***numerus versuum*** The Latin expression *numerus versuum* ("lines' number") indicates the total number of lines of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and the question of their variability in time. In modern standard editions of Homer (e.g., Oxford Classical Texts), they are respectively 15,693 for the *Iliad* and 12,110 for the *Odyssey*. However, this figure changed throughout antiquity because of the particular form of the Homeric text. In fact, even when they had a more or less stable written form (already Hipparchus of Athens standardized to some extent the text of Homer for the Panathenaic recitations: see Athens and Homer), Homeric poems were still performed orally. Oral performances gave the rhapsodes a certain degree of freedom in inserting or omitting formulaic lines or even entire type-scenes. This led to the proliferation of different texts of the Homeric poems, which, though basically identical in terms of plot and structure, had a different number of lines. This fluid status of the Homeric text in antiquity is testified to by the quotations from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Plato, Isocrates, Aristotle, etc. as well as by the Ptolemaic Homeric papyri. The latter, which have been studied by S. West (1967), have been defined as "wild" papyri since the Homeric text they preserve is extremely variable in terms of number of lines (it is more often longer than ours). However, the Homeric text of papyri later than ca. 150 bce does not show plus-verses and has basically the same number of lines of our vulgate. This significant change has been attributed to the editorial activity of the Alexandrian grammarians who, in their effort to produce a correct text of Homer on the basis of many different editions of Homer available at Alexandria, expunged those lines that were likely to be later additions. The text elaborated by Zenodotus, Aristophanes of Byzantium and finally Aristarchus circulated outside the Museum and entered the book trade, so that the *numerus versuum* of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as established by the Alexandrian grammarians eventually became the standard one in the Greek world and has passed down into our vulgate.

*See also* Editions.

*References and Suggested Readings*

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