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Diving for pearls and Tzetzes' death

Abstract: This article argues against a recent attempt to date Ioannes Tzetzes' poem on Psellos' paraphrase of Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias* to after 1174/78 and thereby provide a new *terminus post quem* for Tzetzes' death.

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In a recent issue of this journal Nikos AGIOTIS revisited Ioannes Tzetzes' verses in praise of Michael Psellos' paraphrase of Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias*.¹ Like a diver Psellos descends into the depths of Aristotle's works and brings back the pearls, leaving their empty shells behind:

- Στίχοι κύρ Τζέτζου πρός τὸν κύρ Μιχαὴλ τὸν Ψελλόν.
Καὶ τοῦτο δεῖγμα, Ψελλέ, σῆς εὐφυίας,
δὶ' ἦν καταδύς εἰς ὀβύσσους τῶν λόγων
τοῦ δαιμονίου τὴν φύσιν Σταγειρίτου,
5 γυμνοὺς ἐκεῖθεν ὄστρακών τοὺς μαργάρους
ἀνελκύσας ἔδειξας, οἵς βίος λόγος·
τὰ γὰρ θεωρήματα καλῶ μαργάρους,
τὴν δὲ σκοτεινὴν φράσιν ὄστρακον λέγω
ἀλλ' εἴθε μοι γένοιτο τοιαῦτα γράφειν,
10 τῶν γὰρ φθονούντων τοῖς καλοῖς οὐδεὶς λόγος·
ἀλλὰ σαφεῖς τέθεικας, τραυλέ, σοὺς λόγους.

This too, Psellos, is a sample of your goodness, by the power of which you have plunged into the depths of the words of the naturally divine Stageirite; from there you have drawn up the pearls stripped of their shells and shown them to us who have words as our means of living. For I call the theories pearls, and I term the obscure phrasing a shell. If only I could write such things! For those who envy the good are lacking in reason (*logos*) but you, lisper, have rendered the discourses (*logoi*) clear.

1 N. AGIOTIS, Tzetzes on Psellos revisited. *BZ* 106 (2013) 1–8. See also J. DUFFY, Tzetzes on Psellos, in Ch. F. Collatz et al. (eds.), *Dissertatiunculae criticae. Festschrift für Günther Christian Hansen. Würzburg* 1998, 441–445 and G. DE VICO, Noterelle su Tzetzes. *Giornale italiano di filologia* 10 (1957) 221–224: 221–222. Before that the poem was also printed in PG 96, 1140 note 6.

Agiotis observed that the wording here is strikingly similar to a section in Eustathios of Thessalonike's oration for the patriarch Michael III of Anchialos dated to between 1174 and 1178 (*Λόγος Σ*):²

πολὺ μὲν ἦν τὸ βάθος τοῦ πνευματικοῦ τότε ζητήματος καὶ ῥᾶσιν οὕτε ὄρατὸν οὕτε περιληπτόν, σὺ δὲ καὶ ταχὺ ἐπέβαλες καὶ κατεῖδες καὶ λαβόμενος εὗχες ὑφ' ἔν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις παρέθου εἰς ἀληθείας περίληψιν νηξάμενος κατὰ τοῦ βάθους τοῦ γραφικοῦ κάκεῖθεν γυμνὸν ὁστράκου τὸν τῆς ἀληθοῦς θεολογίας ἀνελκύσας λαμπρὸν παμφαίνοντα μάργαρον, ὃν τοῦ παντὸς ἄν ὁ μεγαλέμπορος πρίσαιτο.³

The depth of the spiritual problem was great on that occasion and difficult both to see through and comprehend. But quickly you applied yourself to it, discerned it, and having grasped it you held it in one piece and presented it to others in order that they should attain the truth, having swum down into the depths of scripture and drawn up from there the all-shining, radiant pearl of true theology, stripped of its shell, that which a big-time merchant would trade everything he owns for.

What is the nature of this intertextual link? AGIOTIS argues that Tzetzes is re-using Eustathios, but there are plenty of reasons to believe the opposite. He claims that Eustathios „source“ is a section occurring a few lines down from the beginning of a Christmas homily ascribed to John Chrysostomos. In a string of metaphors describing the incarnation of Christ we read:

Νῦν ὁ κόκκος ἐσπάρη ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τῆς χάριτος καὶ στάχυν ἐβλάστησεν θεογνωσίας πολυφόρον. Ξενίζει τοὺς ὄρῶντας ἡ τοιαύτη ὑπόθεσις, πῶς ἡ θάλασσα τὴν ἄβυσσον περιβάλλεται. Ὁ πολύτιμος μαργαρίτης ἐν τῷ ὁστράκῳ κεκόλληται καὶ τοῦτον ὡς ἔμπορος Ἰωσήφ ἀνεζήτησεν. Παιδίον μαστεύεται ἐν ἀγκάλαις μητρὸς καὶ τρέφει τὰ σύμπαντα, διὰ παντὸς ἐσθιόμενος.⁴

Now the seed has been sown in the land of grace and spouted crops that are plentiful in knowledge of God. This subject astonishes its beholders as to how the sea can embrace the abyss. The costly pearl is fastened to its shell, and Joseph sought it out as a merchant. The child is sought after in the mother's arms and he nourishes the universe, forever consumed.

The context is markedly different from the 'businessman of *logos*' that Tzetzes and Eustathios are referring to. A much stronger candidate for being considered the *locus classicus* for this idea is a section in Gregory of Nazianzus' *First oration on peace* (or. 6.5) where he presents his work as a sacrifice to God:

² P. WIRTH, Eustathii Thessalonicensis opera minora magnam partem inedita. *CFHB*, 32. Berlin 2000, 25*.

³ Ed. WIRTH, *ibid.* 78 – 99: 89.15 – 90.21.

⁴ Ed. F.J. LEROY, Une nouvelle homélie acrostiche sur la nativité. *Le Muséon* 77 (1964) 155 – 173: 165.15 – 20.

Τοῦτο προσφέρω Θεῷ, τοῦτο ἀνατίθημι ὁ μόνον ἔμαυτῷ κατέλιπον, ψ πλουτῶ μόνῳ. Τὰ μὲν γάρ ἄλλα παρῆκα τῇ ἐντολῇ καὶ τῷ Πνεύματι· καὶ τὸν πολύτιμον μαργαρίτην πάντων ὃν εἶχόν ποτε ἀντηλλαξάμην, καὶ γέγονα μεγαλέμπορος, μᾶλλον δὲ γενέσθαι δι' εὐχῆς ἔχω τῶν μικρῶν, καὶ πάντως φθαρησομένων ὀνησάμενος τὰ μεγάλα καὶ μὴ λυόμενα.⁵

This is what I offer to God; this do I dedicate, my sole remaining possession, my sole wealth. The rest I have made over to the commandment and the Spirit, and in exchange for all I once had I have taken the „pearl of great value“ and become a rich merchant, or rather, hope to be such, trading things small and altogether corruptible for the great and everlasting.⁶

By rejecting all worldly riches and devoting himself completely to *logos*, Gregory has achieved what any big-time merchant would hope for, exchanging cheap and worthless goods for the „pearl of great value“. This in turn alludes to a parable on the kingdom of heaven in the Gospel of Matthew (13:45 – 46): „Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.“ (Πάλιν ὁμοίᾳ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ ἐμπόρῳ ζητοῦντι καλοὺς μαργαρίτας· εὐρών δὲ ἔνα πολύτιμον μαργαρίτην ἀπελθὼν πέπρακεν πάντα ὅσα εἶχεν καὶ ἤγόρασεν αὐτόν.) Considering the context as well as the fact that Eustathios uses the rare word μεγαλέμπορος, which is found in Gregory, it seems clear that this is the target of the allusion. This is also the case elsewhere in Eustathios (*Λόγος Z*),⁷ and in a letter written by his student Michael Choniates (epist. 173).⁸ Michael Glykas offers an interesting twist of the motif in the introduction to his *Poem from Prison* (8 – 15), perhaps indicating connotations that the *topos* would naturally assume in the literary culture we are dealing with here, famous for the heightened professionalism among its writers.⁹ Glykas compares the risky aspects of life as a full-time intellectual to that of a merchant on the sea:

Ως δέ τις μεγαλέμπορος θέλων πολλὰ κερδῆσαι
δεινοῦ παντὸς ὑπερορῷ, κατασολμᾷ θαλάσσης
10 καὶ τὰ φρικτὰ καταφρονεῖ χάσματα τῶν κυμάτων

⁵ Ed. M.-A. CALVET-SEBASTI, Gregoire de Nazianze: Discours 6 – 12. SC, 405. Paris 1995, 120 – 179: 132.17 – 23. See also or. 19.1, PG 35, 1044 – 64: 1045.3 – 7.

⁶ Translation M. VINSON, St Gregory of Nazianzus: Select Orations. *The Fathers of the Church*, 107. Washington, DC 2003, 6 – 7.

⁷ Ed. WIRTH (as in footnote 2 above) 100 – 40: 113.82 – 87 (when expounding the signification of precious stones he acts as a merchant [μεγαλέμπορος] in a speech to the same patriarch). See also *Δόγος I*, ed. WIRTH 170 – 81: 179.34 – 38 (on Manuel I as a pearl diver).

⁸ Ed. F. KOLOVOU, Michaelis Choniatae epistulae. *CFHB*, 41. Berlin and New York 2001, 271 – 81: 277 – 78 (ll. 178 – 79).

⁹ Cf. e.g. M. MULLETT, Aristocracy and patronage in the literary circles of Comnenian Constantinople, in M. ANGOLD (ed.), *The Byzantine aristocracy*. Edinburgh 1984, 173 – 201: 182.

καὶ πορρωτάτω στέλλεται πάντως ρίψοκινδύνως,
οὕτως εἰς πλάτος ἐμαυτὸν ἀφῆκα τὸ τοῦ λόγου,
κἀκεῖθεν ὅλον φορυτὸν χρυσίου καὶ μαργάρων
καὶ θησαυρὸν πολύολβον ἐπλούτησα τὴν γνῶσιν,
15 πολὺν ἐμπορευσάμενος ταύτην τὴν ἐμπορίαν.¹⁰

And like some big-time merchant wanting to earn great profits [who] neglects all danger, and braves the sea and shows contempt for the terrible chasms of the waves and packs himself off to most distant parts risking everything so did I launch myself into the great expanse of learning and from there with all the bounty of gold and pearls and magnificent treasure enriched my mind trading greatly in this merchandise.¹¹

This is the sort of merchant that Eustathios is praising Michael for benefitting. However, a mechanistic declaration that *this* and nothing else was Eustathios' source would be an inadequate approach to his sophisticated art of allusion. Eustathios combines the image from Gregory with another traditional metaphor, that of pearl diving to describe the successful achievement of an exegete. In this part the two sections have unique similarities, which indicate that one is directly re-using the other (Tzetzes: γυμνοὺς ἔκειθεν ὄστρακων τοὺς μαργάρους ἀνελκύσας; Eustathios: κἀκεῖθεν γυμνὸν ὄστρακου [...] ἀνελκύσας [...] μάργαρον). All evidence suggests that Tzetzes phrased the metaphor in this way before his distinguished colleague.

First and foremost, the ten verses in question are written in regular Byzantine dodecasyllable. All lines are accentuated on the second syllable from the end; no feet are substituted for dactyls, anapests or tribachs; and dichronic vowels (α, ι, υ) are frequently used in the positions of long syllables at the beginning or middle of words (1 εὐφῆϊας; 2 κατᾶδὺς; 3 δαιμονίου; 6 θεωρήματα and κāλῶ; 7 φραστιν). This strongly suggests that the poem was not written during the later period of Tzetzes' career, at which point he normally used what he termed *iamboi technikoi* and expressed regret for his former ignorance.¹² Accordingly, the epigram seems to

10 Ed. E. T. TSOLAKES, Μιχαὴλ Γλυκᾶ στίχοι, οὓς ἔγραψε καθ' ὃν κατεοχέθη καιρόν. *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρίς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς Παράρτημα*, 3. Thessalonica 1959, 3.

11 Translation from E. C. BOURBOUHAKIS, 'Political' personae: the poem from prison of Michael Glykas: Byzantine literature between fact and fiction. *BMGS* 31 (2007) 53–75: 64.

12 See G. HART, De Tzetzarum nomine *vitis scriptis*. *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie: Supplementband*, 12, Leipzig 1881, 1–76: 66–75; F. KUHN, *Symbolae ad doctrinae perὶ διχρόνων historiam pertinentes*. *Breslauer philologische Abhandlungen*, 6:3. Wrocław 1892, 82–88; H. HUNGER, Zur Interpretation polemischer Stellen im Aristophanes-Kommentar des Johannes Tzetzes, in *ΚΩΜΩΙΔΟΤΡΑΓΗΜΑΤΑ: Studia aristophanea viri aristophanei* W. J. W. Koster. Amsterdam 1967, 59–64; M. J. LUZZATTO, Tzetzes lettore di Tucidide. Note autografe sui Codice Heidelberg Palatino Greco 252. Bari 1999, 8.

belong to Tzetzes' years in Constantinople following his mysterious dispute with the wife of Isaak, Eparch of Verroia. Most of his exegetical writings on ancient authors belong to this period,¹³ including the unedited verse exegesis on Porphyry's *Eisagoge*. I mention this since Christian HARDER's dating of this work to the later part of Tzetzes' career is generally accepted by scholars,¹⁴ and the text could be invoked as a counterargument here, seeing that it is written in regular Byzantine dodecasyllable. However, HARDER's date is incorrect as we can see from the following section within the work itself:

τοὺς ἀφορισμοὺς τοῦ σοφοῦ Πορφυρίου
καὶ τὰ παραδείγματα τὰ κομψὰ τάδε,
μέχρι γραφῆς φύλαττε [71v] φασκούσης τόδε,
ἐπὶ γενῶν δ' εἰδῶν τε οὐχ' οὔτως ἔχει
ἄκαιρον εἶναι διττογραφίαν νόει
ἀνδρὸς τρυφῶντος καὶ γράφοντος ὑπάτοις.
οὐδὲν φέρει γάρ τῶν λελεγμένων πλέον,
ἀλλ' ἡ Διός Κόρινθον ἐν γραφαῖς φέρει
ἡμεῖς δὲ πολλῶν ἐνδεεῖς πεφυκότες
τὰ χρήσιμα γράφοντες εὐλόγῳ τρόπῳ
τ' ἀλλα παραδράμωμεν ἐν χάρτου σπάνει.
ἥδη γάρ ἐνδέκατον [ἐνδ- cod.] ἄγχομαι χρόνον
γυναικὸς αἰσχρᾶς ἐν δολόφροσι τρόποις,
ἢ τὸν μολοβρὸν τὸν μιασμὸν τοῦ βίου
τὸν ἐλκοκατάρρυτον ἐξ ἔργων [ἐξέργων cod.] σκότους
σύνεδρον εἰργάσατο τῷ ταύτης πόσει
εἰς ἔργον εἰς νοῦν εἰς γένος τὲ καὶ θέαν
εἰς πίστιν αὐτοῦ τοῦ παράφρονος πλέον.
ἡμᾶς δ' ὀπαγχεῖ μηχαναῖς πολυτρόποις
ἐχθροὺς δούλους δράσασα τῷ ταύτης πόσει
ὄντως ὅποιος ἡ θεοῦ δίκη βλέπει
ῶν ἐνεκα φέροντες ἐνδειαν πόσην
τρυφῶντος ἀνδρὸς μὴ κεχρημένου τρόποις
τὰ χρήσιμα γράψαιμεν ἐν χάρτῃ μόνως.¹⁵

When it comes to the aphorisms of wise Porphyry and these ingenious paradigms, stay carefully by the text dealing with this, but act otherwise when it comes to the genera and

¹³ See C. WENDEL, Tzetzes, Joannes. *RE* 7 A2, 1959 – 2012.

¹⁴ Ch. HARDER, Johannes Tzetzes' Kommentar zu Porphyrius περὶ πέντε φωνῶν. *BZ* 4 (1895) 314 – 18; WENDEL, Tzetzes (as footnote 13 above) 1983.

¹⁵ Transcription of Vind. phil. gr. 300, fol. 71^{r-v} (digital images of the manuscript can be found on [http://beta.teuchos.uni-hamburg.de/TeuchosWebUI/manuscripts/tx-container-manuscripts#\[consulted 2013 – 10 – 10\]](http://beta.teuchos.uni-hamburg.de/TeuchosWebUI/manuscripts/tx-container-manuscripts#[consulted 2013 – 10 – 10])). I want to thank the anonymous referee who corrected the transcription.

forms. This you should think of as untimely repetition of a man who lives in luxury and writes for the mighty. For it brings nothing new to what has already been said, except for that it brings a Corinth of Zeus¹⁶ into the work. But we who lack many things and only write what is useful in a sensible manner, let us skip the rest due to lack of paper. For already during eleven years we are pressed by a disgraceful woman's wily-minded devices. From the deeds of darkness she made the beggar, the pollution of this life, the man flowing with ulcers into her husband's associate in work, in mind, in family and appearance, in trustworthiness greater than that deranged man. But us she chokes with many devices making us enemy slaves to her husband, truly such as the judgment of God sees. For these reasons I live in great poverty, and my ways are not those of a man living in luxury and thus I only write what is useful on paper.

The conflict with Isaak and his wife seems to have broken out in the early 1130 s,¹⁷ and so this work should be dated to the early 1140 s. As for the epigram on Psellos the exact date remains unknown, but due to the meter it was evidently written before the 1160 s, let alone before 1174/78 when Eustathios delivered the oration to Michael.

Secondly, it seems rather unlikely that Tzetzes, a self-proclaimed fierce opponent of intellectuals belonging to the *Tholos* („Rotunda“), i.e. the Hagia Sophia,¹⁸ would have been around to enjoy Eustathios' celebration of the patriarch or gotten hold of a copy of his oration. At least this is a far less likely scenario than Eustathios at some point coming across a copy of Psellos' paraphrase that included Tzetzes' laudatory epigram. Agiotis explicitly grounds his conclusion in traditional characterizations of Tzetzes and Eustathios: „In all probability, the metropolitan of Thessalonike had no need to use any of Tzetzes' verses in order to compose text, while Tzetzes was a compilator with a 'limited talent', though a prolific one.“¹⁹ This comparison is problematic,²⁰ and even if we agree that Eustathios was a more competent scholar and literary craftsman than Tzetzes, it seems precarious to deduce who imitated whom based on such notions. In fact, we know that Eustathios made use of Tzetzes' works without crediting him,²¹ and in his tireless search for „useful conceptions for the prose writer who wants to achieve well-timed rhetorical citations (*paraplokai*)“ in the Homeric *Parekbolai*

16 Proverb referring to people repeating the same thing, see Tzetzes on Aristophanes' *Frogs* 439, ed. W.J.W. KOSTER, Jo. Tzetzae commentarii in Aristophanem, III. *Scholia in Aristophanem*, 4. Groningen 1962, 817.

17 WENDEL, Tzetzes (as in footnote 13 above) 1961–62.

18 See LUZZATTO, Tzetzes (as in footnote 12 above) 48–55.

19 AGIOTIS, Tzetzes (as in footnote 1 above) 7.

20 See LUZZATTO, Tzetzes (as in footnote 12 above) 8 and 14.

21 See examples provided by T. CONLEY, Byzantine criticism and the uses of literature. In A. Minnis / I. Johnson (eds.), *The Cambridge History of literary criticism*, II: The Middle Ages. Cambridge 2005, 669–92: 684.

(2.26),²² he did not pass up the opportunity to make use of Tzetzes. Take for instance the following section of the *Parekbolai on the Odyssey* (1410.24–27):

(v. 197) „Ότι τὸ „ἀλλ’ ἔτι που ζωὸς κατερύκεται εὐρέϊ πόντῳ“ προϊῶν που ὁ ποιητὴς παρφεῖ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ἔπους ἀρχὴν οὕτω· „εἰς δ’ ἔτι που ζωὸς κατερύκεται εὐρέϊ πόντῳ“ [δ 498; cf. 552]. τοῦτο δέ τις παρφθῆσας ἐν τῷ τέλει ἀστείως ἐπὶ προσώπου ἀξιολόγου ἐρεῖ· „εἰς δ’ ἔτι που ζωὸς κατερύκεται εὐρέϊ κόσμῳ“, οἵονει λέγων ὅτι ὁ δεῖνα μόνος ἐναπέμεινε τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ προσφωνητικῶς δέ ποτε ἐρεῖ πρός τινα „εἰς δ’ ἔτι που ζωὸς κατερύκεται“ καὶ ἔξῆς.²³

(v. 197) Later on somewhere the phrase „but he is still alive somewhere and kept back on the broad sea“ is re-used by the poet with adaptation at the beginning of the verse in the following way: „but one man is still alive somewhere and kept back on the broad sea“ [Odyssey 4.498; cf. 4.552]. Somebody who reuses this with modification at the end will wittily say in reference to a noteworthy person: „but one man is still alive somewhere and kept back in the broad cosmos“, as if to say that so-and-so alone is left in the cosmos, and addressing someone he will say „you alone are still alive somewhere and kept back“ and so on.

Here Eustathios is actually recommending his reader to quote the verse in the same way as Tzetzes did in a letter (14) to Konstantinos, chartophylax at the Hagia Sophia, dating to 1139.²⁴ Tzetzes prides himself on this witticism of his at the corresponding place in the *Histories* (109, 7.106–9):

Περὶ τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως δε τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος λέγει.
 „εἰς δ’ ἔτι που ζωὸς κατερύκεται εὐρέϊ πόντῳ.“
 Ἐγὼ παρεγραμμάτισα ῥητορικῷ δε τρόπῳ,
 πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον νῦν ἐμοί, „κόσμῳ“ εἰπών, οὐ „πόντῳ“.²⁵

²² Ed. M. VAN DER VALK, Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis Commentarii ad Homeris Iliadem pertinentes, I. Leiden 1971, 3.12 – 13. On these recommendations of re-use, see R. NÜNLIST, Homer as a blueprint for speechwriters: Eustathius' commentaries and rhetoric. *GRBS* 52 (2012) 493 – 509. Note, however, that we are not dealing with a „suggested method“ (NÜNLIST, *ibid.* 497 and *passim*) but a widespread phenomenon in rhetorical theory (see e. g. Hermog. *Id.* 2.4, p. 336.20 – 338.18 Rabe and ps.-Hermog. *Meth.* 30) and practice (see F. KOLOVOU, Die Briefe des Eustathios von Thessalonike. Einleitung, Regesten, Text, Indizes. *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde*, 239. München and Leipzig 2006, 25* – 75*).

²³ Ed. J. G. STALLBAUM, Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis commentarii ad Homeris Odysseam, I. Leipzig 1825, 48.30 – 34.

²⁴ Ed. P. A. M. LEONE, Ioannis Tzetzae epistulae. Leipzig 1972, 25 – 27: 25.5 – 6. On this letter see M. GRÜNBAUM, Prosopographische Beiträge zum Briefcorpus des Ioannes Tzetzes. *JÖB* 46 (1996) 175 – 226: 185 – 87.

²⁵ Ed. P. A. M. LEONE, Ioannis Tzetzae historiae. *Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di filologia classica: università degli studi di Napoli*, 1. Napels 1968, 257.

[Proteus] utters the following verse about Odysseus: „one man is still alive and held back somewhere on the broad sea“ [Odyssey 4.498]. I rephrased it in a rhetorical manner according to what suited me in this moment, saying „in the world“ not „on the sea“.

Agiotis is right when stating that Eustathios did not „need to use any of Tzetzes' verses in order to compose text“ (my italics), but he was apparently willing to do so anyway.

Thirdly, there is more to be said about the background of the metaphor of pearl diving for the activity of the exegete. Among the Fathers, Theodoret was particularly fond of it and uses it in his *Cure of Hellenic Diseases* (9.2).²⁶ Similarly, Psellos himself uses it in reference to interpretation of pagan works in his *Address to neglectful students* (Or. Min. 24),²⁷ but Tzetzes was particularly devoted to it. He used it about his own task as an interpreter at the end of his *Allegories on the Odyssey* (24.284–87)²⁸ and at the beginning of his unfinished *Verse Chronicle* (7–8).²⁹ We also find it in a letter (76) written to Ioannes Kostomou around 1150.³⁰ Responding to an overly flattering message Tzetzes concludes:

καν γὰρ οὐ νέκταρ ἡμεῖς ἀπορρέωμεν, ὡς γράφεις αὐτός („οὐ τίς τοι θεός είμι· τί μ' ἀθανάτοισιν ἔστει;“ [π 187]), καν οὐ „καναχῶσι πηγαὶ“ παρ' ἡμῖν „τῶν ἐπῶν τῶν ῥευμάτων“, οὐδὲ δωδεκάκρουνον ἔχωμεν στόμα Ἰλισσὸν ρέον ἐκ φάρυγγος, καθά φησιν ὁ Κρατῖνος [fr. 198 K.-A.], ὅμως τῶν ἡμετέρων κρηνῶν, ὡς αὐτὸς φήσι, προσεκτικῶς εἰ ἀρύοιτο οὐ διψήσεται. εἰ δέ, μὴ μέγα εἰπεῖν, καὶ δεξιῶς μεταλλεύοι καὶ τῶν λογικῶν ὀστρέων ἀναπτύσσοι τὰ ἔλυτρα, καὶ ψῆγμά τι χρυσίου εὑρήσει καὶ μαργαρῖτιν καὶ λίθον.³¹

For I do not flow with nectar, as you write („I am not a god; why do you compare me to the immortals?“ [Odyssey 16.187]), and I have no „spring splashing in floods of words“, my mouth is no Ilissus of twelve springs running from my throat, as Cratinus [fragment 198 K.-A.] says. Nevertheless, if anyone should draw water from my fountains, as you say, attentively, he will not go thirsty. Moreover, if he – I avoid saying too much – skillfully digs for it and unfolds the shells of the oysters of discourse, he will even find a chip of gold, a pearl and a precious stone.

²⁶ Ed. P. CANIVET, Théodoret de Cyr. Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques, II. SC, 57. Paris 1958, 336.5–10. See also In Ezechielem, PG 81, 809.8–21; In Danielem, PG 81, 1256.31–1257.1; Letter 49 in the Patmos collection, ed. Y. Azéma, Théodoret de Cyr. Correspondance, I. SC, 40. Paris 1955, 119.17–20.

²⁷ Ed. A. R. LITTLEWOOD, Michaelis Pselli oratoria minora. Leipzig 1985, 86.75–80.

²⁸ Ed. H. HUNGER, Johannes Tzetzes, Allegorien Zur Odyssee, Buch 13–24. BZ 48 (1955) 4–48: 38.

²⁹ Ed. H. HUNGER, Johannes Tzetzes, Allegorien aus der Verschronik. Kommentierte Textausgabe. JÖBG 4 (1955) 13–49: 18.

³⁰ See GRÜNBART, Beiträge (as in footnote 24 above) 213.

³¹ Ed. LEONE, Ioannis Tzetae epistulae (as in footnote 24 above) 112–13: 113.8–17.

In the *Histories* (375, 11.489 – 90) Tzetzes clarifies that „here I call the books ‘oysters of discourse’. Surely, you interpret the pearls coming from them, I suppose, as words“ (὾στρεα νῦν δε λογικὰ τὰς βίβλους ὄνομάζω. Μαργάρους πάντως ἐξ αὐτῶν, δοκῶ, νοεῖς τοὺς λόγους.)³² Accordingly, we find Tzetzes utilizing the metaphor in different contexts at least two decades before Eustathios’ oration.

For these reasons the ten dodecasyllables on Psellos do not offer us a new *terminus post quem* for Tzetzes’ death, and for the moment Grünbart’s ‘after the mid-1160 s’ remains our best guess.³³ But the link between the two texts of Tzetzes and Eustathios identified by Agiotis is certainly an interesting and illuminating example of the twelfth-century culture of literary re-use.

³² Ed. LEONE, Ioannis Tzetzae historiae (as in footnote 25 above) 447.

³³ M. GRÜNBART, Byzantinisches Gelehrtenelend – oder: Wie meistert man seinen Alltag, in: L. M. Hoffmann / A. Monchizadeh (eds.), Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie. Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur. *Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik*, 7. Wiesbaden 2005, 413 – 26: 424 – 25. On the *Verses of Lamentation on a Murdered Emperor* not referring to Andronikos I, see M. A. MAGRI, Il carme inedito di Giovanni Tzetzes „De imperatore occiso“. *Bollettino del Comitato per la preparazione della edizione nazionale dei classici greci e latini* 9 (1961) 73 – 75.

