

A Companion to Byzantine Poetry

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Philippos Monotropos in Byzantium and the Slavonic World

Eirini Afentoulidou and Jürgen Fuchsbauer

The *Dioptra* was written by Philippos Monotropos some decades after the didactic poems of Michael Psellos,¹ and several decades before Constantine Manasses or John Tzetzes attempted to present the world history or discuss philological questions in thousands of political verses, and also before important works of fiction such as the *Ptochoprodromika* or the Komnenian novels appeared.² The *Dioptra* consists of over 7000 political verses, which are organized into five books: the *Klauthmoi* (Laments), a poem of contrition addressed to the soul; and four books of dialogue between the *Psyche* (soul) and the *Sarx* (body).³ In the dialogue, the *Psyche*, personified as a mistress, poses her maid, the *Sarx*, questions concerning human nature and its position in a world created and governed by God. The author is the monk Philippos, in scholarship known as Monotropos. The popularity of the *Dioptra* continued throughout the Byzantine period and beyond, as is attested by the 82 manuscripts transmitting Greek versions of the text.⁴ In the 14th century the *Dioptra*

1 Michael Psellos, *Poems*, ed. Westerink. On didactic literature in Byzantium, see Wolfram Hörandner's contribution to the present volume as well as id., "The Byzantine Didactic Poem".

2 See the contributions to the present volume by Roderick Beaton and Nikos Zagklas.

3 The hitherto sole, although non-critical, printed edition is Philippos Monotropos, *Dioptra*, ed. Lavriotes. The text from this edition was transcribed by Jürgen Fuchsbauer for Philippos Monotropos, *Dioptra*, ed. Prochorov et al. The *Klauthmoi* were edited in Philippos Monotropos, *Klauthmoi*, ed. Auvray. A modern critical edition of the *Dioptra* is being prepared within the framework of the above mentioned project. For further bibliography see Hoffmann, "Wie sieht wohl die Hölle aus?" and Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Eine *Dioptra*-Adaptierung".

4 Seventy-nine manuscripts, mostly originating from the Byzantine period, transmit what they claim to be the original *Dioptra*, as a whole or in fragments; eight manuscripts transmit an archaising paraphrase made by Theodore Phialites (Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit 29715) in the 14th century, whereas the missing parts of a further manuscript are supplemented by Phialites' paraphrase. One manuscript transmits a vernacular rendering in political distichs made in the 1570s in the entourage of Michael Kantakouzenos (see Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Eine *Dioptra*-Adaptierung"); a further manuscript transmits another adaptation, also in political distichs, made by Georgios Rhetor in 1639 (see Hörandner, "Notizen zu Philippos Monotropos", pp. 819–21).

was translated into Middle Bulgarian Church Slavonic. The Slavonic translation is transmitted in 200 manuscripts.⁵ In the following we will present the *Dioptra* in the context of Byzantine literature at the turn of the 12th century and its reception in the Slavonic world.

1 The Byzantine Text

1.1 *Philippos and His World*

Philippos is only known as the author of the *Dioptra*. What we know about him is based on the direct information provided in the paratexts and the indirect information deduced from the text proper.⁶ He composed the *Dioptra* in 1095, when he was already an old man. Two years later, a second, perhaps posthumous redaction was released, in which some passages were rearranged and several minor changes in the wording were made.⁷ Philippos was a monk. Accordingly, the *Dioptra* was often described as the unpretentious work of a simple monk, a lengthy specimen of ascetic literature.⁸

And yet, a closer reading of the *Dioptra* offers a differentiated picture of the text, its author and its recipients. Indeed, the monk Philippos, though not an outstanding scholar, had an above-average education, which included theology, grammar, arithmetics and physiology. He was very well-read, although many of his readings were probably taken from *florilegia*. There are strong indications that Philippos lived in Constantinople and belonged to urbane monastic circles close to the patriarchal and imperial authorities. His *Weltanschauung* is a rather simple Christian humanism.

1.2 *Explaining the World in Verses: the Dioptra and Its Concerns*

The *Dioptra* consists of 7134 political verses (or 7217 in the second redaction) and 12 inserts of varying length, 11 in prose and one in dodecasyllables, which are excerpted from other authors.⁹ It was originally accompanied by three prefaces. Two of them were written by Philippos: a letter to the monk Kallinikos, on whose request Philippos wrote the *Dioptra*; and nine political verses of

5 Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische Übersetzung der Dioptra des Philippos Monotropos*, pp. 68–258.

6 See Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, “Philippos Monotropos’ *Dioptra* and its Social Milieu”.

7 See Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, “The *Dioptra* and its Versions”.

8 Philippos Monotropos, *Klauthmoi*, ed. Auvray, p. 3; Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur*, p. 642.

9 Detailed lists of the inserts and annexes of the *Dioptra* are provided in Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, “Die *Dioptra* des Philippos Monotropos und ihr Kontext”.

defence (στίχοι ἀπολογητικοί). The third is a book epigram of 21 dodecasyllables written by the otherwise unknown *vestes* Constantine Granatos. In the second redaction two further prefaces were added: a letter from Kallinikos to Philippos requesting the composition of a collection (συλλογήν) of scriptural and patristic writings; and an anonymous prose preface (πρόγραμμα), erroneously attributed to Michael Psellos in a manuscript family.¹⁰ The five books of the *Dioptra* are followed by four prose annexes, two of which are excerpted from Niketas Stethatos and two are anonymous: an epilogue of 180 political verses (183 in the second redaction) written by Philippos himself; and the dating epigram, or rather colophon, which is transmitted only in three codices but seems to be original.

The five books themselves are the *Klauthmoi* or *Threnoi* ("laments"), a poem of contrition addressed to the soul, and four books of dialogue between the *Psyche* (soul), which is personified as the mistress, and the *Sarx* (body), which is personified as the maid. The *Klauthmoi*, consisting of 355 verses (371 in the second redaction), is considerably shorter than the dialogue books, and is positioned as the first book in the earlier redaction, or the fifth book in the second redaction. The dialogue books consist of 1596 (1840), 1644 (1673), 1161 (916) and 2174 (2204) verses respectively. In these books the mistress poses questions to her maid on various issues, which mainly concern human nature, its constitution, and its state and position in the visible and invisible, present and eternal world. Thus, the second book (or first, according to the later redaction) begins with practical questions of Christian life: good deeds, charity, love, timely repentance and confession, the importance of intention and motivation vs. actual results, etc. The third (second) book continues with theoretical questions regarding the body and the soul as well as the resurrection of the dead: how the soul acts and manifests itself through the body; why and when the soul was united with the body; what the state of the soul and its three parts (intellectual, concupiscent, irascible) will be after resurrection; how the soul will recognize its own body in order to be reunited with it, all ephemeral features having gone; how humans will recognize each other after resurrection, etc. The questions of the fourth (third) book concern the bodiless state of the human soul and the angels: how the soul acts without the body; how the soul and the angels praise God without a body, etc. Finally, the last dialogue book is dedicated to the broader issue of the human state in the ephemeral world and also questions on the other world: why God did not create all humans at once, in the same way as he had created the angels; what the reasons are for differences in character or voice, for congenital illnesses, disabilities, etc.; whether

10 See Karpozilos, "When Did Michael Psellus Die?"

one's character can be changed by effort or God's will; what the state of the deceased until resurrection is. The answers to the physiological questions in the last book are based to a great extent on medical theories, such as the theory of the four elements and the four humours.

This outline of the contents shows that there exists a coherent line of thought throughout the vast text, and that the dialogue is more than a conglomerate of random questions and answers. A large proportion of the verses paraphrase other texts, which Philippos does not usually name; although he readily acknowledges that he only quotes other authors as a proof of his orthodoxy.¹¹ Despite writing in verse, Philippos is very close to his sources. These sources are mainly patristic, but also from both the Old and New Testament. The extent of the paraphrased sources varies from two-three to several dozen verses. Some lengthy sources, the inserts mentioned above, are quoted verbatim. Most sources are texts that were often found in *florilegia*.

The exposition of theological issues in straightforward political verse relates the *Dioptra* to didactic poems, which flourished in the last decades of the 11th century. The questions discussed in the *Dioptra* must have been one important reason for its popularity; they deal with the concerns of educated pious Byzantines. Similar questions were discussed in the epistolary essays written by Michael Glykas in the 12th century, although there seems to be no direct dependence.¹²

1.3 *Dialogue, Erotapokriseis and Personification: Edification and Fictionality*

The Byzantines made extensive use of the dialogue, being heirs to Greek and, through Syriac, to Near Eastern literary traditions. Although the ancient Greek dramatic tradition came to an end in Late Antiquity, save some *Lesedramen*, and dialogues in platonic or lucianic style were written only sporadically,¹³ the dialogue was used in many genres of Byzantine literature. Theological treatises and especially disputations on the theological controversies of the time, sometimes based on actual debates, had a dialogue form.¹⁴ The dialogue

11 Epilogue 13–17 and 165–70. All quotations of the Greek *Dioptra* are from the forthcoming edition by Eirini Afentoulidou.

12 The relationship between the *Dioptra* and the epistolary essays written by Michael Glykas needs to be further investigated. For the question of the genre of Michael Glykas' text, see Kiapidou, "Chapters, Epistolary Essays and Epistles".

13 Marciniak, *Greek Drama in Byzantine Times*.

14 Cameron, *Dialoguing*.

form was also used in epigrams and orations.¹⁵ In particular, funerary orations and epigrams or lamentations often have the form of a dialogue between the deceased, the mourners, a stranger passing by the grave, the city, the orator etc.¹⁶ The hymnographic genre *kontakion*, originating from a bilingual Syriac-Greek environment, evolved mainly from the Syriac *maḏrāšā* and its sub-genre *soghitha*, which was usually a dialogue.¹⁷ Accordingly, dialogues, especially between biblical persons, abound in the *kontakia*.¹⁸ The dialogues were often between personifications, e.g. of cities and other geographic concepts, the 12 months, virtues and vices, and so on.¹⁹ Disputes between the personified body and soul existed in the already mentioned Syriac *soghitha*.²⁰ However, they had no equivalent either in the *kontakia* or in other Byzantine genres. The only cases of a dialogue between the personified body and soul in Byzantine literature are the *Dioptra* and a dispute written by Michael Choniates around 1215,²¹ perhaps inspired by the *Dioptra*.

One rudimentary form of dialogue is the *erotapokriseis* (questions and answers), inasmuch as they constitute an exchange between two “speakers”.²² The *erotapokriseis* was a popular rhetorical means of arranging the material in didactic literature in Antiquity and especially in the Christian Middle Ages. The questions and answers may be attributed to named personas, or be introduced simply by the rubric “question” and “answer”. However, there is hardly any dramatization or fictionalisation in the *erotapokriseis*: there is no reference to extratextual circumstances that would provide the speakers with a background and define the setting of the dialogue, and the dynamics of the

15 See e.g. Theodore Prodromos' dialogue between the poet and Abraham in the epigram “On Abraham Entertaining the Holy Trinity” (Theodore Prodromos, *Neglected Poems*, ed. Zagklas, p. 225) or his dialogue *Apodemos Philia* between the stranger and the personified *philia* (love among equals) (ed. Zagklas, *Neglected Poems*, pp. 326–62).

16 A good example of a dialogue between the mourner and the deceased is the lamenting poem for an intelligent young man κατ' ἐρώτησιν (in questions) by Constantine Stilbes, and its anonymous imitation for the patriarch Dionysius (Constantine Stilbes, *Poems*, eds. Diethart/Hörandner, pp. 2–6 and 6–8).

17 Brock, “The Dispute Poem”.

18 See *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica*, ed. Trypanis, no. 6, 8, 9 and 11, as well as Romanos' *kontakia* on the Old and New Testament in Romanos Melodos, *Hymns*, ed. Grosdidier de Matons.

19 See Stafford/Herrin, *Personification in the Greek World*.

20 Brock, “The Dispute between Soul and Body”.

21 Michael Choniates, *Dispute*, ed. Hunger. See Kolovou, *Μεγάλη Χωνιάτης*.

22 The definition of *erotapokriseis* has aroused some discussion lately. See Ermilov, “Byzantine Question-and-Answer Literature”; Papadoyiannakis, “Instruction by Question and Answer”.

relationship between the speakers are reduced to posing questions and giving authoritative answers.

As regards the *Dioptra*, Philippos himself does not comment on the dialogue form of his work. In some codices the word διάλεξις (dialogue) is mentioned in titles at the beginning of the *Dioptra* or of single books, but there is no indication that these go back to Philippos. In the second redaction, however, terms used for the *erotapokriseis* appear twice in the prefaces: in Philippos' letter to Kallinikos the words "in question and answer; the question is as if of the soul, the answer again of the body" are added.²³ Moreover, the anonymous author of the *Programma* describes the *Dioptra* as consisting of "a few and clear questions and instructing answers".²⁴ The author of the latter preface also addresses the issue of personification of the soul, and argues that this rhetorical device was common both among Old-Testament and Christian authors. However, the examples he cites ("Bless the Lord, O my soul; Return unto thy rest, O my soul; And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods; Soul, the present things are temporal"²⁵) rather undermine his argument: the address "my soul" is a way of addressing oneself, and not a dialogue with a fictitious integrated persona.

Indeed, one of the most innovative and sophisticated features of the *Dioptra* is the dynamics developed between the *Psyche* and the *Sarx* in the four dialogue books. These are at the same time allegorical figures and fictitious integrated personas, and their relationship is shaped a) by the theological notions of the creation of humans as an entity of body and soul on the one hand, and the higher status of the soul on the other; b) by the double social hierarchy between mistress and maid on the one hand, and teacher and pupil on the other; c) by the conventions of *erotapokriseis*, according to which the roles of the one(s) who pose the questions and the one who gives the authoritative answers are clearly defined; and d) by the conventions of catanyctic literature, which include self-accusations addressed to one's own soul.²⁶ Thus, throughout the four dialogue books the *Psyche* poses various questions, which the *Sarx* never fails to answer in the manner of *erotapokriseis*. However, elements that point to a more nuanced interaction recur.²⁷ Their relationship is discussed time and again, be it in the form of a debate or quarrel, a theological argumentation, or simply through the various ways of addressing each other: "flesh" (σάρξ),

23 Κατὰ πρῶσιν καὶ ἀποκρίσιν. Ἡ πρῶσις τοίνυν δῆθεν τῆς ψυχῆς, ἡ δ' ἀπόκρισις αὐτῆς τῆς σαρκός.

24 Δι' ὀλίγων καὶ σαφῶν ἐρωτήσεων καὶ διδασκαλικῶν ἀποκρίσεων.

25 Ps 102/103, 1; Ps 114/116, 7; Lc 12, 19 and Παρακλητική ἤτοι Ὁκτώηχος ἡ μεγάλη, Rome 1885, p. 382.

26 Giannouli, "Catanyctic Religious Poetry".

27 See Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "The *Dioptra* of Philippos Monotropos" and id., "Die Proso-poiia in der *Dioptra*".

“servant” (παιδίσκη/δούλη), but also “teacher” (διδάσκαλε) on the one side; “soul” (ψυχή) or “(my) lady” (κυρία or δέσποινα) on the other. Occasionally the *Sarx* addresses the *Psyche* τάλαινα / παντάλαινα (wretched) or ἀθλία / παναθλία (miserable) in the manner of catanyctic poems. In the second redaction such words of reprimand have been replaced by δέσποινα or κυρία. This change is at first glance successful, since the words “miserable” and “wretched” are inappropriate in the mouth of a servant addressing her mistress; but in fact the author of the second redaction did not take into consideration one of the many levels of the relationship between the *Psyche* and the *Sarx*. The conversation consists mostly of questions and answers, but also includes other forms of discourse: commands, e.g. when the *Psyche* orders her servant to speak;²⁸ threats, e.g. when the former threatens to punish her maid if she disobeys;²⁹ warnings, e.g. when the *Sarx* warns the *Psyche* that they will both be punished, if the latter does not repent;³⁰ and reprimands, e.g. when the *Psyche* accuses the *Sarx* of binding her to the material world, but also when the *Sarx* reproaches her pupil for her ignorance or lack of attention, or for her procrastination regarding her salvation, in the manner of catanyctic poems.³¹ References to events that take place outside the discourse time grant the interlocutors an autonomy that further highlights their status as integrated personas: they had been together for years, but never before discussed salvation;³² at the beginning of the third book the *Sarx* refers to a question she had posed “yesterday”, that is, in the previous book; at the end of the third book she gets tired—a sign of the physicality of an interlocutor—and demands to go to rest and pray.³³

The first 11 verses offer an example of the interplay between the various levels of the relationship between *Psyche* and *Sarx*, and the multiple function of the text; mainly didactic, but also catanyctic, and in any case fictitious and entertaining:

Psyche: It has been a long time ago, since we were bound together by the creator of all, but I have never asked you anything beneficial. Yet, I ask you right now; do not rebuke me, maid. Tell me, Flesh, whatever useful you have in mind, and utter advisory words of instruction. And please forgive the procrastination.

28 E.g. *Dioptra*, Book 2.968–69 and 4.481.

29 E.g. *Dioptra*, Book 3.1372–74.

30 E.g. *Dioptra*, Book 2.944–53.

31 E.g. *Dioptra*, Book 2.1539–44; 3.8–14; 4.612–18.

32 *Dioptra*, Book 2.1–3.

33 *Dioptra*, Book 3.1–2 and 1556–57.

Sarx: If you order, I will tell you; but in a very vulgar manner, because I am ignorant of letters, my lady.

Psyche: But I do not happen to be very learned myself; say boldly whatever you can, however you can.³⁴

In these verses and throughout the *Dioptra*, the hierarchy is ambiguous: the *Psyche*, who asks, is the mistress, and her asking, or rather ordering her maid to instruct her, is a manifestation of her power. On the other hand, she adopts an apologetic tone towards her maid; this undermines her superior position by making her a possible target for reprimand and reducing her to the role of the pupil. On another level the soul as representative of the whole person is often the target of self-accusations in catanyctic literature, procrastination being one of the most common self-accusations. The verb συνεζεύχθημεν (bound together: v. 2) is a theological notion that is discussed thoroughly in the third book of the *Dioptra*, and also defines the social parameters of the relationship between the two personas: despite the different status their fates are united. The *Sarx* accepts her role as a teacher, but hastens to restore the hierarchy; it is as a maid following orders that she gives answers and instructions. Throughout the *Dioptra* she stresses that she is only reproducing what she has read. This explains a feature of the *Dioptra* which may appear strange at first sight, namely, that it is the inferior person who takes the role of the instructor. In contrast to the *erotapokriseis*, the instructor is not a male authority answering by virtue of his own intellectual and spiritual qualities, but a female servant who is ordered to home-school her mistress by reproducing what she has read. Indeed, in another passage, the *Psyche* requests from the *Sarx* a scriptural reference for what she has just said, “Because”, she explains, “I disbelieve you being a servant and I hesitate about what you say”.³⁵ On another level, the fact that the instructor is the body may be an allegorical statement on learning: even biblical and patristic knowledge is an issue of this world, and therefore bodily and vain, if the soul is reluctant to put it in action. The *Psyche* hastens to encourage her maid by claiming that she is not erudite herself: a statement which apparently undermines the mistress’ status, but subtly elevates her through its

34 Ψυχή: Πολλοὺς μὲν ἔχομεν ὁμοῦ καὶ χρόνους καὶ καιροὺς τε, / ἐξ ὅτου συνεζεύχθημεν ὑπὸ τοῦ κτίστου πάντων, / ἡρώτησα δ’ οὐδέποτε τίποτ’ οὖν τὸ συμφέρον, / ἀρτίως δέ σε ἐρωτῶ, μηδὲν μοι μέμψῃ δούλη· / εἰπέ μοι σὰρξ εἴ τι φρονεῖς τίποτ’ οὖν ὠφελείας, / καὶ λόγους παραινετικούς φράσον διδασκαλίας· / τὴν μέλλῃσιν δὲ σύγγνωθι καὶ ἄφες δέομαί σου.—Σάρξ. Εἴπερ κελεύεις λέγω σοι· ἀγροικικῶς δὲ ἄγαν, / ὅτι γραμμάτων ἄπειρος τυγχάνω δέσποινά μου.—Ψ. Ἄλλ’ οὐδ’ ἐγὼ ἐλλόγιμος κατὰ πολλὴν τυγχάνω· ὥς δύνασαι τὰ δύνασαι, λέξον μοι μετὰ θάρσους (*Dioptra*, Book 2.1–11).

35 *Dioptra*, Book 3.1223–25.

condescending tone. A further level regards the composition of the *Dioptra*: it is perceived or conventionalized as being simply written and intended for a simple audience, Philippos claims to have written it following orders, and he depends heavily on other sources.

The *Dioptra* is not a dispute poem and the general mood between the *Psyche* and *Sarx* is friendly and cooperative, though highly hierarchical. However, sometimes the dialogue turns to an argument with vulgar traits, without losing its strong theological background. The combination of buffoonery and theological discourse creates a comic effect characteristic of the *Dioptra*. The following example is from the end of the third book, when the *Psyche* asks the *Sarx* about her state after resurrection. The latter is reluctant to answer on grounds of the difficulty of the question, and urges the *Psyche* to ask somebody more erudite than herself. The *Psyche* reacts by ordering her servant to answer and threatens:

So, begin, my servant, and tell whatever you know.
But if you want to disobey me, do not expect to get fed.
I will not let you have your share of food or drink.
But “not even the dog ate the cane”, as you know.³⁶

The last verse is explained in a marginal note that goes back to Philippos: “you are going to be beaten, obviously”.³⁷ The underlying idiomatic expression is vernacular, similar to the Modern Greek expression “τρώω ξύλο” (eat wood) for getting beaten. This is slapstick humour. However, the theologically versed audience would not fail to decode the deeper meaning of these threats: the disobedient body will be castigated through ascetism.

Fictionality never completely disappeared from Byzantine literature.³⁸ In progymnasmata, epigrams, homilies or hagiography fictitious personas, situations and speeches were created; although with hagiography one must always bear in mind that the characters and the events at least, if not the details of the dramatization, were perceived as facts by most recipients. However, the 12th century witnessed an explosion in the production of works with a considerable degree of fictionality: the novels, the *Ptochoprodromika*, *Katomyomachia*, *Apodemos Philia*, *Christos Paschon*, the dialogues in lucianic style such as

36 Λοιπὸν ἀπάρξου δούλη μου καὶ φράσον ἅπερ οἶδας./ Εἰ δ' ἀπειθήσαι βούλη μου, μὴ προσδόκα τραφήναι/ οὔτε βρωτοῦ οὔτε ποτοῦ μεταλαβεῖν ἐάσω/ ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὁ κύων βέβρωκεν ὡς οἶσθα τὴν σκυτάλην: *Dioptra*, Book 3.1371–74.

37 ἔχεις δαρεῖν δηλονότι.

38 See Agapitos, “In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands” and Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance*.

the *Timarion*, *Amathes* and *Bion Praxis*, and the *Dramation* by Michael Haploucheir;³⁹ to name a few. Apart from the novels and the *Ptochoprodromika*, the rest are dialogues inspired by the long-abandoned ancient traditions of drama and lucianic dialogue. In general, there is a proliferation of dialogues in the 12th century; besides the revival of the ancient forms mentioned above, genres with a long-standing tradition in Byzantium, such as epigrams of all kinds, often had the dialogue form, or at least included dialogues. In this sense the *Dioptra*—conceived as a dialogue between two fictitious personas—represents one of the earliest examples of trends which shaped literary life in Komnenian Constantinople.

1.4 *Language and Style*

Language and style are two of Philippos' major concerns. Both in the *Dioptra* and the paratexts he addresses the same issue, namely the supposed insufficiency of his language and style, but each time with a different line of argument. His main arguments are the following: one must not look at the phrase, but rather at the content, which is edifying and scriptural and patristic through and through;⁴⁰ he is an ignorant himself, simplifying difficult notions for the ignorant;⁴¹ he is not presumptuous, but obeying Kallinikos.⁴² In his defensiveness he becomes defiant; those who might attack him are the ones that take pleasure in mocking, but he is not afraid of mockery and idle talk, which those who are haughty above their measure deserve, for he truly says who he is and what he thinks.⁴³ The roles of the ignorant author and the ignorant public are taken up in the text itself by the two personas of the body/maid and the soul/mistress, as the above cited first verses of the *Dioptra* exemplify.

The language of the *Dioptra* is a simple, straightforward *Schriftkoine*.⁴⁴ In general, Philippos is able to communicate his ideas efficiently. Many linguistic phenomena often observed in the *Dioptra* are usually avoided by scholarly authors, although they are also known from other Byzantine non-vernacular texts. The vocabulary is largely that of learned Komnenian *Schriftkoine*, with occasional vernacular words referring to the material culture. However, Philippos has a fondness for archaic/poetic words through the *Dioptra*, and also for occasional vulgarisms concentrated in slapstick-like passages. The eclectic usage

39 See the contributions to the present volume by Roderick Beaton and Nikos Zagklas.

40 Letter to Kallinikos; Book 2.10–12; Epilogue 25.

41 Apologetic verses 1–6; Book 2.8–10; Epilogue 18–24.

42 Letter to Kallinikos, Epilogue 25–30.

43 Apologetic verses 7–9.

44 For an analysis of the language of the *Dioptra* see Afentoulidou-Leitgeb, "Language and style of the *Dioptra*". See also M. Hinterberger's contribution to the present volume.

of poetic or vulgar words in a context of a low-register *Schriftkoine* constitutes a striking feature of the *Dioptra*'s style. Sometimes this may create a comic effect, similar to the already discussed switch from buffoonery to theological discourse. For example, the humorous character of the following two verses, with which the mistress threatens to beat her maid, is enhanced by the mixture of language registers:

εἰ δ' οὐ πεισθῆς μοι ὁλοή λύσσα κακόφρον πέδη,
ἐμέ γάρ νά κρατήσουσιν ἀλλὰ καὶ σέ νά δείρουν.⁴⁵

The first verse is a loan from Gregory of Nazianzus: ὁλοή being a poetic word. However, the constructions with νά and the suffix -ουν in the third person plural are vernacular. Several decades later a Constantinopolitan scholar, in all probability Theodore Prodromos, wrote begging poems to the emperor, the famous *Ptochoprodromika*, full of slapstick humour, in a largely vernacular idiom.⁴⁶

1.5 *The Political Verse: Form and Function*

By the time of the composition of the *Dioptra*, political verse had already been established as the metre of personal religious expression and didactic poetry.⁴⁷ In this sense both the *Klauthmoi* and the dialogue books were rooted in their respective literary traditions. On the other hand, the *Dioptra* also represents new trends as regards the function of political verse. One of these trends concerns political verse and fiction. The *Dioptra* was the first text with a certain degree of fictionality to be written in political verses. In the following decades, political verse increasingly became the typical vehicle of fiction, such as with: the *ptochoprodromika*; the Grottaferrata version of *Digenes Akrites*;⁴⁸ or Constantine Manasses' novel *Aristandros and Kallithea*. The use of the political verse in fiction continued until well beyond the Byzantine period, with a final peak during the Cretan Renaissance (16th–17th centuries).⁴⁹

45 "If you do not obey to me, you destructive rage, you ill-minded fetter, they will arrest me and they will beat you" (*Dioptra*, Book 4.463–64). Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmen de seipso* 46, in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 37, col. 1378, 4–7: Σάρξ ὁλοή, Βελίαρ κακόφρονος οἶδμα κελαινόν.

46 Garland, "And His Bald Head Shone Like a Full Moon ..."; Kyriakis, "Satire and Slapstick"; Kulháňková, "Das Eindringen" (ἀστειότης referring to a "kultivierte(s) höfische(s) und großstädtische(s) Milieu"). See also Hinterberger, "How Should we Define Vernacular Literature?".

47 Jeffreys, "The Nature and Origins of the Political Verse".

48 On the dating, see *Digenes Akrites*, ed./transl. Jeffreys, and see Beaton/Ricks (ed.), *Digenes Akrites*.

49 Holton (ed.), *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*.

The other trend concerns the length of poems written in political verses. During the 10th and 11th centuries the length of these poems typically ranged between a few dozen and a few hundred verses. The *Dioptra* was at the time of its composition by far the lengthiest work written in political verses. Over the course of the 12th century the political verse established itself as one of the metres of lengthy texts; the *Chronicle* by Constantine Manasses, for example, consists of 6620 political verses, whereas the above-mentioned, now lost romance, *Aristandros and Kallithea* by the same author, must have been of considerable length too.⁵⁰ The *Allegories to the Iliad* by John Tzetzes consist of 6632 political verses, his *Allegories to the Odyssey* 3109, and his *Chiliads* 12668. In the centuries to follow, and up until the 17th century, texts of several thousand verses were typically written in political verses.

1.6 *The Dioptra in the Literary Scene of Its Time*

Despite its popularity in the Byzantine world, the *Dioptra* was long ignored by Byzantinists. Its description as a monastic text implied, unjustly, that it was an atemporal, marginal phenomenon in Byzantine literature. However, there have been different voices, such as Paul Magdalino, who sees in the *Dioptra* “one of the first attempts to limit the cultural damage done by the trial of John Italos”.⁵¹ In the preceding sections it was demonstrated not only that the *Dioptra* was not devoid of vividness, humour and sophistication, but also that it was related to literary trends characteristic of 11th- and 12th-century Constantinople; for some of which it was an early example. Catanyctic and didactic poems written in a straightforward *Schriftkoine*, and in political verse, and the fashion of didactic poems in general, had been established in the last decades of the 11th century. At the same time, the creation of fictitious characters and settings, the dialogue, slapstick humour combined with vernacular elements, and the composition of poems consisting of thousands of political verses, were characteristic of much of the literature in the decades to follow. These new trends were mostly demonstrated in markedly secular works in the 12th century, for, if God’s operation in human history is still apparent throughout the *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses, this is not the case in the novels, nor the *Ptochoprodromika*, or the comic dialogues, or the *Katomyomachia*. The *Dioptra* remained a unique text in combining theological instruction with playfulness, and theological literary traditions with the new trends of lengthy poems, dialogues and fictionality.

50 Seven hundred and sixty-one excerpted verses of this romance survive. See Roderick Beaton’s contribution to the present volume.

51 Magdalino, “Digenes Akrites and Byzantine literature”, p. 13.

2 The Slavonic Translation

The Church Slavonic version of the *Dioptra* was to become even more popular than the Greek original, as is demonstrated by the 198 manuscripts transmitting either the complete poem or extracts of it.⁵² The witnesses range from the 14th to the 19th century; four of them belong to the Middle Bulgarian, 16 to the Serbian, and 178 to the East Slavonic redaction of Church Slavonic. The existence of 15 further manuscripts dating from the 14th century can be deduced from the stemma; Bulgarisms in their respective copies prove that at least eight of them were Middle Bulgarian.⁵³ Despite the scarcity of witnesses of Bulgarian origin, the Slavonic *Dioptra* is clearly of Middle Bulgarian character. We can, however, only speculate on the exact place where the *Dioptra* was translated into Slavonic. The translator's excellent command of both Greek and Church Slavonic allows us to assume that it originated in an eminent literary centre, most likely the scriptoria of Mount Athos or of the Bulgarian capital, Tărnovo.⁵⁴

The point in time when the *Dioptra* was transferred into Slavonic can be narrowed down reasonably well. Codex G1M Chlud. 237, dating from c.1340, contains the original of a translation of two appendix chapters of the *Dioptra*, which is evidently not based on the Slavonic version of the whole text. The translator, a certain Grubadin, obviously did not know about the latter, which allows us to conclude that by that time it did not yet exist, or was at least not widely disseminated.⁵⁵ The *terminus ante quem* is the age of the oldest extant manuscripts, which date from the 1360s. Thus, we may assume that the translation was created around 1350.

In the Slavonic *Dioptra*, as is usual with Middle Bulgarian texts of high quality, the most striking innovations of the contemporary vernacular are rarely, if at all, reflected. The infinitive is lost in Bulgarian like in the other languages of the Balkan *Sprachbund*. Yet, in the Slavonic *Dioptra* it is preserved without any restrictions (however, it appears exclusively in positions where the Greek model has an infinitive). Even Greek substantivized infinitives—which had usually been paraphrased in translations into Old Church Slavonic—were

52 A critical edition of the Slavonic *Dioptra* is being prepared by Heinz Miklas and Jürgen Fuchsbaauer. The first volume, containing the prefaces and the first book, is already published: Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische*. On the manuscripts see *ibid.*, p. 60.

53 *Ibid.* p. 62 and 265.

54 See Fuchsbaauer, *Die Übertragung der Dioptra ins Slavische*, pp. 271–75. Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische*, pp. 39 and 296.

55 See Miklas, *Die Dioptra des Philippos Monotropos im Slavischen*, pp. xix–xxxii, especially p. xxxi; Miklas, “Kāde sa otišli Parorijskite rākopisi?”; Fuchsbaauer, “Identifying Listening Errors in Slavonic Translations?”; Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische*, p. 68.

imitated (e.g. in verse 1070 of book four: εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι τούτῳ is rendered as *ν̑ eže věrovati emou*).

Hardly any indications for the evolution of a postpositive article—another characteristic feature of the Balkan languages—can be detected. Occasionally demonstrative pronouns (usually *s̑* or *on̑*, but not *t̑*, which became the post-positive article in Bulgarian) are inserted after a noun, as in verse 187 of book four:⁵⁶

καὶ εἶρκεν ὁ βασιλεὺς πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν τὸν τούτου·
i reče cř̃b̃ ωn̑ k̃s̃ svoemou sñu.
 (“And the king said to his son”)

In Modern Bulgarian a pronoun or an article would be required here as well. However remarkable such insertions are in view of the translator's general reluctance to add words (cf. below), they occur comparatively rarely. In book four, which consists of 1154 verses and extensive chapters in prose, only four instances can be found; the first book, which comprises 358 verses, contains one.

Above all, the synthetic nominal inflection is seemingly fully preserved. Typical indicators of the transition to analytism, which prevails in the nominal systems of the Balkan languages, would be an increased occurrence of prepositional phrases instead of bare case forms, wrong case endings after prepositions, a lack of congruence, or incorrect verbal regimen. Significant examples for any of these are exceptionally rare.

Moreover, with regard to the use of cases, the Greek model obviously had hardly any impact on the Slavonic translation. Instances for a direct Greek influence are scarce. In the first preface, for example, we find the phrase *ω eže ne ν̑ boga bogatěřštmou*. As there is no indication of direction here, we would rather expect the locative *ν̑ bodzě* instead of the accusative *ν̑ boga*; however, the translator remains faithful to the Greek model, which, in discordance with ancient Greek, also has an accusative: περὶ τοῦ μὴ εἰς Θεὸν πλουτοῦντος.

The regimen of the Greek verb is seemingly imitated in the clause ending the fifth prose chapter of book four, where ἐλεῶ σε τῆς δυστυχίας (“I pity you for your ill fortune”) is rendered as *milouē tē pogrěšenīa*. The Greek verb regularly takes a direct object and a genitive to indicate the cause of the pity. Even though the *Lexicon linguae palaeoslovenicae* does not specify the case a causal complement would require in Slavonic, the genitive sounds rather weird to me. Probably a prepositional phrase would have been preferable.

⁵⁶ Verse numbers are indicated according to Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische*.

Despite the dwindling of the synthetic inflection in the contemporaneous vernacular, in respect to the use of the cases the translator skilfully avoided an inept imitation of the Greek. He must have acquired his ability to use the cases correctly in the course of his education.

Was he equally independent in rendering the Greek text? In the words of Klaus Trost,⁵⁷ Slavonic translators of that time intended to preserve the numeric and positional equivalence of functional units with the original. To put it another way, it was their aim that every word or indivisible word complex (as, for example, the combination of article and noun) of the Greek text be represented by exactly one equivalent in the target language, and that the arrangement of these entities correspond to that of the Greek model.⁵⁸ The idea behind this approach to translating is, in the words of Francis Thomson, “to take the reader to the message and not vice versa”.⁵⁹

Even a quick glance reveals that the translator strictly followed these principles.⁶⁰ And yet, he repeatedly broke the principle of numeric equivalence for several reasons. First of all, he recurrently refrained from rendering words of merely metrical motivation, as, for example, in the verses 790 and 791 of book four:

ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἰωάννου γε τοῦ Θεολόγου αἰθῆς
nq i iōanna že b̃goslova paky
 ἢ τοῦτου ἀποκάλυψις ἐδίδαξε μεγάλως·
ω/t/kr̃venie naoučilo est̃ velmi.
 (“But also John the Theologian’s,
 his Revelation taught in a great way”)

In the immediate sequence of the antecedent Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου, the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτου is definitely superfluous. The author obviously used it to obtain the required number of syllables in the verse. The translator,

57 See Trost, “Die übersetzungstheoretischen Konzeptionen des cyrillisch-mazedonischen Blattes”, pp. 506f.; Trost, *Untersuchungen zur Übersetzungstheorie und -praxis des späteren Kirchenslavischen*, pp. 41f.

58 Our edition of the Slavonic *Dioptra* is particularly apt for the study of translation technique in terms of the adherence to these principles, as the Slavonic version is juxtaposed to a Greek text based on the manuscripts closest to the immediate model of the translation. Thus, maximum comparability of the original and the translation is achieved (cf. Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische Übersetzung der Dioptra des Philippos Monotropos*, pp. 319ff.).

59 Thomson, “Sensus or Proprietas Verborum”, p. 675.

60 For a detailed examination of the translation of book four, see Fuchsbaauer, *Die Übertragung der Dioptra ins Slavische*.

in turn, omitted it, probably in order to slightly amend the text stylistically. Particles, notoriously abounding in Greek, are also left out comparatively frequently, especially where in the Greek text two or more appear within one verse.

On the other hand, the translator was inclined to clarify the text by adding words; compare verse 42 of book four:

ἡνίκα ἐξελεύσεται τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ σκήνους
vъnegda izydetъ dъchъ ω/t/ tělesnago sъsōda.
 ([Greek:] “When the spirit leaves the body”,
 [Slavonic:] “... the vessel of the body”)

He obviously felt that without the adjective *tělesnyj* (‘bodily’) the meaning of this clause might have remained obscure. However, comparable examples of insertions of autosemantic words are scarce. In contrast, polyprothetism—that is the repeating of prepositions with every single of a series of prepositional objects—is a comparatively common phenomenon, especially where the objects are separated from each other.

Like other insertions of synsemantic words, the repeating of prepositions was evidently intended to improve the comprehensibility of syntactic relations. This was, apparently, also the main reason for the translator to break the principle of positional equivalence to the Greek model. Especially frequently he dissolved hyperbata, which are plentiful in the Greek text, by putting together the separated parts of the respective syntactical unit.

Apparently, hyperbata were problematic for the interpreter as well, as they repeatedly caused translational errors: cf. verses 1099 and 1100 of book four:

ὡσαύτως καὶ ἡ τῶν πιστῶν ἀνδρικὴ καὶ γενναία.
takožde i věrnýchъ mōžestvnaa i doblaа.
 ἀνθρώπων δύναιμις ὀφθῆ καὶ κατὰ τούτου πάλη.
člčъskaa sila javit sę i jaže na nъ borba.
 (“Also the brave and noble strength of the believing
 humans will appear in the fight against him.”)

The translator related ἀνθρώπων to δύναιμις, and not to τῶν πιστῶν. The phrase, of course, refers to “the brave and noble strength of the believing humans” and not, as the Slavonic text suggests, to “the brave, noble and human strength of the believers”. Otherwise, errors by the translator occurred comparatively infrequently, which, again, emphasizes his skills.

Furthermore, words are occasionally reordered in a way which demonstrates that in the target language word order was not as free as in the original. Clitics in particular are frequently affected by reordering. Enclitic particles are relocated to the position after the first orthotonic word in the respective syntactic unit, as in verse 447 of book four:

καὶ τοῖς δικαίοις πάλιν δὲ ὥς ἔμαθες κυρία·
i pravednym' že paky jakože navyče gž/d/e.
 ("and to the righteous, as you have learned, mistress")

In contrast, for enclitic object pronouns the post-verbal position is clearly preferred;⁶¹ cf., for example, verse 529 of book four:

αὐτὴ ἀπολογίσεται αὐτὴ με δικαιώσει·
ta da ω/t/věštaetz ta da ωpravdit mē.
 ("It will give an account, it will justify me.")

Moreover, the translator visibly strove to give the constituents of the sentences a more logical order; for example by placing the object behind the verb, as in verse 517 of book four:

κατήλθες ἐσαρκώθης τε τοὺς πάντας ἵνα σώσης·
sznide i vžplzti se jako da špšeši vžsěchz.
 ("You descended and became flesh in order to save all.")

Even though a strictly regulated word order is typical of languages with a predominantly analytical inflection, the infrequent isolated instances for the reordering of non-clitics do not shed doubt on the synthetic character of the language used in the Slavonic *Dioptra*.

With respect to both the numerical and the positional equivalence, differences to the Greek text are rare exceptions. While principally preserving the formal structure of the original, the translator slightly adapted the text mainly in order to improve its comprehensibility. Of course, in some instances further modifications would have been beneficial. In verse 815 of book four, for

61 The reflexive pronoun always immediately follows the verb with one notable exception; in verse 946 of book two it occupies the position after the first orthotonic word (*ω/t/ neli bo se ω/t/ [ω/t/ om. cet.] tebe ω/t/lrčę, bezdělni esmy ωboi*—ἐξ ὅτου γάρ σου χωρισθῶ ἀπρακτοῦμεν κατ' ἄμφω).

example, the translator adopted, as usual, the word order of his Greek exemplar (*gorkъ že přěskvrъnyj ωbręšetъ korenъ togda*—πικρὸν δὲ ὁ παμμίαιρος εὐρήσει ρίζαν τότε); one may doubt whether the readers referred *gorkъ* to *korenъ*, as would have corresponded to the Greek. Yet, similar cases are few, and we may presuppose that the Slavonic *Dioptra* was generally comprehensible for an audience acquainted with its Hellenizing diction.

The Slavonic *Dioptra* thus represents—in respect of language and, of course, in content—an exact copy of the Greek original. We may assume that it was, like its model, popular because it presented worthwhile topics in a comparatively enjoyable and entertaining manner. The high linguistic register of the translation was probably a precondition for its fast spread, wide dissemination, and long lasting circulation. Its pronounced Hellenizing character did not hinder this; it was obviously not perceived as a flaw and may, in fact, have even contributed to the literariness of the Slavonic version of the poem. This is presumably the reason why it became popular even in the leading circles of Pre-Petrine Russia; it was known to various well-known individuals, including Cyril of Belozersk, Joseph of Volokolamsk, and the protopope Sylvester. Thus, the Slavonic version of the *Dioptra* can be assumed to have wielded considerable influence over the intellectual life of premodern Eastern and South Eastern Europe. Only later, in the 18th and early 19th centuries, was the Slavonic *Dioptra* predominantly read by members of the lower classes of society and, above all, among Old Believers: a readership usually neither overly educated, nor particularly philhellenic.⁶² Yet, neither the archaic and Hellenizing diction of the Slavonic version of the poem nor its Middle Bulgarian character provoked any kind of metaphrastic reworking of the text, beyond the scope of the common adaptations to the Russian and Serbian recensions of Church Slavonic.

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62 See Miklas/Fuchsbaauer, *Die kirchenslavische*, pp. 296ff.

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