

Alsof je zou zeggen: dat heb ik begrepen nadat ik sterke koffie had gedronken. Maar de koffie heeft niets te maken met wat ik begrepen heb.

W. F. Hermans, *Nooit meer slapen*

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Het ritme van de pen  
Sociale contexten van het lezen en schrijven van poëzie in het  
elfde-eeuwse Constantinopel

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The Beats of the Pen  
Social Contexts of Reading and Writing Poetry  
in Eleventh-Century Constantinople

Proefschrift voorgedragen tot het bekomen van de graad van  
Doctor in de Taal- en Letterkunde:  
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## Voorwoord

Het boek *Nooit meer slapen* kan begrepen worden als het verhaal van een mislukt doctoraat. Het hoofdpersonage onderneemt een reis naar het Hoge Noorden en trotseert er het barre klimaat, tegenwerkende proffen, vele muggen, en slapeloze nachten zonder duisternis, met maar één doel voor ogen: meteorokraters vinden. Die moeten het bewijs leveren voor een these die hem het ultieme doctoraatsproefschrift zal opleveren. Wanneer zijn tocht op een mislukking begint uit te draaien, staat hem duidelijk voor ogen dat de manier waarop mensen ertoe komen iets te begrijpen, verdwijnt in datgene wat begrepen wordt. De koffie heeft uiteindelijk niets meer te maken met de gedachte die na het drinken van de koffie wordt ontwikkeld. Zonder de laatste fase van de openbaring van kennis is wetenschappelijk onderzoek, zoals in dit boek pijnlijk duidelijk wordt, een beweging in het ijle.

Bij het afsluiten van deze thesis besef ik nu ook dat alleen het naakte resultaat van het onderzoek overblijft. Voor de lezer maakt het niet meer uit hoeveel koffies gedronken werden, hoeveel ideeën in de prullenmand zijn verdwenen, hoeveel boeken gelezen zijn die uiteindelijk weinig nut bleken te hebben, of toch weinig impact op het uiteindelijke resultaat.

Het rampzalige voorbeeld uit *Nooit meer slapen* bleef me voor de geest staan terwijl ik mijn tocht ondernam. Het onderzoek dat ik heb gevoerd, heeft het geluk dat het werd uitgevoerd in meer clemente omstandigheden; zelfs over tegenwerkende proffen kan ik niet klagen. Bovendien kan ik me als literatuurwetenschapper gelukkig prijzen dat het niet valt of staat met het bestaan van een waarneembaar feit als een meteorokrater. In die zin hoop ik dat deze thesis niet opgevat wordt als een poging tot het leveren van ultieme bewijzen, maar eerder als een nieuw perspectief waarop ik hoop dat er respons mag komen.

Anderzijds is het voor de literatuurwetenschapper bijwijlen lastig dat hij of zij niet op zoek kan gaan naar een grijpbaar en zichtbaar fenomeen als een meteorokrater. Er is geen methode die zekere resultaten zal opleveren, en men kan eigenlijk ook niet zeker zijn of de vraag die men stelt wel een legitieme vraag is. De theorieën die er zijn spreken elkaar tegen of genereren resultaten die, zo is mijn aanvoelen, enkel aanspraak op geldigheid kunnen maken binnen een wereld van betekenis die de theorie zelf heeft opgeroepen.

Ik ben ervan overtuigd dat ook de literatuurwetenschapper verplicht is om vragen te stellen die ook de interesse van mensen van buiten zijn discipline, en zelfs van buiten de academische wereld, kunnen bezighouden. Daarom blijven mijn grondvragen in wezen erg simpel. Ik wil teksten duidelijker maken die dat nu nog niet zijn. Waarom nam men de moeite, tijd, energie, en geld om gedichten te schrijven, wat wou men daarmee bereiken bij de lezer, in welke vorm moeten we ons de teksten eigenlijk voorstellen, en waarom koos men voor poëzie? Teksten hoeven daarom niet mooier te worden dan ze waren, maar misschien wel interessanter, betekenisrijker, levendiger.

Deze vragen zijn hopeloos generalistisch, en ik heb er op zekere momenten aan getwijfeld of zelfs een zinvolle aanzet tot een antwoord mogelijk was.

Toen in 2006 dit project van start ging, had ik een werkstuk gemaakt dat met een nu al archaïsch begrip ‘licenciaatsthesis’ genoemd wordt, met een vertaling en commentaar van Christophoros Mitylenaios. De combinatie van de aperte ongelezenheid van de teksten en de ontdekking van een gans nieuw Byzantijns universum, had een onfeilbare aantrekkingskracht uitgeoefend op mijn romantische hang naar het onbetredene. Toen Kristoffel Demoen, als promotor van mijn thesis, me vroeg of ik me zou kunnen voorstellen medewerker te worden op een FWO-onderzoeksproject over de poëzie van de elfde eeuw, lag een ja voor de hand.

Maar nu van mij een nieuw antwoord op nieuwe problemen werd verwacht, bleek alles veel moeilijker. De lectuur van Bourdieu had me vragen doen stellen over de betekenis van culturele handelingen die een mens onderneemt voor zijn of haar positionering in een sociale omgeving. Het scheppen van kunst en het zoeken van kennis werden hardhandig in een ontluisterend perspectief geplaatst. Ik vond deze vragen als dusdanig ook maar amper terug in literatuurtheorie en slechts hier en daar in secundaire literatuur over Byzantijnse teksten. Daarom kwam het me voor, vooral in de eerste jaren, dat ik in een betekenisloos vacuum aan het werken was, op zoek naar meteorkraters zonder te weten wat ze eigenlijk überhaupt konden aantonen.

De teksten bleven fascinerend, hoe dan ook, en bereidden me vele verrassingen. Terwijl het project eerst voer onder de vlag ‘Het literaire veld in het elfde-eeuwse Konstantinopel’, bleek na een jaar dat er helemaal geen literair veld was. Ik telde lange en korte lettergrepen, met de hoop exacte resultaten te vinden over prosodische techniek, tot ik besepte dat ik mijn eigen meteorkraters aan het graven was. De lectuur van Psellos bleek enerzijds een openbaring, anderzijds heeft het me wellicht te veel afgeleid van de poëzie zelf. Het corpus van boekepigrammen waarop ik stootte, bleek al snel onoverzichtelijk, en toen Klaas Bentein kwam en alles overzichtelijk maakte, bleek het resultaat van zijn werk zodanig interessant dat een groots vervolg op getouw werd gezet.

Het gevoel in het ijle te schipperen verdween pas helemaal door het congres dat we organiseerden in Gent. Pas op dat moment kreeg ik er zicht op dat mijn onderzoek kon aansluiten op dat van anderen, en dat er een veld was waar het weerslag kon vinden. Mede daardoor is beslist om de thesis in het Engels te schrijven. Het is de hoop dat dit werk zo respons kan krijgen van een groep lezers die representatief is voor de onderzoeksgemeenschap waarin dit werk kadert.

Achteraf terugkijkend op het schrijfproces ben ik aangenaam verwonderd dat het een zo creatieve onderneming was. Van de eerste schetsen, gemaakt op de trein tussen Harelbeke en Gent, tot de nooit eindigende fase van correctie van taal en stijl, het was een hele tocht, met alles wat bij een tocht hoort: het ochtendfrisse enthousiasme, de vermoeidheid op de lange rechte stukken, en de nieuwe uitzichten na een bocht.

Op dit punt echter, moet ik dringend ophouden met deze thesis voor te stellen als het werk van één persoon. Als ik zeg dat iemand anders zowel verantwoordelijk is voor het in gang zetten van dit project, én tegelijkertijd voor

het uitziften van de kleinste talige onhandigheidjes op het einde, moet het wel duidelijk zijn dat dit een collectieve onderneming is geweest. Mijn promotor Kristoffel Demoen deed beide en eigenlijk nog veel meer tussenin. Hij stuurde het onderzoek naar een duidelijkere vraagstelling, naar een congres, en (met het wapen van de deadline) naar een voltooiing. Hij hield me met vaderlijke bezorgdheid in toom als ik al te onbesuisde plannen daadwerkelijk dreigde uit te voeren, hij reikte nieuwe ideeën aan, en wist altijd de rake en o zo terechte kanttekening te plaatsen die zo waardevol bleek te zijn. Bij vele ideeën voor vertalingen en interpretaties in deze thesis zou eigenlijk met een voetnoot naar ‘Gesprek met K. Demoen, Gent 2006–2009,’ moeten verwezen worden, afgezien nog van de vele dingen die er door zijn toedoen gelukkig niet in staan. Zijn kennis van zaken en eruditie combineert deze doctorvader overigens met een talent voor persoonlijke begeleiding dat, zo is mijn indruk, eerder zeldzaam is.

Waardevolle hulp kreeg ik ook van anderen. Mijn co-promotor Marc De Groote deelde graag zijn filologische expertise, hield me op de hoogte van zijn bevindingen over Christophoros’ editie, en hij heeft zich geen enkele moeite gespaard om mijn manuscripten (zowel de handschriften als de kladversies van mijn thesis) grondig na te kijken. Ook Klaas Bentein bedank ik voor zijn tomeloze inzet en onschatbare samenwerking. Margaret Mullett, lid van mijn doctoraatsbegeleidingscommissie, stuurde me op een bepaald moment in een definitieve richting, bij een gesprek dat om een of andere reden in de Week van de Smaak kaderde. Niels Gaul zette me op veel juiste sporen, vooral op die van interessante manuscripten. Wolfgang de Melo dank ik voor talig advies. En hier mogen ook de andere leden van de vakgroep niet ontbreken, en zeker niet Chrisje, die ik in haar komende pensioen even veel blijdschap als nu in haar werk toewens.

Maar het meest *proximi* waren toch mijn *collegae* die zich ook lieflijk het dichtst bij mij ophielden. Bert Selter, ook wel BERT genoemd, zorgde altijd voor vertier, vermaak, kalenders en water voor de plantjes. Met een emotionele, doch gemeende noot mag het gezegd dat Bert voor de broodnodige werkvreugde zorgde in kantooruren die zich anders traag zouden hebben voortgesleept. Voor mijn nieuwere bureaugenoot Yanick Maes kan erkentelijkheid geen grenzen kennen voor twee geheel uiteenlopende redenen: ten eerste de stimulerende discussies en vervelende vragen die het heilzame effect van een horzel hadden, en ten tweede het ontwerp van de voorkaft die de lezer dezes nu in zijn handen houdt, een wonderlijk kunstwerk dat voor een groot deel zijn verdienste is. Gitte Callaert zorgde met veel behulpzaamheid voor de rest van de afwerking van het manuscript.

Met plezier dank ik hier ook Michel De Dobbeleer, mijn *compagnon de route* in meer dan één betekenis, met wie het altijd een spannend avontuur is samen een onderneming te beginnen. Aan Ilse De Vos breng ik hulde om voor aanspreekpunt te spelen in ‘vijandelijk gebied’.

Voor anderen wordt het moeilijker mijn dank uit te drukken, omdat hun inbreng niet vatbaar maar zo essentieel was. Elisabeth weet hoeveel ze me gesteund heeft, naar me geluisterd heeft, en (de laatste weken letterlijk) voor

me gezorgd heeft—of misschien weet ze het niet, en dan kan ik het haar niet genoeg zeggen. Aan mijn ouders dank voor alles: het vertrouwen, de steun, en zo veel meer.



## Acknowledgements

As the reader sees, the preface I could not write in English. Writing in a foreign language keeps a certain distance between the mind and the words, a distance I could not bridge in this instance to express my thanks and my feelings upon finishing this thesis.

By writing my thesis in English, I hope that the results of my research will be directly available to a broader audience, so that it will be easier for the research community to give response and initiate cooperation. Yet, the reader will pay the prize for this accessibility, for I am aware that the English in this book will not meet the linguistic and stylistic standards expected from a thesis submitted in an Anglophone country. It has been difficult at many times to express my ideas in a precise manner, or to pinpoint concepts in a way native speakers would do. I had to resort to vague circumlocutions, and sometimes perhaps to repetitions, in order to be sure that my idea would be understood. I apologise for these defects.

However, it would be unfair not to mention also in English someone who is so much involved in the coming to being of this work, that language barriers should not hide him from sight. My supervisor, Kristoffel Demoen, not only initiated the research project, but also contributed in many ways to this work, up until the final drafts. Many ideas and interpretations in this work ultimately go back to his remarks. He prevented me from realising my more inept plans, and his talents for stimulating, motivating and monitoring are unparalleled. Thanks also go to my co-supervisor Marc De Groote for his philological advice and the invaluable comments on final drafts of my text.

*Gent, januari 2010*



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Recognising otherness: medieval poetry and modern readings

A true aesthetic experience of medieval texts, according to Hans Robert Jauss, can only reach its full potential if the modern reader takes a step back from his first reaction of pleasure or displeasure, and reflects upon this experience to become aware of the distinctive ‘otherness’ (*Alterität*) of medieval texts.<sup>1</sup> This awareness can make us reconsider the gap between the horizons of expectations of the medieval reader and the modern reader. By reconstructing this medieval horizon of expectations (which can only remain of course a reconstruction, as Jauss stresses), we could come a step closer to a better understanding of the text’s original meaning and reception, and also extract a possible signification for us, as we are forced to revise our own horizon of expectations. Even if we can not enjoy these texts then, we would be able, thanks to this reconstruction, to build a hermeneutic bridge to an alien world, and we would gain a contrastive aesthetic experience.<sup>2</sup> In this reading process, we have to discard (or better: reflect critically on) some notions that are ingrained in our aesthetic horizon. So we have to put into perspective the concept of a literary work (*Werk*) as a singular product of a creator, and take some distance from the deeply enrooted distinctions between didactic and fictional, purposeful and purposeless (*‘zweckbestimmt oder zweckfrei’*), etc.<sup>3</sup>

For Western medieval texts, the modern reader can fall back on a romantic ideal of continuity that links his world to the medieval one. For Byzantine texts, such a bound of heritage is more problematic; Byzantium remains in this respect emphatically an empire that has fallen. We have for a long time seen its literature as an epigonic survival of ancient genres. As a result, texts

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<sup>1</sup>H. R. Jauss, “Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur”, in: *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur : Gesammelte Aufsätze 1956-1976*, München 1977, pp. 9–47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

were located in a rhetorical and literary system that was ancient, without recognising that this system, although perhaps only slightly changed on the surface, was invested with radically different social functions because it functioned in a medieval society. From this point of view, Byzantine literature was bound to fall short of aesthetic expectations. Consequently, as has been amply noted by now, literature was for a long time not being read as literature, but predominantly approached as a potential (but unreliable) source to extract historical information from.<sup>4</sup>

In recent years, many scholars have questioned this view. One counter-reaction was to rehabilitate Byzantine literature and to prove that it is a literature worth to appreciate. But in these attempts to guard Byzantine literature (and specifically poetry) from the more negative traditional views, modern readers risk falling victim to exactly the same (romantic) presuppositions that underlie these traditional views: that poetry should contain sensitivity, originality and experience taken from real life.<sup>5</sup> So, we were (and often are) not prepared to leave behind (or: to recognise as modern) the aesthetic principles underlying our reading strategies. And thus, while Mullett has stated quite a long time ago that ‘it is questionable whether Byzantine literature is best served in the 1990s (!) by such a primitively evaluative approach’,<sup>6</sup> scholars persist in searching for ‘hidden gems’ in Byzantine poetry, and rehabilitate it on aesthetic terms that are distinctly modern.<sup>7</sup> One may conclude that the study of Byzantine literature is still in the stadium where it has to justify the choice of its subject. It still needs to come to terms with the fundamental ‘otherness’ of the texts it studies.

Eleventh-century poetry has suffered a similar fate in modern scholarship. It has been mined for its historical content,<sup>8</sup> it has often been dismissed as tedious,<sup>9</sup> and it sometimes received appreciation for some more ‘vivid’ or ‘humorous’ elements that accidentally suited our tastes better.<sup>10</sup> But eleventh-century poetry is even less than other poetry in the focus of scholarly atten-

<sup>4</sup>As recently as in M. Vinson, “Rhetoric and Writing Strategies in the Ninth Century”, in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, Aldershot 2003, pp. 9–22, p. 9–10, the observation is made that banal *Quellenforschung* is still a prevalent reading strategy in some scholarly communities.

<sup>5</sup>P. Agapitos, “Η θέση της αισθητικής αποτίμησης σε μια ‘νέα’ ιστορία της βυζαντινής λογοτεχνίας”, in: *Pour une “nouvelle” histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique, Nicosie, 25-28 mai 2000*, ed. by P. Odorico and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 1, Paris 2002, pp. 185–232, pp. 185–187, helpfully points out these modern aesthetic assumptions.

<sup>6</sup>M. Mullett, “Dancing With Deconstructionists in the Gardens of the Muses: New Literary History vs ?”, *BMGS* 14 (1990), p. 261.

<sup>7</sup>M. Bazzani, “Theodore Prodromos’ Poem LXXVII”, *BZ* 100 (2007), pp. 1–12, is one of the more recent examples.

<sup>8</sup>E. Follieri, “Le poesie di Cristoforo di Mitilene come fonte storica”, *ZRVI* 8 (1964), pp. 133–148.

<sup>9</sup>About Psellos’ didactic poetry in particular, it has been doubted whether to call it poetry at all, cf. F. J. Dölger, *Die byzantinische Dichtung in der Reinsprache*, Berlin 1948, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup>This applies especially to Christophoros’ satiric poems, see e.g. P. Maas, “Review of: E. Kurtz (ed.), *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*”, *BZ* 15 (1906), pp. 639–641, p. 639.

tion, perhaps because it cannot claim to contain the seeds of Modern Greek literature, for which twelfth-century poetry comes in the picture, and because it is not so narrowly connected to Antiquity as some nine- and tenth-century poetry. In itself quite sizeable in quantity, it received no more than two pages and a half in Hunger's magisterial *Handbuch*, and only a handful of studies, of which most appeared in media outside the focus of international scholarship.<sup>11</sup>

In light of the dearth of scholarly occupation with this poetry, I might state as the most modest goal of this thesis the sheer presentation of texts, grouping them around some relevant themes. But these themes already reveal that this study will pursue a more ambitious research goal: it wants to come to a better understanding of the social function of writing and reading poetry in Byzantine society. It is driven by the question why someone would want to compose or read texts that are shaped in a poetic form. It questions the immediate social rationale for investing time, energy and money in poetry. In engaging in these questions, I deem it necessary to set aside for a moment the literary *doxa* that allows us to suppose that all literature is created as a unique work of art, a contribution to Beauty in general.<sup>12</sup>

These questions have grown out of the conviction that scholarly discourse about the relationship of Byzantine literature with society has been mainly grounded on a one-sided historicism, and may be fruitfully complemented by other ways of research, blazed by theoreticians and recently also by some byzantinists.<sup>13</sup>

It has long been given for granted that the interpreter's task is to 'decode' a single message enclosed in the text. It is this operation of 'decoding' that is endemic to almost every modern scholarly reading of Byzantine texts that also has an interest in the social context. Departing from the observation that these texts were full of rhetoric, it was (and is) customary to scrape off the layer of rhetoric and *topoi*, and to detect the meaning behind this obfuscating layer.<sup>14</sup> Alexander Kazhdan declared it as his intent to 'crack the code, so as to discover the individuality behind the formulae',<sup>15</sup> in order to describe the individual social tenets of authors.

The works of Stanley Fish and Jonathan Culler have made us aware that

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<sup>11</sup>The many useful translations and studies of Maupous and Christophoros by Rosario Anastasi, Carmelo Crimi and their team, which appeared in Sicily in the 80s and 90s, are unfortunately not widely used outside of Italy.

<sup>12</sup>For the term of literary *doxa*, describing the innate veneration for literature as an artistic work, also affecting the researcher of literature, see P. Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, 2nd ed., Paris 1998, p. 303–308, and *passim*; for the *Werkästhetik* alien to medieval texts, see Jauss, "Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur", p. 15.

<sup>13</sup>For new methods in approaching Byzantine literature and its interplay with a historical context, M. Mullett, "New Literary History and the History of Byzantine Literature: A Worthwhile Endeavour?", in: *Pour une "nouvelle" histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique. Nicosie, 25-28 mai 2000*, ed. by P. Odorico and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 1, Paris 2002, pp. 37–60, was particularly stimulating.

<sup>14</sup>Very emphatical in this respect is Ljubarskij, "How should a Byzantine text be read?", in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, Aldershot 2003, pp. 117–125.

<sup>15</sup>A. Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Cambridge 1984, p. viii.

rather than decoding texts, it is important to describe the contexts in which meaning and ‘meaning-giving’ are produced.<sup>16</sup> We need to chart the conventions and the interpretive strategies with which a given interpretive community (a term of Fish) approaches a text. This does not mean that the interpretation of the first readers is the most ‘right’ interpretation, nor that any subjective reader’s opinion is acceptable: it means that the significance of a text is constructed according to certain cultural assumptions shared by a group of people large or important enough to allow the creation of meaning to take place.

As a result, the formulae, instead of obfuscating meaning, may be meaningful in themselves. Rhetoric acquires thus another status: it can be seen as a way to communicate, in some circumstances the only socially acceptable way. In Kustas’ view, rhetoric ‘gave formal structure through the logos to the fundamental characteristics and innermost aspirations of the Byzantine Christian mind. [...] It was an expression of life.’<sup>17</sup>

Also the interaction between text and society can be analysed from another viewpoint. Again, in spite of the enormous value of his work for Byzantine Studies, the work of Alexander Kazhdan may serve as a point to set myself off from, arguably because he has more reflected upon his methodology than others have.

Kazhdan attempted to move away Byzantine texts from the timeless philological sphere where they were kept in, taking as a point of departure the embedment of the texts in their medieval historical context. In the forefront were now the authors, with their own preoccupations determined by their place in Byzantine society, a society now seen as multi-layered and dynamically changing.<sup>18</sup> Kazhdan set upon the task to interpret Byzantine texts as dots in the matrix of social and ideological forces exerting influence on the author. The most systematic application of this undertaking is probably his study ‘The social views of Michael Attaleiates’,<sup>19</sup> where he attempts to locate Attaleiates somewhere between the various ideological movements in late 11th-century Byzantium. He did the same for Mauropous, albeit within a more restrained scope.<sup>20</sup>

This social determinism fails to take into account the specific procedures with which literature operates, and one of the most important of them is genre. Margaret Mullett’s oft-quoted study ‘The Madness of Genre’ has done

<sup>16</sup>S. Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Cambridge, Mass. 1980; J. Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs. Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, Ithaca, NY 1981.

<sup>17</sup>G. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, Thessaloniki 1973, p. 1; about interpretive strategies towards Byzantine rhetoric, see M. Mullett, “Rhetoric, Theory, and the Imperative of Performance: Byzantium and Now”, in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, 2003, pp. 151–170, esp. p. 158.

<sup>18</sup>See for instance A. Kazhdan, “Der Mensch in der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte”, *JÖB* 28 (1979), pp. 1–21, p. 11: “die Byzantinische Literatur existierte nicht in einem Vakuum, nicht in einem leeren Raum, sondern in der menschlichen Gesellschaft. Sie wurde von Menschen, für Menschen und über Menschen geschrieben”.

<sup>19</sup>Kazhdan, *Studies*, pp. 23–87.

<sup>20</sup>A. Kazhdan, “Hagiographical Notes”, *Byzantion* 53 (1983), pp. 538–558.

much to reconsider the formative power of genre.<sup>21</sup> Instead of using genre to carve up the mass of texts and establish false continuities, Mullett's concept of genre looked at the intersection between immediate occasion and inherited forms.

Kazhdan's (and many others') interpretation of literature out of a social context, is also problematic, I think, because it is grounded in a simplified representation of the influence of society on a text, and lays too much stress on the determinative impact of the social background of an author.<sup>22</sup> Texts are *a priori* considered as reflections of historical reality, instead of manipulative representations of it. There is for Kazhdan and many after him a direct relationship between textual and social features. A saint afoot fighting soldiers on horseback, as narrated in Mauropous' encomium for that saint, is an indication of the author's democratic stance.<sup>23</sup> Christophoros' poem 55, requesting a promotion, is a reflection of the liberal cultural policies of Monomachos.<sup>24</sup>

It is typical for this determinative view that any possible reference, however scant, to contemporary history, is seen as a covert critique of present matters. When Mauropous portrays an emperor overcome with remorse, this is seen as scathing critique.<sup>25</sup> Christophoros is critical of the establishment for implicating an empress with murder (poem 8) and praising the rebel Maniakes (poem 65),<sup>26</sup> he is not so devout because he attacks clergymen (114, 135),<sup>27</sup> and pleading for more justice in the world (poem 13), he is considered a 'social gadfly'.<sup>28</sup> Criscuolo, assuming that Christophoros' poems were in fact pieces of historiography, concludes that the poet was conscious of the crisis the empire went through.<sup>29</sup>

It is also often taken for granted that poets speak directly to the whole community: their critique spans, so to say, the whole society. Thus, Lambakis suggests that Christophoros' poetry and Psellos' Chronographia responded to each other.<sup>30</sup> But also implicitly, many scholars assume that everyone had read everything of their contemporaries and predecessors. The question can

<sup>21</sup>M. Mullett, "The Madness of Genre", *DOP* 46 (1992), pp. 233–243.

<sup>22</sup>See also Mullett, "New Literary History", pp. 68–69.

<sup>23</sup>Kazhdan, "Hagiographical Notes", p. 544.

<sup>24</sup>S. Chondridou, *Ο Κωνσταντίνος Μονομάχος και η εποχή του*, Thessaloniki 2002, p. 61, in the tradition of *Quellenforschung* at its most uncritical.

<sup>25</sup>A. Kazhdan, "Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II", *Byzantion* 65 (1995), pp. 362–387.

<sup>26</sup>N. Oikonomides, "Life and Society in Eleventh Century Constantinople", *Südost-Forschungen* 49 (1990), pp. 1–19; M. Lauxtermann, "La poesia", in: *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo 3. Le culture circostanti, vol. I: La cultura bizantina*, ed. by G. Cavallo, Roma 2004, pp. 301–344, p. 324.

<sup>27</sup>Oikonomides, "Life and Society", p. 7.

<sup>28</sup>C. Livanos, "Justice, Equality and Dirt in the Poems of Christopher of Mytilene", *JÖB* 57 (2007), pp. 49–74, p. 49.

<sup>29</sup>U. Criscuolo, "Sui carmina historica di Cristoforo di Mitilene", in: *Bisanzio nell'età dei Macedoni. Forme della produzione letteraria e artistica. VIII Giornata di Studi bizantini (Milano, 15-16 marzo 2005)*, ed. by F. Conca and G. Fiaccadori, Milano 2007, pp. 51–75, esp. p. 74–75.

<sup>30</sup>S. Lambakis, "Η κρίσιμη επικαιρότητα του 11 αιώνα στην ποίηση της εποχής. Συγκρίσεις και παραλληλισμοί με τα ιστορικά κείμενα", in: *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση (;) Το βυζάντιο τον 11ο αιώνα (1025-1081)*, Athens 2003, pp. 393–408.

be raised whether we can assume such a transparent and homogeneous readership, and whether poems entered in such a widespread circulation from so early.

Another problem is that texts are seen as direct reflections of a ‘mentality’. This representation permeates for example Browning’s influential study on the relation between authority and intellectuals in the eleventh and twelfth century.<sup>31</sup> While it is recognised that the empire needed education to provide officials for the state apparatus, it is assumed that the study of the ancients created a ‘spirit’ that encouraged a critical and potentially subversive way of thinking. This ‘spirit’ is of course eminently borne out by Psellos. Browning (and many others) need only to choose one voice from the many in Psellos’ work: the one laying claim on the prestigious title of ‘philosopher’, trying to prove that he engaged seriously with it.<sup>32</sup>

Browning thereupon states: “this is the spirit in which Psellos’ older friend John Mauropos prays to God in a poem to save from damnation Plato and Plutarch”.<sup>33</sup> Such a simplistic connection between text and *Zeitgeist* fails to take into account the multiplicity of voices present in one author, the impact of the occasion at hand, and the sometimes deceptive strategies that a text can deploy.

It is moreover implied that our poets would have had a certain interest in contesting the prevailing schemes of the distribution of power. As I will try to show, they had in contrast much interest in confirming these schemes, and quite a considerable part of the poetic production of this period is aimed at keeping the actual state of affairs going. This does not imply directly that poets were distributing propaganda for the emperor: there is no single evidence for a sustained poetic programme supported or devised by the emperor.

The assumption that any text has ideological, and for that matter socially critical, or, conversely, propagandistic overtones,<sup>34</sup> fails to take into account the communicative status of the text. It is highly questionable whether the concrete reading contexts of poetic texts allow such a politically loaded reading. When poems circulate in more limited milieus and are read with other reading strategies, we can begin reconsidering the ideological layer of these texts.

For each of these texts, I think we will first need to pinpoint the circumstances of production and reading, and decentralise, so to say, the signification and impact of the poem. Awareness has grown in Byzantine studies that poetry needs to be seen in its immediate context. Texts were used in real-life contexts: they could be ‘Gebrauchstexte’.<sup>35</sup> For the epigram, the con-

<sup>31</sup>R. Browning, “Enlightenment and Repression in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries”, *Past and Present* 69 (1975), pp. 3–23, p. 3: ‘Education, and particularly higher education, represents a danger for any established authority, en p. 8: ‘the content of education is far more important than its organization’.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 10–11.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>34</sup>For the latter, see G. Cortassa, “Signore e padrone della terra e del mare. Poesia e ideologia del potere imperiale in Giovanni Mauropode”, *Néa Póμη* 2 (2005), pp. 205–226.

<sup>35</sup>A. Garzya, “Testi letterari d’uso strumentale”, *JÖB* 31.1 (1981), pp. 263–287.

crete context of use has been abundantly demonstrated by the many works of Hörandner and the Vienna school, who have collected inscriptions and related poems to their original inscriptional context.<sup>36</sup>

It is necessary, in this respect, that we step away from our view on literature as an immutable body of texts surrounded by an aura of literary immortality. We need to view texts as discursive practices integrated in the whole of culture, a culture that integrates *écriture*, performance and image.<sup>37</sup> The task set here, is to clarify how texts functioned as communication tools in given cultural circumstances, and to see which needs society posed to the producers of texts.

We will thus need to see the interaction between text and history in a more dynamic and subtle way. Texts are discourses with their own agenda. This is exactly what New Historicism suggests for cultural studies in general. In New Historicist approaches, there is a relationship between discursive and material domains, but this relationship is insecure and unstable.<sup>38</sup> New Historicism inspired studies with attention to the cohesion between literary discourses and discourses in other cultural domains. What comes to the fore now are elements as diverse as performance, clothing, and festivals, each of them being a form of social discourse.<sup>39</sup>

The methodological problems inherent to New Historicism, however, are manifold, and are caused not in the least by the fact that it has never been a theoretical model. I focus on one implication that is frequently mentioned in subsequent assessments of New Historicism and is for medieval literature brought forward in a trenchant way by Gabrielle Spiegel. In an effort to come to terms with historicism and New Historicism as applied to medieval literature, Spiegel attempts to restore a clearer distinction between text and context.<sup>40</sup> She remarks that New Historicists, in their effort to contextualise texts, effectively textualise context, so that text and context collapse into one discursive unity. In order to begin to build up a critical stance that does justice to both textual and historical principles of analysis, Spiegel reminds us that texts “occupy determinate social spaces, both as products of the social world of authors and as textual agents at work in that world, with which they entertain often complex and contestatory relations”.<sup>41</sup> Every text has a social logic within a more restricted context, the context of local social environments, particular systems of communication and relevant power relations.

<sup>36</sup>For epigrams and their immediate communicative function, see W. Hörandner, “Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte”, in: *XVIII Mezdunarodnyj kongress vizantinistov. Plenarnye doklady*, Moskva 1991, pp. 415–432.

<sup>37</sup>For discursive practices in a culturally and socially integrated perspective, see E. Patlagean, “Discours écrit, discours parlé. Niveaux de culture à Byzance aux VIIIe-XIe siècles (note critique)”, *Annales ESC* 34.2 (1979), pp. 264–278.

<sup>38</sup>L. A. Montrose, “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture”, in: *New Historicism*, ed. by H. A. Veenser, New York, 1989, pp. 15–36, pp. 22–23.

<sup>39</sup>For the possible profits of New Historicism for Byzantine literary studies, see Mullett, “New Literary History”.

<sup>40</sup>G. M. Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages”, *Speculum* 65.1 (1990), pp. 59–86.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77.

It is necessary to investigate the social world of the authors and patrons as well as to analyse the specific literary modalities at work within them.<sup>42</sup>

In any event, it appears that a more nuanced view on the relation of a text to society is needed, which also takes into account the concrete embedment of a text in the sphere of its production and reading, and permits to consider its role as an active social agent. In this step, the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu can provide a helpful midway between text-immanent formalism and a 'rude' literary sociology that excludes aesthetics from its research scope.<sup>43</sup> His work provides a sociological viewpoint on literature (and other cultural practices) that can nevertheless account for its internal dynamics and aesthetics. The concept of the field forces us to come to a more negotiated connection between textual features and social context.

In a field such as Bourdieu conceives it, positions and agents are related to each other according to an internal logic. Every action taken by its members is seen as relevant within the *illusio* that governs the particular field and dictates its rules. The field can thus be seen as a game with its own imposed rules and codes of behaviour. Since real interests are at stake, it is a social space ridden with tensions. All agents pursue a peculiar strategy to attain positions or accumulate the kind of capital that is specific to the field (such as cultural prestige in the literary field). Parallel with this internal strife, there is also a struggle to impose and redefine the standards to enter the field. At the same time, strategies are developed to make that the specific capital gathered in the field can be made valuable in a broad social environment and can be exchanged for other capital. The concept of the field thus permits to view cultural production as part of an engagement in a field of rivals and colleagues in a quest to occupy a position that can gain prestige or material rewards.

A reading of texts along Bourdieu's lines may also, I think, make us aware of the constructed nature of representations. The belief in the symbolic value of literary works is a belief produced in accordance with the logic of the field.<sup>44</sup> The value of literary texts is the result of an active process of defining and defending that value, and is not a universal given.<sup>45</sup>

I will not in any way claim that I have followed this method to bring to light the ultimate truth about poetry and society in eleventh-century Byzantium. The absence of a proper literary field (see chapter 'Poets') acts in this respect as a reminder that methodologies cannot be applied 'out of the box'; but this does not mean that no useful questions can be generated from it (for the absence of such a field is an interesting fact *in se*). So, Bourdieu's insights have rather worked as a springboard to pay attention to processes and representations that remain unacknowledged when applying a purely formalist or

<sup>42</sup>Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages", p. 78.

<sup>43</sup>Bourdieu, *Règles de l'art*, is the most extensive application of Bourdieu's thought to literature.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 279–288: 'la production de la croyance'.

<sup>45</sup>About the social constructedness of aesthetic value in general, see P. Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement*, Paris 1979.



purely historicist reading.

By pursuing this kind of methodology, I also hope to have given heed to some calls recently voiced in the field of Byzantine literature: the call to ‘listen above all to the Byzantines themselves’,<sup>46</sup> to have attention for ‘the Byzantine understanding of the role of literature in Byzantine culture’,<sup>47</sup> to problematise the relation between production and reception and the nature of Byzantine literary society,<sup>48</sup> and the question ‘quel a été le sens que les Byzantins attribuaient au mot «poésie»?’<sup>49</sup>

In considering these questions, I think we can begin bridging the gap between the modern reader and the Byzantine reader, and begin ‘making a sense’ of these poems.

## 1.2 Scope of the present study

In the first part, ‘Presenting poetry’, I will offer some elements that may contribute to a historical research of Byzantine reading practices of poetry. I will attempt to shed some light on the interpretative strategies used by the first (and some subsequent) communities of readers. The ‘context’ I will provide in this part is quite literally the con-text of neighbouring texts and the visual and auditive circumstances in which poetry presented itself to the reader. In the chapter ‘Readings’, I hope to clarify the communicative status of poetry and to come a step closer towards understanding the contemporary horizon of expectation with which eleventh-century Byzantine readers approached poetic texts. This chapter will also discuss the embedment of texts in their concrete context of use. The chapter ‘Collections’ has a closer look at the ways in which poems were collected and brought into contact with each other.

The second part, ‘Poetry and society’, scrutinises the place of the poet in society and investigates the social interests of poetic activities in the making of a career. But this undertaking proves difficult because of an apparent lack of a delineation of the figure of ‘poet’ in contemporary discourse. This leads to a problematisation, in the chapter ‘Poets’, of the poetic field and the literary field. Retaining it as a working concept is no option in this case. There was no separate field of persons positioning themselves with regard to a shared and recognised conception of literature, let alone poetry. Therefore, it makes more sense to use the term ‘intellectual field’, since, as the chapter

<sup>46</sup>M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts*, vol. 1, Wien 2003, p. 26.

<sup>47</sup>P. Magdalino, “A History of Byzantine Literature for Historians”, in: *Pour une “nouvelle” histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique, Nicosie, 25-28 mai 2000*, ed. by P. Odorico and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 1, Paris 2002, pp. 167–184, p. 168.

<sup>48</sup>Mullett, “Dancing With Deconstructionists in the Gardens of the Muses: New Literary History vs ?”, p. 270.

<sup>49</sup>P. Odorico, P. Agapitos, and M. Hinterberger, “Préface”, in: *«Doux remède...» Poésie et poétique à Byzance. Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> colloque international philologique, Paris, 23-24-25 février 2006*, ed. by P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 9, Paris 2008, pp. 7–10, p. 8.

‘Poets’ will attempt to demonstrate, the role of intellectual comprised both the creation of texts and other aspects, like (predominantly) teaching. Our poets defined themselves not as poets, but as intellectuals (*logios*). Apart from more official teaching posts, it is this title of ‘intellectual’ that works as a designation of honour that delineates a given social group and organises it internally. Therefore this study frequently puts into perspective the notions of ‘literature’ and ‘poet’, of course using them (we cannot do otherwise), but contrasting them with the different set of notions ingrained in the mental pattern of eleventh-century Byzantine authors and readers. We will sometimes resort to the terms ‘discursive practices’ or ‘production of texts’, terms that are more vague but leave intact the lack of differentiation between literary and non-literary texts.

In the chapter ‘Display’, I will give some indications for the role of poetry as a social tool to make a career and gain social prestige. Also, this chapter engages with the construction of the rules to adhere to in the intellectual field and attempts to expose the mechanisms with which poetry serves to define a distinct class in society.

In the part ‘Poetry and intellectual life’, the function of poetry in the internal dynamics of the intellectual field will form the subject of research. Here, I found it necessary to provide for a short historical précis about school life in the eleventh century. This will make up a considerable portion of the chapter ‘Schools’. This chapter further elucidates the use of poetry in the field where it can most naturally appeal to recognition of its formal features, namely the world of teaching and schools.

School life is a vital element in the two other chapters of this part too. The chapter ‘Knowledge’ discusses the potential of poetry to transmit and organise knowledge, putting up the question why the poetic form was considered apt for didactic content.

The sense of struggle, inherent to Bourdieu’s concept of the field, permeates the chapter ‘Competitions’. In this chapter, I will provide a reading of poems that lays bare their function in ongoing competitions with rivals in the field of teachers and intellectuals.

The next part, ‘Poetry as a service’, tackles the problem of patronage of poetry, or, as I will try to argue, the function of poetry in networks of social services. Throughout this part, the question will stand central how a discourse is developed that allowed poetry, or generally, discursive practices, to be rewarded or exchanged with other services. The chapter ‘Exchanges’ describes the process of enticing and negotiating imperial patronage for poetry and its aspect of prestige. It also focuses on commissioned poems, poetic petitions, and other forms of literary services in a poetic form. The chapter ‘Gifts’ discusses a particular form of a literary service: the one couched in the discourse of the gift. This chapter also treats the function of epigrams as part of a public expense. It closes with some observations on value as produced by the poets, and the exquisiteness of taste.

I realise that these questions are more the questions of a cultural historian than those of a literary scholar. Indeed, in Byzantine studies, ‘the literary

scholar and the historian are not very far apart'.<sup>50</sup> I have to admit (with some regret) that a description of the internal workings of poems and their poetic worlds, while not wholly absent, is subordinated to an account of the value and role of poetry in the 'real', historical world. This entails that texts sometimes have an uneasy status in this thesis: they serve both as the studied object and as a witness to the contemporary discourse about poetry.

### 1.3 The eleventh century: contradictory developments

I will consider learned poetry as a cultural practice in the period from 1025 to 1081, a period falling between two dynasties and marked by many changes and insecurities. The empire's social composition, imperial ideology, and world view were not the same in 1081 as they were fifty-five years before. These changes are either characterised as transitional, either as ephemeral.<sup>51</sup> It is therefore not always easy to explain the purpose behind reforms in this period. Attempts to view developments in the eleventh century as separated from their outcome in the twelfth are in fact few. A sketchy overview of the most significant developments may suffice for the present purpose.<sup>52</sup>

The extinction of male successors in the Macedonian dynastic line created a vacuum on the imperial throne, while especially the populace showed a great affection for Zoe and Theodora, the female descendants of this dynasty. The entourage around these empresses attempted to have them married with men of their choice. As a consequence, court factions acquired an unprecedented power, and emperors were puppets of the party that backed them. This dynastic insecurity creates an abundance of rebellions, some successful usurpations, and court intrigues.<sup>53</sup> Much attention has been given to the military commanders that took up arms against the sitting emperor, men like Maniakes, who rebelled against Monomachos in 1043, and Isaak I Komnenos, who led a successful coalition of dissatisfied army commanders in 1057; but perhaps of equal importance were the opportunists who operated from within the court. These men could quickly gain power thanks to their influence on the emperor or empress, but could easily fall victim to shifting alliances of the entourage of the emperor.

The most influential and memorable of these figures is Psellos himself, who on repeated occasions prided upon his own eventful life and polyvalent and

<sup>50</sup>M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop*, Aldershot 1997, p. 31.

<sup>51</sup>Stress on this transitional nature in A. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture from the Eleventh to the Twelfth Centuries*, Berkeley 1985; on the abortive aspect Browning, "Enlightenment and Repression".

<sup>52</sup>For the political and social history of the period, see in the first place M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History*, 2nd ed., London/New York 1997.

<sup>53</sup>See the impressive list of rebellions and usurpations in J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance*, Paris 1990.

adaptable personality.<sup>54</sup> Many spots in his biography are obfuscated by his own accounts, but it seems certain that after rising in the bureaucracy under Michael IV (reigned 1034–1041), he could seduce Konstantinos IX Monomachos (1042–1055) into making him ‘consul of philosophers’. Under attack from a rival party, he fell from grace and had to resort to a monastery, only to be hailed back by Monomachos’ successor Theodora (1055–1056). With apparently a lot of social dexterity, he managed to remain at court when Isaak I Komnenos toppled Michael VI (1057). From then on, his fate is connected with that of the Doukai family; he surely had a hand in their overthrow of Isaak (1059). Evidently, he enjoyed a favourable position under Konstantinos X (1059–1067) and (initially) his son Michael VII (1071–1078), while his relations with Eudokia Makrembolitissa (1067–1068) and Romanos Diogenes (1068–1071) were more strained; he even might have played a dubious role in the downfall of the latter at and after Mantzikert (1071).

This turbulent *Kaisergeschichte* went hand in hand with many shifts in the social composition of the population. These surely had their roots in the prosperous economic conditions of the time. Commerce boomed, also in provincial cities.<sup>55</sup> For the first time in Byzantium, a class of merchants emerges.

Vertical mobility is a very important and outspoken characteristic of social change in the eleventh century.<sup>56</sup> Vertical mobility had always been present in Byzantine society, but the phenomenon becomes very common in the eleventh century. A typical career is that of someone from an ordinary family, displaying intellectual talents at school, entering in bureaucracy, and there, with the help of social skills, penetrating into the circles close to the emperor.

This remarkable wealth of opportunities for promotions is perhaps related to a desire of the emperors to compensate for their questionable dynastic status. They strove to strengthen their power base by building around them a group of loyal people. To that end, they embarked on a policy of lavish donations and promotions; they extended the apparatus of court officials and civil servants, and made the higher echelons of the civil hierarchy accessible to people hitherto barred from it.<sup>57</sup> Gifts of the emperor, in the form of promotions, entitlements to foundations, tax exemptions, or rights to levy

<sup>54</sup>A comprehensive biography of Michael Psellos still stands out; see in the meantime J. Ljubarskij, *Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού*, trans. by A. Tzelesi, Athens 2004; R. Volk, *Die medizinische Inhalt der Schriften des Michael Psellos*, München, 1990, pp. 1–48; see also the material gathered in , *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, 2006, URL: <http://www.pbw.kcl.ac.uk>, Michael 61.

<sup>55</sup>Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, pp. 24–73.

<sup>56</sup>See A. Kazhdan and M. McCormick, “The Social World of the Byzantine Court”, in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. by H. Maguire, Washington DC 1997, pp. 167–197, pp. 171–2; specifically for the eleventh century: H. Ahrweiler, “Recherches sur la société byzantine au XIe siècle: nouvelles hiérarchies et nouvelles solidarités”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976), pp. 99–124, pp. 110–1.

<sup>57</sup>J. Haldon, “Social Élités, Wealth and Power”, in: *A Social History of Byzantium*, ed. by J. Haldon, Chichester and Malden, MA 2009, pp. 168–211, p. 191–2 for these developments. See what Psellos says about Michael VI’s motivations to introduce mass promotions in Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. by S. Impellizzeri, 5th ed., Milano 2005 (henceforth cited as Psellos, *Chronographia*), ch. VII, § 1–2.

taxes, were the most important base of wealth for the elite.<sup>58</sup> The promotion to higher functions of course entailed higher status, but also higher wealth. As Lemerle has demonstrated, civil functions were tied to a system of yearly revenues.<sup>59</sup> In sum, the foremost resource that was at stake in this period is wealth emanating from imperial benevolence. Hence the importance of social connections, networking, and clever manoeuvring. Careers could be lucrative but were riddled with insecurities.

These developments pave the way for new distributions of power and wealth and new bonds of social coherence, aptly called *solidarities* by Ahrweiler.<sup>60</sup> The official hierarchy of court functions eroded and gave way to more informal dependence relationships. Instead of the centre where an authoritarian emperor ruled according to his own liking, the court now becomes a place where networking and intercession is essential to move forward, and where each interest group or family tried to gain influence.<sup>61</sup> These circles of influence converge at the imperial court, the central place where the people forged alliances, competed with each other for promotions, and sought to have influence with (people close to) the emperor. Closeness to the emperor was of primordial importance, but it was a prerogative that could easily be lost.<sup>62</sup> Members of the state establishment, it should be noted, played various social roles: at the same time, they belonged to intertwining circles of patronage and informal bonds of friendship and kinship.<sup>63</sup>

Relationships, or rather, the pledge to support the same alliance, are based on the reciprocity of services for each other. An ideal of friendship is developed that is centred on intellectualist ideals defined by a commonly shared education.<sup>64</sup> In this context of social networking and factions, friendship must be seen as primarily of an instrumental nature.<sup>65</sup>

These new distributions of social forces and other means to establish power, permit the articulation of a distinct group of people, who have no traditional assets as wealth or high birth, but who make creative use of other (also intellectual) resources to gain influence in the socially complicated world of the court.<sup>66</sup> These are the men that profited from the opportunities for vertical mobility, who rose upwards in civil and ecclesiastic ranks, became judges in the provinces when they were young, and were adorned with several ever more imposing titles at court. The contemporary term for this group is τὸ

<sup>58</sup>J.-C. Cheynet, "Fortune et puissance de l'aristocratie (Xe-XIIe siècles)", in: *Hommes et Richesses dans l'Empire byzantin II*, ed. by V. Kravari, J. Lefort, and C. Morrisson, Paris, 1991, pp. 199–214.

<sup>59</sup>P. Lemerle, "Roga et rente d'état", *REB* 25 (1967), pp. 71–100.

<sup>60</sup>Ahrweiler, "Hiérarchies et solidarités".

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 104–106.

<sup>62</sup>Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, pp. 65–66.

<sup>63</sup>Haldon, "Social Elites, Wealth and Power", p. 180.

<sup>64</sup>Ahrweiler, "Hiérarchies et solidarités", pp. 106–108; Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, p. 132.

<sup>65</sup>See generally M. Mullett, "Byzantium: A Friendly Society?", *Past and Present* 118 (1988), pp. 3–24, and specifically about the 11th century: pp. 18–20.

<sup>66</sup>Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, pp. 62–73; Ahrweiler, "Hiérarchies et solidarités".

πολιτικὸν γένος, mostly translated with a cognate of ‘civil’, and it is in this class, vaguely defined, heterogeneous and quite extended, that we mainly have to situate the authors of poetry, and the persons who defined themselves as intellectuals.

Perhaps in contrast to the social situation of intellectuals in the tenth century,<sup>67</sup> it would be difficult to say that in the eleventh century, intellectuals formed a closed class. Not only they entertained intimate contacts with emperors and state dignitaries, they also formed themselves part of the power apparatus. They are without exception high-placed state officials and thus members of the ‘civil aristocracy’, although Mauropous, for particular reasons, never officially received a civil function, and was only later made a metropolitan.

It is the time of the ‘gouvernement des philosophes’.<sup>68</sup> With the creation of the function of ‘consul of philosophers’, around 1046, an official position was created that consecrated an intellectual precedence. One could say that in this sense, the mid-eleventh century represents a unique point in Byzantium’s history: after the Komnenian reforms, the intellectual is confined to a dependent professional, seeking, and indeed begging for patronage.<sup>69</sup> Before Monomachos’ reforms, intellectual occupations served rather as a secondary means to consolidate a high status in society. But in the few years in between, learning in its pure form was represented as an element to be socially rewarded and sanctioned on an official basis. Obviously, this representation was built by the intellectuals themselves, or more precisely said, from dexterous politicians as Psellos; emperors like Konstantinos IX Monomachos

The precise relationship between intellectual elite and ‘power elite’ is not easy to made; the two surely did not coincide.<sup>70</sup> Men like Strabospondylos and even Leichoudes did not have an outspoken intellectualist profile, although they were typical successful courtiers belonging to the ‘civil class’. Learning was only one of the poles of authority, only temporarily (under Monomachos) the most important. Family lineage, wealth, spiritual charisma, and military power were others, and ultimately the prevailing ones.

Frequently opposed to this civil class is the military aristocracy (τὸ στρατιωτικὸν γένος), consisting of families who based their power on land properties. They propagated an ideology centred on martial prowess and clan adherence, an ideology that will ultimately define the image of the ideal emperor.<sup>71</sup> These families, Doukai, Dalassenoi, Komnenoi, sometimes stood frustrated at the side line, and sometimes successfully managed to impose their will on the capital. They frequently forged alliances with the state apparatus (the

<sup>67</sup>P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle*, Paris 1971, p. 255.

<sup>68</sup>See P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin*, Paris 1977, pp. 195–248.

<sup>69</sup>Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, pp. 130–131.

<sup>70</sup>H.-G. Beck, *Das literarische Schaffen der Byzantiner. Wege zu seinem Verständnis*, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 294, Wien 1974, 14, states that they often do coincide, but this cannot hold true for the eleventh century.

<sup>71</sup>A. Kazhdan, “The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal”, in: *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. by M. Angold, Oxford 1984, pp. 53–74.

proper civil class), so the antagonism between these two classes has rightly been called into question.<sup>72</sup> Yet, it remains a fact that this antagonism was clearly felt and expressly put into words by authors like Psellos: when the military leaders from the east rebel against the weak ‘civil’ emperor Michael VI Diogenes, he clearly represents this rebellion as a clash between τὸ πολιτικὸν γένος and τὸ στρατιωτικὸν σύνταγμα.<sup>73</sup>

Another important factor in power politics is Michael Keroullarios, the extremely influential patriarch eventually brought down with the help of Michael Psellos, and likely to be connected to a more populist and conservative ideology.<sup>74</sup> Another strain of monasticism is centred around the figures of Symeon the New Theologian and Niketas Stethatos, who both proclaimed a message of individual religiosity embedded in traditional Byzantine asceticism and mysticism. They seem to have had little contact with the milieus of our poets, and frequently voiced ideologies totally opposed to each other.<sup>75</sup>

Psellos has expressed the antagonism between the intellectual gentleman and the conservative monk most expressly in a letter to Keroullarios,<sup>76</sup> but the precise extent of their ideological differentiation is difficult to assess. Ljubarskij has demonstrated that both parties sometimes adopted the same lines of argumentation (towards antiquity, for instance).<sup>77</sup> Conversely, Symeon the New Theologian voiced his contempt for the worldly intellectuals,<sup>78</sup> but some of the same motifs (the insecurity of an ambitious life) also occur in the later poems of Mauropous. Joan Hussey’s work, even if outdated, may be right in concluding that the basic ideas held by both ‘ascetics’ and ‘humanists’ were informed by hellenism and christianity alike, and that occasional clashes are rather grounded in political differences than in ideological oppositions.<sup>79</sup> Monastic and ascetic ideals were also in the milieu of intellectuals greatly valued and even, as we will see, transposed to their own way of life.

To conclude this short historical overview, we may state that many important questions about general evolutions and tensions in the eleventh century

<sup>72</sup>S. Vryonis, “Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the guilds in the Eleventh Century”, *DOP* 17 (1963), pp. 287–314, p. 302–303, opposes both parties very expressly against each other; others nuance the gap between civil and military elites, see Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, p. 69; Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 264–7; Haldon, “Social Élités, Wealth and Power”, pp. 185–6.

<sup>73</sup>See Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VII, § 1, and Michael Psellos, “Oratio funebris in Constantinum Leichoudem”, in: *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, ed. by K. Sathas, vol. IV, Venezia/Paris 1876, pp. 388–421, p. 407.

<sup>74</sup>F. Tinnfeld, “Michael I Keroullarios, Patriarch von Konstantinopel (1043–1058). Kritische Überlegungen zu einer Biographie”, *JÖB* 39 (1989), pp. 95–127.

<sup>75</sup>For a speculative attempt to bring both groups in contact with each other, see F. Lauritzen, “Christopher of Mytilene’s Parody of the Haughty Mauropous”, *BZ* 100 (2007), pp. 125–132; F. Lauritzen, “An Ironic Portrait of a Social Monk: Christopher of Mytilene and Niketas Stethatos”, *Byzantinoslavica* 65 (2007), pp. 201–210.

<sup>76</sup>Michael Psellos, *Epistola a Michele Cerulario*, ed. by U. Criscuolo, Napoli 1990.

<sup>77</sup>J. Ljubarskij, “The Fall of an Intellectual. The Intellectual and Moral Atmosphere in the 11th Century”, in: *Essays on the Slavic World and the Eleventh Century*, ed. by S. Vryonis, New Rochelle 1992.

<sup>78</sup>See e.g. Symeon the New Theologian, *Symeon Neos Theologos. Hymnen*, ed. by A. Kambylis, Berlin/New York 1976, hymns 20, 21, 24, 58.

<sup>79</sup>J. Hussey, *Ascetics and Humanists in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, London 1960.

have met with contradictory answers or only partial solutions. Is the intellectual and civil orientation of the emperors of the mid-11th century to blame for the military disasters against the Seldjuks in the later decennia?<sup>80</sup> Was Monomachos a weak emperor, squandering the resources of the empire and indulging in trifles as mistresses and buffoons, or was he a vigorous reformer of state and institutions, and a patron of cultural life?<sup>81</sup> Were Monomachos' policies democratic, aimed at the emancipation of the middle class,<sup>82</sup> or did they only benefit one section of the upper class? Are the educational reforms by Monomachos a step in the direction of a potentially enlightened university,<sup>83</sup> or were they aimed at a more tight centralistic control of bureaucrats? A final question is now again hotly debated, and has informed in a more implicit or explicit form any study of cultural and intellectual life in the eleventh century: are the philosophical pursuits of Michael Psellos to be considered as the germs of an upcoming humanism,<sup>84</sup> as rational philosophical inquiries enjoying a short-lived atmosphere of free intellectual thought, only to be curbed by the advent of the Komnenes,<sup>85</sup> or even as a subversive neo-pagan movement aimed at the undermining of Christian dogmas,<sup>86</sup> or should we rather view his 'philosophy' as a means for self-representation,<sup>87</sup> and as the result of the compilation culture of the Byzantines, whereby philosophy functions as an aesthetically elevated discourse that informed their educational work in various disciplines?<sup>88</sup>

In short, in important matters, the eleventh century remains a period 'hard to interpret',<sup>89</sup> of which we can only discern some developments running

<sup>80</sup>See for instance two rather divergent opinions brought together in a recent symposium: S. Vryonis, "The Eleventh Century: Was there a Crisis in the Empire?", in: *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση (;) Το βυζάντιο τον 11ο αιώνα (1025-1081)*, Athens 2003, pp. 17–43, for a negative view on imperial policy, and J. Haldon, "Approaches to an Alternative Military History of the Period ca. 1025-1071", in: *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση (;) Το βυζάντιο τον 11ο αιώνα (1025-1081)*, Athens 2003, pp. 45–74, who rather sees an internal evolution of the military.

<sup>81</sup>The first view is the traditional one, while the reforming measures by Monomachos have been stressed by Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History*, pp. 56–70, and his cultural interests by Chondridou, *Κωνσταντίνος Μονομάχος*.

<sup>82</sup>Very emphatically so *ibid.*, pp. 61–68, 103–105.

<sup>83</sup>Browning, "Enlightenment and Repression".

<sup>84</sup>So for instance U. Criscuolo, ed., *Introduction to: Epistula a Giovanni Xifilino*, 2nd ed., Napoli 1990, pp. 31–43.

<sup>85</sup>So L. Clucas, *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium*, *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia* 26, München 1981; see also the heading 'Verhinderte Freidenkerei' for Psellos and Mauropous in J. Rosenqvist, *Die byzantinische Literatur: vom 6. Jahrhundert bis zum Fall Konstantinopels 1453*, Berlin 2007, p. 98.

<sup>86</sup>See the provocative view of Kaldellis on Psellos, in A. Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia*, Leiden 1999 and A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*, Cambridge and New York 2007.

<sup>87</sup>E. Pietsch, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos: Kaisergeschichte, Autobiografie und Apologie*, Wiesbaden 2005.

<sup>88</sup>So J. Gouillard, "La religion des philosophes", *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976), pp. 305–324. For an excellent overview of older answers to this question, most of them quite sceptic about the truly philosophic nature of Psellos' work, see Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, pp. 12–40.

<sup>89</sup>M. Mullett, "Originality in the Byzantine Letter: The Case of Exile", in: *Originality*



counter to each other, while not understanding precisely how they clashed, and how relative or far-stretching their impact was.

## 1.4 Poetic texts in Byzantium, 1025–1081

The corpus of poetic texts written during the period under view here is a heterogeneous amalgam with ill-defined borders. It might be said that it is not very extensive in quantity: poetic texts in the twelfth century are far more numerous.<sup>90</sup> Two main groups can be distinguished after the nature of their transmission. The first group consists of poems which have been copied in later manuscripts. These comprise poems of known authors, such as the ‘big three’ Christophoros Mitylenaios, Ioannes Mauropous and Michael Psellos. Another group of poems is preserved in the place where it served its primary function, that is, as book epigrams in manuscript or as inscriptions on objects or buildings. A very interesting element between those two groups is the *Vat. Gr.* 676, a manuscript from the eleventh century, which preserves the poetic collection of Mauropous in a state such as the author had conceived it.

The collection of Christophoros, entitled *στίχοι διάφοροι* in one manuscript, totals 145 poems, and seems to have been ordered chronologically. The collection is preserved as a whole in the Grottaferrata manuscript *Crypt. Z. α XXIX* (XIIIc.), but it is heavily damaged. In the other manuscripts that preserve poems of Christophoros, the poems mostly appear in the same order as in the Grottaferrata manuscript, which indicates that the copyists had before them a collection very similar to the original one.<sup>91</sup>

The four calendars that Christophoros composed (in stichera, canones, iambic distichs (dodecasyllables), and dactylic hexameters) are transmitted in many more manuscripts than his *στίχοι διάφοροι*, and were even translated in other languages; the iambic disticha were included in the *Menaea* of the orthodox liturgy, which secured them a lasting popularity.<sup>92</sup>

The collection of Mauropous, 99 poems, survives in its initially conceived form in the *Vat. Gr.* 676 (and also in some later copies, clearly dependent on

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*in Byzantine Literature Art and Music*, ed. by A. R. Littlewood, Oxford 1995, pp. 39–58, p. 50.

<sup>90</sup>E. Jeffreys, “Why Produce Verse in Twelfth-century Constantinople?”, in: «*Doux remède...*» *Poésie et poésie à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23-24-25 février 2006*, ed. by P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos, Dossiers byzantins 9, Paris 2008, pp. 219–228, pp. 222–223.

<sup>91</sup>See E. Kurtz, ed., *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*, Leipzig 1903, pp. x–xvi.

<sup>92</sup>The calendars in stichera en canones are edited in Christophoros Mitylenaios, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo*, ed. by E. Follieri, Subsidia Hagiographica 63, Bruxelles 1980. Those in iambs and hexameters in the *Menaea*, hence also in the most compact form in S. Eustratiades, ed., *Ἀγιολόγιον τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας*, Athens 1995, also partly in Christophoros Mitylenaios, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo*, vol. II, and some additional disticha in E. Follieri, “Il calendario giambico di Cristoforo di Mitilene secondo i mss. Palat. gr. 383 e Paris. gr. 3041”, *Analecta Bollandi-ana* 77 (1959), pp. 245–304.

the Vaticanus<sup>93</sup>). Some other poems are added to this manuscript.<sup>94</sup> These are: inc. Ἰωάννου φρόντισμα ταῦτα (henceforth called Mauropous I), inc. Τίς ἄν σε προσβλέψειε (II), inc. Φεῦ φεῦ· ποθῶ μὲν πανταχοῦ (III), inc. Καὶ ταῦτα πολλά (IV).<sup>95</sup> The manuscript closes with a poem of Mauropous' secretary Hesaias.<sup>96</sup>

Several other poems are also ascribed to Christophoros or Mauropous, but we should be cautious with these ascriptions. Kurtz gives as an example the *Vindob. theol. gr.* 103: this manuscript preserves the complete collection of Mauropous, and thus seems rather trustworthy, but it adds four poems as works of Mauropous, among which at least two are certainly authored by Christophoros.<sup>97</sup> There is especially a tendency to ascribe poems to Psellos, also to Mauropous to a lesser degree, while Christophoros' poems in contrast often go unnoticed or under the name of another poet.

A poem closely connected with Christophoros is the long poem Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλτου, transmitted before Christophoros 65 in one manuscript,<sup>98</sup> but not present in the Grottaferrata manuscript. Even if this poem is not authored by Christophoros,<sup>99</sup> it must surely date from the 11th century, and is consequently the longest hexametric poem of the period.

Since Mauropous' collection is a selection from a greater corpus of poems, we can assume that he is the author of other poems too. There is a didactic etymological poem surviving in two later manuscripts, which both attribute it to Mauropous.<sup>100</sup> There are also some dodecasyllables transmitted in the *akolouthia* for the Three Hierarchs.<sup>101</sup> Many notices in manuscripts ascribe this whole *akolouthia* to Mauropous, so it is reasonable to assume that the verses (which one manuscript ascribes to Triklinios) are indeed from Mauropous' hand. The poem on the Forty Martyrs, inc. Χειμῶν τὸ λυποῦν in *Paris. Suppl. Gr.* 690 (fol. 118r), and five other shorter religious epigrams in the same manuscript<sup>102</sup> are shown not be written by Mauropous, but rather

<sup>93</sup>R. Anastasi, "Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita", *Sicilorum Gymnasium* 22 (1969), pp. 109–144.

<sup>94</sup>P. de Lagarde, ed., *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitae quae in Codice Vaticano Graeco 676 supersunt*, Göttingen 1882, pp. v–vi.

<sup>95</sup>These poems are surely from the pen of Mauropous and not from a separate person Ioannes Diakonos, as thought by A. Kominis, *Τὸ βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ οἱ ἐπιγραμματοποιοί*, Athens 1966, p. 148.

<sup>96</sup>Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum quae ... supersunt*, pp. iv–v.

<sup>97</sup>Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, p. xvii.

<sup>98</sup>"Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλτου", in: *Ἱστορικὰ Μελετήματα*, ed. by S. Lampros, Athens 1884, pp. 162–165, pp. 162–165.

<sup>99</sup>Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, xvii–xviii, does not believe so.

<sup>100</sup>Edition of one portion in: Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum quae ... supersunt*, pp. ix–xv; the whole poem, counting 476 dodecasyllables, is edited in Ioannes Mauropous, *M. Terentius Varro und Johannes Mauropus von Euchaita. Einer Studie zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, ed. by R. Reitzenstein, Leipzig 1901.

<sup>101</sup>Edited in S. G. Mercati, "Presunti giambi di Demetrio Triclinio sulla festa dei tre gerarchi Basilio, Gregorio Nazianzeno e Giovanni Crisostomo", in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. I, Bari 1970, pp. 529–537, 534–5 (text).

<sup>102</sup>Edited and ascribed to Mauropous in L. Sternbach, "Appendix critica de Ioanne Euchaitensi", *Eos* 4 (1897), pp. 156–163.

by Geometres.<sup>103</sup>

In contrast to Mauropous and Christophoros, a collection of poems by Michael Psellos has never been made, and therefore, the precise extent of his poetic corpus is yet more unclear. Quite many manuscripts tend to ascribe poems to him that are surely not his. Westerink's edition lists 37 genuine and 55 pseudo-Psellian poems.<sup>104</sup> However, even for some of the poems that Westerink ranged under the genuine ones, a false ascription cannot be ruled out: poems 14 *de metro iambico*, 15 *de regimine*, 20 *in Comneni sepulcrum*, 31 *in sanctum Georgium*, 32 *in Photium*, are all transmitted in late and/or untrustworthy manuscripts. Of these poems, poem 20 refers to an 11th-century event, and is likely to date from the period, even if it is not by Psellos. Poem 30 *in maledicum insensatum* is perhaps Christophorean: in *Marc. Gr.* 524, it stands after a genuine poem by Christophoros (although anonymous), and it is labeled by the heading Τοῦ αὐτοῦ, which could thus refer to Christophoros.

It is impossible to say which of the proper pseudo-Pselliana can be dated to the eleventh century. Poems 53 to 61 are didactic poems on various grounds not to be attributed to Psellos. They seem all inspired by Psellos' versifying method, sometimes also reusing verses of his. This could point to a later date for these poems. Poem 62 stands in a tenth-century poetry cycle in *Par. Suppl. Gr.* 690.<sup>105</sup> Poem 67 is surely from after 1100,<sup>106</sup> the other poems are quite impossible to date.

Another poet we know by name is Michael Grammatikos, who has left us seven poems.<sup>107</sup> Mercati identified Michael Grammatikos with another poet, a certain Michael the Hierodeacon, but Lauxtermann has shown that these are separate persons.<sup>108</sup> The poems of Michael Grammatikos can on good grounds, but not conclusively, be dated to the eleventh century.<sup>109</sup>

Another poetry collection from the eleventh century, apparently by one single poet, was edited by Sola,<sup>110</sup> and brought back to the attention of scholarship by Marc Lauxtermann.<sup>111</sup> The poems of this poet, henceforth called the anonymus of Sola (Anon. Sola), are transmitted in an eleventh-century manuscript (the *Vat. gr.* 753). Most of his poems can be dated to the period

<sup>103</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 297–300.

<sup>104</sup>Michael Psellos, *Poemata*, ed. by L. G. Westerink, BT, Stuttgart / Leipzig 1992 (henceforth cited as Psellos).

<sup>105</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 331–2.

<sup>106</sup>K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des Oströmischen Reiches*, München 1897, pp. 440–1. See also the chapter 'Poets'.

<sup>107</sup>Transmitted in *Vat. Pal. Gr.* 367 (s. XIV). Edited in: S. G. Mercati, "Intorno a Μιχαήλ γραμματικός ὁ ἱερομόναχος", in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. I, Bari, 1970, pp. 114–120 and S. G. Mercati, "Ancora intorno a Μιχαήλ γραμματικός ὁ ἱερομόναχος", in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. I, Bari, 1970, pp. 121–135, and entirely in S. Lampros, "Ἐπιγράμματα ἀνεκδότα Μιχαήλ τοῦ γραμματικοῦ", *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 14 (1917), pp. 3–13.

<sup>108</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 318–319.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>110</sup>Sola, "Giambografi sconosciuti dell'XI secolo", *Roma e oriente* 11 (1916), pp. 18–27, 149–153.

<sup>111</sup>M. Lauxtermann, "Byzantine Poetry and the Paradox of Basil II's Reign", in: *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. by P. Magdalino, Leiden/Boston/Köln 2003, pp. 199–216.

1028–1041, while one is to be dated to around 990.<sup>112</sup>

The *Marc. Gr.* 524 contains a highly interesting miscellaneous collection of poetic pieces. Most of them have to be dated to the twelfth century, but the first dozen poems are eleventh-century products.<sup>113</sup> Poems 1 to 11 are clearly from the period of Monomachos: he or Keroullarios are named in poems 2, 3, 5, 8, 10 and 11 (poem 6 = Christophoros 137).<sup>114</sup>

Another series of eleventh-century poems can be found in *Athen. Nat. Libr.* 1040 (XIVc.). A poetic section at the end of the manuscript starts with an anonymous poem on the church of Saint George in Mangana built by Monomachos, who is expressly named.<sup>115</sup> Then follows Mauropous poem 47 (without ascription), and after that a poem addressed to Konstantinos Monomachos, in which an aged literate man asks for consideration for his deplorable financial state.<sup>116</sup> Both anonymous poems were ascribed to Mauropous by Karpozelos; in the case of the last poem, there is sufficient contradictory evidence from Mauropous' biography to disprove his authorship.<sup>117</sup> At any rate, both poems can safely be dated to Monomachos' reign. Thereafter follows a poem by a certain Basileios Kekaumenos on the death of Anastasios Lyzix,<sup>118</sup> a historical person known to us as a friend of Psellos.<sup>119</sup>

There are also four poems on Symeon the New Theologian, attached to a contemporary manuscript with his works (*Athous Vatopedi* 666), all by authors explicitly named: Hierotheos of the monastery Horaia Pègè, Alex-

<sup>112</sup>Lauxtermann, "Paradox", p. 199.

<sup>113</sup>An overview of incipits in S. Lampros, "Ο Μαρκιανός κῶδιξ 524", *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 8 (1911), pp. 3–59; 123–192, edition of nrs. 1 and 7 in W. Hörandner, "Epigrams on Icons and Sacred Objects. The Collection of Cod. Marc. gr. 524 once again", in: *La poesia tardoantica e medievale. Atti del I Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Macerata, 4-5 maggio 1998, a cura di M. Salvatore*, Alessandria 2001. The team of Paolo Odorico envisions an edition of the poems, see P. Odorico and C. Mesis, "L'anthologie comnène du Cod. Marc. gr. 524: problèmes d'édition et problèmes d'évaluation", in: *L'épistolographie et la poésie épigrammatique, Dossiers byzantins* 3, Paris 2003, pp. 191–213.

<sup>114</sup>For the chronology, see Hörandner, "Epigrams on Icons and Sacred Objects. The Collection of Cod. Marc. gr. 524 once again", pp. 118–119; poem 12 is from just after 1094; see M. Mullett, "The Poetics of Paraitesis: The Resignation Poems of Nicholas of Kerkyra and Nicholas Mouzalon", in: «*Doux remède...*» *Poésie et poétique à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23-24-25 février 2006*, ed. by P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 9, Paris 2008, pp. 157–178, p. 160.

<sup>115</sup>Edited in I. Sakkelion and A. I. Sakkelion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Athens 1892, pp. 184–185.

<sup>116</sup>Edited as a poem of Mauropous in A. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ἰωάννη Μαυρόποδος*, Ioannina 1982, pp. 72–73.

<sup>117</sup>R. Anastasi, "Review of: A. Karpozelos, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ἰωάννη Μαυρόποδος*", *BZ* 75 (1982), pp. 354–356, pointing to the age and social status of the poet, incompatible with what we know of Mauropous' biography; see also the doubts expressed in Kazhdan, "Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II", p. 364.

<sup>118</sup>Edited in S. G. Mercati, "Versi di Basilio Cecaumeno in morte di Anastasio Lizix", in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. 1, Bari 1970, pp. 321–342, text: pp. 336–342.

<sup>119</sup>*Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, Anastasios 2101; see also P. Gautier, "Monodies inédites de Michel Psellos", *REB* 36 (1978), pp. 82–151, pp. 89–90, for the identification of the Lyzix of this poem with the Lyzix of Psellos. Gautier also suggests that the poet Basileios Kekaumenos could be the same as Basileios Protoasekretis, ktêtôr of Evergetis; despite the objections in G. Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos*, München 1973, p. 255.

ios megalos didaskalos, Niketas Theophiles ‘of the Great Church’ (the Agia Sophia), and Basileios protasekretis of the Evergetis monastery.<sup>120</sup> In the same milieu, Alexios the deacon wrote a poem on the work ‘on the Celestial Hierarchy’ of Niketas Stethatos, inc. Ἐννάδι μιᾶ τῶν κεφαλαίων λόγου.<sup>121</sup> Then we have also one poem on Theotokos by a certain Ioannes Kossiphes, metropolitan of Thebes.<sup>122</sup>

Some other poems too are preserved because they are attached to other works. In the case of Psellos, there is the four-line invective poem of Sabbaites (or of a certain monk Iakobos) that provoked in response Psellos’ poem 22.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, we have an epigram which derides Psellos’ grammarian, transmitted as an appendix to Or. Min. 17, which appears to respond to this epigram.<sup>124</sup>

Many poems stand a good chance to be a product of the eleventh century, but cannot be dated precisely. Such is the case of a series of poems in *Vat. Gr.* 1587, edited by Giuseppe Schirò.<sup>125</sup> These poems can only loosely be dated to the eleventh or twelfth centuries. A definitive solution is not possible, but it is to note that these poems lean more towards eleventh-century texts: similar phrasings appear and there is a similar conception of the phenomenon of *shedos* (see chapter ‘Schools’). The poems are related to the school of the Forty Martyrs and appear to have been written by a teacher of that school. All of them but one are directed to students of the school.

There are some other poems that repeatedly turn up between 11th-century material but do not contain any indication to date them precisely. A poem on the apostles, ascribed to Mauropous but between Christophorea in Vindob. theol. gr. 103, ascribed to Psellos in Paris. gr. 1782, and to other authors in other manuscripts, may perhaps just be an anonymous inscription.<sup>126</sup> In the Vienna codex, we find also the poem ‘*On the angel standing out of the gate*’.<sup>127</sup>

In some manuscripts from around 1100 there is an extensive cycle of epigrams on Lord’s Feasts,<sup>128</sup> (henceforth called the DOP 46-cycle<sup>129</sup>) probably

<sup>120</sup>Symeon the New Theologian, *Symeoon Neos Theologos. Hymnen*, pp. 26–27; for these poets, see also Kominis, *Τὸ βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ οἱ ἐπιγραμματικοί*, pp. 144–146.

<sup>121</sup>Symeon the New Theologian, *Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, ed. by J. Darrouzès, SC 51bis, Paris 1996, p. 298.

<sup>122</sup>For this poet, see Kominis, *Τὸ βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ οἱ ἐπιγραμματικοί*, pp. 146–7.

<sup>123</sup>L. G. Westerink, ed., *Michael Psellus poemata*, BT, Stuttgart / Leipzig 1992, pp. 259, 270.

<sup>124</sup>Edited in: Michael Psellos, *Oratoria minora*, ed. by A. R. Littlewood, BT, Leipzig 1985 (henceforth cited as Psellos, *Or. Min.*), p. 65.

<sup>125</sup>G. Schirò, “La schedografia a bisanzio nei sec. XI–XII e la scuola dei SS. XL Martiri”, *Bollettino della badia greca di Grottaferrata* 3 (1949), pp. 11–29.

<sup>126</sup>Inc. Σταυροῖ Πέτρων κύμβαχον. Edited as pseudo-Psellos in Westerink, *Poemata*; as Christophorean in L. Sternbach, “Appendix Christophorea”, *Eos* 6 (1900), pp. 53–74, p. 68.

<sup>127</sup>Inc. Οὐρανοβᾶμον, πῶς πυραυλεῖς ἐνθάδε; edited in: Sternbach, “Appendix Christophorea”, p. 69.

<sup>128</sup>W. Hörandner, “Ein Zyklus von Epigrammen zu Darstellungen von Herrenfesten und Wunderszenen”, *DOP* 46 (1992), pp. 107–115; P. Pagonari-Antoniou, “Τα βυζαντινά ἐπιγράμματα τῶν κωδίκων Βατοπεδίου 36, Marc. Gr. 507 καὶ Ζαγοράς 115”, *Δίπτυχα* 5 (1992), pp. 33–58.

<sup>129</sup>In accordance with the usage in: Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*.

a product of the eleventh century. Still less possible to date is a similar cycle in the above mentioned *Marc. Gr.* 524 (henceforth called the DOP 48-cycle).<sup>130</sup>

There is also a series of still unedited poems in the *Hauriensis* 1899 (s. XIII) that are to be found between eleventh-century material (Christophorea, Mauropodea and pseudo-Pselliana).<sup>131</sup>

Apart from these poems that are transmitted as independent texts, there are also innumerable poems attached to manuscripts as additional material, intended to present the book, the author, the text or the donor. These poems are designated by Lauxtermann as ‘book epigrams’.<sup>132</sup> The epigrams datable to the eleventh century have been collected into a database by Klaas Bentein, as part of the Ghent project on 11th-century poetry. This resulted in the collection of some 500 epigrams, found in 400 manuscripts. Most of them have been edited in the catalogues or elsewhere in descriptions of manuscripts, but frequently, the cataloguers did not take notice of them, or only provided *incipits*.<sup>133</sup> In other cases, they did edit the material, but failed to recognise that the text was in fact poetic. A random example of the latter case is an epigram, inscribed in the beams of a cross, running like this: Ἰσχὺν δίδου γράφοντι, Χριστε, τὴν βίβλον // καὶ ῥῶσιν ὠσαύτως δὲ καὶ κεκτημένῳ.<sup>134</sup> Examples like this may indicate that the poetic production in the eleventh century is far larger than we would suspect at first sight, and it is certain that much poetic material is still there in the manuscripts (and the catalogues), waiting to be discovered.

These book epigrams are often the product of recycling older verses and (parts of) poems. Some poems, however, appear as contemporarily composed pieces, of which the poets emerge as independent authors. Such is the case for the epigrams of Mark the monk in the psalter *Bodl. Clarke* 15,<sup>135</sup> although also Mark reuses some older verses.

Apart from this manuscriptal material, there are quite many extant inscriptions on objects and buildings. Reliquaries, crosses and other objects of art, mostly religious, frequently bear inscriptions. Also churches and city walls were provided with inscriptions. The team in Vienna has progressively built up a complete database with inscriptions.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>130</sup>W. Hörandner, “A Cycle of Epigrams on the Lord’s Feasts in Cod. Marc. Gr. 524”, *DOP* 48 (1994), pp. 117–133, for the dating (mid-XI to XIIc.), see p. 123.

<sup>131</sup>See the incipits in: Westerink, *Poemata*, p. viii.

<sup>132</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 30, 197.

<sup>133</sup>The team in Ghent has provided an edition of some unedited epigrams in: K. Bentein, F. Bernard, K. Demoen, and M. De Groote, “Book Epigrams in Honor of the Church Fathers. Some Inedita from the Eleventh Century”, *GRBS* 49 (2009), pp. 281–294; another series will appear in: K. Bentein, F. Bernard, K. Demoen, and M. De Groote, “New Testament Book Epigrams: Some New Evidence from the Eleventh Century”, *BZ* (forthcoming).

<sup>134</sup>*Vat. Gr.* 741 (XIc.), *Varia excerpta*, fol. 176 R. Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani Graeci vol. III. Codices 604-866*, Città del Vaticano 1950, p. 255.

<sup>135</sup>Edition of some of the poems in T. Gaisford, *Catalogus sive notitia manuscriptorum qui a cel. E. D. Clarke comparati in bibliotheca bodleiana adservantur*, Oxford 1812, pp. 57–61; See also M. Lauxtermann, “Mark the Monk”, in: *Giving a Small Taste*, forthcoming.

<sup>136</sup>At the time of completion of this thesis the following volume had been published: A. Rhoby, ed., *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung* 1, Wien 2009.

This is a short orientation of learned Greek poetry produced in the capital in the period from 1025 to 1081. It is a rather disparate body of texts, from which only three poets with a distinct personality and style emerge: Christophoros Mitylenaios, Ioannes Mauropous, and Michael Psellos. The many anonymous or pseudepigraphic poems can help us to conjure up an image of poetry in the eleventh century, and will be used accordingly, but they will mostly not be problematised as thoroughly as the texts of the ‘big three’.

The chronological margins make that some notable poets fall outside this scope, although they will occasionally turn up to provide a background. This is the case of Symeon the New Theologian (died in 1022),<sup>137</sup> Nikephoros Ouranos,<sup>138</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, and John Geometres<sup>139</sup> (all expelled by Basileios II from court around the year 1000),<sup>140</sup> and the shady figures of John of Melitene and the Anonymous Patrician (surely pre-1000).<sup>141</sup> At the other end of the century, the reign of Alexios I Komnenos witnessed a new generation of poets like Theophylaktos of Ochrid, Niketas of Herakleia, Philippos Monotropos, Nikolaos of Kerkyra, Manuel Straboromanos, and perhaps Alexios himself.

The focus here is on learned profane poetry, an inaccurate term to refer to the type of poetic texts produced by and for an intellectual elite. So, vernacular and hymnographic poetry will fall outside the scope of this study. Surely there was permeation between these types of poetry and so-called learned poetry. We can suppose that poetry in the vernacular circulated widely, but it has not left many traces. Hymnographic poetry is composed by the same poets (by Mauropous, but also Christophoros). However, it might be said that hymnography, a very homogeneous body of texts, poses less problems as to its use and function in society, in contrast to the more diverse occasional ‘learned profane’ poetry.

Poetry in other languages was also produced in this period in the Byzantine empire. The most striking parallel with our poetry may be offered by the Armenian poet Grigor Pahlawuni, known to the Byzantines as Gregorios Magistros. He arrived in Constantinople around 1044, was promoted by Konstantinos Monomachos to the title of ‘μίστωρ’, but got embroiled in the difficult political tactics between the emperor and the Armenian leaders. He wrote works in Armenian that cover the same subjects as Greek poetry of the time: a paraphrasis of the Ancient Testament, some occasional poems and poems on religious subjects. He also wrote a treatise on grammar, a translation of Plato, and numerous letters.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>137</sup>Symeon the New Theologian, *Symeon Neos Theologos. Hymnen*.

<sup>138</sup>S. G. Mercati, “Versi di Niceforo Uranos in morte di Simeone Metafraste”, in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. I, Bari 1970, pp. 565–573.

<sup>139</sup>See now E. van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre. Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques*, Leiden 2008.

<sup>140</sup>M. Lauxtermann, “John Geometres - Poet and Soldier”, *Byzantion* 68 (1998), pp. 356–380.

<sup>141</sup>For these poets, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 305–324.

<sup>142</sup>V. Langlois, “Mémoire sur la vie et les écrits du prince Grégoire Magistros, duc de la Mésopotamie, auteur arménien du XIe siècle”, *Journal Asiatique* 13 (1869).





Part I

Presenting poetry



## Chapter 2

# Readings

On one of the first pages of the *Vat. Gr.* 676, the book that contains Mauropous' collected works, appears a poem that addresses the book itself:

Τίς ἄν σε προσβλέψειε, φιλότατη βιβλίε;  
Τίς ἐντύχοι σοι; τίς δ' ἄν εἰς χεῖρας λάβοι;  
Οὕτως ἔχει φόβος με τῆς ἀχρησίας,  
Κἄν τι προσεῖη χρήσιμον τοῖς σοῖς λόγοις.<sup>1</sup>

My dear book, who will look at you?  
Who will meet you? Who will take you in his hands?  
In this manner grips me the fear that you may not be used,  
Even if something useful may be present in your words.

Mauropous expresses the ultimate fear of any author: that his works will remain unread. This amounts to the same as the non-existence of his works: all that may be present (v. 4: *προσεῖη*) in the text itself, however useful, will be written for naught if it is not read. We can also infer that Mauropous expected that his works would be read and re-read in the future; they were not destined to serve a one-time occasion, only to enter oblivion afterwards. However, one of the more conspicuous features of many poems of this period is that they seem to be destined for a unique occasion. The tension between the apparent ephemeral nature of this poetry, and the desire, here expressly voiced, to preserve it for the future, will recur as a constant theme throughout this chapter.

The poem assumes that every time the texts will be read, they can again be of use. The idea that a literary work comes to life in the act of reading is essential for reader-response criticism. In Iser's account of the process of reading, the things *in* the text do only acquire signification as a result of an interpretative operation from the part of the reader.<sup>2</sup> The text does not

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<sup>1</sup>Ioannes Mauropous, *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitanæ quæ in Codice Vaticano Graeco 676 supersunt*, ed. by P. de Lagarde, Göttingen 1882 (henceforth cited as Mauropous), poem II (p. vi).

<sup>2</sup>W. Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens*, München 1994.

remain passive in this act of reading: every text governs in a way the readings that are effectuated upon it, by pushing the reader into a reader role. This reader role is implicit: even if the text proclaims explicitly which reader it addresses, this is often not the reader the author (even unconsciously) has in mind when writing the text. This gap between ‘explicit’ and ‘implied’ reader (for the former, also the terms ‘fictive’ or ‘inscribed’ are sometimes found<sup>3</sup>) will underlie the kind of problems posed in this chapter.

Also, I will take into account the idea of Stanley Fish that no reading is totally personal or idiosyncratic: every reader belongs to an ‘interpretive community’,<sup>4</sup> a set of assumptions about texts and how to read them that preconditions every separate negotiation that a reader initiates with a text. Every instance of reading is dependent on the cultural presuppositions about reading. Moreover, as Fish argues, every reading takes place in a specific situation that influences on beforehand the purposes of the reading and the status of the text, and thus steers the interpretive assumptions about a text; nobody can approach a text in an a-contextual way.

The impact of the vehicle of the text on its interpretations is brought to the fore by Roger Chartier: “When the ‘same’ text is apprehended through very different mechanisms of representation, it is no longer the same”.<sup>5</sup> Chartier therefore calls for an understanding of the historical forms of representation. The ‘technology of the word’, to use an expression by Walter Ong, governs the way in which readers organise, interpret, and respond to the text.<sup>6</sup>

It is now generally acknowledged that texts, by being transmitted in different manuscripts, can change meanings.<sup>7</sup> Also, the attention for reading practices has gained vigour thanks to the work of Cavallo.<sup>8</sup> Following this path of investigation, I will in this chapter pay attention to the various forms in which poetry presented itself to its readers, and the impact that these have on the production of meaning by the reader.

We may state from the beginning that firm and precise answers to these questions are quite impossible. ‘Reading poetry’ was not consciously experienced as such, let alone that it was commented upon as a cultural phenomenon by contemporaries. We can only observe some general features in the only tangible traces that remain, that is, the manuscripts, and reconsider the texts and the way they anticipate their own reading and that of other texts.

<sup>3</sup>See W. D. Wilson, “Readers in Texts”, *PMLA* 96.5 (1981), pp. 848–863.

<sup>4</sup>Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class?*

<sup>5</sup>R. Chartier, *Forms and Meanings. Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer*, Philadelphia 1995, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*, London/New York 1982, who puts into relief the very different cultural assumptions between orality and literacy.

<sup>7</sup>C. Holmes, “Written Culture in Byzantium and Beyond: Contents, Contexts and Interpretations”, in: *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. by C. Holmes and J. Waring, Leiden/Boston/Köln 2002, pp. 1–13.

<sup>8</sup>For the term ‘reading practices’, see especially G. Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance, Séminaires byzantins* 1, Paris 2006.

## 2.1 Reading poetry in the eleventh century: a general overview

### 2.1.1 Poetry in public spaces

It would not be a fanciful exaggeration to state that in eleventh-century Byzantium, people encountered poetry quite frequently. To begin with, they could observe it in its imposing epigraphical form when looking at the many religious and secular buildings of the capital. The impressive inscription carved around the entire church of St. Polyeuktos on the behest of Anicia Juliana in the sixth century, was still to be admired: a codex written at the end of the tenth century testifies to the excellent state of the epigram five centuries after the moment it was inscribed.<sup>9</sup> In the Hagia Sophia, more inscriptions from different dates could be read; probably the most recent was that of emperor Romanos III Argyropoulos, who had restored the apse, commemorating this expense with an inscription.<sup>10</sup> No doubt, many more buildings no longer extant now were adorned with epigrams. This epigraphical activity did not remain confined to Constantinople. In Athens, an official named Kalomalos left a dedicatory inscription on the church of the Saint Theodores.<sup>11</sup> In Bari, the local potentate Basileios Mesardonites had a wall of the church for St. Nicolas inscribed with a lengthy poem.<sup>12</sup> So, both in inner spaces and on the street, and both in the capital and in the province, poetry was visibly present.

Apart from that, objects of art also frequently sported epigrams, often patronised by emperors.<sup>13</sup> There surely were once many more: inscriptions on objects were particularly vulnerable to loss and destruction.<sup>14</sup>

Recent studies have paid attention to the ways the spatial context of inscriptions influences the readings of those inscriptions, both on buildings<sup>15</sup> and portable objects of art.<sup>16</sup> In the examples investigated by Papalexandrou, the presence of the inscription on church walls enhances the purpose of

<sup>9</sup>The *Vat. Pal.* 23; see C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, “Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople”, *DOP* 15 (1961), pp. 243–247, p. 246.

<sup>10</sup>S. G. Mercati, “Sulle iscrizioni di Santa Sofia”, in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. 2, Bari 1970, pp. 276–295, text: 293.

<sup>11</sup>V. Laurent, “Nicolas Kalomalos et l’église des saints Théodore à Athènes”, *Ελληνικά* 7.1 (1934), pp. 72–82.

<sup>12</sup>A. Guillou, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques médiévales d’Italie*, Rome 1996, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup>For historical persons present in inscriptions, see A. Paul, “Historische Persönlichkeiten in Epigrammen auf Objekten”, in: *Giving a Small Taste*, forthcoming.

<sup>14</sup>A.-M. Talbot, “Epigrams in Context: Metrical Inscriptions on Art and Architecture of the Palaiologan Era”, *DOP* 53 (1999), pp. 75–90, p. 90.

<sup>15</sup>A. Papalexandrou, “Text in Context: Eloquent Monuments and the Byzantine Beholder”, *Word and Image* 17.3 (2001), pp. 259–283; C. L. Connor, “The Epigram in the Church of Hagios Polyeuktos in Constantinople and Its Byzantine Response”, *Byzantion* 69 (1999), pp. 479–527.

<sup>16</sup>B. V. Pentcheva, “Räumliche und akustische Präsenz in byzantinischen Epigrammen: Der Fall der Limburger Staurothek”, in: *Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung byzantinischer Epigramme. Akten des internationalen Workshop (Wien, 1.-2. Dezember 2006)*, ed. by W. Hördner and A. Rhoby, Wien 2008, pp. 75–84.

the epigrams to ‘make buildings speak’; in Pentcheva’s example, the rectangular form of the writing space reenacts a ceremonial procession. Readers were sometimes forced to engage physically with objects by turning them around or walking around them, in order to read the epigrams.<sup>17</sup> All these studies stress that reading aloud is the only way in which the message of the epigram truly comes to live.<sup>18</sup> Reading those inscriptions was thus very much a performative action engaging actively with the materiality of the inscribed object. Visual and acoustic aspects not only enriched the readings, but in fact also contribute to the signification of the text: physical space and text mutually interact with each other.

### 2.1.2 Poetry in manuscripts

These ‘direct’ readings were steered by an inevitable context: viewers of an inscription could not disconnect the message and signification of the text from the space on which it was visible. This can be contrasted to the most obvious form in which we would imagine reading a poem, namely, in books. In books, the immediate context gives way to a textual context, and, even if the immediate context is reenacted, it no longer imposes itself. The reading context of a book, to our mind, rather encourages a dissociated kind of interpretative strategy, apprehending texts as independent creators of new, imaginative, contexts.<sup>19</sup> I will argue that the initial context of use does not always degrade into a lifeless residue in manuscripts; but before we treat this question, it might be useful to clarify which place poetry materially occupied in the mass of book production in the eleventh century, and which fate eleventh-century poetry met in later manuscripts.

Many manuscripts contained at least some verses, if only some dedicatory verses. The database of manuscript epigrams reveals that about ten percent of all manuscripts contain one or more book epigrams added by the scribe to the main text.<sup>20</sup> Someone opening the manuscript could not miss them, especially because they often stand out from the rest of the manuscript thanks to a different letter type.<sup>21</sup> Here, immediate context and book context coincide: these epigrams are closely wound up with the production and the outlook of the book. They belong to the material object of the book as otherwise an inscription belongs to the object it is attached to.

But poetry that is copied into a manuscript as an independent text, is another matter. We will start with some quantitative facts.

A precious indication for the place of poetic manuscripts within the entirety of books, is the will of Eustathios Boilas, a wealthy land-owner from Asia Minor. Among the ca. 75 books mentioned in his will, written around

<sup>17</sup>Talbot, “Epigrams in Context”.

<sup>18</sup>See also Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, pp. 54–55.

<sup>19</sup>See the insightful remarks in Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*.

<sup>20</sup>This calculation is made on the basis of the database of book epigrams compiled by Klaas Bentein, see introduction.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. *infra* (page 33).

1052,<sup>22</sup> we find only two manuscripts with poetry: one with (*inter alia*) the poems of Gregorios of Nazianzos (l. 152: τοῦ Θεολόγου τὰ ἔπη), and one with Pisides (l. 161), apart from the greater quantity of hymnographical material that would be found in the several *heirmologia*, *sticheraria*, *triodia*, and *menaia*. Extrapolating this isolated example, we may come to the conclusion that manuscripts with an exclusively or predominantly poetic content occupied only a very small part of the overall manuscript circulation.

The corpus of extant manuscripts from the period, which is fairly large, may of course also offer indications about the diffusion and character of manuscripts with poetry. A comprehensive survey of all contemporary manuscripts with ancient poetry is beyond my scope here, but some of the most important ones may provide some indications.<sup>23</sup>

Homer is represented by numerous manuscripts: *London Mus. Burney* 86 (the ‘Townleianus’), *Marc. gr.* 453, *Laur. plut.* 32.3, *Escor. Gr.* 291 and 509, all contain the Iliad, mostly supplemented with scholia;<sup>24</sup> the *Laur. plut.* 32.24 has the Odyssey, and probably, this list is not complete. The scholia that are attached to the Homeric text in most of these manuscripts suggest a school context. They provide a running commentary with mainly grammatical, lexical, and mythological knowledge, in sum, the kind of information a teacher could use for his courses on the Iliad, which of course was a mandatory subject in Byzantine education.

Tragedy is present in a lesser degree: we have for instance the *Jerusalem Taphou* 36, a palimpsest from around 1000 with fragments of Euripides,<sup>25</sup> but not much more, as it seems. The *Marc. gr.* 474, an important Aristophanes codex, is now dated to the eleventh century.<sup>26</sup> Hellenistic poetry is to be found in the *Vat. Pal. gr.* 168 with Apollonios Rhodios and the *Marc. gr.* 476 with Aratos and Lycophron’s *Alexandra*.<sup>27</sup>

As can be expected, the poems of Gregorios of Nazianzos are transmitted in several manuscripts of the period (for instance *Laur. plut.* 7,10 and *Paris. gr.* 990).<sup>28</sup> Another poet widely copied is Theodoros Stoudites.<sup>29</sup> One of the most complete collections of his poems is the *Marc. Gr.* Z 141 (487) from the eleventh century, and also four other manuscripts used in Speck’s edition date to our century.

<sup>22</sup>See Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 13–63 (text: pp. 20–29). I cite from this edition by line number.

<sup>23</sup>This part of research benefited from the *Pinakes* database of manuscripts by the *Institut de recherche et d’histoire des textes* at the CNRS, Paris, see <http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr>

<sup>24</sup>See H. Erbse, *Scholia graeca in Homeri iliadem*, Berlin 1969, pp. xviii–xxxviii.

<sup>25</sup>A. Turyn, *The Byzantine Manuscript Tradition of the Tragedies of Euripides*, Urbana (IL) 1957, pp. 86–7.

<sup>26</sup>N. Wilson, *Aristophanea: Studies on the Text of Aristophanes*, Oxford 2007, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup>H. Hunger et al., *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur. Band I: Antikes und mittelalterliches Buch- und Schriftwesen. Überlieferungsgeschichte der antiken Literatur*, Zürich 1961, pp. 250–251.

<sup>28</sup>See now C. Simelidis, *Selected Poems of Gregory of Nazianzus*, Göttingen 2009, p. 101 for an overview of the manuscripts used for this edition.

<sup>29</sup>For an overview of manuscripts, see Theodoros Stoudites, *Jamben auf verschiedene Gegenstände*, ed. by P. Speck, Berlin 1968, pp. 7–24.

There are notable gaps too in the transmission of ancient poetry. Hesiod, Pindar and others are not in view;<sup>30</sup> neither do we have, as far as I can see, an extant 11th-century manuscript with Pisides, although he was surely widely read.<sup>31</sup>

Some manuscripts transmit some more recent poems, such as the *Leid. Voss. Gr.* Q 76 and *Grottaferrata Z α III*,<sup>32</sup> containing some paraenetical poems by Gregorios of Nazianzos and Ignatios the Deacon. These manuscripts are in fact school books used by a grammarian, as we will see later.<sup>33</sup>

A school context seems indeed the most evident milieu in which most of the aforementioned manuscripts, especially the manuscripts with Homer, found a use. It would seem that the average reader of poetic manuscripts in the eleventh century was in fact a grammarian, using the texts and their comments to instruct his pupils on grammar, versification, and the like. Poetry that is less suitable for school use is not represented. It is notable, for instance, that the compilation of the *Anthologia Palatina*, which took place in the tenth century, has left no traces in the eleventh century—interest in it seems to have disappeared completely. With other words, we could argue that copying ancient poetry out of scholarly, ‘philological’ motives, carried out so fervently in earlier and later centuries, gives in the eleventh century way to a book production centred on internal use at school.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.1.3 Arrangement of poetry in manuscripts: visual aspects

When poetry appears in a manuscript, it is always visibly distinctive from prose. The presentation of poetry in general implies white space and vertical structuring, and this is no less so in Byzantine manuscripts. Jean Irigoin has made some general observations about the presentation of (mostly ancient) poetry in Byzantine manuscripts: the frequent, but not general use of columns, the outlook of scholia, etc.<sup>35</sup> For our purpose, the *Vat. gr.* 676 may be of special interest, since it contains the contemporary poetry of Ioannes Mauropous. In the poetic part of this manuscript, verses are neatly arranged per page: there are always 24 verses on one page. Also, the scribe attempted to justify his lines, so that every verse stops more or less at the same point, giving the neat impression of a dense square. In figure 2.1 for instance, one

<sup>30</sup>Hunger et al., *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, pp. 280–281.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. *supra* the manuscript in Boilas’ testament, the essay by Psellos, and the many reminiscences in poetry of the period, see C. De Stefani, “A Few Thoughts on the Influence of Classical and Byzantine Poetry on the Profane Poems of John Mauropous”, in: *Giving a Small Taste*, forthcoming.

<sup>32</sup>A detailed description in: G. Uhlig, *Appendix artis Dionysii Thracis*, Leipzig 1881, pp. xix–xxx; see also K. A. de Meyier, *Codices vossiani graeci et miscellanei*, Leiden 1955, p. 192–196.

<sup>33</sup>See p. 173.

<sup>34</sup>Copying ancient poetry for school aims is mentioned in H. Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz. Die byzantinische Buchkultur*, München 1989, p. 74.

<sup>35</sup>J. Irigoin, “Livre et texte dans les manuscrits byzantins de poètes”, in: *Libro e testo*, Urbino 1984, pp. 85–102.



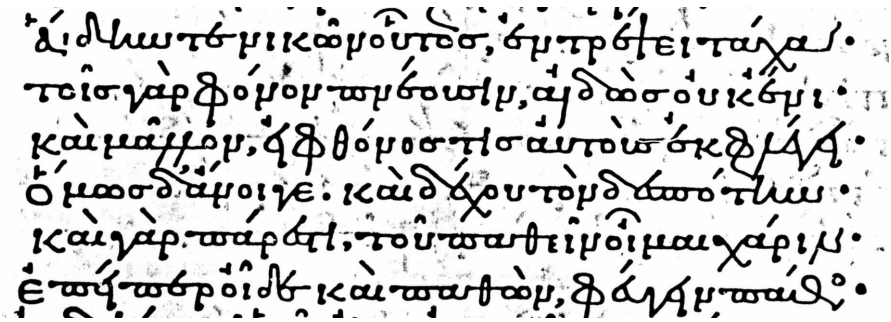


Figure 2.1: Vat. gr. 676, fol. 4v

can see that the scribe stretches in the first line the final alpha of *τάχα* and the final letter of the word *χάριμ* in the fourth line, in order to achieve the same length for every verse. At the end of other verses, abbreviations are used instead to squeeze the verses in the square.

There are also signposts on how to read the poems. In some poems that form fictional dialogues, the scribe put small dashes in the left margin to indicate a change of speakers. Larger content parts are sometimes highlighted with greater initials.

The end of the verse line is nearly always marked by a dot or double dot. As a rule, poetry is written verse after verse, in a vertical alignment, but there are some poems that are written continuously; in these cases, the separation of verses is mostly indicated otherwise. For instance, in the *Barb. Gr.* 520 (XIc.), fol. 2, the book epigram inc. Ἡ τέτρας ὤδε is written continuously, but the initial letters of each verse are emphatically larger, and there is a dot at the end of each verse (see fig. 2.2).

But there is more: in this instance, even the verse pauses are marked by dots. In the first verse for instance, we see a dot above the line at the verse pause after the fifth syllable (after ἡ τέτρας ὤδε).<sup>36</sup>

Another visual aspect that is especially used for book epigrams to make them stand out from the rest of the text, is the script. In many Byzantine manuscripts of this period, titles, indexes, and other additional material, are written in a majuscule type of letter, in contrast to the main text, which is written in minuscule.<sup>37</sup> Book epigrams appear in this same distinctive type of letter. The distinction between letter types thus serves to separate the main text from the paratext. Paratext can encompass any supplementary text intended to organise and present the main text; book epigrams often

<sup>36</sup>For the usual verse pause after the fifth syllable, see P. Maas, “Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber”, *BZ* 12 (1903), pp. 278–323.

<sup>37</sup>H. Hunger, “Minuskel und Auszeichnungsschriften im 10.-12. Jahrhundert”, in: *La paléographie grecque et byzantine*, ed. by J. Glénisson, J. Bompaigne, and J. Irigoin, Paris 1977, pp. 201–220; G. Cavallo, “Funzione e struttura della maiuscola greca tra i secoli VIII-XI”, in: *La paléographie grecque et byzantine*, ed. by J. Glénisson, J. Bompaigne, and J. Irigoin, Paris 1977, pp. 95–137, p. 109.

Μπετρασώδε· τω μαθητῶν του αριου· **Ε**κχει τρεῖς μα·  
 τῶν ἀρρῦτων λοῖο· τῶν κωδὲ φων· μη λατὸ ρῶφτον  
 του ποιμα· **Ψ**υχὴν ἡ παρδωρ· και ποσὸ τζωρτασ φρεασ·  
**Ε**ὐαγγελιστῶν τοσ φεστασ τοσ λοῖοσ· **π**ρὸ μαῖο δερετημασ·  
 δε ποσ λοῖοσ· **Κ**αι τῆ δε σικω· τε χυλωσ ηρμωσ μῆσ·  
**Α**ποσ αἰονων· και τρυφῶν λαθη μῆσ· **Ε**στῶσ γωσ· τῶσ  
**Ε**στῶσ κφωσ μῆσ· **Ι**σ ἀνιγφωμιαζε· τῆ δε βουλασ·  
**Ε**πουδασε μαποχοῖσ· οὐπρινεσ πονδασ μῆσ· **Κ**αι σουνδασ μα·  
 σω πομωσ πορ οφν μῆσ· **Κ**αι και χερμιασ τῶσ· **Ι**σ μοι πει  
 κῆλοσ· **π**ρὸσ μῆσ ενι ζει· τῶσ ορ φωντασ σέσ· **π**ρὸσ του θυ  
 δε ρημασ ψωσ τρφοῖσ· **Ε**ιστρετειν ἀπατασ· αἰρωσ μῆσ·  
**Ε**ν ταῖσ τῆσ ηελοσ· **ἡ** καποσ λῶσ· **Κ**ι νῶν τελοσ· σικησ  
 και τοσ λῶσ· **Ο**φεν πλῶσ σῶσ· **ο**ρ δε σ λῶσ· **Π**οσ  
 ἡσ ἀνιγφω· **κ**ερωσ σέσ· **Κ**αι μῆσ τῶσ· **τ**ῆσ τῶσ  
**σ**μαρ γωσ δε δωλε· **μ**ατῶσ λοῖοσ· **Π**λῶσ του ρητῶ  
**Χ**ριστι ανιωσ φει· **Ο**υ και λατοω τῶσ· **ε**ρδ εμπερ  
 ποσ φίλοσ· **Κ**ωσ μω φν μῆσ· **κ**αι ματασ φροντι  
**Ε**μῶσ ωσ περ· **τ**ῶσ πελωσ τῆσ· **κ**αι  
**Κ**αι πορ οσ χαρῶσ· **κ**αι μῆσ· **κ**αι εμπερ

Figure 2.2: Barb. Gr. 520, fol. 2, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

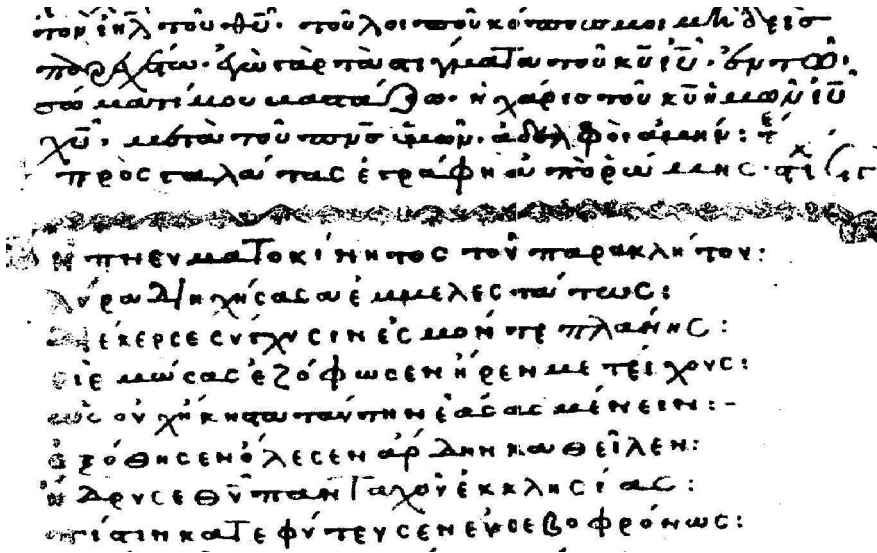


Figure 2.3: Vat. Gr. 363, fol. 89, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

also fall into this category.<sup>38</sup> This is often reinforced by the use of other ink: instead of just black ink, red ink or even gold is used for poetic paratexts; see for this the example from the Theodore Psalter in fig. 10.1 (p. 272), where the poetic colophon is written in majuscule and golden ink, whereas the prose colophon is written as normal text.

In isolated cases, the visual arrangement of poems is elaborated into a visual game, playing with acrostics, figure poems and the like.<sup>39</sup> In these cases, the visual arrangement of poems profits maximally from the poetic form of the text, and vice versa.

In the less spectacular example of fig. 2.3 (*Vat. Gr.* 363 (XIc.), fol. 89, inc. Ἡ πνευματοκίνητος), the difference between prose text (above the decorative line) and the poem becomes visible because dots are used after each verse, the initial is highlighted with red ink, and the letters are of a majuscule type (see for instance the difference between the delta in the second verse line, and the delta in ἀδελφοί in the second last prose line).

More particularly, the book epigrams are very often written in a majuscule that is of the epigraphic type, imitating in fact the letters used for 'real' stone inscriptions.<sup>40</sup> This way, the function of 'epigram' (literally, something written 'on' something else)<sup>41</sup> is also visually made clear for these book epigrams. The attempt to create an 'inscriptional' appearance is even more evident in

<sup>38</sup>For the notion paratext, see G. Genette, *Seuils*, Paris 1987.

<sup>39</sup>See the examples in: W. Hörandner, "Visuelle Poesie in Byzanz. Versuch einer Bestand-saufnahme", *JÖB* 40 (1990), pp. 1–42.

<sup>40</sup>Hunger, "Minuskel und Auszeichnungsschriften im 10.-12. Jahrhundert", p. 207.

<sup>41</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 29–30.

those epigrams that are written around a miniature: the lay-out of the letters perfectly imitates the inscribed border around icons. We can see this for example in the Barberini Psalter (*Barb. gr.* 372, latter half XI c.), where a book epigram (inc. οὗς ἡ τριφεγγής) is framed around a miniature depicting (probably) Konstantinos X Doukas, Eudokia and Michael VIII.<sup>42</sup> (see fig. 2.4) The letters form an imaginative border around the image, as if it were a tangible icon.

However, these epigrams are no mere decoration: they were there on the page to be read. This is sometimes indicated by ‘reading helps’ that steer the sense and direction of reading. In the case of the epigram in the Barberini psalter, we see that each verse is accompanied by a number ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$ ), added to the left of the verse. These numbers indicate the order in which the epigram should be read (see fig. 2.4; the beta is not visible). A similar numbering system is present in an epigram in the *Haun.* 1343 (XI c.), fol. 1r, which is also written in a four-sized frame around a dedicatory miniature.<sup>43</sup> It has to be noted that while the order in the Barberini psalter is top-left-right-bottom, the one in the *Hauniensis* is top-right-left-bottom. The latter order is the most frequent one in epigrams that follow a frame-like patron (in books as well as on objects), but there are many exceptions.<sup>44</sup> These numbered indications are surely not the rule: in the *Sinait. gr.* 364, fol. 3r, we have similarly an epigram of four verses around a miniature, but here there are no indications about the order in which we should read the verses.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.2 Byzantine readings of eleventh-century poetry

Another viewpoint from which we can investigate the reading assumptions towards the poems of the period under view here, is to trace the transmission history of these poems in subsequent manuscripts. The purpose and the general outlook of the manuscripts in which they appear, can give us valuable information about the approach towards these poems by the Byzantine reader.

Only a few manuscripts from the eleventh century itself contain contemporary poetry (apart from book epigrams, of course). The most important, the *Vat. gr.* 676, is obviously one of a kind: it is a presentation copy of the works of Mauropous. We will treat it in detail in the next chapter. The poem quoted in the beginning of this chapter may serve as a sufficient indication

<sup>42</sup>I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, Leiden 1976, pp. 26–36; image: plate 7.

<sup>43</sup>A clear image on: <http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/105/dan/1+recto>. For the dating and a description, see B. Schartau, *Codices graeci Haunienses. Ein deskriptiver Katalog des griechischen Handschriftenbestandes der Königlichen Bibliothek Kopenhagen*, Copenhagen 1994, pp. 119–120.

<sup>44</sup>See E. Follieri, “L’ordine dei versi in alcuni epigrammi bizantini”, *Byzantion* 34 (1964), pp. 447–467, Follieri does not report numberings like in the two manuscripts mentioned here.

<sup>45</sup>Image in Spatharakis, *Portrait*, plate 66.



Figure 2.4: Barb. gr. 372, fol. 5, from Spatharakis, *Portrait*, plate 7.

that this collection was intended to be read as a personal poetry book by readers in the future.

Another manuscript, the *Bodl. Clarke* 15, is a psalter written in 1078. The psalter text is preceded by some verses directly taken from Psellos' poem 1, the poem on the titles of the psalms,<sup>46</sup> more specifically from the last part of the poem (vv. 262–291), explaining the meaning of the term *diapsalma*. The manuscript does not identify the author of these verses. Consequently, they are indicated as anonymous by the catalogues, and the manuscript was not picked up by Westerink for his edition of Psellos' poems.

The inclusion of verses at this point in the manuscript indicates that poetry could be used instantly as a source for information. Before reading the psalms, the reader could find Psellos' verses as an introduction to the book he has at hand. They contain concise information about a specific technical matter.

Moreover, it is clear that the poem entered instantly into wider circulation. This took place in spite of the fact that the poem presents itself as if only the imperial pupil would get to read it: the titles of most manuscript dedicate it to Monomachos (and other emperors) while addresses throughout the text are directed only to the emperor. But this manuscript proves that the text was instantly read beyond this limited reading context.

Another manuscript transmitting contemporary poetry is the Vat. gr. 753, with the poems of the anonymus of Sola.<sup>47</sup> The manuscript is a psalter, preceded by an exegetical *catena* on the psalms. Before that, there are some miscellaneous verses: the poems edited by Sola and the famous verses inscribed on the heads of the Theodoroi Graptoi. The manuscript has a very disparate outlook: it consists of several *cahiers* bound together. The poetic section, copied in another hand, may have existed initially as a separate booklet, consisting of some miscellaneous poems, and later added to the main manuscript with the psalter.<sup>48</sup> We may conclude that Anon. Sola's poems were first copied (or immediately written down) in a small separate booklet, which was accidentally (and fortunately) integrated in another manuscript.

### 2.2.1 Informative dossiers

For the subsequent fate of the poetry of our period, one important division must be made. The didactic poems of Psellos underwent a quite different text history than the other poems of the period. These poems are frequently included in manuscripts that one could term 'informative dossiers' or 'manuals'. The prime purpose of these manuscripts is to gather factual information

<sup>46</sup>Description of the manuscript in: Gaisford, *Catalogus sive notitia manuscriptorum qui a cel. E. D. Clarke comparati in bibliotheca bodleiana adservantur*, pp. 57–58; for the identification of these verses as Psellos 1, see Lauxtermann, "Mark the Monk".

<sup>47</sup>Dated to the eleventh century in Sola, "Giambografi sconosciuti dell'XI secolo", p. 17; similarly in Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 327; but to the twelfth century, and, with some reservations, to an Italian origin, by J. Leroy, "Les manuscrits grecs d'Italie", in: *Codicologica* 2. *Éléments pour une codicologie comparée*, 2, 1978, pp. 52–71, p. 58.

<sup>48</sup>See Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani Graeci vol. III. Codices 604-866*, p. 269.

about one given subject. They generally make no substantial difference between poetry and prose.

For instance, poem 8, the *synopsis legum*, is transmitted in several manuscripts with an exclusively juridical content. It likely served as a convenient glossary of juridical terms that facilitated the understanding of actual legislation. For instance, in the *Paris. suppl. gr.* 627 (XIV c.), it is included together with imperial jurisdiction (Basil's *procheiron legum* among other works), and in the *Vat. gr.* 845 (XII c.), it joins contemporary legislation by Roger II of Sicily. Poem 2, the exegesis on the Canticle of Canticles, was from an early stage inserted in the *catena* on the Canticle, mingled with the (prose) commentaries of early Church Fathers, and thus ended up in many manuscripts with an exegetical content.<sup>49</sup> The poems on dogma, councils, and the nomocanon (3, 4, and 5) are frequently included in manuscripts with a theological or ecclesiastical interest. For example, the *Vat. gr.* 1409 is a manuscript manifestly affected by the thirteenth-century polemics against the Latins;<sup>50</sup> it shows consequently a great interest in dogmatic works and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, containing Eustathios of Thessalonica's *De emendanda vita monarchica*, dogmatic works of Anastasios Sinaïta and Gregorios of Nyssa, among other similar writings. Between these works, evidently all in prose, one also finds Psellos' poems 1 (on the titles of the psalms), 3 (on the dogma), 4 (on councils), and 5 (on the nomocanon). It is clear that Psellos' poems were deemed fit to be included on the basis of their content alone: they provided a concise factual representation of the subject under view.

It should be made clear that our conception of 'didactic' may not wholly coincide with the one held by Byzantine compilers of manuscripts. A fine instance of this is the *Matritensis gr.* 4681.<sup>51</sup> This manuscript from the fourteenth century has a theological and astronomical interest. It begins with Mauropous' works on the three Hierarchs: oration 178, poems 14 to 17, and 49. These three works initially had totally different purposes: the oration was pronounced on the Feast Day of the Hierarchs, the epigrams served an iconographic cycle in a church, and poem 49 adopts a polemical theological position. These different functions are also reflected by their place in Mauropous' own collection, the *Vat. Gr.* 676, where they are adjacent to pieces with a similar context of use. But in the *Matritensis* they are grouped together solely on the basis of their subject, the Three Hierarchs. Moreover, they are ascribed to Psellos, which means that the special personal relationship with his patron saints that Mauropous expressed in his works is in fact annihilated. Next comes a medical work of Symeon Seth, and various other informative works of Psellos, under which his *De omnifaria doctrina*. Most of them are prose works, but among them, we also find poem 1 (on the titles

<sup>49</sup>More details in: S. Leanza, "L'esegesi poetica di Michele Psello sul Cantico di Cantici", in: ed. by U. Criscuolo and R. Maisano, *Italoellenika. Quaderni* 8, Napoli 1995, pp. 143–161, pp. 146–150.

<sup>50</sup>Description in: K.-H. Uthemann, "Der Codex Vaticanus Gr. 1409. Eine Beschreibung der Handschrift", *Byzantion* 53 (1983), pp. 639–653.

<sup>51</sup>G. De Andres, *Catálogo de los codices griegos de la biblioteca nacional*, Madrid 1987, pp. 232–4.

of the Psalms), 3 (on the orthodox dogma), and 4 (on the councils). The astronomical section that follows, is closed by Psellos 13 (on the movements of heaven and the soul).

In sum, this kind of manuscripts have a clear informative intention, sometimes motivated by a polemical background, and picked up various poems without any attention whatsoever for their poetic form or for their initial context of use.

Of course, each manuscript may have its historically conditioned motivations to take an interest in these poems, an interest that has nothing to do with the writing or reading strategies at the time of its conception. At any rate, also the contemporary example of the *Bodl. Clarke 15* makes clear that this recuperation of poems for utilitarian didactic goals is by no means a later habit, but started at the onset of circulation of the poems.

### 2.2.2 Anthologies

This group of factual dossiers and reference books has to be contrasted with another type of manuscripts, mostly transmitting the occasional poems. They are less in number, but generally contain more different poems.

A first manuscript to consider is the *Paris. suppl. gr. 690*, generally dated to the twelfth century.<sup>52</sup> As Lauxtermann warns, the manuscript is lacunary and the original order is disturbed.<sup>53</sup> But one feature is unmistakably different from the manuscripts mentioned earlier, and that is its heterogeneous content. The nine poems of Christophoros that occur here (35, 122, 125–127, 134–135, 137, which are all grouped together, plus 111, among some riddles), together with his calendars in classical metre, cover nearly the whole range of different genres Christophoros engaged in: sophistic enkomia, religious epigrams, *bebiomena*, invective, and riddles. The 23 Mauropodea include epitaphs, religious epigrams, polemics, and other genres. Psellos is present with occasional poems (17, 29) and a minor didactic one (10), but his longer didactic poems are absent.

This anthology combines too many different genres to attribute to it one distinctive feature or interest, but it can be said that it is an anthology in the true sense of the word. It is dominated by texts that themselves are selections or excerpts from other sources, often systematically organised. It has Geometres' *Metaphrasis of the Odes*, Kommerkiarios' metrical *Life of Maria of Egypt*, a metrical (and alphabetical!) rendering of the *Oneirokritikon*, many short gnomic poems (Pisides, Gregorios of Nazianzos and others), and various gnomologies. Moreover, it has an interest in parody and wit, testified by the presence of the *Batrachomyomachia* and some of Lucian's dialogues. Its inclusion of the short poem pseudo-Psellos 91, a poem on the art of versification, may even indicate an interest in poetry specifically.

<sup>52</sup>In contrast to the dating to the eleventh century in G. Rochefort, "Une anthologie grecque du XIe siècle: le *Parisinus suppl. gr. 690*", *Scriptorium* 4.1 (1950), pp. 3–17; see for the later dating and a partial description Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 329–333.

<sup>53</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 329–333.



In short, its intent is to offer the reader easily digestible fragments, be the content devotional, informative (of a more popularising kind), occasional, or sophistic. The poetry from our poets apparently responded to this goal.

Another manuscript that is distinguished by the quantity of eleventh-century poetry is the *Marc. gr.* 524.<sup>54</sup> This thirteenth-century manuscript, as Odorico and Messis have observed, is the product of a progressive bundling of different *cahiers*.<sup>55</sup> Several copyists have worked together, with one scribe responsible for the poetic part of the manuscript. Odorico and Messis suppose that the manuscript emerged in an educational milieu, which explains the range of different subjects that are covered; they also suggested that the book is influenced by a reflex in the late thirteenth century to revive the past glory of the Komnenes. It begins with an eleventh-century section of anonymous poems, under which also some Christophorea. The remainder of the manuscript, mostly filled with 12th-century epigrams, contains four separate sections with Christophorean poems (without ascription; some poems even occur twice).<sup>56</sup> In each one of these sections, the poems are arranged in the same order as in the Grottaferrata manuscript, so it is likely that the scribe of the *Marcianus* had an original collection of Christophoros before him. All kinds of genre are present in these Christophorean selections: religious epigrams, occasional poems, sophisticated *Spielereien*, riddles, invectives, etc. If Odorico and Messis are right with their suggestion that the manuscript is rooted in a school milieu—and I believe they are—, then the extreme diversity of subjects and genres can be explained from a didactic interest in the formal features of the poems, with only a secondary interest in their direct message. Christophoros is not mentioned as the author of his poems<sup>57</sup>, which suggests that the manuscript did not collect poems as a testimony to literary history.

The *Vat. gr.* 1276 is another manuscript in which eleventh-century poetry is prominently present. The manuscript was written in the Terra d'Otranto in the fourteenth century. Jacob and Acconcia Longo supported the view that it emerged in a milieu of Greek-speaking, anti-Latin clerics, keen to preserve the Byzantine religious and cultural identity.<sup>58</sup> It collects a wealth of disparate material, mostly of a grammatical or dogmatic (anti-Latin) kind. It also has an epigraphic interest, which may be testified by an inscription from Constantinople that is registered by an Italian traveller.<sup>59</sup> It includes poems from Prodromos, Stoudites and poets of the region (Nikolaos-Nektarios of Casole among others), and a selection from Christophoros' iambic calendar, which provided a mine of inspiration for the local poets. Psellos 22, the *psogos*

<sup>54</sup>The most detailed description so far is Lampros, "Ο Μαρξιανός κωδιξ 524"; for some general remarks, see also Hörandner, "Epigrams on Icons and Sacred Objects. The Collection of Cod. Marc. gr. 524 once again"; and Odorico and Messis, "Anthologie".

<sup>55</sup>Odorico and Messis, "Anthologie".

<sup>56</sup>Lampros, "Ο Μαρξιανός κωδιξ 524", pp. 141–2; 174–5; 181–183.

<sup>57</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 71.

<sup>58</sup>P. Acconcia Longo and A. Jacob, "Une anthologie salentine du XIVe siècle: le Vaticanus gr. 1276", *RSBN* 19 (1982), pp. 149–228, p. 165.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 171.

of the bibulous monk Iakobos, is to be found between grammatical material.<sup>60</sup> Psellos 24, the paraphrase of Kosmas Maioumas' canon, is followed by some verses in Italian written in the Greek alphabet. Thereafter, we find again some Psellian material: poems 19, 17, 16, and Or. pan. 8. All these pieces, prose and poetry, are of an occasional kind, and addressed to emperors. At another point, we find Christophoros 31, the mocking poem of the cheated husband Moschos, followed by some poems with erotic, even salacious, content.<sup>61</sup> The last part of the manuscript is more interested in anti-Latin polemics and this interest underlies the inclusion of pseudo-Psellian poem 57, and the genuine poem 4 (on the councils).

The fact that many of the eleventh-century poems turn up between grammatical material suggests an educational motivation for copying them here. Also, we may surmise that Christophoros' poems stood as a model, and quite literally so: the poetry of the Otranto poets that was inspired by his iambic calendar is written directly after its example.<sup>62</sup> In the case of Christophoros 31, we may imagine a kind of reading attentive to the potentially more racy features of Christophoros' poetry. Psellos 4 is included in an altogether very different part, written by a different hand, and served here polemical aims. The heterogeneity of the manuscript is probably due to the manuscript's history as a progressive collective enterprise, which makes it difficult to consider it as a unified whole.

The *Hauniensis* 1899 (XIII c.) is also an important manuscript to consider.<sup>63</sup> It is a small manuscript, counting only one quaternion. The manuscript consists of a poetic part (fol. 1–3v) and some unedited diatribes on miscellaneous theological questions. Since Schartau's catalogue did not identify most poems, and Westerink's description is rather sloppy, it might be useful to give a new overview by 'collating' both descriptions:

1. A poetic correspondence between Geometres and Stylianos, not found in any edition of Geometres;<sup>64</sup>
2. Pseudo-Psellos 86<sup>65</sup> (about an injustice done to him); three other manuscripts ascribe this to Psellos, while this manuscript does not have a title;
3. Christophoros 16 (the epitaph for Melias), here ascribed to Nikolaos of Kerkyra;
4. Christophoros 36<sup>66</sup> (the attack on a couple of anonymous opponents); same ascription;

<sup>60</sup>Acconcia Longo and Jacob, "Anthologie salentine", p. 163.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 215–6.

<sup>62</sup>About the indebtedness of many Otranto poems in this manuscript to Christophoros, see *ibid.*, p. 176–177, arguing for the authorship of Nikolaos-Nektarios of Casole.

<sup>63</sup>Schartau, *Codices graeci Haunienses*, pp. 157–159 (where it is dated to XII–XIIIc.); for a description of the poetry part, see Westerink, *Poemata*, pp. viii–ix.

<sup>64</sup>See also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 303.

<sup>65</sup>And not 90, as reported in Westerink, *Poemata*, p. viii.

<sup>66</sup>And not 13, as in *ibid.*, p. viii.

5. An unedited poem, inc. ὡς ἔστι τερπνὸν καὶ καλὸν καὶ συμφέρον;
6. Christophoros 15 (the laudatory poem for Melias), again ascribed to Nikolaos;
7. Mauropous 30 (the *programma* for a law code)<sup>67</sup>, anonymously;
8. Five unedited and anonymous poems on religious subjects;
9. Psellos 33 on a religious subject (the suckling Virgin); the manuscript, the sole testimony of the poem, ascribes it to Psellos;
10. Some poems added by Westerink to the pseudo-Psellian poems (Pseudo-Psellos 83, 84 and 85), but in fact here ascribed to Nikolaos of Kerkyra.<sup>68</sup> The poems deal with religious subjects.
11. Psellos 20 and 31 (sole testimony), of which the former is an epitaph for Isaac Komnenos, and the latter an epigram on Saint George;
12. Christophoros 14, a distich on the Virgin, correctly ascribed;
13. Christophoros 11, the jest on the schoolmaster Midas, without any ascription.

The ascriptions are not at all to be trusted. Westerink admits this,<sup>69</sup> but still considers the poems here ascribed to Psellos as genuine poems (20, 31, 33). Be that as it may, ‘Psellos’ 20, the epitaph for Isaak Komnenos, is likely to be an eleventh-century product, and also Psellos 31, the epigram for saint George, the patron saint of Monomachos, may have been composed in the same period.

It is not a far-fetched hypothesis to state that this anthology is based on an earlier anthology of exclusively eleventh-century poems. There is no obstacle for assuming that the whole section after Geometres comes from the period from 1025 to 1081. The epitaph for Isaak, even if not by Psellos, is from this period, two prominent eleventh-century poets are present (and none of the more famous twelfth-century poets) and the other one (Psellos) is not far off, for he is mentioned as the author of several poems. Unlike other manuscripts with Christophorea, the original order of his collection has not been preserved. This suggests that the manuscript did not delve from a copy of this collection, but rather from an anthology with several different authors.

<sup>67</sup>I could find not a trace of this long text in Schartau’s catalogue, but see also Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, p. xiii.

<sup>68</sup>Apart from an incidental lapsus (on p. ix above poems 82-83 et 84 should be substituted for 83-84 and 85), Westerink apparently interpreted the lemma τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἤγουν τοῦ Κερκύραος above pseudo-Psellos 85 as ‘either by him (= Psellos, as he is last named) or by Kerkyraios’. However, ἤγουν rather means, as usual, ‘that is to say’, so the manuscript in fact (erroneously) assumes that Kerkyraios is the last named, but gives the additional specification to be sure. This is corroborated by the fact that the next poem is entitled τοῦ Ψελλοῦ instead of just τοῦ αὐτοῦ.

<sup>69</sup>Westerink, *Poemata*, p. 297: “testis haud tam fidus”.

The different character of all these anthologies in comparison with the first type of manuscripts we presented, is abundantly clear. The anthologies preserve the extreme generic diversity already present in the original collections. This diversity of subjects and genres stands in sharp contrast to the specialist nature of many informative manuscripts. It calls for an aestheticising reading in which the reader dissociates himself from the direct purpose of the message. For instance, the fact that religious epigrams are often selected together with invectives and decidedly profane poetry, indicates that the reading of these religious epigrams is rather motivated by an interest in formal features than a response to its devotional message. The possible educational purpose of the anthologies may be an important factor in this respect.

The outlook of these manuscripts suggests that poems are not directly collected into books, but probably first into small bundles, *cahiers*. One of these bundles, the present Hauniensis, may have remained in that state. Others were later bundled into larger books. As a result, these books display a very heterogeneous content. The *Vaticanus* 1276 and the *Marc. gr.* 524 are eminent examples.

Moreover, these anthologies show more awareness of the particularity of poetic texts. Poems are mostly grouped together and separated from the prose texts, if these are present. This stands in contrast to the informative dossiers, which throw poetry together with prose without any differentiation.

Can we state that this division between two groups of manuscripts bespeaks the division between ‘utilitarian’ and ‘delightful’ (*dilettevole*) readings of texts observed by Maltese?<sup>70</sup> Perhaps, but this binary division runs the risk of ignoring the manifest educational and didactic purposes of many manuscripts. These manuscripts do not elicit neither entirely utilitarian, nor delightful readings, but act as exemplary models or teacher manuals. A more helpful division may perhaps be made between a ‘formalistic’ reading and a reading attentive to the content of the text. But, as we will see, both aspects can perfectly be combined in one reading.

## 2.3 Sophisticated readings

We should keep in mind that manuscripts represent an advanced stage in the reading history of poems. They are necessarily the products of their own times and own interests, while our attention must evidently also go to the way poems were received and read in the milieu in which they were produced. If we assume that ways of reading change according to the nature of the interpretive community in which the reading take place, then we have to take into account the possibility that a reading in this immediate milieu is different from later readings, and also that different ways of reading were possible at the same time.

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<sup>70</sup>E. Maltese, “Tra lettori e letture: l’utile e il dilettevole”, *Humanitas* 58 (2003), pp. 140–164.

For the readings of poems in the more immediate milieu of the author and the first readers of the texts, we need to turn to the text themselves, and see how they are prepared to respond to strategies of implied readers.

### 2.3.1 The reading of a funeral poem

Christophoros' collection contains a cycle of funeral poems (75–77) for his sister Anastaso. The poem coming immediately after this group (78) bears the following title: 'For the teacher Petros, who had asked for the funeral iambs on his sister, but who kept them (*sc.* the iambs) a long time, and had not yet returned them'. The words 'funeral iambs' refer to poem 77, in which Christophoros mourns the death of his sister Anastaso. In poem 78, Christophoros asks in jest if Petros perhaps had found some lotus in his verses, and asks his verses back after Petros would have read them several times.

We can infer that Christophoros' verses for his sister had become known of within a circle of friends. Whether they had heard them at the funeral or a memorial service, is impossible to ascertain. In any case, Petros knew they existed and had asked for them. Christophoros granted his request, and lent them out. This suggests that he did not sell copies of his poems. There was apparently no system of publishing, but rather an informal habit of lending. It also appears that he did not take himself the initiative to have his verses circulated, since Petros had asked for them, but this might be a self-aggrandising misrepresentation from Christophoros' part.

In poem 79, of which the text has suffered badly, the story of the reading is continued:

*Ἐτεροι εἰς τὸν αὐτόν, πέμψαντα τοὺς στίχους καὶ ...*

Ἐκεῖνο τοῦ σοῦ Χριστοφόρου πυνθάνη,  
 εἰ ταῦτα πενθῶν, ποῖα γοῦν χαίρων γράφω  
     ... γνώσεως καὶ τῶν λόγων  
 τί κομψὸν εἶχε τὰ γραφέντα καὶ μέγα;  
     ... οὐδενὸς γέμον,  
 ποίαν δὲ καινὴν καὶ ξενίζουσαν φράσιν  
     ... ποικίλην  
 πενθοῦντος αὐτοῦ τοῦ γράφοντος, ὡς ἔφης,  
 ...  
 ὡς ἡ λέγουσα μαρτυρεῖ παροιμία,  
 ...  
 ὅμως ἂν εὖρες ἄξιόν τι καὶ λόγου,  
 ...  
 δόξαν χορηγῶ τῶν καλῶν θεῶ δίδου.

5

10

It appears from this poem that Petros had read the verses and had returned them. He also had given some comment on the verses, which prompted Christophoros to react with this poem. The damaged text of poem 79 makes

it difficult to ascertain the exact details of Petros' comment. It appears that the second and eighth line repeat a question of Petros in the manner of: "how could you write this while mourning?" Lauxtermann interpreted Petros' comment as a criticism of Christophoros abusing this mournful occasion to display his virtuosity and knowledge.<sup>71</sup> The words *κομψότης* (v. 4) and *ποικίλη* (7) are then obviously taken in a negative sense.

However, Demoen,<sup>72</sup> further elaborating on Crimi's interpretation,<sup>73</sup> holds that Petros had praised Christophoros' vivid rhetorical handling of the subject. Demoen suggests that the first verses express an *a fortiori*-reasoning: in the eyes of Petros, Christophoros would write still better if the occasion were not such a painful one: what would the result be if he were writing verse in a good mood?

Verse four is a refusal typical for false modesty: 'What elegance or greatness had these writings anyway?', repeating some of the features used by Petros to praise Christophoros' poem. At lines 6 and 7 we observe some other rhetorical qualifications that Petros had found in Christophoros' poem: 'a novel and surprising style', and the adjective 'variegated' (*ποικίλην*). As Demoen has pointed out, these qualifications can also acquire a positive connotation.

The poem closes with what sounds to me a typically humble answer in response to laudatory comments: 'If you really found something worth to speak of, than give the honour to God, the bestower of all good things.' (vv. 12–14) In the previous verses, Christophoros tries to ward off the praise, but argues, in a fashion typical for false modesty, that if there was something good at it, praise must go to someone else. Moreover, the fact that Christophoros in the first verse calls himself 'your Christophoros', indicates that this Petros was not an opponent of Christophoros, but rather an intimate friend.

In any event, Petros' reading of the poem as it appears from poem 79, concentrated on its stylistic and rhetorical features. He paid attention to the knowledge and the style it displayed. We may recall here that Petros is a teacher, as the title of poem 78 indicates (*γραμματικός*). We can expect from grammarians that they had above all an interest in the formal features of a text. So, Petros had read the poem like he would read any other (written) text under review by a schoolmaster. In an atmosphere of friendly discussion, this teacher is here reading the text of another intellectual and assessing it on the terms that are customary in their milieu.

This 'schoolish' reading is surely another kind of reading than the reading inscribed within the text of poem 77, and the reader in this reading situation is not the audience that the poem purported to meet. The intratextual rhetorical situation evoked by the text of poem 77, is that of an oral delivery at the funeral.<sup>74</sup> For instance, at a certain point, allegedly in search for words, the

<sup>71</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 46.

<sup>72</sup>K. Demoen, "Phrasis poikilê. Imitatio and Variatio in the Poetry Book of Christophoros Mitylenaios", in: *Imitatio, variatio, aemulatio*, Wien forthcoming.

<sup>73</sup>C. Crimi, *Cristoforo di Mitilene. Canzoniere*, With the collaboration of R. Anastasi, R. Gentile, A. Milazzo, G. Musumeci, and M. Solarino, Catania 1983, p. 123.

<sup>74</sup>See *infra*, in the section 'Performance', for the oral context of the whole cycle of poems

poet cries out in person to his sister: ‘Which words will I find for you?’.<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere, he consciously shows himself as the loving brother about to bury his sister (vv. 62–65); but turning this duty into what seems like the offering of last sacramental honours (vv. 66–79), he is now finally paying with his words sincere homage (v. 98–102). This indicates that the speaker positions his words at a definite moment and place.

Is this reality or imitation of reality? Impossible to say, but it may be significant that in Petros’ reading as reported by Christophoros, Petros considered the concrete initial circumstances of this poem as ‘real’: he took it for granted that Christophoros was mourning, that his sister really died, etc. All the same, this impression of reality does not preclude a reading that focuses on the text as a display of learning and rhetorical skills. Hence, the written poem, even at this early stage, is not longer merely the script of an oral speech: it becomes a text that can be compared to other written texts. It is an intellectual, if not to say literary achievement. This shows that the initial context of a given poem is not the only context in which these texts could have a meaningful function in the eyes of both author and his milieu.

Moreover, Christophoros was probably aware of this interest when he composed poem 77 itself. From line 88, he seems to declare (the text is damaged at this point) that everyone will have something to say in praise of Anastaso (see esp. v. 90 : ᾄδουσιν ἀγγέλλοντες ἄλλος ἄλλό τι). He stresses that all these praises must be genuine (v. 100 ), and then we find at v. 102: ‘lest we should appear, if we will want to write . . .’<sup>76</sup> I do not know exactly what to make of these verses, but the verb γράφειν, apparently in reference to this very poem, indicates that Christophoros presented his text here as a written text, in spite of the oral setting evoked elsewhere in the poem. This may reflect a stadium of writing before the enunciation, but it may also indicate that this text was surely intended to live beyond its primary short-lived context, as a written text, and that this would be understood even by the first audience inscribed in the text (the people at the funeral), whether this inscribed audience has ever existed or not. As a result, even if we cannot rule out completely an original oral setting, the poem itself may already anticipate a sophisticated and dissociated reading such as the one performed by Petros.

### 2.3.2 A reading of an epigram

Poem 32 of Mauropous is a rather conventional religious epigram, counting only three verses. It is designed to be inscribed on a golden depiction of the Crucifixion of Christ, a valuable reliquary perhaps, or a miniature making use of gold dye.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> to <sup>77</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Christophoros Mitylenaios, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*, ed. by E. Kurtz, Leipzig 1903 (henceforth cited as Christophoros), 77.49: ἐγὼ δὲ πρὸς σὲ ποῖον εὐρήσω λόγον;

<sup>76</sup> Christophoros, 77.102: μή πως φανῶμεν, εἰ θελήσομεν γράφειν.

<sup>77</sup> D. Bianconi, “Et le livre s’est fait poésie”, in: «*Doux remède...*» *Poésie et poésie à Byzance*, ed. by P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 9, Paris

*Εἰς σταύρωσιν χρυσοῦν*

Κἀνταῦθα Χριστός ἐστιν ὑπνῶν ἐν ξύλῳ.  
 φέρει δὲ χρυσὸς τοῦ πάθους τὴν εἰκόνα,  
 ἀνθ' οὗ πραθεῖς, ἔσωσε τοὺς κατ' εἰκόνα.

*On a golden crucifixion*

Also here, this is Christ, sleeping on wood.  
 But the gold represents the image of his Passion;  
 By being sold for this gold, he saved those in the image of God.

This epigram justifies the use of gold for a specific depiction of Christ's Crucifixion: it was the price for which Christ himself was betrayed, and thus the price he paid for the salvation of mankind. Consequently, the gold of the cross has only symbolic significance: Christ still died on a wooden cross. It is a conventional epigram in that it exploits an antithetical relation between the material representation of the religious object and the immaterial meaning of the religious subject.

The reader this epigram addresses in its primary communication context, is the beholder of the image who seeks for a clarification for the fact that this portrayal is carried out with gold. This context is situated in an inscriptional space by the word ἐνταῦθα (v. 1): the referent 'here' unmistakably brings to life the physical reality already indicated by the lemma.

The next epigram (poem 33) has the title: 'Against the man who criticised the verse ἀνθ' οὗ πραθεῖς, because the preposition is not rightly construed'. Apparently, a reader had found fault with a grammatical issue in poem 32. He remarked that the verb 'sell' (πέρνημι) should govern a plain genitive case, instead of being followed by the preposition ἀντί, like Mauropous had written (see v. 3). In poem 33 itself, Mauropous addresses this opponent and defends his choice to represent the betrayal of Christ as a sale by using the preposition ἀντί.

The precise content and motivations of the debate are a question for the chapter 'Competitions'. What is now more important for our purpose, is the status of the various evoked or provoked readings of poem 32. The debate in poem 33 makes clear that someone had read it with the intention to scrutinise its formal features. He did not respond at all to the message that the poem on a first level conveys, nor did Mauropous expect that he would do so: nowhere in poem 33 does Mauropous come back to the content of the poem; he only argues that ἀντί makes the message more clear. Significantly, the reader was again a teacher: this becomes evident from the verse 'So great is the hair splitting of schoolmasters!',<sup>78</sup> and also from the remark that this teacher applied the schedos as an educational exercise (v. 33).

2008, pp. 15–35, p. 29, rightly observes that the title implies that the poem was not written on the cross itself, as this would have been indicated by the word σταυρός.

<sup>78</sup>Mauropous, 33.17: τῆς ἀκριβείας τῶν διδασκάλων ὄση!



Unfortunately, it does not become clear in what form our schoolmaster had read the verses. A first possibility is that he read them as an inscription in its original place, by visiting a church, viewing an object, or opening up a sumptuous book.<sup>79</sup> In that case, he must have known that the poem was of Mauropous' hand, otherwise he could not have addressed the critique to him; but inscriptions are nearly always anonymous. Therefore, it is a more likely possibility that he picked up the verses when they had already been written down in a paper format and were enjoying a first limited circulation among intellectual milieus.

So, just as Christophoros' mourning poem, this epigram finds a reading outside of the context it purports to have been written for. The audience is an audience the text does not target at first sight. It becomes an object of reading in a circle of peers of the author who employ a reading strategy that centres on grammar and rhetoric. This reading addresses the text as an intellectual achievement, not as a direct rhetorical message. They become, so to say, a 'sign of a sign':<sup>80</sup> the texts furthered the author's individual interests and his quest for intellectual recognition.<sup>81</sup> These texts, consequently, did have a significance beyond the ephemeral occasion for which they purport to have been written.

The literarisation, and, so to say, decontextualisation, may moreover not be a process that happened when collecting the poems. It started right away, perhaps even at the very first moment the audience heard the mourning poem or beheld the inscription.

These two examples of poets answering to readers' comments allow us to imagine a circle of readers commenting upon each other's writings and addressing poems in answer to each other. It is significant that both Christophoros and Mauropous took the effort to respond to this reader's comments with, once more, a poem. We may surmise that these circles basically consisted of peers of our poets, schoolmasters, who likely also engaged in poetry.<sup>82</sup> These are the readers with the desired cultural competences to engage in reading and be entitled to join in collective intellectual practices.<sup>83</sup> Within this tight social context, it is only logical that these readers tried hard to give evidence of their superior reading skills by providing specialised comments, whether negative or positive. This desire to spotlight own competences by giving critique and acting as a judge, will reappear in other chapters (see 'Display' and 'Competitions').

<sup>79</sup>This last possibility is put forward by Bianconi, "Et le livre s'est fait poésie", pp. 29-30.

<sup>80</sup>This felicitous expression is taken from I. Toth, "Rhetorical *Theatron* in Late Byzantium: The Example of Palaiologan Imperial Orations", in: *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. by M. Grünbart, Millennium-Studien 13, Berlin/New York 2007, pp. 429-448, esp. pp. 446-448, focusing on a similar process in late Byzantine panegyrics.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 447-448.

<sup>82</sup>See the observations on the multifarious nature of *λόγοι* in the chapter 'Poets'.

<sup>83</sup>For this more competent reader as opposed to the 'uncultivated reader', see Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, pp. 35-46.

## 2.4 Circumstances of reading

### 2.4.1 Scrolls

The question of the material circumstances of the initial circulation of poems inevitably presents itself at this point. I think both foregoing examples already prove that poems circulated initially in a separate form, and not yet collected in anthologies. When having a closer look at Christophoros' description of the exchange of poem 77 with Petros, we may note that Petros had only asked for these specific iambs, as is made clear by the title of 78. Also, Christophoros refers clearly to these verses as a separate entity, when describing them as 'my funeral iambs, Petros, that were written for my sister'.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, the poem must have been handed over separately. I would suggest that this can only have happened in the form of a scroll, that is, a separate leaf of parchment. This is a format of reading that we are not inclined to imagine because its traces are minimal, but it must have been the most widespread form in which poems initially circulated.

An important testimony in this regard is a passage from Psellos' poem 7 about rhetoric, addressed, according to the lemma, to Michael Doukas. In a sudden authorial remark in the midst of the various definitions of rhetorical terms, Psellos addresses the emperor (v. 287-290):

σὺ δ' ἔχε μοι τὴν σύνοψιν, εἴτ' ἐρώτα θαρρούντως,  
 κάγώ σοι τὴν διάλυσιν λέξω τοῦ ζητουμένου.  
 εἴτ' οὐ θαυμάζεις, δέσποτα, τοῦ γράφοντος τὴν τέχνην,  
 ἄν ἔχῃς εἰλητάριον βραχὺ τῆς ὅλης τέχνης;

Keep this summary, please, and do not be afraid to ask questions afterwards:

I will give you the solution of your problem.

And don't you marvel, my lord, at the skill of the author,

Now that you have a small booklet of the whole discipline?

In a translation of the poem, Jeffrey Walker considers the last sentence as an affirmative one, and takes θαυμάζω to mean 'wonder out of puzzlement', supposing that the 'small roll' refers to the work of Hermogenes.<sup>85</sup> However, the word group εἴτ' οὐ is likely to introduce a rhetorical question logically following upon the thread of thought; also, I am convinced that τοῦ γράφοντος refers to Psellos, and not to Hermogenes: the small roll is the short overview by Psellos that is rhetorically placed in antithesis with the 'whole discipline'.

The word εἰλητάριον must refer to a scroll, that is, a loose parchment folium that is not plied together, but rolled up.<sup>86</sup> Here, it is explicitly said to be 'small' (βραχὺ), containing one single work.

<sup>84</sup>Christophoros, 78.2-3: ἐμοῖς ἰάμβοις, Πέτρε, τοῖς ἐντυμβίοις // τοῖς εἰς ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἐμὴν γεγραμμένοις.

<sup>85</sup>J. Walker, "Michael Psellos on Rhetoric: A Translation and Commentary on Psellos' Synopsis of Hermogenes", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31.1 (2001), pp. 5-40, p. 21.

<sup>86</sup>See B. Atsalos, *La terminologie du livre-manuscrit à l'époque byzantine: termes désignant le livre-manuscrit et l'écriture*, *Ἑλληνικά Παραρτήματα* 21, Thessalonike 1971,

So, also in this case, the circulation of the poem was initiated by handing over a folium with the poem separately. This could support the view that the initial circulation happened in the form of small leaflets distributed among a small public, and was not the work of monks copying entire codices in a scriptorium.

The accidental depiction of poems, as material objects, in manuscript images adds further weight to this idea. The frontispiece of the manuscript *Princeton Theological Seminary Lib. cod. acc. 11.21.1900* (fol. I\*r) displays the donator of the manuscript, Ioannes, holding the title of *proedros*, standing in front of Christ. Ioannes presents a scroll on which the dedicatory epigram is written.<sup>87</sup> This epigram refers to the offered object as ‘ten books’: προσφέρω σοι τὰς δέκα βιβλους (v. 5). The depiction of the scroll functions as a substitution for the whole set of books, just like the poem acts as an testimony to the entire writing process. In any event, it is interesting that the poem is offered in the form of a scroll.

Probably, poems were sent in the same format of one scroll to enemies and rivals. The poet of the pseudo-Psellian poem 67 (a twelfth-century product) describes how his opponent had sent him a letter in a poetic form to which he now reacts with this poem.<sup>88</sup> Poem 68 likewise makes clear that the mocking poem was a letter (v. 1: γράμμα) being ‘sent’ (v. 7: πέπομφας) to him; also, he describes it as ‘the paper with your writings’ (v. 57: ὁ χάρτης τῆς γραφῆς σου).

Evidence in eleventh-century hostile poetry is not that clear, but the ubiquitous metaphor of ‘throwing an arrow’ or another weapon (more on that in the chapter ‘Competitions’), allows us to suppose that such poems were indeed sent as separate leaflets to the person that was under attack. This may have led frequently to a continuing exchange of poems.

Only at a later stage were these separate leaflets joined together. Psellos has left us some clues that can give an impression of this process. The most instructive is a fragment from the short treatise *Περὶ καινῶν δογμάτων καὶ ὄρων τῶν νομικῶν ῥωμαϊστὶ λεγομένων λέξεων*.<sup>89</sup> Near the end of this juridical work, Psellos tells the addressee that the greatest part of what he has written existed also in the form of drafts (σχέδια), and were still to be found on scrolls (εἰληταρίοις). Many people selected texts out from these loose leaflets (διφθέραι), made little volumes of them, and this way, they had books of Psellos’ writings (δελτάρια τὰς διφθέρας ποιοῦντες, εὐθύς ἔχουσι βιβλία τὰ γεγραμμένα).<sup>90</sup>

p. 169; however, I do not see the need for a further distinction between two kinds of εἰληταρία: in every instance the word can refer to small leaflets that are rolled up.

<sup>87</sup>Inc. Ἰδρώτων οὐκ ὀλίγων χριστὲ θεέ μου: G. Vikan, ed., *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections*, Princeton University Press, 1973, 114 (image), 115 (text). Text also in Spatharakis, *Portrait*, p. 75.

<sup>88</sup>Psellos, 67.151–2: γράμμα ποτὲ μοι πέπομφας ὄλον ἀλαζονείας // δεικνύνατε σοφώτατον καὶ καλὸν στιχοπλόκον.

<sup>89</sup>Edited in Michael Psellos, *De operatione daemonum*, ed. by J.-F. Boissonade, Norimbergae 1838, p. 116.

<sup>90</sup>For the fragment, see Atsalo, *Terminologie du livre-manuscrit*, pp. 168–169; and also W. Wolska-Conus, “L’école de droit et l’enseignement du droit à Byzance au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Xiphilin et Psellos”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 7 (1979), pp. 1–107, pp. 65–66.

A similar procedure is observable in letter-writing. Psellos implies in several letters to Ioannes Doukas that the *kaisar* made books of his letters.<sup>91</sup> Also generally, we can state that the format of a one-leaf parchment brings the circulation of poems closer to that of normal letters.

The circulation of poems in the Byzantine period is decisively more fugitive, informal and small-scaled than we habitually think of. Moreover, we can begin to see a pattern: poems first circulated on separate scrolls, then were collected into small copybooks or *cahiers*, which were sometimes collected into a larger book. This is corroborated by some manuscripts that are similarly composed of smaller entities that were progressively bundled together (cf. supra the section ‘Anthologies’).

### 2.4.2 Delivering a poem

Occasional poetry presupposes an occasion at which the poet orally delivered his works in front of the addressees. But to which degree does this representation match reality? Poem 55 of Mauropous can give us more clues about the context in which occasional poems functioned and were delivered to its addressees.<sup>92</sup> The poem is addressed to two empresses: Zoe, married to the emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos, and her sister Theodora. The poem as printed in the modern edition, begins with these two verses:

Δισσαῖς ἀνάσσαις αὐταδέλφαις Αὐγούσταις  
δώρημα κοινὸν ἐξ ἐνὸς δούλου τόδε.

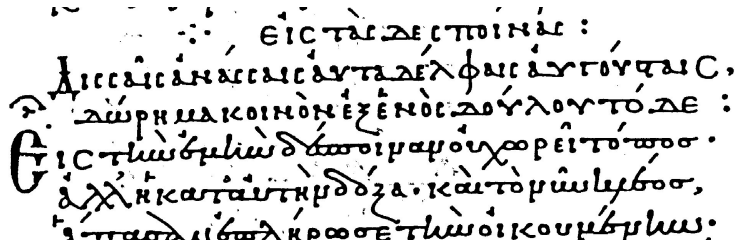
To the two sisters *Augustae* and mistresses,  
This shared gift from one servant.

In the manuscript, these lines clearly stand out from the rest of the poem (see fig 2.5). A greater initial at the beginning of verse 3 indicates that the poem proper starts only at this point. Also, these two verses are not written in minuscule letters like the main body of the text, but in a majuscule type. As we have seen above (p. 33), the use of this font sets off these two lines as an epigram, a poem subsidiary to the text next to which it is written.

Consequently, these two initial verses are in fact a separate poem—let us call it 55a—that presents the poem proper (55b) as a gift. Moreover, a separate use of 55a makes only sense if we suppose that it functioned as an inscription on a material object. We may imagine poem 55b in the form of a small scroll, with 55a as an elegant distich attached to it in some way or another.

<sup>91</sup>P. Gautier, “Quelques lettres de Psellos inédites ou déjà éditées”, *REB* 44 (1986), pp. 111–197, 4, p. 132, l. 7: σὺ μὲν τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολὰς βιβλία ποιεῖς; see also Michael Psellos, “Epistulae”, in: *Scripta Minora*, ed. by E. Kurtz and F. Drexl, vol. 2, Milano 1941 (henceforth cited as Psellos, *Ep. K-D*), letter 256 (cf. infra).

<sup>92</sup>About the delivery and reading context of this poem, see F. Bernard, “The Circulation of Poetry in 11th-century Byzantium”, in: *Papers from the First and Second Postgraduate Forums in Byzantine Studies: Sailing to Byzantium*, ed. by S. Neocleous, Newcastle upon Tyne 2009, pp. 145–160.

Figure 2.5: Vat. Gr. 676, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

Poem 55b itself addresses itself initially to the mistress of the poet. This mistress is to be identified with Theodora, because there is a change of addressees at line 10:

ἀλλ' ὄ μέγιστη κυρία τοῦ νῦν γένους 10  
 (πρὸς γὰρ σὲ τρέψω τὸν βραχὺν τοῦτον λόγον,  
 κὰν μὴ βλέπειν ἔχω σε, πῶς δέχη τάδε),  
 (...)

But oh you greatest mistress of the present people, 10  
 (for now I turn this short oration to you,  
 even if I cannot see how you will receive this)  
 (...)

We can be certain that at this point, Zoe is addressed, because her name is hinted at later on at line 21 (ζωή τε τοῦ σύμπαντος εὐτυχεστάτη).

It is noteworthy that Mauropous, in the fragment from verse 10, explicitly says that he will not see how Zoe will receive his poem. This may imply that Theodora, conversely, *was* present, at what must have been a delivery of the poem. If the delivery of the poem were only a fictional setting, there would be no point in mentioning that Zoe was absent. Following this scenario, we of course have to assume that Mauropous knew on beforehand that Zoe would not be present at the occasion.

This reveals an oral delivery of the poem, possibly by the poet himself, in front of the dedicatees of the poem (of whom one was absent in this case). Mauropous, a renowned court orator at this time, paid here a literary service for his patrons. He handed down the poem as a precious material object, not without a short elegant epigram clearly confirming the dedication. Simultaneously, the poem was delivered orally in the presence of both the poet and one of the recipients. Oral delivery and material delivery of a poetic gift happen simultaneously in this case.

### 2.4.3 Oral performance

This example brings us to a vexed question: to which degree was learned profane poetry devised to be pronounced (or sung)? I will turn again to

Christophoros' cycle for his sister (75–77).

The cycle as a whole clearly represents itself not as a speech at one moment of the funeral, but as an ongoing performance during the entire ceremony. The poems are situated each at a different stage of the funeral process: we follow Christophoros as he speaks at a gathering around the bier (75), the funeral procession (76), and finally the funeral itself (77). In poem 75, Christophoros specifies his sister died May the 30th (v. 30). He describes her as 'lying here',<sup>93</sup> suggesting he stands besides of her body while pronouncing these very words, at a ceremonial event known as the *prothesis*.<sup>94</sup> The last verses of 75 let us believe that on the very moment when this poem is pronounced, Anastaso is being carried away from home, beginning her funeral procession (v. 39–40):

στενάχω, αἰρομένου σκίμποδος ἤδη·  
ἐπὶ γὰρ τύμβον ἄγη, εὐχροε κόρη.

I sigh, now that your couch is already being lifted,  
For you are being carried to your grave, fair-skinned maiden.

The absolute genitive used to describe this event, connected with a present tense στενάχω, referring to his own words, creates the impression that the lifting of the bier happens while he is still pronouncing this very poem.

These verses prepare the next poem, which takes up at the very moment where the preceding one left off: 'There, you are being carried away, leaving your home!'<sup>95</sup> Poem 76 is presented as being pronounced during the funeral procession. The title refers to the name of the ceremony, the ἐκφορά; the preposition ἐπὶ in the lemma instead of the usual εἰς, throws into relief the contemporaneity of enunciation and ceremony. Finally, we have already pointed to the fact that poem 77 explicitly refers to itself as an oration pronounced at the funeral.

So, in these verses, a scene is evoked that portrays the poet pronouncing these very words while he is accompanying his sister to her grave.

The question may be raised whether these references are not self-evident for the audience present at the funeral. After all, they would see the very acts that are described. Perhaps, these references are the over-explicit attributes of a reenactment in imitation of a real-time event. There are other objections: there is no evidence for poetic orations at funerals; moreover, we can hardly imagine that the change of metres from poem 75 to 76 would have captured the intellectual senses of the audience at the spot. On the other hand, there are 12th-century parallels for poems that progressively accompany an ongoing ceremonial, in this case for a wedding.<sup>96</sup>

Psellos 17 is another funeral poem, written at the occasion of the death of the sebastè Maria Skleraina, mistress of Konstantinos IX Monomachos.

<sup>93</sup>Christophoros, 75.19: κυπάριτος καθάπερ ἐνθάδε κείσαι.

<sup>94</sup>See Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 118.

<sup>95</sup>Christophoros, 76.1: Ἴδού λιπούσα τὸν σὸν οἶκον ἐκφέρη.

<sup>96</sup>W. Hörandner, "Court Poetry: Questions of Motifs, Structure and Function", in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, Aldershot 2003, pp. 75–85, pp. 79–83, with reference to a poem of Niketas Choniates.

Agapitos recently argued that this poem was pronounced in public.<sup>97</sup> He points out the acoustic effect of metre and style. The many rhetoric figures create a musical effect that makes the poem particularly apt for oral delivery.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, the poem has a decidedly public character as a whole and engages directly with the audience of relatives who would be present at the funeral (or the commemorative service).

Agapitos' arguments are very convincing for this specific poem, but it remains the question whether we can transpose his conclusion to other poems of the period who are conceived as funeral orations (Christophoros 44, 57, 77 for family members; Mauropous 35 to 39 for friends). It should be noted in a side-note that some funeral poems of Mauropous (40, 41, 81) are grave epigrams, but no funeral orations. Their title is εἰς τὸν τάφον; moreover, poem 40 in particular employs conventional techniques of grave epigrams, as the address to the passer-by.

There are several problems in accepting that the funeral poems proper were devised for oral delivery. Christophoros 57 is written in elegiac distichs, a metre that was surely not apt for oral delivery. Mauropous' poems are no public pieces in the way Psellos 17 is, since they are written from the personal perspective of Mauropous (see 35.15: φώτιζε τὸν σόν, Μιχαήλ, Ἰωάννην, 37.45: ὁμώνυμός σοι τήνδε τῆν μονωδίᾳ). The same applies for Christophoros (mentioning his name in 57.8, for instance). This suggests a more intimate occasion and not a public service like is the case with Psellos 17. The poems, while not void of 'acoustic effects' (as any poem of this period), are not of the same musicality as Psellos' poem. The question for an oral delivery must for the moment stand out, I am afraid: we will have to accept that, in absence of firm evidence, we can never be hundred per cent positive about an oral delivery.<sup>99</sup>

Of liturgic poems, we can of course be quite sure that they were performed.<sup>100</sup> The question for the so-called 'parahymnographic' poems,<sup>101</sup> like Psellos 22 is more difficult. This poem, an invective against the monk Iakobos, is written in the form of a liturgical canon. Normally, the use of this metre is seen as a form of parody.<sup>102</sup>

But Mitsakis pointed out that the melodies of hymnography were part and parcel of the cultural expression of any Byzantine.<sup>103</sup> Many songs were

<sup>97</sup>P. Agapitos, "Public and Private Death in Psellos", *BZ* 101 (2008), pp. 555–607.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 563–568.

<sup>99</sup>See Hörandner, "Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte", p. 423; for the likeliness of oral delivery of much learned poetry, see also J. S. Codoñer, "Poesia clasicista bizantina en los siglos X-XII: entre tradición e innovación." In: *Poesia medieval. Historia literaria y transmisión de textos*, ed. by V. V. Martínez and C. P. González, 2005, pp. 19–66.

<sup>100</sup>Hörandner, "Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte", pp. 423–4.

<sup>101</sup>For the term, see K. Mitsakis, "Byzantine and Modern Greek Parahymnography", *Studies in Eastern Chant* 5 (1990), pp. 9–76, who discusses many similar examples.

<sup>102</sup>Westerink, *Poemata*, p. 270.

<sup>103</sup>Mitsakis, "Parahymnography", pp. 20–21; this idea is approved of by F. D' Aiuto, "L'innografia", in: *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo 3. Le culture circostanti Vol. 1: La cultura bizantina*, ed. by G. Cavallo, Roma 2004, pp. 257–300, pp. 293–4.

modelled after the *heirmoi* of hymnography. Only, they did not form part of the kind of poetry that would be written down in manuscripts. As Mitsakis has shown, songs based on hymnographic models were composed and sung long after the fall of Constantinople, without any trace of malignant parody. In the Byzantine cultural sphere, they may have continued as a non-literary stratum, next to so many other forms of oral poetry that enjoyed popularity without leaving many traces in the written, intellectual kind of literature.<sup>104</sup> Children would also be more susceptible to learn knowledge in the form of hymnography; this seems confirmed by the choice of Niketas of Herakleia to compose orthographical canones, which were perhaps easily to remember.

Consequently, the main reason that has induced Psellos to compose invectives in the form of canons may be pragmatical: these poems could be sung along; and they could be sung in group, for everyone knows the tunes. In the case of Psellos' canones, we could think of a group of friends, sharing an animosity towards the person attacked. Perhaps this potential to be performed is a better explanation for the use of the hymnographic *heirmos* than a supposed ironic perversion of the metre. After all, Psellos also wrote a poem in canon form for the memorial service of Symeon Metaphrastes (poem 23); any parodic aspect is absent here.

Another sphere where poems were likely to be orally performed, is court ceremonial. We know a great deal about court ceremony in the ninth century, thanks to the works about ceremony of Konstantinos VII, and we also have poetic ceremonial texts that are clearly designed to be sung, like the songs of the demes. The same applies for the twelfth century, where there is an abundance of poetic texts that have a clear link to imperial ceremony.<sup>105</sup> But for the eleventh century, we do not have court poetry proper,<sup>106</sup> nor do we have many indications on imperial ceremony. Is poem 24 of Christophoros, entitled 'On the procession (προέλευσιν) of Michael IV', a precursor to the twelfth-century poems for the imperial ceremony of *prokypsis*? The situation described in this short poem (six verses) seems similar: the emperor is said to come out of the palace and show himself to the whole city. The people experience an ineffable joy at this sight. All this is very similar to the ritual of *prokypsis*, but circumstantial evidence is too thin (or in fact, non-existent) to make firm conclusions about the communicative status of this poem.

All in all, the evidence pointing to the oral performance of learned poetry remains inconclusive.

<sup>104</sup>For the concept of the non-literary strata, see M. Jeffreys, "Byzantine Metrics: Non-literary Strata", *JÖB* 31.1 (1981), pp. 313–334.

<sup>105</sup>Hörandner, "Court Poetry", See; and M. Jeffreys, "'Rhetorical' texts", in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, Aldershot 2003, pp. 87–100, where also the question is asked whether we should take all immediate references to a performative context as reflections of reality or clever reenactments, see p. 90–91.

<sup>106</sup>Hörandner, "Court Poetry", p. 78.



## 2.5 Reading circles

Reading was not a solitary activity. The social circles in which readings took place, are a vital element to understand readership of poetry. The examples of the readings of Petros and Mauropous' opponent allow us to imagine the initial circulation of poems as a chain of lending and borrowing of separate scrolls among a limited circle of peers. Members of these 'inner circles' seem to have been personal acquaintances of the poet. In the case of Petros and Christophoros this is surely true, but also the critic of Mauropous would most probably have known him personally.

This has as a result that the poet could still hold a tight control over the initial circulation and reception of his poems. An eloquent example of this is provided by Christophoros 84. This poem is addressed to a certain Basileios Choirinos, bearing an unlucky surname meaning 'piggish'. We learn from the title that Basileios had often asked for Christophoros' writings. Christophoros denies him that right and in passing, he sneers at his wife's unfaithfulness. The poem abounds with word play at various levels: crucial is the double meaning of *κέρας*, both 'acorn' (a typical pig's food) and the proverbial 'horns' of a husband being cheated by his wife, while also *βάλανος* (acorn) possible carries a double-entendre.

*Εἰς τὸν Βασίλειον τὸν λεγόμενον Χοιρινόν, πολλάκις αἰτήσαντα ἐκ  
τῶν συγγραμμάτων αὐτοῦ*

Τί πολλά γρύζεις τοὺς ἔμοῦς ζητῶν λόγους  
καὶ 'σαῖς γραφαῖς θρέψον με' συχνῶς μοι λέγεις;  
ἄπελθε πόρρω· χοῖρος οὐ τρώγει μέλι·  
ἔχεις βάλανους δεῖπνον, εἰ βούλει, φίλον·  
ἂν οὔν μάλιστα καὶ κερατίων δέη,  
ἦ σύζυγος πλήσει σε καὶ κερατίων.

5

*For Basileios, surnamed 'Choirinos' (piggish), who had often asked  
for his writings*

Why do you growl so much, asking for my words,  
And why do you keep saying: "Feed me with your writings"?  
Go away from here: a pig does not eat honey.  
You have acorns, your favourite dinner, if you want.  
If you should need 'horns' too,  
Your wife will provide you with those 'horns'.

5

Observing this gibe, it becomes even more evident that poems initially circulated within limited circles. Just like in Petros' case, people asked for the writings of the poet. That this was a personally granted honour, is evident from this poem. Being entitled to borrow or, even better, to receive a work as a gift, implied membership to limited circles. The parallel with similar

ethics in letter-writing is easy to draw: friendship is expressed and maintained through the commitment to send and receive each other's works. In this poem however, we see that Christophoros denies to Basileios the entry into his inner circle. By calling his own poems 'honey', using an ancient *topos*, Christophoros shows that he is aware that his poems were sought after. They were clearly his own inalienable intellectual creation. They are 'his writings' (v. 2: *σαῖς γραφαῖς*), just like Petros had asked for 'his iambs'.<sup>107</sup> This personal appropriation is of course a feature that will be lost when the poem will appear anonymously in a later anthology.

Christophoros' denial makes clear that he can afford it to refuse people to read his poetry. At this stage, he controls the circulation of his poems, distributing them to friends as tokens of recognition. A peculiar economy is at work here: exactly by keeping the circulation of his poems limited and dependent on personal requests, Christophoros enhances the preciousness of his poems, both in social terms (it is a rare possession) and in aesthetic terms (it is an exclusive piece of work). This is even true for invective poems like this one: we may suppose that they circulated among friends. The intimate friends of Christophoros who got this poem to read, and who probably would have heard rumours about Basileios' wife, have here an occasion to jest at his expense. At the same time, they would again be made conscious of the value of the limitedness of their circle, as they are included to Christophoros' exquisite readership.

Receiving a poem can thus be seen as a form of privilege, exactly because the usual way to get hold of the poem was a personal request to the poet. Conversely, it was also an honour for the author if an influential friend was interested in his works and kept copies of his letters and other works. Michael Psellos points to this in an already mentioned letter to *caesar* Doukas, in which Psellos says of his friend that he 'attached great importance to my letters and stored my writings in his books'.<sup>108</sup> This is seen by Psellos as a token of friendship. Literature circulated along the lines of friendship connections. Christophoros' refusal to allow Basileios to read his poems, is at the same time a refusal to admit him to his inner circle of friends.

This results in the conclusion that the contemporary audience of Byzantine poems was small, and was even deliberately held small. This exclusivity is the social essence of intellectual *filia*,<sup>109</sup> which no doubt is the defining factor in the social cohesion of the reading circles we are having in view. But this intellectual friendship needs to be confirmed time and again, and this needs to be done along the special intellectualist ethics of this kind of friendship.

This emerges from the requests of Christophoros himself to read works from others, such as in the poems to Niketas 'the philosopher' to whom Christophoros begs to let him partake of his words (poems 27 and 100). In poem 27, the poet closes a high-flung encomium with such a request. Reading some

<sup>107</sup>Christophoros, 78.2: *ἐμοῖς ἰάμβοις*.

<sup>108</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 256, p. 303, l. 19–20: *τὰς ἐπιστολὰς περὶ πλείονος ἐπίθει σπουδῆς καὶ συγγράμματα ἐν βιβλίοις ἀπεθησαύριζε*.

<sup>109</sup>For intellectual friendship in the eleventh century, see Ahrweiler, "Hiérarchies et solidarités".

of Niketas' *logoi* will give him an ineffable pleasure: he will appear a new Sardanapalos, enjoying the luxurious pleasure of Niketas' words.<sup>110</sup> But this pleasure is also markedly a pleasure between friends: Christophoros asks his hero to 'genuinely pronounce words that may be few, but dear to me' (v. 44–45).<sup>111</sup> The addition 'genuinely' (γνησίως), referring to the honest feelings with which Niketas should give the words, indicates that the communication of these 'words' is not a mere aesthetic pleasure, but the confirmation of a social relationship. In poem 100, Christophoros urges Niketas to send him some more words, in a fashion typical for epistolography. He confesses to the ideals of intellectual friendship, stating that *logoi* are the food on which he survives.

The term 'reading circle' can be applied aptly to these gatherings governed by the ethics of friendship. Collective reading enhances the bonds between intellectual friends.<sup>112</sup> Of course, epistolography played also a great role in these literary gatherings, and we can ask ourselves if poetry was sent along with letters, or rather formed the subject of collective reading, next to letters, when intellectual friends found themselves together.

The concept of a reading circle frequently occurs in letters of the period. In a letter to such a friend, Psellos depicts a 'panhellenic theatre' in which the friends show their letters to each other, and read and write them in exchange: "So, let us meet each other, like in an panhellenic theatre, and showing in turn our letters, reading them in exchange, and vying for honour."<sup>113</sup> The term *theatron* and the last verb 'vying for honour' hint at a friendly competitive aspect. This will be further investigated in the chapter 'Competitions'. The transition between a reading circle and a competitive *theatron* is smooth: as we have seen in the readings of Christophoros 77 and Mauropous 32, attack and defence were integral to the mutual readings performed in such a reading circles.

In no poem is the sense of collective delight in reading poetry expressed more forcefully than in the first poem of the anonymous of Sola.<sup>114</sup> The poem describes a boat-trip of a few friends along the Bosphorus. In the tradition of *ekphraseis* of a *locus amoenus*, the poet describes how the company delights in the pleasant evening breeze, the gentle splashing of the waves, the dolphins dancing in the sea, and many cups of wine. Meanwhile, they indulge in the collective reciting (and/or singing?) of poetry.

The poem is the celebration of the common interests that unite a group of friends. As becomes clear from the first verses, it is addressed to others who were not present at the trip: 'Listen to me with envy, so that you may burst,

<sup>110</sup>Christophoros, 27.53: ζῶσαν τρυφήν δὲ σοὺς σοφοὺς τρυφῶν λόγους.

<sup>111</sup>Christophoros, 27.44–45: . . . ἀλλὰ καὶ σὺ γνησίως // φθέγγαι βραχὺν μὲν ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ φίλον λόγον.

<sup>112</sup>For reading and writing circles defined by friendship bounds, see Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, pp. 77–79.

<sup>113</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 223, p. 265, l. 23–25: πρόσιμεν οὖν ἀλλήλοις ὥσπερ ἐν πανελληνίῳ θεάτρῳ τὰς σὰς ἀντεπιδεικνόντες ἐπιστολάς καὶ ἀντεπέξιμεν ταύτας καὶ ἀντιφιλοτιμούμεθα.

<sup>114</sup>See also P. Magdalino, "Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos", in: *Giving a Small Taste*, forthcoming.

// which pleasure the fine friends enjoyed.<sup>115</sup> This address to others, even if it may be fictional, helps to confirm the exclusivity of the group of friends. They are the ‘fine friends’ (v. 2), ‘friends of the Muses’ (v. 29, in likeness with the dolphins surrounding them), and ‘eurhythmic friends’ (v. 38). Dedication to intellectual ideals goes hand in hand with the social coherence of the group. The construction with cognate object, τρυφήν τρυφάω, to describe these luxurious pleasures, (see here v. 3) moreover reminds us of how Christophoros described the intellectual pleasure shared by him and Niketas.<sup>116</sup> The words conjure up an image of luxury, but one only reserved for fine friends.

The reading in which the friends find a delight, is described as follows (anon. Sola 1.34–39):

Τί ταῦτα πάντα; ποῖος ἀρκέσει λόγος  
φράζων τὰ τερπνὰ τῶν λόγων ἡμῶν ἄνθη  
κρότους ἰάμβων, τῶν ἐπῶν εὐρυθμίας  
μέτρα τραγωδῶν, ῥητόρων λογογράφων  
(Μουσῶν χοροὺς εἴκασας εὐρύθμους φίλους)  
πληροῦντα πάντα τῶν καλῶν ὀρχημάτων;

What is all that? Which words will suffice  
To express the delightful flowers of our words,  
The beats of iambs, the rhythms of hexameters,  
The metres of tragedians and *clausulae* of prose orators,—  
You would have likened the rhythmic friends to choirs of the  
Muses—  
That fill everything with beautiful dances?

The flowers of *logoi* are of a poetic kind, comprising several metres, even the ‘metres’ of the prose writers. And this poetry, seemingly also of ancients, is appreciated by friends reciting them together. They themselves became ‘eurhythmic friends’ by doing this, and entered the choirs of the Muses (v. 38). The activity of reading lifts them up into a graceful sphere of mutual appreciation.

There is no doubt that the reading presented in this poem is of a sophisticated kind. The wide range of literary genres the friends are said to read, from tragedies to orators, suggests that the specific content of the writings did not matter: the readings here performed, were an intellectual savouring of formal features. The frequent references to rhythm may indicate that there was a strong sensitivity to acoustic features. This focus on rhythmic qualities is also expressed by the word κρότοι (beats), which may refer more specifically to the rhythm of dodecasyllables (v. 36).<sup>117</sup> Rhythm is also present in the ‘dances’ by which everything is said to be filled. It appears therefore that

<sup>115</sup>Sola, “Giambografi sconosciuti dell’XI secolo”, 1.2–3: ἀκούσατε φθονοῦντες, ὡς ῥαγῆτέ, μοι, // ὅταν τρυφήν τρυφῶμεν οἱ καλοὶ φίλοι.

<sup>116</sup>Christophoros, 27.53: ζῶσαν τρυφήν δὲ σοὺς σοφοὺς τρυφῶν λόγους.

<sup>117</sup>For the application of κρότος to rhythm in dodecasyllables, see M. Lauxtermann, “The Velocity of Pure Iambs. Byzantine Observations on the Metre and Rhythm of the Dodecasyllable”, *JÖB* 48 (1998), pp. 9–33, p. 24.

these sailing friends evaluated the works they heard on the basis of their style and euphonic qualities.

The notion of ‘flowers’ (v. 35: ἄνθη) suggests that the literature recited here, was presented in the form of anthologies and selections, perhaps made especially for this occasion. It is unclear whether the possessive pronoun ἡμῶν refers to the flowers or to the poetry: in the former case, the friends would recite poetry of their own, but this would suit ill with the enumeration of orators and tragedians on line 37, who cannot refer to contemporary authors. In the latter case, it would mean that the friends had made each a personal selection of various literary works, and entertained each other with it, perhaps gaining admiration by the originality of their selection, and/or the amount of erudition it displayed. It is hard to imagine that in such a context they would not have added some poetry of their own—this member of the club in any case did so.<sup>118</sup>

This brings us to a final observation relevant for all texts hitherto adduced: all these requests, ‘reader’s letters’, reports of readings, or refusals are registered again in poems. The readings of the poems are themselves aestheticised. This adds to their value, but also further intellectualises the context of the reading of the poems.

The poets that reveal readings have an active role in shaping the reader’s role. They in fact prescribe a certain reading to follow. In the case of Christophoros 78, the poet displays in an indirect way, through Petros’ reaction, the qualities of poem 77 for its readers. In the latter case, Mauropous can remind the readers of his collection that they should not read his poems in a pettifogging way. So, these particular readings stand as a model (negative or positive) for subsequent readings. Authors are here in control of the reading of their poems.

## 2.6 The initial occasion and the impact of contexts

In modern scholarship, there is a growing consensus that most Byzantine poetry (and especially epigrams) was utilitarian to a certain degree, that is, these texts were once used in a real-life setting where they served in a concrete social occasion.<sup>119</sup> In the case of epigrams, this stage is testified by the many inscriptions that have survived, and of which some are also transmitted in the manuscript tradition. However, there are only very few ‘matches’ over the whole history of the Byzantine epigram, that is, epigrams preserved both *in situ* and in manuscripts.<sup>120</sup> For most of the poems we know, we have to

<sup>118</sup>Magdalino, “Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos”, proposes the attractive suggestion that during these gatherings, the members of such circles may, in the process of reciting and hearing, have improvised verses in turn.

<sup>119</sup>Hörandner, “Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte”, pp. 419–421; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*.

<sup>120</sup>W. Hörandner, “Customs and Beliefs as Reflected in Occasional Poetry. Some Considerations”, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 12 (1987), pp. 235–247, pp. 236–237; Lauxtermann,

reconstruct ourselves the original circumstances of the poem. This also applies to poems evoking an original oral setting.<sup>121</sup>

This brings the student of poems to an inevitable question. Is it legitimate to reconstruct, also for poems that we know only from manuscripts, an original setting in which these poems reached their ‘first’ readers? And how does this original reading relate to the subsequent readings of the poem? Or put otherwise: are the poems such as we find them in manuscripts, documentary records of a live performance or real inscription, in short, the textual residue of a *Sitz im Leben*, or are they clever literary evocations of standardised situations? The question must remain open, but has been frequently posed, especially for epigrams, with mostly the obvious conclusion that we may never be sure whether epigrams ever existed in inscriptions. But in the absence of hard evidence, we can use a set of text-internal and text-external parameters, such as deictic referents, parallels with iconography, the naming of a patron, etc., which might suggest that they were used as real inscriptions.<sup>122</sup>

A first observation to be made is that the representation of a poem in a manuscript is always a distortion of its initial reading context: it *is* no longer an inscription in stone, nor is it any longer the spoken words in an oratorical setting. ‘Poetry is out of context in a manuscript’.<sup>123</sup> We may adduce here the evidence from the poetic anthologies we mentioned above, which threw together epigrams with other poems that obviously did not have (or could not have) any inscriptional use, and thus invited the reader to treat these epigrams in the same way as any other poetic text.

Moreover, the examples of ‘sophisticated reading’ we adduced above, indicate that a dissociated kind of reading did not start only at the moment the poems were included in anthologies, centuries after their conception. The schoolmaster-like reading of Mauropous 32 as recorded in Mauropous 33 may serve as forceful reminder that a naive, direct reading of epigrams as inscriptions is surely not the only one practised in the ‘immediate’ milieu of the poem. And we have already remarked that the vivid evocation of an enunciative context in Christophoros 75–77 did not prevent the poems from being read by outsiders to this intimate occasion. The world of Byzantine poets and readers was surely a sophisticated one, and one focused on written texts as intellectual achievements. Yet, the real occasion may not be dismissed right away as a ‘construct’.

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*Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 31–32.

<sup>121</sup>Hörandner, “Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte”, p. 423.

<sup>122</sup>Hörandner, “Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte”; Hörandner, “Customs and Beliefs as Reflected in Occasional Poetry. Some Considerations”; Talbot, “Epigrams in Context”, pp. 75–76; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 150–152; see recently, for these parameters, E. van Opstall, “Verses on Paper, Verses Inscribed? A Case Study, with Epigrams of John Geometres”, in: *Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung byzantinischer Epigramme. Akten des internationalen Workshops (Wien, 1.-2. Dezember 2006)*, ed. by W. Hörandner and A. Rhoby, Wien 2008, pp. 55–60.

<sup>123</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 60.

### 2.6.1 The reenactment of reality

One thing is sure: the poems such as we find them in manuscripts, do offer us a very realistic and vivid presentation of such an ‘original’ setting. Many poems evoke in their texts and in their *lemma* a clearly defined setting of the poem, in spatial, temporal and/or social sense. For Christophoros 77 and Mauropous 32, we have observed that they referred to their own initial context of use (oral performance or inscriptional space) with deictic elements of time and place.

Other examples are numerous. Christophoros 101, bearing the title ‘On the image of saint Elias’, refers with the unmistakable deictic element ἐνθάδε to the image on, or beside of which it purports to have been written. Moreover, it directs itself to an onlooker of the inscribed image: ‘That Elias lives, how would you not believe that, when you regard this? // For look! — here he is alive himself, like you see.’<sup>124</sup> A similar vivid evocation of an inscriptional context is for instance to be found in Mauropous 4, where the beholder of an image of the Transfiguration is made to shiver at the sight he beholds.<sup>125</sup> He is even summoned to take a respectful distance: the epigram evokes and plays with the concept of a space of a few metres in front of the image, a space in which it can convey its message. Also here the deictic element ἐνθάδε refers to the content of the image.<sup>126</sup> Of course, these inscriptional contexts remain of a standardised kind: the lemma only refers to a general religious subject. These epigrams could still be literary imaginative exercises.

However, some lemmata of epigrams do not refer to a general theme, but to a precise location. The lemma of Christophoros 50 refers to one particular horse in the hippodrome,<sup>127</sup> Christophoros 95 to the church of St. George in Mangana and Christophoros 98 to one particular image of the Pantokrator in the Oatos hall of the Palace.<sup>128</sup> These are all well-known public places, so the reader could stilly easily conjure up a mental image of the subject. Also in these poems, deictic references are present. For these epigrams, the question can be asked more urgently: were they on those places or not? If not, this means that the deictic references have no physical reality behind them, and the poem can only be interpreted as a reenactment of reality, but not as real in itself; in that case, it is manifestly double-layered in its conception: one enunciation context that is referred to, but of which both reader and author assume that it never has existed as such, and another layer in which reader and author understand each other’s negotiation of the text, which is on a decidedly different level than the one professed in the text itself.

It is clear that the enunciative context of the poems is not to be taken entirely literally. As we have seen, Mauropous 4 establishes a vivid contact

<sup>124</sup>Christophoros, 101.1–2: ‘Ὡς Ἥλίας ζῆ, πῶς ἀπιστήσεις βλέπων’ // ἰδοὺ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐνθάδε ζῶν, ὡς βλέπεις.

<sup>125</sup>Mauropous, 4.1: Φρίζον, θεατά, τὴν ὀρωμένην θείαν.

<sup>126</sup>Mauropous, 4.6: ὀρθῶς μαθητὰς ἐνθάδε προκειμένους.

<sup>127</sup>Christophoros, 50.title: Εἰς τὸν χαλκοῦν ἵππον, τὸν ἐν τῷ ἵπποδρόμῳ τὸν πρόσθιον πόδα ἠορμένον ἔχοντα.

<sup>128</sup>Christophoros, 98.title: Εἰς τὸν ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ὀροφῆς τοῦ Ὡάτου σωτήρα κάτω βλέποντα.

with the onlooker of the epigram and the image, imparting the viewer with moral advice. However, the speeches or the dialogues that are recorded are not reducible to the historical context of inscription and viewer. In poem 6, on Palm Sunday (which arguably forms part of the same cycle as poem 4), the city of Jerusalem is addressed: it is upbraided for its former sins and urged to receive the Lord and lead a better life. In poem 7, on the Crucifixion, the poet himself is the person who views and attains knowledge through looking. In poem 9, on the *ψηλάφησις* of Christ, the disciples of Christ are addressed as actors in the scene depicted. In poem 14 the painter is the one spoken to. So, when a viewer of these epigrams had the chance to look at the whole cycle, than he would immediately realise that he as a viewer is but one of the characters in a constructed scene. This scene consists of a poetic voice, the figures in the depicted scene, the viewer, the painter, etc. Each one of them comes to life in a reenactment. The fact that also characters in the depiction can act as role players in this reenactment, reduces the role of the viewer from a real viewer to a reenacted one. So, already from its very stadium as an inscription (if that stadium ever existed) the communicative situation present in the text is the result of a reenactment rather than a reflection of a real speech act. This still does not give any conclusive evidence about whether these texts were inscriptions or not, but it can warn us for assuming that every reference to an initial reading context is to be taken in a literal sense.

The vivid reality of the context does not only pierce through in epigrams. In the case of poems similar to orations, this enunciative context is also urgently present, and forms a clear and consistent temporal framework for the poems. A prime example of this, already mentioned earlier in this chapter, is the cycle of Christophoros for his sister Anastaso (75–77). Another clear instance of temporal positioning is Christophoros 61, wherein the temporal deictic *χθές* at v. 1 and 3 refers to the day before the enunciation or sending of this poem, when the patriarch Keroullarios was appointed. As this patriarch was crowned on 25 March 1043,<sup>129</sup> we may theoretically place the enunciation of this poem on 26 March 1043.

## 2.6.2 Switching contexts

Another perspective to the question of how to read the initial context of poems is offered by the following inscription, still visible today above the entrance door of the church of the monastery of Grottaferrata:

Οίκου Θεοῦ μέλλοντες εἰσβαίνειν πύλην  
 Ἐξω γένοισθε τῆς μέθης τῶν φροντίδων  
 Ἴν'εὐμενῶς εὗροιτε τὸν κριτὴν ἔσω.<sup>130</sup>

You, about to enter the gate of God's house,

<sup>129</sup>Ioannes Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. by I. Turn, Berlin, 1973, p. 429.20; See also Tinnefeld, "Michael I Kerullarios, Patriarch von Konstantinopel (1043-1058). Kritische Überlegungen zu einer Biographie", p. 100.

<sup>130</sup>Guillou, *Recueil*, p. 119.



Leave outside the fuddle of your worries  
 So that inside, you will find the judge benevolent.

According to palaeographical evidence, these verses were inscribed at some moment in the eleventh century, not long after the foundation of the monastery in 1004.<sup>131</sup> Anyone about to enter the church would see this inscription and feel that he or she is addressed personally through the second person plural. The message inscribed on the church would be read by this viewer as a relevant one for him at this moment and this place; with other words, it perfectly fits the occasion. Within this context, readers would also be able to identify the sender of the message as a religious authority somehow connected with the foundation of the monastery. With other words, this can be called a piece of 11th-century poetry that had a clearly defined function in a real-life setting.

However, the epigram was composed much earlier; it is in fact a work of Theodoros Stoudites. His poem 46 is nearly identical;<sup>132</sup> only the fourth line has been omitted. The situational context for which the epigram is composed, is the same, as the lemma to Theodoros' poem makes clear: Εἰς τὴν πρῶτην εἴσοδον τοῦ ναοῦ. This is also the place where we find this epigram in Grottaferrata. Theodoros' name is nowhere mentioned in the neighbourhood of this inscription. Although Theodoros had written this epigram with another audience in mind, probably the monks of his Stoudiou monastery in Constantinople, his poem still speaks directly to the eleventh-century visitor to Grottaferrata.

Reuse of existing epigrams in such contexts is by no means rare: several epigrams, especially above doors in churches, reuse older material.<sup>133</sup> This even happens when the occasion is in fact slightly different.<sup>134</sup>

Another similar case is the iambic calendar of Christophoros Mitylenaios. One could hardly imagine a poetic enterprise that involves more intellectualist playfulness, because it endlessly and exhaustively variegates upon the same theme: commemorating a saint and his death.<sup>135</sup> Yet, several of his iambic distichs, and in one case, a hexameter verse, are used as inscriptions in churches.<sup>136</sup> Probably these inscriptions are taken from the *Menaea*, instead of directly from Christophoros' corpus. This entails that 'original' use is not always the same as 'real life use'.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., pp. 119–120.

<sup>132</sup>See Theodoros Stoudites, *Jamben auf verschiedene Gegenstände*, ed. by P. Speck, Berlin 1968, at pp. 64–66 Speck lists some other poems of Theodoros that are transmitted through inscriptions; for instance, epigram 32 was inscribed on the narthex of the eleventh-century monastery Νέα Μονή at Chios.

<sup>133</sup>W. Hörandner, "Zu einigen religiösen Epigrammen", in: *Synodia. Studia humanitatis Antonio Garzya septuagenario ab amicis atque discipulis dicata*, ed. by U. Criscuolo and R. Maisano, Napoli 1997, pp. 431–442, pp. 441–442.

<sup>134</sup>H. Maguire, *Image and Imagination: the Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response*, Toronto 1996, pp. 6–9.

<sup>135</sup>L. R. Cresci, "Διὰ βραχέων ἐπέων: Christ. Mityl. 83,2 Kurtz", in: *Giving a Small Taste*, forthcoming.

<sup>136</sup>See now A. Rhoby, "Zu den inschriftlich überlieferten Epigrammen des Christophoros Mitylenaios", in: *Giving a Small Taste*, forthcoming, who lists 32 instances, of which 22 in the church of Treskavac.

Also, poems sometimes ended up as inscriptions, while they originally did *not* have an apparent inscriptional potential. A notable example is Psellos' poem 10, the allegorical interpretation of an enigmatic bible verse (Mt 13.3, Lc 13.21). This poem was inscribed in the cave sanctuary for Hagios Andreas in the village Chalkiopoulosi.<sup>137</sup> One can see that the intrinsic 'inscribability' of a poem does not go *pari passu* with its real historical use as an inscription.

The easiness by which poems could switch contexts, is supported by the standardisation and ritualisation of iconography and other cultural contexts in Byzantium. The meaning of any sacred space is closely connected with standardised liturgical and theological expressions. The connection between text and context was organised along strong traditional schemes. For instance, it would be particularly hard to find an epigram (inscriptional or not) referring to a threshold or door of a religious building, without the conventional theme of inspiring awe. Recent studies on reading situations of Byzantine epigrams have underlined that every Byzantine had anyway a clear mental image of the religious scene in mind. So, a reference with ἐνθάδε does not necessarily need to point to a concrete physical point in space. From this viewpoint, the ubiquitous lemma 'εἰς plus subject' conveniently anticipates the range of contexts in which the poem could function. Any poem that clearly suits a given occasion, can be resuscitated to life if desired. This may mean that for the Byzantine reader of the poem in its paper form, this poem could be called to life in a cultural situation that he would instantly recognise. Any poem had the potential to be reused.

This also explains the many possible relations between epigrams in manuscripts and their realisations. Poets could compose epigrams as example pieces, without a specific work of art in mind, or could compose a string of poems on the same subject, from which the patron could choose the right one.<sup>138</sup> Also the sharp contrast between the social gathering of an audience in a real-life setting against the solitary reading in a manuscript needs to be put into perspective: as we have seen, the rowing friends of anon. Sola read ancient, totally irrelevant poetry from pieces of paper, but they read them in group, and they read them aloud.

### 2.6.3 The initial context as preserved in books

These examples may demonstrate that the reading history of a Byzantine poem is not one of an original moment where it served in a *Sitz im Lebensituation* and then, by being collected in manuscripts, degraded into a philological fossil. The status of the poem remains one of a text that can possibly be used in such a setting.

I would like to argue that even in collections with a full aesthetic purpose, this status does not change essentially. Perhaps the poem loses its potential to be reused, but it does not lose its primary significance as a utilitarian text.

<sup>137</sup>Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, nr. 62.

<sup>138</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 42–44; See also Maguire, *Image and Imagination: the Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response*, pp. 8–9.

When Mauropous presents the book with his collected works, he opens the collection with a poem that stresses that these poems are but ‘a small taste’ of his many works.<sup>139</sup> The conditions of their past production and the expectations for their present use, are stated this way:

τῶν λόγων οὖν μικρὸν ἀρκεῖτω μέρος,  
εἰς δεῖγμα καὶ γνώρισμα τῶν ὅλων λόγων,  
οὗς εἰς κενὸν κέκμηρα πολλάκις γράφων.  
ἔῶ γὰρ εἰπεῖν οἷς ἐχρησάμην λέγων·

So, a small part of my works should suffice  
To give a token and display of my complete works  
Which I have often laboriously written for nothing;  
For I will leave aside saying which words I really used by pro-  
nouncing them.

Mauropous remarks that he has often composed works that did not find a concrete use. The same motive appears in introductory poems II and IV. This implies that he supposes a normal state of affairs in which his literary works *are* used, and that they were indeed used in the past, albeit not as often as Mauropous wanted, due to external circumstances. Interestingly, he adds that he used them by ‘pronouncing’ them, if we may take λέγων literally here.<sup>140</sup> Whether they were really used or not, the reader understood that it was at least the intention of the poet: he will read them as texts that had once a social relevance.

The poems as they appear in this collection must be read as a γνώρισμα (v. 7): they document for the reader the past poetic efforts of the poet, each one of them devised for a separate occasion. After this introductory poem, the reader will find a sample of his poems, gathered here on paper from very different contexts. But all what the manuscript does, according to this poem, is displaying them as they were written a long time ago, when the poet intended them to be pronounced and to be used. The collection gathers and arranges, but does not actualise the poems.

A characteristic feature that reflects the documentary intentions of the manuscript is the preservation of irrelevant details that are residues of the utilitarian character of the poem. The donor is often mentioned and named in epigrams, even when this mention is utterly useless at the time of the compilation of the collection. For instance, Christophoros 12 is a short epigram recording the restoration of a church. The lemma mentions a certain Eustathios, holding the rank of *zygostates*. To be sure, *zygostates* was not such a prestigious rank, and Eustathios was surely not a very well-known person. Christophoros just reproduces here an inscription he has made years ago, leaving the details as they were, and providing enough information through the lemma to enable a reading that can approach the poem with more or less the same background knowledge as in a real-time setting.

<sup>139</sup>Mauropous, 1.29: ὡς γεῦμα μικρὸν δαψιλοῦς ἀνθοσμίου.

<sup>140</sup>So does also R. Anastasi, *Giovanni Mauropode, metropolita di Euchaita, Canzoniere*, I, Catania 1984, p. 1: ‘tralascio di parlare di quelli che ho pronunziato’.

The same holds true for the reference to Georgios, brother of Michael IV, in Mauropous 26. By the time of ‘publication’ of the collection, Georgios has already disappeared from the scene, and, together with his brothers, left a rather sour trace in the memory of the Byzantines. Decennia after their inglorious rule, it would be absurd to suppose Mauropous could have ‘made up’ this historical setting just as a play on the genre, thereby implicating himself. Rather, his collection, as we will see in the next chapter, strives to give a trustworthy account of Mauropous’ life, reproducing separate texts that were made for separate situations.

The lemma plays an important role in this process of preserving the occasion. Often, it is the lemma that provides information about the context and the situation. It allows the reader to reconstruct the essential non-textual components of the occasion, without which the poem would often be unintelligible.<sup>141</sup> Christophoros 16 is an epigram on the grave of Melias, but the lemma specifies that Melias is depicted twice on his grave, once as a worldly person and once as a monk.<sup>142</sup> This information is needed to grasp the essence of the epigram: Melias was a successful man, but he nurtured also other, higher, aspirations. The references to this depiction in the poem itself (v. 13: ‘as such the painter has depicted him here’, and v. 20: ‘he depicts again himself here’) make only sense to the reader if he knows that the image was a double one.

To be able to understand the influence of the book format on the poems’ significance properly, we would also have to ask ourselves if ‘literary mimicry’ is a possible literary technique within the aesthetics of Byzantine literature and within its reader expectations. In the case of Hellenistic epigrams, we have the so-called ‘inscriptions fictives’:<sup>143</sup> epigrams imitating as faithfully as possible an inscriptional context. The hellenistic reader knows well enough how these literary epigrams play a subtle game with fiction and reality, putting up a mask that is however always to be recognised as such by the reader. It is my contention that literary play of this kind was not conceivable in Byzantine poetry: not that the poet could not put on any masks, but these masks are the product of rhetorical impersonation, rather than a game of fiction and reality.

The world in which these poems were written and read, was not a purely textual world. Mauropous’ poems, for instance, were not collected by others who were then inspired to write also an epigram on a given religious subject, with a subtle variation added to it.

I would suggest that Byzantine readings of poems could dissociate texts from their contexts, to view them as formal exercises in metre and grammar, but this kind of reading did not prevent that the poems remain closely associated with the initial occasion, which in books is painstakingly and consequently reproduced by the lemma. As we have seen, poems on paper could even again be restituted to their original context. Therefore, I think that

<sup>141</sup>Hörandner, “Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte”, p. 236.

<sup>142</sup>Christophoros, 16.title: Εἰς τὸν τάφον τοῦ αὐτοῦ Μελίου, ἱστορηθέντος ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ὡς κοσμικοῦ καὶ ὡς μοναχοῦ.

<sup>143</sup>P. Laurens, *L’abeille dans l’ambre: célébration de l’épigramme*, Paris 1989, pp. 49–51.

the difference between ‘inscriptional’ epigram and ‘literary’ epigram<sup>144</sup> may altogether not be that great: inscriptions could be read as a formally sophisticated form of discourse, and epigrams in books could be read as inscriptions, ready to be inscribed again.

#### 2.6.4 Yesterday’s race: first readers and future readers

The status of the reader in this process is ambiguous. As we have seen in the example of Mauropous’ epigrams, the first reader in an initial context is not to be equated with the inscribed reader in the poem. The examples of sophisticated readings moreover made clear that the *intended* reader may again be someone totally different from the reader present in the text itself as the person to whom the author directs his message.

To clarify the relationship between the historical reader and the reader inscribed in the text of the poem, I would like to have a look at a particular poem of Christophoros, poem 90. The long poem, narrating the chariot races of the previous day, begins thus:

*Πρὸς τοὺς ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ ἀπόντας φίλους, ἵπποδρομίας ἀγομένης ἀπολειφθέν-  
τας καὶ ἀξιώσαντας μανθάνειν τὰ περὶ αὐτῆς*

Ὅπως μὲν εἶχεν ἵππικὸν τὸ χθές, φίλοι,  
 ποίους δὲ τοὺς ἀγῶνας εὔρε τοῦ δρόμου,  
 ἀποῦσι καὶ θέλουσι μανθάνειν γράφω,  
 ποιῶν ὑμῖν ἕκαστα δῆλα πρὸς μέρος,  
 ὡς ἂν γε καὶ δόξητε, φίλτατοι φίλων, 5  
 ὡς ἐκ κατόπτρου τῶν παρόντων μου λόγων  
 τῷ χθές θεάτρῳ συμπαρεῖναι τοῦ δρόμου  
 . . . ὥσπερ ἐμφανεστάτως  
 τοὺς τέσσαρας βλέποντες ἄρματηλάτας  
 . . . εἰν ποιουμένους 10

*To his friends who were out of town, and, having missed the horse  
 race that was held, had asked to be told about it*

How yesterday’s horse race unfolded, my friends,  
 And which contests of the course it witnessed,  
 I now write to you who were away and want to hear about it.  
 I will make everything clear for you, part for part,  
 So that you, my dearest friends, 5

<sup>144</sup>Very outspoken for example in: Talbot, “Epigrams in Context”, p. 76.

Will have the impression, as from the mirror of my present words,<sup>145</sup>

To attend the course in the hippodrome of yesterday

... most manifest

Watching the four chariot drivers

... made to [run?]

10

After these introductory verses, Christophoros makes his promises real and depicts in 110 lines the vicissitudes of the race, but the verses are so badly damaged that we do not even know who won the day.

This poem establishes a direct contact with a clearly defined group of readers, namely, Christophoros' 'real' eleventh-century friends, being out of town. The first ten verses form an address to these friends. He promises to make the race of yesterday alive with the help of these very words 'here present' (v. 6: τῶν παρόντων μου λόγων). They will serve as a mirror, so that the race will become near to visible (v. 8: ὥσπερ ἐμφανεστάτως).

But in fact, this promise can be fulfilled not only for those friends, but for every reader of the poem. The words are still 'present' for the subsequent reader (and to a somehow lesser degree for us). This subsequent reader will also be able to read this poem as a mirror, allowing him nearly to see with his own eyes the theatre in Byzantium, on that 'yesterday', and watch, as if it were real, that particular horse race. As every subsequent reader *will* have missed the race, he can perfectly imagine himself as one of Christophoros' friends. So, when Christophoros asserts that he writes for those who are away and want to hear about it (v. 3), the subsequent reader would feel he or she is also personally addressed. The chariot drivers, as they are racing, are re-created, which Christophoros seems to express with the verb ποιουμένους (v. 10): as such, these 'recreated' chariot drivers are always as present for the subsequent reader as they are for the friends present in the text itself. I would suggest that Christophoros here reaches out a hand to subsequent readers, casting them into the role of a curious friend.

Also, this text is emphatically presented as a text, as a creation. Christophoros interjects the flow of his story with remarks as 'like we said' (v. 58 : ὡς ἔφημεν), and 'like I said above' (v. 94: ὡς ἔφη ἄνω). This last indication (ἄνω) makes clear that the poem has to be read as a written text, not an oral report. With those indications, the setting of an oral report by a friend is made into a definite text of an omniscient author consciously controlling his text and presenting it also to other readers.

The precise temporal referent χθές (v. 1 and 121) also acquires an ambiguous status. The horse race can always have taken place 'yesterday': the temporal referent is not an indication of a given date in the eleventh century, but enriches and enlivens the setting of the poem. The poet still remembers

<sup>145</sup>The text is difficult here. I consider τῶν παρόντων μου λόγων as a qualitative genitive after κατόπτρου; that is, the mirror consists here of Christophoros' words. In Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 132, the translation runs along similar lines: "cosicché vi sembrerà, o carissimi amici, come se il mio presente discorso ne fosse uno specchio, di assistere..."

every detail, as the race only took place ‘yesterday’. It contributes to the liveliness of the story: his friends have are curious to hear the outcome of a race they have not yet heard from anyone else. Has Christophoros then written and sent this poem immediately the day after the race? Little matters: the  $\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  would even for these friends no longer be the  $\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  they experience as the day before they read the poem, but the day before Christophoros began to write down this poetic report. The same is true for subsequent readers: the function of  $\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  to help to set up the story matters more than the precise time indication for the race.

It seems that the motif of absent friends is a convenient backdrop to begin a story. The same element returns in the poem of Anon. Sola, narrating the joyful trip on the Bosphorus. This poem too is addressed to some other friends who were not present, and will envy the seafaring company for their delightful trip. When the poet states that they will burst of envy when hearing the delights of the trip, later readers would have to be induced to feel exactly the same.

Accordingly, the identification of every future reader with those particular friends who were away from town in those days in the eleventh century, has also repercussions for the ontological status of those friends. They are cast by the poet into a role fitting to set up his poem. An audience of a text is in a sense always a fiction,<sup>146</sup> and it is also one here, where the role of these friends is likely to be identified by future readers with their own role.

In the same state are we, contemporary readers, looking at this poems as into a mirror to catch a glimpse from real life in the eleventh century, and bursting of envy because we will never be able to participate at the boat trip and hear the beats of iambs like Byzantines heard them.

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<sup>146</sup>W. J. Ong, “The Writer’s Audience Is Always a Fiction”, *PMLA* 90.1 (1975), pp. 9–21.





# Chapter 3

## Collections

In general, we have until now been treating poems as separate entities. Even when we investigated the consequences of the inclusion of poems in manuscripts, we have stressed that this step in their reading history left intact the unique initial context of that poem. But arguably, something changes when poems are placed next to each other. This is especially the case when the reader knows that the collection of poems is the work of one and the same poet. The poems acquire then the property of being a demonstration (a δειγμα καὶ γνώρισμα, as Mauropous has expressed it)<sup>1</sup> of intellectual skills. In this sense, a personal collection of poems can be seen as a the overview of a career, and as a sample of his competences. Hence, the poet had interest in making it into an agreeable aesthetic experience.

However, as I will argue, no collection was ever made with a premeditated plan in mind, but was always the result of an organisation executed on finalised separate poems. These are picked out and placed next to each other, but their ‘separateness’ remains intact.

Both Ioannes Mauropous and Christophoros Mitylenaios made a collection of their poems. The collection of the former is preserved in a nearly contemporary book, that of the latter in a copy of many centuries later. Before attempting to describe the collective principle behind these collections, I will first present some cases of minor projects of collecting, and, by way of prelude, analyse some cases of close connection between poems that at first sight seem separate pieces.

### 3.1 Minor groupings of poems

#### 3.1.1 Double poems and corrolaries

On some occasions, one poetic purpose demanded, or required, several poems bundled together. This is surely no collection in the proper sense, but rather a split up of one purpose into different poetic formulations.

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<sup>1</sup>Mauropous, 1.6.

We have already encountered poems 55a and 55b, a couple of which the first part formed an epigram on the other part. In this case, the poems are numbered as one. The manuscript is ambiguous: it shows a visible difference between both poems (in letter type, and initial), but it does not provide a separate lemma for each of both, and it counts the poems as one (cf. *infra*).

There is a similar pair of poems in Christophoros' corpus. Poem 68 is a lengthy poem on the transfer of an icon of St. Kyros to another church. Thereafter follows poem 69, bearing the title 'Epigram on the verses about the icon of St. Kyros.'<sup>2</sup> This short epigram notifies the reader that the number of verses of the previous poem equals the number of fishes caught by the disciples of Christ (see John 21.11; the number of fishes—and verses—is 153). Significantly, the poem is called ἐπίγραμμα, which is not a usual term to appear in lemmata.<sup>3</sup> This reinforces the subsidiary status of poem 69: it is emphatically only a corollary to poem 68. In contrast to Mauropous' pair of poems, these poems are counted as two: so does in any event the Grottaferrata manuscript, which has numbers next to the poems.

The adverb ἐνθάδε moreover suggests a concrete physical space: did poem 68 circulate in the form of a roll, with poem 69 attached to it, in the same way we have reconstructed the circulation of Mauropous 55? Or does the adverb merely denote 'this place in the book', and do we have to interpret ἐπίγραμμα just as an indication of dependency, an epilogue as it were? It is infeasible to give an answer, but in any event the two poems form one poetic unity.

Poems 66 and 67 form also a couple of poems, but due to the fragmentary state of the text, it is harder to establish their precise relationship. Here is what remains of the text:

66. Εἰς τὴν Εὐδοκίαν περὶ τοῦ πεμφθέντος αὐτῇ χρυσοῦ (μήλου)  
 ... ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου φίλου τινός

A...  
 κἄν «ἡ καλὴ τὸ μήλον» ὧδέ τις γράφοι  
 ...  
 οὔσης καλῆς νῦν ἐν γυναιξὶ σοῦ μόνης;

67. ...

Εἰς τὴν γυναικῶν καλλονὴν Εὐδοκίαν.

Crimi reconstructed the sense of poem 66 along the following lines: "it is useless that someone would write on this apple 'for the most beautiful', since you are the most beautiful anyway."<sup>4</sup>

The poems do surely not form one poem properly, since the numbering in the margin of the Grottaferrata manuscript counts these poems as two. It is

<sup>2</sup>Christophoros, 69.title: Ἐπίγραμμα εἰς τοὺς στίχους περὶ τῆς εἰκόνας τοῦ ἁγίου Κύρου.

<sup>3</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 26–30.

<sup>4</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 109.

obvious that these poems belong together, and are somehow connected to a golden apple given to Eudokia by a friend (of Christophoros? of Eudokia?); they moreover share the quite rare motif of female beauty. The first poem is not an epigram ‘on’ that apple; in that case, the lemma would rather read Εἰς τὸ χρυσοῦν μήλον πεμφθὲν πρὸς τὴν Εὐδοκίαν. Now, Eudokia herself is the addressee and subject of the poem. The text of the second epigram fits better the purpose of an inscription on the apple. This monostichon did not have to make clear any more what it was written on, since it was inscribed on the apple itself, which was probably mentioned in the lemma; only the recipient of the gift is indicated with a flattering sentence.

Poem 66 may in that case be considered as an accompaniment to the gift meant to clarify its meaning. While 67 was inscribed on the gift, 66 functioned as an accompanying letter. Be that how it may, it seems sure that both these poems tightly belonged together and served one single purpose, the gift for Eudokia; but the form in which they are presented, is very different.

Poems 33 en 34, both for the Saviour, are another pair of poems that form one piece; it is however difficult to establish their relationship to each other, as the poems are badly damaged.

A special case is Mauropous I, the introductory poem to *Vat. Gr.* 676, which is in fact also a pair of poems rather than one poem (cf. *infra*).

### 3.1.2 A group of didactic poems in Psellos?

Unlike Christophoros and Mauropous, Michael Psellos, as far as we know, has never made a comprehensive collection of his poems. However, it seems that he has prepared at least a group of poems belonging together. Wolfram Hörandner observed that the title of poem 6 (on grammar) in some manuscripts refers to a group of poems rather than to this poem alone.<sup>5</sup> The title designates this poem as a Σύνοψις (περὶ) πασῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, and specifies that this synopsis of sciences was offered to Michael Doukas on the behest of his father. The science of grammar and orthography is called ‘the base and foundation of sciences’,<sup>6</sup> which might indicate that poem 6 was the first of a series of didactic poems addressed to the young imperial prince. The poems that shortly introduce a science may all have been part of this group offered to Michael Doukas. Other poems addressed to Michael (according to most manuscripts) are 3 to 5, and 7. Poems 3 to 5, poems on the dogmas, councils and the nomocanon, are all introduced with a καὶ in the first line; for example, poem 3 begins: Δέχου καὶ τὸν θεμέλιον τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς δογμάτων. This use of the word καὶ may as well indicate that they belonged to a continuous group of poems.<sup>7</sup>

As Hörandner remarked, the manuscript tradition does not reflect this grouping of poems, since the poems are mostly transmitted separately; only poems three to five appear together in some manuscripts, and the *Paris. gr.*

<sup>5</sup>W. Hörandner, “The Byzantine Didactic Poem – A Neglected Literary Genre? A Survey with Special Reference to the Eleventh Century”, in: *Giving a Small Taste*, forthcoming.

<sup>6</sup>Psellos, 6.2: πρῶτος ἀπὸ θεμέλιος καὶ βᾶσις μαθημάτων.

<sup>7</sup>Hörandner, “The Byzantine didactic poem”.

1182 has poem seven after six, which might suggest that the one followed upon the other.

The fact that the poems of this group appear scattered in the manuscripts can be related to the peculiar transmission history of Psellos' poems. As we have observed (p. 38), the inclusion of Psellos' didactic poems in manuscripts was related to the particular thematic focus of that manuscript. A synopsis that treated several themes together was likely to have been torn up to suit the more specific needs of the manuscript compiler.

### 3.1.3 Mauropous' old preface

The poetry collection *par excellence* of the eleventh century in fact still shows the traces of a smaller and older collection.<sup>8</sup> The first introductory poem (Mauropous I) to the *Vat. Gr.* 676 is the tangible, and deliberate, vestige of that collection. It is a strange poem: it seems to fall apart in two parts that apparently contradict each other.

The first fourteen lines, if taken apart, constitute a typical *sphragis* of Mauropous to his works. The first line reads: 'This is the care and the work of Ioannes,' a typical phrase to confirm the authorship of a work. The following verses (v. 2–7), surprisingly, elaborate on the fact that Mauropous is 'a man who shuns a second name' (v. 2): he has no honorary function and consequently, one cannot identify him further. Mauropous refers here to the habit to name persons always in one breath with their official titles, which is to him not applicable.

That Mauropous says he holds no office, is of course absurd at the time of the 'edition' of the *Vat. Gr.* 676:<sup>9</sup> since he held the title of metropolitan of Euchaita at that time, Mauropous could easily have referred to this title, if this poem were an introduction to his 'final' collection.

Only one minor office he seems to have occupied (v. 8–14):

Οὐκοῦν ἄμοιρος προσθέτων ἐπωνύμων  
 Τῆ κυρία κλήσει δὲ κοσμεῖται μόνη·  
 Πλὴν εἴ τις αὐτὸν ἐν θεοῦ διακόνοις  
 Τάττων, ἐκεῖθεν μείζονα κλήσιν νέμοι,  
 Φέρουσαν οὐδὲν εἰς διάγνωσιν πλέον.  
 Σὺ δ' εἰ θέλεις, τρίσσευε τὸν τοῦ Κλαυδίου·  
 Φθόνος γὰρ οὐδεὶς πατρικῶν γνωρισμάτων.

So, deprived from additional names,  
 He is adorned only with a personal name,  
 Except if someone, by ranging him under the *diakonoι* of God,  
 Would grant him this way a more elevated designation,  
 Which would however not provide any more evidence to identify  
 him.

<sup>8</sup>Some preliminary remarks about this collection can be found in Bernard, "The Circulation of Poetry in 11th-century Byzantium".

<sup>9</sup>At any rate after 1055 and his appointment as a metropolitan; see Anastasi, "Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita".

But if you wish, you may give him a third name: ‘the nephew of  
the bishop of Klaudios’,  
For there can be no objection against family names.

I take these verses to mean that if someone would have wanted to attribute a more imposing title to Mauropous, he could possibly refer to his title of *διάκονος*. This refers to the clerical function of ‘deacon’, a rather low function we know Mauropous held from around 1030.<sup>10</sup> Apart from his forename and this title, one may also give him a third name, that of ‘the one of Klaudios’. This does not refer to his birth place or father, but to the bishopric of his uncle. It is a Byzantine convention to name persons without major function after the see their uncle governs as a bishop, with after an inflected article the genitive *τοῦ* followed by the name of the see of the uncle.<sup>11</sup> This name serves here effectively as a family name, a *πατρικὸν γνώρισμα*, as Mauropous calls it here. Moreover, we also know from Psellos’ *enkomion* that Mauropous’s uncle was metropolitan of Klaudiopolis.<sup>12</sup>

Between lines 14 and 15, there is a sudden and abrupt change, turning upside down the information stated just before:

Πάλαι μὲν οὕτως. ἀλλὰ νῦν οὕτω πάλιν·  
Ποιμὴν μὲν οἰκτρὸς Εὐχαιτῶν ὁ γράφων,  
Ἔστιν δὲ καὶ σύγκελλος·

15

So it was before. But now, on the contrary, it is as follows:  
The author is not only the pitiful pastor of the Euchaitans,  
But also *synkellos*. (...)

The phrase ‘So it was before’ puts the preceding verses in another perspective. There is a chronological distance between the two parts of the poem. Now, that is, at the moment when the second part of the poem is written, he is metropolitan of Euchaita, which of course makes a sensible difference: Mauropous has now an office he can pride himself on. The first part of the poem dates from an earlier period in his life, before his appointment. Indeed, according to the *enkomion* of Psellos for his friend, he warded off all offices for a long time, even when he had already attained influence with the emperor.<sup>13</sup>

The poem is consequently not to be considered as one single poem. This is also indicated by its presentation in the manuscript (see fig ??). There is a cross and some free space to separate these two poems from each other (fol. Iv). So, there are in fact two poems; the edition of de Lagarde, printing the two parts without any other separation than a (fortuitous?) page break, is somewhat misleading at this point.

<sup>10</sup>Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup>As correctly observed by *ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Psellos, *Orationes Panegyricae*, ed. by G. T. Dennis, BT, Leipzig 1998 (henceforth cited as Psellos, *Or. Pan.*), or. 17, l. 102.

<sup>13</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 17.425–471. Cf. also the chapter ‘Ambitions’.

The first poem (let us call it Ia) is in itself a typical ‘book epigram’, permeated by the motif of humbleness, and hinting obliquely at the name of the author. Since it so emphatically introduces a collection, it must have served as the introductory epigram for another collection, composed at a time when Mauropous had not yet attained his honorary function as a metropolitan of Euchaita.

Consequently, we have here two book epigrams for two different poetry collections. The first served in fact for an older edition. But Mauropous included it also in his later, ultimate edition, as a truthful relict of the times back then. In the second preface, he contrasted his situation in that past period (πάλαι) to his situation now. This way, he demonstrates indirectly the vicissitudes of life, juxtaposing a quiet life free of troubles with a public life full of responsibilities. This opposition is a recurrent motif in his works, and is often exemplified by the adoption of older poems—poem 93, the recantation of poem 92, is another example (cf. *infra*).

### 3.1.4 Cycles of epigrams

It is impossible to establish which poems this older collection could have contained, but there is a block of poems within Mauropous’ collection that are at any rate closely connected with each other.

After poem 1, the *Vat. Gr.* 676 has the general title Εἰς πίνακας μεγάλαι τῶν ἑορτῶν· ὡς ἐν τύπῳ ἐκφράσεως, and at the bottom of the page, the name of the poet is repeated. This title obviously does not refer to one poem, but to a series of poems, since poem 2 has a title of its own. The specification ἑορτῶν at first sight covers only poems 2 to 11, since only these poems describe Lord’s feasts, while the following poems treat prophets, saints, and events from saints’ lives. As a result, only the sequence from 2 to 11 is traditionally seen as an autonomous thematic unity.<sup>14</sup> However, if we consider the greater sequence from poem 2 to poem 26, which are all religious epigrams on works of art, we see that each single poem within this series addresses a different religious subject. These subjects form together a complete iconographic religious cycle, consisting of Lord’s Feasts (2–11), saints and prophets, sometimes placed within a biblical scene (12–25), and as a concluding piece, an epigram on the Saviour (26). This cycle is complete on its own, and the heading above poem 2, although not exactly correct, must apply to this whole cycle.<sup>15</sup> These poems are in fact a poetic pendant to depictions in a Byzantine church, treating progressively first the feasts on the vaults (the most visible place), then the saints and hagiographic scenes on the walls, and ultimately the Pantokrator, to be found high above in the dome.

Poem 26 on the Pantokrator is to be imagined as the highest piece also in an iconographic sense: it crowns the whole group. This final piece is also the one that refers to a patron: Georgios, the brother of Michael IV, who

<sup>14</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 64; Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 79.

<sup>15</sup>For this view, see also Anastasi, “Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita”, 127–128, without further comment.

out of his ‘pious faith’ (26.3: πίστις εὐσεβῆς) has undertaken this very depiction (referred to with ἐνταῦθα). This must refer to the patron of the whole iconographic project.<sup>16</sup> This historical reference confirms the hypothesis that Mauropous here reproduces an entire cycle without any adaptations, a cycle that is connected with an art project funded by Georgios.

Poems 2 to 26 are in this respect perfectly similar to other contemporary epigram cycles.<sup>17</sup> A comparison of this cycle’s structure with that of the cycle of epigrams found in three manuscripts from around 1100 (the DOP 46 cycle), can make this clear.<sup>18</sup> This cycle bears the similar general title Στίχοι διάφοροι εἰς τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας τῶν ἑορτῶν, and has a parallel structure: after epigrams on Lord’s feasts (1–17) follow some epigrams on miracle scenes from the New Testament (18–32). The title of this cycle too merely refers to ἑορτῶν, which also does not exactly fit the second part. In this case too, there is no marked distinction in the manuscripts between both parts,<sup>19</sup> so the reference to ἑορταί in the title covers here other religious scenes as well. This cycle is as well believed to be a literary pendant to an iconographic cycle of inscriptions in a church,<sup>20</sup> which is borne out by the indication εἰκόνας in the heading to the cycle.

Also the DOP 48 cycle<sup>21</sup> is clearly a commission for an iconographic program, either of miniatures in a manuscript or frescoes in a church.<sup>22</sup> Just like Mauropous’ cycle and the DOP 46 cycle, this cycle does not confine itself to Lord’s Feasts proper, but includes various scenes from the New Testament.

Cycles of epigrams still attached to their iconographic program are no longer extant in eleventh-century churches; only books with miniature cycles are often (but not always) accompanied by epigrams. In contrast to Mauropous’ cycle and the DOP 46 cycle, no cycle covers a complete iconographic project, but, logically, only images connected with the content of the book. A series of epigrams with miniatures is for example to be found in the psalter *Berlin. Univers. 3807 (XIc.)*.<sup>23</sup> Most epigrams are connected with Old Testament scenes, but there are also epigrams associated with an image of the Theotokos with the Three Hierarchs (fol. 2v). Another cycle of epigrams is a series of iambic titles of the Odes, found, amongst others, in the *Bodl. Clarke 15*,<sup>24</sup> and *Dumbarton Oaks Cod. Gr. 3*,<sup>25</sup> in the latter manuscript,

<sup>16</sup>Pace Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 81, who holds that only this image was funded by Georgios. In that case, it remains unclear why the patrons of all other epigrams are not named, and why this indication of patronage occurs exactly in this last epigrammatic piece.

<sup>17</sup>For epigram cycles in general, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 166–196.

<sup>18</sup>Edited in Hörandner, “Zyklus”; and Pagonari-Antoniou, “Τα βυζαντινά επιγράμματα των κωδικίων Βατοπεδίου 36, Marc. Gr. 507 καὶ Ζαγοράς 115”.

<sup>19</sup>Hörandner, “Zyklus”, p. 108.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 113–115.

<sup>21</sup>Hörandner, “A Cycle of Epigrams on the Lord’s Feasts in Cod. Marc. Gr. 524”.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>23</sup>G. Stuhlfauth, “A Greek Psalter with Byzantine Miniatures”, *The Art Bulletin* 15.4 (1933), pp. 311–326.

<sup>24</sup>Gaisford, *Catalogus sive notitia manuscriptorum qui a cel. E. D. Clarke comparati in bibliotheca bodleiana adservantur*, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup>S. d. Nersessian, “A Psalter and New Testament Manuscript at Dumbarton Oaks”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19 (1965), pp. 153–183.

these epigrams (which are wide-spread and surely not of eleventh-century origin) accompany miniatures.

We can conclude that the epigram cycle, a form that was already popular in earlier centuries,<sup>26</sup> survived in the eleventh century. Just like earlier, the cycles are closely connected with iconographic projects in churches or books. Mauropous 2 to 26 is arguably such a cycle, reproducing an iconographic—and poetic—project funded during the reign of Michael IV (1034–1041). Could it have circulated in that time as a separate collection, perhaps accompanied by poem Ia, the ‘old preface’? This would also explain the repetition of the author name added to the title above poem 2, but conclusive evidence is absent.

### 3.2 The Vat. Gr. 676: an intellectual and material creation

The *Vat. Gr. 676* (=C) is arguably one of the few true poetry books from Byzantium, perhaps even the only one, if we understand the notion ‘poetry book’ as a collection of poetry where the separate poems are not only collected, but also purposefully selected, arranged, and placed in meaningful contact with each other, guided by a unified aesthetic purpose.

The manuscript must have been written around the time of Mauropous’ death. The precise date of his death is a matter of contention, but 1078 is a sound fixing point.<sup>27</sup> The manuscript as a whole contains all the works of Mauropous, divided into three parts: poetry, letters, and orations. It counts 317 folia, made up of 41 quires, each regular quaternions, that is, containing eight folia. However, the sixth quire contains only two folia (fol. 41–42), so that the end of this quire coincides with the end of the poetry part (fol. 42r). This last folium of the poetic part contains only a few verses; the rest of the folium was cut out. Apparently, conscious efforts were made to have the end of the quire coincide with the important generic division between poetry and prose.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the book is surrounded by additional material that intends to present and organise the main body of the text. At the beginning, three loose folia are attached before the first quire. They contain some verses by Mauropous (poems I–IV), giving an introduction to the purpose and circumstances of his works (I will return to these verses shortly hereafter). As de Lagarde remarks,<sup>29</sup> these poems are written in the same majuscule letter type as the titles and marginal notes of the main manuscript. The use of a majuscule type for these verses highlights their function as paratextual material, that is,

<sup>26</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 166–196.

<sup>27</sup>See Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, pp. 49–50; Kazhdan, “Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II”, pp. 363–364.

<sup>28</sup>For these codicological data, see Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum quae ... supersunt*, p. iv.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. v.



'book epigrams'.<sup>30</sup> The three loose folia, which are also not numbered, close with a table of contents. This introductory material is written by the same hand (labeled C1 by de Lagarde) as the main text.

At the end of the manuscript, two loose folia are attached that come from another manuscript<sup>31</sup> and are written by a different hand. Contrary to what de Lagarde thought, this intervention was not made at a later time: the handwriting is in fact contemporary with the rest of the manuscript;<sup>32</sup> the addition of the folia was therefore also made at the time of the composition of the manuscript. These folia, belonging to the book, but in a sense taking distance from it, show a kind of poetic blurb, lavishing praise on the book and its author, who has managed to combine three literary genres. The author of this poem presents himself as Hesaias, the secretary (ὑπομνηματογράφος) of Mauropous.

The codicological and graphical features of the introductory poems I–IV and Hesaias' poem ensure that these poems appear as manifestly not a part of the main body of the text. Physically encapsulating the main text, they also mentally and interpretatively form a shell around the collection, steering the presuppositions with which the reader sets on to read the book.

They share also some motifs with conventional book epigrams. Typical is the stress on πόνος, designating the toilsome writing work of the scribes, but here rather referring to the result of a creative process; see Mauropous I.1: Ἰωάννου φρόντισμα ταῦτα καὶ πόνος and V.1: Ἰωάννου πόνοι τε καὶ λόγοι τάδε. Also the riddle-like introduction to Mauropous' name in poem I is fairly frequent in book epigrams. Mauropous presents himself indirectly as responsible for both the material writing of his works and for the intellectual creation of them.

Poems II–IV are grouped together on a separate page under the heading 'on his own book' (Εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βιβλίον). The main thought that pervades these poems, is the fear of the author that the book will not be read and remain silent (see also p. 27). The author takes a particularly pessimistic and humble stance towards his own works and their relevance. The readers seem to be invited to test these negative allegations by reading the works of Mauropous.

These concerns are resolved in the poem by Hesaias coming at the very end of the book. It addresses Mauropous' book as follows (l. 3–5):

θησαυρὲ πολλῶν ζωτικῶν παιδευμάτων  
 ἰθυνηκὴ τε καὶ τρόπων σοφῶν νέων,  
 τοὺς ἀκροατὰς διδασχάεις σὺ σεμνύνεις.<sup>33</sup>

Treasury of many lively lessons,  
 And guide of new and wise manners  
 You exalt the listeners with your instructions.

<sup>30</sup>See p. 33.

<sup>31</sup>So Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani Graeci vol. III. Codices 604-866*, p. 130.

<sup>32</sup>N. Wilson, "Books and Readers in Byzantium", in: *Byzantine Books and Bookmen. A Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium*, Washington 1975, pp. 1–15.

<sup>33</sup>Hesaias' poem, Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum quae ... supersunt*, p. iv–v.

Hesaias prepares the response of the readers to the concerns expressed by Mauropous in the introductory poems: his writings are surely of use for the moral elevation of their readership. As a result, Hesaias' poem and the introductory poems form together a frame of question and response, guiding the reader in interpreting Mauropous' works. Of course, the positive judgement pronounced on Mauropous' writings could not come from himself: this would run counter to his image of humbleness. The secretary, by contrast, was in the right position to pronounce praise, declaring Mauropous, thanks to this collection, the champion 'of all men that bring offers to *hoi logoi*.'<sup>34</sup>

The question of Hesaias' different handwriting brings us to the complicated question of the circumstances of the role of C in the collective project of Mauropous' works. Since Hesaias presents himself as the *ὑπομνηματογράφος* of Mauropous (v. 31), he must have been entrusted with the task of writing down what Mauropous dictated. So he would have been the likely candidate to have written the manuscript. But since his handwriting is markedly different, he was *not* scribe C1.<sup>35</sup> Wilson has established that Mauropous was *not* the physical scribe of the book, since there are some textual variants in the margin by the same hand that wrote the main text.<sup>36</sup> For the same reason (the transcription errors and variants in the margin), it can also not be a 'master copy', that is, a manuscript dictated by Mauropous: C must be an apograph from another manuscript.<sup>37</sup> Also, Anastasi proposed that it would be absurd to posit that Mauropous had planned two different anthologies: Hesaias' poem, although coming originally from another book, must refer to this very edition. It is also quite sure that he was the scribe of his own poem, as he confirms at the end that 'Hesaias dares to write this for you // your loyal servant and secretary'.<sup>38</sup>

Now, from which book come the separate leaves with Hesaias' poem? We need to keep in mind that Hesaias was Mauropous' secretary. It is likely that he was in this capacity the scribe of the original 'master copy', perhaps the archetype of C. The loose folia with his poem in his own handwriting may come from this archetype. The work was then transcribed, perhaps because by this time the need had emerged to produce another manuscript. This work was done by C1, who cannot be identified. This process brought necessarily some errors which were later corrected: at one point, a manifest mistake has been corrected.<sup>39</sup> When scribe C1 had finished this work, someone decided to tear the poem of Hesaias from the archetype and to add it to C. The different handwriting of this addition, which would appear as authentic, at any rate would have heightened the credibility of this 'blurb'. If we assume that the

<sup>34</sup>Hesaias' poem, v. 28: πάντων κατ' ἀνδρῶν τῶν θυόντων τοῖς λόγοις.

<sup>35</sup>Contrary to Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 55; see R. Anastasi, "Su Giovanni d'Euchaita", *Siculorum Gymnasium* 29 (1976), pp. 19–49.

<sup>36</sup>Wilson, "Books and Readers in Byzantium", pp. 12–13.

<sup>37</sup>Anastasi, "Su Giovanni d'Euchaita", pp. 21–22.

<sup>38</sup>Hesaias' poem, v. 30–31: Ἡσαίας δὲ ταῦτά σοι θαρρῶν γράφει, // πιστὸς λάτρις οὗς ὑπομνηματογράφος.

<sup>39</sup>To wit, the change of πίπτοντες into the correct form πίπτουσαι in or. 185, p. 167, l. 6. See Anastasi, "Su Giovanni d'Euchaita", p. 21.

'master copy' remained in the hands of its editors, C is more like a 'presentation copy', neatly designed and consciously encapsulated with authenticating material.

Apart from this external organisation, it is beyond any doubt that Maupous carefully thought out the editing and the composition of his collection. This is testified both by his own words and by internal evidence. In poem 1, he makes clear that he made only a selection of his works, as a 'small taste of an abundant flower bouquet' (v. 29). Poem 99, bearing the title 'on the corrected books', also gives proof of an editorial reworking. In that poem, Maupous states that he has rendered the book a service, and has cured the illnesses in it. This refers obviously to a thorough revision in order to accomplish a final product.

There are indeed traces to be found of works being revised before they were copied into the *Vat. Gr.* 676. Oration 178, notably, exists in two versions, one in C, and one quite different version, also found in an eleventh-century manuscript. Anastasi has argued that the version in C is a stylistic revision of the initial version, which is preserved in the other manuscript.<sup>40</sup>

The *Vat. Gr.* 676 is, as Agapitos rightly remarked, a synthesis between a material object and an aesthetic subject, comparable only to some other manuscripts that comprised the work of one author: intellectual and material creation go hand in hand in the form of the book, itself the form in which Λόγος became flesh.<sup>41</sup> As we have seen, the introductory poems of Maupous highlight this unity between form and content and between physical writing work and intellectual creation.

### 3.3 Maupous' poetry book: a life in verse

Apart from the external interventions in the lay-out of the manuscript, the internal organisation of the poetic part reveals a conscious and well thought out arrangement quite unique for Byzantine poetic collections.

The poems are numbered in the edition of de Lagarde from 1 to 99. The number of 99 may imply a deliberate purpose, since by means of isopsephy, it equals the word ἀμήν. But there is a problem. In the *pinax* of the *Vat. Gr.* 676 (fol. III),<sup>42</sup> the poems are mentioned as follows: Στίχοι διάφοροι 97, that is, 98 poems. As de Lagarde notices in the critical apparatus, the number is added by a second hand. Either this person has made a miscalculation, either the poems were indeed counted as 98. But there is no couple of poems that can be counted as one, since the end of each poem is indicated in the manuscript with a horizontal dash in the margin and the beginning by a greater initial.

The only poem that may not have been counted as a poem belonging to the collection proper, is poem 1. As a 'preface to the whole book', it may have been considered to stand apart from the tripartition in poems, letters

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 24–26.

<sup>41</sup>Agapitos, "Η θέση της αισθητικής αποτίμησης σε μια 'νέα' ιστορία της βυζαντινής λογοτεχνίας", pp. 207–208; see also Bianconi, "Et le livre s'est fait poésie".

<sup>42</sup>See Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum quae ... supersunt*, p. vi.

and orations. In contrast to the separation between other poems, there is a decorative line under the poem, and poem 2 has in C an initial letter that is larger and more ornate than the other ones. Also, the name of Mauropus is mentioned at this very point. Poem 1, in that case, occupies a peculiar status somewhere between the introductory poems, which are, unlike poem 1, written in majuscules, and the poems proper. In view of our hypothesis about the history of C, we might suggest that poem 1 was originally the preface of the ‘master copy’. In this scenario, the *Vat. Gr.* 676 forms yet another encapsulation of this original book, by means of poems I–IV and Hesaias’ poem. The indication of the number of 98 poems might give some weight to this possibility.

What regards the arrangement of poems in the poetic section, Lauxtermann discerned a circular thematic structure in the poetry book: apart from the opening and closing poems 1 and 99, there are three great parts, of which the first (2–42) and the third (71–98) contain five thematic cycles mirroring each other.<sup>43</sup> However, these parts do not mirror each other symmetrically: for example, a long cycle in the first part of epigrams on works of art (12–26), corresponds with two short cycles in the second part (71–80 and 86–88). Also, a significant part of the collection (43–70) apparently does not form part of the thematic arrangement, although within this part too one could detect a ‘cycle’ on epigrams on works of art (62–65). It appears therefore that this ‘architectonic’ generic organisation of the poetry collection was not quite rigorously carried out.

An alternative way to approach the arrangement of the collection is to read it not generically, but from the viewpoint of the author’s interest in constructing a self-representative image. In this case, it may be read progressively, and not symmetrically. Poems 1 and 99 remain border points that respond to each other. But also these poems suggest an autobiographical message that ought to be read in a progressive direction.

### 3.3.1 The ideal of *metron*

The first poem steers the readers in their perception of the collection and its connection with the historical person Ioannes Mauropus. Central to this poem is the notion μέτρον. The poet goes to great lengths to express his devotion to this ideal (v. 1–5):

Πάλα διδασχθεῖς ὡς ἄριστον πᾶν μέτρον,  
 τά τ’ ἄλλα πάντα μετριάζω, καὶ λόγους.  
 οἱ γὰρ περιττοὶ τῶν περιττῶν εἰκότως  
 χρήζειν δοκοῦσι πραγμάτων τε καὶ λόγων·  
 ἔμοι δὲ—μικρῶ—πραγμάτων μικρὸς λόγος·

5

Having learnt earlier that every kind of *metron* is supreme,  
 I measure everything else, and also my words;  
 For excessive people fittingly appear

<sup>43</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 64–65.

To have need of excessive things and words;  
But I—small as I am—have only a small concern for things.

5

Of course, this can be seen as a conventional variation on the *topos* of μέγα βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν. But it also refers to the ethical ideal of moderateness, an ideal to be sought after both in life and in literature.

Apart from the signification of ‘moderation’, both in words and in deeds, μέτρον connotes of course meter, and thus poetry. This double sense of μέτρον of ‘moral measure’ and ‘metrical measure’ has also been exploited in a programmatic poem by Gregorios of Nazianzos (II.1.39: εἰς τὰ ἔμμετρα), a great example for Mauropous.<sup>44</sup> The maxim expressed in the first line, ἄριστον πᾶν μέτρον, therefore combines the glorification of poetry with a universally recognised ethical ideal.

It is understood that people who use excessive words, are in need of excessive things: greed and overweening ambition urge people to use words in a similar manner. From this point of view, the verbosity despised in this poem is an effect of gluttonous ambition. The ‘metrical’ qualities of words are brought in connection with the ethical qualities of life. This way, his readers read his ‘measured’ words against the background of a ‘measured’ life.

This double attachment to ‘measure’ is picked up in poem 99, where Mauropous says that now he has cured the illnesses of his works, but he himself is succumbing to the ἀμετρία, the imbalance, of his body. The poem revolves around this antithesis:

99. *Εἰς τὰ διορθωθέντα βιβλία.*

Καλὴν δεδωκῶς ταῖς βίβλοις ὑπουργίαν,  
αὐτὸς πονηρὰν ἀντιλαμβάνω χάριν·  
τῶν μὲν γὰρ ἤδη τὰς νόσους ἰασάμην,  
ἐγὼ δὲ συντέτηρα καὶ κακῶς ἔχω,  
κόπων τὸ σῶμα συντριβεῖς ἀμετρία.  
ἀλλ' οἱ τρυφῶντες ἐν πόνοις ἀλλοτριῶς  
καὶ ταῖς ἑμαῖς πλέοντες εὐδία ζάλαις,  
πρὸς κύριον μέμνησθε τοῦ κεκημηκότος.

5

99. *On the corrected books*

While I have done these books a good service,  
I myself have received in exchange a sour reward.  
For I may have cured now the illnesses in those books,  
But I pine away and I am in a deplorable state,  
My body being worn out by unmeasurable efforts.  
But you who rejoice in works of others

5

<sup>44</sup>R. Anastasi, “Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita”, *Sicilorum Gymnasium* 22 (1969), pp. 109–144, p. 118.

And sail quietly in my storms,  
Remember this exerted man in front of the Lord.

As Bianconi has shown, poem 99 exhibits many features of book epigrams by scribes at the end of the book they have written.<sup>45</sup> The demand towards the readers to remember the scribe in exchange for his labour, and the imagery of the sea journey are indeed typical for closing book epigrams.

The poem also displays the typical Byzantine ideal of immaterial virtue procured at the cost of neglecting bodily and worldly values. By positioning the poem at this place in the collection, the process of physical exertion in exchange for spiritual well-being does not apply only to the correction of the books, but indeed to the composition of the whole collection. The antagonism μέτρον – ἀμετρία acquires the value of a lifetime devotion: Mauropous has given his physical strength for the sake of μέτρον. The word πόνος again fully exploits its double meaning of ‘work’ and ‘painful effort’. Just as a scribe at the end of his book, we see here the author of the works at the end of his physical and intellectual work. This martyr-like ending invites the reader even more to read the poetry collection as a parallel to the life of its author. He has given his energy to the service of his poetry, exemplified in the toilsome writing work, but also in service of the moral elevation of his readers, who will reap profit from Mauropous’ difficulties (his ‘storms’).

### 3.3.2 A biographical logic

This parallelism between life and works, as I would like to argue, is also the prime principle behind the order of the poems. Anastasi has already remarked that this order is more or less chronological, albeit not entirely or consistently.<sup>46</sup> Chronology is indeed not the prime principle of arrangement, but there is a certain biographical logic, which I will attempt to demonstrate by dividing the book in another way, not by genre, but by different types of self-representation.

The first quarter (2–26) of poems, as we have seen, is a consistent whole. The reference to Michael IV makes clear that it is set in an earlier period of Mauropous’ life. The author is not emphatically present in these poems; he is only the epigrammatist. Poem 17 shows us a short glimpse of ‘this’ Mauropous: he names the Three Hierarchs as his teacher and his masters: Ioannes himself is still a servile pupil.<sup>47</sup>

Poems 27 to 34, a group consisting of *programmata* to other works and literary polemics, show us instead an author already conscious of his intellectual achievements. He circulates in a milieu of teachers and other poets and tries his best to prove his worth. Self-awareness and self-assertion are more prominent in these poems.

<sup>45</sup>Bianconi, “Et le livre s’est fait poésie”, pp. 34–35.

<sup>46</sup>Anastasi, “Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita”, providing a chronological framework of the poems.

<sup>47</sup>Mauropous, 17.7–8: ταύτην ἀμοιβήν τοῖς διδασκάλοις νέμει // εὐνοῦς μαθητῆς οἰκέτης Ἰωάννης.

The group from poem 35 to poem 42 are epitaphs, for Michael the deacon, vestarches Andronikos, Ioannes the chartophylax, a *proteuon*, and also himself. They prove that the author has a circle of high-ranking friends, which confirms the growing social status of the author. These friends are said to be held in high esteem, but, significantly, there is no mention yet of contact with emperors.

In poems 44 and 45, the emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos is mentioned for the first time, but as a distant and awe-inspiring figure. In poem 47, announcing his farewell from his house, Mauropous gives a more full self-representation. He appears as a devoted intellectual, an arduous and successful teacher. Poem 48 expresses thankfulness for the emperor for getting his house back. This poem suggests for the first time a narrow contact with the emperor. Also, self-representation is immediately linked to the theme of the vicissitudes of life, exemplified in poems seemingly contradicting each other.

After this couple of poems come some various pieces (49–53). They give proof of a stronger polemical engagement. Poem 49 is a poem on a religious subject, but unlike in the epigrams in group 2–26, Mauropous adopts a polemical stance, arguing against the anathema on Theodoretos of Kyr. He also conducts a polemic against someone who tore apart his own manuscript (poems 51–52), and in response to some slanderers of the emperor and the patriarch, he pledges his support in favour of the rulers (poem 53).

These poems are followed by poem 54, the longest poem of the collection, entitled 'When he first got to know the emperors'. It describes Mauropous' reaction upon his first introduction at court. This moment is flatteringly described as a turning point in his life (vv. 64–67, 72–73):

ἄγροικος ἦν χθές, ἀστικὸς δὲ νῦν μάλα  
κάτω νενευκῶς, ἀλλὰ νῦν ἄνω βλέπων· 65  
ἄθυμος, ἀλλ' εὐθυμος, ἠδονῆς γέμων·  
μικρὸς, κατηφής, νῦν δὲ λαμπρὸς καὶ μέγας·  
(...)

οὕτω με παντάπασιν ἐξ ἄλλου τέως 72  
ἔδειξεν ἄλλον ἢ παναλκῆς σου χάρις·

I was boorish yesterday, but now I am quite refined;  
I looked downcast, but now I look upwards; 65  
I was somber, but now I am cheerful, full of gladness;  
I was inconsiderable and disheartened, but now shining and great!  
(...)

So has your all-mighty grace in every respect 72  
Made me another person than the one before.

Just like this introduction at court is a turning point in Mauropous' life, so is poem 54 a turning point in the collection: at this point begins a series of poems in which Mauropous emerges as a courtier and imperial orator (poems 54–58), and even as a *porte-parole* of the emperor and the empress Theodora (poems 71–79). This gives proof of his high social profile and imperial connections.

The group comprises several chronological phases of Mauropous' life: poem 57 is an epigram on an icon in Euchaita, and was probably written when he was already appointed there as a metropolitan,<sup>48</sup> while other poems (69, 71, and 80) treat places in Constantinople that have a connection to Monomachos. This shows that the type of life that is being exemplified is more important for the order of the poems than a strict chronological principle.

With poems 75 to 79, on a *Deesis* depicting the emperor prostrated before Christ, and certainly with poems 81 to 85, funeral poems for the emperor, another tone prevails: that of the futility and imperfection of human life. This forms the basis for the εἰς ἑαυτόν-poems (89–92), proclaiming a life stance of tranquillity. This philosophy will eventually be refuted by his appointment, as poem 93 makes clear: the quiet intellectual life that was in danger in poem 47, but gained back in poem 48, was eventually irreconcilable with an ambitious life aimed at social promotion and worldly success.

In the last poems (94–99), it is again Mauropous the author who emerges, not as a hired epigrammatist or orator, but as a skilful and independent author. He asserts his authorship of the *Neara* in poem 94, prides himself on his ability to quickly rewrite an oration in poem 95 (referring to or. 181 and 182), suggests his capacity to write a sincere and possibly harmful *Chronographia* (poem 96), and was a critical copyist (poems 97–98). These editorial and auctorial activities culminate in a poem that shows him correcting and preparing his own works at the expense of his health (poem 99).

We may conclude that the principal force behind the arrangement has to be sought in the autobiographical component of the collection. Not so much the chronological phases in Mauropous' life are opposed to each other, but rather different types of life. Each part of this self-image is represented in groups of poems, which move over into each other:

- 2–26: the poet in service of others
- 27–53: the teacher and intellectual; 48–52 preparing . . .
- 54–88: the courtier and official imperial orator; 81–88 preparing . . .
- 89–93: crisis of these two life types (intellectual and courtier)
- 94–99: Mauropous as autonomous author and martyr of his cause

The unifying story behind the collection is that of someone wanting to keep up his integrity as an intellectual, but suddenly overcome with worldly success. This results in a crisis, and the admission that such a union is in fact not possible. With the last poem, Mauropous hopes nevertheless that the reader can learn something from the example of his life.

<sup>48</sup>Kazhdan, "Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II", p. 368–369, does not believe that Mauropous has written this epigram in Euchaita, but still in Constantinople, working in the capital chancellery; see the convincing refutation in A. Karpozilos, "The Biography of Ioannes Mauropous Again", *Hellenika* 44 (1994), pp. 51–60, pp. 51–52.



### 3.3.3 Discontinuity exposed

Each of the poems makes up an authentic part of this evolution. The poems still speak from their own original perspective, which is carefully preserved as such. This feature is reinforced by leaving the names of dead emperors as they were: both Michael IV and Monomachos, who were the subject of some animosity and rejection after their deaths, are mentioned and extolled. For the reader of the collection, who is to be situated at the earliest in the later decennia of the eleventh century,<sup>49</sup> these poems would therefore appear as authentic, 'historical' documents. They are apparently presented without hindsight. With other words, the method by which Mauropous attains his message, is to leave the poems as they were, and to let them speak from their distinctive past perspective.

This impression is still more reinforced by couples of poems in which the second poem has to recant and revise the view expressed in the first poem. A first example is the pair of poems on Mauropous' house; but here not an opinion is reversed, but rather an unpredictable turn of events registered. More poignant is the pair of poems 92 and 93. An 'appointment' forms the watershed between both. In poem 92, Mauropous' reason eloquently tries to convince his soul to hold fast to its principles and resist the temptations and dangers of an appointment. He reasons that glory, wealth and renown are only timely values, bound to wither and decay. In the end, this reasoning seems to prevail: the crisis brought on by the lure of an appointment is sedated: "Well done! We hold out! No storm anymore! The rough sea is brought to rest."<sup>50</sup>

Poem 93 is entitled 'Recantation of those words, after his appointment'. Apparently, Mauropous' decision to refuse the offer and hold fast to an intellectual life, was made in vain: he has been appointed.<sup>51</sup> He has to admit in the first verse of poem 93 that 'those words (that is, poem 92) of mine are not truthful.'<sup>52</sup> But he stresses that, even if it appeared that they have not become truth, they were still spoken in good faith (v. 5–7):

ἐρῶ δὲ μάλλον ὥς ὁ μὲν λόγος μένει,  
ἢ πραγμάτων φύσις δὲ τὴν τροπὴν ἔχει.  
ἄνθρωπος ὦν, ἄνθρωπε, μηδὲν φῆς μέγα.

5

I would rather say that those words remain,  
But that the nature of events has brought about the turn.  
Being a human, oh human, do not speak idle words.

5

<sup>49</sup>Anastasi, "Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita", p. 135–136. The year 1055 (death of Monomachos) is a certain *terminus post quem*.

<sup>50</sup>Mauropous, 92.102–3: Εὖγε. κρατοῦμεν. οὐκέτι τρικυμία. // ἐξημέρωται πόντος ἡγριωμένος.

<sup>51</sup>P. Volpe Cacciatore, "I carmi 'autobiografici' di Giovanni Mauropode", in: *Scritti in onore di Italo Gallo*, ed. by L. Torraca, Napoli 2002, pp. 561–569, p. 568, holds it that in poem 92 Mauropous already implicitly expresses his desire to become a metropolitan; this would flagrantly run counter to the palinodic aspect of poem 93.

<sup>52</sup>Mauropous, 93.1: Οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἀτρεκῆς οὔτος λόγος, a citation from Stesichorus' *παλινφιδία*; see Plato's *Phaedrus*, 244a.

‘Those words’, that is, poem 92, may remain as a sincere testimony to an opinion held by the author: they were no lies. The poem is a sincere piece of personal thoughts, voiced from their particular perspective at a moment of Mauropous’ life; therefore, they may ‘remain’ as such. But the author saw himself constrained to recant these words because an unpredictable turn of events made them futile. The contrast between these two captures of the state of mind of Mauropous, is a testimony to the unpredictability of life (10–11: *μάρτυς δὲ τούτων αὐτὸς οὗτος ὁ γράφων, παθῶν, μαθῶν τε καὶ παλιλλογῶν τάδε*). It is the very incoherence between the two poems that forms their message, that is, an unpredictable and uncontrollable turn of events can urge men to change opinions and abandon previously held principles. Their very discontinuity is a token of man’s powerlessness and futile ambitions.

So, these poems acquire their exemplary force by being presented as authentic pieces, left the way they were. This also applies to the poems that testify to Mauropous’ worldly success: in hindsight of Mauropous’ miserable state now, the reader can easily conclude to what this success has led him. In the last poem, Mauropous indeed expects that the reader can conclude a lesson for his own life: ‘let him take a sufficient example from this case.’ (93.61: *ἐντεῦθεν ἄν παιδευσιν ἀρκοῦσαν λάβοι*).

Lauxtermann concluded that Mauropous’ poems, as separate pieces, are ‘discontinuous stills of a particular event’,<sup>53</sup> but that the form of a collection makes that ‘[r]ather than seeing his poems as discontinuous and fragmented entities, the reader is invited to view them as parts of a meaningful whole.’<sup>54</sup> I would like to add that, while the collection surely forms such a meaningful whole, it does not necessarily do away with the discontinuous nature of the poems. There is a sustained message that is expressed through the discontinuity. I would suggest that the poems *are* intended to be read as snapshots of separate pieces with one single purpose. This purpose of course loses its direct applicability, but not its force as an example for the ethical choices of men. The poetry book’s significance lies in the contrast of these different snapshots. The coherent theme of this poetry book is its very incoherence.

### 3.4 Various verses: Christophoros’ collection

The other 11th-century collection is Christophoros’ collection, but in this case we have no reliable contemporary testimony such as C for Mauropous. The only manuscript to transmit the collection is the *Grottaferrata Z α XXIX*, written in the 13th century. We can be quite sure that the arrangement goes back to the poet himself,<sup>55</sup> who would have ‘published’ one uniform collection, reflected in its entirety, albeit with significant damage, by the Grottaferrata manuscript.

<sup>53</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 65.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>55</sup>Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, p. xvi.

It is easy to see that the datable poems in this collection follow a chronological sequence, stretching from 1034 (poem 8) to around 1045 (poem 95).<sup>56</sup> Poem 143 is a dubious case: it describes a statue of Herakles in the palace called τῶν ἄρετῶν. Since we know that this palace was constructed by Romanos Diogenes (1068–1071), this would push the chronology of Christophoros' poems forward with a few decennia. But as Crimi remarked,<sup>57</sup> the statue could have existed and described before being transferred into the new palace, while a later lemmatist could have supplemented the title.

### 3.4.1 Thematic cycles

This chronological sequence is held responsible for the fact that poems of a very different genre, subject, and form stand next to each other. Oikonomides assumed that Christophoros just copied from a register with duplicates of his works,<sup>58</sup> and also Lauxtermann regarded chronology as the only 'simple method' to organise his material.<sup>59</sup> However, also other principles may have played a role in the arrangement of the collection.<sup>60</sup>

Crimi paid attention to the fact that certain thematic cycles were discernible within the collection;<sup>61</sup> he also pointed out the structural similarity between the funeral cycles for his mother (57–60), and for his sister (75–80).<sup>62</sup> These cycles make clear that poems were not only ordered according to chronology, but also sometimes grouped around an event.

A first thematic cycle is made up by poems 9, 10, and 11.<sup>63</sup> These poems are intimately connected with school life in Constantinople. Poems 9 and 10 praise the school of St. Theodore in Sphorakiou, and its *maistor* Leon, while poem 11 is a venomous attack on Midas, the director of the school of Chalkoprataia. Poems 9 and 10 (as Demoen shows) form a diptych, exhibiting Christophoros' ability to write in different metres and adapt styles to them. Poem 9, written in iambs, elaborates proverbs in a typically iambic gnomologic fashion, whereas poem 10, composed in hexameters, displays an antiquarian Homeric diction and elevated style. This variation in style and metre, I would like to add, is all the more striking because the content structure is mirrored exactly:

<sup>56</sup>For a full overview, see Follieri, "Le poesie di Cristoforo di Mitilene come fonte storica", pp. 135–136. The suggestions of Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, p. 108, Follieri, "Le poesie di Cristoforo di Mitilene come fonte storica", p. 139 to identify the Michael mentioned in poem 112 with emperors Michael IV and Michael VI Stratiotikos respectively, must both be rejected: the epigram obviously exploits the materiality–immateriality antithesis so ubiquitous in epigrams for the archangel Michael. Against the identification of this Michael as the archangel, see also Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 102.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14, n. 19.

<sup>58</sup>Oikonomides, "Life and Society", p. 2.

<sup>59</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 65.

<sup>60</sup>See also Demoen, "Phrasis poikilē", from which many observations will be reiterated here; I have given a very succinct and preliminary treatment in Bernard, "The Circulation of Poetry in 11th-century Byzantium", p. 146.

<sup>61</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>63</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 20; Demoen, "Phrasis poikilē".

poem 9	poem 10	structure
1-2a	1-4	The school stands firmly
2b-3	5-6	Stylianios is one of its pillars
5	7-13	The wise and formidable Leon is its master
6-8	14-17	With Leon as a guide, the students win every contest
9-13	18-21	Leon the 'lion' prevails over every other teacher

Poems 9 and 10 are thus clearly an exercise in treating twice the same subject with different styles and metres. Poem 11 is again composed in dodecasyllables, which ensures that this 'school-cycle' neatly alternates between iambs and hexameters, and praise and blame.

Poems 15 and 16 form another small cycle. Both of these poems are addressed to a certain Melias, holding the title of *parathalassites*. Poem 15 is a short encomiastic epigram, whereas poem 16 is a funeral epigram on the grave of Melias that exhibited a picture of him both as a profane man and as a monk. There must have been a considerable time gap between the composition of those two epigrams: in the meantime, Melias had become a monk, and had died. So, it is probable that Christophoros here broke up the chronological order and grouped together these two epigrams for Melias, thereby achieving an appropriate illustration of the futility of worldly life and values.<sup>64</sup> This example shows most cogently that the principle of chronology was sometimes set aside to achieve a thematic contact between poems.

Another pair of poems is 18 and 19, both for the emperor Michael IV.<sup>65</sup> Here we see again an exercise of metrical variation: poem 18 is composed in iambs, 19 in hexameters. Another, more loose, 'imperial' pair is 54 and 55: the former is an elegant encomiastic piece for Monomachos, while the latter is a poem written on behalf of someone else, addressed to the same emperor.

As I will try to argue in the chapter 'Competitions', also poems 36 to 40 form an organically composed cycle.<sup>66</sup> Poems 95 and 96 too possibly belong together: 95 is an epigram on the church of Saint George in Mangana, while 96, of which the title has been lost, is an epigram on a mosaic floor. Since we know from other sources that the mosaic floor of this particular church was famous, it is reasonable to assume that poem 96 was written for the mosaic floor of Saint George.<sup>67</sup>

The most articulated thematic cycles are the funeral cycles for his deceased mother (57-60) and for his sister (75-77). As Crimi has observed, both cycles begin with a monody in a rather unusual metre (57 in pentameters, 75 in *anacreontea*). In the cycle for his mother follow three poems for his father; in fact the element of consolation for his father is already introduced at the end of poem 57, further connecting the poems of this cycle.<sup>68</sup> Poem 58, in turn, serves as a *πρόγραμμα* for poem 59: it urges the father to pay attention to the

<sup>64</sup>Demoen, "Phrasis poikilê".

<sup>65</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup>For their similar content, see also *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>67</sup>For this suggestion, see *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21.

answers the deceased mother will give from the grave by means of echo. Poem 59 is indeed an echo-poem, allowing the mother to speak from her grave by echoing the last parts of Christophoros' questions. Poem 60 is again directed to his father, reassuring him with the answers that his wife gave him during the foregoing poem. As a result, poem 60 is nothing more than a *corrolarium* of 59. Poems 58 to 60 thus form in fact one poem, with 59 as the central piece that jumps out because of its special echo-structure.

Somehow different is the cycle for his sister: here, the titles indicate that the poems are situated during the different stages of the funeral procession.<sup>69</sup> This cycle has a *corrolarium* as well: poems 78 and 79 are addressed to Petros, a *grammatikos*, who had asked for the funeral iambs (poem 77): in poem 78, Christophoros asks them back, and poem 79 is an answer on the comments of Petros on the poem, when he had returned it.

Another pair that in fact can be considered as one creative piece is 87 and 88, a couple of poems that gives a nice example of *in utramque partem disserere*: poem 87 is written in answer on someone sending grapes, advancing instead figs as superior, whereas poem 88 does exactly the opposite.

We see thus that, in spite of the overall chronological order, poems are brought in contact with each other in narrative cycles or groups otherwise connected by a coherent theme. Within these cycles, the poet strives after the effect of *variatio*, by varying on metre, rhetorical argumentation, or speech genre.

### 3.4.2 *Variatio* as a guiding principle

But also the internal arrangement of the collection as a whole is not only dependent on the simple principle of chronology. If we take an overview of the whole collection, considering the cycles as unitary elements, we see that poems of the same genre never follow upon each other. The collection is a hotch-potch of genres, but we may take another stance to this apparent chaos when realising that it is in fact carefully arranged.

The riddles may serve as a fine example, because this is a very distinctive genre. Riddles are distributed quite evenly throughout the collection (21, 35, 47, 56, 71, 111). If we tightly hold on to a chronological ordering, we would be constrained to suppose that Christophoros wrote a riddle—say—every five years, which seems to me an absurd proposition. A similar example are the epigrams on Lord's Feasts. These likewise return at regular intervals: 2 (Baptism), 14 (Annunciation), 25 (Transfiguration), 41 (Hypapantè), 80 (Raising of Lazarus), 123 (Christmas), 126 (Ascension); even more regularity is visible when adding the New Testament scenes 74 (Death of John the Baptist), and 113 (Birth of John the Baptist). No feast is repeated, while it is difficult to maintain that Christophoros would not have written twice an epigram for the same feast. Such a repetition would apparently disturb the *variatio* within the collection.

<sup>69</sup>See also the chapter 'Readings', p. 54.

A fine example of this generic variation may be shown by the wealth of genres present in the short sequence of poems 41 to 53, falling between two cycles. In this short series of poems, every genre practised by Christophoros occurs. We have an epigram on a Lord's feast (41), an ekphrasis on a wonderful thing (42, 48, 53), poetic letters to friends (43, 45), a funeral poem (44), poems on saints (46, 51), a riddle (47), an invective (49), an epigram on an object of art (50), and a historical poem (52).

The conclusion should be that Christophoros' collection is by no means governed only by the simple principle of chronological arrangement. The poet took care to achieve a collection in which there was a maximum of variation between the different genres. This variation bespeaks the aspect of *ποικιλία*, an aesthetic principle that stood in high awe in this period.<sup>70</sup> It consciously displays the range of different genres in which Christophoros was able to excell.

To be sure, this does not prevent the collection from demonstrating a certain evolution. As Crimi has observed, the milieu in which the poems are set, evolves from the world of the court towards an intimate group of friends; there is also a clear evolution in the use of metres: the dodecasyllable becomes more and more the prime metre, while the use of the hexameter decreases throughout the collection.<sup>71</sup>

The connection between the *variatio* in these *Στίχοι διάφοροι* and the aesthetic principles in the calendars is easily made. The calendars push the ideal of *variatio* to the extreme, both in their structure as a whole, by varying in metre, but also in their internal organisation, by treating each subject exactly once.

### 3.5 Collections as objects of interpretation?

These observations entail an important consequence for our interpretation of collections as a whole. Even if these collections bring poems in contact with each other, they are not a consciously pre-conceived work of art, but always the result of the gathering of poems after they had had their use. Apart from the few clusters of poems we have observed, the poems remain closed entities on their own, serving one specific occasion. The collections are thus not to be read as consistent pictures of one life stance, in Mauropous' case even emphatically not so.

The very different qualifications of the emperor Monomachos in Mauropous' corpus are difficult to overcome for modern scholars. For instance, a study by Guido Cortassa<sup>72</sup> perceives the collection of Mauropous as one premeditated whole, aspiring to give a unified and nuanced image of the emperor, with his overpowering might and privileges at one side, and on the other hand constrained only by the limits set by God. The former aspect evidently is expressed in the encomia, while the latter turns up in for instance

<sup>70</sup>Demoen, "Phrasis poikilê".

<sup>71</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, pp. 16–20.

<sup>72</sup>Cortassa, "Signore e padrone della terra e del mare. Poesia e ideologia del potere imperiale in Giovanni Mauropode".

the funeral poems. It is inevitable that the power of genre has a role to play here. But also, such an interpretation fails to see that different aspects of the imperial image are dependent on the different occasions for which Mauropous wrote poems. Within the collection, in any event, no attempt was made to streamline these (sometimes contradictory) generic conventions into one unified whole.

Kazhdan has argued that the emperor showing repentance in the funeral epigrams 81–84 could not be Monomachos, because it contains such ‘daring criticism’ that we then must believe Mauropous was a ‘turncoat’ attacking his former benefactor.<sup>73</sup> Here, Kazhdan surely underestimates the power of genre, all the same while he dismisses other elements for exactly the same reason. But, also, in such an interpretation, the nature of the collection is ignored: the guiding principle of discontinuity makes that the collection can without problems comprise poems that have each one of them a separate purpose and a separate stance towards its contemporary milieu.

The imperial image such as we can reconstruct it from the collection may rather be the result of different rhetorical motifs each one of them dependent on different genres, than the result of an ideology that shines through the collection as a whole. Mauropous’ collection was not a premeditated ideological artefact, but the result of a later editorial operation that left intact the original purpose of each poem. The same applies for Christophoros’ collection: these collections are only collections *post factum*.

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<sup>73</sup>Kazhdan, “Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II”, p. 371.





## Part II

# Poets in society



## Chapter 4

# Poets

A study of the social function of poetry cannot consider texts as separated from the social agents, the authors, who produced them. It can be called an axiom of the kind of research I will pursue here, that the social concerns of these historical persons shaped to a large degree the texts they produced.<sup>1</sup> Beck has already made the remark that Byzantine authors did not stand not at the margin of society.<sup>2</sup> Since Mullett's studies of literature as a part of 'patronage in action',<sup>3</sup> Byzantinists have been made even more aware that authors used their literary products to achieve personal goals.

However, Byzantine studies have still a long way to go in clarifying the relation between text and author. Some questions have not yet been addressed that are necessary when attempting to grasp this relation. These questions are related to the creation and the perception of 'authority', the role of poetic personae, the detection of different voices in a text,<sup>4</sup> and, I would add, an investigation into the role and status of the author as an occupation or profession in Byzantine society.

This last question will stand central in this chapter. It is my intention to lay bare the contemporary perception of the term 'poet' and to understand better the role poetry occupied in relation to other intellectual activities. What place did the practice of authoring poems occupy in the career and the life of our poets? Did they consciously inscribe their works in a literary tradition? In sum, what was it like to be a Byzantine poet?

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<sup>1</sup>Herein I (partly) subscribe to the foregrounding of the author, proposed by several works of Kazhdan, see e.g. Kazhdan, "Mensch". However, unlike Kazhdan, I will not take the social position (and correspondent ideological stance) of the author as the most important point of departure.

<sup>2</sup>Beck, *Das literarische Schaffen*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Mullett, *Theophylact*.

<sup>4</sup>For the present state of these questions in Byzantine studies, and an attempt to formulate answers, see E. Bourbouhakis, "'Political' Personae: The Poem from Prison of Michael Glykas: Byzantine Literature between Fact and Fiction", *BMGS* 31.1 (2007), pp. 53–75.

## 4.1 The field of discursive practices: an overview

I will begin with a sketchy prosopographical overview: who were the persons of whom we know that they have written texts? The intellectual elite would be a simple answer, but how extended is this intellectual elite, and who was part of it? It has often been stated that the clique around Konstantinos Leichoudes, Ioannes Mauropous, Michael Psellos and Ioannes Xiphilinos, the ‘tetrad of the wise’, as they have been called,<sup>5</sup> dominated both the intellectual and the public life. But Leichoudes, the *μεσάζων* under Monomachos who allegedly has paved the way for the others, remains a shady figure, and Psellos’ letters to him are surprisingly few and appear as very formal declarations of friendship. The network around the central figure Michael Psellos surely extended beyond only this tetrad; on the other hand, there were other intellectual alliances and circles, to which for instance Christophoros must have belonged.

A scant view on Psellos’ letters to his learned acquaintances can make clear that many more friends of Psellos engaged in intellectual activities. His pupils or former fellow students, known only through his letters, form a substantial group. A certain Romanos writes schedographies and possesses a copy of Plutarch;<sup>6</sup> Michael the patrician receives a rhetorical handbook from Psellos;<sup>7</sup> Hesaias, a proximos, educates a pupil of Psellos when the latter is sick;<sup>8</sup> Pothos, son of the *meγas droungarios*, is a pupil to whom Psellos addresses several philosophical and rhetorical treatises and letters;<sup>9</sup> Kyritzes is a pupil with whom Psellos has rhetorical disputes and shares juridic interests.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Ljubarskij reconstructed a *σύλλογος* consisting of a string of other intellectual friends: Choirosphaktes, Basileios ‘*epi tou kanikleiou*’, Leon ‘*epi ton deeseon*’, Aristenos the *protoasekretis*, Iasites the *kouropalates*, etc.<sup>11</sup> Another important figure seems to have been Anastasios Lizix (or Lyzix), praised for his rhetorical skills both in a funeral poem by Basileios Kekaumenos<sup>12</sup> and a funeral oration by Psellos.<sup>13</sup>

To these figures we have to add the many teachers, such as Niketas, *maistor* at the school of St. Peter,<sup>14</sup> the *maistores* of the school of Diakonissa<sup>15</sup> and Chalkoprateia<sup>16</sup> and the teachers that appear in Christophoros’ poems: Leo

<sup>5</sup>S. Chondridou, “Κωνσταντίνος Λειχοῦδης, Ἰωάννης Μαυρόπουλος, Μιχαήλ Ψελλός, Ἰωάννης Ξιφιλίνος: Ἡ τετραὰς τῶν σοφῶν. Ἡ ἀνοδος καὶ ἡ πτώση τῆς γύρω στα μέσα τοῦ 11ου αἰῶνα”, in: *Ἡ αυτοκρατορία σὲ κρίση (:)* *Το βυζάντιο τῶν 11ο αἰῶνα (1025-1081)*, Athens 2003, pp. 409–423.

<sup>6</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letters 16 and 17, if the letters are directed to the same.

<sup>7</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 20.

<sup>8</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 24.

<sup>9</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, or. 15; Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, 220.

<sup>10</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 209.

<sup>11</sup>Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα καὶ ἔργο*, pp. 97–102.

<sup>12</sup>Mercati, “Versi di Basilio Cecaumeno in morte di Anastasio Lizix”.

<sup>13</sup>Gautier, “Monodies inédites”, or. 2.

<sup>14</sup>A. M. Guglielmino, “Un maestro di grammatica a Bisanzio nell’XI secolo e l’epitafio per Niceta di Michele Psello”, *Siculorum Gymnasium* 27 (1974), pp. 421–463.

<sup>15</sup>Michael Psellos, “Epistulae”, in: *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, ed. by K. Sathas, vol. 5, Venezia/Paris 1876 (henceforth cited as Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*), letter 162.

<sup>16</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 168.

and Stylianos of the St. Theodore school (poems 9 and 10), the *maistor* of Chalkoprataia (poem 11; perhaps identical with the *maistor* mentioned by Psellos), Georgios grammatikos (32), Menas the rhetor (37), etc.

Many of Psellos' funeral orations for pupils and fellow students make clear that these people engaged actively in the intellectual field. But only sporadically, it becomes clear that they have written texts. Perhaps this aspect was secondary after all, since it is only mentioned in passing, integrated in the general praises of intellectual excellence. The metropolitan of Melitene wrote orations still testifying to his erudition.<sup>17</sup> Romanos the referendarios, a pupil of Psellos, occupied himself fervently with rhetoric, 'giving birth to one work after the other'.<sup>18</sup> The works of Ioannes the patrician, a former fellow student, are said to be the 'living images' of his soul, and surpass the works of the ancients.<sup>19</sup>

The anonymous applicant of Athen. 1040 too mentions in the beginning of his poem that he had written a historical work about the rebellions of Leon Tornikios and Ioannes Vatatzes, who revolted against Monomachos in 1047.<sup>20</sup> Since we know that also Mauropous had plans to write a history, we might be entitled to suppose that it was a genre more people would lay their hands on.

Other authors from the mid-eleventh century are Xiphilinos, whose orations are left,<sup>21</sup> and Ioannes Doxapatres, who wrote rhetorical commentaries, and who must be considered as a teacher of rhetoric.<sup>22</sup> Other texts that are more narrowly monastic, such as the multifarious mystical works by Nike-tas Stethatos, and some hagiographic texts, are obviously not written in the milieu of the intellectual elite of the capital.

Undoubtedly, this short enumeration, distorted by the whims of textual transmission, only gives a glimpse of how many people engaged with poetry. Some instances in Psellos' works give us the impression of a vast group of people competing in rhetoric and poetry. In the beginning of a letter addressing the nephews of Keroullarios, he states that there are many men who attempt to be good orators and call themselves philosophers.<sup>23</sup> Besides, it is a commonplace in Psellos' panegyric orations to evoke a plethora of other rhetors; the beginning of his fifth and sixth oration make clear that Psellos has to challenge many rivals. But the most outspoken reference to a field of authors (and poets) occurs in his second βασιλικὸς λόγος, when he contrasts the skills of ancient authors to the deplorable situation nowadays:

<sup>17</sup>Gautier, "Monodies inédites", 1.45–46: δεῖγμα τοῦ λόγου οἱ ἔχειν οὐ λόγου.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 4.49–50: Ἄλλα δὲ ἐπ' ἄλλοις ἀποτίκτων γεννήμασι. The form ἀλλά from Gautier's edition must be a misprint for ἄλλα.

<sup>19</sup>Michael Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, ed. by E. Kurtz and F. Drexler, 2 vols., Milano 1941, vol. I, p. 153, l. 11–15.

<sup>20</sup>Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 71.

<sup>21</sup>J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca*, 161 vols., Paris 1857–66 (henceforth cited as PG), vol. CXX, col. 1201–1291.

<sup>22</sup>Ioannes Doxapatres, "Commentarii in Aphthonii progymnasmata", in: *Rhetores Graeci*, ed. by C. Walz, vol. 2, Stuttgart 1832–6, pp. 81–564.

<sup>23</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 31.4–5: πολλοὶ καὶ σοφιστεύειν ἐπιχειροῦσι καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπαγγέλλονται.

Now there is no one who can arrest the unstoppable, neither in prose, nor in metres and poems. Or yes, maybe there are many of them, but there is for them no ground in doing this, since they have no mind at all.<sup>24</sup>

Psellos is here adopting a disparaging stance towards the people who were his direct opponents in the intellectual field, so we should be cautious to see these utterances as precise observations. Yet, it appears as a fact that there were many more authors and poets than we may at first sight think of. Lost texts of authors often without name, figure as the backdrop of many extant texts. Letters were obviously sent in response to other letters. And, as we will see in the chapter ‘Competitions’, many poems were reactions to other poems, written by unknown people.

As a result, we should also be cautious to identify authors mentioned in other texts with authors we know of. They may be just people who happen to be unknown to us, unknown dots in the vast field of discursive practices. This may cast doubt on some tentative identifications, such as Lauritzen’s suggestion that Niketas of Synada, mentioned in Christophoros 27, is in fact Niketas Stethatos.<sup>25</sup> Apart from the very unlikely swapping of surnames, the intellectual field is so large that it could have easily comprised several Niketai.

Within this group of persons engaging in discursive practices, how many did specifically write poetry? The overview of preserved poetic texts in the introductory chapter yields nine poets we know by name: four have left us more than one poem (Christophoros, Mauropous, Psellos, Michael the Grammarian). Two poets with a distinctive persona remain anonymous: anon. Sola, and anon. Schirò (if we can date him in this period). Six others are tied to only one poem: Basileios Kekaumenos, Hierotheos of the monastery Horaia Pègè, Alexios megalos didaskalos, Niketas Theophiles ‘of the Great Church’, Basileios protasekretis, (if not identical with Kekaumenos) and Ioannes Kosiphes. Then there is the the beggar-poet *cum* historian of Athen. 1040, and Psellos’ attacker in Psellos 22 (Sabbaites?). There must have been many people commissioned to write epigrams (such as those preserved in anon. Marc. 524), and there were many scribes who left poems in the margins of their manuscripts. So, we can count six people who seriously engaged with poetry, and dozens of others who at least on one occasion wrote a poem. This list can be supplemented by some others of whom we have no work left (cf. *infra*).

## 4.2 The Byzantine poet: a shadowy notion

What did the notion ‘poet’ signify to the Byzantines, and what status did such a label have? Were ‘poets’ viewed as a profession or occupation apart?

<sup>24</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 2.27–30: Νῦν δ’ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς ὁ κρατῶν τὸ ἀκράτητον, οὐ λόγῳ πεζῶ, οὐ μέτροις τε καὶ ποιήμασιν· ἢ πάρεσι γέ ἴσως πολλοί, ἀλλ’ οὐ λόγος αὐτοῖς τοῦ πράγματος, ὡς μὴδὲ λόγου αὐτοῖς ὄντος. The last sentence, containing a pun on *logos*, is not entirely clear to me.

<sup>25</sup>Lauritzen, “An Ironic Portrait of a Social Monk: Christopher of Mytilene and Niketas Stethatos”.

With these questions in mind, I will discuss the scarce texts in which poetry as a specific discursive form is foregrounded or in which the practice of writing poetry is depicted.

### 4.2.1 A twelfth-century view on Byzantine poets

There is only one source that mentions our poets in their capacity of poets. This is a poem that is in many respects a remarkable text. It has come down to us in one manuscript under the name of Michael Psellos (edited as pseudo-Psellian poem 68, together with another similar poem), but because exactly in the fragment that we will consider here, both Psellos and Theophylaktos of Ochrid are mentioned as already dead, it must have been written in a later period.<sup>26</sup> So, we are here for a moment looking from a twelfth-century spectre, a period when the status and position of authors arguably was not the same anymore.

The poem is an answer to a previous poem written by a certain Ioannes (see v. 76), whose poem was allegedly full of grammatical and prosodical errors. Our poet states, with a touch of irony, that he has read many poems in different metres, but that he has never encountered something like the poetry of Ioannes. Homer, Hesiod, some lyric poets, Euripides, and the Three Hierarchs are all mentioned, along with some unexpected names as Themistokles and Chrysippos. None of them can come near to Ioannes. Then, also some more recent poets pass under review (vv. 81–85):

σὺ δ' αὖ, ὑπέριμε Ψελλέ, Πισίδη, Χριστοφόρε,  
 Λέων καὶ Θεοφύλακτε πρόεδρε Βουλγαρίας,  
 δεινὴν καὶ πάνυ χαλεπὴν ὑπέστητε ζημίαν  
 προμεταστάντες ὑπὸ γῆν καὶ μὴ μεμαθηκότες  
 τοὺς στίχους οὓς μοι πέπομφεν μόνος ὁ στιχοπλόκος. 85

And you, *hypertimos* Psellos, Pisides, Christophoros,  
 Leo and Theophylaktos, bishop of Bulgaria,  
 You have suffered a terrible and hard loss,  
 By going under the sod prematurely, without having read  
 The verses that this single versifier has sent to me. 85

Leo probably refers to Leo Choirospaktes, the late tenth-century poet of the *Χιλιόστιχος Θεολογία*.

In this passage, some specifically Byzantine and even recent poets are grouped together as examples of good poets, which is quite rare. It is the only mention of Christophoros Mitylenaios in another Byzantine literary source, and it is the only mention of Psellos as a poet.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, pp. 440–1.

<sup>27</sup>Psellos appears as a wise-all in the *Timarion*, see R. Romano, ed., *Pseudo-Luciano, Timarione*, Napoli 1974, §41; and as an exemplary letter-writer in the *Synopsis rhetorike* of Joseph Rhakendytes, see C. Walz, ed., *Rhetores Graeci*, 9 vols., Stuttgart 1832–6, III, p. 526.

I do not think that this enumeration reflects a kind of *Pléade* of poets who enjoyed a reputation as poets. The poets are singled out, to state it somewhat self-evidently, because they wrote in verse form. The poet is here upbraiding specifically his opponent's shortcomings in prosodical and rhythmical techniques. This formalist aspect is the reason why he picks out poets and sets them apart here.

Neither are Christophoros, Psellos, and the others called 'poets' here. The list of poets and metres is in fact introduced in the following way (v. 49): 'I have read many verses of rhetors'.<sup>28</sup> Apparently, our poet takes it for granted that verses are written by 'rhetors', indicating that besides of oratory proper, also poetry was a task of rhetors. In this scheme, there is no divide between prose authors and poets.

#### 4.2.2 Christophoros 27: the portrait of an ideal intellectual

Apart from this remarkable poem, the only comments on contemporary poets regard poets whose poems are not known to us. This fact alone puts into perspective the relative importance of known poets (Psellos, Mauropous, Christophoros) within the hierarchy of poetry.

Christophoros' poem 27 is the first of these testimonies. It is a high-flung encomiastic piece for Niketas Synadenos, probably identical with Niketas ὁ φιλόσοφος, the addressee of poems 43 and 100. Just like poem 100, poem 27 is a request for Niketas not to remain silent, but to let Christophoros partake in his beautiful words. I will treat it at length, because it is important to see here the practice of writing poetry in a greater whole. It begins thus (v. 1–6):

*Eἰς τὸν μοναχὸν Νικήταν τῶν Συνάδων*

Ἦ ζῶσα πολλοῖς ἐν πόλει γυνῶσις πάλαι  
 ἐν σοὶ μόνῳ ζῆ καὶ σαλεύει, Νικήτα·  
 κἄν εἰς στενὸν γὰρ ἤλασαν νῦν οἱ λόγοι,  
 ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐνεκρώθησαν οὔμενον ὄλωσ,  
 λιπόντος αὐτοῖς ζῶπυρον τοῦ δεσπότη  
 σέ, ζωτικὸν πνέοντα πνεῦμα τῆς τέχνης.

5

*For the monk Niketas of Synada*

The knowledge (γυνῶσις) that formerly lived in many here in the  
 city,  
 Now lives and vibrates only in you, Niketas;  
 For although learning (οἱ λόγοι) is now driven into a corner,  
 It has by no means died out completely,

<sup>28</sup>Psellos, 68.48: ἐγὼ πολλοὺς ἀνέγνωκα στίχους ἀνδρῶν ῥητόρων.



Since the Lord has left it a spark:  
You, breathing the living spirit of the art (τέχνη).

5

The vocabulary that is used here to describe Niketas' abilities may reveal the indeterminateness of some categories used by the Byzantines to describe intellectual activities that we tend to separate neatly from each other. Christophoros takes γνῶσις as a starting point, a term that quite unambiguously refers to 'knowledge', that is, the result of reading and study. But, by means of γάρ (v. 3), this 'knowledge' is put on a par with οἱ λόγοι. Both terms are used here nearly as synonyms, although the latter surely covers a broad domain of intellectual practices and implies more properly discursive aspects, which we would come to call 'rhetoric' or 'literature'. The translation 'learning' surely does not do it justice: 'intellectual culture' could as well serve here.<sup>29</sup>

Christophoros suggests that God left to these *logoi* someone who breathes the spirit of the τέχνη, to be understood as ῥητορικὴ τέχνη. This term quite narrowly refers to the art of rhetoric. Although this practical notion differs from the theoretical notion of *gnosis*, both function here as two sides of the same coin, namely *hoi logoi*. It is implied that Niketas excelled in both. Active application of rhetoric, that is, the production of texts ('words'), goes hand in hand with theoretical knowledge of books ('words'), both subsumed under the vague term οἱ λόγοι. One who studies 'words', is supposed to be able to put them to use adequately.

The ambiguity of οἱ λόγοι is continued in the following lines (v. 7–9):

ἄρμωστε τοίνυν τὴν σοφὴν σύριγγά σου  
καὶ πάντας ἔλκε τοῖς λόγοις, λόγων φίλε,  
ὡς ἄλλος Ὀρφεὺς τῆ λύρα τὰ θηρία.

8

So, tune your wise syrinx,  
And attract everyone with your words, friend of *logoi*,  
Just like another Orpheus attracting animals with the lyre.

8

The expression σοφὴν σύριγγα is highly ambiguous: unless we assume that Christophoros uses here σοφός in its archaic sense of an artful poet or musician—which I deem improbable—, then we have to interpret this as a reference to Niketas' (theoretical) knowledge. The attraction he exerts however, consists of *logoi*. The latter term refers here more specifically to (rhetorically attractive) words, something we would perhaps call 'literature'. The second instance of *logoi*, in the expression λόγων φίλε, conversely, appears more as a cultural term (as it was used in v. 3): a lover of learning, an intellectual, as opposed to ordinary people. As a result, *hoi logoi* can be seen both as the eloquent communication of wisdom, and the cultural, and social, basis that makes such a successful eloquence possible.

When subsequently Christophoros asks Niketas to 'send lightnings from his lips, letting the manna of his knowledge rain furiously',<sup>30</sup> he again represents

<sup>29</sup>See Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 73: 'la cultura letteraria'.

<sup>30</sup>Christophoros, 27.13–14: λάλων τε πέμπων ἀστραπὰς ἐκ χειλέων // καὶ γνώσεως τὸ μάννα βαγδαῖως ὕων.

Niketas' words as the rhetorical expression of knowledge acquired through study. The combination of eloquence and wisdom suggests that Christophoros here praises Niketas' excellence as a teacher, letting others partake of his knowledge in a manner that is accessible and agreeable.

The following verses introduce another argument, but the transition in the poem itself, adding τίς-question after τίς-question, is smooth and uninterupted (v. 17–20):

τίς πατριάρχαις τίμιος; τίς πατράσιν;  
ἢ τίς ποθεινός τοῖς κρατοῦσι δεσπόταις  
συγκλητικῶς τε πᾶσι καὶ τοῖς ἐν πόλει;  
εὐπατριδῶν δὲ τίς κορωνίς τυγχάνει;

Who is valuable to patriarchs? To fathers?  
Who is loved by the ruling emperors,  
And by all senators and townsmen?  
Who is the crown of the high class?<sup>31</sup>

Here, suddenly, Niketas' intellectual capacities acquire the aspect of social success and renown. The reputation Niketas enjoys with high-ranking persons is highlighted and represented as a logical consequence of his wisdom and eloquence.

The following verse τίς πᾶν λόγων ἤθροισε κάλλος ἐκ νέου; (v. 21) shows how indeterminate the significations of λόγοι can be. We may doubt whether to understand this either as 'who collected anew all the beauty of literary culture (in his own works)?' or as 'who excerpted all the beauty from (existing) books?'. The eventual answer may very well be that in the eyes of the Byzantines there was no such difference. This type of intellectuals read and excerpted books not only to teach methods or make compilations, but also to apply this rhetorical know-how to their own literary creations.

The following verses exalt Niketas as the best among monks as well as among the wise. Then, in the midst of again a rather multifarious enumeration of virtues, there is a short but telling sentence about his poetic activities:

τίνος γέμουσιν αἱ πόλεις συγγραμμάτων;  
τίνος στίχους φέρουσιν οἱ θεῖοι δόμοι;  
τίνος δὲ πάντες καὶ νέοι καὶ πρεσβύται  
ἐπικροτοῦσι συγγραφαῖς ἢ σοῦ μόνου;

With whose writings are the cities filled?  
Whose verses do the divine houses carry?  
Whose writings are applauded both by young and old  
If not these of yours?

The verses of Niketas that are said to be inscribed in or on the churches must refer to epigrams on religious images. The fact that Niketas was able to have

<sup>31</sup>The term εὐπατριδῶν refers in the eleventh century generally to the higher classes, people of noble birth, besides of its narrow historical meaning of 'patrician'.

his verses inscribed in a church, is a mark of his success. This is also the only reference to poetry in this picture of the ideal intellectual, although we may well be able to infer that also the ‘writings’ that are mentioned, will have included poetic texts. But only in a context where prose obviously had no place, namely, epigrams on images, does Christophoros unmistakably single out poetry as such.

Apparently, one of the tasks of Niketas that was implied by his status as an intellectual, is to provide epigrams for religious images. Mauropous and Christophoros did the same; it was one of the discursive practices filling in a practical need.

Niketas’ poetic production is an integral and hardly distinguishable component of his ‘writings’. These writings, in turn, form part of Niketas’ general qualities of an intellectual: his knowledge, his rhetorical skills, his teaching abilities, perhaps also his expedient excerpting of books; in short, his excellence in *hoi logoi*. Niketas is not hailed as a poet, but rather as a wise man in general, a teacher and an orator of high repute. His verses form one example among others to give proof of this.

### 4.2.3 The practice of writing poetry

Another explicit mention of contemporary persons who engaged in the writing of poetry is to be found in Psellos’ funeral oration for Michael Keroullarios. At a certain point, Psellos sketches the different inclinations of the young Michael and his brother: the latter was more sociable and astute, the former more introvert and directed towards higher things. As for their studies, Psellos has this to comment:

He [Michael] held rather on to prose, but his older brother devoted himself to rhythms and metres. Both also pronounced some orations for deceased people. For the men who sacrificed themselves to God, they not only made icons, but they also adorned those icons with words and epigrams.<sup>32</sup>

This is an unusual testimony, because it mentions the predilection of someone to write in verse. Michael’s brother’s inclination to write in poetry is perhaps related to his more extrovert and sociable way of life; but Psellos does not make this causal relation explicit. The division between prose and poetry in any event does not imply that the works they composed had a different function: Psellos tells us that they both wrote funeral orations and epigrams and other *logoi* for icons of saints. Consequently, the division is purely one between forms. They wrote for the same occasions, but the one chose rather verse, while the other liked more to write in prose. Nor does this division entail a rigid categorisation of writers: Michael’s brother is not characterised

<sup>32</sup>Michael Psellos, “Oratio funebris in Michael Cerullarium”, in: *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, ed. by K. Sathas, vol. 4, Venezia/Paris 1876, pp. 303–387, 312.2–6: ἄλλ’ οὗτος μὲν τοῦ πεζοῦ μᾶλλον εἶχετο λόγου, ὁ δὲ γε πρεσβύτερος ἀδελφὸς ῥυθμοῖς ἑαυτὸν ἐπεδίδου καὶ μέτροις· καὶ προσειρήκασί γε ἄμφω τῶν ἀποθανόντων ἐνίους, καὶ τῶν γε καθοσιωσάντων ἑαυτοὺς ἐπὶ θεῶν οὐκ εἰκόνας ἐπεποίητο μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτας λόγοις ἐκόσμου καὶ ἐπιγράμμασι.

as a poet because he likes to write in verse. Conversely, Michael himself also wrote epigrams for icons, which are very likely composed in a poetic form.

The fragment raises some questions: when Psellos makes the distinction between λόγους and ἐπιγράμματα, both said to adorn icons, does he mean a distinction between prose and poetry? Or does he intend a distinction between poems without inscriptional basis, oral speeches perhaps, and inscriptions? The fact that the brothers made themselves the icons, suggests that they also inscribed physically the words on it (so, as inscriptions), as part of the material production of icons. Hence also the term ἐκόσμου, which however is often used in a metaphorical way. The funeral orations, in contrast, are explicitly said to have been ‘pronounced’ (προσειρήχασιν). In any event, the authorial practices mentioned here encompass quite explicitly both oral and written products, and both occasional speeches and religious inscriptions.

Another person mentioned as having composed poetry, is an emperor. In his *Chronographia*, Psellos comments on the intellectual abilities of his pupil Michael VII Doukas, making use of the occasion to highlight his own merits as a tutor. He mentions the ‘poetic treatment of discourse’<sup>33</sup> as part of the studies his pupil indulged in, and gives also his opinion of his skills in it:

While not observing the metrical structure of iambs, he did improvise some of them, and while mostly not hitting the rhythm right, he managed to produce a healthy meaning.<sup>34</sup>

Iambs (dodecasyllables) are singled out because this is obviously the most dominant metre. The term μέτρος must imply here the prosodical structure of the iambic trimetre: apparently, the emperor composed accentual dodecasyllables. It is doubtful whether ῥυθμός refers to this accentual rhythm, or again to prosodical structure. Anyway, it is telling that, while Michael is all the same considered an excellent pupil, his handling of prosody (and perhaps rhythm) was not impeccable. Correct prosodical versification must have been considered as one of the most difficult elements in someone’s educational career.

This fragment of Psellos cannot be quoted without adding its counterpart, found in the historiographer commonly called Scylitzes Continuatus:

When the barbarians were plundering the eastern regions, and people either died or fled to Constantinople, the situation needed a regulating and experienced great-hearted mind, but he [Michael] was so sparing and penurious that he did not want to give away an obole or supply anyone with whatsoever, or to take care of the supplies of food by the transport of animals or provision-ships. Instead, he continually devoted himself to the vain and useless study of rhetoric and the composition of iambs and anapaests, although he had not acquainted himself with this discipline spontaneously, but, deceived and beguiled by the consul of philosophers

<sup>33</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIc, § 4, l. 5–6: ἡ ποιητικὴ τοῦ λόγου κατασκευή.

<sup>34</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIc, § 4, l. 23–25: Ἰάμβων δὲ μὴ προσχῶν μέτροις σχεδιάζει τούτους, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐπιτυγχάνων τὰ πολλὰ τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ, ἀλλ’ ὑγιαίνουσιν τὴν ἔννοιαν ἐκδιδοῦς.

he brought the world to rack and ruin, so to say. A powerful famine arose, followed by plague and deaths, companions for the ruin of men. And many died every day, so that the living could not bury the dead.<sup>35</sup>

Poetry as the cause of famine and the decay of the empire, this can count as a counterbalancing voice. But leaving aside the ideological fault line that runs between these two fragments, they both testify to Michael's aspiration to compose poetry. In both testimonies this activity is a part of his studies, and is introduced to him by his teacher Michael Psellos. It is perhaps not fortuitous that the historian especially singles out poetry to make his case about the emperor's negligence: to his mind, poetry no doubt counted as a particularly vain and frivolous activity.

It is also to Michael Doukas that Psellos addresses his poem on grammar containing also some guide lines about metrical matters (6.92–100), and also containing the exhortation 'Make iambs first, and then hexameters!' (v. 100: καὶ πρόωιστα ἰάμβιζε, ὕστερον δ' ἠρωίσεις.) The emperor was supposed to practice poetry as part of his education in grammar.

Of the three 'poets' mentioned in the sources above, no single work survives, unless we assume that some anonymous poems transmitted to us are by their hand. Consequently, we have to take into account that many more people wrote poetry than the poets known to us by name. We may even suppose that *every* student receiving complete studies from a competent teacher would compose poetry at some point in his school career.<sup>36</sup> The educated all wrote poetry, or have written poetry at some point in their education, but none of them wrote poetry as an independent activity.

It is for instance quite telling that Michael Psellos, otherwise so elaborately spotlighting his own intellectual achievements, keeps silent about his poetic productions; and while calling himself an accomplished philosopher, orator, and statesman, he never presents himself as a poet. Likewise, one might expect in his oration in honour of his teacher and fellow-poet Mauropous a reference to his poetic works. This is however not the case: whereas Psellos treats, quite in detail, the stylistic characteristics of Mauropous' works, mentioning his skills as a persuasive orator and his in depth knowledge of epistolographic models,<sup>37</sup> he does not say a word about his poems, unless of course also his poems are referred to when he speaks in the most general terms about his rhetorical qualities.

#### 4.2.4 Poetry or rhetoric? Psellos' views on poets

Poetry is indeed rarely referred to as a specific discipline apart. It is therefore difficult to single out the practice of writing poetry from discursive practices as a whole. Prose as well is a category that is only rarely distinguished as such.

<sup>35</sup>Ioannes Skylitzes Continuatus, *Ἡ συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτζη*, ed. by T. Tzolakis, Thessaloniki 1968, pp. 171, l. 1–13.

<sup>36</sup>For poetry in education, see the chapter 'Schools'.

<sup>37</sup>See Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 17.243–264.

The only term used for discursive practices in general, is rhetoric, and it is indeed often in rhetorical terms that poetic texts are described or conceived.<sup>38</sup>

For the Byzantines, a ‘poet’ was emphatically someone from the past; it is a scholastic term referring to a historical phenomenon. When Psellos says in a letter that he will add to it something ‘poetic’ (ποιητικόν), he in fact means something ‘homeric’, because he is in this instance likening his admiration for his friend to the chant of Sirens and the lotus eaters.<sup>39</sup>

This antiquarian status of poetry is also evident in Psellos’ essay on Euripides and Pisides. This work compares both poets in their handling of metre, rhythm and style. As Lauxtermann has remarked, Psellos’ assessment of both poets’ metrical and rhythmical qualities is to a high degree informed by rhetorical notions.<sup>40</sup>

For our purpose, it is important to note that there is a slight difference in the representation of both authors: Euripides is quite consistently called ‘the poet’ (ὁ ποιητής) (l. 26, 50, 36) and, consequently, his works are referred to as ποιήσεις or ποιήματα (22, 33, 38, 41, 80, 94, 133). In contrast, Pisides is just once called ὁ ποιητής (l. 101), and is introduced generally as ‘the wise man from Pisidia’.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, I would not immediately dismiss as fortuitous the word choice in this sentence:

Εἰ μὲν οὖν πρὸς τὴν τραγικὴν ποίησιν, φημί δὴ Εὐριπίδου, τὰ Πισιδειακὰ μέτρα συγκρίνεις καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμούς, . . .<sup>42</sup>

If you now compare the Pisidian metres and rhythms to the tragic poetry, I mean that of Euripides, [...]

We get the impression that Euripides is a ‘poet’, while Pisides is a wise man who occupied himself with meters and rhythms. Euripides belongs to the past of the school, he wrote imaginary texts (full of mendacious mythology, one may remember), best qualified as ‘poetry’. Pisides, in contrast, standing closer to Psellos and his audience, is not only someone who wrote verses, but was first and foremost a ‘wise man’. This is an important differentiation that once more proves that Byzantines did not entertain a notion of what a ‘poet’ was, but were accustomed to the idea that some people, next to their other intellectual activities, also wrote texts in a versified form.

This is corroborated by Psellos’ assessment of the wise man *par excellence* for the Byzantines, Gregorios of Nazianzos. Psellos lauds the Church Father on many occasions and singles him out as the subject for a separate treatise.

<sup>38</sup>This phenomenon is as old of Greek literature itself, cf. J. Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, Oxford and New York 2000; for Byzantine theory about poetic texts in rhetorical terms, see Lauxtermann, “Velocity of Pure Iambus”.

<sup>39</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 17, p. 21, l. 17.

<sup>40</sup>Lauxtermann, “Velocity of Pure Iambus”.

<sup>41</sup>Michael Psellos, *The Essays on Euripides and George of Pisidia and on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius*, ed. by A. Dyck, Wien 1986, l. 100: ὁ δὲ ἐκ Πισιδίας σοφός.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. l. 133–4.

tise about his rhetorical style.<sup>43</sup> He also briefly draws attention to Gregorios' poetry, or rather, his use of rhythm as it is demonstrated in his poetry:

Further, if he tunes poems for his mind as for a lyre, he comprises everything in a rhythm that is not unbridled, such as many of the rhetors used it, but rather [a rhythm] of a more restrained kind.<sup>44</sup>

Again, the word 'rhetors' designates people writing verse. Also, it should not surprise us that this short discussion of Gregorios' poetry falls within a description of his rhetorical style. Poetry is seen as just a sub-field of rhetoric. From that view, the term 'rhythm', as in the essay on Euripides and Pisides,<sup>45</sup> is not straightforward: does Psellos mean 'accentual rhythm' or does he intend as part of compositional technique?

The integration of poetry in the designation 'rhetoric' is also evident from the terminology used in poem 1 of the Anon. Sola. The company is said to recite various poems, under which 'beats of iambs, rhythms of epics, and meters of tragedians and rhetoric authors' (v. 36–37: κρότους ἰάμβων, τῶν ἐπῶν εὐρυθμίας // μέτρα τραγωδῶν, ῥητόρων λογογράφων). So, even though λογογράφος is more or less the most precise indication for a 'prose author' one can get (at least in antiquity),<sup>46</sup> here their 'metra' are said to have been read. The word 'metra' can refer to the rhythmical periods of rhetorical prose,<sup>47</sup> but for the tragedians, it must refer to metres. In any event, the transition between rhythmical, 'periodical' prose and poetry proper is barely made: notions as ῥυθμός, μέτρον and the like are used for both. Conversely, a λόγος can also refer to a poem.<sup>48</sup> Hence, there is barely something left to refer to the poetic form specifically.

## 4.3 Intellectual practices: teaching, writing, studying

### 4.3.1 Hoi logoi as an umbrella term

When the activities of intellectuals are described, this is nearly always done in the most vague terms: they occupied themselves with οἱ λόγοι, and this is more or less the most precise indication one can get. The term οἱ λόγοι itself, as we have seen in Christophoros' poem 27, is very broad. It describes a set of

<sup>43</sup>A. Mayer, "Psellos' Rede über den rhetorischen Charakter des Gregorios von Nazianz", *BZ* 20 (1911), pp. 27–100.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., l. 218–221: ἔπειτα ὡσπερ πρὸς λύραν ἀρμόσας αὐτῷ τὰ ποιήματα, ῥυθμῶ πάντα περιλανθάνει οὐ τῷ ἀκολάστῳ, ᾧ πολλοὶ τῶν ῥητόρων ἐχρήσαντο, ἀλλὰ τῷ σωφρονεστάτῳ.

<sup>45</sup>Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure Iambs".

<sup>46</sup>H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., revised by H. S. Jones, Oxford 1996 (henceforth cited as LSJ), s.v. λογογράφος.

<sup>47</sup>M. Lauxtermann, "Byzantine Poetry in Context", in: *Pour une "nouvelle" histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique, Nicosie, 25-28 mai 2000*, ed. by P. Odorico and P. Agapitos, Dossiers byzantins 1, Paris 2002, pp. 139–152, p. 151.

<sup>48</sup>For instance Psellos, 16.15.

intellectual practices, and the creation of literary works (as we would call it), is indeed an integral and important part of these intellectual practices, but it is not to be equated with that. The study and also the teaching of knowledge is more prominent in this respect.

When Psellos says in a letter to a friend that he is the one who ‘adorns Constantinople with *logoi*’, it is clear from the rest of the letter that he intends first and foremost his activities as a teacher, treating all fields of knowledge in a both understandable and complete manner.<sup>49</sup> When Psellos in a famous passage in his *Chronographia* (book VI, § 37–43) depicts his own achievements in οἱ λόγοι, he saw himself especially as a mediator of the different fields of knowledge: traditional philosophy is mentioned along with geometry and physics.<sup>50</sup> He divides οἱ λόγοι, using his usual conceit, into rhetoric and φιλοσοφία, whereby the former makes the latter more accessible. Even more vague is the expression ‘I flowered in *hoi logoi*’,<sup>51</sup> which Psellos uses in a later section of the *Chronographia*: here, this seems rather to point to his eloquence.

When describing the achievements of a deceased student of his, he first generally describes his intellectual predispositions in the general terms of ‘occupation with οἱ λόγοι’,<sup>52</sup> while subsequently, these general terms are further specified as ῥητορικὴ (146.20) and φιλοσοφία (146.19), law (146.25), and exact sciences: geometry (148.21), astrology/astronomy (23), arithmetics (23), and music (24). The fact that this pupil himself had also created works, is only mentioned in passing (153.13–15), as a testimony of his intelligence, more than a praise for his literary talents as such.

This is also apparent from a wordplay in a funeral oration by Psellos for a metropolitan: while praising his literary culture, Psellos states that ‘a proof of his *logos* are the *logoi* of his’.<sup>53</sup> It is evident that the former instance of *logos* refers to his literary culture in general, while the latter denotes the works he wrote. Here, the two definitions are disentangled for the sake of word play. Yet, his works are only a ‘proof’ of his quality as a *logios*: his works are important to evaluate his literary culture, instead of his literary culture being a factor to comment upon his works.

The difficulty for us to distinguish the different significations of the term οἱ λόγοι is at the same time a convenience for those who use the expression. It allows to throw together different elements under one umbrella term, suggesting that eloquence, knowledge in different branches of learning (with rhetoric prominently present), the teaching of these different disciplines, and also the

<sup>49</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, 491.26–492.8 (letter 198); see the first phrase: οἱ τὴν Πόλιν τοῖς λόγοις κοσμήσαντες.

<sup>50</sup>Therefore, I do not think that the translation ‘umane lettere’ in S. Impellizzeri, ed., *Michele Psello, Imperatori di Bisanzio (Cronografia)*, trans. by S. Ronchey, 5th ed., 2 vols., Milano 2005, vol. 1, p. 287, covers well the expression οἱ λόγοι in book VI, § 41; neither does ‘literature’ in R. Sewter, *Michael Psellus. Chronographia*, trans. by R. Sewter, New York 1966, p. 129.

<sup>51</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIa, §7, l. 3–4.

<sup>52</sup>Michael Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, vol. 1, 146.1: ταῖς περὶ τοῦς λόγους μελέταις and 15: πᾶσι τοῖς τοῦ λόγου μέρεσιν.

<sup>53</sup>Gautier, “Monodies inédites”, 1.45–46: δειγμα τοῦ λόγου οἱ ἐκείνου λόγοις.



composition of works are all inextricably linked to each other. What regards the latter aspect, the composition of works, even this activity is seldom commented upon as such: just as ‘poet’, so is ‘author’ a nearly inexistent notion in Byzantium.

The same applies for the notion of literature: it is difficult to ascertain what constituted for the Byzantines the difference between literature and ‘just’ writing. It is only evident that Kazhdan’s firm division between both<sup>54</sup> has met with skepticism.<sup>55</sup>

To have an impression of what kind of works an intellectual is expected to write, we may turn to a funeral oration for an anonymous patrician, a former fellow pupil of Psellos. When describing the progress his friend had made in his studies, Psellos also mentions that he wrote works himself, while still a student:

Not only he had a fair understanding (of *logoi*), but also he himself already created works, and it is possible to see many different products from the (rhetoric) art written by him. Some of these writings are competitive and meant to rival with colleagues in the discipline; some belong to the panegyric genre, and others are put forward simply as an exercise or as a try-out.<sup>56</sup>

The range of works that this student is said to compose is broad. The last type of writings mentioned is merely epideictic: to gain fluency in writing, the deceased patrician composed preparatory studies. But besides of this propaedeutic kind of texts, there are other functions that are more immediately relevant. There are polemic writings against rivals (more on this in the chapter ‘Competitions’), and works that apparently belong to the panegyric genre. Perhaps he wrote praises for the emperor, without yet being in contact with him. In any event, it appears that the student composed works that had no direct social relevance, apart from being preparatory studies displaying his skills, and works that did have a social functionality.

The person who engages in *hoi logoi*, a category that we can only approximately label as ‘intellectual’, is consequently only described in similarly broad terms. He is ‘the friend of *logoi*’,<sup>57</sup> or just ‘wise’,<sup>58</sup> or ‘learned’ (λόγιος). This last word, λόγιος, does not occur in poetry because its prosodical structure with two subsequent short vowels fits ill with the iambic metre, but it is ubiquitous in prose. Indeed, the word *logios* is perhaps the word that in contemporary usage is most often employed to refer to people who happen to be a ‘poet’.

<sup>54</sup>A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)*, in collaboration with Lee F. Sherry and Christine Angelidi, Athens 1999, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup>Mullett, “New Literary History”, pp. 48–49.

<sup>56</sup>Gautier, “Monodies inédites”, 5.161–165: Καὶ οὐ κατανεοῖται μόνον, ἀλλ’ ἤδη καὶ εἰργάσατο, καὶ πολλὰ τοῦτου ἰδεῖν ἔστι καὶ διάφορα τὰ ἐκ τῆς τέχνης γεννήματα, τὰ μὲν ἀγωνιστικά καὶ πρὸς ἄμιλλαν ἀντιτέχνων, τὰ δὲ τοῦ πανηγυρικοῦ ἐχόμενα εἶδους, τὰ δὲ ἄλλως ἐκτεθέντα ἀπλῶς πρὸς γυμνασίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπόπειραν.

<sup>57</sup>Christophoros, 40.45: οἱ λόγων φίλοι.

<sup>58</sup>Psellos, 23.46: σοφέ, for Symeon Metaphrastes.

### 4.3.2 The teacher-poet

Teaching is an important, and perhaps the predominant occupation of an intellectual, and he is often defined and assessed by his contemporaries in terms of his teaching work. As a matter of fact, the poets we know of, were all very much involved in school life and education. It may suffice to mention that one of these poets, Michael Grammatikos, bears the name of his profession. Also, as we have seen, an important part of Christophoros' portrait of Niketas focused on the quality of his teaching. Mauropous' and Psellos' teaching activities are evident from their works.

When Mauropous represents his intellectual activities in poem 47, lamenting the house he had to abandon, the aspect of teaching is very prominently present:

ἐν σοὶ πόνους ἦνεγκα μακροὺς καὶ κόπους,	
ἐν σοὶ διῆξα νύκτας ἀγρύπνους ὅλας,	
ἐν σοὶ διημέρευσα κάμνων ἐν λόγοις,	
τοὺς μὲν διορθῶν, τοὺς δὲ συντάττων πάλιν,	25
κρίνων μαθηταῖς καὶ διδασκάλοις ἔρις,	
ἔτοιμος ὦν ἅπασιν εἰς ἀποκρίσεις,	
καὶ προστετηκῶς ταῖς γραφαῖς καὶ ταῖς βίβλοις.	
ἐν σοὶ συνῆξα γνῶσιν ἐκ μαθημάτων,	
ἐν σοὶ δὲ ταύτην τοῖς θέλουσι σκορπίσας,	30
πολλοὺς σοφοὺς ἔδειξα προῖκα τῶν νέων	

In you I endured long efforts and toils;	
In you I spent whole nights vigilant,	
In you I passed the days toiling in works,	
Correcting some of them, composing others,	25
Judging over the contests of students and teachers,	
Ready for every one to give answers,	
Engrossed by my writings and my books.	
In you I gathered knowledge from studies,	
And in you I distributed it to those who desired it,	30
And for nothing I made many of the youthful wise men. <sup>59</sup>	

It is not clear whether Mauropous taught in his house as a *maistor* just like other schoolmasters; more likely, he taught on his own initiative and responsibility.<sup>60</sup>

What is particularly striking, is that his teaching activities are not separated from his activities as an author and a scholar. Mauropous represents here himself as reading books day and night. When it comes to 'the toiling in works' (*logoi*), it appears that this vague term encompasses several different activities: he says that he has corrected some, which in effect points to his activities as a copyist and editor of manuscripts. He also wrote works himself,

<sup>59</sup>On this passage, see also the chapter 'Display', p. 144.

<sup>60</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 199–201, where also some other sources about Mauropous' teaching activities are mentioned.

although the verb συντάττω used here, does not necessarily refer to an original creation *ex nihilo*, but perhaps also to the compilation of earlier works into a new one.<sup>61</sup> He also acted as a ‘judge’ of contests (more on this function in the chapters ‘Display’ and ‘Competitions’).

But all these different activities fall under the umbrella of his capacity as a teacher. To every question he would give an answer. His teaching work is supported by his work as a scholar, reading books, and studying all night, but perhaps also by organising this knowledge into new books. And this way, he transmitted the ability to become a σοφός to a new generation: it is a learnable and transmittable faculty.

His teaching activities reappear prominently in poem 92: there Mauropous says of himself that he taught to many youths, and trained a new generation of successful teachers and officials (v. 30–50). Mauropous says with so many words that thanks to his teaching, his intellectual capacities bore him fruit and secured him success.<sup>62</sup> A teaching post may indeed be the most visible and lucrative occupation for intellectuals.

In Psellos’ encomium for Mauropous (or. pan. 17), Psellos mentions how the latter was full of learning, of which he profited by having frequent contact with him (l. 193–214). He also calls him his διδάσκαλος (l. 213). However, this praise for his teaching is neatly integrated in the praise of his wisdom and eloquence, and of the breadth of study. We have also two letters of Mauropous (ep. 17–18) of a didactic nature, providing theological, philological and grammatical analyses of texts, to someone who had inquired about these matters by means of a letter.

It is not sure from these sources whether Mauropous held an official teaching post, or was just an radiant intellectual who, in his contacts with colleagues, assumed an authoritative position that one could compare with that of a teacher.

Psellos himself undoubtedly occupied a public teaching chair, at the school of St. Peter.<sup>63</sup> His teaching activities must have been extensive but are hard to pinpoint precisely.<sup>64</sup> When Psellos describes in his *Chronographia* his intellectual achievements, especially his teaching activities are put forward. And his teaching is also closely wound up with the rhetorical qualities of the works he composed. Thus, he claims that has made science accessible by introducing it to his readers in a ‘rhetorical’, hence a literary form.<sup>65</sup> Also, his teaching work cannot be separated from his work as a scholar: he painstakingly extracted knowledge from books, and he has not kept it for himself, but distributed it for nothing to the whole community.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup>For this sense of συντάττω as both ‘writing’ (a new work) and ‘compiling’ (from older works), see P. Odorico, “Poésies à la marge. Réflexions personnelles?”, in: *Giving a Small Taste*, forthcoming.

<sup>62</sup>Mauropous, 92.39–40: εὐγλωττία (...) καρπὸν οὐκ ἄχρηστον ἐξήνεγκε σοί.

<sup>63</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 220.

<sup>64</sup>A very sensible overview of sources illuminating Psellos teaching career is given in *ibid.*, pp. 215–221.

<sup>65</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §41.

<sup>66</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §43.

The amount of didactic texts in the corpus of Psellos is enormous and multifarious: they span nearly every subject that was studied in the period. Nearly all his ‘Philosophica’ and ‘Theologica’, but also many other works, can be considered school texts. These texts, often in answer to a question of a student of his, compile some sources and rework them into a digestible form.<sup>67</sup> His ultimate boast is that he was never short of an answer for any problem that was presented to him.<sup>68</sup> This is a feat also mentioned by Mauropous about himself, when saying he was always ready to answer a question of someone (47.28). The role that Psellos saw for himself was that of someone capable of mastering the processing and exchange of knowledge through self-composed summaries and syntheses.

#### 4.4 The ephemerality of poetry

Consequently, it can be said that an attempt to describe the role of the poet or poetry in Byzantium proves to be unexpectedly difficult, since the Byzantines apparently did not have, or did not formulate, a conception of their own poetry and poets. ‘Poets’ and ‘poetry’ are words used maybe for Homer and the Iliad, and other poetry long dead, but very seldom for contemporary poetry. The contemporary practice of writing poetry is hardly ever discussed or evaluated at all in terms that take into account the specific poetic form of poems.

Poets did also not position themselves against other poets by means of differences in poetry; one can even say that the same applies for the notion ‘author’. Therefore, one cannot use the terms ‘poetic field’ or ‘literary field’ to describe the dynamics of literature in society:<sup>69</sup> there is no articulated cultural and social space where poets qua poets, or authors qua authors compete with each other, nor is there any sense of hierarchy or unifying organisation among poets or poetic currents, neither are there officially or unofficially sanctioned ‘positions’ for poets. Writing poetry apparently formed part of being an intellectual, that is, someone able to study books, excerpt knowledge from it, and able to transmit this knowledge (as an official teacher or not) in an attractive form, and at the same time fulfilling the function of providing the words for various occasions, public and private.

These observations must be brought in connection with a general remark made by Marc Lauxtermann: Byzantine poems are generally not written for posterity. They mostly served specific occasions and specific audiences.<sup>70</sup> Byzantium was not preoccupied by its own literary history. Hence also the sloppiness in the attributions in the lemmata in manuscripts.<sup>71</sup> We possess

<sup>67</sup>More on this aspect in the chapter ‘Knowledge’.

<sup>68</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.* 25, l. 28–30: οὐδ’ οὐδενός ὦν ἐζητήκατε ἠπόρηκά ποτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ πλείονα τοῦ πεφυκότος προστίθημι, as an answer in a dispute with his pupils about his alleged neglect of show rhetoric.

<sup>69</sup>In the sense used in: Bourdieu, *Règles de l’art*.

<sup>70</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 61.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71, with the example of Christophoros’ poems without any attribution in the Marc. gr. 524.

only a tiny fraction of the poetry that was produced in Byzantium:<sup>72</sup> after all: the ‘poets’ occasionally mentioned in the contemporary sources we have just discussed, are not the poets of whom we still have texts extant. They are mentioned because they happen to be outstanding persons in other respects.

The survival of poetic texts depended on a number of factors that do not have anything to do with the preservation of a tradition. Some poems could be practically useful because they offered convenient compilations of older works. This is obviously the case for Psellos’ didactic poems, and, I would add, for Christophoros’ calendars. Another chance was that poetry was integrated in a complete personal collection. This is the case for Mauropous. Another factor is pure chance of catching the attention of some of the (few!) anthologists.

Let us take the example of Christophoros. His collection survives in a manuscript preserved in the Grottaferrata monastery. According to Canart, this manuscript was written in the thirteenth century, in the Land of Otranto.<sup>73</sup> In this region and period, Christophoros’ poetry arguably knew a certain vogue in later times. His verses, both from his ‘profane’ collection and from his calendars, are imitated, paraphrased, and copied by the poets of Otranto of the thirteenth century, such as Nikolaos-Nektarios of Casole.<sup>74</sup> The Grottaferrata manuscript even contains some verses by Nikolaos-Nektarios and Georgios Bardanes, two of these Otranto poets. It is in this milieu that we have to search for the preservation of Christophoros’ collection.

The remarkable success of his profane verse must owe something to the popularity of his calendars: the verses from these calendars are imitated along with those from his *στίχοι διάφοροι*. Moreover, the oldest manuscript with his calendar in canones, the *Scorial.* X IV 8 (XII c.) is surely of south-Italian origin.<sup>75</sup> In the *Vat. Gr.* 1276, also from southern Italy, and containing some of his *στίχοι διάφοροι*, Christophoros’ calendar served as a model for the Otranto poets.<sup>76</sup> Whether this popularity is due to a desire of the anti-Latin monastic communities in southern Italy to emulate the existing Western calendars, is impossible to ascertain, but the popularity of Christophoros in this region is undeniable. The emergence of the Grottaferrata manuscript in this period and this region is arguably associated with this popularity of his calendars.

Without the Grottaferrata manuscript, we would in fact possess only a very partial image of the work of this poet. Only one other manuscript, the *Vat. gr.* 1357, offers a series of Christophorea with a correct attribution (24 poems are in this case, 4 others are anonymous). Nearly all other manuscripts hopelessly mix things up. The *Marc. gr.* 524 transmits 42 poems of Christophoros, all without ascription. The *Hauriensis* 1899 offers 5 poems, only

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>73</sup>P. Canart, “Le livre grec en Italie méridionale sous les règnes normand et souabe: aspects matériels et sociaux”, *Scrittura e civiltà* 2 (1978), pp. 103–162, 156, n. 134.

<sup>74</sup>See M. Gigante, *Poeti bizantini di Terra d’Otranto nel secolo XIII*, Napoli 1985, e.g. poem 10 of ‘Nikolaos’ and poem 2 of ‘Nektarios’.

<sup>75</sup>Christophoros Mitylenaios, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>76</sup>Acconcia Longo and Jacob, “Anthologie salentine”, see also the chapter ‘Reading’ for Christophoros’ poems in this manuscript, p. 42.

one correctly ascribed to Christophoros, two others to Nikolaos of Kerkyra, and two others without a clear ascription. The *Laur. conv. soppr.* 627 has another five, either ascribed to Prodrimos, either anonymously. The *Ottobonianus gr.* 324 has also some poems anonymously and mixed with poems of Theophylaktos of Ochrid. Other ascriptions are to Psellos (87 in *Vindob. theol. gr.* 242), Nikolaos Hydrountinos (31 in *Vat.* 1276), Philes (85 in *Laur.* 59.17), again Prodrimos (several isolated poems), etc.<sup>77</sup>

So, were it not for the enormous success of his calendars, which partly contributed to a rather curious *Nachleben* in a limited geographic region, but one that was favourable to the survival of manuscripts to modern times (in spite of some edacious mice), the *στίχοι διάφοροι* of Christophoros would have been limited to a few scattered poems, and we would have known next to nothing of the profane poems of this remarkable poet.

Also, as we have seen in the chapter ‘Reading’, poets did not expect that their poetry would circulate broadly. They were directed to a limited public of readers: peers, colleagues and direct rivals within an educational and intellectual milieu. Christophoros jokes at the expense of Basileios who is even not allowed to read his poems. It is a fallacy of modern scholars to suppose that texts were ‘public’ and accessible to everyone from the moment that they were written.<sup>78</sup> They did not enter Byzantine literary history from the moment they were produced, far from that.

Discursive practices were far more numerous but also far more fugitive than we usually imagine. Byzantine poetry did not possess the same appeal to posteriority that we traditionally relate to poetic works. These were texts serving a very specific social occasion, and by extension also giving proof of the status and abilities of their author in his direct social milieu. The following chapters will further examine these aspects.

<sup>77</sup>For a complete overview, see Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, pp. x–xv.

<sup>78</sup>See P. Odorico, “L’auteur byzantin. Taxinomie et systématique: un essai de définition”, in: *Pour une “nouvelle” histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique, Nicosie, 25-28 mai 2000*, ed. by P. Odorico and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 1, Paris 2002, pp. 61–80, pp. 76–80.

## Chapter 5

# Display

Psellos' *Chronographia* recounts an anecdote about Maria Skleraina, the mistress of Konstantinos Monomachos. One day, she took part in a procession, passing by a group of secretaries, under whom also Psellos.

While they were going forth (...), someone with a sharp sense for flattery spoke out softly this poetic quote: 'It were no shame ...', without continuing the verse. She made at that moment no sign of having heard the words, but when the procession was completed, she sought out the man and examined him about these words. She made no mistake in the pronunciation, but correctly quoted the word. When the man who had spoken, told the story to those who asked for it, and the present people at once confirmed the truthfulness of his interpretation, she was filled with pride, and in exchange for his eulogy, she rewarded the man who had glorified her with presents that were not few, nor inconsiderable, but such as she was used to receive and give.<sup>1</sup>

The abortive quote alludes to the scene in the *Iliad* when the Trojan elders admire Helen (3.156).<sup>2</sup> It is telling that Skleraina is praised only because she managed to pronounce two words correctly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, § 61: ὡς δ' οὖν προήεσαν, (...), τῶν τις περὶ τὴν κολακείαν πολὺς τοῦτο δὴ τὸ ποιητικὸν ἠρέμα πως ἀπεφθέγγετο, τὸ· Οὐ νέμεσις, περαιτέρω μὴ συντείνας τὸ ἔπος· ἡ δὲ τότε μὲν οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν λόγον ἐπεσημήνατο, ἐπεὶ δὲ ἡ πομπὴ ἐτελέσθη, διέκρινέ τε τὸν εἰρηκότα, καὶ τὸν λόγον ἀνέκρινε, μηδὲν ὑποσολοικίσασα τὴν φωνήν, ἀλλ' ὀρθοεπήσασα τὸ ὄνομα ἀκριβῶς· ὡς δ' ὁ εἰρηκῶς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῷ ἀκριβοῦντι κατέλεξε, καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ ἅμα τῷ λόγῳ πρὸς τὴν ἐρμηνείαν κατένευσαν, φρονήματος αὐτίκα ἐκεῖνη πλησθεῖσα, ἀμείβεται τοῦ ἐγκωμίου τὸν ἐπαιέτην οὐκ ὀλίγους τισιν, οὐδὲ φάυλοις, ἀλλ' οἷς ἐκεῖνη κεχρησθῆαι καὶ ἀμείβεσθαι εἴωθεν.

<sup>2</sup>For the popularity of especially this quote in Byzantium, see H. Hunger, "On the Imitation (MIMHΣΙΣ) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature", *DOP* 23 (1969), pp. 15–38, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>The expression ὀρθοεπήσασα τὸ ὄνομα, to my mind, can only refer to the pronunciation of the word νέμεσις, not a current word anymore in spoken Greek. This interpretation obviously takes a low view of the degree of literary education for (female) members of the

This example indicates the ease by which sophisticated praise could yield material gain, if used in a clever way, that is, on the right moment to the right person. This lucky secretary took the chance to show himself able to deliver a cunning piece of praise, displaying his intimate acquaintance with ancient poetry as well as his ability to put this poetry in use for the sake of imperial glory.

The connection between intellectual competences and social success is one of the most outspoken features of cultural life in the eleventh century, and, just like in this example, poetry plays a prominent role in this process. In this chapter, I will attempt to give a clearer picture of this process. I will argue that in order to capitalise on these competences, one had to display them, through written or spoken words. I will first describe the possible connections between intellectual competences and career opportunities, bringing to the fore the aspect of display in this quest for social promotion (5.1). Then, we will see how an intellectual elite defines itself and makes use of rhetoric and poetry to carve out an own space in the social universe (5.2). The elitism propagated in these texts also has consequences and motivations that extend to broader social and ideological issues (5.3). An elite distinguishes itself by nurturing an intellectualist ideal; also poetic text bear out this ideal (5.4). A thread that will run through this account is the tension between ambition and an ethical ideal that is opposed to it; Mauropous' self-representation in his poems will be considered in the light of this tension (5.5).

## 5.1 Literary display as a way to social success

### 5.1.1 Education as a preliminary for a career

In Byzantine society, it was expected that formal communication was conducted in a language that lived up to the linguistic and rhetorical standards inherited from antiquity. The formulation of official documents, letters, and ceremonial speeches required men who had command of the by then fossilised language of ancient Greek and who were trained in rhetorical technique. Both of these were increasingly unaccessible for the majority of society. Intellectual competences transmitted through education thus had a direct practical applicability in state administration and ecclesiastical organisation, and separated the educated from the non-educated.

To what degree these requirements went for granted, can be measured by the amazement apparent in Psellos' account of the policies of Basil II, who did *not* employ learned men for his administration.

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imperial family. I herein follow the translation in M. Psellos, *Chronographie*, ed. by E. Renauld, Paris, 1928, p. 146, and Sewter, *Michael Psellus. Chronographia*, p. 99 (although the latter tries to make Psellos' vague language more concrete at certain points). This is in contrast to the Italian translation of Sylvia Ronchey and Criscuolo's commentary in Impellizzeri, *Michele Psello, Imperatori di Bisanzio (Cronografia)*, vol. 1, p. 307 resp. 407, holding that with ὀρθοεπίσασα the division in words is meant. The translation of ὀποσολογιζῶ with 'senza l'accento metrico' is not clear to me.



Political matters he did not govern according to the written laws, but to the unwritten laws of his own ingenuous mind. Therefore, he did not pay attention to learned men, but this group—I mean the learned men—he utterly despised.<sup>4</sup>

The conjunction ὅθεν makes clear that Psellos sees a direct causal relationship between Basil's choice not to rely on political advisors and his stance towards the *logioi*, the contemporary term for intellectuals. With other words, under normal circumstances these intellectuals yield real political power. This passage implies especially their knowledge of law, but it is surely not their only activity that is significant for governance.

Psellos also specifies that the phrasing of the imperial answers to petitions was deprived of any cultivation. He links this as well to the fact that Basil employed men who were not πεπαιδευμένοι, as he puts it.<sup>5</sup> This indicates that Psellos assumes that in his own time, imperial communication was supposed to be phrased in a refined language, by men who had enjoyed a decent education in classical Greek and rhetoric. Even Isaak Komnenos, the emperor-soldier, strove to meet up to the standard: when he intervened in judicial affairs, he made sure that 'in order not to make language errors while pronouncing juridical terms, he left this to others'.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the apparatus of scribes, secretaries and notaries did not only need a practical juridical education, but they had to be able to write in correct and elegant Greek. For this reason, the education in ancient Greek language and rhetoric is a necessary precondition for the ascension on the ladders of administrative functions.<sup>7</sup>

Cultural competences thus undeniably function as tools of social distinction in Byzantine society. Basic literacy forms a first divide.<sup>8</sup> In the essentially bureaucratic society that Byzantium was, the power of the written word stood in high awe with ordinary people.<sup>9</sup> Evidence from saints' lives too proves that education was seen by ordinary people as a necessary means to acquire success in society.<sup>10</sup> The *Vita of Lazarus* recounts the story of a monk who with many pains learned to read and write; he was despised by the other monks for his ensuing arrogance.<sup>11</sup> This indicates that he felt being on a higher step than his brethren thanks to his literacy. But literacy is only a preliminary.

<sup>4</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book I, §29: τὸ δὲ πολιτικὸν οὐ πρὸς τοὺς γεγραμμένους νόμους, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τοὺς ἀγράφους τῆς αὐτοῦ εὐφροσύνης ἐκυβέρνα ψυχῆς· ὅθεν οὐδὲ προσεῖχε λογίους ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλὰ τούτου δὴ τοῦ μέρους, φημί δὲ τῶν λογίων, καὶ παντάπασι καταπεφρονήκει.

<sup>5</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book I, § 30: οὔτε τὰ ἐς λόγους ἐς τὸ ἄγαν πεπαιδευμένων.

<sup>6</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VII, § 49: ἴνα δὲ μὴ τὴν φωνὴν σολοικίσῃ τὰς νομικὰς φωνὰς ἐπισημανόμενος, τοῦτο μὲν ἑτέροις ἐπέτρεπεν.

<sup>7</sup>For this general observation, see for instance Browning, "Enlightenment and Repression", p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>R. Browning, "Further Reflections on Literacy in Byzantium", in: *To Hellenikon. Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.* Ed. by J. Langdon, New York 1993, pp. 69–84, pp. 79–80.

<sup>9</sup>H. Hunger, "Die Herrschaft des "Buchstabens". Das Verhältnis der Byzantiner zu Schrift- und Kanzleiwesen", *Δελτίο της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 4.12 (1984), pp. 17–38.

<sup>10</sup>Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, pp. 26–27.

<sup>11</sup>Gregorios Kellarites, "Vita Lazari monachi in monte Galesio", in: *AS Novembriis*, vol. III, pp. 505–580 (henceforth cited as *Vita Lazari*), §234.

What is more important, is ‘rhetoricity’,<sup>12</sup> a more specialised kind of training, which not only involves the training in rhetorical technique, but also implies a social etiquette.

This discriminative situation ensured the persistence of a group of intellectuals who were able to preserve rhetorical culture as an arcane body of knowledge for themselves.<sup>13</sup> Learning functions as a kind of cultural capital appropriated by members of a limited social group,<sup>14</sup> whose members of course defend the already deeply rooted idea that rhetorical culture is a necessary prerequisite for state administration.

In the eyes of Psellos, not only administration, but also political governance must be assisted by ‘wise men’. The ‘philosophy’ he advances, has a strong political and pragmatical side.<sup>15</sup> In an oration intended to defend the resignation of his function as *protoasecretis*, he stresses repeatedly the need for the philosopher to do politics: ‘because the philosopher does not have to forsake political concerns, but he has to proceed to it by aid of learning’.<sup>16</sup> In another oration, justifying the high and powerful functions he assumed as a philosopher, he remarks that ‘the state always needs the best governance, especially now, when it has so much deteriorated due to the ignorance of the masses.’<sup>17</sup> This betrays an aristocratic ideology opposed to the democratic tendencies apparent in eleventh-century society.

In the eleventh century, when the power balance temporarily shifted to a civil class, the state officials were the people with the greatest influence. They benefited most from the dilution of the treasury after Basil II. It is in this class that the connection between intellectual competences and social promotion was most valued. Weiss used the term ‘Beamtenliteraten’ to describe the social position of eleventh-century intellectuals.<sup>18</sup> This term is indeed appropriate, because an administrative function is the embodiment of the successful use of rhetorical competences and the main form of social promotion by intellectuals. Conversely, rhetorical activity was part and parcel of the tasks of an official. But an important part of rhetorical, and indeed poetical, activity is to be situated not in the tasks themselves of officials, but rather in the

<sup>12</sup>G. Cavallo, “Alfabetismi e lettura a Bisanzio”, in: *Lire et écrire à Byzance*, ed. by B. Mondrain, Paris 2006, pp. 97–109, p. 109; M. Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople”, in: *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. by M. Angold, Oxford 1984, pp. 173–201, p. 183.

<sup>13</sup>For classical culture as a means of distinction by a tiny elite in Byzantium, see C. Mango, “Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium”, in: *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, Birmingham 1981, pp. 48–57, esp. p. 49–50.

<sup>14</sup>For a recent study of late-Byzantine literate society with strong emphasis on similar sociological aspects, see N. Gaul, “The Twitching Shroud: Collective Construction of Paideia in the Circle of Thomas Magistros”, *Segno e testo* 5 (2007), pp. 263–340.

<sup>15</sup>For an overview of writings where Psellos advances a political task for philosophy, see R. Anastasi, “Filosofia e techne a Bisanzio nell’XI secolo”, *Sicilorum Gymnasium* 27 (1974), pp. 352–386.

<sup>16</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, or. 8, 1.14–15: οὐ γὰρ ἀπογνωστέον τῷ φιλοσόφῳ τῶν ἐν ταῖς πολιτείαις πραγμάτων, ἀλλὰ μετὰ λόγους πρὸς ταῦτα ἰτέον.

<sup>17</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 6,67–70: Τοῖς μὲν οὖν πράγμασι πάντοτε δεῖ τῆς ἀρίστης ἡγεμονίας, νῦν δὲ καὶ μάλιστα ὅσῳ χεῖρω παρὰ τὴν τῶν πολλῶν ἄγωνιαν γέγονε.

<sup>18</sup>Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*.

running-up competition to grab the attention of the powerful, in the hope for a promotion.

This all makes from intellectual skills and education in letters—or, generally, οἱ λόγοι—assets which can undeniably yield profit. Education is the cornerstone of social advancement for people deprived of other assets.<sup>19</sup> The prevailing vertical mobility provides opportunities to turn these assets in social and material profit.

In Psellos' funeral oration for his mother, which sounds more like an autobiography, he represents his choice to study letters as a choice for a livelihood. The verb ἐμπορεύεσθαι is telling: learning (οἱ λόγοι) is in this context presented as something to make a living from.<sup>20</sup> The same expression, ἐμπορεύεσθαι τὸ τάλαντον τοῦ λόγου, is used by Mauroπους in his poem 92 (v. 26), but here in a more negative sense, as part of the successful life proposed to him, but refused in favour of a tranquil life; this foreshadows Mauroπους' strategy to tackle the accusations of worldly ambitions (cf. *infra*).

### 5.1.2 A meritocratic ideology

The distribution of responsible and lucrative functions according to intellectual competences is represented as a rational and fair system by its proponents. This phenomenon is what Haldon has recently called a 'pseudomeritocracy':<sup>21</sup> not birth, wealth or any other asset are represented to entail social promotion, but solely the merits of someone. This line of thought remains an ideology rather than a reality, of course: it is primarily advanced by one interest group, the civil elite, which is moreover the most vociferous.

Psellos' βασιλικοὶ λόγοι in particular frequently advance the idea that wealth should be distributed according to competences. In the first panegyric oration for Monomachos, Psellos praises the emperor because he had not judged men by their birth, but by their merit:

In old days, it seemed that the sources of prosperity and misery sprang forth regulated by fate, and children received from their fathers the different streams of fortune and passed it on to the grand-children. But you are the first to overturn this ignoble discrimination, and you weigh out the balance of happiness rather on the basis of merit than on the basis of descent, and so you change our destinies.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup>I should mention here the contribution of V. Jezek, "Education as a Unifying and 'Uplifting' Force in Byzantium", *Byzantinoslavica* 65 (2007), pp. 167–200, which sees in education not only a means for social promotion, but also for spiritual perfection. To my mind, this study fails to distinguish reality and ideology in Psellos' writings.

<sup>20</sup>Michael Psellos, "Oratio funebris in matrem", in: *Autobiografia. Encomio per la madre*, ed. by U. Criscuolo, Napoli 1989 (henceforth cited as Psellos, *Or. fun. in matrem*), l. 298–299: ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν δυσχερὲς ἄλλως καὶ μέχρις ἀκοῆς ἄλλο τι πρὸ τῶν λόγων ἐμπορεύεσθαι.

<sup>21</sup>Haldon, "Social Elites, Wealth and Power", p. 179.

<sup>22</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 1.92–97: Ἐδόκει πάλα κατὰ κλῆρον προϊένα ἢ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας καὶ δυσπραξίας πηγῆ, καὶ παῖδες πατέρων τὰ διάφορα τῆς τύχης δεχόμενοι βέβηματα εἰς υἰωνοῦς μετωχέτευσον. ἀλλὰ σὺ πρῶτος τὴν κακίστην αὐτὴν σύγχεας διαίρεσιν, καὶ τῷ τρόπῳ μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ γένει τὰ τῆς εὐτυχίας ταλαντεύσας ζυγά, τοὺς κληρῶν ἡμῶν μετεκίνησας.

It is clear that this meritocratic model is diametrically opposed to the hereditary ideology propagated by other segments in society. In a letter to Keroullarios, Psellos opposes these ideologies to each other, saying that he does not want to be known because of dead ancestors, but because of his tongue.<sup>23</sup>

The rationality and fairness of this meritocratic system are stressed in the funeral oration for Xiphilinos. There, Psellos makes a distinction between the ancient houses (τὰ πρῶτα γένη), and ‘the other side’ (ἡ ἄλλη μερίς).<sup>24</sup> He remarks that it would be absurd to refuse people from the latter group to enter the senate and other administrative bodies, if they have the right qualifications for it.<sup>25</sup> Instead of judging on the basis of an ‘irrational tradition’, the emperor rightly decided to select people for his court on the basis of a ‘rational judgment.’<sup>26</sup>

Psellos defends this ideology also in a polemical pamphlet directed against people who accused him of using his literary and rhetorical talents with the intention of gaining power and wealth (or. min. 9). Psellos assures that his brilliant career—he is talking here about his promotion to ‘hypertimos’—is a logical and rational decision.

If these offices were not the result of judgment and vote, and not a proportionate reward, but if everything, like hail, is thrown upon us from above in a haphazard and fortuitous way, and the better things befell me according to the irrationality of Fortune, then your jealousy would be reasonable. But since everything is taken into account and examined by our masters, and as such (...) the offices are thrown to us according to the measure of our talents, why do you not rather accept the equitable aspect of this judgment instead of unreasonably slandering the reasonable? Take this into account: before the rewards there were efforts and toils, some in words, other in deeds.<sup>27</sup>

In this fragment, Psellos does not at all deny that he enjoys success. This success is materialised in the form of honorific functions (τιμαί, ἀξιώματα are the words that Psellos uses). Psellos’ response once more stresses that selection on the ground of intellectual capacities is the most desirable. The implicit suggestion is present that the best and most diligent students in intellectual

<sup>23</sup>Michael Psellos, *Epistola a Michele Cerulario*, §3 (p. 24, l. 80).

<sup>24</sup>Michael Psellos, “Oratio funebris in Ioannem Xiphilinum”, in: *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, ed. by K. Sathas, vol. 4, Venezia/Paris 1876, pp. 421–462 (henceforth cited as Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*), p. 430, l. 29–30, and 431, l. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 430, l. 1–2: εὐδοξαμότεροι πρὸς ταῦτα φανεῖν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων καταλληλότεροι.

<sup>26</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 431, l. 12–13: οὐ συνήθειαν ἄλογον, ἀλλὰ κρίσιν εὐλογον τῶν περὶ τὰ βασιλεία ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐπεποίητο.

<sup>27</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 9.34–43: Εἰ μὲν γὰρ οὐ κρίσις καὶ ψῆφος οὐδὲ ἀντίδοσις ἔμμετρος αἱ τιμαί, ἀλλὰ πάντα, ὡσπερ αἱ χάλαζαι, καταρριπτεῖται ἄνωθεν εἰκῆ καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν, εἶτα δὴ ἐμοὶ κατὰ τύχης ἀλογίαν τὰ κρείττω συνεπεπτώκει, εἶχεν ἂν ὑμῖν λόγον ἢ βασκανία. ἐπεὶ δὲ πάντα τοῖς κρατοῦσιν ἠρίθμηται καὶ ἠκρίβωται καὶ (...) ἐφ’ ἡμῖν τὰ ἀξιώματα ῥιπτεῖται κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς ἕξεως, τί μὴ μᾶλλον τὸ εὐδόκιμον τῆς κρίσεως ἀποδέχεσθε, ἀλλὰ τὸ σὺν λόγῳ ὑμεῖς ἀλογίως κακίζετε; λογίσασθε γάρ· ἦσαν πρὸ τῶν ἀντιδόσεων καὶ πόνοι καὶ κάματοι, τὰ μὲν ἐν λόγοις, τὰ δὲ ἐν πράγμασι.

matters will also be the best, and most rewarded, government officials. Talent (ἔξλις) and efforts (πόννοι) are cited as preconditions to partake in success. The ‘toils in words’ imply that the creation of works was a condition for being selected. Moreover, this implies that efforts are needed: whoever wants to join the lucrative system, must also do an effort for it. This implies that education is a necessary preliminary to divide the skilful and the dedicated candidates from the rest. Of course, this gives a considerable responsibility and influence to the teachers.

Selecting people for powerful functions on the basis of their display of learning and eloquence was viewed as a quite natural selection procedure. In Mauroπους’ *Neara* concerning the appointment of the *nomophylax*, it is stipulated that Xiphilinos is picked out for this function, because he ‘has demonstrated (ἔπεδείξατο) his learnedness in a way that was neither unclear nor undistinguished nor vague; on the contrary, he was publicly and clearly prominent in tests over these matters.’<sup>28</sup> Even in this official document, the selection criteria take into account the display of learning. The ‘tests’ mentioned here are said to be organised in public. It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of these ‘exams’, but they are held as an indispensable element in meritocratic selection.<sup>29</sup>

The results of this meritocratic model do not merely remain rhetorical propaganda. They are also revealed in other writings as going for granted. In a funeral oration for an anonymous patrician, a fellow student of his, Psellos deplores the fact that the deceased had not yet lived the time when he could pick the fruits of his education: ‘He excelled so in talent and study that he seemed the best of all pupils of the school and should be selected for a higher destination, and carry off an employment of secretary in the palace as a prize for the competition’.<sup>30</sup> The aforementioned preconditions for a successful career return here in slightly other wordings: talent (εὐφυΐα) and study (σπουδή). Psellos adds that his talents can still be discerned in the literary works he has left behind; the letters he sent to Psellos are tellingly described as ‘tokens’ (l. 169: γνωρίσματα) of his rhetorical inspiration. Also elsewhere in the oration, success is seen as the reward for the efforts during study: they are the prizes given ‘according to one’s worth’,<sup>31</sup> and this pupil surely deserved them, since his ‘whole life was an uninterrupted reading’.<sup>32</sup> The word πόννοι is paramount in Psellos’ descriptions of how success is earned by literary edu-

<sup>28</sup>Ioannes Mauroπους, *Novella constitutio saec. XI medii*, ed. by A. Salac, Prague, 1954 (henceforth cited as Mauroπους, *Novella*), § 8: ὁς οὐκ ἀφανῶς οὐδ’ ἀσήμως οὐδ’ ἀμυδρῶς ἐπεδείξατο τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πολυμάθειαν, ἀλλὰ δημοσίᾳ καὶ φανερώς ἐν αὐταῖς ταῖς τῶν πραγμάτων πείραις ἐξέλαμψεν.

<sup>29</sup>More on these tests in the chapter ‘Competitions’.

<sup>30</sup>Gautier, “Monodies inédites” 5.146–149: Τοιοῦτος ἦν ἐκεῖνος καὶ τὴν εὐφυΐαν καὶ τὴν σπουδὴν ὥστε καὶ ἄριστος ἀπάντων ἐν τῷ παιδευτηρίῳ ἀναφῆναι καὶ κρείττονι ἐγκριθῆναι μοῖρα καὶ ἄθλον ἀγῶνος ἀποίσασθαι τὴν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις γραφῆν. For the specific usage of τὴν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις γραφῆν as an employment as a notary or secretary in the imperial chancellery, see *ibid.*, p. 139, n. 47.

<sup>31</sup>See for instance *ibid.* 5.221–2: τὰ τῶν πόννων γέρα ἐπιψηφισθῆ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἀγωνισμάτων ἔπαθλα πρὸς ἀξίαν ἐπιβραβευσθῆ.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.11–12: ὁ βίος ἅπας ἀνάγνωσις ἦν ἀδιάκοπος.

cation: tightly associated with the effortful study (μελέτη, σπουδή), it confers the impression that the meritocratic model is not a hazard undertaking, but rewards people for their diligent efforts in study. The reward is nearly always in the form of a career: through the job of secretary, one proceeded to more lucrative functions.

### 5.1.3 Texts as tests

The laureate student is said to ‘stand out’ (ἀναφῆναι) from his peers at school, and Xiphilinos, prior to being chosen, had ‘demonstrated’ his excellence in tests. These are vague terms. It is difficult to say whether there were centrally organised exams, or the student was chosen because he gathered an excellent reputation. The fragment most clearly pointing to the existence of exams, as Ahrweiler noted,<sup>33</sup> is the funeral oration for Xiphilinos, when Psellos describes the social ascension of himself and his friend:

I was tested and proofed on every sort of discourse, on many judgments, and on improvised writings, and this way I was pushed towards the entrance.<sup>34</sup>

Subsequently, he presents his ascension in the palace (431.21: ἐμὲ ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ὑψοῦσθαι) as a result of his study of letters: (431.20: τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἐπιμελείας καὶ σπουδῆς). But whether this points to a centrally organised exam is debatable.<sup>35</sup> Psellos insists that the ‘tests’ were often conducted and included many writings.

In any event, it is clear that the test for this selection procedure were self-composed texts. This appears also from a fragment towards the end of the second panegyric oration for Monomachos. After pressing the need for remuneration for this oration, Psellos avers that Monomachos should not reward just haphazardly any author for his writings:

The writings should be tested by many ears, and to whomever the supreme price is given, for him should the treasures of your empire be opened. You have, oh emperor, judges of words. You have indeed many of them, downright Muses I would call them. They should judge my words, and the others should divide the lamb as is fitting.<sup>36</sup>

In this fragment, the rationality of the selection procedures becomes concrete: candidates for functions (and thus, for imperial wealth) are being tested with

<sup>33</sup>Ahrweiler, “Hiérarchies et solidarités”, p. 108, n. 32.

<sup>34</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, 431.15–18: πολλάκις ἐξετασθεὶς καὶ βασανισθεὶς ἐπὶ παντὶ λόγῳ, ἐπὶ πολλαῖς κρίσεσιν, ἐπ’ αὐτοσχεδίοις συγγράμμασιν, καὶ οὕτω συμπεισθεὶς πρὸς τὴν εἰσοδόν.

<sup>35</sup>For doubts about centrally organised exams, see Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, p. 21 and 108–109.

<sup>36</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.* 2.826–8: ἀλλὰ δοκιμαζέσθωσαν τὰ συγγράμματα ὑπὸ πολλαῖς ἀκοαῖς, καὶ ὅτω ἂν δοθῇ τὸ ἐξαιρετόν ἐκεῖνον οἱ τῆς σῆς βασιλείας θησαυροὶ ἀνοιγέσθωσαν. Ἐχεις, ὦ βασιλεῦ, κριτὰς λόγων. πολλοὺς, μούσας αὐτόχρημα, οὗτοι κρινέτωσαν τὰ ἡμέτερα, οἱ δ’ ἄλλοι τὸν ἄρνα καθ’ ἄρμόν διαιρεῖτωσαν.

their writings as a basis. The sixth oration of Psellos even mentions the presence of his own pupils, recommended for their knowledge of rhetoric (Or. pan. 6.261–292); it is probable they were about to give a speech themselves.

The fourth *basilikos logos* of Psellos is also presented to the emperor as a demonstration of the virtuoso skills of the orator. This oration appears to be performed in front of a public of judges. In a flattering hyperbole, stressing the impossibility to describe the emperor's virtues, Psellos depicts this performative situation as follows:

From both sides stand groups of learned men, to judge and test my demonstration from every viewpoint, and to conclude that you cannot be beaten in the literary contest.<sup>37</sup>

These encomiastic orations in front of the emperor assisted by specialised judges, would indeed be an ideal testing ground for new applicants: they are showcases of rhetoric, in which young talents could prove their technical mastery and their loyalty to imperial ideology. It is telling that Psellos refers to this very oration as 'my demonstration' (ἐπίδειξις). This seems indeed the most apt word to describe this kind of works: display of competences with as the sole aim to impress a jury.<sup>38</sup>

One can thus see that the 'Beamtenliterat', and if one wants, the 'Beamtendichter', grounds his favourable social position on an ideology that is supported by a broad discourse. This ideology helps men like our poets to use their education to compose works, works that were in turn to be used to convince the emperor and his entourage to entrust to him a lucrative career. Despite the appearance of rationality, we should be cautious to see in this selection process a formal mechanical system. The emperor continued to choose at will his preferred functionaries. As can be derived from many letters of Psellos, this was frequently done on the basis of mediation by other people.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as we will see, Psellos employed also other ways to gain ground in the emperor's entourage and to attract his attention.

But at any rate, it is instructive that 'writings' serve as demonstrations of someone's abilities. They are the test toe for a career and for wealth. This can put into perspective the motivation to produce texts: if a cleverly composed work could provide a job, then discursive practices follow the established lines of social allocation and hierarchies. It is an activity grounded in the self-preservation of an establishment. By being responsible for the transmission of necessary skills and at the same time for the selection (in the capacity of judges), the intellectual elite succeeds in appropriating all potential means to control the flow of influence and power.

<sup>37</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.* 4.21–23: Ἐστᾶσι δὲ ἑκατέρωθεν γένη σοφῶν, ἵνα τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν ἐπίδειξιν πάντοθεν κρίνωσί τε καὶ βασανίσωσι, τὸ δὲ σὸν ἐν τοῖς λογικοῖς ἀγῶσι ἀήττητον ἀποδείξωσι.

<sup>38</sup>See also G. T. Dennis, "Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality", in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. by H. Maguire, Washington D.C. 1997, pp. 131–140, 137: 'Impressing them with verbal wizardry was most important for their reputation, and perhaps, for the recruiting of students'.

<sup>39</sup>Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, pp. 106–110.

### 5.1.4 Texts in the arena of reputation

We have already remarked in the chapter ‘Reading’ that poems were read by peers, prone to detect the elements by which they could detract the poet. It seems that texts and orations, also apart from the strict context of a formal examen, would act as a tool to demonstrate one’s fitness as a credible intellectual. Texts are ‘published’ or pronounced with an audience in view that would assume a critical stance towards the texts. Taking the risk to expose texts to scrutinisation was a necessary step forward. One had to enter the arena and make sure to catch the attention.

Psellos’ representation in the *Chronographia* of the onset of his own career brings to the foreground this aspect of display. As an insignificant secretary, Psellos at first did not have direct contact with the emperor. But he had his name bandied about with his entourage, according to Psellos especially because of the elegance (χάρις) and unaffectedness of his eloquence.<sup>40</sup> This eloquence ‘ran in front of him’,<sup>41</sup> suggesting that his reputation was circulating at court. He was formally introduced, and on this occasion, by virtue of his eloquence alone, he gained the emperor’s admiration, and, in Psellos’ account, the most formidable result of this admiration was that he gained unlimited access (εἴσοδος) to the emperor and his intentions.<sup>42</sup> This story, although probably distorting the truth, makes a natural connection between display of eloquence and political influence.

Among the many people grabbing for attention of the mighty, it mattered to set yourself off from the others so that your name went over the tongues. Surely an emperor like Monomachos was susceptible to the idea of rewarding the cunning and the clever. While describing the volatile character and exaggerated generosity of Monomachos, Psellos disapproves of the emperor giving away honorary functions ‘without consideration’ to people who ‘embarrassed the man with their pressing entreaties, and people who let drop words adapted to the occasion so as to make him laugh’.<sup>43</sup> It is clear that Psellos, even within the *Chronographia* itself, presents a somewhat ambiguous image of this use of display, since he also was one of those who caught the attention by some opportunistic words. Clearly, the anonymous flatterer who quoted Homer, can be reckoned amongst these shrewd people taking opportunity of the desire of the imperial family to appear as sponsors of culture.

In the encomium for Mauropous, Psellos says that among other qualities, Mauropous’ eloquence made him acquire a good reputation: it literally ‘published him’ and put him in the attention of everyone.<sup>44</sup> It is however in-

<sup>40</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §44.

<sup>41</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §45, l. 5–8: ἡ πρόδρομος χάρις τῆς γλώττης.

<sup>42</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §46.

<sup>43</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, § 29: τιμῶν δὲ καὶ πλείστοι μὲν ἀλόγως εὐθὺς παραπήλανον, μάλιστα δὲ οἱ τε φορτικώτερον καταδυσωποῦντες τὸν ἄνδρα, καὶ οἱ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν τι παραφθεγγάμενοι ὥστε ἐκεῖνον κινήσαι πρὸς γέλωτα. The translation of Sewter, *Michael Pselus. Chronographia*, p. 125 ‘pester’ for καταδυσωποῦντες misses the element of entreating or petitioning surely present here.

<sup>44</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 17.444–446: τοῦτον γὰρ ἐδημοσίευσεν μὲν ὁ λόγος καὶ ἡ ἀρετή, καὶ ἐς μέσην καθίστων περιωπήν.



teresting to see how Psellos, to heighten the praise of Mauropous, adds that the latter hesitated to assume the high function of metropolitan, because of his principles and character: his reverence for higher things and his contempt for prestigious and conspicuous functions held him back.<sup>45</sup> It was a normal thing that you made use of the renown created by your learning, but renouncing from this ambition surely was held in higher esteem from a purely moral point of view. We will return to this point with reference to Mauropous.

Ostentation can thus be seen as an important motive behind the creation of literary works. We have already treated the example of the metropolitan of Melitene, whose words were a proof (δείγμα) of his learning.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, the anonymous patrician's writings are called 'tokens of rhetorical inspiration' by Psellos.<sup>47</sup> In a letter to *caesar* Ioannes Doukas, Psellos foregrounds this element of display: he is like a peacock, parading with the beauty of this letter.<sup>48</sup> The verb used here, *θεατρίζω*, implies a large degree of ostentation and display. In his *Historia Syntomos*, Psellos mentions the desire to show off learnedness as one of the features of the letters of Leo the Wise. The letters are said to 'contain ostentation of sound education' as one of their laudable features.<sup>49</sup>

## 5.2 Social aspects

### 5.2.1 Ideological faults

This social promotion grounded on display of intellectual competences is a phenomenon exploited by one particular class in society, typically indicated by the adjective τὸ πολιτικὸν γένος. Just as in the usual English translation 'civil class', the adjective πολιτικός covers a broad range of significations, all associated with a group of people who share a social position and an interest in intellectual activities.

In the funeral oration for his former fellow student Niketas, who later became *maistor* in the school of St. Peter, Psellos describes how he and Niketas grew close to each other thanks to their similar characters. They were refined young men indulging in the more cultivated things of life.<sup>50</sup> While others tried to be conspicuous by letting their hair grow and looking serious, Niketas and Psellos entertained other ambitions: 'we made display by our tongue, by showing off the craftiness of our schooling, and we did not neglect the civil elegance (πολιτικὴ χάρις), of which we rejected the canniness and idleness but

<sup>45</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 17.446–450: συνέστελλε δὲ ἡ περὶ τὰ κρείττω εὐλάβεια, καὶ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἦθος, καὶ τὸ καταφρονεῖν ὕψους θρόνων καὶ τῆς ἐκεῖθεν δόξης τε καὶ λαμπρότητος. τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐβιάζετο τοῦτον εἰς τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ παρρησίαν, τὰ δὲ κατεῖχεν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ κατατροφῶν τῆς μυστικῆς εὐδοξίας.

<sup>46</sup>See supra, p. 112.

<sup>47</sup>Gautier, "Monodies inédites", 5.169: τῆς ῥητορικῆς ἐπιπνοίας γνωρίσματα.

<sup>48</sup>Gautier, "Quelques lettres de Psellos inédites ou déjà éditées", pp. 7.3–9.

<sup>49</sup>Michael Psellos, *Historia syntomos*, ed. by W. Aerts, Berlin 1990, 100.17–19: ἐπιστολὰς εὐπαιδευσίας μὲν ἐχούσας ἐπίδειξιν.

<sup>50</sup>Guglielmino, "Epitafio per Niceta", pp. 450, l. 73–77.

pursued the manageability and skilfulness.<sup>51</sup> Psellos specifies that at this stage, the training in rhetoric consisted of the study of existing texts as well as of the creation of new texts; in particular the latter provided for many people a proof (πεῖρα) of his rhetorical skills.<sup>52</sup>

The notion of πολιτικός turns up in the phrase πολιτικὴ χάρις. It here combines ambiguous features such as skilfulness but also idleness—the negative features Psellos mentions here are not that far away from the allegedly positive ones. The word πολιτικός frequently refers to a set of competences and activities connected with this class, such as administration and governance. Here it also seems to involve a compliance to the intellectually defined behavioural standards at court, implying a certain sense of jocularity and lightheartedness.

When the expression ὁ πολιτικὸς βίος is used in connection with the deceased anonymous patrician,<sup>53</sup> it seems to refer to his career as an official in particular, and might as well connote something like ‘the worldly life’. When characterising Leon Strabospondylos in his *Chronographia*, Psellos pictures him as the opposite of the πολιτικὸς ἀνὴρ: he is deprived of literary culture and of any sense for flexible behaviour; he is rude and unaccessible, in short, he is not the kind of elegant courtier who is apparently embodied by the adjective πολιτικός.<sup>54</sup> This ideal of being πολιτικός, with its stress on intellectual competences and the mastery of a certain code of behaviour, apparently gained vigour in this intellectual elite.

Literary works used for display are generally limited to the rhetorical works of the elite, designed to be performed or to circulate at court. The more edifying literature circulating in monastic milieus is suspicious of this aspect of display. From their viewpoint, the activity of writing is inextricably connected to the desire to display and to please, even to such a degree that they themselves had to ward off the accusation that they wrote texts with such mundane ends in mind.

The radical mystic Symeon the New Theologian advances the following motives to entrust his thoughts to paper:

So, I wanted to write this down, my brethren, not because I wanted to chase after renown—for such a man is foolish and worlds apart from the higher renown—, but in order to make you aware of the immeasurable magnanimity of God.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Guglielmino, “Epitafio per Niceta” l. 80-84: ἡμεῖς ἐν γλώττῃ ποιοῦμενοι τὴν ἐπίδειξιν, καὶ τὸ περιττόν ἐν τοῖς παιδεύμασιν ἐνδεικνύμενοι, οὐδὲ τῆς πολιτικῆς ἡμελοῦμεν χάριτος, τὸ μὲν εὐτράπελον αὐτῆς καὶ ἀδόλεσχον ἀποπτύοντες, ζηλοῦντες δὲ τὸ εὐάγωγόν τε καὶ περιδέξιον. The word περιττόν is surely not to be translated by ‘serietà’, as does Guglielmino: it connotes aspects of frivolous display.

<sup>52</sup>ibid. l. 89-92: τοὺς σοφιστικοὺς τῶν λόγων ἀκριβωσάμενος, πολλὰς τε τοιαύτας ὠδινήσας γονάς, καὶ πολλοὺς πείραν τῆς ῥητορικῆς παιδεύσεως παρασχόμενος.

<sup>53</sup>Gautier, “Monodies inédites”, p. 5.158.

<sup>54</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIa, § 6-7.

<sup>55</sup>Symeon the New Theologian, *Catéchèses*, ed. by B. Krivochéine, 3 vols., SC 96, 104, 113, Paris 1963-5, or. 17, l. 87-90: Ταῦτα τοιγαροῦν, ἀδελφοί μου, γράψαι ἠθέλησα οὐχ ὡς δόξαν θηρᾶσαι βουλόμενος—ἄφρων γὰρ ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ τῆς ἄνω δόξης ἀλλότριος—, ἀλλ’ ὅπως εἰδότες ἔσεσθε τὴν ἄμετρον φιλανθρωπίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

The suspicion is implicitly present that people normally write and ‘publish’ their writings to gain renown in worldly society. Symeon recognises this, but evidently condemns it on ideological grounds.

The same stance is visible in the *Vita Lazari in monte Galesio*: there, it is said that the saint did not want to write or speak in a learned way, unlike those others who are ostentatious (ἐπιδεικτικοί) and ambitious (φιλότιμοι).<sup>56</sup> This ideologically and socially external view on how literary production was conducted within the world of the court, allows us to see more clearly the connection between worldly ambition and the production of literary works.

This monastic segment of society often adopts a fervent anti-intellectual (or do we have to say anti-*politikos*) stance. These mystics, with Symeon The New Theologian in front, put the stress on personal religious feeling, excluding subtle theologic reasoning. In hymn 21 for instance, Symeon develops a particularly strong attack on intellectuals who use their rhetorical talents to gain power.<sup>57</sup> Symeon states that the deliverance from Christ will not reach the following kind of people (v. 55–60):

οὐ τοῖς ῥήτορσιν οὐδὲ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις, 55  
οὐ τοῖς μαθοῦσι συγγραφὰς τῶν Ἑλλήνων,  
οὐ τοῖς τὰς γραφὰς ἀναγνοῦσι τὰς ἕξω,  
οὐ τοῖς ἐξασκήσασι σκηρικὸν βίον,  
οὐ τοῖς λαλοῦσι τορνευτῶς καὶ πλουσίως,  
οὐ τοῖς λαχοῦσι μεγάλων ὀνομάτων, 60

Not the rhetors or philosophers, 55  
not those who have studied the writings of Hellenes,  
not those who have read pagan writings,  
not those who lead a theatrical life,  
not those who talk in a rich and polished manner,  
nor those who receive great titles. 60

It is revealing to see how naturally the connection is made here between intellectual competences and social success. This type of men is denounced as living a vain and ostentatious life. This anti-intellectualism spills over in the writings over Niketas Stethatos, who proudly claims that his great model Symeon had only enjoyed basic education.<sup>58</sup>

But also within the intellectual elite (or the class of *politikoi*) itself, it was sometimes a clever move to try to ward off the suspicion of writing merely to gain social renown. The word ἐπίδειξις, for instance, then acquires an outspoken negative connotation. When praising the more simple style of Symeon the Metaphrast, Psellos for instance condemns the ‘futile’ writers (οἱ περιττοί) for desiring to write everything ‘for display’ (ἐπίδειξιν) and not for

<sup>56</sup>Vita Lazari, §119.

<sup>57</sup>Symeon the New Theologian, *Symeon Neos Theologos. Hymnen*, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup>Niketas Stethatos, *Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949-1022) par Nicéas Stéthatos*, ed. by P. H. I. Hausherr, *Orientalia Christiana* 45, Roma 1928, §2.

moral edification.<sup>59</sup> This disdain obviously serves the specific argument here, as always in a work of Psellos. Consequently, when his works are considered as a whole, Psellos' stance towards display and social promotion can be called ambiguous.<sup>60</sup> In any event, we can conclude that display and ostentation, taken at face value, were not highly valued from an ethical viewpoint.

### 5.2.2 Social effectiveness

In the world of the court, entertaining personal relationships was of an undeniable importance. Membership to the right alliance and access, directly or indirectly, to the emperor, defined the influence of the courtier. At the same time, it was a world where intellectual values and codes of behaviour were held in high regard. The power of rhetoric could help the people circulating at court both to make intercession work more efficiently and to entertain the friendships which were often defined as intellectual friendships.

The usefulness of literary skills for 'getting things done' may appear from a few examples in which Psellos and Mauropous combine their literary talents and use their friendly relationships to influence decisions.

When some men from Euchaita bring in accusations against Mauropous at court, Psellos reassures his friend that he has taken the appropriate steps to ward off the danger. He successfully altered the opinion of the emperor, so that he did not believe the calumniators, and was full of praise for Mauropous. Besides, the emperor read several times Mauropous' beautiful and intelligent letter, and compared it to ancient literature.<sup>61</sup> This indicates how literary qualities can affect the outcome of manoeuvres at a social level. It is implied that not so much the content as such, but rather the display of literary beauty persuaded the emperor to take a favourable stance towards Mauropous. The criterion of comparison with ancient literature suggests that the quality standards applied by the emperor are the same as those by which a schoolmaster would judge the writings of his pupils, or of his peers. The play of forms and the *mimesis* of antique literature does have a real function here: to charm and impress powerful persons.

Another letter of Psellos discusses Mauropous' possible return to the capital from his 'exile' in Euchaita (Ep. K-D 229). After gently rebuking Mauropous for accusing him,<sup>62</sup> Psellos affirms that the emperor still admires Mauropous, mainly because of his literary qualities: he is said to compare him favourably with other orators and philosophers, who lag behind with him in their 'literary movements'.<sup>63</sup> When Mauropous would be called back to the

<sup>59</sup>Michael Psellos, *Orationes hagiographicae*, ed. by E. Schiffer, BT, Leipzig / Stuttgart 1994, 7.240–241: βούλονται γὰρ οἱ περιττοὶ τὴν σοφίαν πρὸς ἐπίδειξιν πάντα γεγράφθαι, οὐ πρὸς ὠφέλειαν καὶ ἥθους κατόρθωσιν.

<sup>60</sup>Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History*, pp. 67–8.

<sup>61</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 80, p. 314, l. 3-6: τὴν δὲ γε ἐπιστολὴν σου, τὴν καλὴν ὁμοῦ καὶ σοφὴν, πολλάκις διεξελήλυθε, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχαίους λόγους συνέκρινε.

<sup>62</sup>This letter may be an answer to one of those letters of Mauropous where he expresses his disappointment at his friends in the capital who have put him down, such as letter 51.

<sup>63</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 229, p. 273, l. 14-15: τῶν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις κινήματων.

capital, he should change his style, and not mingle subjects of insults and requests in his words, for that would ruin their case. He has to change his Muses for Graces, an expression dear to Psellos, implying that Mauropous should take care to speak in a light-hearted and pleasing manner. Psellos describes Mauropous as an actor (274.3: ὑποκρινόμενον), himself as a director, and the whole event as a play (274.2 δράματι). This description, surely not isolated in more in-crowd documents of Psellos,<sup>64</sup> reveals much of the connection between literary work and concrete social situation: authors assume roles, using their literary skills to create a favourable effect.

In a description of the career of a deceased pupil, Psellos gives us yet another picture of the importance of the deployment of literary skills in making hard one's requests at court.<sup>65</sup> Psellos establishes a causal relation between the flickering mind of the emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos and the need to use eloquence as a psychological weapon. During his audiences with the emperor, his pupil could enchant him with the 'Siren of his tongue'; he was moreover versatile (πολύχρους) enough, that is, willing to adapt himself to the occasion. As a result, he could charm the emperor's soul and never walked away from the palace empty-handed.

Just like the clever man flattering Skleraina with a Homeric citation, Psellos' pupil cunningly made use of the emperor's perceptiveness to being flattered, and therefore he had to be versatile (πολύχρους). Steadfast principles were not the way to be rewarded, but a sensitivity to the *kairos* all the more was.

Graces of lore (χάριτες, σειρήν), skill (τέχνη), adaptability (πολύχρους), beguilement (θέλω, μνηστεύομαι), theatricality (θέατρον, δράμα), these are the notions that reoccur in the process of display and securing rewards.

## 5.3 Poetry and display of study

### 5.3.1 'Be conspicuous and have success': Psellos 16

We have one testimony of a poem which appears to have been actively deployed in the process of gaining a career by demonstrating poetic skills. That is poem 16 of Michael Psellos, addressed to an emperor, probably Michael IV. It contains at the end an explicit request to enrol him as an imperial secretary. It must refer to the period in his life when he was seeking for a job in the imperial chancellery (see *Chronographia*, book IV, §38), which falls during the reign of Michael IV,<sup>66</sup> if we suppose that his request is genuine and succeeded.<sup>67</sup> In this case, the poem was one of the elements of literary display that helped Psellos' career to take off.

<sup>64</sup>See Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 169, where the addressee is also urged to play well his role in the theatre that is set up at the court, and to use his literary skills in an able way.

<sup>65</sup>Gautier, "Monodies inédites", or. 4, l. 111–118.

<sup>66</sup>Westerink, *Poemata*, p. 238.

<sup>67</sup>See also Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, p. 45, n. 13, where it is suggested that Psellos received the job exactly because of this poem.

The poem's argument goes along the following lines: up until now, Psellos has lived a life devoted to study, but at this moment, Michael's empire seems to be beset by a serious threat. Therefore, Psellos wishes him an unhindered rule, and asks him to accept this poem as a gift and to give in exchange an appointment as one of his secretaries.

The first six lines of the poem offer in a nutshell the consensus on which the social profitability of *hoi logoi* rests:

Ἐμοί, κραταῖε φωσφόρε στεφηφόρε,  
 μέλημα καὶ σπούδασμα καὶ βίος λόγοι,  
 ἐξ ὧν φανῆναι καὶ προκόψειν ἐλπίσας  
 πάντων κατεφρόνησα καὶ ζῆν εἰλόμην  
 τέως ταπεινὸν καὶ κεκρυμμένον βίον,  
 πόνοις ὁμιλῶν καὶ σοφῶν βιβλοῖς μόνον.

5

Dear mighty and light-bearing emperor,  
 learning, that's my care, my concern, my life.  
 It is from this that I hope to be conspicuous, and to have success.  
 Therefore I neglected all other things and chose until now  
 a humble and concealed life,  
 having contact only with the works and the books of scholars.

5

The rational meritocratic model that Psellos so painstakingly develops in other writings also appears here. He goes to great lengths to underscore the investments he has made. The devotion to learning is represented as a way of life (βίος, twice, in l. 2 and 5) that was toilsome. Moreover, this life was 'hidden': this entails that Psellos had to conceal his ambitions and refrain from establishing connections and progressing on a social level. Withdrawn from real life, he contemplated books of the ancient wise. This must have been an unattractive way of life. Study, isolated and not directly applicable, was an investment; we have seen this element several times in other works of Psellos, crystallised in words as *πόνοι*. The renunciation to all other things comes close to an ascetic ideal, always the most revered one in Byzantium.

This poem responds to the expectation that study, and the efforts to make progress in it, are indispensable for social promotion. This way, no intruders could reap fruits without the prescribed *rite de passage* of study. The toils in study are represented as the price to be paid for the fulfilment of certain expectations. These are stated in two telling verbs: *φανῆναι καὶ προκόψειν*, attract attention and be successful. The first step (*φανῆναι*) entails the display of literary skills, so laboriously acquired: Psellos hopes to stand out from the rest. As we have seen in his account of his student time, he does so particularly by displaying his virtuosity in eloquence. The second step (*προκόψειν*) is the development of a successful career. The process where the latter follows upon the former seems to go for granted.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this poem is its frankness: seldom are literary works available to us so revealing about the aims they pursue. The poem concludes bluntly by stating that the gift of this poem is expected to

be returned with the job of secretary. Psellos in particular normally refrains from stating his self-interested intentions so openly. This outspokenness may be related to the point of the trajectory that Psellos pursues: at this moment, as a juvenile anonymous, he has to make his ambitions plain enough. At a later stage, when he claims the role of state philosopher, he is able to adopt the attitude of disinterestedness that is implied with this position.

### 5.3.2 Metrical and rhetorical virtuosity

Also poetry had a role in this process to ‘be conspicuous’ as an intellectual. Poetry, technically more demanding, fits perfectly to display literary skilfulness in a dazzling way. As we have seen, the correct application of prosodical rules was considered one of the most difficult part of grammatical education. Getting that right is an unmistakable proof of skill.

Elizabeth Jeffreys has recently suggested that verse-writing in the twelfth century was to a large degree motivated by the desire to demonstrate that one was a ‘credible member of the guild of *literati*’.<sup>68</sup> A similar motivation for writing poetry can be observed in eleventh-century poetry. Several poems serve to assert the author as a credible adherent to the ideals of the intellectual elite.

It is obvious that the correct handling of poetic skills was closely watched upon by colleagues. Mauropous’ poem 34 (Πρὸς τοὺς ἀκαίρως στιχίζοντας) is a reaction against incapable versificators, upbraided either for their lack of metrical skills (cf. *infra*), either for the fact of writing verse in a way that was inappropriate for the social occasion (expressed by the word ἀκαίρως in the title).

But also other forms of rhetorical and intellectual display are present in poetry. It would take us too far, and it would probably be an unnecessary exercise, to unravel every example of this, but a few striking examples may be mentioned, wherein the aspect of skilfulness and virtuosity apparently comes on the first place.

Christophoros composed a long poem (111 verses) on the spider (122), and a very short one (four verses) on the ant (125). In both of these poems Christophoros stresses the ordinariness and pettiness of these animals, as if to heighten the virtuosity of his undertaking. The spider is repeatedly characterised as a ‘trivial creature’<sup>69</sup> and the ant altogether a ‘small animal’.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the great difference in length between both poems is no doubt designed to highlight Christophoros’ skills, who proves that he can handle both the techniques of *brevitas* and that of *copia*.

In the encomium on the spider, this aspect is integrated in an argumentation of deference: Christophoros states that he cannot praise the wonderful works of the Creator in a fitting way, thus he will start with a creature that seems insignificant in comparison with other creatures (v. 13–21). He repeats

<sup>68</sup> Jeffreys, “Why produce verse?”, p. 221.

<sup>69</sup> E.g. Christophoros, 122.17: εὐτελοῦς (...) πλάσματος.

<sup>70</sup> Christophoros, 125.1: τὸ βραχὺ ζῷον.

this alleged motivation at the end of the poem: even to this small animal, the forces of the rhetor fail to do justice (v. 105–111). Also the poem on the ant takes the smallness of the animal as its main subject: the small body of the ant is juxtaposed to its great mind. The ultimate argument is on both occasions to celebrate the greatness of Creation, but the stress on the banality of the subject highlights the poet's (or: the rhetor's) achievement.

Poems 87 and 88 too are unmistakably a *προγύμνασμα*: they form a perfect example of the exercise of *ἀνασκευή* and *κατασκευή*. In poem 87, a friend is rebuked because he had sent grapes from the countryside; the poet asks for figs instead, and gives an elaborate argumentation why figs are superior to grapes. In poem 88, exactly the opposite argument is claimed. Both poems, counting exactly 16 verses, perfectly mirror each other. Comparison of trees and plants is a popular sophistic exercise of *σύγκρισις* from Antiquity onwards;<sup>71</sup> in the eleventh century, also Doxapatres wrote a comparison between the olive tree and the vine.<sup>72</sup> Christophoros arguably builds on this tradition; consequently, his subject is chosen in imitation of a sophistic tradition, and not inspired by real concerns.

The riddles are also a genre that fits into this game of display. All three of our poets have written riddles: Christophoros has six of them, Mauropous 60 is a riddle, and so are Psellos 35 to 37. This formidably ancient and persistent genre provides a perfect occasion to initiate a competition and demonstrate intelligence, both for the poet and the participants who have to guess the right answer.

Sophistic virtuosity, but then in a negative form, is also registered in poem 23 of Christophoros. In that poem, a certain Georgios, a *γραμματικός*, is ridiculed because he had written a wrong *boustrophedon*. I would argue that Georgios' attempt at writing such a *boustrophedon* would be a typical feat of virtuoso display by a teacher: within the engagement with poetry, *schedos*, and other things that are rather considered playful, writing a verse that can be read from left to right and from right to the left,<sup>73</sup> would perfectly fit. In this sense, it is surely no coincidence that Georgios is a grammarian: this kind of preparatory studies are the terrain in which he is supposed to excel.

## 5.4 The poetry of an intellectual elite

We have already observed that the civil class acted as an elite, playing out intellectual competence as an asset to profit from. Its members thus had every interest to keep this class as limited as possible. Whoever had a position of any renown as an intellectual, had interest in preserving the intellectual elite as an elite, that is, as a closed class that not anyone can enter and in which distinctive rules and codes apply.

<sup>71</sup>H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft ; Abt. 12, Teil 5, München 1978, vol. I, pp. 106–108.

<sup>72</sup>Ioannes Doxapatres, "Commentarii in Aphthonii progymnasmata", pp. 491–2.

<sup>73</sup>Crimi interprets *boustrophedon* as such, see Crimi, *Canzoniere*, pp. 67–70.



Membership of the class is borne out by the prerogative of being called ‘a *logios*’. Contemporary expressions are for example ‘shining among the wise’ (λαμπρὸς ἐν σοφωτάτοις), used sarcastically by Christophoros,<sup>74</sup> or ‘to be conspicuous in the list of wise’.<sup>75</sup> The image of the list also frequently occurs in Psellos’ letters, for instance in one to *caesar* Doukas: thanks to the *caesar*’s appreciation of his qualities, Psellos feels he can be ‘counted among in the list of learned people’ (νῦν ... δοκῶ ... ἐν τῷ καταλόγῳ τῶν λογίων συνηριθμηθῆναι).<sup>76</sup> But of course, it was still better to prevail among these men; thus Mauropus is called in the poem by his secretary ‘the champion of all men who bring offers to *hoi logoi*’.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, Psellos says of himself that thanks to the praises of a friend, he ‘was believed to prevail over everyone in *logoi*’.<sup>78</sup>

These examples prove that the ‘intellectual elite’ was a consciously delineated concept in the mind of contemporary Byzantines, in terms of *hoi logoi* and *logioi*. It also allowed for a hierarchy; Psellos was conscious that he was on top of the field. This position of precedence was consecrated by his appointment as consul of philosophers, and, if it does not amount to the same, by his title of proedros. Psellos has this to say, against a critical Xiphilinos:

Why are you upset by this title, my dear friend, when since already a long time you thought and declared in your letters that I presided over *hoi logoi* (προεδρεύειν ἐν λόγοις)? I have now received exactly what I underwent (for a long time), and the title has now sealed practice.<sup>79</sup>

Psellos’ towering authority in the intellectual field is sanctioned by an official title, which makes him *incontournable*, but also gathers him critique because it offends the disinterestedness inherent to the ethics of the intellectual field.

### 5.4.1 Defending positions: Christophoros’ elitist stance

The idea of distinction, and the connection between social and cultural elitism, are endemic to the works of all of the intellectuals of this period. Christophoros’ poetry is permeated by the idea that functionaries of all sort should be educated men like himself. Ignorance, credulity and boorishness incited his indignation time and again. This elitist stance permits him to assess the in-

<sup>74</sup>Christophoros, 40.24.

<sup>75</sup>Michael Psellos, “Or. fun. in Leichoudem”, here 393.29, of Mauropus: ἐμπρέπει ... ἐν σοφῶν καταλόγῳ.

<sup>76</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, 231, p. 276, l. 5.

<sup>77</sup>Hesaias’ poem, v. 28: πάντων κατ’ ἀνδρῶν τῶν θυόντων τοῖς λόγοις.

<sup>78</sup>E. Maltese, “Epistole inedite di Michele Psello. I”, *Studi italiani di filologia classica* III.5 (1987), pp. 82–98, letter 3, l. 39–40: πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐν λόγοις ἄρχειν πεπίστευμαι.

<sup>79</sup>E. Maltese, “Epistole inedite di Michele Psello. II”, *Studi italiani di filologia classica* III.5 (1987), pp. 214–223, letter 7, l. 31–34. διὰ τί, ὦ φιλότης, δυσχεραίνεις ἡμῖν τὸ ἀξίωμα, ὅποτε τὸ προεδρεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν λόγοις πάλαι καὶ ᾤθηθης καὶ πολλάκις ἀπεφώνω ἐν γράμμασιν; αὐτὸ γοῦν πεπόνθαμεν, ὅπερ ὑπειχομεν, καὶ σφραγὶς ἡμῖν τῆς πράξεως ἢ κλήσις ἐγένετο.

tellectual value of others and discard them if they are deemed not fit enough. His jibes at the expense of others are weapons to achieve this.

His first poem may serve as an example for his aversion towards boorishness. This poem describes a disastrous stampede at the feast of St. Thomas. We have no other historical sources for this event, and it is quite impossible to ascertain whether the disaster was incited by violence or a too large mass of people. Christophoros zooms in on one particular event in a church, while the people were singing psalms and one particular person created chaos (v. 29–35). Whether this has caused the whole disaster, is difficult to ascertain precisely.<sup>80</sup>

ἀγράμματος δὲ πανθεώτης τις γέρων  
 ῥαβδοῦχος ἦν ὀπισθεν ἐκβοῶν μέγα,  
 καὶ πεζολεκτῶν ὡς ἄπειρος γραμμάτων  
 ἔφρασκεν αὐτοῖς· «ὡς κελεύετε, ψίχα.»  
 οὗτοι δὲ τοῦτο συχνὸν ἠνωτισμένοι  
 ἔφρευγον εὐθύς τοῦ μέλους λελησμένοι  
 καὶ συντριβὴν κλαίουσι τῶν μελῶν ἔτι.

At the back, there was an old man, an uneducated *pantheotes*,<sup>81</sup>  
 Who was carrying a stick, and yelled out aloud.  
 Speaking prose as someone unacquainted with letters,  
 He kept saying to them: ‘Here you are, a crumb!’  
 The people, after repeatedly hearing this,  
 Ran away at once, forgetful of the song (*melos*),  
 But still they bemoan the crushing of their legs (*melos*).

For a good understanding of the course of events, we would have to know what the curious scream of this *pantheotes* precisely means. It is difficult to believe that he was distributing bread, because the people are said to run away instead of approaching. The word ‘crumb’ must have carried a second meaning that was possibly shocking or vulgar, but that totally deludes us.

Christophoros lays great stress on the fact that the man was an uneducated bore, and in fact, he makes a direct connection between this vulgar shout and the panic among the people. The verb used for this shout is πεζολεκτέω. This word, fairly seldom, means ‘speaking (or writing) in prose’, mostly used in a neutral sense.<sup>82</sup> In this poem, however, a negative connotation is evident: it is directly connected with the expression ‘as someone unacquainted with letters’. Of course, prose is not the indication of boorishness in se, but it has the potential also to be used in such a boorish way. The underlying

<sup>80</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 49, believes so, but the particle τοῖνον on v. 25 rather introduces a new event instead of giving a cause.

<sup>81</sup>A *pantheotes* was a minor functionary belonging to the service of the palace; see N. Oikonomides, “L’évolution de l’organisation administrative de l’empire byzantin au XIe siècle (1025-1118)”, *TM* 6 (1976), pp. 125–152, 129, but citing exactly this very poem as a source.

<sup>82</sup>Apart from a few other occurrences, the word also occurs in the begging poem from Athen. EB 1040, v. 58, cf. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 72.

implication of the word as it is used here, I would suggest, is that poetry can never imply this aspect of boorishness. Christophoros deduces the rudeness of this person from his words. Words, whether spoken or written, are the sign of someone's education, or lack thereof.

In a similar fashion he complains about people performing the function of priest and deacon in poem 63. The social critique is eminent here: Christophoros deplores the fact that ordinary people (he explicitly mentions a string of ordinary professions) can become priests and deacons. This leads to situations, comically described by the poet, where these sham priests cannot properly pronounce the words required for the service and fall back on the jargon of their profession.

In another poem (poem 40), he upbraids an ordinary man, an ἰδιώτης, for claiming the right to judge writings of ancient authors. This leads Christophoros to bemoan the fate of the intellectuals, a group that Christophoros subsumes under the designation 'we, friends of *hoi logoi*' (v. 44: ἡμᾶς τοῦς λόγων φίλους). The sham intellectual is excluded, but primarily, as it seems (the text is damaged), because he had not yet gone through the whole necessary process of education and consecration by his peers. Christophoros advises him: 'do not run from the rows to the throne' (v. 14: κόπης ἀπ' αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸ βῆμα μὴ τρέχε). Social promotion should advance rationally. Elsewhere, Christophoros implies that he had not yet learned to write first (v. 6): in sum, he lacked the education needed to assume the role he assumed. He will remain a 'herdsman' in the world of intellectuals (v. 62: ἀντικρυς ἐστὶ βουκόλος πρὸς συγκρίσεις). In this instance, social categories are used to judge people on an intellectual basis, and *vice versa*. Nevertheless, the position he coveted, is described as an attractive one. Christophoros ironically presents us the image of the typical successful intellectual: he occupies a throne, high and floating (l. 22), and he is admired and popular (24–28).

The 'boorishness' that is said to be brought along by such people is also defined in a traditional pastoral term ἀγροικίαν (v. 32), which is said now to endanger the city (vv. 29–32). The word defines an opposition between city and country and may reflect a commonly thought analogy between intellectuality and geographic provenance. In the ensuing personification of ἀγροικία, the poet states that it 'accuses knowledge and literary culture of being nothing good'.<sup>83</sup> This may hint at a hostile discourse that questioned the relevance of education. Therefore, Christophoros feels that it is necessary to restate the preconditions for participating in intellectual life. He names three necessary requisitions to gain entrance in the group of persons legitimised to pronounce literary judgments. We cannot read these requisitions entirely, but the familiar pair is discernible, consisting of talent (v. 58: ἔχειν εὐφυῆ φύσιν δέον) and study (v. 60: ἐντελῆ γνῶσιν φέρειν). He must 'cling to many books' (v. 64: ἐξημμένον μάλιστα πολλὰ πυκτία). In the last verses, the requirements are stated as 'time, efforts and an oil-lamp' (v. 75: χρεία χρόνου σοὶ καὶ κόπου καὶ λυχνίας). The overall message is that one cannot simply assume the role

<sup>83</sup>Christophoros, 40.31–32: κατηγοροῦσα γνώσεως καὶ τῶν λόγων // ὡς χρηστὸν οὐδὲν οὐδαμῶς πεφυκότων.

of an intellectual: this status is defined by standards of education, and needs to be given proof of. This proof, study and composition of works, requires a certain amount of effort and devotion, so that even at night one must be prepared to work for it. This last aspect is hinted to by the oil lamp. In sum, assuming the position of an intellectual needs an investment, just like Psellos stressed the investments he has made to lead a life devoted to *hoi logoi*.

Christophoros' perspective is typical for the position he occupies as an intellectual: when education and study are set up as necessary preconditions to participate in intellectual life and enjoy the social promotions tied to this, the people who belong to the group have to assert themselves as such, and guard against people who can assume a similar role without willing to invest the same time, energy and money in education. Vertical mobility creates opportunities, but should be held in check by those claiming a more authoritative position. Regulation and consecration of members seemed thus to have happened on an internal basis, by peers scrutinising and testing their rivals.

This may also explain the perceived self-assertive tone found in poems of the eleventh century,<sup>84</sup> which we may, with an interesting anachronism of Magdalino, also call 'snobbishness', that is, the explicit expression of social superiority from people who do not have enough authority to make this superiority implicitly clear.<sup>85</sup>

A similar elitist stance is to be observed in a poem of Mauropous directed against 'someone who is suddenly honoured' (poem 66). It is a mildly ironic piece, drawing a bead on the swiftness by which someone is promoted from secretary (1: *μυστογράφος*) to tax collector (2: *ἐξάκτωρ*). This forms a cause to lament the transitoriness of earthly values: 'such are all mortal and transient things: // a shadow that cannot be kept by the hands that hold it' (10-11: *τοιούτων ἔστι πᾶν τὸ θνητὸν καὶ ῥέον —// σκιὰ κρατούσας χερσὶν οὐ κρατούμενη*).

Just like Christophoros' complaints about priests and deacons who come from nothing, so is this piece a reflection of the quickly changing social balance. Insecurity about the acquired social status makes that these poets adopt a disparaging view about the vertical mobility they see around them. They try to defend their own position by putting up the barrier of education and stating the investments they have made as necessary preliminaries. As such, they attempt to stop the influx of less qualified people, who gnaw at the repute of their status.

### 5.4.2 Intellectual friendships

The social aspect of this intellectualism becomes clear through the concept of 'intellectual *φιλία*', an important expression of social identification in this

<sup>84</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 38–39; it is unnecessary to make this point for Psellos in general, whose self-assertiveness is also described in more pejorative terms by modern scholars. For a more nuanced assessment of Psellos' self-representation, see Pietsch, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos: Kaisergeschichte, Autobiografie und Apologie*.

<sup>85</sup>P. Magdalino, "Byzantine Snobbery", in: *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. by M. Angold, Oxford 1984, pp. 58–78.

period.<sup>86</sup> The ideal of a civilised and cultivated friendship is expressed in many letters of Michael Psellos,<sup>87</sup> but it is also important in Mauroπους' letters and reappears in a particular jocular form in Christophoros' poems. We have already seen that the reading circles were composed of same-minded men, who attached great importance to the social aspect of their cultural gatherings. Christophoros, in begging his literary hero Niketas to let him partake of his words, clearly considers this a part of the social relationship they have (cf. *supra*, p. 61).

It is perhaps one of the most important elements in the intellectual history of the eleventh century that one anew dared to project learning and literary culture as an ideal.<sup>88</sup> In a letter to a friend, Psellos chastises his correspondent because he neglects the values of *hoi logoi*: he leans toward material values, whereas he should know that *hoi logoi* provide the real wealth and should be honoured.<sup>89</sup> It is typical for the bookishness of this elite that Psellos even avers that letters, as written documents, are worth more than a live conversation.<sup>90</sup> The friend is called to order and urged to send him a letter back, that is, he should again subscribe to the intellectualist values of friendship that were so important for the self-definition of this elite.

This kind of gentle chastisements is ubiquitous in letter-writing. But it is also to be found in some of Christophoros' poems. In poem 100, he begs his friend Niketas to write him some more words. In poem 4, he lays a conventional chastisement at the door of a certain monk Mourzoul: Σιγῶς; In the chapter 'Gifts', we will encounter some other telling examples.

The friendship that originates in these circles, is perceived and described as a special one, free from any low material motivations. In a funeral oration for Anastasios, a pupil of his, Psellos claims that their friendship was provoked by their shared love for learning.<sup>91</sup> This is only reinforced, Psellos states, by their common manners. He underlines the immaterial and authentic aspects of their friendship. Not carousals, games, or sport formed the basis and subject of their friendship, but the Muses, learning, and other beautiful things.<sup>92</sup> They met each other a few times at some occasions, and Anastasios became impressed by Psellos' graces, and made him his teacher (l. 38–43). One may wonder what is precisely meant with these 'occasions of learning' (ἡ ἐπὶ τούτοις [sc. λόγοις] συνουσία is the expression that is used), but it is assumable that Anastasios was impressed by a public show oration of Psellos, or a public lecture—the difference may well be not that great. Reputation seems in this process a defining factor: Psellos stresses that they were introduced to each other on the basis of what other people said.<sup>93</sup> One can again easily see how

<sup>86</sup>Ahrweiler, "Hiérarchies et solidarités".

<sup>87</sup>About this intellectual friendship, cf. Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, pp. 178–179.

<sup>88</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 245.

<sup>89</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 11, p. 244, l. 20–21: πάντα σοι μάλλον ἢ ὁ λόγος τετίμηται ; l. 24: τὸν παλαιὸν πλοῦτον, τοὺς λόγους.

<sup>90</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, p. 24, l. 1–6.

<sup>91</sup>Gautier, "Monodies inédites" 2.27–30. Probably this Anastasios is Anastasios Lyzix, see the convincing arguments adduced by Gautier, p. 86–90.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.25–26: Μουσῶν καὶ λόγων καὶ τῆς ἄλλης χάριτος.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.28–29: φήμη πρὸς ἀλλήλους περὶ ἀλλήλων ἤκουσα.

important it must have been for a teacher to enhance his reputation, exactly by the demonstration of his skills. It is also important to see that relationships between teachers and students could be described in terms of intellectual φιλία; we will come back to this point.

### 5.4.3 Urbanity

Someone aspiring to the title of intellectual should not only meet formal requirements in his works or conversations, he should in fact comply to a role that dictates certain intellectual and behavioural standards. One of the most outspoken of these is that of ἀστεϊότης.

It is the very counterpart of ἀγροικία, and reflects the opposition between urban elegance and provincial boorishness.<sup>94</sup> This opposition is most eminent in Mauropous' poem 54, where he says: 'I was boorish yesterday, but now I am urbane'.<sup>95</sup> Mauropous, who hailed from the countryside, was here introduced at court. The imperial court, in the middle of the city, is this way represented as the radiating centre of ἀστεϊότης. And not without reason Christophoros tells us that the works of his deceased brother gave proof of ἀστεϊσμοὶ ποικίλοι (v. 33), that is, 'various witticisms', next to containing 'Attic *charis*' (v. 31).

Poem IV of Michael Grammatikos is a particularly vitriolic jibe at the ἀγροικία of an opponent.<sup>96</sup> Targeting the bishop of Philomelion, the poet makes his opponent tell his life: he was raised in a rough village, 'where people had the same brains as the cattle' (v. 19: ὅπου περ ἀνδρῶν καὶ βοῶν ἴσαι φρένες). This is manifested by the famous passage in which it is made clear that in the country the upsilon was pronounced as /i/. Constantly ridiculing the bishop as a herdsman and describing his immorality, Michael exposes to the full his ἀγροικία—the word is also mentioned at verse 78.

In one of his polemical orations,<sup>97</sup> Psellos defends the civilness or urbanism (ἀστεϊον) of his words and his behaviour (ἤθος), which is moreover natural (ἄτεχνον). Part of this urban behaviour also consisted of speaking at the right times (not ἀκάρως). Psellos took care never to be onerous (φορτικός), or to play roles in the wrong manner (οὔτε διαμαρτάνω μιμούμενος). The latter aspect is particularly revealing: it implies that a 'man of the world' may play various roles, but he should know the right way and moment to do so. The intellectual wishing to maintain a position of conspicuity, thus had to comply to some standards of behaviour, and an intimate knowledge of social conventions and opportunities. We may remind here the unfavourable portrait of Strabospondylos, who displayed an unaccessible character, the opposite of πολιτικός (cf. supra).

Particularly in Psellos' works, the ideal of versatility is advanced and celebrated. We have already seen that a pupil of his, thanks to his versatility, could convince the emperor to lavish him with presents.<sup>98</sup> Psellos self-

<sup>94</sup>For this opposition, see also Crimi, *Canzoniere*, pp. 36–38.

<sup>95</sup>Mauropous, 54.64: ἀγροϊκος ἦν χθές, ἀστικὸς δὲ νῦν μάλα.

<sup>96</sup>Mercati, "Ancora intorno a Μιχαὴλ γραμματικὸς ὁ ἱερομόναχος", pp. 128–131.

<sup>97</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 7.110–9.

<sup>98</sup>Gautier, "Monodies inédites", or. 4, l. 111–118.

aggrandisement frequently centres around this property of being παντοδαπός or εὐάρμοστος.<sup>99</sup> In one letter, explaining his marriage of rhetoric with philosophy, he confesses: ‘I don’t know what I am, either a philosopher, either another animal, perhaps still more complex than Typhon.’<sup>100</sup>

Wit, implied by the word ἀστεϊότης, is also an important element to belong to the inner circle. In a letter to a fellow student, Psellos reminds him of their shared education as a basis of their friendship, and he specifically refers to ‘juvenile games and witticisms’.<sup>101</sup> In another letter, he reproaches an acquaintance (the *epi ton deeseon*) for leaving aside his elegance (χαριεντισμός) and playfulness (παιδιά):<sup>102</sup> he should understand the innocence of Psellos’ jest.

These examples may make us aware of the importance of a certain code of behaviour governing the social relationships in these intellectual circles. A degree of humour and insider’s jokes was no doubt an important element to cement the circles of refined men. Some poems, notably those of Christophoros, bristling with puns and jokes, may reflect this appreciation of ‘urban’ wit. In the case of Mauropous and Psellos, however, it appears that wit, satire and jest are rather reserved for letters, and not for poems.

#### 5.4.4 Nocturnal efforts: the devotion to *hoi logoi*

We have already mentioned that a claim to the right to be called ‘logios’ implied investments, predominantly in study. These investments became a fixed ingredient of intellectual self-representations.

Christophoros took care to display faithful credentials of the membership to an intellectual elite. His self-representation is intent to uphold the image of a devoted intellectual. This is borne out for instance by a poem on an owl hooting and keeping him awake (poem 131). The poem is very mutilated. Christophoros begins by apostrophising the owl, wishing him a long life. It seems that the first part of the poem describes the assistance someone offered him earlier to awake him, an old man (v. 21 and 35), or maybe also a cock (v. 25); but the promises to keep Christophoros at fixed times awake were not fulfilled. Now, he has an owl that renders him this service.

The poet stresses the feature of wisdom traditionally associated with the owl (v. 9: ᾗ φροντις ἐστὶ γνώσεως). In this case, the owl brings wisdom because he keeps Christophoros awake. This way, he can dedicate himself at night to his books and studies: the bird makes him ‘alert and eager for efforts’ (v. 13: ὄξυν τιθεῖσα καὶ πρόθυμον εἰς πόνους). He will collect knowledge from being awake (v. 51: συλλέξομαι γὰρ γνῶσιν ἐξ ἀγρυπνίας).

Vigilance, or ἀγρυπνία, formed a part of the self-representation of intellectuals. It had already appeared in poem 40, when Christophoros mentioned

<sup>99</sup>Cf. Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VII, §27, about his speeches, who were adapted according to the *καρὸς*.

<sup>100</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 174, p. 442, l. 21–22: ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ οἶδα μὲν ὅστις εἰμι, εἴτε φιλόσοφος, εἴτε τι ἄλλο ζῷον ἴσως Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον.

<sup>101</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 17, p. 21, l. 27: παιδικὰ προσπαίγματα καὶ ἀστείσματα.

<sup>102</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 12, p. 245, l. 24.

the oil lamp as a preliminary for sound intellectual work. It is connected to the efforts one has to sacrifice to his studies. As one of the hallmarks of asceticism, it could gain universal esteem in Byzantium.<sup>103</sup>

The poem inverts ordinary expectations, because it welcomes the owl, a bird others would want to chase off because it keeps them from sleeping. The prayer to the owl, wishing the bird a good health (v. 11), has to be interpreted as the ironic counterpart of what one is expected to shout at an owl hooting in the night. This counterintuitive aspect distinguishes Christophoros as an intellectual devoted to ἀγρυπνία.

The same elements of intellectualist self-representation appear in Mauropous' poem on his house when he was forced to abandon it (poem 47). We have already encountered this poem as a self-representation as a teacher (see p. 114). Mauropous constructs a similar image of toil, vigilance and devotion to books. He endures long efforts (πόννοι) and spends entire nights vigilant (ἀγρύπνους).<sup>104</sup> He is merged together with his books (v. 28). The book, as the embodiment of the immaterial *logoi*, is indeed the only material object to which one can be devoted and show reverence.<sup>105</sup> Mauropous moreover states that he distributed his knowledge for free (v. 30–31: προΐκα).

Exactly the same image of the teacher devoting himself night and day to his books, solely out of a desire to impart others with his knowledge, occurs in Michael Psellos. In an oration to his students, he says:

Therefore, I stay awake until late at night, and when day dawns,  
I hurry immediately to my books, as is my habit, not in order to  
gain something from it, but to collect their knowledge for your  
advantage.<sup>106</sup>

The same disinterestedness of his teaching he stresses also in the *Chronographia*: he distributed his knowledge to anyone who wanted it without asking anything.<sup>107</sup> This has to be contrasted with the image of the *maistor* of Chalkoprateia, scorned in Christophoros 11 because he sold his *schede* for money.

### 5.4.5 The ethic of disinterestedness

When comparing in the *Chonographia* the wise men under Basil II with the intellectuals of his own time, Psellos vehemently reprimands contemporary students of letters because they study letters not as an end on its own, but first and foremost to gain money out of it:

<sup>103</sup>For vigilance as a monastic ideal, see Klimax, §16.

<sup>104</sup>Mauropous, 47.22–23: ἐν σοὶ πόνους ἤνεργα μακροῦς καὶ κόπους, // ἐν σοὶ διῆξα νύκτας ἀγρύπνους ὄλας.

<sup>105</sup>See G. Cavallo, “Libri in scena”, in: *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, vol. 1. Plenary Papers, Aldershot 2006, pp. 345–364; Bianconi, “Et le livre s’est fait poésie”.

<sup>106</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 24.23–26: ὅθεν διαγρυπνῶν μέχρι πόρρω νυκτῶν παρανατειλιάσης ἡμέρας εὐθὺς περὶ τὰ βιβλία πάλιν, ὥσπερ μοι ἔθος ἐστί, καταγίνομαι, οὐχ ἵν’ αὐτός τι ἐκεῖθεν πορίσωμαι, ἀλλ’ ὅπως ἂν ὑμῖν τὸν ἐκεῖθεν συναρνήσωμαι νοῦν.

<sup>107</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §43.



Most do not pursue education along these lines, but they consider a lucrative career as the most important motivation for their literary education, and it is rather because of this that they engage in the study of letters. Moreover, if their goal does not succeed for them at once, they abandon already the beginning. That kind of men, let them burn in hell!<sup>108</sup>

The verb *χρηματίζεσθαι* in this context can have two significations: it can mean ‘make money’, or ‘have a function’; here, it may refer to both. This fragment is interesting because it gives us an image of what was surely part of a real process, namely, young students flocking to the schools to study letters out of opportunistic and material motivations. But at once, this stance is in firm terms denounced by Psellos: letters ought to be studied as a goal on itself, out of pure intellectualist devotion.

The tension between self-interest and the ethic of disinterestedness touches at the heart of the apparent connection between education and social promotion. Worldly ambition was in Byzantium often regarded with suspicion. Moreover, exaggerated display of rhetoric quickly gained the accusation of being mere sophistry out of material gain. This debate, as old as rhetoric itself, flares up again in this period. Our successful upcoming new men were frequently attacked by others, disparagingly called ‘jealous slanderers’. Thus, they had every interest in upholding the disinterestedness of their motivations to study and produce works.

In his encomium for Symeon Metaphrastes, Psellos implies that Symeon, coming from an affluent family, did not strictly need the study of letters to gain money. This is opposed to others who do pursue studies with the aim to become rich, not to attain higher thoughts.<sup>109</sup> Here again, we find an example of the moral prescription that learning should not serve for mundane ends, but should be studied to attain ‘higher things’. It is clear however, that also Symeon’s career was part of the same process of education and ambition: he used his excellence in studies as a springboard to attain dignity and renown.<sup>110</sup> The result was that he gained the admiration of the emperor, and was entrusted with important tasks.

Disinterestedness and an ascetic-like devotion are important elements in the image of the ideal intellectual, preserving their symbolic status. It forms a response to the implicit and always present accusation that worldly ambition is the motivation behind their intellectual activities. Much of their discourse is of course a smoke-screen. We should keep this in mind when approaching

<sup>108</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book I, §29: οἱ πολλοὶ παρὰ τὴν παιδείουσιν οὐχ οὕτω βαδίζουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ χρηματίζεσθαι εἰς πρώτην αἰτίαν τῶν λόγων ἀναφέρουσι, μάλλον δὲ διὰ τοῦτο τὰ περὶ τούτους λόγους σπουδάζουσι, κἄν μὴ εὐθύς τὸ τέλος προσήει, ἀφίστανται τῆς ἀρχῆς. Οὗτοι μὲν οὖν ἐρρώσθων.

<sup>109</sup>Michael Psellos, *Or. Hagiographicae*, 7.85-88: οἱ γὰρ πλείστοι ἀρορμὴν πλουτεῖν ὡσπερ τὸν λόγον τιθέασιν, οὐχ ἦν' ἐπήβολοι τῶν κρειττόνων γένοιντ', ἀλλ' ὅπως ἂν τοῖς ματαίοις ἐπεντροφήσωσιν περὶ ταῦτα σπουδάζοντες.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.115-121: τὴν δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων ἀρετὴν ἀρορμὴν εὐθύς ἔσχε μεγαλοπρεπεῖας τε καὶ λαμπρότητος.

the poetry collection of Mauropous and its engagement with the question of the ethic consequences of intellectual activities.

## 5.5 Mauropous' self-representation: between ambition and resignation

The reputation of Psellos has always been plagued by the many contradictions in his works. The flexible stance that he developed towards the very different political circumstances he had to face, has resulted in the image of a cynical sophist lying and deceiving according to his personal aims. His tameless ambitions allegedly made him blind for intellectual truth. This image was present in contemporary accusations that targeted his innovating promotion to 'consul of philosophers', but has also run through many modern evaluations of this remarkable person.<sup>111</sup>

Not so with Mauropous: time and again, modern accounts of Mauropous represent him as a sincere and modest man who initially, out of an inner conviction, had chosen a contemplative life as a disinterested amateur of letters, and who only reluctantly, and on instigation of his friend Michael Psellos, enjoyed some social success, only to be later cruelly banished because his mischievous friend let him down.<sup>112</sup>

I want to argue that these evaluations are merely echoing Mauropous' self-representation. Mauropous conjured up an image of himself by catalysing the convergence of two contradictory discourses, one of ambition, and one of morally elevated resignation. We have to take into account the fact that, unlike Psellos, Mauropous made a collection of his complete works; as a result, he succeeded better in controlling the self-image imparted by his writings.

### 5.5.1 Poem 1: downgrading ambitions

The first poem, the *programma* to his whole book, steers the reader in interpreting his works against the background of his life (see p. 85), introducing 'measure' as the main goal of his life and works alike.

In this poem, Mauropous also tries to come to grips with his own former ambitions when he pursued an intellectual career. He does avow that also he

<sup>111</sup>See the different older views presented in Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, pp. 11–40. See C. Chamberlain, "The Theory and Practice of Imperial Panegyric in Michael Psellos. The Tension Between History and Rhetoric", *Byzantion* 56 (1986), pp. 16–27 for the influence of rhetorical occasion on Psellos' apparent contradictions. The debate about the 'seriousness' of Psellos philosophical ambitions recently has flared up again, see the discussion in Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia*, pp. 34–41, who characterises Psellos' work as a 'body of lies', but nevertheless distils a sincere hidden voice in it, that of a neo-pagan hellenism.

<sup>112</sup>So for instance E. Follieri, *Giovanni Mauropode. Otto canonici paracletici a Gesù Cristo*, Roma 1967, p. 8: 'il modesto, il schivo, il ingenuo Giovanni'; Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, pp. 83–84: 'der aufrichtige und lebenswürdige Privatlehrer des Psellos'; Chondridou, "Τετράς των σοφών", p. 412; Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History*, p. 101: 'an amateur of letters', instructing his pupils 'for the love of it'.

has written a great deal of words, but these efforts seem pointless in hindsight (v. 7–9). Now, at the moment of ‘publishing’ his collection, his intentions are more humble (vv. 33–37):

ἔχοντες οὖν μοι τοὺς βραχεῖς, φίλοι, λόγους,  
 αὐτοὶ δὲ ἔργων μᾶλλον ἢ μακρῶν λόγων  
 εὐχέσθε πᾶσιν εὐαρεστεῖν τὸν φίλον,  
 πλέον δὲ πάντων τῷ λογιστῇ καὶ λόγῳ,  
 ὃ καὶ λόγος λέγοιτο, πραγμάτων λόγος.

35

So, having now my few words, my friends,  
 You ought to pray that your friend may please everyone  
 Through deeds rather than through words,  
 And most of all [may I please] the judge and Logos  
 For Whom, even if He is called Logos, only deeds matter.

35

Mauropous here adopts the argument that deeds matter more than words. As a result, Mauropous renounces to the ambitions once entertained in his texts. In presenting these works not to a powerful person, but just to his friends, he creates the impression that his ultimate collection is no part anymore of the game of display and worldly ambition. Even then, the desire to please is not directed to powerful persons here on earth, but to God. Ambition is transformed into devotion. After all, God judges men only according to their deeds. This is expressed in a pun on *λόγος*, which can mean ‘words’, but also ‘account’, and ‘Christ’, the ultimate *logos* that governs all other *logoi*.

The poems that follow in the collection provide proof of Mauropous’ worldly success. As I have argued in the chapter ‘Collections’, they can be read as ‘stills’ in the poet’s life, frozen instances of particular successful moments. However, after reading the warnings uttered in the first poem, the reader knows these ambitions turned to ashes: the poems should be read as negative models from an ethical viewpoint.

### 5.5.2 Poems 89 and 90: a manifesto for a prudent use of *hoi logoi*

Poems 89 to 93, having ‘himself’ as subject in the title, are the cornerstone to Mauropous self-representation. However, they are no consistent pieces of one and the same thought. Also, while the appointment as a metropolitan apparently triggered some of these poems, we do not have to take this biographical information at face value.

Traditionally, poems 89–93 are seen as one whole, written at the moment of the appointment of a metropolitan.<sup>113</sup> While it may be so that they were written at that moment (cf. *infra*), I would contend that poems 89–90 at least do not present themselves as being written then, since the promotion is nowhere apparent and Mauropous even seems very confident that he can

<sup>113</sup>Anastasi, “Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita”, p. 121; Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 98; Volpe Cacciatore, “Carmi autobiografici”, pp. 567–8.

pursue this course of life, in contrast to the more desperate pleas in poems 91–92. The use of the present tense in poem 89 and 90 aids to create this impression that the poems are written as a genuine expression of feeling at an *earlier* moment in Mauropous' life, and consequently not as a reaction on the incumbent appointment.

Poem 89 and 90 are tightly connected with each other: the title of 89 is Ἐπερ ἑαυτοῦ πρὸς Χριστόν, while 90 neatly takes up with 89 by means of the title ἄλλοι. Poems 91 and 92, by contrast, have the slightly different title Εἰς ἑαυτόν, the conventional title for a *katanyxis*, an introspective poem expressing contrition. They are not directed to Christ, but rather, like the traditional Εἰς ἑαυτόν-poems, they form dialogues between soul and reason. The arguments of the poems are also not entirely the same: while poems 89 and 90 apparently reacted to implicit accusations of ambitious use of *hoi logoi*, poems 91 and 92 react to a concrete offer of promotion.

Poem 89 and 90 seem to be written as an answer to the implicit accusation that the only motivation behind his intellectual pursuits is despicable ambition. They can be read as Mauropous' justification for the use he has made of his literary talents. Their place at the end of the corpus signals that they function as a personal afterthought on the previous poems. The poems are directed to Christ, and thank Him for the gift of words. Throughout these poems, two lines reoccur as a refrain (four times: 89.1–2, 89.20–21, 90.1–2, 90.31–32):

Πολλὴ χάρις σοι τῶν λόγων, θεοῦ Λόγε,  
ὡς εὐδόκησας δωρεάν με πλουτίσαι.

I thank you very much for the words, oh Word of God,  
With which you consented to enrich me for free.

It is implied that Mauropous did profit materially from his gift of words, but he has done so in an acceptable way. In poem 89, Mauropous claims that he has made a prudent use of words (1–9). Again the word μέτρον is used to express this: 'I posed explicit limitations (μέτρα) to my needs.'<sup>114</sup> Every surplus of success and wealth he has shunned, in contrast to others, who, out of greed, have made improper use of their rhetorical talents: 'the force of luxuriance has changed already a long time ago the use of them [of words] into abuse.'<sup>115</sup> Mauropous says he is happy to have no such insatiable desires as those people have; rather, he wants to receive remuneration from above (10–22). Words are his only care, day and night; and his only source of pleasure and joy (23–28). These last sentences of course recall the image of the disinterested intellectual devoted to the pursuit of knowledge.

Poem 90 weighs the advantages of a simple life, compared with the blissful, but dangerous life of success (3–30). Words are his honour and wealth, and words prevent his desires to wander about (32–43). The ideal of ἀπραξία is honoured (v. 4) and proclaimed as his desired way of life.

<sup>114</sup>Mauropous, 89.4: ἔταξα ῥητὰ ταῖς ἑμαῖς χρεῖαις μέτρα.

<sup>115</sup>Mauropous, 8–9: ... ἐξήμειψεν ἡ τρυφῆς βία // τὴν χρῆσιν αὐτῶν εἰς παράχρησιν πάλαι.

Not so much introspection and *katanyxis*, as the advancement of an intellectual ideal is at stake in both of these poems. In contrast to the poems that will follow, the persona of the poet as it emerges here, lives a carefree life untainted by worldly success. Mauropous is entirely happy with this way of life (89.37: 'I am not having great problems with my present situation', and 90.3 'this enjoyable life'). In a sense, these poems reflect the same 'hidden' life that appears in Psellos' poem 16, a life that is defiantly represented as unattractive for others, but not for the true intellectual. They bring out the ideal of a disinterested use of intellectual competences and literary works, and stress the pure and untainted devotion to *hoi logoi*.

### 5.5.3 Poems 91–93: clashing ethical ideals

By contrast, poems 91 and 92 are conceived as dialogues between soul and reason. All *εις εαυτόν* poems in Byzantine literature are of course largely dependent on the *εις εαυτόν* poems of Gregorios of Nazianzos.<sup>116</sup> Contrition is always a present element in these poems. However, Mauropous' poems can be called unique in Byzantine autobiographical tradition, because they try to look back at the past and conclude moral lessons for the present.<sup>117</sup>

In poem 91, Mauropous' 'soul' offers to his 'reason' three advantages the fulfilment of ambition can bring. The first, wealth (v. 1–5), is declined with the argument that in death, everybody will remain equally rich or poor. The second offer, power (6: 'thrones that carry you high') is brushed aside (6–26) because men should know their place: it is safer to remain at a low position, so that everyone can see you the way you are; those who pride themselves on functions and thrones are not better than the jackdaw from the fable who takes the feathers from other birds. The third offer (27–41) is renown (27: 'the applauding crowds'), but Mauropous' reason points out that the crowd is easily manageable by flattering but deceitful words. The poem closes (42–43) by pushing these thoughts forward as a life manifesto.

In poem 92, the tone is less restrained. The offer of a promotion seems to take a more and more concrete shape. The opening lines resume the threats from poem 91, but instead of a quiet rational reaction, they now provoke panic reactions from Mauropous' soul, being pulled from two sides:

Ἐλκουσι βαθμοί: πρόσσυχες. ἀθρόα ζάλη.  
 ψῆφοι φέρονται· συστροφή καταιγίδων.  
 θρόνοι καλοῦσιν· ὧ κυβερνήτα, βλέπε.  
 ὄραξ ὅσος κύκλωθεν ἠγέρθη κλύδων;  
 σπείσον βοήθει. κλύζεται σοι τὸ σκάφος.  
 λαβοῦ, τάλαν, τάχιστα τῶν σῶν οἰάκων,  
 λαβοῦ, λογισμέ, πρὶν παραχθῶμεν βίᾳ.

5

<sup>116</sup>M. Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz*, Wien 1999, p. 71; Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, vol. II, pp. 158–162.

<sup>117</sup>In apparent contrast to normal practice in autobiographic works in Byzantium; see Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz*, p. 73.

Functions pull—Watch out, a sudden squall!  
 Votes are cast—A whirling storm.  
 Thrones call—Oh steersman, look out:  
 Do you see how great a wave rises around?  
 Come quickly to help; your vessel is tossed around.  
 Hold on fast to the rows, poor man!  
 Hold on, reason, before we are forcibly carried away!

5

Mauropous' reason thereupon takes the floor (10–24), and advises to walk the proper way. With the passing of time, many others will occupy respected offices, but they will all end up the same way. The only thing to be gained is a pressing and dangerous responsibility. In response, Mauropous' soul brings up a question that explicitly touches at the tension between intellectual activities and social ambitions: 'So be it, you have spoken well. But then still, how will you cash in on your talent of words?' (25–26: ἔστω, καλῶς εἴρηκας. ἀλλὰ γὰρ πόθεν // τὸ σὸν τάλαντον ἐμπορεύση τοῦ λόγου;). The phrase ἐμπορεύομαι τὸν λόγον, also present in works of Psellos, expresses in the most blunt way the profitability of learning.

Mauropous' reason brings in that his body is so sick that he cannot even utter a word. He now sticks to a new creed that has given short shrift to the past stories. He has quit 'giving idle demonstrations and talking nonsense in schools and gatherings' (32–33: ὕφ' ἧς πέπαυμαι τοῦ θεατριζεῖν μάτην // καὶ πολλὰ ληρεῖν ἐν σχολαῖς καὶ συλλόγοις). Display is here considered a vain act. He now 'measures his words': v. 34: μετριάζω πρὸς λόγους, an echo of poem 1, v. 2. He only uses words to sooth his soul (37–38). He recognises that in earlier days the gift of eloquence bore him fruit by teaching the young (39–50); now he desists from this passion, living an undisturbed life between his books (51–57). Mauropous soul then brings in that ambitions should be played out; he should profit from the moment (58–81). This proposition is brushed aside by claiming that worldly renown is a fugitive thing, while eternal renown is something totally different (82–101); in the end, reason has succeeded in convincing Mauropous not to accept the offer for wealth (102–106).

It appears throughout the poem that Mauropous in the past did profit from his learning; only with reluctance, he is able to quell the bad thoughts in his soul that enumerate the obvious advantages of using learning to ambitious ends. The most elaborate description of this past life emerges from the account of the 'fruits that eloquence bore him':

ἄλλως τε καὶν πάλαι τις ἦν εὐγλωττία,  
 καὶ καρπὸν οὐκ ἄχρηστον ἐξήνεγκέ σοι,  
 καλῶς γεωργήσασα πολλοὺς τῶν νέων—  
 πάντας γὰρ οὐ τίθημι, μὴ καὶ κομπάσω·  
 πλὴν ἀλλὰ πλείστους—ἦρεν ἐκ μαθημάτων,  
 πλείστοις δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἦθος εἰσήνεγκέ τι,  
 οὐ μᾶλλον ἢ παιδευσίς εὐτυχεστέρα  
 τῆς τῶν περιττῶν ἐν λόγοις κομψευμάτων.  
 τούτους ἔγωγε τοὺς σοφισθέντας νέους

40

45

κέρδος μέγιστον τῷ ταλάντῳ προσφέρω,  
 ὧν νῦν θεωρεῖς ἔστιν οὗς διδασκάλους  
 βαθμοῖς τε λαμπροῖς ἐμπρέποντας ἀξίως.

Especially in the past, there was a kind of eloquence,  
 Which did not bore you useless fruit: 40  
 It aptly cultivated many of the youths—  
 I won't say all of them, that would be bragging,  
 But surely most of them—and raised them with learning,  
 And for the most it also contributed to their manners,  
 Where my education may have had more success 45  
 Than education based on superfluous literary spectacles.  
 I, for my part, now offer these cultivated young men  
 As the greatest gain due to my talent.  
 You can now see that some of them have become teachers  
 And men who are prominent in prestigious functions.

Here we find an outline of the successes of an intellectual and renowned teacher, who raised the future elite of Byzantine society. Words as *περιττός* and *κόμψευμα* here appear in a derogatory sense: they are the despicable aspects of ambition and display.

Again, we have to observe that the main profit of eloquence resided in teaching; which is emphasised as well by the fact that his pupils themselves became teachers, equated with other prestigious functions. Also, in spite of the rhetoric of denunciation, Mauropous cannot resist underscoring his accomplishments. Part of his justification is his claim that already as a teacher, he had the moral education of the youth before his eyes.

#### 5.5.4 A manipulated autobiography

All of this falls to pieces in poem 93, when he apparently had accepted the offer for promotion and had to recant the opinions held in poem 92. Obviously, Mauropous wants here to present a justification for his choices in life; but this is not done in a straightforward narrative. We need to mention here a few elements together to fully grasp the interplay between self-image, biographical elements, and the dynamics of the collection of poems.

First, poems 93 and 92 are clearly centred around a decisive moment that is called *χειροτονία* in the title of poem 93. The obvious event to which the *χειροτονία* refers, and which made Mauropous change his mind, cannot be anything else but his appointment as a metropolitan of Euchaita.<sup>118</sup> the word unmistakably refers to ordinations of bishops and metropolitans.

A second element is that in Mauropous' life, the assumption of functions in reality did not go hand in hand with his real power—rather to the contrary. Psellos' encomium for Mauropous, which contains an account of his appointment (or. pan. 17.425–471), can shed some light on this peculiar situation.

<sup>118</sup>Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 98.

There has been considerable debate about what Psellos exactly described, but now it seems certain that Psellos refers to Mauropous' appointment as metropolitan of Euchaita, to be dated around 1049.<sup>119</sup> In Psellos' account, Mauropous seemed very reluctant to accept the ordination, allegedly out of contempt for renown and high functions. This of course concords with his views as stated in poem 89–92.

Nonetheless, the encomium makes clear that Mauropous was held in very high regard by Monomachos: the emperor considered him as a teacher (433), named him a father (429), had frequent contact with him (435), entrusted him his secrets and asked for his advise in important state affairs (435–436). As a matter of fact, around the years 1045–1047, Mauropous was a renowned figure: he wrote the *Neara*, 'published' around 1045, and pronounced public discourses as a court orator around 1047.<sup>120</sup>

This is corroborated by some letters of Mauropous which unmistakably refer to him enjoying a prestigious position at court at the moment of writing (ep. 19–20), while there is no reference to any official function. These letters are written in a Constantinopolitan court milieu, well before his appointment as metropolitan. So, Mauropous' power and influence, perhaps quite uniquely, was not based on an official function.

A third element to consider, is that Mauropous throughout his whole career persistently advanced a self-image of the disinterested intellectual, and this not only with regard to his appointment as a metropolitan. A comparison with a letter of his can make this clear. Letter 5 is an answer directed to an unknown person in response to an offer of the function of *chartophylax*. Mauropous refuses, with arguments that perfectly concord with the discourse of the splendidly isolated intellectual in poems 89–92. He shuns the centre (l. 3: τὰ μέσσα φεύγειν), wants to lead a hidden life (3–4), being satisfied with a small and safe corner where he can contemplate himself and God (11–12). Surely, someone else will be found (27), but Mauropous knows too well that gain entails dangers (40). Even the wordings and metaphors are very similar to that of the poems: compare ἴσως μὲν που καὶ ἄδοξον, τὸ δὲ πλεόν ἀκίνδυνον (letter 5.34–35) with ἴσως ἄδοξός ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἐλευθέρᾳ (90.5); also, the allegory of the ship that comes in turbulent waters, occurs in the letter as well as in the poems (compare letter 5.36–42 with the beginning of poem 92). The letter

<sup>119</sup>Kazhdan, "Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II" has raised doubts about this, as has Dennis in his commentary in the *apparatus criticus* of his edition. Karpozilos' counter-arguments seem to me decisive, though, see Karpozilos, "The Biography of Ioannes Mauropous Again". First, poem 57 of Mauropous is set in Euchaita, at a moment when Monomachos was still undoubtedly emperor, and Mauropous already metropolitan of the see. Second, in the biographic part of Psellos' encomium for Mauropous, the emperor named Konstantinos who pushed Mauropous towards a function twice designated as ἀρχιερωσύνη, is to be identified as Konstantinos IX Monomachos, while the function of ἀρχιερωσύνη is that of metropolitan of Euchaita. Confusingly, Dennis identifies the first instance of this word (l. 444) as Mauropous' appointment as a diacre, and the second instance (l. 465) as that of metropolitan (where it indeed cannot possibly refer to something else). This is of course inconsistent: throughout the whole passage (l. 425–471), one single event is narrated.

<sup>120</sup>Following the dating of J. Lefort, "Rhétorique et politique: trois discours de Jean Mauropous en 1047", *TM* 6 (1976), pp. 265–303.



closes with the request to make this known to the emperor and the patriarch; it may be published for everyone as an apology.

A fourth element we have to take into account is the fact that Mauropous' reluctance to accept the ordination was not so much due to his love for serenity, than the fact that this ordination amounted to an exile. From several letters of Mauropous and Psellos we know well enough that the ordination was indeed felt as an exile and a painful change for Mauropous.<sup>121</sup> This may be associated to the more broadly used rhetoric of metropolitans or bishops in far-off areas, complaining about the circumstances in their see.<sup>122</sup>

Another associated genre is the refusal poem, stating a *paraitesis*, in which an office is refused or quit. Mauropous' poems are easy to compare with the *paraitesis* poem by Nikolaos Kerkyraios.<sup>123</sup> With this poem, pronounced before a synod in 1094, Nikolaos renounces his office of bishop of Kerkyra. It is an elaborate articulation of the ethics of resignation and tranquillity. Exactly the same imagery as in poem 92 (life as a ship in the midst of stormy waters) is used (compare with 9–18), and also here, the dangers of an ambitious life are depicted in gruesome terms. But whereas Mauropous focuses on the ambiguity of his use of learning, Nikolaos' poem tends to contain more moral censure of the vice of hypocrisy (132–3: *Θέλεις ἀρέσκειν; βούν ἐπὶ γλώττης φέρε // καὶ πάντ' ἐπαίνει καὶ τὰ πρὸς χάριν λέγε.*).

Apart from that, even upon accepting a function, it was customary to subscribe to this ethical ideal of tranquillity, and to express misgivings about such a promotion. In Psellos' encomium of Xiphilinos, the latter reacted in a similar way upon hearing the news that he was to become patriarch. Instead of thanking the emperor in a flattering way, he entrusted to Psellos: 'have I not said before, have I not asseverated, that I would not of my own free will depart from my serenity, and degrade to worldly things?'<sup>124</sup> Deference and apparent refusal of high functions was a common strategy to ward off the suspicion of entertaining ambitions. And it was all the more recommended to use this strategy when the function in fact amounted to an exile.

Finally, there is also the fact that the arrangement of the poems in the collection arguably constitutes an *ex post* presentation. Poems 89 and 90 are presented as contemporary with this low-key approach to social promotion, long before the threat of the appointment came. But is this so?

A particular feature of poems 89 and 90 is that they are presented as a manifesto for life. The last lines of poem 90 claim: 'These words I take to have written as laws applying to myself, // According to which I have

<sup>121</sup>For instance Ioannes Mauropous, *The letters of Ioannes Mauropous Metropolitan of Euchaita*, ed. by A. Karpozilos, CFHB 34, Thessaloniki 1990 (henceforth cited as Mauropous, *Epistulae*), 51; Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, 45.

<sup>122</sup>See for this genre Mullett, "Originality in the Byzantine Letter: The Case of Exile".

<sup>123</sup>Edited in: Nikolaos of Kerkyra, "Στίχοι ἰαμβικοί, γεγονότες ἐπὶ τῇ παραίτησει αὐτοῦ", in: *Κερκυραϊκὰ ἀνέκδοτα*, ed. by S. Lampros, Athens 1882, pp. 30–41. See now Mullett, "The Poetics of Paraitesis: The Resignation Poems of Nicholas of Kerkyra and Nicholas Mouzalon".

<sup>124</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, 448: οὐ προὔλεγον, οὐ διεμαρτυρόμην, ὡς οὐκ ἂν ποτε ἐκὼν εἶναι τῆς ἡσυχίας ἐκσταίην, καὶ τοσοῦτον καταβαίην τοῖς πράγμασι; I have slightly altered the punctuation.

obligations and also rights to the things entitled to me'.<sup>125</sup> The end of poem 91 states: 'Guiding myself by these thoughts and words, I fulfil my life.'<sup>126</sup> This aspect of a manifesto is so much emphasised, that we may be entitled to doubt about the presentness of the present tense. Maybe, poems 89 and 90 are little enacted dramas that help Mauropous to underpin his sincerity in the poems that follow immediately, since they provide an implicit pretext. In the precarious situation sketched in poems 91–93, he could refer to poems 89 and 90, arguing: 'You see, that was the way I thought about ambition and literature in those times, and I felt genuinely entirely happy with it.' This makes us think of Xiphilinos' alleged reaction in Psellos' encomium (cf. supra), which suggests that it was important to have a 'testimony' of such opinions held in the past. It is this aspect that the manifesto-like representation of poems 89 and 90 wanted to respond to. So, poems 89 and 90, while not professing to have anything to do with this event, do provide a backdrop to help to construct the self-image of the disinterested intellectual defended in 92, and resigned, but in fact still upheld, in poem 93.

Consequently, it seems that Mauropous consistently, during his whole stay at the court of Monomachos, put forward the self-image of the disinterested philosopher, imparting knowledge and political advice, but not asking any remuneration for this in the form of an official function. He professed this ideal of modesty and serenity in documents such as letter 5, refusing a job as *chartophylax*. When confronted with his ordination as a metropolitan, which in fact amounted to an exile, he tries his best to point out that he held this ideal for a very long time. In the collection that gives a justification for his life and tries to downgrade his ambitions, he attaches also poems 89 and 90 in front of the poems that revolve around his appointment. The poems can give proof of the fact that he was not entertaining any high ambitions. Whether they were composed later than they purport to have been composed, or not, their manifesto-like character helps to underpin the uprightness of Mauropous' message of renouncing to worldly ambitions. To refuse the offer that in fact amounted to an exile, this past testimony could be convenient. Refusal of an exile was expressed through confirming disinterestedness, the only viable rhetorical strategy Mauropous had at hand.

Mauropous' self-representational strategy, in contrast to that of Psellos, was thus focused on the image of the recluse intellectual. Accusations of ambitiousness he could tackle by pointing to his peculiar non-official status, and by poems expressing a sincere delight in disinterested study and teaching. The promotion to metropolitan, already disastrous, forced him to change course. In a clever move, he succeeded in representing his former convictions as sincere thoughts, by setting them in a present tense. The *παλινοῦδία* he then advanced was not so much a renunciation of former principles, but a self-representation as a victim of the uncontrollable tide of events. The fact

<sup>125</sup>Mauropous 90.42–43: τοῦτους ἑμαυτῷ τοὺς νόμους ἔχω γράφειν // ἐν οἷς κρατοῦμαι, καὶ κρατῶ τῶν ὧν θέμις.

<sup>126</sup>Mauropous, 91.42–43: τοῦτοις ἔγωγε τοῖς λογιμοῖς καὶ λόγοις // ἄγων ἑμαυτὸν ἐκπεραίνω τὸν βίον.

that we as moderns are so inclined to echo his view, shows that he succeeded in controlling the heritage of his historical and poetical persona.



## Part III

# Poetry and intellectual life



# Chapter 6

## Schools

In the previous chapter, education has repeatedly been mentioned as an indispensable chain in the connection between intellectual competences and social advancement. Education is the cornerstone on which the meritocratic ideal of the intellectuals is built. It transmits necessary competences and skills, forges ties among an elite, and acts as a selective factor to define a career. As we have seen, it was also put up as a barrier to define who can appeal to being reckoned to this elite and who cannot. In all of these different functionings of education, poetry plays a role. Since the educational background of poetic products has not always been taken seriously into consideration in comparison to other historical factors, I will in the following chapters attempt to elucidate the connection between education and poetry.

I am convinced that a more dynamic image of school life in the period may explain some remarkable features present in the poems. Therefore, this chapter will begin by an extensive overview of schools and school life in Constantinople in the eleventh century (6.1). Then, I will attempt to clarify the function and place of poetry within the school career (6.2), and argue that many texts, and indeed some poems, are associated with, or influenced by, exercises of composition practised at schools (6.3).

### 6.1 Schools in eleventh-century Byzantium

Different modern perceptions about Byzantine education continue to exist next to each other without taking notice of each other in a fruitful way. On the one hand, many studies of schools and education are still caught up in the idea that the educational system in Byzantium has been preserved unchanged from (Late) Antiquity. As a result, tensions in eleventh-century education are in recent studies explained along the same lines as ideological struggles over education in the fourth century,<sup>1</sup> that is, a tension between a conservative

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<sup>1</sup>Examples of this view are: P. Agapitos, “Teachers, Pupils, and Imperial Power in Eleventh-century Byzantium”, in: *Pedagogy and Power*, ed. by Y. L. Too and K. Livingstone, Cambridge 1998, pp. 170–191; and K. Metzler, “Pagane Bildung in christlichen

Church and a more progressive University. Also, many modern accounts seem to take it for granted that education always proceeded in three stages, with an academic schooling after a secondary education.

On the other hand, some studies, taking a more critical look at the sources, apprehended Byzantine education in its peculiar medieval situation. These studies, of Speck,<sup>2</sup> Lemerle,<sup>3</sup> and Weiss,<sup>4</sup> appeared around the same time and often present a similar view. They recognise the independent nature and defining influence of the different separate schools and teachers. They are generally reluctant to see large ideological struggles in education, downplaying into perspective the existence and impact of one central university. Yet, their views have not been fully adopted by mainstream scholarship about Byzantine education, which is according to me a missed chance in many ways.

### 6.1.1 Private schools and the imperial foundation at Mangana

A central event is Monomachos' creation, around 1045, of the functions of 'nomophylax' and 'consul of philosophers', taken up by Ioannes Xiphilinos and Michael Psellos respectively. This act is documented by a Novella drafted by Mauropous,<sup>5</sup> concerning specifically the appointment of Xiphilinos, and by a passage in Attaleiates.<sup>6</sup> Apart from these sources, Psellos hints at these evolutions in several autobiographical passages in his writings.

For a long time, it was commonly accepted that Monomachos founded with this act a state school, called by some a 'University',<sup>7</sup> consisting of a Law Faculty and a Faculty of Philosophy. The 'University' is in this view understood as an ineradicable part throughout Byzantine history, superseding the other schools, which are variously called 'branches of the Patriarchal School',<sup>8</sup> or simply 'monastery schools'.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it is frequently thought that education at this university was influenced by a swing of liberal freedom and secularisation of knowledge, opposed to the conservative Church, which tried to control the transmission of knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

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Byzanz: Basileios von Kaisareia, Michael Psellos und Theodoros Metochites", in: *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. by M. Grünbart, Millennium-Studien 13, Berlin/New York 2007, pp. 287–305.

<sup>2</sup>P. Speck, *Die Kaiserliche Universität von Konstantinopel*, Byzantinisches Archiv 14, München 1974.

<sup>3</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*.

<sup>4</sup>Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*.

<sup>5</sup>Mauropous, *Novella*.

<sup>6</sup>Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. by I. Bekker, CSHB 22, Bonn 1853, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup>E.g. J. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire, 867-1185*, Oxford 1937, 51–72.

<sup>8</sup>See R. Browning, "The Patriarchal School at Constantinople in the Twelfth Century", *Byzantion* 32 (1962), pp. 167–202 for the twelfth century, but with the implication that in the eleventh century this evolution had already started; this doubtful representation of facts must be discarded, see Chondridou, *Κωνσταντίνος Μονομάχος*, pp. 179–180.

<sup>9</sup>Throughout Hussey, *Church and Learning*.

<sup>10</sup>Many instances of this view can be mentioned. See recently Maltese, "Tra lettori e lecture: l'utile e il dilettevole", p. 160; Agapitos, "Teachers, Pupils and Imperial Power",



Speck demonstrated that there was no continuity among the different ‘universities’ over the centuries.<sup>11</sup> From time to time, emperors founded educational institutions, for which renowned teachers are attracted, but all these are short lived and only in isolated cases did the emperor appear to have imposed a centralised curriculum.

Both Speck and Weiss underlined the fact that the difference between secondary education and higher education was not so outspoken, and may even not have existed at all.<sup>12</sup> This view, although never openly contested, did not gain mainstream acceptability.<sup>13</sup> But no contemporary text points to a division between both. When Psellos describes the career of a very successful former fellow pupil of his (the ‘anonymous patrician’), he specifies that he made the transition from a grammarian to the rhetor and seemed ready for a brilliant career. There is no mention of some form of higher education, and philosophy seems to have been studied at the same time as rhetoric, rather than after it.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, if we maintain that Psellos was the champion of ‘universitary education’ in contrast to secondary schooling, it is difficult to explain why he continued teaching also rhetoric, a subject allegedly limited to secondary schooling.

Nevertheless, Xiphilinos’ school appears to have gained a predominant position. The *Neara* quite clearly stipulates that the emperor intends to control the selection of state officials by means of the foundation of the Law School, for he will give preference to students versed in law for the selection of future officials.<sup>15</sup> No doubt this will have boosted the relative importance of Xiphilinos’ teaching, but the fact that the *Neara* still supposes that other disciplines will continue to be taught at other schools,<sup>16</sup> is an indication of the relative impact of this decision, which was short lived anyway, since Xiphilinos was removed from the capital around 1050.

What regards the appointment of Psellos as ‘consul of philosophers’ (ὕπατος τῶν φιλοσόφων), it is now considered highly questionable whether this appointment entailed the foundation of a school of philosophy. There is no evidence for the foundation of such a school.<sup>17</sup> It appears that the function

who views an ideological clash between philosophy and theology similar to the opposition of both in the fourth century, cf. esp. 170.

<sup>11</sup>Speck, *Kaiserliche Universität*, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup>Speck, *Kaiserliche Universität*; Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, pp. 65–67; Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 243: ‘Rien n’autorise à penser qu’une école supérieure, d’État, du niveau que nous dirions ‘universitaire’, ait alors existé’.

<sup>13</sup>See for a strong division between secondary and higher education e.g. Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, pp. 121–123; S. Euthymiades, ‘L’enseignement secondaire à Constantinople pendant les XIe et XIIe siècles: modèle éducatif pour la Terre d’Otrante au XIIIe siècle’, *Nέα Πόλη* 2 (2005), pp. 259–275; A. Markopoulos, ‘De la structure de l’école byzantine. Le maître, les livres et le processus éducatif’, in: *Lire et écrire à Byzance*, ed. by B. Mondrain, Paris 2006, pp. 85–96; Chondridou, *Κωνσταντίνος Μονομάχος*, pp. 161–4.

<sup>14</sup>Gautier, ‘Monodies inédites’, pp. 5.146–176.

<sup>15</sup>Mauroπους, *Novella*, §25: δῆλον γὰρ ὡς τοὺς ὄνομα καὶ δόξαν λαμπρὸν ἐπὶ νομομαθεῖα λαβόντας καὶ ἡ βασιλεία ἡμῶν καὶ οἱ μεθ’ ἡμᾶς ἀεὶ βασιλεύσοντες, προκρινοῦμεν τῶν ἄλλων ἐν ταῖς διανομαῖς τῶν ἀρχῶν.

<sup>16</sup>Also Markopoulos, ‘Structure de l’école byzantine’ points to the fact that the basic education remains untouched

<sup>17</sup>Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, 67–8, 72, 76, where it is argued that Psellos only received

perhaps gave Psellos some supervising power over other teachers, which is reflected in a letter in answer to the teacher of Chalkopratea who demanded more material means,<sup>18</sup> but this letter may reflect an exceptional gift rather than an institutional subsidy.<sup>19</sup>

The most important insight gained by the studies of Speck, Weiss and Lemerle is that the main form of educational organisation was undoubtedly the private school. These schools were no monastic institutions, nor were they directly controlled by imperial court or by the patriarch.<sup>20</sup> They were independent institutions, centred around the charismatic figure of one or few teachers. We have evidence of at least seven schools in our period.<sup>21</sup> They share some features: they all bear the name of a church or monastery where they are situated, and they are led by a *μαίστωρ*, who is assisted by a *πρώξιμος*.

The foundation at Mangana must be seen as the expression of the emperor's desire to fund a similar institution.<sup>22</sup> The place of the school is the monastery of Saint George in Mangana: this building was part of a prestigious project of Monomachos in honour of his personal patron saint. Consequently, the school was a private imperial foundation, not a public place, and the *Neara* is not a reform of education,<sup>23</sup> but rather a foundation document.

These private schools are nearly all connected to a monastic centre. This evolution seems to have been initiated already in the sixth century as a result of the reorganisation and christianisation of urban spaces.<sup>24</sup> The example of Monomachos' foundation of a school in the monastery of St. George in Mangana shows that this pattern of foundation is continued. In contrast to the imperial foundations, some of the other schools had been in existence for centuries: the school of St. Theodore in Sphorakiou is already mentioned in the early ninth century.<sup>25</sup>

The association of schools to monasteries has some obvious advantages. It seems logical, for instance, that the library of a monastery would be shared with that of the school, or that the *maistor* would have access to it. Some manuscripts were also directly copied in the school, as some notices make clear.<sup>26</sup> Access to books was not widespread, and therefore the teacher had a unique position, acting as a mediator of sometimes recondite knowledge.

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imperial protection for his own private school. See also Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 223–227, who is also cautious to attach too much importance to the function.

<sup>18</sup>The letter is edited in Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 168.

<sup>19</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 226.

<sup>20</sup>Speck, *Kaiserliche Universität*, pp. 35, 89–90; Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, pp. 65–67.

<sup>21</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 227–235. See *infra*, p. 215 for the existence of yet another school.

<sup>22</sup>*ibid.*, p. 208, 210, and Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup>As it is represented in e.g. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History*, pp. 65–67.

<sup>24</sup>P. Magdalino, *Constantinople médiévale. Études sur l'évolution des structures urbaines*, Paris 1996, pp. 40–42.

<sup>25</sup>Lemerle, *Premier humanisme*, p. 141.

<sup>26</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 231, with regard to the school of St. Peter.

### 6.1.2 Regulation of teacher positions

When describing the chaotic situation of school life before the reforms of Monomachos, the *Neara* tells us that students aiming at a career in administration were enrolled if they said who was their teacher and how long they had studied (§4). It appears that the reputation of the schoolmaster was the only criterion on which students based their choice of a teacher (§5). This arbitrary situation (at least following the narrative in the *Neara*) created much confusion.

The funeral oration for Xiphilinos gives more details, but is particularly hard to interpret.<sup>27</sup> Like the *Neara*, it describes a situation of fierce competition between schools, with no schoolmaster emerging as a dominant figure. There were schools (διδασκαλεῖα καὶ παιδευτήρια) for various disciplines, and there were teaching positions (‘revered thrones’ is the expression) for every discipline and science.<sup>28</sup> Both sources pretend this indeterminacy is solved by the action taken by the emperor and his wise men, but as these reforms did not have a lasting effect, this assertion must be put in perspective.

The question is whether the word θρόνοι refers to an officially sanctioned state position or merely to the informal consent of the right to teach. The *Neara* compares the organisational structure of the education of λόγοι to the domain of handicraft: dedicated places and other benefits are allotted to them, and there are elections for chairmanships.<sup>29</sup> It has been suggested that the teachers were organised in a kind of guild,<sup>30</sup> which is corroborated by the equal treatment of letters and handicrafts in the passage in the *Neara*. This would rather mean that the distribution of teaching positions (θρόνοι) was decided upon from within the education field, by colleagues from other schools or sanctioned judges.

At any rate, the election to a teacher chair was not a trifling matter, and implied considerable renown. There is a letter of Mauropous in which he congratulates a friend, with near-certainty to be identified as Psellos, upon ascending a teaching chair.<sup>31</sup> Mauropous reports that he has met with a delegation of Psellos’ students. This friendly conversation persuaded him to pledge his support for Psellos’ promotion. It has been suggested that Psellos’ appointment of consul of philosophers is referred to,<sup>32</sup> or perhaps just a position at the school of St. Peter, where Psellos had taught.<sup>33</sup> At any rate, the letter seems to refer to some kind of election procedure and

<sup>27</sup>For a reconstruction of events as described in this oration, see *ibid.*, p. 203–206. We have to take into account that Psellos in this testimony surely overestimated the importance of Xiphilinos’ and his own accomplishments.

<sup>28</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.* 433.2–4: Ἦν μὲν πάλοι ἀνά τὴν ἡμετέραν πόλιν τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστημῶν διδασκαλεῖα καὶ παιδευτήρια, καὶ σεμνοὶ θρόνοι καθίστασαν.

<sup>29</sup>Mauropous, *Novella*, § 7a: ταῖς μὲν ἄλλαις ἐπιστήμαις καὶ τέχναις, ὅσαι τε λογικαί, καὶ τῶν βαναύσων ἐνάιαι, καὶ χώρας ἰδίας καὶ καθηγεμόνας ἀποτετάχθαι, προεδρίας τε κεκληρωσθαι καὶ σιτήσεις προσσφωρίσθαι καὶ τί γὰρ οὐ προσεῖναι καλὸν εἰς παραμυθίαν τῶν μετιόντων·

<sup>30</sup>Speck, *Kaiserliche Universität*, pp. 38–40.

<sup>31</sup>Mauropous, *Epistulae* 23, l. 12–13: τὴν τοῦ διδασκαλικοῦ παράληψιν θρόνου.

<sup>32</sup>W. Wolska-Conus, “Les écoles de Psellos et de Xiphilinos sous Constantin IX Monomaque”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976), pp. 223–243, p. 228.

<sup>33</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 223.

a certain hierarchy among schoolmasters.<sup>34</sup> The same impression emerges from Psellos' account of the career of his friend and grammarian Niketas: by charming everyone's ear and proving his excellence in interpreting poetry, he was awarded with a 'higher throne'.<sup>35</sup> There is also question of a 'law' forbidding Niketas to become directly a *maistor*.<sup>36</sup>

In a letter that Psellos wrote on behalf of the schoolmaster of the school of Diakonissa (Ep. Sathas 162), this teacher asks for a transfer to another school, preferably that of St. Peter. Rather surprisingly, the patriarch is the person who decided about the nomination, but likely, it was expected that he would intercede in his personal capacity.<sup>37</sup> Not the church as an institution did subsidise the teacher, for it appears that he was expected to attract enough money from his students.<sup>38</sup>

Even outside the enclosed world of intellectuals, the status of a teaching position is an obvious fact. Symeon the New Theologian, for all his anti-intellectualism, held it for normal that not just anyone could assume the role of teacher and speak in public: 'Also, no one would dare to ascend the imperial throne against the will of the emperor, nor would any ordinary person dare to take up the position (τάξις) of *grammaticus* or rhetor; neither, if he were illiterate, to read in front of the people.'<sup>39</sup> The class of teachers and orators, roughly the elite of intellectuals, is thus seen also by one of its staunchest adversaries as a privileged class to which access is not self-evident.

Obviously, emperor and patriarch, being important patrons and protectors of education, had a say in this nomination process, but I would be inclined to think that especially the colleagues and perhaps specialised judges were to decide about this. And ultimately, a teacher always depended for his influence and income on his pupils. Even in the *Neara*, it was not wholly excluded that the *nomophylax* accepted some extra fees from pupils who are particularly well off (§14).

### 6.1.3 School factions

Schools did not form an enclosed world on its own. Each school consisted of a tightly-knit community of teachers and students. Their common education forged bonds of friendship that did not remain without social relevance.<sup>40</sup> In Mauropous' *Neara*, it is expected that the graduates from Xiphilinos' school

<sup>34</sup>See also Wolska-Conus, "Écoles", p. 228, where it is suggested that students could choose among teachers, and the emperor ratified this election.

<sup>35</sup>Guglielmino, "Epitafio per Niceta", § 11, l. 193–200.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., § 7, l. 103–105.

<sup>37</sup>Speck, *Kaiserliche Universität*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>39</sup>Symeon the New Theologian, *Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, nr. 18, l. 240–3: Καὶ θρόνῳ μὲν βασιλέως οὐδεὶς ἐπιβῆναι τολμᾷ μὴ θελήσαντος ἐκείνου, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ γραμματικοῦ ἢ ῥήτορος τινος ἀναλάβεσθαι τάξιν ἰδιώτης τυγχάνων, οὐδὲ ἐπὶ λαοῦ ἀναγνῶνα ἀγράμματος ὄν.

<sup>40</sup>With 'friendship' obviously not only in the sentimental, but also in the instrumental sense, see Mullett, "Byzantium: A Friendly Society?"

should feel obliged to this school, as children towards their mother or nurse;<sup>41</sup> they should be appreciative of their teachers, who in turn had enabled them to ‘bear fruit’. Consequently, they should keep supporting the school in later life with due remunerations (called τροφεία and διδασκάλια). This calls into life a typical patronage relationship: the foundation enables generous gifts, creating at the same time affiliations for life. It is a long-term investment to create goodwill for the founder, in this case the emperor and its protégés.

Michael Psellos too reveals in some letters his personal concerns for the monastery called Ta Narsou. He was born in its neighbourhood and received at least some basic instruction in it.<sup>42</sup> In a letter, he expresses his commitment to pay back the costs for his upbringing to the institution that has nourished him.<sup>43</sup> In recognition for his spiritual instruction, Psellos now secures its material prosperity.<sup>44</sup>

This affiliation between the former student and his school is a direct consequence of the cultivation of a special relationship between teachers and pupils. In writings directed to his students or former students, Psellos frequently refers to his ‘circle’ of pupils, in terms that connote a devotion to intellectualism, and are, tellingly, frequently drawn from the sphere of tragedy and theatre.<sup>45</sup> Also Mauroπους uses these words χορός and κύκλος to describe the community of Psellos’ students as well as that of his own pupils.<sup>46</sup> The imagery in the funeral oration to Xiphilinos to describe the different teachers with their ‘troupe’, is wholly taken from the sphere of choirs and dancers.<sup>47</sup> Here, it is related to the different contests between teachers, an aspect that will return in the chapter ‘Competitions’.

How real the social consequences of this group cohesion were, can be deduced from the many letters from this period that are addressed to former teachers, fellow-students, or pupils. In a letter to Romanos, metropolitan of Kyzikos, a teacher of his, Psellos describes the moment he became attached to him: ‘From this moment on, I visit you frequently, I receive education from you, and I become a member of your choir, treating you with praise and proclaiming you with loud voice’.<sup>48</sup> The remainder of the letter is a rather formal proposition to start a friendship. It is clear that becoming a student of someone is at the same time becoming a member of a network whose ef-

<sup>41</sup>Mauroπους, *Novella*, § 23: ἦτινι καὶ χάριτας εἶσεσθε δικάως πολλάς, καὶ ὡς μητρὶ καὶ τροφῇ τῆς ὑμετέρας παιδείσεως ἀποδώσετε πρέπουσαν αἰδῶ καὶ τιμῇν.

<sup>42</sup>For an overview of the sources, see Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 212–3, and P. Gautier, ‘Précisions historiques sur le monastère de Ta Narsou’, *REB* 34 (1976), pp. 101–110.

<sup>43</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 135: εἴωθα τροφεία κομίζεῖν ἀεὶ ἀναθρεψαμένη.

<sup>44</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 213.

<sup>45</sup>See, by way of example, Michael Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, I, 211: λογικὸς σύνδεσμος, χορός, θίασος; Gautier, ‘Monodies inédites’ 1.326: περὶ ἐμῆ μουσικῆς χορείας; 4.120: κύκλος τῶν μαθητῶν. This imagery of choirs is of course not new, cf. for example Libanios, ep. 1297, and Photios ep. 290.

<sup>46</sup>Mauroπους, *Epistulae* 23 about the χορός of students around Psellos, and letter 24 about his own κύκλος τῶν φοιτητῶν.

<sup>47</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, pp. 433.11–14.

<sup>48</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 12, p. 14, l. 15–18: καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ τούτου φοιτῶ μὲν παρὰ σοὶ καὶ παιδεῖας τυγχάνω καὶ μέρος γίνομαι τῶν σῶν χορευτῶν, οἷς δι’ ἐπαίων ἄγεται τὰ σὰ καὶ μεγαλοφώνως ἀνακηρύττεται.

fectiveness extends beyond the classroom. In their self-representations, these groups obtain mystical and literary overtones, with the teacher modelled after the leader of a choir. Psellos' promise to 'proclaim' his teacher may entail that students engaged actively in the promotion and polemical defence of the school and its teacher; we come back to this point.

A letter from the corpus of the anonymous tenth-century professor gives some indications about students composing poetry on demand of their teacher.<sup>49</sup> Letter 94 of that collection is addressed to a poet and friend, letting him know that his feelings of friendship are indeed serious. To prove this, the school-master will ask his students to compose iambs and to display them in the streets and squares. This indicates that students composed iambs in a school context and that these iambs did not necessarily need to be irrelevant school exercises: at this occasion, they serve a personal purpose of their teacher.

Also Mauropous' letter collection contains a letter to someone he calls his teacher. Mauropous appears to have made a considerable social promotion, and now defends himself against accusations from his teacher.<sup>50</sup> Mauropous' teacher seems thus to have maintained a position of spiritual advisor, also in matters that are not strictly related to education.

When Psellos himself became a teacher, he performed various services for his former pupils, especially recommendations.<sup>51</sup> A considerable part of his network consists of former pupils and former fellow pupils.<sup>52</sup> A fine example of how this teacher-student relationship interferes with the mundane matters of the outer world, is a letter (K-D 53) to a former pupil, Pothos, also known from other letters. Pothos, a tax-collector, was due to demand Psellos, who owned a monastery, for a levy.<sup>53</sup> Psellos had this cancelled, and in this letter repeatedly appeals to their intellectual friendship to justify this intervention: his propriety of teacher of philosophy is said to be incompatible with the crude payment of a tax.<sup>54</sup> It should at all means be avoided that 'a teacher and a student would fight against each other.'<sup>55</sup>

The ties uniting former fellow-students remain strong during their subsequent careers. In a letter to a former fellow student, Psellos makes an appeal to their common education, presenting it as a bond that unites them: 'If there is one thing, oh my spiritual friend, that brings us together and binds us and

<sup>49</sup>A. Markopoulos, ed., *Anonymi Professoris Epistulae*, CFHB 37, Berlin 2000.

<sup>50</sup>Mauropous, *Epistulae*, letter 20. I deem it improbable that the address of 'teacher' could be ironic or sarcastic, as Karpozilos suggests in his commentary at p. 217. The references to their teacher-student relationship are too many and surely not in a continuous ironic mood.

<sup>51</sup>For example Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letters 91, 189, and many others.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, 101-2 for a reconstruction of these circles of second-generation intellectuals.

<sup>53</sup>See *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, narrative unit: 'Psellos, as owner of a monastery, had its military levy cancelled; Pothos was asked to talk to the hegoumenos and assure him of his support'.

<sup>54</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 53, p. 84, l. 10-11: τί κοινόν διδασκάλου φιλοσοφίας και ἐπιδόσεως μεσομουλλαρίας, σοφώτατε μαθητά;

<sup>55</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, l. 14-17: ἴνα μή ... μάχωντο μαθητῆς και διδάσκαλος ... ἀπηλλάγμεθα τῆς εἰμαρμένης ἐκάτεροι.

unites us, it is the long-lasting education and our common participation in colleges'.<sup>56</sup>

One can see how easily bonds of friendship and dependence relationships (as well as feuds) are formed within the school, and how these relationships are defined in terms of love for learning, reputation for smartness, and attractive manners. These bonds survived by far the moment when these youngsters sought careers outside its walls. It may be legitimate to speak in this context of an old boy network. But also the group consisting of a teacher with his pupils is an important social force in intellectual camaraderie.

It is in many accounts from the eleventh century clear that every 'circles' or other 'syllogoi' or 'thiasoi' can in fact refer to a group consisting of teachers and students or ex-students.<sup>57</sup> A typical *χορός* was constituted by a teacher and his pupils, forming together a circle that exchanged writings. The teacher would correct and judge the writings of the younger, who in turn proclaimed the reputation of this teacher. The teacher also prepared them for competitive exercises that would enhance both his own reputation and that of his students (see chapter 'Competitions'). Also the 'reading circles' such as we have defined them (p. 61), have a strong association to the milieu of teachers and students. It is thus in these 'circles', and their dynamics of intellectual and instrumental friendship, that we can locate a considerable part of reading and writing activities.

## 6.2 Instruction of poetry

These observations about school life in the eleventh century will play a large role in the explanation of some notable features in poetry. But before we delve into these questions, the exact place of poetry in the education process will be defined. Throughout, attention will be paid to the connection between the passive transmission of knowledge about poetry and the process of learning to write poetry actively.

### 6.2.1 Poetry: the terrain of the grammarian

Poetry is traditionally a subject treated during the first years of education, and was thus taught by the *γραμματικός*.<sup>58</sup> The Homeric poems were obviously the central text during this stage. The teaching methods of these texts aimed at the instruction of grammar, presumably supplemented by an amalgam of traditional philological knowledge, such as mythology.

It is striking that this 'poetic' stage in education is frequently dismissed as frivolous and puerile. Ioannes Doxapatres opens his commentary on the Pro-

<sup>56</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 11, p. 12, l. 13–15: Εἰ καὶ μηδὲν ἄλλο, πνευματικὴ ἀδελφεί, συνίστησιν ἡμᾶς καὶ συνδεσμεῖ καὶ ἐνοῖ, ἀλλ' ἢ γε χρονία διαγωγὴ καὶ ἡ κοινὴ τῶν μαθημάτων μετ' ἀλλήψις.

<sup>57</sup>For a suggestion of this connection, see also Mullett, "Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople", p. 177.

<sup>58</sup>Lemerle, *Premier humanisme*, p. 253; R. Browning, "Teachers", in: *The Byzantines*, ed. by G. Cavallo, Chicago 1997, pp. 95–116, p. 97.

gymnasmata of Aphthonios by describing the awe and trepidation of students passing from poetry and the ‘teratology’ that accompanied it (τῆς ἐκεῖθεν τερατολογίας) to the much more formidable and renowned discipline of rhetoric.<sup>59</sup> The same trepidation was also felt by young Psellos who said he was ‘delivered from hearing the poems, and looked forward to the art of words with grace.’<sup>60</sup> The instruction of poetry appears in these accounts as a necessary step in the cultivation of learning, but at the same time, it is a juvenile thing, decidedly inferior to rhetorical education.

When Psellos describes in the funeral oration for Xiphilinos the situation of education in Constantinople before the arrival of the two friends, he says that there were ‘revered thrones not only for the ordinary discipline of poetry, but also for rhetoric and for the supereminent philosophy.’<sup>61</sup> The word πάνδημος that here qualifies poetry, can mean ‘common’, ‘popular’, and has decidedly a pejorative connotation. This confirms of course Psellos’ alleged inclination to philosophy and his dismissive stance towards a discipline that was more common and accessible.

This disparaging stance towards the poetic phase of the educational curriculum is also evident from a letter of Mauropous directed to a student (ep. 74). Mauropous gives him the advice to pursue eagerly his studies to attain his ultimate goal, and to engage in depth with every subject, thus avoiding ‘to cling only to the schedos, for instance, or only poetry or another subject of learning, while there are so many, and to disregard other subjects.’<sup>62</sup> Schedos and poetry are not fortuitously chosen as examples of subjects that do not require long or engaging study. Mauropous wants his pupil to occupy himself with more substantial subjects. Schedos and poetry, both treated in the beginning of the curriculum, are seen as easy and playful; more serious matters lay ahead.

Interesting, but not entirely clear, is also the beginning of the letter: a certain γραμματικός is mentioned, but it is uncertain what his connection is with the student needing advice. If the γραμματικός is simply his teacher, the letter is in fact an advice for the student to press his teacher to proceed to more difficult subjects, and in fact, it would be an indication of the influence students could have on the teaching they get.<sup>63</sup> The letter begins with these words:

What sort of grammarian do we now have among us, and of what

<sup>59</sup>Ioannes Doxapatres, “Commentarii in Aphthonii progymnasmata”, pp. 81.5–14.

<sup>60</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in matrem*, l. 841–842: ἄρτι τοῦ ποιημάτων ἀκούειν ἀπαλλαγείς καὶ παρακύψας εἰς τὴν τῶν λόγων τέχνην σὺν χάριτι.

<sup>61</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, 433.3–5: σεμνοὶ θρόνοι καθίστασαν οὐ τῆς πανδήμου μόνης ποιητικῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς τῶν λόγων τέχνης καὶ τῆς θαυμασιωτάτης φιλοσοφίας.

<sup>62</sup>Mauropous, *Epistulae* 74.11–15: τὰ δὲ τῆς προκοπῆς μὴ εἰς μήκος ἀπλατὲς προχωρεῖτω σοι (...), ὥστε μόνου τοῦ σχεδους, φέρε εἰπεῖν, ἢ τῶν ποιημάτων σε μόνον ἢ καὶ ἄλλου μέρους ἑνός τινος τῶν τῆς παιδείσεως ἔχουσθαι, οὕτως ὄντων πολλῶν, καταφρονεῖν δὲ τῶν ἄλλων. Translation adapted from Mauropous, *Epistulae*, p. 190. Karpozilos inferred from this letter that Mauropous’ stance towards the schedos was negative; see Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 27, which I find difficult to agree with, not in the least because he would then also generally condemn poetry, a discipline he cultivated; see also *infra*, p. 211 for this question.

<sup>63</sup>Cf. also Browning, “Teachers”, p. 107.



style? Is he Sophoclean? Or by now Aristophanic? I at least would have preferred him to be Aratean, and would have liked to hear that he is even more advanced than that and closer to the completion of his schooling.<sup>64</sup>

This list probably reflects a real evolution in the curriculum, from tragedy over comedy to didactic poetry. Even then, poetry as a whole is considered as the basic part of the curriculum, for Mauropous urges that he leave poets behind, and proceed to the completion of the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία.

In Psellos' poem on grammar, poetry is also one of the subjects treated. After an overview of the tenses and defective verbs, and before explaining the breathings, there is a short section on the metrical feet, containing some advice on which feet to use best in own poems (6.92–100). Poetry, and more specifically also the composition of poetry, appears as one of the subjects of grammar.

### 6.2.2 Poetry as a didactic subject

The most extensive contemporary account of the activities of a grammarian and his teaching of poetry is to be found in Psellos' funeral oration for Niketas, his friend and former fellow-student.<sup>65</sup> This Niketas was a teacher at the school of St. Peter. Psellos describes his teaching of the alphabet, orthography, morphology, syntax, and also poetry. Niketas' method of reading Homeric poems is described elaborately. Niketas' allegorising interpretation is well known:<sup>66</sup> under their improper appearance, the Homeric poems concealed a secret truth related to the Christian message of salvation. Psellos adds, interestingly, that unlike the others, Niketas did not subdue to the charms of style and metre, but concentrated only on the hidden message. Whether we can conclude from this that the other teachers of poetry did pay attention to these more formal and stylistic features, is difficult to say, but this restriction warns us not to take Niketas' particular method as representative for the teaching methods of poetry in general.<sup>67</sup>

Psellos too taught poetry. His exegetical interpretations of Homeric passages are collected in the *Philosophica minora* (vol. I, opusc. 42–48). They are addressed to a group of students, and thus seemed to have been a part of Psellos' teaching activities. Their interpretative method accords with the allegorical and Christianising interpretations of Niketas. Psellos explicitly

<sup>64</sup>Mauropous, *Epistulae*, 74.1-5: Ποταπὸς ἡμῖν ἄρα καὶ τίς ὁ γραμματικὸς; πότερον Σοφοκλείου ἢ Ἀριστοφάνειος ἦδ᾽ ἢ; ὡς ἐγωγε βουλοίμην ἂν καὶ Ἀράτειον ἢ καὶ ἔτι προσωτέρω τοῦτον ἀκοῦσαι καὶ μᾶλλον ἐγγυτέρω τοῦ τέλους τῆς ἐγκυκλίου. Translation from Mauropous, *Epistulae*, p. 188.

<sup>65</sup>Guglielmino, "Epitafio per Niceta"; Guglielmino proposes to identify this Niketas with Niketas of Herakleia, an identification that surely must be dismissed, see A. Sideras, *Die byzantinischen Grabreden*, Wien 1994, p. 142.

<sup>66</sup>Agapitos, "Teachers, Pupils and Imperial Power", p. 180.

<sup>67</sup>Which may be implied by the account in R. Browning, "Homer in Byzantium", *Viator* 6 (1975), 25, considering the exegetical activity of Niketas and Psellos as a challenging form of independent thinking.

claims that his goal is ‘to turn a short Hellenic myth, totally out of tune with our doctrines, into a more divine form.’<sup>68</sup> These pieces also bear the name *ἀλληγορία* in the title of the manuscript. No information about specific views on poetry can be extracted, and only in op. 48, we discern a certain kind of rhetorical description instead of an allegoric exegesis. As appears from the prologue to op. 43, Psellos was (or feigned to be) rather reluctant to enter upon such a playful subject, but ‘a philosopher needs to love myths from time to time and occupy in earnestness with playful things.’<sup>69</sup>

In one passage that is rather difficult to interpret, Psellos seems to hint that contemporary metrical practices belong to the standard cultural acquisitions. In this piece (or. min. 16), Psellos scorns his pope, who calls himself a *γραμματικός* and a *νοτάριος*, but does not deserve these titles, and surely does not seem to have learnt anything at the schools he frequented. More specifically, Psellos states that, among other miscellaneous grammatical and administrative terms, he does not know what a *koukoullion* is (l. 22). Although this is a less common phenomenon, limited to contemporary anacronisms, Psellos supposes that someone with a basic education should know about it. This would mean—but the text is far from straightforward—that also more recent elements of poetic composition had a place in the education by the grammarian.

The manuscripts transmitting ancient poetry indicate that many of them were used at school. We have already made the observation that the greatest part of manuscripts of the Iliad, for instance, contain scholia, likely to be used in a school context (see p. 31). These manuscripts do not display many innovative or anomalous features. The scholia, taken over from ancient source, comment on mythological, etymological, grammatical, sometimes rhetorical, and other miscellaneous features. They do not at all delve into the kind of allegorical explanations as Psellos does and Niketas is said to do.<sup>70</sup> Some of them clearly seem prepared for educational goals. A good example is the Iliad-manuscript *Escorial. Gr. 509* (Ω I 12). The folia of this eleventh-century codex have two columns: the left one exhibits the text of the Iliad, while the right one contains a paraphrase.<sup>71</sup> The upper parts of the folia, as well as other free space, are filled with scholia (ancient as well as newer exegetical ones), referring to the text with asterisks and other signs. This juxtalinear outlook may indicate an educational destination.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Michael Psellos, *Philosophica minora*, ed. by J. Duffy, vol. I. Opuscula logica, physica, allegorica, alia, BT, Leipzig/Stuttgart 1992 (henceforth cited as Psellos, *Phil. Min. I*), opusc. 42, l. 16–18: βραχὺν τινα μῦθον Ἑλληνικὸν καὶ πάντη τοῖς ἡμετέροις λόγοις ἀπᾶλλοντα εἰς τὴν θειοτέραν ἰδέαν μεταποιήσωμεν.

<sup>69</sup>Psellos, *Phil. Min. I*, 43.8–11: δεῖ γὰρ τὸν φιλόσοφον (...) καὶ φιλόμυθον εἶναι ποτε καὶ σπουδάζειν περὶ τὰ παίγνια.

<sup>70</sup>Cf. Erbse, *Scholía graeca in Homeri iliadem*, xvii–xix: the exegetical scholia of the family b all go back to four extant eleventh-century manuscripts, so we may presume that this kind of scholia was much used and copied, if not complemented, in the eleventh century. Erbse supposes that these scholia go back to examples of the first century BC, see *ibid.*, xii–xiii.

<sup>71</sup>See the description in *ibid.*, xx–xxi.

<sup>72</sup>A. Dain, “À propos de l’étude des poètes anciens à Byzance”, in: *Studi in onore di Ugo*

### 6.2.3 The Vossianus Q 76

Other manuscripts used by grammarians may also shed a light on the function of composing poetry at school. I will take as an example one of the most representative of these manuscripts, the *Leidensis Vossianus Q 76*, an eleventh-century manuscript.<sup>73</sup>

The manuscript is very similar to others that can be dated around the same period, such as the *Monacensis Gr. 310* and the *Grottaferrata Z α III*.<sup>74</sup> The manuscript contains various grammatical works, such as the *Ars* of Dionysius Thrax, the *Canones* of Theodosius and *On tropes* of George Choïroboskos. These are accompanied by various *prolegomena* and scholia, and also some shorter metrical treatises. This additional material turns also up in some other similar manuscripts, so it is by no means unique for the *Vossianus*.

The didactic material is organised as a progressive initiation in the subject of ‘grammar’. After some introductory texts (see further) the book treats the alphabet (fol. 12–17) and diacritic signs (fol. 17–20). This is followed by elementary explanations about letters and syllables (fol. 20–28), a general introduction to the subject of grammar (fol. 28–54; cf. *infra* for this interesting treatise), and the basics of syntax (fol. 54–71). Then comes poetry and metrics (fol. 71–85), and dialectology (fol. 87–94). There is also a large portion of morphology (fol. 95–203), which opens with a conjugation table of τύπτω, and includes specialised orthographic treatises about more recondite matters as accents, *pronomina* and the length of the vowels called *dichrona*. The book closes with the treatise of George Choïroboskos on tropes, this way providing in a running-up to rhetoric. In sum, the manuscript reads as a manual of a grammarian, treating subjects in progressive order.

The introductory material in the beginning of the manuscript consists of poetry, and, surprisingly perhaps, of rather recent poetry. There is first an iambic poem generally ascribed to Gregorios of Nazianzos (I,2,30; *PG* 37.908–910), giving moral advice in the form of an alphabetic acrostic. The title in the manuscript stresses that the poem contains ‘perfect moral advice’ (τελείαν παραινέσιν). It is followed by a very similar poem, also ascribed to Gregorios, which seemingly addresses a pupil (see v. 11 τέκνον, 24 ὦ παῖ).<sup>75</sup> A third poem by the ninth-century poet Ignatios the Deacon is as well an iambic alphabetic poem with paraenetical content.<sup>76</sup> This poem is written from the perspective of a preceptor giving advice to a young student, urging him to hold Christ in his thoughts, to deliver efforts for his studies, and to behave humbly toward his teachers. The second poem by Gregorios and the poem of Ignatios are also present in the *Grottaferrata Z α III*.<sup>77</sup>

*Enrico Paoli*, Firenze, 1961, pp. 195–201, p. 196.

<sup>73</sup>A detailed description in: Uhlig, *Appendix artis Dionysii Thracis*, pp. xix–xxx; see also Meyer, *Vossiani graeci*, pp. 192–196.

<sup>74</sup>Uhlig, *Appendix artis Dionysii Thracis*, pp. xi–xix.

<sup>75</sup>Edition in Sakkellion and Sakkellion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>76</sup>Edition in A. M. Bandini, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae medicae Laurentianae*, Firenze 1764, vol. I, p. 516.

<sup>77</sup>Uhlig, *Appendix artis Dionysii Thracis*, p. xii.

One might wonder which use these texts could have. Was the teacher to read them aloud in front of his pupils, imparting them with admonitions relevant to a classroom context? Were the pupils to know these poems by heart, thereby aided by the alphabetic structure? Were they only an introduction to the alphabet, the next element treated in the manuscript, and, one could suppose, in the courses of the grammarian? However this may be, like all the texts in this manuscript, a use in the classroom is evident.

The metrical treatises that appear in the *Vossianus* obviously also had a relevant use in the education of a grammarian. The general observations about Byzantine metrical treatises of course also apply to these: this is traditional theoretical material rather than a description of contemporary practice.<sup>78</sup> However, they are not deprived of practical applicability. Instead of indulging in obsolete metres, they only treat iambs, hexameters, elegiacs and anacreontics, the four metres that are still used, in decreasing order of frequency. Moreover, the treatise on the iambic trimeter<sup>79</sup> makes a difference between the ‘iambs used by the ancients’, and ‘pure iambs’ (καθαροὶ ἰαμβοί), that is, the unresolved dodecasyllable used by the Byzantines.<sup>80</sup>

The *prolegomena* to Dionysios’ *Ars* are edited in the *Grammatici Graeci*, as the *prolegomena Vossiana*.<sup>81</sup> Some parts occur in other manuscripts too,<sup>82</sup> but the *Vossianus* is the oldest of them. This text (fol. 47–50) is a very general introduction, giving definitions of grammar and related notions. Of special importance is a section that argues that grammar partakes of all kinds of disciplines: theoretical, practical, and creative (ποιητική). That last word is connected to its narrower meaning, that of ‘poetic’:

This discipline (grammar) is thus of a mixed kind; for when it tells stories to the youth, it partakes of the theoretical kind. When it takes the reed, adds diacritical signs and corrects the words that are not right, it partakes of the practical kind. Finally, it has something in common with the creative kind, when it blends together the material of loose words, by means of art and metre, thus completing a perfect verse. Grammar is therefore in every respect a most useful art, both for rhetors and for philosophers.<sup>83</sup>

The different aspects of the art of grammar, or more precisely, the curriculum provided for of by the γραμματικός, are here taken together. The first aspect

<sup>78</sup>Cf. W. Hörandner, “Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik der Byzantiner. Einige byzantinische Zeugnisse zu Metrik und Rhythmik”, *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995), pp. 279–290.

<sup>79</sup>Edited in M. Consbruch, ed., *Hephaestionis Enchiridion cum commentariis veteribus*, Leipzig 1906, pp. 309–310.

<sup>80</sup>See for this ‘pure iamb’: Lauxtermann, “Velocity of Pure Iambs”.

<sup>81</sup>A. Hilgard, ed., *Scholae in Dionysii thracis artem grammaticam*, *Grammatici graeci* 1.3, Leipzig 1901, pp. 1–10.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, p. viii–x. The occasional ascriptions to Theodosius of Alexandria must be false.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2, l. 10–16: αὐτὴ γὰρ τοῦ μικτοῦ εἶδους ἐστίν· ὅταν μὲν γὰρ τὰς ιστορίας διηγῆται τοῖς νέοις, κοινωνεῖ τῷ θεωρητικῷ, ὅταν δὲ κάλαμον λαβοῦσα στίξῃ καὶ διορθῶται τὰς μὴ εὖ ἐχοῦσας τῶν λέξεων, τῷ πρακτικῷ, τῷ δὲ ποιητικῷ, ὅταν τὴν ὕλην τῶν διαλελυμένων λέξεων τέχνην καὶ μέτρον συναρμόσῃ καὶ τέλειον στίχον ἀπεργάσῃται. Αὕτη τοίνυν ἡ γραμματικὴ χρησιμωτάτη ἐστίν ἐν ἅπασι καὶ ῥήτορι καὶ φιλοσόφοις.

refers to antiquarian lore, probably also consisting of obsolete metrical knowledge. Second, it teaches orthography, suggesting that the pupils wrote texts themselves, which would then be corrected. The third aspect is of course the most important for our purpose: it clearly states that the teaching in grammar comprises exercises in the composition of poetry. This poetic writing is not at all a creative composition, as it appears, but rather an exercise in transformation, or in paraphrasing: it is said that when starting to write verse, you had to take the material from words and reshape it into a verse. It is represented as if poetry is the reshaping of a prose text, instead of a new composition.

Grammar is said to be important for rhetors and philosophers, that is, people wanting to write occasional or informative texts. It implies that their works should comply to grammatical standards. It also implies that these works could be written in verse, or that at any rate, an intellectual, whether writing rhetorical works or informative texts, should also know how to compose poetry. This confirms our general observations in the chapter ‘Poets’ that instead of specialised ‘poets’, every author (or every intellectual) was supposed to be skilled in poetic composition.

#### 6.2.4 Writing verse at school: technical aspects

Before entering upon the subject of these poetic exercises, we might briefly consider some metrical didactic texts that come remarkably close to the pragmatic advice laid out in the metrical treatises of the *Vossianus*.

The first is the portion about metrics in Psellos’ poem on grammar (poem 6). It contains a short enumeration of metrical feet (v. 92–100), saying which to shun and which to use, rejecting the choriamb, the pyrrhic and the ionic foot in favour of others. This surprising advice simply states which feet to use in an iambic trimetre (of course in an academic formalist way). It also suggests to make iambs, and only thereafter hexameters. It seems that school practice reflects here real practice (or vice versa). It should not surprise us that while the poem is in political verse, the metre is not mentioned at all: this is simply not the metre to learn at school, but a metre growing in and through cultural practice not influenced by school knowledge.

Psellos is said to be the author of a poem ‘about the iambic metre’, which advises a friend on how to compose iambs (poem 14). However, the attribution to Psellos is far from certain: the oldest manuscript that contains the poem is from the 14th century, and false attributions to Psellos are frequent. The poem proclaims once more the ancient prosodic feet as the basic elements of the verse, but at the same time, it makes clear that each verse should always contain 12 syllables, which is only applicable to the Byzantine form of the iambic metre. This number is hinted at by some riddle-like allusions: the number of feet should be the same as the number of legs of a bee, while the syllables should equal the number of signs in the zodiac.<sup>84</sup> All the same, we

<sup>84</sup>Psellos, 14.2–4: τοὺς πόδας μὲν ἢ μέλισσα δεικνύτω, // τῶν συλλαβῶν δὲ τὴν ἀρίθμησιν κύκλον // τὸν ζωδιακὸν εἰσορῶν μάθῃανέ μοι.

hear nothing about the regulation of accents, just as in the contemporary metrical treatises.

This can make us consider how the more practical side of versification was transmitted. It may be instructive in this regard to note that the old prosodic rules were not followed very strictly anymore. The Byzantines made concessions in the treatment of the prosodical aspect of their versification. These concessions were not totally idiosyncratic: they were based upon certain patterns and principles, of which we find no trace in Byzantine metrical theory. For modern scholars, they were the basis for evaluative classifications. As such, Hilberg divided Byzantine iambographers in ‘Klassiker’, ‘Epigonen’ and ‘Stümper’ on the basis of their adherence to the old prosodic rules.<sup>85</sup> This classification, besides bearing the mark of classicist prejudice, is too simplified, but it remains a fact that all our poets agree on certain objective regulations.

In the intricate matter of *dichrona*, it is notable that apart from proper names and technical terms, a prolongation of a short dichronum vowel (*productio*) is allowed only when the word otherwise would not fit in the prosodical structure of the iamb. Both Christophoros and Mauropous observed this rule<sup>86</sup> and an analysis of Psellos’ poems shows that he does ignore this rule in the Ablaut, but observed it quite painstakingly in inner-word vowels, although Westerink<sup>87</sup> and recently Sarriu<sup>88</sup> maintained that Psellos ignored the quantity of all *dichrona* altogether.<sup>89</sup> Conversely, a shortening of a long dichronum vowel (*correptio*) is always allowed, even when the graphic image makes clear that it is a long vowel.<sup>90</sup>

We may ask ourselves how these prosodical patterns and accentual rules could gain widespread acceptance if there were apparently no manuals at hand. Versification was probably predominantly a practical skill transmitted by the teacher by giving own examples, perhaps copied or imitated by pupils.<sup>91</sup> This way, the composition of verse was predominantly learnt by practice, under guidance of a teacher. We may remind here the account of how Michael VII Doukas learnt to write verse with Psellos as a tutor: apparently Psellos corrected his verses, and tried (in vain) to improve his prosodical skills. But at this point we enter a subject for which sources are extremely scant.

<sup>85</sup>I. Hilberg, “Kann Theodoros Prodromos der Verfasser des *Χριστὸς πάσχων* sein?”, *Wiener Studien* 8 (1886), pp. 282–314, pp. 291–2.

<sup>86</sup>F. Kuhn, *Symbolae ad doctrinae peri dichronon historiam pertinentes*. Breslau 1892, pp. 63–64.

<sup>87</sup>Westerink, *Poemata*, p. xxxix: ‘dichrona (...) ad libitum (...) usurpentur’.

<sup>88</sup>L. Sarriu, “Metrica e stile nei dodecasillabi di Michele Psello”, *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Filologia, Linguistica e Tradizione classica “Augusto Rostagni” dell’Università degli Studi di Torino* 2 (2003), pp. 293–306, p. 293.

<sup>89</sup>I count in Psellos’ 2743 dodecasyllables only nine infringements on this rule.

<sup>90</sup>Kuhn, *Symbolae ad doctrinae peri dichronon historiam pertinentes*. p. 78–79. Examples in Psellos also abound.

<sup>91</sup>Hörandner, “Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik”, p. 286, suggesting oral transmission of accent regulations.

## 6.3 Poetic exercises

In the remainder of the chapter, I will argue that some texts are closely connected with preparatory school exercises in poetry, focusing especially on some poems on Christophoros that are traditionally seen as pieces with ideological intentions. The problem I will raise touches also at the question how we have to interpret Byzantine ‘classicism’, or Byzantine ‘mimesis’: as an active appropriation of an antique heritage, or as a dissociated game of formal recycling.

### 6.3.1 Models to follow: exemplary pieces by teachers

Some rhetorical compositions of Psellos leave no doubt about the fact that they are sophistic show-pieces without any serious relationship with reality. His encomia on the flea, louse, and bedbug (or. min. 26–28) are such works. As appears from the preceding piece or. min. 25, his students had complained that their teacher did not provide them with this kind of sophistic rhetoric. Pupils expected from their teacher that he could provide them with models of dazzling rhetoric that they could admire and copy. Reluctantly, as it appears, Psellos provides them with these encomia.

The piece in praise of the louse (or. min. 28) is a remarkable example of a paradoxical encomium in the tradition of Lucian’s *Praise of the Fly*.<sup>92</sup> After praising at length the merits of the louse, Psellos remarks towards his students that they should not view this piece as a serious oration:

I did not strive in earnest to lay down a praise of the louse — I am not that crazy—, but I wanted to give you an example of what rhetoric (*ho logos*) can do, so that you would have an example to look at and would be able to perfect yourself in the most base of subjects and would cling to imitation.<sup>93</sup>

The very inferiority of these creatures is a hallmark of Psellos’ skills. Consequently, these pieces are sheer showcases: they display the skills of the teacher and can serve as a didactic example to follow. Nothing is serious about these *études*.

But the didactic and epideictic aspect of Psellos’ rhetorical works does not remain confined to these virtuoso pieces on mock subjects. There is an epitaph for the metropolitan of Melitene that is manifestly written for didactic goals, although at the surface, it did have a social applicability. The oration begins with an address to his students:

Not because you wanted to bring honour to the metropolitan of Melitene who has now died, do you ask me for an encomium, it

<sup>92</sup>For this kind of sophistic enkomia in Byzantium, see Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, I, pp. 131–132, with reference to Psellos.

<sup>93</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.* 28, l. 120–124: οὐ γὰρ ἐγκώμιον φθειρὸς προεθυμήτην καταβαλέσθαι (μὴ οὕτω μανείην), ἀλλ’ ὑμῖν ἐνδείξασθαι ὅσα ὁ λόγος δεδύνηται, ἵν’ ἔχοιτε καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα βλέποντες καὶ πρὸς τὰ εὐτελέστερα τῶν ὑποκειμένων παραξέειν ἑαυτοὺς καὶ προσαρτᾶν πρὸς τὴν μίμησιν.

seems to me, but to have a reference of the way a panegyric oration should be composed. The latter aspect you have concealed, the former professed, so that you would under the respectful mask of your request gain two things: reverence for the deceased and the art of eloquence.<sup>94</sup>

The oration that follows, is indeed a conventional funeral oration. However, it is not just a sophistic show oration for a non-existing person. As Gautier argues,<sup>95</sup> the metropolitan was a historical person who has really died, otherwise there would be no point in mentioning detailed facts about his life, such as his forename (l. 37) and his combat against the Jacobites. Neither does Psellos deem it exceptionable that people asked him to compose the funeral oration, and he even avows that this technical feat will bring some honour to the metropolitan. The only thing he does, is introducing it with this disclaimer, because he really does not know much about the metropolitan's lifetime, so it is a convenient chance to demonstrate and teach some techniques of an improvised oration, without running the risk of being held liable for factual mistakes.<sup>96</sup> The oration is thus reference material, a supply of ideas and techniques to learn from (l. 3: ἀφορμάς, l. 18: πόρισμα).

It is important to note that the students had not asked right away for such a show piece: they professed to do honour to the metropolitan. It appears that, were Psellos to know the metropolitan better, the oration would as well be a demonstration of techniques, just without this disclaimer, and it would also (and more expressly) be a token of honour for the metropolitan. Yet, the students would learn techniques from it.

Psellos' prominent position as an 'intellectual', a λόγιος required that he compose public orations at request, for occasions that have undeniably a real social significance. But these orations would be read attentively by his pupils and the whole intellectual community, who would also—and perhaps especially—judge it as a product of rhetorical technique. This brings us to the tentative consideration that many texts serve in fact this double intention of both providing the rhetorical dimension for a public occasion and on the other hand demonstrating the skills of an intellectual and the competences of a teacher—which virtually amounts to the same.

### 6.3.2 Christophoros 8 and 52: exercises in Homeric verification

With this, we have again arrived at the phenomenon of display. The display of excellence in *logoi* could enhance the teacher's position with regard to his

<sup>94</sup>Gautier, "Monodies inédites" 1.1–6: Οὐ τὸν Μελιτηνῆς σεμῦναι βουλόμενοι τὴν ἐν ταῦθα μετηλλαχότα ζωὴν, ὡς γέ μοι δοκεῖ, εἰς ἐκεῖνον αἰτεῖσθῆ με ἐγκώμιον, ἀλλ' ἵν' ἔχοιτε ἀφορμάς τοῦ πῶς δεῖ τὸν πανηγυρικὸν μετιέναι λόγον. Τοῦτο μὲν ἀποκεκρύφατε, ἐκεῖνο δὲ προβέβλησθε, ἵν' ἐν τῷ εὐσχήμονι τῆς αἰτήσεως δύο ταῦτα κερδάνητε, τό τε πρὸς τὸν ἀπεληλυθότα αἰδέσιμον καὶ τὸ τὴν τέχνην ἔχειν.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 98, n. 1.

<sup>96</sup>Cf. *ibid.* 1, l. 15–18. As a matter of fact, the oration contains still less concrete information than others; see *ibid.*, p. 98, n. 1.



rivals. Parallel with that, we may remark that the competences displayed in general were no others than those advanced in a school context. Christophoros' poems on the spider, the ant, grapes and figs can in this context be considered not only as a display of intellectual skills in general, but a demonstration in skills that were transmitted and valued in a school context. But also the hexametric poems, written in a metre that was only enjoyable on an intellectual level, may form part of this demonstration of 'schoolish' skills.

Poem 8, counting 32 dactylic hexameters, is entitled: Εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Ῥωμανόν· ἐπιτάφια ἠρωϊκά. The poem opens as a lament on the fate of Romanos, but quickly switches to a narrative of his death, attributing a somewhat ambiguous role to Zoe, Romanos' wife, who according to the rumours had her husband murdered to help her lover to ascend the throne as the emperor Michael IV. Whether the account indicates critique or loyalty towards Zoe, is in doubt.<sup>97</sup> It ends with a description of the reaction of the people to the burial of the old emperor. The representation of the crowd's indifference agrees remarkably well with Psellos' account in the *Chronographia*,<sup>98</sup> and adds a striking *pointe* to the poem:

προύπεμπον δὲ ἄνακτα κατὰ πόλιν οἵπερ ἄριστοι·  
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἱκανόν γε Περιβλέπτου ἐνὶ νηῶ,  
 ἐνθάδε ταρχύσαντο νέκυν βασιλῆος ἀγαυοῦ,  
 βᾶν δ' ἐπ' ἄνακτα νέον καὶ Ῥωμανοῦ ἐξελάθοντο. 30

The best men accompanied the emperor through the city.  
 But when they reached the church of the Peribleptos, 30  
 They buried the body of the valient emperor,  
 And flocked to the new emperor, forgetting about Romanos.

This poem could never have been pronounced in public. It does too much harm to the authority of the new rulers, not only by implicitly suggesting that they are somehow involved in the death, but even more by suggesting that their popularity was gained at the expense of an immoral negligence of Romanos' memory. Moreover, it accuses the elite (29: οἵπερ ἄριστοι) of being forgetful of their deceased emperor. But perhaps more important than that, this poem has not the rhetorical structure of a funeral oration. After introducing a *gnome* (also emperors are mortal), and addressing the deceased (from v. 3), it proceeds abruptly to the narration of the death, omitting every praise or biographic information of the emperor, and it ends with the ignominious reaction of the prominent Constantinopolitans instead of the conventional consolation. This is not a rhetorical piece apt for public pronouncement or diffusion.

Rather, I will argue that this poem anticipates to a reading that predominantly pays attention to its technical metrical features. The poem is in

<sup>97</sup>For a critical stance, see Criscuolo, "Carmina historica", here p. 60: 'una non troppo velata accusa di colpevolezza'; Crimi, in contrast, observes an implicit admiration for Zoe, which indicates the poet's loyalty, see Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 55.

<sup>98</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book IV, §2.

hexameters, and as a result it also adopts the Ionic epic language of Homer, including many citations from Homeric poems. The subject of the death of an emperor provided the poet with a convenient backdrop to introduce these Homeric expressions.

To begin with, there are some Homeric formulas seamlessly integrated in the text. The address *κοίρανε λαῶν* (v. 4) is such a formula (cf. *Il.* 7.234 and elsewhere, in total four times); as well as *θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι* (v. 6; occurs eight times in Homer, both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), and *ὅσσε φαεινῶ* (v. 15, cf. *Il.* 13.3 and elsewhere, in total six times). The expression *οἵπερ ἄριστοι* is also to be found in *Il.* 17.509. Interestingly, Christophoros puts each of these formulas at the end of the verse, just like in the Homeric example. Also some other collocations are adopted by Christophoros, such as *βῆ δ' ἰέναι* (v. 17, very frequent in Homer). This formula is in the Homeric poems mostly found in the beginning of the verse; Christophoros duly follows custom. One may also note that *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἴκανον* (v. 30) mirrors closely the Homeric formula *ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἴκανον*. Again, the verb *ἴκανον* is in exactly the same *sedes* of the verse. This way, Christophoros can make use of convenient metrical blocks which are already 'in place', assuring a correct prosodical verse structure.

Some other verses are entirely modelled on existing verses from the Homeric poems. Verse 7 *ὦ μοι ἅπαντα ἄφνω θάνατος μέλας ἀμφεκάλυψεν* resembles *Od.* 4.180: *πρὶν γ' ὅτε δὴ θανάτοιο μέλαν νέφος ἀμφεκάλυψεν*: Christophoros takes over the verb at the same place, the end of the line, also adopting, with a slight alteration, the metaphor of 'black death'. Verse 9: *αὐτὸς δ' ἐξερέω πικρὸν μόρον, ὄνπερ ὑπέστη*, is modelled after *Od.* 9.365: *ἐξερέω· σὺ δέ μοι δὸς ξείνιον, ὡς περ ὑπέστης*. Christophoros adopts the verb *ἐξερέω*, but, on the basis of the Homeric verse, he also takes over at the same place of the line the expression *ὡς περ ὑπέστης*, slightly modifying it to suit the meaning. I would exclude the possibility of a proper allusion to the content of the homeric verse: Odysseus' cunning answer to the Cyclops to tell his name has no relation whatsoever with the narration of the dead that the I-voice in Christophoros' poem promises to begin. Moreover, the verb *ὑπίστημι* is used in a totally different sense: 'withstand' in Christophoros (of a fate), 'promise' in Homer (by Odysseus to tell his name).

The expression *ὄνπερ ὑπέστη* turns up again in verse 18. That verse, *δεσποίνῃ ἐρέων πόσιος μόρον, ὄνπερ ὑπέστη* is clearly inspired by *Od.* 23.2: *δεσποίνῃ ἐρέουσα φίλον πόσιν ἐνδον ἐόντα*, but also here the context is totally different: on the one hand, Eurykleia bringing Penelope the happy message that Odysseus has arrived; on the other hand, a servant announcing the death of a husband. I do not think that readers of Christophoros are invited to recall the narrative of the *Odyssey* here:<sup>99</sup> just like in the previous example, the verse provided a convenient metrical structure. Moreover, this specific Homeric verse, a very conventional one, does not stand out as a potential source for allusions. Verse 22 is almost identical with *Il.* 10.15: *πολλὰς ἐκ κεφαλῆς προθελύμους ἔλαετο χαίτας*. Verse 27 *κεῖτο μέγας μεγαλωστί ληλασμένος ἦς*

<sup>99</sup>Although this example, exactly because of its contrast, could be taken as a sarcastic allusion; see Demoen, "Phrasis poikilē".

ἔχε δόξης mirrors Il. 16.776 and Od. 24.40 κείτο (resp. κείσο) μέγας μεγαλωστί, λελασμένος ἵπποσυνάων. Christophoros takes over the greatest part of the verse (in the same place in the verse structure, of course), only altering one feature that is quite alien to the Byzantine emperor ideal.

Poem 52 can be approached along similar lines. The poem, also written in hexameters, does not suit any rhetorical occasion either: it is not a monody, for it does not lament the dethronement of Michael V, but rather justifies it. It is rather a dramatic narration of the exile of the empress Zoe by Michael V and the subsequent riots in the capital, during which Michael was deposed and blinded. The opening μέλλεν ὄρα is typical for a monody, but quickly the poem switches from lament over the city to a narration of the exile and unrest (v. 10–19), followed by accusations against Michael, intertwined with motifs of vanity rather typical for imperial funeral orations. The narrative character of the piece is also made clear by the title, specifying the moment that forms subject of the poem: Εἰς τὸν ἀποβασιλέα Μιχαὴλ τὸν Καλαφάτην, ὅτε διὰ τὸ τὴν δέσποιναν Ζωὴν ἐξορίσαι τῆς βασιλείας κατενεχθεὶς ἐτυφλώθη ἠρωϊκά.

The Homeric reminiscences are also in this case a matter of metrical technique. The expression φύλοπιν αἰνήν (v. 2) is to be found sixteen times in Homer, always at the end of the verse, like in Christophoros' poem. So does the collocation εἶδος ἀρίστης (v. 4), four times in Homer, always at the end if used in a feminine form. The collocation κουριδίην δ' ἄλοχον has an exact correspondence in Il. 7.392, where it occurs likewise in the beginning of the verse. The word group κάλειον δέ μιν (v. 8) corresponds with κάλειόν τέ μιν in Il. 23.203, in exactly the same *sedes* of the verse, at the fourth and fifth foot. The word group παρθενίην ζώνην (v. 9) occurs at the same *sedes* (second to fourth foot) at Od. 11.245. The expression μάχας τ' ἀνδροκτασίας τε (12) takes over a half verse from Il. 7.237. Λευγαλέους θανάτους (13) is a fixed Homeric collocation, and ἄλγεά τε στοναχάς τε is adopted from the same place in the verse, in both Il. 2.39 and Od. 14.39. In verse 15, ὅς ῥα κακῆ αἴση is modelled on the metrical block τῷ ῥα κακῆ αἴση, found in Il. 5.209 and Od. 19.259, both times at the beginning of the verse, like in Christophoros' poem. The end of verse 16, λάθετο συνθεσιάων is modeled on the end of Il. 5.319 ἐλήθετο συνθεσιάων. The place of the word συμφράσσατο (17) is in exactly the same *sedes* (fourth-fifth foot) as the four Homeric verses where it also occurs; the same holds true for the words οὐλομένην (25; thrice in Homer; always in the beginning of the verse) and ἄνασσεν (26; four times, always at the end). The metrical place of the expression βαρὺ στενάχων (23; first to third foot) is identical to the position in the seven Homeric verses where it occurs. The word group κείται δ' ἐν + noun (see 25) appears also in Homer twice at the beginning of the verse (see Il. 4.143 and Il. 24.600).

Criscuolo, who mentioned the most striking correspondences, headed them under the notion *imitatio*.<sup>100</sup> But what kind of imitation is Christophoros' adoption of metrical blocks and fixed expressions? The fact that Christophoros takes over words and expressions from the same *sedes* as in the Homeric verses, without apparent engagement with the content of the verse, points to

<sup>100</sup>Criscuolo, "Carmina historica", p. 73.

my mind rather to a technical kind of imitation. The Homeric poems, being the prime example of hexametric poetry, are mined for their versification technique. Surely, this poem demonstrates familiarity with Homer, but only on a metrical level: it does not allude to the content of its source texts, nor does it use the Homeric poems as a cultural background that the author has in common with his readers, apart from the linguistic aspect.<sup>101</sup>

### 6.3.3 ‘Historical poems’ ?

In Criscuolo’s view, these poems must be considered as ‘historical poems’, expressing the concerns of the court elite about the crises the empire went through.<sup>102</sup> But the compositional technique I proposed above and the kind of reading that this technique would expect, do not allow for an ideologically critical reading of Christophoros’ account of the actual events. Actual events were just favourite material for schoolmasters to work with. Probably it aroused more the interest of the youth, but also, the realistic subject matter prepared them better for the kind of work they would be confronted with later. Browning already suggested this for some twelfth-century poetic exercises that are intertwined with schedographies and were composed by teachers. These poems had as a subject actual events (fires, etc.) or were addressed to emperors. This would supposedly arouse the interest of the pupils, initiating them in poetry and grammar, but they remain a product of the school.<sup>103</sup>

Actual events were frequently used as subjects of rhetorical exercises,<sup>104</sup> and also some poetic texts followed suit.<sup>105</sup> The death of Michael V in particular, which formed the subject for Christophoros 52, was apparently a popular subject for preparatory exercises at school. Charlotte Roueché, with reference to a specific passage in Kekaumenos, already pointed out that Michael V’s deposition was a popular school exercise, and referred in passing to a fragment in Ioannes Doxapatres, the rhetorician who wrote an extensive commentary on Aphthonios’ progymnasmata.<sup>106</sup> Doxapatres comments in this fragment a particular *progymnasma* of Aphthonios.<sup>107</sup> The exercise under view is an *ethopoiia* entitled ‘What would Niobe say when her children were lying dead?’ He analyses Aphthonios’ progymnasma on questions of genre, style, and inven-

<sup>101</sup>Browning, “Homer in Byzantium”, does not address this kind of textual relationship to Homeric texts; for centos as a purely linguistic imitation, proving the mastership of *techne*, see Hunger, “Mimèsis”, p. 33–34, and *passim* for the formal aspect of Byzantine *mimesis*.

<sup>102</sup>Criscuolo, “Carmina historica”, p. 74.

<sup>103</sup>R. Browning, “Il codice marciano gr. XI.31 e la schedografia bizantina”, in: *Miscellanea Marciana di studi bessarionei*, Padova, 1976, pp. 21–34, p. 22.

<sup>104</sup>Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, vol. 1, p. 114–116.

<sup>105</sup>One of Ioannes Geometres’ poems is an *ethopoiia* of Nikephoros Phokas, see Opstall, *Jean Géomètre. Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques*, nr. 80; see also E. van Opstall, “Poésie, Rhétorique et mémoire littéraire chez Jean Géomètre”, in: «*Doux remède...*» *Poésie et poésie à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23-24-25 février 2006*, ed. by P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 9, Paris 2008, pp. 229–244, p. 236.

<sup>106</sup>C. Roueché, “Rhetoric of Kekaumenos”, in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, Aldershot 2003, pp. 23–37, here 27, n. 16.

<sup>107</sup>Ioannes Doxapatres, “Commentarii in Aphthonii progymnasmata”, pp. 505–508.

tion. Thereafter, he adds an *ethopoia* of his own, entitled Τίνας ἄν εἶπη λόγους ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἐκπεσὼν Μιχαήλ, τῶν βασιλείων ἀπελαυνόμενος; ('What would Michael have said, when he was deposed from the imperial throne and chased from the palace?')<sup>108</sup> This is followed by a short lament in the first person, pronounced by Michael who deplores his unexpected downfall from the imperial throne he had gained equally unexpectedly. Motifs and time frame of this *ethopoia* are very similar to the poem of Christophoros. In Doxapatres' text, imbedded as it is in an extensive course book on the progymnasmata, there is no doubt it is a sophistic exercise to teach a rhetorical technique; I would assume the same status for Christophoros' poem. Only, because the latter one appears isolated from its context, we are prone to treat it as a source, or as a historical account with possible political or moralistic motivations.<sup>109</sup>

It is impossible to say whether Christophoros had written poems 8 and 52 while being a student, or as a teacher giving an exemplary model, or perhaps just as a careerist proving his intellectual skills. But I would argue that in any event, their affinity with school exercises is evident, and consequently, their demonstration of formal technique prevails on the ideological message that these poems may contain. They are no public pieces of rhetoric, but poetic exercises on a subject that could be in fact any subject that would minimally raise the interests of sophisticated readers.

It is unsure whether we should be entitled to extend this suggestion to other poems of Christophoros. A poem that can be perfectly compared, is the poem Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλτου.<sup>110</sup> It teems with Homeric quotes and reminiscences. It has even some verses in common with poems 8 and 52 (compare v. 95 with 8.27). The poem portrays Maniakes as a Homeric hero, and it is evident to perceive the admiration for Maniakes' valiance. If the poem is by Christophoros (and everything points to this), then it bears proof of a particular predilection to treat possibly sensible subjects in hexameters. To my mind, this does not point to a concealed opinion (for the admiration in the poem on Maniakes is barely concealed), but to the fact that these poems did not circulate beyond the *theatra* or *sullogoi* of intellectual friends.

Perhaps we might also problematise the alleged ideological background of Christophoros' poem 13 in this way. This poem, lamenting the inequality of human life, engages in a direct dialogue to God, and according to most scholars displays stinging social critique.<sup>111</sup> At least the impact of the poem—apart from its intentions—may be put into perspective if we conceive this poem as an exercise on a set theme, in this case, the inequality of life. Such an interpretation admittedly downplays the importance of hidden layers and subtle critique, but may apply a kind of reading that was surely also performed by

<sup>108</sup>Ioannes Doxapatres, "Commentarii in Aphthonii progymnasmata", pp. 508–509; It is disputed whether this progymnasma is authored by Doxapatres, see now C. A. Gibson, "The Anonymous Progymnasmata in John Doxapatres' *Homiliae in Aphthonium*", *BZ* 102 (2009), pp. 83–94, the evidence for an anonymous authorship, however, is only indirect.

<sup>109</sup>For moralistic stance in these poems, see Lambakis, "Κρίσιμη επικαιρότητα", p. 399.

<sup>110</sup>Lampros, "Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλτου".

<sup>111</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 61; Livanos, "Justice, Equality and Dirt in the Poems of Christophoros of Mytilene", p. 49.

the Byzantines themselves, namely, paying attention to the technical features of a text.

# Chapter 7

## Knowledge

At the onset of this chapter, I would like to pick up two elements advanced in previous chapters that can help to explain the peculiar relationship between knowledge and poetry that is forged in the eleventh century.

The first element is the integration of teaching within the activities of an intellectual in general (see p. 116). An intellectual occupied himself both with the study of knowledge and the transmission of it, and, on a more concrete level, the reading of books and the writing (compiling, etc.) of them.

We have seen that both Psellos and Mauropous laid great stress on their activities as educators, and especially Psellos prided himself on being able to mediate this knowledge in an accessible form. Instead of specialisation, there was rather a stress on generalisation and versatility: teachers had to be able to answer on every question a student would ask him (see also p. 116).

Another element is the particular outlook of school life in this period. In a sphere of constant rivalry, teachers had to prove their worth in order to uphold their renown and attract pupils, who were free to choose their teachers. In the previous chapters, we have observed that the poetic form was a powerful element in the desire to display the skills of an intellectual. This chapter will largely build on this premise.

### 7.1 Beautifying knowledge

Byzantine didactic poetry has repeatedly baffled its modern readers. It may seem a strange, even an abject<sup>1</sup> phenomenon, but it surely gained renewed vigour and popularity in the eleventh century. Psellos' didactic poems, treating bible exegesis, Christian dogma's, rhetoric, grammar, medicine, law, as well as some other minor subjects, are a novelty in more than one way. To begin with, they are the first didactic poems in Byzantium that seek to compile systematically all the information on a given subject,<sup>2</sup> and also in the breadth

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<sup>1</sup>Dölger, *Die byzantinische Dichtung in der Reinsprache*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>W. Hörandner, "La poésie profane au XIe siècle et la connaissance des auteurs anciens", *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976), pp. 245–263, p. 254.

of treated subjects they aspire for the first time at universality. Second, the *politikos stichos*, the new purely accentual meter of the Byzantines, finds in these poems for a first time a sustained and systematic application.

In a recent contribution, Lauxtermann opposes two modern views on Byzantine didactic poetry: one in fact denying that this was poetry at all, the other arguing that some didactic poetry *can* be poetic, dependent on aesthetic judgements.<sup>3</sup> Lauxtermann questions the modernist assumptions behind both views: ultimately, both suppose that there must be inherent qualities associated with the denominator ‘poetry’ that refer to matters of style, content, etc. Lauxtermann, conversely, holds that this poetry is to be considered poetry ‘for no other reason than that it is in verse’.<sup>4</sup>

The aesthetics of Byzantine didactic poetry are particularly problematic because style, diction and vocabulary do not at all differ from prose and are sometimes even more ‘prosaic’, in our terms. In several instances, we can observe that verses are taken over from prose texts, only slightly altered to fit it in the metrical mould. To advance a simple example: in the poem on rhetoric, the source text of Hermogenes gives as a definition of περιβολή:

Περιβολή δὲ αὐτάρκης προοιμίων διπλασιάσαι ὄνομα καὶ διπλασιάσαι  
κῶλον.<sup>5</sup>

In Psellos’ poem, this becomes (7.112–113):

Αὐτάρκης δὲ περιβολή τυγχάνει προοιμίου  
διπλασιάσαι ὄνομα, διπλασιάσαι κῶλον.

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In the first verse, Psellos inserts the verb τυγχάνω, an extremely frequent verb in his didactic poems—while being surely no ‘poetic’ one, but it comes in handy because it counts three syllables. In the second verse, Psellos is forced to omit the conjunction καί. The asyndeton that he thereby creates, is no stylistic ‘poetic’ device, but just a way to fit Hermogenes’ prose text into a fifteen-syllable mould.

This is emphatically prose in verse form. So, I believe that in essence, Lauxtermann is right: we do not have to seek for an aesthetic surplus that is carried with the use of the verse form, other than the use of the verse form itself. The choice for the verse form must then lie in reasons that are directly tied to its formal qualities, and not to indirect consequences of this form.

In what follows, I want to adduce some elements that can help us to understand better the rationale behind the choice to use a poetic form for these texts. I will attempt to demonstrate that some basic features of the poetic form were instrumental in making it an attractive one to frame knowledge in.

<sup>3</sup>M. Lauxtermann, “Byzantine Didactic Poetry and the Question of Poeticity”, in: «Doux remède...» *Poésie et poétique à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23-24-25 février 2006*, ed. by P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos, *Dossiers byzantins* 9, Paris 2008, pp. 37–46, referring to studies by Signes Codoñer and Ingela Nilsson.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>5</sup>Hermogenes, *Opera*, ed. by H. Rabe, Leipzig 1913, *De inventione*, I, 5, 18–20.



### 7.1.1 Anon. Schirò, poem 5: words with a pulse

A collection of poems that is very closely related to teaching activities, is that of the teacher of the Forty Martyrs-school, whose poems are preserved in the collection edited by Schirò. The fifth and last poem sheds a particular light on the connection between education and poetry.<sup>6</sup> It is obviously directed to a teacher (v. 7: a διδάσκαλος) and specifically a grammarian (v. 3: γραμματικός). If this piece is written by the same poet as the preceding four, which is probable, it is written by a grammarian for a colleague. This is the complete poem:

Ὡ ὑπεραγάσθην σε τῆς στιχουργίας  
καὶ τῆς ὑπὲρ νοῦν καὶ λόγον μουσουργίας  
τὸν γραμματικῶν πρόκριτον μυστηπόλων,  
ψυχὴν ἐμὴν θέλξαντα ῥυθμῶ καὶ μέτρῳ  
ὀρφαϊκῆς ἥδιον εὐήχου λύρας,  
ἦν μύθος αἰρεῖν καὶ φύσεις τῶν θηρίων  
καὶ τίς γὰρ εἶδε τῶν τινὰς διδασκάλων  
οὕτω πρὸς ἧσιν τῶν μεμαθητευμένων  
ἅπαντας εἰσφέροντας ὀρμὴν ἐν λόγοις,  
ὥς σὲ βλέπω σπεύδοντα τέρπειν τοὺς νέους;

Oh how do I admire you for your works in verse  
And your artistic creations, exceeding mind and reason.  
You are chosen from the initiates in grammar,  
Charming my soul with rhythm and meter,  
Sweeter than the sonorous Orphic lyre,  
Of which the story goes that it subdues even the nature of animals.  
For who ever saw anyone at all of the teachers  
This way bringing pulse in their words  
For the enjoyment of the pupils,  
Like I see you do, in your effort to please the youths?

The grammarian apparently used poetry to liven up his subject matter, in order to make it enjoyable for his students.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, this is done because it can charm with rhythm and metre. To take away any doubt, the works are explicitly called poetry, or rather, poetic writing (v. 1: στιχουργία).

The poetry of this schoolmaster is praised for its artistic merits: it is called a μουσουργία (l. 2), a work inspired by the Muses, able to charm (10: τέρω) and give pleasure (8: ἧσιν), for his colleague as well as for the pupils. Associated with the aesthetic pleasure of poetry in particular is the ‘swing’ or ‘pulse’ (9: ὀρμή) he introduces in his works. This pulse may refer to the rhythmic qualities of poetry: it denotes the same sense of ‘velocity’ that is

<sup>6</sup>Text of the poem in: Schirò, “Schedografia”, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup>I believe that λόγοις in v. 9 still refers to poetical works, because it is connected by γὰρ (v. 7) with the στιχουργία in v. 1, so I would hesitate to follow Schirò’s translation ‘conversazioni’ for λόγοι, cf. *ibid.*, p. 26.

associated with poetry.<sup>8</sup> This aesthetic quality makes his verse attractive for his students: he obviously caters to their tastes by couching knowledge in a pleasing form. It also confirms his excellence as a teacher: in this poem, he is favourably compared to other teachers.

This poem does not refer necessarily to didactic poetry as we conceive it. It could also refer to the kind of poems that precede this poem. These are directed to his students, giving advice or introducing a course. But the border with didactic poems is thin: one of these poems, seemingly giving some moral admonitions, was also a *leçon par l'exemple* to instruct difficult superlatives (Schirò 3). At any rate, the poem proves that there was a 'market' for attractive forms to transmit knowledge in.

### 7.1.2 Psellos' project of joining philosophy with rhetoric

The connection between an attractive form and the transmission of learning is also evident from the self-representations of Psellos. One of his most often professed principles is the marriage between philosophy and rhetoric. If we try to define concretely what Psellos means with the words φιλοσοφία and ῥητορική, I think that we are constrained to come up with such concrete terms as 'science' and 'literary form'. Mostly, he integrates this conceit in the representations of his teaching activities: he has made his knowledge ('philosophy') widely accessible by garbing it into a 'rhetoric' form.<sup>9</sup> What regards the term ῥητορική, we have remarked on several occasions that this could encompass poetry as well.

The Psellian *topos* of mixing philosophy with rhetoric also heavily permeates his discourses against calumniators who apparently accused him of downgrading philosophy by employing it for his base ambitions. In a work meant to justify his refusal of the function of *protoasekretis* (Or. Min. 8), he asserts that he mixed philosophy with rhetoric to make it known for others (the verb δημοσιεύω is used),<sup>10</sup> and to prevent it from being a recondite matter: only so he could show its wonderful nature.

The problem is brought up very clearly in the answer to an anonymous calumniator (Or. min. 7). A considerable part of this oration (l. 102–180) justifies Psellos' achievement of having mixed serious philosophical character (ῥῆθος) with (literary, or rhetorical) grace (χάρις), 'so that I would not seem boring for listeners, neither faulty for those who have a better understanding.'<sup>11</sup> Also those great men from Antiquity and early Christianity mixed beauty of expression (χάρις) with a philosophic disposition. From them, says Psellos, I have learnt to adapt myself to every science, and "I approach the sciences and at the same time I express their forms, and the beauty (χάρις) that runs in front of these forms makes the carving of this creation melodious

<sup>8</sup>Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure Iambs".

<sup>9</sup>One of the many instances: Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §41.

<sup>10</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 8.154.

<sup>11</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.* 7.129: ὥστε μήτε τοῖς ἀκροαταῖς δοκεῖν φορτικὸς μήτε πλημμελὴς τοῖς συνοῦσι.

and polished.”<sup>12</sup> ‘Melody’ and ‘polished’ might refer to qualities that would be perfected in a poetic form. Also the word *charis* appears as a key notion that denotes the rhetorical handling of knowledge.

In a letter in answer to someone who had read a work of him, Psellos defends himself against the apparent critique that his work was not philosophical enough: it does not need to be so deprived of eloquence that it would become unintelligible, says Psellos; the rhetorical figures serve the purpose of clarity, not of display.<sup>13</sup> This example shows that clarity is considered a rhetorical operation applied on a body of knowledge, but it was not expected to get out of control and become an element of display.

In a funeral oration for his student Georgios vestarches, Psellos relates that he initiated his pupil both in rhetoric and in philosophy. In an effort to mix both, Psellos tells that he “on purpose atticised the ‘philosophic’ notions with eurhythmic and technical words, thereby uplifting the profoundness of ‘philosophy’ ”.<sup>14</sup> The fact that rhythm is mentioned here again as an element that could make science more attractive and accessible, may be an indication that the rhythmical, or generally euphonic, aspects of poetry, and surely of political verse, were an important motivation for using a poetic form to transmit knowledge.

## 7.2 Poetic form and didactic content

The poems of Psellos are quite vociferous in the advertising of their own qualities. This may provide us an insight in the question why poetry is chosen to give form to this body of dry information, and also why political verse was used. The onset for an understanding of the aesthetic and cultural presuppositions for the use of this metre by Psellos has been given by Jeffreys’ seminal article about the political verse.<sup>15</sup> I will first adduce some general features already pointed out by Jeffreys, supplementing them with the concept of ‘synopsis’, and I will also attempt to elucidate further the cultural assumptions about the use of the political verse, as opposed to other metrical or non-metrical forms.

### 7.2.1 Grace and play

Simplicity and clarity are manifest features advanced by Psellos to qualify his didactic poems.<sup>16</sup> The most outright claim to that feature we find in poem 2, on the *Canticum Canticorum*, where the exegesis is said to be written ‘in the

<sup>12</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.* 7, l. 153–155: ὁμοῦ τε πρόσεμι ταῖς ἐπιστήμασι καὶ ἐναποτυπούμαι τὰ τούτων εἶδη καὶ ἡ τοῦ εἶδους προδραμοῦσα χάρις ἐμμελῆ τε καὶ εὐπερίστροφον τὴν τῆς πλάσεως τορεῖαν εἰργάσατο.

<sup>13</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 174.

<sup>14</sup>Michael Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, 212, l. 25–27: ἐξεπίτηδες τὰς φιλοσόφους ἐννοίας ἡτικίζον λέξεσιν εὐρύθμοις καὶ τεχνικαῖς ἐπαίρων τὸ τῆς φιλοσοφίας βαθύ.

<sup>15</sup>M. Jeffreys, “The Nature and Origin of the Political Verse”, *DOP* 28 (1963), pp. 141–195.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 164.

most simple and common words': ἐν ἀπλουστάταις λέξεσι καὶ κατημαζευμέναις (2.7). The word κατημαζευμέναις denotes a familiar level of language, a style that is somehow more 'low' in comparison to other literary styles.<sup>17</sup> In the title to poem 6 (as we have seen, the title for a whole series of didactic poems, see p. 75) the aim of the poems is to introduce Michael into the study of the sciences by means of their 'simplicity and pleasantness' (ὥστε διὰ τῆς εὐκολίας καὶ τῆς ἡδύτητας ἐνεχθῆναι τοῦτον εἰς τὴν μάθησιν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν). As Hörandner suggests, ἡδύτης may refer to the verse form in general, εὐκολία to the political verse in particular.<sup>18</sup>

This simplicity of diction obviously results in 'clarity', which is of course an advantage in the formulation of scientific technical material. In the epilogue to poem 1, Psellos states: 'I have explained everything in a short and clear poem.'<sup>19</sup> In the title to poem 6, the synopsis is said to be written 'in clear and political verses' (διὰ στίχων σαφῶν καὶ πολιτικῶν). It appears here that political verse in particular was perceived as implying a more simple and more accessible form of language. Poem 9 on medicine, the only large didactic poem that is not written in political verse, may serve as a contrast, for it does not mention this feature of clarity explicitly.

The aspect of simplicity and clarity can be related, I believe, to Psellos' vow to make 'philosophy' more accessible for others with the help of 'rhetoric': in this way, the perceived more simple nature of the political verse could be a bone of contention against which Psellos had to defend himself.

Psellos explicitly states that he does not desire to offer new scientific knowledge: he promises to summarise the discipline, and he prides himself upon the achievement of having condensed information into an easy form. He is a mediator of knowledge, not a creator of knowledge. As such, his poem on the Canticle of Canticles is so closely modelled on the interpretation of the Canticle by Gregorios of Nyssa, that it breaks off at the point where Gregorios' interpretations stops.<sup>20</sup> This presumed hackneyed nature of the poem has been doubted,<sup>21</sup> but recently Luciano Bossina convincingly demonstrated that Psellos' poem was in all its aspects—even in the quotes from the biblical text itself—a poetic reworking closely following Gregorios' text.<sup>22</sup>

Other features with which these poems advertise themselves are their alleged sweetness and playfulness. We have already pointed to the pressure teachers felt to package their colleges in an attractive form. There can be no doubt about it that also Psellos sought to present the formal features of his poems as an attractive shape through which knowledge will be more easily imparted.<sup>23</sup> This emerges most clearly from the epilogue to poem 7, where

<sup>17</sup>Hörandner, "The Byzantine didactic poem"; Jeffreys, "Nature and Origin", p. 164.

<sup>18</sup>Hörandner, "The Byzantine didactic poem".

<sup>19</sup>Psellos, 1.299: συντόμῳ πάντα καὶ σαφεῖ ἐξηγησάμην λόγῳ.

<sup>20</sup>Westerink, *Poemata*, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup>Leanza, "L'esegesi poetica di Michele Psello sul Cantico di Cantici".

<sup>22</sup>L. Bossina, "Psello distratto. Questioni irrisolte nei versi In Canticum", in: *Dulce Melos. La poesia tardo antica e medievale. Atti del III Convegno internazionale di Studi, Vienna, 15-18 novembre 2004*, ed. by V. Panagl, Alessandria 2007, pp. 337-360.

<sup>23</sup>Jeffreys, "Nature and Origin", pp. 174-5.

the poem, besides of its features of conciseness, is characterised as follows (7.543–545):

Full of sweetness and filled with grace,  
 With attractive words and style, and extraordinarily melodious,  
 So that you, in this intellectual game, would gain something from  
 this poem.

γλυκύτητος ἀνάμεστον, χάριτος πεπλησμένον,  
 ἤδυεπές, ἠδύφθογγον, ἠδύμελές ἐκτόπως,  
 ὥς ἂν καὶ παίζων λογικῶς κερδαίνῃς τι τοῦ λόγου.

Sweetness, melodiousness, playfulness, and, in sum, grace (χάρις) are the key notions used to positively describe this poems. As we have seen, Psellos uses the notion χάρις also often in association with the layer of rhetoric he professed to couch his philosophic lessons in. It may refer to the euphonic qualities of verse, but, from the view of Psellos' opponents, perhaps also to vapid charm and frivolous display.

What also turns up here, is the aspect of 'play': the form is playful and not serious, but may help to learn something serious. This brings the reader back to the age-old dictum of didactic poetry to combine *delectare* with *prodesse*.<sup>24</sup> This returns in a text where Psellos reluctantly agreed to enter upon the frivolous subject of myths in Homer: sometimes also a philosopher has to occupy in earnest with playful matters, and these are defined—inter alia—as 'charming style'.<sup>25</sup> The notion χάρις may refer to the the elegance of polished diction, an elegance that is playful and frivolous. Political verse can be seen as the eminent form of playfulness and charm.

The connection between playfulness and the political verse is demonstrated most evidently in a poem of Niketas of Herakleia that sets on to explain the subjunctive verbs. Niketas starts his poem, addressed to his pupils, in this way:

Φέρε μικρόν τι παίζωμεν πολιτικοῖς ἐν στίχοις  
 τῆς νόσου παρηγόρημα καὶ τῆς μικροψυχίας,  
 περὶ ῥημάτων δ' ἔστωσαν αὐθυποτάκτων οὔτοι·  
 τοῦτο γὰρ ἀνεξέταστον ἐστὶ τὸ μέρος μόνον.<sup>26</sup>

Come, let us amuse ourselves a little in political verses,  
 A consolation in sickness and faintheartedness.  
 Let these be about subjunctive verbs,  
 For this is the only topic which we have not examined.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Hörandner, "The Byzantine didactic poem".

<sup>25</sup>Psellos, *Phil. Min. I*, 43.8–12: δεῖ γὰρ τὸν φιλόσοφον (...) καὶ φιλόμυθον εἶναι ποτε καὶ σπουδάζειν περὶ τὰ παίγνια· παιδιὰ δὲ τῶ φιλοσόφῳ μῦθος καὶ λέξις ἐπιτερπῆς καὶ ἱστορία ἢ διαχέουσα τὴν ψυχὴν ἢ συστέλλουσα.

<sup>26</sup>S. Lampros, "Ἰωάννου τοῦ Τζέτζου Περὶ ῥημάτων αὐθυποτάκτων στίχοι πολιτικοί", *NE* 16.2 (1922), pp. 191–197 (henceforth cited as Niketas, *On Subjunctive Verbs*), pp. 1–3.

<sup>27</sup>Translation from: Jeffreys, "Nature and Origin", p. 166.

Niketas proposes his students a playful lesson, in an equivalent to Psellos' *παίζων λογικῶς*. Here, the political verse must be seen as a direct cause of this playfulness.

The aspect of *χάρις*, however, is not solely associated with the political verse as such, but also with the poetical form in general. A passage in poem 9 about medicine, the only didactic poem written in dodecasyllables, makes mention of the 'graces of metre' (9.531–537):

ἐμοὶ δὲ γνώμη καὶ σκοπὸς τῶν ἐμμέτρων  
 μὴ πάντα πάντως συλλαβεῖν τὰ τῆς τέχνης,  
 μικρὰν τεκεῖν ὄρεξιν ἀνδράσι φίλοις,  
 γραμματικοῖς, ῥήτορσι καὶ φιλοσόφοις,  
 τῆς τῶν ἱατρῶν ἀκριβεστάτης τέχνης, 535  
 ὅπως ποθοῦντες τὰς χάριτας τοῦ μέτρου  
 σὺν τῷ μέτρῳ λάβωσι καὶ τὰ τῆς τέχνης.

For me, it is the scope and intent of these verses  
 Not to comprise everything of this discipline in every way  
 But to stir up a small appetite for some befriended men,  
 Grammarians, rhetors and philosophers, 535  
 (An appetite) for the most precise art of medicine,  
 So that they would, in their desire for the graces of metre,  
 Receive together with the metre also the subject of this discipline.

The intention is the same: the outward form of the poem is beautifully shaped, only to ensure that the readers, by tasting the charms of its outward form, would, almost unwittingly, also absorb something of the content. The notion of *χάρις* is here emphatically associated with the use of the metre, but not political verse.

## 7.2.2 The synoptic quality of didactic poems

The title in the manuscript of the series of poems that Psellos offered to Michael VII Doukas at the request of his father is *Σύνοψις περὶ πασῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν*; poem 8 is likewise called *Σύνοψις τῶν νόμων*. In the text of the poems, they are repeatedly presented the same way, with the words *συνοψίσας* (1.292), *συνοπτικόν* (3.2), *σύνοψιν* (7.287, 541), *συνοψίσομεν* (7.517), *εὐσύνοπτον* (7.542), *συνοψίσας* (8.6), *συνοψίζειν* (8.206), *συνοπτικώτατον βιβλίον* (8.1409). Rather than clarity or comprehensibility, I believe that the word *σύνοψις* and its derivatives indicate the unique form of these poems. The poems are 'synoptical' because everything is comprised in it, but in a condensed and easily digestible form, in which every item of information can be easily spot.

This synoptic quality is also underlined by adjectives as 'well delineated' (3.2: *περιγεγραμμένον*) and 'well divided' (7.542: *τετμημένον*): the latter word suggests that information comes in small parts clearly separated from each other. This is connected with the pledge that these poems are 'short' (*σύντομος*: 1.299, 3.2, 5.78, 7.542, 9.1; *βραχύ*: 7.290); poems 2 and 8, both more than 1000 lines long, understandably escape this characterisation.

The synoptical quality is also supported by the claim that this shortness does not prevent the poet from treating exhaustively all parts of the τέχνη at hand. In poem 8, Psellos claims to have addressed all branches of law;<sup>28</sup> but all the same the information is easy to absorb and readily accessible.<sup>29</sup>

In poem 7, the feat of having produced a summary but comprehensible précis is explicitly put forward:

σαφῆ τὰ παραδείγματα πάντων τούτων τυγχάνει.  
 σὺ δ' ἔχε μοι τὴν σύνοψιν, εἴτ' ἐρώτα θαρρούντως,  
 κάγώ σοι τὴν διάλυσιν λέξω τοῦ ζητουμένου.  
 εἴτ' οὐ θαυμάζεις, δέσποτα, τοῦ γράφοντος τὴν τέχνην,  
 ἂν ἔχῃς εἰλητάριον βραχὺ τῆς ὅλης τέχνης;

The examples of all these types (of the rhetorical periods) are clear.

You, take this overview from me, and then ask questions without hesitation:

I will give you the solution to your problem.

Don't you wonder, then, my lord, at the art of this author,

Now that you have a small roll of the whole discipline?

This last aspect once more underlines the concise, comprehensive but all the same exhaustive treatment of the poem, a true σύνοψις.

These lines in fact suggest that the written version of the poem makes up the back bone of the discipline. In an oral explanation, the teacher could answer questions and provide details. The same method is also suggested by a letter of Psellos, in which he sends along a book of the *Staseis*. He assures his correspondent that if he has any additional questions, he can always summon the expert (Psellos himself?) and ask him.<sup>30</sup>

Accidentally or not, right before the quoted fragment, Psellos had given an explanation of the rhetorical πνεῦμα (291–301), which is defined as a 'composition of speech that completes a whole thought in *kola* and in *kommata*, that are smaller than *kola*',<sup>31</sup> a definition duly taken from Hermogenes.<sup>32</sup> Completing thoughts in short *kola*, is of course exactly what Psellos does by versifying the *techne* of Hermogenes. Each verse is of equal length, counting fifteen syllables, and divided in *kola* of eight and seven syllables. It never continues a syntactical unit over two lines by means of an enjambment, and it completes just one thought within one verse or half verse, thus establishing a perfect example of a recurrent πνεῦμα. Byzantine poetry, as has by now been firmly established, strives after the rhetorical quality of eurhythmic and

<sup>28</sup>Psellos, 8.1408: πάντων δ' ἡψάμην τῶν μερῶν νομίμων.

<sup>29</sup>Psellos, 8.1410: ἔτοιμον εἰς κατάληψιν καὶ πρόχειρον εἰς γνῶσιν.

<sup>30</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 20, p. 26, l. 15–p. 27, l. 1; *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, considers this expert as a third person (Anonymus 2342), but I think that he might be Psellos himself.

<sup>31</sup>Psellos, 7.292-3: σύνθεσις λόγου πέφυκε νοῦν ὅλον ἀπαρτίζον // ἐν κώλοις τε καὶ κόμμασιν τῶν κώλων μικροτέροις.

<sup>32</sup>Hermogenes, *Opera*, De inventione, IV, 3 (p. 183)

concise diction,<sup>33</sup> and Byzantines were aware that the colon structure of their accentual poetry corresponded to the colon structure of prose.<sup>34</sup>

Whether the place of this remark is expressly designed or not, it is clear that the ‘synoptic’ quality is put forward by Psellos as the most remarkable achievement of his poems. The verse technique of summarising one thought in one short syntactical unit that follows a repeating rhythmical pattern, seems the most apt form to come close to the fulfilment of this principle. Verse sets boundaries to the flow of language that may otherwise be unrestrained, or outright boring. The nature of Byzantine verse, which avoids enjambments, makes sure that the information comes in small and equal bits. The adjective τετμημένον (7.542) may express this. It also permits easy overview and access, which is propagated by words such as εὐσύνοπτος and εὐθήρατος (8.7).

Indeed, even a visual aspect may play a role in the ‘synoptic’ quality of didactic poems. There is only one other instance in Psellos’ works where a word from the lexical group συνοράω is used to refer to a work of his, a didactic work on Aristoteles’ *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*.<sup>35</sup> The second part of this work bears the title σύνοψις καὶ μετὰφρασις σαφεστάτη τῆς διδασκαλίας τοῦ Περὶ ἑρμηνείας: this part is in fact a synopsis of Psellos’ own college. If we have a look at this small synopsis, we see that it is interspersed by headings indicating the different subjects. The work is visually divided in small paragraphs, each one of them preceded by a short title. Undoubtedly, this outlook permitted the use of the word σύνοψις in its title. This convenient splitting up of information is a feature that would be realised all the more in a poetic text.

Each verse expands on one or two problems; mostly the word that is explained is put in the beginning of the verse. Information is structured along a vertical frame: applied to the kind of line-per-line explanation that Psellos maintains, the poems appear as lists of different ‘entries’. Each entry is equally long, and the vertical ordering permits easy scrolling and an easy overview of the different parts. The adjective εὐθήρατος (8.7) may be considered literally: it is easy to catch the answer you are looking for. In contrast to a dense prose text with seemingly no divisions, poetry enables a clear entry-per-entry overview of its subject. Consequently, when we assume that the poetic form is used *qua* poetic form for these didactic texts, its basic feature of arranging a text in a vertical way would be an important visual factor especially useful for texts transmitting knowledge.

<sup>33</sup>See Hörandner, “Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik”, pp. 288–289, and Lauxtermann, “Velocity of Pure Iambs”, pp. 20–21, both in reference to the dodecasyllable.

<sup>34</sup>M. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*, Byzantina Vindobonensia, Wien 1999, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup>Psellos, *Phil. Min. I*, 52. It has to be added that Psellos’ authorship is not certain, cf. Psellos, *Phil. Min. I*, p. xxxvi. Psellos, *Phil. Min. I* 50, also called a σύνοψις is certainly spurious; interestingly, it displays the same visual features as described in reference to opusc. 50.



## 7.3 Didactic poems and imperial addressees

As Jeffreys has shown, political verse occupied a peculiar position: it was frowned upon by intellectuals setting high standards for their own work and that of others, going so far as to call it ‘unmetrical’.<sup>36</sup> Its use by Psellos surely meant a deviation from the ideal of the pure intellectual, and was likely to attract accusations that he used improper sophistic tricks to realise base ambitions. As such, the use of the political verse was an uneasy exercise between catering to popular taste and upholding intellectualist ethics. As always, Psellos found a way out, not in the least by maintaining a total resilience about his own use of political verse.

Another factor is that nearly all large didactic poems of Psellos are dedicated to emperors, and it is arguably no coincidence that of all major didactic poems, the only one written in dodecasyllables, poem 9 on medicine, is also the only one not dedicated to an emperor, but to his learned friends. The court was a cultural pole around which the use of the political verse revolved.<sup>37</sup> While political verse is unlikely to have originated at the imperial court, it was in the ninth and tenth centuries, together with related forms, very fashionable as the metre for occasional and ceremonial poems.<sup>38</sup> However, the extended use of the political verse in didactic poems is something of an innovation. This can perhaps be partly explained by the particular position of Psellos in the intellectual field.

### 7.3.1 Psellos tutor of emperors

One of the self-representations put forward by Psellos, is that of the imperial preceptor. He fancied himself in the role of Aristoteles teaching Alexander the Great, or Plato advising the Sicilian tyrants.<sup>39</sup> This reaches a climax in the funeral oration for Xiphilinos, in which Psellos relates at length the teaching activities of him and his friend. At a given moment, Psellos says, Monomachos became infatuated with the idea of becoming a learned emperor.<sup>40</sup> He called back Psellos to the palace, and made him his personal teacher, noting down what he dictated to him, in imitation of Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher emperor. This was considered by Psellos as the climax of his teaching career. It ‘produced a marvel for him, for me a dignity that was unbelievable for most men’.<sup>41</sup> It was something unheard of, just like the novel function of ‘consul of philosophers’; an innovation likely to produce protest and jealousy from rival intellectuals.

His tutorship of the crown prince Michael VII Doukas is likewise described as an extremely prestigious and exceptional function. Psellos himself acknowl-

<sup>36</sup> Jeffreys, “Nature and Origin”.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>38</sup> See Hörandner, “Court Poetry”, p. 76–77.

<sup>39</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 231, pressing *caesar* Doukas in the role of a king needing Psellos as philosopher.

<sup>40</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 434.

<sup>41</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 434, l. 18–19: ἐκεῖνός τε θαύμα διδόν, κάμοι σεμνότητα τοῖς πολλοῖς ἄπιστον.

edges this, when he describes in his *Chronographia* that Michael had chosen him as his teacher, giving him priority over all other teachers. By doing this, he ‘made his [Psellos’] name known to everyone’.<sup>42</sup>

The setting of the poems bespeaks this imperial tutorship. Psellos speaks in the I-person teaching one other student, the emperor, who is addressed throughout the texts as δέσποτα (5.1), ἄναξ (7.80), στεφηνόροε (8.1407), etc. Moreover, the poems are presented as being recited in a personal college. The poem on rhetoric is introduced with the claim that the subject is particularly useful for emperors (7.1–3). As we have seen above (p. 191), in the same poem, Psellos interrupts his explanation to encourage him to ask further questions if something is not clear.

The poem on the Canticle in particular is very emphatically presented as a continuing college. Psellos introduces it as the response to a specific command of the emperor (1–7; cf. also infra). The bible verses that are to be commented are preceded by remarks that hint at an oral context. For instance: ‘But let us listen to the continuation of the Canticle: for the bride says to the groom: (etc.)’.<sup>43</sup> Another time, Psellos reassures him that he should not be too surprised by the explanations, for prophecies can be illogical at times (723–726). Sometimes, he also explicitly summons the emperor to be attentive: ‘You, pay attention carefully to the exegesis of these verses!’ (707: Σὺ δέ μοι σφόδρα πρόσεχε τῇ τούτων ἐξηγήσει.) At one point, Psellos promises to treat a particular problem later: it is something ‘about which you will be instructed more extensively further on.’ (2.284: ἦν μάλιστα πλατύτερον κάτωθεν διδαχθήσῃ).<sup>44</sup> The adverb κάτωθεν is intriguing: it is difficult to maintain that this adverb could be used in a purely oral context referring to a moment later in time. It rather has the spatial sense of ‘below’, thus assuming a written text. It has a perfect pendant in v. 1150, where ἄνωθεν is used to refer to an exegesis that was given by Psellos ‘earlier’ in the text. This may confirm that the setting of a real-time college need not to be taken at face value. It is a literary construction, confirming Psellos in his role of imperial tutor and the emperor as lover of learning.

### 7.3.2 Recycling poems

This is corroborated by the fact that these poems were reused in order to be offered to different emperors. Nearly all didactic poems have dedications to several emperors, depending on the manuscript. No doubt, as Westerink noted in his introductions to the poems, these different dedications go back to adjustments carried out by Psellos himself when another emperor had as-

<sup>42</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIC, § 4, l. 21–22: πολλάκις τὸν συγγραφέα ὑπερεβάλλετο, ὃν δὴ καὶ καθηγῆτην πρὸ πάντων εἶλετο καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἐδημοσίευσε τοῦνομα.

<sup>43</sup>Psellos, 2.299–300: Ἄλλ’ ἀκουσώμεθα λοιπὸν καὶ τῶν ἐξῆς ἁσμάτων’ // ψησὶ γὰρ ἔτι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡ νύμφη τὸν νυμφίον.

<sup>44</sup>The last verb is an intervention of the editor, probably because of the analogy with verse 814; some manuscripts give forms that make no sense, but some have the form διδαχθεῖς, which may be an example of *optativus pro futuro*, see É. Renauld, *Étude de la langue et du style de Michel Psellos*, Paris 1920, pp. 119–122.

cended the throne. Normally only the dedications in the titles of the poems are changed. Poem 6 on grammar, conversely, seems to have undergone more fundamental changes in its text as it was dedicated to different emperors. It may be worthwhile to look closer to the relationship of these different versions to each other.

The poem consists of two parts: a compilation of the *Ars* of Dionysius Thrax, and a lexicon. This lexicon, as Westerink showed, draws in a first part from a source that in its turn is based on the *Souda* and other etymologies, a second part that covers only the letters Z–N, and a list of various medical terms, for which Psellos had a source at hand that he also used for other works. Now, the manuscripts show a very heterogeneous image. The *Paris. gr.* 1182 (P), the standard Psellian manuscript, has the longest text and contains a dedication to Michael Doukas. So does the *Laur.* 57.26 (p<sup>P</sup>), but it omits many verses towards the end of the manuscript. Another manuscript, *Patm.* 110 (p<sup>q</sup>) displays more or less the same text, also omitting some verses at the end, but contains a dedication to Monomachos. But most manuscripts (dubbed by Westerink the ‘vulgata’) have a very different verse order: all items of the lexicon are put in an alphabetical order and many verses are omitted. All these manuscripts contain a dedication to Konstantinos Monomachos. A peculiar manuscript is *Alexandrinus Patr.* 181 (p<sup>r</sup>), which has the same order as the ‘vulgar’ version, but concurs with P, p<sup>P</sup> and p<sup>q</sup> in its textual variants.

Westerink reconstructed the text history as follows:<sup>45</sup> Psellos first made a version of the poem that was the most complete and logical. Then, he ordered a scribe to make a new version; this scribe tried to alphabetise the poem but thereby ruined the text. This version was offered to Monomachos. When Psellos later decided to offer it to Michael Doukas, he returned to his earlier, correct, version.

In this reconstruction, not only the reason remains unclear why Psellos should offer an inferior version to Monomachos and an older and better one to Doukas, but it also fails to explain the peculiar situation in the manuscript p<sup>q</sup>, with the ‘good’ text but the Monomachos dedication, and the hybrid text in p<sup>r</sup>.

It is more probable that Psellos has used twice the same text to offer to the emperor. The oldest version dedicated to Monomachos, survives in only one manuscript, p<sup>q</sup>. The other version for Doukas is preserved in the branch represented by P and p<sup>P</sup>. The scribes of two of these three manuscripts (p<sup>q</sup> and p<sup>P</sup>) did not go through the effort of copying meticulously each lexical item.

The text underwent subsequently a phase in which attempts were made to arrange the poem alphabetically. A first kind of attempt was made with few departures from the text itself; this resulted in p<sup>r</sup>. The model of another branch had a text that was apparently not so well preserved; this resulted in the *vulgata* version. Both versions, by accident I would argue, relied on a manuscript that had an ascription to Monomachos. Whether these redrafts were executed on the behest of Psellos, cannot be ascertained; it is likely that

<sup>45</sup>Westerink, *Poemata*, p. 80.

this happened later. But they were obviously done with the aim to make the poems easier to consult.

Poem 1, on the inscriptions of the psalms, also has an intricate text history. It bears a dedication to Monomachos in the titles of some manuscripts, and to Michael Doukas in others. Also—as in most other didactic poems—the emperor is repeatedly addressed in the text itself, with interjections as δέσποτά μου or ἄναξ. But there is also a group of manuscripts that does not mention any emperor at all.<sup>46</sup> The text in these manuscripts also differs substantially from the text in the other manuscripts: whenever the main text has an address to the emperor (for example, v. 1: δέσποτά μου), this group of manuscripts supplants this with a general address, apparently to a group of students (in this example: φιλόλογοι). Moreover, these manuscripts leave out the last portion of the text (from l. 292 to the end). Significantly, this portion is an epilogue to the main text, where the poet addresses the emperor and dedicates the poem as a gift.

It might be interesting to note that the group of manuscripts that omit any mention to an emperor agree in their deviant readings with the oldest extant fragment that is transmitted; that is, in the Bodl. Clarke 15,<sup>47</sup> which was written in 1078 while Psellos was probably still alive.<sup>48</sup> This fragment also ends just before the final dedicatory verses. The evidence from the Bodl. Clarke 15 may confirm that the manuscripts that do not include a dedication reflect at any rate a contemporary version of Psellos' poem, a version of a poem not offered to emperors.

The addresses to a wider public of *filologoi* may suggest that Psellos used the poem in his capacity as a teacher at a private school, rather than in his function of imperial preceptor. But matters are not straightforward: the alternative addresses to pupils in the manuscripts of this branch are not uniform among the manuscripts. To repeat the example of v. 1: where the main group of manuscripts give δέσποτά μου, j<sup>z</sup> has the address ἄγαπητέ, and j<sup>x</sup> and j<sup>y</sup> have φιλόλογοι. In any event, these manuscripts may indicate that Psellos used the poems also for his ordinary teaching practice.

This also proves that political verse in didactic poems was not confined to court. Rather, political verse retained the overall popularity it must have enjoyed during the preceding centuries, albeit not always on a level where it has left traces.<sup>49</sup> The poems in political verse by Niketas of Herakleia, composed nearly half a century later, may also reflect this use of political verse for didactic texts in non-imperial contexts. Emperors, surely not the most refined people in Constantinople, would be sensible to this popular taste. By offering his poems to emperors in a metre they would appreciate, Psellos

<sup>46</sup>These manuscripts are: Boston Houghton 3 (j<sup>z</sup>), Athen. 799 (j<sup>x</sup>), and Mosq. gr. 388 (j<sup>y</sup>).

<sup>47</sup>More on this manuscript in Lauxtermann, "Mark the Monk".

<sup>48</sup>Psellos at any rate died after 1076, possibly as late as 1092: A. Karpozilos, "When did Michael Psellus die?", *BZ* 96 (2003), pp. 671–677.

<sup>49</sup>See for this phenomenon Jeffreys, "Byzantine Metrics: Non-literary Strata" and, for the sudden emergence of the politikos stichos in religious poems by Symeon the New Theologian, Jeffreys, "Nature and Origin", p. 167.

made concessions to a taste considered vulgar by more intellectual standards, but he surely was conscious that these poems could also be read with pleasure by others, under whom probably his own students.

### 7.3.3 Political verse and courtly tastes

The second poem, the exegesis of the *Canticum Canticorum*, is very instructive to understand the tension between intellectual pressure and the social advantage of pleasing the emperor. This poem is addressed to three different emperors: most titles in the manuscripts refer to Monomachos, but others mention Michael VII and even Nikephoros Botaneiates.

It states from the beginning that the motivation to compose this poem was the eagerness of the emperor to learn something about the exegesis of the *Canticum Canticorum* (l. 3). Psellos says that he has obeyed to his command (v. 4: θέσπισμα) and will give the explanation in ‘simple and familiar wordings’ (v. 7; see above). This last description is, unusually for Psellos, quite outspoken about the somewhat inferior intellectual status of the political verse. I would suggest that Psellos adds this to stress that the choice of metre and style was part of the imperial ‘command’. Also the end of the poem explicitly states the connection between the form of the poem and the imperial request:

Ἡμεῖς μὲν οὖν τοῦπίταγμα τὸ σόν, ὦ στεφηφόρε,  
ἀποπληρῶσαι θέλοντες ὡς δοῦλοι τοῦ σοῦ κράτους,  
ὡς δυνατόν ἐγράψαμεν πολιτικοῖς ἐν στίχοις  
τὴν τῶν Ἀισμάτων δύναμιν, ἐξήγησιν καὶ γνῶσιν.

So, wishing to fulfil your command, oh Lord,  
As slaves of your power,  
I have, for the best I could, written down in political verse  
The meaning, exegesis and knowledge of the Song of Songs.

This is the only instance where Psellos mentions in his text the designation ‘political verse’. It is presented as the direct outcome of the imperial order. The unusual stress of the poem on the fact that it was done at imperial command (mentioned thrice: 4: θεσπίσματι, 1201 and 1215: ἐπίταγμα) and the outspokenness about the political verse are no unrelated factors: Psellos wants to make sure that his public understands that he has not degraded himself to this ‘metre’ at his own initiative. He excuses himself also for another point: that he, being no spiritual person (apparently, he had not yet donned the monk’s habit at this moment), had taken the liberty to talk about spiritual matters (l. 1219–1226). In sum, even this poem, bearing so strongly the stamp of an imperial dedication, was expected to be read by others, but Psellos takes the precaution to warn that it was the imperial command that made him choose a metre that would not live up to high intellectual standards, and choose a subject of which it was apparently debated whether he had the right to teach it.

This brings us back to the main point of the use of political verse in the eleventh century: it was considered inferior in intellectualist circles, even not a proper metre at all, but it was becoming increasingly popular, spreading to more differentiated genres than before.<sup>50</sup> Authors less sensible to intellectualist pressures, like Symeon, did not have any problems in using this metre and related metres, a fact that Niketas Stethatos consciously registers by using the expression ἀμέτρῳ μέτρῳ.<sup>51</sup> Intellectuals who were eager to uphold certain standards rejected it altogether, like Mauropous who states: ‘an unmetrical metre is to my mind no metre at all’,<sup>52</sup> probably referring to political verse.<sup>53</sup>

This can help us to explain why Psellos on other occasions rejected the political verse and condemned the use of poetic summaries written out of political ambitions. The most striking expression of this rejection occurs in the funeral oration for Ioannes Xiphilinos. There Psellos treats Xiphilinos’ occupation with rhetoric:

He did not divide rhetoric into different parts, as most orators thought was needed, nor did he compress its infinite power by making something like a synoptical work, like those who cut the sea off from the great oceans; no, he discovered all its effects and principles, and he introduced these not to common people, or to lazy and indolent emperors by making a *synopsis* of the massive discipline, but its whole existence he demonstrated in his works.<sup>54</sup>

Xiphilinos is praised because he did not do what Psellos obviously has done: writing vulgarising scientific summaries for people who do not have the intellectual capacity or preparedness to go through the whole discipline of rhetoric. To do such a thing, is clearly considered here as unfit for a true intellectual, and testified to debased ambitions. The use of a ‘popular’ metre like the political verse, may be implied by the disparaging tone here.

Interestingly, the common people, that is, those who do not have enjoyed the apt education, are set on a par with emperors, who could have enjoyed education, but did not have the right intellectual spirit. I think this indicates that ‘popular’ taste, as exemplified in the more familiar political verse, was not a prerogative of court, but something that the court shared with more common people. But understandably, works dedicated to emperors would have more chance to survive, and therefore, our image of works in political verse is distorted by the strong bias of extant material towards the courtly sphere. In fact, Psellos implies here what he could not mention in his didactic

<sup>50</sup>For this extension of use, cf. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*, 39.

<sup>51</sup>Niketas Stethatos, *Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949-1022) par Nicéas Stéthatos*, ch. 37, l. 12; See also Jeffreys, “Nature and Origin”, p. 166.

<sup>52</sup>Mauropous, 34.5: μέτρον δ’ ἄμετρον οὐδαμῶς μέτρον λέγω.

<sup>53</sup>Jeffreys, “Nature and Origin”, 166. See also p. 219.

<sup>54</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, 455, l. 7–14: οὐ γὰρ οὕτως τὴν ῥητορικὴν διήρει ὥσπερ οἱ πλείους τῶν ῥητόρων ᾤθησαν δεῖν, οὐδὲ τὴν ἄπειρον ταύτης δύναμιν, ὥσπερ συνοπτικὸν ποιούμενος λόγον συνέστειλε, καθάπερ οἱ τὴν θάλασσαν ἀπὸ τῶν μεγάλων πελαγῶν διαρροῦντες, ἀλλὰ πάσας αὐτῆς τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐφεῦρε καὶ συνεισήνεγκεν οὐκ ἰδιώταις τισὶν, ἢ βασιλεῦσιν ἀργοῖς καὶ ῥαθύμοις σύννοψιν τοῦ πλήθους ποιούμενος, ἀλλὰ τὴν ὅλην αὐτῆς ὑπαρξίν τῷ λόγῳ παραδεικνύς.

poems: that the writing of synopses in political verse for emperors amounts to the same as popular surveys for ordinary people. Moreover, the traces of reuse and recycling that we have discovered, allow us to believe that Psellos wrote these poems also with a broader public in mind.

As we all know, Psellos was a flexible and versatile personality. He gained an insight in scientific questions that must have been quite unsurpassed in his time. As a teacher, he loosely organised his colleges into texts, those we have today as ‘*philosophica minora*’ or ‘*theologica*’. But Psellos wanted more: in order to cater for a more popular taste, and for the taste of the emperor, he composed overviews of sciences, nearly all of them in political verse. On the one hand, he lets it be understood that the choice of the metre is a choice of his patron, and he officially condemns such a practice in accordance to the intellectualist standards of his time. On the other hand, he also advertises the obvious advantages of such poetic synopses: simplicity, clarity, and the feature of being easy to overview, thereby visually assisted by the poetic form. This—likely among other things—gathered critique from more conservative intellectuals, who accused him of downgrading ‘*philosophy*’. Psellos answered, without explicitly mentioning his poems, with an elaborate argumentation about the joining of philosophy with rhetoric. His poems were surely not the expression of his standing as an intellectualist author. Rather, they were the product of the desire of a teacher of extraordinary abilities to gain broad and prestigious admiration by the vulgarising of knowledge.

## 7.4 Didactic modes

The ‘*didactic poems*’ of Psellos are arguably not the only poems of the period that transmit knowledge. The metrical ‘*etymologicon*’ of Mauropous is the other grand didactic poetic project of the eleventh century, leaving aside Niketas of Herakleia. In contrast to the teaching persona that Psellos assumes in nearly all of his didactic poems—again, the medicinal poem is an exception—, the persona transmitting knowledge in this poem is rather that of an author. He had to break off his work (*ponos*), interrupted by other, bitter *ponoi*, which here with a pun refer to physical troubles (or his exile?), but perhaps not to other works, as Reitzenstein concludes.<sup>55</sup> The fragment occurs towards the end (vv. 471–2):

Ἄλλοι με πικροὶ συνταράξαντες πόνοι  
ἔπαυσαν ἄφνω τὸν γλυκὺν τοῦτον πόνον.

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Not surprisingly, the poem was left out of Mauropous’ collection of works. But it is once more an affirmation of Mauropous’ work as a scholar and a teacher. Moreover, it makes clear that didactic poetry was by no means the prerogative of Psellos: also the bulk of pseudo-Psellian didactic poems make clear that many teachers engaged in this genre.

<sup>55</sup>Ioannes Mauropous, *M. Terentius Varro und Johannes Mauropus von Euchaita. Einer Studie zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, p. 18.

Apart from these proper didactic poems, there are many poems that may not assume the same didactic setting but stake an interest in the transmitting of knowledge. Psellos 18, explaining the Roman calendar system, but in reality an imperial address on a festive day, is a good example.

The same could apply to Christophoros 42, the poem that describes a piece of confectionary made by his niece, depicting the Zodiac. Magdalino believes that the ephrastic quality of the poem takes precedence over the astrological aspect;<sup>56</sup> it is surely no in-depth overview of astrological knowledge. But all the same, it gives a basic overview of the signs of the Zodiac, the planetary system, and the cardinal points.

Christophoros 17, a poem in hexameters on the months, obviously is also a poetic treatment of knowledge, but it is different to say what prevails, the ostentitious display of technique (the metre points to this), or the transmission of knowledge.

Perhaps also the riddles were part of school practice; Psellos at any rate addressed some of them to his pupil Michael Doukas (poems 35–37).

Learning was in all of our poets a present element, also in their poetic works. While Psellos and Mauropous used it for teaching purposes, it looks like for Christophoros, the indulgence in knowledge is more a matter of intellectual display. At any rate, the amount of knowledge observable in poetry once more exposes the assimilation between scholar, teacher, and poet.

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<sup>56</sup>P. Magdalino, “Cosmological Confectionery and Equal Opportunity in the Eleventh Century. An Ekphrasis by Christopher of Mitylene (poem 42)”, in: *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations. Texts and Translations dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides*, ed. by J. Nesbitt, Leiden 2003, pp. 1–6, p. 4.



## Chapter 8

# Competitions

Ever since the time of Homer, when on the agora ‘young boys quarrelled over words’,<sup>1</sup> public dispute and contests in eloquence have played a role in Greek-speaking culture. Poetic contests were an important part of the communal identification and social diversification.<sup>2</sup> Especially at times when an intellectual elite gained in importance and autonomy, forms of more or less codified contests emerged, which defined the position of their participants within the elite.<sup>3</sup>

In the eleventh century, when, as we have seen, career possibilities partly depended on the display of learning, the candidates to acquire a prestigious position were subject to tests and contests to define their worth. The dynamics of display, such as we have laid them down in the eponymous chapter, guaranteed that the production and circulation of any written work could provoke reactions from peers and rivals. The meritocratic ideal imposed on this process was designed to make sure that the most apt candidates were selected; competition was therefore a necessary element in this system.

In the field of education, competitions took different forms with varying degrees of seriousness. It was on the one hand a playground for innocent disputational exercises, on the other hand there were the interschool contests, where students rallied behind their teachers to defend their school and the reputation of their teachers vis-à-vis his rivals. Once within the elite, people claimed their own positions. This gives rise to polemics, often conducted over self-created texts.

I will first argue that the ‘logikos agon’, the contest of words, provided a mindset for these various competitions. The agones were deeply ingrained in school life, and continued to define the production of works of intellectuals

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<sup>1</sup>Iliad 15.284: ὁππότε κοῦροι ἐρίσσειαν περὶ μύθων.

<sup>2</sup>For the concept of contest in ancient Greek poetry, with some helpful parallels in other cultures, see D. Collins, *Master of the Game. Competition and Performance in Greek Poetry*, Washington D.C., 2004.

<sup>3</sup>See the concept of contest during the Second Sophistic, as described in T. Schmitz, *Bildung und Macht. Zur sozialen und politischen Funktion der zweiten Sophistik in der griechischen Welt der Kaiserzeit*, Zetemata 97, München 1997.

(8.1). The following sections describe the role of poetry within these ‘agones’: in school contests (8.2), and in rivalries in the intellectual field (8.3). Then, I will have a closer look at the particular competitive rhetoric used in poems of Christophoros (8.4) and Psellos (8.5), and discuss its relationship to the various genres that are used in these poems.

## 8.1 The ‘logikos agon’: contests of words

We have already observed (5.1.2 and 5.1.3) that during the selection procedure for future officials, display of eloquence is tested and assessed by judges. In the meritocratic logic, a rational form of competition is a necessary step in this selection. And indeed, the process of selection and promotion elicited rivalry at all levels. This competition atmosphere among secretaries, the lower level of bureaucracy, is described vividly in some works of Psellos.<sup>4</sup> Everyone tries to cajole the *protoasekretis*, and to damage the reputation of direct rivals. Everyone also advances his own reasons for a promotion (or. min. 12, l. 8–19): speed in writing, knowledge, bodily strength, eloquence, a vulgar tongue and age. Intellectual properties have their place in the game of competitions, at this bureaucratic level, but also, and more outspoken, at the level of rivaling teachers.

These acquire the more or less formalised shape of *agones*. The sources about *agones* are numerous, especially in Psellos’ works, but sometimes it is difficult to say whether it refers to the cultural phenomenon of a formalised competition, or to one of the more obvious senses of the word.

In the funeral oration for Xiphilinos, the word occurs often, in seemingly different senses. While praising Xiphilinos’ eloquence, Psellos gives his opinion ‘about contestations’ (περὶ τὰς ἀντιθέσεις).<sup>5</sup> He adds the intriguing remark that people of the kind of Xiphilinos and Psellos (τὸ καθ’ ἡμᾶς μέρος) are likely to encounter jealousy and criticism. Is this a general remark on the hostilities against this type of upcoming intellectuals? Or is it just a contest between different school factions? In any event, he also describes the opponents as τοῖς ἀντιθέτως ἔχουσιν, that is, people holding a different opinion.

Psellos tells us that he helped his friend in the battles in the λογικὸν θέατρον, and no less did Xiphilinos applaud and support him when Psellos tried to prove his best ‘in contests and demonstrations’ (ἐν ἀγῶσι καὶ ἐπιδείξεσιν).<sup>6</sup> It is not easy to make firm sense from these words,<sup>7</sup> but it seems that the debates had a rhetorical or literary aspect and that they were watched, and ultimately perhaps also decided on, by an audience or jury. The words ἐπίδειξις and ἀγών are mentioned in one breath; this indicates that we have to consider these contests as closely associated, and perhaps identical with,

<sup>4</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 11 and 12.

<sup>5</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, pp. 432.17–29.

<sup>6</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, pp. 432.24–29.

<sup>7</sup>Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 204, n. 25, draws attention to these declamations and contests, pointing to the archaising and imprecise vocabulary; it is improbable that they refer to judiciary cases, as proposed by Wolska-Conus, “Écoles”, p. 224.

rhetorical performances. The candidates were mutually scrutinised (432.30: ἀντεξετάζομαι), which suggests a contest based on comparison of candidates. The λογικὸν θέατρον appears here to refer to a place where the various contenders fought out their literary battles by giving show demonstrations in turns.

Another kind of literary contests is presented immediately thereafter: the competitions between teachers in Constantinople for the revered thrones (433.3: σεμνοὶ θρόνοι) of the different schools. When Psellos sketches the lamentable and fragmented state of education in the capital, he mentions the lack of contests in the field of *hoi logoi*:

Public *theatra* were still organised, and an arbiter presided over them, and the contenders were dexterous. But the contests in *hoi logoi* did not deserve that name: there were just some who whispered their declamations in a corner.<sup>8</sup>

With other words, there were occasions for contests (there were *theatra* being established publicly), and there were judges, but Psellos hesitates to call the contests really contests. Since the contenders are in this case the teachers with their 'choirs', the expression οἱ τῶν λόγων ἀγῶνες must refer here to contests between teachers or between schools competing for the favour of students. We may surmise that education was the most important terrain in which *logikoi agones* were held. Schedos contests may be implied, but the subject is surely broader: Psellos mentions generally 'sciences and disciplines' (433.19–20: ἐπιστήμας καὶ τέχναις). Without doubt, these contests included declamation and other displays of knowledge. This fragment refers to a highly formalised kind of contest: it was held in public, and there was a specialised judge, here, in the vein of the metaphor, called *agonothetes*.

The subsequent description of the chaotic situation of education uses an imagery taken from the sphere of ancient theatre. The 'thiasos' did not hold rhythm, since there was no choir leader: none of the examined teachers (433.15: τῶν ἀντεξεταζομένων is again the word used) prevailed over the other, until both friends came to the fore. The word θέατρον, in conjunction with other notions evoking ancient sports or theatre games, here again refers to an occasion for competition.

The βασιλικοὶ λόγοι of Psellos show many marks of their potential to be tested and weighed against works of others. Psellos refers regularly to rival orators, especially at the beginning of the fifth and sixth panegyric orations, and at the end of the seventh. Each time, he uses the ploy of transgressing the rules of rhetoric which other orators respect, because his subject is allegedly so exceptional. The panegyric orations for Monomachos in particular convey the impression that Psellos speaks in front of a jury, in a contest to decide who is the most accomplished speaker.

<sup>8</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.* 433.8–11: Καὶ θέατρα μὲν ἐτελεῖτο δημόσια, καὶ ἀγωνοθέτης τούτοις προὔκαθ'ητο, καὶ οἱ διαμιλλώμενοι περιδέξιοι· οἱ δὲ τῶν λόγων ἀγῶνες ἐψεύδοντο τοῦνομα, καὶ ἐν παραβύστω ἔνιοι τοὺς λόγους ὑπεψιθύριζον.

Several contests appear to be linked to education. The school provided a context where students could pit themselves against each other in a playful way. These engagements may appear as innocent games, having only a preparatory value, but in reality the boundary with serious competitions is sometimes insecure.

This appears from a writing of Psellos entitled ‘To two students of his who direct writings against each other’ (Or. min. 20: Εἰς δύο τινὰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ λογογραφήσαντας πρὸς ἀλλήλους). He reproaches his students that by fighting against each other, they disturb the good order of his ‘phalanx of learning’.<sup>9</sup> It is not yet time for war, since they do not fight against the real enemy. Besides, their literary works are not yet well-formed (49–65), and lack the necessary technique (66–78). Above all, they should be careful to make the distinction between play and seriousness: their buffoons should remain confined to παιδιὰ; there is no need to pursue official functions.<sup>10</sup> This entails that besides of these playful contests between pupils, there are others with a more important issue: obtaining careers—I can see no other way to interpret ἀρχὰς τῶν ἀξιωματῶν. They should also be prepared for more serious battles against real enemies, with Psellos acting as a general and his troupe of students as an army. Obviously, inter-school contests are referred to here,<sup>11</sup> but perhaps not necessarily schedos contests,<sup>12</sup> for it appears that students also had to produce works themselves. This work proves how contests and polemic writing were a very natural thing in this school atmosphere of educated ambitious young men. Students and teachers alike engaged in competitive battles against peers, in a playful way, but also in a more engaged way against rival schools.

From other sources we learn that competition among students was stimulated. The Neara closes with an address to the future students of the school of the nomophylax, advising them not to remain idle, but to ‘dispute the fine dispute, and fight the great battle over your reputation in law, keeping in mind that the prize is great, and expecting a very fine reward indeed’.<sup>13</sup> The approving expressions ἡ καλὴ ἔρις and ὁ πολὺς ἀγὼν indicate that this competition was seen as a venerable thing. It is an integral element of the coming to being of a worthy intellectual, holding up the prospect of ‘good repute’ (εὐδοκίμησις, as it is stated here).

It seemed a very normal thing that students sought to measure themselves with each other. This does not need to be taken always in a strictly hostile sense: when relating the study of rhetoric of Michael Keroullarios, Psellos says that as a student, he contended with his brother, as an equal ‘sparring partner’:<sup>14</sup> here, the atmosphere is a playful one.

<sup>9</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 20.10: τῆς λογικῆς φάλαγγος, and, similarly, l. 16: τὴν λογικὴν σύνταξιν.

<sup>10</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 20.82: οὐ δεῖ ἀρχὰς τῶν ἀξιωματῶν ζητεῖν.

<sup>11</sup>So also Lemerle, *Cinq études*, p. 216.

<sup>12</sup>As stated by Chondridou, *Κωνσταντῖνος Μονομάχος*, p. 190.

<sup>13</sup>Mauropous, *Novella*, § 14: τὴν καλὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἔριν ἐρίζετε, καὶ περὶ τῆς ἐν νόμοις εὐδοκίμησεως τὸν πολλὸν ἀγῶνα ποιεῖσθε, μέγιστον εἰδότες τὸ ἔπαθλον, καὶ καλὴν ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν ἀμοιβὴν ἐκδεχόμενοι.

<sup>14</sup>Michael Psellos, “Oratio funebris in Michael Cerullarium”, 310.10–11: τῷ δέ γε ἀδελφῷ

In Psellos' funeral oration for Leichoudes, he tells us how Leichoudes, still as a boy, participated with much success at the 'battle over words' (ἡ περὶ τοῦς λόγους πάλη),<sup>15</sup> first in what seems as grammar, and then in rhetoric. Athletic imagery is again predominant in this account.

In a funeral oration for a former student, Psellos tells us that he had always supported him in public gatherings and literary contests (λόγων ἀγῶνες).<sup>16</sup> This seems to corroborate the account of literary battles in the oration for Xiphilinos, where Psellos is also said to support his friend; it appears that the battles were fought between rival factions, whose members supported and cheered for each other. Perhaps these contesting 'teams' are to be equated with circles of pupils gathered around a teacher.

It is indicative of Psellos' insistence on the practical relevance of learning that for him, these contests at schools were no innocent pastimes. Within the meritocratic and intellectualist ideal put forward by Psellos and others like him, the games of the school prefigured later contests over influence and wealth. In several orations directed against detractors (or. min. 9 and 10), he defends the rationality of the reigning selection procedures. In or. min. 9, he states that after the more innocent games, real rewards were distributed, of which he received more than anyone else.<sup>17</sup> In a similar oration (or. min. 10), Psellos sneers that his enemies did not care when they were defeated in contests over words (51: τὴν ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις ἤτταν), but when Psellos won also the serious games, they considered their lives miserable. This shows that the earlier contests over words were not that inconsequential: they prepared the way for the battle over real assets, presumably the distribution of titles and functions.

Sports imagery is rampant, and indeed the very word ἀγών already reflects this. In or. min. 9, Psellos builds up a long allegory that compares his excellence in the field of letters to various sports contests (l. 43–63). The contest, inside the metaphor, is called an ἀγών, taking place in the θέατρον. Without doubt, Psellos refers to rhetorical battles where he shone forth, but he uses the imagery of a running contest in an arena.

With regard to the funeral oration of Xiphilinos, we have already remarked that θέατρον seems to have retained at all times its basic meaning, whether used literally or in a metaphor. Of the eleven occurrences of θέατρον in the Chronographia, it is used six times to refer to the Hippodrome of Constantinople, four times to horse races in general, and once in a metaphorical way to liken the empire to a chariot in a horse race.<sup>18</sup> In ep. K-D 223, it carried clearly an antiquarian sense of 'ancient theatre' (πανελληνίῳ θεάτρῳ), in which collective reading and mutual literary contests take place.<sup>19</sup> In ep.

ὡς πρὸς τὸ ἴσον διαμιλλώμενος ἦν.

<sup>15</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 392.5.

<sup>16</sup>Gautier, "Monodies inédites", 4.124–5.

<sup>17</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, 9.43–56.

<sup>18</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, Hippodrome: IV.50, V.32, VI.86, VI.136, VI.154, VI.61; horse races: II.8 (thrice), V.13; metaphorical: VII.56.

<sup>19</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 223, p. 265, l. 23–25; see also in the chapter 'Readings', p. 59.

K-D 190, it is used in the similar sense of ‘learned community’.<sup>20</sup> In each of these instances, the reading of each other’s letters is implied, and not always in a hostile sense. Psellos uses the phrase λογικὸν θέατρον also for a learned dispute, when he narrates that the Sultan provided time for a discussion organised among Byzantine and muslim scholars.<sup>21</sup> Rather than to a group of intellectuals, it refers to an imaginary place, an occasion for learned competitions and collective reading.<sup>22</sup> At any rate, its primary meaning of ‘hippodrome’, ‘sports arena’, or (ancient) ‘theatre’ is still very emphatically on the foreground, in line with the imagery evoked by the words ἀγῶν and ἀγωνοθέτης.

The teachers acted as judges over these contests. In poem 47, Mauropus mentions that he, in his capacity as a teacher, ‘judged over contests among students and teachers.’<sup>23</sup> This must refer to the λογικοὶ ἀγῶνες, which are held both among students and among teachers. In a letter, he also responds to his friend’s request to ‘arbitrage over a battle and give the prize to the best’.<sup>24</sup> It appears thus that Mauropus was asked upon to judge over *logikoi agones*; he was, to retain the prevalent imagery, an *agonothetes*.

The kind of works written for competitive goals are explicitly described as such. In his oration for the anonymous patrician, Psellos mentions the three kinds of works that the patrician is said to produce during his studies;<sup>25</sup> one of these kinds is called ‘agonistic’ (ἀγωνιστικά); Psellos specifies that they are written ‘for the contest with rivals in the art [of rhetoric]’.<sup>26</sup>

These competitions have their impact on the written heritage of authors. In his hagiographic oration for Symeon Metaphrastes, Psellos states that he ‘occupied himself versatily with all genres of literature, some of them in a more competitive manner (ἀγωνιστικώτερον), others more friendly.’<sup>27</sup> In discussing the style of Gregorios of Nazianzos, Psellos singles out Gregorios’s handling of style in his ‘agonistic orations’ (ἀγωνιστικὸν λόγον).<sup>28</sup> This latter passage also evidences the fact that ἀγῶνες covered a broad kind of writings, for we must assume that Psellos intends here for instance the polemic orations against Julian. In later centuries, the kind of ‘agonistic rhetoric’ will

<sup>20</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, 190, p. 214, l. 18.

<sup>21</sup>Michael Psellos, *Theologica vol. II*, ed. by L. G. Westerink and J. M. Duffy, BT, München / Leipzig 2002, opusc. 3, l. 70–75.

<sup>22</sup>For *logikon theatron* as used for twelfth-century and late-Byzantine learned communities, see Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople”; and Toth, “Rhetorical Theatron”, p. 430; the Psellian stage of the socio-literary connotations of λογικὸν θέατρον is largely ignored in general studies about its definition, see for instance P. Marciniak, “Byzantine Theatron – A Place of Performance?”, in: *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. by M. Grünbart, Millennium-Studien 13, Berlin/New York 2007.

<sup>23</sup>Mauropus, 47.24: κρίνων μαθηταῖς καὶ διδασκάλους ἔρις.

<sup>24</sup>Mauropus, *Epistulae*, 29.4–5: τὸ δὲ διατηῆσαι προσηκόντως τῆ μάχη καὶ δοῦναι τῷ κρείττονι τὸ κράτος.

<sup>25</sup>See p. 113.

<sup>26</sup>Gautier, “Monodies inédites”, 5.163–4: τὰ μὲν ἀγωνιστικά καὶ πρὸς ἄμιλλαν ἀντιτέχνων.

<sup>27</sup>Michael Psellos, *Or. Hagiographicae*, 7.302–303: ἄπτεται δὲ καὶ πολυειδῶς τῶν τοῦ λόγου μερῶν, τὰ μὲν ἀγωνιστικώτερον, τὰ δὲ πραότερον.

<sup>28</sup>Michael Psellos, *De operatione daemonum*, pp. 126, l. 16.

undergo an expansion, but the examples to which Hunger referred in his study about the phenomenon are largely of a narrowly rhetorical nature, without (apparently) an underlying social involvement.<sup>29</sup>

Writings designed for competition and contest are thus seen as a normal part of the literary output of an intellectual. In the chapter ‘Display’, we have argued that candidates to acquire the symbolic capital of intellectual renown had to publish themselves through publishing writings, in an oral or written sense. By doing this, they exposed themselves to being tested. This happened on the one hand in a friendly atmosphere, in which comments and responses were tokens of intellectual ethics. But on the other hand, they were really tested to be selected for functions, and attacked by rivals. Only by withstanding these attacks, by participating in the game, could they prove their worth and establish a reputation.

## 8.2 The schedos contests

In Christophoros 9, Leon is said to prepare his pupils for the ἀγῶνες λόγων (v. 7), which implies, as we have seen, a range of contests. But in this poem, it refers to one instance of *agones* that acquires a particularly clear shape in the eleventh century: that of the schedos contests.

The schedos, or schedography (the writing of *schede* as a student) is an educational method used by the grammarian. It is an exercise composed by a teacher, containing various grammatical problems and difficulties. This exercise would be dictated to the students, who were required to reconstruct correctly the original text.<sup>30</sup> The most specific form of *schede* are texts consisting of unintelligible word groups from which the pupils had to extract the right reading by applying another spelling and other word breaks.<sup>31</sup> All such *schede* stem from the twelfth century, which may imply that this kind of schedos was an innovation.<sup>32</sup>

Although the schedos became widespread in the eleventh century (Psellos mentions it in several letters of him and also taught schedos to students of his.<sup>33</sup>) I could only detect some texts from the eleventh century that might count as *schede*, and even then, their dating and interpretation is insecure to say the least. The longest is an intriguing text from a certain Longibardos, who might be the same Longibardos mentioned by Anna Komnene in connec-

<sup>29</sup>H. Hunger, “Zeugnisse agonaler Rhetorik in der byzantinischen Literatur”, *JÖB* 22 (1973), pp. 23–36.

<sup>30</sup>See Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, p. 24–29; Browning, “Schedografia”, p. 22; Schirò, “Schedografia”.

<sup>31</sup>See the *schede* of Theodoros Prodromos in I. Vassis, “Graeca sunt, non leguntur. Zu den schedographischen Spielereien des Theodoros Prodromos”, *BZ* 87 (1994), pp. 1–19, and the texts edited in L. Polemis, “Προβλήματα τῆς βυζαντινῆς σχεδογραφίας”, *Hellenika* 45 (1995), pp. 277–302, all 12th-century texts.

<sup>32</sup>For this distinction, see A. Garzya, “Literarische und rhetorische Polemiken der Komnenenzeit”, *Byzantinoslavica* 34 (1973), pp. 1–14, pp. 3–4.

<sup>33</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, 16, 24.

tion with the schedos.<sup>34</sup> The text is a lengthy piece of moral advice directed by a teacher to his students, but the most striking feature is its abundant use of difficult orthographical words and abstruse terms. Vassis maintained that even this text was not a schedos as such, but rather a set of rules to be used in schedos contests.<sup>35</sup> The same status seems to be occupied by some didactic poems of Niketas of Herakleia: in some of his poems, he urges his pupils to learn his rules well, so that they would stand firm in the contests of schede.<sup>36</sup>

The second poem of Anon. Schirò is one of the very few texts that can appeal to being called a schedos itself. Just like the text of Longibardos, the subject matter is moral advice, but clearly this is not as important as the display of superlatives. One may wonder, however, whether this text presents any orthographical difficulties: after all, these are all regular adjectives building their superlative by the ending *ότατος*.

### 8.2.1 School wars

What is particular about our evidence about the schedos in the eleventh century, is that especially poetic texts contain so much information. Poems 9, 10, 11 by Christophoros are arguably some of the most informative sources on school life of this period, all of them also referring to the schedos. Poems 9 and 10 celebrate the excellence of the school of St. Theodore in the neighbourhood of Sphorakiou, while poem 11 is directed against the *maistor* of the school of Theotokos of Chalkoprateia.

The praise of poem 9 for the *maistor* Leon and his assistant Stylianos is exclusively based on the claim that they are victorious in the schedos contests. Military imagery underlies the word choice in this poem. The verb *στομώσας* (6), ‘providing with eloquence’, can as well mean ‘harden’, ‘train’. Leon is said to ‘march out’ (8: *ἔξεισι*) with his students, trusting in them like in arms (*ὄπλις*). Any teacher may take a student of his and come forward to join battle (10: *λαβῶν μαθητὴν τῆ πάλη προσελθέτω*), but he shall soon realise that they are no match, and will have to learn some more.

Also in poem 10, the schedos contests form a substantial part of Leon’s excellence:

ῥοῦν ἐμέει σοφίης κούρων αἰεὶ περὶ ὦτα,  
οἱ λιπαινόμενοι τε καὶ εὐλογίην ξυνάγοντες  
τῶν πάντων κρατέουσι νέων σχεδέων ἐν ἀγῶσιν,  
οὐνεκα τοῖσι Λέων γε διδάσκαλός ἐστιν ἄριστος·  
οὗ δὴ καὶ κλέος ἔσται ἀγήραον ἤματα πάντα.

15

He throws up a stream of wisdom round the ears of the young,

<sup>34</sup>The text is edited in N. Festa, “Longibardos”, *Byzantion* 6 (1931), pp. 101–222. Festa loosely dated the text to the eleventh century, with some question marks.

<sup>35</sup>Vassis, “Graeca sunt, non leguntur”.

<sup>36</sup>See an overview of relevant passages in: J. Schneider, “La poésie didactique à Byzance: Nicétas d’Héraclée”, *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé* 58 (1999), pp. 388–423, pp. 416–417.



Who grow fat on it and collect all the eloquence,  
 So that they defeat all other boys in the contests of schede,  
 Because Leon is the best teacher in this area;  
 Therefore, he will have unwithered fame for all days to come.

15

The link between success in schedos contests and the reputation of the teacher cannot be established clearer than in these last two verses: Leon's reputation as a teacher will grow thanks to his excellence in training the youth for the schedos contests. This reputation is measured with respect to his colleague *maistores* (see v. 2): the rivalry among schoolmasters is an eminent feature here, and is a direct cause of the schedos contests.

The gibe at the schoolmaster of Chalkoprateia in poem 11, a well known poem, is based on the claim that he sells his schede to his students, turning the school of Chalkoprateia into a 'schedoprateion', a shop of schede. Christophoros likens him to Midas, eager for gold, exposing his greed.<sup>37</sup> It indicates to which degree the schooling of schedos was ingrained in contemporary education and defined the reputation of teachers.

The importance of the schedography contests can be measured by the fact that is nearly the only thing that Christophoros mentions in praising or debunking the schools. It appears clearly that they are as much a battle between teachers as between students: in poem 9, the adversary is a teacher, who will soon realise that he has more teaching work ahead to defeat Leon, and in poem 10, Leon's wisdom stands as a fact of central importance in comparison with his rivals. It is surely no coincidence that the school of Chalkoprateia is the target: the churches of Sphorakiou and Chalkoprateia were in close proximity to each other.<sup>38</sup>

Poem 68 of Mauropous, entitled Εἰς σχέδος, is also written on the occasion of a schedos contest. Mauropous apparently takes sides for the school of the Forty Martyrs. He challenges an adversary, boasting the divine help of forty martyrs. The war-like imagery is again present: the martyrs are a 'phalanx' of hoplites, and the challengers dare to engage in battle (v. 6: *συμβολεῖν τολμᾶς μάχην*). It has been maintained that Mauropous is not speaking in his own name in poem 68, or surely not as a teacher. Schirò maintained that it was written by a pupil, other than Mauropous,<sup>39</sup> but this is difficult to believe, since the poetry collection as a whole bears so clearly the stamp of Mauropous as its author.<sup>40</sup> According to Karpozilos, Mauropous wrote this piece as part of a personal feud, while he himself was opposed to the schedos,<sup>41</sup> and Anastasi

<sup>37</sup>I can see no reason to assume that this poem targets the phenomenon of schedos as such, as has been suggested in Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, vol. II, p. 26, apparently taking ἤττων δεινήν as 'misery' stemming from the use of the schedos, and not as a defeat in a contest.

<sup>38</sup>Magdalino, *Constantinople médiévale. Études sur l'évolution des structures urbaines*, p. 40, and n. 138.

<sup>39</sup>Schirò, "Schedografia", pp. 17–18, 22.

<sup>40</sup>R. Anastasi, "Giovanni d'Euchaita e gli skedikoi", *Siculorum Gymnasium* 24 (1971), pp. 61–69, p. 67.

<sup>41</sup>Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 94.

interprets ‘schedos’ as an improvised piece written by Mauropous.<sup>42</sup>

But I can see no reason why Mauropous, as a renowned teacher, would be opposed to the schedos or could not seriously engage with it.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the striking similarity with the first poem of Anon. Schirò, which is unmistakably a piece for a schedos-contest,<sup>44</sup> allows us to believe that also Mauropous’ poem was written for such an occasion. It was an integral part of teaching activities to engage in schede, and to deny that Mauropous participated in it, would be to believe all too rashly in the self-created image of Mauropous as a reclusive intellectual—which he was surely not.

Poem 70 of Mauropous celebrates a schedos composed by the emperor Konstantinos Monomachos. The subject of the poem is more specifically an edition of schede of Monomachos, which is also mentioned by a letter of Psellos (Sathas 115). The colour of the ink, cinnabar, is the main argument around which the epigram is built. It also precedes two book epigrams on a book of Monomachos stipulating the exact liturgic service for his patron saint George. So, poem 70 was very likely conceived as a book epigram accompanying the edition of schede by Monomachos also mentioned by Psellos.<sup>45</sup>

Another reference to the writing of schedography occurs in poem 33. The passage is imbedded in the defence of Mauropous for inserting the preposition ἀντὶ in the previous poem for the sake of clarity. Since I believe this poem has been misunderstood in the only interpretation that exists of it,<sup>46</sup> I will take a closer look at it.

While fulminating against what Mauropous calls the ‘hairsplitting of schoolmasters’ (l. 17), he claims:

ἀλλ’ ὡς ἔοικε τῆς σαφηνείας χάριν  
 ἄχρηστος ἢ δύστηνος ὑμῖν εὐρέθη·  
 τὸ γὰρ σαφές τε καὶ πρόδηλον ἐν λόγοις  
 λογογράφοις ἥδιστον, οὐ σχεδογράφοις,  
 καὶ ταῦτα κλῆσιν τὸ σχέδην κεκτημένοις.  
 γρίφους δὲ σοὶ πλέκοντι τοὺς ἐν τῷ σχέδει  
 ἐπαχθές ἐστι πᾶν πρόχειρον καὶ σχέδην.

As it appears, that unlucky [preposition] for the sake of clarity  
 Was deemed unnecessary by you;  
 For clarity and perspicuity in writing  
 Is cherished by authors (logographoi) but not by schedographoi,  
 And that while they have acquired the name of ‘easily’.  
 Also for you, plaiting riddles in your schedos,  
 Everything that is easy and straightforward is despicable.

<sup>42</sup>Anastasi, “Giovanni d’Euchaita e gli skedikoi”, pp. 66–67.

<sup>43</sup>For Mauropous as an opponent to scedography, see also Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, vol. II, p. 26; and Markopoulos, “Structure de l’école byzantine”, p. 94.

<sup>44</sup>See p. 211.

<sup>45</sup>There is therefore no reason to call the interpretation of this poem ‘problematic’, as Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 86 does.

<sup>46</sup>Anastasi, “Giovanni d’Euchaita e gli skedikoi”.

Anastasi supposed that Mauropous in poem 33 vented his unfavourable opinion about a group of schoolmasters that he calls *σχέδιοι*.<sup>47</sup> In Anastasi's view, Mauropous saw three categories, one of *logographoi*, one of *schedographoi*, and one of those making riddles in *schede*. The second category is linked by Anastasi to the practice of improvisation, the third to language purists, both categories being criticised here by Mauropous. The word *σχέδην* would refer to this aspect of improvisation. However, I do not believe it is put forward here as a serious etymology. On the contrary, Mauropous confronts the similar sound of the *σχέδην* and *σχεδογράφοι* with their different meaning. The property of *σχέδην*, 'gently', and so 'easy', is exactly what these schedographers are not, according to Mauropous, despite their similarly sounding name. The word group *καὶ ταῦτα* at line 32 has to be taken as adversative: clarity or ease of understanding is not dear to schedographers, and *that while* they have a name that hints at 'easily'. Also, the conjunction *καὶ* connects *σχέδην* with *πρόχειρον*, not *σχέδην* with *ἐπαχθές*.<sup>48</sup>

I am not convinced that Mauropous in poem 33 conducts a polemic against *schedos* as such, as some scholars have been inclined to see.<sup>49</sup> Mauropous makes use of the fact that his opponent writes *schede*, in order to reproach him that he applies techniques from *schede* to other fields that have nothing to do with it. Surely, obscurity is a hallmark of *schede*, but Mauropous does not find fault with this feature when used in *schede*, but he does censure it when applied to other texts.

The poems of Anon. Schirò are also related to *schedos* contests. The first text is in fact very similar to poem 68 of Mauropous. Both texts are composed in defense of the same school, the school of the Forty Martyrs. In the poem of Anon. Schirò, the feast day of the Forty Martyrs is celebrated at length, and arguably provided the occasion for the *schedos* contest. Both poems assure the assistance from the patron saints of the school. The poem of Anon. Schirò is directed to the students, spurring them on to perform well, while in Mauropous 68 a rival teacher is addressed, perhaps only as a fictitious figure, acting as a sounding-board for the bragging and self-aggrandisement of the students and teacher. Both poems boast the divine support they have, and deter the enemies in a war-like language. Both poems also use the same argumentation: with so many allies by their side, the students of the Forty Martyrs-school cannot fail to win. Even the phrasing is remarkably parallel: compare verses 38-39 of Anon. Schirò, 'τίς γὰρ τοσοῦτους εὐτυχικῶς προστάτας // μαρτυρικὴν φάλαγγα χορῶν ἁγίων;', with verses 2-3 of Mauropous 68: 'τίς πρὸς τοσοῦτους χεῖρας ὀπίστας ἄροι; // τίς πρὸς φάλαγγα μαρτύρων στήσοι μάχην;'<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>As in Anastasi, "Giovanni d'Euchaita e gli skedikoi", p. 68; see also the translation in Anastasi, *Giovanni Mauropode, metropolita di Euchaita, Canzoniere, I*, p. 26.

<sup>49</sup>Anastasi, "Giovanni d'Euchaita e gli skedikoi"; Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, pp. 91-92; Euthymiades, "L'enseignement secondaire", p. 267.

<sup>50</sup>For these similarities, see also Schirò, "Schedografia", p. 22.

### 8.2.2 The role of poems in schedos competitions

If the poems themselves were no real *schede* in their own right, how do we have to understand the exact purpose or signification of these poems within the context of *schedos* contests? It could be argued that the challenges pronounced towards adversaries and the exhortations towards students imply that the teacher pronounced these poems before the contest began. Maybe a kind of poetic *agon* preceded the real *schedos* contest. Another possibility is that these poems served as epigrams attached to an edition of *schede*. Poem 70, in any event, is clearly conceived in function of an edition of *schede*.

We may suppose that Maupous and the Schirò poet wrote their pieces in their quality of schoolmasters. Christophoros' *schedos* poems, in contrast, display the same warlike language and an outspoken partisanship, but they are surely not composed by a teacher, as the teachers are the ones praised in the poem. The motivation for the poems has to be sought in the traffic of praise within the school factions, which, as we have seen, bound together pupils and teachers (see p. 167). Pupils were expected to pronounce praise for their teachers. This is testified by the letter of Psellos to his teacher Romanos, where Psellos says that he, as a member of his teacher's choir, praised him and proclaimed him with loud voice.<sup>51</sup> Also in letter 94 by the anonymous tenth-century professor,<sup>52</sup> a teacher vows that his students will compose iambs in his honour. The poems of Christophoros can be connected to this kind of texts a pupil, or a member of the same school circle, would produce in praise of his teacher. These pieces, whether live pronounced in the context of *schedography* contests or more widely diffused, as in the letter of the Anonymous Professor, confirm the patronage-like bonds that nod teachers together with their students and former students.

Poems could thus function as pamphlets in defense of the school and its teachers, at the moment when its reputation was most at stake: at the inter-school contests. The poetic pieces, influencing public opinion and enhancing esteem with peers, are in a sense also part of the competition. Moreover, they could perfectly be the kind of poetic pieces circulating in a *χύκλος* of a teacher, with around him the pupils, trying their best to demonstrate their skills, and forging and maintaining the bonds of their small intellectual community.

## 8.3 Competitions in the intellectual field

Many of the contests we have turned our attention to, can be situated in the field of education. Schools and teachers were pitted against each other in *schedos* contests and probably other contests loosely indicated as *τῶν λόγων ἀγῶνες*. But the tendency to compose polemic writings of all sort was inherent in the intellectual milieu, which thrived on mutual testing and rivalries. Poems prove to be a very apt medium to fight out these intellectual rivalries.

<sup>51</sup>See p. 166.

<sup>52</sup>Markopoulos, *Anonymi Professoris Epistulae*.

### 8.3.1 Satirising teachers

Poem 23 of Christophoros upbraids an instance of excessive display of a grammarian.

Εἰς τὸν γραμματικὸν Γεώργιον, γράψαντα βουστροφηδὸν ἐσφαλμέν-  
ως

Ὡς κρεῖττον ἦν σοι βοῦν ἐπὶ γλώττης φέρειν  
ἢ βουστροφηδόν, οἷάπερ γράφεις, γράφειν.

*To grammarian Georgios, who wrote a wrong boustrophedon*

It would have been better for you to carry an ox on your tongue  
Instead of writing an ox-turned verse such as the one you write!

The poem has a pun on the proverb βοῦν ἐπὶ γλώττης φέρειν, meaning ‘keep silent’. This is associated with the word βουστροφηδόν, literally, ‘as an ox turns’, referring to a verse that remains the same if written backwards. Moreover, as Crimi remarks, the name of the grammarian, Georgios, literally, ‘farmer’, provides a further twist for the wordplay on βοῦς.<sup>53</sup> This poem illustrates what is at stake with these games. After all, a *boustrophedon* is arguably nothing more than a playful demonstration of skills. But there was a public that watched carefully over possible mistakes in such a demonstration, prepared to debunk and mock the author if it did not meet up to the requirements. Whether a slightly jesting camaraderie, or an attempt to damage the reputation of a rival, the poem scrutinises and judges the competences of a professional teacher upon a demonstration of skills through a text.

Another little poem criticising the technicalities of works produced by a teacher, is found in the *Vat. Gr.* 672, after an oration of Psellos in defence of his own *grammatikos* (or. min. 17).<sup>54</sup>

Τὴν ἐνδεκάτην ὁ ψιλοῦν γραφὴν θέλων  
νοῦ καὶ φρενῶν πέφυκας ἐψιλωμένος.

Wanting to strip the written word ἐνδεκάτην of its aspiration  
You are indeed stripped of minds and brain.

As Kurtz and Drexl, the first editors of this oration and this poem, admitted, it is uncertain to what these verses refer;<sup>55</sup> Littlewood suggested that they point to the same grammarian defended in Psellos’ oration.<sup>56</sup> However, the connection with the oration is not clear: there, Psellos defends his grammarian against accusations that he was sloppily dressed and had long hair;

<sup>53</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 70.

<sup>54</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, p. 65 for the text of the poem.

<sup>55</sup>Michael Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, vol. I, p. 64.

<sup>56</sup>Psellos, *Or. Min.*, p. 65.

there is not a word about accusations of making grammatical mistakes, so the oration can hardly be an answer to this poem, nor vice versa. Probably, the oration and the poem formed part of ongoing ‘battles’ with (the same?) rivalling colleagues of Psellos’ schoolmaster. In this scenario, the party of Psellos and his teacher reacted with or. min. 17 to an accusation against the grammarian’s physical appearance, and with the poem in attack of a colleague who had written ἐνδεκάτην without spiritus asper. In this scenario, Psellos has a great chance to be himself the author of this epigram.

In this poem, the target of the criticism is again a text, which must have been circulating among the peers of the hapless author. These peers were apparently going to great lengths to detect any slight grammatical mistake their rivals made.

### 8.3.2 Anon. Sola and the school of Nosiai

Among the poems of the Anonymus of Sola, we find a series of seven short polemical poems grouped together as poem VII.<sup>57</sup> Since these poems have never been translated or commented upon in detail, a particular difficulty in these poems has escaped the attention of scholars. This is the rather curious use of the word νοσιάς. It occurs twice; first in part 2:

Ἦ φθέγμα κυκλώπειον, ἔρρου πρὸς πέτρας·  
ἐν νοσιάς ἄδουσιν ἀλλ’ ἀηδόνες.<sup>58</sup>

The second instance is in part 5 of the poem:

Ἐν νοσιάς, ὃ θαῦμα καὶ πάντων πλέον,  
ὁ στρουθός οὔτος, ἀλλὰ παῖς Ἀλωάδων.

The word νοσιά (with two sigma’s), a variant spelling of νεοσιά, signifies ‘brood of young birds’,<sup>59</sup> or simply ‘nest’. In both instances here, it can have a meaningful sense: in the first occurrence, it is said that ‘between the brood sing nightingales’. In the second instance, it is said that there is a ‘sparrow in the nest’, στρουθός being a variant spelling of στρουθός. It is probable that these ‘nests’ refer to pupils; in that case, the poems depict a group of students, probably of the same school. The poems appear to have been written by a teacher extolling his own students, or someone else praising a group of pupils.

But this interpretation would surely miss the *pointe*, for these are mocking epigrams, prone to puns and forms of word play. The ‘nests’ are emphatically repeated and are also in the plural, which is not evident. The word obviously hides a double layer. Moreover, the (rare) spelling of the word with one sigma is never used in the literal sense of ‘nest’, but only for a geographic indication.<sup>60</sup> That the word is in fact a proper name, is also evident from the

<sup>57</sup>Sola, “Giambografi sconosciuti dell’XI secolo”, p. 151.

<sup>58</sup>Sola’s edition has ἔρρου, but the form with double ρ is both grammatically and prosodically more correct.

<sup>59</sup>LSJ, s.v. νεοσιά.

<sup>60</sup>Seven instances are listed in the TLG (forms: νοσιάς and νοσιῶν), all of them occurring in chroniclers. The spelling with two sigma’s for the geographical place is also found.

fact that it breaks prosodical rules. The second syllable should be long, and the poet elsewhere respects the basic prosodical rules.

This geographical indication, Nosiai, is a place close to the sea (it is unknown where precisely), where Leo VI founded a monastery.<sup>61</sup> The most detailed account of the place and the foundation of the monastery is to be found in the chronicle of pseudo-Symeon Magister, a tenth-century chronicler.<sup>62</sup> The foundation is also mentioned in Theophanes Continuatus (p. 376), Cedrenus (p. 273) and Scylitzes. The monastery is still mentioned in the twelfth century.<sup>63</sup> We have also a seal from around 1050, which belonged to a certain Philotheos, kathegoumenos of this monastery.<sup>64</sup>

It may not be too far fetched to suppose that a school would be attached to this monastery. Supposing then that the speaker of the poems was a teacher (or pupil?) at this school, the word play in the poems becomes evident. The birds are pupils at the school of Nosiai, speaking and writing in a most charming manner. It must be said that there are no other indications that the monastery of Nosiai harboured a school.

It is even likely that another pun is intended. In the first poem, the ‘Cyclopeian voice’ is said to go away to the rocks. This does not make very much sense, unless we assume that the word πέτρας also hints at a school. In that case, the school of St. Peter is a likely candidate.<sup>65</sup>

The poems could then be translated as follows:

Oh, Cyclopean voice, go away to the rocks / the school of St.  
Peter!  
In the nests / school of Nosiai sing nightingales.

In the nests / the school of Nosiai —what a marvel, surpassing all  
others!—  
Is this sparrow, however also a child of Aloades.

The last verse perhaps hints to a student at the school of Nosiai who sings beautifully—for sparrows and their beautiful songs, see also Christophoros 48—, but, unlike this little bird, he was quite tall, which is hinted at by the reference to the mythological giants.

The other poems included in poem VII are also coloured by rivalry between schools and reflect the atmosphere of the contests. The first poem mocks the orations (‘songs’) of a rivaling school (or *kuklos*):

<sup>61</sup>R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins*, Géographie ecclésiastique de l’empire byzantin Vol. I, tome 3, Paris 1975, p. 59.

<sup>62</sup>I. Bekker, ed., *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, CSHB, Bonn 1838, pp. 713–716.

<sup>63</sup>J. P. Thomas and A. C. Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents. A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ Typika and Testaments*, Washington DC 2001, II, p. 730.

<sup>64</sup>*Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, Philotheos 20103, kathegoumenos of the monastery of Nossiai; edition in: Nesbitt - Oikonomides III no. 60. 1. On the seal the name νοσιῶν is also written with one sigma.

<sup>65</sup>About this school, see Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 231–233.

Σειρήνες ἀδέτωσαν, οὐδέν μοι μέλει·  
οὐ κηρὸν ὡσίν, ἀλλὰ σαγίον μέγα  
βαλῶ πρὸς ὧτα καὶ διαδράσω μέλη.

Let the Sirenes sing—I do not care!  
I will not put wax on my ears, but a large *sagion*,  
And make my way through the songs.

The *sagion* is a prestigious court attire.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the poet states that he will ignore the hostile words of his opponents, haughtily putting on a hat.

The third poem apparently lacks a polemical element; it is addressed to a second person and seems to promise the light of truth. It may have constituted a poem praising the courses of the teacher-poet towards his students.

The fourth poem attacks a rhetor named Nikolaos: the poet wishes that the Nile's cascades may hit him more than Nikolaos' melodies.

Νείλου καταρράχται με βάλλοιεν πλέον  
ἢ Νικολάου ῥήτορος μελωδίαι.

A *rhetor* is the target here, perhaps also of the other poems.

The sixth poem has apparently a bald man as its subject:

Ἄθριξ, ἀπώγων, καὶ βαρύγδουποι κτύποι·  
ᾄδεις ἀληθῶς οἷα δέρμα τυμπάνου.

Bald, beardless, and loud-thundering bangs:  
you truly sing like the skin of a drum.

This is a mocking poem drawing a bead both at the physical features of an opponent and his rhetorical skills.

The last poem of this series is a violent attack against a rival:

Ὅρη, πέτραι, φάραγγες οὐ φέρουσί σε,  
φεύγουσι θῆρες, δαίμονες φρίσσουσί σε,  
οἱ δ' ἄγγελοι μισοῦσι· πῶς οἴσω μόνος  
φωνὴν βιαίαν παντὸς ἐχθρὰν τοῦ βίου;

Mountains, rocks and gorges cannot bear you,  
Animals flee from you, demons shiver for you,  
Angels hate you; how can I then as the only one  
Sustain your violent voice hostile to my whole way of life?

Just like in poem 2, the *πέτραι* mentioned in verse 1 may be a pun on the name of the school St. Peter where his rival taught.

This series of seven poems is the work of a teacher who was active, if our hypothesis may stand, at the school of Nossiai. He attacks his rival teachers, of which one is named as Nikolaos, and another (perhaps the same Nikolaos?)

<sup>66</sup>E. Piltz, "Middle Byzantine Court Costume", in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. by H. Maguire, Washington DC 1997, pp. 39–51, p. 45.



is implicitly hinted at as a teacher of St. Peter. Whether the poems were used at one and the same occasion or form a collection of different poetic libels over time, is uncertain. Perhaps some of them may make the most sense if we suppose they are pieces invented *impromptu* at a contest, drawing the laughter of the audience at the expense of an opponent in the contest.

It is however clear that texts were the bone of contention for these poetic attacks. Throughout these poems, there are references to ‘songs’ or ‘voices’ (1.3: μέλη, 2.2: ᾄδουσιν, 4.2: μελωδία, 6.2: ᾄδεις, 7.4: φωνήν). These may refer to the literary products of rival teachers or of related students, produced at a school contest (or just being circulated). Consequently, the textual output of students and teachers, rather than anything else, was each time the motivation to initiate an attack or a defence. It demonstrates again that display of competences through works is the way to gather more renown and attraction in the field of education.

### 8.3.3 Intellectual polemics in Mauropous

The agonistic poems in the corpus of Mauropous display all the characteristics of the poems we have just analysed: they are addressed to rival teachers and quarrel over the correctness of written texts. The main difference lies in the argument of these poems: rather than personal abuse and invective (although these are present), the poems take as their argument the validity or invalidity of rhetorical or metrical standards. This makes them more properly ‘polemic’ than the other poems.

Poem 33 is a poem in answer to the criticism of a reader of poem 32, the epigram on the Crucifixion: the reader had found fault with the expression ἀνθ’ οὗ πραθείς that occurred in this epigram (see also p. 48.). Poem 33 ardently defends the use of ἀντί after the verb πιπράσκω instead of plain genitive, which would be grammatically correct. First, the betrayal of Christ was in fact clearly a ‘gift in exchange of a receipt’ (l. 10: ἀντι λήψεως δόσις), so it was an exchange; only, one part of the exchanged elements was money. Second, the use of ἀντί makes the argument more clear: also his opponent will have to admit that at least he *thinks* the preposition when he expresses the purchase, even when not writing it (v. 23–24). The enhanced clarity is in fact the main argument of the poem. Cunningly, Mauropous obliquely incorporates in the formulation of each of these arguments the preposition ἀντί, as if to exemplify its usefulness (see v. 10, 36, 38, 43).

The motivations for the attack have been sought in a personal rivalry, based on a difference between two pedagogic methods, related to a polemic about the usefulness of schedography.<sup>67</sup> I cannot see, however, that Mauropous propagates another way of teaching than the traditional one. To me, this poem is an example of a λογικὸς ἀγὼν fought out between teachers testing each other’s texts. Mauropous had composed an epigram, but he could not escape the risk of being criticised for it by his peers.

<sup>67</sup>Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 91. For the improbability of Mauropous’ animosity against schedos, cf. *supra*, p. 211.

Mauropous himself considered poem 33 clearly as part of a literary battle: he calls it ‘battling with (or: over) words’ (50: λόγοις μάχεσθαι), and claims that his argumentation has ‘won’ in two ways: clarity and authority (l. 45: νικᾷ δι’ ἀμφοῖν).<sup>68</sup> How serious this contest was, may appear from the last lines of Mauropous’ poem: “It would be unsound that the protector of learning (*logos*) // should fight over words with people without understanding of it.”<sup>69</sup> By assuming for himself the function of protecting the *logos* itself, Mauropous disdains to continue debating with people who are not worthy of it. So, the response of Mauropous also questions the right of his opponent to judge over his writings, and his assumption of being someone versed in λόγος. At the contrary, he is ἀνευλόγος, deprived of *logos*. When Mauropous addresses him with the title of ‘judge of words’ (22: ἐρήσομαι γὰρ τὸν δικαστὴν τοῦ λόγου), before demolishing his argument, this is nothing but sarcasm: he exposes his audacity to assume this title. It is a fight over the assumptions of certain positions of authority: Mauropous, exposed to a nasty attack, referred to his position of authority and denied to the other altogether the prerogative to criticise him.

Poem 34 is another polemical poem. This time, Mauropous initiates the attack. The poem, twelve verses long, bears the title “To those who versify in an inappropriate manner” (Πρὸς τοὺς ἀκαίρως στιχίζοντας). It starts with the well-known dictum ‘ἄριστον πᾶν μέτρον’, being also the very first verse of the whole collection. Mauropous develops the notion μέτρον into a criterion by which he judges writings assuming that very name, i.e. poetry; cf. v. 3: μέτροις ὀρίζω καὶ λόγους τοὺς ἐμμέτρους. But since he discerns a lack of μέτρον in the poems of his opponent, he denies it that very name (l. 5: μέτρον δ’ ἄμετρον οὐδαμῶς μέτρον λέγω). He advises his rival to make use of this good thing not in a bad way, because ἀμετρία is a great evil, especially that kind that spoils the nature of μέτρον (l. 11–12).

It is not so easy to see what is the main point of critique of this poem, that surely is utterly untranslatable. What is the specific kind of μέτρον that Mauropous advises his opponent to apply in his poems? He might intend it in the general sense of ‘moderateness’, thus proposing that poems should have a moderate length,<sup>70</sup> this way reiterating the main concern of μέτρον in poem 1. This interpretation seems also to be supported by v. 4 (μέτρον δ’ ἂν εἴη πᾶν τὸ συμμέτρως ἔχον), since the word συμμέτρως clearly refers to the sense of ‘moderateness’. The title may also be interpreted this way: the poets under attack did not know the right word for the right occasion (καυρός).

But also, it has been suggested that Mauropous refers to the signification of ‘metre’, levelling his critique at poems that do not observe the prosodic rules of the ancient quantitative meters. By consequence he may have hinted

<sup>68</sup>To what ἀμφοῖν precisely refers, is glossed over in the existing commentaries. The conjunction ἔπειτα at line 41 clearly distinguishes two main arguments: until line 40, Mauropous pushes forward clarity as a motivation, whereas ἔπειτα introduces the argument that the use of ἀντί is attested and can be demonstrated.

<sup>69</sup>Mauropous, 33.49–50: οὐκ εὐλόγως δὲ τοῦ λόγου τὸν προστάτην // λόγοις μάχεσθαι σφόδρα τῶν ἀνευλόγων.

<sup>70</sup>So Hörandner, “Poésie profane et auteurs anciens”, p. 258.

at poems composed in political verse.<sup>71</sup> The expression μέτρον ἄμετρον (v. 5) has contemporary currency: Nikethas Stethatos says that the hymns of his great hero Symeon the New Theologian are composed ἐν ἀμέτρῳ μέτρῳ,<sup>72</sup> here undoubtedly referring to the unprosodic, purely accentual metres used by Symeon.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, it is certain that the text under view is a poetic text (see v. 3: λόγους ἐμμέτρους), so, it focuses exactly on the premise that the poem under critical examination was called ‘poetry’ in the first place. Consequently, a critique at the handling of metrical features does at least ring through.

What this poem also reveals, is the role of technical aspects of versifying in the game of censoring and testing. The tenacious compliance to the long fossilised quantitative prosodic requirements can only be understood against this background of a critical readership of rivalling schoolmasters, who set up themselves as ‘judges’. More than anything else, mastering these prosodic niceties was a demonstration of competences. In this poem, Mauropous clearly refers to his competences to do so: he ‘knows to apply metre to deeds and words’.<sup>74</sup> This is also reflected by the form in which he frames his judgments, namely, in poetry. He exemplifies his metrical know-how ‘on the spot’ with this poem written in impeccable iambs.

It is surely no coincidence that Mauropous placed this poem at this place in the collection. It perfectly tallies with the genre and intentions of the previous poem: just like poem 33, it is a move in a literary battle, an answer in the chain of response between authors who expose their own writings and react on those of their rivals. The difference is that poem 34 is a direct reaction upon reading the writing of a rival, whereas poem 33 is a second-degree response: it is the reaction to a reader’s reaction.

Also poems 60 and 61 form part of an intellectual battle. In poem 61, Mauropous attacks someone who had made improper use of a riddle of his (poem 60). He had put it in other words, but the riddle remained the same. With poem 61, Mauropous reconfirms the control over his own writings. Another had tried to show off (title: προβαλόντα) with Mauropous’ poem. He is unmasked, and Mauropous adds a threat: ‘go away, man!’<sup>75</sup>, and some puns rather typical for a satiric mood: his oracle is not new (καινός), but is vain (κενός; v. 11), and seeming a hero (ἥρως) he has proven to be some idle chatterer (λῆρος; v. 12). This short poem is built on a pattern typical for this kind of poems: ironically stating the exaggerated assumptions of the opponent, unmasking him, preferably with a nice pun, and then adding some violent threats.

<sup>71</sup>Jeffreys, “Nature and Origin”, p. 166.

<sup>72</sup>Niketas Stethatos, *Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949-1022) par Nicéas Stéthatos*, ch. 37, l. 12.

<sup>73</sup>See Jeffreys, “Nature and Origin”, p. 166. Cf. also J. Koder, “Ο Συμεών ο Νέος Θεολόγος και οι Ὕμνοι του”, in: *Τέσσερα κείμενα για την ποίηση του Συμεών του Νέου Θεολόγου*, ed. by A. Markopoulos, Athens 2008, pp. 1–36, p. 20.

<sup>74</sup>Mauropous, 34.2: κἀγὼ δὲ μετρεῖν πράξιν εἰδῶς καὶ λόγον.

<sup>75</sup>Mauropous, 61.6: ἄνθρωπ', ἄπελθε.

### 8.3.4 Guarding against intruders

All these poems can be seen as exchanges between rivals in the same field, engaged in a competition for reputation. But not only within the field struggles were fought out; also, considerable efforts were spent on delineating this field and barring it from the fortuitous intruder intent on assuming positions without proceeding through the preliminaries that were thought to be necessary.

Many polemical writings of Psellos aim to define the field of intellectuals and guard it against new intruders. He derides a tavern-keeper who vaingloriously meddled in ‘philosophy’ (or. min. 13), and a son of such a tavern-keeper who became a judge (or. min. 14). It is quite interesting for our general purpose to note that these orations, one aimed at an intellectualist boasting, another at the assumption of an office, are strikingly similar, focusing mainly on the lack of proper education. Psellos opposes this twice to the image of what he thinks of as a proper intellectual careerist, that is, someone versed in secular learning.

The most forceful invective that touches directly on the positioning of intellectuals within their field, is Christophoros 40, which has already been treated in the chapter ‘Display’ (pp. 140). This poem, of which the text is damaged to a high degree, is directed to a relative of a certain Pothos, who is accused of having assumed the right to judge over other’s writings, while being just a common man (an *ιδιώτης*).

The piece is clearly conceived as a personal attack, intended to ridicule the intellectual assumptions of someone. The victim of the attack had begun to judge and compare (l. 2: *καὶ κρίνεις καὶ συγκρίνεις* and l. 4 *λόγων τὰς συγκρίσεις*); with other words, he had assumed the authority of a judge, of which we have already often remarked that it entailed a certain status. This is emphasised by Christophoros’ sarcastic remark that he ‘wanted to be the revered judge of words’ (51: *ὁ σεμνὸς εἶναι τῶν λόγων κριτῆς θέλων*). He wanted to take hold of a throne (l. 8: *ἀντίθρονός τις οἶον ἐν θρόνῳ κάθη*). The word *ἀντίθρονος* does not mean here simply ‘avversario’, as Crimi translates:<sup>76</sup> rather, it is an ‘usurper of the throne’.<sup>77</sup> As we have seen, the word *θρόνος* is also used to designate a teaching chair. Apparently, the hapless opponent had taken all the pretensions of a teacher, without really being sanctioned as such.

At line 18 Christophoros refers to something that is winged by nature, picked up at line 20 with *τὸ κάρτα φάσκει*. *τὸ κάρτα* is a collocation that occurs also in Herodotos, and is used there with a slight ironic sense: it confirms with mock confidence an erroneous opinion. Probably, at the preceding line, a false, possibly ridicule statement was made, which is thereupon confirmed by the impostor. This way, Christophoros sarcastically exposes his presumed smartness. The poem closes (ca. 68–76) with the kind of violent threats

<sup>76</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 83.

<sup>77</sup>Cf. E. Trapp, *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts*, unter mitarbeit von W. Hörandner, Wien 1994– (henceforth cited as LBG), s.v. *ἀντίθρονος*.

ubiquitous in this kind of poems: the enemy is urged to ‘go away’ (ἄπελθε, in an emphatic anaphora at vv. 68 and 71).

Throughout the poem, the fiction of a live setting of an oral contest is evoked, and sometimes abandoned. He addresses the pretentious opponent at the beginning (v. 1–ca. 15), but then switches to describe him in the third person, apostrophising Constantinople and the prophet Jeremiah (v. ca. 16–48). Then he addresses his opponent again, putting in scene a live dialogue: he urges him to give answer to his questions, but the impostor keeps silent. This little non-dialogue further puts the opponent in an awkward position, and gives Christophoros the advantage of ultimately prevailing in his answer: in the world of this written poem Christophoros always comes out as the winner.

Poem 9 of Michael Grammatikos is a short mocking epigram with basically the same tenet:<sup>78</sup>

νόμους μόνους σχόλαζε καὶ λόγους ἔα  
ὥς γὰρ κρίνειν ἔοικας, οὕτω καὶ γράφειν.

Occupy yourself only with laws, and leave literature alone;  
Because you seem to write in the way you judge.

This poem attacks a judge, or perhaps another official with a juridical task. Just like the other poems we discussed in this chapter, it is a response on a deed of literary display: the judge had meddled in the field of *logoi* by writing (γράφειν) a work. Michael obviously had read this work and found it not up to the standard. It is not exactly clear what the comparison between the writing skills and judging skills of the attacked implies. Does it simply mean that, since he was a bad judge, he is now also a bad author? Or does it suggest that criteria in writing are not the same as those for judging? At any rate, this poem allows us to presume that Michael, who had received the title of γραμματικός, assumed the same elitist stance like that of his more known fellow poets.

Another type of poems is the satire of illiteracy in holders of clerical offices. Christophoros 63 is a satire on ordinary people who become diacres and priests, but here the point of attack is more ignorance of the proper customs of the venerable profession, rather than boredom in se. A similar, though much more vitriolic piece, is the fourth poem by Michael Grammatikos, scorning a bishop, attacking him for several moral and intellectual shortcomings.

It is a typical reaction of newcomers to guard against people who just like themselves try to seek a way upward. Referring to their standing, in a way that Magdalino has compared with modern ‘snobbishness’,<sup>79</sup> they attacked outsiders who in effect pursue a career very similar to their own one.<sup>80</sup>

It seems thus that competition was an integral element in the works of all five poets of the period we can describe as a poet. The dynamic oppositions

<sup>78</sup>Mercati, “Ancora intorno a Μιχαὴλ γραμματικός ὁ ἱερομόναχος”, p. 135.

<sup>79</sup>Magdalino, “Byzantine Snobbery”.

<sup>80</sup>Psellos does so within his *Chronographia*, see Pietsch, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos: Kaisergeschichte, Autobiografie und Apologie*, pp. 83–93.

in the field of education, the taste for competition and contests, and the many occasions for such agonistic exchanges, all provided a suitable and fertile framework. The urge to display one's credibility as an intellectual, as an incoming newbie or as a settled member of the club, forced each participant to expose his works to his peers, which put his reputation at risk.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall have a look at the poetic residue of two *logikoi agones*, one in Christophoros and one in Psellos. In both, poetry uses a wide range of weapons at its disposal. Wit, sarcasm, invective, and metaphorical language are employed on several levels, intellectual, moral, personal; but all weapons have the same target: doing harm to enemies.

## 8.4 An agonistic cycle in Christophoros' collection

### 8.4.1 Poetic blows: Christophoros 36

Poem 36 is a piece full of genuine sounding hostility. Its title is damaged; all that can be reconstructed is: Εἷς τινα ὑπερλαλήσαντα φίλου ἔνεκεν τῶν, a gap of seven letters, followed by κατ' αὐτοῦ, ἐννοούμενον δέ. Between τῶν and κατ' there was presumably a verb contrasting to ἐννοούμενον δέ, so a certain accusation was not outspoken, but intended. The verb ὑπερλαλέω is in later Greek almost exclusively used in the sense 'speak in defence of', and is followed by a genitive case (see Souda). I thus think that we can reconstruct the title as "To someone who speaks in defence of a friend, because of accusations that he did not speak out against him (=Christophoros), yet intended".<sup>81</sup>

From the text, it appears that Christophoros had to take up battle against two friends. Probably, he had already conducted hostilities with someone known to him; this seems supported by the expression πρὸς αὐτὸν σὸν φίλον (6). This man had found an anonymous ally. This newly formed alliance inspired Christophoros for the point of his poem: alone, he had to begin fight against two opponents. This is elaborated through a few negative mythological examples. He then advises his opponent to leave the scene of battle. Remarking that he has already fled, he develops the main point of his attack: his cowardly opponent opted to remain unknown. After a lengthy comparison of his opponent with a wild boar, Christophoros vows that he will only need one deadly blow to eliminate his enemy.

The language of threat and violence is particularly present here. It features both the invitation to come forth and begin the fight (v. 23), and the advice to keep away for his own safety (v. 10). The engagements are described in terms of hitting, and indeed 'killing' (vv. 25 and 37).

It is interesting to see how this poem hovers on the borderline between written and oral contest. On the one hand, he directly addresses his opponent(s), describing his reaction in the present tense: he flees for Christophoros'

<sup>81</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 79–80 does not give a translation of the title, but suggests that ἐννοούμενον could mean 'who thinks at his own interests'.

attack (v. 13: ἤδη δὲ φεύγεις; note the emphatic reference to the present by means of ἤδη), and he hides in a shelter (v. 19 and 33). The fight is represented as a spear fight (34: βαλῶ σε ῥημάτων ἀκοντίῳ) or an exchange of arrows (19: πέμπεις βέλη). Both opponents try to 'hit' each other (16: βάλλειν, 37: σου κατοίσω καιρίαν μίαν, 38: βολὴν ὑποστῆς). Just as in poem 40, the fiction of the live setting of a fight is evoked.

On the other hand, the following passage describes the fight and its weapons in the more realistic terms of written pamphlets; ink and pen are the weapons that are used (v. 8–12):

καὶ φευγέτω πᾶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ φεύγων ἅμα  
 χάρτην, μέλαν, κάλαμον εἰς γῆν ῥιπτέτω·  
 αὐτὸς δὲ φεῦγε καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ὄλων·  
 πληγὴν ἐμοῦ γὰρ οὐχ ὑποίσεις καλάμου·  
 τοῖνον μακράν που φεῦγε τῶν Προτασίου.

And let everyone flee, but while fleeing  
 Let him drop paper, ink and pen on the ground!  
 You too, flee before all others;  
 For you will not endure the wound from my pen.  
 So, flee to somewhere far from Protasiou!

The representation is that of an arena in which both opponents, armed with their writing tools, engage with each other. But as Christophoros writes his poetical attack in his home at Protasiou, where we know he lived (see 114.131), it is evidently impossible that the fight happened with both opponents within eyesight of each other. While the fiction of a live exchange of blows is kept alive, it is clear that the writings were sent from afar to each other, one in response to the other.

The expression πληγὴν καλάμου (11), just like the expression βαλῶ σε ῥημάτων ἀκοντίῳ (34) unites the fiction of the physical fight with the real exchange of poems. Poems are represented as 'blows' with words and writing tools used as 'weapons'. It is revealing that the battle, also in metaphorical terms, is described as an exchange of alternate blows. This may refer to the poetic pamphlets which are successively exchanged.<sup>82</sup> At the end of the poem, Christophoros boasts that one more blow will finish his opponent.

It seems thus that the *agon* was performed by exchanging written texts. However, we should by no means exclude the possibility that these texts were read aloud, not exactly towards the opponents, but in a group of friends, who would all laugh at the expense of the outsider.<sup>83</sup>

It must be noted that this piece is again circumstantial: it announces a battle, positions the opponents, and threatens to deal a final blow, but it *is*

<sup>82</sup>See Crimi's term 'tradizione pamphlettistica', applied to this poem, cf. *ibid.*, p. 80. I cannot resist the temptation to point to the Dutch word 'schotschrift', literally 'shooting writing', which covers very well the circumstances and use of this genre.

<sup>83</sup>See in general about the reading of hostile poems the suggestions made in Magdalino, "Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos".

not a part of the contest itself—at least not in appearance. Examples of such ‘blows’ are to be found immediately after this poem.

### 8.4.2 A cluster of satiric poems: Christophoros 37 to 40

Poem 37 is a sneering monostich addressed at the rhetor Menas, attacking his bibulousness.

Poem 38 is a hexametric piece for the soldier Ioannes, who stole the belongings of his comrades. The poem is badly damaged (only the second verse remains), but I think Crimi’s reconstruction of the argument cannot be far mistaken: the *pointe* is that Ioannes appears as a valiant warrior, not by robbing the booty of others in the war, but by robbing belongings of others without any war.<sup>84</sup>

Poem 39 is addressed to a eunuch called Eugenios.<sup>85</sup> Christophoros reminds him (v. 2) that his name is unmistakably, and has always been, Εὐγένιος with a iota: this implies that Eugenios would have liked to change his name to Eugeneios, ‘well-barbed’, which would cover up his emasculated nature. Very well, says Christophoros (l. 4): in spoken words (ἐν τοῖς λόγοις) you may have your diphthong, but not in written words (8: ἐκ τῶν γραμμάτων). ‘If that pleases you’ (εἰς χάριν), Christophoros adds sarcastically. The joke is that in pronunciation, there is no difference between both words, and Christophoros’ friendly suggestion is of no use to Eugenios.<sup>86</sup> At line 6, this χάρις is indeed said to be ‘empty’, and Christophoros closes with the remark that in written words, he will by no means write the diphthong.

Poem 40, being a lengthy invective instead of a short mocking epigram, is quite different from the three preceding poems. But it also belongs to a thematic cycle extending from poem 36 to 40. It can be no coincidence that these satiric pieces follow upon each other and are preceded by poem 36, which forms a perfect introduction. This piece defined the framework of a battle, while the others exemplify the battle itself. As poem 36 announced, Christophoros is able to deliver literary blows. Poems 37 to 40, heterogeneous in form though they are, could all be seen as such blows in *logikoi agones*. Christophoros strives after variation by inserting in the middle of the group a poem in a different metre (38). While poem 40 substantially differs in length and genre, the fact that Christophoros included it in this cycle, may be a sign that he considered it as a poem fulfilling essentially the same goal as the other poems: dealing a blow in an ongoing agon.

<sup>84</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 81, who also adduces AP 11.333 (not 9.333, as is printed) as a similar example.

<sup>85</sup>For the interpretation of this poem, I elaborate the suggestion of *ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>86</sup>R. Anastasi, “‘Difonia’ nell’XI secolo a Bisanzio”, in: *Studi di filologia bizantina*, vol. IV, Quaderni del Sicularum Gymnasium 16, Catania 1988, pp. 121–141, p. 140, interprets this poem differently, in function of his argument for different pronunciations of Byzantine Greek: Christophoros allows him to pronounce (ἐν τοῖς λόγοις) his name with a genuine /-ei/ sound. This interpretation, besides of resting on highly unlikely phonological premises, misses the joke: Christophoros’ friendly suggestion is in reality a mock advice, since the pronunciation is the same.



Something we should not doubt of, is the personal involvement of both poets and addressees. It is striking that all opponents are named, and sometimes very specifically defined. What is more: there is hard evidence for at least one person that he was a real historical person. This is Basileios Xeros, *kritès* of Hellas and Peloponnesos, object of this satirical epigram of Christophoros (poem 20):

*Εἰς τὸν πρωτοσπαθᾶριον Βασίλειον καὶ κριτὴν τὸν Ξηρόν*

Καλῶν θάλασσαν, τοῦτο δὴ τὸ τοῦ λόγου,  
ὁ Ξηρὸς εὐρῶν ὁ κριτῆς τὴν Ἑλλάδα,  
ξηρὰν ἀφήκε, μὴ λιπῶν μηδ' ἰχμάδα.

*On protospatharios and kritès Basileios Xeros*

An ocean of goods, as the saying goes,  
That was how *kritès* Xeros found Hellas,  
But he left it dry, not leaving even a drop behind.

We have seals of this Basileios Xeros, which mention his forename, name, and precise function of *kritès* of Hellas.<sup>87</sup> This makes him one of the very few non-imperial identifiable figures from Christophoros' collection.

## 8.5 Psellos and Sabbaites: a poetic agon

### 8.5.1 The reconstruction of a poetic exchange

While we have in the case of Christophoros and Mauropous only parts of the poetic *agones*, namely the poems they had written themselves, in the case of Psellos' invectives we have actually also the poem that provoked Psellos' reaction. The poems that stand central are Psellos 21 and 22, two long invectives, and a short mocking epigram transmitted together with these, attacking Psellos himself. The precise reconstruction of the *agon* is obstructed by a confused image in the manuscripts. I will first present the facts as they stand now, on the basis of a now widely accepted and indeed plausible interpretation, and thereafter suggest an alternative.

In one of the three manuscripts transmitting Psellos 21 (*Vat. Urbinas Gr.* 141 (XIVc.) = s<sup>u</sup> in Westerink), the poem is preceded by a two-line epigram, entitled 'Of Sabbaites against Psellos':

Ὀλυμπον οὐκ ἤνεγκας, οὐδὲ καὶν χρόνον·  
οὐ γὰρ παρήσαν αἰ θεαί σου, Ζεῦ πάτερ.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup>*Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, unit Basileios 20193, surname Xeros, *kritès* of Hellas and Peloponnesos; the database does not make the connection with this Basileios Xeros, as of 10/12/2009. It may be mentioned here that Psellos has a letter to a *kritès* of Thrakesion, also named Xeros, and also upbraided for his harsh taxing, see Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 48.

<sup>88</sup>Text: Westerink, *Poemata*, p. 259.

You did not bear the Olympus, not even a year,  
Because, father Zeus, your goddesses were not there.

The poem of Psellos itself is preceded by the analogous title ‘Of Psellos against Sabbaites’.

The background of this witty mock epigram is Psellos’ U-turn in his monastic vocations. Psellos had donned the monk’s habit probably in 1054, and departed for the monastery of Horaia Pege on the mountain Olympos in Bithynia,<sup>89</sup> only to return shortly thereafter when Theodora had ascended the throne. This was bound to provoke hostile reactions; in his *Chronographia*, Psellos himself admits that his come-back at court caused ‘jealous reactions’;<sup>90</sup> he even thought it wise to mind his steps for a while in his contacts with the empress. Maybe there is also a venomous hint at alleged indecent relationships Psellos had with the empress: the scholia seem to confirm this.<sup>91</sup>

A further piece of evidence about this monk Sabbaites is revealed in a letter from Psellos to the metropolitan of Amaseia (Sathas 35).<sup>92</sup> In this letter, Psellos expresses his hope that a protégé of him, a former student who is now *kritès* of the Armeniakon-theme, lives up to the expectations. He also says that this *kritès* will need the metropolitan’s protection, because ‘Sabbaites washes him in many insults, involving also you, and no less me too, although being far away, and the emperor and God’.<sup>93</sup> Psellos adds, though, that he will not waste any more words on him. The targets of Sabbaites’ insults (emperor, God, and also patriarch) are repeated as such in poem 21, lines 14 to 16; there can be no doubt that the same Sabbaites is meant.

The mocking poem itself is never mentioned as such in Psellos 21, but it is clear that Psellos had suffered from an attack by Sabbaites that ridiculed him. When he says ‘you pour out, filling your tongue with abuse’ (28), he may have had the specific vulgar abuse of the poem in mind. Sabbaites’ intervention is frequently characterised as a ‘censure’ (ἔλεγχος, cf. lines 20, 36, 64), ‘blasphemous’ (βλασφημία, cf. lines 28, 83, 129), and an insult (269: λοιδορία).

At the same time, not only this poem vexed Psellos: it is clear that Sabbaites’ attacks were going on for a while, and that he had proclaimed various other polemic views. When Psellos flings him in the face that he has ‘decreed and stamped new types of life’,<sup>94</sup> this might refer to these other writings.

A reconstruction of the occasion of the poems is complicated by the fact that the poem of Sabbaites unexpectedly turns up in one of the two manu-

<sup>89</sup>Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, p. 53.

<sup>90</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, § 14: βασκαίνουμαι τῆς ἀφίξεως.

<sup>91</sup>Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, p. 152, n. 96, refers to Gasparov’s work for these scholia, but doubts at their validity.

<sup>92</sup>For the connection with this letter, see also L. Sternbach, “Ein Schmähgedicht des Michael Psellos”, *Wiener Studien* 25 (1903), pp. 10–39.

<sup>93</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 35, p. 269: ὁ γὰρ Σαββαίτης πολλαῖς αὐτὸν ταῖς ὕβρεσι καταπλύνει συμπεριλανθάνων και σέ, οὐδὲν δὲ ἤτιον κάμει, πόρρω καθήμενον, και τὸν βασιλέα, και τὸν θεόν.

<sup>94</sup>Psellos 21.21: και δογματίζεις και τυποῖς καινοὺς βίους.

scripts transmitting Psellos 22 (*Marcianus gr.* 408 (XIVc.) = a<sup>m</sup>). It is expressly identified as the work of a certain monk Iakobos from the monastery of Synkellos: Στίχοι Ἰακώβου τινὸς μοναχοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς μονῆς τοῦ Συγκέλλου κατὰ τοῦ Ψελλοῦ. The lemma to Psellos' poetic answer likewise characterises the motivations for the poem as being a direct answer to this poem: Ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ Ψελλὸς ἐποίησε κανόνα κατὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰακώβου. Iakobos' name is also inscribed in the poem's acrostic Μέθυσον Ἰάκωβον εὐρύθμως ᾄδω, Κώνστας. Konstas is the secular name of Psellos, who assumed the name Michael only upon donning the monk's habit. The poem that was purportedly composed by Iakobos counts four lines in a<sup>m</sup>; the last two are identical to the poem of Sabbaites:

ὦ δέσποτα Ζεῦ καὶ πάτερ καὶ βακλέα,  
ὄβριμβουγαίε καὶ βαρυβρέμων,  
Ὀλυμπον οὐκ ἤνεγκας κἄν βραχὺν χρόνον·  
οὐ γὰρ παρῆσαν αἱ θεαὶ σου, Ζεῦ πάτερ.<sup>95</sup>

Oh master Zeus, father and stick-bearer,  
Mighty braggart, roaring loud,  
You did not bear the Olympus, not even a year,  
Because, father Zeus, your goddesses were not there.

Westerink concluded that this four-line epigram, ascribed by a<sup>m</sup> to Iakobos, should in its entirety be attributed to Sabbaites, because Psellos 22 does not show any sign that it was written in answer to a previous insult, whereas Psellos 21 does bear the stamp of being a direct response to such an epigram. Also, there is the fact that Psellos called himself Konstas in poem 22, a name he did not use anymore after his monastic vocation. In this scenario, poem 22 was written before 1054, as a moral diatribe against the bibulous monk Iakobos, but in a later manuscript, it came to be accompanied erroneously by Sabbaites' poem. Psellos 21, which is a genuine response to that poem, must have been written during the reign of Isaak Komnenos, as the poem mentions a male emperor who has appointed a new patriarch (this would refer to Leichoudes becoming patriarch in 1059).<sup>96</sup>

I would even add a further argument for the attribution of the entire four-line epigram to Sabbaites. In the second line of this poem, the word βαρυβρέμων occurs. This word is not common: the *LBG* lists only five other

<sup>95</sup>Text: Westerink, *Poemata*, p. 270.

<sup>96</sup>Westerink's reconstruction has been accepted by subsequent studies, for example E. Maltese, "Osservazioni sul carme Contra il Sabbaita di Michele Psello", in: *La poesia tardoantica e medievale*, ed. by A. M. Taragna, Alessandria 2001, pp. 207–214, p. 208, n. 4. It must be said that the s<sup>u</sup> is far from trustworthy: as Sternbach stresses (Sternbach, "Schmähgedicht", p. 11.), it not only exhibits some gaps, but also it inserts on its own initiative some inferior readings. This brought Sternbach to conclude that the original poem was the one preceding Psellos 22, later ending up in front of Psellos 21. But his chronological arguments are flawed, because he seems convinced that Psellos' letter Sathas 35 is addressed to Mauropous, and asks for the well-being of Psellos' future son-in-law Elpidios; this suggestion can simply not be true; see also Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, p. 135.

occurrences.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the word is also used by Psellos in this very poem 21 (v. 116). It seems almost impossible to imagine that Psellos was not, consciously or unconsciously, reminiscent of the occurrence of this rare word in Sabbaites' poem when he used it in his response.

This reconstruction is highly plausible, but it does not wholly explain why the scribe a<sup>m</sup> so confidently gives a different reconstruction of the *agon*, allegedly initiated by a certain monk Iakobos. I would not right away exclude the possibility that the poem, whoever the author was, had a wide circulation in the capital, and was on various occasions picked up by enemies of Psellos. It could have been a popular joke in Constantinople, orally transmitted among people allied against the controversial figure of Psellos. Some of them dared to write it down and send it to him, perhaps, as is evident here, adding or leaving out some verses. In the case of Iakobos, it provoked a counter-reaction that heavily attacked his own shortcomings, while the reaction to Sabbaites' use of the poem is a more direct answer to the vulgarity of the poem. In this scenario, it is impossible to discern a fixed author, but it is possible to take into account the possibly more popular strains of hostile poetry.

### 8.5.2 Blasphemous mouths: competition at various levels

Again, we have here an example of how the principle of the literary *agon* can embrace different formal genres. Sabbaites' poem is clearly a satirical epigram, with a Christophorean *pointe* exploiting the identical name for the mythological mountain and the Bithynian mountain where Psellos had retreated. Psellos' answer, by contrast, is a genuine *psogos*, employing the same techniques as the encomium, but now with opposite content. Yet, they operate within the same framework: damaging each other's reputations, and outdoing each other in linguistic and rhetorical violence and wit.

A closer look at Sabbaites' poem reveals its nastiness. There is the crude hint that Psellos could not live up to the monastic vow of chasteness. This is reinforced by the address *βακλέα*. It is a *hapax*, related to the vernacular word *βάκλον* from the Latin *baculum*, referring to a stick.<sup>98</sup> The vernacular word is deliberately out of tune with the learned, if somewhat exuberant, pseudo-epic vocabulary that surrounds it, and may be slightly parodical. Consequently, *βακλέα* may very well contain a nasty popular-sounding abuse. The translation of 'sceptre-bearer', as the *LBG* gives, surely does not cover the coarse sexual innuendo behind it.

Psellos' answer, in turn, is an stupefying stream of abuse and insults, for the greater part just consisting of series of unflattering vocatives. Again, as in other contests, the attack revolves principally around the question whether Sabbaites has enough authority to censure people who are in a higher position. In a considerable portion of the poem (35–83), introduced by the question

<sup>97</sup>*LBG*, s.v. 'βαρυβρέμων'. There are in fact six other occurrences listed, but the reference to Attaleiates must be wrong, as the text gives *δορυβρέμων*.

<sup>98</sup>See *LSJ*, s. v *βάκλον*.

‘Who are you to censure and chastise people better than you?’<sup>99</sup> Psellos aims to undermine this authority.

The *agon* may have contained some ideological oppositions too. Sabbaites is described as an alleged protector of the poor (v. 29: τῶν πενήτων προστάτης δεδειγμένος). Psellos also accuses him of using the poor as a pretext (304: πρόσχημά σοι πένητες, οὓς κατεσθίεις). Apparently, Sabbaites belonged to the class of populists, with which Psellos frequently had problems. In light of the hostility of Sabbaites towards Leichoudes, the new patriarch (see v. 16 and Psellos’ defence of the patriarch at vv. 76–82), it is not difficult to see Sabbaites’ attack as coming from a group of people that has always been hostile towards Psellos and his clique.

Notwithstanding this ideological background, these poems remain pieces of a literary *agon* with its specific rules. The contest is as much an intellectual competition between two poets as a discussion on a moral level. At one point, Psellos explicitly brings their controversy on this intellectual level, attacking Sabbaites’ lack of learning and the improper way he uses the only techniques he masters (v. 159–176):

ὦ γνώσεως ἄμοιρε τῆς τῶν κρειττόνων,  
 μαθημάτων ἄδεκτε τῶν σοφωτέρων, 160  
 φύσις δὲ πλήρης πνευματουμένων γνάθων  
 γλωττοκρότων τε τεχνίτα λεξιδίων·  
 ὦ καινὲ ῥήτορ, γῆθεν ἐκφύς ἀθρόον,  
 τὰς εὐρέσεις ἄτεχνε καὶ τὰς ιδέας,  
 τὰς δὲ στάσεις ἔντεχνε τὰς ἀμφιρρόπους 165  
 καὶ δεινὲ τὴν ἔννοιαν ἢ καὶ τὴν φράσιν·  
 ὦ πρὸς καταδρομὴν μὲν ἢ κοινὸν τόπον  
 θερμουργεῖ καὶ πρόχειρε, καχλάζων ὄλος,  
 τοὺς δὲ τρόπους ἄτεχνε τῶν ἐγκωμίων.

Oh you, deprived of the knowledge of better things,  
 Not having received more advanced education, 160  
 Creature full of puffy cheeks,  
 Technician of tongue-beaten claptrap!  
 Oh novel orator, suddenly grown from the earth,  
 Without any skills in invention and types of style,  
 But very experienced in ambiguous stases 165  
 And skilled in thought and diction too.  
 Oh you, for invective and commonplace  
 Reckless and ready, gurgling in your entirety;  
 Yet incompetent in the figures of the encomium!

These accusations do not target Sabbaites as a complete boor, since Psellos admits that he has some skills. Rather, the charge is that those limited skills are only used to the detriment of other people. Out of the parts of rhetorical education that are mentioned, Sabbaites masters only those that

<sup>99</sup>Psellos 21.36: τίς ὢν ἐλέγγχεις καὶ κατάρχεις κρειττόνων;

can harm other people. The κοινὸς τόπος, the commonplace, is to be understood here in its technical rhetorical sense, namely, an accusation that makes use of unproved general statements against vices.<sup>100</sup> The references to gurgling and puffed cheeks suggest that Sabbaites somehow manages to produce literary products that may charm on a superficial level, but that are mere idle chatter. This appears especially from the line γλωττοκρότων τε τεχνίτα λεξειδίων, that might well refer more specifically to Sabbaites' poem. The adjective γλωττοκρότος, a neologism, may refer to the rhythm of the poem, while the expression 'technician of little nasty words' (as the pejorative term λεξειδία may be translated), might reflect the cunning, but nasty, neologisms in Sabbaites' poem.

In spite of these skills, Psellos accuses him of being deprived of higher forms of knowledge. The tactic is that Psellos somehow does not question the efficiency of Sabbaites' attack (this also appears from line 171: 'tongue knowing expressions that can cut through'), but aims to depict this achievement as the act of a dangerous sophist. This is also expressed by the word δεινός, at line 166 and also further in line 185: 'mischievous and sly one, with a dangerously cunning (δεινός) mind!' (κακοῦργε καὶ πανοῦργε, δεινὲ τὰς φρένας). Also, Psellos targets the fact that Sabbaites had not received sufficient education, he speaks as an orator 'grown from the earth' (v. 163): this metaphor bespeaks a kind of accusation we have met time and again in other works, namely, the questioning of someone's unbased authority.

The intellectual contest is also conducted at the level of display of knowledge. Psellos clearly strove to compose a poem that demonstrated a dazzling wealth of learning. As Maltese pointed out,<sup>101</sup> the poem is full of ideological and cultural references, with allusions to patristic notions and cultural practices of exorcism. Maltese concludes that the psogos, although spontaneous in appearance, remains a typically Byzantine intellectual construction.<sup>102</sup> This is corroborated by the study of Conca, indicating the rich intertextual background and intricate rhetorical construction of Psellos' poem.<sup>103</sup>

In function of the significance of intertextual allusions, I just want to emphasise the fact that, apart from the more subtle allusions pointed out by Maltese and Conca, the frequency of direct and unmistakable quotes of whole verses from ancient poetry is striking. Verses 210 and 275–276 are identical, or nearly wholly identical, with Euripidean verses.<sup>104</sup> There are also some other reminiscences that clearly function as allusions. Verse 248, ἔστηκα καὶ πέπωκα τῶμῳ κυρίῳ, becomes only relevant when the reader recalls the passage in Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom. 14.4), where Paul says he will only accept censorship from his Lord, just like Psellos refuses to accept the critique from Sabbaites.

<sup>100</sup>H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, München 1960, §409.

<sup>101</sup>Maltese, "Osservazioni sul carme Contra il Sabbaita di Michele Psello".

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>103</sup>F. Conca, "La lingua e lo stile dei carmi satirici di Psello", *Eikasmos* 12 (2001), pp. 187–196.

<sup>104</sup>v. 210=Eur., *Iph. in Taur.* 569; v. 275–276=fr. TGF 687

Apart from that, mythological details, neologisms, and smart word games abound. Not all of them have even yet been brought to the surface.

Verses 114–115, for instance, which constitute yet some other insults in the endless stream of abuse, are a clever demonstration of biblical allusions and cunning word play:

ὦ βροῦχε σαρκῶν καὶ ψυχῶν ἐρυσίβη,  
κάμπη λογισμῶν, ἀκρις ἐνθυμημάτων.

Oh locust of flesh, and rust of souls,  
Caterpillar of thoughts, grasshopper of arguments!

This echoes a Old Testament passage in which great disasters destroy the crops.<sup>105</sup> This way, Sabbaites is represented as the four-fold plague that destroys every sound thought or argument. But there is even another twist involved in the second of these verses: the words *κάμπη* and *ἀκρις*, caterpillar and grasshopper, refer to the words *καμπή* ('sudden turn'), and *ἀκρίσια* ('confusion'). These words acquire a meaningful sense when connected to the rhetorical terminology of *λογισμοί* and *ἐνθυμήματα*: Sabbaites undermines a sound use of rhetoric, 'suddenly upsetting thoughts', and 'confusing arguments'.

Like in the other agonistic poems, the language of violence plays a great role. Just as in Christophoros 36 and 11.5, we encounter threats that the opponent will be crushed to ashes if he dares to approach, and is advised to flee as far as possible (lines 292-301). There is also the *topos* that words bring honour, so that such a despicable person as Sabbaites in fact does not deserve to have a poem addressed to him; this is something that we also encountered in Mauropous 33. In his letter concerning Sabbaites, Psellos had haughtily vowed not to waste any words on him.<sup>106</sup>

The *topos* of 'words as weapons' also returns here (vv. 171–176):

ὦ γλῶσσα τὴν σφάπτουσαν εἰδυῖα φράσιν  
δήμων ἀνάπτα, λαομουλτοσυστάτα·  
ὦ δάκτυλοι πλήττοντες οἷάπερ βέλη  
καὶ βραχίων δόρατος εἰσβάλλων πλέον  
καὶ καλαμῖς τέμνουσα πολλῶν καρδίας  
μέλαν τε τὴν μέλαιναν ἐγγράφον δίκτην.

175

Oh tongue, knowing slaughtering expressions,  
Agitator of the people, provoker of uproar among the crowd,  
Fingers hurting like arrows,  
Arm attacking more than a spear,  
Pen cutting into the hearts of many,  
And ink, inscribing a black lawsuit!

175

<sup>105</sup>See Joel 1.4: τὰ κατάλοιπα τῆς κάμπης κατέφαγεν ἡ ἀκρις, καὶ τὰ κατάλοιπα τῆς ἀκρίδος κατέφαγεν ὁ βροῦχος, καὶ τὰ κατάλοιπα τοῦ βρούχου κατέφαγεν ἡ ἐρυσίβη.

<sup>106</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 35, p. 270, l. 4–5.

Like in Christophoros' poem 36, the writing tools of the participants of the confrontation are likened to weapons. The pen inflicting wounds is also here present. The *logikos agon* is represented in terms of a real fight with its own weapons and rules. The power of words to damage reputations is evident here; it is also implied that Sabbaïtes hit a popular string with his words.

What Psellos opposes to these damaging insults, is the power of his own wit. The final section of the poem (v. 306–321) deals with the impact this poem will have on Sabbaïtes. Psellos assures that his enemy has been ridiculed by the poem: he has become a toy of his verse (313–4: τὸν Σαββαίτην . . . τοῖς ἐμμέτροις τέθεικα παίγνιον λόγοις); he has been ridiculed (317: τοῖς ἰάμβοις τοῖς ἐμοῖς τεθεῖς γέλως). His power has successfully used the power of humour in order to debase his opponent.

## 8.6 Some conclusions about hostile poems

The poems treated in this chapter have been variously treated as mocking epigrams, pamphlets, invectives, but the prevailing term for the longer pieces is 'satire'. But this generic label is not an unproblematic one. When Romano in his work on Byzantine satire heaps together texts such as Christophoros 114 (the satire on the monk collecting relics), Psellos 21 and also texts as the twelfth-century Timarion, he creates the impression that eleventh-century poems form part of the strand of satiric tradition connecting Lucian with the Timarion.<sup>107</sup> However, paradoxically, the only genre that did not seem to have influenced eleventh-century satirical poetry is this Lucianic strand of satire. It might be more convenient to speak of a 'satiric voice' turning up in these poems. Even then, the resurgence of the satirical voice in eleventh-century poetry is a phenomenon that cannot readily be explained: the hypothesis of Romano that the satire was a more safe refuge for subversive voices after the Komnenes put philosophy to silence,<sup>108</sup> can obviously not serve as an explanation for 11th-century evolutions.

Moreover, satire properly speaking employs wit to achieve moral elevation: satire involves a concern with the ethical (or other) standards of society as a whole.<sup>109</sup> In that case, Byzantine satire, as Soyter remarks, which does not seek to raise social issues, but to ridicule and disparage specific persons,<sup>110</sup> is not satiric at all. It would be hard, for example, to see in Psellos 22 a moral judgment on alcohol abuse; rather, the accusations of drunkenness aim to degrade the reputation of his opponent. It has been remarked about Latin medieval literature that texts exhibiting a satiric voice are often of a partisan and polemical character, and used words as a weapon to reduce

<sup>107</sup>R. Romano, *La satira bizantina dei secoli XI-XV*, Torino 1999.

<sup>108</sup>Romano, *Satira*, p. 6; for a similar view, see Tozer, "Byzantine Satire", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 2 (1881), pp. 233–4.

<sup>109</sup>R. Quintero, "Introduction: Understanding Satire", in: *A Companion to Satire*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, pp. 1–12.

<sup>110</sup>G. Soyter, *Humor und Satire in der byzantinischen Literatur*, Sonderabdruck aus den Bayerischen Blättern für das Gymnasialschulwesen, München 1928, p. 147.



the prestige and power of opponents of the poet's partisan group.<sup>111</sup> I think this observation holds also true for our texts: these are agonistic, in the contemporary sense, in that they are used for the personal social purposes of the author.

If there is one tradition consciously appropriated in this poems, it is rather the 'iambic idea', the invective power of iambs. It is surely no coincidence that Psellos calls his own poem 'iambs' twice (v. 8 and v. 305). But it can be said that it is inspired primarily by school knowledge. The stories about Iambe and the aggressive use of iambs in antiquity was stock knowledge of the grammarian, but no living tradition.

The general purpose of the λογικὸς ἄγών enables us to free ourselves from the more constraining and necessarily more problematic modern generic notions of satire, invective, and polemics. The fact that Christophoros grouped together poems on which we would stick different generic labels, indicates that contemporary poets were not consciously inscribing their own works in one of these literary traditions, but rather saw them as the subsequent 'blows' in 'battles'. I would suggest that the category ἀγωνιστικά, which, as we have seen, is a contemporary term to describe such writings, suits better the general purport and intent of these writings.

These poems are tools in an games that were sometimes playful, but mostly serious. Exchanged in a form close to what we would call pamphlets, they are pieces of ongoing contests, with rules defined by intellectual standards. They assume a voice that we may call satiric, and play an intricate game of subtexts and puns. We must not forget that perhaps the poems were sent to their enemies, *and* also performed before a more friendly audience. In both cases, the subtle humorous games test the intellectual capacity of the readers, expecting laughter as a confirmation from friends, and shame and anger from enemies. Humour is used to score points at the expense of others. It is the kind of texts, which, running counter to many of our tastes, demonstrates the power of poetry in this medieval society. The beats of the pen can inflict wounds in these cases.

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<sup>111</sup>L. Kendrick, "Medieval Satire", in: *A Companion to Satire*, 2007, pp. 52–69, p. 62.



## Part IV

# Poetry as a service



In the previous chapters, we have given an outline of how poetry could serve as a means to define the poet's position in the field of the intellectuals. The following chapters, in contrast, will analyse concrete occasions where poems are used to meet external social demands. They will also give a picture of the negotiations between textual and intellectual domain on the one hand, and the material domain on the other hand. Therefore, this part treats 'poetry as a service', since it will view poetry as one kind of service within the traffic of assets that are exchanged through social networks.

So, a question that will loom large over this part is that of patronage, in a very broad sense: the material support coming from other segments in society to make the production of texts possible. Patronage may make us think of a *maecenas* supporting artists for the love of art. In a medieval society like Byzantium, this image must be discarded, and I think we may retain the basic distinction made by Alain Viala, between a 'logic of service' and a 'logic of recognition'.<sup>112</sup> The latter implies a conception of art as art, while the former rests upon the concept of literature as a social tool; evidently, Byzantine literary patronage can be seen within such a 'logic of service', which thrives on immediate exchange and the imperative of the occasion rather than on an artistic program.

Studies of patronage in pre-modern societies have shown that patronage is channeled along personal relationships.<sup>113</sup> The production of and rewards for literature are the outcome of a commitment of the author and the patron on a personal and social level. In such a system, patronage is not an institution but part of the network of social relationships, which have to be reconfirmed at every new occasion.

Our poets entertained extended social networks, as any Byzantine courtier, and these networks needed a flow of reciprocal services, symbolic ones and real ones.<sup>114</sup> Since friendships were often defined as intellectual friendships, as we have seen, poems could work in such a system—but it seems that each relationship and each occasion required its own negotiation. Towards emperors, evidently, the negotiation is of a different kind, but it is also a vital one, since the emperor was the ultimate source of wealth and services.

The poems we will look closer to, are but one side of a social relationship of which we cannot trace the full extent or definition. We can thus often not retrieve the concrete terms of these negotiations, but through the texts we can come to discern the value that poetry claims to possess and proposes to exchange for other kinds of services.

This negotiation never ends; neither is it in any way officialised. Every occasion posed its demands and its opportunities. What can be remarked, and perhaps forms a specific trait for the eleventh century, is that poets frequently seized opportunities themselves. Unlike in other periods, they did not cast

<sup>112</sup>A. Viala, *Naissance de l'écrivain*, Paris 1985, pp. 52–57.

<sup>113</sup>R. Weissman, "Taking Patronage Seriously: Mediterranean Values and Renaissance Society", in: *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance Italy*, Oxford 1987, pp. 25–46.

<sup>114</sup>About networks and services in personal friendships, see J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*, Oxford 1974; for Byzantium, a powerful demonstration of networking in action is to be found in Mullett, *Theophylact*.

themselves on beforehand in a submissive role, but stressed the special value of their artistry.

This part will outline the actions taken on the part of the intellectuals to secure patronage for their literary products, and the representation of value of texts in the exchange of services. The gift is such a dominant format of exchange, in which poetry plays such a particular role, that it will receive a chapter on its own. This chapter pursues two traces: how poetry serves as the presentation of a gift, and how it is perceived as a gift itself.

There is a methodological problem inherent in the presentation of facts here. While I will claim to describe the general relationship between literature and society in the eleventh century, I will in fact present the actions and representations of predominantly one person, namely Michael Psellos. I think we need to bear in mind that the texts of Psellos are not only the indication of certain evolutions, but single-handedly set these evolutions in motion themselves. They not only reflect the framework in which literature (or learning generally) functions, but they shape that framework to a great degree. Therefore I think it is legitimate to present his texts as parts of a negotiation between discursive practice and society.

Furthermore, the subject of literary patronage in the eleventh century is so vast, multi-faceted and understudied, that I do not want to make any appeal to exhaustivity. I will only sketch out some lines I see as the most important, maintaining my focus on poetic texts.

# Chapter 9

## Exchanges

### 9.1 Imperial literary patronage

One of Psellos' βασιλικοί λόγοι in honour of Konstantinos IX Monomachos closes with a thinly veiled request for patronage. This request reveals some features of the negotiation on literary patronage that will turn up again repeatedly.

But how are we doing? We have been rejected, we have been disregarded—do not reproach me for adding this—we, the nurslings of knowledge, accustomed with wisdom, the worshippers of the Muses. Someone else may hit an enemy with an arrow, or only stretch out his spear, and he gets the first prizes. Another makes show of his consideration towards you, only in appearance, and an abundant stream of richness flows over him. But we proclaim with words, we hit with eulogies, we bring service with the means that we have, and yet we do not receive a spark of compassion. Again I will tell you the same thing—excuse me for my straightforwardness, emperor, it is the child of an aggrieved soul. How are the Romuli proclaimed, the Bruti, Aelii, Antiochi, Seleuci and Alexanders? With literature, with books, aren't they? And those authors, how were they incited to write? Because they profited from it, don't you think?<sup>1</sup>

We can discern an ideological chasm here. Psellos confirms the desirability of entertaining an intellectual elite, in contrast to other types of people (sol-

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<sup>1</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 2, 1. 798–813: τὰ δ' ἡμέτερα οἶα; ἀπερρίμμεθα, καταπεφρονήμεθα, μὴ κακίης εἰ καὶ τοῦτο φήσω, οἱ τῆς γνώσεως τρόφιμοι, οἱ τῆς σοφίας ἐθάδες, οἱ τῶν μουσῶν θιασῶται. ὁ μὲν τις βέλει τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἔπαισεν, ἢ μόνον τὸ δόρυ ἐπετείνατο καὶ τὰς πρώτας ἔχει τιμάς· ἄλλος τὸ εὐγνωμον μέχρι σχήματος ἐνεδείξατο, καὶ τὸ τοῦ πλοῦτου ρεῦμα τούτῳ ἔρρουσεν ἄφθονον. ἡμεῖς δὲ λόγοις κηρύττομεν, εὐφημίαις βάλλομεν, οἷς ἔχομεν θεραπεύομεν, καὶ μόγις που βανίδια ἐλέους δεχόμεθα. ἀλλὰ πάλιν τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον ἐρῶ, μὴ κάκιζε τὴν παρρησίαν, ὦ βασιλεῦ, τόκος ἐστὶν ὁδυνωμένης ψυχῆς. πόθεν Ῥωμῦλοι κηρύττονται, πόθεν Βροῦτοι καὶ Αἴλιοι, Ἀντίοχοι τε καὶ Σέλευκοι καὶ Ἀλέξανδροι; οὐκ ἐκ λόγων, οὐκ ἐκ συγγραμμάτων; οἱ δὲ συγγράφοντες πόθεν εἰς συγγραφὰς ἐκινήθησαν; οὐκ ἐξ ὧν εὖ ἔπασχον;

diers and courtiers). These intellectuals can serve the emperor in their own ways. But Psellos lays also the basis for a system of rewards: the ultimate motivation (ἐκινήθησαν) to produce literature consists of the fact that the authors 'profit from it' (εὖ πάσχω). Whereas most representations of possible material support are vague and metaphoric, the pressing for rewards is quite outspoken in this case.

Some recurrent arguments can be mentioned at this place. Psellos sneers at people who only praise the emperor in appearance; their praises are allegedly only part of display (ἐνεδείξατο). We need not repeat the observation stated often in the chapter 'Display', that display *an sich* was viewed with apparent suspicion. Psellos, conversely, promises irreproachable praise. Another frequent commonplace is that intellectuals have been unduly neglected, whereas others fare well. This erratic situation should be set right by the emperor.

The need for Monomachos' reign to be remembered in literature, is grounded in examples from the past. The example of glorious rulers should incite Monomachos not to remain behind; his status obliges him to inscribe his reign in the succession of glorious reigns.

This fragment, quite unusually, specifically singles out discursive practices as the target of imperial support, and not learning in general. The words συγγράμματα and συγγράφοντες refer specifically to written texts. It is implied that only written texts are able to continue proclaiming Monomachos in the future.

This idea runs through the whole oration. It begins as follows:

Present time is fleeting, oh greatest emperor; it has no seat or fixedness. Transitory are the things bound to it, flowing away and tossed about by its unstoppable stream. But the wise men of lore, who could do great things with words, arrested these unstable things in a certain way and they fixed what is unsteady by imposing on it the indissoluble bound of their writings.<sup>2</sup>

Literature possesses the power to arrest time, to let great deeds live on in the minds of the people. Konstantinos' brilliant successes deserve even more than historical events to leave a trace in glorifying literature.

In the following lines, the orator states that in the old days of ancient Greece, there were many splendid authors, but their content was altogether futile; and now that times are glorious and fresh, there is no one to put it on paper to be made remembered. The remainder of the oration is in effect a short preview of Psellos' capability to glorify Monomachos through historiographic writing. It begins with Basil II, and gives a quite negative account of his successors. But the main focus is of course on Monomachos'

<sup>2</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 2, l. 2–8: 'Πευστός μὲν ὁ παρὼν χρόνος, ὧ μέγιστε αὐτοκράτορ, καὶ μηδεμίαν ἔχων ἔδραν ἢ παγιότητα, παροδικὰ δὲ καὶ τὰ κατ' αὐτὸν πράγματα τῇ ἀπαύσῳ τούτου ῥοῇ παραρρέοντά τε καὶ συγκινούμενα. ἀλλ' οἱ πάλαι σοφοὶ μεγάλα τῷ λόγῳ δυνάμενοι ἔστησάν τε τὰ ἄστατα τρόπον τινὰ καὶ ἐπαγίωσαν τὰ ἀνέδραστα, δεσμὸν αὐτοῖς ἄλυτον τὰς συγγραμμὰς ἐμβαλόντες.



life: his exile to Mytilene, his ascension to the throne, and his crushing of the rebellion of Maniakes. Psellos does not omit to stress how Monomachos donates generously to his subjects (662–679). After this historical part, Psellos continues by narrating how supernatural signs had predicted the victory of Monomachos. This demonstrates even more the power of literature to bend events to the benefit of the patron. Literature is the base of eternal renown.

What Psellos does here, is not merely asking for patronage, it is providing the grounds for the establishment of a system of literary patronage. It advertises literature and its advantages for a prestigious reign. What it can offer, is renown. This renown is guaranteed by the glorifying power of history: Monomachos will inscribe his reign in a historical perspective, connecting him to the emperors of lore, and thus attributing to him an undeniable prestige.

There can be no doubt that emperors were sensible to the appeal to emulate their illustrious historical predecessors. Especially the history of the ancient Romans appealed to the imagination.<sup>3</sup> Romanos III Argyropoulos' reign in particular appears to have been influenced by the desire to build up a prestigious reign. Perhaps not incidentally, Romanos is the first of a series of emperors who comes on the throne without a dynastic lineage, so he has to search for other forms of symbolic capital to confirm his imperial status.

When Psellos in the *Chronographia* discusses Romanos' cultural policies, he attributes his military and cultural aspirations to the desire to establish himself as successor to glorious Roman predecessors: 'Since Romanos wished to model his reign on those of the great Antonines of the past, the famous philosopher Marcus [Aurelius] and Augustus, he paid attention particularly to two things: the study of letters and the science of war'.<sup>4</sup> To that end, he 'enrolled a whole new tribe of philosophers and orators and all those who busied themselves in the sciences'.<sup>5</sup> The specific verb for the 'enrollment' of these intellectuals is κατέλεγε, a verb of which Psellos also uses the close cognate ἐγκαταλέγω to refer to enrollments in the army.<sup>6</sup> This makes clear that the main reward for these intellectuals consisted in the promotion to an official function.

A similar characterisation of Romanos' cultural policies appears in Psellos' short historical survey of 11th-century emperors in his second panegyric oration (the same one for Monomachos treated above). Romanos is similarly represented as a ruler interested in literature and education. When he ascended the imperial throne, says Psellos, he 'gave himself even more over to his dignity, and even more than earlier, he held on to literature and occupied

<sup>3</sup>For this consciousness of the tradition of ancient Rome and the imperial grandeur that accompanied it, see also E. Kitzinger, "Artistic Patronage in Early Byzantium", in: *Committenti e produzione artistico-letteraria nell'alto medioevo occidentale*, Spoleto 1992, pp. 33–55, pp. 36–37.

<sup>4</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book III, §2, l. 6–9: βουλόμενος δὲ ἐς τοὺς ἀρχαίους Ἀντωνίνους ἐκείνους, τὸν τε φιλοσοφώτατον Μάρκον καὶ τὸν Σεβαστόν, ἀπεικάσαι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν, δυοῖν τούτων ἀντειχετο, τῆς τε περὶ τοὺς λόγους σπουδῆς καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ ὄπλα φροντίδος.

<sup>5</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book III, § 2, l. 15–16: πᾶν γένος κατέλεγε, φιλοσόφους φημί καὶ ῥήτορας καὶ τοὺς ὅσοι περὶ τὰ μαθήματα ἐσπουδάκασιν; Translation from Sewter, *Michael Psellus. Chronographia*, p. 40.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. e.g. book III, § 7, l. 13

himself with sciences.<sup>7</sup> Psellos suggests that Romanos' prime motivation has to be sought in the dignity connected with his imperial status (*ἀξιώματι*): rather than genuine interest, the prestigious appearance of a cultivated reign mattered for him. Psellos considers Romanos' aspirations here from a later perspective, and not without a certain disdain. But this disdain cannot conceal that Romanos must have set in motion a new imperial vigour towards learning, out of motivations into which Psellos in turn will try to talk Monomachos.

For himself, as we have seen, Psellos fancied the role of preceptor of emperors, for which there also ancient examples. Apart from Plato and Alexander, a great ancient example is Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher among emperors.<sup>8</sup> In the funeral oration for Xiphilinos, Psellos reports that Monomachos had heard about this learned emperor. This incited him to take lessons from Psellos, even placing him on the throne while noting down what Psellos dictated.<sup>9</sup> There is not much imagination needed to find out how Monomachos would have heard about this example: in some panegyric orations directed to him, Marcus is presented as an ideal emperor, to be imitated in his cultural aspirations.<sup>10</sup> The fragment once more indicates that Psellos was keen to convey this kind of imperial images. His discourses implant the envy to emulate model from the past. The prestige conferred onto himself, as imperial preceptor, is of course also considerable.

Another recurrent motif is that of the emperor as the restorer of learning. He attributes this role to Michael Doukas in a *basilikos logos*. In earlier days, emperors had only attention for people bringing in taxes, while learning and intellectuals were neglected; now the wisdom itself lives in the soul of the new emperor, and he prefers the contact with learned people above adoration of the subjects of his mighty empire.<sup>11</sup> This last conceit is telling: not only it is the task of an emperor to support learning, but a truly cultivated emperor will engage in learning out of a genuine enthusiasm, and adapt his personal predilections in function of this.

The *Historia Syntomos*, nowadays generally believed to be a genuine work of Psellos,<sup>12</sup> can also be read as a work providing imperial models.<sup>13</sup> Psellos says explicitly that he will write this history 'in order that you may either

<sup>7</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 2.203–205: ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον συνεπεδίδου τῷ ἀξιώματι, καὶ πλέον ἢ πρότερον λόγου τε ἤπτετο καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἐπεμελεῖτο.

<sup>8</sup>See also M. Angold, "Imperial Renewal and Orthodox Reaction: Byzantium in the Eleventh Century", in: *New Constantines. The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th – 13th Centuries. Papers from the Twenty-sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St Andrews, March 1992*, ed. by P. Magdalino, Aldershot 1994, pp. 231–246, p. 235.

<sup>9</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 434, l. 19–24.

<sup>10</sup>See Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 6, l. 316–318.

<sup>11</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 8.10–26.

<sup>12</sup>J. Duffy and S. Papaioannou, "Michael Psellos and the Authorship of the *Historia Syntomos*. Final Considerations", in: *Βυζάντιο. Κράτος και κοινωνία*, ed. by E. Chrysos, A. Avramea, and A. Laiou, Athens 2003, pp. 219–229.

<sup>13</sup>For the exemplary aspect of the *Historia Syntomos*, see also J. Ljubarskij, "Some Notes on the Newly Discovered Historical Work by Psellos", in: *Τὸ Ἑλληνικόν. Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonīs, Jr.* Ed. by J. S. Langdon, S. W. Reiner, J. S. Allen, and C. P. Ioannides, vol. 1, La Rochelle 1993, pp. 213–228, p. 214.

imitate the good deeds of the emperors or criticize and despise the bad ones'.<sup>14</sup> So, it is truly intended as a kind of *Fürstenspiegel*: by means of examples of past emperors, the new emperor (Ljubarskij suggests Michael VII) is guided in fulfilling his imperial task. It is part of this image of the ideal emperor that he welcomes and supports learning.<sup>15</sup> For example, Justinian is praised because he gathered learned men around him.<sup>16</sup> Conversely, when Staurakios is debunked as one of the worst emperors possible, his neglect of learning is one of the negative elements mentioned.<sup>17</sup>

The thinly veiled pressure Psellos exerts on the emperors has to be contrasted with the rhetoric of Mauropous. The latter constructed a broad ideological frame that fitted the civil base of imperial ruling. Lefort has given an outline of this civil imperial ideology Mauropous advanced in his orations.<sup>18</sup> Mauropous repeatedly projects the ideal of an emperor who rules according to the application of laws and the powers of persuasion, rather than through the use of arms. Pacifism, clemency, and cultivation are the key notions of the political ideal projected by Mauropous in these orations.<sup>19</sup> Words (λόγοι) are represented as powerful arms in defense of the empire. Herein the emperor imitates God, who has predestined that the world should be ruled with persuasion and reason (πειθοῖ καὶ λόγῳ).<sup>20</sup> The eloquence of the emperor symbolises his culture, in contrast to the military prowess of his barbarian adversaries (or. 186, § 10). Of course these ideals conformed well with the interests of the civil class.

The question of imperial patronage must be separated from the question whether these emperors were themselves intellectuals. It may be revealing to remind that Michael VII was apparently exceptional for receiving an education in letters, and even then, his verses were not up to the normal standard.<sup>21</sup> It is considered an amazing thing that the *sebastè* Maria Skleraina pronounced one homeric word correctly.<sup>22</sup> The greatest intellectual achievement by an emperor seems to be Monomachos' edition of schede.<sup>23</sup> We should be cautious then, to regard cultural policies as something prepared in the palace and carried out by orators; rather, the orators themselves deliberately tried to impose on the emperors their idea of how an emperor should behave towards intellectuals. Cultural policies and their advantages are spun out by intellectual courtiers like Psellos. It is in the happy coincidence, I would suggest, between people issuing from a class that is not privileged but is profiting from vertical mobility on the one hand, and emperors needing prestige to compensate for their shaky

<sup>14</sup>Michael Psellos, *Historia syntomos*, §10, l. 61–63.

<sup>15</sup>Ljubarskij, "Newly Discovered Historical Work", pp. 217–219; Duffy and Papaioannou, "Michael Psellos and the Authorship of the *Historia Syntomos*. Final Considerations", p. 228.

<sup>16</sup>Michael Psellos, *Historia syntomos*, § 71, l. 70–71.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, § 93, l. 89–90.

<sup>18</sup>Lefort, "Rhétorique et politique: trois discours de Jean Mauropous en 1047".

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 285–293.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. for example Mauropous, or. 186, § 8 (p. 179).

<sup>21</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIc, § 4. Cf. also *supra*, p. 108.

<sup>22</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, § 61.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. *supra*, p. 210.

dynastic status on the other hand, that the support for discursive practices in the period 1025–1081 finds its basis.

## 9.2 Poetry in the scheme of patronage

### 9.2.1 When the scheme does not work: poetry under Basileios II

The literary patronage under Basileios II may serve as a foil to view the differences in the eleventh century. The genres in which the rest of the century excels, imperial rhetoric, historiography, poetry, and the like are virtually absent in the years 1000–1028. This is confirmed by Psellos' assessment, who writes that there were many intellectuals, but they were not supported by the emperor.<sup>24</sup> Crostini has contested this view, and tried to rehabilitate literary culture under Basileios.<sup>25</sup>

And indeed, Basil set up the ambitious project of collecting and rephrasing the lives of the saints, a project connected with the person of Symeon Metaphrastes. In his encomium for Symeon, Psellos is clear about the nature of the project:<sup>26</sup> the initiative came not from Symeon himself; there were 'imperial requests' (βασιλείοι παρακλήσεις), and the emperor provided a team of helpers.<sup>27</sup> This seems more like a precise appointment for a craftsman. Basileios had a clear aim in mind, which had nothing to do with artistic excellence: he wanted to create an orderly corpus of hagiography. He alone laid down the scope of the works to be written. This dependence on the emperor becomes poignantly manifest when at a certain point, Basileios interrupted the project, according to one source upon reading a passage that afflicted too much imperial authority to his liking. Symeon fell in disgrace, and the metaphrastic menologion started only to have its enormous currency after Basileios' death.<sup>28</sup>

When Psellos avers that under Basileios, many people engaged in literature but were not rewarded by the emperor, he had no reason to lie here. The few traces of literary culture under Basileios II rather support Psellos' view: there are people who engage in literature, but the great difference with later literature is that their literary pursuits do not concern the emperor immediately: the emperor and his court are not central in this literature, nor are there any traces of regular rhetorical activity at Basileios' court: the emperor is not the driving force behind literary evolutions.<sup>29</sup> Basileios was for one reason or another just not interested in supporting literature.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the

<sup>24</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book I, §29.

<sup>25</sup>B. Crostini, "The Emperor Basil II's Cultural Life", *Byzantion* 66 (1996), pp. 55–80.

<sup>26</sup>Michael Psellos, *Or. Hagiographicae*, pp. 7.330–339.

<sup>27</sup>This is also testified by internal evidence, see C. Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes. Rewriting and Canonization*, Copenhagen 2002, pp. 93–110.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 128–9.

<sup>29</sup>Lauxtermann, "Paradox", p. 206; Crostini has to come to more or less the same conclusion Crostini, "The Emperor Basil II's Cultural Life", p. 71.

<sup>30</sup>Lauxtermann, "Paradox", pp. 213–6.

measurements most manifestly directed *against* intellectuals were not taken immediately, just as Psellos says: Basileios did away with literature, or more specifically, with *literati*, in a later stadium of his reign. Symeon Metaphrastes is but one example: it seems that also Ioannes Geometres was at a certain point removed from Basileios's court.<sup>31</sup> Even if these removals were the result of a conflict between factions at court,<sup>32</sup> the result is the same: the lack of imperial patronage in the latter part of Basileios's reign (and the short reign of Konstantinos VIII) seriously hampered the production of courtly, rhetorically styled poetry. The splendid projections of imperial prestige through literature did not catch on with Basileios.

### 9.2.2 Commission of poetry

How did the patronage of poetry work concretely? How were poets induced to do their work? Commission seems the most obvious process: the patron clarifies a purpose for which the poet provides the fitting words.

The most clear indication of a sustained program of imperial support for poetry is the title of Psellos 6 in some manuscripts. It records that Psellos had written a poetic overview of all sciences for Michael VII, on order (ἐκ προστάξεως) of his father.<sup>33</sup> Poem 2 on the Canticle of Canticles also explicitly states that it is written on the behest of Monomachos (v. 4: θέσπισμα, v. 1202 and 1215: ἐπίταγμα). As we already noted, also the choice of metre is represented as being imposed on Psellos.<sup>34</sup>

Whether this refers to a clear-cut commission from the part of the emperor, is not entirely clear. After all, the poems for Michael were already dedicated before to other emperors. Poem 2 as well is in some manuscripts dedicated to Michael Doukas, and in one even to Nikephoros Botaneiates. The references to a commission may well not reflect a real commission, but rather be a device to bring in the picture the interest of the emperor in the diverse forms of knowledge and to confirm his role as cultural patron.

Another category of commissioned poems are poems in which the commissioner speaks in the I-voice, but the text is written and claimed by the poet. Christophoros 55 is preceded by a lemma that reads ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ πρωτοσπαθαρίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Ὑψίνου; that is, the message pronounced in this poem (namely, a request to be promoted) does emphatically not apply to Christophoros, but to Hypsinous, who is also named at line 11. Christophoros is here nothing more than a ghost-writer, lending his poetic words to someone else, who is, significantly, also presented as a real historical figure (see the meticulous mentioning of his function). Similar ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου poems are quite frequent in Christophoros' corpus: so are poems 7 (on a well

<sup>31</sup>Lauxtermann, "John Geometres - Poet and Soldier", pp. 367–371; Opstall, *Jean Géomètre. Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>32</sup>As Lauxtermann, "John Geometres - Poet and Soldier", pp. 370–1 suggests for Geometres' case.

<sup>33</sup>Psellos, 6.title; The title is probably meant not only for poem 6, but for a series of poems, see Hörandner, "The Byzantine didactic poem", and *supra*, p. 75.

<sup>34</sup>See p. 197.

in a monastery, as pronounced by a remorseful monk), 66 and 67 (on a golden apple, as pronounced by a friend of a certain Eudokia). The most evident scenario is that these people have heard of Christophoros' poetic talents and demanded him to lend his poetic craft so that they could pronounce the words fitting for an occasion.

In other instances, poems are commissioned for a well defined occasion, mostly to serve as an epigram. In all these examples, poetry is but a part of the patronage of a greater project. Poetry is a service provided for by a craftsman who is of course rewarded for this.

In Christophoros 12, the *zygostates* Eustathios dedicates a church), and in 28, Eirene dedicates an *encheirion* to the Theotokos. In most other epigrams of Christophoros, there is no reference whatsoever to a patron or a clear-cut commission.

Upon the commission of a poem, sometimes several poems were made by the poet, from which the patron then apparently choose his preferred one. A known eleventh-century example is a series of epigrams on a cup made for Konstantinos Dalassenos.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps accidentally, a very similar series of poems is transmitted under the name of Psellos (poem 34), and is also made for a silver cup, here belonging to a woman.

These are examples in which highly placed officials made a commission. But mostly, extant poetry is composed for the occasion of imperial foundations. At this point, a survey of poems addressed or dedicated to emperors in the period 1025–1081 may give an idea of the extent of commission of poems, especially epigrams.

The anonymous of Sola has a poem on an icon inaugurated by Zoe when Romanos was her husband (2), and funeral verses for the former wife of Romanos, a certain Maria, who died in 1032 (poem 8). Moreover, Romanos had some epigrams inscribed (if in both cases not Romanos Diogenes is meant) on the apse of Hagia Sophia,<sup>36</sup> and on a reliquary of the True Cross, now in Bari.<sup>37</sup>

A foundation of Michael IV, the church of Theotokos Gorgoepekoos, is remembered in Anon. Sola 6. One of the brothers of Michael IV, Georgios, also funded an iconographic project, for which Mauropous in his younger years seems to have composed epigrams (poem 26, and, likely, the whole series of poems from 2 to 26).

A considerable part of extant poetry connected with Monomachos and his co-empresses, is related to foundations of churches and buildings. His grand project of St. George in Mangana spawned Christophoros 95 (and 96?), an anonymous poem in *Athen. Ethn. Bibl.* 1040,<sup>38</sup> and perhaps Psellos 31.<sup>39</sup> Objects in this church are celebrated in *Marc. gr.* 524, poem 8 (the *triklin-*

<sup>35</sup>Maguire, *Image and Imagination: the Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response*; and Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 42–43.

<sup>36</sup>Mercati, "Sulle iscrizioni di Santa Sofia", p. 293.

<sup>37</sup>Guillou, *Recueil*, p. 55.

<sup>38</sup>Sakkelion and Sakkelion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, pp. 184–185.

<sup>39</sup>The Mangana complex is not explicitly mentioned here.

ion), and Mauropous 71 (a liturgical book). Several other expenditures by Monomachos of icons and reliquaries are celebrated in epigrams transmitted in *Marc. gr.* 524.<sup>40</sup> Poem 2 from this collection is an epigram on an icon made by Longibards for Monomachos, and poems 10 and 11 are epigrams on an icon made for the Theotokos by Monomachos. His *flamoulon*, featuring his patron saint, also sported an epigram ascribed to Psellos (poem 27).

Foundations by Monomachos are frequently recorded by Mauropous. Poems 57, 58, 70, 71 and 72 are epigrams on books and icons dedicated by Monomachos. Mauropous 80, an epigram on an icon in the church of Sosthenios, celebrates the three emperors as its founders. The epigrams mention Monomachos explicitly in each case, but probably also in poems 75 to 87, the ‘emperor’ is to be identified with him.<sup>41</sup> An epigram adorning a portrait in the homiliarium *Sinait.* 364 celebrates Monomachos together with Zoe and Theodora.<sup>42</sup> Mauropous also wrote epigrams for an icon dedicated by Theodora to the archangel Michael.

Eudokia Makrembolitissa (reigned 1067) commissioned books in which poems pressed for patronage: so the *Paris. gr.* 922,<sup>43</sup> The *Paris. Coislin* 79, abounding with many poems, was executed with Michael VII Doukas in mind, but ultimately offered to Botaneiates.<sup>44</sup>

In all these examples, poetry forms part of a greater whole. We also need to take into account that many icons, books, and churches that are extant, do not contain any epigram. Epigrams were a surplus. It is not clear in what capacity our poets were summoned to do their work. Was Mauropous at a given moment the ‘court poet’, on whom the emperor did a call whenever he needed to add a poetic addition to a foundation of his? Nothing, except the amount of commissioned poems, points to this.

### 9.2.3 Rhythmical charms

In Psellos’ project of securing imperial literary patronage, poetry is seldom mentioned apart. Only once, in the sixth *basilikos logos* for Konstantinos Monomachos, in a flattering comparison, it is said that Alexander the Great is proclaimed and exalted both in prose and in poems.<sup>45</sup> Here, for once, poetry is specified as a means for praise, but not in any special contrast to prose, and, significantly, only in the context of a distant past.

Something similar can be said about the passage in the second panegyric oration depicting the dearth nowadays of orators and poets capable to describe Monomachos’ deeds.<sup>46</sup> Poetry does not stand in any contrast to prose; the

<sup>40</sup>See Lampros, “Ο Μαρκιανός κῶδιξ 524”, pp. 5–7.

<sup>41</sup>Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*; This is disputed by A. Kazhdan, “Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous”, *JÖB* 43 (1993), pp. 87–111.

<sup>42</sup>Inc. Ὡς τῆς τριάδος σῶτερ; edited in Spatharakis, *Portrait*, p. 100.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Inc. Εὐρών ὁ Χριστὸς ἀγάπην ξυνωρίδα, edited in: [103].

<sup>44</sup>Inc. Ὑψους ἀνάκτων, inc. Ὡς φωσφόρον φέρεις, inc. Ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμὶ σὸς φύλαξ, edited in *ibid.*, pp. 108–112.

<sup>45</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 6.295–6: Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Μακεδόνα ἄδουσι μὲν συγγραφέων λόγοι, βοῶσι δὲ ποιητῶν γένη.

<sup>46</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 2.27–30: see also *supra*, p. 101.

only reason to mention it is apparently to make the picture of possible forms complete.

When looking for the added value of poetry, it might be better to look at some qualities of rhetoric that would be especially played out in texts in a poetic form. In a letter for Mauropous (ep. Sathas 182), Psellos asserts that he is full of feelings of gratitude and admiration for his former teacher, and carries this through by enhancing his reputation in his conversations with other people. He says that he tries to speak about him as charmingly as possible, ‘adorning the speeches of praise with metrical figures’.<sup>47</sup> It is not sure whether this refers to poetry or to rhythmical prose (a subsequent reference to Gorgios points to the latter), but of course poetic texts can be considered as a kind of speech that pushes the ideal of rhythmicity and metrical graces to an extreme.<sup>48</sup> Psellos’ eloquence and its rhythmical qualities are here said to develop their full potential when they are put to use to enhance his friend’s reputation.

Another letter (Ep. Sathas 189) describes the various services of eloquence Psellos has performed for his addressee. Psellos boasts that his words, thanks to their excellent technical qualities, did not fail to have effect. Not only his knowledge of rhetoric did the trick, but especially his ‘rhythms’ charmed the ears of everyone.<sup>49</sup> As he specifies further on, the harmony of words may be sought both in prose and in poetry,<sup>50</sup> and both rhythm and harmony have the power to enchant people as with music.<sup>51</sup>

In another letter, he avers that he has exhausted every means to charm the emperor’s soul, in order to hail his friend back to the capital. To that end, Psellos has put to use all his ‘harmonic graces’ (ἁρμονικὰς χάριτας).<sup>52</sup>

Psellos especially singles out qualities as melodious, rhythmical, and harmonious, to give his gift of praise more value and enchanting power. Poetry, I would argue, provides the perfection of these qualities, but surely has not the monopoly to them, as it is clear that Psellos also lays stress on musical qualities in prose.

Christophoros’ poem 54, a short praise poem for Konstantinos Monomachos, may serve as an example of these musical qualities and their value in a gift of praise.

<sup>47</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 182, p. 464, l. 28–29: σχήμασι μετρικοῖς τὴν εὐφημίαν κατακοσμῶν.

<sup>48</sup>For such a view on the rhythmicity of poetry as associated with the rhythmicity of rhetoric, see Lauxtermann, “Velocity of Pure Iambus”.

<sup>49</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 189, p. 481, l. 18–19: θέλγονται μὲν γὰρ ἅπανα ὄσαι κατήκοοι τῶν ἐμῶν ῥυθμῶν, ἀλλ’ οὐχ οὕτως ὡς σύ.

<sup>50</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, p. 481, l. 30: τὴν γέ τοι ἁρμονίαν μὴ ἐν μέλεσι μόνον ἦγοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἔπεσι καὶ λόγῳ πεζῷ.

<sup>51</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, p. 482, l. 1–2: γίνονται δὲ κατακώχμιοι, οἱ μὲν τοῖς αὐλήμασι, οἱ δέ, τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς, οἱ δέ, ταῖς ἁρμονίαις τῶν λόγων.

<sup>52</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 48, p. 80, l. 13–15.



Ἔχεις τὸ λευκὸν εἰς τί μαργάρων χάρις;  
 τὸ ξανθὸν αὐχεῖς· χρυσὸς ὄντως εἰς μάτην.  
 πλουτεῖς τὸ φαιδρὸν· οἱ λίθοι βάρους μόνον.  
 κόσμον φέρεις σὸν· ἔρρέτω κόσμος νόθος.

You possess brightness — why then the beauty of pearls?  
 You can boast the blond — gold is truly to no use.  
 You are rich in splendour — stones are weight only.  
 You have your own ornaments — away with those false beauties!

Each verse forms an antithesis between Monomachos' beautiful features and the artificial beauty of jewellery. The distribution of dynamic accents in the verses creates a rhythmical pattern: in each verse, these two worlds are divided by the same verse pause (after the fifth syllable), with a stress on the fifth syllable, while the verse, as usually, ends with an accent on the eleventh syllable. The opposition between a final stress in the first verse half and a penultimate stress in the second, highlights this antithesis and creates an internal rhythmical variation that is for instance also present in the political verse. Apart from rhythmical structuring, also the pattern of sounds is well thought out. Each first verse half, except for the second, ends on the sound /-on/, thus resonating through the whole poem. The endings of each verse are paired by assonance: the first two verses end on the vowels /a/ and /i/, while the last two end on /o/ and /o/. These devices attribute the poem a particular musicality.

In light of Psellos' valorisation of rhythm and harmony, I would suggest that Christophoros' praise poem aims at investing as much of the rhythmical and melodious charms as possible to heighten the value of his words. It is intent on only one thing: charming the powerful person to whom it is dedicated.

## 9.2.4 Psellos 18: hymns for glorious deeds

Psellos' poem 18 consciously brings forward the connection between its poetic nature and its address to an emperor. It perfectly fits Psellos' promises that literary works enhance the bliss and prestige of an imperial reign.

The poem is dedicated to Isaak Komnenos. Westerink classified it under the *didactica minora*, since the major part of the poem explains the names of the ides, nones and kalendae. But in fact, the poem follows predominantly a rhetorical pattern: it is perfectly akin to a κλητικὸς λόγος as described by Menander Rhetor,<sup>53</sup> only that the aetiology of the feast takes a particular didactic form. The setting of the poem is the *καλάνδια*, a yearly feast in Constantinople.<sup>54</sup> Psellos tells the emperor that the crowds come together to

<sup>53</sup>Menander Rhetor, *Peri epideiktikon*, ed. by D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, Oxford 1981, pp. 182–192.

<sup>54</sup>A. M. Guglielmino, "Versi di Michele Psello all'imperatore, signore Isacco Comneno, sulle calende, le none e le idi", *Siculorum Gymnasium* 27 (1974), pp. 121–133, pp. 121–122; for the *kalandai*, see A. Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols., Oxford 1991 (henceforth cited as ODB), s.v. 'calends'.

cheer him (v. 40–43). In the final verses, Psellos describes his own role in this happy feast in honour of the emperor (vv. 44–58):

Ὅθεν καὶ γὰρ σοὶ τὰς καλάνδας εἰσάγω  
 καὶ μέτρα ποιῶ τοὺς ἐτησίους ὕμνους, 45  
 εὐάγγελός σοι προσφόρως δεδειγμένος.  
 χαῖρε, στρατηγὲ καὶ βασιλεῦ 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 ρυθμίζοντες εὐρύθμοις μέτροις.  
 χαῖρε στρατηγέ (τοῦτο γὰρ πάλιν φράσω)  
 ἀκινδύνου φάλαγγος εὖ τεταγμένης,  
 θέαμα φρικτὸν βαρβάροις τοῖς ἀθέοις. 55  
 σῶν γὰρ τροπαίων πᾶσαν ἐμπλήσεις χιθόνα,  
 καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα σοὺς ἀνυμνήσει πόνους  
 μέτροις τε ποικίλλουσα καὶ λόγοις ἄμα.

Therefore, I introduce the calends to you  
 And I shape my yearly hymns in a metrical form, 45  
 Showing myself fittingly as a bringer of a happy message to you.  
 Hail, general and emperor of the whole world,  
 Greatest, most renowned, ruler of all rulers!  
 Your resonating deeds, which cannot cherish in trifles,  
 Will be sung collectively by men 50  
 Who have enjoyed a refined education in rhetoric  
 And give rhythm to everything with their well-proportioned me-  
 tres.  
 Hail general—to use that name again—  
 General of a well-arranged phalanx which contains no danger,  
 A terrifying sight for the unbelieving barbarians, 55  
 You will fill the whole earth with your trophies,  
 And every tongue will sing in praise of your deeds  
 Alternating between poetry and prose.

The image of a triumphal feast is made complete by the praise the admiring subjects will lavish on their emperor. Psellos describes this praise three times, and each time, poetry is part of the laudations. First, Psellos himself asserts that the poetic eulogy he is now presenting to the emperor (v. 45: μέτρα ποιῶ), adds to the joyfulness of the message. Then, after a very short ‘preview’ of such a metrical praise (v. 47–48), Psellos announces that also the select group of cultivated men will present their praises. Again, he makes clear that they will do so with poetry (see 52: μέτροις), putting great stress on the rhythmical qualities of such a poetic praise. This seems part of their refined cultivation. Again, beginning with a χαῖρε, an example of such praise is given. Finally, in a progressive climax, all subjects are said to sing in praise of the emperor; in

this instance, poetry stands side by side with λόγοις, which is therefore likely to refer here specifically to prose.

Psellos advances three distinct qualities of poetry: the first is the fact that the poetic explanation of the calendrical turns this address into a joyful message. Poetry brings pleasurable knowledge. A second aspect refers to its capacity of being a sign of refinement, of cultivated education. The third one is the quality of ποιικιλία: in the quest for variation of forms, poetry comes in the picture as a welcome change. His deeds will be sung exhaustively in every form accessible to the *logioi*, under which also poetry. This poem thus at once propagates and exemplifies the glorifying power of poetry.

It is worth noticing that Psellos does not desist from pressing for an intellectually informed kind of patronage with an emperor who is considered as coming from the ‘military class’. Psellos retains the military reputation of Isaac (by calling him a στρατηγός and praising especially his military achievements), but he integrates this element seamlessly in the model of the cultivated emperor. Military achievements can gain renown by being the subject of poetry and rhetoric.

## 9.3 Traffic of services

The basis is laid for a system in which poetry can appeal to benefit the emperor and expect benefits in return. In the following, I will further describe the process that made that poetry may be viewed as an element in an ongoing exchange between poet and patron, on every occasion newly negotiated upon.

### 9.3.1 The logic of reciprocity

In Maupous 57, an epigram on an image of the emperor in Euchaïta, the generosity of Monomachos is praised. Apparently, a chrysobull of him has reinstated the ancient imperial privileges for the city. ‘Therefore, he receives in exchange a righteous gift, // by being pictured among our benefactors’.<sup>55</sup> The pervasive idea of rightful exchange between different kinds of capital is represented with great consciousness and near-commercial precision. The image of the emperor made by the citizens of Euchaïta is a favour in return for a privilege. The poem makes clear this expectation; it is the communicative side of the enterprise.

The praise for an emperor in texts, I would suggest, follows exactly the same logic of reciprocity. The logic of patronage requires that generosity of the emperor is responded to by acts of recognition through words, which in turn enhance the emperor’s renown and prestige.

A powerful example of this is to be found in a letter of Psellos to *caesar* Doukas (K-D 231) in which he evokes the ancient philosophers (Plato and Aristotle) who were entertained at the courts of kings. Psellos compares

<sup>55</sup>Maupous, 57.11–12: ὅθεν δίκαιον ἀντιλαμβάνει γέρας, // εἰς τοὺς καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐγγραφεῖς εὐεργέτας.

himself to these philosophers, and concludes that, while they evidently were very wise men, they had failed in their duties, since they have produced no praises for their patrons and have thus offended them (ὑβρις is the term that is used). Psellos asserts that if Doukas will act as his patron, he will outdo them in the elegance of his praises.<sup>56</sup> Psellos' commonplace of mixing rhetoric and philosophy reappears, here in help of the argument that philosophy alone is not enough to please a patron. He lays stress on the logic of providing praise (εὐφημία) for patrons: omitting to do that amounts to *hybris*.

The logic of reciprocity is a strong one and cannot be violated at free will.<sup>57</sup> It is telling that at a certain point in the *Chronographia*, when Psellos is about to give an uncensored account of Monomachos, he feels the urge to defend himself against accusations that he will blacken his former patron (book VI, §23).

I would be ashamed of myself if I did not seize every opportunity of commending him. I should be ungrateful and altogether unreasonable if I did not make some return, however small, for his generosity to me, a generosity which showed itself not only in positive acts, but in the indirect ways in which he helped me to better my condition. It would be shameful if I did not prove my gratitude in my writings. (...) I did not want to turn my literary talents against him, while I had perfected these talents because of his encouragements.<sup>58</sup>

The prayers to God not to reproach him for turning upside down this fundamental rule (§26) gives proof of the uneasiness of Psellos. A patron should by all means be gratified for the support he gives; not doing so, violates the basis of literary patronage. Monomachos had enabled him to exercise his rhetorical talents; not giving him a remuneration in the form of praise would be an outright shameful thing.

The reciprocity of services, also discursive ones, is particularly visible in Psellos' letter corpus. Reading his letters is like closely watching an enormous engine of social services at work. Promotions, intercession, friendships, recommendations, influence of judiciary cases, protection of monasteries, quarrels over land, education of boys from well-off families,... all kinds of services and goods are proposed, requested, promised, thanked for, or exchanged. Also the letters themselves, and the faculty of eloquence, are considered as services, and may be involved in the same transactions. Psellos' *logoi*, then, are seen as an independent kind of asset, but one with a special radiation.

<sup>56</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, 231, see esp. p. 278, l. 8–17.

<sup>57</sup>And, as I would like to suggest, neither can an author risk to bypass it by smuggling covered critique in his oration.

<sup>58</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §23: ὑπερ οὗ αἰσχυνοίμην ἂν, εἰ μὴ πᾶσαν εὐφημίαν τούτῳ συνεισενέγκαιμι· ἀγνώμων γὰρ ἂν εἶην καὶ πάντῃ ἀλόγιστος, εἰ μὴ ὧν ἐκεῖθεν τὰ μὲν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἔργοις, τὰ δὲ εἰς ἀφορμὴν κρειττόνων ἔσχηκα, πολλοστὸν ἀντιδοίην μέρος, τὴν διὰ τῶν λόγων εὐγνωμοσύνην· (...) ἥμισυ βουλόμενος (...) ἦν ἐκάθηρα γλῶτταν ἀφ' ὧν ἐκενός με πρὸς τοῦτο παρώρμησε, ταύτην ἐπ' αὐτῷ θήξασθαι; translation from Sewter, *Michael Psellus. Chronographia*, p. 122.

In a letter to an unknown acquaintance (ep. Gautier 31), he asks him for a favour, probably related to one of the monasteries that fell under Psellos' care:

So, let us in a certain way requite each other, and be reciprocally affected, me by giving words, you by giving me back deeds. (...) I have opened up with my mouth the sources of words in your favour, and you gush over me with your benevolence in a still greater stream, and by both, the bowl of friendship will become filled.<sup>59</sup>

The words of Psellos are supposed to enhance the renown of his correspondent, likely through recommendations with other people. The situation is profitable for both sides: the correspondent gains social capital, and Psellos can turn his rhetorical competences into material rewards—for this is arguably what is meant with 'gush with benevolence'.

In a letter to the bishop of Parnassos, the material rewards that Psellos receives, are spelled out concretely: cheese, pickled fish, and butter. Psellos thanks his acquaintance, and urges him that they should not cease to conduct these exchanges:

May you never break off this benevolent disposition, nor may I ever deprive you of my encomia; for I am rich in words, you in things. So, we will exchange to each other our own things in abundance, you what you are wont to give, and I the graces of words.<sup>60</sup>

In these two examples, Psellos proposes a specific service: praise through charming words. In a social world where intercession can play such a pivotal role, praise can be a precious service indeed. Significantly, Psellos implies that the most effective praise is that which is created by rhetorically attractive words. While his correspondents are rich in other things, Psellos possesses the competence to create such craftful praise. With other words, he has hold of the cultural capital that is able to generate this specific social capital that can be so valuable.

Psellos represents his orations too as acts of remuneration for other services. He describes the encomium for his friend Ioannes Mauropous as a 'debt that has been paid off',<sup>61</sup> and as for the encomium for his mother, he says 'I am repaying the just debt to nature and rendering the appropriate tribute to

<sup>59</sup>Gautier, "Quelques lettres de Psellos inédites ou déjà éditées", letter 31. Text: p. 184, l. 8–10 and p. 185, l. 15–17: Τρόπον οὖν τινα ἀντιδῶμεν ἀλλήλοις καὶ ἀντιπάσχομεν, ἐγὼ μὲν λόγους διδοῦς, σὺ δὲ ἔργα ἀντιδίδους. (...) Ἐγὼ μὲν πρὸς τὰς ὑπὲρ σοῦ τῶν λόγων πηγὰς ἀνεστόμωμαι, σὺ δὲ ἀνθυπερβλύζεις τὸ εὐγνωμονεῖν πλείονι βέουματι, καὶ γίνεται παρ' ἀλλήλους πλήρης ὁ τῆς φιλίας κρατήρ.

<sup>60</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, 75 (p. 107), l. 16–20: καὶ μήτε σὺ λήγεις ποτὲ τῆς τοιαύτης προθέσεως οὔτε ἐγὼ σε τῶν ἐγκωμίων στερήσαιμι· ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ πλουτῶ λόγοις, σὺ δὲ πλουτεῖς πράγμασιν. ἀντιδώσομεν οὖν ἀλλήλοις δαφιλῶς τὰ οἰκεῖα, σὺ μὲν, ἄπερ εἴωθας, ἐγὼ δὲ τὰς ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων χάριτας.

<sup>61</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 17, l. 853: ὡς χρέος ἐκτετισημένον.

virtue'.<sup>62</sup> The fiscal vocabulary in this last example is striking, with words as ὄφλημα (debt), and the very technical term συνεισφορά (joint contribution).

Another letter of Psellos, to droungarios Konstantinos, may serve as yet another indication that rhetorical elaboration serves as a special surplus value:

If I had sent you, just like on other occasions, this letter for nothing, I would not labour so much on the beauty of style; but now I am preparing something else: I am buying, or I am exchanging better things for worse things, and therefore I ornate this letter I am selling like in a shop, so that you, attracted by its outward beauty, are willing to acquire it for any price.<sup>63</sup>

In this example, we see a feature that will reappear often: Psellos implies that the asset he is giving, is superior to the material things others give. Another feature that may be striking, is that Psellos quite explicitly points out the exchange. By calling the whole operation a sale as in a shop, he exposes the mercantility of these exchanges, something that normally remains unspoken. It is implied that the rhetorical embellishment of the letter is carried out because of a service Psellos asks from his friend; the literary surplus value should thus match the amount of social service Psellos is asking for.

In discussing the various ways in which texts were exchanged, I must also attract the attention to a letter of Mauropous which is very interesting in this regard. Letter 33 is sent to a person called Χρυσορρός in the beginning. He must refer to an author (see l. 14: ταῖς γραφαῖς σου), but I am reluctant to accept Karpozilos' identification with Psellos.<sup>64</sup> The letter is far from clear, but it seems certain that Mauropous had sent a project of a discourse (l. 10: σχεμμάτιον) imitating the style of his correspondent. For this work of ghost-writing, Mauropous requests a payment (v. 16: νομίσματά), which must be ample enough, for the creation of the work, metaphorically described as a birthgiving, has been long labour. As far as I can see, this is one of the most explicit accounts of a literary service for which a direct payment is requested. This payment is even to be (ideally) in proportion to the length of the text. Here, for once, the writer emerges as a craftsman to be paid for his work.

### 9.3.2 The dedication of a work

Another factor in the use of texts in the traffic of service is the dedication of the work. Here we should from the beginning make clear that 'work' refers

<sup>62</sup>Psellos, *Or. fun. in matrem*, l. 3–4: τῆ φύσει τὸ δίκαιον ἀποδίδωμι ὄφλημα καὶ τῆ ἀρετῇ τὴν πρόβουσαν εἰσάγω συνεισφοράν; translation from A. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters*, Notre Dame, IN 2006, p. 51.

<sup>63</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 85, p. 325, l. 17–23: Εἰ μὲν οὖν προῖκα ὡσπερ δὴ καὶ τὸν ἄλλον χρόνον προσηγήροισι σοὶ τὴν ἐπιστολήν, οὐκ ἂν περὶ τὸ κάλλος ἐπραγματευσάμην τῶν λέξεων· ἐπεὶ δὲ ἄλλο τι νῦν ἐξεργάζομαι, ἐξωνούμενος, ἢ ἀνταλλαττόμενος τῶν κρειττόνων τὰ χεῖρονα, διὰ ταῦτά σοι περιανθίζω ὡσπερ ἐν πωλητηρίῳ ταύτην δὴ τὴν ἀπεμπολουμένην ἐπιστολήν, ἵνα δὴ τῷ φανομένῳ κάλλει θελχθεῖς, ὅποσσοῦδήποτε ταύτην προήη τιμήματος.

<sup>64</sup>Mauropous, *Epistulae*, p. 227–228 holds it that Psellos, ep. KD 33 was a letter in response to this letter, adducing some similar metaphors in both letters, which are quite conventional; moreover, Psellos hints at the death of Mauropous' brother, which is not mentioned at all in Mauropous' letter.

both to the ‘copy’ of a work and the ‘work’ as mental concept. Genette made the distinction between *dédier* (of a copy) and *dédicacer* (of a work),<sup>65</sup> but in fact, for Byzantine texts, this amounts to the same. As we have observed in the chapter ‘Poets’, there was almost no sense of a ‘literary work’ as the creation of an ‘author’. Thus, it is easier to see that Psellos could have no problems in dedicating the same work several times to different emperors: in essence, he was each time dedicating another gift.

In the case of the didactic poems, a dedication could act as an aggrandising factor. The poems, which sometimes explicitly state the emperor’s interest in the matter at hand (like in poem 2), confirm the role of the emperor as cultural patron and lover of learning. Being the recipient of such a learned gift conferred prestige on their name.

Only mentioning a name in a work is indeed already a token of prestige. In a curious letter to a certain Mchetarios, Psellos mentions that he planned to mention him in his Chronographia, apparently to do him a favour, but now he threatens to abandon this plan.<sup>66</sup> So, only a mentioning in a writing may be seen as a social service, given, exchanged, and here retracted.

In the beginning of his essay on the rhetorical style of Gregorios of Nazianzos, Psellos dedicates the work to Pothos, a person to whom also other works are addressed. Psellos makes clear that such a dedication was sought after by many:

I have not given this work to anyone else, while, as you know, many press me for this, but I have since long promised it to you, and now I give it with feelings of jealousy.<sup>67</sup>

In the logic of service, the dedication can make up in fact the backbone of the signification of the poem. This has been suggested also for so-called ‘empty’ letters:<sup>68</sup> they keep the friendship going without more. An amount of seemingly gratuitous energy is spent on preserving the fact that one is ‘on speaking terms’ with each other.

Some poems have the same outlook and intent. We have already referred to Christophoros 100, a poem asking Niketas not to remain silent. This is a text solely intended on reconfirming the friendship. Psellos 29 is still more emphatically a gratuitous service for friends. It is in this sense exceptional because it is directed to a group of friends: the Bardai, Prokopioi and Kinnamoi (v. 3). The poem is nothing but an twelve-verse long address, mentioning the various official titles of his friends. This is a poem, offered as a gift with as a value nothing more than the fact *that* it was offered.

<sup>65</sup>Genette, *Seuils*, pp. 141–143.

<sup>66</sup>Psellos, *Ep. Sathas*, letter 108.

<sup>67</sup>Mayer, “Psellos’ Rede über den rhetorischen Charakter des Gregorios von Nazianz”, p. 48, l. 24–26: οὐχ ἑτέρῳ τὴν σπουδὴν χαρισάμενος, βιασαμένων, ὡς οἴσθα, πολλῶν, ἀλλὰ σοὶ ταύτην πάλαι μὲν ὑποσχόμενος, νῦν δὲ φιλοτίμως διδούς.

<sup>68</sup>Mullett, *Theophylact*, pp. 112–113.

### 9.3.3 Requests

In the exchange of texts for material rewards, the relationship between poet and patron is sometimes more awkward than in the cases hitherto adduced. This may be shown by a poem from an intellectual who occupies a more inferior position in the intellectual field. This is the poem in *Athen. Ethn. Bibl.* 1040,<sup>69</sup> 85 verses long, bearing the title ‘For the emperor lord Konstantinos Monomachos’. It also mentions this emperor in the text itself (v. 50 and 78). This poem makes clear how a different position in the social hierarchy implies different rhetorical strategies.

The poet tells about himself that he is a teacher (referring to his pupils in v. 40), that he is 60 years old (v. 25), and had written a work documenting the rebellions of Leon Tornikios and Ioannes Batatzes (v. 1–4). From the beginning of the poem, our teacher takes an extremely obsequious stance. He fears that the arrow of Monomachos’ power may kill him if he dares to write, although he has kept silent up to now (v. 8–9). He lets it be understood that it could be perceived as an impertinence to bother the emperor for a request. This element returns at the end of the poem, where he promises to make an end to his poem, since ‘as the saying goes, a long speech is a burden for the ears’ (v. 70: *μηχος λόγου γάρ ὡσὶν ἄχθος, ὡς λόγος.*).

The request is introduced by saying that the emperor is being surrounded by a splendid and dignified circle of servants (v. 15–20). They received dignities because they showed themselves so faithful to Monomachos’ empire (v. 21). Now he introduces his own case: while he is equally old as these people, he is not on their par in learning and manners (v. 23: *ὁ τοῖς λόγοις ἄνισος ὦν καὶ τοῖς τρόποις*); he prevails on everyone in this respect (v. 24). We can see here how this wronged teacher appeals to the same meritocratic ideology as others do in this period: the motivation for his promotion should consist in his intellectual competences and his investments in it. His clearly inferior status entails that he needs to spotlight his capacities.

After this motivation, the poet refers explicitly to the exchange status of this poem (v. 28–32):

ὡς οὖν βασιλεύς, τῇ δικαίᾳ σου κρίσει  
 ζυγοστατήσας ὃν προβάλλομαι λόγον,  
 εἴ μὲν τι τολμᾷ τῷ κράτει τῷ σῷ πρέπον  
 καὶ μοι προσῆκον ὄντι δούλων ἐσχάτων,  
 πλήρωσον αὐτὸ καὶ παράσχου τὴν χάριν.

Therefore, as emperor, weigh with your righteous judgment  
 The poem I hereby present to you,  
 And if I dare something worthy for your power  
 And fitting for me, being among the most base slaves,  
 Fulfill this, and provide me with this favour.

<sup>69</sup>Edition in: Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, pp. 71–74; for the implausibility of Karpozilos’ ascription to Mauroπους, see Anastasi, “Review of: A. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ιωάννη Μαυρόποδος*”.



The emperor is asked to consider this poem and assess its worth. The value of his enterprise should decide whether his request can be granted. Also the value of the reward needs to be weighed on a balance: ‘Nobody will debunk me with reason, by saying that I request a gift that is too valuable’ (v. 45–46).<sup>70</sup> The poet states it is not fitting one should request small things from persons who are so powerful and rich, especially Monomachos who is like a gold-flowing river of *rogai* (v. 47–51). Understandably, it is not the function itself that this man is after, but the *rogai* connected with it. In the following verses, the generosity of Monomachos is described in terms that seem to come right from the blissful *basilikoî logoi* of Psellos: without hesitating he pours out dignities to everyone (v. 54–55), thereby representing an immense *charis* (v. 55). As in other texts pressing for patronage, the generous character of the emperor is hailed and extolled. The poem closes with a prayer to Christ to protect Monomachos and the pair of empresses.

The social conventions that play their role in the dynamics of patronage come here to the fore. On the one hand, there is the poet who must take the opportunity to advance his case and to have the impertinence to force an access to the emperor; on the other hand, he needs to be conscious of his position and show enough deference.

Christophoros’ poem 55, although much shorter (13 verses), is perfectly comparable. Significantly, it is a poem written *ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου*: Christophoros wrote it for protospatharios Ioannes Hypsinous.<sup>71</sup> The argument is exactly the same: Monomachos is hailed as a generous emperor, everyone benefits from his donations and promotions, except for the applicant, who hopes that the emperor will remedy this fault. The rhetorical argumentation is built around two instances of word play: Monomachos is like the river Pactolus. However, unlike that river, he does not only stream with gold (3: χρυσορρόας), but also with honorary functions (4: τιμορρόας, a neologism). The request itself is also based on word play: Monomachos, who elevates (10: ὑψῶν) everyone, will also elevate Hypsinous (11: ἀνυψώσειε καὶ τὸν Ὑψίνου).

The image of the Pactolus river reoccurs in a panegyric oration of Psellos (Or Pan 2.668), referring as well to Monomachos’ generosity. The convenience of this comparison is twofold: it fits the greater set of metaphors of streams, rain, etc., which is often used to refer to rewards and generosity (passim in Psellos’ βασιλικοὶ λόγοι and also in the 1040-begging poem, v. 51: ῥοῦν μιμῆται

<sup>70</sup>Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, p. 72 puts these verses between quotation marks, suggesting that they are the proverb announced in v. 44. However, I believe the verses before it allude to an unknown proverb which probably uses the image of an old man carrying young men on his shoulders.

<sup>71</sup>Lauritzen, “Christopher of Mytilene’s Parody of the Haughty Mauropous”, establishes a direct link between this poem and Mauropous, ep. 33: according to Lauritzen, the poem is a parody on this letter, ridiculing a quest of Mauropous for promotion. I believe this thesis is for many reasons untenable: the very unlikely identification (even ironically) between a protospatharios Hypsinous and Mauropous, who never held that rank; the sustained and intransparent irony that would be used; the fact that Mauropous, also in ep. 33, was never eager for a promotion; the unlikeliness that Christophoros, not belonging to Mauropous and Psellos’ circle, would have read ep. 33; the ubiquity of the metaphor of ‘golden streams’ (cf. infra), etc.

χρυσόρρειθρον) while it can at the same time refer rather explicitly to gold, the thing that mattered of course when speaking about rewards.

These poems, although not exactly begging poems in the twelfth-century sense, clearly put the applicant in an inferior position. It is not insignificant that our poets known by name did not write such a request by their own name (or did not allow it to circulate more broadly). Their more prominent position could apparently allow them to style their requests in a more self-composed manner.

### 9.3.4 Gratitude

A literary service can also follow upon the material service that is performed earlier. In this case, expressions of praise are represented as acts of gratitude for earlier services by the patron.

Mauropous 54, 'When he first got to know the emperors', addressed to Monomachos, is permeated by the feeling of thankfulness. It describes *in extenso* the joy felt by Mauropous when he came into contact with the emperor. The poem is presented as an act of gratitude that follows in a totally logical way on the favours bestowed on Mauropous. Praises are the natural consequence of his admission to have access to the emperor (v. 13–15):

καί που με δεινὸς πρὸς τὸ πρᾶγμα νῦν ἔρωσ  
 ἄφνω κατέσχε καὶ βιάζεται λέγειν  
 ὡς τερπνὸν οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν βασιλέως.

And the powerful love for this [sc. his first contact with the emperor]

Took suddenly hold of me and forces me to say  
 That there is nothing so sweet as the emperor.

It is implied that if the emperor keeps taking care of Mauropous, his effusive praises will also continue.

But at the same time, Mauropous takes the opportunity to introduce a new request: from verse 88, Mauropous asks the emperor's help to lift a fear he has. Apparently, some of the emperor's entourage, 'standing before the gate' (v. 91: πρὸ τῆς πύλης), hinder Mauropous' free access to the emperor. He compares them with gatekeepers from mythology and the Bible. In sum, Mauropous asks for an access to the emperor that is still more unbothered than now: 'Give me a way that is wholly calm'.<sup>72</sup>

We see here how praise can play its role in the dynamics of exchanging services. Praise creates goodwill, and in this capacity, it is able to requite other deeds of benefaction, and, significantly, praise provides an excellent opportunity to introduce new requests. As such, the chain of exchange is continued in a seemingly endless interplay between requests and gratification.

Another, even more subtle, example of this is Christophoros' poem 19. It is a poem in dactylic hexameters for the emperor Michael IV. It looks like a very

<sup>72</sup>Mauropous, 54.109: τὴν ὁδὸν μοι πᾶσαν ἡμέρον δίδου.

conventional short encomion in verse, but it has its own peculiar emphasis. By means of a *priamel*, the poet tells us that other emperors were preoccupied with war (v. 1), horse-races (v. 2), or learning and literature (v. 3); not so Michael, whose prime concern is *ἐλεημοσύνη* (v. 4–7):

σοὶ δ' ἐλεημοσύνη τιμᾶται ἕξοχα πάντων·  
 μειλιχίη γὰρ ἅπαντα βρότεια γένη ἐλεαίρεις·  
 οὓς ὀλοῆς πενίης δὲ βέλος δάμασεν πολὺπικρον,  
 τοῖσιν ἄφαρ παρέχεις ἄλλαρ, σκηπτοῦχε, ἀρήγων.

5

You, by contrast, venerate 'mercy' most of all,  
 Because, by virtue of your kindness, you pity all mortal folks  
 Who are smitten by the bitter arrow of baneful poverty.  
 These people you provide a helping hand, sceptre-bearer, by relieving them.

5

The word *ἐλεημοσύνη* is completely out of tune with the otherwise epic-sounding vocabulary. It is otherwise almost exclusively used in Christian context, and has often the stricter sense of 'almsgiving', charity out of pity for the poor.<sup>73</sup> It is telling that instead of martial or cultural achievements, he advances this feature as an imperial virtue. The poem, continuing with a curse for those who do not love him and closing with a wish for a long reign, can thus be considered as a confirmation of a generous policy of distributing wealth.

Things may not always go so smoothly for our literati. A letter of Psellos to the empress Eudokia Makrembolitissa shows us the creeks in the ideal system of imperial patronage (ep. Gautier 35). In this letter, it appears that the empress had accused Psellos of being ungrateful. Psellos brings in that he has performed many literary services for the empress in exchange for her benevolence:

Ungrateful, I, who have depicted your virtues in orations as well as in writings, for everyone to read? [. . .] Ungrateful, I, who have deified [unreadable] great, small, mental, material; and for any of these having made an elaborate writing?<sup>74</sup>

It is here reconfirmed that writings in praise of someone are considered in the logic of exchanging services. Psellos denies the fact that he is in default in the balance of exchanges towards Eudokia, because he has rendered her many services by authoring works (written and spoken) that enhanced her status for the whole population.

He continues by arguing that his literary services for past emperors were greatly valued:

<sup>73</sup>G. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 19th ed., Oxford 2005.

<sup>74</sup>Gautier, "Quelques lettres de Psellos inédites ou déjà éditées", 35.6–12: Ἄγνώμων ἐγὼ ὁ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις τὰς σὰς ἐξεικονίσας ἐν τε λόγοις ἀπλῶς καὶ συγγράμμασιν ἀρετάς; (...) Ἄγνώμων ἐγὼ ὁ πάντα ἰ... ἐκθειάζων μεγάλα τε καὶ μικρὰ καὶ ψυχικὰ καὶ σωματικὰ καὶ ἐφ' ἐκάστῳ τῶν πάντων ἐσπουδασμένον ποιούμενος σύγγραμμα;

Most of these (emperors), even the more average ones, have honoured intellectuals before all others. They have let them partake in their benevolence, and thought them worthy of uncountable favours, calling them ‘dear ones’ in stead of subjects.<sup>75</sup>

Following this sentence, Psellos refers to the various favours done to him by Eudokia’s husband (Konstantinos X) and by Monomachos, who treated him as a friend and as a teacher.

The empress’ role as a cultural patron in the track of the predecessors is again made clear to her. She is asked to assume the same stance towards intellectuals as other emperors do. This will be to her advantage, for Psellos will, out of gratitude, only utter praise for her. He shows that he is submissive to her and will not make any false presumptions: he is ‘dependent on her soul’.<sup>76</sup> Again, the labour invested in literary works is restated: Eudokia is begged not to ignore ‘the speeches by day and the writings at night’.<sup>77</sup> So, this letter gives the patronage relationship with Eudokia, obviously at a low, again a push in the right direction.

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<sup>75</sup>Gautier, “Quelques lettres de Psellos inédites ou déjà éditées”, 35.51–53: οἱ γε πλείους καὶ μετριώτεροι τοὺς λογίους πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἐτίμησαν καὶ πάσης εὐμενείας τούτοις μετέδωσαν καὶ χαρίτων μυρίων ἤξιωσαν καὶ φιλότατους ἀνθ’ ὑπηκόων ὠνόμαζον.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 35.82: τῆς σῆς ἐξηρητημένον ψυχῆς.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 35.83–84: δημηγοριῶν ἡμερινῶν τε καὶ νυκτερινῶν συγγραφεῶν.

# Chapter 10

## Gifts

In a panegyric oration for the emperor Konstantinos Monomachos, Michael Psellos draws the attention of the emperor to the various branches of learning:

Philosophy, jurisprudence and the sophistic art, the first from heaven, the others from more earthly spheres, have now, as by agreement, come together for you, not to judge your deeds or to criticize them—for who is more correct than the rule itself?—but to see and admire your deeds, and to bring words as a gift for the man who has elevated those words.<sup>1</sup>

Psellos stresses that intellectual pursuits will not run counter to the interests of the emperor: they will not bring criticism, only admiration. In the scenario that he evokes, all the emperor has to do in support of learning is accept the gifts that are brought to him spontaneously. It has to be noted that while the three branches of learning are quite divergent—with philosophy significantly taking the lead part—their gifts are only offered to the emperor in the form of ‘words’, implying that the literary form is the most convenient way to communicate learning.

This all sounds attractive and quite harmless. But at the same time, both parties more or less consciously understand that Psellos here demands material support for the benefit of intellectuals and their learning and teaching. Not without purpose, Psellos adds that the ‘gifts of words’ are intended for ‘the man who has elevated them’. He advances the ideal of a cultivated emperor who partakes in the glory that learning can provide. As such, he is expected to appreciate these admirations, even to the degree that he ‘elevates’ them; in other words, that he provides adequate support to make the creation of these ‘gifts of words’ possible. The material price for this glory is not mentioned, but implicitly understood.

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<sup>1</sup>Psellos, *Or. Pan.*, 1.22–28: φιλοσοφία δὲ καὶ νομοθετικὴ καὶ ἡ σοφιστικὴ τέχνη, ἡ μὲν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, αἱ δ' ἐκ περιπεζίων σφαιρῶν, ὥσπερ ἀπὸ συνθήματος εἰς ταῦτόν σοι ἤκασι νῦν, οὐχ ὥστε κρίνειν ἢ δοκιμάζειν τὰ σά—τίς γὰρ τοῦ κανόνος εὐθύτερος;—ἀλλ' ἰδεῖν καὶ θαυμάσαι, καὶ τοὺς λόγους δωροφορῆσαι τῷ τούτους ὑψώσαντι.

In this chapter, I will take a closer look at some of these ‘gifts of words’, explore the various ways in which poetry helped to give these gifts a form, and try to describe some of the implicit overtones that emerge when a poem presents itself or something else as a ‘gift’. I will approach the concept of ‘gifts of words’ as a discursive construction, and not necessarily as the reflection of a historical cultural practice. In the previous chapter, we have already seen that *logoi* could be made into an asset that found a place in the exchange of goods and services. The concept of gift makes use of this.

But gift giving is a special kind of economic exchange, as both parties pretend that it is, in fact, not economic.<sup>2</sup> Both giver and receiver let it be understood that the gift is a spontaneous, gratuitous present, and does not need to be reciprocated. However, in reality, it is very clear that both parties tacitly, or even unconsciously, agree that it does need to be reciprocated. This phenomenon of disguise has been referred to by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as ‘méconnaissance’, the willing failure to recognize openly that material rewards are expected.<sup>3</sup> It is this tension between implicit material interests and professed disinterestedness that will inform my readings of some poems.

Some gifts can be real and tangible, others have a more symbolic, and thus more fluid value. This value is created and measured by the common presuppositions of the cultural context in which it takes place. As we have seen, within the world of intellectuals, a disinterested devotion to *hoi logoi* was highly valued. This will play a part in the attribution of value to the ‘gift of words’.

## 10.1 Poetic gifts and material rewards

Psellos saw no obstacle in proposing that gifts of words implied gifts of other various kinds, as the examples in the previous chapter have shown. In the world of Psellos’ letter corpus, words had their own special place in the intricate traffic of services and goods, one imbued with a special symbolic value.

In a letter to Iasites (Sathas 171), Psellos asks for a mule that Iasites apparently is about to give.<sup>4</sup> Psellos presents this very letter as a gift of words that is worth far more than Iasites’ gift. He exploits to this end the philosophical connotations of the word pair *λόγος* and *ἄλογον*, the latter obliquely

<sup>2</sup>On gift giving as an anthropological phenomenon, see the seminal work of M. Mauss, *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*, Paris 1923; recent studies on gift exchange in Byzantium include A. Cutler, “Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38.1 (2008), pp. 79–101; C. J. Hilsdale, “Constructing a Byzantine augusta: a Greek book for a French bride”, *The Art Bulletin* 87 (2005), pp. 458–483.

<sup>3</sup>P. Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique*, Paris 1980, pp. 191–4; For a critique on this self-interested aspect M. Osteen, “Questions of the Gift. Introduction”, in: *The Question of the Gift*, ed. by M. Osteen, London/New York 2002, pp. 1–41, pp. 23–26.

<sup>4</sup>See my analysis of this letter in: F. Bernard, “Exchanging *Logoi* for *Aloga*: Cultural Capital and Material Capital in a Letter of Michael Psellos”, *BMGs* (forthcoming).

referring to the mule Iasites will give. He reminds Iasites of the power his words can have, and stresses the ever renewable source of it: thanks to his literary talent, he can create as many words as he likes. Adducing also Plato's imagery of the soul as a span of horses pulled by the *logos*, he is able to imbue the image that his gift of words should be supported with all material means (and here also literally with a horse).

In another letter, to Chasanes, kritès of Macedonia (Sathas 172), Psellos again weighs out the worth of the gift of words in contrast to other material gifts. In this letter, the gift of words is worth less than the gift of gold, because the former can only metaphorically be described as gold, whereas the latter is real gold. But all the same, the gift of gold is less respectable (439.30: ἄτιμος) than the gift of words, which is an immaterial product of the mind. The playfulness of the reasoning should not lead us astray: a service consisting of words is here exchanged for gold, both presented as gifts contesting with each other in a literary setting (the scene of Glaukos and Diomedes exchanging shields in Iliad 6).

Both letters, perhaps not coming accidentally just after each other in the collection in the manuscript, do two things at the same time: they reaffirm the immateriality of *logoi* and their superiority in a symbolic sense, but they also allow for it being exchanged with a kind of assets that is definitely material.

The rhetoric of 'words in exchange for things' comes to the surface again in poems of the period. And 'things' can also be cucumbers: poem 105 of Christophoros Mitylenaios is a poem about a cucumber-bed kept in a vineyard.<sup>5</sup> The poem is severely damaged; from the initial part, we can only infer that the poet addresses the vineyard keeper, and asks for some of his cucumbers. The poet also mentions a short writing that seems to be exchanged for the skills of the vineyard keeper (v. 7: σου τὴν τέχνην βραχεῖ λόγῳ), and a 'payment coming from encomia' (v. 9: μισθὸν ἐξ ἐγκωμίων). The subsequent verses indeed appear as an encomium: the gardener is praised for his efforts to keep the vineyard (and the cucumbers) clean from robbers and vermin. From line 52, just after stating that he will remember the gardener until his death, Christophoros repeats his demand:

πρὸ τοῦ θανεῖν δὲ ζῶντί μοι νῦν εἰσέτι  
 ἐκ τοῦδε τοῦ σοῦ σικυηλάτου δίδου·  
 ἤδη γὰρ οἶδα τῶν ἐπαίνων σοι κόρον,  
 οὓς ἀντὶ μισθοῦ τῶν ὀπωρῶν εἰσφέρω·

55

But before I die, give me now something  
 Of this cucumber-bed of yours while I still live;  
 For I realize that by now, you have enough of the encomia  
 I contribute in return for the recompense of your fruits.

55

<sup>5</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 143–4. In contrast to this interpretation, I do not think that the speaking voice in the poem is a fortuitous passer-by, but rather (the persona of) the poet himself, for there is obviously a proposal of poems in exchange for cucumbers. The praise for the vineyard keeper defending his garden against robbers, is not to be taken as a complaint about his avaricious nature, but as an element of genuine praise.

It is clear from these lines that Christophoros refers to this very poem when he mentions ‘the encomia’, since he represents the gardener becoming wary of his praises, which have by now indeed been continuing for fifty verses. Consequently, the encomia and the ‘short writing’ mentioned in the beginning, which are said to entice an exchange, need to be understood as this poem itself.

The word *μισθός*, mentioned at least twice in relation to this very poem (lines 9 and 55), underlines the mercantile aspect of the exchange. This mercantile feature is also evident from the fact that this ‘poetic currency’ can be used cumulatively: the poem closes with the promise that if the cucumbers please him, Christophoros will write more praises (v. 59–64).

Of course, the tone here is playful, and we should not be too quick to posit a mechanical barter economy where verses are sold for cucumbers—in fact, this is exactly what the discourse of gift giving by-passes. This example is meant to indicate merely that the rhetoric of ‘words for things’ existed and found currency. Moreover, the poem can serve as a demonstration of the encomiastic power of a literary gift: in a real *tour de force*, Christophoros succeeds in giving the vineyard keeper the dimensions of a hero and a martyr. Notwithstanding the playfulness of the argument, I would therefore suggest that there was some real value inherent in a literary service like this; that is, the power to give (or detract) social renown and prestige.

In a second example, the tone is less playful and the stakes are higher. Poem 16 by Michael Psellos was very probably written for the emperor Michael IV, when Psellos was still a young man looking for a job opportunity in the bureaucratic system of the capital. We have already argued that the beginning of the poem heightens the symbolic value of the asset Psellos promises to give, that is, his *logoi*, in which he has invested so much effort and time. I want here to focus on the poem’s ending, which defines it as a gift and connects this with a rather explicit request (v. 15–17):

δέδεξο λοιπὸν οἰκέτου δῶρον λόγον·  
 σὺ δ’ ἀντιδοίης τὴν κατ’ ἄξιαν δόσιν  
 τοῖς σοῖς με πάντως συμβαλὼν νοταρίοις.

So, accept now this poem as a gift from a servant;  
 But you, may you give me a reward of equal value  
 By recruiting me as one of your secretaries.

This poem is emphatically identified as a gift (15: δῶρον) consisting of a λόγος. This is immediately connected with a plea to reward this gift with a job as a secretary. Psellos makes clear that the reward must be something of equal value (16: τὴν κατ’ ἄξιαν δόσιν). This reward is also described as a counter-gift (16: δόσις) that needs to be ‘given in return’ (ἀντιδοίης). Here, Psellos points to the inherent ethics of gift-giving; that is, that every gift supposes a counter-gift, with the expectation that a lasting gift exchange will arise. The expectations about the crude economic mechanics of gift exchange are stated here in an unusually explicit manner. It should be noted that Psellos’ gift worked: he did obtain a function as a secretary in the administration



of Michael IV, as we learn from his *Chronographia*.<sup>6</sup> The discourse of the gift thus evidently implies that something should be given in return.<sup>7</sup>

However bluntly this poem may express its expectations, it also reveals some presuppositions that are only applicable to ‘gifts of words’. In the first part of the poem, Psellos emphasises his dedication to intellectual values. With the toils he spent for the *logoi*, he hoped to be conspicuous and to be successful (see above, p. 134). This poem itself then, also called a *logos* (v. 14), is a token of these investments, and provides ample proof that Psellos mastered all the intellectual competences needed for a responsible job.

In the case of this poem or Christophoros’ cucumber-poem, we do not need to think that poet and recipient seriously believed that the poem in itself sufficed as a means of payment in return for cucumbers or a job as a secretary: other factors will probably have played a greater role. But I would argue that the presentation of the transaction as a poetic gift of words confers to it a particularly graceful aspect, and permits both participants to think of it not as an economical transaction, but as an act of aesthetic admiration. The rhetoric of ‘gifts of words’ only works because the recipients are supposed to attach an extraordinary value to the beauty of words and the amount of intellectual energy and talent that is needed to achieve that beauty. The poems themselves are the place where the social or economical exchange finds an adequate and refined expression.

## 10.2 Expenses and dedications

Poetry not only serves to be presented as a gift; it also serves to present other things as a gift. Poetry was a particularly apt medium to dedicate gifts, through its wide-spread use as an epigram, that is, a text written *on* something else.<sup>8</sup> Of course, many poems in Byzantium are connected with objects: icons, books, buildings, most of them in a religious sphere.<sup>9</sup> The verses attached to these objects give them a social direction. They tell the viewer or passer-by that these objects are created and paid for by a certain person who intended something by funding them.

The genre of the dedicatory epigram is old, of course: its history goes as far back as the oldest remnants of the Greek language. But within the overall religious context of Christianity, and the specific context of the eleventh century, a period which witnesses for instance the growing importance of private gifts to monasteries, dedicatory epigrams acquire specific significations. These specific overtones I want to describe in this paragraph, focusing rather on what epigrams do in a social sense, than describing their generic status.

This is a field in which art history and study of poetry fruitfully enrich

<sup>6</sup>Psellos, *Chronographia*, book V, §27.

<sup>7</sup>See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 40–42 for examples from before the year 1000.

<sup>8</sup>For this ‘byzantine’ definition of ἐπίγραμμα, see *ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

<sup>9</sup>For an overview of the uses of ‘religious epigrams’, see Kominis, *Τὸ βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ οἱ ἐπιγραμματοποιοί*, pp. 26–47.

each other, as has been shown by the work of Henry Maguire.<sup>10</sup> However, in investigating the patronage of art, epigrams have often been read at face value, without taking into account specific discursive elements. In the following, I will discuss some isolated cases of artistic patronage and the role of epigrams in it. A more comprehensive overview or in-depth analysis must stand out for the moment. The project on book epigrams that will start off in Ghent, and which will provide a database of book epigrams in Byzantine manuscripts, will surely give an impetus to this kind of research, together with the progressive publication of the Vienna corpus of Byzantine inscriptions.

### 10.2.1 Public expenses and public spaces

In the early nineteenth century, the English mineralogist and traveller Edward Clarke visited Constantinople. Not only did he bring from there the manuscript collection named after him in the Bodleian (among which also the E. Clarke 15); he also noted down some traces of an inscription in the apse of the Hagia Sophia that was at that moment still visible.<sup>11</sup> Today, no traces remain, but Mercati could ascertain that the fragments noted down by Clarke belonged to an epigram also transmitted in some manuscripts, where it functions as an example of elegiac distichs. The poem as it is reconstructed by Mercati runs as follows:<sup>12</sup>

Καὶ τήνδ' οὐρανίην ἀψίδα χρόνῳ μογέουσαν  
 Ῥωμανὸς ἤδρασεν ὀλβιόδωρος ἄναξ,  
 ὃς καὶ χρυσοῦ πεντήκοντα τάλαντα θεοῖο  
 ὕμνοπόλοισι νέμειν πρόσθετο εὐσεβέως.

And also this heavenly apsis, withered with time,  
 has been secured by Romanos, the blissfully generous emperor,  
 who has also piously distributed in addition  
 fifty golden talents among composers of religious hymns.

Since we have ample historiographic evidence that Romanos III Argyropoulos spent much money on the Hagia Sophia and its clerics, it seems nearly certain that he is the emperor Romanos mentioned here.<sup>13</sup> The word ὕμνοπόλος, in poetic usage, can mean 'poet'; however, when later writers were talking about the ὕμνοπόλοι in the context of a church, they were referring more specifically to 'hymn writers',<sup>14</sup> and I think this more limited definition applies also in this case.

The epigram is directly related to the place where it was visible, referring to it as 'this apsis' (τήνδ' ἀψίδα). People who would see the visible beauty and

<sup>10</sup>H. Maguire, "Epigrams, Art and the "Macedonian Renaissance"", *DOP* 48 (1994), pp. 105–115; Maguire, *Image and Imagination: the Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response*.

<sup>11</sup>Edited in his *Travels*, published in London, in 1812.

<sup>12</sup>Mercati, "Sulle iscrizioni di Santa Sofia", p. 293; See now also Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, 401 (nr. M14).

<sup>13</sup>Mercati, "Sulle iscrizioni di Santa Sofia", pp. 291–292.

<sup>14</sup>See for instance Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, p. 319.

wealth of the apsis would instantly be reminded of the patron responsible for it. The epigram provides a social justification of the costs and provenance of the inscribed object. It defines the object as a public gift from the emperor to the community. The initial word καὶ moreover suggests that it formed only one part of a restoration program of the church by Romanos.

However, the second half of the inscription is not directly related to its physical location, except that the hymnographers were connected with the Hagia Sophia. The epigram provided an occasion to record also this donation, which was not tied to a visible object. This may also explain the mention of the precise payment. It is in fact quite exceptional to find a precise amount of money mentioned in an inscription recording a donation. When an epigram on an object or building indicates that this building had been restored by someone, the result of this expense would be visible and self-explanatory. But a donation of money to hymnographers cannot be expressed or demonstrated by a visible object, hence an explicit mention of the sum paid.

The gift is presented as the desire of an emperor who is rich in gifts (ὀλιβόδωρος), and who is pious (εὐσεβέως). The double gift obviously forms part of a particular ideology: the emperor appears as a generous and pious protector of divine glory in his divine empire. His generous gifts enhance his status, and this is all the more borne out by the epigrams. Dedicatory epigrams are elements in social ostentation: nearly always the giver is mentioned, and most often with a detailed identification (functions, provenance, etc.).

Personal expense and official function in society go hand in hand in the dedications of public gifts. In Christophoros 12, Eustathios the zygostates restores a church on his own expense (12.1: ἐῆ δαπάνη), but his functions are mentioned in detail and make up the half of the poem. Public ostentation of the expense made by the donor is the most important element.

### 10.2.2 The poetic discourse of funding and expense

Our commonly used terms ‘dedication’ and ‘donation’ do not have an exact equivalent in common Byzantine usage. The vocabulary used by a ‘dedicatory epigram’ to denote the acts and agents of the gift is peculiar, and needs to be understood against the background of cultural practices. It is understood as if the act of getting an object in possession (either by producing or by buying it), is an act that can be dedicated to a Saint or a Divine Person. This act can be rewarded through the mediation of the Saint, in the form of the redemption of sins. A typical example are the last verses of this rather frequent epigram on the evangelist John, inc. Βροντῆς γόνον σε, occurring inter alia in *Sinait. gr.* 172 (a.1067), fol. 168 and *London Add.* 17470 (XIc.), fol. 220.<sup>15</sup>

ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸς αὐτὸν νῦν ἔχων παρρησίαν  
 ἄνωθεν αἰτοῦ τὴν λύσιν τῶν πταισμάτων  
 ἔμοι δοθῆναι τῷ πόθῳ κεκτημένῳ

10

<sup>15</sup>Edition of the poem in: W. Hörandner, “Randbemerkungen zum Thema Epigramme und Kunstwerke”, in: *Polypleuros Nous. Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by C. Scholz and G. Makris, 2000, p. 79.

τὴν παντὸς ὄλβου τήνδε τιμιωτέραν  
τῶν σῶν φαεινῶν δογμάτων θείαν βιβλόν.

But since you have the right to speak to him (Christ),  
beg him high above that to me may be given  
the redemption of my sins, for I have acquired with desire  
this book, more valuable than any riches,  
this divine book with your radiant doctrines.

10

The specific argument of the dedication is that the owner of the book has performed an expense: he has ‘acquired’ this book. In exchange for this expense (of time, energy, and money), he demands the benevolence and protection of the Lord, through John’s mediation. This is in fact the most basic model. The verb standing central is *κεκτημένω*: as Karl Krumbacher pointed out long ago in a still relevant study, this verb denotes the possession of the book as well as the ‘funding’ of it (the *Stiftung*), that is, its production by providing in the costs for its manufacture and material.<sup>16</sup> Both in the German word ‘Stiftung’ and in the English ‘foundation’, we encounter the same ambiguity between ‘founding’ and ‘funding’. The object remains a private possession, but it is being ‘acquired’ in an act made public, in honour of a saint or of the Lord. The acquisition is a personal expense in devotion of a patron saint, and the epigram helps to make this expense public.

In a recent study of the signification of the word *κτήτωρ*, Kambourova pointed out that ‘possession’ in a religious public sphere is to be understood as a transition between private possession and gift to the divine.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the owner is only a ‘modal proprietary’: the object in question is dedicated to Christ, and thus prepares the detachment of the human of his material possession. So, we do not always have to suppose a transfer of the object. What stands central, is the energy and devotion by which the object is acquired.

The verb *κτάομαι* is often replaced by a verb that simply denotes the expense or energy that was involved in the production of the object. The verb *τεύχω* is the most general of these. Also for this verb, a semantic problem arises: in most of the cases, this verb does not always refer to the physical manufacture of the object (the writing of the scribe, or the creation of the artist), as many studies seem to assume,<sup>18</sup> but rather to funding of the project in general, its production, in the largest possible sense. It is used in a causative sense: the object is ‘caused to be made’ by someone. For instance, in the epigram accompanying the famous Menologion of Basil II,<sup>19</sup> the production of the book is described with the verb *τεύξας* with Basil as subject of the verb (v. 13), but this obviously does not imply that Basileios had written this book himself: it implies that he has funded the whole project.

<sup>16</sup>K. Krumbacher, “Κτήτωρ. Ein lexicographischer Versuch”, *IF* 1909 (25), pp. 393–421.

<sup>17</sup>T. Kambourova, “Ktitor: le sens du don des panneaux votifs dans le monde byzantin”, *Byzantion* 78 (2008), pp. 261–287.

<sup>18</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 159.

<sup>19</sup>Inc. Ἐνταῦθα νῦν σκόπησον ὀρθῶς ὁ βλέπων, *Vat. Gr.* 1613. Edited in E. Follieri, *Codices graeci. Bibliothecae Vaticanae selecti temporum locorumque ordine digesti commentariis et transcriptionibus instructi*, Città del Vaticano 1969, p. 34.

It should not surprise us that sometimes the term δεσπότης, more unambiguously referring to the proprietary, turns up as an equivalent for the κερτημένος, connected with the same expectations. In the epigram inc. Εὐαγγελιστῶν τοὺς θεοπνεύστους λόγους,<sup>20</sup> three aforementioned designations occur on the same level to designate the ‘funder’, ‘producer’, or ‘owner’:

εὐχαῖς φιλοφρονεῖσθε τὸν τετευχότα  
ὡς δεσπότην πρωτουργὸν ὡς πᾶσι τρόποις  
ταύτην προθύμως κτώμενον κτῆμα ξένον. (my emphasis) 12

Honour in your prayers the producer,  
as he is the original owner, and as he has in all possible ways  
readily acquired this book, as an admirable possession. 12

Nor is the term γράφω unambiguously used for the scribe of a manuscript. At the end of the *Vat. Gr.* 1650, a manuscript from 1037 containing a commented New Testament and works of Chrysostom, we find (f. 185v) the epigram inc. εἴληφε τέρμα βιβλος ἡγλαΐσμένη.<sup>21</sup> In this epigram, Nikolaos, bishop of Reggio Calabria, states that he has ‘written’ this book (v. 3: ἔγραψε). In a following epigram (or series of three epigrams), which is basically a hotch-potch of existing book epigrams on Evangelitaria,<sup>22</sup> Nikolaos identifies himself again as bishop in an additionally inserted verse, and he asks the readers to ‘admire his initiative’ (v. 10: θαύμαζε τῆς εὐβουλίας). After this epigram, we find a scribe’s notice (in prose) that clearly attributes the writing work to a certain Theodoros Sikeliotes,<sup>23</sup> and attributes its commission to our Nikolaos, also expressly named ktëtor: ἐγράφη αὕτη ἡ δέλτος διὰ χειρὸς Θεοδώρου κληρικῶν Σικελιώτου κατ’ ἐπιτροπὴν Νικολαοῦ ἐπισκόπου κτήτορος ταύτης). The addition διὰ χειρὸς is here the sign of the physical writing. The expression ἔγραψε that Nikolaos had used for himself in the first epigram, has to be taken in its causative sense as ‘had written’. The difference between the prose notice and the poetic dedication is to be noted: in the former, the naked truth is simply told, whereas in the latter, the discourse of a symbolic production is maintained.

Nearly all objects that sport dedicatory epigrams are dedicated to divine persons or saints. In fact, this results in a contradiction, dear to the Byzantine mind so susceptible for theological subtleties and rhetorical antitheses. All of these objects are material and can even be precious and beautiful objects. This may raise the suspicion that its funders are merely accumulating material wealth, while the intent of the dedications must be purely devotional and void of any material expectations. Also, the material value of the object can

<sup>20</sup>The epigram occurs often; see E. Follieri, “Epigrammi sugli evangelisti dai codici Barberiniani greci 352 e 520”, *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata* 10 (1956), pp. 61–80, 135–156, esp. 147.

<sup>21</sup>Edition of the epigrams in C. Giannelli, *Codices Vaticani Graeci. Codices 1485-1683*, Città del Vaticano 1961, p. 372.

<sup>22</sup>Inc. ἡ πηγὴ ὧδε τῶν μαθητῶν τοῦ λόγου, conflating three existing epigrams.

<sup>23</sup>As such appearing in E. Gamillscheg, D. Harlfinger, and H. Hunger, *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten, 800-1600*, Wien 1981–9, p. III.217.

obviously not be an indicator of the amount of devotion someone feels. Many epigrams have a rhetorical structure built around these contradictions: they justify that the ‘funding’ of a precious object does reflect a genuine feeling of devotion.

Most wide-spread and straightforward is motivating the foundation in the feeling of *πόθος*. This notion, mostly translated in this context with ‘desire’, denotes the devotion with which the object is given. As a result, the return of the exchange should not be measured on the basis of the material value of the object, but the amount of *πόθος*. In the greatest part of dedicatory epigrams, the expression *ἐκ πόθου, πόθῳ* is added to the verb denoting the expense that is made.

In a lectionary from the second half of the eleventh century, an epigram on the frontpage<sup>24</sup> announces that a *proedros* Ioannes has spent much sweat in the production of this book. His request is stated as follows (v. 4–8):

Δίδου μοι λύσιν πολλῶν ἀμπλακημάτων  
 πόθῳ γὰρ προσφέρω σοι τὰς δέκα βίβλους  
 βίους ἄθλους τε μαρτύρων καὶ ὁσίων,  
 πρέσβεις τούτους προβαλλόμενος θαυρήσας  
 ὄση προνοία πρόεδρος Ἰωάννης.<sup>25</sup>

5

The *pothos* is the motivation for the plea Ioannes makes (see the conjunction *γάρ*).

The juxtaposition between material wealth and inner feelings of devotion is expressed and elaborated in the book epigram inc. Ἔσπευσαν ἄλλοι χρυσὸν εὐρεῖν ἐν βίῳ<sup>26</sup>. There, it is said with a priamel that others search for gold, land or precious stones. But the possessor (v. 4: *δεσπότης*) of this book does not search for those things, but for beauty of the prophet’s words. He has sought them ‘out of godly-inspired love’ (v. 7: *ἐξ ἔρωτος ἐνθέου*) and has collected the only wealth that is permanent, as all things on earth wither and only the Word remains: (vv. 8–9: Ἐνθεν συνῆξε πλοῦτον, ὃς μένει μονος. Πῆ πάντα (...) γῆς γὰρ καὶ λόγος μένει μόνος.). He asks that the one ‘who has adorned this with much desire’ (v. 11: *τὸν ταύτην κοσμήσαντα τῷ πολλῷ πόθῳ*) be protected. A discourse is developed that actively tries to refute that material wealth is the motivation for the expense. Only the desire and devotion (*ἔρως, πόθος*) are the true acts for which one should be rewarded.

Within this ethical framework, there can be no question that the amount of expense would be mentioned, for the dedication is not seen as a financial transaction but as the result of religious zeal. Only seldom does a notice in a manuscript precisely mention the costs of the book; they mostly do not even refer to such a payment, but imply that the work is done ‘on order’, or, to

<sup>24</sup>Inc. Ἰδρώτων οὐκ ὀλίγων Χριστὲ Θεέ μου, from Princeton Speer Libr. Cod. 11.21.1900, fol. 1\*; edited in Spatharakis, *Portrait*, p. 75. For this epigram, see also above, p. 51.

<sup>25</sup>Edition in *ibid.*, 75. I corrected here and there some obvious orthographic errors.

<sup>26</sup>Found, among others, in *Vat. Gr. 342*. Edition in S. G. Mercati, “Confessione di fede di Michele Categumeno del monastero fondato da Michele Attaliate”, in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. 1, Bari 1970, pp. 609–617, text: 617.

put it even more weakly, ‘by exhortation’.<sup>27</sup> Nor do inscriptions on objects ever mention the exact amount of money invested in it.

### 10.2.3 Actors of a dedication: the case of the Theodore Psalter

The precise direction of the expense can be approached in a similar manner in the case of the so-called Theodore Psalter, a lavishly decorated psalter created in the Stoudios monastery. Scholars have sought in this psalter (and surprisingly, rather in the images than in the text) hints to contemporary ideological and religious tensions,<sup>28</sup> but I believe its social signification is that of public expense rather than a comment on contemporary events.

A dedication epigram of this book is to be found on fol. 207v, after the main text. Michael the Synkellos is portrayed and identified by an inscription. Next to his portrait, we find in golden majuscules this epigram:

Αἰνῶ σε σῶτερ τερματίσας τὴν βίβλον  
τοῦ σοῦ προφήτου καὶ σοφοῦ βασιλέως.<sup>29</sup>

Michael is identified as the producer of the book, to which he has now completed. It is thus presented as if Michael the Synkellos, the patron of the book, was also the one who has written the book. This is however not the case. At the facing page, another colophon is added, in prose, in which the monk Theodoros announces that he was written the book with his hand (Χεῖρὶ δὲ γραφὴν καὶ χρυσογραφηθὲν θεοδώρου μοναχοῦ ... τῆς αὐτῆς μονῆς) on the order of synkellos Michael (ἐπιταγῇ μὲν γεγενημένῃ τοῦ θεσπεσίου πατρὸς καὶ συγχέλλου Μιχαήλ).<sup>30</sup> This colophon merely provides factual information, but it does not form part of the dedication proper, in which Michael is the giver and Christ is the receiver. This distinction emerges more clearly when we see that the prose colophon is followed by a one-verse epigram, a dodecasyllable, written in golden majuscule, visually standing out from the rest of the page (see fig. 10.1).<sup>31</sup> This single verse again directs the glory of the book to its origin and ultimate beneficiary, that is, Christ: Χριστῷ ἄνακτι δόξα καὶ κράτος πρέπει. The visual features of this text are associated with its poetic form, as I would like to add. Its graphical and poetical outlook identifies it as an

<sup>27</sup>G. Cavallo, “Forme e ideologie della committenza libraria tra Oriente e Occidente”, in: *Committenti e produzione artistico-letteraria nell’alto medioevo occidentale: 4-10 aprile 1991*, Spoleto 1992, pp. 617–643, pp. 626–7.

<sup>28</sup>See for example J. C. Anderson, “On the Nature of the Theodore Psalter”, *The Art Bulletin* 70.4 (1988), pp. 550–568; B. Crostini, “Navigando per il Salterio: riflessioni intorno all’edizione elettronica del Manoscritto Londra, British Library, Addit. 19.352 (Seconda parte)”, *Bollettino della badia greca di Grottaferrata* 56-57 (2002–3), pp. 133–210, sees rather a message destined for the ongoing dispute with the Latin church.

<sup>29</sup>C. Barber, *Theodore Psalter. Electronic Facsimile*, CD-ROM, 2005, 207v, text, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup>In favour of Theodoros also being the illuminator: J. Lowden, “An Inquiry into the Role of Theodore in the Making of the Theodore Psalter”, in: *The Theodore Psalter. Electronic Facsimile*, CD-ROM, 2005.

<sup>31</sup>For this visual separation, see also *ibid.*, who does not recognise the verse as a poetic verse.



Figure 10.1: London Add. 19.352, fol. 208; image from C. Barber, *Theodore Psalter. Electronic Facsimile*, CD-ROM, 2005

elevated text, and as such, it also voices the more elevated side of the dedication. Just like in the Vat. Gr. 1650, the prose notice could make clear who the real scribe was and who the commissioner, but the dedicatory poems, instead, follow another discourse, avoiding any crude reference to the ‘commission’ or the physical scribe.

The miniature with the investiture scene and epigram on fol. 191v–192 is the key scene of the representation of the book’s intents. This scene shows Michael the abbot receiving a stick from Christ as a sign of power. The scene is surrounded by an epigram, inc. ὦ Χριστέ Σωτήρ. As Dufrenne has observed, the image is a variation on some other marginal images in the psalter that depict the transmission of the charge of ἡγούμενος, and the motif of the divine investiture of the abbot was a common theme among manuscripts manufactured in the Stoudite monastery.<sup>32</sup>

In the epigram, saint Prodromos, patron of the Stoudite monastery, is speaking,<sup>33</sup> mediating with Christ in favour of abbot Michael. The mediation through the Saint Baptist allows the poem to display an answer of Christ to his ‘friend’, and to speak out clearly that Michael has any divine support and authorisation he needs. But who is here requesting for what? In fact, what Saint Prodromos asks for, is a ‘kind’ and ‘agreeable’ abbot to rule his monastery (v. 6: ἡδὺν, εὐπρόσιτον σὺν λόγῳ). In whose interest could this possibly be other than in that of the monks? When looking at the miniature of the investiture, the monks are also present, kneeling at the feet of the abbot, accompanied by the inscription ‘monks showing repentance’. While they are

<sup>32</sup>S. Dufrenne, “Deux chefs-d’oeuvre de la miniature du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Cahiers archéologiques* 17 (1967), pp. 177–191.

<sup>33</sup>A. Iacobini, “Il segno del possesso : committenti, destinatari, donatori nei manoscritti bizantini dell’età macedone”, in: *Bisanzio nell’età dei Macedoni : forme della produzione letteraria e artistica*, ed. by F. Conca and G. Fiaccadori, Milano 2007, pp. 151–194, pp. 190–191.



not represented as giving the book (that privilege is for their abbot and their patron saint), they are surely represented as supporting the entreaty. And of course, one (or some) of them was also responsible for its execution.

Whether ideological overtones are present, is up to others to discuss, but there is one thing that needs to be sorted out: it is highly improbable that the emperor is the implicit destinee of the book, as Crostini had suggested.<sup>34</sup> Crostini thinks that it is a contradiction that such a splendid work should remain confined to a monastic milieu. Also, she deems it improbable that if such enigmatic messages are inscribed in the psalter, these would not reach their destination. The latter suggestion seems to me a circular argument. Additionally, I would add that the ethics of the gift assume that the recipient of the gift is mentioned, if not elaborately glorified. It would be very unconventional if the emperor were the recipient, but his presence were only hinted at through an identification with David, as Crostini suggests.<sup>35</sup> A gift is an act of ostentation: both donator and recipient need to be mentioned and glorified as participants in the gift exchange.

The Theodore Psalter is another example of a pattern that we can observe in other dedicated objects. Nominally, they are dedicated to Christ, but in fact, a religious institution is both the beneficiary and the benefactor. The creators are often monks, and the destination of the object is the monastery itself. The book was to be put on display, demonstrating the power and affluence of the monastery and the abbot, and hence the sumptuous execution can find a motivation. Although the abbot was the nominal giver of the 'present', the monk Theodoros, who executed the book, took the opportunity to obliquely put forward a request in favour of the monastic community, through the Saint Baptist as a mouthpiece.

### 10.3 Mauropous' programmata: dedicating gifts of words

Poems can also dedicate other poems. An eminent example of this is Mauropous 55, which we have treated in the chapter 'Reading' (p. 53). In this case, the gift itself (55b) is also a poem. This might imply that the poetic gift does not always refer to itself explicitly as a gift, while many poems did function in such a way. 55b is an example: when we take away the epigram 55a, there is no explicit indication to be found that it was intended as a gift.

The function of a poem as the presentation of a gift of words emerges more clearly from poem 27 of Mauropous. It is indicated in the title as a *πρόγραμμα* for Mauropous' oration for the Dormition of the Theotokos (or. 183), and it is embedded in a small series of *programmata* in the collection (27–31). The word *πρόγραμμα* can be taken quite literally: the poetic dedicatory inscription might have been physically affixed before the main text as it appeared in the

<sup>34</sup>Crostini, "Navigando per il Salterio: riflessioni intorno all'edizione elettronica del Manoscritto Londra, British Library, Addit. 19.352 (Seconda parte)", p. 191.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 191–192.

manuscript. In contrast to an ἐπίγραμμα, it was written before the dedicated object instead of on it, but all the same it functioned as a paratext, and would provide a visually marked indication of the circumstances of the gift.<sup>36</sup>

In poem 27, Mauropous presents the oration as a garland for the Theotokos, and asks her to allow him to crown her with it; but he adds the following precaution (v. 24–29):

εἰ δ' οὖν, τὸ δῶρον δεξιᾶς σῆς ἀξίου,  
 αὐτὴ τε σαυτὴν εὐπρεπῶς τούτῳ στέφε· 25  
 ἢ μᾶλλον εὐπρέπειαν αὐτὴ τῷ στέφει  
 προσψαύσεως σῆς ἀξιουμένῳ δίδου.  
 ἡμᾶς δὲ τοὺς λόγοις σε τιμῶντας μόνοις  
 ἔργοις σὺ πάντως ἀντιτίμησον πλέον.

If not, [sc. if I cannot crown you myself] deem this gift worthy of  
 your right hand,  
 And crown yourself with it, in dignity. 25  
 Or rather, attribute dignity to this garland  
 By deeming it worthy of your touch.  
 As for us, who have revered you with words only,  
 Reward us at any rate more, with deeds.

The poem concludes (l. 34–36):

ταύτην ἀμοιβὴν τοῦ πόθου καὶ τοῦ λόγου  
 λάβομεν ἐκ σοῦ, καὶ τὸ τῆς δόξης στέφος, 35  
 καὶ ταῦτα μεῖζον ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐλπίσαι.

May we receive from you that reward for our desire and our words,  
 And also the wreath of renown, 35  
 Even if hoping this lies beyond our limits.

The poet is keen to underline the spiritual nature of the exchange that takes place here. All the poet has to offer are his words and his well-intended feelings. The word *pothos* (translated as ‘desire’) is important here again: it refers to the intention and the personal devotion that motivate the gift, in contrast to its intrinsic, ‘real’ material value. Elsewhere in the poem, Mauropous states that it is not this garland of words that is worthy of the Theotokos, but the *pothos* that underlies the act of giving, and that gives strength to this oration (v. 13–16).

Another important aspect of gift giving that is revealed in poem 27 is Mauropous’ claim that the Theotokos is able to attribute dignity to the gift and the giver merely by accepting the gift. The slightest touch of her hand (v. 27: προσψαύσεως) will confer glory on the gift and its donator. What Mauropous hopes for, as he says in the second-last line (v. 35), is ‘the wreath of renown’. I am convinced that this aspect can be extrapolated to gifts among

<sup>36</sup>For the similar status of *programma* and *epigramma*, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, p. 30.

humans: if a gift is accepted by a recipient who holds a higher hierarchical position, this acceptance aggrandises the giver as well, because his or her gift was deemed worthy of the attention of the mighty. The request for renown (35: δόξα) thus might have repercussions that extend into the context of the initial readers and listeners of the poem. Mauropous' oration was, of course, read out in a public place, in the presence, we may presume, of important officials. Therefore, the wish for renown is at the same time the wish for an appreciative reception of the oration by the contemporary (and maybe also subsequent) listeners (and readers). The fact that the gift consists of words, is in itself a token of a higher form of gift exchange. It is with a defiant tone that Mauropous asserts that his gift consists of 'only words' (v. 28).

In poem 28, a *programma* to an oration for the commemoration of the angels (or. 177), this aspect is elaborated to a further degree: the argumentation goes that even if Mauropous were able to give something of material value, he would still only give a gift with the appropriate intentions (v. 5: σὺν προθυμίᾳ), and since he feels only love for words and learning (v. 7–9), he can only offer a gift consisting of words. This is expressed in almost mystical, or at any rate, ascetic terms: he renounces all worldly things to devote himself to *logoi* (v. 9). This devotion is characterised as love, (v. 7: ἔρωσ), a term with strong mystical overtones.

The value of his gift resides not in its material price, but, as Mauropous represents it, in the renunciation of this value. All the same, also his gifts do not come out of thin air: Mauropous stresses that the preconditions to create such a gift, learning and knowledge of literature, were only gathered at the price of long labours (see v. 10: ἅ μοι συνῆξαν οἱ μακροὶ μόλις πόνοι). The latter aspect ensures that his gift of words acquires a social exclusivity. Only people who had access to education and who went through the whole process that education imposed on them, would master the necessary linguistic and rhetorical skills to create an acceptable gift of words. However humble this dedication may sound, it helps to build up Mauropous' self-representation as an intellectual, and it limits the people able to profit from it or to assume such a discourse.

It must be noted that in both *programmata*, the gift giving is performed on the level of a religious relationship. In fact, the discourse of gift exchange was very appropriate for the expression of the relationship between man and God: the idea of ἀντίδωσις or ἀμοιβή, the reward that one receives in the life hereafter for the good deeds done on Earth, is seminal to Byzantine religious thinking.

## 10.4 The gift of words: a gift unlike the others

In one of his letters to *caesar* Doukas, Psellos describes his reaction to the *caesar's* gift of truffles:

Your beautiful gift, the truffles, I gladly considered not as 'the richest of lands', as the expression goes, but as the enjoyments of

my *caesar*, and as the food shared at your table. Therefore, I will even more gladly enjoy the foodstuff. But what do I care about gifts? I am content, instead of everything else, with your letter and your usual way of addressing me.<sup>37</sup>

‘What do I care about gifts?’ Does Psellos with this question endanger the gracefulness of gift exchange? Surely not, for he says he will eat the truffles: this is not a denial of the gift. But what he surely does, is avoiding to express his happiness with the truffles as only a delicious foodstuff: he makes clear that the signification of these truffles lies in the fact that his friend enjoys them and shares them. The intrinsic, material value of the gift is brushed aside: that form of mundane wealth is understood not to count for an appreciative judgement of the gift. What does make up the joy of receiving, in this line of argumentation, are the feelings with which it is given, the signification within the personal relationships of the participants.

But in the last sentence, Psellos goes even further: he altogether dismisses the gift and states that he would rather get some more letters of him. For all we know, we can suppose that the *caesar* was not really an intellectual or accomplished letter-writer. But he surely was someone willing to match up with the image of a cultural patron—at least, Psellos frequently cast him into this role.

For someone not at home in this line of arguing, it might have sounded outright rude that someone would so bluntly refuse these presents. The slight protestation against material gifts in favour of literary gifts was a *topos* in epistolography.<sup>38</sup> It is in the very inversion of normal polite conventions that more exquisite conventions appear. The addressee, and of course, also the subsequent audience of the letters and poems, had to understand the ironic voice of such refusals of gifts, and the implication that instead, shared intellectual values are celebrated. In this way, by making up a discourse that can only be shared by the initiate, a group of intellectuals is able to distinguish itself. It is not about whether the truffles are appreciated or not, it is about the awareness that you should appreciate that costly gifts are apparently not appreciated.

The common celebration of gifts normally finds its foremost literary expression in epistolography: letters express gratitude for received gifts, or accompany gifts sent to a friend. In fact, quite a few poems by Christophoros are perfectly comparable with this kind of letters. Poem 43 thanks his friend Niketas Synadenos for the gift of bandages for his sore feet. Poem 45 accompanies a gift of fresh jars (with aromatic wine?<sup>39</sup>) for a friend in summertime; also here, the poet proclaims the pothos with which the gift is given. Poem 64 accompanies a book (and perhaps more—the poem is greatly damaged)

<sup>37</sup>Psellos, *Ep. K-D*, letter 40, p. 66, l. 26–30: Τὸ δέ σου καλὸν δῶρον, τὰ ὕδνα, οὐχ ὡς οὐθата γαίης κατὰ τὸν εἰρηκότα, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐντροφήματα καίσαρος καὶ ὡς κοινωνήματα τραπέζης τῆς σῆς, εἶδόν τε ἡδέως καὶ ἡδύτερον καταπολεύσω τοῦ βρώματος. ἀλλὰ τί μοι τὰ δῶρα; ἀρκεῖ μοι ἀντί παντός τὸ γραμματίον καὶ ἡ συνήθης σου προσαγόρευσις.

<sup>38</sup>A. Karpozelos, “Realia in Byzantine Epistolography X-XIIc”, *BZ* 77 (1984), pp. 20–37, pp. 20–21.

<sup>39</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, pp. 89–90.

given to protopapas Ioannes. Poems 66 and 67 accompany the gift of a golden apple for a certain Eudokia, written on behalf of a friend. Poem 87 and 88 reject in a playful sophistic manner first a gift of grapes and then a gift of figs from a friend. Poem 94 accompanies ‘mesisklia’ sent to a certain Leon;<sup>40</sup> from a fragmented line, we can infer that Christophoros thanks Leon for the affection (v. 4: *στοργή*) he has shown with this gift. Poem 110 is coupled with some wine sent to a certain Kosmas. Poem 117 is sent along with a perfume of roses for the monk Athanasios, suggesting that Athanasios might pass the gift along to other friends. Besides, it may be mentioned that also other poems not mentioning gifts, are perfectly comparable with types of letters. The so common reproach of silence is the subject of poem 4 (see the beginning *Ἔτι σιγᾶς*). Poem 72 is sent from afar to a certain Konstans, who is said to be missed by his friends, and poem 100 is a request to Niketas to speak to Christophoros.

But most of these poems accompany or respond to gifts sent to or from friends: the titles frequently use the verb ‘send’ (*ἀποστέλλω* or *πέμπω*) in reference to the gifts, although the poems themselves designate them more expressly as ‘gifts’ (45.1, 117.1: *δῶρον*, 43.6: *δόσις*). The poems display the same conventional motives as letters written to thank people for gifts, such as the joy of receiving (see 45.3: *σὺν ἡδονῇ ... δεῖξαι καρδίας*), and *ad hoc* explanations of the hidden meaning of gifts (so 43, 87, 88, and possibly implied in 64.2 *κεχυμμένην*).

However, three ‘gift poems’ join the discourse of ‘gifts of words’ with these conventions of friendly, elegant gift exchanges, by focusing on the poem as an autonomous gift. I will leave aside the intriguing, but heavily damaged poem 97, which seems to respond favourable to a gift of words from a friend. I will focus on poems 115 and 124, both written—perhaps not by accident—on the occasion of popular celebrations. These are the *broumalion*, celebrated in November, and the *kalandai*, the first days of the year.<sup>41</sup> Both celebrations, which were officially condemned, included exuberant merrymaking and masquerades, but they were also appropriate moments to exchange gifts.

Christophoros’ poem 115 bears the title ‘To his friend Nikephoros, who sent him cakes during the time of the *broumalion*’.

Ἐκ ῥημάτων με δεξιῶ, μὴ πεμμάτων  
 ἐμοὶ γὰρ ἡδὺ βρουμάλιον οἱ λόγοι,  
 ὡς προσκυνητῆ καὶ λατρευτῆ τοῦ λόγου,  
 τῶν δὲ σταλέντων πεμμάτων τίς μοι λόγος;  
 λοιπὸν γε τοίνυν σύ, γλυκὺς Νικηφόρος,  
 ἀφείς τὸ πέμμα καὶ πλατύνας τὸ στόμα  
 τὰ δ’ οὖατα γλύκαينه καὶ μὴ τὸ στόμα,  
 ταῖς ἡδοναῖς τέρπων με τῶν σῶν ῥημάτων.<sup>42</sup>

Greet me with words, not with cakes!

<sup>40</sup>It is not known what these *μεσίσκλια* are; see LBG, s.v. *μεσίσκλια* : ‘eine Speise?’

<sup>41</sup>For these feasts, see ODB, s.v. ‘Broumalion’ and ‘Calends’. See also poem 18 of Psellos, written on the occasion of the *kalandai*.

<sup>42</sup>I adopt Crimi’s conjecture *δ’ οὖατα* at v. 7, see Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 156.

Words are for me a sweet *broumalion*,  
 as I am a devotee and worshipper of words.  
 What do I gain by the cakes you sent me?  
 So, my sweet Nikephoros, as for you,  
 leave the cakes and open wide your mouth,  
 sweeten my ears, and not my mouth,  
 by entertaining me with the pleasures of your words.

5

Nikephoros is rebuked—in a playful way, of course—for not living up to the intellectual ideal. Again, ‘normal’ material gifts are contrasted, and found inferior, to the immaterial literary gift that is presented here as a source of purely intellectual pleasure. Christophoros is very much aware that at the occasion of this feast, everybody gives cakes or other similar presents to each other. This poem deliberately sets itself off from this common habit. It is, just as Psellos’ apparent refusals of material gifts, a reversal of the normal practice of gift exchange. It even balances on the edge of rudeness, by dismissing the gift of the giver.

Christophoros’ ideal gift constitutes of words, something not tangible. He appeals in this way to a commonly held ideal of neglect of worldly values. But the main consequence is that Christophoros and his friend are distinguished as people who, unlike the others, do not exchange sweets. Christophoros singles out himself as a worshipper of words (v. 3). He is a cultivated intellectual, permitting himself to break the rules of normal politeness. The taste of Christophoros, and apparently the taste Nikephoros is more or less forced to have, is not like the taste of the others; it is the distinguished taste for words, for rhetorical beauty, a taste that can only be aroused in people who have had the fitting education that would enable them to create and appreciate such gifts.

Poem 124 is written on the occasion of the *kalandai*. The poem is badly damaged: only the even verses are extant. From its fragmented title, we can only conclude that it was addressed to a friend on this festive first day of the year.

... φίλ ... κατὰ τὴν ἀρχιμηνίαν

...

... λούνται δεξιώσεις πρὸς φίλους

...

πάντων θελόντων· τοῦτο γὰρ τούτου χάρις.

...

ἴδου δίδωμι τούσδε δῶρα τοὺς λόγους

...

γραφήσ καλάμῳ ῥημάτων τελεῶ κρότους

...

ἐν τῇ καλανδῶν προσδέχου νομηγία

...

5

10

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἔχει τὶ βέλτιον τούτου βίος.

On line 2, Christophoros refers to 'salutations for friends'. On line 6, he unveils the gift he is to present to his friend. 'Here you are, I give you these words as a gift', and on line 8, he specifies, 'I create beats of words with my pen'. In the next readable verse, he asks his friend to accept these words on this festive day of the *kalandai*, and he concludes his poem by stating that nothing in life is better than this gift.

In all likelihood, the gift in question is this very poem itself. The word *κρότος* (v. 8) may refer to the beating rhythm of verse,<sup>43</sup> and the words *τούσδε τοὺς λόγους* (6) may point to this very poem, and not to another piece of literature, as Crimi suggests;<sup>44</sup> this may be concluded from the present tense of *τελῶ κρότους* (8). In any event, the proud declaration of Christophoros to give verse as a gift, while he was conscious that others gave material presents at this festive occasion, indicates the exquisiteness that poetry maintains with respect to other forms of gifts. There might also have been—perhaps more explicitly so in the lines that are now lost—an antithesis between the rattling and clapping by celebrants of the *kalandai*, and the beats of Christophoros' pen, both designated with the word *κρότος*. In this case, the sound of poetic rhythm is, of course, considered superior.

Just like in poem 115, Christophoros implies that the taste for words is not shared by everybody: only a literary gift is suitable for him, as he declares that 'nothing is better in life' (124.12). This refined taste is thus seen as the hallmark of a distinct type of individual: the true intellectual. Only this type of intellectual is able to recognise the value of those gifts, a value that is not measurable by evident material standards. This mutually shared appreciation of the signification of such a gift forges exclusive bonds that hold the intellectual elite together.

The specifically poetic form of these gifts adds to their value. The sheer amount of labour invested in the composition of prosodic and rhythmical verse would testify to the time and energy one is willing to give to someone else. The effort to curb verse both in the obsolete quantitative prosodic pattern, and in an attractive rhythmical pattern, can be considered a token of the *prothumia* or *pothos* with which a gift is given. Christophoros asserts the metrical artistry of this undertaking in a conscious way: 'I produce beats of words with my pen' (124.8). It appears that his intention is to polish his letters to such a degree and to make them so rhythmical, that he shapes them in poetry, turning them into still more valuable gifts.

The discourse of 'words as a gift' can thus be described a powerful rhetoric which celebrates the common taste of these circles of intellectuals and confirms the relevance of their skills. Even in quite blunt proposals for exchange, as in Psellos' poem 16, there is a strong appeal to appreciate the labours needed to master these skills. The stress on the artistic quality and spiritual signification of the poetic gift permits these poets to project it into a graceful

<sup>43</sup>Lauxtermann, "Velocity of Pure Iambs", pp. 24-25.

<sup>44</sup>Crimi, *Canzoniere*, p. 164.

sphere of exchange, where gifts and counter-gifts are represented as spontaneous acts of admiration, compelled by the shared sensibility to the delights of *logoi*. The powerful people in society, although perhaps not the most intellectually sophisticated, nevertheless partake of the prestige that accompanies these exchanges, if only by accepting the gift (and, obviously, by creating the appropriate material framework to make these gifts possible). The discourse of the gift of words, moreover, permits the creation of bonds, but also exclusions. While evoking a paradise-like world of mutually appreciated aesthetics, it also helps to guard this paradise against the intruder.

## 10.5 Patronage and poetry: some preliminary conclusions

As a conclusive thought to the part 'Poetry as a service', I think the inevitable observation must be that there was no sustained system of literary patronage, let alone patronage of poetry. While arguably, a discourse is constructed to imbue the emperor with the image of a cultural patron, in practice poems were the outcome of particular negotiations between poet and patron for a one-time occasion.<sup>45</sup> Poets applied their craft to provide for the communicative aspect of an occasion requiring this, and in return, they will undoubtedly have received rewards; several letters and poems make it clear enough that a discursive service (if we can call it like that) should be rewarded with material means.

Hence, poets did not occupy a fixed position of poet. But through the fame they acquired in the intellectual field, it was known in their networks that they could be made an appeal on to provide the words for an occasion, be it a funding, a funeral, an appointment, or something else. Hence, a poet, I would suggest, had basically to follow a two-track strategy. He had to gain a reputation with other cultivated men who would judge and approve of his works. Once he had gathered a name for himself, potentials patrons could contact him for the specific service they wanted.

Moreover, poetry frequently fulfilled merely a secondary role: to register, to justify, or to foster the exchange or expense. It is only within the restricted sphere of an intellectual circle that poetry can be considered as an independent gift.

If there was any direct remuneration for poetic services, this happened through other services which are not designated or intended as specifically cultural or intellectual. The office of 'consul of philosophers' is a notable exception, and demonstrates how for a very short time an exceptional figure like Psellos succeeded in having consecrated his position of superiority in the intellectual field.

It is hazardous to posit that formal developments in literature are due to

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<sup>45</sup>Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 36–37.



the tastes of the patrons,<sup>46</sup> and in the case of most of our poems, I think that form is defined by the more limited intellectual field. The choice for the political verse, therefore, may stand the most chance to be motivated by a desire to suit the tastes of patrons without negotiating with the standards of intellectual colleagues and rivals. It is perhaps because of the towering authority of Psellos that he could afford it to ignore these standards and lift up political verse into more intellectual matters.

As a consequence, we see that the poet can only capitalise on his poems within the limits of his personal network. In contrast to Psellos' and Mauropous' imperial connections, the circles of patronage in Christophoros' poetry rather reflect a more limited sphere. His family (through funeral poems), his circle of friends who do not belong to the top of society, his school faction tied to the school of St. Theodore in Sphorakiou, his neighbourhood of Protasiou to which he refers twice (36.12 and 114.131), these are the points around which his literary services gravitate, with only a loose connection with the court.

Poetic patronage in the 11th century is at any rate in marked contrast to the 12th century, which witnessed the emergence of the professional author and the ideal of the poor beggar's poet.<sup>47</sup> In the eleventh century by contrast, poetry was integrated as a nearly evident element in a logic of 'precious communication' sustained by civil officials wishing to confirm and enhance their position in a field governed by the standards of intellectualism and urbanity.

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<sup>46</sup>Mullett, "Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople", pp. 181-182.

<sup>47</sup>For 1100 as a caesura in the patronage systems of poetry, see also Lauxtermann, "La poesia", pp. 305-306.



**Part V**

**For the mind and the  
senses**



# Chapter 11

## For the mind and the senses: some conclusions

May the reader allow me to phrase my conclusions in a form of *παίζειν λογικῶς*. I will present them in three movements, the first about the aspect of poetry and society, the second about reading contexts, and the third about the role of poetry as a poetic text. I will close with some suggestions on what could be a ‘poetics’ of Byzantine poetry.

### 11.1 The venal muse (with prelude)

The Muses, those divine entities summoned by so many poets for inspiration and protection, have one appearance that from time to time shows her gruesome head: the ‘venal Muse’. Pindar bewailed the advent of the *Μοῖσα φιλοκερδής* and *ἐργάτις*, who has taken over power over the land of poetry; Terpsichore now has to sell her sweet songs for money.<sup>1</sup> Theocritus’ Graces come back home from begging, with empty purse and freezing feet from walking barefoot.<sup>2</sup> The ‘muse vénale’, complete with cold feet and empty purse, returns in the midst of the *l’art pour l’art* poetry, in a disgraceful depiction by Charles Baudelaire:

#### *La muse vénale*

O muse de mon cœur, amante des palais,  
Auras-tu, quand Janvier lâchera ses Borées,  
Durant les noirs ennuis des neigeuses soirées,  
Un tison pour chauffer tes deux pieds violets?

---

<sup>1</sup>Pindar, *Isthm.* 2.6

<sup>2</sup>Theocritus, *Id.* 16

Ranimeras-tu donc tes épaules marbrées  
 Aux nocturnes rayons qui percent les volets?  
 Sentant ta bourse à sec autant que ton palais,  
 Récolteras-tu l'or des voûtes azurées?

5

(...)

Likewise, Mauropous struggles with his soul, which tries to convince him to 'make money out his talent for words' (92.25–26: *πόθεν τὸ σὸν τάλαντον ἐμπορεύσῃ τοῦ λόγου;*). In several poems, he tries to shake off this spectre of the 'venal Muse', just wanting to feed himself on words as a 'cicada on dew' (89.33), the creature that had received of the Muses the precious gift of being able to sing without needing food.<sup>3</sup>

To keep securing a kind of support, other negotiations are set in place. It showed more grace to say that 'it is an easy gift for a skilled man to speak words of praise in recompense for labours of all kinds'.<sup>4</sup> The venality of poetry is still lurking, but it is made into a graceful gift, a *χούφα δόσις*.

On many occasions, we had the chance to look at the strategies in our texts to 'harvest the gold from the azure skies'.

First, there was a firm basis for the exchange between intellectual achievements and social and economic remunerations. A civil elite managed to ground a meritocratic ideology that values intellectual competences. Through education, young men embarked on bright careers. Poetry was an essential component of education; it was a mandatory subject that did not only imply study of the ancients, but also a practical schooling in poetic composition. In the transition between education and career, there was a barrier of tests that was imposed by the intellectuals themselves. Here, demonstration of skill and of the needed competences was essential. A poem as Psellos 16, asking for a job as secretary in return for the poem itself, points to the study needed to achieve these competences.

Apart from that, poetry was an ideal form to perform a range of actions intent on furthering one's social position. At this point, poetry profited from a discourse that aimed to make clear towards potential patrons that texts (what we would call 'literature') implied prestige. This discourse is especially carried through by Psellos. His poem 19 makes abundantly clear that poetry enhances the immortality and the atmosphere of bliss surrounding a successful reign.

Hence, poetry was invested with a value that made it indispensable for furthering interests. Requests for promotions (the *Athen.* 1040 poem), expressions of gratitude (Mauropous 55), these were all social moves for which the poetic form could make perfect sense. It enhanced the feeling of value, and displayed the amount of study invested in competences the emperor would sorely need. A perfect discourse to couch a demand in, was that of the poetic gift, seemingly expecting no reward, but implying one, and severing the ties between a forced dilettante of poetry and producer of poetry.

<sup>3</sup>Plato, *Phaedrus* 259c.

<sup>4</sup>Pindar, *Isthm.* 1.45–47.

On another level, poetry was an apt tool to make public acts of economic ostentation. In the form of inscriptions, poetry publicised a public expense of a book or object someone made in honour of a saint. In a sublimated form of exchange, he asked for the redemption of his sins in return for his sumptuous 'acquisition'. This is testified in innumerable epigrams sharing the same discourse of dedication.

But here the Muse becomes perhaps all too venal. People with more intellectual authority had to develop strategies to ward off even the slightest hint to her. Therefore, poets sought to give a self-representation that preserved the disinterested motives of their intellectual pursuits. Maupous does so most emphatically. In poems 47, 89, 90, he claims a life far away from worldly ambitions, devoted to *hoi logoi*. Although a glorious function in the end was forcibly imposed on him, he arranged in his collection his poems in such a way that readers would remain convinced of his detachedness. Also as a whole, Maupous' collection is presented as a progressive autobiographical image. This does not result from a premeditated plan; instead, it is a series of discontinuous snapshots, of which the very discontinuity should be the central message towards the reader.

## 11.2 The beats of the pen

In the poem Christophoros 124, the poet for once consciously expresses the activity of himself writing (perhaps) poetry: he asserts that he 'creates beats of words with his pen'. While the city revels, here is our intellectual, kept awake by his owl, lightning his desk with his oil lamp, creating his own exquisite beats with his pen.

The 'beats of the pen' imply an exquisite kind of sound unlike the beats resounding outside on the street. Poetry was to a great extent a tool in hands of a limited group of people forming an elite in the true sense of the word. Hovering between the centre of power and with one foot still firm in the middle class, the intellectual elite was a group of people appropriating the means to capitalise on intellectual pursuits.

In many poems, the exclusiveness of the elitist behaviours and ethics is highlighted. Many poems of Christophoros bespeak this stance, barring the elite from gratuitous intruders (poem 40), and representing himself as an arduous scholar, devoted to the ἀγρυπνία in function of *hoi logoi*.

This gave rise to a special conceptualisation of friendship, one that was based on shared education and elegant manners. Christophoros cultivates friendships based on the exchange of *hoi logoi*, maintaining networks of friends from which he keeps asking for words. Also, the feature of being πολιτικός was essential to these ethics; it implied playfulness, present in many poems, and it implied a versatility to the circumstances, reflected in the seemingly flickering opinions of our poets.

At other times, the beats of the pen are not charming the ear of the listener, but inflicting wounds. In Psellos 21 (v. 175) and in Christophoros 36 (v. 11), the pen is said to hurt the opponent of the poet. The pen is here a weapon in

a game of which the rules are well defined, but in which precious reputation can be at stake. The prizes at stake in the intellectual field, and the low degree of external consecration, guaranteed a constant struggle. Especially rivalling teachers vied for reputation. They made use of the inter school contests to damage the reputation of others and to assert their own worth. Poetry proves to be an important tool in doing so, both in attacking others, as in showing own skills. Competition was vital to the ethics of the intellectual field. The words ἀγών and θέατρον cover the cultural practice of formalised competition, but the latter seems also to extend to more playful gatherings of intellectuals collectively enjoying reading (and perhaps improvising).

All this may suggest that this poetry was a mere play of forms for the sake of the form. This is the 'Selbstzweck' of poetry such as Franz Dölger has described it.<sup>5</sup> In light of the valorisation of formal technique, it might be said that this play was not inconsequential. There were contexts where irrelevant games could have an impact on the reputation and future of the poet, such as the walls of the school, and the *theatra* or *syllogoi*. As we have seen, there is even not much difference between *syllogoi* of students and salons of intellectual comrades.

In sharp contrast to this intellectualist aspect of poetry is a concept also designated with German words, the 'Sitz im Leben' of 'Gebrauchstexte'. The many reading contexts we have described show that there were various occasions in which poems found a pragmatical use. They were orally performed in public, at school, in a reading circle of friends; they were sent along on scrolls in a separate form, they were inscribed on buildings or objects, or added to books. In all these contexts, they served a well-circumscribed goal as just one part of a broader cultural event or practice. Even the collections, as we have seen, were not premeditated and unified works of art, but left intact the initial pragmatical context of each poem.

But the puzzling thing is that also to these seemingly utilitarian texts, formalist strategies of interpretation were applied. Our examples of 'sophisticated readings' performed on texts that could have a perfectly utilitarian goal (Mauropous 32 and Christophoros 77, as recorded in 33 and 78/79) illustrate this point.

We must assume, then, for many of the poems a two-track reading. We may recall here Psellos' oration for the metropolitan of Melitene, which was both a manual for good rhetoric and a token of honour for the man. One part of the audience would be busy weighing quantities and assessing rhetorical techniques. For others, it just mattered that well-sounding words resounded at an occasion that required this. Texts could please both the mind and the senses. This split sense of beauty may be present in the double essence of the dodecasyllable itself, combining acoustic rhythm with quantitative metre. This duplicity may also be present in the broad social role that was fulfilled by an 'intellectual'. The producers of poems, as we have also repeatedly remarked, were both participants in a purely intellectual milieu and gentlemen with a public function in society.

<sup>5</sup>Dölger, *Die byzantinische Dichtung in der Reinsprache*, p. 5.



Also, poetry remained tied to schemes of composition and reading as transmitted at school. It is itself a learnable technique, no god-given talent. Trying to describe this association with education, I could not find an adjective in English with the same sense of Dutch ‘schools’, meaning that standards and manners from the school are applied to contexts where they are consequently perceived as academic, formalistic and quibbling. So, even if Christophoros’ poems on emperors and on Maniakes contained potential ideologic dynamite, I have suggested that their strong connection with school practice rather pre-figured a sophisticated, ‘schoolish’ reading. Poets were often teachers (or pupils), and their poetic products would be evaluated according to this social role.

Next to that, there is also the word *logoi* that could cover both theoretical knowledge and the rhetorical articulation of thoughts. Communication of knowledge (again, poets were often teachers) implied an attractive elaboration of that knowledge. This was an ideal ground for didactic poetry, which thrived in this period, and extensively made use of the political verse, to comply with the wishes of a taste that was both popular and tied to the imperial court.

### 11.3 The lamp in the corner

Mauroπους wished for himself that ‘a vestige of the light’ from his words would be preserved, far from the winds of open air (92.68–71). It indeed appears that the vestiges of his poetry have remained, but are indeed being kept as a lamp in a small corner as he himself had foreseen. This poetry has proven to be a marginal affair in literary history. But then it had itself sought this status.

Poets did not consider or describe themselves as poets. Even their own works are normally self-designated as a *logos*, and only in isolated cases as ‘iambs’ (in Psellos 21). They did not work consciously in a poetic tradition, nor did they engage with other poets *qua* poets. There is no formulation of a ‘poetics’, nor is there a sustained meta-poetic discourse. Texts remain silent about concepts we hold for self-evident. The only domain in which poetic texts were assessed, was that of *logoi*. Here, our concepts of ‘poetry’ and even of ‘literature’ fall apart in the face of what can only be termed ‘discursive practices’.

Moreover, our poets voiced quite disparaging opinions about poetry as a subject in education. Psellos had called it *πάνδημος ποιητική*, and Mauroπους urged a pupil to proceed beyond the subject. The remark of ‘Scylitzes Continuatus’ that Michael Doukas, under the influence of Psellos, occupied himself with poetic trifles instead of defending the empire, is an extreme example of such a disparaging tone. There is something frivolous about poetry, which is also expressed by the references to play in the didactic poems of Psellos and Niketas. It is again the ‘schoolishness’ of poetry, I believe, that makes that it can barely escape the connotation of frivolity.

The lack of self-awareness of poetic work *qua* poetic work is also at the basis of the insecure status of a poem. It can change contexts, like the poem

above the entrance of the Grottaferrata monastery. In many manuscripts, it is dissociated from its author because it is not attributed to the original author, as especially happened with Christophoros' poems. It can be reused for other purposes, as Psellos' didactic poems. It seems that a poem was not a fixed entity, but could be reworked, reused and adapted to new circumstances: there are as many texts as there are contexts.

This fragmentation starts with the initial circulation of poems. This is particularly fugitive and ephemeral, dependent on scrolls and perhaps oral transmission (as for the Sabbaites poem has been suggested). Only in a later stadium did the intellectual friends preserve copies that were progressively bundled into booklets, and later into manuscripts.

The conclusion could be that poetry is an endlessly series of texts, floating in an anonymous sphere. Yet, authors are surely not totally dissociated from their work. The fact that both Mauropous and Christophoros made collections of their poems, proves that they firmly connected their personality to their works. They also appear emphatically in their capacity of author in their own poems. Christophoros repeatedly mentions his name and also attaches a *sphragis* to his poem 114.

Our poets are also extremely self-assertive about the value of their works. Christophoros calls his work 'honey' that should not be fed to pigs (84.3) and makes clear that the verses on his sister were eagerly sought after, by reporting the enthusiastic reading response of Petros (poems 78–79).

And there is even a slight sense, despite the apparent ephemerality of poems, that they were made for immortality. This aspect is explicitly brought forward in Psellos' discourse on literature bringing eternal fame for emperors. In poem IV of Michael Grammatikos, the verses are said to preserve the scandalous manners of the bishop of Philomelion 'for eternity' (4.91–92). In a preface poem by Mauropous, this desire to live on in immortality is voiced with a more anxious undertone: he asks whether his books will find readers in later times (poem II). However, this immortality is perhaps more related to deeply rooted ideas about the written text as permanent vestige than the continuation of a literary history.

## 11.4 For the mind and the senses (with coda)

A final note then, on a question that is perhaps either too difficult or too easy for us to resolve. What were the motivations or underlying assumptions to use exactly poetry, and not prose? What was it that in each of these cases brought the poet so far to use metrically structured speech instead of the far more obvious prose form?

The question has occupied scholars, but mostly from the experience of an aesthetic bewilderment, shown in the most trenchant way in the case of didactic poetry. How come that poets were willing to put for instance knowledge about law, theology, or about the colour of urine and excrements (one may enjoy Psellos 9.442–528) in hundreds, indeed thousands of verses?

It is clear that ‘poetry’ for us moderns has connotations that go beyond the mere verse form. What sets poetry off from prose can be described in terms of imagination, distortion and autoreferentiality. Poetry is emphatically marked speech. How can we rhyme this with the Byzantine situation, where poetry treats the playful, the small, the practical, in simple style, and prose is puffed up into magniloquent and hyperbolic speech, in a deliberately obtrusive diction?

It disturbs us when this marking seems absent, when it seems that all what constitutes poetry is just the form. Hence we have come to many negative evaluations of poetry, and doubts whether ‘poetry’ deserves this name at all. It is telling, to cite a more indirect example, that Beck described Psellos’ funeral oration on his grandchild (in prose, of course) as pure ‘Lyrik’,<sup>6</sup> and that it has been observed that letters have taken over the sphere of the ‘emotional’ from poetry.<sup>7</sup>

The few attempts to describe a Byzantine ‘poetics’ have sufficed with describing some stylistic features in poetic diction that allegedly set it off from prosaic diction. This is basically what Thomas Conley did when he attempted to describe the ‘poetics’ of Byzantine poetry.<sup>8</sup> What Conley isolates, though, in the poems he discusses, are either stylistic features that are surely not confined to poetry (the frequent use of anaphor is a good example), or are otherwise rooted in the simple pragmatic fact that poetry is versified language (the love for acrostics for instance).

Consequently, it is still difficult for us to leave behind usual schemes for assessing poetry. When for instance Symeon the New Theologian turned to verse to write down his mystical experiences after having written in prose, this is linked with the ‘intensity of the subject’.<sup>9</sup> A poem of Theodoros Prodromos is hailed back as a ‘hidden gem’ because features are spotted (such as enjambments) that may appeal to our poetic feeling, but perhaps not to that of the Byzantines.<sup>10</sup>

In sum, it becomes time to leave our own assumptions about poetry for what they are, and try to understand how Byzantine poetry works. Agapitos has in a trenchant way shown how we are preconditioned by post-romantic aesthetic assumptions about what constitutes ‘poetry’;<sup>11</sup> Lauxtermann has likewise shown with reference to didactic poetry, that modern categories about poetry that focus on the content of poetry are of no help.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars

<sup>6</sup>H.-G. Beck, “Antike Beredsamkeit und byzantinische Kallilogia”, *Antike und Abendland* 15 (1969), pp. 91–101, p. 97.

<sup>7</sup>For the emotional in letters instead of poetry, see M. Mullett, “The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter”, in: *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, ed. by M. Mullett and R. Scott, Oxford 1981, pp. 75–93, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup>T. Conley, “Practice to Theory: Byzantine ‘Poetics’”, in: *Greek Literary Theory after Aristotle: A collection of papers in honour of D.M. Schenkveld*, ed. by J. Abbenes, S. Slings, and I. Sluiter, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 301–320.

<sup>9</sup>Koder, “Ο Συμμεών ο Νέος Θεόλογος και οι Ύμνοι του”, pp. 16–18.

<sup>10</sup>Bazzani, “Theodore Prodromos’ Poem LXXVII”.

<sup>11</sup>Agapitos, “Η θέση της αισθητικής αποτίμησης σε μια ‘νέα’ ιστορία της βυζαντινής λογοτεχνίας”.

<sup>12</sup>Lauxtermann, “Byzantine Didactic Poetry”, p. 46.

have concluded that our modern criteria cannot be used in a valid way to retrieve Byzantine poetics; so has Ugo Criscuolo done, before sketching out the traits of the poetics in the works of Symeon the New Theologian.<sup>13</sup>

Answering the question why texts are written in a poetic form, we should not try to discover a ‘poetics’, but rather focus on the advantages this form was perceived to have. This form should then also be taken very literally: the visual and auditory aspects of poetry are what constitutes its form, and hence perhaps also its essence.

Poetry arguably had a distinctive visual appearance on the page, created by the use of majuscules, other ink, and by the arrangement on the page. Their outlook often links them with inscriptions. This shows that there is a transition between book and stone, and thus perhaps a wide-spread sense for a visual poetics. Prominent features of these visual aesthetics are density and symmetry. The aspect of compactness implied by the verse form is echoed in the compact form of these letters, and perhaps, the aspect of value by the use of gold.

Also for didactic poems, we have suggested a visual element: the vertical alignment of verses created a list-like overview, and hence aided the ‘synoptic’ quality of these poems. The visual aspect is here of a pragmatistical kind.

Next to the visual aspect, there is of course the acoustic element. All of the extant poetry of this period, except for the hexameters and elegiac distichs, is rhythmically structured. The dodecasyllables of known poets are paroxytonic nearly without exception,<sup>14</sup> and always respect the usual verse pause either after the fifth or the seventh syllable. But there is more: the strict isosyllabity of the dodecasyllable (always counting 12 syllables) and the avoidance of enjambment ensure that these verses are structured as ‘crisp sound-bites’,<sup>15</sup> applying the rhetorical exigence of ‘velocity’ to an extreme degree.<sup>16</sup>

The acoustic quality of poetry is further enhanced by figures as homoioteleuta, anaphors, parallelisms, etc. Agapitos has demonstrated this for Psellos 17. And, as we have sought to demonstrate, Christophoros 54 forms an extreme example of the implementation of rhythmical and euphonic qualities in poetry. Probably, more remains to discover in this direction, investigating style, rhythm, etc.

Perhaps this forms the backbone of the *charis* of poetry: that what makes it more enjoyable and charming than prose, but also more playful and frivolous. *Charis* indeed reflects the duplicity of value on the one hand and frivolity on the other hand. It is opposed to the idea of *φορτικός*, and

<sup>13</sup>U. Criscuolo, “Poesia e poetica negli *Inni* di Simeone il Nuovo Teologo”, in: *La poesia bizantina. Atti della terza Giornata di studi bizantini sotto il patrocinio della Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini (Macerata, 11-12 maggio 1993)*, ed. by U. Criscuolo and R. Maisano, Italoellenika. Quaderni 8, Napoli 1995, pp. 55–77, see esp. p. 58 for the invalidity of modern criteria.

<sup>14</sup>For this observation for Christophoros, see Maas, “Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber”, p. 288.

<sup>15</sup>Magdalino, “Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodrornos”.

<sup>16</sup>Lauxtermann, “Velocity of Pure Iambs”.

perhaps, on an entirely different level, that of φιλοσοφία. It is this lightheartedness that perhaps allows poetry to express itself more freely than prose.<sup>17</sup> It is only after a lengthy description of the colours and odours of urine in his poem of medicine, that Psellos, to counterbalance this distasteful aspect of exhaustive science, states that he wanted to give the reader some foretaste of the art of medicine, stressing the grace of metre: ‘so that you, in your eagerness for the graces of metre, // would together with it pick up the subject of the science.’<sup>18</sup>

This aspect of *charis* is repeated in a poem that hitherto in this study has not received due attention: pseudo-Psellos 91, of which author and date can be impossible to ascertain, but which may aptly close this study, because it sums up some essential features. First, the stress on the fact that is a *technè*, that is, a learnable art. Moreover, poetry has a musicality, expressed through rhythms that are not relaxed but tight and crisp; this musicality is in this poem elaborated with an extensive comparison with the lyre. And what poetry ultimately creates, is χάρις, here connected to positive feelings of enjoyment: it satisfies the intellect of intellectuals, and charms the senses of the unlearned. Let us close on this happy and musical note.

*Εἰς τὸν στίχον*

Τέχνη τίς ἐστι τὸ στιχίζειν ἐντέχνως,  
 τέχνη καλλίστη, μουσικωτάτη τέχνη,  
 θέλγουσα καὶ τέρπουσα καὶ νοῦν καὶ φρένας  
 καὶ τὴν ἄτεχνον ἠδύνουσα καρδίαν.  
 Ἔχει κολάβους ἐκ λόγων ἠσκημένους, 5  
 ἔχει δὲ χορδὰς εὐφυῶς κεκλωσμένας,  
 ἔχει δὲ ῥυθμούς οὐκ ἀναβεβλημένους,  
 οὐδ’ αὖ χαλαρούς, ἀλλὰ συντεταγμένους,  
 οὐ πρὸς μάχην κινουῦντας, ἀλλὰ πρὸς χάριν,  
 πρὸς ἠδονὴν μάλιστα καὶ θυμηδίαν, 10  
 ἔχει δὲ πῆχυν προσφυῶς ἐξεσμένον  
 καὶ μαγάδα σάλπιγγος ἠχοῦσαν πλέον.  
 Ὅ γοῦν μελουργὸς καὶ δίχα μελωδίας  
 σύμπασαν ἐκπλήξειε τὴν οἰκουμένην.  
 ταύτην μετελθὼν Ὀρφικὴν κτήση λύραν 15  
 κηλοῦσαν ἠδύτητι καὶ λίθων φύσιν.

<sup>17</sup>For freedom of subject and tone in poetry, see Magdalino, “Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos”.

<sup>18</sup>Psellos, 9.536–7: ὅπως ποθοῦντες τὰς χάριτας τοῦ μέτρου // σὺν τῷ μέτρῳ λάβωσι καὶ τὰ τῆς τέχνης.

*On verse*

Writing verse with skill is a kind of art,  
A most beautiful art, and a highly musical one,  
Charming and pleasing both the mind and the intellect  
And sweetening the uninformed heart.  
It has pegs trained in *logoi*, 5  
It has strings that are twined with talent,  
And rhythms that are not deferred,  
And not loose, but tight,  
Not inspiring for a fight, but for grace,  
And for enjoyment indeed, and cheerfulness. 10  
It has a horn that is well polished  
And a bridge that resonates more than a trumpet.  
As a result, the 'bard' will also without a melody  
Baffle the whole world.  
If you pursue this art, you will acquire an Orphic lyre 15  
Beguiling even the stones with its sweetness.

# Chapter 12

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