

CHAPTER 8

Metaphrasis and Versification: The *Paradeisos* as a Reworking of *Apophthegmata Patrum*

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The so-called *Paradeisos* is a collection of 99 quatrains in elegiac distichs, largely based on the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. The date of its composition, the author and the title *Paradeisos* itself are uncertain: the manuscripts provide contradictory information. One of the possible authors mentioned in the manuscripts is John Geometres. Although the attribution of the *Paradeisos* to Geometres is probably erroneous, it is plausible that the collection stems from the same period and the same milieu: 10th century Constantinople – the cultural and historical context in which Symeon Metaphrastes was also active and in which Kephala's anthology of epigrams (best known through the *Anthologia Palatina*) brought the classical epigrammatic tradition to the fore again.

Despite several editorial plans in the 20th century,¹ the *Paradeisos* is still accessible only in outdated editions, based on one or few of the 44 manuscripts known today and/or on late witnesses from the least reliable branch of the tradition.²

¹ Announced by John Bagnell Bury, "The Παράδεισος of Joannes Geometres," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 7 (1898), 134-37; Paul Speck, "Zur Datierung des sogenannten Paradeisos," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 58 (1965), 333-36; and Antony R. Littlewood, "Some Notes on the Manuscripts of the Παράδεισος of John Geometres," in *Texte und Textkritik: Eine Aufsatzsammlung*, ed. Jürgen Dümmer (Berlin, 1987), pp. 327-29. The latest announcement is the following: Björn Isebaert and Kristoffel Demoen, "John Geometres and the Paradeisos: A New Editorial Project," in *L'épistolographie et la poésie épigrammatique: projets actuels et questions de méthodologie*, eds Wolfram Hörandner and Michael Grünbart (Paris, 2003), pp. 139-51. Björn Isebaert has indeed prepared a full critical text as part of a PhD dissertation: Björn Isebaert, "De Παράδεισος van Ioannes Kuriotes Geometres (?): Kritische tekst met inleiding en commentaar," 4 vols, unpublished PhD diss. (Ghent University, 2004). A co-authored monograph (Demoen – Isebaert) on the *Paradeisos*, including a revised and updated version of this critical text, is currently under preparation. Our new critical text will deviate from the previous ones in about 90 of the 99 poems, often crucially.

² The *editio princeps* by Zacharias Skordylios was based on a manuscript from the later and inferior ε branch (see stemma below), as was the edition by Frédéric Morel – in fact an annotated reedition of Skordylios – that is reprinted (with errors) in the *Patrologia Graeca* (106:867-90): Zacharias Skordylios, ed., *Νικήτα φιλοσόφου τοῦ καὶ Δαβὶδ ἐρμηνεία εἰς τὰ τετράστιχα τοῦ μεγάλου πατρὸς Γρηγορίου τοῦ Ναζιανζηνοῦ. Τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐρμηνεία, εἰς τὰ μονόστιχα. Τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰ ἐπιγράμματα τὰ εἰς τὸν μέγαν Βασίλειον, παράφρασις. Ἰωάννου Γεωμέτρου, ἐπιγράμματα* (Venice, 1563) and Frédéric Morel, *Ἰωάννου Γεωμέτρου Ἐπιγράμματα Τετράστιχα. Ὡς ἢ ἐπιγραφὴ Παράδεισος: Hortus Epigrammatum Graec. Moralium, Io. Geometra Autore* (Paris, 1595). The most recent edition (1820!) is

Several manuscripts of this branch share the following title as a heading to the collection, with minor variants (many other manuscripts have no title at all, or have much shorter versions):

κεφάλαια μεταληφθέντα ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῶν ἀποφθεγμάτων καὶ πράξεων τῶν ὁσίων πατέρων ἧς ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ παράδεισος· νεύλου μοναχοῦ, ἐν ἄλλοις ἰωάννου γεωμέτρου· ἥρωελεγεῖοι.

Chapters taken from the book of sayings and deeds of the holy fathers of which the title is “The Garden”. By Neilos the Monk, according to other (witnesses) by John Geometres. Elegiacs.³

This long heading will serve as a guide to our discussion of the *Paradeisos*: I will subsequently deal with the title (ἧς ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ⁴ παράδεισος), the author (νεύλου μοναχοῦ, ἐν ἄλλοις ἰωάννου γεωμέτρου), the source texts (ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῶν ἀποφθεγμάτων καὶ πράξεων τῶν ὁσίων πατέρων), the metaphrastic character (μεταληφθέντα or μεταβληθέντα) and generic and formal aspects (κεφάλαια [...] ἥρωελεγεῖοι).

Title: Paradeisos?

It is well-known that titles in Byzantine manuscripts have to be handled with care.⁵ The label *Paradeisos* (i.e. “Garden”) occurs only in the long heading, i.e. in a later and inferior branch of the transmission. Moreover, the syntax of the phrase in which it appears suggests that the term is not used as a title for the collection of poems, but for the source text, which we call *Apophthegmata Patrum* (APatr): the relative pronoun in the clause “ἧς ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ παράδεισος” refers back to “(ἐκ τῆς) βίβλου (τῶν ἀποφθεγμάτων)”. Indeed, in some manuscripts, the book containing the APatr themselves (in whatever version or selection) is indicated as “the so-called Garden”

used one of the better and older manuscripts (Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, 2773, dated to 1350-75) along with an apograph of the *editio princeps*, but did so in a very negligent way: Xavier Werfer, “Nili Ascetae Paraenetica e Codicibus Darmstadiensi et Bernensi. Opus posthumum,” *Acta Philologorum Monacensium* 3 (1820), 61-118.

³ Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

⁴ *Varia lectio* ἐπωνυμία.

⁵ See Andreas Rhoby, “Labeling Poetry in the Middle and Late Byzantine Period,” *Byzantion* 85 (2015), 259-83, at p. 266: “the variety with which works have been labeled throughout the centuries [...] the Byzantines used titles which often differed from the original ones and also from the ones used today”.

(“ὁ λεγόμενος Παράδεισος”).⁶ This metaphorical title – which belongs to the same floral domain as *Spiritual Meadow* and the like⁷ – occurs also in other collections of monastic anthologies.⁸ This, then, is the literary tradition in which the title *Paradeisos* situates the 99 quatrains.

Whether or not it was the original title (if we follow the best manuscripts, rather not), the poet does indicate himself in the opening tetrastich that his collection has to be read in this vein:

1. Ὅτι ἀθάνατος τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν ἡ ὠφέλεια.

Ἀνθεμόεις παράδεισος ὁ τῶν ἁγίων χορός ἐστίν,
ὁδμῆς ἡδεῖης πείρατα πιμπλάμενος.
πᾶς οὖν ὃς παθέσσειν ἐπεπλήγει φίλον ἥτορ,
δεῦρ' ἴτω ἀμβροσίης ἄνθεα δρεψόμενος.

The profit for the readers is immortal.

The choir of the saints is a flowery garden, | filled to its limits with a sweet smell. | So let everyone who is stricken at heart by passions | come here in order to cull flowers of immortality.⁹

The first verse obviously shows an awareness of “Garden” being a common metaphor for the monastic-hagiographical tradition, and the second hemistich of the final verse quite literally invites the reader to consider this poetry book as a spiritual anthology. The lemma (ὅτι ἀθάνατος...) to this opening poem (which, again, may or may not stem from the author himself) also points to the usefulness for the readers –a trite *topos* in edifying literature, for instance expressly present in the prologue of the systematical collection of the APatr.

⁶ The heading of the prologue of the systematic collection reads “Πρόλογος τῆς βίβλου τῶν γερόντων ὁ λεγόμενος Παράδεισος”: ed. and trans. Jean-Claude Guy in *Les Apophtegmes des Pères*, Sources Chrétiennes 387 (Paris, 1993), p. 92; the same title is to be found in the colophon of the earliest extant manuscript of the systematical collection, Athos, Protaton 86 (9th c.), see Jean-Claude Guy, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum*, Subsidia Hagiographica 36, 2nd ed. (Brussels, 1984), p. 120.

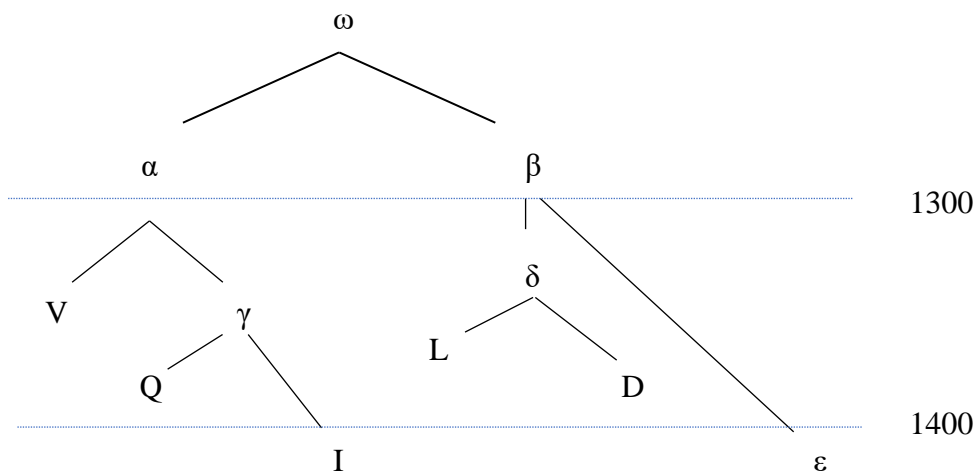
⁷ According to Photios, Moschos’ *Meadow* was called in some manuscripts the “Νέον Παραδείσιον” (*Bibl.* 199.162a).

⁸ The *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* has the following double title in *Patrologia Graeca* 65:441-42: “Ἡ κατὰ Αἴγυπτον τῶν μοναχῶν ἱστορία, ἥτοι Παράδεισος”; it is not retained in the most recent critical edition, André-Jean Festugière, *Historia monachorum in Aegypto: Édition critique du texte grec et traduction annotée*, Subsidia Hagiographica 53 (Brussels, 1971), although Festugière does mention the alternative title “παράδεισον ἄλλον” in some manuscripts, p. xxxv and xcvi.

⁹ The text of the *Paradeisos* is throughout taken from Isebaert’s PhD, with occasional changes that will be made for the new edition Demoen – Isebaert (in preparation).

Author and Date: Neilos? Geometres?

The long heading indicates that the authorship of the collection is uncertain: “Neilos the Monk, according to others John Geometres”. As a matter of fact, the attribution in the manuscripts coincides more or less with the textual relationship. This is clear from the following stemma, which will be relevant for the discussion of some further topics too.



V = Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vind. Phil.gr. 330, fols 27r-33r (1st half XIV)

Q = Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 743, fols 91r-97v (XIV)

I = Athos, Iviron 187, fols 186r-193v (XV)

L = Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Laur. gr. plut. IX, 18, fols 311r-317v (XIV)

D = Darmstadtensis 2773 (see above n. 2), fols 284-293v (1350-1375).

The oldest manuscripts of the excellent α branch, V and Q, do not name an author, while their younger relative I names “Gregory the Theologian”. The best manuscripts of the β branch, L and D, give Neilos as the author. The alternative attribution to Geometres appears only in part of the manuscripts of ε – a branch in which textual contamination is apparent too. The sole attribution to Geometres starts only with the *editio princeps* (see n. 2); it reappears in several manuscripts that are clearly apographs of the printed version and in later editions up to the *Patrologia Graeca*.

There are good reasons to doubt all these alleged authors. The most widespread attribution, saint Neilos of Ankyra, is impossible for several reasons, both

stylistic (the extensive ascetical oeuvre of the monk does not include any poetry, let alone highbrow elegiacs such as the tetrastichs of the *Paradeisos*) and chronological. It has been noted before that the following poem, with its clear reference to the Athos as a monastic community, precludes an origin in the fifth century.¹⁰ For this same reason, the attribution to Gregory of Nazianzos in I is impossible as well – there are, moreover, many anecdotes about Desert Fathers who postdate Gregory. I quote the tetrastich and its source *Apophthegma* in full, as it will serve as an example for further purposes too.

48. Ὅτι πρὸς τὸν τόπον καὶ τὰς χρείας.

Ξεῖνον ἔδεκτ' Ἀγάθων· χύτρῃ δέ τιν' ἔμβαλε φακὸν
καὶ παρέθηκε φέρων. Φῆ δ' ὁ φίλος γελόων·
Ὅμφακες, οὐ φακοὶ εἰσιν. Ὁ δ' ἴαχεν· Οὐκ ἄρα τοῦτο
ἄρκιόν ἐσθ' ὅτι πῦρ ἔδρακες εἰς τὸν Ἄθω;

The needs vary according to the place.

Agathon received a guest. He put lentils in a pot | and served them up. His friend said jokingly: | “These are unripe raisins, not lentils”. He exclaimed: “Is it then not | enough that you saw fire on Athos?”

The poet clearly took his inspiration from the following anecdote, preserved in the alphabetical collection (CA) of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

Ὁ αὐτὸς ἀββᾶς Ἡσαΐας ἐκάλεσέ τινα τῶν ἀδελφῶν, καὶ ἐνιψεν αὐτοῦ τοὺς πόδας, καὶ ἔβαλε δράκα φακοῦ εἰς χύτραν, καὶ ὡς ἔβρασε, κατήνεγκεν αὐτήν. Καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ ἀδελφός· Οὕτω ἐψήθη, ἀββᾶ. Καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· Οὐκ ἄρκεῖ σοι ὅτι ὅλως εἶδες λαμπρόν; καὶ αὕτη μεγάλη παράκλησις. (APatr [CA], Esaias 6, PG 65.181C)¹¹

The same Abba Isaiah invited one of the brothers and washed his feet then he threw a handful of lentils in a pot and served them when it came to the boil. The brother said to him: “It is not yet cooked, abba” and he said to him: “Is it not enough for you that you saw a bright [flame] at all? That is great consolation”.¹²

¹⁰ Speck, “Zur Datierung”.

¹¹ The *Patrologia Graeca* is a reprint of the old edition by Jean-Baptiste Cotelier, *Monumenta Ecclesiae Graecae*, 4 vols (Paris, 1677-92), 1:338-712.

¹² Trans. in John Wortley, *Give Me a Word: The Alphabetical Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Yonkers, 2014), adapted. The Greek text and Wortley’s English (as well as other) translations are available through the marvelous online tool <http://monastica.ht.lu.se/> (Lund University, project directed by Samuel Rubenson).

The poem closely follows the prose original. There are only two noteworthy changes as it comes to content: the change of the ascetic host's name (on which see below), and the addition of the final words (“εἰς τὸν Ἄθω”).¹³

This transfer of the original setting of the anecdote from the Egyptian desert to Mount Athos would be senseless in the fifth century, but it does fit with the tenth century, i.e. the date of John Geometres. Geometres' corpus, moreover, includes two other versifications of simple(r) Christian texts: the *Metaphrasis* of the nine Biblical Odes (an undisputed work in dodecasyllables) and the *Enkomion on saint Panteleemon* (in fact a metrical Passion or Life, also in dodecasyllables), the authorship of which is not completely ascertained.¹⁴ This seems to make the authorship of Geometres plausible, but a metrical analysis of the *Paradeisos* as compared with Geometres' genuine hexametrical and elegiac poetry makes a common authorship rather improbable.¹⁵ Moreover, the attribution surfaces at a late stage in the textual transmission, as we have seen, and it might be influenced by Geometres' reputation as a metrical metaphrast. In the new edition, we will present the *Paradeisos* as the work of an anonymous poet, probably from the tenth century.

A comparison of the metaphrastic techniques in Geometres' *Odes* and *Panteleemon* and in the *Paradeisos* shows parallels but also important differences, due both to the metrical form chosen by the poet and to the different nature of the source texts.¹⁶ The first is a faithful rendering of the biblical odes, which can doubtlessly be explained by the sacred status of the well-known source text. The second poem deals more freely with the wording (the poet sometimes gives a pedantic demonstration of his mythological knowledge and makes a remarkable use of Greek tragedy as intertexts), but it closely follows the narrative of the story of saint

¹³ Perhaps the “fire on Athos” is (also) a reference to the scene of Aischylos' *Agamemnon* in which Klytaimnestra tells about the fire that was seen on Athos (vv. 282-85). Christian Høgel suggested this when I discussed this poem during a talk in Odense, thus confirming my own cautious interpretation. At least two readers, then, responded to this verse as containing a learned allusion.

¹⁴ Editions: Marc De Groote, “Joannes Geometres' Metaphrasis of the Odes: Critical Edition,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 44 (2004), 375-410; Leon Sternbach, *Joannis Geometrae carmen de S. Panteleemone*, Dissertationes classis philologicae academiae litt. Cracoviensis 16 (Cracow, 1892), pp. 218-303.

¹⁵ See Emilie Marlene van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre, poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques: édition, traduction, commentaire* (Leiden, 2008), especially pp. 81-88.

¹⁶ Kristoffel Demoen, “John Geometres' Iambic Life of Saint Panteleemon: Text, Genre and Metaphrastic Style,” in *Philomathestatos: Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Bart Janssens, Bram Roosen and Peter Van Deun (Leuven, 2004), pp. 165-84.

Panteleemon as we know it from the premetaphrastic (and metaphrastic, for that matter) versions. The case of the *Paradeisos* is completely different in this respect, since here we do not have a clear source text.

The (Identification of the) Source Text(s)

The long heading of the *Paradeisos* states rather uncomplicatedly that the poems are taken “ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῶν ἀποφθεγμάτων καὶ πράξεων τῶν ὁσίων πατέρων” – as if there is such a thing as “the” book of the apophthegms of the holy Fathers.

Admittedly, most of the tetrastichs in the collection offer indeed anecdotes about Desert Fathers, seemingly or demonstrably taken from the APatr, also known as “τὸ γεροντικόν”, “the book of the elders”. As is well known, however, we have no single “γεροντικόν”, but rather various collections of anecdotes and sayings, many of them anonymous.¹⁷ They are sometimes transmitted in small selections as part of general monastic material, sometimes in large accumulations of up to 1500 anecdotes. Almost every single manuscript offers a collection of its own. The largest collections available in more or less modern publications are the alphabetical collection (CA, see above n. 10), the anonymous collection (CN),¹⁸ and the systematic collection (CS, see above n. 5) – but none of them does full justice to the manuscript tradition. This notoriously complex and fluid transmission of the APatr makes it sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to trace back the individual poems to a particular source text, and it has not (or not yet?) been possible to relate the *Paradeisos* as a whole to any particular exemplar of the *Apophthegmata* collections. To date, we have been able to find clear parallels for some 60 poems.

¹⁷ See the expert synthetic discussions by Samuel Rubenson: “The Formation and Re-formations of the Sayings of the Desert Fathers,” in: *Early Monasticism and Classical Paideia*, ed. Samuel Rubenson, *Studia Patristica* 55/3 (Leuven, 2013), pp. 5-22; and “Textual Fluidity in Early Monasticism: Sayings, Sermons and Stories,” in: *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology*, ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug (Berlin, 2017), pp. 178-200, especially pp. 180-86. Rubenson is the director of the *Monastica* project mentioned above, n. 11 – the website of which has been helpful for the identification of some extra sources not yet detected in Isebaert, *De Παράδεισος*.

¹⁸ Published by François Nau, “Histoires des solitaires égyptiens,” nine installments in several volumes of *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* 12 (1907) to 18 (1913). See also John Wortley, *The “Anonymous” Sayings of the Desert Fathers: A Select Edition and Complete English Translation* (Cambridge; New York, 2013).

One element that complicates the detective work is the fact that our poet sometimes combines several apophthegms into one piece, or attributes the anecdote to a different Desert Father from the one given in the preserved prose collections – if a name is mentioned at all. There are three possible scenarios, each of which will be illustrated by one case.

a) The tetrastich mentions the protagonist of the anecdote by name.

In 27 cases, the poet gives away the identity of the Desert Father speaking or acting. This may seem to make for a straightforward identification of the source text, but in fact only ten of them are actually to be found in the anecdotes of the alphabetical collection under the same name. Here is one example:

17. Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι νοσεῖν καὶ θεραπεύειν ἄλλους.

Ἐξελον οἱ πρότεροι καὶ δαίμονας ἦν διὰ πίστιν
ἢ δὲ μένει, τὰ δὲ που ἐν νεφέεσσιν ἔδου.
Εἶπε δὲ Πιτυρίων· “Ῥέα δαίμονας ἐξελάσειεν
ὅς πρῶτ’ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τούσδε διεσκέδασεν”.

It is impossible to cure others when being sick oneself

The men of old time drove out even demons through their faith; | faith is still there, but exorcism has disappeared in the clouds. | Pityrion said: “It would be easy to drive out demons | for someone who has first driven them out of himself”.

Ἐλεγεν ὁ ἀββᾶς Πιτυρίων ὁ μαθητὴς τοῦ ἀββᾶ Ἀντωνίου, ὅτι ὁ βουλόμενος ἀπελαύνειν δαίμονας πρότερον τὰ πάθη δουλώσεται· οἷου γὰρ ἂν πάθους περιγένηται τις, τούτου καὶ τὸν δαίμονα ἀπελαύνει. (APatr [CA], Pityrion 1, PG 65.376A)

Abba Pityrion, the disciple of Abba Antony, used to say: “He who would drive out demons will first have to enslave his passions. Whatever passion one masters, he drives out the demon of it”.¹⁹

Ten more tetrastichs have equally a clear parallel in the CA, but with a different name, as in the case of number 48, the Agathon/Isaiah anecdote quoted above. Two tetrastichs with a name in the poem appear to have an anonymous saying from the CN as their inspiration. For the five remaining ones, we have not (yet) been able to identify a source.

¹⁹ Trans. Wortley, <http://monastica.ht.lu.se/>.

b) The tetrastich mentions no name of the protagonist.

A larger number of tetrastichs (35) has the recognizable format of an *Apophthegma*, but fails to give a name. The sayings or deeds are typically attributed to “someone” (τις), “an elder” (γέρων), “a man” (άνήρ). The proportion of unidentified source texts is somewhat higher in this case: eleven of them do not appear to have a parallel in the transmitted and published APatr. Four are known from the CN, suggesting that the anonymous character of the anecdote has been preserved, while the largest number (20 out of 35) goes back to the alphabetical collection. This does not necessarily mean that the protagonist of the story has lost his name, as the following example shows.

8. Ὅτι ἔργοις ἢ λόγοις ἐγγυμναστέον.

Ἔργα σοφὸς μοναχῶν γράψας ἐλάχιστα παρήλθε.
Τῷ δέ γ' ὁ προστάξας χόετο καὶ νεμέσα·
Πῶς τάδε καταλέλοιπας; Ὁ δ' ἴαχεν· Ἰσχεῖς· ἐγὼ δέ,
εἰσόκε ταῦτ' ἔρξεις, καὶ τὰ πρόλοιπα γράφω.

One must practice oneself rather in deeds than in words | A wise man was writing deeds of the monks, and he omitted some tiny things. | The man who had ordered the copy got angry at him and reproached him: | “How could you leave these out?” But the other replied: “Stop! | As soon as you bring in practice what is there, I write the arrears”.

Ἐλεγε περί τινος τῶν Σκητιωτῶν ὁ ἀββᾶς Ἀβραάμ, ὅτι γραφεὺς ἦν, καὶ οὐκ ἤσθιεν ἄρτον. Ἦλθεν οὖν ἀδελφὸς παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν γράψαι αὐτῷ βιβλίον. Ὁ οὖν γέρων ἔχων τὸν νοῦν αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν θεωρίαν, ἔγραψε παρὰ στίχους καὶ οὐκ ἔστιξεν. Ὁ δὲ ἀδελφὸς λαβὼν καὶ θέλων στίξαι, εὔρε παρὰ λόγους. Καὶ λέγει τῷ γέροντι· Παρὰ στίχους ἐστίν, ἀββᾶ. Λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ γέρων· Ὑπαγε, πρῶτον ποιήσον τὰ γεγραμμένα, καὶ τότε ἔρχη καὶ γράφω σοι καὶ τὴν λοιπάδα. (APatr [CA], Abraham 3, PG 65.132BC)

Abba Abraham used to say of one of the people at Skete that he was a scribe and that he did not eat bread. A brother came begging him to write out a book for him. The elder's mind was wrapped in contemplation; he skipped some lines and wrote without punctuation. When the brother took it and wanted to punctuate [it] he found it lacked some lines and he said to the elder: “There are some lines missing, abba”. Said the elder to him: “Go away, and first practice what is written; then come back and I will write the rest for you too”.²⁰

The poet of the *Paradeisos* has here left out the name of the informant (Abraham), not of the protagonist, the wise scribal monk of Skete, who was already anonymous in the CA. This monk was himself writing a kind of APatr, it seems – at least in the version of the *Paradeisos* (v. 1: ἔργα μοναχῶν).

²⁰ Trans. in Wortley <http://monastica.ht.lu.se/> with adaptations.

c) The tetrastich is not (clearly) recognizable as the reworking of an *apophthegma*. A final possibility – and in fact the most frequent one (with 37 out of the 99 tetrastichs) is that there is no explicit indication in the poem that it was based on a saying of the Desert Fathers. And yet, 16 of these tetrastichs do have probable or demonstrable parallels in the APatr. The second poem, for instance, is at first sight the expression of a general wisdom based on the Gospels, without any reference to the words of a Desert Father.

2. Ὅτι συγγνωστότερον τὸ ἐλάχιστον.

Κέρδιον ἢ μετάνοια μάλ' ἔξοχον· ἐκ γὰρ ἀρίστων
καὶ τόκον εἰσπράττων Κύριος ὑψιμέδων,
τοῖσιν ἁμαρτωλοῖς καὶ ὅλον ἀφήησι τὸν ὄφλον·
εἰκόνα τὴν πόρνην καὶ τὸν ἄσωτον ἔχεις.

The lowest deserve more leniency.

A truly most rewarding thing is repentance: whereas from the best ones | the Lord who rules on high charges interest too, | He remits even the whole debt of the sinners. | As an illustration you have the whore and the prodigal son.

The pastoral message in the first verse is corroborated by a clear reference (“γὰρ”) to the parable of the talents (Matt 25:27: “on my return I would have received what was my own with interest” – σὺν τόκῳ), and then further illustrated in v. 4 with the *exempla* (εἰκόνα) of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:2-11) and the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). End of story: this could very well be based directly on the New Testament – and obviously each Byzantine reader would be expected to recognize these intertexts. Yet, the odds are that our poet was led to this particular composition by one or both of the following Sayings:

Ὁ αὐτὸς εἶπεν, ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς τοῖς μὲν ἁμαρτωλοῖς καὶ τὸ κεφάλαιον παραχωρεῖ μετανοοῦσιν, ὡς τῇ πόρνῃ καὶ τῷ τελώνῃ· τοὺς δὲ δικαίους ἀπαιτεῖ καὶ τόκους. (APatr [CA], Epiphanius 15, PG 65.165C-168A)²¹
Εἶπεν γέρων· Ἡ ταπείνωσις πολλάκις καὶ χωρὶς κόπου ἔσωσε πολλούς. Καὶ μαρτυρεῖ τοῦτο ὁ τελώνης καὶ ὁ ἄσωτος υἱὸς ῥήματα μόνον μικρὰ εἰπόντες καὶ σωθέντες. (APatr CN 552)²²

²¹ The fact that other tetrastichs (3 and 70) are arguably based on two other Sayings of Epiphanius (numbers 12 and 16 in the *Patrologia Graeca*) makes the link even more plausible.

²² Wortley, *Anonymous Sayings*, p. 376.

The same elder [Epiphanius] said: “God forgives the debts of sinners who repent, as he did in the cases of the Woman who was a Sinner and of the Publican; but as for the righteous, he demands interest too”.

An elder said: “Humility, even without toiling, has often saved many people. The Publican and the prodigal Son bear witness to this: all they did was to speak a few words and they were saved”.²³

For the remaining 21 tetrastichs without any recognizable apophthegmatic features (i.e. for more than half of them) we have not found any source texts in the APatr. Unsurprisingly, this is the highest proportion of the three scenarios. In some cases, the tetrastichs seem to be just original monastic poems without any connection to the Desert Fathers – but the preceding example warns against jumping too hastily to this conclusion. The only poems of which we can be quite certain that they were composed for the occasion are the opening and closing ones. The former has been discussed before (and does give proof of acquaintance with the APatr tradition, perhaps with the prologue of the systematic collection); the final one (number 99, incorrectly number 96 in *Patrologia Graeca*) will be discussed below. Elsewhere we do have the feeling that the poet found his inspiration in a source text unknown to us – just as in the cases of the unidentified *Apophthegmata* of the two previous scenarios. In many cases, the source texts appear to be irretrievably lost to us, and hence any concrete analysis of the metaphrastic technique becomes impossible.²⁴ Alternatively, a number of the quatrains without identified source may indeed be original compositions by the poet of the *Paradeisos*, who imitated the general style rather than the precise stories of the APatr.²⁵

The Transformation of the Source Texts

Even when we do have clear parallels in the APatr, as in two thirds of the tetrastichs, we have to be cautious when analyzing the relation between the *Paradeisos* and what

²³ Trans. in Wortley <http://monastica.ht.lu.se/>.

²⁴ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* (Paris, 1982; repr. 1992) discusses this situation: “Nous sommes là, très vraisemblablement, en présence d’hypertextes à hypotexte inconnu, dont l’hypertextualité nous est presque certaine, mais nous reste indéscribable et donc indéfinissable”. (pp. 532-33). Genette’s rewriting theory in relation to premodern rewriting is explored in the first chapter of the present volume.

²⁵ As suggested by Marc Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts. Volume Two* (Vienna, 2019), p. 245. Within his chapter on *metaphrasis*, Lauxtermann devotes a perspicuous discussion to the *Paradeisos* pp. 241-246. I want to thank him for letting me read this and other parts of the book before publication.

we *think* to be (one version of) the source text. As said before, the latter is particularly fluid, and we do not have a clear idea of the particular collection(s) of the *Apophthegmata* known to and used by our poet.

Still, it is obvious enough that there is a metaphrastic, or hypertextual,²⁶ relationship between the APatr and our collection. This relationship is designated in the long heading by the term “μεταληφθέντα” (or, in one manuscript, μεταβληθέντα). Above, I have translated the participle of μεταλαμβάνω simply as “taken”, but it might as well be rendered as “received, substituted, changed, transferred, altered, parodied, translated, derived, paraphrased”.²⁷ The verb is here used as a synonym of μεταφράζω, μεταγράφω or μεταπλάττω, terms that are used in Byzantine texts and manuscripts for the same activity of rendering prose texts in poetical form.²⁸ In this volume, it needs not to be repeated that *metaphrasis* has received considerable attention in Byzantine literary studies over the last decades. My discussion of the *Paradeisos*’ metaphrastic technique will center around five categories: selection; style and language; extent; narrative structure; genre and function.²⁹

Selection

²⁶ The terminology of Genette in *Palimpsestes*: a hypertext is “a text derived from another preexistent text” (the hypotext) “by a transformative process”; trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, *Palimpsestes: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln; London, 1983). For Genette, hypertextuality includes translation (ch. 41) and versification (ch. 42).

²⁷ All these possible English translations are offered in LSJ and/or Montanari’s *Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*.

²⁸ Rhoby, “Labeling Poetry,” p. 266, on Nikephoros Xanthopoulos in his fourteenth-century ecclesiastical history: “Gregory transformed his orations into every kind of poetry which he called *epê* (πρὸς παντοῖα ποιήσεων εἶδη μεταπλάττων τοὺς λόγους, ἃ ἔπη ὠνόμασε, *Patrologia Graeca* 146:509C)”; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry* vol. 2, pp. 232-33, informs us about the headings of Ignatios the Deacon’s fable tetrastichs – a work with obvious similarities to the *Paradeisos*: in Par. gr. 2991a the heading is “Ἰγνατίου διάκονος τετράστιχα δι’ ἱάμβων ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Βαβρίου αἰσωπικῶν μεταφρασθέντα καὶ πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἐπαλείφοντα” (compare the structure and terminology of the *Paradeisos*’ long heading); in Vind. Phil. gr. 178 it is “Βαβρίου ἐν ἐπιτομῇ μεταγραφὲν ὑπὸ Ἰγνατίου μαγίστορος”.

²⁹ My approach, a further development of Demoen, “John Geometres’ Iambic Life”, has been inspired by several works of Christian Høgel, especially *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen, 2002). More recently, I have learned from Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić and Bernard Flusin, eds., *Remanier, métaphraser: fonctions et techniques de la réécriture dans le monde byzantin* (Belgrade, 2011), especially from Flusin’s contribution: “Vers la métaphore” (pp. 85-99); Juan Signes Codoñer and Immaculada Pérez Martín, eds., *Textual Transmission in Byzantium: Between Textual Criticism and Quellenforschung* (Turnhout, 2014), notably Martin Hinterberger, “Between Simplification and Elaboration: Byzantine Metaphraseis Compared,” pp. 33-60 and Juan Signes Codoñer, “Towards a Vocabulary for Rewriting in Byzantium,” pp. 61-90; Daria Resh, “Toward a Byzantine Definition of Metaphrasis,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 55 (2015) 754-87. For metrical *metaphrasis* in particular, see below, n. 38.

The “chapters” of the *Paradeisos* are μεταληφθέντα ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῶν ἀποφθεγμάτων. It is clear by now that we do not know from which particular book, but nevertheless one might ask whether it is possible to detect a rationale behind the selection made by the author of the *Paradeisos* from the enormous tradition of *Apophthegmata*. The answer seems to be quite simple: there is no such rationale. There is no straightforward structure in the *Paradeisos* as a whole, and there is scarcely any system in the choice of source texts, at least when compared to the existing editions of the basic collections of the Sayings of the Desert Fathers, the alphabetical/anonymous one and the thematic (or systematic) one.

Nineteen different elders are named in the *Paradeisos*, but, as has been shown before, this does not coincide with the sequences of the alphabetical collection since the names have often been altered, deleted or added. Only four of the elders from the CA have offered inspiration for three or more tetrastichs: Epiphanius (see above, note 21) three times, yet each time without his name (which might have to do with metrical reasons, Ἐπιφάνι- would not correctly fit in a dactylic verse); Arsenios equally three times, exceptionally in a row (numbers 9-11); and the two “big shots” Antony (five times) and Poimen (eight times, four of which in a series, numbers 73-76). There are, then, only two short sequences that resemble the alphabetical ordering of one branch of the APatr, but even here we have a remarkable variation: Arsenios is mentioned expressly in each of the three consecutive poems, while Poimen’s name is only hinted at in the last poem of the short series.

A numerical look at the relationship between the *Paradeisos* and the systematic collection does not yield any more significant results. The CS is subdivided into 21 themes of divergent size, ranging from 19 to 194 *Apophthegmata*. Their presence in the *Paradeisos* does not show remarkable preferences: as expected, the longer sections are represented with most reworkings: nine tetrastichs come from the collection on discernment (διάκρισις, 194 items), five from that on self-control (ἐγκράτεια, 104) and four from that on soberness (πάντοτε νήφειν, 104). The only theme that has more than 100 Sayings in the CS and fewer than four in the *Paradeisos* is humbleness (ταπεινοφροσύνη, three out of 136). This all seems a fairly even distribution. There is, moreover, no discernible ordering of the themes throughout the *Paradeisos*, although here again there appear to be a few coherent micro-series.

If, then, one would have to assume a rationale behind the organization of the *Paradeisos*, it might be a search for variation (ποικιλία).

Style and Language

The overall transformation is a paradoxical one: simple prose texts about ascetics who have renounced the world are rewritten in a classicizing style, epic-like language and a sophisticated meter. The versification of the simple *Apophthegmata* gives sometimes occasion to a display of an encyclopedic knowledge of ancient language and literature, especially of the epic and the epigrammatic tradition. The examples are legion, ranging from mere epic diction to probably conscious quotations of specific passages. The latter is arguably the case in the opening poem, where the end of the third verse (“ἐπεπλήγει φίλον ἦτορ”) and the opening words of the fourth verse (“δεῦρ’ ἴτω”) seem to be inspired by Iliadic lines (3.31 and 7.75), perhaps not by coincidence dealing with Paris and Hektor, respectively. Tetrastich 48, equally discussed above, may serve to illustrate the morphological and lexical transformation of single words from the source text: “ἐκάλεσε” becomes “ἔδεκτ(ο)”; “ἔβαλε εἰς χύτραν” becomes “χύτρῃ ἔμβαλε”; “λέγει” is diversified into “φῆ” and “ἴαχεν”; “εἶδες” becomes “ἔδρακες”. All these new words and forms are typical of the epic tradition, often especially frequent in Nonnos.

Extent

The poet chose the dense and refined form of the tetrastich (as had been done by Ignatios the Deacon who versified the Aesopic fables in quatrains, see already n. 28), sticking to this form regardless of the length of the original stories. This means that many *Apophthegmata* are either summarized or expanded in order to fit into the fixed format of four verses. The uniform structure often compelled the poet to abridge his source and to leave aside details from the narrative context, as in number 8, on the scribal monk. (The shortening of longer anecdotes does not always lead to comprehensible results, it must be said). Conversely, brief sayings are sometimes rather a starting point for a new poem than a model to be closely followed: they are introduced by an extra message, as in number 17 (the poem on exorcism); or several of them are conflated into a new whole, as with poem 2 (the one on repentance).

Narrative Structure and the Narrating Voice

The core of an *Apophthegma* is, by definition, the wise and sometimes witty saying of the ascetic hero. In its most basic form, it simply runs “Abba X said (that abba Y said): *this or that maxim*”. But quite often, there is a narrative context, briefly sketching the situation in which the saying is uttered or in which the narrator has been informed about it. This situation may include some noteworthy action of the ascetic, too – remember the expression in the long heading: “ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῶν ἀποφθεγμάτων καὶ πράξεων”. Part of the *Apophthegmata* do not even have any direct speech, but consist only of the description of an action. The anecdotes of the APatr, then, take all forms of the *chreia* as described in the rhetorical handbooks: the λογική (verbal: consisting of a saying alone), the πρακτική (active: action alone) and the μικτή (mixed: both action and speech).³⁰ In their treatises on *progymnasmata*, Ailius Theon and Ps-Hermogenes rightly point to the close relationship between the χρεία, the γνώμη (the maxim, another standard rhetorical exercise) and the ἀπομνημόνευμα (the “memorable recollection”, a longer anecdote).³¹

Likewise, the quatrains of the *Paradeisos* display a variety of narrative and non-narrative forms that can mostly be considered as *chreiai*. In this sense, one may say that despite the stylistic and metrical “upgrade” realized in the *metaphrasis*, there is generic invariance on a structural level. This is not to say that the individual poems stick to the original format of their specific source *apophthegma(ta)*. As stated above (under “Extent”), the fixed number of verses sometimes entails abbreviation or elaboration, which can have an impact on the narrative structure. The possible transformations can be schematically represented when compared to the standard elements of a typical *apophthegma*:

- (a) an optional narrative setting (*One day...; It was said of abba...; A brother asked abba...*)

³⁰ On the *Apophthegmata* as *chreiai*, see Kathleen McVey, “The Chreia in the Desert: Rhetoric and the Bible in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*,” in *The Early Church in Its Context, Essays in Honor of Everett Ferguson*, eds Abraham J. Malherbe, Frederick W. Norris and James W. Thompson, (Leiden, 1998), pp. 245-55.

³¹ Theon, *Prog.* 3.96-97, ed. Michel Patillon, *Aelius Théon: Progymnasmata* (Paris, 1997), pp. 18-19; Ps-Hermogenes, *Prog.* 3.20-21, ed. Hugo Rabe, *Hermogenes Opera*, *Rhetores Graeci* 6 (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 6-7.

(b) the core: the saying or the deed of the elder. In the case of a saying (by far the most common situation), we have:

- (b1) an introduction (attributive discourse), often in standardized formulas such as “εἶπεν γέρον” (“an elder said”, in the case of the anonymous collection)
- (b2) the saying itself, represented in direct speech.

When reading the APatr, we get the impression of an objective record of the Fathers’ words, reported by a covert narrator.³² The same is true in several tetrastichs of the *Paradeisos*, for instance in the numbers 8 and 48 discussed above. Even though the name of the source anecdote is replaced or omitted in these cases, the narrative situation remains identical. Yet, quite often the narrator comes to the fore in the *Paradeisos*, and this happens in two opposite ways:

1) There is no narrative setting (no a) and the saying (b2) is presented without any attributive discourse (no b1). The result is that the narrating voice appears to become responsible for the maxim and to take more authority. Instead of a “χρεία” we have the effect of a “γνώμη”; the poet does not tell an anecdote, but seems to utter the wise words himself. As we have seen above with tetrastich 2, this impression can be the result of the suppression of the narrative frame of one or more concealed source apophthegms.

2) The whole anecdote is framed by an introductory remark and/or explained in a conclusion. In both cases, the elder’s saying or action functions as the illustration of a general truth, advanced by the overt narrator. Such an interference of the authorial voice is not unlike the *epimythion* that introduces or concludes fables, or the (probably non-authentic) titles of the individual tetrastichs. Two examples will illustrate this: one active and one verbal *chreia*. Note the conjunction γάρ in both cases: this is the verbal signal of the narrator's foregrounding.

13. Ὅτι οὐδὲν τῶν μεγάλων ἄνευ γίνεται τόλμης.

Βούλετό τις καθ’ ἑν ἡμᾶρ ὑπεκφυγέειν βιότοιο

³² The prologues of the alphabetical and the systematic collections constitute exceptions: only there does the narrator express his intentions and his appreciation of the monastic heroes he is about to present. Compare the opening poem of the *Paradeisos* (quoted above), which fulfills a similar function as the prologues in the APatr.

ἀλλὰ τὰ καὶ τὰ λέγων, εἰρύετ'· ἔνθεν ἀφείς
καὶ τὸ χιτῶνιον αὐτὸ δι' ἄκρας ἔδραμε κοῦφος.
Ἄνδρὶ γὰρ εὐτόλμῳ καὶ πόλος ἐστὶ βατός.

Nothing great can be realized without courage.

A man wanted to renounce the worldly life every single day, | but he said this
and that, and was always kept back; so he threw aside | even up to his tunic
and, relieved, he ran up to the top. | Indeed: for a daring man even heaven is
accessible.

Here, the narrator adds a generalizing conclusion to the original *apophthegma*, which spoke for itself.³³ In the next poem, conversely, he starts out with a maxim that is then illustrated by an anecdote – shortened and with different characters from the ones in the probable source version:³⁴

40. Ὅτι δεῖ μὴ μέγα φρονεῖν ἐπὶ τινι.

Εἴ τι μέγ' ἐξείποις, ἑτέρου πάρα μείζον ἀκούσεις·
καὶ γὰρ ἔφη Ζήνων· “Οὐποτε μ' ἡέλιος
δειπνίζοντα δέδορκε”. Θεὸν δ' ἀπάμειπτο παραστάς·
“Αὐτὰρ ἐμὲ {ὁ} αὐτὸς οὐδὲ χολωσάμενον”.

That one should not boast on anything.

When you proclaim something great, you will hear something greater from
someone else. | Look indeed at Zenon, who said: “Never has the sun | seen
me eating”. And Theon, who stood near him, answered: | “But me, the sun
even never saw me provoked to anger”.

Overall, these transformations make for a narrator of the *Paradeisos* who is clearly more prominent than the one of the APatr.

Genre and Function

In the previous section, we observed a generic invariance at a structural-rhetorical level: both the anecdotes of the APatr and the tetrastichs of the *Paradeisos* are mostly

³³ APatr CN 51: A young man was seeking to renounce the world but often, after he had set out, his *logismoi* turned him back, involving him in affairs, for he was also rich. One day, after he had set out, they crowded in on him raising a great cloud of dust to turn him back again. But he suddenly stripped and, throwing his clothes aside, he ran off naked to the monasteries (trans. in Wortley, <http://monastica.ht.lu.se/>).

³⁴ APatr [CA] Cassian 4: The same [elder] also recounted: “Abba John who was the *hegumenos* of a large coenobion visited Abba Paesios who had been living in the remotest desert for forty years. As he had great love for him and, consequently, freedom of speech, he said to him: “In retreat like this for such a long time and not easily disturbed by anyone, what good have you accomplished?” He said: “The sun never saw me eating since I started living alone”. Said Abba John: “Nor did it ever see me being angry” (trans. in Wortley, <http://monastica.ht.lu.se/>).

chreiai. But of course, there are major formal and arguably also functional transformations that allow one to speak as well of an important generic shift: formally from prose to verse and from colloquial Byzantine Greek to highbrow poetic diction; functionally – but this is more a matter of interpretation – probably from monastic edification to secular entertainment or educational praxis.

When it comes to the original function and the intended audience of the poetic cycle, we can only speculate since we are not sure about either geographical origin or date. One thing can be safely assumed: the *Paradeisos*' aim cannot have been to replace the APatr as a source of information on the Desert Fathers or as an invitation to an ascetic life in the desert. The dense, sometimes almost incomprehensible formulation, the multiple stylistic and linguistic layers, as well as the rather sophisticated intertextual allusions seem to point to versed readers, who would appreciate the virtuoso form and the variation in metaphrastic techniques demonstrated throughout the 99 tetrastichs. The intellectual circles in tenth-century Constantinople would be an educated guess, notably the peers of the poet or perhaps a school audience.³⁵

The final poem of the *Paradeisos* is revealing as it comes to the ambivalent function and audience of the collection. At face value, one might assume a genuine spiritual intention, since the paraenetic character appears to be literally expressed in the title and the first verse of this epilogue-poem. Yet, the second distich insists on the literary aspects of the message, both explicitly (the “books of the Helicon” clearly refer to the poetic form) and implicitly (by the two mythological references: Helikon and Hylas). Edification or education? Possibly both at once.³⁶

99. Ὅτι τοῖς κουφοτέροις ἀνόνητος ἡ παραίνεσις.

³⁵ Compare the assumed “sophisticated audience” of the two (prose) *metaphraseis* from around the turn of the tenth century discussed in Dirk Krausmüller, “Fainting Fits and Their Causes: A Topos in two Middle Byzantine Metaphraseis by Nicetas the Paphlagonian and Nicephorus Ouranos,” *Golden Horn: Journal of Byzantium* 9 (2001-2), 4-12. Resh, “Toward a Byzantine Definition,” p. 763, infers from Photios (*Bibl.* 128a.11-17) that “biblical paraphrases in verse were intended primarily for school audiences”. Similarly, Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry* vol. 2, p. 238, “strongly” suspects that Ignatios the Deacon’s metrical *metaphraseis* were intended for educational purposes.

³⁶ In his chapter on Byzantine hagiography in verse (which does not mention the *Paradeisos*), Stephanos Efthymiadis concludes that metrical hagiographical texts in Greek were “always prompted by rhetorical purposes” and “the exigencies of the literary exercise outweighed the demands for edification and polemics”: Stephanos Efthymiadis, “Greek Byzantine Hagiography in Verse,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis, 2 vols (Farnham 2011-14), 2:161-78, at p. 172.

Πολλὰ λαλῶν καὶ πολλὰ παραινῶν ἐν μόνον εὔχου·
ὄφρα τύχης ἀνδρὸς ὅστις ἔχει κραδίην.
Εἰ δὲ βίβλους Ἑλικῶνος ἀκαρδίῳ ἀνδρὶ κενοίης,
τὸν Ὑλλαν κρᾶζεις ἢ παρὰ θῖνα λαλεῖς.

Exhortations are of no profit to the lighthearted.

When you are talking much and advising much, you should have only one wish: | to reach a man who has the right heart. | But if you pour out the books of the Helikon into a senseless man, | you cry for Hylas,³⁷ or you are talking to a beach.

The Formal and Generic Tradition of the Paradeisos

The final section of this chapter deals with the collection's tradition in two senses: its place in the literary tradition (of both metrical rewriting and epigram), and its reception and textual transmission.

a) *Metaphrasis* and Versification: Epigrams, Chapters, Tetrastichs

One part of the literary context of the *Paradeisos* is obviously the Byzantine practice of the metrical *metaphrasis* of source texts of all kinds, both secular and religious.³⁸

John Geometres' relevant works have been discussed before. His *Metaphrasis of the Biblical Odes* continues a tradition of Bible versifications, the most notable of which are those of the Psalms by Apollinaris and of the Gospel of John by Nonnos.³⁹

Geometres' *Panteleemon* is one of the most elaborated and sophisticated instances of hagiography in verse. The much shorter format of the metrical *Synaxaria* (the most famous ones being those by Christophoros Mitylenaios) comes closer to the quatrains of the *Paradeisos*, as do the works of two other famous poets within this tradition:

Ignatios the Deacon (especially his fables in iambic quatrains) and Theodore

Prodromos (notably his dodecasyllabic and hexametrical *tetrasticha* on the Old and

³⁷ A proverbial expression for vain efforts, just like the second verse half. The proverb is explained among others in the Souda (τ 769: Τὸν Ὑλλαν κραυγάζεις· ἐπὶ τῶν μάτην πονούντων καὶ κραυγάζόντων ἢ παροιμία; *You are shouting Hylas: the proverb applies to those labouring and shouting in vain*; see also υ 90: Ὑλλαν κραυγάζειν). It ultimately goes back to Theocritus' Idyll 13 (*Hylas*), vv. 58-60.

³⁸ Useful surveys with further bibliography in Efthymiadis, "Greek Byzantine Hagiography in Verse" and Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry* vol. 2, ch. 19 ("Metaphrasis"), pp. 225-246.

³⁹ Recent discussions: Andrew Faulkner, "Faith and Fidelity in Biblical Epic: The Metaphrasis Psalmorum, Nonnus, and the Theory of Translation," in *Nonnus of Panopolis in Context*, ed. Konstantinos Spanoudakis (Berlin, 2014), pp. 195-210 and Rachele Ricceri, "The Byzantine Reception of the Metaphrasis Psalmorum: Paratextuality and Visual Representation," in *Byzantines and the Bible*, eds Reinhart Ceulemans and Barbara Crostini, (Uppsala, forthcoming).

New Testaments; he also composed a fragmentarily surviving metrical calendar, four verses for each saint).

Prodromos' short poems on Biblical episodes and on saints are often called epigrams, even though they are never designated as “ἐπιγράμματα” in the manuscripts.⁴⁰ The same is true for the *Paradeisos*. Alan Cameron called it “the most technically competent corpus of Byzantine epigrammatic poetry” and praised the poet because “he has a feel for the structure of the classical epigram that is [...] without parallel in the entire Byzantine age”.⁴¹ The poet has indeed demonstrably drawn inspiration from the ancient epigrams newly available and popular in mundane literary circles since the Anthology of Kephala (ca 900). The *Paradeisos*' short and often witty poems with a point, written in elegiacs, obviously correspond to the ancient and modern notion of “epigrams”. Yet, Byzantine usage would probably not label these non-inscriptional tetrastichs as “ἐπιγράμματα”. As a matter of fact, the term appears nowhere in the manuscripts before the *editio princeps*. Skordylios is the first to use this label in his title (see above n. 2). When there is an overall heading in the manuscripts, the generic indication is mostly “κεφάλαια” (chapters), as in the long heading from the later manuscript branch. Two of the earliest manuscripts (Q and V) do not have a title; the two other fourteenth-century witnesses have “κεφάλαια παραινετικά” (D) or “Ἔτερα κεφάλαια τοῦ ἁγίου νεύλου” (L; its apographs have “κεφάλαια ἠθικά καὶ διδασκαλικά”). The term “chapters” is common for ascetical literature, as in the case of Neilos (see notably the title in L: *Other chapters of saint Neilos*). Its use as a title stresses the moralizing and didactic aspect of the collection, even without the explicit qualifications: “παραινετικά”, “ἠθικά” or “διδασκαλικά”. The poetic character of the *Paradeisos*, by contrast, is not indicated at all in the titles of the oldest manuscripts; only in the later long heading does the addition “ἡρωελεγεῖοι” (elegiacs) appear. There is one exception as it comes to the labeling of the poems as “chapters”: the title in manuscript I reads “τετράστιχα λίαν ὠφέλιμα”, thus combining a (simple and precise) formal denomination with the moral profit announced in the opening poem. “Tetrastichs” is the neutral term that has indeed been used for the poems throughout this chapter.

⁴⁰ Grigorios Papagiannis, *Theodoros Prodromos: Jambische und hexametrische Tetrasticha auf die Haupterzählungen des Alten und des Neuen Testaments*, 2 vols (Wiesbaden, 1997), 1:3.

⁴¹ Alan Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993), p. 339.

b) The (Re)presentation of the Tetrastichs in the Manuscripts

In his discussion of “architextuality”, Genette states that “the text is not supposed to know [...] its generic quality [...]. Even less [...] does verse declare itself as verse [...]. Determining the generic status of the text is not the business of the text but that of the reader, or the critic, or the public”.⁴² In the manuscript age, this determination is also the business of the compiler or the scribe, who can make use not only of titles (“chapters”, “tetrastichs”, or none) but also of layout and context. This paratextual, visual and contextual information may make for important transformations as it comes to the possible function and reception of the text in later centuries.⁴³

As we have seen, the *Paradeisos* was probably intended for performance in the *theatron*, for circulation among literary peers and/or for use in advanced education in tenth-century Constantinople. Yet, its oldest surviving manuscripts date to the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and some aspects of this transmission are revealing for the assessment and the afterlife of the anonymous versified *apophthegmata*. We have discussed the various headings added to the collection as a whole; there is just as much variation when it comes to the graphical presentation of the texts and the character of the manuscripts in which they are preserved. Three of the five oldest manuscripts (V, L and I) have no consistent line breaks at the verse ends, and hence present the tetrastichs as if they were prose. It is no coincidence that V and L are manuscripts with religious prose (theological and exegetical texts in V, ascetic prose by Neilos in L); I offers a long section of poems by Gregory of Nazianzos – to whom the *Paradeisos* is ascribed solely in this manuscript. The moralizing function evoked in most titles is thus reinforced by the visual and contextual presentation. In opposition to this, Q and D, as well as the ε branch, do present the poems (mostly) correctly as quatrains. Q further includes gnomology, apophthegms of Plutarch and poems of (among others) John Geometres; D is a miscellaneous manuscript with several grammatical and rhetorical treatises: the correct lay-out of the *Paradeisos* (and the many glosses and scholia in D) correspond with the secular learning on display in the manuscripts as a whole.⁴⁴

⁴² Genette, *Palimpsestes*, p. 12 (English trans., p. 4).

⁴³ Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry* vol. 2, pp. 245-46 was a source of inspiration for the final paragraphs of this chapter.

⁴⁴ Remarkably, the *Paradeisos* is never to be found in manuscripts with *Apophthegmata Patrum*. This confirms a remark made by Martin Hinterberger in “Between Simplification and Elaboration,” p. 56: “the juxtaposition of the two texts [source text and metaphrasis] would reduce the metaphrasis to a

It seems, then, that the *Paradeisos* must have been transmitted from some moment on and up to the fourteenth century as part of ascetical collections. This suggests a kind of return from sophisticated poetry back to (seemingly) religious prose. During the Palaiologan Renaissance, it resurfaces (to our knowledge), and regains its real character as a *metaphrasis* in highbrow verse.

mere derivate of the older original. The metaphrasis though is more than that and also in its time it was read independently of its source. It deserves, therefore, to be published as an independent text, to be read as an independent text in its own right, functioning according to its own linguistic and stylistic logic”.