Experimenting with Prose and Verse in Twelfth-Century Byzantium

A Preliminary Study

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This iambic tetrastich is preserved on fol. 150r of the eleventh-century codex Parisinus graecus 3032, immediately before a partly surviving prose letter to Leo the Archdeacon that describes the capture of Syracuse by the Arabs in the year 880.1 Both were written by Theodosios the Grammarian, either during the siege of Syracuse or slightly later at the beginning of the tenth century.2 The tetrastich is a metrical paratext that introduces the content of the prose letter to the recipient, asking him to pray for the writer's desperate situation after the Arab invasion. What is more important for our purposes, however, is that here prose and verse are closely interlinked. The Byzantines may not have set clear-cut boundaries between the composition of prose and verse,3 but this does not mean that they could not distinguish between the two forms.4 A learned Byzantine could hear the rhythmical difference and see the visual one; in the same vein, the recipient of Theodosios the Grammarian's letter and iambic epigram would probably notice and appreciate the acoustic and visual diversity generated by the juxtaposition of prose and verse.

Δέχου, πάτερ, τὸ πένθος ἐγγραφόν, δέχου, δ’ δυστυχῶς ἔτλημεν ἐξ ἐναντίων.

εὐχές, πάτερ, μοι τῷ καθειργμένῳ τέκνῳ, ὅπως θεός μου χεῖρα δῷ προμηθίας.

Accept, father, accept in written form my mourning, which, in misfortune, we have endured because of our enemies. Pray, father, for me, your imprisoned child, that God may give me his solicitous hand.

3 Both were subcategories of the broader category hoi logoi (= “discursive practices” or simply “texts”); see F. Bernard, Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry 1025–1081 (Oxford, 2014), 31–57. For the designation of Byzantine texts as logoi see also ODB 2:1234. Of course, there are also exceptions to this practice. Bernard has discussed some eleventh-century cases, while we come across additional ones in twelfth-century texts. For example, Theodore Prodromos, in a metrical prologue for the schedographical collection of Ioannikios the monk, makes a distinction between prose and verse logoi; see Prodromos, Historical Poem 61, in Theodoros Prodromos: Historische Gedichte, ed. W. Hörandner (Vienna, 1974), 493, v. 9: χάριτες ἐν πεζοῖσι καὶ ἐμμέτροισι λόγοις.
As with Theodosios, who supplemented his prose with a verse text, many other authors exploited poetry’s distinct merits in various ways throughout Byzantine times. This holds true especially for the Komnenian period, when the production of verse was substantially larger than in any other century in middle and late Byzantine times. Komnenian poets frequently experimented with form and genre to impress their imperial and aristocratic patrons. For example, in the first decades of the twelfth century certain genres traditionally written in prose began to appear in verse form. The practice of writing novels is a case in point. Unlike their ancient models, three of the four Komnenian novels are written in verse form. Regardless of whether it was


Theodore Prodromos who revived the novel genre, his *Rhodante and Dosicles*, written in 4,614 verses, is the first extant verse novel written in Byzantium. Following the paradigm of his teacher, Niketas Eugenianus composed his novel *Drosilla and Charicles* in 3,658 verses. While Prodromos and Eugenianus chose the dodecasyllable, Constantine Manasses wrote his *Aristandros and Kallithea* in political verse. Manasses also composed his chronicle in this meter, a genre previously written mainly in prose.

Even the scale of encomiastic ceremonial discourse leans in favor of poetry during the Komnenian period. Many texts celebrating the victories of the Komnenoi (especially of John II and Manuel I Komnenos) and other imperial ceremonies were composed in verse. Again Theodore Prodromos seems to be the principal instigator of this trend, but he is followed by the so-called Manganeios Prodromos and later Komnenian writers, such as Niketas Choniates and Euthymios Tornikes. Other twelfth-century developments that


10 All in dodecasyllables, except for two songs and a lament in hexameters; see Eugenianus, *Drosilla and Charicles*, in *Nicetas Eugenianus, De Drosillae et Charicleis amoribus*, ed. F. Conca (Amsterdam, 1990), 3.163–288/3.197–320 and 6.201–235, respectively.

11 We know only of a verse chronicle by Apollodoros of Athens (2nd c. BCE), ranging from the fall of Troy to ca. 143 BCE. For a study see B. Bravo, *La Chronique d’Apollodore et le Pseudo-Skymnos: Érudition antiquaire et littérature géographique dans la seconde moitié du IVe siècle av. J.-C.* (Leuven, 2009).

12 Most of them are to be found in Hörandner, *Theodorus Prodromus*.


highlight the special relation of verse and prose are the innovative functions that many twelfth-century literati imposed on epigrammatic poetry. In addition to numerous metrical paratexts meant to present, praise, and elucidate prose works, in the mid-twelfth century a new practice was introduced that demonstrates another special interaction between prose and verse in a performative context: the so-called metrical prefaces, which were delivered before the reading of prose homilies or hagiographical texts in church services. The earliest examples of this practice are most likely two poems by Theodore Prodromos; but Manganeios Prodromos, Nikephoros Prosouch, John Apokaukos, and Nikephoros Chrysoberges also wrote such epigrams.

Undoubtedly, all the above-mentioned examples signify a change in the balance between prose and verse, or demonstrate some interactions between the two modes of composition in twelfth-century Byzantium. In the latter case, however, verse serves mostly a paratextual function (just as in the case of Theodosios the Grammarian’s tetrastich). Hence the prose and verse in these cases are only loosely connected, especially when compared to the Latin literary practices of the prosimetrum or opus geminatum, both of which exhibit a remarkable internal symbiosis of prose and verse. In the present paper I will demonstrate that twelfth-century Byzantine literature displays comparable practices. In an attempt to achieve stylistic versatility and meet the expectations of their literary patrons and commissioners, many authors of this period succeeded in forging a much more dynamic bond between these two modes of composition across a wide range of literary genres. To make this twelfth-century development more tangible, this paper will provide a preliminary survey of two practices that have so far been little studied. The first section will examine single works whose narrative is a mixture of prose and verse. The second section will provide an overview of the practice of writing multiple separate works, all of them associated with the same event, in prose, verse, and occasionally schedography. There are many differences between these two practices, but both of them represent the various changes that the symbiosis of prose and verse witnessed in the twelfth century. By discussing these two twelfth-century practices, we can expand the picture of twelfth-century literary experimentation and acquire a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between prose and verse in Byzantium.

**Blending Prose with Verse: “Mixed Works”**

In the late thirteenth century Manuel Holobolos and Maximos Planoudes undertook the task of translating Latin literary works into Greek. Among the various works that Planoudes translated was Boethius’s *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, the most famous representative of prosimetrum, a term that denotes works written in a hybrid amalgamation of prose and verse. Boethius had some influence on Greek literary culture

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15 There are many examples by both well-known and less known authors. For example, Prodromos composed a laudatory book epigram to preface a collection of schede by his friend and fellow grammaticos, Ioannikios the monk: Prodromos, *Historical Poems* 61, ed. Hörandner, 492–93.


17 Ibid., 62–68.

18 For literature on these two practices see notes 21 and 67, respectively.
even before Planoudes’s translation, but, as expected, it is not comparable to the popularity he enjoyed in the Latin West. His Consolationis Philosophiae was one of the most popular and influential philosophical works and was considered the model par excellence for the writers of prosimetrum from the Carolingian period to the Middle Ages and beyond. This is especially true for the twelfth-century Latin West: roughly between the years 1100 and 1170, the genre of the “philosophical-didactic-allegorical prosimetrum”23 emerges with the following five works: Hilbert of Lavardin’s Querimonia, Adelard of Bath’s De codem et diverso, Laurence of Durham’s Consolatio de morte amici, Bernardus Silvestris’s Cosmographia, and Alan of Lille’s De planctu Naturae.24

Even though such full-fledged prosimetric compositions do not exist in Byzantium, many Komnenian authors start to develop various techniques of mixing these two forms for the composition of a single work. Most often, they borrow verses from ancient Greek poetry and introduce them into their prose works without marking them as quotations.25 One good example of this technique is Hysmine and Hysminias, the single Komnenian novel in prose, by Eumathios Makrembolites. Makrembolites embellished the narrative of his novel with numerous well-known ancient verses.26 To give but one example: the prose and verse parts of the narrative are perfectly stitched together in terms of syntax and content in the third book of the novel, where Kratisthenes comforts his friend Hysminias with Homer’s words:27

\[ Τόξον, πτερόν, γύμνωσιν, ἰχθύων βέλος \]

Hysmine is lovely, indeed very lovely and there is no wrong in suffering many years for such a woman.

The coexistence of prose and verse in Makrembolites’ novel occasionally goes beyond the insertion of quotations from ancient Greek poetry. In three cases the author made use of metrical parts that are not just citations, but epigrams written by the author himself. All three epigrams accompany the wall paintings in the garden described in the second and fourth books of the novel, and are excellent examples of the symbiosis of prose with epigrammatic poetry within the same work.28 For instance, instead of employing an extensive description in prose, Makrembolites inserts a two-line epigram into the prose narrative of the novel, with the phrase “it went as follows,” that helps him convey to the intended reader the image of the wall painting depicting Emperor Eros in the garden of Sosthenes:29

\[ Υ σμίνη καὶ λίαν καλὴ καὶ νέμεσις σῶδεια τοιῇδ’ ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν. (cf. Iliad 3.156–57) \]

The wall painting depicts Emperor Eros in the garden with the phrase “it went as follows,” that helps him convey to the intended reader the image of the wall painting depicting Emperor Eros in the garden of Sosthenes.


23 For the term see Pabst, Prosimetrum, 1:388.

24 For a study of all five works see Balint, Ordering Chaos.

25 It is interesting to note that Pabst claims that such a combination of prose and verse is considered a “Grenzfall” of the prosimetric structure of a work, while Bartoňková has noted that this is one of the two types of writing prosimetrum; see Pabst, Prosimetrum, 1:77 and Bartoňková, “Prosimetrum,” 7.

26 I count nineteen citations: 1.13.2; 2.7.2; 2.14.6; 3.9.2; 3.9.6; 4.3.3; 5.3.8; 6.7.1; 6.14.7; 6.15.3; 8.11.2; 8.11.2; 8.14.2; 8.14.4; 8.20.3; 9.23.1; 9.23.2; 10.6.5; 11.15.5. In contrast with Makrembolites, in Byzantine letters the quotations are inserted mostly as an alien feature or a mere quotation. However, there are some letters by John Tzetzes with a metrical part that is not a simple quotation; see the discussion on page 237.


29 Makrembolitis, Hymine and Hysminias, ed. Marcovich, 2.10.4; trans. in Jeffreys, Four Byzantine Novels, 190.
But let us look, if you like, at what is written above the lad’s head. There were iambic verses, which went as follows:

This lad is Eros, with his sword, torch, Bow, arrows, nudity. A dart aimed at fishes.

Another Constantinopolitan author who uses the technique of embellishing a prose text with entire poems is Theodore Prodromos. In his work *Amaranto, or the Erotic Desires of an Old Man*, one of the works that builds—at least partially—upon Lucian, Prodromos includes two verse epithalmia sung at the wedding of a very young girl to the aged philosopher and teacher Stratocles, who used to dismiss the idea of marriage and any kind of bodily pleasure. At the wedding banquet, old Stratocles, who has previously been compared to a jester, appears to be fonder of wine than of the young maiden. Aristoboulos leans over to his friend, the main hero Amarantos, and tells him that the bridegroom’s cheek has grown red because of his shame. When Amarantos starts laughing, all the wedding guests think that it was Amarantos’s intention to ridicule the bridegroom. At this point the grammarian Dionysios stands up and recites an epithalamion of six elegiac couplets in honor of the bridegroom:


32 Ibid., 195.

After Dionysios’s laudatory, ekphrastic, and ironic epithalamion, Stratocles and Amarantos debate the merits of marriage in a prose dialogue. As the debate becomes more intense, it is unexpectedly interrupted with the delivery of a second epithalamion by the comedian Chaerephon:
At that moment the comedian Chaerephon stood up and said, “Enough of these arguments: I will recite a few verses of the Anacreontic Muse as a part of the epithalamium for the feast.” And at once he said:

Queen of Goddesses, o Cyprian; Desire, might of mortals; Marriage, guardian of life. I sing for you with words, I glorify you with verses, o Desire, Marriage, Paphian goddess. Behold the young maiden, behold, o young lad; awake, do not let your partridge quarry escape!

Stratocles, friend of the Cytherean one; Stratocles, husband of Myrilla, look at your dear wife; she flourishes, she blooms, she shines; the rose is the lord of flowers, Myrilla is the rose among the maidens. The sun illuminates your bedsteads; a cypress has grown in your garden.

Certainly, it is very interesting that Prodromos made use of a popular ceremonial poetic genre for the sake of the narrative of a literary work. The metrical form of the two epithalamia may differ (the first one is in elegiac couplets, the second in anacreontics), but both appear at turning points in the narrative and obviously aim to enhance the satiric tone of the work; the epithalamium in elegiac couplets presents a reverse image of old Stratocles as young and beautiful; while the one in anacreontics summons Stratocles, who is ironically called “young lad,” to wake up and look at the beautiful bride.

Prodromos uses a slightly different technique of mixing prose with verse in his Bion Prasis (Sale of Political and Poetical Lives). This comic dialogue, which has been described as a “sequel” to Lucian’s Bion Prasis, narrates the auctioning of six ancient authors (Homer, Hippocrates, Aristophanes, Euripides, Pomponius, and Demosthenes) to six uneducated and vulgar buyers. Hermes, who conducts the auction, manages to sell all the authors except Aristophanes. The work is filled with no fewer than forty-five verses of various meters (hexameters, elegiac couplets, dodecasyllables, and even pentameters). Most of these verses are uttered by Homer, but Hermes, Hippocrates, and Euripides also speak in verse. Many of these verses are citations from ancient Greek works and aim to add to the comic atmosphere of the dialogue. A good example is the dialogue between Homer and his buyer about where he comes from, with a serial alternation between prose and quotations from Homer and a hexametric passage from the Greek Anthology (all metrical parts are indicated in bold type):

33 For the text see E. Cullhed in P. Marciniak, Taniec w roli Tersytesa: Studia nad satyrą bizantyńską [A Dance in the Role of Thersites: Studies on Byzantine Satire] (Katowice, 2016), 185–203.
Buyer: Come on then, O old man, tell us where you were born, what is your origin and your country?

Homer: I will not answer you because you are not able to speak in epic verse!

Buyer: Teach me then how I should pose the question in epic verse.

Homer: Who are you among men, and from whence? Where is your city and where are your parents?

Buyer: Suppose, then, that I asked you in this manner and speak of your origin.

Homer: Seven cities quarrel for my sacred roots of origin: Smyrna, Chios, Kolophon, Ithaca, Pylos, Argos and Athens.

However, it should be stressed that in this passage Homer’s reply to his potential purchaser’s question about his origin is not a quotation, but a verse written by Prodromos himself. There are even more verses in Bion Prasis that are not mere Homeric citations.

Homer: No by Apollo, dear to Zeus! I [myself] don’t understand what the meaning of these terms is.

Buyer: You must be joking! Certainly the noblest grammarians would swear that the verse “And the Trojans shuddered when they saw the writhing snake” misses a syllable.

Homer: O father Zeus and Athene and Apollo! If I knew it was a tapering verse may I not have a favorable
wind. But you will distinguish the good from bad when you approach this multitude of verses.

Buyer: And the fingers of the day and tunics? How is it possible that the former appear to you rosy-colored and the latter saffron-colored, if your perception of eyes is inoperative, because of your visual disability?

Homer: The dark night did not cover my eyes when I was young; I saw the sun and the rosy-fingered dawn.

Here, the buyer and Homer talk about various aspects of his hexametric poetry and his ability to describe colors, despite his blindness. Two verses are taken from Homer, while the remaining five are Prodromic. It is worth noting that the first sentence uttered by Homer is a skillful combination of hexameter and prose within a single sentence. Hence, even though most of the verses introduced in the work are taken from the works of other authors, they are used creatively for the needs of the comic dialogue, resulting in an elaborate collage of prose and verse.

Besides Makrembolites’ and Prodromos’s experiments in the genres of novel and satire, there is yet another very interesting group of twelfth-century texts in which prose and verse are mixed together: schede. Many of these texts consist of a rather short prose text followed by a verse section. Occasionally, the verse part

could be placed before the prose one, and there are even schede that both open and close with verses. Follieri has rightly argued that schedography should not constitute a case of prosimetrum because the versified prologues or epilogues have usually a paratextual function.

There are, however, quite a few schedographical works in which the verse part constitutes more than a mere paratext. The manuscript Vaticanus Palatinus graecus 92, which was most probably produced in Salento, contains numerous schede in which prose is combined with a verse epilogue for the sake of the narrative. To give but an example: an anonymous antistoichic schedos concerned with the life of Saint Anthony the Great concludes with a dodecasyllable (with a caesura after the fifth syllable and without any prosodic errors):

40 Note the wordplay between “μείουρον” and “μὴ οὖρος,” which reminds us of the contemporary practice of antistoichic sound plays in schedography described by Eustathios of Thessalonike; see P. Agapitos, “Literary Haute Cuisine and Its Dangers: Eustathios of Thessalonike on Schedography and Everyday Language,” DOP 69 (2014): 225–41.


42 Follieri, “Per l’identificazione,” 404.

43 D. Arnesano, La minuscola “barocca”: Scritture e libri in Terra d’Otranto nei secoli XIII e XIV (Galatina and Congedo, 2008), 78. On the other hand, Polemis has argued that the manuscript was produced in Epirus; see I. D. Polemis, “Mia ὑπόθεσις γιὰ τὴν προέλευση τῆς σχεδογραφικῆς συλλογῆς τοῦ κώδικα Vaticanus Palatinus graecus 92,” in Αντιφίλησις: Studies on Classical, Byzantine and Modern Greek Literature and Culture; in Honour of John-Theophanes A. Papademetriou, ed. E. Karamangou and E. D. Makrygianni (Stuttgart, 2009), 558–65.

44 I have consulted both the manuscript and the edition offered in G. J. Sánchez, “Η σχεδογραφία τοῦ 12ου αἰώνα: Ανέκδοτα κείμενα από τὸν κώδικα Vaticanus Palatinus gr. 92” (master’s thesis, Thessalonike, 2015), 9 and 60. Moreover, Ioannis Polemis has kindly informed me that he is working together with I. Vassis on a critical edition of the schedographical collection of the entire manuscript. For more examples of sche with similar structure see I. Vassis, “Τῶν νέων φιλολόγων παλαίσματα: Ἡ συλλογὴ σχεδῶν τοῦ κώδικα Vaticanus Palatinus gr. 92,” Hellenika 52 (2002): 17–68, e.g., nos. 18, 21, 24, 27, 34, 18, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 49, 53, 71, 81, 90, 91.

45 The manuscript reads τὸ.

46 The manuscript reads τῶν σώρων.

47 The manuscript reads καλὸν.
Anthony the Great from a tender age assumed the ascetic habit and embraced the mountain-roaming life, and in having done everything according to God’s will, he went up to heaven and was transferred to the eternal dwelling-place; and having received the Immortal Life, he is pleased at the sight of paradise and fully rejoices in seeing the good and never-setting light of the Holy Trinity and dances together with the choirs of angels.

What is more, the practice of supplementing a prose text with a verse ending even occurs in contemporary letter-writing practice. There are three letters, all by John Tzetzes, with short iambic epilogues of a varying number of verses. For example, Tzetzes’ letter 1, a full-fledged polemic addressed to the deacon Epiphanios, who was the nephew of the metropolitan of Side, ends with an iambic poem of seven verses:

ἀνέξομαι γάρ, εὖ ἴσθι, οὐδαμῶς τοιαῦτα ἀκούειν· οὐ γὰρ ἐμὸς πέφυκε ταρβήμων νόος, οὐδ’ ἀχαριτόγλωττός εἰμι πρὸς λόγους, ἀλ’ οἶδα νωμᾶν εὐφυῶς τὴν ἀσπίδα, οἶδα κραδαίνειν δεξιῶς ἄγαν δόρυ, ἐλῶ τὸν ἵππον, οὐ πέφρικα τὸν κτύπον, τῇ συστάδην γέγηθα τῶν ἄλλων πλέον, καὶ τόξα τείνων οὐ πτοοῦμαι τὰς μάχας.

Be certain that I won’t tolerate to hear such things; for my mind wasn’t born to be fearful, nor am I without any grace in the logos, but I know to handle my shield skillfully, I know to wave the spear very well. I ride the horse, the rattling noise doesn’t scare me, I rejoice more in close combat than other things, and I stretch my bow, I am not afraid of the battles!

Despite Tzetzes’ critique against the novel type of schedography that emerged in the twelfth century, the way he combines prose with verse clearly recalls the technique employed by contemporary schedographers. Of course it would be far-fetched to claim that the schedos on the life of St. Anthony and Tzetzes’ letter display prosimetric qualities, but it is clear that the concluding parts are not paratextual. On the contrary, they are an indispensable part of the narrative of the remaining text, in terms of both syntax and content.

If we now shift our focus from Constantinople to southern Italy, which in the twelfth century demonstrates an unprecedented production of literature in both verse and prose, we encounter an even more conspicuous case of mixing prose with verse than all the works discussed so far. The early twelfth-century grammarian Leo the Sicilian wrote in the mixed form two hagiographical encomia on SS. Nektarios and James the Greater, respectively. The former work includes 102 dodecasyllables introduced at various places in the prose narrative, from the prologue to the end of the text (a total of more than 18 pages). The number of verses of each incorporated stanza varies (from a single verse up to 18). For example, while the prose work concludes with a grand total of 18 dodecasyllables that describe two miracles by Nektarios during his burial, the description of St. Nektarios’s rise to the patriarchal see consists of chunks of prose together with monostichs that are mutually dependent.

He δὲ προπομπὴ πόθεν καὶ ποῦ καὶ ἵνα τί; Ἀπὸ τῆς παλαιᾶς Εἰρήνης, τοῦ πρώτου δηλονότι πατριαρχείου καλουμένου τῆς Εἰρήνης ἤτοι τοῦ σωτῆρος, ἐπὶ τὸν νέον τῆς Σοφίας νεόν, τὸ καινὸν

49 Ibid., 1, 4, lines 6–13.
54 Leo the Sicilian, Encomium on St. Nektarios, ed. Halkin, 189.
55 Ibid., 181.
Where does the procession come from and whither [does it go] and for what reason? From the old [church of] Irene, namely the old patriarchal church called [that] of Irene or of the Savior, to the new [patriarchal] church of Sophia, the new building, in order to enthrone Nektarios the great, it is necessary that the radiant light be placed in a lampstand to light the entire world; and the assembly is a mixture of different appearances, ages and ways of life. The aim of all the gathered people is the same; to escort the man or to honor him with all their power. A not indistinct noise was heard from them all, or rather one mouth, one voice and opinion

The other mixed work of Leo the Grammarian remains, unfortunately, still unedited, except for some passages published by Follieri. However, its structure and the alternation of verse and prose seem to operate in a very similar way. For instance, toward the end of the work on St. James, where we are told that the bloodied body of the saint has a miraculous power, prose and verse alternate in a continuous flow, and the verse cannot stand on its own as independent poetry.

By now it has become clear that in the twelfth century, the mixing of prose and verse for the composition of a single work occurred in a wide range of genres, for example novel, satire, hagiography, schedography, and epistolography, both in Constantinople and southern Italy. The main question that emerges from this discussion, however, is whether the structure of these works is associated with the practice of prosimetrum.

As far as Makrembolites' and Prodromos's works are concerned, Marc Lauxtermann has rightly noted that “the occasional use of verse in prose text is in itself very interesting but it does not constitute prosimetrum.” Additionally, it should be stressed that the driving forces behind the juxtaposition of prose and verse differ in the capital and the periphery and across various literary genres. Leo's experimentation with prose and verse should be seen in the light of the popularity of prosimetrum in Latin since the time of Boethius and the influence of Latin literary culture on many of the poets who were active in Sicily and other parts of southern Italy. On the other hand, the reasons for mixing prose with verse in Constantinople varied. Both Makrembolites and Prodromos occasionally seem to appropriate the skeleton of their ancient models.

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57 Ibid., 401.
which quite often constitute a mixture of prose and verse,\(^{60}\) while on other occasions this symbiosis seems to reflect an experimentation on the part of the author (e.g. the insertion of two epithalamia in *Amarantos* by Prodromos). In either case, by doing so, Makrembolites succeeds in conveying a more credible image of the wall paintings in the garden of Sosthenes, while Prodromos strengthens the satiric and comic effects of his works. As to the mixing of prose and verse in many schedographical works, this is a much more complicated issue, and of course cannot be determined with the study of a single schedos. However, it seems that schedography and poetry were very similar in composition, as both were part of the early stages of Byzantine education. It is therefore likely that the mixed form was a way to teach students the composition of both prose and verse.\(^{61}\)

All in all, the mixing of prose and verse operates in different ways in terms of purpose, variety, and quantity: Prodromos and Makrembolites make use of a small number of poems, single verses, and quite a number of quotations borrowed from ancient Greek poetry; the writers of schede insert a very small number of verses (either before or after the prose part); John Tzetzes exclusively adds some short poems at the very end of his letters; and Leo the Sicilian includes numerous blocks of verses at various points in his works. Whereas most of the other authors write in dodecasyllables, Prodromos makes use of hexameters, elegiac couplets, and anacreontics. Whereas in Leo the Sicilian’s works the mixture is very conspicuous and arguably the closest that Greek literary culture came to the prosimetric, in the Constantinopolitan works the mixture is subtler and

60 For the mixture of prose and verse in Lucian see Bartoňková, “Prosimetrum,” 70–76 and Pabst, *Prosimetrum*, 1:71–84. For the novel see Bartoňková, “Prosimetrum,” 75–76 and Pabst, *Prosimetrum*, 1:85. Achilles Tatius in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, which is extensively used as a model by Makrembolites, includes a good deal of material taken from ancient Greek poetry (e.g. *L. & C.* 1:8.2).

61 Moreover, it probably represents the transition from schedography to the composition of poetry. For example, Nicholas Mesarites, in the epitaph for his brother John, claims that John started writing poetry after having fully learned the art of schedography: A. Heisenberg, *Der Epitaphios des Nikolaos Mesarites auf seinen Bruder Johannes, in Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Kaiseriums und der Kirchenunion*, vol. 1, Sb. Bayer. Ak., phil.-hist. Kl. 1912 (Munich, 1912), 5, 16–72, 28:15: Ἦν μὲν οὖν τὰ τῆς σχεδογραφίας ἐμμελετῶν τελεώτερα ἀκμαιότερον τε καὶ συντονοτέρον. Ἐπὶ κινοῦν ἐν ἀμβέδεια ως εἰς τὰς ἀδὰς τὰ στρουθία τοῖς τῶν παιδῶν μοισυκτέρους.

cannot be labeled as prosimetric per se.\(^{62}\) That said, all of these twelfth-century texts can be grouped under the umbrella term “mixed works,” since they bear witness to the synergy of verse and prose within the same work. As will be argued in the next section, however, in the twelfth century we witness a synergy of prose and verse not only within a single work, but also among a set of seemingly separate works.

Reconciling Prose with Verse and Schedography: “Diptychs” and “Triptychs”

Nicholas, protect me again as always; you know that you are my life, no proof is necessary. Imperial secretary, save me again as always; you know that I regard you with affection, no proof is necessary. Most powerful emperor, purple-born—for I make you the concluding seal of my work—triumph over the enemies who have risen up against you, remember the house of your Prodromos and may you fare well with Nicholas as ally.

This poem is the closing part of a prose schedos (another example of supplementing a prose work with verse) that is an encomium on and a prayer to St. Nicholas. In the poem Prodromos addresses the saint and asks Theodore Styppeiotes, a former student of his and the

62 As has already been argued in Lauxtermann, “Tomi, Mljet, Malta,” 173.

imperial secretary of Manuel Komnenos,\textsuperscript{64} to rescue him once again from his dreadful poverty. Moreover, Prodromos wishes the emperor to triumph over the barbaric enemies of the empire, but also to remember his Prodromos. Clearly this is not a work written for Prodromos’s students but, like a substantial portion of his poetry, it is associated with the court.\textsuperscript{65} Even more interesting is the fact that this is not the only time that Prodromos addresses Theodore Styppeiotes asking for help; in a poem written in ninety-nine political verses, he asks Styppeiotes for news about the struggles of the emperor against the barbaric enemies in order to compose new encomiastic orations, while in a poem of forty-two dodecasyllables (poem 72 in Hörandner’s edition) he asks Styppeiotes to save him from his poverty. First of all, it is worth emphasizing that these three works addressed to Styppeiotes are written in different forms: they consist of a schedos and two poems in political verse and dodecasyllable. Secondly, the schedos strongly resembles the content and function of the second epistolary poem addressed to Theodore Styppeiotes, since both ask him to help the unfortunate sick and poor poet.\textsuperscript{66}

Were the schedos and the iambic epistolary poem sent at different times or together? In my view, there is good reason to believe that the latter is possible. As with the Latin literary trend of opus geminatum—the practice of writing a work into two forms, one in prose, the other in verse\textsuperscript{67}—the composition of twinned works (in prose and verse) or even tripartite works (in prose, verse, and schedography) for the very same occasion seems to have flourished in twelfth-century Byzantium. Ioannis Vassis was the first scholar to notice that Prodromos composed triptychs,\textsuperscript{68} while more recently Panagiots Agapitos argued that triptychs were part of Prodromos’s literary performative schedourgia.\textsuperscript{69} According to both of them, Prodromos seems to have produced such multicompositional works for three purposes: (a) to praise someone, (b) to commemorate a death, and (c) to praise an imperial victory.

Although there are no surviving examples of the last group, from one of his poems sent to Theodore Styppeiotes we can deduce that Prodromos composed triplets of works celebrating the triumphs of the Komnenian emperors.\textsuperscript{70} On the other hand, parts of these multicompositional works for the first two occasions do survive. For instance, at the very beginning of a verse encomium written in 1141 for the orphano trophos Alexios Aristenos,\textsuperscript{71} Prodromos explicitly says ὑμνησάμην σε πρῶτα πεζῷ τῷ λόγῳ . . . ἐμελψάμην σε δεύτερον σχεδουργία (“First, I praised you with prose discourse . . . then, I celebrated you with schedourgy . . .”).\textsuperscript{72} The poem is thus a part of a triple composition; the schedos that was written in praise of Aristenos does not survive, but this may not be so for the prose part. Three prose orations directed to Aristenos are extant, any of which could potentially be the prose discourse that Prodromos refers


\textsuperscript{65} As is well known, sometime in the twelfth century schedography was transformed from a mere teaching exercise into a separate literary “genre,” assuming the functions and modes of contemporary panegyric discourse and becoming a playful “board game” for the court; see Vassis, “ Graeca sunt,” 11. More recently, N. Zagklas, “Theodore Prodromos: The Neglected Poems and Epigrams (Edition, Translation, and Commentary)” (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2014), 73–87 and Agapitos, “Schedourgia of Theodore Prodromos,” 14 (n. 41 above).

\textsuperscript{66} See also Vassis, “ Graeca sunt,” 12.


\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 12–14. This technique was also noted by W. Hörandner, “Musterautoren und ihre Nachahmer: Indizien für Elemente einer byzantinischen Poetik,” in Odorico, Agapitos, and Hinterberger, ”Doux Remède,” 207.


\textsuperscript{70} This can be deduced from two points of the poem: Hörandner, \textit{Theodoros Prodromos} 71, vv. 16–17 and 65–73; for a translation and discussion see Zagklas, \textit{Theodore Prodromos}, 75 and Agapitos, “Schedourgia of Theodore Prodromos,” 16–17.

\textsuperscript{71} Hörandner, \textit{Theodoros Prodromos} 467; see also the online database “Prosopography of the Byzantine World” (s.v. Alexios Aristenos).

\textsuperscript{72} Prodromos, \textit{Historical Poem} 56, ed. Hörandner, 461, vv. 9–10; trans. in Agapitos, “Schedourgia of Theodore Prodromos,” 19.
to.\textsuperscript{73} As with the poem, the three prose orations stress Aristenos’s broad education and eloquence, and celebrate his service in both the religious and the legal sphere. One of them, however, appears to be very close to the poem for two reasons. First, both works were written on the occasion of Alexios Aristenos’s return from Thessaly to Constantinople to receive the title of \textit{orphanotrophos} for the second time.\textsuperscript{74} Second, in Vaticanus graecus 305, which is the most important witness to the Prodromic oeuvre,\textsuperscript{75} these two particular works are preserved very close together: the prose discourse is on fol. 36\textsuperscript{v}–38\textsuperscript{v}, while the poem follows on 39\textsuperscript{v}–40\textsuperscript{v} (there is only a letter addressed to Alexios between the two works).

Another example from Prodromos’s works that shows both the literary evolution of schedography and how it was used consecutively with prose and verse is a schedos commemorating the death of the \textit{sebastokrator} Andronikos, son of Alexios I Komnenos and Irene Doukaina.\textsuperscript{76} Apart from the schedos, the author had produced a prose monody, performed in front of the deceased sebastokrator,\textsuperscript{77} as well as a hexametric poem of consolation for Irene Doukaina.\textsuperscript{78} Although they serve slightly different functions,\textsuperscript{79} both the prose monody and the poem of consolation praise the graces and military merits of the dead sebastokrator. Moreover, the vocabulary and motifs are very similar; for example, both works use the Homeric allegory of the diamond: the monody for Andronikos’s military steadfastness,\textsuperscript{80} and the poem of consolation for Irene Doukaina’s steadfastness after the loss of her beloved son.\textsuperscript{81} Similarly, in the schedos Prodromos notes that the glory and the power of an imperial individual are due not to the possession of worldly goods, such as gold and pearls, but to his military merits and benevolence, which the deceased sebastokrator possessed in full. The empress, Prodromos says, suffered yet another loss after that of her husband and her daughter-in-law, Andronikos’s wife. The schedos then concludes with a poem of three hexametric verses addressed to Doukaina. More importantly, halfway through the text, Prodromos also writes \textit{Καὶ ὁ λόγος χθές γεγονὼς ἡμῖν τρανῳθήσεται} (“And the speeches delivered yesteryday will now be explained by me”).\textsuperscript{82} This is a very helpful notice, since it suggests that the prose oration and the hexametric poem were delivered first, and the schedos was sent the following day as a clarification of their content.

In addition to these two examples, both of which have been identified and discussed,\textsuperscript{83} there is another pair of texts with a similar purpose and function. In particular, Prodromos addressed to John Komnenos’s younger brother Isaac a prose discourse\textsuperscript{84} and a poem of sixty-one hexameters\textsuperscript{85} on an unspecified occasion and date. The themes of the encomium are by and large identical in both texts, with a special focus on Isaac’s

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\textsuperscript{74} Whereas the poem is entitled “Τῷ πρωτεκδίκῳ καὶ νομοφύλακι κυρῷ Ἀλεξίῳ τῷ Ἀριστηνῷ δὶς τὴν τοῦ ὀρφανοτρόφου ἀξίαν λαμβάνοντι,” the prose oration is “Τοῦ αὐτοῦ εὐχαριστήριος τῷ ὀρφανοτρόφῳ καὶ νομοφύλακος, πρωτεκδίκῳ καὶ ὀρφανοτρόφῳ κυρῷ Ἀλεξίῳ τῷ Ἀριστηνῷ” (Prodromos, \textit{Orations} 35, ed. Op de Coul, 198 = PG 133:1268–74). By contrast, the other two prose discourses were written when Alexios was \textit{orphanotrophos}, but not to celebrate this particular event. This is clear from their titles: “Τοῦ αὐτοῦ εὐχαριστήριος τῷ νομοφύλακι, πρωτεκδίκῳ καὶ νομοφύλακας κυρῷ Ἀλεξίῳ τῷ Ἀριστηνῷ” and “Τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀνένεμος τῆς γλώσσης τοῦ ὀρφανοτρόφου καὶ νομοφύλακας κυρῷ Ἀλεξίῳ τῷ Ἀριστηνῷ”; Prodromos, \textit{Orations} 31 and 32, ed. Op de Coul, 173 and 184 (PG 133:1241–48, 1258–68), respectively.

\textsuperscript{75} For a recent study of the manuscript with detailed literature see Zagklas, \textit{Theodore Prodromos}, 137–45.

\textsuperscript{76} Prodromos, \textit{Schedos} 2, ed. Vassis, 18–19.


\textsuperscript{79} As already noted in Agapitos, “Schedourgia of Theodore Prodromos,” 18.


\textsuperscript{81} Prodromos, \textit{Historical Poem} 2, ed. Hörandner, 187, vv. 60–68.

\textsuperscript{82} Prodromos, \textit{Schedos} 1, ed. Vassis, 19.

\textsuperscript{83} In the studies of both Vassis, “Gracea sunt” (n. 63 above) and Agapitos, “Schedourgia of Theodore Prodromos.”


\textsuperscript{85} Prodromos, \textit{Historical Poem} 42, ed. Hörandner, 396–98.
impressive learning. Even the imagery employed by the poet is strikingly similar:

ἐκείθεν δέ σοι περὶ τὸ οὖς ἡ φρόνησις ἐπικύψασα ὑποτίθεσθαι δοκεῖ τὸ δέον ἐν συμβουλίαις· καὶ τῇ μὲν ἡ δικαιοσύνη μετὰ τῆς τρυτάνης καὶ τοῦ ζυγοῦ καὶ τῆς φίλης ἱσορροπίας παρίσταται, τῇ δὲ ἡ σωφροσύνη μετὰ τῆς ὄχρας καὶ τῆς σεμνότητος θαυμαστῷ τινι ζωστῆρι τὴν ὀσφὺν περιζώννυσι· καὶ ὧδε μὲν ἡ γραμματικὴ μετὰ τῶν διαλέκτων καὶ τῶν ἐτυμολογιῶν καὶ τῶν ἀναλογιῶν καὶ τῆς κρίσεώς γε τῶν ποιημάτων, ἐκεῖθεν δὲ ἡ ῥητορικὴ μένος ὅλον ἀττικοῦ πυρὸς ἀναπνέουσα, χρυσείοις περιδεραίοις καὶ ἐνωτίοις καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ κόσμῳ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντα γοητεύουσα· ἐπὶ πᾶσι καὶ πρὸ τῶν πάντων ἡ τιθηνός σοι φιλοσοφία τῷ τραχήλῳ γνησίως μητρικῶς περιπλέκεται. 

If you saw someone among the people who had a crown of every virtue and carried [it] on his head; a man of capacious wisdom, sensible, kind, who knew grammar and versatile meters and the rules of rhetoric, and who has moreover accurately investigated with his enormous intellect all of logic, physics, and mathematics. 

And from the other side Prudence, stooping to your ear, seems to advise you concerning what is necessary. And on the one side Justice with the scales and balance and her dear equilibrium stands beside you; and on the other Temperance with her pallor and chastity girds your waist with a marvelous belt. And here is Grammar with her discourse, the etymologies, the analogies and the art of judging poems, and there Rhetoric exhaling the full force of Attic fire, [and] charming those who attend with her gold necklaces and earrings and the rest of [her] ornamentation. Above all and before all, your nursemaid Philosophy embraces your neck like a true mother.

In the prose discourse Prodromos visualizes Isaac, sitting upon a throne surrounded by Prudence, Justice, and Temperance, along with Grammar, Rhetoric, and Philosophy, while in the poem he is crowned with a garland adorned with all these virtues and arts. It would not be surprising if the prose and verse discourses were part of a diptych or even a triptych. They seem to complement each other, resulting in a rhetorical tour de force for an individual who was also an acclaimed author.

Prodromos wrote multiform compositions not only for the due praise of an individual and other ceremonial occasions, but also for intellectual settings, be it the rhetorical theatra or the school. His poem entitled “Verses of Complaint against Providence”90 and a prose treatise under the title “On Those Who Blaspheme against Providence on Account of Poverty”91 are probably cases in point. Both works deal with the dire poverty that educated individuals endure in contrast to the material comforts that completely uneducated and low-born artisans enjoy; they also ask whether Providence is to be blamed for this injustice. The works stand very close to one another in terms of motifs and phrasing, but the way that they treat this issue ties them together

87 Prodromos, Oration 14, ed. Op de Coul, 212, lines 94–102 (= Kurtz, “Unedierte Texte” 114–15, lines 104–13); for this passage see also Magdalino, Manuel I Komnenos, 194.
88 Prodromos, Historical Poem 42, ed. Hörandner, 396–97, vv. 7–12; for this passage see also Pontani, “Isaac Porphyrogenitus,” 552, n. 5.
89 See note 86.
even more. Whereas the poem is a complaint against Providence regarding the inequality between these two groups, the prose work refutes the argument that Providence is to be blamed for it. Their function is comparable to the rhetorical progymnasmata of kataskeuē and anaskēuē: the poem stands for kataskeuē and the prose work for anaskēuē. Most likely, they were used as a Prodromic twinned work at the so-called rhetorical theatre, or even as exemplary models for teaching his students these two rhetorical progymnasmata from Aphthonios’s textbook.

Now that we have established that Prodromos experimented with such multicomponent works for both ceremonial and teaching or intellectual purposes, it is interesting to see whether other authors made use of this technique throughout the twelfth century. Since both Vassis and Agapitos have argued that the composition of triptychs is an innovative technique invented by Prodromos in the first half of the twelfth century, one might think that the simultaneous writing of two works—one in prose and the other in verse—for the same occasion is a unique characteristic of his literary technique. But Prodromos was by no means the only Komnenian representative of this practice; quite a number of such diptychs survive, by both members of his close intellectual entourage and other twelfth-century authors.

Let us begin with an author who belonged to Prodromos’s literary circle, and a set of works that was actually written for him. Niketas Eugenianos composed a prose text, a dodecasyllabic poem of 279 verses, and a hexametric poem of ninety-nine verses on the occasion of Prodromos’s death sometime in the late 1150s. Just like Prodromos, who commemorated the deaths of his teacher Stephanos Skylitzes and of sebastokrator Andronikos in a series of works written in different forms, Eugenianos decided to carry on the practice of his teacher. Although we cannot reconstruct the original context and the order in which these three works were performed, it is certain that Niketas was the one who delivered all three of them. In all of them he mourns the death of his dear friend and teacher by stressing his unparalleled erudition and prolific literary production, but he does so by employing varying forms (prose, dodecasyllables, and hexameters) and treating them from different angles. For example, he stresses Prodromos’s schedographic project only in the dodecasyllabic poem and the prose monody; he praises him for the composition of numerous poems and epigrams on various occasions in the dodecasyllabic poem; and in the hexametric poem he provides an imagery of several ancient authors, such as Homer, Plato, and Aristotle, praising him for his boundless knowledge and literary merit in the writing of both prose and verse.

Approximately ten years after Eugenianos’s works, and more specifically in 1167/68, the lesser-known grammarian Leo tou Megistou composed two monodies on the occasion of the death of megas hetairarches George Palaiologos: one in prose and one in 194 dodecasyllabic verses. Apart from a small number of

93 P. Roilos, Amphotergologia: A Poetics of the Twelfth-Century Medieval Greek Novel (Washington, DC, 2005), 197; see also Zagklas, Theodore Prodromos, 34–25. Moreover, Roilos has noted that the same function can be claimed for Prodromos’s prose work “Refutation of the Adage That Poverty Begets Wisdom.” It would be another example of a bipartite form, if Prodromos ever penned a confirmation in verse.


97 This date has been suggested by Hörandner, Theodorus Prodromos 21–32; on the other hand, Kazhdan argued that Prodromos’s death can be dated ca. 1170; see A. P. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries (Cambridge, 1984), 87–115. In my view, the date offered by Hörandner is much more plausible.


101 Ibid., 535, vv. 50–92.

102 The prose monody was first edited in A. Sideras, ed., 25 ανέκδοτοι Βυζαντινοί ιεραρχές—25 unedited byzantinische Grabreden (Thessalonike, 1990), 211–21. However, it was edited again with corrections in O. Lampisidis, “Die Monodie von Leon Megistos auf Georgios Palaiologos Megas Hetairarches,” JOB 49 (1999): 113–42. Although Lampisidis published only a very small number of verses from the poem, he stressed the striking resemblance of these two works.
verses, the poem remains largely unedited. While the prose work is a monody performed by Leo, the poem, which has also been described as monody by Lampsidis, is a dialogue between George Palaiologos’s wife and the tomb. Following in the footsteps of Prodromos, Eugenianos, and Leo, Euthymios Tornikes, in the year 1204, commemorated the death of his uncle, Euthymios Malakes, bishop of Nea Patras, in a prose and verse monody. Indeed, the two works are preserved together in the codex 508 of the Romanina Academy in Bucharest. The fragmentarily surviving verse monody is preserved on fol. 5–7 and the prose one on fol. 7–19. Although both texts were meant to be read out together by Tornikes, it is difficult to say whether the order in which they survive in the manuscript reflects the way these two works were delivered.

The fourth surviving diptych is associated with the celebration of an imperial marriage. In the early years of the reign of Isaac II Angelos, and more specifically in 1185 or 1186, Niketas Choniates celebrated the marriage of the emperor to Margaret of Hungary, both in a prose oration and in a poem in fifty-seven political verses. Unlike other diptychs, these two works are not transmitted in the same manuscript: the former is preserved in Marcianus graecus 11.22 (ff. 95r–96v), while the latter is in Barocci 110 (f. 336v–v). As a result, many scholars were previously puzzled by the function of the poem, while some of them even argued against its authorship by Niketas by assuming that it was rather a work of his brother, Michael Choniates, who is much better known for his poetic talent. However, this does not seem to be the only poem by Niketas; what is more, the prose oration as well as the poem were very likely written for the celebration of Isaac’s wedding. Both the prose oration and the poem have very similar structure and content: praise of the imperial bridegroom, the welcome and praise of the beautiful and virtuous bride, and joy at the emperor’s reign. However, whereas the oration was delivered by a single person (most probably Niketas himself), the poem was recited by representatives of the Demes. Its title, metrical form (political verse), and structure suggest that the poem had a function similar to that of the public poems by Theodore Prodromos. Hence they seem to serve different roles within the same ceremonial occasion.

If we now turn to twinned works related to an intellectual or school environment, apart from Prodromos’s verse katakaskeuē and prose anaskkeuē there are three other twelfth-century examples of sets of works that could have been used together. First, the little-known George, who was headmaster of the School of the Forty Martyrs (fl. 1140–1150), wrote three works about a fire: two schede and a poem in dodecasyllabic form. Second, on fol. 94r–96v of the manuscript

104 Despite its length, it is also likely that the text was meant to be inscribed.
105 **ADB** 2:1274. On the other hand, the year 1206 is suggested in Sideras, *Die byzantinischen Grabreden*, 235.
108 Darrouzès did not note this because he edited the prose monody only from ms. Petropolitanus gr. 500.
112 Choniates, Poem, ed. van Dieten, 64: Στίχοι τού Χωνιάτου ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀναφοραῖς τοὺς δήμοις, ἔπηκαὶ ὁ βασιλεύς Ισαὰκος συνεζύγη τῇ θυγατρὶ τοῦ ῥήγος Οὐγγρίας Βελᾶ ("Verses by Choniates for the acclamations of the Deme when the emperor Isaac was married to the daughter of Roger Béla of Hungary").
113 Hörandner, “Court Poetry,” 82 (n. 14 above).
114 For the poem, see R. Browning, *Il codice Marciano gr. XI.31 e la schedografia bizantina*, in Miscellanee Marziana di Studi Bessarioni (Padua, 1976), 21–24 (repr. in idem, *Studies on Byzantine History, Literature and Education* [London, 1977], no. 16), the
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While the dodecasyllabic poem is directed to a member of the imperial family (an emperor or future emperor), the prose treatise does not include any sort of address, but its method of instruction is much more detailed, with the use of examples. Given that both of them were written by the same author, it can be assumed that they were used for teaching the imperial family the art of writing correct dodecasyllabic verses. I would suggest that the prose version, which is more comprehensive and thorough in its description, preceded the poem, which serves as an example of writing correct iambic trimeters along with its mnemonic technique. Finally, two other twelfth-century works are closely related. One is a poem in fifty-two political verses, the other a prose work on the life of Oppian. The poem is attributed with certainty to Constantine Manasses, but the prose work is preserved anonymously in all its three text witnesses. However, they both date to the twelfth century and both have a purely didactic purpose, and Colonna has stressed the similarity between the two works. If we assume that Manasses is also the author of the prose life, then it would be an excellent demonstration of the use of both verse and prose for teaching the life of Oppian.

It is clear that the literary production of the twelfth century teems with diptychs and triptychs; no fewer than twelve such compositions by well-known literati (e.g. Theodore Prodromos, Niketas Eugenianos, Niketas Choniates) or otherwise little-known authors (e.g. Leo tou Megistou or George, Maistor of the School of the Forty Martyrs) survive for a wide range of occasions. But the composition of so many diptychs and triptychs by Komnenian authors raises more questions. Were these practices a twelfth-century literary invention? Are Prodromos and the other Komnenian authors the only representatives of these practices? Did these practices cease to exist after the twelfth century?

Prodromos may well have been the most prolific author of both diptychs and triptychs, but he does not seem to have invented at least the former. In contrast with triptychs, diptychs have a longer tradition that goes back to the eleventh century. Already in the mid-eleventh century, poetry is occasionally coupled with prose for the praise of an individual. In the concluding verses of an encomiastic poem for Isaikios Komnenos, Michael Psellus says καὶ πάσα γλῶσσα σοῦ ἀνυμνήσει τόνους | μέτροις τε ποικίλουσα καὶ λόγοις ἅμα (“Every tongue will praise your endeavors, embellishing them with metres and prose at the same time”). On a different occasion, Psellus’s student Theophylact of Ochrid made simultaneous or consecutive use of prose and verse for the same event at least twice. In his prose oration “In Defense of Eunuchs,” made for his brother Demetrios Hephaisotos, Theophylaktos wrote not only a prose protheoria, but also a metrical one in thirty-five dodecasyllables. Both protheoriai maintain that Theophylaktos wrote the discourse in defense of eunuchs as a gift to his brother. The second instance of twinned works in Theophylaktos’s oeuvre consists of a letter and an epistolary poem, both addressed to the doctor Michael Pantechnes. The poem reads:

117 Laurentianus graecus 51, 5 (fol. 1r), Ambrosianus graecus C.212 (fol. 25v), and Var. gr. 1345 (fol. 1b); see Colonna, “De Oppiani vita antiquissima,” 40.
118 Colonna, “De Oppiani vita antiquissima,” 37.
120 Both protheoriai maintain that Theophylaktos wrote the discourse in defense of eunuchs as a gift to his brother. The second instance of twinned works in Theophylaktos’s oeuvre consists of a letter and an epistolary poem, both addressed to the doctor Michael Pantechnes. The poem reads:
121 Margaret Mullett has very aptly noted that “of all Theophylact’s works it is the poems which dovetail best with the letters”; M. Mullett, Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop (Aldershot, 1997), 143.
Come happily to me. Why are you scaring me again? Your fears are childish bugbears. Rather be afraid of undergoing a punishment soon, since even though you are a doctor, and of emperors at that, you do not do me the slightest benefit, neither as a doctor (for my sciatica is wearing me down), nor as an imperial doctor (for you do not put an end to my battles). So be afraid of being justly hanged, receiving in old age the punishment which you avoided in your youth.

As with the poem, letter no. 129 is also addressed to Pantechnes, asking him to visit the sick archbishop and to have no fear about his payment. Moreover, the tone and wording are very similar in both works. Whereas Gautier and Mullett argued that both works were sent together, it has recently been suggested that the verse letter was most probably sent after the prose one. Be that as it may, it is an excellent case of a twinned work in the genre of late eleventh-century epistolography: a letter and a poem that convey exactly the same message in an epistolary context.

Furthermore, the extensive appropriation of Komnenian literary works and trends by many Palaiologan authors promoted the simultaneous use of prose and verse works for various ceremonial purposes until the late Byzantine period. To give but a single example: John Chortasmenos, an author who was well acquainted with Prodromos’s work and on many occasions imitated his poetry, composed a multiform composition on the occasion of the death of Andreas Asan and his son Manuel. The funerary commemoration opens with dodecasyllabic poetry, continues with some prose texts, and concludes with poetry in political verse. These three different forms delineate the three stages of the ceremony and help us to visualize it better than any other such composition. More specifically, the dodecasyllabic part consists of four poems that were most probably read aloud by the widow herself. The first poem is a prooimion; poem two and three are laments for the loss of her spouse and son, respectively; while the last poem is an ekphrasis on Manuel Asan’s beauty. The prose part is a dialogue between the mother and her son, whom she has seen in her dreams. At some point the dialogue switches from prose to political verses, without any apparent reason. The commemoration concludes with a poem in political verse by Manuel’s teacher, John Chortasmenos, who mourns the loss of his student.

Given the preceding analysis, the practice of diptychs seems to have been in use from the eleventh century up to the late Palaiologan period, but it reached its heyday in the twelfth century with the works of Theodore Prodromos and other Komnenian authors. Indeed Prodromos expanded its scope by introducing schedography as a third part. Triptychs do not seem to have become as popular in Komnenian and Palaiologan literary circles, for such compositions by any other author do not survive.

Both diptychs and triptychs were written for a number of occasions and across various genres (e.g., encomia, funerary orations, epithalamia, epistolography, progonynasmata). To fully reconstruct the context of these ceremonial or intellectual occasions and understand the place of these multicomponent works

123 Ibid., 2:183.
124 Ibid.: Τοῖς νηπίοις φόβητρα τὰ φόβητρα σου καὶ τὰ δίκας μεν ἄλλα καὶ βασιλέων, ἀδικήματα μεν ἀλλὰ καὶ βασιλέων, ἐμοὶ δ’ ὄνησιν οὐδὲ μικρὰν εἰσφέρων, οὔθ’ ὡς ἰατρὸς (ἰσχιὰς γάρ με τρύχει), οὔθ’ ὡς κρατούντων (οὐ λύεις γὰρ τὰς μάχας). Δέδιθι λοιπὸν μὴ κρεμασθῇς ἐνδίκως, γέρων δίκην δούς, ἣν πέφευγας ὡν νέος.
Within an author’s corpus, we should read all their parts together as unities. Even if the parts of a diptych or a triptych do not always treat the occasion from the same perspective, or are not directed to the same addressee, all of them are associated with the very same occasion or event. For example, as noted above, Prodromos’s triptych on the death of the sebastokrator Andronikos consists of a prose monody to commemorate his death and a schedos and poem addressed to his mother Irene Doukaina. Thus the former has a public character, the poem and the schedos a private one. As with the “mixed works,” all these multiform compositions are conventionally grouped under the umbrella term of diptychs and triptychs, since we cannot be entirely sure about the exact circumstances of their composition and delivery. In contrast with the Latin authors of diptychs, who made programmatic statements surrounding the authorial decision to compose one work in verse and another in prose, the Byzantines unfortunately provide no explanation for the composition of two or even three works for the very same occasion. Most likely, it would depend on the nature of the occasion. For instance, in a ceremony they would enhance the encomiastic effect, while in a school setting they would be used as exemplary models of treating the same subject in different form.

Unlike Theodosios’s introductory tetrastich to his prose letter which opened the present paper, the synergy of prose and verse in the twelfth century goes beyond attaching poetry as metrical paratext next to prose. Poetry does not play a secondary role, but it is used together with prose, either for the narrative of a single work, in the case of “mixed works,” or as an equivalent part in diptychs and triptychs, respectively. However, much work lies ahead, since the preliminary discussion of these two practices leaves many questions open. How did the Byzantine audience or readership respond to these compositions? Did this alternation of prose and verse bring more pleasure? How were the diptychs and triptychs delivered?

Most importantly, why were the Komnenian authors so keen to produce such multiform compositions?

Several answers can be given to the last question, for instance, and each of these two practices is a result of distinct circumstances, but it is definitely not a coincidence that both of them became literary trends in the twelfth century. Both should be seen as a result of the exponential increase in the production of verse and the fading of the role of prose as the dominant form of Byzantine literary culture. Moreover, if we want to determine a common principal force behind this development, increasing sophistication in both literary experimentation and rhetoric are the central factors. The Komnenian period has frequently been seen as a turning point for Byzantine literary culture, with the resurgence of ancient genres (e.g., satire and the novel), the first appearance of works in vernacular, and various literary experiments with the creation of new genres (e.g., the schedourgia by Theodore Prodromos). At the same time, rhetorical variety played an important role in Byzantium; it is well known that authors whose oeuvre comprises works in both prose and verse were celebrated for their talent to achieve a rhetorical poikilia, or “variety.” For instance, a certain Hesaias, allegedly Mauropos’s secretary, in a book epigram following Mauropos’s works in the famous manuscript Vaticanus graecus 676, speaks about the rhetorical variety that the eleventh-century intellectual achieved by writing in different forms and genres, including orations, letters, and poems; the “threefold variety of logoi”

130 A telling example is Alcuin’s statement that his prose life of St. Willibord was designed to be read in the church service, while its metrical counterpart “for private study as an edifying model of versification”; see Godman, “Anglo-Latin Opus Geminatum,” 224 (n. 67 above).


132 For instance, in Prodromos’s triptychs there seems to be no fixed sequence. In the “encomiastic triptych” for Alexios Aristenos we are told that the poem was written after the prose and schedos, while in his “funerary triptych” for the sebastokrator Andronikos the delivery of the prose text and the poem seem to precede that of schedos.


134 For various discussions of rhetoric in Byzantium see Jeffreys, Rhetoric in Byzantium (n. 14 above); see also E. C. Bourbouhakis, “Rhetoric and Performance,” in The Byzantine World, ed. P. Stephenson (London and New York, 2010), 175–87.
In the twelfth century, rhetorical versatility was expected to a much larger degree by the Byzantines; in a partly published schedos addressed to his fellow teacher and intellectual Prodromos, Ioannikios the monk says:

\[ καὶ τίς γὰρ οὐκ ἴδῃσι τοῦτον [sc. Πρόδρομον] . . . ως ἱκανὸν ὄντα τῆς τέχνης αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν περὶ ταύτην διδάσκαλον; τίς οὐκ οἶδεν ἐμβοῶν νέω παντὶ καὶ γηραιῷ ῥητόρων τοῦτον τὸν πρόκριτον; τίς οὐκ αἰνεῖ τῶν φιλόσοφων; ὃταν ἐρωτήσῃ τισὶν ἐμποιεῖ καινὸν θαυμασμόν∙ ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ λογογραφεῖ καὶ ἐτὶ σχεδοπλοκεῖ.

And who does not consider him . . . as skilled at this art [sc. schedography] and teacher of this art? Who cannot proclaim him for all young and old people the most excellent of rhetors? Which of the philosophers does not praise him? When his abundant flow of words is speaking in iambics and in hexameters, for some he produces a novel admiration. Similarly, he also writes both prose and schede.

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Here Ioannikios calls Prodromos the most adroit grammarian, rhetor, and philosopher. His skill in writing poetry (both in iambics and hexameters), prose, and schede is matchless.

Thus, in a fiercely competitive social environment like that of twelfth-century Constantinople, Prodromos and other authors who attempted to achieve rhetorical variety and become authoritative intellectuals did not limit themselves to composing either prose or verse works across a wide range of literary genres; they experimented further by bestowing verse form on genres traditionally written in prose, such as verse novels and chronicles; by blending verse with prose in a single work, as in the “mixed works”; and finally by inventing novel multicomponent works, such as the twinned works in verse and prose or even triplets of works in prose, verse, and schedography. Although the Byzantines viewed both verse and prose as *logoi*, in twelfth-century Byzantium there is a marked shift in their relationship. Their relationship becomes particularly fluid and complex, resulting in the production of ostentatious rhetorical fireworks in both the public and the private spheres.

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This paper was written within the framework of the project “Byzantine Poetry in the ‘Long’ Twelfth Century (1081–1204): Texts and Contexts,” funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF P 28959-G25). Working drafts were presented at the Byzantine Studies Conference in New York (October 22–25, 2015) and at Dumbarton Oaks. I would like to thank both audiences for their insightful feedback. I would also like to extend my thanks to Mary Cunningham, Byron MacDougall, Andreas Rhoby, Alice-Mary Talbot, David Ungvary, and the anonymous readers for offering suggestions and corrections on successive drafts of this paper. Special thanks are due to Ingela Nilsson, Panagiotis Agapitos, Kristoffel Demoen, and Marc Lauxtermann, who carefully read through the penultimate draft and offered constructive criticism for improvements. If not otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.