

How Tzetzes Lost His Horse at Troy: Metalepsis in the *Carmina Iliaca*

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IN JOHN TZETZES' *Carmina Iliaca*,¹ an epic that recounts the story of the Trojan War from beginning to end, the narrator occasionally intervenes in the events he narrates—a literary device Genette calls ‘metalepsis’.² Since Genette illustrated metalepsis with examples taken from Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (“In this attitude I am determined to let her [Mrs Shandy] stand for five minutes: till I bring up the affairs of the kitchen ... to the same period ...”) and Diderot’s *Jacques le fataliste* (“Si cela vous fait plaisir, remettons la paysanne en croupe derrière son conducteur, laissons-les aller et revenons à nos deux voyageurs”), this farcical intrusion of the narrator in the story is usually, but incorrectly, associated with European modernism. In fact, it is much older.³ Let me quote Michael

¹ Ed. P. A. M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Carmina Iliaca* (Catania 1995). For a good introduction see M. Cardin, “Teaching Homer through (Annotated) Poetry: John Tzetzes’ *Carmina Iliaca*,” in R. Simms (ed.), *Brill’s Compendium to Prequels, Sequels, and Retellings of Classical Epic* (Leiden 2018) 90–114. See also T. Braccini, “Erudita invenzione: riflessioni sulla *Piccola grande Iliade* di Giovanni Tzetze,” *Incontri Triestini di Filologia Classica* 9 (2009–10) 153–173, and U. Modini, “John of All Trades: The Μικρομεγάλη Ἰλιάς and Tzetzes’ Didactic Programme,” in E. E. Prodi (ed.), *Τζετζικαὶ ἔρευναι* (Bologna 2022) 237–259.

² G. Genette, *Figures III* (Paris 1972) 243–246.

³ For pre-modern examples see F. Wagner, “Glissements et déphasages: note sur la métalepse narrative,” *Poétique* 130 (2002) 235–253, and M. Fludernik, “Shift, Metalepsis, and the Metaleptic Mode,” *Style* 37 (2003)

Psellos:

Having reached this point in our account of the empress, let us return once more to the Augusta and Constantine. Perhaps it may be the reader's wish that we rouse them from their slumbers, and separate them. The emperor we will keep for a later description, but Sclerena's life-history we will finish now.⁴

Here the narrator invites the narratees to follow him and enter the imperial bed chamber and have a good look at Constantine IX Monomachos and his mistress Maria Skleraina before he wakes them up. It is not difficult to find more examples of this sort in Psellos and other Byzantine authors.

But let us return to Tzetzes. Often criticized for his "oversized authorial presence,"⁵ it does not come as a surprise that Tzetzes has left his mark all over the *Carmina Iliaca*, not only in the form of a running commentary, but also in various apostrophes (e.g. 1.1–19, 3.757–762), transitional passages in which he tells what he will say next (e.g. 2.26, 3.468), references to the sources he has used (e.g. 1.6, 2.25, 2.55, 2.230), claims to truthfulness (e.g. 1.62–75, 3.705–6), a tirade against unfaithful spouses (1.237–245), and curious autobiographical asides. All these asides deal with a conflict he had when he was employed as a secretary to Isaac Komnenos, a *sebastos* and *doux* (governor)

382–400. For Greek antiquity see I. de Jong, "Metalepsis in Ancient Greek Literature," in J. Grethlein et al., *Narratology and Interpretation: The Content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature* (Berlin 2009) 87–115. De Jong states at 115: "A major difference between modern and ancient examples of metalepsis is that the latter are for the most part serious (rather than comic) and are aimed at increasing the authority of the narrator and the realism of his narrative (rather than breaking the illusion)." This is clearly not true for the Byzantine examples cited in this article.

⁴ *Michael Psellus: Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, transl. E. R. A. Sewter (Harmondsworth 1966) 189. For the text (6.68) see D. R. Reinsch, *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia* I (Berlin 2014) 134.

⁵ See E. E. Prodi, "Introduction: A Buffalo's-eye View," in *Τζετζικαὶ ἔρευναὶ* ix–xiii.

of Verroia.⁶ At 2.137–162, where he recounts how Aias was treated unfairly, he tells us that he himself suffered the same fate at the hands of Isaac and his adulterous wife. At 3.617–628, he admits not knowing when Odysseus was held prisoner in Troy, but says he could not care less because he feels depressed because of the way he was treated by the libidinous wife of Isaac. And at 3.753–756, he informs his readers that he must end his account because he is suffering from hunger on account of Isaac and his wife.

There are two (almost postmodern) examples of metalepsis in the Genettian sense of the word. The first is at 3.700–707 where we read that Triphiodorus felt he could fool Tzetzes when he said that the Trojans adorned the wooden horse with flowers although it was winter! Triphiodorus felt he could get away with this because Tzetzes had been dishonoured by Isaac. Here we have a third-century poet, a character within the narrative, who is apparently aware of the latest gossip in twelfth-century Constantinople and crosses over to make fun of the narrator/author.⁷

The other example is one of the most hilarious passages in Tzetzes (3.280–290). Memnon the king of the Aethiopians has just killed Antilochus the son of Nestor and the two, Memnon and Nestor, are talking to each other in the din of the battle, for which the source is Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica* (2.300–338):

μοῦνος ἀπ' ἄλλων Νέστωρ Μέμνονος ἤλυθεν ἄντα, 280
 υἱέος ἀχνύμενος· μέγα δ' ἔστενεν ἔνδοθι ἦτορ.

⁶ As rightly noted by P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge 1993) 349, it is not clear whether Tzetzes “was employed in Isaac’s household or in the provincial administration.”

⁷ In the Middle Ages the distinction between author and narrator is not as strict as modern literary theorists presume: see A. C. Spearing, “What is a Narrator? Narrator Theory and Medieval Narratives,” *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 4 (2015) 59–105. Tzetzes is a good example of this.

σὺν δ' ἄρα οἱ ὁ Κόϊντος ἔην πέλας, ὃς ἐπάκουε
 Μέμνων ὅσσα ἔειπε γέροντ' Ἀραβηΐδι φωνῆ.
 πεζὸς ἐγὼ τελέθων δέ, Ἴσακίσι φραδαίσιν,
 ὅς μ' ἀπὸ Βερροίης ἐριβόλακος ἠδὲ Σελαῶν 285
 πεζὸν ἔπεμψε νέεσθαι, ἐμεῦ ἵπποιο ἀμέρσας,
 ἧς ἀλόχου βουλήσι σαόφρονος, ἥ οἱ ἅπαντας
 κύδηνε λεπρούς τε καὶ ὅσσοι νείκεος υἱέας,
 οὐνεκὲν οἱ καλῶς καταθύμια πάντα ἔρεζον,
 φεῦγον οὐδ' ἐσάκουσα, τὰ Μέμνων ἐξερέεινε. 290

Nestor went up to Memnon all alone, grieving for his son: he was heartily distressed. Quintus was there too, next to him, and overheard what Memnon said to the old man in Arabic. But I was on foot, by orders of Isaac, who made me go back on foot, from fertile Verroia and Selai, having taken my horse at the advice of his chaste wife, who honoured lepers and brawlers alike, because they fulfilled all her wishes mightily well: so I had to leave and did not hear what Memnon said.

What we see here is Tzetzes first turning Quintus Smyrnaeus, his source, into an eyewitness who is directly involved in the events as they unfold, and then introducing himself as a tragicomic figure on the battlefield, unable to keep up with his characters and his literary source because he no longer has a horse. As Tzetzes hastens to explain in a scholion, this is sarcastic irony: “That I did not live in Trojan times nor was coeval to Quintus Smyrnaeus, and did not invent the Trojan War, that is clear to all. This, however, is an example of rhetorical indignation wrapped up in a joke (βαρύτης ἐπίκρυπτος τῷ ἀστεϊσμῷ)⁸; it is a savage denunciation of Isaac because he (...).”⁹ Though he states that the target of his sarcasm is again the evil Isaac, it is worth pointing out that in the scholion

⁸ For Tzetzes’ understanding of the Hermogenian concept of βαρύτης see C. D’Agostini and A. Pizzone, “Clawing Rhetoric Back: Humor and Polemic in Tzetzes’ Hexameters on the *Historiai*,” *Parekbolai* 11 (2021) 123–158, at 124.

⁹ Leone, *Carmina Iliaca* 223–224 (scholion on 3.284).

immediately preceding this one he writes that he is making fun of Quintus Smyrnaeus because he thought the meeting of Memnon and Nestor was utterly unbelievable.¹⁰

This is important because whenever Tzetzes either intrudes in the narration (as he does here) or lets a character move into his world (as he does in the case of Triphiodorus), it always involves writers. See, for example, his *Histories* 10.358, in which Philoxenus, the writer of dithyrambs, tells Dionysius the tyrant of Syracuse after his release from imprisonment (he had been imprisoned for his outspokenness) to send him back to the quarries “because I and Tzetzes have never flattered anyone.”¹¹ Or to give another example, in his *Commentary to Lycophron*, where he criticizes the poet for “stealing” words from Hipponax and getting the sense wrong, he directly addresses Lycophron: “Don’t you know that when you were holding Hipponax’s book, I was standing behind you and watching you collect his words?”¹² Thus we see that Tzetzes, both in his scholarly work and in his poetry, creates a timeless universe of books where he and other authors meet on the page and react to one another’s writings. In Tzetzes’ bookish universe, discourse constitutes a level playing field where all are equal: the authorities of the past and their twelfth-century colleague. Tzetziian metalepsis is not so much a matter of transgressing the levels of narration as removing them altogether for the sake of a frank and honest scholarly debate across time and space.

This bookish universe was rudely disturbed when Tzetzes was dismissed from his salaried post in Verroia and had to make a living in Constantinople, initially without much success

¹⁰ Leone, *Carmina Iliaca* 223 (scholion on 3.282).

¹¹ Ed. P. A. M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Historiae*² (Galatine 2007) 417 (lines 850–851). See A. Pizzone, “The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: A View from Within,” in *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Functions, and Identities* (Berlin 2014) 15.

¹² Ed. E. Scheer, *Lycophronis Alexandra II Scholia* (Berlin 1908) 277. See Prodi, in *Τζετζικάι έρευναι* xxvii.

which forced him to sell most of his books. In the *Carmina Iliaca* and other early works, such as the *Exegesis of the Iliad*,¹³ the *Commentary to Porphyry's Eisagoge*,¹⁴ and the *Theogony*,¹⁵ he blamed the wife of Isaac for his dismissal. He accused her of adultery, even suggesting that she had tried her luck with him as well, but that he had rejected her advances: see *Carmina Iliaca* 2.146–150 and 3.620–623; *Exegesis* 438.14–18; *Commentary to Porphyry* 13–20; *Theogony* 258–261 and 418–423. In *Carmina Iliaca* 1.237–245, Tzetzes compares Laodamia and other loving spouses with the women of his day who shamelessly betray their husbands: he calls them Φυλονόμαι, Φαῖδραι, and Σθενέβουαι—mythical characters who had all tried to seduce younger men in their households. As we do not have her side of the story, it is idle to speculate about what exactly went on (or not) under the roof of Isaac Komnenos. The tone of Tzetzes' rants is misogynistic.¹⁶ Like the wife of Potiphar, she is not even given a name.¹⁷ She is a ghostly presence in his bookish universe, though it is good to remember that if Tzetzes had not ended up penniless, he might not have written a single word.

There is also some kind of professional rivalry going on. Among the men upon whom Isaac's wife allegedly bestowed her sexual favours, Tzetzes repeatedly singles out one specific individual: the “Leper.” Not a real leper, of course, but apparently someone with a serious skin condition manifesting itself in

¹³ Ed. M. Papathomopoulos, *Ἐξήγησις Ἰωάννου γραμματικοῦ τοῦ Τζέτζου εἰς τὴν Ὀμήρου Ἰλιάδα* (Athens 2007).

¹⁴ Still unedited, but see E. Cullhed, “Diving for Pearls and Tzetzes' Death,” *ByzZeit* 108 (2015) 53–62, at 57.

¹⁵ Ed. P. A. M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Theogonia* (Lecce 2019).

¹⁶ As rightly noted by T. Braccini, “Mitografia e miturgia femminile a Bisanzio: il caso di Giovanni Tzetze,” *I Quaderni del Ramo d'Oro on-line* 3 (2010) 88–105.

¹⁷ In the *Theogony*, 260 and 418, she is twice called an Ἐρινύς; this may suggest that her name was Eirene.

festering pustules on his face. Isaac's wife is called φίλελκος ("pustule-lover") at *Theogony* 419, is said to have favoured a disgusting beggar afflicted by festering sores (ἐλκοκατάρρυντον) in the *Commentary to Porphyry* 15–16, and is accused of consorting with filthy lepers (λεπροί) at *Carmina Iliaca* 2.144, 156, 3.288, and 3.621. The Leper appears to have been a colleague of Tzetzes. In the *Commentary to Porphyry* 17–19, we read that Isaac's wife "made him [the Leper] her husband's adviser in work and counsel, privately and in public, who was fully trusted by that idiot" (σύνεδρον ειργάσατο τῷ ταύτης πόσει / εἰς ἔργον, εἰς νοῦν, εἰς γένος τε καὶ θεάν, / εἰς πίστιν αὐτοῦ τοῦ παράφρονος πλέον). In letter 6, addressed to Isaac Komnenos *sebastos*, he is given the Aristophanic nickname Λέπρεος¹⁸ and identified as a γραμματικὸς (secretary) who is a disgrace to his profession and should therefore be fired on the spot.¹⁹ He is once again described as utterly disgusting.²⁰ It cannot be excluded that the professional rivalry with the Leper is the real reason for Tzetzes' dismissal: short-tempered as always, he may have felt slighted and said things he should not have, cf. *Carmina Iliaca* 2.145–147: Isaac

¹⁸ Borrowed from Aristophanes, *Birds* 149–151, who pokes fun at a certain disgusting character called Melanthius by changing the grammatical gender of the place name Λέπρεον to Λέπρεος.

¹⁹ Ed. P. A. M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Epistulae* (Leipzig 1972) 9–15. Many scholars doubt that the addressee of letter 6 and the target of Tzetzes' criticisms in the *Carmina Iliaca* and elsewhere are one and the same person (see e.g. M. Grünbart, "Prosopographische Beiträge zum Briefcorpus des Ioannes Tzetzes," *JÖB* 46 [1996] 175–226, at 80 and n.27, and P. Agapitos, "Middle-Class' Ideology of Education and Language, and the 'Bookish' Identity of John Tzetzes," in Y. Stouraitis [ed.], *Identities and Ideologies in the Medieval East Roman World* [Edinburgh 2022] 146–163, at 153 and n.31), but how many *sebastoi* by the name of Isaac Komnenos and how many lepers do we need? The addressee of letter 6 is also regularly confused with the Sebastokrator Isaac Komnenos, the brother of John II—but Tzetzes' Isaac is a *sebastos*, not a *sebastokrator*.

²⁰ *Epistulae* 10.11–22, 12.9–11, 12.16–18, and 15.9–13.

and his wife “dreaded [Tzetzes’] superb eloquence” and surrounded themselves with ignoramuses.

And then there is Isaac, of course. Who is he? The information provided by Varzos, the go-to scholar for anything to do with the Komnenoi, is sadly not entirely reliable in the case of this Isaac (Isaakios 56 in his list).²¹ Isaac is the grandson of Isaac Komnenos *sebastokrator* (Isaakios 12 in Varzos), the brother of Alexios I, and he is the son of Constantine *pansebastos sebastos* (Konstantinos 27), attested as *megas droungarios tes viglas* in the early 1140s.²² Like Isaac, his father was *doux* of Verroia at the beginning of his career: there is a letter by Theophylact of Ohrid in which he tells Constantine that his brother Demetrios is travelling to Verroia; as Theophylact’s brother died in 1107–1108, this gives us a *terminus ante quem*.²³ Isaac’s date of birth is unknown; but given the fact that he was *doux* of Verroia in the early 1130s, he was most probably born before ca. 1110.²⁴ The letter he received from Tzetzes (no. 6) states at 9.9–11 that they were both living in Constantinople at the time of writing. As the letter dates from before 1138, it would seem that Isaac left

²¹ K. Varzos, *Ἡ γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν I* (Thessaloniki 1984) 286–287.

²² For Constantine Komnenos see L. Stiernon, “Notes de titulaire et de prosopographie byzantine: Adrien (Jean) et Constantin Comnène, sébastes,” *REByz* 21 (1963) 180–198, at 192–198.

²³ Ed. P. Gautier, *Theophylacte d’Achrida: Lettres* (Thessaloniki 1986) 563, no. 123. See M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Aldershot 1997) 184–185. G. N. Skiadaresis, *Ἡ Παλαιά Μητρόπολη της Βέροιας στο πλαίσιο της βυζαντινῆς αρχιτεκτονικῆς* (Thessaloniki 2016) 185–187, assumes that the Middle Byzantine building phase of the Old Metropolis in Verroia is the work of Constantine Komnenos. Isaac Komnenos would be another option.

²⁴ The date 1117 given by Varzos, *Γενεαλογία* 286, is not based on any hard evidence and is surely not correct. The dates given by Varzos 157–159 for Isaac’s father’s birth (ca. 1085) and marriage (after ca. 1106) are not based on hard evidence either: I would put his father’s birth in the early 1080s and the marriage around 1100.

his post not long after the conflict with Tzetzes. The next piece of evidence is a monody by Manganeios Prodromos in which he laments the passing away of a member of the Antiochos family (no name given).²⁵ The daughter of the deceased was married to a Konstantios who was the son of Isaac Komnenos *sebastos*; he was apparently named after his grandfather, Constantine.²⁶ The poem cannot be dated, but if Isaac was born not long before 1110, he may have had his first-born in the late 1120s or early 1130s, which suggests a date of ca. 1145–1150 for his son's marriage. Finally, from a letter written by George Tornikes in 1156 we learn that Isaac has become a monk, not on his death-bed as most aristocrats were wont to do, but during his lifetime.²⁷ It is worth noting that in the *Theogony* (lines 259 and 420) Tzetzes accuses Isaac's wife of being a lover of dark-frocked monks (φιλομελαγχίτων) and sleeping around with them, though a more charitable observer might have said that she had genuine spiritual stirrings and liked the company of monks. So there is a possibility that Isaac and his wife mutually agreed to retire from this world and don the monastic habit: if the *Theogony* (ca. 1140–1145) is anything to go by, this may have happened sometime in the later 1140s.

The conflict between Isaac, his wife, the Leper, and Tzetzes

²⁵ Not yet published. I am grateful to Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys for sending me the text of poem no. 65 in advance of publication. For a partial edition see M. Loukaki, "Contribution à l'étude de la famille Antiochos," *REByz* 50 (1992) 185–205, at 194–198.

²⁶ Lines 257–261, 383–388, and 400–405. Varzos, *Γενεαλογία* 286, confuses Isaac Komnenos *sebastos* with Isaac Komnenos *sebastokrator*, his grandfather, and therefore identifies Konstantios (Isaac's son) with Constantine (Isaac's father); but the text clearly states that Konstantios is the son of a *sebastos*, namely our Isaac, and descends from a *sebastokrator*, namely his paternal great-grandfather. See the justified criticisms of Loukaki, *REByz* 50 (1992) 198.

²⁷ Ed. J. Darrouzès, *Georges et Démétrios Tornikès: Lettres et Discours* (Paris 1970) 167–168, no. 25.

must have erupted in the early 1130s. The earliest dateable literary work by Tzetzes, the encomium of Patriarch John IX Agapetos, dates to 1133–1134: since the text is clearly intended for performance before a Constantinopolitan audience, it is reasonable to assume that Tzetzes had returned home when he wrote the text.²⁸ In the *Exegesis of the Iliad* (21.12–23.7 and 421.3–18) Tzetzes says that it had already been more than seven years that he was without books due to an evil woman and her pig-headed husband and, more precisely, that he was twenty-one years of age when he had to sell his books. Elsewhere in the *Exegesis* (170.1–4) he mentions the death of his brother Isaac in 1138, but as Giske already observed, he does so in a manner that suggests that it was not a recent loss.²⁹ The *Exegesis*, therefore, dates from 1139 at the earliest, which means that Tzetzes must have sold his books in 1132 or later; but it cannot have been much later because of the above-mentioned encomium. All in all, a date between 1132 and 1134 seems reasonable for Tzetzes' unexpected fall from grace.³⁰ This

²⁸ Ed. V. L. Konstantinopoulos, "Inedita Tzetziana: Δύο ἀνέκδοτοι λόγοι τοῦ Ἰωάννου Τζέτζη," *Ελληνικά* 33 (1981) 179–184, at 181–182.

²⁹ H. Giske, *De Ioannis Tzetzae scriptis ac vita* (Rostock 1881) 48.

³⁰ C. Wendel, "Tzetzes. 1) Johannes," *RE* 7A (1948) 1959–2010, at 1966, dates the *Exegesis* to 1140 and hence, by implication, Tzetzes' conflict with Isaac to 1133; see P. L. M. Leone, "I 'Carmina Iliaca' di Giovanni Tzetzes," *QCSAM* 6/11 (1984) 377–405, at 377–378. Pizzone argues that a hitherto unknown poem proves that Tzetzes was in the service of Isaac Komnenos when he was shipwrecked on 8 November 1131: A. Pizzone, "Saturno contro sul Mare di Ismaro: Una nuova fonte per l'(auto)biografia di Tzetze," in A. Capra et al. (eds.), *Philoxenia: Viaggi e viaggiatori nella Grecia di ieri e di oggi* (Milan 2020) 75–94; but she confuses the Julian and the Gregorian calendars and does not realize that in the twelfth century the difference between the two was not 13 days (as it is now), but 7 days. Using the same astronomy website as she did, <https://webpace.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/astro/almagestephemeris.htm>, I arrive at a different date for Tzetzes' misfortune, namely the night of 27 to 28 October 1143 (in the

would put the date of his birth between 1111 and 1113.³¹

Fiction begins where facts—true or alleged—are transposed into another world than their original setting. Whatever happened between Tzetzes, the Leper, and Isaac’s wife, it did not happen in Troy—and yet there he is, this Don Quixote without a horse. And without a saddle too—please note the Tzetzian pun in the line that says that he had to walk on foot from Verroia and Selai, presumably leaving behind his “saddles” (σέλ(λ)αι).³² In the scholion attached to this passage, Tzetzes

Julian calendar): Sun in Scorpio, Moon in Gemini, and Jupiter in Aquarius, coinciding with the “leavetaking” (ἀπόδοσις) of the feast of St Demetrios.

³¹ Tzetzes’ maternal grandmother was born ca. 1075; see P. Gautier, “La curieuse ascendance de Jean Tzetzes,” *REByz* 28 (1970) 207–220. Allowing for an interval of 15 to 20 years for adolescence, marriage, and procreation, Tzetzes’ mother may have been born ca. 1090–1095. As we know that he was her eldest child, a date for his birth ca. 1111–1113 makes perfect sense.

³² As so often with Tzetzes, the information on Selai in the scholion on 3.284 (Leone, *Carmina Iliaca* 224) is bewildering. Isaac made him return to Constantinople without his horse

ἔκ τε τῆς Βερροίας, ἧς εἶχε τὴν ἐπαρχίαν, καὶ τῶν Σελῶν, οὐ τῶν παρὰ Λάρισσαν ὧν ὁ Ὅμηρος μέμνηται, οἱ νῦν χωρίον ὄντες εὐτελὲς Σελουστιανοὶ λέγονται, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ Σελῶν τελουμένων αὐτοῦ, οἷς παραρρεῖ ποταμὸς ὁ Στρυμῶν καὶ ἡ Βοιβηῖς λίμνη, Βερβίτζα νῦν καλουμένη βαρβαρικῶς, ὡς καὶ οἱ Σελοὶ οὗτοι Σελίτζα,

from Verroia which was his province, and from Seloi, not the one near Larissa which Homer mentions and which is now a shabby village called Seloustianoï, but from the Seloi that was his property, next to which flows the river Strymon and lake Voiviüs, which has now the barbarous name Vervitsa, just as Seloi is called Selitsa.

The Selloi mentioned by Homer (*Il.* 16.234) were a people, not a place, and they lived near Dodoni, not Larissa. The Strymonas does not flow in the region of Verroia nor is lake Voiviüs (nowadays known as lake Karla) to be found there. And if the estates of Isaac are called Σέλαι as in the poem or Σελίτζα (“small saddle/mountain pass”) as in the scholion, then the change of grammatical gender to Σελοί is unexplained. There is a village near Kozani called Σέλιτσα, which according to M. Vasmer, *Die Slaven in Griechenland* (Berlin 1941) 187, is a Slavic toponym. For a discussion of this peculiar scholion see A. Sykopoulos-Bellos, *Τα σχόλια του Petrus Morellus Turonensis στο ποιητικό του έργου De bello troiano* (Thessaloniki 2013) 235–236.

peremptorily states that he “did not invent the Trojan War” (οὐδὲ πέπλακα τὸν Τρωϊκὸν πόλεμον), thus emphasizing the veracity of his account. But the fact remains that he fictionalizes his authorial persona. Somehow Verroia has morphed into Troy and Tzetzes is on the battlefield without his horse, missing out on all the action, an idle bystander who cannot even hear what Nestor and Memnon are saying. And the worst part is that by introducing himself into the narrative, he has become fiction himself, forever losing his horse at Troy, forever wronged by that dreadful woman. There is no escape from literature.

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