

Multitextual Reading and the Future of the Homer Multitext

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The 10th century manuscript of the *Iliad* known as the Venetus A (Marcianus Graecus Z. 454 [= 822]) is designed for multitextual reading. On typical pages of the manuscript there appear 25 lines of the Homeric epic poem, and up to five different sets of commentary (known as scholia) on those same lines. The sets of scholia, which are distinguished by their location on the page, include: (1) the main scholia, which are written above, outside, and below the lines of the epic, in a bracketing shape, many of which have lemmata, keywords from the line of text being commented on; (2) the intermarginal scholia, located between the poetry and the main scholia and written in a different script; (3) the interior scholia, written in the gutters (that is, toward the bound edge of the page); (4) the exterior scholia, written in the outer margin, toward the edge of the page beyond the main scholia; and (5) interlinear scholia, written between the lines of the poetry. Each set of scholia provides different kinds of content and commentary on the poetry, often from different sources. Certain sets also refer to known earlier versions of the epic that were subsequently lost. Thus the multitextual reading in this kind of manuscript is twofold. A reader can read these various sets of commentary in relation to the text and to each other in multiple combinations, but the reader can also read the poetry itself in multiple ways with access to these other known versions that result from the oral-traditional nature of the poetry and its composition in performance.

When print editions first reproduced these manuscripts, as in Villoison's 1788 edition, the spatial information embedded in the placement of the scholia on the page was lost. Within the volume, the scholia were printed separately from the lines they were commenting on: the lines of the poetry were printed continuously, and then the scholia were placed on pages that followed the entire poem. The ascent of the critical edition meant that some of the variation of the poem was included, although in smaller print in a highly abbreviated apparatus at the bottom of the page. Such a placement serves to enforce the impression that there is a correct version, and then there is everything else. Furthermore, the need to compress information in the limited space of the apparatus obscures what each witness itself actually contains. The scholia have been only rarely included in the apparatus, and instead have been published in a fuller form in completely separate volumes, by different editors. Through these developments in publishing and in scholarship, reading the *Iliad* became more and more restricted to single versions.

Within a digital medium, the multitextual aspects of the textual transmission that the manuscripts themselves, the true primary sources, offer can be regained. The Homer Multitext project aims to provide the sources and tools that allow multitextual reading of the Homeric epics. Our presentation will give examples of how such readings operate within the medieval manuscripts, and how we are applying digital technologies to recapture their multitextual nature, as well as open up multitextual readings between different witnesses along with modern scholarship and other resources.