NOTES ON ESCHATOLOGICAL PATTERNS IN A 12TH CENTURY ANONYMOUS SATIRICAL DIALOGUE THE TIMARION

by

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Katabasis, namely descending to the underworld, is one of the most meaningful mythological and literary motives of all times, widespread in Antiquity in numerous well-known stories— to mention here at least Sumerian Inanna’s visiting her sister Ereshkigal, the epic of Gilgamesh, the twelfth labour of Heracles, Orpheus’ journey to bring back his Eurydice or Aeneas’ descent in the sixth book of Vergil’s Aeneid. In medieval Western Europe it was reinterpreted in Dante’s Divine Comedy and was also popular in Byzantium, although in a completely different context. An anonymous satirical work that was composed in the 12th century, the Timarion (Τιμαρίων ή περὶ τῶν κατ’ αὐτὸν παθημάτων), belongs to

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1 Some parts of the text have been delivered under the title: Beware of Mice in Hades! Ancient Greek Eschatological Beliefs in a Satirical 12th Century Anonymous Dialogue “Timarion” during the conference: “Μίμησις in Byzantine Art: Classical, Realistic or Imitative? The Second Cracow Symposium on Byzantine Art and Archaeology” organized by the Institute of History of Art and Culture of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, 5–7.9.2012.

2 Contrary to popular convictions, Homer’s Odysseus does not descend to the Underworld but invokes the souls out of Hades in a sort of a necromancy ritual and thus the passage from the eleventh book of the Odyssey cannot be regarded as a katabasis motif.

3 The most comprehensive studies regarding the katabasis motives in Byzantine medieval literature are still: an unpublished doctoral dissertation by LAMBakis 1982 and Jane BAUN’s extensive monograph (BAUN 2007). Most recently see also CUPANE 2014.

4 VLACHAKOS (2001: 20 f.) gives a valuable survey of the hypotheses concerning the conjectural date of the composition as well as the authorship of the Timarion. See also TÖZER 1881: 235; LAMBakis 1982: 82; ALEXIOU 2002: 100; MACRIDES 2005: 139; KALDELLIS 2012: 275. In 19th century scholarship it was attributed to Theodore Prodromos, an acclaimed Byzantine 12th century writer and scholar. Because of the thorough knowledge of medical art, it was also later ascribed to the famous court physician of the emperor Manuel I Komnenos, Nicolaos Callicles. KAZHDAN, EPSTEIN 1990: 139; KAZHDAN 1991: 2085; VLACHAKOS 2001: 21. KRALLIS 2013: 242. On 12th century and earlier Byzantine medicine see especially KAZHDAN 1984, who formulates a hypothesis that by the end of the 12th century physicians regained their status in Byzantine society which had been lost earlier due to the healing powers of the saints. He remarks (p. 50) that the person of Theodore of Smyrna (born mid-11th c., died after 1112), whom Timarion meets in Hades and who handles his defence, is an
this genre and brings many interesting observations as for the usage of the *katabasis* motif as well as literary inspirations and the reception of different Greek ideas.

It is well known that the educated Byzantines of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, during the period of Komnene rule (1081–1204), had a thorough knowledge of classical literature. Although the presence of classical inheritance was inseparably linked to Byzantine culture in earlier centuries and the transmission of ancient texts as well as the maintenance of classical tradition were extremely important earlier, during the Komnene period the ancient legacy was rediscovered from new perspectives. Insofar as classical literature was mainly gathered and transcribed from the ninth century onwards, in the time the *Timarion* was written it began the process of deeper reflections on ancient heritage and identification with the Hellenic past. It is clearly visible for instance in the commentaries on Homer made by Eustathios of Thessaloniki and John Tzetzes, in which the Byzantine commentators did not restrict themselves to the sophisticated analysis of the language of the poems, but significantly they attempted to refer to Homeric poems, drawing comparisons to contemporary reality and thus commenting on current affairs. Therefore, the ancient Greek legacy became in time the point of reference to the present as well as the mirror in which the Byzantines could look in order to see their own world identified with the Hellenic past in many areas.

The unknown author of the *Timarion*, keeping up with the times, intertwined countless indirect quotations and hidden allusions to classical texts into his narrative. Besides Lucianic satirical dialogues, which he used as formal patterns in his composition, borrowing from the rhetorician of Samosata the technique of a dialogue as a structural pivot, we come across in the story of Timarion a variety of references to ancient Greek sources. The phrases and passages drawn from Homeric poems constitute an integral part of the protagonists’ conversation and confirm that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were undoubtedly extremely popular at that time and that a knowledge of the epics was an obligatory part of the education of every Byzantine intellectual. Indeed, the origins of the exegesis example of a parody of Christian temperance. Timarion’s former tutor is now quite slim because of the diet of asphodel flowers. See Alexiou 2002: 109. As for Byzantine medical art in the *Timarion*, see also Leven 1993: 129–135.

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6 Alexiou 2002: 98.
9 Krallis 2013: 222.
10 Kalidellis 2012: 275. Krallis (2013: 226) notes that indeed there are two dialogues: the first one between Timarion and his friend Kydion in the world of the living, the second in Hades between Timarion and his teacher, Theodore of Smyrna.
11 Vlachakos 2001: 31. It was a basic school text used uninterruptedly until the end of the Eastern Empire. See Niehoff 2012: 16–18. On Homer’s role in education from Antiquity up to
on Homer began no earlier than in the eleventh century, when the poems started to be explained allegorically, and therefore in the twelfth century commentators could already exploit the Homeric material more profoundly and with more versatility\textsuperscript{12}. The same applies to the tragedies and especially to the comedies of Aristophanes, which the \textit{Timarion} was significantly inspired by and which started to be studied critically by Tzetzes and Eustathios in the twelfth century\textsuperscript{13}. Likewise, the attitude of the Byzantine scholars to the text they commented upon was different than in earlier periods. Aristophanes’ case may be a good example of the change of attitude of the Byzantine intellectuals to the ancient legacy in the twelfth century. Tzetzes, in his scholia to Aristophanes’ comedies, does not avoid a full explanation of all the obscenities they contain and treats them with due respect, whereas earlier it would have been impossible, because the sources antiquity provided to the Byzantines tended to be treated with great reverence\textsuperscript{14}. It is also worth mentioning here that Aristophanes’ comedies figured in the Byzantine school curriculum and were often used as a sort of reference for commenting on reality\textsuperscript{15}. In case of the \textit{Timarion}, it is clearly visible that Aristophanes’ \textit{Frogs} and especially the underworld setting for the comedy were used to satirize as well as comment on current affairs, including the ideology and social phenomena, which was rather a common characteristic of well-educated Byzantine writers of that time\textsuperscript{16}.

There have been many substantial studies discussing various aspects of the \textit{Timarion}, including authorship and historical setting\textsuperscript{17}, Lucian’s influence\textsuperscript{18}, detailed analyses focused on narrow but significant issues such as the legal context in the trial scene (one of the most important in the narrative)\textsuperscript{19}, as well as the narrative structure\textsuperscript{20} and the meaning of classical quotations embedded in the text\textsuperscript{21}. Most recently, a completely new approach was proposed by Krallis, who in his detailed analysis attempts to show a new reading of the text, paying attention to the political, religious and cultural background of the \textit{Timarion}. He has

\begin{footnotesize}

\begin{itemize}
    \item Kazhdan, Epstein: 1990: 134 f.
    \item Kazhdan, Epstein: 1990: 136.
    \item Alexiou 2002: 98.
    \item Alexiou 2002: 101; Tozer 1881: 236; Kazhdan, Epstein: 1990: 139.

Byzantium, see also Marrou 1956. On education in the twelfth century and the books that were read, see Magdalino 2002: 323–330.
\end{itemize}

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convincingly proved that the satire is a broad critique of Byzantium under the Komnene dynasty\textsuperscript{22}.

However, the *Timarion*, as scholars dealing with the text have already underlined\textsuperscript{23}, is unique among works of Byzantine literature with a similar form as well as plot and its content is not easily definable. It would be rather an oversimplification if we assume that the author’s main aim was to mock the values of twelfth century Byzantine aristocracy and that the work is a satire on the whole establishment, as some researchers tend to underline\textsuperscript{24}. Of course, it is beyond the scope of this paper to refer to all possible interpretations and theories concerning the multi-aspect significance of the satire. Here is also not the place to touch upon such questions as the art of rhetoric in the twelfth century, medieval Byzantine philosophy and its reception, not to mention the impossibility of open philosophical debate under a Christian regime\textsuperscript{25} and the problem of the revival of some literary genres in twelfth century literature. Likewise, I am not able to analyze the problem of whom exactly the *Timarion* was written for and if it was produced for court occasions in the same way as other satirical works of that time\textsuperscript{26}. Because of the complexity of intertextual interplay with the author’s contemporaries and ancient writers as well as countless references to famous personalities from the Greek, Roman and Byzantine periods\textsuperscript{27}, the text does not easily lend itself to interpretation and still continues to open up new fields of research.

In this paper I would like to shed some light only and – let me underline this – exclusively on one aspect of the *Timarion*, which has been rather neglected in modern scholarship, namely the motif of the *katabasis* to Hades and the elements of afterlife imagery. To my knowledge, this aspect of the satire has not been the subject of any separate studies and has not been treated adequately by researchers dealing with the work. However, in my opinion the question of eschatological motives in the *Timarion* deserves more attention, not only in the light of its affinity to other literary texts belonging to the same genre, which is rather obvious, but – strange and improbable as it may seem at first glance – regarding possible traces of popular or religious elements in the description of the eschatological landscape.

\textsuperscript{22} Krallis 2013.

\textsuperscript{23} Kaldellis 2012: 275 f.

\textsuperscript{24} Kaldellis 1999: 20. Two centuries later, in a letter, a minister of the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantine Acropolites, accuses the anonymous writer of the *Timarion* among others that “his intention was to string together pagan nonsense in an incompatible union with the truth” (*ibidem*). See also Alexiou 2002: 101. She considers that the accusations of Acropolites were due to the idea expressed in the *Timarion* that as a matter of fact pagans are more tolerant of other religions than Christians (p. 109). See also Magdalino 2002: 355; Krallis 2013: 221. The first edition of Acropolites’ letter was made by Treu 1892: 361–365.

\textsuperscript{25} Krallis 2013: 221.

\textsuperscript{26} Magdalino 2002: 355.

\textsuperscript{27} Krallis 2013: 222 ff.
As it turns out, the twelfth century Byzantium, which was marked by dynamic changes in culture and literature together with the change towards the ancient legacy and a more profound investigation of classical texts, as mentioned earlier, was also characterized by the growing interest of intellectuals in ethnography and folklore elements. The phenomenon could be also observed in the change of attitude to the vernacular language that hitherto had been unacceptable. After so many centuries of linguistic conservatism among educated Byzantines, who were obliged to study and write in Hellenistic Greek Koine, in twelfth century literature we come across three works where the vernacular idiom was used: the Ptochoprodromic Poems, Michael Glykas’ chronicle from the creation of the world to the death of Alexius I Comnenus (1118) and an unknown work by an author called Spaneas. The social and cultural changes in the Komnene period also affected the religious life of the Byzantines as far as the perception of the holy man is concerned, as well as church decorations and religious iconography.

It would seem rather improbable if the abovementioned changes did not somehow affect the author of the Timarion. It is obvious, that – as in another katabasis, Mazaris’ Journey to Hades (Ἐπιδημία Μάζαρι ἐν ᾪδου), written two centuries later during the reign of Manuel Palaeologus II between 1414–1415 – the text of the satire belongs to secular and political discourse and differs entirely from other visions that have a very strong religious background. However, if we take into account that, from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, some apocryphal versions of biblical stories started to permeate into church iconography, forming more elaborate liturgical images than before, we may also assume – although with some restraint – that the same may apply for literary texts, especially those related in a way to religious matters. Whatever the core meaning of the Timarion, due to its obvious eschatological context it would be highly inappropriate to separate it entirely from the religious references. Thereby,

28 Kazhdan, Epstein 1990: 134. For example, Eustathios of Thessaloniki, in commentaries on Homer, did not hesitate to include examples of popular folkloric elements coming from English and Russian traditions in his work (ibidem).

29 Kazhdan, Epstein 1990: 84 f. Significantly, all three works are regarded by most historians of Modern Greek literature as an integral part of it and are considered as the first monuments of Greek demotic language. On vernacular texts in the Komnene period see Knös 1962: 71–82; Vitti 1994: 13–25.


31 For more on Mazaris, see especially a detailed analysis by Garland 2007, who expresses an opinion that the author might have read the Timarion (p. 185). There is an English translation of the work: Maximus Mazaris, Journey to Hades or Interviews with Dead Men about Certain Officials of the Imperial Court. Greek Text with Translation, Notes, Introduction and Index by Seminar Classics 609 [Buffalo, NY 1975]. For the relation of Mazaris to Ancient comedy, see Marciniak 2004: 68–70.

32 Baun 2007: 127.

33 Kazhdan, Epstein 1990: 97.
analyzing the eschatological motives, we should not forget and exclude medieval Greek visionary journeys to heaven and hell anonymously composed between the ninth and eleventh centuries34. In other words, the question that it is tempting to ask during a thorough reading of the Timarion is: whether the eschatological image the author sketches in any way may echo twelfth century and earlier popular beliefs. Moreover, another question seems justifiable on this subject, namely if the motives we come across in Byzantine and post-Byzantine literary adaptations, including the Timarion, appear at all in Modern Greek folk eschatological beliefs that we know mainly from demotic poetry (δημοτικά τραγούδια)35.

Although such a methodology may seem odd at first sight and useless I would like to reiterate the fact that it has already been used by acknowledged scholars, to mention here for instance ALEXIOU in her influential monograph where she underlines the cyclical rather than linear aspect of time in the understanding of Greek culture through the centuries36. Moreover, let me stress this clearly – I realize I may be wrong in my opinion – the excursions of the Byzantinists to modern Greek culture and inversely happen unfortunately rather rarely with some significant exceptions37.

Thus, researching the traces of apparent folk origins, which in some cases turn out to be a direct continuation of ancient ideas, I will focus on images connected with the journey to the underworld and some characteristics of Hades that I regard as “eschatological patterns”, namely the units of the katabasis narratives that are invariable although their content sometimes reveals unexpected sources of inspiration and brings to mind a broader context than one would expect.

1. THE PASSAGE TO THE UNDERWORLD THROUGH SLEEP

The Timarion’s plot until the title character reaches Hades is as follows: Timarion comes back to Constantinople from his journey to Thessaloniki, where he had the opportunity to observe and to take part in a religious feast devoted to Saint Demetrius of Thessaloniki (τα Δημήτρια) which was held on the 26th of

34 The first full-length study of the Apocalypse of the Theotokos and the Apocalypse of Anastasia was made by BAUN (2007), who analyses also numerous other stories of that kind, for instance the Life of Philaretos (9th c.), Vision of Kaioumenos concerning Philentolos (7th c.), Oneirokritikon of Achmet (probably 10th c.), Lives of Basil and Andrew (10th c.).

35 Demotic Greek songs were gathered mainly in the 19th century and at that time were treated by the collectors as “written” rather than “oral” texts, which significantly affected their final shape in the editions that appeared then. See especially BEATON 2004: 1–12; ALEXIOU 1984: 7–10. The oldest text we have in manuscript is The Song of Armouris dated back to the 15th century. See BEATON 2004: 82–86. Even the medieval provenience of the songs called akritika was lately questioned, as well as their connection with the Byzantine epic of Digenes Akritas. See POLITIS 2011: 55.

36 ALEXIOU 2002.

October\textsuperscript{38}. When the feast day ends, Timarion suddenly develops a high fever and decides to return to Constantinople. His health deteriorates, he does not eat for thirty days and is forced to stay in the city. Exhausted he eventually falls asleep on the bank of the river Evros. The rest of the story is a description of what the protagonist thought he saw and experienced in the underworld and what perplexed him so much was that he was not quite sure if it was real or just a weird dream.

The first significant element of Timarion’s \textit{katabasis} is the motif of the passage to the underworld through sleep, which turns out to be a characteristic feature of most Byzantine and post-Byzantine versions of the journey to Hades\textsuperscript{39}: “thus, the sleep that is called a father of death knocked me down, and I don’t know how to say, it sent me on a journey to Hades”\textsuperscript{40} (ὕπνος γὰρ ἐνταῦθα ὁ θρυλλούμενος καὶ θανάτου πατήρ κατασχόν ἡμᾶς, εἰς ἀποδημίαν οὐκ οἴδα πώς εἴπω τὴν εἰς Ἅιδου ἐστείλατο, 330).

Thus, the identification of sleep with death as twin brothers\textsuperscript{41}, well-known in antiquity, commonly accepted and diffused by the Fathers of the Desert\textsuperscript{42}, gains another dimension in the Byzantine context. Because the author could not choose a real \textit{katabasis}, due to the fact that “a real” descent in the Christian world was reserved only for Christ and exceptionally in apocryphal \textit{katabaseis} also to the Mother of God, Theotokos\textsuperscript{43}, he showed Timarion’s descent into Hades as being the result of a disease. Because of it “he lost the fourth basic element and lived with the other three without bile (χολή)”, which was – according to the author – against the rules of Hippocrates and Asclepios and led to his death (405–410)\textsuperscript{44}.

\textsuperscript{38} Kazhdan, Epstein 1990: 35. Thessaloniki was one of the most important and largest cities of the time, visited in the first half of the 12th century by merchants from the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea. See also Alexiou 2002: 105. Krallis (2013: 230 f.) notes that visitors to Thessaloniki were mostly Western Europeans with some Greeks from the mainland as well as some Egyptians, Phoenicians and inhabitants of the coasts of the Black Sea. However, there is no one from Asia Minor, which is, according to him, an evident sign of the lost Byzantine territory now laying outside the eastern borders.

\textsuperscript{39} CuPane 2014: 53. In case of Mazaris ‘Journey to Hades, it is not quite clear how he managed to get to Hades after the plague that affected the capital. However, in the second part of the work Mazaris expresses his complaints to Manuel Holobolos, an imperial secretary, in a dream, which may be an echo of other \textit{katabaseis}. See Garland 2007: 183.

\textsuperscript{40} The first complete English translation was made by Baldwin (1984). In this paper, due to philological reasons, all English translations of the passages and phrases from the \textit{Timarion} are by the author of the present paper. I use the edition of Vlachakos 2001.

\textsuperscript{41} See for example: II. XIV 231: ἔνθ᾽ Ὕπνῳ ξύμβλητο κασιγνήτῳ Θανάτοιο [“there she met Sleep, the brother of Death”].

\textsuperscript{42} Vlachakos 2001: 197.

\textsuperscript{43} Lambakis 1982: 45 f., 83. CuPane 2014: 53 f.

\textsuperscript{44} As Krallis (2013: 239) convincingly reminds us, bile was connected with a hot temper and anger and in the case of Timarion its lack and in consequence his seeming death might have been caused by events he experienced at the fair of Saint Demetrios. The strong emotions of dislike and hate he felt towards the Komnenian establishment made Timarion lose one of the basic elements.
Although there are some clues indicating that the motif might have been borrowed from one of Lucian’s dialogues\(^45\), the main source of inspiration for the author of the *Timarion* in handling the motif of a disease and consequently the passage to Hades could rather have been contemporary and earlier Byzantine works. The dream as a special medium, a “vehicle” to the other world, was usually sent by God himself to holy men in order to allow them to see the fate of the soul after death in the Underworld. In time it developed in literature into a special genre called “Visions of the other world”\(^46\). Significantly, most of the visions tended to show the torments of the darkness of Hell rather than the brightness and joy of Paradise, which was obviously connected with the Church’s need to impose its unquestionable power on people\(^47\).

An example of such a vision, which the author of the *Timarion* might have known, could be the *Vision of the Monk Kosmas*\(^48\), the other near-death Byzantine narrative dated to 930 AD, namely in the thirteenth year during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos\(^49\). The monk Kosmas, who was an abbot at the imperial monastery of the Theotokos tou Eusebiou on the Sangarios River, five months after falling badly ill (ἀρρωστία σωματική), was one morning thrown into ecstasy, whispering incomprehensible words (ἀναρθρα καὶ πάντη ἀκατανόητα) for six hours. Next day, he presented his vision (ὀπτασία) of Hell as well as of the heavenly world to his monk brothers\(^50\).

The other post-Byzantine *katabaseis* prove that the motif of a passage through sleep – not necessarily because of disease – was widespread in popular tradition as well. The protagonists of two stories about the descent into the underworld written in demotic Greek come down to Hades in this manner: *Apokopos* 

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\(^45\) See the Lucianic dialogue *Philopseudes sive Incredulus*, where Kleodemos – one of the narrators of the stories about adventures in Hades – relates: εἴ πως δυνήθειν εἰς ὕπνον τραπέσθαι, τότε οὖν ἐφίσταται μοι νεανίας ἐγρηγορότι πάγκαλον λευκὸν ἱμάτιον περιβεβλημένος, εἶτα ἀναστήσας διά τινος χάσματος εἰς τὸν Ἅιδην, ὡς αὐτίκα Τάνταλον ἰδὼν καὶ Τιτυὸν καὶ Σίσυφον (“I was to get some sleep if I could. Well, I woke up to find a handsome young man standing at my side, in a white cloak. He raised me up from the bed, and conducted me through a sort of chasm into Hades; I knew where I was at once, because I saw Tantalus and Tityus and Sisyphus”, *Philops.* 25, transl. by F.G. and H.W. Fowler).

\(^46\) CuPANE 2014: 53 ff.

\(^47\) CuPANE 2014: 53 ff. The author is obviously oversimplifying the situation by saying that both the *Timarion* and “Mazaris” as well as post-Byzantine vernacular *katabaseis* describe “the torments of Hell”.

\(^48\) Kazhdan, Talbot 1998: 61. The vision of Kosmas is included in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* (in a 14th-c. manuscript, Paris gr. 1582). A longer version is preserved in a manuscript from 992 (Venice, Marc. gr. 346). Kosmas’ tale was written by an erudite author and is an artfully composed literary artifice, differing from the other medieval near-death narratives, see Baun 2007: 126. For the longer version of the vision, see Angelide 1983.

\(^49\) Lambakis 1982: 52; 83. For more on Kosmas’ vision, see also CuPANE 2014: 59–61.

\(^50\) Mango 1980: 152 f.
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(Aπόκοπος) ascribed to Bergadis (Μπεργαδής) from Crete, the first modern Greek work to appear in print in Venice in 1519 and Ρίμα θρηνητική εἰς τὸν πικρὸν καὶ ακόρεστον Άδην (Mournful Rhyme on the Bitter and Insatiable Hades) by Ioannis Pikatoros of Rethymnon, a major work of medieval vernacular literature, dated to the end of the 15th century. These two works deal with the same genre but handle it in a completely different way. I will refer to these two works later. In both of them the narrators of the story fall asleep and wake up in a dream on a meadow.

Although, as I mentioned earlier, this element in Timarion’s story might have been borrowed from Lucian, in my opinion it is more probable that here we are also dealing with the adaptation of apocryphal theological katabaseis that echo later in post-Byzantine Modern Greek works.

2. JOURNEY TO THE UNDERWORLD

After describing the circumstances of his disease, Timarion explains to his friend Kydion how he eventually managed to get to Hades. According to his account, among the different daimones there are some “punishing” ones (ποίνιμοι δαίμονες) as well as “the good” ones (αγαθοί), who reward those who are virtuous. Indeed, among them there were some demons that had duties of psychagogoi, in other words they were responsible for carrying the souls to the underworld: “The guides of the souls, leading into the netherworld the souls separated from the body” (ψυχαγωγοί [...] τὰς ἤδη τοῦ σώματος διϊσταμένας ψυχὰς [...] κατάγοντες).

52 The up-to-date critical edition with scholia and commentary was edited by Bakker, van Gemert 2008.
53 Μιαν από κόπου ενύσταξα, να κοιμηθώ εθυμήθην·/ έθεκα στο κλινάρι μου κ’ ύπνον αποκοιμήθην./ Εφάνιστή μου κ’ έτρεχα ’ς λιβάδιν ωραιωμένον,/ φαρίν εκαβαλλίκευγα σελλοχαλινωμένον (Bergadis, Απόκοπος. Η βοσκοπούλα, ed. by S. Alexiou, Athina 1979, 19–32). Ος πρικαμένος με χολήν, διατί πολλά εγρύπνουν,/ Ήθεκα ν’ αποκοιμηθώ, να πάρω αέραν ύπνου./ Εφάνιστή μου κέιτοντα εις υπνοφαντασιά μου/ -επόνειν το κεφάλι μου κι έκλαιγεν η καρδιά μου/- Εφάνιστη μου να περνώ σ’ ένα λεφτό λαγκάδι (Bakker, van Gemert 2008: 95).
54 The motif of passage to the underworld through sleep, as far as I know, is absent in Greek demotic songs.
55 Oversimplifying, we can say that the world around was for the Byzantines overcrowded with a variety of demons, strictly connected with one place and rivalling each other, as Mango describes it in his well-known study (1980: 160 f.). Cunningham (2006: 148–150) draws attention to the fact that a belief in demons was widespread, especially in the early Byzantine period. One of the best sources describing Byzantine demons is the Life of Saint Theodore of Sykeon. On Byzantine demonology, see especially the detailed and up-to-date monograph by Greenfield 1988.
56 It is worth mentioning here the well-known 12th century icon “The Ladder of Divine Ascent” representing the teaching of John Klimakos, with a depiction of black demons trying to pull down the monks attempting to ascend the ladder to heaven to attain salvation. The icon is preserved...
Two such guides appeared to Timarion to take him down to Hades when he was seized by “the last sleep” (πύματος ὕπνος): they “looked like shadows, were black in appearance and flew in the air” (σκιοειδεῖς ἄνδρες, γνοφεροὶ τὴν ὄψιν, ἀέρι πετόμενοι). Their role is strictly determined: apart from guiding the soul to Hades, when they obviously function like the ancient Hermes psychopompos and are described as nekragogoi and mystagogoi, they are the ones that “tear the soul from the body” (ψυχὴν ἀποσπῶν τοῦ σώματος). Significantly, the soul is regarded as something touchable and material – the two nekragogoi are later accused by Timarion himself during the trial scene of prematurely dispatching his soul from the body, which is visible in the way the soul looks – it is still bleeding profusely because it was one with the body when they tore it off: “they tore off by force the soul from the body, although it was tightly glued to the body and it was difficult for them to tear it off him” (βίᾳ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ σώματος διεῖλον ἵσχυρως ἐμφυρομένην τῷ σώματι καὶ δυσαποσπάστως αὐτοῦ ἔχομαι).

Regarding the two guides of the soul, these enigmatic figures “black in appearance” are supposed to reflect the “Ethiops” (Ἀιθίοπες) or dark-skinned Arabs known from theological katabaseis with apocalyptic visions, where they appear with the classical names of Ὀξύβας (Speedy) and Νυκτίων (Nightly). For instance, we come across them in The Vision of a Taxeota (Το όραμα του ταξεώτη), where a soldier just after his death sees beside him some terrible Ethiops (τινὰς Αἰθίοπας παρισταμένους) as well as two young men, probably angels, that take his soul and try to carry it to heaven (θεωρῶ δύο νεανίσκους εὐειδεῖς ἐλθόντας [...] ἡ ψυχή μου ἐπήδησεν ἐς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν). However, terrible, black Ethiops (Ἀιθίοπας ζοφώδεις) who lurk to examine every sin of the soul at the tollhouses or tollgates (τελώνια), found the sin of adultery after thorough examination and sent his soul to hell. We come across similar looking people later when Timarion, together with his guides, reaches the entrance to Hades. Other gate keepers awaited the perplexed Timarion behind the iron gate. These ones seemed to be another kind of infernal demons, like his black guides: “Inside the gate there were gate keepers, black and gloomy men” (ἐσώθεν δὲ αὐτῆς πυλώροι, σκιοειδεῖς ἄνδρες καὶ ἀμειδεῖς, 15, 395).

in Saint Catherine’s Monastery, Mount Sinai. See James 2010: 101. These black figures also appear in the well-known iconographic depictions of the Last Judgment, which were widespread in Byzantine times and in eastern Orthodoxy.

57 The trial scene is analysed by Macrides 2005.
59 Lambakis 1982: 83
60 De Boor 1896: 307 f.
61 There seems to be a reminiscence of these figures in the above-mentioned poem by Joannis Pikatoros, where the protagonist hunted by the dragon is thrown into its mouth by “someone dressed in black” (έναν μαυροφόρο, R. Thr. 58–61) who appears to be the dragon’s servant or someone who helps in passing to the netherworld.
Interestingly, we come across such awful looking black-faced figures in the aforementioned Vision of the Monk Kosmas from the 10th century. His account to his monk brothers brings a similar description of “black Ethiops”. As he relates, he seemed to have seen (ἐδοξά θεωρεῖν): πλῆθος ἀνθρωπαρίων δυσειδῶν καὶ αἰσχρῶν, ἀνείκαστον, πάντων μὲν ἐχόντων μεμελανωμένα τὰ μιαρὰ αὐτῶν πρόσωπα, οἷοι τυγχάνουσιν οἱ αἰθίοπες — “a crowd of people incomparably ugly and deformed, all of them having black dirty faces, just like in Ethiops”.

When the monk Kosmas is led to the entrance, as it seems, to Hell, he sees a similar looking guardian: γιγάντιος ἀνήρ, μέλας μὲν τὸ εἶδος — “a gigantic black-looking man”.

However, another enticing, although at first sight controversial, possibility was taken into account by earlier scholars trying to decipher the motif of black figures in the Timarion. For instance, Hase suggested that it is very probable in this case that it may constitute an allusion to the angels of Muslim eschatology, Munkar and Nakir, who according to Islamic beliefs, test the faith of the dead. Another possibility is one of the angels, Malak al-Maut, known in some Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions under the name of Azrael, as an angel of death executes God’s orders, separating the soul from the body and taking it back to God.

Does the connection between Arabian folk tradition and the text of a learned Byzantine really seem curious and unjustifiable? Not necessarily, if we take into account the place Timarion comes from. Indeed, he is supposed to be a Cappadocian and arrives at Thessaloniki, which is the Western part of the empire, from the lost Byzantine territory, where the Arabian influences must have been much stronger. The traces of Arabian origins may be visible even in the underworld: all the judges, except the emperor Theophilos, that are about

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62 Angelide 1983: 82.
64 Hase 1813: 145. See also Tozer 1881: 248, who mentions the names of Munkar and Nekir. However, in traditional Islamic mythology the role of these angels is to try the faith of the deceased by the graves. See Encyclopedia of Death and Dying accessible at: http://www.deathreference.com/Ho-Ka/Islam.html [accessed 2.7.2014]. Vlachakos (2001: 198) mentions the fact in his commentary to the Timarion, without entering into a discussion if the assumption made by Hase and Tozer is convincing or not.
67 Alexiou (2002: 111) assumes that Timarion is rather “a high member of Constantinopolitan society”.
68 Krallis 2013: 230.
to examine Timarion are dressed in Arab clothes, like for instance Hippocrates (Ἀρραβικός τις ἐδόκει, 915) and the description of the Elysian fields reminds us of the type of oriental gardens, paradeisoi⁶⁹.

In my opinion, there are some characteristics in those two “black figures” that make them closer to the Modern Greek folk personification of death Charos (Χάρος, Χάροντας), who is considered by scholars, following the well-known study by Alexiou, as a fusion of the ancient Greek Hades, Thanatos and Charon⁷⁰. In my opinion this is an oversimplified statement, excluding other possible cultural sources of evolution of this mythological person. Of course, it is beyond the scope of this paper to present in detail the complex problem of intercultural elements in the Modern Greek representation of death, which has been already a subject of my studies⁷¹, but let me pay attention to some features linking him both with the characters from the Timarion and the Islamic angel of death.

Firstly, Charos is usually depicted as a horseman riding a black horse, dressed in black, with a black face which slightly resembles the picture of the black figures in the Timarion. This can also be linked to the ancient Greek picture of death of Homeric origin⁷², like in a well-known song “Charos and the Souls” (Χάρος καί οἱ ψυχές): “He is black, dressed in black, black is his horse,/ black are his hounds chasing the deer (Μαύρος είναι, μαύρα φορεί, μαύρ’ είν’ καὶ τ’ ἀλογό του,/ μαύρα καὶ τα ζαγάρια του, τ’ ἀλαφοκυνηγάτα)⁷³.

Secondly, two figures “black in appearance” take the surprised Timarion “flying through the air” (αέρι πετόμενοι), which brings to mind another archetypal image of death as something/someone “flying” from the sky. Such an image has its antecedence, among other things, in ancient depictions of Thanatos as a young boy with wings and with sword in hand. Moreover, it also resembles some Modern Greek folk images of death reflected in phraseology⁷⁴ as well as in representations in demotic songs of Charos as a black swallow (μαύρο χελιδόνι).

Lastly, let me mention that during the Byzantine period the Archangel Michael, who had often been confused and identified with Death/Charos⁷⁵, was

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⁶⁹ Krallis 2013: 236 f. In Timarion’s court in Hades Krallis sees a replica of a Byzantine imperial pavilion built in an Arab style.

⁷⁰ Alexiou 1978.

⁷¹ Bzinkowski 2009; Bzinkowski 2011b.

⁷² Anagnostopoulos 1984: 75, who gives the possible sources of “black death”: Il. II 859; III 360, 454; Hes. Op. 155. I cite the above mentioned passage in my paper in which I sketch the role of Charos as psychopompos. See Bzinkowski 2009.

⁷³ This passage is cited by Anagnostopoulos 1984: 75.

⁷⁴ Anagnostopoulos pays attention to the linguistic image of death hidden in such phrases as αγγελοσκίαζομαι or αγγελομαχώ (I fight with the angel), αγγελοκρίνομαι, αγγελοκριτηρεύομαι (I am judged by the angel) as synonyms to “dying”. See Anagnostopoulos 1984: 120, Bzinkowski 2009: 28.

regarded as the “escort of souls”\textsuperscript{76}, as in the third century apocryphal \textit{Apocalypse of Paul}\textsuperscript{77}. Numerous apocalypses from early as well as late Antiquity confirm that the cult of the Archangel Michael was extremely popular in Byzantium\textsuperscript{78}. In an eschatological context the miraculous icon of the Archangel Michael on Lesvos is very interesting. It is known as Archangel Michael of Mantamados, who is called also the “Arab” (\textit{Ἀράπης}, \textit{Ἀραπέλλι}) due to his black face (!)\textsuperscript{79}.

The question sketched here obviously needs further investigation and as far as I know, no consideration has been given so far for instance to Byzantine paintings, especially frescos with representations of the Last Judgement and the punishment of the wicked ones\textsuperscript{80}.

3. THE ENTRANCE TO HADES

Having crossed the river Evros, without getting soaked, as the surprised Timarion notices (370–375), “the black angels” flew with him over lake Acherousia (\textit{διὰ λίμνης Ἀχερουσίας} [...] \textit{διωδεύκειμεν}), another important element in underworld topography, which brings to mind many ancient sources connected with the place as a passage to Hades (among others: Hom. \textit{Od. X} 513; Aesch. \textit{Ag.} 1160; Lucian, \textit{De luctu} 5–7)\textsuperscript{81}.

The next step during the journey to Hades for Timarion and his guides was a sort of “mouth” (\textit{στόμιο}): “we came closer to an underground mouth” (\textit{στομίῳ} \textit{τινὶ προσηγγίσαμεν καταγαίῳ}, 380). Timarion, though resisting with all his strength, was pushed into it by force by his two guides who had to punch him in order to get him down. However, this was not the proper entrance to the kingdom of the dead. After walking a great distance in the darkness, the travellers stood in front of an “iron gate”: “when we reached the iron gate, where the kingdoms of Hades close up” (\textit{κατὰ τὴν σιδηρᾶν πύλην γεγόναμεν, ἣ τὰ τοῦ ᾨδου βασίλεια κλείεται}, 385). The phraseology used in this passage in the description

\textsuperscript{76} Krueger 2006: 125.

\textsuperscript{77} Known also as \textit{Visio Pauli} or \textit{Visio Sancti Pauli} (ed. Tischendorf 1866). It presents the vision of heaven and hell seen by Paul the Apostle. See Baun 2007: 205 f. About the plot as well as the characteristics of the story, see Lambakis 1982: 43 f., 47 f.

\textsuperscript{78} Baun 2007: 205. Significantly, it is the Archangel Michael who is the guide for the Mother of God and for Saint Anastasia in the Underworld in two Apocalypses dating to the 10th century. See Angold 2000: 447; Baun 2007: 75.


\textsuperscript{80} Tozer 1881: 248 made such a suggestion, assuming that the motif might have been borrowed from the west front of some Greek monasteries.

\textsuperscript{81} Vlachakos 2001: 201, following Lambakis 1982: 100 f.
of the gate is visibly of classical origin and proves once more that the author of the *Timarion* must have had a thorough knowledge of ancient sources connected with the concept of an iron entrance to the abode of the dead. We come across the same image, adapted from Homer’s *Iliad* (VIII 15), in Lucian’s *Erotes* (32) “where in truth, ‘are gates of iron and thresholds of bronze’” (ἐνθα ὡς ἀληθῶς “σιδήρειαί τε πύλαι καὶ χάλκεος οὐδός”).

The motif of the guards at the iron gate is also interesting. In the *Timarion* they constitute a mixture of different mythological traditions and literary motives: “dragons with fiery eyes and the dog with very sharp teeth which is called Cerberus by the Greeks” (δράκοντες πυρώδεις τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καί κύων κάρχαρος μάλα, ὃν Κέρβερον ὀνόμαζον Ἕλληνες, 395).

The well-known image of a hellhound preventing the dead from escaping Hades is one of the most frequently recurring elements regarding the *katabasis* motif. Greek as well as Latin sources transmit the story about Heracles’ last labour in numerous versions throughout Antiquity (Hom. *Il.* VIII 36; *Od.* XI 623; Hes. *Th.* 310, 769; Pl. *Rep.* 588 C, etc). The same three-headed hound of Hades is placed by Dante at the gate of the Inferno (*Inferno*, Canto VI, 13–18)82.

Regarding the place where the visitor enters the abode of the dead, the dragon or snake motif is more interesting to consider, bearing in mind that these creatures can be easily identified with each other. It seems to me that two traditions might have been confused in the *Timarion*: namely the literary tradition with the motif of a helldog, confused with the folk tradition, which quite often connects the passage to the underworld to meeting with snakes or falling into a dragon’s jaws83.

In the aforementioned vernacular post-Byzantine *katabaseis*, we come across the motif of a dragon’s mouth as the entrance to Hades84, into which the narrator of the story falls from a tree that was undermined by two mice, one white and one black, as in the *Apokopos*: “And I saw at the bottom of the well the terrible dragon/ he gaped and waited for me to fall down” (Και δράκοντ’ εἶδα φοβερόν στου πηγαδιού τον πάτον/ κ’ ἐχασκεν και μ’ ακαρτερεὶ πότε να πέσω κάτω, *Apokopos* 59 f.).

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82 In Joannis Pikatoros’ poem a “three-headed-mouthed snake” (ὀφῆς τρισκεφαλόστομος, *R.* 83) appears as a guardian of the Underworld. The passage survived in the folk songs of Crete. See Bakker, van Gemert 2008: 144 f.

83 As for the snake motif in demotic Modern Greek songs, see for example Anagnostopoulos 1984: 333 f.

84 For instance, in the above-mentioned 15th century Ρίμα Θρηνιτική (*Mournful Rhyme*) by Ioannis Pikatoros of Rethymnon, a dragon appears who pursues the protagonist of the story and finally devours him, thus enabling him to get into Hades (δράκον μεγάλου εἶδα, *R.* 7–12). However, the dragon in this *katabase* differs from similar creatures from other near-death narratives. As Bakker and van Gemert (2008: 128) notice, its characteristics, the poison dripping from its jaws as well as its fiery tongues, indicate that it might have been created as a sort of mythical creature rather than a usual snake-dragon and reminds us of the dragons that we come across in visions of the Church Fathers.
Such a picture is frequently attested and well-known in Byzantine iconography. There are for instance representations of the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus showing monks falling from the Ladder into the mouth of a dragon, which is in fact Hades’ open mouth that swallows everyone who falls into it. In accordance with this convention, images of the Last Judgement were also painted, in which the mouth of Hell was depicted as gaping jaws of a dragon or a serpent.

4. THE UNDERWORLD

The image of Hades in Timarion’s account is far from Christian eschatological visions. It seems to be shrouded in an all-surrounding darkness devoid of sunlight, which evokes and reflects the most archaic Greek ideas concerning the afterlife beliefs contained mainly in the Homeric poems: “everything in Hades is obscure and sunless” (τὰ ἐν Ἅϊδου πάντα ζωφερά καὶ ἀνήλια [420], adapted in turn from Lucian: τοῦτον εἶναι καὶ ζωφερόν καὶ ανήλιον, De luctu 12–16).

However, such an image should be by no means surprising and restricted only to the tendency of the author to imitate the ancients, thus intertwining his work with citations of different kinds. The eschatological dimension becomes less obscure if one takes into account the Modern Greek afterlife beliefs that have been preserved until now and are vital, especially in lament songs called moirologia (μοιρολόγια) or so called “songs of the Underworld and of Charos/Death” (Του Κάτω Κόσμου και του Χάρου). Transmitted in oral tradition throughout Byzantium and still alive and marking their presence in funeral rites, they convey a vision that could be one of the proofs of the continuity of Greek tradition from Antiquity until now, as is testified by Alexiou in her well-known study.

Without entering into details, which I have attempted to research elsewhere, let me point out that the convictions concerning the place where the soul of the dead finally go are far from the Christian vision of heaven and hell. The most common names for the world of the dead (Hades – Ο Άδης, the World Below/the Underworld – Ο Κάτω Κόσμος, “down at the furthest edges of the

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85 The dragon placed at the entrance to the underworld is also reminiscent of the well-known art motif of a Hellmouth or Jaws of Hell imagined as the gaping mouth of a huge monster. It was extremely popular in Byzantine and post-Byzantine iconographic representations of the Last Judgement. See Bakker, van Gemert 2008: 140; Skrzyniarz 2002: 179–181.

86 Krallis 2013: 222; Alexiou 2002: 110 f.

87 Among different collections of folk songs with moirologia, it is worth mentioning here: K. Pasayannis, Μανιάτικα μοιρολόγια και τραγούδια, Athina 1928; S. Kougeas, Τραγούδια του κάτω κόσμου. Μοιρολόγια της Μεσογιακής Μάνης, συλλογή του ακαδημαϊκού Σωκράτη Κουγέα, κατά τα έτη 1901–1904, Athina 2000; G. Saunier, Ελληνικά δημοτικά τραγούδια. Τα μοιρολόγια, Athina 1999.

88 Alexiou 2002a.

89 Bzinkowski 2011a.
earth“ – κάτω στα Τάρταρα της γης) reflect the most archaic Greek ideas regarding the soul’s lot that inevitably dwells finally in a place that is morally “neutral” and thus comprising all the dead.

However, the author of the Timarion seems to have combined literary as well as demotic tradition, adding his own additional features of afterlife existence, obviously accordingly to his satirical prerogatives. Besides, life in Hades seems to be almost the same as in the world above. The ones who were prosperous are still happy down there; however the ones who suffered during their life, unfortunately, do not cease to suffer. As Kalpellis rightly notices, Hades is a mere replication of the social divisions of the living90. The dead in the Timarion residing in Hades live in tents91 (σκηνώσεις τῶν νεκρῶν, 420), the same as in the aforementioned Vision of the Monk Kosmas (οἷον σκηνή ἦν)92. In spite of the darkness, they light a fire accordingly to their previous status in life (420–425), which apparently is the author’s satirical commentary on Byzantine inequality in the society of his time, which continues to last even after death93: “The common and vulgar people have the light made by their hands, the others made of wood and charcoal and the others made of twigs; however those who distinguished themselves in life and were more illustrious used to light the torches” (Ἐξοπλίζεται δὲ θανατοποίητα φώτα, ὁ μὲν ἐκ ξύλων καὶ ἀνθρακιᾶς, ὁ δὲ ἐκ κλάδων, ὁ κοινὸς καὶ ἀγοραῖος ὄχλος, ὅσοι δὲ παρὰ τὸν βίον ἐλλόγιμοι ποτὲ καὶ λαμπρότεροι καὶ λαμπάδας ἀνάπτουσι, 420–425). Interestingly, although the vision of Hades is composed “Homerically” and at the same time according to the folk vision of afterlife beliefs, the author differentiates the seemingly “morally neutral” abode of the dead by the way the inhabitants light the fire, which is probably his own invention.

However, proceeding further, Timarion reaches a place overflowing with brightness and light (φωτεινὸν τόπον, 750), a paradise garden, the green plain (πεδιὰς χλοερὰ, 750) with an abundance of various plants, rivers and streams, the musical chirping of birds, devoid of winter and decay, with an everlasting spring. The description of the place brings to mind the image of the Christian Paradise. Yet, as Timarion’s guide explains to him, that was the place that was called by people the Elysian Fields and the Asphodel Meadows (θρυλλούμενον

90 Kalpellis 2008: 279.
91 A motif of a “tent” also appears in Modern Greek folk songs, but it is used in a slightly different context. Significantly, the word for a “tent” that is used is not σκηνή, but the Latin τέντα. It is used in connection with Charos/Death, who – when taking the dead with him to his “tent” – warns them that they will be scared if they see it: Μαρέ αὖ δἄγες τιν τέντα μου, ὅλος ἀνατρομάξεις (“You fool, if you see my tent, you will be wholly scared”); A. Passow, *Popularia carmina Graeciae recentioris*, Lipsiae 1860, p. 305, no. 428). Saunier (1982: 301 f.) suggests that τέντα is a military term and he directs attention to the historical background of the motif.
93 Tozer 1881: 249; Lambakis 1982: 84; Vlachakos 2001: 203.
NOTES ON ESCHATOLOGICAL PATTERNS IN THE TIMARION


We come across a very similar vision in the above-mentioned Kosmas narrative.95 In this case there is no doubt that the place where Kosmas’ two guides, St. Andrew and St. John lead him, is clearly Paradise. As he relates, in a similar way to Timarion, he had a vision of a “flat place” (πεδιάσιμον τόπον), in which there was a beautiful green valley (κοιλάδα χλοεράν).96 It is noteworthy that here, as in the Timarion, the guides explain to the protagonist of the story that it is indeed “Abraham’s bosom” – κόλπον τοῦ πατριάρχου Ἀβραάμ97, place full of olive trees under which the inhabitants of the valley dwell in tents.

The similarities between Timarion’s and Kosmas’ account, in imagery as well as in the construction of the narrative, may prove that the author of the former could have known, if not Kosmas’ vision, then another medieval dream vision with the same content, which he handled in his own way. Such a mixture of classical mythological references intertwined with Byzantine elements of learned as well as of apparently vernacular origin98 is also visible in the characteristics of the court of the three judges: the ancient Greek Minos and Aiakos together with the third one, the Byzantine emperor Theophilos (805). It is beyond the scope of this article to develop and analyze the question of the presence of Byzantine as well as Ancient Greek figures appearing in Timarion’s Hades, especially as this has already been done.99 Here, let me pay attention only to the fact that Theophilos’ justice, which reached far after his death, is not the only reason for placing him among the judges in the underworld. The explanation of his presence is quite understandable and reasonable: “Yet, because the fame of Christians possessed all the oikoumene and the whole of Europe, many parts of Asia, the Divine Providence decided to place also someone to help the Ancient Greek judges” (ἀλλ’ δύμως τῆς

94 Vlachakos (2001: 225 f.) sees here echoes of Lucian’s Verae Historiae II 2; 5.
95 Paradise is depicted as a fantastic garden in many Byzantine dream visions, to mention here the Vision of Anastasia or the vision of Niketas in the Life of Philaretos, see Baun 2007: 124 ff.
96 Angelide 1983: 84.
98 Alexiou’s (2002: 108) remark about the motif of the two fat mice (Δύο μύες τῇ ὀψει προσέπεσαν λιπώδεις, παχεῖς, 475) that Timarion sees in Hades is very intriguing. According to her, the motif of mice – which might have been borrowed from Theodoros Prodromos and which constitutes a topos in Byzantine literature – may also be another variation on a traditional feature of apocalyptic visions in which mice and other pets in Hell are the souls of the sinful dead. Alexiou follows Lambakis 1982, but she does not specify the exact passage from the cited dissertation.
99 According to one mythological tradition Minos, the son of Zeus and Europa, became a judge of the dead in the underworld after his death. He ruled there together with his brother Rhadamanthus and another of Zeus’ sons, Aiakos (Plato, Gorgias 523 A and 524 B ff.).
100 More recently Alexiou 2002: 100–111; Krallis 2013.
Moreover, Theophilos, who is dressed in black and looks very modest – unlike the Greek judges – is accompanied by a young person dressed in a white robe (λευκενδύτης), looking like an eunuch. Timarion’s guide explains to him that he is a guardian angel, because an angel was given to every single Christian king to remind him what he should do, and that this is the same angel that followed Theophilos during his life (825).

Happily for Timarion, the three judges in the underworld, thanks to the expertise of Asclepius and Hippocrates who were ordered to give an opinion in the matter, finally released him and sent his soul back to his body so that he could come back to life (ἐπὶ τὸν βίον, 1150).

All the remarks regarding the katabasis motif and eschatological patterns prove that the author of the Timarion used quite various and complex sources of inspiration in his composition, which are not so easily tangible. The literary references to ancient Greek and Byzantine sources, as well as the observations of contemporary Byzantine intellectual life, are obvious and clearly present in his work. However, as I have attempted to show, it is highly probable that he also used motives appearing in the vernacular tradition regarding the theological apocryphal katabaseis and the representations of the Last Judgement that he might have seen in Byzantine churches and that must have also been known to the readers of his satire. This should not be surprising if we take into account that the twelfth century constitutes a sort of a caesura mark, from which the vernacular language and tradition started to penetrate into the sophisticated and conservative Byzantine literature written in Hellenistic koine, as I have already mentioned. Thus, it seems quite probable that the author of the Timarion could have embellished his vision with popular elements that undoubtedly might have enforced, for an educated reader, the satirical tone of his work. Nevertheless, the anonymous text still remains full of secrets and, as KaldeLLis significantly notices, it is more than just a satire and it should be read simultaneously as a literary, satirical and philosophical narrative.

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101 The question as to whether the picture of Theophilos with a guardian angel might be a derision of the divine nature of imperial office is still disputable. See Vlachakos 2001: 229.
102 Vlachakos 2001: 33 f.
105 KaldeLLis 2008: 282.
106 KaldeLLis 2012: 287.
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