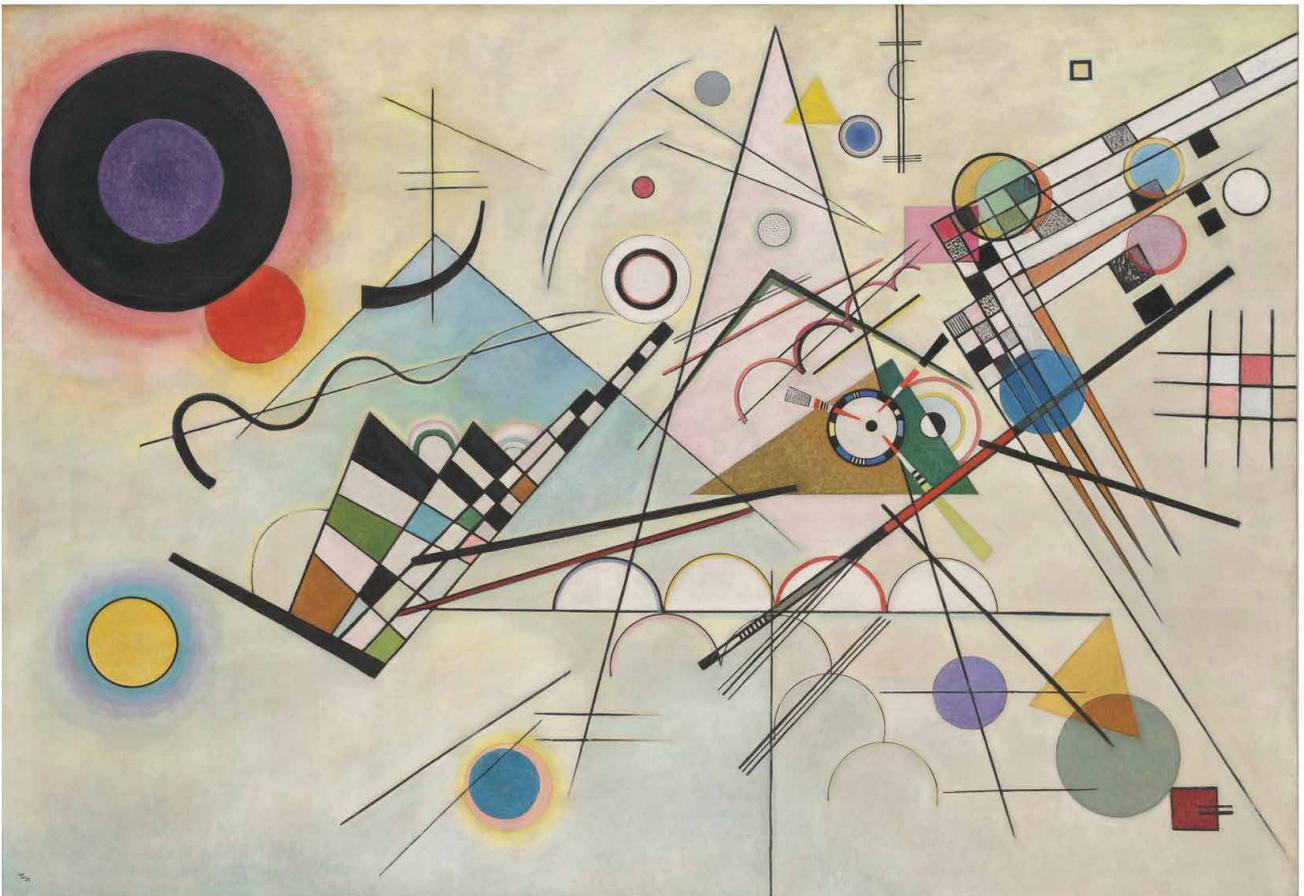


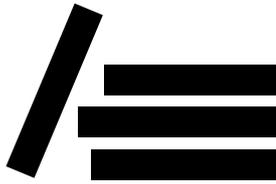
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Occasional Literature and Patronage in Later Medieval and Early Modern Periods



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Alle meine Gedichte sind Gelegenheitsgedichte: the Problems and Possibilities of Occasionality

Abstract

This introductory paper sets the stage for the five contributions in this special issue, which examine the occasional literature across various linguistic traditions (Greek, Latin, and Persian) from the eleventh to seventeenth centuries. It offers reflections on the interplay between occasion, lyric, and literature, suggesting that occasional literature can be regarded as a precursor to lyric. Additionally, it explores the close relationship between occasional literature and patronage, which has significantly shaped the modern dismissive attitude toward the former.

Keywords

Occasional literature, Patronage, Lyric, Poetry, Medieval and early Modern times.

Die Welt ist so gross und reich und das Leben so mannigfaltig, dass es an Anlassen zu Gedichten nie fehlen wird. Aber es müssen alles Gelegenheitsgedichte sein, das heisst, die Wirklichkeit muss die Veranlassung und den Stoff dazu hergeben ... Alle meine Gedichte sind Gelegenheitsgedichte, sie sind durch die Wirklichkeit angeregt und haben darin Grund und Boden.

According to Johann Peter Eckermann, this is what Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) said almost exactly two hundred years ago, on September 17, 1823 (cited also in Oppenheimer 1). Coming from a central figure in the period marked by *Sturm und Drang* – the movement that resulted in the first flowering of romanticism in German literature and music in the 1790s – Goethe’s remarks on the inherent nature of occasionality in his own poetry are highly interesting. They run counter to the view of many of his contemporaries, who denounced any links between poetry and occasion: poetry was seen as the result of inner inspiration, not in relation to any factual situation or reality. At about the same time, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

(1770–1831), introduced a tripartite system of poetic taxonomy into the philosophy of art that distinguished between epic, drama, and lyric. The last category was to be understood as the perfect medium for the expression of personal emotions and thus came to remain far removed from any given occasion.

Pre-modern authors would not have shared the idea that ‘lyric’ is a self-contained category of poetry, but etymologically this category derives from poetry written by Sappho, Anacreon and Pindar, and in particular from the musical instrument which accompanied the performance of their works: “the lyre” (Gr. λύρα). Various characteristics associated with modern lyric poetry can indeed be recognized retrospectively in poetry composed from the time of Sappho and Pindar onwards, all the way up to Bob Dylan (b. 1941) and Louise Glück (b. 1943), to mention but two of the most famous modern poets whose emotional expression affect millions of people. In Antiquity, Pindar affected a more limited circle of listeners with his poems in similar ways, including lyrical elements within the frame of so-called epinikian poetry: poems written for the winners of athletic games. Modern readers of his poems get affected by the same lyrical quality, musing on human beings as “dreams of a shadow” (*Pythian* 8.96), overlooking the fact that these poems were written for very real occasions and for financial compensation.

This brings us back to Goethe and the genesis of his poetry as always being intertwined with an occasion. Pindar wrote occasional poetry, but that does not mean that his work lacked personal and lyrical features. Quite the contrary: lyrical and occasional poetry share many features, because they share the same aim of affecting the emotions of listeners and readers. Long before the romantic eighteenth-century movement when lyric was elevated into a new category of poetry, ‘brevity’ – the expression of personal feelings – and ‘passion’ were characteristics of occasional poetry. Broadly speaking, what we now refer to as lyric (as a self-contained genre of poetry) in ancient, medieval, and early modern periods used to be represented by a wide category of occasional poems. One might even go a step further and argue that occasional poetry, as in the example of Pindar, is the precursor of lyric. But despite their proximity, authors and literary critics have treated them very differently. Lyric has been placed on a pedestal, far above other types of literary expression, as a superior medium of aesthetic value. Occasional literature has been described as ephemeral, performed at a specific occasion and most often without any afterlife, or with an afterlife of trivial importance for posterity.

1. See p. 17 in the present thematic cluster.

The very term ‘occasional’ has been burdened with pejorative connotations and attitudes have traditionally been dismissive. Such derogative positions often result from misconceptions about these types of texts or even the difficulty to describe their form and function in a concrete manner: “Occasional literature is notoriously difficult to define,” Margaret Mullet writes in her contribution to this collection of essays.¹ The definition offered in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* is inclusive and thus, perhaps, not very helpful: “all literary works are occasioned in some sense” (Miner et al. 966). One might wish to compare the occasional nature of literature to its instructive nature: in the broadest sense, all literature imparts learning in a way or another. Similarly, all literature arises from an occasion. But then again, how helpful are definitions that are all-inclusive? Or do definitions perhaps rather stand in our way?

In the study of the Greco-Roman tradition, occasional literature has been seen primarily in relation to epideictic rhetoric and ceremonial literature, ranging from panegyrics and triumphal songs to *epithalamia* (“wedding songs”) and dedicatory epigrams. These may be considered the prime examples of occasional literature, but it is worth remembering that various narrative genres and drama, too, were performed at specific occasions and, in many cases, were composed for that specific event (see Nilsson 6). Think, for instance, of *The Persians* by Aeschylus, performed at the Athens Dionysia in 472 BCE and clearly a comment on historical political events. This brings us to another main distinction that has often been drawn between lyric and occasional literature, namely the idea that lyric was usually addressed to a private reader, while the latter was meant to be performed in a public sphere. But historically, all lyric was performed privately and all occasional works were not performed at public occasions. To offer but one example, dozens of medieval religious dedicatory epigrams or prayers directed to a holy figure by a donor were frequently performed in a private environment. What differs, then, across various types of works is the degree of occasionality or its nature. For some texts, the occasion is made clear through the addition of prologues or epilogues; for others, the extratextual end is exhibited rather through internal evidence; and then there are texts for which the original occasion has been lost and very often is impossible to reconstruct, but that does not make them less occasional to their nature.

One important reason behind the dismissive attitude to pre-modern occasional literature is its incompatibility with the cult of authorial genius which has prevailed in modern literary criticism since the

nineteenth century. Occasional literature usually flourishes within the system of patronage: an economic arrangement that fosters the exchange between patron and client (the author). It has long been recognized that patronage is a pervasive feature of both traditional agrarian societies and modern commercial communities. In discussing personal patronage in the Roman period, Richard Saller has listed three necessary criteria for its definition:

First, it involves the reciprocal exchange of goods and services. Secondly, to distinguish it from a commercial transaction in the marketplace, the relationship must be a personal one of some duration. Thirdly, it must be asymmetrical, in the sense that the two parties are of unequal status and offer different kinds of goods and services in the exchange – a quality which sets patronage off from friendship between equals. (Saller 1).

Saller here emphasizes the exchange of resources between patron and client: the former offers material assistance, the latter a series of services. Moreover, the element of reciprocity is of paramount importance in the system of patronage. But how is reciprocity achieved in the relationship between an author and a patron? What do patrons offer and what do authors provide in turn? This depends very much on the nature of an occasion, the period or even the cultural environment to which the relationship of patron and client belongs. Moreover, complete reciprocity is achieved only in the ideal form of patronage relations. On many occasions, theory and practice do not go hand in hand, mainly because relations between individuals are complicated.²

In supporting the ideal form of patronage, many authors throughout history hoped for some tangible resources from their patrons, including money, a one-time specific gift, or even a pension. The authors could also be granted hospitality, ranging from a dinner invitation to an extended stay at a patron's house. But patrons also provided authors with more things: they could encourage the author to finish a work, elevate an author's social status, or protect an author from abusive attacks by other rivals. They could also impose authority on a work, since the status of the patron can enhance the importance of a work and have a direct impact on its circulation. Overall, the patron could create the appropriate circumstances for a successful trajectory for an author. At the other end, patrons fostered this arrangement because they could gain valuable services and benefits. A literary work could become a property of the patron, especially in premodern time

2. A very good example is the case of the twelfth-century Byzantine author John Tzetzes who frequently complains about his patrons in his writings. See, more recently, Lovato.

when the concept of copyright did not exist. The author offered entertainment and aesthetic pleasure to the patron, he could provide his professional expertise, and even offer fame and magnificence. By expressing his or her view about a work, a patron could have a significant impact on the cultural production of a particular period.

The romantic period has shaped our notion of the writer as an independent creator of literature, condemning any connection between literature and patronage. But as already noted in the case of Pindar, the admired authors of the Greco-Roman canon were supported by patrons in various ways. The Sicilian tyrant Hiero of Syracuse was a patron of Pindar. In Alexandria, King Ptolemy II was the patron of Theocritus, father of pastoral poetry. The father of Alexander, king Philip II of Macedon, housed Aristotle. Gaius Maecenas, the well-known statesman and adviser of emperor Augustus, both before and during his reign, fostered the literary pursuits of poets like Virgil, Horace, and Propertius. Literary patronage continued to thrive in the medieval period, reaching its peak during the Renaissance and in early seventeenth-century England.³

Needless to say, patronage and occasional writing did not remain unchanged throughout their long history. The invention of printing and the transition from a limited manuscript circulation among friends or a small group of literati and patrons to the large-scale commercial book trade transformed the literary scene for good. Even so, patronage persisted in many cultural environments by acquiring new forms and ways of expression. In England, for example, literary patronage continued to flourish throughout the eighteenth century (Griffin). Patronage also persisted in our modern world, veiled in new and different forms. One could even go so far as to say that the notion of autonomous artists is a fallacy: these days they may not be enslaved to an individual patron, but to the whims of the public. In the words of Dustin Griffin, “both the academy and high culture generally continue in our own time to be dependent on, and the beneficiaries of, a system of patronage, disguised though it may be in the form of foundation grants, tax policies, fellowships, academic appointments, art collectors, theatre subscribers, and private contributors” (Griffin 4). As academics, we often work on commission, as do modern artists, musicians, and artists.

The relation between artist and patron in many ways remain the same, with artists lending their cultural capital of various kinds to mighty patrons, often through performance. A case in point that many of our readers will remember is the performance of Amanda

3. As has been noted in Griffin 46: “The great age of patronage in England, so it has been suggested since the days of Goldsmith, was the period from the Revolution in 1688 until the death of Queen Anne in 1714.”

Gorman, reading her spoken word poem “The Hill We Climb” at the inauguration ceremony of Joe Biden in Washington, D.C. on January 20, 2021. This performance had all the characteristics of occasional poetry, from the political situatedness of the words to the powerful act of the artist herself and, not the least, the cultural impact of both words and act for the new president. The poet, in return, achieved global fame, book deals, and even a contract with IMG Models. This kind of situation enables modern readers to fully comprehend the workings of both patronage and occasionality.

Academia often functions as a reflection of society at large, and in recent years, modern scholars have shied away from the suspicious treatment of occasional literature and literary patronage outlined above. Various studies have paved the way for a better understanding of the particularities of this kind of literature by focusing on the devices these authors had to shape their voice, manipulate or resist the mechanisms of patronage to their advantage, recycle their material across various occasions, and eventually establish their literary brand within a highly antagonistic environment. All these issues are well known in literary studies and have been investigated in various fields, including classics, medieval, and early modern studies. The collection of essays presented here follows in these scholarly trajectories and applies a transcultural perspective by looking at occasionality and patronage across languages and cultures in the late medieval and early modern periods (c. 1100–1700). The aim is to shift the attention from famous cases to less-known texts, and also to explore approaches across linguistic and cultural borders.

The first two contributions deal with twelfth-century Byzantium and texts written in Greek. Margaret Mullett, in her “The Occasional Muse: Textual Genesis and Literary Innovation in Komnenian Byzantium,” considers the literary production of the twelfth century from the perspective of innovation. Focusing on occasion rather than occasionality, and understanding it as ‘event’ or *kairos*, Mullett reminds us that the assumed constant of occasion and patronage sometimes needs to be teased apart. As the basis of her analysis, she divides the Byzantine twelfth-century production into four groups: 1) Commissioned occasional performative texts; 2) Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts; 3) Not commissioned occasional (or non-occasional) performative (or non-performative), job-related texts; and 4) Not commissioned non-occasional highly experimental texts. Even if these categories admittedly remain somewhat crude and overlapping, Mullett’s analysis shows, in particular,

how the fourth group contains a large number of works that do not fit into a model of dominant patronage and pervasive occasionality. These are texts marked by hybridity and experimentation, perhaps aimed at achieving commissions through performance in the literary circles of Constantinople, the so-called *theatra*, but possibly written by authors for themselves or friends, relying on a “poetics of hybridity”. Mullett thus concludes that innovation does not always come from the “occasional Muse”, in the form of commissions and constraints pushing creative boundaries, but that there is a need to make space for inspiration as well as patronage.

In contrast to Mullett’s broad approach to the entire corpus of twelfth-century literature, Aglae Pizzone targets a particular kind of occasional texts, namely those that teach the Greek language. As indicated by her title, “The Occasionality of Byzantine Didacticism: a Case Study from the Twelfth Century (Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 222, inf. f. 218r),” she also examines a particular text: a didactic poem on prosodic quantity, attributed to John Tzetzes. Pizzone opens her essay by noting how the very notion of didactic poetry is modern and imbued by eighteenth-century aesthetics – similarly to the notion of occasional poetry, as noted above – but argues that didactic poetry in Byzantium was marked by improvisation and personal experience: in other words, a kind of occasionality. The poem that she analyses, edits and translates opens with a classroom question that occasions the teacher’s answer, which is the poem itself – an improvised display of the very problem at hand. It is not uncommon in the twelfth century to stage the classroom situation in this manner, putting on display the occasion as such, but also the personal experiences and improvisational skills of the teachers. Pizzone argues that such poetry contains an autobiographical and personal component that has a lyrical dimension, again contradicting the way in which both didactic poetry and Byzantine poetry is traditionally understood. Moreover, manuscripts such as the one under investigation may be seen as sites for both the frozen moment of the teaching occasion and a continuation of the debate in the form of authorial comments on and to the scribe. Both circumstances and emotions may thus be retraced through careful analysis.

Theo Beers’ contribution, “The occasional *ghazal* in an early modern Persian *tazkira*,” takes us forward in time by a few centuries and offers a consideration of classical Persian poetry from an occasional perspective. What does it mean for a Persian poem to be occasional, how can the term be applied, and where can we look for ev-

idence in cases where context may be lacking? Beers suggests that a form traditionally thought of as purely lyric – the *ghazal* – was in practice occasional: performed in a variety of contexts, often composed for specific occasions and in competition between poets. As a way of exploring cases where the context is missing, he turns to *tazkiras* – biographical anthologies of poetry – for information about compositional and performative circumstances. Beers focuses on one such *tazkirah*, the *Tuḥfa-i Sāmī* (c. 1550) by Sām Mirzā (d. 1567), a prince of the Safavid dynasty who acted as both littérateur and patron. The *Tuḥfa* includes anecdotes about poets’ circles in cities across Iran that are crucial for such information; on the level of composition, the practice of *javāb* (“imitation”) is sometimes noted, explaining how a *ghazal* is imitating a specific earlier poem. Such a poetic conversation through and across works might constitute, argues Beers, an occasion in itself.

With the essay of Francesco G. Giannachi, “Poetry and patronage in the Barberini entourage: the *Technopaignia* of the Southern Italian Greek-speaking poet Francesco Arcudi Bishop of Nusco (1590–1641),” we move on to a different place but return to the issue of Greek language skills and manuscript studies. Francesco Arcudi was from the Greek-speaking area of Apulia, came to Rome to study at an early age and became one of many scholars who worked under the auspices of the mighty Barberini family. This environment was international and multilingual, as witnessed by the huge poetic anthology *Monumentum Romanum* (1637), whose last section Παγγλωσσία contains poems in all languages known at the time, ranging from Sanskrit to Peruvian. Arcudi devoted himself to collecting Greek manuscripts for the Barberini library and provided all of them with his own epigrams composed in Greek, but he also wrote in Latin. Some of these are analysed, edited and translated in Giannachi’s essay. Arcudi’s epigrams are inspired and occasioned by specific events, stated in the verses (“For a statue...” or “For a book...”), and the poet’s devotion to his patrons is expressed in the imagery that symbolizes the Barberini family: the bee, the honeycomb, and honey. What is important to note here is the extent of Barberini patronage: the number of people, object and texts involved in this movement, and the immense contribution to not only antiquarianism and philology, but also poetry. Much of this production remains unedited, so there is much more to come.

Further north in the same century, poets were writing their praise of mighty patrons in Latin. Elena Dahlberg’s “How to succeed as a favour seeker: two foreign epicists’ quest for patronage in seven-

teenth-century Sweden,” describes a situation that is similar to the one in the south, but perhaps even more competitive due to the smaller scale of the courts at which favour could be sought. Dahlberg focuses on foreign poets from Protestant minorities that sought protection and support by eulogizing the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus II and his intervention in the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648). Two such poets – the Bohemian humanist Venceslaus Clemens and the Dutch writer and physician Johannes Narssius – were clearly interested not merely in religious protection, but also in financial support. In contrast to Arcudi’s rather concise epigrams and poems, they both wrote very long epics, impossible to perform in their entirety but probably impressive by their sheer length. The two authors were similar in their quest for favours not only at the Swedish court but also among the aristocratic entourage, they both released their epics in 1632, and they wrote poetry for and about each other. And yet, Clemens failed and eventually died in poverty, while Narssius had a successful career. Dahlberg’s analysis explores the possible cause for this difference in two seemingly similar careers in occasional writing, suggesting that Narssius was a more versatile person with a variety of skills, including networking. He seems to have handled the changing conditions of society better than others; improvisation is indeed the best friend of both teachers, diplomats, and occasional poets.

Collectively, our authors address similar questions: How does the poetics of occasional texts transform across various genres and different social settings of production and consumption? What is the link between occasional literature and a school setting? What is the link between occasionality and patronage? How did authors create space to use the conventions of patronage to their advantage? What are the reasons for the success of an author within the system of patronage? Is it always connected to their literary skills or also other kind of services offered to a patron? How flexible are the authors in adapting during the transformation of the patronage system? By examining texts written in different languages and places, they reveal how occasionality and patronage were of global importance for literary cultures in premodern and early modern societies. Despite significant omissions of important cultural settings – Arabic, Georgian, Hebrew, Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, Church Slavonic, Old French, and many others – we hope that this collection of essays will inspire further investigation from a transcultural point of view.

Finally, we wish to thank our own patron, The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm, for fund-

ing and housing the workshop at which the essays published here were first presented (in January 2022). We take this opportunity to thank also the participants who did not have time to revise their papers for publication here, or who decided to take them elsewhere, but who importantly contributed to the fruitful discussions on that cold day in Stockholm, whose icy streets will remain part of that occasion for as long as we remember it.

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The Occasional Muse: Textual Genesis and Literary Innovation in Komnenian Byzantium

Abstract

This paper explores the literary production of the twelfth century from the perspective of innovation. Focusing on occasion rather than occasionality, and understanding it as ‘event’ or *kairos*, it reminds us that the assumed constant of occasion and patronage sometimes needs to be teased apart. The Byzantine twelfth-century production is divided into four groups: 1) Commissioned occasional performative texts; 2) Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts; 3) Not commissioned occasional (or non-occasional) performative (or non-performative), job-related texts; and 4) Not commissioned non-occasional highly experimental texts. Even if these categories admittedly remain somewhat crude and overlapping, the analysis shows, in particular, how the fourth group contains a large number of works that do not fit into a model of dominant patronage and pervasive occasionality. These are texts marked by hybridity and experimentation, perhaps aimed at achieving commissions through performance in the literary circles of Constantinople, the so-called *theatra*, but possibly written by authors for themselves or friends, relying on a ‘poetics of hybridity’.

Keywords

Innovation, hybridity, occasional literature, poetics, performance.

1. Bourbouhakis, *Not Composed* 46*–47*: “the term ‘occasional’ risks becoming an abstract label, a mere classification rather than a designation signaling a concrete historical setting which enabled the performance of a text.”

2. [Web](#) [Accessed 2 November 2022].

Occasional literature is notoriously¹ difficult to define. It is also often considered more in terms of poetry than of prose works. The Poetry Foundation’s definition of “a poem written to describe or comment on a particular event and often written for a public reading” seems both too narrow (in that it does not allow for the participation of the text in the event) and too wide (in that it involves performance).² Elizabeth Jeffreys’ starts similarly: “verse produced to commemorate an event, whether an imperial victory or an aristocratic wedding, a birth, a death” then veers away “or an impassioned petition to a potential patron” (E. Jeffreys, “Why produce verse?” 225). Wolfram Hörandner’s is tighter:

“an occasional poem is either itself part of a process or of an object, or it describes a process (or object) or refers to them in any way whatsoever” (Hörandner, “Custom and Beliefs” 235); though it complicates the definition with “an object” this is far from unusual. Marian Sugano begins with its position between history and poetry and ends with a “new poetics of the occasional” which foregrounds the presence of the object (Sugano 7). Occasional literature may be conflated with didactic, with Gebrauchstexte, or with public poetry.

It can encompass extreme ends of any spectrum of literature from the grand (Tennyson’s *Charge of the Light Brigade*) to the trivial (Mallarmé’s inscribed couplets on eggs, fans, visiting cards). It may be “partly literary and partly referential,” (de Man 3) between fact and fiction, the circumstantial and the essential (Sugano 1–2). Though much of the critical literature is restricted in scope to ‘occasional poetry’, in many literatures it includes both prose and verse in registers from the stately to the colloquial. And this can trouble those who choose to evaluate literature: a verdict on the British poet laureate’s poem on the death of Elizabeth II as “archaic at best, banal at worst”³ is characteristic of some views of occasional literature;⁴ Goethe’s as “die erste und echteste aller Dichtarten” (von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben* 397) is characteristic of another time. There is a tendency for the term to become all-embracing: Goethe said that all his poems were occasional poems, suggested by real life (Goethe, *Conversations* 18), and Edward Said agreed in that “every literary text is burdened with its occasion,” (Said 35) Ingela Nilsson in her study of Constantine Manasses rejects a usage of Byzantine literature “often limited to cases of epideictic rhetoric or ceremonial poetry” and prefers “to argue that all preserved texts by Manasses were potentially occasional. So was most if not all Byzantine literature of the twelfth century as were numerous texts produced in Europe up till at least the end of the eighteenth century.” (Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 6).

Further, we are invited by the premiss of this collection of essays to consider the relation of occasion to patronage, to the pre-text, to an extra-literary end, to occasional literature as ‘public relations.’⁵ If ‘writing on command for specific occasions’ is seen as the key activity then patronage is surely at the heart of occasion, and indeed of twelfth-century Byzantine literature as Robert Browning saw long ago: “The more one examines Byzantine literature, the more one becomes convinced that it never appears spontaneously: it needs a salon, patronage, institutionalised forms.” (Browning, “Unpublished Funeral Oration” 8).

Yet this is not necessarily so: “an aristocratic and courtly-sponsored society in which patronage played an important role” may cer-

3. Sarah C.E. Ross (Wellington, New Zealand) on Simon Armitage’s *Floral Tribute* acrostic, wondering why there has been so little poetic response to the death of the Queen, and whether public poetry is dead: [web](#) [Accessed 2 November 2022].

4. Hegel, vol. 2, 995–96 proposes inferior value because of “entanglement with life;” cf. Sugano 7: “a great deal” of Renaissance “verse was little more than servile flattery.” See also, tongue in cheek, Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 2, 107: “it is occasional poetry after all, ephemeral and of little consequence.”

5. Tompkins 208: “a resource of financial support, a form of social protection, a means of securing a comfortable job, an instrument of socialisation, a move in a complicated social game or even a direct vehicle of courtship.”

6. Nilsson and Zagklas, blurb for the colloquium.

7. See still Ihor Ševčenko, “Society and Intellectual Life.”

8. See the relevant chapters in Papaioannou, *Oxford Handbook*. On poetry Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 2, ranges later and more widely than the title suggests; Spingou, *Words and Artworks* unlocks the treasure house of Marc. gr. 524; for literature on art see Spingou’s two volumes, *Visual Culture of Later Byzantium*; together with these works Hörandner, Rhoby, and Zagklas, ed. *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry* and Rhoby and Zagklas, ed. *Middle and Late Byzantine Poetry* have put poetry at the centre of the twelfth-century achievement. See also the Austrian Academy’s four-volume project on metrical inscriptions, ed. Rhoby, and the [Gent book epigram project](#).

tainly have “allowed or even demanded occasional literature to thrive,” (Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 9) “textual genesis” may often have been “triggered by sponsorship of a patron”⁶ yet that society may also have allowed or even demanded literature written for occasion which had other forms of genesis and development. Since Browning wrote, Byzantine literature of the twelfth century has come to be seen as a period of intense experiment and innovation and it is by no means certain that this innovation is patron-driven. In what follows I should like to take a step back from recent sophisticated studies of occasion (Nilsson) and patronage (Zagklas) and look at the relations between text, patronage and occasion in the Byzantine twelfth century with a view to clarifying ways of looking at textual genesis and innovation. And in this I should prefer to look at occasions rather than ‘occasional’, to see with Said that “poetry is an event” (Said 4) and with Bourbouhakis remember that “by ‘occasional literature’ we mean an actual physical and ceremonial context, an *event*.” (Bourbouhakis, *Not Composed* 46–47). If I use the term ‘occasional literature’ at all I should prefer the simple definitions of Adelung “ein Gedicht welches bey gewissen feyerlichen Gelegenheiten verfertiget” (Adelung, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, 529) or of Bourbouhakis “a text recited before a particular audience in a particular place.” (Bourbouhakis, *Not Composed* 59). Similarly, at this stage of analysis, I prefer occasion as *kairos* to occasion as *occasio* (Moog-Grünwald 15–18). There will be more questions than answers, hypotheses rather than solutions.

Komnenian literature

From a perception fifty years ago that twelfth-century Byzantine literature operated in an “age of uncreative erudition, of sterile good taste” (Browning, “Enlightenment and Repression” 5) it has become apparent that it was highly creative and very innovative with revivals of ancient genres, translations from other languages and experiments in language, metre and genre. The sheer volume of surviving work is greater than in comparable periods, except perhaps in the early fourteenth century),⁷ with a very large body of occasional rhetoric, and letters, new forms of narrative, and, we have increasingly seen, a mass of commissioned verse for objects and occasions.⁸ Authors wrote for a small group of other authors and aristocratic patrons as well as for church and court. They were members of the imperial family, aristocrats, lawyers, soldiers, diplomats, bureaucrats, bishops, monks, career rhetors

9. Preeminently on Constantine Manasses by Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* and on Theodore Prodromos by Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos*. On John Tzetzes see Pizzone, e.g. “A Byzantine Book of Memory?” and on Manganeios Prodromos the forthcoming edition by Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys. The best overview of literary society in the period is still in Magdalino, *Manuel I Komnenos* 316–412.

10. As well as in *Distant Reading*, in *Graphs, Maps, Trees* Franco Moretti makes the case for a quantitative approach to literature, which may be digital but need not be. He argues that literary scholars should stop reading books and should start counting, graphing and mapping. Though Byzantine literature is less threatened than other literatures by the establishment of a canon representing less than 1% of works actually published, there is a tendency to look at parts rather than the whole. By considering as far as possible all works written in the long twelfth century we can arrive at a sense of relative numbers: between religious polemic at the most numerous to novels at the least.

11. Mullett addressed it in “Aristocracy and Patronage;” “The Disgrace;” “Patronage in Action” and in “Gynamics.” Floris Bernard 291–93 discusses the dangers of attempting to deduce patronage and considers, with respect to eleventh-century poetry, solicitation of patronage, commissions, dedications and gifts, the last proving the difficulty of establishing the level of reciprocity. See also Loukaki, “Τυμβωρύχοι και σκυλευτές νεκρών.”

and teachers. For the first time in Byzantium we see some who lived by writing on command backed up by teaching, and recent studies⁹ have illuminated the careers of several. It would seem to be a perfect corpus of material with which to explore issues of occasion and patronage.

Four groups of texts

If we attempt a ‘distant reading’¹⁰ of this rich literature and attempt to tease apart the assumed constants like occasion and patronage we might suggest a division (fig. 1) into four groups: 1. Commissioned occasional performative texts, 2. Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts, 3. Not commissioned occasional (or non-occasional) performative (or non-performative), job-related texts and 4. Not commissioned non-occasional highly experimental texts.

	Court, school, church	Theatron, court
Other-generated	1. commissioned occasional performative	2. commissioned non-occasional non-performative
Self-generated	3. not commissioned occasional job-related	4. not commissioned non-occasional experimental
	Performative	Non-performative
	More factual	More fictional

Fig. 1 Four groups of twelfth-century texts

There are clearly difficulties in making distinctions of this kind. For one thing we frequently simply do not know whether a work was commissioned or not. The reciprocity spectrum from dedication to presentation to commission to piece-work patronage to personal patronage is a wide and difficult one,¹¹ and we may be misreading allusive references or simply be missing a piece of evidence which would push it in one direction or the other, towards self- or other-generated. For another the occasion is not always defined. Some rhetorical speeches give us a great deal of information, others do not. We may assume that monodies and consolations were delivered at the house, funeral orations later at the grave but we are seldom told. Sometimes we are told a great deal about occasion but nothing about textual genesis: for example the metrical prefaces to patristic sermons studied by Theodora Antonopoulou may tell us a great deal about place, liturgical feast, perfor-

12. Both are associated by Magdalino, “Liturgical Poetics” with the confraternity at *ta Kyrou*.

13. The *maistor ton rhetoron* was not the only speaker; he regularly handed over to his pupils and we also have some speeches with Jordan imagery not associated with a *maistor*, as well as some by a *maistor* without the Jordan. For Lazaros Saturday speeches see Loukaki, “Le samedi.”

14. Lauxtermann, “The Byzantine Epigram” 32; Maguire, *Image and Imagination* 7–9; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, 42–43; on the epigrams Mercati 313–16. For other examples see Spingou, *Words and Art Works* 122, Bernard 307; Lauxtermann, “The Byzantine Epigram” 43–44, Drpić, the fullest discussion, 29, 31, 37, helpfully distinguishing ‘rough draft’ from ‘on spec’ and ‘workshop catalogue’.

15. Spingou, *Words and Art Works* 119–22 on inscriptional epigrams (which might never become verse inscriptions and might also be performed); 146–63 on performative epigrams, 163 “written with performance in mind.”

16. E.g. the two tent poems of Manganeios Prodromos for Eirene the Sebastokratorissa, edited by Michael Jeffreys in Anderson and Jeffreys 11–13.

17. Or rather perhaps not helped by the versatility of literature intended for these communicating vessels. Zagklas has shown convincingly that Theodore Prodromos recycled school compositions at court and court poems in teaching. Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos* 53–70.

18. Mullett, “Rhetoric, Theory and the Imperative of Performance;” Marciniak, “The Byzantine Performative Turn.”

19. On *theatra* Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage,” Magdalino, *Manuel I Komnenos*, ch. 5 on the Guardians of Orthodoxy, esp. 335–43; Grünbart, *Theatron*, esp. Marciniak, “Byzantine Theatron – a Place of Performance?” Andrew Stone has written a series of papers looking for Komnenian evidence, e.g. “Euthymios Malakes in Theatron;” “Eustathios of Thessalonike and Performance of Rhetoric” and Niels

mance by the author, sometimes the circumstances, but give us no idea of whether the poems were commissioned or author-generated (Antonopoulou). With Paul Magdalino’s work we can begin to see some as part of the devotion of a lay confraternity (Magdalino, “Liturgical Poetics”), but on the basis of their other works the likelihood of difference between poems written by John Geometres and Manganeios Prodromos¹² in terms of commission is great: the first we assume is author-generated, the second patron-generated. Another issue is whether a kind of text is job-related and so whether it should be seen as author- or patronage-generated: many school texts come into this category, but also the career-expected speeches of the *maistor ton rhetoron* to the emperor on 6 January or to the patriarch on Lazaros Saturday.¹³ Sometimes the most obviously patron-generated texts can take on another light, as when it was posited that the range of eight texts for Constantine Dalassenos’s silver bowl in Laura Ω 126 represented ‘on spec’ epigrams to be presented to the patron: the pre-text is the job-search.¹⁴ And the relationship between performance and occasion is not always clear. We have come to assume that we need to justify an argument that a text is not performed rather than that it is, but that does not in itself make it either performative or occasional. Here the work of Foteini Spingou on epigrams offers some assistance: she assumes that all epigrams may have been performed, if only as the process of reading aloud by the patron or recipient, but she distinguishes carefully between texts written for inscription (which may also be performed) and those written for performance.¹⁵ Sometimes doubles are found, one for inscription, one for performance.¹⁶ To prove occasion we would need evidence of a particular date in movable or immovable or life cycles. And finally we are often unsure about place, about the possible milieu for performance, a doubt not helped by Zagklas’s otherwise very helpful theory of communicating vessels.¹⁷ The great performativity of Byzantine society¹⁸ meant that a text might be performed in church, in a monastery, on the street, at court, in a law court, in a school or in a *theatron*,¹⁹ and often we can only surmise which was its primary milieu and what others were possible.

Given these considerable provisos we may proceed to look at the literature of the long twelfth century, the Komnenian period (1081–1204), in terms of commission and occasion, generation and innovation.

20. See Table 1.

21. It is here that we regret the lack of a Komnenian *De cerimoniis*.

22. See Table 1. We still lack a good survey of the life-cycle rhetoric.

23. For example, members, in some cases three or four different individuals, of the Anemas, Apimphios, Arbanites, Aristenos, Axouch, Belissariotes, Dokeianos, Doukas, Drimys, Euphorbenos, Hagiotheodorites, Kamateros, Kontostephanos, Makrembolites, Meles, Mesapotamites, Palaiologos, Pantechnes, Prosouch, Roger, Stypeiotes, Stryphnos, Tornikes families received encomia, funeral orations, consolations, monodies, epigrams, poems, and were sometimes also correspondents of the literati. On the families see Grünbart, *Inszenierung und Repräsentation* and on the rhetorical works the dissertation of Ilias Nesseris.

24. Agapitos, “Mischung der Gattungen;” Zagklas, “Metrical Polyideia and Generic Innovation.”

25. See Table 2.

1. Commissioned occasional performative texts

This body of material²⁰ comprises the large body of annual speeches to the emperor and patriarch, with other occasional *prosphonemata*, and hymns for the demes on special but repeated occasions.²¹ It also includes speeches and poems for major state occasions like John II’s victory at Kastamonu and the resulting triumph of 1133, the inauguration of the Pantokrator monastery and the rapprochement between the emperor and his brother Isaac of 1138. These represent the ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ end of the public/private spectrum, but here are also to be found also life-cycle events: births, birthdays, and epithalamia, and the whole enormous Komnenian literature on death, comprising laments, consolations, and speeches of praise, in prose and verse, as well as epitaphial epigrams too long for inscription or explicitly performative in language.²² Other political occasions of a less celebratory nature may also fit here: religious polemic and oral Kaiserkritik for example. More trivial and private occasions may also be included, like the account by Constantine Manasses of an expedition to the Sea of Marmara to hunt siskins, where it is clear that the text is the result of a request from his fellow-participant in the occasion recorded. Here there is always a sense that the occasion includes the text as well as inspiring it. The patrons, where not imperial or lesser members of the imperial house, belong to a restricted number of ‘literary’ families.²³ Texts are largely other-generated, placed in court, private houses of the aristocracy, churches, monasteries, or on the streets. They tend to be factual rather than fictional. Experiment and innovation may be found in *mixis* of genres, in playing with rhetorical conventions, and in the highly inventive polymetric cycles of verse for life-cycle occasions.²⁴ Texts of this kind account for 40% of secular output of the period and 35% of religious.

2. Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts

These works represent a much smaller proportion of the output of the period, perhaps 17% of the whole, though we may be underestimating commissions where they are not explicit. The most certain have narrative support as well as dedication, or at least make the patronage history clear in the body of the text. They include²⁵ imperial commissions like an encyclopaedia of heresies and a parainetic set of animal fables translated from the Arabic for Alexios I Komnenos. Other imperial commissions include astrological poems and prov-

26. Theis et al., *Female Founders*.

27. Annibaldi, “Towards a Theory of Musical Patronage,” distinguishes humanistic patronage, in which the social standing of the patron is symbolised by his artistic sensibility, from conventional patronage, in which it is symbolised by an appropriate repertoire. Hence ‘passive literati’: either they were capable of work in their own right or were praised as if that were true.

28. Mullett, “Whose Muses?”

29. Early discussions of imperial women as patrons concentrated on the need to dumb down for those who were not native Greek-speakers, e.g. E. and M. Jeffreys, “Who was Eirene the Sevastokratorissa?” See also Magdalino, “Astrology at the Court.”

30. See for example Nilsson, “Discovering Literariness in the Past;” “The Past as Poetry;” “The Literary Voice of a Chronicler.”

31. See Table 3.

32. E.g. at Isaac Komnenos’s *Kosmosotera* once a month, *Typikon*, 59, ed. Petit, 48; tr. Nancy Ševčenko, vol. 2, 825.

33. Though it is often believed that hymnography was on the decline except in Byzantine Italy, that hagiography in the twelfth century was very sparse, and that new homilies were not needed when patristic sermons could be read aloud, there are more of all three than might be expected.

erbs for Manuel I Komnenos, and one of the earliest revived novels for the Caesar Nikephoros Bryennios. The commissions of imperial women are even more impressive:²⁶ theological and meteorological works for the ex-basilissa Maria, philosophical commentaries for Anna Komnene; various epigrams and poems and a history for her mother Eirene Doukaina. Educational works – grammatical, astrological, historical and classical – were written for the sebastokratorissa Eirene, as well as poems, homilies and letters. Manuel’s first wife Bertha-Eirene is associated with at least one classical paraphrase. Aristocratic patrons include Constantine Kotertzes, George Palaiologos and the many patrons of the Marc.gr. 524 epigram collections. The small prayers of Byzantine lead seals, often metrical in this period, introduce us to a wider group of patrons, though sadly not to their authors. These patrons, or passive literati, fit Annibaldi’s category of ‘humanistic patronage’²⁷ in that they are praised for their good taste and knowledge, equated with Muses when female and expected to return the favour of elegant writing.²⁸ By definition these works are other-generated, though they may take a form originated by the author, they are non-performative, though they may have been read in whole or in part at court or in a *theatron*. They may be fictional or non-fictional, didactic or paraenetic and in a register appropriate to the recipient.²⁹ Experiment and innovation may be found in the verse form, in register, in the kind of history written.³⁰

3. Not commissioned occasional (or non-occasional) performative (or non-performative) job-related texts

This group of texts may come under the heading of ‘job-related,’ where an individual writes as part of his calling.³¹ Teachers of the Great Church gave inaugurals for their ceremonial installation and further lectures relating to psalms, epistles or gospels without clear occasional identity. Monastic leaders wrote *katecheseis*, answers to spiritual questions, collected spiritual anthologies, and drew up *typika*, foundation documents for their monasteries. These might be performed on a particular day in the year or, like many *typika*, read in the refectory on designated occasions.³² Bishops and other clergy wrote sermons for particular feast-days, hymns for designated days in the year and daily office, saints’ lives for a feast-day *panegyris* or in the liturgy to celebrate the anniversary of the saint, forming an occasional cycle accessible to a wide public.³³ Members of confraternities, at Chalkoprateia, Hodegon or *ta Kyrou*, may

34. On the competitions Bernard 253–90, on *schede*, Vassis, “Graeca sunt;” Agapitos, “Grammar, Genre and Politics” and “Learning to Read and Write a *schedos*;” on schedography, see also the book by Fevronia Nousia, esp. 49–75. Some *schede* were dedicated in their second (verse) half.

35. For the eight Prodroomic dialogues see esp. Marciniak, “Reinventing Lucian in Byzantium;” two other dialogues, *Dialogue of the Dead* (CE 1185) and *Anarcharsis* are attributed elsewhere; three others, *Philopatris*, *Charidemos* and *Timarion*, are anonymous and much disputed as to authorship and (at least in the case of *Philopatris*) date.

36. van den Berg, et al. *Byzantine Commentaries*, esp. papers by Trizio and Pizzone.

37. E.g. *Timarion*, in Romano, *La satira bizantina* 107–75, and see Marciniak, “Heaven for Climate, Hell for Company,” with bibliography on readings by Alexiou, Macrides, Kaldellis, Krallis, MacDougall and Nilsson; *Bion praxis*, in La Porte–du Theil, “Vente à l’encan de différentes professions,” and see Marciniak, “Theodore Prodromos’ *Bion praxis*” as well as Chryssogelos, “Theodore Prodromos’ Βίων πρᾶσις;” Theodore Prodromos, *En apodemia te philia*, PG 133: 1321–32 and see now Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos* 270–89; *Anacharsis* or *Ananias*, in Christidis and see Cullhed, “The Consolation of Philology.”

38. We do not have Komnenian equivalents for the tenth-century harangues, McGeer, “Two Military Orations,” though some are indicated in historiography; for the other genres and the relationship of emperor to general see Schmidt, “Performing Military Leadership.”

39. On the revival of Lucianic satire see Marciniak, “Reinventing Lucian in Byzantium;” Messis, “The Fortunes of Lucian in Byzantium;” Zagklas, “Astrology, Piety and Poverty.”

40. See Table 4.

41. Why this should be so is of some interest. Partly it is because the texts were regarded as more ‘literary’, partly because they relate easily to contemporary writings in the west: the *Chanson de Roland*, Chrétien de Troyes, the Archpoet. Many are narrative, and what rhetoric is well known often depends – as well as on its narrative significance – on what is described, for example

have written verse prologues for delivery before famous patristic sermons. Schoolmasters wrote commentaries, treatises in prose and verse on everything from metre to morality and *schede*, the grammatical exercises which were used in school competitions in eleventh- and twelfth-century Constantinople and also for grand-er occasional purposes.³⁴ It may be that the revival of satire in mid-twelfth-century Constantinople also had a didactic purpose; many of the small dialogues are associated with Theodore Prodromos who was a teacher as well as court poet, and they may have originated in his classroom as a means of teaching grammar or rhetoric.³⁵ Though it has come to be thought that commentaries were performed in the sense of read in class,³⁶ and the dialogues could certainly have been,³⁷ they had no occasional identity. Generals delivered harangues to troops before battle, received instructions from the emperor and encomia from literati as well as sending reports from the front.³⁸ So this group of texts represents both occasional and non-occasional literature in our strict sense, performative and non-performative, fictional but mostly non-fictional, and appears to be author-generated, within the patronal framework of the institutions of schools, the patriarchate, monasteries and city churches where the texts were used or performed. Innovation could be metrical or in terms of register or generic expectations, or in the major task of reviving an ancient genre.³⁹ These texts account for perhaps 37% of the whole literature of the period.

4. Not commissioned non-occasional highly experimental texts

This final group of texts⁴⁰ includes those for which the Byzantine twelfth century is best known:⁴¹ the texts popularised by Margaret Alexiou in the 1970s and 80s:⁴² the novels (one in prose, two in twelve-syllable verse, fragments of another in *politikos stichos*),⁴³ the vernacular experiments including the four (or five) ‘begging’⁴⁴ poems of poor Prodromos, the Grottaferrata version of the heroic poem *Digenes Akrites* if it is to be placed in the twelfth century,⁴⁵ the more ambitious of the satirical dialogues. It includes histories not explicitly commissioned or dedicated,⁴⁶ as well as saints’ lives written by lay literati rather than churchmen. And as well as narrative it includes rhetorical pieces, both *progymnasmata* and free-standing *ekphraseis*. These texts give no clue of commission or oc-

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works of art. Clearly there is no emic justification for isolating these works, but there is some logic in terms of the history of Byzantinist scholarship.

‘Hysmine and Hysminias’;” “Literary Subversion and the Aristocracy” and “The Poverty of Écriture.”

42. See her “Eustathios Makrembolites’

43. For the best evaluation of the impact of the novels on literature in

general and for a summary of arguments on the order of the texts see Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance*. For the impact of rhetoric on the novels see Roilos.

44. Though these are addressed to an imperial figure the scenario suggests self-generation.

45. The (cautious) tendency is now to work from the date of the manuscript, so the fourteenth century. Goldwyn and Nilsson, *Reading the Late Byzantine Romance* xix n. 20, and Goldwyn and Nilsson, "Troy in Byzantine Romances" 191–92; Messis, "The Palaiologan Hagiographies" 230 and n. 1.

46. Only the histories of Michael Attaleiates (dedicated to Nikephoros Botaneiates), Nikephoros Bryennios and Constantine Manasses appear to be other-generated. The elaborate histories of Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates appear to be self-generated; both writers were surprisingly under-studied in terms of monographs until very recently.

47. These vary, ranging from the long paraphrases and narratives including the two novels at 4,614 and 3,638 lines respectively to the Cannibal at 165 lines and Ptochoprodromos II at 117 and Majuri at 66 lines.

48. It should be noted that we do have the (positive) reception of Kerkyras' poem when delivered at the synod of Blachernai in 1094, and Mouzalon's may also have been written for delivery, offering occasions of some kind. Indeed, if this were so the poems could have been performative in the sense of Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

49. *The Alexian Komnenian Muses*, ed. Maas. Again this purports to be delivered on Alexios's deathbed, suggesting a fictive delivery at a real occasion.

50. *Mousai* conforms only in that it claims authorship for Alexios. In fact the author must be close to John II. See Mullett, "Alexios I Komnenos and Imperial Renewal;" Mullett, "Whose Muses?"; Stanković 20.

51. See Constantinou on Bakhtin's theory of hybridity; see also the panel at the BSANA Byzantine Studies Conference at Holy Cross, Brookline in 2012 with papers by Beatrice Daskas on Mesarites, Alexander Riehle on Sergia's

casation but are secure in authorship, form a tiny proportion of the literature as a whole (little more than 5%), and tend to the fictional rather than factual. They are innovative in language, metre, mode, and especially in revival.

This group also includes the long⁴⁷ poems of the twelfth century: two poems of resignation from episcopal office (there is no indication that this was a regular kind of writing to match inaugural lectures),⁴⁸ the fragmentary *Muses* purporting to be written by Alexios I Komnenos for his son John,⁴⁹ a poem on the fires of 27 July 1197 and a poem in the Marc.gr. 524 on toothache. It may include Glykas's poem from prison, but not the prison/exile poem of Anonymous Malta since his literary milieu appears to be the court of the Norman kings of Sicily rather than the court of the Komnenian emperors at Constantinople. It includes one of a few travel accounts of the twelfth century but focusing largely on the ambassador's distress at having to leave Constantinople. These are original in terms of subject-matter, and sometimes in structure, ranging over description, narrative, parainesis, complaint, sometimes ending with a prayer, sometimes not, and apparently entirely author-generated and auto-graphic⁵⁰ if not totally authorially secure.

And the group includes a number of extraordinary texts unlike anything else, all hybrids. I do not mean this in de Man's sense of the nature of occasional literature as between literarity and referentiality (De Man 3) but that like the centaur they combine more than one body.⁵¹ There are prose and verse examples, all highly experimental, all problem pieces or puzzles. We have a saint's life entwined with an ascetic anthology, a trilogy of passion plays in the form of Euripidean tragedy welded to Virgin's lament, a mock epic-cum-animal fable in dramatic form, a poetic version of a legal document recording a day in court, suffused with tragic lament, and an epistolary narrative including monastic embassy accounts and vivid vignettes of court life in Constantinople. They tend to the fictional, claim no occasion⁵² or setting, are not apparently commissioned and several have authorship issues.⁵³ The performability of the *Christos Paschon* has been questioned (and defended)⁵⁴ and the dramatic form of the *Katomyomachia* recently challenged.⁵⁵ That they were performed seems highly likely, though not all at a single sitting.

These texts undermine binary distinctions in Byzantium: past and present in that patristic authors speak through a twelfth-century saint, Euripides' tragic heroines speak through the Virgin

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narration about St Olympias, and Raimondo Tocci on chronicle, organised by Aglae Pizzone and Alexander Riehle. Constantinou's strict adherence to Bakhtin might not include any of our examples: she

distinguishes between texts where the two elements are easily separable and those with more intricate connections. For different views on generic hybridity see Kubina, esp. 150–56; Cupane, "Intercultural encounters."

52. The exception is the Cannibal poem, which claims to be the *semeioma* delivered in court by the judge Andronikos after interviewing the penitent Maria. Ruth Macrides considered that it was fact rather than fiction and probably delivered as claimed; it is at least as likely that it was written after the event and performed at a *theatron*. The improvisation in the course of a day in court is not impossible, given other improvisation challenges of the period, but time pressure must have been extreme. Of course both, as communicating vessels, are possible.

53. Authorship issues: only one, the *Katomyomachia*, can be ascribed to a major literary figure of the period and that in only one of the 24 manuscripts; the *Paschon* is ascribed in all 25 manuscripts to Gregory of Nazianzos, but is clearly a twelfth-century text; the *protekdikos* Andronikos is not otherwise known and Nicholas Kataskepenos hardly more so; the authorship of the *Partial Account* is multiple.

54. Puchner, “Theaterwissenschaftliche Anmerkungen;” Mullett, “Performance issues.”

55. Marciniak and Warcaba 99: “we would like to argue that the *Katomyomachia*, even if it contains some dramatic elements (e.g. chorus, *rhesis angelike*) and recycles lines from ancient drama, is not an endeavour to revive the ancient form of drama, but is rather a Byzantine version of mock-epic and an attempt to write an updated, Byzantine version of the *Batrachomyomachia*.”

56. Macrides, “Poetic Justice,” 138: Ἄκουσμα καινὸν καὶ πέρα τραγωδίας / οἷον περ οὐκ ἦνεγκε πώποτε χρόνος.

57. Ampelarga, and see Constantinou, “Generic hybrids.”

58. Cameron and Gaul, *Dialogues and Debates*; for the chorus by Michael Haploucheir, see Cavallero and Marciniak, “The Dramatization by Michael Haploucheir;” Alexiou, “Lament of the Virgin.” For a (very) small Euripidean cento (4 lines) see Duluz, “Ekphrasis and Emotional Intensity” 258–59.

59. See now Cupane, “Letters in Narrative Literature.”

60. Beaton 47 acknowledged the genre problem and resolved it with the proposal of ‘proto-romance’, characterising G as a transitional piece; Magdalino, “Digenes Akrites and Byzantine

Mary, a story in Josephos is reflected by the tragic cannibal Maria, and that the cat and mice play out *Iliad* and *Persai*, Aesopic fable and the stylistically (but not chronologically) Homeric *War of Frogs and Mice*. Education and entertainment coexist in story-worlds of monastic jokes, recipes, the engagement of the emotions and palace gossip to convey eternal truths about redemption, and more contemporary concerns of judicial compassion, Athonite superiority and monastic reform. Literary and subliterate also coexist in the inelegant frame story of the *Partial Account* and the high-style epistolary formulas, and in the tragic interpolations into the legal frame of the Cannibal poem. Fact and fiction emerge explicitly in the Cannibal poem, and the Athonite narrative, but the saint of the *Life* is nowhere else attested and his cult sank without trace in Thrace – if it ever really started. Secular and sacred clash above all in the *Paschon*, yet those contrasting worlds are apparent also in the Cannibal, the *Partial Account* and the *Life* with their stories of court life.

Each of these texts is a unicum, as Andronikos *protekdikos* argues (lines 1–2)⁵⁶ for his story, the Cannibal, and is unrepeatable. But each text has forebears. The combination of *Life* and ascetic anthology had been tried once before in the late antique *Life of Synkletike*,⁵⁷ and the *Katomyomachia* reflects the fragmentary papyrus *War of Weasels and Mice* (Schibli) and complements the Homeric *War of Frogs and Mice*. The *Christos Paschon* is clearly unique as a Byzantine tragedy though it is bookended by a second-century CE Jewish tragedy and a mysterious early fourteenth-century Cypriot Passion cycle in scenario form (Lanfranchi, “The Exagoge;” Puchner, *Crusader Kingdom*). There are other twelfth-century dialogues, other uses of a chorus, other Virgin’s laments, other centos.⁵⁸ But the combination is entirely unique. There are included letters and included documents in narrative works⁵⁹ and a great deal of Byzantine history-writing involves the combination of vivid episodes (Scott, “Byzantine Stories”) – but not in the specific mixture of the *Partial Account*.

The hybrids are not a closed group, simply the most extreme version of a common phenomenon, even within the well-known works of this fourth group: *Digenes Akrites* is a combination of frontier epic and romance;⁶⁰ Markéta Kulhánková has recently characterised the *Ptochoprodromika* as a fusion of encomium, supplication, satire and parody (Kulhánková, “Game of Discourses;” Mar-

Literature” 3 sees “thematic affinities with twelfth-century romances” and the “common ground of epic”; and resolves the preface’s listing of “the Byzantine epic,” “the epic of Modern Greece,” an “epic-romance” and

“romance” again with a transitional model. Goldwyn and Nilsson’s *Reading the Late Byzantine Romance* 191–96 “makes an implicit case for the inclusion of Digenes Akritis among the Palaiologan romances” 11, and

reveals its Homeric motifs and techniques while remaining skeptical about hybridity. Kulhánková “Narrative Coherence,” esp. 198, explicitly chooses to look to heroic poems in other literatures rather than to the twelfth-century Byzantine novels.

61. Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 46–54.

ciniak has characterised the *Timarion* as a blend of Höllenfahrt and satire (Marciniak, “Heaven for Climate, Hell for Company”). We could go on: the *Hodoiporikon* is a mixture of travel account and encomium of Constantinople (Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 46–54).⁶¹ They are all very different from each other, pairing narrative with an interactive genre/form or playing with tragedy and lament with different architexts. What they all have in common is their hybridity. What they share with the narratives and the long poems is their level of inventiveness, their heightened experiment.

Analysis and problems

So we have isolated, quite crudely, four groups of Komnenian text, to show the relationship between occasion and patronage: the rhetoric and ceremony which depends on both, the educational and entertaining works which are explicitly commissioned but have no obvious occasion, the religious and educational writings which ‘come with the job’ (some with occasion, some not), and the fourth group, apparently independent of occasion or patron. The crudeness of the isolation is immediately apparent: there is no emic justification – to a Byzantine all would be *logoi*, prose or verse, rhetoric or ‘literature’. And it is frequently difficult to assign texts to one group rather than another. We have seen that in terms of occasion it is absurd to place one group of 6 January speeches in the ‘commissioned occasional’ group and another in the ‘comes with the job’ group. One of the (usually occasion-free) hybrids claims to have a real-life occasion though we may suspect it is a *theatron* piece.⁶² One of the non-occasional commissioned pieces (with a narrative of commission) has survived in an elaborate illustrated copy⁶³ surrounded by paratexts which scream performance in a ceremony of presentation. One of the revived novels,⁶⁴ normally placed in the fourth group, moves to the second, non-occasional commissioned, simply because the patron can be deduced. If we can include metrical prologues to homilies in the ‘comes with the job’ group, on the basis of Magdalino’s confraternity theory, the performance of the poem by its author surely represents an occasion in Said’s sense of the poem as an event.

More serious issues arise when we interrogate further the nature of occasion or patronage. Nilsson’s inclusive definition was not totally sweeping: “all preserved texts [...] were *potentially* occasional” (Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 6). Though performance does not

62. The Cannibal poem, see above 26 and n. 52.

63. Vat. Gr. 666 of Euthymios Zigabenos’s *Panoplia dogmatike*.

64. Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*: see discussion by Jeffreys, “A Date for *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*?” Agapitos, “Poets and Painters.”

65. Cf. Bernard 291: “patronage tends to conceal itself.”

66. See for example the efforts of John Tzetzes and Manganeios Prodromos to obtain institutional support.

67. For these works, both funerary, see Lampsidis, “Die Monodie von Leon Megistos.”

68. See Zagklas, “Experimenting” and “Metrical Polyeideia” and for specific pairings of ‘historische Gedichte’ with ptochoprodromic, Agapitos, “Schedourgia’.

69. As well as the Leo *ho tou Megistou* story see Demetrios Tornikes challenging Niketas Choniates to argue that winter is better than summer, see van Dieten, *Erläuterungen zu den Reden und Briefen* 138–39.

70. Gédéon 70–72.

make occasion it can, and we need to look for these possibilities. And Zagklas talks about “*well camouflaged occasions*” (Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos* 17), to which could also be added ‘well camouflaged patronage’⁶⁵ in which we must deduce from wordplay or allusion the identity of patron or occasion. The camouflage is particularly but not exclusively to be sought in groups 3 and 4. Group 3 is apparently author-generated but represents in fact a kind of institutional patronage, of a kind that was hugely sought after by twelfth-century literati.⁶⁶ *Adelphata* (corrodiēs), teaching jobs, positions as rhetor or bishop ensured survival and required literary output which was not dependent on piece-work or maintaining a sufficient number of pupils. It might include perhaps the works Leo *ho tou Megistou* wrote as *grammatikos* to George Palaiologos after auditioning for the job by improvising verses on a statue of a Muse (Lampsidis, “Die Entblösung der Muse Kalliope”). And the works of his we have⁶⁷ are suggestive: how many of the rhetorical works we have placed in the first group were not one-off commissions but ‘comes with the job’ expectations? We are no further forward, it seems to me, in deciding who was expected to speak whose funeral oration.

Finally we need to look more closely at the fourth group (the well-known ‘literary’ pieces, the autographic long poems, the hybrids). Why did literati write these pieces? There seem to me to be two answers to that question. One is that these texts are the means of achieving a commission. The *theatron* was the place for display pieces that could attract a patron or pupils. Our texts could be *theatron* pieces with their exuberant *deixis*: the hybrids scream ‘I can write lament, satire, parody, tragedy, epic, letters, and I can tell stories; I’m equally good at diegesis and mimesis, and I can combine them in any way you like!’ It is also true that the highly original diptychs and triptychs and polymetric cycles⁶⁸ also shout “I can say it in prose, *politikos stichos*, 12-syllables, hexameters, anacreontics, schedography, anything else you want.” Their setting is clearly different (court/oikos rather than *theatron*) and they belong largely to the occasional commissioned group 1. The hybrid pieces are unlikely to be patron-generated (‘how about next time combining a riddle with a saint’s life?’) though it is not a million miles away from the improvisation challenges of the period,⁶⁹ but could well be written with potential patrons in mind. Even the *Life of Cyril* could have been read in part in a *theatron*, maybe of the author Nicholas Kataskepenos’s correspondent⁷⁰ Eirene Doukaina. And it might explain why he came to the notice of her grandson Manuel I when he was collecting

71. On the foundation of Kataskepe see van Dieten, *Chronike diegesis* 206–20; Tafel 244.

72. On the speeches of Manuel see Gautier, “Le dossier d’un haut fonctionnaire;” Mullett, “Imperial vocabulary of Alexios I Komnenos” 370–71.

73. On the relation between the texts see Messis, “Deux versions de la meme ‘verité’” esp. 315 and n. 38 on the manuscripts.

74. Conca, 306–496, tr. Jeffreys 351–458. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2908 (ca. 1500) has a brief prologue: “the work of kyr Niketas Eugenianos in imitation of the late wise Prodrornos;” see Jeffreys 343.

75. Letters, whether prose, see Riehle, *Companion*, or in the small corpus of verse letters, see Kubina and Riehle, *Epistolary Poetry*, tend to be regarded as ‘occasional’, largely on grounds of ephemerality, and they were certainly performed in *theatra*, yet in our terms they are seldom associated with an occasion.

super-monks for his foundation of Kataskepe; he may have been looking for someone to express the reform ethos of his monastery.⁷¹

Clearly this is not the only way patrons could be sought: good performances in the bread-and-butter commissioned works might lead to more, and some authors clearly wrote some longer prose pieces on spec; the career of Manuel Straboromanos is a case in point.⁷² And flashy performance in *theatron* might have other goals: the envy and admiration of one’s peers for example. Or the maintenance of a literary reputation under threat, by exile from Constantinople for example. The extravagant revivals and innovations of this group of works could do both at once for the writer: move him up the pecking order of peers and attract him a patron. We need perhaps to look more at matching kind of work with stage of career, as Nilsson has done for Constantine Manasses (*Writer and Occasion* 185–89) and Zagklas for Theodore Prodromos (*Theodoros Prodromos* 31–70). For both are posited:

- 1) early large narrative and/or ekphrastic works before
- 2) the major commissions, from 1122–43 ceremonial poetry for John II in the case of Prodromos and from the late 1130s to the end of the 1150s commissions for Eirene the Sebastokratorissa in the case of Manasses, followed by
- 3) 1143–death for Theodore; c.1160–70s for Constantine, a readjustment to more self-generated works or writings for a variety of patrons.

The large *theatron* pieces make the case for occasional commissions and when they end the authors return to writing longer works or educational pieces, with the odd work on demand for various patrons.

But there is another possibility which we have lost sight of with our concentration on commission and occasion. Are we so cynical that we are unable to envisage that authors might write for themselves or their friends? It seems that some texts were written in response to other texts, Prodromos’s *Life of Meletios*, for example,⁷³ or Niketas Eugeneianos’s novel,⁷⁴ for peers rather than for patrons. And the autographic ‘long poems’, indeed the self-portraiture of letters,⁷⁵ might be just that: author-generated with identity, reputation and legacy at stake, rather than an eye on the next job. And it is this possibility that makes me uneasy about writing the pretext into our view of all twelfth-century literary production or accepting *in toto* Browning’s dictum quoted above. There is no doubt that we are dealing with a patronage society, that patrons may be lurking in shadows where

76. This is the argument of Mullett, “Whose Muses?”

77. Krause, *Divine Inspiration* esp. 7–12, 22–30 on concepts of origination. A secular equivalent to this study would be a daunting endeavour.

we might least suspect them, and that muses are mostly patronesses in twelfth-century literature,⁷⁶ but in our diagrammatic view of the genesis of Byzantine literature in this period we need to make space for inspiration⁷⁷ as well as patronage (fig. 3 rather than fig. 2). A pretext may not be necessarily extra-literary, and performance is a broader category than occasion.

Fig. 2 Nilsson’s working model of occasionality

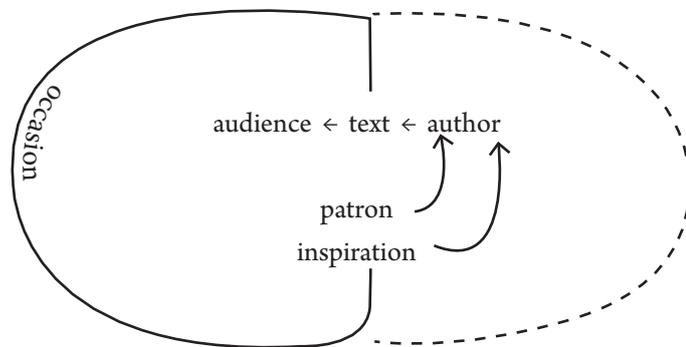
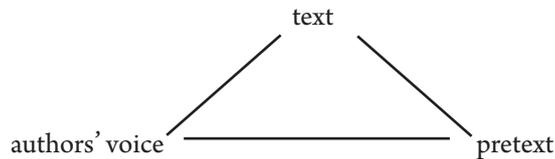


Fig. 3 Another possible model

Concluding thoughts

So we may be in a position to draw together some preliminary thoughts. We have seen the importance of occasion in Byzantine literature, in the vast majority of writings, both secular and theological. “Byzantine literature is an occasion-defined literature,” says Zagklas (*Theodoros Prodromos* 23). Ceremonial and liturgical cycles, the human life-cycle, the marking of career points all create occasion, which is fulfilled in deme hymns, encomia, sermons, saints’ lives, laments, marriage songs, birthday pieces, dedication epigrams and many more. Occasion moreover is crucial to genre, to the understanding between author and audience that communicates ideas.⁷⁸

When we ask how much twelfth-century literature is self-generated, how much other-generated, we have collected three whole groups of material which have clear evidence of other-generation: speeches, celebratory poems, educational materials, narratives, and

78. On the developing view of genre as a means of communication see Nilsson, “Greco-Roman love letters and modern genre theory.”

are clear that we need to be constantly on the alert for the ‘well-camouflaged patron’ as well as for the ‘well-camouflaged occasion.’ But we have also collected a body of material – revivals, experiments, hybrids, autographies – which does not immediately fit into a model of dominant patronage and ubiquitous occasionality.

If we ask where innovation comes from in the twelfth century the answer is not always or entirely ‘the occasional muse.’ Though small-scale innovation may be found in the bread-and-butter speeches and in ‘comes-with-the-job’ exercises, larger-scale innovation resulted from polymetric verses for life-cycle occasions, and though patronal wishes may have encouraged the haute vulgarisation of classical works to be found in the non-occasional commissioned works, most of the largest-scale innovation is to be found in the fourth, highly experimental, group: in language with the learned adoption of a vernacular, in metre with a similar learned adoption of a non-metrical metre as well as revivals of classical metres, in genre with revival of satire, the novel, drama. Hybridity does not in this literary society produce new genres (with the exception of the epistolary novel which is forever being revived)⁷⁹; it does produce lively hybrid works which serve simultaneously as claim to literary reputation, inspiration to other authors and a pitch for material support. It is also an aesthetic choice, a poetics of hybridity.⁸⁰

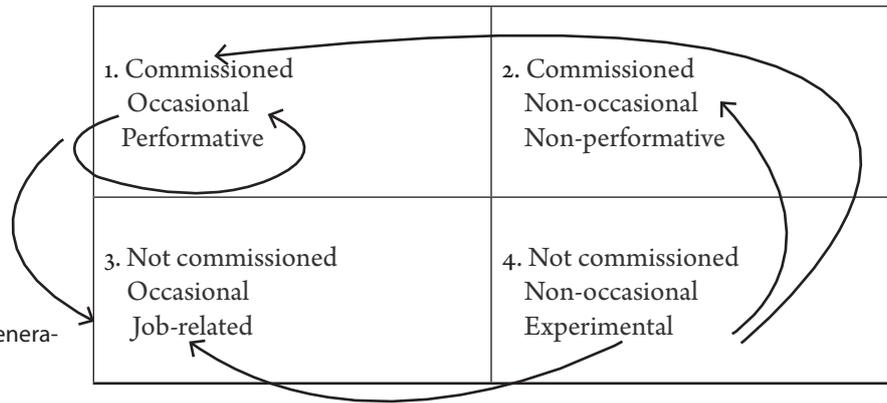
But if we ask how occasional literature was valued in the period, we must admit immediately that it was the greatest desideratum, the grand prize. To be commissioned to write a speech or a cycle of poems for a major state occasion paid for itself (and was more visible so less easy to welch on, unlike the non-occasional commissioned works), provided ceremonial visibility for the author and encouraged future commissions in turn. Other occasional rhetoric in palace or aristocratic *oikos* could maintain and develop patronage relationships already in place as well as floating potential alternatives; well delivered ‘on-the-job’ occasional pieces in church, monastery or school could encourage promotion, add supporting resources, or fan metropolitan fame.⁸¹ The task of revealing new talent, bolstering fading reputations, recruiting new patrons, and contesting with peers fell to less occasional works, less obviously patron-generated, but still imbued with the thematics of a patronage society: heroic deeds, thwarted love, impoverished genius, in which passive literati, patrons and peers could appreciate the rhetorical skills and innovative abilities of learned and competing authors in an agonistic system of literary genesis (fig. 4). *Gelegenheit macht Dichter*, patronage provides for

79. Ovid’s *Heroides*, the correspondence of Abelard and Heloise, Guilleragues’s *Lettres portugaises* (1669), Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and Sally Rooney’s *Beautiful World, Where Are You* (2021) are other such points of reinvention; Janet Altman’s *Epistolarity* is still inspirational.

80. Henry and Eunice Maguire do not quite argue this in *Other Icons*, but I attempted to pursue it in my Runciman lecture (February 2022) “Hybrid by nature.”

81. Fame in the sense of the superstar reader Kroustoulas described by Michael Psellos, *Encomium for the monk Ioannes Kroustoulas* (Littlewood, 137–51, tr. Papaioannou *Michael Psellos on Literature and Art* 224–44) or of the priest Michael’s knowledge of the latest Prodromos verses in Michael Italikos, ep. 1 (Gautier, *Michel Italikos* 64). It should be noted that in one case the fame is of the performer, in the other of the author, but in neither case do we see performance by the author.

Fig. 4 The four groups and text generation



rhetoꝛs, but neither is quite enough to explain the explosion both of writing and of literary innovation in the Byzantine twelfth century.

Table 1 Examples in Group 1
Commissioned occasional performative texts

PUBLIC	Annual occasion	Special occasion	Life-cycle occasion	Literature
Empire	6 January	1133 triumph 1138 Isaac rapprochement		Magdalino, <i>Empire</i> , 413–70; Magdalino, “Triumph;” Lovato.
Church	Lazaros Saturday Pantokrator	1090–91 John the Oxite 1112 Grossolano debates 1114 Philippopolis debates		Loukaki, “Samedi;” Kotzabassi; Sághy and Ousterhout; Gautier, “Diatribes;” Ryder; Grumel; Darrouzès, “Les conferences;” Anna, <i>Al.</i> , 14.8.1–14.9.5; for context: Cameron, 91–99.
Individual		Manasses siskin hunt	Birth Marriage Death	Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 6–12; Nilsson and Messis forthcoming; e.g. Hörandner, <i>Historische Gedichte</i> , no XLIV; Lauxtermann, <i>Byzantine Poetry</i> , vol. 2, 101–117M; Agapitos, “Ancient Models.”
PRIVATE				

Table 2 Examples of acts of patronage mentioned above in Group 2
Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts

Patron	Author	Text	Reference	Evidence
Emperor Alexios I Komnenos	Euthymios Zigabenos Symeon Seth	<i>Dogmatic Panophy</i> <i>Stephanites and Ichnilates</i>	PG 130: 9–360 Sjöberg	Narrative: Anna, <i>Al.</i> , 15.9.1; Title: author translated “at his command”
Emperor Manuel I Komnenos	John Kamateros Michael Glykas	<i>Introduction to Astronomy</i> <i>On Proverbs</i>	Long: 15 syll, Weigl; Short: 12 syll, Miller, 53–111; see Magdalino, <i>Astrologues</i> , 111–13 Sathas, vol. 5, 544–63	Long: title; short: in lines 2–4, naming emperor and poet Lines 337–38 address an emperor

Nikephoros Bryennios, Caesar	Theodore Prodromos	<i>Rhodanthe and Dosikles</i>	Marcovich, tr. Jeffreys, 19–156, see Nilsson, <i>Raconter</i> , 74–78	Epigram, see Agapitos, “Poets and Painters”
Maria, ex-basilissa	Theophylact of Ochrid Eustratios of Nicaea	<i>Commentary on Mark and Luke</i> <i>On Thunder and Light- ning</i>	In Vind.gr. 29 Caudano,	Epigram, De Rubeis, PG 123: 35 Dedication in BL Add. 34060, 416r: Eustratios of Nicaea to the despoine kyria Maria of Alania
Eirene Doukaina, Empress	Nicholas Kallikles Nikephoros Bryennios, Caesar	Poem 6 <i>Material for History</i>	Romano, <i>Nicola Callicle</i> 81 Gautier, <i>Nicéphore Bryennios</i> ; see Neville, <i>Heroes and Romans</i>	Title: despoina; line 6 Eirene of the Doukai Narrative: Anna, <i>AL</i> , 7.2.6; also in Prologue
Anna Komnene, Kaisarissa	Michael of Ephesus Eustratios of Nicaea	Commentary on <i>Nicomachaeon Ethics</i> 5, 9, 10 and other works of Aristotle Commentary on <i>Nicomachaeon Ethics</i> , 1, 6	Hayduck <i>EN</i> 5; Heylbut, <i>EN</i> 9–10; see Ierodiakonou, “Some Observations;” Heylbut, <i>EN</i> 1, 6; see Barber and Jenkins; Trizio; Browning, “Unpublished funeral oration”	George Tornikes, funeral oration on Anna Komnene; Darrouzès, <i>Georges et Dèmetrios Tornikès</i> 283 (all-night labours) Dedication in 6 to god-fearing empress who loves <i>logoi</i> , goodness and beauty

Sebastokratorissa Eirene	Constantine Manasses	Verse chronicle	Lampsidis, <i>Synopsis chronike</i> ; see Nilsson, “Literary Voice”	Addressed in lines 1–26 (15 syll) and also in a hexameter nine-line poem either at front as prologue or at end as book epigram
	Constantine Manasses	Astrological poem	Miller, 8–39; see Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 117–24	Title: to Sebastokratorissa Eirene; lines 1–15 address her as basilissa Cloths and covers ‘produced by Sebastokratorissa’
	Manganeios Prodromos	Poems 89–96 in Magdalino’s list, <i>Empire</i> , 494–500	Jeffreys and Jeffreys, <i>Manganeios Prodromos</i>	In almost all mss dedicated to a Sebastokratorissa, in most to Eirene; corroborated by art-historical arguments about the illuminated copy (Taphou 52)
	Theodore Prodromos	Grammar	Goettling; see Zagklas, “Byzantine Grammar Treatise;” Spatharakis	
	James of Kokkinobaphos	Centonic letters	ed. Jeffreys and Jeffreys, <i>Jacobi monachi epistulae</i> ; see Jeffreys, “As patron” 180	Addressed to her as spiritual daughter
	James of Kokkinobaphos	6 Homilies on Theotokos	PG 127:544–700; see Jeffreys, “Twelfth-Century Context”	Similarity with letters; spiritual relationship; art historical argument
	John Tzetzes	<i>Theogony</i>	Matranga 577–98	Prologue addressed to a Sebastokratorissa
John Tzetzes	<i>Allegories of Odyssey</i>	Goldwyn and Kokkini, <i>Allegories of the Odyssey</i>	Prolegomena A lines 15–17: “I speak on request of my queen” Proposed by editors (as against Bertha or Maria of Antioch)	
Bertha-Eirene, empress	John Tzetzes	<i>Allegories of Iliad</i> , books 1–15	Goldwyn and Kokkini, <i>Allegories of the Iliad</i> ;	Dedicated to “most powerful and Homeric empress” in title, addressed lines 1–50 of Prolegomena

Constantine Kotertzes	John Tzetzes	<i>Allegories of Iliad</i> , books 16–24	Goldwyn and Kokkini, <i>Allegories of the Iliad</i> ; see Rhoby	16.1–6: money is mentioned
George Palaiologos	Constantine Manasses	<i>Cyclops</i>	Sternbach; see Nilsson, “Constantine Manasses, Odysseus and the Cyclops”	Word-play: <i>palaios logos</i> ; see Magdalino, “In search” 162
Marc.gr.524 patrons, 80% of syllogai B&C	Anon	Epigrams	Lampros; Spingou, <i>Words and Artworks</i> , 65–89; <i>Poetry for the Komnenoi</i>	In titles, some in text
Seal patrons	Anon	Metrical inscriptions	Wassiliou-Seibt; see McGeer, “Discordant Voices”	Named in text

Table 3 Examples of job-related texts in Group 3
Not commissioned occasional (or not) performative (or not)

Milieu	Genre	Author	Text	Reference
Patriarchate See Darrouzès, <i>Offikia</i>	Inaugural lecture	George Tornikes	Or. 1 (Psalter), 2 (Gospel), 3 (stand-in for <i>oikoumenikos</i> <i>didaskalos</i>)	ed. Darrouzès, <i>Tornikès</i> , 74–106; Mullett, “Inaugural”
Monastery See Mullett, “Monastic culture”	Katecheseis	Paul of Evergetis	<i>Katechetikon</i>	Crostini, <i>Katechetikon of</i> <i>Evergetis</i> ; see Crostini, “Katechetikon of Paul”
	Answers to Questions	Michael Glykas	<i>Theological Chapters</i>	Eustratiades; see Magdalino, <i>Empire</i> , 370–82
	Spiritual anthology	Nikon of Black Mountain	<i>Pandects</i>	uned., see Richard; Alexakis;
		John the Oxite	<i>On Eucharist, Eclogae</i> <i>asceticae</i>	
	Typikon	Isaac Komnenos <i>porphyrogenetos</i>	<i>KosmosoteiraTyp</i>	Petit, tr. Ševčenko
	Saint’s life	Theodosios Goudelis	<i>Life of Leontios</i>	Tsougarakis
Diocese see Angold, <i>Church</i> <i>and Society</i> , 137–262	Hagiography	Theophylact of Ochrid	<i>Martyrion of 15 Martyrs</i> <i>of Tiberioupolis</i>	Kiapidou
	Sermon	Eustathios of Thessalonike		or. 1, 9 Feb 1180 on prepara- tion for Lent, Tafel, 1–7
City church (by confraternities) see Magdalino, “Elite Religious”	Verse prologues to homilies	Manganeios Prodromos	Poems 67–88 in Magdalino’s list, <i>Empire</i> , 498	Jeffreys and Jeffreys, <i>Manganeios Prodromos</i> ; see Antonopoulou

School See Nesseris, <i>Paideia</i>	Commentary	John Tzetzes	<i>Scholia on Aristophanes</i>	Koster et al.; see Pizzone, “Cultural Appropriation;”
	Didactic Poem	Constantine Manasses	<i>Origins of Oppian</i>	Colonna; see Hörandner, “Teaching with Verse,” 465; Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 124–30
	Schedos	Theodore Prodromos or Constantine Manasses	<i>Sketches of the Mouse</i>	Papathomopoulos; tr. and see Marciniak, “A pious mouse;” Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 134–38.
	Dialogue	Anon	<i>Timarion</i>	Romano, <i>Satira bizantina</i> 107–75 and see Marciniak, “Heaven for Climate” with bibliography on readings by Alexiou, Macrides, Kaldellis, Krallis, MacDougall and Nilsson

Table 4 Examples of texts mentioned in Group 4
Not commissioned non-occasional (mostly) non-performative

Genre	Author	Text	Reference
‘WELL KNOWN’			
Novels See Nilsson, <i>Raconter Byzance</i> ; Beaton	Eumathios Makrembolites	<i>Hysmine and Hysminias</i>	Conca, 499–687, tr. Jeffreys, <i>Four Byzantine Novels</i> 177–283; see Nilsson, <i>Erotic pathos</i> ;
	Niketas Eugeneianos	<i>Drosilla and Charikles</i>	Conca, 305–497, tr. Jeffreys, <i>Four Byzantine Novels</i> 351–458; see Nilsson, <i>Raconter</i> , 78–86;
	Constantine Manasses	<i>Aristandros and Kallithea</i>	Conca, 689–777, tr. Jeffreys, <i>Four Byzantine Novels</i> 284–337; see Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 153–59

<p>Epic/Romance Beaton and Ricks, <i>Byzantine Heroic Poetry</i>; Goldwyn and Nilsson, <i>Late Byzantine Romance</i></p>	Anon	<i>Digenes Akrites G</i>	Jeffreys, <i>Digenis Akritis</i> ; see Kulhánková, “Narrative Coherence”
<p>‘Begging poems’ See Kulhánková “Game of Discourses” in response to Kubina, “Begging Poet?” Agapitos, “New Genres.”</p>	Ptochoprodromos	I–IV, Majuri	Eideneier; Majuri; ed.tr. Alexiou in progress; see Kulhánková, “Game of Discourses”
<p>History See Neville, <i>Byzantine Historical Writing</i>; Macrides, <i>History as Literature</i>; Odorico et al., <i>L’écriture de la mémoire</i></p>	<p>Anna Komnene</p> <p>Niketas Choniates</p>	<p><i>Alexiad</i></p> <p><i>Chronike diegesis</i></p>	<p>Reinsch, tr. Sewter; see Gouma-Peterson, <i>Anna Komnene</i>; Buckley, <i>Alexiad</i>; Neville, <i>Anna Komnene</i>; Vilimonović, <i>Structure and Features</i></p> <p>van Dieten, tr. Magoulias; see Efthymiadis and Simpson. <i>A Historian and a Writer</i>; Simpson, <i>A Historiographical Study</i>; Urbainczyk, <i>Writing about Byzantium</i></p>
<p>Hagiography See Magdalino, “Byzantine Holy Man;” Paschalidis, “Hagiography of Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries”</p>	Theodore Prodromos	<i>Life of Meletios</i>	Polemis; tr. Armstrong; see Messis, “Deux versions”
<p>Rhetoric On progymnasmata see Chiron and Sans, <i>Les Progymnasmata en pratique</i></p> <p>On ekphrasis, Taxidis, <i>The Ekphraseis</i> with very useful index, 239–41</p>	<p>Nikephoros Basilakes</p> <p>Constantine Manasses</p> <p>Nicholas Mesarites</p>	<p><i>Progymnasmata</i></p> <p><i>Ekphrasis of Earth</i></p> <p><i>Holy Apostles</i></p>	<p>ed.tr. Beneker and Gibson; see Loukaki, “Training Students”</p> <p>Lampsidis; see Nilsson, “Narrating images,” 124–26</p> <p>Downey; see Daskas, “New critical perspectives”</p>

'LONG' POEMS	Nicholas of Kerkyra	<i>Resignation poem</i>	Strano; see Mullett, "Poetics of <i>paraitesis</i> "
	Nicholas Mouzalon	<i>Resignation poem</i>	Strano; see Mullett, "Poetics of <i>paraitesis</i> ;" Chryssogelos, "Author and politics"
	'Alexios I Komnenos'	<i>The Muses</i>	Maas; see Mullett, "Imperial Renewal," "Whose Muses?"
	Constantine Stilbes	<i>Fires of 1197</i>	Diethard and Hörandner; tr. Layman
	Anon	<i>Toothache poem</i>	Giulia Maria Paoletti in progress
	Michael Glykas	<i>From Prison</i>	Krumbacher; see Bourbouhakis, "Political Personae"
	Anonymous Malta	<i>Exile poem</i>	ed. Vassis and Polemis; see Lauxtermann, "Tomi, Mljet, Malta"
	Constantine Manasses	<i>Itinerary</i>	Chryssogelos, <i>Odoiporikon</i> ; tr. Aerts; see Nilsson, <i>Raconter Byzance</i> , 202–08; <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 46–54
HYBRIDS			
Vita+florilegium	Nicholas Kataskepenos	<i>Life of Cyril Phileotes</i>	Sargologos; see Mullett, "Literary Biography"
Tragedy+lament	'Gregory of Nazianzos'	<i>Christos Paschon</i>	Tuilier; see Puchner, "Theaterwissenschaftliche;" Mullett, "Contexts"
Mock-epic+tragedy	Theodore Prodromos	<i>War of Cats and Mice</i>	Hunger; see Marciniak and Warcaba, "Mock-epic"
Semeioma+tragedy+lament	Andronikos <i>protekdikos</i>	<i>Cannibal Poem</i>	Macrides, <i>Cannibal Poem</i>
Epistolary narrative	Multiple nested	<i>Partial Account</i>	Meyer

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The Occasionality of Byzantine Didacticism: a Case Study from the Twelfth Century (Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 222 inf. f. 218r)*

Abstract

The paper analyses, edits and translates an unknown didactic poem on prosodic quantity attributed to John Tzetzes. The poem contains an autobiographical and personal component that has a lyrical dimension, challenging the way in which both didactic poetry and Byzantine poetry is traditionally understood. Moreover, manuscripts such as the one preserving the poem under investigation may be seen as sites for both the frozen moment of the didactic occasion and a continuation of the debate in the form of authorial comments on and to the scribe. Overall, the paper argues that didactic poetry in Byzantium was marked by improvisation and personal experience: in other words, a kind of occasionality.

Keywords

John Tzetzes, didactic poetry, Byzantine literature, improvisation, prosody.

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1. These aspects are developed in Volk 25–68; Sider; *Hörandner*, “The Byzantine Didactic poem”; “Teaching with Verse”; Bernard 230–31; Van den Berg 285–88.

2. His theoretical framework has inspired *Hörandner*, “The Byzantine Didactic Poem” 56–57; “Teaching with Verse” 460; Bernard 242, n. 98.

Didactic poetry, both classical and Byzantine, has been recently examined with renewed interest. Discussions have focused on the very definition of the genre, on its literariness as well as on contexts of performance.¹ The theorization offered by K. Volk, in particular, has been favorably received among Byzantinists.² According to Volk, didactic poetry is defined by (1) explicit didactic intent, (2) a teacher-student constellation, (3) poetic self-consciousness, and (4) poetic simultaneity. Although at first sight convenient, such a framework might be problematic. Van den Berg, for instance, has highlighted that it does not capture the actual – not only fictional – immediacy of the communicative situation characterizing much of Byzantine di-

dactic poetry (Van den Berg 288, n. 24). At the other end of the chronological spectrum, Sider has pointed out that such a grid is too rigid and does not account for changes across time, treating “didactic poetry” as a monolith (Sider 20–21). Sider’s reflections are particularly valuable and can be extended beyond the remits of strictly classical didactic poetry. Volk too stresses that the notion of genre is perhaps too narrow when it comes to didactic poetry, thus preferring the notion of mode. Sider goes one step further, by calling attention to the fact that the very notion of ‘didactic poetry’ is a modern one, steeped in eighteenth-century aesthetics, as the tag features for the first time in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1756 (Sider 18). It is not coincidence then that Sider also breaks – and rightly so in my opinion – the dichotomy reinforced in the romantic era, but ultimately based on Aristotle, between didacticism and elegy.³ Sider does so by including archaic and classical production of ethical content in elegiac verse into the didactic mode. I think, however, that the dichotomy can be broken also by looking at how immediate, personal, and not rarely occasional traits – conventionally ascribed to lyrical poetry – are expressed through didactic modes.

The actual simultaneity of Byzantine didactic poetry calls for this different perspective, as the classroom’s communicative situation is relational by definition and teacherly performance often implies both improvisation and references to personal experiences. A distinctive characteristic of Byzantine didacticism, I would say, is to create its own occasionality. Teachers turn their own subjectivity or circumstances into a learning tool. A case in point is offered by a prolific eleventh-century poet and teacher, Niketas of Herakleia.⁴ Author of several poems on grammar in a variety of meters (political verse, dodecasyllable, but also hymnographic meters),⁵ he wrote a 1087-political verse poem on various aspects of language.⁶ This poem is seemingly interrupted by a long rant on the laziness of his students. This rant is admittedly verbose (Hörandner, “The Byzantine Didactic Poem” 65), but I would argue that it is such by design. By venting out about the unpleasantness of student behavior in class, Niketas creates the occasion to instruct his pupils about the different shades of meaning taken by one and the same verb associated to different prepositions. The following passage provides a telling example, one that I would ask the reader to keep in mind, because it presents us with some elements that we will find again in the text constituting the core of this contribution (*On Grammar* 427–36, 363 Boissonade):

3. The connection is traced in Payne.

4. See Hörandner, “The Byzantine Didactic Poem” 64–66 and Roosen, for an overview of Niketas’ work.

5. In particular *On Grammar*, edited in Boissonade 341–93. Nina Vanhouette is currently preparing the edition of a corpus of poems by Niketas.

6. Bernard 25; 106–08.

Καταπαλαίει σοῦ τὸν νοῦν ἢ φαύλη ῥαθυμία,
καὶ συμπαλαίειν οὐ τολμᾶς ἀρίστοις σχεδογράφοις,
ὄθεν ἀργός καθήμενος ταῖς ἄταις προσπαλαίεις.

Ἵπερφωνῶ τὸν Στέντορα πρὸς λόγους φωνῶ δέ σε,
ὄπερ σημαίνει τὸ καλῶ, περιφωνῶ τοὺς ὄχλους
καταφωνῶ τὸν αὐλητὴν, τὸν Ἰσμηνίαν λέγω
καταφωνῶ τὸν τόπον δὲ καὶ τὸ...
Σὺ δ'ὡς ἐχθρὸς οὐ συμφωνεῖς ταῖς παραινέσεσί μου.
Φωνῶ τε καὶ ἐπιφωνῶ, σημαῖνον τὸ βοῶ σοι,
πρὸς δοτικὴν μοι σύνταττε, καὶ τύχης οὐπὲρ θέλεις.

The sloppiness of laziness overcomes your mind,
and you do not dare to come up against the best schedographers,
hence sitting idle you come to fight your deceptions.

I shout louder than Stentor, but I shout out to you “to the
speeches!”
which means I call you out. I shout after the multitudes,
I shout like the aulos player, I mean Isminias,
And my shouting fills the place and the...
But you, hostile, you do not obey to my exhortations.
I shout and shout again, meaning that I yell at you,
come on, construe it with the dative and get to your point!

7. On the importance of the notion in middle Byzantine rhetorical theory see Valiavitcharska, “Rhetorical Figures”; Pizzone, “Emotions and λόγος ἐνδιάθετος.”

8. See Pizzone, “Tzetzes and the Prokatastasis,” for Tzetzes’ commentary within late twelfth-century Constantinopolitan culture.

9. The whole of Tzetzes’ commentary on the corpus is still unedited. The section on *De ideis* is preserved in a complete form only in two manuscripts, the Leiden University Library, Vossianus Graecus Q1 and the Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek (SLUB), 007. Elisabetta Barili has provided the first critical edition of the text in her PhD dissertation (soon to be published in the Brill series Sources in Early Poetics).

These lines are a fully-fledged satire offering a glimpse – if exaggerated – into a loud Constantinopolitan classroom. Disobedient pupils offer the occasion for a semantic tour de force displaying learnedness, immediacy, humor and an engaging teaching technique. Improvisation, after all, is a tool of the trade for any teacher. As such it can be systematized, theorized and therefore taught. In the twelfth-century commentary on the so-called *corpus Hermogenianum* authored by John Tzetzes – one of the leading and most controversial figures of his time – this tendency can be seen clearly. The *corpus* was the handbook of choice for rhetorical training in Byzantium and the stepping stone to further develop communicative and narrative strategies. When enlarging on the ‘spontaneous speech’ or ἐνδιάθετος λόγος⁷ in his commentary on Hermogenes’ *De ideis* II 7. 9. 1, p. 172 Patillon,⁸ John Tzetzes offers precious insides on the performance and styling of improvisation (*Commentary on Hermogenes’ De ideis*, 2675–80, pp. 120–21 Barili):⁹

Σχεδόν τις, μία μέθοδος ἐνδιαθέτου λόγου·
 τὸ μὴ προλέγειν μηδαμοῦ ὅτι τυχὸν ὁμόσει
 ἤγ'οὔν, ὅτι θαυμάσειεν ἢ εὐξεται ἢ ἄλλο,
 ἀλλ' αἰφνιδίως λέγειν τε κ' ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοσχεδίου
 τὸ δὲ σχεδὸν δὲ ἄρρητοι καὶ τὸ, σχεδὸν δὲ μία,
 πάνυ τῶν ἀδιστακτῶν τε καὶ τρόπου διδασκάλου.

12 There is roughly speaking one single method proper of a spontaneous discourse:

to never say beforehand that he would take an oath per-chance,

or else be amazed or pray or whatever,

but to say straight and impromptu

“σχεδὸν δὲ ἄρρητοι” and “σχεδὸν δὲ μία”

totally belongs into the instinctive expressions and into the teaching mode.¹⁰

10. Critical text and translation based on Barili.

The last two lines paraphrase directly Hermogenes to show that the rhetor himself, while illustrating his own theory, made use of ἐνδιάθετος λόγος as a discursive strategy particularly suitable to teaching. The whole passage, in fact, is characterized by terms pointing to improvisation and occasionality (αἰφνιδίως, ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοσχεδίου). That the classroom, with its unpredictability – now and then – is described as a site of occasionality or improvisation does not come as a surprise. In the case of the Byzantine classroom, this also includes occasional poetry.¹¹ Tzetzes lengthy commentary on the best-selling rhetorical treatise of Hermogenes is after all a work of poetry, being composed in political verses.

11. See on this nexus Bernard 229–32; Hörandner, “Teaching with Verse”; Van Den Berg and below.

These examples show how didactic poetry fully complies with the norm of Byzantine poetry, which, as recently highlighted by Kristins Kubina, can ever hardly be defined as “non-occasional.” (Kubina 163–68). The space of the classroom, however, is associated to occasionality in a different way as compared to the other spaces explored in this monographic issue. While occasion still matters, the classroom is not directly – or perhaps less obviously – linked to patronage. And yet, as I will try to show, such space is largely characterized by comparable compositional practices. In my contribution I deal with a text that confirms once more the porous boundaries between different areas and settings of performance.¹² It also demonstrates how ‘public’ modes of performative composition affect creative practices in more private settings and how such modes are by no means relegated to the oral dimension, but shape also written textu-

12. For this concept in twelfth century, see Zagklas, “Theodoros Prodromos,” 53–70; for its use in the work of Konstantinos Manasses, see Nilsson 10 and 116.

al production. It thus shows how manuscripts can become the site where the above-mentioned vessels meet, so to say, and become visible, frozen on paper but still bearing traces of their original context of production and consumption. Finally, my case study will provide an example of how ‘experiential aspects,’ that is aspects related to biographical, lived circumstances can become part of and model performance in rather standardized situations.

The poem

I will focus on a poem of fifty-seven iambic lines preserved in the manuscript Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana C 222 inf., f. 218r. The manuscript’s title ascribes the lines to John Tzetzes, an intellectual and polymath living between *c.* 1100–*c.* 1180 – we will come back to those dates toward the end of my paper.¹³ The poem deals with the issue of the prosodic length of certain vowels, alpha, iota, ypsilon, the so-called *dichrona* (*i.e.* liable of being both long and short, as we shall see below), and was apparently prompted by a question addressed to Tzetzes during his teaching practice. The issue of *dichrona* tormented Tzetzes obsessively during his career and he comes back to it time and again, acknowledging that in his youth he also had had problems in respecting the rules of ancient prosody.¹⁴ In what follows I will provide an analysis of some compositional features pointing to occasionality by comparing the poem with similar texts preserved in another manuscript, Leiden, University Library, Vossianus Graecus Q1. For the sake of clarity, I will first provide a short description of these manuscripts. I will then delve into the issues of oral vs. written composition as well as of performance, to highlight how Byzantine didactic poets create their own occasionality. Finally, I will illustrate how metrical technicalities, turned into “authorial branding,” to borrow again Ingela Nilsson’s terminology, can provide a suitable way to scaffold an intellectual biography. Finally, I will provide the first critical edition of the poem,¹⁵ which will work as an appendix to this contribution.

13. On Tzetzes’ life and work, see Nesseris 515–40 and Prodi.

14. For Tzetzes’ metrical skills and the whole question of dichronic vowels see Lauxtermann, “Buffalos and Bastards.”

15. In the edition I normalize punctuation, so as to make the text more legible to today’s readers.

The manuscripts

In this section I will briefly introduce the two manuscripts at the core of my contribution. These manuscripts are particularly significant,

as they allow perhaps better than others to grasp the dynamics leading to the transmission of quintessentially performative and aural texts designed for the classroom. They are a perfect instantiation of that liminal space between the written and the oral described by Floris Bernard, in which Byzantine poetry often finds its place (Bernard 242–43).

The first one, Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana C 222 inf., thoroughly investigated by Carlo Maria Mazzucchi, is an important witness for ancient authors such as Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Hesiod, Pindar and others. At the beginning, the end and in between quires the manuscript was provided with blank folia, filled in at different stages with miscellaneous annotations by the main copyist, who, according to Mazzucchi, was also the owner of the manuscript (“Ambrosianus C 222 inf. I,” 270; “Ambrosianus C 222 inf. II,” 411–20). C 222 inf. is very rich in materials by Tzetzes, one of the ‘*maestri*’ whose teachings are repeatedly mentioned in the miscellaneous excerpts. His name is sometimes referred to in the present, while other times he is mentioned as “blessed” – that is deceased. Combining this detail with the paleography of the manuscript, Mazzucchi reaches the conclusion that Ambr. C 222 must have been compiled in the last quarter of the twelfth century or, at the latest, at the very beginning of the thirteenth based on autograph materials by Tzetzes.

The second manuscript, the Leiden University Library Vossianus Graecus Q₁, now divided into two volumes, is a paper codex including thirty quires, mostly bifolia transmitting Aphthonius and Hermogenes, complete with Tzetzes’ commentary. The quires, numbered in red ink by the main copyist at the end of each quire, start with ε, thus showing that the codex is acephalous. The main copyist’s handwriting bears clear analogies with informal scholarly hands that have been recently re-dated to the mid-late twelfth century, just like the professional copyist penning part of the Ambrosianus C 222 inf. The Vossianus is an important witness not only because it can be dated around the time of Tzetzes’ life. Besides the text penned by the professional main copyist, it preserves also a large number of inter-linear and marginal notes in the hand of Tzetzes himself (Pizzone, “Self-authorization”). At f. 41v and f. 115v he states that he finds himself in his seventieth year of life. As Tzetzes was probably born around 1110–13 (Pizzone, “Saturno contro”), the revision of the Vossianus probably took place in the 1180s, which again brings us close to the materials of the Ambr. C 222 inf.

Improvisation and occasion between orality and writing

I will now focus on the poem from the Ambrosianus C 222 inf. The manuscript provides a title for our poem in the top margin of f. 218r, which testifies to its ‘occasional’ nature. The title, written by the same hand, reads as follows: τοῦ μακαρίτου Τζέτζου ἀθωροὶ πρὸς τινα ἐρωτῶντα περὶ τοῦ ὄρνις (“Verses on the spot by the blessed Tzetzes to someone asking about ὄρνις”). This line is part of the evidence brought in by Mazzucchi to argue that Tzetzes’ death might have happened while the manuscript was being copied. The description of him as “blessed,” μακαρίτης, is missing in other annotations in the formerly blank folia.

As mentioned, the poem is prompted by an anonymous interlocutor, construed as a challenging member of the audience and as the primary addressee of the poem. This inscribed addressee allegedly questioned Tzetzes about an issue of prosodic quantity, that is whether to count the iota in ὄρνις as a long or a short vowel, clearly favoring the latter. In the first line Tzetzes himself mentions the occasion behind the poem – which is didactic in genre (Hörandner, “The Byzantine Didactic Poem.”) – and clearly describes it as a provocation.

To understand the nature of such provocation, it is necessary to look at the context and didactic background of the student’s question. At the beginning of the *Ars Grammatica*, Dionysius Thrax, in listing the seven vowels of Greek language, also specifies their prosodic quantities (*Ars Grammatica* I 1, 10):

Τῶν δὲ φωνηέντων μακρὰ μὲν ἔστι δύο, η καὶ ω βραχέα δύο, ε καὶ ο, δίχρονα τρία, α ι υ. δίχρονα δὲ λέγεται, ἐπεὶ ἐκτείνεται καὶ συτέλλεται.

Of the vowels, two are long, η and ω, two are short, ε and ο, three are *dichrona*, α ι υ. They are called *dichrona*, because they get both long and short.

This seemingly harmless passage has sparked endless debates throughout the centuries among practitioners of classicizing poetry and traditional meters since in the Middle Ages sensitivity toward prosodic quantities had long been lost (Kuhn 1892; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, II, 265–84). An awareness of the right prosodic quantities was key to learning how to properly write in exameters or

iambic trimeters (dodecasyllables) and therefore it was a competence taught and highly valued in the Byzantine classroom.

16. An overview of this production in Pontani 163 and Sandri.

17. Cramer 302–33 and see Giannachi, who also announces a new edition.

Evidence of such interest is the production of the treatises and lexica targeted precisely at teaching ‘traditional’ prosody.¹⁶ Prosodic wisdom consistently features as a token of authorial branding in Tzetzes’ production: times and again he positions himself as a master in the ‘technical’ knowledge of ancient meters. The treatise *On meters*, edited by Cramer in 1836, as well as our piece testifies to such keen engagement with metrical theory and practice.¹⁷ More specifically, Tzetzes often showcases his skill in using (and theorizing about) *dichrona*, in open polemic against practitioners and teachers of his time. As explained by Dionysus Thrax, *dichrona* are syllables that can be both long and short. Such potentiality, however, is not absolute, but, on the contrary, contextual, *i.e.* it depends on the position of the syllable within the word and within the meter, or even, as we shall see, on the Greek dialect in which the relevant piece of poetry is written. This is where the issue becomes controversial and where Tzetzes often takes stance against current theories. The passage from Dionysius Thrax mentioned above for instance is alluded to at line 34.

The question of the student is not a peregrine one. On the contrary, it appears particularly defiant because it testifies to an awareness of the current interpretation to be found in the sources regarding *dichrona*. Once again, a seemingly ‘dry’ topic gives us an insight into a very lively moment in which a cheeky pupil tries to catch his teacher unprepared.

In his treatise on *dichrona*, Herodianus treats the case of ὄρνις, explaining how the iota at the end is short, except for Attic dialect – hence the mention of Attic lengthening in our text. Herodianus refers to the work on dialects by Aristokles (*Treatise on dichrona* 18.14–7). The same mention of Attic is to be found in the *Epimerismi Homeric* (O 46, p. 553). The medieval lexica recently edited by Sandri, however, show that there were strands of metrical doctrine considering the iota in ὄρνις either long or both (Sandri 106 and 114 for *loci paralleli* on ὄρνις):

42 ὄρνις· μακρόν

...

51 ῥαφανίδας, ὄρνις, αἰγίδια, σίδια· ταῦτα διχῶς φασί. Καὶ τὸ σηπίδιον.

42 ὄρνις: long

...

51 ῥαφανίδας, ὄρνις, αἰγίδια, σίδια · they say these both ways,
and σηπίδιον.

Tzetzes' inquisitive student, therefore, seems implicitly to refer to Herodianus' mainstream treatment of *dichrona*. In his answer, Tzetzes compares and contrasts two doctrines: the first one presents *dichrona* as absolute ancipites (and he completely disagrees with this stance), the second one describes *dichrona* as liable to both shortening and lengthening depending on the context (and this is the stance he seconds). Knowing such context properly, however, requires expertise and experience as well as patience. The student asking the question, on the contrary, embraces ready-made, unsuitable short-cut solutions.

Beyond the technical content, what makes this piece particularly interesting to the cultural historian and the historian of literature is how Tzetzes frames and defines his answer. This is why I would like to spend a few more words on the title.

The key term in the title line is without any doubt ἀθωροί. The adjective appears in two other headings of Tzetzes' oeuvre, as highlighted by Panagiotis Agapitos: his longish synopsis of Hesiod's *Theogony* (cf. also vv. 22–23 of the same poem) and the few but violent lines against the imperial secretaries Skylitzes and Gregory.¹⁸ In both cases we are to do with quintessentially occasional poetry. The *Theogony* is comparable to other texts addressed in this special issue: a poem, epic in content, dedicated to an influential patroness, the *sebastokratorissa* Eirene, transmitted in writing, but potentially performed and without any doubt performable. When commenting on the use of ἀθωροί in these two texts Agapitos suggest for the term the literal meaning of “immediate” and hence improvised. For sure, the adjective points to an indication of time, to the timeliness of the poems. Such a timeliness, however, could also be construed as ‘occasionality.’ As Agapitos himself points out the adjective in its adverbial form “makes a massive appearance in lemmata to poems of Manuel Philes (c. 1270–c. 1335), that functioned as metrical prefaces to the recitation of prose works by older authors” (Agapitos, “John Tzetzes” 37). In this context the notion of improvisation does not seem to be the most appropriate. With its semantic pointer to “being in the very moment,” ἀθωροί perhaps rather stresses the fitness for a specific time, or occasion and could thus fit the very definition of occasional poetry, which might or might not be improvised. This

18. The poem has attracted much attention: Agapitos, “John Tzetzes” 36–38; “Middle Class” 157–58 and Zagklas, “Poetry” 254–55; “Satire” 297–99.

would explain the presence of the term also in contexts where improvisation is absent or only partially involved.

Our poem seems to support this interpretation also beyond its title, as shown by lines 31–32, where Tzetzes talks about the issue of expounding metrical technicalities *almost* without preparation:

Ὡς ἐξ ἐτοίμου τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην γράφων
τὸ τεχνικὸν παρήκα τῶν ἄλλων πλέον.
Ἄκουε λοιπὸν καὶ σαφέστατα μάθε.

Writing this piece of writing as if improvising,
I was more succinct in the technical part than the others.
Now, listen to what follows and learn most clearly.

The *Etymologicum Gudianum* (Sigma, 518, 21 Sturz), most interestingly, and after him Ps. Zonaras (Sigma, 1701, 11 Tittman) in the thirteenth century, gloss ἐξ ἐτοίμου with σχέδιον “sketchy,” which fully belongs into the vocabulary of improvisation. The Suda moreover (Alpha, 4313 Adler) contrasts ἐξ ἐτοίμου and μετὰ ἀποδείξεως (*i.e.* with argumentative proof) as modes of delivery. What matters here, is that Tzetzes seems to imply that we are not dealing with an exclusively oral delivery. Although the question that paves the way to the poem points to an oral setting, *i.e.* the challenging environment of the classroom, the verbs present in the poem point to compositional and consumption practices suspended between the oral and the written word, given the presence of the word γράφω. The lines 31–32 (Ὡς ἐξ ἐτοίμου τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην γράφων / τὸ τεχνικὸν παρήκα τῶν ἄλλων πλέον) are quite telling in this respect and seem to imply a situation in which Tzetzes first jots down his poem quickly – but not properly impromptu (Ὡς ἐξ ἐτοίμου) – to then perform it in front of an audience. Such audience is invited to listen (v. 17 ἄκουε καλῶς ἐξ ἐμῶν διηγήματων; v. 33 Ἄκουε λοιπὸν καὶ σαφέστατα μάθε), supporting the idea that the intended consumption is actually aural. Later, when the composition is further copied into a manuscript – by a former pupil in this case, if Mazzucchi is right – the formerly performed poem also becomes a site of exercise, as shown by the marginal gloss at v. 34 (ζήτει εἰς τοῦ τυγχάνει ταῦτο), urging the reader to find an equivalent for τυγχάνει.¹⁹

19. On the convenience of this verb in metrical composition and didactic poetry in particular, see Bernard 231.

Strikingly, in the poem we find several references to the teacher’s shouting. The verb βοάω/ἐκβοάω (vv. 5, 10, 51) is repeated three times, in connection with metrical rules that might be written down but are possibly yelled at the pupils. In one instance the shouting is

said to be even louder than the proverbial voice of Stentor, the Greek herald at Troy (*Iliad* 5, 785–86). I would argue that the reference is here to (loud) modes of teaching in the actual didactic setting. The coexistence of an emphasis on writing and shouting encapsulates the hybrid nature of performance in the classroom, or to put it in Shawcross' words “the constant humming of the interplay of the written and the oral – and of the verbal and the non-verbal – in the private study, the public square, the garden, and even on the battlefield” (Shawcross 34; cf. also Papaioannou and Messis).

In Byzantium, and specifically in the capital, the classroom was very much a battlefield as shown by the studies of Bernard for poetry and Valiavitcharska for prose (Bernard 253–80; Valiavitcharska, “Figure, Argument and Performance” and cf. Loukaki). Both teachers and students were engaged in verbal contests. The manuscript Ambr. C 222 inf. preserves another text, included in the commentary on Aristophanes, in which Tzetzes – in a much more aggressive tone – expresses his discontent at contemporary theory on *dichrona*. The passage has been highlighted by Lauxtermann in a chapter dealing precisely with the treatment of *dichrona* in Tzetzes. I quote here from his translation (Lauxtermann, “Buffalos and Bastards” 118):

ἡμᾶς τε σύρει τήν θ' ὀμηρείαν φύσιν
 ἀλλοπροσάλλως διχρόνοις χρῆσθαι λέγει,
 τὸ «Ἄρες, Ἄρες» πανταχοῦ βοῶν μέγα
 (Βρεντησίου μένδητος ὦ πατρὸς τέκνον!).

He mocks me in public and keeps saying that Homer uses the *dichrona* as it suits him, while bellowing Ἄρες, Ἄρες on every occasion (oh that bastard from Brindisi!).

Content and terminology are like those of our lines on ὄρνις. Again, we find a reference to shouting and the same case in point, emphasizing the different prosody of Ares to be found in Homer. Unfortunately, we do not know who the bastard from Brindisi was. He might not be the same person who provoked Tzetzes by asking him about ὄρνις, however they both embody a type of challenging audience populating the Constantinopolitan classroom. The occasion must have also been comparable: a sort of dispute on the nature of the *dichrona*, as pointed to perhaps also by the mention of the “others” at line 32. The environment is comparable to that featuring in Niketas' poem quoted at the beginning of this contribution: a loud classroom allegedly populated by rather obnoxious students.

As we have seen, the fifty-seven lines of the Ambrosianus show without any doubt that occasionality is not at odds with written composition or confined to oral composition/delivery. The poems capture that immediacy of Byzantine didacticism mentioned above. The same immediacy is also at stake in the occasional – in that they are prompted by well-defined situations – verses that Tzetzes personally appends from time to time to the Vossianus. In the margins we find repeatedly iambic lines to convey both outbursts against the copyist or even additional rules or κανόνες explaining why the choices of the copyist are not to be subscribed to – often in connection with prosodic quantities.

At f. 45v. of the Vossianus manuscript, Tzetzes complains about a mistake of the scribe, throwing a sarcastic joke on the awkwardness of the resulting text:

Ἄφεις ἀπάσας τὰς δυσόσμους βορβόρους,
αἷς ὁ βδελυκτὸς βορβοροῖ Τζέτζου βίβλον,
καὶ θηλυκὰ ἄκουε νῦν ἄπλως λόγους.
Κἂν πῦρ κεραυνῶν τοῦτον οὐκ ἐφεψάλου
ὄρων τόσον γράφοντα τῷ Τζέτζη πόνον.

After neglecting all the stinking nonsense
with which the accursed one contaminates the book of Tzetzes,
everyone should now listen to speeches in the feminine!
Provided the fire of lightning did not burn it to ashes,
seeing how great a strain it is for Tzetzes to write.

Tzetzes addresses here the copyist using a communicative strategy he was familiar with from his practice in the classroom. This sort of satirical jokes, integral to teaching in Byzantium and a key component of its ‘occasionality,’ are repeated in the margins of the Vossianus. Sometimes they even find their way in the commentaries proper, as shown by the exegesis on Hermogenes *De ideis* II 6.12.4 p. 165 Patillon (Tzetzes, *Commentary on Hermogenes’ De ideis* 2579–86, pp. 115–18 Barili):

Τοῦτο, ῥήτορ Ἑρμόγενης, τῶν πάνυπερ ἀστειῶν·
γράφοντα τέχνωσιν τινὰ, μὴ λέγειν περὶ ταύτης·
ἄλλος δὲ πόνος ἤπειγε λέγειν, ὡς σὺ νῦν λέγεις.
οὐ νόσον οὐ δυσχέρειαν ἄλλην εἰργνῦσαν βίου,
ἀλλὰ τι ἄλλο ἕτερον, ποῖον ἐκεῖνο, λέγε;
Μὴ οἶον ἔφη τίς μωρὸς ἐν τοῖς παροῦσι χρόνοις,
τῆς συναφείας τῷ καιρῷ τῇ σφῆ συζύγῳ λέγων,
βούλει ποιήσω νόημα, οὐδὲν σκοποῦ προέχει.

O rhetor Hermogenes, this belongs to the most urban wit,
 to not speak about a rhetorical device while treating it.
 “Another task urged on me to say as you are stating here.
 Neither a disease nor any hardship interfering with life,
 but something else, what is that? Please speak up!
 Not as a stupid from our time did,
 saying at the very moment he was having intercourse with his
 wife:
 “do you want me to think about it?,” he did not reach at all his
 target.²⁰

20. The syntax of the last line remains however uncertain.

The passage shows how Tzetzes establishes an impromptu and direct dialogue with the commented author, using again the stylistic marks of spontaneous speech (sudden questions prompted by emotions). He ironically mocks Hermogenes, since he does not deliver on his promises of explaining the characteristics of moderation, adducing some vague excuses for his failure. Tzetzes introduces a dirty joke, which seems to imply a shared knowledge of contemporary anecdotes with his audience.

A joke in the same vein is to be found at line 45 of our poem. Tzetzes mentions hyenas as ambivalent creatures, both male and female, an assumption already discussed and debunked by Aristotle (cf. *Historia Animalium*, VI, 32, 579b, 16ff; *De generatione animalium* III, 6, 756b, 18). However, the learned allusion turns into a somewhat crass joke, if one thinks of the outlook of female striped and spotted hyenas, with their conspicuous elongated genitalia.²¹

21. On the myth of hyenas through ages from antiquity to the twentieth century, see Glickman.

Prosodic quantity of vowels is pretty much center stage in the marginal glosses of the Vossianus At folio 37v. for instance, a mistake of the scribe induces Tzetzes to add a rule in dodecasyllables to explain why he has corrected the copyist’s ἐνάτος with a single ν and a long alpha. The iambs here deal with very much the same issues we find the poem copied in Ambr. 222C.

In all these cases, Tzetzes remarkably turns to verse, even in the solitary endeavor of editing his own text, a behavior that has been otherwise highlighted also in later authors, as shown by Julian Bértola in his PhD dissertation (Bértola, *Using Poetry*; “Tzetzes’ Verse Scholia”). This happens for two reasons in my opinion. First, the compositional modes are shaped by the agonistic setting of the classroom, which reverberates also onto individual creative practices (when the author is faced to the manuscript page). Tzetzes keeps improvising poetry also when revising his own text. Second, the manuscript space is experienced as a public, performative space. After all,

Tzetzes understood that any copyist's mistake could pass for his own and therefore be picked up by his opponents, like the bastard from Brindisi mentioned above. That is why authorial branding becomes important and also, in turn, affects teaching and delivery style, in a sort of continuous feedback loop. This dynamic emerges more clearly from manuscript pages, such as those of the Vossianus, which have been personally curated by the author, but leaves fainter traces also in later, non-authorial copies.

The *dichrona* as a temporal marker

The engagement with *dichrona*, was never a straightforward affair for Tzetzes. Their incorrect use has long been recognized as a chronological marker to date Tzetzes' oeuvre since, as he himself acknowledges, as a younger writer he was not able to control them (Cullhed). As I argue, we can go a little bit further by saying that uses of and discourses on *dichrona* are employed with full awareness by Tzetzes to make himself recognizable and clearly define the different stages of his work. In the fifty-seven lines of the Ambrosianus he defines himself as an old man, a biographical aspect that becomes an identity factor, as clearly shown by the glosses in the Vossianus, where Tzetzes consistently defines himself as "the old man" in the third person f. 41v.:

Ὁ μισαρός δὲ μεταγραφεὺς καὶ ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, μηδὲν
ἐζημιωμένος, οὕτω πάντα παρελίμπανε, ἄθλους καὶ πόρους
ὑπὲρ τοὺς Ἡρακλείους πολλῶ ἀσυγκρίτως παρέχων τῷ γέροντι,
εἰς τὴν τούτων ἀνόρθωσιν· ὅτι πόνημα ἦν ἡ βίβλος τοῦ
γέροντος. Εἰ δεινὸς ἄλλου σύγγραμμα ἦν καὶ μυρία
κεκαινοτόμητο πάνυ λεπτῶς ἂν ταύτην κατατεμῶν πυρὶ
κατετέφρωσα.

That cursed man copied and, enemy of God, remaining
unpunished, overlooked everything, forcing the old man to
labours far greater than those of Heracles, to purge this text.
And this only because the book was the work of the old man.
Had it been anyone else's, even though filled with innumera-
ble novelties – very finely – I would have torn thrown it into
the fire.

Mentions of *dichrona* can become a way to situate Tzetzes' earlier oeuvre, as we see from another passage of the commentary on Her-

mogenes' *De inventione* (Pizzone, "Saturno contro"). In commenting on the *De inventione* Tzetzes gives us a glimpse into his younger self. When Tzetzes sets off to explain amplification, instead of offering the usual examples of ekphrasis taken from Homer, he gives the reader a description of a shipwreck he allegedly experienced. The setting is still the classroom, but we have here a more conventionally occasional poem (prompted by the personal experience of the shipwreck), which is elevated to the status of a new standard, as it were, substituting Homer despite the incorrect use of *dichrona*. Tellingly, the poem also offers very precise details on the life of Tzetzes. Besides having clear Homeric intertexts, the beginning of the ekphrasis is modelled after Gregory of Nazianzus' famous shipwreck poem. The interesting fact is that Gregory's shipwreck happened when he was eighteen in November 348. The time of the year is the same. It is also highly likely that the time of their life was the also same. Tzetzes' shipwreck happened on the day of St. Demetrius, which falls on the eighth of November according to the old calendar. The only possible suitable date corresponding to the astronomical description he himself provide is 1131, which fits perfectly both with Gregory's intertext and with what we know about Tzetzes' biography in the early 1130s, when he was traveling in the service of Isaac, eparch of Beroia. An occasional poem in this case subtracted to its own contingency, canonized as it were and incapsulated into another occasional setting (the classroom). Through the manuscript occasionality freezes in turn on the page and Tzetzes' exegetical work loses its situated character, becoming a neutral tool for future readers, who often dismember and merge it with other exegesis.

Conclusion

As a way of conclusion, I would say that a technical issue such as the lengthening and shortening of the *dichrona* often becomes for Tzetzes an opportunity to take stock of his life and career, providing a biographical/diachronic dimension to his authorial self. This tells us something. It has been often said that Byzantine poetry lacks the lyrical personal dimension, later heavily romanticized, that we find in the West.²² Kristina Kubina and Ingela Nilsson have recently challenged this view, emphasizing how notions such as subjectivity and individuality in much occasional poetry are defined through author, addressee and the situation (Kubina 165 and Nilsson). The same ap-

22. See the discussion in Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, I 20.

plies here, once we put the clash between the elderly teacher and the young pupil in a context of lived, embodied experience. Subjectivity emerges poignantly in the lines where Tzetzes realizes the vanity of his efforts in learning and teaching the formal minutiae of an artificial language from a long-lost past: not even a whole life would suffice, he tells us (v. 40). The last line conveys a sense of resignation that can be hardly overlooked, with a formulaic finale that reminds one of the Euripidean resignation before the inexplicable behavior of the gods.²³ This is an important detail, especially given the well-known acquaintance of Tzetzes with Euripides' tragedies and their widespread reception in twelfth-century Constantinople.²⁴ Euripides has famously a formulaic five-liner with which he concludes *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Helen*, *Bacchae*, and with a slight variation, *Medea*. Here is the text from *Bacchae* 1388–92:

23. I thank Andrea Capra for pointing this detail to me.

24. See Cararra. Cararra however does not believe Tzetzes had a first-hand knowledge of lost Euripidean oeuvre.

πολλὰ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων,
 πολλὰ δ' ἀέπτως κραίνουσι θεοί
 καὶ τὰ δοκηθέντ' οὐκ ἐτελέσθη,
 τῶν δ' ἀδοκῆτων πόρον ἦῤυρε θεός.
 τοιόνδ' ἀπέβη τόδε πρᾶγμα.

Many are the forms of divine things,
 and the gods bring to pass many things unexpectedly;
 what is expected has not been accomplished,
 but the god has found out a means for doing things un-
 thought of.
 So too has this event turned out (transl. T. A. Buckley)

The lines were designed to accompany the exit of the chorus and would stress the end of the performance (Dodds 242). Tzetzes jokingly adopts the same expressive module to signal the end of his performance and his own resignation in the face of both the difficult subject and the unescapable 'thickness' of his pupils. Such an attitude feeds in the occasionality of the poem. The statement according to which Tzetzes decides to give up on technical explanations (v. 54) is also a way to implicitly 'shame' the students, who, with his question has revealed a knowledge precisely of those same technical contents now deemed useless by Tzetzes.

The function of closure of these lines is also highlighted by the layout of the poem. A cross at line 45 signals the ending of a textual unit, confirmed also by the insertion of the marginal note referring to line 34. The next textual unit starts with two anaphoric lines both

beginning with *πολλά*, resonating with the Euripidean seal picked up again at the end of the unit in a sort of circular composition. I believe that both the reference to Euripides and the manuscript layout point to ‘performative units,’ which can give us an idea of the original modes in which the text was delivered.

It is also worth pointing out that a very personal, autobiographical component is present also in Tzetzes’ treatise on meters, dedicated to his deceased brother Isaac. The preface and the conclusion in hexameters take us quite close to a ‘Western-like’ lyrical dimension (Tzetzes, “*Διδασκαλία*”; Giannachi; Van den Berg 288–91). This could also be a way to read Tzetzes’ attachment to metrical matters, beyond the stubborn pride of his self-proclaimed ability to follow long-forgotten prosodic rules. The interest in meters he shared with Isaac and the loving bond between the two of them made the ostensibly dry issue of prosody something familiar and emotionally charged, an identity trait accompanying him throughout his life. Seen from this perspective his personal obsession with *dichrona* becomes perhaps less alien to us modern readers. It is indeed an ‘authorial branding’ but one that resonates with very poignant personal circumstances too and is, more broadly, in tune with twelfth-century metrical experimentation (Zagklas, “*Metrical Polyeideia*” esp. 48). On the other hand, the question of the student mentioned at the beginning of the composition – either real or fictional – becomes the occasion for implementing the very technical rules Tzetzes is illustrating. In so doing, he both showcase and passes on the mature metrical prowess that distinguished his later production from his younger self.

To conclude, the disenchanting view that the only poetic quality of Byzantine didactic poetry resides in its being in verse does in fact need some qualification (Bernard 232 based on Lauxtermann, “*Byzantine Didactic poetry*” 46). The texts with which I have opened this contribution further prove that didacticism too had its own codified expressive modes. Instructors would provide practical examples of the theories they were illustrating through their very teaching performance. On another level, the corpus of texts I have dealt with in the previous pages also offers us snippets of life way beyond their didactic content. The classroom composition of the Ambrosianus, just like the notes of the Vossianus, are fully fledged occasional literature, one that allows us to pierce through the veil of time and retrace the circumstances, the emotions, the contexts that prompted it. If we only knew how to look.

Τοῖς διχρόνοις ζάλη δὲ πολλή τυγχάνει.
 Καιροῦ δὲ δεῖται καὶ τριβῆς πολλῆς τάδε.
 Ζωῆς ὁ πᾶς γὰρ ἀρκέσει μόλις χρόνος 40
 εἰς γνῶσιν αὐτὴν ἀτρεκῆ τῶν διχρόνων.
 Ὅσοι δὲ τέχνας ἐκφοροῦσι τοῦ βίου
 καὶ τὰς ἀτέχνους ἐκβαδίζουσι τρίβους
 βράχιστα ταῦτὰ καὶ μακρὰ λέγουσί μοι
 ὡς τὰς ὑαίνας, ἄρσενας θήλεις ἅμα. 45

Πολλὰ γὰρ αὐτῶν τὸν μακρὸν φθείρει χρόνον.
 Πολλὰ δὲ τυγχάνουσι τῶν βραχυχρόνων.
 Ὁ τεχνικὸς μὲν ἀκριβῶς εἰδὼς τάδε,
 τὴν δυσχέρειαν φημί τὴν τῶν διχρόνων,
 γράφων πρὸς ἀστοὺς τοὺς νέον κατηργημένους 50
 βοᾷ μέγιστον ἃ δὲ πως αὐτοῖς λέγων
 “τὰ μὲν βράχιστα ῥᾶστα καὶ τὰ μακρὰ δέ
 τὰ δίχρονα δὲ δυσχερῆ γνῶσιν ἔχει.”
 Καὶ νῦν μὲν αὐτὸς τεχνικῶς ἐῷ λέγειν.
 Τὰ δ’ εἰσαγωγῆς προσφυᾶ ταῦτα γράφω 55
 ἐκ τῶν ἀπείρων διχρόνων τρανῶς λέγων,
 “Πολλὰ βράχιστα πολλὰ μακρὰ τυγχάνει.”

28. ὁμοῦ: ἅμα ssc 38. % i.m. 45. % ζήτει εἰς τοῦ τυγχάνει ταῦτο gl

Impromptu lines by the blessed Tzetzes to someone asking him about ὄρνις

He tests me, an old man, like a kid, 1
 asking how ὄρνις can possibly be long,
 according to others it might also be received as short.
 On these matters you have two technical explanations
 of which one is shouting out loud as follows: 5
 “Among all the parts, the final syllables
 being all short and long,
 you should take them as both short and long, as you please.”
 One technical rule therefore writes so.
 Another one shouts, even louder than Stentor, 10
 and this one is perverted by those ignorant in the art:
 “The *dichrona* love both stretching
 and shortening their quantities.” To those unexperienced this

has therefore caused to be confused about *dichrona*.
 Yet, which *dichrona* the expert writers say 15
 to have accepted both natures of the quantity,
 do hear beautifully from my teachings.
 These do not say that all *dichrona*
 lie in confusion endowed with opposite quantities,
 but some Attic speech tends to lengthen, 20
 and some the fashion of the Ionic language shortens.
 Such is the case, very well-known to the young, of
 Ἄρης Ἀπόλλω, ὄρνις and εὐκνήμις too.
 Such they say are those with a twofold quantity
 and the final syllables at the end of linguistic units. 25
 These, however, misunderstand the technical explanations
 in accepting that every *dichronon* is by nature
 both short and long.
 Oh very wise bee of discourses you have got
 a very cheap flower, the very discourse you were looking for. 30
 Writing this piece of writing as if improvising,
 I was more succinct in the technical part than the others.
 Now, listen to what follows and learn most clearly.
 The expert in the art, writing to the young kids,
 says that there are seven vowels, 35
 of which two absolutely short and two long,
 unless they become common syllables.
 Great is the confusion with the *dichrona*.
 These matters require time and a lot of practice.
 For barely the time of a whole life will suffice 40
 to get a very perfect knowledge.
 Those who exclude art from their lives,
 and walk the unskilled paths,
 tell me that the same are absolutely both short and long,
 like the hyenas, both males and females. 45

For many destroy the long quantity,
 And many obtain shortenings.
 The expert, knowing precisely these things -
 I mean the difficulty of the *dichrona* -
 writing to urban people who just started, 50
 shouts most loudly saying to them somehow:
 “The shortest are the easiest, and so are the long ones,
 but to know the *dichrona* is very difficult.”

And now I will myself avoid to speak in a technical way.
 I write these words in a manner that is suitable for an introduction, 55
 saying plainly, in the fashion of those ignorant of *dichrona*:
 “Many happen to be very short, many happen to be long.”

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The Occasional Lyric in an Early Modern Persian Anthology

Abstract

This paper argues for a modest expansion of the concept of occasional verse in the context of classical Persian poetry. Discussion of occasionality in this field has traditionally focused on the panegyric ode (*qaṣīda*), and to a lesser degree on the epigrammatic poem (*qiṭʿa*). While these forms certainly represent key categories of occasional verse, it is unfortunate that the type of poetry that came to dominate the classical Persian tradition – *i.e.*, love lyric, especially the *ghazal* – has less of a clear position in the discourse on occasionality. The difficulty in considering *ghazals* as occasional is, admittedly, first and foremost a result of their tendency to treat abstract themes, rather than to comment on specific events. What I suggest, however, is that we can look to biographical anthologies of poets (*tazkiras*) – in particular from the early modern period – since they sometimes offer anecdotes to explain the context underlying the composition and sharing of *ghazals*. Leveraging these sources could allow us to extend the study of occasional verse in Persian to a much larger body of poetry, with strong representation from all historical periods.

Keywords

Classical Persian poetry, Occasional verse, *Ghazal*, Biographical anthologies, Safavid-Mughal period.

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2. As will be discussed below, the *qiṭʿa* – a form of short, often epigrammatic poetry – has also been treated as occasional in some contexts.

Introduction

The goal of this paper is to encourage conversation on the idea of occasional literature in the context of classical Persian poetry – a topic that has not, to the best of my knowledge, been debated to a significant extent in scholarship.¹ There is, of course, a rich body of work on one kind of occasional verse in the Persian tradition: the panegyric ode, or *qaṣīda*, which was a widely practiced genre in all periods and especially dominant in the pre-Mongol era.² But studying the classical *qaṣīda*, which represents occasional poetry in the most

3. There is some prior scholarship that explores the occasional dimension in *ghazals*. One of the best examples is Brookshaw, who analyzes, *inter alia*, the mention of places and performance contexts in *ghazals* by Ḥāfiẓ (d. c. 792/1390) and other poets of his era. It should be noted, however, that Brookshaw does not explicitly use the terminology or framework of ‘occasional verse.’ Part of the project of enriching the discussion of occasionality in scholarship on classical Persian literature will be bringing together existing studies that are relevant but perhaps not obviously so.

4. It should be kept in mind that there are questions surrounding the reliability of anecdotes presented in some anthologies – including, famously, the *Tazkirat al-shu‘arā’* (892/1487) of Dawlatshāh Samarqandī. The problem is most pronounced when there is a large gap in time between the career of a poet and the composition of *tazkiras* that discuss them. In this article, the focus is rather on details that early modern anthologists recorded about poets of their own era, perhaps even acquaintances. Still, as is always the case in literary history, stories must be taken with a grain of salt. *Tazkira* authors had various motivations: promoting themselves and their friends; criticizing their rivals; setting out their perspectives on trends in the style of Persian poetry; etc.

5. Another ideal *tazkira* in which to study this phenomenon is the *‘Arafāt al-‘āshiqīn va ‘araṣāt al-‘arīfīn* (1024/1615) of Taqī al-Dīn Awḥādī Balyānī. (See the edition of Zabīḥ Allāh Ṣāhibkāri and Āmina Fakhr Aḥmad, published in eight volumes by Mirās-i Maktūb in 2010). One could use Taqī al-Dīn’s biographical notices to reconstruct the activities of urban poets’ circles around the turn of the eleventh/seventeenth century.

straightforward sense, is not the same as a broader critical engagement with questions of ‘occasionality.’ What did it mean for a Persian poem to be occasional? How could that term perhaps be applied to different forms and genres? (That is, if we are comfortable extending it beyond panegyric and other ‘safe cases’). And where can we look for evidence of the occasional dimension in Persian poetry, when context may be lacking in the poems themselves?

What I would like to suggest, on an experimental basis, is that it is possible to identify occasionality in a form/genre in Persian that is usually thought of as lyric: the *ghazal*.³ This shorter form of poetry – which focuses on themes of love (broadly defined) and held unmatched popularity among Persian poets from about the seventh/thirteenth or eighth/fourteenth century onward – was practiced in such a range of contexts, to such a variety of ends, that it is not difficult to imagine its application to occasional verse. Were *ghazals* sometimes composed for particular occasions and linked to phenomena such as patronage and competition among poets? It is likely that almost any specialist in classical Persian poetry would answer this question in the affirmative. What is lacking is, rather, a higher-level discourse in the field.

To be more specific about the line of argument in this paper, I place emphasis on the role of biographical anthologies of poetry (or *tazkiras*) as repositories of information about the contexts in which poems were composed and performed.⁴ We have a proliferation of anthologies from the early modern period – the same time in which the total dominance of the *ghazal* among the genres of Persian poetry was consolidated. And these sources allow us, in certain cases, to ‘connect the dots’ between a snippet of lyric poetry and the moment of, or reason for, its composition. We can thereby circumvent one of the difficulties in studying *ghazals* from a social perspective: the tendency for their *text* not to include direct references to their *context*.

This is merely a short article, outlining a few ideas and pointing to examples. While there are many early modern Persian *tazkiras* that contain useful discussion of poets’ careers and interactions,⁵ I will focus on one source, the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī* (c. 957/1550). Written by a Safavid prince named Sām Mirzā (d. 975/1567), the *Tuḥfa* is an invaluable record of the activities of poets (or would-be poets) of the tenth/sixteenth century, who came from a range of social classes and lived in cities across Iran. This *tazkira* includes anecdotes involving two phenomena in the culture of Persian lyric poetry that bear on questions of occasionality. First, there are descriptions of poets’ circles, in some cases noting that a given poem was composed at a certain

6. The classic study of this practice in Persian poetry is Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*.

gathering of individuals. Second, on a more abstract level, Sām Mirzā sometimes introduces a quote from a *ghazal* by explaining that it was composed in the practice of *imitatio* (*javāb-gūʿī*) vis-à-vis a specific earlier poem.⁶ Among my suggestions is that it is worth exploring the idea that *javāb-gūʿī* – which was one of the key ways in which Persian poets engaged in conversation with one another through their work – might in itself constitute a sort of occasion.

Before turning to the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, however, it will be necessary to define our terms (including ‘occasionality’); to situate occasional poetry in the classical Persian tradition, paying special attention to the shift in popularity and influence from the *qaṣīda* to the *ghazal*; and to provide at least a brief introduction to the *tazkira* genre. Again, this is intended to promote further dialogue among Persianists on a topic that has yet to be confronted in earnest in the scholarly literature. To develop a nuanced understanding of occasionality in classical Persian poetry would involve a substantial, longer-term research effort.

Terminological Questions

We need first to have a working definition of occasional poetry – at least for the purposes of this paper. For a starting point, we can look to an authority such as *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. There we find an entry for ‘occasional verse,’ which is described as “poetry written for or prompted by a special occasion, e.g. a wedding, funeral, anniversary, birth, military or sporting victory, or scientific achievement” (Baldick 176). The entry further specifies that the poetic forms most associated with the occasional style are the *epithalamion* (a kind of poem that celebrates a wedding), the elegy, and the ode.

A slightly longer and more critical discussion of occasional verse is given in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Green 966). While the term is defined in effectively the same way, a few noteworthy caveats are issued. First, the authors of this entry clarify that “all literary works are occasioned in some sense,” and that “occasional verse differs in having not a private but a public or social occasion.” Second, after listing a range of well-known examples of occasional poetry (mostly in English), the authors note that the common perception of this type of verse – that it is “ephemeral or trivial or public” – can be challenged in many cases. Occasional verse exists in various forms and at all levels of seriousness. This leads the authors to admit – or, at least, to hint at an admission – that it is diffi-

cult to set boundaries for which kinds of poetry qualify as occasional. They cite the example of Emily Dickinson's poems that imagine the occasion of her own death.

In short, the impression given by reference works is that it is straightforward to articulate a basic definition of occasional verse – and that there is a consensus around this definition, and around many of the famous examples to be mentioned – but at the same time, we see acknowledgment of the difficulty (if not the impossibility) of finding a basis on which to distinguish consistently between occasional and non-occasional poetry. And this way of thinking about occasionality is clearly applicable to the classical Persian tradition. As will be discussed in greater detail below, some of the central applications of the *qaṣīda* form – praising a ruler, marking a holiday, etc. – fit within the ordinary, simple definition of occasional verse.

The object of this paper is not to call into question the validity of the traditional approach to occasional poetry, nor to attempt to dislodge the *qaṣīda* from its position as the clearest manifestation of this phenomenon in Persian. Rather, the question at hand is whether we can broaden our sense of occasional verse to some extent. What I will suggest here – if only provisionally – is a practical and flexible understanding of the term, under which, rather than setting absolute criteria, we highlight a few 'indicators of occasionality.' Poetry that displays multiple such features might then (weighing the specific circumstances) be considered occasional.

There are three factors that seem especially pertinent to the question of occasionality in the case of Persian poetry. First, and most obviously – almost tautologically – there should be a connection between the authorship of a poem and a certain 'occasion,' *e.g.*, a festival, the inauguration of a new ruler, or a meeting of a literary circle. (Later we will see how the practice of *imitatio* in Persian poetry, or *javāb-gū'ī*, might also be thought of as generating a kind of occasion, albeit more abstractly). Second, an occasional poem will often have a definable 'performance context.' Was the piece in question initially meant to be recited, for example, at court before the king, or at a gathering of other poets or friends? Third, the composition of a given poem, or the work of the poet more generally, may be linked to 'patronage.' That is, occasional poetry can be relevant to the way that the poet makes a living or achieves his or her social status. Patronage could involve a direct payment – say, a poet performs an ode at court as part of a celebration of the harvest and is awarded his weight in silver coins. Or it could be that the poet holds a regular position, the maintenance of which in-

volves periodically composing and reciting new work. Each of the aforementioned indicators – occasion, performance, patronage – can be approached on flexible terms. This makes for an understanding of occasional verse that is relatively broad, but not, I would argue, to a degree that renders the concept meaningless.

If one looks for discussion of occasional poetry in scholarship on classical Persian literature, one will find relevant material in works by researchers such as Sunil Sharma (*Persian poetry, Mughal Arcadia*; in the latter book, see, e.g., 49–50), Jocelyn Sharlet,⁷ Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, and Samuel Hodgkin. In most cases, however, there is the traditional application of terminology and concepts, in which occasional verse is nearly equated to panegyric verse (i.e., the *qaṣīda*) composed in search of patronage from someone in a position of authority. The one other type of poetry in Persian that is often referred to as ‘occasional’ is the *qiṭ‘a* (lit. ‘snippet’), a short form that was used for epigrams, extemporaneous commentary on events, etc. (see de Bruijn and Baha’-al-Din Khorramshahi).⁸ But this is not a large avenue of research, given that the *qiṭ‘a* is generally one of the less-studied forms in the Persian tradition.

7. This is perhaps the overall best study of classical Persian (and Arabic) panegyric poetry, at least in recent years. See, e.g., the overviews of the careers of individual panegyrists in ch. 3.

8. See, for example, the *Encyclopædia Iranica* entries on “Kvāju Kermāni,” by J. T. P. de Bruijn; and “Hafez ii. Hafez’s Life and Times,” by Baha’-al-Din Khorramshahi.

9. One relatively early Persian poet noted for his imaginative use of the *qaṣīda* form is Khāqāni Shirvāni (d. c. 1190s CE). See Beelaert “Kāqāni Šervāni,” *A Cure for the Grieving*.

Locating Occasionality in Classical Persian Poetry

One could categorize classical Persian poetry in any number of ways, along both formal and generic lines (not to mention other criteria). With regard to form, for example, we could highlight four that became especially prestigious and dominant, in different periods and in different ways: the verse narrative, composed in rhyming couplets (*maṣnavī*), up to thousands of lines in length; the ode (*qaṣīda*), of variable length but often on the order of several dozen lines; the love lyric (*ghazal*), traditionally five to fourteen lines (i.e., roughly comparable in length to the sonnet); and the so-called quatrain (*rubā‘ī* or *du-baytī*), which in fact consists of two lines of two hemistichs each. Any of these forms could then be associated with multiple genres. Persian narrative verse, for example, could be used for epic (the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī, d. c. 410/1020); romance (*Khusraw va Shirīn* by Niẓāmī, d. c. 605/1209); or religious or philosophical discourse (the *Maṣnavī-i ma‘navī* of Rūmī, d. 672/1273). The *qaṣīda* could be panegyric (its most common manifestation), or it could be composed without a dedicatee and address more abstract themes.⁹ The *ghazal* could express love anywhere on a spectrum from the mystical (the *Dīvān-i Shams* of Rūmī) to the

10. On the latter count, see Ingenito, especially pt. 1 (chs. 1–3).

11. *Qif'as*, which have been discussed above, represent another common category.

12. For an example, more or less picked out of a hat, see the Nawrūz *qaṣīda* composed by Farrukhī Sistānī (d. c. 429/1037–38) and dedicated to the Ghaznavid prince 'Azud al-Dawla Yūsuf, one of the sons of Sabuktāgīn (d. 387/997), founder of the dynasty. *Dīvān-i Ḥakīm Farrukhī Sistānī*, ed. Muḥammad Dabīr-Siyāqī, 217–19 (*qaṣīda* no. 109). The text of the poem can also be found in the [Ganjoor corpus](#) (last access on 4 October 2024).

13. The early poet Rūdakī (d. c. 329/940–41), for example, had a reputation as a highly skilled musician. See the introductory section in Tabatabai.

14. For an in-depth study of one of these figures, see Clinton.

15. See the earlier footnote on Khāqānī.

strongly profane (as in some of the poems of Sa'dī, d. c. 690/1291).¹⁰ And so forth. One could go into limitless detail in such a discussion, but the basic point is that, for the most part, when we open the collected works (*dīvān* or *kulliyāt*) of a classical Persian poet, we will find predominantly *ghazals*, *qaṣīdas*, *rubā'īyyāt*, and sometimes longer-form narrative poems.¹¹

If one wished to locate occasional poetry in this system, the initial answer would be clear: one should turn to the panegyric *qaṣīda*. This was a prominent form and genre – especially (though by no means exclusively) in the early centuries of the Persian tradition, *i.e.*, from the fourth/tenth century to the seventh/thirteenth. The prototypical context was that a poet would compose a new *qaṣīda*, dedicated explicitly to a ruler or other powerful individual who was in a position to offer monetary rewards for poems that honored him. Many such panegyrics were also tied to specific events, such as the Iranian New Year (*Nawrūz*) or the autumn festival (*Mihragān*). If there was, for example, a ceremony at a ruler's court to mark Nawrūz, then a poet might prepare a *qaṣīda* celebrating both the holiday (linked to the arrival of spring) and the ruler.¹² It is thought to have been common for poets to recite their own original work at court.¹³ If a poem made a particularly good impression, it might lead to an especially generous reward. Another part of this dynamic was that a poet could affiliate with a court for a period of time, or even for their whole career. We can point to several of the most famous Persian poets from the early classical period and identify them clearly as panegyrists of their respective courts. For example, Farrukhī (d. c. 429/1037–38), 'Unṣurī (d. 431/1039–40), and Manūchihri (fl. 1030s CE) all have secure positions in the canon, and all three served the Ghaznavid sultans in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century. Their affiliation with the Ghaznavid court was what allowed for them to make a living composing poetry, and for their works to attain popularity and to be recorded for posterity.¹⁴

The panegyric *qaṣīda* has all the features that one might expect to find in occasional poetry: mention of specific events, an oral performance context, a direct relationship to patronage. But the prevailing trends in Persian poetry would change over time. In the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, there was growth in the number and diversity of longer works of verse – for instance, romances and mystical allegories – and this became a major vehicle for literary creativity. At the same time, the *qaṣīda* form evolved to where it was used to address, for example, philosophical themes, in ways that were less tied to praising kings in exchange for material rewards.¹⁵

16. This is not to mention the adoption and adaptations of the Persianate *ghazal* in other languages – Ottoman Turkish first among them.

Perhaps most consequentially, another form rose to prominence in this period: the *ghazal*. Over the long run, and continuing into the modern era, the *ghazal* would become by far the most popular form in Persian poetry.¹⁶ As Persian literary history progresses into the later medieval and early modern periods, with the *qaṣīda* giving way to the *ghazal*, the idea of occasionality becomes more complicated. Poets never stopped composing *qaṣīdas* or reciting them at court for patronage. But most of the activity in Persian poetry, and a great proportion of the creative energy, would come to be devoted to the *ghazal* form. We see, accordingly, a shift in what might be called the ‘dominant occasion’ for the performance and exchange of Persian poetry: it moves from the court to the literary salon.

This is, it should go without saying, a very high-level description of part of how the culture of Persian poetry evolved from the early days in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries to the lyric efflorescence of the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries. And a great deal has been glossed over here. The main ideas that need to be conveyed, for the purposes of this paper, are as follows: that there could be numerous approaches to the organization of classical Persian poetry into different categories; that occasional verse could, in turn, be studied from various perspectives; that the most immediately obvious angle would be to focus on the panegyric *qaṣīda*; and that, in light of the gradual shift in popularity and influence from the *qaṣīda* to the *ghazal*, it would be helpful to have a way of analyzing occasionality within the context of Persian lyric poetry. (Implicit in this is the idea that occasional literature, like other broad types of literature, was at all times being produced, and that it is our task as students of the classical Persian tradition to follow what ‘occasional’ meant in different eras and regions).

In fact, the culture around the composition and sharing of *ghazals*, especially during the early modern period, does display some characteristics that can be associated with occasional verse. It was common for poets to gather socially in urban areas, to recite for one another their latest *ghazals*, and even to extemporize lyric poetry in response to whatever the theme of the day may have been. One of the key practices in this poetic culture was *javāb-gūʿī* (i.e., *imitatio*). This entailed composing a new poem as a response to an older one, using the same meter and rhyme and playing with some of the same themes and vocabulary – so as to make clear the connection between the original poem and the *javāb* (lit. ‘response’). Poets would sometimes gather and share different *javābs* that they had composed to the

same well-known *qaṣīda* or *ghazal*. (Examples of these phenomena will be described below). It is also worth noting that, insofar as *ghazals* were crafted to suit various performance contexts on a day-to-day basis, they could, if anything, fill the role of occasional poetry more frequently than *qaṣīdas* – which were more like ‘special-occasion poems.’ The early modern *ghazal* represents one of the most active research areas among Persianists today, including from the perspective of social history (see e.g.: Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*; Kinra; Mikkelson).

The *Tazkira* Genre

The next question, which will bring us closer to the specific intervention of this paper, is how we can learn about the activities of Persian poets as they gathered and exchanged their work. When reading a panegyric *qaṣīda*, it is sometimes obvious from the content of the poem when it was composed and for what occasion – for instance, in celebration of the enthronement of a certain ruler, the date of which is known from other sources.¹⁷ This is rarely the case for a *ghazal*, as it is a shorter form whose content is conventionally lyric. The beloved may be described in great detail, but not by name, let alone with a time frame indicated; and it is often unclear, if not irrelevant, whether the author has an actual person in mind. The corpus of *ghazals* produced by a given poet can therefore appear as something of an undifferentiated mass in their collected works (at least with regard to the circumstances of composition). This is despite the fact that some of those poems may originally have been performed in quite distinct contexts.

Fortunately, we can achieve greater insight into this process by studying works written in an ancillary genre to Persian poetry; namely, biographical anthologies of poets, or *tazkiras*.¹⁸ These are books that collect biographical information on large numbers of poets, while also presenting selections of their verse. For those who have studied Renaissance European cultural history, a *tazkira* is not entirely dissimilar to Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. Or, for those with a background in the classics, there is Suetonius’ series of works on prominent grammarians, rhetoricians, poets, and historians. The Persian *tazkira* is roughly analogous. One point that should be emphasized is that, in the early modern era, when the *ghazal* had reached full ascendancy over other forms of Persian poetry, the *tazkira* genre also exploded in popularity. Only a handful of *tazkiras* were written prior to the late ninth/

17. The great eleventh/seventeenth century poet Ṣā’ib Tabrīzī (d. c. 1087/1676), for example, has a *qaṣīda* on the occasion of the coronation of the Safavid Shah Sulaymān I, which took place in Shawwāl 1078 AH (March 1668 CE). This was a particularly sensitive event, since the ruler in question had previously been enthroned as Shah Ṣafi II in 1077/1666. The beginning of his reign was deemed so inauspicious that he was recrowned under a new name. See the edition of Ṣā’ib’s *divān* by Muḥammad Qahramān, vol. 6, 3597–99. The text of the poem is also available in the [Ganjoor corpus](#) (last access on 4 October 2024).

18. For a more comprehensive general introduction to this genre, see Losensky, “Biographical Writing.”

fifteenth century, but the early modern period saw the production of dozens, even hundreds of these texts across Iran, Central Asia, and especially on the Indian subcontinent – which was then a major center for Persian literature.

In a *tazkira* entry on a given poet, one will typically find some description of that individual's life, along with at least a line or two excerpted from their work. What is of interest with regard to occasional poetry is that a biographer will sometimes link a certain snippet of verse to an anecdote. There are, for instance, accounts in which a handful of poets gather to share their work (or to extemporize new verse), and some noteworthy occurrence is linked to one of the resultant poems. As will be demonstrated below, such an anecdote can offer us a window into the occasional dimension of poetry, lyric or otherwise.

Among the many Persian *tazkiras* written during the boom in the genre's popularity in the early modern period is the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, completed around 957/1550 by Sām Mirzā, a prince of the Safavid dynasty in Iran. The remainder of this paper will center on the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī* as a *tazkira* that is, in some ways, particularly well-suited to the study of the social history of Persian poetry in the tenth/sixteenth century – including the matter of occasionality.

Sām Mirzā and the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*

The *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, as has been noted above, was completed in 957/1550 or not long thereafter. The author, Sām Mirzā, was one of the sons of Shah Ismā'īl, the founder of the Safavid dynasty as a ruling entity.¹⁹ There is a fair amount to be said (though not here) about the relationship between Sām Mirzā's political career – which was characterized by frustration and failure and ended with his execution at the order of his brother in 975/1567 – and, on the other hand, his literary career.²⁰ The *Tuḥfa* turned out to be one of the most famous Persian *tazkiras* ever written.

Perhaps the greatest distinguishing feature of the *Tuḥfa* is that its notices, which number a bit over seven hundred, represent a selection of individuals who came from many stations in society. The chapter organization of this *tazkira* is largely on the basis of social class, in a descending hierarchy, whereby the first chapter is devoted to members of various ruling dynasties who were known to have composed verse; the second chapter is for religious scholars (*ulamā'*) and descendants of the Prophet (*sayyids*); and so forth, until the seventh and

19. The Safavids are the dynasty responsible for converting the majority of the population of Iran to Shi'i Islam, as well as for building a polity whose borders corresponded roughly to those of modern Iran. Readers looking for a concise general introduction to the Safavid period in Iranian history may refer to Newman, or to Quinn.

20. For much more on this topic, see, "The Lives of Sām Mirzā;" "A Safavid Text."

final chapter, which addresses members of lower socioeconomic strata who had some interest in poetry. The chapter that is set aside for “actual poets” (*shu‘arā*), and by far the largest in the book, is the fifth.

The importance of the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī* as a source is, for the most part, twofold. First, the famous Persian poets of the early tenth/sixteenth century are given entries in this *tazkira*. Sām Mīrzā thus provides key documentation of these poets’ careers and the initial reception of their work. Second, and more in terms of the social history of Persian poetry, the *Tuḥfa* has received attention for its discussion of people of lower social status. This is one of the few *tazkiras* of its era that tell us, for example, about the literary activities of men who worked humble jobs in the bazaar.²¹ Another consequence of the *Tuḥfa*’s concern for painting a broad portrait of the types of people who were participating in the poetic culture of tenth/sixteenth century Iran, is that this sometimes involves describing occasions on which poetry was composed (or extemporized) and performed. In what follows, we will review a handful of examples of such phenomena, drawn from different sections of the *Tuḥfa*.

21. One noteworthy example of a category of people included in the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī* is professional storytellers, or *qiṣṣa-khwānān*. See Khan, 35–36.

Examples of ‘Occasional Lyric’

The cases discussed here will represent various kinds of ‘poetic occasion’ as reflected in the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*.²² Furthermore, not all of the poems in question will be *ghazals*. As has been explained above, the *qaṣīda* continued to be a significant form of Persian poetry in all eras; it was simply overshadowed in popularity and versatility by about the eighth/fourteenth century. It also seems to be the case that, over time, *qaṣīdas* were increasingly likely to be written as meditations on philosophical themes (or similar), rather than in the context of panegyric. And there are still further poetic forms to consider, such as pieces of satirical verse, which are often quite short. One of the common themes that emerge from these examples – *i.e.*, a typical way for the composition or performance context of a poem to be described – is the practice of *javāb-gū’ī*.

Our first passage is from the entry on a minor poet – perhaps more of a poetaster, in the elitist perspective of Sām Mīrzā – called Qāsim Qaranbū. This is an individual that Sām encountered in the city of Harāt (modern-day northwestern Afghanistan), where he spent much of his youth as a Safavid prince. He recounts in this notice that a group of Harātī poets were gathered, and that they were all compos-

22. All citations of the text of the *Tuḥfa* will point to the *c.* 1967 edition by Rukn al-Dīn Humāyūn Farrukh. For good measure, three other editions are listed in the bibliography: those of Mawlavī Iqbāl Ḥusayn (1934), Vaḥīd Dastgirdī (1936), and Aḥmad Mudaqqiq Yazdī (2009).

ing *javābs* to a certain *ghazal* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), the most famous Persian poet of the ninth/fifteenth century. To jog the reader’s memory, Sām Mīrzā quotes the opening line of Jāmī’s poem: “From love for you, there is a strange tumult in my heart today / grief at your absence has given me a different ecstasy today” (*az ‘ishq-i tu shūrī-st ‘ajab dar saram imrūz / dāda-st ghamat bi-khwudī-i dīgar-am imrūz*) (Sām Mīrzā Ṣafavī, 362). It could probably be assumed, for the proximal audience of the *Tuḥfa*, that they would be familiar with many of the *ghazals* of Jāmī, and that a small prompt like this would be sufficient for them to understand which poem was intended. Such *aide-mémoire* quotations can be seen at several points in the *Tuḥfa*.

In any case, Qāsim Qaranbū took the occasion of this exchange of *javābs* to direct a bit of satire toward two of his friends and fellow Harātī literati. Sām Mīrzā quotes what appear to be the first three lines of Qāsim’s response-*ghazal*. (We can tell, at least, that the first line quoted is also the opening line of the poem, since both hemistichs follow the rhyme – whereas, in subsequent lines, the rhyme is observed only at the end of the second hemistich). The quoted lines are as follows:

dīvāna u āshufta-dil u abtar-am imrūz / dar pīsh-i raqīb-i tu zi
sag kamtar-am imrūz;
tā na-shnavam āvāz-i Hilālī u na-bīnam / kūr-am chu Zulālī u
chu Qawsī kar-am imrūz;
Ḥaydar ki bi har kūcha davīdī bi kulūkhī / dar khāna-yi
khwud rah na-dahad Ḥaydar-am imrūz.

(I’m crazed, agitated, and destitute today / Next to my rival
for your love, I’m less than a dog today;
Until I hear the voice of Hilālī and see him / I’m blind like
Zulālī and deaf like Qawsī today;
Ḥaydar, who runs through the streets with clods of dirt /
Even Ḥaydar will not let me in his house today) (Sām Mīrzā
Ṣafavī, 362–63)

Apparently fond of this *javāb*, Sām Mīrzā also excerpts a line from later in the poem: “Tomorrow I will not wish for the shade of the tree of Paradise / if your cypress-like shadow is cast over my head today” (*fardā na-kunam ārizū-yi sāya-yi ṭūbā / gar sāya-yi sarv-i tu fatad bar saram imrūz*). Sām notes that this line “came out well” (*khūb vāqī‘ shuda*), and that it was out of a desire to quote it that he brought up the rest of the poem (*murād az irād-i in ghazal hamīn bayt ast*). The

‘good line’ must come from later in the poem, but it is probably not the final line. Again, a *ghazal* generally consists of between five and fourteen lines. The opening line, or *maṭlaʿ*, is special in that both hemistichs must follow the rhyme scheme. It is also often the case – though not in this piece by Qāsim Qaranbū – that the *maṭlaʿ* is the most pithy and quotable line in the poem. The ‘final’ line of a *ghazal*, or the *maqṭaʿ*, conventionally has the poet referring to him or herself by pen name (*takhalluṣ*). It becomes a moment of personal reflection on the ideas that have been expressed in the poem. In this case, Sām Mīrzā gives us (most likely) the opening three lines of Qāsim’s *ghazal*, and one later but non-final line.

Formal Requirements of a *Javāb*

It is worth pausing to explain, on a basic level, how *javāb-gūʿī* operates in Persian poetry. The rule is that a *javāb* should share all the formal characteristics of the original poem: the meter, the rhyme syllable (or syllables), and, if applicable, the refrain (*radīf*). That is, a line from the *javāb* could be inserted into the source poem without creating a technical problem. Qāsim Qaranbū’s *javāb* of Jāmī functions nicely as an example of this practice. He has used the same meter (a particular variant of *hazaj*), the same rhyme syllables (*-ar-am*), and the same *radīf* (*imrūz*, “today”). It can be easier to identify responses to a poem that has a *radīf* – which is not an uncommon feature, but is also far from ubiquitous. The refrain becomes a significant added constraint on the content of any *javāb*, and this makes coincidences less likely. If one were to find, in the *divān* of a post-Jāmī poet, a *ghazal* in this variant of *hazaj*, with the rhyme syllables *-ar-am* and a *radīf* of *imrūz*, one should have at least a strong suspicion that the more recent poem is a *javāb*. In the case of a *ghazal* without a *radīf*, on the other hand, the odds of a coincidence – *i.e.*, matching meter and rhyme – would be higher. Having said that, there are poems that reached such a degree of fame – the first *ghazal* in the *divān* of Ḥāfīz, for example – that any use of the same meter-rhyme pairing risks being interpreted, correctly or otherwise, as an attempt at *javāb-gūʿī*.

So much for the technical requirements of a *javāb*; there is, of course, supposed to be more to the practice. A poem becomes a ‘response’ to another not only through shared formal characteristics, but by playing with some of the same themes, images, and words that are found in the original. A *javāb* can modify the perspective articu-

lated in the source poem, or reject it entirely. The general idea, anyway, is that the second poet engages in a kind of conversation with the first. And there should be enough to link the *javāb* to the original – including formal aspects, but also, more subjectively, points of connection in content – that the relationship will be legible to readers.

Returning to the *Tuḥfa*

In the case of Sām Mīrzā's discussion of Qāsim Qaranbū, of course, we are given a more direct explanation of the context: this was recited at a gathering of poets, at which multiple people shared their *javābs* of the same *ghazal* of Jāmī. We may or may not opt to view the practice of *javāb-gū'ī* as creating its own type of literary occasion; but in this instance, at least, we know from Sām Mīrzā that there was a *literal* occasion. With regard to the content, Qāsim seems to be poking fun at his friends Zulāli, Qawsī, and Ḥaydar, while also expressing his desire to hear the voice of Hilālī (d. 936/1529) – who was one of the great Persian poets of that period in Harāt. There is little to nothing stylistically noteworthy about this satirical *javāb* by Qāsim. Sām Mīrzā seems to have recorded it mainly because he found one of the lines well-formed, and perhaps out of amusement. But the poem does have an occasional aspect, which is shown to us through the accompanying anecdote.

Next, on a similar theme, we have the entry on Āgahī Khurāsānī, who served as a bureaucrat at the court of the Timurids (one of the predecessor dynasties of the Safavids) at the end of the ninth/fifteenth century. Among the curious phenomena that Sām Mīrzā describes in the *Tuḥfa* is that certain poems would have phases of popularity, such that numerous poets would each compose a *javāb*. This could take place in an *ad hoc* setting, as with the anecdote above, in which the poets of Harāt were riffing on a *ghazal* of Jāmī. But a 'circle of *javābs*' could also be composed for longer poems, and on more of a correspondence basis. One example of this evidently occurred in the late ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries, during which time there was a vogue in composing *javābs* to a famous *qaṣīda* by the poet Amīr Khusraw (d. 725/1325). The poem in question is known as the *Daryā-yi abrār* ("Sea of the Pious"), and it addresses religious and philosophical ideas. The wave of *javābs* of this *qaṣīda* that appeared around the turn of the tenth/sixteenth century involved both famous poets, such as Jāmī and 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī (d.

906/1501), and lesser-known figures. Sām Mirzā mentions four *javābs* of the *Daryā-yi abrār* in the *Tuhfa*.

One of those responses was written by Āgahī Khurāsānī, the aforementioned bureaucrat. Sām explains that Āgahī was frequently in conflict with people in the city of Harāt, so he took the opportunity of composing a *javāb* of Amīr Khusraw’s *qaṣīda* to satirize the Harātīs. Āgahī’s poem is also referred to here as a *shahr-āshūb* (“disturber of the city”), a flexible genre in which the poet comments – often in a risqué manner – on the various inhabitants of a given city. (This is a great oversimplification of the *shahr-āshūb* tradition in Persian poetry, but it will have to do for the moment; see Sharma, “The City of Beauties”). The lines quoted from Āgahī are as follows:

‘arṣa-yi shahr-i Harī rashk-i sipihr-i akhẓar ast /
dargahash rā shamsa-yi khurshīd gul-mīkh-i zar ast;
jirm-i ẓīn yak musht-i khāk az khāk-rīz-i khandaqash /
nargis-i bāgh-i jahān-ārā-yi ū haft akhtar ast;
pāyitakht-i ṣad hazārān khusraw-i gītī-gushā-st /
kuhna tārikh-i basī shāhān-i anjum-lashkar ast;
charkh-i kaj-raw bīn ki az ta’šīr-i ū shahrī chunīn /
maskan-i jam’ī parīshān-rūzgār-i abtar ast

(The square of the city of Harāt is the envy of the azure firmament / Its court has the sun itself for a decorative element;

This globe of clay is just a handful of dirt from the wall of its moat / The narcissus of its world-adorning garden²³ is equal to the seven heavens;

It is the capital of a hundred thousand world-conquering rulers / It holds the history of so many kings with soldiers as numerous as the stars;

Look at the crookedness of the heavens, by whose influence such a city / has become the home of a group of ill-fated losers) (Sām Mirzā Ṣafavī, 208–09)

The response-*qaṣīda* apparently continued from this point to satirize specific Harātī individuals, but Sām Mirzā explains that much of the poem is so off-color that it would be inappropriate to quote in his *tazkira* (*ān rā zikr kardan lāyiq-i siyāq-i kitāb nīst*). Sām further notes that Āgahī wrote this satirical poem after a certain incident at the Timurid court, in which he had been accused of malfeasance and nearly lost his position, before being forgiven by the ruler. We therefore see

23. This was the proper name of a garden in Harāt.

in this case the production of poetry that has both a kind of literary occasion (*i.e.*, *imitatio* of an earlier *qaṣīda* by Amīr Khusraw), and a more concrete political occasion (*i.e.*, taking a potshot at one's rivals).

For the next example, we will draw from a curious entry in the final chapter of the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī* – the chapter in which Sām Mīrzā describes members of the lower classes and their attempts to compose verse. Some of those attempts are characterized as incompetent. There are notices that are included in this section of the *Tuḥfa* simply because Sām Mīrzā finds novelty and amusement in the efforts of uneducated people in the bazaar to come up with their own poetry.

One such individual is Nūrī Quflgar, or 'Nūrī the Locksmith.' Sām Mīrzā describes Nūrī as a true master in the art of locksmithing, then he explains, "After seventy years [of life], it occurred to his exalted mind that he should become a poet" (*ba'd az haftād sāl bi khāṭir-i sharīf-i ishān rasīd ki shā'ir mī-bāyad shud*) (Sām Mīrzā Ṣafavī, 365). It is not mentioned where Nūrī lived, but the most likely option is again Harāt, where Sām Mīrzā spent his formative years in the 1520s and '30s, and which serves as the setting of many of the colorful anecdotes in the *Tuḥfa*. Of Nūrī's poetry, Sām states that "it does not follow the rules of meter and also has no meaning" (*nā-mawzūn ast va ma'nā ham na-dārad*). And one of the examples that he cites is a supposed *javāb* of a *ghazal* by the great eighth/fourteenth century poet Ḥāfiẓ of Shirāz (d. c. 792/1390). Sām Mīrzā quotes the elegant opening line of Ḥāfiẓ's poem: "I saw the green field of the heavens and the sickle of the crescent moon / I thought of my own farm and the harvest time" (*mazra'-i sabz-i falak dīdam u dās-i mah-i naw / yādam az kishta-yi khwīsh āmad u hangām-i diraw*) (Sām Mīrzā Ṣafavī, 365). As with the earlier example from Jāmī, it can be assumed that everyone would recognize this.

Then comes Nūrī's *javāb*, which is unmetred and almost nonsensical: "I saw the quick ball of the heavens, running back and forth / I told it 'Don't go so fast, barley, barley, barley!'" (*kura-yi tund-i falak dīdam u ū dar tak-u-daw / guftam-ash tund ma-raw, jaw jaw jaw, jaw jaw jaw*). By way of at least partially explaining this poem, Sām Mīrzā notes that, when reciting it, Nūrī would shake the front of his tunic, just as someone would put barley in the front of his tunic and shake it to attract a horse that had run off. Like much of the poetry in the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, this snippet by Nūrī Quflgar has no intrinsic significance. What is of literary-historical and social-historical interest in such anecdotes is that we see how the poem came into being: what prior work it was meant to imitate; how and in what context it was

performed; and so forth. (Having a record of the literary activities of a locksmith in early Safavid Iran may also be meaningful). Again, an entry in a biographical anthology can give a sense of ‘occasion’ to a poem that would not otherwise display clear signs (and would otherwise probably not survive).

Finally, we will turn to an example of a different sort. This occurs in the notice on an individual called Sawsanī – a man of Turkic background who served the Safavids and apparently fancied himself a poet in both the Turkic and Persian languages. Sām Mīrzā reports that Sawsanī was notorious for taking poetry composed by others, repurposing it in some way, and claiming it as his own work: “He reads the poetry of [other] people in his own name” (*shī’r-i mardum bi nām-i khwud mī-khwānad*) (Sām Mīrzā Ṣafavī, 358–59). There is a rather amusing anecdote in this connection, which Sām relates secondhand from one of his acquaintances.

The story goes that a group of young men, including Sawsanī, were socializing in the city of Tabrīz. Their program was to amble about, and whenever they saw an attractive young man or adolescent boy, they would all try to extemporize poetry about his beauty. On the day in question, this group happened to pass by a butcher’s apprentice, and they stopped so that each of them could create a bit of verse about the charming youth. Before any of the others, Sawsanī recited a pleasing line, which was indeed about falling in love with a butcher: “Whenever that butcher places a blade to my throat / I set my head upon the ground so that he can tread on my face” (*har gāh ān qaṣṣāb tiḡhī bar gilū-yi man nahad / mī-zanam sar bar zamīn tā pā bi rū-yi man nahad*) (Sām Mīrzā Ṣafavī, 359). Then, every few moments, while the other friends were still deep in thought, Sawsanī would recite yet another line – until he had completed a fine *ghazal* of seven lines. The whole group praised Sawsanī for his triumph of extemporaneous poetry. Later, they were relaxing at a barbershop, and one of them opened a book that was lying on a shelf – a copy of the collected works of an eighth/fourteenth century poet named Kamāl Khujandī (d. 803/1400–01). The friend flipped to a random page in the book and saw the very *ghazal* that Sawsanī had just claimed to compose. To make matters even more embarrassing and comical, Sawsanī insisted that he had never seen this poem by Kamāl,²⁴ and that his re-authorship of it must have been a coincidence. This is, of course, not really a story about the occasional composition of a *ghazal*; but it is a case of what one might call ‘occasional plagiarism.’

There are many other passages in the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī* comparable to

24. It should be noted that, as best we can tell, the poem is actually attributed to Hilālī, not to Kamāl as Sām Mīrzā narrates. See Hilālī Astarābādī Chaghata’ī, 67. The text can also be found in the [Ganjoor corpus](#) (last access on 4 October 2024).

those that have been highlighted as examples. As we have seen, perhaps the most characteristic type of anecdote in the *Tuḥfa*, relating to the circumstances of composition of poetry, involves people of Sām Mīrzā's time composing *javābs* of well-known poems – usually (though not always) from earlier generations. When an entry also mentions something about the context in which a *javāb* was performed or shared with fellow poets, we find a reflection of both literary and social occasionality – at least, if we apply a flexible definition of 'occasional.'

Conclusions

The larger issue at stake is whether our understanding of occasional poetry within the Persian tradition can be broadened and elaborated to encompass the phenomena discussed here. Any student of classical Persian literature will acknowledge the panegyric *qaṣīda* as the quintessential form/genre of occasional verse – and I do not seek to challenge this idea. (Again, some types of *qiṭ'ā* have also been treated as occasional. That association need not be disputed, either). After all, the 'indicators of occasionality' suggested at the beginning of this paper still apply to the *qaṣīda* more clearly than to any manifestation of the *ghazal*. What I would advocate is the consideration of a wider corpus of poetry in other forms as 'potentially' occasional, while affirming the role of the *qaṣīda*.

We ought to keep in mind, however, the magnitude of the gradual shift in literary taste (and in political and economic importance) away from the *qaṣīda* and toward the *ghazal*. In the late ninth/fifteenth century, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī was able to reflect on this change in a matter-of-fact tone, in his *Bahāristān*, a wide-ranging educational text that includes a *tazkira*-esque chapter on Persian poetry. It is obvious, from Jāmī's discussion, that the transition from *qaṣīda* to *ghazal* was long since a *fait accompli* (Jāmī 123, see also Lewis). He explains that "poetry comes in different forms" (*shi'r bar aqsām ast*), listing the examples of the *qaṣīda*, *ghazal*, *maṣnavī*, and *qiṭ'ā*. Jāmī then notes that some poets compose in all the forms, while others have clearer preferences or specializations. By way of example – and here is the key point – Jāmī states that "poets from earlier periods" (*mutaqaddimān*) "placed emphasis on *qaṣīdas*, in panegyric, exhortation, etc., and some of them focused on the *maṣnavī*" (*ihtimām-i ishān bi qaṣāyid būda-st dar madāyih va mavā'iz va ghayri ān, va ihtimām-i ba'zī bi maṣnavī*). This is in contrast to "more recent

poets” (*muta’akhhirān*), whose work, according to Jāmī, “has been composed mostly in the *ghazal* form” (*akṣar bar ṭarīq-i ghazal vāqī shuda-st*). He goes on to note that “the number of this group [of poets] is beyond limit or counting, and mentioning their details would exceed the basis of comprehension” (*‘adad-i in ṭā’ifa az ḥadd va ḥaṣr bīrūn ast, va zikr-i tafāṣīl-i īshān az qā’ida-yi ihāṭa mutajāviz*). That is, there were far too many *ghazal* poets in Jāmī’s era for him to mention more than a tiny selection of them in the *Bahāristān*.

This situation – an effectively limitless quantity of *ghazals* being generated on all sides – would persist throughout the centuries, up to (and into) the modern period. (It was, in fact, not limited to Persian; the *ghazal* became a similarly vital poetic form in other languages, including Ottoman Turkish and Urdu). The culture of Persian poetry after the ascendancy of the *ghazal* – the culture reflected in the *Tuhfa-yi Sāmī* – was one in which literati were overwhelmingly interested in composing love lyrics (of various kinds), and decreasingly likely to participate in the traditional model of court panegyric. Where, then, should occasional poetry be situated? Is it not reasonable to look for occasionality also in the omnipresent, versatile, extemporizable *ghazal*? To be fair, it seems likely that many Persianists would be sympathetic toward this perspective. The field suffers not from a misunderstanding of occasional verse, but from an under-theorization of it.

If one is inclined to entertain a somewhat more liberal concept of occasionality in Persian poetry, then among the logical courses of investigation is to study *tazkiras* for their discussion of the circumstances – sometimes quite specific – of the composition of poems, typically *ghazals*. A meeting of an urban literary salon in the tenth/sixteenth century was, per a certain understanding, comparable to a circle of court poets in the fifth/eleventh century. Each of these settings provided the dominant context for the performance and exchange of poetry in its own era. We are, admittedly, usually more limited in what we can determine about the background of a *ghazal* – since there may be nothing in the lyric content that can be associated with a certain time, place, or event. But this is where biographical and anthological sources like the *Tuhfa-yi Sāmī* could be summoned to help. If a *tazkira* notice quotes from a *ghazal* while describing the moment of its composition or recital, then, depending on the specifics, a frame of occasionality may have been added.

A final question is whether it is tenable to extend this idea to cases in which the composition of a poem is described as *javāb-gū’ī*, and a connection is drawn between the ‘call’ and ‘response’ texts. Is this,

too, a kind of literary occasion, perhaps across a substantial temporal and/or spatial gap? This may appear to stretch the definition of occasionality beyond sensible limits. There are, however, descriptions in *tazkiras* of gatherings at which poets would share their *javābs* of a given source poem. Such cases, of which we have seen an example from the *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, suggest that *javāb-gūʿī* was, at minimum, ‘linked’ to poetic occasionality. Could a *javāb* also *create* an occasion – one of dialogue among the poets involved – without reference to a discrete gathering or other event? If we are willing to take steps like this, then still further avenues of interpretation will be opened.

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Poetry and Patronage in the Barberini Entourage: the *Technopaignia* of the Southern Italian Greek-Speaking Poet Francesco Arcudi, Bishop of Nusco (1590–1641)

Abstract

In 1638 the Vatican Typography printed a book in memory of Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc; the book was dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini and it is a clear example of the way in which political (and ecclesiastical) power influenced the cultural dynamics of the seventeenth century. Among the scholars who composed verses for the death of de Peiresc we find Francesco Arcudi, a literate priest from the Greek-speaking area of Southern Apulia, who migrated to Rome to study in the Greek College of St. Athanasius. He showed his Greek (linguistic and liturgical) knowledge at the court of Francesco Barberini. Arcudi's poetic production is, in its greatest part, dedicated to Pope Urban VIII Barberini and his nephew, Cardinal Francesco; the poems are written for various occasions, aiming to celebrate the power and glory of the pope's and cardinal's family. Of great interest are Arcudi's τεχνοπαιγνια, figure epigrams inscribed in the shape of a bee (the arms of the Barberini family) or an eagle (symbol of Barberini's power), here edited for the first time. After an overview of Francesco Arcudi's personality and poetic production, the paper aims to advance our understanding of the cultural landscape (during the pontificate of Pope Barberini) and show the way in which Barberini's patronage influenced Arcudi's work and that of other scholars in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Keywords

Greek Renaissance poetry, Greek epigrams, figure epigrams, Barberini's entourage, Francesco Arcudi.

1. Introduction

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the three bees emblem, symbol of the Barberini family, signaled a driving force in much cultural and literary production in Rome and at the papal curia. From

1. An extensive collection of studies on the Barberini family and cultural entourage is that of Mochi Onori et al.

2. See Allacci, *Apes Barberinae* for a prosopographical and biographical index of the major authors of the Barberini entourage around the year 1633. See also Legrande.

here came not only a poetic stimulus and source of inspiration, but also a safe and continuous medium of patronage. Both Italian and foreign scholars and antiquarians gathered around the figures of Pope Urbanus VIII (born Maffeo Vincenzo Barberini, who held the throne of St. Peter from 1623 to 1644; see Lutz) and his nephew Francesco Barberini (cardinal from 1623; died in 1679; see Merola). Any attempt to highlight here even just the most salient features of this period of dense cultural, religious, and political would be doomed to failure.¹ Yet, one may hope that these will soon attract more attention among modern scholars. A good starting point would be to compile a prosopography of the many persons who devoted themselves to historical, artistic, and literary enterprises during the pontificate of Urbanus VIII, with accompanying bibliographical profiles. Here we will limit ourselves to mentioning some of the more illustrious members of the *Res publica litterarum Barberina* who, like bees around a honeypot, participated in the advancement of knowledge in the fields of antiquarianism, philology, ecclesiastical history and poetry.² We have, for example, the French humanists and antiquarians Claude-Fabri De Peiresc, Claude Saumaise, and Pierre Poussines; Henri Dormal from Flanders; the geographer, historian and bibliophile Lukas Holste from Germany; Greek-speaking scholars from the Ottoman Empire like the polygraph Leon Allacci, the theologian Petros Arcudios, and many others (e.g. Mattheus Caryophyllis); the Greek-native Nicholaus Alemanni and the missionary and ecclesiastical writer Neophytos Rhodinòs from Cyprus. The Barberini manuscripts, both Greek and Latin, now in the Vatican Library, are a treasure trove, though not yet sufficiently investigated, for a better understanding of these human and cultural relations. They document philological studies on many patristic and Byzantine texts, erudite discussions on important topics and, not least, requests from members of the pope's closest circle, involving all the talented scholars mentioned above and many others. It was precisely in this cultural atmosphere that the philological investigation of various theological assumptions and liturgical customs of Eastern Christians and attempts to demonstrate the unity of the universal Church and to foster dialogue with Orthodoxy in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation flourished. Vast areas of central and northern Europe had recently broken away from the central power of Rome, professing not only a radical return to the Gospel truth and a new ecclesiastic organization, but also a different theological vision of doctrines and sacraments. Through philological, theological, and liturgical studies,

Allacci and Arcudios sought to demonstrate the existence of a perpetual consensus, an inseparable union on the level of faith and liturgical practice, between the Church of the East and the Church of the West (Herklotz, *Die Academia Basiliana*; “The Academia Basiliana”). Allacci, Caryophyllis and others were concerned at encountering the first signs of Lutheran and Calvinist penetration into Eastern Europe. They and others violently attacked the Patriarch of Constantinople Kyrillos Lùkaris (1572–1638) who, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, had opened up to the reformist demands of Central Europe and had written a confession of faith strongly influenced by Calvinist thought. On this topic, see Runciman 259–88; Khokhar; Nosilla and Prandolini; Falkowsky. Treatises and polemical writings went hand in hand with this commitment. One example of this is Neophytos Rhodinòs, a missionary in southern Albania, working on behalf of the congregation *De propaganda fide*. He was in constant contact with Roman circles, in particular with Francesco Barberini and Leone Allacci,³ and exercised his ministry in the Balkans, instructing the Hellenophones of the Himara in the Greek language and educating them in the Catholic faith (see Karalevsky; Brunello). He also preached in northern Greece and was persecuted by the Ecumenical Patriarch Lùkaris (see Tsirpanlis, “Ο Νεόφυτος Ροδινός”).

It is difficult to detail the vast and complex landscape of cultural interplay that also had a major impact on the production of poetry. Strong cultural tension came to be expressed through editions of ancient texts, compilations of erudite works on specific themes (e.g. to the many works on homonymy carried out by Allacci), and through personal composition of verses and the creation of poetic anthologies. One example is the *Monumentum Romanum* from 1637, a collection of poems edited by Jan-Jacque Buchard, celebrating the death of Nicolas-Claude Fabri De Peiresc (1580–1637),⁴ a scientist and man of letters with a wide reputation in early seventeenth-century Europe and closely linked to Cardinal Francesco Barberini.⁵ Despite its simple structure, the *Monumentum* is a true paradigm of an era, a manifesto of a generation of men of letters who wove verses under the patronage of the powerful cardinal. Rather than shedding tears over the death of their illustrious dedicatee, bent their poetic muse to Barberini’s wishes, crowded together to show off, flaunted a cultural background nourished by classical readings, and displayed erudition and a baroque vein. Such behaviour could hardly hide, or most probably did not want to hide, a very ill-concealed careerism. De Peiresc’s death became an occasion for a deferential homage to the *auctor* of

3. Yet unedited letters between Rhodinòs and Allacci are still preserved in the *Fondo Allacci* of the Biblioteca Vallicelliana in Rome and I’m working on them for a forthcoming paper.

4. On Peiresc see Fumaroli.

5. The prelate was notoriously well disposed towards French politics, intellectuals and artists. See Pieyre; Colomer.

the collection, Francesco Barberini, and the opportunity to indulge his taste and follow his cultural directives. The result is a collection of verse of a high standard that concludes with the interesting section entitled Παγγλωσσία. This last section, a veritable treasure trove, contains poems in all languages known at the time, both ancient and modern, ranging from Sanskrit to epigraphic Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, Albanian, Modern Greek, Hungarian, Japanese, Russian, and Peruvian. The anthology stems from a mournful event (de Peiresc's death) and should be testament to the esteem and affection for a man who had dedicated his life to science, but actually it reads more as a symbol of a triumphant Church, present in every age of humanity, militant in every corner of the earth, even the most remote. Displaying a Baroque poetic tendency, strongly influenced by the patronage of the Barberini family, the *Monumentum* is an obvious manifesto of a Counter-Reformation Church, dominated by the Barberini family and guided by the poet pope Urbanus VIII, who through this confirms his power, patronage and universality.

2. Francesco Arcudi: the poet

Among the many poets who contributed to the *Monumentum Romanum* was Francesco Arcudi, a scholar born in 1590 in Soleto (Terra d'Otranto), in the Greek-speaking area of southern Apulia. When he was only ten years old, in 1600, Arcudi began studying at the Pontifical Greek College of St. Athanasius in Rome. There, alongside companions such as the aforementioned Leone Allacci and under the guidance of teachers such as Nicola Alemanni and Giasone Sozomeno, he continued his studies until he completed a doctor's degree. After finishing his studies in 1613, he returned to Soleto, where he was ordained priest according to the Latin rite. At home, the socio-cultural and political situation was still inflamed, especially due to the delicate transition of the collegiate church of Soleto from the Greek to the Latin rite. It was not the right climate for those who cultivated literary and erudite interests or aspired to a career within less circumscribed horizons.⁶ It was also for these reasons that he began to collect Greek manuscripts from Salento and to make a gift of them to Cardinal Francesco Barberini and Pope Urbanus VIII. They had created the Barberini Library, and any valuable donation that would help to expand the library's collection was welcome. This devotion earned Arcudi first a return to Rome and to the circle of the cardinal and then

6. On Arcudi's biography and works see Legrand 435–71; Impellizzeri; Giannachi. On Arcudi's knowledge of the Byzantine liturgy see Parenti.

7. On this manuscript see Maleci; Sciarra.

8. See Rhoby, *Ausgewählte Byzantinische Epigramme*. For a broad overview of the subject, see all references to occasional poetry in Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry I*. See also Drpić.

9. For the epigrams in BAV, Barb. gr. 279 see Giannachi. The manuscript is now digitized and available on the [web](#).

10. The epigrams presented in this paper are all taken from Francesco Arcudi's autographs preserved in manuscript BAV, Barb. gr. 279. The author took particular care in spelling the verses he wrote, for the obvious reason of appearing as accurate as possible in the eyes of his patrons. For this reason, after careful examination of the texts, I have preserved the original spelling throughout, as well as the diacritic marks. I have only intervened to restore the capitalized initials of personal names and place names. The graphic presentation of the epigrams in elegiac couplets with every second verse indented also reflects Arcudi's choice.

the appointment as bishop of Nusco in Irpinia, which came in 1639.

All of Arcudi's donations of books (including not least the archetypal codex of the *Etymologicum Gudianum*, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [BAV], Barb. gr. 70)⁷ were accompanied by Greek epigrams of his. Arcudi was a true devotee of this type of poetry and in this he continued a long tradition that stretched from the Greek Middle Ages⁸ to the Early Modern period. We are left with a corpus of about fifty epigrams of varying length (see Surace 334–35; Giannachi 898–139). He wrote Greek verses, dactylic hexameters and elegiac couplets, for various occasions during the year, such as the Pope's genethliacs, or in reply to gifts from his illustrious patrons, or for special events related to the cultural activities of the Barberini family. Examples of the latter include: a new statue erected in the Barberini library, a museum opened by Francesco Barberini at Monte Mario, a gift of forty-one gold coins from the cardinal, the discovery of a reference to statues burnt by the Latins at Constantinople in the assault of 1204, found in a codex containing Niketas Choniates' *Chronike Dieghesis*. The greatest quantity of his occasional epigrammatic poetry is preserved in ms. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Barb. gr. 279.⁹ Poetry became a means of excelling in the eyes of powerful prelates, demonstrating one's erudition and cultivating one's career. Thus, he indulged in poetic activity from a compelling need to be under the eyes of the pope and the cardinal and to be counted among the *litterati* closest to the Barberini family in order to obtain appointments, bonuses, and promotions. In this sense, we can speak of Arcudi's epigrammatic poetry as occasional poetry. Our author attempted to amplify every important action through the sounding board of his verses, and to understand not only the way Arcudi's poetry was born (the literary occasion) but also how it was enjoyed by its recipients. We must note that many of Arcudi's epigrams, like those of many other poets who gravitated around the Barberini court, have remained in handwritten manuscripts, preserved among the papal or cardinal's archival papers. They were intended as private reading for the erudite circle led by the two Barberini. As for the epigrams that Arcudi wrote in the manuscripts he donated to the pope's or the cardinal's collection, they were also only intended for those who owned and used the books. To amplify the importance of his gift, Arcudi had his seal imprinted on them, so that even future patrons would remember his affection and dedication.

Some of the epigrams can be dated to Arcudi's Roman period. What follows below is an edition¹⁰ and translations of some poems,

which exemplify Arcudi's style. The edited epigrams were chosen because they highlight certain occasions that inspired the epigrammatic production and because they testify to the baroque style of our author, who often indulges in the same images (the bee, the honeycomb, the honey) in praising the munificence of his patrons.

11. See Giannachi 115.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 60r)¹¹

Εἰς εἰκόνα χαλκῆν Οὐρβανοῦ τοῦ Ὀγδόου
τὴν ἐν τῇ Βαρβερινῇ βιβλιοθήκῃ ἀναστηλωθεῖσαν.

Βαρβερινὸς Φραγκίσκος ἐδείματο βιβλιοθήκην,
ὡς στάδιον σοφίης· εἰκόνα θεῖς δὲ μέσην
Οὐρβανοῦ ἐν σοφίῃ ἄκρου, σταδιεῦσιν ἐνίσπει·
δεῦρ' ἴτ'· ἀγνοθέτης ἄθλα πάρεστι νέμων.

Οὐρβανῶ τῶ Ὀγδόῳ
εὐκτικόν

Σοὶ νεότητ' ἀετοῦ Θεὸς ἄμβροτος αἰὲν ὀπάσσοι,
καὶ πολλῶν ἐτέων οὐποτε κύκλα λίποι.

(For a bronze image of Urbanus VIII erected in the Barberini library.

Francesco Barberini built the library as an arena of wisdom, and in placing the image of Urbanus, the supreme example of wisdom, in the middle, he says to the runners: "Come on! The judge is here and oversees the races!."

To Urbanus VIII as a wish.

May the immortal God always grant you the youthful vigor of an eagle and may the cycles of many years never take an end for you).

A new statue of the pope erected by his nephew, the cardinal, in the family's private library became a cue for our author to write laudatory verses and good wishes. Expressing his devotion through formulas of good wishes with this epigram, he once again testified to his competence in the Greek language, much appreciated in the Barberini entourage. We also deduce from the text that Arcudi frequented the Barberini house assiduously and was admitted to the newly-founded library.

Another epigram was written to accompany the gift by Arcudi of

a book by Methodius on chastity. This was the *Συμπόσιον περὶ ἀγνείας* by Methodius of Olympus, a bishop of Middle Eastern origin who lived between the third and fourth centuries suffering a martyrdom during the time of Diocletian. Of these verses we curiously possess the original Arcudian version and a second version made in response to the pope's revisions? corrections? suggestions? The works of the scholar from Salento used to abound with references to classical mythology. This Urbanus VIII pointed out to him, so much so that Arcudi modified the poetic text. In the second version, Arcudi dwells more on the martyrdom of Methodius and is forced to openly reject the ancient myths as false tales of poets.

12. See Giannachi 117–18.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 61r)¹²

Εἰς τὴν περὶ ἀγνείας βίβλον Μεθοδίου τοῦ μάρτυρος

Ἡ Κύπρις τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἰχνηλατέουσ', ὑπ' ἀκάνθης
τὸν πόδα ἐτρώθη· αἶμα δ' ἔβαψε ρόδα.
Μειθόδιος δὲ θανῶν περὶ πίστιος, αἶματι βάψεν
ἄνθεα παρθενίης, ἄφθιτα, λευκὰ πάλαι.

Idem emendatum et correctum ab auctore sui
ex censura URBANI octavi P.O.M.
doctissimi et sapientissimi Sacrae Poësis Principis

Ψευδὲς μουσπολῶν φῦλον μυθεύσατο, ὅτι
τρωθείσης Παφίης αἶμα* ἔβαψε ρόδα. * vel λύθρος
κάλλος ὅμως γε ρόδοιο ἀπόλλυται. ὤλετο Κύπρις,
ὡς σκιά, ὡς ὄναρ, ὡς μῦθος ἀοιδοπόλων.
Μειθόδιος δὲ θανῶν περὶ πίστιος, αἶματι βάψεν
ἄνθεα ἀγνείης, κ' ἄφθιτός ἔστιν ἔτι.
κ' ἄφθιτα ἀγνείης ἔπλε κάλλεα, πορφύροντα
λύθρω Μειθοδίου. ταῦτ' ἔχει ἡδε βίβλος.

(For the book by Methodius on chastity. Cypris, while chasing Adonis, injured her foot on a thorn and stained the rose with blood. But Methodius, having died for the faith, stained the eternal and once white flowers of virginity with blood.

The same epigram was amended and corrected by the author after the revision of Urbanus VIII, the most learned prince of sacred poetry.

The false servants of the muses told a lie: after being wounded, Aphrodite Paphia soiled the roses with blood* (*or with a bloodstain). The beauty of the rose, however, faded and Cypris died, like a ghost, a dream, a poet's tale. Methodius, on the other hand, who died for the faith, stained the flowers of chastity with blood and is still immortal; and the beauties of chastity, purple with Methodius's blood, became immortal. Such things are contained in this book.)

On f. 104r of BAV, Barb. gr. 279 there is a longer version of the first epigram, expanded in the second part with greater insistence on the superiority of Methodius' martyrdom over the ephemeral beauty of all that is mortal (see Giannachi 116–17; Pontani 120–21).

ἡ Κύπρις τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἰχνηλατέουσ', ὑπ' ἀκάνθης
τὸν πόδα ἐβλήθη· αἷμα δ' ἔβαψε ρόδα.
Μειθόδιος δὲ θανῶν περὶ πίστιος, αἵματι βάψεν
ἄνθεα παρθενίης, ἄφθιτα, λευκὰ πάλαι.
κεῖνα δ' ἄμ' ἠβάσκοντα ἐγήρασεν, ἠδ' ἔμαράνθη.
σαρκὸς γὰρ φθαρτῆς ἡ χάρις ὠκύμορος.
ἄφθιτα ταῦτα δ' ἔμεινεν ἀκήρατα, κρέσσονα τόσσον
σαρκὸς ὅσον φθαρτῆς πνεῦμα Θεοῦ προφέρει.

(Cypris, while chasing Adonis, was pricked in the foot by a thorn and soiled the roses with blood. But Methodius, having died for the faith, stained the once eternal and white flowers of virginity with blood. Those former flowers, as soon as they grew, faded and withered away. For the grace of a mortal body is short-lived. The latter, on the other hand, remained incorruptible, immaculate, all the greater because the spirit of God is superior to a mortal body).

These epigrams are particularly interesting because they not only highlight one of the most common occasions that stimulated Arcudi's epigrammatic poetry (the gift of a book), but also shed light on the dynamics of reception of our author's verses. The pope, we see, received the epigrams and read them personally, even intervening if something needed improvement. We know that Urban VIII was particularly sensitive to poetry and wrote verses himself in Greek and Latin. In this case, he acted as a reviser of Arcudi's verses, improving, according to his own taste, the poetic diction and choices. It is interesting to note that Arcudi copies both versions of the epigram onto the same page of the present manuscript BAV, Barb. gr. 279; he is keen

to emphasize that the second version is the one that came about after the Pope's intervention. That is, he deliberately wants to point out that his poems have caught the attention of Urban VIII, that they were directly read by him, and that the pope proposed changes that were accepted by the author. In the second version, Arcudi adheres strictly to the Pope's literary taste and modifies the epigram by placing more emphasis on the martyrdom of the Christian saint than on mythological references. Mythology is emphatically defined as a false narrative.

The two following epigrams, the fruit of Arcudi's heartfelt devotion to Francesco Barberini, also highlight some biographical elements. Francesco insists on his Salentine (Apulian) origin, on his love for and work under the orders of the cardinal, in the end thanking him for his reception in Rome, welcomed like a castaway Ulysses at the court of the Phaeacians. The expression of sincere affection towards Barberini returns here for allowing him to leave Salento, where he felt confined and undervalued, and for having received him among his collaborators in Rome.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 63r, again in f. 94r)

Τῷ ἐξοχωτάτῳ, καὶ αἰδεσιμωτάτῳ κυρίῳ
Φραγκίσκῳ Καρδινάλει τῷ Βαρβερινῷ

ἦνι Σαλεντίνων γλυκερὸς πόνος ἦλθε μελισσῶν
Ῥώμηγδ', ὑμετέροις νεύμασι πειθόμενος.
σεῖο φιλοφροσύνης γλυκεροῖς ἐνικάτθεο σίμβλοις,
ὡς ἔρου ἀκραιφνοῦς σύμβολον ἀντίτυπον.
ὦδε Ὑμηττείου μέλιτος ῥόου, ὦδε Ὑβλαίου,
τοῦτο μέλι προφέρει, σῶν μετέχον χαρίτων

ἄλλο

Ὑδρουντοῖθε μέλισσα φίλον μέλι πέμψε μελίσσαις
Βαρβεριναῖς Ῥώμηγδ', οἷά τ' ἔροιο φόρον.

(To the most eminent and respected sir Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Behold, the sweet work of the Salentine bees has arrived in Rome, persuaded by your nods. Place it in the sweet hives of your benevolence, as a pledge corresponding to pure love. Thus, this honey surpasses that of Hymettos and of Hybla, because it partakes of your graces.

Another one.

From Otranto a bee sent honey to Rome, to the bees of Barberini, as a gift of affection.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 80r)

Τῷ ἐξοχωτάτῳ, καὶ αἰδεσιμωτάτῳ κυρίῳ
Φραγκίσκῳ καρδινάλει τῷ Βαρβερινῷ

Ἄλκίνοος ποτ' ἔδεκτο φιλοφρονέων Ὀδυσῆα
τλήμονα ναηγὸν, δεινὰ παθόντα λίην.
νῦν δὲ φιλοφροσύνη μεγαλώνυμος, ἔξοχε, σεῖο
οἶά τε ναηγόν μ' ἄστεγον, εὐμενέως
δέξατο, καὶ μ' ἐγέρηρεν ἀνάξιον. ἦ ρά σ' αἰείσω
(ἡέρα ἄχρι πνέω) δεύτερον Ἄλκίνοον.

Ταπεινότατος δοῦλος
Φραγκίσκος ὁ Ἀρκούδιος

(To the most eminent and respected sir Cardinal Francesco Baberini. Once Alcinous, showing benevolence, welcomed Odysseus, an unfortunate castaway who had suffered much. Now, Your Eminence, your renowned benevolence welcomed me as a homeless castaway and honoured me even though I was unworthy. And I will sing to you, as long as I live, as the second Alcinous. Your most humble servant Francesco Arcudi).

Once again, we find a reference to Greek myth, but this time it is made to elevate the figure of the Cardinal even further and bring him into the panorama of heroes, through the comparison between him and Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, who rescued the shipwrecked Odysseus.

3. The Figure Poems by Arcudi

Arcudi also dabbled in a literary genre that could certainly have impressed the Cardinal: the *carmina figurata*. In the manuscript Barb. gr. 279, on f. 86r, there is a letter in Italian (Arcudi also wrote letters in Greek and Latin) which is essentially a message of heartfelt thanks for a gift received or a request fulfilled.

Em(inentissi)mo et R(everendissi)mo Si(gno)r mio e
 Prot(ettore) Col(endissi)mo
 Con un'altra mia accompagnata con un Epigramma, e da
 un'Ape, le cui ali erano vestite di versi a imitatione dell'amor'
 alato di Simmia Rodio, testificai in parte a V(ostra) E(minen-
 za) riconoscer l'obligationi mie verso di Lei viè più crescenti,
 per la cortese dimostrazione d'aiuto s'è degnata dare alle mie
 deboli forze [...].

(With another of my letters accompanied by an epigram, and
 by a Bee whose wings were dressed in verses in imitation of
 the *Winged Love* by Simmias Rhodius, I testify partially to
 your Eminence that I recognize my obligations towards you
 as they grow, because of the courteous demonstration of help
 you have deigned to give to my weak efforts [...]).

The letter is dated 23 October 1636 and refers to an earlier missive in which Arcudi had sent Barberini a composition inspired by the *carmina figurata* of Simmias of Rhodes, and in particular the epigram known as *The Wings*. Arcudi's work can be found in the Barberini codex mentioned above, which can rightly be termed as 'the Arcudi dossier' among the Barberini manuscripts in the Vatican Library.

In the manuscript we can admire not only the imposing bee with the devout verses on its wings, but also, a few pages later, an equally monumental eagle, finely drawn on a sheet of parchment, decorated on its breast with the usual emblem of the three bees. The masterly design is embellished with Greek verses inscribed in the outstretched wings, in imitation, once again, of Simmias' *carmen figuratum*.

Before we enter into an analysis of the contents of Arcudi's two epigrams, it is worth reflecting on the choice of literary genre and the possible reasons that led Arcudi to imitate Simmias' *Wings* poetically and to try his hand at a particular iconography. Little is known about Greek figure poetry of the Hellenistic period, not least because only six epigrams have survived. On the other hand, there has at all times been a widespread tendency to blend image, or rather form, and word (See Ernst, *Carmen Figuratum*; d'Ors; Luz; Diamantopoulou, *Griechische visuelle*). To give just a few examples, we may recall Levius, a poet active between the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE in the circle of the pre-neotericists, and Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius (fourth century CE), author of the *versus intexti*, verses literally interwoven through pieces of papyrus agglutinated into one another.

During the Latin and Greek Middle Ages, prose texts were also sometimes inscribed with an image reminiscent of what it contained. In fact, figurative Gospels, in which a cross drawn on the page, often with obvious polychrome borders, contained the sacred text, were widespread in the East among high-quality book artefacts (see Hörandner; Diamantopoulou, *Στίχοι υφαντοί*). As with Simmias Rhodius, also Theocritus and Dosiadas from 3rd–2nd century BCE dabbled in literary games, adapting verses to the space of a defined form and alluding to this with the content. After this, a new image became to the Byzantines the vessel of the sacred text par excellence, reproducing the most elevated thing for a medieval Christian person: the cross (Diamantopoulou, *Στίχοι υφαντοί*).

Even the Renaissance took an interest in *carmina figurata*. Suffice it to say that these Hellenistic compositions, transmitted uninterrupted in manuscripts up to the threshold of the Renaissance, were published already in the 1515 Giuntina edition of Theocritus and again in the 1516 edition edited by Zaccaria Kalliergi.¹³

13. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Hellenistic *τεχνοπαίγνια* came back into vogue, above all thanks to the work of the French experimentalist poet Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), and this time too with a spirit and sensitivity very similar to those of antiquity. Cubists and Futurists deconstructed the artistic space, even that of the manuscript page, and so the word became image and the verse, naturally deprived of any metrical structure, took on the form of a trace. The poetic word, therefore, not only meant but also necessarily represented the author's thought. All this cannot be defined as a literary game, or rather not only, but as a committed expressive technique, the offspring of a new vision of reality.

14. In the manuscript, at the top of f. 137r, the verses are preceded by the dedication (Οὐρβανῶ τῷ Ὀγδόῳ) and an elegiac couplet (Μοῦσα ἐμὴ ἀμδρῶς ἐχαράξατο τῆδε μελίση/ Σεῦ ἀρετῆν, σοφίην, θέσκελα ἔργα Σέο).

3.1 The Wings of the Bee

As critics have deduced, the *carmen figuratum* known as *The Wings*, was written by Simmias of Rhodes (*Anth. Pal.* 15.24) to decorate a statue of Eros, and it must have been inscribed inside the wings of the divine image. In Arcudi's poem, instead of Eros, the powerful god and ruler of a primordial human feeling, love, we find the bee, emblem of a noble family, the Barberini – just as, if not more, powerful and capable of stimulating the muse of a young archpriest of the seventeenth century in search of a career, than Eros was in inspiring a Hellenistic poet.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 137r)¹⁴

Βαρβερινῆς εἰμὶ Μελίσσης σκιά. οὐκ ἀνθέεσιν δ' ὠκυμόροις [– –]
 αὐτὰρ ἀγήρων σοφίης λείρια αἰὲν δρέπομαι ὄνειρα
 ὡς μέλιτος στάζῃ ἀπαὶ σμήνεος. οὐδ' ἄπωθεν
 σφήκες, ἄμουσοί τ' ἀμύητοι ἔστων
 τῆς σοφίης. τὸ θεῖον
 δ' ἔδωκε,

πτέρυξι
 τῶν ἀρετῶν θέειν γῆς

πείρατα. Κράντειρα φύσει, ἄκεντρος
 οὔσα δ' ἀνάσσοις· πολιτείας παναρίστου εἰκῶν,
 κ' εὐνομίας· θελξινοῶν τ' ἀγγελέουσα χθονίοισι πειθῶ,
 εὐνάσας ἢ ἔχθος ἀνάκτων. θεομίμητε σύ, καὶ θειοφιλῆς βιώης

(I am a copy of a Barberini bee; I do not gather ephemeral flowers [~ – –] but always lilies of imperishable wisdom, so that my honey may grow from the honeycomb. Unlettered wasps, uninitiated into wisdom, must be kept away from this. God allowed me, through the wings of virtue, to travel to the ends of the earth. Queen by nature, you will be sovereign though you have no sting; you, the image of good government and justice; you, who by sweetening souls announce to mortals the persuasion with which you appeased the hatred of kings. You, imitator of God, may you live protected by God).

Evidently bipartite, both in form and substance, this epigram claims to imitate its archetype by its external structure and partly also by some internal elements. Simmias' verses let Eros speak directly and the first person dominates his whole composition, especially from v. 3 onwards. In Arcudi's epigram, the bee, symbol of the noble papal family, speaks directly only in the part spatially placed in the left wing (part 1). The second half of the epigram, on the other hand, is a pompous praise of the insect as a Barberini banner and indirectly, therefore, of the pope's gifts. The section thematizes some of the bee's typical qualities: the bee is a queen, addressed as sovereign of the Papal State and vicar of Saint Peter, and as an example of order and justice, it has the ability to sweeten with honey, an indirect reference to the pope's ability to settle quarrels and create peace.

Arcudi, therefore, innovates on the internal content of his ancient model but, as indicated above, deliberately does not depart from his archetype in the external formal aspects, namely the design of the wings and the metrical structure. In fact, he too uses choriambic sequences (catalectic hexameter, pentameter, tetrameter, trimeter, dimeter *in syllabam*, concluded by a catalectic choriamb or rather a bacchaeus). This formal aspect is not to be underestimated and we can speak of deliberate imitation. Arcudi always writes in dactylic hexameters or elegiac couplets (see the epigrams in BAV, Barb. gr. 279). Only in this case does he abandon the usual meters for rhythmic structures that appear extravagant when compared to his other production and that of all the versifiers (good and bad) who revolved around the Barberini circle (Leone Allacci, Pietro Arcudi, etc.).

Another element with which Arcudi embellishes his ‘Wings of the Bee,’ if I may be allowed to use this title, is in the refined lexicon. In addition to the Homeric coloring of many non-contracted forms (ἀνθέεσιν of v. 1; ἀγγελέουσα of v. 11) and the explicit quotations (see in vv. 8–9 γῆς πείρατα which is very evocative of the πείρατα γαίης of *Il.* XIV 200 and 301; *Od.* III 433 and IV 563), he displays lexical virtuosity by including, for example, κράντειρα in v. 9 which is found only in the *Orphic Hymns* and in an epigram of the Palatine Anthology, n. 216 of book XVI, ascribed to Antipater. In v. 4 of this ancient epigram, in fact, we read in reference to one of the Muses: ἀλλ’ ἄ μὲν κράντειρα τόνου πέλει.

3.2 The Eagle

It was evidently not enough for Arcudi to demonstrate his ability to imitate Simmias Rhodius just once. BAV, Barb. gr. 279 also contains a vivid depiction of an eagle with spread wings. Here Arcudi inscribes another epigram in imitation of the Rhodian poet

15. In the manuscript, at the top of f. 137r, the verses are preceded by a title; it contains a well-wishing phrase (Ἀνακαινισθήσεται, ὡς ἀετοῦ ἢ νεότης σου. καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐλλείψουσι).

Barb. gr. 279 (f. 141r)¹⁵

Λεῦσσε με τὸν σύμβολα πατρῶα πέδου εὐρυανάκτων
στεφανοῦντα ὄρνιν,
αἴσιον οἰωνὸν ἅπασιν· φάος ὡς ἡλίοιο, πέτρα,
ῥοῦς τ’ ἀνεκαίνισσε με ἤβην· ἴδε, ὡς Μέλισσαι
στῆθος ἔχουσιν μέσον. Οὐρβανοῦ γὰρ
κοιρανίην, χ’ ὑγείην
προφωνῶ

διαρκῆ.
Σῶστρα φέρω δ’ ὑγείης,
ἦν ἀνεκαίνισσ’ ἐπὶ πέτραν ἱπτὰς
πίστιος ἀρρήκτου· ὅπου θραῦσε νόσου ἀπειλὰς
ἔς δὲ φάος θεῖον ἰδῶν, καὶ χαρίτων ῥοῦν, λεπίδας βροτείων
ἔξεσε δεινῶν: ἰδὲ γήρωσ λίπεν ἄχθος: νέασέν τε πρὸς ἰδρῶτας
ἦτορ.

(Look at me, bird that crowns the ancestral emblems of those who rule over vast territories; a good omen for all; look how the sunlight, the mountain, the river current have made me as new as spring; look, how the bees stand in the midst of my

breast. For I want to announce as lasting the sovereignty and good health of Urban. I make offerings for the health that he renewed, for he flew on the rock of an unshakable faith, when he annihilated the threats of illness and, turning his gaze to the divine light and the river of grace, smoothed away the scales of evil. He abandoned the weight of old age and made his heart ready once again for his labors).

In this second composition, Arcudi attempts to go even further in imitation of his model. He resumes *ad verbum* the incipit that in Simmias reads: Λεῦσέ με τὸν Γᾶς τε βαθυστέρνου ἄνακτ' Ἀκμονίδαν τ' ἄλλυδις ἐδράσαντα. It seems, moreover, that in this case he has also abandoned the two-voice structure of his first epigram and returned to the ancient model. The eagle, in fact, after introducing itself and describing itself, extols the pope's regained health and announces his new labors after the complete recovery of his strength.¹⁶

16. On v. 1 the word εὐρυνάκτων seems to recall a Bacchylidean context (Ode V, 18–20): περὶ γέσσι ταχεί-/ αἰς αἰετὸς εὐρυνάκτος ἄγγελος/ Ζηνὸς in which the eagle, herald of Zeus, lord of the vast domains (εὐρυνάκτος), is mentioned (in Arcudi's poem the eagle is the most important element of the homeland of those men [*scil.* the Barberini] who have vast domains [εὐρυνάκτων]). But Arcudi could not have known these verses by Bacchylides. They are not transmitted through any, even indirect, tradition and are preserved only in a papyrus which came to light in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century.

17. See Bernabò and Magnelli on the manuscript transmission of Simmias' *technopaignia*.

It is worth saying a few words about the reasons that may have prompted the author to abandon the usual elegiac couplets and turn to Simmias's choriambics. Certainly, the baroque taste, which was very popular in the first thirty years of the seventeenth century, and the desire to impress readers and benefactors by showing off not only one's skill in the Greek language but also in drawing, not to mention the literary recovery of ancient models so dear to the Barberini family (in those years they had founded their own antiquarian library), must all have had an influence. I believe, however, that there may be more. The two epigrams can be dated to 1635–36 when Arcudi was the archpriest of Soletto, having returned from Rome after finishing his studies in 1613 (see Giannachi). He could therefore have encountered Simmias's poems either through manuscripts¹⁷ or through one of the five editions printed in the sixteenth century. In 1619, however, Claude Saumaise (Salmasius) had written the first, and for several centuries the only, critical essay on Greek *carmina figurata*, published in Paris by the publisher Drovart (*Ad Dosidae Aras: Simmiae Rhodii ovvm, alas: Theocriti Fistulam, notae*). Therefore, Arcudi may have followed the fashion of the time by composing epigrams in the manner of Simmias, precisely in the years in which they, printed in *editio princeps* just over a century ago (in the Iunta edition of 1515, followed by the Kalliergi editions in 1516 and 1545, Giovanni Trimanino's Latin translation in 1539, etc.) and reissued several times, had been studied by one of the most famous philologists on the European scene of the early seventeenth century. At that time, Salmasius'

philological labors had a wide resonance among the scholars of the time and, in a letter from 1639, Cardinal Francesco Barberini himself informed Francesco Arcudi (who was then in Nusco in his diocese) of the dispute over New Testament Greek that had pitted Salmasius against Daniel Heinsius in Heidelberg (see Giannachi).

The popularity of this literary genre¹⁸ in certain poetic collections produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in Jesuit colleges in France¹⁹ may also have influenced Arcudi's choice to compose *technopaignia*. For instance, the *technopaignia* of the French Jesuite students of Dole in 1592, dedicated to the new governor of Franche-Comté, Claude II de Vergy Count of Champlitte, were highly appreciated. The *carmina figurata* of this collection are written in French, Latin, and Greek in imitation of those of the Hellenistic age (see Guillaumin et al., 24–82). Nor should it be forgotten that when our own Francesco Arcudi studied at the Pontifical Greek College of St. Athanasius in Rome, in the first decades of the seventeenth century, it was precisely the Jesuit fathers who ruled the institution.²⁰ Moreover, we know that among the collegians of St. Athanasius, Arcudi was not the only one to try his hand at *technopaignia*. We know of at least one other example of a *carmina figurata* from the same period, also an imitation of the *Wings* of Simmias of Rhodes, written by Gregorius Portius and transmitted again in the BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (see Pontani 118–20 for the edition and translation of the text).

In conclusion, Francesco Arcudi wanted to play his small part, surprising his illustrious protectors by imitating a recently rediscovered poet (Simmias) and by following the literary fashion of the moment, in an attempt to fly from the South of Italy (Salento, Apulia) to the Roman curia on the 'wings' of an eagle, or rather perhaps on the 'wings of a bee.'

18. On the popularity of *carmina figurata* in the seventeenth century, see Adler and Ernst; Denker; Plotke.

19. See Guillaumin et al., 8–13. On the popularity of *carmina figurata* in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, see Ernst, "Europäische Figurengedichte" 295–360.

20. On the Greek College in Rome see Tsirpanlis; Fyrigos.

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How to Succeed as a Favour Seeker: Two Foreign Epicists' Quest for Patronage in Seventeenth-century Sweden

Abstract

The article examines the patronage of two neo-Latin poets from the early seventeenth century: the Bohemian humanist Venceslaus Clemens (1589–1637) and the Dutch writer and physician Johannes Narssius (1580–1637), both of whom produced long epics to celebrate the intervention of the Swedish king Gustavus II Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War (1618–48). These two authors are suitable for a comparative analysis, because they both acted as favour seekers in a foreign country and they approached the same dedicatees. Although both writers were skilful epicists and their networks overlapped, Clemens was unsuccessful in securing funding from his honorandi, while Narssius received both remuneration and a career. By uncovering the two poets' ultimate goals and their strategies to seek favour, I will argue that the system of patronage in which they operated was more complex than an inexperienced writer might have expected and that one of the poets featured here was not fast enough to grasp this system's intricate mechanisms.¹

Keywords

Early modern patronage, Neo-Latin epic poetry, the Aeneid, Humanist networks, Early modern letter-writing

Introduction

The Thirty Years' War (1618–48) is often called the first total war. It began after the newly crowned king of Bohemia Ferdinand, from 1619 the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II, had started imposing Catholicism upon all the territories under his jurisdiction. The implementation of Ferdinand's policies created enormous religious and political tensions all over Europe, which caused serious disturbances to every stratum of society, not least to intellectuals. Many men of letters, including poets, were forced into exile or endured other vicissitudes of war – e.g., the death of family members, plague, and des-

1. This article is a spin-off product of my project *Latin Poetry in the Service of the Swedish State-Building Programme, c. 1550–1650*, which will result in a separate monograph. I am very grateful to the Swedish Research Council for sponsoring this work. Special thanks to the anonymous referees, whose comments helped to improve my contribution.

2. On the tremendous popularity of this genre during the early modern period, see Gwynne's "Epic;" Schaffentrath; Kallendorf. Italy and France stand out here in particular: we have hundreds of neo-Latin epics produced in these two regions of Europe. For lists and summaries of the most important of these poems, see Ludwig Braun's volumes.

3. A short introduction to the epics of these four writers will be found in Helander's "Neolatinistik i Sverige och i världen" 105.

4. As Lord High Chancellor of Sweden for more than four decades (1612–54), Oxenstierna played an important role as the leader of his country's foreign policy during the Thirty Years' War and after it. Moreover, he is credited with having transformed Sweden's state apparatus into one of the most efficient governmental systems in the world. For a comprehensive study of Oxenstierna's achievement, see Wetterberg. See also Roberts, *passim*.

titution. While their situation was precarious, it lent them an opportunity to approach foreign patrons and to explore new networks. Moreover, the constrained circumstances did not stop poets from embarking on rather ambitious projects such as putting together long epics in Latin dactylic hexameter.² Thus, at least four neo-Latin epicists celebrated the intervention of Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden in the military conflict with the Habsburgs. These four poets were foreigners from Protestant minorities in their respective countries and all of them had their own agenda to pursue. Two of them were French Huguenots: Antoine Garissoles (1587–1651) and Evurte Jollivet (1601–62). The third poet was the Czech-Bohemian refugee Venceslaus Clemens (1589–1637), while the fourth one was the Dutch Remonstrant activist Johannes Narssius (1580–1637).³

The driving force behind the compositions of the French poets was the writers' wish to bring attention to the desperate state of their Protestant communities and eventually get support, in some form, from Lutheran Sweden. This is especially noticeable in the 1649 *Adolphid* of Antoine Garissoles: the poet repeatedly refers to the distress of the Huguenots in his native France, while emphasizing the historical ties between the two countries (Guthrie 182–83).

The two other writers, viz. the Bohemian Clemens and the Dutchman Narssius, were also motivated by their religious cause, without a doubt. Nevertheless, their other poetical pieces and extensive correspondence with contemporary politicians and scholars also indicate a clear interest in monetary reward for their services as poets. They are therefore typical examples of early modern writers who tried to make a living by composing poetry for wealthy and well-connected patrons. There are many similarities in the lives of these two poets. Both of them were foreigners seeking the favour of the Swedish king and the Swedish nobility. They were members of the entourage of one of the most powerful people in Sweden, viz. Lord High Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna (1583–1654).⁴ Both released their epics in 1632. Both died in 1637. Moreover, they wrote poetry for and about each other. It is the more surprising to discover that the outcome of their respective poetic endeavours would be dramatically different: Narssius gained both money and a career; while Clemens failed to receive the profit that he was hoping for and had to chase new patrons in England, where he eventually died in absolute poverty. The study seeks to explore the causes of this outcome.

Who gains what: The dynamics of early modern patronage

The first three important monographs to deal with the literary patronage in early modern Sweden were Bo Bennich-Björkman's *Författaren i ämbetet* (1970), Jan Drees's *Die soziale Funktion der Gelegenheitsdichtung* (1986), and Magnus von Platen's *Yrkesskalder – fanndom?* (1985). In his study from 1970, Bennich-Björkman argues that early modern authors used occasional poetry to qualify themselves for other jobs. He acknowledges poets who actually received remuneration for their works, but explains that even these hired poets used their positions as a springboard for obtaining proper offices in the service of the state. von Platen, and indirectly also Drees, disagree with that thesis to contend that many a poet in early modern Sweden acted as a professional writer and composed his pieces to earn money. Both von Platen and Drees demonstrate how this worked in practice by looking closely at the case of Lasse Lucidor (1638–74), who produced impressive quantities of verse on commission. In addition, von Plan offers a concrete example of an early ban on writing poetry as a form of begging.⁵ The different views on the desires of paid poets suggests that the reality might have been somewhere in the middle. What is more, the patronage system appears to have been evolving due to the changing conditions brought about by seventeenth-century society in a country like Sweden. During this era, writers leveraged their literary talents not only to sustain themselves but also to position themselves as versatile individuals capable of serving in various roles. This made them suitable for employment both with the state and with wealthy patrons. Therefore, these authors could be regarded as long-term assets as opposed to assets valuable only at one particular time. The services offered by them may be denoted as exemplifying what economists label as capital assets – a term employed by Pierre Bourdieu to describe the various forms of resources possessed by individuals, including their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu).

All the various ways to understand the mechanisms of early modern patronage agree on one thing: this system implied that the patronal relationships were reciprocal, as both parties were supposed to profit. Thus, a prince who had superstars like Bernini and Rubens working for him obtained magnificence and an aura of sophistication, while the artist received a handsome reward and new commissions. The same holds true for writers: by hiring the services of fa-

5. von Platen, *Yrkesskalder – fanndom?* 48–49. A similar attack on dedications that preceded academic works was issued in Sweden in 1633. Such dedications could take the form of poetic pieces as well. Sjökvist, “Mot studenternas missbruk.”

6. The literature on early modern patronage of artists is extensive. In the field of early modern poetry, until recently most of the work has focused on the patronage in early modern England. See, for example, the monographs by Griffin, Brennan, and McCabe. See also the volumes by Wilkins & Wilkins and Lytle & Orgel, both of which explore individual cases and offer general reflections on patronage in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The situation in Sweden is studied in Bennich-Björkman, Drees, and von Platen, *Yrkesskalder – fanns dom? and Klient och Patron*.

7. The work on the system of patronage in Greece and Rome is massive. Two of the most important of these studies are Peter White's *Promised Verse: Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome* (1993), and Ruurd R. Nauta's *Poetry for Patrons: Literary Communication in the Age of Domitian* (2002). See also Lowell Bowditch's examination of Horace's view of gifts and remuneration. The critique of the early modern and modern labour market goes back to Karl Marx, who called the product of such labour alienation.

8. More on the downsides of this strategic investment by commissioners in Molyneux.

9. Baxandall, chap. 1; Gilbert. For examples of the most famous documents such as the appointments of Brunelleschi and Michelangelo, consult Chambers. See also McLean, who investigates how scholars in fifteenth-century Florence used the art of letter-writing to seek patronage. By exploring the rhetoric of these letters, McLean unveils the rules of interaction that were valid in that particular society in Renaissance Italy and elucidates what favour seekers believed was expected of them.

10. In his *Epistle to Augustus*, Horace condemns a poet who writes for cash. For a thorough discussion of this poem by the Augustan poet, see Bowditch 34–38.

11. For one of the first analyses of the conditions of neo-Latin poets in Sweden, see Johannesson. Two of the most recent monographs on early modern patronage of Latin writers are De Beer's *The Poetics of Patronage* and Gwynne's *Poets and Princes*, both of

mous humanists like Erasmus, the patron was able to fashion himself as a learned man himself, while the writer would gain financial stability and an opportunity to build a career.⁶ The definition of literary patronage offered in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* (s.v. "Patronage") is spot on: "Patronage was never noblesse oblige, but rather a political and economic agreement mutually beneficial to the patron and the client."

However, it is obvious that there always was a social hierarchy in patron-client relationships and that the artist/writer often was dependent on the benefactor's economic resources (cf. Griffin 19–22). This dimension of *mecenatismo* was already present in ancient Greece and Rome, but the employer's wealth as the defining factor of the interplay of patrons and producers of art becomes even more profound in the proto-capitalistic societies of the early modern era: people with resources to invest start viewing everything through the prism of profit.⁷ One of the disadvantages for artists and writers living in such societies was that their sponsor had to think strategically, which in turn created many limitations for those who produced art on commission.⁸ Contracts signed between the patron and the artist/writer as well as letters, in which they established their relationship testify to this.⁹ Thus, the analysis of Narssius's case offered below includes an examination of the letter of appointment given to the poet by the Swedish king. At the same time, it became less of a taboo subject to compose literary work for money. If for Horace it was a shameful thing to write poetry exclusively for monetary reward, it was not for an early modern poet.¹⁰ Illustrative is Dryden's complaint about his wage: "encourag'd only with fair Words, by King Charles II, my little Sallary ill paid, and no prospect of a future Subsistance, I was then Discourag'd (...)" (Griffin 19–20). As we will see, neo-Latin poets had the same perception of their work: they celebrated their patrons in the expectation of receiving economic compensation.

The patronage of neo-Latin poets: premises and practices

While the social history of the patronage of vernacular writers has been studied for decades, the exploration of the patronage of neo-Latin poets has not been studied with the same consistency.¹¹ It is the more intriguing to see the most current research's findings. For example, it seems to have been a frequent practice for neo-Latin poets

12. This and other techniques employed by neo-Latin writers to compose poems efficiently are described in Gwynne and Schirg. The editors of the volume call the phenomenon “the economics of poetry.”

13. On Nagonius's reuse of his own verse, see Schirg and Gwynne 46–58.

14. More about Clemens's life in Nosco; Ryba; Hejnic and Martínek; Poole. For transcriptions of many of Clemens's letters, see Ryba; Poole.

to recycle their own poems to approach new *honorandi*. Here the Latin language offered an obvious advantage to compare to the vernacular, as the poet could easily reuse his old verses to produce poems for a new dedicatee in a different country.¹² The Italian poet Johannes Michael Nagonius (c. 1450 – c. 1510) was one such ‘literary economist:’ he readapted his own pieces to celebrate some of the most famous rulers of his age, including the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, Henry VII of England, Vladislav II of Bohemia and Hungary, and Louis XII of France.¹³

Another illuminating case is the Irish neo-Latin poet Dermot O'Meara (*floruit* in the first half of the seventeenth century). In his epic *Ormonius* (1615), the Irishman commemorates the military career of Sir Thomas Butler, Tenth Earl of Ormond (1531–1614). During the composition of the poem, the writer faced an interesting problem: his patron fell unwell. Naturally, O'Meara was afraid of not completing his work in time. When fighting against the clock, he was forced to wrap up the poem's narrative in a rather hurried way and to add a new dedicatory letter to the Earl's heir (Sidwell).

To understand the dynamics of the patronage of Clemens and Narssius, we have to understand these two poets' wishes and their benefactors' needs. As we will see from the correspondence of Clemens and Narssius, they both were open about the fact that they expected to be remunerated for their verses. In addition, the authors' other writings, such as the paratexts preceding their epics and the poems issued prior to or after the publication of the epics, reveal what the poets thought was required of them.

Venceslaus Clemens: The wandering poet

Venceslaus Clemens (Czech: Václav Klement Žebrácký) was born in 1589 in Žebrák, a village about fifty kilometres southwest of Prague.¹⁴ In many of his poems, he presents himself as ‘Venceslaus Clemens a Lybeo-Monte.’ The epithet ‘of the Mountain of Liba’ was borrowed by Clemens from his fellow poet Joannes Czernovicius (Jan Černovický), who was another Bohemian humanist in exile. In a poem, Czernovicius explains that he had received this title from the emperor (in all probability the Holy Roman Emperor Mathias) and that he wanted to share it with his friend who was seeking his fortune in Sweden (Ryba 90–91).

Clemens received a Master's degree from the Utraquist Univer-

15. "Magistratui politico an lex scripta, an aequitas non scripta sequenda?"

16. Pacala offers an intriguing study of this little work.

17. A list of Clemens's writings is compiled in Hejnic & Martinek 371–82.

18. The itinerant poet was an old phenomenon and constituted an important part of the cultural life of ancient, medieval and early modern societies. For example, poets in ancient Greece travelled to attend competitions or to make a living as public performers. See Hunter and Rutherford and essays in Cameron. For medieval authors, consult Waddell.

19. *Anagrammata et epigrammata encomiastica aliquot in Vratislaviam.*

20. *Gedanum sive Dantisticum.*

21. *Trinobantiados Augustae sive Londini libri VI.* Trinobantia for London originates from the name of the Trinobantes, which was a Celtic tribe. Tacitus mentions this people in *Ann.* 14, 31.

22. *Libellus Supplex ad Serenissimum et Invictissimum Monarcham ac Dn. Dn. Gustavum Adolphum [...].*

sity in Prague in 1614 after defending a dissertation with the title "Whether the written law or unwritten equity must be followed by the political magistrate in deciding cases?"¹⁵ Later, he would produce a treatise on music and poetry.¹⁶ Before and after obtaining his Master's degree, Clemens worked as a teacher at various schools in the Prague area and as a tutor to children from noble Czech families. He began to publish poetry during his university years. His first published piece in verse seems to have been an occasional poem in Czech: it was a lamentation on the death of the children of his patron Otto Stoss von Kaunitz. Among his earliest poems in Latin, we find verses about Prague (1616) and an epyllion about Bohemia (1619) composed for Elector Palatine of the Rhine Frederick V, who was a Protestant and reigned as King of Bohemia in 1619–20.¹⁷ Frederick was dethroned and exiled after the disastrous defeat at the White Mountain (Bílá hora) in 1620. People like Clemens were also forced to flee and free-lance as poets or teachers. The Bohemian humanist's itinerant life brought him to Dresden, Leipzig, Regensburg, Nuremberg, the Harz, Erfurt, Weimar, Elbing, Danzig, Leiden, and eventually London. Clemens was a wandering poet *par excellence*.¹⁸ A great number of his poems belong to the *laus urbis* genre: *Some encomiastic anagrams and epigrams on Breslau* (1626),¹⁹ *Gdansk or Danzig* (1630),²⁰ and *The six books about Royal Trinobantias or London* (1636).²¹ Like above-mentioned Nagonius, Clemens recycled his own verses. For instance, sections from the Danzig poem would appear in his poem about London (Ryba 87–89). As previous research has shown, repurposed verses and other texts such as paratexts in dissertations and collections of poetry, including re-dedications to new addressees, were usually an indication of the poet's financial constraints and sometimes even extreme poverty (Sjökvist, "Mot studenternas missbruk" 524, "Dedicatory Practices," von Platen 23). It is clear that Clemens was desperate to secure stability and that every new place was seen as a new opportunity to find a patron. The Czech refugee's strenuous conditions are mentioned both in his poetry and in his letters. Thus, in 1627 we find him approaching Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden with a 140-line poem, which already with its title expresses a request: *A little book of supplication for the most Serene and Undefeated Ruler and Lord, Lord Gustavus Adolphus [...]*.²² At that time, the Swedish king was waging war against Poland: besides fighting for territories in Livonia and Estonia, the two nations were competing for dominance in Danzig, which was one of the most important ports in the Baltic. Clemens's verses seem to have been

23. "Præsent[atus] in castris ad Caput Vistulae [...] 6 Jul[ii] A[nno] 1627 a V[enceslao] Clem[ente]."

24. Cf. Verg., *Aen.* 8, 470–71: "maxime Teucrorum ductor, quo sospite numquam / res equidem Troiae victas aut regna fatebor."

25. The poem is included in Clemens's *Miscellaneorum et adoptivorum libri quatuor* issued in 1632 in the same volume as his epic *Gustavis*. The poem is discussed in Ryba 83.

26. Translation by Niall Rudd for the Loeb Classical Library.

handed over to Gustavus Adolphus in the Swedish camp in Danzig, as the *libellus* is followed by the words: "Presented in the camp at the mouth of the Vistula river [...] on 6 July 1627, by Venceslaus Clemens."²³ This is how the piece opens:

Laus Virtusque Virum, Arctoi Lux inclyta Mundi,
 Delicium Populi, Regum jubar, et decus ævi,
 Bellorum Domini gestor; quo sospite nunquam
 Res Sueonum victas, aut vinci posse fatebor:²⁴
 En ego Dive tuas supplex provolvor ad aras,
 Et Majestati demisse assurgo sacratæ,
 Hactenus externo, patriis a sedibus exul,
 Orbe vagus; nusquam hospitio, nusquam Lare certo.²⁵

(Glory and Virtue of Men, renowned Light of the Northern Sphere,
 Delight of the People, splendour of Kings and ornament of our age,
 Manager of the Lord's wars, for while you live I will never grant that
 The Swedish state was beaten or ever can be.
 Behold, Divine ruler, I kneel as a suppliant at your altar,
 And I arise humbly before Your Sacred Majesty,
 Until now exiled from my homeland and wandering the world abroad,
 With no lodging and no sure hearth).

The phrase *delicium populi* has a resemblance of the words used by Suetonius to describe the emperor Titus: "amor ac deliciae generis humani" ("the delight and darling of mankind") (Suet. *Tit.* 1, 1). In addition, there is a clear allusion to the opening of Horace's ode 1, 1: "Maecenas atavis edite regibus, / o et praesidium et dulce decus meum." ("Maecenas, descended from royal lineage, my protection, my fame and my joy").²⁶ It is the first book of the Roman poet's four-book collection of *Carmina* and functions as a dedication to his benefactor and friend Gaius Maecenas. The reader who recognizes this allusion will also remember the closing of Horace's ode, where the poet expresses his hope to be counted among the best lyric poets and last but not least to gain Maecenas's recognition.

The remainder of Clemens's opening describes the Czech humanist's life in exile, while the rest of the poem consists of a praise of the Swedish king and the poet's promise to sing of Gustavus's war ex-

27. The Swedish literary scholar Stina Hansson was able to show that dedications printed in seventeenth-century Swedish translations followed such a pattern. The same axiom would easily apply to other sorts of dedicatory texts in printed items from that time. Hansson 69.

28. *Elegia Supplex ad Axelium Oxenstirnum, etc. Dominum S[uum] Gratiosum.*

29. Cf. Ov. *Trist.* 5, 11, 4: "qui iam consuevi fortiter esse miser." Like the verses for Gustavus, the poem must have been handed over to the dedicatee by the author himself, as it is followed by the words "Præsent[ata] Elbingæ Boruss[iae]. Calendis Ian[uarii] A. 1628."

plots in new verses. What Clemens is trying to do is to sell the idea of hiring him. What is more, Clemens seems to break against the contemporary principle of decorum: mentioning your financial situation could be mentioned in a work dedicated to a commoner, but had to be avoided in homages to nobility and royals.²⁷

Six months later, viz. in January 1628, we see the Bohemian writer courting the Swedish Lord High Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, Gustavus's right-hand man. Entitled *Elegy of supplication* and composed of ninety distiches,²⁸ Clemens's poem for the chancellor was written for the same ends as the verses for Gustavus. Even the flattering epithet of the dedicatee is similar to the epithet used for the Swedish king in the previous piece:

Arctoi Lux alta Poli, quo sospite nunquam
 PATRIA securæ nescia Pacis erit;
 [...]
 Sed quid ago? Te magne Heros, generose Dynasta,
 Deveneror supplex, aspice quæso Virum,
 Aspice quæso Virum, quem sors indigna gravavit,
 Qui jam consuescit fortiter esse miser.²⁹

(High-born Light of the Northern Clime, as long as you breathe
 the Fatherland shall never be ignorant of enduring Peace.
 [...]
 But what am I doing? I kneel as suppliant before You,
 Oh great Hero and magnanimous Ruler,
 Behold this Man, I implore you,
 Behold the Man, I beseech you, whom an unjust fortune has weighed down,
 Who is now accustomed to bearing misery with fortitude).

The poem paid off: Clemens became part of Oxenstierna's entourage in Elbing and his children's tutor. Clemens's stay in Prussia would be prolific: there the Czech wrote a great deal of panegyrics for his new Swedish benefactors as well as poetic *nugae* for and about his new friends. Many of these verses would be printed in his four-book collection, *Miscellaneorum et adoptivorum libri quatuor* that accompanied his opus magnum *Gustavis*. Among these pieces from the Elbing period, we find threnodies on the death of some of the members of Axel Oxenstierna's family. One of the most moving poems is Clemens's piece about the premature death of his patron's son Gus-

30. *De immaturo obitu Gustavi Oxenstirni Axelij Fil[ii] Primogeniti, in Miscellaneorum et adoptivorum libri quatuor* 33–36.

31. These lines appear in *Gustavis*, book five. Ryba 335.

32. Unabridged title: *Gustavidos libri IX, quibus Gustavi II vere Magni et Augusti, Succor[um] Gothor[um] Vandalor[um] etc. Regis Serenissimi, Victoriarum heroicarum, rerumque per Germaniam gestarum series carmine heroico narratur.*

33. “Imo [...] odor *Gustavidos* meae iam ad eruditos usque pervenit.” Ryba 214.

34. *Ad Incomparabilem Virum D[omi-num] Daniele Heinsium Equitem quum illi suam GUSTAVIDA CENSENDAM OFFERRET*, in *Miscellaneorum et adoptivorum libri quatuor* 57–59.

35. The title page contains the following words: “Cum Privilegio Sacrae Regiae Majestatis Sueciae.”

36. Good summaries of the poem are offered in Helander’s “The *Gustavis* of Venceslaus Clemens;” Ryba 333–39. Verhaart presents an excerpt, with translation, of a representative passage from Clemens’s epic.

37. The motif of writers bestowing eternal glory on heroes goes back to antiquity and continues to be important in literature from the era under examination. One of the most famous passages treating this idea is Cicero’s discussion of Homer’s role in preserving the fame of Achilles in his *Pro Archia poeta*. See Helander’s *Neo-Latin Literature*, 478–82.

taf.³⁰ A part of this poem on Oxenstierna’s loss would be included in the epic *Gustavis*.³¹

In September 1631, the Bohemian refugee joined the chancellor’s son Johan (Axelson) Oxenstierna on his study tour to Leiden. The poet enrolled at the Dutch university as well. It was also in Leiden that he published his *Gustavidos libri IX*.³² As the title indicates, it was a celebration of Gustavus Adolphus’s German campaign against the Emperor’s army. Many of Clemens’s writings penned in Elbing show that he had composed a greater part of the epic before leaving for the Dutch Provinces. For example, Clemens’s 1631 poem about Gustavus’s siege of Frankfurt an der Oder in the spring of that year contains a dedication to Oxenstierna, where it is suggested that he had already distributed his *Gustavid* among other scholars: “Nay! [...] the scent of my *Gustavis* has now reached the learned men.”³³ Among other proofs of Clemens having more or less finished the epic in Elbing, is his poem for Daniel Heinsius. He wrote it in September 1631, *i.e.* the month in which he arrived in Leiden, to ask the Dutch scholar to provide feedback about his epic: “To the unequalled man Lord Daniel Heinsius, Knight, to whom the author would like to offer his *Gustavis* for judgment.”³⁴

The *Gustavis* appeared in print in April 1632. Issued in Leiden with the privilege of the royal Majesty of Sweden,³⁵ it is preceded by an *epistola nuncupatoria* to Axel Oxenstierna, which delineates how the Protestant forces of the Swedish king were fighting the Catholic army of the Emperor. The poem itself is an impressive work: written in the tradition of Latin ancient epics, it consists of nine books of about 6,800 lines of dactylic hexameter.³⁶ In the *epistola* to his patron, the author asserts that princes have always wanted to be commemorated by poets and that poets are important for the maintenance of great heroes’ fame. The case of Augustus and Virgil is a good example:

Augusto Virgilius in deliciis fuit. Aliis alii. Horum enim calamis Numina illa, natura quidem morti destinata, redduntur immortalia, facta eorum heroica obliterari nequeunt.

(Virgil was Augustus’s darling. For other [princes], it was other [poets]. For it is through their pen that these great gods, who are indeed destined by nature to die, are made immortal, while their heroic deeds cannot be forgotten.)³⁷

Moreover, Clemens makes a point of the fact that the name Gustavus contains the same letters as the name of Augustus (Gustafsson

217, see also Helander's *Neo-Latin Literature*, 384). When reading the neo-Latin epic itself, we realize that it has all the elements that we associate with Virgil's masterpiece: allegories, gods intervening in the events, and long speeches by the protagonists, not to mention the plot. Thus, early in the poem we meet with personified Religio complaining to God about her expulsion from the German lands and asking him to assist the Protestants in their wish to become free from the Catholic yoke. The prototype is easy to recognize: the scene is modelled on the famous scene in the *Aeneid*, where Venus addresses Jupiter with a similar request to help Aeneas to reach his destination. Clemens's Religio is assured that the salvation will be provided by a certain hero. This hero is, of course, Gustavus Adolphus! Later, Religio visits the Swedish king to tell him the history of the Protestant Reformation and thus motivates him to protect his co-religionists on the continent. The account of his participation in the war starts in book four to culminate in book nine, where the poet celebrates Gustavus's victory in the battle of Breitenfeld in September 1631 and announces that Frederick of Pfalz will soon return to his country. These parts of the epic, too, are replete with allegories, metonyms, and emblematic phrases.

The epic's theme is explained in book 1, 35–40:

Tu quem Bellorum moles operosa fatigat,
Arma canenda gerens,³⁸ vastus quibus intremis orbis,
Rex veterum decus Heroum, nova gloria secli;
Cujus magnaminæ dederat pia Patria dextræ
Sponte sub Ausoniis quod noluit alma Ligistis
Religio, Pietasque pati, [...].

(You, whom the great burden of wars is wearing out,
are conducting military campaigns worthy to be sung
and at whose sight the vast world trembles.

O King, the glory of ancient Heroes, the new pride of our age,
to whose bold right hand your pious country has given
willingly
what dear Religion and Piety did not want to tolerate under
the suppression of the Italian League).

The neo-poet is going to unfold the tale of Gustavus's mission to fight the *Ausonii Ligistae*, i.e. the Catholic League. Throughout the poem, the pope is portrayed as the Antichrist,³⁹ while the long preface to the epic contains a reproach of the Habsburgs for supporting the Jes-

38. Cf. Stat., *Silv.* 4, 4, 70–71:
“propriis tu pulcher in armis / ipse
canenda gerens parvoque exempla
parabis.”

39 On the attacks of Protestant writers on the Catholic Church and their use of the topos of Antichristus, see Helander's *Neo-Latin Literature*, 324–25.

uit order, which is compared to the frightful Hydra, “hydra terribilis”. In book five, we learn that the Jesuits are the offspring of the fury Tisiphone: at a council held by the infernal forces the monster suggests that her progeny ought to be used against the Evangelical church, which undeservedly has gained too much ground. This passage relies on the famous scene in Claudian’s *In Rufinum*.⁴⁰

Before sending the poem off to the printing house, Clemens was sure to obtain congratulatory poems from a number of Dutch humanists. The above-mentioned poem for Heinsius was part of Clemens’s strategy to show off his social capital. The liminary texts, which are in Latin and Greek, are by eight famous scholars from Leiden: in addition to Heinsius’s piece, we have commendations from the theologians Johannes Polyander, Andreas Rivetus, Antonius Walaeus, Antonius Thysius and Reinerus Vogelsangius, the renowned poet Petrus Schriverus, and Fridericus Zamelius, the mayor of Elbing. The latter person had been the poet’s best friend since his time in Elbing. Clemens had also tried to secure an epigram from Constantijn Huygens and other prominent humanists, but for various reasons they were not able to deliver their congratulations.⁴¹

Only half a year after the release of the epic, on 6/16 November 1632, Gustavus Adolphus was killed in the battle of Lützen. Despite this, the victory was Sweden’s. In 1633, Clemens issued a 2,600-line epyllion entitled *Excessus Augusti ad Deos*, which was a eulogy praising Gustavus and offering a summary of his military career. The dedication from February 1633 is again to Oxenstierna. Certainly understanding that the death of the ‘Northern Lion’ would make his chances of securing funding from Sweden worse, the writer had embarked sometime in 1632 or 1633 on his *Lechias* to celebrate the accession to the throne of Vladislav IV of Poland.⁴²

Johannes Narssius: three professions in one person

Johannes Narssius (Johan van Naarsen) was born in Dordrecht in 1580. He pursued his university studies at the University of Leiden.⁴³ On May 5 of 1604, he acted as a respondent of theological theses on ministry.⁴⁴ Professor Jacobus Arminius was the *praeses*. Just two months earlier, Arminius presided over a dissertation that offered a revised view of predestination (hence the name of the remonstrant movement). Arminius’s opinion led to a conflict with other profes-

40. On Clemens’s dependence on Claudian, see Helander’s “The *Gustavis* of Venceslaus Clemens.” See also Helander’ “Neolatinistik i Sverige och i världen” 105–06.

41. Consult for example Clemens’s letter to Ludvig Camerarius, the Swedish ambassador to The Hague. Ryba 222–24. See also Poole 165.

42. The Czech poet would work on this new epic for at least three years, but never published it. For a modern edition with introduction, see Starnawski.

43. The biography is based on the entry in *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*; Woortmann; Bennich-Björkman; Gustafsson. The most valuable primary source is Narssius’s correspondence with Axel Oxenstierna preserved in the National Archives in Stockholm, *Oxenstiernska samlingen*. Ser. B. *Narssius-Niem*. E 664.

44. This and other disputations defended by Narssius are discussed in Woortmann 23–24.

45. For an overview of Arminius's teachings and legacy, see Den Boer; van Leeuwen.

46. Gustafsson 127. See also Jakobsson, who studies the employment strategies of the Dutch labour migrants in early modern Sweden.

47. *Ad Amplissimum Virum D[ominum] Leonardum Curium seu van Sorgen Mercatorem non e minimis et serenissimi Regis Suecorum negotiis apud Hamburgenses Præfectum, Dominum et cognatum suum faventissimum Joannis Narssii Epistola Elegiaca de Itinere Svecico.*

sors in Leiden, who did not accept his criticism of the Calvinist doctrine.⁴⁵ The fact that Narssius chose to defend new theses by Arminius shows that he shared the high-profile theologian's views. In 1605, Narssius was appointed minister of the Reformed Church of Grave. Ten years later, he took up a similar position in Zalt-Bommel, where he joined the circle around the Remonstrant activist Henricus Leo. When the Remonstrants' demand to revise the Calvinist articles of faith was condemned at the Synod of Dort in 1618–19, Narssius left for Rotterdam, but continued to assist the Remonstrant movement by spreading their writings abroad. He was arrested in 1622, but managed to escape to France. When in this new country, he acquired a new profession: he became a physician.

In 1623, Narssius moved to Sweden. It has been suggested that Narssius arrived there as one of the Dutch workers who were invited to the newly founded city of Gothenburg.⁴⁶ His profession as a doctor must have been a great asset. Moreover, Narssius was a skilful poet. His first collection of poems was released in the autumn of 1623. Entitled *Svecica*, it opens with a greeting to "the gentle reader," which is followed by a poetic address to the Dutch merchant Leonard van Sorgen. The dedicatee was a regular Swedish correspondent in Hamburg and a close relative of Narssius. The poem is a description of Narssius's travel to Sweden, his *iter Svecicum*.⁴⁷ We learn that it was van Sorgen's idea that Narssius go to Sweden and that Narssius left for Sweden from Danzig. As the Swedes had a representation there, it can be assumed that he left Danzig with the Swedish fleet. In his greeting to van Sorgen, the Dutch poet does not shy away from self-advertisement relating to his professions:

[...] Artis alumnum
 Me Medicæ Batava prædico gente satum.
 Et simul exiguum, Phœbo suadente, poëma,
 Suppliciter offert officiosa manus.

(I call myself a child of the Batavian soil and a pupil of the medical discipline.

And the same time, on the exhortation of Phoebus,
 My serviceable and humble hand offers its little poem).

A few lines later, Narssius proudly announces that Axel Oxenstierna is his *fautor* and that he has the protection of Jan Rutgers and James Robertson. We understand that Narssius had an impressive network in his new country: Rutgers worked as a Swedish representative in

the Dutch Republic, while Robertson was physician-in-ordinary to the Swedish king. The other poems in the *Svecica* collection include encomia for Gustavus Adolphus, Axel Oxenstierna, Jan Rutgers, Sigismund III of Poland and Sigismund's son Vladislav.

In Narssius's second collection, *Poëmata Septentrionalia* (1624), we find not only typical eulogies for patrons, but also poems such as a panegyric to the city of Gothenburg and an epigram on the Dutch conquest of a part of Brazil. The next important piece by Narssius appeared in 1625: it was his *The conquest of Riga by the most august prince Gustavus Adolphus*.⁴⁸ It is an epic about the Swedish siege of Riga in 1621, a poem on which Narssius had worked for a long time. In a letter from 4 January 1625, he explained that he wanted his composition to conform to his benefactors' demands and wishes (Gustafsson 128).

In 1627, Narssius released his *The liberation of Meva in Pomerania from the Polish siege and other poems on Swedish-Prussian and Swedish-Russian affairs*.⁴⁹ As the title reveals, the poems dealt with Gustavus's military successes in Prussia and Russia. (Meva is modern Gniev in Poland.) Clearly, Narssius was working on commission, which is confirmed by his correspondence with Oxenstierna. In a letter from June 1625, we read that his traveling costs were covered by Gustavus Adolphus.⁵⁰ We also see how Narssius kept asking for an official stipend, which wish was eventually granted.⁵¹ In December 1625, Gustavus II Adolphus issued a letter of authorization for Narssius as Sweden's official historiographer:

Nos Gustavus Adolphus, Rex,
 Omnibus et singulis hasce nostras visuris et lecturis notum
 facimus, Nos Egregium et Doctum Jöannem Narssium
 Medicinæ Doctorem vocasse et constituisse prout harum
 nostrarum vigore eundem constituimus, ut res nostras et
 Regni nostri historias Carmine fideliter conscribat, antiquas
 historias et monumenta vetera diligenter congerat, evolvat,
 inquiratque. Inprimis volumus, ne prænominatus Doctor
 historias nostras Poëtarum figmentis involvat, vel Ethnicos
 iocos suis Carminibus, ceu veras historias continentibus,
 intertextat; sed serio agens ita hisce conscribendis studeat,
 quo sint utiles et iucundæ legenti, nobis Regnoque nostro,
 nec non illius Incolis ornamento, et tandem iucunde ad
 posteritatem transmitti queant. Pro quo servitio sive labore
 suo prænominato Doctori Narssio annuatim promittimus
 Sexcentos thal[eros]. Sueticos, quos singulis annis duobus in

48. *Riga devicta ab augustissimo principe Gustavo Adolpho*.

49. *Meva Pomerelliae obsidione Polonorum liberata ... aliaque poëmata Suedo-Borussica, Moschovitica, miscellanea*.

50. Narssius's letter from 15 June 1625 in *Oxenstiernska samlingen* in Riksarkivet, Stockholm.

51. In a letter from 14/24 September 1625, he reminds Oxenstierna to arrange "stipendium aliquod," which according to their earlier conversation had been assigned for him by the king. Similar reminders will be found in Narssius's letters from 7/17 October, 29 November, and 29/19 December 1624. *Oxenstiernska samlingen*, Riksarkivet, Stockholm. Gustafsson 129.

terminis, quamdiu in nostro servitio est a Quæstore nostro accipiet. Initium vero huius suæ Constitutionis erit primus dies præteriti Mensis Maij huius Anni præsentis. In maiorem fidem, Dabatur.

(We, Gustavus Adolphus, the King, announce to each and every one who is going to see and read this letter, that we have decided to invite the distinguished and learned Johannes Narssius, Doctor of Medicine, and appoint him by means of this letter in order for him to faithfully describe our deeds and the history of our kingdom in a poem. That he will put together, unveil and diligently examine ancient stories and old writings. First of all, we wish that the above-named Doctor should not wrap our history in the fiction of poets or interweave his poems with pagan jokes together with true stories. But he should perform in a serious manner and when describing these things see to it that they may be useful and pleasant to the reader, and indeed serve as a distinction for us, for our Kingdom and for its inhabitants, and finally that they can be passed on to posterity in a pleasing form. For these services or work, we promise to the above-mentioned Doctor Narssius six hundred Swedish *daler* annually, which money he will receive from our Treasurer each year on two occasions, as long as he remains in our service. The start of this appointment is the first day of the previous month of May of this present year. Provided for further assurance).⁵²

52. Riksregistraturet 366, *S. Reg. M:tis Constitutio pro D. Joanne Narssio Medico et Poeta*.

53. For example, one of the first epics written after the classical period and exhibiting this understanding of epic poetry was the *Alexandreis* by Walter of Châtillon (c. 1135 – c. 1189): telling about the life of Alexander the Great, it ignored the fiction of the Alexander Romances to rely on the facts provided in the *Vita Alexandri* by Curtius Rufus (1st century CE). Gwynne's "Epic," 201–02. More on epic as 'historical poetry' in Schaffentrath.

It is noteworthy that the king sees narrative poetry with encomiastic and/or didactic messages as a genre of history, which was the contemporary view of heroic epics.⁵³ We should also mention that less than a decade earlier the Swedes tried to hire the renowned poet Daniel Heinsius as *historiographus regni*, but the plan was never realized. We can therefore assume that the recruitment of Narssius met the needs that Heinsius was supposed to fill (Bennich-Björkman 207–09). Narssius's wage of 600 Swedish *riksdaler* was a hefty sum of money, considering the fact that a professor at the faculty of Philosophy at Uppsala received 400 *riksdaler* (Bennich-Björkman 244, n. 1). Moreover, in 1627 Narssius's wage was raised by 200 *daler*:

Såsom vi hafva tagit i vår tjenst Johannem Narcium,
Medicinæ doctorem, för vårt rikes historia scribent, hvilken
han ordentligen uti Latinske verser sammansätta skall och

54. The king's letter from 4 April 1627 is transcribed in Kullberg 104, n. 3.

utgå låta, så på det han sådant med dess större flit förrätta skall, hafve vi unt och efterlätit honom till årlig lön 800 Daler, hvilka honom af vår Räntekammare levereras skole, räknandes från d. 1 Maj förgångne år 1626.⁵⁴

(As we have taken into our service Johannes Narssius, Doctor of Medicine, as our Kingdom's writer of history, which he shall carefully compose in Latin verses and publish, so that he shall accomplish such things with greater diligence, we have indulged and granted him an annual wage of 800 *daler*, which will be delivered to him by our Treasure Chamber, counting from the first of May of the last year 1626).

55. *Ad serenissimum regem Sigismundum Tertium Gedanum feliciter ingredientem I Iulii 1623. Amplissimi Senatus Gedanensis Oratio Gratulatoria.*

56. "[S]pero cum bono Deo, utramque Gentem et Reges imprimis laudatissimos arctius quoque animis conjungendos."

57. *Pax confirmata inter serenissimos reges septentrionales anno 1624.*

58. Interdisciplinary analyses of this phenomenon are offered in Sowerby and Craigwood.

Like Clemens, the Dutchman was an industrious writer. Interestingly, several of Narssius's poems treat Sweden's relationship with other countries. For example, his *Svecica* contains a poem about Danzig's celebration of how Sigismund III of Poland entered the city in July of 1623.⁵⁵ Why would Narssius eulogize the Polish king during a time when Sweden was waging war against Poland? Narssius's preface introducing the collection provides us with the explanation: "I hope that with the will of God the two Nations and the two Kings, who are highly esteemed beyond any other person, will also be more closely united in their hearts."⁵⁶ Narssius acts as the ambassador of peace! He does this again in his collection *Poëmata Septentrionalia*, where he delivers a poem on the recently signed peace treaty between Sweden and Denmark. Entitled *The Peace signed between the most serene Nordic kings in the year of 1624*,⁵⁷ the piece rejoices at the restoration of the old order and extols the olive branch that silences the sound of the military horn:

Consilio veteris firmat fundamina Pacis,
Et raucum Litui sistit Oliva sonum.

(He [the All-Mighty] strengthens the foundations of the old Peace through an astute plan and the Olive branch stops the raucous sound of the Horn).

The United Provinces would play a major role as a peace negotiator in the Swedish-Polish wars in the 1620s. As recent scholarship has demonstrated, culture in general and poetry in particular were important ingredients in early modern diplomatic practices.⁵⁸ It is remarkable that Narssius himself would include the peace negotiators from the Dutch 1627–28 mission in his drama 1627 *Gustavus Saucius*

59. The play was issued twice. Here we use the second edition released in 1628.

60. For an analysis of the tragedy, see Sarasti-Wilenius. My analysis concerns only four particular lines and relies heavily on Hulsenboom, who discusses poems and plays produced during the Dutch diplomatic missions to Poland in 1627–28 and 1635. Hulsenboom argues, and very convincingly so, that Dutch envoys used poetry as diplomatic gifts or as a means of voicing their political standpoints.

61. The translation is from Hulsenboom 79.

62. Cossee; Woortman 18. Cf. Hulsenboom's observation regarding the case of Joost van den Vondel who in one of his poems celebrated the 1635 truce signed between Poland-Lithuania and Sweden. van den Vondel was a Remonstrant and that might be the reason why his verses are so appreciative of the Polish king Vladislav IV. Hulsenboom 99.

(*The wounded Gustavus*).⁵⁹ The play treats the ongoing Swedish-Polish war and how Gustavus was wounded in two battles, first in May 1627 and then in the battle of Dirschau in the summer of 1627.⁶⁰ The Dutch diplomats make their appearance in an apostrophe uttered by the Swedish general Johan Banér:

Pacis optatae diu
Frustra sequestri venerint Bickerius,
Honardus atque Bellimontus, Batava
A gente missi.

(Bicker, Honert and van Beaumont,
The mediators of a long desired peace,
Sent by the Batavian people,
Will have come in vain).⁶¹

These three men were Rochus van den Honert (1572–1638), member of the High Council of Holland, Zeeland and West-Frisia, Andries Bicker (1586–1652), the mayor of Amsterdam, and Simon van Beaumont (1574–1654), the Pensionary of Middelburg and Deputy of Zeeland. We can assume that the great networker Narssius knew at least one of them. Furthermore, his Remonstrant background might have been useful in the context of the United Provinces' attempt to mediate peace between Lutheran Sweden and Catholic Poland, as the Remonstrant views were in many respects closer to Catholicism than to Calvinism and Lutheranism.⁶²

Also Narssius moved from place to place, but unlike Clemens, who was constantly searching for new patrons, he moved because of his assignments. Thus, we find him working for Oxenstierna in Stockholm, Elbing, and Hamburg. As Oxenstierna's correspondence shows, the chancellor's family did not miss the chance to employ Narssius as their medical practitioner. In August 1626, the chancellor's brother Gabriel Gustafson Oxenstierna asks Axel to forgive Narssius's late arrival from Stockholm. Gabriel needed Narssius the physician, as his wife was ill. We also learn that he was pleased with Narssius's services:

... effter Dr Narsius nu förreser öffuer till H. K. M:tt till
Preussen, och jagh inthe tvifflar, dett min k[iäre] b[roder] der
och nu näst Gudz hielp ähr stadder, så haffuer jagh inthe
kunnatt underlathe min k[iäre] b[roder] medh denna min
sckriffuelse att besökia, broderligen begärandes, dett, effter

jagh honom nu en tijdh långh för min hustrus siuklige
legenheet skull uppehollet haffuer, och han sin största flijtt
giort, så att jagh, näst Gudz hielp, hereffter dett besta förmo-
da vill, att min k[iäre] b[roder] hans dröjsmål ville till dett
besta lathe entschylla och hans person sigh och ville lathe vara
befalat.⁶³

63. For transcription, see Sondén 97.

(Since Doctor Narssius is now traveling to His Royal Majesty in Prussia and I have no doubt that my dear brother is also there now, with God's help, I could not help myself but to attend to my dear brother with this letter, brotherly asking, that after having kept him [*i.e.* Narssius] for a long time because of my wife's sickly condition – and he has been very diligent – I want thereafter, with God's help, to hope that my dear brother will hopefully excuse his late arrival and will let him [*i.e.* Narssius] be recommended).

As mentioned above, Narssius's profession as a physician must have been his most valuable career asset. In fact, this is how Narssius always presents himself on the title pages of his collections: "Johannes Narssius Dordracō-Batavus Medicinæ Doctor."⁶⁴

64. For example, the title page of his first collection of poetry reads as follows: *Ioannis Narssii Dordracō-Batavi Med[icinæ] Doct[oris] Svecica addenda apologetico et prodromo poematiko nuper editis.*

Narssius's literary activities would reach their apogee with his epic, which was entitled *Gustavidos sive de bello Sueco-Austriaco libri tres* (*The Gustavid or the three books about the Swedish-Austrian war*) and printed the same year as Clemens's *Gustavis*. The first three books comprising almost 2,000 lines appeared sometime before August of 1632, as the third book does not treat the events that took place that month. In 1634, Narssius released his fourth and last book: *Gustavidos sive de bello Sueco-Austriaco liber quartus*.⁶⁵ The opening of Narssius' first book announces of the poet's ambitious undertaking:

65. Unabridged title: *Gustavidos sive de bello Sueco-Austriaco liber quartus, continens occupatam Thuringiam, Franconiam et loca quædam finitima.*

Austriacas fractas acies Papaliaque arma
Gustavi virtute cano, virtute redemptas,
Quae dudum pressae victrice Tyrannide, gentes.

(I sing of how Gustavus's courage broke the Austrian lines and the Papal weapons, how the people who were suppressed until now by a victorious Tyranny were rescued).

Early in the epic, the reader meets with a description of the devastation caused to Germany by Ferdinand's troops to learn how this prompts the estates of the Swedish realm to make a joint decision to intervene. We then follow the Swedish king's descent on the shores

of Pomerania, his building of alliances with German princes and subsequently his successes on the battlefield. We are always horrified by the ferocity and cruelty of the imperial army. One such scene is of the sack of Magdeburg by Count of Tilly, a massacre that took the lives of at least 20,000 of the city's citizens. These verses are reminiscent of Vergil's passages on the destruction of Troy in the *Aeneid*. The resemblance occurs on several levels, not least on the level of direct borrowings. Thus, *Gustavis* 1, 471: "Horror ubique animis, et plurima mortis imago" ("horror filling hearts is everywhere, and many a form of death") is a rephrasing of *Aen.* 2, 368–69: "[...] crudelis ubique/luctus, ubique pavor et plurima mortis imago" ("everywhere is cruel grief, everywhere panic, and full many of a shape of death").⁶⁶

When comparing the two *Gustavides*, the reader will discover that Narssius's poem is more military in content and that its descriptions of battle scenes are at times more elaborate, while Clemens's epic devotes more time to themes such as divine intervention and allegories of various kinds.⁶⁷ We know that both Clemens and Narssius requested access to recent reports from the battlefields and both seem to have received these accounts.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Narssius had a better chance of obtaining all sorts of information directly from the Swedish officials: while Clemens was putting the finishing touches to his poem in Leiden, the Dutch poet could easily approach these men in Hamburg and Elbing. In addition, Clemens's choice of motifs can be explained as due to his religious argument, as the Leitmotif of his *Gustavis* is the need to fight the Catholic Church, not least the Jesuits. Narssius, too, sees the conflict as a struggle between confessions, but this theme is much more predominant in the Bohemian writer's poem, not to mention Clemens's recurrent references to the martyrdom of his beloved Bohemia.

What is more, being a member of the Swedish representation in Elbing, Narssius knew Clemens, as we learn from the Czech writer's *Miscellanea et adoptiva* collection. The poems gathered there were written between 1625 and 1631 and include poetic addresses to the Bohemian refugee's friends and pieces by his fellow poets. Present also are verses by and about Narssius, and what they signal is that Clemens and Narssius were competitors in the field of poetry writing. For instance, the following line by Clemens about their relationship can be interpreted in this way: "Invidulis pridem me despectabat ocellis." ("Previously he looked down upon me with eyes full of envy.")⁶⁹ In fact, it was Clemens who had all the reasons to be jealous: Narssius was then working on his epic as an officially employed

66. Translation by H. Rushton Fairclough revised by G. P. Goold for the Loeb Classical Library.

67. There are no longer studies of Narssius's epic, but some of his verses are quoted in Helander's *Neo-Latin Literature* as illustrations of the language of Protestant literature from the time of the Thirty Years' War, which primarily regards his use of terminology from the field of early modern warfare.

68. In a letter from 15 November 1631, Clemens thanks Ludvig Camerarius for supplying him with material about the siege of Magdeburg. The letter is transcribed in Ryba 216–17. Several letters by Narssius from his first years in the service of the Swedish state contain requests of the same type. For example, the Dutch poet asked for details regarding the taking of Riga in 1621. He needed this information for his epyllion *Riga devicta* that he eventually released in 1625. Gustafsson 128.

69. Cf. Ryba 339–40, who also quotes this line in his discussion of the two poets' literary rivalry. Further, Ryba suggests that some verses by Narssius in his *Miscellanea* collection are aimed at Clemens, but it is difficult to assert this with absolute certainty.

historiographer, while Clemens was trying to make a living as a teacher to Oxenstierna's children.

Post poëmata

In a letter to Ludvig Camerarius from 1633, Clemens writes that he is planning to move to England and that he needs the ambassador's recommendations to use in the new country:

Patiatur, quaeso, Dominus cumulo beneficiorum mihi exhibitorum id ipsum singulare favoris in me superaddi argumentum, ut me literis suis alicui Magnatum Britannicorum, [...], diligenter et de meliore nota commendare dignetur [...]. (Ryba 341–42)

(May my Lord grant me, I beseech, adding to the sum of the favours bestowed on me this particular help in my favour, that he will deem worthy to recommend me diligently and with a rather kind mention in a letter to one of the English Magnates).

The poet also complains that the printing of the epic had costed him “centum Imperiales,” *i.e.* “one hundred imperials,” an amount of money that was excessively high for a wretched man like him, “ingens profecto hominis calamitosi detrimentum” (“indeed, a great damage for an unfortunate man”).

An unusually long letter from 12 March 1634 from Clemens to Oxenstierna reveals that the poet's situation had not improved. Clemens reminds the chancellor that he has not received his salary for three years. The poet is also worried that his *Gustavis* and *Excessus Augusti* have not been delivered to the patron, but he makes it clear that he wants to be reimbursed for the printing costs, as he hardly can afford to buy bread. Moreover, he wonders what other favour seekers have done to deserve their handsome salaries:

Doleo autem quam maxime, facile etenim credo nequicquam ex opusculis meis Tuae celsitudini publice destinatis ad manus tuas pervenisse. Forsan neque ipsius *Gustavidos* opus! Multo minus, quae de *Excessu Augusti nostri ad Deos* publice meo sumptu dederam. Ego vero sperabam pro tot laboribus et lucubrationibus aliquid fructuum ad sustentandum vitae

hujus miserae subsidium in me redundaturum, ut et debitoribus meis satisfacerem ac operas Typographicas persolverem. At sperabam tantum. Quid dicam, Illustrissime Domine? Ad extrema deveni. Deest mihi, deest profecto Panis quotidianus. Jejunii vix iam sustineo supplicium. Ad Te manus supplices toties orando, obsecrando, obtestando levavi, at nunc audio querelas meas non devenisse, quo dirigebantur. In Te uno post Deum spes mihi posita fuit. Tibi, Domine, tuisque hanc vitam, studia, calamum devovi. Multa hactenus scripsi ad causae publicae statum defendendum, apud posteros provehendum, nescio an etiam plura (sit venia modeste glorianti) quam omnes alii, qui amplissimis erant ornati salariis, beneficiis, donationibus. (Ryba 346–47)

(I am deeply distressed, since I can easily believe that none of my minor works that were published and meant for Your Highness has reached Your hands. Probably not even the *Gustavis* work itself! Not to mention the work which, entitled *De Excessu Augusti nostri ad Deos*, I published at my own expense. In fact, I cherished hope that, in return for my work and toil, some rewards would be bestowed on me to support this miserable life so that I would be able to please my debtors and to pay for the printing of my works. But I only cherished hope. What shall I say, most Illustrious Lord? I have reached the most dire hardship. Indeed, I lack, yes I lack daily bread. I now barely endure the plight of starvation. How many times have I stretched my begging hands towards You while asking, beseeching and appealing, to learn now that my complaints have not reached their addressee. My hope was in You alone after God. To You and Your family, my Lord, I have dedicated my life, my work, and my pen. I have hitherto written much to defend the state of the public cause, to advance it among future generations, and perhaps even more (forgive the one who is boasting modestly) than all the others, who are awarded with very high salaries, benefactions, and gifts).

As William Poole notices, Clemens's letters are at times passive aggressive (Poole 165). This is not surprising: even before, Clemens seems to have been worried that his work would go unnoticed and therefore without rewards, especially after the death of the Swedish king. We perceive this anxiousness in his letter to Constantijn Huy-

70. "Dab[am] sub occasum Anni 1632 trium Europaeorum occasu Regum notabilis." Digital Collection of Leiden University Library.

gens, penned sometime at the end of 1632, *i.e.* some weeks after the battle of Lützen. The letter's date is indicated in the following way: "Penned at the end of the year 1632 which is remarkable because of the deaths of three European Kings."⁷⁰ The *tres Reges* are Gustavus Adolphus (d. 6 November 1632), Sigismund III Vasa (d. 30 April 1632), and the former Elector Palatine of the Rhine Frederick (d. 29 November 1632). Now, when they are gone, Clemens wants to be recommended to "our most Christian Prince who is ever victorious," which words must refer to Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, who like his brother Maurice was a talented military strategist. The poet is promoting himself with his epic and uses the same expressions as he would use in his letters to other people:

Harum exemplar Victo-
riarum ad te Vir Amplissime mitto, et
majorem in modum oro, obsecro, obtestor, ut apud Trium-
phatorem nostrum Principem Christianiss[imum] quem
pagina loquitur nostra, me autorem gratia, favore, ac patro-
cinio, ejusdem summopere indigum, de meliore nota com-
mendes, qui rivulus quispiam aut guttula ex fonte beneficen-
tiae clementiss[imi] Victoris in me derivetur.

(I am sending you a copy of these Victories, most honourable Man, and I ask, I beseech, I strongly urge that you would be so kind as to recommend me to our most Christian Prince, ever victorious, of whom my letter speaks,⁷¹ as the author, who is highly in need of his kindness, favour, and patronage, so that a stream or a drop from the fountain of the most kind Victor may flow to me).

71. Clemens praises the military *virtus* of the prince, "stupenda virtus Invictissimi Principis Auriaci," thirteen lines earlier.

Victoriae is the word in the subtitle of the Czech poet's epic, "victoriarum heroicarum [...] series" ("a series of heroic victories").

During that year, Clemens approached several other influential men, among them Gerardus Joannes Vossius and Johannes Polyander. In a letter to Vossius from July 1632, he begs the Dutch scholar to help him cover the costs of one of his poems (Poole 165). As a matter of fact, Polyander had a recommendation arranged for the poet already as early as April of 1632. In his letter to the Ministers of the Churches of Great Britain, Polyander explains that he knows that they can provide protection for Bohemian refugees and asks them to think especially of a group of exiled ministers, students and teachers. Clemens is mentioned as one of the refugees residing in Leiden. We also learn that he was very poor:

72. Polyander's letter is transcribed in Hessels 1554, no 2166. Another recommendation, from 1633, was from Vossius. More about it in Ryba 344.

Intellexi ex Domino Rutingio vestri quondam Symmystae filio apud vos esse exulum ob nomen Christi ex Bohemia eiectorum fautores et patronos, qui ex Christiana εὐδοκία καὶ συμπαθεία (sic) ipsis succurrere desiderant. In horum censu sunt miseri pastores D. Johannes Litomil et D. Daniel Weterus Pastores apud nos degentes, et D. Venceslaus Clemens qui fuit Rector Scholae Pragensis cuius egestas nobis quoque est probe cognita.⁷²

(I have heard from Lord Rutingius who is the son of your former assistant clergyman that there are among you people who are protectors and patrons of refugees expelled from Bohemia because of the name of Christ, who wish to assist these people owing to Christian kindness and compassion (sic). Among these are the wretched ministers Mr Johannes Litomil and Mr Daniel Weterus, which ministers are staying with us, and Mr Venceslaus Clemens who used to be Rector of the School in Prague and whose extreme poverty is also well known to us).

73. *Garterias sive Aureae Periscelidis libri duo*.

Before leaving for England, Clemens produced a 1,850-line poem on the origin and traditions of the Order of the Garter: *The Garteriad or the two books about the Golden Garter* (Leiden, 1634).⁷³ The poet's plan was to arrive in England in time for the procession held on St George's Day and to present the poem to Charles I. Unfortunately, Clemens did not make it in time and would later explain that his *Garterias* "had little success" ("Garterias mea parum fortunatos experitur successus").⁷⁴

74. Poole 166 and 177, n. 23.

When in England, Clemens used Vossius's testimonials to seek new *Maecenates*. The potential benefactors he met did not provide any support, though. The Bohemian poet's attempts to get introduced to other influential Englishmen seem to have left Vossius annoyed. William Poole has argued that Clemens's blunt manner of communicating his wishes could have been one of the reasons for his failure as a favour seeker (Poole 167). The only Englishman who maintained contact with the Czech refugee throughout his stay in England was the royal librarian Patrick Young. Their correspondence bears additional witness to Clemens's miserable state (Poole 170).

The Bohemian writer's last major project was his 6,200-line *Trinobantias*. Printed in 1636 and dedicated to Charles I, it is a praise of the city of London. As noted above, parts of it are borrowings from Clemens's poem about Danzig. Again, the work did not bring the de-

sired result. The poet died in absolute poverty in 1637. His will is a distressing read:

Quod attinet res meas, pecuniis careo, vestimenta, libros, et lucubrationes meas, Magnis Moecenatibus dedicatas (pro quibus præmium nisi periodus vitæ meæ fatalis incidisset, industria et sedulitate dignum promissum magnificè habebam, et jam jam spicilegium præstolabar) de illis ita dispono: quoniam singulari amore propensa erga me Ecclesia Belgica quæ est Londini, mihi in summa necessitate 7 libras et 10 solidos mutuo dederat, tum etiam hospiti meo pro camera, ex rebus meis, solutioni jubeo satisfiat. Quæ reliqua manebunt, Conterraneis meis Bohemis, Bartholomæo Mikysko et Casparo Hlawacio, quia dum sanus et æger eram, promptè mihi inserviebant, ea omnia et singula spontè ac voluntariè lego, mando, relinquo. Hæc est liberi animi mei summa et postrema voluntas. Factum in Musæo meo, præsentè hospite meo Iohanne Rogers qui hoc scripsit 7. Maij Anno Domini nostri 1637.

(As for my belongings: I am destitute of money. Clothes, books, and my writings, dedicated to great Maecenases (for which I had good hope to receive, had I not now been in a moribund state, a reward, corresponding to my strenuous efforts, which had been solemnly promised to me, and a gleaning [of which] I was already expecting); concerning these I dispose thus: for the singular love shown to me by the London Dutch Church, which had lent me in my greatest necessity the sum of £7 10s, and then also to my host for my chamber, I bid that they be repaid from my belongings. As for those things that remain, those things all and individually, I willingly and voluntarily bequeath, commit and leave to my Bohemian countrymen Bartholomæus Mikysko and Caspar Hlawacius, because they served me well while I was in health and in sickness. This is the last and final will of my free soul. Made in my study, in the presence of my host John Rogers, who wrote this, 7 May 1637).⁷⁵

75. The text of the will and its translation, here slightly altered, are from Poole 174 and 182. Two minor misprints in the Latin text have been corrected.

What happened to Narssius after the completion of his epic? We know that the Dutchman left his position as Sweden's historiographer sometime in 1631. He mentions his resignation in a letter to Oxenstierna from 11/21 July 1633. Lars Gustafsson speculated that the

Swedish employment might have been hampering for Narssius in potential business opportunities (Gustafsson 130). In the same letter from 1633, the poet wishes to be compensated for his *Gustavis* together with some other poems and for his travel expenses. He was also delighted to hear from Johan Banér that the king is said to have enjoyed the first part of the epic:

Quodsi etiam pro inchoato Opere Gustavidos, (quod clementer gratum habuisse S[acri] R[egis] M[ajest]t[ate]m ex Illustrissimo Domino Generali Bannerio intellexi) aliisque scriptis post resignatum stipendium editis, atque etiam in subsidium itineris Germanici, extraordinario aliquo honorario me dignabitur, id in lucro ponam [...].⁷⁶

76. *Oxenstiernska samlingen* in Riksarkivet, Stockholm.

(But if some sort of additional honorarium is granted me for the work of *Gustavis* that is begun (which I learned from Most Illustrious Lord Banér was benevolently received by his Sacred Royal Majesty) and other writings printed after the resignation from my stipend, as well as any help to pay for my travel to Germany, then I will count it as the profit).

So, Narssius wrote the fourth *liber* of his *Gustavis* after quitting his appointment with Sweden. It is noteworthy that the last book does not contain any dedications. Its only paratext is a short address to the reader, where Narssius explains that he wants to finish the poem in order to celebrate those who deserve commemoration. He might have received some kind of remuneration before the release of this concluding part of the epic, as he had brought up his financial strain in a letter to the chancellor from November 1633:

Non difficile est Exc[ellentiae] Vestrae judicare, quam grave fuerit mihi (qui toto jam biennio, et quod excurrit, stipendio carui) septendecim mensibus in hisce locis commorari meis in pensis praesertim cum paucula duntaxat ex rebus meis, quas oppignorare possim, hic habeam, plerisque Hamburgi relictis, spe expeditionis celerioris.⁷⁷

77. Also this letter is preserved in Riksarkivet, Stockholm.

(It is not difficult for Your Excellency to judge how strenuous it has been for me (who have already lacked a stipend for more than two years) to spend seventeen months in these places at my own expense, especially since I have here only a few of my possessions that I can pawn, as I have left most of

them in Hamburg, in the hope that the travel will not last long.)

After finishing the *Gustavis*, Narssius took up a new job: he was recruited as extraordinary councillor and physician of the Dutch East India Company. He died in 1637 in Java. The exact day of his death is not known.

Conclusion

To make a conclusion, we will need to return to the question of our poets' wishes and their patrons' expectations. As the extensive correspondence of the two writers shows, both wrote poetry for remuneration. Neither of them is hiding this fact. Both are eager to remind their benefactors of their old promises to pay, and neither one fails to bring up the new printing and travel costs he had incurred.

Narssius was active not only as a poet, but also as a physician and as a quasi-diplomat. Those additional skills were clearly appreciated by his Swedish employer and it is telling that Narssius's appointment with the Dutch East India Company was in these two capacities, and not as an encomiast.

Clemens, who was part of Oxenstierna's household, seems to have been hired primarily as a tutor. This suggests that he would be able to count on lodging and food, but perhaps not salary. Moreover, Oxenstierna's children would not need Clemens forever: when the Bohemian teacher had joined Johan Oxenstierna on his study tour to Leiden, the young nobleman had turned nineteen. Furthermore, it is important to remember that by the time of Clemens's arrival in Elbing, Narssius was already employed as Sweden's official historiographer.

It is also instructive to study the network these two poets relied on. Narssius was introduced to Swedish men in power through people who were already working for the Swedish state. Individuals like Leonard van Sorgen, Jan Rutgers and James Roberston were hired for their unique expertise. van Sorgen, who sent young Narssius to Sweden, was the Swedish correspondent in Hamburg. He was also the person who helped Sweden establish postal services on the continent (Linnarsson 62–68). The Scot Robertson was a highly appreciated doctor at the Swedish court and a successful businessperson, who had a monopoly of the supply of all the medicines within the royal palace (Forsstrand). As to Clemens's network, it consisted of

humanist scholars and theologians from the Netherlands. We know that Sweden had tried to recruit one of the most renowned of them, viz. Daniel Heinsius. That job went to Narssius.

Was it bad timing for Clemens to seek the Swedes' favour when Narssius had already installed himself as their *historiographus regni*? I do not think that timing was Clemens's main problem. What he failed to understand – in my opinion – was the changing conditions of his contemporary society. The system of exchange relationships was then undergoing a transformation: investing in people was now supposed to bring profit. For that reason, lavish paratexts and constant pleading for help did not suffice to promote a candidate on the labour market, as he had to offer his sponsor something very substantial, something his foreign patron would benefit from both at home and internationally. The favour seeker had to be a capital asset.

Many other contemporary cases corroborate this argument. For example, Johannes Raicus (Jan Rajek) (c. 1580–1632), also a Czech Protestant in exile, made a stellar career in Sweden.⁷⁸ His first important appointment was as rector of the cathedral school in Königsberg. In addition to his humanist training, including the proficiency in the art of poetry, he, like Narssius, was a licensed physician. It was in this capacity that he was invited to serve the Oxenstierna family. It was also an Oxenstierna, the University Chancellor Gustaf Oxenstierna, who proposed Raicus for a new chair in medicine at Uppsala. Already after two years as Professor Ordinarius (1627–29), the Czech was made the university's rector. One year later, he became head of the newly founded Swedish academy in Dorpat. What conclusion should we draw from this? Raicus possessed a useful knowledge and the Swedes did not hesitate to offer him their patronage.

78. The summary of Raicus's employment history is based on Nosco 915–18; Lindroth 387–88.

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