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Filippomaria Pontani (ed.), *Scholia Graeca in Odysseam: 1. Scholia ad libros a-b*. Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2007. Pp. xl, 382. ISBN 978-88-8498-446-3. €58.00.

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The field of ancient scholarship is full of irritating gaps where an edition is urgently needed but no-one dares, or can be bothered, to produce it. Since the publication of Erbse's monumental edition of the scholia to the *Iliad*,¹ none of these gaps has been more obvious, more inconvenient, or more frustrating than the lack of an acceptable edition of the scholia to the *Odyssey*. Dindorf's edition of 1855² has long been the standard text, but universally acknowledged to be grossly inadequate because of its reliance on a small number of (often poorly chosen) manuscripts, inappropriate conjectures, and numerous omissions. But the large number of manuscripts involved, and the lack of any equivalent of Venetus A or even of the other key manuscripts of the *Iliad* scholia, made the task of editing the *Odyssey* scholia too daunting for post-Dindorf editors of ancient scholarly works, who preferred to devote their efforts to material that was easier to handle, even if it had lower intrinsic value.

A few piecemeal attempts were made to tackle the *Odyssey* scholia, but these only served to heighten one's awareness of what was missing. Ludwich's edition of the scholia to the first 309 lines of the first book³ offered considerably more than twice as much material as Dindorf had provided for that section of text, with a far more reliable text; but the fact that this edition covered such a small percentage of the *Odyssey* scholia meant that it served to heighten awareness of the defects of Dindorf more than to replace his work, and by now Ludwich's text itself is more than a century out of date. (It was reprinted in 1966 with a vigorous preface by Erbse pointing out that the need for a reprint was a disgrace to the current generation of philologists who had not managed to make Ludwich's text obsolete,⁴ but this challenge evidently failed to move potential editors.) Nicola Ernst's edition of the D scholia⁵ also provided a more usable text of part of the corpus and in doing so increased awareness more than solving the overall problem.

It is therefore with considerable gratitude that one greets the arrival of the first volume of Pontani's edition, the first proper attempt to make sense of the manuscript tradition in more than a century and for most of its notes either the first edition in over 150 years or the first edition altogether. But a certain nervousness is also created by such a work's appearance, for any new edition would immediately become the standard text of these scholia, even if it were full of misprints, misunderstandings, unwise conjectures, and all the other ills that are far too common in editions of ancient scholarly works. If it took 150 years for someone to have the courage to replace Dindorf, we are likely to be living with the replacement for at least the next century.

Fortunately, this is an edition that will be easy to live with, done to a high standard from almost every perspective. Pontani sets out to surpass his predecessors in his understanding of the whole tradition of Homeric interpretation from antiquity through the Byzantine period (not only the scholia themselves and their manuscript tradition, but parallel passages from other sources, which are carefully collected; the collection of scholia aims to be comprehensive through the fourteenth century and selective for the fifteenth and sixteenth) and in conveying that understanding clearly in the edition, as well as in the extent of his collection (not only the use of a wide range of manuscripts, but also the inclusion of papyri on the same footing as medieval sources). He succeeds in these aims admirably.

The manuscript tradition of the *Odyssey* scholia is problematic. One branch is relatively well preserved: the vulgate, non-scholarly tradition of interpretation known as the V scholia (this is the same group of material that is traditionally but unfortunately known as D scholia when it concerns the *Iliad*). The oldest extant manuscript of the V scholia, Vo, dates to the end of the tenth century; although Pontani cites twelve other manuscripts containing this material they are descended from Vo and therefore of little use to us. Unlike Erbse, who in editing the *Iliad* scholia systematically excluded D scholia even if they appeared in the best manuscripts, Pontani has given them the same treatment as other types of scholia, a welcome decision in view of the importance and considerable antiquity of some notes in this group.

There was also a scholarly tradition of *Odyssey* interpretation that resembled that of the *Iliad*, with material from a "Viermännerkommentar" made up of extracts from the works of Didymus, Aristonicus, Herodian, and Nicanor as well as an exegetical tradition. The *Odyssey* scholia are often dismissed as being of low value in terms of transmitting Alexandrian material, and it is certainly true that notes with Alexandrian sources are less frequent than in the *Iliad* scholia. But references to Zenodotus, Aristarchus, and other important scholars are by no means absent. The difficulty is that the transmission of this part of the tradition is poor: not only is there no equivalent of Venetus A of the *Iliad*, i.e. an old manuscript that can be relied on to transmit Alexandrian scholarship from named sources, but there is also no equivalent of the next level of *Iliad* manuscripts, such as B or T. The oldest manuscripts of this part of the tradition, F and G, contain almost no scholia. Those that have substantial numbers of notes all date to the thirteenth century or later and largely fall into two branches, a south Italian one belonging primarily to the thirteenth century (particularly HMP) and a Constantinopolitan one belonging primarily to the fourteenth century but descended from a lost thirteenth-century archetype (particularly DEJs); these two traditions both descend from a single archetype.

The scholia are complemented by a large group of testimonia from extant classical authors including Aristotle, Plutarch, and Athenaeus; lexica including those of Apollonius Sophista, Ammonius, and Hesychius; and grammatical works including Apollonius Dyscolus. There are also a host of Byzantine testimonia.

All this is very concisely stated in Pontani's short preface, as he has already published a detailed study of the manuscripts elsewhere.⁶ The custom of accompanying editions with a book-length study of the textual tradition in the author's native language, and therefore omitting this material from the preface to the edition itself, is by now well established. Clearly it offers many benefits, as the editor has far more space to explain his premises and argue his case, and doing so in his native language rather than in the traditional Latin of a preface makes his own life easier and may do the same for many of his readers (though it is not clear to me that a majority of readers would find Italian easier than Pontani's

beautifully lucid Latin). This practice does, however, have some drawbacks: while Pontani's edition will no doubt be purchased by every major library and is likely to remain in frequent use for at least a century, the explanation will not have the same availability or survival rate. According to WorldCat the study is currently owned by only 6 of its member libraries in Europe, and it seems unlikely that this situation will improve in the future; private purchase is difficult now because the work is expensive and not available through the standard online booksellers, and it will probably not be long before it is completely unavailable. Under these circumstances, the vast majority of readers of the edition are not going to have access to the longer explanation of its sources, and therefore a bit more information in the edition's own preface would have been helpful, especially for posterity.

In other ways the preface is charming, written in Latin that is graceful, correct, and yet clear and unflagging. There is something disarming about the way the author addresses readers in the second person and recognizes their needs (e.g. 'maxime te iuvabit iudicium libri mei a v. cl. E. Dettori factum', note 3 p. x). Unlike many prefaces, this one assumes very little prior knowledge and sketches the basic facts of the tradition and the edition's content and rationale with admirable clarity and frankness.

Turning to the main text, the first thing that strikes the reader is how many more scholia are in Pontani's edition than in previous ones. A check of 40 randomly selected lines distributed over the two books (containing between them 511 notes) suggests that 86% of the notes (by 'note' I mean a scholion or portion of a scholion that is printed by Pontani as a separate unit) in Pontani are new, in the sense of not being reported by Dindorf; it is this, rather than the provision of more information about each note, that primarily accounts for the fact that Pontani's first volume covers the same amount of *Odyssey* text as the first quarter of Dindorf's first volume. One can extrapolate that Pontani's edition will require eight volumes to complete, but as he is young and evidently energetic there is good hope that the other seven, which are urgently needed, will in fact appear.

Pontani's edition is also more complete than Ludwich's in those sections for which both are available. A random check of 20 lines (290 notes) suggests that 26% of the notes in Pontani's text of the scholia to lines 1-309 of book one are new in the sense of not appearing in Ludwich's edition.

At the same time, some material that appears in the earlier editions is not printed by Pontani. In the case of Dindorf the amount of material involved is tiny, amounting to only one note in my 40-line sample (though I noticed a few more elsewhere), but I found 16 notes that were transmitted by Ludwich and not Pontani. The omitted notes are all late and mostly short, and it seems unlikely that they will be missed, but the issue serves to highlight a point Pontani makes in his preface, that his collection is comprehensive only up through the fourteenth century.

The most valuable scholarly information contained in the scholia, for example information on Alexandrian scholarship, is in great part already represented (though not necessarily so accurately) in Dindorf's edition. One reason for the comparatively small size of Dindorf's edition is clearly that he exercised some editorial selection. On average the new notes are shorter than the ones also found in Dindorf, and they include many one-word glosses. But there are also a number of longer notes, references to variant readings, and discussions of considerable interest on various questions.

Completeness can also be measured in the range of manuscripts used, and in this respect as well Pontani's edition is far superior to its predecessors. Dindorf mentions twelve manuscripts, in most of which he does not distinguish between first and second hands, though in some cases these are centuries apart and use very different sources; in practice

he rarely reports the readings of more than one or two manuscripts on any specific passage. Pontani uses 58 manuscripts, in many of which he distinguishes two or more hands, and is careful to indicate the range of sources for each note. Not having checked the manuscripts themselves, I cannot confirm that their readings have been reported accurately on all occasions, but the indications (including agreement with an unpublished collation to which I did have access) point in that direction.

It is sometimes the case that readings printed as the main text by Dindorf and/or Ludwich are not even included in Pontani's apparatus. This tends to occur with material from the same manuscripts as furnished the omitted notes; in particular it is clear that Dindorf valued manuscript E a lot more highly than Pontani does. Pontani's judgment is probably better in this respect.

Completeness is not the only respect in which the new edition is superior to its predecessors: it also offers a better and more readable text. In some places Dindorf had combined originally separate notes to produce a coherent whole that is now unmasked as a beguiling fiction rather than actual ancient scholarship. In others Dindorf's text was always implausible and has now been replaced with something more convincing. The result, of course, is that Pontani's text of a scholion is sometimes radically different from the text of the same note as printed by Dindorf. The improvements come partly from the use of a greater range of manuscripts and better understanding of them, and partly from more care and thought than Dindorf exercised, but also from Pontani's taking advantage of the conjectures that have been offered by various scholars over the last 150 years. Far more than Erbse, he aims to reproduce the words that some ancient scholar might deliberately have written rather than representing the state of the manuscripts; this means, among other things, that when the scholiasts misquote the text of Homer he prints the correct text and only notes in the apparatus that the manuscripts of the scholion all have something else. I confess to some reservations about this level of correction: as long as one is using the edition to learn what the ancient scholars probably intended to say, it works well, but those readers who want to know what is actually transmitted should keep a close eye on the apparatus.

Pontani provides many more aids to the reader than previous editions. As did Erbse in presenting the *Iliad* scholia, he indicates the probable sources of notes with marginal abbreviations. These indications are not always present, for often it is impossible to determine the source of a note, and not infrequently they are accompanied by a question mark, showing a healthy acknowledgement of the limits of our knowledge. There is however a drawback to Pontani's system of marginalia that did not affect Erbse's system, and for many readers it will cause acute frustration: the source indications are heavily abbreviated, and expansions of those abbreviations must be sought some in the preface, some in the list of authors and works, some in the apparatus, and a few in vain. As a public service, I give here the complete list of marginal abbreviations:

alleg. = belonging to the allegorical tradition
 Ariston., Aristn., Ar. = Aristonicus
 Arist. Byz., Ar. Byz. = Aristophanes of Byzantium
 Choer. = Choeroboscus
 Cyrill. = Cyrillus
 Dem. Ix. = Demetrius Ixion
 Dem. Trivolis = Demetrius Trivolis
 Did. = Didymus
 EGud = Etymologicum Gudianum
 epim. = Epimerismi Homerici

Etym. = etymologica

Eust. = Eustathius

ex. = belonging to the ancient exegetical tradition (n.b. that 'ex' without the period is also used in the marginalia for 'from', so 'ex Etym.?' means 'possibly from the Etymologica', but 'ex. (Dem. Ix.)' means 'from the exegetical tradition, via Demetrius Ixion')

gl. = belonging to the glossographical tradition

Hrd. = Herodian

hyp. metr. = taken from a metrical hypothesis

Max. Conf. = Maximus Confessor

Nican. = Nicanor

Nicol. Hydr. = Nicolaus-Nectarius Hydruntinus

Or. = Orion

Phlx. = Philoxenus

Porph., Porp. = Porphyry

Ptol. Asc. = Ptolemy of Ascalon

Tz. = John Tzetzes

V = belonging to the vulgate tradition (i.e. the D scholia)

v.l. = variant reading for which there are no grounds for attribution to Didymus or Aristonicus.

This list illustrates the range of different traditions represented by the scholia in this edition: Pontani has been far less restrictive in his selection of scholia than Erbse was for the *Iliad* scholia. In addition to notes from the main Alexandrian scholarly tradition, he includes not only the D (V) scholia, but also scholia taken from the lost work of Porphyry and Byzantine material, all of which Erbse systematically excluded. On the one hand such inclusiveness may be irritating for those who have no interest in anything but the oldest stratum of scholarship, which is unquestionably diluted by the other material. On the other hand it means that this text will be far more useful than Erbse's for those who have a wider range of interests, particularly those concerned with late antiquity and the Byzantine period or with mythographical interests.

Pontani numbers each entry with not only the line number of the lemma, but also a series of letters and numbers to allow precise reference to an individual scholion. This is unquestionably a big improvement. The provision of two apparatuses, one for sources and one for parallels, is another modern convention about whose value no questions can be raised. I found, however, that neither apparatus was as easy to understand as Erbse's: abbreviations are very heavily used, and many are not found in any list of abbreviations. Most of them are fairly common and will not pose unusual difficulties to those accustomed to reading an apparatus, but still there is a sharp contrast with Erbse's meticulous listing of even the most common abbreviations.

Another useful advance is the consistent provision of in-text references to ancient sources when these are cited in the scholia; Dindorf provided these sporadically, but Pontani always offers them, and has updated them to match our current understanding of the texts concerned.⁷ Abbreviations for source manuscripts are also given in the text immediately following the note to which they refer; as many notes are partially preserved in some manuscripts the text of longer entries is often broken up by strings of source abbreviations at the points where those sources end. This is all very correct, useful, and in accordance with the latest conventions, but it makes the notes harder to read, and this difficulty is increased by the fact that sometimes, to save space, Pontani prints two or three one-word glosses on the same line, separated by a slash. The result is that a certain alertness is required to tell, when the Greek text is interrupted by a string of abbreviations, whether one needs to take the text that follows that interruption as syntactically connected to what

preceded or not.

There is occasional poor copy-editing, as is noticeable in the inconsistencies in the list of abbreviations given above. In general, however, this work is accurate where it matters: I found no wrong references and only one very minor misprint in the Greek text. The soft covers and binding may have difficulty lasting as long as this work is likely to be in use.

In general, however, this is an excellent work (one would not mind non-durable binding if the book were not likely to be the standard text for so many years), and one can only hope that the remaining volumes follow soon and attain a similar level of quality.

Notes:

- [1.](#) Erbse, Hartmut, *Scholia graeca in Homeri Iliadem (scholia vetera)* (Berlin 1969-88).
- [2.](#) Dindorf, Wilhelm, *Scholia graeca in Homeri Odysseam* (Oxford 1855).
- [3.](#) Ludwich, Arthur, *Scholia in Homeri Odysseae A 1-309, auctiora et emendatiora* (Königsberg 1888-90).
- [4.](#) Erbse, Hartmut, preface to Olms (Hildesheim) 1966 reprint of Ludwich (above, note 3), p. iii.
- [5.](#) Ernst, Nicola, *Die D-Scholien zur Odyssee* (diss. Köln 2006) ([available online](#)).
- [6.](#) Pontani, Filippomaria, *Sguardi su Ulisse* (Rome 2005). Reviewed by Emanuele Dettori (also in Italian) at BMCR [2005.09.40](#).
- [7.](#) References to the text of Homer are given according to the convention whereby books of the *Iliad* are indicated by capitalized Greek letters and books of the *Odyssey* by lower-case Greek letters, though this convention is not mentioned in any list of abbreviations.

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