

## A Tale of Two *Iliads*: Oxford New College 298 and Trinity College Dublin 922

Of all the ancient texts that have shaped history, the *Iliad* is among the most widely read, copied, and studied. It has been uninterruptedly used as a schoolbook since antiquity, through the medieval and modern ages, and still is today. Whilst the broad impact of the *Iliad* across macroscopic physical and temporal spaces is well-documented, the propagation of the texts themselves may offer cultural and historical insights on a more microscopic scale, where individual scholars can be found leaving their mark on history and our understanding of Homeric work.

What follows is a story of how two specific copies of the *Iliad* have left their imprint on the pages of history. Not only do their paths illustrate the journey of the text itself, but also the way people from different backgrounds interacted with it, in places far apart and through the passing of many centuries. From the hands of southern Italian monks to those of English merchants and members of the Anglo-Irish nobility, these two copies of the *Iliad* made their way north and west across Europe. They simultaneously bear witness to an ancient text, and have been witnesses themselves to almost nine centuries of turbulent European history. Because of the similar conditions surrounding their creation and their journeys, these two manuscripts have lived a sort of ‘parallel lives’: they started off together in Terra d’Otranto, they travelled along separate roads, and finally reached their current homes in the Isles, one in England and the other in Ireland. This is a tale of two *Iliads*, Trinity College Dublin MS 922 and Oxford New College MS 298.

Oxford New College MS 298 occupies a privileged position in the study of the *Iliad* and the para-Iliadic tradition. Readings from MS 298 can be found under the siglum O<sup>8</sup> in Allen’s 1931 edition of the *Iliad*, and siglum O in both van Thiel’s 1996 and West’s 2001 editions. Added to the text itself, MS 298 contains several other works related to the *Iliad*: a corpus of scholia, Heraclitus’s *Allegoriae Homericae*, two versions of the *Epimerismi Homerici*, and Tzetzes’s *Allegories of the Iliad*.<sup>1</sup> Readings from MS 298 are present in many modern editions of these works.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the taxonomy of the scholia in MS 298 was discussed by Hartmut Erbse in the introduction to his monumental edition of the *Scholia Maiora*. Erbse refutes Cramer’s view that the scholia in MS 298 are similar to those in Venetus A and classifies them in the category known as the D scholia.<sup>3</sup> The manuscript is also quintessential to the transmission of Heraclitus’s *Allegoriae Homericae*. All three editions of the text since the beginning of the twentieth century take into account readings from MS 298: it was highly regarded as a testimony of the text by the editors of the 1910 Bonn version, even though its relevance was later called into question by Buffière in his 1962 edition, who takes it to be part of a secondary tradition.<sup>4</sup> The most recent edition, published by Russel and Konstan in 2005, restores MS 298 to its position as a useful testimony to Heraclitus’s *Allegoriae Homericae*. Regarding the *Epimerismi Homerici*, Arthur Ludwich studied MS 298 in 1885, and its version of the text would later become the base for the current editions of the *Epimerismi* to book A’ and the ‘alphabetical’ *Epimerismi*.<sup>5</sup> The manuscript is not unknown to the readers of this journal either.

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<sup>1</sup> For descriptions of MS 298, see Arthur Ludwich, *Aristarchs Homerische Textkritik nach den Fragmenten des Didymos* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1885), II, 609–612; Andrew R. Dyck (ed.), *Epimerismi Homerici pars altera: Epimerismos continens qui ordini alphabetico traditi sunt* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), pp. 26–8; Irmgard Hutter, *Corpus der Byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften*, vol. 5.1 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1997), pp. 145–9; Elisabetta Sciarra, *La Tradizione degli scholia Iliadici in Terra d’Otranto* (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2005), pp. 58–63; Alberto Ravani, ‘[New College MS 298: A Story of the Manuscript](#)’, *New College Notes* 16 (2021), no. 2.

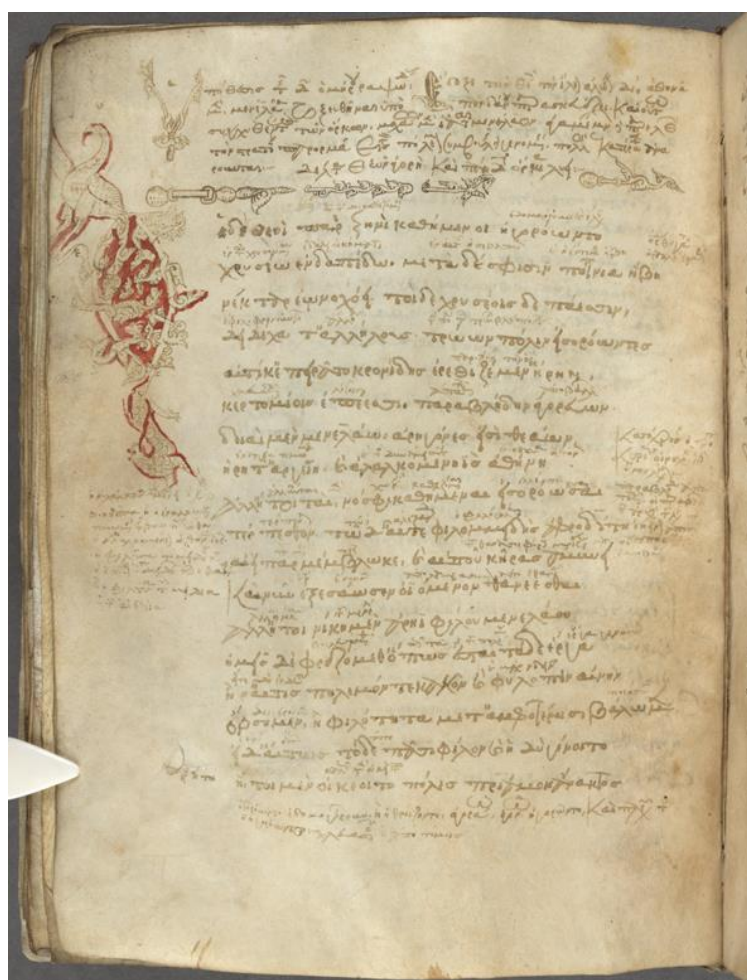
<sup>2</sup> It is worth mentioning at this point that while the text of the *Iliad* dates from the early thirteenth century, the other works are from the early fourteenth. The manuscripts were likely bound together sometime in the fifteenth century. See in this same journal the article by Ravani, ‘[New College MS 298](#)’.

<sup>3</sup> Hartmut Erbse, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem (Scholia Vetera)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), I, xxxiii. For Cramer’s description of MS 298 where the scholia are identified with the A recension, see J. A. Cramer (ed.), *Anecdota Graeca e Codd. Manuscriptis Bibliothecarum Oxoniensium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1835), I, v.

<sup>4</sup> Héraclite, *Allégories d’Homère*, ed. Félix Buffière, Collection Guillaume-Budé (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1962), p. xlvii.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwich, *Aristarchs Homerische Textkritik*, II, 609–612. The most recent editions of the *Epimerismi* are Andrew R. Dyck (ed.), *Epimerismi Homerici. Pars prima: Epimerismos continens qui ad Iliadis librum A pertinent* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983), and *Pars altera: Epimerismos continens qui ordini alphabetico traditi sunt* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995).

Alberto Ravani wrote an article on its origins, history, and importance to the text of Tzetzes's *Allegories of the Iliad*.<sup>6</sup> New College 298 has not only been studied because of the multiple texts it contains. It also provides an insight into cultural production and textual transmission in mediaeval Otranto, the region where it was copied. In the late 13th century, long after Otranto had ceased to be controlled by the Byzantine Empire, the production of manuscripts in Greek was still in vogue in the monasteries of the area. A number of these manuscripts, all of them containing the *Iliad* and scholia, were brought together in a study published by Elisabetta Sciarra in 2005. Rather than the relevance of each individual manuscript to the transmission of the text of the *Iliad*, Sciarra scans the interpolations between the manuscripts—the process known as contamination—looking for clues that might help clarify the relationship between these manuscripts. The contamination turns out to be remarkable, not only in the text of the *Iliad*, but also in the wide corpus of scholia that accompany the *Iliad*. By comparing the different manuscripts' variants in the text and in the scholia, Sciarra manages to create a picture of how the transmission of the *Iliad* worked in the region of Otranto during the last half of the 13th century and the first quarter of the 14th. One of the manuscripts included by Sciarra in this group is, of course, New College MS 298.<sup>7</sup>



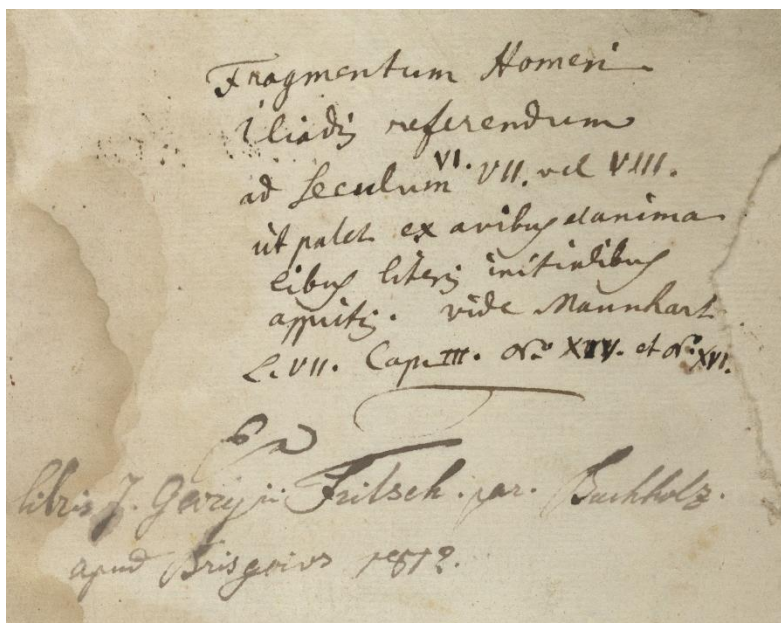
Trinity College Library, Dublin, MS 922, f. 31v © The Board of Trinity College Dublin

Across the Irish sea, another manuscript from 13th-century Otranto was faced with a rather different fate to that of New College MS 298. It is the codex now kept in Trinity College Dublin, at shelfmark MS 922. It contains a fragmentary text of the *Iliad* up to book I<sup>1</sup>, verse 282,

<sup>6</sup> Ravani, [‘New College MS 298’](#).

<sup>7</sup> Sciarra, *La Tradizione*, pp. 58–63.

with marginal scholia and an intermittent interlinear paraphrase. It is not easy to pinpoint the stops that the manuscript made on its journey from Otranto to Ireland. A note from 6 March 1824 in the TCD Board diary reads: ‘manuscript of Homer presented to the College by Lord Leitrim, obtained on the Continent—*Fragmentum Homeri Iliadis referendum ad seculum VI, VII vel VIII, ut patet ex avibus et animalibus litteris initialibus apposis. vide Mannhart, L. VII, Cap. III, or. XIV et or. XVI.*’



Trinity College Library, Dublin, MS 922, f. iir [detail] © The Board of Trinity College Dublin

The note in Latin is likely copied from the first flyleaf of MS 922, folio iir. It is a reference to Franz Xaver Mannhart’s *Bibliotheca domestica bonarum artium ac eruditionis studiosorum usui instructa et aperta*, vol. IV (Augsburg, 1762), pp. 79–86, 93–8. The two quoted sections of Mannhart’s treatise describe a trend in manuscripts from the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries to have decorated initials with motives in the shape of birds and animals. Mannhart’s explanation led the author of the note in TCD 922 to mistakenly date the manuscript to this time period. The use of the word *fragmentum* here probably indicates that the missing part of the text, from P 282 onwards, was already lost when the note was written. According to the TCD catalogue entry, the other note immediately after this one reads ‘*Ex libris J. Gary in Fritsch. par. Buchholz. apud Brisgerius 1872.*’ If ‘Buchholz apud Brisgerius’ is indeed Buchholz im Breisgau as suggested in the catalogue—or at least somewhere in a German speaking region—it seems fairly implausible that the manuscript was in Dublin in 1824 when it was donated to TCD, then travelled to southern Germany in 1872, and then found its way back to Dublin a few years later to be entered in T. K. Abbott’s 1900 *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in Trinity College Dublin*. A more reasonable explanation seems to be that both the note and the *ex libris* were written in 1812 in Buchholz. The numbers eight and one in ligature could make the number one in 1812 look like a seven, explaining the mismatch in the TCD catalogue. This theory also increases the likelihood that the note’s author had access to Mannhart’s text, which was published in Augsburg in 1762. The manuscript must have then been acquired ‘on the Continent’ by a member of the Clements family, who held the earldom of Leitrim, somewhere between 1812 and 1824, when it was donated to TCD. It was catalogued by T. K. Abbot in 1900 and then lay ignored for over a century, until Barbara Crostini published an article on it in 2017.<sup>8</sup> Crostini has shown that the manuscript was copied in late 13th-century Otranto and circulated in the area long enough to interact with other manuscripts from the region. The route it followed on

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Crostini, ‘A New Manuscript of the Iliad with Scholia from the Terra d’Otranto: TCD MS 922’, *Néa Pómyx: Rivista di ricerche Bizantinistiche* 15 (2018), 137–65.

its journey from Otranto to Germany remains a mystery, one that is unlikely to be solved in the near future. The prolificacy of manuscripts containing the *Iliad* in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries renders the construction of a closed mediaeval tradition (that would allow us to identify the traces left by a single manuscript) almost impossible.<sup>9</sup> However, one way of gaining insight into the journeys of these *Iliads* is through comparison between selected groups of codices with common traits such as their production time and milieu.

Even though both these manuscripts were copied in the Terra d'Otranto area, there are remarkable differences between them. For instance, New College 298 is copied on paper, whereas TCD MS 922 is written entirely on parchment, except for a slightly later restoration made on three paper folia at the beginning. There are other noteworthy differences between the two manuscripts: perhaps one of the most obvious is the fact that between the covers of New College 298, the *Iliad* is garnished with later addenda of para-Iliadic texts. Their presence and careful positioning—protecting the first and last pages of the *Iliad*—remind us that the manuscript was already considered worth preserving from the early centuries of its existence. In TCD 922, the *Iliad* is found alone and incomplete. The first three folia were restored shortly after its original composition,<sup>10</sup> and there is no evidence of any other restoration attempts since. In the same way that the missing part of the text from book I' onwards was lost prior to its arrival to Trinity College, the other lacunae are presumably earlier too.<sup>11</sup> If we take a look at the layout, we see that in New College 298 the text of the *Iliad* is consistently justified on both sides, the script on each page copied in two neat columns of 40 verses.<sup>12</sup> In TCD 922 there is no visible ruling pattern, there are entire pages of unjustified text (folio 60r, for example), and the number of verses varies between 17 and 29 from page to page.<sup>13</sup> Both manuscripts are written in a minuscule script that is consistently identified with the Otranto region,<sup>14</sup> but the hands that copied the text of the *Iliad* are remarkably different from one another. Another trait of the script is the red filling in red ink of majuscule letters. This feature appears consistently throughout New College 298, but it is a relatively rare occurrence in TCD 922 where it is reserved, with few exceptions, for chapter openings.

Although the differences in material, shape, and format are noteworthy, there are many textual coincidences between these two manuscripts that point to a close relationship between them. Perhaps the most striking similarity is the omission of the Catalogue of the Ships, vv. 494–877. This omission is not unique to the two copies, but it does allow us to infer a certain textual relationship between them.<sup>15</sup> Another shared omission, this one seemingly unique, is that of verses E 295–296. The lack of these verses suggests that at least part of the text was copied from one manuscript into another,<sup>16</sup> or more likely that both had a common ancestor. After the collation of book I' of the *Iliad* in all of the copies attributed to Otranto by Sciarra, and the comparison of the readings to those of TCD 922, I found that of all Otrantine manuscripts with the *Iliad*, New College 298 has the most readings in common with TCD 922. Only in book I', and only taking into

<sup>9</sup> This issue is addressed in Martin L. West, *Studies in the Text and Transmission of the Iliad* (München: K.G. Saur, 2001), pp. 139–57.

<sup>10</sup> Crostini, 'A New Manuscript', 141–2.

<sup>11</sup> The lacunae due to page loss are: book B' verses 92–416, book Z' verses 284–331, book Θ' verses 83–458.

<sup>12</sup> Sciarra, *La Tradizione*, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Crostini, 'A New Manuscript', 145. Crostini states the lower number of verses is 19 and the higher 28. There are, however, several folia with 17 lines of text (5r, 5v), 18 lines (4r, 4v, 18r), and 29 lines (60v, 64v, 66v).

<sup>14</sup> For a description of the Otrantine script, see André Jacob, 'Les Écritures de Terre d'Otrante', in *La Paléographie Grecque et Byzantine*, ed. Jean Glénisson, Jacques Bompaire, and Jean Irigoien (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1977), pp. 269–81.

<sup>15</sup> See Allen, *Homeri Opera*, ad loc. and West, *Homeri Ilias*, ad loc. Some related manuscripts also omit the Catalogue of the Ships. For instance, Laur. 31.32, copied in Otranto, and Genevensis 44, a copy believed to be similar to the archetype of the Otranto *Iliads*. See Sciarra, *La Tradizione*, p. 38 and p. 256.

<sup>16</sup> This was pointed out by Crostini, 140. However, Crostini believes the *Iliad* in New College 298 to have been copied at the beginning of the fourteenth century, unlike Hutter (p. 146), Sciarra (pp. 58–61) and Ravani, that date it to the thirteenth century.

account only the readings that differ from the main tradition, there are five readings that appear exclusively in these two manuscripts:<sup>17</sup>

Γ34 ὑπό τε : ὑπό δε O<sup>8</sup> Tcd / Γ104 Ἡελίω : Ἡλίω O<sup>8</sup> Tcd / Γ114 γαίη : γαῖαν O<sup>8</sup> Tcd / Γ271 ἐρυσάμενος : ἐρυσάμενος O<sup>8</sup> Tcd / Γ348 ἀνεγνάμφθη : ἀνεγνάμφη O<sup>8</sup> Tcd

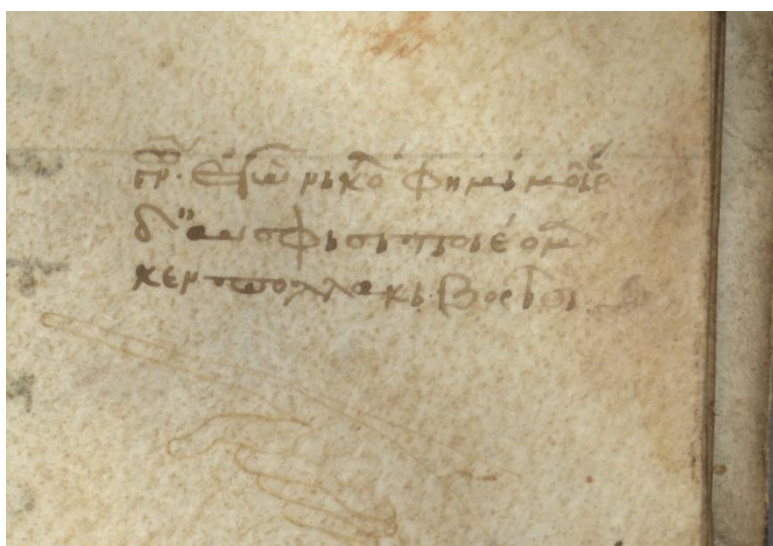
Two more may be added that are shared only by one more manuscript from Otranto:

Γ236 δοιῶ : δύω O<sup>8</sup> Tcd V<sup>13</sup> / Γ424 φιλομειδῆς : φιλομειδῆς O<sup>8</sup> Tcd Vi<sup>3</sup>

Although further collation will be necessary for a relationship to be definitively established, these two copies are part of a relatively small Otrantine pool of *Iliads*, and share a considerable number of *lectiones unicae*. It therefore seems very likely that they are related, either by lateral contamination or through a mutual ancestor.

Another common trait shared by both manuscripts is the presence of a scholium to Z<sup>488</sup> that also appears in Vindob. Phil. gr. 49. This scholium could be an alternative reading to the end of Hector's speech to his wife Andromache,<sup>18</sup> an ingenious answer to this verse,<sup>19</sup> or a reference to a poetic work by Nicholas-Nectarius, abbot of Casole.<sup>20</sup>

μοῖραν δ' αὖ σφίσι ποιόμεν κεν πολλάκι βορτοί



Trinity College Library, Dublin, MS 922, f. 72r [detail] © The Board of Trinity College Dublin

In each of the three manuscripts, the scholium is preceded by a slightly different attribution:

ἐγὼ δὲ Νικόλαος φημί· Vi<sup>3</sup> : γνώμη· ἐγὼ Νικόλαος φημί Tcd : ὁ τῆς ἰδρούσης Νικόλαος φησίν O<sup>8</sup>

The mention of a Nicholas in the first person in Vindob. Phil. gr. 49 has led to the belief that the scholium is an autograph written either by Nicholas of Otranto, son of Giovanni Grasso, or by

<sup>17</sup> The sigla used hereafter, except the siglum of TCD 922, are those in Allen's edition: O<sup>8</sup> = Oxford New College 298; Tcd = Trinity College Dublin 922; V<sup>13</sup> = Vat. gr. 1316; Vi<sup>3</sup> = Vindob. Phil. gr. 49.

<sup>18</sup> Ravani, [New College MS 298](#).

<sup>19</sup> Crostini, 'A New Manuscript', 149.

<sup>20</sup> Filippomaria Pontani, *Sguardi su Ulisse: La tradizione esegetica Greca all'Odissea* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2005), pp. 206–7.

Nicholas-Nectarius of Casole, a central figure in the intellectual life of twelfth and thirteenth century Otranto who wrote scholia in several other manuscripts.<sup>21</sup> Another—albeit unlikely—candidate is a scribe called Nicholas of Gallipoli, who was active a bit later and who copied the text of the *Iliad* in Ang. gr. 122, Bodmer 85, and part of Laur. 32.5.<sup>22</sup> The presence of the scholium in TCD 922, once more in the first person, adds another layer of complexity to the already existing plurality of interpretations regarding its authorship. There is a possibility, already hinted at by Crostini,<sup>23</sup> that the scribe of TCD 922 is Nicholas Hagiopetrites. We know of two codices whose colophons have the signature of this scribe, Paris. gr. 2574 and Barb. gr. 102.<sup>24</sup> If indeed the similarities between Paris. gr. 2574, Barb. gr. 102, and TCD 922 are enough to pinpoint them to the same scribe, it may be argued that the autograph scholium is the one by Nicholas Hagiopetrites in TCD 922. However, this would require that TCD 922 had been copied at an earlier date than the last decade of the thirteenth century, which seems unlikely on palaeographical grounds. It cannot however be ruled out that two different scholiasts who share the name Nicholas are in action here. One is Nicholas-Nectarius of Casole whose scholia have been widely studied. The other is an unidentified Nicholas, who commented on Homeric texts and had access to Tzetzes's writings. In fact, it is not impossible that the scholium to α 21 on folio 2v of Vind. phil. gr. 56, a manuscript that contains the *Odyssey*, was written by the same scribe as the scholium attributed to Nicholas in TCD 922. This would help account for the grammatical errors in the scholium identified by Pontani.<sup>25</sup>

After all, it could well be that there are many more similarities between both manuscripts that will be brought to light by a thorough collation and study of the remaining text and scholia in TCD 922. So far, it is clear that both TCD 922 and New College 298 were created in the same region and in the same century. Based on the numerous connections and interpolations that can be found in the text and margins, they very likely even shared the desk of a scriptorium in southern Italy during the first years of their existence. Then, both codices travelled northwards following different paths. New College 298 has left traces of its northbound journey through all of Italy, until it reached Venice from where it was taken to England by sea.<sup>26</sup> TCD 922 made its way to a German-speaking area, possibly the town of Buchholz im Breisgau on the edge of the Black Forest. Shortly after 1812, it was transported to Ireland and donated to Trinity College Dublin in 1824 by a member of the Clements family, who held the earldom of Leitrim. Whereas these manuscripts are but drops of water in an ocean of mediaeval copies of the *Iliad*, their entwined history is a good example of how we may begin to unravel the complex textual transmission of the *Iliad* in the Middle Ages and after. And so, examination of codices not only as witnesses to the text, but also as historical objects with an impact of their own, may gradually dissipate the prevailing pessimism in the study of the *Iliad*'s mediaeval manuscript tradition.

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<sup>21</sup> See for instance Pontani, *Sguardi su Ulisse*, pp. 232–4; Mariachiara Fincati, 'Annotazione Polemiche di Nicola-Nettario abate di Casole nel codice Parisinus Graecus 3', *Aevum* 91 (2) (May–August 2017), 495–514; Carlo Maria Mazzucchi, 'Diodoro Siculo fra Bisanzio e Otranto (Cod. Par. Gr. 1665)', *Aevum* 73 (2) (May–August 1999), 385–421.

<sup>22</sup> On the debate between these three figures, see Pontani, *Sguardi su Ulisse*, p. 206 and especially n. 464; and Ravani, 'New College MS 298'.

<sup>23</sup> Crostini, 'A New Manuscript', 163–4.

<sup>24</sup> In the *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten, 800-1600*, see RGK II, nr. 446 (Paris. gr. 2574); RGK III, nr. 536 (Barb. gr. 102).

<sup>25</sup> Pontani, *Sguardi su Ulisse*, p. 233.

<sup>26</sup> Ravani, 'New College MS 298'. Ravani ingeniously manages to follow the steps of the manuscript through Italy by identifying its usage in the creation of two copies of Tzetzes's *Allegories of the Iliad*.