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## *Phrasis poikilê*

### *Imitatio and variatio in the Poetry Book of Christophoros Mitylenaios*

One of the most acclaimed Byzantine poets was also one of the most authentic ones. Christophoros Mitylenaios' work is famous for the many picturesque scenes. The irony of history has proven the poem "on the mice in his house" (103 Kurtz), in which these are said to be (literally) devouring his books, to be prophetic.<sup>1</sup> The well-known deplorable state of the transmission of Christophoros' *στίχοι διάφοροι* ("various poems") is, indeed, due to mice that have destroyed parts of the main manuscript, the Grottaferrata Z α XXIX.<sup>2</sup> The loss of many verses and parts of verses does not merely spoil, at times, the exceptional aesthetic pleasure the reading of Christophoros has to offer, it also complicates our understanding and interpretation of individual poems and, to a certain extent, even of his collection as a whole. The following paper is directed towards dealing specifically with this collection as such.

#### A FRIEND'S RESPONSE TO AN INGENIOUS MONODY: CRITICISM OR PRAISE?

Poem 79 is a painful illustration of the difficulties which the lacunous transmission entails. This is all the more frustrating since the poem seems to include some clues as to how to read and appreciate Christophoros' verse in general. It bears the incomplete title "other verses to the same person, who has sent the verses and ...". This person is a certain Petros, a grammarian who had read Christophoros' poem 77, a mourning poem on the death of his sister Anastaso. The answer to Petros is worth quoting in full – as full as possible, that is.

Ἐτεροι εἰς τὸν αὐτόν, πέμψαντα τοὺς στίχους καὶ [. . .]

Ἐκεῖνο τοῦ σοῦ Χριστοφόρου πυνθάνη,  
εἰ τὰῦτα πενθῶν, ποῖα γοῦν χαίρων γράφω  
[. . . . .] γνώσεως καὶ τῶν λόγων  
τί κομψὸν εἶχε τὰ γραφέντα καὶ μέγα;  
5 [. . . . .] οὐδ]ενὸς γέμον,  
ποῖαν δὲ καινὴν καὶ ξενίζουσαν φράσιν  
[. . . . .] πο]ικίλην  
πενθοῦντος αὐτοῦ τοῦ γράφοντος, ὡς ἔφη,

<sup>1</sup> Οἱ παντοτρῶκται τοῦδε μῦθου τοῦ δόμου (...) οἱ πᾶν φαγόντες βρώσιμον τῆς οἰκίας (...) τὰ χαρτῖα τρώγουσι καὶ τὰ βιβλία (103 K, 1, 46, 48). Symbolically, only 23 out of 72 verses of this poem have survived completely, and about half of them have disappeared almost entirely. The title itself is largely a conjecture by Kurtz: *Εἰς τοὺς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ μῦθου*. See E. KURTZ, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*. Leipzig 1903. The Greek text of Christophoros in this article is quoted from the new edition prepared by my colleague Marc De Groote. He adopts many of Kurtz' ingenious proposals, and includes other, more recent conjectures, especially by Carmelo Crimi, from C. CRIMI [*et al.*], *Cristoforo di Mitilene. Canzoniere*. Catania 1983 (the only modern translation of the whole collection) and IDEM, *Recuperi Cristoforei*. *BollGrott* 39 (1985) 231–242; and by Claudio De Stefani, from C. DE STEFANI, *Notes on Christophoros of Mitylene and Konstantinos Stilbes*. *JÖB* 58 (2008) 45–52. De Groote's accentuation takes into account the practice of the manuscripts.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. the sobre remark by Paul Maas: "Viele Gedichte sind freilich von den Mäusen hoffnungslos zugerichtet", P. MAAS, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios (sic)*, *Besprechung von KURTZ, Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*. *BZ* 15 (1906) 639–641, 640. The ms G is variously dated to the end of the 13th, the 14th and the 15th century. For palaeographical reasons, Marc De Groote dates it to the 13th century.

- [. . .]  
 10 ὡς ἢ λέγουσα μαρτυρεῖ παροιμία,  
 [. . .]  
 ὁμως ἂν εὖρες ἄξιόν τι καὶ λόγου,  
 [. . .]  
 δόξαν χορηγῶ τῶν καλῶν θεῶ δίδου.

In his impressive and stimulating book on Byzantine poetry, Marc Lauxtermann devotes a brief literary discussion – the only one I am aware of – to this poem:

“Christopher replies to criticism vouched by a certain Peter the Grammarian, who had read Chr. Mityl. 77 (see Chr. Mityl. 78). Although the text of Chr. Mityl. 79 is badly damaged, it is clear that Peter was surprised that Mitylenaios could compose a beautiful monody to his sister, although he was grief-stricken by her death at a young age. If he really bewailed her untimely death, how could Mitylenaios write such a superbly constructed text? If he genuinely regretted her loss, how could he indulge in splendid rhetoric? This is hardly a veiled criticism. Peter praises Christopher Mitylenaios for his beautiful style and fine rhetoric, but takes him to task for not being sincere enough. Peter’s criticism sounds almost modern (...); but it is not an argument much used by the Byzantines”.<sup>3</sup>

These lines are part of a discussion of style criticism in the eleventh century, when, Lauxtermann rightly observes, “there are many texts that bear proof of a purely aesthetic, and not ideologically biased, appreciation of contemporary poetry and prose”.<sup>4</sup> He refers to our poem as an exception to the rule.

Carmelo Crimi, by contrast, seems to interpret Peter’s response in a totally laudatory way:

“Il *grammatikos* ha forse chiesto, con ammirazione, cosa Cristoforo, dimostratosi così facendo in occasione di un lutto, avrebbe potuto comporre, provando un sentimento opposto, cioè la gioia. Ha ammirato, ancora, l’*elocutio novella et mirabilis* (v. 6), la *varietas* (v. 7) ed altro ancora: tracce evidenti di una critica improntata visibilmente alla retorica”.<sup>5</sup>

I tend to follow the latter reading, thinking that poem 79 is indeed concerned with aesthetic criticism, and is thus precisely a confirmation of the general tendency of the century as described by Lauxtermann. Peter seems to have wondered, admiringly, what his friend (τοῦ σοῦ) Christophoros would be capable of writing in happy circumstances, if he writes so well when mourning. Verse 2 is a kind of *a fortiori* reasoning. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure whether the partial sentences and loose words in the following verses are references to Peter’s actual comment on the monody.<sup>6</sup> Yet this is, in my view, not that important. The important thing is that Christophoros himself advances the following notions as criteria by which the quality of his poetry has been or has to be judged: γνώσεως καὶ τῶν λόγων (perhaps to be taken together as knowledge of literature) and κομψὸν ... καὶ μέγα. There might be, as often, a touch of irony or even a hint at ‘mere’ rhetoricity in the term κομψόν,<sup>7</sup> but the verses certainly suggest the literary skills of a competent writer, who is steeped in the rhetorical tradition. In verses 6 and 7, we read about καινήν καὶ ξενίζουσαν φράσιν, novel and

<sup>3</sup> LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry* 46.

<sup>4</sup> LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry* 46.

<sup>5</sup> CRIMI, *Canzoniere* 123: the introduction to his translation of poem 79.

<sup>6</sup> The interrogative words τί and ποῖαν seem to imply so.

<sup>7</sup> The basic meaning (ingenious, refined, subtle, clever) sometimes gets a sneering sense, see *LSJ* s.v. As a *TLG* on-line search indicates, eleventh century usage is fluctuating. Whereas Michael Psellos uses the term often in a derogatory way, Ioannes Mauropous recommends the orations of Gregory the Theologian as follows, the adjective being put on a line with σοφός and χρηστός: πλήρης μὲν ἐστὶ δογμάτων ἀποκρύφων, / πλήρης δὲ θείων καὶ σοφῶν μυστηρίων, / πλήρης δὲ χρηστῶν ἠθικῶν διδαγμάτων, / πλήρης δὲ κομψῶν τεχνικῶν μαθημάτων (DE LAGARDE 29, 18–21). Most importantly, the two other passages in Christophoros’ works with κομψός are equally laudatory: 120 K, 107 (see below) and 27 K, 48. In the latter poem, the poet flatters the monk Niketas of Synada and his tongue: ἐν ἧ κατοικεῖ πᾶσα μουσῶν κομψότης. / ταύτης μετασχεῖν εὐχομαι τῶν ῥημάτων (48–49). F. LAURITZEN, An ironic portrait of a social monk: Christopher of Mytilene and Niketas Stethatos. *BSI* 65 (2007) 201–210, interprets the poem ironically, and argues that this monk is Niketas Stethatos. I am not convinced either by the ironic reading or the identification.

surprising phrasing,<sup>8</sup> and the adjective ποικίλην – whether or not further qualifying the noun φράσις – seems to belong to the same notion: the two verses apparently point at originality and variation in diction and style. Here again, one might discuss whether the qualifications καινή, ξενίζουσα and ποικίλη have positive or pejorative connotations, in eleventh-century literary criticism in general and for Christophoros in particular (I think they indicate positive qualities);<sup>9</sup> in any case, it is indisputable that they are concerned with style. We have, again, no clue concerning the proverb quoted in the lost verses 9 or 11 (Christophoros is fond of them throughout his works). On the contrary, the final idea of the poem is clear: rhetorical modesty demands that the credits for anything worthwhile in the monody be given to God, the χορηγός of all beautiful things.

In short, it is difficult to detect in this poem any firm traces of Petros' alleged criticism of Christophoros' insincerity. The criterion by which to judge on ἄξιόν τι καὶ λόγου (v. 12) is purely aesthetic indeed, and the literary qualities advanced are closely related to the basic features of Byzantine literature that are central to this volume of papers: verses 3 and 4 have to do with knowledge and cleverness, i.e. the basis for *imitatio*; verses 6 and 7, especially the ποικιλία, conform to *variatio*.

Now, what can we deduce from this poem? I would suggest to read it as a strong indication for the way we are supposed to appreciate Christophoros' στίχοι διάφοροι as a whole, rather than as a mere reflection of a particular reaction to a particular poem. Even if we assume that we are wrestling with the remains of the authentic, original version of a text that was once really sent, given or read to Peter, we have not found the poem in an archive or in a drawer, but in a collection prepared, as is generally accepted, by the poet himself. As a matter of principle, then, the poem we read has another context and function than the poem Peter has read, even if the words are the same.

This leads to the next question, the assessment of Christophoros' collection as a collection.

#### THE ΣΤΙΧΟΙ ΔΙΑΦΟΡΟΙ: A POETRY BOOK OR A RANDOM COLLECTION OF SNAPSHOTS?

In his review of the Kurtz edition, Paul Maas advertized the reading of the corpus as a whole:

“Die Gedichtsammlung des Christophoros (...) repräsentiert den Höhepunkt der byzantinischen Profanpoesie (...); bei diesen Kunstprodukten wirkt immer nur das Ganze”.<sup>10</sup>

In a general presentation of the poems, Nikolaos Oikonomides represented the *communis opinio* on the collection's origin and ordering principles as follows:

“The Grottaferrata manuscript is obviously an anthology of poems. Their chronological arrangement suggests that they were copied from a register in which Christophoros kept duplicates of (all?) his poetical works. The criteria of the selection are not known to us. (...) The only message that the antholo-

<sup>8</sup> It is tempting to relate the expression καινή φράσις to the famous *elocutio novella* of Fronto, as is done implicitly by Crimi in the quoted lines. The notion is traditionally taken to refer to a blend of archaisms and colloquial speech, which would make for a fair description of Christophoros' style, but this is not uncontroversial, see e.g. L. HOLFORD-STREVEN, *Elocutio Novella. Classical Quarterly* 26 (1976) 140–141.

<sup>9</sup> The expression ξενίζουσα φράσις appears to be unique in extant Greek literature (at least no parallels were found on the TLG online). Christophoros uses ξένος, καινός and ποικίλος several times in his poems, almost always in a positive way (for examples, see below). His contemporaries procure some more parallels endorsing this interpretation. In his poetry book, Ioannes Mauropous twice juxtaposes ξένος and καινός, almost as synonyms: once in an *ekphrasis* of a surprising artistic representation of the Nativity (DE LAGARDE 31, 1–7: Ὡ τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ ξένων θαυμάτων. / πάλιν λόγος σάρξ (...) / οὐδ' εἰς Ἰουδαίαν τε καὶ Παλαιστίνην. / ἀλλ' ἐνθάδε, ξένην τε καὶ καινὴν πλάσιον / πλασθεῖς) and once in an epigram on the astonishing originality of Gregory the Theologian (DE LAGARDE 15: Τί σοι τὸ σύννου βλέμμα βούλεται, πάτερ; / λέξειν τι καινὸν ἐκβιάζει μοι τάχα· / ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν εὖροις· πᾶν γὰρ ἀνθρώποις ξένον / ἐγνώρισαν φθάσαντες οἱ σοὶ μοι λόγοι.). Finally, expressions linking ποικίλος to φράσις are well attested, in a positive sense. Photios ends his discussion of the sophist Sopatros with the following admiring remark on his variegated style: Ἡ δὲ φράσις αὐτῷ ποικίλη καὶ οὐ μία τὴν ιδέαν, εἰ καὶ διὰ πάσης τὸ σαφὲς ᾤδευεν (Bibl. 161, 105a.13–14 HENRY); in his discussion of Euripides, Psellos states: [τὰ μὲν] γ[ὰρ] [μέ]τρα καὶ τὴν λέξιν μετατίθησι καὶ ποικίλλ[ει τὴν] φρά[σιν] κατ[ὰ] δύναμιν ὁ σο]φός. (*De Euripide et Georgio Piside iudicium* 82–83 ДУСК).

<sup>10</sup> MAAS, *Gedichte* 639.

gist wanted to convey when putting together the model of the Grottaferrata manuscript, was to show off this [i.e. the poet's] remarkable know-how in versification".<sup>11</sup>

Marc Lauxtermann briefly touches upon the question in a discussion of Ioannes Mauropous' unique poetry book, with its thematic arrangement and ring-composition. He concludes:

"By placing his poems in a poetry book and arranging them in a thematic order, Mauropous manipulates the perspective of his readers. Rather than seeing his poems as discontinuous and fragmented entities, the reader is invited to view them as parts of a meaningful whole. Thus Mauropous is re-creating his literary persona: he is no longer the author of various poems written over the years for various occasions, but a self-conscious author with a coherent oeuvre reflecting his literary identity. The refined thematic structure of Mauropous' poetry book is without parallel in other Byzantine collections of poems, which either have no formal arrangement at all or employ simple methods of organizing the material (such as, for instance, the chronological order of Christopher Mitylenaios' collection of poems). If there is no cohesiveness of design in a collection, poems function as self-contained units of composition and sense, as loose elements that are to be read and interpreted in isolation. (...) Poems are like stills. They are frozen poses of the past (...) each poem has its own particular relevance, but all the poems combined lack coherence."<sup>12</sup>

This is a view opposite to that of Paul Maas, of course. And it has implications as to how to study and interpret these loose poems:

"Byzantine poetry, as I see it, presents a random collection of snapshots: instantaneous exposures of non-recurring literary moments. The poems that we find in manuscripts are not written for eternity, but reflect a moment in time and deserve to be studied in their historical contexts. Each and every poem documents a single event and is the written record of a specific literary moment in the past, which often can be reconstructed by reading the text attentively, taking into account historical factors".<sup>13</sup>

This is, undisputably, sound advice, and that is what we see indeed put into effect by most scholarly work on Christophoros' corpus. The research, relatively scarce as it is, (although there seems to have been an upsurge during the last few years), is often directed towards the perusal and interpretation of particular poems in isolation, and focuses mainly on the historical and contextual information to be deduced – an obviously interesting and rewarding approach.<sup>14</sup>

Still, I would like to put Lauxtermann's implicit assessment of Christophoros' poetry book in perspective. I have already done so by suggesting that the Petros poem obtains a wider, metaliterary implication in the context of the anthology, and is not (just) "the written record of a specific literary moment in the past".

To be sure, Mitylenaios' collection as we have it lacks the exceptional coherence of Mauropous' book. The latter, moreover, has a metrical preface or πρόγραμμα, expressly stating that the author offers a brief selection of his oeuvre, a γέῤῥμα μικρόν; and its final poem, not by coincidence the ninety ninth, is an

<sup>11</sup> N. OIKONOMIDES, *Life and Society in Eleventh Century Constantinople*. *Südost-Forschungen* 49 (1990) 1–14, here 2–3. Note that Oikonomides leaves open the possibility of an anthology collected by someone other than the author. As has been said, most scholars assume that Christophoros himself made the selection.

<sup>12</sup> LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry* 64–65. For further remarks on Mauropous' poetry book, see now F. BERNARD, *The Circulation of Poetry in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, in: *Proceedings of the I Postgraduate Forum in Byzantine Studies: Sailing to Byzantium* (ed. S. NEOCLEOUS). Newcastle upon Tyne 2009, 145–162.

<sup>13</sup> LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry* 59–60.

<sup>14</sup> The primary reference is still E. FOLLIERI, *Le poesie di Cristoforo di Mitilene come fonte storica*. *ZRVI* 8 (1964) 133–148. More recent articles mainly interested in historical analysis of the collection include OIKONOMIDES, *Life and Society*, and U. CRISCUOLO, *Sui carmina historica di Cristoforo di Mitilene*, in: *Bisanzio nell'età dei Macedoni. Forme della produzione letteraria e artistica* (ed. F. CONCA – G. FIACCADORI). Milano 2007, 51–75. Over the last years, the reconstruction of the historical context of particular poems has been attempted by P. MAGDALINO, *Cosmological Confectionary 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. J. NESBITT). Leiden 2003, 1–6; F. LAURITZEN, *Christopher of Mytilene's Parody of the Haughty Mauropous*. *BZ* 100 (2007) 125–132 (on 55 K); LAURITZEN, *An ironic portrait* (27 K); and C. LIVANOS, *Justice, Equality and Dirt in the Poems of Christopher of Mytilene*. *JÖB* 57 (2007) 49–74 (13, 85 and 132 K).

appropriate epilogue.<sup>15</sup> Nothing of the kind in the Grottaferrata Christophoros, which starts and ends rather abruptly. On the other hand, his *στίχοι διάφοροι* are not as chaotic as another corpus that goes under the same generic title, and that is often put on a par with Christophoros and Mauropous, to wit, Ioannes Geometres.<sup>16</sup>

The chronology of the works was not, it seems, the sole criterion for the selection and arrangement of Mitylenaios' "various poems".<sup>17</sup> Ποικιλία, *variatio*, seems to have been at least as important. An obvious example is the more or less even distribution of the six riddles over the collection: we need not assume that Christophoros decided to compose one every six years or so. In a similar way, the many short epigrams on works of art and the famous mocking poems are more or less evenly distributed throughout the corpus.<sup>18</sup> The same goes for the variation in length and metre. Out of the 145 poems, 25 have more than 30 verses: these longer compositions never follow each other immediately. Neither do two dactylic poems ever form a sequence, although they are mainly concentrated in the first part of the collection: 15 out of the 21 hexametric and elegiac poems are to be found in the first half, and even seven within the first 20 poems, but even here never following one another.<sup>19</sup> The anthologist must have been anxious to avoid immediate sequences of long, dactylic or skoptic poems; as a matter of fact, they are regularly separated by just one other formal or generic type.

Conversely, there are several short sequences of thematically coherent poems, yet within these "mini-cycles", *variatio* is again the rule. The following examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

### MEANINGFUL SEQUENCES

Poems 9 to 11 deal with two competing schools in Constantinople.<sup>20</sup> The first two are laudatory poems on the school of saint Theodore, conveying an identical message: praise of the headmaster (μαῖστωρ) Leon, and his assistant (πρωξίμος) Stylianos. A partial juxtaposition of the two versions is revealing.

<sup>15</sup> DE LAGARDE 1, 26–29: in this Πρόγραμμα εἰς τὴν ὅλην βιβλίον, Mauropous announces a selection from his verse and prose, a gift to friends of literature, as "a small taste". The final poem is a kind of colophon, contrasting the sound state of the poems to the bad health of the poet, and begging the readers to remember him. If one considers, with de Lagarde, the *programma* not as a prologue but as the first poem of the poetry section – which is suggested by the lay-out of the manuscript, the Vaticanus Graecus 676, although it does not number the pieces – the verse collection consists of 99 poems. The resulting isopsephy with ἀμὴν is probably not fortuitous, compare the 99 epigrams in the *Paradeisos* attributed to Ioannes Geometres. In the latter case, the symbolic value of the number of poems was observed by P. SPECK, Zur Datierung des sogenannten Paradeisos. *BZ* 58 (1965) 333–336, 335 n. 17.

<sup>16</sup> A partial edition of Mitylenaios according to metrical criteria would make no sense, for it would harm the unity of the collection. For Geometres, such a metrical selectivity is not unjustified, see indeed E. VAN OPSTALL, Jean Géomètre: Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques. Edition, traduction, commentaire. Leiden 2008. A complementary volume with the iambic poems is hardly needed.

<sup>17</sup> See BERNARD, Circulation of Poetry, part II, "Other poetry collections". This section of my paper is, to a certain extent, an elaboration on his remarks, and owes much to the many discussions we have held on Christophoros and other eleventh century poetry.

<sup>18</sup> Riddles: 21, 35, 47, 56, 71, 111; ekphrastic epigrams on liturgical feasts, saints and/or works of art (the distinction is not always clear, partly due to the ingenious variations on the trite themes): 3, 7, 14, 25, 32, 41, 50, 51, 74, 80, 86, 89, 93, 95, 98, 101, 102, 106, 112, 113, 121, 123, 126, 133, 139, 143, 144; mocking poems: 2, 4, 6, 11, 20, 23, 31, 37, 39, 82, 132, 134 (here, the first half of the corpus has the higher concentration: the older, the milder?).

<sup>19</sup> Long poems: 1, 8, 13, 22, 27, 30, 36, 40, 42, 44, 57, 59, 63, 68, 75, 77, 90, 103, 105, 109, 114, 116, 122, 131, 136; dactylic metre: 3, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 26, 28, 38, 46, 52, 57, 65, 70, 81, 83, 104, 111, 130, 133. Incidentally (and cautiously), this tendency of Christophoros to abandon dactylic verse and to concentrate on dodecasyllables might reflect a general evolution in contemporary profane poetry: Ioannes Geometres had composed more than 20% of his verse in strongly classicizing dactylic verse; Mauropous will only use iambics, and Michael Psellos alternates dodecasyllables with political verse.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the interesting information they contain on the Constantinopolitan school system, see FOLLIERI, Le poesie 144–145, P. LEMERLE, Cinq études sur le XI<sup>e</sup> siècle byzantin. Paris 1977, 193–248: "Le gouvernement des philosophes: l'enseignement, les écoles, la culture", specifically 228–229 and 239–240, and OIKONOMIDES, Life and Society 5–6 with further references to literature on schedography and school contests, n. 19.

Εἰς τὸ σχολεῖον τοῦ ἁγίου Θεοδώρου τῶν Σφορακίου (9 K, 13 verses)

- Σχολὴ μεγίστου μάρτυρος Θεοδώρου  
 πτωθῆ μὲν οὐκ ἄν, πρῶξιμον κεκτημένη  
 τὸν Στυλιανόν, ἄρραγῆ τινὰ στύλον·  
 ἦτταν δὲ δεινὴν οὐποτε σχέδους ἴδη,  
 5 ἕως μαῖστωρ ἐστὶ γεννάδας Λέων·  
 (... εἴ τις ...)
- 11 εἰ δ' εὐλαβεῖται τὴν σοφὴν παροιμίαν,  
 μὴ πρὸς λέοντα δορκὰς ἄφηται μάχης,  
 συχνὸν τὸ λείπον καὶ ἄλλιν διδασκέτω.

Εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ σχολεῖον. ἠρωϊκὰ (10 K, 21 verses)

- (...)
- 5 στήσατο δὲ στύλον ἔνδον κείνου ἔμμεναι εἶλαρ,  
 Στυλιανὸν μουσόφρονα, εἰδὸτα πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά.  
 ἠδυεπὴ δὲ Λέοντα πρόμον ποιήσεν ἀγητόν,  
 ἠλικίην μέσον, οὔτε πελώριον οὔτε δὲ βαιόν,  
 εὔθετον, εἶδος ἄριστον, ἐπίρρινα, οὐλοκάρηνον,  
 10 ὀφθαλμοὺς χαρίεντα, μελάγχροον, ἠϋγένειον,  
 (...)
- 18 ὡς δὲ ζῶων τετραπόδων κρατέουσι λέοντες  
 κάρτεϊ, ἠγορέη καὶ ὄξυτάτοισιν ὄνουξιν,  
 20 ὡς ὁ Λέων κρατέει μαῖστώρων ἐνὶ πᾶσιν,  
 ἔν τ' ἀρετῇ τε κυδρῇ καὶ ἐν σοφίῃ ἐρατεινῇ.

Both versions have the same predictable puns on the names of the two professors and express the same ideas, but at the same time, the diptych is an exercise in the adaptation of style to metre. Whereas in the first, dodecasyllabic poem, the supremacy of Leo the lion is illustrated by a maxim, building upon the long tradition of iambic gnomology,<sup>21</sup> the hexametrical version obviously uses general epic diction, has more subtle allusions to a specific Odyssean passage and includes a Homeric simile.<sup>22</sup>

Poem 11, by contrast, is an invective against an anonymous greedy schoolmaster: Εἰς τὸν μαῖστορα τῆς σχολῆς τῶν Χαλκοπρατείων. Its target is possibly the equally anonymous and greedy maistor of the school of Chalkoprateia to whom Psellos addressed his letter 168 (SATHAS 428), dated to 1048.<sup>23</sup> If the poems follow a

<sup>21</sup> The παροιμία in verse 12 ultimately goes back to an anonymous iambic (comic?, tragic?) poet (the verse figures in KOCK's Comicoorum Atticorum Fragmenta, as *incertorum* 270; in NAUCK's Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta, as *adespota* 135; and in DIEHL's Anthologia Lyrica Graeca, as *adespota* 19), but must have been known to Christophoros from the numerous paroemiographers who cite it; the Suda also quotes it, even three times (Δ1386, M977 and Π2751 ADLER). Mitylenaios' fondness of proverbs has been noted before.

<sup>22</sup> The description of Leon in verses 8–10 contains two epitheta (οὐλοκάρηνον and μελάγχροον) stemming from the same Homeric verse, Od. 19.264 (which has the form μελανόχροος); in the Odyssey, Eurybates, the highly esteemed friend of Odysseus, is described. The verse has become a stock example in the progymnasmata handbooks, under the heading of ἔκφρασις (Aelius Theon, Aelius Herodianus, Aphthonios, Tryphon and others have it). The simile in verses 18–20 – prototypically featuring lions – has been thought to include a reference to another proverbial expression, ἐκ τῶν ὀνύχων τὸν λέοντα (see *LSJ* s.v. ὄνουξ, 'to judge by the claws'): CRIMI, *Canzoniere* 58. I do not think this meaning appropriate here, and would rather read it as a straightforward description, compare Pindar, N. 4.63: θρασυμαχᾶνων τε λεόντων ὄνουξας ὄξυτάτους. (This is not to suggest that Christophoros borrowed the collocation directly from Pindar.)

<sup>23</sup> See the on-line Prosopography of the Byzantine World (<http://www.pbw.kcl.ac.uk>), Anonymus 2293 – yet without a reference to Christophoros. The identification has been proposed without hesitation by LEMERLE, *Cinq études* 227 (on Psellos' addressee): "il est clair que c'est le même personnage que vise la poésie satirique de Christophore Mitylénaios". Our poet refers to the maistor in a telling antonomasia: ὁ γὰρ Μίδας ζῆ καὶ τὸ φῶς πάλιν βλέπει (v. 3). For a painstaking rhetorical analysis of the poem, see O. SCHISSEL, *Interpretationen zu Christophoros Mitylenaios*. *BZ* 29 (1929–30) 161–167, here 162–163.

strictly chronological order, all three school poems must have been written between 1034 and 1041.<sup>24</sup> This short temporal gap between the 1030s and 1048 does not exclude, of course, the identification of the two maistores. Yet, Christophoros' poem and Psellos' letter may as well have been written as a response to the same event in 1048. Compositional cohesion may have been a reason to combine a more recent specimen of poetical blame with the earlier laudatory poems in the same professional sphere.

Similarly – and more positively – the next diptych in the collection seems to combine two compositions from different dates. Poems 15 and 16 both deal with the same high ranking official, the supervisor of the harbour, Melias.<sup>25</sup> The first extolls his professional virtues, the second is a funerary epigram, apparently inscribed on the grave featuring Melias both as παραθαλασσίτης and as a monk. Most probably, the juxtaposition of these texts has no chronological basis, as it seems that many years have past in between.<sup>26</sup> Rather, the sequence is an illustration of the bottom line of many individual pieces in the corpus: the *vanitas vanitatum* – an expression which is explicitly quoted in poem 16.<sup>27</sup>

The following pairs are related to the emperors Michael IV and Konstantinos Monomachos, respectively. Poems 18 and 19<sup>28</sup> show, again, variation in metre: dodecasyllables versus hexameters; the dactylic poem opens with an original variation on a trite priamel.<sup>29</sup> The double flattery towards Konstantinos, poems 54 and 55, twice refers to the enormous wealth of the emperor – χρυσός being a key term in both poems – but alternates in formal presentation. The first is written *in propria persona*, the next is an *ethopoïia*, written under the name of a certain protospatharios Ioannes Hysinios.<sup>30</sup>

Whereas the preceding examples of mini-cycles are, arguably, the result of a deliberate juxtaposition by the anthologist, of poems which may have been written on different occasions, other sequences are clearly the result of one and the same creative process. The intriguing, albeit far from complete and transparent poem 68 – even the title is frustratingly lacunose – counts 153 verses, and is followed immediately by an ἐπίγραμμα which explains the symbolic meaning of this number (see Ioh 21:11).<sup>31</sup> Equally intrinsically linked are the poems 86 and 87, allegedly directed to a friend who had sent the poet first grapes, then figs, twice to the latter's ostentatious discontent. They are, of course, a *Spielerei* in the tradition of the typical *in utramque partem* exercise, jestingly comparing grapes and figs, with opposite results.<sup>32</sup> It may be noted that the argumentation in both cases is drawn, rather disrespectfully, from the Bible.

<sup>24</sup> FOLLIERI, Le poesie 144. Poem 8 is an epitaph for Romanos III († 1034), the next poems related to datable events, 17, 18 and 24, deal with Michael IV (1034–1041).

<sup>25</sup> Εἰς τὸν πατρικίον Μελίαν καὶ παραθαλασσίτην (4 verses) and Εἰς τὸν τάφον τοῦ αὐτοῦ Μελίου, ἱστορηθέντος ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ὡς κοσμικοῦ καὶ ὡς μοναχοῦ (29 verses).

<sup>26</sup> Between his service at the harbour and his death, Melias has received the tonsure. See also, e.g., 16, 10 and 28–29: ἦν γὰρ πάλαι μέγιστος οὗτος Μελίας (...) νῦν οὖν μεταστάς πρὸς σέ τὸν Θεὸν Λόγον, / ἄρχων γένοιτο καὶ παρ' αὐτῷ τῷ πόλῳ.

<sup>27</sup> Verses 8–9: ματαιότης τὰ πάντα, Σολομῶν λέγει, / ματαιότητων ἄντικρυς ματαιότης.

<sup>28</sup> Εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Μιχαὴλ καὶ τοὺς τρεῖς ἀδελφούς αὐτοῦ (22 verses) and Εἰς τὸν αὐτόν· [ἠρωϊκά] (17 verses). On these poems, see CRISCUOLO, carmina historica 62–68.

<sup>29</sup> Ἄλλῳ μὲν βασιλῆων ἔργα μόθοιο μέμηλεν, / ἄλλῳ δ' ὠκέες ἵππ[οι] ὑφ' ἄρμασι κολλητοῖσιν], / ἄλλῳ δ' αὖ σοφίη καὶ ἱμερόεσσά τε μοῦσα· / σοὶ δ' ἔλεημοσύνη τιμᾶται ἔξοχα πάντων]. These lines seem to play upon a well known Byzantine priamel, which rejects earthly goods and traditionally ends with the embrace of God or Christ. Gregory of Nazianzus has several examples, the closest parallel being perhaps the opening lines of the dactylic poem II.1.82 (PG 37, 1428: ... αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ Χριστὸς ...), which has been followed by Ioannes Geometres c. 57 (... αὐτὰρ ἐμοίγε Θεὸς ...), see VAN OPSTALL, Jean Géomètre 200–203. Christophoros replaces the usual point with an indirect appeal to the emperor's ἐλεημοσύνη.

<sup>30</sup> Εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Μονομάχον (4 verses) and Εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν βασιλέα, ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ πρωτοσπαθαρίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Ὑψίνου (13 verses). On the second poem, see C. CRIMI, Una consonanza tra Giovanni Geometra e Cristoforo di Mitilene, in: Graeca et byzantina. Catania 1983, 41–43; and LAURITZEN, Parody. The latter proposes to identify this Ioannes as Ioannes Mauropus – unconvincingly, to my mind.

<sup>31</sup> Εἰς τὸν σύγκελλον ...] Ἀργυροπώλου περὶ τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ ἁγίου Κύρου, ... the title consists of another five lines; Ἐπίγραμμα εἰς τοὺς στίχους περὶ τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ ἁγίου Κύρου (3 verses). The collection contains another book epigram on Christophoros' own works: 83 K is a kind of *programma* to his metrical calendar. It makes one wonder why the στίχοι διάφοροι as a whole lack such a metrical introduction.

<sup>32</sup> Εἶς τινα φίλον ἐξ ἀγροῦ σταφυλὰς πέμψαντα and Εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν σῦκα πέμψαντα. Both have 16 verses and a parallel structure. For an analysis firmly based in the progymnasmata tradition, see SCHISSEL, Interpretationen 165.

A final example here (but see below for the sequences of mourning poems) is less obviously a cycle, but it surely does illustrate the alternation aimed for. The long eulogy on the spider, poem 122 (stressing that the δεινότης and κομψότης [!] of all rhetors and sophists do not suffice to exhaust the marvels of this small animal) is answered by the four-line encomium on the ant, poem 125, which is a brachylogical version of the very same idea: a little animal illustrates the mighty power of God.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, two epigrams on the corresponding feasts of the Birth and the Ascension of Christ are following the enkomia on the small beasts.<sup>34</sup> In the middle of it the anthologist has chosen a (heavily damaged) poem on the giving of texts as presents, poem 124, which ends with a line that seems to have been Christophoros' motto: there is nothing better than literature in life.<sup>35</sup>

It will be clear, then, that the juxtaposition of many poems within this collection is far from random, and that their deliberate combination does add new meaning to at least some of the individual poems. They gain a new function when written down in a collection, as did the poem to Petros. This new function might be called a secondary function, but often it is, rather, a tertiary function. This brings us to the next point.

### AN EXCLUSIVE FEAST OF WORDS

As we have seen in poem 124, and already in the poem to Petros, Christophoros distributed his works among his friends, as exquisite presents. Several other poems of his deal, directly or indirectly, with the circulation of literature among peers in the intellectual circles of 11th century Constantinople.

The monk Niketas of Synada, for instance, is said to charm, as another Orpheus, the whole city with his writings, and to adorn many a church with his verse. Christophoros begs for some new texts in order to enjoy the delicate pleasure of literature, again presented as surpassing all other luxuries.<sup>36</sup>

Εἰς τὸν μοναχὸν Νικήταν τῶν Συνάδων (27 K, 53 verses)

Ἦ ζῶσα πολλοῖς ἐν πόλει γνῶσις πάλαι  
ἐν σοὶ μόνῳ ζῆ καὶ σαλεύει, Νικήτα ·  
(...)

7 ἄρμοττε τοῖνυν τὴν σοφὴν σύριγγά σου  
καὶ πάντας ἔλκε τοῖς λόγοις, λόγων φίλε,  
ὡς ἄλλος Ὀρφεὺς τῆ λύρα τὰ θηρία.  
(...)

29 τίνος γέμουσιν αἱ πόλεις συγγραμμάτων;  
τίνος στίχους φέρουσιν οἱ θεῖοι δόμοι;  
(...)

49 ταύτης μετασχεῖν εὐχομαι τῶν ῥημάτων  
ἢ τῶν ταλάντων τοῦ Κροίσου καὶ τοῦ Μίδα ·  
φανήσομαι γὰρ Σαρδανάπαλος νέος,  
οὐ θρυπτικῶς ζῶν ὡς ἐκεῖνος ἐν βίῳ,  
ζῶσαν τρυφήν δε σοὺς σοφοὺς τρυφῶν λόγους.

<sup>33</sup> Εἰς τὸν [ἀράχνην] (111 verses) and Εἰς τὸν μύρμηκα. 122, 105–107 read ἐξασθενεῖ πρὸς ταῦτα καὶ νοῦς καὶ λόγος / καὶ πᾶσα πάντων δεινότης τῶν ῥητόρων / καὶ πᾶσα πάντων τῶν σοφιστῶν κομψότης.

<sup>34</sup> 123 K, Εἰς τὴν γέννησιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ (6 verses) and 126 K, Εἰς τὴν ἀνάληψιν (5 verses).

<sup>35</sup> 124 K, [...] φίλ[...] κατὰ τὴν ἀρχιμηνί[αν] (12 verses, half of which are lost). The main clues to the interpretation are verses 6 and 12: [i]δοῦ δίδωμι τοῦσδε δῶρα τοὺς λόγους and ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἔχει τί βέλτιον τούτου βίος.

<sup>36</sup> Another poem is likely to have been addressed to the same, otherwise unknown, monk: 100 K, Εἰς τὸν μοναχὸν Νικήταν τὸν φιλόσοφον (8 verses). Here also, Christophoros calls for Niketas' *logoi* as his daily bread and pleasure, and he expresses his fear for starving from a λιμὸς λόγων, should his friend stop writing. For the idiosyncratic interpretation of poem 27 by LAURITZEN, An ironic portrait, and his proposal for an identification of Niketas, see above, n. 7.



Poem 97, which has lost its title, and poem 115 are variations on the same theme, the enchanting charm of exchanging one's writings.<sup>37</sup>

What we see at work in poems like these, is the intermediate step between the original *Sitz im Leben* of poems as *Gebrauchstexte*, their 'real', historical origin, that is – for instance an actual funerary epigram, a monody on one's deceased sister, a plea or a flattering poem to the emperor – on the one hand, and their collection in an anthology on the other. At this intermediate stage, loose poems or short cycles of poems were communicated as presents. Yet, unlike the offprints of our days, this private distribution among peers preceded the ultimate 'publication' in an anthology or a poetry book (if such a publication ever took place).<sup>38</sup> No doubt, both compliments and criticism were expected from the peers, and we can trust that adaptations and improvements were made in the version that eventually made it into our manuscripts. As said before, we have (at best a more or less trustworthy copy of) a tertiary stage of a text, no direct contact with a historical performance.

The literary scene in the capital, where the 'preprints' circulated, appears to have been an exclusive one. Some of the poems indicate in a biting way that not everyone is entitled to enjoy the honey of Christophoros' poetry. A certain Basileios Choirinos, or 'porky Basil', is not allowed to join the club.

Εἰς τὸν Βασίλειον τὸν λεγόμενον Χοιρινόν, πολλάκις αἰτήσαντα ἐκ τῶν συγγραμμάτων αὐτοῦ (84 K, 6 verses)

Τί πολλά γρύζεις τοὺς ἔμοὺς ζητῶν λόγους  
καὶ “Σαῖς γραφαῖς θρέφον με” συχνῶς μοι λέγεις;  
ἄπελθε πόρρω· χοῖρος οὐ τρώγει μέλι· ...

The title of poem 40 draws the lines explicitly: [Εἰς τὸν . . .] τοῦ Πόθου, ἰδιώτην ὄντα καὶ τοὺς τῶν σοφῶν λόγους συγκρίνοντα. An idiot cannot pass judgment on the writings of the wise. First you have to learn to write yourself, the poet sneers, and this means the investment of much time, and much work.<sup>39</sup>

#### ΤΩΝ ΣΟΦΙΣΤΩΝ ΚΟΜΨΟΤΗΣ, INCLUDING: *LA CONNAISSANCE DES AUTEURS ANCIENS*

For Christophoros, being σοφός means, clearly, being capable of writing decent verses and being well acquainted with the literary tradition. One important element of this tradition is ancient Greek poetry, the explicit presence of which is notoriously fluctuating in the history of Byzantine literature. As Wolfram Hörandner observed some decades ago, in eleventh century poetry in general, quotations from classical poets are very rare, more so than in contemporary prose.<sup>40</sup> In Christophoros there are a little more of them than

<sup>37</sup> 97 consisted of 6 verses; the even ones are lost, but the remaining lines are clear enough: “Ἐθελξας ἡμᾶς ῥημάτων κάλλι πλέον (...) κεσῶ γὰρ οἶον τὰ γραφέντα σκευάσας (see II. 14.214) (...) οὕτω διεξέπεμψας ἡμῖν τοῖς φίλοις. Poem 115, Εἰς τὸν φίλον Νικηφόρον, ἀποστείλαντα πέμματα κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦ βρουμαλίου (8 verses) starts as follows: [Ἐκ ῥημάτων με δεξιού, μὴ πεμμάτων· / ἔμοι γὰρ ἠδὺ βρουμάλιον οἱ λόγοι, / [ὡς π]ροσκυνητῆ καὶ λατρευτῆ τοῦ λόγου.

<sup>38</sup> See for an interesting indication of this practice the Life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian by Niketas Stethatos, who relates that, having composed hymns and enkomia for Theodore Stoudites and Symeon, he submitted them to specialized eyes before really performing or publishing them: ταῦτα τοιγαροῦν ἐκθέμενος, ἀνακαθάρας τε καὶ εἰς χάρτην μεταπηξάμενος, ὑπέδειξά τινα τῶν πολλῶν ἐχόντων τῆς τε θύραθεν καὶ τῆς ἔσωθεν γνώσεως πείραν ... (Vita Symeonis 136 HAUSHERR). Stethatos received an encouraging reaction.

<sup>39</sup> The long poem (76 verses) is heavily damaged but its overall pattern is clear. It starts with a gross insult (4–6: ἀπασχ[ο]λῆ νῦν εἰς λόγων τὰς συγκρίσεις [...] αὐτὸς γὰρ ὡς δεῖ μὴ μαθὼν πρῶτον γράφειν) and ends with a sound piece of advice (73–75: πρὸς τὸ γραφὰς γὰρ συγκρίνειν ὀρθῆ κρίσει [...] χρεῖα χρόνου σοὶ καὶ κόπου καὶ λυχνίας). The poem contains the only mention of Plato in the stichoi διάφοροι, unfortunately in a mutilated context: ἀτὰρ τίς οἶδε; πτηνός ἐστι τὴν φύσιν / τε[...] / τὸ κάρτα φάσκει· τί πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ Πλάτων; (18–20). There might be a reference here to Plato's Ion 534b3–4: κοῦφον γὰρ χρῆμα ποιητῆς ἐστὶν καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερὸν.

<sup>40</sup> W. HÖRANDNER, La poésie profane au XIe siècle et la connaissance des auteurs anciens. *TM* 6 (1976) 245–263, 258: “On n'aime pas insérer des citations dans les poésies, et nombre d'auteurs dont les lettres et discours sont de véritables trésors de citations tendent à s'en abstenir dans leurs poésies”.

appears from a cursory reading or from the *Namenverzeichnis* of Kurtz.<sup>41</sup> Still, many passages that might seem to be allusions to classical authors, are merely vague references to stock mythological figures,<sup>42</sup> instances of general poetic diction<sup>43</sup> or expressions that ultimately go back to ancient literature but seem to be known to Christophoros indirectly, often because they have become proverbial.<sup>44</sup> Even the poetical corpus of Gregory of Nazianzus, ubiquitous in the verse of Ioannes Geometres, has left no certain traces in Christophoros.<sup>45</sup>

As an illustration of Mitylenaios' literary artistry, with its sophisticated appeal to the classical tradition, I want to quote a few lines from poem 42, the highly original *ekphrasis* of an astronomical cake made by the poet's niece.<sup>46</sup> The first part of the poem consists of a long and rather technical description of the confectionary, which represents the Zodiac, the planets, the cardinal points, the seasons, etc. It then leads to a most sympathetic encomium of feminine handicraft, from verse 53 on, where his niece is called a σοφή τις καὶ ποικίλη δημιουργός.

οὔτω σοφή τις τὰς φρένας καὶ ποικίλη  
 ἢ δημιουργὸς τοῦδε τοῦ νέου πόλου.  
 55 ὦ πάνσοφε πρόνοια τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου,  
 ὅσας χαρίζῃ καὶ γυναιξὶ τὰς τέχνας,  
 οἷας δὲ ταύταις ἐντίθης καὶ τὰς φρένας.  
 ἄλλοι δὲ μοι λέγουσιν ἄνδρας Φειδίας  
 καὶ Ζεύξιδα μάλιστα καὶ Παρρασίους  
 60 καὶ τοὺς ἀγνώστους ἄντικρυς Πολυγνώτους  
 καὶ τοὺς ἀδόξους ἔμπαλιν Πολυκλείτους  
 καὶ νοῦν σκοτεινοὺς αὐθις Ἀγλαοφώντας  
 καὶ ποικιλοργοὺς χεῖρας αὐτὰς Δαιδάλου·  
 λήρος τὰ πάντα, κόμπος, οὐδὲν δὲ πλέον.  
 65 πλὴν ἢ γραφὴ μὲν καὶ πάλιν θαυμαζέτω

<sup>41</sup> Hörandner, for instance, is too restrictive when he states: “Dans les épigrammes et poésies de circonstance, on relève nombre de réminiscences, mais presque aucune citation. Le nom d’Homère se lit une seule fois (chez Kalliklès 28, 78), et une deuxième fois une allusion est faite au poète κατ’ ἐξοχὴν quand Mauroπος (93,2) dit: ποιητικῶς ...” (HÖRANDNER, *La poésie profane* 260). One may add at least one unequivocal – and laudatory – reference to Homer from Christophoros, 42 K, 46–47: ὡς ἡ σοφὴ γὰρ μαρτυρεῖ βραψοδία, / ἐν ταῖς πύλαις οἰκοῦσιν ὦραι τοῦ πόλου (see II. 5.749).

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. 6 K (Εἰς τὸν ἠνίοχον Ἰεφθάε, πεσόντα εἰς τὸν Χρυσόν) 15–6 κἂν τέσσαρας γὰρ Πηγάσους ζευξῆς ἄμα, / ὁποῖος ἵππος ἦν ὁ Βελλεροφόντου, with a revealing explanation in the text itself; or the references to the Hydra and Briareos in 114 K, 23 and 29.

<sup>43</sup> This is especially the case in the dactylic poems. At times, there may be a conscious borrowing from or allusion to a specific Homeric passage. Poem 52 (Εἰς τὸν ἀποβασιλέα Μιχαῖλ τὸν Καλαφάτην, ὅτε (...) ἐτυφλώθη· ἠρωϊκά) has many trivial expressions (e.g. κουριδίην δ’ ἄλοχον, 7) but also some words possibly meaningful in their new contexts (e.g. οὐλομένην as the first word, 25) and a Homeric *harax* (παρθενίην ζώνην, 9, cf. Od. 11.245). Christophoros (at least the two manuscripts that contain this poem) follows here the accepted reading, not the variant παρθενικὴν, commonly found in the rhetorical tradition and in some Homeric manuscripts, see e.g. the critical apparatus A. HEUBECK, *Omero, Odissea*. Vol. III. Vicenza 1983, *ad locum*: “παρθενίην testis, plerique (sc. codices): παρθενικὴν testes, pauci”. By contrast, in v. 24 both manuscripts read βαρυστενάχων, in one word, thus following the variant reading, not the commonly accepted βαρὺ στενάχων, see e.g. *LSJ ad locum*.

<sup>44</sup> See the final verses of poem 6 (immediately following the verses quoted in n. 42): πρὸς τοὺς Πρασίνων ἀρματοτροχηλάτας / πεζὸς παρ’ ἄρμα Λύδιον, φασί, δράμης. The earliest parallel is Pindar, fr. 206 (222) SNELL, but Christophoros is more likely to know the expression from Gregory of Nazianzus’ popular *epitaphios* for Basil the Great (or. 43,22) or from some paroemiographer.

<sup>45</sup> Even when the iambic poem 29, Εἰς τὸν πτωχὸν Λέοντα, paraphrases a scriptural passage (Mt 10.9–10) with a collocation of rare words (Ἀχάλκος ὢν, ἄραβδος, 1) that are also to be found at the beginning of two consecutive verses in an iambic poem of Gregory’s (II,1,12, 200–201), the odds are that Christophoros borrows the expression not from the poem but from a liturgical homily of the Theologian, or. 45,19 (πρὸς τῷ ἀχάλκῳ, καὶ ἀράβδῳ ...). The latter passage is discussed by Michael Psellos, in his Exegesis of Gregory’s Easter oration (Psellos, *Theologica* 43, 11–15 GAUTIER).

<sup>46</sup> It bears the lacunose title [...]ον κύκλῳ διὰ ζύμης τὸν ζωδιακὸν κύκλον, πρὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐξαδέλφην (80 verses). The explicit reference to Homer, quoted in n. 41, is integrated in this poem. For a contextual reading, see MAGDALINO, *Cosmological Confectionary*, which includes a translation of the whole text.

πασῶν γυναικῶν ἔργα καινὰ καὶ τέχνας,  
λέγουσα · “Τίς δέδωκε θηλειῶν φύσει  
ύφασμάτων μὲν γνῶσιν ἀκριβεστάτην,  
ποικιλικῆς δὲ πᾶν ἐπιστήμης μέρος;”

The dismissive *synkrisis* (58–64) with the most famous male artists from antiquity – typically full of puns on their names – is, again, an indication of general acquaintance with ancient culture. More remarkably, the qualities expressly appreciated in the female *technê* remind one of the aesthetic criteria for literature we have seen highlighted before, notably in the poem to Petros: ἔργα καινὰ (66), γνῶσιν ἀκριβεστάτην (68), ποικιλικῆς ἐπιστήμης (69). In the final verses of the poem the poet’s niece is said in another, ‘same sex’ *synkrisis*, to surpass the weaving skills of Penelope, Helen, and, nay, the women of Lesbos:

ἀλλ’ ὡς μαθεῖν πάρεστιν ἐξ ὧν εἰργάσω,  
κἂν τῇ τέχνῃ μάλιστα τῆς ἱστουργίας  
πάσας παρέρχῃ Πηνελόπας, Ἑλένας,  
80 ἀμὴν λέγω σοί, καὶ γυναῖκας Λεσβίας.

The first ladies are manifestly references to the Homeric poems,<sup>47</sup> and so are, probably, the Lesbian women of the last verse, which appears to be a climax.<sup>48</sup>

### MOURNING BECOMES CHRISTOPHOROS

It will be clear, by now, that the anthology as a whole displays a deliberate ποικιλία *qua* composition and a moderate κομψότης in diction, combining tradition and originality. Finally, we turn towards a particular genre that lends itself perfectly for an analysis of traditional and original elements: Christophoros’ funeral poems – one of which was the occasion for Petros’ compliments.

The traditional character of Byzantine mourning literature in general is well known. The main elements of the genre are ἔπαινος, θρήνος, παραμυθία and εὐχή, all of them with their own *topoi*.<sup>49</sup> For mourning poetry, more specifically, its compliance with the generic rules is evoked playfully in a letter of Ignatios Diakonos, who writes to a friend after a grievous illness.

Θάρσει τοιγαροῦν ὡς οὐδὲ τοῖς περιστειλασιν ἡμᾶς τῷ τάφῳ συνέδραμες· ἦ γὰρ ἂν ἐπιτυμβίους ἐλέγους ἡμῶν ἐπεμέτρῃσας καὶ στίχον ἐπικὸν ἐξάτονον ἔτεμες <καί> ἰωνικῶ μείζονι συμπλέξας ἐμμέτρως ἐλάττονα, μέλος ἦσας ἡμῖν ἐπιτάφιον. (Ep. 60, 16–19)

The editor, Cyril Mango, considers this seemingly tripartite enumeration of metrical forms “merely for effect” and states that the ionic meter “was hardly ever used in the Byzantine period”,<sup>50</sup> but Marc Laux-

<sup>47</sup> Od. 19.141–50 and Il. 3.125, respectively.

<sup>48</sup> See Il. 9.128–130, repeated in 270–272, where Agamemnon promises to give Achilles seven beautiful women of Lesbos, “skilled in noble handiwork”. In Odysseus’ plea (the second version), the verses run: δώσει δ’ ἑπτὰ γυναῖκας ἀμύμονα ἔργα ἰδυίας / Λεσβίδας, ὅς ὄτε Λέσβον ἐκτιμένην ἔλες αὐτὸς / ἐξέλεθ’, αἱ τότε κάλλει ἐνίκων φύλα γυναικῶν. The odd thing is that, in antiquity, this passage was used to corroborate the most famous reputation of Lesbian women, viz. their quality as whores, see the often discussed and quoted verses by the comedian Pherecrates, fr. 149 ΚΟΚΚ: δώσει δέ σοι γυναῖκας ἑπτὰ Λεσβίδας. / (answer:) καλὸν γε δῶρον ἔπτ’ ἔχειν λαικαστρίας, and compare the technical verb λειβιάζειν. A sexual interpretation of the final verse would, of course, undermine the whole admiring tone of the poem. An alternative but speculative explanation might be that Christophoros is referring here to the geographical background of his family, although Mitylenaios himself was a native of Constantinople.

<sup>49</sup> See the helpful introduction in A. SIDERAS, Die byzantinischen Grabreden. 142 Epitaphien und Monodien aus dem byzantinischen Jahrtausend (WBS XIX). Wien 1994.

<sup>50</sup> C. MANGO – St. EFTHYMIADIS, The correspondence of Ignatios the Deacon (CFHB 39). Washington 1997. Mango’s translation of the lines runs as follows: “So be of good cheer in that you have not even helped those who covered me with a tomb, for then you would have had to scan for me a funerary elegiac poem and fashion epic verses in hexameter, and weave the major ionic in due measure with the minor, and so sing to me a burial song” (147). He comments (202): “The enumeration of three types of meter

termann has convincingly argued that in this passage Ignatios refers to only two kinds of funerary poetry: sepulchral elegies in dactylics (either the elegiac or the hexameter) and burial songs or monodies in ‘Byzantine anacreontics’, with the stanzas in ionic dimeter and the koukoulia in ionic trimeter. These are, apparently, the appropriate meters for the genre in ninth century Byzantium – as Ignatios’ own literary practice confirms.<sup>51</sup>

Now if we look at the metrical choices in Christophoros’ poems, the results are revealing. He has composed one lament or *μονωδία* (75) and eight sepulchral poems or *ἐπιτάφια* (8, 16, 44, 57, 65, 70, 77 and 104), and tends to follow the rules laid out by Ignatios: the monody is in anacreontics, and five out of the eight epitaphs are in dactylic verse – a statistically significant number, given the overall strong predominance of iambic verse. He has written besides three consolation poems or *παραμυθητικοί* (58, 59 and 60), in dodecasyllables. With *μονωδία*, *ἐπιτάφιος* and *παραμυθητικός* – corresponding to the three stages of death, burial and resignation – the three funeral genres distinguished by Menander Rhetor are represented in the corpus.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, Christophoros alternates between the three formal types of epitaphs: first, second and third person.<sup>53</sup> His poetry book, then, includes samples of the whole range of Byzantine mourning poetry. I shall discuss some of the most interesting poems.

The oldest epitaph deals with the emperor Romanos III, who died in 1034 under suspicious circumstances.<sup>54</sup>

Εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Ῥωμανὸν ἐπιτάφια ἠρωϊκά (8 K, 32 verses)

Ἦ μάλα καὶ βασιλῆες ἀμέρσκονται βιότοιο,  
πικρὰ δὲ μὴν καὶ τοῖσι μόρου κερνῶνται ἄλεια.  
Ῥωμανέ, ποῦ τοι σκῆπτρον ἐπίφθονον ἠδέ τε κύδος;  
ποῦ θρόνος ἔνθα κάθησο, μέγ’ ἔξοχε κοίρανε λαῶν;  
(...)

8 ἄλλ’ υἴες μερόπων, στοναχήσατε εἵνεκα κείνου,  
αὐτὸς δ’ ἐξερῶ πικρὸν μόρον, ὄνπερ ὑπέστη.  
(...)

19 ἀγχοῦ {δὲ} στάς κλαίεσκε καὶ ἔστενε καὶ τάδε ηὔδα·  
“Κεῖται αὐτοκράτωρ. ὦ ἀγγελίης μάλα λυγρῆς.”  
(...)

26 ἄναξ δὲ κλίνην περὶ λαμπρὰν  
κεῖτο μέγας μεγαλωστί, λελασμένος ἦς ἔχε δόξης. (...)  
30 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ’ ἴκανόν γε Περιβλέπτου ἐνὶ νηῶ,  
ἐνθάδε ταρχύσαντο νέκυν βασιλῆος ἀγαθοῦ,  
βᾶν δ’ ἐπ’ ἄνακτα νέον καὶ Ῥωμανοῦ ἐξελάθοντο.

(elegiac, hexameter, ionic) is merely for effect, and the third, in any case, was hardly ever used in the Byzantine period, except in the refrain of anacreontics.”

<sup>51</sup> LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry* 214–215.

<sup>52</sup> See SIDERAS, Grabreden, Introduction §10. One final mourning poem of Christophoros falls somewhere between these traditional categories: the short poem on his sister’s funeral procession (76, see below).

<sup>53</sup> LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry* 215–227 discusses the three types under the titles “The Voice of the Dead” (first person, the deceased is speaking), “The Voice of the Next-of-Kin” (second person, usually a lament by relatives) and “Commemorating the Dead” (third person, mostly celebrating the virtues of the deceased). Christophoros has applied them respectively once (65 K, Ἐπίγραμμα εἰς τὸν τάφον τοῦ Μανιάκου δι’ ἠρωϊκοῦ, 6 verses, giving voice to Maniakes: Μανιάκης λαλέω ἀπὸ τύμβου ἀνδράσι πᾶσιν ...), four times (8, 44, 57, 77 K, all four to be discussed below, three of them addressed to close kins) and three times (each time about official persons: 16 K on Melias, see above n. 25; 70 K, Εἰς τὴν σεβαστὴν Μαρίαν, ὅτε ἐτελεύτησεν. ἠρωϊκά, 4 verses, probably on Maria Skleraina; 104 K, [... εἰς] τὸν [τ]άφον τοῦ πρωτοσπαθαρίου Κωνσταντος καὶ δευτέρου τῶν ἐν τοῖς [... ἠρωϊκά], originally 6 verses).

<sup>54</sup> CRISCUOLO, *carmina historica* 55–61, gives a full text and translation of this poem and compares it with the other sources on the same event, Psellos and Skylitzes.

After a two line maxim, serving as a prologue, we see the conventional address of the deceased emperor.<sup>55</sup> Verse 8 continues in a traditional way, prompting the people to groan over the king, but then we get an unusual narration of the suspicious death of the emperor, who is, in verses 20 to 27, intertextually associated with the gentle Patroclus.<sup>56</sup> The most original twist comes at the end. After the burial of the noble king we get one sobre final verse not unlike the point of many a poem by Konstantinos Kavafis: “they went to a new leader and forgot Romanos”.

Most of Christophoros’ mourning poems are personal. He appears to have lost his brother Ioannes, his mother Zoe and his sister Anastaso, in this order. Their deaths have left increasingly elaborate and ingenious traces in the literary legacy of their brother and son.

Poem 44, *Eis tōn adelphōn Iō[άννην]* (80 dodecasyllables) is really a copybook sepulchral elegy. It starts with a *θρήνος* of 15 verses, in which forms of the words *θλίψις* and *πένθος* are each repeated three times.<sup>57</sup> It then turns expressly to a long *ἔπαινος*, only preserved in part. This includes, among Ioannes’ many qualities that defy description even by sophisticated rhetors, a praise of his literary skills in familiar terms.<sup>58</sup> After a new *θρήνος*, with a short narration of the brother’s death, the poem ends with a prayer.<sup>59</sup> This is an absolutely conventional composition.

The death of his mother has been the occasion for four poems from the anthology (57–60 K), which form a coherent cycle. The first one, bearing the conjectural title [*Eis tēn μητέρα Ζωὴν τελευτήσασαν· ἠρω]ελεγεία* (38 verses), is again a blueprint, this time in elegiacs. It consists of three clearly distinct parts: a *θρήνος* of 14 verses, centered around the poet’s own grief;<sup>60</sup> an *ἔπαινος* of the same length, equating Zoe with the ‘Capable Wife’ of Proverbs;<sup>61</sup> and a shorter *παραμυθία* addressing the father.<sup>62</sup>

The elegy is followed immediately by a short consolation poem: *Eis tōn patēra lypoumenon kai θρηνοῦντα* (14 dodecasyllables). It is clearly written as a link between the two long poems 57 and 59: the opening verse resumes the final part of the former, whereas the second half announces the latter: “mother is speaking, although she is absent and cannot be seen: she gives answers to our questions”, and father is asked to pay attention.<sup>63</sup>

This miraculous dialogue with the dead is described in the famous and highly artificial echo poem with a long and incomplete title, or rather a lemma, telling it is meant to comfort the distressed father: [... ἴα]μβοι· καὶ οἱ μὲν πρὸς τὴν μητέρα ἀ[... ἔτε]ρόφωννον, ὡσανεὶ τῆς μητρὸς τὰ [... θαυ]μασίως κατὰ τὴν ἡχὴν [... τὸν πατέρα διὰ μ[... ... ἄθυμιάς] καὶ οἷον παραμυθοῦ[μενον ... παρὰ τοῦ] υἱοῦ λεγόμενα. It consists of 22 distichs

<sup>55</sup> It is, arguably, no coincidence that the address of Romanos combines the frequent Homeric collocation *κοίρανε λαῶν* with the less frequent *μέγ’ ἔξοχε*, a formula used only once in the Iliad (Il. 2.480), for that other king murdered in his bath, Agamemnon.

<sup>56</sup> Compare 20 to the tidings of Patroclus’ death, Il. 18.18–20: ἡ μάλα λυγρῆς / πεύσειαι ἀγγελίης, ἢ μὴ ὠφέλλε γενέσθαι. / κεῖται Πάτροκλος. The expression *λυγρῆς ἀγγελίης* occurs two more times in Homer (besides once in the accusative form), twice about the death of Patroclus (Il. 17.642 and 686). The expression *κεῖτο μέγας μεγαλωστί* is used twice in the Iliad: for Kebriones, the last victim of Patroclus (Il. 16.776) and for Achilles, as he reacts to the news of Patroclus’ death (Il. 18.26–27).

<sup>57</sup> Ἄδελφέ, κείσαι, σβέννυσαι δὲ καὶ τάφω, / ἀλλ’ ἐξανάπτεις θλίψεως ἐ[μοὶ φλόγα], (...) / οὐ τὴν τελευτὴν σφόδρα δακρῶ, σφόδρα (vv. 1–2 and 9).

<sup>58</sup> Πλὴν ἀλλὰ πενθεῖν ἐξαφείς ἕως τέλους, / γλώττης τὸν αὐτὸν εἰς ἐπαί[νον] νῦν τρέπω, / (...) ποῖαι πλοκαὶ γοῦν ἐκφράσουσι ῥητόρων, / ὅπως μὲν εἶχες δεξιῶς πρὸς [τὴν φύσιν], / (...) / σπουδῆς λόγοι φέροντες Ἀττικὴν χάριν [...] ῥητῶν ἀπείρων ἀστεῖσμοι ποικίλοι] (vv. 15–16, 19–10, 31 and 33).

<sup>59</sup> Ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες πένθος ἤγομεν μέγα / (...) ἀλλ’ ὦ κραταῖον πατρός ὑπίστου σθένος, / (...) Ἰωάννου μνήσθητι σοῦ δούλου, λόγε (vv. 54, 74, 78).

<sup>60</sup> See, for instance, (part of what is preserved of) verses 7–10: ὦ μοι, μήτηρ ἐμή, ὅτι σὸς παῖς, ὃν φιλέεσκες, / (...) Χριστοφόρος / (...) γεύσατο καὶ ἀνίης.

<sup>61</sup> The passage starts with an authorial question indicating the shift between the two topical parts: ποίου δὴ προτέρου ἀγαθῶν ὦν μνήσομ’ ἔγωγε; (15); the biblical stylization opens as follows: ὤχετο ἐκ φθορτοῖο φίλη μήτηρ βίοτοιο, / [ἦν Σο]λομῶν, σοφίης ἔρνος εὐκλεέος, / ἐν προτέροισι χρόνοις ἐπέγραφε καὶ πρὸ τόκοιο (19–21), see Prov. 31.10–31.

<sup>62</sup> 28–38: τί]πτε, πάτερ, στενάχεις; τίπτε βαρυστενάχεις; (...) παῦσ’ ὀλοφυρόμενος.

<sup>63</sup> Τί, πάτερ, αὐ]τὸς ἄσχετον πενθῶν κάθη / λούων σεαυτὸν δακρῶν καταγίσι; / [μήτηρ γὰρ ἡμῶν], κὰν παρῆλθεν ἐκ βίου, / λαλεῖ δὲ μὴ παροῦσα μηδ’ ὀρωμένη, / [ἠχοῦς λαλιάν] ὡσπερ ἐκμιμουμένη, / καὶ τοῖς λόγοις δίδωσι τὰς ἀποκρίσεις (...) σὺ δὲ προσέξεις καὶ παραψυχὴν λάβης.

with epiphoric ending, as the mother answers the son's questions by echoing their final words. Only the second half of the poem is in a more or less readable state. This is the final part:

θέλω μαθεῖν, αἴσθησις εἰ ψυχ[αῖς ἔνι·]  
 30 ἔφησεν, ὡς αἴσθησις ἐν ψυχαῖς ἔνι.  
 νοοῦσι δ', εἰ θύοι τις· ἦ γούν καὶ [λίαν·]  
 ἤκουσας; ἀντέφησεν ἡ μήτηρ· “Λίαν.”  
 ταύτας δὲ θρηγῶν ὠφελεῖ τις ἢ θύ[ων·]  
 εἶρηκεν, ὡς ἤκουσας, ὦ πάτερ· “Θύων.”  
 35 χαίρουσι δ' αὐταὶ ταῖς χοαῖς; ἦ καὶ [πάνυ·]  
 πάτερ, προσέσχες; ἀνταπεκρίθη· “Πάνυ.”  
 δέξαι χοὰς οὖν τοὺς λόγους, εἴ σοι φίλ[ον·]  
 ἄγαν φιλοῦσα τοὺς λόγους ἔφη· “Φίλον.”  
 λόγοι γὰρ ὄντως βελτίους χοῶν ὄλ[ως·]  
 40 συμμαρτυρεῖ μοι καὶ λέγει πάντως· “Ὀλως.”  
 (...)   
 καὶ μοι πάλιν σίγησον, εἰ σιγᾶν [πρέπει·]  
 εἰδυῖα καιρὸν καὶ σιγῆς (Eccl 3:7), ἔφη· “Πρέπει.”

This technique has antecedents in Greek literature,<sup>64</sup> but nowhere is it applied so long and so systematically (or tiringly); in this real mourning context it is original, to say the least. One may note the unsurprising hierarchy Christophoros has his dead mother develop – or rather confirm – between lamenting (θρηγῶν, 33), sacrificing (θύων, 33, and χοαῖς, 35) and, above all, speaking (λόγους, 37) to or with the dead. Having affirmed that dead souls have some sense-perception (αἴσθησις, 30), she is a reliable witness to the superiority of λόγοι (39).

The cycle is completed with another short consolation poem, as the title explicitly mentions: Εἰς τὸν πατέρα ἕτεροι παραμυ[θητικοί] (6 verses). It is a kind of aftermath to the echo poem, making explicit the conclusion of the antiphonic conversation with the deceased mother: stop mourning for her and praise the Lord.

Even more interesting is the cycle dealing with the death of Christophoros' sister Anastaso (75–79 K). The first poem is a beautiful monody in the typically Byzantine anacreontics: it consists of four pairs of tetrastichs (*oikoi*) in eight-syllable anacreontics, each time concluded by a *koukoullion* of two ionic dimeters a minore.<sup>65</sup> I quote the first *oikoi*, and all four *koukoullia*.

Εἰς τὴν ἀδελφὴν Ἀναστασώ, τελευτήσασαν καὶ ἔτι προκειμένην· ἀνακρεόντεια (75 K)

Ῥοδοικέλην γυναῖκα  
 θάνατος μέλας κατέσχευ,  
 ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης δὲ κεῖται  
 ἀποτμηθὲν ἔρνος οἶα,  
 5 ἀρετῆς δ' ἄσυλον ὄρμον  
 περικειμένη καθεύδει,  
 ἀνακειμένη δὲ λάμπει,  
 νεκρωμένη περ οὔσα.  
 νεφέλαι ὀμβροτόκοι, δάκρυα χεῖτε,

<sup>64</sup> See C. CRIMI, *Motivi epigrammatici nei Carmi sull' eco di Cristoforo di Mitilene*, in: *Graeca et byzantina*. Catania 1983, 45–50, the most detailed discussion of poem 59.

<sup>65</sup> See Th. NISSEN, *Die byzantinischen Anacreonteen*. München 1940, 67–68, and especially C. CRIMI, *L'anacreontea a Bisanzio nei secoli XI e XII*, in: *Storia e tradizione culturale a Bisanzio fra XI e XII secolo. Atti della prima Giornata di studi bizantini sotto il patrocinio della Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini* (ed. R. MAISANO). Napoli 1994, 149–152.

- 10 ὅτι καλλίστη ἄφνω ἔσβετο κούρη.  
 (...)
   
 κυπάριττος καθάπερ ἐνθάδε κείσαι,  
 20 κασιγνήτη, μέγ' ἄχος ἄμμι λιποῦσα.  
 (...)
   
 γενεῆς ἡμετέρης ὤλετο κόσμος  
 30 τριακοστῇ μαΐου, φεῦ μοι, ἰὼ μοι.  
 (...)
   
 στενάχω, αἰρομένου σκίμποδος ἤδη·  
 40 ἐπὶ γὰρ τύμβον ἄγη, εὐχροε κούρη.

The metre and diction of this poem are completely in line with the Byzantine anacreontics, notably with those from the 10th century Barberini Sylloge.<sup>66</sup> The very first word serves as a generic marker: although ῥοδοικέλην is a hapax, it is similar to the many compounds with ῥοδο- to be found in the anacreontic tradition. Other typical elements are the recurring notions of colour and light, the comparisons with plants and trees, the invocation of cosmical sympathy (in the first koukoullion) and the Aeolic form ἄμμι for ἡμῖν. The whole poem consists mainly of moaning, as befits a monody at the πρόθεσις. The four double *oikoi* are structured according to the typical elements: after the description of the dead girl (1–8), come the θρήνος (11–18), the ἔπαινος (21–28) and the εὐχή (31–38)<sup>67</sup> – at this stage, a παραμυθία is out of place – but all *koukoullia* resume the moaning. In the final verses, the burial procession is announced in an apostrophe to the young girl. She is addressed as εὐχροος: rather than being an inadvertent insertion of a typically anacreontic word (or than a morbid joke), this epitheton evokes the precise moment of the original setting: the mortal pallor has yet to come.<sup>68</sup>

Once again, a short poem makes the transition between two longer ones. In poem 76, Ἐπὶ τῇ ἐκφορᾷ τῆς αὐτῆς (4 verses), the ἐκφορά is evoked in a vivid style: the first line, and, more specifically, the first word, suggests a real participation in the departure for the burial: Ἴδου λιποῦσα τὸν σὸν οἶκον ἐκφέρη, ...

The sepulchral poem proper (77, Εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ἐπιτάφια) is in a most deplorable state. It counted 118 verses, but more than half of the text is completely lost. As far as we can see, Christophoros' epitaph for Anastaso was much more personal and original than the corresponding poem for their brother Ioannes. It starts with the ἔπαινος, explicitly rejecting the expected πένθος (v. 2: [τὴν ο]ὐχὶ πένθους ἀλλ' ἔπαινων ἀξίαν) – perhaps because the preceding monody is supposed to replace the traditional θρήνος. Another reminder and reversal of the monody is the next preserved verse, in which Anastaso is said to be completely pale (v. 4: [τὰ π]άντα λευκὴν, σῶμα, πνεῦμα καὶ τρόπους). From verse 17 on the poet repeats his refusal to mourn, (v. 17: ἐβουλόμην σε δάκρυσι κλάειν – the preterition is revealing, though), rejecting the example of the Heliads who wept amber tears for the son of Helios, a common topos in Byzantine epitaphs.<sup>69</sup> He then gives his sister a message for their mother – which cannot but remind the reader of the preceding cycle.<sup>70</sup> Paradoxically, the poet suggests it is easier for him to find the words his sister has to speak to their mother than to speak to his sister himself. Indeed, after an *ethopoia* of nine (more or less complete) verses in which Anastaso addresses her mother, the poet asks: σὺ μὲν λαλήσεις ταῦτα πρὸς [τὴν μητέρα,] / ἐγὼ δὲ πρὸς σὲ ποῖον εὐρήσω λόγον;

<sup>66</sup> See the edition by F. CICCOLELLA, *Cinque poeti bizantini. Anacreontee dal Barberiniano greco 310*. Alessandria 2000, with useful introduction and indices, from which one can learn that Christophoros shares the signal words ἔρνος, ἄμμι and εὐχροε, and the ῥοδο-compound with the Sylloge.

<sup>67</sup> See ἀπὸ καρδίας στενάξω / σὸς ἀδελφός, ὦ γλυκεῖα· (15–16); Κινύρας λόγων δονεῖτε, / φιλοιστόρων τὰ πλήθη, / ὀλοαμπρόχρου δὲ κούρη / στέφετε κρότοις ἐπαινων· (21–24); κατὰταξον ἦν προεῖλου, θεέ μου, ἄναξ ἀπάντων, ... (33–34).

<sup>68</sup> Compare ὀλοαμπρόχρου (v. 22), and especially vv. 25–28: δοκέει κλύειν γὰρ ἦδε, / λαλέειν τις εἰ θελήσει, / ἴχνος οὐδὲν ἐν προσώπῳ / θανάτου φέρουσα πάντως.

<sup>69</sup> SIDERAS, Grabreden 81. This interpretation is based on a passage of which we have only the uneven verses (17–25): ἐβουλόμην σε δάκρυσι κλάειν [...] ὡς Ἡλιάδες Ἥλιου τὸν υἱέα [...] ἀστακτὶ χεῖν ἤλεκτρον ἐκ τῶν ὀμμάτων [...] τοιοῦδε νεκροῦ καὶ τὸ πένθος εἰκότως. [...] οὕτω σε πενθεῖν οὐδὲ χρὴ πενθεῖν ὄλω. In the first 12 preserved verses, forms of πένθος and πενθεῖν thus occur four times, putting their ostentatious denial in perspective.

<sup>70</sup> Τὴν φιλάτην ὅπου περ ἡμῶν μητέρα / ὄψ[ει ...] / ἦν ὡς ἀφ' ἡμῶν καὶ πρόσσειπε γνησίως (31–33).

(48–49). As usual, the *diaporesis* is followed by a long speech, most of which is, however, barely comprehensible.<sup>71</sup> The only certain thing is that it ends with the usual prayer (110–118).

Petros the grammarian was more lucky than we are, for poem 77 is the one Christophoros has lent to him – but Petros was slow in returning the copy. This appears from poem 78 and its lemma.

[Εἰς τὸν] γραμματικὸν Πέτρον, αἰτήσαντα <τὰ> εἰς τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἐπιτάφια ἱαμβεῖα, κατασχόντα [δὲ χρόνον] πολὺν καὶ μήπως φθάσαντα ἀποδοῦναι.

Ἦ λωτὸν εὗρες ἐμφυτευθέντα ξένως  
 [ἐμοῖς] ἱάμβοις, Πέτρε, τοῖς ἐντυμβίοις  
 τοῖς εἰς ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἐμὴν γεγραμμένοις  
 [... αὐ]τόχρομα τοὺς στίχους κρίνεις  
 5 καὶ ῥᾶστα τούτων οὐκ ἀποσπᾶσθαι θέλεις·  
 [χώρει δ'] ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὡς ἀναγνοὺς πολλάκις.

Although intrinsically linked to the preceding poems, the tone changes abruptly. The mourning brother is making jokes again, and asks his friend whether he has found lotus growing on the sepulchral verses.<sup>72</sup> A subtle hint, which led Petros to send back the manuscript, along with some literary comments – which in turn triggered Christophoros to write the poem soliciting an aesthetic reading with special attention given to cleverness and variation.

<sup>71</sup> One interesting passage is more or less preserved: Christophoros wonders how he can get in touch with his dead sister. The pagan method, a clear reference to the *nekylia* in the *Odyssey*, will not suffice: ἀλλὰ σκοπῶμεν ὧδε καὶ [προσεκτέον· / ψυχᾶς ὀρύττει βόθρον Ἑλλην ἀφρόνως, / σφάττει πρόβατον καὶ μελί[κρατον χέει] (and so on, see *Od.* 11.22–43) / ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν σὴν, αὐτ[αδελφὴν φιλότατη], / οὐ γῆ παριστᾶν βούλομαι ψυχὴν φίλην, / (...) / οὐκ ὀρύξω σοι βόθρον, ...

<sup>72</sup> Probably another allusion to the *Odyssey*, where we read that the eating of lotus withholds one from bringing back tidings: τῶν δ' ὅς τις λωτοῖο φάγοι μελιηδέα καρπὸν, / οὐκέτ' ἀπαγγεῖλαι πάλιν ἤθελεν ... (*Od.* 9.94–95).