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# College of the Holy Cross
**Worcester, Massachusetts**

**The Thesis of** Anne Catherine Schaaf

**entitled** Woven Words in the Iliad: Gender, Narrative, and Textile Production in the Scholia of the Venetus A Manuscript

**is submitted to the office of Scholar Programs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with College Honors at the College of the Holy Cross, and has been read and approved by the following:**

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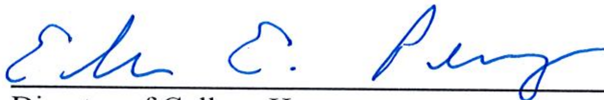

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# Woven Words in the Iliad: Gender, Narrative, and Textile Production in the Scholia of the Venetus A Manuscript

Anne-Catherine Schaaf

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Introduction

Every summer from the 6th century BC to the 3rd century CE, rhapsodes, "stitchers of songs", would perform the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to audiences numbering in the thousands at the Panathenaic Festival in Athens. This festival took place in the month of Hekatombaion, roughly at the end of July, and honored the goddess Athena, patron of Athens, as well as the patron of art and wisdom (Dué, 240). In addition to performances, athletic competitions, and banquets, the festival included a giant procession that would wind upwards through the streets of Athens to present a πέπλος, a woman's outer garment, at the altar of Athena. This garment would have been what Elizabeth Wayland Barber calls, in her article "The Peplos of Athena", a "story-cloth" (Barber, *Peplos*, 111). Intricately detailed, created by women working over the course of a year, it depicted the story of the Gigantomachy, the Olympian victory over the giants, a battle in which Athena played a crucial role, as well as an example of her *ἀριστεία* (Barber, *Peplos,* 117).

In the world of Homeric epic, and in Ancient Greece, epic singing and weaving are themselves interwoven as dual and surprisingly similar modes of narrative creation. When I refer to narrative creation, I use it as a shorthand for the act of epic singing, as well as other forms of storytelling, which can include sculpture, vase painting, metalwork, and weaving. The Homeric epics themselves originally existed as oral narratives, creatively retold and remixed by generations of singers. Moreover, the ancients considered epic storytelling the domain of men, and our recorded names of rhapsodes are all men (González, 401). These epics survive to the present day due to their recording and transmission in papyri, and later, manuscripts. Unfortunately, unlike sculpture, vase painting,and metalwork, along with other important mediums for artistic creation in the lives of the ancients, textiles decay comparatively quickly from an archaeological perspective. Yet, women in the *Iliad*, and in the ancient world, participate in the act of narrative creation through weaving their complex and multi-patterned textiles. Through their creation of these textiles, the women creators

assert their creative and narrative power. Even when they fail to control the narrative, as in the case of the doomed Trojan women, Hecuba and Andromache, they still use their creative work in compelling ways to resist their situation. My thesis analyzes the connections between weaving and narrative creation and the women who do both in the Venetus A Manuscript of the *Iliad* and its accompanying scholia within four specific scenes. The scholia of these scenes illuminate how ancient scholars and the poems' audiences recognized this connection of two different forms of narrative creation within the *Iliad*, with women characters as the driving force.

"The Classical Greeks inherited a 7000-year tradition of weaving, which even before the end of the Stone Age had blossomed in Europe into an elaborate technology of pattern-weaving that left the rest of the ancient world far behind," (Barber, *Peplos*, 103). This work was done for the most part, with the limited exceptions of ancient Egypt and on occasion, Athens, by women (Barber, *Women's Work,* 188). Their work was essential to the daily life of the household, and so labor-intensive that it "seems from all evidence to have occupied most of women's time inside the home," (Barber, *Peplos*, 105). However, the woven materials described in the *Iliad* are not everyday household goods, but what we can understand to be beautiful, elegant garments and tapestries made by women with a high degree of creative control. Susan Edmunds in "Picturing Homeric Weaving", describes how "Homeric weavers—Penelope, Helen, Andromache, Arete, as well as their divine counterparts Calypso and Circe—were master weavers by virtue of extensive training, long experience, keen intellect, and fine taste. Like Athene herself, they were embodiments of a kind of skill that was synonymous with intelligence" (Edmunds).

Texts and textiles interweave across the Greek language and literature, as they do in modern English. The root of the English word *text*, for example, is the Latin participle *textus*, meaning "woven". Scholars like Gregory Nagy and Susan Edmunds have noted a connection between many of the terms used in epic singing, and the terms used in weaving (Edmunds et al). The word *rhapsode*

itself derives from the Greek verb ῥάπτω, meaning "to stitch together." Rhapsodes as a group of contenders in competition stitched together pieces of an epic, as they were expected to seamlessly pick up the narrative from where an earlier rhapsode in the competition left off, and recite completely a section of the poem. The verb was originally used for textiles before being applied to singers. Likewise, the word *ὕμνος* is used to mean both the first song of an oral performance, and the border first woven on a garment.

In all the scenes I studied, the word ποικίλος occurred, a word that can mean both woven motifs with a colorful pattern, or any piece of art that is carefully and cleverly made, or when used for a person, that they have a subtle, artful, complex mind. As Jennifer Stager describes, "'poikilos is 'variegation' which was an aspect of color that was highly valued in the ancient Mediterranean" (Stager, 86) Moreover, ποικίλος, as George Melville Bolling describes, can be anything worked by human craftsman- or craftswomanship or that provokes feelings of "admiration or pleasure" in the viewer (Bolling, 275). Stager references, for example, Sappho's plea to Aphrodite of the "ποικίλος " mind, translated often as "shimmering, dappled, changeable, adorned, and var-iegated" (Stager, 113). The word *ποικίλος* in the sections I studied all appear to involve the creation of "story-cloths," like the ones woven, for the most part by women, to offer to Athena. Each woven motif is not just a decorative pattern, but a kind of spell or charm that can either control the memory of the past or attempt to change the present and future reality of the narrative. The *Iliad*, and its weaving, reveal the female character's ποικίλος minds; their complexity and agency. I concur with Nagy and Edmunds in typically using "pattern-woven" as a translation, a term that is true to the technical art of weaving and also hints at the word's wide semantic breadth and depth.

The *Iliad* itself acknowledges this other storytelling tradition of weaving, with both scenes of weaving and textile use, and references to and metaphors of textiles and weaving interspersed throughout the epic. My research, however, given this vast treasure of material, focuses exclusively

on the scenes of elite women. Of course, the kidnapped women in the Achaean camp and the slave women of Troy were also producing textiles, but as the epic narrative is not invested in their experiences or characters, it is likewise not invested in their textile production.

Elite women, however, have the opportunity to exhibit artistic control and thus narrative agency, to make what Barber's "story-cloths," and likewise appear in the more extensive textile-related scenes with lengthy scholia in the Venetus A manuscript. I begin with Helen in Book 3, Hecuba in Book 6, Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite in Book 14, and finally Andromache in Book 22. Helen is the most famous example of a woman exerting narrative power through weaving, but Andromache attempts to exert some narrative power as well. The three goddesses at the center of the epic, Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite, have their own special garments, and perhaps more power than anyone else to use them to successfully exert narrative control. Even Hecuba, who is not able to successfully change the outcome of the narrative, tries to claim power through textiles, and forces the narrative to acknowledge her love for her son through her efforts to save him. The creation of textiles makes all of these women players in this story's game. Textiles, like Helen's δίπλακα [χλαῖνα] are made with dual folds of ordinary women's work, and extraordinary women's agency. Garments in their use, to put it simply, change the reality around them. A beautiful garment may please a divine being, and/or change someone's fate.

Yet, as essential as textiles were to the daily life and ceremonial art of the ancient Greeks, scholars often neglect to give them their due importance. Homer, and indeed many other poets, speaks of beautiful cloaks, robes, bedcovers, and tapestries, but all that survives to the present day is a few faded threads, ensconced in museums. Moreover, Homer's *Iliad* represents this crucial activity in intriguing detail, yet has a lack of scholarship recognizing its value to the text.
To understand these questions, and especially to understand what the ancients thought about this topic, I wanted to look at the earliest complete form of the *Iliad* we have, which is the Venetus A

manuscript, named after the library where it is held. The works of Homer survive today due to being copied down in manuscripts, while woven works, as previously stated, for the most part are lost to the ravages of time. In studying weaving then, lacking direct access to the artwork itself, we as scholars have to synthesize information from many indirect sources, archaeological and literary, and try to understand what was obvious to those in the ancient world. There is one important potential source that has so far been underexplored, due to in no small part their historical inaccessibility: the scholia.

In addition to the *Iliad* text in the Venetus A manuscript, it also contains over ten thousand scholia, the critical commentary surrounding the text of *Iliad* manuscripts,which are created by different ancient scholars, often copying and citing each other's comments, so that each manuscript has its own unique treasure trove of scholarly commentary. Many of the scholia I analyzed contain diples, a "critical sign" that signals that the comment is explaining technical vocabulary. Through this discussion of unusual words, grammar corrections, explanation of poetic technique, and debates over a line's authenticity, they reveal the most important themes and concerns of the scholars. The *Iliad* has over 14,000 lines, so not every line gets a scholia, but interestingly, the scenes of weaving I studied all had a large number of scholia, showing that weaving was an interesting topic for the ancient scholars.

Moreover, the job of the γραμματικός, the editor(s) who created and copied the scholia, was not just to add technical notes, but to expand on and clarify the most important themes and arguments of the work. The scholia are under-utilized by modern scholarship on perhaps every topic, but they can be particularly useful for a topic that is little understood like that of textiles. The scholia of the four weaving scenes I analyze illustrate the important connections between weaving and narrative creation, and how women can play a role in both. Looking at these sometimes contradictory, fascinating comments, modern readers can understand how the people of the

ancient world thought about weaving and storytelling, and how their thoughts can help us as modern readers by what they call our attention to. I do not include every scholia on the page of the passage I am examining, but limit myself to the ones that comment specifically on the set of lines I am interested in.

These scenes of elite women in the *Iliad* and their engagement with textiles expounded on in the scholia of the Venetus A reveal the broad spectrum of how textiles connect to narrative and power. Helen reveals to the reader how ordinary domestic work is actually a work of art, and how it can give its laborer not only creative control, but control over their story of their life--the very story Helen exists in. The scholia that cluster around her lines help us understand exactly what she weaves, its importance, and her role as narrative agent. Hecuba allows us to further understand the connection between textiles and the divine, and the roles women play in resisting fate and protecting their family. The three goddesses help the reader to understand the power of textiles, their literal magic, not only in their power to subjugate others' will, but their power to create real connections and community among women. Finally, Andromache uses textiles as a warning, a final omen to her own fate and the ultimate fate of Troy, reminding us of the limits of power even as one woman asserts her own. Weaving is never just weaving. In their woven patterns, women can express themselves, and in their creation, sacrifice, and wear of woven garments, women can take active roles in the story. The text and the scholia reveal how a traditional women's activity is brought into the epic narrative, and the women--too often sidelined, too often silenced--become creators, and agents both of a narrative and within the larger narrative of an oral epic.

## Acknowledgements

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Book 3 Lines 125-128: Helen

τὴν δ᾽ εὗρ᾽ ἐν μεγάρῳ: ἣ δὲ μέγαν ἱστὸν ὕφαινε 125

δίπλακα μαρμαρέην: πολέας δ᾽ ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους

Τρώων θ᾽ ἱπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,

οὕς ἕθεν εἵνεκ᾽ ἔπασχον ὑπ᾽ Ἄρηος παλαμάων:

Scholia to 44 Recto: https://www.homermultitext.org/staging/va-facsimile/msA.44r/

**msInt (unnumbered) on 3.126:** παραλέλειπται τὸ κύριον ἡ χλαίνα λέγει δὲ δίπλακα χλαίναν ἣν ἐστι διπλὴν ἀμφιέσασθαι

Comments on 3.126

*3.126: The critical sign is there because the proper noun is missing. "χλαίνα" refers to this "double-folded mantle" which one puts with the cloth doubled over.*

**msA 3.201:** δίπλακα μαρμαρέην καὶ αἱ Ἀριστάρχου καὶ ἡ Ζηνοδότου καὶ ἡ Ἀριστοφάνους πορφυρέην εἶχον , οὐ μαρμαρέην καὶ ἐστι πρεπωδέστερον καὶ γὰρ ἐπι τῶν νυμφῶν φάρε᾽ ὑφαίνουσι ἁλιπόρφυρα ⁑ Comments on 3.126

*3.126: "a shining double fold garment," yet the editions of Aristarchus and edition of Zenodotus and edition of Aristophanes had "sea-purple", not "shining", and (this) is more appropriate because with reference to the nymphs, they weave webs of sea-purple color.*

**msA 3.199: ἐν μεγάρῳ** ἐν θαλάμω οὗτος γὰρ διαίτημα γαμηθεισῶν: χηρῶν δὲ καὶ παρθένων ὑπερῷον Comments on 3.125

*3.125: "In the great room", [it means] in the inner-chamber, for this room is the dwelling-place of married women; while the upstairs room is the dwelling-place of widows and unmarried women*

**msA 3.691**: **δίπλακα μαρμαρέην** καὶ αἱ Ἀριστάρχου καὶ ἡ Ζηνοδοτου καὶ ἡ Ἀριστοφάνους πορφυρέην εἶχον καὶ ἐστι πρεπωδέστερον. καὶ γὰρ ἐπι τῶν νυμφῶν φάρεων ὑφαίνουσι ἁλιπόρφυραι

⁑ Comments on 3.126

*3.126: "a shining double fold garment", yet editions of Aristarchus and the edition of Zenodotus and the edition of Aristophanes had "sea-purple", and (this) is more appropriate. Because with reference to the weavings of the nymphs, they weave sea purple-colored ones.*[1]

**msAil 3.703: ἱστόριζεν**

Comments on 3.126

*3.126: "wove stories"*

Helen's weaving scene in lines 125-128, the prelude to her τειχοσκοπία (viewing from the city wall), perhaps most clearly out of any of the women I will discuss, displays how textiles exist in the interstices of narrative control, narrative and temporal shift, and women's power. Iris' visit to Helen in Book 3 introduces a dramatic shift in narrative and a rare moment of female narrative power in the *Iliad*, Helen's τειχοσκοπία. The τειχοσκοπία is famously out of sync with the normal temporal progression of the narrative (shouldn't Priam know who the warriors who have been trying to capture his city for ten years are?), but Helen's weaving scene demonstrates how the narrative actually looks backward into time, through Helen's eyes. Helen so far is the object of the war and of men's desire, but this scene grants her subjectivity through her artistic power. It all begins at a loom, in a rather unexpected location, along with an unnerving creation.

The first notable aspect of this passage with the accompanying explanatory scholion msA

[1] NB: Readers will note the seeming reproduction (with slight alterations) of msA 3.201 in msA 3.691, as well as the misordered placement of msA 3.199. The most simple explanation seems to me that the scholiast wrote msA 3.201, realizes he left out msA 3.199, adds it, and then adds in msA 3.691 to recreate the correct line order on the page.

3.199, is Helen's location: ἐν μεγάρῳ. The μέγαρον, or great hall, is not the typical place one would expect to find a loom, or a woman working it. The μέγαρον is a public space, for speeches and decrees, feasting and gift giving, the gathering place where men dominate the social influx. Of course, women would be there, at the side of men, if they were elites, or more likely, as slaves bringing food and drink and cutting across the room on various errands. Moreover, as previously mentioned, textile work demanded the constant time and energy of even elite women. In the *Odyssey*, both Helen and Arete bring out their wool baskets to spin wool into thread as they sit and listen to the men tell their stories, always keeping their hands busy. Yet, this is still not the space to set up a loom. A loom like the one Helen would have worked on is a heavy, bulky piece of technology, and would have occupied a significant workspace, as it would have required baskets of thread nearby, and the constant moving presence of slave women nearby spinning or fetching thread and wool from elsewhere in the palace. The term used for both loom and web in line 125, μέγαν ἱστὸν, whatever it may be, informs readers that this creation takes up a sizeable amount of space. Tasks like spinning wool are relatively simple, repetitive, and easy to do while paying attention to something else, but weaving a complex garment would require more intense concentration. It is unlikely Helen would find that in the clamor and bustle of the central social space in a large household.

The scholia on line 3.126 offers a correction for this confusing phrase. According to this interpretation, what the poet really meant was the θάλαμος, the chamber of a married woman. This scholia is also helpful for explaining other details of social life, naming the other "women's quarters" where widows and unmarried women resided. The question remains whether slaves shared those quarters or had separate ones. In the world of the *Iliad*, the θάλαμος is the more appropriate place for weaving, as Hecuba in Book 6 and Andromache in Book 22 both carry out their textile related missions in the θάλαμος. Later, for example in 6.325, Hector finds Helen

weaving next to Paris in the θάλαμος of Paris' palace. Finally, Hecuba's scene in book 6 additionally established that the θάλαμος is not only the nexus of textile production, but their storing place as well when Hector also tells Hecuba to get a robe to sacrifice out of the θάλαμος. As shown later in Book 22, Andromache weaves in another appropriate location in 22.437, μυχῷ δόμου ὑψηλοῖο, an inner room of the lofty house, in emphasized seclusion from the outside world. There, she would not be disturbed, having the privacy to contemplate her work, unweaving and reweaving as necessary, and likewise not intruding on the other affairs of the household. No matter whether the space is a θάλαμος or a μυχός, it is clear that weaving is an activity that belongs in very private, protected and intimate spaces, and thus how terribly inappropriate the μέγαρον is.

Yet, we do not necessarily have to accept the scholiast's correction. Instead, we as readers should ask ourselves how Helen's weaving can be viewed differently in these two very different contexts. Is she seeking to publicly display her work, as crafting it in the μέγαρον would no doubt entail? Or, if she stays in the protective enclave of the θάλαμος, is she choosing to model the behavior of a respectable wife? Or perhaps is her work too emotional, painful, proactive, or unexplainable to be displayed in a public setting? A loom would not have accidentally or unconsciously been left in the μέγαρον. By weaving in the μέγαρον, then, Helen transgresses. Helen has an apartment she shares with Paris that would be the location those listening to the bard's tale would expect. Yet, without an explanation, Helen and her work are on display for everyone to see. Wherever she is, Helen stands in Priam's house weaving what she has seen, and will see, from up upon the walls of Troy. Helen's act of weaving in lines 121-128 simultaneously represents the first detailed depiction of textile creation in the *Iliad*, and a shift to a new perspective. Weaving may be traditionally "woman's work," and she may not speak in this scene, but this woman is by no means passive. Rather, the threads she weaves become her voice and her power. Helen is weaving, ὕφαινε, the imperfect tense demonstrating that this is a continuous action. All the verbs used in this scene

(ὕφαινε, ἐνέπασσεν, ἔπασχον), in fact, are imperfect. This continuous act has implications for the narrative within her creation. Helen is not simply weaving one particular, atomic scene. Many battles, and her ongoing witness to those battles, are recreated in the layers and patterns of her garment. Ann Bergren in "Helen's Web: Time and Tableau in the *Iliad"* describes the "metatemporal point of view," of the τειχοσκοπία, and this meta-temporality is already clear in the unfinished, still progressing narrative of the garment (Bergren, 48).

Particularly notable is the word used in line 126 to refer to what Helen is actually creating on her loom, ἀέθλους, meaning contests or exploits. This word is used to represent the continuing patterns and illustrations of a story-cloth, and can additionally mean tragedies. Helen is weaving words, the *Iliad* itself, into a smaller depiction of the very poem she is in, suspending the moment in time. Helen is literally weaving the deeds of warriors into artistics patterns, much like how the bards performing the *Iliad* would turn (likely mythical) physical events into patterns of song. An interior scholia, msAil 3.703, is also intriguing. This interior scholia explains an alternative meaning for the verb ἐνέπασσεν, which describes what which is given by the LSJ as "sprinkling in", an odd phrase. As an alternative, the scholiast provides the readers with ἱστόριζεν, another imperfect representing continuous action, "narrating" or "story-telling". This verb is not in the LSJ, but The -ιζω ending signifies a verb that derives from a noun. In Galen, there is the word ἱστόρισμα, a noun meaning "history," that may be the origin of the verb. Helen may be telling many small, interconnected stories as she weaves a pattern of small threads and motifs, just as the narrator of the *Iliad* does also.

An intermarginal scholia clarifies the nature of the garment described in line 126. The *Iliad* itself only comments on the details, not the thing itself, "double-folded and shining", leaving translators to substitute in a name for this woven object. The interior scholion tells us exactly what this object is, a χλαῖνα. Mireille Lee explains in *Body, Dress, and Identity In Ancient Greece* that "the

*chlaina* and *chlamys* are cape-like mantles worn by men fastened at the shoulder or neck with a button or fibula" (Lee). However, Lee also notes that " the adoption of a typically masculine garment by females of non-ideal or indeterminate status is not unusual," especially for ritual purposes. Regardless, the garment Helen weaves is not just any χλαῖνα, but a δίπλαξ, something with a double fold. The interior scholion on line 126 additionally specifies what "diplaka" means. The double-fold, according to him, is in reference to how the garment is worn on the body, which was worn differently in "Homer's time" than it was in his. The double-fold, δίπλακα, is not an aspect of the weaving pattern, but rather means it is folded around the body twice, and that it hangs over the chest (Lee). Interestingly this double-fold appears to generally refer to the overhang on women's πέπλοι, however there is nothing I could find about the nature of a χλαῖνα that would preclude it from also having a double fold.

The δίπλακα is also described in the Venetus A manuscript line 126 as μαρμαρέην, a "shining" double-fold cloak. μαρμάρεος is a highly unusual term to describe a woven work, and the scholiast in 3.201 and 3.691 finds it problematic. In the *Iliad*, it is used three other times: when referring to the sea (14.273), Zeus's aegis (17.594), and the shield made for Achilles (18.480) How can a woven work, which would almost certainly be made out of wool, have the quality of shining and reflecting light usually assigned to metal and water? Perhaps the narrative emphasizes a more positive aspect of the battle scene: not wounds, but shining armor, like that of the Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων in line 127. Perhaps Helen is engaging in a form of transmutation only possible in a mythical narrative, of turning metal into fiber, incorporating the very metals she has seen clashing before her, literally reflecting them. Modern weavers sometimes do use metal coated threads, giving their fabric a shiny but stiff appearance. Yet, there is no archaeological or literary source that I know of that describes women in the ancient world weaving with metallic threads. Indeed, the majority of extant manuscripts have the word πορφυρέην, and the word πορφυρέην is the more common

reading in the surviving papyri. The scholiast clarifies that this unusual use of μαρμαρέην is not the correct descriptor for the garment, in his judgment.

The most common word in the *Iliad* manuscripts, preferred by the Alexandrian editors, πορφυρέην, likewise introduces many possibilities of challenging and intriguing meanings. *πορφυρέην* is a much more common term used for garments, a color associated with death, blood, wine, and the sea, and as a dye originates from the glands of hexaplex trunculus, a sea snail. Sea purple, like saffron, was one of the rare dyes in the ancient world that was naturally colorfast and bright (Barber, *Peplos*, 116). Unfortunately, it was difficult to capture the sea snails that produced it, and production was time-consuming, making their dye rare and expensive, accessible only to the elite. Gowns that color purple were often sacrificed to goddesses, and if this garment is for a woman, this may be exactly what Helen is doing (Ferrera, 123). The scholar Bianca Ferrera has summarized three main semantic meanings for the color purple. "a symbol of divinity and expression of the priest's dignity" "a symbol of luxury and opulence", and finally "a symbol of royalty and political power."(Ferrara, 118) Helen claims all three.

Within that double fold, we enter a double narrative, Helen's story within the story, an alternate perspective, a wresting away of narrative control. Helen now weaves, and story-tells, what she sees, *Τρώων θ' ἱπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων* (line 127), and accordingly she will name the men and describe them on her own terms for Priam in the following lines. What thoughts passed through her head as she drew their wounds into the weft threads? Whether the scene is described with πορφυρέην or μαρμαρέην, the garment may appear very different, respectively either focusing on the the surging motion of the armies and the massive quantities of blood and gore, enough to be the dominant color of the garment, or its brilliant shining nature, highlighting the Achaean's armor. This may be the answer to the mystery of the μέγαρον. Perhaps Helen could have had a better view to record the bloodshed outside the gates from this location. Iris later invites her to view Τρώων θ'

ἱπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων, in line 131, the exact same scene that Helen is already weaving.

Finally, since the χλαῖνα is most likely worn by men, who is Helen weaving for? The most obvious (simply in terms of proximity) would be her husband, Paris, who is currently dueling with her old husband, Menelaus, on the plains of Troy. Yet, the duel is ongoing, as she is told "two husbands fighting" and the garment will go to whichever husband returns. The men she points to are her old suitors. Through Helen's act of weaving what she has seen and will see, the *Iliad* offers a different perspective, one that refers back to the time long before the events of the *Iliad*. Afterwards, Iris, messenger of the gods, appears to Helen in the guide of her sister-in-law, Laodice, and invites her to step away from the loom where she works. In line 130, Iris speaks for the first time, addressing Helen as νύμφα, "bride." This form of address may explain the scholiast's reference to sea nymphs, although that could also be a mythical association between sea nymphs and the oceanic origin of the sea snail dye. Helen has been married (under questionable circumstances) for ten years to Paris, and to Menelaus multiple years before that. She is not a young woman or a newlywed wife. This narrative of battle is not just the current battle, or the future battles, or the battles of the last ten years, but stretches all the way back to the first battles Helen ever had to fear: those threatened by her choice of one suitor over another.

Helen steps outside the neat march of the plot to create a smaller narrative with its own sense of time, a reaction and reproach to the larger narrative she is a, perhaps unwilling, participant in. And as she makes their tragedy into her work of art, she becomes the narrator of the story. She does not simply sprinkle in patterns, but through the act of choosing what to include, and where and how to include, as one must do while weaving, narrates a story that is unmistakably her own. This garment is a story-cloth, just like the peplos made for the Panathenaic festival. The focus of

this work is on the scholia of the Venetus A manuscript. Yet, I would be remiss not to briefly mention the fascinating scholia on this scene in the Burney 86 manuscript, specifically Schol. T ad. Il 3.125b and Schol. bT ad Il. 3.126-127 which respectively compare Helen's work to that of Circe and Calypso and discuss the woven scene of the Trojans and Achaeans as an archetype for Homer's own work. The recurrence of these commentaries in a very different manuscript hints at the ancients' recognition of the common links between textiles and artistic creation.

The reader does not know if Helen ever finished her work. A woven work often took months, if not years to complete. Yet, the text suggests that Helen's work has at least made close to a complete picture. When the Achaeans set their fires and race up the sloping streets to the palace, they will find waiting for them, in the delirium of their victory, only another reminder of the pain and suffering that they simultaneously bore and inflicted to achieve such an awesome victory. Eventually, Helen's time as narrator will end with the appearance of Aphrodite, the goddess most similar to Helen herself. Maybe Helen has claimed too much power, dabbling too deep in this transfiguring magic of story-weaving. Unlike Andromache, Helen weaves no magic charms of protection, only a violent scene. Perhaps goddesses are used to shocking scenes, after all, Athena's robes were woven with scenes from the Gigantomachy, also a violent affair. Yet, this garment, with its portrayal of horrific, ongoing violence, by a woman who has seen too much of it, is something else. The garment, if it is a gift for a goddess, would logically be for Aphrodite. The two goddesses who traditionally receive purple garments, Hera and Athena, are both on the opposite side of the war, while Aphrodite sides with the Trojans, and is more closely tied to Helen than anyone else, even her mythical father Zeus, by her role in Helen's abduction. This creates a new and complicated dimension to the relationship between Helen and Aphrodite, who are mimetic doubles with one another. Helen has been shamed. Here, she, by showing the consequences of the war , she shames the goddesses who are involved in it, a precursor to her later rebuke of Aphrodite. She has been

called vain, been blamed for her beauty. With her woven narrative, she will rebuke the actions of those around her with her own kind of narrative, if only to force the gods and the privileged members of Troy to look upon the horrors of war, like she will do later in her τειχοσκοπία.

The scholia add valuable insight to and raise new questions about this pivotal passage. Does Helen claim this position of visibility for a reason, if she is in the μέγαρον? What does she wish to highlight in her rare moment of narrative power? People fight and die in Helen's name, although the war is about so much more than just her. This is her chance to reflect on the world around her, the warring world she has fairly or unfairly been blamed for. There can be a kind of healing in the creation of a narrative, a kind of remembrance. The dead soldiers, and those doomed to die, will still live in this garment. This technical work is also an implicit acknowledgement by the ancients of Helen, her agency, and the role she plays in the narrative. The scholiasts' intended audiences had far more familiarity with the *Iliad* than modern readers do, and by reading these scholia, just a few out of many commenting on weaving scenes in the text, we can see that this debate has been going on since ancient times, and that the audience cares about this theme. Even the most narrow technical points, like the correct accent of a word, in this passage, center around this important theme. In this short four-line passage the details of the scholia in their different forms and focuses guide the reader to a reading of the passage where we can see how important the theme of weaving is, and calls to our attention who Helen is and how important this act is.

Book 6 Lines 288-296: Hecuba

αὐτὴ δ’ ἐς θάλαμον κατεβήσετο κηώεντα:

ἔνθ’ ἐσάν οἱ, πέπλοι παμποίκιλοι: ἔργα γυναικῶν

Σιδονίων : τὰς αὐτὸς Ἀλέξανδρος θεοειδὴς 290

ἤγαγε Σιδονίηθεν. ἐπιπλὼς εὐρέα πόντον:

τὴν ὁδὸν. ἣν Ἑλένην περ ἀνήγαγεν εὐπατέρειαν:

τῶν ἕν’ ἀειραμένη Ἑκάβη. φέρε δῶρον Ἀθήνη

ὃς κάλλιστος έην ποικίλμασιν ἠδὲ μέγιστος:

ἀστὴρ δ’’ ὡς ἀπέλαμπεν. ἔκειτο δὲ νείατος ἄλλων: 295

βῆ δ’ ἰἔναι: πολλαὶ δὲ μετεσσεύοντο γεραιαί:

Scholia to 86 Recto https://www.homermultitext.org/staging/va-facsimile/msA.86r/

**msAim 6.248:** ἐν ταῖς Ἀριστάρχου φερε καὶ ἑτέρως ἡ δ’ εἰς οἶκον ἰοῦσα παρίστατο φωριαμοῖσιν

⁑ Comments on 6.288

*6.288: In both editions of Aristarchus, he presents an alternate reading of this, "going into the house she, standing by the chests*"

**msA 6.97: ἔθεσαν οἱ πέπλοι** ὅτι ἐγκεκλιμένως ἀναγνωστέον οὕτως δύο τόνοις καίτοι πορριχιακῆς οὔσης τῆς λέζεως ἵνα μὴ ἄρθρον νοηθῇ τὸ οἱ ἀλλ’ αντωνυμία ⁑

Comments on 6.289

*6.289: "Garments were placed for her"*, *the critical sign is there with two accents; this is because one must read the enclitic, being not the article but rather thought to be the pronoun.*



**msA 6.98: Σιδονίηθεν** δεδηὼς γὰρ τὸν διωγμὸν δια Φοινίκης καὶ Αἰγύπτου ἦλθεν ὡς καὶ οἱ Ἀργοναυται. διὰ τοῦ Ἴστρου. της περιεργασίας δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου τὸ μὴ ὠνήσασθαι πέπλους ἀλλα

καὶ πρίασθαι τὰς ἐργαζομένας ⁑

*Comments on 6.291*

*6.291: "From Sidon", [Homer says this] because since[Alexander] was afraid of the pursuit, he traveled through Phoenicia and Egypt, like the Argonauts, through the Istros [river]. But Alexander's agenda was not occupied with purchasing the textiles, but to buy as slaves those who make them*

**msAint 6.185**: οτι ἀπο μιᾶς πόλεως της Σιδῶνος τὴν Φοινικην σημαίνει ⁑

Comments on 6.291

*6.291: with the phrase "from the city of Sidon", he means the Phoenicians*

**msA 6.99**: **τὴν ὁδὸν** ὅτι τὸν ἐκ Πελοποννησου ἐπ Ἴλιον πλοῦν ἀναγωγὴν λέγει

⁑ Comments on 6.292

*6.292: "the road", because he reads the upward voyage into Ilium from the Peloponnesos*

In Book 6 line 242, Hector has just returned to Troy. The first person he meets is his mother Hecuba, accompanied by his sister Laodice. She offers to bring him wine, so that he may pour libations to Zeus, and drink some as well to prepare himself for the unending task of battle. He rejects her emphatically, saying that he is unclean from war and therefore unable to make sacrifices, and likewise that drinking wine would weaken him. Instead, he tells his mother, along with the mature women of Troy, the γεραιάς (*Iliad* 6.270), to sacrifice a garment to Athena for his victory in battle. This is an unusual scene for multiple reasons, and the scholia offer important critical appraisal.

First, Hector seems to understand that garments are powerful. Usually, men talk about sacrificing animals to gods and goddesses, and this may be the only scene in which a man in the

*Iliad* talks about sacrificing a garment to a goddess. This seems to be, in fact, the only scene in which a garment is sacrificed, specifically dedicated, at all. In the *Iliad*, the common mode of sacrifice is animals, with human beings also sacrificed by Achilles. Likewise, women rarely perform sacrifices. In this scene, after Hector's exhortation, Hecuba and the other women of Troy drive the narrative without any male presence.

The women of Troy are usually on the sidelines, but through their sacrifice of textiles, Hecuba feels that she has an opportunity to exert agency and attempt to alter the course of the war, with other grieving mothers, wives, and sisters at her side, although readers know that her attempt will fail. Apart from her failing to convince Hector to come within the city walls in Book 22 and mourning over him in Book 24, Hecuba is for the most part sidelined in the narrative. Moreover, there is a scarcity of modern scholarship on Hecuba, much less her relationship with her son. Homer's character is usually overshadowed by the titular character of Euripides' play. This is surprising, given how important parental relationships are in the *Iliad*, as Louise Pratt explains in the excellent "The Parental Ethos of the *Iliad*." Parents, like Thetis, Chryses, and Priam intervene on behalf of their children and dedicate themselves to their care. Yet, Hecuba is not mentioned in Pratt's article. She will not succeed in her taks, but she, like these other parents, has a long and significant scene centered around her devotion to her child. However, in this act of sacrifice for her son, Hecuba finally has a chance to play an active role, to be able to take a stand in this world where she is literally relegated to the sidelines, like the other women of Troy.

In this passage, the scholiast provides multiple comments on the garments Hecuba sacrifices to Athena at the behest of her son Hector. The garment itself is richly described in line 294, κάλλιστος έην ποικίλμασιν, beautiful in its woven patterns and παμποίκιλα, imbued with the most magic art-motifs of all Hecuba's treasured textiles. From the use of the word ποικίλμασιν, deriving from the verb ποικιλόω, to pattern weave, denotes that this is some kind of story cloth,

similar to what Helen is weaving in 3.125-128, and that these patterns would be images that told some kind of narrative. Perhaps, like Andromache's garment for Hector and the belt of Aphrodite that I will discuss in the upcoming chapters, the patterned images on this garment contained desires or indications on the part of the weaver. The garment is also μέγιστος, the biggest. As Barber describes in "The Peplos of Athena", the size of Athena's πέπλος at the Panathenaia varied between years, but at a minimum it would have been very large to adorn the life size statue. Barber also references a πέπλος big enough to be a sail for a ship, although that reference is not entirely clear(Barber, *Peplos*, 114). G.A. Richter, in *Korai,* describes the peplos, "reaching from neck to ground, made of wool, wrapped round the body, mostly from left to right, and fastened on each shoulder with a pin or brooch…The peplos was considered to be the typically Doric (or Corinthian) dress, that is, the garment worn in continental Greece as against that worn in Ionic Asia Minor" (Richter, 7).

It is also interesting to note that garment is κηώεντα (*Il*iad 6.288) form of κηώεις, 'sweet smelling', a term used in the *Iliad* to describe the storeroom where garments are held. This adjective may describe the effects of textiles on the storeroom, or specifically the chest that the garment is kept in, as sea snail dye has been noted for its unpleasant smell. Yet, the linen also, as Cynthia Shelmerdine explains in, would have been in ancient Mycenaean culture and Homeric culture, treated with fragrant oils likely containing "rose, sage, and other herbs," to give the garment its rich, divine smell (Shelmerdine, 103). Shelmerdine notes that these fragrant clothes are closely associated with the gods, "Indeed, fragrance has long been recognized as an attribute of divinity, in ancient Greece as elsewhere" (Shelmerdine, 104), and treatment with oil also made garments shiny and soft. With its ambrosial smell, in addition to its other extraordinary attributes, this is a fitting gift for a goddess.

The scholiast then comments on a grammatical point in Hecuba's visit to the storeroom.

MSA 6.97 emphasizes "the peploi were placed for her," meaning that the peploi belong to Hecuba, and she controls their storage and distribution. The garment chamber visiting scene itself is also a formulaic one, as Penelope and Helen both visit their own garment chambers in the *Odyssey*. The recurrence of this formulaic language is notable because it shows these scenes were described often enough for the traditional epic language to formulate a way to say them. This garment is also "the gown underneath the rest" (*Iliad* 6.295). Has it never been worn? Is it being saved for something special? It is a sign of great wealth to have a store of textiles that are not in use. The garment may not have a clearly established purpose yet, but its description establishes that it is suitably beautiful and valuable enough to be a respectable sacrifice.

In lines 289-292 and in msA 6.98**:**, the enslaved Sidonian women who made this beautiful robe get a rare moment of acknowledgement. The scholia highlights that these enslaved women have special skills in the production of textiles, and that they bring a skill that it is implied the women of Troy do not have. They have special knowledge in a time when slaves were expected to only do the most menial of tasks associated with weaving, and not exert creative control. MSA 6.98 notes that Alexander did not purchase the textiles made by these women, but instead bought as slaves the women themselves. This would imply that their skills are unique, and moreover that the elite Trojans desired them as a continuous source of textile production, textiles that they may not have the knowledge to create themselves. Clearly, then readers can understand this garment to be even more special as it is created with uncommon techniques that require the purchase and enslavement of human beings.

However, it is Hecuba's final lines of attempted power and abandonment in the temple of Athena that may have held a particularly poignant meaning for the people of Athens listening to poets perform Homeric verse. Gregory Nagy argues that there is a "pervasive historical connection" between performances of Homeric epic and the Panathenaic festival (Nagy, 3).

Hecuba acts out a role that would have been familiar to the Athenian listeners. An elite woman oversees the sacrifices of textiles every year in Athens to the Pallas Athena, where likewise the garment was actually placed on the statue. A key component of the festival, as Barber details in "The Peplos of Athena", was the parade down the main streets of Athens, culminating in young women and matrons offering a large and valuable garment to the statue of Athena at the Parthenon (Barber, *Peplos*, 104). Here, the focus on the divine attributes of the garment only heightens the terrible pathos of Athena rejecting such an excellent gift. Would Athenian audiences have been shocked to hear Athena refuse the gift, so similar to the one they gave her every year? It does not matter how beautiful or valuable the garment is, or how much labor and knowledge and time was put into it, the Goddess can reject it without explanation, ἀνένευε δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη (*Il*iad 6.310).

Even in a multiform oral narrative, some things, like the death of Hector, as Andromache will also learn, are inevitable and reenacted in the tradition again and again. That traditional outcome will not, however, stop the women of Troy from trying to create a different narrative. Ultimately, Priam, Hector's other parent, will successfully sacrifice textiles to regain Hector's body in *Iliad* 24.228. The request for aid, accompanied by gifts of textiles, is a formulaic scene, which shows up in *Iliad* 24, as well as in *Odyssey* 15. Achilles will say yes when Athena says no, but Priam, like Hecuba, does not know what the answer will be. He is successful, while Hecuba is not. She cannot change the narrative that audiences already know, but she still tries. Pratt summarizes Priam's journey in a way that undoubtedly also applies to Hecuba. "Thus, though Priam deserves pity, he also demands respect…Through his act above all, the *Iliad* suggests that self-sacrifice out of love, the kind associated in the poem with parents is sufficient in itself, the investment that the *Iliad* has consistently insisted parents make in their children is worthwhile, even if it is never paid back" (Pratt, 40). Would the women of Athens in particular, as their sons and husbands go to fight and

die in war, understand this act of sacrifice as a reflection of their own desperation, and of the god's seeming indifference in their lives? The garment will remain there, on Athena's knee, but she will dispense no favors to the Trojan fighters, or their wives, or their little children, or their anxious mothers. Hecuba has failed in her quest, but the fact that she has undertaken it all, and that it is centered around the female activity of creating and sacrificing textiles, shows that she still asserts her power within the narrative.

Book 14 Lines 178-180, 214-221: The Three Goddesses

ἀμφὶ δ’ ἀρ ἀμβρόσιον ἑανὸν ἑσαθ’, ὅν, οἱ, Ἀθήνη

ἔξυσ’, ἀσκήσασα, τίθει δ’ ἐνι δαίδάλα πολλά:

χρυσείῃς δε’ ἐνέτῇσι κατα στῆθος περονᾶτο: 180

…

ῆ. καὶ ἀπο στήθεσφιν ἐλύσατο κεστὸν ϊμάντα:

ποικίλον. ἔνθα δέ οἱ θελκτήρια πάντα τέτυκτο: 215

ἔνθ’ ἔνι μὲν φιλότης, ἐν δ’ ϊμερος, ἐν δ’ ὀαριστὺς

πάρφασις. ἥ τ’ ἔκλεψε, νόον πύκα περ φρονεόντων:

τόν ῥά οἱ ἔμβαλε χερσὶν, ἔπος τ’ ἔφατ’, ἐκ τ’ ὀνόμαζε:

τῆ νῦν τοῦτον ϊμάντα τεῷ ἐγκάτθεο κόλπῳ

ποικίλον, ῷ ἔνι πάντα τετεύχαται: οὐδέ σε φημὶ 220

ἄπρηκτόν γε, νέεσθαι, ὅτι φρεσὶ, σῇσι μενοινᾷς:

Scholia to 184 Recto: https://www.homermultitext.org/staging/va-facsimile/msA.184r/

**msAint 14.C1:** οτ εανὸς ὁ αυτὸς τῷ πέπλῳ καὶ καθόλου πρὸς τὸν στολισμόν:

Comments on 14.178

*14.178: the critical sign is there because this word linen, the word linen means "peplos" here, and more generally for the entire garment*

**msA 14.C1**: **ἔξυσεν:** ἐκέρκισεν ξύουσι γὰρ τὴν κρόκην προς τὸ πυκνωθῆναι. οἱ δὲ ἐλέανεν ἀπο μεταφορᾶς τῶν ξύλων: οἱ δὲ ἀντι τοῦ ἔγναψεν μετα τὸ ὑφανθῆναι:

Comments on 14.179

*14.179 "sheared": "kerkis-worked", for they compress the weft thread in order to make the fabric denser. Some say through [it means ] "smooth out", by transference of the wood. Others , though, read it as "combed after weaving".*

**msAil 14.C1**: ὑφη

Comments on 14.179

*14.179: [she] wove*

**msA 14.C2: χρυσείης δ' ἐνετῇσι κατα στῆθος περονᾶτο:** ὅτι κατα τὸ στῆθος ἐπερονῶντο οὐχ ὡς ἡμεῖς κατα τὴν κατακλεῖδα τοῦ ὤμου:

Comments on 14.180

*14.180: "she pinned it on her breast with golden pins", the critical sign is there because they [the ancients] used to habitually pin her garments on the chest, and not the way we do, on the clavicle*

Scholia to 184 Verso: https://www.homermultitext.org/staging/va-facsimile/msA.184v

**msA 14.C12**: **ἦ καὶ ἀπο στήθεσφιν.** ὅτι κεστὸς ἐκ παρεπομένου ὁ ποικίλος ἀπο τοῦ δια τὰς ῥαφὰς κεκεντῆσθαι ἐμπεπυκιλμένης τῆς φιλότητ καὶ ἱμέρου καὶ ὁ ἀριστύος. καὶ οὐκ ἐστι κύριον ὄνομα ὡς ἔνιοι τῶν ἀρχαιων δι ὃ καὶ ἐπάλλου λέγει ἄγχε δέ μιν πολυκεστος ϊμάς ⁑

Comments on 14.214

*14.214:"and she from her chest" the critical sign is there because "kestos"*

*goes with the "poikilos" in the accompanying line , which has to do with the fact that it has been pierced with this stitching work", artfully-worked-in love and longing and sweet words. But this is not the proper name as some of the ancients said, because in another place he said "the belt with lots of stitching."*

**msAim 14.C5:** ἔν τισι τῶν ὑπομνηματ ἠδ' ὁ ἀριστύς :

Comments on 14.216

*14.216: some of the commentaries replace "ὁ ἀριστύς" with* ἦδ' ὁ ἀριστύς"

**msA 14.C13: ἐν δ' ὀαριστὺς πάρφασις** συναπτέον ἀμφότερα τὰ ὀνόματα τὴν παραλογιστικην ὁμιλίαν δι αμφοτερων δηλοῖ ⁑

Comments on 14.216-217

*14.216-217:"there is sweet talking, persuasion" the two nouns should be joined together, he shows the persuasive conversation through both of the words*

**msAim 14.C6:** οτ πτῶσις ἐνηλλακται αντ ἀυτῆς ταῖς χερσιν ⁑

Comments on 14.218

*14.218:the critical sign is here because the case is changed instead of "with her hands", ["her"]*

**msA 14.C14: τῆ νῦν τοῦτον ἵμαντα:** ὅτι τὸ κατα τὸ στῆθος κόλπωμα τοῦ πέπλου κόλπον εἶπεν καὶ ὅτι τὸ τη λάβε ἐστιν ⁑

Comments on 14.219

*14.219: "now [take] this belt", the critical sign is here because the folding of the peplos on the chest he called the "*κόλπωμα" Aristarchus calls the "κόλπωμα" *and because the "*τη" *means "take it"*

**msA 14.C15: ἄπρηκτον γε νέεσθαι:** τοῦτέστι πορέυεσθαι ουτ Ἀρίσταρχος : Δημήτριος δὲ γενεσθαι ἀντι τοῦ βιαίως πάνυ. οὐδε γὰρ τὸ πυθέσθαι πυθέεσθαι γίνεται. οὐδὲ τὸ λαβέσθαι λαβέεσθαι ἵνα καὶ τὸ γενεσθαι γενέεσθαι γενήται ⁑

Comments on 14.221

*14.221: " be unsuccessful" to travel, this is Aristarchus' reading. Demetrius, very violently says it is* γενεσθαι in place of γενήσεσθαι. *But* πυθέσθαι *does not become* πυθέεσθαι. *Neither does*

*the word* λαβέσθαι become λαβέεσθαι so that γενεσθαι becomes γενέεσθαι.

In Book 14, lines 178-180 and 214-221, garments play an important role in enabling a female divinity, Hera, in gaining significant narrative agency and additionally reveal the collective power of the goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. This episode centers around Hera's efforts to seduce Zeus so that she can distract him from the battle. While Zeus is distracted, Poseidon will be able to join the battle and help the Achaeans hold back the Trojans from their attack on the Achaean ships. Hera's former competitors come to her aid, even as Aphrodite helps the opposing side. Up to this point, Zeus was in control of the narrative, as he decreed in Book 8 that the gods will no longer involve themselves in the war. In Book 13, however, in lines 4 and 5, having brought the Trojans to the Achaean ships, Zeus has taken his eyes off the battlefield and looks elsewhere, trusting that no god or goddess will defy him. Hera, then, uses garments as a tool to alter that narrative to meet her own desires.

Bergren notes that the *Διὸς ἀπάτη*, the deception of Zeus (while she does not mention Hera's garment specifically) serves to play with time, "to weave into the text another tableau", deviating from the male-centered narrative directed by Zeus and driven by Achilles (Bergren, 48). Many ancient legends attest that Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite started the Trojan war through the contest sparked by the golden apple. In the *Iliad* itself, the cause of the war is ascribed to the abduction of Helen. Regardless of the cause of the war, these goddesses are on opposite sides, Hera and Athena with the Greeks, Aphrodite with the Trojans. Yet, in this passage, the sharing of garments builds bonds between them, and leads to Hera succeeding in altering the narrative and making the Trojans suffer, if only for a limited moment in time.

This scene likewise goes into detail about the beautiful garments and accoutrements created by other goddesses Hera will wear to achieve her goal, relying on other female divinities for aid and

friendship. Athena and Hera have previously conspired together in book 2 to help the Achaeans. In Book 8, they go on the battlefield together. Hera's and Aphrodite's relationship, however, is more complicated. Hera mentions they are on separate sides of the war. Yet, Aphrodite is willing to loan her powerful ἱμάς and to build a friendship with Hera. The narrative, for a brief moment in time, even as the ultimate goal is the seduction of a man, centers around women's relationships.
Lines 177-179 describe Hera's ἀμβρόσιον ἑανὸν, her ambrosial linen robe made by Athena, in the context of Hera's larger dressing routine, that Hera puts on in order to seduce her husband, Zeus. Hera's various luxury accessories are carefully described, and undoubtedly fascinating, but I will focus only on her main garment, and later, the all-powerful belt loaned by Aphrodite. Athena appears as the creator of this garment, perhaps the finest we see in the *Iliad*, described as "ambrosial" and δαίδάλα πολλά, "with many cunning works." The technical language here not only describes the garment but offers information about the goddesses who are involved with it, as creators and wearers. The reference to "cunning works" seems fitting for Athena, the goddess of wisdom and forethought, even though it is difficult to figure out exactly what those works might be. From the context of other textiles in the *Iliad*, we can assume they are at the very least beautiful patterns. Perhaps Athena is challenging herself artistically to make the most difficult and ornate patterns possible. The material of this robe is specified as likely linen, as the word ἑανός can mean both linen and a women's robe, according to msAint 14.C1. In addition, msA 14.C1 explains the word ἔξυσ', "shearing", a method of trimming down the linen fibers on the loom that results in a finer, softer garment.

The msA 14.C1 scholion adds valuable technical context to our discussion in this instance. The first word of the scholion is a gloss on the lemma, ἔξυσ', expanding it into ἔξυσεν. This word comes from ξύω, which means to scratch, scrape, or shape by whittling. This is an extremely uncommon word. The scholiast provides multiple explanations to clarify what Athena is doing

with wood. The next word, ἐκέρκισεν, can mean to "ply the loom," moving threads around with the assistance of a **κερκίς**. The original word is elided but the lemma is not, suggesting that something has been replaced or changed in the text. The scholiast also suggests other weaving-related terms, such as what I take to be scutching, or combing the wool to improve and clean the fiber before spinning. Modern linen makers refer to the term of scutching as scraping the flax fibers to get rid of the tiny hairs and produce a small high quality fiber. However, it seems like Athena is actually just shearing the nap of the wool, a process that makes a finer and softer garment. I believe ἔξυσεν refers to this, and the gloss offers an alternate more widely known verb. ἔξυσεν on line 179 contains a short gloss as well, msAil 14.C1, an even more abbreviated form of the discussion in the other scholia. The scribe only glosses words that would be difficult and unfamiliar to his reader, and perhaps wanted to give both a quick note, and a longer explanation in the longer scholia. Glosses are, according to Churik et al, a continuous commentary on the translation, "The glosses give meaning, like the lexicon, and form, that is to say, they give the word in the form (frequently in the Atticized version) that it is used in the text in that location" (Churik et al). There are very few interlinear scholia in book 14, a phenomenon known as commentator fatigue, noted by Churik (Churik et al). Clearly, the ancients also found this terminology difficult to grasp, just as modern people today don't often have extensive knowledge of the terms used in clothing production.

Aphrodite's ἱμάς, literally and figuratively, successfully wraps up Hera's outfit, with a special form of woven magic, described in similar terms to Hecuba's and Andromache's weaving. After adorning herself with Athena's fine garment and other accessories, Hera goes to Aphrodite for the final, and most important piece in her retinue in lines 14.214-223. This is Aphrodite's belt, the ἱμάντα in line 214. The belt is the jewel in the crown, the one piece that is implied to be actually magic while everything else is simply beautiful. ἱμάς is an unusual word, usually referring to leashes,

reins, or straps, all items associated with leather. Yet, the words used to describe it make it clear that it is linked with the other textiles women wear and create in the *Iliad*. It is described twice, in lines 215 and 220, as ποικίλον, with magical motifs (what these are, we shall soon see), and in line 215 as τέτυκτο, a verb which refers to anything wrought by human craftsmanship (or divine craftsmanship as well). msA 14.C12 confirms that the schooliast finds it a woven garment as well, noting that it is ῥαφὰς κεκεντῆσθαι "pierced with this stitching work", stitching that allows the incorporation of "artfully-worked" magical abilities.

The concept for this garment, according to Campbell Bonner, is likely related to the magical leather amulets worn by prostitutes across the ancient Mediterranean. Prostitutes would tie amulets to their thighs to attract customers, and Aphrodite's belt seems to be an example of that tradition of seductive power and agency (Fischer, 238). Fischer does note that these amulets would usually be tied around the thigh, while Bonner makes a persuasive argument for the garment overlapping around the breast. Still Bonner concurs with Fischer on the power of these garments, "It is well known that cords, bands, and knots, are very widely believed to be capable of magical use" (Bonner, 2). msA 14.C14 also specifies that this leather accessory is actually worn around the chest, and gives specific detail into how it would be worn compared to how garments were worn in the scholiast's own time. While this garment is not a traditional woven garment, it is still ποικίλον, containing worked-in image magic, as Bonner says, it is "charged with subtle art," fitting for the allurements described within it. (Bonner, 4). Interestingly, the text also describes it as κεστὸν. According to Bonner, this means the belt is physically pierced, although these piercings should be taken in context with ποικίλον to represent the infusion of Aphrodite's love-magic into the garment (Bonner, 4). The scholia, in their points about grammar, reinforces how powerful the belt is. The term ἐμπεπυκιλμένης in msA 14.C12 is particularly noteworthy. The presence of love and sweet words have been summoned into existence with a woman's weaving tools. Each of its patterns contains a

different magical charm, from love, to longing, to sweet words. No one who wears it can fail in her mission to promote the cause of love.

Even with this unusual material, the key idea of worked-in patterns is still present. The poet is not specifying a type of physical creation, but the merger of normal physical objects with spiritual creation. We can assume, like Andromache's roses that I will discuss in the next section, that each incantatory desire takes the form of a certain material thing, perhaps with different pattern-woven floral designs. Men are usually the ones with power, the ones who seduce, but the spells woven in this belt upend traditional active-passive dynamics and give women seducing powers. While Aphrodite's belt is in a different place on her body, it is the same principle. Lee notes that the cross belt served a practical purpose in keeping fabric from billowing away from the chest but also served to also emphasize a women's breasts, and thus her desirability (Lee). Hera, like any respectable Greek wife, must normally keep her body hidden and subject only to the gaze of her husband. The transfer of this erotic garment then, in conjunction with Hera's adornment of herself, is Hera symbolically shifting from a respectable, invisible wife, and gaining agency to alter the course of the narrative through the power of the garment. Hera decides and carries out a plan of action to change the narrative, one that will succeed. Yet, for all her many gifts, it is only accomplished through the power of textiles described in similar terms to other powerful textiles in the human world, along with support from other goddesses.

Book 22 Lines 440-448: Andromache

ἀλλ’ ἥ γ’ ἱστὸν ὕφαινε μυχῷ δόμου ὑψηλοῖο. 440

δίπλακα πορφυρέην. ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ’ ἔπασσε:

κέκλετο δ’ ἀμφιπόλοισιν ἐϋπλοκάμοις κατα δῶμα

ἀμφι πυρὶ στῆσαι τρίποδα μέγαν: ὄφρα πέλοιτο

Ἕκτορι θερμὰ λοετρὰ ἔκ νοστήσαντι μάχης

νηπίη: οὐδ’ ἐνόησεν. ὅ μιν μάλα τῆλε λοετρῶν. 445

χερσὶν Ἀχιλλῆος δάμασσε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη :

κωκυτοῦ δ’ ἤκουσσε καὶ οἰμωγῆς ἀπὸ πύργου:

τῆς δ’ ἐλελίχθη γυῖα: χαμαὶ δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε κερκίς:

Scholia to 291 Recto https://www.homermultitext.org/staging/va-facsimile/msA.291r/

**msA 22.101: ἀλλ' ἥ γ' ἱστὸν ὕφαινε.** οτι ασυμπαθης η ανδρομαχη εν τοσουτω θορυβῳ κατ οικον ατρεμουσα και ταυτα την αχιλλεως εφοδον ουκ αγνοουσα , εοικεν ουν φησιν ο αρισταρχ προκαταχρησαμενος ο ποιητης τῳ της ανδρομαχης προσωπω κατα την προς εκτορος κοινολογιαν απεσχισθαι νυν του προσωπου ⁑

Comments on 22.440

*22.440 "But she still wove the web" the sign is there because Andromache [is] lacking emotion, in the midst of such confusion, and she is within the house untrembling and this is because she is unaware of the approach of Achilles. In fact, as Aristarchus says, the poet appears to put aside the character because he has used the character of Andromache up already in the conversation with Hector.*

**msA 22.102: θρόνα** τα βαπτα ερια κατα μετουσιν ομοιώσ τοισ ποιουσι τα ποιουμενα ⁑ Comments on 22.441

*22.441: "flowers": dyed wool. By metonymy, also refers to those who make the things that are made.* 35

**msA 22.103: ποικίλ' ἐπασσεν:** πάσσειν Κύπριοι τὸ ποικίλλειν ἀφ οὗ παστὸς ὁ θάλαμος ⁑ Comments on 22.441

*22.441: "She sprinkled in multi-worked[things]": The Cypriots use "sprinkle" to mean the word "work-in motifs" ; from "women's chamber", which means "bridal chamber"*

**msAil 22.42:** ανθ ποικίλα ἐξ ὢν βάπτουσι

Comments on 22.441

*22.441: the multi-colored flowers from which they dye [the wool]*

**msAint 22.30:** καθ' εαυτο τὸ νηπίη

Comments on 22.445

*22.445: the word "*νηπίη*" is to be taken by itself*

**msA 22.104: κωκυτοῦ δ' ἠκουσεν.** ἀντι τοῦ θρήνου ἠκουσεν ἐζήτηται δὲ πῶς τοσοῦτου γενομένου θορύβου μόλις Ἀνδρομάχη προῆλθεν. φασὶ δὲ ὡς ὅτι ἡ προτέρα τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐπίπληξις ἡ εν τῆ Ζ σωφρονεῖν αὐτὴν ἀναγκάζει ⁑

Comments on 22.447

*22.447: "but she heard the cacophony": Instead of "she heard the wailing". So the question is, how, in the midst of all this noisy confusion, did this just now come to Andromache? They say that it is because her criticism of her husband in her first meeting in Book 6 compels her to not react.*

**msA 22.105: ἡ δ' αὖτις δμωῇσι** αὔξει τὸ πάθ , τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἀπέχει τοῦ ἐννοεῖν τί τῶν συμβεβηκότων ὡς καὶ λουτρὰ τῷ ἀνδρὶ παρασκευάζειν μονονουχὶ ὁρῶσα τὸν Ἕκτορα διὸ καὶ ἐπεφώνησεν ὁ ποιητὴς τὸ νηπίη οὐδ' ἐνόησεν ὥσπερ ἐλεῶν τὴν ἄγνοιαν αὐτῆς ⁑

Comments on 22.445-22.449

*22.445-449: "she [spoke] to her slave women": [this speech] increases the pathos, becuase she is so far from understanding anything of the things that have happened, that she even prepares a bath for her husband, when she's practically seen Hector [dead]. For this reason the poet also calls her "pitiful one", as if he is pitying her ignorance.*

In Book 22 lines, 440-448 Andromache has closed herself off from the world, but the world still manages to find her. She stands in the innermost chamber, weaving a garment, trying to change fate in order to protect a man who is already lost to her. At this point in Book 22, Achilles has killed Hector, and the news of his death is spreading throughout the city of Troy. In her μυχῷ δόμου, the inner corner of the house, a private and protected space, she has not heard the news. This is the appropriate location for a married woman to weave in, and unlike Helen, there are no questions of her propriety. Yet, her isolation means she is unable to hear the news that is sweeping through the city like wildfire. msA 22.101 explains this and cautions the reader not to judge her. The main scholia, out of these twenty-four lines on the page, center on just ten lines: the character and actions of Andromache, and her woven garment, almost evenly split between commentary on the garment and commentary on Andromache's emotional state. She is in a comforatable position of power at the loom, able to multitask by both weaving and ordering her slaves to heat a bath for Hector. She has not lost her fundamental confidence in the order of the world. Her world unravels around her. She mistakenly believes she can still direct the course of events through her actions. The poet grieves for and with her.

In her isolation and lack of knowledge, she is able to imagine a different future through her weaving. Key language is repeated from the Helen scene in book 3, even as the context is very different. Helen and Andromache both set about their work in the same way, weaving a δίπλακα

[χλαῖνα], a double-folded garment with powerful patterns (ποικίλος). Andromache weaves another double-folded garment, δίπλακα πορφυρέην, like that in the very first scene analyzed in this work. Andromache and Helen both weave alone, no other elite women working with them, but Barber says women would usually have a companion at the loom (Barber, *Pepelos*, 108). They both have slaves to fetch, carry, and do the countless thankless tasks of domestic labor. Unlike Helen though, Andromache is not directly responding to the narrative of the war, not weaving what she sees, but rather what she wishes she could see. Also opposite to Helen, the manuscripts generally agree on πορφυρέην here, except for the Townley, which has μαρμαρέην. Hector is beyond the point where armor could help, and this choice of hue, even if it is luxurious, has ominous connotations. Finally, weaving, like many other narratives, has an unsteady relation to time. The metatemporality described by Bergren in relation to Helen's weaving also exists for Andromache. In her isolation, she is able to inhabit and imagine an alternate timeline where her husband is alive and she can protect him. Her work is also "transcending the limit of any single historical moment" (Bergren, 45).

Andromache asserts her power through what she weaves. This power is centered around her love and desire to protect her husband. She weaves flowers, θρόνα in line 441, but the word could also mean charms or drugs. It could be a love charm for her husband. In conjunction with the word ποικίλ', taking it with itse sense of worked-in intentions, we can understand that these are not ordinary decorations. According to George Bolling, Andromache weaves roses for Hector, a protective symbol like the real flower's thorns, and simultaneously a vessel for her love and magical charm to protect him on the battlefield. Bolling cites a scholiast on Theocr. 2. 59, commenting on X 441, who believed (in summary): "(1) That different flowers secured different blessings for their wearers; (2) that roses brought one's man back safe and sound to the one who wore them; (3) that Andromache's most intense wish was for the safety of Hector" (Bolling, 281). This suggests that

the term θρόνα would have special significance to the bard's listeners. The scholiast confirms Bolling's theory about how Homer creates Andromache into a pathetic figure. She may not be anywhere near the battle, or able to fight directly, but she will not be passive in the face of war. The word θρόνα, from θρόνον, only occurs once in the *Iliad*, in this passage. Yet, references to many forms of plant life abound elsewhere. The scholiast offer an explanation of this*hapax legomenon* in msA 22.102. The flowers are not actually real world plants themselves, but dyed wool formed into floral patterns. maAil22.42 explains this dyed wool even more. The root of the dye, as is still the case for many modern organic dyes, is plant materials like flowers. The power of the woven motifs may come from the flowers themselves that are used for dyes.

Additionally, MSA 22.3 describes the fascinating etymological origin of the words used here to refer to Andromache's act of sprinkling her magical flowers. The mention of the Cypriot women is particularly interesting given the different weaving techniques used in Cyprus. Barber notes that the Cypriots had "tapestry looms and true tapestry technique", different from the warp-weighted looms used by other Ancient Greeks (Barber, *Peplos*, 114-115). This passage is not simply an ethnographic origin of a term, but has fascinating implications for what Andromache is weaving. Finally, the scholion talks about the bridal chamber, also known as the women's chamber, and how Homer is using the Cypriot sense of the word.

Her garment, with its symbols of peace and wealth, is designed for a world that is very much in danger. She knows that the Acheaens are at the walls and if they break the walls, her weaving will be futile, but she is so determined to believe that everything is alright that she weaves anyway. Weaving is the normal activity expected of her, and she is going to perform that normal activity. This is more than a woman carrying out the activities of just a respectable wife. The world outside is descending into chaos, and Andromache alone still attempts creative production as complete destruction of her society and all its treasures rapidly approaches.

Yet, even as she asserts her power through weaving magic, it is not enough. After she loses her husband, Andromache will ritually enact the loss of her own identity. She takes agency, to almost speed up time, as if trying to reach the end of her own narrative. In her failure to protect her husband, and in her eventual suffering and enslavement that will come about because of the loss of her husband, tied to the dropping of the κερκίς and the loss of her veil, the narrative recognizes Andromache as a tragic, pathetic figure. She could have the power to change things, and she is clearly fighting against the narrative, but once she realizes that her fate is set and her husband is dead, she attempts to speed through the stages of her future life to reach her own death. The passage ends on line 448 with Andromache dropping her κερκίς. The κερκίς is a highly symbolic tool, as discussed by Susan Edmunds, the "pin beater", that strikes the weft into place (Edmunds). When weaving, the warp threads are typically the basic structure for holding the weft threads, which are the ones that are dyed and placed differently to create patterns. The κερκίς controls the direction of the weft threads, determining the pattern. To wield the kerkis is the role of the elite woman, the one who more than any other woman has the luxury and safety to decide what she will weave.

The loss of her κερκίς symbolizes Andromache's loss of her ability to control her own fate. Yet, it is not shocking enough for Andromache to drop her κερκίς. She must, in an acceleration of time, afterwards go through an extended and humiliating scene of denuding, a cruel play on the traditional ανακαλυπτηρια. Lines 466-472 will describe the unveiling in detail. Lee describes the anakalypteria as a common ritual of a bride revealing her face to her husband. Andromache, then, as she hastens towards the end, also moves backward in time, as if by removing her veil she can expect to find a loving groom waiting in her field of vision. A woman's status is defined, much like today, by the clothes she wears, and a respectable Greek wife was always veiled in public. According to lines 22.470-472, Aphrodite gave Andromache her own veil as a wedding gift upon her marriage

to Hector. Now, Andromache flings it away without hesitation. Andromache is abandoning her identity as a high-status woman, the status her marriage to Hector affords her, since her own family is dead and cannot provide it. It is a status she will lose once Troy is invaded, she is simply predicting the future through her engagement with her garments. A woman is supposed to wear a veil when she leaves the house, and Andromache is in a state of shocking immodesty to all who see her, a hint that that with the loss of her status, she is vulunerable to sexual violence. A woman's "respectability" in the time of the Ancient Greeks and our own, too often is predicated on having a man to protect you, and Andromache knows that she is alone. She is exposed to any man who cares to sexually use her. Her beautiful garments might as well be trampled on, and indeed Andromache mentions she will burn what she has made since it is useless to Hector. It takes a strange and ironic agency to choose to humiliate yourself versus waiting for someone else to do it. Yet, her immediate grief begins the series of ritual lamentations that must occur in order for Trojan society to begin the collective cultural process of grief.

Through her strippiing of her own veil, she is now able to engage in a kind of mimesis of what is happening to Hector. Hector's body is defiled, dragged around the walls of Troy's by Achilles in his incandescent rage, stripped of his armor and clothes.ὃ δ᾽ ἀπ᾽ ὤμων τεύχε᾽ ἐσύλα/αἱματόεντ᾽: (*Iliad* 22.368-369). Both husband and wife are denuded, and destroyed. The word here is τεύχε᾽, the "worked-on" things he wears. Andromache acknowledges his nakedness, in her lament in 22.510, calling him a γυμνόν, a naked body. Both husband and wife are stripped of power and protection. Hector dies before he can ever see this garment so lovingly worked-on, and he will only feel the touch of the carefully-worked robes, the color of blood, reserved for royalty in death, in line 24.796, as his countrymen cover his bones with soft purple cloth, πορφυρέοις πέπλοισι καλύψαντες μαλακοῖσιν. Barber informs us in the context of Penelope's work, that a hero's shroud would not be a plain white cloth, like how we might think of a modern "winding cloth", or the

fabric used for wrapping ancient Egyptian mummies, but rather a story-cloth (Barber, *Women's Work*, 154). Andromache though, does not even have the guarantee of a funeral cloth, and faces a future as a slave where she loses the status and protection of her beautiful garments and is exposed to the cruel violence of the world as a slave.

I would argue that what makes a person pitiable is not their total passivity, but rather that they tried to resist their situation and failed for reasons beyond their knowledge or control. Andromache's efforts to change her fate makes her a tragic figure, because the audience knows her fate already. msAint 22.30 offers a note on a strange occurrence in the poem. Direct address by the poet is uncommon in the Homeric epics, but it is often sympathetic when it is used, even if modern readers often take the word νηπίη to be pejorative. The poet seems to sympathize with her, as he calls her 'pitiful one'. The poet emphasizes the pitifulness of her situation again in msA 22.105 when commenting on her slave women. The scholiast has mentioned previously in msA 22.101 that Andromache is unemotional in the weaving scene as a contrast to her past intense emotion in Book 6. Yet, I think that Andromache's grief in hearing the news of Hector's death, extended in the funeral lament in Book 24, is also heightened by this tiny moment of peace, when Andromache for once dares to let herself have hope.

## Conclusion

The study of ancient Greek weaving intersects with poetry, performance, gender, and the basic social roles, duties, and rituals that defined Homer's fictional society, and the society which for hundreds of years performed his poems at the Panathenaic festival, and at feasts and firesides across the ancient Mediterranean world. The *Iliad* is considered this poem of manly affairs, men's actions, men's choices, and indeed the central characters who drive the plot forward are mostly men, and readers get the most in-depth view into their interiority and the difficult choices they have to make. But in these separate yet connected moments of weaving we can view threads of women's lives and of stories that the passage of time and purposeful erasure or thoughtless exclusion have for the most part taken from us.

In this project, however, I limited myself to just four scenes from just one Homeric poem, from just one manuscript. Yet, each passage was rich in fascinating commentary from the scholia and in the details of the text itself. When I began my research, I couldn't have imagined the connections in language and in common themes I would draw between these scenes and their revelation of fascinating new directions for research.

The passages of Helen and Andromache struck me the first time that I read the *Iliad*. Helen and Andromache are such different characters, with different desires, but with such compelling similarities that these scenes where they perform this daily work, this ritual, and how they interpret it in their own ways becomes compelling as a revelation of their character. I discovered the three goddesses' passage later, as I became more interested in the technical terms associated with weaving. Finally, it was only through the late process of writing this that I began to see the beauty and pathos of Hecuba's narrative, and how she herself is even more overlooked than the other major women characters of the *Iliad*.

As I have shown, not all of these women succeed in keeping the narrative power they

claim. Helen and Hera do succeed at taking narrative control. The reader sees Helen's perspective, and Hera is able to alter the course of the war. While Hecuba and Andromache fail, their efforts thwarted by the gods, their efforts to obtain narrative control should not be overlooked. The outcome of the narrative has been set already, but nevertheless, these women will not accept it passively.

Moreover, these women, whether or not they change the larger narrative, have the chance to express themselves through what is not only a practical and valuable household good, but we can consider a work of art. None of these women are making bed sheets or dishrags or other ordinary household goods. They are creating something unique, something that narrative recognizes as valuable through its reoccurring description of their size and expensive materials, the effort required to make them, and the time elite women dedicated to them. Their work could be a wall hanging, a sacrificial garment, or a beautiful item of clothing, but whatever it is, it is beautiful, and entails significant work and a high level of craftwomanship. Each time the *Iliad* is sung, it regenerates itself. It is the same story, but each performance is new and different. Its female characters will create narratives of their own within the larger one, in their preferred medium, and as long as the epic is still sung, or read, will never stop trying, and occasionally succeeding, in changing the outcome.

Yet, one consistent cultural practice from the time of Homer to our own, is the exclusion of women and the denial of women's artistry. We cannot easily see into the lives of ancient women. The cloth that women produced thousands of years ago, unlike pottery or armor or sculpture, has eroded away with the passage of time. Alongside the loss of their creations, women also fade from narratives that are written, as the *Iliad* was, and composed most likely by groups of men. Bad translations, stubborn ignorance, and gender bias in scholarly appraisal have led modern readers to assume their women's work held no importance, either in the lives of the characters or the

narrative development of the epic itself. Indeed, as Wace notes, too many male translators of the*Iliad* seem to rely on secondhand understanding of the textile activities their wives did instead of engaging with ancient Greek weaving as a serious work of material craftsmanship, and of literary significance. Wace, 51).Our culture, moreover, is so separate from the ancient Greeks, and their culture was separated from the mythological epics they constructed that instead of them simply influencing our ideas and our culture, it is only too easy for us to impose our own cultural ideas on them when faced with a chasm of lost contextual information.

However, the scholia open a world of new possibilities. There is much confusion, misunderstanding, and missing data surrounding ancient textiles, and the scholia themselves can sometimes feel like another layer of difficulty and obfuscation when they assume knowledge that is lost to modern readers. However, they are our best source of clarification. They attempted to answer the same questions modern scholars are asking, and these scribes one thousand years ago share the hunger of modern scholars for any insight we can get into this epic material, with the benefit of being chronologically closer to the original audiences of Homer's works. Modern day scholarship can benefit from the knowledge of how people a thousand years earlier than us attempted to understand the *Iliad*. These scenes and their accompanying scholia allow us as modern readers a more complex view of the ancient world, of their stories, of the women who made lives and art within them;.iberatory reading practices offer a new way for thinking about the ancient narrative and how we might apply our knowledge in the future.

Multiple scholars before me have noted that the act of weaving parallels the act of epic singing. "We know, of course, that this mentality of re-weaving gives way, in the course of time, to a web no longer re-woven. Once the weaving stops, the web can become a text" (Nagy, 115). As long as we keep reading, the women of the *Iliad* will keep weaving, and continue to offer us insight into their lives, and the narrative itself. Helen's weaving will end when the war, and the poem, ends. The

*Iliad* remains a living epic as the women continue weaving their unfinished, contradictory, powerful stories.

## Future Directions

My own research is not finished, and I doubt if this topic can ever be exhausted. Thanks to the decades-long work of the Homer Multitext project, researchers today now have access to ten thousand scholia of the Venetus A manuscript, fully digitized and freely available for study. With these scholia, we can understand what Early Greeks understood about this ancient mythological world, more similar to their own than to ours, and benefit from their context. The work of the Holy Cross summer research team of 2021 consisting of Natalie DiMattia, Augusta Holyfield, Rose Kaczmarek, and myself, along with previous undergraduate work by members of the Homer Multitext project, revealed that *Iliad* manuscripts like the Venetus A, along with the Burney 86, Venetus B, and Upsilon 1.1, are a rich and intriguing source for scholarly analysis. As more and more manuscripts become available digitally, in the future we may hope to see topic models and other forms of digital analysis highlighting and comparing the presence of weaving in the scholia across manuscripts, along with any other topic that sparks scholarly interest. I hope this project can serve as an example of the rich depth of understanding scholars can gain by going beyond the standardized modern *Iliad* text to engage with the manuscripts and their lengthy and newly accessible critical commentary.

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