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Performance Theory and the Study of Byzantine Hymnography: Andrew of Crete's *Canon on Lazarus*¹



Introduction

In the study of Greek poetry of the antique and Byzantine periods, both profane and religious verses, there has been a tendency in recent years to emphasize a so-called performative approach. Instead of studying texts as 'plain texts' (that are read as autonomous literary works, outside of their original context, in the silence of a scholar's chamber), they are now seen as performed texts.² This has fundamentally changed our understanding of certain poetic genres.³ Certain art historians have begun to examine the performative aspects of not only liturgical poetry (and its attendant musical forms), but also of visual elements such as iconography and movements. In other words, the application of performative approaches to the study of liturgical art are often coupled with the examination of sensory experience.⁴

¹ The first version of this paper was delivered as a talk at a workshop titled 'Religious Poetry and Performance in Byzantium' the University of Uppsala, 23–24 May 2017, convened by Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen. I thank all the workshop participants for their enlightening and supportive comments on the draft of this paper.

² See Lieber (2015, 327, n. 1) who notes: 'Even reading silently or in solitude involves an implicit kind of performance, as the reader "hears" speech in his or her mind and envisions certain elements of the "staging." By some definitions, just as every text has an audience, every work also has some performative elements, some simply more explicitly than others.'

³ Such is the case, for example, with the poetry of the famous archaic Greek female poet Sappho, from the island of Lesbos, whose erotically toned works were first interpreted as intimate Lesbian poetry. However, in recent histories of Greek literature, her works are seen as a collection of rhetorical tropes, performed in female festive meals: the erotic tropes are customary public praises of noble women; for an extensive examination of the literary traditions of antiquity, see Taplin 2001.

⁴ Especially Béatrice Caseau (2016) and Bissera Pentcheva (2006, 2011, and 2014) have dealt with the notions of performance and sensory experience.

However, some Orthodox theologians are particularly cautious of the term ‘performance’ in a liturgical context. In the strong eucharistic ecclesiology of the 20th century, a setting which describes ‘performers’ and ‘audience’ is not favoured, but instead, the communality of ritual is emphasised. Simultaneously, the idea of Orthodox theology as a description of spiritual experience, as Fr Andrew Louth claims in his recent work ‘Modern Orthodox Thinkers’, emerges as a prominent tendency among Orthodox theologians, especially after the Russian revolution and the political instability of Europe in the early 20th century.⁵ It is therefore surprising that the act of performance has been neglected for so long. This might be due to a tendency to restrict the use of the vocabulary of modern scholarship in the field of Orthodox theology, a move which has made it less desirable for some scholars to provide new methodological concepts to the study of liturgy.⁶ On the other hand, some other scholars too often forget the ontological basis of a liturgical performance:⁷ in order to do justice to the object of study, it is a great mistake not to take into account that prayers were composed for the purpose of communicating with God, not merely to ‘form a self’ in the pedagogical sense.⁸ Respecting the spiritual tradition of the Byzantine Church is an essential aspect in forming a bigger picture of a Byzantine ‘theology of performance’. Thankfully, during

⁵ This thought appears throughout the work by Louth (2017), but is also promoted strongly by John Romanides (for a recent critical review of his ‘experiential’ theology, see Olkinuora 2019).

⁶ Especially Fr John Romanides opted for such an approach to theology, and that has been continued by many of his students. However, as Pantelis Kalaitzidis points out, it does not seem justified also through the fact that the church fathers (whom Romanides thinks of highly) employed the language of the non-Christian ‘scholarship’ of their times; see *Καλαϊτζίδης* 2013, 220–222.

⁷ Bissera Pentcheva (especially 2011 and 2014), in her studies on the ‘multisensory aesthetics’ of Byzantine worship, has taken a step towards a more holistic image of Byzantine liturgical traditions and their ‘ontology’, as she calls it. However, it seems to me, that her initial remarks on the theological dimensions of performance require much further deepening and nuancing.

⁸ Derek Krueger (2014), for instance, has discussed Byzantine liturgical poetry as a formation of the liturgical ‘self’. His ideas are certainly thought-provoking, but it seems to me that he remains excessively in a ‘sociological’ setting, merely tracing the lines of transmission throughout the Byzantine ‘Dark Age’ (a problematic notion in itself) up until the Renaissance, and the author is perhaps slightly exaggeratingly preoccupied with the thought of Michel Foucault and his notion of the ‘self’: a broader contextualization in Byzantine spirituality would have certainly aided the study.

the past few years, there has been a rising interest towards performance theory as a bridge between Byzantine theology and art history.⁹

The notion of ‘performance’, in the context of performance theory, has a much broader meaning than the notion that these above-mentioned theologians abhor. In the latter half of the 20th century, many fields within the humanities began to broaden the notion of ‘performance’ from staged, aesthetic performances to a multitude of situations in human communication. Richard Schechner, in his seminal collection of essays on performance theory, groups rites and ceremonies, shamanism, eruption and resolution of crisis, performances in everyday life, sports, entertainments, play, art-making processes and ritualization under the inclusive term ‘performance’:¹⁰ the basic qualities that can be examined in any form of performance, from play to rituals, are the special orderings of time, the particular value attached to objects, the material non-productivity of the performance and a set of rules. All these performances also happen in a certain space that affects the functions of the performance.¹¹

These criteria can easily be applied to the study of Byzantine hymnography. In its liturgical performative context, we can make a particular distinction: it belongs to the category of *aesthetic performance*, as opposed to the examination of everyday actions as performance. In such a performance, the message communicated to the audience is conveyed through an aesthetic mode of expression. The audience consists not of passive listeners – as if a group of *tabulae rasae* – but it takes part in a communicative exchange with

⁹ Such instances have been the International Congress on Byzantine Studies in 2016, where a two-day workshop on ‘Performance and Liturgy’ was convened by Niki Tsironi and Andrew White; in May 2017, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen convened a workshop on ‘Byzantine Religious Poetry and Performance’; in 2019, a workshop on ‘Theologising Performance in the Byzantine Tradition’ convened by me at the Oxford Patristics Conference.

In bibliography, White’s monograph (2015) has become widely known. Also the work of Laura Lieber (2010, 2015, and 2018) has been particularly revealing; her focus is mainly on the Semitic genres of poetry in Late Antiquity, but she also discusses Byzantine hymnography (*kontakia*, not canons). In her paper on the performative aspects of hymnography (2015) she chooses to approach her topic from a ‘theatrical’ point of view.

¹⁰ Schechner 2003, xvi.

¹¹ Schechner 2003, 8–19. The space here does not allow for a broader discussion of performance theories; see Schechner’s bibliography for a broader spectrum on this field.

the performers. Using the definition of Ronald Pelias, such an aesthetic communication

is a culturally specified act in which a speaker structures language in a unified and expressive manner, triggering audience response. Aesthetic communication calls upon speakers and listeners to become engaged in the power of art, to accept their respective roles, and to possess the necessary competencies for the exchange to take place. When the participants meet these conditions, an aesthetic transaction occurs.¹²

So, singing liturgical poetry is formed aesthetic communication for the faithful present in the liturgical space, as an integral part of a liturgical performance, composed in liturgical language, understood only as a part of a liturgical hierarchy. Full understanding of liturgical poetry, according to the Byzantine mindset, requires illumination.¹³

The present paper, forming the first part of a larger project on performance theory as a tool to analyse Byzantine liturgy, is an attempt to bridge the gap between these two views.¹⁴ I shall examine Byzantine hymnography as a performed text, from the point of view of aesthetic performances, as defined above by Pelias. I have chosen to exemplify this with a canon on Lazarus, attributed to Andrew of Crete and sung, even today, in the Compline of the Friday before Palm Sunday, on the eve of Lazarus' awakening.¹⁵ I shall initially provide a thematic and structural overview of the canon, followed by an examination of the performative structures found in the text. I shall also attempt to link these performative structures to the theological understanding of performance in the Byzantine tradition. Through this analysis, I shall show that performance theory is an utterly useful tool for approaching Orthodox liturgy not only from an anthropological, but also a theological viewpoint.

¹² Pelias & Shaffer 2007, 19.

¹³ Castagno (1998, 67–70), in her study of Origen's 'methodology' in preaching, points out that for Origen it was fundamental that both the preacher and his audience had reached the same level of spiritual illumination, in order to transmit the message of the sermon more efficiently.

¹⁴ In other denominations performance studies have been embraced more willingly: see, for example, Ward 2002.

¹⁵ The Greek original (referred to as *Canon in Lazarum*) can be found in any Greek Triodion: the edition I am referring to is PG 97, 1385–1397. The English translations are taken from Mother Mary's and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware's *The Lenten Triodion* 1978, 466–475.

Andrew of Crete's *Canon in Lazarum*

Although the canon has been attributed to the renowned hymnographer Andrew of Crete,¹⁶ one should be cautious – the present study, however, does not allow for a detailed evaluation of the authenticity of the attribution. In most medieval manuscripts, the canon lacks any attribution to a certain poet; on the other hand, printed editions are unanimous in the attribution. The question of attribution is not of utmost importance here, since our examination does not require an exact contextualisation of the hymn: our approach is purely intratextual.

The canon consists of nine odes, including the 2nd ode,¹⁷ and altogether 77 stanzas (or *troparia*), including the *triadika* and *theotokia*, even though these are probably later additions: they do not include thematic or structural links (apart from following the same metre) to the actual *troparia* of the odes. The nine *heirmoi*, model stanzas for canons, preceding the *troparia*, are not counted since they are pre-existing. There are some overarching structural features. The canon includes abundant repetition of certain themes, which is a usual feature of the canon as a genre: no clear narrative continuity can be seen.

There are a number of *troparia* that provide a general description of the event: Christ awakens Lazarus from the dead, according to the Gospel of St John. The smell of Lazarus' decomposition is also emphasized, since it makes the miracle more wondrous and shows the extraordinary power of Christ, who is the Creator, as opposed to the older miracles of resurrecting the dead by Old Testament prophets. The most prominent theme, however, is the reaction of Hades: his gates and shackles are broken. His wailing is a theme already prominent in the apocryphal tradition, but even more strongly brought forth in the hymnography of Holy Week and Lazarus Saturday.¹⁸ An antithesis to this wailing is the joy of Martha and Mary, who, according to the gospel narrative, are initially heartbroken. The poet also scorns the Jews

¹⁶ A general overview of Andrew's oeuvre (660–740) is still lacking: for the most recent overview of his life, see Auzépy 1995.

¹⁷ In contemporary liturgical practice, the canon (which in its largest form consists of nine odes) omits the second ode apart from some days of the Great Lent. In the manuscript tradition, several canons that are sung today (and printed) without the second ode do include it. The present canon is one of the two examples in contemporary liturgical tradition, where the second ode of a full canon is sung, the other being the so-called Great Canon by, again, Andrew of Crete.

¹⁸ See Frank 2009 and Arentzen 2017a.

for their disbelief, and sometimes the canon becomes prayer of the faithful towards God.

The canon also expounds on dogmatic themes and provides an allegorical interpretation of the gospel narrative. Some *troparia* consider Christ and the doctrine of His human and divine natures: particular emphasis is given to the strange event of him crying by Lazarus' tomb, a passage difficult to interpret in a non-Nestorian way.¹⁹ As God, He would have known that Lazarus' death was only temporary, but the canon interprets Christ's tears, firstly, as a tropological example for humanity in how the deceased should be mourned and, secondly, as an indication of Christ's perfect human nature and His humanity being involved in the performance of the miracle.

It should be pointed out that Andrew's treatment of the topic is not particularly innovative, perhaps apart from his views on the two wills and actions of Christ. He is following a longer tradition, especially that of Romanos the Melodist, but it must be acknowledged that the canon provides a rich setting for the different exegetical aspects of the Lazarus narrative.²⁰

The performative function of repetition: boredom or pedagogy?

Above, we noted that the canon includes abundant repetition. In many cases, none of the repetitive *troparia* provide any further information regarding the previous stanzas. The repetitiveness of canons is probably one of the reasons why canons have not been exhaustively studied in detail, neither formally as edited texts or content-wise – in contrast, *kontakia* that are often characterised as 'dramatic' or 'narrative' have been both edited critically and studied in detail.²¹ Perhaps the same aspect of canons has led to the abbreviation of this highlight of Byzantine matins in practice. According to rubrics, each ode of the

¹⁹ It should be noted that Andrew experienced the dogmatic disputes over monoenergism and monotheletism, heresies that claimed Christ had only one divine activity and will. This seems to force Andrew to provide a spiritual interpretation of the fact that Christ cried, in order to describe the Orthodox stance on the co-operation of the wills and them manifesting themselves identically.

²⁰ For an examination of the influence of Romanos on Middle Byzantine liturgical literature, see Cunningham 2008.

²¹ A typical example of such an approach is the doctoral dissertation of Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen (2014), where the dramatic elements of Romanos' hymns are examined through the lens of narratology.

canon should be sung as fourteen stanzas, which usually requires repetition of some or all of the stanzas, but this is not followed almost anywhere (apart from some great festal services in the Holy Mountain, for example). On the contrary: in most parishes around the world, not all the stanzas are sung because of the repetition – in other words, the hymn is made boring by its truncated execution!

A slightly more nuanced scholarly approach to this question has been presented by José Grosdidier de Matons, one of the greatest scholars of the *kontakia*, who has described the different characteristics of canons as opposed to *kontakia*:

Les préoccupations de l'auteur de *kontakia*, en effet, n'ont rien de commun avec celles de l'auteur de canons. Le second ne s'occupe pas d'enseigner, de prouver, de prêcher, de convaincre, mais seulement de prier.²²

It seems to me that this description is unjust since the overlap between the two genres is much greater than Grosdidier de Matons wants to admit. It also remains unclear why he opposes persuasion, didactic purposes and preaching applied to the notion of prayer. It is clear, through the repetition of *troparia*, that the canon is, indeed, a didactic poem; the *Canon in Lazarum* teaches through repetition the most important exegesis of the Lazarus narrative of the Gospel of John; it argues for the uniqueness of the miracle by comparing it to the previous miracles performed by Elijah and Elisha; and, finally, it is also a prayer and includes doxological elements. Later in this paper we shall also examine the use of refrains, which naturally require repetition.

But why so much repetition, then? Repetition is a prominent element throughout the Byzantine liturgical tradition, and its role is to perpetuate memory. The repetitive poetic images of the canon, according to the patristic theory of the senses, make an imprint on the soul of the believer and guide him towards communication with God.²³ Perhaps the title of this subsection is misleading, when it suggests only two options for the function of liturgical repetition, since that act can include many meanings simultaneously. We shall return to this question in the context of refrains.

²² Grosdidier de Matons 1980/1981, 40.

²³ For an overview of Byzantine memory culture, see Papalexandrou 2010; for a more extensive, enlightening examination of the role of memory in medieval culture, see Carruthers 2008.

Composing and chanting the canon: the performative and textual 'roles'

Now, if we turn our gaze to the actual performance of the canon, we need to consider two ways of performing it. It is probable, as in the contemporary liturgical tradition, that the canon was sometimes used also for private worship, even though this would have been a marginal phenomenon: the possession of liturgical manuscripts for private use would have been extremely expensive and, therefore, impossible for most believers. Consequently, the most important encounter with this hymn would have been its performance by soloists or choirs in the church space, in a liturgical context. We do not have much practical information on how the canon was sung in actuality (in other words, if it was sung by soloists or an ensemble of chanters): we can assume that, like most Byzantine hymnic material, it would have been sung antiphonally. There are some rubrical sources that refer, in the case of festal canons, to a soloist (usually the abbot of the monastery), while the generic 'we' of most *typika* would refer to the choir. For this particular piece of poetry we possess no information.

This forces us to make an intratextual analysis of the text and see what the poem itself tells us of its performance. When we talk of a particular poem, we need to define *who* the performer is and *what* the performance is like. Hymnography is fundamentally different from, say, sermons: hymns are performed by soloists and choirs throughout the course of history, not alone by the hymnographer (even if the first performance of the poem would have been by the hymnographer, a hypothesis for which we have very little evidence apart from a few legendary accounts). When we examine an aesthetic text, written beforehand by a hymnographer and performed by two soloists or choirs, we can make a classical division of the so-called 'speakers of aesthetic communication': the performance is an act where *creators*, *personae*, *performers*, and *audience* contribute, according to the definition of Pelias. Let us now examine how these four roles appear in the *Canon in Lazarum*.

Creator

The *creator* of the text is Andrew. A Byzantine hymnographer is not a romantic writer, working in isolation and expressing his personal emotions: instead,

he composes his poetry in a communal setting, meant to express communal emotions and to educate the audience – including its performers. Writing is, in part, a public act.²⁴ Byzantine art is, as we all know, formulaic: the hymnographer borrows poetic formulae from other hymns or the Scriptures.²⁵ In canons, the author borrows *heirmoi*, the model stanzas, from an already existing repertoire: this is also the case in *Canon in Lazarum* that borrows standard *heirmoi*.

If we elevate this activity of the author to a spiritual level, the author pleads for spiritual help, not only from God through divine inspiration, but from the audience as well. There is a beautiful passage in Gregory Palamas' Homily 53, on the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, where he asks the audience to participate in the creation of the sermon:

Δεῦρο δὴ μοι θεία παρεμβολή, θέατρον ἱερόν, χορὸς ἡρμουςμένους οὐρανίῳ Πνεύματι, καὶ τόνδε μοι συνεργάσασθε τὸν λόγον, καὶ ποιήσασθε κοινόν, οὐ τὰς ἀκοᾶς ὑποσχόντες μόνον καὶ συντείναντες τὴν διάνοιαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν δι' εὐχῆς εἰλικρινοῦς ἐπικουρίαν προσάγοντες, ὡς ἂν συνεψάμενος τῶν ὑπὲρ τῆς μητρὸς λόγων ὁ καὶ τοῦ Πατρὸς Λόγος ἄνωθεν μὴ παντάπασιν ἀπάδοντα φθέγγασθαι δοίη, μᾶλλον γε μὴν καὶ περᾶναι τι δοίη ταῖς φιλοθέοις ἀκοαῖς ἑναρμόνιον.²⁶

So come forward, divine audience, holy spectators, the choir [that sings] in harmony with the heavenly Spirit, and co-operate with me in the homily and come together, so that you would not only listen and give your attention, but help me with your sincere prayer, so that also the Logos of the Father would co-operate with me in my writing in the honour of his Mother. May it not fail completely, but may He rather help me to finish it harmonically for the [good of the] God-loving audience.²⁷

As I noted, however, the setting in which the canon is performed differs from that of the sermon. The canon is not composed *de novo* at the time of its (first or

²⁴ This is the overarching argument of Derek Krueger in his illuminating monograph *Writing and Holiness* (2011).

²⁵ The question of formulaity, imitation, and even 'plagiarism' (in the modern sense) is extensively dealt with in conjunction with the notion of originality in Byzantine culture in Littlewood 1995.

²⁶ Homily 53, subsection 5.

²⁷ The translation is taken from Olkinuora 2015, 128.

subsequent) performance, nor does the author aim at creating the illusion that it is. Still, the idea of authorship in the Byzantine church was a communal one; and the communal support happens through Christ and His Body, the Church, where the author lives a sacramental life and is carried by the intercessions of the saints, the prayers of his fellow-believers, and the grace of God.

Personae

My aim here is not to underestimate the personal contribution of each author: in the *Canon in Lazarum*, the biblical narrative is presented in a way that is not prominent in other texts. But the author did not want to promote himself, which brings us to the second contributor of performative communication: the *persona*. In Byzantine rhetoric one of the strongest rhetorical devices was the use of *ethopoia*.²⁸ This corresponds to the *personae* of a dramatic performance: the *personae* exist within the aesthetic world of literary action. In the *Canon in Lazarum*, we hear the voices of Christ (ode 3, *troparion* 1; ode 4, *troparia* 2 and 4):

Θαῦμα, ξένον καὶ παράδοξον! πῶς ὁ Κτίστης πάντων, ὅπερ οὐκ ἠγγόει,
ὡς ἀγνοῶν ἠρώτα. Ποῦ κεῖται ὄν θρηνεῖτε; ποῦ τέθαπται Λάζαρος, ὄν μετ'
ὀλίγον εἰς νεκρῶν, ζῶντα ὑμῖν ἐξαναστήσω ἐγώ;²⁹

O strange and marvellous wonder! Although he knew the answer, yet as if ignorant the Maker of all asked, 'Where does he lie, whom ye lament? Where is Lazarus buried, whom I shall shortly raise up for your sake, alive from the dead?'³⁰

As is usual for the *personae*, they are dealt with in two ways in this quotation: they are described in narrative fashion (3rd person), but they also receive a voice of their own (1st person). In performance, this shift in (grammatical) person within the poem creates a constant dynamic change in the appearance

²⁸ This refers to the 'invented' dialogue in a certain rhetorical texts; for a study of this literary device, see Heusch 2005. For the use of *ethopoia* in the form of dialogues in Middle Byzantine sermons, see Cunningham 2003.

²⁹ Ode 3, *troparion* 1; *Canon in Lazarum*, PG 97, 1389A.

³⁰ The Lenten Triodion 1978, 468.

of the *personae*. When they are spoken of, they remain hidden; when they speak, they are heard and embodied in the person of the chanter in front of the audience. In this twofold way, we both hear about *and* hear Martha and Mary (ode 3, *troparion* 3):

Μάρθα, καὶ Μαρία Κύριε, ὄδυρμοῖς ἐβόων· Ἴδε ὃν ἐφίλεις, τετραταῖος ὄζει, εἰ ἥς ὧδε τότε, οὐκ ἔθνησκε Λάζαρος. Ἀλλ' ὡς ἀχώριστος παντί, τοῦτον εὐθὺς φωνήσας ἠγειρας.³¹

Martha and Mary, O Lord, cried out lamenting: 'Lo, he whom Thou hast loved is four days dead and stinks. If Thou hadst been here, Lazarus would not have died.'³²

In such a passage, where it is not Christ but, rather, the other *personae* of the narratives speaking *to* Christ, the dynamic is slightly different, as the distinction between audience, performers and the *personae* is blurred; we shall concentrate on this aspect below in conjunction with the question of the liminal case between *personae* and performers. This is particularly prominent in the way Lazarus, who also receives an ethopoetic voice of his own (unlike in John, where Lazarus never utters anything), speaks aloud (ode 6; ode 7, *troparia* 2 and 3):

[Ο Λάζαρος] ἀναστάς, ἀνύμνησέ σε, καὶ γεγηθῶς οὕτως ἐβόα· Σὺ Θεὸς καὶ Κτίστης μου, σὲ προσκυνῶ καὶ ὑμνῶ, τὸν ἀναστήσαντά με.³³

[Lazarus] rose up and sang Thy praises, crying joyfully: 'Thou art my God and Maker; I glorify and worship Thee, for Thou hast raised me up.'³⁴

And, finally, we have the Jews. This is the only *persona* presented in a fully negative light in the canon, brought up as a corrective example. While in the former cases, as we soon shall see, the roles of the *personae* and audience are merged, the Jews are always presented as a group in the narrative, never substantiating themselves in the performative space (ode 9, *troparion* 4):

³¹ Canon in Lazarum, PG 97, 1389B.

³² The Lenten Triodion 1978, 468.

³³ Ode 7, *troparion* 2; Canon in Lazarum, PG 97, 1393D–1395A.

³⁴ The Lenten Triodion 1978, 472.

Ἐξέστησαν πάντες, ὡς ἑώρων σε Σωτήρ, δακρύνοντα, τὸν Λάζαρον
θανέντα, καὶ ἔλεγον οἱ δεινοί. Ἴδε πῶς αὐτὸν φιλεῖ.³⁵

All were dismayed to see Thee, Saviour, weeping over dead Lazarus, and in
their misery they said: 'Behold how He loves him.'³⁶

To a Byzantine believer, these characters are not merely imaginary, or entertaining: they are existing persons. They are seen on the walls of the church in paintings, they are heard in the Gospel, they communicate noetically with believers through prayer. I mentioned earlier Schechner's description of a special notion of time being a characteristic of performance: here, historical time loses its meaning, and historical events become present. As Andreas Andreopoulos points out, Byzantine hymns are not commemorations. They declare events that are considered true by the faithful.³⁷

A particularly puzzling case is that of Lazarus. As noted, he does not utter a word in the Gospel. His joy is not even described as having been verbal: he only leaped in joy. This was well known by all the believers in the church, at least those who were familiar with the Gospel narrative. Below we shall observe that the ethopoetic use of Lazarus' voice was an allegory of the human race, but nevertheless it was 'disguised' in the form of a narrative. The believers most probably accepted the use of such a rhetorical device as a revelation of the hidden parts of the narrative. Lazarus, who after his resurrection became a bishop, did not remain silent for the rest of his life; and he continues to reveal his innermost feelings of gratitude even to the believers who hear this canon.

A unique case is the character of Hades, who speaks out several times during the canon (ode 3, *troparion* 5; ode 7, *troparia* 4–6; ode 9, *troparion* 5). It stands on the border zone between *ethopoiia* (invented dialogue) and *prosopopoeia* (giving voice to inanimate objects); in ancient Greek mythology, Hades was both a god and a toponym. The descent of Lazarus in Hades is a mimesis of the descent of Christ himself, even though there are also pre-Christian precedents, such as Orpheus or Heracles.³⁸ The *ethopoiia* of Hades

³⁵ Canon in Lazarus, PG 97, 1397 B.

³⁶ The Lenten Triodion 1978, 474.

³⁷ See Andreopoulos' magnificent essay on the notion of time in Orthodox Liturgy (Andreopoulos 2011, 39–56).

³⁸ More detailed discussions on Hades' role in the Lazarus narrative and its theological functions can be read in Damaskinos of Xenophontos 2018 and Frank 2009; see also a recent, enlightening volume, Ekroth & Nilsson 2018.

is not, primarily, an involving one: it is more of a spectacle, shown before the spiritual eyes of the faithful. Hades speaks to Lazarus or Death, not to God or the audience. However, there is an interesting *troparion*, where the role of Hades seems to overlap with the faithful, when they both join in urging Lazarus to leave Hades:

Ἀνάστα ἐντεῦθεν, ὑπακούσας τῆς φωνῆς· ὁ φίλος σου γὰρ ἔξω προσφωνεῖ σε· οὗτός ἐστιν, ὁ τὸ πρὶν ἀναστήσας τοὺς νεκρούς· Ἠλίας μὲν ἠγείρε νεκρόν, καὶ Ἐλισσαῖος ἄμα, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς ἦν δι’ αὐτῶν, καὶ λαλῶν καὶ πράττων.³⁹

‘Rise up, obedient to the voice: thy friend outside is calling thee. This is He who raised the dead of old: for when Elijah and Elisha brought the dead to life, He it was that spoke and acted through them.’⁴⁰

Even Hades, then, confesses the divinity of Christ, and he is not dealt with the same negativity as the Jews.

Between *personae* and performers: Lazarus

As noted above, the most striking feature of the canon, as opposed to the Gospel narrative, is the use of Lazarus’ voice. Unlike the other characters who are given speaking roles in the canon, Lazarus utters not a word in the Gospel narrative, nor is he given voice in any of the sermons dedicated to this feast: in the sermon on Lazarus written by Andrew himself, Lazarus remains silent. Could there be a reason, then, why he speaks in this hymn, other than the one we provided above – Lazarus’ ‘personal’ revelation of his innermost feelings? Here we need to make a small detour to the audience’s side. The sixth ode of the canon is an exceptional one: it is, in all its original *troparia*,⁴¹ a monologue of Lazarus towards his Creator. The use of first person creates a feeling of personal experience for the faithful.

³⁹ Ode 9, troparion 6; Canon in Lazarus, PG 97, 1397B.

⁴⁰ The Lenten Triodion 1978, 475.

⁴¹ This statement is based on the supposition that the triadikon and theotokion are later additions.

It is not arbitrary that it is exactly ode 6 that is composed in this form. The canon, as a literary genre, is thematically based on so-called biblical canticles, and ode 6 is modelled after the hymn of Jonah in the whale's belly (Jonah 2:3–10). This is a typological image of Hades, which resulted in resurrection: Lazarus here is simultaneously an image of Jonah and all humanity. But there is also another element of communal participation, where the audience possibly participates in the performance of the hymn: the use of the refrain (bolded in the following example).

Ἐνέδυσάς με Σωτήρ, τὸ πῆλινον σῶμα, καὶ ἔπνευσάς μοι ζωὴν, καὶ εἶδον
τὸ φῶς σου, καὶ ἤγειράς με νεκρόν, τῷ προστάγματί σου.

Ἐψύχωσας σύ, τὴν ἄπνουν μορφὴν τῆς σαρκός μου, συνέσφιγξάς με
Σωτήρ, ὁστέοις καὶ νεύροις, καὶ ἤγειράς με νεκρόν, τῷ προστάγματί σου.⁴²

Thou hast clothed me in a body of clay, O Saviour, and breathed life into me, and I beheld Thy light; and Thou hast raised me from the dead by Thy command.

Thou hast breathed life into my flesh, O Saviour, when there was no breath within it; Thou hast bound it fast with bones and sinews, and Thou hast raised me from the dead by Thy command.

Ethopoia is not a particularly prominent feature of the canon genre, neither is the refrain; nor do we have explicit information regarding the participation of the faithful in the singing of the canon refrain. I would think there are two reasons for the use of refrain. Firstly, the 'pre-historical' form of the canon was the chanting of the biblical canticles, where each biblical verse was followed by a refrain. Later on, these refrains expanded into larger hymns (*troparia*), sets of which we now call canons.⁴³ Secondly, the use of refrains might be a stylistic imitation of the *kontakia*: the refrains of the *kontakia* were sung by all the faithful or at least the choir, in any case by a larger ensemble of people.⁴⁴

⁴² Ode 6, *troparia* 3 and 4; Canon in Lazarum, PG 97, 1393B.

⁴³ For a more detailed description of this process, see Frøyshov 2013.

⁴⁴ The singing of refrains has been briefly referred to by Grosdidier de Matons (1977, 45–47). He claims that since the 7th century the refrains would not have been sung by the laity anymore, but does not provide any evidence or reference for this.

This poetical device was ancient and predated Christianity, which made it natural to be used from the very beginnings of Christian hymn-singing; it was also very prominent in the Hebrew *piyyut*, and the interrelation these two poetic genres has lately aroused some scholarly attention.⁴⁵ The use of refrains is an ancient tradition: Egeria, already in the 4th century, describes lay participation in singing refrains: the use of refrains was a prominent feature of the asmatic typikon in Constantinople. Even monastics were encouraged to take part in prayer through chanting the refrains.⁴⁶ Indeed, the refrain is a very efficient way of involving the audience in the performance and, as we saw previously in this paper, they form an important device for repetition. As Thomas Arentzen points out, refrains helped the faithful to focus, and the words probably summarised the hymn's main theme.⁴⁷ Moreover, refrains were sung loudly and this sonic aspect of refrains created, as Arentzen and Münz-Manor point out, a 'soundscape of salvation'.⁴⁸ The use of refrain in Andrew's canon is not perhaps as multifaceted as in Romanos' poems, where the same refrain acquires several meanings depending on its contextualisation, but surely this refrain draws the attention of the faithful to the hymn.

Indeed, in a living liturgical context, a spontaneous audience response to this particular refrain in the *Canon in Lazarum* is very possible, even though this might not be encouraged by the conductor.⁴⁹ So, the refrain, whether it was actually sung by the faithful or not, triggers some form of audience response. But if the refrain says '*Thou* hast raised *me* from the dead by Thy command', this ode makes Lazarus an exemplar for the whole of humanity; the raising of Lazarus was a foreshadowing of the raising of all human nature. This is the reason, why the voice of Lazarus is uniquely reserved for this occasion in the liturgical repertoire: the sermon, since it is proclaimed by the preacher alone,

⁴⁵ For comparative studies of Christian and Jewish liturgical poetry, see Arentzen & Münz-Manor 2019 for a discussion on soundscapes they create, and Lieber 2015, especially pp. 333–335, where the refrains of Aramaic poetry are discussed; for another study on the use of refrains and repetition in the Jewish piyyut, see Lieber 2018. See also Lieber 2010, especially pp. 124–127, where she emphasizes the participatory character of refrains in piyyutim.

⁴⁶ See Galadza 2015 for a study of Theodore the Studite's encouragement to his brotherhood to chant together in their services.

⁴⁷ See Arentzen 2017b for a deeper analysis of the function of refrains in Romanos' kontakia.

⁴⁸ Arentzen & Münz-Manor 2019, especially 42–46.

⁴⁹ I have witnessed the spontaneous congregational singing of this 'refrain' at my own monastic community.

does not have the same aspect of communal participation. When we cry out, as the auditors or chanters of the canon, the core message of the canon, we join the whole humanity in the expectance of the resurrection: if this liturgical phrase is actually a sing-along, we concretely form the ‘soundscape of salvation’ through this personified cry towards the Divine.

Performers

Now we come to the actual concrete *performer* of the hymn: the chanters. The canon works in the system of *contrafacta*, so its musical performance is not something unique. The basic repertoire is, for the most part, known both to the chanters and the audience, and each stanza (*troparion*) in each ode follows a conventional melody provided by the *heirmos*. This allows both the performers and the audience to give more emphasis to the comprehension of the lyrics. The performer’s task is, according to canons and *typika*, to provide an example of true prayer to the audience – not a modest task in any way! For example, if one casts a look at the *typikon* of the convent of Steadfast Hope from the fourteenth century, we see that the *ecclesiarchissa*, who was responsible for organising the singing, had to have, in addition to musical abilities, excellent moral purity, and she should be able to lead all the sisters toward a correct form of prayer.⁵⁰

In the musical performance of the *contrafacta*, the chanter should be concerned with articulating the verses as well as possible, taking special care to render metrical changes in a comprehensible way, making the required changes in the standard melody (even though one should note that Andrew is a particularly meticulous author in keeping the metre of the *heirmoi* in the *troparia*, with very few exceptions).⁵¹ The chanter is, apart from being a performer, also a member of the audience – the hymn is also supposed to spiritually transform him or her, both through the words of the hymnographer and God’s activity in him or her during the process of chanting. When Lazarus

⁵⁰ See Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents 2000, vol. 4, 1517, 1537–1538. See also Dubowchik 2002 for a more extensive study on the descriptions of church singing in Byzantine monastic foundation documents.

⁵¹ For example, in the first ode (PG 97, 1385), where the third troparion omits an unstressed syllable (Ἴδε ὃν ἐφίλεις, τεταρταῖος ὄζει with twelve syllables, while the corresponding phrase of the *heirmos*, οὗτος ἐγεννήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας has thirteen syllables).

cries out through the performer's voice, it is first and foremost the performer who becomes the vocal incarnation of Christ's friend. We must also bear in mind that the *Canon on Lazarus* was preceded by a forty-day Lent, during which an abundant number of penitential hymns in the first person have been sung:⁵² here the emphasis has shifted from penitence to salvation and recreation of the human nature.

The singer can also present a voice of authority, similar to that of a preaching priest, and even become Christ Himself, when he asks for the location of Lazarus' tomb:⁵³

Θαῦμα, ξένον καὶ παράδοξον! πῶς ὁ Κτίστης πάντων, ὅπερ οὐκ ἠγγόει,
ὡς ἀγνοῶν ἠρώτα. Ποῦ κεῖται ὄν θρηνεῖτε; ποῦ τέθαπται Λάζαρος, ὄν μετ'
ὀλίγον ἐκ νεκρῶν, ζῶντα ὑμῖν ἐξαναστήσω ἐγώ;⁵⁴

O strange and marvellous wonder! Although he knew the answer, yet as if ignorant the Maker of all asked, 'Where does he lie, whom ye lament? Where is Lazarus buried, whom I shall shortly raise up for your sake, alive from the dead?'⁵⁵

Audience

The most interesting case however, it seems to me, is the audience of the hymn. This group is not an easy one to define: it could refer to the concrete audience, or the group to which the hymn is directed (even if they are absent from the church). The most concrete audience is, naturally, the faithful present in the church, to which the choir sings. We already saw above how they possibly participated in the singing of the canon. But participation is

⁵² For a discussion on the formative aspects of these hymns, see Krueger 2014, 165–196.

⁵³ See also Krueger (2014, 36–41), who discusses the 'typological self' in Romanos' hymns. Here, however, the case of the performer is not similar to Romanos, who reflects himself to the biblical prototypes: here the singer actually vocally becomes the persona and does not feel inferiority to his prototype. Also, Andrew does not reveal his own person in the poem, unlike Romanos.

⁵⁴ Ode 3, troparion 1; Canon in Lazarum, PG 97, 1389A.

⁵⁵ The Lenten Triodion 1978, 468.

not only audible: it is often non-verbal.⁵⁶ The most profound non-verbal audience response is trying to make sense of what is said, in which repetition, including the use of refrains, is of great help. The audience can also participate by blessing themselves with the sign of the cross or doing prostrations: in some *typika*, this is assigned to each *troparion* of the canon, and the *typikon* of St Sabbas, for example, orders as many as three prostrations for each *troparion* of the Great Canon by Andrew of Crete:⁵⁷ with 250 troparia, that makes about 750 prostrations during a single canon, not to mention adding the other prostrations which are already part of the service!

In addition to the visible and concrete audience that can in some cases participate in the hymn-singing through chanting themselves, or making gestures (or, naturally, just listening to the hymn), the canon also has implied or invisible audiences. The most 'earthly' of these are the Jews mentioned in polemic stanzas. It is not probable that Jews would have been present in the church space, but some *troparia* are directed at them:

Ποῦ ἢ τῶν Ἑβραίων ἄνοια; ποῦ ἢ ἀπιστία; ἕως πότε πλάνοι; ἕως πότε νόθοι; ὄρατε τὸν θανέντα, φωνὴ ἐξαλλόμενον, καὶ ἀπιστεῖτε τῷ Χριστῷ; ὄντως υἱοὶ τοῦ σκοτός πάντες ὑμεῖς!⁵⁸

What is this madness that has seized you, O ye Jews? Why do ye disbelieve? How long will ye wander in falsehood? Ye see the dead man leap up when Christ calls him, and do ye still disbelieve in Christ? Truly ye are all children of darkness.⁵⁹

Οἱ σκοτεινοὶ περὶ τὸ φῶς, Ἰουδαῖοι, τί ἀπιστεῖτε, τῇ τοῦ Λαζάρου ἐγέρσει; Χριστοῦ τὸ ἐγγεῖρημα.⁶⁰

O Jews, the Light shines around you, but ye still remain in darkness. Why do ye doubt the resurrection of Lazarus? It is the work of Christ.⁶¹

⁵⁶ As Sr Vassa Larin (2013) has noted, the notion of 'active participation' has been used in several meanings from audible, vocal participation to gestures and the mere admiration of the liturgical celebration by the faithful.

⁵⁷ Τυπικὸν τοῦ Ἁγίου Σάββα 2012, 313.

⁵⁸ Ode 3, troparion 6; Canon in Lazarum, PG 97, 1389C.

⁵⁹ The Lenten Triodion 1978, 468.

⁶⁰ Ode 8, troparion 4; Canon in Lazarum, PG 97, 1398D.

⁶¹ The Lenten Triodion 1978, 473.

Of course, these words are directed to Jews present at Lazarus' awakening, but they can also be understood as a more general exhortation towards the Jewish population – or, actually, they are warnings of disbelief or heresy, the personification of which are the Jews at the time of Christ. This tradition of the 'rhetorical Jew' is an old one; it has been noted in scholarship that Ephrem the Syrian, for example, saw the Jews as a personification of the non-Orthodox heretics, and the anti-Jewish polemics gave believers tools to confront heterodox thinkers of their time.⁶² Therefore, the anti-Jewish passages are also constructive, even though in the *Canon on Lazarus* they are mainly polemical and not particularly argumentative. In any case, the different roles of the 'rhetorical Jews' allow for the multifaceted understanding of this *persona* present in the poem.

Jews are, however, not the only 'audience' that transcends spatio-temporal limits. Above we saw that Lazarus is also spoken to by Hades – Lazarus, therefore, becomes an indirect audience. But the most important audience of the hymn is Christ Himself: a majority of the *troparia* are directed at Him, even the ones that are not sung in His honour. This is the very character of prayer: we are the performers, God is the audience, but He is also the fundamental *creator* of the performance. We hope that He is listening to our performance, even if we do not consciously perform in front of Him. An ideal prayer is given by Him to Himself through us. Carol Harrison, in her intriguing study on the sense of hearing in early Christianity describes prayer as 'overhearing'.⁶³ In the *Canon in Lazarum*, the congregation overhears the discussion of the hymnographer and the chanters with God; they take part in this conversation through their own verbal or non-verbal response; they overhear conversations between Hades and Lazarus, Mary, Martha, and Christ. In the end, if the process of praying was as it was supposed to be, they overheard words to God inspired by God, through the mouth of a human agent: it was God, after all, who inspired the hymnographer. But this overhearing is personal, we are all drawn by the words of Lazarus to Christ to join the common prayer of human nature to its Creator.

Taking all these different audiences into account, one could theorize and make a division between the narrative and performative elements of the poem. But is this the way the believers understand it? Should the audience be

⁶² This is the main argument of Christine Shepardson in her monograph on the anti-Jewish polemics of Ephrem (2008).

⁶³ Harrison 2013, 201–211.

determined by those who hear the hymn or by those who perform the hymn? Is conscious hearing of the hymn required for one to be called ‘audience’? The overlapping of all the four roles of performance creates such a complex network of linkage between us (the believers), God, His saints, and even our enemies, that a strict division between a ‘performative audience’ and ‘narrative audience’ does not seem tenable to me. Each church-goer has his or her own associations provoked by the hymn; each believer reflects on it according to his own background, and a strict theoretical division would do injustice to Byzantine hymnography’s multiform semiotics.⁶⁴

Conclusion

During the course of this paper, we have provided an initial analysis of one hymn through the lens of performance theory, merely touching on some aspects that require further investigation. The thought-provoking merit of performance theory is found exactly in the challenge it poses to the scholar to re-evaluate the seemingly obvious roles of communication through an aesthetic text. The dynamics between intratextual and extratextual dialogues – conducted between the *personae* of the narrative, us and them, God and us – shows that liturgical discourse is a complex web of interdependences.

We also have seen that we should not limit the notion of performance to a concrete act of singers performing the hymn, the faithful being the audience. Performers are many, audiences are many: the roles overlap, and temporal structures overlap in the construction of these roles. Complex relations between typology, eschatology, and active liturgical participation are manifested through the effective means of singing a simple refrain. I believe that, through this process of meticulous re-articulation of liturgical roles, performance theory can become an indispensable tool for contemporary scholars of Orthodox liturgy: forthcoming studies will hopefully prove its usefulness even more convincingly.

⁶⁴ See also Krueger 2014, 12, where he quotes Talal Asad’s phrase ‘The program is performed primarily not for the sake of an audience but for the sake of the performers’ and notes that monastic ‘performances’ are monks performing for themselves.

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Tiivistelmä

Damaskinos (Olkinuora) Ksenofontoslainen, *Performanssiteoria ja bysanttilaisen hymnografian tutkimus: Andreas Kreetalaisen Lasarusen kanoni*

Artikkeli käsittelee performanssiteorian hyödyntämistä ortodoksisen liturgiikan tutkimuksessa. Tämä metodologinen lähestymistapa, jota on alettu käyttää humanistisilla aloilla puoli vuosisataa sitten, on ortodoksisen teologian alalla vielä lapsenkengissä. Artikkelissani esitän, että performanssiteoria on arvokas työkalu bysanttilaisen hymnografian tutkimuksessa, ja käyttäen Andreas Kreetalaisen Lasarus-kanonia esimerkkitapauksena. Performanssiteoria auttaa nykytutkijaa artikuloimaan uudelleen liturgisia toimintoja ja tarkastelemaan liturgisten tekstien esittäjien yhteen punottuja rooleja sekä esityksen eri funktioita.