

# The Art of the Scholar of Letters: Critical Signs and Critical Judgment

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# Dionysius of Thrace on the art of letters

Μέρη δὲ αὐτῆς εἰσὶν ἔξι·  
ἕκτον κρίσις ποιημάτων, ὁ δὴ κάλλιστόν ἐστι πάντων τῶν ἐν τῇ  
τέχνῃ.

“There are six parts of it . . . the sixth (part) is the judgment/discernment of poems/poetry, which is the finest of all those (six parts) in the art.”

Folio 8r of the Venetus A,  
containing a portion of  
Aristonicus' description  
of the critical signs as  
used in this manuscript.

## From Aristonicus' description . . .

He (Aristarchus) took (over) the obelos from the edition of Zenodotus.

And as he rejected lines from the poem, he placed it (the obelos) next to them, as if next to corpses of humans.

## From Aristonicus' description . . .

His (Aristarchus') rationale/reason for athetesis is two-fold:

- i) The first use is when indicating that the line (epos) is **not Homeric**, as was indicated on the line "he delights in the feast and he has as wife Hebe with lovely ankles." (Odyssey 11.603)

For it is impossible for the one who is perpetually virgin to be given in marriage.

## From Aristonicus' description . . .

The second use (of the obelus for athetesis) is when the lines are **out of place**.

E.g. Aristarchus says that athetesis should be applied in *Iliad* 1.177 (Agamemnon speaking to Achilles)

“For strife is always dear to you, and wars and battles”

because this is the very sort of person Agamemnon actually needs!

[actually the obelus is missing in Venetus A, with just an asterisk next to the line.]

## From Aristonicus' description . . .

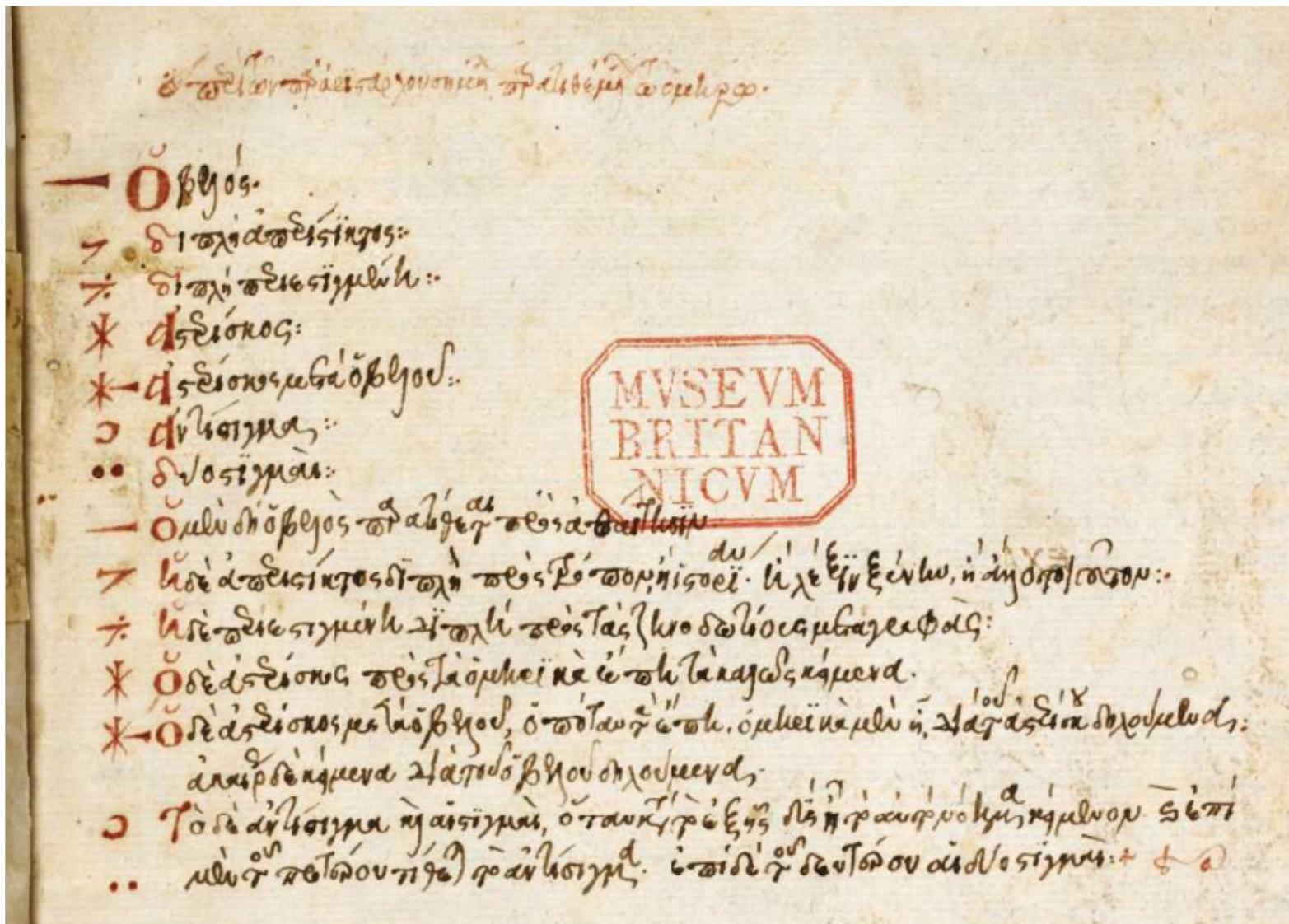
Whenever it (the asterisk) appears together with an obelos, it shows that the line is Homeric, but improperly (phaulos) placed here.

[so in its other occurrence, Iliad 5.891, the line is appropriate, when spoken by Zeus to Ares. In that location there is an asterisk next to the line, with no obelus.]

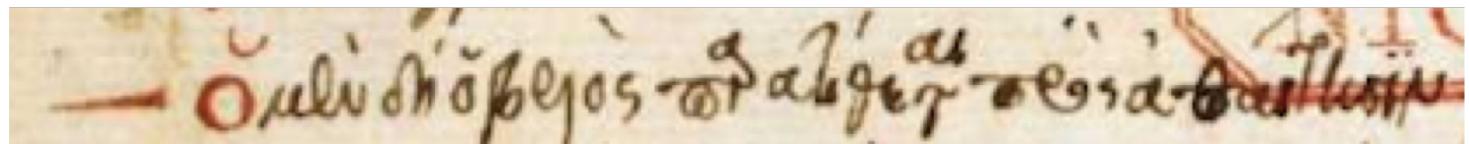
From Aristonicus' description . . .

In response to Zenodotus, his (Aristarchus')  
placement of the dotted diple more specifically  
against each reading can be observed.

# Harley 5693 (14<sup>th</sup> century)



# Harley 5693 (14<sup>th</sup> century)



The obelos is applied in response to athetesis

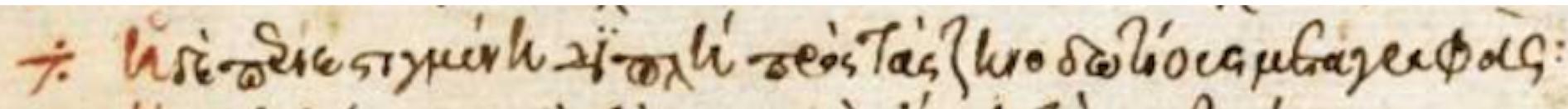
# Harley 5693 (14<sup>th</sup> century)

\* Ode dñe sona de s. Iohanni n. e. o. h. tanas, regred.  
\* Ode dñe sona per l. o. b. h. o. d. o. o. h. i. n. p. l. i. n. d. a. g. a. s. i. n. d. o. o. d. o. l. o. d. :  
i. n. s. p. e. n. q. u. e. r. a. d. a. g. o. d. o. b. h. o. d. o. o. d. e. r. d.

The asterisk (is used) in response to the Homeric lines that are well-placed

Whereas the asterisk with obelus (is used) whenever the lines are (genuinely) Homeric, as shown by the asterisk, but (occurring) out of place, as shown by the obelus.

# Harley 5693 (14<sup>th</sup> century)



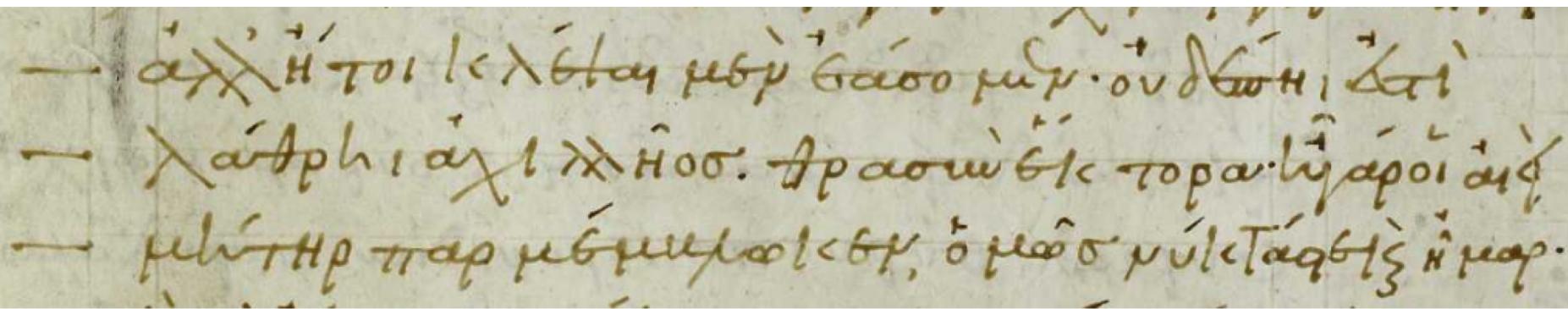
The dotted diple (is used) in response to the Zeondotean alterations (of the text).

## 3 lines athetized: *Iliad* 24.71-73

(Zeus speaking)

“But we cannot steal strong Hector’s body; it is not possible without Achilles’ noticing, since his (Achilles’) mother (Thetis) is always with him, day and night.”

# Venetus A: folio 311



— ἀγγέλοις λαθεῖν μηδὲ γάσοντες οὐ δύνονται  
— λαίφηις αὐχλαῖνος. Θρασοῦ εἰς τοραλήγροι αὐχ  
— μεντηρ παρ μέμπειντες, ο μεσογύλταρετζης μερ-

“But we cannot steal strong Hector’s body; it is not possible without Achilles’ noticing, since his (Achilles’) mother (Thetis) is always with him, day and night.”

## Scholion to *Iliad* 24.71-73

“The three lines are athetized because they present a falsehood . . . Thetis does not spend all her time with Achilles . . .”

Other reasons for athetesis (see Schironi, pp. 452ff.):

Internal inconsistency

“Inappropriateness”

Redundancy

# *Iliad* 1.12-15, Venetus A, folio 12r

ΧΡΥΣΗΝ  
ἀπρόδιος. οἱαρίνεθοσ εἰσιν οἰκαγαῖοι.  
λοσ μένος τηγατρα. φέρονται πρόσοι απομινα.  
αθηματίων συχθοτιμείνειον απόγενος  
Χριστοι, αραοκήπρω, και μετροπάρασαγαῖος.

Atreides; for he (the priest) had come to the Achaeans' swift ships  
In order to ransom his daughter, bringing an uncountable treasure,  
Having in his hands the ribbons of far-shooting Apollo  
On a golden staff, and he besought all the Achaeans . . .

*Iliad* 1.372-374, Venetus A, folio 19r

- \* μούμενός τε θύετρα· φέροντ' απέβεισιά ποικιλα.  
- \* <sup>μετατρέμενα</sup> οὐδεματί έχει την χερσίν οὐδενός τοιούτων  
- \* Χρυσέων, ἀπὸ στεφάνων· λαΐσισθε πάτραις δειπνοῖσι.

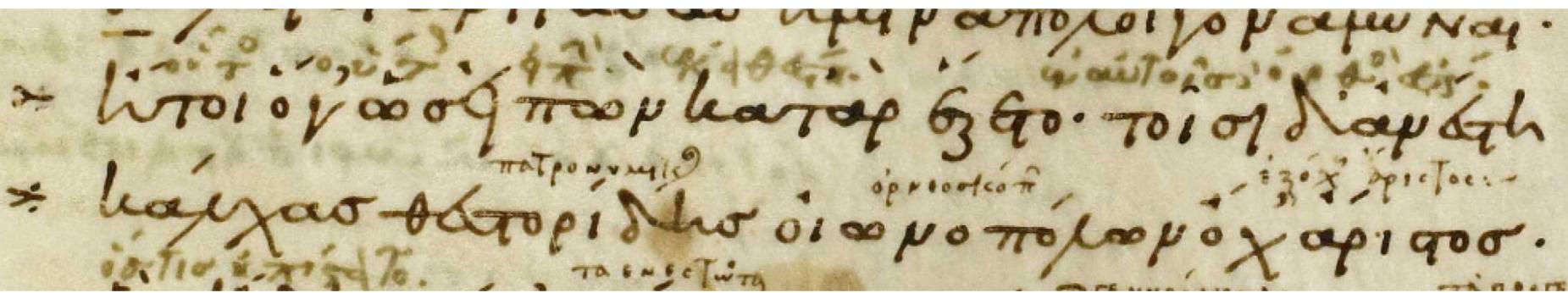
In order to ransom his daughter, bringing an uncountable treasure,  
Having in his hands the ribbons of far-shooting Apollo  
On a golden staff, and he besought all the Achaeans . . .

## Scholion to *Iliad* 1.12-15

“The lines were transferred inappropriately to a different location (sc. 372ff.).”

The lines are Homeric, hence the asterisk in both locations; but appropriately placed only in this place, inappropriately in the later passage – hence the obelus there as well as the asterisk.

# *Iliad* I.68-69 with scholion



λιτοι γεσθησαρεψετοι διετοι στηναρεψετοι  
καέχασ θεστορίδης οι ωμοπόλωμοχαρισσοσ.

And having spoken he sat down; and there stood up before them Kalchas, son of Thestor, the best of the augurs.

ὅτι Ζηνοδοτ γράφει μάντις Θεστορίδης. οὐ δύναται δὲ τῷ γένει τὸ εἶδος ἄμα συγκατατίθεσθαι

(the dotted diple) because Zenodot(us) writes “seer, son of Thestor”: but the species cannot be agreeing with the genus [seer is the genus, augur a species of seer, so Homer shouldn’t say “a seer, the best of the augurs”].

Thank you!