicity of versions passed through the hands of scholars in Egyptian Alexandria and Rome and emerged as two common texts, one of the *Iliad* and one of the *Odyssey*, supplemented with notes that preserved the rich and varying tradition. These were copied by generations of scribes through the first millennium of the Common Era, work that eventually produced the great codices, the bound books of the tenth and eleventh centuries like [the Venetus A and B manuscripts] that Bessarion brought to Venice. But with the first printing, these texts became editions, and the tradition of multiformity and the wholesome impulse to preserve the richness of variation through notes and commentaries fell away.” (Blackwell and Dué 2009: 5-6)

Since we have lost the original sense of multiformity with our printed editions, studying these manuscripts from a time when the multiformity was still remembered and thought important enough to pass on is crucial to our understanding of what these poems were to the original audience. In the words of Bird, “even medieval manuscripts like Venetus A can preserve ancient readings which provide evidence of much earlier performance traditions” (Bird 2010: 44), mostly buried in the extensive notes and commentary (called scholia) written around their margins.

The handwritten manuscripts offer crucial clues to our understanding of the *Iliad*, not only through the text of the *Iliad* and accompanying scholia, but also in the very way the scribe went about constructing the manuscript. Only by understanding how the scribe interacted with the text he was copying can we attempt to understand that text fully.
So what sort of people were these scribes? How much did they edit the source material in their own manuscript? Did they simply copy these manuscripts from a previous exemplar, or were they compiling a manuscript and its scholia from multiple sources? According to Myriam Hecquet,

“The manuscript also bears witness to the high level of scholarly activity of its scribe and of his environment. In the ninth and tenth centuries, Byzantine scribes developed practices of textual criticism considerably more advanced than we usually attribute to them, but they often worked anonymously without leaving theoretical treatises about their work on the text.” (Hecquet 2009: 57)

Though she was writing about the Venetus A manuscript, the point also holds true for Venetus B.

**Project Proposal**

Although Venetus A has been examined in some detail, Venetus B (Marcianus Graecus Z. 453) has been largely overlooked. Most scholarship mentions Venetus B only tangentially, and few if any have explored how the manuscript came to be. We know very little about its origins before Cardinal Bessarion purchased it in his attempt to preserve as much of the Greek culture as possible, sometime before 1468. He donated it upon his death to the Marciana Library in Venice, where it has remained since.

With the Homer Multitext Project's open-access publication of high-resolution digital images of several manuscripts, including Venetus B, we can study these manuscripts in an unprecedented amount of detail. For the first time, we can search at leisure for clues about the process of its creation, and compare it side-by-side to other manuscripts housed miles away.

I chose to study lines 2.212-76 (spanning folios 24r-26r), in which Thersites will not be quiet or sit down, until Odysseus rebukes and beats him. This scene is both fascinating and confusing to a modern
audience (for a translation of the passage in question, see Appendix 3), and I hoped to gain a deeper understanding through studying the section in detail. Although my analysis covers only a small portion of Venetus B, some conclusions can be drawn about the broader manuscript, and I hope my research has raised some questions which can be explored by others. Many questions remain to be answered, but based on my observations, it appears the scribes of these manuscripts were much more scholarly than they are often given credit for.

As I will discuss in Chapter 1, the scribe put a great deal of thought and care into how he laid out each page of the manuscript. He also displays a level of interaction with the text indicating a clear understanding of Greek and the story of the *Iliad* in particular. Venetus B was written not just to be looked at but to be read, and the scribe carefully planned each page to maximize its reader-friendliness. Half the page was also covered in comments (‘scholia,’ singular ‘scholion’), some probably dating back as far as Hellenistic scholars, which attempt to explain everything from the motives of the characters to the origin of Thersites’ name to archaic word forms, aiding in the full understanding of the text.

Chapter 2 discusses the type of information found in the scholia, examining what sort of information the scribe thought important to note or pass on to future readers. Much can be discovered by analyzing not only the content, but the style in which they are written.

Chapter 3 compares the Venetus B manuscript with the Y.1.1 manuscript (Escorialensis Y.I.1 (294 = Allen E3)), now housed in El Escorial library in Madrid, Spain. Like Venetus B, the history of Y.1.1 before it came to the library is unclear. Dué writes that

“According to the catalogue, the manuscript was purchased in Venice 1572 by Guzmán de Silva for Philip II, which supports the connection between the two manuscripts—though of
course all three [Venetus A, Venetus B, and Y.1.1] were almost certainly produced in Constantinople not Venice, ca. 400 years before coming to Venice.” (Dué 2010, blog post)

The content and layout of the two manuscripts are almost identical, causing many to call them twins. Comparing them in a high level of detail, however, produces differences which strongly indicate that, though they were working with the same material, each scribe made it his own. Instead of blindly copying their sources, they were actively engaging with what they were writing, and trying to make the meaning of the text and scholia as clear as possible.

As mentioned above, many questions remain unanswered, perhaps unanswerable. Few scholia mention the source of their information, leaving us to theorize where and when most notes originated. Some people have suggested that Venetus B and Y.1.1 are copies of each other, since they are so similar, but in which direction this copying went, if it happened at all, is still unknown. This work is merely a first step along the road to understanding these manuscripts and the people who wrote them, but we can already see that the scribes were far more than simply copiers, engaging with their subject matter and explaining it to future generations.
Chapter 1: Venetus B Layout

Overall Layout

The manuscript is made of vellum folios and written in semiuncial script. A folio is one sheet of vellum, the front being referred to as the *recto* of the folio, and the back as the *verso*. Thus if the codex were open in front of you, the left page would be the verso of some number (say the verso of folio 24, or 24v for short), and the right page would be the recto of the next number, or 25r. The folios are in turn sewn into groups called quires. Venetus B (VB) has 42 quires, which are almost exclusively quaternions, meaning that each quire is composed of eight folios. The lines studied are on quires 4 and 5.

Before the scribe began writing, he planned out how he would use the space on each folio. On the outside edge of each folio, a series of pricks runs down the side of the page (marked in yellow below on 24v).
According to Myriam Hecquet, writing about Venetus A, this pricking “was made to guide the ruler for marking lines in order to guide the writing of the *Iliad*’s text” (Hecquet 2009: 60). Folio 24 has two lines of pricks, while folios 25 and 26 only have pricks for the main text spacing. Whether the other folios always had only one line or whether the second was trimmed in the binding process is unknown. The inside pricks are spaced for the gridlines of the main text (8.5mm), while the outside ones guided the scholia lines (6.5mm) The text in both cases is written so that the line falls in the middle of the letters, rather than the letters being placed on top of the line as we commonly write today (see example below, from 24v).
Whoever prepared the manuscript also made pricks at the bottom, this time to guide margin lines. On each recto (24r, 25r, 26r), two on the far left (8.5mm apart) mark the margin of both scholia and text; the right prick of the pair marks the margin for the text of *Iliad* and scholia, while the left marks the proper placement of scholia numbers, as well as outdent spacing (see example below, from 24r).
Three pricks, with lines drawn from them, appear in the center at the bottom of the page. The left two (6.5mm apart) mark the hoped-for right margin of the main text for the scribe (see example below, from 25r).

The middle prick also serves as a guide for the scholia numbers down the side of the main text. The rightmost prick in the group (11.5mm away from the middle prick) marks the left margin of scholia written down the side of the main text.

Two on the far right mark the right margin of scholia all down the page, though the later hand sometimes adds its own scholia in the empty space to the right (example below from 25r).
The scribe planned the layout of the page such that the guide-lines on the verso of each folio are drawn from the same pricks as those for the recto. Thus the two pricks that mark the right margin of scholia on 24r become guides for the lines marking the left margin of scholia on 24v, and so on.

Main text layout

The main text is obviously the focus of the page. Written in the middle of the page, the letters are larger than the scholia writing, which usually surrounds it on three sides. Though some exceptions exist, 20 lines of text per folio is the standard throughout the manuscript. While writing the main text, the scribe sometimes outdents a line a little. Within the studied lines alone, the scribe has outdented 4 lines: 2.235, 2.243, 2.265, and 2.272. Line 2.235, in the beginning of Thersites’ speech, marks a shift from speaking to Agamemnon to addressing the rest of the Achaeans. 2.243 shifts out of Thersites’ speech. 2.265 marks the end of Odysseus’ rebuttal, and in 2.272 Agamemnon begins to speak. Though not all shifts in action or speaker are outdented (the beginning of Thersites’ speech, for example, is in line), their occurrence always marks one of these shifts in the text, where we might put a paragraph break today, Thus, the outdents appear to be quite intentional.

Scholia layout

In addition to the main text of the Iliad, the manuscript is covered in commentary and marginal notes, called scholia (singular: scholion). The original scribe of the manuscript wrote extensive scholia, and a second hand has later filled in most of the space around the original scholia with more notes. Since the second hand was almost certainly added after the completion of the manuscript, and is a rich topic of its own, we will concern ourselves here only with what the original scribe wrote.
Each scholion is linked to the word to which it refers by a number, much like our system of footnotes. These numbers are upper-case Greek letters with bars over them, such as

![Image](123x626 to 159x665)

The numerical values of each letter are summarized in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Letter</th>
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<th>Letter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Α</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ι</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ρ</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Β</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Κ</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Γ</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Λ</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Τ</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Μ</td>
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<td>Η</td>
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<td>Π</td>
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<tr>
<td>Θ</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>ρ</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>ρ</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_numerals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_numerals))

For numbers above 10 the system adds itself together, such that IΘ (see above) equals 19, KB equals 22, etc.
The numbering is organized by bifolio spreads. A bifolio is composed of the verso of one folio on the left and the recto of the next folio on the right. That is, if we were to open the bound book to a particular page, the numbering of the scholia would begin at the top of the left page at 1 (scholion A) and continue until the bottom of the right page, before starting over at 1 on the back of that right page.

Rather than having a hard-and-fast rule about when to start a new scholion on the next line or continue on the same line as the previous scholia, the scribe seems to make a decision based on how crowded the rest of the page is, or will be when finished. He typically conserves space at the top, letting the scholia flow into one another, and adjusts his spacing as he works down the page and sees how much space he has left. On VB 24v, for example, Δ starts with ~65mm of writing space left on the line:

Further down the page, however, ΙΓ starts on a new line, even though with the same spacing as above the scribe had ~86mm of writing space before the end of the line:

The spacing between the scholia down the side of the page also varies based on how many/how long the other scholia above and below are. Compare VB 24r, with no spaces between scholia (See Appendix 1), to VB 24v, with spacing between the side scholia ranging from one gridline,
This suggests that the scribe knew fairly well how copious the scholia for each page would be before he began working on it. Whether this is because he was copying from one exemplar and could see how much writing was on each folio of it, or because he planned which sources to use carefully before he began the writing process is unclear, though the fact that the Venetus B scholia so closely match the scholia in the Y.1.1 manuscript (discussed in Chapter 3) makes the former more likely, unless one of these two manuscripts is a copy of the other. This possibility will be touched on in Chapter 3 as well.

**Morphological and Sacred Abbreviations**

The scribe makes use of a system of shorthands for certain letters and letter combinations. They appear in all parts of the manuscript, though are more often used in scholia than main text. This could be because the main text is given more space because of its importance, or possibly because the scribe wanted to make the main text easier to read, even if someone was not well-versed in this extensive system. These morphological endings are most commonly used at the end of words in VB, though occasionally they appear in the middle of a word, with the beginning and ending written out.
In addition to the morphological endings, the scribe sometimes abbreviates an entire word. Abbreviated words fall into two categories. First, several words have special symbols, such as καὶ, δὲ, and the most commonly used forms of the verb φήσιν.

These were probably developed simply to save time and space, since they appear very frequently in any Greek text. They are not unique to this text, but appear in other Byzantine manuscripts of the time.

Since the manuscript was almost certainly copied by a monk, he also abbreviated several specific words that were important or holy to the Christian faith. These include, in the studied segment alone: πατρὸς (father):
πατρίδος (of one’s father):

πατήρ (father):

ἄνθρωπος (humankind):

These, too, appear across multiple manuscripts from this time.

**Unexplained Marks**

Not all the marks on the page are understood. On VB 25r, at the end of the 6th line of main text, there is a curious-looking cross-with-two-dots-on-top symbol:

It does not appear to be associated with anything else on the page, nor to be in the same ink or with the same pen as anything else on the page. Is it simply a doodle that either the original scribe or someone later made? A wider study of the manuscript might yield other similar marks, at which point we could compare the context in which they occur, but that study is beyond the scope of the current project and must be saved for another day.
Chapter 2: Content of Scholia

Though the main text is the focal point of each page, half of the space is taken up by scholia. What do they say? What did the scribe think important to pass on? Are they all from one source? What types of information do they give us?

Much has been written about the sources from which our Homeric scholia come. Rudolf Pfeiffer, who wrote a two-volume edition about the history of classical scholarship, explains:

“Large excerpts from Aristarchus’ ὑπομνήματα are preserved in a Venetian codex of the Iliad with text and copious marginal and interlinear scholia, the most precious parts of which are based on the labours of four men, Didymus, Aristonicus, Herodian, and Nicanor, who had made excerpts from Hellenistic sources in the time of Augustus and of the early Roman empire.” (Pfeiffer 1968, 214)

Unfortunately, the Venetian codex to which he refers is not Venetus B but Venetus A, though many scholia overlap between the two. Whether Venetus B had other contributors is unknown, but these four probably compiled many of the scholia we find in the manuscript from various sources, as well as adding their own. For more information on the general sources of scholia, see Pfeiffer 1968.

Though quite a lot is known about the general list of people who contributed many scholia, unearthing which author might have written a particular scholion proves far more difficult. Students at Holy Cross college have had some success identifying scholia written by Aristarchus (see Arralde 2012, blog post), but none of the scholia studied here start with the telling word ὅτι, leaving us where we were before. Much can be gained by studying the scholia in their own right, however, regardless of who exactly penned them.
A few notes before I begin. First, I have cited the scholia based on the 4-digit identifier given to it as part of the Homer Multitext Project. All scholia cited in this chapter are from the Venetus B manuscript. Second, I do not use the terms ‘scribe’ and ‘writer’ interchangeably. The scribe is, unless otherwise indicated, the scribe who copied or compiled Venetus B. The ‘writer’ refers to whoever wrote the particular scholion in question, most of the time an unknown entity in name, time period, and place of residence.

A total of 47 scholia comment on the lines I studied, ranging in size from six words (2207, ΚΔ on 25r) to almost a quarter of the page (2170, KB on 24r). Their content and style varies widely, making it difficult to draw general conclusions which hold true across all the scholia, but some patterns and trends do emerge from careful analysis.

The majority of scholia analyze the scene itself, giving either background information or analysis to explain what happens and why. I will give only two examples, for the sake of brevity. The first is a reaction to a line of Thersites’ speech to Agamemnon. Angry, he flings abuse at his king, asking him,

“ἢ ἔτι καὶ χρυσοῦ ἐπιδεύεαι ὅν κέ τις οἴσει
tρώον ἱπποδάμων ἐξ ἰλίου υἱὸς, ἄποινα,
ὸν κεν ἐγὼ δήσας ἀγάγω ἢ ἄλλος ἀχαιῶν·” (Iliad 2.229-31)

“Or yet do you lack gold also, which someone
Of the horse-taming Trojans will bring from Ilion, as a ransom for his son
Whom I myself bound and lead away, or another of the Achaeans.” (Iliad 2.229-31)

His point is that he (and the other Achaeans) have done the work, for which Agamemnon reaps the rewards and then complains about them not being enough. A scholion over the ὅν of 2.231 points out the actual effect of the passage, caused by his choice of words: “ἐνταῦθα καὶ τῶν ἄλλων προούθηκεν ἑαυτὸν ὁ ὅν δῆ δείκνυσιν αὐτὸν καὶ γελοῖον παρὰ πᾶσιν ὑπὲρ πάντας” (2186) In English, this reads “And here [Thersites] set himself before the others; which shows him also as laughable in front of everyone” (2186).
Thersites, the worst soldier who came to Troy, sets himself off not only from Agamemnon but from the other Achaeans as having done most of the hard work (ἐγὼ δήσας ἄγάγω ἢ ἄλλος ἄχαιῶν). Thus instead of agreeing with his point, the Achaeans are distracted by his claiming that he has bound and led anyone away, which according to the scholion writer is a “laughable” idea.

At the other end of the episode, a scholion summarizes and explains the end and aftermath of the scene. When Odysseus beats Thersites, he sits down in silence and cries with pain and humiliation. The scene is not complete, however, until we hear the Achaeans’ reaction to Odysseus’ actions. Do they approve? We are told that

“οἱ δὲ καὶ ἀχνύμενοι περ, ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἰδὴ γέλασσαν·
ὁ δὲ δέ τις ἐπέεικεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον
ὁ πόποι ἤ δὴ μυρὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐσθλὰ ἔοργε” (Iliad 2.270-2)

“But also the ones who were distressed, laughed sweetly at him;
And so someone said, looking at his other neighbor,
‘Oh my! Truly Odysseus has done myriad good things (before now)...’” (Iliad 2.270-2)

The Achaeans laugh and praise Odysseus for what he has done. The revolutionary is humbled, the men have sided with the figure of authority, and they can return to the trajectory of the scene before Thersites’ interruption. A scholion on ὃ πόποι explores how this transition occurs:

“πῶς εἰπὼν αὐτοὺς γεγελακέναι, σπουδαῖα καὶ οὐ γελοῖα παράγει λέγοντας· τάχα οὖν τοῖς ἀπὸ θρασὺ καὶ παρρησιστικόν αὐτῶν Ὀδυσσεύς· ἄλλως τε προοικονομεῖ τὴν εἰς ὅλην τὴν ποίησιν ἀμνηστίαν Θερσίτου· διὰ τοῦ ὅτι οὐ θήν μιν πάλιν’ (Iliad 2.276)” (2227)

“After saying that they laughed, how does (the narrator) divert them into saying serious and not ridiculous things? Perhaps Odysseus by his remarks on Thersites is stripping away their boldness and freedom of speech; Otherwise he provides ahead of time a forgetfulness of Thersites for the rest of the poem; through the (expression) ‘surely not ever again...’ (Iliad 2.276)” (2227)

The Achaeans laugh, but this alone is not a sign of Odysseus’ success, since it could be a precursor to more “ridiculous things.” How does the narrator actually get the story off Thersites and back on track?
Only once Odysseus makes an example of Thersites and silences him does he reestablish his control over the others, “stripping away their boldness and freedom of speech.” The scholion ends by stating that the poem forgets about Thersites from then on, and is quite clear about its intent to do so. The rest of the quoted line reads “οὐ θήν μιν πάλιν αὐτίς ἀνήσει θυμὸς ἀγάνωρ” (Iliad 2.276), meaning “surely not ever will his headstrong spirit let loose again,” and indeed, Thersites is never mentioned again for the rest of the poem.

Another large category encompasses scholia which try to clarify the meaning of a particular word. For example, when Thersites’ head is described as φοξὸς (Iliad 2.219), a scholion explains that “φοξὰ κυρίως εἰσὶ τὰ πυρορραγῆ ὀστρακὰ· φλοξὰ τινὰ ὀνῦ (2179) or “Properly, pieces of pottery broken by the fire are φοξὰ (peaked); Some (pieces) being called φλοξὰ.” Knowing the origins of the term gives a clearer mental image of Thersites’ appearance than simply knowing the word as ‘peaked’ would.

Most assume a high level of understanding in their reader, both of the story and of the Greek language. Some are indeed so short and abridged that finding their intended meaning is a challenge. For example, lines 2.212-3 begin the introduction of Thersites:

“θερσίτης δ’ ἔτι μοῦνος ἀμετροεπὴς ἐκολῴα· ὃς ἔπεα φρεσὶν ᾗσιν ἄκοσμά τε πολλά τε ᾔδη” (Iliad 2.212-3).
But unbridled-of-tongue Thersites alone yet brawled;
Who knew many disorderly words in his mind” (Iliad 2.212-3).

A scholion over the word ἄκοσμά (‘disorderly things’) reads “τοῦτο πάντων ἄτοπον κἂν δοκῆ τισῒ βραχὺ εἶναι” (2172) It seems simple enough at first glance: “This thing of all things seemed to be out of place and short/trivial to some people.” This scholion could mean one of three things, however. If βραχὺ means “short,” as it often does, it could be saying that he thinks the poet should have given a more lengthy description of Thersites’ disorderliness. Since the current description goes on for several lines, however,
this reading seems suspect. If, on the other hand, we take βραχὺ to mean “petty,” the meaning shifts; the scholion writer is then claiming that it seems petty to call Thersites ἄκοσμά, “disorderly”. This abridged style of writing takes considerable practice to be able to read with ease, suggesting an intended audience well-versed in reading Homeric scholarship.

Not only did the scholion writer(s) assume a high ability with reading and interpreting abridged scholia, they also assume a masterful grasp of the Homeric texts themselves. Often a scholion writer will quote a passage from a different book of the Iliad, or even the Odyssey, without giving any indication of where the quote begins or ends, making it incomprehensible to anyone not intimately familiar with the Homeric epics. For example, when Odysseus beats Thersites with a staff, we are told that “σμῶδιξ δ᾽ αἰματόεσσα μεταφρένου ἐξυπανέστη,” or “a bloody weal started up from under his back” (Iliad 2.267). A note on σμῶδιξ explains this line: “σμῶδιξ καλεῖται τὸ ἐκ πληγῆς οἴδημα· ἐμφαντικῶς δὲ πυκνὰς τὰς προθέσεις ἔλαβεν ἐν τῷ ἐξυπανέστῃ ὡς ἐν τῷ ὑπεξαναδύς’ (Iliad 13.352)’” (2223) In English, this becomes: “The swelling from a blow is called a σμῶδιξ (‘weal’). He made the preposition vividly dense in the word ἐξυπανέστη, as in ‘ὑπεξαναδύς’ (‘coming up from under’) (Iliad 13.352).’” (2223) The scholion writer references the word ὑπεξαναδύς, which appears eleven books later in the Iliad, without any indication of where it comes from or what its context is, assuming his readers will understand the intended reference.

This scholion yields clues not only about the intended audience, but also about the habits of its writer. Commenting on the word σμῶδιξ in the text, the word σμῶδιξ appears at the beginning of the scholion. This might be a holdover from the time lemmata rather than numbers were used to link scholia to the passages to which they refer (such as in the Venetus A manuscript). Though σμῶδιξ still appears to
be part of the scholion, and should be translated as such, placing it first is a recognizable echo of the lemma-using mentality, since the most natural word order would place it at the end of the sentence.

Some of the most fascinating pieces of information we learn from the scholia are different forms of the same line, preserved from a time when the text was still more fluid than it was by the time Venetus B was written. One scholion in particular illustrates this. Where the main text reads “εἰ κ’ ετὶ ς’ ἀφραίνοντα κιχήσομαι ὡς νῦ περ ὄδε,” (Iliad 2.258), a scholion over ‘εἰ κ’ ετὶ’ adds:

ό μὲν Ἀρίσταρχος ‘εἰ δὲ τι σε’· ο δὲ Ζηνόδοτος ‘εἰ κ’ ετί’· ὃν προκριτέον· ὃν προκριτέον· ἡ δὲ Σινωπική εἴχε, ’κιχήσομαι ὡς τὸ πάρος περ’· ἡ δὲ Μασσαλιωτική ὑστερον αὖτις· ἡ δὲ κατά Φιλήμονα, ἐν Δαναοῖσιν’‡” (2216)

“On the one hand Aristarchus says ‘εἰ δὲ τι σε’ (but if something you); on the other hand Zenodotus says ‘εἰ κ’ ετί’ (and yet if); the one which is preferred; and the Sinopike manuscript has, ’κιχήσομαι ὡς τὸ πάρος περ’ (I will overtake you as you were before); and the Massaliotike manuscript, ὑστερον αὖτις (coming after in turn); and the text according to Filemona, ἐν Δαναοῖσιν ‘in the Danaans.’” (2216)

This scholion is remarkable in the number of forms it preserves, and that it preserves where each appeared. Also worthy of note, Zenodotus’ preferred form is the one which appears in the text of the manuscript, but the writer still decided to include it in his list, among the other forms. Even though he marks it as being “the one which is preferred” in the text, he still sets it on the same level as the other forms he preserves, perhaps indicating a level of understanding of the multiform origins of the Iliad, or at least a hesitation to judge which form is correct more than is needed to choose one to put in line with the rest of the text.

Much of the time, a scholion deals with one word or thought. Some are written by line, however, and talk about several different points within one line of text. For example, when Odysseus is about to beat Thersites, line 2.266 reads: “πλῆξεν· ὁ δ’ ἴδνωθη θαλερὸν δὲ οἱ ἐκπεσε δάκρυν” (Iliad 2.266) A scholion over the word ἴδνωθη (‘he bent back’) says
“ἀνεκλάσθη διότι τέλειον προκύψη τὸ κυρτόν· θαλερὸν δὲ τὸ ἔνικμον ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν φυτῶν μεταφορᾶς· τινὲς δὲ γράφουσιν ‘ἐκφυγε δάκρυ’, διὰ τὸ τάχος δηλοῦν τὴν λέξι⎦” (2222)

“He was bent over so that the hunch stooped over to perfection (became perfectly round). And the word θαλερὸν (‘blooming/swelling’) designates something moist (from the metaphor applying to plants); And some people write “ἐκφυγε δάκρυ” (‘a tear escaped’), because that wording makes clear the speed.” (2222)

The first sentence explains why ἰδνώθη “he bent himself” is used in the main text here. The second explains the full meaning of the word θαλερὸν, clarifying the picture painted by the poet - he used a word that invokes an image of the moisture inside plants, indicating that the tear welled up like sap or water from a cut plant. Finally, the third refers to “ἐκπεσε δάκρυ” (Iliad 2.266) later in the line, giving an alternate version: Instead of the tear ‘falling down’, a tear ‘escapes’ his eye, which “makes clear the speed” at which the tear falls. Each of these three comments might have been a separate scholion, but instead are combined into one.

Most scholia are written in third-person, or with no specified person. A few are first-person, however, such as a comment on the word ἕτι of Iliad 2.229 (quoted above). The scholion reads: “οἶμαι τὸ ἕτι, τὴν παράτασιν τῆς ἀπλήστου αὐτοῦ δηλοῦν ἀδικίας‡” (2185), or “I think the [word] ἕτι, [is included] to show the extension of the injustice of the same greediness” (2185). The variety in person (first/third) found in the scholia shows, as expected, that they were compiled from multiple writers, rather than representing the work of a single scholia writer.

Conclusions

The scholia cover a wide range of topics, with no discernible pattern concerning level of detail. The bulk of the scholia analyze the scene, trying to explain what is going on and why to an audience
removed from the original audience. Similarly, many try to explain a difficult or confusing word or image to an audience unfamiliar with the nuances some words had in pre-κοινη Greek.

Several quote passages from the *Iliad or Odyssey* without any indication of where a quotation begins or ends, indicating that the audience they were written for was well-versed in Homeric scholarship. Many are also written in such an abbreviated style of writing that the intended audience must have had a masterful grasp of both the Greek language and the subject matter to grasp the intended meaning.

Some preserve other tellings of the story, with or without ascribing these forms to a particular source, indicating that the scribe was trying not to pass judgment on a correct form, but rather preserve the rich tradition and let the reader decide which form he liked best.

Several scholia comment on an entire line rather than just a word, even when the sentence changes in the middle of the line. Many times, a scholion will make three or four unrelated points, about different words in the line. Whether these are condensed from several scholia over time, or whether the original author of such scholia worked by the line rather than related comment, is still unknown.

Since some scholia are first person where most are not, we can conclude that they came from various sources. Whether the Venetus B scribe copied all the scholia from one exemplar or compiled many sources remains unknown, although the similarity in content to the Y.1.1 manuscript (discussed in the next chapter) suggests they were either copied fully from a common exemplar, or are copies of each other.
Chapter 3: Comparing Venetus B to Y.1.1

In order to gain a better understanding of the unique stamp the Venetus B scribe brought to his particular manuscript, we can compare his work with another manuscript. The Y.1.1 manuscript is so similar to VB in content and layout that they have often been called twins, making it the logical choice for such a comparison. Since the content of the manuscripts is so similar, even minor differences in punctuation and layout stand out, giving us a sense of the unique touch with which each scribe worked on his manuscript.

Overall Layout/Format

The two manuscripts look aesthetically quite similar. Both are written in a similar script, both have as a standard 20 lines of text per folio, both have a set of scholia written in the same hand as the text, linked to the words to which they refer with numbers. Not only is 20 lines of text per folio standard for both manuscripts, but their main text is uniform enough that the first line on each folio matches the other manuscript. As in Venetus B (VB), Y.1.1 sometimes outdents a line a little where there is a shift in action in the text, such as where we might put a paragraph break today.

Though the margins have been trimmed from Y.1.1, cutting off whatever guideline pricks might have been there, we can still see the bottom pricks on Y.1.1 24v; two at the far left, two to the right of the middle, and two at the far right:
These, coupled with the same gridlines used in VB, indicate that the preparation of the folio before the scribes started writing was quite similar.

Since the lines match up between the corresponding folios, it should come as no surprise that the number of scholia referring to those lines is also the same between the two manuscripts. The folio that contains line 2.212, where my discussion begins (24r in Venetus B, 23r in Y.1.1), has the same number of scholia, starting at Ι and going to ΚΔ.

Learning to read these manuscripts is difficult not only because of the unfamiliar script and letter forms, but because all of them use a system of abbreviations which must be learned. This system is consistent between the manuscripts.

Though both manuscripts use the same set of morphological abbreviations discussed in Chapter 1, they differ slightly in how exactly they are used. Y.1.1 more often uses the ‘endings’ in the middle of words. Compare, for example, the last word of scholion 2182 in VB (σωφρονίσω, ‘to be chastened’) to its counterpart in Y.1.1:

The tilde symbol is a common abbreviation for the letter omega, but Venetus B seems to use it almost exclusively at the end of words, unlike Y.1.1.
Since this system appears to have been widely known, we can assume that each scribe was taught the abbreviations and then left to use them as he saw fit, and the differences we see between the manuscripts reflect the preferences of the specific scribes.

The latter category encompasses many words that were sacred to the monks compiling these manuscripts. Instead of writing out the word πάτρος (father), for example, the scribe would write πρς with a large bar over it to indicate that it was abbreviated.

When it comes to whole word abbreviations, VB and Y.1.1 are exactly the same: They abbreviate the same words, and use the same abbreviations.

Y.1.1 23v is laid out very similarly to VB 24v, its corresponding folio. Though there was slightly more open space on the folio in VB before the later hand added, much of that is marginal that might have simply been cut off in the binding process of Y.1.1. Both have the same number of scholia written by the first hand on them. Both have same number of lines and indeed the same lines on them. In both, the scribe has left a break between scholion Z and scholion H.

This level of similarity is not limited to this folio, but applies to all the folios in this study, as analyzed below (See Appendices 4 and 5):
Y.1.1 24r

The layout of the page in Y.1.1 is almost identical to that of 25r in VB. ΙΔ through ΙΩ are across the top of the main text, while IH through K run along the sides of the manuscripts, and KA through KE run along the bottom of the page. There is a break between ΙΘ and K on both manuscripts; the second hand has filled it in with his own note in VB.

Y.1.1 24v

The layout is again very similar to the corresponding folio (VB 25v). The largest difference comes at the bottom: while in Y.1.1 one scholion starts directly after another one ends, the scribe of VB at first tried to start every scholion on a new line. Interestingly, he wrote an IB on the same line that IA ends, as if he meant to start IB on the same line, then thought better of it and wrote another IB on the line below, continuing with the scholion from there. After that, the rest of the scholia follow one after the other for the rest of the page.

Notably, a similar instance happens on 23r of Y.1.1, with II being written near the end of the line, and written again before the scholion actually begins on the next line.

Was VB scribe copying something that looked more like Y.1.1, but was trying to make it clearer and easier to see the distinct scholia? The extra IB suggests that he was not paying attention and continued
copying the line of the other manuscript, then realized his error and fixed it, then decided to save space and do the rest of them running on the lines. The placement of the last three scholia on the folio is remarkably similar in the two manuscripts.

Y.1.1 25r
The page layout is quite similar between the two manuscripts. There are many notes on this folio, and the scholia at both the top and bottom of the folio run one into the next, rather than starting on a new line.

One of the questions I wanted to answer going into this project was if I could tell whether one of these manuscripts was a copy of the other and if so, in which direction that relationship went. This becomes an especially necessary piece of information when studying from where the scribes copied the scholia. If the manuscripts are siblings or cousins, their similarity assures that all the scholia were copied from one exemplar, rather than compiled from separate sources by the scribes. If one is the parent or grandparent of the other, however, the possibility that the older manuscript compiled the scholia from a variety of sources must be considered.

Though I found no conclusive evidence in either direction, the two are obviously closely related, especially taking into consideration the active role the individual scribes had in choosing and relaying the text. If they were copied in vastly different spatial or temporal settings, the chances of the layout and content being so similar are small. Can we tell if one was a copy of the other, though? Matthew Davis, a student at Holy Cross College, has found clues in other parts of the text which lead him to conclude: “This leaves us with two possible scenarios: they are either both ultimately derived from a text in which these lines [Iliad 7.430-7.434, on Y.1.1 97r] were also duplicated (with the scribe of VB choosing to omit them) or the Venetus B was copied from the Y.1.1 or one of its derivatives. In either case, they are definitely not
ʻtwins,’ and the Y.1.1 is definitely not a derivative of the VB.” (Davis 2011: blog post) This, paired with his other observations, suggests that the manuscripts were probably related, but not copied from one another. A common exemplar seems reasonable, given the similarity in layout. Perhaps one day we will be able to trace the lineage of our manuscripts with certainty, but for now it remains a mystery.

**Unusual Formatting/Writing**

Since both scribes are usually quite thoughtful in how they lay out each page, any deviation stands out quite clearly. Most have perfectly reasonable reasons behind them, giving us valuable insight into the thought processes of the scribe.

For example, the end of scholion KB on Y.1.1 23r is all scrunched up, and he scrunches the last few words onto the end of the next line surrounded by a box rather than going onto the next line and starting ΚΓ in the middle of the line.

This totally breaks character from what the scribe normally does, but if we take a step back and analyze the situation, the reasoning becomes clear. The entire page is covered with first-hand scholia, without any breaks between any of them. In fact, this is not the only time on this folio where he breaks out of his usual margins - the ending words of ΙΓ, ΙΔ, and ΙϚ also extend slightly past the usual line, so that the scholia
might be finished and the next one started right away at the beginning of the next line, and the fishtails of IΘ and K do the same.

The scribe knew even as he wrote the scholia at the top of the page that he would be pressed to find enough space for all the scholia he wanted to include, so he bent his own formatting rules. By the time he got down to KB, he was running out of space (the scholia go almost to the bottom of the page, with very little margin), so he threw neatness out for a moment and squeezed in the rest of the scholion on the same line.

It is worth noting that whenever possible (in fact, all the scholia other than IA), he started a new scholion on a new line, even when that meant breaking his usual formatting. This makes it easier to see where each scholion begins, on a folio crowded with writing.

Also, KΔ on Y.1.1 23r is indented a bit so as to be more centered at the very bottom of the page. Aesthetically, this makes the scholion easier to look at than if it had started at the expected place, especially coming so close to the bottom of the page. Possibly this was also a method to try to preserve the scholion from being damaged, since the corners of pages are often the most battered. VB shows no sign of indentation there, but its page is not quite as crowded, and there was still an adequate margin at the bottom, enough that the second hand was able to write a scholion of its own underneath the last one by the first hand.

ΙϚ on VB 26r has been relabeled into two separate scholia in VB, but remain one in Y.1.1. While Venetus B says
Y.1.1 writes

Rather than giving the second half its own number, the VB scribe put in a symbol, possibly to mark that this was his own opinion rather than what he was copying from another source. If we look at the translations of these scholia, we can see why he might have wanted to separate them. 2231 talks about Thersites and the different words used to describe him. 2232 comments on the word πάλιν (back again), “And so on the one hand the word πάλιν, shows the thing in the future, but the word αὖτις (again), the time that is (in general)” (VB 2232). These appear to be two completely separate and distinct comments.

The ink does appear to be the same as that used by the first scribe, though it is difficult to tell for certain.

On 23v of Y.1.1, there appears to be writing underneath the last line of main text on the page. Though it looks like something that might have bled through from the other side, there is no sign of it when we flip over to 23r. It almost seems to be written backwards, since there are two marks that appear to be backwards η’s. Though mostly faded or scratched off, it appears to say something like “θ’ ύπο τῆς εἰ η νοση (…)” when read backwards.
It did not bleed through, neither is there anything on 24r that it could have seeped from. Perhaps a still-wet folio from another part of the manuscript, or a different manuscript altogether, was set on the page and 23v blotted some of the ink from the other page.

In fact, this writing seems to have extended up for several lines. A μ, also backwards, can be made out, and spots of the same ink extend heavily in a square pattern at the ends of the last 5 lines of the folio.

It almost looks like a backward scholion was badly erased and then written over with the present manuscript.

This is not the only instance of tantalizingly incomplete data. On Y.1.1 23v, next to scholion H, there is writing that was cut off when the page was trimmed, in what appears to be the first hand. The word ends -αγῆ, but nothing else can be seen.

This appears to be unique to Y.1.1, since none of the surrounding second-hand scholia in VB have likely matches to the word.
Sometimes it is difficult to tell if something is significant. For instance, three lines from the top of the main text on Y.1.1 25r, the last letter and a half appear to either be in a different ink or have become faded to an odd color.

The text matches VB. Was it changed retroactively to match its sister manuscript? Is it simply a case of ink fading slightly differently in that place? Did something spill on the manuscript? We may never know whether it is significant or not.

**Scholia (Main and Secondary)**

The most easily noticeable difference between the Y.1.1 and VB manuscripts is that while both have a set of comments written in the same hand as the main text, their other scholia differ. Both have writing in different hands from the original scribe, but while VB has a whole other set of comments in a similar format to the original scholia, a set which Y.1.1 lacks, Y.1.1 makes much more use of interlinear scholia than does Venetus B.

Though I went into my comparison between the scholia of the two manuscripts hoping to discover some interesting difference in how they portray Thersites, what I found instead was insight into how these manuscripts were written and copied. A few differences are significant in how some scholia are read, but the scholia are almost always identical between the manuscripts. Is one copied straight from the other?
Were they copied from the same source? I found no answer to these questions, but instead a wealth of insight into the minds of the scribes who copied them.

First, we can categorize many of the differences as simple miscopyings. Scholion 2221 in VB reads, “βραχεῖαι πληγῆι καὶ τῇ μεθ' ὀρκὼν ἀπειλῆι,” (VB 2221, emphasis mine) meaning “with a short blow and with the threat along with oaths (of more).” In Y.1.1, however, it says “βραχεῖαι ἀπειλῆι καὶ τῇ μεθ' ὀρκὼν ἀπειλῆι,” (Y.1.1 363, emphasis mine) meaning “with a short threat and with the threat along with oaths (of more).” Although we cannot know for sure, this is most likely a mistake on the part of the scribe. The word appears in the next clause in both manuscripts (quoted above), and Y.1.1’s interpretation makes little sense, since we know the context is that Odysseus is beating Thersites.

The most common differences that can be explained as miscopying are neglected iota-subscripts. Here is a sample:

ὀρῶτο/ὁρῶιτο (to see)
The scribe of VB more often leaves them out than does the scribe of Y.1.1, though both are guilty. The fact that so many iota subscripts were left out could be put down to the simple fact that they are small and easily overlooked, but it could also suggest that by this point they were ceasing to be pronounced as part of the word, and were fading into the background.
Distinct from differences that are simply errors on the part of one scribe or another, some differences seem to reflect a conscious choice on the part of the scribe. Most of these are punctuation marks, which were probably changed in an attempt to make the meaning of the scholion clearer.

Often, for example, one scribe will have a punctuation mark which does not appear in the other manuscript after what we call a “word as word” (WAW) - a word in the scholion that can be read as “the word X”, as in “the word X is interesting because...” For example:

Referring to line 2.219 (after the WAW ἐνήνοθεν ‘to grow on’)

(Venetus B, comma)

(Y.1.1, no comma)

Referring to line 2.234 (after the δὲ ‘but’):

(Venetus B, comma)

(Y.1.1, no comma)

Referring to line 2.254 (after the WAW προεδρεύεις ‘to act as leader’):

(Venetus B, no raised dot)

(Y.1.1, raised dot)
These punctuation marks, when present, serve to set off that word from the rest of the sentence and make it clearer how it should be read. Neither scribe is absolutely systematic about whether they set off WAWs with punctuation, but instead each uses his own judgment to decide whether it would be helpful.

Sometimes one scribe will add a comma to separate parts of a thought and give a little lift in the middle of a sentence. As a sample:

**VB scholion 2176**

![Image](image1.png)

(Venetus B, comma)

![Image](image2.png)

(Y.1.1, no comma)

**VB scholion 2177**

![Image](image3.png)

(Venetus B, comma)

![Image](image4.png)

(Y.1.1, no comma)

**VB scholion 2223**

![Image](image5.png)

(Venetus B, no comma)

![Image](image6.png)

(Y.1.1, comma)

**VB scholion 2226**

![Image](image7.png)

(Venetus B, no comma)
Again, this seems to have more to do with the punctuation that the scribe felt would best convey the meaning of the sentence than with any overarching rule on the part of either scribe.

Sometimes a comma is added by one scribe or the other to set off the beginning or end of a quotation:

VB scholion 2198 (after τῶι ‘the’)

VB scholion 2216 (after Ἀρίσταρχος ‘Aristarchus’)

Occasionally, a word will appear in only one manuscript which seems to have been added for clarification:

VB scholion 2181 (τούτοις ‘these’)

(Y.1.1, comma)
The presence of this τούτοις makes the scholion read “and the proverb is in accord with these things” in VB (VB 2181), while “with these things” is left implied in the Y.1.1 version.

VB scholion 2220 (τὸ ‘the’)

(Venetus B)

(Y.1.1)

The article changes the participle from circumstantial to attributive position, hence in Venetus B it reads “or since [being] the one who has struck” (VB), while Y.1.1 says “Or since having struck” (Y.1.1).

Do either of these drastically change the meaning of the scholion? No, but that is not what the scribes intended to do with their scholia, as far as we can tell. It seems their goal, we see again and again, was to make the meaning of the scholia as clear to the reader as they could, without compromising the integrity of the comments they were passing along. All these small pieces build to a picture of a scholar, actively reading what he writes, and attempting to make it as clear as he can for the reader, rather than simply a blind copyist of a previous exemplar.

**Adornments and Unexplained Marks**

Some differences have no discernible relation to the meaning of the text. For example, underneath some of the numbers preceding scholia, the scribe has drawn a small squiggle.

Both the VB and Y.1.1 scribes do this at different points.
I could discern no pattern among the scholia with squiggles under their numbers. Some analyze the use of a particular word (VB 2185), some clarify what the poem is saying in a particular episode (VB 2182, VB 2183), some clarify the relationship between the characters (Y.1.1 2.333 = VB 2197). Many scholia that also analyze similar aspects of the text are not squiggled, however. Some are first person (VB 2185, VB 2187), most make no mention of the author (Y.1.1 2.333 = VB 2197, Y.1.1 339 = VB 2203, VB 2182, VB 2183), suggesting that they are not all from one source. Many include small differences between the two manuscripts, but again, I could detect no pattern distinct to those scholia.

Also, although the squiggles appear in both manuscripts, there is no overlap between manuscripts concerning which scholia are marked. The squiggles only appear in one area of the analyzed VB text, and only on scholia that start at the left edge of the folio. All the bottom scholia that start at the edge of that folio have the squiggles, though. The Y.1.1 scholia are more scattered, and none of the scholia with squiggles in Y.1.1 overlap with those in VB.

Perhaps a wider survey would bring enough data to light to make a conclusion about what the squiggles mean. Or perhaps it is simply a decoration on the part of the scribe, such as this elaborately decorated omicron on 26r of Venetus B seems to be,

![Image](image.jpg)

and has no deeper meaning than simply an aesthetic doodle.

The scholia are not the only place possible doodles appear. On Y.1.1 23v, someone has drawn a large curl after the 6th line of main text on the page, in the same ink as the interlinear notes:
Another mark is drawn at the end of the 9th line of main text on Y.1.1 24r; a curve with two dots. 

The mark does not appear anywhere else on the page. In VB, the ‘upside-down snail with two dots’ dingbat appears over the final word of the line, βήσαιο, but no sign of this mark can be seen. Its meaning, like all the others in this section, remains a mystery for now.

The precise relationship between the two manuscripts remains unknown. Given the similarity in layout and content, they are certainly related to one another. Whether that relation is one of sibling (both copied from the same source), or one of parent or grandparent (one copied from the other), is yet to be discovered. Since none of the squiggled scholia overlap with each other between the manuscripts, I find it more likely that they are siblings (perhaps their common ancestor squiggled all of them). Since we do not yet know what (if anything) the squiggles mean, though, this is merely conjecture. A broader survey of squiggled scholia in both manuscripts is needed to understand their significance.
Conclusions

For the last several hundred years, Homeric scholarship has been forced to rely mainly on print copies made from manuscripts, many of which are not entirely accurate, and none of which fully transfer the essence of the handwritten manuscripts, each of which is a unique representation of the Iliad.

Our new ability to study the actual manuscripts at leisure and in more detail than is possible in person, made possible by the work of the Homer Multitext Project, yields a much more complete picture of Homeric scholarship than we have been able to see for many hundreds of years. By studying the manuscripts themselves, rather than simply the words someone has transcribed off the page (sometimes imperfectly), we can start to see how the scribe as person interacted with his source material.

He obviously took his job seriously. Since manuscripts were incredibly expensive and time-consuming to produce, it should come as no surprise that he planned each folio out carefully before he attempted to write on it. What might not be so obvious is the level of interaction he had with the text itself. We cannot see this if we look only at one manuscript at a time, but for the first time we have the ability to compare two similar manuscripts in an incredible level of detail. By comparing the details of page format between Venetus B and Y.1.1, we see indications that each scribe understood each line he transcribed, and how it fit into the broader story arc. This suggests a higher level of scholarship on the part of the scribes than has generally been assumed.

In analyzing the text and scholia, we see clues as to the intended audience of the manuscript. As noted in Chapter 1, many scholia quote passages of the Iliad without any indication of where such a quotation begins or ends, unless the intended audience was familiar enough with the entire Iliad to
recognize such quotes on sight. This, coupled with the extensive (and baffling to the uninitiated) system of morphological abbreviations employed in the manuscript bespeaks a scholarly, learned intended audience, probably not too far removed from the time of its writing.

Given the striking similarity both in layout and content between Venetus B and Υ.1.1, we should not be surprised that many call them twin manuscripts. Though my research has proved inconclusive in ascertaining whether one was a copy of the other, some indications point to the conclusion that Υ.1.1 was not copied from Venetus B. The writing style is quite similar, the layout almost identical, the method of preparing comparable, all of which indicate that the manuscripts were probably made relatively near each other in time and place, but the exact situation of either of their creations remains a mystery.

Why should we care? After all, we have perfectly good versions of the Iliad in print now. Why should we continue to study these manuscripts? Just as the poets created the Iliad anew with each telling, these scribes use the same set of guidelines as each other, transmitting the essence of the material, while still inserting their own personal touch into each manuscript. By studying these manuscripts made before the advent of the printing press, when a person still had to sit down and create one manuscript at a time, we can gain a tiny glimpse of the type of personality that an oral poet could have inserted into the story, using the established system to create something entirely new.
null
Appendix 2: Full Folios of Y.1.1

Y.1.1 23 Recto
θερσίτης δ' ἐτι μοῦνος ἄμετροεπῆς ἑκολύφα·
ὅς ρ ἐπεα φρεσίν ἤσιν ἄκοσμά τε πολλά τε ἡ ὅη
μάν, ἀτὰρ οὐ κατά κόσμον ἐρίζεμεν βασπλεῦσιν·
ἄλλ᾽ ὁ τι οἱ εἴσαιτο γελοίον ἀργύριοισιν
ἐμμεναι· σάρχιστος δ' ἐν ἄνηρ ἴλιον ἦθεν·
φολκὸς ἔην, χωλός δ' ἐτερον πόδα· τῷ δ' οἱ ὁμω
κυρτοὶ ἐπὶ στήθος συνοχοκότε· αὐτὰρ ὑπερθέ
φοξός ἐν τε κεφαλὴν· γεννήτρις δ' ἐπενήθη θάνη·
ἐξθιστος δ' ἀχιλὴδ' μάλιστ' ἵν ὅηδ' ὀδυσσηδ'·
τῷ γάρ νεικεῖσκε· τότ' ἀγαμέμνονον διὸ ἀθέ
ἀκριλιγοὺς λέγ' ὀνείδεα· τῷ δ' ἀρ' ἀχαῖοι
ἐκπάγλως κοτέντο νεμέσσηθεν τ' ἐνι θυμόδ·
αὐτὰρ ὁ μακρὰ βοῦν· ἀγαμέμνονον νείκε εὐθὺθ σ
ἀτειδής· τέο δ' ἀτ' ἐπιμέμφει αἱδ' χατίς·
pλεῖα τοι χαλκοῦ κλίσια· πολλαὶ δ' γυναῖκες
εἰςίν ἐνι κιλῆς ἓξαρτεῖσιν· ὅς τοι ἀχαῖοι
προτίστοφ δίδομεν εὔτ' ἀν πολιεύθθον ἔλομεν·
ὁ έτι καὶ χρυσοῦ εὐπεδέεια δ' ἐπενὶς οἱ
τρῶν ἐπιπάδων ἐξ ἵλιον ὑτος· ἄποινα·
ἄν κεν ἐγὼ δῆσας ἰἀγηγό· ἤ ἄλλος ἀχαῖων·
ἡ γυναῖκα νέην· ἔπασχον ἐν φιλοτητή·
ὡ τ' αὐτὸς ἀπό νόσσαν κατίσθενα· οὐ μὲν ἐδικεν
ἀρχόν ἐντά· κακῶν ἐπιβασκέμεν νίας ἀχαῖων·
ὁ πέπωνες· κή· ἐλέγει· ἀχαιάδες οὐκ ἄτ' ἀχαιῶν·
οἰκάδε περ σὰν νησί νεώμεθα· τόνδε δ' ἐδομεν
αὐτοῦ ἐνι τροή γέρα πενεσσεμεν· ὁφρα ἴδηται·
ἡ ὅτι οἱ ι' ἐμεῖς προσαμύνομεν ἐς καὶ οἰκί·
ὁς καὶ νῦν ἀκριλή ἐῳ μέγ' ἀμείνονον φώτα
ἤπιμμενεν· ἐδον γάρ ἐχει γέρας αὐτὸς ἀποὺρας·
ἀλλὰ μᾶλ' οὐκ ἀκριλὴκ' χόλος φρεσίν· ἀλλὰ μεθῆμων·
ἡ γὰρ ἃν ἀτειδή νῦν ὅστατα λωβήσαιο·
ὡς φάτο νεικεῖον ἀγαμέμνονοι ποιμένα λαδόν·
θερσίτης· τῷ δ' ὅκα παρόστατο δῖος ὀδυσσεύς·
καὶ μὲν ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν χαλεπόν ἤντίσεμεν μύθω·
θερσίτης· ἀκριτόμυθε· λιγύς περ ἐξων ἀγορητής·
ἄγορε· μή δ' ἐθελ' οίον ἐριζέμεναι βασπλεύσιν·
οὐ γάρ ἐγὼ σάν σφιν χρυσοῦντων βροτῶν ἄλλων
ἐμμεναι· ὅσσοι ἁμ' ἄτειδης ὑπὸ ἴλιον ἰᾶθων·
tῷ οὐκ ἂν βασιλῆας ἀνα στόμα· ἔχον ἀγορεύοις·
καὶ σφιν ὀνείδεα τε προφερος· νόστον τε φιλάσσοις·
οὐδέ τι πω σάρα ἴδον ὅπως ἔσται τάδε έργα·
ἡ εὖ ἕν κακώς νοστήσουμεν ὑείς ἀχαιῶν·
tῷ νῦν ἀτειdıδ' ἀγαμέμνονοι ποιμένι λαδό
ὣς ἀρ’ ἔφη· σκήπτρῳ δὲ μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμων
πλῆξεν· ὁ δ’ ἰδνώθη· θαλερὸν δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε δάκρυ
σκήπτρου ὑπὸ χρυσέου· ὃ δ᾽ ἄρ’ ἕζετο τάρβησέν τε·
ἀλγήσας δ᾽ ἀχρεῖον ἰδὼν, ἀπομόρξατο δάκρυ·
οἱ δὲ` καὶ ἀχνύμενοί περ, ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ ἡδὺ γέλασσαν·
ὧδε δέ τις εἴπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον
ὄψεις τ᾽ ἐξάρχων ἀγαθὰς· πόλεμόν τε κορύσσων·
νῦν δὲ τόδε μέγ᾽ ἄριστον ἐν ἀργείοισιν ἔρεξεν.
ὃς τὸν λωβητῆρα ἐπεσβόλον ἔσχ’ ἀγοράων·
οὐ θήν μιν πάλιν αὖτις ἀνήσει θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
νεικείειν βασιλῆας ὀνειδείοις ἐπέεσσιν·

But unbridled-of-tongue Thersites alone yet brawled;
Who knew many disorderly and foolish words in his mind.
He quarrelled with the kings, yet not in any orderly way;
But whatever might seem to be laughable to the Argives;
And this man was the most disgraceful man who came to Ilion.
He was bandy-legged, and lame in one of his feet; and his two curved shoulders
Were contracted on his chest; nevertheless his upper head was peaked; and a scanty downy hair
grew on it.
Most hateful, above all, was he to Achilles and Odysseus,
‘Cause he quarreled with the two of them. But now
He spoke sharp rebukes, screaming doubly at Agamemnon; with him the Achaeans
Were exceedingly angry and wroth in their hearts.
But shouting greatly, he railed at Agamemnon with powerful words:
“Son of Atreus! From what do you complain and what do you lack?!!
Your huts are filled by bronze; and many women are
In your hut, chosen spoils, whom we the Achaeans Gave to you first of all, when we seize a
citadel.
Or yet do you lack gold also, which someone
Of the horse-taming Trojans will bring from Ilion, as a ransom for his son
Whom I myself bound and lead away, or another of the Achaeans.
Or a young girl, so that you can mingle in love;
And whom you yourself are holding apart from us; On the one hand it is not seemly, Being the leader; to lead the sons of the Achaeans into badness; O soft ones! cowardliness is evil; You women of the Achaeans, men no more; Let’s go back home with our ships; and let’s leave this man by himself in Troy to digest his prizes, so that he may perceive Whether we aid him or not. Now also he dishonored Achilles, a much better man than he; ‘Cause grasping a gift of honor for himself, he has robbed him; But there is no more wrath in the heart of Achilles, but he does not care; ‘Cause truly, son of Atreus, you would now maltreat him for the last time if he did.” So Thersites spoke, quarrelling with Agamemnon, the shepherd of the host. But quickly heavenly Odysseus stood with him; And looking askance, upbraided him with stern words: “Thersites of reckless babbling, being a sweet speaker, Restrain yourself! And don’t wish to quarrel alone with kings. ‘Cause I say that there is no other mortal inferior to you, Even with as many men as came beneath Ilion with the son of Atreus; You should not, having the words of the kings in your mouth, speak in the assembly, And bring reproaches to them; and watch for the homecoming. In no way do we know clearly as yet how these works will be. Either well or badly we - the sons of the Achaeans - will have a homecoming. Now you sit, hurling abuse against Agamemnon the shepherd of the host, son of Atreus. Since Danaan heroes give him many great gifts; but you harangue taunting him. But I will speak out to you, and will be fulfilling this thing: If ever I find you being senseless, like this situation now, Then no more may the head of Odysseus come near his shoulders; And may I not still be called the father of Telemachus; If I do not, taking you, on the one hand strip off your clothes Your cloak and this here tunic, which cover your nakedness; And I will send you yourself wailing swiftly to the ships, Having struck you from the assembly with unseemly blows.” So he said. And he struck his back and shoulders with the scepter. But Thersites bent over; And a blooming tear fell from (his eyes); And a bloody weal started up from under his back; By means of the golden scepter. But he sat himself down and was terrified, And looking around uselessly, in pain, he wiped away a tear. But also the ones who were distressed, laughed sweetly at him; And so someone said, looking at his other neighbor, “Oh my! Truly Odysseus has done myriad good things Leading in the council, and equipping the war effort; But now this thing is by far the best he has done among the Argives, That he holds this rash-talking slanderer from the assembly. Surely not ever will his headstrong spirit let loose again To quarrel with the kings with reproachful words.”
Appendix 4: Glossary of Terms

Folio: One sheet of vellum (one physical page). The front (on the right of the open codex) is the recto, the back (on the left of the open codex) is the verso of the folio.

Lemma: A way of marking what passage is being commented on by a scholion, in which a small quote from the text is written before the scholion on which it comments.

Recto/Verso: The front and back, respectively, of one folio of the text. See folio.

Scholia (singular scholion): Grammatical, critical, or explanatory comments, written on the margins of manuscripts.

WAW: Abbreviation for “word as word,” - a word in the scholion that can be read as “the word X”, as in “the word X is interesting because...”
Bibliography


