

APPENDIX V

Two Anonymous Poets

Oxon. Bodl. Barocci 50, a manuscript of the first half of the tenth century, contains a collection of 29 poems at the end, on fols. 381^r–386^v. These poems were published by the late Robert Browning, with an extensive commentary and a thorough introduction¹. Browning established these poems to be the work of a single poet living around the year 900: that is, after the restoration of orthodoxy in 843 (the poet occasionally lashes out against the iconoclast doctrine) and before the manuscript was copied (the scribe is obviously not the author of these poems as he comments upon them and sometimes even comes up with conjectural emendations of his own)². In support of Browning's dating one may also add the following argument, based on the fact that the poet occasionally imitates the epigrams of Theodore of Stoudios (see below): since Theodore's poems were only published after 886 (see p. 70) and can hardly have been known to the general public before they circulated in manuscript form, the year 886 obviously constitutes the *terminus post quem* for the composition of some of the poems in Oxon. Barocci 50. According to Browning, "the manuscript is a product of the scholarly circles in Constantinople of the two generations after Photius". But the manuscript is, in fact, of Italian origin, as Irigoín has shown³. It is reasonable to assume that the anonymous poet also lived in southern Italy, not just because Oxon. Barocci 50 was copied there, but above all because one of the poems celebrates the building of a church in that part of the Byzantine empire. Poem no. 28 is headed: ἐν Ἰταλία εἰς τὸν ναὸν ὃν ᾠκοδόμησε τοῦ ἁγίου Βαρνάβα τοῦ ἀποστόλου Βαρνάβας τις μοναχὸς ἐξ ἀλλοδαπῆς χώρας παροικήσας ἐκεῖσε. It is interesting to note the words τις and ἐκεῖσε. The word τις obviously indicates that the Italian scribe was not familiar with Barnabas the monk. The word ἐκεῖσε implies that the church of St. Barnabas was situated somewhere far away, namely ἐν Ἰταλία. Ἰταλία is the name given to the Byzantine theme of Longobardia (modern Apulia and northeast Basilicata) in the second half of the tenth century, but it was already in use at a much earlier date⁴. It would seem, therefore, that the scribe himself

¹ BROWNING 1963. See also BALDWIN 1982.

² See BROWNING 1963: 291. See also BALDWIN 1982: 5–7.

³ See J. IRIGOÍN, *JÖB* 18 (1969) 50–51 and idem, *Scriptorium* 48 (1994) 3–17.

⁴ See V. VON FALKENHAUSEN, in: MARKOPOULOS 1989: 28.

did not live in Longobardia, but somewhere else in southern Italy, probably Calabria. As for the poet, since the only poem that can be geographically situated deals with a church in Longobardia (Ἰταλία), he probably lived in the same region. I refer to this poet as the Anonymous Italian.

The Anonymous Italian was a monk. Poem no. 19 celebrates St. Athanasios, a key figure in Byzantine monasticism; no. 23 is a tribute to ascetic life; no. 24 describes a picture of the monastic saints Anthony, Euthymios, Chariton and Sabas; and no. 29 is an epitaph to a man called Sabas, a popular name in monastic circles. The collection of the Anonymous Italian's poems can be divided into two parts: poems written for his own monastery (nos. 1–21) and poems written for others (nos. 22–29). This arrangement is similar to that of the collection of Theodore of Stoudios' epigrams, which is also divided into two separate parts: (i) poems written for the Stoudios monastery and its annexes (Theod. St. 1–103) and (ii) poems written for other pious foundations (Theod. St. 104–123). The Anonymous Italian occasionally imitates the epigrams of Theodore of Stoudios: compare Anon. Ital. 3 with Theod. St. 31; for the poetic device of icons that speak or listen (in Anon. Ital. 1–2, 4 and 7–8), see Theod. St. 35–39. This suggests that the monastery of the Anonymous Italian was in close contact with the Stoudite movement.

Oxon. Barocci 50 contains many poems that merit close study⁵. It is the oldest manuscript for some of the epigrams of Pisides⁶. On my last visit to Oxford, apart from two excerpts from the *Odyssey* and a few fragments of Gregory of Nazianzos' poems, I noticed on fols. 200^v–201^r some very unusual texts which I have not been able to identify: for instance,

† ἀρρώστου· πρὸς ἱατρὸν †
 Ὄς ἐν παρέργῳ τὴν ἐμὴν σκοπεῖς φύσιν,
 ἀλλ' οὐ παρέργως ἢ νόσος κατατρύχει,
 ὄθεν δέος μοι δυσφόρητον ἐκφέρεις⁷
 μήπως νικηθεῖς ὡς παρεργάτης νόσῳ
 προπομπὸς ἡμῖν τοῖς Ἄδου φανῆς δόμοις.

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⁵ Incidentally, it is not the only tenth-century Italian manuscript containing quite remarkable poems. For the various poems in Vat. gr. 1257, see LAUXTERMANN 1998a: 399–400 and CANART 2000: 150–152. For the poems in Patmos 33, copied in Reggio di Calabria in 941, see A. ΚΟΜΙΝΙΣ, *Σύμμεικτα* 1 (1966) 22–34 and idem, *Πατμιακὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*. Athens 1988, I, 82–90.

⁶ On fol. 176^v we find Pisides Q. 7, Q. 4 and St. 108. The text of St. 108 and especially of Q. 4 differs strongly from that of the existing editions. In my forthcoming edition of Pisides' epigrams I will publish the readings of this manuscript.

⁷ I am not familiar with the construction ἐκφέγω δέος τινί, "to inspire fear in someone". Perhaps we should read εἰσφέρες, cf. LSJ, s.v., I. 3.

Vat. gr. 753 (s. XI), fol. 4^{r-v}, contains a collection of anonymous poems, which were published by Sola in 1916⁸. His edition has not attracted much attention. This is much to be regretted because these poems deserve to be studied, not only for their aesthetic merits, but also because they contain some snippets of information that are of interest to (art) historians. Despite the misleading title of his edition, “Giambografi sconosciuti del secolo XI”, Sola assumed, on stylistic grounds, that these poems were the work of a single poet⁹. I see no reason to question this assumption. The poems have a homogeneous style and bear the hallmark of a gifted poet. The rules of prosody are the same in all poems, rhythm and metre are uniform and the vocabulary does not vary; but above all, if I am permitted to use a purely subjective argument, reading these poems I clearly distinguish the voice of an individual poet. I have to admit, though, that there is a slight chronological problem: as poem no. 3 dates from 980–992 and poem no. 6 from 1034–1040, it would seem that the Anonym of Sola lived to be quite old, for he must have been at least sixty-five when he wrote no. 6. Still, I think Sola is right in assuming that we are dealing with the poems of one and the same poet.

Vat. gr. 753 contains the following poems: Sola nos. 2, 5, 6, 1, 7 (which consists of seven short poems), 8, 3, an unpublished poem, and Sola no. 4. The poem not published by Sola reads: Τριάς, τριάς μου, τῶν φίλων τὴν τετράδα / σφῆζοις φέρουσαν ἀρετῶν τὴν τετράδα. Though the order of the poems is different in the manuscript, for the sake of convenience I follow the numbering of Sola.

No. 3 is probably the earliest poem written by the Anonym of Sola. It celebrates the golden and silver decoration of an image of the Holy Virgin in the famous Blachernai bathhouse, the λουῖμα, where a therapeutic spring flowed. The epigram suggests that the holy water sprang forth from Her hands. The golden and silver plates attached to this miraculous image were donated by Patriarch Nicholas. This is undoubtedly Nicholas II Chrysoberges (980–992). The Patria, too, mention this decoration of the Blachernai bathhouse with gold and silver, but state that it was Emperor Basil II who commissioned the decoration¹⁰. As the epigram appears to be a dedicatory inscription, the Anonym of Sola is in this case a trustworthier source than the Patria.

No. 2 dates from 1028–1034. It is a dedicatory epigram celebrating the building of a pavement inlaid with porphyry and silver, which had been commissioned by Romanos III Argyros and his wife Zoë. The pavement was to be found in the church of Christ Antiphonetes. This is probably the same

⁸ These poems were also copied by Leo Allatius in Barb. gr. 74, fols. 35^r–37^r.

⁹ SOLA 1916: 19.

¹⁰ Ed. PREGER 1901-07: 283, 4–9.

church as the one built by Empress Zoë¹¹. No. 8 is an epitaph on Helen, the first wife of Romanos III, who was forced to retire to a monastery and to become a nun (renamed Maria) when her husband assumed power; she died in 1032. No. 6 is a dedicatory epigram celebrating the construction of a church dedicated to the Virgin Gorgoepekoos. Its two donors were Emperor Michael IV and Empress Zoë¹². No. 5 is, once again, a dedicatory epigram: it mentions a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin and built by Theoktistos the droungarios, who bore the titles πατρίκιος, βέστης and πραιπόσιτος. The latter title indicates that he was a eunuch. I have not been able to identify him, unless he is the general by the same name who went on an expedition in 1030; but this general, a confidant of Romanos III, was a megas heteariarches and protospatharios¹³. None of the other poems can be dated.

The Anonym of Sola lived at a time we know little about and which has left us very little poetry¹⁴. When he started his literary career, Geometres was still alive; and when he laid down his pen, Mauropous and Mitylenaios had already begun writing. But apart from the prolific Symeon the New Theologian, the Anonym of Sola is the only poet we know to have been active in the first decades of the eleventh century.

¹¹ See K.N. SATHAS, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*. Athens 1872–94 (repr. Hildesheim 1972), VII, 163, 3–5. See also P. MAGDALINO, in: *Aetos. Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango*. Stuttgart–Leipzig 1998, 225–227.

¹² SOLA 1916: 151 suggests that the νέος Μιχαήλ mentioned in the epigram is Michael V Kalaphates. The four months of his reign are too short a period to rebuild a church from its fundamentals: βάθρων ἀπ' αὐτῶν σοι νεουγοῦσαι δόμον (v. 4). Moreover, shortly after becoming emperor, Michael V removed Zoe from the palace.

¹³ See Skylitzes, ed. THURN 1973: 382, 66–71

¹⁴ See LAUXTERMANN 2003a.