

## A Companion to Byzantine Poetry

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# A Companion to Byzantine Poetry

*Edited by*

Wolfram Hörandner  
Andreas Rhoby  
Nikos Zagklas



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# Contents

Acknowledgements IX  
Notes on Contributors X

Byzantine Poetry: an Introduction 1  
*Nikos Zagklas*

## PART 1

### *Preliminaries: Contexts, Language, Metrics, and Style*

- 1 Texts and Contexts 19  
*Marc D. Lauxtermann*
- 2 The Language of Byzantine Poetry: New Words, Alternative Forms,  
and “Mixed Language” 38  
*Martin Hinterberger*
- 3 From Hexameters to Fifteen-Syllable Verse 66  
*Michael Jeffreys*
- 4 Byzantine Poetry and Rhetoric 92  
*Elizabeth Jeffreys*

## PART 2

### *Periods, Authors, Social and Cultural Milieus*

- 5 Late Antique Poetry and Its Reception 115  
*Gianfranco Agosti*
- 6 George of Pisidia: the Spring of Byzantine Poetry? 149  
*Ioannis Vassis*
- 7 Monasticism and Iconolatry: Theodore Stoudites 166  
*Kristoffel Demoen*

- 8 John Geometres: a Poet around the Year 1000 191  
*Emilie van Opstall and Maria Tomadaki*
- 9 The 11th Century: Michael Psellos and Contemporaries 212  
*Floris Bernard*
- 10 “How Many Verses Shall I Write and Say?”: Poetry in the Komnenian Period (1081–1204) 237  
*Nikos Zagklas*
- 11 Poetry on Commission in Late Byzantium (13th–15th Century) 264  
*Andreas Rhoby*

### PART 3

#### *Poetry in Byzantium and Beyond*

- 12 “Accept a Roman Song with a Kindly Heart!”: Latin Poetry in Byzantium 307  
*Kurt Smolak*
- 13 Philippos Monotropos in Byzantium and the Slavonic World 331  
*Eirini Afentoulidou and Jürgen Fuchsbauer*
- 14 Byzantine Poetry at the Norman Court of Sicily (1130–c.1200) 353  
*Carolina Cupane*

### PART 4

#### *Transmission and Circulation*

- 15 Byzantine Collections and Anthologies of Poetry 381  
*Foteini Spingou*
- 16 Byzantine Book Epigrams 404  
*Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen*
- 17 Byzantine Verses as Inscriptions: the Interaction of Text, Object, and Beholder 430  
*Ivan Drpić and Andreas Rhoby*

**PART 5*****Particular Uses of Verse in Byzantium***

- 18 Teaching with Verse in Byzantium 459  
*Wolfram Hörandner*
- 19 Hymn Writing in Byzantium: Forms and Writers 487  
*Antonia Giannouli*
- 20 The Past as Poetry: Two Byzantine World Chronicles in Verse 517  
*Ingela Nilsson*
- 21 Byzantine Verse Romances 539  
*Roderick Beaton*
- General Bibliography 557  
General Index 566  
Manuscript Index 575





## Acknowledgements

The idea for a volume on the poetry of the entire Byzantine millennium dates as early as 2013. At that time, Wolfram had already been retired, Andreas was working on a corpus of Byzantine inscriptional epigrams, and Nikos was finishing a dissertation on the poetry of Theodore Prodromos. The Division of Byzantine Research at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, with its vibrant scholarly environment, was the place where the three of us used to meet every day. During our discussions on the Byzantines and their poetic tradition, we repeatedly observed that no study existed, which explored the Byzantine poetry written between the 4th and the 15th centuries as a whole. Thus, when we heard that Brill launched the *Companion Series to the Byzantine World*, we contacted Prof. Dr. Wolfram Brandes, the series' editor, and asked if a volume on poetry would be suitable. His reply was positive and he encouraged us to pursue this book project. We would like to thank him for accepting our proposal and for all his encouragement throughout the years. We would also like to thank our contacts at Brill: firstly, Julian Deahl, who, until the time of his retirement, guided us through the early stages of the book; and secondly, Marcella Mulder and Elisa Perotti for their constant help and professional support over the last years. Moreover, we would like to express our gratitude to a number of individuals and institutes: Dr Michael Mulryan for the careful copyediting of the entire book; Grigori Simeonov for having undertaken this painstaking task of compiling the index; the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Dujčev" for the permission to use the image of f. 3<sup>v</sup> of Codex D. gr. 282 for the book cover; and Prof. Peter Schreiner for putting us in contact with the Centre and facilitating the acquisition of the image.

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*Wolfram Hörandner, Andreas Rhoby and Nikos Zagklas*  
Vienna, December 2018

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# Byzantine Poetry: an Introduction

*Nikos Zagklas*

Κατὰ μίμησιν τῶν στίχων τοῦ Πισίδου  
στίχους, φίλος, μάθηθ' ἀνε κεκροτημένους,  
πρὸς τὸν κραταιότατον αὐτάνακτά μου  
Κομνηγὸν Ἀνδρόνικον Ἄγγελον Δούκαν  
Παλαιολόγον, τὴν πνοὴν τῶν Αὐσόνων,  
πρὸς ὃν λόγων δύναμις οὐδὲν ἰσχύει.<sup>1</sup>

Verses in rhythmical beat [written] in imitation of Pisides' verses, learn, my friend, for my most powerful lord, Andronikos Komnenos Angelos Doukas Palaeologos, the breath of the Byzantines, to whom the power of *logoi* is not equivalent.



These six verses preface a long encomiastic poem by Manuel Philes addressed to the emperor Andronikos II Palaeologos in the late 13th or early 14th centuries. Their authorship cannot be attributed to Manuel Philes with certainty because of some blunt metric errors,<sup>2</sup> and some questions that the manuscript tradition raises.<sup>3</sup> It is very likely to be a book epigram composed by a less talented poet—most likely a scribe—who prompts the reader to memorize Philes' poem, which is metrically modelled on that of Pisides. In fact, the

<sup>1</sup> Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Martini, no. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See the comments of Paul Maas in "Addenda und Corrigenda" that supplement Martini, *Manuelis Philae Carmina inedita*, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> The preface is transmitted together with Manuel Philes' poem on Andronikos Palaeologos in two 15th-century manuscripts (Taur. C VII 7 and Cremon. Bibl. Govern. 160), while it is not to be found in the manuscript *Metochion tou Panaghiou Taphou* 351, f. 26r–29v. However, in the latter manuscript the folio that includes the first 20 verses of Philes' poem has dropped out, so it cannot be excluded that the preface was initially transmitted with Philes' poem. The preface is also preserved together with the first 34 verses of the poem in Vatic. Urb. gr. 125. On the other hand, a shorter version of Manuel Philes' poem is preserved in four manuscripts without the preface; for the manuscript tradition of the poem, see Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, pp. 209–42. Many thanks to Krystina Kubina for discussing with me the authorship and the manuscript tradition of this text.

rhythm of Philes' dodecasyllables is closer to that by Pisides than any other Byzantine poet.<sup>4</sup> This is hardly surprising, when we consider that Philes was well read in the poetry of Pisides. Despite the lack of a close analysis between Philes' *Properties of Animals* and Pisides' *Hexaemeron*, it is beyond any doubt that the former owes a great deal to the latter.

Although probably not the work of Philes himself, this book epigram draws an uninterrupted line from the time of George Pisides up to that of Manuel Philes, from the seventh to early 14th century.<sup>5</sup> It goes without saying that these two authors are significant landmarks in the development of poetry in Byzantium: the former contributed a great deal to the formation of many of the main features of Byzantine poetry; the latter was the most prolific author of the late Byzantine period.<sup>6</sup> Pisides' work triggered the transition from the classical iambic trimeter to Byzantine dodecasyllable, which remained the main metre of Byzantine poetry until the time of Manuel Philes and beyond. Moreover, Pisides is deemed the most celebrated court poet of the early Byzantine period,<sup>7</sup> while Manuel Philes is the court poet *par excellence* of the Palaeologan period, working on commission for noble individuals and producing poems across a wide range of genres. But this unbroken tradition is also accompanied by a number of variations and deviations, when we compare the two authors and their works. Take, for example, their social status: whereas George Pisides acquired various offices at the patriarchal administration, most probably Philes never was appointed to a high-ranking office.<sup>8</sup> As a matter of fact, Philes' corpus strongly indicates that he was much more dependent on commissions than his 7th-century fellow poet. Unlike Pisides' works, his poetry teems with petitions and requests for favors. The different social standing the two poets enjoyed is mirrored in the distinguished poetics, and even different functions, of their works.<sup>9</sup>

While both George Pisides and Manuel Philes are inextricable agents of the Byzantine poetic tradition, we are not always so sure for some other authors,

4 See Maas, "Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber", pp. 297–298; see also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 2, pp. 339–40.

5 Of course, the Byzantines linked their poetry to the tradition of Antiquity and Late Antiquity. A good example is the anonymous treatise on the four parts of perfect speech; ps.-Gregory, ed. Hörandner.

6 He is by no means the last poet in Byzantium; there many others after him; see the paper by Andreas Rhoby on late Byzantine poetry in the present volume.

7 Hörandner, "Court poetry", p. 76.

8 He was simply a member of diplomatic embassies; see Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, pp. 28–31.

9 For the change of the status of many poets, and the year 1000 as a kind of caesura, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 35–39.



especially those that were active before the time of George Pisides. But the question at stake is whether we can impose clear-cut chronological borderlines on Byzantine poetry, and whether we can establish any fundamental prerequisites, in order to consider a poet as agent of this tradition. The 15th century signifies the end of Byzantine poetry and literature more broadly, but we cannot say with certainty that the 7th century constitutes its starting point. Is George Pisides to be credited for the beginning of Byzantine poetry? Or should we better see his corpus as a kind of caesura for the history of Byzantine poetic tradition? In other words, is it more accurate to say that his corpus demonstrates a transition from late antique poetry to Byzantine poetry, or rather a transition from the early to the middle phase of Byzantine poetic tradition? This is a particular difficult question since the Greek poetry written within the 4th and 6th centuries can fit both late antique and Byzantine culture.

Furthermore, if we take a quick glance at modern conceptions about the beginning of the literary culture of Byzantium, there seems to be no consensus between scholars. The upper boundaries of Byzantine literature for Alexander Kazhdan are to be placed after George Pisides' times;<sup>10</sup> Herbert Hunger, on the other hand, noted that the period between the 4th and 6th centuries can be called both late antique and early Byzantine.<sup>11</sup> Also, Hunger placed a special emphasis on the production of classicizing literature as a criterion for the continuity of literature from Antiquity to the Byzantine period. Panagiotis Agapitos in turn placed the beginning of Byzantine literature at the start of the 4th century because of the "structural break", to use his words, in the Greek and Latin literary cultures, which is reflected in the works of Eusebios of Caesarea and Lactantius.<sup>12</sup>

However, poetry is a field of literary culture with its own peculiarities. The existence of metre does not allow us to make any slips in including a poet in the Byzantine tradition. We cannot fail to notice, for instance, that poems written in the Byzantine dodecasyllable from the time of George Pisides until that of Manuel Philes and beyond, share the same characteristics and is one of the main reasons that these authors are part of the Byzantine poetic tradition. That said, there are some poets, even before Pisides, that should be considered part of the Byzantine tradition. Gregory Nazianzus' poems are no less Byzantine than those written in the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. Even though his iambic poetry stands between the classical iambic trimeter and Byzantine

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10 Kazhdan, *Byzantine Literature*, p. 3.

11 Hunger, *Hochsprachliche Profane Literatur*, vol. 1, p. v.

12 Agapitos, "Late Antique or Early Byzantine?"

dodecasyllable—since it includes resolutions<sup>13</sup>—the themes and the content of his poetry are Christian and Byzantine *sensu stricto*. Nazianzus' work εἰς τὰ ἑμμετρα ("on his own verses"), where he speaks about the dual meaning of *metron* ('moral moderation' as well as 'metre', namely poetry), is a kind of programmatic statement about the use of verse throughout the entire Byzantine period.<sup>14</sup> What was Homer for Classical and Hellenistic poetry is Gregory for middle and late Byzantine poetry.<sup>15</sup> His corpus constitutes the cornerstone of the Byzantine "poetic construction" as we know it, and for this reason, we cannot consider him less Byzantine than later poets, such as George Pisides, Theodore Stoudites or John Mauropous. This means that the chronological span of Byzantine poetry ranges between the time of Gregory of Nazianzus and the 15th century. When it comes to its beginning we should be flexible, and view the centuries between the 4th and early 7th centuries as a transitional period during which poetry can bear both labels: it can be both late antique and Byzantine.

When we look at geographical boundaries and the medium of language it becomes even more clear that it is impossible to place poetry within a frame with clear-cut edges. Poetry was not only written in Constantinople and the periphery of the empire, but also outside its official boundaries. The most well-known examples are the poets who were active in Sicily and southern Italy from the 12th century onwards. In the same vein, the lion's share are written in Greek, but Latin played an important role during Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine period; both Priscian and Corippus were active in Constantinople, where they wrote poems in Latin on various occasions. Taking all this into consideration, it can be argued that the chronological timespan, the geographical borderlines, and the issue of language may be important elements that help us to formulate a watertight definition of Byzantine poetry, but at times these very same elements pose questions and make its borderlines less distinct. In case one of them is absent during the genesis of a poem, it does not necessarily mean that this particular work is less Byzantine than other ones.

13 See Simelidis, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 57. Iambic verses with resolutions are also encountered in poems written after Pisides' time; see Rhoby, "Vom jambischen Trimeter zum byzantinischen Zwölfsilber", pp. 123–6. A very good example is Tzetzes and his "technical verse"; for bibliography, see Cullhed, "Diving for Pearls", p. 56 and Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 289.

14 Magdalino, "Cultural change?", p. 31 and Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, p. 197.

15 The bibliography on the reception of Gregory's poetic work throughout Byzantine times is extensive; see Simelidis, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 57–79; Rhoby, "Aspekte des Fortlebens des Gregor von Nazianz", pp. 409–17; Demoen and van Opstall, "One for the Road", pp. 223–48; Zagklas, "Theodore Prodromos and the Use of the Poetic Work of Gregory of Nazianzus", pp. 223–42; see also the chapter Agosti in the present volume.

The picture becomes even more blurred if we try to touch upon conceptual connotations bound with Byzantine poetry. We encounter challenges when we try to come up with a description of its aesthetic and poetics, while we run the risk to diminish its value if we try to understand and evaluate its aesthetics according to our modern conceptions. Form is essentially what defined a text as a poem for the Byzantines,<sup>16</sup> for there was no difference between poetry and verse. Regardless of the metre in which a text was written in Byzantium, it was considered part of its poetic tradition. This does not mean that Byzantines did not distinguish between bad and good poetry, between poems of low and high quality. The correct use of a metre was the main criterion for them to impose on a work such labels, but it was not the only one. Even in the literature of a premodern society like the Byzantine one, the concepts of poetic prose and prosaic poetry were not completely unknown.<sup>17</sup> However, contrary to our expectations, the Byzantines did not use different conceptual terms for texts in prose or verse;<sup>18</sup> the word *logoi* very often stands for texts written both in verse and prose.<sup>19</sup> Again this does not mean that they could not distinguish between the two forms, but for them poetry was not a superior form of literature placed in some ivory tower far above prose. This is clearly a romantic view that Byzantines did not share.<sup>20</sup> Even though they did not place the composition of poetry above the writing of prose, it should be stressed that they did associate the use of verse with particular aesthetics and features that are not to be found in prose texts. Floris Bernard has, for example, discussed four merits that are exclusively related to the composition of poetry: the *iambikè idea*, *poikilia*, *metron*, and *charis*.<sup>21</sup>

In sum, Byzantine poetry is a broad field of rhetorical composition that includes all works that conform to the rules of a metre.<sup>22</sup> Irrespective of their length or their generic qualities, they are considered poetry. There are various genres or text types in verse, including monodies, epitaphs, encomia, *epithalamia*, panegyrics, *ethopoiiai*, *ekphraseis*, satires and invectives, hymns, prayers, didactic poems, oracles, book epigrams, riddles, letters, and many others.<sup>23</sup>

16 On this issue, see Lauxtermann, "Byzantine Didactic Poetry".

17 As Ingela Nilsson notes in her chapter on verse chronicles.

18 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 31–57.

19 What is more, poetry and prose in Byzantium come even closer in terms of rhythm; see Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*.

20 On this issue, see also the chapter by Marc Lauxtermann in the present volume (p. 21).

21 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 340–41.

22 Regardless of whether its prosodic rules are correct or not.

23 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 33. In both volumes, each chapter contains studies of various genres.

Even long narrative works can be considered poems for the Byzantines. As non-metrical novels and chronicles are entitled to be called prose works, their metrical counterparts cannot be devoid of the title of poetry. A work in Byzantium and other cultures can be more than one thing and fall into various conceptual fields. It can partake in one or more genres and be composed either in prose or verse. As simple as it may seem to be: when written in verse, it is a poem; when not, it is a prose work. Form in Byzantium played the most decisive role for the consideration of a text as poem;<sup>24</sup> hence, poetry in Byzantium can be considered the “other self” of prose.

### 1 The Research History of Byzantine Poetry: Transformations and New Approaches

In his “Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur” Karl Krumbacher opens the chapter that deals with Byzantine poetry with the words of Gottfried Bernhardt from his history of Greek literature, published about three decades earlier:<sup>25</sup>

Poesie im wahren Sinne des Wortes kannten die Byzantiner nicht, und sie hat unter ihnen niemals bestanden.

Poetry in the true sense of the word was unknown to the Byzantines, and never existed among them.

Although Krumbacher notes that these remarks are extremely harsh, he goes on further below to say that such a judgement is justified. According to Krumbacher, the poetry with a secular focus does not display any innovative features during the Byzantine period. Krumbacher argued that the Byzantines created something “new” and “original” only in the field of religious poetry and vernacular poetry.

Approximately 50 years after Krumbacher’s “Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur”, Franz Dölger published his short study “Die Byzantinische Dichtung in der Reinsprache”.<sup>26</sup> As clearly indicated in the title, the focus is placed on the study of the poetry written in a highbrow register (“Reinsprache”). In the opening paragraph, Dölger claims that if one seeks to offer a fair appraisal of

24 For example, Lauxtermann has noted that didactic poetry “is to be considered poetry for no other reason than that it is in verse”; see Lauxtermann, “Byzantine Didactic”, p. 46.

25 Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, p. 639.

26 Dölger, *Die byzantinische Dichtung*.

the value of Byzantine literature, then a comparison with our modern views or with works from Antiquity must be avoided.<sup>27</sup> In view of such a programmatic statement at the very beginning of his book, one would accept a fair assessment (or at least a balanced one), but, unfortunately, Dölger's approach does not fulfil our expectations, and we soon come across judgements such as the following one:<sup>28</sup>

Dichtung ist nicht mehr Ausdruck drängender Leidenschaft oder erschütternder Schicksalstragik, sondern wird zum Ornament einer kirchlich und politisch approbierten Schriftstellerei, die gar nicht mehr den Ehrgeiz hat, originell zu sein. Es überrascht uns nicht, wenn wir auf Gestalten wie Theodoros Prodromos (12. Jh.) stoßen, welche die Dichtung zum Gefäß ihrer Adulation und Bettelei erniedrigten.

Poetry is no longer an expression of pressing passion or shattering "Schicksalstragik" [= tragedy of fate], but becomes the ornament of an ecclesiastically and politically approved writing, which no longer has the ambition to be original. It is not surprising that we come across figures like Theodore Prodromos (12th cent.), who debased poetry [by using it] as a medium for their obsequious flattery and begging.

Although Dölger published his study five decades after Krumbacher's "Literaturgeschichte", his attitude toward Byzantine poetry does not differ significantly. It is obvious that both scholars did not take into account the context of these texts, and their work did not do justice to Byzantine poetry. They fail to understand that the genesis and use of poetry in Byzantium cannot be compared with our standards, and needs to be viewed with the Byzantine "reality" and the needs of this premodern society. In Byzantium, poetry was not necessarily related to emotional expression and other lofty literary subjects.

Pejorative judgements were not the only problems with the earlier studies of Byzantine poetry. Both Krumbacher and Dölger were looking for a tripartite division of Byzantine poetry into epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry that was already known for classical works,<sup>29</sup> while Herbert Hunger applied this tripartite arrangement to the section that discusses Byzantine poetry in his "Profane Literatur der Byzantiner".<sup>30</sup> But this kind of classification is of no use, simply

27 Dölger, *Die byzantinische Dichtung*, p. 7.

28 Dölger, *Die byzantinische Dichtung*, p. 14.

29 For their different approaches to this issue, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 21.

30 The structure of his section on poetry has various problems. To mention one example: in the section on the Byzantine novels he discusses the three Komnenian novels written in verse and then the one by Makrembolites written in prose.

because epos, lyric poetry and drama did not exist as self-contained generic fields in Byzantium.<sup>31</sup> It is clear that the methodology of all these early studies was at an initial stage, since they studied Byzantine poetry in conjunction with the classical or modern conceptions. This was first pointed out, in an explicit manner, by Marc Lauxtermann in his book that examined Byzantine poetry from George Pisides to John Geometres:<sup>32</sup>

Since we know so little about Byzantine poetry, and since we continuously make the mistake of comparing the little we know to both classical and modern literature, it is time to broaden our horizon and become acquainted with the texts themselves.

This programmatic statement and his book constitute a “caesura” in the study of Byzantine poetry. He was the first who studied various genres of poetry in detail, while some of them had never been considered as separate types of texts before (perhaps the best example is the book epigram). Marc Lauxtermann has thus played a major role in the transformation of the research history of Byzantine poetry, but it should be stressed that another important scholar here is Wolfram Hörandner. Hörandner contributed a lot to the shift in modern research in this new direction with his numerous publications on various issues surrounding Byzantine poetry, ranging from court and epigrammatic works to their oral circulation and manuscript transmission.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, in 2017 he published his short monograph “Forme et fonction. Remarques sur la poésie dans la société byzantine” that deals with Byzantine poetry over the entire Byzantine period. Both Lauxtermann’s and Hörandner’s studies were incredibly influential, and were the catalyst for a number of new studies in recent years, such as: Floris Bernard’s book on 11th-century secular poetry,<sup>34</sup> Ivan Drpić’s study on epigrammatic poetry in later Byzantium,<sup>35</sup> and several collected volumes on poetry that discuss a wide array of themes and challenges.<sup>36</sup>

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31 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 21 and Hörandner, “Poetry and Romances”, p. 894.

32 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 25.

33 Many of them are now collected together in Hörandner, *Facettes de la littérature byzantine*.

34 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*.

35 Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium*; the entire corpus of Byzantine inscriptional epigrams (7th–15th century) is edited in Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung*, 4 vols.

36 There are three of them: Agapitos/Hinterberger/Odorico, *Poésie et poétique à Byzance*; Bernard/Demoen, *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*; and Rhoby/Zagklas, *Middle and Late Byzantine Poetry*.

A similar research shift occurred in the study of Byzantine metrics. Since modern scholarship on various Byzantine metres is vast, I will only refer to the research history of the dodecasyllable here. Whereas at the end of the 19th century the Austrian classicist Isidor Hilberg classified Byzantine poets as “Klassiker” (classics), “Epigonen” (epigones), and “Stümper” (bunglers),<sup>37</sup> Paul Maas refuted this absurd classification a few years later.<sup>38</sup> Even though prosody continues to play an important role in Byzantine poetry, he demonstrated that quantitative verses had in practice been replaced by accentual verses. By building upon Maas’ fundamental article “Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber”, many modern scholars have further enhanced our understanding of various aspects of the Byzantine dodecasyllable over the last three decades.<sup>39</sup>

Needless to say, we have come a long way in our understanding of Byzantine poetry since the time of Krumbacher, Hilberg and Dölger. Hörandner, Lauxtermann, and Bernard have put Byzantine poetry in a better perspective. Fortunately, negative judgements and unnecessary adherence to the ‘classics’ are no longer a part of recent work, allowing us to assess Byzantine poetry within its context of use and according to Byzantine perceptions, and even start appreciating its merits.

## 2 The Present Volume: an Overview

It is against this background of recent developments in the study of Byzantine poetry that the present book intends to embark on its journey of exploration. However, it should be stressed from the outset that a single volume cannot fully explore all aspects associated with poetic production over 1000 years; the material is vast and it would have been impossible to discuss in detail every single author and poem over this long timespan. The material has been arranged thematically into five main parts: 1) Preliminaries: Contexts, Language, Metrics and Style 2) Periods, Authors, Social and Cultural Milieus 3) Poetry in Byzantium and Beyond 4) Transmission and Circulation and 5) Particular Uses of Verse in Byzantium. Each of them aims to examine poetry from various angles, and demonstrate that poetry in Byzantium is a complex multi-layered construction.

37 Hilberg, “Theodoros Prodromos”, pp. 291–308.

38 See mainly Maas, “Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber”, pp. 278–323.

39 For instance, Hörandner, “Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik der Byzantiner”, pp. 279–90; Lauxtermann, “The Velocity”, pp. 9–30 and Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 2; Rhoby, “Vom jambischen Trimeter zum byzantinischen Zwölfsilber”, pp. 117–42; and Bernard, “Rhythm in the Dodecasyllable”, pp. 13–41.

The section “Preliminaries” aims to map some of the main aspects of Byzantine poetry. It starts with a discussion of its “context(s) of use”, moving to some formal features of texts written in verse. As already noted, poetry in Byzantium is not written in a vacuum isolated from its social setting. There is always a context that surrounds a poem during its genesis, shaping its poetics and tropes. But “context” cannot stand without “text”, or, as Marc Lauxtermann points out in his chapter, “no text without context, no context without text”. Thus, these two concepts are inseparable in the study of Byzantine poetry and literature more generally. Lauxtermann demonstrates this by offering some case studies of poems that were used in the imperial court; the so-called rhetorical *theatra*; and for the expression of devotion in a religious setting. Moreover, he looks at the con-text by investigating the relations of certain poems with other texts during their written transmission in poetry books, small *syloges*, anthologies, and miscellanies.

The next two chapters focus on the form of Byzantine poetry; the former deals with the language, the latter with the metre. Martin Hinterberger seeks to shed some light on the links between metre and language. Its symbiosis facilitates the creation of new words or the use of poetic forms. Poems are not exclusively written in highbrow or the vernacular; there are a large number of poems that combine features from different registers. On the other hand, Michael Jeffreys’ article is a case study on hexameter and the political verse. Although the Byzantine poets made use of a wide range of metres: the dodecasyllable, hexameter, pentameters, elegiac couplets, anacreontics, political verse and so forth, Jeffreys focuses on the gradual decline of hexameter (it never disappeared though) and the emergence of the fifteen-syllable verse.

In addition to issues of context, language, and metre, rhetoric and style are two other important aspects linked to the composition of verse. It is well known that the handbooks by Hermogenes, Menander, and especially Aphthonios, were widely used by the Byzantines, having an impact on textual production, be it in prose or verse, from the early period to the Late Byzantine era. Next to *encomia*, funerary speeches, *epithalamia* (wedding speeches) or speeches to honour the emperor (*basilikoi logoi*) in prose, we find verse works too (especially in the 11th and 12th centuries). Elizabeth Jeffreys notes that poetry constitutes a part of rhetorical composition in various genres and sub-genres. She also notices the strong connection between verse and trope, by saying that the former occasionally facilitated even more the extended use of figures of speech, such as alliteration, asyndeton or assonance.

The section “Periods, Authors, Social and Cultural Milieus” looks at Byzantine poetry from a synchronic and diachronic point of view. It examines important authors or distinctive periods of Byzantine poetic production. It aims to



discuss the motivations for writing texts in verse, and outline the development of poetic trends throughout the Byzantine millennium. Gianfraco Agosti looks at the roots of Byzantine poetry (or its early period) by discussing the poetry written between the 4th and 7th centuries and the fate of some popular genres in the later periods. It is particularly interesting that the 'modern style' (i.e. of Nonnos of Panopolis and his followers) is to be encountered in Byzantine poetry. Moreover, Agosti demonstrates that the Byzantines perceived late antique poetry as different from the Classical and Hellenistic traditions.

The next three studies look at three major poets that were active between the 7th and 10th centuries: George Pisides, Theodore Stoudites, and John Geometres. Although these four centuries saw the production of important works by other poets, these three authors are the indisputable protagonists. Ioannis Vassis surveys the work of George Pisides. Regardless of whether Pisides is the starting point of Byzantine poetry, it is certain that his corpus contains many innovative features; he reshaped many characteristics of poetry associated with religious subjects and epic encomium; he contributed a great deal to the shift from the iambic trimeter to Byzantine dodecasyllable; and he transformed the literary epigram of the previous centuries into a *Gebrauchstext*. Thus, he anticipated—to an extensive degree—many trends found in Byzantine poetry for centuries to come.

The next individual who plays an important role in the production of poetry is Theodore Stoudite. Theodore has often been described as an author who re-activated classical traditions at the end of the so-called "Dark Ages". Kristoffel Demoen argues that this classification is not very accurate, since the poetic oeuvre of Theodore hardly contains any direct references to Antiquity (or ancient themes and genres). Most of his poems were written for a monastic milieu without any high literary aspiration, since they were meant to be used as inscriptions. A particularly interesting part of Stoudite's poetry is his figure poems; they demonstrate that poetry played a significant role towards the promotion of an agenda during the iconoclastic controversy.

Moving to the next century, we find a military officer who composed a great deal of poetry. John Geometres is by far the most important figure around the year 1000. His oeuvre extends to over 300 works written for various occasions. They were associated with both religious and secular themes: poems on contemporary society, poems for objects, satirical and invective poems, personal poems, prayers, and hymns etc. Emilie van Opstall and Maria Tomadaki seek to bring Geometres' versatility into the foreground. Of course, the 9th and 10th centuries abound with other poets (e.g. Ignatios the Deacon, Constantine the Rhodian, and Leo Choïrosphaktes) and developments, but the study of the corpora of Stoudites and Geometres nicely demonstrates a slight shift in the

use of poetry. Whereas in the early 9th century Stoudites mainly composed inscriptional poetry for a monastic milieu, Geometres corpus mirrors the use of poetry for a wider range of occasions. He is the first poet of the Middle Byzantine period with such a rich and versatile corpus, anticipating the trends of the 11th and 12th centuries, when poetic prolificacy and versatility became the norm due to the appearance of many professional authors.

Floris Bernard looks at poetic production after the time of John Geometres, and argues that the period between 1025 and 1081 shares some common characteristics (e.g. a high degree of self-assertiveness, wit, and variety) that sets it apart from other periods. The three main poets are Christopher Mitylenaios, John Mauropous and Michael Psellos, who are surrounded by some lesser known and anonymous poets. Psellos composed mainly didactic poetry, while the first two produced texts for various occasions and contexts; from invectives and satires, to epigrams and poetry for liturgical purposes. These learned men were more conscious of their poetic achievements than earlier authors. For example, John Mauropous put together a collection of his own works in order to shape his self-representation.

The next chapter examines a period too, namely that of the “long 12th century” that ranges between the years 1081 and 1204. The number of poets is much higher, including Theophylaktos of Ochrid, Nicholas Kallikles, Theodore Prodromos, Manganeios Prodromos, John Tzetzes, Constantine Manasses, Michael Glykas, and Michael Choniates, along with numerous other poets. Unlike during the 11th-century, most 12th-century poets depended much more upon favors and commissions, thus this period signifies a shift in the relationship between patronage and poetry. However, the degree of patronage differs over this long timespan. Nikos Zagklas argues that it gradually rises during the reign of Alexios Komnenos, reaching its pinnacle under John and Manuel Komnenoi, and then dropping in the last decades of the 12th century. Court poetry includes not only poems for a number of ceremonies, but also texts that are meant to have a didactic use. Although the 12th century is the most prolific period of Byzantine poetry, Andreas Rhoby shows that poetry continues to flourish during the Empire of Nicaea and throughout the Palaeologan period. As in the 12th century, patronage is the main driving force behind the composition of poetry, but there are some exceptions. Manuel Philes is the main poet of the period due to the extensive number of verses he penned, but there are a number of other poets who are producing works, including Theodore Metochites, Nikephoros Blemmydes, Manuel Holobolos, Maximos Planudes, John Chortasmenos etc.

The next section “Poetry in Byzantium and Beyond” aims to demonstrate that the boundaries of Byzantine poetry are not clear-cut by looking at three

different phenomena: poetry that was written in the centre of the empire, but in Latin; Greek poetry that was written in Constantinople, but then translated into another language; and finally, Greek poetry written outside the official borders of the empire. Constantinople in Late Antiquity or during the Early Byzantine period saw the production of poetry in Latin. The two main authors are Priscian and Corippus. As Kurt Smolak notes, the former wrote grammar treatises and poetry, while the latter exclusively poetry. The poetry of both authors was written for the Court, since they fall within the group of panegyrics. As with the poetry of George Pisides and later Byzantine poets, they put their works at the service of imperial propaganda.

Eirini Afentoulidou and Jürgen Fuchsbauer take us to the Middle Byzantine period and particularly to the year 1095, when Philippos Monotropos finished the composition of his *Dioptra*, a poem of about 7000 verses. It consists of the *Klauthmoi*, a poetic poem addressed to one's own soul, and four books in the form of a dialogue between the soul (*psyche*) and body (*sarx*), which are personified as a mistress and maid. The soul asks her servant questions on various theological and philosophical topics. The 80 surviving Greek manuscripts speak for its popularity within the boundaries of Byzantium. However, the *Dioptra* was translated in the 14th century into middle Bulgarian Church Slavonic, and enjoyed even more popularity, since there are approximately 200 surviving manuscripts.

In the 12th century, Byzantine poetry flourished not only in Constantinople, but also in the periphery (e.g. Michael Choniates in Athens) and even outside the official borders of the empire. Carolina Cupane focuses on the poets that were hosted in the court of Norman Sicily, above all, an anonymous poet of a very long work that exceeds 4000 verses, and Eugenius of Palermo toward the end of the 12th century. The works of these poets resemble the Constantinopolitan style, but at the same time owe a great deal to Latin, and even Arabic, literary cultures. Poetry continued to blossom in southern Italy in the 13th century thanks to the so-called Salentine school, which included poets such as Nicholas of Otranto, John Grasso, and Theodotos of Gallipoli, and whose poetry is very close to the Byzantine tradition.

The fourth section focuses on the different aspects of circulation and transmission of poetry, be that manuscripts or other kind of media. Foteini Spingou scrutinizes anthologies and collections of the Byzantine period; the former include works of more than one poet, while the latter the works of a single author. She argues that we should distinguish between "Classizing" and "Byzantine" collections and anthologies. She also investigates the sociocultural reasons for putting together such collections and anthologies, and what that tells us about the author and the way he viewed his work, since some of them

contribute a great deal to the shape of their authorial image (of course, the case of John Mauropous is the most significant). Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen focus on book epigrams and their close association with books, and thus circulation. Following Gérard Genette, they describe book epigrams as metric paratexts (the term “book epigram” was coined by Marc Lauxtermann). This kind of poem tells us a great deal about the production of a book, the way literature (both ancient and Byzantine) was read, and so on. However, manuscripts are not the only medium for the circulation of written poetry. Ivan Drpić and Andreas Rhoby discuss epigrams that were inscribed on fresco decorations, portable objects (metalwork, ivories, steatites etc.), icons, seals etc. There is a strong interaction between the text, the object, and the beholder. The visual power of epigrams facilitates the communication of aesthetics and the response of the beholder.

The last section is labelled “Particular Uses of Verse in Byzantium”. It intends to discuss in some detail two particular functions associated with verse (the teaching one and the liturgical one) and the use of verse for the composition of two genres that are typically in prose (chronicles and novels). Wolfram Hörandner concentrates on poetry written for teaching purposes. He offers an extensive survey of poems that had a potential didactic function, and demonstrates that these poems are associated with a wide range of themes, including astrology, astronomy, grammar, jurisprudence, mathematics, medicine, rhetoric, theology, zoology, and many more. Hörandner also touches upon the question of the aesthetic value of didactic poetry. Poetry was also written for liturgical reasons; Antonia Giannouli surveys the tradition of hymn-writing in Byzantium. Aside from religious poetry, we find hymns (first the *kontakion* and later the *kanons*) sung within an ecclesiastic or monastic setting. Their production is rich from the time of Romanos Melodos up to Theodore Stoudites. Interestingly enough, around the 9th century, hymn forms found their way into other more secular contexts: they were used in educational settings, and even gave form to satirical attacks.

The last two chapters of the volume look at the use of verse for long narratives. Ingela Nilsson examines two chronicles: the *Synopsis Chronike* by Constantine Manasses (mid-12th century) and the *Chronicle* of Ephraim of Ainos (early 14th century). Although both poems are written in verse (in the fifteen-syllable and the twelve-syllable), the style of Manasses’ is much more “poetic”. The paper discusses the selection of verse as a medium to write history, as well as the various implications of this. In addition to chronicles, another genre that started to assume a verse form is novels. The 12th century not only saw the resurgence of narratives of love and adventure, but also the victory of verse over prose in this genre; three out of the four surviving Komnenian

novels are composed in verse. As Roderick Beaton points out, the practice of using verse for the composition of novels (or romances) continues into the Palaeologan period, as well as into the post Byzantine period.

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**PART 1**

*Preliminaries:  
Contexts, Language, Metrics, and Style*







## Texts and Contexts

*Marc D. Lauxtermann*

Context has been a catch-word for at least thirty years now, with an almost unequalled popularity in titles and editorial blurbs. It is usually associated with new historicism and other historicizing trends in literary theory (cultural materialism, historical contextualism, archaeo-historicism, etc.), but there is nothing new about context. It is as old as philology itself. That we see contextualization as a fairly recent trend—sometimes referred to as the “historical turn”—is because it feels like a backlash against new criticism, structuralism and other text-immanent approaches popular in the middle decades of the century that was to see the end of history, but then carried on much as it always had. The text-immanent paradigm, however, was itself a response to overly factual interpretations, with texts seen either as trustworthy testimonies of historical events or as authentic reflections of their authors’ states of mind.

Text and context are dialectically linked. It is a seesaw, really: when the one is on top, the other, at the bottom, is ready to swing back and regain its former position. The problem is that we Byzantinists skipped the intermediate phase. We went directly from gullible reliance on ‘facts’ and naive readings of the historical ‘evidence’ to detailed and elaborate studies of the socio-cultural and material contexts of Byzantine literature. We missed out on the intervening period, that of close reading, structural elements, semeiotic relations, formal analysis. While the rest of the humanities were reading up on Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes and *tutti quanti*, past generations were diligently searching for nuggets of historical truth or, even worse, looking for classical borrowings in Byzantine literature. The interest in *mimesis* had little to do with intertextuality; this was a hunt for the glittering gold of a literary eldorado. Both the heavy emphasis on literature as a mine of information and the long shadow of classical scholarship, have led to severely distorted interpretations of Byzantine texts and contexts. The loss is ours. It cannot be undone. But what we can do is understand that there are no contexts without texts nor texts without contexts.



So, what is a text? In his recent study of 11th-century poetry, Floris Bernard points out that poetry as such does not exist in the conceptual world of the Byzantines. Poetry is subsumed in the much wider category of *hoi logoi*, an almost untranslatable term which vaguely corresponds to what we would call ‘texts’ or ‘discursive practices’. *Hoi logoi* was the domain of the *logioi*, the intellectual elite of Constantinople who hoped to gain cultural or social capital either by composing, improvising and performing new texts or by copying, compiling, and commenting on, older texts.<sup>1</sup> The Byzantines were not particularly interested in the “literariness” of the texts they produced or assembled;<sup>2</sup> what mattered to them above all was the creative potential of language, the adroit use of various stylistic registers, and the composition of texts according to the rules of rhetoric. Their idea of *hoi logoi* is much closer to what in German is called “Schrifttum” than it is to “Literatur” (or in Modern Greek, closer to γραμματεία than to λογοτεχνία).

Another major difference with what we consider to be literary texts, is that *hoi logoi* are open for revision. There is no definitive text. Texts may be re-drafted and revised, authors are free to rewrite earlier texts ad infinitum, and later generations may even introduce new material and radically change the original wording. Here are some examples for each of these three practices. (i) Redrafting texts: a number of poems, such as Manasses’ *Hodoiporikon* and Constantine Stilbes’ monody on the fire that devastated a city quarter,<sup>3</sup> have come down to us in two different redactions, both of them clearly the work of the author himself. (ii) Rewriting texts: there are numerous metaphraseis of fables, gnomes and sayings, from prose to verse and vice versa, from long to short and the other way around, from a learned to a rather unsophisticated stylistic register and back again.<sup>4</sup> (iii) Altering texts: the best known examples are vernacular texts, such as the *Digenes Akrites* (six versions) or the *Achilleid* (three versions); but the phenomenon is not restricted to the vernacular, there are also texts in a higher stylistic register which circulate in radically different forms, such as the penitential poem ‘O Father, Son and Spirit, Holy Trinity’.<sup>5</sup>

A third difference is that whereas we tend to associate texts with the written word (books, newspapers, ads, blogs, etc.), the Byzantines included performative and oral texts in their definition of *hoi logoi*; they also included

1 See Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 31–57.

2 The Byzantines would have been baffled by Kazhdan’s attempt to distinguish their *logoi* into literary and non-literary texts on the basis of their supposed literariness: Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, pp. 1–5.

3 See Horna, “Hodoiporikon”, pp. 318–19. Stilbes, eds. Diethart/Hörandner.

4 See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 2, pp. 225–46.

5 See Lauxtermann, “His, and Not His: the Poems of the Late Gregory the Monk”.

non-bookish forms of the written word, such as inscriptions and coin legends. Inscribed epigrams were ubiquitous in Byzantium, and poetry was therefore above all a visual medium for the Byzantines, especially for those without access to manuscripts and outside court circles.<sup>6</sup> Oral poetry may have been equally important, but left hardly any trace in our sources apart from a few ballads in vernacular Greek, such as the *Song of Armouris* and the late 11th-century epic of *Digenes Akrites*. In addition to oral composition, there is also oral performance, which is not the same thing. There can be little doubt that most Byzantine poems were initially intended to be performed before an audience (say, at Court, in the class-room or in a literary theatre); but only those that were a success began a second life in manuscript form.

A fourth and final difference is that where we tend to draw a sharp dividing line between poetry and prose, the Byzantines saw both as *logoi*. What separates the two is the use of metre. Anything in verse is poetry for the Byzantines: it can be bad poetry if it fails to live up to the high demands of fellow *logioi*, but it is poetry nonetheless. The distinction between “poetry” and “verse” (or “doggerel”) is a romantic notion, and not one shared by the Byzantines; the same goes for the idea that poetry is something special, high up on a pedestal of lofty artiness, and so very “poetical”. For the Byzantines a poem is as good and bad as any other text out there on the literary market.<sup>7</sup>



Texts have contexts (συμφορᾶζόμενα) and con-texts (συγκείμενα). Let me begin with the latter. Con-texts are the other texts in a poetry book, small sylloge, anthology, or miscellany. Just as literary texts are by definition intertextually related—either moving backward to the authorities of the past or striding forward to future writers—so too do texts inevitably engage in an intricate dialogue with the other texts of the manuscript they are in.

Single-author poetry books are very rare indeed. Arguably the two best examples are Vat. gr. 676, the collection of John Mauropous’ literary works, and Grottaferrata Z α XXIX, a late 13th-century southern Italian copy of the poems of Christopher Mitylenaios. Mitylenaios arranged his poems both in chronological order and thematically, putting like by like and presenting certain topics from different angles: his main aim in putting together his poetry book was to achieve unity in variety.<sup>8</sup> Mauropous published his selected poems, letters

<sup>6</sup> For metrical inscriptions, see Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme*.

<sup>7</sup> See Lauxtermann, “Byzantine Didactic Poetry”.

<sup>8</sup> See Demoen, “Phrasis poikilé”.

and homilies at the end of his life; the way he selected and arranged his literary works suggests a deliberate act of self-presentation and self-justification, with particular emphasis on his election to the see of Euchaita, which he viewed as exile.<sup>9</sup> As he explains in the programmatic first poem, his aim was to offer a selection of his *logoi*, both those in verse and prose. The same mix of poetry and prose is found in Par. Suppl. gr. 352, a 13th-century copy of John Geometres' literary oeuvre,<sup>10</sup> and in Par. gr. 228, an early 13th-century copy of the works of Michael Glykas.<sup>11</sup>

Glykas' manuscript offers on fol. 21–214: (1) the famous prison poem, with a biographical note on the author at the very end; (2) the collection of popular sayings with explanations in verse, introduced by an encomium on Manuel I and with numerous autobiographical passages throughout the poem; (3–97) Glykas' 95 theological "chapters" (essay-like answers to questions put to him). Items 1, 2 and 3–97 have a consecutive numbering in the manuscripts of Glykas and, interestingly enough, they are all called κεφάλαια ("chapters"), indicating that these 97 chapters together constitute a whole book.<sup>12</sup> The prison poem and the commentary on popular sayings, written soon after Glykas' release from prison, serve as autobiographical introductions to his theological writings.<sup>13</sup> This is, in all likelihood, not their original purpose; it is an interpretative layer added onto these two texts at a later stage.

The reuse of Glykas' poems illustrates that a text can have more than one context: looking at the con-texts can help us understand the multiple contexts that, in due time, accrue to texts like crustaceans to piers and vessels. In this case it is the author himself who offers a new interpretative framework for his poem, but recontextualization usually starts with the reader. Once a *logos* begins to circulate, it is prone to be altered textually or, if the wording remains the same, to be transformed at least meaning-wise. And each new reading constitutes a new context.

Small sylloges are somewhere in between poetry books and anthologies: they may contain the selected poems of one author or offer a miscellany of various authors. Vat. gr. 753 (s. XI), fol. 4<sup>r-v</sup>, contains what looks like the work

9 See Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 128–148. See also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 62–65, and id., "The intertwined Lives of Michael Psellos and John Mauropos".

10 For the manuscript, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 68–69 and 287–90.

11 See Glykas, ed. Efstratiades, vol. 1, pp. ρχβ–ρκε.

12 See Kiapidou, "Chapters, Epistolary Essays and Epistles".

13 Not unlike Basilakes' autobiographical prologue to the edition of his rhetorical writings: see Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz*, pp. 349–53.

of one poet, Anon. Sola (*floruit* c.990–1040);<sup>14</sup> but Vindob. Phil. gr. 150 (s. XIV), fol. III–IV, Laur. 32.52 (s. XIV in.), fol. 122<sup>r</sup>–125<sup>v</sup>, and Haun. 1899 (s. XIII), fol. 1–8, for example, offer more than one poet. The Viennese ms. has various anonymous epigrams, a fragment of a 12th-century encomium, and some Psellos;<sup>15</sup> the Florentine ms. has erotic anacreontics by Constantine the Sicilian and others, a few poems of Psellos, and Nikephoros and Manuel Straboromanos;<sup>16</sup> and Haun. 1899 offers Mitylenaios, Mauropous, Psellos and others.<sup>17</sup> It is highly likely that these three post-1204 sylloges eventually go back to Komnenian ones and, through them, to even earlier collections of poems. It is worth emphasizing, however, that later sylloges by definition reflect later preferences. If Laur. 32.52 has father and son Straboromanos, it means that people were interested to read their fairly mediocre poetry as late as the early 14th century. While the original setting of their poetry is the reign of Alexios Komnenos, its reception in a Palaeologan manuscript reflects a contemporary interest in the Komnenian past: the con-text creates a new context.

As Foteini Spingou will discuss anthologies in this volume, I can be short. Like sylloges with which they have much in common, anthologies signpost changing literary attitudes. Whereas the Greek Anthology (c.890–900) (ancient, hellenistic, Roman and late antique epigrams) is predominantly interested in the classical past, the Barberinian Anthology (c.920) (a collection of anacreontics and lyrics in accentual metres) is refreshingly Byzantine: Sophronios of Jerusalem is the starting-point and most of the poems are 9th-century or even early 10th-century.<sup>18</sup> If one compares these two anthologies, so close in time but so utterly different, one cannot fail to notice that a sea change has taken place with regard to the classical past: while the Greek Anthology is a typical product of 9th-century classicism, the Barberinian Anthology focuses on the recent past and appeals to contemporary sentiments.

This leaves us with the category of miscellanies. If one studies the contents of such miscellanies, one may get a better understanding of the readership of a certain text in later times. Take, for example, the *Paradeisos*, a late 10th-century collection of versified metaphraseis of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, incorrectly attributed to Neilos of Ankyra. It has come down to us in 37 manuscripts.

14 See Anon. Sola, ed. Sola.

15 See Hörandner, “Nugae Epigrammaticae”.

16 See Bernabò/Magnelli, “Il codice Laurenziano plut. 32.52”, pp. 201–02.

17 Christensen, “Inedita from Hauniensis 1899”.

18 For the Greek Anthology, see Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes*; for the Barberinian Anthology, see Crimi, “Motivi e forme dell’ anacreontea tardoantica e bizantina”; for both anthologies, see also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 83–128.

As Isebaert explains in his recent edition,<sup>19</sup> most of these manuscripts go back to a common exemplar: the so-called  $\beta$  tradition, which is probably post-Byzantine. There are four manuscripts that are undoubtedly Byzantine: V = Vindob. Phil. gr. 330 (s. XIV in.), Q = Vat. gr. 743 (s. XIV), D = Darmstad. 2773 (s. XIV post med.) and L = Laur. IX 18 (s. XIV). Of the four Palaeologan manuscripts, L is the one that comes closest to the archetype in its overall make-up: it is a monastic manuscript with a lot of Neilos of Ankyra and which presents the *Paradeisos* as prose. The other three manuscripts, however, are more scholarly: V shows a huge interest in theology and ecclesiastical matters, D is a miscellany of learned texts, and Q offers a mixture of secular proverbs and Byzantine poetry, including Geometres. In other words, whereas the readers of VDQ are in all likelihood Palaeologan intellectuals, those of L are probably monks.



There are as many contexts as there are texts. In fact, since texts may be reused and since each reuse constitutes a new context, texts are even outnumbered. The reception of the fable quatrains of Ignatios the Deacon, reworkings of Babrian fables, illustrate how texts can be reused by later generations, and thus change their nature. Their original function was to be used in schools as model examples of metaphrasis, a basic school exercise which trained the students in rewriting existing texts. However, some of Ignatios' quatrains have been found in Eski Gümüş, an 11th-century courtyard complex in Cappadocia, in a room above the narthex of the church: there they served as metrical legends to depictions of Aesopic fables on the walls.<sup>20</sup> This is quite a radical change.

A similar shift in use and function can be observed in the case of two verse inscriptions written by George Bardanes (metropolitan of Kerkyra in the early 13th century): namely an epitaph to himself and a dedicatory epigram celebrating the construction of a church of Saints Peter and Paul.<sup>21</sup> These two inscriptions have also survived in Grottaferrata Z  $\alpha$  XXIX, a late 13th-century manuscript copied in the region of Otranto: this is the same manuscript that contains Mitylenaios' poetry book. There the two inscriptions form part of a small sylloge of poems by Nicholas of Otranto, George Bardanes, and an

19 *Paradeisos*, ed. Isebaert. Kristoffel Demoen and Björn Isebaert are preparing a new edition of the *Paradeisos*, based not only on these four manuscripts and the  $\beta$ -tradition (in their edition, the  $\varepsilon$ -tradition), but also on an important newly discovered manuscript, Athous Ib. 187 (s. xv).

20 See Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme*, vol. 2, pp. 403–06 (Add19–21).

21 See Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme*, vol. 3, pp. 256–60 (GR69) and 435–39 (IT13).

otherwise unknown monk called Nektarios.<sup>22</sup> While the two verse inscriptions originally served a practical purpose and had a physical link with the objects they recreated in verse (the tomb of Bardanes and the church of Saints Peter and Paul), they assumed another literary dimension in their new environment. Strategically placed between Nicholas of Otranto—who in one of his poems praises Michael II Komnenos Doukas—and the Salentian monk Nektarios, his poetry was there to remind the manuscript’s users of the close cultural links connecting Southern Italy to the Ionian Islands and the Despotate of Epirus. In a way the presence of Bardanes in a sylloge of local poetry from Otranto validates their claims that they too share in the cultural heritage of Byzantium.

The reuse of usually anonymous verse inscriptions is very common in Byzantine art and architecture. Good examples are the epigram found on a number of depictions of the Virgin Paraklesis (inc. τί μῆτερ αἰτεῖς, 4 vv.) and the protreptic epigram found at the entrance of many Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches (inc. ὁρῶν τὸ βῆμα, 5 vv.). The earliest examples of the Paraklesis epigram date from the 12th century, but there is some evidence that it was already in use in the 10th century.<sup>23</sup> The earliest examples of the protreptic epigram date from around the year 1000, and it remained immensely popular throughout the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period.<sup>24</sup> The Paraklesis epigram has come down to us in more than one version, and the text of the protreptic epigram differs widely from church to church. Each reuse of these two epigrams creates a new context, which means that one cannot understand the texts without taking into account the monuments or pictures in which these texts come to life. The same goes for book epigrams, another popular genre that favors the reuse of more or less the same text in various manuscripts: each manuscript is unique, and each occasion at which a book epigram is reused constitutes a unique literary moment.<sup>25</sup> The singularity of these literary moments by far outweighs the fact that the book epigrams in question are not “original”, but have been used before.



As there are as many contexts as there are texts, if not more, it is impossible to discuss them all within the compass of a single critical essay. In the following

22 Bardanes, ed. Rocchi, pp. 66–67.

23 See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, 166–70.

24 See Hörandner, “Zu einigen religiösen Epigrammen”, pp. 437–39.

25 For a corpus of 11th-century book epigrams, see the *Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams*, at <http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/>.

I shall restrict myself to three environments that were particularly conducive to literary pursuits in Byzantium: the court and its ceremonies, the religious sphere, and the schools and literary *theatra*.

Arguably the best studies of court poetry are by Wolfram Hörandner, the editor of the historical poems of Prodrornos. Court poetry is versified rhetoric celebrating members of the imperial family or high dignitaries with some affiliation to the Court, such as encomia in verse, ekphrasis in verse, monodies in verse, etc. Among these kinds of court poetry there is one that tends to be overlooked: *epithalamia* (wedding songs).<sup>26</sup> Almost all the Byzantine material Hörandner discusses dates from the Komnenian period and later: Theodore Prodrornos, Manganeios, Niketas Eugenianos, Niketas Choniates, Nicholas Eirenikos, and others. The genre is much older, of course: Sappho, Anacreon, Theocritus, and all that, as well as the school of Gaza (John of Gaza and George the Grammarian) in Late Antiquity, and Leo Choirosphaktes around the year 900.

Choirosphaktes is the author of two *epithalamia* in anacreontics celebrating one of the four marriages of Leo VI.<sup>27</sup> It is not certain which one, but the emphasis both poems place on the fact that the marriage is “lawful” strongly suggests either the second or the fourth, both to ladies called Zoe. The first of these (Zoe Zaoutsaina) was not considered suitable marriage material because she had been Leo’s concubine, while marrying the other Zoe (Karbonsina) was out of the question not only because she had shared his bed and given birth to a bastard (the future emperor Constantine VII), but also because it would be the emperor’s fourth and uncanonical marriage. For the theme of the marriage’s ‘lawfulness’, see for instance the following lines (L2. 43–46):

Παλάμαις ῥόδον λαβοῦσα	ποτὶ σὰς κόμιζε κοίτας,
ὁ ἔρωσ ὅπως συνών σοι	νομίμοις πόθοις δαμάσση.

Take the rose in your hands and bring it to your marriage-bed, that Eros may be with you and overpower you in lawful love-making.

The person addressed is the bride and Eros is the emperor.

While the political context of the theme of “lawfulness” is obvious, it is worth noting that the same lines, when used for another occasion, no longer

26 Hörandner, “Zur kommunikativen Funktion”, p. 117. Hörandner, “Court Poetry”, pp. 79–83. For *epithalamia*, see also Heisenberg, *Aus der Geschichte und Literatur der Palaiologenzeit*, pp. 98–112.

27 Choirosphaktes, ed. Ciccolella, nos. L2 and 3, pp. 73–107.



retain their sense of immediacy and contingency. I am referring to an anonymous *epithalamium* celebrating the marriage of Constantine VII and Helen, which plagiarizes the two texts of Choirosphaktes.<sup>28</sup> Lines 45–48 read:

Ἀπαλὴν κόρην λαβὼν γε                      ποτὶ σὰς κόμιζε κοίτας,  
ὁ ἔρωσ ὅπως συνῶν σοι                      νομίμους πόθους διδάξει.

Take the tender girl in your hands and bring her to your marriage-bed,  
that Eros may be with you and teach you lawful love-making.

The person addressed is the emperor and Eros is simply Eros.

Since there was nothing illegitimate about Constantine VII's marriage, a contextual reading of the word νομίμους, such as the one we applied to the *epithalamion* of Leo VI, is clearly incorrect. The only explanation is textual: the poet copied an earlier text without asking himself whether it made any sense in the context of 919. The lack of poetic talent is also clear in the change of addressee and the deadening effect this had on the bit about 'Eros being with you': the text loses its overt eroticism. In the poet's defense I should say that literary allusions and even textual borrowings are part and parcel of the anacreontic tradition: though he may be overdoing it, the poet follows in the footsteps of his predecessors. The two *epithalamia* of Leo Choirosphaktes, for example, engage in a subtle dialogue with both Anacreon and the school of Gaza, playfully alluding to stock motifs and clichés of the anacreontic tradition.<sup>29</sup>

As rightly pointed out by Ciccolella,<sup>30</sup> the *epithalamia* of Choirosphaktes also show striking parallels with a wedding song recorded in the *Book of Ceremonies*. There we read that on the eve of imperial weddings the brides were escorted to the palace while the sounds of tambourines and cymbals floated in the air and that, upon arrival, the *demes* would welcome them with the usual acclamations, and sing a song in their honor (in the first mode, ἦχος α'):

Ἄνθη ἐσώρευσα τοῦ ἀγροῦ  
καὶ εἰς τὴν παστὰδα εἰσήκα σπουδῆ·  
ζευγόνυμφον ἦλιον εἶδον  
εἰς χρυσέντιμον κλίνην·

28 (Ps.) Choirosphaktes, ed. Ciccolella, no. L5, pp. 109–15. The poem is incorrectly attributed to Choirosphaktes: see Giardina, "L'anacreontea 5 di Leone Magistro Chirofaktis".

29 Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti bizantini*, pp. lix–lxi.

30 Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti bizantini*, pp. 84–85.

ἀλλήλα ἠγκαλιζοντο  
 ποθητὴν ἐπιθυμίαν.  
 χαρὰ εἰς τὰ κάλλη αὐτῶν  
 τὰ ἐγλυκοθέατα  
 καὶ ῥόδα τὰ ῥοδοεὺμορφα·  
 χαρὰ εἰς τὸ ζεῦγος τὸ χρυσόν.

I gathered flowers of the field and rushed into the nuptial chamber; I saw the Sun wedlocked in his bed of golden splendour: the two were embracing each other with love and desire. May they enjoy their beauty, a sweet sight to behold, and their splendid rosy-red rosiness! Long live the golden couple!<sup>31</sup>

Whereas the *epithalamia* of Choiosphaktes celebrate a specific moment in time—a one-off event—the wedding song in the *Book of Ceremonies* is sung at recurrent festivities. The former have a historically grounded context, the latter is more generic in nature, which does not mean it is any less important. Its true importance lies in the fact that the text is so refreshingly vulgar: the compound adjectives, the adverb in -α, the use of the accusative for an adverbial phrase, the *makarismoi*. This strongly suggests that the text, though composed by a court poet, ultimately goes back to an authentic folk tradition, and may indirectly shed light on what went on at Byzantine weddings.

To recapitulate, there is a delicate interplay between text and context in the case of *epithalamia*. Because singing songs at weddings is such an old and venerated custom, poets are very aware of the literary tradition and tend to imitate or even borrow whole phrases from their predecessors. However, since social structures and institutions are historically embedded—and marriage is no exception to this general rule—each wedding song is by definition one of its kind. While textual approaches may help us to understand the generic features of the *epithalamium*, contextual readings may shed light on the specific circumstances that led to the creation of a particular *epithalamium*.



Religious poetry is generally ignored. It does not have the allure of hymnography and holds little interest to most Byzantinists, who traditionally tend to focus on classicizing texts. This is a pity because if we want to understand the Byzantines, we should take their religious sentiments seriously, and rather

<sup>31</sup> *De Ceremoniis*, 1.90 (81), ed. Reiske, vol. 1, p. 379.15–20 and Vogt, vol. 2, p. 180.

than seeking to find hidden agendas and crypto-pagan messages where there are none, we should take their religious utterances at face value.

These religious non-hymnodic poems are predominantly devotional prayers, and a substantial number of these have a clearly penitential character: to use the Byzantine term, they are “catanyctic”: poems of contrition.<sup>32</sup> There are all kinds of catanyctic poetry: alphabets, *eis heauton* poems, short prayers, and lyrical effusions of considerable length. As the genre is extremely popular, one may find more than one version of the same text or the use of the same or almost identical lines in various distinct poems. Typical for this kind of poetry is its seemingly ‘autobiographical’ character; the lyrical subject confesses to having fallen prey to the most terrible sins and to being the lowest of the low, utterly and totally worthless and unworthy, beyond the reaches of God’s unlimited grace and forgiveness. However, there is nothing autobiographical about catanyctic poetry, which expresses sentiments and experiences shared by all. In fact, the lyrical subject is not the voice of one person speaking, it is a multitude of voices, all bearing witness to man’s sinfulness.

Contrition (κατάνυξις) is one of the prime forms of Christian devotion: without it, no monk can ascend the heavenly ladder; no laic can hope to enter heaven. Catanyctic poetry helps the believers to find the right words and to express their innermost feelings when they are praying and confessing their sins to God in private. Catanyctic poems form part of the devotional practices of the Byzantines; they are recited, together with psalms and hymns, at set times: in the early morning, at evening, before going to bed, before communion, before confession, et cetera. While the social context of such poems is private devotion, some of these were eventually incorporated into euchologies and other liturgical collections. Good examples are the communion and confession prayers, which only gradually gained admittance into the liturgy. The difference between private and officially recognized devotional practices is, of course, slight, and there is no reason to assume that devotional texts, before they entered into ‘official’ euchologies, were just a personal choice. In fact, their use must have been widespread and generally accepted before they became part and parcel of the Byzantine liturgy.

The *Horologion* (“Book of Hours”) offers a whole set of communion prayers, one of which is metrical: no. 7 ἀπὸ ῥυπαρῶν χειλέων, ἀπὸ βδελυρᾶς καρδίας (“from sordid lips and an odious heart”), with a double ascription to Symeon the New Theologian and John of Damascus.<sup>33</sup> The earliest liturgical manuscripts to

32 For this type of poetry, see Giannouli, “Catanyctic Religious Poetry”.

33 *Ὡρολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, Venice 1832, pp. 504–07 = Venice 1851, pp. 447–49 = Rome 1876, pp. 316–18 = Athens s.d., pp. 578–80. The prayer is also found in the Zagoraios edition of

contain the prayer date from the 13th and 14th centuries,<sup>34</sup> but it must be considerably older. Since there are no other examples of the trochaic octasyllable before the late 10th century,<sup>35</sup> I would be inclined to date it to the 11th or perhaps the 12th century, though a 10th-century date cannot be excluded. It is a fervent prayer for forgiveness: the lyrical subject confesses his sins and pleads with God to be forgiven and be allowed to partake in holy communion, even reminding Him of His own words:

Σὺ γὰρ εἶπας, Δέσποτά μου·

πᾶς ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα,	πίνων δέ μου καὶ τὸ αἷμα,
ἐν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖτος μένει,	ἐν αὐτῷ δ' ἐγὼ τυγχάνω.
ἀληθῆς ὁ λόγος πάντως	τοῦ Δεσπότη καὶ Θεοῦ μου·
τῶν γὰρ θείων ὁ μετέχων	καὶ θεοποιῶν χαρίτων
οὔμενον οὐκ ἔστι μόνος,	ἀλλὰ μετὰ σοῦ, Χριστέ μου,
τοῦ φωτὸς τοῦ τρισηλίου,	τοῦ φωτίζοντος τὸν κόσμον.

For you have said, my Lord: “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him”. The word of my Lord and God is true indeed, for he who shares in the holy and godly graces is in no way alone, but is with you, my Christ, the thrice-radiant light that enlightens the world (lines 58–70).

At the very end of this prayer we read that the lyrical subject, being found worthy of Holy Communion, worships, magnifies and glorifies God “with a grateful mind and grateful heart, with the grateful μέλη of my soul and body” (lines 129–134). The word μέλη has multiple meanings: members, limbs, songs. The μέλη signify the movements of the limbs, the body language, the kneeling congregation; the movements of the soul, the divine rapture, the receiving of God’s endless grace; the singing of psalms and odes in church and the recital of prayers such as this one in solitude; and the joy of taking part in

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Symeon the New Theologian: see Koder, “Ein Dreifaltigkeitshymnus”, p. 129. In *Patrologia Graeca* 96, cols. 853–56, the prayer is attributed to John of Damascus; Migne’s source is ed. Billius, *Ioannis Damasceni Opera*, pp. 593–95. The prayer cannot be the work of John of Damascus: see Nissen, *Die byzantinischen Anacreonteen*, pp. 72–74. Nor can it be the work of Symeon the New Theologian: see *Symeon the New Theologian*, ed. Koder, vol. 1, 21.

34 Parpulov, *Toward a History of Byzantine Psalters* (in Appendix C 2 on the accompanying CD-rom), mentions Laura B 14 (s. XI<sup>11</sup>) and Brux. IV 912 (s. XI<sup>14</sup> in.); Alexopoulos/Van den Hoek, “The Endicott Scroll”, p. 185, mention Sinait. 728 (a. 1375) and Sinait. 712 (a. 1482) as the earliest *horologia* to contain the prayer.

35 See Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*, pp. 52–53.

holy communion and joining in with others. Whereas the prayer starts off as a solitary preparation for Holy Communion, it ends with the faithful actually taking part in it in church. Within the compass of a mere 136 lines, the prayer symbolically follows a trajectory from private devotion to communal service and from seclusion to inclusion.

Just as the text of this anonymous prayer is incomprehensible without the context of private devotion and communal services in Byzantium, so too is this context intangible and elusive without a proper understanding of texts that bear witness to the spiritual anxieties of the Byzantines. Texts and contexts are in a relationship of mutual dependence.



As Floris Bernard has shown in his masterly study of 11th-century poetry, the literary theatres and the inter-school contests made intellectual life in the capital competitive, if not outright combative and aggressive.<sup>36</sup> They also created the conditions for the development of one of Byzantium's most productive genres: satire.<sup>37</sup> Byzantine satire has always had a bad press because of modern sensitivities and standards of propriety; and the lack of humor in academic circles did not help much to redress the balance. However, if we wish to understand Byzantine society and the literature it created, there is no genre that gets us closer to the roots of Byzantine creativity than satire. It allows us to see the Byzantine intellectual, the λόγιος, in his natural environment: the literary theatre (θέατρον) where he reads out his work to his peers, listens to other scholars and engages in scholarly debates, sometimes with reasonable objections and good arguments, but more often with a torrent of abuse and ridicule.

Take for example Psellos' brilliant excursus on scabies (poem no. 62), a poem the editor for no good reason puts among the 'spuria', even though the author calls himself "Michael" in the metrical heading attached to it, and the two collections that contain it (Par. Suppl. gr. 690 and Laur. 32.52)<sup>38</sup> are relatively close to the age of Psellos. The only argument given is that the poem tells us how this Michael was once physically abused in the church of the Holy Apostles—and according to Westerink, no one would have dared to do such a thing to Psellos

36 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 253–90.

37 For which, see Baldwin, "A Talent to Abuse".

38 Par. Suppl. gr. 690 dates from the early 12th century. Laur. 32.52 dates from the early 14th century, but the collection of poems and prose texts on fols. 122–25 probably dates from the early 12th century, given the unexpected presence therein of two second-rate intellectuals active during the reign of Alexios Komnenos, Nikephoros and Manuel Straboromanos.

after his tonsure in 1054 when he changed his name to Michael. This is frankly a nonsensical argument; Psellos made many enemies in his long career and there were many moments in his life when he did not enjoy imperial support and, besides, the poem explicitly tells us that this incident happened *πάλαι*, 'long ago', that is to say possibly *before* his tonsure. The poem is a *psogos* (invective) of scabies; it is a pendant to Psellos' mock encomia of the flea, the louse and the bedbug, which, as the author himself writes, had an educational purpose, namely 'to show you (i.e. his students) the power of *logos*'.<sup>39</sup> The poem describes Psellos' tragi-hilarious struggle with scabies throughout the day: how the itching pain prevents him from writing (the very existence of the poem belies this claim), how he cannot sit still when he eats and drinks with his friends, how he cannot sleep but keeps scratching himself at night, how he cannot sing in the morning service because of his scabies, and how his only temporary relief is a visit to the bathhouse.<sup>40</sup>

At this point, however, this hilarious exercise in the art of *psogos* suddenly turns into real satire. Just as in one of the graffiti on the Parthenon, where a betrayed lover asks the Holy Virgin to afflict his rival in love with a hernia,<sup>41</sup> so too does Psellos beseech Christ to release him from his scabies and instead visit it upon Adrianos, a mean bastard who once beat him up during an imperial procession in the church of the Holy Apostles. As we have no further information on the *comes* Adrianos,<sup>42</sup> nor on his reasons for beating up Psellos, it is idle to speculate on the precise circumstances. However, it is worth pointing out that physical abuse in church is not an uncommon phenomenon, at least not in Byzantine poetry. See, for example, Manasses' unabashed confession of attacking a foul-smelling Cypriot during a church service, or Mitylenaios' account of an over-diligent officer beating up the folk that took part in a procession.<sup>43</sup> As rightly pointed out by Paul Magdalino, Byzantine poetry is unique in commenting on 'the normal situations of ordinary life' and reporting 'the extraordinary incidents' as well.<sup>44</sup> It provides information that cannot be found anywhere

39 Psellos, *Oratoria Minora*, ed. Littlewood, nos. 27–79; the quote comes from no. 28.121–122. See also Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 173–74.

40 Psellos, *Poemata*, ed. Westerink, pp. 430–31, no. 62, vv. 1–43.

41 Eds. Orlandos/Vranousis, *Τὰ χαράγματα τοῦ Παρθενῶνος*, p. 5, no. 9.

42 Though it is interesting to note that in the only letter in which Psellos admits to having been the victim of physical abuse in the church (ed. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 5, pp. 381–82 (no. 139), he singles out "the tattooed eunuch", "the great evil of mockery", and "the bearded comet" (τὸν πωγωνίαν κομήτην): is this the κόμης Ἀδριανός?

43 See Manasses, *Hodoiporikon*, ed. Chrysogelos, pp. 146–50, vv. 4.89–130, and Christopher Mitylenaios, ed. Kurtz, pp. 1–2, no. 1, esp. vv. 29–35.

44 Magdalino, "Cultural Change?", p. 24.

else. Magdalino has a name for it: ‘poetic journalism’.<sup>45</sup> I would rather call it a form of ‘public diary-keeping’ because it is intimate and personal; it is like a column in a newspaper, a blog on the internet, or even a tweet on Twitter. Psellos’ poem ends in a splendid fashion:

καὶ νῦν ἐν ὕπνοις τὸν κορυνήτην βλέπων  
 ὀρμώμενον τύψαι με, καὶ διδοῦς δρόμῳ  
 λείπω τὸν ἐχθρὸν καὶ τὸν ὕπνον αὐτίκα.

And now, every time I see this bully in my dreams running to beat me up,  
 I leg it and at once abandon both sleep and enemy.

And while fleeing from Adrianos and abandoning sleep, the narrating ‘I’ exits the poem with equal speed.

The context for the production of this kind of vaguely autobiographical and extremely funny in-your-face poetry is the literary theatre, the heterotopy where intellectuals meet to discuss their work and engage in banter and ridicule. It is worth emphasizing how incredibly rapidly scholarly discussions tend to become personal in Byzantium. Take, for example, Michael Glykas’ analysis (in verse!) of vernacular proverbs: it is a rather far-fetched interpretation of these sayings with a strong focus on theological hermeneutics, and is clearly intended to illustrate certain dogmatic truths to an audience of students. But there are a number of autobiographical elements interspersed in the commentary, the most important of which is an extended passage in which Glykas complains to the emperor that he has been abandoned by all and sundry, robbed of all his possessions, and left to die in grave misery.<sup>46</sup>

It is in their natural habitats—the schools, the literary theatres—that Byzantine intellectuals shed off all forms of decency and decorum (and the emperor’s clothes) and begin to talk about what really matters to them: their social positions, their intellectual capacities, their self-worth. Psellos’ scabies is a metaphor for the plight of the Byzantine λόγιος, down on his luck and abused by dumbwits, such as that dreadful *comes* Adrianos, but still capable of writing a piece of superb satire and delivering it to his own literary circle with inimitable gusto and punch.



45 Magdalino, “Cultural Change?”, p. 25.

46 See Glykas, ed. Efstratiadis, vol. 1, pp. ροε’–ροζ’ (poem 2, vv. 333–78).

In the above I have looked at three specific textual and contextual areas that are highly conducive to the production of λόγοι in Byzantium: court ceremonial, private devotion, and professional rivalry. I have offered contextual readings, and argued that just as there are no texts without contexts, there are no contexts without texts; it is not a matter of 'either/or'. Philology and literary sociology are perfectly compatible. As a recent editor of Donne's sermons reminds us, though the current emphasis on political, doctrinal and social contexts has been salutary in many respects, "There is a danger that the pendulum may have swung too far in turning from formal analysis: the most rewarding and revealing interpretations of the sermons have been careful to balance detailed consideration of their contexts with alertness to their formal strategies. This is important because form and context are separated at risk".<sup>47</sup> Or, to quote myself, "form matters".<sup>48</sup> What I meant by this is not only that formal analysis helps to discover the inner workings of literary texts and reveal meanings that would otherwise go unnoticed, but also, on a deeper level, that form *is* matter: form is the essence of any literary text. This is why historically contextualizing approaches cannot, and should not, ignore formal aspects of texts.

In this essay I have also argued that each reuse of a text constitutes a new context. Each time a text is reread, it is reinterpreted and recontextualized. As modern readers we are at the very end of this chain of rereadings, reinterpretations and recontextualizations that stretches out through time. Texts themselves do not pose questions; it is us who interrogate these texts and try to make sense of them. This is why contextual readings of Byzantine texts are as much about us as they are about them (them being the obnoxious Byzantines with their annoyingly highbrow Greek and their arcane literary codes). So the most difficult question of all is what the context is of all this contextualizing. It is the most difficult of questions, not only because it is personal (why do you do what you do?), but also because it leads to a logical dead-end: any answer to it would by definition be of a contextualizing nature and, therefore, be self-defeating. It is therefore not a question I am willing to answer, but it is, I think, a question worth posing because it makes us aware of the fact that the true context of Byzantine poetry lies in the here and now. One reads the text; one becomes the context.

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47 Ed. Colclough, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne*, vol. 3, pp. xxv–xxvi.

48 Lauxtermann, "Byzantine Didactic Poetry", p. 46.



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# The Language of Byzantine Poetry: New Words, Alternative Forms, and “Mixed Language”

*Martin Hinterberger*

Formale Beschränkungen sind wie eine Batterie,  
die Strom erzeugt\*



## 1 Introduction: the Language of Poetry in the Context of the Language of Byzantine Literature in General

The language of Byzantine poetry is the written medieval Greek which appears in a broad spectrum of varieties.<sup>1</sup> To various degrees this written language was deeply influenced by model texts from the distant past (especially from the classical Greek period), since the language of higher education was the language of this ancient Greek literary heritage, and grammars and lexica were available only for this type of Greek. However, the influence of the literary tradition is primarily reflected in orthography, morphology, and lexicon. Yet, with regard to syntax and semantics, the Byzantine literary language, even in its most classicizing forms, is deeply influenced by the contemporary Greek of everyday oral communication, and therefore subject to constant change.<sup>2</sup> A literary language, based predominantly in terms of morphology and vocabulary on the spoken language, was only gradually developed from the 12th century onwards.

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\* Wolf Haas, “Warum lieben wir Krimis?” in the weekly newspaper “Die Zeit” (no. 12/2015), pp. 17–19, here p. 17.

1 For a short overview, see Wahlgren, “Byzantine Literature”. Browning, “The Language” provides insightful remarks on many authors/works. See also Toufexis, “Diglossia”.

2 Horrocks, “High-Register Medieval Greek” and id., “Georgios Akropolites”. Rollo, “Greco medievale”, pp. 437–43.

In order to systematize the often perplexing varieties of written Byzantine Greek one can distinguish three categories:<sup>3</sup> a) texts incorporating, for stylistic reasons and for the sake of genre conventions, linguistic features entirely foreign to the spoken living language. Therefore, this type is also called classicizing or “atticizing”, i.e. imitating a virtually attic ideal, but in reality comprising the whole range of “classical” literature, late antique and earlier, as well as contemporary Byzantine classicizing texts.<sup>4</sup> These texts also avoid as much as possible any visible traces of this spoken language; b) texts avoiding both clearly outdated linguistic features as well as clearly “modern” language (called “Byzantine koine”); c) texts also based in terms of morphology on the spoken language, but permit certain conservative features as well.

Since, morphologically, categories a) and b) were based on older forms of the language, they are labelled “texts in the learned language” (or “Hochsprache”), whereas category c) is usually called “literature in the vernacular”. Yet, transitional grey zones between the categories sketched out above cover broader areas than the “pure” categories themselves. Therefore, instead of dividing Byzantine literature into strictly separated fields according to the texts’ linguistic appearance, one should rather view these multifarious linguistic levels or registers as manifestations of one and the same language and treat them together (without of course ignoring the manifest differences).<sup>5</sup> Whereas the language of vernacular literature has always attracted the interest of historical linguists, the so-called learned language, because of its alleged identity with ancient Greek, has been largely neglected until recently.<sup>6</sup> This is the reason for the almost complete lack of comprehensive studies on the learned language, which poses a problem for the present chapter as well.

Traditional classicizing poetry was perhaps more obviously affected than other genres by the historical changes that the Greek language underwent. Classical and early Byzantine poetry was based on a variety of rhythmical patterns (meters) produced primarily by the sequence of long and short syllables. By the 6th century the distinction between long and short vowels (and subsequently syllables) had been totally lost, and the dynamic accent was replaced by the stress accent. Isosyllaby and regulated accentual patterns based

3 Ševčenko, “Levels of Style”. In this insightful and highly influential study, poetry is, however, not taken into consideration.

4 Browning, “Language of Literature”, p. 107, therefore very aptly speaks of “conceptual classicism”.

5 Trapp, “Learned and Vernacular”.

6 Horrocks “High-Register Medieval Greek” and id., “Georgios Akropolis”; Hinterberger, *Language of Learned Literature*.

on stress became the new principle of Byzantine metrics.<sup>7</sup> As the logic behind each verse line was the same time duration, the substitution of a long syllable with two short syllables in ancient metrics had become unintelligible to the Byzantine ear (although poems in these metres continued to be produced, yet were largely pure “Augenpoesie”). Therefore, the most productive Byzantine metre of ancient origin, the Byzantine twelve-syllable verse, is based on an invariable number of syllables.

Poetry as a whole, with its traditional/classicizing and “modern” genres, is fairly representative of the general linguistic situation of Byzantine literature. All kinds of linguistic registers are to be found. To a great extent, the language of a poem is directly connected to its genre. As a rule, hexameters or elegiac distichs are invariably written in a highly classicizing, usually Homerizing/epic language (the equivalent of “atticizing” language in other genres). The vocabulary of the dodecasyllable ranges from highly classicizing to koine, while in terms of morphology it is more consistently classicizing. The language of the *politikos stichos* stretches from koine to the vernacular. Ecclesiastical hymns of the Middle and Late Byzantine period, primarily the *kanon*, are composed in the (ecclesiastical) koine, which, due to the outspokenly classicizing language of the first known authors of *kanones*, and their imitation by subsequent poets, often has quite classicizing traits.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 General Observations on the Language of Poetry

To the best of my knowledge there exists no comprehensive study on the language of Byzantine poetry. Besides a few in-depth investigations into certain authors/texts (most of them supposed to reflect the spoken language to a considerable degree),<sup>9</sup> important research has been conducted in the framework of introductory chapters to the edition of verse texts.<sup>10</sup> As in studies of other literary categories, the ancient Greek language appears as the point of refer-

7 Hörandner, “Poetry and Romances”, pp. 895–96. Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, p. 69; cf. *ibid.* pp. 78–80.

8 See e.g. Detorakis, *Κοσμάς*, pp. 134–39; Mineva, *Το υμνογραφικό έργο*, pp. 187–88. Early Byzantine *kontakia* on the other hand quite clearly also reflect the influence of the spoken language in morphology (Mitsakis, *Romanos*).

9 E.g. Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, “Language and Style of the Dioptra”; Apostolopoulos, *La langue*; Christensen, “Sprache des Alexandergedichtes”; Egea, *Gramática*; Mitsakis, *Romanos*; Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 91–94.

10 Particularly useful are e.g. Speck, *Jamben*, pp. 70–103; Vassis, “Constantine of Rhodes”, pp. 11–13.

ence for poetry in the learned language, and, respectively, modern Greek for poetry in the vernacular. In both cases textbook rules (regarding spelling, but also morphology and occasionally syntax) which were probably not valid at the time of the composition of the texts under scrutiny, are imposed. One, therefore, can read that a certain poet's use of language is "faulty" or, on the contrary, "remarkably correct". It has to be emphasized that in principle the language of Byzantine poetry is of course "correct".

When the language of verse texts is examined from the perspective of historical linguistics, two diametrically opposed attitudes concerning the usefulness of poetry can be observed, namely that: a) metrical texts offer privileged insight into the reality of language because rhythm, and therefore the actual pronunciation, especially accentuation, is directly related to the metrical form;<sup>11</sup> but also that b) precisely because of its poetic form (and its concomitant metrical constraints) the language of poetry, being a specially developed *Kunstsprache*, provides only a distorted picture of the linguistic reality.<sup>12</sup> In my opinion, the latter assumption has been convincingly refuted.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning the principal difference between prose and poetic language, it seems to be generally accepted that the poetic language is dense and tight, its meaning is compressed, and for this reason a line of verse has more "specific weight" than a line in prose. In the case of Symeon the New Theologian, for instance, whose hymns partly repeat what the author had already said in prose, Johannes Koder has demonstrated that, on its way from prose to verse, the message Symeon seeks to convey, undergoes primarily a process of semantic condensation.<sup>14</sup> To some extent, and particularly in certain genres, poetry also means a specific form of language, particularly Homeric/epic language in hexameter poems, as well as the recycling of parts of lines or whole lines of older poetry, not forgetting the so-called *centos*.<sup>15</sup> Kristoffel Demoen analyzing the verse encomium on Saint Panteleemon by John Geometres (a verse *metaphrasis* of a hagiographical prose text), establishes primarily a transposition to a different linguistic level, strongly influenced by ancient tragedy, with clear references to classical texts and a preference for certain favourite poetic words.<sup>16</sup>

11 Lauxtermann, "Review", p. 367.

12 E.g. Horrocks, "Language", p. 783: "the distorting effects of metre and other literary conventions".

13 Soltic, "The Πολιτικός Στίχος Poetry", or Mackridge, "An Editorial Problem", esp. p. 333.

14 Cf. Koder, "Ο Συμμεών", pp. 9–16.

15 Cf. also Jeffreys, "Why Produce Verse", p. 220.

16 Demoen, "Iambic Life", pp. 182–83.

### 2.1 *The General Impact of Metre*

Since the end of a line of verse generally tends to coincide with the end of a syntactic unit (especially in the case of the twelve- and fifteen-syllable verse), the most obvious, and perhaps most significant impact of the metre on language is the production of rather short semantic/syntactic units, mostly complete sentences or, at least, complete constituents of a sentence.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the subdivision into cola and respectively half-lines produces even shorter syntactic units, since the caesurae (B5, B7 in the dodecasyllable, B8 in the *politikos stichos*) are not allowed to separate closely connected syntactic units.<sup>18</sup> In principle, this division into short units also limits the maximal length of words to five or seven syllables in the twelve-syllable line (with some remarkable exceptions) and eight or seven syllables in the fifteen-syllable verse. This quite often produces words of exactly this length (i.e. five/seven-syllable words and eight/seven-syllable words respectively; see below “new words”).<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the rhythmical and prosodic patterns underlying poetry impose certain restrictions on the language used. According to these patterns only specific sequences of accentuated and non-accentuated and/or specific sequences of (erstwhile) long and short syllables are possible in the metrical framework. For instance, a sequence of three short syllables is not permitted in any prosodic metre.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent accentuated syllables, i.e. a word ending in an accentuated syllable followed by a word beginning with an accentuated syllable, are basically not permitted in fifteen-syllable verse except when the words are divided by the caesura. Since in Late Byzantine fifteen-syllable verse, accentuation on the third syllable of the line is generally avoided, the line cannot start with a word accentuated on its third syllable.

Yet, language also influences metre. Thus, it has been convincingly argued that the fifteen-syllable verse in the vernacular shows a higher percentage in first half-lines ending with an accentuated syllable, because the vernacular is richer in words ending in an accentuated syllable than the learned language.<sup>21</sup>

17 Cf. Hörandner, “Literarästhetik”, p. 288, on the sentence completed within a verse as an aesthetic principle, especially in short poems. For modern poetry, see Eagleton, *How to Read*, p. 97: “the lines are units of meaning”. Therefore, Byzantine lines also tend to contain at least one verbal form (finite or participle or infinitive).

18 Cf. Soltic, “The Late Medieval Greek Vernacular Πολιτικός Στίχος Poetry”, p. 99.

19 See also the list of words filling a whole line in Komines, *Ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα*, p. 81.

20 See also Stickler, *Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 157 on words possible only in fifteen-syllable verse.

21 Alexiou, “Bemerkungen”.



### 2.2 *The Impact of Prosody on Orthography*

Dichrona (α, ι, υ) which, according to traditional grammar, would be regarded as long, and therefore bear the circumflex, may have the acute/grave accent when the metre requires those syllables to be regarded as short. This is in order to indicate explicitly that they are meant to be short in the specific position.<sup>22</sup> Since such forms are to be found also in prose texts,<sup>23</sup> a general fluctuation in spelling conventions seems to have been deliberately and consciously exploited in metrical texts.

### 2.3 *Hiatus*

In learned texts the hiatus is generally avoided (primarily through elision, crasis, variable features like ν *ephelestikon*, alternative forms, variation of word order), yet is tolerated with certain short words ending in short vowels, like πρό, περί, τί, ὄτι. Hereby, Byzantine pronunciation has to be taken into consideration, which is decisive for producing hiatus or not. Thus, for example, αῶ, φεῦ, ἄνευ produce only an “optical hiatus” because, when pronounced, they are not ending in a vowel, but in the consonant /v/.<sup>24</sup>



Having made these general remarks, I shall now focus on three issues, the first two of them are more or less directly (though not exclusively) related to the choice of words in dependence of the metrical form: neologisms and alternative forms. In a third section I shall then treat the issue of linguistic/stylistic levels in the context of poetry. All of these topics are, at the same time, major subjects for the exploration of the language of Byzantine literature in general. They have though a special relevance to poetry.

## 3 **New Words as a Concession to Metrical Necessity and as a Stylistic Device: between Metrical Pressure and Creativity**

Generally and diachronically, poetry is characterized by a high sensitivity for diction: the choice of words.<sup>25</sup> Due to conventions of genre and the high

22 Cf. Speck, *Jamben*, p. 83; Papagiannis, *Tetrasticha*, pp. 165–67 and 206; de Groote, “Accentuation”, p. 134; Vassis, “Constantine of Rhodes”, p. 13. The reverse phenomenon (circumflex instead of acute/grave) is less frequent.

23 Noret, “L’accentuation”, pp. 117–18.

24 Cf. e.g. Westerink, *Pselli poemata*, p. XXXVIII; Vassis, “Constantine of Rhodes”, pp. 12–13.

25 Cf. e.g. Lennard, *Poetry Handbook*, p. 223, and Eagleton, *How to Read*, p. 21.

degree of imitation, Byzantine learned poetry is strongly influenced by ancient Greek poetic vocabulary. On the other hand, however, poetry is also the literary category where new words are remarkably frequent, constituting a significant stylistic device, as well as an explicit sign of the creative use of language. Moreover, in Byzantium, poetry is the principal medium of puns as well as of verbal offence.

Thanks in particular to the work of Erich Trapp et al. *Lexikon zur Byzantinischen Gräzität* (hereafter *LBG*), and the research connected to it, the vocabulary of Byzantine literature is probably the best explored area of medieval Greek. Poetic neologisms, accounting for a considerable portion of the *LBG*-lemmata, are obviously shaped in accordance with the metrical requirements of a given poem. Occasionally, metrical pressure may have stretched the flexibility inherent to the language to an extreme, e.g. by adding further prefixes to an already prefixed word, apparently without semantic differentiation.<sup>26</sup> It is unlikely though that incorrect words (i.e. perceived as such by the author and/or his audience/readership) were generated.<sup>27</sup>

An inclination for the use of new words may be a general characteristic of a certain author, and can manifest itself in poetry as well as in prose, but it is usually in poems where this trend is most obvious. In the following I shall give a short overview of poets who were the most remarkable creators of new words.

George Pisides' rather short hexametrical poem *On Human Life* contains no fewer than 18 new words in only 90 lines. Less dense but nevertheless impressive is the appearance of new words in Pisides' *Hexaemeron* (1864 dodecasyllable lines), that has 40 new adjectives and nouns alone, besides a plethora of rare words. Interestingly, this obvious liking for neologisms is decidedly less marked in Pisides' historical poems (though a few neologisms appear there too) as well as in his *De vita vana*. A simple analysis of Pisides' new words reveals a clear preference for certain patterns of word formation. Pisides is particularly fond of adjectives constituting a combination of noun/adjective+verbal adjective (e.g. λαμπρόκλωστος, παχύκλωστος, φωτόχυτος, ψαλμοκίνητος) or of

26 Aerts, *Alexander Poem*, p. 13; see also D'Ambrosi, *I tetrastici*, pp. 92–93.

27 For examples of the "arbitrary use of words", see Aerts, *Alexander Poem*, pp. 16–21. Cf. also Schönauer, *Steinkatalog*, p. 50\*. It is, however, difficult to judge with certainty whether a particular word is generally accepted or tolerated only in poetry. Irregular/abnormal numerals used by Michael Psellos in his fifteen-syllable *On the Inscriptions of the Psalms* (e.g. ἑβδομηκοστόπρωτος 214, ἑξηκοστένατος 206, ἑξηκοστοδεύτερος 193, ed. Westerink) seem to belong to the latter category (though some of these forms are also attested in other texts, cf. *LBG* s.v.).

adjective+noun (e.g. λεπτοδάκτυλος, ώμόσαρκος).<sup>28</sup> It is remarkable that the new words shaped according to these patterns appear in both the hexametrical poem and the iambic *Hexaemeron*, though normally these two genres are quite clearly differentiated. In general, Pisides' diction in hexameter is less markedly different from his language in iambic trimeter poems than we see with other authors.<sup>29</sup>

During the 8th century a manneristic fashion of coining bizarre multiple compounds emerged, most probably, by John Arklas' iambic *kanones*; the most notorious word perhaps being άκτιστοσυμπλαστουργοσύθρονος "uncreated co-creator sharing the throne". According to Marc Lauxtermann this fashion became popular in poetry dating from the 9th and 10th century.<sup>30</sup> Its most (in)famous adherent is probably Leo Choirosphaktes. Some of his extravagant compounds found in dodecasyllables are δοξολεπτομωρία, κρουνοχυτρόληρος, ψευδοτεχνοκαπνοβορβορόστομος (11 syllables!).<sup>31</sup> Leo's penchant for such three (and occasionally multi-) component compounds can also be observed in his anacreontic poems, e.g. άκροβλαστοχρυσόμορφος (filling a whole eight-syllable line) or the six-syllable words θολοκογχόχρυσος, λευκοκρινόχρως, λυροκαλλίμοπος, μελοτραυλόφωνος.<sup>32</sup>

Choirosphaktes was ridiculed by Constantine Rhodios for this stylistic peculiarity and mocked in a poem which makes use of 37 monstrous neologisms, all of them insulting Leo.<sup>33</sup> Constantine Rhodios addresses Leo directly with words filling entire twelve-syllable lines, such as έλληνοθηρσκοχριστοβλασφημότροπος or πρεσβευτοκερδοσυγχυτοσπονδοφθόρος.<sup>34</sup>

In fact, in his non-satirical poems, Constantine Rhodios' diction, unlike Choirosphaktes', is indeed much more conservative, following the tradition of George Pisides. Yet, in his *Ekphrasis of the Seven Wonders of Constantinople and the Church of the Holy Apostles* (981 dodecasyllables), Rhodios uses quite a lot of new words, approximately 30 (almost exclusively adjectives).<sup>35</sup> Remarkable are two substantial groups of new composite adjectives with the

28 For all those words, see Lampe, *Patristic Lexicon*, s.v., except παχύκλωστος for which see *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität*, s.v.

29 Browning, *Language*, p. 113: "His language is essentially literary koine, a medium used heretofore almost entirely for prose". See also below, p. 46.

30 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 136–37.

31 See the index in Vassis, *Choirosphaktes*.

32 See the index in Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti*.

33 Vassis, *Choirosphaktes*, pp. 9 and 46; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 137.

34 Constantine Rhodios, *Poems*, ed. Matranga, *Anecdota*, pp. 624–26.

35 Cf. the index in James, *Constantine of Rhodes*. Words containing the component -σύθητος had already been used by Pisides, e.g. άντισύθητος, σφαιροσύθητος (cf. Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v.).

second component -σύνθετος and -μορφος respectively: e.g. ἀστροσύνθετος, πεντασύνθετος, χαλκοσύνθετος and βλαστόμορφος, πενταστρόμορφος, πηγανόμορφος, χρυσολαμπόμορφος.

In the 11th century, neologisms seem to have been much less in fashion than in the previous and following centuries. In the 12th century, however, Niketas Eugenianos coined a significant number of compound words consisting of three and even more components,<sup>36</sup> such as πτηνοτοξοπυρφόρος (“with wings, bow and fire”), λευκερυθροφωσφόρος (“iridescent in white and red”), or σκληροπετρόστερνος (“with a breast hard like a stone”), which are all *hapax legomena* describing the protagonist of the novel or god Eros.

The author who has to be credited with the highest number of new words is Constantine Manasses (12th century).<sup>37</sup> Whereas general word formation patterns are very similar in George Pisides and Constantine Manasses, new words in these two authors differ in length. While the majority of Pisides’ words have four or five syllables, many of Manasses’ neologisms stretch over five and six syllables (βλοσυροβλέφαρος, πνευματοκίνητος, προφυροβλάστητος, τρυφεροπάριος).<sup>38</sup> Again, many of Manasses’ new words can be grouped according to their second component, such as words ending in -κάρδιος (altogether 15 words: e.g. άγριο-, άνδρο-, γενναιο-, δακνο-, δειλο-, έλευθερο-). Another substantial group consists of words ending in -πρόσωπος (e.g. σοβαρο-, τρυφερο-) and -φύτευτος (e.g. άστρο-, πορφυρο-). Such compounds appear both in Manasses’ chronicle and his novel, indicating that these words constitute a very specific characteristic of Manasses’ personal style. As already in Eugenianos, in Manasses too a few three-component compounds appear as well, such as βελεμνοτοξοφόρος (“carrying arrow and bow”), μυσαροκοπρώνυμος (“with an abominable shit-name”), and όρχηστοφιλοπαίγμων (“loving dances and games”), initiating a mass production of such words in the vernacular romances of the following centuries.

A limited number of words per line is a known stylistic device. The phenomenon of three-word lines/iambus of ancient poetry, the so-called “three-word trimeter”, also appears in Byzantine poems, e.g. by Leo Choïrosphaktes or Constantine Rhodios.<sup>39</sup> An even stronger stylistic effect is produced by

36 See the index in Conca, *Nicetas Eugenianus*; cf. Beaton, *Romance*, pp. 78 and 241 (note 32).

37 According to Lampsides, *Manassis Chronicle*, p. lxii there are almost 800 thesaurista in the *Chronicle* alone.

38 For these and the following words, see *LBG*, s.v. Neologisms in Theodore Balsamon’s poems tend to be even longer, cf. Horna, “Die Epigramme”, pp. 215–17 (25 seven-syllable words).

39 Vassis, *Chiliostichos*, p. 46 and id., “Constantine of Rhodes”, p. 11; cf. also Hörandner, “Literärästhetik”, p. 285.

lines containing only two words, and in extreme cases only one (see also above). Another stylistic peculiarity of Manasses, which developed into a stylistic characteristic of Late Byzantine vernacular poetry (and also in the *Sophrosyne-poem*), are such one-word half-lines. These are mostly second half-lines, occasionally formed by new words, e.g. μεγαλαγκυλοχείλαι, ἀπεραντολεσχίαν.<sup>40</sup> Such manneristic composite words, each of them filling a half-line, also appear in the Ptochoprodromic poems (παραγεμιστοτράχηλος, μεταξοσφικτουράτος),<sup>41</sup> and already in the demotic 10th-century *Song about Empress Theophano* (κουκκουροβουκινάτορες φουκτοκωλοτρύπατοι), which may indicate a liking for such formations in the spoken language.<sup>42</sup> In both cases, these bizarre words increase and emphasize the humoristic or scoptic character of the lines.

In some poems (often again of a humoristic character) neologisms and *hapax legomena* cluster around a specific semantic field, usually the central idea of the poem. In Leo the Philosopher's (9th century) epigram *On a Stuttering Pupil of His*, such *hapax legomena* are thematically linked to the stuttering of the addressee.<sup>43</sup> The first three lines of this five-line poem consist almost entirely of the following *hapax legomena* (based on the root τραυλ- "stutter"): τραυλορήμων, τραυλεπίτραυλος, τραυλόλαλος, πάντραυλος, ἔντραυλος and τραυληγορέω.

Theodore Balsamon (12th century) too wrote a pair of humorous epigrams, the first addressing a small eunuch (Εἰς εὐνουχόπουλον), the second addressing a tall cupbearer, though as if composed by the small eunuch.<sup>44</sup> Both dodecasyllable poems consist of 12 lines, the first containing five *hapax legomena*, the second an incredible 12, which almost all cover the entire first colon (i.e. five syllables before B5). The second poem answers the first, using neologisms corresponding to those used in the first poem. By emphasizing the contrast in bodily dimensions, these compounds are formed in the first poem with the component μυρμηκο- ("ant") and in the second with the component γιγαντο- ("giant"): μυρμηκοφυής—γιγαντοφυής, μυρμηκοτραφής—γιγαντοτραφής, μυρμηκοτρυφάω—γιγαντοτρυφάω. Moreover μυρμηκομοχθέω corresponds with κυπελλομοχθέω, the cup being the symbolic tool of the cupbearer's service.

40 Constantine Manasses, *Chronicle* 155 and 3161, ed. Lampsides, pp. 12 and 173.

41 *Ptochoprodromika* 3.69, ed. Eideneier, p. 176.

42 Horrocks, *Greek*, pp. 331–32 (with reference) and 342 ("over-the-top compounds"); Beaton, *Romance*, p. 241 (note 32); Kulhánková, "Das Eindringen", pp. 241–42.

43 Leo the Philosopher, *Epigram* 11, ed. Westerink, pp. 200–01.

44 Theodore Balsamon, *Poems* 21–22, ed. Horna, pp. 187–88.

In both cases, all of these neologisms are unique attestations, they constitute “one-time events” like the poems they belong to,<sup>45</sup> and whose unique and momentary character they underline. These words seem to have been coined *ad hoc*, as a poetical response to a certain topic to which they are intrinsically related. Their usage being essentially bound to this context, these *hapax legomena* probably never entered common vocabulary. In contrast to that, Manasses’ rare words both partly reflect the influence of contemporary poets (connecting Manasses to a wider community), and in turn are to be found in later authors as well.

Three-component compounds that fill an entire half-line and are thematically connected to a central topic turn to be a particularly conspicuous stylistic device of the fully fledged literature in the vernacular of the 13th and 15th centuries. Thus, in the *Livistros-romance* we are struck by the appearance of thematically focused neologisms, here formed with *έρωτο-* and *πόθο-* (“love” and “desire”, each around 35 compounds! These are mostly *hapax*, e.g. *ποθοορκωμοσία*, *ποθοχοροβατώ*, *χαριτοερωτοανάπαισις*), or most characteristically with both components in combination (e.g. *έρωτοποθοκράτωρ*, *ποθοερωτοδαρμένος*).<sup>46</sup> We also observe (new) words filling a full half-line, frequently in the form of a perfect passive participle with a purely adjectival meaning (the finite verb is not attested, e.g. *έρωτοποιημένος* or *έρωτοπυνημένος*).<sup>47</sup> Some other long and impressive compounds filling either the first or the second half-line in the *Livistros* are e.g. *ἀγριογλωσσοφονίζω*, *δολεροκακομάγος*, *έθελοκαταδούλευτα*, *καρδιοπονόθλιβος*, *ψυχοσωματωμένος*.<sup>48</sup>

The *Callimachos romance* is equally full of such “super-compounds”.<sup>49</sup> Again it is adjectival participles and also nouns/adjectives which are most conspicuous. These include: *έρωτοφορούμενος*, *καλοξενοχάραγος*, *λιθομαργαργωμένος*, *ξενοχαραγόπλαγος*, *όλοχρυσομαργάρωτος*, *όρεινοπετροβούνιν*, and *χρυσοδρακοντόκαστρον*, all consisting of eight or seven syllables.

Occasionally, such compounds are grouped together in passages describing one of the central heroes of the plot.<sup>50</sup> For example, in the Naples version of the *Achilleis* we find the following words referring to Achilles’ future wife: *άσπροκοκκινομάγουλη*, *κρυσταλλοκινοστράχηλος*, *μαρμαροχιονόδοντος*,

45 Cf. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 65.

46 See the table in Lendari, *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου*, pp. 96–99 displaying these compounds as represented in each manuscript of *Livistros*. Cf. also Browning, *Medieval and Modern Greek*, pp. 84–85.

47 Cf. also Agapitos, *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου*, p. 64.

48 Cf. the index in Agapitos, *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου*.

49 Cf. Apostolopoulos, *La langue*, pp. 202–04.

50 Beaton, *Romance*, p. 95.

στρογγυλεμορφοπούγουνη, φεγγαρομεγάλόφθαλμος.<sup>51</sup> According to Roderick Beaton “[i]t is presumably the opulence and strangeness of the language, rather than any visual reference, that is intended to convey the essential quality of the person” described in these verses.<sup>52</sup> Through the same astonishing usage of strange words (coined again largely using favourite roots like ἐρωτο- and ποθο-), the learned (so-called) *Sophrosyne-poem* by Constantine Meleteniotes (mid-14th century) is clearly linked to the tradition of the vernacular romances.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4 Alternative Forms

By alternative forms I mean forms which, though morphologically different, are semantically equivalent.<sup>54</sup> The parallel existence of such semantic equivalents (which basically contravenes linguistic economy) is the result of the historical development of the Greek language, and the continuous use of several older forms of the written language and the subsequent production of texts based on a rich and varied reading experience. This is always, though to varying degrees, influenced by the living spoken language. Alternative forms are not restricted to poetry, but constitute a feature inherent in the Byzantine written language. They appear in prose texts too (though far less frequently, depending on genre), where they are motivated by rhythmical considerations or are used for the sake of variation, yet to some extent also reflect alternative forms in the natural/spoken language.<sup>55</sup>

Besides their function as prestigious markers of high-style, older linguistic forms, which were obsolete in the spoken language, developed a particular functionality within poetic language, where alternative forms were most welcome in order to satisfy metrical restrictions.<sup>56</sup> These semantically equivalent forms provide alternatives in terms of number of syllables and/or prosodic pattern, and/or position of the accent. They may also serve towards the avoidance

51 *Achilleis* N 870–77, ed. Smith, p. 42. See e.g. also *Phlorios-romance* 191–95, ed. Ortolá Salas, pp. 116–18.

52 Beaton, *Romance*, p. 95.

53 Schönauer, *Steinkatalog*, p. 18\* appropriately speaks of “barocke Wortschöpfungen”. See also Beaton, *Romance*, p. 193.

54 Hinterberger, “Variationsformen” and idem, “Το φαινόμενο”; cf. also Christensen, “Die Sprache”, p. 373, and Lampsides, *Manassis Chronicum* vol. 1, p. LXII, and vol. 2, p. 87.

55 Alternative forms also appear in Byzantine documents and other non-literary genres where metrical or stylistic considerations cannot account for their usage (Hinterberger, “Το φαινόμενο”, pp. 217 and 231–32). See also alternative forms in today’s Standard Modern Greek and in modern Greek dialects (ibid. pp. 215–16).

56 Cf. Hackstein, “Greek of Epic”, p. 402, for useful metrical alternatives in Homer.

of hiatus, and finally they produce variety. Without aiming at an exhaustive catalogue of alternative forms, below I shall give representative examples for the most frequent types, ordering them in the following groups: a) alternative forms inherited from ancient literature and further developed in Byzantium; b) syntactical alternatives due to linguistic developments in the spoken language; and c) morphological alternatives due to linguistic developments in the spoken language.

#### 4.1 *Alternative Forms Inherited from Ancient Literature and Further Developed in Byzantium*

Both the movable  $\nu$  (*nu ephelkustikon*) as a morphological variant inherent, particularly in the verbal paradigm (in verbal forms of the third person singular and plural), but also some dative forms, and the movable  $\varsigma$  ( $\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega(\varsigma)$ ,  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\chi\rho\iota(\varsigma)$ ), as well as the movable guttural ( $\omicron\upsilon(\chi/\chi)$ ), serve towards the avoidance of hiatus and the production of positional length.<sup>57</sup> Traditionally a few words are spelled with either a single or double consonant (especially liquids, as e.g.  $\acute{\alpha}\rho(\rho)\alpha\beta\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$ ), and thus provide prosodic alternatives.<sup>58</sup> The addition of prefixes and suffixes without semantic change constitute a comfortable means for regulating the number of syllables (and is also a source of new words, as we have already seen): e.g.  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{\epsilon}\xi\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron$  and  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\pi\acute{\epsilon}\xi\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron$ .<sup>59</sup>

Due to the mixture of ionic and aeolic features, the Homeric (or generally epic) language used for the composition of hexameter and elegiac verses, is particularly rich in alternative forms, mostly alternative phonology and morphology. The most frequent items of Homeric morphology are: the aeolic genitive  $-\omicron\iota\omicron$  (instead of  $-\omicron\upsilon$ ) and dative  $-\epsilon\sigma\sigma\iota$  (instead of  $-\sigma\iota$ ); the alternative  $o$ - and  $a$ -stem endings  $-\omicron\iota\sigma\iota/-\alpha\iota\sigma\iota$  (instead of  $-\omicron\iota\varsigma/-\alpha\iota\varsigma$ ) and  $-\acute{\alpha}\omega\upsilon\upsilon$  (instead of  $-\acute{\omega}\nu$ , e.g.  $\acute{\alpha}\mu\pi\lambda\alpha\kappa\iota\acute{\alpha}\omega\upsilon\upsilon$ ); as well as other uncontracted forms (of adjectives ending in  $-\eta\varsigma$ , e.g.  $\sigma\kappa\omicron\tau\omicron\epsilon\iota\delta\acute{\epsilon}\epsilon\varsigma$  instead of  $\sigma\kappa\omicron\tau\omicron\epsilon\iota\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , and neuter nouns in  $-\omicron\varsigma$ , e.g.  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\gamma\epsilon\alpha$  instead of  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\gamma\eta$ ); and the possessive adjective  $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$  instead of  $\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ . Frequently the aorist and imperfect are formed without augment.<sup>60</sup> Occasionally both alternatives are to be found in one and the same line.<sup>61</sup>

57 See e.g. Vassis, "Constantine of Rhodes", p. 13.

58 Schönauer, *Steinkatalog*, p. 40\*; Lampsides, *Ephraem*, p. xlvi; Hörandner, *Prodromos*, p. 119. Papagiannis, *Tetrasticha*, pp. 167–68 mentions alternative nominal forms ending in  $-\epsilon\iota\alpha/-\iota\alpha$  and the facultative doubling of  $-\sigma$ .

59 Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe* 4.354/380 and 4.412. See also many such variants in Pisides' *Historical Poems*; Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia*, p. 43.

60 Cf. also van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, p. 46.

61 E.g. *Anthologia Graeca* xv 30.2 (Ignatius Diaconus), ed. Beckby, iv p. 280:  $\kappa\epsilon\delta\nu\acute{\omicron}\upsilon$   $\Pi\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\lambda\omicron\iota\omicron$   $\acute{\omega}\sigma\tau\epsilon$   $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$   $\eta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon$ . John Geometres, *Poem* 61.6, ed. van Opstall, p. 210:  $\epsilon\upsilon\mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\theta\eta$   $\text{Κρήτην}$ ,  $\text{Κύπρον}$   $\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\pi\rho\epsilon\pi\acute{\epsilon}\alpha$ .



Phonological alternatives such as *χειρα/χέρα, μόνος/μόνος* or *νοῦσος/νόσος* produce alternative prosodic/quantitative patterns.<sup>62</sup> The rules guiding the Homeric language were extended to genuinely Byzantine words, such as *Θευδόσιος* serving as an alternative for *Θεοδόσιος*<sup>63</sup> and were also used for the production of new Homerizing words.<sup>64</sup> In analogy to ancient epic forms, Theodore Metochites (14th century) created pseudo-Homeric forms such as *λοῦγος* and *φθόνης* as metrical alternatives of *λόγος* and *φθόνος*.<sup>65</sup>

Already in the Hellenistic koine, alternative sigmatic aorist stems existed along with so-called strong aorist-stems (e.g. *ἀγαγ-/ἄξ-, ἐνεγκ-/οῖσ-, λαβ-/ληψ-, λιπ-/λειψ-*). Both in the indicative and in the subjunctive they provide alternative accentuation and/or alternative quantities.<sup>66</sup> In his *Encomium on Panteleemon* 38 ἦτις θανούσα τὸν πεπρωμένον μόρον, John Geometres uses the strong aorist participle providing the line with a short third syllable, whereas in line 93 μήτηρ μὲν ἢ θνήξασα τὸν χριστὸν μάλα he prefers the sigmatic aorist form, probably for accentual reasons or simply for the sake of variation.

Flexibility in word order is provided by some of the following means, available primarily to the learned register: the postponement of an adjective, but necessarily with the repetition of the article (e.g. *ἡ βαθμῖς ἡ πρόκριτος* instead of *ἡ πρόκριτος βαθμῖς*);<sup>67</sup> regulating the number of syllables and the accentuation pattern; as well as the postponement of prepositions (e.g. *καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τοσαῦτα κίωνων πέρι*),<sup>68</sup> following ancient Greek poetic practice. Equally useful is the alternative usage of either the possessive pronoun or the possessive adjective, possible also in “classicizing vernacular”. This can be seen in, for example, *Digenes G* or the *Alexander Poem* τοῦ κοιτῶνος σου 279/τῷ σῷ κοιτῶνι 339, characteristically at the end of the first and the second half-line, respectively.

The phenomenon of hyperbaton, usually treated as a rhetorical figure and also known from prose texts, is particularly common in verse. The hyperbaton is defined as a breach of normal/natural word order. In its usual Byzantine appearance (also in prose) the position of verb and noun at the end of a syntactic unit (i.e. before a pause) is inverted, the verb separating an otherwise

62 See e.g. the Index in Marcovich, *Theodori Prodrumi*.

63 Constantine Rhodios, *Ekphrasis* 184 and 220, ed. Vassis.

64 See particularly Theodore Prodromos; cf. Hörandner, *Historische Gedichte*, p. 112; D'Ambrosi, *Tetrasticha*, pp. 83–96. See also for this matter, Horrocks, *Greek*, pp. 213–14.

65 See also Polemis, *Theodori Metochitae Carmina*, p. lxi.

66 E.g. George Pisides, *Hexaemeron*, subscriptio 11, ed. Tartaglia, p. 424: *καὶ τῷ θεῷ προσήξεν ἐξ ἀκηράτου* where *προσήξεν* is used because it has other qualities than *προσήγαγον*. See also Sternbach, “*Studia*”, p. 135.

67 Michael Psellos, *Poem* 17.12, ed. Westerink, p. 239; see also *Livistros-romance* 111, ed. Agapitos.

68 Constantine Rhodios, *Ekphrasis* 255, ed. Vassis. See also e.g. John Geometres, *Enkomion of Panteleemon* 49, 105, 228, 579, 589 e.a., ed. Sternbach.

inseparable nominal group (e.g. article+adjective+noun or article+adnominal genitive+noun). For example, ὁ θεόφρων ἤθροισται λαός<sup>69</sup> instead of the ‘natural’ ὁ θεόφρων λαός ἤθροισται or νῦν συμφορᾶς ἄπαυστος ἠγέρθη κλύδων<sup>70</sup> (instead of ἄπαυστος κλύδων ἠγέρθη). Much less frequently (and unusual in prose) it is a noun which separates a nominal group, e.g. τὸ τῆς ἐμῆς βλάστημα γαστρὸς (instead of τὸ τῆς ἐμῆς γαστρὸς βλάστημα).<sup>71</sup>

Other special types of hyperbaton which are to be found primarily in poetry (but almost never in prose), may constitute stylistic markers of certain authors. These include the separation of adjective and noun, or noun and depending genitive, by a preposition, e.g. παρθενικῆς ἀπὸ γαστρὸς (instead of ἀπὸ παρθενικῆς γαστρὸς),<sup>72</sup> or ἄβυσσον εἰς αἰνιγμάτων (instead of εἰς ἄβυσσον αἰνιγμάτων).<sup>73</sup>

#### 4.2 *Syntactical Alternatives Due to Linguistic Developments in the Spoken Language*

Morphological categories, which in ancient Greek were semantically/syntactically distinguished, coincided in later centuries, and therefore could function as alternative forms. These are essentially verbal alternative forms; in Byzantine texts the subjunctive aorist, optative aorist and monolectic future are syntactically interchangeable. The same is true for the perfect (mostly active) and the aorist, as well as for the pluperfect and the aorist.<sup>74</sup>

In the long poem *Εἰς τὴν ἀποδημίαν*, for instance, John Geometres uses two alternative forms of the verb (ὑπο)φέρω: ἢ πῶς ἐνέγκω κάλλος ἠρεμωμένον /.../ ἢ πῶς ὑποίσω καὶ στεναγμούς καὶ γόους.<sup>75</sup> In terms of traditional morphology, ἐνέγκω is an aorist subjunctive and ὑποίσω future indicative, yet both forms fulfil the same syntactical function (future/modal: “(How) shall/can I bear ...”). Here these alternative forms are used just for the sake of variation, since both forms have the same number of syllables and the same prosodic pattern. Interestingly, this pair of corresponding forms is used in a wide range of stylistic/linguistic registers.<sup>76</sup> For instance we find it also in the *Ptochoprodromika* 1.1–2 (ed. Eideneier: 12th century) where it provides an alternative number of

69 Cosmas of Maiouma, *Canon on the Dormition* 124, ed. Christ/Paranikas.

70 Michael Psellos, *Poem* 17.2, ed. Westerink, p. 239.

71 Nicholas Kallikles, *Poem* 12.1, ed. Romano, p. 87.

72 Cosmas of Maiouma, *Canon on the Dormition* 65, ed. Christ/Paranikas.

73 Leo Choïrosphaktes, *Chilostichos* 34, ed. Vassis, p. 75. More examples are listed *ibid.*, p. 212.

74 Horrocks, “High-register Medieval Greek” and *idem*, “Georgios Akropolis”; Hinterberger, “Die Sprache”, and *idem*, “Monolectic Perfect”. Cf. also Sternbach, “Studia”, pp. 222 and 245.

75 John Geometres, *Poems*, ed. Cramer, p. 325.7/11; cf. also Scheidweiler, “Studien”, p. 317.

76 Cf. also Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymn* 24.30–33 (“political” twelve-syllables).

syllables: Τί σοὶ προσοίσω δέσποτα, δέσποτα στεφηφόρε/άνταμοιβήν ὅποιαν δὲ ἢ χάριν προσενέγκω.

For the parallel use of the monolectic future and the aorist subjunctive in a negative exhortation, see e.g. Andrew of Crete, *Megas Kanon* 93: τὰ ἔργα σου μὴ παρίδης,/τὸ πλάσμα σου μὴ παρόψη. Future and subjunctive are used side by side in Symeon the New Theologian's *Hymn* 20.122–4 as well: Οὐκ οἶδα δὲ τί φθέγξομαι, οὐκ οἶδα τί σοὶ εἶπω/φοβοῦμαι γὰρ καὶ τὸ λαλεῖν καὶ γράφειν τὰ τῶν αὐτῶν/μὴ περιπέσω τοῖς ἐμοῖς λόγοις καὶ ἀμαρτήσω.

Monolectic perfect forms are semantically the equivalents of aorist forms, and therefore freely alternate with the latter, e.g. σὺ γὰρ μου προαπόλωλας καὶ προεθανατώθης (Manasses, *Chronicle* 1328). Since perfect forms usually start with a consonant due to reduplication, they may be used in order to avoid the hiatus, which would be created by aorist forms (e.g. ἄπερ ἔπραξεν, but ὅσα πέπραχας).<sup>77</sup> In the following lines from Theodore Prodromos' *Historical Poem* 4 ἐώρακεν functions as a four-syllable alternative along with the two-syllable aorist εἶδεν:<sup>78</sup> οὐκ εἶδεν ἥλιος ποτὲ τοιοῦτον βασιλέα/οὐδ' ἥλιον ἐώρακεν ἀνατολῇ τοιοῦτον (4.202–03). In Manasses' *Chronicle*, the semantically equivalent aorist and perfect active participles are distributed according to their metrical suitability either to the end of the first hemistich or to the end of the second, e.g. καὶ τῷ μηδὲν πικραναντι, μηδὲ λελυπηκότι (356).<sup>79</sup>

Only rarely is the semantic merger of perfect and aorist forms also reflected in the alternative usage of both endings in combination with the perfect stem, as e.g. τεθνήκασιν/τέθνηκαν.<sup>80</sup> In the vernacular, however, the alternative endings -ασιν/-αν, attached to the aorist or imperfect stem, are extremely frequent and provide a comfortable means of regulating the number of syllables (see below).

The pluperfect alternates especially with aorist passive forms.<sup>81</sup> For instance, in the dodecasyllable verse ἔσβεστο λύχνος καὶ συνεσβέσθη πόθος (Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla* 6.487) the distribution of the forms is clearly in accordance with metrical requirements, since the pluperfect provides a short third syllable while the aorist form a long 10th syllable, whereas in Andrew of

77 Philippos Monotropos, *Dioptra* 2.863/882, ed. Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, pp. 51–52; see Hinterberger, “Die Sprache” 132, note 87.

78 See also ἀπὴλαυσέ σου Δούναβις, “Ἄλυσ ἐώρακέ σε,/εἶδε σε γῆ Κασταμονίς, Γάγγρα προσέβλεψε σου (ibid. 9b.8–9) and the alternation εὔρες/εὔρηκας in ibid. 4.20–22.

79 See also *Chronicle* 1220, 2221 and 2289, ed. Lampsides. Characteristically, in three of these four examples, the second half line simply repeats the meaning of the first with different, yet semantically equivalent, words.

80 Philippos Monotropos, *Dioptra* 2.1311/1317, ed. Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, p. 77.

81 Cf. Hinterberger, “Die Sprache”, esp. pp. 131–33.

Crete, *Megas Kanon* 165 and 167 πέπρατο and ἐπράθης are chosen according to the accentual pattern.

In Theodore Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, the aorist passive form ἐτράπη appears twice at the end of the twelve-syllable verse (2.321/3.17), whereas the pluperfect τέπρατο again appears twice before B7 (3.267/327), the first providing accentuated penultima, and the latter proparoxyton accentuation before the caesura, as well as a short seventh syllable.<sup>82</sup>

In fifteen-syllable verse this kind of alternation is less frequent, e.g. ὅταν ἡ γῆ κατώκιστο, τὴν πρῶτην παρουσίαν/προγράφει τὴν δεσποτικὴν, ὅταν πᾶν κατωκίσθη (Psellos, *Poem* 4.231–32, ed. Westerink), where, characteristically, the pluperfect form is used at the end of the first hemistich and the aorist at the end of the second.

#### 4.3 *Morphological Alternatives Due to Linguistic Developments in the Spoken Language*

This section refers to vernacular morphology, mostly to pairs of old and new forms.<sup>83</sup> Sometimes alternative accentuation of a single lexical item is to be found, e.g. δένδρον/δενδρόν. Stretching to entire grammatical categories, pairs of words which transfer the accent according to traditional rules, are used side by side with those which no longer do this, e.g. the present participle -ομένη/-όμενη,<sup>84</sup> or emerging new accentuation patterns occur along with old/traditional ones, such as ἄνθρωποι/ἀνθρώποι, ἔφυγαν/ἐφύγαν, ἔφαγαν/ἐφάγαν. Moreover, forms that may display synizesis or not such as καρδία/καρδιά (providing an alternative number of syllables and alternative stress accent patterns) exist side by side, too.<sup>85</sup> Occasionally, alternative forms are created by the merger of first and second declension, e.g. γυνήν/γυναίκα(ν). Personal pronouns also appear in a broad range of alternative forms, like ἐμέ(ν)/ἐμένα(ν) etc. Most frequently, alternative forms appear in the verbal system, particularly the alternative endings of the third person plural present -ουν/-ουσι(ν) and aorist/imperfect -αν/-ανε/-ασι(ν), e.g.: ὅταν τὰ ἀηδόνια κελαδοῦν καὶ τὰ πουλία λαλοῦσιν (*War of Troy* 127) and οἱ Φράγχοι ἀπεινὸν ὠμόσασι, τοὺς ὄρκους ἐβαστάξαν (*Chronicle of Morea* 58).<sup>86</sup>

82 For more examples of exactly the same usage, see *ibid.*, pp. 132–33.

83 See generally Hinterberger, “Variationsformen”, and *idem*, “Το φαινόμενο”.

84 Cf. e.g. Schönauer, *Steinkatalog*, p. 49\*.

85 Usually recognizable only because of the metrical structure, because the traditional spelling with accent on the penultima is preserved. See e.g., Egea, *Gramática*, 43–44; Hinterberger “Variationsformen”, p. 159, and *idem*, “Το φαινόμενο” p. 220.

86 For more examples, see Hinterberger, “Το φαινόμενο”, *passim*.

For the sake of variation, and due to metrical necessity, alternative forms are especially frequent with those words which are crucial for the topic of a certain text. In Theodore Prodromos' *Calendar* it is words indicating the death of the saints (e.g. τεθνεώς/θανών, τετμημένος/τμηθείς "beheaded"). The subject of Andrew of Crete's *Megas Kanon* is sin, therefore the relevant verb appears in various alternative forms which are semantically equivalent (ἡμάρτηκα/ἡμαρτον/ἔξῆμαρτον and participles formed from the sigmatic aorist stem, such as ἔξαμαρτήσας). In other texts it is the principal hero's name or another term designating him, such as νέος/νεώτερος/νεανίας/ἄγουρος/ἄγουρίτζης "youth/boy" in *Digenes G*, and Βελισάρης/-ιος, Ἰμπέρης/-ιος in the homonymous story and romance, or even another person frequently named (e.g. Μωσής/Μωυσής in *Dioptra* 2.1545/1549, ed. Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, p. 91).<sup>87</sup>

## 5 Mixture of Registers

Byzantine learned high-style poetry is very much influenced by ancient models, and so is its language. Byzantine hexametric poetry almost always shows obvious traces of the Homeric or generally epic language, both on a lexical, and even more conspicuously, morphological level. Typical elements of Homeric/epic language, which were widely applied by Byzantine poets, are certain lexical items as well as phonological characteristics (so-called ionic and aeolic forms), such as uncontracted forms, lengthened vowels, ionic endings instead of attic, personal pronouns and nominal endings (see the examples already given above). The language of Byzantine iambs (twelve-syllables) on the other side, in its high-style type, manifests its connection with ancient models (particularly tragedy), as well as a puristic conservative morphology, primarily in the form of lexical parallels and allusions. Although both poetic genres (hexameters and iambs) are decidedly high-style, they are clearly differentiated from each other through characteristic linguistic markers.

The character of these linguistic features as generic markers becomes especially evident when we look on the deliberate juxtaposition of such poems, as in the case of Theodore Prodromos' *Historical poems* 26 and 27, where the author presents a funeral inscription and respectively a prayer, first in hexameters and then in iambs. Like in the same author's hexametric and iambic *Tetrastichs on the Old and New Testaments* or the *Tetrasticha on the Lives of the Three Hierarchs*, the most obvious difference between the paired poems is

87 See also Egea, *Gramática*, p. 38. Hinterberger, "Variationsformen", p. 162. Acconcia Longo, *Il calendario*, p. 67.

language. While the iambic epigrams are cast in high-style Byzantine koine, the hexameter-poems are decidedly “different” due to the ample use of “epic” vocabulary (and diction in general), based primarily on Homer and Gregory of Nazianzus. Although each poem presents the general subject from a slightly different point of view, they constitute a kind of *metaphrasis*. In *Historical Poem 27*, for instance, the following correspondences between the hexameter and iambic version can be established: κοίρανε παμμεδέων—παντοκράτορ, ἐῆ δ’ ἀγνή γενετείρη ἀνδόκω—ἀναδόκω δὲ τῆ πανάγρω μητρὶ σου, οὐ σώωσον—δὸς σωτηρίαν. In the mentioned pairs of poems only very few words are identical, while the most striking impression they convey is the profound difference in their linguistic make-up. Thus, in the case of hexameter and dodecasyllable verse, linguistic differences are clearly genre-related.

It seems that Byzantine poets, conscious of the literary tradition they adhered to, largely kept these two linguistic registers apart. Occasionally, however, epic language features are used in dodecasyllabic poetry as well, mostly for metrical, but perhaps also stylistic reasons. This phenomenon appears—for obvious metrical reasons—rarely in Theodore Stoudites’ epigrams, but much more frequently in Constantine Rhodios’ *Ekphrasis* (especially the use of non-augmented verbal forms, apocope and epic nominal inflexions, as well as uncontracted forms).<sup>88</sup> Yet, the opposite can also be observed. In his hexameters on Gregory of Nazianzus, along with genuine Homeric/epic vocabulary, Theodore Prodromos makes use of words from the tragic tradition and, astonishingly, even of the Byzantine koine, camouflaging these non-epic words through Homeric (frequently hyperionic) phonology and morphology.<sup>89</sup>

In principle, “modern” poetic genres and forms such as ecclesiastical hymns or fifteen-syllable verse, are free from the influences of the classical heritage, something characteristic of iambic and hexametric poetry. However, hymnography of the 8th and 9th century (the heyday of *kanon*) is sometimes utterly classicizing. The most famous example is probably John Arklas’ (or John of Damascus’)<sup>90</sup> iambic *Kanon on the Birth of Christ*, whose *acrostic* forms two elegiac distichs in epic language. This is apart from the already quite recherché combination of the in principle non-classical, stress accent oriented *kanon* with prosodic dodecasyllables. Cosmas of Maiouma, too, incorporated Homeric words and phrases in his non-prosodic *kanones*.<sup>91</sup>

88 Speck, *Jamben*, pp. 70 and 95–97. Vassis, “Constantine of Rhodes”, p. 12.

89 D’Ambrosi, *I tetrastici*, pp. 89–90.

90 Cf. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 137.

91 Detorakis, *Κοσμάς*, pp. 34–35.

Though the occasional mixture of epic and non-epic features in poetry has been repeatedly observed, it did not provoke a scholarly debate. In contrast, the contact between learned and vernacular language has been fiercely debated, because, for ideological reasons (connected particularly with the modern Greek “language question”) they were regarded as strictly separated; only in this context was the term “mixed language” used.<sup>92</sup>

From the 12th century on (but also sporadically before this), besides the traditional classical, epic, atticistic, koine etc. levels, the spoken language began to provide inspiration for the written idiom. Phonological as well as morphosyntactic elements of the spoken language started to appear along with more traditional elements. Gradually the vernacular developed as a literary language, yet during the Byzantine period it is hard to find a single so-called vernacular text that is totally free of learned elements, alien to the spoken language, especially the dative case, participles and infinitives, or older verbal endings. In the light of what has been pointed out above, I believe that the parallel use of older and newer linguistic elements in the framework of vernacular literature essentially continues an already existing situation found in older non-vernacular texts. Byzantine literary Greek almost always is, at least to some extent, a mixed language, in the sense that forms which are no longer used in everyday language exist side by side along with those forms which continued to be used in daily parlance. This is even more true of poetical language, where the stock of alternative (old and modern) forms is particularly useful for complying with the necessities created by metre.

This mixture of linguistic registers has to be distinguished from another phenomenon, equally referred to as “mixed language”. In the “proto-vernacular” *Ptochoprodromika*, the opening and closing parts are composed in a different, mildly learned register, while the main part is written in the “vernacular”. This mixture of registers has been puzzling scholars for a long time. In my opinion, what Roderick Beaton suggested for two of the poems, namely that the main, “vernacular” part constitutes an *ethopoia* of the poor *pater familias*, or respectively the wretched monk framed by the learned parts, provides the key to the solution.<sup>93</sup> In all four *Ptochoprodromic* poems the decidedly vernacular passages can be interpreted as intended as “another voice”, clearly distinguished from the rest of the text. The “vernacular” is a constituent of the narrator’s persona. In the opening sections it is Theodore Prodromos who is speaking, whereas in the following (through *ethopoia*) the author impersonates the unlucky

92 Hinterberger, “Το φαινόμενο”, pp. 237–38.

93 Beaton, “Rhetoric of Poverty” and “Πτωχοπροδρομικά Γ’”, concerning poems II and III (ed. Hesselning/Pernot = poems II and IV, ed. Eideneier).

husband—himself impersonating his cruel wife: an *ethopoia* embedded in another—the failed scholar, or the monk, using (almost) everyday language every time.<sup>94</sup>

In the “vernacular” parts of the *Ptochoprodromika* the language used is not so much the medium, but a substantial part of the message; the literary presentation of the everyday language in itself is the subject and aim of these poems. This effect is enhanced by the use of impressive vocabulary, especially of multiple compounds, which may or may not reflect the spoken language (see already above). As to the question whether or not Theodore Prodromos—a renowned poet of learned verses to whom the *Ptochoprodromika* are ascribed—was indeed “capable” of writing these satirical poems,<sup>95</sup> the issue seems now to have been definitely settled in favour of this author. As Panagiotis Agapitos has recently demonstrated, already in his schedographic work Theodore Prodromos used quite a lot of vernacular features, mixing them with learned elements, and actually using the vernacular in order to make the learned language accessible.<sup>96</sup>

To conclude this chapter, let us have a brief glance at a phenomenon of mixed registers that has barely been noticed, at least as far as I am aware of.

### 5.1 *Vernacular in Titles*

Usually, highly classicizing poetic language does not coexist with vernacular features.<sup>97</sup> Yet, how strongly classicizing poetry—with its often *recherché* and remote vocabulary as well as puristic morphology—is embedded in its contemporary world and how it reflects on it, is occasionally indicated through titles which bridge the gap between seemingly distant loftiness and everyday experience. In the titles—certainly part of the collection, but probably added at some point after the composition of the poem—<sup>98</sup> the central topic of the poem is sometimes mentioned in its vernacular form/version. Thus, in the titles

94 The other texts usually grouped together with the *Ptochoprodromika*, as forerunners of vernacular literature, exhibit a decidedly less vernacular character, and their vernacular elements are distributed evenly through the entire text; see Trapp, “Ιωάννης Καματηρός”, esp. p. 93.

95 For an overview of the Prodromic question, see Kulhánková, “Das Eindringen”, pp. 236–37 and Agapitos, “New Genres”, pp. 4–5. For Hans Eideneier’s reasons for believing in an imitation of Prodromos rather than in the composition by this author, see the survey of his objections in Eideneier, *Πτωχοπρόδρομος*, pp. 93–99.

96 Agapitos, “New Genres”.

97 See however John Tzetzes, *Chiliades* XI, Hist. 369, 210–24, ed. Leone, where hexameters are combined with fifteen-syllables and Homeric elements alternate with vernacular ones; cf. Agapitos, “Grammar, Genre”, p. 6.

98 See e.g. Speck, *Jamben*, pp. 66–68; Rhoby, “Labeling Poetry”, esp. pp. 262–63.



of Theodore Stoudites' epigrams (8th–9th century)—themselves composed in a rather simple, yet strictly learned idiom, avoiding vernacular morphology or lexicon—we read, for example, the following thoroughly non-classical names of the objects referred to in the poems: ἐνδυτή, κιβούριον, ῥάκκος ἱστορισμένον, τέμβλον, τετρακάμαρον.<sup>99</sup> The same is true for the monastic offices lauded by Theodore without using the contemporary terms, which are, however, mentioned in the titles, e.g.: ἀριστητάριος, βεστητάριος, κελλαρίτης. The phenomenon of a clear stylistic/linguistic differentiation between poems and their titles, is even more apparent in Christopher Mitylenaios (11th century), because on one side the language of his poems is more classicizing,<sup>100</sup> and on the other the title-words such as κουτρούβιν (“earthenware vessel”), μεσίσκληια (an unknown dish), or ποδοπάνια (“stockings”), have a stronger vernacular tinge. Characteristically, the title of poem 82 mentions the νεκροθάπτης (“undertaker”), whereas in the poem proper the classicizing hapax νεκροκηδευτής is used.<sup>101</sup> Finally, a similar phenomenon is to be observed in Nicholas Kallikles' (12th century) collection of poems, where again the clearly classicizing language contrasts with titles containing vernacular words such as: καυκίον, κουβούκλιον, παλάτιον, or τρικάνδηλον (poems 16, 25, 24 and 5). Here, the everyday word provides the solution for Kallikles' riddle-like poems. In all these examples mentioned, non-classicizing words introduce the reader into classicizing poems, establishing a strong bond between both. Even if only in a few cases, the title words were certainly chosen by the author himself, at least for the reception of these poems, the symbiosis of higher and lower levels of Byzantine Greek were a fact.<sup>102</sup>

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99 See the index in Speck, *Jamben*, pp. 315–34.

100 For a characterisation of Christopher's language, see Follieri, *I calendari* 1, p. 7.

101 For all these words (and numerous more examples, such as κηνησουάλιος, πηγάδιον, τέντα), see the index in de Groote, *Collectio cryptensis*.

102 Cf. generally Trapp, “Learned and Vernacular”.

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# From Hexameters to Fifteen-Syllable Verse

*Michael Jeffreys*

## 1 Introduction

This is the only chapter in the volume with a purely metrical title, and it is mainly about metre, especially the writing down of oral metres. It starts from a deliberately simplistic viewpoint covering the two metres concerned,<sup>1</sup> which are by any measure the most important in Greek poetic history, spanning more than three millennia, from before Homer to the 20th century. Both used long lines. The number of different metrical shapes permitted in the hexameter was large in Homer, but steadily reduced over time;<sup>2</sup> this shrinkage seems unaffected by the gap between the last hexameters in the ancient tradition (George of Pisidia: 7th century) and the first demonstrable fifteen-syllables (a dozen 10th-century poems). By the 11th century, permissible variations in the fifteen-syllable were only two. However, attempts to prove direct, unitary development from one metre to the other, as we shall see, face formidable difficulties.

Similarities between hexameter and fifteen-syllable are intriguing. Both almost certainly began as oral verses before being written down, though speech is fleeting and evidence of oral metrical expression only survives fortuitously in what happens to be written. Both metres were affected by formulaic repetition: this permeated Homer and the early hexameter, producing formulaic systems among the most complex ever found. Not all genres of the fifteen-syllable used formulas, and their geographical spread and length of use is uncertain; where existent, they were simple and prosaic, defined only by repetition, like most medieval formulas of western Europe.<sup>3</sup> Both metres were connected with mixed languages. The archaic hexameter drew its language from more than one Greek dialect, either a historical mixture of successive dialects in one area, a geographical mixture of simultaneous dialects in a wider region, or maybe both. This language remained an idiolect for writing hexameters long after

1 The wide-ranging introduction to this chapter will be sparingly provided with notes. Later sections will be annotated more conventionally.

2 The full range of metrical patterns used by Homer was reduced to nine in Nonnos and six in George of Pisidia. See the table in Whitby, "Learned Spiritual Ladder?", p. 444.

3 Several comparisons are made by Jeffreys, M., "Formulas in the Chronicle of the Morea", pp. 165–91.



most of its elements were obsolete. The mixed language of the fifteen-syllable seems more geographical than historical. Heroic oral narrative dominated early hexameters, and probably figured in the early history of the fifteen-syllable. Both metres encouraged the coinage of new words.

Differences between the metres have been mentioned in connection with formulas and language. Other differences involve wider intellectual contexts: I shall outline two. Homeric and other oral hexameters were fundamental to ancient Greek written culture, from the archaic period till Late Antiquity. Previous, largely Asiatic, traditions were less significant. Similar hexameter traditions also influenced Rome, especially through Vergil. Thus the Byzantine culture which generated and nourished 10th-century fifteen-syllables was suffused with ancient hexameter lore in both Greek cultural and Roman imperial dimensions. Christianity, the third Byzantine dimension, combined hostility to ancient paganism with learned investment in pre-Christian Greek education. Any Byzantine traditions in oral fifteen-syllables—perhaps the *Digenis Akrites* and stories glimpsed in the *Akritika tragoudia*—could not compete with those of ancient Greece, which permeated Byzantine learned minds through many channels. Byzantine oral material could never dominate written culture.

A second difference lies in the metres' historical trajectories. The hexameter began as a dominant oral verse but to a large extent was transferred into writing, probably with Homer. It remained significant in written Greek poetry, while retaining some oral role. The learned hexameter reached two cultural climaxes, one in Alexandria (3rd to 2nd century BC), involving Callimachus, the other in the 4th and 5th centuries AD in Egyptian poets linked to Nonnos. Callimachus has grown in scholarly estimation as a stylist writing brief, elegant, well-balanced poems, contrasting with epic prolixity.<sup>4</sup> Nonnos' huge poems added to Alexandrian refinement, but elegance was not his only motive. Many of his changes confirmed the hexameter's shape and its obsolete quantitative prosody, with word-accent before line-end and caesura. This was the future for Greek poetic expression. Nonnos was attempting to save the hexameter as a living medium for Greek writing.<sup>5</sup>

The last direct follower of Nonnos was George of Pisidia (7th century), a great poet whose chief metrical role was in developing twelve-syllable verse. But he also wrote hexameters.<sup>6</sup> Here the rescue mission attributed to Nonnos becomes more intense; the number of hexameter types shrinks further. Modern

4 See especially Callimachus, *Hymns*, ed. and transl. Stephens.

5 E.g. Jeffreys M, "Non-literary Strata", pp. 313–22.

6 George of Pisidia, *On Human Life*, ed. Gonnelli.

reception of the poems is positive over their content but often critical of their versification. Accents orally marking the verse's shape can sound repetitive.<sup>7</sup>

The first secure examples of fifteen-syllable verses were brief, often mixing sequences of fifteen-syllables with other metres. Thus, in the metrical confusion of the time, the definition of fifteen-syllable verses must be extended to demand several repetitions of regular verses.<sup>8</sup> The first clear examples of these appeared in the 10th century.<sup>9</sup> They are widely believed (see further below) not to show the verse's creation, but the writing down of an oral form derived from social and educational levels from beneath the historical record. Over the next decades the verse stabilised into the two accentual patterns we see up to the 20th century. There were significant variations in poetics, from elaborate embellishment to plain communication; it was sometimes easier to write than prose. Some 12th-century panegyrics for public performance show extensive patterning, usually called rhetorical. Later, at lower educational levels, came the formulas and mixed language mentioned above.

Unlike the hexameter, the fifteen-syllable remained predominately oral. Only rarely, as in the Cretan Renaissance, did written verse threaten this oral supremacy. A major variation affecting much fifteen-syllable production, both oral and written, was the 14th-century introduction of rhyming couplets, probably from the Italian side of the Italo-Greek culture of Crete.<sup>10</sup>

Developments between its first appearance and the long, fifteen-syllable poems of the 12th and 13th centuries are two-fold. As well as real evolution, some changes simply show the writing down of more details of underlying oral poetics, as discussed at the end of this chapter. We shall also question whether this transfer happened in a single, unitary way, or whether different surviving texts show different features of the oral substratum, itself probably divided into different genres.

The change from ancient quantitative prosody to medieval and modern accentual forms is important in the cultural history of Greek, and the most

7 Mary Whitby in her "Learned Spiritual Ladder?", pp. 436–37, praises George's artistry, rejecting criticism of his strained metre made by Gonnelli, George's editor (120). But could this not be creative transformation of a problem into positive results?

8 Koder, "Kontakion und politischer Vers" searches a large corpus of *kontakia* for cola like the hemistichs of the fifteen-syllable, especially when they run together, making a full accurate verse. Such hemistichs are few (considering the prominence of eight-syllable verse). Full verses form only 4 per cent of his corpus' cola, and are probably fortuitous. We should not define isolated cola or lines as belonging to the later fifteen-syllable. There are no "runs" of accurate fifteen-syllables before the 10th century.

9 Especially *Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII*, ed. Ševčenko.

10 Holton, *Renaissance Crete*, pp. 12–13.

decisive division in Byzantine poetry. To quote Paul Maas, doyen of Byzantine metricians, “The centuries after Justinian were a period of utter decline for Byzantine metric. The only important event is the introduction of the so-called ‘political metre’ [fifteen-syllable] ... from the Acclamations into literature”.<sup>11</sup> Most ancient metres did not survive Late Antiquity. However, those which became Byzantine 12- and 8-syllables converted painlessly: they became identifiable by length, as syllable variation (previously permissible by quantitative resolution) was limited to regular sequences of 12 or 8 syllables respectively. They also used word-accent to mark any regular pauses. Some poets chose either old or new alternative prosodies, others tried to fulfil both.<sup>12</sup> The longer lines of the hexameter are more problematic, as isosyllaby (the repetition of lines with the same number of syllables) was unachievable without major changes.

Three distinct stages need examination here: the decline of hexameters; the rise of fifteen-syllables; and the long gap of some 300 years, when the few hexameters seem conscious reversions to an interrupted tradition,<sup>13</sup> while no fifteen-syllables can yet be identified. This last period is the hardest. There is considerable metrical chaos, and even distinctions between prose and poetry become problematic. There is a danger that the results of any analysis will depend more on the choice and application of methodologies than the full surviving evidence.

Thus this chapter covers eight centuries, from 5th-century Egypt to early poems using formulas and mixed language, now localised to the 13th-century Frankish Morea. This huge subject imposes choices. Metre will dominate other aspects of poetry. Bibliography will cover metrical developments, but little else. Discussion will define analytical possibilities and problems only, while treating a few important stages of this development in more detail. Very little Greek will be quoted. This introduction seeks to form fragmented surveys into an integrated whole.

## 2 The Declining Hexameter

Callimachus was once considered an ivory-tower poet writing for audiences with the same tastes. But study of quoted fragments and papyrus

<sup>11</sup> Maas, *Greek metre*, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> A brief summary of the situation in Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, pp. 69–74.

<sup>13</sup> De Stefani, “End of the ‘Nonnian School’”, pp. 375–93.

excerpts—major sources of his text—has shown that he aimed at, and probably reached, a wide audience.<sup>14</sup> His poems innovated by brevity, breaking the heroic mould of epic, limiting the shapes of cola to achieve harmonious balance. Later, hexameter production shifted to Rome, then poetry was long subordinated to prose. When, in the 4th and 5th centuries AD, poetry writing revived in the Greek east, the hexameter was losing contact with readers and listeners, who no longer understood the quantitative prosody which made it sound like poetry. But audiences remained wide. Alan Cameron states firmly: “For many poets of the later Empire poetry was no more and no less than a profession ... They were often shrewd and worldly adventurers, equally proficient in the very different arts of poetry and politics”.<sup>15</sup> He explains how poetry brought success in politics, listing many poets, before and after Nonnos, mostly Egyptians, some pagans, some leaving surviving works and some not. They won administrative positions by writing panegyrics on local dignitaries and commanders, and also *patria* of cities: antiquarian verse texts on their foundation and development. Far from the ivory tower, they nourished local patriotism for political gain and employment.

Nonnos set the poetic tone. His two huge works, the *Dionysiaka* and the *Paraphrase of St John's Gospel*,<sup>16</sup> bridge the boundary between paganism and Christianity. An Alexandrian perspective may see his works as “jewels”,<sup>17</sup> adding metrical and other aesthetic refinements to Callimachus’ patterns. But some changes were forced compromises with the ears of his audience. His refinements used fewer hexameter types, and most may also be read as responses to demands for isosyllaby and the need to anticipate the verse’s regular pauses. It was Nonnos’ (and his colleagues’) achievement to take the tensions of preserving an ancient metre in a world which no longer understood it, and to sublimate them into verses of jewelled grace, rivalling Callimachus and even supporting Nonnos’ ambitions to emulate Homer.<sup>18</sup>

14 De Stefani/Magnelli, “Callimachus and Later Greek Poetry” is a good indication of the breadth and depth of the poet’s reception.

15 Al. Cameron, *Wandering poets*, pp. 1–2.

16 Nonnos, *Dionysiaka*, ed. Keydell. Nonnos, *Paraphrase of St John's Gospel*, ed. Scheindler. As well as this Victorian edition, several learned editions of single books have been published recently.

17 De Stefani/Magnelli, “Callimachus and Later Greek Poetry”, pp. 557–62.

18 Understanding of Nonnos’ verse is often expressed as a dilemma: was his metre to be appreciated by the ear or the eye? See first Wifstrand, *Von Kallimachos zu Nonnos*, and the succinct summary of Magnelli, “Appositives”, pp. 281–83.

George of Pisidia in the 7th century was the last of the series of poets writing hexameters like Nonnos. However his main role in metrical history was to develop twelve-syllable verses (from the iambic trimeter) to replace hexameters in formal panegyrics. His hexameters are the last surviving examples of an old tradition.<sup>19</sup> It remains possible to see his changes as elegant gestures like those of Callimachus and Nonnos, for his writing shows attractive, balanced construction. But modern judgements are variable: some call his versification repetitious, as the number of permissible shapes shrinks further.<sup>20</sup> His innovations show the metre responding to pressures from the need for isosyllaby and structural word-accent. These, which were desirable for Nonnos' readers, seem now almost essential for George's, marking an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to save the verse as a major medium of Greek poetic expression. Twelve-syllables were much more adaptable to the new situation.<sup>21</sup>

The pressures operating on Nonnos and especially George of Pisidia suggest metrical reasons why his are the last substantial hexameters preserved in the old tradition. But rival explanations are available. The most obvious is the Christianisation of society and poetry, seen in Nonnos' own religious ambiguity; but there is little evidence that the hexameter was rejected as pagan. More important was the loss to the Arabs of the rich, culturally advanced eastern provinces of Palestine and Egypt. This removed many poets and readers of hexameters who lived there. It was no longer usual for administrators anywhere in the empire to gain positions by poetic skill. More practical abilities took over.<sup>22</sup>

It will always be hard to balance metrical explanations against military failure and societal change. Poets using the late hexameter, especially George of Pisidia, seem driven towards an isosyllabic stress metre. An uncomfortable *argumentum ex silentio* suggests that the hexameter tradition at its end did not decline but simply disappeared, probably confirming metrical collapse as an important cause.

This section ends with a confession. An article published in 1974 derived political verse from the Latin *versus quadratus*: a fifteen-syllable quantitative Latin metre of soldiers addressing emperors. The proposal was based on syllable numbers, caesuras and common imperial connections, but faced the problem that the rhythm of the *versus quadratus* was trochaic, while the

19 George's use of the two metres is summed up in De Stefani, "End of the 'Nonnian School'", pp. 376–80.

20 Whitby, "Learned Spiritual Ladder?", p. 444.

21 The dominance of the needs of schoolboys over instruction in the handbooks on iambic trimeters and dodecasyllables, are explained by Lauxtermann, "Iambs", esp. pp. 12–19.

22 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, esp. pp. 425–27. De Stefani, "End of the 'Nonnian School'", p. 376.

fifteen-syllable is essentially iambic. Accent patterns at caesura and line-end are similarly reversed. I still have no explanation.

The worlds of Greek and Latin hexameters were not culturally distinct; the greatest 4th-century Latin hexameter poet (Claudian) had Greek as his first language.<sup>23</sup> There are broader similarities between later Greek accentual metres and the more fragmented Latin traditions.<sup>24</sup> In both, the three most common rhythms had 15, 12, and eight syllables respectively, with the iambic-trochaic reversal mentioned above. But any influence was more complex than I suggested in 1974.<sup>25</sup>

### 3 The “Gap”: Reviewing Marc Lauxtermann’s *The Spring of Rhythm*

We now reach the gap of nearly 300 years, after the hexameter had lapsed but before the fifteen-syllable appeared. By far the best-informed metrical survey of this gap’s complex poetic remains, is Marc Lauxtermann’s *The Spring of Rhythm*. I will summarise and assess the book and the views it articulates, as my best approach to the period’s problems. Lauxtermann’s programme is as follows: “The main purpose of this book is to study the history of octosyllables and heptasyllables between c.400 and 1000. Its ultimate objectives are to investigate the origins of the political verse ...”.<sup>26</sup>

The volume operates in reverse chronological order. Chapter 1 (21–40) examines genres and metrical details of 10th-century fifteen-syllables (monodies, catanyctic alphabets and *exaposteilaria* hymns), offering many valuable insights. The folk-song *chelidonisma* from the *Book of Ceremonies* is discussed later. All the poems have likely connections to the imperial court. Metrical

23 Al. Cameron, *Wandering poets*, p. 146.

24 Compare Norberg, *Introduction à l'étude*, pp. 213–15, with the Greek fifteen-syllable. Lauxtermann, “Medieval Latin and Byzantine Accentual Metrics”, p. 115, attributes similarities to the shared classical heritage and “analogous but independent linguistic processes”.

25 My mistake had one positive personal outcome. Professor Linos Politis, an academic hero of mine, was briefly a colleague as visiting professor in Sydney. When at last the Greek establishment accepted his election to the Academy of Athens, his first communication attacked my *versus quadratus* proposal: a proud but chastening moment (see Politis, L., “Νεώτερες ἀπόψεις”).

26 Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, p. 17. “Political verse” translates a Greek name of the fifteen-syllable. Sifakis similarly discusses the fifteen-syllable via a review of *Spring of Rhythm* in “Σκέψεις για τη γέννηση και δομή του δεκαπεντασύλλαβου”. He is favourable to the book, but unwilling to abandon belief in the persistence of the ancient iambic tetrameter.

analysis covers, for example, changes in the stress-accent before caesuras (after syllable 8). Though the earliest 10th-century poems show only accents on syllable 8, later the alternative on syllable 6 makes rare appearances. Lauxtermann shows that no accents are regulated anywhere before the hemistich endings. Even the underlying iambic rhythm only appears late in the century.

Chapter II (41–54) treats accentual octasyllables and heptasyllables, corresponding in syllable numbers to the hemistichs of the fifteen-syllable. An introduction discusses terminology, then focuses on variants of the hemistich forms, many dated to the 9th century, apparently ready for combination in the 10th. Lauxtermann concludes as follows:<sup>27</sup>

... in the ninth and tenth centuries accentual poetry appears to have become fashionable at the imperial court. The accentual metres found in court poetry of that time are (in chronological order of appearance) the octasyllable, the heptasyllable and the political verse. The political verse derives from two, once separated colons ...

Regular heptasyllables resemble the second fifteen-syllable hemistich, but common octasyllables have paroxytone endings unsuited to the first hemistich, which needs a rarer proparoxytone “political octasyllable”.

Lauxtermann then shows how 9th-century regular octasyllables often come in pairs, like the less frequent heptasyllables. This principle, “pairing”, is the glue binding the fifteen-syllable’s hemistichs together. To explain puzzling changes in octasyllable accentuation, he links regular octasyllables to later fifteen-syllables in various ways; regular octasyllables are used in the 9th century for the same purposes as fifteen-syllables in the 10th, and appear among 10th-century fifteen-syllables as refrains and variants. Further evidence arises from the mutilated ms. Barb. gr. 310, now reduced to a few alphabet poems, using paired octasyllables or paired heptasyllables. The ms. index lists 80 alphabets, some lost examples probably in fifteen-syllable form. The conclusion here is as follows:<sup>28</sup>

There can be hardly any doubt that whatever the origins of the political verse, the metrical principle of pairing has been instrumental to its genesis. Whereas it is certainly not easy to explain why the combination of a political octasyllable and a heptasyllable became so popular that it

<sup>27</sup> Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, p. 51.

led to the extinction of almost all of the other forms of paired poetry that once existed, the composite origins of the political verse doubtlessly result from the principle of pairing.

Chapter II ends with detailed statistics, unexpectedly introducing new octasyllable categories, going back to the 6th century.

Chapter III (55–68) returns to the beginnings of accentual poetry, in three categories: hymnography, acclamations and satirical songs. The comments on hymnography largely depend on Koder's statistics on the *Kontakia* of Romanos.<sup>29</sup> Lauxtermann shows that Romanos already had a distinct idea of heptasyllables and regular and political octasyllables, as well as some surprising oxytone octasyllables. He discusses the large statistical differences between religious and secular poetry, attributing them either to the *kontakion's* additional periodic respension from strophe to strophe, or its music, or newly-mentioned complexities of ancient rhythm. Some acclamations are hard to date or analyse; but seven- and eight-syllable cola are even more prominent here than in early hymns. Satirical songs are interesting, but too brief and textually confused to help much in metrical history. Chapter III shows that varied seven- and eight-syllable cola were common from the start of accentual verse.

Chapter IV of Lauxtermann's book (69–86) turns from the history of early accentual metrics to its governing principles, stressing that Byzantines treated accentual forms in rhetorical rather than metrical handbooks. Section 1 surveys the birth of quantitative metrics, including hexameter changes, while sections 2–4 deal with stress regulation, isosyllaby and finally colon structure, which Lauxtermann calls the most important. This trio of principles appears repeatedly. He suggests that the use of colon structure in verse derived from "Asiatic" or "Asianic" (not "Attic") oratory, which was poetic and encouraged verbal virtuosity, dating maybe from the 2nd or 3rd century AD. I feel that reverse historical order is less effective when applied to abstract metrical principles than in tracing the development of the metres themselves.

Chapter V (87–96) deals effectively with the well-known *chelidonisma* from the *Book of Ceremonies*, comparing it with a similar text in octasyllables from the 9th century, forming a satisfactory conclusion to the book.

This is the work of a very well-read and well-informed scholar confessing to "dithyrambic enthusiasm" for metre (7). He employs a wide range of material and analytical methods; most readers' first instinct will be to trust his judgments. But despite his intelligent enthusiasm, this is not an easy read. The

29 Romanos, *Kontakia*, ed. Maas/Trypanis.



historical narrative, we have seen, is in reverse. From the 10th-century fifteen-syllable, the focus turns to heptasyllables and various kinds of octasyllables, which in different genres date back to the beginning of accentual verse in Late Antiquity. Developments in the shorter lines follow principles also outlined in reverse chronological order. This would be clearer if amalgamated into a chronological narrative.

During this complex argumentation, the reader is offered intriguing distractions: histories of minor metres, terminological issues, detailed genre particularities, and many statistics. In chapter III earlier issues arise. Music, complexities of rhythm, the *kontakion* form and prose rhythms influencing colon structures appear. The information is interesting, often fascinating; but the points vary in their relevance to Lauxtermann's metrical history, with little explanation. Most readers' reactions to this wealth of material will be positive. But under pressure from a rich yet undifferentiated information flow, second thoughts may cause bafflement or even wariness, in case flaws in the argument are missed.

The reason for backwards chronological treatment is presumably the problem stated above: the lack of a focus for fifteen-syllable research before secure examples appear. What metrical features of the 6th century influenced the appearance of the verse in the 10th? A reversed radiological metaphor suggests itself. Lauxtermann in Chapter 1 injects (as it were) a striking dye into 10th-century fifteen-syllables, then runs the clock back in Chapters II–IV, concentrating on elements in previous x-ray photographs which led to the genesis of the verse. The dye separates relevant from irrelevant factors. But this is surmise; I have found no direct confirmation in the book.

Lauxtermann's discussions often end in brief formal conclusions. These usually differ stylistically from the remaining text: straightforward, simple, usually more clearly stated than the arguments leading up to them. I detect some frustration at the uncertainty inherent in studies of inchoate metres before regular forms appear, and disappointment that analysis cannot be not more incisive. Thus, conclusions are stated as dogmatically as the evidence allows. Such impressions may increase any unease readers may feel over the wide variety of material offered.

Similar issues were discussed on later chapters (for earlier periods) under Chapter III above. Others are hardly touched on in the book, for example possible textual problems. Brief cola of varying length and accentual pattern are not self-authenticating by the demands of metrical accuracy, unlike lines whose metres are secure. The songs of the *Book of Ceremonies*, for example, may have puzzled all those involved in preserving them: those who first recorded them

(maybe from performance), subsequent copyists, and modern editors. It is also harder in earlier periods to divine the nature of oral songs then in circulation, which probably had more metrical influence than surviving verse. As we have seen, even distinctions between prose and poetry collapse, since many prose cola differ from poetry only in showing less pressure towards isosyllaby. Metrical history during the gap is an area where secure answers may never be found. But arguments line up more convincingly if the writer does not aim at certainty, but just claims that one solution covers more evidence than others. This style of argument demands competing proposals, judged by explanatory power over the full range of evidence.

It is easy to make up a very convincing proposal of this kind from the *Spring of Rhythm*. It would be based on Lauxtermann's three major principles: stress regulation, isosyllaby and colon structure. A fourth—pairing—explains the combination of the two hemistichs of the fifteen-syllable. The argument might be made in two stages. A good (almost deductive) case can be made that long metres were already breaking into shorter cola, mainly of eight or seven syllables, by the time of Romanos, as shown by Koder. Lauxtermann states the fact in his introduction, but supports it by one reference to Koder's work, without summarising its argument.<sup>30</sup> By the same time, the prehistory of the fifteen-syllable had absorbed balancing and antithesis, characteristic of prose colon structure but not prominent in hexameters, adding up to a major revolution in poetic writing in Late Antiquity. This argument greatly weakens theories suggesting continuity over the gap, like the hypothesis of direct development, rejected at the outset of this chapter, or the *versus quadratus* proposal. A picture would emerge of a rich primal soup of suitable short cola, from which (influenced by pairing) there developed the regular 10th-century fifteen-syllable.

The argument could be made simply, and forwards. To suppress anxieties over possible *petitio principii* (solutions predetermined by methods chosen), it must be shown that the argument covers too much of the available evidence to allow for substantially different proposals. Some early complexities Lauxtermann discusses, may be treated separately as irrelevant to his core metrical analysis.

My main complaint about *The Spring of Rhythm* is the lack of attention paid to convincing the reader; surprising, perhaps, in a book where rhetoric plays a large part. The book sets chronology in reverse, over both metrical history and its governing principles, without explanation. It provides a vast volume of interesting information without stating the importance (or not) of much of it to

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30 Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, p. 18. Koder, "Kontaktion und politischer Vers".

the historical thread running through the book. It shows some frustration over inevitably tentative conclusions, and states them as firmly as possible. These issues undermine the great credibility gained through the impressive breadth and detail of the information provided. Lauxtermann's book is by far the best survey of the prehistory of the fifteen-syllable, and the history it sketches is much more convincing than any alternative. But the theory deserves focussed support, aiming as much to persuade as to inform.

#### 4 Prose Rhythms

Modern study of the rhythms of Byzantine prose was first put on a solid footing by Wilhelm Meyer (aus Speyer) before 1891,<sup>31</sup> but for nearly a century progress was limited. Meyer's first real successor was Wolfram Hörandner.<sup>32</sup> After discussing Meyer and others, Hörandner's section I (17–46) outlines a theoretical framework for the subject. But his book is more practical than theoretical, being based on a very large series of examples. Section II (47–117) covers writers of *progymnasmata* for teaching purposes, while section III (119–52) analyses examples from all periods of Byzantine literature. These chart developments in rhythmic usage, but also have specific practical goals of attribution and textual criticism. Hörandner asks readers to use rhythmical analysis to measure an author's rhetorical aspirations, to compare rhythmical "signatures" in cases of disputed attribution, and to identify atypical usages suggesting editorial intervention. Similarities between prose and poetic rhythms are mentioned, but not developed.

Lauxtermann's treatment has already been mentioned. It climaxes by linking Byzantine poetic colon structure to Asianic rhythms of Hellenistic prose oratory. This insight is expanded in chapter 2 of the latest contribution to the debate, by Vessela Valiavitcharska.<sup>33</sup> She teaches rhetoric in a department of English, and approached Byzantine prose rhythms via comparisons between Old Slavic translations of Byzantine homilies with their Greek originals. Though she claims both Hörandner and Lauxtermann as important influences, her book reads differently from their Greek-based analyses. Her concern with wider aspects of rhetorical theory illumines new dimensions of the issue, while forcing readers to question terminology ever more fiercely. She ends with

31 Meyer, "Anfang und Ursprung"; Meyer, *Der accentuirte Satzschluss*.

32 Hörandner, *Der Prosarhythmus*.

33 Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*.

challenging concepts to which I cannot yet formulate a response. For example, she says that in rhetorical prose, rhythm is a significant part of meaning, and that it can even cross linguistic boundaries, for example from Old Slavic to Greek.

But the primary importance of the study of prose rhythms to this chapter is not at theoretical levels. Hörandner and Lauxtermann analyse the importance of the *clausula*, rules for marking the end of the prose colon, whilst stressing that this was only part of the influence of rhythm. Valiavitcharska ambitiously attempts to examine the whole of that influence. At several points I wonder whether she claims unjustified certainty over details, since her sources vary in date, and it is not always clear whether they refer to a past ideal or to their writers' own times. But she is right, in my view, to broaden analysis to include among possible antecedents of accentual poets all the resources of Asianic rhetors. All devices of Asianic writers as complex as Sophronios of Jerusalem may potentially have influenced the *cola* which achieved poetic status as accentual octasyllables and heptasyllables. They were also available when two such *cola* with specific accentual endings were paired to form the fifteen-syllable, and in particular when individual fifteen-syllables were woven into larger rhetorical structures. Asianic patterns may have operated at all these stages, through sound, syntax and sense. Her chapter 2, entitled "Between Prose and Poetry: Asianic Rhythms, Accentual Poetry, and the Byzantine Festal Homily" (56–89), covers many such devices.

The rhetor aims at "a language which is uncomplicated yet rhetorically pleasing (in order to satisfy everyone's expectations), simple yet sophisticated (in order to convey theological subtleties), all the while memorable (in order that the message may stay)" (56). Large, mixed urban crowds needed readily noticeable figures of speech, not the "syntactically convoluted, long and flowing periods of the Attic orators, which were more suitable for leisurely reading" (59). Audiences heard "figures of balance and symmetry (antithesis, parallelism), and figures of accumulation and redundancy (paratactic syntax, asyndeton, rhyme, anaphora, antimetabole, anadiplosis)" (65). It is important to contrast the learning required to write Asianic rhetoric with its likely attraction to the ears of unsophisticated audience members. Baroque music may be enjoyed by those who can say nothing of its structures. Since such rhetorical elements belonged to the birthright of the fifteen-syllable, we may seek their influence in later works in that verse.

## 5 Early Fifteen-Syllables: 11th and 12th Centuries

The latest metrical history so far covered here is Lauxtermann's analysis of 10th-century fifteen-syllables in chapter 1 of the *Spring of Rhythm*. This section will review surviving fifteen-syllables from the 11th and 12th centuries, seeking signs of oral forms which (most now believe) lie behind their earliest written use. A judgement made 40 years ago may be a useful introduction: that fifteen-syllables of this time cluster round four poles of attraction: popular, imperial, religious, and educational.<sup>34</sup> I shall reformulate this. The popular connections of the fifteen-syllable now seem paramount, both aurally for the illiterate, and in writing for those with inadequate literacy to follow allusive references to learned material. The other three poles show powerful elements of Byzantine society using the verse's popular appeal for imperial propaganda, religious edification and simple education.

I shall choose five large bodies of work from the two centuries, without claiming to give a complete or even a representative picture. The first consists of the hymns of Symeon the New Theologian, written around the year 1000 in eight- and twelve-syllable verses, as well as fifteen-syllables.<sup>35</sup> Symeon's fifteen-syllables are irregular, with some half-line verses and eccentric caesuras, suggesting instability in the written fifteen-syllable. However, his accuracy in the two shorter metres is little better, hinting that more mistakes are owed to the poet's ill-disciplined enthusiasm than the immaturity of his medium. Symeon's text was probably edited by Niketas Stethatos, maybe in a clumsy way. The strongest accusations of poetic incompetence and textual disruption in this period refer to Symeon's poems, about whose publication we probably know more than in any other case. This should make us wary in analysing texts in minor verse-forms or heightened prose, especially from "the gap", when verse-forms are rarely secure and details of textual history usually unavailable.

The second body of work is by Michael Psellos, who wrote several long fifteen-syllable poems to instruct emperors, Constantine IX in the 1040s and 1050s, then Michael VII in the 1060s and 1070s.<sup>36</sup> Several didactic poems survive in two versions, with dedications updated for another imperial pupil. The reason why Psellos used the verse is explicit, and was later repeated in comments

34 Jeffreys, M., "Nature and Origins", pp. 173–79.

35 Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns*, eds. Koder/Paramelle, with the comments of Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, pp. 42–43.

36 Psellos, *Poems*, ed. Westerink, chiefly nos. 1–8, with the comments of Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 23–25.

on their own work by several 12th-century poets.<sup>37</sup> He and they used the fifteen-syllable for audiences whose education was insufficient to read or understand orally the literary games with which learned authors usually filled their writings. The language and style of fifteen-syllables is usually correct but simple. By their own choice, or by commands from a patron, poets selected this metre for the stated audiences.

The third body of work is quite different. The *Ptochoprodromika* make authorial claims to the name Prodomos, complain of poverty, and ask for money.<sup>38</sup> They are also impressive works of literature. The four or five poems, written in different personae, are the first surviving substantially in the Byzantine vernacular, thus maybe in Modern Greek. This importance in the history of Greek culture often removes them from their historical context: demoticists in the Greek language question, while achieving so much for contemporary Greek education, rigidly divided learned and popular texts of the 12th century. The *Ptochoprodromika* are often presented as bold outbursts of popular Greek spirit, breaking through learned Byzantine obscurantism, making it hard to attribute them to any well-educated Byzantine. In fact, they suggest to me an educated approach to writing the vernacular.<sup>39</sup> Most begin with dedications in regular Byzantine Greek, which soon give way to a convincing version of the register shared by all 12th-century Greeks when speaking in a relaxed way. New languages, or new levels of existing languages, usually first appear in writing camouflaged with the poetics of oral forms. The 12th-century date is not confirmed by contemporary manuscripts, but there are persuasive links to John II and Manuel I.<sup>40</sup>

The fourth body of work belongs to the probable author of the *Ptochoprodromika*, Theodore Prodomos (c.1100–56).<sup>41</sup> He was a well-educated writer whose works survive in many different learned genres, prose and verse, versatility which suggests that he wrote the *Ptochoprodromika* as well. His learned verse also lamented poverty and asked for money. But Theodore's key genre for present purposes unites him with the author of the fifth body of work:

37 Jeffrey, M., "Nature and Origins", pp. 150–59.

38 *Ptochoprodromika*, ed. H. Eideneier, with a demoticist introduction.

39 Agapitos, "Grammar, Genre and Patronage" and idem, "The Schedourgia of Theodore Prodomos", provide scholarly support for this impression of mine. For him the *Ptochoprodromika* are a learned exercise, probably written by Theodore. This increases rather than decreasing their vernacular authenticity.

40 Agapitos' study removes most problems relating to a 12th-century dating.

41 Theodore Prodomos, *Historical Poems*, ed. Hörandner.

“Manganeios Prodromos”.<sup>42</sup> Both Prodromoi wrote many poems addressed to emperors on public occasions: celebration of births, marriages and deaths in the imperial family, and military and diplomatic victories over Byzantium’s neighbours. Theodore used more metres than Manganeios, including the longest hexameter poems since Late Antiquity. But half of Theodore’s work in imperial genres, and nearly all of Manganeios’, is in the fifteen-syllable. There is little doubt that their motive for using it was effectiveness in making imperial propaganda before audiences of varying sizes around the palace, and presumably elsewhere.

Theodore probably invented this genre in the 1130s. In the 1140s the Prodromoi were rivals for imperial commissions, with roughly equal success. Manganeios refers to Theodore with affection in 1156 as already dead,<sup>43</sup> while his own last securely dated poem was written in 1159. A main characteristic of their fifteen-syllables is obsession with rhetorical patterning, frequent in the case of Theodore, whose editor provides only a selection, because they are far too many to list in full.<sup>44</sup> But Manganeios includes significantly more still.

This is not the place for detailed study of Manganeios’ metrics. He regularly adds rhetorical patterns to the basic constituents of the verse. Some shapes operate within the line, balancing the two hemistichs, or the two halves of the first hemistich. Balance sometimes operates through sense, though anaphora, rhyme, assonance, and syntactical parallelism play their parts. Chiasmic variation of the order of elements is nearly as common as simple repetition. Parallel, balanced structures are frequently used to hold two or more lines together.<sup>45</sup> One reason why the full edition of Manganeios (eds. Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys) has been long delayed is the search for vocabulary to describe these patterns. They seem too numerous and fundamental to be called rhetorical colouration applied to poetry conceived without them: they have a generative quality, as important as the fifteen-syllable line itself. The fact that the two Prodromoi were first to use the fifteen-syllable for substantial poems, exploiting its value in public performance, suggests they may have appropriated the poetics of the oral genres they adapted. The moderately educated Manganeios uses this rhetoric much more than the highly educated Theodore, suggesting

42 Manganeios Prodromos, *Poems*. See the list of titles, poem numbers, editions and provisional dating in Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, pp. 494–500.

43 Poem 37 ll. 27–48. Manganeios’ last securely dated poem is no. 23, written for a wedding held after Manuel I’s return from Antioch in 1159; ed. and trans. Jeffreys/Jeffreys, “A Constantinopolitan Poet”, pp. 144–51.

44 Theodore Prodromos, *Historical Poems*, ed. Hörandner, p. 113: “eine vollständige Aufzählung würde ins Uferlose führen”.

45 See the tables in Jeffreys, “Written Dekapentasyllables”, pp. 214–28.

that it is a rhetoric of the crowd and the streets rather than the schoolroom. The fifteen-syllable did not exist when ancient metrical handbooks were written: as with other accentual metres, guidance should be sought in rhetorical, not metrical, handbooks.

## 6 Possible Traces of Early Oral Fifteen-Syllables Found in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Texts

### 6.1 *Manganeios Prodromos and “Templates”*

The search for parallels to the verse of the Prodrómoi has settled on Grigoris Sifakis’ analysis of the structures of Modern Greek folk-song.<sup>46</sup> Sifakis begins from Homeric oral theory, but describes a rather different system. Beneath surface confusion of different modern dialects and orthographical conventions, he describes a surprisingly uniform structure. Sifakis defines the use of “templates”, which divide one fifteen-syllable line, or combine more than one, into patterns to create and preserve the songs. The templates use most of Manganeios’ rhetorical elements described above. Only chiasmic patterns are missing; in their place are clauses balancing statements and their negation.<sup>47</sup> These similarities suggest parallels, even connections, between Manganeios and folk-songs collected in the 19th century. The chronological gulf is shortened by good evidence from the 15th century onwards.<sup>48</sup> But earlier details are sparse. The 12th century itself, for example, offers only one couplet from Cyprus, though its witness is more convincing than its brevity might suggest. It uses a template frequent in both Manganeios and folk-song, with simple language and markers of a typical modern song of exile.<sup>49</sup>

Whilst preparing this paper, the thought has occurred that Manganeios’ style may be traced backwards as well as forwards. Colon structures of texts prefiguring early fifteen-syllables, particularly prose cola described by Valiavitcharska, include many features (typically involving balance and antithesis) shared with Manganeios (and folk-song). Manganeios’ editors must now decide whether to use vocabulary describing prose sermons influenced by Asianic rhetoric, as well as structuralist analysis of 19th-century folk-songs. Potential confirmation has been found for Asianic input into the fifteen-syllable.

46 Sifakis, *Γιὰ μιὰ ποιητική*.

47 Sifakis, *Γιὰ μιὰ ποιητική*, pp. 95–99.

48 There is little to add to a summary written 35 years ago: Beaton, *Folk poetry*, pp. 82–89.

49 Tsiknopoulos “Ποιητική παράγωγη”, p. 49.



## 6.2 “Mixed” Language

In the 13th century new genres for the fifteen-syllable appeared; long, narrative works in a new linguistic medium. Most were romances, some original Greek compositions, others translations, especially from French.<sup>50</sup> None may be securely located linguistically in the Greek world, though other evidence shows that modern dialects were then under formation. Previous fifteen-syllables, apart from the *Ptochoprodromika* and other experiments, had (in the Byzantine tradition) avoided many post-classical elements of daily speech. However the new genres included numerous, previously excluded, linguistic features. Surprisingly, however, equivalent “archaic” features remained; in fact there is often some statistical equality between “old” and “new” morphological variants. The inverted commas in this sentence indicate that exclusive temporal frameworks are now superseded. Most “old” and “new” elements were in fact current in different Greek-speaking areas. The mixture was more geographically than historically based, a mixture of live dialect forms. Usually both variants were probably available in a speaker’s daily conversation, but often the new genre may have brought together forms normally treated as alternatives. It is striking that variant forms of the same nouns and verbs seem designed to fit the metrical clausulae of the two hemistichs of the fifteen-syllable. This language seems to aim, at least in part, at easy composition in that verse. Its mixture is fairly consistent, implying independent existence, not just haphazard choices of the poets who used it over the centuries. How may such consistency be explained otherwise? How old is the mixed language?

## 6.3 Formulas

Texts in the mixed language also show many half-line repetitions, both within each poem and from one to others.<sup>51</sup> Sometimes up to 30 per cent of hemistichs are repeated, to include changed noun cases and verb tenses. This places these poems in a category covering numerous languages. Many famous medieval poems are just as formulaic: the *Chanson de Roland*, the *Nibelungenlied*, *Beowulf*, and the *Cid*, for example. Intensive research in the second half of the 20th century concluded that such poems must have some connection with oral genres of poetry. Comparative studies of oral performance in modern situations show that formulas are not essential; but no cases have been found where repetitions on this scale appear with no oral connection, however distant.

50 Horrocks, *Greek*, in his Chapter 12 “Texts in the ‘Vernacular’” (pp. 325–69) gives a good introduction to the language and content of the new genres.

51 Jeffreys, “Formulas in the Chronicle of the Morea”. Jeffreys and Jeffreys, “Traditional Style (1979)”.

The formulas in these poems are not uniform. A few include obsolete particles (e.g. the  $\tau\epsilon$  in  $\mu\iota\kappa\rho\iota\ \tau\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\iota$ , the most common formula), more show prepositions governing cases which had long changed in daily speech. These are presumably quite old. Others were created for texts where they are now found: for example, idiosyncratic formulas for Frankish heroes in translated romances.<sup>52</sup> Others are on the continuum between these extremes. The basic need was to use formulas (of whatever kind), rather than the employment of a given formulaic vocabulary.

#### 6.4 *The War of Troy and the Chronicle of Morea*

The nature and date of genres with mixed language and formulas have recently been refined. The longest (more than 14000 lines) is the *War of Troy*, a translation of the French *Roman de Troie* of Benoit de Sainte Maure.<sup>53</sup> This survives in five manuscripts and other fragments, while several lost copies may be postulated by manuscript collation. This one poem accounts for a high percentage of non-learned Greek verse of the time in manuscript. When published in 1996, it was dated (perfunctorily) to the mid-14th century (p. lxxix). Recently Elizabeth Jeffreys has securely redated it to the 1270s, following revelation of the use of the French original as dynastic propaganda in Paris and Naples, writing the Capetian dynasty into the web of Trojan descendants among the medieval rulers of Europe.<sup>54</sup> Charles of Anjou from Naples was suzerain of the principality of Morea; thus his governor there in the 1270s, Leonardo da Veroli, could imagine himself representing a Trojan descendant ruling a land largely populated by Greeks. Several other reasons support the proposal that Charles or Leonardo sponsored this huge translation, to impress Moreot Greeks with the pedigree of their French rulers.

It may have been hard to choose a Greek style. What was needed was a popular medium, to attract Greek Moreots, most of whom would have been illiterate or at least not learned: perhaps a style of oral entertainment. Paradoxically, the fact that French rulers (untroubled by Byzantine traditions) chose the mixed language/formula style for this purpose is some guarantee of the Greekness of the medium.

There is another long Greek text celebrating the Franco-Greek Moreot principality: the *Chronicle of the Morea*.<sup>55</sup> Surviving manuscripts date to the late 14th century or later, but its narrative stops early in that century. Theresa

52 Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "Traditional Style" (1979), pp. 125–27.

53 *War of Troy*, ed. Papathomopoulos and E. Jeffreys.

54 Jeffreys, "Byzantine Romances: Eastern or Western?", pp. 228–35.

55 *Chronicle of the Morea*, ed. Schmitt.

Shawcross has suggested that the *Chronicle*, a kind of founding epic of the Morea, probably saw rolling editions recording local events before 1300.<sup>56</sup> Thus, an earlier version may have existed at the time of the translation of the *War of Troy* in the 1270s, another use of oral style in writing to express multicultural Moreot propaganda. The *War of Troy*, by this scenario, might be the first such poem to be written. This would explain the origins of the genre, which is rather inexplicable in a purely Byzantine framework.

### 6.5 *Byzantine Greek Reactions?*

When the *War of Troy* (with or without the *Chronicle*) reached Byzantine ears, it must have struck them as French appropriation of Greek symbols: Homer, ancient Greece, recent Greek history (praise of the Fourth Crusade), as well as the language. The *War of Troy*, besides battles, also includes substantial romantic interludes: Jason and Medea, Paris and Helen, Briseis with Troilus and Diomedes, and Achilles and Polyxene. Other poems in the formula/mixed language genre are hard to attach to dates and places, but are usually attributed to Nicaea or Constantinople.<sup>57</sup> They are similar in style to the Moreot works, which we have claimed as attractive means of communication with uneducated Greeks; many are romances, several have ancient Greek subjects, particularly Homeric stories. Elizabeth Jeffreys, after redating the *War of Troy*, suggested that these poems were a Byzantine response to Frankish cultural aggression.<sup>58</sup> This second proposal has been less accepted than the redating.

### 6.6 *The “Natural Spoken Language” of Jorie Soltic*

The most recent contribution to this debate is from a linguist, Jorie Soltic. She claims that the language of the new poetic genres of the 13th century was not an artificial discourse, disqualified from use in linguistic history, where its many vernacular forms are potentially useful. In fact, she identifies many marks of a “natural spoken language”. Her recent PhD thesis is based on more subtle linguistic analysis than is usually found in Medieval Greek.<sup>59</sup>

Two concepts already met in this chapter introduce her arguments. First, the use of formulas, usually linked to oral composition and performance, points to spoken language (14–32). Second, she demonstrates that the style is extremely flexible, without the artificial rigidity often seen in poetry (81–91).

56 Shawcross, *The Chronicle of Morea*, pp. 73–76.

57 See e.g. Agapitos, “Χρονολογική ακολουθία”.

58 Jeffreys, “Byzantine Romances: Eastern or Western?”, pp. 235–37.

59 Soltic, *The Late Medieval Greek πολιτικός στίχος Poetry*.

The flexibility often depends on the mixed language's provision of alternative, metrically useful accent-patterns, often exploiting the rules for clitics (91–124).

Soltic's core analysis can be only outlined here. It is based on a nexus of linguistic methodologies known as Information Structure, identifying the rapid processing of speech, not the more considered approaches typical of writing (39–64). Soltic shows in a corpus of 13th- and 14th-century fifteen-syllables, that narrative divides into a series of Information Units, chunks of data a hemistich or a line in length, connected paratactically: the concept "sentence" is hardly present (125–32). Those forced to punctuate the poems will immediately take the point. Another category is "light verbs", generic verbs meaning "do", "make" etc., which simply turn nouns into verbal expressions; they are common in the *Chronicle of the Morea* (159–67). Other cases result from a sudden need to change syntax during one line, or from one line to the next. After beginning with a singular verb, for example, the poet may have to use a plural subject, leaving a syntactic anomaly (132–42). In "clitic doubling", syntax is completed (usually by a pronoun), but it is later felt that the pronoun's reference is unclear, compelling the addition of an explanatory noun and making the earlier pronoun redundant. In several categories, Soltic uses modern spoken language to parallel irregular medieval fifteen-syllables, providing professional solutions to editorial dilemmas previously ignored.

The largest category, "Discourse Markers", is more persuasive still (191–298). Many such words have changed their meaning, or sometimes lost meaning altogether, in particular ways. Some were ancient Greek particles, others belong to various parts of speech. The original meaning of the word is replaced by a functional role in the discourse. This may at times be little more than filling a vacant syllable in the line, but it is usually more substantial and procedural, like switching to a different subject, grabbing attention, or adding emphasis to what has just been said. Discourse markers often retain some characteristics of the original word (e.g. a particle's position in the Information Unit), but may lose others (like the ability of a verb to take an object, govern a clause, or change in number to reflect different subjects). Most medieval discourse markers have disappeared in Modern Greek, but one, *λοιπόν*, remains very frequent. The process by which a word becomes a discourse marker is called the "bleaching" of its meaning. "Bleaching" takes time.

Soltic concludes that her medieval corpus has so many marks of natural spoken language that it may be quarried for historical linguistics, like a prose resource (299–306). This is a conclusion for fellow-linguists reluctant to use metrical texts. But she raises other questions for literary scholars. Formulas, fifteen-syllable verse and the mixed language are characteristics of those texts as fundamental as those identified in her thesis, but were self-evidently not all

part of Greek daily speech. What was the “natural spoken language” to which she refers? Might it have been used by Greek oral poets to address audiences in performance? Soltic has shown that the style of these texts was not based merely on the addition of formulas to plain written text. But where was this uniform style formed? Where were the discourse markers bleached? Were the features she identifies added by poets as they wrote, copying 13th-century Greek speech, or did the style come ready-made from oral sources, which may have already been under formation in the 10th century?

## 7 Two Genres of Modern Greek Oral Poetry?

The evidence of 12th- and 13th-century fifteen-syllables suggests two kinds of oral background. Manganeios Prodromos and the Neophytos distich seem to link the 12th century via templates with the *tragoudia*, the main line of Greek folksong up to the present.<sup>60</sup> We have now suggested projection of this line back to Asianic prose rhythms of the Alexandrians and Late Antiquity, via the chaos at the time of the hexameter's disappearance. The other background is postulated by the spread of formula/mixed language fifteen-syllables in the Frankish Morea, later probably to the capital. It is hard to see how Frankish formulaic traditions could have imposed themselves so firmly on poems of the first background as to generate the second, with its radical change of poetics. There survived till the 20th century limited traditions of longer songs, sung by *rimadori* in Crete and *poietarides* in Cyprus, with some decayed formulaic usage. These may be remains of the second form, suitably found in lands dominated by westerners.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps the Frankish rulers found among their Greek subjects another singing tradition resembling their own formulaic patterns. This familiar style might have seemed more practical to sponsors of the *War of Troy* and the *Chronicle of the Morea* than the templates of the *tragoudia* tradition, which seem designed for shorter oral poems (though the Prodromoi had stretched them out in writing). The mixed language is ripe for more research, improving linguistic methodologies over all aspects of the language, in order to confirm and nuance Soltic's conclusions. The hypothesis of two oral traditions is not much more adventurous than the hypothesis of one. This would bring oral traditions

60 The history of Greek folksong is a project of Sifakis, who describes it in Sifakis, “Looking for the Tracks of Oral Tradition”.

61 Cretan and Cypriot traditions are summarised together in Beaton, *Folk Poetry*, pp. 151–78.

in Greek in line with the two (or more) medieval oral traditions in German, Spanish and other languages.<sup>62</sup>

This chapter leads to no conclusion. It stresses that most Byzantine poems were oral, and these vanished works must have massively influenced the written remains.<sup>63</sup> Some light appears in this obscurity, particularly at moments when new genres were first written down, maybe betraying some characteristics of the majority of poems which are lost. I have tried to bring these points of light into one list, and to sketch the subterranean paths that joined them, until and after the end of Byzantium. There is value in stating hypotheses, even as schematic as these. Once written down they are easier to criticise and develop.

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62 I propose a more fundamental division of techniques than Beaton, *Folk Poetry*, pp. 136–50. Reichl, "Plotting the Map", pp. 31–43, outlines cases of different medieval oral strands in the same language, whilst warning against simplistic labels. Other essays in the same collection give more details e.g. Müller, "Medieval German" (esp. pp. 310–25) and Wright, "Hispanic Epic and Ballad" (esp. pp. 411–23).

63 Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "Traditional Style" (2016) approach these problems for the 13th and 14th centuries from a rather different viewpoint.

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# Byzantine Poetry and Rhetoric

*Elizabeth Jeffreys*

This chapter will consider first how Byzantine poets encountered Greek rhetorical theory and practice, and will then discuss some of the ways in which these practices are apparent in their texts.

## 1 Rhetoric

Byzantine rhetoric continues to be an understudied subject, and also an ill-understood one with a reputation for difficulty. Indeed, in almost any language ‘rhetoric’ and ‘rhetorical’ have become pejorative terms, with connotations of exaggeration, deceit and obfuscation, and a sense that layers of rhetoric have to be scraped away before a text’s message can be revealed.<sup>1</sup> This is regrettable since, in essence, rhetoric is nothing more sinister than a set of rules to aid communication, both orally and in writing.<sup>2</sup> However, it must be admitted that from its earliest years, in the Greek world of the 5th century BC, practitioners of rhetoric could be stigmatized for “making the weaker argument the stronger”.<sup>3</sup> Rhetorical techniques derived from the ancient world underlie virtually every formal composition in Byzantine Greek, whether in prose or verse, whether large-scale or small, whether a free-standing oration or an embedded element in a longer work. Those who read Byzantine texts today without awareness of this fact cannot fully appreciate them.

Knowledge of rhetoric in Byzantium came from handbooks and commentaries, and practice in the class-room, where rhetorical theory was introduced in the later stages of secondary education.<sup>4</sup> The handbooks were

1 See the comments in Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 5–6, and the contributions of J. Ljubarski and M. Vinson in Jeffreys, *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, which lament approaches of this sort.

2 As is widely recognized in North American pedagogy, where courses in creative writing can blur into courses in rhetoric; see Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*, pp. 2–6.

3 Famously in Plato, *Apology* 18 a, where Socrates is branded as a meretricious sophist.

4 On Byzantine rhetoric the relevant section in Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, vol. 1, pp. 65–196 remains a fundamental reference tool. Useful also are Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, and Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*.

initially produced in Late Antiquity under the influence of a literary movement that began in the 2nd century AD and, growing out of the urban culture of Greek-speaking areas of the Roman empire, has come to be known as the Second Sophistic. Its impact can be considered to have continued into the 5th and 6th centuries AD.<sup>5</sup> The most significant of these handbooks were: the *On Issues* and *On Style* of Hermogenes of Tarsus, on structuring arguments with suitable stylistic configurations;<sup>6</sup> the treatise on epideictic or display oratory by Menander of Laodicea;<sup>7</sup> and the *Progymnasmata*, or preliminary exercises, of Aphthonius.<sup>8</sup> No uncial copies of these authors survive. However, their works continued in use until the revival of secular learning in the 9th and 10th centuries as is indicated, for example, by the knowledge of Hermogenes shown by Germanos (patriarch 715–30) and also by Photios (patriarch 858–67, 877–86).<sup>9</sup> The works of Hermogenes, Menander and Aphthonius came through the crucial 9th-century process of transliteration into minuscule from uncial, but thereafter their circulation pattern varies.<sup>10</sup> For Menander, strangely, no manuscript survives for the period between the 10th and 13th centuries, although this was a time when epideictic oratory flourished, while the large number of 15th- and 16th-century manuscripts for Hermogenes demonstrates that the esteem in which he was held in Palaeologan Constantinople was echoed in the Renaissance West.<sup>11</sup> Many earlier manuscripts may have been used to destruction in teaching situations, or perhaps the number in existence was never great since teaching was largely oral and dependent on lectures and note-taking.<sup>12</sup> Interesting are the manuscripts from the 13th century which

5 See Kazhdan, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, under 'Second Sophistic', and also, e.g., Gleason, *Making Men*; Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*, with older bibliography; and idem, *Beyond the Second Sophistic*.

6 2nd century AD: Hermogenes, *On Issues* and *On Style*, ed. Rabe; English translation in Heath, *Hermogenes On Issues*.

7 3rd century AD: ed. and trans. Russell /Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*; see also Heath, *Menander*.

8 Late 4th/early 5th century AD: ed. Patillon, *Aphthonios Progymnasmata*; English translation in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*.

9 Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, pp. 5–22, at pp. 20–21.

10 There is some notable clustering of rhetorical authors in 10th-century manuscripts; e.g. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 1741 with Aristotle, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Menander; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 2919 with scholia on Hermogenes; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 3932 with Aphthonius and Hermogenes.

11 It is instructive, and now straightforward, to explore the online lists provided by the Institut de recherches et d'histoire des textes on the site *Pinakes*: [www.pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr](http://www.pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr).

12 For a recent survey of Byzantine pedagogy, see Markopoulos, "Teachers and Textbooks in Byzantium".

have collected up dossiers of the rhetorical productions from previous centuries, in both prose and verse, that had survived the debacle of 1204.<sup>13</sup>

Commentaries on Hermogenes started in the 5th century with the work of the Neoplatonic Syrianus, at one time head of the Academy in Athens.<sup>14</sup> From the mid-10th century onwards commentaries (now lost) by, for example, the obscure John of Sardis and the soldier-poet John Geometres, are known from references in the 11th-century commentary of John Doxapatres, much less obscure but still not well understood.<sup>15</sup> Slightly earlier came the voluminous commentaries of John Sikeliotes, now beginning to attract scholarly attention again,<sup>16</sup> while intriguingly Psellos paraphrased Hermogenes' treatises in fifteen-syllable verse for his imperial pupil Michael VII Doukas.<sup>17</sup> The 12th century saw fewer independent exponents of rhetorical theory, though a further example of a verse paraphrase of Hermogenes was produced by the indefatigable Tzetzes.<sup>18</sup> In the 13th century Pseudo-Gregory of Corinth was significant,<sup>19</sup> while Maximos Planudes edited, and commented on, all Hermogenes' works.<sup>20</sup> In the early 14th century Joseph Rhakendytes included in his encyclopedia of all knowledge a summary of Hermogenes' writings, adapted for the contemporary context; he demonstrated its continued relevance with observations that reflect evolved Byzantine stylistics.<sup>21</sup>

Menander's treatise, however, did not fare so well for, despite the traces of its precepts that can be observed in Doxapatres and Sikeliotes, no independent commentary survives. It has been suggested, nevertheless, that the variations found in the witnesses to the transmitted text could well derive from differing teaching practices, again giving witness to the text's continued use.<sup>22</sup>

Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*, which set out basic elements that could be used in an extended composition (*ekphrasis* or description, *ethopoia* or character study, *diegema* or short narrative, etc.), was a relatively uncomplicated

13 E.g. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barocci 131; Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Y II 10; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, phil. gr. 321.

14 Syrianus, *Commentaries on Hermogenes*, ed. Rabe; see also Wildberg, "Syrianus".

15 John Doxapatres, *Commentaries on Hermogenes*, ed. Rabe.

16 John Sikeliotes, *Commentary on Hermogenes*, ed. Walz. On the relations between Doxapatres and Sikeliotes, see Papaioannou, "Sicily, Constantinople, Miletos", pp. 273–77 and Roilos, "Ancient Greek Rhetorical Theory".

17 Psellos, *Poems*, ed. Westerink, no. 7; see Walker, "Michael Psellos on Rhetoric".

18 John Tzetzes, *Summary of Rhetoric*, ed. Walz (incompletely published).

19 See, e.g., Pseudo-Gregory of Corinth, *On the Perfect Speech*, ed. Hörandner.

20 Maximos Planudes, *On Rhetoric*, ed. Walz.

21 Joseph Rhakendytes, *On Rhetoric*, ed. Walz; see comments in Conley, "Rummaging in Walz's Attic".

22 Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, pp. xl–xlvi.

text, so perhaps it is not surprising that it attracted fewer commentaries than did Hermogenes.<sup>23</sup> Instead we find sets of specimen *progymnasmata*, some by a few of Byzantium's better known writers, such as Nikephoros Basilakes or George Pachymeres; these were practical demonstrations of what a student could aspire to.<sup>24</sup>

A further set of handbooks or aids to composition in general, whether in prose or verse, came in guides to the rhetorical figures of speech which were known as tropes or schemata.<sup>25</sup> These are the small-scale elements that vary the texture of written and spoken compositions, and challenge writers' ingenuity. In the most developed lists, these figures include allegory, ellipsis, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, metonymy, pleonasm, simile, synecdoche, riddle, and so forth. One work from Late Antiquity, which seems to have been particularly useful judging by the number of surviving manuscripts and paraphrases, is Tryphon, *On Tropes*.<sup>26</sup> The *On Poetic Figures* by the 9th-century George Choïroboskos is in effect yet another variation on Tryphon's lists for the so-called poetic figures of the title are no different in kind from those of Tryphon. They are described as "poetic" because verse writing made more abundant use of them than did prose.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, in this overview of the tools available to aspiring Byzantine word-smiths, there are late antique handbooks on metre, such as that of Hephaïstion, which give extensive descriptions of the mechanics of the ancient Greek prosodic patterns.<sup>28</sup> In addition there are the works of Byzantine metricians such as Elias Monachos or Isaac Monachos,<sup>29</sup> not forgetting Tzetzes' survey in fifteen-syllable verse.<sup>30</sup> The difficulties Hephaïstion's account caused readers is indicated by the quantities of scholia and paraphrases that were generated.<sup>31</sup> Why these are of only limited use to modern attempts to understand Byzantine poetic practice will become apparent.

23 But see, e.g. John of Sardis, *Commentary on Aphthonius*, ed. Rabe; John Doxapatres, *Commentaries on Aphthonius*, ed. Rabe.

24 Nikephoros Basilakes, *Progymnasmata*, ed. Pignani; George Pachymeres, *Examples of Progymnasmata*, ed. Walz.

25 Martin, *Antike Rhetorik*, pp. 261–69; Lanham, *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, pp. 174–78.

26 1st century BC: Tryphon, *On Tropes*, ed. Spengel. In the 12th-century, Tryphon's work circulated under the name of Gregory Pardus: West, "Tryphon, *De tropis*".

27 George Choïroboskos, *On Poetic Figures*, ed. Spengel, p. 244.

28 2nd century AD: Hephaïstion, *Enchiridion*, ed. Consbruch, pp. 1–78 text, pp. 81–174 scholia.

29 Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure lambs", pp. 12–14.

30 John Tzetzes, *On Metre*, ed. Cramer.

31 Hephaïstion, *Enchiridion*, ed. Consbruch, pp. 176–254: commentary derived from George Choïroboskos' lectures. For an outline of the problems facing Byzantine metricians in dealing with ancient metres, see Fryde, *Early Palaeologan Renaissance*, pp. 270–74.

## 2 Who Wrote Poetry, and When?

It is clear from the size and scope of this *Companion to Byzantine Poetry* that poetry was a prominent element in Byzantine literary culture. It is legitimate then to ask who produced this poetry, at what stages of their lives, and how this related to contact with rhetorical handbooks.

Recent work has made it increasingly apparent that writing in verse formed part of a student's secondary education, taught by the *grammatikos*.<sup>32</sup> Occasional references to this from either teacher (e.g. the 10th-century Anonymous Professor) or taught (e.g. Ignatius the Deacon, under the tutelage of the patriarch Tarasios in the 780s) are indicative.<sup>33</sup> In his overview of basic grammar and orthography made for the benefit of his imperial pupil, Psellos interposes comments at several points on the tools for composition in verse, and implies that writing iambics precedes attempts at hexameters.<sup>34</sup> There is a corollary to this situation: much surviving verse may well be the products of school exercises, or alternatively may represent "show pieces" by the students or "fair copies" by the teachers.<sup>35</sup> Composition in verse would have been taught at this early stage in a student's education because it provided a thorough training in the construction of cola, that is, the metrical units which formed the building blocks for prosodic lines of verse.

As is discussed elsewhere in this volume,<sup>36</sup> Byzantine verse composition used two different approaches to metre: the prosodic, which respected the ancient vowel quantities, and the accentual, which used the stress patterns of normal speech. These could be applied separately or sometimes together. Ancient vowel quantities had become meaningless to the ear by the 5th century AD, and had to be learnt in school. At first, Byzantine poets often used patterns of stress accents to point to the ends and caesuras of their lines, which would otherwise be heard as prose. Some poets combined stress accent with respect for all the ancient rules on syllable quantity. The mental gymnastics involved in this dual process exposed the student to the intricacies of ancient morphology and syllable quantity.<sup>37</sup> As a means of instilling deep knowledge of the linguistic by-ways of Greek, together with creative verbal flexibility, verse

32 See Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 209–51, here at pp. 213–22.

33 See Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure Iambs", p. 10, n. 7.

34 Psellos, *Poems*, ed. Westerink, no. 6: lines 92–100 on metrical feet; lines 177–180 on poetical tropes; iambics before hexameters: line 100.

35 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, p. 222.

36 See the contribution of M. Jeffreys in this volume, "From Hexameters to Fifteen-syllable Verse".

37 Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure Iambs", pp. 20–21.

composition was, and still is, unrivalled.<sup>38</sup> The eight- and twelve-syllable lines became largely accentual, though some poets using these metres continued to flirt with ancient rules on syllable quantity. The fifteen-syllable line appeared in the 10th century and achieved later dominance as the stress metre *par excellence*, completely without reference to ancient prosody.

Another way of describing this concentration on parts of the metrical line is as teaching the construction of cola, that is, metrical phrases. This ability was important because this was also a fundamental element in the composition of high-level prose, which demanded euphonic rhythmic patterns and cadences at sentence ends.<sup>39</sup> These indicated to the reader, and more importantly the listener,<sup>40</sup> the shaping of sense sequences. Accurate recognition of this patterning, and accurate presentation of it when reading aloud, was part of a student's training.<sup>41</sup> The importance of these cadences, appealing to the ear more obviously than the eye, was overlooked in several generations of modern scholarship, but has now been brought back into focus, notably by Wolfram Hörandner and more recently by Vessela Valiavitcharska.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, investigations by Marc Lauxtermann into the rhythms rather than the artificial prosody of Byzantine verse, that is, into the tension between the medieval stress accent and the obsolete classical syllable quantities, has highlighted the importance of cola.<sup>43</sup> Metricians like Hephaestion, discussed prosodic metres without reference to rhythm, while the handbooks of rhetoric refer to rhythm and the construction of cola, ignoring metre. As is now being appreciated once more, cola were an essential element in the composition of high level Byzantine prose, while they were equally important in constructing verse. This training in use of cola is yet another reason why verse composition was taught much earlier in the education process than modern pedagogical practice might expect, and indeed why it was included at all.<sup>44</sup>

Floris Bernard has pointed out that the Byzantines seem to have been indifferent over whether a work was written in prose or in verse. Psellos, for example, is not modest about the number of texts he has produced, but never refers to any of them as poems; he is equally reticent about the verse productions of

38 See also the contribution of Hörandner in this volume, "Teaching with Verse in Byzantium". On the teaching of versification, see Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure Iambs", p. 16.

39 Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*, pp. 23–55.

40 Most Byzantine texts were articulated orally, that is, read out aloud; Bourbouhakis, "Rhetoric and Performance".

41 Byzantine punctuation was also organized with this in mind: Reinsch, "Stixis und Hören".

42 Hörandner, *Prosarhythmus*; Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*.

43 Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure Iambs", p. 27.

44 Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*, pp. 20–21.

his friend and teacher Mauropous. Psellos' observation that in his youth the patriarch Michael Keroularios had preferred prose, unlike his more worldly elder brother's taste for verse, is exceptional in distinguishing between the two forms.<sup>45</sup> George of Pisidia's verse panegyric to the emperor Herakleios on the triumphs of his Persian expedition unblushingly invokes Demosthenes as a rousing predecessor, irrespective of his use of prose.<sup>46</sup> George's verse and Demosthenes' prose were both λόγοι, without any distinction in form. The same applied to Mauropous' speeches and poems when he came to amass his collected edition: all were λόγοι but some happened to be ἔμμετροι.<sup>47</sup>

Given that almost no Byzantine poet whose work survives would have composed his verses had he not experienced an education in which rhetoric played a major role,<sup>48</sup> one might expect to find poets frequently reflecting on their poetic techniques. This is not often the case.<sup>49</sup> Floris Bernard has pointed to one instance, when Christopher of Mytilene addresses Niketas of Synada; here the *techne* which the poet's friend is praised for having sparked back into life, surely refers to rhetoric and literary art.<sup>50</sup> An instance of reflexivity can be observed in the conclusion to Psellos' verse paraphrase of Hermogenes' manuals where, after 500 or so lines of dry instruction with few examples, he knowingly and rhetorically hopes that his little handbook (τεχνύδριον) might prove to be full of the sweetness, charm and euphony it is intended to inculcate.<sup>51</sup> In the 12th century, Theodore Prodromos hopes the *nomophylax* Alexios Aristenos will appreciate the skillful variety of metres which the poet uses to congratulate Alexios on the renewal of his appointment as *orphanotrophos*.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, the anonymous poet now known as Manganeios Prodromos, whose eloquence does not seem to have been refined by long education, is particularly

45 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 34–35. Modern commentators can also be oblivious to a difference in form: in the volume of essays *Rhetoric in Byzantium* the authors of the three papers focusing on verse texts make little reference to the fact that the texts under discussion were in verse.

46 George of Pisidia, *Persian Expedition*, ed. Pertusi, 2.1: Δημοσθένης, πρόελθε σὺν παρρησίᾳ; cited in Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure Iambis", p. 22.

47 Lauxtermann, *From Pisides to Geometres*, p. 69.

48 Exceptions would involve poets writing forms of the vernacular such as that found in the 13th-/14th-century *Chronicle of the Morea*.

49 Despite the unannotated comment in Lauxtermann, *From Pisides to Geometres*, p. 47: "that there are dozens of texts in which one intellectual congratulates another on his sublime style, impeccable metrics and fine style".

50 Christopher Mytilenaios, *Poetry*, ed. De Groot, no. 27, line 5; see Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, p. 38. *Techne* can, of course, be applied to any skill.

51 Psellos, ed. Westerink, no. 7, lines 541–44. See Lauxtermann, "Didactic Poetry", pp. 37–46.

52 Theodore Prodromos, *Historical Poems*, ed. Hörandner, no. 56.35–46.



aware of his craft, as well as his fellow craftsmen, frequently drawing attention to it and them as if uncertain of his credentials.<sup>53</sup> In poem 7.501–15, for example, Manganeios compares the increasing magnitude of the emperor Manuel's triumphs to the skill with which an orator builds his rhetorical climax, using technical rhetorical terminology, "forming like a rhetor the trope of climax".<sup>54</sup>

### 3 Rhetoric in Poetry

Having thus considered some aspects of what rhetoric is and how poets in Byzantium encountered it, what then might a modern observer perceive as rhetorical in Byzantine poetry?

An obvious starting point comes with examples of free-standing epideictic oratory in categories recognized in the rhetorical handbooks, and which had a place in Byzantine court and ecclesiastical ceremonial, but whose creators have preferred to use verse rather than prose. This is a phenomenon particularly apparent in the 12th century. The practice may perhaps have been initiated, but was certainly made subsequently fashionable, by Theodore Prodromos (c.1100–c.1159?) when, probably in 1122, he produced an *enkomion* in the fifteen-syllable line for the crowning of John II's eldest son as co-emperor.<sup>55</sup> There followed over the next decades more such encomia, especially commemorating imperial victories, and also *epitaphioi logoi* (funerary poems), and *epithalamia* (wedding songs), some for the imperial family but others for members of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. Theodore used the fifteen- and twelve-syllable lines, but also set himself and his fellow poets a challenge by reintroducing the hexameter. This he used notably when celebrating imperial victories, employing the ancient heroic metre to add magniloquent pomp to the ceremonies. Two celebratory texts on John II's triumph at Kastamon in 1134 survive from his pen, one in hexameters, perhaps for a restricted event within the court, and another in fifteen-syllables for presentation by the demes (the ceremonial remnants of the circus factions). On other similar occasions, however, Theodore

53 For some of the evidence for this, see Jeffreys, "Written Dekapentasyllables" and the discussion of Manganeios' unconventional metrical templates at pp. 212–214.

54 Manganeios Prodromos, no. 7, ed. Racz, line 504: τὸ σχῆμα τὸ κλιμακωτὸν ὡς ῥήτωρ σχηματίζων. Manganeios' poems (with editions where they exist) are conveniently listed in Mioni, *Codices graeci manuscripti*, pp. 116–31; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, pp. 494–500 has additional bibliography up to 1993.

55 Theodore Prodromos, *Historical Poems*, ed. Hörandner, no. 1.

produced speeches in prose.<sup>56</sup> From the 1140s and 1150s there survives the large corpus of verse in twelve- and fifteen-syllable lines by Manganeios Prodromos. The range of epideictic material that he offers is similar to that of Theodore Prodromos: *enkomia* of the emperor (sometimes at an overwhelming length), *epithalamia*, and laments. The contexts for which these were produced vary from imperial ceremonies (e.g. for the performance of a *basilikos logos*), at which an elite audience would be anticipated, to family occasions (e.g. on the performance of *epithalamia* at weddings).<sup>57</sup> We do not know whether Manganeios ever wrote in prose.

While the 12th-century practice of using verse for formal speeches seems, for most categories of discourse, to have been developed during that century, the funerary lament was different. As argued by Margaret Alexiou, it had a centuries-long history of production in verse, with ritual lamentations that can be traced from the ancient Greek world through medieval Christian, Byzantine rites, to modern times.<sup>58</sup> Random but representative Byzantine examples range from the early 10th-century imperial laments written in fifteen-syllable lines in the margins of the Skylitzes Matritensis, though Christopher Mitylenaios' sorrowful anacreontics on his sister, or Psellos' highly wrought iambic (twelve-syllable) verses on the death of Maria Skleraina, to Nicholas Kallikles' lapidary eulogies, behind which stand orations.<sup>59</sup>

Then there are numerous instances of elements taken from the handbooks' rhetorical tool-kit that are embedded within longer verse structures. The 12th century offers fertile ground for this process since this was a period when narratives in verse became fashionable. Thus, in the novels in twelve-syllable verse, written in the years from c.1130 to c.1160, there are abundant instances of *ekphrasis*. These include Gobryas' fantastic cup in Theodore Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, the beautiful heroine in Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles*, and the beautiful meadow in which the reader is first introduced

56 See Theodore Prodromos, *Historical Poems*, ed. Hörandner, pp. 40–42 where, of the seven items listed, four (*epithalamia* and monodies or speeches of consolation) also have versions in verse; for an enlightening discussion of possible factors at work, see Agapitos, “New Genres”, pp. 18–23 and Zagklas, “Prose and Verse”, pp. 239–47.

57 A sample of the range of environments in which Manganeios assumed his verse would be presented, can be seen in the poems associated with Manuel I's expedition to Cilicia in 1158–59: Manganeios Prodromos, nos. 8–10, 23, 34, 35, eds. Jeffreys/Jeffreys.

58 Alexiou, *Ritual Lament*.

59 Imperial laments: *Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII*, ed. I. Ševčenko; Christopher Mitylenaios, *Poetry*, ed. De Groot, nos. 75–77; Psellos, no. 17, ed. Westerink; Nicholas Kallikles, ed. Romano, e.g. no. 28 for an epitaph to be placed on a tomb, but no. 30 refers to a eulogy that had been delivered over the deceased (admittedly not explicitly in verse).

to her. We also see this in the effects of a winter storm in Constantine Manasses' *Aristandros and Kallithea* (in the fifteen-syllable line).<sup>60</sup> The novels also offer examples of forensic debates,<sup>61</sup> *ethopoiiai* (what a character would say under certain circumstances),<sup>62</sup> and speeches for specific occasions.<sup>63</sup> It is tempting, in fact, to think that the novels were largely written as display pieces of rhetorical technique. Other long narratives in verse operate in the same way: Constantine Manasses's *Synopsis Chronike*, for example, opens with an extended *ekphrasis* of nature during Creation,<sup>64</sup> and includes many instances of *diegemata* (short narratives) in its succinct accounts of each reign.<sup>65</sup> But examples are not confined to the 12th century nor to the higher registers of Greek. The verse romances from the Palaeologan period, which use a form of the vernacular in the fifteen-syllable line,<sup>66</sup> offer marks of familiarity with rhetorical conventions, most conspicuously in the *ekphraseis* of places and people. Examples would include the virtues and vices decorating the walls of the Argyrokaston in *Livistros and Rhodamne* (harking back to the 12th-century prose *Hysmine and Hysminias*), the awe-inspiring Eros of the same romance, or the ominous statues in *Belthandros and Chrysantza*.<sup>67</sup>

The examples thus far have been taken from secular writers because the starting point for this discussion has been the rhetorical handbooks, which did not recognize the ecclesiastical genres of, for example, hymnography, prayer or homiletics. However, these ecclesiastical genres were not immune to the wiles either of verse or of rhetoric.<sup>68</sup> To take the question of verse first,

60 Gobryas' cup: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, ed. Marcovich, 4.323–413; Drosilla: *Drosilla and Charikles*, ed. Conca, 1.120–158 (the girl), 1.78–115 (the meadow); the storm: *Aristandros and Kallithea*, ed. Mazal, no. 85.

61 Forensic debate: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, ed. Marcovich, 1.310–389 (speeches in court culminating in an ordeal by fire), 7.355–515 (wrangling, in the form of a Platonic dialogue, over sacrifices to gods).

62 E.g. how a young man might express his futile passion: *Drosilla and Charikles*, ed. Conca, 4.110–15; or debate what his chances are of persuading a girl's parents to accept him as a suitor: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, ed. Marcovich, 1.206–315.

63 E.g. how a general might exhort his troops before battle: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, ed. Marcovich, 5.115–414.

64 Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, 48–99; see further Nilsson, "Narrating Images".

65 E.g. *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, 2992–3020: Anastasios' dream; 2623–61: Paulinus' apple.

66 For new insights into the nature of this language, see Soltic, "The Medieval Greek πάλιν".

67 *Livistros and Rhodamne*, ed. Agapitos, 1002–1252 (Argyrokastron), 429–542 (Eros receives Livistros); *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, ed. Kriaras, 322–425.

68 Antonopoulou, "Byzantine Homiletics", p. 184 on the unnecessary division between religious and secular literature, with special reference to homiletics but with wider

hymnography is of course the most obvious, and major, type of text to make use of verse, but other types of text were not excluded. An interesting minor element, for example, is provided by the metrical prefaces to homilies and some hagiographical texts that were produced, usually in the twelve-syllable line, in the 12th to 14th centuries and read aloud in the course of a service, often before a gospel reading.<sup>69</sup> The great majority of hymnographic verse, however, such as *kontakia* and canons, while functioning with lines, as did the secular verse, also functioned in strophes, that is, in sets of lines, which responded responsively to stress patterns, often newly established for each hymn.<sup>70</sup> However remote this may at times have seemed from the established routines of the rhetorical structures derived from Late Antiquity, their influence nevertheless can be perceived. Perhaps the most obvious formal pattern is that of the lament, where the laments of the Virgin develop a rich tradition from its roots deep in Antiquity, with the best examples to be found in the 6th-century *kontakia* of Romanos, perhaps most notably in the *kontakion* known as “Mary at the Cross”.<sup>71</sup>

However, the depth of rhetoric’s impact on Byzantine writing in verse, whether secular or ecclesiastical, can be seen most convincingly in the use of tropes. Tropes, as noted earlier when a short list of “tropical types” was given, are the small-scale elements that give decoration to a text’s surface. Scrutiny of almost any verse text, whether in the high-style or in the near vernacular, will lead to the identification of a wide range of these figures of speech.<sup>72</sup> Figures of speech, the smallest building block in rhetorical practice, are used by poets irrespective of metre, genre or language register.

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applicability. This is also the basis on which Alexander Kazhdan constructed his history of Byzantine literature.

- 69 See further Antonopoulou, “On the Reception of Homilies and Hagiography”, pp. 63–65.  
 70 Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*, pp. 76–89. The metrical aspects of hymnographic verse are bound up inextricably with their music: Lingas, “Music”.  
 71 Romanos, *Cantica*, ed. Trypanis-Maas, no. 19. See the discussion in Cunningham, “The Reception of Romanos”, which draws attention to the rhetorical elements in this *kontakion*, in particular the use of dialogue; for a general presentation, see Alexiou, *Ritual Lament*, pp. 62–78.  
 72 See, e.g. the discussion in Theodore Prodromos, *Historical Poems*, ed. Hörandner, pp. 111–18; Agapitos, “Public and Private Death”, pp. 565–68 on Psellos’ use of figures; *Synaxarion of the Donkey*, ed. Moennig, p. 116 on tropes in vernacular verse; or Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, p. 279 on figures in hymnography.

#### 4 Rhetoric and Metrical Developments

Finally, attention needs to be drawn to recent discussions on the origins of medieval Greek stress metres, which have suggested that the florid Asianic style of rhetoric—often found in Byzantine festal homilies, such as those of the 9th-century George of Nikomedia, with elaborate figures and balanced clauses—may have had a role to play in the development of these metres. As we have seen, Lauxtermann and Hörandner have pointed out that accentual poetry is referred to in rhetorical rather than metrical handbooks with terminology that is applied to both prose rhythm and accentual verse.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, both poetry and prose share regulation of stresses at the end of a line, while the caesura—breaking a line of verse with a strong sense pause—produces an effect similar to the pairing of clauses in Asianic rhetorical prose. The only difference between prose and verse in this principle of structuring by self-contained cola, is over the number of syllables in the cola, which in verse is fixed but in prose is unlimited.<sup>74</sup> Thus, arguably, Byzantine stress metres are rooted in centuries-old rhetorical practices. While for most purposes this conclusion is of historical interest only, it does point out features that are set up by the “stress responion” (to use Valiavitcharska’s terminology) in early and middle Byzantine strophic verse forms, such as those found in the hymnographic *kontakia* and canons.<sup>75</sup> Here the combination of Greek morphology and iso-syllabic cola produces balanced clauses and encourages the use of figures of speech, such as chiasmus, asyndeton, polysyndeton, or homoioteleuton. It is interesting to observe these patterns present in abundance in the fifteen-syllable verse of the 12th-century Manganeios Prodomos, particularly asyndeton, polysyndeton, assonance, and chiasmus.<sup>76</sup>

73 Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*, p. 76.

74 This paragraph is based on Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*, pp. 76–77, drawing on Lauxtermann, “Velocity of Pure Iambus”, and idem, *Spring of Rhythm*, pp. 61–86 and also Hörandner, *Prosarhythmus* and idem, “Beobachtungen”.

75 Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm*, p. 79 cites the opening lines of Romanos’ *kontakion* on the Nativity (ed. Trypanis-Maas, no. 1), drawing attention to syntactically balanced clauses, rhyme and the use of antithesis and paradox.

76 Jeffreys, “Written Dekapentasyllables”, pp. 217–20 and tables 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 15.

## 5 A Case Study

Thus, rhetoric runs through Byzantine poetry like the lettering through a piece of English sea-side rock.<sup>77</sup> We may consider two cases from near each end of the Byzantine literary spectrum, both temporally and stylistically: George of Pisidia and Manganeios Prodromos.

In his poem on the Avar War, George, poet laureate (as it were) at the court of Herakleios, uses the twelve-syllable line to address his honorand, the patriarch Sergius, who has masterminded Constantinople's survival from the Avar peril:

125 ἀλλ' εἶμι λοιπὸν πρὸς τὰ τῆς νεωτέρας  
μάχης τρόπαια, καὶ πάλιν δὲ συμμάχου  
τῆς σῆς προσευχῆς εὐποροῦντες οἱ λόγοι  
ὡς πρὸς συνήθη καὶ φιλεύδιον πόρον  
ἄγουσι πρὸς σέ τῆν λαλοῦσαν ὀγκάδα.<sup>78</sup>

125 But I turn now to the triumphs  
of the recent battle, and my words again  
supported by your allied prayer  
as to a familiar strait favoured by fair weather  
bear towards you the vessel of speech.

In this succinct passage there is a dense texture of meaning, set off initially by word play on the syllable πορ-: εὐποροῦντες (127: “supported”), πόρον (127: “strait”). The “you” in line 126 is the patriarch Sergius. The words are those of George; his words of respectful counsel are both supported (εὐποροῦντες) by Sergius' wise strategies but also offer him guidance. A nautical train of thought has been set up, in which a vessel of advice (τῆν λαλοῦσαν ὀγκάδα) accomplishes a safe sea-crossing (πόρον) in fair weather, in the wake of the recent victory. Behind this phrasing lies the well-worn commonplace of the ship of state guided by its helmsman, a concept that would have been familiar to George's audience.

77 For those unfamiliar with this traditional sweet, it consists of a cylinder of boiled sugar about 20 cm long and 2.5 cm in diameter with the name of (usually) a sea-side resort running the length of the cylinder internally, and so always legible, however much has been nibbled away. The letters are normally red, embedded in white.

78 George of Pisidia, *Avar War*, ed. Pertusi, lines 125–29, trans. Whitby, “Persuasive Word”, p. 182 (adapted).

Manganeios arguably aspired to be the poet-laureate to the emperor Manuel I, though his attractiveness as an imperial mouthpiece may have resulted more from his skill in communicating with the uneducated than his deep knowledge of the rhetorical handbooks. The following passage in the fifteen-syllable line, less succinct and dense in phrasing than that of George, also includes nautical imagery and a sense of the value of words.

- Καὶ βλέπω πέλαγος διττὸν θαυμάτων καὶ ναμάτων·  
 ἀλλὰ τοῦ μὲν ὑπερορῶ πόρρωθεν ἀποβλέπων,  
 καὶ βλέπω καταποντισμὸν μετὰ μικρὸν Παιόνων  
 καὶ φεύγοντα τὸν Πάννονα κατ' ἑμαυτὸν προβλέπω.  
 80 Καὶ τοῦτο προμαντεύομαι καὶ πρὸ καιροῦ κηρύττω·  
 καὶ μὴ παρέλθοις πρόρρησιν τὸ μέλλον προφανοῦσαν  
 ἀλλὰ παρασημείωσαι καὶ γνώσῃ μετὰ ταῦτα.  
 Τοῦτο μὲν οὖν τὸ πέλαγος οὐ φρίττω, μονοκράτορ·  
 τὸ δ' ἄλλο κατασκέπτομαι καὶ δειλιῶ καὶ τρέμω  
 85 καὶ θέλω πλεῦσαι καὶ ποθῶ τὸ κατοπτεῦσαι τοῦτο·  
 ἀλλὰ βραχὺ λεμβίδιον εἰς πέλαγος τοσοῦτον  
 πῶς βάψει τρόπιν ἀσθενῆ, πῶς ἀκινδύνως πλεύσει;  
 Πῶς ἐξαρκέσει πρὸς αὐτό; Πῶς ἀπαρκέσει ζάλην;  
 Ἄγε λοιπὸν ἐκ τῆς ἀκτῆς ὡς ἔχω κατοπτεῦσω  
 90 καὶ τὰς ἀκτίνας ἴδω σου καὶ τὰς μαρμαρυγὰς σου.  
 Σήμερον ἔγνω καθαρώς τὴν τοῦ προφήτου ῥῆσιν  
 λέγουσαν εἶναι θαυμαστὰς τὰς τῆς ὑγρᾶς ὑψώσεις·  
 ταῦτα μαρτύρομαι ἀγά, ταῦτα καὶ συγκραυγάζω  
 καὶ τὰς ἐπάρσεις φοβερὰς τῶν σῶν καινουργημάτων  
 95 ἐξ ὧν ὀρώ κατανοῶ, καὶ φρίττων δραπετεύω.<sup>79</sup>

And I behold a double sea of wonders and water:  
 I gaze down at the former, seeing it from a great distance,  
 and I foresee very soon the sinking of the Paionians,  
 and I predict to myself that the Pannonian will flee.  
 80 This I foreshadow and have long been announcing:  
 and do not ignore a prediction which foretells the truth,  
 but note it down, and later you will see.  
 This sea has no terrors for me, sovereign,  
 but I gaze at the other sea and I shrink and tremble

79 Manganeios Prodomos, no. 6.76–95, ed. Bernardinello.

85 and I wish to sail on it and desire to observe it:  
 but a tiny rowing-boat in so great a sea,  
 how will it wet its weak keel, how will it sail without danger?  
 How will it be adequate for this? How will it withstand the storm?  
 Come then I will watch from the shore, as I am,  
 90 that I may see your rays and your effulgence.  
 Today I have clearly understood the prophetic text,  
 saying that the waves of the sea are wonderful;  
 to this I too bear witness, this I cry with him,  
 and I comprehend the terrible waves of your innovations,  
 95 from what I see, and flee in terror.

These lines come in an encomiastic address to the emperor in which Manganeios is reacting to events in 1151. Manuel has achieved two victories in watery contexts, one recently at sea over the Sicilian fleet and the first the previous year over the Hungarians (78, 79: “Paionians”) at the river Tara. Manganeios is gazing at a great distance (77) because Manuel, unlike Manganeios, is not in Constantinople and Manganeios is exercising his imagination. However, the *πέλαγος διττὸν* (76: “double sea”) does not refer only to the naval battles but includes the sea of rhetoric on which Manganeios modestly hesitates to launch himself (83–84) in the *βραχὺ λεμβίδιον* (86: “tiny rowing-boat”) of his rhetorical skills. As with George, in addition to nautical imagery, there is word play, in this case a repeated use of *προ-* (79: *προβλέπω*; 80: *προμαντεύομαι*, *πρὸ καιροῦ*; 81: *πρόρρησιν*, *προφωνοῦσαν*; 91: *προφήτου*) which emphasizes Manganeios’ conviction that Manuel’s triumphs will be repeated. Manganeios’ modesty *topos* continues as he deprecates the ability of his frail craft (87: *τρόπιν ἀσθενή*, “weak keel”) to withstand the challenge to his skills.

With further word-play he proposes to contemplate from a distance (89: *ἐκ τῆς ἀκτῆς* “from the shore”) and admire the rays (90: *ἀκτίνας*) of Manuel’s brilliance. The reference is to the *prokypsis* ceremony that Manuel had recently introduced as a dramatic piece of flamboyant imperial self-presentation,<sup>80</sup> but the phrasing allows the stormy metaphor to be developed into “waves of innovation” (94: *τὰς ἐπάρσεις φοβερὰς τῶν σῶν καινουργημάτων*) that allude also to Manuel’s taste for novelty. With his allusion to “the prophetic text” (91) Manganeios tacitly identifies Manuel with the Old Testament leader who had led safely through the Red Sea the Lord’s Chosen People, who in much of Manganeios’ work stand for Manuel’s subjects. In Mary Whitby’s words:

80 On the *prokypsis*, see Jeffreys, “Comnenian Prokypsis”, and for its Palaeologan version, see Macrides/Munitiz/Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, pp. 439–44.



... the rhetoric of [George's] poetry ... works by creating a network of links to fuse the unexpected. Links are created too at a verbal level by punning and word play ... and by his variable yet consistent typology for his honorands, which easily encompasses both classical and biblical figures, and is adaptable to a variety of circumstances.<sup>81</sup>

This also describes Manganeios' poetic practice. But whereas for George the handbooks and their precepts are an authentic part of his composition process, one has a sense that there are other elements at play for Manganeios,<sup>82</sup> and that he uses the handbooks' techniques to enhance his credibility. Nevertheless, the resulting fabric of Manganeios' verse, however different the threads from which it has been spun, reads in a strikingly similar manner to that of George.

These two examples, taken more or less at random, indicative as they are of the extent to which rhetoric permeates Byzantine literary compositions, should encourage all readers of Byzantine poetry never to ignore the rhetorical artfulness deployed by the authors of the texts before them.

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81 Whitby, "Persuasive Word", p. 186.

82 There is much that is still to be understood about Manganeios' versification, in particular its startling correspondences with templates observed by Sifakis in Modern Greek folk poetry: Sifakis, *Για μιὰ ποιητική* and Jeffreys, "Written Dekapentasyllables".

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**PART 2**

*Periods, Authors, Social and Cultural Milieus*







# Late Antique Poetry and Its Reception

*Gianfranco Agosti*

## 1 Introduction

At the turn of the 14th century, Maximos Planudes copied one of the most fascinating late antique poems, the hexameter *Paraphrase of John's Gospel* by Nonnos of Panopolis. In a note after the subscription (*Marcianus gr.* 481, f. 122v) the learned monk observed that the poem is an “enjoyment for those who are passionate for learning and literature”.<sup>1</sup> Planudes himself was well aware of such passion. The familiarity with Nonnos’ style he displays in his own poems (see below) makes him one of the most passionate readers of Nonnian poetry in Byzantium. Although it is unclear if he felt the style of the *Paraphrase* to be typically ‘late antique’, one thing is certain: unlike the majority of modern critics in the past century, he had no prejudice against late antique poetry as being decadent and empty verbiage.

Late antique studies experience now a blossoming development, and many scholars would probably not only approve of Planudes’ words, but even go further in re-evaluating Nonnos and his fellow poets.<sup>2</sup> It has become current to read late antique verse production according to its own aesthetic values and distinctive features, and to consider it apart both from Classical and

1 “ἰστέον δὲ ὅτι αἰεὶ πρόσεστι τοῖς φιλομαθέσι ποθεινὸν καὶ ἐράσμιον ἢ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν συγγραμμάτων ἀνάγνωσις, καὶ μάλιστα ἢ τῶν Ὀμηρικῶν, διὰ τὸ εὐφραδὲς καὶ ποικίλον τῶν λέξεων. οὐ ἔνεκεν καὶ ἢ παρούσα μετὰφρασις ἐμμέτρως ἐν ἡρωϊκοῖς ἐγεγράφη στίχοις, πρὸς τέρψιν τοῖς φιλομαθέσι καὶ φιλολόγοις (“We should note that the reading of Hellenic literature has always been an object of longing and delight for lovers of learning, and particularly the reading of the poems of Homer, because of the grace and variety of the language. That is why the present metrical paraphrase has been written in heroic metre, to give pleasure to lovers of learning and literature”, trans. Browning, “Tradition and Originality”, p. 21). See Livrea, *Parafraresi del Vangelo di S. Giovanni. Canto XVIII*, p. 73; Pontani, “Scholarship in the Byzantine Empire”, p. 414, commenting on Planudes’ Christian humanism, which “rested ultimately on a stylistic approach”. For the completion date of the manuscript (1229 or 1301), see now Valerio, *Agazia Scolastico. Epigrammi*, p. 66.

2 On the gradual re-evaluation of late antique poetry, see Cameron, “Poetry and Literary Culture in Late Antiquity”; Agosti, “Greek Poetry”, pp. 361–62.

Hellenistic, and Byzantine poetry as well.<sup>3</sup> The latter point is essential for the present chapter, that is devoted to late antique poetry and its reception in subsequent centuries. Indeed, “the ‘explosion’ of Late Antiquity has brought with it a real identity crisis for Byzantium”, as Averil Cameron remarked.<sup>4</sup> It is not the case for poetry, in my opinion. Although the chronological frame of Late Antiquity is still on unsettled terms,<sup>5</sup> and literary culture has its own periodization that does not necessarily coincide with political and religious history,<sup>6</sup> poetry’s chronological boundaries prove to be quite definite. It is actually undeniable that distinctive features of what we should properly consider ‘late antique poetry’—like the exploitation and new restructuring of classical genres, the central role held by rhetoric, the fortune of the epic panegyric, and the gradual appearance of visual aesthetics—clearly emerged only in the age of Diocletian and Constantine.<sup>7</sup> Also, for poetic production the structural

3 With some exceptions, significantly among Byzantinists: for example Livanos, “Trends and Developments”, p. 200 with “Byzantine poetry” means the verse composed from the time of Constantine to that of Constantine XI.

4 Av, Cameron, “Late Antiquity and Byzantium”, p. 28. “Explosion of Late Antiquity” is an effective definition by Andrea Giardina, “Esplosione di tardoantico”, who pointed out the uncontrolled expansion of the field.

5 It is impossible here to even mention the main contributions on this controversial issue, which fostered a long-standing and lively debate among historians. In the recent works by Av. Cameron, “Late Antiquity and Byzantium”, and Agapitos, “Late Antique or Early Byzantine?”, the reader will find a comprehensive bibliography. Related are the problems of what Late Antiquity is in terms of cultural and religious values: many interesting questions are raised in the paper by Brilliant, “Late Antiquity’: a Protean Term”.

6 Many voices raised against a chronology based on major historical events superimposed on literary culture. “The periodization of history as argued by historians is external to the surviving texts”, as Agapitos, “Late Antique or Early Byzantine?”, p. 12, effectively remarks. Similar remarks are made also by Brilliant, “Late Antiquity’: a Protean Term”, from the perspective of art history.

7 Agosti, “Greek Poetry”, p. 364. As a consequence, poets of the second and first half of the 3rd century AD, often labelled as late antique, should be considered belonging to “Imperial poetry” and are excluded from the present chapter. Recent contributions emphasized the continuity between the didactic poetry of the 2nd century and its later developments (Cameron, “Poetry and Literary Culture”, pp. 327–28 = 163–65; Carvounis/Hunter, *Signs of Life?*, pp. 3–4). This would be convenient, admittedly, from the point of view of the reception in the Byzantine Middle Ages. Indeed, the description of the *oikoumene* by Dionysius Periegetes (under Hadrian) enjoyed immense popularity in Byzantium. The didactic poems by Oppian of Cilicia (author of the *Haliutica*, dedicated to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus) and the so-called Oppian of Apamea (author of the *Cynegetica*, dedicated to Caracalla) were no less popular. On Dionysius, see now Lightfoot, *Dionysius Periegetes*; bibliography on the Oppians in Agosti, “Greek Poetry”, p. 385 n. 1. In addition, the Oppians show in style, diction and metre some tendencies that will eventually become the most typical late antique style, that of Nonnos (Whitby, “From Moschus to Nonnus”). As the issue of continuity might

break that marked the birth of late antique literature,<sup>8</sup> happened at the beginning of the 4th century.

The cultural transformation in the age of Justinian, with the increasing role of religious studies to the detriment of classical culture,<sup>9</sup> did not have immediate effects on poetry, but undoubtedly paved the way for its end in the following century. After the delicate balance between the new poetic style and Christian ideology, represented by Paul the Silentiary's ekphrasis of Haghia Sophia,<sup>10</sup> the 7th century and especially the age of Herakleios marked a hinge period for the transmission of late antique poetic heritage to Byzantium. Hexametric poetry virtually disappeared: the major poet of Herakleios court, George of Pisidia, dabbled only once in hexameter poetry, although he had a remarkable command of Nonnos' style and imagery.<sup>11</sup> In the rest of his paramount verse production George adapted the late antique style he knew so well to the new rhythm of the dodecasyllable. The emergence of the accentual form of the ancient iambic trimeter—more accessible and easier for the audience to understand—<sup>12</sup> actually represented a major change, and as such was perceived by the contemporary audience. It is the rhythm, more than the style, that makes George of Pisidia's poems "easier" than those of Nonnos.<sup>13</sup> Although recent approaches have questioned the traditionally evoked breakdown of the

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be relevant, one can hardly label the aforementioned poets as 'late antique'. Indeed, their aesthetics should be more conveniently defined "Late Hellenistic", and they belong rather to the Second Sophistic world, like Quintus of Smyrna and its mythological poem (see below). Later poets like Nonnos or Gregory of Nazianzus imitated them, exactly as the orators of the so-called "Third Sophistic" looked at 2nd century writers as "classical" models.

- 8 See the persuasive remarks by Agapitos, "Late antique or Early Byzantine?", pp. 15–23, focusing on Lactantius and Eusebius.
- 9 See now Pontani, "Scholarship in the Byzantine Empire", pp. 298–300, who emphasizes the symbolic value of 529 AD (date of the closure of the Athenian Academy).
- 10 Agosti, "Niveaux de style, littérarité, poétiques", pp. 116–19.
- 11 Apart from three short epigrams (*Epigrams* 44, 96, 99 ed. Sternbach = 93, 11, 35 ed. Tartaglia) the only hexametric poem is the 90-lines *On Human Life* (ed. Gonnelli). Significantly enough, the same George rewrote it in a dodecasyllable longer version. Furthermore, George's hexameter has a very rigid and monotonous aspect, albeit not respecting some Nonnian restrictions: see De Stefani, "The End of the 'Nonnian School'", p. 379, and the comprehensive treatment in Whitby, "A Learned Spiritual Ladder?". On George, see also in this book the chapter by Ioannes Vassis.
- 12 See Maas, "Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber", pp. 302–303 = 267.
- 13 For Pisides' rhythmic and euphonious iambs, see e.g. Psellos, *To One Asking "Who Wrote Verse Better, Euripides or Pisides"*, ed. Dyck, lines 100–110 (translation and notes by Littlewood in Barber-Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos on Literature and Art*, pp. 183–84).

late antique school system,<sup>14</sup> the reduction of classical education is undeniable, and it partially explains the decline and abandonment of the epic verse.<sup>15</sup> By the mid-7th c. there are only a few examples of hexameter poems. These were mainly epigrams, like one by Sophronius, and perhaps another one by a certain John of Memphis on Gregory of Nazianzus: the last gleams of a glorious past.<sup>16</sup> This disappearance of epic hexameter poetry represents a strong element of discontinuity with the past in Byzantine literary history.<sup>17</sup>

In what follows I shall refrain from summarizing the present state of research on late antique verse production (for which we have now excellent surveys).<sup>18</sup> I will rather focus on some crucial issues, like the *continuity/reappearance* of late antique forms and types,<sup>19</sup> and the *presence* of late antique linguistic and

14 Reduction, not collapse. On the continuity of classical education, see Loukaki, "Le profil des enseignants dans l'Empire Byzantin", and also Agapitos, "Contesting Conceptual Boundaries", pp. 73–76.

15 On the other hand, the impact of political and military troubles on culture has been recently reconsidered: see Agapitos, "Late Antique or Early Byzantine?", p. 11; Cameron, "Late Antiquity and Byzantium", pp. 34–36; Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die*. For a different view, see De Stefani, "The End of the 'Nonnian School'", pp. 376–78, on the (indirect) influence of the Persian war on the decline of late antique literature.

16 Sophronius, *Greek Anthology* 1.123, ed. Beckby. On Sophronius' epigrams, see Cameron, "The Epigrams of Sophronius"; De Stefani, "The End of the 'Nonnian School'", pp. 381–82; Tissoni, "The Reception of Nonnus", pp. 696–97; Valerio, "Analecta Byzantina", pp. 300–02; and Boudignon, "Homère au Saint-Sépulcre". For John of Memphis' book epigram on Gregory (<http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/4350>), see Magnelli, "An Unknown 'Nonnian' Poet". The prefatory epigrams to the iambic canons attributed to John of Damascus (ed. Nauck) have an undoubted late antique flavour. See also Magnelli, "Il 'nuovo' epigramma", p. 193. Incidentally, a thorough study of the presence of late antique poetry in Byzantine books epigrams is an urgent *desideratum*. My impression is that at least some of the most elaborated hexameter epigrams would show what we might define as a "late antique *al-lure*" (for other examples of this category, see also below pp. 131 and 134).

17 Cf. Mango, "Discontinuity with the Classical Past", p. 47.

18 See Cameron, *Poetry and Literary Culture*; Carvounis/Hunter, *Signs of Life?*; Miguélez Caveró, *Poetry in Context*, pp. 3–105; Agosti, "Greek Poetry"; Whitby/Roberts, "Epic Poetry". Due to the renewed interest, bibliography on late antique poetry is considerably increasing. For Nonnos, see: Bannert/Aringer/Kröll, "Bericht: Dionysiaka"; Lauritzen, "Bulletin critique"; Bannert/ /Kröll, "Nonnos von Panopolis 2 Bericht"; Agosti, "Nonnus", and the comprehensive bibliography in Accorinti, *Brill's Companion*, pp. 755–831. Modern readers can consult some good anthologies of later Greek poetry. The valuable Hopkinson, *Greek Poetry* excludes, unfortunately, Christian poetry. Both Cantarella, *Poeti bizantini* and Baldwin, *An Anthology of Byzantine Poetry* offer a smaller, though more representative, selection of late antique poems. A new collection has been recently edited by Spanoudakis/Carvounis/Litinas, Ποίηση Ἰστερης Αρχαιότητας. Ανθολόγιο, on-line and freely downloadable [<https://repository.kallipos.gr/handle/11419/363>] (each text is provided with a detailed commentary).

19 See Mullet, "The Madness of the Genre", pp. 235–36.

stylistic features, in particular the “modern style” (of Nonnos and his followers), in subsequent centuries. Finally, I will question if and how Byzantines perceived late antique poetry as different and autonomous from the Classical and Hellenistic tradition. This chapter is devoted to learned poetry, i.e. verse production in classical metres and language.<sup>20</sup>

## 2 Rhetoric and Genres

One of the major changes in cultural taste in Late Antiquity was undoubtedly a long-lasting poetic revival, often termed as “resurgence” or “renaissance” by modern scholars. This revival was both the cause and the consequence of the new role poetry had in social life and education. All over the empire, education based on classical learning (*paideia*) became a fundamental qualification for a career in the administration, which needed a larger class of cultivated functionaries.<sup>21</sup> Poetry, “*paideia* in its most concentrated form”,<sup>22</sup> entered the school curriculum more substantially than in the past, and “preliminary exercises” (*προορμνάσματα*) in verse became a usual part of students’ rhetorical training.<sup>23</sup> This both answered new demands and stimulated an ingrowing taste for verse composition, as is dramatically shown by verse inscriptions and the dozens of papyri containing occasional poems, like epic panegyrics (encomiastic verse compositions connected to contemporary events), *patria* (poems on mythical origins of cities), *enkomia* and *epithalamia*.<sup>24</sup> The authors were

20 On liturgical and vernacular poetry, see the contributions by Antonia Giannouli and Martin Hinterberger in this book.

21 Cameron, “Poetry and Literary Culture”, pp. 176–77; Agosti, “Greek Poetry”, p. 363; for later Byzantine centuries, see Whitby, “Rhetorical Questions”, p. 244.

22 Cameron, *ibidem*, p. 177.

23 Agosti, “Letopea nella poesia greca tardoantica”; Miguélez Caveró, *Poems in Context*, pp. 264–370.

24 Most late antique verse inscriptions are conveniently available in the collection by Merkelbach-Stauber, *Steinepigramme*. The ground-breaking book by Louis Robert, *Hellenica IV*, is fundamental for a proper understanding of the inscriptions’ social functions; for further bibliography see Agosti, “Per una fenomenologia”. Papyri: the reference collection is still Heitsch, *Griechische Dichterfragmente*, which needs to be replaced, in light of the amount of new papyrological findings in recent decades (the present writer and Jean-Luc Fournet are preparing a new collection, with a French translation and commentary). For an updated survey, see Miguélez Caveró, *Poetry in Context*, pp. 33–85 (and pp. 198–263 on school). On epic panegyric, see Nissen, “Historisches Epos und Panegyrikos”, and Viljamaa, *Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry*, pp. 24–33. On *patria*, see Whitby, “Writing in Greek”, pp. 212–13; Agosti, “Nonnus and Late Antique Society”, pp. 647–48.

professional poets, talented and well-travelled and often of Egyptian origin. The occasional character and the topicality of some of their compositions (for example, Pamprepios' *enkomion* of the powerful Theagenes of Athens) surely did not favour long-lasting conservation.<sup>25</sup> Actually, even of reputed poets like Kyros of Panopolis (†457), or Pamprepios (†484) we have only fragments and a handful of epigrams. The only poet whose works can be read in their entirety is the renowned Claudian (c.370–404), who studied in Alexandria and had an outstanding career as a Latin poet in the western court.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, we should not underestimate how attractive this “professional” poetry might have been for its stylistic refinement. Surprisingly enough, in the 9th century, an anthology of authors from Middle and Upper Egypt still circulated.<sup>27</sup>

In terms of literary continuity, the major contribution of late antique professional poetry was the new generic hybridation of epic poem and encomium, usually called *epic panegyric*, that represented an enduring heritage in Byzantium.<sup>28</sup> Encomiastic hexameter poems had already started in the age of Diocletian and remained in vogue until the end of the 6th century. Poets expected to benefit from their skilful panegyrics and occasional poems: careers like those of the aforementioned Claudian in the western court, and Kyros of Panopolis at the court of Theodosios II, prove that they could be very successful at it. We can still read examples of panegyrics written in Latin in Constantinople, by Priscian († after 530: *Panegyric of the Emperor Anastasios*), and Corippus († after 567: *Johannis* and the encomium of Justin II). Quite disappointingly, their Greek counterparts, like Eudocia's poem on Theodosios' victory over the Persians (in 422), or the poem on Anastasios' Persian war by Colluthus, are lost. Nevertheless, from the few extant works, the copious papyrus fragments, and the encomiastic sections of poems like Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*

25 Probably for this reason the epigrams (poorly) preserved in the so-called “Palladas papyrus” (ed. Wilkinson, *New Epigrams of Palladas*) did not enter the manuscript tradition (apart from two exceptions).

26 On Pamprepios, see the literary and political portrait drawn by Livrea, “The Last Pagan at the Court of Zeno”. On Claudian, see now Cameron, *Wandering Poets*, pp. 113–46.

27 Photius, *Myriobiblon*, ed. Henry, cod. 279, 563a.8–20, containing *patria* of Hermoupolis and Alexandria, as well as other poems in various genres and metres (see Miguélez Caveró, *Poems in Context*, pp. 79–83; Agosti, “Greek Poetry”, p. 366; Cameron, “Wandering Poets”, p. 14). We cannot ascertain whether these poems really circulated and exerted some influence on the Macedonian renaissance, although it might be a reasonable assumption, in light of the presence of other late antique poems in the 9th and 10th centuries and later (see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 72–73; Tissoni, “Il Tardoantico a Bisanzio”; and below). Kyros was still remembered for his poetic renown in the 10th century (see Cameron, “The Empress and the Poet”, pp. 39–42).

28 See Nissen, “Historisches Epos und Panegyrikos in der Spätantike”; Viljamaa, *Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry*; Lauritzen, “I panegirici bizantini”, with further bibliography.

or Paul the Silentiary's *Description*, it is possible to have a clear idea of the tradition that George of Pisidia inherited in the 7th century, transforming it into the typical Byzantine panegyric genre. It is possible, therefore, to follow the continuity of certain forms and images created in Late Antiquity.<sup>29</sup> The comparison between the petition poems addressed to Egyptian dukes and high officers by the amateur Dioskoros of Aphrodito (mid-6th century) and those by John Geometres or Theodore Prodromos, points out a common ground of rhetorical verbiage, stemming from Late Antiquity to Byzantium. For example, any reader of late antique encomiastic poetry feels at home with these lines from Michael Psellos' poem in praise of Isaac Comnene:<sup>30</sup>

χαίρε, στρατηγέ καὶ βασιλεὺ γῆς ὅλης,  
 μέγιστε, παμβόητε, τοῦ κράτους κράτος·  
 τοὺς σοὺς γὰρ ὑμνήσουσιν εὐήχους ἄθλους  
 οὐ παιδιαῖς χαίροντας ἄνδρες ἄθροοι, 50  
 οἱ τοῖς λόγοις δὲ μουσικῶς τετραμμένοι  
 καὶ πάντα ῥυθμίζοντες εὐρύθμοις μέτροις.  
 χαίρε στρατηγέ (τοῦτο γὰρ πάλιν φράσω)  
 ἀκινδύνου φάλαγγος εὖ τεταγμένης,  
 θέαμα φρικτὸν βαρβάρους τοῖς ἀθέοις. 55  
 σῶν γὰρ τροπαίων πᾶσαν ἐμπλήσεις χθόνα,  
 καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα σοὺς ἀνυμνήσει πόνους  
 μέτροις τε ποικίλλουσα καὶ λόγοις ἅμα.

Hail, general and emperor of the whole earth, greatest, most renowned, power of all powers! Your resounding feats will not be sung by an assembly of men who indulge in trifles, but by men who have enjoyed a refined education and give rhythm to everything with their well-proportioned metres. Hail general—to use that name again—of a well-arranged phalanx which is harmless, a terrifying sight for the unbelieving barbarians. You will fill the whole earth with your trophies, and every tongue will sing in praise of your deeds, embellishing them with poetry and prose alike.

The well-informed and competent assembly of people praising Isaac, the participation of the whole earth, the emphasis on the euphony and rhythm and on

29 On the whole, late antique literary patronage was not so different from the Byzantine one. See e.g. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol.1, pp. 35–45; Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 291–333.

30 *Poem* 18.47–58, ed. Westerink. Translation by Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, p. 303.

the rhetorical presentation (μέτροις τε ... καὶ λόγοις) are part of a repertoire well established in late antique prose and verse encomia.<sup>31</sup> Expressions and images typical of this repertoire often passed to later poetry, although not necessarily through a direct link. For instance, Theodosios the Deacon (10th century) opens his epic poem (in dodecasyllables) celebrating Nikephoros II Phokas' victory over the Arabs in 962–63, and the capture of Crete, with a long prologue where the Cretan war is celebrated as superior to ancient wars and even to that of Troy, as the new Rome is superior to the old Rome. The Cretan war would have been a subject much worthier of Homer!<sup>32</sup> Theodosios reuses an image derived from late antique rhetorical paraphernalia. In the “proem at the middle” of book 25 of his *Dionysiaca*, Nonnos claims that the Indian war is greater than the Trojan one (25.1–10, 27–30). Later he seems to change his mind, invoking Homer's help, but only to utter that Dionysus as an epic hero would have better suited the genius of Homer, had not Thetis “stolen” such a privilege from him.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Theodosios makes frequent use in his poem<sup>34</sup> of the symbolism of the light (represented by the Byzantines) and darkness (the Arabs). This imagery is very common in Nonnos, who represents the victory of Dionysos over the black Indians as the triumph of light over darkness.

Examples might be easily multiplied. Christopher Mitylenaios, comparing Constantine Monomachos to the river Paktolos, for his generosity—with the difference that he flows with gold and honours as well—employs an image already overused in Late Antiquity (e.g. by Libanius and Nonnos).<sup>35</sup> Mythological comparisons were actually a long-established tool codified in rhetorical handbooks. One of the nicest examples is the fragment of an *enkomion* of Theodosios II by Kyros of Panopolis, transmitted in the *Greek Anthology* (9.15). Here only the virtues, not the vices, of the Homeric heroes are attributed to

31 Viljamaa, *Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry*, pp. 77–79. Note that μέτροις τε ... καὶ λόγοις in Psellos corresponds to λόγοι καὶ μελωδία in late antique texts. See also Papaioannou, “Introduction to Part One”, pp. 18–19; and Agosti, “Poesia sul gioco” pp. 726–63.

32 See Crisuolo, “Aspetti letterari e stilistici”, pp. 3–5.

33 25.253–260: see especially ll. 258–60: Μούσα τεῖ καὶ Βάχχον ἀκοντιστήρα Γιγάντων, / ἄλλοις δ' ὑμνοπόλοισι πόνους Ἀχιλλῆος ἔασσαι, / εἰ μὴ τοῦτο Θέτις γέρας ἤρπασεν (“Your Muse ought to have sung so great and high a war, and Bacchus striking the Giants, leaving Achilles' labours to other poets, had not Thetis deprived you of such a honour”), and Agosti/Magnelli, “Homeric Nonnus”. A similar idea occurs in Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm.* 3.10.1–6.

34 Crisuolo, “Aspetti letterari e stilistici”, p. 7; Andriollo, “Il De Creta capta di Teodosio Diacono” p. 46.

35 Christopher Mitylenaios, *Poem* 55, ed. De Groot; for this poem, see Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, p. 328, discussing also Lauritzen, “Christopher of Mytilene's Parody”; on the imagery, see Nilsson, “Words, Water, and Power”, p. 268–70.



the emperor.<sup>36</sup> George of Pisidia overemployed the possibilities offered by the (obvious) comparison between Heraklios and Herakles,<sup>37</sup> a scholastic tag very common in Late Antiquity and often reused later.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that mythology was part of the indispensable set of knowledge for anybody who aspired to acquire a high-ranking social position, explains also why *mythological poetry* enjoyed considerable success in Late Antiquity. After some premises in the 3rd century—i.e., the lengthy 14 books of *Posthomerica* by Quintus of Smyrna, balanced by the short (less than 700 hexameters) *Capture of Troy* by Triphiodoros<sup>39</sup>—in the 5th century Nonnos of Panopolis (c.430–50) wrote the longest extant epic poem of Antiquity, the *Dionysiaca*. This is more than 21,000 hexameters in 48 books, retelling the life of Dionysus, his triumph in India and his progress from the Near East to Thebes.<sup>40</sup> Probably in the second half of the 5th century the *Argonautica of Orpheus*, were composed, a pretentious poem that is a “revised” résumé of Apollonius of Rhodes’ narrative, emphasizing Orpheus’ role in the expedition. Mythological self-standing-poems continue to be composed in the age of Anastasius, with Colluthus (*The Rape of Helen*) and Musaeus (*Hero and Leander*), as well as under Justinian (the *Daphniaca* by the young Agathias). In the 5th and 6th century classical mythology was no longer considered a mark of paganism, but just a component of the *paideia*: its ubiquitous presence in culture and daily life really shows that poetry inspired by classical myths did not imply adherence to paganism, or lukewarm Christianity.<sup>41</sup> On the contrary, mythological epic actually encountered little

36 The emperor is compared to Achilles (“except for his wrath and his love”, to Agamemnon (“but wine does not disturb your mind”), to the cunning Odysseus (“but without wicked deceit”) and to Nestor (for his eloquence). See Viljamaa, *Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry*, pp. 114–16 and Cameron, “Wandering Poets”, p. 41 (whose translation I adopted).

37 Nissen, “Historisches Epos und Panegyrikos in der Spätantike”, pp. 302–03; Hunger, “On Imitation”, p. 23.

38 To extol a governor for his merits as a “new Herakles” or “new Dionysos”, was very frequent (without any hint of paganism lurking behind, of course). It was part of the general reduction of the classics to a mere learned language (see the reference article by Hunger, “On Imitation”, pp. 22–25; more recently Loukaki, “L’univers homérique dans les éloges impériaux”, with further bibliography). It is here worthwhile to remember that in the 10th century Genesios, in the section devoted to Basil I of his *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, compares the emperor to a series of Homeric and Nonnian heroes (= Test. 5 Keydell; see Gonnelli, *Nonno di Panopoli. Le Dionisiache*, p. 16).

39 The endless *Heroic Theogamies* by Pisander of Laranda, in 60 books (!), are lost.

40 *Nonnos de Panopolis*, ed. Vian et al. On Nonnos, see the accurate surveys by Accorinti, “Nonnos von Panopolis” and “The Poet from Panopolis”.

41 See Cameron, “Wandering Poets”, pp. 173–76; Agosti, “Greek Poetry”, pp. 381–82; Id., “Classicism, *Paideia*, Religion”.

favour in Byzantine poetry.<sup>42</sup> Apart from Nonnos' *Dionysiaca* (see below), few of the extant mythological poems exerted any influence during the Byzantine Middle Ages, and they did not represent a model to imitate.<sup>43</sup>

A genre that had a durable continuity in Byzantine poetry was *didactic poetry*, despite different and often opposite modern judgments on its value.<sup>44</sup> It was practised mainly in the Komnenian age (above all by John Tzetzes), and later under the Palaeologans (mainly by Manuel Philes). Christian didactic poetry, like the innovative *Iambi ad Seleucum* by Amphilochios of Iconium, enjoyed considerable appreciation, of course. A special place was occupied by the didactic production of Gregory of Nazianzos, the poet *par excellence* in Byzantium.<sup>45</sup> Gregory composed specific didactic poems, like those on the miracles of the Old Testament, and the Gospels' (*carm.* 1.1.12–28), and the overall gnomic and didactic tone of many others of his verse compositions made them particularly suited to school education in the Byzantine centuries.<sup>46</sup> More surprisingly, an elegant *divertissement* on astrological forecasts (περὶ καταρχῶν), persuasively attributed by its latest editor to Maximus of Ephesus, the teacher of the emperor Julian, met great success in Byzantium from the 9th century onwards.<sup>47</sup> Another profane poem *On Stones* attributed to Orpheus—a refined treatise on stones' therapeutic virtues, whose author was probably also involved in the milieu of Maximus—did not leave any trace until the 12th century, when Tzetzes shows a good acquaintance with it.<sup>48</sup>

42 With the exception of Tzetzes, see Hunger, "On Imitation", p. 19; Bravo García, "La poesía griega en Bizancio: su recepción y conservación", p. 294.

43 Quintus of Smyrna was scarcely known in Byzantium. Eustathios mentions him in his commentaries to Homeric poems; Tzetzes quotes the name of Quintus in his scholia on Hesiod and Lycophron, as well as in his *Posthomerica* and in the *Chiliads* (a complete list is in Megna, "Per la fortuna umanistica di Quinto", pp. 132–34). A few possible echoes from Quintus were pointed out in Theodore Prodromos' poems, though they are admittedly not decisive: see e.g. Theodore Prodromus, *Epigr. John* 259b, ed. Papagiannis l. 2 and Quintus 13.112–13 with Spanoudakis, "Nonnus and Theodoros Prodromus", p. 242. The only instance of Quintus (14.455) being quoted in A. Giusti's *apparatus fontium* of Niketas' novel, is very dubious (see Nicetas, *Drosill. et Char.*, ed. Conca 9.91 ἀκάματον πύρ).

44 See Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, pp. 115–19; Lauxtermann, "Byzantine Didactic Poetry".

45 See Moreschini/Sykes, *St Gregory of Nazianzus Poemata Arcana*, pp. 57–59; Simelidis, *Selected Poems*, pp. 21–78; Crimi, "I componimenti poetici bizantini in onore di Gregorio Nazianzeno".

46 Simelidis, *Selected Poems*, pp. 78–79.

47 The main sources are collected by Zito, *Maxime. Des initiatives*, pp. xc–xcii.

48 See Schamp, *Lapidaire orphique*, pp. 68–70; Ghiannakis, *ΟΡΦΕΩΣ ΛΙΘΙΚΑ*, pp. 119–21. Cf. *All. Il.* 18.173–74, trans. Goldwyn-Kokkini: "for Herakles was a great astrologer, as Orpheus fiercely advocated in the *Lithika*".

Directly related to the already mentioned role played by poetry in education are some of the most important late antique innovations in poetic genres, mainly the *verse paraphrase* of a core text, especially in its characteristic Christian form: the Biblical verse paraphrase.<sup>49</sup> After some experiments in the mid-4th century,<sup>50</sup> it was in the following century that Biblical paraphrase enjoyed a short but fruitful season. Nonnos' *Paraphrase of John's Gospel*, the *Metaphrase of the Psalms* (attributed to a certain Apollinarios of c.460), the lost metaphrases of the Octateuch, of Zacharias and Daniel by Eudocia, and the 'Hellenic Gospel' of the *Homeric Centos*—known in four different redactions, one of them reworked by Eudocia herself<sup>51</sup>—witness the popularity of the genre. Furthermore, Bishop Basil of Seleucia transposed into verse the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* (the poem is lost). A paraphrase of a prose account is also the fascinating poem by Eudocia on St Cyprian, a famous Antiochian wizard, who converted to Christianity and eventually was martyred.<sup>52</sup> In itself, the interaction of prose and verse was not a Christian innovation of course.<sup>53</sup> Christian poets' major contribution was the transformation of a rhetorical exercise into a refined literary and theological genre, based on the principles of condensing, expansion and exegetical explication of the Biblical model. The late antique inheritance proved to be particularly fruitful in the following centuries.<sup>54</sup> For example, the *Metaphrase of Psalms* enjoyed considerable success,

49 Agosti, "L'epica biblica nella tarda antichità greca"; Whitby, "The Bible Hellenized"; Sandnes, *The Gospel According to Homer and Virgil*; Agosti, "Greek Poetry", pp. 371–72 with further bibliography.

50 Namely the poems of the so-called *Codex Visionum* (P.Bodmer 29–37): Miguélez Cavero, *Poems in Context*, pp. 61–63, 330–36; Agosti, "Greek Poetry", p. 365; Agosti, "Poesia greca nella (e della?) biblioteca Bodmer".

51 Nonnos' *Paraphrase*: the complete reference edition is still by Scheindler, *Nonni Panopolitani*. New editions with detailed commentary of single books are listed in the bibliography at the end of this chapter. *Metaphrase of the Psalms*: ed. Ludwig. *Homeric Centos*: ed. Schembra. See Whitby, "The Bible Hellenized"; Agosti, "Greek Poetry", p. 380.

52 Photius is very appreciative of Eudocia's poems; see Photius, *Myriobiblon*, ed. Henry, *codd.* 183–184. Unfortunately, the *St Cyprian* partially survived in only one manuscript of the 10th century. It is tempting to think that it influenced experiments like the dodecasyllable redaction of the *Life of St Leo*, bishop of Catania (BGH 981b, thought to be dated to the 11th/12th c.), whose storytelling is similar to the story of Cyprian.

53 In the age of Diocletian, Soterichos of Oasis composed a metrical life of Apollonius of Tyana; two centuries later, Marinus also wrote a hexameter redaction of his *Life of Proclus*.

54 Gonnelli, "Le Sacre Scritture e i generi poetici a Bisanzio" is the best treatment of the subject. See also the epigrams on selected passages from the Old and New Testament, a typical Byzantine genre (e.g. Prodromos' iambic and hexametric *Tetrasticha*, ed. Papagiannis: see Gonnelli, "Reminiscenze classiche e cristiane").

as its rich manuscript tradition shows.<sup>55</sup> Using it as model, many later authors composed analogous works; two good examples are the metaphrases in dodecasyllables of the *Odes* by John Geometres, or the metaphrase of the *Psalms* in political verses by Manuel Philes.<sup>56</sup> Also, the moral hexameter poem on Job by Leo the Philosopher (ed. Westerink), and the two poems by Psellos on the titles of the *Psalms* and on the *Song of Songs* (*Poems* 1 and 2, ed. Westerink), are modelled on late antique paraphrase technique and its characteristic merging of the rewriting in a higher literary register with the exegesis. Contrary to what one would have expected, the already mentioned *Homeric Centos* did not create a real tradition of religious centos, apart from the exceptional case of the *Christos Paschon*, an Euripidean cento of debated date and authorship, but probably a Byzantine poem.<sup>57</sup> Nor was the tradition of profane cento, represented in Late Antiquity by the lost Homeric cento by Tatianus (praised by Libanius: *Letter* 990, ed. Förster), much more developed. Quite remarkably, in the 9th century, Leo the Philosopher had a certain predilection for short centos with erotic meaning.<sup>58</sup>

School education played a decisive role in the transformation of some of the most common *preliminary exercises* (προγυμνάσματα) into self-standing literary genres; above all, the ἔκφρασις, “description”, of objects, places, situations, people and works of art, which is ubiquitous in late antique poetry.<sup>59</sup> Description reaches the status of a self-standing poem with an elegant ekphrasis of a day (of autumn or spring) by Pamprepios (fr. 2, ed. Livrea, unfortunately fragmentary), Christodoros of Coptos, John of Gaza, and in the poems by Paul the Silentiary, the masterpieces of the genre. Christodoros of Coptos (age of Anastasios I) composed a description of the statues of the Baths of Zeuxippos in Constantinople (transmitted as book 2 of the *Greek Anthology*).<sup>60</sup> John of Gaza (5th/6th century) is the author of the ekphrasis of a cosmic painting (or wall-painting) in the winter baths at Gaza (or Antioch): a poem of about

55 See Ludwich, *Apolinarii Metaphrasis Psalmorum*, pp. xxii–xxxii.

56 Gonnelli, “Le Sacre Scritture e i generi poetici a Bisanzio”, pp. 394–96.

57 Ed. Tuilier, who follows the branch of the manuscript tradition ascribing it to Gregory of Nazianzos. For a recent discussion, with bibliography, see Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, pp. 263–67.

58 See Hunger, “On Imitation”, pp. 33–34; and now the detailed analysis by Prieto Domínguez, *De alieno nostrum*, pp. 73–78 and 132–72.

59 See Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, pp. 110–11; Miguélez Caverro, *Poems in Context*, pp. 283–309; Agosti, “Nonnus’ Visual World”, pp. 155–62. In general on the ekphrastic mode, see also Brilliant, “Late Antiquity: a Protean Term”, p. 41 (and Barber/Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos on Literature and Art*, pp. 239–379, with further bibliography).

60 Ed. Beckby; a detailed commentary has been produced by Tissoni, *Cristodoro*.

700 hexameters, inspired by Neoplatonic doctrine.<sup>61</sup> Paul the Silentiary, probably the best late antique poet after Nonnos, composed his renowned description of Hagia Sophia, and publicly performed it on the occasion of the second restoration of the dome, a few days after Christmas 562 AD (some days later the description of the ambo was also declaimed).<sup>62</sup>

Self-standing *ekphraseis* has a certain success in the Macedonian renaissance. Leo Choïrosphaktes composed a description of the Bath of Leo the Wise in anacreontics.<sup>63</sup> Constantine of Rhodes described Constantinople and the Church of the Holy Apostles in dodecasyllables. The latter's poetics, based on ξένος and θαύμα, "wonder", is particularly close to the visual world of late antique *ekphraseis*.<sup>64</sup> In the 11th century, Christopher Mitylenaios penned a couple of elaborated descriptions, one of a spider's web (*Poem* 122), and one of a loaf of bread decorated like embroidery with representations of the 12 signs of the Zodiac, and with 18 eggs (*Poem* 42). This latter example is a refined poem, praising artistic skills and subverting usual *topoi* of the genre, as Paul Magdalino demonstrated.<sup>65</sup>

One should also take into account standard themes that enjoyed a remarkable success and continuity in Byzantium, such as the describing of the coming of spring, a very popular subject in late antique *ekphraseis* in prose and in verse.<sup>66</sup> Nonnos devoted several digressions to it (e.g. *Dion.* 3.10–29, ed. Chuvin), as do the epigrammatists of Agathias' *Cycle* (*Greek Anthology* 10.14–16, ed. Beckby). Perhaps the most elegant variation was composed by a post-Nonnian poet (*Greek Anthology* 9.363, ed. Beckby), imitated and expanded by John Geometres (*Poem* 300, ed. Van Opstall).<sup>67</sup> On this subject in the 12th century, Nicholas Kallikles also wrote one of his best poems (*Poem* 29, ed. Romano).

61 New edition and commentary by Lauritzen, *Jean de Gaza*.

62 Paul was read and imitated by later poets, as the *testimonia* collected in De Stefani's edition exhaustively demonstrate; see also De Stefani, "The End of the 'Nonnian School'", p. 388.

63 Ed. Gallavotti. See Magdalino, "The Bath of Leo the Wise".

64 Constantine of Rhodes, *On Constantinople and the Church of the Holy Apostles*, eds. James/Vassis. See James, *Constantine of Rhodes, On Constantinople*, pp. 56–57. On 'wonder poetics' in Late Antiquity see Agosti, "Contextualizing Nonnus' Visual World", with further bibliography.

65 See Magdalino, "Cosmological Confectionery", who also gives an English translation.

66 See De Stefani, "L'epigramma longum tardoantico", Loukaki, "Ekphrasis Earos. Le topos de la venue du printemps".

67 Detailed commentary in De Stefani, "L'epigramma longum tardoantico", pp. 580–84, Van Raalte, *Jean Géomètres*, pp. 513–50; and Crimi, "Giovanni Geometra, i cigni e le cicale".

The *impersonation* (ἵθοποιία) was another preliminary exercise that deeply influenced the structure of late antique poetry. The imitation of a character working in direct style, valued as particularly helpful in developing the ability to compose an effective speech, promoted the diffusion of direct speeches in poems, characterised by emphatic and dramatic style, and embellished by antitheses, oxymora, sound effects, wordplays and paratactic cola.<sup>68</sup> For example, both the collection of *ethopoïiai* conserved in the *Greek Anthology* (9.451–481, ed. Beckby), dated to the 5th/6th century, and the exercises by Dioskoros of Aphrodito (*Poems* 41–46, ed. Fournet) on mythological subjects, are related to school practice. How innovative impersonation could be is nicely shown by a curious dialogue between Aphrodite searching for Adonis and Zeus, transmitted in the corpus of anacreontics in the ms. *Barberinianus gr.* 310 (*Poem* 6, ed. Ciccolella), which in the second part displays a rejection of Greek myths based on Christian-Neoplatonic arguments (myths inadequately represent noetic events). Furthermore, impersonation occasionally found the status of self-standing poem, already from the 3rd century onwards. In the mid-4th century in Egypt, *ethopoïiai* on Christian subjects (Cain and Abel: *P.Bodmer* 33 and 35), were composed, which predate the analogous (but in prose) exercises by Nikephoros Basilakes (12th century).

There is no need to emphasize the importance to Byzantine poetry of late antique epigram, perhaps the only genre that had a seamless continuity.<sup>69</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus' epigrams (gathered in *Greek Anthology*, book 8) are constantly the object of imitation and variation in subsequent centuries. But also Christian epigrams (now in *Greek Anthology*, book 1), as well as those of poets of the 4th and 5th century—like Palladas and the others gathered in the so-called *Palladas Sylloge*, and the 5th and 6th century epigrams put together by Agathias in his *Cycle*—enjoyed considerable success.<sup>70</sup> It is worth mentioning here metrical inscriptions, which are a relevant part of late antique poetic production and share some stylistic developments and features of highbrow poetry.<sup>71</sup> Two aspects of late antique verse inscriptions had been particularly

68 See Wifstrand, *Von Kallimachus zu Nonnos*. Further bibliography in Agosti, "Greek Poetry", p. 374. A recent, thorough study can be found in the book by Verhelst, *Direct Speech in Nonnus' Dionysiaca*. To the same author we owe a useful database of direct speech in Greek epic poetry (<http://www.dsgep.ugent.be/>).

69 See the chapters by Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen, and by Ivan Drpić and Andreas Rhoby in this book.

70 For bibliography on late antique epigram, see Agosti, "Greek Poetry", pp. 372–73. A comprehensive study is devoted to Byzantine epigram by Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1. Valerio, *Agazia Scolastico. Epigrammi* (forthcoming in the series *Studi e Testi*) offers a detailed and up-to-date history of the *Palatine Anthology*.

71 Agosti, "Greek Poetry", pp. 372–73, with bibliography.

significant to later Byzantine developments: the employ of stichic verses (hexameters and later trimeters), and the length of the epigrams, up to dozens of verses.<sup>72</sup> A case in point is the 76-hexameters inscription in St Polyeuktos' church (c.520), which circulated in a written version and influenced literary epigrams.<sup>73</sup>

### 3 The Distinctive Feature of Late Antique Poetry: the "Modern Style"

Several stylistic trends corresponding to different tastes and literary levels were experienced in late antique poetry.<sup>74</sup> Among the major trends the so-called "modern style", typical of Nonnos and his followers, was undoubtedly the most distinctive. Nonnos perfected some tendencies already visible in Hellenistic poets and evident later in Triphiodoros, his immediate predecessor from this point of view.<sup>75</sup> It is a baroque style,<sup>76</sup> based on manneristic exuberance, emphatic and dramatic, relying on accumulation, antithesis, repetition, oxymoron, paradox, sound effects, wordplays, abundance of synonyms, participial constructions, overwhelming variation, and illusionism. The result is an apparently fragmentary composition, whose scenes are connected to each other by association, and narrative is characterised by discontinuity, disharmony, and predominance of the ekphrastic mode.<sup>77</sup> Recent research also pointed out the influence of Neoplatonism on Nonnos' sophisticated aesthetics.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the "modern style" fits perfectly into the new hexameter created

72 Agosti, "L'epigramma lungo nei testi letterari ed epigrafici fra IV e VII sec. d.C."; De Stefani, "L'epigramma longum tardoantico e bizantino".

73 Connor, "The Epigram in the Church of Hagios Polyeuktos"; Whitby, "The Vocabulary of Praise" and "The St. Polyeuktos Epigram".

74 To put it roughly, one can distinguish between archaizing poets, who are closer to the "Homeric" style (like Quintus of Smyrna, Eudocia, the author of the *Metaphrase of the Psalms*, the *Argonautica of Orpheus* and many verse inscriptions); "Hellenistic" poets, like the didactic poems of the 4th century or Gregory of Nazianzus; and the "moderns" (Triphiodoros, Nonnos and his followers).

75 See Wifstrand, *Von Kallimachos zu Nonnos*; Whitby, "The Evolution of Nonnian Style"; and Agosti, "Greek Poetry", pp. 367–69 with bibliography. Still fundamental is Keydell, *Nonni Panopolitani*, pp. 35–81.

76 For the category of "baroque", see Van Opstall, "The Golden Flower of Youth".

77 For recent descriptions of this style, see Miguélez Cavero, *Poems in Context*, pp. 116–86, with previous bibliography; and the chapters in Accorinti, *The Brill's Companion to Nonnus*, pp. 371–459 (especially those by G. D'Ippolito, A.M. Lasek, D. Gigli Piccardi, R.A. Faber).

78 See recently Hernández de la Fuente, "Poetry and Philosophy at the Boundaries of Byzantium"; Gigli Piccardi, "Nonnus' Poetics".

by the poet, who was able to give a very simple and functional structure to his verse, despite its many restrictions.<sup>79</sup> Dactylic words are predominant, whereas spondees are avoided as much as possible. Only nine hexameter patterns (out of the Homeric 32) are allowed, spondaic hexameters are forbidden, and there is always a main caesura at the third foot (81 per cent is trochaic). The most relevant feature is the regulation of stress accent, together with restrictions of word-ends: verses end with a long syllable (90 per cent), preferably with a word with an accent on the penultimate syllable (72 per cent), while a proparoxytone ending is strictly forbidden and other regulations affect stress accent before main caesurae. The result is a verse tending to isosyllabism, with a stress accent at the end and at the main break, a paired colon structure, with the minimum possible rhythm patterns, and a regular number of syllables.<sup>80</sup> Such a verse was conceived to respond to the linguistic changes and was intimately connected to oral poetry performances (public declamations, competitions), because it became easier for the audience to follow its rhythmic pattern.<sup>81</sup>

The modern style and metrics soon entered late antique schools, and Nonnos became a new classic to imitate.<sup>82</sup> Professional poets of the 5th and 6th centuries adopted his style and metrics,<sup>83</sup> although we cannot properly speak of a “school of Nonnos”<sup>84</sup> for poets like Colluthus, Musaeus, Christodorus, John of Gaza, Agathias, Paul the Silentiary, and the epigrammatists of the *Cycle*, to mention only those whose work(s) survived in Byzantium. In addition, some verse inscriptions of the 5th/6th century clearly show the influence of the modern style.

This style, as mentioned above, remained alive up to the first half of the 7th century. George of Pisidia was the last still capable of composing a short poem in Nonnian hexameters, although he accentuated its intrinsic features of monotony and strict stress regulation.<sup>85</sup> George was very familiar with Nonnian poetry, whose style and imagery transposed into a new communicative

79 The best treatment is now Magnelli, “The Nonnian Hexameter”, with complete bibliography.

80 Jeffreys, “Byzantine Metrics”, pp. 315–19; Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*, p. 71; Agosti, “Greek Poetry”, pp. 376–80.

81 Agosti, “Greek Poetry”, pp. 377–78 and Magnelli, “The Nonnian Hexameter”, p. 362.

82 See Agosti, “Niveaux de style, littérature, poétiques”.

83 But there are differences in the metrical habits of each author.

84 Miguélez Caveró, *Poems in Context*, pp. 93–96; Agosti, “Niveaux de style, littérature, poétiques”, pp. 102–07.

85 See D’Ambrosi, “Lesametro accentuativo in Giorgio di Pisidia”; De Stefani, “The End of the ‘Nonnian School’”, pp. 378–80.



medium.<sup>86</sup> His decision to adopt the dodecasyllable for his secular and religious works dramatically reveals that, at the beginning of the 7th century, the hexameter was no longer recognizable for the audience. Indeed, the dodecasyllable's immediate success also marked the end of the "modern metrics".

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the influence of late antique "Nonnian" poets ended. It is actually possible to follow their presence and resurgence in later poetry, as recent studies have pointed out. In some 9th century texts we can observe the first traces of this revival.<sup>87</sup> A handful of poets—Leo the Philosopher, Cometas the Grammarian, Constantine of Sicily, and Anastasios the Quaestor—are credited with some knowledge of Nonnos (together with a much more expected familiarity with Gregory of Nazianzos' poetry and prose).<sup>88</sup> Among these the most prominent figure is Leo the Philosopher, who in an epigram transmitted in the *Greek Anthology* displays a couple of Nonnian words (15.12, ed. Becky = 9 Westerink: a meditation on the best way of life). In many cases, acquaintance with late antique poetry is quite certain, although instead of precise imitations or allusions we should speak of a late antique "allure". This is true also for Dionysius of Stoudios' acrostic epigram in honor of Theodore and Anatolios the Stoudites (end of the 9th century).<sup>89</sup> Later on, some verses by Constantine Manasses, namely the prefatory poem to his *Chronicle*, give the same impression of a superficial acquaintance with late antique poetry.<sup>90</sup>

It seems that, after the break represented by Photios' little interest in poetry,<sup>91</sup> literates of the 10th and 11th century had a deeper knowledge of their late antique predecessors. John Geometres surely imitated both of Nonnos' poems.<sup>92</sup> John Tzetzes is the only one who quotes Triphiodoros extensively as a relevant

86 See the effective pages by Gonnelli, *Nonno di Panopoli*, pp. 11–13.

87 See Magnelli, "Il 'nuovo' epigramma", pp. 193–96; De Stefani, "The End of the 'Nonnian school'".

88 Detailed analysis in Tissoni, "Il Tardoantico a Bisanzio", pp. 621–29; and "The Reception of Nonnus", p. 697, with further bibliography.

89 See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 70–73, and especially De Stefani, "The End of the 'Nonnian school'", pp. 383–85 with further bibliography. Despite De Stefani's insightful remarks, it remains difficult to indicate any precise model for the undoubtedly late antique expressions of this poem.

90 De Stefani, "The End of the 'Nonnian school'", pp. 388–89, also pointing out possible knowledge of Paul the Silentiary's ekphrasis.

91 See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 102–07; Signes Codoñer, "Poesía clasicista bizantina", pp. 25–26.

92 Van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, p. 45 and *passim*. See e.g. John Geometres, *Poem* 211.13–20 ed. van Opstall, with Andriollo, "Aristocracy and Literary Production", pp. 135–36.

source of Homeric themes.<sup>93</sup> The sophisticated poem by Musaeus, already known by the author (possibly Leo the Philosopher) of a cento transmitted in the *Greek Anthology* 9.381, was imitated by John Geometres too, and in the 12th century Theodore Prodromos and Niketas Eugenianos show a familiarity with it.<sup>94</sup> A few echoes of late antique models emerge in Christopher Mitylenaios' poems.<sup>95</sup>

The great personality of Theodore Prodromos deserves a special mention among the poets of the Komnenian age. He was not only remarkably acquainted with Gregory of Nazianzos,<sup>96</sup> but he also knew other late antique poets well, especially Nonnos, whom he imitates in a conscious and subtle way, as Enrico Magnelli and Claudio De Stefani pointed out.<sup>97</sup> More interesting, Prodromos sometimes goes beyond literary allusions and reuse of vocabulary, displaying a familiarity with Nonnian narrative that influenced his own way of composing. Kostantinos Spanoudakis has successfully shown that the episode of the healing of the dying Rhodanthe in *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* (8.388–520, ed. Marcovich), rewrites the resurrection of Lazarus (the obvious primary model) through the rendition of Nonnos, *Par.* 11, associated with the “parallel” episode of the resurrection of Tylos in *Dion.* 25, in a sort of cross-reading of Nonnos that

93 See *Test.* 4–5, 18–23, 26–34, 37 Dubielzig, and *Allegories of the Iliad, Proleg.* ll. 480–84, trans. Goldwyn-Kokkini: “Thus not even if you had read Homer and Stesichoros, Euripides, Lykophron, Kollouthos and Lesches, and Diktys’ well written *Iliad*, Triphiodoros and Quintus, even a hundred books, not even then would you have learned the story in greater detail”. Tzetzes follows Triphiodoros’ narrative in his *Posthomerica* 602–749, ed. Leone (mentioning him at ll. 209 and 700), though he disagrees with him about the period of the fall of Troy. On Tzetzes’ *Allegories*, see now Pontani, “Scholarship in the Byzantine Empire”, pp. 377–78. On Tzetzes, see now Braccini, “Riscrivere l’epica”; Rhoby, “Ioannes Tzetzes als Auftragsdichter”. Livrea, “Per una nuova edizione critica di Trifiodoro”, pp. 391–92 detected a quotation of Triphiodoros in Michael Choniates.

94 For John Geometres, see van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, p. 484 and passim. For Niketas, see Kost, *Musaïos*, pp. 70–73; Accorinti, “Musaïos II”, col. 169. A résumé of Hero and Leander’s love story is in *Drosilla and Charicles* 6.471–91, ed. Conca. Later, John Grassus (13th century) wrote a short poem in dodecasyllables, a dialogue between a Stranger and Leander (*Poem* 10, ed. Gigante), displaying some knowledge of Musaïos.

95 See the *Index fontium et locorum conferendorum* in De Groote’s edition, the new annotated translation by Bernard/Livanos, *The Poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous*, and the remarks by Magnelli, “Recensione”, pp. 380–93.

96 See the *Tetrastichs on Gregory*, ed. D’Ambrosi (with detailed commentary); Magnelli, “Prodromea (con una nota su Gregorio di Nazianzo)”, pp. 123–37; and the insightful remarks by Zagklas, “Theodore Prodromos and the Use of the Poetic Work of Gregory of Nazianzus”.

97 Magnelli, “Reminiscenze classiche e cristiane”; De Stefani, “The End of the ‘Nonnian school’”, pp. 389–91. See e.g. *Historical Poems* 56b.40–48, studied by De Stefani, *ibidem*.

“predates” modern approaches to the poet.<sup>98</sup> Theodore was fond of hexameters and he probably transmitted his passion to his pupil Niketas Eugenianos, who inserted in his novel three *morceaux de bravoure* in hexameters (*Drosilla and Charikles* 3.263–88 and 297–322, 6.205–35, ed. Conca). Claudio De Stefani recently dealt with the long passage in book 6,<sup>99</sup> suggesting that Niketas “composed his noteworthy ‘late antique’, Pisides-like hexameters in the wake of his master”. This is actually confirmed by the close relationships between *Drosilla and Charikles* 6.205–35 and Theodore Prodromos’ three dedicatory epigrams to *Rhodante and Dosikles*, convincingly attributed by Panagiotis Agapitos to him.<sup>100</sup>

As already mentioned, Maximos Planudes exhibited a great familiarity with Nonnos’ poems. The renowned manuscript with the corpus of epic poets, ms. *Laur.* 32.16 (1280–83), was copied in his *atelier*, but the *Dionysiaca* do not bear the name of their author (the poem circulated anonymously in the Byzantine Middle Ages).<sup>101</sup> Twenty years later, when he copied the *Marc. Gr.* 481 of the *Paraphrase*, Maximos was at least aware of the authorship of the Christian poem (though not without some doubts). Planudes’ affection for Nonnos and the absorption of his language and style is evident in the epigrams, especially in the 46-hexameter poem on Ptolemy’s *Geography*, and the *Idyll*, a curious *divertissement* and one of the rare examples of “bucolic” poetry in Byzantium, where almost every line contains a quotation from the poet from Panopolis.<sup>102</sup>

98 Spanoudakis, “Nonnus and Theodoros Prodromus”.

99 De Stefani, “The End of the ‘Nonnian school’”, pp. 396–98.

100 Transmitted in the *Pal. Gr.* 43 and re-edited by Agapitos, “Poets and Painters”. See also below pp. 136–7. Agapitos demonstrated that the iambic preface of Niketas Eugenianos imitates these lines, but the imitation of the hexametric passage in the novel is even closer. I am preparing an article on these unnoticed correspondences. Moreover, Prodromos’ epigram is very similar to the beginning of book 8 (8.1) in Chariton’s *Chaireas and Callirhoe*, as Nikos Zagklas kindly pointed out to me. Incidentally, we should also mention a possible reminiscence of Nonnos’ *Paraphrase* in Nicholas Kallikles, *Poem* 22.26, ed. Romano (see Romano’s apparatus).

101 An exception is represented by Eustathios, who seems to be the author of the marginal addition mentioning Nonnos in the ms. *Marc. Gr.* 448 f. 220r of the *Souda*, pointing out that Nonnos “he is the one who also paraphrased the chaste Theologian in epic verse”: see Accorinti, “The Poet from Panopolis”, pp. 19–23. Eustathios inaccurately quotes passages from *Dion.* book 1 about ten times in his commentaries to Homer and Dionysios Periegetes (see also Tissoni, “The Reception of Nonnus in Late Antiquity”, p. 699).

102 *Epigram* 5, ed. Taxis. See <http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/typ/1927>; Pontani, “The World on a Fingernail”, pp. 197–200; Mazzucchi, “Ancora sugli esametri di Massimo Planude per le carte di Tolomeo”. For the *Idyll*, see the edition by Pontani, *Maximi Planudis Idyllium*, with a rich *apparatus fontium*. For the epigrams, see Valerio, “Analecta Byzantina”, pp. 291–94 with bibliography; and Taxis, *Les épigrammes*, pp. 27–28 (and passim).

#### 4 The Sensitivity to Late Antique Style

To sum up, we have seen that late antique classicizing poetry had a certain presence and success in Byzantium. If Gregory of Nazianzos was by far the most read and imitated author, and for many Byzantine poets his poetic corpus constituted the main model, other late antique poets were undoubtedly known, although it is often difficult to point out precise imitations and reuse of phraseology. If anything, some Byzantine authors show a sort of late antique “allure” in style and language.<sup>103</sup>

Before closing this brief survey, I would like to discuss a crucial question that involves the general attitude to late antique poetry in Byzantium. Were Byzantines aware of the novelty and specificity of late antique poetic style? The question is particularly urgent for those poets who display a certain familiarity with Nonnian words and phrases. Labelled as a modern poet by his contemporaries (he is called νέος by Agathias, for example),<sup>104</sup> Nonnos himself utters that he is “in competition with both new and old poets” (*Dion.* 25.26–27, ed. Vian: “ἀλλὰ νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν ἐρίζων”). Was it the same in Byzantium, or did he simply become part of the classical heritage? The answer obviously changes according to cultural predilections and authors’ preferences. For example, Planudes clearly managed to imitate the style of a poet he appreciated; in his *Idyllium* he experimented with a sort of Nonnian bucolic poem, giving a late antique dress to a genre that was virtually unknown to Late Antiquity. We cannot doubt that he was able to feel the difference between Nonnian and Homeric style. On the contrary, the great polymath Theodore Metochites very rarely exploits wording and tags from late antique poets apart from Gregory (a couple of quotations from both Quintus of Smyrne and Nonnos, one from Eudocia).<sup>105</sup> In these cases, he gives the impression that he just picked them up randomly, just to add a little flavour of “preciosity” to his verses.<sup>106</sup> Occasional

103 Incidentally, this is true not only for poetry in heroic verse (with which the previous pages mainly dealt), but also for that in dodecasyllables. We mentioned that George of Pisidia was a passionate reader of both of Nonnos’ poems. A thorough examination of the influence of Nonnian style and language on George’s poems is still lacking, but it would be very promising. See, for example, Gonnelli, *Nonno di Panopoli. Le Dionisiache XIII–XXIV*, pp. 11–13. Furthermore, George is likely to have transmitted Nonnian images and words to later Byzantine dodecasyllabic poetry, heavily indebted to him.

104 Agathias, *Histories* 4.23.5–6, discussed by Accorinti, “The Poet from Panopolis”, pp. 29–30.

105 See the *index fontium et locorum parallelorum* in Polemis’ edition. On Metochites’ wide-ranging learning, see Pontani, “Scholarship in the Byzantine Empire”, pp. 428–32.

106 See Ševčenko-Featherstone, “Two Poems by Theodore Metochites”, p. 4. Metochites ultimately derived the inspiration and the genres of his poems as well as his idea of *poikilia* from Gregory of Nazianzus (see Polemis, *Theodore Metochites*, pp. xvii–xlix).

literary borrowings are neither necessarily proof of conscious imitation, nor evidence of modernistic mindset.

If we turn our attention to the sensitivity to levels of style, we can perhaps glimpse a different perspective.<sup>107</sup> Leo the Philosopher, as we have seen above (pp. 131–2), reuses some Nonnian words as mere literary embellishments, whereas his style is rather Homeric. Nonetheless, in the *protheoria* of his moralistic poem *Job*, Leo explicitly dismisses “harsh style and vocabulary”, in favour of a “more pedestrian and more Homeric” style for the sake of clarity and charm (“σαφήνειας ἔνεκα καὶ γλυκύτητος”). Westerink plausibly suggested that with “harsh style” Leo meant the style of Nonnos and his followers.<sup>108</sup> If so, Leo had a clear idea of the difference between the Homeric poems and the stilted compositions in late antique “modern style”.<sup>109</sup> Equally aware of it, in my submission, was the poet of the well-known metrical inscriptions (first quarter of the 10th century) for the tomb of Michael, the *synkellos* of Nikolaos Mystikos, which is a unique example of Byzantine verse inscription in Nonnian style (remarkably from both the *Dionysiaca* and the *Paraphrase*), possibly composed by Alexander of Nicaea.<sup>110</sup> The author clearly aimed at composing a refined poem, using highbrow language and elegant phraseology, different from standard Homeric poetry.<sup>111</sup> If we compare it with the famous Homeric inscription

107 For the levels of language and style, see also the chapter by Martin Hinterberger in the present volume.

108 It seems that in a couple of points at least (*Job* 69 and 86, ed. Westerink) Leo ignored his own principles and alludes to Nonnian phraseology (Magnelli, “Il ‘nuovo’ epigramma”, p. 196).

109 Σαφήνεια is one of the most distinctive qualities in the literary judgments by Photios, who, for example, highly recommends Eudocia’s paraphrases (Photius, *Myriobiblon*, ed. Henry, cod. 183), “because the meaning is always preserved precisely without expansion or abridgment, and the wording too, wherever possible, preserves a close similarity” (trans. N. Wilson). Scholars usually think that Photios did not know Nonnos’ *Paraphrase*, whose style is exactly the contrary of what he praises in Eudocia (most recently, Accorinti, “The Poet from Panopolis”, p. 18). Admittedly, his concern for “clarity” puts Photios closer to Eudocia’s rewriting than to that of Nonnos; and I wonder if it was just because he had some knowledge of the radically different Nonnian style that he composed such a passionate characterization of Eudocia’s poems.

110 TR64 Rhoby, with a detailed commentary (*Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 637–40). See also Ševčenko, “An Early Tenth-Century Inscription from Galakrenai”; Agosti, *Parafraasi del Vangelo di San Giovanni. Canto Quinto*, p. 470; and De Stefani, “The End of the ‘Nonnian School’”, pp. 387–88.

111 This is evident especially from the last four lines (4–8): ποσσὶν ἔλαφροτάτοισι διέστιχεν, ἦχι χορεύει / πιστότατος θεράπων μεγάλῃτορος ἀρχιερέως / Νικόλεω γεγαῶς πινυτόφρονος, ὅστις ἔτευξε / τόνδε νεῶν ὑψίστῳ ἐπουρανίῳ βασιλῆϊ (“moved over, with nimble feet, [to a place] where he is [now] rejoicing. He was a servant of the great-hearted and wise Archpriest, Nikolaos, who had his temple built in honor of the Highest Heavenly Ruler”,

in the narthex of the church of Skripou, celebrating the *protospatharios* Leo (873/74),<sup>112</sup> the stylistic difference effectively stands out. Albeit an elegant text, the Skripou inscription displays a more traditional Homeric language.<sup>113</sup> The access to (or the rediscovery of) Nonnos' poems apparently urged the author of the Galakrenai inscription to adopt a more sophisticated style. In light of the presence of Nonnian expressions in 9th and 10th century poets (see above) we can presume that the tiny intellectual élite that formed the audience of the epigram was supposed to recognize such virtuosity.

Theodore Prodromos, in *Rhodante and Dosikles* 9.196–204, inserted a short epic passage intended to imitate the style of oracular poetry, without displaying any specific late antique feature.<sup>114</sup> But he also premised his novel with three different dedicatory poems, respectively of 14 hexameters, one elegiac distich, and again eight hexameters.<sup>115</sup> While the first two poems are in Homeric style, in the third Theodore clearly strove to give a late antique tone to his verses, reusing a precious vocabulary and nominal style, and a clear tendency to build four words hexameters (a typical late antique feature):<sup>116</sup>

Κούρης ἀργυφῆς καλλιστεφάνου τε Ῥοδάνθης  
 Καὶ κούρου Δοσικλήος ἀγαπρεπέος τε καὶ ἐσθλοῦ  
 ταῦτα φυγαῖ τε πλάναι τε κλυδώνια <τ'>οἴδματα, λησταί,  
 ἀργαλέαι στροφάλιγγες, ἐρωτοτόκοι μελεδῶνες,  
 δέσματ' ἀλυκτοπέδαι τε καὶ ὀρφνοφόρουσι μελάθροισι  
 ἐρκοσύναι, θυσίαι τε παναισχέες, ἄλγεα πι[κρά],

trans. Ševčenko, "An Early Tenth-Century Inscription from Galakrenai", p. 462). Line 5: ποσσὶν ἐλαφροτάτοισι διέστιχεν, ἤχι χορεύει is a cento from Nonnos (*Dion.* 28.272, 32.248 and *Par.* 19.21; *Dion.* 3.110); in line 6a: πιστότατος θεράπων comes from *Dion.* 34.25, and the clause of line 8 is drawn from *Par.* 5.70.

112 GR98 Rhoby (*Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 320–24). See now Prieto Dominguez, "On the Founder of the Skripou Church".

113 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 119–20.

114 Remarkably enough, in this "pastiche ... of the contorted vocabulary typical of oracular utterances" (Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 147 n. 291) the most relevant presence is Dionysios Periegetes. Theodore was followed by his pupil Niketas, who, in his *Drosilla and Charikles*, inserted three hexameter showpieces (3.263–88 and 297–322, 6.205–35), where the text itself draws the attention of the reader to the generic differences. The first two are love poems sung by Barbition, defined respectively as ἄσμα τερπνὸν ἠδύνον, "a charmingly tuneful song of love" (3.262) and τερπνὸν ... καὶ μελίφθογον μέλος, "a sweet and melodious air" (3.296); the third passage is a θρήνον ... ξένον, "horrendous lament" (6.203), by Drosilla. This latter displays a sound familiarity with late antique poetry.

115 Heildelberg, *Palatinus Graecus* 43 (14th century).

116 Text according to Agapitos, "Poets and Painters", p. 175; translation, slightly modified, by Jeffreys, "The Novels of the Mid-twelfth century", p. 197 (= *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 20).

φαρμακόνετα κύπελλα καὶ ἀρμονίης παραλύσεις,  
 ἔν δὲ γάμος τε λέχος τε καὶ ἡμερόντες ἔρωτες.

These [are the adventures] of Rhodanthe, the silvery girl with the lovely garland, and of valiant and comely youth Dosikles, the flights and wanderings and tempests and billows, brigands, grievous eddies, sorrows that give rise to love, chains and indissoluble fetters and imprisonments in gloomy dungeons, grim sacrifices, bitter grief, poisoned cups and paralysis of joints, and then marriage and bed and passionate love.

This is not a unique case, of course. Prefatory poems often display magniloquent wording and style, grander than the rest of the poem.<sup>117</sup> Such a sensitivity to levels of poetic style is already evident, however, in some late antique poems, which might have had a certain influence as models. The author of the *Metaphrase of the Psalms* prefaced his poem with a *προθεωρία*, whose language and metrics are close to the “modern manner”, whereas the rest of the poem follows a pedantic Homeric style.<sup>118</sup> Even Eudocia, in the 24 hexameters *Apology* to her version of the *Homeric Centos* (transmitted in the *Par. Suppl. Gr.* 388), displays more “modern” wording and metrics.<sup>119</sup>

In the absence of a thorough study, it would be premature to draw firm conclusions. Nonetheless, I have the impression that in defining late antique cultural memory as perceived in Byzantine poetry, besides the combination of “classical” heritage and Christianity,<sup>120</sup> we should investigate the role played by the characteristic “modern style” and language, whose presence was more relevant than is usually admitted.<sup>121</sup>

117 See, for example, the reminiscences of late antique poetry “shining through” in the prologue of Constantine Manasses’ *Chronicle* (above p. 131 and cf. n. 90).

118 Agosti, “Lepica biblica”, pp. 88–91; on the prologue, see now Faulkner, “Faith and Fidelity”.

119 Agosti, “Lepica biblica”, p. 75; Whitby, “The Bible Hellenized”, pp. 206–07. On the prefatory poem, see also Sandnes, *The Gospel According to Homer and Virgil*, pp. 186–189.

120 See Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, pp. 120–72. For the Byzantine perception of Late Antiquity and the decisive role played by Christianity, see Guran, “Late Antiquity in Byzantium”. In the effective words by Cyril Mango, “the true culture of Byzantium ... was dominated, not by classical antiquity as we understand it, but by a construct of the Christian and Jewish apologists built up in the first five of six centuries AD.” (Mango, “Discontinuity with the Classical Past”, p. 57).

121 I wish to thank Andreas Rhoby, Nikos Zagklas, Enrico Magnelli and Francesco Valerio for kindly reading a first draft of this chapter and improving it with their suggestions and remarks. Needless to say, all remaining shortcomings are my own.

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## George of Pisidia: the Spring of Byzantine Poetry?

*Ioannis Vassis*

### 1 George's Life and Work

Although he wrote poems of considerable historical interest, he was not a historian; while he wrote poems with religious content, he was not a theologian. Before all else, George of Pisidia was a poet, and a talented poet at that, who lived through the end of Late Antiquity and the dawn of the Byzantine era. His poetry would go on to have a profound impact on the poetry written in the Byzantine centuries to come, both in terms of form and content.

We know very little indeed about the poet's life. He was from Pisidian Antioch, as Michael Psellos noted,<sup>1</sup> but lived in Constantinople in the first half of the 7th century during the reign of Herakleios (610–41), a period which enjoyed a brief literary and cultural revival, largely due to the influence of Patriarch Sergios (610–38). George was a deacon of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia and—as we learn from the 10th-century lexicon the *Souda*,<sup>2</sup> and the titles of manuscripts containing one or more of his works—at times he held various positions within the patriarchal administration. These included those of sacristan, *chartophylax* and *referendarios*, which is to say the officer responsible for liaising between the patriarch and the imperial court. Some of these manuscripts ascribe two further elevated titles to the poet relating to the administration of charitable institutions in the capital. His death can be placed in the 630s, and with certainty after 632.<sup>3</sup>

The once widely-held view that had George starting out with epic panegyric poems and only turning later (after 630, when the Persian war had ended) to purely ethical-religious poetry,<sup>4</sup> does not seem to hold true. Apart from the fact that the subject-matter of these latter works makes it hard to date them with any accuracy, it should also be stressed that George's religious convictions

1 Michael Psellos, *On Euripides and George of Pisidia*, ed. Dyck, p. 48, lines 100–01: ὁ δ' ἐκ Πισιδίας σοφός, οἶμαι τῆς ἐλάττονος Ἀντιοχείας.

2 *Suidae lexicon*, ed. Adler vol. 1, p. 517, lines 19–22 (γ 170).

3 For an overview of George's life and career, see Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 11–16; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 17–18.

4 See Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 15–16.

are evident throughout the political poetry he wrote in praise of Herakleios<sup>5</sup> and Patriarch Sergios, the twin poles of power between which he lived and to whom most of his works are addressed. The struggles of both to repulse the empire's enemies from without (the Persians and Avars), which George praises in his panegyric poems, and the individual's struggle to overcome his inner foes (the passions), which he describes in his religious poetry, are two sides of the same coin. Victory on the field of battle could only be considered complete when accompanied by victory in the ethical sphere. For the poet, a true *homo byzantinus* spirituality was a lived reality. This poured through him into his poetry, which an examination of his surviving poetic works reveals<sup>6</sup> (which range between 100 and 2000 lines in length), and it was inextricably interwoven with the historical momentum.

In his earliest surviving poem *On Herakleios' Return from Africa*,<sup>7</sup> the poet praises Herakleios for having set free the empire from the tyrannical usurper Phokas (602–11) and seizing the reins of power with God's help. In addition to the new ruler's spiritual virtues—wisdom, piety, mildness and clemency—the poet expresses the hope that Herakleios will bring peace to the land and set about eradicating external threats to the empire, chiefly from the Persians and Avars. The poem can be dated with some certainty to shortly after Herakleios' ascent to the throne (611/12) and most probably represents a first attempt at winning the emperor's favour, which is obviously taken for granted in the poet's remaining works.

The *Persian Expedition*<sup>8</sup> is a small epic poem in three *akroaseis* (recitations), which exalts the successes of Herakleios' first expedition against the Persians (622–23). It begins with a long and elaborate *prooimion*, which includes both an exhortation from the poet to the Holy Trinity, the Christian muse, for divine inspiration, and an apostrophe to the emperor, in whose presence it must have been recited in 623, when Herakleios had returned to the capital for a

5 See e.g. Whitby, "The Devil in Disguise", p. 116: "George's personal religious conviction inspires much of his political poetry in praise of Heraclius". On whether all of George's poetic output was written on commission, and to what extent he was a mouthpiece for imperial ideology and propaganda, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 31–35, who points out (*ibid.*, p. 34) that "the tone and dominant themes of his political poetry were of his choosing, and that he preferred at times to adopt an original line of his own".

6 On possible lost poems by George, see Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 17–31, and Howard-Johnston, "The Official History", pp. 57–87; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 18–20.

7 Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 77–81; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 62–68. For a thorough analysis of the poem, see Frendo, "The Poetic Achievement", pp. 166–77.

8 Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 84–136; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 72–138. See Nissen, "Historisches Epos", pp. 314–24; Frendo, "The Poetic Achievement", p. 179f.; Whitby, "George of Pisidia's Presentation of the Emperor Heraclius", pp. 162–66; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 20–21.

time. The poem reverses the initial order at its close, moving from earth (the emperor) to heaven (God) with a lengthy laudation to Herakleios followed by a prayer entreating the Lord to grant him further victories. Herakleios is presented as a man implementing a divine mission; eradicating the threat posed to the Byzantine state by Khusro II and saving mankind from paganism. Given that his campaigns were thus subject to the dictates of divine strategy, they acquired a religious character,<sup>9</sup> which would henceforth provide an ideological-political background for all of George's epic panegyrics.

Although its title may indicate otherwise, *On Christ's Resurrection*<sup>10</sup> is not a (purely) religious poem. It was obviously written for Easter, to be recited to Herakleios' first-born son and co-emperor, Herakleios Constantine, which is why it begins with a reference to the significance of the paschal feast for the rebirth of all mankind. However, the second part of the poem is dominated by the theme of light dispelling darkness and the destruction of Satan; in it, the co-emperor is praised for his ethos and his spiritual discipline. At this point, the religious theme acquires a clearly political overtone: the young emperor is being encouraged to fight at his father's side, to renew the empire and subdue the evil threaten of the Persians in the East and Avars in the Balkans to the North. This final detail clearly dates the poem to the mid-620s.<sup>11</sup>

In two other poems, George refers to Constantinople being besieged by the Avars, Slavs and Persians in the summer of 626, while the emperor was on the eastern front engaging the Persians. The first, *On Bonus the Patrician*,<sup>12</sup> is addressed to the nobleman charged with the responsibility to protect the capital at this time, along with Patriarch Sergios and the co-emperor, though the bulk of its verses (lines 49–168) are actually devoted to exhorting Herakleios to hasten to the capital in its hour of need. The poem ends with a prayer to divine Logos to guide the emperor's thoughts on the salvation of Constantinople. While this poem comes across as a desperate cry at a moment of crisis, *Avar War*,<sup>13</sup> which was written immediately after the besieging forces were

9 See e.g. *Persian Expedition*, 1.248–52; 2.105–119.

10 *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 92, cols. 1373–84; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 250–59.

11 See Taragna, "Sulla fortuna di Giorgio di Pisidia", pp. 314–21. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 18–19, proposes AD 613, given that this was the year in which Herakleios' newborn son was crowned co-emperor. It is worth noting that the same scholar, *ibid.* pp. 33–34, posits, perhaps not unjustifiably, that after the *Persian Expedition* (623) and for five years up to 628, George lost the emperor's favour. He argues that Herakleios must have been displeased by the poet's allusion (*Pers. Exp.* 3.385–410) to the emperor's incestuous relationship with his niece, Martina.

12 Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 163–70; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 142–52.

13 Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 176–200; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 156–90. See Nissen, "Historisches Epos", pp. 310–14; Speck, *Zufälliges zum Bellum Avaricum*; Howard-Johnston, "The Siege of

successfully repulsed, is infused with a panegyric atmosphere of victory. The second poem includes a detailed description of the different phases of the conflict on land and at sea written by an eye-witness to the events and addressed to Patriarch Sergios. The patriarch, wielding his own spiritual weapons—his cast-iron faith, constant vigils and prayers to the Mother of God<sup>14</sup>—and parading the icon of Christ around the city walls, heartened the city's defenders and led them to victory. Needless to say, the poet does not neglect to stress the contribution of the emperor, who sent military reinforcements and detailed instructions in a stream of dispatches from the front.

In *Heraclias*,<sup>15</sup> the most panegyric of all George's poems, the poet celebrates the victorious outcome of the emperor's six-year war (622–28) against the Persians in two *akroaseis* (recitations).<sup>16</sup> The poem begins with the idea of the new *oecumene* brought into being by Herakleios, who is portrayed inter alia as a new Hercules, come to save and renew the world both politically and spiritually. This *renovatio mundi* he achieved by dint of the destruction of the Persian fire temple at Darartasis and the death of Khusro. The crushing of the pagan fire-worshippers,<sup>17</sup> who had posed such a vital threat to Christendom for two decades, is painted by George as a critical turning point that had altered the flow of history. The poem's second recitation focuses on a selection of five key actions taken by Herakleios to defeat the internal and external enemies who had threatened the state and its unity, beginning with the elimination of Phokas and ending with the crushing defeat of Khusro. According to the poet,

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Constantinople", pp. 134–35; Whitby, "Defender of the Cross", pp. 266–68; Whitby, "George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word", pp. 181–83.

- 14 For the Theotokos and her role in George's poetry, see Franchi, "La Vergine Maria", pp. 329–56.
- 15 Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 240–92; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 194–224. See Nissen, "Historisches Epos", pp. 301–10; Frendo, "The Poetic Achievement", pp. 181–84.
- 16 The indication in a 14th-century manuscript (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Ottob. gr. 342, fol. 194v) of the existence of a third recitation is not compelling, as Frendo ("Classical and Christian Influences", pp. 57–58) has shown in his painstaking analysis of the content and structure of the *Heraclias*. However, Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 23–30, is of the opinion that this lost recitation dealt with Herakleios' second and third Persian campaigns; he has attempted to reconstruct it on the basis of various scattered verses contained in the *Chronicle* of Theophanes (9th century) and the *Souda* lexicon. Nonetheless, it is far from certain that these fragments are from the *Heraclias* or from another one of George's poems that has not survived. Howard-Johnson ("The Official History", pp. 62–85, and id., *Witnesses*, pp. 25–26) has boldly argued that the fragments in question were actually from a now lost hybrid prose-verse history of Herakleios' Persian campaigns (AD 624–26 and 627–28) compiled by Pisides on imperial commission.
- 17 On George's knowledge of Persian religion and history, see Huber, "Ansichten eines Zivilisierten", pp. 162–92.

these victories proved the emperor's piety, since they were aimed at the restitution of an earthly order analogous with the divine, and had secured him the hope of a place in the kingdom of heaven.

When word reached Constantinople that Herakleios would be returning the relics of the Holy Cross to Jerusalem on 21 March 630, George quickly improvised the 116 lines *On the Restoration of the Holy Cross*.<sup>18</sup> This short poem emphasizes the mystic power of the Cross, which had destroyed the fire worshipped by the Persians. The emperor's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem is portrayed in a manner which recalls Christ's on Palm Sunday, while the restoration of the Cross to its proper place is declared as significant as its discovery by Constantine the Great, revealing Herakleios to be the son and worthy heir of the founder of the Christian empire.

The *Hexaemeron* is George's longest (1864 lines) and most important poem. Obviously elaborated in numerous stages over a number of years, the form in which it has come down to us dates from shortly after 632.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding its title, the poem is not a description of the six days of Creation as these are related in the Bible, but rather a hymn to the glory of God, which provides various proofs that all His creations, from the heavenly bodies and human beings to the most microscopic of creatures, such as the spider, bee and ant, have been gifted with admirable and unique properties by Divine Providence. To know the divine Logos, one only has to read inside the book of creation carefully, beginning before all else with self-knowledge.<sup>20</sup> However, the poet stresses that the beauty and order of the universe are purely and simply a reflection of the actions of the Creator, whose nature transcends human conception.<sup>21</sup> Despite its explicitly philosophical and theological nature, the poem ends with a prayer to God which the poet puts into the mouth of Patriarch Sergios. The prayer asks that the emperor—who had won a divinely ordained victory and banished the sin of the Persian fallacy from the world—and his two sons should now succeed in purging their souls of earthly passions and win a second, spiritual, victory. Finally, taking the form of a ring composition,

18 Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 225-230; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 240-247. See Frendo, "The Poetic Achievement", pp. 180-81; Drijvers, "Heraclius and the Restitutio Crucis", pp. 181-86; Whitby, "George of Pisidia's Presentation of the Emperor Heraclius", pp. 161-62; Rey, "La Croix et le dragon", pp. 610-17. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier*, pp. 357-63, is of the opinion that the surviving text is merely a sketch for a poem which the poet may or may not have subsequently completed.

19 Ed. Gonnelli, *Esamerone*, pp. 116-242; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 310-422.

20 Cf. *Hexaemeron* 598-625. See Gonnelli, "Le parole del cosmo", pp. 411-22.

21 On the combining of an apophatic theology relating to the nature of God with secular theories on the nature of the universe, see Nodes, "Rhetoric and Cultural Synthesis", pp. 274-87.

the poem ends as it begins with the poet addressing his ecclesiastical patron, the patriarch.<sup>22</sup> George brings together here an impressive knowledge of cosmology, astronomy, zoology and medicine.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it must have been the theological, philosophical and scientific information about the universe, mankind and his anatomy, animals,<sup>24</sup> plants, herbs and their curative properties contained in the poem, that made the *Hexaemeron* so popular in the Byzantine era and during the Renaissance. It is the only one of George's poems that has come down to us in 50 manuscripts. Due to its edifying character, it was translated early on into Armenian (8th/9th century) and later into Slavonic (13th/14th century).<sup>25</sup> The rest of his poems have survived in relatively few manuscripts, most probably due to their ephemeral historico-political nature.<sup>26</sup>

The long poem *Against Severus*,<sup>27</sup> which George also wrote during the 630s, most likely having been commissioned to do so by the patriarch or the emperor, is a sort of dogmatic pamphlet in support of state ideology and its goal of reinstating religious unity in the empire. This was to be done by converting the monophysite populations of the key provinces of Egypt and Syria, which Herakleios had liberated from Persian occupation, to Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Despite the poet's modest affirmations that he was inadequate to the task due to his lack of a theological training, his detailed knowledge of the patristic texts comes out very clear, for he enlists the views of authoritative theologians to rebut the arguments of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch (d. 538) and his monophysite followers, who rejected the dual nature (divine and human) of Christ.

The meditative poem *On the Vanity of Life*,<sup>28</sup> in 261 lines, deals with the struggle of the individual, and thus of the poet himself, to transcend the passions and arrogance most of all. Even if the prudent man does succeed in vanquishing all his internal vices, the one passion that is hardest to rein in is the vain conceit born of fleeting happiness and transient glory, for both block the

22 On the final part of the poem and the interpretational and chronological issues it raises, see Whitby, "The Devil in Disguise", pp. 115–29 and Gonnelli, "Sulla datazione dell'Esamerone", pp. 113–42 (both include exhaustive discussions of the earlier bibliography).

23 See Bianchi, "Note sulla cultura", pp. 137–43, and Bianchi, "Sulla cultura astronomica", pp. 35–52.

24 See Gonnelli, "Il bestiario esamerale", pp. 105–32, and Tartaglia, "L'excursus zoologico", pp. 41–57.

25 On the manuscript tradition of the text and its two translations, see Gonnelli, *Esamerone*, pp. 17–42.

26 On their manuscript transmission, see Pertusi, *Panegirici*, pp. 49–67.

27 *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 92, cols. 1621–76; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 262–306. For an exhaustive analysis of the poem, see MacCoull, "George of Pisidia, Against Severus", pp. 70–77; see also Taragna, "Les apparences sont trompeuses", pp. 134–37.

28 *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 92, cols. 1581–1600; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 428–45.



workings and instability of fate from his sight. George deals with the same subject in *On Human Life*,<sup>29</sup> a shorter poem of 90 lines written in hexameter verse in accordance with the sophisticated rules laid down by Nonnos, the poet of the first half of the 5th century who remained a major influence. A number of motifs and metaphors from the previous work reappear in this technically masterful poem in which George combines the epic with the didactic,<sup>30</sup> to speak both of the vanity of human ambition and pride and the struggle of Reason against the forces of evil.

The poem *On Alypius*,<sup>31</sup> which is addressed to a monk or cleric friend, is a *unicum* in George's poetry. The first section (lines 1–103) teases its subject, not without sympathy, for his physical appearance and deformity, while the second half of the poem (lines 104–21) surprises by praising him for the excellence of his character. By balancing the invective aimed at Alypius' body with the encomium directed at his soul, the poem manages to be amusing even to its "victim", since it in no way detracts from his moral excellence.

Finally, George also wrote 115 mostly short epigrams<sup>32</sup> referring to pictorial scenes from the life of Christ, to saints, martyrs and Church Fathers, to religious and secular buildings, as well as to various contemporary figures (primarily to the patriarch and the emperor). The secular (erotic, sympotic, and generally pagan) themes of the epigrams in the cycle by Agathias and Paul the Silentiary (6th century), are exercises in literary style, and remained oriented towards the Hellenistic epigram tradition, which portrayed neither the real life of their era nor the poets' feelings and beliefs. Those of George now give way to religious subject-matter imbued with genuine Christian feeling. Most of George's epigrams were destined to be (or could have been) used for some practical purpose, as inscriptions in works of art or buildings, and on the title page or colophon of books. Apart from three written in hexameter, George's epigrams are written in iambic trimeter, marking a turning point in the history of a literary genre which had until then mainly been written in classicizing elegiacs and dactylic hexameters. The subject-matter, function and metre of

29 Ed. Gonnelli, "Il De vita humana", pp. 118–38; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 448–55. Whitby, "A Learned Spiritual Ladder?", pp. 435–57, provides an excellent analysis of the poem.

30 Whitby, "A Learned Spiritual Ladder?", p. 457: "[The poem] engages in a confrontational manner with earlier hexameter poetry, and seeks to unite the genres of epic and didactic".

31 Ed. Sternbach, "Georgii Pisidae carmina", pp. 1–4; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 458–65. On this poem, see Taragna, "Riso e scherno in Giorgio di Pisidia", pp. 179–206.

32 Ed. Sternbach, "Georgii Pisidae carmina", pp. 16–18; id., "Georgii Pisidae carmina II", pp. 51–68; Tartaglia, *Carmi*, pp. 468–505. See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 180–83, 334–37.

George's epigrams would henceforth serve as a binding model for Byzantine epigrammatic poetry.<sup>33</sup>

## 2 George's Poetic Idiom

The self-conscious manner in which the poetic ego frequently features in George's longer compositions is noteworthy, not just because it makes it clear that it is the poet himself addressing the poem's intended recipient, but also because George often talks about himself and his views on art. He sometimes presents his poem as a talking boat, a small and slow-moving boat of words,<sup>34</sup> which is finding it hard or impossible to cross the endless sea of the emperor's military accomplishments. Elsewhere, the rhetorical *topos* of humility obliges him to describe his poems as 'mumblings',<sup>35</sup> though not without a measure of delicate irony. When reciting the *Persian Expedition*, he did not miss the opportunity to describe his epic encomiastic composition as an expedition (στρατηγίας *Pers. Exp.* 1 40) of a different sort from the emperor's, given that it was conducted using the weapons of poetry. In doing so, he was discretely expressing both a personal ambition and a veiled pride in the difficult task he dared to undertake. Elsewhere, his self-referential declarations take the form of brief comments on his conscious choice to diverge from a narrative line when he considered it essential, or to justify his embarrassment at the choices he had to make in order to relate a large number of significant events.<sup>36</sup> When, finally, the poet expresses his personal feelings,<sup>37</sup> his goal is less confessional

33 In addition to the above poems George also wrote—c.632, on commission for the Patriarch Sergius—a prose laudation of the Persian martyr Anastasios, who had died in 628. In this piece the poet reworked the *Acts* of the martyr in an elevated style (Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse*, vol. 1, pp. 202–59). On the dating and nature of this text, see Flusin, *ibid.*, pp. 191–97; Whitby, “George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word”, pp. 177–81; Rey, “La Croix et le dragon”, pp. 617–20.

34 *Persian Expedition* 3.381 (μικρῶ καὶ βραδυδρόμῳ σκάφει [cf. *Heraclias* 2.153; καίπερ ὦν βραδυγράφος]); *Avar War* 129, and *On the Vanity of Life* 37 (λαλοῦσαν ὀλκάδα); *On the Persian Martyr Anastasius* 14.1 (p. 221 Flusin: τὸ σκάφος τῶν λόγων). On the imagery of the boat, see Whitby, “George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word”, p. 182.

35 *Against Severus* 255: ἄκουε λοιπὸν τῶν ἐμῶν ψελισμάτων.

36 See e.g. *Persian Expedition* 1.100–03, 166–69 and 2.6–7; *Avar War* 125–29, 413–16; *Heraclias* 1.221–41, 153–60 etc.

37 See, for instance, the fear that seizes the poet-onlooker as he watches a fictive battle staged as training for the campaign (*Persian Expedition* 2.122–52). On this passage, see also Taragna, “Les apparences sont trompeuses”, pp. 124–25.

than motivated by a desire to elicit a corresponding emotional response from his audience or readers.

George wrote his poems in quantitative iambic trimeters, the metre of ancient drama.<sup>38</sup> Using fewer resolved (or divided) syllables over time, his verse came to be restricted to a more or less fixed number of 12 syllables. At the same time, he was the first to systematically apply accentual rules at key points in the verse, regulating the stress accent at both the end of the verse (where he displays an increasing preference for paroxytonic endings) and in the syllables before the caesura, which increasingly serves as a syntactic as well as a metrical pause.<sup>39</sup> The strict observance of prosody, for which he has rightly been hailed the last of the classics,<sup>40</sup> reveals his desire not to diverge from the poetic tradition, which considered only a prosodic verse to be 'metrical', while his accentual decisions bear witness to a new approach, which served the communicational function of a poetry destined primarily for public performance. Our poet had no qualms about experimenting with the poetic tradition to create a metre convenient for post-classical Greek pronunciation, which no longer made quantitative distinctions in its vowel sounds.

George broke new ground in extending the use of this new type of iambic trimeter (which we usually call the Byzantine dodecasyllable) to epic encomia, too, which until then had been written in hexameter in order to praise emperors and local rulers in both East and West.<sup>41</sup> Since the iambic is closer to the spoken language in both rhythmic and lexical terms, it contributes significantly to making the recited verses comprehensible to a broader audience. This contrasts with the demanding hexameter, which only the highly educated were able to appreciate and enjoy; indeed, until the 6th century, it had been customary to add an iambic prologue to both panegyric and descriptive poems of various lengths. As has been argued,<sup>42</sup> George created a new type of epic panegyric: on the one hand, he adapted elements of the rhetorical tradition of the *Basilikos logos*, as this had been codified by the Menander Rhetor;<sup>43</sup> on the other, he employed and developed the laudatory and narrative elements

38 On Euripides as the most likely metrical model for George, see Whitby, "Michael Psellus", section v (nn. 90, 95).

39 On George's metre, see Maas, "Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber", pp. 280, 285–86, 321; Pertusi, *Panegirici*, 43–45; Lampsidis, "Σχόλια", pp. 244–63; Romano, "Teoria e prassi", pp. 1–22; Lauxtermann, "The Velocity", pp. 9–33; id., "Some Remarks", pp. 182–87.

40 See Pertusi, *Panegirici*, p. 11.

41 With the sole exception of a few, usually unmetrical, iambic encomia to local notables and officials by Dioscoros of Aphrodito (late 6th century). See Fournet, *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte*, vol. 1, pp. 278–83, 286–88.

42 See Frenco, "The Poetic Achievement", pp. 162–66.

43 Ed. Russell/Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, pp. 76–94.

found *in nuce* in the iambic prologues prefixed by Paul the Silentiary in the middle of the previous century in his *Description of St Sophia*.<sup>44</sup> However, it must be stressed that in his imperial encomia, George places human conflicts in a broader cosmic context,<sup>45</sup> and accentuates the profound metaphysical significance of the dedicatee's achievements for the Christian *oecumene*.<sup>46</sup> These two elements broaden the perspective of his epic encomia and clearly differentiate them from the panegyric poems of his predecessors in Late Antiquity.<sup>47</sup>

George's highbrow poetry is written in the literary *Koine* with a tendency towards the Attic purity. The poet makes frequent use of rare words drawn directly or indirectly from the poetic tradition,<sup>48</sup> but also coins his own compound adjectives. A good deal of these compounds figure in the work of later poets, for whom George served as a constant and inexhaustible source of inspiration and material to be emulated. Although he generally makes sparing use of Hellenized Latin administrative terms, he manifests a clear preference for words which, used exclusively in prose until then, were mainly borrowed from the medical sphere,<sup>49</sup> which also inspired a number of original metaphors in his work.<sup>50</sup>

George breathed new life into the vocabulary, but also the imagery, of poetry. Apart from the traditional rhetorical figures—rhyming, alliteration, parallelism, repetition, hyperbaton, asyndeton—he also makes noteworthy use of inspired word-play: puns, antitheses, and imaginative oxymora of every sort, which reveal his technical mastery. His highly figurative and frequently allusive style is further enriched with complex similes, unique for their length and elaborate structure, which he goes on to interweave with abstract ideas, transforming them into metaphors in the process.<sup>51</sup> His vibrantly original images

44 Ed. De Stefani, *Paulus Silentiarius*, pp. 1–7.

45 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, p. 26.

46 Whitby, "A New Image", p. 218.

47 On the encomiastic poetry of Late Antiquity, see Viljamaa, *Studies*; Pertusi, *Panegyrici*, pp. 32–37.

48 It may well be that the poet was not familiar with all the authors at first hand and drew words and phrases from lexicons, handbooks and anthologies such as Stobaios.

49 On George's language, see Pertusi, *Panegyrici*, pp. 39–43. On the unusually frequent use of medical vocabulary, see Frenzo, "The Significance of Technical Terms", pp. 45–55, and id., "Special Aspects", pp. 49–56.

50 See, for instance, *Persian Expedition* 2.191–200 and *Heraclias* 2.41–48, in which the emperor's decisive influence on his army and his people is illustrated using a medical metaphor.

51 See Frenzo, "The Poetic Achievement", p. 184: "expressions belonging to the first half of the simile are inserted into the second half in the form of an explanatory, often allegorizing, metaphor, so that some highly concrete and pictorial expression reappears in association with some more or less abstract idea". See also *ibid.*, pp. 185–86, in which a simile of this type is analyzed (*Persian Expedition* 1.227–38).

never become clichéd; when he reuses them, he always amends and adapts them to their new context to express or evoke a range of different moods. His frequent use of maxims, either his own or drawn from existing gnomological collections, imparts a slightly didactic tone to his work.

A remarkable feature of George's poetic idiom is the daring fusion of classical and biblical imagery, which bears ample witness to his erudition. His extraordinary ability to combine disparate elements into a new and unexpected whole is revealed, for instance, in the way he shapes the image of Herakleios. Instead of bedecking him with resounding laudatory epithets, he uses the well-known rhetorical device of *synkrisis*, drawing frequent parallels between the emperor and figures from Greek mythology (chiefly Hercules, but also Perseus, Orpheus, and Jason), but also with carefully selected biblical figures (Moses, Elijah, Noah, and Daniel). But what may make the greatest impression of all is the fact that he often uses a biblical figure to complete a comparison he has drawn between the emperor and a mythical hero.<sup>52</sup> These elaborate comparisons—particularly his use of Herculean imagery, for obvious reasons—appear frequently in both his laudatory poetry and in poems with religious and ethical themes, though George reworks the details to create a different effect each time. He uses the same technique when constructing the image of the emperor's diametric opposites, albeit in a more unadorned and less nuanced way, such as Phokas the tyrant, Khusro, human passions, the physical or spiritual foe. In other words, elements against whom Herakleios waged war and was victorious, or against which Man must forever pit himself. These are compared almost exclusively with mythic beasts: the Gorgon, for instance, or Scylla and Charybdis. It should be noted that the language and imagery are the same in his religious poems.

### 3 George's *Nachleben*

The new type of iambic trimeter pioneered by George would prove a fecund and exceptionally durable model for the bulk of Byzantine occasional and epigrammatic poetry. In the 11th century, Michael Psellos made it clear that he considered George a model for the writing of iambic verses when he dedicates an essay to comparing the versification of George and Euripides, in which he

52 On George's use of *synkrisis*, see Whitby, "A New Image", pp. 205–16. As she herself notes (*ibid.*, pp. 205–206), the comparisons with the great generals of the past (Alexander the Great, for example) are of a different type, in so far as they are made purely to stress the Byzantine emperor's unquestionable superiority.

praises, among many other things, the fine rhythm of the later poet's verse.<sup>53</sup> Byzantine school textbooks on metre and rhetoric often cite George as an example of the correct use of the iambic, but also as a model for rhetorical forms and succinct expression,<sup>54</sup> whose rules were not infrequently exemplified using lines from his work. Moreover, a number of his verses were considered memorable and were included in Byzantine lexica and gnomological collections: works which poets and prose writers used to enrich and enhance their style. But it was not only his metre: the imagery, vocabulary and tone of George's poems would also impact in multiple ways on Byzantine encomiastic and religious poetry.<sup>55</sup> His most faithful emulator was perhaps Theodosios the Deacon, who wrote a long laudatory poem (in five recitations) *On the Sack of Crete* (961),<sup>56</sup> though he does not scale the heights of his model. Another prolific poet, Manuel Philes, in a display of virtuosity, addressed a supplicatory poem<sup>57</sup> to the emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos which, as he openly admitted, imitated both the style and diction of George's *Hexaemeron*. The shift in epigrammatic poetry initiated by George towards Christian subject-matter, and the use of the genre in various types of inscriptions, would impact decisively on its subsequent history. During and after the so-called Dark Ages and the turbulent era of iconoclasm, poets as well-regarded as Theodore the Stoudite would adopt the features of this new type of epigram, and help establish it by expanding its use to new contexts. This multi-level renewal of poetry undertaken by George can thus be seen as a daring leap into the future, from Late Antiquity into the era in which Byzantium started to resemble Byzantium.

53 See Lauxtermann, "The Velocity", pp. 28–33; Whitby, "Michael Psellus", section iv. Psellos' final verdict remains uncertain, as his text has come down to us in a single, badly worn manuscript. On its restoration and interpretation, which poses a number of serious issues, see Kambylis' excellent corrections: "Michael Psellos' Schrift über Euripides und Pisides", pp. 203–15 and id., "Michael Psellos' Schrift Τίς ἐστὶ χιλιε κρεῖττον", pp. 135–49.

54 See, for instance, the treatise of Ps.-Gregory of Corinth (13th century), *On the Four Parts of the Perfect Speech* (ed. Hörandner, p. 108, lines 162–63: ἐχεις ἀρχέτυπον τὸν Πισίδην), in which George is set out as model of succinct argumentation (τὸ ἐνθυμηματικόν). This passage was also reproduced verbatim by Joseph Rhakendytes (13th/14th century) in his *Synopsis of Rhetoric* (ed. Walz, p. 562, lines 10–11). See Hörandner, "Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik der Byzantiner", pp. 287–89.

55 See e.g. Taragna, "Sulla fortuna di Giorgio di Pisidia", p. 310, n. 11.

56 On George's influence, see Panagiotakis, *Θεοδόσιος ὁ Διάκονος*, pp. 17–23; Criscuolo, "Aspetti", pp. 76–77. On the generic features of the poem in which Theodosios, taking George as his model, combines the historical epic with the imperial laudation, see Andriollo, "Il De Creta capta", pp. 31–56.

57 Martini, *Manuelis Philae carmina inedita*, pp. 2–9.

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## Monasticism and Iconolatry: Theodore Stoudites

*Kristoffel Demoen*

I send you a small book and fourteen quaternions, containing discourses and Lives of our brothers in verse. Read them yourself, let them read by some of the trustworthy brothers, and then hide them in a safe place. Nothing of my writings, brother, is worth mentioning. But since I have spare time and since my holy father spurs me on to do so, and moreover listening to the divine Paul who says to the holy Timothy “do not neglect the gift that is in you” (1Tim 4:14), I do what I do, being unworthy, “with fear and trembling” (2Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5; Phil 2:13).<sup>1</sup>

This is a passage from one of Theodore Stoudites’ many letters to his favorite disciple Naukratios. It was written in 818, when Theodore was exiled for the third time from Constantinople, now for his anti-iconoclastic stance. This explains the clandestine character of the metrical biographies of his fellow monks, probably confessors of iconolatry. Theodore’s modesty, wrapped in explicit and implicit Pauline phrasings, conceals the pride of a man who clearly considered himself a gifted poet; as apparently did his “holy father”, the abbot Plato (who died in 814). Naukratios must have hidden the poems safely indeed, since they are lost to us, along with several other poetical works of Theodore.<sup>2</sup>

### 1 Theodore, Iconoclasm and the Dark Ages

Theodore was born from noble offspring in 759 in Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> His childhood and youth elapsed at the height of the first iconoclastic period under

1 *Ep.* 405 (Ναυκρατίῳ τέκνῳ), ll. 28–34: Ἀπέσταλκά σοι βιβλιδάκιον καὶ τετράδας δεκατέσσαρας, ἐφ’ οἷς εἰσι λόγοι καὶ βίοι τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐμμέτροις στίχοις· ἄπερ ἀναγνοὺς αὐτὸς τε καὶ τινες τῶν πιστῶν ἀδελφῶν ἀσφαλῶς κατὰκρυψον. οὐδὲν οὖν ποιῶ, ἀδελφέ, ἄξιον λόγου· ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ εὐκαιρῶ καὶ ἐπειδὴ νύσσομαι ὡς ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου μου πατρὸς, ἀκούων τε πάλιν τοῦ θείου Παύλου λέγοντος τῷ ἁγίῳ Τιμοθέῳ, μὴ ἀμέλει τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος, ὡς ἀνάξιός μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου ποιῶ ἅ ποιῶ.

2 Theodore’s lost poems are listed in Speck, “Parerga”, pp. 30–33.

3 The major biographical sources are Theodore’s own works (especially his more than 550 letters) and the *Vitae* preserved in four versions, the oldest of which (*Vita B* by the

the rulers Constantine V and Leo IV. Around 780, the year of Leo's death and succession by his wife Irene, he accepted the tonsure. Along with his next of kin he founded the monastery of Sakkoudion on a family estate in Bithynia. His maternal uncle, Plato, spiritual leader of the clan, was its first abbot; the young Theodore became co-abbot in 794. After his return to the capital in 799 he became abbot of the important Stoudiou monastery. He was banished three times from Constantinople, twice (in 797 and 809–811) as the result of his opposition to the emperor and the patriarch in the so-called moechian affair (the "adulterous" marriage of Constantine VI), and again after the synod of 815, following the reinstatement of iconoclasm under Leo V. He died on the island of Prinkipo in 826.

Theodore's life and works are marked by two constants: monastic life and the iconoclastic controversy. As an abbot of Stoudiou he was very active, as appears notably from his *Catecheses*: two collections of rules and admonitions dealing with all aspects of monastic life. In the footsteps of Basil the Great, he was a major reformer of coenobitic monachism. At the same time he was one of the champions of icon veneration, along with John Damascene and his contemporary the patriarch Nikephoros. He wrote several treatises against iconoclasm, formulating the orthodox icon doctrine.<sup>4</sup> Monachism and iconoclasm are related factors (the majority of the monks were partisans of icon veneration), and they are also prominent in Theodore's poetry, as we shall see.

Theodore's life not only bridges the two phases of Byzantine iconoclasm but a large part of it also coincides with the so-called "Dark Ages" (from the end of the 7th to the beginning of the 9th centuries), a period with a marked decline of (preserved) artistic and literary production in Constantinople. The correlation between the two more or less contemporary phenomena is a much debated issue.<sup>5</sup> Most modern scholars no longer accept a causal relationship, as had once been accepted, partly under the influence of the Byzantine sources. These are almost exclusively iconophile and hence biased against the iconoclasts, who

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otherwise unknown Michael the Monk) was written about half a century after Theodore's death. Excellent modern studies to start: Fatouros, *Epistulae*, pp. 3\*–20\*, Karlin-Hayter, "A Byzantine Politician Monk"; and Kazhdan, *Byzantine Literature*, pp. 235–57. Recent monographs by Pratsch, *Theodoros Studites*; and Cholij, *Theodore the Stoudite*, pp. 3–78.

- 4 Discussions of Theodore's iconophile doctrine: Henry, "The Formulators"; Parry, *Depicting the Word*; and Roth, *On the Holy Icons*. The completest overview of Theodore's writings is in Fatouros, *Epistulae*, pp. 21\*–38\*.
- 5 Sober summaries in Mango, *Oxford History*, notably in chapters 6, "Iconoclasm" (by Karlin-Hayter) and 8, "The Revival of Learning" (by Mango himself). A survey of the sources on the iconoclast era is in Brubaker/Haldon/Ousterhout, and a full history is in Brubaker/Haldon.

are presented as uncultivated barbarians; the opposite was equally the case, as far as we can judge, from the rare iconoclastic texts that survived. One good reason not to see a causal relationship is the fact that the “Dark Ages” do not completely coincide with the “Age of Iconoclasm”. The absence of a secular literary culture and the apparent lack of a broad intelligentsia in Byzantium, started well before the advent of iconoclasm under Leo III around 730; and the first indications of a cultural revival appear by the end of the 8th century, long before the final liquidation of iconoclasm by the empress Theodora (843). Moreover, it has been convincingly argued that the elementary education of grammar, rhetoric and philosophy had never completely come to a halt.<sup>6</sup>

In order to understand and assess Theodore’s poetry correctly, along with its place in the literary history of Byzantium, it is necessary to keep in mind this undeniable fallback in the secular culture at the period of his birth, as well as the role of literacy in the mutual polemics of the iconoclast controversy.

## 2 Secular Poetry in Theodore’s Education and Works

*Vita B* briefly states that the young Theodore completed the traditional *trivium* of grammar, dialectics (“which the specialists call philosophy”) and rhetoric, while the longer *Vita A* gives more details. Theodore is said to have been a diligent student of pagan culture (παιδείας τῆς θύραθεν ἤπτετο σπουδῆ). The study of grammar “purified his Greek language”; he paid much attention to poetry, “of which he did not accept the mythical, but only the useful aspects” (οὐ τὸ μυθῶδες, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὠφέλιμον κατασχών). He had the same critical attitude when studying rhetoric: he “did not adopt the character of the rhetoricians”, avoiding their lies and empty discourses, again picking what was useful. Similarly, while frequenting the philosophers he behaved like a honeybee sucking the nectar from all kinds of flowers.<sup>7</sup> This whole description of Theodore’s secular education is absolutely conventional, including the trite metaphor of the bee (φιλόπονος μέλιττα).<sup>8</sup> The critical detachment towards pagan learning is surely a hagiographical *topos*, and the tripartite curriculum itself may be a reflection of the educational system of the time of the biographer, rather than

6 The classic study is Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme*; see also Hörandner, “Éléments de rhétorique”; and Criscuolo, “Iconoclasmo e letteratura”.

7 *Vita B* § 3 (PG 99, 237B); *Vita A* § 2–3 (PG 99, 117C–120B).

8 See Karlin-Hayter, “Où l’abeille butine”.

that of Theodore's actual schooling.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the information on his studies is very general, lacking such specifics as those we get in Ignatios the Deacon's *Life of Tarasios*, written around the middle of the 9th century. In its epilogue we learn that Tarasios—who had ordained Theodore around 780 but became, as a patriarch, temporarily his adversary in the moechian affair—had taught Ignatios—whom we will meet again as an opponent of Theodore in the iconoclast controversy—the ancient poetic forms, notably iambic trimetre, trochaic and anapaestic tetrametre, and dactylic verse.<sup>10</sup> This precise discussion of the metrical training is confirmed by the poetic oeuvre transmitted under Ignatios' name, which is far more diverse and influenced by classical learning than Theodore's.

Theodore himself does not speak about his education, nor does he mention his poetic predecessors or sources explicitly; inferences have to be made from his works. The opinions on the extent of his literary culture are divergent, ranging from characterizations of Theodore as a cultivated man inserting mythological allusions in his writings,<sup>11</sup> to a polygraph with neither great intellectual skills nor a broad profane erudition.<sup>12</sup> As often, the truth lies somewhere in between.

In several letters, Theodore underlines that the defenders of iconolatry have to employ grammar, eloquence (rhetoric) and dialectic (philosophy), as do their opponents.<sup>13</sup> This is clearly a reflection of the traditional tripartite education also mentioned in the *Vitae*. Indeed, Theodore's doctrinal disputations are imbued with (probably indirect) influence from the Aristotelian tradition, both in the use of grammatical and rhetorical technical terms and in the logical style of argumentation.<sup>14</sup> There are, then, undeniable traces of secular learning in Theodore's writings, at least of technical and formal disciplines. How about classical literature and poetry?

9 The role of secular literature in 8th-century education is unclear. Since the pioneering studies of Irigoien (e.g. "Survie et renouveau") and Lemerle, there is a tendency to accept a continuous practice during the Dark Ages, with an elementary training based on the ancients. Yet Moffatt, "Schooling", suggests that the school canon then consisted of biblical and Christian texts, rather than Homer and Demosthenes.

10 Eftymiadis, *The Life*, § 69 with pp. 39 and 247. For a brief overview and an assessment of Ignatios' poetry, see Baldwin, *Anthology*, pp. 134–35.

11 E.g. Hörandner, "Éléments de rhétorique", p. 298.

12 E.g. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme*, p. 123 and Criscuolo, "Iconoclasmo e letteratura", p. 211.

13 Ep. 49, ll. 2–14; ep. 445, ll. 11–21; ep. 528, ll. 38–64; ep. 546, ll. 10–12.

14 See Demoen, "Culture et rhétorique", pp. 333–46.

The *index locorum* in Fatouros' edition of the letters includes passages from Plato and Demosthenes, Homer and Aristophanes, Aeschylus and Euripides.<sup>15</sup> This seems to imply at least a familiarity, if not a direct acquaintance, with the great classical authors. Yet appearances can be deceptive. Patricia Karlin-Hayter has formulated reservations to many of the alleged references, which she has demonstrated to be proverbial expressions that had become part of the vocabulary of any educated person.<sup>16</sup> She accepts only four passages in the entire letter corpus as directly alluding to ancient literature. Two passages from the *Odyssey* might each be alluded to twice: Penelope's anxious question "is he still alive? Does he see the light of the sun?" (*Od.* 4.833), and the episode of Odysseus appearing naked before Nausicaa (*Od.* 6.127–40). I think we have to reduce that number even further: the allusions to the former verse are vague and implicit at most.<sup>17</sup> The latter case is more interesting since Theodore mentions the Homeric hero twice by name. In a flattering letter to a friend he states that "whoever is clad in virtue is richer than all men, as is made clear by those who tell the story of Odysseus saved from shipwreck, naked".<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in the consolatory part of a letter to the *spatharios* Eudokimos, distressed by many afflictions including confiscation, he says that Eudokimos' knowledge and rhetorical skills (γνώσις and γλώσσα) cannot be taken away:

When someone has these gifts, he is worth more, in the eyes of a sensible person, than those with enormous fortunes, even if he is dressed in rags. This has not only been demonstrated by the whole chorus of the just, but also, among the pagans, by the famous Odysseus who was, after his shipwreck, seen naked by the princess.<sup>19</sup>

The reference to the Odyssean story is indisputable, but is it also a textual allusion reflecting a ready knowledge of the Homeric verses themselves? The only verbal link between the letters and the text of the *Odyssey* is the word γυμνός (*Od.* 6.136), and the allegorical interpretation of the scene had become

15 Fatouros, *Epistulae*, pp. 973–78.

16 Karlin-Hayter, "Où l'abeille butine", pp. 105–08.

17 *Ep.* 431, l. 35 and *Ep.* 447, ll. 28–29.

18 *Ep.* 161, ll. 13–15: ὁ γάρ τοι τὴν ἀρετὴν ἠμφιεσμένος πλουσιώτερος πάντων, ὡς πού τὸν Ὀδυσσεύα ἱστοροῦντες ἐκ ναυαγίου γυμνὸν περισωθέντα φάναι τάδε.

19 *Ep.* 527, ll. 25–29: ὃ, εἴ τις κέκτηται, τῶν ἀγὰν πολυουσιῶν αἰρετώτερός ἐστι τῷ νοῦν ἔχοντι, κἂν βακίους μόνον ἀμπεχόμενος. καὶ τοῦτο δέδειχε σύμπας μὲν ὁ τῶν δικαίων χορός, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔξωτερικοῖς προσώποις ὁ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐκείνους, ἐκ ναυαγίου γυμνὸς ὄφθεις τῇ βασιλίδι.



traditional. There are, notably, two passages in the poems of Gregory of Nazianzus in which the naked Odysseus is presented as a paradigm of virtue. Remarkably, the passages from Theodore's letters show much closer parallels with their phrasing than with the Homeric original.<sup>20</sup> The odds are that the popular pagan *exemplum* was known to Stoudites from the Christian reception rather than from its original Homeric version, especially given his undisputable acquaintance with Gregory the Theologian, as we shall see below. All in all, ancient literature has barely left any traces in Theodore's prose, and this picture will not change when we turn to his poetry.

### 3 The Poetic Oeuvre of Theodore

Ever since Karl Krumbacher, who discussed Stoudites in his chapter on "Profanpoesie", it has often been said that Theodore has revived the great tradition of the Greek literary epigram, or that he was the first representative of the renaissance of secular poetry after the Dark Ages.<sup>21</sup> This reputation, which needs to be seriously qualified, is mainly based on his "iambos on various subjects", a collection of epigrams which will be a major focus of attention in this chapter too.

Theodore's poetic oeuvre falls apart in two clearly distinct groups. His name is linked, sometimes erroneously, with a large production of liturgical poetry in rhythmical verse (canons, stichera and *kontakia*), much of which is not available in modern editions. Besides, he has written epigrams in prosodial metre (most probably only iambs), namely the collection mentioned above and poems against iconoclasm.

Before presenting this oeuvre, a preliminary remark on literature and *Gebrauchstexte* is required. As we shall see, most, if not all, poems by Theodore could be labeled occasional poetry: they were written for specific use, mostly in the liturgy or as inscriptions, and not meant for publication, nor for reading or declamation in learned circles. This does, of course, not imply that they

20 1.2.10, vv. 401–06 (*PG* 37.709) and 2.2.5, vv. 208–13 (*PG* 37.1536). The first poem in particular is likely to have directly inspired Theodore: Οὐ γὰρ δοκεῖ σοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἐκφυγῶν | Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐκείνος, οὐ τὰ πόλλ' ἀβλήματα, | ὄφθεις ἀλήτης τῆ βασιλίδι καὶ γυμνός (...) εἶναι προδήλως τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐγκώμιον; (text from the 1995 edition by Crimi/Kertsch).

21 Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, pp. 712–15, § 295: "ihm gebührt vornehmlich das Verdienst, die in der dunkeln Zeit (...) in Vergessenheit geratene Kunst der Epigrammatik wieder ins Leben gerufen (...) zu haben." Similarly Mango, *Oxford History*, p. 224. Compare Baldwin, *Anthology*, p. 148.

are devoid of literary characteristics, such as stylistic embellishments and rhetorical strategies.<sup>22</sup> Byzantine poets usually display their literary ambition by the conscious adoption or manipulation (*imitatio* and *variatio*)<sup>23</sup> of the tradition in which they want to inscribe themselves: generic *topoi*, metrical rules, often also the inclusion of ancient and/or mythological themes, quotations and allusions; the author of *Vita A*, as we have seen above, considered τὸ μῦθῶδες as clearly inherent to the poetry studied at school. We shall look for these features in Theodore's poetry too.

### 3.1 Liturgical Poetry

Towards the end of the *Vitae* (*A* §§ 103–14, *B* §§ 48–57), Michael the Monk relates a series of miracles and wonders performed by Theodore both during his life and posthumously, all duly reported by eyewitnesses. One of them happened in Sardinia.<sup>24</sup> A prelate who was fond of Theodore's writings, especially of his Lenten triodion, received some monks, who were disciples of Gregory of Syracuse. When they heard that Theodore's odes would be sung, they were not only surprised that these were known on the island, but also ridiculed the poems as awkward (σόλοικα) and uncultivated (ποιήματα οὐ κατὰ λόγον συντεθέντα παιδείας). As a result, the host decided to leave them aside for the service, but at night he was visited by a pale Theodore and some attendants. The latter whipped him and Theodore shouted: "Why do you despise my poems? The divine churches have passed them down everywhere as a source of gain. The heart is struck not by rhetorical bombast (κόμπος ῥημάτων) nor verbal chasing (λέξεων τορεία), but by humble speech (ταπεινὸς λόγος) composed for its usefulness (ὠφέλεια)." As he woke up with a start, the man sent away the monks and henceforth revered Theodore's poems again.

The anecdote is telling in several respects. It suggests that Stoudites' hymns gained a surprisingly quick and widespread popularity, but also that they met with criticism for their simple language. The poet himself—a rather resentful character in the story—is given a dream opportunity to explain that his plain style was a conscious choice. All of this seems credible. Theodore's canons, troparia and *kontakia* are all written in mainstream rhythmical verse; unlike some of his great predecessors in Byzantine hymnography—such as Andrew of Crete and John Damascene one century earlier—he appears not to have written canons in highbrow prosodical metre. And his hymns have indeed

22 See Garzya, "Testi letterari d'uso strumentale".

23 See for instance Rhoby/Schiffer, *Imitatio—Aemulatio—Variatio*.

24 Related both in *B* (§ 56, *PG* 99, 312C–313B, first-person narration) and, with rhetorical elaboration, *A* (§ 113, *PG* 99, 216B–217A).

found their way into the Greek ecclesiastical books, along with those of his brother Joseph of Thessalonike.<sup>25</sup>

Here are some samples: the proems (*koukoulia*) of the *kontakia* for Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>26</sup>

Τὰ θεόβρυτα  
τῆς λογικῆς σου κρήνης ρεῖθρα  
ὡσπερ ἄβυσσος  
ἐκ λογισμῶν βαθέων χέων,  
τοὺς ἀσεβοῦντας  
κατεπόντισας,  
Βασίλειε, καὶ στῦλος πυρὸς  
ὀρθοδοξίας λάμπων,  
μετάγεις ἡμᾶς  
ἐκ τῆς πλάνης Ἀρείου,  
ἱεράρχα  
ὁ πολυκαρτερώτατος·  
ἀλλὰ τῷ Κυρίῳ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν  
ἀδιαλείπτως ἰκέτευε.

The streams of your verbal well,  
streams flowing from God,  
as an abyss you let them flow  
from deep reasons,  
and doing so you have drowned  
the unfaithful, Basil,  
and as a fiery pillar  
of orthodoxy you are shining,  
thus leading us away  
from the deceit of Arius,  
oh hierarch,  
most enduring;

Τὰ σοφώτατα  
τῆς φλογερῆς σου γλώττης ἔπη  
ἀστραπτόμενα  
ἐκ τοῦ ἀόρητου φάους λάμπων,  
τὴν οἰκουμένην  
κατελάμπρυνας,  
Γρηγόριε, βροντίσας φρικτῶς  
τῆς Τριάδος τὸ δόγμα,  
καὶ πάσας ἀπριξ  
τάς αἱρέσεις μωράνας,<sup>27</sup>  
ἱεραρχῶν  
ὁ θεολογικώτατος·  
ἀλλὰ τὸν Κύριον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν  
ἀδιαλείπτως ἰκέτευε.

The words of your flaming tongue,  
most wise words,  
flashing you let them shine  
from the unspeakable light  
and doing so you have enlightened  
the whole world, Gregory,  
and you have thundered fearfully  
the dogma of the Trinity,  
thus convicting of folly  
absolutely all the heresies,  
oh among the hierarchs  
the most theological;

25 See Wolfram, "Der Beitrag". She concludes that Theodore's influence on the liturgical books was very important (p. 125). The religious poetry by Theodore and other authors of the "Dark Ages" is actually by far the largest part of the poetry written in this period. It has numerous problems of authorship, date, and textual transmission: see the chapter on Byzantine Hymnography by Antonia Giannouli, elsewhere in this volume.

26 Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, pp. 346, 351. On the Stoudite's position in the history of the *kontakion*, see Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 59–62.

27 Pitra unduly corrects this manuscript reading into *μαράνας*.

but supplicate the Lord on behalf  
of us  
incessantly.

but supplicate the Lord on behalf  
of us  
incessantly.

The two *koukoulia* follow the same metrical and musical scheme, the first mode (ἦχος α'). Yet the similarities go further: the argument follows the same lines, the syntax is almost identical, the refrain is the same, several expressions and images are interchangeable,<sup>28</sup> and both poems have analogous (incomplete) acrostics (τοῦ Στουδίτου and ἕσμα Στουδίτου respectively). Several of their characteristics are typical of hymnography in general, but it is clear that Theodore has developed his own template.<sup>29</sup> The same ideas, phrases and metaphors return in the other hymns: all Church and Desert Fathers are champions of Trinitarian orthodoxy, brave victors of heresies and demons, shining lights and streams of eloquence. And of course, they live up to their names: Basil is like a royal diadem (διάδημα βασιλειαῖον) and Gregory has a vigilant mind (ὁ νοῦς ὁ γρήγορος):<sup>30</sup> common puns in Byzantine sacred literature.

This is not to say that the individual traits of the specific saints are completely neglected. Gregory, for instance, is qualified as the greatest theologian of the Fathers, and said to surpass Plato and Aristotle in wisdom and eloquence.<sup>31</sup> The fourth stanza recalls his studies in Athens; the fifth and the ninth seem to allude to the opening scene of Gregory's second theological oration, where he compares his theological quest metaphorically with Moses' ascent of mount Tabor.<sup>32</sup> The seventh stanza probably refers to Gregory's dogmatic poems, thereby using images that appear to be taken again from his work.<sup>33</sup> Gregory's writings have also inspired the sixth stanza of Theodore's hymn for

28 To give but one example: like Basil (line 7) Gregory is also called "a fiery pillar of orthodoxy" (στύλος πυρὸς ὀρθοδοξίας) in the sixth stanza.

29 Compare the proem of the hymn for Athanasius, equally written in the first mode and glaringly cast in the same mould: *Τᾶ θεόφθογγα / τῆς ἐμμελοῦς σου γλωττῆς ρείθρα / πλουσιώτερα / τοῦ χρυσορρόα Νείλου βλύζων, / τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, / Ἀθανάσιε, / καταρδεύσας, / καὶ δείξας αὐτὴν ὡς παράδεισον ἄλλον, / καθεῖλες αὐτῆς τὰς τριβόλους αἰρέσεις, / ἱεράρχα, / ὁ πολυκαρτερώτατος· / ἀλλὰ τὸν Κύριον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν / ἀδιαλείπτως ἰκέτευε.* Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, p. 349.

30 Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, pp. 346, 369. Theodore is fond of the technique in all his works, often explicitly labeling it φερωνύμως ("as his name suggests"), e.g. in the *kontakion* on Euthymius: *Εὐθυμείτω φερωνύμως ἡ Σίων.*

31 Stanza 8, one of the extremely rare mentions of pagan authors in Theodore's entire oeuvre, in a tellingly vague and disparaging way ("Plato and Aristotle, of whom the childish Hellenes keep talking because of their great wisdom").

32 Ἄλλον Μωσέα σε / ἔγνωμεν, ἱεροφάντορ, / ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τῆς σεπτῆς θεολογίας / προβάντα εὐσεβῶς ... Compare Greg. Naz. Or. 28.2 (PG 36.28A): *Ἀνιόντι δέ μοι προθύμως ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος...*

33 Gregory's mouth is called "an instrument of the Holy Spirit", resonating with "dogmatic songs" (μελουργήμασι δογματικοῖς). Compare the opening lines of Greg. Naz. Or. 12.1

Basil, where he describes Basil's friendship with Gregory.<sup>34</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, Nazianzen's life and works were familiar to Theodore, and the same goes for the other great Fathers, certainly for Basil, the great example of Theodore as monastic ruler and as letter writer. No author is quoted more often in Theodore's correspondence than Basil; Gregory comes second, but, remarkably, Theodore quotes mainly if not exclusively from his prose.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.2 *Iambs on Various Subjects*

The most important collection of non-liturgical poetry by Theodore is transmitted under the title Ἰαμβοὶ εἰς διαφόρους ὑποθέσεις, and consists of some 130 short poems.<sup>36</sup> They were collected around the year 900, and most of them appear not to have circulated in manuscripts before that date. They were firstly inscribed epigrams; the final section of the collection seems to include some exceptions, as we will see. The collector and editor of the cycle, the Stoudite monk Dionysios,<sup>37</sup> has consciously arranged the poems, partly according to their geographical origin, one of the indications of their role as verse inscriptions. This epigraphic character is also suggested by the many deictic elements in the texts themselves, and by the titles that were added by the editor. Almost without exception these start with εἰς (or rarely ἐν), in twelve cases preceded by the label ἐπίγραμμα or ἐπιτάφιος.<sup>38</sup> The preposition εἰς has a triple, and sometimes ambiguous, meaning: it can indicate the subject of the poem ("about"), its addressee ("to") or its location ("inscribed on"), or have several

(PG 36, 844B): Ὁργανόν εἰμι θεῖον, (...) ὄργανον καλῶ τεχνίτη τῷ Πνεύματι ἀρμοζόμενον καὶ κρουόμενον.

34 Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, p. 348: ἐν σώμασι γὰρ δυοῖ / μία ψυχὴ ἐκράθη ἀμφοῖν ὑμῖν. Gregory uses the image of one soul in two bodies twice, precisely when discussing his friendship with Basil: *Or.* 43.20 and his autobiographical poem, 2.1.11, vv. 229–30.

35 See the *index locorum* in Fatouros, *Epistulae*, pp. 973–77. The only reference to Gregory's poems mentioned by Fatouros is a passage that was often (unduly) used in iconophile argumentation, see Demoen, "The Philosopher". It is probably no coincidence that the Gregorian parallels for Theodore's liturgical poetry (given in the previous notes) are also from the orations.

36 Edition with introduction, translation and commentary: Speck, *Jamben*. Several of the following observations go back to this exemplary study.

37 He is the author of an awkward hexametrical poem on Theodore that closes the collection in three of the most complete manuscripts of the iambs. It bears number 124 in Speck's edition. Dionysios identifies himself in the acrostic. The poem is an encomium on Theodore and his successor Anatolios, but gives no information on the origin or purpose of the collection of Theodore's poems.

38 Ἐπίγραμμα: 25, 48, 58, 97, 98, 102, 104, 105a, 105c, 105e, 111; ἐπιτάφιος: 105g. On the use of εἰς in the titles of poems in Byzantine manuscripts, with or without specification by terms such as ἐπίγραμμα, see Rhoby, "Labeling Poetry", pp. 273–74.

meanings at once. Poem 47 has a double title: “On the entrance of the church; on a cross” (Εἰς ναοῦ εἴσοδον· εἰς σταυρόν). It seems to have been written on or below the depiction of a cross at the entrance of a church (“on”); the cross is speaking (“about”); the church is addressed (“to”). Only two titles do not have the locative preposition: 123 (see below) and 103. The latter—advice to read carefully what is written on the walls (Πρὸς τὸ ἐπιμελῶς ἀναγιγνώσκειν τὰ ἐν τοῖς τοίχοις)—precisely confirms the inscriptional nature of many other texts.<sup>39</sup>

The primary purpose of most of Theodore’s iambic poems, then, was epigraphic: they were not meant to circulate in manuscripts. Dionysios’ anthology—more or less contemporary to the epigraphic exploit of Gregory of Kampsas and the epigram collection of Constantine Kephala<sup>40</sup>—gave the poems a second life. They now became a literary corpus, and a very popular one at that: more than 40 manuscripts contain (parts of) the iambs. As a result, they later got reused as inscriptions in churches or on objects<sup>41</sup> (thus fulfilling their primary function again), and in manuscripts (thus playing a new role as book epigrams, see below).

As said before, the occasional character of Theodore’s poems does not mean that they have no literary qualities. To begin with, the mastery of the artificial prosodical rules observed in his dodecasyllables (the metre he uses throughout in his non-liturgical poetry) presupposes a relatively high level of literary competence.<sup>42</sup> Besides, the conscious simplicity of Theodore’s language, syntax and vocabulary, aiming at clarity and naturalness, is paired with stylistic and rhetorical embellishments aiming at maximum effect. He is fond of puns on personal names, paronomasia, *figura etymologica* (these figures of speech are often combined<sup>43</sup>), and compounds, a remarkable part of which

39 “When passing by, read the parts that have inscriptions / for you should not overlook any divine word.” While not really proving that Theodore’s own poems were inscribed (the second verse suggests biblical texts), the poem does indicate that the walls of monasteries had texts meant to be read.

40 Stressed by Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 70–74 and 140–41. He also points to the telling fact that none of Theodore’s epigrams made it into the Palatine Anthology.

41 Poems 32, 46 and (part of) 52 have been epigraphically transmitted: Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, nos. GR52, IT5, TR47; cf. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 71.

42 On Theodore’s position in the development of the dodecasyllable: Maas, “Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber”, pp. 316–17; Speck, *Jamben*, pp. 70–87; Rhoby, “Vom jambischen Trimeter”, esp. pp. 123 and 142.

43 One explicit example is from a funerary epigram for a certain Eudokia, whose name, Theodore explains, was accorded by God “who was pleased (εὐδόκησεν) to have Eudokia fittingly bear this meaningful name (φερωνύμω τρόπῳ), since she was pleasing (εὐδόκηθῆϊσαν) by her excellent way of life” (116, vv. 4–6). Compare above, n. 30.

are neologisms or at least *hapax legomena*.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, there are also many figures of thought, such as (biblical) *exemplum*, paradox and antithesis. The opposition between darkness and light is a favourite of his.<sup>45</sup> Some poems (e.g. 117) have an acrostic.

Needless to say, none of these devices is surprising or innovative in a Byzantine poet. Theodore's verses show no ambition whatsoever to revive an interrupted tradition of highbrow poetry, as is clear from his exclusive choice of iambs, the simple and limpid style,<sup>46</sup> and the overall absence of intertextual references to ancient or late antique poets that might have been models for iambic poetry (tragedy, Gregory of Nazianzus, Pisides, to name but the most obvious candidates).

### 3.2.1 Survey

Within the corpus, one can distinguish several sections and subgenres. The first group consists of monastic epigrams related to the Stoudiou monastery. The opening poem appears to have been an inscription on a relic shrine of martyrs venerated at Stoudiou, the second on the monk's cell of Theodore himself, as appears from its title "On/in the cell of our father"; the titles are clearly given not by the poet but by the collector. Numbers 3 to 29, the large majority of which counts 9 or 12 verses, could be labeled miniature catecheses.<sup>47</sup> In most poems, the poet addresses one particular (anonymous) monk or group of monks, with a brief indication of the monastic function, some lines of paternal advice, and a mention of the heavenly remuneration that awaits the pious servant, often described with imagery taken from the sphere of the monk's tasks. A few poems of the series bear titles that indicate a location in the monastery (the dormitory in 20, the guest rooms in 29). These monastic epigrams, arguably the most personal and original part of Theodore's poems, were probably written on the walls of the monastery, where Dionysios could easily read and transcribe them. One typical example is poem 12, "On the cellarer":

44 See the word index of Speck, *Jamben*, pp. 315–34, and Trapp, *Zum Wortschatz* (on Theodore as arguably the most productive creator of neologisms in the Greek Middle Ages).

45 Poem 50, for instance, an inscription on a cross, is built around this opposition: "Cross, my light, shine for me all the time, and chase away the darkness of my soul".

46 Trypanis calls the language of Theodore's epigrams "workmanlike and simple": Trypanis, *Greek Poetry*, p. 447.

47 The manuscript tradition has the iambs typically follow Theodore's *Catecheses*. The many, often verbal, parallels between the works have been pointed out by Leroy, *Stouditisches Mönchtum*, the French original of which has only much later been published as part of De Montleau, *Théodore Stoudite*.

Who is like you, my child, as a worker of God?  
 Indeed, you have a task that exceeds by far that of the others,  
 since you are in charge of the food of the brotherhood.  
 Devote yourself completely to this care, with all your strength,  
 and give each one what he deserves with good judgment.  
 Accept the fiery burden of being much sought-after,  
 treating this one like this, another one like that,  
 mildly, quietly, with sympathy and compassion,  
 because doing so you will gain the crown with Stephanos.<sup>48</sup>

The word play in the last verse (οὕτως γὰρ ἔξεις σὺν Στεφάνῳ τὸ στέφος) is very common, Theodore uses it also in his poem for the monastery's steward (7.1) and in poem III, an epitaph for an unidentified Stephanos. It may seem rather gratuitous here, but it is in line with the implicit comparison of the hard monastic labour with the ordeals of the (proto-) martyr.

These protreptic epigrams are followed by a series of ten poems of unequal length (between 3 and 14 lines) on icons and iconolatry. Most deal with icons of Christ or the Theotokos, and use the traditional forms of ekphrastic epigrams: the depicted persons are speaking (36, 38, 39) or addressed (35, 37), or the poet explains the image to the spectators (30–34), stressing the legitimate character of the icon portraits. Deictic elements suggest once again that the poems were inscribed on icons or frescoes. Moreover, the longer poems in particular also offer a theology of the icon in a nutshell, with echoes from Theodore's prose treatises on the same issue. Poem 30, "On the holy icons", is a case in point:

The image that you are looking at, is the image of Christ:  
 call it also 'Christ', but homonymically,  
 since the identity consists in the name, not in the nature.  
 Still, both deserve one and the same veneration in an indivisible way.  
 Well then, whoever venerates this image, worships Christ,  
 and indeed if he does not venerate the image, he is an enemy of Christ  
 in the highest degree,

48 Εἰς τὸν κελλαρίτην. Τίς ὡς σὺ, τέκνον, ἐργάτης Θεοῦ πέλει; / Ἔχεις γὰρ ἔργον σφόδρα τῶν ἄλλων πλέον, / τῶν τῆς ἀδελφότητος ἄρχων βρωμάτων. / Ὅλος πρόσελθε πανσθενῶς τῇ φροντίδι, / διδοὺς ἐκάστῳ τὸ προσήκον ἐν κρίσει. / Πυρὰς δέχοιο τῆς πολυζητησίας (α ἡραχ), / ἐκεῖνον οὕτως, ἄλλον ἀλλοίως φέρων, / πράως, γαληνῶς, συμπαθῶς, οἰκτιρμόνως. / Οὕτως γὰρ ἔξεις σὺν Στεφάνῳ τὸ στέφος.



since in his rage he does not want the representation of Christ's incarnated aspect to be worshipped.<sup>49</sup>

The poem addresses the spectator and opens with a philosophical argument popular in the second phase of the iconoclast controversy: the image and the depicted person have the same name but not the same nature: Christ and his icon are homonyms. The idea and its phrasing ultimately go back to Aristotle's definition of homonyms in his *Categories*, 1.1. The second half of the poem, which elaborates on the indivisibility expressed in verse 4, contains a logical fallacy: from a positive affirmation (whoever venerates icons worships Christ), a false negative conclusion is drawn (whoever does not venerate icons does not worship Christ). The poem thus typically slips from an apology for the legitimacy of iconolatry to an affirmation of its obligation.

Poems 40–46 are related to churches, five of them to that of Stoudiou itself. The last one, “On the first entrance of the church” (mentioned before), was inscribed on the door between the narthex and the naos of the church and addresses its visitors. The next poem in the collection, “On the entrance of the church; on the cross”, appears to have been copied from the same place at Stoudiou. This time, the cross speaks reassuringly to the church and presents itself as a prophylactic sign warding off the demons. Within the composition of the collection, 47 is thus the perfect transition to a series of “epigrams on crosses” (47–60), mostly distichs or monostichs. Poem 58 actually consists of five ἐπιγράμματα μονόστιχα εἰς σταυρούς, at least one of which was reused as a caption to an image of the cross in a 14th-century manuscript.<sup>50</sup> They are predictable variations on the same theme.

Poems 61–84 are a coherent group, consisting of 18 tetrastichs on saints, doubtlessly destined to be inscribed under their painted images. The epigrams are full of set phrases, as was the case with the hymns, with which this cycle shows remarkable thematic and verbal resemblances. At least half of the saints praised in the tetrastichs were also the object of hymns written by Theodore. A comparative reading shows that in some of these cases the epigrams can be considered as iambic summaries of the *kontakia*, or vice versa, the latter as

49 Εἰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας. “Ἦνπερ βλέπεις εἰκόνα, Χριστοῦ τυγχάνει· / Χριστὸν δὲ καὐτὴν λέξον, ἀλλ’ ὁμωνύμως / κλήσει γὰρ ἐστὶ ταυτότης, ἀλλ’ οὐ φύσει· / ἀμφοῖν δὲ προσκύνησις ἀσχίστως μία. / Ὅ τοῖνον ταύτην προσκυνῶν Χριστὸν σέβει, / μὴ προσκυνῶν γὰρ ἔχθρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ πάνυ, / ὡς τὴν ἀναγραφείσαν ἔνσαρκον θέαν / τούτου μεμηνῶς μὴ σεβασθῆναι θέλων.

50 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken*, p. 327 with n. 1298. Many metrical inscriptions on crosses that have been preserved are distichs like Theodore's: see Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen*, passim.

hymnic elaborations of the epigrams. The tetrastichs 66 and 67, again on Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, may serve as an example.

Εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Βασίλειον  
 Ἦστραψας αἴγλη τοῦ φαεινοῦ σου βίου  
 καὶ φαιδρύνεις τὸν κόσμον ἔργοις καὶ λόγοις·  
 λαβῶν δὲ τὰς κλεῖς καὶ τὸς ὡς Πέτρος νέος  
 φύλαξ ὑπάρχεις τῆς πάσης ἐκκλησίας.

#### On Saint Basil

You have lightened with the radiance of your shining life  
 and you make the world bright with words and deeds;  
 you yourself have taken the keys like a new Peter  
 and you are the guardian of the whole church.

Εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Γρηγόριον τὸν Θεολόγον  
 Βροντῶν τὰ θεῖα τῆ βοῇ τῶν δογμάτων  
 ἤχησας ὄντως τὴν ὑπ' οὐρανόν, μάκαρ·  
 καὶ πάσας ἀπρίξ μωράνας τὰς αἱρέσεις  
 τὸν κόσμον ἐστήριξας ἐν τοῖς σοῖς λόγοις.

#### On Saint Gregory the Theologian

Thundering the divine things with the sound of dogmas  
 you have really resounded throughout the world, blessed one;  
 you have convicted of folly absolutely all the heresies  
 and you have firmly fixed the world with your words.<sup>51</sup>

It is surely no coincidence that the two Cappadocian friends and Church Fathers follow each other in the collection; they may very well have been depicted next to each other also. The epigrams form a kind of diptych in words: the opening images of lightning and thunder clearly correspond to each other and, as in the hymns, the syntactic structure and the basic ideas run parallel in both poems. The resemblances to the respective hymns are striking. The epigram on Gregory shares several images and phrases with the *koukoulion* quoted above: the third dodecasyllable is practically identical to the ninth and tenth lines of the rhythmical hymn. This shows how Theodore, in a typically Byzantine fashion, recycled the same ideas and words, adapting them no more

51 A discussion of this poem, with (an alternative) translation and comparison with the hymn, is in Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 170–73.

than necessary to the metrical form prescribed by the genres: functional conventions take precedence over artistic intentions. It is tempting to imagine the *kontakia* performed at the festal services for the saints at Stoudiou, in front of their images bearing inscriptions with verbal parallels to the hymns sung.

The later popularity of these tetrastichs can be deduced from their reuse as book epigrams: along with the epigram on John Chrysostom (number 72), they are combined into one laudatory poem in several 10th century manuscripts with Gregory's works.<sup>52</sup> The cycle of tetrastichs on saints is followed by another group of epigrams on buildings (85–91) and artistic or liturgical objects (92–93: two dedicatory inscriptions).

The final section of the collection has a less limpid structure, partly due to lacunas in the manuscript tradition, and includes some poems that cannot have had an inscripational purpose. Although numbered as 94–123, this part counts 35 poems, one of which is incomplete (105b) and one or two of which are spurious (95 and 96, the latter is the only poem to be written in [poor] elegiacs and to contain mythological names). Speck has labeled this final section *Verschiedene*: “various”. Many are epitaphs for relatives and friends, adopting the conventional features of the genre, such as speaking tombs and the address of the deceased. Writing funeral poems must have been a self-evident activity for Theodore, as we can deduce from an empathetic letter to his mother Theoktiste, who was critically ill: he imagines himself to be informed of her death, then to sing laments for her, to see her grave and finally to write an epitaph for it (ἵνα ὀρώων σου τὸν τάφον ἐπιγράψω ἐλεγεία).<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, there are some more inscriptions on liturgical objects and poems on religious topics, such as an enclosed monk (94: perhaps an implicit encomium on his uncle Plato) or monastic hospitality (104 and 105a).

As this survey makes clear, most of the poems by far belong to the common Byzantine subgenres of the epigram: verses on works of art (with ekphrastic, dedicatory or laudatory emphasis), epitaphs, and gnomic and protreptic epigrams.<sup>54</sup> They were written for concrete occasions, had a practical function,

52 See the chapter “Book Epigrams” in this volume, p. 414.

53 *Ep.* 6. l. 14. We can safely assume that the term ἐλεγεία is used in the general sense of funeral epigram, as defined in Hesychius' *Lexicon* (ει946: ἐλεγεία· τὰ ἐπιτάφια ποιήματα), without a metrical reference. Actually, Theodore's iambic collection includes an epitaph for his sister (105f), but not for his mother.

54 These are the genres discussed by Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 149–270, in his chapter “Epigrams in Context”, where he often quotes Theodore's iambs as evidence. Only one of Lauxtermann's categories seems not to have been practiced by Theodore, at least as far as we can tell, that is book epigrams: the later reuse as such of his tetrastichs cannot be taken into account. The metrical titles of the *Great Catecheses*, listed among

and were mostly inscribed on objects, walls, graves and the like. Only a few poems cannot easily be classified as traditional epigrams. Two of them deserve a brief discussion: 97 and 123.

The former consists of 12 verses and starts as follows: “Humble soul, come up, accept my words. / Time is fast, like a runner who runs about, / the end is near, and it is impossible to elude it. / So let us not toil with idle worries ...”.<sup>55</sup> Although the editor has entitled it “epigram to himself” (ἐπίγραμμα εἰς ἑαυτὸν) this poem is not an epigram in any sense of the word (it is not an inscription, nor does it tie in with the ancient tradition of the literary epigram).<sup>56</sup> It belongs to the specific genre of εἰς ἑαυτὸν poems, in which the poet addresses his own soul. This lyrical genre, related to metrical prayers and catanyctic poems, goes back to Gregory of Nazianzus and became popular in Byzantium.<sup>57</sup> Yet Theodore’s most direct model may have come from hymnography: in his *Great Canon*, Andreas of Crete addresses his own soul in phrases similar to those of Theodore’s.<sup>58</sup>

The very last poem of the collection is a playful note of three verses: a “letter to a grammarian” (ἐπιστολή πρὸς γραμματικόν) written in response to a similar composition:

To your writing in three verses, adorned with pearls of gold,  
I bring you, so as to pay off my debts, an emerald gift.  
Now you, make sure to sing me in return, in a way worthy of a musician.<sup>59</sup>

This self-proclaimed literary gem is, as a pure *Spielerei*, unparalleled in Theodore’s oeuvre.<sup>60</sup> It does prove, however, that he was up to a challenge when it came to the display of formal poetical skills. Poems like the last two discussed indicate that Dionysios cannot have collected all the material in

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Theodore’s metrical works by Fatouros, *Epistulae*, p. 35\*, would count as book epigrams, but they are not genuine: see Delouis, “Le Stoudite”, p. 222.

55 Ψυχῆ ταπεινή, δεῦρό μοι, δέξαι λόγον. / Ὁ καιρὸς ὄξυς ὡς δρομεὺς διατρέχων, / ἐγγὺς τὸ τέρμα, καὶ παρελθεῖν οὐκ ἔνι. / Μὴ δὴ κάμοιμεν ταῖς ματαίαις φροντίσιν,....

56 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 143–44 discusses the genre and the “curious title”.

57 See Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, pp. 158–60; and Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen*, pp. 71–74.

58 Speck, *Jamben*, pp. 258–60, lists several parallels.

59 Τῆ τριστίχῳ σου χρυσομαργάρῳ φράσει / σμαραγδοτίμον ἀντεπεξάγω χρέος· / αὐτὸς δ’ ἄδοις μοι μουσικοπρεπῶς πάλιν.

60 The closest parallel might be 105d, which Speck admits not to understand: Speck, *Jamben*, pp. 273–74. Its title, εἰς ἰάμβους συγγραφή, is not helpful and probably corrupt (for ἰάμβων συγγραφέα?).

his anthology from inscriptions. He must have had access to the *Nachlass* of Theodore, in which he may very well have found not only the manuscripts of the few personal poems included in the final section of the collection, but also some handwritten originals of the public poems meant to be inscribed.

### 3.3 *The Anti-iconoclastic Iambs*

The pinnacle of a metrical competition in which Theodore took part is not to be found in the *Iambs on Various Subjects*, and its occasion was far from a playful competition among friends. We know this remarkable verse fight primarily from Theodore's treatise *Examination and Refutation of the Impious Poems of Four Enemies of Christ* (hereafter *Refutation*), written during his third exile after 815.<sup>61</sup> It starts with four figure poems by the iconoclasts John (the Grammarian), Ignatios (probably the Deacon), Sergios and Stephanos.<sup>62</sup> They all have the same form: a triple acrostic (acro-, meso- and telostic), the mesostic forming the sign of the cross together with a keyword in the middle of the third verse, σταυρός ("cross"), itself in three cases (see Fig. 7.1). This series is followed by two groups of "orthodox" poems. The first four, certainly by Theodore himself, follow the same strict rules as the iconoclastic models; the other six, probably also by Theodore, are less artificial, with "only" acro- and telostic (four poems) or no acrostic at all. The refutation then really starts with a line-by-line criticism of the iconoclastic poems.<sup>63</sup>

The historical background of these poems has been the subject of much scholarly discussion, especially by Paul Speck.<sup>64</sup> According to his hypothetical reconstruction, two sets of them were inscribed on the *Chalkê*, the brazen gate of the imperial palace. The four poems with double acrostic, by Theodore, would have been installed under the reign of Irene (around 800), possibly in the place of earlier iconoclastic inscriptions (with simple acrostic?). They would have been replaced in their turn by the four iconoclastic figure poems after 815; Theodore has then responded on paper by his own triple acrostics.

We are informed about the last stage of the poetico-ideological battle by Theodore's letter 356 to the monk Litoios, who had sent him a transcription of

61 Edition by Sirmond, *Opera* = PG 99.435–78.

62 See Speck, "Parerga", pp. 32–34 and Hörandner, "Visuelle Poesie", pp. 13–15.

63 Sirmond's edition adds four iconoclastic epigrams that follow the treatise in his text source: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 894, fols. 44r–59v. Other manuscripts of *Refutation* include some more orthodox iambs, falsely attributed to Theodore: edition and comments in Speck, "Parerga", pp. 36–43.

64 E.g. Speck, *Ikonomklasmus*, pp. 175–210; posthumous summary in Speck, "Das Christusbild". Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 274–84, accepts Speck's chronology and devotes a long discussion to John's difficult poem.

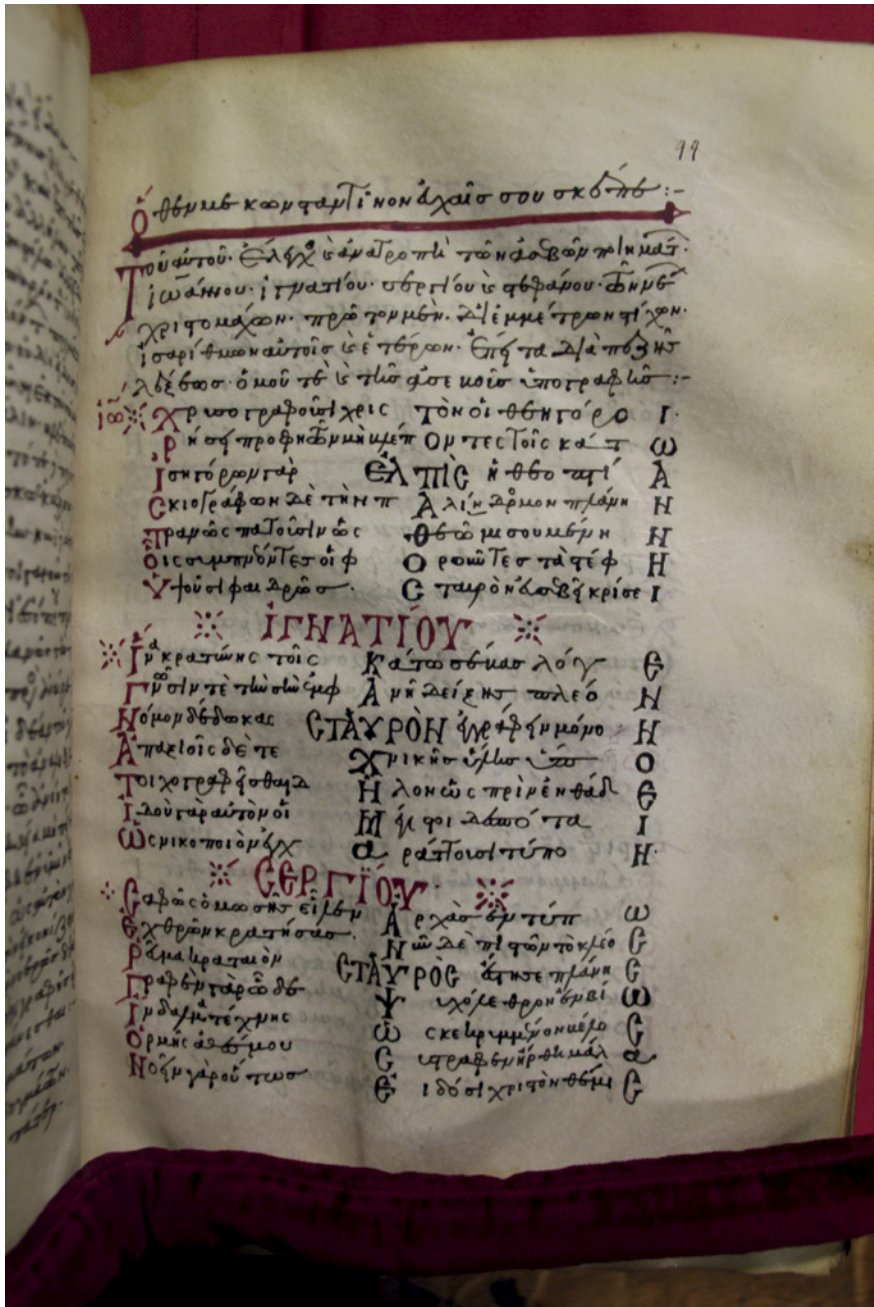


FIGURE 7.1 Par. gr. 894, fol. 44r  
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the iconoclastic iambs. Theodore joins to his letter a copy of his *Refutation* and explains that his own iambs are technically superior to theirs, since the iconoclasts break the rule that the mesostic should consist of the first letter of the seventh syllable.<sup>65</sup> The introduction of the orthodox poems in the *Refutation* itself equally stresses, with the same words, that their mesostics are correct (ἀκριβῶς) since they do not cut up syllables.<sup>66</sup> Technical perfection and ideological truth appear to go hand in hand, that much is expressly stated at the end of the letter to Litoios.<sup>67</sup>

However, observing the rules of sophisticated *technopaegnia* does not guarantee elegant verses and acceptable syntax. This is Theodore's third poem, with the cruciform acrostic "For Theodore it is pious to praise Christ" (see Fig. 7.2), along with a stylistically equivalent translation.

Θεὸς πρὸ σαρκὸς ἦν	Ἐν οὐ γραφῆς θεέ	A
Ἐπεὶ δὲ νῦν σὰρξ, τὴν	Ἵπογραφὴν φέρε	I
ἽΟρηξ γὰρ ὄνπερ	XPICTON ἡ σεμνὴ τέκε	N
Δῆλον κατ' αὐτὴν ὡς	Ἐπίγραπτος τὸδ	E
ἽΟι καὶ πέφυκε προσ	Bλέπειν αὐτῆς τέκο	S
ἽΡάσσον τὸν οὔτι φῶς	ἽΕχοντα τὴν φρέν	A
ἽΩς ἀντίδοξον πᾶ	Σι θείοις ἀνδράσ	I

God was before the incarnation in an aspect that was not of depiction.  
 But since he is now flesh, he bears the outline.  
 Indeed, the scion which the venerable has borne, Christ,  
 It is clear because of her that he is inscribable in this respect,  
 Because of which it is also natural to look at her child  
 Who beats the person who does not have light in his mind  
 As someone who is dogmatically opposed to all divine men.

The basic idea is clear: the incarnation legitimizes the iconic representation of Christ, but does the icon controversy legitimize these kinds of artificial obscurities that go counter to Theodore's generally limpid style? In a letter to Naukratios from around 816, Theodore asks whether it is a good thing to write

65 We cannot confirm this rule from other theoretical sources, but a 10th-century epigram by a certain Georgios does observe it in its twelve verses, see Hörandner, "Weitere Beobachtungen", pp. 295–96.

66 PG 99, 437C.

67 Ep. 356, ll. 13–14. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 139–40, discusses the comparable (legendary) case of the Graptoi, the iconophile monks on whose foreheads the iconoclast emperor Theophilus had branded metrically faulty iambs.

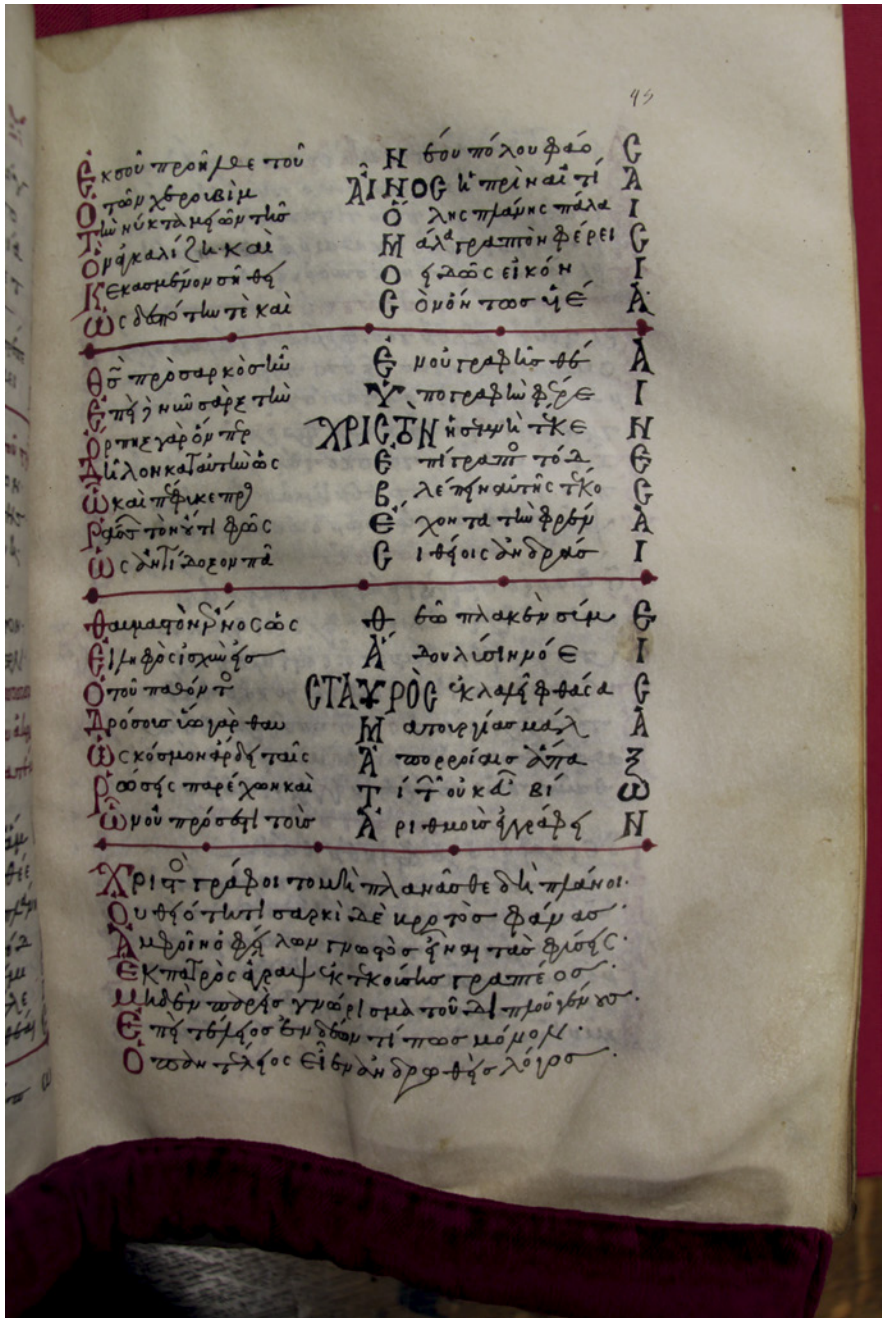


FIGURE 7.2 Par. gr. 894, fol. 45r  
 © BNF, PARIS



iambic poems against the iconoclasts. He hastens to add that “these poems are not so much written to the profit of others as to his own, as a diversion” during his exile: remember the opening quotation of this chapter.<sup>68</sup>

#### 4 Theodore’s Position in Literary History

In that opening quotation from the letter to Naukratios, Theodore both dismissed his writings as “not worth mentioning” and prided himself for possessing a gift (*charisma*) for poetry. It will be clear that he was indeed capable of composing decent verses for several occasions, but also that he was far more important as a monastic reformer and an iconophile polemist than as a poet. It is difficult to accurately assess his position within medieval Greek literary history, given the absolutely conventional nature of most of his work (the unique poems on monastic duties and the artificial triple acrostics against the iconoclasts serving as exceptions) and the deplorable scarcity of surviving poetry from the 8th and early 9th centuries (apart from the flourishing yet understudied field of liturgical poetry). Yet we can safely state that Theodore was not particularly innovative, neither as a hymnographer nor as an epigrammatic poet, and that he was certainly not the initiator of the revival of classical learning and classicizing poetry that was to come later in the 9th century. His contemporary and rival Ignatios the Deacon might make a better claim in this respect, whereas one generation later, Cassia(ni), arguably the foremost poetess of the Byzantine age, wrote some hymns and (gnomic) epigrams that are rightly considered as more interesting and personal than Theodore’s.<sup>69</sup> But the latter’s reputation as a towering figure in the ecclesiastical history of Byzantium also secured for his poetry a prominent place in later manuscript transmission.<sup>70</sup>

68 *Ep.* 108, ll. 8–10: εἰ καλὸν διὰ ἱαμβικῶν μέτρων ποιῆσαι κατὰ εἰκονομάχων, οὐ τοσοῦτον δι’ ἄλλων ὠφέλειαν, ὅσον δι’ οἰκείαν, εἰς τὸ ἀντιπερισπᾶσθαι τὸν νοῦν μου ἐξελλκόμενον ἐκ τῶν ἀτόπων.

69 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 141–42 gives a pitiless comparison of Theodore and Ignatios, with p. 241–43 on Cassia.

70 I wish to thank Nikos Zagklas and Stig Frøyshov for fruitful discussions of (parts of) this chapter in the studious atmosphere of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, in April–May 2016.

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# John Geometres: a Poet around the Year 1000

*Emilie van Opstall and Maria Tomadaki*

John Geometres (c.935–1000) is nowadays known as one of the most highly accomplished authors from the 10th century. His literary production encompasses a wide range of profane and sacred topics. His poetical works in iambs, hexameters and elegiacs include over three hundred epigrams and longer poems, *Hymns* to the Virgin, as well as metrical paraphrases of biblical odes and hagiographical prose (*Metaphrasis of the Odes* and *Life of Saint Pantaleon*). His prose works include rhetorical treatises on Hermogenes and Aphthonius, rhetorical exercises, commentaries on profane and patristic authors (especially Gregory of Nazianzus), homilies and panegyrics.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Biography

In spite of John's prolific production in poetry and prose, his personal life is shrouded in mystery. Biographical information has been distilled almost exclusively from his own works.<sup>2</sup> What kind of person emerges from his own words? In his poems, John presents himself as the younger of two sons of a civil servant at the imperial court. We do not read anywhere that he was married or that he had children of his own. He was undoubtedly educated in the usual four disciplines: rhetoric, philosophy, geometry, and astronomy. His favourite teacher was Nicephorus, to whom he dedicated three poems.<sup>3</sup> If Nicephorus can be identified with Nicephorus Eroticus, teacher of geometry at the school founded by Constantine VII, this could explain John's surname "Geometres",

1 For a complete list of his works, including editions up to 2008, see van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 15–17. The authorship of the *Paradeisos* is uncertain, see Isebaert, *Paradeisos*, pp. 502–24. Kristoffel Demoen and Björn Isebaert are currently preparing a critical edition of the *Paradeisos*.

2 For his biography, see Lauxtermann, *John Geometres*; van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 3–14; Tomadaki, *Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης*, pp. 1–5; see also Magdalino, "The Liturgical Poetics" and Papagiannis, "Ερμηνευτικά σχόλια".

3 Poems 66 and 146, ed. Tomadaki, and 255, ed. van Opstall. The numbers of the poems referred to in this chapter can be found respectively in the editions of Tomadaki (iambs, with an overview of themes on pp. 6–16) and van Opstall (hexameters and elegiacs, with an overview of themes on p. 29). All English translations in this article are our own.

which was used by the 11th-century rhetorician Doxopatres and by the scribes of several manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> However, Geometres' works do not show any particular concern for geometry or astronomy. The choice of his topics proves that he was interested in philosophy and that he had a predilection for rhetoric and theology. The style of his poetry and prose was strongly influenced by epideictic rhetoric.

Beside his intellectual pursuits, he made a military career as a high-ranking official (a *protospatharios* according to some manuscripts) under Nikephoros Phocas, John Tzimiskes and Basil the Nothos. He dedicated several poems to these emperors, poems that seem to have been composed both for public and for private occasions. From his rhetorical prose exercises, we know that he possessed a house with a beautiful garden in the centre of Constantinople.<sup>5</sup> In his poems, there are other references to his home-town: lively descriptions of landmarks such as the Church of Stoudios (poem 151) and a tower of the Theodosian wall (poem 13), as well as epigrams on the Church of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou* (e.g. poem 142).

John Geometres was a member of the educated elite of Constantinople and was proud to excel in the intellectual field as well as on the battlefield. Like the members of several other aristocratic families, he was dismissed and disowned under Emperor Basil II.<sup>6</sup> It is not entirely clear what happened to him after his disgrace. He often sharply criticizes the cultural climate of his time. This does not stop him writing about contemporary issues, since his poems report the civil war of 986–89, its aftermath in 989–90, and the possibly coronation of Samuel as a Bulgarian tsar in 997. He repeatedly describes himself as the victim of the envy (*φθόνος*) of his fellow citizens, who despised his successes. This ill fortune gave rise to many bitter lamentations.<sup>7</sup> When, in his eyes, society under Basil II goes astray, he fights against moral decline and for what he calls “the perfect virtue”: “bravery, prudence and mastery of desires.”<sup>8</sup>

4 See Vasil'evskii, *Trudy*, p. 110.

5 *Progymnasmata*, 2 and 3, ed. Littlewood; see also Demoen, “Homeric Garden”.

6 On John's positive attitude towards Basil the Nothos, and his negative opinion of Basil II, see Lauxtermann, “John Geometres”, who illuminates many obscure references to both emperors.

7 Poem 211.26–32, ed. van Opstall. For similar moralizing criticism concerning lack of virtue, see poems 65 ed. van Opstall, and 237, 268, 296–98, ed. Tomadaki. See also Lauxtermann, “John Geometres”, pp. 368–71. Kazhdan, in “John Geometres and ‘Political’ Poetry”, p. 254, interprets the ‘John’ in poem 211 not as John Geometres but as the emperor John Tzimiskes.

8 Poem 298, 45–46, ed. Tomadaki: τὴν δ' αὖ τελείαν ἀρετὴν ἐγὼ λέγω / εὐανδρίαν, φρόνησιν, ἡδονῶν κράτος.

In one of John's *Progymnasmata*, in a letter written at an advanced age about his garden, he tells his friend that he "has embraced philosophy and has become concerned with the truth",<sup>9</sup> leaving behind the luxury of his previous life and devoting his time to religious texts. A passage in one of his confessional poems (289, lines 12–17) seems to describe his initiation as a monk.<sup>10</sup> For a long time, it has been assumed that John's sobriquet "Kyriotes" (used in one of his own epigrams and in several manuscripts) could be an indication that he was associated with the monastery *ta Kyrou*, consecrated to the Virgin.<sup>11</sup> John regarded the Virgin as co-redemptrix at the side of Christ, and accorded her a prominent role in his works; she is present in his poems, hymns, and the *Life of the Theotokos*.<sup>12</sup> But did he indeed become a monk at the end of his life? And was he associated with this particular monastery, whose precise location is questionable?

Recently, Paul Magdalino has made the attractive suggestion that the name *Kyriotes* refers to members of a confraternity of *Kyriotai*, associated not with the monastery *ta Kyrou* but with the church of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou* (the actual *Kalenderhane Camii*), near the Aqueduct of Valens and the Forum of Theodosius.<sup>13</sup> John's initiation in poem 289 would then refer to his induction in a society of laymen under the direction of this church, which was probably located in the same neighbourhood as his house and garden. He could have belonged to "a wider circle of pious laymen who strove to live virtuous Christian lives in the world", such as his contemporary Nicephorus Ouranos (a military official and author of tactical treatises), who was also a *Kyriotes*.<sup>14</sup> The Theotokos *Kyriotissa* was traditionally associated with wisdom and eloquence, so that, as Magdalino points out:

... we may plausibly infer that ... the *Kyriotai* gave <literature> priority in their functions and their membership—that they expressed their devotion to the Virgin primarily by chanting the hymns of the humble Romanos <the Melodist>, or by composing poems and encomia in her honour ... <T>his is surely the context in which to view much of <John

9 *Progymnasmata* 2.9.7, ed. Littlewood: ἐξ ὅτου περ φιλοσοφίας ἠψάμην καὶ ἀληθείας ἐφρόντισα.

10 Ed. van Opstall.

11 Sajdak, "Que signifie Κυριώτης Γεωμέτρης?"; Lauxtermann, "John Geometres", pp. 358–59; van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 13–14 and 326–29.

12 On the Marian doxology of John Geometres, see Mimouni, *Traditions anciennes*, pp. 94–101.

13 Magdalino, "The Liturgical Poetics", pp. 117–18.

14 Magdalino, "The Liturgical Poetics", p. 130.

Geometres' > sacred *oeuvre*, especially his hymns and homilies to the Virgin.<sup>15</sup>

We can add another aspect to Geometres' biography concerning his physical appearance. In several poems, he mentions war injuries, especially to his hand, along with wounds and scars to his head, for example in poem 290, lines 27–28: “Gone is the force of my right hand, a sword has cut my sinews, / my jaws, my head, the war has taken everything”.<sup>16</sup> When John is dismissed from military service, these past sufferings are all the more difficult to bear. However, some of these references to physical damage can also be interpreted metaphorically (“the force of my hand” as a metaphor for “swift strength” or “physical force”).<sup>17</sup> In a satirical dialogue with a certain Stylianos, John's opponent comments upon his “blindness” and “damaged eyes”, remarks which are difficult to value because of their invective context.<sup>18</sup>

To conclude this short biography, we can imagine John Geometres in various roles: as an army officer fighting battles for the emperor, and being bitterly disappointed after his dismissal; as a learned aristocrat writing profane and sacred works in prose and verse; as an elite intellectual conducting Socratic discussions under the plane tree in his garden in Constantinople in the intimate company of his friends; and, last but not least, as a member of a lay confraternity, living a pious life and reciting poetry in the church of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou*. As a poet John stands in the tradition of the cultural revival of the 10th century (the so-called “Macedonian Renaissance”), to judge by his references to ancient authors and his interest in poems of the *Greek Anthology*, collected by Kephala and Constantine the Rhodian.<sup>19</sup> However, direct influence on or from his contemporaries is much more difficult to prove. His poems do show some features that would become more prominent in the literary production of the next century, such as “wit”, “urbanity” and “intellectual independence”.<sup>20</sup> The same holds for his personal concerns and his comments on contemporary society, characterized by Paul Magdalino as “poetic journalism”.<sup>21</sup> His satirical

15 Ibid.

16 See also poem 53.6, ed. van Opstall and 298.2–4; 224.4, ed. Tomadaki. We would like to thank Ioannis Vassis who first suggested, during a personal discussion, that Geometres had an injured or severed hand.

17 See poem 53.6; 67.6–7; 290.138, ed. van Opstall. Compare also the metaphorical use of *νεύρα* as “force” in poems 49 and 298.27 and 56, ed. Tomadaki.

18 See below and van Opstall, “The Pleasure of Mudslinging”.

19 See below and van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 21–24 and “Jean et l'Anthologie”, and Tomadaki, pp. 23–24.

20 Lauxtermann, “Byzantine Poetry and the Paradox of Basil II's Reign”, p. 212.

21 See Magdalino, “Cultural Change?”, pp. 20 and 25.



dialogue with Stylianos also provides an example of an intellectual contest and personal invective, which both became common during the 11th and 12th centuries. Contrary to the poets of the 12th century, John was not a professional court poet (*Auftragsdichter*: poet on commission) as for instance Theodore Prodromos and John Tzetzes, since there is no clear evidence in his works of systematic patronage.<sup>22</sup>

## 2 The Poems

The majority of Geometres' poems are preserved in the 13th-century manuscript Par. Suppl. gr. 352, which is the most important witness of his poetical oeuvre.<sup>23</sup> Apart from the *Hymns* (fols. 153<sup>v</sup>–155<sup>v</sup>) and the *Metaphrasis of the Odes* (fols. 176<sup>r</sup>–179<sup>r</sup>), it also contains 300 poems by Geometres (fols. 155<sup>v</sup>–176<sup>r</sup>) written in iambs, elegiacs and hexameters. These poems deal with both secular and Christian themes; for instance, there are poems devoted to Christ, Mary, the saints, relics, icons, as well as on Byzantine emperors, contemporary politics, ancient writers, and philosophers. As for their function, the majority of them are intended as verse inscriptions, laudatory/declamatory poems and book epigrams. Poems with the same subject and function are sometimes arranged together in the manuscript, often under the same title,<sup>24</sup> but this is not always the case. Generally, in Geometres' poetry collection there is no formal order or meaningful arrangement of the poems.<sup>25</sup>

In the following we will present the main thematic categories of Geometres' poems that can be traced in Paris. Suppl. gr. 352, along with some characteristic poems and remarks on their context. This categorization will reveal not only the thematic variety of Geometres' poetry, common motifs and his main techniques, but also his ability to compose poems in different genres, metres, and styles. Classical forms (metre, genre) and classical references

<sup>22</sup> See Magdalino, "Cultural Change?", p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> For its description, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 287–90 and van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 99–107. Geometres' poems can also be found in the following manuscripts: Vat. gr. 743 (s. XIV, fols. 98r–102r), Par. gr. 1630 (s. XIV, fols. 56r–63v and 127r–38v), Vat. Pal. gr. 367 (s. XIV, fols. 140r–40v and 143r–43v), Par. Suppl. gr. 690 (s. XII, fols. 118r–18v), *Hauniensis* GkS 1899, 4<sup>o</sup> s. XIII? f. 1rv, etc.; see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 290–304 and van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 108–13 and 558.

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, the funerary epigrams 179–97 on patriarch Polyeuctos, which are grouped under the title "Ἐπιτύμβια εἰς τὸν πατριάρχῃν κυρὸν Πολύευκτον", ed. Tomadaki, pp. 172–78.

<sup>25</sup> For the habitual way of arranging poetry collections in Byzantium, see the chapter on "Byzantine Collections and Anthologies of Poetry" by Foteini Spingou in this volume.

(authors, history, mythology) mingle with Christian themes (hagiographical, biblical) and Christian models (especially Gregory of Nazianzus<sup>26</sup>). John's poetic language is mainly influenced by Homer, Euripides, the Bible, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the *Greek Anthology*.

### 3 Iambics, Hexameters, Elegiacs: Some Generic Metrical Rules

The majority of Geometres' poems are composed in the so-called Byzantine dodecasyllable, the metrical norm of the Middle Byzantine period. Geometres follows the rule of 12 syllables and respects the prosody by keeping short the third, seventh and the eleventh syllable of the verses. However, he sometimes fails to remain faithful to the correct treatment of dichrona. In addition, within the total of 1755 dodecasyllable lines, 20.5 per cent of proper names do not fit into the prosodic iambic patterns. 77.3 per cent of these verses have caesura (*Binnenschluss*) after the fifth syllable and 22.7 per cent after the seventh syllable. It should also be noted that Geometres does not always respect the rule of paroxytone endings of the verses, since he also uses 19 pro-paroxytone and 11 oxytone endings.<sup>27</sup>

Approximately one third of John's poems are composed in hexameters and elegiacs.<sup>28</sup> These verses usually observe the classical prosodic rules, respecting vowel lengths, except for the dichronic vowels  $\alpha$ ,  $\iota$  and  $\upsilon$ . John's patterns of spondees and dactyls imitate Gregory of Nazianzus's practice, with a variety of 22 combinations (Homer 32; Gregory 21; Nonnos 9). Contrary to contemporary practice, he does not rigidly regulate accentuation before the caesura nor at the end of each verse. The number of masculine caesura coincides with the Homeric practice (45 per cent), but the number of feminine caesurae is unusually low (28 per cent), and the number of *caesurae mediae* is extremely high (20 per cent). Since the *caesura media* cuts a verse in two halves of equal length, it could have been used to compensate for the lack of regulated rhythmic accentuation. In a short poem on the numerological characteristics of elegiacs, accompanying his *Hymns*,<sup>29</sup> John describes the hexameter as perfect and the pentameter as less perfect: together, they form a mixture of the divine and the human.

26 See for example van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre* and Demoen/van Opstall, "One for the Road".

27 For more information about the metre of Geometres' iambic poems see Tomadaki, *Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης*, pp. 28–32.

28 For an extensive treatment of Geometres' hexameters and elegiacs, see van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 67–88.

29 Ed. Sajdak, p. 76.

#### 4 Poems on Contemporary Society

Geometres dedicated several of his poems to well-known contemporaries such as Nikephoros Phocas, John Tzimiskes, Basil the Nothos, Michael Maleinos, the judge Theodore Decapolites, the patriarch Polyeuctos etc.<sup>30</sup> Most of these poems are epitaphs that praise the deceased person for his virtues, military successes and pious life. Some of them are written in the form of an *ethopoia*, impersonating the deceased Nikephoros Phokas.<sup>31</sup> Another interesting example is his eulogy for Theodore Decapolites (poem 96), which must have been written after 961: as long as Theodore lived, the Virgin Justice reigned on earth and the golden age returned; now that he is dead, she sits mourning on his tomb and even her constellation (the Virgin) has lost its splendour. The orphaned Laws can do nothing but cry.<sup>32</sup>

There are also some poems in which the poet refers to historical events of his time such as the civil wars of Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas (976–79, 987–89), the wars against the Bulgarians and the “increasing threat” of Samuel Kometopoulos, the comets of 975 and 989, earthquakes, droughts, etc.<sup>33</sup> In two of these poems, entitled *On the Revolt* (7) and *On the Journey* (232), Geometres expresses his concerns about the civil wars and laments their catastrophic consequences.<sup>34</sup> In poem 7, in particular, the poet describes the mutual slaughter among the Byzantines by focusing on a family tragedy:

Firstly, the blood of relatives stains the entire East  
and, alas, the sword separates undivided clans and family members.  
10 The father rushes into the slaughter of his beloved  
and the child smears his right hand by killing his father;  
and his knife raises the brother—what a misfortune—against the heart  
of his brother!<sup>35</sup>

30 Interesting are the encomiastic poems 60 and 153, which praise Nicephorus Phokas and Basil the Nothos respectively, while they are still alive (ed. Tomadaki). For Geometres' encomium on Basil the Nothos, see Lauxtermann, “John Geometres”, pp. 373–78.

31 Poems 61, 80 and 147, ed. van Opstall.

32 Cf. poem 229, ed. Tomadaki, pp. 196–97.

33 For a short commentary on Geometres' historical poems, see Kazhdan, “John Geometres and ‘Political’ Poetry”, pp. 249–61 and Lauxtermann, *The Byzantine Epigram*, pp. 149–69.

34 Ed. Tomadaki, p. 56–59.

35 Poem 7.7–13, ed. Tomadaki: τὸ συγγενές μὲν αἷμα πάσαν τὴν ἔω / πρῶτον μαινίει, καὶ μερίζεται  
ξίφος / τὰ συμφυῆ, φεῦ, καὶ γένη τε καὶ μέλη· / πατὴρ μὲν ὄργᾳ πρὸς σφαγὴν τῶν φιλτάτων, / καὶ  
δεξιᾶν παῖς πατρικῶ χραίνει φόνω· / αἶρει δὲ καὶ μάχαιραν, ὦ πικροῦ πάθους, / ἀνὴρ ἀδελφὸς εἰς  
ἀδελφοῦ καρδίαν.

We possess very few reactions from Byzantine readers to John's work, so it is noteworthy that Attaleiates uses line 11 of this poem to describe the civil strife of his epoch in his *History*. We can therefore assume that he had read at least one of Geometres' poems.<sup>36</sup> Another example is a line quoted by Eustathios of Thessalonike in his commentaries on the *Iliad* to explain the genitive of "λαγός" (hare).<sup>37</sup>

In poems 237, 268, and 296–98, which are dated to the first years of Basil II's reign, John critically comments on contemporary society and on political affairs.<sup>38</sup> In poem 237, for instance, he opposes the so-called "new philosophers" who claimed that learned men are cowards.<sup>39</sup> John ironically calls them "new philosophers" so as to contrast them with the ancient philosophers, who believed exactly the opposite. For instance, Socrates argues at the end of *Protagoras* that knowledge is a requirement for bravery.<sup>40</sup> John, who was familiar with the Platonic dialogues, also believes that courage should always be accompanied with knowledge and prudence. In order to prove he is right, he provides in poems 297 and 298 many examples of well-educated persons who combined wisdom and courage, such as Aeschylus, Socrates, David, and Alexander the Great. In a similar way, Geometres expresses his disapproval of the policies of Basil II regarding the educated officials in poem 268, which is a dramatic dialogue between the poet and Virtue:

Yesterday, I saw Virtue in the middle of town,  
 dressed in black and utterly dejected,  
 "But what happened to you?" I asked, and she <replied>: "Now you  
 know: courage, prudence and knowledge lie in a corner,  
 but ignorance, drunkenness, and cowardice reign".<sup>41</sup>

These "cowards, inexperienced and drunk people" who are in power, influencing the emperor and responsible for the army's weakness,<sup>42</sup> could be identical

36 See Michael Attaleiates, *History*, ed. Tsolakis, p. 44.

37 Poem 3.45, ed. Tomadaki, and Eustathios, *Commentaries on the Iliad* v. 361, ed. van der Valk, p. 90.

38 These poems are examples of the above-mentioned 'poetic journalism' (see n. 21).

39 See poem 237, ed. Tomadaki.

40 *Protagoras* 360b–360e, cf. *Laches* 196d–97e. See also Devereux, "The Unity of the Virtues", pp. 765–89.

41 Poem 268, ed. Tomadaki: Τὴν ἀρετὴν χθῆς εἶδον ἐν μέσῃ πόλει/ μελαμοροῦσαν καὶ κατηφείας ὄλην/ 'τί δ', ἠρόμην, 'πέπονθας; ἡ δέ· 'νὺν ἔγνωσ/ τόλμα, φρόνησις, γνῶσις ἐν ταῖς γωνίαις,/ ἄγνοια δ' ἄρχει καὶ μέθη καὶ δειλία'.

42 Cf. poem 298.27–28, 56, ed. Tomadaki.

with the “new philosophers” or the “new legislators of evil”,<sup>43</sup> namely the rivals of Geometres. Their intention was probably to change the army’s status quo and gain military titles by replacing the educated officials. To sum up, it can be said that John expresses in poems 7, 232, 237, 268, and 296–98 his concerns and complaints about personal issues (e.g. his disgrace) as well as broader political issues (e.g. civil wars). Without doubt he sketches a distinct image of contemporary Byzantine society: rather gloomy, but reflecting reality.

## 5 Poems on Objects

Geometres’ epigrams on objects are distinguished by their potential inscriptional use and the variety of their themes. They are usually short (they consist of 2–6 lines), are composed in dodecasyllables, and give the impression that they were intended as verse inscriptions on icons, frescoes, churches/monasteries, objects of minor art, and books.

The majority of these epigrams are devoted to Christian themes, for instance to the Holy Virgin, Jesus Christ, relics, saints and churches. The Holy Virgin plays an important role in Geometres’ poetry, since many of his epigrams are dedicated to Marian feasts (such as the Annunciation, the Entrance into the Temple, and the Dormition) or to their well-known iconographic types.<sup>44</sup> The epigrams on the Annunciation contain the salutation and the dialogue between the Holy Virgin and the archangel Gabriel.<sup>45</sup> However, the epigrams on the Dormition focus on the presence of Christ, who, as in the relevant pictorial scene, stands above his mother’s bed and holds her spirit. In some cases they also praise the painter for the realistic effect of his icon, which could convey the doctrinal message of the Dormition.<sup>46</sup>

Favourite Christological themes of Geometres are the Baptism, the Presentation of Christ at the temple and the Crucifixion.<sup>47</sup> Important characteristics of these epigrams are the *ethopoiia* of Christ, the antithesis between past and present, and their final soteriological message. John was aware of the exegetical method of the Church Fathers and often uses it by contrasting scenes of the *Hexameron* with the passions of Christ, as in poem 93:

43 Cf. “Νέοι νομοθέται κακίης” note 7 and “σοφούς ὑποξύλους” poem 298.28, ed. Tomadaki.

44 See poems 6,102–08, 137–39, 158–61, ed. Tomadaki. Compare also poems 143 and 167, ed. van Opstall.

45 Poems 102–08.

46 Poems 158–61.

47 See poems 93, 95, 98, 154–55, 243, 285–86, ed. Tomadaki, and poems 283–84, ed. van Opstall. Compare also poems 18, 73 and 265–67 on Christ, ed. van Opstall.

I stretched out the heaven, I stretch out my hands,  
 I fixed the earth, now I am nailed to wood.  
 I made the sea gush, but now, my creature,  
 these fresh streams flow from my side.  
 I create fire, I stretch the air,  
 leave the warmth, I breathe my last breath. What else (I do) for you?  
 Dead, I dwell the earth, but I bring (you) back to life:  
 by readily entering your grave I open heaven for you.<sup>48</sup>

John uses similar techniques in poems 125–27 and 131–32, which are dedicated to relics of Christ's passion, such as the Holy Sponge, the Holy Lance, the Holy Chlamys and Christ's Shackles.<sup>49</sup> The relics of Christ were kept and venerated in the church of the Virgin of the Pharos, which was located inside the Great Palace.<sup>50</sup> Although it is not clear whether these poems refer to the actual relics of Christ's Passion or merely to the symbols of Christ's Passion, it is nevertheless obvious that the symbols of the Passion are transformed in Geometres' poems into symbols of salvation: the sponge cleanses humans of their sins (poem 125), the chlamys takes away their "garment of shame" (poem 127), the lance causes the flowing of a medicine for their sorrow (poem 126) and the shackles release them from their sufferings (poem 132). Geometres might have composed these epigrams as potential verse inscriptions for reliquaries similar to the Limburg *Staurotheke*.

The epigrams on saints are usually laudatory and reflect scenes of the saints' lives or of their martyrdom, such as his famous epigram on the Forty Martyrs, which can be still seen on a fresco in the church of Panagia Phorbiotissa of Asinou in Cyprus.<sup>51</sup> The epigrams on other objects and works of art (e.g. on a

48 Poem 93, ed. Tomadaki: Τους οὐρανοὺς ἠπλώσα, τείνομαι χέρας, / ἤρρισα τὴν γῆν, νῦν προσηλοῦμαι ξύλω. / θάλασσαν ἐξέβλυσα, νῦν δέ, πλάσμα μου, / πλευράς τὰ καινὰ ῥεῖθρα ταῦτα βλυστάνω. / πῦρ δημιουργῶ, τανύω τὸν ἀέρα, / λείπω τὸ θερμόν, ἐκπνέω. τί σοι πλέον; / γῆν νεκρὸς οἰκῶ, πλὴν ἀνιστῶ· καὶ τάφον / ἐκὼν ὑπελθὼν, ἐξανοίγω σοι πόλον. Cf. *Genesis* 1, 6–10 and *Isaiah* 42, 5. The first two verses of the poem allude to the following text by Melito of Sardis (2nd century AD), who was an important representative of the exegetical method: "Ὁ κρεμάσας τὴν γῆν κρέμαται. Ὁ πήξας τοὺς οὐρανοὺς πέπεκται. Ὁ στηρίξας τὰ πάντα ἐπὶ ξύλου ἐστήρικται", Melito of Sardis, *On the Passover* 732, ed. Perler, p. 116.

49 Poem 131 is dedicated to the swaddling clothes of Christ.

50 See Magdalino, "L'église du Phare", pp. 15–30; Klein, "Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies", pp. 91–92, and Bacci, "Relics of the Pharos Chapel", pp. 234–45.

51 For this epigram, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 298; van Opstall, "Verses on Paper, Verses Inscribed?", p. 56; Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme*, vol. 1, pp. 350–52. Cf. poems 168–74, ed. Tomadaki, which are dedicated to St Stephen and poems 58, 62–63, ed. van Opstall, dedicated to St Demetrius. Geometres obviously had a preference for military

censer, stained glass, swords and on an imperial ring) are remarkable for their comparisons and symbolisms.<sup>52</sup> For instance in poem 116, which is dedicated to stained glass decorated with angels, the glass reflects the sunlight, in the same way as the angels (“mirrors of God”) reflect God’s light.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, in poem 165, the silver, the gold and the precious stones of a censer symbolize the ether, the light, and the stars respectively, and as a result convert this luxurious object into a perfect miniature of the universe.<sup>54</sup>

Geometres also presents the famous Stoudios-monastery, the Kyros-church and a church dedicated to Christ the Saviour as miniatures of the celestial world (“πόλου μίμημα”) on earth.<sup>55</sup> He claims that they were miraculously built by God Himself by mixing celestial and terrestrial elements. About the church of Christ the Saviour he writes:

You, creator of the universe, mixed into one  
the delights of earth with the splendours of the sky  
—since you worked together with your Niketas to make this—  
and you built the church on earth like another heaven,  
its light coming from the stars and its precious stones from earth.<sup>56</sup>

The epigrams on churches and monasteries often mention the name of their donor.<sup>57</sup> However, there are no indications that Geometres received payment or any other rewards for composing these dedicatory epigrams.

One of Geometres’ epigrams has been transmitted as an actual book epigram: it is the epigram on Sophocles accompanying *Oedipus the King* in several codices, e.g. Laur. 32, 40 (s. XIV, fol. 49r) and Urb. gr. 141 (s. XIV, fol. 23r).<sup>58</sup> Other

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saints and in particular for St Theodore, who was his role model. His poems on this saint are more personal than the ones on the other saints: see poems 67–68, ed. van Opstall and poem 224, ed. Tomadaki.

52 See poems 115–17, 162–65, 245–49, 271–72 and 278, ed. Tomadaki.

53 Poem 116, ed. Tomadaki. For the angels as ἔσοπτρα Θεοῦ, see Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* 4.22, ed. Suchla, p. 153.

54 Poem 165, ed. Tomadaki.

55 See, for instance, poems 151, 220, ed. Tomadaki and 263–64, ed. van Opstall.

56 Poem 220, ed. Tomadaki: Τῆς γῆς τὰ τερπνὰ καὶ τὰ λαμπρὰ τῶν ἄνω / εἰς ἔν κεράσας, δημιουργε τῶν ὄλων / –σὺ γὰρ συνήργεις ταῦτα τῷ σῶ Νικήτᾳ– / ἄλλον πόλον τέθεικας ἐν γῆ τὸν δόμον / ἐξ ἀστέρων φῶς, ἐκ δὲ τῆς γῆς οἱ λίθοι.

57 See the dedicatory epigrams 148, 220, 222–23, 259, ed. Tomadaki.

58 The famous book epigram on Psalter ascribed to Geometres (inc. σίγησον, Ὁρφεῦ, ῥίψον, Ἐρμῆ, τὴν λύραν) can be found in many Byzantine manuscripts; see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 303 and Vassis, *Initia*, p. 672. For both epigrams, see also the *Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams* (DBBE), Ghent University: <http://www.dbbe.ugent.be>.

epigrams on ancient authors (e.g. Xenophon, Sophocles), Church Fathers and rhetoricians (e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus, Libanius), ancient philosophers and commentators (e.g. Aristotle, Plato, Porphyry, Simplicius), and on philosophical issues (e.g. Aristotle's *Categories*, the *Theoretical and Practical Philosophy*), which have not been transmitted as actual book epigrams, could be considered as potential book epigrams.<sup>59</sup> They either praise the authors or refer to the content of their texts. This is the case, for example, in poem 38, where Geometres enumerates the most important philosophical schools of Antiquity (e.g. Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics and Epicureans) by paraphrasing a passage of Simplicius' commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*.<sup>60</sup> We could, therefore, assume that this epigram could have accompanied a volume with Simplicius' *Commentaries*.<sup>61</sup> Another example of a potential book epigram of Geometres is poem 177. Here Geometres praises Libanius' eloquence by using a word-play on his name (Λιβάνιος-λιβάς).<sup>62</sup>

Your name is appropriate for you, Libanius,  
since a drop of honey flows from your words.<sup>63</sup>

Geometres' real and potential book epigrams are important, since they provide information about his reading preferences, the way he perceived ancient Greek philosophy, and the diffusion of ancient and Byzantine texts in the 10th century.

59 Poems 19–21, 25, 30, 32–38, 110, 121–24, 156, 166, 175–77, 217–18, 236, 256–57, 291, 294–95, ed. Tomadaki, and poems 22–24, 26, ed. van Opstall. For Geometres' epigram on Gregory of Nazianzus, see Demoen/van Opstall, "One for the Road", pp. 229–30. For the characteristics of book epigrams, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 97–212, Bernard/Demoen, "Byzantine Book Epigrams", pp. 431–40 and the chapter on "Book Epigrams" by Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen in the present volume.

60 Poem 38, ed. Tomadaki. Cf. Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Categories*, ed. Kalbfleisch, p. 3.

61 See poems 32, 34, ed. Tomadaki and poems 23–24, ed. van Opstall.

62 Geometres often uses word-play on the names of characters in his poems, see Tomadaki, *Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης*, pp. 7–8. Christophoros Mitylenaios uses the same technique in his metrical calendars with the names of the saints, see Hunger, "Byzantinische Namensdeutungen". A similar wordplay (Λείβει λιβάδας Λιβάνιος) occurs in an actual book epigram on Libanius, preserved in codex Vat. gr. 106 (s. XIII, fol. 312r), ed. Mercati/Franchi De' Cavalieri, p. 127. Cf. DBBE: <http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/1020>.

63 Poem 177, ed. Tomadaki: Ἡ κλήσις ἀρμόζουσα, Λιβάνιέ, σοι/ ὥσπερ λιβάς μέλιτος ἐκ λόγων ῥέει.



## 6 Satirical and Invective Poems

John Geometres' sense of humour manifests itself in various shades, from innocent word-play and irony to biting satire and invective. It is evident that one's sense of humour is not only culturally defined but also varies from person to person; a joke which is funny in the eyes of one person may seem dull in the eyes of another: it is a question of taste. John's satirical poems contain typically iambic elements—Aristophanic words, language, and themes—recurring in late antique and Byzantine texts. Among these iambic themes are the exclusion of those who are different, the derision of physical defects, and a taste for scatological material and sex. Not all John's poems are comical: combined with crude personal attacks, satire turns into invective.<sup>64</sup> John wrote several scoptic poems which address physical or moral characteristics of general personalities; for example a poem on someone who lost his manners after visiting Greece (45), on the asexuality of a eunuch (72), or on the size of an extremely small person (273).<sup>65</sup> In another manuscript containing a series of invective poems,<sup>66</sup> the persons ridiculed are vividly depicted. Three of John's victims are mentioned by name and seem to be linked to contemporary persons or circumstances: Sa. 1 concerns a legal dispute between the church of *ta Kyrou* and a certain Psenas;<sup>67</sup> Sa. 4 is on a judge named Pegasios who cannot pronounce any sentence correctly; and Sa. 5 is on a general named Keroularios, ridiculed for his low descent and his speech impediment. A most intriguing satirical invective is the dialogue in verse between John Geometres and a certain Stylianos.<sup>68</sup> It is the only example we have of John directly interacting with a contemporary, unless Stylianos is a literary invention. The register is low, the language is repetitive, the stakes are high. Through deforming illnesses, splattering brains and heaps of excrement, the participants aim to

64 The same trend is visible in 11th-century poetry: see Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 266–76.

65 For other scoptic poems with various subject-matter, see also poems 4 and 97, ed. Tomadaki.

66 Sa. (= ed. Sajdak) 1–14 are to be found in Vat. Pal. gr. 367 (s. XIV) ff. 140rv and 143rv, edition and commentary by Sajdak, "Spicilegium Geometreum II", pp. 530–34 and Tomadaki (in preparation). For the dates of some of these poems and references to secondary literature, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 302–03.

67 See Magdalino, "The Liturgical Poetics", pp. 118–121. This poem on Psenas provides—along with poem 29, which probably refers to the coronation of Samuel the Tsar in 997—a *terminus post quem* for John's death, see Lauxtermann, "John Geometres", p. 373.

68 For a new edition, translation and commentary of the dialogue (nine poems), replacing the edition by Graux from 1879, see van Opstall, "The Pleasure of Mudslinging".

debase the intellectual and rhetorical capacity of their opponent. The dialogue opens with the following two poems:<sup>69</sup>

(1) From John Geometres, against Stylianos

By blowing up dropsy harms the flesh,  
and a blown up mind bereaves the senses  
and filled with envy also stirs up strife.  
Utterly emptied by vanity and filled with envy  
5 Stylianos vomits forth depravity.

(2) From Stylianos, against John

By blowing against us he has blown out his brains.  
By raging against his enemies he has lost his eyes:  
bereft of both he engages in a battle of words.  
Out of his mind and without eyes to see,  
10 John pours out a stream of nonsense.

Ritualized verbal duels in front of an audience, sometimes indicated with the Scottish word “flyting”, are a phenomenon in numerous societies from Antiquity to the present day.<sup>70</sup> However, the exact context of this particular dialogue remains obscure. Was it meant as sheer amusement for a group of friends? Or is it a sort of an intellectual contest between pupils or teachers of different schools, which became common in the 11th century?<sup>71</sup> Or is it an example of a career battle between members of the Constantinopolitan elite, meriting the qualification of ‘φθόνος-society’ that Theodore Metochites would give it a few centuries later?<sup>72</sup> Trampling on your intellectual competitors and damaging their reputation was a most effective way to make your own star rise. As we know, John Geometres experienced this kind of φθόνος personally.

69 See van Opstall, “The Pleasure of Mudslinging”: Ἰωάννου Γεωμέτρου κατὰ Στυλιανοῦ. / Ὑδρωψι φουρήσας ζήμιοι τὸ σαρκίον / καὶ νοῦς φουσηθεὶς ἐξαφαιρείται φρένας, / φθόνου δὲ πλησθεὶς ἐξεγείρει καὶ μάχας. / Τύφω κενωθεὶς καὶ φθόνου πλησθεὶς ὄλωσ / ὁ Στυλιανὸς ἐξεμεί μοχθηρίαν. / Στυλιανοῦ κατὰ Ἰωάννου. / Φυσῶν καθ’ ἡμῶν ἐξεφυσήθη φρένας, / ὀργῶν κατ’ ἐχθρῶν ἐξαφηρέθη κόρας, / ἀμφοῖν στερηθεὶς εἰς μάχην χωρεῖ λόγῳ· / Τὸν νοῦν ἐπαρθεὶς ἐκκενωθεὶς καὶ κόρας, / Ἰωάννης βόϋν ἐκκενοῖ ληρημάτων.

70 See for example Highet, *Anatomy of Satire*, pp. 153–54; Pagliai, “The Art of Dueling”; Conley, *Towards a Rhetoric of Insult*, pp. 87–91; van Opstall “The Cicada”.

71 On the *logikos agon*, see Bernard, *Reading and Writing*, pp. 254–90.

72 Theodore Metochites, *Logos Ethikos* 38–43, see Hinterberger, *Phthonos*, pp. 187–205.

## 7 Personal Poems, Prayers, Hymns

John Geometres is well known for his personal poems. These poems—some of them concise, some of them up to 150 verses—are written in the tradition of Gregory of Nazianzus' *eis eauton*-poems.<sup>73</sup> They are mostly composed in hexameters and elegiacs, but some of them are in iambics. From a modern point of view, they are personal only to a certain extent, since they do not necessarily reveal intimate thoughts and emotions of an autobiographical nature. The lyrical *persona* in John's poems often refers to the collective 'I' of the Christian sinner, confessing his sins, expressing humbleness and declaring his faith in God, Christ and the Virgin:

Be gracious to me, all-gracious Lord, Sun of glory,  
be gracious, you who carry the world, be gracious, Father of compassion,  
from my birth I committed as many sins as sand and dust,  
and even as I am talking now, I breathe impurity.<sup>74</sup>

The 'I' can also refer to the more individual historical 'I' of the poet, for example when he describes his position in society as an 18-year old prodigy, as a military officer fighting for the empire, or as the object of spite of his fellow citizens. These verses were probably to be shared within the *θέατρον*: the social, political, and intellectual community to which John belonged. The poet does not hesitate to show off his qualities proudly:<sup>75</sup>

'Tell me: who made you skilled in celestial and terrestrial matters,  
at the tender age of eighteen, John?'  
'The all-powerful Queen made me so, and to it she added  
remarkable strength: burst all together, Envy!'<sup>76</sup>

73 *Eis eauton* poems: 41, 53–57, 75–76, 81, 200, 206–07, 211, 280, 289; prayers: 14, 67–68; hymns: 65, 290, 300, ed. van Opstall.

74 Poem 56.1–4, ed. van Opstall: Ἰλαθὶ μοι, πανίλαε βασιλεῦ, ἦλιε δόξης, / Ἰλαθι, κοσμοφόρε, Ἰλαθι οἰκτοπάτορ· / ἦλιτον ἐκ γενετῆς ὅσσα ψάμαθός τε κόνις τε· / ἦν δέ τι νῦν λαλέω, οὐ δὲ πνέω καθαρόν.

75 For the growing Byzantine 'self-assertiveness' from the mid-9th century onwards, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 37.

76 Poem 280, ed. van Opstall: εἰς ἑαυτόν. Οὐρανίων, ἐπιγείων ἴστορα, τίς, λέγε, θῆκεν / ὀκτωκαιδεκέτη εἰσέτι σ', Ἰωάννη; / θῆκε με παμβασίλεια, καὶ ἡγορέην ἐπὶ τούτοις / δῶκεν ἀριπρεπέα· ῥήγνυσο μῶμος ἅπας.

In a long ekphrasis on spring (300, 121 hexameters)<sup>77</sup>—a hymn to Christ who inspires the entire creation with new life after the winter—the poet breaks his silence after Easter. This poem is thematically linked to the annually recurring liturgical celebration of the Resurrection, as described by Gregory of Nazianzus in his homily on the New Sunday after Easter (*Or.* 44). Living in solitary exclusion, John prays to regain life together with the budding nature and to participate in its exuberance.

John's epigrams on eros<sup>78</sup> are close to his autobiographical poems, sharing certain elements, such as the poetic ego and the lyrical confessional style. Nevertheless, they are a separate category, because they focus on eros and not on other sufferings or emotions of the poet. Moreover, their form resembles that of the erotic epigrams of the *Greek Anthology*, since they are short and sophisticated.

Like in ancient erotic epigrams and in the erotic novels of Late Antiquity, in John's poetry, eros is represented as a winged archer (poem 210), a disease (poem 210), fire, or even as unquenchable thirst (poem 299). However, the main difference between ancient erotic epigrams and Geometres' poems is that the latter refer not only to human love, but also to divine love, and that they condemn carnal desire as inferior. Unlike other poets who wrote erotic epigrams in the classical tradition—such as Paul the Silentary and Agathias (6th century), Theophanes the Grammarian, and Constantine the Sicilian (9th century)<sup>79</sup>—Geometres manages, in a creative way, to combine patterns of ancient erotic epigrams with the Christian concept of love.<sup>80</sup>

For instance, in poem 299, the narrator, who asks water from a woman and falls in love with her, claims that love (eros) can be treated only by another more burning love, that is: divine love. Finally, he asks Christ to give him his "living water";<sup>81</sup> the only medicine which can quench the flames of human love.<sup>82</sup> Similarly in poem 227, entitled "on carnal love", John states that desire for God quenches sexual desire, an idea that can also be found in the work of John Climax:<sup>83</sup>

77 See van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 513–50; De Stefani, "L'epigramma longum"; Cresci, "Scarsa liricità and Percorsi"; Crimi, "I cigni".

78 See poems 228, 210, 299, ed. Tomadaki and poem 227, ed. van Opstall.

79 See Lauxtermann, *Ninth-Century Classicism*, p. 167.

80 Leo the Philosopher (9th century) also condemns carnal love by creatively combining classical and Christian elements (*AP* xv 12 *eis eauton*), see van Opstall, "Balancing on the Tightrope of Paganism".

81 ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν, see *John's Gospel* 4.10.

82 Cf. poems 210.8–11 and 228, ed. Tomadaki.

83 See also the opening lines of the 15th Rung on Purity, *Ladder* (*PG* 88, 880D): ἀγνός ἐστιν ὁ ἔρωτι ἔρωτα διακρουσάμενος, καὶ πῦρ πυρὶ ἀπὸ πῦρος ἀποσβέσσει. Cf. *AG* xvi 251, 6: φλέξει τις πυρὶ πῦρ, ἦψατ' ἔρωτος ἔρωτος.

If you add Bacchic fire to fire, you kindle it even more,  
but if you add desire for God to carnal love, you quench it.<sup>84</sup>

## 8 Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented John Geometres as a poet by discussing his epigrams and longer poems available in recent critical editions, with a translation and commentary. Of his other poetical works, the *Metaphrasis of the Odes* has been recently edited (De Groote 2004), while the *Life of Saint Pantaleon* (Sternbach 1892) and the *Hymns* (Sajdak 1931) have older editions. Up-to-date commentaries and translations in modern languages are needed in order to explore these works in the light of newly developed theories in the field of Byzantine poetry. For example, John's *Hymns* in elegiacs and in hexameters contain some interesting material on their performance. They consist of a concatenation of invocations, followed by an accumulation of eulogising epithets and an enumeration of the various roles of the Virgin:

Hail, graceful Maiden, who generates grace, joy for parents,  
great joy for humans, great joy for angels.  
Hail, grace-giving Maiden, who answers grace with grace,  
Virgin without toil, Mother without grief ...<sup>85</sup>

These verses culminate in a request for help by a general sinner, with whom anyone in a congregation could have identified. It is usually assumed that hymns in classical metres were not included in liturgy, but were meant for private devotion: "Mit Klängen, die in der lebendigen Sprache keinen Widerhall mehr fanden, konnte niemand zum Herzen des Volkes sprechen."<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, John's posterity did not perceive his hymns as obscure learned exercises; on the contrary, they seem to have been quite popular. While the bulk of his epigrams and poems have been transmitted in one single manuscript without indication of their author, the *Hymns* came down to us in 11 manuscripts together with several appreciative comments of their author by scribes from the 13th to the 17th century. They were the first of John's works to appear in print. Morel's *editio princeps* of 1591, with a Latin translation, would be reprinted five times in the

84 Poem 227, ed. van Opstall: Εἰς σαρκικὸν ἔρωτα. / Εἰ πυρὶ πῦρ ἐπάγεις βρόμιον, μάλα πολλὸν ἀνάπτεις. / εἰ δὲ πόθῳ σαρκὸς θεῖον, ἀποσβενύεις.

85 *Hymn* 1.1–4, ed. Sajdak: Χαίρε, Κόρη χαρίεσσα, χαρίτοκε, χάρμα τοκήων, / Χάρμα μέγα χθονίων, χάρμα μέγ' οὐρανίων. / Χαίρε, Κόρη χαιρήκοε, χάρματι χάρμα λαβούσα, / Παρθένε πλὴν καμάτων, Μήτηρ ἄνευ ὀδύνης.

86 Krumbacher, *Geschichte*, p. 306; see also *ODB* s.v. Hymnography.

years to follow.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the lemmata of two manuscripts of the 16th century indicate that they were “uttered on the day of the Annunciation” (that is the Annunciation of the Theotokos celebrated during the Divine Liturgy on 25 March), or, “for those willing, daily” (presumably by way of private devotion).<sup>88</sup> Obviously, we do not know if these indications refer to a practice in John’s time (10th century) or the time of the scribe (16th century), but it is not impossible that they were recited by the lay society of *Kyriotai* in the church of *ta Kyrou*. In spite of their “old-fashioned” metre, they have a certain rhythmical quality, due to the use of repetitions, assonance, antithesis, wordplay with the word-field of *χάρις*, and *caesura media*. In other words, their language is not “dead”.

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87 See van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, p. 92.

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## The 11th Century: Michael Psellos and Contemporaries

*Floris Bernard*

From many points of view, the years between 1025 and 1081 form a distinct period, not only in the political, but also in the literary history of Byzantium. These decades are characterized by internal instability between two periods of imperial authority and dynastic continuity. Byzantium found itself at “a turning point of its destiny”,<sup>1</sup> as an older classical study suggests, or “being in between”, following the title of a recent collected volume.<sup>2</sup> Another collected volume on the period bears even a question mark in its title.<sup>3</sup> Many developments were set in motion that proved to be decisive for the future of the empire. Other developments (e.g., the emergence of an urban elite) seem rather to be aborted by the reforms of the reign of Alexios I Komnenos. Social mobility was even more pronounced than in other periods: officials and high-ranking ecclesiastics frequently came from well-known families, but the number of those families was fairly high, and also for complete newcomers there were opportunities through education to gain entrance in higher circles.<sup>4</sup> Within the elite, informal networks of “friends” and allies were formed,<sup>5</sup> as well as rivalries and feuds, fueled by calumny and public abuse. It was a time of political insecurity: power could easily shift from one interest group to the other, through court intrigues, rebellions, and usurpations.<sup>6</sup> There was a relative freedom of intellectual and philosophical inquiry, perhaps symbolically brought to an end

1 See Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 249. Lemerle’s work, firmly based on a critical inquiry of the sources, remains essential. Kazhdan, *Change* offers important insights, but perhaps overemphasizes gradual developments from the 11th to the 12th centuries. Angold, *A Political History*, counters the traditional view that the period was one of decline, rehabilitating the policies of Constantine IX Monomachos.

2 Lauxtermann/Whittow, *Byzantium in the Eleventh Century*.

3 Vlyssidou, *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση* (⋮). Several essays in the volume offer different interpretations of the same sources.

4 For research on the elite in this period, I refer to the many studies of Jean-Claude Cheynet, which make excellent use of a vital source, namely seals. See now the collected articles in Cheynet, *Byzantine Aristocracy*.

5 Ahrweiler, “Recherches”.

6 See Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*.

by the trial of John Italos in 1082. Constantinople counted many independently operating schools, and rhetoric became an important staple of court life.

These decades also roughly correspond to the active lifetime of Michael Psellos, arguably one of the most remarkable authors of Byzantium. His writings, as well as his intellectual profile and reputation, elicited admiration but also indignation from contemporaries and modern Byzantinists alike. Any interpretation of the mid-11th century depends on an interpretation of his life and works. And in the case of Psellos, life and works are inextricably intertwined with each other, because no matter in which genre he writes, he continuously offers justifications of his own actions,<sup>7</sup> distorts reality in the function of his interests,<sup>8</sup> or constructs a subtly balanced, and in many ways novel, self-representation, tied to a creative authorial profile.<sup>9</sup> Also, by his own accord, versatility was his main asset,<sup>10</sup> and Psellos' works, carefully navigating between different and even contradictory ideals and discourses, thus mirror the instability and polyphony of 11th-century Byzantium.

But in the field of poetry, it is not so much Psellos himself, but two contemporaries who in modern times take pride of place: John Mauropous and Christopher Mitylenaios. The former gets praise for his humanist traits and integer persona, while the latter is singled out for the vividness of his descriptions and the acerbic wit of his satires. In what follows, I will attempt to do justice to the full extent of their multifarious poetry, and discuss some of the roles that verse texts could play in 11th-century society.<sup>11</sup>

## 1 Biographical Trajectories

The poets of this period (at least those we know of) profited from the opportunities for social mobility. They were from a non-aristocratic background, and steadily gained power and influence during the Paphlagonian emperors (1036–42), achieving the pinnacle of their success during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–55). Their social status and position depended on good contacts with the imperial court, but all known poets were also closely connected to the vibrant world of education. Rather than just being “poets”, they claimed to be prominent *logioi* (“learned men”), and poetic

7 Braounou, *Chronographia*.

8 Jeffreys, “Psellos and ‘his’ Emperors”.

9 Papaioannou, *Rhetoric and Authorship*.

10 Ljubarskij, *Ličnost' i tvorčestvo*.

11 For a study of poetry within Byzantine society, see also Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*.

craftsmanship was only one part of their intellectual activities. These encompassed everything related to *hoi logoi*: teaching, studying and compiling knowledge, engaging in literary criticism, and drafting speeches and epigrams.

While Maupous and Psellos are perhaps exceptional cases of social mobility, Christopher Mitylenaios<sup>12</sup> is a more typical example of an eleventh-century member of the elite. He was born in Constantinople, probably in the first decade of the century. There are some seals belonging to Mitylenaioi: all high-ranked clerics or officials, probably related to the poet.<sup>13</sup> A seal of Christopher himself, and the lemmas above his poems in the most important manuscripts, inform us that he bore the high honorific titles of *patrikios* and *protospatharios* and held the important office of judge of the *velum*. He was also a *krites* (judge and administrator) in several provinces. In one poem, he presents himself as “secretary of the emperor” (poem 114, l. 129).

Many of Christopher’s poems contain references to historical events or persons,<sup>14</sup> which make it possible to situate his poetic activity in the period from c.1028 (death of Romanos Argyros) to the later years of Monomachos’ reign.<sup>15</sup> Important historical events appear in poem 8 on the death of Romanos Argyros (1034), poem 52 on the violent deposition of Michael V (1042), and a funeral epigram on George Maniakes (poem 65), the successful general who revolted in 1043.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, these poems offer a version of events that deviates from the more well-known accounts of Scylitzes and especially Psellos.<sup>17</sup>

John Maupous was born around 1000 in Paphlagonia, came to Constantinople and gained himself a solid reputation as a teacher.<sup>18</sup> His most important pupil was Michael Psellos, with whom he continued to exchange many letters,

12 About the family name of this poet: “Mitylenaios” is certainly more correct than “of Mytilene”, which gives the wrong impression that Christopher was born on that island. Mitylenaios is clearly a hereditary name. The spelling (with first ι and then υ) is also found elsewhere in the Byzantine period, and appears in this form on the poet’s personal seal.

13 Cheynet/Morrisson/Seibt, *Sceaux de la collection de Henri Seyrig*, pp. 136–37 for seals of Mitylenaioi (Christopher’s seal is no. 193). See also Christopher Mitylenaios, *Various Verses*, ed. De Groote, pp. xviii–xix.

14 A complete overview is in Follieri, “Fonte storica”.

15 There may be a reference in poem 143 to a palace that was only constructed after 1068, but the evidence is doubtful. See Maguire, “Parks and Gardens”, p. 254.

16 See also the long hexametric poem now edited in Broggin, “Il carme Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλτου”, which presents Maniakes as an epic hero. It may be the work of Christopher, but evidence is inconclusive.

17 See Criscuolo, “Sui carmina historica di Cristoforo di Mitilene”.

18 On Maupous’ biography: Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, pp. 23–50; id., *The Letters of Ioannes Maupous*, pp. 9–27. Id., “The Biography of Ioannes Maupous Again” refuted some suggestions in Kazhdan, “Some Problems in the Biography of John Maupous”. See also Id., “Some Problems in the Biography of John Maupous, II”.

and who also wrote a glowing encomium for his former teacher.<sup>19</sup> Mauropous probably became a monk early in life. He reached the apex of his career under Constantine IX Monomachos. He pronounced orations on the occasion of important events, and wrote the *Neara*, an imperial foundation document for the law school at St George of Mangana. Then, probably around 1050, he was appointed metropolitan of Euchaita, a small city in faraway Pontus. Technically, this was a promotion, but there can be little doubt that Mauropous experienced it as an exile. He continued to lobby for a return to the capital, but only seems to have achieved this late in life, when he entered the monastery of St John Prodromos *tes Petras* in Constantinople.<sup>20</sup> His name is also connected with the inauguration of the Feast of the Three Hierarchs, who appear throughout his works as his personal patrons.

As to Michael Psellos, it is difficult to tell what position his poems occupied within his gigantic oeuvre. Although certainly not reticent about his intellectual achievements, he nowhere explicitly mentions his poems. At any rate, they reflect the various occupations Psellos engaged in, especially his teaching, but also his functions of public orator and imperial advisor, and his status as a high-profile, and controversial, intellectual figure. It is odd that Psellos and Mauropous are connected in various ways with each other, but that there is no mention in their works of Christopher, nor vice versa, while they must have moved in the same circles.<sup>21</sup>

## 2 Collections

Both John Mauropous and Christopher Mitylenaios are now chiefly known for their collections of “various verses” (στίχοι διάφοροι), a title also given by the most important manuscripts with the poems. While the edition of Mauropous’ poems is perhaps in need of an update,<sup>22</sup> Christopher has recently received a new critical edition.<sup>23</sup> Both collections have been translated into Italian,<sup>24</sup> and

19 See now Lauxtermann, “Intertwined Lives”. The encomium is Psellos, *Encomium* 17, ed. Dennis.

20 Lequeux, “Jean Mauropous, Jean Mauropodès et le culte de Saint Baras”.

21 Lauritzen, “Christopher of Mytilene’s Parody” sees a hint at Mauropous in Christopher 55, and id., “An Ironic Portrait of a Social Monk”, in Christopher 27.

22 Lagarde/Bollig (eds.), *Iohannis Euchaitorum quae supersunt*.

23 De Groot (ed.), *Christophori Mitylenaii Collectio Cryptensis*.

24 Crimi (trans.), *Cristoforo di Mitilene. Canzoniere*, and Anastasi, *Giovanni Mauropode, Canzoniere*.

recently into English with brief commentary.<sup>25</sup> The term “various” is indeed very appropriate in both cases: the poems vary greatly in length, genre, subject, occasion, and style. Moreover, both collections are organized with great care.

Christopher’s collection, to begin with, is mainly arranged according to chronology. But other principles also played a role: he organized poems into cycles and strove to achieve a maximum of variety (ποικιλία).<sup>26</sup> This variety also applies to the metres he used. In contrast to Psellos and Mauropous, Christopher wrote poems in a wide range of metres: mainly dodecasyllables of course, but also hexameters, elegiac distichs, and one funeral poem in anacreontics (poem 75).

The entire collection has come down to us in only one manuscript, the 13th-century Grottaferrata, *Cryptensis Z α XXIX*.<sup>27</sup> The *Cryptensis* probably goes back directly to a collection compiled by Christopher himself or his milieu. Unfortunately, the manuscript is heavily damaged. Since the poems are laid out in two columns, it is frequently the case that one column has disappeared, resulting in the loss of every other verse.

The “various verses” of Christopher offer us one of the most vivid perspectives on Constantinople and its buildings, persons, and events.<sup>28</sup> These events range from significant historical turning points (see above) to horse races (poems 6, 90), rowdy processions (1, 136), and popular festivals (102, 124). Christopher has a keen eye for the inequalities that he observes around him (13 and 29), upbraiding presumptuous (85, 132), avaricious (11, 82), gluttonous (135) or credulous (114) people, be it monks, officials, teachers, or physicians.<sup>29</sup> The satirical voice suits him well for this purpose, and puns are never far away. He is fascinated by the natural world (48, 92, 122, 125), by popular habits (108) and by the art of musicians (129) and painters (112), also showing interest in astrology (42).<sup>30</sup> Some witty poems contain personal anecdotes (103, 132). Magdalino has used the term “poetic journalism” for this tendency to turn social and personal observations into verse.<sup>31</sup>

The στῆλοι διάφοροι of Mauropous include a similar variety of genres. What distinguishes Mauropous from many other Byzantine authors, is that he

25 Bernard/Livanos (trans.), *The Poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous*.

26 Demoen, “Phrasis poikilè”.

27 Description now in De Groote (ed.), *Christophori Mitylenaii Collectio Cryptensis*, pp. xxvii–xxix.

28 Oikonomides, “Life and Society”, which is essentially an overview of subjects treated in Mitylenaios’ poetry.

29 For his social critique, see especially Livanos, “Justice, Equality, and Dirt”.

30 Magdalino, “Cosmological Confectionery and Equal Opportunity”.

31 See Magdalino, “Cultural Change?”, p. 20.

carefully selected and arranged his literary works, integrating them into a collection that forms a meaningful whole. That is, the organization of the collection itself forms a message, which unfolds as the reader progresses with his reading. Moreover, this collection is still extant: it is the Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 676. It is clear that Mauropous closely oversaw the arrangement and production of this manuscript, but has probably not written it by his own hand.<sup>32</sup> The material composition and layout of Vat. gr. 676 faithfully reflects Mauropous' aesthetic programme, which is especially aimed at giving a nuanced image of his life and works, reflecting its eventful course and unexpected ruptures. The main part of the manuscript, containing Mauropous' "collected works" proper, is surrounded by some additional folia with metrical prefaces. These discuss the close relationship between the outlook of the present book and the vicissitudes of the author's life.

The 99 poems of the collection proper are arranged according to a carefully premeditated plan. Poems of similar genre and theme are grouped, and these groups occur throughout the collection in a symmetrical pattern.<sup>33</sup> Without maintaining a strict chronology, the order of the poems shows the advance of Mauropous' fame and career and his increasing contacts with the imperial court of Constantine IX Monomachos and his co-empresses. This success story is abruptly ended by Mauropous' appointment as metropolitan of Euchaita, which is reflected upon in a series of autobiographical poems (some of them entitled *eis eauton*), expressing the wish to lead a tranquil life far from the whirls of worldly ambition. The final poem, which functions as a special kind of book epigram,<sup>34</sup> implies that the reader will have gained a lesson from reading this collection.

Mauropous also often pairs poems with seemingly contradictory content. The second poems in these pairs recant and annul the conclusions reached in the first ones. He does this with the first preface poem consisting of two parts written far apart in time, then with a pair of poems on losing and gaining back his house (47 and 48),<sup>35</sup> and finally, and perhaps most forcefully, with a pair of poems before and after his appointment as metropolitan (92 and 93). This technique of recantation underscores the parallel between life and literature: the poems records for us in a series of snapshots the vicissitudes of a tumultuous biography.

32 Bianconi, "Giovanni Mauropode e il Vat. gr. 676". See also Anastasi, "Su Giovanni d'Euchaita", and Wilson, "Books and Readers", pp. 12–13.

33 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 64–65. For the arrangement of the collection, see also Anastasi, "Il *Canzoniere* di Giovanni di Euchaita".

34 Bianconi, "Et le livre s'est fait poésie".

35 Livanos, "Exile and Return".

As far as we know, Michael Psellos did not design a collection of poems in the same way Mauroπους and Christopher did. The modern edition of Psellos' poetry thus looks far more heterogeneous and includes genuine, dubious, as well as spurious poems attributed to him.<sup>36</sup> But there is an indication that at least some poems were grouped together.<sup>37</sup> The title above poem 6 actually refers to a group of poems, a synopsis of "all fields of science", at the behest of Constantine X Doukas, for the education of his son, the future emperor Michael VII Doukas. This "synopsis" probably encompassed poems 6, 3, 4, 5, and 7.

Variation is a keyword to understand the aesthetics of poetry of the time, and the various roles poets performed in society. It is telling that even minor collections of less well-known poets of the period, such as Michael the Grammarian<sup>38</sup> and the so-called "Anonymous of Sola",<sup>39</sup> cover a similarly wide range of genres and occasions.

### 3 Poetry and Power

The poetry of Michael Psellos and contemporaries represents a distinct phase in the history of Byzantine poetry. It takes some features already present in poets such as Geometres to another level, thus paving the way for 12th-century developments.<sup>40</sup> Poets of the 11th century represent themselves as more or less independent, or self-assertive, and even combative intellectuals. They pride themselves on their own achievements and skills, and the poet speaking in the first person is an emphatic presence in the poems.<sup>41</sup>

This self-assertiveness can be ascribed to social evolutions particular to these decades. The intellectual elite and the power elite to a certain extent coincided. Poets were high officials or highly influential persons who used poetry to advance their interests, enhance their reputation, and fulfill public needs. Our poets were able to set the rules of the game themselves, in contrast

36 Michael Psellos, *Poems*, ed. Westerink. For some criticisms on this edition, see Spadaro, "Note filologiche".

37 Hörandner, "The Byzantine Didactic Poem", p. 58.

38 Michael's poetry is edited in: Mercati, "Intorno a Μιχαήλ γραμματικός" and id., "Ancora intorno a Μιχαήλ γραμματικός". See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 318–19 and Lauritzen, "Michael the Grammarian's Irony about Hypsilon".

39 Sola, "Giambografi sconosciuti". Lauxtermann, "Paradox" revived interest in this poet.

40 See Magdalino, "Cultural Change?".

41 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 38–39; Magdalino, "Cultural Change?", pp. 29–30.



to their counterparts in the 12th century, who often represent themselves as miserable subordinates, bewailing their poverty. In this respect, the reign of Alexios Komnenos seems to mark a clear caesura in patronage.<sup>42</sup> Also, in comparison to later poetry, mid-11th century poetry is less directly linked to court and ceremonial.<sup>43</sup>

While some poetry was written during the reign of Basil II, it remains the case that this emperor did not actively support the patronage of poetry (or other literary pursuits).<sup>44</sup> After the short reign of his brother Constantine VIII, Romanos Argyros (1028–34) was the first emperor to take an interest in poetry again,<sup>45</sup> although the extant products are scarce. Under the short-lived “Paphlagonian dynasty” (Michael IV and Michael V, from 1034 to 1042), more traces of poetic patronage can be found, as all important poets dedicated poems to members of this imperial family. Christopher Mitylenaios praises the four brothers of this family in his poem 18; John Mauropous writes an epigram on behalf of Michael IV’s brother George (poem 26); and a young Michael Psellos offers poem 16 to Michael IV to apply for a job as a notary. But the most important emperor for poetry was undoubtedly Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–55), who reigned together with Zoe and Theodora, the female descendants of Basil II.<sup>46</sup> He is praised, addressed, or mentioned in several poems, some by famous authors, others by anonymous ones. Some of the longest poems of Mauropous (54 and 55) are addressed to these three imperial figures, expressing the poet’s attachment to their regime. Mauropous also defends emperor and patriarch (probably Michael Keroullarios) against attackers (53), and celebrates the holy protection of Constantinople when attacked twice in 1043 (63 and 64). Christopher also dedicates a particularly flattering poem to Constantine IX (55). Several epigrams were written for Constantine’s various patronage projects, especially his foundation of St George of Mangana, of which the church,<sup>47</sup> *triklinos* (hall),<sup>48</sup> and gospel books<sup>49</sup> are celebrated in epigrams. There are also extant epigrams on Constantine’s imperial banner;<sup>50</sup>

42 Also stressed in Lauxtermann, “La poesia”.

43 Hörandner, “La poésie profane au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, p. 254.

44 See Crostini, “Cultural Life” and Lauxtermann, “Paradox”, which take different viewpoints, but are not necessarily incompatible with each other.

45 Lauritzen, “Miliaresion Poet”.

46 On this emperor and his literary policies, see Chondridou, *Κωνσταντίνος Μονομάχος*.

47 Christopher 95 and an anonymous poem edited in Sakkelion/Sakkelion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, pp. 184–85.

48 Anonymous poem transmitted in the famous manuscript Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Marc. gr. 524; see Spingou, “Snapshots”, p. 62.

49 Mauropous 71 and 72.

50 Psellos, *Poem 27*, ed. Westerink. The attribution to Psellos is not certain.

and on gifts for his personal patron saint, St George.<sup>51</sup> His co-empresses also appear prominently as patrons, especially in the poetry of John Mauropus, who wrote epigrams for religious objects donated by Theodora (73 and 74).

After Monomachos' death, only Psellos seemed to have stayed in touch with the imperial court. For Isaac I Komnenos (1057–59), he composed some poems which curiously mingle didactic with ceremonial content (18 and 19). We have already mentioned that he dedicated a cycle of didactic poems for the imperial prince Michael VII Doukas (1071–78) during the reign of Constantine X Doukas (1059–67). But the situation is not so straightforward. Psellos had in fact already dedicated some of these poems to earlier emperors. The other long didactic poems as well have a history of different dedications. So we should perhaps take with a pinch of salt the statements in the poems themselves that they are tailored to the specific demands of the emperors. Their function rather lies in current teaching practice for a broader public, and the imperial dedications may be secondary “repackagings” of these texts.

#### 4 Friends and Enemies

The combative tone and conscious self-representation of our poets are the results of fierce competition within the elite. Their privileges were insecure and their positions ill-defined: after all, there was no post of “court poet”, nor of “court orator”. To gain entry into the elite (in other words, to become a credible and well-connected *logios*), one had to prove one's worth; many texts referring to examinations, tests and competitions (*logikoi agones*) attest to this. There was a meritocratic, or pseudo-meritocratic, system where intellectual abilities (as evidenced in poetry and other texts) were supposed to lead to careers in bureaucracy, education, and/or the Court. The already mentioned “poetic application letter” of Michael Psellos (16) is a telling example. We also have some metrical requests for promotion addressed to Constantine IX: Christopher writes one on behalf of a friend (poem 56), and an anonymous official submits a poetic petition for promotion.<sup>52</sup>

Within this elite, a veneration for *hoi logoi* (a term encompassing learning, education, as well as rhetorical skills) was a necessary prerequisite, and a

51 Again transmitted in the Marc. gr. 524; see Lampros, “Μαρκιανός κἀδίδιξ”, p. 7 (a gift of a car-bundle?) and p. 128 (an amulet). The first poem also turns up in a later rhetorical treatise, which picks up this monostich as a perfect example of conciseness: Hörandner, “Über die vier Teile”, p. 107, l. 152. For 11th-century poetry in the Marcianus, see Spingou, “Snapshots”.

52 Edited in Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 72–73. Karpozilos' attribution of the poem to Mauropus should be dismissed.

common ideal of behaviour was put forward. The many funeral and encomiastic poems for friends can be read as portraits of the ideal intellectual gentlemen: erudite, sociable, witty. Examples are: Christopher's poem 27 for a certain Niketas of Synada; 44 for his brother; Mauropous' poems 35 to 39 for various friends; and a long funeral poem of Basil Kekaumenos for Anastasios Lyzix.<sup>53</sup>

In this context, our poets quite aggressively asserted the value and quality of their own work. Several poems address an audience of readers eager to judge poems that were apparently already circulating in a limited milieu of friends and peers. Christopher responds to a reader who had commented on the rhetorical sophistication of a funeral poem of his (Christopher: 77 and 78), and Mauropous rebuts the criticisms of a reader who had found fault with a grammatical issue in an epigram (Mauropous: 32 and 33). Mauropous also reacts to plagiarism of one of his poems (poems 60 and 61).<sup>54</sup> These reading circles were mostly of a restricted nature and were deliberately kept so: in an effective mocking epigram (poem 86), Christopher regards his poetry as too precious to be thrown to the pigs.

Precisely because of social mobility, our poets had to watch out for intruders. Poems could be a medium to attack rivals, who rose through the ranks quickly without showing due credentials (Christopher: 40, Mauropous: 66). Competitors who put up a display of their own and made some error, were mercilessly criticized by our poets in turn (Christopher: 23, Mauropous: 34). Mauropous is critical of other authors who write in great quantities for easy recognition and fast profit (poem 1).

Derision and outright abuse are weapons used by our poets to secure their reputations and damage those of their rivals. Christopher describes in vivid tones a poetic altercation with his rivals; it is represented as a literary duel, with pen and paper as weapons (36). Psellos addresses a long and abusive invective poem to his enemy Sabbaites (poem 21), who had in turn written a caustic poem making fun of Psellos' contentious return from the monastery of Olympus in Bithynia to the capital.<sup>55</sup> Psellos' poem contains numerous cultural and intertextual references, which display his skills and erudition, in an attempt to outwit Sabbaites.<sup>56</sup> Psellos' poem 22, written in the canon form,

53 Basil Kekaumenos, *Funeral Poem on Lyzix*, ed. Mercati.

54 See also Anastasi, "Sul carne 61 Lagarde di Giovanni di Euchaita".

55 For the circumstances of the exchange between Psellos and Sabbaites, see Sternbach, "Ein Schmähgedicht des Michael Psellos", and (more correctly) Westerink in his introductions to the poems. The evidence in the manuscripts is confusing, since poem 22 is also considered to be an answer to the poem attacking Psellos.

56 Maltese, "Osservazioni sul carne *Contra il Sabbaita* di Michele Psello", and Conca, "La lingua e lo stile dei carmi satirici di Psello".

attacks a monk named Jacob, mainly because of his love of the bottle. Satirical and invective poems in particular may have had a performative function: among a group of friends, poems evoked laughter at the expense of a common rival.<sup>57</sup>

Clearly, this elite felt itself at home in Constantinople, and not outside of it. Mauropous' pair of poems on his house (47 and 48) focus on the meaning of exile, so important in Mauropous' life and that of his contemporaries.<sup>58</sup> Our poets pride themselves on being *asteios*: refined urbanites with a feeling for wit.<sup>59</sup> In the world outside the city, *agroikia* reigns, literally "rusticity", with connotations also present in the English word "boorishness". In his poem 40, Christopher represents *agroikia* as the enemy of anything urban and intellectual, threatening the "friends of *hoi logoi*". Michael the Grammarian, in an attack on a wanton bishop living in the provinces, also considers lack of education, faulty pronunciation, and even rough table manners, as typical features of *agroikia*.

Friendship played an important role in 11th-century poetry. Our *logioi* built and maintained personal networks in which friends exchanged services, such as recommendations, interventions, and gifts, while seeking solidarity in an unstable world of intrigues and calumny. This friendship is impregnated with all the characteristics of intellectual *philia*. When Mauropous dedicates his collection to his friends (poem 1, v. 32: φίλοι), these are at the same time identified as "friends of *hoi logoi*" (v. 28: τοῖς λόγων φίλοις). Christopher repeatedly asks his friends to send him *logoi*, because this is what the poet craves for and lives on (poems 27, 100). In some playful pieces that can be called epistolary poems, he uses the device of refusing material gifts in favour of the gift of words, which is most cherished of all (poems 115, 124).<sup>60</sup>

Characteristically for this intellectual *philia*, friends and peers engaged in a more or less playful competition, seeking to outwit each other in intricate games. Riddles, a genre cultivated by all three main poets, can be seen in this context. Another example is Christopher's pair of poems (87 and 88) of which the first reacts to a gift of grapes, arguing that figs would have been better, while the second poem does exactly the opposite. Our poets are not averse to a dose of humour. Puns abound, especially in Christopher's poetry, for satirical purposes. Equivocations are also present in Mauropous, but there they operate on a more conceptual level.

57 See also Magdalino, "Cultural Change?"

58 Livanos, "Exile and return in John Mauropous".

59 Bernard, "Asteiotes".

60 Bernard, "Greet Me with Words".

## 5 Occasions

The “various verses” of our poets are dictated by equally various occasions. Our poets were called upon to provide metrical discourse for a wide range of public or semi-public circumstances. Epigrams are perhaps the most important of these. When Christopher praises his friend Niketas of Synada, otherwise unknown to us, for his various qualities and successes, he singles out how the “divine abodes bear his verses” (poem 27, line 30). It seems indeed that writing inscriptions on commission, especially for religious purposes, was an essential task of the poet (or *logios*) of that time.

Numerous inscriptions have survived in their original context,<sup>61</sup> but many more are transmitted in manuscript tradition. Some of them have precise lemmata that refer to specific objects or buildings, but mostly, epigrams are written in a more general fashion for artistic representations of feast days or saints. In many of them, a concrete image (an icon, fresco, or small object) is implied in the text with adverbs such as “here”, or references to the great skill of the artist.<sup>62</sup> There are some cycles or groups of anonymous epigrams that can be loosely dated to the 11th century.<sup>63</sup> Many epigrams are also transmitted under the name of Michael Psellos.<sup>64</sup> Christopher’s collection counts many short epigrams on feast days and saints; probably as a result of the aesthetics of variety, no subject is treated twice. Epigram is also a very prominent genre in Mauropous’ collection. Poems 2 to 26 form a cycle of epigrams for a complete iconographic program. The designation *ἐκφράσεις* for this cycle (or at least for poems 2 to 12) reflects the very vivid and detailed way in which Mauropous describes the images of biblical scenes. Other epigrams of Mauropous accompany imperial gifts and foundations (icons, books), by or for Constantine IX, Zoe, and/or Theodora.<sup>65</sup> There are quite a number of book epigrams in Mauropous’ collection, including on works of his own (27–28 and 94–95).<sup>66</sup> Perhaps his most famous epigram is poem 43, asking Christ to be lenient to the ancient authors Plato and Plutarch.<sup>67</sup> The fact that this is called *epigramma* in the

61 On 11th-century inscriptions, see Toth, “Epigraphic Traditions in Eleventh-Century Byzantium”. As to the so-called “book epigrams”, a splendid 11th-century example is discussed in Lauxtermann, “Mark the Monk and *Bodl. E.D. Clarke 15*”.

62 See also the chapter of Drpic and Rhoby in this volume.

63 Christensen, “Inedita from the MS. Hauniensis 1899”, and Hörandner, “Ein Zyklus von Epigrammen”.

64 Farkas, “Epigrammata Pselli”.

65 See De Gregorio, “Epigrammi e documenti”, who compares some of these poems to foundation documents and documentary texts. For a specific case, see Tsantilas, “Ο Ιωάννης Μαυρόπουλος και η απεικόνιση των αυτοκρατόρων”.

66 Cortassa, “I libri di Giovanni Mauropode”.

67 See Anastasi, “Giovanni Mauropode e Platone”.

manuscript (the only one in the collection) suggests that it may have functioned as a book epigram, rather than being a spontaneous reflection on the ancient literary heritage.

The metrical calendars of Christopher Mitylenaios take the art of writing epigrams to an extreme. These four calendars mention day by day the saint or the liturgical feast celebrated on that day, often including a short description of the saint's death. Two calendars are written in hymnographic metres (one in *stichera* and one in *canones*).<sup>68</sup> While scholars have tended to see Christopher's calendars as intellectual exercises,<sup>69</sup> indications in the manuscripts rather suggest that the two hymnographical calendars were performed in church liturgy.<sup>70</sup>

Another calendar was written in dodecasyllables (called "iambic"), devoting one distich to each saint. Christopher wrote a metrical preface for this calendar (poem 83). The fourth calendar is hexametrical, with one line for each day. The modern reader can reconstruct these two calendars from Follieri's partial editions;<sup>71</sup> the editions of liturgical books are more complete, but are uncritical and include later additions.<sup>72</sup> The art of Christopher's calendars, as Lia Raffaella Cresci shows, is that the poet squeezes all essential information into a very confined space, and yet achieves a maximum of variation between the hundreds of entries.<sup>73</sup> All the while, he very adroitly uses a device beloved of the Byzantine epigrammatist: the (mostly paradoxical) antithesis, often connected to a pun on the saint's name.<sup>74</sup>

Poets were also asked to provide verses for a very broad range of public occasions and ceremonies. Funerals (or commemorations of the dead) were among the most important of these occasions. For his sister, mother, and brother, Christopher composed cycles of poems accompanying different stages of the funeral and mourning process. Emotions of familial attachment play a great role in these poems. Apart from the already mentioned funeral pieces for friends, Mauropous also wrote a series of funeral poems for the emperor (81–85), probably Constantine IX Monomachos, who speaks in the first person (according to the principle of *ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου*, in which the poet lends his voice to another person). He assumes a strongly repentant tone, bewailing the

68 Follieri, *Calendari*.

69 Darrouzès, "Calendriers byzantins en vers".

70 See Follieri, *Calendari*, pp. 27–28, for the titles and notices in one of the oldest manuscripts.

71 In the second volume of Follieri, *Calendari*, and Follieri, "Il Calendario giambico di Cristoforo di Mitilene".

72 Eustratiades (ed.), Ἀγιολόγιον.

73 Cresci, "Esegesi nel testo poetico"; ead., "Fra artifici retorici e testo scritturale", and ead., "Stratégies de composition".

74 Hunger, "Antithese", with many examples from Christopher's calendars.

fleeting nature of worldly wealth and power. This forms a noteworthy counterpart to jubilant images of imperial power elsewhere in the collection,<sup>75</sup> but should be seen as an expression of ritual *katanyxis* by the emperor, not necessarily as *Kaiserkritik*.<sup>76</sup>

Psellos' funeral poem for Maria Skleraina, mistress of Constantine IX Monomachos (poem 17), is a long and elaborately rhetorical piece.<sup>77</sup> As Panagiotis Agapitos pointed out, this highly dramatic poem is very suitable for performance at a public mourning ceremony, since it lends its voice (through the technique of *ethopoïia*) to family members mourning her death, and makes heavy use of rhetorical devices aimed at acoustic effects.<sup>78</sup>

Also other ceremonies required poetic accompaniments. Michael Psellos dedicated two remarkable poems to Isaac I Komnenos on the occasion of festive celebrations (poems 18 and 19).

## 6 Poetry and Education

Our poets actively engaged in contemporary school life and education. For Psellos and Maupous, teaching was the core of their career. Typically for the 11th century, education is characterized by the highly competitive atmosphere between independent teachers and schools. A special form of the "contests in *hoi logoi*" mentioned earlier are the contests in *schede* (grammatical exercises), mostly fought between pupils of rival schools. The poems written to accompany these contests have a very polemical tone, as a direct consequence of the poets' partisan involvement in the virulent competition between schools. Christopher wrote two poems extolling the school of Saint Theodore of Sphorakiou, and one that attacks the rival school of the Theotokos in Chalkoprateia (poems 9 to 11). Tellingly, his praises or criticisms of teachers mainly focus on their ability to train pupils for the *schedos* contests.

Maupous chose the side of the school of the Forty Martyrs, hurling threats at the opponents of this school in *schedos* contests (poem 68); remarkably,

75 Cortassa, "Poesia e ideologia del potere imperiale in Giovanni Maupode".

76 Pace Kazhdan, "Some Problems in the Biography of John Maupous, II", who underestimates the peculiar features of the genre and the consequences of the *ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου* technique.

77 Edition and introduction also in Michael Psellos, *Funeral Poem for Maria Skleraina*, ed. Spadaro.

78 Agapitos, "Public and Private Death in Psellos".

this poem is very similar to an anonymous poem with the same purpose.<sup>79</sup> Mauropous' occupation with *schede* is also evident from a book epigram accompanying an edition of *schede* made by the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (poem 70).<sup>80</sup> Also the Anonymous of Sola wrote poems for contests between schools.<sup>81</sup>

Our poets, in their capacity of teachers, turned to their metrical skills in order to make knowledge attractive and draw students. This led to a remarkable resurgence of the genre of didactic poetry.<sup>82</sup> Mauropous' name is connected to a didactic poem about etymologies.<sup>83</sup> But it is Michael Psellos who revolutionized the genre of didactic poetry. These poems, some of which are very long, cover all kinds of subjects: grammar (6), rhetoric (7), medicine (9), law (8), biblical exegesis (1 and 2), as well as some smaller poems on Church councils and canon law. In terms of content, these poems are highly derivative. Poem 2, an Exegesis of the *Song of Songs*, is so dependent on a particular manuscript branch of a homily of Gregory of Nyssa on the subject, that it even disregards a portion of the original biblical text.<sup>84</sup> Poem 7 on rhetoric, as well, for example, can be considered a summary of the Hermogenic corpus.<sup>85</sup> These poems have some remarkable features in common with their ancient counterparts: a conscious advertisement of how metre made dour subject matter attractive; and a communicative situation where the poet speaks in the first person as a teacher to a second person who is portrayed as a pupil.<sup>86</sup> In the didactic poems of Niketas of Herakleia (active in the later decades of the century), verse is related to day-to-day teaching practice, with attention to *schedos* contests and the behavior of the students.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, Niketas' poems adopt the core features of the didactic genre, marrying the thirst for accessible knowledge to the attraction of (accentual) metre.

79 Schirò, "La schedografia a bisanzio nei sec. XI–XII". See also Anastasi, "Giovanni d'Euchaita e gli skedikoi", arguing for the improvisatory character of *schede*.

80 Both Anastasi, "A proposito del carne 70 di Giovanni Mauropode" and De Gregorio, "Epigrammi e documenti", interpret the poem differently.

81 Bernard, "Anonymous of Sola".

82 Hörandner, "The Byzantine Didactic Poem".

83 John Mauropous, *Poem on Etymology*, ed. Reitzenstein.

84 Bossina, "Psello distratto".

85 For more details (and a translation of the poem), see Walker, "Michael Psellos on Rhetoric".

86 More on these generic features in Hörandner, "The Didactic Poem".

87 For Niketas' didactic poetry, see Schneider, "La poésie didactique"; Roosen, "The Works of Nicetas Heracleensis"; and Antonopoulou, "The Orthographical Kanons".



## 7 Metres and Rhythms

From a purely technical point of view, writing verse was a genuine *tour de force*. In the hands of the Constantinopolitan elite poets, the dodecasyllable reaches a mature, classic form. Christopher and Mauropous apply the rhythmical pattern of the dodecasyllable with great consistency.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, the three main poets strove to maintain the prosodical scheme of the iambic trimetre. For them, it was evident that they still wrote in *iamboi*.<sup>89</sup> However, the rules for correct prosody were not as strict as in ancient practice or even as in George of Pisidia's poetry. Certain concessions were made, and some patterns can be discerned in these infringements, not only within a poet's individual collections, but also when comparing different poets.<sup>90</sup> In spite of this seemingly fossilized metrical technique, not everything is imitation. Our poets were rather restrained in their use of quotations from ancient texts,<sup>91</sup> with the exception of Christopher's hexametric compositions, which feature Homeric diction and numerous Homeric reminiscences.

The *kanon* had by now been established as the main form for hymnography. Mauropous is the author of a considerable amount of hymnographic poetry.<sup>92</sup> Some 150 *kanones* under his name have survived. They celebrate the Theotokos, Christ, military saints, the Three Hierarchs, and various other saints, often including an acrostic with Mauropous' name. It is an interesting question why Mauropous did not include, nor mention, his hymnographical poems in his "collected works" represented by Vat. gr. 676.

Even Michael Psellos is not alien to the world of hymnography. He wrote a *kanon* for the office of Symeon Metaphrastes (poem 23), and poem 24 (in dodecasyllables) summarizes a *kanon* of Kosmas the Melode.<sup>93</sup> Remarkable in

88 Maas, "Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber", pp. 288–89, n. 2. On the metre in Mitylenaios, see De Groot, "The Metre in the Poems of Christopher Mitylenaios" and id. (ed.), *Christophori Mitylenaii Versuum variorum Collectio Cryptensis*, pp. lxxv–lxxii. On metre and rhythm in Psellos, see Sarriu, "Metrica e stile", and id., "Ritmo, metro, poesia e stile".

89 References in the poems to their status of "iambs", for instance, are in Psellos, 21.306, Mitylenaios 78.2 (referring to poem 77), and Mauropous 33 (title), referring to poem 32.

90 The most exhaustive treatment is in Kuhn, *Symbolae ad doctrinae perichronon historiam pertinentes*. For Psellos, who is somewhat more tolerant, see Sarriu, "Le infrazioni prosodiche".

91 Hörandner, "La poésie profane au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle", and now De Stefani, "Influence of Classical and Byzantine Poetry".

92 On Mauropous' hymnographical works: Hussey, "The Canons of John Mauropous"; Follieri, "Living Heimnology"; ead., *Otto canoni*, pp. 20–30, and D'Aiuto, *Tre canoni*, pp. 20–25.

93 Lauritzen, "Paraphrasis as Interpretation".

this period is the rise of a phenomenon called “para-hymnography”:<sup>94</sup> hymnographic metres used for purposes that had nothing to do with liturgy. Psellos used it for invective (poem 22 against the bibulous Jacob), and Niketas of Herakleia used it extensively for didactic purposes (mainly grammar).<sup>95</sup>

In this period, *politikos stichos* comes to dominate all other non-prosodical metres. Symeon the New Theologian, who died in 1022, had written a large quantity of poetry that completely disregarded ancient prosody and used a wide range of accentual metres. This formal choice may have been a deliberate avoidance of learned tradition.<sup>96</sup> While Symeon’s spiritual legacy loomed large over 11th-century Constantinople, his metrical innovations seem not to have been picked up, not even by the poets that hailed him in some book epigrams.<sup>97</sup> The *politikos stichos*, at the same time, as a vehicle for written verse, spreads to more genres than before.<sup>98</sup> Nearly all of Psellos’ didactic poems are composed in *politikos stichos*, which seems in contradiction with the fact that Psellos is an established intellectual author. Also, for the first time, a poem in *politikoi stichoi* contains a reference to the metre in the text itself (Psellos, poem 2, line 1217). These poems thus mark a remarkable step in the history of the *politikos stichos*, a step that is not always given its due weight. In the poems themselves, Psellos attributes certain qualities to the use of the *politikos stichos*: clarity, simplicity, playfulness, pleasantness, and (perhaps surprisingly) conciseness.<sup>99</sup> The quality of συνοπτικὸς is frequently mentioned, which may partly explain the visual advantages that verse could offer in contrast to prose. Psellos was certainly conscious that the *politikos stichos* was not held in high regard by his peers in the intellectual elite. In a funeral oration, he condemns the practice of making synopses for “lazy emperors”: the very thing he was doing when composing and dedicating his didactic poems.<sup>100</sup> The use of the *politikos stichos* may be related to the imperial dedicatees of the poems, as the court was a hotbed for this metre. It is no accident that poem 9, the long poem on medicine, is written in dodecasyllables instead, and is not dedicated to emperors, but expressly to anyone interested in science. There are no references to clarity or simplicity, but rather to the “graces” of metre (see vv. 529–38).

94 Mitsakis, “Byzantine and Modern Greek Parahymnography”.

95 Antonopoulou, “Orthographical Canons”.

96 On Symeon’s poetry, see Markopoulos (ed.), *Τέσσερα κείμενα για την ποίηση του Συμεών του Νέου Θεολόγου*; Koder, *Die Hymnen Symeons, des Neos Theologos*.

97 See Bernard and Demoen elsewhere in this volume.

98 Jeffreys, “Written Dekapentasyllables and Their Oral Provenance”.

99 Jeffreys, “The Nature and Origin of the Political Verse”.

100 Psellos, *Funeral Orations*, ed. Polemis, p. 152 (§ 22, l. 58–65).

## 8 Afterlife

What impact did 11th-century poetry have? When looking at the extant manuscripts transmitting 11th-century poetry, there can be little doubt that two categories were popular in later Byzantium: Christopher's calendars (chiefly the iambic and hexametric ones),<sup>101</sup> and Psellos' didactic poems. Christopher's calendar verses were included in the Constantinopolitan *synaxarion*, which secured them a lasting popularity and circulation. Some verses even appear in inscriptions in churches.<sup>102</sup> The calendars were also translated into Slavic languages.<sup>103</sup> Psellos' didactic poems were not only widely copied, they were also revised, adapted, summarized, or supplemented with scholia or additional verses. Proof of his formidable reputation as a didactic poet is the fact that later scribes and compilers attached the name of Michael Psellos to many other didactic poems; hence the many *spuria* in Westerink's edition.

The Byzantine afterlife of Christopher's "various verses" is more limited than that of his calendars. Some of his poems were included in poetic anthologies of the 12th and 13th centuries, but mostly without his name attached. The reception of Christopher's poetry entered a decisive phase in 13th-century Otranto, in southern Italy. It is here that the *Cryptensis* came into being,<sup>104</sup> which included not only Christopher's poetry, but also the works of poets belonging to a circle of 13th-century Otranto poets, who imitated his poetry. The afterlife of Maupous' poems is closely connected to Vat. gr. 676: all known copies seem to derive from this manuscript.<sup>105</sup> It is an open question how later Byzantines approached this poetry that was so closely tied to specific events, persons, and occasions of the mid-11th century. To us, it is perhaps exactly this occasionality, this *Sitz im Leben*, that ensures its vividness.

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101 On the afterlife of Christopher's calendars, see Follieri, *Calendari*, pp. 217–321.

102 Rhoby, "Inscriptional Versions".

103 Follieri/Dujčev, "Il calendario in sticheri di Cristoforo di Mitilene".

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## “How Many Verses Shall I Write and Say?”: Poetry in the Komnenian Period (1081–1204)

*Nikos Zagklas*

Damn me, o emperor, when I turn around and see how he prepares himself for the meal, while I walk up and down measuring metrical feet of verses. He gobbles down sweet wine from a huge jug, while I seek the iamb, search for the spondee, [135] search for the pyrrhic and the other metres. But how can metres sate my limitless hunger? When did I eat from the iamb, o ruler of the world? Or how can I ever be satisfied by the pyrrhic? [140] Behold, a skilled versifier, that cobbler said “Kyrie Eulogeson” and then began to nibble. But damn this misfortune! How many verses shall I weave, how many verses shall I write and say, how many verses shall I voice to have the ultimate cure of that voice? So, I too set out to become a cobbler, [145] to sate my appetite for bread, the so-called crunchy bread instead of the bread of second quality, known as the bread of poverty, that one that grammarians and talented wordsmiths fancy!<sup>1</sup>



\* Ptochoprodromos, poem 3, ed. Eideneier, v. 142.

1 ἀνάθεμά με, βασιλεῦ, ὅταν στραφῶ καὶ ἰδῶ τον, | τὸ πῶς ἀνακομβώνεται κατὰ τῆς μαγειρείας, | καὶ ἐγὼ ὑπηγαίνω καὶ ἔρχομαι πόδας μετρῶν τῶν στίχων. | Αὐτὸς κοτσώνει τὸ γλυκὺν εἰς τὸ τρανὸν μουχρούτιν, | καὶ ἐγὼ ζητῶ τὸν ἱαμβον, γυρεύω τὸν σπονδεῖον, | (135) γυρεύω τὸν πυρρίχιον καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τὰ μέτρα. | Ἀλλὰ τὰ μέτρα ποῦ ὠφελοῦν τὴν ἄμετρον μου πείναν; | Πότε γὰρ ἐκ τὸν ἱαμβον νὰ φάγω, κοσμοκράτωρ, | ἢ πῶς ἐκ τὸν πυρρίχιον ποτέ μου νὰ χορτάσω; | “Ἐδε τεχνίτης στιχιστῆς ἐκεῖνος ὁ τσαγγάρης (140) | εἶπε τὸ “κύριε εὐλόγησον”, ἤρξατο ῥουκανίζειν. | Ἐγὼ δέ, φεῦ τῆς συμφορᾶς, πόσους νὰ πλέξω στίχους, | πόσα νὰ γράψω καὶ νὰ εἰπῶ, πόσα νὰ λαρυγγίσω, | νὰ τύχω μου τοῦ λάρυγγος τῆς ἄκρας θεραπείας; | “Ὀρμησα τάχα καὶ ἐγὼ τὸ νὰ γενῶ τσαγγάρης, (145) | μὴνα χορτάσω τὸ ψωμῖν, τὸ λέγουν ἀφρατίσιν, | ἢ ἀπὸ τὸ μεσοκάθαρον, τὸ λέγουν τῆς πτωχείας, | τὸ ἐπεθυμοῦν γραμματικοὶ καὶ καλοστιχοπλόκοι: Ptochoprodromos, poem 3, ed. Eideneier, pp. 180–81, lines 130–48.

By addressing the emperor Manuel I Komnenos, (Ptocho)Prodromos<sup>2</sup> describes in the most overdramatic tone his dire situation as a “professional poet” in 12th-century Constantinople. While his neighbour is an uneducated cobbler enjoying a very comfortable life with loads of food and drink, he is a learned poet suffering from hunger, for he has nothing else to eat but his own verses. By intermingling the “futility of letters” and “social inequality” with a rather far-fetched image of his poverty, the poet shapes the so-called “rhetoric of poverty”,<sup>3</sup> which is a common feature of many other learned and vernacular poems of the Komnenian period.

In view of (Ptocho)Prodromos’ complaints, one would normally expect a meagre use of verse in this period, but this is far from being the case. The verse production becomes much larger than that of the immediately preceding and succeeding centuries.<sup>4</sup> To explain this ostensible discrepancy, and understand the disguised purpose of (Ptocho)Prodromos’ woes, it is important to see them in conjunction with the historical and socio-cultural developments of this period. The social status of many Komnenian literati differs considerably from that of their 11th-century fellows. Unlike Christopher Mitylenaios, John Mauropous and Michael Psellos, who were fairly secure (both socially and financially), many of their 12th-century successors depended, to a much larger degree, upon the favours and commissions of various literary magnates. This is hardly surprising, if we consider Alexios I Komnenos’ accession to the throne was accompanied by the introduction of a military aristocracy and a very centralized political system, dominated by the members of the Komnenian family and a few other privileged aristocratic families.<sup>5</sup> Whereas in the case of Basil II the military ideology brought about a strong “anti-intellectual climate” within the court,<sup>6</sup> during the reigns of Alexios and his successors, intellectualism was

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2 Who is most likely to be identified with the celebrated 12th-century poet Theodore Prodromos. For the most recent study on the authorship of the *Ptochoprodromika*, see Agapitos, “Theodore Prodromos”, pp. 23–37 (with detailed bibliography).

3 The term “begging poetry”, which has prevailed in Byzantine studies since the time of Krumbacher, is not an appropriate term. For detailed literature on this issue, see Agapitos, “Theodore Prodromos”, p. 3, note 10.

4 As has already been noted in Jeffreys, “Verse”, pp. 219–28. For introductory studies to the Komnenian poetry, see Lauxtermann, “La poesia”, pp. 327–35; Signes Codoñer, “Poesía”, pp. 19–66 and more recently Magdalino, “Cultural Change”, pp. 19–36. Though Magdalino concentrates on 11th-century poetry, he offers some thought-provoking insights into Komnenian poetry.

5 As Mullett has put it “the closer to the emperor in kin the higher in pecking order”; see Mullett, “Court Literature”, p. 174.

6 Lauxtermann, “Paradox”, p. 212.

highly valued and acquired a key-role at court.<sup>7</sup> One major consequence of this development is the emergence of a group of literati who vociferously vied for patronage and social promotion by using as a medium their poetic craft.<sup>8</sup>

As a result, the figure of the starving poet projected in (Ptocho)Prodromos' poem and some other contemporary works—even if it echoes frank sentiments and experiences—should be seen, to a certain extent, as one of the tools used by the Komnenian poets to fulfil their ambitions and objectives. What is more, such kinds of poems constitute only one segment of the multifaceted picture of 12th-century poetry and its relation to literary patronage. The genesis of a wide array of other types of verse texts (e.g. the novel, chronicle, letters, *schede*, and didactic and ceremonial poetry) is also frequently linked with requests by various literary magnates. Although literary patronage is a very important motivation for the use of verse during the entire period, there seems to be some degree of variation. Poetry does not display a static character over this long period, without any changes or distinct phases. For example, various literary genres make their first appearance in verse during the reigns of John and Manuel Komnenos and cease to exist altogether in the last decades of the 12th century. The next three sections aim to offer a fuller picture of the vast verse production and its trends, demonstrate the development of patronage, and draw some cautious links between the poets and their works during this long period from c.1081 up to the threshold of the 13th century.

## 1 The Early Komnenian Period: a Transitional Phase

To fully understand the blossoming of poetry in the Komnenian period, we should behold not only the centre of the picture (the reigns of John and Manuel), but also its margins: the late 11th and 12th centuries. The early years of Alexios I Komnenos' reign witnessed the existence of quite a few poets who were not only successors of some important 11th-century poets, but also models for many well-known Komnenian poets. For example, in the pseudo-Psellian poem no. 68, most probably written by a 12th-century poet,<sup>9</sup> Theophylaktos of Ochrid is praised for his poetic talent together with other well-known

7 For a study of court literature in the reign of Alexios, see Mullett, "Court Literature", pp. 173–82.

8 This issue has been discussed in numerous studies related to Komnenian literature and culture more broadly; see Kazhdan/Wharton Epstein, *Change*, and Mullett, "Patronage", pp. 173–201.

9 See Hörandner/Paul, "Ps.-Psellos", pp. 108–09, who suggested Niketas of Herakleia, Gregory Pardos, or Ioannikios the Monk as possible candidates.

Byzantine poets.<sup>10</sup> No less than 15 of Theophylaktos' poems with diverse subject-matters have come down to us:<sup>11</sup> a book epigram for a manuscript with works of Galen; two nouthetic poems; a polemic poem against a certain individual who lambastes priests; two monodies for his brother Demetrios; and a verse prologue to his oration in defence of his brother Demetrios, who was a eunuch.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, as a very prolific letter writer, it does not come as a surprise that two of Theophylaktos' surviving poems functioned as letters. In poem no. 1, Theophylaktos addresses Nikephoros Bryennios, who has asked him to send a letter, while in poem no. 2 the doctor Michael Pantechnes is asked to visit Theophylaktos and help him with the treatment of his sciatica. Theophylaktos' corpus includes many types of poems; types that continue to be written in the remainder of the 12th century. More importantly, some of Theophylaktos' techniques anticipate popular trends in the decades to come. The double redaction of his monody for his brother in anacreontics and dodecasyllables is a very good example.<sup>13</sup> The practice of multimetric poetic cycles is quite popular among many later Komnenian authors, including Prodromos, Eugenianos and Tornikes.<sup>14</sup>

Didactic poetry is another popular text type during the reign of Alexios thanks to three authors: Niketas of Herakleia, Philippos Monotropos, and Nicholas III Grammatikos. The metropolitan of Serrai, Niketas of Herakleia—who wrote some of his works even before 1081—is mainly known for his didactic poems on issues of grammar and metrics that were composed not only in various liturgical forms, but also in political verse and iambics.<sup>15</sup> In 1195, the monk Philippos Monotropos concluded the composition of his long *Dioptra* (7,000 verses), a didactic poem which mainly focuses on various theological and moral issues.<sup>16</sup> Within the same social and ecclesiastical environment,

10 Psellos, poem 68, ed. Westerink, p. 454, lines 81–82: σὺ δ' αὖ, ὑπέρτιμε Ψελλέ, Πισίδη, Χριστοφόρε, | Λέων καὶ Θεοφύλακτε πρόεδρε Βουλγαρίας; = And you, Hypertimos Psellos, Pisides, Christophoros, | Leo and Theophylaktos, bishop of Bulgaria; transl. Bernard, *Secular Poetry*, p. 53.

11 Theophylaktos of Ochrid, ed. Gautier, vol. 2, pp. 348–77; for some brief comments on the poems, see Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid*, pp. 243–47.

12 Theophylaktos of Ochrid, ed. Gautier, vol. 2, pp. 289–91; for the prose oration, see Mullett, “Eunuchs”, pp. 177–98; Messis, *Les eunuques*, pp. 321–36.

13 For the connection of the two monodies, see Zagklas, “Multimetric Poetic Cycles”, p. 56–58.

14 Zagklas, “Multimetric Poetic Cycles”, p. 43–70.

15 For some preliminary remarks on Niketas' didactic works, see Hörandner, “Didactic Poem”, pp. 64–66; and Bernard, *Secular Poetry*, s.v. chapter “Education”.

16 For an analysis of this work, see the chapter by Afentoulidou and Fuchsbaauer in this volume.

and most certainly influenced by Monotropos' *Dioptra*,<sup>17</sup> the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nicholas III Grammatikos (1084–1111) composed a didactic poem of 413 political verses on feast days, in 1107.<sup>18</sup>

Several similarities and differences can be found between these three works and later mid-12th-century didactic poetry. However, I think it is important to single out two deviations: first, whereas they are exclusively concerned with grammatical, metrical, theological, and moral issues, the later didactic poems, as we shall see, deal with much more diverse issues, including the Homeric epics, astrology/astronomy, historiography, rhetoric, philosophy, Antiquity etc. Secondly, though one of the didactic poems of Niketas might have had an imperial recipient,<sup>19</sup> most of these works do not seem to owe their production to the court. Conversely, later poets composed most of their didactic poems at the behest of imperial and aristocratic patrons.

Although early Komnenian didactic poetry does not seem to be very closely connected to court requests, there are some ceremonial poems that speak for the increasing popularity of poetry in the court of Alexios. Some of them can even be considered heralds of the ceremonial poetry written for the courts of John and Manuel. Stephanos Physopalamites, an otherwise unknown figure of the court, composed two poems for Alexios.<sup>20</sup> Both are written in the *politikos stichos*: the first poem is an encomium of Alexios in the form of alphabet,<sup>21</sup> while the second celebrates the reconquest of a fortified settlement during the fight against the Normans. Another poet who composed poetry within Alexios' court is the *protonobelissimos* and grand *Hetairiarch* Manuel Straboromanos, who wrote a cycle of four poems on behalf of the empress Irene and her husband Alexios I; all of them were meant to be inscribed on an *epanoklivanon* sent as a gift to Alexios.<sup>22</sup> Even Alexios himself has been credited with the authorship of a verse prayer and the so-called *Muses*, an advice poem of 501 dodecasyllables addressed to John II Komnenos.<sup>23</sup> However, attribution to Alexios is far from certain<sup>24</sup> and should be viewed under the light of the gradual "courtization" of poetry.

17 Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Monotropos", pp. 92–95.

18 Nicholas III Grammatikos, ed. Koder, pp. 208–34.

19 Most probably, Constantine Doukas, son of Michael VII; see Roosen, "The Works", pp. 126–27.

20 Stephanos Physopalamites, ed. Welz, pp. 54 and 58–59.

21 According to Jeffreys, this poem is associated with the ceremony of *prokypsis*: Jeffreys, "Political Verse", p. 178.

22 Manuel Straboromanos, poem 1, ed. Gautier, pp. 168–204.

23 *Muses*, ed. Maas, pp. 349–62; for a study of the poem, see Mullett, "Muses", pp. 195–220.

24 See Lauxtermann, "His, and not his", p. 81, note 17. Marc Lauxtermann has noted that "The ascription of the *Muses* to Alexios I is a literary hoax; the text dates from the early reign

Consequently, the early years of Alexios' reign signify a transitional phase for Byzantine poetry. Quite a few works, mainly ceremonial poems, demonstrate that patronage starts to play a more important role than in the 11th century,<sup>25</sup> reaching its peak during the time of Kallikles, Prodrornos, and other contemporary poets. However, patronage is not the only characteristic that brings poetry of this period closer to that of the mid-12th century. For example, a number of poems written at different intervals from the end of the 11th to the mid-12th century display a continuity in the way personal sentiments are expressed on similar occasions. Nicholas of Corfu's delivered a resignation poem at the synod of Blachernai in 1094,<sup>26</sup> while Nicholas Mouzalon, Patriarch of Constantinople (1147–51), composed a poem on the occasion of his abdication from the see of Cyprus (c.1110).<sup>27</sup> As has rightly been argued, these two resignation poems stand very close to each other, and simultaneously owe much to the poetic oeuvre of Gregory of Nazianzus: both Nicholas of Corfu and Nicholas Mouzalon express the need to withdraw from public life because of the vanity of the mundane life.<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that similar feelings are expressed in Prodrornos' poems "Verses of farewell to Byzantines",<sup>29</sup> and "Verses of lamentation on the devaluation of learning".<sup>30</sup> In both of them Prodrornos asserts that he is willing to withdraw from Constantinopolitan public life. However, unlike Nicholas of Corfu and Nicholas Mouzalon, Prodrornos does not resign from a bishopric but from his position as court poet and distinguished intellectual of the capital.

## 2 Kallikles, Prodrornos and their Contemporaries: the Heyday of Patronage

In the 13th-century anonymous treatise "On the four parts of the perfect speech" two poets are singled out from the 12th century and listed next to

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of John 11 and aims to legitimize the latter's ascension to the throne." Although I am not entirely sure whether the poem was written in the early years of the reign of John 11, I fully share Lauxtermann's certainty regarding the authorship.

25 See also Lauxtermann, "La poesia".

26 Nicholas of Corfu, *Resignation Poem*, ed. Lampros, pp. 30–41. Nicholas of Corfu is also the author of four religious epigrams: Vassis, *Initia*.

27 Nicholas Mouzalon, resignation poem, ed. Doanidu, pp. 110–41; for a discussion of both resignation poems, see Mullett, "The poetics of Paraitesis", pp. 157–78.

28 Lauxtermann, "Poem of Exile", pp. 161.

29 Prodrornos, *Historical Poem* 79, ed. Hörandner, pp. 550–51; for an analysis of the poem, id., "Prodrornos and the City", pp. 49–62.

30 Prodrornos, *Poem* 12, ed. Zagklas, p. 288.



other significant Byzantine poets as models (such as Gregory of Nazianzus and George Pisides) for the composition of flawless dodecasyllabic verses, these being Nicholas Kallikles and Theodore Prodromos.<sup>31</sup> Apart from their metric merits, the outputs of these two poets triggered a shift for Byzantine poetry in terms of techniques, functions, and literary patronage. Though Kallikles seems to be one generation older and stand between the reigns of Alexios and John Komnenos, both wrote extensively on commission for the Komnenian court in the first half of the 12th century. Most of Kallikles' works are dedicatory epigrams associated with various objects of art (*encheiria*, icons, metal revetments attached to icons, stone etc.) or epitaphs for various imperial members and aristocratic dignitaries.<sup>32</sup> Kallikles was a sought-after poet, and his poetic talent was highly acknowledged by the members of the Komnenian family. For example, poem no. 31, an epitaph for the tomb of John II Komnenos, was commissioned by John when the latter was still alive.<sup>33</sup> However, not all poems by Kallikles have a ceremonial function per se; poem no. 30, which praises the excellent rhetorical talent of the high official and scholar Theodore of Smyrna for a now lost funeral oration, written for a son of the *protostrator* Michael Doukas, was probably read in the rhetorical *theatra*, while poem no. 29 was possibly delivered before a school contest in Constantinople.<sup>34</sup>

Kallikles might set the ground for the broad use of verse in court but it was Prodromos, with his dozens of occasional works during the reigns of John and his son Manuel, who secured a distinguished place for poetry in the court for ceremonial purposes.<sup>35</sup> Most of them usually celebrate the expeditions and victories of Komnenoi against the Turks and other barbarian enemies of the empire, imperial weddings and births, and even the crowning of a co-emperor. Others were composed on the occasion of the death of members of the family, while there are also quite a few dedicatory epigrams (for various objects) and prayers commissioned by the imperial family, wealthy aristocrats and high-ranking officials (e.g. Alexios Aristenos and Theodore Styppeiotes). But Prodromos did not restrain himself to the role of the poet laureate of the Komnenian court. His surviving corpus demonstrates that many of his poems

31 Ps.-Gregorios, ed. Hörandner, p. 108, lines 162–65.

32 For the text of Kallikles' poems, see Romano, *Nicola Callicle*.

33 This can be deduced from the title of the poem; Kallikles, *Poem 31*, ed. Romano, p. 112.

34 Kallikles, ed. Romano, no. 29, vv. 110–17. It bears the title Εἰς τὰ ῥόδα that probably stands for *logoi*. Although it has gone rather unnoticed, Kallikles is likely to have been a teacher at some point in his career, since a number of unpublished *schede* are ascribed to him in Vat. Pal. Gr. 92; see Vassis, "Παλαίσματα", pp. 37–68.

35 The texts of all these poems, along with brief notes, are to be found in Hörandner, *Historische Gedichte*.

were written in support of his capacity as influential intellectual and *grammatikos* in Komnenian Constantinople (to a much larger degree than that of Kallikles).<sup>36</sup> For example, he composed countless epigrammatic cycles, these being a metrical calendar of saints, as well as cycles of tetrastichs on the Old and New Testaments, the three *Hierarchs*, and the military saints Theodore, George and Demetrios. He also employed the medium of verse for the resurgence of ancient genres: the mock-epic combined with features of ancient drama (*Katomyomachia*) and novel (*Rhodanthe and Dosikles*).

It is hardly surprising that many of Prodrornos' experimentations and compositions were imitated more than Kallikles' and any other Komnenian poet's, not only by many later poets (e.g. Michael Haploucheir, Manuel Philes, John Chortasmenos), but also by his contemporaries. The most obvious example is his student and close friend, Niketas Eugenianos, who carried on the trend of verse novels with his work *Drosilla and Charikles*. However, Eugenianos neither followed the trend of the "rhetoric of poverty" nor did he produce a large amount of ceremonial poetry for the Court.<sup>37</sup> Prodrornos' "successor" in this respect seems to be Manganeios Prodrornos; most of his surviving poetry celebrates and commemorates various court events associated with Manuel I, *Sebastokratorissa* Irene, and other imperial or aristocratic individuals.<sup>38</sup> But again ceremonial poems are not the only text types that establish a link between the works of these two contemporaneous poets. As with Prodrornos, who addressed poems to imperial and aristocratic individuals—filled with various requests and complaints about his dire situation ("rhetoric of poverty")—so did Manganeios.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, both produced epigrams (the so-called "metrical prefaces"), which were delivered in an ecclesiastical milieu before the reading of a homily or hagiographical work.<sup>40</sup> Both wrote invectives

36 For Prodrornos' poems with a didactic purpose, see Zagklas, *Theodore Prodrornos*.

37 He is the author of only two *epithalamia* poems (in 33 hexameters and 98 dodecasyllables) celebrating the marriage of an unnamed offspring of Komnenoi with a princess of the Doukas family: Niketas Eugenianos, *Epithalamia*, ed. Gallavotti, pp. 231–36.

38 We are still waiting for the edition of the entire corpus by Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys. So far, only a group of six poems associated with the events in the region of Frankish Antioch in the late 1150s has appeared: E. Jeffreys/M. Jeffreys, "Frankish Antioch", pp. 49–151. For older editions of Manganeios' remaining poetry, one can consult the thorough list in Magdalino, *Manuel*, pp. 494–500. For some bibliographical updates, see also Nesseris, *Η Παιδεία*, pp. 467–76.

39 See the poems which are linked to the school of Saint George in the Mangana Quarter: Manganeios, *Poems*, ed. Bernardinello.

40 Antonopoulou, "Recited Metrical Prefaces", pp. 62–65.

against the inappropriate erotic lustfulness of individuals of old age,<sup>41</sup> and both contributed to the 12th-century resurgence of Eros.<sup>42</sup>

This period also marks an increase in the use of poetry for didactic purposes (mostly written in the political verse). By far the most prolific author of this text type is John Tzetzes, who can be considered the “new Psellos” of the 12th century. The Homeric epics and mythology constitute the cornerstone of his didactic corpus. Three Tzetzian works with pertinent subjects have come down to us: the *Allegories of the Iliad*<sup>43</sup> and *Allegories of Odysseus*,<sup>44</sup> the *Carmina Iliaca* which relates the story before, during and after the Trojan War,<sup>45</sup> and the *Theogony*,<sup>46</sup> a story about the origin of the gods and heroes of Troy. The remaining corpus of his didactic poetry deals with heterogeneous subjects, e.g. metrics,<sup>47</sup> rhetoric,<sup>48</sup> philosophy,<sup>49</sup> and ancient poets or poetic genres.<sup>50</sup> Yet another author who wrote a substantial portion of didactic poetry is Constantine Manasses. His bulky verse chronicle (more than 6600 political verses), that ranges from the creation of the world until the year 1081, can be described as semi-didactic, since it displays ubiquitous didactic characteristics embedded in a long narrative account that aimed to amuse its recipient.<sup>51</sup> On

41 Prodromos, *Against a Lustful Woman*, ed. Migliorini, pp. 3–4 and Manganeios Prodromos, *To an Old Man Taking a Young Woman*, ed. Miller, pp. 58–63.

42 See Prodromos' novel *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* and Manganeios' poem “On Eros”. For the editorial fate of the latter text, see Jeffreys, “Manganeios Poem 45”, pp. 357–59.

43 John Tzetzes, *Allegories of the Iliad*, ed. Matranga; cf. also Boissonade, *Tetztae Allegoriae Iliadi*. For an English translation with some annotations, see Goldwyn/Kokkini, *Allegories of the Iliad*.

44 John Tzetzes, *Allegories of the Odysseus*, ed. Hunger.

45 John Tzetzes, *Carmina Iliaca*, ed. Leone.

46 Maria Tomadaki is working on a new edition of the *Theogony*. For the time being, see Matranga, *Anecdota Graeca*, vol. 1, pp. 577–98; Bekker, “Theogonie”, pp. 147–69 and Hunger, “Theogonie”, pp. 302–307. See also the comments in Agapitos, “Tzetzes”, pp. 36–57.

47 A didactic poem on all metres: Tzetzes, ed. Cramer, *Anecdota Graeca*, vol. 3, pp. 302–33.

48 His verse exegesis on Hermogenes' book and Aphthonius' progymnasmata: Tzetzes, ed. Cramer, *Anecdota Graeca*, vol. 4, pp. 1–138.

49 A still unpublished verse exegesis on Porphyry's *Eisagoge* of 1700 dodecasyllabic verses. For an edition of some verses as well as previous bibliography, see Cullhed, “Diving for Pearls”, p. 57.

50 The dodecasyllabic treatises Στίχοι περὶ διαφορᾶς ποιητῶν, ἴαμβοι τεχνικοὶ περὶ κωμωδίας and περὶ τραγικῆς ποιήσεως, which form a triptych and were therefore intended to be used together. Regrettably, only the work on tragic poetry has a modern edition; see Tzetzes, ed. Pace. For the other two works, see Cramer, *Anecdota Graeca*, vol. 3, pp. 334–49.

51 See, for example, Rhozy, “Konstantinos Manasses”, p. 393 and the chapter by Wolfram Hörandner in this volume.

the other hand, the didactic element is even stronger in Manasses' astrological poem<sup>52</sup> and metrical "Vita of Oppian",<sup>53</sup>

Unlike Nicholas Kallikles, Theodore Prodromos, and Manganeios Prodromos—whose poetic oeuvres largely catered to the needs and demands of court ceremonies—Tzetzes and Manasses do not seem to have written a great deal of ceremonial poetry for the Komnenoi.<sup>54</sup> This does not mean that their works are less associated with the court. Many of Manasses' and Tzetzes' above-mentioned didactic poems owe their genesis to various recognized female literary magnates of the court. Manasses' *Synopsis Chronike* and astrological poem was written for the *Sebastokratorissa* Irene. Tzetzes' *Theogony* also has the *Sebastokratorissa* Irene as the inscribed recipient, while the first 15 books of the "Allegories of the Iliad" and "Allegories of the Odyssey" are dedicated to Bertha of Sulzbach, the wife of Emperor Manuel I.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the Komnenian court instigated the use of poetry both for ceremonial and didactic purposes. "Court poetry" does not denote only works for the praise of an emperor, but also works that seek to teach a member of the court.

Furthermore, ceremonial and didactic poetry for the court emerge to be two of the most popular text types in the works of the poets who were active in mid-12th-century Constantinople, but more links can be drawn between their poetry in terms of form and genre. To give but three examples: i) Prodromos, Eugenianos, and Manasses produced novels in verse; ii) in addition to Manasses' astrological poem for the *Sebastokratorissa*, two lengthy poems on this subject, and with a strong didactic nuance, were written by John Kamateros for Manuel: the first poem "on the Zodiac" consists of 1154 dodecasyllables,<sup>56</sup> while "The introduction to astronomy" is of 4107 political verses;<sup>57</sup> and iii) the flourishing of vernacular poetry. The pinnacle may be

52 Manasses, *Astrological Poem*, ed. Miller, pp. 1–39; its authorship by Manasses has been settled in Rhoby, "Sebastokratorissa Eirene", pp. 305–36.

53 Manasses, *Poem on Oppian*, ed. Colonna, pp. 33–40.

54 We do not know of any ceremonial poetry by Manasses. On the other hand, there exists only two epitaphs for Manuel I Komnenos and Theodore Kamateros by Tzetzes. See Tzetzes, ed. Matranga, pp. 619–22 and Pétridès, pp. 8–10. Interestingly enough, two verses of the latter poem resemble a verse from a 12th-century stone inscription (Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, vol. 3, pp. 624–26). Nevertheless, it is not possible to determine with certainty that it was written by Tzetzes on the basis of a single lexical resemblance, especially since many contemporary and later authors imitated Tzetzes' works.

55 It is worth noting that at the beginning of book 16 of Tzetzes, we are told that Constantine Kotertzes is the new sponsor of his work: Rhoby, "Tzetzes", pp. 167–83.

56 John Kamateros, *On the Zodiac*, ed. Miller, pp. 53–111.

57 John Kamateros, *Introduction to the astronomy*, ed. Weigl.

considered the four *Ptochoprodromika*<sup>58</sup> and the so-called Maiuri poem<sup>59</sup> directed to various imperial addressees, but there is also the colloquial poem “Spaneas”, a paraenetic poem from a father to a son (hence, it resembles *Muses*).<sup>60</sup> What is more, Michael Glykas, who served as imperial secretary, addressed two vernacular poems to Manuel after his imprisonment in the *Noumera*, one of Constantinople’s prisons. These are the well-known “poem from prison” and a poem celebrating Manuel’s triumph in Hungary, which is filled with pleas asking the latter to show mercy.<sup>61</sup>

The competitive intellectual environment of the middle Komnenian period played a pivotal role in the boom of many of these genres, and new developments. The keenness of many mid-12th century authors to produce dazzling works for the acquisition of more commissions should be deemed the main reason, even in the case of works that are not directly related to the court. Tzetzes’ *Histories*—a work of more than 12,500 political verses, that functions as a very extensive literary/philological commentary on his letters<sup>62</sup>—or *Christos Paschon*<sup>63</sup>—a dramatic cento of 2,632 dodecasyllabic verses about the story of the Passion—are two very good examples. Even though they do not seem to be direct products of literary patronage, they should have brought fame and more commissions to their authors. The existence of common subjects and similar types of texts during this period reflect, to a certain extent, the taste of the literary patrons, but this does not mean that the poets act as puppets without having a say in the formation of the poetics of their works. In order to outshine their rival poets, they constantly strived to recast various kinds of text types in different forms. Take, for example, the case of the Komnenian novels. Two of them are in dodecasyllables, one in political verse, and the fourth is in prose. Since all the authors were, more or less, contemporary, the form clearly mattered in the mid-12th century literary market.<sup>64</sup>

58 Ptochoprodromos, ed. Eideneier; poem 1 is directed to Emperor John II Komnenos, poems 3 and 4 to his son Emperor Manuel I, while poem 2 addresses an anonymous *sebastokrator*, most probably Isaac Komnenos, John’s younger brother.

59 Prodromos, ed. Maiuri, pp. 398–400.

60 Spaneas, ed. Anagnostopoulos. For a study, see Danezis, *Spaneas*.

61 See Glykas, ed. Efstratiades, vol. 1, pp. ρχβ–ρκε. For the prison poems, see Bourbouhakis, “Michael Glykas”, pp. 53–75. It is interesting to note that Glykas, after his release, also composed a verse exegesis of vernacular sayings, which was probably used for teaching reasons: Glykas, ed. Efstratiadis, vol. 1, pp. ροε’–ροζ’.

62 John Tzetzes, *Histories*, ed. Leone.

63 Christos Paschon, ed. Tuilier.

64 See also Jeffreys, *Novels*, 279.

### 3 The Late 12th Century: a Gradual Decourtization of Poetry

Komnenian poetry does not come to an end in the year 1185; no one would deny the label “Komnenian” to authors who continued to write poetry after the ascension of the Angeloi dynasty to the throne. Even though patronage reached its heyday during the time of Kallikles, Prodrornos and their contemporary fellow-poets, the production of verse continues to be quite abundant. Two authors who played a decisive role in this respect are Theodore Balsamon (c.1130–after 1195) and Constantine Stilbes (c.1150–after 1225), both of them with an illustrious ecclesiastical career.<sup>65</sup> Balsamon is the author of 45 poems, most of which are preserved in codex Marcianus gr. 524.<sup>66</sup> They are associated with various occasions and functions; many of them are dedicatory epigrams on various religious and secular themes, and epitaphs for various individuals. There are also satires, but also a verse epilogue to his collection of ecclesiastical canons, as well as a dedicatory poem in hexameters to his canon collection.<sup>67</sup> On the other side, Stilbes wrote two funeral poems,<sup>68</sup> a poem which concerns an image of John III Doukas, his wife and their son,<sup>69</sup> and most importantly his long “fire poem”, which is a monody in 937 dodecasyllabic verses about the great fire that took place in Constantinople on July 25, 1197.<sup>70</sup>

Some other late 12th-century authors, mostly known for their prose work, opted for verse on a few occasions. Eustathios of Thessalonike is likely the author of a completely neglected epigram for a depiction of St Demetrios;<sup>71</sup> Niketas Choniates composed an *epithalamion* for Isaac II Angelos<sup>72</sup> and perhaps some autograph poems copied in the margins of a manuscript of Diodorus Siculus’ *Bibliotheca Historica* (Vatic. gr. 130);<sup>73</sup> also the metropolitan of New

65 Balsamon held various offices (e.g. deacon, patriarchal *nomophylax*, *chartophylax*, πρῶτος τῶν Βλαχερνῶν, πρωτοσύγκελλος) before acquiring the patriarchal see of Antioch in 1193. On the other hand, Stilbes was first a deacon and *didaskalos* at the Patriarchate School of Constantinople, reaching the apex of his career shortly before 1204, when he was appointed Metropolitan of Kyzikos.

66 Theodore Balsamon, *Poems*, ed. Horna. Rhoby has argued that two other poems from the anthology can be attributed to Balsamon: Rhoby, “Identifizierung”, pp. 197–98.

67 For a study of the entire work of Balsamon, see Rhoby, “Theodore Balsamon”, pp. 111–45.

68 On patriarch Michael III of Achialos and a young man, almost certainly his student Stephen Hexapterygos.

69 Konstantinos Stilbes, ed. Kotzabassi, pp. 443–44.

70 Konstantinos Stilbes, ed. Diethart–Hörandner; for some preliminary remarks and an English translation, see Layman, *Fire Poem*.

71 Eustathios of Thessalonike, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, p. 478.

72 Niketas Choniates, *Poem*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 45–46.

73 Mazzucchi, “Vaticano GR. 130”, pp. 200–56.

Patras, Efthymios Malakes, wrote a short poem on commission for the bath of a certain Choumnos.<sup>74</sup> However, within the same intellectual milieu, we find two poets that were much more prolific: Niketas Choniates' older brother and metropolitan of Athens, Michael Choniates, and Malakes' nephew and metropolitan of Old Patras, Efthymios Tornikes.<sup>75</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that religious epigrams hold the lion's share of Michael Choniates' work, there is also a long hexametric poem (457 vv.), entitled, "Theano" that constitutes the eulogy of a fig tree.<sup>76</sup> There is also a poem of 30 iambic verses on Athens,<sup>77</sup> and a satirical poem filled with vituperations against a gluttonous archon of Athens.<sup>78</sup> The element of satire and invective is even more evident in Efthymios Tornikes' poetry, since there survive two such poems: the first is directed against a foolish bishop of Seleucia, who seized the episcopal see contrary to the canon laws of the monasteries of Euboea, and a partially surviving poem (the first 119 vv.) about the dispute of the people of Thebes and Euboea for the pronunciation of "nu" and "lambda".<sup>79</sup> Unlike Michael Choniates, Tornikes, before his appointment to the bishopric of Paleopatras, produced poems for the Constantinopolitan court and aristocracy. There is a group of nine poems written in various metres for the emperor Isaac Angelos, an epitaph on the death of the wife of the otherwise unknown *Kouropalates* John Chamakon, and a verse *pittakion* addressed to a certain Constantine Doukas.<sup>80</sup>

Late 12th-century poetry shares many traits with that of the early and middle Komnenian periods. Although no late 12th-century novels and chronicles in verse seem to exist, Stilbes' "fire poem" and Choniates' "Theano" carry on the practice of using verse for the composition of long narrative works. Whereas the production of didactic poetry declines significantly, there is a good portion

74 Euthymios Malakes, *Poem*, ed. Mponis, p. 37. This poem is not an ekphrasis *in sensu stricto*, but rather a dedicatory poem for a bath whose water washes the sins away. Similar poems have been written both by earlier and contemporary poets: Theodore Prodromos (there are two unpublished poems: Zagklas, *Theodore Prodromos*, p. 57, no. 46); Theodore Balsamon (ed. Horna, no. 42); and John Apokaukos (ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, no. 12).

75 Michael Choniates, *Poems*, ed. Lampros, vol. 2, 375–97 and Horna, pp. 28–30; Efthymios Tornikes, *Poems*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, pp. 188–207 and Hörandner, "Tornikes".

76 For some notes in terms of sources, see Tziatzi, "Θεανὼ", pp. 521–41. Kennedy, "Choniates", pp. 299–302 argues that the poem owes a lot to Callimachus, but it should also be viewed within the practice of 11th- and 12th-century authors writing accounts on ordinary events: Magdalino, "Cultural Change?", p. 24.

77 For the poem, see Speck, "Athen", pp. 415–18 and Magdalino, "Perception", p. x; Lauthermann, "La Poesia", pp. 333–35; for a different approach, see Livanos, "Choniates", pp. 103–14.

78 Michael Choniates, *Poems*, ed. Horna, pp. 29–30.

79 Tornikes, *Poems*, ed. Hörandner, pp. 104–39.

80 Efthymios Tornikes, *Poems*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, pp. 188–207.

of ceremonial poetry (e.g. by Efthymios Tornikes and Niketas Choniates). Moreover, there is an epigrammatic genre that continues to blossom throughout the century: the so-called “metrical prefaces”, which were used before the delivery of a homily. Theodore Prodromos and Manganeios Prodromos produced such works, but the genre remains popular until the beginning of the 13th century thanks to Nikephoros Prosouch, John Apokaukos, and Nikephoros Chrysoberges.<sup>81</sup>

The circulation of manuscripts with poems from the early and middle Komnenian periods can help us to determine with greater certainty whether they were used as models by late 12th-century poets. Even though the evidence is not abundant, there are some indications. For example, the *Dioptra* by Philippos Monotropos was copied and read already in the late 12th century.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, in the last decades of the 12th century Haploucheir composed his iambic *Dramation*. This poem affords us a glimpse into the compositional workshop of Haploucheir, but more importantly illustrates a continuity of some poetic tendencies over the Komnenian period: first, by borrowing fifteen verses (virtually verbatim) from Prodromos’ poem “Verses of Complaint against the Providence”;<sup>83</sup> second, by including elements of a *drama* just like *Katomyomachia* and the anonymous *Christos Paschon*. Most probably, Haploucheir had on his desk a manuscript with Prodromos’ poetry. He was not the only late 12th-century poet who had access to Prodromos’ poetry. For example, Tornikes was familiar with it, since he borrowed verses from Prodromos’ works and imitated his practice of multimetric poetic cycles and diptychs.<sup>84</sup>

Despite all these affinities, which allow us to argue for a kind of continuity in terms of poetic trends and tendencies, poetry in the late 12th century also underwent changes. Professional poets seem to be less common, resulting in a looser connection between poetry and literary patronage than in the reigns of John and Manuel Komnenos. Moreover, late 12th-century poetry seems to be even more decentralized; unlike 11th-century poetry, the poetry of the entire Komnenian period is not exclusively Constantinopolitan. For example, the production of verse in southern Italy is constant thanks to the so-called Anonymous Malta and Eugenios of Palermo.<sup>85</sup> However, toward the end of the 12th century, poetry becomes even less Constantinopolitan due to various

81 See Antonopoulou, “Recited Metrical Prefaces”, pp. 65–68.

82 For instance, the manuscript 2874 dates to the second half of the 12th century; Pérez Martín, “Les manuscrits de Gérasimos”, p. 545.

83 Hörandner, “Musterautoren”, pp. 201–17; cf. Zagklas, *Theodore Prodromos*, p. 321.

84 See Zagklas, “Prose and Verse”, pp. 243–44 and id., “The Multimetric Cycles of Occasional Poetry”, pp. 52–55.

85 For poetry written in southern Italy, see the chapter by Carolina Cupane in this volume.



sociohistorical developments. The last years of the 12th century, or after the fall of Constantinople to the Latins, we find many poets writing most of their works in the periphery of the empire. Michael Choniates composed most of his poetry in Athens or during his exile on the island of Cea, John Apokaukos both in Constantinople and Naupaktos, and Nikephoros Chrysoberges in Sardinia.

#### 4 Ambitions and Motivations: Some Generic Features and Interlinks

In addition to literary patronage, which played an important role (especially between c.1120 and 1170), intellectualism and education (with their various manifestations and degrees of variation) are two other main pillars on which the production of Komnenian poetry is sustained.<sup>86</sup> However, these three driving motivations are behind the poetic production not only of the Komnenian period, but also of the 11th century, the Palaeologan period and even the entire Byzantine period. Thus, it is not so much the purposes and the intended audience of poetry that change in the Komnenian period, but rather the balance between these three motivations and the occasional tools which the poets of this period retrieve from their arsenal, and the way they combine them for the fulfilment of their aspirations.

Take, for example, the poems which are produced within the system of patronage, and more particularly those poems which are filled with requests on behalf of the authors. While the “self-assertiveness” of Byzantine poets grows substantially after the year 1000,<sup>87</sup> it is not communicated always in the same way. The code that the poets use to convey their requests is very often transformed throughout the Middle and Late Byzantine period. In the 11th century, we witness conspicuous requests for a certain post. The poem no. 16 of Michael Psellos, which asks Michael IV to grant him the office of imperial secretary, is a case in point.<sup>88</sup> Conversely, no such straightforward requests for a reward of an office or job can be found in the surviving poems of the Komnenian intellectuals.<sup>89</sup> This is so because the Komnenian poets devise a new code to communicate their requests to their patrons. At this point, we should remember the third Ptochoprodromic poem which opened the present study,

86 See also Jeffreys, “Verse”, p. 225.

87 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 36ff.

88 Bernard, *Secular Poetry*, pp. 171–73.

89 I was not able to spot any explicit request for a job in Komnenian poems; nor is there such an example in Magdalino, *Manuel*, pp. 346–52. The only exception is Manganeios Prodromos’ requests for admission to the *adelphaton* in the Mangana Quarter in Constantinople.

and the poet's complaints for his desperate situation. Moreover, irrespective of whether we are willing to identify Prodrornos with Ptochoprodrornos, the former should be credited for being the mastermind of this trend, since in many of his poems he couples "self-assertiveness" as well as "self-belittlement" with a continuous projection of his poverty.<sup>90</sup>

It is beyond any doubt that patronage comes to play a more important role at this time than other periods in Byzantium. We have seen that quite a large number of 12th-century poets wrote on command for various imperial and aristocratic magnates or individuals with high-ranking offices: Nicholas Kallikles, Theodore Prodrornos, Manganeios Prodrornos, John Tzetzes, Constantine Manasses, and many others. Indeed, the *Megas Hetairiarches* Georgios Palaeologos had in his service a grammarian named Leo *tou Megistou*, who most probably was responsible for this particular task. In order to acquire this position, Leo had to demonstrate his poetic skills by improvising on the spot a poem about a stone relief depicting the Muse Kalliope.<sup>91</sup> But next to these professional poets, there is a good portion of Komnenian poetry written by high-ranking office holders, whose primary purpose might have not necessarily been to express their requests for material remunerations nor their ambitions for social advancement. The *logothete* of the *dromos* Stephanos Meles composed two religious poems.<sup>92</sup> The first is a "metrical life" of Theodore Stoudites (170 vv.)—or, to put it better, a praise of Stoudites with a dedicatory character delivered in an ecclesiastical milieu—while the second poem functions like the introduction to the aforementioned poem. The *logothete* of the *dromos* Michael Hagiotheodoritis wrote a verse *ekphrasis* of a horse race, which survives fragmentarily in the manuscript Vind. Suppl. gr. 125.<sup>93</sup> The *Megas Hetairiarches* John Doukas composed two poems in political verse.<sup>94</sup> In

90 There are many examples in the poetic works addressed to various imperial individuals and aristocratic dignitaries. For example, in the "historical poem" no. 15, directed to John before his departure from Constantinople for a campaign, Prodrornos complains about his critical situation; see Prodrornos, ed. Hörandner, no. 15, vv. 81–90.

91 Leo *tou Megistou*, ed. Lampsidis, pp. 107–10. On the occasion of Georgios Palaeologos' death (c.1167–70), Leo penned not only a prose monody, but also a metrical one, which still remains partly unpublished: Lampsidis, "Georgios Paläologos", pp. 393–407. It is interesting to note that five dedicatory epigrams from Marc. Gr. 524 are associated with Georgios Palaeologos; hence, their author could be Leo *tou Megistou*: Spingou, "Marcianus gr. 524", pp. 207–08. No. 58 has been attributed to Manganeios, see Rhoby, "Identifizierung", pp. 190–91.

92 Stephanos Meles, *Poems*, ed. Delouis, pp. 38–49.

93 Michael Hagiotheodorites, *Verses Ekphrasis*, ed. Horna, pp. 194–97; recently, it has been argued that the recipient of this poem was Constantine Manasses: Marciniak/Warcaba, "Chariot Race", pp. 97–112.

94 John Doukas, *Poems*, ed. Polemis, "Δύο ποιήματα", pp. 357–67; cf. Polemis, "Παρατηρήσεις", pp. 357–67.

the first Doukas addresses his soul and declaims against human foolishness, while the second is a monody, most probably for Irene Bertha of Sulzbach, the wife of Manuel I Komnenos. A certain Andronikos, who was Protekdikos of the Great Church, is the author of a puzzling poem that describes the story of a nun brought to trial before the Patriarchal court on a charge of murdering and devouring her own child.<sup>95</sup> Most of these officials used poetry on an occasional basis, to communicate with the divine, manifest their poetic talent, express their deep devotion to imperial individuals, or even for juridical reasons.

Even members of the imperial family made use of verse for private use. Alexios I Komnenos may not be the author of *Muses* and the verse prayer “O Father, Son and Spirit, Holy Trinity”,<sup>96</sup> but according to the *Typikon of Kosmosoteira*, his son Isaac Komnenos and John II Komnenos’ younger brother bequeathed a book which contained his letters and *ekphraseis*, but also heroic, iambic and political verses.<sup>97</sup> This particular manuscript has been lost forever, but it has gone rather unnoticed that one verse prayer by Isaac directed to the Theotokos is still preserved in the famous 13th-century manuscript Oxon. Barocc. 131.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, Isaac is not the only member of imperial family who produced a poem for his own purposes. Two epigrams written for depictions of Christ survive under the name of Anna Komnene in codex Laurent. x Plut. v.<sup>99</sup>

Turning to the connection between poetry and intellectualism, there are various manifestations of this symbiosis, which range from harmonious co-existence within intellectual circles to gentle intellectual contests and fierce disputes in the Komnenian *Theatra*. For instance, a circle could have formed around Prodromos that included at least three authors: Niketas Eugenianos and the less known poets Ioannikios the Monk, and Peter the Monk. All the three poets borrowed verses from Prodromos’ works and composed poetic works with similar literary features. Whereas Niketas Eugenianos wrote a multimeric monody on the occasion of Prodromos’ death,<sup>100</sup> Peter the monk composed a hexametric epitaph for Prodromos’ tomb, inscribed with red letters on his tomb, as we are informed from the title of Peter’s second poem, which functions as a metrical prologue to this epitaph.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, Prodromos

95 Andronikos Protekdikos, ed. Macrides, pp. 137–68.

96 See Lauxtermann, “His, and not his”, pp. 81–82.

97 Patterson Ševčenko, *Kosmosoteira*, no. 29, p. 844, par. 106.

98 Isaac Komnenos, *Verse Prayer*, ed. Kurtz, pp. 44–46.

99 Anna Komnene, *Epigrams*, ed. Sola, pp. 375–76. Contrary to Jeffreys, “Verse”, p. 225 note 22: “the only woman writer known from the twelfth century used prose”.

100 Niketas Eugenianos, *Monodies on Theodore Prodromos*, ed. Gallavotti, pp. 222–29; see Zagklas, “Prose and Verse”, p. 243.

101 Peter the Monk, *Epitaph for Theodore Prodromos*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, pp. 399–402.

addressed Ioannikios the monk through a hexametric verse letter, and even wrote a hexametric prologue for a book with *schede* of the latter.<sup>102</sup> Ioannikios was a *grammatikos* and an illustrious scribe,<sup>103</sup> who produced not only verse epilogues for his numerous *schede*, but also two poems.<sup>104</sup> In the first poem Ioannikios advises his students to be eager for learning and eschew idleness,<sup>105</sup> while the second (pseudo-Psellian poem no. 14) is a short verse treatise on how to write correct iambs.<sup>106</sup>

The intellectual competition with the use of verse varies significantly among the Komnenian poets. It can be benign, as for example in the case of Nikephoros Prosouch's metrical solutions for three of Aulikalamos' verse riddles.<sup>107</sup> Since the metrical riddles and their solutions are contemporary, they explicitly demonstrate how learned men vie to show off their intellectualism by the use of poetry. However, intellectual competition can also be aggressive and extremely fierce. In his poem "Against a man with a long beard" Prodrornos pokes fun at an old man for considering himself the ultimate source of knowledge due to his long and scruffy looking beard.<sup>108</sup> Most likely, it is an attack against contemporary intellectuals and teachers. In addition to Prodrornos, John Tzetzes attacks a Skylitzes in a poem<sup>109</sup> and a certain Gregory who was the imperial secretary.<sup>110</sup> Tzetzes was accused by them of being incapable of composing iambic verses. For this reason, he composed an on-the-spot invective as a kind of counter-attack. Tzetzes compares the two poets with goats, and claims that the only thing goats are able to do is to hit with their horns.<sup>111</sup> With the help of Tzetzes letter 89, in which the author gives more details about his rivalry with Gregory, we can argue that this poem is probably part of a "poetic

102 Prodrornos, *Historical Poems 62 and 63*, ed. Hörandner, 492–94.

103 For bibliography, see Papaioannou, *Psellos*, pp. 257–58.

104 Hörandner, "Didactic Poem", p. 62. Hörandner has suggested that Ioannikios could be one of the possible candidates for the authorship of pseudo-Psellian poems nos. 67–68.

105 Ioannikios the Monk, ed. Vassis, "Παλαίσματα", p. 45. A paraphrase of this poem is transmitted in manuscript Vat. Ottob. gr. 324 (fol. 174v); see Zagklas, *Theodore Prodrornos*, pp. 149–50.

106 Michael Psellos ed. Westerink, no. 14.

107 Aulikalamos and Nikephoros Prosouch, ed. Treu, pp. 10–14.

108 See Kucharski and Marciniak, "Philosopher's Beard", p. 53.

109 Who is most probably the same person as George Skylitzes, the author of the dedicatory poem for Andronikos Kamateros' *Sacred Arsenal* commissioned by Manuel Komnenos: George Skylitzes, ed. Bucossi, pp. 7–10. Moreover, he has been credited with the authorship of at least ten epigrams from the codex Marcianus gr. 524; Rhoby, "Identifizierung", pp. 167–204.

110 Tzetzes, ed. Pétridès, pp. 568–70.

111 For an analysis of the work, see Zagklas, "Satire in the Komnenian Period" (forthcoming).

dispute”, which includes a group of works filled with reproaches and rebukes exchanged in succession between these intellectuals.<sup>112</sup>

It should be emphasized that the wide use of verse ultimately goes back to the dominant place of poetry in 12th-century education. This is exemplified in Tzetzes’ letter no. 47, addressed to *Logariastes Kyr* John Smeniotes, where we are told that a young boy filled the service tax ledgers with iambs.<sup>113</sup> Irrespective of whether these iambs were a product of this young boy, his teacher, or an ancient Greek poet, it explicitly demonstrates that the Byzantines were familiar with poetry from a very young age. The nature of the nexus between poetry and education displays certain similarities as well as deviations, when compared with the situation in the 11th century and other periods of Byzantium. We have seen that many Komnenian intellectuals employed the didactic verse (mostly in political verse) in their teaching; Constantine Manasses and above all John Tzetzes hold primacy in this respect. But when we turn to other poets of the time who possessed a teaching post (either as *grammatikoi* or a more distinguished position), it comes as a surprise that their corpora are void of any didactic verse in *politikos stichos*. The Komnenian poets used, and occasionally invented, other methods. Mnemonic poems, which helped the students in memorizing more easily, are one of these methods. For example, Prodrornos composed such poems on the *Dodecaorton* and the reception of the Holy Trinity,<sup>114</sup> while the less known poet and teacher George ὁ καυθεῖς composed a mnemonic poem on the Zodiac cycle.<sup>115</sup>

Other authors made use of “schedography”, which flourishes throughout the 12th century. Regrettably, none of the studies on various aspects of 12th-century poetry takes into consideration this matter. Apart from verse *schede*, innumerable prose *schede* are coupled with versified prologues or epilogues; though they do not constitute an example of *prosimetrum*, they are yet another good example of a harmonious match of prose and verse.<sup>116</sup> Theodore Prodrornos is the most well-known paradigm, but he does not stand alone. Ioannikios the Monk, Niketas Eugenianos, Nicholas Kallikles, Nicholas Mouzalon, Gregory Pardos, and even Constantine Manasses, one of the main representatives of didactic poetry in political verse,<sup>117</sup> composed such *schede*. At the same time, there are some poems which survive together with *schede* making it difficult

112 Indeed, on fol. 43r of the 13th-century Viennese manuscript philologicus 321, right after the poem of Skylitzes and Gregory, survives yet another poem by Tzetzes against the same individuals, which still remains unedited.

113 Tzetzes, *Letter 47*, ed. Leone, p. 68, lines 8–10.

114 Prodrornos, *Poem on the Dodecaorton*, ed. Zagklas, nos. 3 and 7.

115 George ὁ καυθεῖς, *Poem on the Zodiac*, ed. Browning, pp. 29–30.

116 Zagklas, “Prose and Verse”.

117 For Manasses’ *schede*, see Polemis, “Konstantinos Manasses”, pp. 279–92.

for us to determine whether these should be labelled as verse *schede* or poems which were used within a school milieu, and simply survive together with an author's schedographical work. For example, a poem by a certain Christodoulos Hagioeuplites dedicated to St Barbara has come down to us together with other *schede* in the codex Marcianus gr. XI 31.<sup>118</sup> This work does not differ from a typical religious epigram, demonstrating that the boundaries between works to be used as epigrams or/and didactic tools are not always clearly set.

The poems as "Selbstzweck" and "Sitz im Leben" are not always two opposed or self-contained concepts in 12th-century poetry, without any kind of interlinkage.<sup>119</sup> Many *schede* draw their subject-matter from real incidents, while some of them were not confined to the school milieu. Similarly, many occasional poems were not exclusively used in the court, but also in class. For example, Prodromos used his *schede* in court and his ceremonial poems in class. In a poem addressed to his former student Stypeiotes, Prodromos maintains that he used in class the poems and the *schede* which were composed for the court in order to celebrate the victories of the emperor.<sup>120</sup> Hence, court, literary *theatra*, and the classroom—the three prevailing contextual areas for the production of Komnenian poetry—are not environments with loose connections, but rather are very closely interrelated, resulting in vast poetic production and the constant circulation of poetry in the 12th century.<sup>121</sup>

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118 Christodoulos Hagioeuplites, *Epigram on Barbara*, ed. Browning, pp. 30–32.

119 I owe the use of these terms to Bernard, *Secular Poetry*, pp. 335–36.

120 Prodromos, *Historical Poem* 71, ed. Hörandner, p. 516, lines 7–10.

121 See Zagklas, *Theodore Prodromos*, pp. 73–87.

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# Poetry on Commission in Late Byzantium (13th–15th Century)

*Andreas Rhoby*

## 1 Introduction

A considerable part of Byzantine literature was written on commission. This means that a (professional) author was hired to compose a text for a commissioner. This applies to both what one regards nowadays as *les belles lettres* and what one defines as non-fictional texts, since both were *hoi logoi* and *ta grammata* respectively for Byzantine intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> But not only literature was commissioned:<sup>2</sup> also scribes, fresco and icon painters,<sup>3</sup> sculptors, and other craftsmen were ordered by their commissioners who aimed at self-representation and self-fashioning,<sup>4</sup> and the contest of noble families in relation to their social standing was a specific feature, especially of late Byzantium.<sup>5</sup>

In most of cases, commissioners of literature belonged to the imperial court or the high aristocracy of Constantinople and other (urban) centers of the Empire. This assumption is valid throughout the Byzantine millennium, from Late Antiquity until the 15th century: Eusebios of Caesarea was Constantine the Great's favorite author, Romanos the Melode<sup>6</sup> and Paul Silentiarios wrote for Justinian I, as did George of Pisidia for Herakleios.<sup>7</sup> Various products of literature were commissioned by the court of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus.

1 See Kambylis, "Abriß der byzantinischen Literatur", pp. 319–20; Odorico, "Byzantium, a Literature that Needs to be Reconsidered", pp. 72–73; Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 34–57.

2 See, e.g., Buchthal/Belting, *Patronage in Thirteenth-Century Constantinople*.

3 On the commissioned production of icons in Venetian Crete, see the fine article by Vassilaki, "Looking at Icons and Contracts".

4 Generally on these concepts, see Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.

5 Matschke/Tinnefeld, *Die Gesellschaft im späten Byzanz*, pp. 365–85; see also Agoritsas, *Κωνσταντινούπολη*.

6 Koder, "Imperial Propaganda in the Kontakia of Romanos the Melode", with some general remarks on hymnography and mass propaganda.

7 Whitby, "George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word"; see also Hörandner, "Court Poetry", p. 76: "We may duly call George of Pisidia the first Byzantine court poet."

However, as has already been noted, the connection between literary production and patronage was rather loose up to the year 1000.<sup>8</sup> From the 11th, and especially from the 12th century onward,<sup>9</sup> due to a decline of resources, the struggles of the *literati*, especially poets, became very intense. The poets on commission in the middle of the 12th century, and especially during the reign of the emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80)—such as Theodore Prodromos, the anonymous so-called ‘Manganeios’ Prodromos, Constantine Manasses, and John Tzetzes—may serve as representative examples of authors who were in constant competition for the best writing jobs offered by the court and the aristocracy. Some of them were hired for a longer period, others only occasionally for unique instances. They were not only commissioned to compose orations for various events, but also to write poems for the aforementioned elite’s self-representation and self-fashioning. Whether these authors only produced texts after they had received a commission (with promised remuneration), or if they offered their literary productions to their potential sponsors unrequested, is not always clear.<sup>10</sup>

The rise of poets on commission also coincides with the increasing popularity of poetry: from the 11th century onwards, poems are written for various occasions, such as weddings, funerals, imperial processions, and so forth.<sup>11</sup> In addition, verses (epigrams) were also produced to be inscribed on objects, which were sponsored by members of the imperial family or the aristocracy.<sup>12</sup>

The interaction between commissioners and patrons on the one hand and poets on the other hand did not cease to exist with the end of Komnenian rule. It continued under the Angeloi,<sup>13</sup> it survived the chaos of the Fourth Crusade, and it was maintained at the court of Nicaea. A new climax of commissioned literature was reached in the Early Palaeologan period. With the recapture of Constantinople in 1261 and the return of the Byzantine court to the capital, a new (also literary) productive era came into being,<sup>14</sup> often, rather misleadingly,

8 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 34–45.

9 On the literary production in these two centuries, see Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*; Bernard/Demoen, *Poetry and its Context in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*; Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*; Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance*.

10 On this issue, see the fine article by Nilsson, “Words, Water and Power”.

11 Hörandner, *Forme et fonction*, passim.

12 Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*; Rhoby, “The Structure of Inscriptional Dedicatory Epigrams”.

13 See, e.g., Rhoby, “The Poetry of Theodore Balsamon”.

14 Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*.

called the “Palaeologan Renaissance”.<sup>15</sup> Poetry was again very widespread, with Manuel Philes as *the* poet who worked on commission.<sup>16</sup>

Due to Philes’ well-preserved poetical œuvre, the discussion of his verses on commission will constitute an essential part of this short study. However, as I will argue, other poets, some of them less known, of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries were commissioned to write poems on behalf of the imperial court and the aristocracy as well. This article will highlight that late Byzantine poetry was still a viable means to communicate and present oneself, and that even after the climax of commissioned poetry in the 11th and especially the 12th century, this trend continued. It will also focus on poems of better and lesser known authors, some of them anonymous. Inscriptional poems of the period under investigation—many of which were transmitted anonymously, which are still extant *in situ*, and were mainly commissioned by the imperial court and the aristocracy—will only be treated *en passant*, because they have already been the subject of detailed studies.<sup>17</sup>

## 2 The 13th Century: Poetry on Commission at the Laskarid Court

Despite threatening political circumstances, the court of the Byzantines in exile at Nicaea was a learned center;<sup>18</sup> its intellectual role was also recognized by later generations. Theodore Metochites in his praise of Nicaea (*Nikaeus*) stated that the city “preserved the seeds of later revival.”<sup>19</sup> After the Latin capture of Constantinople in the course of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, many intellectuals had fled to Nicaea, among them Niketas Choniates, who finished his *History* there.<sup>20</sup> Although, of course, incomparable with the Komnenian court of the 12th century, the Byzantine rulers in exile had their court poets as well, who were ordered to compose poems in the name of the emperor.

Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197/98–1272), who had studied medicine, philosophy and theology, was a very learned man and teacher, who belonged

15 Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance*.

16 A brief overview of Byzantine literature in the first half of the 14th century is provided by Hunger, “Die byzantinische Literatur in der 1. Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts”.

17 The material is presented in Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*; Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*; Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*. See now especially Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*.

18 Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium*, pp. 5–27; Constantinides, “Teachers and Students of Rhetoric in the Late Byzantine Period”.

19 Foss, *Nicaea*, p. 190 (c. 17: lines 12–13). Cf. Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik*, p. 4.

20 Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*.



to the high clergy of Nicaea.<sup>21</sup> His small, but interesting poetical œuvre encompasses poems in dodecasyllables, political (i.e. fifteen-syllable) verse and hexameters.<sup>22</sup> He is, therefore, one of the few known Byzantine poets who composed poems in the mentioned three meters, which makes him comparable with two famous 12th-century poets: Theodore Prodromos and John Tzetzes.<sup>23</sup> The poem for Theodore Laskaris, the future emperor Theodore II, consists of 25 political verses.<sup>24</sup> Ordered by Theodore's father John III Vatatzes, it must have been performed soon after the boy's birth in November 1221, or at the baptism. God is asked to grant the small boy—"my new-born emperor";<sup>25</sup> as the poem's title reveals—a long life with as many years as possible.<sup>26</sup>

Two poems are devoted to the Sosandra monastery (near Magnesia *ad Sipylum*), which was the most prestigious monastic foundation of the Nicaean period: both probably date to the 1230s.<sup>27</sup> One is composed in hexameters (στίχοι ἡρωικοί: 70 vv.),<sup>28</sup> the other in dodecasyllables (στίχοι ἰαμβεῖοι: 120 vv.),<sup>29</sup> and both aim at praising the monastery and its founder, the emperor John III.<sup>30</sup> Both, or at least one of them—perhaps the one in dodecasyllables—may have been performed at the inauguration of the monastery.<sup>31</sup> A further hexameter epigram, dated to the year 1222/23 and once inscribed above the northern gate of the castle on Mount Pagos near Smyrna, may have been composed by Blemmydes on the commission of John III Vatatzes as well. The emperor, who is celebrated as a descendant of the Ducas family and ruler of the New Rome,<sup>32</sup> is praised for having provided Smyrna with new splendor. The term "New Rome" (ὀπλοτέρη Ῥώμη) refers, of course, to Constantinople, to which John III makes a claim both against the Latins residing there and the

21 Constantinidis, *Higher Education in Byzantium*, pp. 7–22.

22 Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Poems*.

23 Zagklas, "Metrical *Polyeideia*".

24 Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Poem*, pp. 110–11.

25 Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Poem*, p. 110, title: Τῷ νεογενῷ μοῦ βασιλεῖ continued by τῷ βασιλείας ἄνθει, εὐχεται σὸς πρεσβύτερος μονάζων Νικηφόρος.

26 Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Poem*, p. 111, v. 21: ζῶν μακρὰν παράσχοι σοι πολυχρονιωτάτην.

27 Mitsiou, "The Monastery of Sosandra".

28 Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Poem*, pp. 112–14.

29 Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Poem*, pp. 115–19.

30 E.g. Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Poem*, p. 112, v. 4: δοκὸβλαστος Ἰωάννης, κῦδος ἅλης βασιλείας, p. 115, v. 10–11: τῇ τοῦ κρατοῦντος ἀρετῇ πρόσχες μόνῃ / τοῦ δουκοφουοῦς παγκλεοῦς Ἰωάννου. On the monastery, p. 115, vv. 15–17: ὁ παγκράτιστος καὶ μέγιστος αὐτάναξ / κάλλιστον, ἀσύγκριτον, ἐξηρημένον / τῆς ἀρετῆς μόρφωμα παραδεικνύει.

31 The same seems to apply for the poem on the foundation of the Pantokrator monastery at Constantinople in the 12th century; see Rhoby, "Text as Art?", pp. 270–71.

32 Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, no. TR93, vv. 10–11: ἀλλὰ Ῥώμης κοίρανος ὀπλοτέρης Ἰωάννης / πάϊς Δουκοφύτων ἐρικυδῶν βασιλῆων.

rivaling Epirot rulers in the West.<sup>33</sup> A further epigram, consisting of 122 political consolatory verses, is attributed to Blemmydes as well. Its editor, J.B. Bury, wanted to identify the addressee as John 111, and the poem to be written on the occasion of the death of the emperor's wife Eirene in the year 1241.<sup>34</sup> The attribution, however, is rather vague, since neither the deceased's nor the emperor's name is mentioned.

Blemmydes' younger contemporary and student George Akropolites (1217–82),<sup>35</sup> a civil official and teacher at the Nicaean court, also seems to be the author of a metrical epitaph (στίχοι ἐπιτύμβιοι) for John 111's wife Eirene.<sup>36</sup> Coincidence or not, it has almost the same length as the poem attributed to Blemmydes; it consists of 117 verses, but it is written in dodecasyllabic verses. Judging from the opening verses (“Seeing my tomb here, o stranger, do not pass by it like at an ordinary tomb! It does not hide an anonymous corpse inside”),<sup>37</sup> it could have been inscribed because it reminds the reader of the similar wording of metrical inscriptions on Byzantine tombs.<sup>38</sup> Due to the poem's length, however, it is more probable that the verses were performed at the funeral, together perhaps with the ones attributed to Blemmydes.

Akropolites not only had a very close relationship with the empress Eirene, but in the 1240s he also served as tutor to Eirene's and John 111's son, Theodore, the later emperor Theodore 11 Laskaris. The close relationship with Theodore, which the latter also had with Blemmydes, is also testified by the fact that Akropolites was asked to compose a poem introducing the Lascarid's letter collection.<sup>39</sup> The prince thanked him by dedicating a prose encomium to him.<sup>40</sup> Besides the praise of the beauty of Theodore's letters, Akropolites' book epigram<sup>41</sup> is also an encomium on the Lascarid “whose rumor ran out to the entire world”, as one of the verses reveal.<sup>42</sup> While in this poem Theodore Laskaris

33 Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, p. 698.

34 Bury, “An Unpublished Poem of Nicephorus Blemmydes”; cf. Wilson, “A Byzantine Miscellany”, p. 161.

35 Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium*, pp. 31–35.

36 George Akropolites, *Poems*, ed. Hörandner, pp. 89–93.

37 George Akropolites, *Poems*, ed. Hörandner, p. 89, vv. 1–2: Ἐμὸν βλέπων ἐνταῦθα τάφον, ὦ ξένε, / μὴ παροδύσης τοῦτον ὡς κοινὸν τάφον· / κρύπτει γὰρ ἔνδον οὐκ ἀνώνυμον νέκυον.

38 E.g., Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, no. TR107, v. 1 (a. 1193): Ἐμὸν βλέποντες πάντες, ἀδελφοί, τάφον.

39 George Akropolites, *Opera*, ed. Heisenberg, pp. 7–9.

40 Theodore 11 Laskaris, *Opuscula*, ed. Tartaglia, pp. 95–108; cf. Agapitos, “Blemmydes, Laskaris and Philes”, pp. 3–4.

41 With a length of 63 dodecasyllables the poem belongs to the longer ones of the genre of book epigrams, cf. DBBE.

42 George Akropolites, *Opera*, ed. Heisenberg, p. 8, v. 21: οὐ θρύλλος ἐξέδραμεν εἰς πᾶσαν χθόνα.

is addressed as the “son of the all-famous ruler John”<sup>43</sup> (i.e. John III Vatatzes), in another poem attributed to Akropolites the Lascarid is described as “most excellent Theodore, son of grace”,<sup>44</sup> with grace (χάρις) referring to Vatatzes’ name John.<sup>45</sup>

Another poet working for John III Vatatzes was Nicholas Eirenikos, *chartophylax* and most likely relative of the patriarch Theodore Eirenikos (1214–16). He composed several poems which were recited at the engagement ceremony of the emperor (after his first wife Eirene had died in 1239) with Anna-Constanze of Hohenstaufen, in 1240 or 1241, who was crowned at the same occasion.<sup>46</sup> The fifteen-syllable verses were meant to be sung: those meant to be sung in the church are six *tetrasticha*, as stated in the second part of the compendium’s title, not counting the first two verses of the poem which are repeated after each *tetrastichon*.<sup>47</sup> In these verses, Eirenikos employs some nature imagery, repeatedly calling the emperor “ivy” (κιττός) and the empress “cypress” (κυπάριττος), and in order to stress how closely they belong together, employing the image of an iron and a magnet.<sup>48</sup> Eirenikos’ poetic cycle also consists of verses addressed and chanted to the emperor leaving the church (Εἰς τὴν ἐξέλευσιν τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας)<sup>49</sup> and during the procession to the palace (Εἰς τὴν προέλευσιν).<sup>50</sup> Some elements in Eirenikos’ verses are reminiscent of official ceremonial as described in the treatise of Pseudo-Kodinos.<sup>51</sup> Of specific socio-cultural interest is the group of 12 verses dedicated to *prokypsis*

43 George Akropolites, *Opera*, ed. Heisenberg, p. 8, v. 20: ἀνακτος υἱοῦ παρχλεοῦς Ἰωάννου.

44 Agapitos, Blemmydes, Laskaris and Philes 5, v. 5: Θεόδωρε κράτιστε, χάριτος τέκνον.

45 This refers to the Hebrew origin of the name John, which means “God has been gracious”.

46 Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, pp. 97–112. The title of these poems (Τοῦ λογιωτάτου χαρτοφύλακος κυροῦ Νικολάου τοῦ Εἰρηνικοῦ τετράστιχα εἰς τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων καὶ ἐκ Θεοῦ ἐστεμμένων μεγάλων βασιλέων Ἰωάννου τοῦ Δούκα καὶ Ἄννης τῆς εὐγενεστάτης αὐγούστης ...) in the cod. Laur. gr. Conv. Sopp. 627, f. 20r, reveals that they were composed for John’s and Anna’s engagement and not for their wedding as claimed by Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, p. 42. The date of John and Anna’s wedding is also under debate: while some date it to the year 1244 (*PLP* no. 91223), Kieseewetter, “Die Heirat zwischen Konstanze-Anna von Hohenstaufen und Kaiser Johannes III. Batatzes” (without mentioning Eirenikos’ poems) dates it to the end of 1240 or to the beginning of 1241.

47 Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, p. 100 (for the first part of the title see n. 46: ... ἄνευ τῶν δύο πρώτων τοῦ καταλέγματος, οἷς καὶ τὰ τέλη ὅμοια, see also p. 108.

48 Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, pp. 100–02. This *topos* is employed extensively in the 12th-century erotic discourse: see Zagklas, *Theodore Prodromos*, pp. 347–48.

49 Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, p. 102.

50 Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, pp. 103–04.

51 Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, p. 111; on this passage, see Macrides/Munitiz/Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, pp. 235, 408.

(literally “emergence”),<sup>52</sup> which describes the presentation of the emperor on an elevated platform. As described in Eirenikos’ verses, this type of emergence of the emperor, which already existed in the Komnenian period, took place within the context of a distinguished performance encompassing music and the recitation of appropriate eulogies, e.g. the *polychronion*.<sup>53</sup> As described in Pseudo-Kodinos’ treatise, the recitation of verses (στίχοι) during the *prokypsis* was a distinct element of this ceremony.<sup>54</sup> Further authors who wrote poems for the *prokypsis* are Manuel Holobolos (see below p. 272) and Manuel Philes.<sup>55</sup>

As one clearly sees in Eirenikos’ verses, despite the commission of composing verses for the engagement ceremony, the author’s major task was to praise the emperor John III.<sup>56</sup> He is called “eye of the *oikumene*”,<sup>57</sup> which is—as observed in the aforementioned inscriptional epigram from Smyrna, perhaps composed by Nikephoros Blemmydes<sup>58</sup>—a clear claim on the possession of Constantinople, which is generally beautified by this term.<sup>59</sup>

The preserved poetic heritage of the Byzantines in exile in the first six decades of the 13th century is small, but the surviving evidence proves that at the imperial court, literary traditions shaped in the 11th and (especially) in the 12th centuries continued, and that poetry was also employed in order to promote the emperor’s activities. However, in contrast to previous and following decades, aristocratic patronage cannot be observed. Aristocracy, of course, existed, but it did not have the means to assert itself with the commission of poetry.

### 3 Poetry on Commission in the Early Palaeologan Era

On 25 July 1261, Constantinople was recaptured by the Byzantines and freed from Latin occupation. This event was celebrated by a poem, which is

52 Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, pp. 102–03; cf. Macrides/Munitiz/Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, p. 405.

53 Jeffreys, “Comnenian Prokypsis”.

54 Macrides/Munitiz/Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, pp. 144.10–146.3.

55 Manuel Philes, *Poem F210*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, pp. 379–80.

56 This reminds us of, for example, the wedding poem (a. 1148/49) for Theodora, the emperor Manuel I Komnenos’ niece, and the Babenberg duke Henry II, composed by the anonymous so-called Manganeios Prodromos, whose main task is to praise the emperor: cf. Rhoby, “Byzanz und Österreich im 12./13. Jahrhundert”, pp. 590–91.

57 Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, p. 104, v. 103: τῆς οἰκουμένης ὀφθαλμέ. Cf. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, p. 84.

58 See above p. 267.

59 Hunger, “Ὁ ὀφθαλμός τῆς γῆς”.

transmitted anonymously.<sup>60</sup> It attributes the deed (ἔργον) of the recapture to God, “a deed which was not done by mortals”;<sup>61</sup> the city was lost due to sins, but God brought it back due to his mercy.<sup>62</sup> The speaker’s ‘I’ is the emperor himself, who is mentioned without name in the penultimate verse.<sup>63</sup> It is the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, the recapturer of the city, who seemed to have commissioned the composition of the poem. Further poems on Michael VIII’s solemn entry into Constantinople might also have been composed by George Akropolites. As ordered by the emperor, Akropolites succeeded in producing 13 rhythmical (metrical?), unfortunately unpreserved, prayers for intercession for the imperial majesty in less than 24 hours.<sup>64</sup>

A further anonymously transmitted poem<sup>65</sup> precedes the emperor’s *typikon* for the monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios, located in the Asiatic suburbs of Constantinople, near Chalcedon. The document is generally dated between 1261 and 1280/81,<sup>66</sup> but due to some verses’ content it seems to have been commissioned soon after the capital’s recapture. Towards the middle of the poem (vv. 44ff.) the speaker’s ‘I’, the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, praises the archangel for having released “the city of Constantine, the second Sion”, from the Latin threat and daily murders.<sup>67</sup> The monastery that had suffered severely during the Latin rule (vv. 69ff.) is then offered to him. According to the poem’s title (Στίχοι εὐχαριστήριοι ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιστράτηγον Μιχαήλ) the thankful verses addressed to the archangel Michael were composed as if they were spoken by the emperor, the saint’s namesake.<sup>68</sup> Very typical for commissioned poems, which serve the patron’s self-fashioning,

60 Anonymous, *Poem*, ed. Mercati.

61 Anonymous, *Poem*, ed. Mercati, v. 6: οὐκ ἔστιν ἔργον ταῦτα τοῦ θνητῶν γένους.

62 Anonymous, *Poem*, ed. Mercati, vv. 17–18: ἦν γὰρ ἀπωλέσαμεν ἐξ ἁμαρτίας / ταύτην <...> ἀπήγαγεν (fort. ἐπανήγαγεν Mercati) ἐξ εὐσπλαγχνίας.

63 Anonymous, *Poem*, ed. Mercati, v. 19: ἰδοὺ βασιλεὺς καὶ μετάρσιος θρόνος.

64 George Akropolites, *Opera*, ed. Heisenberg, pp. 186.10–187.16; cf. Hörandner, “Court Poetry”, pp. 83–85; on this passage, see also Macrides, *George Akropolites*, pp. 382–83.

65 Anonymous, *Poem*, ed. Papageorgiou, pp. 674–77. Vassis (*Initia carminum Byzantinorum*, p. 37) was inclined to attribute the poem to Manuel Philes due to a similar incipit of one of Philes’s poems (*Poem* F 238, ed. Miller, vol. 1, pp. 436–37), but this seems to be a false assumption.

66 Thomas/Constantinidis-Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, p. 1207.

67 Anonymous, *Poem*, ed. Papageorgiou, p. 676, vv. 46–48: ... τῶν καθ’ ἡμέραν φόνων / τὴν Κωνσταντίνου, τὴν Σιών τὴν δευτέραν, / ἤλευθέρωσας ... On Constantinople as second Sion, see Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae*, index.

68 Similar titles are also attested, for example, in Theodore Prodromos’ poetry in the 12th century and Manuel Philes’ verses in the 14th century: Theodore Prodromos, *Poems*, ed. Hörandner, nos. 7, 21, 23 etc.; Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Miller, nos. E 166 (vol. 1, p. 76), F 47 (vol. 1, p. 226), F 66 (vol. 1, p. 240) etc.

the poem's last verses are dedicated to the emperor whose complete ancestry is mentioned: "I, Michael, ruler of the Romaioi, <offer> this to you, (I, Michael) Komnenian-born, Dukai-born, from the family Palaiologos Angelos, (I) who nourishes loyal love to you, (and) most pure slavish devotion".<sup>69</sup>

A Byzantine intellectual, still born in the time of the Byzantines in exile, and who died at the beginning of the 14th century, after Constantinople had been recaptured and undergone tremendous reconstructions,<sup>70</sup> is Manuel Holobolos (c.1245–c.1296–1310 or c.1310/14).<sup>71</sup> He worked at the court of Michael VIII and served as *rhetor ton rhetoron* and teacher at the Patriarchal School. Pretending to be in favor of a Church union he suddenly changed his mind, and due to his anti-unionist attitude he suffered repeatedly at the hands of the emperor Michael VIII. In 1273 he was even exiled to the monastery *tou Megalou Agrou* on the Marmara Sea, but after his return to Constantinople following Michael VIII's death, he was again active and served as *protosynkellos*. As is the case with Nicholas Eirenikos (see above pp. 269–270), a considerable amount of his verses for the imperial court, namely 20 poems, is devoted to *prokypsis*.<sup>72</sup> They are composed in the fifteen-syllable verse as well, and they are mainly addressed to Michael VIII, some of them to his son Andronikos, who is called Ἀνδρόνικος ὁ νέος (Andronikos the young) in the title of poem nine.<sup>73</sup> It is easily comprehensible how they were performed in public, being full of praise of the emperor, and with sun and light imagery especially employed.<sup>74</sup> In addition, almost all of these poems include verses by which a long life is wished to the emperor. In order to strengthen the performative element, in poem three, which is addressed to the emperor Andronikos II, the speaker's "I" poses a rhetorical question to the addressee: "Who is this bright new emperor?"<sup>75</sup> It seems

69 Anonymous, *Poem*, ed. Papageorgiou, p. 677, vv. 105–08: Ὁ Μιχαήλ σοι ταῦτα Ῥωμαίων ἄναξ, / Κομνηνοφυῆς, Δουκοφυῆς, ἐκ γένους / Παλαιολόγος Ἄγγελος εὐνοῦν (οἱ εὐνοῦς?) τρέφων / πρὸς σὲ σχέσιν, δούλωσιν ἀκραίφνεστάτην.

70 Talbot, "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII"; see also Macrides, "The New Constantine".

71 The date of Holobolos' death is not clear: according to *PLP* (no. 21047) he died between c.1296 and c.1310; according to *ODB* (p. 940) it was between 1310 and 1314. On Holobolos, see also Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium*, pp. 55–59; Macrides, "The New Constantine", *passim*.

72 Manuel Holobolos, *Poems*, ed. Boissonade; Manuel Holobolos, *Poem*, ed. Treu (improved edition in Manuel Holobolos, *Poem*, ed. Siderides). On Holobolos' *prokypsis* poems, see Heisenberg, *Aus der Geschichte und Literatur der Palaiologenzeit*, pp. 112–32.

73 Manuel Holobolos, *Poem*, ed. Boissonade, p. 169.

74 This is also true for Eirenikos' *prokypsis* verses: Nicholas Eirenikos, *Poems*, ed. Heisenberg, pp. 100–05, vv. 68–79, 97–108, 111–12, 121.

75 Manuel Holobolos, *Poem*, ed. Boissonade, p. 162, v. 4: Τίς ἐστὶν οὗτος ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ νέος.

highly likely that this very poem was composed immediately after Andronikos' ascension to power, after the death of his father Michael VIII (in 1282), perhaps for his first *prokypsis* appearance.

Under Holobolos' name, two tomb epigrams are also preserved. It is hardly a coincidence that they consist of 50 verses each, and both are structured as dialogues, which seems to be a deliberate antiquarianism since ancient and late antique (tomb) epigrams were often composed in dialogue form too.<sup>76</sup> In the tomb epigram for Constantine Komnenos Maliasenos<sup>77</sup> a φίλος and a ξένος converse with each other,<sup>78</sup> whereas in the verses for Andronikos Komnenos Tornikes,<sup>79</sup> the tomb (τύμβος) and a ξένος perform a dialogue.<sup>80</sup> In the latter poem, in almost every verse there is a change of protagonist, while in the poem for Constantine Komnenos Maliasenos most of the verses, especially at the beginning, are the *xenos'* text. In the poem for Maliasenos, the title is of specific interest too: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ στίχοι ἐπιτάφιοι ὡς ἐν τύπῳ δράματος (*Tomb Verses of the Same as in the Form of a Drama*).<sup>81</sup> In Byzantium, the term "Drama" was sometimes applied to works in dialogue, not produced for the stage but for reading.<sup>82</sup> Since the manuscript witness seems to have been written very soon after the completion of the verses—the codex is commonly dated to the late 13th century<sup>83</sup>—the title might be original.<sup>84</sup>

An individual with a similar life span to Holobolos, is Maximos Planudes (c.1255–1305).<sup>85</sup> Born in Nicomedia, with the given name Manuel (later as a monk, Maximos), under the shelter of the Nicean Empire, his later life centered on Constantinople, although he also served as abbot of the monastery on Mount Auxentios on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. One of the most learned persons of his time, he is mainly known as the compiler of the *Greek Anthology*;

76 On dialogues in ancient tomb epigrams, see Kauppinen, *Dialogue Form in Greek Verse Inscriptions*; on dialogues embedded in late Byzantine rhetoric, see Gaul, "Embedded Dialogues".

77 Polemis, *The Doukai*, no. 121.

78 Manuel Holobolos, *Poem*, ed. Treu, pp. 550–51.

79 Schmalzbauer, "Die Tornikioi in der Palaiologenzeit", pp. 122–23.

80 Manuel Holobolos, *Tomb Epigram*, ed. Andrés. The verses are also published in Manuel Holobolos, *Tomb Epigram*, ed. Moschonas.

81 Manuel Holobolos, *Poem*, ed. Treu, p. 550.

82 *ODB*, pp. 660–61.

83 Based on the description by Rostagno/Festa, "Indice dei codici greci Laurenziani non compresi".

84 In the title of the 12th-century *Christos paschon*, this terminology is used as well: ὑπόθεσις δραματική.

85 *PLP* no. 23308; *ODB*, pp. 1681–82; Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium*, pp. 66–89.

as one of the first Byzantines he also knew Latin. He started his career as a scribe in the imperial palace, and later taught at the Chora monastery.<sup>86</sup> He also translated Latin authors, both theological (e.g. Augustine) and secular (e.g. Ovid), into Greek; his poetic works consist of 36 preserved epigrams.<sup>87</sup> A considerable number of them seem to be the product of commissioned work:<sup>88</sup> 26 dodecasyllables labeled as *στίχοι ἐπιτάφιοι* (tomb verses) were written for the deceased John Chameas.<sup>89</sup> They follow the traditional design of Byzantine tomb epigrams, and, as Ilias Taxidis has proven, their structure is based on the recommendations of (Ps.-)Menandros of Laodicea for composing monodies.<sup>90</sup> In this and similar cases, the commissioned author's task was straightforward. As if using a template, the epigram starts with a rhetorical question about the vanity of life. Its main part is devoted to the presentation of the deceased, and in the concluding verses the addressee of the verses, the listener / reader and visitor of the grave, is asked to pray for the salvation (*ψυχική σωτηρία*) of the deceased.<sup>91</sup> Planudes is the author of three further epigrams which were composed to serve as inscriptions. When Theodora Rhaulaina, the niece of Michael VIII Palaiologos—a learned woman and scribe, who also seems to have entertained a literary circle—restored the Constantinopolitan convent of St Andres *en te Krisei* c.1284, she commissioned Planudes to compose epigrams,<sup>92</sup> which were very likely meant to accompany an image of the patroness in the newly erected church.<sup>93</sup> One is composed in elegiac distichs,<sup>94</sup> the two others in dodecasyllables,<sup>95</sup> and, as the similar content of the dodecasyllabic epigrams reveals, they might have been variants from which the commissioner was perhaps to choose one.<sup>96</sup> This is a procedure attested elsewhere

86 One of his students (and friends) may have been a certain Merkourios, author of four surviving metrical works in dodecasyllables (on Theodore Stratelates, on Theodore Tiron, on the Annunciation and an iambic canon on St John Chrysostom): ed. Merkurios Grammatikos, *Iambos*, ed. Antonopoulou.

87 Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis.

88 Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis, pp. 7–10.

89 Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis, pp. 77–81, no. 3.

90 Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis, pp. 78–79.

91 On the similar structure of Byzantine dedicatory epigrams, see Rhoby, “The Structure of Inscriptional Dedicatory Epigrams in Byzantium”.

92 Inter alia, Planudes was also commissioned by Theodora to correct and amend manuscripts which belonged to her, and Planudes addressed Theodora as ‘my lady’ (*ἡ κυρία μου*): see Riehle, “Καί σε προστάτιν”, pp. 310–11.

93 Riehle, “Καί σε προστάτιν”.

94 Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis, pp. 118–24, no. 15.

95 Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis, pp. 124–33, nos. 16–17.

96 Riehle, “Καί σε προστάτιν”, p. 299, n. 4.



in Byzantium.<sup>97</sup> It is Planudes himself who offered one of his patrons a series of epigrams, which the latter had ordered, for the inscriptional decoration of an icon of the Last Judgement.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, of course, it cannot be excluded that both epigrams existed next to each other. Planudes' epigrams' main statement is praise of Theodora's noble ancestry. Planudes was certainly the right author to provide her with this kind of self-fashioning, which Theodora needed very much after she had returned from exile. The background of her banishment had been the opposition against her imperial uncle's Church union attempts.

Planudes was not only commissioned by the aristocracy, but also directly by the imperial court. Within his preserved *œuvre* there are two epigrams in elegiac distichs mentioning Andronikos II and (in one of them) Michael IX, composed in order to be inscribed on the door, or next to the door, of an (unknown) monastery.<sup>99</sup> The monastery was apparently renovated as part of the reconstruction measures under Andronikos, which had already started under his father Michael VIII.<sup>100</sup> These two epigrams again might have been two versions on the same topic from which the patron had to choose,<sup>101</sup> or again two rhetorical pieces which were more than mere bearers of information but beautifully arranged epigrammatic texts, both in content and layout.

The practice of a patron selecting from a group of offered verses might be testified in the poetic *œuvre* of Nikephoros Choumnos (c.1250–55–1327),<sup>102</sup> the political and literary rival of Theodore Metochites,<sup>103</sup> and a contemporary of Holobolos and Planudes. Choumnos composed three funerary poems on the death of the emperor Michael IX on 12 October 1320, which, as they were composed in the fifteen-syllable verse and are of similar length (number one: 35 verses; two: 46 verses; three: 42 verses), were perhaps meant to be recited and performed at the tomb.<sup>104</sup> Alternatively, they could have been written for some of the deceased's remembrance days, i.e. the third, ninth, 40th, or one

97 See Maguire, *Image and Imagination*, pp. 8–10.

98 Maximos Planudes, *Epistulae*, ed. Leone, *Ep.* 73. On this passage, see Drpic, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, pp. 18–21. The three hexameter epigrams are edited in Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis, pp. 157–62, no. 31. I sincerely thank Krystina Kubina who made me aware of this reference.

99 Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis, pp. 137–41, nos. 20–21.

100 Talbot, "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII"; see also Talbot, "Building Activity in Constantinople under Andronikos II".

101 Maximos Planudes, *Epigrams*, ed. Taxidis, p. 140.

102 *PLP* no. 30961, *ODB*, pp. 433–34.

103 Cf. Ševčenko, "Études".

104 Nikephoros Choumnos, *Poems*.

year after the death.<sup>105</sup> The three poems' performative character is stressed by a repetitive rhythm and by direct addresses to the participants. The first six verses of number one start with ὁ βασιλεύς followed by epithets describing the grandiosity of the deceased (co-)emperor, while number two opens with three verses starting with Ἴδου καὶ πάλιν.<sup>106</sup> The third variant plays with a learned allusion at its beginning: the repetition of ἔμελλε (e.g. v. 1: "Ἐμελλε τοῦτο, βασιλεῦ Ῥωμαίων ἀτοκράτωρ) hints at Gregory of Nazianzus' famous opening of the funeral oration for Basil the Great.<sup>107</sup> This is a play which may have also raised the attention of the members of a so-called *theatron*, a literary saloon, or a "venue of power" as Niels Gaul called it with regards to early Palaeologan *theatra*.<sup>108</sup>

Theodore Metochites (1270–1332),<sup>109</sup> the great scholar, polyhistor, and statesman, composed, beside numerous prose works (commentaries, essays, orations, hagiographical encomia), 20 poems in hexameters, which clearly imitate the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus. Among this group there are autobiographical poems *To Himself*. Most of Metochites' poetry however (perhaps with the exception of the three preserved funerary poems),<sup>110</sup> was not written on commission, i.e. he was not hired by the court or the aristocracy, but it was composed on his own accord to express his thoughts.<sup>111</sup>

#### 4 Manuel Philes: the Poet on Commission Par Excellence

Planudes', Holobolos', Choumnos', and Metochites' (younger) contemporary, Manuel Philes (c.1270/75–after 1332), seems to have been one of the most

105 I, again, thank Krystina Kubina for making me aware of this possibility. On this practice in prose funerary orations, see Sideras, *Die byzantinischen Grabreden*, pp. 64–68.

106 In Martini's edition, the third verse reads: Ἴδου παῖ (sic) πάλιν, but this seems to be a simple typo.

107 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Funeral Oration for Basileios the Great*, ed. Bernardi, p. 116: "Ἐμελλεν ἄρα πολλάς ἡμῖν ὑποθέσεις τῶν λόγων αἰεὶ κτλ. On the reception of Gregory of Nazianzus' funeral oration for Basil in Byzantium, see Papaioannou, "Michael Psellos on Friendship and Love", p. 51; see also Zagklas, "Theodore Prodromos and the Use of the Poetic Work of Gregory of Nazianzus", p. 227.

108 Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik*, pp. 17–61 ('Schauplätze der Macht').

109 *PLP* no. 17982, *ODB*, pp. 1357–58.

110 Theodore Metochites, *Poems*, ed. Polemis, nos. 7–9.

111 See also Polemis, *Theodore Metochites. Poems*.

productive authors and poets of the Byzantine millennium.<sup>112</sup> An anonymous version of a treatise on rhetoric, dated after the middle of the 14th century, so only a few years after Philes' death,<sup>113</sup> presents the reader with several ancient and Byzantine authors who should be regarded as models in various literary genres. For the composing of iambs, alongside the old authorities Sophocles and Gregory of Nazianzus, mention is also made of George of Pisidia, Theodore Prodromos, and a certain Φιλῆς (cod. φιλῆν),<sup>114</sup> who is, doubtlessly, the famous Manuel Philes.

Most of Philes' verses were indeed composed in Byzantine iambic dodecasyllables, the most common Byzantine meter (almost 90% of his poetic output).<sup>115</sup> The rest is written in lines of 15 syllables, and no other meters are employed, although hexameters and elegiac distichs were still in use, as can be seen in the œuvre of his aforementioned contemporaries Maximos Planudes, Nikephoros Choumnos and Theodore Metochites. Marc Lauxtermann noted that composing hexameters and elegiac distichs was beyond Philes' competence.<sup>116</sup> This might be true but difficult to prove; one also has to take into account the purpose of Philes' verses. A lot of them were written to serve as inscriptions (on tombs, works of art etc.) or to be performed orally (at funerals, commemoration services, on the arrival or departure of the emperor or generals, etc.), in other words, for occasions for which a more easily understandable language was needed. Dodecasyllables and lines of 15 syllables,<sup>117</sup> with their stable and repetitive structure and rhythmic patterns, were much more likely to be appreciated by the verses' addressees and audiences than hexameters, which were not at all akin to spoken language. In general, Philes' language is not too difficult to comprehend: verbs are often used in the historical present

112 *PLP* no. 29817, *ODB*, p. 1651, Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*; Kubina, *Die enkomastische Dichtung des Manuel Philes*.

113 On the question of the date of Philes' death, see A. Rhoby, "Wie lange lebte Manuel Philes?"

114 Cf. Rhoby, "Metaphors of Nature", p. 263.

115 Cf. Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*, p. 46, but see also p. 57.

116 Lauxtermann, "La poesia", p. 337.

117 As to the fifteen-syllable or political verse, it is employed in Philes' metrical psalm metaphrasis, for example. The choice of this meter for this specific work might be due to the character of the poem as a didactic work, for which the fifteen-syllable verse was often employed (but not exclusively). But Günther Stickler's (Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, pp. 157–58) explanation that the use of fifteen-syllable verse is based on the structure of the psalms themselves, which sometimes recall fifteen-syllable lines, might have played a role as well.

tense, constructions such as *genitivus absolutus* are avoided, as well as enjambements and longer syntactical structures.<sup>118</sup>

Manuel Philes' life coincides to a large degree with the reign of Andronikos II and Andronikos III, and his preserved work comprises more than 25,000 verses.<sup>119</sup> Philes' poetical output is both huge and manifold: it includes poems on flora and fauna, such as his very long poem "On the characteristics of animals", consisting of more than 2,000 verses. This poem is divided into 119 chapters dealing with all different kinds of animals, from swans to owls, from bees to lions, and from jackals to elephants. It is mainly based on Aelianos, but it is more than a mere compiled work as detailed analysis shows.<sup>120</sup> Another poem is entirely devoted to the description of an elephant, an accurate account suggesting he must have seen one with his own eyes, either in Constantinople itself or when he was on a mission to the East.<sup>121</sup> In addition, there are two poems on the silkworm.<sup>122</sup> With regard to botany, Philes, for example, composed epigrammatic verses about a rose and a pomegranate.<sup>123</sup> These poems, composed in Byzantine dodecasyllables and most likely addressed to Michael IX Palaiologos, were not written without reason and for Philes' own pleasure but seem to have functioned as didactic poems,<sup>124</sup> which

118 Caramico, *Manuele File*, p. 36. Scholars have been very harsh in their judgment of Philes' style and language; Lauxtermann even called Philes language "sterile" and "dead", and his style "abraded", but regards the prosodic-rhythmical structure of his verses as being of good quality: Lauxtermann, "La poesia", p. 337: "levigato fino alla consunzione"; cf. Caramico, *Manuele File*, pp. 35–41.

119 According to Bazzani, "Livelli di stile", p. 145, even 30,000. This impressive number exceeds the poetic oeuvre of Theodore and the anonymous Manganeios Prodromos, whose preserved verses amount to 17,000 to 18,000 verses each, cf. Zagklas, *Theodore Prodromos*, p. 52 and Jeffreys, "The *Sebastokratorissa* Irene as Patron", p. 181. In addition, Philes is attested as an author of prose works; he composed a prose prologue for an encomion on St John penned by Nikephoros Blemmydes (Manuel Philes, *Prologue*, ed. Munitiz; cf. Agapitos, "Blemmydes, Laskaris and Philes") and, as argued by Hans-Veit Beyer, he might be the author of the abridged version of George Pachymeres' voluminous historical work (Beyer, "Über die wahrscheinliche Identität"). However, convincing proof for this vague assumption is missing. Be that as it may, Philes honoured Pachymeres, who died c.1310, with a very long funerary poem in which he addressed him as *διδάσκαλος* (Manuel Philes, *Poem App.* 39, v. 6, ed. Miller, vol. 2, p. 401; a different view on this passage is provided by Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 27.).

120 Caramico, *Manuele File*; Caramico, "Policromatismo".

121 On Philes' participation in embassies to the East, see Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, pp. 28–30.

122 Kádár, "Manuel Philés tanköltevényei a selyemhernyóról".

123 Rhoby, "Metaphors of nature", pp. 264–65.

124 Caramico, *Manuele File*, p. 17.

were created on commission because the emperor was interested in the topics discussed by Philes.

Most of his poetry is indeed on commission, written for the emperor or other members of the imperial court, as well as being addressed to members of the aristocracy and high officials.<sup>125</sup> In addition, as argued by Stickler, he occasionally sent his uncommissioned verses to these people in the hope of appropriate remuneration.<sup>126</sup> Philes' (commissioned) poetry can be characterized as follows: it comprises a huge number of tomb verses (*epitaphioi*) (some of them were also certainly used as inscriptions); consolatory verses; panegyric verses in praise of the emperor, other members of the court, or the aristocracy; and verses on religious themes, quite a lot of them connected with icons or other ecclesiastical objects. It also includes some book epigrams, for example a laudatory epigram for Andronikos Komnenos Palaiologos,<sup>127</sup> perhaps a cousin of the emperor Andronikos II, who had composed an 'erotic book' (ἐρωτικὸν βιβλίον), i.e. a love romance, which might be identical with the famous Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe romance.<sup>128</sup> Philes was not a sort of a humble petitioner, but could be quite tenacious when asking for commissions. In a letter poem to an unspecified *despoina*—apparently a member of the imperial court, who is asked to intercede for him with the emperor—he concludes: "For who else should sing in our place, if there is no profit for me?"<sup>129</sup>

However, although Philes was able to establish a network of patrons, he was of course dependent on commissions. As we know from some of his remarks, life was sometimes difficult with this kind of profession: in a poem to the emperor Andronikos II, Philes complains that he lives on his verses as badly as a spider on mosquitos.<sup>130</sup> In a poem to Theodore Patrikiotes,<sup>131</sup> a revenue officer at the court and one of his main commissioners, Philes states that he will not

125 Kubina, *Die enkomiastische Dichtung des Manuel Philes*, pp. 210–17.

126 Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 32.

127 *PLP* no. 21439; Andronikos is also attested as the author of other works.

128 Manuel Philes, *Laudatory Epigram for Andronikos Komnenos Palaiologos*, ed. Martini; cf. Knös, "Qui est l'auteur du roman de Callimaque et de Chrysorrhoe?", pp. 280–84. See also Cupane, "In the Realm of Eros", pp. 95–97, 114–15. The authorship question was also discussed by Henrich, "Ein neu(artig)es Argument". The epigram, despite its length, may have acted as a prologue epigram to the romance; although it may have been a reflection on the romance in metrical form as well.

129 Manuel Philes, *Poem F 100*, vv. 37–38, ed. Miller, vol. 1, pp. 284–85; Ποίος γὰρ ἄλλος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν φθέγγεται, / λήμματος οὐ παρόντος ... I thank Krystina Kubina for providing me with this reference. On this letter, see also Kubina, "Manuel Philes—a Begging Poet?"

130 Manuel Philes, *Poem F 80*, vv. 30–33, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 258; cf. Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, pp. 32–33.

131 *PLP* no. 22077.

send any further poems unless he has received the meat he had asked for.<sup>132</sup> The exchange of *realia* is not exceptional but a known practice which is attested in Byzantine epistolography. As we learn from Palaeologan letters,<sup>133</sup> horses and mules as gift were very popular.<sup>134</sup> Philes on one occasion also received horses as remuneration for his poetic activity;<sup>135</sup> in some further poems he asks for barley for his horses.<sup>136</sup> Later on in his career, however, Philes' horses (perhaps the same ones) were distrained.<sup>137</sup> Further remuneration *realia* include a silver sword or a robe with gold threads,<sup>138</sup> or wine,<sup>139</sup> but in most cases he only asked for money. In a short poem to a member of the Komnenos family, whom he addressed flatteringly as "friend of the Muses", he reminded them impressively not to forget to send him the gold (coins) before his addressee left for Thrace.<sup>140</sup> A witty form of salary was given to Philes by the *domestikos* John Kantakouzenos, the future emperor John VI, namely a goose egg full of silver (coins).<sup>141</sup>

The mention of his poverty is more than a mere *topos* in his work. In a poem, probably addressed to the emperor, he calls the latter *πτωχοτρόφος* ("nourisher of the poor")<sup>142</sup> and he verbally states that he is hungry.<sup>143</sup>

Philes' poems are of very different lengths, apparently depending on the payment he had received: poems addressed to the emperor, in most cases Andronikos II, are quite long, often comprising 100 or more verses. It is certainly no coincidence that some of his poems for the emperor consist of exactly 100 verses.<sup>144</sup> This stable number of verses also holds true for poems addressed to other members of the imperial family, the court or the aristocracy, such as John

132 Manuel Philes, *Poem F 14*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 194; cf. Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 33.

133 Karpozilos, "Realia in Byzantine Epistolography XIII–XV c."; on *realia* in letters in earlier periods, see Karpozilos, "Realia in Byzantine Epistolography X–XII c.". On *realia* in Philes' poetry, see Tziatzi-Papagianni, "Ὅστις ποτ' ἂν βούλοιτο μαθεῖν τὴν Θράκην".

134 See also below p. 289.

135 Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 32.

136 Cf. Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*, p. 44.

137 Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 35.

138 Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 32.

139 Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*, p. 44; cf. Anagnostakes, *Ὁ οἶνος στὴν ποίηση*, pp. 117–38, 220–36.

140 Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Martini, no. 97.

141 Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Martini, no. 80; cf. Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 32.

142 Manuel Philes, *Poem F 58*, v. 3, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 233.

143 Cf. Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*, p. 43.

144 Manuel Philes, *Poem F 44*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, pp. 220–225; *Poem P 54*, ed. Miller vol. 2, pp. 94–98; *Poem App. 31*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, pp. 393–97.

Kantakouzenos.<sup>145</sup> A further poem to the emperor comprises 200 verses.<sup>146</sup> The longest poem, however, addressed to Andronikos II is entitled “Consolatory (verses) for the emperor when the Sicilians overran Thrace”.<sup>147</sup> The 590 verses deal with Berenguer d’Entença’s<sup>148</sup> and his Catalan troops’ arrival in Thrace at the beginning of the 14th century,<sup>149</sup> and are also witness to Philes’ practice of dealing with events of contemporary history, making him comparable to his 12th century predecessors, Theodore and Manganeios Prodromos. The long poem, or at least parts of it, was also perhaps performed in public: Philes very intensively employs the rhetorical figure of anaphora throughout the poem with several verses in a row having the same beginning in order to stress the meaning of his thoughts.

However, as many hints in his poetry reveal, his relationship with the emperor Andronikos II became problematic. He must have annoyed the emperor quite seriously, resulting in him being dismissed from the court.<sup>150</sup> Although it is often very difficult to establish a secure chronology for his poems, from this time onwards Philes might have had difficulties making a living by writing poetry. Because he was no longer part of the higher social strata any more, he also seems to have lost many of his patrons. His situation apparently did not change until Andronikos III’s victory after the civil war against his grandfather Andronikos II. In a lengthy poem consisting of almost 200 verses Andronikos III is welcomed as the renewer and liberator of Constantinople.<sup>151</sup>

Philes’ œuvre also consists of a large number of shorter poems which comprise two, four, a dozen, or about 20 verses. As already stated, the number of verses he composed certainly depended on the payment he received, but this was not the only factor. One such example is the very short tomb epigram for a certain Melane,<sup>152</sup> who was the wife of the πρωτοῖερακάριος Basilikos, the emperor’s first falconer. The two verses,<sup>153</sup> drawing upon traditional funerary rhetoric, perfectly fit their use as an inscription on her tomb. However, Philes also composed a longer poem on Melane’s death, consisting of 38 verses, in

145 Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Martini, no. 79.

146 Manuel Philes, *Poem F 95*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, pp. 270–78.

147 Manuel Philes, *Poem P 14*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, pp. 34–58.

148 *PLP* no. 27580.

149 Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium*, pp. 130–32.

150 Cf. Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, pp. 33–36.

151 Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Gedeon, pp. 219–20, cf. Polemis, “Ποικίλα Ἑλληνικά I”, pp. 210–12; see also Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 36.

152 *PLP* no. 17640.

153 Manuel Philes, *Poem E 179*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 86.

which the deceased speaks in the first person.<sup>154</sup> There are some hints which might suggest that the poem was composed even before her death after she had become a nun. This would not be without parallel in Byzantium, and is also attested elsewhere in Philes' œuvre: for example, in a poem which Philes wrote in the name of John Kanaboures, προκαθήμενος τοῦ βεστιαρίου,<sup>155</sup> the latter states that he had created his tomb before his death.<sup>156</sup>

Philes' œuvre comprises a lot of poems, such as that for Melane's tomb, which were meant to be inscribed either on architecture or on icons and liturgical objects. Whether all of Philes' similarly structured poems ended up as inscriptions is very difficult to tell. Like other poets before him—such as the aforementioned Maximos Planudes and Nikephoros Choumnos—in many cases, Philes might have developed several epigrams on the same subject from which the patron could have chosen. For Philes this practice is evidenced by the tomb verses for John Cheilas, who served as metropolitan of Ephesos from 1285 to 1289.<sup>157</sup> Twelve different versions for Cheilas' tomb poems are preserved, all of them with four verses and a similar structure.<sup>158</sup> A good argument can be made that Philes made Cheilas choose one of the epigrams, which was then indeed inscribed on the tomb after the patron's death. It is interesting to observe that only two out of the 12 epigrams mention Cheilas' office as metropolitan of Ephesos. This is probably due to the fact that Cheilas had been expelled from the Ephesos see and was under house arrest in Constantinople.<sup>159</sup>

Among Philes' various poems for tombs, icons, and liturgical objects, there is a considerable number of verses which were composed *ek prosopou* ("in the name of" / "as if spoken by"), as some of the titles reveal. However, poems which were also transmitted without this expression in the title are written in a form which pretends as if the mourning widow of a deceased aristocratic, or a patron of a donated object, is the verses' author. An epigram (25 vv.) for an icon of the Mother of God uses a variant of the common *ek prosopou* formula, namely ὡς ἀπὸ στόματος ("as if from the mouth of").<sup>160</sup> An epigram of almost equal length (24 vv.) was written for a further icon of the

154 On funerary poems in the first person, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 215–18.

155 *PLP* no. 10865.

156 Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Gedeon, p. 659.

157 *PLP* no. 30764.

158 Manuel Philes, *Poems* P 158–67, ed. Miller, vol. 2, pp. 188–91.

159 See *PLP* no. 30764.

160 Manuel Philes, *Poem* F 66, ed. Miller, vol. 1, pp. 240–41.



Mother of God on behalf of Michael Asan Palaiologos.<sup>161</sup> What most of these poems have in common is their similar structure at the end; they offer in two or three verses a short curriculum vitae of the patron. In the case of the icon of Michael Asan, the last three verses run as follows: “Asan Michael Palaiologos, nephew of the ruler of the Ausones’ race, Komnenian-born, (wrote) this for the all-pure Virgin”. An interesting *ek prosopou*-poem is eight verses written by Philes for the painter Makarios,<sup>162</sup> who had painted an icon of Christ. It is a dedicatory epigram in which Makarios very humbly describes his painting action, but not forgetting, as is the tradition with such verses, to claim a place in heaven as reward.<sup>163</sup> The verses might have been painted on the icon, perhaps on the back, as similar metrical painters’ signatures on some Sinai icons of the 11th/12th century suggest.<sup>164</sup>

When Philes was still well-liked at the court of Andronikos II, he also had access to the emperor’s palace. One short poem (consisting of six verses) refers to depictions of the virtues in the palace.<sup>165</sup>

As to style<sup>166</sup> and language: it has already been proven that Philes worked a lot with templates,<sup>167</sup> which means that he repeats verses or parts of verses throughout his whole poetry, especially in his tomb and funerary epigrams. This is more than a rhetorical device, but has its origin in Philes’ technique of producing verses in advance. He not only composed different versions of poems on the same topic (as we have seen), but also created *epitaphia* with

161 Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Martini, pp. 40–41. This list could contain many more examples. The title of the epigram mentions Andronikos, but according to Martini (p. 40, n. 35) this is a mistake for Michael: see also *PLP* no. 1514 and Kubina, K., “Manuel Philes and the Asan Family”, p. 197.

162 *PLP* no. 16249.

163 Manuel Philes, *Poem E 259*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 131.

164 Rhoby, A., *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, nos. 1k4–7.

165 Manuel Philes, *Poem E 237*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, p. 124. One long poem (consisting of 108 verses) addressing the paintings of an entire floor in the palace (that reminds us of the 12th-century author Constantine Manasses’ description [in prose] of a mosaic in the palace: Constantine Manasses, *Ekphrasis ges.*, ed. Lampsidis; cf. Mpazaiou-Barabas, “Το εντοίχο ψηφιδωτο της Γης”), had long been ascribed to Philes, but does not belong to the latter’s oeuvre. It was instead composed by Manuel Melessinos, as the title in the manuscript (Vat. gr. 1126, f. 146v: [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1126](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1126)) reveals: Manuel Melessinos, *Poem on the Paintings in the Palace*, ed. Miller. I sincerely thank Krystina Kubina for sharing this information with me. Melessinos seems to be identical with Manuel Melissenos (*PLP* no. 17822 = 94141?) who is attested as the author of at least four more poems: Manuel Melessinos, *Poems*, ed. Miller; and Manuel Melessinos, *Poem*, ed. Romano.

166 On style see also Bazzani, “Livelli di stile”; and Bazzani, “A poem of Philes to Makarios Chrysokephalos?”.

167 Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*, p. 60.

general remarks on the death, to which he only had to adjust the name and other features of the deceased person.<sup>168</sup>

As to the structure of his *epitaphioi*: Philes, like so many other authors, owes a lot to the instructions of late antique theorists, especially (Ps.-)Menandros of Laodicea and Maximos Planudes, as we have seen.<sup>169</sup> As advised by Menandros, his poems consist of prologues, encomiastic parts, and epilogues.<sup>170</sup> Philes also employed all kinds of further rhetorical devices, such as allegories, anaphoras, epiphers, rhetorical questions, and a lot of allusions to the Bible and to sayings.<sup>171</sup> With vocabulary, however, Philes is a very active wordsmith; several dozen *hapax legomena*, mainly adjectives, are attested in Philes' œuvre.

## 5 Poetry on Commission in the 14th and 15th Centuries

However, not everything which is in verse and was produced (on commission) in the first half of the 14th century, was necessarily penned by Philes. This is true for a poem of 48 dodecasyllables with the title "Verses of supplication to the Empress Virgin and Mother of God of Chora as if spoken in person by the very pious empress lady Maria Komnene Palaiologina".<sup>172</sup> She is generally identified as an illegitimate daughter of Michael VIII Palaiologos, who was twice married to Mongolia.<sup>173</sup> Here again the expression "as if spoken" (ὡς ἐκ προσώπου) pretends as if the speaker's "I" was the author of the work. The poem informs us about the donation of a book, which Maria richly decorated, supposedly with a precious binding, for the Chora monastery. In actual fact, however, the poem is a long praise of the Virgin, who is asked to make the donor "dwell in the heavenly mansions, in the never-ageing house of Eden."<sup>174</sup> The epigram might have served as a prologue epigram in the renovated book, most likely a Bible, because in v. 33 there is a hint to "the Lord's golden divine words" (οἱ Κυριακοὶ χρύσειοι θεῖοι λόγοι). In the secondary literature the poem is listed among the works of Manuel Philes,<sup>175</sup> although the author's name is nowhere attested. It was only Ihor Ševčenko's assumption that it was composed

168 Cf. Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*, p. 31.

169 See above p. 274.

170 Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*, p. 47.

171 Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*, passim.

172 Anonymous, *Verses of Supplication to the Empress Virgin*, ed. Teteriatnikov, p. 194 = ed. Krustev, p. 72.

173 *PLP* no. 21395.

174 Anonymous, *Verses of Supplication to the Empress Virgin*, ed. Teteriatnikov, p. 196.

175 Vassis, *Initia carminum Byzantinorum*, p. 169 (incipit: "Ἐδει μὲν ἴσως τῇ παναρχάντου κόρη).

by Philes,<sup>176</sup> but it may also be attributed to Maximos Planudes, because the structure of the poem reminds of the latter's aforementioned (p. 274) epigrams for Theodora Rhaulina and the St Andrew *en te Krisei* monastery. It may also be attributed to another anonymous author of the time.

A further poem, consisting of 86 verses, transmitted anonymously and edited by Dieter Roderich Reinsch some 25 years ago, is to be dated to approximately the same period. This is because it was composed on Michael IX's death on 12 October 1320;<sup>177</sup> Choumnos' poems for the same occasion as the anonymous poem is written in the fifteen-syllable. It is interesting to see that Michael IX's death generally produced many monodies in prose, but especially in verse.<sup>178</sup> The two prose monodies were penned by Theodore Hyrtakenos<sup>179</sup> and Staphidakes<sup>180</sup> respectively.<sup>181</sup> There are Choumnos' poems,<sup>182</sup> and a further poem by Theodore Metochites,<sup>183</sup> and there are three further short anonymous poems in fifteen-syllable verses which similarly mourn Michael IX's death.<sup>184</sup> Were all these works commissioned, or did the emperor's death cause some of these works to be produced and offered to the court? Whatever the case, the above mentioned anonymous tomb poem edited by Reinsch compares the darkness (*σκότος*) for the New Rome, which was created by Michael IX's death, with the darkness which emerged when Christ died on the cross (vv. 1–3). As for the poem's authorship, Dieter Roderich Reinsch does not wish to assign it to Manuel Philes.<sup>185</sup> He seems to be right because the poem is written in a lower language register than normally employed by Philes, although the anonymous author is well aware of Homeric expressions and the vocabulary of Byzantine rhetoric.<sup>186</sup> Since the tomb verses contain a lot of addresses, mainly to the deceased (e.g. vv. 57–59),<sup>187</sup> it was certainly writ-

176 Anonymous, *Verses of Supplication to the Empress Virgin*, ed. Teteriatnikov, pp. 188–89, n. 2; cf. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 2, p. 176.

177 Anonymous, *Poem on the Death of Michael IX Palaiologos*, ed. Reinsch.

178 Very briefly (and incomplete), Gickler, *Kaiser Michael IX Palaiologos*, pp. 31–34, 198.

179 Theodore Hyrtakenos, *Monodies on the Death of Michael IX Palaiologos*, ed. Boissonade.

180 Staphidakes, *Monody on the Death of Michael IX Palaiologos*, ed. Meschini. On Staphidakes, see also below p. 286.

181 On both, see Sideras, *Die byzantinischen Grabreden*, pp. 280–282.

182 See above pp. 275–276.

183 Theodore Metochites, *Poems*, ed. Polemis, no. 8.

184 Anonymous, *Poems on the Death of Michael IX Palaiologos*, ed. Geanakoplos; on these poems, see Jeffreys, "The Nature and Origins of the Political Verse", p. 179.

185 Anonymous, *Poem on the Death of Michael IX Palaiologos*, pp. 379–80.

186 Anonymous, *Poem on the Death of Michael IX Palaiologos*, p. 375.

187 Anonymous, *Poem on the Death of Michael IX Palaiologos*, p. 374: καὶ σὺ δέ, θεῖε βασιλεῦ, αὐτάναξ, αὐσονάρχα, / σκηπτοῦχε θεοβούλευτε θεόσπεπτε θεόφρον, / ὄμβριμε λεοντόθυμε γενναίε βριαρόχειρ.

ten in order to be performed orally, ideally at the tomb itself. This is comparable, for example, with Philes' verses on the death of Michael Tarchaneiotos, attached to the outer cornice of the chapel of the Pammakaristos church in Constantinople, which starts with the direct address "My husband, my light, my breath, my counterpart".<sup>188</sup>

The above-mentioned Staphidakes<sup>189</sup> is not only attested as the author of a prose monody on Michael IX's death—which was presented in Thessaloniki, the emperor's place of death—but also as composer of a poem addressed to Isaac,<sup>190</sup> the founder of the Peribleptos monastery (also called Isaac monastery) in the same city. Consisting of eight verses only, it is composed (apparently in a deliberately antiquarian way) in elegiac distichs.<sup>191</sup> What is interesting is that almost three out of the poem's eight verses are dedicated to the poetic description of Isaac's life span and the day he died (probably not before 1314): "he became 65 years and 26 days, and he died on 16 December ..." (Ἐξήκοντα γεγώς ἔτεα πρὸς τοῖσί τε πέντε / ἡματὰ θ' ἕξ καὶ πρὸς δις δέκα θνήσκει νῦν / ἕκτη καὶ δεκάτῃ δεκεβρίοιο ...). Staphidakes, like his contemporary Thomas Magistros, an intellectual in Thessaloniki, may have been commissioned to compose this short epigram, which was perhaps even inscribed on the tomb. But he may have written it of his own accord, if he can be identified as one of Isaac's former students, which might be true for Thomas Magistros as well, whose spiritual father Isaac served.<sup>192</sup>

Nikephoros Gregoras (c.1295–c.1360), about a generation younger than Manuel Philes and author of the famous *Rhomaïke Historia*,<sup>193</sup> is the author of three tomb epigrams, one of them composed for his former teacher Theodore Metochites. Perhaps not commissioned but written of his own accord, it consists of four verses, and two elegiac distichs. It ends with the words "dead is that man, dead is all wisdom".<sup>194</sup> It may have been inscribed on Metochites' tomb, or just a sketch for an epigram for his tomb. The other two poems seem to

188 Manuel Philes, *Poem E 223*, ed. Miller, vol. 1, pp. 117–18, v. 1: Ἄνερ, τὸ φῶς, τὸ πνεῦμα, τὸ πρόσφθεγμᾶ μου. The inscriptional version is published by Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, no. TR76.

189 *PLP* no. 26734; Gaul, "Moschopoulos, Lopadiotes, Phrankopoulos (?), Magistros, Staphidakes", pp. 190–94; see also Skrekas, "Translations and Paraphrases of Liturgical Poetry".

190 *PLP* no. 8241.

191 Staphidakes, *Poem*, ed. Mercati.

192 *PLP* no. 8241.

193 *PLP* no. 4443; *ODB*, pp. 874–75.

194 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Tomb Epigrams*, ed. Mercati, p. 150, no. 3, v. 4: ὤλετο κείνος ἀνήρ· ὤλετο σοφίη πάσα. As rightly stated by Mercati, the second half of the pentameter is corrupt. Mercati also noted that Gregoras' verses are based on an epigram in the *Anthologia Palatina* (7.593).

have been written on commission: the first, written in elegiac distichs too, are tomb verses for Michael Asan (Komnenos Tornikes Palaiologos), governor of Lesbos from 1342 onward;<sup>195</sup> this poem is also composed in the form “as if said” (ὡς ἐκ προσώπου) by his wife Eirene.<sup>196</sup> Since it addresses the audience (v. 15: *παριόντες*) it might have been performed at the funeral or the commemoration service. The poem is full of laments by the widow; some verses are devoted to Michael’s ancestry (vv. 37–41), and at the end Eirene asks the Mother of God to forgive the deceased and her for all their sins. The second epigram has all the attributes of an inscribed epigram: it is rather short (10 vv.), and it is composed in dodecasyllables, the traditional meter of inscribed epigrams. The speaker’s “I” is the deceased Euphrosyne Sphrantzaina Laskarina Palaiologina,<sup>197</sup> who, again very traditionally, addresses the beholder (v. 3: *ἄνθρωπε*) to be aware of the evanescence of life.<sup>198</sup>

The so-called *Epithalamion*, a poem in political verses written for the marriage of a Byzantine prince, has already attracted a lot of scholarship.<sup>199</sup> It is of specific interest, because in its single witness, the cod. Vat. gr. 1851, it is accompanied by illustrations.<sup>200</sup> The date and to which marriage the poem refers, have been very much debated. Some years ago, it was again argued that the verses do not refer to a marriage in the late 12th century, but rather to the wedding of the eight-year-old Andronikos IV Palaiologos, son of the emperor John V, with Maria, the nine-year-old daughter of the famous Bulgarian tsar Ivan Alexander.<sup>201</sup> The verses use a language register which is different from the one employed in the poems presented so far. Despite the use of some high-style vocabulary, suitable for the address of the imperial court, it is full of vernacular *vá*-constructions and other elements of spoken language, and has a rather simple syntax.<sup>202</sup> The verses were certainly meant to be presented and

195 *PLP* no. 1513. He is not identical with Michael Asan Komnenos Palaiologos (*PLP* no. 1514), commissioner of Manuel Philes (cf. Kubina, “*Manuel Philes and the Asan Family*”, p. 197) and military commander in Macedonia, who defected to the Serbs in 1328.

196 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Tomb Epigrams*, ed. Mercati, pp. 148–49.

197 *PLP* no. 27268, perhaps the wife of the *megas stratopedarches* and senator Sphrantzes Palaiologos (*PLP* no. 27282), who died in 1339.

198 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Tomb Epigrams*, ed. Mercati, p. 150.

199 Anonymous, *Epithalamion*, ed. Strzygowski; some text corrections by Papademetriou, “Ο ἐπιθαλάμιος Ἀνδρονίκου ΙΙ”; see also Hennessy, “The Vatican *Epithalamion*”.

200 Cf. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, pp. 210–30 (with an edition of the Greek text differing from the one by Strzygowski).

201 Hennessy, “A Child Bride and her Representation”.

202 Jeffreys, “The Vernacular *εἰσαγγεῖαι* for Agnes of France”, who, however, argues for a date in the 12th century by identifying the princess as Agnes of France, the bride of the future emperor Alexios II Komnenos.

sung during the procession, similar to the one described by Nicholas Eirenikos in the 13th century.<sup>203</sup>

The following three late Byzantine authors and their poems differ from the above-mentioned commissioned poetry insofar as they are not products of the milieu of Constantinople.

The first example is Constantine Hermoniakos'<sup>204</sup> "Trojan War",<sup>205</sup> which was composed for John II Angelos Doukas Komnenos (= Giovanni Orsini), the Italian despot of Epirus,<sup>206</sup> who ruled between 1323 and 1335. This work is extraordinary for several reasons: it is composed in octosyllables and in a language with several vernacular characteristics as well. In a long prologue poem of 93 verses, the author informs the reader about his commission: he was ordered (vv. 23, 37 ἐπροστάχθην) by John and his wife Anne, which he both calls "very fond of learning" (v. 22 φιλολογικώτατοι), to make the difficult wording of Homer simpler and better understandable, and to bring it to clearness (σαφήνεια).<sup>207</sup> After stating that he was orally commissioned by the despotic couple to convey the content of the Iliad,<sup>208</sup> the author seizes the opportunity to present himself: "The author is Constantine, their servant, Hermoniakos by name, (servant) of John and Anne, my good despot and beautiful despoina".<sup>209</sup> In the following verses (61–85) Hermoniakos offers a short overview about the content, interestingly enough with an alphabetic acrostich from Alpha to Omega.

Stephen Sgouropoulos leads us to the court of the Komnenoi at Trebizond, where he served as *protonotarios*, perhaps between 1350 and 1354.<sup>210</sup> He is the author of nine poems with a total of more than 1500 verses, most of them addressed to the emperor of Trebizond Alexios III Komnenos, who reigned from 1349 to 1390.<sup>211</sup> What they have in common with Hermoniakos' Iliad

203 See above pp. 269–270.

204 *PLP* no. 6129, *ODB*, p. 921.

205 Constantine Hermoniakos, *Trojan War*, ed. Legrand. See Jeffreys, "Constantine Hermoniakos and Byzantine Education"; Nilsson, "From Homer to Hermoniakos".

206 *PLP* no. 6129.

207 Constantine Hermoniakos, *Trojan War*, ed. Legrand, p. 4, vv. 23–27: ἐπροστάχθην τοῦ πεζεύσαι / ἐκ τὰς δυσκολούσας λέξεις / τοῦ Ὀμήρου ῥαψωδίας / εἰς παντοίαν σαφήνεια, / ἐπὶ τὸ σαφὲς ἐπίπαν. On the specific meaning of πεζεύειν in this context, see Kriaras, *Λεξικό της μεσαιωνικής ελληνικής δημόδους γραμματείας*, s.v. πεζεύω (11).

208 Constantine Hermoniakos, *Trojan War*, ed. Legrand, p. 4, vv. 37–38: ἐπροστάχθην νὰ συγγράψω / ἐκ χειλέων δεσποτῶν μου.

209 Constantine Hermoniakos, *Trojan War*, ed. Legrand, p. 5, vv. 44–49.

210 *PLP* no. 25034.

211 Stephen Sgouropoulos, *Poems*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus; Stephen Sgouropoulos, *Verses*, ed. Papatheodorides.

paraphrase, is the fact that they are written in octosyllables as well. The verses are full of praise for the emperor; however it seems they were not commissioned but sent by Sgouropoulos of his own accord, who was then an old man asking for support. He mentions inter alia ἔρωσ and πόθος, which made him say a lot.<sup>212</sup> Towards the end of the poems, Sgouropoulos asks, always very servilely, the young emperor to accept his words. Interestingly enough, in one of the poems he asks the emperor to provide him with either a horse, a mule, a bullock, or a wood-bearing donkey instead of money, because due to his age he does not want to go by foot anymore.<sup>213</sup> Remarks of this kind remind us of Manuel Philes, who had asked for barley for his horses instead of money.<sup>214</sup>

A notable case is the one of John Katakalon, the third author on commission outside Constantinople to be mentioned here, who served as *oikonomos* of Adrianopolis c.1366/67.<sup>215</sup> He is the author of a long laudatory poem on the emperor John V Palaiologos, consisting of 422 political verses.<sup>216</sup> However, it was not the emperor who commissioned Katakalon, neither did Katakalon address his verses to John on his own accord. It was the metropolitan of Adrianopolis, Polykarpos,<sup>217</sup> who commissioned Katalon to compose the poem, as we learn from its prologue and some remarks later in the poem.<sup>218</sup> The metropolitan's self-fashioning is expressed by the remark that he prayed day and night for the salvation of the Byzantine empire from the Turks.<sup>219</sup>

212 Stephen Sgouropoulos, *Verses*, ed. Papatheodorides, p. 264, vv. 15–19: Ἐρωσ ὁ πρὸς σέ με φλέγει, / πόθος πυρπολεῖ με ξένος, / συνταράσσει μοι τὰ σπλάγχχνα / καὶ ποιεῖ με πολυλόγον / καὶ πολύγλωσσον, ὡς βλέπεις.

213 Stephen Sgouropoulos, *Verses*, ed. Papatheodorides, p. 282, vv. 79–84: Δὸς ἵππον εὐδρομον, στερρὸν / ἀντὶ τῶν ἀργυρίων, / ἢ δὸς ἡμίονον ἢ βοῦν, / ὄνον ξυλοφοροῦντα, / ἴνα μὴ πλέον ἐνοχλῆ / πεζοπορῶν ἐν γήρᾳ. Verses 80, 82 and 84 contain only seven syllables, as do also other verses in this poem, but there does not seem to be a logical sequence of octasyllables and heptasyllables.

214 See above p. 280.

215 *PLP* no. 11427.

216 John Katakalon, *Laudatory Poem on John V Palaiologos*, ed. Migne.

217 *PLP* no. 23515; Preiser-Kapeller, *Der Episkopat im späten Byzanz*, pp. 4–5, 7–8. Polykarpos was imprisoned in 1368/69 when the Turks conquered Adrianopolis; from c.1372 onward he resided in Constantinople.

218 John Katakalon, *Laudatory Poem on John V Palaiologos*, ed. Migne, p. 961A: τοῦ ποιμενάρχου προσταγαῖς τοῦ θείου τετυγμένον / Ὁρεστιάδος τοῦ λαμπροῦ καὶ ξένου Πολυκάρπου, see also p. 970A: τοῦ Πολυκάρπου τοῦ λαμπροῦ τοῦ θαυμαστοῦ τοῦ πάνυ / τούτου ταῖς θείαις προσταγαῖς ἐκθύμως τετυγμένα.

219 See Zachariadou, “The Conquest of Adrianople by the Turks”.

When the same emperor John v Palaiologos, became emperor in 1354, this was celebrated by a poem consisting of 30 political verses<sup>220</sup> penned by Marc Angelos,<sup>221</sup> who is also attested as the author of a poem (in 144 anacreontics / octosyllables) on *Eros*.<sup>222</sup> There are no hints as to whether Angelos was commissioned to compose this poem for the Byzantine emperor or if he submitted them on his own accord; so also here this interesting question cannot be answered satisfactorily.

A very humble attitude by an author is to be found in one of the poems of John Chortasmenos (c.1370–c.1436/37): author, scribe, notary in the patriarchal chancery, and, in the last years of his life, metropolitan of Selymbria.<sup>223</sup> Of specific interest is his long *threnos* on the death of Andrew Asanes<sup>224</sup>—a tax collector on the island of Lemnos and relative of the emperor Manuel II Palaiologos—and his son Manuel. In this, following a centuries-old tradition,<sup>225</sup> Chortasmenos employs two different meters (dodecasyllable and pentadecasyllable) and prose.<sup>226</sup> The *threnos*, which has come down to us, like his other works, in his autographon cod. Vind. Suppl. gr. 75, is transmitted as a unity consisting of three parts. The first part is composed in (unprosodic) dodecasyllables,<sup>227</sup> and is spoken by Andrew's widow. It consists of a prologue, followed by laments on the death of husband and son and an *ekphrasis* on the beauty of the deceased son. The second part is written in prose, and constitutes the text of a dialogue between mother and son, which is based on a dream of the mother. In the third part, composed in pentadecasyllables, this dialogue is continued. Interestingly enough, Chortasmenos, the author, inserts himself at the end of the pentadecasyllable part. He calls himself “teacher” (διδάσκαλος) of the son Manuel, and he explicitly states that he composed his *threnos* in “various meters”,<sup>228</sup> and, in the typical fashion of verses written for someone,

220 Marc Angelos, *Verses*, ed. Lampros, pp. 438–39; cf. Jeffreys, “The Vernacular εισιτήριοι for Agnes of France”, p. 105 and n. 32.

221 *PLP* no. 218.

222 Marc Angelos, *Verses*, ed. Lampros, pp. 434–38.

223 *PLP* no. 30897, *ODB*, pp. 431–32, John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger.

224 *PLP* no. 1486.

225 See above p. 267.

226 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, pp. 227–37, see also pp. 38–39 and pp. 130–32.

227 The harsh criticism of Chortasmenos' dodecasyllables by Hunger (John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, pp. 38–39, 40) is unjustified because Byzantines sometimes intentionally composed unprosodic verses, such as Kassia or Symeon Neos Theologos.

228 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, p. 237, v. 387: νῦν μονωδῶ σε δυστυχῶς ἐν στίχοις διαφόροις. Similar experiments occur intensively in the 12th century: see Zagklas, “Experimenting with Prose and Verse”.



he asks as a “reward” intercession from Christ.<sup>229</sup> It is easily conceivable that Chortasmenos was commissioned by the widow to compose this *threnos*. He also might have offered it to the widow in the hope of remuneration.

But what can be said about the text’s performance, if there was any? Did the widow and mother indeed have the dream, or was it Chortasmenos’ invention? Be this as it may, the dodecasyllables had the potential to be performed at the funeral or the commemoration service. The prologue, consisting of 12 verses with some general remarks of the widow about death, even had the potential to be inscribed, and the dialogue part (both prose and pentadecasyllables) might have been performed at a *theatron*.<sup>230</sup> Despite the high esteem Chortasmenos was held among his contemporaries, he seems to have belonged to a rather poor social stratum. He seems to have depending on commissions and on jobs as a teacher, such as that of the mentioned Manuel Asanes.<sup>231</sup> A poem addressed to the young (νέος) John VIII Palaiologos might have been composed when the latter became co-emperor in 1403 or slightly later,<sup>232</sup> that is in a period, when Chortasmenos served as notary in the patriarchal chancery (1391–c.1415). In this work he introduces himself to the emperor with the words “Chortasmenos: this is my name”,<sup>233</sup> and asks the co-emperor to accept his petitions and entreaties, to become his “fellow rescuer” (σωτήρ σύμμαχος), and to provide him, being poor like a beggar, quickly his favour.<sup>234</sup> Such expressions remind us of similar genre-based phrases in the poetry of authors working on commission in the 12th century, and of Manuel Philes.

One of Chortasmenos’ main patrons and sponsors seems to have been Theodore Kantakouzenos (†1410), senator in Constantinople and uncle of the emperor Manuel II.<sup>235</sup> Five poems (three in dodecasyllables, two in hexameters) deal with the newly built house of Kantakouzenos;<sup>236</sup> the second hexameter poem is only a variation (with some different verses) of the first. In addition, about half of the hexameters form a *cento* of Homeric verses. This might be the result of Chortasmenos’ own difficulties in composing proper hexameters, or because he wanted to beautify his poem with the highest possible

229 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, p. 237, vv. 388–89: σὺ δὲ Χριστῷ παρεστηκῶς τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν ἄλων / κάμοῦ μνημόνευε λοιπὸν ὡς ἔχων παρρησίαν.

230 On this passage, see also Zagklas, “Experimenting with Prose and Verse”, p. 246.

231 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, pp. 46–47.

232 *PLP* no. 21481.

233 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, p. 191, no. c, v. 13: ὁ Χορτασμένος· τοῦτο μοι κλήσις ἐστίν.

234 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, p. 191, no. c, v. 8: δὸς ἐν τάχει μοι τὴν χάριν πτωχεύοντι.

235 *PLP* no. 10966.

236 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, pp. 190–92, nos. b, d, e, pp. 194–95, nos. g, g/1.

authority, Homer. As is the case with many other poems (see above, pp. 274–275), Chortasmenos might have offered his patron these five pieces in order for them to choose one. In one of the variants, it is Theodore Kantakouzenos himself who addresses the audience with the words “Beholders of my house”.<sup>237</sup> The verses might have been inscribed, perhaps next to a depiction of Kantakouzenos himself, but they might have been performed after the house’s erection as well. Various variants of epigrams, both in dodecasyllables and pentadecasyllables, also exist for the death of the abbot and scribe Joasaph; one of them might have become an inscription on his tomb.<sup>238</sup> Some of Chortasmenos’ short epigrams refer to saints; one of them bears a title telling us that the verses were composed for an icon of the *aspasmos* of the apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>239</sup> Chortasmenos might have either written these epigrams on his own spiritual accord, as commissioned work, or as poems to be offered to patrons.

Verses on the same subject, one version in dodecasyllables (20 vv.), the second in hexameters (19 vv.), are also testified in the poetic oeuvre of the famous author, scribe, and churchman John Eugenikos (after 1394–after 1454/55).<sup>240</sup> His tomb verses for the military leader, governor of Thessaloniki, and senator in Constantinople, Demetrios Leontares, who died in 1431,<sup>241</sup> are extant in two versions.<sup>242</sup> Both were meant to be inscribed on Leontares’ tomb, which was located in the Petra monastery of Constantinople. Not only does the hexameter version start with the typical Ἐνθάδε for tomb inscriptions,<sup>243</sup> the dodecasyllable version opens with “You seek, beholder, the great deceased Leontares, whose image you see”.<sup>244</sup> This address is often attested in metrical tomb inscriptions and other epigrams.<sup>245</sup> From the last word of v. 2 (εἰκόνα) we also learn that the epigrams must have been accompanied by a depiction of the deceased next to his tomb in the monastery complex. Eugenikos is also the author of a further tomb epigram of 38 dodecasyllables for Isaac Asanes (who

237 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, p. 192, no. e, v. 1: Ἄνδρες θεαταὶ τῆς ἐμῆς κατοικίας.

238 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, pp. 193–194, no. f.

239 John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, p. 196, no. i, see also p. 112.

240 *PLP* no. 6189; *ODB*, pp. 741–42.

241 *PLP* no. 14676.

242 John Eugenikos, *Tomb Verses for Demetrios Leontares*, ed. Lampros; cf. John Chortasmenos, *Opera*, ed. Hunger, p. 40.

243 John Eugenikos, *Tomb Verses for Demetrios Leontares*, ed. Lampros, p. 214, v. 1: Ἐνθάδε κάλλιπε σώμα εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἀπαίρων.

244 John Eugenikos, *Tomb Verses for Demetrios Leontares*, p. 213, vv. 1–2: Ζητεῖς, θεατά, τὸν μέγαν Λεοντάρην, / ἐκείνον αὐτὸν οὐ βλέπεις τὴν εἰκόνα.

245 Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, no. Me81; Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, nos. GR28, GR38, GR79, TR54; Vassiss, *Initia carminum Byzantinorum*, p. 284.

had served as *eparchos* of Constantinople)<sup>246</sup> and his granddaughter, who were buried in the Philanthropos monastery.<sup>247</sup> The epigram's end reveals that, also in this case, the deceased were depicted and the verses written next to the images, as ordered by the small girl's parents.<sup>248</sup> The parents, in all likelihood, were also those who commissioned Eugenikos to compose the tomb verses. Another funerary poem reveals that Eugenikos also wrote for addressees outside of Constantinople. His funerary poem for Alexios, prince of Gothia, who died in 1446/47,<sup>249</sup> is 95 dodecasyllables long,<sup>250</sup> and due to its length may not have been used as an inscription. However, the last ten verses are explicitly addressed to the beholder (θεατής), who should not just look at the tomb as a simple tomb and the image (of the deceased),<sup>251</sup> but should kneel down, shed tears, and become aware of the bitterness of life.

## 6 Conclusion

This survey cannot encompass the entire poetic output of late Byzantium from the early 13th century onwards, so has restricted itself to poets and poetry on commission. Its purpose, however, is to demonstrate that, after a peak in poetic production in the 11th and especially the 12th century, this trend did not cease to exist after the Latin conquest of 1204. On the contrary, the emperors at Nicaea, as well as the Palaeologan court (at least until the late 14th century) and the aristocracy, continued to commission poets through their eagerness to (re)present themselves. Patrons commissioned dedicatory epigrams, tomb epigrams (many of them inscribed), book epigrams for valuable manuscripts, and epigrams for other special occasions, such as weddings. This proves that “genres” employed in previous centuries, also flourished in late Byzantium. Particularly in the (early) Palaeologan era, a great deal of patronage was

246 *PLP* no. 1493.

247 John Eugenikos, *Tomb Verses for Isaac Asanes*, ed. Lampros.

248 John Eugenikos, *Tomb Verses for Isaac Asanes*, ed. Lampros, p. 212, vv. 37–39: Εἰς γούδν παρηγόρημα λοιπὸν τοῦ πάθους / συνιστοροῦσιν οἱ τεκόντες τῷ πάππῳ / καὶ προσπαραγράφουσιν ἐν στίχοις τάδε.

249 *PLP* no. 622; see also Sideras, “Zum Verfasser und Adressaten einer anonymen Monodie”, pp. 310–14.

250 John Eugenikos, *Tomb Verses for Alexios*, ed. Lampros.

251 John Eugenikos, *Tomb Verses for Alexios*, ed. Lampros, p. 218, vv. 86–87: Ἄλλ, ὦ θεατά, μὴ σκοπήσης τὸν τάφον / ὡς τάφον ἀπλῶς ἢ καὶ τὸν τύπον τόνδε.

provided by the aristocracy.<sup>252</sup> This also coincides with an increasing self-confidence and self-assertion among the urban elites in this period.<sup>253</sup>

As shown in this contribution, it was not only Manuel Philes, the commissioned poet par excellence of late Byzantium, but also other poets who were asked to compose poems on behalf of patrons. In addition, almost all of the discussed authors seem to have composed poems in advance of offering them to potential sponsors. Therefore, in late Byzantium the close relationship between Byzantine poets, the court, and the aristocracy continued, and, thus, there is a continuous development of poetry from Late Antiquity until the end of the Byzantine Empire.

A final case study seems to highlight a continuity of poetical trends in Byzantium. Studying the poetry of Theodore Prodromos, the anonymous Manganeios Prodromos, and Manuel Philes, one very soon becomes aware of similarities in form, style, and metrics between these authors. The manuscript tradition also transmits some works at one point under the name of Theodore Prodromos, and at another under the name of Philes.<sup>254</sup> Interestingly enough, there are quite a few very rare words which are only attested in Manuel Philes and Theodore Prodromos,<sup>255</sup> so one might imagine that at least some of them are direct borrowings.

The same awareness of structure and formulae is, for example, expressed in several passages. When Manuel Philes, in a poem on a dog of the emperor, addresses the latter as ὥστε καὶ χαίρε, βασιλεῦ, καὶ σκίρτα καὶ φαιδρύνου,<sup>256</sup> then this verse reminds us of Manganeios' opening verse in the wedding poem of Theodora, a niece of the emperor Manuel I and Henry, duke of Bavaria and margrave of Austria. It reads: Ἀλαμανία, χόρευε καὶ σκίρτα καὶ λαμπρύνου,<sup>257</sup> to which a verse in a wedding poem by Theodore Prodromos can be added: Σκίρτα καὶ πάλιν, Βυζαντίς, ἀγάλλου, Ῥώμη νέα.<sup>258</sup>

One is of course tempted to assume that Manuel Philes' source for this verse was either Manganeios or Theodore Prodromos. These are, however, the same

252 See Ševčenko, "Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century".

253 Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik*, p. 3.

254 Cf. Theodore Prodromos, *Poems*, ed. Hörandner, p. 35.

255 Cf. Trapp, *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität*, s.v. βουνεύρισμα, δρακοντοφόντης, ἐπόπτρια, ἡμεραγωγής (also attested in the oeuvre of Constantine Manasses), θύλακος, ναυτιλάρχης, πανηγυριστικός, etc.

256 Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Martini, p. 19, v. 29.

257 (Anonymous) Manganeios Prodromos, *Wedding Poem*, ed. Neumann.

258 Theodore Prodromos, *Poems*, ed. Hörandner, no. 13. Cf. Rhoby, "Verschiedene Bemerkungen zur Sebastokratorissa Eirene", p. 315.

structures and forms of commissioned poetry which remained relatively stable over the centuries.

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**PART 3**

*Poetry in Byzantium and Beyond*







# “Accept a Roman Song with a Kindly Heart!”: Latin Poetry in Byzantium

*Kurt Smolak*

## 1 Preliminary Remarks

Writing about Latin poetry in Byzantium means treating literary products of the earliest Byzantine period, which in many respects has to be classed with Late Antiquity. This is if the phenomenon of Byzantium as a cultural and political unit is (in a narrower sense) defined as the period of time after the great changes under the emperor Herakleios in the 7th century to the end of the empire. It is well known that after Justin II, the language of the Roman West rapidly lost its importance, so that within the Byzantine realm it was impossible for any Latin literature to establish itself.<sup>1</sup> Nor can traces of Latin poetry be detected in the exarchates of Carthage and Ravenna, that existed until 698 and 751 respectively, although these two political and cultural centres were under Byzantine sovereignty after the reigns of the Vandals and Ostrogoth kings. Although the poetic works of Ennodius and Maximianus (if the traditional dating is correct) were written in Ostrogothic territory, they do not include any references to Constantinople, apart from the fact that the latter in his fifth elegy mentions having spent some time at the Bosphorus as an envoy for peace negotiations.<sup>2</sup> This, in all probability though, must be regarded as a poetic fiction. However, according to Claudian’s invectives against East Roman politicians (Rufinus, Eutropius) at the turn of the 5th century, rare references to Byzantium can be spotted in the Latin poetry of medieval Western Europe. So far, a suitable survey has not been published.

\* *Accipe Romanum clementi pectore carmen!*

(Priscian, “*In praise of Emperor Anastasius*” [*De laude Anastasii imperatoris*], l. 1).

1 For basic information see Zilliacus, *Zum Kampf der Weltsprachen*; Koder, “Sprache als Identitätsmerkmal”, pp. 5–37, especially on Latin 11–16; see also H. and R. Kahane, “Abendland und Byzanz”, pp. 448–49. In this article, however, 6th-century literature has been neglected. The survey given by Hemmerdinger, “*Les lettres latines*”, pp. 174–78, is incomplete. A concise history of Latin literature in Byzantium is contained in Stache, *Corippus*, pp. 7–19.

2 Maximianus, *Elegies* [*elegiae*] 5.1–3.

## 2 Byzantium and Latin

In order to explain the special status of Latin poetry in Byzantium before the 7th century, in comparison to its status in later Greek culture (Byzantine in an intrinsic not only in a literary sense), it is helpful to discuss how Byzantines used the terms “Roman” (*Romanus*) and “Latin” (*Latinus*) in connection with Western Europeans in the Middle Ages.

The relationship between the Byzantines (regarded in common usage as a medieval state using the Greek language) and the contemporary European West—where Latin was no longer spoken except in socially defined spheres, such as the Church, science, and diplomacy—is an ambivalent one. On the one hand, the Byzantines considered themselves Romans (Ῥωμαῖοι), a concept, even before the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 211, that did not have any linguistic implication, only a legal one.<sup>3</sup> But this is an idea that has survived to the present day as a feature of the Greek-speaking population of the former Ottoman Empire in Turkish-speaking areas. Yet, the Eastern Romans, after the schism of 1054 at the latest, looked upon Roman Catholic Western Europeans as their confessional, and consequently political, hereditary enemies, and in accordance with their lingua franca, classified them as Latins (Λατῖνοι).

After Carolingian educational reforms established a final terminological differentiation between *lingua Latina* as the language of education, and the proto-Romance *rustica Romana lingua* as the spoken idiom,<sup>4</sup> the concepts of Romans and Roman, respectively, were semantically free. After the restoration of the Western empire as a Roman empire, they never referred to a particular state in the sense of a former “Roman people” (*populus Romanus*).

Given these semantic conditions, Liudprand of Cremona, on his famous legation to Constantinople in 968,<sup>5</sup> could declare to the (Eastern) Roman emperor Nikephoros II Phocas that Western Europeans (e.g. Langobards, Saxons, Franks, Lorrainians, Bavarians, Suevi, Burgundians), as followers of Latin-influenced culture, use the word “Roman” to indicate any kind of perfidy.<sup>6</sup>

3 E.g. Prudentius, *Against Symmachus* [*contra Symmachum*] 2.602–18, makes use of the ethnic and consequently (in an indirect way) linguistic indifference of the concept of “Romans” in order to explain his universal theology of a Christian empire.

4 This distinction was first made by the Council of Tours in 813: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Leges*, sect. 111:2, p. 288, 24.

5 Liudprand had been sent there by the (Western) Holy Roman emperor Otto I to look out for a wife of imperial birth for his son.

6 Liudprandus, *Legation to Constantinople* [*relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*] 12. When the emperor himself quotes Ovid, *The Art of Love* [*de arte amatoria*] 1.57–59 in the previous

However, these semantic distinctions were not yet valid in the earliest period of Byzantine culture and politics.<sup>7</sup>

### 3 The “Sitz im Leben”

In early Byzantine poetry, political panegyrics represent the “Sitz im Leben” even more powerfully than in late antique Latin literature in general. Christian topics such as biblical paraphrase,<sup>8</sup> ecphrastic poetry, and epigrams were already left to the Greek language by this point. Latin, however, especially in connection with imperial policy, was used by Latin-speaking authors in the capital, although it can be presumed that the addressees knew Greek as well. The reason for this may lie in the fact that Latin, the traditional official language (in the Greek-speaking part of the empire as well), was regarded as corresponding to dignified occasions. The teaching of Latin, including poetry (mainly Vergil), is well attested by papyri in the East. Beyond military and administrative terminology, however, the Latin poetic language left no traces in Byzantine poetry,<sup>9</sup> as it was not sufficiently rooted in the Greek linguistic sphere in the pre-Byzantine period. The fact that there existed official positions for Latin rhetoricians in Constantinople in the 6th century, however, does allow us to say that there was still a reasonable number of people capable of understanding Latin there.<sup>10</sup> After all, Latin was the mother tongue of the emperors Anastasius I, Justinian I, and Justin II.

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chapter, this must be taken as evidence that Liudprand read and knew this work well, and not as proof of Nicephorus' familiarity with classical Latin literature.

- 7 The period covered in this article is treated from various perspectives in: Gastgeber/Daim, *Byzantium as Bridge*. For the relationship between *Graecitas* and *Latinitas* as a complex phenomenon of Byzantine culture and self-definition see Moening, “Byzantinistik”, pp. 92–105.
- 8 It cannot be ruled out that a copy of Proba's biblical Vergilian cento, with a dedication to emperor Theodosius I. or, according to recent research, to Theodosius II. and a presumptive son of the latter, named Arcadius (Fassina/Lucarini, *Faltonia Betitia Proba*, pp. CVIII–CXI), in the imperial library at Constantinople, inspired Eudocia's Homeric centos. A lexical Graecism (4: *agnoscere* for *legere*) could indicate that a Greek author penned the dedication.
- 9 For the frequently discussed problem of Latin influence upon the Greek poetry of Late Antiquity, see Gärtner, *Quintus Smyrnaeus und die Aeneis*.
- 10 Salomon, “Priscian und sein Schülerkreis”, pp. 91–96.

## 4 Priscian

### 4.1 *His Life and His Works*

The name of Priscian of Caesarea<sup>11</sup> is historically associated with an extensive œuvre, above all the 18 books of *The Instruction (Institutio)* that deals with both Latin grammar and syntax. Along with Donatus' *Major Grammar* and *Minor Grammar (Ars maior and Ars minor)*, Priscian's *Institutio* for centuries remained *the* basis for studying Latin grammar in Western Europe, though it seems to have been written, like his minor works, for a Greek-speaking public. This view is based on the fact that Priscian—in this respect the only grammarian of Late Antiquity—encouraged his students to compare the two languages. It is not possible to verify whether this practice was modelled after his highly respected teacher Theoctistus, whose name may also hint at a Greek origin. When Priscian was employed under Anastasius I as an official teacher of Latin grammar in Constantinople, he seems to have been well connected with important individuals from the West, such as Aurelius Symmachus, Boethius' father in law, to whom he dedicated three minor works,<sup>12</sup> although admittedly when Symmachus was in Constantinople.<sup>13</sup> As witnesses of Priscian's poetic production, two poems have been preserved: a verse panegyric to Emperor Anastasius I; and a geographical didactic poem, the *Periegesis*. Both of these works have been largely neglected by scholars for some time.<sup>14</sup>

11 In the *communis opinio*, situated in Mauretania. This view, however, has been questioned: Caesarea may refer to another homonymous town in the eastern part of the empire. Coyne, *De laude Anastasii*, pp. 8–9 refers to a paper on “Priscian and the West”, given in 1982 by Marie Taylor Davis at the Eighth Conference on Byzantine Studies in Chicago, which seems to have never been published. Only in 1999 was Priscian's origins in Caesarea in Palestine convincingly argued, by Geiger, “Some Latin authors”, pp. 606–12.

12 *De figuris numerorum, De metris fabularum Terentii, Praeexercitamina*. In the first treatise, Priscian shows a familiarity with Greek authors.

13 The addressee of the *Institutio* (Iulianus: *consul and patricius*) cannot be identified with certainty. Cameron/Cameron, “The Cycle of Agathias”, pp. 12–16, tried to prove that he should be identified with the epigrammatist Iulianus the Egyptian, and, if he is identical with Justinian's homonymous *Praefectus Praetorio Orientis*, he had connections with Constantinople at any rate. The statement of Schanz/Hosius/Krüger, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, vol. 4.2, p. 221, that Iulianus was a Western Roman cannot be verified.

14 The most comprehensive description of Priscian's life and œuvre can still be found in Schanz/Hosius/Krüger, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, vol. 4.2, pp. 221–38. Too little information is given by v. Albrecht, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, vol. 2, pp. 1170–71, and Fuhrmann, “Philologie und Rhetorik”, p. 184. Priscian's poems are mentioned only in Schanz/Hosius/Krüger, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, pp. 235–38.

#### 4.2 *The Verse Panegyric to Anastasius I*<sup>15</sup>

This panegyric does not contain any precise information about the date and motivation for its composition. Coyne suggests that the work should be dated to the rebellion of Vitalianus, *magister militum* in Thracia, that took place in the autumn of 513.<sup>16</sup> She reaches this conclusion through a careful analysis of the historical allusions in the text, especially the repulsion of the Scythians from the banks of the Danube (*Hister*) by Hypatius (lines 298–99), the emperor's nephew and later (eventually) the rival emperor of Justinian. From a formal viewpoint, Priscian places his poem within the late antique Latin tradition of verse panegyrics to emperors in hexameters.

This is already evident in the preface, where he uses a different metre, iambic trimetres, to set forth the following topical statements concerning the poet himself: 1. The assertion that he will report nothing but the truth (1–10), a motive which goes back to the *prooemium* of Hesiod's *Theogony*;<sup>17</sup> 2. The statement that it was necessary to present excerpts of an overwhelming amount of material, 100 times richer than Homer's, which would require 1000 tongues for its complete presentation (15),<sup>18</sup> 3. The confession of limited poetic ability; 4. The request to God for inspiration (19–22). What follows this is the main part, consisting of 312 (311) epic hexameters. This form of metric differentiation between prologue and narration in the genres of panegyric and invective, was introduced into Latin poetry by the Greek-speaking Claudian, and was adopted later by Sidonius Apollinaris in his three panegyrics to emperors. It is noteworthy that all the prologues just mentioned were composed in elegiac distichs. Did Priscian use iambs to comply with the increasing predilection for Greek poetry in that metre?<sup>19</sup> The question as to whether he theoretically

15 The edition by Baehrens follows the only complete testimony of the text: Codex Vindob. Lat. 16, fols. 50r–52r, saec. VIII (returned to Naples after World War I); Baehrens' edition was reprinted with few modifications in Romano, "Prisciano a Bisanzio", (1966), pp. 305–55; (id., "Prisciano a Bisanzio", [1979], pp. 273–300 gives a reprint without text); Chauvot, *Procopé de Gaza, Priscien de Césarée*, pp. 56–68; Coyne, *Prisciani de laude Anastasii imperatoris*, (1991) (= 1988), pp. 49–55.

16 Coyne (ed.), *Prisciani de laude Anastasii imperatoris*, pp. 9–21.

17 Hesiod, *Theogony* [*Theogonia*] 27–28. Panegyrists, especially, had to defend themselves from the reproach of being liars; see Augustine's negative valuation of this genre, which he himself had to practise as an imperial rhetorician in Milan (*Confessions* 6.6).

18 *Iliad* B 489; 10 tongues; Vergil, *Georgics* 2.44 = *Aeneid* 6.625: 100 tongues; Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* [*Metamorphoses*] 11., 25: 1000 tongues; Paulinus of Nola, *Poems* 21.352 would need 1000 mouths with 100 tongues each; Dracontius, *Praise of God* [*de laudibus Dei*] 3,570 wishes to have as many tongues as hair of his head.

19 Priscian seems to be the only author of Latin literature in Late Antiquity to pair an iambic preface with a hexametric *panegyricus*. Prudentius' *The Battle in the Soul* [*Psychomachia*] and *On the Origin of Sin* [*Hamartigenia*], which are likewise preceded by prefaces in

wanted to create a Latin equivalent to Greek panegyrics in verse or in prose (such as the prose panegyric written by Procopius of Gaza), for the purpose of demonstrating the empire's unity, depends on how Procopius is dated. The creation of a Latin counterpart, however, seems more probable than a supplementary counterpart in Greek to a Latin *panegyricus*.<sup>20</sup>

The following analysis of this comparatively short panegyric will be limited to an examination of the standard elements of epic panegyrics for emperors, and to thoughts concerning the poem's intention and its relationship to "New Rome". Its historical background has already been sufficiently documented and discussed in the commentaries of Chauvot and Coyne.

From the very beginning, the emperor's commitment to ancient Rome is expressed through the Latin language of the panegyric, "a Roman song" (*Romanum carmen*: line 1), and his fidelity to God as the giver of rule and reign is underscored. Both elements represent the ideal orthodox Christian emperor.<sup>21</sup> The typical trope of stressing one's own courage in dealing with such a tremendous subject (8–9) leads Priscian to the *topos* "praise starting from one's ancestors" (*laus a maioribus*): Anastasius I, born in Dyrhachium, boasts of descending from Pompeius Magnus, who defeated Caesar in this very place in 48 BC (though this is not explicitly mentioned). By means of the panegyric *topos* of eclipsing previous emperors, Anastasius is ranked higher than his predecessors because of his victory over the Isaurians. He seems to be the executer of God's plan of salvation. This attitude is typical of panegyric usage, but must also be considered as a further intensification of praise (15–40), since the emperor's part as God's servant appears to be the reward for the emperor's virtues (42–4), and culminates in another list of former "good" rulers (from Titus to Marcus Aurelius), all of whom Anastasius has easily surpassed. Even the second war against the Isaurians, which was a greater menace, comes to

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iambic trimeters, belong to other genres. In contrast, the use of iambic prologues for hexametrical Greek poetry was standard: Cameron, "PAP.ANT. III. 115", pp. 119–29.

20 Coyne, *Prisciani de laude Anastasii imperatoris*, 264–69 compares the panegyrics of Priscian and Procopius in light of their adherence to Menander Rhetor's theoretical advice for panegyrics written to a ruler. On account of the large number of obligatory items, however, similarities in both texts are not sufficient to prove the priority of either panegyric. Chauvot 116–119 merely gives a descriptive summary of the poem with references to Menander's precepts.

21 The statement of line 5: God, whom you follow, o most just sovereign, with an upright heart [*deum*], *quem sequeris princeps animo iustissime recto*], seems to defend the 'orthodox' (*animo recto!*) emperor against the suspicion that he favoured monophysitism, which he in fact did. In doing so, he stood in opposition to most of the population of Constantinople and to the Chalcedonian 'orthodoxy' of the West. On Anastasius I, see Lee, "Anastasius", pp. 52–62; Mischa Meier, *Anastasios I*.

be characterised as a gift of God, for it brought about the final punishment of the rebels (55–66). This war merits a lengthy description: it begins with an exceptionally long lion simile, in which the emperor is portrayed as God's warrior (67–79), and continues with another portrayal of Anastasius outstripping previous victors, namely Bellerophon and Servilius Isauricus (80–86), who defeated the barbarian tribes of Asia Minor. The war is recounted with gruesome details,<sup>22</sup> and ends with praise for the "clemency" (*clementia*) and regulating power of Anastasius (112–41).

The second main section opens with a comparison with the Pythia, stressed by the exordial *topos* "little material out of a lot" (*pauca e multis*); this section praises the emperor, who had previously been so successful in warfare, as a Prince of Peace (142–48). Once again the praise begins with a contrast: namely the abolition of a commercial tax (*auri lustralis collatio*, χρυσάργυρον) is contrasted with previous tax pressure. Priscian here joins the tradition of Latin and Greek verse panegyrics addressed to emperors (149–61).<sup>23</sup>

The poem reaches its climax when the emperor burns the debt registers and triumphantly exhibits the captured Isauri in the hippodrome, thus surpassing the triumph of Aemilius Paulus over Perses of Macedonia, all primarily because the Christian God has taken the place of Jupiter. It is he who brings back the Golden Age (182); once more a panegyric *topos* usually referring to a worldly ruler is transferred to a metaphysical one, whose executor the former is (182–85).<sup>24</sup> That "golden" present is described in a long catalogue, rich in topical references to peace (186–253). This catalogue contains a comparison between the emperor's donations of corn with the provisional economy of the Egyptian Joseph (211–17);<sup>25</sup> it also contains the prohibition of public animal baiting by Anastasius (224–27), and a statement concerning the good conditions for teachers, scholars, artists, and men of the law called from the "Old" Rome to the "New" one (242–53). According to Priscian, God rewards this policy, which favours peace and culture, by beating back from the empire enemies

22 In Hellenistic tradition, the catalogue of the horrors of war contains details that seem grotesque by modern standards; for example, the sea, Priscian writes, was full of human corpses to such an extent that the fish could not devour them all (116–18).

23 Priscian 160–61 refers to former panegyrics in both Latin and Greek: "(which) many poets have mentioned before when singing your praises in Latin or Greek song" (trans. Coyne) [*plures pridem dixere canentes / Romano vestras vel Graio carmine laudes*]. A fragment of a verse panegyric to Anastasius may be preserved (see Viljamaa, *Greek Encomiastic Poetry*, pp. 56–8); apart from that nothing has come down to us.

24 Similar *topoi* can be found as early as Horace, *Odes* 4.5, in praise of the peaceful reign of Augustus.

25 In this comparison, a biblical hero replaces one of the traditional figures of mythology or pagan history.

from the East, possibly an Arab tribe under Persian sovereignty (254–64). The hope contained in the description of the unity of the Eastern and Western Roman Empire under the emperor, who serves God (267–69), might be a hint concerning religious tensions between Anastasius, who was inclined to monophysitism, and the Chalcedonian western pontificate. The proof that God sides with the emperor is given by a lengthy description of how the latter's life was miraculously saved, which can be compared with biblical and hagiographical *topoi* (270–89).

The panegyric concludes with typical praise for the emperor's family, in which Priscian emphasizes once again the military achievements of Hypatius and the political ones of Empress Ariadne (290–308).<sup>26</sup> As in the beginning of the poem, the elements "Roman" and "Christian" are central to its conclusion (308–10). The final verse, "pious wishes of the people and the venerable senate" (*vota populi Sanctique Senatus*), alludes to the old formula of the "senate and people of Rome", (*senatus populusque Romanus*: 312), although the senate and people of the *Nova Roma* are definitely meant.

#### 4.3 *The Periegesis*<sup>27</sup>

In the mid-4th century, the pagan Avienus had already treated the geographic didactic poem of Dionysius Periegetes written in Hadrian's time; he titled his hexameter work *Descriptio orbis terrae*, thereby introducing personal elements such as his divine experience in Delphi. In his oeuvre, this largely subjective paraphrase is part of a complex *Weltgedicht*, which also comprises a greatly enlarged hexametric rewriting of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, continuing a tradition that goes back to Cicero, and a iambic periplus.<sup>28</sup> This cycle aims to present the universe as the domain of pagan science. In a purposeful contrast to Avienus, Priscian does not endow his adaptation of Dionysius with a subjective pagan character, but with a Christian one. He places a request to the biblical God for inspiration at the beginning,<sup>29</sup> expresses his expectation of a divine reward at the end,<sup>30</sup> and he suppresses traditional mythological themes. Apart

26 Ariadne, Zeno's widow, presented Anastasius to the people as his successor, and married him shortly thereafter. The year of her death, 515, is the *terminus ante quem* for the panegyric, which must have been written before the failure of Hypatius' expedition.

27 The best edition of the *Periegesis* is still that of van de Woestijne.

28 For Avienus' *Descriptio orbis terrae* see Smolak, "Festus Rufus Avienus", pp. 23, 27.

29 The apostrophe of God in 3: "Youself entrusted the government (of nature) to the mortals" [*imperium* (sc. *naturae*) *mortalibus ipse dedisti*] clearly echoes Gen. 1.28–30. For the Christian framework of the poem, see Manitius, "Zu den Gedichten Priscians", pp. 170–72.

30 Hope of salvation as the motivation of Christian poetry (as expressed in verse 1087: "The Almighty Father shall reward me for this poem" [*omnipotens pro quo genitor mihi praemia*



from these characteristics, the paraphrase sticks to its Greek text of reference more strongly than that by Avienus. Occasional abridgements are balanced by enlargements from Latin sources, such as from Solinus.<sup>31</sup> The purpose of the repeated Latin reworking of Dionysius' paraphrase may represent the Christianisation of an oeuvre, which explains the ecumenicity, that is to say, the virtual sphere of power of the Roman emperor to his Latin-speaking subjects. In the background there seems to be the same political concept as in the panegyric: Christian and Roman ideology as the common pillars of a world order. Applied to Anastasius, this view of policy would correspond to what the crowds are reported to have shouted when Ariadne presented Anastasius as the new emperor-elect: "Give us an orthodox emperor, give us a Roman emperor!"<sup>32</sup>

## 5 Flavius Cresconius Corippus (Gorippus)<sup>33</sup>

Born around 500, Corippus was a contemporary of Priscian, though probably slightly younger. His poetic qualities surpass those of Priscian and, unlike him, he did not occupy himself with any prose genre. Based on the testimony of some manuscripts, the opinion that he should rather be called Gorippus has gradually won recognition.<sup>34</sup> His origin is certainly to be found in the Latin-speaking province of Africa under the reign of the Vandals. Africa, at that time, could boast of an intact school system, based on reading the Roman classics, with Carthage as its centre. If he learned Greek—and if he did, what level of knowledge he reached—is unknown. Nor is there any definite information about his profession, although he is called *grammaticus* in the Madrid manuscript of his later work, a panegyric for Justin II. *Grammaticus*, however, does not necessarily refer to a school teacher, but there is no reason to exclude this basic meaning. It is possible that Corippus came to Constantinople because of his qualities as a poet, namely because of his great epic, *Iohannis*. In Africa, Justinian's religious policy of the late 540s led to tensions due to his rejection of the so-called "Three Chapters" theology; as such, Corippus' Latin epic about a successful Byzantine general, finished shortly before 552, may have attracted the attention of the court. One and a half decades may separate this epic and

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*donet*]) can be traced back to the metrical paraphrase of the gospels by Iuvencus, *Preface*, 22–24.

31 See the *index auctorum* in Wostijne's edition, pp. 110–13.

32 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *On Ceremonies* [*De caeremoniis*], 418–19.

33 For various aspects of Corippus, his poems, and their complex historical and cultural background, see Goldlust, (ed.), *Corippe. Un poète latin entre deux mondes*.

34 Riedlberger, "Again on the Name of 'Gorippus'", pp. 243–70.

Corippus' second work, the panegyric to Justin II, in which the poet presents himself as old and indigent. The statement concerning his poverty (48), at least, seems to be true; the rest is unknown.

### 5.1 *The Iohannis*

The "Großepos" titled *Iohannis*, was first discovered in 1814<sup>35</sup> and published in 1820.<sup>36</sup> It consists of eight hexametric books, which are almost completely extant, and a prologue in elegiac distichs in the manner of Claudian's and Sidonius' panegyrics on emperors. It claims a special position in Latin epic poetry in Late Antiquity insofar as it deals with an event of the poet's own period: namely, the military campaign which in 548 was successfully ended by the "military commander in Africa" (*magister militum per Africam*) Iohannes Troglita. After the reconquest of the Vandal kingdom in 533, Justinian sent Iohannes against rebellious African tribes, especially the Mauri, who once again had disrupted the peace. Given these events, one may assume that Corippus was encouraged by an official authority still in Africa to write the *Iohannis*.<sup>37</sup>

The plot of the epic, which was probably not written in one continuous draft,<sup>38</sup> follows the order of historical events rather than adhering to the rules of literary composition.<sup>39</sup> In the first five books, however, a degree of stylizing may be discerned in the depiction of the victory of the Byzantines over the Berbers led by Antalas. This victory is styled as the victory of Christ over the Berber god Gurzil. Books six to eight, on the other hand, treat a considerably longer period of time and are elaborated less carefully. Their "anti-hero" is a certain Carcasan, whose defeat in the decisive battle is described by Corippus

35 The text was discovered in the manuscript Milano, Biblioteca Trivulziana 686. saec. XIV<sup>2</sup>; some quotations have been preserved elsewhere.

36 Mazzuchelli, *Flavii Cresconii Corippi Iohannidos seu De Bellis Libycis libri VII*; there followed other critical editions, which are still quoted: Partsch, *Merobaudes et Corippus*; Bekker, *Corippi Africani Grammatici quae supersunt*; Petschenig, *Flavii Cresconii Corippi Africani Grammatici quae supersunt*. The leading edition of the *Iohannis* is by Diggle/Goodyear, *Flavii Cresconii Corippi Iohannidos seu de bellis Libycis libri VIII*. Book eight has been published with a commentary by Riedlberger, *Kommentar*.

37 For the circumstances of the epic's origin and the relationship to its audience see Riedlberger, *Kommentar*, pp. 89–90.

38 Riedlberger *Kommentar*, p. 80: "erster Entwurf (endete) ungefähr nach Buch 5".

39 Corippus' description of the historical events also contains details of warfare and cultural history; these details can otherwise only be found in Procopius' *De bello Vandalico* 1.8.25–28 e.g., a Berbian barricade of camels, a parallel to the Vandalian barricade of wagons (8.40). For general information about the relationship of the poetic presentation of history in the *Iohannis* to history, see Gärtner, *Untersuchungen*.

in a less detailed way than that of Antalas. This seems to indicate that books six to eight were written later and under some time pressure.<sup>40</sup>

One comes across historical epics treating the history of the poet's own time at the very beginning of Roman narrative poetry. Naevius and Ennius should be mentioned here, and, in some respects, Lucanus' *Pharsalia* as well. The latter is admittedly not so close to its author's lifetime, but provides an example of a long epic that treats a single event of the recent past; the *Pharsalia* was, moreover, an important text of reference for Corippus. This may also apply to Statius' historical epic *De bello Germanico*, in which the author praised his benefactor, the emperor Domitianus. Thus, it is an early example of an historical epic with a panegyric purpose, unobscured by a setting in the distant past (as in Vergil's *Aeneid*); however, the poem is no longer extant. Claudian's historical poems "On the battle near the river Pollentia" and "On the war against the Visigoths" (*De bello Pollentino* and *De bello Gothico*), must be regarded as panegyrics rather than as epics.

On the contrary, Corippus' *Iohannis* positions itself as an analogy to the *Aeneid* through its title: the feminine form of an adjective used as a noun. This situates the work within the epic tradition and not the realm of panegyric.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Corippus, in the opening scene of Book 1, announces that he intends to create a second *Aeneid* and, in doing so, to present Justinian as a second Augustus: "The Muses are eager to sing the descendants of Aeneas".<sup>42</sup> He states this after pointing out two myths in the prologue that are understood as historical events: namely Aeneas and Achilles (7; 11–12), whose glory reached the collective memory through the poetry of Vergil and Homer.<sup>43</sup> In the opening scene, Corippus reveals to his public his essential intention: that he plans

40 Riedlberger, *Kommentar*, p. 81. For a summary of the occasionally rather complicated affairs, see id., pp. 97–100 (books 1–7); pp. 9–10 (detailed statement of the contents of book 8).

41 For the title and its alternative form *De bellis Libycis* see Riedlberger, *Kommentar*, p. 79.

42 "*Aeneadas rursus cupiunt resonare Camenae*" (1.8). For the relationship between the *Iohannis* and the *Aeneid* see Lausberg, "*Parcere subiectis*. Zur Vergilnachfolge in der *Iohannis* des Coripp", pp. 105–20 (especially p. 108). Riedlberger's scepticism about this item (*Kommentar*, p. 95, n. 364) does not seem to be justified: the epithet *magnanimus* (6.99), as well as the repeated address of Justinian as *pater*, present him as a new Aeneas and, consequently, a type of a victorious ruler. One should bear in mind that in Late Antiquity the *Aeneid* was occasionally classified as a panegyric to Augustus, e.g. in Servius, *Commentary on Vergil's Aeneid* [*commentarius in Vergilii Aeneida*] 1, p. 4, ed. Thiele: "This is Vergil's intention: to imitate Homer and to praise Augustus referring to his ancestors" [*intentio Vergilii haec est: Homerum imitari et Augustum laudare a parentibus*].

43 For precisely the same concept of epic literature see Iuvencus, *Preface* 6–10 (cf. note 30), for the wording of the catalogue (*preface* 7–9) see Ovid, *Lamentations* [*tristia*] 4.3.75.

to write a panegyric to the emperor by putting Justinian on a sublime throne between the allegories of Peace (*Pax*: important with regard to Augustus' propaganda), Victory (*Victoria*: relevant for the occasion of the *Iohannis*), Piety (*Pietas*: essential in order to evoke a comparison to "pious Aeneas"), Justice (*Ius*: a reference to the emperor's name), and Concord (*Concordia*: the slogan of the Romans' political self-presentation). As a consequence, he attributes the victory celebrated in his epic to Justinian, by addressing him directly rather than Iohannes (1.9–16). This procedure is continued in the first narrative scene, insofar as Corippus places a lengthy *ethopoiia* of Justinian, the pious sovereign (*princeps*),<sup>44</sup> looking for a suitable general at the beginning of this scene (1.48–109). The poet subtly shifts the praise of Iohannes to the emperor, thereby making him a person who is in some way actually "performing".<sup>45</sup> The Augustean term *princeps* remains the leading concept until the plot of *Iohannis* is set in motion. The traditional epic language (with some contemporary modifications<sup>46</sup>) alongside two passages from the beginning of books two and three—in which the emperor appears as an assistant of the Muse and as Christ's comrade-in-battle<sup>47</sup>—point at the intended genre of Roman historical epic. Thus, this leads to a certain tension with the strongly panegyric elements of the beginning,<sup>48</sup> since Corippus makes use of typical stylistic elements of epic in order to structure the plot, such as: sunrises,<sup>49</sup> catalogues,<sup>50</sup>

44 On the different aspects of *pietas* in the *Iohannis*, see Consolino, "Pietas et ses contextes", pp. 189–220.

45 This term is used in 1.110, 118, 125, 131, 134, 157. In addition there is an indirect reference: when Iohannes enters the city (probably Carthage) in triumph, the people shout the name of the emperor (!), who had given to them that great general.

46 For this linguistic aspect, and the possible Latin texts of reference, see Riedlberger, *Kommentar*, pp. 64–74; asyndetic series of nouns, such as in 4.56: *magnanimus, mitis, sapiens, fortissimus, insons* and 4.592: *castus amor, pietas, bonitas, sapientia, virtus* belong to the stylistic means of Late Antiquity, which seem in turn to trace back directly to archaic Latin poetry.

47 In *Iohannis* 2.23–25, Justinian is addressed as the bearer of the epic theme, a task that, since Homer, is attributed to the Muses. Corippus, however, limits the activities of the Muses to a pleasant presentation of the subject matter: more precisely, to the names of the barbarians. In *Iohannis* 3.42–44 the soldiers pray to Christ as the one who fights via the weapons of Justinian, and protects the emperor. A similar concept also pervades the panegyric of Priscian.

48 Gärtner, "Epik vs. Panegyrik", pp. 321–36, tends to overemphasize the contrast between these two genres.

49 E.g. in 4.256–59 and 8.318–21.

50 E.g. in 2.23–84 a catalogue of barbarian fighters is developed with the invocation of Justinian and the Muses. This catalogue echoes that of Italian fighters in Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.37–80, with the invocation of Erato!

*aristeias* (“excellences”),<sup>51</sup> and elaborate and individually employed similes.<sup>52</sup> Direct speeches, typical of epics since Homer, and increasingly used in the development of that genre, also comprise extensive messengers’ reports, a stylistic means of drama, a genre which the epic style grows to approximate in its evolution (4.333–93). Standing epithets, on the other hand, are largely absent.

It goes without saying that pagan religion is replaced by Christianity, probably in respect of the relevant tensions between Africa and the emperor without any dogmatic specification.<sup>53</sup> Like classical epic heroes, Iohannes says his prayers,<sup>54</sup> or more precisely, he sings them, and Christ is always the person addressed. So, in a long morning prayer, the general implores Christ to make him victorious. Here Christ resembles Jupiter, who throws lightning (4.269–84); moreover, he appears as Jupiter who shakes (his hair) and upsets the world (5.45–49),<sup>55</sup> and, in a long speech of Iohannes before a battle, he is portrayed as a merciless subduer of his enemies (8.213–31; 341–53).<sup>56</sup> At one point, the successful general and his followers enter a church to pray (6.98–103) and before the decisive battle of *Campi Catonis* in 548 he takes part in a camp service together with his army. Its carefully described liturgy is almost the only source for the history of liturgy in Africa in the 6th century (8.318–69). In opposition to the epic’s Christian foundation, Corippus uses pagan deities (according to Christian interpretation, demons) to characterize the entourage of the enemies; this can be seen from a comparison of the dark-skinned Mauri with creatures of the classical underworld (4.322–28).<sup>57</sup> Corippus also keeps

51 E.g. in 8.389–427 Corippus presents an *aristeia* of Iohannes.

52 Two bird similes may serve as examples: in 6.92–95 a black female prisoner who protects her children is compared to a raven mother feeding and protecting her nestlings. In 8.9–13 Corippus transposes the swallow simile, which can be traced through intermediate Latin literature (Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.473–77) back to the *Iliad* (1.323–24), into a metaphor that transcends the material world. Corippus uses the metaphor to depict the ‘flying’ thoughts of the general, whereas Vergil applied it to describe the busy activities in a Roman house. By adapting this simile to Iohannes, Corippus put a new spin on a traditional epic *topos*, namely the hero pondering over his next step in warfare (*Iliad* A, 188–217; Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.283–87; 8.18–21).

53 Cf. Mattei, “Présence du christianisme”, pp. 169–88.

54 For the function and style of the prayers in the *Iohannis*, see Bureau, “La prière dans la *Johannide*”, pp. 221–42.

55 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.178–80, paraphrasing *Iliad* A, 528–30.

56 See the rich commentary by Riedlberger, *Kommentar*, pp. 312–37.

57 Presumably Corippus overemphasizes the opposition between Christian Romans and pagan barbarians: Christians are also documented among the latter. For the complex topic of “Christianity” and “Paganism”, see Andres, *Das Göttliche in der ‚Iohannis‘ des Corippus*; on metonymies of pagan deities used for the purpose of marking time, cf. id., pp. 37–55.

the metonymous usage of names of gods, which was typical of ancient poetry in general. In some of these metonymies the relative god's personal traits can still be recognized, such as in the case of "raging Mars" (5.66–67). In several instances Corippus calls the sun Phoebus and the moon Cynthia (e.g. 8.279). In the urban centres of education in the mid-6th century, paganism had already become a mere literary instrument,<sup>58</sup> which in medieval Latin literature survived as an ornament, or as a means to express lyrical subjectivity, but not as an alternative to Christianity.

## 5.2 *The Panegyric on Justin II and the Preface Directed to Anastasius (Panegyricum)*

The hexametric panegyric "Praise of the Emperor Justin the Younger", the *Laudes Iustini Augusti minoris*,<sup>59</sup> which has been almost completely preserved, is the longest metric panegyric to an emperor in Antiquity. It contains four books with almost 1600 verses altogether (Claudian's panegyric on the emperor Honorius celebrating his third consulate comprises only three books), although it treats only a few days. The panegyric is preceded by a preface to the emperor and his wife Sophia, including personal details. Corippus comments on Justin's past achievements, such as his victories over the Avars with their serpent-like hair (4),<sup>60</sup> the Franks, the Longobards, the Getae, and the Gepids.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, he establishes a relationship between the names of the imperial couple and both the emperor's mother (Justinian's sister) Vigilantia, as well as the imperial virtues (*Iustitia*, *Sapientia*, and *Vigilantia*: 21–25). These virtues, realized in the sovereign's family, justify the empire's claim to a global ruling:

58 Corippus' statement in Iohannis, *praefatio* 25, to have spoken only *per rura*, must be understood as a statement of modesty concerning his less cultivated language, as *Musa rustica* in *Panegyricus*, *praefatio* 28, cf. Riedlberger, *Kommentar*, p. 36.

59 The leading edition is by Antès, *Corippe, Éloge de l'empereur Justin II* (with introduction, French translation and complementary notes); previous editions: Av. Cameron (with introduction, English translation and commentary focusing on the cultural setting of the earliest Byzantine epoch); Romano (with Italian translation and commentary; the book is also accessible online); Petschenig; Partsch; Bekker. Stache, *Corippus* offers a commentary which focuses on language and textual criticism, with a list of *loci similes* pp. 563–87. The main manuscript, Codex Matritensis 10029, saec. IX–X, olim Toletanus 14, 22, seems to be of Spanish origin, and other traces of the tradition lead without any exception across Spain (Oviedo), cf. Antès, LXXXV–C; Stache, *Corippus*, pp. 32–41. This fact may indicate an intersecting cultural relationship between the courts of Constantiople and Toledo: already in the 7th century archbishop Iulianus of Toledo quotes from Corippus' panegyric.

60 The epitheton *colubrinodis* (*capillis*) seems to be a neologism created by Corippus to associate the long-haired Avars with the Gorgon's head.

61 Concerning possible contact at that time between the Byzantines and those barbarians, see Antès, *Corippe, Éloge de l'empereur Justin II*, pp. 133–38.

“All that has life is ruled by these three names”.<sup>62</sup> Alluding to topical affairs of politics, Corippus states that Justin’s rule, because of his ethical qualities, is of a universal character and therefore also comprises the reign of the Persian Sassanid king, whose solemn official denomination the poet paraphrases skilfully (30–34).<sup>63</sup> With a rhetorical *topos*, namely the importance of the current argument, Corippus beats his own Iohannis (35), and using a literary trope rather typical of prayers, he reminds the addressee, Justin, of previous achievements. This permits him a transition to his own request for material support, which he compares with a healing medicine (35–48). To a certain degree one feels reminded of later Byzantine begging poetry.

Though a double preface is not unparalleled in Greek poetry of Late Antiquity,<sup>64</sup> Corippus’ practice of putting another preface, also in hexameters, in front of the panegyric and the preface directed to the emperor, must be regarded as a special case in Latin poetry of that period, both with regards to literary typology and to its content. For this second preface is directed to a person of lower rank than the emperor: namely, Anastasius, the “Finance Controller of the Holy Palace” (*quaestor sacri palatii*) and “Supreme Chancellor” (*magister officiorum*) in 565/66,<sup>65</sup> making it an anti-climax. In the manuscript tradition, this piece of poetry is entitled *Panegyricum* [*sic!*], although it does not show any elements typical of rhetorically elaborate late Latin panegyrics. It is placed between the preface directed to Justin and the first book of the *laudes*. Stache not unreasonably suggested swapping the sequence of the two prefaces.<sup>66</sup> In this way, the high ranking court-official would (so to speak) function as the first bearer of authority to whom Corippus turns, once again asking for support because of his old age and material misery, before addressing the highest authority, the emperor himself. The latter is mentioned together with an announcement of the panegyric in the last line, for the first time (51). The imperial preface, which immediately precedes the panegyric, would be an appropriate link between the Anastasius-preface and the main part of this complex poem. The imperial preface may have originally started with an apostrophe of Justin, thereby establishing a connection with the end of the Anastasius-preface. Due to textual loss at its beginning, however, a definite statement cannot be made.

62 “*Nominibus tribus his regitur quodcumque movetur*” (26).

63 Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, p. 122.

64 Id., p. 118.

65 On Anastasius see Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, p. 123.

66 Stache, *Corippus*, pp. 45–76. This transposition, probably due to the loss of some verses at the beginning of the Anastasius’ *preface*, must have happened before or during the 9th century, when the Codex Matritensis was written.

It may be assumed, that Antès, in his edition, was right in following Stache's suggestion, whereas Averil Cameron neglected the Anastasius-preface.

In the Codex Matritensis the Anastasius-preface is entitled "panegyric in praise of Anastasius" (*panegyricum in laudem Anastasii*) and begins as if it were directed to the emperor: "An immense material for praising (*laudes*) you, o just (*iuste*) man":<sup>67</sup> *laudes* is the Latin term for *panegyricus*; *iuste* echoes the emperor's name. Thus, one gets the impression that the preface was originally addressed to Justin himself, and only from line 17 onwards was it readdressed to Anastasius, for "just the right (rhetorical) figures", *iustas (figuras)*, in line 16, would form a ring-composition with *iuste* in the first line, and so forms a perfect conclusion of the presumably original part of the preface.<sup>68</sup> Based on the double meaning of *silva*—both "forest" and "matter for literary treatment" as in the Greek ὕλη—in line 1, Corippus applies the rhetorical *topos* of "enormous amount of material" (*silva*) in an individual manner, and develops the image of the tree of life, which connects earth and heaven (7–16). For a court official, however, this image seems exaggerated; another reason to support the hypothesis just mentioned. Moreover, the image of the tree of life is taken from Daniel 4.7–27, a dream of King Nabuchodonosor, which, according to Daniel's interpretation, symbolizes the world's ruler (4.17–27). Corippus marks his re-interpretation concerning a person of lower rank than the emperor with an intentionally chosen interpretation of the dream: "You are that fructifying tree, for you drink from the sublime / venerable (*Augusto*) well",<sup>69</sup> which refers to the prophet's words "Your majesty, You are that tree".<sup>70</sup> One is tempted to suppose that the original verse was "You (Justin) are that fructifying tree, for you drink from the eternal well (God)".<sup>71</sup> By adapting the text in this way, Corippus could easily relate all the positive qualities of the tree of life to Anastasius, partially using hymnic style (27–32). Only towards the end of these hymnic predications does he turn to the imperial couple, by pointing out their virtue-revealing names Iustinus and Sophia (33–34). These two verses stand in isolation and would perfectly fit in the hypothetical original version. Just as in the imperial preface, the poem ends with a request for supporting the old and needy poet, and as in the imperial preface, he uses the metaphor of the benefactor as a

67 "Immensam, silvam laudum, vir iuste, tuarum" (1).

68 The "source" in 13 (*radix de fonte bibit*) should originally have meant God, who gives grace to the emperor; in 19: *Augusto de fonte*, this metaphor should have been transposed to the emperor (*Augusto!*) himself, who gives grace to Anastasius.

69 "... tu fertilis arbor / Augusto de fonte bibens" (18–19).

70 "... arborem quam vidisti ... tu es, rex" (Daniel 4. 26).

71 "tu (sc. Iustine) fertilis arbor / aeterno de fonte (sc. Deo) bibens".



healing doctor. The two final verses are almost identical with those of the imperial preface, and that is, strictly speaking, the only place they fit.

The structure of the panegyric is largely determined by the events described; literary license can be found only in styling (e.g. similes). Since the contents of the panegyric abound in factual information, summaries (*periochae*) have been added to the text in the Matritensis both before the imperial preface and in the margin; the more or less detailed summaries in modern editions and commentaries are based on these *periochae*.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, a paraphrasing interpretation that highlights methods of style and composition may suffice here. This can, together with the ancient summaries, give the reader an idea of this complex and unique poem.

### 5.2.1 Book 1

According to epic tradition, the beginning comprises a general indication of the poem's topic and an invocation of the emperor's mother and his wife, which replaces that of the Muses. This appeal is extended to the Virgin Mary as a helper, and to court officials, above all to Anastasius. He appears to have given the incentive to Corippus to write the panegyric: this is another traditional exordial *topos*. After that the poet starts with a vision: the allegory of the Roman cardinal virtue Piety (*Pietas*) appears to Justin in a dream and announces both the imminent death of his uncle, Emperor Justinian, and his own destiny as Justinian's successor. Dreaming as a literary means to initiate an activity, or to continue it, is a traditional literary device in use since Homer.<sup>73</sup> After waking up, Justin is offered the throne by a delegation of the senate. Even before he agrees, he and his wife proceed to Justinian's deathbed.<sup>74</sup> The ensuing acclamation of Justin through the people in the hippodrome is elevated to a kind of metaphysical level, insofar as it is preceded by an allegorical interpretation of the colours of the four circus parties and the orbital structure of the hippodrome itself. Thus the world of chariot racing symbolizes a Christian concept of empire. In the meantime, the assembled masses, shouting the stereotyped acclamation of victory, "You be victorious" (*tu vince*), are believed to announce God's will.

72 Antès, *Corippe, Éloge de l'empereur Justin II*, pp. CXIII–CXIX; Cameron, *In laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris*, pp. 3–4; Stache, *Corippus*, pp. 560–62.

73 E.g. *Iliad* B, 1–34 (dream of Agamemnon); Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.270–301 (dream of Aeneas).

74 This scene provides the opportunity for an *ekphrasis* of the funeral blanket covered with pictures of Justinian's triumph.

## 5.2.2 Book 2

Consequently, Justin enters a church for prayer and the Holy Spirit confirms the people's will with the demanding imperative: 'He shall rule!' '*regnato!*' (2.44).<sup>75</sup> One is reminded of Jesus' baptism, when God the Father confirms his son's mission while the Holy Spirit descends dove-like from heaven. Justin's wife and daughter enter another church at the same time. After that, the investiture of the future emperor in the palace and his coronation can take place in due order, that is to say, in three stages: first a cirlet (*torques*) is put around his neck in the palace, then soldiers raise him up on a shield in the open air,<sup>76</sup> which offers the poet the traditional opportunity to compare the sovereign with the rising sun.<sup>77</sup> Finally there comes the coronation by the patriarch with the diadem, which can be seen on numerous coins and on mosaics in Ravenna.<sup>78</sup> The act of coronation is also confirmed by acclamations. These are continued in the hippodrome, where the new emperor addresses the people in a long speech in which he announces his plan to reintroduce the consulate that Justinian had abolished in 542 (2.352). This promise is emphasized by Corippus, probably because in the whole poem he expresses his sympathy for the senate, of which his benefactors are members. After burning the debt tallies, a traditional coronation gesture,<sup>79</sup> and announcing an amnesty, the emperor returns to the palace (2.361–96).

## 5.2.3 Book 3

Justin's first political action is the reverent burial of his "father" Justinian. On the one hand, this is to be considered an assimilation of the emperor to "pious" Aeneas; on the other hand it is in contrast to Augustus, who could not

75 Before his approval by the Holy Spirit, the emperor delivers a perfectly structured hymn, whose aretology consists of the biblical report of Creation (2.11–42), while the empress prays to Mary (2.52–68). The imperial couple is accompanied by their daughter, to whom Corippus dedicates an elaborate description of female beauty (2.72–83) combined with an epic comparison. The aim of these ornamental devices is to transform an historic narrative into an epic one.

76 According to a symbolic interpretation of letters, it is significant that Corippus compares Justin's upright stance (as depicted on the shield) with the initial letter of his name: I, which stands for *iustitia*, a moral quality that the new emperor's predecessors, Justinian and Justin I, likewise possessed (2.139–47).

77 The allegorical splendour of the emperor, Corippus writes, surpasses the "material" one of the rising sun (145–58); this *topos* appears already in Martial, *Epigrams* 8.21.11–12.

78 Cameron, *Cresconius Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris*, tables 4 and 5.

79 Priscian, *Anastasius*, 164–65.

bury his “father” Caesar.<sup>80</sup> In any case, Corippus contrasts the act of public mourning by describing in great detail a kind of public feast, in the course of which the citizens celebrate the return of the Golden Age; this *topos* is typical of panegyrics on rulers.<sup>81</sup> To that feast corresponds, on the imperial level, a gala dinner, which is introduced by a long “epic” catalogue of wines.<sup>82</sup> The purpose of this catalogue is to emphasize, by contrast, the imperial couple’s modesty in eating and drinking. The dinner amounts to a joyful repast for Justinian, whose pictures decorate the tableware. In this way, too, the gala dinner is presented as an act of piety (*pietas*).

The first occasion of Justin’s foreign policy is an audience: he receives a delegation of the Avars, who demand the annual tribute. In connection with this official act, the splendour and luxury of the court is described in great detail, which is to intimidate the barbarians; and in fact, the palace as an image of the universe<sup>83</sup> and the emperor as its ruler, leaves the barbarians perplexed (3.179–90). The speech of the delegation leader, an example of barbarian briskness, is met by Justin in a composed and inexorable manner, so that the Avars leave the audience without having achieved their object; another example of the superiority of Roman culture over barbarian boldness.

#### 5.2.4 Book 4

At the beginning there is a thorough description of the preparations for the emperor’s accession to the consulate, which is to be celebrated in public on 1 January 566. The text contains elements of epic style, such as busy workmen described with the simile of zealous bees, and a catalogue of types of wood, which are said to be needed for erecting a platform in the palace. Primarily, however, this catalogue is a demonstration of the poet’s erudition applied to the panegyric.<sup>84</sup> A description of the actual festive day follows, again with the introductory juxtaposition of the rising sun and the imperial consul (4.99–102), with the emperor’s throne being included in that sphere of brightness and glamour. The throne is praised for having its own light due to its golden surface and the precious stones embedded in it.<sup>85</sup> Thus the throne corresponds with

80 3.27: “Justin, the sovereign, is in better situation than the Emperor Augustus” [*Augusto melior Iustinus Caesare princeps*].

81 Priscian, *Anastasius*, 182.

82 Cult names of the god of wine frame this catalogue (87: *Bacchi*; 102: *Iacchi*).

83 For the cosmic dimension of an imperial palace cf. the round dining hall that evokes the star-covered sky in Nero’s *domus aurea* (Suetonius, *Nero* 31.1).

84 4.24–34 (simile), 4.35–46 (catalogue).

85 4.116: “having its own light without sunshine” [*lumen habens sine sole suum*]. For the *topos* of ‘intrinsic light’ within descriptions of objects see verse 1 of the mosaic inscription

those portrayed in pictorial art of the period, such as in the “preparation-of-the throne-scenes” (*praeparatio throni*) in the baptisteries in Ravenna. Justin’s entrance to consulate is accompanied by festive speeches; the first is delivered by a senator who far too obviously makes use of the *topos* of surpassing the past when he praises the emperor for excelling even Augustus. Afterwards rhetoricians deliver panegyric speeches in both Greek and Latin (4.174–85).<sup>86</sup> This is important information concerning the history of Byzantine culture. Finally the consul / emperor, still sitting on his throne, is carried out from the hall to take part in a procession, in which he, accompanied by the senate, presents himself to the waiting citizens. They also receive presents like those the court officials had previously received. An epic comparison with a mother swallow who feeds her nestlings forms the end of the description of Justin’s appearance in public. Then the consul/emperor moves on into the Hagia Sophia, the historical construction of which Corippus narrates along with allegorical interpretations.<sup>87</sup> This passage also contains a paraphrase of the creed (4.290–311).<sup>88</sup> After the church visit a kind of imperial council (*sacrum consistorium*) is held, during which Justin is informed about a relevant order from the dying Justinian to confirm the legitimacy of his imperial rule; the consulate as a topic has disappeared from the centre of attention. At the end of the poem, Tiberius, Justin’s successor, happens to be mentioned among the court officials then present (4.374–75). At the end of the panegyric, a couple of verses are obviously lost.

Unlike any other document of the period, Corippus’ *laudes* offer detailed information about court ceremonies and public life in, what the poet often calls by her official name, *nova Roma* during the final decades of Late Antiquity or the earliest decades of the Byzantine era, respectively. Comparable information can only be found in the *De ceremoniis*, written in the 10th century by the emperor Constantine VII. This latter book, however, refers to a world that has already undergone decisive changes both politically and culturally.

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(which may have been written under archbishop Petrus III) in the so-called *Oratorium Sancti Andreae* in the Archiepiscopal Museum in Ravenna: “either light was born here or it was captured and reigns freely” [*aut lux hic nata est aut capta hic libera regnat*]. The text is preserved in Andreas Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* 50.

- 86 In an unobtrusive manner, Corippus includes men of literature (that is to say, himself) hoping for material support.
- 87 In 4.284 Corippus refers to Justinian’s famous joyful exclamation: that by building the Hagia Sophia he had surpassed the temple of Solomon: Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, p. 204.
- 88 The explicitly dyophysitic sentence in 303 (*una in naturis extans persona duobus*) clearly goes beyond the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Here *persona* is not used as a term of trinitarian theology.

## 6 After 1453

When in the second half of the 6th century, Latin poetry had become silent in the eastern Roman Empire, it was only after its end that an outstanding Latin poet came forward, namely Michael Tarchaniota Marullus (Μαρούλγης). Educated in the Latin language in Italy and married to a lady from the town of the Medici, Florence, he enriched the Neo-Latin literature of Renaissance-humanism considerably. Marullus was born in 1458, probably not in Constantinople, but in the despotate of Morea, whose cultural centre Mistra—the home of the Platonist Gemistus Pletho—exerted its intellectual influence on him from a distance. When Marullus was still a child, he fled with his parents from the Ottomans to Ragusa in Dalmatia, and from there to Italy. During his life as a soldier he strove to bring about a crusade against the Islamic aggressors. At the same time he composed Latin poems, perfect in language and structure. These include four books of epigrams, among them love poems (he knew Catullus) and *Hymni naturales*, which are of outstanding importance from the perspective of European cultural history. These hymns were partially composed in hexameters, after the long tradition of Homeric and philosophical Greek hymns, and partially in classical lyrical metres. In them, Marullus referred to the Stoic and, above all, Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation of the pagan gods not as demons, as the early Christians did, but as cosmic entities present and active in nature. Moreover, he engaged in textual criticism and interpretation of the atomistic world of Lucretius, whose poem had shortly before been rediscovered by Poggio Bracciolini. Nevertheless, in his reception of Neoplatonic ideas he was in line with the Neopaganism of the so-called Academy that had gathered around Marsilio Ficino in Florence. Marullus died by drowning in a Tuscan river in a riding accident.<sup>89</sup>

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89 A selection of critical editions of Marullus' poems:

- Charles Fantazzi (ed.), *Michael Marullus: Poems* (text, English translation). Cambridge, Mass., 2012 (I Tatti: The Renaissance Library 54).
- Otto Schönberger (ed.), *Michael Marullus, Hymni naturales* (text, German translation, commentary), Würzburg, 1996.
- Jacques Chomarat (ed.), *Michel Marulle: Hymnes naturels* (text and commentary), Geneva 1995.
- Christine Harrauer (ed.), *Kosmos und Mythos. Die Weltgotthymnen und die mythologischen Hymnen des Michael Marullus* (text, German translation, commentary), (Wiener Studien Beiheft 21), Vienna 1994.
- Alessandro Perosa (ed.), *Michaelis Marulli carmina*, Zurich 1951.

## Appendix: Fictitious Latin Verses from Byzantium

In the second half of the 13th century an extensive falsification, namely Ovid's literary testament, appeared, written in medieval Latin hexameters in three books. Its title was "The ugly old woman" (*De vetula*).<sup>90</sup> In this biographical epic, Ovid describes the "metamorphosis" (!), *immutatio*, of his life from a womanizer to a monogamous husband and, finally, to an ascetic. The poem's purpose was to position Ovid closer to Christianity (in analogy to Vergil) in order to make his love poems acceptable for certain groups within the Church. Following an old tradition of falsified literature, the author pretended that Ovid's testament had been discovered in a tomb in Armenia, which he claims was the poet's burial site. Since nobody there could understand Latin sufficiently, the book was sent during the time of "Emperor Vatachius"<sup>91</sup> to Constantinople, where "a lot of Latin speaking people" (*copia Latinorum*) were said to be dwelling. Evidently, the author (possibly Richard de Fournival) confused the exiled Byzantine Empire in Nicaea and the Latin Empire in Constantinople. There, he writes, a certain Leo, "First clerk of the Holy Palace in Byzantium" (*prothonotarius [sic!] sacri palatii Byzantei [sic!]*) edited the recently discovered poem and added 14 Latin hexameters as an introduction, which was called the "access to the author" (*accessus ad auctorem*) in the Latin Middle Ages.

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90 The title refers to a burlesque episode of the poem: instead of the girl, with whom Ovid had arranged a romantic night, he discovers her aged mother in bed. This frustrating episode cures his erotomania.

91 Emperor John III Doukas Vatatzes, who ruled in Nicaea.

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## Philippos Monotropos in Byzantium and the Slavonic World

*Eirini Afentoulidou and Jürgen Fuchsbauer*

The *Dioptra* was written by Philippos Monotropos some decades after the didactic poems of Michael Psellos,<sup>1</sup> and several decades before Constantine Manasses or John Tzetzes attempted to present the world history or discuss philological questions in thousands of political verses, and also before important works of fiction such as the *Ptochoprodromika* or the Komnenian novels appeared.<sup>2</sup> The *Dioptra* consists of over 7000 political verses, which are organized into five books: the *Klauthmoi* (Laments), a poem of contrition addressed to the soul; and four books of dialogue between the *Psyche* (soul) and the *Sarx* (body).<sup>3</sup> In the dialogue, the *Psyche*, personified as a mistress, poses her maid, the *Sarx*, questions concerning human nature and its position in a world created and governed by God. The author is the monk Philippos, in scholarship known as Monotropos. The popularity of the *Dioptra* continued throughout the Byzantine period and beyond, as is attested by the 82 manuscripts transmitting Greek versions of the text.<sup>4</sup> In the 14th century the *Dioptra*

1 Michael Psellos, *Poems*, ed. Westerink. On didactic literature in Byzantium, see Wolfram Hörandner's contribution to the present volume as well as id., "The Byzantine Didactic Poem".

2 See the contributions to the present volume by Roderick Beaton and Nikos Zagklas.

3 The hitherto sole, although non-critical, printed edition is Philippos Monotropos, *Dioptra*, ed. Lavriotes. The text from this edition was transcribed by Jürgen Fuchsbauer for Philippos Monotropos, *Dioptra*, ed. Prochorov et al. The *Klauthmoi* were edited in Philippos Monotropos, *Klauthmoi*, ed. Auvray. A modern critical edition of the *Dioptra* is being prepared within the framework of the above mentioned project. For further bibliography see Hoffmann, "Wie sieht wohl die Hölle aus?" and Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Eine *Dioptra*-Adaptierung".

4 Seventy-nine manuscripts, mostly originating from the Byzantine period, transmit what they claim to be the original *Dioptra*, as a whole or in fragments; eight manuscripts transmit an archaising paraphrase made by Theodore Phialites (Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit 29715) in the 14th century, whereas the missing parts of a further manuscript are supplemented by Phialites' paraphrase. One manuscript transmits a vernacular rendering in political distichs made in the 1570s in the entourage of Michael Kantakouzenos (see Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Eine *Dioptra*-Adaptierung"); a further manuscript transmits another adaptation, also in political distichs, made by Georgios Rhetor in 1639 (see Hörandner, "Notizen zu Philippos Monotropos", pp. 819–21).

was translated into Middle Bulgarian Church Slavonic. The Slavonic translation is transmitted in 200 manuscripts.<sup>5</sup> In the following we will present the *Dioptra* in the context of Byzantine literature at the turn of the 12th century and its reception in the Slavonic world.

## 1 The Byzantine Text

### 1.1 *Philippos and His World*

Philippos is only known as the author of the *Dioptra*. What we know about him is based on the direct information provided in the paratexts and the indirect information deduced from the text proper.<sup>6</sup> He composed the *Dioptra* in 1095, when he was already an old man. Two years later, a second, perhaps posthumous redaction was released, in which some passages were rearranged and several minor changes in the wording were made.<sup>7</sup> Philippos was a monk. Accordingly, the *Dioptra* was often described as the unpretentious work of a simple monk, a lengthy specimen of ascetic literature.<sup>8</sup>

And yet, a closer reading of the *Dioptra* offers a differentiated picture of the text, its author and its recipients. Indeed, the monk Philippos, though not an outstanding scholar, had an above-average education, which included theology, grammar, arithmetics and physiology. He was very well-read, although many of his readings were probably taken from *florilegia*. There are strong indications that Philippos lived in Constantinople and belonged to urbane monastic circles close to the patriarchal and imperial authorities. His *Weltanschauung* is a rather simple Christian humanism.

### 1.2 *Explaining the World in Verses: the Dioptra and Its Concerns*

The *Dioptra* consists of 7134 political verses (or 7217 in the second redaction) and 12 inserts of varying length, 11 in prose and one in dodecasyllables, which are excerpted from other authors.<sup>9</sup> It was originally accompanied by three prefaces. Two of them were written by Philippos: a letter to the monk Kallinikos, on whose request Philippos wrote the *Dioptra*; and nine political verses of

5 Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische Übersetzung der Dioptra des Philippos Monotropos*, pp. 68–258.

6 See Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Philippos Monotropos' *Dioptra* and its Social Milieu".

7 See Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "The *Dioptra* and its Versions".

8 Philippos Monotropos, *Klauthmoi*, ed. Auvray, p. 3; Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur*, p. 642.

9 Detailed lists of the inserts and annexes of the *Dioptra* are provided in Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Die *Dioptra* des Philippos Monotropos und ihr Kontext".

defence (*στίχοι ἀπολογητικοί*). The third is a book epigram of 21 dodecasyllables written by the otherwise unknown *vestes* Constantine Granatos. In the second redaction two further prefaces were added: a letter from Kallinikos to Philippos requesting the composition of a collection (*συλλογήν*) of scriptural and patristic writings; and an anonymous prose preface (*πρόγραμμα*), erroneously attributed to Michael Psellos in a manuscript family.<sup>10</sup> The five books of the *Dioptra* are followed by four prose annexes, two of which are excerpted from Niketas Stethatos and two are anonymous: an epilogue of 180 political verses (183 in the second redaction) written by Philippos himself; and the dating epigram, or rather colophon, which is transmitted only in three codices but seems to be original.

The five books themselves are the *Klauthmoi* or *Threnoi* (“laments”), a poem of contrition addressed to the soul, and four books of dialogue between the *Psyche* (soul), which is personified as the mistress, and the *Sarx* (body), which is personified as the maid. The *Klauthmoi*, consisting of 355 verses (371 in the second redaction), is considerably shorter than the dialogue books, and is positioned as the first book in the earlier redaction, or the fifth book in the second redaction. The dialogue books consist of 1596 (1840), 1644 (1673), 1161 (916) and 2174 (2204) verses respectively. In these books the mistress poses questions to her maid on various issues, which mainly concern human nature, its constitution, and its state and position in the visible and invisible, present and eternal world. Thus, the second book (or first, according to the later redaction) begins with practical questions of Christian life: good deeds, charity, love, timely repentance and confession, the importance of intention and motivation vs. actual results, etc. The third (second) book continues with theoretical questions regarding the body and the soul as well as the resurrection of the dead: how the soul acts and manifests itself through the body; why and when the soul was united with the body; what the state of the soul and its three parts (intellectual, concupiscent, irascible) will be after resurrection; how the soul will recognize its own body in order to be reunited with it, all ephemeral features having gone; how humans will recognize each other after resurrection, etc. The questions of the fourth (third) book concern the bodiless state of the human soul and the angels: how the soul acts without the body; how the soul and the angels praise God without a body, etc. Finally, the last dialogue book is dedicated to the broader issue of the human state in the ephemeral world and also questions on the other world: why God did not create all humans at once, in the same way as he had created the angels; what the reasons are for differences in character or voice, for congenital illnesses, disabilities, etc.; whether

10 See Karpozilos, “When Did Michael Psellus Die?”

one's character can be changed by effort or God's will; what the state of the deceased until resurrection is. The answers to the physiological questions in the last book are based to a great extent on medical theories, such as the theory of the four elements and the four humours.

This outline of the contents shows that there exists a coherent line of thought throughout the vast text, and that the dialogue is more than a conglomerate of random questions and answers. A large proportion of the verses paraphrase other texts, which Philippos does not usually name; although he readily acknowledges that he only quotes other authors as a proof of his orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup> Despite writing in verse, Philippos is very close to his sources. These sources are mainly patristic, but also from both the Old and New Testament. The extent of the paraphrased sources varies from two-three to several dozen verses. Some lengthy sources, the inserts mentioned above, are quoted verbatim. Most sources are texts that were often found in *florilegia*.

The exposition of theological issues in straightforward political verse relates the *Dioptra* to didactic poems, which flourished in the last decades of the 11th century. The questions discussed in the *Dioptra* must have been one important reason for its popularity; they deal with the concerns of educated pious Byzantines. Similar questions were discussed in the epistolary essays written by Michael Glykas in the 12th century, although there seems to be no direct dependence.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3 *Dialogue, Erotapokriseis and Personification: Edification and Fictionality*

The Byzantines made extensive use of the dialogue, being heirs to Greek and, through Syriac, to Near Eastern literary traditions. Although the ancient Greek dramatic tradition came to an end in Late Antiquity, save some *Lesedramen*, and dialogues in platonic or lucianic style were written only sporadically,<sup>13</sup> the dialogue was used in many genres of Byzantine literature. Theological treatises and especially disputations on the theological controversies of the time, sometimes based on actual debates, had a dialogue form.<sup>14</sup> The dialogue

11 Epilogue 13–17 and 165–70. All quotations of the Greek *Dioptra* are from the forthcoming edition by Eirini Afentoulidou.

12 The relationship between the *Dioptra* and the epistolary essays written by Michael Glykas needs to be further investigated. For the question of the genre of Michael Glykas' text, see Kiapidou, "Chapters, Epistolary Essays and Epistles".

13 Marciniak, *Greek Drama in Byzantine Times*.

14 Cameron, *Dialoguing*.

form was also used in epigrams and orations.<sup>15</sup> In particular, funerary orations and epigrams or lamentations often have the form of a dialogue between the deceased, the mourners, a stranger passing by the grave, the city, the orator etc.<sup>16</sup> The hymnographic genre *kontakion*, originating from a bilingual Syriac-Greek environment, evolved mainly from the Syriac *madrāšā* and its sub-genre *soghitha*, which was usually a dialogue.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, dialogues, especially between biblical persons, abound in the *kontakia*.<sup>18</sup> The dialogues were often between personifications, e.g. of cities and other geographic concepts, the 12 months, virtues and vices, and so on.<sup>19</sup> Disputes between the personified body and soul existed in the already mentioned Syriac *soghitha*.<sup>20</sup> However, they had no equivalent either in the *kontakia* or in other Byzantine genres. The only cases of a dialogue between the personified body and soul in Byzantine literature are the *Dioptra* and a dispute written by Michael Choniates around 1215,<sup>21</sup> perhaps inspired by the *Dioptra*.

One rudimentary form of dialogue is the *erotapokriseis* (questions and answers), inasmuch as they constitute an exchange between two “speakers”.<sup>22</sup> The *erotapokriseis* was a popular rhetorical means of arranging the material in didactic literature in Antiquity and especially in the Christian Middle Ages. The questions and answers may be attributed to named personas, or be introduced simply by the rubric “question” and “answer”. However, there is hardly any dramatization or fictionalisation in the *erotapokriseis*: there is no reference to extratextual circumstances that would provide the speakers with a background and define the setting of the dialogue, and the dynamics of the

15 See e.g. Theodore Prodromos' dialogue between the poet and Abraham in the epigram “On Abraham Entertaining the Holy Trinity” (Theodore Prodromos, *Neglected Poems*, ed. Zagklas, p. 225) or his dialogue *Apodemos Philia* between the stranger and the personified *philia* (love among equals) (ed. Zagklas, *Neglected Poems*, pp. 326–62).

16 A good example of a dialogue between the mourner and the deceased is the lamenting poem for an intelligent young man *κατ' ἐρώτησιν* (in questions) by Constantine Stilbes, and its anonymous imitation for the patriarch Dionysius (Constantine Stilbes, *Poems*, eds. Diethart/Hörandner, pp. 2–6 and 6–8).

17 Brock, “The Dispute Poem”.

18 See *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica*, ed. Trypanis, no. 6, 8, 9 and 11, as well as Romanos' *kontakia* on the Old and New Testament in Romanos Melodos, *Hymns*, ed. Grosdidier de Matons.

19 See Stafford/Herrin, *Personification in the Greek World*.

20 Brock, “The Dispute between Soul and Body”.

21 Michael Choniates, *Dispute*, ed. Hunger. See Kolovou, *Μιχαήλ Χωνιάτης*.

22 The definition of *erotapokriseis* has aroused some discussion lately. See Ermilov, “Byzantine Question-and-Answer Literature”; Papadoyiannakis, “Instruction by Question and Answer”.

relationship between the speakers are reduced to posing questions and giving authoritative answers.

As regards the *Dioptra*, Philippos himself does not comment on the dialogue form of his work. In some codices the word *διάλεξις* (dialogue) is mentioned in titles at the beginning of the *Dioptra* or of single books, but there is no indication that these go back to Philippos. In the second redaction, however, terms used for the *erotapokriseis* appear twice in the prefaces: in Philippos' letter to Kallinikos the words "in question and answer; the question is as if of the soul, the answer again of the body" are added.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the anonymous author of the *Programma* describes the *Dioptra* as consisting of "a few and clear questions and instructing answers".<sup>24</sup> The author of the latter preface also addresses the issue of personification of the soul, and argues that this rhetorical device was common both among Old-Testament and Christian authors. However, the examples he cites ("Bless the Lord, O my soul; Return unto thy rest, O my soul; And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods; Soul, the present things are temporal"<sup>25</sup>) rather undermine his argument: the address "my soul" is a way of addressing oneself, and not a dialogue with a fictitious integrated persona.

Indeed, one of the most innovative and sophisticated features of the *Dioptra* is the dynamics developed between the *Psyche* and the *Sarx* in the four dialogue books. These are at the same time allegorical figures and fictitious integrated personas, and their relationship is shaped a) by the theological notions of the creation of humans as an entity of body and soul on the one hand, and the higher status of the soul on the other; b) by the double social hierarchy between mistress and maid on the one hand, and teacher and pupil on the other; c) by the conventions of *erotapokriseis*, according to which the roles of the one(s) who pose the questions and the one who gives the authoritative answers are clearly defined; and d) by the conventions of catanyctic literature, which include self-accusations addressed to one's own soul.<sup>26</sup> Thus, throughout the four dialogue books the *Psyche* poses various questions, which the *Sarx* never fails to answer in the manner of *erotapokriseis*. However, elements that point to a more nuanced interaction recur.<sup>27</sup> Their relationship is discussed time and again, be it in the form of a debate or quarrel, a theological argumentation, or simply through the various ways of addressing each other: "flesh" (*σάρξ*),

23 Κατὰ πένσιν καὶ ἀπόκρισιν. Ἡ πένσις τοίνυν δῆθεν τῆς ψυχῆς, ἡ δ' ἀπόκρισις αὐτῆς τῆς σαρκός.

24 Δι' ὀλίγων καὶ σαφῶν ἐρωτήσεων καὶ διδασκαλικῶν ἀποκρίσεων.

25 Ps 102/103, 1; Ps 114/116, 7; Lc 12, 19 and Παρωαλητικῆ ἤτοι Ὀκτώηχος ἡ μεγάλη, Rome 1885, p. 382.

26 Giannouli, "Catanyctic Religious Poetry".

27 See Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "The *Dioptra* of Philippos Monotropos" and id., "Die Proso-poiia in der *Dioptra*".

“servant” (παιδίσκη/δούλη), but also “teacher” (διδάσκαλε) on the one side; “soul” (ψυχή) or “(my) lady” (κυρία or δέσποινα) on the other. Occasionally the *Sarx* addresses the *Psyche* τάλαινα / παντάλαινα (wretched) or ἀθλία / παναθλία (miserable) in the manner of catanyctic poems. In the second redaction such words of reprimand have been replaced by δέσποινα or κυρία. This change is at first glance successful, since the words “miserable” and “wretched” are inappropriate in the mouth of a servant addressing her mistress; but in fact the author of the second redaction did not take into consideration one of the many levels of the relationship between the *Psyche* and the *Sarx*. The conversation consists mostly of questions and answers, but also includes other forms of discourse: commands, e.g. when the *Psyche* orders her servant to speak;<sup>28</sup> threats, e.g. when the former threatens to punish her maid if she disobeys;<sup>29</sup> warnings, e.g. when the *Sarx* warns the *Psyche* that they will both be punished, if the latter does not repent;<sup>30</sup> and reprimands, e.g. when the *Psyche* accuses the *Sarx* of binding her to the material world, but also when the *Sarx* reproaches her pupil for her ignorance or lack of attention, or for her procrastination regarding her salvation, in the manner of catanyctic poems.<sup>31</sup> References to events that take place outside the discourse time grant the interlocutors an autonomy that further highlights their status as integrated personas: they had been together for years, but never before discussed salvation;<sup>32</sup> at the beginning of the third book the *Sarx* refers to a question she had posed “yesterday”, that is, in the previous book; at the end of the third book she gets tired—a sign of the physicality of an interlocutor—and demands to go to rest and pray.<sup>33</sup>

The first 11 verses offer an example of the interplay between the various levels of the relationship between *Psyche* and *Sarx*, and the multiple function of the text; mainly didactic, but also catanyctic, and in any case fictitious and entertaining:

*Psyche*: It has been a long time ago, since we were bound together by the creator of all, but I have never asked you anything beneficial. Yet, I ask you right now; do not rebuke me, maid. Tell me, Flesh, whatever useful you have in mind, and utter advisory words of instruction. And please forgive the procrastination.

28 E.g. *Dioptra*, Book 2.968–69 and 4.481.

29 E.g. *Dioptra*, Book 3.1372–74.

30 E.g. *Dioptra*, Book 2.944–53.

31 E.g. *Dioptra*, Book 2.1539–44; 3.8–14; 4.612–18.

32 *Dioptra*, Book 2.1–3.

33 *Dioptra*, Book 3.1–2 and 1556–57.

*Sarx*: If you order, I will tell you; but in a very vulgar manner, because I am ignorant of letters, my lady.

*Psyche*: But I do not happen to be very learned myself; say boldly whatever you can, however you can.<sup>34</sup>

In these verses and throughout the *Dioptra*, the hierarchy is ambiguous: the *Psyche*, who asks, is the mistress, and her asking, or rather ordering her maid to instruct her, is a manifestation of her power. On the other hand, she adopts an apologetic tone towards her maid; this undermines her superior position by making her a possible target for reprimand and reducing her to the role of the pupil. On another level the soul as representative of the whole person is often the target of self-accusations in catanyctic literature, procrastination being one of the most common self-accusations. The verb *συνεζεύχθημεν* (bound together: v. 2) is a theological notion that is discussed thoroughly in the third book of the *Dioptra*, and also defines the social parameters of the relationship between the two personas: despite the different status their fates are united. The *Sarx* accepts her role as a teacher, but hastens to restore the hierarchy; it is as a maid following orders that she gives answers and instructions. Throughout the *Dioptra* she stresses that she is only reproducing what she has read. This explains a feature of the *Dioptra* which may appear strange at first sight, namely, that it is the inferior person who takes the role of the instructor. In contrast to the *erotapokriseis*, the instructor is not a male authority answering by virtue of his own intellectual and spiritual qualities, but a female servant who is ordered to home-school her mistress by reproducing what she has read. Indeed, in another passage, the *Psyche* requests from the *Sarx* a scriptural reference for what she has just said, “Because”, she explains, “I disbelieve you being a servant and I hesitate about what you say”.<sup>35</sup> On another level, the fact that the instructor is the body may be an allegorical statement on learning: even biblical and patristic knowledge is an issue of this world, and therefore bodily and vain, if the soul is reluctant to put it in action. The *Psyche* hastens to encourage her maid by claiming that she is not erudite herself: a statement which apparently undermines the mistress’ status, but subtly elevates her through its

34 Ψυχή: Πολλοὺς μὲν ἔχομεν ὁμοῦ καὶ χρόνους καὶ καιροὺς τε, / ἐξ ὅτου συνεζεύχθημεν ὑπὸ τοῦ κτίστου πάντων, / ἠρώτησα δ’ οὐδέποτε τίποτ’ οὖν τὸ συμφέρον, / ἀρτίως δέ σε ἐρωτῶ, μηδὲν μοι μέμψη δούλην / εἶπέ μοι σὰρξ εἴ τι φρονεῖς τίποτ’ οὖν ὠφελείας, / καὶ λόγους παραινετικούς φράσον διδασκαλίας / τὴν μέλλησιν δὲ σύγγνωθι καὶ ἄφες δέομαί σου.—Σάρξ. Εἴπερ κελεύεις λέγω σοι· ἀγροικῶς δὲ ἄγαν, / ὅτι γραμμάτων ἄπειρος τυγχάνω δέσποινά μου.—Ψ. Ἄλλ’ οὐδ’ ἐγὼ ἐλλόγιμος κατὰ πολὺ τυγχάνω / ὡς δύνασαι τὰ δύνασαι, λέξον μοι μετὰ θάρσους (*Dioptra*, Book 2.1–11).

35 *Dioptra*, Book 3.1223–25.



condescending tone. A further level regards the composition of the *Dioptra*: it is perceived or conventionalized as being simply written and intended for a simple audience, Philippos claims to have written it following orders, and he depends heavily on other sources.

The *Dioptra* is not a dispute poem and the general mood between the *Psyche* and *Sarx* is friendly and cooperative, though highly hierarchical. However, sometimes the dialogue turns to an argument with vulgar traits, without losing its strong theological background. The combination of buffoonery and theological discourse creates a comic effect characteristic of the *Dioptra*. The following example is from the end of the third book, when the *Psyche* asks the *Sarx* about her state after resurrection. The latter is reluctant to answer on grounds of the difficulty of the question, and urges the *Psyche* to ask somebody more erudite than herself. The *Psyche* reacts by ordering her servant to answer and threatens:

So, begin, my servant, and tell whatever you know.  
 But if you want to disobey me, do not expect to get fed.  
 I will not let you have your share of food or drink.  
 But “not even the dog ate the cane”, as you know.<sup>36</sup>

The last verse is explained in a marginal note that goes back to Philippos: “you are going to be beaten, obviously”.<sup>37</sup> The underlying idiomatic expression is vernacular, similar to the Modern Greek expression “τρώω ξύλο” (eat wood) for getting beaten. This is slapstick humour. However, the theologically versed audience would not fail to decode the deeper meaning of these threats: the disobedient body will be castigated through ascetism.

Fictionality never completely disappeared from Byzantine literature.<sup>38</sup> In progymnasmata, epigrams, homilies or hagiography fictitious personas, situations and speeches were created; although with hagiography one must always bear in mind that the characters and the events at least, if not the details of the dramatization, were perceived as facts by most recipients. However, the 12th century witnessed an explosion in the production of works with a considerable degree of fictionality: the novels, the *Ptochoprodromika*, *Katomyomachia*, *Apodemos Philia*, *Christos Paschon*, the dialogues in lucianic style such as

36 Λοιπὸν ἀπάρξου δούλη μου καὶ φράσον ἅπερ οἶδας./ Εἰ δ' ἀπειθήσαι βούλη μου, μὴ προσδόκα τραφήναι/ οὔτε βρωτοῦ οὔτε ποτοῦ μεταλαβεῖν ἐάσω/ ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὁ κύων βέβρωκεν ὡς οἶσθα τὴν σκυτάλην: *Dioptra*, Book 3.1371–74.

37 ἔχεις δαρεῖν δηλονότι.

38 See Agapitos, “In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands” and Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance*.

the *Timarion*, *Amathes* and *Bion Praxis*, and the *Dramation* by Michael Haploucheir,<sup>39</sup> to name a few. Apart from the novels and the *Ptochoprodromika*, the rest are dialogues inspired by the long-abandoned ancient traditions of drama and lucianic dialogue. In general, there is a proliferation of dialogues in the 12th century; besides the revival of the ancient forms mentioned above, genres with a long-standing tradition in Byzantium, such as epigrams of all kinds, often had the dialogue form, or at least included dialogues. In this sense the *Dioptra*—conceived as a dialogue between two fictitious personas—represents one of the earliest examples of trends which shaped literary life in Komnenian Constantinople.

#### 1.4 *Language and Style*

Language and style are two of Philippos' major concerns. Both in the *Dioptra* and the paratexts he addresses the same issue, namely the supposed insufficiency of his language and style, but each time with a different line of argument. His main arguments are the following: one must not look at the phrase, but rather at the content, which is edifying and scriptural and patristic through and through;<sup>40</sup> he is an ignorant himself, simplifying difficult notions for the ignorant;<sup>41</sup> he is not presumptuous, but obeying Kallinikos.<sup>42</sup> In his defensiveness he becomes defiant; those who might attack him are the ones that take pleasure in mocking, but he is not afraid of mockery and idle talk, which those who are haughty above their measure deserve, for he truly says who he is and what he thinks.<sup>43</sup> The roles of the ignorant author and the ignorant public are taken up in the text itself by the two personas of the body/maid and the soul/mistress, as the above cited first verses of the *Dioptra* exemplify.

The language of the *Dioptra* is a simple, straightforward *Schriftkoine*.<sup>44</sup> In general, Philippos is able to communicate his ideas efficiently. Many linguistic phenomena often observed in the *Dioptra* are usually avoided by scholarly authors, although they are also known from other Byzantine non-vernacular texts. The vocabulary is largely that of learned Komnenian *Schriftkoine*, with occasional vernacular words referring to the material culture. However, Philippos has a fondness for archaic/poetic words through the *Dioptra*, and also for occasional vulgarisms concentrated in slapstick-like passages. The eclectic usage

39 See the contributions to the present volume by Roderick Beaton and Nikos Zagklas.

40 Letter to Kallinikos; Book 2.10–12; Epilogue 25.

41 Apologetic verses 1–6; Book 2.8–10; Epilogue 18–24.

42 Letter to Kallinikos, Epilogue 25–30.

43 Apologetic verses 7–9.

44 For an analysis of the language of the *Dioptra* see Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Language and style of the *Dioptra*". See also M. Hinterberger's contribution to the present volume.

of poetic or vulgar words in a context of a low-register *Schriftkoine* constitutes a striking feature of the *Dioptra*'s style. Sometimes this may create a comic effect, similar to the already discussed switch from buffoonery to theological discourse. For example, the humorous character of the following two verses, with which the mistress threatens to beat her maid, is enhanced by the mixture of language registers:

εἰ δ' οὐ πεισθῆς μοι ὀλοή λύσσα κακόφρον πέδη,  
ἐμέ γάρ νά κρατήσουσιν ἀλλά καὶ σέ νά δείρουν.<sup>45</sup>

The first verse is a loan from Gregory of Nazianzus: ὀλοή being a poetic word. However, the constructions with νά and the suffix -ουν in the third person plural are vernacular. Several decades later a Constantinopolitan scholar, in all probability Theodore Prodromos, wrote begging poems to the emperor, the famous *Ptochoprodromika*, full of slapstick humour, in a largely vernacular idiom.<sup>46</sup>

### 1.5 *The Political Verse: Form and Function*

By the time of the composition of the *Dioptra*, political verse had already been established as the metre of personal religious expression and didactic poetry.<sup>47</sup> In this sense both the *Klauthmoi* and the dialogue books were rooted in their respective literary traditions. On the other hand, the *Dioptra* also represents new trends as regards the function of political verse. One of these trends concerns political verse and fiction. The *Dioptra* was the first text with a certain degree of fictionality to be written in political verses. In the following decades, political verse increasingly became the typical vehicle of fiction, such as with: the *ptochoprodromika*; the Grottaferrata version of *Digenes Akrites*;<sup>48</sup> or Constantine Manasses' novel *Aristandros and Kallithea*. The use of the political verse in fiction continued until well beyond the Byzantine period, with a final peak during the Cretan Renaissance (16th–17th centuries).<sup>49</sup>

45 "If you do not obey to me, you destructive rage, you ill-minded fetter, they will arrest me and they will beat you" (*Dioptra*, Book 4.463–64). Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmen de seipso* 46, in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 37, col. 1378, 4–7: Σάρξ ὀλοή, Βελίαρ κακόφρονος οἶδμα κελαϊνόν.

46 Garland, "And His Bald Head Shone Like a Full Moon ..."; Kyriakis, "Satire and Slapstick"; Kulhánková, "Das Eindringen" (ἀστειότης referring to a "kultivierte(s) höfische(s) und großstädtische(s) Milieu"). See also Hinterberger, "How Should we Define Vernacular Literature?".

47 Jeffreys, "The Nature and Origins of the Political Verse".

48 On the dating, see *Digenes Akrites*, ed./transl. Jeffreys, and see Beaton/Ricks (ed.), *Digenes Akrites*.

49 Holton (ed.), *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*.

The other trend concerns the length of poems written in political verses. During the 10th and 11th centuries the length of these poems typically ranged between a few dozen and a few hundred verses. The *Dioptra* was at the time of its composition by far the lengthiest work written in political verses. Over the course of the 12th century the political verse established itself as one of the metres of lengthy texts; the *Chronicle* by Constantine Manasses, for example, consists of 6620 political verses, whereas the above-mentioned, now lost romance, *Aristandros and Kallithea* by the same author, must have been of considerable length too.<sup>50</sup> The *Allegories to the Iliad* by John Tzetzes consist of 6632 political verses, his *Allegories to the Odyssey* 3109, and his *Chiliads* 12668. In the centuries to follow, and up until the 17th century, texts of several thousand verses were typically written in political verses.

### 1.6 *The Dioptra in the Literary Scene of Its Time*

Despite its popularity in the Byzantine world, the *Dioptra* was long ignored by Byzantinists. Its description as a monastic text implied, unjustly, that it was an atemporal, marginal phenomenon in Byzantine literature. However, there have been different voices, such as Paul Magdalino, who sees in the *Dioptra* “one of the first attempts to limit the cultural damage done by the trial of John Italos”.<sup>51</sup> In the preceding sections it was demonstrated not only that the *Dioptra* was not devoid of vividness, humour and sophistication, but also that it was related to literary trends characteristic of 11th- and 12th-century Constantinople; for some of which it was an early example. Catanyctic and didactic poems written in a straightforward *Schriftkoine*, and in political verse, and the fashion of didactic poems in general, had been established in the last decades of the 11th century. At the same time, the creation of fictitious characters and settings, the dialogue, slapstick humour combined with vernacular elements, and the composition of poems consisting of thousands of political verses, were characteristic of much of the literature in the decades to follow. These new trends were mostly demonstrated in markedly secular works in the 12th century, for, if God’s operation in human history is still apparent throughout the *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses, this is not the case in the novels, nor the *Ptochoprodromika*, or the comic dialogues, or the *Katomyomachia*. The *Dioptra* remained a unique text in combining theological instruction with playfulness, and theological literary traditions with the new trends of lengthy poems, dialogues and fictionality.

50 Seven hundred and sixty-one excerpted verses of this romance survive. See Roderick Beaton’s contribution to the present volume.

51 Magdalino, “Digenes Akrites and Byzantine literature”, p. 13.

## 2 The Slavonic Translation

The Church Slavonic version of the *Dioptra* was to become even more popular than the Greek original, as is demonstrated by the 198 manuscripts transmitting either the complete poem or extracts of it.<sup>52</sup> The witnesses range from the 14th to the 19th century; four of them belong to the Middle Bulgarian, 16 to the Serbian, and 178 to the East Slavonic redaction of Church Slavonic. The existence of 15 further manuscripts dating from the 14th century can be deduced from the stemma; Bulgarisms in their respective copies prove that at least eight of them were Middle Bulgarian.<sup>53</sup> Despite the scarcity of witnesses of Bulgarian origin, the Slavonic *Dioptra* is clearly of Middle Bulgarian character. We can, however, only speculate on the exact place where the *Dioptra* was translated into Slavonic. The translator's excellent command of both Greek and Church Slavonic allows us to assume that it originated in an eminent literary centre, most likely the scriptoria of Mount Athos or of the Bulgarian capital, Tărnovo.<sup>54</sup>

The point in time when the *Dioptra* was transferred into Slavonic can be narrowed down reasonably well. Codex G1M Chlud. 237, dating from c.1340, contains the original of a translation of two appendix chapters of the *Dioptra*, which is evidently not based on the Slavonic version of the whole text. The translator, a certain Grubadin, obviously did not know about the latter, which allows us to conclude that by that time it did not yet exist, or was at least not widely disseminated.<sup>55</sup> The *terminus ante quem* is the age of the oldest extant manuscripts, which date from the 1360s. Thus, we may assume that the translation was created around 1350.

In the Slavonic *Dioptra*, as is usual with Middle Bulgarian texts of high quality, the most striking innovations of the contemporary vernacular are rarely, if at all, reflected. The infinitive is lost in Bulgarian like in the other languages of the Balkan *Sprachbund*. Yet, in the Slavonic *Dioptra* it is preserved without any restrictions (however, it appears exclusively in positions where the Greek model has an infinitive). Even Greek substantivized infinitives—which had usually been paraphrased in translations into Old Church Slavonic—were

52 A critical edition of the Slavonic *Dioptra* is being prepared by Heinz Miklas and Jürgen Fuchsbauer. The first volume, containing the prefaces and the first book, is already published: Miklas/Fuchsbauer, *Die kirchenslavische*. On the manuscripts see *ibid.*, p. 60.

53 *Ibid.* p. 62 and 265.

54 See Fuchsbauer, *Die Übertragung der Dioptra ins Slavische*, pp. 271–75. Miklas/Fuchsbauer, *Die kirchenslavische*, pp. 39 and 296.

55 See Miklas, *Die Dioptra des Philippos Monotropos im Slavischen*, pp. xix–xxxii, especially p. xxxi; Miklas, “Kāde sa otišli Parorijskite rākopisi?”; Fuchsbauer, “Identifying Listening Errors in Slavonic Translations?”; Miklas/Fuchsbauer, *Die kirchenslavische*, p. 68.

imitated (e.g. in verse 1070 of book four: εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι τούτῳ is rendered as *vs eže vĕrovati emou*).

Hardly any indications for the evolution of a postpositive article—another characteristic feature of the Balkan languages—can be detected. Occasionally demonstrative pronouns (usually *sz* or *onz*, but not *tz*, which became the postpositive article in Bulgarian) are inserted after a noun, as in verse 187 of book four:<sup>56</sup>

καὶ εἶρηκεν ὁ βασιλεὺς πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν τὸν τούτου·  
*i reče cř̃b̃ ωnz k̃s svoemou sñou.*  
 (“And the king said to his son”)

In Modern Bulgarian a pronoun or an article would be required here as well. However remarkable such insertions are in view of the translator's general reluctance to add words (cf. below), they occur comparatively rarely. In book four, which consists of 1154 verses and extensive chapters in prose, only four instances can be found; the first book, which comprises 358 verses, contains one.

Above all, the synthetic nominal inflection is seemingly fully preserved. Typical indicators of the transition to analytism, which prevails in the nominal systems of the Balkan languages, would be an increased occurrence of prepositional phrases instead of bare case forms, wrong case endings after prepositions, a lack of congruence, or incorrect verbal regimen. Significant examples for any of these are exceptionally rare.

Moreover, with regard to the use of cases, the Greek model obviously had hardly any impact on the Slavonic translation. Instances for a direct Greek influence are scarce. In the first preface, for example, we find the phrase *ω eže ne vs boga bogatĕřštwmou*. As there is no indication of direction here, we would rather expect the locative *vs bodzĕ* instead of the accusative *vs boga*; however, the translator remains faithful to the Greek model, which, in discordance with ancient Greek, also has an accusative: *περὶ τοῦ μὴ εἰς Θεὸν πλουτοῦντος*.

The regimen of the Greek verb is seemingly imitated in the clause ending the fifth prose chapter of book four, where *ἐλεῶ σε τῆς δυστυχίας* (“I pity you for your ill fortune”) is rendered as *milouĕ tĕ pogrĕšenĭa*. The Greek verb regularly takes a direct object and a genitive to indicate the cause of the pity. Even though the *Lexicon linguae palaeoslovenicae* does not specify the case a causal complement would require in Slavonic, the genitive sounds rather weird to me. Probably a prepositional phrase would have been preferable.

<sup>56</sup> Verse numbers are indicated according to Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische*.

Despite the dwindling of the synthetic inflection in the contemporaneous vernacular, in respect to the use of the cases the translator skilfully avoided an inept imitation of the Greek. He must have acquired his ability to use the cases correctly in the course of his education.

Was he equally independent in rendering the Greek text? In the words of Klaus Trost,<sup>57</sup> Slavonic translators of that time intended to preserve the numeric and positional equivalence of functional units with the original. To put it another way, it was their aim that every word or indivisible word complex (as, for example, the combination of article and noun) of the Greek text be represented by exactly one equivalent in the target language, and that the arrangement of these entities correspond to that of the Greek model.<sup>58</sup> The idea behind this approach to translating is, in the words of Francis Thomson, “to take the reader to the message and not vice versa”.<sup>59</sup>

Even a quick glance reveals that the translator strictly followed these principles.<sup>60</sup> And yet, he repeatedly broke the principle of numeric equivalence for several reasons. First of all, he recurrently refrained from rendering words of merely metrical motivation, as, for example, in the verses 790 and 791 of book four:

ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἰωάννου γε τοῦ Θεολόγου ἀΐθις  
*no i iwānna že b̃goslova paky*  
 ἢ τούτου ἀποκάλυψις ἐδίδαξε μεγάλως·  
*ω/t/kr̃venie naoučilo est̃ velmi.*  
 (“But also John the Theologian’s,  
 his Revelation taught in a great way”)

In the immediate sequence of the antecedent Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου, the demonstrative pronoun τούτου is definitely superfluous. The author obviously used it to obtain the required number of syllables in the verse. The translator,

57 See Trost, “Die übersetzungstheoretischen Konzeptionen des cyrillisch-mazedonischen Blattes”, pp. 506f.; Trost, *Untersuchungen zur Übersetzungstheorie und -praxis des späteren Kirchenslavischen*, pp. 41f.

58 Our edition of the Slavonic *Dioptra* is particularly apt for the study of translation technique in terms of the adherence to these principles, as the Slavonic version is juxtaposed to a Greek text based on the manuscripts closest to the immediate model of the translation. Thus, maximum comparability of the original and the translation is achieved (cf. Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische Übersetzung der Dioptra des Philippos Monotropos*, pp. 319ff.).

59 Thomson, “Sensus or Proprietas Verborum”, p. 675.

60 For a detailed examination of the translation of book four, see Fuchsbaauer, *Die Übertragung der Dioptra ins Slavische*.

in turn, omitted it, probably in order to slightly amend the text stylistically. Particles, notoriously abounding in Greek, are also left out comparatively frequently, especially where in the Greek text two or more appear within one verse.

On the other hand, the translator was inclined to clarify the text by adding words; compare verse 42 of book four:

ἡνίκα ἐξελεύσεται τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ σκήνους  
*vz negda izydetъ dčhъ ω/t| tēlesnago szsōda.*  
 ([Greek:] “When the spirit leaves the body”,  
 [Slavonic:] “... the vessel of the body”)

He obviously felt that without the adjective *tēlesnyj* (‘bodily’) the meaning of this clause might have remained obscure. However, comparable examples of insertions of autosemantic words are scarce. In contrast, polyprothetism—that is the repeating of prepositions with every single of a series of prepositional objects—is a comparatively common phenomenon, especially where the objects are separated from each other.

Like other insertions of synsemantic words, the repeating of prepositions was evidently intended to improve the comprehensibility of syntactic relations. This was, apparently, also the main reason for the translator to break the principle of positional equivalence to the Greek model. Especially frequently he dissolved hyperbata, which are plentiful in the Greek text, by putting together the separated parts of the respective syntactical unit.

Apparently, hyperbata were problematic for the interpreter as well, as they repeatedly caused translational errors: cf. verses 1099 and 1100 of book four:

ὡσαύτως καὶ ἡ τῶν πιστῶν ἀνδρική καὶ γενναία·  
*takožde i věrnýchъ možstvnaa i doblaa·*  
 ἀνθρώπων δύναμις ὀφθῆ καὶ κατὰ τοῦτου πάλῃ·  
*člčzskaa sila javit se i jaže na nъ borba·*  
 (“Also the brave and noble strength of the believing  
 humans will appear in the fight against him.”)

The translator related ἀνθρώπων to δύναμις, and not to τῶν πιστῶν. The phrase, of course, refers to “the brave and noble strength of the believing humans” and not, as the Slavonic text suggests, to “the brave, noble and human strength of the believers”. Otherwise, errors by the translator occurred comparatively infrequently, which, again, emphasizes his skills.



Furthermore, words are occasionally reordered in a way which demonstrates that in the target language word order was not as free as in the original. Clitics in particular are frequently affected by reordering. Enclitic particles are relocated to the position after the first orthotonic word in the respective syntactic unit, as in verse 447 of book four:

καὶ τοῖς δικαίοις πάλιν δὲ ὡς ἔμαθες κυρία·  
*i pravednym' že paky jakože navyče gž/d/e.*  
 (“and to the righteous, as you have learned, mistress”)

In contrast, for enclitic object pronouns the post-verbal position is clearly preferred;<sup>61</sup> cf., for example, verse 529 of book four:

αὐτὴ ἀπολογίσεται αὐτὴ με δικαιώσει·  
*ta da ω/t/věštaetz ta da ωpravdit mē.*  
 (“It will give an account, it will justify me.”)

Moreover, the translator visibly strove to give the constituents of the sentences a more logical order; for example by placing the object behind the verb, as in verse 517 of book four:

κατῆλθες ἐσαρκώθης τε τοὺς πάντας ἵνα σώσης·  
*sъnide i vъplъti sę jako da sъseši vъsęchъ.*  
 (“You descended and became flesh in order to save all.”)

Even though a strictly regulated word order is typical of languages with a predominantly analytical inflection, the infrequent isolated instances for the reordering of non-clitics do not shed doubt on the synthetic character of the language used in the Slavonic *Dioptra*.

With respect to both the numerical and the positional equivalence, differences to the Greek text are rare exceptions. While principally preserving the formal structure of the original, the translator slightly adapted the text mainly in order to improve its comprehensibility. Of course, in some instances further modifications would have been beneficial. In verse 815 of book four, for

61 The reflexive pronoun always immediately follows the verb with one notable exception; in verse 946 of book two it occupies the position after the first orthotonic word (*ω/t/neli bo sę ω/t/ [ω/t/ om. cet.] tebe ω/t/lōčę, bezdělni esmy ωboi*—ἐξ ὅτου γάρ σου χωρισθῶ ἀπρακτοῦμεν κατ' ἄμφω).

example, the translator adopted, as usual, the word order of his Greek exemplar (*gorkъ že přěskvrěnyj ωbrěštetz koreň togda*—πικρὸν δὲ ὁ παμμίαιρος εὐρήσει ρίζαν τότε); one may doubt whether the readers referred *gorkъ* to *koreň*, as would have corresponded to the Greek. Yet, similar cases are few, and we may presuppose that the Slavonic *Dioptra* was generally comprehensible for an audience acquainted with its Hellenizing diction.

The Slavonic *Dioptra* thus represents—in respect of language and, of course, in content—an exact copy of the Greek original. We may assume that it was, like its model, popular because it presented worthwhile topics in a comparatively enjoyable and entertaining manner. The high linguistic register of the translation was probably a precondition for its fast spread, wide dissemination, and long lasting circulation. Its pronounced Hellenizing character did not hinder this; it was obviously not perceived as a flaw and may, in fact, have even contributed to the literariness of the Slavonic version of the poem. This is presumably the reason why it became popular even in the leading circles of Pre-Petrine Russia; it was known to various well-known individuals, including Cyril of Belozersk, Joseph of Volokolamsk, and the protopope Sylvester. Thus, the Slavonic version of the *Dioptra* can be assumed to have wielded considerable influence over the intellectual life of premodern Eastern and South Eastern Europe. Only later, in the 18th and early 19th centuries, was the Slavonic *Dioptra* predominantly read by members of the lower classes of society and, above all, among Old Believers: a readership usually neither overly educated, nor particularly philhellenic.<sup>62</sup> Yet, neither the archaic and Hellenizing diction of the Slavonic version of the poem nor its Middle Bulgarian character provoked any kind of metaphrastic reworking of the text, beyond the scope of the common adaptations to the Russian and Serbian recensions of Church Slavonic.

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62 See Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische*, pp. 296ff.

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# Byzantine Poetry at the Norman Court of Sicily (1130–c.1200)

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## 1 The Cultural and Historical Context

Located at the centre of the Mediterranean, medieval Sicily has always been a pawn of manifold power interests in the struggle for maritime hegemony and control over the trade routes which connected the West and East. Byzantium and the different Islamic potentates, alternatively seizing power over time, were the main players in this struggle until the second half of the 11th century, when a new challenger entered the political stage and resolved the conflict to his own benefit. Having gained possession of the Byzantine provinces of Apulia and Calabria as well as of the Longobard territories in Southern Italy in the late 1050s, the Normans landed on Muslim Sicily in 1061 under the lead of Count Roger de Hauteville. It took him 30 years for the conquest to be achieved, although the capital city Palermo had already fallen in 1072.<sup>1</sup> His son and successor, also called Roger, was to become the founder of a dynasty that ruled southern Italy until the end of the 12th century. Roger made the old Muslim capital his residence. As a king from 1130 onwards, he began to reshape the city's urban aspect. In Palermo, as well as in other Sicilian towns, new churches were built, Arabic fortresses and palaces were reused and adapted, and new pleasure villas arose.<sup>2</sup> This impressive building activity changed radically the architectural landscape of the island and created a separate visual language which harnessed both Byzantine and Arabic artistic experiences.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the Norman kings drew on and combined stylistic features and elements found in contemporary Arabic and Byzantine art with architectural

1 On the Norman conquest of Sicily, see Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard*; Metcalfe, *The Muslims*, pp. 88–111.

2 On these suburban villas, called *solacia*, see Meier, *Die normannischen Königspaläste*; on Arabic and Norman Palermo, see the recent contributions of Di Liberto, “Norman Palermo” and Bagnera, “The Urban Evolution”.

3 An overview of Roger's cultural politics is in Houben, *Roger II of Sicily*, pp. 98–164.

structures of their native tradition.<sup>4</sup> The coexistence of Byzantine mosaic and Arabic *muqarnas* vaulting, as well as of Latin, Greek and Arabic inscriptions in the palace chapel (*Cappella Palatina*), founded in 1143 by Roger II, stands for the tripartite nature of Norman kingship.<sup>5</sup> The royal mint, by coining bilingual and even trilingual pieces, conveyed the same message, and appealed in different ways to the kingdom's different audiences. Neither inscriptions nor coins presupposed the mastery of the respective languages. The meaning of symbolic objects lay more on their overall visual impact than on the specific message they conveyed.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the fusion of different, even contrary styles and languages in both objects and buildings was intended to give a strong political statement, and aimed to glorify the unifying power of the new monarchy through the use of such widely accessible media.<sup>7</sup>

Visual art, however, was not the only channel used to project a politically appropriate image of kingship and power. Written records, be it official documents or literary works, were likewise suitable means to achieve this goal, although they certainly never reached the same broad impact. Official documents and chancery charters, too, had to meet the very concrete needs of royal governance, as well as to respond to practical contingencies. Hence, they inevitably mirror the kingdom's multilingualism. Admittedly, legal and administrative rules strongly limited freedom of expression in this sector; still, the role documents played in formulating and representing the monarchy's self-image cannot be underestimated.<sup>8</sup>

The wide field of literary production, a traditional arena for constructing images of power and legitimacy, offered more creative possibilities. Yet, although cultural intermingling and even hybridity might be expected, the reality shows a different picture. Literary works in Arabic, Latin, and Greek (Italian vernacular did not play any role at that time) written in Sicily from the mid-12th century onwards, seem *prima facie* to embody incommunicability. Almost all of them arose at around the same time and in the same court milieu, and were either surely or probably penned on behalf of the king himself, or at least

4 On the multifaceted nature of Norman palatial architecture, see Maier, *Die normannischen Königspaläste*, esp. pp. 12–32.

5 This topic is dealt with extensively in Tronzo, *The Cultures of his Kingdom*; on the Arabic inscriptions on the vault of the royal chapel and more generally on Arabic epigraphs from Norman Sicily, see Johns, “Le iscrizioni e le epigrafi”, and id., “Arabic Inscriptions”.

6 Johns, “Arabic Inscriptions”, pp. 135–42 and Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 148–74 on the function and meaning of Arabic inscriptions in a Christian context, as well as Mallette, “Translating Sicily” on coins.

7 Johns, “Arabic Inscriptions”, pp. 143–44.

8 On this issue, see von Falkenhausen, “I diplomati dei re normanni”; Becker, “Charters and Chancery”; Johns/Jamil “Signs of the Times”.



addressed to him. Nevertheless, their respective authors appear to be largely unaware of the literary achievements of the other cultures of the kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

Modern research on the multilingual literary production of Norman Sicily still reflects this situation, and remains within the conventional boundaries of the respective academic disciplines, not least due to the linguistic complexity. Even when the claim for a multidisciplinary approach has been recently formulated, and awareness of the intrinsic hybridity of the literature of Norman Sicily arises, many aspects still remain unexplored. This holds particularly true for the Greek part of the three-tongued literary corpus of medieval Sicily,<sup>10</sup> which is thoroughly neglected in research, and has not yet been given its due place within the body of Byzantine literature.

The aim of this study is to give a chronological survey of the available texts, analysed in the broader context of 12th-century Byzantine literature as a whole. At the same time, I endeavor to detect the distinctive features reflecting the hybrid cultural milieu in which the texts originated. Some awareness of Latin and, to a lesser extent, Arabic literature may be assumed from the outset.

## 2 Multilingual Literary Production at the Court of Roger II (1130–54)

Not more than scanty information is available about what should have been one of the most vibrant cultural centres of the Western Middle Ages. King Roger is known as a patron of literature in all three languages of his kingdom. Although their spheres of competence remained largely separated, and literary exchange between the different cultures is barely detectable,<sup>11</sup> they were all deemed worthy of royal support. The celebrated scientist and geographer al-Idrisi, to name the most celebrated example, wrote for Roger II the book entitled *A Diversion for the Man Longing to Travel to Far-Off Places*, and illustrated it by what is considered to be the most accurate map of the world from pre-modern times.<sup>12</sup> Nilus Doxapatris, a theologian and refugee from Constantinople, penned a treatise on the *Hierarchy of the Patriarchates (Taxis ton patriarchikon thronon)* on behalf of the same king, in which Byzantine

9 A well balanced overview of the linguistic situation, as well as of the major role of the court in the production of literary texts, is in Grévin, "Linguistic Cultures", pp. 413–22.

10 Not surprisingly Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily*, deals with Sicilian poetic production in Arabic and in the Italian vernacular, but almost entirely ignores Greek court poetry and literature: not a single Greek work is to be found in the attached anthology of texts produced in Norman Sicily.

11 See Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 212–30.

12 Bresc/Nef, *La première géographie*.

positions against Rome's claims are supported.<sup>13</sup> Roger's sister Mathilde commissioned Alexander of Telese to write a chronicle of Roger's conquests, which the author dedicated to the king himself.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, homilies in elegant highbrow Greek language were written. The author, the Sicilian monk Philagathos Kerameus, attained a solid knowledge of theological and classical literature, probably at the library of the monastery of the New Hodigitria—founded in 1130 by Roger II in Rossano (Calabria)—where he spent some years and acquired a reputation as a preacher. After having travelled extensively in southern Italy and Sicily, Kerameus sojourned in Palermo where, most likely at the invitation of the king himself, delivered a sermon in front of a court audience in August 1143.<sup>15</sup>

Both historical writing and scientific works directly commissioned by the royal house, were in a broad sense dynastic literature. By directly or indirectly praising the king's achievements in war and peace, they played a paramount role in the construction of a positive political image, and proved an eminently serviceable means of acquiring legitimacy for a ruling dynasty which had come to power through force of arms.

### 3 Greek Poetry and Patronage at the Norman Court

Far less well-known than the above-mentioned works, is the Greek poetic production which flourished at the Norman court. Greek is commonly believed to have been the language of religious discourse, be it hagiographic or liturgical; the language of poetry, on the contrary, being Arabic.<sup>16</sup>

Arabic court poetry is mainly encomiastic, written to celebrate the new rulers, and therefore despised by contemporary and later *hommes de lettres*, who only preserved scanty fragments of it in anthologies. In one of these panegyrics, for example, King Roger is praised with images of light, his face, according

13 Ed. *PG* 132, cols. 1083–1114. On both works, see Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians*, pp. 99–101, who, however, underscores the exceptionality of Roger's patronage; for an overview of the literary production at Roger's court, see Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 191–229.

14 See De Nava/Clementi (ed.), *Alexandri Telesini Abbatis Ystoria Rogerii Regis Siciliae Calabriae atque Apulie*.

15 The precise date of the delivery is still a subject of discussion; see an overview of the different scholarly opinions in Johns, "The Date of the Ceiling". For the text of the homily, see Rossi Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami*, vol. 1, pp. 174–82.

16 See for example Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily*, pp. 29–31, see also Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 198–206; both mention the existence of poetry in Greek only in passing.

to the poet “is gleaming dawn in the darkness: you would think that the splendor of the sun is among those who envy him”.<sup>17</sup>

This kind of imagery is strongly reminiscent of similar modes of expression in Byzantine encomiastic poetry.<sup>18</sup> This does not mean that Arabic poetry is somehow indebted to the Byzantine one or vice versa; simply, a common figurative language existed along with the visual one. They shared a standard repertoire of repeatedly used metaphors, in which imperial power was celebrated around the Mediterranean and beyond, despite the linguistic diversity.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the same light imagery appears in an almost obsessive way in a lengthy anonymous 12th-century poem of exile that addresses George of Antioch, the famous “prime minister” of Roger II.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.1 *The Anonymous Poem of Exile*

Two successive editions have recently made accessible in its entirety what has to be considered one of the longest dodecasyllabic poems in Byzantium.<sup>21</sup> Since both a study of the sources and a literary appraisal are still at an early stage, it shall be presented here in more detail.

The poem, along with the author’s name, is missing. In its present state the poem consists of 3825 verses, followed by two prayers of 144 and 73 verses respectively, which makes a whole of over 4000 verses, but it may have been substantially longer. The poem is written in the high rhetorical language of contemporary Byzantine court literature, of which the poet has a superb command.<sup>22</sup> His metrical skills in handling the dodecasyllable are likewise admirable.

The text has been handed down in a *codex unicus* (now preserved in the national library of Madrid, no. 4577), written in southern Italy (Salento) probably

17 Many examples in English translation are to be found in Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily*, pp. 138–45 (the quote p. 145); on the topic, see also below, pp. 360–61.

18 On this well-known rhetorical *topos*, see Hunger, *Prooimion*, pp. 75–83; Magdalino, *The Empire*, pp. 417–18; and Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, esp. pp. 78–93.

19 On the existence of a common visual language which tied together objects and monuments of disparate origin, see Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability”; Wolf, “Alexandria aus Athen zurückerobern?”, pp. 39–62.

20 On the life and career of George, see among others Lavagnini, “Giorgio di Antiochia”; Johns, “Arabic Administration”, pp. 74–83.

21 Anonymous Malta, ed. Vassis/Polemis; see also the edition by Busuttil/Fiorini/Vella, *Tristia ex Melitogaudo* (to be read along with the book review of Zagklas in *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 62 (2012), pp. 294–97.

22 Although not without some un-Byzantine peculiarities, see Lauxtermann, “Tomi, Mljet, Malta”, pp. 161–62.

in the first half of the 13th century.<sup>23</sup> The manuscript is damaged in several places, which makes the legibility sometimes difficult, and a large number of folios are displaced.<sup>24</sup> The layout, however, is quite accurate; verses are not written *in continuo*, the end of each coincides with the end of a line and is marked by a sign (most often a dot). Several marginal notes accompany the main text and single out different narrative units. These asides have to be understood as a kind of guide leading the readers through the complexities of an admittedly abstruse text. As such, they echo a different voice than the author's one; they are indicators of how later audiences made use of the text and belong therefore to a different chronological layer than the poem itself.<sup>25</sup>

But who was the author of this huge piece of literature? When and on what occasion did he compose it? In the absence of any external information, all the clues come from the poem itself.<sup>26</sup> When he wrote the work, most probably 1143–46,<sup>27</sup> the poet, as he himself declares, had already spent nine years in exile (lines 3588–91, p. 376). His mother was still alive (lines 1790–91, p. 210; lines 3699–706, p. 386) and a brother had been banished like him (lines 425–27, p. 76).<sup>28</sup>

As for the poet's social standing: he insistently claims that he is not one of the magnates (e.g. lines 1705–07, p. 202; lines 1906–10, p. 222), but he repeatedly calls himself a faithful servant (οἰκέτης; e.g. line 240, p. 58; line 424, p. 76; line 3785, p. 394) of George of Antioch, which makes clear that he belonged to his household.<sup>29</sup> He was sent on various missions within the Kingdom (lines 1991–93, pp. 228–30; lines 2086–88, p. 238) and also took part on military expeditions against the King's enemies (lines 1831–32, p. 214). The nature of his functions is not specified, but there are some hints that he was concerned with fiscal affairs (lines 1733–35, p. 204; lines 2081–85, p. 238). According to his own words, the anonymous author was probably not born in Sicily; rather, an origin from southern Italy, Calabria or Salento, can reasonably be assumed.<sup>30</sup> There

23 On the date, see now Lucà, "Produzione libraria", pp. 160–61.

24 On this, see Vassis/Polemis, "Ένας Έλληνας ἐξόριστος", pp. 15–20.

25 Lauxtermann, "Tomi, Mljet, Malta", pp. 169–70.

26 For biographical data, see Puccia "L'anonimo carme di supplica", pp. 232–40; Lauxtermann, "Tomi, Mljet, Malta", pp. 157–58.

27 Puccia, "L'anonimo carme di supplica", pp. 238–40.

28 References are to the edition of Vassis/Polemis, "Ένας Έλληνας ἐξόριστος".

29 Lauxtermann, "Tomi, Mljet, Malta", p. 158. Already his parents seem to have belonged to Georges's entourage, for the poet calls himself "a servant, the son of your housemaid" (θεράπων, οἰκέτιδός σου παῖς; lin. 3795, p. 394).

30 The relevant passages are in Lauxtermann, "Tomi, Mljet, Malta", pp. 157–58.

he most probably acquired a considerable knowledge of ancient literature, both Greek and Latin, which I will discuss in more detail later.<sup>31</sup>

The poet does not specify the nature of the charges brought against him, nor reveals the names of his enemies. In a typical Byzantine manner he only makes slander responsible for his downfall (lines 2089–103, pp. 238–40) and the consequent exile in the “lands of Barbary” (line 1154, p. 148), that is to say in Malta, as two marginal notes explain.<sup>32</sup>

The poet’s voice becomes very eloquent when he speaks about his misfortune and the numerous inconveniences of the life in exile: distress, hunger and thirst, nakedness, being attacked by parasites (e.g. lines 1886–96, p. 220; lines 3248–49, p. 344), the loss of friends and relatives and even of speech (lines 1884–85, p. 220). In fact, banished among the impious Muslims (lines 1779–80, p. 210; lines 1877–79, p. 218) without any knowledge of their language (i.e. Arabic), he is obliged to communicate through interpreters (ὑποφῆται: line 1143, p. 148). Deprived of all comfort, and even of a sip of wine, he must content himself with beer (lines 1782–85, p. 210).

Such a wide range of autobiographical material can partly be explained by the apologetic nature of the poem, whose declared aim is to stage the author in the role of an innocent victim of envy and injustice, in order to be pardoned and reintegrated back into his earlier social status.<sup>33</sup>

However, the plea for pardon, important as it is, is only one of the manifold concerns of this multifaceted poem. Eulogy and political propaganda in support of the young Norman monarchy are equally important. Again and again the poet conjures up the radiant image of the monarch, his brilliant victories against the Muslims and other enemies by land and sea, his just and wise government. The poet despises Roger’s official title rex (ῥήξ), and displays instead the Byzantine imperial titles by addressing him as: βασιλεύς (emperor), αὐτοκράτωρ (absolute ruler), δεσπότης (master), στεφανφόρος (crown-bearing), εὐσεβῆς (pious), κραταῖος καὶ μέγας (powerful and great), either individually

31 On the topic of the author’s biculturalism, see Lauxtermann, “Tomi, Mljet, Malta”, pp. 165–69, 173.

32 On fol. 35v (note to line 1155) and 55v (note to line 1828) respectively. Elsewhere the poet uses the form Μελιτογαῦδος which has differently been understood as Gozo or Malta-and-Gozo: see the discussion in Lauxtermann, “Tomi, Mljet, Malta”, pp. 156–57.

33 Ἄδικία (injustice) and innocence are key themes that run like a red thread through the poem, see e.g. line 27, p. 40: σύγγνωθι τούτῳ μηδαμῶς ἐπταικῶτι (“forgive the one who has no fault”); line 1807, p. 212: πταισματος ἄνευ καὶ κακῆς ἐργασίας (“without any fault and evil doing”). On the intermingling of self-biography and apology see Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen*, esp. pp. 367–81; see also Lauxtermann “Tomi, Mljet, Malta”, pp. 160–61.

or in different combinations.<sup>34</sup> Roger is represented in an entirely Byzantine manner as the divinely ordained, crowned sovereign sitting on his throne and surrounded by the personifications of the Virtues: *Sophia* (Wisdom) holding in its hands a crown, on which the entire universe (sun, moon, and heavenly bodies) sits, with time and its parts also represented (lines 1525–1611, pp. 185–94); *Dikaiosyne* (Justice); *Orthodoxia* (Orthodoxy); *Eirene* (Peace); *Andreia* (Valour); *Eupoiia* (Charity); *Agape* (Love); and *Pistis* (Faith) (lines 1616–55, pp. 194–98).<sup>35</sup>

The comparison of the emperor with the sun is a constant element in encomiastic discourse, not only in Byzantine, but also, as already noted, in Arabic contemporary literature. The anonymous poet makes use of these metaphors to the utmost. Roger is the “one who lightens the whole world with his golden rays, brighter than the sun’s ones”.<sup>36</sup> Roger is even greater than the sun, for the sun “when hidden by the shadow of the earth, is being set to appear only during the day” (ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀνατέλλειν ἡμέραν μόνην τέτακται, γῆς σκιᾶς κεκρυμμένος), whereas “our golden emperor enlightens by his beams the whole earth night and day, and he has all the once fearful peoples of the world to move sure and unafraid by land and sea, even in the dangerous night hours. For the nights too are enlightened by the powerful splendour of his majesty, when he sits unshaken on his golden, glorious throne”.<sup>37</sup>

Our poet is so fond of such images of light that he does not hesitate to apply them to his dedicatee: Roger’s great vizier, the admiral George of Antioch. From the very beginning George is praised as a “second light” (line 8, p. 38 and line 1042, p. 138: δεύτερον φῶς), as “the golden one, whose brightness is only comparable with that of the sun among the sparkling stars” (lines 2664–66, p. 290: Ὅς μηδὲν ἄλλως ... ὁ χρυσομόρφος, ἢ, καθὼς ὁ φωσφόρος / ἀυγεῖ φαεινῶν

34 See e.g. line 1061, p. 140: θείῳ βασιλεῖ καὶ κρατίστῳ δεσπότη (“divine emperor and most powerful master”); line 1348, p. 166 and line 1462, p. 178: χρυσοῦς αὐτοκράτωρ (“golden absolute ruler”); line 325, p. 66: δεσπότης στεφηφόρος (“crown-bearing master”), line 801, p. 114: κραταιὸς καὶ μέγας στεφηφόρος (“powerful and great crown-bearer”); line 788, p. 112: εὐσεβῆς, κρατίστος (“pious, most powerful”); cf. Puccia, “L’anonimo carne di supplica”, pp. 248–49.

35 See line 1523–24, p. 184: καὶ γὰρ στεφηδὸν τόνδ’ ὀρῶ κυκλωμένον / ἐκ παντοδαπῶν ἀρετῶν ἀσυγκρίτων (“I see him surrounded by a crown of all kinds of incomparable virtues”); see the relevant examples from Byzantine court literature in Magdalino/Nelson, “The Emperor in Byzantine Art”, pp. 142–46; on the further popularity of the theme, see Cupane “Das erfundene Epigramm”, pp. 24–28.

36 See e.g. lines 9–10, p. 38: τοῦ φωτιούντος τὴν ὑφήλιον πᾶσαν / ἀκτίσι χρυσαῖς φωσφόρου ἀυγεστέραις; cf. lines 789–90, pp. 112–14.

37 See lines 1342–43 and 1348–56, pp. 166–68. On this passage, see Puccia, “L’anonimo carne di supplica”, pp. 251–52, who points out the conspicuous convergence between our poem and several imperial encomia by Theodore Prodromos, but he rightly rules out the possibility of a direct imitation on chronological grounds (pp. 254–55).

ἀστέρων μεταιχμῖω). The peak of the climax is reached when the poet urges the admiral on his own behalf by addressing him as “thrice resplendent, lofty brightness, head of the admirals, walking the heaven”.<sup>38</sup>

Images of light and splendor even accompany the celebration of George’s military prowess: “Now the only resplendent and most brilliant leader, golden combatant on land and sea, incomparable, superior to the present commanders and the past ones, gives a peaceful life to all”.<sup>39</sup> George is indeed the fire-lighting lamp of the commanders (*archontes*), who defeated by land and sea Pisa and other Italian cities as well as Fatimid Djerba.<sup>40</sup>

To sum up, the encomiastic stance of the poem is just as important as the plaintive, apologetic tone. Without being openly propagandistic, it is certainly a strong statement in favour of the new monarchy, whose novelty the anonymous author never gets tired of emphasizing. Again and again Roger is addressed as the “new crown-bearer” (νέος στεφεφόρος), his government is “a new monarchy” (νέα σκηπτουχία).<sup>41</sup> The poet plays skilfully with the ambivalence of the adjective νέος, which can and should be understood as both new (novel) and young (recent). Indeed, both perfectly suit the recently established Norman monarchy (a. 1130), which doubtless represented a new factor in the political landscape of the medieval Mediterranean.

The novelty of the poem itself, however, lies neither in its autobiographical-apologetic stance nor in its encomiastic agenda. Rather, it is the poet’s conspicuous fondness for storytelling that lends the text its distinct character. Marc Lauxtermann, who already underscored this feature, is surely right in relating it to the tradition of *exempla* in the western Middle Ages.<sup>42</sup> And yet, although length and degree of narrative elaboration are similar, there are several con-

38 See lines 3266–67, p. 348: σὺ δ’ ἡ τρίφωτος, ἀέριος φαιδρότης, / οὐρανοβάμων τῶν ἀμυράδων κάρα.

39 See lines 2604–08, pp. 284–86: νῦν μὲν διαυγῆς, παμφασέτατος μόνος / καὶ δημαγωγὸς καὶ χρυσοῦς καθοπλίτης, / οὖν ὑδρομάχος ἄλλος ὡς οὐδεὶς πλεόν, / τῶν νῦν παρόντων τῶν τε παροχηκότων, / δίδωσι πᾶσιν ἡρεμόν τινα βίον.

40 See lines 2882–85, p. 312. The poet calls George (line 2852, p. 308) τῶν σατραπῶν πυρσοφαὴ λυχνία, as he had already repeatedly done with similar wording: (line 2603, p. 284) σατραπῶν καὶ μέγας ἀμυράδων; (line 2677, p. 282): φαιδρὰ κορυφῆ σατραπῶν ἀμυράδων; (line 2, p. 38 and line 2120, p. 240): τῶν σατραπῶν παμφασεστάτη κάρα. On George’s numerous naval victories, see Kislinger, “Giorgio di Antiochia e la politica marittima”, pp. 52–54.

41 See e.g. line 681, p. 102; line 973, p. 130; line 1028, p. 136; line 1046, p. 130: νέος στεφεφόρος and line 1841, p. 216; line 2099, p. 238; line 2775, p. 302; line 3349, p. 354: νέα σκηπτουχία; see also Puccia, “L’anonimo carme di supplica”, p. 255.

42 Lauxtermann, “Tomi, Mljet, Malta”, pp. 163–67. The literature on medieval *exempla* is enormous; an excellent and exhaustive study of the topic is von Moos, *Geschichte als Topik*; see also Gilomen, “Volkskultur und Exempla-Forschung”; Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority and Power*, esp. pp. 27–134.

spicuous differences between the western tradition and our southern Italian adaptation. First of all, the subjects dealt with are different. Hagiographical tales, which make up a large part of medieval (both Latin and vernacular) *exempla* are lacking, with a few exceptions.<sup>43</sup> Biblical topics—such as Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh,<sup>44</sup> the story of St Paul and the possessed slave girl of Thyateira (Act 16, 14),<sup>45</sup> Joseph and his brothers,<sup>46</sup> Moses striking water from the rock,<sup>47</sup> Joshua,<sup>48</sup> the beheading of John Baptist,<sup>49</sup> and Moses and the golden calf—<sup>50</sup> are predictably, just as in the western *exempla* tradition, well represented.

A second main focus of the anonymous author is history: Roman and, to a lesser extent, early Byzantine.<sup>51</sup> This comes as no surprise: the genre of historical paradigms can be traced back to the collection of *Facta et dicta memorabilia* by Valerius Maximus (1st century AD), whose lasting popularity in the Middle Ages is attested by the large number of manuscripts in which it has been preserved. With the *Excerpta Constantiniana* and the encyclopedic lexicon called the *Souda*, Byzantine literates also had a comparable reservoir of anecdotes at their disposal. Our poet draws his knowledge from these or similar sources, but he also seems to be well acquainted with contemporary Byzantine chronicles (George Kedrenos and John Skylitzes).

But the main concern of the author was undoubtedly classical mythology. This kind of tale provides the largest group of narratives within the poem, and displays a high degree of literary elaboration. In fact, fondness for mythological subjects is a peculiar feature that sets our poem apart from any comparable medieval work I know.<sup>52</sup> The counterpart of this invasive mythological flair is the absence of any even small reference to real life. Whereas medieval exemplary tales have been rightly seen as a mine of folklore materials, which could shed light on the shadowy boundaries between learned and popular

43 See lines 2961–69, p. 318 (the legend of St Senouphios and Emperor Theodosios the Great), and lines 3540–81, pp. 372–76 (the story of the old men sitting at the city gates of Athens and insulting allcomers); on both see Lauxtermann, “Tomi, Mljet, Malta”, pp. 163–65.

44 Cf. lines 385–420, pp. 72–76.

45 Cf. lines 1971–85, p. 228.

46 Cf. lines 2343–73, pp. 260–64.

47 Cf. lines 2684–717, pp. 292–96.

48 Cf. lines 2886–923, pp. 312–14.

49 Cf. lines 3334–48, p. 354.

50 Lines 3251–65, pp. 346–48.

51 E.g. lines 51–175, pp. 42–54 (Caesar and Pompeius); lines 534–68, pp. 86–90 (Octavian Augustus); lines 1072–105, pp. 140–44 (Belisarius and Justinian, the legislator); lines 2374–82, p. 264 (Gizerich and Marcian); lines 3367–79, p. 356 (Maecenas and Augustus).

52 See also Lauxtermann, “Tomi, Mljet, Malta”, p. 162.



culture,<sup>53</sup> our poet simply put together a small anthology of the most famous Greek myths, that strongly hints at a classroom influence, and bears witness to the author's high level of education, in both Greek and Latin. Indeed, it is the mythological *exempla* that give us an insight into the bicultural, Latin and Greek literary world of the anonymous poet, showing how reminiscences of, and borrowings from, both literatures intermingle. As a matter of fact, in addition to the Homeric poems and selected plays of the ancient tragedians—standard school readings in the Byzantine world—the poet also displays a thorough familiarity with what can safely be called the greatest repository ever of ancient mythological knowledge: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which had advanced to become a schoolbook just at the author's time of writing.<sup>54</sup> The tales of Orpheus, Philomela and Procne, Phaethon, Pan and Syrinx, Apollo and Daphne, and Daedalus and Icarus,<sup>55</sup> are all told in great detail according to the Latin source, in order to manifest the author's personal lot. In reality, however, the actual relatedness between the mythological stories and the poet's individual situation is anything but compelling. Rather, the connection is often tenuous, the only rationale of the narrative lying in the author's own delight in narrating.

The impressive number and variety of narratives—which range from historical anecdotes, mythological tales and biblical narratives—make the poem a unique piece of literature, whose generic status shifts from lament to eulogy, and finally to a collection of short stories. Influence from the medieval tradition of *exempla* is highly probable, but the “surge” of narrativity that runs over Byzantine literature in the 11th and 12th centuries should also be taken into account.<sup>56</sup>

Given the author's extensive knowledge of Greek mythology and ancient profane literature (both Greek and Latin), along with his command of the learned Byzantine language and metric, the question arises as to how and where the poet acquired these remarkable skills. Very little is known about the school system, both Greek and Latin, in southern Italy under Norman rule.

53 See Gilomen, “Volkskultur und Exempla-Forschung”, pp. 190–208.

54 On the impact of Ovid's poem on the Anonymous Malta, see the brief but insightful remarks by Lauxtermann, “Tomi, Mljet, Malta”, pp. 165–66; I intend to deal with this most interesting topic elsewhere. On schoolbooks in the western Middle Ages, see Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter*.

55 Cf. lines 2030–78, pp. 232–36 (Orpheus); lines 2126–67, pp. 242–44 (Filomela and Procne); lines 1736–72, pp. 206–08 (Phaethon); lines 2200–52, pp. 250–52 (Pan and Syrinx); lines 2298–3134, pp. 322–34 (Apollo and Daphne); lines 3383–427, pp. 358–62 (Daedalus and Icarus).

56 For this phenomenon, Margaret Mullett coined the term “novelisation”: Mullett, “Novelisation in Byzantium”.

Literacy and a good command of both languages, as well as of Arabic, were required for officials of the royal administration, but we do not know how the necessary level of mastery would have been reached. At any rate, it seems likely that teaching was mainly private or took place in monastic schools.<sup>57</sup> Be that as it may, the high level of learning of our poet cannot be questioned. The acquaintance with Ovid's poem or with Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*, which he quotes in Latin (lines 2526–29, p. 278), as well as with several Greek texts, among them the novel *Leucippe and Cleitophon* by Achilles Tatius (2nd century AD),<sup>58</sup> is too intimate to be attributed to the simple consultation of anthologies (*florilegia*).<sup>59</sup> As for the intended audience of the poem: both the level of language and the address to the great admiral George of Antioch—who was probably also the poet's literary patron—suggest that it consisted of the small circle of Greek speaking, learned high officials at Roger's court.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.2 *Epigrammatic Poetry at the Time of Roger II*

The anonymous author of the poem of exile was not the only literate able to write in decent Greek and produce proper iambs at Roger's court. Epigrammatic poetry is one of the most popular genres in Byzantine literature. It has been handed down either in manuscript form, from being painted on church walls, or from being inscribed on different objects or funerary monuments.<sup>61</sup> Sicilian epigrams belong to this last category, and can broadly be divided into funeral and dedicatory epigrams.<sup>62</sup>

The epitaphs to George of Antioch, his mother Theodoule, and his wife Eirene, are today preserved in manuscript copies. The original inscriptions, which were probably engraved on the gravestone, are lost. All of them were written by the same poet, who also penned the dedicatory epigrams in the church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio (Martorana) in Palermo, which are still

57 Regarding Greek education, see the cautious (perhaps too cautious) remarks of Lucà, "Testi medici e tecnico-scientifici", pp. 590–93; on the school system, see Guillou, "L'école dans l'Italie byzantine".

58 See Lauxtermann, "Tomi, Mljet, Malta", p. 168. It is worth noting that a manuscript of the novel was written in southern Italy probably during the poet's own lifetime: Lucà, "I Normanni e la rinascita", pp. 53, 84–85.

59 This is the opinion of Lucà, "I Normanni e la rinascita", pp. 76–79 (regarding Philagathos Kerameus).

60 So rightly Lauxtermann "Tomi, Mljet, Malta", pp. 172–73.

61 For an overview on the topic, see the chapter by Ivan Drpić and Andreas Rhoby in the present volume.

62 See the excellent edition by Acconcia Longo "Gli epitaffi giambici". The texts are now conveniently assembled in the monumental collection by Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 479–98 and 813–17: id., *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Mosaiken*, pp. 390–92.

to be found *in situ*. The first of these was one beyond the donor portrait inside the church, the second on the north and south church façade; the author cannot be identified. Similarities in wording with the Anonymous Malta does not mean that the author was the same, but it simply means that the poets belonged to the same cultural milieu.<sup>63</sup> Without being literary masterpieces, the epigrams are of good quality in terms of both linguistic and metrical skills, when they are compared to similar Byzantine compositions. Furthermore, far from being expressions of a peripheral culture, the author seems to be aware of contemporary Byzantine poetry, most notably of Theodore Prodromos.<sup>64</sup>

The *Cappella Palatina* and the royal palace had, for King Roger, the same significance as the Martorana church for George of Antioch. It comes as no surprise therefore that the only two epigrams which praise royal deeds are to be found in these buildings. The first can be exactly dated to the year 1142.<sup>65</sup> It celebrates a (now lost) water clock, probably located within the palace, and is part of a set of three inscriptions dedicated to this object, in Latin, Greek, and Arabic respectively.

Almost more important is the verse mosaic inscription of 1143 around the base of the rotunda on the ceiling of the *Cappella Palatina*.<sup>66</sup> The ruler here speaks in the first person as the founder of the chapel, which he dedicated to the apostle Peter, and puts himself on an equal footing with other emperors (πάλαι βασιλείς) of the past. The epigram starts with a wording strikingly close to two Byzantine poems in honour of the victorious Byzantine emperors Justinian I and Basil II, who both had ruled over what now constituted the Norman kingdom.<sup>67</sup> Admittedly, this kind of beginning is a *topos* that we also encounter elsewhere.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, it is quite possible that these very epigrams may have circulated in 12th-century Sicily within the small circle of Greek speaking court scholars, clerics and high officials to whom leading figures like George of Antioch, Philagathos Kerameus, and the Anonymous Malta belonged. Although it cannot be proven, it would be entirely in keeping with Roger's own understanding of his monarchical power, who was aware of the

63 See already Lauxtermann, "Tomi, Mljet, Malta", p. 159.

64 In the funerary epigram to George of Antioch (ed. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, p. 485), the wording of v. 5 is identical with Theodore Prodromos, *Poem* 48, v. 3 (ed. Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos Historische Gedichte*, p. 436): τὸν πανυπερσέβαστον ἐκ τῆς ἀξίας), see the remarks of Acconcia Longo, "Gli epitaffi giambici", pp. 40–46.

65 Ed. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, p. 495.

66 Ed. Crostini, "L'iscrizione greca", p. 188, repr. in Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 813–16; on the dating cf. also Johns, "The Date of the Ceiling".

67 Editions and related bibliography are in Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 814, *apparatus fontium* and 815, n. 14.

68 Examples are in Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 815–16, n. 15.

similarities described above, and delighted in being celebrated as another Justinian or Basil, or even prompted the epigrammatist to do so.<sup>69</sup> The author of this epigram cannot be identified, but it should be the same who was also responsible for the funerary epigrams of George, his wife, and his mother.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.3 *Greek Poetry under Roger's Successors: the Iambos of Eugenius of Palermo*

The production of Greek court poetry in the second half of the 12th century is closely connected with the name Eugenius of Palermo. Scion of a dynasty of high officials, Eugenius was born in the Greek speaking northeast of Sicily (Valdemone). He spent his whole life in Palermo and then in southern Italy working in the civil administration of the three successors of Roger II: Wilhelm I (1154–66), Wilhelm II (1166–89) and Tancred of Lecce (1190–94). He remained a faithful servant of the Sicilian monarchy even after the kingdom passed to Henry VI of Hohenstaufen, who had married Roger's II daughter Constance. Eugenius reached the peak of his career under Wilhelm II, when he held the title of *magister* and was director of the *duana baronum*, the office which handled feudal affairs and land administration on the mainland (except Calabria), and was based in Salerno.<sup>71</sup> The title of an admiral bestowed upon Eugenius by King Tancred had already lost the prominent status it once had, and had only honorific value by this time. After the fall of the Norman dynasty, Eugenius was accused of participation in a conspiracy against the new ruler. He was imprisoned and brought to Germany, but a few months later he was reintegrated into his earlier functions. In 1196 Eugenius was appointed *magister camerarius* (master chamberlain) *Apuliae et Terrae Laboris* (modern Campania), and held this office till his death, which probably occurred shortly after 1202.<sup>72</sup>

Eugenius was one of the most conspicuous personalities in the cultural scene of the Norman era in southern Italy. His perfect command of Arabic and Latin, along with his Greek mother tongue, made him the ideal mediator between the three main cultures of the *regnum*. Eugenius collaborated in the translation of Ptolemy's *Optics* (whose Greek original is not preserved) from Arabic into Latin, he supervised a partial translation of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, and prompted a new "edition" of the famous frame story collection *Stephanites and Ichnelates* (itself a translation of the Arabic book: *Kalila wa Dimna*) to whom he added some new Arabic material. He also translated the Greek text

69 See Crostini, "L'iscrizione greca", pp. 196–97.

70 See Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 816–17.

71 See Takayama, *The Administration*, pp. 143–52.

72 On Eugenius' life and career, see Jamison, *Admiral Eugenius*.

of the *Prophecy of the Erythraean Sibyl* into Latin, an oracular forecast of the doings of kings and emperors, which Emperor Manuel Komnenos had sent as a gift to King William I.<sup>73</sup>

However, Eugenius' main accomplishment—besides some hymnographic poems in honour of the Mother of God, recently attributed to him<sup>74</sup>—are the 24 iambic poems he composed at different times, either at the royal court in Palermo or, mainly, while dwelling in southern Italy. It is perhaps no coincidence that the 14th-century *codex unicus* of Eugenius' poems, which was written in Maglie near Lecce, also contains several epigrams by authors of the so-called school of Otranto (on which see below), as well as a selection of the most important Byzantine epigrammatists: George Pisides, John Geometres, Christopher Mitylenaios, and Theodore Prodromos.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, one may infer that Eugenius' poems were available in this region, and were further used—probably to be read in schools—as examples of high rhetorical skilfulness. In any case, a brief eulogy of Eugenius combined with a plea for (most probably financial) support, written by a certain Roger from Otranto, is preserved in the same codex, thus confirming his ties with the Apulian cultural milieu and the high renown Eugenius enjoyed both as a *homme de lettres* and as a political persona.<sup>76</sup>

Cultural exchanges between Sicily and Salento existed ever since, and are well documented. In the second half of the 12th century they became more intensive. In this light it appears highly probable that it was indeed Eugenius who made the original poem of the Anonymous Malta known in this area, where the manuscript bearing the text was copied some decades later.<sup>77</sup>

Eugenius' iambic poems are of variable length, and touch on different topics. Some very brief epigrams were perhaps intended to be attached to related objects; such as 11 (“On the icon of John Chrysostomos”), 12 (“On the holy table”), and 13 (“On the Crucifixion”). A substantial number (2–8, 20, 22, 23) are dedicated to the praise of virtues and the blame of vices, a very popular topic in contemporary Byzantine literature.<sup>78</sup> The virtues Eugenius celebrates

73 On Eugenius' translations and more generally on translation activity in Norman Sicily, see Haskins, *Studies in the History of Medieval Science*, pp. 155–93.

74 See Luzzi, “Hymnographica Eugeniiana”, pp. 226–35.

75 On the manuscript, see Arnesano/Sciara, “Libri e testi di scuola”, pp. 449–51.

76 The brief poem is edited in Gigante, *Eugenii Panormitani versus iambici*, pp. 12–14. On Eugenius' ties with the Apulian cultural milieu, see Acconcia Longo, “Poesia greca nel Salento”, pp. 263–64; cf. id. “La letteratura italo-greca”, pp. 124, 128–29, and already Gigante, *Poeti bizantini*, pp. 62–63.

77 Lucà, “La produzione libraria”, pp. 172–73.

78 On the popularity of the theme in Byzantine and western literature, see Cupane, “Das erfundene Epigramm”, pp. 24–28.

are Virginité (4), Charity (5), and Modesty (23), the vices he scourges are Greed (2), Gluttony (3), Verbosity (6), Envy (7), Blame (8), Slander (20), and Anger (22). A set of poems (17–19) were addressed to the Calabrian priest Kalos, who had asked him to compose a verse biography of St Agata. They are particularly interesting, insofar as they permit a glimpse into cultural exchanges between learned people at that time, just like the verses to Eugenius by Roger of Otranto, quoted above.<sup>79</sup>

In all these poems, Eugenius displays a conspicuous knowledge of ancient Greek literature and mythology, which is entirely comparable, if not more extensive, than that of an older peer of the previous generation, the Anonymous Malta. They both share the same fondness for mythological *exempla*, and sometimes exploit the same stories, as happens in the case of Tantalus.<sup>80</sup> But, does Eugenius' classicizing poetry also interact with contemporary Byzantine literature and with the two other cultures of his homeland?

The first poem of the collection is (like the work of the Anonymous Malta discussed previously) a "prison poem". The *inscriptio* (title) in the manuscript informs us that it was written while the poet dwelled in jail, which took place in 1195 when Eugenius had been arrested and deported to Germany. Unlike his older peer—whose work he very likely knew—Eugenius does not address a patron summoning him for mercy, nor claims his innocence. Rather, the poem is a pessimistic meditation on the caducity of human things and the instability of luck, culminating in a farewell to all worldly ambitions and in the decision to withdraw from public life. The modern editor rightly underscored the all-pervasive presence of Gregory of Nazianzus' poetry in Eugenius' poem.<sup>81</sup> This is no surprise. The Church Father was considered a paramount example of rhetorical skill, and he is one of the most imitated authors in Byzantine literature.<sup>82</sup> Gregory's influence on Eugenius' poem cannot be denied, yet he is not the only source of inspiration. In fact, it is not Gregory, but a celebrated Latin author, who is responsible for the impressive representation of the wheel of Fortune which dominates the poem's first part.<sup>83</sup>

79 Torre, "Tra Oriente e Occidente", pp. 190–91.

80 See *Anonymous Malta*, lines 1811–20, pp. 212–14, ed. Vassis/Polemias and Eugenius, Poem 6, lines 37–40 (ed. Gigante, *Eugenii Panormitani Versus*, p. 78). On Eugenius' use of the Tantalos tale and his possible sources, see Torre, "Fra Oriente e Occidente", pp. 189–90.

81 Besides the passages indicated in the *apparatus fontium* of his edition (pp. 51–60), see also Gigante, "Il tema dell'instabilità della vita".

82 The literature on the topic is huge; among the most relevant contributions are: Zagklas, "Theodore Prodromos"; Demoen, "One for the Road"; Rhoby, "Aspekte".

83 Poem 1, lines 29–42, ed. Gigante, *Eugenii Panormitani Versus*, pp. 52–53.

The image of the wheel, which throws the humans sitting on it randomly around, one time at the top, and then, without warning down to the bottom, was created by Boethius, the learned and powerful *magister officiorum* of Emperor Theodoric (493–526) at the beginning of the 6th century AD. After falling into disgrace, Boethius wrote in prison his celebrated *prosimetrum* (a combination of prose and verse), *De consolazione philosophiae*, which would turn out to be one of the most influential texts in the Middle Ages and beyond. The work certainly circulated at the Norman court in Palermo, for the Anonymous Malta was able to quote it verbatim. At the time Eugenius was writing, the text had already been given illustrations, with that of the image of the *rota Fortunae*, alongside the representation of *Philosophia* disputing with Boethius, being very prominent. It is highly probable that Eugenius, who spent most of his professional life in Terra di lavoro, not far from Cassino, could have seen the lavishly illuminated manuscript (now no. 189) of the Montecassino library (11th century) that preserves the earliest representation of the wheel of Fortune.<sup>84</sup>

Like the Anonymous Malta, Eugenius also combines Greek and Latin sources. Here, for instance, the western originated image of the wheel merges with that of the three Fates, the white-robed incarnations of destiny, who spin, measure, and cut the thread of life.<sup>85</sup> Eugenius knew the latter from his acquaintance with Greek mythology, either through direct reading of the relevant classical sources or through a gnomic *florilegium*.

Latin and Greek literature, however, were not Eugenius' only sources of inspiration. While his translation activity from Arabic into Latin and Greek demonstrates Eugenius' skills in these languages and his interest in eastern science, there is some evidence that he was also aware of contemporary Arabic court poetry. This can be seen in poem 24 of the collection: a verse panegyric to a King Wilhelm. As I have tried to show elsewhere,<sup>86</sup> there is strong evidence that this individual was Wilhelm II (1166–89). Though neither the date nor the occasion of the composition can be ascertained, one may suppose that the panegyric was publicly delivered at William's second coronation, held when he married Joanna of England in 1177.

The motifs and imagery of the poem<sup>87</sup> closely follow the Byzantine encomiastic tradition, whose rules were already established in Late Antiquity, and

84 See on this Cupane, "Fortune rota volvitur", pp. 148–52.

85 Poem 1, lines 18–28, ed. Gigante, *Eugenii Panormitani Versus*, p. 52.

86 Cupane, "Eugenios von Palermo", pp. 265–70.

87 See the analysis of the motifs in Cupane, "Eugenios von Palermo", pp. 258–64.

were flourishing in Eugenius' time.<sup>88</sup> However, some elements of it are quite peculiar, and may well hint at the Arabic poetic tradition, particularly of the sort seen in the court literature of the Norman era. These elements include the depiction of the sovereign as ruler and master of time, victorious not only over his enemies, but even over Fortune itself,<sup>89</sup> or the emphasis on the king's superiority over the Roman emperors (Caesars) of old.

Unfortunately, the most laudatory poems (*madīḥ*) in Arabic for Norman kings have almost entirely been lost on ideological grounds,<sup>90</sup> the only one surviving eulogy is Ibn-Qalāqīs' panegyric to William II of 1168/69.<sup>91</sup> A thorough (here, of course, not feasible) cross-reading would bring to light conspicuous thematic similarities, which cannot always be explained through the fundamental homogeneity of the celebratory language in the different poetic traditions of the medieval Mediterranean. It suffices to say that the aforementioned peculiar motifs are to be found both in Ibn-Qalāqīs' poem and in fragments of lost panegyrics.<sup>92</sup> It would be fair then to assume that Eugenius took such laudatory motifs from the Arabic poetic practice of his time.<sup>93</sup>

However that may be, Eugenius should certainly be considered an exceptional figure in the literary landscape of his time. His multilingual work perfectly embodies the essence of Norman Sicily and more specifically the court of Palermo, the city which at exactly this time was celebrated, with some exaggeration, as the "urbs felix, populo dotata trilingui".<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, in Eugenius' day, the decline of Greek as a literary language against the growing role of Latin is evident. Not by chance the bulk of his translation activity is from Arabic or Greek into Latin, and never the other way around. Greek, of course, survived as the language of poetry, but outside Sicily, on the mainland, namely in Salento.

88 On the rich encomiastic production in honour of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos, see Magdalino, *The Empire*, pp. 413–88.

89 Poem 24, lines 16–17. 71, ed. Gigante, pp. 128, 130.

90 See above, p. 356.

91 Ed. by Nef, "Un poème d'Ibn Qalāqīs" (repr. in id., *Conquérir et gouverner*, pp. 652–64).

92 Cf. couplet 28 (trans. Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, p. 653) and Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily*, p. 141 respectively.

93 For a brief but substantial overview of the panegyric verse literature composed in Arabic and Norman Palermo, see Cassarino, "Palermo Experienced, Palermo Imagined", pp. 107–15.

94 Petrus of Eboli, *Liber ad honorem Augusti, sive de rebus siculis*, line 56, ed. T. Kölzer/M. Stähli, p. 45.



## 4 A Survey: the Salentine School of Greek Poetry

Greek Salento has been given increasing scholarly attention in the last decades, particularly in regard to its material and visual culture.<sup>95</sup> Poetic production represents an integral part of its cultural output. The collection of poems published in 1979<sup>96</sup> made known the names of four poets working in Otranto. Like Eugenius and his older peers, they all were high officials employed in the imperial administration, or were members of the secular clergy, and belonged to the city patricians. Nicholas of Otranto was a teacher and founder of a learned circle,<sup>97</sup> who later in his life became a monk under the name of Nektarios, and was appointed abbot of the famous monastery of St Nicholas at Casole.<sup>98</sup> His pupil, John Grasso, was an imperial notary (βασιλικὸς γραμματικὸς) and ἐπὶ τῶν δεήσεων (responsible for receiving and answering petitions to the emperor); his son Nicholas is known to have been a rich landowner, and finally George was the archivist (χαρτοφύλαξ) of the church of Gallipoli. Their activity covers the whole of the 13th century, from the cultural blossoming under Frederick II to the long period of conflict that marked the accession to power of the house of Anjou in southern Italy and Sicily. Writing in the learned language of high Byzantine literature, they are, in a sense, the reverse image of the contemporary Sicilian poets, who belonged to the very same social class, and were likewise high imperial officials, but chose to employ Sicilian vernacular as their poetic language.<sup>99</sup>

The personal involvement of the Greek poets in the politics of their time is mirrored in the poetry. Nicholas/Nektarios was part of a diplomatic mission sent by Frederick II to the Byzantine court of Nicaea, and John Grasso followed the emperor in the campaign against the rebel city of Parma. George of Gallipoli, for instance, not only celebrates the visit of the *dux* of Corfu, John Komnenos Vatatzes, to Frederick's court at Gallipoli,<sup>100</sup> but has the personified city of Rome address the emperor and summon him to give her the early glory and status back.<sup>101</sup>

95 See now recently Safran, *The Medieval Salento*.

96 Gigante, *Poeti bizantini*.

97 On his school, see Arnesano/Sciara, "Libri di scuola", pp. 433–40.

98 On the monastery and its abbot Nektarios, the monograph by Heck/Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto*, remains indispensable.

99 An overview is in Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily*, pp. 65–129.

100 Poem 1, ed. Gigante, *Poeti bizantini*, pp. 165–66; cf. Acconcia Longo, "Poesia greca nel Salento", pp. 255–56.

101 Poem 13, ed. Gigante, *Poeti bizantini*, pp. 175–79.

Nevertheless, emotional and political chords are not often struck; the bulk of the epigrams deal with religious themes and objects, and are very close, in spirit and imagery, to earlier Byzantine poems on similar topics, mainly those by Theodore Prodromos.<sup>102</sup> Some epigrams, on the contrary, are related to real existing monuments.<sup>103</sup>

Especially noteworthy are the mythological poems by John Grasso: Hecuba's *ethopoeia* on the ruins of Troy (9); and dialogues between a foreigner and Cypris (10), a stranger and Leander (11), and between a foreigner and Apollo on his unhappy love to Daphne (12). In these the author displays an impressive knowledge of ancient mythology and classical and Byzantine literature.<sup>104</sup>

The four aforementioned poets are certainly not the only representatives of Greek poetry in medieval southern Italy. After the painstaking examination of countless manuscripts, recent research almost doubles the number of Salentine poets and their production. Names such as Theodotos of Gallipoli—probably a member of the secular clergy, and author of skilful epitaphs to the learned hieromonk and polemicist Theodore Cursiotes<sup>105</sup>—the priest and teacher Drosos of Aradeo,<sup>106</sup> or Demetrios, author of mainly hagiographic epigrams,<sup>107</sup> are a further, impressive witness to the richness and the vitality of Greek culture in 13th-century Salento. Such vitality was doubtless buttressed by frequent contacts with Byzantium, which opened the way for a lively exchange of books and ideas, but this would have been unthinkable without the steady activity of several private schools. Founded and supported by both officials and the secular clergy, such schools secured the survival of Greek language and culture for centuries and grew into a kind of—in the words of Guglielmo Cavallo—“ethnic resistance”.<sup>108</sup>

102 Especially the poems by Nicholas of Otranto; see on this Acconcia Longo/Jacob, “Une anthologie salentine”, pp. 172–78.

103 See for example John Grasso, Poem 2, ed. Gigante, *Poeti bizantini*, p. 104 (For the Portraits of the Evangelists in the four pendentifs of a cross-in-square church of Otranto, see Safran, “A Medieval ekphrasis”), or George of Gallipoli, Poem 10, ed. Gigante, *Poeti bizantini*, p. 173 (imperial symbols on the door of the bishop's palace in Otranto).

104 Ed. Gigante, *Poeti bizantini*, pp. 10–11. 111–1. 113–14. 115–17 respectively.

105 Ed. Acconcia Longo, “Un nuovo codice”, pp. 158–70 (on both author and addressee, as well as on the sources of the poems: *ibid.*, pp. 133–52).

106 See Reinsch, “Einige Verse”; cf. Acconcia Longo/Jacob, “Une anthologie salentine”, pp. 165–68; 189–91. On Droso's school, see Arnesano/Sciara, “Libri di scuola”, pp. 440–54.

107 See Acconcia Longo/Jacob, “Une anthologie salentine”, pp. 178, 202–203, 208–209; Cesaretti, “Da «Marco d'Otranto» a Demetrio”, pp. 205–208.

108 Cavallo, “Libri e resistenza etnica”.

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**PART 4**

*Transmission and Circulation*





## Byzantine Collections and Anthologies of Poetry

*Foteini Spingou*

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,  
legato con amore in un volume,  
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna ...

In its profundity I saw when entering  
bound by love in a single volume  
these which are scattered leaves throughout the universe ...

DANTE, *La Divina Commedia*: Paradiso, 33.85–87



### 1 Definitions

When Sir Henry Wellcome—founder of the Wellcome Trust and perhaps the greatest collector of the past century—started amassing his collection, he intended to demonstrate “by means of objects ... every notable step in the evolution and progress from the first germ of life up to the fully developed man of today.”<sup>1</sup> His unique artworks and objects, once held in 1,300 cases in his storage area, are now housed in famous (mostly London) museums, available for the modern visitor to experience fragments of the past. Byzantine collectors of poetry are no different from Sir Henry in what they have to offer and their aims. Their collections and anthologies are the major sources for Byzantine poetry for the modern reader; indeed, they demonstrate past or contemporary literary achievements by means of texts. As it is not always clear what led Sir Henry to acquire an object, similarly it is uncertain why a Byzantine collector included a poem in his compilation. The lack of a clear statement over criteria poses a problem in defining the right descriptive terms for these complications. So, what is a poetic collection and an anthology?

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<sup>1</sup> See Larson, *An Infinity of Things*, esp. p. 152.

Modern definitions of the terms “poetic collection” and “anthology” lack accuracy. Both terms are applied to forms of compilations because they include poems, which are decontextualized and thus disconnected from previous interpretive frames, such as an object or a form of social or ritual ceremony. A poetic collection is considered to include poems with “a sequential or other holistic form”,<sup>2</sup> while an anthology is understood to be a “bouquet” of poems: masterpieces that do not necessarily narrate *one* story.<sup>3</sup> The very fact that poems are considered “interesting” or “beautiful” and thus worthy of inclusion in a compilation, imposes the holistic aspect of collections to anthologies as well. Poems are assembled to tell the story of, for example, a literary “genre” or of good writing, or even to give instructions to the good Christian. To put it differently, an anthology is a collection even if the criteria for its compilation are not explicit. Let us take, for example, the case of the ultimate anthology, the *Palatine Anthology*: a middle Byzantine compilation that combines earlier poetic anthologies and collections. Despite the constant additions, the compilation has an internal sequence, a sequence that has started to be decoded only very recently.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, a compilation of poems penned by one author could also be considered an anthology. Although it has a “holistic form” as the work of one author, such a compilation is neither always arranged in an obviously rational manner nor possesses a “sequential” form. Often it includes only a “bouquet” of poems by one and the same author. Collectors refer to their collections as such. In a famous passage, the 11th-century poet John Mauropous sets his collection’s goal as to give a “little taste” of his literary production (see below). Also, a 13th-century copyist indicates that what follows in another manuscript are “various verses” from the pen of Mitylenaios, “selected and placed” in that manuscript.<sup>5</sup>

As confusion can arise from describing medieval practices with modern terms, I will follow Marc Lauxtermann, who keeps things simple, dividing roughly the available manuscript material into “collections of poems by a single author and anthologies containing poems by various authors”.<sup>6</sup> The term “sylloge” is often used in modern scholarship to denote small anthologies. Despite the functional character of such a definition, the dividing line remains

2 E<arl> M<inner>, “Collections, Poetic”, in Preminger and Brogan, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, pp. 222–23.

3 Brogran and Swanson, “Anthology”, pp. 74–76.

4 Cameron, *The Greek Anthology*; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 83–123; Lauxtermann, “Cephalas”; Maltomini, “Selezione e organizzazione”.

5 Vat. gr. 1357 (XIV s.), fol. 82: “Χριστοφόρου ... τοῦ μιτυληναίου στίχοι διάφοροι ἐκλεγέντες καὶ τεθέντες ἐνθάδε”. See de Groot, *Mitylenaios*, p. xlvi.

6 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 61.

blurred, as the lack of Byzantine interest in the question of authorship resulted in poems of various authors “sneaking in” to an authored collection. Justly, Paolo Odorico refers to the Byzantine collecting impulse as “la cultura della Sylloge” or “la culture du recueil”, which perhaps can be rendered in English as the “culture of the compilation”.<sup>7</sup> For Odorico, “sylloge” or “recueil” describes the way medieval speakers of Greek worked to compile excerpts or full texts in manuscripts.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, the difficulty in terminology also reflects a reality: each compilation of poetry must be treated as a unique cultural product. However, a list of seeming similarities between anthologies or collections of a certain era can be compiled. Collections and anthologies of poetry obviously depend on the production of poetry itself. As little poetry was produced during the “dark ages” in Byzantium, collections started appearing after the end of iconoclasm.<sup>9</sup> Then, as interest in the production of occasional poetry declined after the 1330s, anthologies with “typically” Byzantine occasional poetry become a rarity after the 1350s, without, however, ceasing to exist altogether.

## 2 Collections of Byzantine Poetry

Two groups of poetic collections can be distinguished: those that were gathered by the author himself, and those that were compiled by students or admirers of an author. However, if a compiler’s note (often a book epigram) is not included, any secure classification is impossible. Titles of poems are rarely helpful, since in most cases the poems come from the draftbooks of authors.<sup>10</sup>

One of the first poetic collections to appear after Iconoclasm was that of the poetic oeuvre of the preceding era’s greatest holy man, Theodore the Stoudite. Seventy years after his death, Theodore’s cult led Dionysios, a monk of the Stoudios monastery, to record verse inscriptions attributed to Theodore from the walls of the monastery and other Stoudite monasteries. Dionysios added to his compilation other poems that he found in manuscripts, and thus he created the collection of Theodore Stoudite’s poetry.<sup>11</sup> In a poem appended at the end of the collection and in painstaking hexameters, Dionysios expresses his

7 Instead of “the florilegic habit”, as tentatively suggested by Paul Magdalino (“Orthodoxy and History”, p. 143).

8 Odorico, “La cultura della Συλλογή”; id., “La culture du recueil”.

9 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 67.

10 See also Rhoby, “Labeling Poetry”.

11 On the poetic collection of Theodore the Stoudite, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 70–72 with further bibliography, and Demoen’s paper in the present volume.

admiration, but also implicitly claims credit, for the collection by the poem's very presence.<sup>12</sup>

Almost a century later, Niketas Stethatos published the collected poetic work of another holy man, Symeon the New Theologian. Niketas speaks of his agency in more vivid terms than Dionysios, referring to it twice: first, in a *Vita* that he composed for Symeon; and second, at the introduction that he placed before the poetic collection. Thirteen years after the death of the great mystic Symeon (that is, in 1035), Niketas collected his work. Symeon's poetic work occupied a special place in Niketas' enterprise, as—according to the available manuscript evidence and the introduction preceding the poetic collection, and despite Niketas' claims in the *Vita*—the hymns circulated independently of Symeon's prose works.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Niketas felt responsible for the collection of Symeon's works that he assembled by divine command. According to the *Vita*, after Symeon's death, Niketas had a vision, which was interpreted by "a very wise elder", that Symeon invited Niketas to "write down" ("γράφῃ") "the compositions [of Symeon] that were provided to him [Symeon] by the Spirit from above"; so that Niketas would make them "known to the faithful" and "they [the compositions] may benefit those who read them".<sup>14</sup> The use of the undoubtedly ambivalent verb "γράφω" (to write) is particularly curious, and especially since this is the first time that Niketas speaks about his "mission". In later passages, Niketas refers to his undertaking with the words "μεταγραφή" and "μεταγράψαι", or "μετάπηξις" and "μεταπηγνύναι", indicating that he simply copied the words of Symeon.<sup>15</sup> These later terms would have been most appropriate to describe Niketas' undertaking, given that Symeon himself wrote down his mystical experiences and that Niketas alleges he worked from the saint's manuscripts.<sup>16</sup> However, when the verb "γράφω" reappears a few paragraphs after the passage in question, it has the meaning "to compose", referring to Niketas' encomia to Symeon.<sup>17</sup> Hence, by using the verb "γράφω" in a crucial passage for the development of the narrative, Niketas claims co-responsibility for the final form of Symeon's collected works. Such a feeling of co-responsibility is also mirrored in the way he intervenes in Symeon's poems. The very title of the compilation is his invention: "τῶν θεῶν ἐρώτων ὕμνοι" (*Hymns of the Divine Loves*), even though none of the 58 poems can be

12 Theodore the Stoudite, *Iambos*, no. 124. See also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 72–73.

13 See ed. Koder, vol. 1, pp. 23–25; and ed. Kambylis, pp. xlii–xlvi, lxxvii–lxxxii, lxxxix–xcvi.

14 Chapter 139, cf. Greenfield, *Niketas*, p. 343.

15 Chapter 150, cf. Greenfield, *Niketas*, pp. 379–81.

16 Chapters 131 and 140, transl. Greenfield, *Symeon*, pp. 317 and 345.

17 Chapter 148, cf. Greenfield, *Niketas*, p. 371.

interpreted as a hymn. He also added a general introduction at the beginning of each “hymn”,<sup>18</sup> and modern research has shown that Niketas did indeed intervene in the text.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Niketas was neither a simple compiler nor a new gatekeeper for the treasure of Symeon’s work.<sup>20</sup> Instead, he is a collector who labels the poetry as if guiding the reader around the texts, and who is interested in presenting literary artifacts in a manner accessible to the beholder.

Niketas himself states that his aim for “making his [Symeon’s] legacy known everywhere and [...] publishing his divine writings for everyone”, is to make sure “that they are readily available to help and benefit their [the people’s] souls”.<sup>21</sup> By publishing Symeon’s hymns, Niketas diffuses the word of a holy man, who was given revelations by the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup> Most importantly, and since the circulation of Symeon’s works is uncertain, Niketas preserves Symeon’s works. Niketas did this for the first time in Symeon’s lifetime. According to the *Vita*, Niketas was entrusted to copy Symeon’s works, but he returned to Symeon both copy and original.<sup>23</sup> More than a decade after Symeon’s death, Niketas not only claims that he had no access to manuscripts with Symeon’s works until “accidentally” (or by divine providence) they came into his possession, but also he speaks of a book that was sold off and he managed to find. These manuscripts were more than 16 years old by the time Niketas wrote, and it is not beyond imagination that Symeon’s works were in eminent danger of disappearing, if indeed only a single copy existed.

The case of Niketas’ self-awareness as a collector finds a parallel in that of the stoudite monk Dionysios (discussed above). Dionysios is present in the

18 The labeling of the poems by Niketas as “hymns” is misleading. As J. Koder has discussed, the genre of these poetic texts is a hybrid; they include features of lyric and didactic poetry, verse homily, and have strong autobiographical elements: Koder, “Ο Συμεών ... και οι ύμνοι του”, pp. 25–26. On the title and the agency of Niketas, see also Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, “Οι ύμνοι του Συμεών του Νέου Θεολόγου”, pp. 123–147, esp. 128–130 and 132–133.

19 Koder, “Ο Συμεών ... και οι ύμνοι του”, p. 8. See also Lauxtermann, “Review”, pp. 291–92.

20 Greenfield, *Symeon*, pp. ix–x, argues that Niketas presents himself as Symeon’s “deliberately chosen literary trustee”. Symeon indeed entrusted him to make known his legacy, however, according to Chapter 140 of the *vita*, a process of collection was intervened. Niketas says that Symeon’s compositions “had been taken and guarded like some royal treasure for thirteen years by another difficult man” ... “and one book of his compositions ... had been sold off”. All these works came together into Niketas’ hands, who published the collected work of Symeon (not only the *Hymns*, which concerns us here). See also Chapters 133–35.

21 Chapter 140, transl. Greenfield, *Symeon*, p. 345. Cf. Symeon’s Letter that Niketas includes in the *vita*: Chapter 132, Greenfield, *Symeon*, pp. 319–21.

22 Chapter 131, transl. Greenfield, *Symeon*, p. 317.

23 With the exception of some letters addressed to Niketas. See Chapter 131, Greenfield, *Symeon*, p. 319.

collection thanks to his book epigram and the very fact that he recorded the epigrams; Niketas is present through the interventions to the text, the introduction, and the briefing at the beginning of each poem. Moreover, they both record and ensure the survival of divinely inspired words. In this sense their collections are not “antiquarian” actions or collections of curiosities, but practical guidance for a good Christian life. The circulation of their collections would also benefit themselves. Niketas was trying to establish Symeon’s cult, at the time that he (Niketas) was involved in political turbulences. Dionysios with his collection ensured that the memory of the spiritual founder of his monastery remained alive. The potential circulation of his collection would also mean that some of the verses could become verse inscriptions in monasteries outside the Stoudite circle, and thus could ensure the further spreading of Theodore’s teachings.

From the middle of the 11th century on, an increasing number of authors were interested in collecting their works. Unfortunately, only a few of these collections have come down to us, but sometimes we are lucky enough to hear about them. Isaac Komnenos, son of an emperor, wished to bequeath the collection of his writings (“heroic, iambic and political verse, as well as various letters and *ekphraseis*”) to the monastery he founded, the Theotokos Kosmosoteira in Thrace, near Pherrai. He demands that the book not “lie in an obscure place, but be displayed often as [something to] read (and in memory of me) to those especially industrious men (and they [are the ones who] want to come upon books and pictures).”<sup>24</sup> And he is not slow to add that he does not wish the books that he bequeathed (including his collected works) “to be alienated by the monastery” but “to survive” there “forever”. Unfortunately, Isaac’s book did not survive the vicissitudes of the Pherrai monastery. However, the book of the collected works of John Mauropous, the highly erudite metropolitan of Euchaita and a prolific teacher of the 11th century, is now in the Vatican library (ms. Vat. gr. 676).

The Vatican manuscript has long been thought to be a close copy of the original collection by Mauropous. Recently, Daniele Bianconi proved on palaeographical grounds that the Vaticanus is the original and that Mauropous himself oversaw the production of the book.<sup>25</sup> According to the book epigram at the beginning of his volume, he carefully included his rhetorical works (in prose and verse) in order to give a “little taste” (“γεῦμα μικρόν”) from “a rich scent of flowers” (“δαψιλοὺς ἀνθοσμίου”) to the friends of literature (“τοῖς λόγων

24 Transl. Patterson Ševčenko, p. 844, par. 106.

25 “Piccolo assaggio”.



φίλοις”).<sup>26</sup> Maupous, like Isaac, collected his works to be read by a small circle closely affiliated to the author. Maupous had students and he was part of the most vibrant circle of *literati* of his age. Isaac, a nobleman, did not have real students, but the monks of the monastery that he founded could become such “students”.

In the book epigram, Maupous indicates that the poetic section of Vat. gr. 676 was formed after a deliberate process of selection and subsequent arrangement so that the reader would receive “a moderate pleasure”. According to Floris Bernard, Maupous was interested in constructing a self-representative image in the way he arranged the poetry. Maupous, according to Bernard, appears in different sections of the collection as “a humble epigrammatist”, as a “man self-assertive about his authorship” and with “high-ranking friends”, and so forth.<sup>27</sup>

The case of Maupous’ book is unique. We have never come as close to a medieval author’s practice in preserving his own poetry as with him; in most cases, it is unclear who arranged the poetry as it survives in manuscripts. Also revealing is the case of another 11th-century master, that of Christopher Mitylenaios. Mitylenaios’ poetic collection has been (poorly) preserved in a manuscript in Grottaferrata (Z a xxix), which was copied far from Constantinople, where Mitylenaios lived and flourished, in 13th-century Terra d’Otranto.<sup>28</sup> It has been suggested that the collection is arranged chronologically, although some poems are grouped around the same subject as well.<sup>29</sup> Given that Mitylenaios’ poems are arranged chronologically, it is a plausible hypothesis that the poems come from a register of his works.<sup>30</sup> However, whether this “register” was formed by Mitylenaios himself, or a copyist who selected some poems from a larger pool, remains uncertain.

The problems encountered when trying to identify a collector can be further demonstrated by looking into the poetic collection of the late 12th-century canonist Theodore Balsamon. Balsamon’s collection is transmitted as part of an extensive poetic anthology, the *Anthologia Marciana* (see below).<sup>31</sup> It is not possible to discern a pattern of arrangement to the poetry within the

26 Poem 1, vv. 26–29.

27 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 136–48.

28 For the relevant bibliography, see de Groote, *Mitylenaios*, pp. xxvii–xxix, and Arnesiano, *La minuscola*, no. 88 (p. 97).

29 Bernard, *Reading and Writing Poetry*, pp. 148–53. Crimi, *Canzoniere*, pp. 16–20, suggests that the collection’s focus is diverting from the court towards an intimate group of friends, as also the metre becomes simpler.

30 Oikonomides, “Life and Society”, p. 2.

31 Marc. gr. 524, fols. 89–96; cf. Horna, “Die Epigramme”, pp. 178–99; nos. 1–39.

collection; only a group of epigrams at the beginning stands out as a cluster (nos. 1–8).<sup>32</sup> Otherwise, poems on the same subject appear separately.<sup>33</sup> Most importantly, three more epigrams attributed to Balsamon (but excluded from the collection) are copied by the scribe of the anthology later on in the same anthology,<sup>34</sup> indicating that he had access to a larger corpus of epigrams. So, is the modern reader approaching Balsamon through the author's selection of poems or that of a later compiler?

Nicholas Kallikles' collection, also part of the *Anthologia Marciana*, can provide some interesting clues. In the original arrangement of the manuscript's quires, Kallikles' collection was the opening poetic section of the anthology. His collection, as it appears in the Marcianus, comprises 25 poems<sup>35</sup> with two easily distinguishable parts: the first 21 poems at least are verse inscriptions (or at least they are intended as such), while the rest have a performative function.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, smaller clusters also exist within the collection: poems 18 to 22 (according to Romano's numbering) are tomb epigrams and poems 24 to 25 are dedicated to monumental pictorial works in the palace.<sup>37</sup> In other words, Kallikles' collection is arranged according to the medieval concept of "genre", which is closer to the modern notions of "subject-matter" and function than to literary "genre". However, Kallikles' collection in the *Anthologia Marciana* does not include all the poems penned by the author or even all the inscriptional epigrams.<sup>38</sup> Thus, it can be assumed that what is included in the *Anthologia Marciana* is only a fraction of a larger poetic collection purposely arranged and coming from the author's papers.<sup>39</sup> From this fraction the scribe was able to make further selections; the scribe-redactor was the one deciding what to include. Three of Kallikles' poems reappear in a different part of the anthology, indicating a selection process on the part of the compiler.

32 Horna, "Die Epigramme", p. 204.

33 E.g. Horna, "Die Epigramme", nos. 21–23 cf. no. 25 or no. 9 cf. nos. 35–37.

34 Fols. 8v–9.

35 The arrangement of the poems is the following (using Romano's numbering): 1, 2, 32, 3, 4, 8, 11, 13–18, 20–31. Romano has placed no. 32 among the "*dubia*", because in other manuscripts it is attributed to poets other than Kallikles. Romano himself seems to be uncertain about his decision (Romano, *Callicles*, p. 29).

36 Romano's no. 28, which is included in the Marcianus, could be either a verse inscription or a sepulchral epigram.

37 Nos. 9 and 10 in Romano's edition are not included in the collection as appears in *Marcianus*, and thus could have been arranged within the suggested cluster of tomb-epigrams.

38 See Romano, "Per una nuova edizione".

39 The lack of significant differences in the readings of poems that are included both in the collection and were circulated independently, does not support the existence of two separate manuscript traditions. See, e.g., the *apparatus criticus* in Romano's poem no. 18.

Therefore, it is highly probable, although hard to prove, that Balsamon's collection stems from a similar selection process since it is also preserved as part of the *Anthologia Marciana*.

### 3 Poetic Anthologies

Poetic anthologies can be roughly divided between those that include antique epigrams (*Classicizing Anthologies*) and those that consist solely of Byzantine material (*Byzantine Anthologies*).

The compilation that has primarily been associated with the word "anthology" is the so-called *Greek Anthology*. The term *Greek Anthology* refers to anthologies formed from / around the 9th-century *Anthology of Constantine Kephalas*, and specifically to the poems in the 10th-century recension in the Palatine manuscript and the 13th-century *Anthology* of Maximos Planudes. Kephalas, about whom we know almost nothing, published in the 880s, at the earliest, an anthology of ancient and late antique poetry. His sources were mainly Alexandrian, Roman, and late antique anthologies. To this antique material, Kephalas himself added a small number of 9th-century epigrams,<sup>40</sup> but also a book with Christian epigrams at the very beginning of his collection to justify his use of pagan poetry.<sup>41</sup>

The manuscript of Kephalas has not survived, but the 10th-century *Palatine Anthology* must be considered a faithful copy, although with the addition of three books.<sup>42</sup> The copying of the book was a collective work, but its final 10th-century form is the work of one scribe who was the final redactor of the manuscript.<sup>43</sup> A 12th-century hand copied additional epigrams in the book.<sup>44</sup>

The *Kephalas Anthology* was an immediate success. Many copies, most of which do not survive, were redacted.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, none of them appears to be a faithful copy of the *Kephalas Anthology*, since in all cases a selection process was involved; the *Palatine Anthology* incorporated poems that were

40 For Kephalas' additions of 9th century poetry see: Lauxtermann, "Cephalas", pp. 200–02.

41 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 89–98.

42 *Anthologia Palatina* books 2, 3 and 8. See Lauxtermann, "Janus Lascaris", pp. 63–65. See also Maltomini, "Poesia epigrammatica", pp. 113–20.

43 The first group of scribes worked between AD 920 and 930 (B1, B2, B3) and the second just a few years later, between 940 and 950 (A1, A2, J). The identification of J, the redactor of the manuscript, with Constantine the Rhodian has been disputed by Orsini, "Lo scriba J", but without good cause: see Lauxtermann, "Cephalas", p. 196, n. 5.

44 Scribe Σπ. See Lauxtermann, as above.

45 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 114.

originally not to be found in the *Kephalas Anthology*. Another recension, the *Sylloge Euphemiana*, which was compiled during the reign of Leo VI (886–912), only included rearranged selections from the *Kephalas Anthology*.<sup>46</sup> The same holds true for the *Sylloge Parisina* that comes from an early abridgement of Kephelas.<sup>47</sup>

The great 13th-century scholar, Maximos Planudes, organized a new enterprise to collect as much as possible from Kephelas' original anthology between 1280 and 1283. He used two manuscripts that come from a different branch of Kephelas' manuscript tradition than the *Palatine Anthology*. He compared and compiled a new anthology, today named the *Anthologia Planudea*. In it one can find no less than 450 additional epigrams to add to the 3,700 epigrams of the *Palatine Anthology*. Planudes, however, did not follow faithfully Kephelas' thematic categories; instead, he cut sequences into shorter blocks, mixed poems, and even rearranged some epigrams.

The *Kephalas Anthology* withstood the pace of time by being complete, organized and adaptive. Thus, its production is not the result of mere classicism;<sup>48</sup> instead the effort of a genius such as Kephelas, who managed to collect and justify the preservation of more than 4,000 epigrams, made the production *ex novo* of a similar anthology in subsequent years unnecessary.<sup>49</sup> Luckily, Kephelas lived at a time of great interest in the Classics and the Late Antiquity as examples of rhetorical production. Fortunately, Kephelas' era was only the prelude to an even greater interest in collecting and anthologizing, and thus his anthology was able to receive the recognition that it deserved, and its contents kept being copied. Thus, Byzantine "classicism" was only a part of the equation that led to the compilation of this (still) influential anthology.

The turbulent story of the *Greek Anthology* leads to one of the main points of this contribution: no two anthologies are the same. To my knowledge, there are no faithful copies of a single anthology, since an element of reorganizing is always involved. As soon as a scribe is engaged in copying, he becomes a new anthologist. The fluctuant nature of short texts allowed him to select those that he found interesting for his own reasons. With no need to abbreviate, the anthologist was able to quote the poems without affecting their individual character as snapshots from a larger composition; the titles were there to remind

46 Maltomini, *Tradizione antologica*, pp. 79–94; Cameron, *The Greek Anthology*, pp. 254–77.

47 Maltomini, *Tradizione antologica*, pp. 29–47; Cameron, *The Greek Anthology*, pp. 217–53; van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, pp. 99–102. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 287–90.

48 For the reception of the *Anthologia Palatina* in the 10th and 11th centuries, see Demoen, "Flee from love who shoots with the bow!".

49 On the arrangement of the poetry, see above p. 389, and Maltomini, "Poesia epigrammatica", pp. 120–23.

the reader of the individual character of each poem. *Byzantine anthologies* also fit into this “mix and [perhaps] match” pattern.

The elegant 10th-century manuscript Barberinus Gr. 310 contains one of the earliest surviving Byzantine anthologies: the so-called *Anthologia Barberina*.<sup>50</sup> It was compiled contemporaneously with the copying of the manuscript, and it is organized so as to flatter emperor Constantine VII.<sup>51</sup> Although it has lost most of its pages, its index has been preserved, offering a comprehensive picture of the poems' arrangement. The poems of the first part of the manuscript (mainly anacreontics) date from between the 6th and the 9th centuries and some of them can also be found in the Palatine manuscript.<sup>52</sup> Alphabets and various hymns that date from the years 867 to 912, prevail in the second part. The *Anthologia Barberina* is the only Byzantine anthology that can be read as a songbook, as a collection of lyrics; both alphabets and anacreontics, written in accentual metre, were intended for musical performance.<sup>53</sup>

The anthology in the early 12th-century manuscript Paris. Suppl. Gr. 690, may differ from the *Anthologia Barberina* as to its contents, but not its intended audience.<sup>54</sup> The once luxurious manuscript—clearly written for a commissioner of high status, with titles in gold—is today in a deplorable condition, and spare folia and significant *lacunae* make it impossible to discern the original arrangement of the poetry.<sup>55</sup> However, the surviving material from the anthology points to Par. Suppl. Gr. 690 as the herald (or perhaps the only survivor) of a new pattern for anthologizing poetry. If Kephalas was interested only in a small number of contemporary or near contemporary poetic works, and if the *Anthologia Barberina* is a songbook for the court, the anonymous anthologist of the Parisian manuscript is far from either of these. The manuscript itself includes some classical poetry, but the anthologist is concerned mainly with texts by Byzantine authors. Poets such as Pisides, Geometres, Mitylenaios, Mauropous, Psellos, but also Kosmas the Melode, have a place there. All these poems are laudatory, or epigrams on works of art, and liturgical hymns, and

50 Gallavotti, “Note”, pp. 29–83. Crimi, “Motivi e forme dell’anacreontea tardoantica e bizantina”. Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti bizantini*, pp. xxviii–xxxiii. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 123–28.

51 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 126.

52 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 126–27. West, *Carmina Anacreontica*, pp. x–xi.

53 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 127–28, where also a comparison with the *Book of Ceremonies*.

54 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 329–33; Rochefort, “Une anthologie”; Bernard, *Reading and Writing*, pp. 72–73. The dating of the manuscript is heavily disputed: Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 329.

55 Rochefort, “Une anthologie”, p. 4.

they can be viewed as skillfully-written poetry from a time relatively close to the anthologist's past.

Medieval Greek anthology culture reached its peak within the context of the early Palaeologan "revival". Manuscripts with Byzantine letters, homilies, and histories, date primarily from this time of high hopes and scholarly confidence, after the politically turbulent years following the dramatic events around the year 1204. The high level of scholarship in the early years of the Palaeologan dynasty encouraged the creation of compilations of literature surviving in the Constantinopolitan libraries after 1261. Thus, this explains why the late 13th and early 14th centuries are rich in poetic anthologies as well. Unfortunately, only a small number of them have been sufficiently studied, and the role of Nicaea in the anthologizing impulse remains unexplored.

The most famous of all of these examples is the late 13th-century *Anthologia Marciana*. It was compiled around the year 1200, but it survives today in a copy from the last decades of the 13th century in Constantinople, now in the *Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana* under the number Gr. 524 (collocation no. 318). The *Anthologia Marciana* is a "hyper-anthology" that includes long poems, such as: Constantine Stilbes' nearly 1000 verses on the great fire of 1197; authored collections, such as those of Nicholas Kallikles and Theodore Balsamon; and three anonymous compilations of poetry ("Syllogae" A, B, and C). The "Syllogae" are relatively small anthologies with occasional poetry (epitaphs, epigrams on works of art, deme-hymns, etc.). The first Sylloge, Sylloge A, consists of 39 poems that date mainly from the 11th century. Sylloge B, with 173 poems, is the largest of the three anonymous compilations. The datable poems come mainly from after the year 1140, with poetry from after 1050 interspersed. Sylloge C contains 45 poems from between 1050 and 1200, some of which have been copied from previous parts of the same manuscript. The seemingly sloppy layout suggests that the scribe copied the anthology for his own use and did not aspire to circulate the texts. The agency of the scribe for the final content of the *Anthologia Marciana* remains unclear. Did he copy faithfully the content of the anthology he had in sight or did he choose to copy only part of it?<sup>56</sup> A new examination of the manuscript has suggested that this anonymous scribe tended to copy carefully and fully his exemplars, even leaving empty pages in his manuscripts in cases where his original was defective.

Another 13th-century anthology copied by the scribe for his personal use, is manuscript Hauniensis GkS 1889.4, in Copenhagen; it is apparently only a

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56 On the *Anthologia Marciana* and the relevant bibliography, see Spingou, "Anonymous Poets", pp. 139–40. For a revised approach to the subject of the compilation of the *Anthologia Marciana*, see the forthcoming edition of *Syllogae B and C*, by the same author.

fragment from a larger anthology that has not survived.<sup>57</sup> The datable poems come from the late 11th century. Again, there is no sense of order in this anthology, while it is also uncertain if it is indeed the copy of a previous anthology.<sup>58</sup>

Looking for general patterns in the compilation of the anthologies, we can say that scribes in these centuries were copying poetry for themselves and not necessarily for a wealthy commissioner. Such poetry could be used as model-text. Indeed a verse for the Sylloge A of the *Anthologia Marciana* can only be found in a 13th-century grammatical treatise as an example of concise but meaningful verse.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the language of court poetry during the reigns of Michael VIII and Andronikos II resembles much of the style of the poetry found in the anthologies.

The use of anthologies was similar in the empire's periphery. A number of manuscripts with poems come from south Italy, especially the Terra d'Otranto where a Greek-speaking population had a pronounced presence with a number of functioning monasteries. In two prominent 13th- and 14th-century manuscripts, local poetic production is mixed with Byzantine poetry stemming from the centre,<sup>60</sup> suggesting that Italian poets used these poets as examples of good writing.<sup>61</sup> An early 14th-century manuscript from Cyprus appears to be a parallel case. The Vatican manuscript Palatinus gr. 367 contains a collection of mainly letters and charters from early Frankish Cyprus. The collected texts were meant to be used as models by local family notaries. Among the various prose works, it also includes enclaves with poetry. Poems from the Byzantine centre are mixed with poems that notaries have written or received as gifts.<sup>62</sup>

The poetic anthologies did not disappear with the political turning point marked by the year 1453. The *Greek Anthology* was already a great success in the West. Although Byzantine anthologies had fallen into oblivion, those

57 For the poems, see Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli Poemata*, pp. viii–ix. For the description of the manuscript, see Schartau, *Codices Graeci Haunienses*, pp. 157–59. A new reappraisal of the manuscript was published by Christensen, “Inedita”. I follow here the dating implied as the most probable by Christensen.

58 As suggested by Christensen, “Inedita”, p. 320.

59 Hörandner, “Pseudo-Gregorios”, pp. 127–28.

60 Laur. Plutei 5. 10 (a. 1282) and Vat. gr. 1276 (xiv s.) see Arnesiano, *La minuscola*, no. 26 (pp. 80–81), no. 46 (p. 87), Bandini, *Catalogus codicum*, pp. 23–30; Sola, “De codice Laurentiano X plutei V”; Bernard, *Reading and Writing*, pp. 73–74. See also Gigante, *Poeti Byzantini*, 19–20; see also Hoeck and Loenertz, *Nikolaos—Nektarios von Otranto*, pp. 114–16. Acconcia-Longo, “Anthologia”, cf. the case of Laur. Plut. 58.25, see Arnesiano, *La minuscola*, no. 54 (p. 89).

61 E.g. Gigante, *Poeti Bizantini*, pp. 20–23.

62 Fols. 122–48. Description in Beihammer, *Griechische Briefe*, pp. 47–49. On the identity of the compiler, see id., pp. 55–62, esp. pp. 58–59.

individuals initiated into Byzantine literature were still compiling their own anthologies.<sup>63</sup> It is sufficient to look at the notebooks of Andreas Darmarios (a 16th-century book dealer) and Leo Allatius (librarian of the Vatican Library), or at the anonymous 19th-century anthology of Byzantine-Italian poets in Palermo, to be persuaded of the importance of the anthologizing impulse for the transmission of Byzantine poetry in early modern times.<sup>64</sup>

#### 4 Authorship in Collections and Anthologies

If collections, as defined here, are built around the axis of authorship, anthologies show little concern with the delicate matter of who wrote what; occasional poetry, in particular, appears anonymously. One might also mention the gargantuan *syllogae* in the *Anthologia Marciana*. Despite the fact that some poems in the *syllogae* come from the poetic collections of Christopher Mitylenaios and Nicholas Kallikles, they are quoted anonymously.<sup>65</sup> In the anthology of ms. Hauniensis 1899, most poems appear unattributed or with false ascriptions;<sup>66</sup> other poems often appear to be attributed to more than one poet. A poem by the 10th-century poet John Geometres appears in manuscripts either unattributed or with no less than five different ascriptions.<sup>67</sup> Such multiple attributions have puzzled modern editors who are more concerned with authorship. Robert Romano, for example, in his edition of Nicholas Kallikles' poems, was led to believe poem no. 32 was of "uncertain authorship". Romano's suggestion is based on the fact that the main manuscript with the poetry of Theodore Prodromos ascribes the poetry to Prodromos (and not to Kallikles). However, the poem was, in fact, included in Kallikles' collection (in the *Anthologia Marciana*), which was compiled earlier and at which there are no obvious interpolations.<sup>68</sup> Other philologists decided not to publish their editorial work on anthologies because they were unable to identify authors.<sup>69</sup>

63 Lauxtermann, "Ianus Laskaris".

64 On Andreas Darmarios, see for instance Monac. Gr. 162, a. 1579 (Hadjú, *Katalog*, pp. 271–73). On Leo Allatius (1586–1669), see for example Barb. Gr. 74, s. xvii (Capocci, *Codices Barberiniani Graeci*, pp. 80–94). For the anonymous anthology see ms. Palermo Bibl. Communalis 2 Qq G 40 (= Mioni 175), a. 1840.

65 See Spingou, "The Anonymous Poets"; Rhoby, "Zur Identifizierung", pp. 113–50.

66 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli Poemata*, p. viii.

67 Attributed to Psellos, Prosouch, Choniates, Prodromos, Philes: Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 289. See also Patterson Ševčenko, "The Metrical Inscriptions", pp. 71–72.

68 The same poem (no. 32) appears also in Kallikles's collection: Romano, *Callicles*, p. 29.

69 On the unpublished edition of the anonymous *Sylogae* of the *Anthologia Marciana* by Konstantin Horna, and his correspondence with Spyridon Lambros, see my forthcoming



It is no coincidence that Byzantine compilers were uninterested in accurately attributing texts. Despite the concern of some authors to safeguard their identity by compiling collections or giving hints in the main text,<sup>70</sup> the concept of “copyright” *per se* is a modern invention. Epigrams, verses, and rare or newly coined words, were used and reused without giving any credit to their original creator. Manuel Straboromanos, a little known poet, wrote a series of epigrams on behalf of Alexios I Komnenos (r.1081–1118) in which he incorporated an epigram by Michael Psellos without giving him credit.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, epigrams on works of art in particular were inscribed and recycled, and the name of the author did not figure under the inscriptions. A famous example is an epigram by the 10th-century poet John Geometres, that accompanies a 12th-century depiction of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in Asinou.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, we see Straboromanos adopting Psellos’ epigram, and the epigraphist in Asinou using the work of an earlier poet; poems have also been included anonymously in collections or, to be more precise, anthologies were built around the work of a single poet. The little explored manuscript tradition of Manuel Philes’ poems testifies to such a habit.

When reading Philes, we rely mostly on the very problematic 19th-century edition by Bénigne Emmanuel Clément Miller.<sup>73</sup> Miller arranged the poems according to what he considered “primary manuscripts”. Even among the first pages of the printed book one can find a number of poems that were not penned by Philes, but have been included among his poems.<sup>74</sup> In most cases, these are epigrams on works of art, which, thanks to their formulaic language and utilitarian character as potential verse inscriptions, could circulate freely. The anthologist (or perhaps even Philes himself) thought it appropriate to in-

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*Poetry for the Komnenoi: The Anthologia Marciana: Syllogae B & C* (Oxford Studies in Byzantium).

70 See, for example, the use of the word “φῖλος” and its derivatives in the poetry of Philes.

71 Bernabò and Magnelli, “Il codice Laurenziano Plut. 32.52”, p. 202.

72 Patterson Ševčenko, “The Metrical Inscriptions”, pp. 70–72.

73 Miller, *Manuelis Philae Carmina*. Karl Krumbacher (*Geschichte*, 779.1 and 780.3–4) was not pleased with Miller’s edition. For a modern criticism of Miller’s edition, see Stickler, *Manuel Philes*. There are numerous examples of misattributions in Miller’s edition, so we must be very careful when using it: see, e.g. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 267, no. 67.

74 See, for example, Miller, *Manuelis Philae Carmina*, vol. 1, pp. 3–6, where the misattributions are noted even in the edition; but Scor. 16, p. 7 in Miller’s edition is by Theodore Prodromos. Stickler, in his appendix with the manuscripts including Philes’ œuvre, notes in brackets a number of misattributions that are not indicated by Miller (Stickler, *Manuel Philes*, pp. 209–42). For further examples, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 267, fn. 67.

clude a further example on the same “subject” (a depiction), even if it was by a different author.

The practice of including poems by different authors in a collection is not unique to Byzantine poetic anthologies; collections of letters also include misattributed texts.<sup>75</sup> The reason behind these misattributions is the very function of a collection of rhetorical texts, a category that includes texts in prose and verse alike. Theoretical rhetorical treatises and fictional model-texts dedicated to specific “genres” are rare in Byzantium. Anthologies and collections were filling this gap by offering examples of good writing. In a famous passage from the 13th-century treatise of Pseudo-Gregory of Corinth on rhetoric, the author appears to incite the reader to have as models: George of Pisidia, Nicholas Kallikles, Prodromos, “and whoever is similar to them”.<sup>76</sup> Significantly, names mainly of these “canonical” authors appear in collections, while the names of many more poets (those whose existence we infer from other sources) are lost for good.

The question of authorship becomes especially relevant for texts aimed at the “spiritual benefit of the reader”, in which authorship ensures “orthodoxy”. Spiritual *florilegia* or anthologies, for instance the 13th-century anthology by Mark the Monk, often include clusters with poetry. Short epigrams with obvious profit for the soul are not necessarily attributed, but excerpts from longer poems are attributed to Church Fathers, such as John Chrysostom.<sup>77</sup>

## 5 Collections, Anthologies and the Literary Canon

Anthologies and collections of Byzantine poetry incorporate principles related to the literary canon, for they presuppose a selection process on the basis of “value”. This selection appears to depend on the individual, given the diversity of the anthologies, and so compilations seem to represent a “private canon”, which was assembled on commission or speculation. The various canons, however, are built around the axis of common aesthetic values. The relatively narrow selection of poems they represent, although not always first-rate, nevertheless demonstrate one or more of the following characteristics: erudite and often purposely obscure language; newly coined compounds; a rich list of modifiers; vivid metaphors and images; personal involvement; (acceptable)

75 See, e.g., Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos*, p. 265.

76 Pseudo-Gregorios, *On the Four Parts of the Perfect Speech*, ed. Hörandner, “Pseudo-Gregorios”, p. 108.

77 See Roelli, *Marci Monachi Opera Ascetica*, esp. pp. 66–67, 90–94, and 98–99.

metrics; and/or rhythm. A possible demonstration of “orthodox” values can be potentially added to this list. The sensibility towards these aesthetic values indicates that the collector, anthologist, and scribe were seen as the custodians of cultural capital. The names of famous, “canonical”, authors were there to signify that indeed a poem possesses these characteristics and thus deserves attention.<sup>78</sup>

The great number of anthologies of occasional poetry dating from the second half of the 13th and the early 14th centuries, and their decline in numbers after the 1330s, are telling. In the early Palaeologan court, but also in roughly contemporary south Italy and Cyprus, it was essential for the individual to write appropriate poetry that incorporated as many of the above-mentioned aesthetic values, originating from a glorious past, as possible, or to understand the connotation of similar texts. With this skill, the reader could participate in mainstream culture. As soon as this social interest towards this kind of rhetoric ceased to exist because of sociopolitical changes, such a literature ceased to be important and, accordingly, was no longer intensively collected.<sup>79</sup> Only later were compilations based on personal, isolated interests, such as in the cases of Darmarios and Allatius, in the 16th century, demonstrate.

## 6 Concluding Remarks

The short nature of this essay precludes an overview of the collections with liturgical or vernacular poetry, as well as *poetic miscellani* (codices with only poetry), and early modern anthologies of Byzantine poetry. From the material that has been surveyed here, three conclusions can be drawn. First, that the poems collected in an anthology or collection do not differ significantly from objects that have been collected by, for example, Sir Henry Wellcome, and then exhibited in a collection. The selected texts create a new whole (a storyline), although they preserve their individuality. Second, our modern picture of Byzantine poetry has passed through the lens of collectors and anthologists, who worked as the curators of an exhibition of poetry, since occasional poetry survives almost exclusively in such collections and anthologies. Third, a collection or an anthology cannot be seen as an isolated cultural event, out of its sociocultural context. It is a cultural product of the concerns and the needs of a society at a specific time. John Mauropous and Isaac Komnenos collected their works at a time when education was connected to social status and the place

<sup>78</sup> Papaioannou, “Voice, Signature, Mask”, pp. 35–39.

<sup>79</sup> On the decline of interest, see Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, pp. 7–8.

of the individual was paramount. Kephalas and Dionysios worked at a time when aspects of the past were important for forming a new future. The multilayered *Greek Anthology* shows magnificently how such needs changed over time. Thus, each anthology or collection “reflects” partly intentional but nevertheless significant choices between what should be remembered (and thus be preserved) and what should or can be forgotten (and thus disappear). Such a function does not differ much from how one would describe “culture” itself.

### Appendix 1: Selected Collections of Byzantine Poetry (9th–14th Century)

- 9th cent. Ignatios the Deacon, *Epitaphs* (not preserved<sup>80</sup>)  
Theodore of Stoudios<sup>81</sup>  
*Anonymous Italian* (Barocci 50<sup>82</sup>).
- 10th cent. *Anonymous Patrician* (Vat. Pal. Gr. 367, s. XIV inc.)  
John Geometres (Par. Suppl. Gr. 352, s. XIII, ff. 151–79).
- 11th cent. Symeon the New Theologian (Marc. Gr. 494, s. XIII s.; Paris. Suppl. gr. 103, s. XIV; Patmiacus 427, s. XIV)  
*Anonymous of Sola* (Vat. gr. 753, f. 4<sup>r-v</sup>).<sup>83</sup>  
John Mauropous (Vat. gr. 676, s. XI)  
Christophoros Mitylenaios (Grott. *Bibl. Bad. Greca* Z a XXIX, s. XIII)
- 12th cent. Nicholas Kallikles (Marc. Gr. 524, s. XIII ex.)  
Theodore Prodromos (Vat. gr. 305, s. XIII ex.)  
'Manganeios Prodromos' (Marc. Gr. XI 22, s. XIV)  
Theodore Balsamon (Marc. Gr. 524 (s. XIII ex.))
- 13th cent. John Apokaukos (St Petersburg RNB Gr. 250 Granstrom 454)  
Maximos Planudes (Paris. suppl. gr. 1090, s. XV & Paris. gr. 1211)  
Maximos/Manuel Holobolos
- 14th cent. Leo Bardales (Paris. gr. 1630)  
Manuel Philes (multiple manuscripts; the textual transmission of his poetry remains problematic and cries out for further attention, see Stickler, *Manuel Philes*, pp. 209–42)

80 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 111–12.

81 See Speck, *Theodoros*, p. 59.

82 See Browning, “An Unpublished Corpus of Byzantine Poems”; for its Italian origin, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 325–26.

83 Sola, “Giambografi sconosciuti del secolo XI”, pp. 18–27 and 149–53; cf. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 327–28; Bernard, “The Anonymous of Sola”.

Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos (Ambros. G.50 sup., Martini-Bassi 395, s. xv/xvii, ff. 35–37<sup>v</sup>; Vindob. Theol. Gr. 78, s. xiv, ff. 360<sup>v</sup>–361<sup>v</sup>).

### *Anthologies*

For the manuscript tradition of the *Greek Anthology*, see Irigoien/Maltomini/Laurens, *Anthologie grecque. Première partie. Anthologie Palatine*, vol. 9, book 10.

### *Anthologies of Byzantine Poetry (Preliminary List)*

Barber. Gr. 310 (s. x) = *Anthologia Barberina*

Vat. Gr. 753 (s. xi)

Paris. Suppl. gr. 690 (s. xii)

Laur. Plut. 5.10 (a. 1282), ff. 25–214

Haun. Gr. 1899 (s. xiii)

Marc. Gr. 524 (s. xiii) = *Anthologia Marciana*

Vat. Gr. 1357 (s. xiv)

Vat. Pal. Gr. 367 (a. 1317–1318)

Laur. Plut. 32.19 (s. xiv)

Bodl. Roe 18 (a. 1349)

Scor. Gr. R.III.17 (s. xiv)

Vat. Gr. 1267 (s. xiv)

Vat. Ottob. 324 (s. xiv/xv)

Andreas Darmarios: Monac. Gr. 162 (1579), Bodl. Auct. D. 3. 19 (Misc. 4, s. xvi)

Leo Allatius: Barber. Gr. 74 and 279 (s. xvii).

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## Byzantine Book Epigrams

*Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen*

It is well known that books played a central role in Byzantine culture.<sup>1</sup> Books fulfilled a ceremonial function in the holy liturgy and were often put on display.<sup>2</sup> They were also objects of study and intense collaboration among intellectuals.<sup>3</sup> Books commanded respect and brought spiritual enlightenment and edification.<sup>4</sup> The cult of *hoi logoi* and the veneration of the written word arguably encompassed both monastic and intellectual circles, making books a revered object in many areas of Byzantine society. The acts of producing, transcribing, and reading books were seen as beneficial for the soul.<sup>5</sup> In spiritual terms, books were considered to be a materialization of words, something that corresponds with a core concept of Christian religious thinking: namely, that Christ (*Logos*), is the incarnation of the Word, and that the ultimate Christian truth is revealed through the Scriptures.<sup>6</sup> In strictly economical terms, books were extremely costly;<sup>7</sup> as a possession, they were reserved for very few rich people in Byzantium. This, however, by no means excludes books from being the subject of circulation, borrowing, public performance, and communal use.

To these first observations can be added another; Byzantine culture had a marked tendency to attach metrical texts to meaningful objects. These texts are called, both by Byzantines and by us, “epigrams”, although the modern use of the term does not coincide completely with the Greek usage.<sup>8</sup> As discussed elsewhere in this volume, all kinds of buildings, icons, frescoes, jewels, and other works of art were inscribed with poems.<sup>9</sup> Books and documents, by their very nature, were an even more favourable environment for appending

1 See e.g. Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen*; and Grünbart, “Bibliophile Society”.

2 Cavallo, “Libri in scena”; id., *Lire à Byzance*, pp. 139–58.

3 Cavallo, “Pratiche di lettura”; id., *Lire à Byzance*, pp. 67–82.

4 Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, pp. 103–32. See also Hunger, “Herrschaft des Buchstabens”.

5 Ronconi, “La main insaisissable”, pp. 631–33.

6 Bianconi, “Et le livre s’est fait poésie”.

7 On the cost of books, see Wilson, “Books and Readers”, and Ronconi, “La main insaisissable”, pp. 649–54.

8 On the fairly strict Byzantine usage of ἐπίγραμμα (“inscription”, not literary epigram), see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 26–31.

9 See the contribution by Ivan Drpić and Andreas Rhoby in this volume.

poems. In one of his letters, John Tzetzes had to intervene because a silly boy wanting to show off his intelligence had written some iambs on an important tax document, so the official responsible did not want to sign it.<sup>10</sup> So deeply ingrained was the “epigrammatic habit”,<sup>11</sup> i.e. the tendency of Byzantines to inscribe metrical epigrams on all kinds of objects. Taking these two features of Byzantine culture together, it is only natural that the book epigram is a frequent and prominent genre in Byzantium.

## 1 Book Epigrams: Definition and Main Characteristics

Not all epigrams found in books are book epigrams: manuscripts also contain collections of epigrams originally inscribed on other objects. Book epigrams, by contrast, are inscriptions “on” books. The book not only serves as their physical support and, hence, the means of their transmission, but they also take that very book and its contents as their subject and theme.<sup>12</sup> Their purpose does not differ at all from inscriptions on other objects: they clarify, motivate, and present the object “on” which they are inscribed. As we will see, this affinity with inscriptions is reinforced by the visual presentation of many book epigrams. Book epigrams are mostly still to be found *in situ*, although we also find book epigrams in collections of known poets (e.g. John Geometres, John Mauropous). There is also a grey area of isolated poems that do not have a close connection to the specific book: epigrams on the psalms, for instance, appear not infrequently in manuscripts that are not, strictly speaking, psalters.<sup>13</sup>

The content of Byzantine book epigrams is diverse. They may describe the manuscript, structure the main text, praise the author or his oeuvre, identify the scribe, patron or owner of the manuscript and declare their role and motivations, give advice to the readers or ask for services from them, explain or comment upon a miniature, etc. Most were inserted at the time of the production of the manuscript, others were later added by readers or owners of the manuscript.

10 John Tzetzes, *Letter 47*, ed. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae epistulae*; see also Grünbart, “Bibliophile Society”, pp. 120–21.

11 Magdalino, “Cultural Change?”, p. 32.

12 See also Bianconi, “Et le livre s’est fait poésie”, p. 16.

13 See Meesters/Praet/Bentein/Demoen, “Makarios’ Cycle of Epigrams on the Psalms”, with further references.

Their form and literary quality are variable as well; some consist of one or two conventional verses, while others are elaborate and sophisticated compositions.<sup>14</sup> Whereas some are negligent scribbles by ordinary scribes, others are clearly the work of highly-trained and professional literati. Epigrams of the latter kind are more often especially designed for a specific manuscript, while the former proliferate in dozens of manuscripts.

An alternative term for “book epigram” is “metrical paratext”. Indeed, Byzantine book epigrams meet some of the essential criteria of paratexts, as defined by Gérard Genette.<sup>15</sup> They are dependent on a main text, which they present to the reader, shaping and influencing his or her expectations regarding this main text. Paratexts are to be found on the “thresholds” between the inner world of the text and the outer world, between text and context, between the mental image of the text and its materialization. Hence, they belong closely to the physical support of the text. In recent decades, the concept of “paratexts” has been fruitfully used, especially in studies on reading and on book history in the Early Modern Age.<sup>16</sup>

Genette’s theory is oriented towards the age of the printed book, something Genette himself explicitly acknowledged.<sup>17</sup> This raises some problems. Whereas in the printed age, books are mechanically reproduced, in the manuscript era each manuscript amounted to a new realization of the text. Instead of an author and a publisher holding the authority over the text, as they do in the Gutenberg Age, the producers (scribes, patrons) of manuscripts had a crucial impact on the specific presentation of each particular exemplar of the text, including the title and the naming of the author, which are in themselves two essential “paratexts”.

Moreover, in the manuscript era, other kinds of dependent or derivative texts existed: commentaries, glosses, *epitomai*, etc., which are also sometimes taken to be “paratexts”.<sup>18</sup> To be fully compliant with Genette’s terminology,

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14 The longest example known to us counts 222 verses. It is a long metrical summary of John Climax’ *Ladder*, preceded by a praise of the author. It is part of a cycle of four poems on Climax, totalling over 470 verses. The cycle is preserved in six manuscripts: Mosq. Synod. gr. 229 (Vlad. 192); Mosq. Synod. gr. 480 (Vlad. 193); Manchester Rylands Gaster 1574; Athos Megistes Lauras B 102; Paris. Coisl. 264; and Athos Iberon 418. For an edition of this cycle, see Meesters/Ricceri, “A Twelfth-Century Cycle of Four Poems on John Klimax: Editio Princeps”, pp. 285–386.

15 Genette, *Seuils*.

16 By way of example: Calle-Gruber/Zwisza, *Paratextes. Études aux bords du texte*; and Smith/Wilson, *Renaissance Paratexts*.

17 Genette, *Seuils*, p. 9, and also pp. 19–21.

18 A notable example of such a study is Alexander/Lange/Pillinger, *In the Second Degree*. This book makes no mention of titles, colophons, or prefaces, but seems to define paratexts very generally as “derivative texts” (and especially as commentaries).

these texts are perhaps better called more specifically “epitexts”, and our texts “peritexts”. But the etymological force of “paratexts” permits us to speak about book epigrams as texts standing “next to” other texts, on the bridge between the immaterial world within the text and the material world of the object that transmits it.

Many of the metrical paratexts, of course, fulfil functions parallel to those of prose paratexts. However, it can be said that metrical paratexts take on some specific roles: it is a privileged genre for self-representation, for framing patronage, for praise and blame. Poetic paratexts express personal experience and emotion to a degree unseen in other paratexts.

The Byzantine tendency for metrical paratexts is remarkable. Western manuscripts were often adorned with colophons, both in Latin and the vernacular languages, but at first glance, there were fewer metrical colophons and a less rich and persistent tradition.<sup>19</sup> Much closer to the Byzantine tradition are the colophons in Armenian manuscripts, that were often metrical.<sup>20</sup> There are also indications of interaction in this area between Byzantine and Armenian manuscript producers.<sup>21</sup>

## 2 Scholarship on Book Epigrams

The manuscript catalogues of the numerous libraries holding Byzantine manuscripts are the main source for printed editions of book epigrams. Yet catalogues vary greatly in precision and attention to detail, and this is reflected in their presentation of book epigrams. Not infrequently they are wholly neglected; often, only incipits are provided. When a text is given, this is not always done in a methodologically sound way.

Apart from catalogues, many editions of book epigrams can be found in some larger studies describing groups of manuscripts, mostly focused on miniatures.<sup>22</sup> A major heuristic tool for finding and locating book epigrams is Vassis' compendium of Byzantine poems.<sup>23</sup> A number of articles edit particular subgroups of book epigrams, selecting them on the basis of their subject,

19 The largest repertory is in Bénédictins du Bouveret, *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux*.

20 Stone, “Colophons in Armenian Manuscripts”, esp. p. 466 for the amount of metrical colophons.

21 D’Aiuto/Sirinian, “Un carme bizantino in onore degli evangelisti e la sua versione armena”.

22 Hutter, *Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften*; Lake, *Dated Greek Manuscripts*; Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*; Euangelatou-Notara, *Σημειώματα ελληνικών κωδίκων*; id., *Συλλογή χρονολογημένων σημειωμάτων*; id., *Χορηγοί-κτήτορες-δωρητές*.

23 Vassis, *Initia Carminum Byzantinorum*; and Vassis, “Supplementum I”.

their formulaic character, their script, or their visual appearance.<sup>24</sup> Book epigrams also turn up in studies that describe a specific manuscript, but attention is sometimes exclusively focused on the “textbook” codicological and paleographical features, with book epigrams only being treated cursorily. The fourth volume of the *Byzantinische Epigramme in Inschriftlicher Überlieferung* includes a thorough study of the genre, as well as editions, translations and commentaries of book epigrams that are found in illuminated manuscripts.<sup>25</sup>

The *Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams*, based at Ghent University, offers an online platform where book epigrams are collected, and where they can be retrieved and selected according to various criteria, such as date, identity of the scribe, type of manuscript, etc. While the texts and the contextual information were initially largely based on existing resources, the team behind the database is gradually providing transcriptions and editions of the poems based on consultation of the manuscripts themselves.<sup>26</sup>

In 1973, Enrica Follieri noted, when discussing some book epigrams: “This minor literature, so copious in the manuscripts, has not yet been studied in a systematic way”.<sup>27</sup> This remark still holds true. While many poems are edited or have at least appeared in print, and while some have been discussed in the context of their manuscript, very little systematic work has been done to edit, describe, and understand the genre as a whole.

Athanasios Kominis was a pioneer in establishing a separate category for “book epigrams” when he distinguished “inscriptions in and on books” from other kinds of inscriptions (ἐπιγράμματα).<sup>28</sup> In his seminal book on Byzantine poetry, Marc Lauxtermann devoted an entire chapter to this genre.<sup>29</sup> He discusses some interesting examples from before 1000, and identifies recurrent features and topics. He also identified the following categories of book epigram: laudatory, dedicatory, and colophons. In a study based on southern Italian manuscripts, Santo Lucà has also outlined some general features and functions of the genre.<sup>30</sup>

24 References to these publications will follow below when we discuss these features.

25 Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme in illuminierten Handschriften*. As the present chapter had already been completed at the moment this volume was published, we could not provide references to it for every epigram mentioned here.

26 See [www.dbbe.ugent.be](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be). The project has been funded by the Hercules Foundation of the Flemish Government and by the Special Research Fund of Ghent University. The texts of all epigrams mentioned in this chapter can be found on DBBE, often with links to images of the relevant manuscripts.

27 Follieri, “Ciriaco O ΜΕΛΛΙΟΣ”, p. 506.

28 Kominis, *Τὸ βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα*, pp. 38–45; see the heading at p. 38: τὰ ἐν βίβλοις καὶ εἰς βίβλους ... ἐπιγράμματα.

29 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 197–212.

30 Lucà, “Sulla sottoscrizione in versi”.

There are several reasons for paying attention to book epigrams in a more comprehensive way than has been done hitherto. Book epigrams give us precious indications about the writing and reading practices in Byzantium, about book culture, and about the manufacturing of text and image in manuscripts. They are testimonies to the canonization and afterlife of authors, thus offering an alternative literary history, as seen through Byzantine eyes. At the same time, in contrast to unmetrical marginalia, book epigrams bespeak a literary affinity if not ambition, constituting a living vein of Byzantine poetry, less restrained by formal rules and conventions than the works of “mainstream” Byzantine poets. For this reason, book epigrams are also valuable sources of information for linguistic and metrical developments.

### 3 Visual Aspects

The paratextual function of book epigrams is reflected by their visual and material representation. Mostly, they are to be found literally on the “thresholds” of books: at important divisions within the book, or at the front and at the end. Naturally, metrical paratexts appear in the same places as non-metrical paratexts. In many gospel books, for example, epigrams on the evangelists are to be found next to other introductory texts, such as the so-called *kephalaia*, the prefaces by Kosmas, the stichometric calculations, and sometimes miniatures of the evangelists.<sup>31</sup>

Book epigrams also stand out as paratexts through the way they are written. Herbert Hunger has drawn attention to what he aptly termed *Auszeichnungsmajuskel*. Many manuscripts from the Middle and Late Byzantine period that use a minuscule script throughout return to this archaizing “distinctive uncial” for specific kinds of texts, such as titles, citations, lemmata, subscriptions, etc.<sup>32</sup> Book epigrams in particular fall within this category of texts, and are indeed often written in *Auszeichnungsmajuskel*, most often the “Alexandrian” kind, but also sometimes the “Constantinopolitan” variant.

The most monumental type of these uncials, however, is the “*epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel*”. Scribes adopted this script from inscriptions in stone, complete with the typical ligatures; even the strokes and breathings above the

31 For paratexts in gospels, see von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 377–87 for metrical paratexts; and now especially the project “Paratexts of the Bible”: <http://paratextbib.eu/>.

32 Hunger, “Minuskel und Auszeichnungsschriften”.

letters imitate the effects of chiseling in stone.<sup>33</sup> Some of the most important examples of book epigrams written in this script have been edited by Rudolf Stefec.<sup>34</sup> In Laur. 5.9, for example—a 9th-century Book of Prophets commonly called the “Bible of Niketas”—the poems are written in “*epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel*”, with golden ink and framed by a decorative border. Moreover, every verse line ends at more or less the same point, thus filling up the whole surface within the borders. This makes the poems, executed on a full page, look like an icon or miniature. In many other manuscripts, the visual distinction that the scribe wanted to convey can be far more subtle, and many examples of book epigrams in *Auszeichnungsmajuskel* verge on the cursive.<sup>35</sup>

Some book epigrams go very far in the elaboration of their visual potential. In a group of theological manuscripts, for instance, we find a remarkable dialogue consisting of four epigrams, with the book speaking first, and the patron (ὁ κτήτωρ) answering, praising the spiritual value that the book brought him. A certain Eustratios identified himself as the patron, not in the text, but in an acrostic that is repeated three times in this set of epigrams.<sup>36</sup> Other book epigrams indulge in sophisticated visual games.<sup>37</sup> In Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 922, fol. 5v (1060), for example, Eudokia Makrembolitissa inserts a verse announcing her patronage in a labyrinth poem (set in a square, in which the verse can be read in any way when beginning from the middle), and then again in an acrostic of a book epigram.<sup>38</sup>

When miniatures are present, book epigrams are often closely connected to them. In Baltimore, Walters Art Museum 524 (10th century), for example, the book epigrams on the Evangelists form part of the prefatory material for each evangelist, including miniatures of which the uncommon features (Mark and Luke taking dictation from Peter and Paul) are only mentioned in

33 Hunger, “Die epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel”.

34 Stefec, “Epigramme in epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel”, and id., “Weitere Epigramme in epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel”.

35 See also Hunger, “Minuskel und Auszeichnungsschriften”, p. 204.

36 Somers, “Quelques poèmes en l’honneur de S. Grégoire de Nazianze”, pp. 542–50, and for the acrostics in particular: Hörandner, “Ergänzendes zu den byzantinischen ‘Carmina figurata’”, pp. 194–95.

37 Hörandner, “Visuelle Poesie”, and id., “Weitere Beobachtungen zu byzantinischen Figurengedichten”.

38 Hörandner, “Visuelle Poesie”, pp. 18–21, with further bibliography. Remarkably close parallels (one verse set in a square) are to be found in two manuscripts dated to roughly the same period: Sofija, Centar I Dujcev D. gr. 282, fol. 3v; and Vat. gr. 394, fol. 214r. See Hörandner, “Visuelle Poesie”, p. 22, and id., “Weitere Beobachtungen zu byzantinischen Figurengedichten”, pp. 291–92. Meesters suggests that those two figure poems were executed by the same scribe. See Meesters, “Visual Representation”.



the epigrams, not in the other texts.<sup>39</sup> Tellingly, a near-contemporary note to the book epigrams of the “Bible of Leo the Patrician” (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. reginensis graecus 1) states that the epigrams “clarify most clearly in summary form the meaning of the images”,<sup>40</sup> which shows the importance of book epigrams to interpret images.

#### 4 Chronological Flashpoints

It is difficult to trace the history of the book epigram. Since they are mostly anonymous, the origins of many poems are unclear. An interesting testimony of the early existence and transmission of book epigrams is given by Photius. He relates that his volume of the mythographer Apollodorus was adorned with a “not charmless” epigram, which he quotes in full;<sup>41</sup> he also quotes an epigram from a book with the works of Lucian, in which the author himself speaks.<sup>42</sup> Photius uses the term *epigramma* for these texts, and he defines the poem on Lucian as a “book epigram”: τὸ τῆς βίβλου ἐπίγραμμα. The latter poem turns up in some later manuscripts of Lucian as well. Both poems are generally regarded not to be the work of Apollodorus or Lucian themselves; nevertheless, the metre (elegiac distichs), vocabulary, and the playful and thoroughly pagan attitude do rather suggest a late antique origin (or inspiration).

One of the earliest extended book epigrams in its original place is to be found in Vat. Gr. 1666 (from the year 748). It accompanies a Greek translation of the dialogues of Gregory the Great, made by John the Monk.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, the epigram is also entitled ἐπίγραμμα in the manuscript. Logically, extant book epigrams begin to turn up when the number of extant manuscripts increases, that is especially from the 10th century onwards. Book epigrams continued to be written after 1453, as long as manuscripts were being produced, that is, well into the 20th century.<sup>44</sup>

39 Nelson, *The Iconography of Preface and Miniature*, pp. 76–79. See also Parpulov, “Catalogue of Greek Manuscripts at the Walters Art Museum”, pp. 93–96.

40 Mango, “The Epigrams”, p. 64.

41 Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 186, ed. Bekker, p. 142.

42 Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 128, ed. Bekker, p. 96.

43 The epigram is edited in Mercati, “Sull’ epigramma acrostico premesso alla versione greca”, pp. 171–73. See also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 355, and Canart/Lucà, *Codici greci dell’Italia meridionale*, p. 42 (who date the manuscript to 800).

44 Nikolopoulos, “Ἐμμετρος δὴλωσις τοῦ χρόνου”, gives examples of book epigrams up to the 19th century.

Some of the more well-known book epigrams are to be found in luxurious illuminated manuscripts patronized by emperors or important monasteries. Limiting ourselves to manuscripts from before 1100, let us mention the following examples. Two epigrams in the famous Par. gr. 510, from around AD 880, containing orations of Gregory of Nazianzus, celebrate the imperial recipients.<sup>45</sup> The above-mentioned Bible of Leo the Patrician (Vat. reg. gr. 1), from the 10th century, contains one long and two short dedicatory epigrams, and 13 epigrams written in frames around miniatures of Old Testament scenes.<sup>46</sup> The most famous manuscripts patronized by Basil II, his so-called “Menologium” (Vat. gr. 1613)<sup>47</sup> and his “psalter” (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Marc. gr. 17)<sup>48</sup> sport dedicatory epigrams emphasizing the power and piety of Basil. Another manuscript, dedicated to Nikephoros Botaneiates (Paris. Coislin 79; perhaps originally intended for Michael VII Doukas), contains several epigrams written above the introductory miniatures.<sup>49</sup> The small psalter Oxford, Bodleian Library, Clarke 15 (a. 1078) contains a collection of both existing epigrams and poems made for the purpose by Mark the monk.<sup>50</sup> These book epigrams merit their place alongside the poetry of famous contemporaries, as important vestiges of Byzantine poetry and as vehicles of imperial ideologies.

## 5 Authorship

Many book epigrams are anonymous formulas, passed on from book to book, and deeply entrenched in the mind of many scribes. They were subject to endless variation, adaptation, and creative reworking. One of the most widespread book epigrams begins (in its standard version) with the words ὥσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν and describes the joy of the scribe who has reached the end of his book, comparing this with the joy of other people reaching a desired goal, mostly the foreigner who sees his homeland again, or the seafarer arriving in a safe haven.<sup>51</sup> The many variants of the poem can be distinguished from each other by slight syntactical differences and by the number of verses. Some

45 See Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium*, pp. 158–62. The Greek text is in Omont, *Miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs*, pp. 12–13.

46 Mango, “Epigrams”. See also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 191–96.

47 Edition in Follieri, *Codices graeci bibliothecae Vaticanae selecti*, p. 34.

48 Editions in Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, p. 23, and Cutler, *Aristocratic Psalters*, p. 115 (both with some errors).

49 See now Bianconi, “All’ombra dell’imperatore”.

50 Lauxtermann, “Perils of Travel”.

51 Treu, “Der Schreiber am Ziel”.

epigrams indulge in four or five *comparantia*. Another widespread poem is the following: “The hand that has written this is rotting in the grave, but the writing is here to stay until the completion of time”.<sup>52</sup> The poem is known in many variants. Before 1100, it predominantly occurs in manuscripts made in southern Italy, but its Italian origin is debated.<sup>53</sup>

As in several other genres of Byzantine literature,<sup>54</sup> authorship is a difficult and blurry concept when applied to book epigrams, since they are subject to various processes of appropriation, recycling, compilation, and adaptation. For the overwhelming majority of book epigrams, including those that are unique, it is impossible to ascertain the identity of the poet. Only rarely is the intellectual author of a book epigram identified in the poem itself or in its title.<sup>55</sup>

Scribes and patrons appropriated these poems in different ways. We expressly use the vague term “appropriation” because it is difficult to establish whether they claim what we would call “intellectual authorship”. On a very basic level, they inserted their own name into an existing epigram. Thus, there is a common epigram (inc. εὐαγγελιστῶν τοὺς θεοπνεύστους λόγους), describing the good service the scribe has done in transcribing and structuring the gospel. In verse 6, the reader is asked to admire the εὐβουλία (“good counsel”; perhaps here rather “laudable initiative”) of the patron. The first four syllables of this verse can be filled with the name of any scribe or patron. In the oldest extant manuscript, Moscow, Synodical Library, Synod. gr. 44 (10th or 11th century), we find Λεόντιον. In Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vind. suppl. gr. 164, we read τὸν Ἀνδρέαν, the scribe having added an article to complete the verse. Michael Zorianos went a step further, adding some verses to indicate his status and office, in Bodl. Barocc. 29 (c.1300).<sup>56</sup> Then there are also many examples of book epigrams creatively reusing older poems or parts of poems in a new poetical text. Paolo Odorico described some cases where book epigrams are reused and “recomposed”, thus blurring the line between compiler and author.<sup>57</sup>

52 ἡ μὲν χεὶρ ἢ γράψασα σήπεται τάφῳ, / γραφὴ δὲ μένει εἰς χρόνους πληρεστάτους. Text from Atsalos, “Die Formel ‘H μὲν χεὶρ ἢ γράψασα ...’”, p. 692, with further bibliography. See also Garitte, “Sur une formule des colophons”.

53 See Atsalos, “Die Formel ‘H μὲν χεὶρ ἢ γράψασα ...’”, who is quite critical of an Italian origin, but see Follieri, “Attività scrittoria calabrese”, p. 358, n. 97.

54 See several contributions in Pizzone, *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature*.

55 There are few exceptions. A certain Nicholas, for instance, identifies himself as συγγραφεὺς τῶν στίχων in Jerusalem, Patriarchal Library, Panagίου Taphou 21 (from 1079). Edition in Papadopoulou-Kerameus, *Ἱεροσολυμιτικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 1, pp. 82–83.

56 Edition and exact references in Follieri, “Epigrammi sugli evangelisti”, p. 156.

57 Odorico, “Poésies à la marge”.

Some well-known Byzantine poets also composed book epigrams. Some of these are to be found in their personal collections and were later actively re-used in their appropriate context. Epigrams originally composed by poets such as Leo the Philosopher and John Geometres, turn up anonymously in later manuscripts.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, an epigram of Christopher Mitylenaios on Dionysius the Areopagite began to lead a life of its own, and is to be found in several later manuscripts containing works ascribed to Dionysius, mostly without attribution to Christopher.<sup>59</sup> Poems of Theodore Stoudites are often recycled. For example, a group of 10th-century southern Italian manuscripts containing the orations of Gregory of Nazianzus have a poem that is a combination of three epigrams by Theodore.<sup>60</sup> Figuring among other book epigrams, they clearly function as paratexts.

Many book epigrams borrowed heavily from popular poets such as Gregory of Nazianzus and George Pisides. Thus, a long poem praising David that occurs (amongst other manuscripts) in the 11th-century theological collection Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Ambros. M sup. 15, begins with the verse "Ὁμηρος, δὲ λέγουσι πηγὴν τῶν λόγων, an exact quotation from Pisides' poem *Expediatio Persica*.<sup>61</sup> The pagan poetic tradition also remains alive in book epigrams. A poem in honour of John Climax draws heavily on expressions and vocabulary from Lycophron's *Alexandra*, a popular poem in Byzantine times.<sup>62</sup> Two poets from a totally different tradition and style are united here, in a typically Byzantine fashion.

Book epigrams were sometimes anthologized, which indicates that they were appreciated for their literary merits. Wolfram Hörandner cites Paris. gr. 1630 (14th century), which includes a collection of epigrams on apostolic letters and evangelists that are also to be found in earlier manuscripts, fulfilling their original function in earlier manuscripts (for example, epigrams heading each of Paul's letters).<sup>63</sup> Hörandner concludes that the functional status of book epigrams does not exclude them from being treated as independent literary pieces by later readers.

58 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 200.

59 For a full list, see Christopher Mitylenaios, *Various Verses*, ed. De Groote, *Christophori Mitylenaei Versuum Variorum Collectio Cryptensis*, poem 86.

60 Somers, "Quelques poèmes en l'honneur de S. Grégoire de Nazianze", pp. 539–42.

61 Pisides, *Exp. Pers.*, v. 66. Edition: Follieri, "Un carme giambico in onore di Davide".

62 Magnelli, "Una presentazione licofronea per Giovanni Climaco".

63 Hörandner, "Verse auf die Apostelbriefe und Evangelien". More examples of earlier manuscripts can be adduced, further supporting Hörandner's view: Paris. gr. 223 (1044), Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Monac. gr. 375 (10th century), Paris. gr. 224 (10th century).

## 6 Metre and Language

Some book epigrams were (or were reusing) the work of professional poets; others were the product of scribes who had only enjoyed a limited education. Therefore, the whole spectrum of linguistic and metrical possibilities in Byzantium can be encountered. As is the case with the majority of Byzantine epigrams in general, the dodecasyllable is the metre of choice.<sup>64</sup> Only a few book epigrams are written in dactylic hexameter, still fewer in elegiac distichs, and book epigrams in *politikoi stichoi* form a small but noteworthy minority.<sup>65</sup>

As is well known, dodecasyllables in some cases still upheld the pretence of being prosodically correct iambic trimeters. This pretence is not always present in book epigrams: many epigrams are non-prosodical dodecasyllables. They do closely adhere, however, to the new syllabo-tonic patterns: 12 syllables, stress on the penultimate syllable, no enjambments, etc.<sup>66</sup> In some less accomplished poems, even these are subject to variation; in a manuscript from 1495 (Oxford, Bodl. Barocc. 179), we find a book epigram of 11 verses.<sup>67</sup> Most are passable dodecasyllables, but the last verse counts 15 syllables, and the eighth verse has only 11 syllables. What is not lacking, however, is the stress on the penultimate syllable. Since book epigrams are often spontaneous expressions of metrical feeling, less regulated than mainstream poetry, they may give us precious indications of the mentally ingrained patterns of metrics in Byzantium.

In many instances, the metrical paratext slips into a prose paratext through a succession of verses that seem to lose their metrical rigidity gradually. The boundary between poetry and prose becomes very thin in these cases. In a typical example, the colophon verses of Oxford, Bodl. Clarke 8 (from AD 1252),<sup>68</sup> the metre is maintained as long as the scribe holds on to well-known formulas, but the lines including more specific, personal, information are defective, and when the scribe comes to the formulation of the date, the paratext loses all metrical pretence.<sup>69</sup>

The linguistic level of the poem likewise oscillates between the various registers that Byzantine Greek offers. The syntax of some poems is arguably very

64 Compare Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, pp. 60–65.

65 See the poem of John Manglavitis in Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, Sinai. gr. 352, dated to 1320, discussed below, which is written in (not impeccable) *politikoi stichoi*.

66 Maas, "Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber".

67 Edited in Coxe, *Bodleian Library, Greek Manuscripts*, p. 299.

68 Turyn, *Dated Greek Manuscripts in the Libraries of Great Britain*, pp. 15–16, with some doubts on the "conception" of these dodecasyllables.

69 On the date in inscriptional epigrams, see Rhoby, "When the Year Ran Through Six Times of Thousands ...".

convoluted or just plainly erroneous, to such a degree that they become unintelligible, because the poets did not succeed in fitting their thoughts into the Procrustean bed of the metre.<sup>70</sup>

## 7 Main Categories of Book Epigrams

Five important roles can be identified in the communicative situation that book epigrams establish: the *author*, that is, the person deemed responsible for the intellectual creation of the main text; the *patron*, that is, in a broad sense, the person who had the manuscript made; the *scribe*, the one who physically wrote the text; the *reader* or user of the manuscript; and, finally, the *text* itself that is contained in the manuscript. In the following, we will use these main roles to divide the corpus of book epigrams. Our categories partly coincide with those proposed by Marc Lauxtermann: laudatory, dedicatory, and colophons.<sup>71</sup> It is only natural, of course, that many epigrams combine elements from several categories. Quite a number of author-related poems, for example, also address and exhort the reader.

### 7.1 *Author*

Many book epigrams praise the author of the main text of the book; they hail his eloquence and the moral benefits that the reader can reap from his texts. This genre overlaps mainly with the “laudatory” category established by Lauxtermann.

The four evangelists are, for the Byzantines, the quintessential model of “authors”. Epigrams on the evangelists occur in countless gospel books and lectionaries, sometimes accompanying miniatures representing them; Athanasios Kominis and Enrica Follieri have collected a fair number of these epigrams.<sup>72</sup> They often allude to legends and other biographical lore that accrued around the figures of the evangelists.

The Church Fathers were also frequently the subject of laudatory book epigrams.<sup>73</sup> Many manuscripts with works of Gregory of Nazianzus,<sup>74</sup> Basil of

70 Example: ὦ μοι τῷ οἰκτρῶ in Follieri, “Ciriaco O MEAAIOΣ”, p. 504.

71 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 197–212.

72 Kominis, “Συναγωγή ἐπιγραμμάτων εἰς τοὺς τέσσαρας εὐαγγελιστάς”; Follieri, “Epigrammi sugli evangelisti”.

73 See also Bentein/Bernard/Demoen/De Groote, “Book Epigrams in Honor of the Church Fathers”.

74 Somers, “Quelques poèmes en l’honneur de S. Grégoire de Nazianze”; Macé/Somers, “Sur la beauté du livre et la contemplation du divin”; Demoen/Somers, “Grégoire de Nazianze, le Fils du tonnerre”.

Caesarea,<sup>75</sup> and John Chrysostom contain poems praising these authors. The works of (pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite are almost invariably accompanied by the same set of epigrams.<sup>76</sup>

Some epigrams emphasize the personal bond of the patron/scribe with the author, who is also often asked to intercede with Christ as a reward for the service that the scribe or patron has given him. In an epigram in the manuscript Copenhagen, Royal Library, Gamle Kongelige Samling 1343,40 (11th century), containing works of Basil of Caesarea, a certain Basileios Anzas, patron of the manuscript, underlines his attachment to the author, exploiting their identical names. The epigram accompanies a miniature in which he kneels in front of the Church Father.<sup>77</sup>

Laudatory book epigrams were not only written for authors of a distant past. They could also be deployed in the canonization process of a recently deceased spiritual figure. A clear example is the attempt by Niketas Stethatos and contemporaries to keep the memory and spiritual charisma of their master Symeon the New Theologian alive. Several manuscripts of Symeon's hymns include a set of laudatory book epigrams, addressed to the readers of "this book", praising Symeon's poems as they bring spiritual elevation and salvation.<sup>78</sup> There are also laudatory poems on the works of persons who are still alive: Theodore Prodromos wrote a book epigram for Ioannikios' collection of *schede*.<sup>79</sup>

Not all epigrams for authors are positive: a book epigram on Lycophron, probably by the scholiast Isaac Tzetzes, curses the poet for all his graceless and difficult words, making his readers toil and sweat.<sup>80</sup> In Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Palatinus gr. 18, the poem accompanies depictions of Lycophron and Tzetzes with a scroll of their poems.<sup>81</sup>

75 Rudberg, "Annotations historiques et adscripta métriques".

76 Some material is collected in Lundström, "Ramenta Byzantina", pp. 140–45.

77 See Schartau, *Codices graeci Haunienses*, pp. 119–20 and Rhoby, "Inscriptions and Manuscripts in Byzantium", p. 21.

78 *Symeon*, ed. Kambylis, pp. 25–27 (edition; poems nos. 2 to 5), and pp. ccclviii–ccclxvii (manuscripts and commentary); for these poets, see also Kominis, *Βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα*, pp. 144–46.

79 *Theodoros Prodromos*, no. 61, ed. Hörandner, p. 492–93. Poetic praise for contemporary authors has a long tradition, at least going back to Callimachus and Leonidas of Tarentum, who wrote epigrams on Aratus' *Phaenomena*, *AP* 9.507 and 9.25 respectively.

80 Inc. λόγους ἀτερπεῖς πολλὰ μοχθήσας γράφεις, edited in Lycophron, *Alexandra*, ed. Scheer, vol. 2, p. 398. It is transmitted in at least five Lycophron manuscripts. See also, with a new edition of the poem, De Stefani/Magnelli, "Lycophron in Byzantine Poetry", pp. 615–16.

81 See also Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme in illuminierten Handschriften*, p. 115–18.

## 7.2 Patron

Book epigrams were the ideal medium for the patron to make his identity known and to express his intentions. Patron-related poems follow a discourse and structure similar to that of other inscriptions.<sup>82</sup> This category tallies perfectly with Lauxtermann's "dedicatory" epigrams.

The kernel of the typical dedicatory formula appears in its most bare form, for example, in Vat. gr. 516 (11th century): "Christ, grant redemption of sins for the one who has acquired this volume with much dedication".<sup>83</sup> The patron has "acquired" (verb: *κτάομαι*) the book, that is, made its coming into being materially possible; he has done this with ardent zeal, a reflection of his devotional feelings, and by this, he hopes that he will obtain remission of sins. Dedicatory book epigrams elaborate on this core scenario in endless variations and additions.

Byzantine dedicatory book epigrams, as Guglielmo Cavallo noted,<sup>84</sup> use (in contrast to the West) verbs that refer to "acquiring" or "founding", not verbs of "commanding" or "commissioning" (*iubere* and others).<sup>85</sup> As Karl Krumbacher points out, the verb *κτάομαι*, so frequent in Byzantine dedications, refers to the possession of an object as well as to its "funding" and "founding" (the *Stiftung*).<sup>86</sup> This implies that the patron makes possible the production of the book by providing the funds for its material and manufacture. His possession is not merely private, since he sets up his foundation for the benefit of the entire community. In the aorist form, the verb *κτάομαι* comes very close to the verb *κτίζω*, which also means "to found". The latter verb is especially popular in manuscripts of Italian origin.<sup>87</sup>

The patronage of a book can also be expressed by verbs that, properly speaking, denote the "making" or "writing" in Greek: *τεύχω* and *γράφω*, which are here to be taken in their causative meaning.<sup>88</sup> The distinction between "making write" and "physically write" is often deliberately made. Thus, a long poetic colophon in Vat. gr. 1650, fol. 185v (a. 1037) asserts that Nikolaos, archbishop of Reggio, has "written" this book (v. 3: ἔγραψε). He emphasizes his role of patron

82 Rhoby, "The Structure of Inscriptional Dedicatory Epigrams" and id., *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, pp. 55–56. For the vocabulary of dedications of manuscripts, see Lucà, "Lo scriba e il committente dell'*Addit.* 28270", pp. 181–91.

83 Χριστὸς πάρασχε λύσιν ἀμπλακημάτων/τῷ πόθῳ πολλῷ τὴν δέλτον κτησαμένῳ. Edition in Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani Graeci*, vol. 2, p. 372.

84 Cavallo, "Forme e ideologie della committenza libraria".

85 See also Iacobini, "Il segno del possessore".

86 Krumbacher, "Κτήτωρ".

87 Lucà, "Lo scriba e il committente dell'*Addit.* 28270", pp. 190–91.

88 See also the remarks in Bianconi, "All'ombra dell'imperatore", pp. 162–63.



when he inserts his name and function into another, traditional, book epigram, actualized for the purpose, asking the reader to “admire his initiative”.<sup>89</sup> The physical scribe however, Theodore, is only mentioned in a prose notice.<sup>90</sup>

Patrons almost invariably underline the devotion or desire (in Greek: πόθος, προθυμία) with which they have taken the initiative to produce the book. It is this devotion that is represented as the motivation of their act, and it is this devotion that Christ or the saints should measure, not the mere cost. Indeed, the costs to manufacture the book are rarely mentioned,<sup>91</sup> although there are exceptions. At the end of a psalter dated to 1419 (Paris. gr. 12), the scribe Matthew explicitly mentions the number of quaternions and the cost of the book (15 *nomismata*), money provided for by the patriarch Joseph II, for whom the readers are asked to pray.<sup>92</sup>

Patrons go so far as to denounce the material value of their book, stressing that their incidental beauty or luxuriousness should not be taken into account. But all the same, these material features can be mentioned and thus indirectly advertised. Hence, they mention the binding,<sup>93</sup> or, more often, the script and the beauty of the letters. Mark the Monk, in an elaborate dedicatory epigram in the psalter Oxford, Bodl. Clarke 15 (a. 1078), begins by saying that perhaps someone seeing this book and all its expensive beauty (which is then elaborately described: the fine letters, the golden images, the latches of silver, etc.), will accuse Mark of being ostentatious. These objections are then countered by Mark, who stresses his *pothos* (v. 18).<sup>94</sup>

Many book epigrams express the imperial or aristocratic patronage of monasteries, including the donation of books or the entrance into the monastery of a wealthy aristocrat.<sup>95</sup> The books produced on these occasions are clearly meant to benefit the entire community, and are not intended as the private possession of one person. For instance, in the dedicatory epigram in Athens, National Library of Greece 212 (10th century), the patron (Leo the patrician) ex-

89 See Bentein/Demoen, “The Reader in Byzantine Book Epigrams”, and Bianconi, “Libri e paratesti metrici”, with further bibliography. Edition of the first poem is in Evangelatou-Notara, *Σημειώματα ἑλληνικῶν κωδίκων*, p. 153 and Giannelli, *Codices Vaticani Graeci. Codices 1485–1683*, p. 372.

90 The question of the identity of scribes in this particular manuscript is more complex, but we are concerned here with how patron on the one hand and scribe on the other hand are represented in paratexts.

91 Cavallo, “Forme e ideologie della committenza libraria”.

92 Edition: Omont, *Les manuscrits grecs datés des XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles*, p. 5.

93 Bianconi, “Et le livre s’est fait poésie”, pp. 21–24.

94 Edition in Stefec, “Anmerkungen zu weiteren Epigrammen”, pp. 345–46. See also Lauthermann, “Perils of Travel”, pp. 201–02.

95 Morris, *Monks and Laymen*, pp. 120–42, and esp. p. 122 for books.

pects his book to remain in the church to which it is donated, even stipulating that it should not leave its gates.<sup>96</sup>

### 7.3 *Scribe*

In recent decades, we have bid farewell to the view of the scribe as a kind of human automaton. Interest in the role of the scribe has been increasing,<sup>97</sup> and book epigrams can contribute many elements to help make this picture complete. Precisely in book epigrams, scribes found a way to express their feelings, desires, intentions, and to describe the milieu and circumstances they worked in. The scribe was more than someone who traced the letters: he could act as a compiler, a decorator, and, in the case of book epigrams, as a poet. Several book epigrams underline the efforts that have gone into collecting and compiling the texts in the manuscript (the Greek terms mostly used for the activity are συλλέγω and συνάγω).<sup>98</sup> This category of “scribal” book epigrams roughly corresponds with “colophons” in Lauxtermann’s categorization.

We have already remarked that the physical scribe is often expressly mentioned in contrast to the patron. The distinction is clearly made in the following popular epigram: “O Trinity, safeguard in threefold happiness the following three: the one who has written this with his fingers, the one who has acquired this, and the one who reads this with piety”.<sup>99</sup> The one who writes “with his fingers”, that is, the physical scribe, is clearly distinguished from the patron. The addition “with my/his hand” (χειρί) also frequently occurs.

The scribe is keen to assume a modest and even self-deprecatory stance.<sup>100</sup> He represents himself as a sinner, shows repentance, and hopes that Christ will grant him redemption. He mentions his ignorance and lack of skills. Much of this is topical, of course, colophons being by far the most formulaic subgroup of book epigrams.

In some epigrams, we can perceive something of the enormous physical labour that went into the transcription of books. Epigrams such as the popular

96 Edition of the epigram is in Marava-Chatzinikolaou/Toufexi-Paschou, *Catalogue of the Illuminated Byzantine Manuscripts*, vol. 3, p. 19. See also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 355 with further bibliography.

97 See e.g. Ronconi, “La main insaisissable”; De Gregorio, “καλλιγραφεῖν/ταχυγραφεῖν”.

98 See Demoen, “La poésie de la συλλογή”, esp. pp. 92–94.

99 Τὸν δακτύλοις γράψαντα, τὸν κεκτημένον/τὸν ἀναγινώσκοντα μετ’ εὐλαβείας/φύλαττε τοὺς τρεῖς ὧ τριάς τρισολβίως (at least 37 manuscripts have this epigram). Again, there are many variants, notably a variant beginning with Τὸν ἀναγινώσκοντα σὺν προθυμίᾳ, preserved in at least eight manuscripts.

100 Wendel, “Die ταπεινότης des griechischen Schreibermönches”.

ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν ... convey for us the feelings of exhaustion and joy upon reaching the end of the book. In Ambros. B 1 inf., from the year 1239, a certain Laurentios discloses how his commissioner, a certain Nephon, persuaded him to sail to his monastery near Rossano twice to transcribe this entire book, all of which Laurentios did “with much toil and with an ardent desire”.<sup>101</sup> Scribes often thank God for giving them the strength to finish the book.<sup>102</sup> Of course, since most scribes are monks, these colophons often reflect monastic literary culture and typically monastic concerns.

#### 7.4 *Reader*

In line with the overall function of paratexts, many book epigrams address the reader of the book.<sup>103</sup> They prescribe certain reading habits and strategies or anticipate an expected response from the reader. Often, book epigrams emphasize the edifying qualities of the main text, recommending it for the spiritual well-being of the reader. By doing so, they offer us precious information about ideas and discourses on reading.

In an epigram mentioned above (inc. Εὐαγγελιστῶν τοὺς θεοπνεύστους λόγους), the reader is represented as “listening with ears pricked up to these words [sc. the gospel], pronounced quietly, and enjoying them every day”.<sup>104</sup> The reader is rather a listener here; the words are vocalized, but quietly: the reading is more of a murmuring. In a closely related epigram, the readers are represented as “transcribing or uttering quietly” the texts in the manuscript, showing how reading and writing (transcribing) were intertwined with each other, and indicating again the quiet vocalization of texts as a primary method of reading.<sup>105</sup>

Many book epigrams recommend the book to the reader, and imply that he/she will lead a better life when perusing the book attentively and with good intentions. Thus, a book epigram closing a volume of homilies of Basil of Caesarea (Marc. gr. 56, 11th century) praises the excellent qualities of this author, who is a wise teacher, a fundament of faith, and a guiding light.<sup>106</sup> The benefits for the attentive reader are great: whoever sets his mind on him,

101 Turyn, *Dated Greek Manuscripts in the Libraries of Italy*, p. 12 with more details.

102 As in the epigram inc. δόξα σοι, τρισάκτιστε θεότης μία, edited in Lucà, “Sulla sottoscrizione in versi”, pp. 287–88.

103 See Bentein/Demoen, “The Reader in Eleventh-Century Book Epigrams”.

104 Follieri, “Epigrammi sugli evangelisti”, p. 156, vv. 4–5: ἅπας ἀκούων καὶ τρυφῶν καθ’ ἡμέραν, / ἔστώσιν ὡς τὸς ὑπεκφωνομένους.

105 Stefec, “Anmerkungen zu weiteren Epigrammen”, pp. 211–12, vv. 9–10: ἦς οἱ τρυφῶντες τὴν ἐπανθοῦσαν χάριν / μεταγράφοντες ἢ λαλοῦντες ἡρέμα.

106 Edited in Rudberg, “Annotations historiques et adscripta métriques”, pp. 66–67.

will acquire knowledge and mystical insight. The epigram then addresses the readers as “friends”, urging one last time not to neglect the counsels (v. 15: *παραινέσεις*) of this Church Father, for this will help them to obtain mercy from God. Another book epigram (in Mosqu. Synod. gr. 265, from the 9th c., with works of Anastasios Sinaites) recommends this book as “beneficial” (v. 1: *ὠφέλιμος*, a very frequent term in contexts of reading in Byzantium<sup>107</sup>), but it sets as a condition that the readers should peruse the volume “with desire” (v. 2: *pothos*).<sup>108</sup>

Often, the reader is asked to pray for the patron/scribe in exchange for the benefits that the book brings him.<sup>109</sup> Thus, in Athen. Nat. Libr. 212 (already mentioned above), the patrician Leo first prays to God to accept this book benevolently, and then turns to the readers (v. 21: *ἀναπτύσσοντες*, “those who browse this book”), who are asked to pray for Leo, “as a reward for the edification from this book”.<sup>110</sup>

On the other hand, book epigrams can warn against persons who want to steal or damage the book. Potential thieves are often intimidated by the prospect of facing the curses of the Nicene Fathers, and in Sinait. gr. 352, written in 1320 by John Manglavitis, God and all saints are invoked against the one who dares to cut away paper from the book.<sup>111</sup>

### 7.5 Text

Epigrams were used to order and structure the book and to emphasize its divisions. One of the most common book epigrams simply states, in one verse: “here the book [title] has taken an end”.<sup>112</sup> This epigram often marks a division in the book itself, for instance, in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Laur. 4.18 (11th century), where the epigram “here is the end of the book *Hexaameron*” occurs after the end of Basil of Caesarea’s *Hexaameron* (fol. 136v).<sup>113</sup> The epigram is written twice at the last page of a quaternion, towards the top; the rest of the folium is left blank, whereupon the next work (of Gregory of Nyssa)

107 Maltese, “Tra lettori e letture”.

108 Edition in Vladimir, *Sistematičeskoe opisaniè rukopisej Moskovskoj Sinodal’noj Biblioteki*, pp. 227–28.

109 See also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 201.

110 Marava-Chatzinikolau/Toufexi-Paschou, *Catalogue of the Illuminated Byzantine Manuscripts*, vol. 3, p. 19, vv. 21–22: ἀντιμισθίαν παιδεύσεως τῆς ἔνθεν.

111 Edition in Gardthausen, *Catalogus codicum graecorum sinaiticorum*, p. 78.

112 In Greek: εἴληφε τέρμα δέλτος (or βίβλος), followed by a genitive.

113 Bandini, *Catalogus bibliothecae Laurentianae*, vol. 1, pp. 541–42: εἴληφε τέρμα δέλτος ἑξαήμερου.

begins on the following page (and following quaternion). At the beginning of many manuscripts, one may find, heading the table of contents, the monostich Πίναξ σὺν Θεῷ τῆς παρουσίας πυκτίδος, or one of its countless variants.<sup>114</sup>

Texts, or parts of texts, are sometimes preceded by a metrical title. The books of the Iliad and the Odyssey are headed in many manuscripts by monostichs summarizing their content. These seem to have a very long pedigree, since a first series of them on the Iliad, ascribed to Stephanus Grammaticus, also appears in the *Anthologia Palatina* (IX 385). There also exist later, alternative sets of epigrams, most of them hexameters.<sup>115</sup> A similar example from the Christian sphere is a set of epigrams heading Paul's letters.<sup>116</sup>

## 8 Conclusion

Book epigrams are a vivid and persistent vein of the Byzantine poetic tradition. They show how the production of poetry is intimately connected to practices of writing and reading, and to Byzantine book production as a whole. They document for us the ways in which Byzantines appropriated and adapted their rich textual heritage. In them, Byzantine readers and manuscript producers come to life. Now made available in a searchable database, the genre can be studied in a more comprehensive way, in order to exploit its full potential, and to value it as a worthy part of Byzantine literary history.

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114 See Kominis, *Tò βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα*, p. 43.

115 See Schrader, "Hexametrischen Überschriften".

116 Hörandner, "Verse auf die Apostelbriefe und Evangelien".

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# Byzantine Verses as Inscriptions: the Interaction of Text, Object, and Beholder

*Ivan Drpić and Andreas Rhoby*

## 1 Introduction

The practice of attaching texts to buildings and objects has a very long tradition, as surviving evidence from Mesopotamia and ancient China demonstrates. The same is true for Greek script: Mycenaean “Greek” written in Linear B dating between the 15th and the 13th centuries BC is found on clay tablets; the earliest Greek inscriptions in alphabetic script belong to the 8th century BC.<sup>1</sup> The oldest preserved metrical inscriptions, traditionally called epigrams (ἐπιγράμματα), date from about the same period.<sup>2</sup>

The Greek term ἐπίγραμμα is first attested in the 5th century BC;<sup>3</sup> its original meaning is simply “inscription” as the etymology of the word (ἐπί + γράμμα “something written upon”) indicates. A much later definition of the word, an entry in the Souda lexicon of the 10th century, also draws on this original sense: “epigram: all texts that are inscribed on some object, even if they are not in verse, are called epigrams.”<sup>4</sup> However, one has to agree with Wolfram Hörandner who stated that the parenthesis “even if they are not in verse” clearly indicates that normally epigrams are metrical.<sup>5</sup>

From the Hellenistic period until Late Antiquity the production of epigrams flourished.<sup>6</sup> Over the course of these centuries, inscriptions, many of them in verse form, were a common medium of social interaction. It is therefore no surprise that, from the point of view of modern scholarship, inscriptions are among the key sources for the history and culture of the Roman Empire. This is testified by a large number of prose inscriptions and verses still preserved *in*

1 Easterling/Handley, *Greek Scripts*.

2 Day, *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication*.

3 Liddell/Scott/Stuart Jones/McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v.

4 Souda ε 2270 (vol. 2, p. 352, ed. Adler): ἐπίγραμμα· πάντα τὰ ἐπιγραφόμενά τισι, καὶ μὴ ἐν μέτροις εἰρημένα, ἐπιγράμματα λέγεται. English translation after Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 26.

5 Hörandner, “Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung”, p. 156.

6 For Late Antiquity see the classic work of Robert, *Hellenica*, vol. 4.

*situ* as well as by collections of inscriptional poetry such as, for example, the so-called *Anthologia Palatina*. Compiled in the middle of the 10th century, this compendium is essentially a copy of an earlier anthology of epigrams from Antiquity, Late Antiquity and the Byzantine period, put together at the end of the 9th century.<sup>7</sup> One of the epigrams preserved in the *Anthologia Palatina* (IV 3c) and ascribed to Agathias, a 6th-century author, clearly explains the popularity of inscriptions: “Columns and pictures and inscribed tablets give intense pleasure to those who possess them.”<sup>8</sup>

Due to several reasons—the decline of cities, the loss of epigraphically productive regions in the East of the empire in the 7th century during the Arab conquest, the invention of new methods of communication—the production of inscriptions decreased precipitously in the Early Middle Byzantine period, during the so-called “grande brèche”.<sup>9</sup> The Byzantine Empire of the middle and late periods was certainly no “civilisation d’épigraphie,” as the famous epigrapher Louis Robert once called the Roman Empire.<sup>10</sup> There are no lengthy Byzantine philosophical inscriptions comparable to the famous inscription from ancient Oinoanda, of which hundreds of fragments have been discovered so far.<sup>11</sup> Nor did inscriptions play the same role in Byzantium as they did, for example, in Chinese culture, where they still form wide landscapes of words.<sup>12</sup>

The body of inscriptions surviving from Byzantium is nonetheless substantial. Significantly, many of these inscriptions are in verse. Almost 1,000 inscriptional epigrams are preserved from the 7th to the 15th centuries, a sizable quantity that testifies to the immense popularity of verse inscriptions in Byzantine culture.<sup>13</sup> The physical context of epigrams is not restricted to stone or metalwork, as in Antiquity: they are found in all media available, as part of fresco decorations in churches, incised or carved on portable objects (metalwork, ivories, steatites etc.), on icons, and so forth. In addition, thousands of Byzantine lead seals are equipped with verses as well.<sup>14</sup> Many more inscriptional epigrams must have existed when we take into consideration collections

7 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 83.

8 English translation after Garland, “Public Lavatories,” p. 158.

9 Zakythinos, “La grande brèche”.

10 Robert, *Choix d’écrits*, p. 88.

11 E.g. Hammerstaedt, “Inscription und Architektur”.

12 Harris, *The Landscape of Words*.

13 Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*; Id., *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*; Id., *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein*.

14 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus*, vols. 1–2.

of epigrams such as the *Anthologia Palatina*, the cod. Marc. Gr. 524,<sup>15</sup> or the poetic œuvre of Manuel Philes.<sup>16</sup>

The considerable number of preserved inscriptional epigrams testifies to the widespread practice in Byzantium of furnishing monuments and objects with verses. In a society where patronage played an important role, verse inscriptions were a means of self-representation and social interaction.<sup>17</sup>

## 2 Basic Features of Byzantine Epigrams

In Antiquity and Late Antiquity, epigrams were composed either in hexameters or in elegiac distichs (hexameter + pentameter). From the 7th century onwards the so-called dodecasyllable, based on the structure of the iambic trimeter, becomes the dominant meter of epigrams because its stable structure and its accent-orientated rhythm is much more akin to spoken language than the hexameter, which has to respect the sequence of long and short syllables. In the Middle and Late Byzantine periods, epigrams are composed in either prosodic or unprosodic dodecasyllables, the latter merely relying on the word accent, i.e. in verses that either respect or disregard the prosodic rules of the trimeter. For many inscriptional epigrams “bad” prosodic quality is certainly due to the lack of skill of mediocre poets; but inscribed verses of the Early Middle Byzantine period and dodecasyllables of later periods are often “intentionally” unprosodic because the sequence of long and short syllables was irrelevant for oral performance.<sup>18</sup>

Inscriptional epigrams rarely use other meters than the dodecasyllable. While there are some instances of inscribed verses in hexameters, 15-, octo- and heptasyllables, this is the exception rather than the norm.<sup>19</sup> Whenever the hexameter is used for inscriptional epigrams, this is usually a sign of deliberate antiquarianism with the aim to highlight the elevated position of the donor or the addressee of the verses. One such example is the hexameter dedicatory inscription dating to the year 873/74, which is preserved on the outer wall of the

15 Spingou, *Words and Artwork*.

16 Braounou-Pietsch, *Beseelte Bilder*.

17 Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, pp. 67–117; see also Geelhaar/Thomas, *Stiftung und Staat im Mittelalter*; Spieser/Yota, *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin*; Theis/Mullett/Grünbar, *Female Founders*.

18 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 271–72.

19 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, pp. 60–65; Id., *Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, pp. 40–41; Id., *Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 83–90.

Skripou church at Orchomenos.<sup>20</sup> The inscriptional decoration of this church, which has already been the subject of several studies,<sup>21</sup> provides an interesting testimony for the performance of inscriptions at a Middle Byzantine monument. Four main inscriptions, which are placed around the church, inform the visitor about the foundation and dedication of the site. Three are written in unpretentious prose, while one is in hexameters. The visitor was expected to circumambulate the church, terminating the journey at the hexameter verses.

Since these hexameters were certainly very difficult to comprehend even by the average literate Byzantine, regardless of whether they were read or presented orally, the inscription relies on signal words at the beginning which unmistakably indicate the meaning of the whole text: the destructive forces of envy (*φθόνος*) and time (*χρόνος*) will not manage to destroy the efforts of the founder.<sup>22</sup>

The fifteen-syllable or political verse was rarely used for inscriptional epigrams either. The reasons are twofold: the dodecasyllable continues a tradition of epigrammatics harkening back to Antiquity and Late Antiquity. The fifteen-syllable verse, on the other hand, is more or less a Byzantine “invention”; although extensively used in poetry for and by the imperial court and the aristocracy, and very much akin to prose, it was never regarded as a proper meter by the Byzantines.<sup>23</sup>

### 3 The Perception and Performance of Epigrams in Byzantium

Unfortunately, there are hardly any Byzantine sources that inform us about the Byzantine perception of inscriptional epigrams in detail. One rare statement is found as a marginal note on fol. 1<sup>v</sup> of the codex Reginensis Gr. 1, the famous Bible of Leo Sakellarios, compiled at the beginning of the 10th century. This annotation describes the meaning of the metrical captions of the manuscript's illuminations as follows: “It should be noted that in every picture, that is, in the holy images that have been represented in the two books—in every picture scanned iambic verses go around the four corners of the borders, signifying most clearly in summary form the meaning of the representations.”<sup>24</sup> The same statement could be true for verses which encircle icons; an interesting

20 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, no. GR98.

21 E.g. Papalexandrou, “Text in Context”.

22 Rhoby, “The Meaning of Inscriptions”, pp. 737–38.

23 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, pp. 232, 244.

24 Mango, “The Epigrams”, p. 64; cf. Rhoby, “The Meaning of Inscriptions”, p. 732.

example is an epigram which is inscribed on the frames of three very similar bronze icons of the 12th century, which are kept in the Benaki Museum, Athens, the Menil Collection, Houston, and in a private collection. The inscription explicitly refers to the depiction of the Mother of God holding the Christ Child in her left arm.<sup>25</sup> Another famous example is the epigram placed on the 14th-century enamel frame of the Freising icon of the Mother of God; the verses on this icon, however, do not offer an ekphrasis of the depiction but rather reflect upon the perishability of matter in a poetic plea spoken by the donor.<sup>26</sup>

As has already been demonstrated in several recent publications, epigrams, mainly those attached to monuments, were also meant to be read aloud.<sup>27</sup> Dedicatory and donor inscriptions, but most likely epigraphs on tombs and sarcophagi, too, became part of an oral performance on certain occasions. One famous example is the long founder's epigram in the Pantokrator church at Constantinople. The verses, today unfortunately no longer preserved, but still visible in the late 16th century, poetically describe the monastery complex and underline the specific role of Eirene-Piroschka, John II Komnenos' wife, in the foundation process, as testified by the manuscript tradition of the poem.<sup>28</sup> The title of the verses in the manuscripts suggests that the epigram was recited every year on the day of the commemoration of the church's inauguration.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the epigram, which to most semi-literate or illiterate beholders may have been little more than a "secret" message due to its length, became part of the artistic ensemble of the church and the monastery complex.<sup>30</sup> Apart from the already mentioned hexameters at the Skripou church, the same kind of commemorative recitation may have also characterized the reception of the famous verses of Manuel Philes on the outer cornice of the chapel of the Virgin Pammakaristos church at Constantinople<sup>31</sup> and many other similar inscriptions. The position of the verses, either on the lintel of the entrance or at prominent places within the church, was apparently not chosen randomly.

25 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, no. Ik13; Weyl Carr, "The Matter of the Word".

26 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, no. Ik12; cf. Pentcheva, "Epigrams on Icons". On the date of (the restoration of) the Freising icon, see Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, p. 3; on the icon, see now Bosselmann-Ruickbie/Roll, *Das Freisinger Lukasbild*.

27 Papalexandrou, "Echos of Orality"; James, "And Shall These Mute Stones Speak"; Shawcross/Toth, *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*.

28 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, no. 214; for the manuscript version of the epigram, see Vassis, "Das Pantokratorkloster von Konstantinopel in der byzantinischen Dichtung," pp. 213–20.

29 Rhoby, "The Meaning of Inscriptions," pp. 745–46.

30 On similar cases, see Rhoby, "Text as Art?"

31 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, no. TR76.



It coincides with the physical movement of the visitor and beholder,<sup>32</sup> which was perhaps still influenced by the processional route at ancient temples, as has been suggested by Bissera Pentcheva for inscriptions framing rectangular panels, such as the verses on the frame of the Limburg *Staurotheke*.<sup>33</sup>

Sometimes the visitor/beholder is approached directly: the addressee of an inscriptional epigram may be called θεατής, ἄνθρωπος, ξένος, or the like.<sup>34</sup> Some epigrams, in fact, address the beholder with specific emphasis: a 15th-century dedicatory epigram at Karytaina (Peloponnese) begins with an emphatic request to the beholder to look at the church; the verses, no longer preserved *in situ*, were likely inscribed on the lintel of the central entrance: “You see distinctly, man,—view and look!—the glowing house of the impeccable maiden.”<sup>35</sup> The patron of the church is mentioned further in the epigram’s text, and one can easily imagine that these verses were read aloud on the commemoration day of the church as well.

The direct address ξένος (“foreigner”, “passer-by”), which has a long tradition in Greek poetry,<sup>36</sup> is especially common in tomb epigrams; this feature recurs with great frequency in the rich poetic output of Manuel Philes in the first half of the 14th century.<sup>37</sup> Like dedicatory epigrams, tomb inscriptions were most likely read aloud on the commemoration day of the deceased or other occasions associated with honoring the memory of the grave-dweller. Several verses by the 9th/10th-century author Arethas of Caesarea lend support to this claim. The tomb epigram for his sister closes with the following words: “For the mouths of all can by no means forget her who gave so good an admonition by her life. But if they do, the inscription placed beside her tomb shall speak more than all.”<sup>38</sup> The epigram itself is indeed full of praise for Arethas’ sister, an aspect of the poem that comes to the fore when the verses are read aloud.

32 Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, pp. 54–55.

33 Pentcheva, “Räumliche und akustische Präsenz in byzantinischen Epigrammen”.

34 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, p. 101.

35 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, no. GR65: Ὁράς τρανώς, ἄνθρωπε—βλέψον καὶ ἴδε—/ οἴκημα λαμπρὸν τῆς παναμάμου κόρης.

36 One of the most famous epigrams of Antiquity, the epitaph of the Spartans at the Thermopylai, starts with ξένος, *Anth. Pal.* VII 249: ὦ ξεῖν, ἄγγελιον Λακεδαιμονίσις, ὅτι τῆδε / κείμεθα τοῖς κείνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι. On the term ξένος, see Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, p. 101.

37 Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*; Brooks, “Poetry and Female Patronage in Late Byzantine Tomb Decoration”.

38 *Anth. Pal.* xv 33 = Westerink, no. 80: πάντων γὰρ αὐτῆς οὐδαμῶς λάθοι στόμα / καλὸν φερούσης νοθέτημα τῷ βίῳ· / εἰ δ’ οὖν, λαλήσει καὶ γραφὴ πάντων πλέον / αὐτῆ παρ’ αὐτὸν τὸν τάφον τεθειμένη. English translation after Paton, *The Greek Anthology*, vol. 5, p. 141. The phrase παρ’ αὐτὸν τὸν τάφον indicates that the verses were most likely written on the wall next to the tomb, as has already been suggested by Westerink.

In some epigrams the visitor/beholder/reader is even invited to respond vocally, through direct speech. One such example is the mid-11th century epigram incised on the lintel of a sarcophagus kept in the Archaeological Museum of Adana (Turkey). When the verses were read aloud, the immediate inclusion of the addressee might have resulted in a choir chanting the epigram's text: "Everyone dwelling here may say: I have indeed found Sisinius, whom well-twisted (?) ..., by deed, word, and integrity of the heart, because he had found appreciation at the all-accomplishing Lord Christ according to the divine word."<sup>39</sup>

Direct addresses to beholders are also found in epigrams which are attached to icons and small portable objects. The epigram on the 11th-century reliquary of Saint Marina, designed to keep a part of her hand and now housed in the Museo Correr in Venice, with its direct address to the reader in the form of a rhetorical question ("You ask, beholder, whose is this hand?"),<sup>40</sup> has already been the subject of detailed analysis.<sup>41</sup> An interesting epigram was painted on the surface of an icon, originally kept at the Mega Spelaion monastery in the northern Peloponnese. This icon, most likely dated to the 14th century, was destroyed in the course of the great fire of 1934; it depicted the Mother of God and a young nobleman called John Asanes, related to the ruling house of the Palaiologoi. The epigram accompanying this scene addresses the beholder/reader both directly and indirectly: "O flower cut before the time! See how it was chopped off before the time, see the sprouting branch of the Palaiologoi, the most powerful emperors, which fell down to the ground. Alas, alas, premature cut by death!"<sup>42</sup> As the icon's epigram continues with some further reflections on the cruelty of death, the purpose of the verses might also have been to prompt the addressee to consider his own mortality, ending with an inner monologue about the vicissitudes of life.<sup>43</sup>

39 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, no. TR1: 'Ἐνταῦθα πάς τις ὄς ἂν ἦ σταῖς εἰπάτω / Εὐδρον γὰρ ὄντως Σισίνιον / ᾧ εὐπλεκεῖ <...> / πράξει λόγῳ τε καρδίας εὐταξία / ὡς εὐεσθησαντι τῷ παντεργάτῃ / ἄνακτι Χριστῷ κατὰ τὸν θεῖον λόγον. On the metrical problems of the text *ibid.*, pp. 514–15.

40 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, no. Me81: Ζητεῖς, θεατά, τίνος ἡ χεῖρ τυγχάνει.

41 See Rhoby, "The Meaning of Inscriptions", p. 750.

42 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, no. Ik30: ὦ μοι πρὸ ὥρας ἄνθος ἐκτετμημένον / ἴδε πρὸ καιροῦ τοῦτο γ' ἐκκεκομμένον, / ἴδε κλάδον θάλλοντα Παλαιολόγων / βασιλέων κρατίστων εἰς γῆν πεσόντα· φεῦ φεῦ τομῇ ἄωρος ἡ τοῦ θανάτου.

43 A psychological approach towards Byzantine lead seals and their legend has recently been presented by Feind, *Byzantinische Siegelkunde*, pp. 187–90.

Unlike in Antiquity, when inscriptions were attached to public buildings, in Byzantium, churches became the most important location of “displayed writing”.<sup>44</sup> However, epigrams inscribed on other monuments were most certainly performed as well. An epigram carved on two marble slabs, which originally belonged to the *Kastron* of Samos,<sup>45</sup> invites the listeners of the verses explicitly to interact vocally: “... o emperor of all the inhabited word, be well, Theophilos, ruler of the Romans. / ... glorifying the sceptre and your crown / we duly say: Live many years!”<sup>46</sup> It is conceivable that listeners were encouraged to participate by saying “Live many years!” when the inscription was read out aloud.<sup>47</sup> “Live many years!” (πολλοί σου χρόνοι or πολλά τὰ ἔτη) is a well-known Byzantine formula that was chanted by the people at the coronation ceremony of the emperor and on other occasions of imperial celebration.<sup>48</sup>

Similar performances of epigrams are also conceivable in the case of verses found on Byzantine fortifications, e.g., at Constantinople, Ankara, Nicaea etc.<sup>49</sup> It must not be forgotten, moreover, that inscriptions and other signs on city walls also wielded apotropaic powers.<sup>50</sup>

The variety of material supports to which epigrams were attached in Byzantium is considerable. They range from fortifications to church walls, icons, objects of the so-called minor arts, to coins and seals. However, there is one interesting example of a metrical legend on a 12th-century seal that encapsulates the Byzantine obsession with offering as much information as possible on a tiny surface: “I am not sealing anything except for two verses only. The verses, however, do not quote more than this.”<sup>51</sup>

44 The term is used by Roueché, “Written Display in the Late Antique and Byzantine City”, p. 235; see also Rhoby, “Byzantinische Kirchen als Orte der Interaktion von Wort, Bild und Betrachter”.

45 The slabs are currently kept in the Archaeological Museum of Pythagoreio on the island of Samos.

46 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, no. GR106: ... ὦ αὐτοκράτορ πάσης τῆς οἰκουμένης / Θεόφιλε δέσποτα χαίρει Ῥωμαίων, / [...] δοξάσας τὸ σκήπτρον καὶ τὸ στέφος· / ἑπαξίως λέγωμεν πολλοὶ σου χρόνοι.

47 Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 271–73; Papalexandrou, “Echos of Orality”, p. 179; Rhoby, “The Meaning of Inscriptions”, p. 743. English translation of the epigram’s text based on Papalexandrou.

48 Vogt, *Le livre des cérémonies*, vol. 2, pp. 3–5.

49 Rhoby, “*Tower Stablished by God, God is Protecting You*”; Rhoby, “The Meaning of Inscriptions”, pp. 741–45.

50 Rhoby, “Secret Messages?”.

51 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus 2*, no. 1721: Οὐδὲν σφραγίζω πλὴν μόνους στίχους δύο· / οἱ δὲ στίχοι γράφουσιν οὐδὲν τι πλέον.

#### 4 Animating the Image, Personifying the Object

In objects adorned with metrical inscriptions, art and text, visual and verbal media interact and confront each other on multiple levels. The inscribed verses may play a complementary role by providing that which the artifact or the depicted figure lacks, namely, speech. In this scenario, the verses “speak” for the artifact or figure, and in the process animate it. Oral recitation—a standard way to read inscriptions and other kinds of texts in Byzantium—would have strengthened this effect of animation.<sup>52</sup>

The power of the epigram to endow “mute” art with voice is explicitly acknowledged in an epitaph to a *sebastos* Rogerios by Nicholas Kallikles.<sup>53</sup> Speaking in the first person—a device frequently employed in Byzantine epitaphs—the deceased draws the viewer’s attention to his portrait, in which the painter has rendered him as a “shadow and figure” (σκιάν με και τύπον γράφει). “Stand, o stranger,” the dead *sebastos* implores the viewer, “benevolently hear the speech of a shadow (σκιᾶς λαλιάν) and the discourse of a figure (τύπου λόγον).”<sup>54</sup> As a vehicle of a human voice, the verses of the epitaph bring, as it were, the portrait to life. The image and the poem here collaborate to make the absent deceased vicariously present.

In Byzantine art, countless figures, both sacred and secular, speak. They often do so by means of a text written on a scroll in their hands, which is a common visual trope for rendering a speech act. Exceptionally, such a scroll may accommodate a dialogue, such as this: “What do you ask for, Mother?” “The salvation of the mortals.” “They have angered me.” “Be compassionate, my Son.” “But they do not repent.” “Well, save them out of mercy.” “They will have their redemption.” “I thank you, *Logos*.”<sup>55</sup> The intercessory Virgin turned in prayer toward Christ holds a scroll with this poetic conversation or a version of it in a number of Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches, with the earliest examples dating from the 12th century.<sup>56</sup> The dialogue dramatizes the relationship

52 See above pp. 434–436.

53 Nicholas Kallikles, *Poem* 19, ed. Romano, pp. 93–95.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 93, lines 6–8: ὁ ζωγράφος σκιάν με και τύπον γράφει. / πλήν στήθι, πλήν ἄκουε συμπαθῶς, ξένε, / σκιᾶς λαλιάν, ἀλλὰ και τύπου λόγον. For a commentary on this poem and the question of the deceased’s identity, see *ibid.*, pp. 175–77. For epitaphs spoken in the voice of the grave-dweller, see Papadogiannakis, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*, especially pp. 76–79; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 215–18.

55 Τί, μήτερ, αἰτεῖς; Τὴν βροτῶν σωτηρίαν. / Παρώργισάν με. Συμπάθησον, υἱέ μου. / Ἄλλ’ οὐκ ἐπιστρέφουσι. Καὶ σώσον χάριν. / Ἐξουσι λύτρον. Εὐχαριστῶ σοι, Λόγε. See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 166–67; Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, p. 330.

56 Djordjević/Marković, “On the Dialogue Relationship”; Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, pp. 329–41, no. 230.

between the Theotokos and her Son, giving specificity to the generic visual language of gestures and adding a temporal dimension to the scene.

The capacity of an epigram in the form of a dialogue to infuse a static picture with a sense of drama is particularly evident in narrative images. In the frescoes of 1191 at Kurbinovo, for instance, the Annunciation, depicted on either side of the bema, features a short exchange. “Christ <is> in you. Hail, Mother of the *Logos*,” says the archangel. To his greeting, Mary responds with a poetic paraphrase of Luke 1:38: “As you yourself have said, Gabriel, may it happen to me.”<sup>57</sup> The two verses, each written next to the figure that speaks it, transform the scene into a dramatic encounter enacted through both gestures and written utterances. To a spectator familiar with the tradition that Mary became pregnant through hearing, namely, that she conceived the Word of God by hearing the word of God communicated by the archangel, this emphasis on speech in the image would acquire a particular resonance. In light of the notion of *conceptio per aurem*, the appended epigram may be said not only to animate the scene, but also to accentuate the moment of the Incarnation and to figure it through verbal means.<sup>58</sup>

In Byzantine epigrams, speech is not a prerogative of humans and divine being, as inanimate objects, too, can assume the “I” of the text. The use of this poetic device is attested in a variety of contexts, from inscriptions on towers and city walls to metrical legends on seals. Epigrammatic ventriloquism of this kind may serve to create or respond to a performative context of the object’s use. A 12th-century silver-gilt cup, now in Skopje, exclaims in the final line of the quatrain inscribed around its lip: “May whoever holds me drink with joy!”<sup>59</sup> It is easy to imagine the cup being displayed, admired, and scrutinized at an aristocratic drinking party, with its playful inscription contributing to the conviviality of the gathering. But the device of the speaking object may also highlight the purpose and meaning of an artifact. A reliquary of Saint Demetrios at Halberstadt, datable to the 11th century, bears the following epigram. “I, the present tomb of the martyr Demetrios, contain not only blood, but *myron*, too, giving strength to those who have obtained <them> with desire.”<sup>60</sup>

57 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, pp. 91–92, no. 10: Ὁ Χριστὸς ἐν σοί, χαίρει, μήτε]ρ τοῦ Λόγου· / ὡς εἶπας αὐτός, Γαβριήλ, γένοιτό μοι. See also Hadermann-Misguich, *Kurbinovo*, pp. 96–103.

58 For the notion of *conceptio per aurem*, see Constan, *Proclus of Constantinople*, pp. 273–313.

59 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, pp. 170–71, no. Me11, line 4: ἀλλ’ ἡδέως πᾶς με κατέχων πίνε.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 156–57, no. Me5: Οὐχ αἶμα μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ μύρον φέρω / τάφος ὁ παρῶν μάρτυρος Δημητρίου / ῥῶσιν παρέχων τοῖς πόθῳ εἰληφόσιν. On the Halberstadt reliquary, see also Janke, *Ein heilbringender Schatz*, pp. 141–42, no. 2.c.

This small receptacle shares two features with several other reliquaries of the great Thessalonian martyr: first, it housed the saint's bodily effluvia, his blood and *myron*, the latter word denoting a sweet-scented oil that oozed from the saint's tomb; and second, it was conceived as a replica of this tomb, which is evident not only from the reliquary's self-identification ("I, the present tomb"), but also from its sarcophagus-like form.<sup>61</sup> The fact that the reliquary speaks in the first person underscores this mimetic identification. To give voice to the *ta-phos* is a common strategy in Byzantine as well as in ancient Greek epitaphs.<sup>62</sup> The epigram on the reliquary playfully engages with this convention. Since this precious container is essentially a tomb in miniature form, it also speaks like one. The choice of the speaking subject reflects and emphasizes the reliquary's function and meaning.

## 5 Epigram and the Viewer's Response

Aside from complementing the object to which it is attached through the ascription of voice, an epigram can variously frame and mediate the viewer's encounter with the object and also prescribe how the viewer should respond. The epigram may do so, for instance, by describing the object. While, on the whole, ekphrastic elements are rather rare in Byzantine epigrammatic poetry, as the cohabitation of art and inscription rendered them somewhat superfluous, description can be used effectively. A case in point is the epigram that once adorned the church of Saint Polyuktos in Constantinople, founded by Juliana Anicia in the 520s (*Anthologia Palatina* 1.10).<sup>63</sup> The manuscript evidence indicates that lines 1–41 of this celebrated poem were inscribed around the nave of the church, whereas the remaining lines 42–76 were displayed on a set of plaques at the entrance. Significantly, this second part of the poem contains an *ekphrasis* of the church (vv. 51–62).

How it stands forth on deep-rooted foundations,  
springing up from below and pursuing the stars of heaven,  
and how too it extends from the west, stretching to the east,  
glittering with the indescribable brightness of the sun

61 On the reliquaries of Saint Demetrios, see especially Grabar, "Quelques reliquaires de Saint Démétrios"; Bauer, *Eine Stadt und ihr Patron*, pp. 335–93.

62 Papalexandrou, "Text in Context", p. 262. For the ancient Greek world, see the classic study by Svenbro, *Phrasikleia*, especially pp. 26–43.

63 See especially Connor, "The Epigram in the Church of Hagios Polyuktos"; Whitby, "The St Polyuktos Epigram".

on this side and on that! On either side of the central nave,  
 columns standing upon sturdy columns  
 support the rays of the golden-roofed covering.  
 On both sides recesses hollowed out in arches  
 have given birth to the ever-revolving light of the moon.  
 The walls, opposite each other in measureless paths,  
 have put on marvelous meadows of marble,  
 which nature caused to flower in the very depths of the rock.<sup>64</sup>

This verbal exposition of the splendors of the church served not only to extol the foundress, but also to mentally prepare the viewer, as he or she was about to enter the church and experience all these marvels first-hand.

The inscribed verses often mediate between the viewer and the object by explaining the latter's meaning, function, or moral or religious significance. In such instances, the poetic text embodies an authoritative voice that suggests, if not imposes, a hermeneutic framework within which to approach the object. Alternatively, the verses may affect the viewer's response to the object by dramatizing the act of seeing, by provoking an emotional reaction, or by eliciting a sense of wonder and puzzlement with regard to the object's design, imagery, material fabric, or the skill of the artist employed. Some of the above strategies inform the famous epigram on the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia by John Geometres, which we find in secondary use in the church at Asinou (1105/06), attached to a fresco depicting the martyrs' suffering in an icy lake.

Winter <brings> the pain, flesh the suffering here.  
 If you pay attention, you will even hear the groans of the martyrs;  
 but if you do not listen, they will <still> endure the violence <of the cold>,  
 looking to the crowns, not to the toils.<sup>65</sup>

64 *Anth. Pal.* 1.10, lines 51–62: οἶος μὲν προβέβηκε βαθυρρίζοισι θεμέθλοισι, / νέρθεν ἀναθρώσκων καὶ αἰθέρος ἄστρα διώκων. / οἶος δ' ἀντολῆς μηχανέται ἐς δύσιν ἔρπων, / ἀρρήτοις Φαέθοντος ὑπαστράπτων ἀμαρυγαῖς / τῆ καὶ τῆ πλευρῆσι· μέσης δ' ἐκάτερθε πορείης / κίονες ἀρρήκτοις ἐπὶ κίοισιν ἐστηῶτες / χρυσορόφου ἀκτῖνας ἀεράζουσι καλύπτρης· / κόλποι δ' ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐπ' ἀψιδέσσι χυθέντες / φέγγος ἀειδίμητον ἐμαιώσαντο σελήνης· / τοῖχοι δ' ἀντιπέρηθεν ἀμετρήτοισι κελεύθοις / θεσπεσίους λειμῶνας ἀνεζώσαντο μετάλλων, / οὐς φύσις ἀνήθασα μέσοις ἐνὶ βένθεσι πέτρης. Trans. Whitby, "The St Polyeuktos Epigram", p. 164.

65 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, pp. 350–52, no. 237: Χειμῶν [τὸ λυπ]οῦν, [σάρξ] τὸ πάσχον ἐνθάδε· / [προσχ]ῶν ἀκούσεις καὶ στεναγμὸν μαρ[τύρων]· / [εἰ δ' οὐ]κ ἀκ[ούσεις, καρτεροῦσι] τῆ βίᾳ· / πρὸς τὰ στέφη βλέπουσιν, οὐ πρὸς τοὺς πόνους. See also Maguire, *Image and Imagination*, pp. 12–13; Patterson Ševčenko, "The Metrical Inscriptions in the Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa", pp. 70–72, with the English translation of the epigram reproduced above.

The verses are written between the figures of the martyrs in shivering postures and a set of crowns, prizes for their ordeal, hovering in the sky above. The introductory line creates a setting for the viewer's experience of the fresco—note the deictic ἐνθάδε (“here”)—by juxtaposing winter and flesh, the freezing cold and the martyrs' reaction to it. The appeal to the viewer to pay attention, as he or she may hear the martyr's groans, underscores the lifelike quality of the picture. Blurring the boundary between reality and representation, the fresco has such a mimetic force that it is even capable of generating a sensation of sound. While the trope of the living or animate image is not uncommon in Byzantine epigrams,<sup>66</sup> in this particular instance it is invoked to encourage a specific mode of active, immersive viewing. Rather than looking at the fresco from a distance as a self-contained work of art, the viewer is prompted to enter, as it were, into the pictorial space and let him- or herself be overwhelmed by the fresco's visual power. Interestingly, the composition at Asinou readily accommodates this kind of immersion, since it extends into the shallow barrel vault above, which features a medallion of Christ, issuing the crowns to the martyrs, as well as a subsidiary episode with one of the Forty leaving the lake for the warmth of a bath house on the shore and a bath attendant who is about to replace the renegade. With the composition acquiring a three-dimensional quality, the viewer is quite literally enfolded in the image.

One aspect of Byzantine epigrammatic poetry that deserves to be singled out is its pervasive interest in what we may call the materiality of art. Indeed, Byzantine poets habitually mention or comment on the physical makeup of works they were called upon to celebrate in verse. One reason, of course, is the sheer pecuniary value of gold, silver, gems, pearls, and other precious materials, which affluent patrons desired and demanded for the artistic creations they sponsored. But the display of costly or exotic substances was also an object of aesthetic delectation and, moreover, an occasion for spiritual exercise and meditation, providing the spectator with a pathway of access to the divine. Luster and radiance, texture and color, hardness and malleability, let alone a range of symbolic and metaphorical associations with which scriptural exegesis and pre-scientific lore invested various materials—all these elements could be engaged to impart meaning or enhance the viewer's response. Consider, for instance, the following epigram on a steatite icon of the Nativity of Christ penned by a certain Hagioanargyrites.

The Virgin, like the bush before, is unconsumed by fire;  
for although she gives birth in a motherly fashion, she remains virgin.

66 On this trope, see especially Braounou-Pietsch, *Beseelte Bilder*.



Even the stone cries out that this miracle is true  
 by showing her spotless nature.  
 Hence I venerate the image of the childbirth.<sup>67</sup>

Steatite was frequently used for small-scale carvings of religious subjects. The Byzantines called it ἀμίαντος λίθος, literally “spotless” or “unblemished stone.”<sup>68</sup> This appellation encouraged the stone’s association with the Theotokos, who was celebrated as *amiantos*.<sup>69</sup> Hagioanargyrites’ epigram elaborates upon this link by bringing into play the stone’s green color (the green variety was favored by the Byzantines) as well as its resistance to heat and fire. The verses allude to these physical properties of steatite by evoking the Burning Bush, one of the standard Marian prefigurations. Imbued with a representational and symbolic force, the stone itself here figures for the viewer the mystery of virginal motherhood.

The epigrammatic engagement with the materiality of art may extend to the processes of artistic creation. Thus, in an epigram on a marble relief icon of Saint George, Manuel Philes draws a parallel between the carving of the stone and the torturing of the martyr’s body.

The stone, which has suffered toil (πονηθείς) by being worked into a relief of the crowned one [i.e., Saint George],  
 makes manifest his unbending strength with respect to suffering (πόνους);  
 for it was not fitting to depict with colors  
 him who had endured deep wounds (ξέσεις) [literally, ‘carvings’] of his  
 flesh.<sup>70</sup>

The epigram prompts the viewer to consider the hardness of marble and the invasive process of its carving in relation to the toils of martyrdom undergone by Saint George. Under the sculptor’s chisel, marble remains steadfast, just as the saint did in the face of the wounds inflicted upon him by his tormentors. The very medium of stone carving—here contrasted with that of painting,

67 The epigram is published in Manuel Philes, *Poems*, vol. 1, pp. 430–31, no. 219: Ἡ παρθένος ἄφλεκτος ὡς πρὶν ἢ βᾶτος, / κἂν μητρικῶς γεννᾷ γὰρ ἔστι παρθένος. / πιστὸν τὸ θαῦμα τοῦτο κράζει καὶ λίθος / τὴν ἀμίαντον δεικνύων ταύτης φύσιν. / σεβάζομαι γοῦν τοῦ τόκου τὴν εἰκόνα.

68 Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite*. The term ἀμίαντος was also used for asbestos. See Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, p. 828.

69 See especially Kalavrezou, “The Mother of God in Steatite”.

70 Braounou-Pietsch, *Beseelte Bilder*, pp. 100–01, no. 38: Λίθος πονηθείς εἰς γλυφὴν στεφανίτου / τὸν εἰς πόνους ἀκαμπτον ἐμφαίνει τόνον / οὐκ ἦν γὰρ εἰκὸς ἐντυποῦσθαι ταῖς χροαῖς / τὸν εἰς βάθος φέροντα σαρκὸς τὰς ξέσεις.

which the poet finds less suitable for the subject at hand—is able to convey the saint’s physical and moral strength and the constancy of his faith. The epigram, in other words, does not conceive of representation solely in terms of formal resemblance. Hard, obdurate marble and its artistic transformation offer a portrayal of the saint no less vivid than a mimetic visual rendering of his physical appearance.

In prescribing how the viewer should react to an object, epigrams often self-consciously thematize their coexistence with works of art and, more broadly, the relationship between verbal and visual media.

Perhaps you praise this image, stranger, for, thanks to artistic skill, it appears to be alive. Astonished, you would have also marveled at the nature <of the person depicted>, had it been possible to depict speech too.<sup>71</sup>

Thus reads Philes’ epigram on a portrait of Michael Atzymes, a high dignitary at the court of the early Palaiologoi. Highlighting the portrait’s strikingly life-like quality, the poet nonetheless points to a fundamental deficiency of the medium of painting, specifically, its inability to depict a person’s character and inner disposition, best communicated through speech. Painting is mute, and hence incapable of endowing its subjects with the fullness of presence and life. Such poetic musings on the limits of visual representation, which one often encounters in Byzantine epigrams, are ultimately self-referential. They call attention to the power of poetry, the epigrammatist’s own medium, and seek to promote it at the expense of visual art.<sup>72</sup> For Byzantine literati, many of whom, like Philes, depended on the patronage of the powerful and wealthy, the poetic self-reference of this kind was a way to assert the value of their literary craft. But the self-conscious thematization of the rivalry between art and poetry could also enrich the viewer’s response by inviting him or her to reflect upon the rapport between the two media and their synergy in the inscribed object.

## 6 Verses Materialized: Epigram as Visual and Physical Presence

A crucial aspect of this synergy concerns the visual and material dimension of the written word. Epigrams constitute an integral component of the objects upon which they are placed. Aside from conveying information, they project a

71 Ibid., pp. 73–74, no. 11: Ἴσως ἐπαινεῖς τόνδε τὸν τύπον, ξένε. / δοκεῖ γὰρ ἐμπνεῖν ὑπὸ τῆς εὐτεχνίας. / ἐθαύμασας δ’ ἂν ἐκπλαγεῖς καὶ τὴν φύσιν, / ἂν ἦν δυνατὸν ζωγραφεῖν καὶ τοὺς λόγους.

72 See Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild*.

forceful physical presence through the particulars of their script, the size and shape of letters, the nature of the text's material support, the use of color, ornamentation, and various framing devices, and the physical and spatial layout of the text.<sup>73</sup> These elements of an epigram's visual presentation can produce diverse aesthetic effects and, moreover, inflect and amplify its verbal message. In addition, they can variously contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the inscribed object, organize its appearance, heighten its power and authority, and intimate its purpose and meaning. In the case of an illiterate audience, the graphic and visual elaboration of writing played a fundamental role in making the displayed text "legible." Such elaboration created a point of reference for non-literate responses, whether these responses invested the written word with apotropaic, magical, ornamental, or iconic properties.<sup>74</sup>

Metrical inscriptions almost invariably make use of majuscule. Exceptions to this rule are rare, since minuscule, introduced in the early 9th century, was primarily a book script. Before the 10th century, the dominant epigraphic style featured simple yet solemn capital letters, typically uniform, unaccented, unconnected, and of equal height. Beginning in the 10th century, and especially from the 11th century onward, one sees notable changes. Accents and breathing marks are now frequently, if not routinely, added; ligatures, often in the form of visually striking combinations of letters, multiply; variations in the size and graphic structure of letters become common; and with the increasing insertion of minuscule forms, the uniformity of uncials is all but abandoned. The result is a graphic idiom that favors ornamentation and decorative effects.<sup>75</sup> To be sure, the quality of writing in the corpus of Byzantine epigrams preserved *in situ* varies enormously, and many specimens show a complete lack of calligraphic control. Nonetheless, the Byzantine recognized the twofold nature of inscribed verse, its status as both a literary and a physical artifact, and they were sensitive to ways in which elevated poetic discourse may be dressed in a compelling material form.<sup>76</sup>

73 On the visual and other extralinguistic aspects of the written word in Byzantine culture, see Cavallo, "Testo e imagine", pp. 54–62; James, "And Shall These Mute Stones Speak? Text as Art"; Maayan-Fanar, *Revelation Through the Alphabet*; Orsini, *Scrittura come immagine*, pp. 59–79; Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, pp. 186–243; and the relevant essays in Eastmond, *Viewing Inscriptions*.

74 In addition to the bibliography cited in the previous note, see Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing"; Rhoby, "Secret Messages".

75 On the paleography of Byzantine inscriptions and the transformation of the dominant epigraphic style in the 10th and 11th centuries, see Mango, "Byzantine Epigraphy"; Mango, "Epigraphy"; Karagiannis, "Παρατηρήσεις στη χρήση της μικρογράμματος γραφής"; Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, pp. 75–79.

76 See Drpić, "Chrysepes *Stichourgia*".

The four surviving epigrams that introduce the Major Prophets in the manuscript Laur. plut. 5.9, a section of the so-called Niketas Bible of c.970, can hardly fail to impress the spectator.<sup>77</sup> Placed against an expense of creamy-white parchment, these inscriptions in book format are rendered in gold in an elegant display script, each arranged in a neat block of text framed by a luxuriant border with floral ornamentation. With the gold lettering assuming a powerful visual presence, the poetic text rises to the status of an image. Independent of the text's verbal content, this image made of words reflects and emphasizes the sanctity of the divinely inspired prophetic writings copied on the pages that follow.

On precious-metal objects, the text of an epigram may find a no less powerful material embodiment in enamel or niello. The same is true of stone inscriptions. The hexameters celebrating Juliana Anicia's patronage of Saint Polyeuktos enveloped the nave of this church like an ornamental band. As witnessed by the preserved fragments, the sober, dignified capital letters of the inscription were carved rather than incised in stone, a far more labor-intensive procedure that, in and of itself, highlighted and made manifest the preciousness of the poem. Traces of blue pigment that have been detected on the background of the letters indicate that, originally, the aesthetic impact of the carved text was further enhanced through polychromy.<sup>78</sup> Elsewhere, the letters of an epigram incised in stone may be picked out in color or inlaid with lead. Apart from enhancing legibility, such interventions were bound to heighten the epigram's visual appeal.

The expressive use of color is also attested in painted inscriptions. Thus the dialogue on the scroll of the intercessory Virgin, cited above, is occasionally presented in such a way that the words spoken by Christ are painted in red.<sup>79</sup> The strategic deployment of this color not only aided comprehension; it could have also triggered a range of associations, from the imperial use of red ink to Christ's sacrificial blood.

The 10th-century *staurotheke* at Cortona exemplifies how the visual presentation of an epigram can inflect its message and communicate the object's function and significance.<sup>80</sup> The back of this unusual reliquary of the True Cross—unusual because it is made of ivory—features two inscriptions. The one running along the border, written in prose, identifies the donor of the

77 Belting/Cavallo, *Die Bibel des Niketas*, pls. 2, 4–6; Stefec, “Anmerkungen”, pp. 204–09.

78 Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium*, p. 84.

79 See Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Εργονγεία*, p. 280.

80 On the *staurotheke*, see especially Oikonomides, “The Concept of ‘Holy War’”, pp. 77–86; Klein, “Die Elfenbein-Staurothek von Cortona”; Leggio, “La stauroteca eburnea”. For the epigram on the *staurotheke*, see also Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, pp. 331–34, no. El23.

reliquary: “Stephen the *skeuophylax* of the Great Church of the Divine Wisdom offers <this reliquary> to his monastery of origin, Eveme.”<sup>81</sup> The other inscription in the dodecasyllable is laid out in the shape of a cross within the field framed by the prose inscription. It reads:

In the past, Christ gave to the powerful lord Constantine [i.e., Constantine the Great]  
the cross for salvation;  
and now, <our> emperor victorious in God [i.e. Nikephoros II Phokas],  
who possesses this <cross>, <with it> puts to flight the tribes of the  
barbarians.<sup>82</sup>

The very shape of this epigram identifies the relic lodged inside the ivory container. The text and its visual form here work in concert. Further contributing to the interplay between the linguistic and the figural, is the distinctive script used for the two inscriptions. A predilection for ample, rounded letterforms, the overall effect of chiaroscuro created by the alternation of thick and thin strokes, and above all, numerous ornamental flourishes, including knobs, tendrils, curls, trefoils, and x-shaped embellishments, all identify the script as an instantiation of what Italian scholars call *maiuscola liturgica*.<sup>83</sup> At the time when the Cortona reliquary was fashioned, this extremely ornate graphic idiom was employed primarily for the production of deluxe Gospel lectionaries. It was, in other words, associated with the visual representation of sacred texts. In view of this association, the choice of *maiuscola liturgica* is highly significant, insofar as it infused the two inscriptions with some of the dignity and authority carried by the Scriptures.

The cruciform poem on the back of the Cortona *staurotheke* is but one example of Byzantine “figured” epigrams. Rarely encountered outside the realm of the book, such epigrams typically take the form of letter labyrinths and grid poems, the latter featuring acrostics and intexts in various configurations that can be read independently of the main textual block.<sup>84</sup> The celebrated iambic poems installed at the Chalke Gate of the Great Palace in the wake of the iconoclastic council of 815, were shaped in precisely this manner. The poems showed crosses made of letters, which appear to have been highlighted

81 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, p. 331: ‘Ο τῆς μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας Θεοῦ σοφίας σκευοφύλαξ Στέφανος τῇ θρεψαμένη μονῇ Εὐήμης προσφέρει.

82 Ibid., p. 332: Καί πρην κραταιῶ δεσπότη Κωνσταντίνῳ / Χριστὸς δέδωκε σταυρὸν εἰ<ς> σωτηρίαν / καὶ νῦν δὲ τοῦτον ἐν Θεῷ νικηφόρος / ἀναξ τροποῦται φύλα βαρβάρων ἔχων.

83 On *maiuscola liturgica*, see Orsini, *Scrittura come immagine*.

84 Hörandner, “Visuelle Poesie”; Hörandner, “Weitere Beobachtungen”; Diamantopoulou, *Griechische visuelle Poesie*, pp. 63–105. See also Ernst, *Carmen figuratum*, pp. 738–65.

in gold.<sup>85</sup> Considering the centrality of the cross in iconoclastic ideology, the propagandistic power of these most public of inscriptions resided not so much in their verbal content, but rather in their visual form.

Even without turning inscribed verses into a recognizable figure, the physical layout of an epigram allows for different kinds of manipulation that can significantly enhance its communicative potential. Certain key words such as the patron's name, for instance, may be accentuated through their prominent placement.<sup>86</sup> Alternatively, the poetic message may be amplified by virtue of the text's physical context. This is the case with the dedicatory epigram in the church of Saint Nicholas at Platsa in the Mani, which the *tzaousios* Constantine Spanes and his wife Maria restored and decorated with frescoes in 1337/38.<sup>87</sup> Arranged in a single horizontal band around the nave, the epigram starts on the north wall, continues along the curvature of the sanctuary apse, and ends on the south wall. The text—convoluted, at times obscure, and in addition, marred by lacunae—begins by recording the patrons' names and titles and by commemorating their work of restoration. Not accidentally, at the point where the string of painted letters reaches the sanctuary, the epigram assumes a different tone. While the introductory section of the poem (vv. 1–6) features an impersonal voice, Spanes himself speaks in the remaining lines (vv. 7–15), addressing the figure of Christ *Pantokrator* depicted in the conch as part of a monumental *Deesis*:

<The Tabernacle>, foreshadowed to the God-seer Moses, which the architect Bezalel constructed most wisely as an image of the created world, represents <an image> of your birth, O *Pantokrator*.<sup>88</sup>

Running the length of the sanctuary apse below the *Deesis*, these four lines (vv. 7–10) engage the theme of the Old Testament Tabernacle (cf. Exod. 25:8–40), which is here introduced as an august point of comparison for the church restored by Spanes and his wife. The verses elaborate upon the spiritual significance of this transportable desert shrine, specifically, the notion

85 The iconoclastic epigrams at the Chalke Gate are preserved in Theodore the Stoudite's treatise *Refutatio et subversio*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 99, cols. 436B–477A. On these poems, see especially Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 274–84.

86 See Rhoby, "Interactive Inscriptions", pp. 319–20.

87 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, pp. 229–33, no. 135; Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, pp. 52–54, 215–19. On the church and its pictorial decoration, see Mouriki, *The Frescoes of the Church of St. Nicholas*.

88 Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, p. 229, lines 7–10: Μωσῆ θεόπτῃ προσκιαγραφουμένη, / ἦν ἀρχιτέκτων Βεσελεὴλ πανσόφως / εἰς κτίσεως ἔπιξεν εἰκονουργίαν, / τῆς σῆς λοχείας ἴστορεῖ, παντοκράτορ.

that the Tabernacle symbolized the created world and, moreover, prefigured the Incarnation of Christ. The link with the Incarnation—ultimately derived from the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which Paul speaks of the “greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands” (9:11)—was frequently invoked in scriptural exegesis.<sup>89</sup> Christ’s human body, so the argument went, housed his divinity like a shrine, while the sacrificial death of this body on the Cross superseded and abolished the Old Testament sacrifices performed in the Tabernacle. The allusion to Christ’s Incarnation and his redemptive sacrifice is a felicitous one, if one considers the location of the quoted verses close to the altar table and immediately above the depiction of the Infant Jesus as a Eucharistic offering, the sacrificial *amnos*, in the lower zone of the apse. The verses interact with their immediate spatial and iconographic context, which in turn throws into focus and intensifies their message. To fully appreciate the dedicatory epigram in the church of Saint Nicholas, one cannot read it as a self-contained literary composition. Integral to the meaning of this poem is its physical setting.

## 7 Conclusion

The verbal and the visual were closely intertwined and interdependent in Byzantine culture. They constituted not simply analogous or rival but overlapping modes of expression and signification. This mutual imbrication is nowhere more evident than in objects adorned with metrical inscriptions. Through their coexistence and collaboration, art and epigram created new aesthetic, discursive, and performative frameworks of experience and engagement with the world, ones that transcended the communicative capacity of visual forms and words taken in isolation.

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89 See, e.g., John Chrysostom, *In Epistulam ad Hebraeos*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 63, col. 119; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Interpretatio Epistulae ad Hebraeos*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 82, col. 741B–C; Symeon of Thessalonike, *De sacro templo*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 155, col. 325B–C.

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**PART 5**

*Particular Uses of Verse in Byzantium*







## Teaching with Verse in Byzantium

*Wolfram Hörandner*

In the Byzantine school, several techniques were used for teaching, often combining acoustic and visual elements. To a large degree the transmission of knowledge took place by the oral recitation of examples, yet there is ample evidence for the use of schoolbooks. For example, there existed rhetorical handbooks like those of Menander, Hermogenes, and Aphthonios, as well as the *σχέδη* “*schede*”,<sup>1</sup> and similar reference books of grammar and rhetoric. In the contribution at hand we shall concentrate on the role of versified treatises as tools of transmitting knowledge, in various disciplines and on various levels.

It may be worthwhile to first shed some light on this often neglected branch of Byzantine literature.<sup>2</sup> Under the heading “didactic” in an encyclopedic dictionary we read: “Didactic poetry is almost a special category of its own ... It has been argued that all poetry is, by implication, didactic; that it should and does instruct as well as delight.”<sup>3</sup> Here three important issues are combined: first, that didactic poetry is *almost* a category of its own, which means that we do not have to deal with a well-defined literary genre, but with a type of poem that *could* be regarded more or less as a category of its own. After this, there is the statement that all poetry is, by implication, didactic; and finally the stress is laid on the double function of poetry, namely that it should and does instruct as well as delight. This is an allusion to a famous passage in the *Ars poetica* of Horace:<sup>4</sup> *Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae | aut simul et iucunda et*

1 It is hard to find an adequate modern translation for this term designating a technique of teaching grammar by analyzing texts, which came into being during the 11th century. In *schede* prose and verse are often combined. The so-called *antistoicha*, i.e. a play with words of equal sound but different spelling as a school exercise, also plays an important part. For intriguing new approaches, see now particularly Agapitos, “Grammar”; id., “New Genres”; Zagklas, *Theodore Prodromos*, pp. 73–87.

2 For a useful survey, see Aerts, “Panorama”. Many aspects of didactic poetry, particularly its social contexts, are treated in Bernard, *Writing*.

3 Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary*.

4 Horatius, *Ars poetica*, 333.

*idonea dicere vitae.* (“Poets want either to benefit or to delight or to express simultaneously both pleasure and usefulness for life.”).

Metrical shape and instructive function are the two constituents which make a didactic poem: the term “didactic” not necessarily meaning “written for use at school”. In antique and medieval Latin literature, the phenomenon is too important to be neglected: prominent authors of this type of poetry include Hesiod, Aratos, Virgil, and Lucretius.

In recent decades a number of publications devoted to didactic poetry from Antiquity and the Middle Ages were written in search of new and adequate theoretical approaches to this type of literature.<sup>5</sup> For example, it is interesting to note that Bernd Effe makes a distinction between a formal and a more content-oriented type.<sup>6</sup> In the formal type the masterly handling of the poetic form dominates, whereas the content-oriented type focuses primarily on scientific truth and precision, the poetic form simply serving as a means for better transmitting the contents. Between these two types, according to Effe, a third one exists, which he calls the transparent type; it is characterized by the attempt to make transparent the dignity of the subject by the sublime form. Katharina Volk postulates four criteria which, according to her, have to be met when speaking of a didactic poem:<sup>7</sup> “Explicit didactic intent”; the “teacher-student constellation”; “poetic self-consciousness”; and “poetic simultaneity”, that is, the creation of a dramatic illusion of a lesson actually in progress as the poem progresses.

These criteria are also applicable to Byzantine didactic poetry, as is Effe’s typological model. For the Byzantine sphere it may be useful to choose a more narrow definition, restricting the term to texts which present themselves more or less explicitly as pieces of instruction, be it by mentioning the addressee in the title, be it by referring to real or fictitious pupils by vocatives like νέε or φίλτατε (“o young one, o best of friends”), or by verbs like μή βουληθῆς, σκόπει, λάβε, ἄκουσον (“don’t want, regard, take, listen”) and so on. To give an example of this kind of technique, we can mention the didactic poems of Michael Psellos. Most of them are dedicated to an emperor, partly for the instruction

5 Effe, *Dichtung*; Fabian, “Das Lehrgedicht”; Haye, *Das lateinische Lehrgedicht*; Horster/Reitz, *Wissensvermittlung*; Liebermann/Huber/Walz, “Lehrdichtung”; Sowinski, *Lehrhafte Dichtung*; Volk, *The Poetics*.

6 Effe, *Dichtung*, pp. 30–33.

7 Volk, *The Poetics*.

of the emperor's son,<sup>8</sup> and in the texts, by and large, addresses of the kind just mentioned are to be found.<sup>9</sup>

However, if we restrict the investigation too narrowly to cases of an explicit teacher-student-relation, we run the risk of not considering a great number of poems of obviously instructive character. If we take instructive intention—and not so much genre—as a starting-point, we can incorporate very different kinds of poems into our study. In many cases instruction is only one of a number of functions; we also need to examine to what degree, and in what way, the didactic and other principles are pursued alongside each other in a given poem or group of poems.

Before discussing in detail some typical examples from various periods,<sup>10</sup> we should say a few words about a type of didactic text which rarely gets studied: the so-called mnemonic verses. These are generally neglected and often even excluded from literary texts. Because of their purely technical and informative contents, they are generally believed to lack literary quality. Effe devotes only a short excursus to them,<sup>11</sup> closing with the significant words: “*Sie stellen eine Gebrauchsform des Unterrichts, nicht aber eine Form der Literatur dar.*” (“They represent a form of instruction, not literature.”) In the pages which follow we shall try to discuss this issue in relation to each of the examples presented.

A very good example of this type of texts are the metrical *synaxaria* (calendars). Since they give information on the Saints within the year, and by their metrical form they help remembering, we can rightly call them didactic. Yet, it would be completely wrong to reduce the value of these verses to their mnemonic function, because at the same time they are small pieces of literary art showing technical skill and poetical refinement. Technical skill is needed for putting as much information as possible into the limited space of a tetrastichon or a distichon or even a monostichon. Refinement is demonstrated by the choice and mastery of metre, adequate vocabulary, the use

8 See, e.g., the title of Psellos' poem on grammar: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ψελλοῦ Σύνοψις διὰ στίχων σαφῶν καὶ πολιτικῶν περὶ πασῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν γενομένη πρὸς τὸν εὐσεβέστατον βασιλέα κύριον Μιχαὴλ τὸν Δούκαν ἐκ προστάξεως τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ βασιλέως, ὥστε διὰ τῆς εὐκολίας καὶ ἡδύτητος ἐνεχθῆναι τοῦτον εἰς τὴν μάθησιν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν (“By the same Psellos, survey in clear political verses about all fields of knowledge, written for the most pious emperor Michael Doukas on the order of his father and emperor, so that by the simplicity and grace he [i.e. Michael] may be introduced into the study of the disciplines.” Michael Psellos, *Poems*, no. 6 (Grammar), tit.

9 For further details concerning Psellos' didactic poems, see Hörandner, “Didactic poem”; Agapitos, “Grammar”.

10 For the 11th century, see particularly the publications quoted in the previous note.

11 Effe, *Dichtung*, pp. 231–33.

of rhetorical devices, allusions, and puns etc. In this respect the metrical *synaxaria* of Christopher Mitylenaios (11th century) are real masterpieces.<sup>12</sup>

At the other end of the scale there is an example of extreme conciseness, namely the metrical *synaxarium* of Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos (first half of the 14th century). It consists of about 15 verses per month, thus mentioning two or even three Saints in a single verse,<sup>13</sup> a whole verse for a single feast being exceptional (e.g. Χριστοῦ μεταμόρφωσιν ἐν Θαβωρίῳ). Of course such a technique leaves no space for anything but a mention of the names of the Saints (or of the feasts respectively), and here and there an epithet. Yet, we have to bear in mind that Xanthopoulos chose this catalogue form deliberately, and that it was not an easy task to put all these names into correct dodecasyllables.<sup>14</sup> Indeed Xanthopoulos seems to be fond of teaching by catalogues. The famous Basel edition of 1536 of his work contains (besides the metrical *synaxarion*) a whole series of similar lists on various sacred subject-matters, like: the books of the Old and New Testaments; the Sundays of the *Triodion* (from Lent to Pentecost),<sup>15</sup> and the *Dodekaorton* (the 12 feasts of the Lord). For the *Dodekaorton* three versions are transmitted, one with six verses,

12 This may be demonstrated by the following example: [1 Sept.] Λιπὼν Συμεῶν τὴν ἐπὶ στόλου βάσιν τὴν ἐγγὺς εἶρε τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγου στάσιν. Ἐν γῆ ξενίζει Μάρθα τὸν Χριστὸν πάλαι, σὲ δὲ ξενίζει, Μάρθα, Χριστὸς ἐν πόλῳ. [2 Sept.] Ἀκμαῖος ὢν Τριάδος εἰς πίστιν Μάμας, ἀκμαῖς τριαίνης καρτερεῖ τετρωμένος. [3 Sept.] Τμηθεὶς κεφαλὴν, μάρτυς Ἄνθιμε, ξίφει, καὶ νεκρὸς ἀνθεὶς εἰς Θεοῦ δόξαν τρίχας (“Leaving the place on the column, Symeon found the position near to the Logos of God. On earth Martha welcomed formerly the Christ, (now), Martha, Christ welcomes you in Heaven. Mamas, being top in the veneration of Trinity, endures being stabbed by the tops of a trident. Being decapitated, martyr Anthimos, by a sword, even as a corpse you make blossom hairs for the glory of God.”): Christopher Mitylenaios, *Iambic synaxarium*, pp. 9–11. Among Mitylenaios’ metrical *synaxaria* some use the technique of hymnography, whereas the one quoted above consists in iambic disticha, i.e. in pairs of dodecasyllables. It is possible that Mitylenaios was the first author of metrical *synaxaria*. Enrica Follieri, in her monumental study, printed the dodecasyllables as annex to the canons. A strong connexion exists between the two verses of a distich using rhetorical devices like the *homoioteleuton* (βάσιν—στάσιν), parallelisms (v. 3 and 4 are closely connected), and wordplays, with the name or the destiny of the saint (Τριάδος—τριαίνης, Ἄνθιμε—ἀνθεὶς). For the latter practice, dear to the Byzantines, see Hunger, “Byzantinische Namensdeutungen”. Note that at a later date (14th century) some of these couplets were used in monumental painting as inscriptions accompanying pictures of the relevant saints: Rhoby, “Inscriptional Versions”.

13 Critical edition: Stefec, “Die Synaxarverse”.

14 For the dodecasyllable, the Byzantine derivative of the iambic trimeter, the classic study is still Maas, “Zwölfsilber”. See now also Rhoby, “Vom jambischen Trimeter”.

15 Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos, *Verses on the Triodion*, Inc. Ἐγὼ δὲ τριώδιον ταῦτα σοὶ φέρων, ed. Guntius, *Cyri Theodori Prodomi epigrammata*.... For details of the Triodion, see *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols., Oxford 1991, vol. 3, pp. 2118–19.

one with four, and one with three.<sup>16</sup> In some cases the didactic intention is expressed by the imperative μάνθανε, whereas in the metrical *synaxarion* most of the chapters begin with the word ἐγώ, thus signaling that it is the month itself, or rather a picture, who is speaking. For example: September Ἐγὼ Συμεὼν καὶ τὸν Μάμαντα φέρω “I bring Symeon and Mamas”; October Ἐμοὶ δὲ κόσμος ἡ στάσις Ἀνανίου “my ornament is the steadfastness of Ananias”.

The monastic epigrams of Theodore Stoudites (early 9th century) obviously show a didactic intention. Here, as in many works by Theodore, it is the real *hegoumenos* himself, father and guide of his monks, who addresses the various members of his flock, reminding them of their specific duties under the rules of Christian spirituality, and promising the award in heaven. So the character of these poems is more paraenetic than didactic, and yet this too is a kind of instruction. Other epigrams of Theodore—those dealing with the veneration of icons—are more dogmatic, and hence more didactic.<sup>17</sup>

Generally speaking, epigrams can also have a didactic function, although this may not be their main aim. This is true, for example in the so-called “verses on the twelve months”. Several examples of such epigram cycles have been transmitted: one by Theodore Prodromos,<sup>18</sup> one by Manuel Philes,<sup>19</sup> and some others that are anonymous.<sup>20</sup> All of these poems have a strong ecphrastic (descriptive) character, in that they refer to images which show personifications of the months together with their typical attributes, mainly taken from the ag-

16 Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos, *Verses on the Dodekaorton*, ed. Guntius, *Cyri Theodori Prodromi epigrammata ...: Τὸ χαίρε, γέννα, Συμεὼν, Ἰορδάνης, | Θαβώριον, Λάζαρος, βαῖα, ξύλον, | ἔγερσις, ἄρσις, πνεῦμα καὶ κόρης μόρος* (“The Annunciation, Birth, Symeon [= Presentation], Jordan, Tabor, Lazaros, Palms [= Entry in Jerusalem], Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Spirit [= Pentecost] and Dormition of the Virgin.”). Three verses for the entire dodekaorton! This aim was achieved by replacing some of the usual names of the feasts by shorter words, e.g. Θαβώριον instead of Μεταμόρφωσις, ξύλον instead of σταύρωσις etc. Ἰορδάνης has one syllable more than Βάπτισμα, but it fits better into the verse because of the accent. See also Lampros, “Κατάλογος”, p. 227; for further references, see Vassis, *Initia*, p. 800 s.v. Τὸ χαίρε, γέννα. For similar lists penned by Prodromos, see Zagklas, *Theodore Prodromos*, nos. 3 and 7. The question of the original function of all these catalogues (just for memory or as inscriptions on icons or small objects) remains open.

17 Πᾶς ὁ γράφωιν με καὶ γράφειν Χριστὸν θέλε, | ἐπίπερ αὐτὸς συμπλέκεται μοι πάθει· | ἐμοῦ γὰρ ἐχθρὸς καὶ καθαιρέτης πέλει | ὁ μὴ γράφων ἐκεῖνον, εἰ καὶ με γράφει (“Whoever represents me [the Cross], shall represent also the Christ, since He is intertwined with me by the passion; for my enemy and murderer is he who does not represent Him, even if he represents me.”): Theodore Stoudites, *Jamben*, ed. Speck, p. 209. Here, in the four verses of an epigram, Theodore presents the whole iconodoule dogma in a nutshell.

18 Theodore Prodromos, *On the Twelve Months*, ed. Keil, “Die Monatscyclen”; most recent edition: Nicola Callicle, *Carmi*, ed. Romano.

19 Manuel Philes, *On the Twelve Months*.

20 Eideneier, “Kalendergedicht”.

ricultural sphere. In one case, that of Theodore Prodromos, recommendations are added, including what food and drink is preferable, and what one should avoid, in a given month, something that is, of course, strongly didactic.

The subjects treated in didactic poetry are manifold. In what follows I give a list (in alphabetical order, but with no claim to it being exhaustive), while adding to each subject one or two examples.

## 1 Antiquity

John Tzetzes (12th century) is together with Michael Psellos and Niketas of Herakleia (both 11th century) one of the most prolific authors of didactic poems in the entire Byzantine era. But while Psellos treats various fields of knowledge and Niketas concentrates first and foremost on grammar, Tzetzes is the great school teacher, covering the whole of classical studies, particularly the Homeric myths.<sup>21</sup>

However, Tzetzes' poems are not the only examples on ancient themes. An anonymous poem on the labours of Herakles in 211 trimeters (212 verses including title) is transmitted in cod. Upsal. 15.<sup>22</sup> The trimeters show a considerable number of resolutions (two short syllables instead of one long one), which can be seen as a sign of a rather early dating (not later than the 7th century). This assumption corresponds to the very correct use of prosody in the work, yet the paroxytone verse endings are maintained with great consistency throughout the poem, an element that rarely occurs before George Pisides (first half of the 7th century). The choice of subject-matter and some of its formulations make this work clearly didactic, and the insertion of scholia at a much later period is also typical of school texts. These later additions show which words, in the view of the scribe or a school-master using the poem for teaching, needed an explanation with the use of more common words.<sup>23</sup>

Another short catalogue-like poem on the same subject (the labours of Herakles) is transmitted in a couple of manuscripts dating from the 14th and

21 Wendel, "Tzetzes". Cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, p. 2136. See now particularly Rhoby, "Ioannes Tzetzes als Auftragsdichter". The different positions of Psellos, Tzetzes and Eustathios towards allegorical interpretation are treated in Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*.

22 Anonymous, edition with commentary: Knös, "Ein spätgriechisches Gedicht". Some corrections were added by Xanthoudides, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 18, pp. 296–97. Observations on metric provided by P. Maas have been worked in by the editor.

23 A few examples of the scholia: 1) πρόσταγμα· όρισμόν, πληρών· τελειών; 2) δεσπότην· αὐθέντην, θεσπισμάτων· μαντείων τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος; 3) εἶσι· ἀντί τοῦ ἔρχεται, κτενών· φονεύσων.

15th centuries.<sup>24</sup> The first two verses function as the title (they are written in Byzantine dodecasyllables<sup>25</sup>), whereas the six remaining verses (including the final one) are political.<sup>26</sup> The text has been printed several times, by Wagner among others.<sup>27</sup>

A further example of ancient themes in didactic works is Constantine Manasses (12th century), who wrote a biography of Oppianos in 52 political verses.<sup>28</sup> The poem is a typical *vita*<sup>29</sup> completely devoted to detailed information on the life and works of the individual at hand, without any allusion to the reader or patron. Yet, the statement that the poet devoted day and night (16: *νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν*) to their studies reminds us of similar phraseology in the didactic poems of Niketas of Herakleia.<sup>30</sup> A prose *vita* of Oppianos<sup>31</sup> also shows some striking parallels to the metrical biography. It seems that both biographies, the metrical and the prose, originate from one and the same author. This may have resulted from their use in the classroom, as an exercise on how to treat the same subject in verse and in prose.

## 2 Astrology, Astronomy

John Kamateros, a high official at the imperial chancellery, wrote a poem in more than 4000 political verses, dedicated (if we believe a dry note in the prose title) to the emperor Manuel I Komnenos.<sup>32</sup> Nobody can deny the didactic function of these verses, although any indirect mention of a possible addressee is rare,<sup>33</sup> and homage to the patron, so frequent in works of court poetry, is completely lacking, at least in the version transmitted by the extant manuscripts. John Kamateros is also the author of another poem on astronomy,

24 See the Inc. Τὸς Ἡρακλέους in Vassis, *Initia*.

25 For the Byzantine dodecasyllable see above, n. 14.

26 For the political verse, a line of 15 syllables with iambic rhythm and obligatory stress on the penultimate and a strong caesura after the eighth syllable, see particularly Jeffreys, "Nature"; Lauxtermann, *Spring*.

27 *Mythographi graeci*, vol. 1, ed. Wagner, p. 249.

28 Ed. Colonna, "De Oppiani", pp. 33–40.

29 For *vita* and other hagiographic terms, see now Hinterberger, "Byzantine Hagiography".

30 For this item, see Hörandner, "Didactic Poem", pp. 55–67. A similar formula is to be found in Georgios Lapithes (see below pp. 472–73).

31 Ed. Bussemaker, "Scholia et Paraphrases in Nicandrum et Oppianum", p. 243. Cf. Colonna, "De Oppiani".

32 John Kamateros, *Εἰσαγωγή ἀστρονομίας*, ed. Weigl.

33 See for example, 123: γνῶριμος ὑπάρχεις, 126: μὴ δόξης, 145: λέξομέν σοι, 154: ὑπόλαβε.

consisting of 1354 dodecasyllables.<sup>34</sup> Here, in the introductory verses (1–5), the names of the commissioner (the emperor Manuel) and of the author are mentioned. Now and then signal words like μάθε, ἴσθι and so on, occur.

Another 12th-century poem on astronomy is dedicated by Constantine Manasses to the *sebastokratorissa* Eirene, the famous literary patroness of the era.<sup>35</sup> The poem consists of 593 political verses, the first 15 functioning as a prologue. Following the initial address Ἄγε ψυχὴ βασιλίσσα μεγαλοπρεπεστάτη (“Come on, kingly and magnificent soul”) the verses 2–6 consist exclusively of an asyndeton of epithets paying tribute to the *sebastokratorissa*. The last 29 verses of the poem (565–93) form an epilogue; the initial address is resumed (Ἴδού ψυχὴ βασιλίσσα μεγαλοπρεπεστάτη), thus forming a kind of ring composition. Then the author justifies himself against those criticizing astrology, and finally he thanks the *sebastokratorissa* for her generous support. Notwithstanding the absence of the typical signs of a teacher-pupil interaction (vocatives etc.), the didactic purpose of the poem is obvious due to the choice of subject-matter.

### 3 Chronography

Like the poem on astrology, Manasses’ *World Chronicle* (Σύνοψις χρονική) is composed in political verse.<sup>36</sup> Both poems are dedicated to the *sebastokratorissa*, and both share, beyond factual information, a certain literary ambition. The patroness had wished to receive a clear and neatly arranged presentation of history, and Manasses had undertaken this difficult task. In verses 18–20 the author declares that he must interrupt the homage to the *sebastokratorissa* lest a reader should blame him for missing the poem’s aim, that of history, for the benefit of flattery. In the edition we have, the prologue is preceded by an epigram in nine hexameters, which may have been intended as an epilogue<sup>37</sup> accompanying the delivery of the finished poem: the epigram begins with the verse Δέχνησο τοῖον δῶρον ἀφ’ ἡμετέροιο πόνοιο (“Accept this gift from my efforts”).

34 Miller, “Poèmes”, pp. 53–111.

35 Jeffreys/Jeffreys, “Who was Eirene?”; Rhoby, “Verschiedene Bemerkungen”; Jeffreys, “The Sebastokratorissa Irene as Patron”, pp. 177–94.

36 *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum*, ed. Lampsidis.

37 See Lampsidis, “Zur Sebastokratorissa Eirene” and Hörandner, “Zur Topik”.



A similar example to Manasses' *World Chronicle*, comes from the 14th century, where a certain Ephraim from Ainos left a chronicle of more than 10,000 dodecasyllables.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4 Grammar, Including Metrics

In the 11th century some of the most important authors of the period (Michael Psellos, Niketas of Herakleia, and John Mauropus) left voluminous didactic poems on these subjects,<sup>39</sup> while a considerable number of versified treatises have been preserved in manuscripts from the subsequent centuries, most of them obviously designed for practical use. For example, a short hitherto unknown poem on the structure of the iambic trimeter was recently edited.<sup>40</sup> It consists of 16 dodecasyllables and is followed, in the only manuscript known so far, by a prose treatise on the same object. Obviously the character and function of the poem is didactic, as can be deduced not only from the contents, but also from the use of some typical formulations (5: νόει "regard", 6: ἐκδέχου "understand", 15: μαθών "learn"). Addresses like στεφηνόφορε "crowned one" (2) and πάντων ἄναξ "ruler of all" (15) show that the addressee is an emperor (or, perhaps, a future emperor). According to the editor some similarities with poems of the 12th century can be observed. The *terminus ante quem* of the composition of the text is the dating of the manuscript (end of 12th or beginning of 13th century).

As for its contents, length, and structure, the poem resembles those 17 dodecasyllables printed as number 14 in Westerink's edition of Psellos' poems;<sup>41</sup> these have now been attributed, on solid grounds, to Ioannikios, however. According to a note by Gallavotti,<sup>42</sup> the attribution to a certain Ioannikios is corroborated by Cod. Vat. Pal. gr. 92 s. XIII ex., which had escaped Westerink's attention. Taking this into account, we can identify the author of the poem with the Ioannikios that was a teacher and writer of σχέδη in the circle surrounding Theodore Prodromos.<sup>43</sup> One of the manuscripts (Vind. theol. gr.

38 *Ephraem Aenii Historia Chronica*, ed. Lampsidis.

39 Hörandner, "Didactic poem", pp. 55–67.

40 Delle Donne, "Sedici giambi".

41 *Michaelis Pselli poemata*, ed. Westerink, pp. 236–37.

42 Gallavotti, "Nota", p. 22.

43 Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos*, pp. 492–94 (poems 61 and 62); Vassis, "Graeca Sunt". For a recent bibliography on Ioannikios, see: Vassis, "Ἐὼν νέων"; Polemis, "Προβλήματα"; Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos*.

287) contains also a scholion,<sup>44</sup> rendering precisely in prose the contents of the poem.

However, due to their contents and conciseness, both poems are perfectly suitable for being used as mnemonic verses. This also applies to a poem of Ioannikios in 12 dodecasyllables recently edited by Vassis.<sup>45</sup> Its length and character resemble Westerink number 14, yet the content is not grammatical-metric, but paraenetical.

A similar, though much longer (100 dodecasyllables), poem on the iambic metre was composed by John Botaniates.<sup>46</sup> A couple of verses of this poem correspond nearly word for word with verses of Ps.-Psellos, no. 14.<sup>47</sup> From these correspondences, but also from different variants, it can be concluded that all these versified treatises were used time and again as support for teaching, and that they were also transmitted orally. Contrary to Ps.-Psellos, the poem of Botaniates mentions author and addressee. The author, a notary (tit. νομικοῦ, 95: ταβουλλάριος) on Crete, addresses his colleague on Chios. The use of the title δέσποτα (23) in this context may seem somewhat surprising, but it cannot be excluded that, in an earlier version, the poem was directed to an emperor.<sup>48</sup>

A number of didactic poems on questions of orthography—particularly on the varying meanings of words according to accent and breathing—give us an insight into language teaching in the Late and Post-Byzantine school. The texts are mostly composed in political verses, but also sometimes in the style of ecclesiastical hymns (canons), and usually arranged alphabetically. Now and then the (fictitious) pupil is addressed in the usual way; knowledge of the relevant rules shall protect the pupil from making a fool of himself by solecisms and barbarisms.

Miller edited such works from a manuscript which he dated to the 15th century,<sup>49</sup> and Pappadopoulos found the same texts (with considerable differences) in a manuscript of the 17th century, then still preserved in the library of the Evangelic School in Smyrna.<sup>50</sup> Several other late manuscripts came to light, some mentioning Theodore Prodromos (or Ptochoprodromos,

44 Published in Studemund, *Anecdota*, p. 199.

45 Vassis, “Των νέων”, p. 45. The manuscript title reads: Τοῦ μοναχοῦ κυροῦ Ἰωαννικίου.

46 Studemund, *Anecdota*, pp. 201–04; Cougny, “Théorie”.

47 Ps.-Psellos, 8: πρῶτον μὲν οὖν καὶ τρίτον ἢ πέμπτον πόδα. Botaniates, 16: πρῶτον τρίτον πέμπτον τε τῶν στίχων πόδα; P 10 τὸν δεύτερον δὲ καὶ τέταρτον ἀξίως; B 18 τὸν δεύτερον δὲ καὶ τέταρτον, ὡς θέμις; P 11 ἴαμβον ἀπλοῦν εἰσφέρων ἀπαρτίσεις; B 20 ἴαμβον οὖν τὸ μέτρον ἔστω σοι τόδε.

48 Change of recipient is a well-known phenomenon, see Psellos, poem 1.

49 Miller, “Lexiques grecs inédits”.

50 Miller/Pappadopoulos, “Notice”.

respectively) as the author, an attribution, according to Miller, that is rather unlikely due to a considerable number of mistakes.<sup>51</sup>

Cod. Paris. gr. 400 contains a schedographic lexicon in 907 political verses, edited by Boissonade,<sup>52</sup> and now examined meticulously by Gaul.<sup>53</sup> On the basis of a subscription of the manuscript, the year 1343/44 can be regarded as the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the poem. According to Gaul, a dating toward the end of the 12th century is the most plausible. As for its contents and structure, the poem resembles to a certain degree Psellos' poem on grammar,<sup>54</sup> and some elements of the vocabulary are reminiscent of the 12th century. However, the level of quality is significantly lower; vulgarisms are relatively frequent. Therefore Gaul supposes that the manuscript, and perhaps also the poem, had its origin not in Constantinople, but somewhere in the periphery of the empire, a conclusion which I do not find very convincing.

Be that as it may, it is obvious that we have here a didactic poem in the strict sense; time and again the (fictitious) pupil is addressed with the typical vocatives and imperatives. In the introduction the author declares that his aim is a discourse free of solecisms and barbarisms and the imitation of Christ (12–13 ἀσόλοικα ... ἀβάρβαρα ... χριστομιμήτως). At first sight this is a strange juxtaposition, perhaps to be understood as an allusion to the traditional term of ἱερὰ γράμματα as the way of teaching grammar by using religious texts. The main subject of the text is orthography and the *antistoicha* (18). The author consciously did not write in prose, but chose the fifteen-syllable verse (21: εἰς δεκαπέντε συλλαβὰς τὸν στίχον περιπλέξω) because this made it easier to memorize the text (22: ὅπως ἀποστηθίζομεν). However, this need not necessarily mean that the pupil was expected to learn the entire poem by heart; rather we could consider the poem as a kind of reference work.

At the end of John Geometres' (second half of the 10th century) hymns to the *Theotokos*, eight trimeters are added, the first two entitled Τρίμετροι, the remaining Εἰς τὴν διπλὴν (recte τριπλὴν?) ἑκατοντάδα τῶν ἠρωελεγειῶν Ἰαμβοί.<sup>55</sup> The unknown author of these verses plays with allegorical elements. For example, Christ's double nature is expressed in the metrical shape of the verses: complete hexameters show divine, *meiouroi* (i.e. pentameters) human origin.<sup>56</sup> Therefore they could be regarded as a theological and, at the same time,

51 Hörandner, *Theodoros*, no. 183–87.

52 Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca*, vol. 4, pp. 366–412.

53 Gaul, “Ἀνασσα”.

54 Psellos, no. 6, ed. Westerink (see above, n. 8).

55 For text of these verses, see John Geometres, *Hymns*, ed. J. Sajdak, pp. 61–78 and *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 106, pp. 865–68.

56 Van Opstall/Tomadaki, pp. 191–211 in the present book.

metrical didactic poem. The same applies to the 25 hexameters with alphabetical acrostics, following the iambs. They contain epithets of the Virgin, each time juxtaposing related words and word forms. So here too, grammatical and theological subject-matters are combined.

## 5 Jurisprudence

The *Synopsis legum* of Michael Psellos is a didactic poem of more than 1400 verses, that are mostly political, with just a few passages in dodecasyllables.<sup>57</sup> According to the title, the poem was written for the young emperor Michael Doukas on behalf of the latter's father. The question of the addressee is not settled definitely, it could also be another member of the imperial family. In any case, terms like: ἄναξ, δέσποτα, στεφηφόρε indicate a ruling monarch.<sup>58</sup> The main endeavor is to offer Greek translations and explanations of Latin juridical terms.

## 6 Mathematics and Geodesy

In cod. Barocc. gr. 76 s. xv, a poem on geodesy in 285 political verses is transmitted with the title Τοῦ σοφωτάτου Ψελλοῦ γεωμετρία διὰ στίχων ("Geometry of the most wise Psellos in verses").<sup>59</sup> From the very beginning various expressions addressed to the (fictitious) reader signal its didactic character.<sup>60</sup> Yet, as Westerink rightly observes,<sup>61</sup> due to the rather low linguistic register, and the liberal use of the metre, the attribution to Psellos has to be excluded.

57 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, pp. 123–78 (text no. 8), 178–90 (scholia). For the manuscript tradition, see id., xviii–xx.

58 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, p. 123.

59 Michael Psellos, *Poemata*, pp. 415–26; cf. also Schilbach, *Byzantinische metrologische Quellen*, pp. 116–25.

60 Some examples: 1: Μαθεῖν εἰ βούλει ἄριστα ... ("If you want to learn exactly ..."); 285: καὶ οὕτω τύχης τοῦ σκοποῦ καὶ οὐκ ἀστοχῆσεις μέτρου ("and so you may reach the target and will not miss the metron").

61 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, p. 415.

## 7 Medicine, Including Diet

We have already mentioned the advice on diet given within the “verses on the twelve months” (above, pp. 463–64), but similar detailed advice, though not referring to images, is contained in a poem of 100 dodecasyllables transmitted in various manuscripts.<sup>62</sup> The author-name is lacking, but, on the basis of language and metre, the poem must date from the Middle or Late Byzantine period.

Michael Psellos also wrote a long poem (1374 dodecasyllables) on various questions of medicine, a topic which he had also partly treated in prose treatises.<sup>63</sup> Eight dodecasyllables, also attributed to Psellos, give useful advice on diet as well.<sup>64</sup>

Nikephoros Blemmydes (13th century), in two treatises on blood and urine, used the model of hymnography (canon), obviously with the aim of better memorization.<sup>65</sup> The same may hold true for two anonymous short poems (18+5 dodecasyllables) on the seven ages of man, edited by Boissonade together with a prose treatise on the same subject.<sup>66</sup>

In the middle of the 15th century, George Sanginatio dedicated a poem to Pope Nicholas V in 55 political verses on the terms designating the parts of the human body.<sup>67</sup> A similar poem on the same subject, though transmitted anonymously, found its way into the *spuria* of Michael Psellos,<sup>68</sup> due to a number of verses obviously taken from Psellos’ poem no. 6 (“On grammar”). Both Sanginatio and the unknown author of Ps.-Psellos intended to enhance the readability of their anatomic treatises by juxtaposing scientific terms with their more common synonyms.

## 8 Morality

Theodore Prodromos’ verses *On Virtues and Vices* are a typical example of short poems that are useful for life, and thus suitable for teaching, without being didactic poems in the strict sense. In most manuscripts, the work consists of

62 Bussemaker, “Praecepta salubria”, pp. 132–34. Cf. Schreiner, *Codices Vaticani Graeci 867–932*, p. 30.

63 Most recent edition: Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, pp. 190–233.

64 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, pp. 237–38.

65 Kousis, “Les œuvres médicales de Nicéphore Blemmydès”.

66 Boissonade (above, n. 52), vol. 2, pp. 456–57; Cougny, *Epigrammatum Anthologia Palatina*, vol. 3, no. 3.240 and 3.254 respectively.

67 Ed. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* — *Bibliotheca graeca medii aevi*, vol. 5, vδ–vε.

68 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, no. 61.

26 iambic couplets, in each one of which a virtue or its corresponding vice,<sup>69</sup> speaking in the first person, presents its specific qualities.<sup>70</sup> The attribution to Prodrornos is reliable, whereas in some later textual witnesses the verses are ascribed to Psellos or to a certain Paniotes.<sup>71</sup> Similar to the “verses on the twelve months”, the original function of these verses may have been that of an inscription accompanying an illustration. Later it was certainly used in the classroom as a kind of exercise.

The same applies to a series of 53 iambic tetrasticha on virtues and vices, attributed to Andronikos Komnenos Palaiologos, the possible author of the romance of Kallimachos and Chrysorroë.<sup>72</sup> However, the differences are considerable: they refer not only to formal criteria like length of stanzas and number of verses, but also to the arrangement which is rather arbitrary, unlike the consequent alternating sequence of corresponding subjects in Prodrornos. Besides, the speaker is not, as in Prodrornos, the virtue or the vice itself, but the writer. We may surmise that the two authors, Prodrornos and Andronikos, reflect different manifestations of a common tradition.

A poem on morals in 916 political verses, divided in 100 chapters, was edited by Miller from cod. Paris. gr. 2750 A.<sup>73</sup> He attributed the verses, on the basis of style and vocabulary, to Constantine Manasses. In contrast to Miller, Mazal speaks of an anonymous imitator of Manasses’ novel.<sup>74</sup> The address ὦ θεία κεφαλή “oh divine head” at the beginning of the epilogue (v. 899) seems to indicate a person belonging to the imperial court as a patron. On the other hand, both scholars conclude, from the male form βέλτιστε “best one” in v. 1, that the person who ordered the poem was a prince, not a princess.

George Lapithes—a contemporary (first half of the 14th century) and correspondent of Nikephoros Gregoras, Gregorios Kyprios, and other intellectuals of the time—wrote a poem on morality in 1501 political verses,<sup>75</sup> edited by Boissonade from cod. Paris. gr. 2877. In the manuscript it bears the title Στίχοι πολιτικοὶ αὐτοσχέδιοι εἰς κοινὴν ἀκοήν τοῦ σοφωτάτου κυρίου Γεωργίου Λαπίθου τοῦ Κυπρίου (“Spontaneous political verses written for common performance by the most wise mister George Lapithes from Cyprus”). While αὐτοσχέδιοι

69 Note that towards the end of the series some manuscripts contain couplets referring not to moral, but to rhetoric, philosophy etc.

70 Piccolos, *Supplément*. Festa, “Nota sui versiculi”, pp. 569–76. A new critical edition with translation and commentary is now accessible in Zagklas, *Theodore Prodrornos*, no. 15.

71 Rhoby/Zagklas, “Paniotes”.

72 Ozbic, “I Κεφάλαια”.

73 Miller, “Poème moral de Constantin Manassès”.

74 Mazal, “Das moralische Lehrgedicht”.

75 Lapithes, “Poème moral”.

can be rendered as “spontaneous”, “simple”, or the like, εἰς κοινήν ἀκοήν seems to indicate an oral presentation. In the first verse the recipient is addressed with ὦ βέλτιστε “oh best one”, and throughout the whole poem imperatives are frequently used, thus giving the text the character of a guide for a general audience.

Danezes found a close resemblance between this poem and the *Spaneas*.<sup>76</sup> Both have a paraenetic character, the level of language in Lapithes’ poem being on the whole higher than in the *Spaneas*.

## 9 Rhetoric

Given the high importance of rhetoric in Byzantine poetry, it goes without saying that acquiring rhetorical skill played an important part in literary teaching. We are not very well informed on the details of what was happening in the Byzantine classroom, yet, composing, imitating, and orally performing model texts—be they in prose or in poetry—was certainly one of the favourite methods used. We can see this in the way Theodore Prodromos reminds his former pupil of the high esteem the latter had shown for the teacher’s speeches, especially those in verses.<sup>77</sup> Besides, the students could profit from the indications offered by schoolbooks on what to observe in order to produce good verse.<sup>78</sup>

Michael Psellos’ poem on rhetoric in 545 political verses<sup>79</sup> is transmitted together with his poem on grammar and directed to the same addressee, the future emperor Michael Doukas.<sup>80</sup> As Westerink convincingly shows, Psellos offers, as it were, a versified commentary on the prose treatises of the *corpus Hermogenianum*. The introductory verses,<sup>81</sup> together with the closing ones,<sup>82</sup>

76 Danezes, “Ο Σπανέας”.

77 Theodore Prodromos, ed. Hörandner, no. lxxi, vv. 7–10: “Ἐτι τυγχάνων ἐν παισίν, ἔτι τὰ σχέδη γράφων | καὶ γραμματικεύομενος καὶ ποιηταῖς προσέχων | ἐξήρησός μου τῶν σχεδῶν, ἐξήρησο τῶν στίχων, | ἐκείνων δὲ καὶ μάλιστα τῶν ὑπὲρ βασιλέως (“Still among children, still producing *schede*, attending grammar school and busy with poets you were hanging on my *schede*, hanging on the verses, particularly those praising the Emperor”).

78 Hörandner, “Beobachtungen”; id., “Pseudo-Gregorios Korinthios”.

79 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, pp. 103–22, no. 7.

80 For the dedication, see above, p. 470.

81 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, no. 7, vv. 1–3: Εἰ μάθοις τῆς ῥητορικῆς τὴν τέχνην, στεφηφόρε, | ἔξεις καὶ λόγου δύναμιν, ἔξεις καὶ γλώττης χάριν, | ἔξεις καὶ πιθανότητα τῶν ἐπιχειρημάτων (“If you learn the art of rhetoric, bearer of the crown, you will have power of discourse, you will have grace of speech, you will have credibility of enterprises”).

82 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, vv. 541–45: Ἔστω γοῦν σοὶ τεχνύδριον ἢ σύνοψις τῆς τέχνης, | εὐσύνοπτόν τι μάθημα, σύντομον, τετμημένον, | γλυκύτητος ἀνάμεστον, χάριτος πεπλησμένον,

give insights into the basic tendencies pursued by the poet. Both in the prologue and in the epilogue, Psellos uses terms suitable for any reader, but especially for a (future) emperor. Note the word *παίζων* “playing”, a hint at the widespread technique of using puns for making the task easier.

## 10 Theology

Arsenius of Pantellaria (8th or early 9th century) wrote a book epigram in 130 iambic trimeters (*ἐπίγραμμα ἰαμβικόν tit.*)<sup>83</sup> on the *Pandektes* and its author Antiochos. The focus lies on the appreciation of the work in the light of antique pagan and biblical literature. The poem shows didactic elements, by allusion to several authors and by the vocabulary, characterized by numerous unusual (“barocco”) words and word formations. As for the date of composition, Odorico assumes a time around 800, and identifies the author tentatively with Arsenios, the author of the poem on David edited by Follieri.<sup>84</sup> Some parallels are partly due to the comparison of David with Homer and Orpheus; however, in the poem on David there are no bizarre word formations as in the poem on Antiochos.

A poem on spring in 148 octosyllables, equally ascribed to a certain Arsenios, shows some elements of erudition concerning vocabulary and motifs.<sup>85</sup> As for the function, the editor supposes plausibly that the poem was recited by the teacher and his pupils on the occasion of an Easter festivity.

The so-called *Chiliostichos Theologia* of Leo Choirosphaktes, a theological treatise of around 1150 dodecasyllables (early 10th century), based on the *Theological Orations* of Gregory of Nazianzus, has only recently been edited for the first time.<sup>86</sup> As can be deduced from an address in the last chapter (v. 1131 τῶν ἀνακτόρων κλέος “glory of the palace”), the poem was dedicated to an emperor, namely the still very young Constantine VII Prophyrogenetos.<sup>87</sup> The prologue of eight verses, prefixed to the poem in the only known complete

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| ἡδυεπές, ἡδύφθογγον, ἡδυμελές ἐκτόπως, | ὡς ἂν καὶ παίζων λογικῶς κερδαίνῃς τι τοῦ λόγου  
 (“May this small opus be the synopsis of the art, a schoolbook clear, concise, and well defined, full of pleasure and grace, with pleasant words, pleasant sound and extraordinarily fine tunes, so that by playing with words you may gain something of the discourse”.)

83 Odorico, “La sanzione”.

84 Follieri, “Un carne giambico”.

85 Critical edition and analysis are in Kaltsogianni. “A Byzantine metrical *ekphrasis* of Spring”. Cf. Crimi, “I versi per la domenica di Pasqua”.

86 Leo Magistros, *Chiliostichos Theologia*, ed. I. Vassis.

87 Vassis, *Leon Magistros*, vv. 22–24.



manuscript, poses some difficulties of interpretation. In verses 3–4 we read: εἰ δ' αὖ μαθημάτων γε νῆις τυγχάνεις, | ἃ μὴ νοεῖς ἕασον εἰδόσιν φίλοις (“but if you are not expert in sciences, leave, what you do not know, to expert friends”). If Vassis’ dating is correct (which is more than probable) then Constantine was three to seven years old at the time of composition of the poem. Therefore, should the dedication to the prince have anything to do with reality, it could be just in the sense of a theological guide for his future. If this was the case, however, the recommendations expressed in the verses above would hardly be suitable for an emperor. Thus, it is highly probable that the prologue was not part of the poem from the very beginning, but an addition made at a later date (perhaps by an anonymous reader) when the poem was no more *only* for Constantine. Vassis draws a similar conclusion, based on the word τετράδελτος in v. 5.<sup>88</sup>

Among the *spuria* of Psellos, Westerink critically edited a poem of around 250–87 political verses on Liturgy;<sup>89</sup> this was first edited, and erroneously attributed to Psellos, by Joannou.<sup>90</sup>

Towards the end of the 11th century, Philippos Monotropos produced the *Dioptra*,<sup>91</sup> a poem in more than 7000 political verses, transmitted in no less than about 80 Greek and 180 Slavic manuscripts.<sup>92</sup> It treats various theological and philosophical questions, from the Creation up to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time. The author has chosen the form of a dialogue, the questions being posed by the soul (ψυχὴ), and the answers being given by the body (literally the flesh: σάρξ). Thus, teaching takes place on a double level, firstly by informing the reader about various subject-matters, secondly by constructing a teacher-pupil-model between the two fictitious persons, i.e. a *prosopopoiia* (personification).

Nikolaos III Grammatikos (1084–1111) is the author of a poem of 423 political verses on the various periods of Lent, addressed to a Protos of Athos who had asked for it to be produced.<sup>93</sup> The contents and character of the poem are those of a guide through the relevant canonical prescriptions. These had been

88 Vassis, *Leon Magistros*, pp. 155–56.

89 Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli*, pp. 399–406, no. 56.

90 Joannou, “Aus den unedierten Schriften des Psellos”. For dating, manuscript tradition, and authorship, see Jacob, “Un opusculé”, pp. 161–78. An English translation is being prepared by R. Betancourt in a thesis at Yale University.

91 Until now the text has only been available in an old and unreliable edition (Athens 1920). A new, critical edition is now being prepared by Eirini Afentoulidou; see her and Jürgen Fuchsbauer’s chapter in this volume.

92 For the Slavic version, see now Miklas/Fuchsbauer, *Die kirchenslavische Übersetzung der Dioptra des Philippos Monotropos*.

93 Koder, “Das Fastengedicht”.

constituted (in prose) by decisions of the Synod, and now they were shaped in verse, obviously for the sake of better readability and memorability. Keywords are εὐσύνοπτον καὶ σύντομον (“concise and well articulated”) (v. 3), just like in Psellos’ poem on rhetoric: v. 542: εὐσύνοπτόν τι μάθημα, σύντομον, τετμημένον. Here and there stress is laid on the author’s lack of poetic ability (410: τὸ πάμπαν ἄμουσόν μου) which, however, he sees compensated by the awareness that God loves what is done according to our forces (412: εἰ δὲ τὸ κατὰ δύναμιν φίλον Θεῷ ὑπάρχει).<sup>94</sup>

## 11 Zoology and Botany

The impressive oeuvre of Manuel Philes (first half of the 14th century) contains, beside numerous epigrams and occasional poems,<sup>95</sup> some didactic material.<sup>96</sup> This includes a lengthy poem of 2015 dodecasyllables on the qualities of animals; a description of the elephant in 381 dodecasyllables; a poem on plants in 365 dodecasyllables; as well as some minor poems, such as one on the silkworm. The poems are dedicated to an emperor who is addressed here and there by epithets like βασιλεύς or Αὐσονάρχης (ruler of the Romans = Byzantines).



As stated above, metre plays an important part in Byzantine didactic poetry. Although there are no strict laws concerning the metre to be used in didactic poems, there are certain tendencies varying from period to period. In Antiquity the hexameter was the usual metre for didactic poems. Given that, from Late Antiquity onwards, neither the rhythm of the hexameter nor epic vocabulary was understood any more by the majority of readers, the use of the hexameter for purposes of instruction was no longer useful. To a certain extent the heroic metre remained in use through the whole Byzantine era,

94 For the origin of this widespread *topos*, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *In laudem fratris Caesarii* (Or. 7), ed. Calvet-Sebasti, pp. 180–245.

95 The most important editions are: *Manuelis Philae Carmina*, ed. Miller; *Manuelis Philae carmina inedita*, ed. Martini; Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase*; Braounou-Pietsch, *Beseelte Bilder*.

96 *Phile de animalibus, etc.*, ed. Dübner/Lehrs; *Manuele File, le proprietà degli animali*, ed. and trans. Caramico.

but primarily for representation, and much less for instruction.<sup>97</sup> In this field it was widely replaced by the iambic trimeter and then its Byzantine variant, the Byzantine dodecasyllable. To quote some examples: already in the 4th century, Amphilochios of Iconium, contemporary and compatriot of the Cappadocian Fathers, used the iambic trimeter for his advice on how to handle Hellenic literature,<sup>98</sup> as did the anonymous author of the poem on the labours of Herakles (above, pp. 464–65). George of Pisidia, too, wrote his *Hexaemeron* and nearly all of his other poems in iambic trimeters.

At the beginning of the 10th century the political verse emerged in literature. Soon after its first appearance, the political verse became a favourite metre, if not *the* favourite metre, of didactic poetry. The first well-known author to use the political verse widely for this purpose was Michael Psellos in the 11th century, and it may be the example of this prominent author that paved the way for the further use of the political verse in poems of instruction. Suffice to say that another prominent author, John Tzetzes, in the 12th century, made use of this metre in most of his poems.

Beside poems in the political verse we have to mention another type of poem, viz. those following the model of hymnography. There are numerous poems on various subjects (grammar, medicine etc.) composed *πρὸς τὸ ...*, that is following the rhythm and the tune of canons.

But what makes an author choose the metrical form for transmitting scientific information, and what makes him choose a *particular* metre? The answer usually offered by modern scholars is to memorize. Indeed it is much easier to remember verses than prose, and this refers particularly to the political verse, with its simple and memorable rhythm, and to the canons, whose rhythm and tune were familiar to everybody from liturgy. Let us dwell a little on the term “mnemonic verses”. As stated above, in modern publications on ancient and medieval Latin literature this type of poem is hardly ever mentioned, because it is not regarded as part of literature; for Byzantine literature it is a different case. Given the great number of relevant texts, they deserve more attention, yet the question remains: which poems are to be called mnemonic and which are not?

It is not easy to answer this question. Of course in some cases it is evident that a certain poem has been written in order to be learnt by heart by students. Think, for example, of the catalogue-like poems of Nikephoros Kallistou

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97 It seems that didactic poetry in the heroic metre sees a certain revival in the 11th and even more in the 12th century: Bernard, *Writing*, pp. 229–243. For the decisive role of Theodore Prodromos in this development, see Zagklas, *Theodore*, pp. 90–95.

98 Amphilochios of Iconium, *Iambs*, ed. Oberg.

Xanthopoulos, mentioned at the beginning of this contribution (above, nn. 15–16), to which numerous similar cases could be added. We even find here and there in surviving texts allusions to learning by heart, such as in the Late-Byzantine schedographic lexicon (above, n. 52). In other cases things are much less evident. Length could be a criterion. We all know that in former times people learned much more by heart than today; the very restricted availability of books made it necessary, the absence of media saturation made it possible. Yet can we really suppose that a Byzantine student knew a poem of 1000 verses (or more) by heart? Hardly. Short lists or sentences, yes. But in all probability longer poems were only partially learned by heart, be it from the poem itself, or from anthologies.

Repeatedly the question of the literary quality of didactic poems or of their poetical character is raised; it is a question of the relationship between didactic and aesthetic value. Can a didactic metrical text be also regarded as a piece of literature and poetry, or is there a strict opposition between didactic and poetical texts? I do not think that such a strict opposition really exists. In this respect the late Alexander Kazhdan held a very rigorous point of view. According to him a text does not belong to literature if it presents nothing but scientific or practical information. To be regarded as literature, a text has to exceed the sphere of mere information by what he calls superinformation, i.e. the embedding of information in a more or less explicit expression of general views on man, society, the universe etc. So Kazhdan's criterion is essentially one of ideas, of thought and world view, although he recognizes as devices of superinformation also rhetorical elements like metaphor, simile, rhythm or word play.<sup>99</sup>

Now in our context the question is: can didactic poems be classified as pieces of poetry simply because of their metrical form, in spite of their mostly technical contents? Basically this question has to be raised and answered for each text individually. As I mentioned above, there are great differences regarding level of style and overall character in such poems. As in Antiquity, in some cases literary ambition predominates, whereas in other examples the focus lies mainly on transmitting knowledge. On the whole simplicity prevails, due to the didactic function and the choice of metre, particularly in the case of the

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99 Kazhdan/Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, pp. 98–99: "(literature) begins when a text contains not only exact information but also unformulated elements that are only indirectly connected with information. This super information may appear as a general context ... or it may be an artificial or rhetorical embellishment of the narrative, such as metaphor, simile, rhyme, rhythm, or word play."

political verse. And yet there is hardly any piece which can be completely denied conscious literary shaping.

Let us now have a look at some typical motifs and *topoi* which occur rather often, but of course only in longer poems, not in the extremely short lists or catalogues.

The title often gives detailed information about the author, the patron and the aim of the poem. I mentioned already a typical case, the title of Psellos, poem 6, on grammar.<sup>100</sup> Of course, when interpreting manuscript titles, we have always to be cautious, bearing in mind that these titles, as we read them in the manuscripts, often do not go back to the author himself, but to a contemporary, or even later, reader. If there are different wordings of title in different manuscripts, it can be a delicate question which form of title we may follow. In the case of Psellos, Poem 6, it seems that the title presented by the main text witness is not far from reality. It tells us for whom the poem was composed, by whom it was ordered, and for which purpose it was written. In this case the title gives even more information, namely the type of verse (the political verse) and the reasons for choosing this. According to the writer of the title, the political verse is clear (διὰ στίχων σαφῶν καὶ πολιτικῶν),<sup>101</sup> and it has been chosen in order to introduce the prince into learning sciences by its simple and pleasant character (διὰ τῆς εὐκολίας καὶ ἡδύτητος).

In the texts themselves (primarily in the *prooimia*) time and again the authors mention the simplicity of language and metre, explaining their decision to use this rather low level style, and more or less apologizing for it. Indeed writers like Michael Psellos or John Tzetzes, familiar with high style literary production, feel the necessity to explain why, in this special case, they chose to use a lower register of language and metre. They did it for the sake of better transmitting difficult subjects in an understandable way. We could ask why are they doing this? Are the didactic poems meant for teaching students at school? Or are they addressing an audience not familiar with Greek language on a higher level, like princesses who had come from abroad? Obviously the answer to this question, if it can be answered at all, will be different from case to case, and in some examples both explanations can be valid. Precious material in this respect can be found in Michael Jeffreys' classic article on the nature and origins of the political verse.<sup>102</sup>

100 See above, n. 8.

101 This is not the place to discuss the various meanings of πολιτικός. However, without any doubt, the author is thinking of the political verse. Yet, to be precise, taking account of the καὶ in the above passage, διὰ στίχων σαφῶν καὶ πολιτικῶν could be understood as "by clear and simple verses".

102 Jeffreys, "Nature".

Sometimes hints at the audience, made occasionally in the course of the text, may be helpful. Vocatives like τέκνον, φίλε, νέε will not be useful, but if the recipient is addressed with words like δέσποτα, ἀναξ or στεφηφόρε, this is relevant. Yet it cannot be excluded that a poem originally dedicated to a person belonging to the imperial court was also—from the beginning or at a later date—used for general teaching.

And what does it really mean, if, in the introductory passage of the astrological poem of Constantine Manasses, the *sebastokratorissa* receives—among other, more general laudatory attributes—the epithets φιλόστορ, φιλολόγε, μουσόθρεπτε, παράδεισε παντοδαπῆς σοφίας? Was she really fond of learning and literature, and was she a paradise of wisdom? Or did her merits just consist of supporting the poor literati? The verse-chronicle of Manasses, also dedicated to the *sebastokratorissa*, begins with the usual praise, followed by some lines about the order the author had received from the patroness to write this poem. Then he speaks about the pains he had to endure, and he confesses:

... παραμυθοῦνται γὰρ ἡμῶν τοὺς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις μόχθους  
αἱ μεγαλοδωρία σου καὶ τὸ φιλότιμόν σου,  
καὶ τὸν τοῦ κόπου καύσωνα καὶ τῆς ταλαιπωρίας  
αἱ δωρεαὶ δροσίζουσι κενούμεναι συχνάκις

... for your great gifts and your ambition give consolation in my troubles with literature, and the gifts, frequently poured out, bedew the burning heat of pain and poverty.<sup>103</sup>

These verses can only be understood as referring to material support the author had received repeatedly from the patroness in order to enable him to finish the great poem. Undoubtedly the author solemnly handed over the dedicatory copy to the patroness. Did he also recite the poem (or perhaps parts of it) in her presence? Probably, although it cannot be strictly proven.

So gratitude towards the patron is an essential *topos* of the *prooimion* of a literary work whatsoever, be it in verse or prose, be it didactic in the strict sense, or not. Another widespread exordial *topos* in didactic works consists of the laying of stress on the importance of the subject-matter and the profit the reader (or listener) may draw from the treatise at hand. In didactic poems a third element is added: the simple and playful character, or, to be more precise, the combination of serious contents and playful realization, the interplay of

103 *Constantini Manassis Breviarium chronicum*, ed. Lampsidis, vol. 1, p. 5.

σεμνόν and παιδιά.<sup>104</sup> Using the political verse is regarded as a play, and beyond this the teachers often insert puns and wordplays, which serve the same purpose, viz. to enhance understanding of a difficult and often dry content.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, although we can hardly speak of didactic poetry as a homogeneous genre of its own, I have tried to demonstrate by the examples gathered in this chapter that Byzantine didactic poetry, even in its most simple examples, shows traits of conscious literary shaping. More often than not, we are unable to decide whether a given text served a didactic purpose, be it from the beginning or at a later stage of their use-life. What counts is simply the function of the poems, sometimes declared *expressis verbis* within the texts themselves, in other cases testified in a more hidden way. Therefore, these products are to be taken seriously as witnesses of the social, intellectual, and literary life of Byzantium.

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104 Michael Psellos, *Poems*, ed. Westerink, no. 7 (On rhetoric), vv. 541–45.

105 Καιρός μὲν ὕπνου, καὶ καθεύδειν ἦν δέον· ἀλλ' οὖν δι' ὑμᾶς, παῖδες, ἀγρυπνητέον. | Ἡ νύξ δὲ τοῦ νύ λήξιν ἐξεταζέτω. (“Time to go to sleep; however, I have to be awake for your sake, children. The night may examine the ending with Ny”): Niketas of Herakleia, *On Words Ending With Ny*, ed. Boissonade, vol. 3, pp. 323–27 (vv. 1–3).

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# Hymn Writing in Byzantium: Forms and Writers

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## 1 Introduction

To the Byzantine mind, hymn writing was a miraculously bestowed, divine gift. A wealth of examples in the hagiographical literature attest to this. The most renowned case is that of Romanos the Melode. He was endowed with the gift of writing *kontakia* in a dream in which he swallowed a scroll (*tomon chartou*) handed to him by the Mother of God, and afterwards began to sing the hymn on Christ's Nativity.<sup>1</sup> The lavishly illuminated, 11th-century liturgical manuscript *Vaticanus graecus* 1613, known as the *Menologion of Basil II*, illustrates this narrative, promoting the tradition.<sup>2</sup> Such miraculous endowments became a hagiographical commonplace, recurring with striking variety in the *Lives* of hymnodist saints and religious writers, such as Ephrem the Syrian, Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus, Kosmas the Melode, Joseph the Hymnographer, or the *meGas maistor* John Koukouzeles.<sup>3</sup> Even as a hagiographical *topos*, such stories are indicative of the high esteem hymn writing enjoyed throughout the Byzantine era.<sup>4</sup>

As poems meant to be chanted in church services, hymns were—and remain—inseparable from music.<sup>5</sup> Closely connected with Orthodox doctrine, liturgy and worship, they disclose a variety of poetic forms, metrical patterns, melodies, and linguistic and stylistic levels, something that reflects the Church's efforts to respond to changing liturgical needs. Irrespective of their literary quality, they are justly regarded as genuine witnesses to the

1 Koder, "Romanos Melodos", pp. 120–21, n. 39. I am grateful to Professor Johannes Koder (Vienna) for our discussions on hymnography. The completion of this chapter has also profited from the research project on hymnography funded by the University of Cyprus.

2 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1613, fol. 78. On a date c.AD 1000, see Luzzi, "El *Menologio de Basilio II*", p. 47.

3 E.g. Symeon the Metaphrast, *Life of Ephrem*, in *PG*, col. 1260CD; Niketas the Patrikios, *Life of Andrew of Crete*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, pp. 170.22–171.10; John Merkouropoulos, *Life of John of Damascus and Kosmas the Melode*, ed. id., pp. 337.16–340.2 (Kosmas) and 348.24–350.4 (John); Theophanes the Monk, *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, ed. id., p. 8.18–30; *Life of John Koukouzeles*, ed. Eustratiades, p. 8.

4 Tomadakes, "Τόμου", esp. 193–94; Krueger, *Writing*, pp. 77–78 and 189–90.

5 Hannick, "Exégèse", p. 209; Wellesz, *History*, p. viii.

true spirit of the Church. However, despite their importance in the Byzantine world and to modern students thereof, it is striking that the hymns of most distinguished hymnodists, with the exception of Romanos, still await even a first critical edition.

### 1.1 *Definition and Distinctions*

The term “hymnography”, literally meaning “hymn writing” (ὑμνον γράφειν), and designating all forms of liturgical poetry, was established by J.-B. Pitra in 1867.<sup>6</sup> For practical reasons, it is distinguished from the writing of non-liturgical, more personal “religious poetry”.<sup>7</sup> The hymn-writers speak as preachers and in the collective voice. They convey the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church, trying to mold them to a particular hymn form and a specific metrical pattern, suitable for recitation or singing. They generally chose to write in comprehensible *koine* and accentual rhythm for reasons of clarity, and to appeal to a broad audience, but after the second half of the 7th century, they sometimes wrote in classicizing language. By contrast, the authors of religious poetry freely expressed their own thoughts and feelings, often using Atticizing Greek and quantitative metres (prosody). Of the distinction criteria—purpose, content, and form—purpose is the most crucial. Of course, the dividing line between the two categories becomes blurred when it comes to liturgical and non-liturgical poems on similar topics or with related functions, such as the poems of compunction (*katanyxis*).<sup>8</sup> The verse-calendars of Christopher of Mytilene, modeled according to melodic patterns (*heirmoi*) and preserved in liturgical books, constitute a borderline case. Used like *synaxaria*, they cannot be classified as hymnography. Yet their classification has split scholarly opinion.<sup>9</sup>

6 The word ὑμνογραφία is not attested in the lexica H.G. Liddell/R. Scott/H.S. Jones/R. McKenzie (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon. With a Revised Supplement*, ed. by P.G.W. Glare, Oxford 1996; G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961 (repr. 1978); Trapp, E., et al. (ed.), *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität*, besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts, 2 Bände, (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Byzantinistik VI), Vienna 1994–2017 [hereafter *LBG*]. On the term see Pitra, *Hymnographie*, pp. 3–4; Mitsakis, *Ἑμνογραφία*, p. 47; Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, p. 4; Krueger, “Authorial Voice”, pp. 109–17; id., *Liturgical Subjects*, pp. 29–65.

7 Tomadakes, *Ἑμνογραφία*, pp. 9–12; Komines, *Ἐπίγραμμα*, pp. 23, 25; cf. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 37–38. On such poems, see Mitsakis, *Ἑμνογραφία*, p. 107–39; Efthymiadis, “Hagiography in Verse”, vol. 2, pp. 163–64.

8 Giannouli, “Die Tränen”; ead., “Catanyctic Religious Poetry”. On non-liturgical hymns, see below, p. 504.

9 Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, p. 107; Christopher of Mytilene, *Calendars*, ed. Follieri, pp. 8–15 and 26f.

To conclude, even in this narrow sense, hymnography constitutes one of the richest areas of Byzantine literature,<sup>10</sup> and it is this precise area that will constitute the framework for the present chapter. After some brief remarks on versification, the focus will be on the main hymn forms and their prominent representatives, concluding with the state and prospects of research.

## 1.2 *Versification*

Hymns were predominantly structured in strophes rather than in verses, while only a relatively small number were written in prosodic or accentual metres.<sup>11</sup> Strophic hymns, like accentual poetry from the 4th century onwards, are governed by two distinct rules of versification, i.e. isosyllaby (using the same number of syllables) and *homotonia* (regulation of the stress accent). In practice, this means that all strophes repeat the same metrical pattern of a model strophe (*heirmos*) for the sake of the melody, as Theodosios Grammatikos noted in the 9th century.<sup>12</sup> Both rules had to be observed in respect of the stanzas as well as of their corresponding colons.<sup>13</sup> The adherence to these rules required considerable skill on the part of the hymnodist regarding word choice and order, and syntactic and morphological variation. However, any deviations from the *heirmos* could be corrected in the musical performance of the hymn.<sup>14</sup>

## 2 Hymn Forms

### 2.1 *Introduction*

It is not possible to reconstruct a detailed history of Byzantine hymnography, not only because it did not develop in a uniform or linear fashion, but also because of the rarity of examples.<sup>15</sup> This state of affairs stems from a number of factors. One of these was the absence of favorable conditions for hymn writing, e.g. during the persecutions of the first three centuries AD. There was also the resistance of the Church to new hymns for fear of encouraging heresy, as well

10 On hymns in this *narrow sense*, see Tomadakes, “*Ἑμνογραφία*”, col. 944. On the term hymnology as an alternative designation for this field of study, see id., “*Ἑμνολογία*”, col. 949. See also Latke, *Hymnus*.

11 For hymns in political verse, see Lauxtermann, *The Spring*, pp. 35–37; Hörandner, “Poetic Forms”, p. 138; Stathes, *Ἡ δεκαπεντασύλλαβος*. For the iambic *kanones*, see below, pp. 497 and 505.

12 Theodosios Grammatikos, *Scholia*, ed. Hilgard, p. 569.39–43; Christ, “Bedeutung”, pp. 100–02; Lauxtermann, *The Spring*, p. 58; Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric*, pp. 99–100.

13 Lauxtermann, *The Spring*, pp. 80–86.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 57; Conomos, *Hymnography*, pp. 11 and 20.

15 Conomos, *Hymnography*, pp. 6–7; Mitsakis, *Ἑμνογραφία*, p. 51.

as the negative reactions of conservative groups to hymn singing in communal worship. However, there was also the loss of many early hymns in the selection process involved in standardizing the liturgical books. Furthermore, the late transmission of many early hymns, and above all their anonymity, complicate the work of arranging them in chronological order.

## 2.2 *Early Christian Hymns*

Early Christians observed Paul's admonition about incessant prayer and singing to God; continuing Jewish practice, they sang psalms and biblical canticles.<sup>16</sup> Once Christianity had become the official religion of the empire of New Rome, hymn writing increased considerably in the eastern part of the Empire. In the 4th century, Egeria witnessed the singing of hymns in Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> A significant impetus came from the need to fight the heretics with their own weapons, since chanting had proven to be a successful means of propaganda.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the Church made regular attempts to control the choice of hymns and singers, in order to protect the faithful from erroneous beliefs.<sup>19</sup>

The earliest hymns, preserved in the compilation of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and on papyri, are dated to the 4th century. Most of them are addressed to Christ, except the intercessory prayer to the Mother of God in the *Rylands Library Papyrus 470* (4th c.), which is the earliest known hymn addressed to the Theotokos.<sup>20</sup> The famous hymn "Φῶς ἱλαρόν" (*O Gladsome Light*), as sung today, is probably not earlier than the time of Sophronios of Jerusalem (634–38).<sup>21</sup> In the 5th century, hymn singing began to spread throughout Christian churches. But there were still dissenting voices in austere monastic circles rejecting it as an obstacle to contrition and other ascetic virtues.<sup>22</sup>

16 1Thess. 5.17, Col. 3.16 and Eph. 5.19–20; Wellesz, *History*, pp. 35–41; Conomos, *Hymnography*, p. 4. On the influence of Jewish practice, see Phillips, "Prayer", pp. 31–58.

17 Egeria, *Itinerarium*, ed. Pêtre, pp. 208–13; cf. Grosdidier de Matons, "Liturgie", pp. 32–33.

18 Sokrates, *History*, 6.8, ed. Hansen/Périchon/Maraval, p. 296.13–19; Sozomenos, *History*, 3.16.7, ed. Bidez/Hansen, p. 129.1–8. See also Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, p. 6.

19 On the 4th century, see the *Canons of the Council of Laodicea*, nos. 15 and 59, ed. Joannou, vol. 1.1, pp. 136 and 138. For similar restrictions in AD 691/92, see *Canons of the Council in Trullo*, no. 75, ed. Ohme, pp. 266–67.

20 *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.35.17–20; 7.47 and 7.48, ed. Metzger, vol. 3, pp. 76, 112 and 114; D'Aiuto, "Un antico inno", pp. 50–52. See also Mitsakis, *Υμνογραφία*, pp. 58–59 and 62–64. On the prayer to the Theotokos, see Cunningham, "The Use", p. 118, n. 6.

21 Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, ed. Pruche, pp. 508–10, esp. p. 509, n. 4. On its date, see Plank, *Φῶς ἱλαρόν*, pp. 6, 23, and p. 137.

22 E.g. Longo, "Il testo", p. 256.97–104 and p. 266.293–98 (cf. pp. 227–30). See also Frøyshov, "La réticence", pp. 229–45. On reading vs recitation of the psalms, see Parpulov, "Psalters", pp. 82–84.



Despite these reservations, hymns eventually became an established part of liturgical writing. The doctrinal controversies, the evolution of the services, and not least the authority of famous hymnodists, favored the introduction of complex hymn forms for the different divine offices.

### 2.3 *Main Hymn Forms*

The hymn forms of the *troparion*, the stichic hymn and the *kontakion* date back to the 5th century. The *kontakion* and the *kanon* constitute the major hymn forms, while there are a variety of shorter ones.<sup>23</sup>

#### 2.3.1 Troparion

The *troparion*, a short hymn in rhythmical prose, is deemed to be the earliest hymn form, attested as far back as the mid-5th century. After the emergence of the major hymn forms, the term denotes any strophe conforming to a metrical model (*heirmos*).<sup>24</sup> A noteworthy, early *troparion* is the famous supplicatory *Trisagion*. According to tradition, it was an angelic chant, disclosed to the people of Constantinople by a child, when a powerful earthquake struck the imperial city some time before 450. It enjoyed widespread popularity in Byzantium, not least because of a dispute with the Monophysites about its interpretation.<sup>25</sup> It is also worth mentioning the *troparion* “Ὁ Μονογενῆς Υἱός” (“The only begotten Son”), erroneously ascribed to the Emperor Justinian I, which is an elaborate rendering of the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds, and was designed to be sung at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy.<sup>26</sup>

#### 2.3.2 Stichic Hymns

The so-called stichic hymn (Gr. *kata stichon*; German “gleichzeilig”) consists of lines with a paired colon structure.<sup>27</sup> All lines and their respective colons adhere to the principles of isosyllaby and stress regulation, but they have no standard length and rhythm, indeed they display considerable variety in this respect. The close relation of some stichic hymns to the phrasing of canonical decrees suggests that they were most likely written for congregations in

23 Grosdidier de Matons, “Liturgie”, p. 35; Taft, “How Liturgies Grow”, p. 8; Wellesz, *History*, pp. 239–45.

24 Mitsakis, *Ἕμνογραφία*, pp. 78–84; Conomos, *Hymnography*, pp. 10–15; Grosdidier de Matons, “Liturgie”, p. 36; Christ, “Bedeutung”, pp. 90–94.

25 On the *Trisagion* (Ἄγιος ὁ Θεός), see Conomos, *Hymnography*, pp. 40–43; Taft, “Trisagion”, p. 2121.

26 Barkhuizen, “Justinian’s hymn”, pp. 3–5.

27 Mitsakis, *Ἕμνογραφία*, pp. 85–97; Lauxtermann, *The Spring*, pp. 58–61, 74–77 and 86. I follow the (stichic) translation proposed by Lauxtermann (*ibid.*, p. 58).

the cities, in order to provide arguments against heretics. Two of the earliest examples, designated to be sung in the *Apodeipnon* during Lent, are transmitted in papyri of the 5th–6th century.<sup>28</sup> This form was still in use when the *kanones* appeared, as examples ascribed to Romanos the Melode and John of Damascus attest.

### 2.3.3 The Kontakion and Precursory Forms

The *kontakion* is the earliest hymn form with a complex strophic system. Taking shape in the second half of the 5th century under the influence of Greek and Syriac poetic models, it reached its peak with the work of Romanos the Melode in the first half of the 6th century.<sup>29</sup> In particular, *kontakia* disclose a combination of features and themes, attested in the three forms of Syriac hymnography—*mêmrâ*, *madrâsha* and *sogîthâ*—such as strophes, accentual rhythms, and acrostics, as well as a dialogic or narrative style, a hortatory, polemical, apologetic, funerary or penitential content, and a prayerful or encomiastic tone. As regards the Syriac influence, it has also been shown that Romanos knew the gospels in the form of Tatian's *Diatessaron* and the Syriac versions of the New Testament. Thus, his debt to Syriac sources, and especially to Ephrem the Syrian, as regards the choice of symbols, exegesis, phrases and metaphors, has been established.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.4 Structure and Features of the Kontakia

The hagiographical tradition ascribes the invention of the *kontakia* to Romanos the Melode. Even the word “*kontakion*”, literally referring to a scroll, was first attested as a term for the hymn form in the 10th century and specifically associated with him,<sup>31</sup> though the writers of *kontakia* themselves used various other labels for their hymns.<sup>32</sup> However, a few extant examples that seem certain to predate Romanos impugn the credibility of the tradition: e.g. the *kontakion* on the First Humans, the Akathistos hymn, and the funerary hymn

28 On the hymns (nos. 4 and 5) in the *Apodeipnon*, see Maas/Mercati/Gassisi, “Gleichzeitige Hymnen”, pp. 314–16; Mercati, “Osservazioni”, p. 128.

29 Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 26–27; Mitsakis, *Υμνογραφία*, pp. 104–06.

30 Petersen, “The Dependence”, pp. 172 and 183; Petersen, *The Diatessaron*. See also Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 16–17 and 254.

31 *LBG* (see above, n. 6), s.v. *κοντάκιον*, -άκιον; *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, ed. Delehay, pp. 95.19 and 96.7.16 (for 1 October); cf. pp. liii–liv; on the *Menologion* of Basil II, see above, n. 2. See also Koder, “Romanos Melodos”, pp. 122–23; Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 37–38; Mitsakis, *Υμνογραφία*, p. 202, n. 3.

32 Tomadakes, *Υμνογραφία*, p. 56. Such a variety is not uncommon in Byzantium: see Rhoby, “Labeling Poetry”, pp. 262, 282.

by Anastasios.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, the substantial contribution made by Romanos to the development of the hymn form is undeniable.<sup>34</sup> Given that the early specimens are more prayerful than didactic, the distinctive—homiletic, narrative and dramatic—character of the hymn form has been justly attributed to Romanos. Its particular function as a “homily in verse”, the emphasis on biblical exegesis, the narrative and dramatic accounts of vivid biblical scenes, and especially the “real” or imagined dialogues or monologues, which endow the protagonists with psychological depth, all go back to Romanos.

A homiletic purpose is reflected in the hymn structure itself: the first strophe (*prooimion* or *koukoulion*) is normally the preamble introducing the main theme and the refrain. The ensuing stanzas (*oikoi*), usually ranging in number from 18 to 24, develop the theme by focusing on the biblical text and Christian doctrine, while the last stanza concludes with a prayer.<sup>35</sup> The fact that *kontakia* were recited from the ambo after the gospel reading is a further indication of this function.<sup>36</sup>

In the 6th century, *kontakia* were performed responsorially (*antiphōnikōs*) during the vigil for Sundays and great feasts between the singer(s) and the congregation, who chanted only the refrain (*ephymnion* or *anaklōmenon*), namely the concluding word or phrase that recurs in every stanza, including the *prooimion*.<sup>37</sup> The refrain and the acrostic, which links all the stanzas except the *prooimion*, are the chief indicators of the integrity and authenticity of the *kontakion*. Apart from the alphabet, the acrostic may spell out a short phrase in prose revealing the name of the poet or the feast celebrated.<sup>38</sup>

Written in a language close to the contemporary *koine*, and based on accentual rhythm with a predilection for octosyllables and heptasyllables, the *kontakia* were designed to appeal to people of average education.<sup>39</sup> In terms of rhythm, all stanzas except the *prooimion*, follow the same metrical and musical pattern, which can be: original and unique (*idiomelon*), original but later reused as the model for another hymn (*automelon*), or a reproduction of an

33 Grosdidier de Matons, “Liturgie”, p. 36f.

34 Id., *Romanos*, p. 3.

35 On the *prooimia*, see Grosdidier de Matons, “Liturgie”, pp. 40–42. On the *oikoi*, see id., *Romanos*, p. 39.

36 For the division of the *kontakia* into three groups—panegyric or encomiastic, doctrinal or didactic, and occasional—by association with the categories applied to homilies, see Mitsakis, *Ἰμνογραφία*, p. 192.

37 Grosdidier de Matons, “Liturgie”, pp. 36, 40. On the *ephymnion*, see Hunger, “Der Refrain”, pp. 53–60; Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 45–48; Mitsakis, *Ἰμνογραφία*, pp. 231–38.

38 Mitsakis, *Ἰμνογραφία*, pp. 246–47; Krumbacher, “Die Akrostichis”, pp. 645–57; Weyh, “Die Akrostichis”, pp. 62–64.

39 Koder, “Kontakion”, pp. 50, 53–54; Lauxtermann, *The Spring*, pp. 45 and pp. 80–86.

earlier model (*prosomoion*). In the latter case, which was usual in later hymns, the model strophe (*heirmos*) is indicated by its incipit following the superscription of the hymn.<sup>40</sup>

*Kontakia* continued to evolve in terms of form and content even after Romanos the Melode. Those on the feasts of saints and the translation of relics emerged later.<sup>41</sup> Under the influence of hagiography and rhetoric, they became more encomiastic than narrative, as they increasingly promoted the cult of saints in the 8th and 9th centuries. Direct addresses to the saint, abundant praise, rhetorical questions and even Atticizing tendencies indicate the *kanon's* impact on them, both in terms of style and poetic conception.

While in the mid-7th century *kontakia* were still being chanted in vigils,<sup>42</sup> some time after that their chanting was transferred to the Morning Office (*orthros*), after the reading of the Gospel and before the *kanon*. It was an evolutionary process, usually dated to the period of Iconoclasm and thereafter, which first took place in the Constantinopolitan rite.<sup>43</sup> The *kontakion* existed alongside the *kanon*, until the former was eventually reduced to the *prooimion* and the first *oikos*, and inserted as the *mesōdion* in the *kanon*, namely between its sixth and seventh ode.<sup>44</sup>

It is in this short form that the so-called “shared” *kontakia* (*kontakion en partage*) emerge. Dedicated to a class of holy personages, such as martyrs, hermits, stylites, and bishops, they are full of commonplaces lacking specific narrative elements, making them suitable to be reused for the feast of any new saint. In cases of poor adaptation, the virtues of different saints, as well as the genders of female and male saints, appear mixed up.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.5 The Akathistos Hymn

The Akathistos hymn is the only *kontakion* still recited in full in the Orthodox Church today. Hagiographical sources trace the origin of its designation to the people of Constantinople, who remained “unseated” (*akathistōs*) all night long, chanting it as a hymn of thanksgiving to the Mother of God for their

40 Schirò, “Introduzione”, p. 333, n. 7; cf. Mitsakis, *Ἰμνογραφία*, p. 206, n. 1.

41 Romanos the Melode, *Cantica dubia*, ed. Maas/Trypanis, pp. xi–xii; Grosdidier de Matons, “Le Kontakion”, pp. 262–63.

42 *The Miracles of St. Artemios*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, p. 20.5–6.

43 Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 99f. See also Frøyshov, “Byzantine Rite”, *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*; I am grateful to S. Papaioannou for the reference to this dictionary.

44 Grosdidier de Matons, “Liturgie”, pp. 36 and 40–43; id., *Romanos*, pp. 38–39 and 104–05.

45 Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 94–96; Follieri, “Problemi”, p. 318; Tomadakis, “Un problema”, pp. 3–30.

rescue from the besieging Sassanid Persians and Avars in 626.<sup>46</sup> Admittedly a literary masterpiece, it has been the subject of numerous studies. However, the desideratum of a critical edition based on a wide range of textual witnesses, proposed long ago, has yet to be realized.<sup>47</sup>

Though classified as a *kontakion*, the hymn discloses a more complex structure;<sup>48</sup> preceded by three *prooimia*, its main part consists of 24 stanzas linked by an alphabetical acrostic.<sup>49</sup> Up to the fifth verse, all 24 conform to the same metrical pattern, and thus share the same rhythm. From the sixth verse onwards, they diverge. The odd-numbered stanzas continue with a set of 12 salutations to the Virgin and conclude with the refrain *χαίρε νύμφη ἀνύμφευτε* (“Hail, bride unwedded”), reminiscent of Luke 1.28. The even-numbered ones conclude with another refrain, “Alleluia”, in the sixth verse. A further binary division of the hymn is based on its content. The “historical” section, consisting of the first 12 stanzas, recounts the events surrounding the Nativity, while the other 12 comprise the “theological” section, focusing on the mystery of the Incarnation and praising Christ and the Mother of God.

There has been much speculation about the enigmatic author of the Akathistos and the date of its composition. Despite the similarities with the hymns of Romanos, the authors cannot be one and the same person, since Romanos uses terminology that reflects the Mariology and Christology of his age, and projects an image of the Mother of God that postdates the one reflected in the Akathistos.<sup>50</sup> Then again, internal indications place the hymn in the 5th century. The emphasis both on the Annunciation and the Incarnation of Christ suggests that the hymn was written for the feast of the Nativity of Christ and the Mother of God, celebrated on 26 December until c.530–53 until Justinian I (527–65) established the feast of the Annunciation on 25 March.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the debate reflected in the Akathistos about the Theotokos in relation to the Incarnation provides further indications for dating its composition

46 *Synaxarion of the Akathistos-Feast*, in *PG*, col. 1352B and 1353A–B.

47 For the critical edition, see Trypanis, *Fourteen*, pp. 29–39. On the need for a new critical edition, see Grosdidier de Matons, “Liturgie”, p. 31; Papagiannes, *Ανάθιστος*, pp. 18–20.

48 Trypanis, *Fourteen*, pp. 17–26.

49 The first *prooimion*, “Τῆ ὑπερμάχῳ”, is the most well known, but the second, “Τὸ προσταχθέν”, has been considered genuine: Trypanis, *Fourteen*, p. 20. Both conclude with the same refrain as the stanzas. The third one “Οὐ πανόμεθα” is a later addition. According to Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 33–34, all the *prooimia* are later additions.

50 Koder, “Positionen”, pp. 45–49.

51 The Akathistos feast on the fifth Saturday of Lent can be traced back to the 9th c.; Koder, *Positionen*, p. 48, n. 104. See also Peltomaa, “Mary as Intercessor”, p. 134, n. 43.

to some time between the Councils of Ephesos (431) and Chalcedon (451).<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, its exact date and author remain open questions.

The Akathistos had an immense impact especially on Byzantine poetry and iconography. Various hymnographers, above all Romanos the Melode, were inspired by its metrical patterns or sets of salutations.<sup>53</sup> Also worthy of note are the metrical paraphrase by Manuel Philes and a Cretan paraphrase (maybe from Latin) produced towards the end of the 15th century.<sup>54</sup> In art the special iconographic cycles inspired by the Akathistos from the 14th century onwards, must also be noted.<sup>55</sup>

### 2.5.1 Kanon

The emergence of the *kanon* is connected with the office of *orthros*, in which it was sung after the reading from the Psalter. It developed gradually before acquiring its final form, which is seen in the works of Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus, and Kosmas the Melode. Byzantine hagiography connected these early *kanon*-writers with the Great Lavra of St Sabas, thus placing the emergence of the new hymn form in a monastic environment. Recent studies, however, have shown that these holy writers should rather be associated with the Church in Jerusalem, and that their monastic vocation did not prevent them from composing hymns for the public liturgy of the cathedral.<sup>56</sup>

In its complete form, the *kanon* has a more complex strophic system than the *kontakion*. The strophes (*troparia*) are split into nine sections: the odes (*ōdai*). Each ode normally consists of three to five stanzas, and has its own metrical and musical model (*heirmos*). Hence with regard to rhythm and music, the *kanon* reveals a greater variety.<sup>57</sup> Of course, it betrays structural, metrical, and thematic similarities with the *kontakion*, which evolved from the mutual influence between the two hymn forms.<sup>58</sup> But unlike the *kontakion*, the *kanon* is a lyric composition with meditative tone and is richer in theological

52 Peltomaa, *The Image*, pp. 113–14. On the authorship of Germanos I of Constantinople (AD 715–30), see Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 70–73.

53 E.g. Romanos the Melode, *Hymns*, no. 6, ed. Grosdidier de Matons, vol. 1, pp. 250–57. On further imitations, see Russell, *Literature and Culture*, pp. 139–48; Tomadakes, “Ἡ Ἀκάθιστος ἐορτή”, pp. 16–48.

54 Manuel Philes, *Poems*, ed. Miller, vol. 2, pp. 317–426. On the impact of the Akathistos, see Mitsakis, “Ἐνας λαϊκός κρητικὸς Ἀκάθιστος”, pp. 29–32.

55 Spatharakis, *The Pictorial Cycles*; Pätzold, *Der Akathistos Hymnos. Die Bilderzyklen*, p. 8.

56 Frøyshov, “Rite of Jerusalem”; Wellesz, *History*, p. 206; Hannick, “Hymnographie”, pp. 217–28.

57 Wellesz, *History*, pp. 198 and 202. On the *heirmoi*, see Schirò, “Introduzione”, pp. 344–45. On *heirmos* meaning “concatenation”, see Christ, “Bedeutung”, p. 88.

58 Cunningham, “The Reception”, pp. 252 and 259.

teaching.<sup>59</sup> With regard to language and style, it is written at a higher level. But, it was rarely as classicizing as the three iambic *kanones*, attributed to John of Damascus or a certain John Arklas, which were composed in Atticizing Greek and iambic trimeter.<sup>60</sup> For these aesthetic, edifying, doctrinal, and liturgical reasons, the *kanon* prevailed over the *kontakion*, which over time had become more superficial.<sup>61</sup> Its establishment in the *orthros* was seen as the result of a liturgical reform. The Council in Trullo (692) may have played a role, as it determined daily preaching from the scriptures,<sup>62</sup> but it was Iconoclasm that created the conditions favorable to a change of hymn book.<sup>63</sup>

The prehistory of the *kanon* started with the singing of stanzas (*troparia*) between biblical canticles and psalms, as attested in manuscript witnesses dating back to the 7th century, but preserving an earlier tradition.<sup>64</sup> It has been associated with the creation of the Jerusalem series of nine biblical canticles (*ōdai*), which is reflected in the ninefold structure of the fully formed *kanon*.<sup>65</sup> For, because it followed the order (*kanōn*) of these canticles, the hymn form acquired the name “*kanon*” and its nine sections were termed “odes”.<sup>66</sup> In recent decades, studies on the old Georgian hymnary (*Iadgari*), which is a translation of a now lost Greek hymnary (*tropologion*) sung in Jerusalem before the 8th century, have shed further light on the issue.<sup>67</sup> They focused on *kanones* consisting of only two, three or nine odes, and suggested that they represented evolutionary stages in the development of the final nine-ode *kanon*. The exact

59 D’Aiuto, “L’innografia”, pp. 277f.

60 But they were also in accordance with the stress pattern of the Byzantine dodecasyllable: Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 136. For a recent detailed discussion of the three iambic *kanones*, see Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary*, ed. Cesaretti/Ronchey, pp. 40\*–44\*. On Arklas, see *ibid.*, 96\*–103\*.

61 Koder, “Romanos Melodos”, pp. 123–24; Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, p. 99; Mitsakis, *Ἕμνογραφία*, pp. 525–30; Wellesz, *History*, pp. 157, 198; Tomadakes, *Ἕμνογραφία*, pp. 65–66.

62 *Canons of the Council of Laodicea*, no. 19, ed. Joannou, vol. 1.1, pp. 150–51; Wellesz, *History*, pp. 204, and 366. See also Velimirović, “The Byzantine Heirmos”, p. 201.

63 Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, p. 99; Wellesz, *History*, pp. 229–39.

64 These are: the 7th-century *John Rylands Papyrus 466* (dated after 642); and the fragment Heidelberg 1362: see Taft, “Mount Athos”, p. 188. On the papyri, see Schneider, “Die biblischen Oden”, pp. 261–62.

65 A set of 14 biblical canticles to be sung after the Psalter is attested in the 5th-c. *Codex Alexandrinus* (London, British Museum, Royal Library I. D. v–VIII, fol. 564–69): see Schneider, “Die biblischen Oden”, pp. 28 and 56. Their number was later reduced to nine; on this, see *ibid.*, pp. 253–55, and 497–98; see also Velimirović, “The Byzantine Heirmos”, pp. 202–03.

66 Christ, “Bedeutung”, pp. 78 (= PG 135, 424D), and 94–96.

67 Frøyshov, “Rite of Jerusalem”; *id.*, “La réticence”, pp. 236–37; Jeffery, “The Earliest Christian Chant Repertory”, p. 14.

evolution of the *kanon* needs further investigation, but it is generally accepted that it emerged in Jerusalem and before the era of the great *kanon*-writers acclaimed as its inventors.

Concerning its content, the *kanon* preserves a close relationship with the nine biblical canticles, since the metrical model strophe (*heirmos*) of each ode draws on the corresponding canticle and combines the biblical theme with the main subject of the hymn.<sup>68</sup> It has been observed that in the liturgical books—mainly the *Menaion* and the *Parakletike*—the *kanones* appear without the second ode. This fact was commented on by Byzantine scholars in the 12th century, who attributed the omission of the second ode to the mournful character of its corresponding canticle, that of Moses (Deut. 32.1–43), which made it unsuited to *kanones* of praise.<sup>69</sup> Modern scholars have shown that the phenomenon has more complex causes, as it is connected with the formation of the liturgical books and the *akolouthiai*.<sup>70</sup> The second ode is preserved in the *kanones* contained in the *Triodion*, the liturgical book for the ten weeks preceding Easter.<sup>71</sup>

The penultimate and the concluding *troparion* of each ode—the *theotokion* and the *triadikon* respectively—also draw on specific themes, like the *heirmos*; the former refers to the Mother of God, while the latter is dedicated to the Trinity. Both appear in the work of some early *kanon*-writers such as Andrew of Crete.<sup>72</sup> The recurring biblical and doctrinal content (in the *heirmoi*, *theotokia* and *triadika*) increases the impression that the hymn form lacks unity and coherence of thought; an opinion that has not gone unchallenged.<sup>73</sup>

68 The *heirmoi* refer to the biblical canticles in the following order: 1) the thanksgiving ode of Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea (*Exodus* 15.1–19); 2) the ode of Moses before his death, warning his people (*Deuteronomy* 32.1–43); 3) the prayer of Samuel's mother Hannah (1 *Regum* 2.1–10 = 1 *Samuel* 2.1–10); 4) the prayer of Habakkuk (*Hab.* 3.2–19); 5) the prayer of Isaiah (*Isaiah* 26.9–19); 6) the prayer of Jonah (*Jonah* 2.2–9); 7) the prayer of Azaria and the first ode of the three youths in the fiery furnace (*Daniel* 3.26–45 and 52–56); 8) the second ode of the three youths (*Daniel* 3.57–88), and finally 9) the ode of the Virgin after the Annunciation and the ode of Zacharias (*Luke* 1.46–55 and 68–79): see Velimirović, "The Byzantine Heirmos", p. 202.

69 Theodore Prodromos, *Commentaries*, ed. Stevenson, p. 8. For John Zonaras, see Christ, "Bedeutung", pp. 81–82; Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary*, ed. Cesaretti/Ronchey, p. 21.320–27.

70 Kollyropoulou, *Περὶ τοῦ προβλήματος*, pp. 63–68; for a review of earlier research, see *ibid.*, p. 395. See also Krueger, "Authorial Voice", p. 106, n. 4.

71 For the order in which odes are sung during Lent, see e.g. Velimirović, "The Byzantine Heirmos", p. 203. Due to the dominant three-ode *kanones* (*triōdia*), the book and the period of the Church calendar share the same name (*Triodion*).

72 Schirò, "Caratteristiche", pp. 131–33. See also Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, p. 263.

73 Kazhdan, "An *Oxymoron*", p. 55; Grosdidier de Matons, "Liturgie", p. 41.



The acrostic and the *epymnion* appear only sporadically in the *kanones*. An acrostic consists of the initial letters of the strophes, normally without the *heirmoi*, and displays either an alphabet or a phrase in metre, iambic, or dactylic. In this respect, the iambic *kanones* constitute a rare exception, since their acrostic is an elegiac couplet formed from the first letter of each verse.<sup>74</sup> Some *kanones* even display double acrostics, of which the second one—consisting of the first letter of all nine (or eight) *theotokia*—discloses the name of the *kanon* writer.<sup>75</sup>

In the 8th and 9th centuries, *kanon* writing reached its peak. *Kanones* continued to be written afterwards, in order to celebrate new saints or address an intercessory prayer, and, from this period on, also for secular subjects.<sup>76</sup> But the production varied in terms of originality and quality, since it mostly drew on known metrical patterns, while an increasing emphasis was placed on the musical element. Critical in this respect was the process of standardization of the liturgical books and the ensuing selection of hymns; this process started in the 11th century, was intensified in the 12th and was more or less accomplished by the 14th.<sup>77</sup>

### 2.5.2 Liturgical Books

The oldest liturgical book was a hymnary (*tropologion*), which contained all the hymns of the ecclesiastical year.<sup>78</sup> The expansion of hymnody for the celebration of the moveable and fixed feasts of the year impelled its division into more books, which changed and developed over time.<sup>79</sup> Hymns are contained in: the *Menaion*, the 12 volumes of which contain services designated for the fixed feasts of the year;<sup>80</sup> the *Triodion* and the *Pentekostarion*, which contain the services of the moveable feasts, involving the ten weeks before Easter Sunday and the seven weeks until the feast of Pentecost respectively; in the Great *Oktoechos* or *Parakletike*, which supplements the two latter books, containing the services for the rest of the moveable cycle, arranged according to the eight odes;<sup>81</sup> the *Horologion*, which contains the invariable parts of the hours, namely the daily cycle of services; and the *Euchologion*, which, apart

74 Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary*, eds. Cesaretti/Ronchey, p. 40\*.

75 Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, p. 263. See also Weyh, "Die Akrostichis", pp. 51–53.

76 See below, p. 504.

77 Frøyshov, "Byzantine Rite".

78 See above, p. 497, n. 67.

79 Taft, "I libri", pp. 229–56; D'Aiuto, "Per la storia"; Follieri, "I libri", pp. 83–100; Tomadakes, *Ἰμνογραφία*, pp. 79–80.

80 Nikiforova, *Towards a History of the 'Menaion'*.

81 Bucca/D'Aiuto, "Per lo studio", pp. 73–102; Hannick, *Dimanche*, pp. 37–60.

from prayers, also contains hymns. Collections of specific types of hymns include the *Theotokarion*, the *Kontakarion*, and the *Heirmologion*, to mention only the most significant ones.<sup>82</sup> The *Typikon* is another kind of liturgical book that regulates how liturgical books and texts should be used.

### 3 Representatives

The acrostics and superscriptions of the hymns are often the only evidence of the names of their writers.<sup>83</sup> The lengthy list of hymnographers and melodists drawn up by C. Emereau and E. Follieri, supplemented by later studies and prosopographical lexica, reveals a large number of hymnographers and melodists of various classes and origins from Byzantium and beyond. They consist mainly of monks, bishops, and patriarchs, but also scholars, at least five emperors, and a few women, the most eminent of whom was Kassia (9th century).<sup>84</sup> The following account of hymnographers offers a rough outline of hymnographic production, focusing on the main representatives of the *kontakia* and *kanones*.

The most prominent writer of *kontakia* and composer of melodies is Romanos the Melode (c.485 to 555–62).<sup>85</sup> The hagiographical tradition ascribes over 1000 hymns and the invention of the hymn form to him. However, of the 90 extant *kontakia* under his name, only 56 are deemed genuine.<sup>86</sup> The majority of them were written for a feast in the church calendar, especially for the penitential period of Lent; a fact which explains the emphasis on the “cultivation of conscience and the practice of self-accusation”.<sup>87</sup> Romanos was familiar with the theological controversies of his time and defended the

82 On *kontakaria*, see Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 108–18. On *heirmologia*, see Schirò, “Introduzione”, pp. 331–47; Velimirović, “The Byzantine Heirmos”, pp. 204–34.

83 Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 124–26 and 269–79.

84 The lists by Emereau, “Hymnographi”, and Follieri, *Initia*, vol. 5, pp. 251–306, are supplemented by the prosopographical lexica such as E. Trapp et al., *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, 12 vols., Vienna 1976–1995 and R.-J. Lilie et al., *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit*. On emperors, see e.g. Tomadakes, *Ἰμνογραφία*, p. 73. On women, see e.g. Catafygiotou-Topping, “Women”, pp. 98–111.

85 For a comprehensive introduction, see Koder, *Romanos Melodos, Die Hymnen*, vol. 1, pp. 9–48; id., “Romanos Melodos”, pp. 115–94, with extended bibliography. On the date of his death, see *ibid.*, p. 118.

86 On this number, see Romanos the Melode, *Hymns*, ed. Grosdidier de Matons; cf. Romanos the Melode, *Cantica genuina*, ed. Maas/Trypanis, vol. 1, where 59 *kontakia* are listed as genuine. On the 90 hymns, see Koder, “Romanos Melodos”, pp. 133–49.

87 Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects*, p. 64; id., *Writing*, pp. 159–88.

imperial policies of Justinian I (527–65).<sup>88</sup> Apart from biblical texts, Romanos drew on apocrypha, sermons, homilies, and other Christian writings in Greek and Syriac.<sup>89</sup> His reading shaped the language of his hymns, yet his “literary” *koine* betrays many traits of the contemporary, colloquial idiom.<sup>90</sup> His hymns are marked by their vivid interpretation of biblical texts and transmission of orthodox doctrine, the use of dramatic dialogue, the penitential address to God, for portraying the Virgin in human terms, and in the cosmic element; all characteristics, which affected later writers of hymns and homilies, directly or indirectly.<sup>91</sup>

While *kontakia* were originally intended for the moveable feasts and the feasts of Christ and the Mother of God, after Romanos they were increasingly written for the feasts of saints and the translation of their relics.<sup>92</sup> Even in the 9th century, the peak period for the *kanones*, there were monks, who, inspired by a *passio* or *vita*, were simply displaying their talents in writing *kontakia*, and not necessarily responding to a particular liturgical need. Well-known writers of *kanones*, such as Joseph the Hymnographer and Theodore the Stoudite, also wrote *kontakia*.<sup>93</sup> In the 10th century, Gabriel and Ioannikios preferred once again to compose narrative rather than encomiastic *kontakia*.<sup>94</sup> The tradition was continued also in south Italy by monks, such as Nilus of Rossano and Paul the Monk in the 10th and 11th centuries. Sporadic composition of this hymn form is attested even after the end of the Byzantine empire.<sup>95</sup>

In the hagiographical tradition, the invention of the *kanon* is mainly ascribed to Andrew of Crete or John of Damascus, sometimes also to Kosmas the Melode; all three were more or less contemporaries and associated with the Church of Jerusalem. While John and Kosmas belong to the Jerusalem rite, Andrew of Crete represents a “figure of transition”, belonging both to the Jerusalem rite and the emerging Byzantine liturgical synthesis.<sup>96</sup> The account

88 Koder, “Imperial Propaganda”, pp. 275–91.

89 Koder, “Positionen”, pp. 27–28; Maisano, “Romanos’s Use”, pp. 261–73; Petersen, “The Dependence,” pp. 171–87.

90 Mitsakis, *The Language*, p. 1.

91 Koder, “Romanos Melodos”, pp. 150–74; Cunningham, “The Reception”, pp. 251–60.

92 For a list of the feasts on which the *kontakia* (transmitted in *Kontakaria*) were recited, see Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 74–93. On poets of *kontakia*, see *ibid.*, pp. 48–65; Mitsakis, *Υμνογραφία*, pp. 510–24.

93 Tomadakis, *Ίωσήφ*, pp. 204–07; Wolfram, “Der Beitrag”, pp. 124–25.

94 Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, pp. 63 and 65; Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 2, p. 303.

95 For the West, see below, p. 503, n. 111. On the 16th century, see Strategopoulos, *Νικόλαος Μαλαξός*, p. 327.

96 Frøyshov, “Byzantine Rite”.

of the main representatives of the hymn form, given below, is only indicative of the regional expansion and the thematic range of this production.

Andrew of Crete (c.660–c.740), renowned *kanon*-poet, melodist, orator, and saint (feast day 4 July),<sup>97</sup> was elected Archbishop of Crete during the reign of Philippikos Bardanes (711–13).<sup>98</sup> He is traditionally credited with the invention of the *kanon*, an attribution corroborated by the great number of *heirmoi* ascribed to him and the fact that his *kanones* disclose all the main elements of the hymn form: preserving second ode, *triadikon* and *theotokion*.<sup>99</sup> It has been noted that his *kanones* display similar themes and approaches to his homilies, repeating the same thoughts, words or phrases, and that both are devoid of “historicity” or “actuality”. Among the numerous *kanones*, *triodia*, and *idiomela* under his name, his *Megas Kanon* stands out. Its 250 *troparia* constitute a “penitential bible”, which became popular in the monastic world and beyond. In the Orthodox Church, it is still sung *ex integro* on the Thursday of the fifth week of Lent.<sup>100</sup>

Another prolific author and writer of *kanones* and *idiomela* from the same period was Germanos I, Patriarch of Constantinople (715–30). But the traditional attribution to him of certain works, such as the Akathistos hymn, cannot be proven.<sup>101</sup> Another contemporary of his was John of Damascus (c.655–c.745), the great theologian and fervent defender of the icons during Iconoclasm, preacher, poet, and saint.<sup>102</sup> A great number of *heirmoi*, *kanones*, *stichera*, *prosoimoia* and *idiomela* survive under his name, but many attributions, such as those relating to the *Oktoechos* or the iambic *kanones*, remain uncertain.<sup>103</sup> Eustathios of Thessalonike (c.1115–95/96) was already disputing John’s authorship in his commentary on the iambic *kanon* on Pentecost.<sup>104</sup>

Yet another contemporary, Kosmas the Melode (†734), Bishop of Maïuma, was a prominent *kanon*-poet and saint, whom the hagiographical tradition presents as John’s foster brother. However, according to recent research, there is no evidence for this relationship. Hymns in a variety of forms, such as *kanones*, *heirmoi*, *triodia*, *tetraodia*, *idiomela* and *stichera prosoimoia*, survive under his

97 R.-J. Lillie et al., *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit. Erste Abteilung (641–867)*, vol. 1, Berlin/New York 1999, pp. 117–19 (no. 362); Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 37–54.

98 Niketas the Patrikios, *Life of Andrew*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, vol. 5, p. 174.10–26.

99 Schirò, “Caratteristiche”, pp. 113–19.

100 Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 46–52; Cunningham, “Andrew of Crete”, pp. 267–93; Giannouli, *Kommentare*, pp. 31–41; Krueger, “The Great Kanon”, pp. 57–97.

101 Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 58–59, 70–73.

102 Kontouma, “John of Damascus”, no. 1, pp. 28–30; Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary*, ed. Cesaretti/Ronchey, p. 35\*, n. 192.

103 Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 87–90; Louth, *St John Damascene*, pp. 252–82.

104 Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary*, ed. Cesaretti/Ronchey, pp. 83\*–84\*.

name. But, he is not the writer of the Akathistos hymn, or even of a single *kontakion* attributed to him.<sup>105</sup> He used acrostics and refrains in his *kanones*, but avoided the second ode. In his hymns, he expressed his political views on the policies of the iconoclast emperors. The high-flown language and condensed expression in his *kanones* led to epimerisms, paraphrases, and commentaries.<sup>106</sup>

Both *kanones* and some *kontakia* are attributed to Theodore the Stoudite (759–826), but, just like his contribution to the organization of the *Triodion* ascribed to him and his brother Joseph of Thessalonike, they need further investigation.<sup>107</sup> Theophanes Graptos (the “tattooed”, c.778–845), who wrote hymns in various forms, such as *kanones*, *idiomela* and *stichera*, was active in the 9th century.<sup>108</sup> However, the most prolific hymnodist of that century was Joseph the Hymnographer (812/18–86). *Kanones*, some *kontakia*, and a large number of *troparia*, some of which had an impact on icon painting, have come down to us under his name. He is also regarded as the author of the *New Oktoechos*.<sup>109</sup> In the next century, Gabriel the Hymnographer wrote *kontakia* and *kanones*, which disclose stylistic and theological similarities with the hymnography of the Stoudios monastery.<sup>110</sup> The hymnographical production of monks and abbots in the West, especially in Grottaferrata—including by its founder and first abbot, Nilus of Rossano (†1004)—and in southern Italy, is also worth mentioning.<sup>111</sup> While hymn writing appears to decline from the 11th century onwards, it continued to be practiced in the West in the Late Byzantine period and beyond.<sup>112</sup>

105 Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 107–24; Detorakes, *Κοσμάς*.

106 Detorakes, *Κοσμάς*, pp. 179–209.

107 On Theodore, see Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 235–57; Wolfram, “Der Beitrag”, pp. 117–25; Pott, *La réforme*, pp. 106 and 117–20. On Joseph, see Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 259 and 270. See also the chapter by Kristoffel Demoen in this book.

108 Sode, “Creating New Saints”, pp. 177–89; Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 269–79; R.-J. Lillie et al., *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit. Erste Abteilung (641–867)*, vol. 4, Berlin/New York 2001, pp. 593–98 (no. 8093); Plank, “Der hymnographische Beitrag”, pp. 316–30.

109 Tomadakis, *Ἰωσήφ*; Patterson-Ševčenko, “Canon”, pp. 101–14; Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 270–71; Constatas, “Poetry and Painting”.

110 Paschos, “Gabriel l’hymnologue”; Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 2, pp. 303–09.

111 Gassisi, *Poesie*, pp. 39–41, and 55–60; Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, p. 65; Szövérfy, *A Guide*, vol. 1, pp. 179–80 (*kontakia*); *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 54–62 (*kanones*).

112 Szövérfy, *A Guide*, vol. 2, pp. 54–58 and 62–77; Strategopoulos, *Νικόλαος Μαλαξός*.

#### 4 Non-liturgical Hymns

From the 9th century onwards, several hymn forms were used for secular subjects, serving purposes other than liturgical ones, such as teaching, praise or blame, lament or satire.<sup>113</sup> The didactic ones (the majority) contain spelling, grammatical or syntactic rules, lists of heresies, saints' feasts, ancient deities, minerals, or other encyclopedic knowledge. By recasting this teaching material in the metrical and musical patterns of known *kontakia*, *kanones*, *stichera* or *kathismata*, writers provided an effective mnemonic device for learning in the same way as others did by using the political or the dodecasyllable verse. These hymns have come down to us either anonymously or under the names of known scholars, such as Photios, Psellos, Niketas of Heraclea, Christopher of Mytilene, John Zonaras, Nikephoros Blemmydes, or Maximos Planudes, though their authorship is not always indisputable.<sup>114</sup> Characterized as “parahymnography” on the basis of their form, these compositions have been unjustly considered “products of an age of decline”.<sup>115</sup> The earliest examples, ascribed to Photios, date back to the golden age of the *kanones*.<sup>116</sup> This phenomenon rather attests to the popularity and powerfulness of the various hymn forms, which became a useful vehicle for literary expression, in combination with other genres. Moreover, it displays a mixing of genres, which was part of the “process of the reorganization of the system of genres” evident from the time of Photios onwards, namely “the age of encyclopedism”.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, numerous schedographic exercises in the form of hymns, used—either word for word or in paraphrase—for the teaching of grammar or for amusement, suggest the Byzantines' familiarity with hymnography.<sup>118</sup>

#### 5 Byzantine Scholars on Hymnography

In the same period—from the 9th century onwards—various *glossae* and scholia in lexica, the epimerisms, the paraphrases, and lengthier commentaries on well-known hymns, emerge. This was an erudite activity, first attested by the Sicilian Theodosios Grammatikos, which reached its peak in the 12th century

113 Mitsakis, “Parahymnography”; Krumbacher, *Geschichte*, pp. 681–82.

114 See Hörandner, “The Byzantine Didactic Poem”.

115 Mitsakis, “Parahymnography”, p. 20.

116 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–20.

117 Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 2, pp. 320–26.

118 Strategopoulos, “Η παρουσία”, pp. 75–87; Vassis, “Τῶν νέων φιλολόγων”, p. 43.

in Constantinople and Thessalonike.<sup>119</sup> Above all, the iambic *kanones* ascribed to John of Damascus, the classicizing language which eventually made their linguistic interpretation indispensable, but also the genuine *kanones* of the same writer, or of Kosmas the Melode, aroused the interest of some eminent 12th-century intellectuals. These included Theodore Prodromos (1100–56/58), Gregory Pardos (c.1103–57), John Zonaras († after 1160), and Eustathios of Thessalonike (c.1115–95/96).<sup>120</sup> The *Great Kanon* of Andrew of Crete also attracted the attention of commentators for its moral and didactic value from the 12th century onwards.<sup>121</sup> The commentators' aim was to make these anthems comprehensible by revealing their biblical and theological foundations and stressing their literary merit. At the same time, they took the opportunity of displaying their knowledge of patristic and classical literature, as Eustathios of Thessalonike did in an exemplary way. The content and apparent objective of these commentaries point to two kinds of intended audience: on the one hand, those who were already initiated or specialized in the study of hymns; and, on the other, a literary elite.<sup>122</sup>

## 6 State and Prospects of Research

The increasing attention paid to Byzantine hymnography by modern scholars is recorded in the relevant area of the bibliographical part of the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.<sup>123</sup> The variety of issues treated is also clearly reflected in the classified bibliography by Joseph Szövérfy, published in 1978–79.<sup>124</sup> Among the still outstanding desiderata, the most urgent are definitely the editions, as even the works of well-known hymnodists often lack a reliable or even an initial edition. Given the large number of direct and indirect textual witnesses, editions could be limited to special traditions or liturgical books.<sup>125</sup> Editions will help in tracing special linguistic and stylistic elements and solving issues of authorship, especially where the hints in the acrostics of the hymns are not enough for the

119 Genakou-Borovilou, "Επιμνησμοί", pp. 83–97.

120 For the most recent presentation of commentaries, see Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary*, ed. Cesaretti/Ronchey, pp. 48\*–72\*.

121 Giannouli, *Kommentare*.

122 Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary*, ed. Cesaretti/Ronchey, pp. 113\*–17\*, 122\*–24\*.

123 From *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84 (1991–92) onwards, the studies in hymnography in the bibliographical part are separated from those in liturgics. See also Maisano, "Prospettive", pp. 291–93; Follieri, "Problemi".

124 Szövérfy, *A Guide*.

125 See Schirò, *Analecta Hymnica Graeca*; Spanos, *Codex Lesbiacus*.

identification of the authors or the disambiguation of homonymous authors.<sup>126</sup> This is something that complicates the updating of historical reviews, such as those by Wellesz, Mitsakis, or Grosdidier de Matons, to mention only the more extensive ones. The ongoing studies on liturgical books, e.g. the *heirmologia*, are shedding more light on the history of hymnography.<sup>127</sup> The creation of databases of the hymnographical manuscripts or an *Incipitarium* could complement older research tools, or provide more efficient ones.<sup>128</sup> Suggestions for research materials, such as a catalogue of hymnic desinitis, as first proposed by Kazhdan, should be considered, since certain concluding formulas can indicate the writer.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, resources that have been useful for hagiography, such as the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, could function as models for counterparts in hymnography.

The comparative studies in parallel liturgical traditions, such as the Syriac or Georgian traditions, can help to overcome the problem of our fragmentary knowledge due to the scarcity of primary sources for Greek hymns. Similarly, comparative analysis of the works of contemporary poets is needed, in order to examine their differences with regard to mentality, interests and personal choices, rather than just to detect the dependence of one on the other.<sup>130</sup> In this regard, approaching this literary activity through Byzantine eyes could be insightful.

Illuminating evidence about the Byzantine perception of hymnography is to be found in the *Lives* of saints and in the commentaries on hymns. The former emphasize divine inspiration, while the latter the theological acumen in them. Of particular interest are the literary judgments scattered in the scholia. The commentators, mostly from the intellectual elite, point out the rhetorical qualities in the hymns—their rhythmic and melodic beauty, concise and succinct expression—using poetic designations for the hymn writer and his work. To cite a characteristic example: Theodore Prodromos, commenting on the *kanones* of Kosmas the Melode and John of Damascus, asserted, with some hyperbole, that the melodic grace of Kosmas's hymns had almost persuaded him to compose a melodic commentary. He addressed Kosmas

126 Follieri, "Problemi", pp. 312–13 and 318; Kazhdan, "An *Oxymoron*", p. 20; Lauxtermann, "His, and Not His", p. 84.

127 D'Aiuto, "Per la storia"; Schirò, "Introduzione", pp. 331–47; Velimirović, "The Byzantine Heirmos", pp. 243–44.

128 For two databases which will complement or replace older catalogues (such as Follieri's *Initia* or Papaeliopoulou-Photopoulou's *Ταμείον ἀνεκδότων*), see Luzzi/Fusi/D'Aiuto, "Ἀλλοις ἐν στόμασι".

129 Kazhdan, "An *Oxymoron*", p. 20.

130 Kazhdan, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 117 and 265–69; id., "An *Oxymoron*", pp. 46–52.



as “my Orpheus”, described him as a great composer of songs, who painted succinctly with words. Though Prodrornos noted that Kosmas’s *kanon* had no metre, unlike the iambic *kanones* ascribed to John of Damascus, he stressed that it was instead written in an extremely dignified and elevated manner (δίχα μὲν μέτρου, ἀξιωματικώτατα δὲ ὁμῶς καὶ ὑψηλότατα).<sup>131</sup> Of course, Prodrornos was not the first scholar to distinguish the *kanones* according to metre—by which he meant the prosody—and to point to their stylistic qualities as compensating for the absence of prosody. His words corroborate the observation that Byzantine scholars regarded poetry and prose as “two similar types of discourse”.<sup>132</sup> But in Byzantine eyes, hymn writing was more than linguistic artistry. It resulted—as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—from divine inspiration and was meant to evoke a divine response and “healing”.<sup>133</sup> Thus, the chanting of their hymns in services was a major concern of hymn writers. A reference to the iconoclast emperor Theophilos inciting the choir to chant his hymns is contrived, but Theodore II Laskaris’ belief that the singing of his *kanon* in church would ensure divine blessing, sounds very close to the truth.<sup>134</sup>

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131 Theodore Prodrornos, *Commentaries*, ed. Stevenson, pp. 2.30–33, 15.22, 18.7, 19.19, 58.6–8.

132 Souda ι 467, ed. Adler vol. 2, p. 649.31–32; Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary* 16.17, eds. Cesaretti/Ronchey, p. 41 (cf. p. 34\*, n. 186); Lauxtermann, “Velocity”, pp. 13 and 22.

133 See Giannouli, “Die Tränen”, pp. 153–55.

134 On Theophilos, see e.g. John Skylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum* §11, ed. Thurn, p. 63.5–13 (also by George Kedrenos); Theodore II Laskaris, *Letters* (no. 186, to George Mouzalon), ed. Festa, p. 236.8–12.

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## The Past as Poetry: Two Byzantine World Chronicles in Verse

*Ingela Nilsson*

Prose is often described as the perfect vehicle for writing history: it gives a clear account of real events, avoiding poetic and epic distortion of veracity. Such an idea depends on a clear distinction between prose and poetry, according to which the essential purpose of prose is to communicate ideas and the essential purpose of poetry is to affect the reader with the power of its stylistic form. The principle that history, accordingly, should be written in prose appears to have been dominant in Greek culture from writers such as Herodotos and Thucydides onwards,<sup>1</sup> including into the Byzantine period, during which the great majority of Byzantine histories and world chronicles are written in prose.<sup>2</sup> There are, however, two notable exceptions to the rule: the *Synopsis Chronike* by Constantine Manasses (mid-12th century) and the *Chronicle* of Ephraim of Ainos (early 14th century). These two chronicles belong in different centuries and different cultural contexts; they are both written in verse, but not in the same metre and not with the same focus, nor in the same style. My aim here, within the frame of this volume, is to consider the verse form and the stylistic level of the two texts, primarily in relation to each other. In a slightly wider perspective, I wish to address the significance of using verse as a vehicle for narrating history and the implications—literary, historical, ideological—that such a choice of form may have entailed in Byzantium.

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- 1 Cf., however, the verse chronicle by Apollodorus of Athens (2nd century BC), covering history from the fall of Troy to c.143 BC. Only fragments preserved in other authors remain. For a recent study, see Bravo, *La Chronique d'Apollodore et le Pseudo-Skymnos*, esp. pp. 112–58 on the possible structure of the lost work.
  - 2 Only world chronicles, firmly belonging in the Byzantine chronographical tradition, will be included in this article, which means that the vernacular *Chronicle of the Morea* and *Chronicle of the Tocco*, recording local history, will be left out.

## 1 Constantine Manasses

The first Byzantine world chronicle in verse, the *Synopsis Chronike*, was composed by Constantine Manasses, teacher and rhetorician in 12th-century Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> Manasses' work departs from the traditional chronicle form in a number of respects, the most significant of which is the metrical form. Written in the 15 syllable political verse, the *Synopsis Chronike* seems to take a step towards 'popular' literature, all the while staying within the boundaries of learned language and historical content from the Creation of the world up to year 1081 (the accession to the throne of Alexios I Komnenos).<sup>4</sup> In addition to the verse form, the author employs an episodal narrative technique and a carefully wrought style, both of which are reminiscent of the contemporary novel, which has led scholars to describe the *Synopsis Chronike* as a literary or even "novelistic" chronicle.<sup>5</sup> Let us first consider this particular character of the work, before moving on to the question of its sociocultural context.

Manasses' chronicle opens traditionally with the Creation of the world, but it is an elaborate rewriting of the Creation, presented in the form of a long and dazzling garden ekphrasis, ending with the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (vv. 27–285). In accordance with the overall emphasis on art and nature in the episode, God is described not only as creator, but also as an artist and a gardener. Manasses thus takes well established imagery and adapts it so as to suit his purposes; here, the image of God as a gardener is underlined within the frame of the garden ekphrasis and intertwined with the surrounding vegetal

3 Edited and modern Greek translation by Lampsidis, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum* and *Κωνσταντίνου Μανασσή Σύνοψις Χρονική*. A German translation is currently under preparation by A. Paul and A. Rhoby. For a general introduction to Manasses' chronicle, see Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί Ιστορικοί και Χρονογράφοι*, vol. 3, pp. 535–57; for a more recent survey, see Nilsson, "The Literary Voice of a Chronicler". The tentative biography of Manasses will not be discussed here; for an updated survey of his life and works, see the entry by Rhoby in *Lexikon byzantinischer Autoren*; for a presentation of his life and functions at the court, see Magdalino, "In Search of the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Choirospaktes and Constantine Manasses", pp. 161–65. Lampsidis' many studies of various aspects of Manasses' chronicle up to the end of the 1970s were published in his *Δημοσιεύματα περί τήν Χρονικήν Σύνοψιν Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Μανασσή*; for his later studies, see the bibliography in *Κωνσταντίνου Μανασσή Σύνοψις Χρονική*.

4 Manasses thus avoids narrating the history of the Komnenian dynasty, an enterprise he would never dare to undertake, as he explains in the very last verses of his work: Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, p. 358, vv. 6609–20.

5 On the innovative and literary/novelistic aspects of the *Synopsis Chronike*, see Lampsidis, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum*, pp. xl–xlv; Reinsch, "Historia ancilla literarum?"; Nilsson, "Discovering Literariness in the Past"; Rhoby, "Quellenforschung am Beispiel der Chronik des Konstantinos Manasses".

imagery. As more things are created and the artistic imagery on the whole increases, God's artistry is stressed in elaborate passages.<sup>6</sup> The episode thus contains an intriguing parallel between the artistry of God and the artistry of the poet, both creating/composing/cultivating by means of *logos* (word/narrative/culture). By representing the Creation in the form of an ekphrasis, Manasses highlights the literary-rhetorical character of the chronicle, while at the same time drawing attention to himself as the composer of a new kind of history.

Here I should like to look in some detail at another episode that contains well known historical material and imagery drawn from the chronographical tradition, namely the account of the reign of Constantine the Great. Constantine's reign (306–37) covers surprisingly few verses in Manasses' version (vv. 2291–2329), considering this emperor's position in the history of the Byzantine empire. On the other hand, Manasses had a predilection for wicked characters and juicy stories,<sup>7</sup> and from this perspective of story-telling Constantine may appear as slightly boring. The introductory verses of the episode describe the "successive storms" by which the Romans had been tossed around, due to the dispersed power, and how Constantine seized power and became emperor and single ruler, "a nursling of Christ's sacred leadership of his flock, | the first of emperors who stuck genuinely to Christ".<sup>8</sup>

This man demolished the altars, closed the temples | in which the pagans had brought sacrifices to demons, | and the practice of shameful offerings and unclean rites | and every abomination he condemned. | And there was a distinct trumpet, a silver trumpet, | sounding and echoing from end to end of the world, | everywhere proclaiming the faith in the Creator.<sup>9</sup>

6 Esp. Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, pp. 13–14, vv. 174–80 and 183–84. On the Creation episode, see Nilsson, "Narrating Images in Byzantine Literature", esp. pp. 129–37, 140–46 (translation), and Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, vol. 3, pp. 542–43.

7 For examples and analysis, see Reinsch, "Historia ancilla litterarum?", Nilsson, "Discovering Literariness in the Past", and Nilsson, "The Literary Voice of a Chronicler".

8 Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, p. 125, vv. 2299–2300: και θρέμμα γίνεται Χριστοῦ σεπτῆς ἀγελαρχίας, | πρῶτος ἀνάκτων τῷ Χριστῷ προσκολληθεὶς γνησίως. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Manasses' chronicle are my own.

9 Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, pp. 125–26, vv. 2301–07: οὗτος καθεῖλε τοὺς βωμοὺς, ἔκλεισε τὰ τεμένη, | ἐν οἷς προσῆγον Ἕλληγες δαίμοσι τὰς θυσίας, | και τῶν αἰσχροῶν ἐναγισμῶν και ῥυπαρῶν ὀργίων | σχολὴν κατεψηφίσαστο και πάσης βδελυρίας. | και γέγονε περίτρανος σάλπιγξ ἀργυροσάλπιγξ, | ἀπ' ἄκρων γῆς εἰς ἄκρα γῆς ἠχούσα και βοῶσα | και πανταχῆ σαλπίζουσα τὴν εἰς τὸν κτίστην πίστιν.

First one should note the language that is employed in order to describe this crucial event of Christianity's triumph, represented by the trumpet echoing all over the world: *καὶ γέγονε περίτρανος σάλπιγξ ἀργυροσάλπιγξ, | ἀπ' ἄκρων γῆς εἰς ἄκρα γῆς ἠχοῦσα καὶ βοῶσα | καὶ πανταχῆ σαλπίζουσα τὴν εἰς τὸν κτίστην πίστιν*. The trumpet's echoes are made to resound in the very words chosen by the author, using repetition, rhymes and alliteration in order to represent the narrated content, at the same time creating a rhetorical and sonoric effect. Second, on the level of content, the episode firmly establishes a crucial characteristic of Constantine: he is indeed the first Christian emperor. This unique position is brought out and underlined by the "Biblical grandeur" of the silver trumpet, spreading its message to the world.

Leaving out numerous other events on Constantine's road to power<sup>10</sup>—most of them of a military character and, by Byzantine chroniclers, usually considered important enough to be included—Manasses then simply moves on to the next truly central event in Constantine's reign: the founding of Constantinople. "Wishing to be called founder of a city", Constantine began his building project at the site of the "blind Chalkedonians", but large birds came flying and moved the stones to the other side of the Bosphoros, "to the most beautiful city of Byzas".<sup>11</sup> The emperor realized that the event was no coincidence and moved his efforts and attention "to the most blessed city of the Byzantines".<sup>12</sup> Manasses then moves on to an ekphrastic praise of Constantinople in the form of a beautiful woman:

And he reassembled upon it a prosperous city, | the greatest city, the city of New Rome, | a Rome without wrinkles, that never grows old, | a Rome forever young, forever renewed, | a Rome from which streams of graces flow, | which the mainland embraces, the sea receives, | the palms of Europe gently cradles | and the mouth of Asia kisses from the other side.<sup>13</sup>

10 For recent studies of Constantine, based to a large extent on the accounts of Byzantine chronicles, see Stephenson, *Constantine: Unconquered Emperor, Christian Victor*, and Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire*.

11 Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, p. 126, v. 2308: πόλεως δὲ βουλόμενος δομήτωρ χρηματῖσαι; v. 2313: ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν Βύζαντος τὴν περικαλλεστάτην.

12 Ibid., p. 126, v. 2318: ἐπὶ τὴν πανευδαίμονα πόλιν τῶν Βυζαντίων.

13 Ibid., p. 127, vv. 2319–26: καὶ πόλιν ὀλβιόπολιν αὐτῇ προσανεγείρει, | πόλιν τὴν μεγαλόπολιν, πόλιν τὴν νέαν Ῥώμην, | Ῥώμην τὴν ἀρρυτίδωτον, τὴν μήποτε γηρώσαν, | Ῥώμην αἰεὶ νεάζουσαν, αἰεὶ καινιζομένην, | Ῥώμην ἀφ' ἧς προχέονται χαρίτων αἰεὶ συρμάδες, | ἣν ἠπειρος προσπτύσσεται, θάλασσα δεξιούται, | ἠπίως ἀγκαλίζονται παλάμαι τῆς Εὐρώπης, | ἀντιφιλεῖ δ' ἐτέρωθεν τὸ τῆς Ἀσίας στόμα.

We may note, again, the carefully wrought language resounding with repetition (e.g. *καὶ πόλιν ὀλβιόπολιν αὐτῇ προσανεγείρει, | πόλιν τὴν μεγάλοπολιν, πόλιν τὴν νέαν Ῥώμην*), creating a beautiful style that is suitable for representing the beautiful woman that is the capital, cradled and loved by east and west alike. Manasses then leaves both Constantinople and Constantine with a seemingly dismissive comment: “But the glories of this imperial city | demand another story and a different occasion; | now we must return again to my tale”.<sup>14</sup> This kind of authorial remark is rather characteristic of Manasses, and it does not necessarily mean that he composed another piece on Constantinople or that he failed to return to it properly within the frame of the chronicle.<sup>15</sup> The reference to the beauty of the capital does, however, tie in with the sociocultural setting of the author and the circumstances of the chronicle’s composition.

Manasses wrote his chronicle for *sebastokratorissa* Irene, widow of the *sebastokrator* Andronikos, and thus sister-in-law of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80).<sup>16</sup> Since the *Synopsis Chronike* includes praise also of the young emperor Manuel (vv. 2507–12), his accession to the throne offers us a *terminus post quem*, whereas Irene’s death c.1153 provides us with the latest possible date for the chronicle’s composition.<sup>17</sup> Irene was known to be a generous patroness of letters and she was involved with numerous writers of the period, including Theodore Prodromos and John Tzetzes.<sup>18</sup> It is no surprise, then, that the *Synopsis Chronike* opens with a praise of Irene’s love for learning, as compared to the material desires of a greedy soul; her soul, by contrast, is imperial and loves learning,<sup>19</sup> “ever thirsting for knowledge, culture, and education, | ever applying itself to books, delighting in literature”.<sup>20</sup> The chronicle’s clear and

14 Ibid., p. 127, vv. 2327–29: Ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ἀρχήματα ταύτης τῆς βασιλίδος | ἐτέρου λόγου καὶ καιροῦ καταριθμεῖν καὶ γράφειν, | ἐπὶ δὲ τὴν διήγησιν πάλιν ἐπανιτέον.

15 See Lampsidis, *Constantini Manasses Breviarium Chronicum*, p. 127, *apparatus fontium* on vv. 2327–28: “tale opus Manassis mihi ignotum est”. On authorial remarks in Manasses’ chronicle, see Nilsson, “Discovering Literariness in the Past”.

16 For two recent studies, see Jeffreys, “The *sebastokratorissa* Irene as patron”, and Rhoby, “Verschiedene Bemerkungen zur *Sebastokratorissa* Eirene”.

17 A plausible scenario is that the work was written in portions, so that the references to Manuel were inserted after his accession to the throne; see Lampsidis, “Zur Biographie von K. Manasses”. Cf. Reinsch, “Die Palamedes-Episode in der *Synopsis Chronike*”, pp. 266–67, dating the chronicle to 1150–53.

18 For other authors receiving patronage from Irene, among which there was the so-called Manganeios Prodromos and the monk Iakovos, see Jeffreys, “The *sebastokratorissa* Irene as patron”.

19 Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, p. 5, vv. 3: σὺ δὲ, ψυχὴ βασιλίσσα καὶ φιλολογωτάτη.

20 Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, p. 5, vv. 4–5: αἰεὶ διψῶσα γνώσεως καὶ λόγου καὶ παιδείας, | βίβλοις αἰεὶ προστέτηκας, ἐπεντροφᾶς τοῖς λόγοις. A dedicatory poem

comprehensible form, underlined by Manasses himself in the introductory verses,<sup>21</sup> and enhanced by the use of the “popular” political verse, thus aims at presenting history as an “easy read” for an important member of the court, thirsting for historical knowledge.

The “simple” and thus potentially “popular” character of the *Synopsis Chronike* has often been brought up by scholars, starting with the crucial observations of Odysseas Lampsidis, who argued that the main innovations of Manasses—the verse form, the arrangement of historical material and the “popular” language—made the chronicle an “introductory and easily readable historical work,”<sup>22</sup> which was what the cultural and literary environment of the time more or less demanded. Lampsidis was probably thinking both of the contemporary inclination for historical material within a literary framework—as witnessed by, for instance, the historical works by Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates<sup>23</sup>—and of the rewriting of ancient fiction that took place in the Komnenian period, resulting in the so-called Komnenian novels.<sup>24</sup> Manasses was, in fact, one of the novelists, composing his novel *Aristandros and Kallithea* in the same metre as the chronicle: the political verse.<sup>25</sup> The literary and narrative techniques employed by Manasses in his recasting of history into verse indeed resemble those that are used by him and others in the novelistic project, but we should note that Manasses the chronicler never relinquishes the claim

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in hexameter, likewise praising Irene, follows the chronicle in a number of manuscripts (but is printed before the chronicle in Lampsidis' edition): see Rhoby, “Verschiedene Bemerkungen zur Sebastokratorissa Eirene”, pp. 323–25.

- 21 See Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Lampsidis, p. 5, vv. 7–12: ἐπεὶ γούνη ἐπεπόθησας οἶα τροφίμη λόγου | εὐσύνοπτόν σοι καὶ σαφὴ γραφὴν ἐκπονηθῆναι, | τρανώς ἀναδιδάσκουσαν τὰς ἀρχαιολογίας | καὶ τίνες ἤρξαν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς καὶ μέχρι ποῦ προήλθον | καὶ τίνων ἐβασίλευσαν καὶ μέχρις ἐτῶν πόσων, | ἡμεῖς ἀναδεξόμεθα τὸ βᾶρος τοῦ καμάτου ... (“Since you have desired as a foster child of learning, | that a comprehensible and clear treatise should be written for you, | giving plain teaching in ancient history |—who held power from the beginning and how long they continued, | over whom they ruled and for how many years—| I shall accept the onus of the task ...”). English translation by Jeffreys, “The Nature and Origin of Political Verse”, p. 158, slightly revised.
- 22 Lampsidis, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum*, pp. xl–xlv; xlv: “ἕνα ἱστορικό ἔργο ἐπαγωγικό καὶ εὐανάγνωστο”. Cf. Magdalino, “In Search of the Byzantine Courtier”, p. 162, stating that Manasses “writes only to entertain or to instruct on a very basic level”.
- 23 For recent studies of these two historians, see Buckley, *The Alexiad of Anna Komnene*; Neville, *Anna Komnene*; Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*.
- 24 For introductions to and English translations of all four novels that have come down to us, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*. For a brief introduction to their overall characteristics, see Nilsson, “Romantic Love in Rhetorical Guise”.
- 25 Manasses' novel has come down to us only in excerpts. For an attempted reconstruction of the plot, see Mazal, *Der Roman des Konstantinos Manasses*, and Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 280–82.



to historical truth.<sup>26</sup> His chronicle thus remains history, however “novelistic”, aesthetically pleasing, or entertaining the form.

Other scholars read the *Synopsis Chronike* primarily as didactic poetry, composed, in the words of Elizabeth Jeffreys, “for a patroness who enjoyed uncomplicated introductions to subjects that caught her interest”.<sup>27</sup> The use of political verse was a common and appropriate medium for court poetry addressed to members of the imperial family, and *sebastokratorissa* Irene had other works written for her in the same form.<sup>28</sup> Political verse was easy to write and easy to understand, suitable not the least for oral delivery, and the simple and memorable rhythm made it suitable for didactic works.<sup>29</sup> While Manasses’ chronicle from this perspective indeed may be seen as didactic, it should be noted that there is a difference in both form and function between a voluminous work like the *Synopsis Chronike*, filled with ekphrastic details and enthralling digressions, and a didactic poem such as the so-called *Astrological Poem*, also composed for the *sebastokratorissa* Irene and most probably by Manasses.<sup>30</sup> Not only the length (6620 vs 593 verses), but more importantly the subject matter and function of the two poems differ significantly. Astrology was taught within the *quadrivium*, which means that Manasses’ poem on astrology is didactic in the same manner as, for instance, the poem on rhetoric by Michael Psellos (teaching Hermogenes as within *rhetorike*) or the *Allegories* of the Homeric epics by John Tzetzes (teaching Homer as within *grammatike*).<sup>31</sup> History, by contrast, belonged to no similar disciplinary category, but was

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- 26 See Nilsson, “Discovering Literariness in the Past”. Cf. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 401: “We ought not to refuse to call it a history just because it is in verse”. On the Komnenian novels as a key to understanding the literary trends of the period as a whole, see I. Nilsson, *Raconter Byzantine*.
- 27 Jeffreys, “Why Produce Verse in Twelfth-Century Constantinople?”, p. 224. See also Lauxtermann, “Byzantine Didactic Poetry and the Question of Poeticity”. On didactic poetry in general, and in the 11th century specifically, see Hörandner, “The Byzantine Didactic Poem”, and Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry*, esp. pp. 229–39.
- 28 Jeffreys, “The Nature and Origin of Political Verse”, esp. pp. 151–53 and 158; cf. Rhoby, “Quellenforschung am Beispiel der Chronik des Konstantinos Manasses”, pp. 393–94.
- 29 Jeffreys, “Why Produce Verse in Twelfth-Century Constantinople?”, pp. 227–28. On political verse, see also Hörandner, “Beobachtungen zur Literaturästhetik der Byzantiner”, esp. pp. 280–85, and Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*.
- 30 Manasses, *Astrological Poem*, ed. Miller, pp. 1–39. On the previously disputed authorship, see now Rhoby, “Verschiedene Bemerkungen zur Sebastokratorissa Eirene”.
- 31 On education in Byzantium, see Markopoulos, “Education” and “In Search for ‘Higher Education’ in Byzantium”. On poetry and education in the 11th century, see Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry, 1025–1081*, pp. 209–51 (on Psellos’ poem on rhetoric, see pp. 230–31); no such survey exists for the 12th century, but it seems reasonable to assume a similar educational context.

learned gradually as to form part of a general *polymathia*; its form was, however, clear: historiography preserved and represented the events of the past, offering information as well as pleasure.<sup>32</sup> The *Synopsis Chronike* thus has didactic qualities, as any history or chronicle would, but it does not fully resemble other examples of didactic poetry by the same writer and his contemporaries.

Regardless of the reasons for, and exact meanings of, using political verse, it is clear that the *Synopsis Chronike* can be seen as an expression of contemporary literary trends and sociocultural circumstances. The Komnenian period was marked by an intense interest in ancient Greek literature, resulting in commentaries and treatises on ancient authors as well as more experimental rewritings and adaptations of ancient works and genres.<sup>33</sup> Numerous works that have come down to us were written for imperial or aristocratic patrons, and the situation of writers and rhetoricians in such a society was frequently commented on and debated by the authors themselves.<sup>34</sup> We shall return to these questions below, but let us first move forward in time by a century and a half to look at the second Byzantine world chronicle in verse, written by Ephraim of Ainos.

## 2 Ephraim of Ainos

The chronicle by Ephraim has been called a younger counterpart of Manasses' *Synopsis Chronike*,<sup>35</sup> but in fact it differs significantly from the earlier chronicle

32 See e.g. the proem by Niketas Choniates, discussing the form and value of historiography, *Chronike diegesis*, ed. van Dieten, p. 1, lines 1–2: Αἱ ἱστορίαι δὲ ἄρα κοινωφελὲς τι χρῆμα τῷ βίῳ ἐφεύρηται, εἴπερ ἐκ τούτων οὐκ ὀλίγα ἔστι ξυλλέγειν τὰ βελτίω τοῖς ἡρημένοις. (“Historical narratives, indeed, have been invented for the common benefit of mankind, since those who will be able to gather from many of these the most advantageous insights.”) and p. 2, lines 23–25: Ἀλλὰ τοιάδε μὲν ἡ ἱστορία, ὡς ἐπιτρέχοντά με εἰπεῖν, αὐτοῖς δὲ τοῖς ἐπιούσιν οὐ μνοῦν οὐδαμῶς χαρίεσσα; μὴ οὕτω μανείη τις ὡς ἥδιον ἡγεῖσθαι τι ἕτερον ἱστορίας. (“Since such is the value of history, if I may say so in passing, is it not just as pleasing to posterity? Let no one be so mad as to believe that there is anything more pleasurable than history.”). English translation by Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 3. On history and education, see further below, p. 531.

33 See the important studies by Kazhdan/Franklin, *Studies in Byzantine Literature*, and Kazhdan/Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, followed in recent years by a number of studies on individual authors and genres of the 12th century. For a brief survey, see Nilsson, “Komnenian Literature”.

34 See e.g. the recent Bourbouhakis, “The End of ἐπίδειξις” and Cullhed, “Diving for Pearls and the Death of Tzetzes”.

35 Hunger, *Die Hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 1, p. 478: “Als jüngeres Pendant zur Weltchronik des Konstantinos Manasses ist die spätbyzantinische Verschronik des Ephraim erhalten.”

in both focus and form. It is even more voluminous than Manasses' chronicle, comprising no less than 9588 verses, and it is written in the most common Byzantine metre, the dodecasyllable verse. Ephraim's *Chronicle* has come down to us in only two manuscripts, one of which is a copy of the other. The beginning of the oldest manuscript has been mutilated (one or two pages are missing) and we cannot be sure how the chronicle opened.<sup>36</sup> The text in its present shape begins with the reign of Caligula, which indicates that it originally began with either Julius Caesar or Augustus.<sup>37</sup> This means that Ephraim departed from the formal chronicle tradition, which demanded a beginning either at the Creation of the world or where the previous chronicler left off. Ephraim's emphasis on Christian piety, and the ensuing antipathy towards Latins, Muslims and other creeds, might, however, have made the birth of Christ an appropriate beginning for this particular work. The chronicle ends in 1261, as Michael VIII enters Constantinople and Latin rule comes to an end. In addition to the chronicle, both manuscripts contain a list of Constantinopolitan patriarchs from Apostle Andreas to Patriarch Isaias (1323–32), attributed to the same author.<sup>38</sup> The composition of the work is thus generally assumed to belong in the first quarter of the 14th century.<sup>39</sup>

In order to get an idea of the style and historical focus of Ephraim, we shall look at his account of the reign of Constantine the Great and compare it to Manasses' version that we considered above. Emperor Constantine is the focus of the first long episode in Ephraim's chronicle, consisting of about 100 verses (vv. 296–399). It is, accordingly, much more detailed than Manasses' version (consisting of only 31 verses), which allows more focus on historical events and Christian piety. The episode opens with Constantine becoming emperor after his father; the former, from the very start, showing intelligence and wisdom in spite of his inexperience (vv. 296–306). Then follows an account of the political situation with three emperors (Constantine, Maxentius and Licinus), of which Maxentius was "heavy on his subjects, | a savage snake, a dog delighting

36 Ed. Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*; for details on the manuscripts, see pp. xi–xv. Cf. the large number of manuscripts preserving the chronicle of Manasses, on which see Lampsidis, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum*, pp. lxxvi–clv.

37 Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 1, p. 478; cf. Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, pp. xv and xvii.

38 The patriarch verses are not included in the Lampsidis edition; see instead the Bonn edition (Bekker, *Ephraemius*, pp. 381–417). On these verses, see Lampsidis, *Beiträge zum byzantinischen Chronisten Ephraem und zu seiner Chronik*, pp. 30–55. They will not be included in the present article.

39 Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, p. xvii.

in blood”,<sup>40</sup> so that Constantine was asked to intervene (vv. 307–14). The author then presents us with the well known story of Constantine and the cross.<sup>41</sup>

And convinced, the compassionate heart, | he immediately marches  
against Rome | and prepares himself for battle. | And as he was consider-  
ing and fearing the battle, | the sign of the cross appeared in the middle of  
the day, | formed by stars in the sky, | that said in letters: “By this conquer”.  
| He immediately made an image of the golden cross, | as a mirror of that  
one, wisely made | and commanded that his army carry it. | Trusting in  
the cross, they met their enemies | and won a victory over the big tyrant  
| who became victim of the river’s streams | as he shamefully escaped,  
defeated, from the battle. | And from then on he ruled over all of Rome, |  
and he immediately sent out an imperial order | saying that one must not  
torture the Christians.<sup>42</sup>

Ephraim then offers some more anecdotal material on Constantine, leading up to his realisation that God is a “dispenser of good things” (v. 343). After more honorable and good deeds, Constantine has a nightly vision in which the apostles Peter and Paul visit him (vv. 362–68). He asks Patriarch Sylvester to interpret the dream for him, at which point Ephraim breaks off his narrative: “But why shall I elaborate on this in writing?” (v. 374).<sup>43</sup> As his audience well knew, the dream led up to Constantine’s baptism, which is supposed to have taken place a few months before his death in 337. After a brief note on Helen’s journey to Jerusalem (vv. 378–82), the episode ends with a praise of Constantine

40 Ephraim, *Chronicle*, ed. Lampsidis, pp. 311–12: βαρὺς ὁ Μαξέντιος ἦν ὑπηκόοις, | δράκων  
δαφινός, αἰμοχαρῆς τις κύων. All translations from Ephraim’s chronicle are my own. For a  
modern Greek translation, see Lampsidis, *Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Αἰνίου Χρονογραφία*.

41 On this particular episode in the life of Constantine, see Stephenson, *Constantine: Unconquered Emperor, Christian Victor*, pp. 113–40, esp. 135–36, and Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire*, pp. 74–80, including an account of recent scholarly debates surrounding the vision of Constantine and an updated analysis of the contemporary sources.

42 Ephraim, *Chronicle*, ed. Lampsidis, p. 16, vv. 315–31: καὶ καταπεισθεὶς, ἡ συμπαθῆς καρδιά, |  
ἐφίσταται τάχιστα Ῥωμαίων πόλει, | καὶ πρὸς μάχην ἔτοιμον αὐτὸν δτρύνει. | καὶ δὴ σκοποῦντι  
καὶ δεδοικότε μάχην | σταυροῦ μεσούσης ἡμέρας ὤφθη τύπος, | τυπούμενός γε πρὸς πῶλυ δι’  
ἀστέρων, | ἐν γράμμασι φράζουσιν «ἐν τούτῳ νίκα». | αὐτίκα τοῖνον ἐκ χρυσοῦ σταυροῦ τύπον,  
| ὡς ὤπτό οἱ πρὶν, ἐμφρόνως σχεδιάσας | αὐτοῦ προάγειν στρατιάς παρηγγύα· | ᾧ δὴ πεπειθῶς  
συμπλακείς ἐναντίοις | τρόπαιοι ἰστᾶ κατὰ τυράννου μέγα, | ἔργον φανέντος βρυμάτων ποταμίων  
| ἡττημένου φεύγοντος αἰσχροῦς ἐκ μάχης. | κἀντεῦθεν οὐκοῦν ἦρξε καὶ Ῥώμης ὄλης, | καὶ δόγμα  
βασίλειον εὐθὺς ἐκφέρει | μὴ δεῖν κολάζειν θεσπίζον χριστιανύμους.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 18, v. 374: καὶ τί με δεῖ γράφοντα μακρὰ συμπλέκειν.

and the victory of Christianity over both the capital and the provinces of the Roman empire:

He ruled alone countries of countless people and expanded the borders of the state that he commanded. | And with the power of the cross and the all-mighty Word | he builds the homonymous city, | the shining eye of the known world. | He was called the father of Christian emperors, | the leader of Christian sovereigns | and he convoked himself the first synod of bishops. | With them he condemned the heretic teaching of Areios.<sup>44</sup>

Compared to the rather fanciful description of Constantine and his founding of Constantinople in Manasses' version, Ephraim handles the material in a matter-of-fact way, with a strong emphasis on the Christian value of Constantine's reign and no mention of specific building projects or the beauty of the capital. The style is comparatively plain, and significantly less intense in euphonious effects of repetition, rhyme and alliteration.<sup>45</sup> And although Ephraim's authorial remark at v. 374 resembles the narrative technique of Manasses, guiding the reader through the episodes, it probably does not stem from any direct influence but rather from the common narrative-rhetorical tradition.<sup>46</sup> On the whole, the two verse chronicles seem to have little in common except for being written in metre, which makes the idea of Ephraim as a younger counterpart of Manasses rather troublesome. In order to come to grips with the two chronicles' similarities and differences, we would need to consider and compare their respective historical and sociocultural contexts more carefully.

However, we immediately encounter some difficulties, since the composition of Ephraim's chronicle cannot be placed in any specific context: we simply

44 Ibid., pp. 18–19, vv. 391–99: ὁς ἄρξας ἔθνων ἀπλέτων ἔθναρχίας | σχοινίσματά τε πλατύνας κληρουχίας | σταυροῦ τε κράτει παντοδυνάμου λόγου | πάλιν πολίζει τὴν ὁμώνυμον πόλιν, | ὀφθαλμὸν αἰγλήεντα τῆς οἰκουμένης, | πατὴρ ἀνάκτων εὐσεβῶν κεκλημένος | καὶ χριστολατρῶν κρατόρων ἀρχηγέτης, | πρώτης ὀριστῆς ποιμεναρχῶν συνόδου, | μεθ' ὧν καθείλεν Ἀρείου δόγμα νόθον.

45 See Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, pp. xlix–lii on the “literary value” of Ephraim's chronicle (with a list of rhetorical devices used: pp. li–lii). I would argue that the rhetorical skill that the author displays is an indication of his rhetorical training, not of any literary aspiration similar to what we see in Manasses' chronicle.

46 Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 1, p. 479: “Die Übereinstimmungen im Wortschatz, die sich bei einem Vergleich von Manasses und Ephraim feststellen lassen, müssen nicht auf eine gemeinsame Quelle zurückgeführt werden; sie lassen sich wohl aus dem reichen jahrhundertalten dichterisch-rhetorischen Fundus der byzantinischen literarischen Ausbildung erklären.”

know too little. Even Ephraim's presumed identity as a Thracian from Ainos (now Enez) is based on an old library catalogue of the Vatican, which has listed the work since the 16th century as Ἐφραίμ Αἰνίου χρονική ἱστορία (*Chronicle of Ephraim from Ainos*).<sup>47</sup> Whether this denomination contains any historical truth is uncertain. While Manasses can be firmly placed in the learned circles of the capital by the mid-12th century, in the case of Ephraim we are left with his chronicle and whatever clues we may deduce from its choice and presentation of historical material. As already mentioned, the dating is usually placed in the first quarter of the 14th century, and the strong dependence on Komnenian historical material is in line with the literary trends of that period.<sup>48</sup> In the first part of the chronicle, Ephraim depends primarily on the history of John Zonaras (until Alexios I Komnenos), in the second part he draws on Niketas Choniates (until the fall of Constantinople in 1204), and in the final part he employs the history of George Akropolites.<sup>49</sup> We may thus consider his narrative and literary technique in light of a certain 'archaizing' tendency of the early 14th century, looking back at the Komnenian century and its literary production for inspiration and rhetorical ideals.<sup>50</sup>

As for Ephraim's use of dodecasyllabic verse, it should probably be seen as part of the same 'archaizing' tendency: using a metre frequently used in Byzantium in order to express a relation to the literary past and perhaps even Komnenian court poetry.<sup>51</sup> A clear connection to the *Synopsis Chronike*

47 See Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 1, p. 478, and Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, p. xvi. For a tentative biography, see Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, p. x, and *Beiträge zum byzantinischen Chronisten Ephraem und zu seiner Chronik*, pp. 16–30.

48 See Lampsidis, "Ο κλασσικισμός και αἱ λαϊκὰί τάσεις εἰς τὴν Χρονογραφίαν τοῦ Ἐφραίμ (14ος αἰ.)", arguing that Ephraim's chronicle forms a bridge between the vernacular and the "classicising" tendencies in the 14th century; cf. Lampsidis' interpretation of Manasses' chronicle as a "popular" work (above, n. 22). On "folklore" elements in Ephraim's chronicle, see the series of articles by Barbounes, written in the 1980s and 90s and reprinted in *Λαογραφικά μελετήματα της Ρωμιοσύνης* as chapters 2–6, dealing with numerous topics ranging from proverbs to medicine.

49 On Ephraim's sources, see Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, pp. xl–xlvii. On Ephraim's working methods and compositional techniques, see also Prinzing, "Der vierte Kreuzzug in der späteren Historiographie und Chronistik der Byzantiner", pp. 288–89.

50 See Lampsidis, "Ο κλασσικισμός και αἱ λαϊκὰί τάσεις εἰς τὴν Χρονογραφίαν τοῦ Ἐφραίμ (14ος αἰ.)", using the term *klassismos*. I find the term "archaizing" more suitable; cf. Bartusis, "The Functions of Archaizing in Byzantium" on "classicizing" vs "archaizing", esp. pp. 271–72.

51 See Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 1, p. 479, who argues that the choice of verse "deutet auf die Vorliebe des Autors für das Archaisieren". On Ephraim's metrics, see Hilberg, "Die Verstechnik des Ephraemios"; Lampsidis, "Beitrag

by Manasses seems, however, unlikely. Ephraim may have known about Manasses' chronicle, which was still read, continued, and even turned into vernacular prose in the 13th century,<sup>52</sup> but in spite of possible influence there is no evidence of textual dependence.<sup>53</sup> Ephraim's choice of 12 instead of 15 syllable verse, along with the different narrative and ideological focus, should accordingly not be seen in relation to Manasses' chronicle. It seems more likely that Ephraim, in his wish to present a chronicle focusing on the pious aspects of Byzantine history, chose the most obvious metrical form for learned texts in an imperial context. Whether his undertaking to present a series of Christian emperors in this specific manner was encouraged by a patron, or dedicated to a person who would appreciate it, remains unknown. The indications of such circumstances—the occasional “you” appearing in the chronicle—remain vague, and could be seen as rhetorical devices appearing in a number of chronicles and other texts throughout the Byzantine period.<sup>54</sup>

Rather than indicating Ephraim's *Chronicle* as a continuation of a trend that Manasses had initiated in the 12th century, a comparative analysis of the two chronicles seems to bring out the specificity of the *Synopsis Chronike*. In such a comparison, Ephraim represents the expected versification of the chronicle tradition: a relatively straightforward verse paraphrase, in the appropriate 12 syllable verse, without much rhetorical embellishment, and with a clearly defined authorial persona and implicit addressee. With such a procedure, the ideological message can quite easily move back and forth between the verse and the prose form.<sup>55</sup> The chronicle by Manasses, by contrast, does not function in this manner, since it abandons part of the ideological functions of the chronicle, and instead places itself in the narrative tradition of entertaining texts that mark the Komnenian period. He freely employs ekphrastic discourse

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zur « akustischen » Metrik in der Chronik von Ephraem”, pp. 76–105, and id., *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, pp. liii–lv.

52 On the continuation, see Grégoire, “Un continuateur de Constantin Manassès et sa source”, arguing for an early date (1204/05). The vernacular version was first discussed by Praechter, “Eine vulgärgriechische Prosaparaphrase der Chronik des Konstantinos Manasses” and “Zur vulgären Paraphrase des Konstantinos Manasses”, but note the more recent Genova, “Vorläufige Bemerkungen über eine anonyme spätgriechische Prosaparaphrase des Konstantinos Manasses”. On the *Nachleben* of Manasses in some more detail, see Nilsson, “The Literary Choice of a Chronicler”.

53 See Lampsidis, “Ο κλασικισμός και αἱ λαϊκῆς τάσεις εἰς τὴν Χρονογραφίαν τοῦ Ἐφραίμ (14ος αἰ.)”, p. 120, who sees Manasses' chronicle as a *prottypon* for Ephraim. See also Lampsidis, *Beiträge zum byzantinischen Chronisten Ephraem und zu seiner Chronik*, pp. 52–55.

54 Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, p. xvi.

55 See the way in which Manasses' historical narrative was turned back into prose by Michael Glykas: Nilsson, “The Literary Voice of a Chronicler”.

and presents known historical events as exciting or romantic episodes; his authorial persona is not stable and trustworthy but rather playful and teasing, and his addressee is—beyond his patron and primary addressee *sebastokratorissa* Irene—anyone who is willing to be delighted and entertained. His use of political verse is significant, because it marks a departure from the traditional prose of chronography, but it is not the only device that makes his *Synopsis Chronike* more literary and indeed more ‘poetic’ than the chronicle by Ephraim.

### 3 The Past as Poetry

It seems generally accepted in modern scholarship that Manasses is “more a poet than an historian”,<sup>56</sup> and that Ephraim “did not intend to write a proper history but rather a literary work that contained a historical narrative”.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, as we noted above, the political verse of Manasses may be seen in relation to the wishes of his patron and her demand for a “comprehensible and clear treatise ... giving plain teaching in ancient history”.<sup>58</sup> The dodecasyllabic verse of Ephraim, in turn, appears to be part of the author’s archaizing style. But, can we come any closer to a sociocultural meaning of verse and its relation to history? I believe we can, but we need to consider in some more detail the question of history and verse in the Middle Byzantine period.

Even if only two complete (or in Ephraim’s case, near complete) Byzantine world chronicles in verse have come down to us, we know of yet another planned verse chronicle: the *Μετρική χρονική βίβλος*, written by Manasses’ contemporary John Tzetzes.<sup>59</sup> Only the introduction has been preserved, consisting of 527 verses on allegory, along with a couple of short passages preserved in Tzetzes’ *Histories* (the so-called *Chiliades*). Both introduction and fragments are written in the kind of dodecasyllable that Tzetzes termed *iamboi technikoi*,<sup>60</sup> in contrast to the political verses of the main text of the *Histories*. The second passage contains a discussion of chronological questions (12.264–95 on

56 Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 399.

57 Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*, p. 119, referring to Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, p. xlix. See further below, p. 534.

58 See above, n. 21.

59 Ed. Hunger, “Johannes Tzetzes, Allegorien aus der Verschronik. Kommentierte Textausgabe”. Another 105 verses from Tzetzes’ chronicle, unedited, seem to be preserved in a manuscript in Alexandria (Alexandrinus Patriarchalis 62 [107], ff. 85v–88r); see Cesaretti/Ronchey, *Eustathii Thessalonicensis exegesis in canonem iambicum pentecostalem*, p. 202\*, n. 80.

60 On Tzetzes and his *iamboi technikoi*, see Cullhed, “Diving for Pearls”, p. 56, with further references. See also, briefly, Hunger, “Johannes Tzetzes”, pp. 13–14.



the Metonic cycle), preceded by a remark on the composition of the verse chronicle:

I have spoken about the Metonic Cycle  
and composed metrically a world history  
in iambic verse in accordance with the Art, even if I left it  
incomplete as I realized that all hated what was in accordance with the Art  
while loving barbaric verses. What utmost misfortune!<sup>61</sup>

We may read these verses as a reference to the constant rivalry between writers in 12th-century Constantinople, and perhaps even to a competition that Manasses, with his 'barbaric' chronicle in political verse, won.<sup>62</sup> But regardless of whether this is a personal stab at the person of Manasses or not, Tzetztes' unfinished project, and especially the way in which he styles himself as a superior historian *qua* grammarian, offers interesting (if somewhat caricatural) clues to understanding choices of form in the Komnenian period. The practice of identifying and explaining historical accounts had long since been an integrated part of instruction in *grammatike*: the first educational stage of Byzantine secular education. The scholia on Dionysios Thrax's *Art of Grammar*, the foundational manual of the discipline, offers the standard list of the elements of poetry, of which the grammarian is an expert. It includes *historia*, "the clear account of things that have happened or could be", and *mythos* (fictional accounts), together with the use of dignified and sonorous words, verse, and sometimes dialect.<sup>63</sup> If the characteristics of poetry are myth, metre, style, history and dialect, the *Synopsis Chronike* is poetry while also being history, because there is no opposition between the two, rather a close affiliation. "Verse does not amount to poetry",<sup>64</sup> and in Manasses' case,

61 John Tzetztes, *Histories* 12, ed. Leone, p. 477, lines 252–56: ἐγὼ δὲ νῦν τοὺς Μέτῳνος ἐνιαυτοὺς εἰρήκειν | καὶ μετρικῶς συνέγραψα τῇ κόσμου ἱστορίᾳ | ἰάμβῳ μέτρῳ τεχνικῶ, κὰν ἀτελῆ καὶ ταύτην | ἀφήκα βλέπων σύμπαντας τὸν τεχνικὸν μισοῦντας, | τὰ βάρβαρα δὲ στέργοντας. ὦ συμφορὰς ἐσχάτης. Translation by Eric Cullhed and Ingela Nilsson.

62 Discussed in both Cullhed, "The blind bard and 'I'", and Bourbouhakis, "The End of ἐπιδειξις". On Manasses' possible involvement in such situations, see Rhoby/Zagklas, "Zu einer möglichen Deutung von Πανιώτης".

63 *Scholia in Dionysii Thracis Artem grammaticam*, ed. Hilgard, p. 168, lines 8–10; p. 300, lines 34–36; p. 303, line 36; p. 304, line 1; p. 449, lines 4–6. On the grammar of Thrax in an educational vs poetic context, see Morgan, "Dionysius Thrax and the Educational Uses of Grammar", and Swiggers, "Poetics and Grammar".

64 Nilsson, "Narrating Images in Byzantine Literature", p. 131, n. 31; see also "Discovering Literariness in the Past", p. 17. Cf. Lauxtermann, "Byzantine Didactic Poetry and the Question of Poeticity", p. 46, and Hörandner, *Forme et fonction*, pp. 132–33.

the other characteristics—not so much myth, but at least style, history, and choice of words—contribute as much as the metrical form to making his chronicle “poetic”, in the sense that it fulfilled the criteria set by Homeric epic. Such a focus on literary form is confirmed by a large number of other works by Manasses, likewise expressing a keen interest in aesthetic quality.<sup>65</sup> Manasses, himself both a poet and a *grammatikos*, thus employs the same methods whether he writes poetry or prose.<sup>66</sup> He carefully distinguishes between content and form, creating, depending on the occasion, poetic prose or prosaic verse. Such a practice was by no means foreign to premodern writers, something described in detail for Greek authors in the treatise *The Arrangement of Words* (Περὶ συνθέσεως ὀνομάτων) by Dionysios of Halikarnassos:

Now that my discussion of these matters is at an end, I think that you are eager to hear next how language without metre is made to resemble a beautiful poem or lyric and how a poem is made similar to beautiful prose.<sup>67</sup>

The focus on suitable form is apparent also in the comments by Tzetzes on people who hate the ‘technical’ verses and love the ‘barbaric’ ones, referring to the use of dodecasyllabic vs political verse.<sup>68</sup> Whether he refers to Manasses or not, he makes an aesthetic judgement on the form. Needless to say, the metre affects a number of formal features of any given content—vocabulary, syntax, rhythm, and so on—but the author still has a choice as regards the content and the overall level of style.<sup>69</sup> As we have seen above, even a brief comparison of the two verse chronicles by Manasses and Ephraim shows that the authors do

65 See esp. the ekphrastic work by Manasses, and most notably the description of a crane hunt; ed. Kurtz, “Esce dva niezdannych proizvedenija Konstantine Manassi”, pp. 79–88. A new edition and translation is under preparation by C. Messis and I. Nilsson.

66 On the relationship between poetry and prose in the 11th century, both defined as *logoi*, see Bernard, *Byzantine Secular Poetry, 1025–1081*, esp. pp. 41–47. Note also Conley, “Practice to Theory: Byzantine ‘Poetics’”, pp. 312–13.

67 Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *The Arrangement of Words*, 25, eds. Radermacher/Usener, p. 122, lines 13–16: Τούτων δὴ μοι τέλος ἔχόντων, ἐκεῖνά σε οἶομαι ποθεῖν ἔτι ἀκοῦσαι, πῶς γίνεται λέξις ἀμετρος ὁμοία καλῶ ποιήματι ἢ μέλει, καὶ πῶς ποίημα ἢ μέλος πεζῆ λέξει καλῆ παραπλήσιον. English translation as in de Jonge, *Between Grammar and Rhetoric*, p. 356; for a thorough discussion of prose, poetry, and poetic prose in Dionysios’ treatise, see *ibid.*, pp. 329–66. Similar ideas were expressed in Hermogenes’ *On Types of Style* (the chapter on “sweetness”, with examples from both prose, epics and poetry), and thus repeated and discussed in the Byzantine commentaries on Hermogenes.

68 See above, p. 531; see also Conley, “Practice to Theory: Byzantine ‘Poetics’”, p. 302.

69 Lauthermann, “Byzantine Didactic Poetry and the Question of Poeticity”, p. 46.

not have the same narrative focus and do not use poetic devices to the same degree. Manasses uses the “prosaic” fifteen-syllable verse, but employs epic, poetic and unusual words (including frequent neologisms), metaphors and similes, along with numerous figures such as rhyme and alliteration. Ephraim uses the more elevated twelve-syllable verse, but employs a more severe style with less stylistic embellishment of the kind that brings “sweetness” and “pleasure”.

The reasons for these differing stylistic choices can most probably be found in the different sociocultural contexts of the two chroniclers. Manasses worked in an environment in which ancient Greek literature and its usefulness in contemporary rhetoric was constantly underlined and turned into a social reality for teachers and functionaries in the service of the imperial court. The rewriting of ancient novels and the veritable flood of occasional poetry—some of it in political verse—seem to have influenced also other kinds of writing, so that novelistic and poetic devices found their way into various genres, including history and chronography. Moreover, the verse form itself had a social function, endowing verse with a particular value for those who patronized and consumed works written in that discursive register.<sup>70</sup> By the time Ephraim wrote his chronicle, a certain literary nostalgia made authors look back to, and draw inspiration from, Komnenian production. As already noted above, it is likely that the form of Ephraim’s *Chronicle* was influenced by that literary trend, but we know little of the exact circumstances under which his chronicle was composed. While Manasses had a patron, presumably having certain specific demands—and perhaps, if we are to believe Tzetzes, even staging a sort of competition in order to achieve them<sup>71</sup>—Ephraim’s impetus for a new take on historical form remains obscure. His choice of a less “poetic” representation of history indicates, however, that his ideological focus on imperial piety and the orthodox Church demanded a more prosaic level of style combined with a prestigious metre.

#### 4 Conclusion

As a representation of the past, history is not just an account of “true” or presumed facts. The past is a repository of lost dreams and desires, offering

70 Jeffrey, “Why Produce Verse in Twelfth-Century Constantinople?”, p. 225: In the words of Elizabeth Jeffrey, “The verse-writing is intended to demonstrate that the writer is a fully paid-up member of the notional writers’ union, that he is a credible member of the guild of literati.” Cf. Conley, “Practice to Theory: Byzantine ‘Poetics’”, pp. 316–17 on social and professional anxiety in relation to the use of verse.

71 See above, pp. 531 and cf. Jeffrey, “The Nature and Origin of Political Verse”, p. 158.

a consoling image of what once was and, perhaps more important, an alternative vision of what is now. History is, accordingly, a powerful expression of ideological assertion. In a similar manner, poetry is not simply a question of aesthetic quality or pleasure. Poetic discourse uses powerful words and phrases to convey ideas, moods, and emotions, and in just a few words one can create a complicated mental picture. Moreover, in the words of Thomas Conley, poetry is “a literary strategy for preserving what political or theological strategies could not, viz., the sense of being connected, with the Past, to be sure, but also with one another”.<sup>72</sup> The combination of historical content and poetic form is, accordingly, not a far-fetched procedure, but rather a potent device for both ideological and literary purposes.

Lampsidis argued that the individual literary ideal of Ephraim's *Chronicle* indicates that he did not intend to write “history proper” but rather aimed to compose a literary work based on history.<sup>73</sup> Such a neat distinction between “history” and “literature” is still common among scholars, in spite of the complex questions of authorial intention and hermeneutic procedures that it entails. In practice, the absolute majority of historians up till the 18th century composed literary works based on historical narratives, cutting and pasting and rewriting according to their own preference, or that of their audience.<sup>74</sup> The two Byzantine verse chronicles by Constantine Manasses and Ephraim offer examples of history cast as poetry. Both indicate not only an inclination to “romance the past” by turning Greek, Roman, and Byzantine history into entertaining and educational accounts,<sup>75</sup> but also offer apt demonstrations of the careful distinction between content and form that formed the basis of grammatical, poetic, and rhetorical skill in Late Antiquity and Byzantium.<sup>76</sup>

72 Conley, “Practice to Theory: Byzantine ‘Poetics’”, p. 318.

73 Lampsidis, *Ephraem Aenii Historia chronica*, p. xlix, on which see Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*, p. 119: in consideration of this “we can more easily explain the omission of historically significant information, the narration of self-inclusive episodes that typifies his style, as well as the emphasis on characterization so as to capture the interest of his audience.”

74 On this procedure from a Byzantinist perspective, see Nilsson, “To Narrate the Events of the Past”.

75 For such a notion applied to western material in the 13th century, see Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*; cf. the notion of Manasses' *Synopsis Chronike* as a “novelistic” chronicle.

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## Byzantine Verse Romances

*Roderick Beaton*

In a section devoted to the use of verse for various genres, it will be as well to begin by defining the genre in question. Lengthy fictional stories of love and adventure had first begun to be written in Greek around the beginning of the Common Era. Five of these have come down to us complete, all of them dating from Roman imperial times. From fragments and papyri we know that many more were produced and circulated during the same period. Modern scholarship has termed these texts either “romances” or “novels”, more or less interchangeably; the distinction is peculiar to English: the French *roman* and its cognates in many other languages mean both.<sup>1</sup>

The texts to be discussed in this chapter represent the Byzantine (and in some cases post-Byzantine) reception, continuation, and development of that ancient genre in the very different context of the thought-world of the later Middle Ages and Early Modern period. The Byzantines themselves, like the ancient practitioners before them, had no generic term for this kind of writing, and have left no theoretical discussion of it either. Neither of the modern terms available in English is very satisfactory when applied to these texts.

“Romance” (from French *roman*) from its 12th-century origins just meant something written in the vernacular, and gradually extended to tales of love and adventure, because these were favourite topics for vernacular treatment. Tales of this sort, in western Europe, were as often written in verse as in prose, though the earliest are in verse. The earliest of the Byzantine texts have little, if anything, to do with the near-contemporary emergence of the “romance” in western Europe, and indeed are not even written in the vernacular. To call them “romances” therefore risks raising expectations derived from the history of medieval literature in the West, which are not really relevant to these texts. It was not until the 13th century that the Greek vernacular became established as the natural language for stories of this sort: perhaps at the same time as western romances first began to be translated into Greek.

The novel, on the other hand, is always thought of as a quintessentially prose genre; the first Greek fiction, in Antiquity, had also been written exclusively in

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<sup>1</sup> For translated texts, see Reardon, *The Collected Ancient Greek Novels*; for discussion, Whitmarsh, *The Cambridge Companion*.

prose. It makes sense to situate the Byzantine and post-Byzantine genre within the literary history of fiction, that begins with Chariton of Aphrodisias and the Roman Petronius in the 1st century and continues with the Man-Booker prizewinners and best-sellers of today. On the other hand, all but one of the 16 surviving Byzantine “romances” (or “novels”) are written not in prose like their ancient predecessors, but in verse, and this is why they have a place in this book.

So, for the purposes of this chapter let us call them “romances”. Let us further define the Byzantine “romance” (from now on without quotation marks) as *an extended fictional narrative of love and adventure, usually written in verse*.<sup>2</sup>

The Byzantine romances, thus defined, fall naturally into two distinct groups. There is greater continuity from the one group to the other than used to be acknowledged. But no study of Byzantium should underestimate the importance of the rupture that separates the two groups, namely the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and the half-century of Latin rule from which the empire never recovered.

## 1 Romance in 12th-Century Constantinople

The first group of romances flourished in court circles under the emperors John and Manuel Komnenos. The four romances that make up this group belong integrally to the artistic and intellectual spirit of revivalism and experimentation that defines the Komnenian period. At a time when other kinds of secular writing were being revived after having fallen into disuse since Late Antiquity, the romance makes its appearance in the immediate wake of the revival of epic, of Lucianic satire, and in tandem with the reinvention of Thucydidean historiography by Anna Komnene.<sup>3</sup>

Its appearance is sudden, during the 1130s, and can be traced to the initiative of one man. This was the prolific court poet, orator, joker, and

2 Cf. the definition proposed by Adamantios Koraes for the newly minted Greek generic term *mythistoria* in 1804: “a fictional, but plausible story of sufferings in love, written with artistry and dramatically, for the most part in prose”: Koraes, “Τὰ εἰς τὴν ἔκδοσιν”, p. 3. This in turn had been an adaptation of the definition for the French *roman* by Danuel Huet in 1670, to reflect the fact that the later Greek romances had been written not in prose but in verse. See also Beaton, *Introduction*, pp. 54–55 and Beaton, “The Greek Novel”, pp. 225–26.

3 For English translations of all four romances (into prose), with introductions and notes to each, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*. A modern edition with facing translation into Italian can be found in Conca, *Il Romanzo bizantino*. The fullest studies relating to all four are: Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 52–88; Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*; Meunier, *Le roman byzantine*; Nilsson, “Romantic Love in Rhetorical Guise”, pp. 39–66.

literary experimenter Theodore Prodromos.<sup>4</sup> Almost certainly, it was the same Prodromos who first, playfully, introduced the language of the street into the refined salons of his highly placed patrons (who included the emperors John and Manuel Komnenos).<sup>5</sup> Despite this, in Byzantium in the 12th century there was no convergence between the romance genre and the vernacular language: that would have to wait for more than a century and the aftermath of 1204.

Prodromos' romance was called, after the manner of its late antique predecessors, by the names of its principal characters: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*.<sup>6</sup> His example was followed, probably during the first half of the 1140s, by another Constantinopolitan courtier, Eumathios (or perhaps Eustathios) Makrembolites, whose *Hysmine and Hysminias* is, exceptionally, in prose.<sup>7</sup> This is much the most sophisticated of all the Byzantine romances, and also enjoyed by far the richest manuscript tradition, proving that it was continuously read and copied down to the late 18th century. However, the medium in which *Hysmine and Hysminias* is written rules it out for further discussion here.

At around the same time, possibly in tandem with an aristocratic commission to produce a world history in "political verse", another of the same circle, Constantine Manasses, produced *Aristandros and Kallithea*.<sup>8</sup> This work survives only in fragments. The group is completed by *Drosilla and Charikles*, written by a former pupil of Prodromos, Niketas Eugenianos, most likely in homage to his master in the mid-1150s.<sup>9</sup>

All the evidence suggests that these four authors knew one another and were closely linked as men of learning in the service of the imperial family. The revival of the genre at this time seems therefore to have been a self-conscious activity. The works of these writers continued to be copied and read, and were

4 Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 7–10.

5 Ed. Alexiou, *Ptochoprodromika* (forthcoming); Beaton, "The Rhetoric of Poverty"; and Cullhed, "The Blind Bard". For a recent critical edition of the vernacular poems attributed to Prodromos, see Eideneier, *Πτωχοπρόδρομος*.

6 For text, see Marcovich, *Theodori Prodromi de Rhodanthes et Dosiclis*; for translation with English introduction and commentary, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 1–157.

7 For text, see Marcovich, *Eustathius Macrembolites*; for translation with English introduction and commentary see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 157–269 (on author and date, see pp. 159–65).

8 For text, see Mazal, *Der Roman*; for translation with English introduction and commentary see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 271–337 (on author and date, see pp. 273–76).

9 Burton, *A Byzantine Novel*, provides facing Greek text (from Conca, *Il Romanzo bizantino*, pp. 305–497) and a translation into English verse; see also the prose translation with introduction and commentary in Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 339–458 (on author and date, see pp. 341–43).

certainly known to at least some of the anonymous authors of the vernacular romances that came later. But there is no sign of a “popular” vogue for new romances at this time. So far as we can tell, those four were the only ones written during this period.

This has led modern scholars to interpret them as sophisticated literary games, aimed at a small coterie, and essentially as elaborate rhetorical exercises. On the other hand—particularly when these rather rarefied narratives are set in the context of the livelier tradition that took root during the 13th century—they deserve to be viewed as a significant element in the history of Byzantine story-telling, as well as in the subject of this book: Byzantine poetry.

Why, then, did these Byzantine authors—working in a tradition that valued emulation and continuity rather than overt originality or novelty—in three out of four cases make such a radical break with the older tradition and write in verse? One explanation, that can be discounted immediately, is that they might have been influenced by the vernacular “romances”, on ancient themes, that began to be written in Old French during the 1150s, the *romans d'antiquité*. The suggestion that the passage of the Second Crusade by Constantinople in the winter of 1147–48 had some sort of catalytic effect in both Greek and French literature of the period, deserves to be more fully examined than it has been.<sup>10</sup> But recent advances in dating the Komnenian romances make it almost certain that three out of the four predate that encounter with the West. If 1147 was some sort of catalyst, its effects were felt in the West, not in Constantinople.

A possibility nearer home needs to be considered. The “Byzantine epic”, *Digenis Akrites*, has also been recognized as a “proto-romance”. Derived from originally oral songs circulating on the eastern periphery of the empire during the Middle Byzantine period, and celebrating the exploits of an exemplary hero (and of his father, a Muslim Arab), this work seems first to have achieved literary form early in the 12th century. In the course of doing so it acquired narrative and stylistic elements characteristic of the ancient and later Byzantine romances. These are the pairing of the hero, in both generations, with an equally exemplary, beautiful and virtuous, woman, for whose sake he achieves all his marvellous exploits.<sup>11</sup>

10 Jeffrey, “The Komnenian Background”; and Id., “The Wild Beast from the West”; cf. Beaton, “Fiction in the Twelfth Century”.

11 For the fullest account of this work and modern scholarship on it, with a critical edition of the two most authoritative manuscript versions, English translation, and commentary, see Jeffrey, *Digenis Akritis*. For this work as a “proto-romance”, see Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 30–51.

Naturally, given its origins in what would once have been oral song, the written versions of this material are (with one late exception) in verse. And there are observable thematic continuities between these versions and oral balladry in Greek collected in the 19th and 20th centuries. The nature, extent, and origin of these continuities have been much discussed, but inconclusively. However, what is not disputed is that *Digenes Akrites*, in its earliest versions, emerged from a tradition of oral verse *and* was known in the same court circles, during the last years of the reign of John II, where the revival of the romance took place. We know this because it is clearly parodied in a comic poem in the vernacular, attributed to the same Theodore Prodromos, addressed to the same emperor, and therefore before the death of John in 1143.<sup>12</sup>

It seems very probable that the first literary versions of the heroic deeds of Digenes emerged from the same climate of literary innovation, based on revival of ancient genres, as did the romance. Whether that was sufficient reason for the radical switch from prose to verse for three out of the four romances of the period, is hard to tell. In part, the difficulty has to do with the particular verse-form chosen by the authors of the romances.

The literary versions of *Digenes*, like their presumed oral avatars, are written in “political verse”, to which Michael Jeffreys has devoted a chapter in the present volume. This verse-form has a long tradition in oral and popular contexts, and Jeffreys has convincingly argued that its emergence into written form, and its subsequent dominance in Greek narrative poetry for some eight centuries, carries traces of this originally oral substratum.<sup>13</sup> Later, the “political verse” would become established as the natural medium for the Byzantine and post-Byzantine romance.

But this did not happen immediately. The metrical form in which Prodromos chose to reintroduce the romance into the canon of Greek literature, was not the fifteen-syllable “political verse” but the twelve-syllable metre, which Byzantines called “iambic trimeter”. This, unlike the “political verse”, which writers in these circles treated with some disdain, could pay at least lip service to the ancient metrical principle of quantity. And even though the distinction on which it was, in theory, based—between long and short vowels—had long since disappeared from the spoken language, these Byzantine intellectuals prided themselves on their ability to write “correctly” according to the rules of ancient metrics.

12 Jeffreys, “The Afterlife of *Digenes Akrites*”, pp. 146–49.

13 Jeffreys, “The Nature and Origins of the Political Verse”; and Id., “Written Dekapentasyllables”. See also Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*.

The result is a curious hybrid, since the metrical pattern on which each line is supposed to be based cannot be heard in oral delivery. The rhythmic effect is rather like the French *alexandrin*—with which it fortuitously shares the same number of syllables—or the Italian hendecasyllable made famous by Dante, which also allows for considerable variation in rhythm.

So Prodomos was recasting an originally prose genre from Antiquity in a different medium—verse—that was also very ancient, and had a primary association with quite a different genre, namely drama. It is perhaps not unconnected with this choice that Makrembolites (alone among the Byzantine writers of romance) labelled his work a “drama”. When read aloud, Prodomos’ verse would have sounded (perhaps) distantly like tragic dialogue, but also (unlike the accentual “political verse”) like the prose in which the original romances had been written.

This compromise, if that is what it was, was followed faithfully by Prodomos’ pupil Eugenianos. But *Drosilla and Charikles* is not just a homage to the work of the master; of the four romances of the 12th century, this is by far the most “poetic”. Eugenianos has taken the choice for verse significantly further than his predecessors. Joan Burton has shown that *Drosilla and Charikles* invokes not just the ancient novel, and particularly its pastoral offshoot in *Daphnis and Chloe* (whose hero and heroine have the same initial letters), but the pastoral poetry of the originator of that sub-genre: Theocritus.<sup>14</sup> Lyrical love poetry, a genre barely present in Byzantine literature outside the *Greek Anthology*, makes a strong appearance in this romance, which includes long passages that purport to reproduce a series of songs sung along the road. Two of these exploit further possibilities of the verse medium, by varying the standard metre. A precedent had already been set by Prodomos in a short passage, but Eugenianos goes significantly further, with three extended passages where Homeric hexameter breaks into the regular pattern of the lines.<sup>15</sup> With the change of metre—and surely to partly comic effect—the linguistic register changes too. The first two of these passages have been read as not merely paying homage to the ancient epigram, but as actually functioning as new epigrams in their own right.<sup>16</sup> Love poetry of this kind in 12th-century Byzantium is extremely rare.

It is with the fragmentary *Aristandros and Kallithea* by Constantine Manasses that the modern accentual metre, the fifteen-syllable “political verse”, for the first time enters the service of the romance genre. A possible precedent for

14 Burton, “A Re-Emergence of Theocritean Poetry in the Byzantine Novel”.

15 *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, ed. Marcovich, 9.186–204; *Drosilla and Charikles*, ed. Burton, 3.263–88, 297–320, 6.205–35.

16 Conca, “Il Romanzo di Niceta Eugenio”, pp. 122–23.

this, as we saw, may have been its use in the Byzantine epic or proto-romance, *Digenes Akrites*, where we can be fairly sure that the verse-form is carried over from the poem's oral sources. In Manasses' case, we know that he used the same metre in another long work, seemingly at the request of an aristocratic patron.<sup>17</sup> It has been suggested that his romance may have been another commission, and the choice of metre again imposed upon the author. But we cannot be certain of this.<sup>18</sup>

There is little in either language or versification to connect this text more directly with the oral tradition, but it does anticipate later developments in the genre in two ways. The first of these is a taste for the fabulous or exotic, exemplified by the one-eyed monster from Paionia that "releases a fart of bitter flame" and the touch of whose droppings are lethal.<sup>19</sup> Natural curiosities had featured already in *Leukippe and Clitophon*, the ancient romance which is used as a model for all these stories of the 12th century. However, Manasses crosses a line into the *supernatural*, so that this passage seems rather to prefigure the fiery serpents of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* some two centuries later.

The other innovation is a striking inventiveness in the creation of poetic compound words, a linguistic resource that would later be associated with the romances of the 13th to 15th centuries and to some extent also with the folk tradition. Particularly noteworthy from the point of view of versification is that there is a tendency for these long hybrid words to fill an entire half-line in the structure of the fifteen-syllable verse, suggesting an integral connection between this verse-form and linguistic ingenuity of this type.<sup>20</sup>

There is no way of telling whether these innovations are Manasses' personal contributions to the developing genre, or whether he was drawing on a substratum of oral or popular literature that is otherwise lost to us, but would have been available as a resource for later writers of vernacular romances to develop.

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17 The evidence has been presented most fully in Jeffreys, "The Nature and Origins of the Political Verse", pp. 143–68; see also Professor Jeffreys' chapter in the present volume and also the chapter by Ingela Nilsson.

18 Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 276.

19 *Aristandros and Kallithea*, Fr. 36 (for translation, see E. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 293–94); cf. frs. 31, 77, 155.

20 For examples, see Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 242, n. 43. See also the article of Martin Hinterberger in this volume.

## 2 Vernacular Romances after 1204

### 2.1 Introduction

The genre seems to have fallen silent, not long after the middle of the 12th century. A century would elapse before it would re-emerge, with significant differences in language and content, and now inseparable from the fifteen-syllable verse-form, which by this time was fast emerging as the natural, almost the universal, medium for narrative literature in the vernacular.<sup>21</sup> Although the variety of language used in these later romances is by no means uniform, it is now invariably based upon the spoken register of the time: a marked departure from precedent, either in the 12th century or indeed in Antiquity.<sup>22</sup>

The change of linguistic register does not necessarily mean that the new romances are products of “popular” or “folk” literature (*Volksliteratur*), as they often used to be represented.<sup>23</sup> None has a named author in the manuscripts, but all of these manuscripts date from between one and three centuries after the most likely date of composition. Given the uncertain state of the times, and the absence of indications of where the copying took place, the copies we have must have been made in conditions very different from those of the original compositions. It now seems most probable, as we shall see shortly, that the new revival in the 13th century began under aristocratic patronage and with a political agenda. And there is good evidence to attribute authorship of one of the romances, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, to a member of the reigning dynasty of Constantinople in the early 14th century.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of content, the romance has undergone significant changes too. In part, this is due to the penetration of western narrative models into Greek-speaking lands; a consequence, of course, of the fragmentation of the Christian world of the eastern Mediterranean after the Fourth Crusade. Of 11 surviving texts, no fewer than six are translated from either Old French or Italian. The other five are original stories, first written in Greek, and to varying degrees deriving from the 12th-century revival of the genre and from the “proto-romance”

21 See e.g. Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi bizantini*, p. 44, justifying the choice of prose as the most natural medium for a translation today.

22 The best known of the ancient romances were written under the influence of the literary movement known as the “Second Sophistic”, in a language which harks back to classical Attic, which had not been spoken for several centuries before they were written.

23 See, for example, Beck, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur*, pp. 115–54, and more recently, Cupane, “Wie volkstümlich ist die byzantinische Volksliteratur?”

24 Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 104. On the issue of authorship see also Ozbic, *Κεφάλαια*.



*Digenes Akrites*. The extent of western influence in these has been much discussed, albeit inconclusively.<sup>25</sup>

The story-lines of these romances remain true (more or less) to the traditional theme of idealized love tried and tested by extreme adventures. The adventures become more marvellous (particularly in the romances originally written in Greek), with the intervention of the supernatural becoming a regular feature. And although secular, sensual love is still idealized, the traditional ban on its consummation is set aside. In these vernacular romances, sex is at last permitted. The romances translated from French and Italian are also, if to varying extents, love stories. What else they have in common, and what seems to have determined the choice of foreign texts to translate in the first place, is that their *originals* are all set in the eastern Mediterranean in which the Greek romance, in its earlier forms, had always been at home.<sup>26</sup>

For the rest of this section, it will be necessary to consider each of these two groups, the original and the translated romances, in turn. For reasons that will shortly become apparent, I begin with the translations.

## 2.2 *Romances Translated from Western Originals*

We now have convincing circumstantial evidence to suggest that the *Roman de Troie* by Benoit de St Maure was translated into Greek “political verse” in the Peloponnese during the 1270s, following the transition of the Principality of Achaia from the Villehouardin dynasty to rule by the Angevin kingdom of Naples.<sup>27</sup> It has been disputed to what extent this free retelling of the story of the Trojan War really counts as a romance (as we saw, the original title refers to the fact that it was written in French, not in Latin). But several of its episodes do develop the theme of “romantic” love, where the corresponding ancient source material had not.<sup>28</sup> And of course the *War of Troy* shares with all the other translations into Greek that followed, a historical and geographical setting with which Greek-speakers of any period would have identified. In any case, this monumental work of almost 15,000 lines appears to have exercised a

25 The fullest discussion of all these texts together is to be found in Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 89–206, although now in need of some revision in the light of the new editions of *Livistros* and *Rhodamne* and new discoveries about the date of the *War of Troy*. The most important of these new proposals are summarized in the following paragraphs. See also Cupane, “Il Romanzo” and Id., “In the Realm of Eros”, pp. 95–126.

26 Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 135, 139–40.

27 For text, introduction and commentary, see the critical edition by Papatomopoulos and Jeffreys. For the new material on date and context, see Jeffreys, “Byzantine Romances”, pp. 228–35.

28 Jeffreys, “Byzantine Romances”, p. 228, cf. Jeffreys in Agapitos *et al.*, “Genre, Structure and Poetics”, pp. 62–63.

dominant stylistic influence, certainly over subsequent translated romances, and indeed over the development of vernacular narrative verse in Greek for at least two centuries.

Such limited evidence that we have tends to place the translation or adaptation of western romances in lands that were at the time under “Frankish” (western) rule, in the fragmented world of the eastern Mediterranean after 1204. *Phlorios and Platzia-Phlora* (based on *Floir et Blanchefleur* via an Italian version in verse) can also be connected to the Angevin rulers of the Peloponnese, this time during the lifetime of Boccaccio, whose own *Theseid*, in due course, would turn up in a Greek translation, probably made in Crete around 1500.<sup>29</sup>

Another of these translations, *Imperios and Margarona*, based on the 15th-century French prose romance *Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne*, shows that the conventions of the Late Byzantine verse romance could outlast Byzantium itself, and even the ending of the Middle Ages. The Greek translation in its earliest form probably dates from around the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Thereafter it was recopied in four manuscripts that survive, but, more remarkably, was recast about a century later into the rhyming couplets that, under the influence of the Italian Renaissance, had in the meantime become the standard verse-form in Venetian-controlled Crete. *Imperios* was the only one of the late-medieval Greek romances to make this transition, and in the latter form would continue to be reprinted and read down to the early 19th century. The latest editor of the text has concluded that the thought-world of *Imperios* is not really medieval at all, and therefore the Greek versions of this story represent “a case of de-medievalization”, as translators, editors, and readers found themselves in the process of adjustment to an emerging post-Byzantine, Early Modern environment.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.3 *Vernacular Romances Originally Written in Greek*

When it comes to the five original romances, we have even less solid evidence to pin down the date or the political or cultural context of their composition, since there is no original foreign text to provide a firm point of reference.<sup>31</sup>

29 Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 137, 141. The Greek text of *Phlorios*, together with one other translated romance and three original ones (*Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, and the *Tale of Achilles*) can be found in a modern edition, with accompanying Italian translation: Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi bizantini*.

30 Yiavis, “So Near, Yet So Far” and ed. Yiavis, *Imperios and Margarona: the Rhymed Version*.

31 Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, gives English translations of *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, and *Libistros and Rhodamne*. The first two of these are also included in the parallel Greek and Italian edition by Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi bizantini*. All three are extensively discussed by Agapitos, *Narrative Structure*.

It used to be presumed that *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* was the first to be written, simply because its likely author, Andronikos Palaiologos, was active around 1310, and this was fairly early in the “window” during which all five are most likely to have been written. More recently, attention has become focused instead on *Livistros and Rhodamne*. Not only is this the longest and most elaborate of the five, it also bears the strongest links back to the predecessors of all the original romances in the 12th century. *Livistros and Rhodamne* makes direct allusions to *Hysmine and Hysminias*, and carries over, from *Drosilla and Charikles*, the inclusion of an impressive compendium of lyrical poetry, in the form of embedded songs, letters, and laments. It also has significantly the largest number of surviving manuscripts of any of the five original romances, just as *The War of Troy* does among the translated ones. Both seem to have been known and influential throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, in a way that cannot be shown to be the case for any other romance of either group.

On these and other grounds Panagiotis Agapitos, the most recent editor of one of this romance’s three versions, has proposed a date for its original version (now lost) in the 13th century. Agapitos has further proposed a *cultural* and, to some extent, political context for the production of this text during the last years of the Byzantine empire in exile in Nicaea: the period of the Latin interregnum at Constantinople.<sup>32</sup>

The case for the primacy of *Livistros and Rhodamne* has found fairly general acceptance. The question remains: if this romance is indeed a product of the 13th century, then just how far back in that century? It is tempting, and makes very good sense, to see the 12th-century experiments in reviving the genre carried forward, respectively, among the elite of the rump Byzantine empire and among the elites of the successor states under western rule. This would imply a parallel development, involving mutual awareness and borrowings, and also perhaps rivalry among patrons and/or authors, throughout the final Byzantine centuries. But where did the impetus for that development begin? Although both are conjectural, the proposed political context for the translation of the *Roman de Troie* in the 1270s has stronger evidence behind it than the revival of the genre in *Livistros and Rhodamne* between ten and 20 years before

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The other original romances are the *Tale of Achilles*, or *Achilleis*, and the *Tale of Troy*, or *Troas*, on which see Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, respectively pp. 102–04, 110, 117–18 and pp. 107, 116, 134.

32 The evidence is presented most fully in Agapitos’ critical edition of the “alpha” version, *Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου καὶ Ῥοδάμνης*, pp. 48–55. For a summary in English see Agapitos, “The ‘Court of Amorous Dominion’”, pp. 390–92. The version that may be closest to the lost original, version E, is accessible only via the diplomatic transcription by Lambert, *Le roman de Libistros et Rhodamné*.

at Nicaea. In the case of the *War of Troy*, the choice of the fifteen-syllable “political verse” belongs integrally to the proposed context of the Frankish-ruled Peloponnese, since the existence of a local oral tradition, into which the patron and author wished to insert the foreign material, is all but certain. Yet, it is far from self-evident why a court poet in Nicaea would adopt this metrical form in order to revive a genre that, in the previous century, had been much more closely identified with the forms, sanctioned by Antiquity, of either prose or the twelve-syllable “iambic trimeter”. The possibility that *Livistros* may represent a Byzantine political and aesthetic “response” to the *War of Troy* deserves to be further explored.<sup>33</sup> Either way, the choice of that particular verse-form is unlikely to be accidental, or a purely aesthetic one. Verse “in the service of” another genre turns out to play a crucial role in determining the literary and cultural history of the Late Byzantine period.

However this second, vernacular revival of the romance may have begun, its progress thereafter most probably follows the parallel lines suggested above. *All* these texts share a common poetic language and the same verse-form (until *Imperios* jumps the barrier into rhyming couplets and consequently also into print). None of the original romances shows the hostility to westerners that characterizes the literature of the Nicaean empire, and there is plenty of evidence of interchange between the two groups of romances—original and translated—throughout two centuries or more of manuscript transmission. At least in the form in which they have come down to us, *Kallimachos*, *Livistros*, and the even-harder-to-place *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, all bear witness to a floating indeterminacy of identity. This perhaps accords with the “liquid and multiple” identities of Greek-speakers in the fragmented and kaleidoscopic world of the Aegean and its hinterlands after 1204 and into the Early Modern period.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the latest in date of the versions of *Livistros* seems to reach forward into the same post-medieval, post-Byzantine world as does the translated *Imperios*.<sup>35</sup>

33 This is the proposal of Jeffreys in Agapitos *et al.*, “Genre, Structure and Poetics”, pp. 62–63 and Jeffreys, “Byzantine Romances”, pp. 235–37.

34 This is the argument of Beaton, “The Poetics of the Vernacular Greek Romances”. For the historical and cultural context, see Herrin/Saint-Guillain, *Identities and Allegiances*; Stathakopoulos/Saint-Guillain, *Liquid and Multiple*.

35 Edited (with introduction and commentary in English) by Lendari, *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου και Ροδάμνης*. The manuscript was produced c.1475 by a named copyist who may also have been the redactor of this late version.

### 3 Postscript

Properly speaking, the story of Byzantine verse in the service of the romance ends there, with these adaptations which bring us beyond the end of the empire in 1453. By far the greatest in terms of literary skill and invention does not belong to this tradition at all, but it would be a pity to end without mentioning it. *Erotokritos* is the work of a named author, Vitsentzos Kornaros (Vicenzo Cornaro), who completed it in Candia, the chief city of Crete, around the year 1600.<sup>36</sup> It is a matter for debate how well Kornaros could have been acquainted with previous vernacular verse romances in Greek. He would almost certainly not have had access to the Komnenian romances of the 12th century, and of the later tradition may have known only the rhymed version of *Imperios*.<sup>37</sup> His immediate literary precursors belonged to a local convergence between the thought-world of the Italian Renaissance and a vernacular tradition that had developed over the previous two centuries, based on the dialect of Crete. The verse-form that achieved one of its highest literary expressions in his hands was again the fifteen-syllable “political verse”, with the addition of the now-obligatory couplet rhyme. Linguistic ingenuity of the type first manifested in Manasses’ excursion into this verse-form in the 12th century, and developed further in the later romances translated from western originals, now becomes more abundant, but also far more varied in its effect. *Erotokritos*, like earlier romances, often seems to allude to the folk tradition. At the same time, while remaining true to the metrical structure of the “political line”, with its caesura after the eighth syllable, Kornaros far exceeds any of his predecessors in exploring the possibilities of enjambement (unknown to the folk tradition), with many sentences overflowing the limits of the line to create an elegant and subtle counterpoint between metre and sense.

For all its differences from its predecessors, *Erotokritos* does carry forward one of the notable characteristics of the earlier translated romances: it freely adapts a western original (*Paris et Vienne*) which itself had retained the basic plot structure of the ancient Greek romances, and in its original form had included (although *Erotokritos* itself does not) a series of far-flung adventures for the lovers in the geographical space of the eastern Mediterranean. In most respects, this sophisticated and polished work of the late 16th century is far

36 For a prose translation into modern English, see Kornaros, *Erotokritos*. The standard critical edition is by Alexiou, *Βιτσέντζου Κορνάρου, Ἐρωτόκριτος*. For critical discussion and context, see Holton, *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*, pp. 205–37. For date and place in the history of fiction, see Beaton, “*Erotokritos* and the history of the novel”.

37 Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 204–06.

removed from Byzantium or the late medieval continuation of the genre of ancient Greek romance. On the other hand, among the heroes in *Erotokritos* who vie with one another in a formal jousting contest, a “Prince of Byzantium” (the ancient name for Constantinople) is presented as an especially admirable figure, worthy of notable respect. This work also marks the high point of what its most recent editor termed, perhaps uneasily, “the novel in verse”,<sup>38</sup> a development in the history of European fiction that is particularly associated with the Byzantine revival of the ancient Greek romance and its continuation into the Early Modern period.

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38 Alexiou, *Βισσέντζου Κορνάρου, Ἐρωτόκριτος*, pp. lxx–lxxiii.

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# General Index

- Acclamations 69, 74, 323  
Achilles 20, 48, 548 n. 29  
Achilles 85, 317  
Achilles Tatius 364  
Aelianos 278  
Aeschylus 170, 198  
Agathias 123, 127–130, 134, 155, 206, 431  
Akathistos hymnos 492, 494–495, 496,  
502–503  
*Akritika tragoudia* 67  
*acrostic* 56, 131, 174, 177, 183–187, 227, 288,  
410, 447, 470, 493, 495, 499, 500, 503,  
505  
Alexander Poem 51  
Alexander the Great 198  
Alexander of Nicaea 135  
Alexander of Telese 356  
Alexios I Komnenos 12, 31 n. 38, 212, 219,  
238–243, 395, 518, 528  
Alexios II Komnenos 287 n. 202  
Alexios III Komnenos 288  
Al-Idrisi 355  
Alphabet poems 29, 73, 391  
Alypius 155  
Amphilochios of Iconium 124, 477  
Anacreon 26, 27  
Anacreontics 10, 23, 26, 27, 45, 100, 128, 216,  
240, 290, 391  
Anapaestic trimeter 169  
Anaphora 81, 281, 284  
Anastasios I 120, 123, 126, 309–315  
Anastasios (hymnographer) 492–493  
Anastasios the Quaestor 131  
Anatolios Stoudites 131, 175 n. 37  
Andreas Darmarios 394, 397  
Andrew of Crete 53, 54, 55, 172, 182, 487,  
496, 498, 501–502, 505  
Andronikos II Palaeologos 1, 160, 272–275,  
278–281, 393  
Andronikos III Palaeologos 278, 281  
Andronikos IV Palaeologos 287  
Andronikos Komnenos Palaeologos 472,  
549  
Andronikos Protekdikos 253  
Anna Constanze of Hohenstaufen 269  
Anna Komnene 253, 522, 539  
Anonymoi 13, 23, 55, 219 n. 48, 271, 285, 392,  
504, 542  
Anonymous Italian 398  
Anonymous Malta 250, 357–369  
Anonymous Patrician 398  
Anonymous of Sola 23, 218, 226, 398, 463,  
471  
Antiochos 474  
Anthologies 10, 13, 21, 120, 182, 229, 364,  
381–397, 414  
Anthologia Barberiana 23, 39  
Anthologia of Kephalas 389–390  
Anthologia Marciana 387–389,  
392–394  
Anthologia Planudea 389–390  
Greek Anthology 23, 122, 126–128, 131,  
132, 194, 196, 206, 273, 382, 389, 390,  
393, 397, 398, 423, 431, 432, 440, 544  
Aphthonios 10, 93, 191, 245 n. 48, 459  
Apollinarios 125  
Apollodoros of Athens 411, 517 n. 1  
Apollonius of Rhodes 123  
Apollonius of Tyana 125 n. 53  
*Apophthegmata Patrum* 23  
*Apostolic Constitutions* 490  
Arabic 13, 355–357, 366–370  
Arethas of Caesarea 435  
Aratos 460  
Ariadne, Empress 314, 315  
Aristandros and Kallithea 101, 341–342, 522,  
541, 544  
Aristophanes 170, 203  
Aristotle 93 n. 10, 169, 174, 179, 202  
Armenian 154, 407  
Arsenios 474  
Arsenios of Pantellaria 474  
Asiatic / Asiatic oratory 74, 77, 78, 82, 87,  
103  
Assonance 81  
Astrological poem (Constantine Manasses)  
246, 480, 523  
Augustine 274  
Aulikalamos 254  
Avienus 314–315

- Bardas Phokas 197  
 Bardas Skleros 197  
 Basil I 123 n. 38  
 Basil II 192, 198, 365, 366, 412, 487  
 Basil the Great 167, 180, 276, 416–417, 421, 422  
 Basil Kekaumemos 221  
 Basil the Nothos (Lekapenos) 192, 197  
 Basil of Seleucia 125  
 Basilikoi logoi 100, 157  
 Belthandros and Chrysantza 101, 550  
 Belisarius 55  
 Benoit de Sainte Maure 84, 547  
 Beowulf 83  
 Bertha of Sulzbach 246, 253  
 Bible of Leo the Patrician / Sakellarios 411–412, 433  
 Bible of Niketas 410, 446  
 Boccaccio 548  
 Boethius 310, 364, 369  
 Bonus the Patrician 151  
 Book of Ceremonies 27, 28, 73, 74, 76, 326  
 Book epigrams 1, 2, 5, 8, 14, 25, 118 n. 16, 181, 195, 202, 217, 223–228, 240, 268, 279, 293, 323, 383, 386, 404–423, 474  
 Briseis 85  
 Calendar (in verse) 55, 224, 229, 244, 461–462, 488  
 Kallimachos and Chryssorrhoe 48, 279, 545, 546, 549, 550  
 Callimachus 67, 70, 71, 249 n. 76, 417  
 Cassia(ni) (Kassia) 187, 290 n. 228, 500  
 Catanyctic alphabets 73  
 Catanyctic poems 29, 182, 336–338, 342, 488  
 Catullus 327  
 Centos 41  
 Ceremonial poetry 239–246, 250  
 Chanson de Roland 83  
 Chariton of Aphrodisios 133 n. 100, 539  
 Chelidonisma 73, 74  
 Chiastic variation 81, 82  
 Christodoros of Coptos 126, 130  
 Christodoulos Hagioeuplites 256  
 Christology 199, 442, 462–463, 495  
 Christopher Mitylenaios 12, 21, 23, 24, 32, 59, 98, 100, 122, 127, 132, 202, 213–229, 238, 367, 382, 387, 391, 394, 398, 414, 462, 488, 504  
 Christos Paschon 126, 247, 250, 273 n. 84, 339  
 Chronicle of Morea 54, 84–87, 98 n. 48, 517 n. 2  
 Chronicle of the Tocco 517 n. 2  
 Church Slavonic 13, 77, 78, 154, 229, 332, 343–348  
 Cid 83  
 Claudian 72, 120, 307, 311, 316, 317, 320  
 Clausula 78  
 Coin legends (in verse) 21, 437  
 Colophon (in verse) 407, 415, 418  
 Cometas the Grammarian 131  
 Consolatory Verses 279  
 Constantine the Great 116, 153, 264, 447, 519–521, 525–527  
 Constantine V 167  
 Constantine VI 167  
 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus 26, 27, 191, 264, 326, 391, 474, 475  
 Constantine VIII 219  
 Constantine IX Monomachos 79, 122, 212–220, 223–226  
 Constantine X Doukas 218, 220  
 Constantine Granatos 323  
 Constantine Hermoniakos 288  
 Constantine Kephalas 176, 194, 389–391, 397  
 Constantine Meleteniotes 49  
 Constantine Manasses 12, 14, 20, 32, 46, 47, 48, 53, 101, 131, 245–246, 252, 255–256, 264, 294 n. 255, 331, 341, 342, 465–467, 472, 480, 518–534, 541, 544, 545, 551  
 Constantine the Rhodian 11, 45, 46, 56, 127, 194, 389 n. 43  
 Constantine the Sicilian (of Sicily) 23, 131, 206  
 Constantine Stilbes 20, 248, 335 n. 16, 392  
 Corippus 4, 13, 120, 315–326  
 Cosmas of Maiouma 56  
 Cretan Renaissance 68, 341, 551  
 Cycles 244–250  
 Dactylic verse 169  
 Daniel 159  
 Dante 544  
 Daphnis and Chloe 544

- David 198, 414, 474  
 Demosthenes 98, 169 n. 9, 170  
 Didactic poems 5, 12, 14, 79, 116 n. 7, 124,  
 155, 220, 226–229, 239–246, 249,  
 255–256, 278, 310, 331, 334, 335, 341,  
 342, 385 n. 18, 459–480, 523  
 Diegema 94, 101  
 Digenes Akrites 20, 21, 51, 55, 67, 341,  
 542–543, 545–547  
 Diocletian 116, 120, 125 n. 53  
 Diodorus Siculus 248  
 Diomedes 85  
 Dionysios Thrax 531  
 Dionysius the Areopagite 414, 417  
 Dionysius of Halicarnassus 93 n. 10, 532  
 Dionysius of Stoudios (Stoudites) 131,  
 175–177, 182, 383, 386, 397  
 Dionysius Periegetes 116 n. 7, 133 n. 101,  
 136 n. 114, 314–315  
 Dionysus 122, 123  
 Dioptra 55, 240–241, 331–348, 475  
 Dioskoros of Aphrodito 121, 128, 157 n. 41  
 Dodecasyllables 2–4, 9, 10, 11, 40, 42, 45, 47,  
 55, 56, 67, 69, 71, 72, 79, 97–104, 117, 122,  
 125 n. 52, 126, 134 n. 103, 157, 159, 176,  
 180, 196, 199, 216, 224, 227, 240–247,  
 267, 268, 274, 277, 278, 287, 290,  
 291–293, 332, 333, 357, 415, 432, 433,  
 447, 462–471, 474–477, 504, 525,  
 528–530, 532, 497 n. 60, 543, 550  
 Donatus 310  
 Doxopatres 192  
 Drama 8, 250, 334, 544  
 Drosilla and Charikles (Charikles) 53, 100,  
 132 n. 94, 244, 541, 544, 549  
 Drosos / Demetrios of Aradeo 372  
 Efthymios Malakes 249  
 Efthymios Tornikes 249–250  
 Eight-syllable verse (octosyllables) 69,  
 72–79, 97, 288–290, 432, 464  
*Eis eauton* poem 182, 205, 217  
 Ekphrasis 5, 26, 45, 94, 100–101, 117, 126–129,  
 158, 178, 181, 206, 252–253, 278, 290, 309,  
 323 n. 74, 386, 434, 440, 463, 518–520,  
 523, 529  
 Ekphrasis of the Seven Wonders of  
 Constantinople 45, 56  
*ek prosopou* verses 282–284, 287  
 Elegiac couplets (elegiacs) 10, 40, 50, 155,  
 191, 195–196, 205–207, 216, 274, 275, 277,  
 286, 287, 311, 316, 411, 415, 432  
 Eleven syllable-verse (hendecasyllable) 415,  
 544  
 Elias / Isaac Monachos 95  
 Elijah 159  
 Enkomion 5, 10, 11, 23, 26, 32, 41, 51, 99–100,  
 106, 119–120, 121, 122, 155–157, 160,  
 175 n. 37, 181–187, 195, 215, 221, 241,  
 268, 356–357, 360, 361, 369, 384, 391  
 Ennius 317  
 Ennodius 307  
 Ephraim of Ainos 14, 467, 524–534  
 Ephrem the Syrian 487, 492  
 Epigram 12, 14, 24, 25, 47, 56, 59, 117 n. 11, 118,  
 120, 125 n. 54, 127–133, 155–156, 159, 160,  
 171, 175–177, 179–182, 191, 192, 195,  
 199–202, 206, 214, 219–223, 243–244,  
 248, 250, 252 n. 91, 253, 254, 265, 267,  
 268, 270, 273–275, 282, 284–287,  
 292–293, 309, 327, 333, 335, 339, 340,  
 364–367, 372, 388 n. 36, 37, 389, 391,  
 395, 396, 404, 430–449, 463, 466, 476,  
 544  
 Gnomonic 181, 187  
 Protreptic 25 178, 181  
 Epitaph 5, 24, 99–100, 178, 181, 197, 221,  
 224, 243, 246 n. 54, 248, 249, 253, 254,  
 268, 275, 279, 283–284, 364, 372, 438,  
 440  
 Epithalamion 5, 10, 26, 27, 28, 99–100, 119,  
 244 n. 37, 248, 287  
 Epos (epic) 7–8, 51, 55, 56, 57, 85, 118, 120,  
 122, 123, 149, 150, 155–157, 241, 245,  
 315–319, 540, 542  
 Eros (erotic) 26, 27, 46 126, 155, 206, 245,  
 279, 290  
 Erotapokrisis 335–338  
 Erotokritos 551–552  
 Ethopoiia 5, 94, 101, 128, 197, 199, 225, 318  
 Euchologia 29, 499–500  
 Eudocia 120, 125, 134, 135 n. 109, 137, 309 n. 8  
 Eugenius of Palermo 13, 250, 366–370  
 Eulogy 197, 249, 270, 359, 363, 367  
 Eumathios / Eustathios Makrembolites 541,  
 544

- Euripides 132 n. 93, 159, 170, 196  
 Eusebios of Caesarea 3, 124 n. 43, 264  
 Eustathios of Thessalonike 198, 248, 502,  
     505  
*exaposteilaria* 73  
  
 Fable quatrains 24  
 Fifteen-syllable verse 54, 58 n. 97, 66, 67,  
     68, 69, 72–87, 94–105, 267, 269, 272,  
     275, 277, 285, 290–292, 415, 432, 433,  
     469, 518, 533, 544–546, 550, 551  
 Floir et Blanchefleur 548  
 Folk songs 73  
 French 83–85, 541, 546–548  
  
 Gabriel the Hymnographer 501, 503  
 Galen 240  
 Genesios 123 n. 38  
 Genre 5, 6, 8, 26, 29, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 49, 55,  
     56, 73, 75, 80–88, 102, 116, 121, 124, 127,  
     160, 181–182, 195, 213, 216–218, 228, 239,  
     245, 250, 251, 277, 319, 363, 382, 385 n. 18,  
     388, 396, 405, 408, 413, 423, 459, 504,  
     533, 539, 541, 544–546, 549, 550  
 George Akropolites 268–269, 528  
 George Bardanes 24, 25  
 George Choiroboskos 95  
 George of Gallipoli 371  
 George the Grammarian 26  
 George ho kauthais 255  
 George Kedrenos 362  
 George Lapithes 472  
 George Maniakes 214  
 George of Nikomedia 103  
 George Pachymeres 95, 278 n. 119  
 George Pisides 1–3, 8, 11, 13, 44, 45, 46, 66,  
     67, 71, 98, 104, 107, 117, 121, 123, 130, 133,  
     134 n. 103, 149–160, 177, 227, 243, 264,  
     277, 367, 391, 396, 414, 464, 477  
 George Sanginaios 471  
 George Skylitzes 254 n. 109  
 Georgian 497, 506  
 Georgios 185 n. 65  
 Georgios Rhetor 331 n. 4  
 Germanos I, Patriarch 93, 502  
 Gottfried Bernhardt 6  
 Great Oktoechos 499  
 Gregory 254–255  
  
 Gregory the Great 411  
 Gregory of Kompsa 176  
 Gregory of Nyssa 226, 422  
 Gregory (of) Nazianzus 3–4, 56, 117 n. 7, 118,  
     124, 126 n. 57, 128, 129 n. 74, 131–134,  
     171–175, 177, 180–182, 191, 196, 202,  
     205–206, 242–243, 276, 277, 341, 368,  
     412, 414, 416, 474  
 Gregory Pardos 95 n. 26, 239 n. 9, 256, 505  
  
 Hagioanargyrites 442–443  
 Hagiography in verse 207, 252  
 Heirmologion 500, 506  
 Helen, empress 526  
 Helen, Iliad 27, 85  
 Hephaistion 95, 97  
 Heptasyllables 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 432  
 Herakleios 98, 104, 117, 123, 149–159, 264, 307  
 Herakleios Constantine 151  
 Herakles / Hercules 123, 152, 159, 464, 477  
 Hermogenes 10, 93–95, 98, 191, 226, 245 n.  
     48, 459, 473, 523, 532 n. 67  
 Herodotos 517  
 Hesiod 124 n. 43, 311, 460  
 Hexameter 10, 40, 41, 44, 45, 50, 55, 56,  
     58 n. 97, 66–72, 87, 96, 99, 115–133, 136,  
     155–157, 191, 195–196, 205–207, 216, 224,  
     227, 229, 248, 249, 253, 254, 267, 276,  
     277, 291, 292, 311, 314, 321, 327, 383, 415,  
     423, 432, 433, 434, 446, 466, 476, 544  
 Historical poems 26, 44, 53, 55, 56  
 Holy Apostles, church of 31, 45  
 Homilies 77, 101–103, 191, 194, 226, 339, 356,  
     385 n. 18, 493, 501, 502  
 Homer 4, 41, 50, 51, 55, 56, 58 n. 97, 66, 67,  
     71, 82, 85, 122, 130, 132, 135, 169–170, 196,  
     227, 241, 245, 285, 288, 291–292, 311, 317,  
     323, 363, 464, 469, 470, 474, 523, 532,  
     544  
 Homeric Centos 125, 137, 291, 309 n. 8  
 Honorius 320  
 Horace 459  
 Horologion 29, 499  
 Hymnography 11, 14, 28, 40, 41, 53, 56, 73, 74,  
     79, 101–103, 172–174, 179–182, 187, 191,  
     193, 195, 207, 224, 227, 228, 367, 384, 391,  
     416, 462 n. 12, 469, 477, 487–507  
 Hysmine and Hysminias 101, 541, 549

- Iambic trimeter 2–3, 11, 45, 46, 71, 117,  
 128–129, 155–157, 159, 169, 227, 311, 415,  
 432, 464, 467, 469, 474, 477, 497, 543,  
 550
- Iambic tetrameter 72 n. 27
- Iambic verses (iambics) 4 n. 13, 5, 45, 55, 56,  
 73, 96, 157, 160, 171, 175–179, 183–187, 191,  
 195–196, 203–205, 229, 240, 249, 250,  
 254, 274, 277, 314, 364, 367, 386, 405,  
 433, 447, 472, 499, 502, 505, 506, 531
- Ibn-Qalāqis 370
- Ignatios the Deacon 11, 24, 96, 169, 183, 197,  
 398
- Iliad 198, 246, 288, 342, 423
- Imperios and Margarona 548, 550, 551
- Inscriptions 11, 12, 21, 24, 25, 55, 119, 128–129,  
 135–136, 155, 160, 171, 175–177, 179–181,  
 183, 195, 199–200, 223, 229, 266, 268,  
 270, 274, 275, 277, 279, 281, 297, 292,  
 364–365, 383, 386, 388, 395, 405, 409,  
 430–449, 472
- Invectives 5, 11, 12, 203, 222, 228, 244, 249,  
 307, 311
- Ioannikios 501
- Ioannikios the Monk 239 n. 9, 253–256, 416,  
 467–468
- Irene, Empress 167, 183
- Isaac I Komnenos 121, 220, 225
- Isaac II Angelos 248, 249
- Isaac Komnenos, author 253, 386–387, 397
- Isaac Tzetzes 416
- Isosyllaby 69, 70, 73, 74, 75, 489, 491
- Italian 546–548
- Iulianus the Egyptian 310 n. 13
- Jason 85, 159
- John II Komnenos 80, 99, 239, 241, 243, 250,  
 434, 540, 541, 543
- John III Doukas Vatatzes 248, 267–270
- John V Palaeologos 289, 290, 297
- John VI Kantakouzenos 280
- John VIII Palaeologos 291
- John Tzimiskes 192, 197
- John Apokaukos 249–251, 398
- John Arklas 45, 56, 497
- John Botaneiates 468
- John Chortasmenos 12, 244, 290–291
- John Chrysostomos 181, 367, 396, 416
- John Climax 206, 406 n. 14, 414
- John of Damascus (Damascene) 29, 56,  
 118 n. 16, 167–172, 487, 492, 496–497,  
 501–502, 505, 506
- John Doukas 253
- John Doxopatres 94
- John Eugenikos 292–293
- John Geometres 8, 11, 12, 22, 24, 41, 51, 52,  
 94, 121, 126, 127, 131, 132, 191–208, 218,  
 367, 391, 394, 395, 398, 405, 414, 441,  
 469
- John of Gaza 26, 126, 130
- John the Grammarian 183
- John Grasso 13, 132 n. 94, 371–372
- John Italos 213, 342
- John Kamateros 246, 465–466
- John Katakalon 289
- John Koukouzeles 487
- John Manglavitis 415 n. 65, 422
- John Maupous 4, 12, 14, 21, 23, 98, 213–229,  
 238, 382, 386, 387, 391, 397, 398, 405,  
 467
- John of Memphis 118
- John of Sardis 94
- John Sikeliotes 94
- John Skylitzes 214, 362
- John Tzetzes 4 n. 13, 12, 58 n. 97, 94, 95, 124,  
 131, 132 n. 93, 195, 245–247, 252–255,  
 265, 267, 331, 342, 405, 464, 477, 479,  
 521, 523, 530, 531, 533
- John Zonaras 504, 505, 508
- Joseph the Hymnographer 487, 501, 503
- Joseph Rhakendytes 94
- Joseph of Thessalonike 173, 503
- Julian 124
- Justin II 307, 309, 315, 320–326
- Justinian I 117, 123, 264, 309, 316, 318,  
 323–324, 365, 366, 491, 494, 501
- Kanon (Canon) 14, 40, 45, 53, 54, 55, 56,  
 103, 118 n. 16, 171, 172, 182, 224, 227, 248,  
 274 n. 86, 468, 471, 491, 493–507
- Katechesis 177
- Katomyomachia 244, 250, 339, 342
- Khusro II 151, 152, 159
- Klauthmoi 13, 331, 341
- Kollouthos 120, 123, 130, 132 n. 93
- Kontakarion 500



- Kontakion 14, 40 n. 8, 68 n. 8, 74, 75,  
102–103, 171–173, 179–181, 335, 487,  
491–497, 500–504
- Kosmas the Melode 227, 391, 487, 496,  
501–503, 505–507
- Koukoulia 173–174, 180, 493, 494
- Kyros of Panopolis 120, 122
- Lactantius 3
- Laments 100, 102, 195 n. 24, 224, 287, 331,  
333, 335, 363
- Latin poetry 13, 72, 120, 307–328
- Leo III 168
- Leo IV 167
- Leo V 167
- Leo VI 26, 127, 390
- Leo Bardales 398
- Leo Allatius 394, 397
- Leo of Catania 125 n. 52
- Leo Choïrosphaktes 11, 26, 27, 45, 46, 127,  
474
- Leo tou Megistou 252
- Leo the Philosopher 47, 126, 131, 132, 135,  
206 n. 80, 414
- Leonidas of Tarentum 416
- Leonardo da Veroli 84
- Lesches 132 n. 93
- Letters (in verse) 5, 182, 222, 239, 240, 254
- Leukippe and Clitophon 545
- Libanius 122, 126, 202
- Lithika 124
- Liturgical poems 240
- Liutprand of Cremona 308
- Livistros and Rhodamne 48, 101, 547 n. 25,  
549, 550
- Logoi 5, 20, 21, 22, 31–34, 98, 214, 221–222,  
225, 243 n. 34, 264, 404, 519
- Lucanus 317
- Lucian 411, 540
- Lucretius 327, 460
- Lycophron 124 n. 43, 132 n. 93, 414, 416
- Manganeios Prodrōmos 12, 26, 81, 82, 87,  
98–100, 103–107, 244, 246, 250, 252, 265,  
278 n. 119, 281, 294, 521 n. 18
- Manuel I Komnenos 12, 80, 99, 100 n. 57,  
105–106, 238–239, 241, 244–246, 250,  
265, 294, 367, 465, 466, 521, 540, 541
- Manuel II Palaeologos 290, 291
- Manuel Holobolos 12, 270, 272, 275, 398
- Manuel Melissenos 283 n. 165
- Manuel Philes 1–3, 124, 126, 160, 244, 266,  
275–285, 291, 294, 395, 398, 432–435,  
443–444, 463, 476, 496
- Manuel Straboromanos 23, 31 n. 38, 241, 395
- Marc Angelos 290
- Mark the Monk 396, 412, 419
- Maria Skleraina 100, 225
- Marian Feasts 199, 208, 439
- Marinos 125 n. 53
- Martina 151 n. 11
- Mary at the Cross 102
- Mauri poem 247
- Maximianus 307
- Maximos of Ephesos 124
- Maximos Planudes 12, 94, 115, 133, 134,  
273–278, 282, 285, 389, 390, 398, 504
- Medea 85
- Meleton of Sardis 200 n. 48
- Menaion 499
- Menander Rhetor 10, 93, 157, 312 n. 20, 459
- Merkourios Grammatikos 274 n. 86
- Mesostic 183–185
- Metaphrasis (in verse) 20, 23, 24, 27, 41,  
44 n. 27, 195, 207, 277 n. 117
- Metre 4, 5, 10, 24, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 53,  
66–76, 79, 81, 86, 95, 97, 99, 102, 103,  
157, 160, 171, 176, 181, 195–196, 227–228,  
311, 391, 415, 461, 476, 499, 507, 517, 527,  
531–533, 545, 551
- Michael IV 219, 251
- Michael V 214, 219
- Michael VII Doukas 79, 94, 218, 220, 412,  
470, 473
- Michael VIII Palaeologos 271–275, 393, 522
- Michael IX Palaeologos 275, 278, 285–286
- Michael II Komnenos Doukas 25
- Michael Attaliates 198
- Michael Choniates 12, 13, 249, 251, 335
- Michael Glykas 12, 22, 33, 247, 334
- Michael Hagiotheodorites 252
- Michael Haploucheir 244, 250, 340
- Michael Keroularios 98, 219
- Michael Maleinos 197
- Michael the Grammarian 218, 222
- Michael the Monk 167 n. 3, 172

- Michael Psellos 12, 23, 31, 32, 33, 44 n. 27,  
54, 79, 94, 96–100, 121, 126, 149, 159,  
212–229, 238, 251, 331, 333, 391, 395, 460,  
464, 467, 470–479, 504, 523
- Michael Synkellos 135
- Michael Tarchaniota Marullus 327
- Michael Zorianos 413
- Mimesis 20
- Miscellanies 10, 23
- Mnemonic verses 461, 468, 477
- Mythological poetry 123
- Monodies 5, 20, 26, 73, 253, 274, 285
- Morea 69, 84–87
- Moses 159, 174, 362, 448, 498
- Musaeus 123, 130, 132
- Naevius 317
- Neilos of Ankyra 23
- Nektarios 25, 166
- Neophytos distich 87
- Nibelungenlied 83
- Nicholas 413 n. 55
- Nicholas of Corfu 242
- Nicholas Eirenikos 26, 269–272, 288
- Nicholas III Grammatikos 240, 241, 475
- Nicholas Grasso 371
- Nicholas Kallikles 12, 59, 100, 127, 133 n. 100,  
242–248, 252–256, 388, 392, 394, 396,  
398, 438
- Nicholas Mouzalon 242, 255
- Nicholas Mystikos 135
- Nicholas / Nektarios of Otranto 13, 24, 25,  
371
- Nikephoros II Phokas 122, 192, 197, 308,  
447
- Nikephoros III Botaneiates 412
- Nikephoros Basilakes 95, 128
- Nikephoros Blemmydes 12, 266, 270,  
278 n. 119, 471, 504
- Nikephoros Choumnos 275–277, 282,  
285
- Nikephoros Chrysoberges 250, 251
- Nikephoros Gregoras 286, 472
- Nicephorus Eroticus 191
- Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos 399,  
462, 477–478
- Nikephoros Ouranos 193
- Nikephoros, Patriarch 167
- Nikephoros Prosouch 250, 254
- Nikephoros Straboromanos 23, 31 n. 38
- Niketas Choniates 26, 248, 250, 266, 522,  
528
- Niketas Eugenianos 26, 46, 53, 100, 132, 133,  
136 n. 114, 240, 244, 246, 253, 256, 541,  
544
- Niketas of Herakleia 226, 228, 239 n. 9, 240,  
241, 464–467, 504
- Niketas Stethatos 79, 333, 384–386, 416
- Nilus Doxapatris 355
- Nilus of Rossano 500, 503
- Noah 159
- Nonnos 11, 67, 70, 71, 115–136, 155, 196
- Odyssey 170, 246, 342, 423
- Oikos, hymnography 493–494
- Oppian of Apamea 116 n. 7 (465?)
- Oppian of Cilicia 116 n. 7
- Oracles 5
- Orpheus 123, 159, 363, 474, 507
- Ovid 274, 363, 364
- Palladas 128
- Palladas Sylloge 128
- Pamprepios 120, 126
- Panegyrics 5, 13, 68, 70, 71, 98, 116, 119, 120,  
121, 149, 150, 153–158, 191, 279, 309–325,  
356–357, 369
- Paradeisios 23–24
- Parahymnography 228, 504
- Paris, Iliad 85
- Paris et Vienne 551
- Patria 70, 120 n. 27, 119
- Patronage 218–220, 242–251, 266–293,  
356–364, 416–421, 433–440, 464–481,  
518–524, 540–550
- Paul the Monk 501
- Paul the Silentiary 117, 121, 127, 126, 130, 155,  
158, 206, 264
- Penitential poetry 20
- Pentameter 10, 196, 286 n. 194, 432, 469
- Pentekostarion 499
- Perseus 159
- Personal poems 11
- Peter the Monk 253–254
- Petronius 540
- Philagathos Kerameus 356, 365

- Philippikos Bardanes 502  
 Philippos Monotropos 13, 240–241, 250,  
 331–348, 475  
 Phlorios and Platzia-Phlora 548  
 Phokas 150, 152, 159  
 Photios, patriarch 93, 125 n. 52, 131,  
 135 n. 109, 411, 504  
 Pierre de Provance et la belle Magnelonne  
 548  
 Pisander of Laranda 123  
 Pittakion 249  
 Plato (abbot) 166–167, 181  
 Plato (philosopher) 170, 174, 198, 202, 223  
 Plutarch 223  
 Poems for objects 11, 279, 282, 283, 367, 391,  
 395  
 Politikos stichos (Political Verse) 40, 42,  
 72, 73, 74, 228, 240–241, 245–247,  
 253, 255, 267–268, 277 n. 117, 290,  
 331–334, 341, 342, 386, 415, 433,  
 465–473, 477–479, 504, 518,  
 522–524, 530, 532, 533, 541, 543,  
 547, 550, 551  
 Polyeuctos, Patriarch 195 n. 24, 197  
 Polyxene 85  
 Popular sayings 22  
 Porphyry 202, 249 n. 49  
 Prayers (in verse) 5, 11, 55, 101, 182, 241, 243,  
 253, 271  
 Priscian 4, 13, 120, 310–315  
 Proba 309 n. 8  
 Procopius of Caesarea 316 n. 39  
 Procopius of Gaza 312  
 Progymnasmata 77, 93–95, 119, 126, 339  
 Proverbs 33  
 Pseudo-Gregory of Corinth 94, 160 n. 54,  
 396  
 Pseudo-Kodinos 269  
 Pseudo-Menandros of Laodikeia 274, 284  
 Psogos 32  
 Ptochoprodromic poems  
 (Ptochoprodromika) 47, 53, 57, 58, 80,  
 83, 238–239, 247, 251–252, 331, 339–342,  
 541  
 Ptolemy 133, 366  
 Quintus of Smyrna 117 n. 7, 123, 124 n. 43,  
 132 n. 93, 134  
 Relics 200, 436, 494, 501  
 Rhodanthe and Dosikles 54, 100, 132–137,  
 244, 541  
 Rhyme 81  
 Riddles 5, 222, 254  
 Roman de Troie 547, 549  
 Romanos III Argyros 214, 219  
 Romanos Melodos (the Melode) 14, 74, 76,  
 102, 193, 264, 487, 492, 494–496, 500,  
 501  
 Sabbaites 221, 222  
 Salentine School 13  
 Sappho 26  
 Satires 5, 11, 12, 14, 31, 74, 203, 213, 222, 248,  
 249, 540  
 Schede 225–226, 239, 243 n. 34, 254–256,  
 416, 459, 467, 469  
 Seals (in verse) 431, 437  
 Secular proverbs 24  
 Sergios, Patriarch 104, 149–152  
 Severus, Patriarch of Antioch 154  
 Sidonius Apollinaris 311, 316  
 Simplicius 202  
 Socrates 193, 198  
 Song about Empress Theophano 47  
 Song of Armouris 21  
 Sophia 320, 322  
 Sophocles 201–202, 277  
 Sophronios of Jerusalem 23, 78, 118, 490  
 Sophrosyne-poem 47, 49  
 Soterichos of Oasis 125 n. 53  
 Spaneas 247, 473  
 Staphidakes 285–286  
 Statius 317  
 Stephanites and Ichneletes 366  
 Stephanos Meles 252  
 Stephanos Physopalamites 241  
 Stephanos Sgouropoulos 288–289  
 Stephanos Grammaticus 423  
 Stesichoros 132 n. 93  
 Stechera (stichira) 171, 224, 503, 504  
 Stichic hymns 491–492  
 Stobaios 158 n. 48  
 Style 10, 52, 192, 206, 216, 283, 319, 323–326,  
 340, 517, 518, 521, 525, 531, 533, 541  
 Souda 133 n. 101, 149, 362, 430  
 Sylloge 10, 21, 22, 23, 24, 382, 383, 390–394

- Sylloge Euphemiana 390  
 Sylloge Parisina 390  
 Symeon Metaphrastes 227  
 Symeon the New Theologian 29, 41, 53, 79,  
     228, 290 n. 228, 384–385, 416  
 Syntactic parallelism 81  
 Syriac 335, 492, 501, 506  
 Syrianus 94
- Tarasios, Patriarch 96, 169  
 Tatianus (Tatian) 126, 492  
 Telostic 183  
 Theagenes of Athens 120  
 Theatra 10, 276, 291  
 Theocritus 26, 544  
 Theodora, empress (IX c.) 168  
 Theodora, empress (XI c.) 219, 220, 223  
 Theodore II Laskaris 267–269, 506  
 Theodora Rhaoulaina 274–275  
 Theodore Balsamon 46 n. 38, 47, 248, 268,  
     387–389, 392  
 Theodore Hyrtakenos 285  
 Theodore Metochites 12, 51, 134, 204, 266,  
     275–277, 285, 286  
 Theodore Phialites 331 n. 4  
 Theodore Prodromos 7, 12, 26, 53, 54, 55, 57,  
     58, 80, 81, 99–100, 121, 124 n. 43, 132, 133,  
     136, 195, 238 n. 2, 240–256, 267, 277, 281,  
     294, 335 n. 15, 341, 360 n. 37, 365, 367,  
     372, 394, 396, 398, 416, 463, 464, 467,  
     468, 471–473, 477 n. 97, 505–507, 521,  
     541–544  
 Theodore of Smyrna 243  
 Theodore Stoudites (the Stoudite) 4, 11, 12,  
     14, 56, 59, 131, 160, 166–187, 252, 413,  
     448 n. 85, 463, 501, 503  
 Theodosios I 309 n. 8  
 Theodosios II 120, 122, 309 n. 8  
 Theodosios the Deacon 122, 160  
 Theodosios Grammatikos 489, 504  
 Theodotos of Gallipolis 13, 372  
 Theogony 245–246
- Theological chapters 22  
 Theophanes 152 n. 16  
 Theophanes the Grammarian 206  
 Theophanes Graptos 503  
 Theophilos 437, 507  
 Theophylaktos of Ochrid 12, 239–240  
 Theotokarion 500  
 Thomas Magistros 286  
 Thucydides 517, 540  
 Tragedy 41, 56, 177  
 Trisagion 491  
 Triodion 499, 503  
 Trochaic tetrameter 169  
 Triphiodoros 123, 129, 131, 132 n. 93  
 Trochaic octasyllable 30  
 Troilus 85  
 Troparion 172, 491, 496–498, 502  
 Tryphon 95
- Valerius Maximus 362  
 Verse paraphrase 125, 133–137, 191, 309, 314,  
     334, 496, 529  
 Verse Romances 7 n. 30, 14, 46, 49, 53, 54,  
     83–85, 100–101, 239, 244–247, 279, 331,  
     339, 340, 539–552  
 Versus quadratus 72, 76  
 Vitsentzos Kornaros 551  
 Virgil 67, 309, 317, 360  
 Virgin Paraklesis 25
- War of Troy 27, 84–87, 288, 546, 549, 550,  
     551  
 (World) Chronicles in Verse 6, 14, 46, 53,  
     101, 131, 239, 245–246, 331, 342, 466–467,  
     517–534
- Xenophon 202
- Zoe 219, 223  
 Zoe Karbonopsina 26  
 Zoe Zaoutsaina 26

# Manuscript Index

- Alexandria, Bibliothek tou Patriarcheiu  
Cod. 62 530 n. 59
- Athens, Ethnike Bibliothek tes Hellados  
EBE 212 419, 422  
Metochion tou Panaghiou Panagiu  
Taphou 21 413  
Metochion tou Panaghiou Taphou 351  
1 n. 3
- Athos  
Iber. 418 406 n. 14  
Meg. Laur. B 14 30 n. 34  
Meg. Laur. B 102 406 n. 14
- Baltimore, Walters Art Museum  
Cod. 524 410
- Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier  
Cod. IV 912 30 n. 34
- Copenhagen, Gamle Kongelige Samling  
Haun. GkS 1343,4<sup>o</sup> 417  
Haun. GkS 1899,4<sup>o</sup> 23, 195 n. 23, 392, 394,  
399
- Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und  
Hochschulbibliothek  
Cod. 2773 24
- El Escorial, Real Biblioteca des Monasterio  
Cod. R.III.17 (Revilla 051) 399  
Cod. Y.II.10 94 n. 13
- Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana  
Laur. plut. 4.18 422  
Laur. plut. 5.9 410, 446  
Laur. plut. 5.10 393 n. 60, 399  
Laur. plut. 9.18 24  
Laur. plut. 10.5 253  
Laur. plut. 32.16 133  
Laur. plut. 32.19 399  
Laur. plut. 32.40 201  
Laur. plut. 32.52 23, 31  
Laur. plut. 58.25 393 n. 60  
Laur. conv. soppr. 627 269 n. 46
- Grottaferrata, Biblioteca Statale del  
Monumento Nazionale  
Cod. Z α XXIX 21, 24, 216, 229, 387, 398
- Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek  
Pal. gr. 18 417  
Pal. gr. 43 133 n. 100
- London, British Museum  
Royal L.D. V–VIII (Codex Alexandrinus)  
497 n. 65
- Madrid, Biblioteca nacional de España  
Matrit. 4577 357  
Matrit. 10029 320 n. 59  
Matrit. Vitr. 26–2 (Scylitzes Matritensis)  
100
- Manchester, John Rylands UL (olim coll.  
M. Gaster)  
No. 1574 406 n. 14
- Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana  
Ambros. B 1 inf. 421  
Ambros. G. 50 sup., Martini-Bassi 395  
399  
Ambros. M sup. 15 414
- Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana  
No. 686 316 n. 35
- Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek  
Monac. gr. 162 394 n. 64, 399  
Monac. gr. 375 414 n. 63
- Moscow, Gosudarstvennyi Istoričeskij Muzej  
Mosq. Synod. gr. 44 413  
Mosq. Synod. gr. 229 406 n. 14  
Mosq. Synod. gr. 265 422  
Mosq. Synod. gr. 480 406 n. 14
- Oxford, Bodleian Library  
Bodl. Auct. D.3.19 399  
Bodl. Barocc. 29 413  
Bodl. Barocc. 50 398  
Bodl. Barocc. 76 470  
Bodl. Barocc. 131 94 n. 13, 253  
Bodl. Barocc. 179 415

## Oxford, Bodleian Library (cont.)

- Bodl. Clarke 8 415  
 Bodl. Clarke 15 412, 419  
 Bodl. Roe 18 399

## Palermo, Biblioteca Comunale

- No. 2 Qq G 40 394 n. 64

## Paris, Bibliothèque National de France

- Par. gr. 12 419  
 Par. gr. 223 414 n. 63  
 Par. gr. 224 414 n. 63  
 Par. gr. 228 22  
 Par. gr. 400 469  
 Par. gr. 510 412  
 Par. gr. 894 184, 186  
 Par. gr. 922 410  
 Par. gr. 1211 398  
 Par. gr. 1630 195 n. 23, 398, 414  
 Par. gr. 1741 93 n. 10  
 Par. gr. 2750 472  
 Par. gr. 2877 472  
 Par. gr. 2919 93 n. 10  
 Par. gr. 3932 93 n. 10  
 Par. suppl. gr. 103 398  
 Par. suppl. gr. 352 22, 195, 398  
 Par. suppl. gr. 388 137  
 Par. suppl. gr. 690 31, 195 n. 23, 391, 399  
 Par. suppl. gr. 1090 398  
 Paris. Coisl. 79 412  
 Paris. Coisl. 264 406 n. 14

## Patmos, Mone tou Hagiou Ioannou tou

- Theologou  
 Patmiacus 427 398

## Sinai, Mone tes Hagias Aikaterines

- Sin. gr. 352 415 n. 65, 422  
 Sin. gr. 712 30 n. 34  
 Sin. gr. 728 30 n. 34

## Sofia, Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies

- “Prof. Ivan Dujčev”  
 Cod. D. gr. 282 410 n. 38

## St Petersburg, National Library of Russia

- Petropol. gr. 250 (Granstrem 454) 398

## Uppsala, Universitetsbibliotek

- Upsal. 15 464

## Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

- Vat. Barb. gr. 74 394 n. 64, 399  
 Vat. Barb. gr. 279 399  
 Vat. Barb. gr. 310 73, 128, 391, 399  
 Vat. gr. 130 248  
 Vat. gr. 305 398  
 Vat. gr. 394 410 n. 38  
 Vat. gr. 516 418  
 Vat. gr. 676 21, 217, 227, 229, 386, 387,  
 398  
 Vat. gr. 743 24, 195 n. 23  
 Vat. gr. 753 22, 398, 399  
 Vat. gr. 922 410  
 Vat. gr. 1126 283 n. 165  
 Vat. gr. 1276 393 n. 60, 399  
 Vat. gr. 1357 382 n. 5, 399  
 Vat. gr. 1613 412, 487  
 Vat. gr. 1650 418  
 Vat. gr. 1666 411  
 Vat. gr. 1851 287  
 Vat. Pal. gr. 92 243 n. 34, 467  
 Vat. Pal. gr. 367 195 n. 23, 203 n. 66, 393,  
 398, 399  
 Vat. Urb. gr. 125 1 n. 3  
 Vat. Urb. gr. 141 201  
 Vat. Ottob. gr. 324 254 n. 105, 399  
 Vat. Reg. gr. 1 411, 412, 233

## Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana

- Marc. gr. 17 412  
 Marc. gr. 56 421  
 Marc. gr. 448 133 n. 101  
 Marc. gr. 481 115, 133  
 Marc. gr. 494 398  
 Marc. gr. 524 219 n. 48, 220 n. 51, 248,  
 252 n. 91, 254 n. 109, 392, 398, 399, 432  
 Marc. gr. XI 22 398  
 Marc. gr. XI 31 256

## Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

- Vind. phil. gr. 321 94 n. 13, 255 n. 112  
 Vind. phil. gr. 150 23  
 Vind. phil. gr. 330 24  
 Vind. suppl. gr. 75 290  
 Vind. suppl. gr. 125 252  
 Vind. suppl. gr. 164 413  
 Vind. theol. gr. 78 399  
 Vind. theol. gr. 287 467–468