SIMIAS' PATTERN POEMS:
THE MARGINS OF THE CANON*

Luis Arturo Guichard

1. Problems of Name, Definition, and History of the Text

The Greek Pattern Poems are six texts transmitted by the *Greek Anthology* and the *Corpus Bucolicorum*[1], ascribed to Simias of Rhodes (*Wings, Axe* and *Egg*), Theocritus (*Syrinx*), Dosiadas (*'Doric' Altar*), and Besantinus (*'Ionian' Altar*), the most important feature of which is that they visually reproduce the object with which they deal. We have no true ancient name for this type of poem – if it ever had any –[2], therefore it has received many different names in Classical and Modern Philology[3]. Classical scholars normally call them τεχνοπαίγνια or *carmina figurata*. The first denomination, taken from a well-known work of Ausonius, was used first by Fortunio Liceti, who wrote a commentary on five

  1. The manuscript of the *Anthology* preserves all six poems (*AP* XV 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27); the manuscripts of the bucolic poets preserve them divided into different groups according to the families. See Haeberlin (1887: 5-8); Wendel (1907; 1910); Ernst (1991: 54-57); Gallavotti (1993: 372-380); Strodel (2002: 10-41).
  2. The vagueness of the testimonies actually leads to the conclusion that they never had a special name. Hephaest. *Intr. metr.* p. 62.5-6 Consbruch calls them simply παίγνια; *Schol. ad* Hephaest. *Ench.* 9.51 calls the *Axe* a σύγγραμμα and informs that there are others of the same kind with the form of a sphere and a throne. In some manuscripts of the bucolic poets in which the poem is ascribed to Theocritus, the *Wings* is called εἰδύλλιον or ποίημα; see Wilamowitz (1899: 51) and the critical apparatus of the principal editions.
  3. See Ernst (1991: 1-11); the most usual terms in European languages are 'pattern poetry', 'figured poetry', 'figurative poetry', 'concrete poetry' (Engl.); 'Figurengedicht', 'Bildgedicht', 'Imago-Gedicht', 'Umrissgedicht', 'optische Poesie', 'Bilderreime', 'Seh-Texte', 'Buchstabendichtung' (Germ.); 'poesía visual', 'poesía concreta', 'poesía figurada' (Sp.); 'poesia visiva' (It.); 'calligramme' (Fr.). Some of them are related to specific periods (i.e. Bilderreime to German Baroque, calligrammes to XXth-century avant-garde, etc.), but anachronism in the name is very common. More difficult is to associate them to specific productions of the text: concrete poetry normally refers to typographical texts, calligramme to hand-written texts, etc. A certain familiarity with these forms and denominations is useful in any case to appreciate the type in different periods.

of the poems in the XVIIth century[4]; the latter is the standard name used in mediaeval Latin literature to refer to the work of Optatianus Porfirius, Venantius Fortunatus, Rabanus Maurus and other authors who composed poems that belong to the same tradition but in a different form, that of the labyrinth.

The six poems date from different periods. If *Wings*, *Axe* and *Egg* are the work of Simias of Rhodes as most testimonies indicate, they belong to the IIIrd century BCE[5]. Dosiadas' *Altar* bears close relationship to Lycophron's *Alexandra*, and so could be Hellenistic or slightly later. As Gow has demonstrated, the *Syrinx* is not by Theocritus and certainly comes from a later period[6], probably imperial, as does Besantinus' *Altar*, which seems to be the latest of the six. In this paper I will deal with Simias' poems, since they mark the foundation of this poetic type in the Hellenistic period.

Simias' poems belong to the extensive tradition of visual poetry, that is to say, texts that in a broad sense try to represent the shape of objects. Although this sort of poetry has been commonly considered in terms of literary oddity, erudite experiment and *avant-garde*, recent studies have demonstrated its continuity from Antiquity to modern times, the Greek poems being the first examples preserved[7]. In this tradition nevertheless very different types of poems appear[8], which can be classified according to two basic features:

1) The use of verbal and nonverbal devices, so that we have
   a) poems that use only words (verbal devices)
   b) poems that use words combined with other elements, ranging from lines to complicated designs, colour, numbers, etc. (nonverbal devices).

4. See Liceti (1630; 1635; 1637; 1640; 1655); these commentaries have been denigrated – perhaps rightly from a purely philological point of view – by modern scholars, but they are quite interesting for the understanding of the critical reception of the poems and their vogue in Baroque.

5. As most critics note, the testimonies of Hephaestion and Tzetzes on the authorship of the poems is more reliable than the alternative ascriptions (to Theocritus or Dosiadas) given by some manuscripts; see Cameron (1995: 33). The fragments of Simias have been edited by Fraenkel (1915), Powell (1925: 109-120), and Strodel (2002). *SH* 906 has been also attributed to Simias by Merkelbach.

6. See Gow (1914); most scholars seem not to know this paper, which closes the discussion on the authorship of the *Syrinx*.

7. On the tradition of visual poetry see D'Ors (1977); Rypson (1989); Higgins (1987); Adler – Ernst (1990); Ernst (1991); Cózar (1992); Pozzi (2002); Molas – Bou (2003). On the continuity of the tradition see specially Ernst (1990) and (1997). The reader should be advised that the sections devoted to Greek poems in these general works are of very uneven value.

8. For theoretical approaches and classification see especially Cook (1979); Ernst (1986); Higgins (1987: 3-17 and 230-233); Pozzi (2002: 101-111); Molas – Bou (2003: 45-59).

2) The way in which the image is produced, so that we have
   a) poems in which the word block shapes an image, so that is 'out of the text'.
   b) poems in which the image results from combinations inside the word block, so that is 'in the text'.

Mediaeval Latin poems and modern poems in a variety of languages are easy to classify according to these features, but the Greek examples are not, as the original layout is probably lost and the appearance of each poem in manuscripts, early editions and modern editions can be differ widely. According to my own examination of the manuscripts, which confirms in general terms those of Gallavotti and Strodel, it is possible to identify at least three different traditions with different layouts of the poems:

1) A tradition represented by the manuscript of the *Greek Anthology* (*Palat. gr. 23 + Par. suppl. gr. 385*), in which the six poems appear in layout 1a-2a, copied in a 'typographical manner'[9].
2) A tradition represented by the Ambrosian family of the bucolic poets, in which the poems appear in layout 1a-2a, but copied in a 'calligrammatic manner'. The only surviving codex of this family is *Ambrosianus gr. C 222 inf.* (K), whose importance for the text of Theocritus is well-known[10].
3) A tradition represented by many manuscripts of the bucolic poets in which the poems appear in layout 1a-2b and 1b-2b.

Although the manuscript tradition of the poems is a complicated matter for which we have no definitive answers even after Strodel's valuable description[11], I consider it of interest to discuss some of its consequences. We should ask ourselves first whether the different layouts presented by the manuscripts can or cannot be the result of personal contributions by the copyists. The example of group 3 seems to indicate that personal variation is scarce, i. e., the matter that a copyist may be able to 'draw' better or worse than the model he copies, but in every case tries to imitate it as accurately as possible. One of the most important manuscripts of group 3, the magnificent *Parisinus gr. 2832*, probably copied by Demetrius Triclinius himself and illuminated by a professional artist, presents the same model of *Syrinx* as for example the poorly copied *Ambrosianus B 75 sup* or the *Vaticanus gr. 1948*, in which the copyists just did what they could[12]. The same happens in early editions, based on

9. Pattern Poems are in the Parisian section, *Par. suppl. gr. 385* fols. 28r-30v (642r-644v of the manuscript before it was divided). Bibliography on this important manuscript cannot be reported here; see Cameron (1993: 97-120); Guichard (2004: 85-102); specially useful is the photographic facsimile of Preisendanz (1911).

10. See Gallavotti (1993: 297-299).

11. See Strodel (2002: 48-84).

12. I refer to published examples. The *Parisinus* is reproduced by Wendel (1907),

manuscripts of different traditions and layout (see below on the *Axe*).
Modern editions more often use the layout 1a-2a as transmitted in the
Anthology and edited first by Saumaise[13]. Modern critical editions do not
explain why they prefer this layout, but it is obvious that most editors
thought that this was the original, the other being a late revision. It is dif-
ficult to state with certainty in any case which is the original layout.
From a strictly chronological point of view, there seems to be some kind
of progression in the manuscript tradition from copies of the type 1a-2a
to copies of the type 1a-2b and 1b-2b, but this is very uncertain as group
1 seems to be completely independent from groups 2 and 3 from the
point of view of the text. Group 1 – if indeed the manuscript of the
Anthology represents a group – comes from about the IXth century, as
the material included in book XV certainly comes from a source differ-
ent than from Cephalas' *Anthology*; that source could have been a
bucolic manuscript or a special edition of *carmina figurata* or an anthol-
ogy of difficult epigrams such as those collected in the last books of the
Palatine manuscript, but of course every option is a matter of conjecture.
The text of group 2, as noted by Gallavotti, comes from the IX-XIth cen-
turies. Manuscripts of group 3 come from the XIIIth century onwards.
Drawings in this group are consistent and lead to a whole family of the
types 1a-2b and 1b-2b; there is no doubt that this tradition was that used
by Holobolos and Pediasimos for their commentaries in the XIIIth Cen-
tury[14]. The testimonies of Eustathius, although extremely rhetorical, and
Tzetzes, seem to refer also to a drawn version of the poems[15]. It is also
important to consider that this kind of drawing fits in with the testi-
monies we have of illuminated papyri[16], but this no doubt implies that

Wojaczek (1993) and Ernst (1991: 751); the *Ambrosianus* and *Vaticanus* by Ernst (1991:
75). If the example of other Pattern Poems is relevant, we can also consider the different
copies of the *In honorem Sanctae Crucis* of Rabanus Maurus, whose copyists respected
even the colour of their models, although there is a great difference between the magnif-
icent Vatican 'purple codex' and the poor copies. See Perrin (1989) and Ernst (1991:
309-323).

13. The most important editions of the poems are those by Saumaise (1619); Brunck
(1776), all six; Jacobs (1798); Dübner (1864), all six; Bergk (1868), (not including the
Syrinx; Haeberlin 188), all six; Fraenkel 1915, only Simias' poems; Powell 1925; Diehl
1940, not including *Syrinx*; Beckby (1968 and 1975), both including all six; Gow (1950)
for the *Syrinx* and (1952) for all six; Gallavotti (1993), all six; Strodel (2002), only
Simias' poems.

14. On Holobolos and Pediasimos' commentaries, see Wendel (1907; 1910); Sbor-
done (1951); Ernst (1991: 747-756). Holobolos' scholia have been re-edited by Strodel
(2002: 131-156).

15. See Eustath. *In hymnum Pentecostalem Ioan. Damasc. commentarius*, ed. Mai
1841:II,170-173 (= *PG* 136,513c-d) and Tzetz. *De metr. Pind.* (ed. Cramer, *Anecdota
Parisina* I 65,24); Simonini-Gualdoni (1978: 12-14).

16. The testimonies have been recently collected and studied by Small (2003: 118-154).

Simias' poems were originally conceived in layout 1a-2b or 1b-2b. Although Cameron[17] has tried to demonstrate that Simias' Pattern Poems "are not really figure poems at all", the evidence collected by Gallavotti, Ernst and most recently Strodel clearly shows that the poems did have a pattern. As an example of the problems posed by the transmission of the text, we can consider the different shapes of the *Axe*, which are much less problematic than those of the *Syrinx* or the *Egg*. The text in most modern editions is presented as in the Palatine manuscript[18]:

1	Ἀνδροθέᾳ δῶρον ὁ Φωκεὺς κρατερᾶς μηδοσύνας ἦρα τίνων Ἀθάνᾳ
3	τᾶμος ἐπεὶ τὰν ἱερὰν κηρὶ πυρίπνῳ πόλιν ἠθάλωσεν
5	οὐκ ἐνάριθμος γεγαὼς ἐν προμάχοις Ἀχαιῶν,
7	νῦν δ' ἐς Ὁμήρειον ἔβα κέλευθον
9	τρὶς μάκαρ, ὃν σὺ θυμῷ
11	ὅδ' ὄλβος
12	ἀεὶ πνεῖ.
10	ἵλαος ἀμφιδερχθῇς·
8	σὰν χάριν, ἁγνὰ πολύβουλε Παλλάς·
6	ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κρανᾶν ἱθαρᾶν νᾶμα κόμιζε δυσκλής·
4	Δαρδανιδᾶν χρυσοβαφεῖς τ' ἐστυφέλιξ' ἐκ θεμέθλων ἄνακτας,
2	ὧπασ' Ἐπειὸς πέλεκυν, τῷ ποκα πύργων θεοτεύκτων κατέρειψεν αἶπος.

1	Phocian Epeius, in gratitude for her strong device, to the virile goddess Athena
3	then when he burnt to ashes with fire-breathing doom the holy city
5	a man who was not reckoned among the Achaean chieftains,
7	but now he has entered on the path of Homer,
9	thrice blessed he whom with a gracious
11	This blessedness
12	ever breathes.
10	mind you watchest over.
8	thanks to you, holy Pallas of many counsels.
6	but an unknown one who carried water from the pure fountains,
4	of the Dardanidae and dashed down from their seats the gilded kings,
2	gave the axe with which of old he laid in ruin the high, god-built towers[19].

The Palatine manuscript (group 1) presents a double-sided axe, in which the verses have to be arranged as above[20]; Hephaestion attests this arrangement for the *Egg* "and other poems" and the bucolic *scholia*

17. Cameron (1995: 33-37). The author ignores the testimony of bucolic manuscripts and bases his radical conclusions on modern editions.

18. Text as edited by Gallavotti (1993), but layout as in the Palatine manuscript. Gallavotti's text of reference for the bucolic poets and the recent edition of Strodel (2002) do not give any visual appearance to the Pattern Poems; although Gallavotti's and Strodel's prudence is laudable, their edited text does not represent any manuscript at all: every manuscript gives its own pattern.

19. Prose translation by Paton (1918), adapted to my own interpretation of the poem and the layout of the Palatine manuscript.

20. See plate nr. 1; a facsimile was published by Preisendanz (1911: 2,670).

relate it to the *Axe*[21]. The bucolic manuscripts present it as follows. The *Ambrosianus gr. C 222 inf.* fol. 362v (group 2) has an *Axe* in a layout very similar to that of the *Anthology* but with a 'calligrammatic' aspect, i.e. the text is not copied in horizontal ('typographical') lines but it is adapted to a semicircle[22]. *Vaticanus gr. 434*, a very important manuscript for the text of the Pattern Poems that preserves the work of Holobolos[23], presents the *Axe* as *Ambrosianus*, but with a drawing which shapes the text[24]. Several manuscripts of the bucolic tradition, most of them late, present the text as the *Ambrosianus A 155 sup*, i. e. like in *Ambrosianus C 222 inf* but with the figure rotated 90°[25]. A manuscript of this type was used by Musurus for the *editio Iuntina* (1515), while the edition of Callierges (1516), whose importance for the text is well known, used a manuscript of the 'calligrammatic' type with a drawing, much less striking than that of the *Salamandrina* (1531) – from which also the influential Latin translation of Andreas Divus (1939) was made – or that of Wechel (1543), both of which were based on the *Calliergiana*[26]. An obvious consequence of the arrangement as double-sided axes presented by most manuscripts of the bucolic tradition is the 'handle', which presents different metrical or prose texts, most of them not making any sense[27]. Basing himself or the Palatine manuscript, which he had recently 'discovered', Saumaise considered that the handle was not original since its text was very close to *Egg* v. 20. Manuscripts descending from Holobolos' edition – e.g. *Vaticanus gr. 434* cited above – also present a handle, this time with a sort of (unmetrical) title.

The text of the *Axe* therefore can be found in at least four different layouts. Although the manuscript transmission gives no clues about

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21. Hephaest. *Intr. metr.* p. 62.5-6 Consbruch: ταύτης τῆς ἰδέας ἐστὶ τὸ Ὠιὸν τὸ Σιμίου καὶ ἄλλα παίγνια. 'Of this kind are also Simias' *Egg* and other poems'. *Sch. ad* Theoc. p. 343.7-10 Wendel: δεῖ τὸν ἀναγινώσκοντα καὶ ἐξηγούμενον μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον κῶλον τὸ τελευταῖον λέγειν, εἶτα τὸ δεύτερον ἀπ' ἀρχῆς καὶ μετ' αὐτὸ τὸ δεύτερον ἀπὸ τέλους, καὶ οὕτως καθεξῆς ἕως τοῦ μέσου, ὥστε τὸ μέσον τέλος εἶναι, 'the reader should place the last kolon after the first, then the second from the beginning, and after this the second from the end, and continue in this way until the coming to the middle'.

22. See plate nr. 2. I have no notice of a published facsimile.

23. Codex Y in modern editions. See Gallavotti (1993: 348-349).

24. See plate nr. 3; reproduced by Ernst (1991: 70).

25. See plate nr. 4; reproduced by Ernst (1991: 70) and Parmiggiani (2002: 86).

26. The transition of *carmina figurata* from manuscript to printed text needs a more extensive explanation, which I hope to give in the edition and commentary I am preparing; in the meantime, see Osbourne (1933).

27. On the text of the handle see Strodel (2002: 158-159); the 'standard' text runs: τὼς δίνων κλυτὸς ἶσα θεοῖς ὡς εὗρε Ῥόδου γεγαὼς ὁ πολύτροπα μαιόμενος μέτρα μολπῆς (τὼς δίνων Gallavotti: τὰς βίνων K: βαίνων ed. Iuntina: Σιμμίας βαίνων Wilamowitz).

which of them could have been the one copied in the papyri contempo-
rary with Simias, the only layout without a handle is that of on the Pala-
tine manuscript, so we can conclude that layout 1a-2a is closer to the
original than layout 1a-2b. It is clear, in any case, that these texts are
later additions to fit better the shape of an axe: the original text was con-
ceived made to fit (or imitate) the shape of the blades only.

2. Origin

There have been three main interpretations regarding the origin of the
Pattern Poems: 1) as texts derived from magical practice, 2) as a liter-
ary elaboration of real 'pattern inscriptions', destined themselves to be
inscribed or not, and 3) as an extreme development of *griphoi* and other
puzzling devices used in Hellenistic Poetry. Let us begin with the less
plausible. Dieterich[28] and other authors after him tried to link the Pat-
tern Poems to magical diagrams preserved in magical manuscripts and
papyri. The spells in the form of a triangle that have been preserved
in crude form in some papyri do not have any metrical or poetic fea-
tures. Wojaczek[29] proposed that the Pattern Poems could have some
relationship to magical practice and that the three poems by Simias are
actually inspired by Orphic cult, an opinion adopted by some scholars
but in general terms very difficult to support. According to Wojaczek,
Simias' poems are a sort of tryptichon in which the Orphic Eros (*Wings*)
uses the *Axe* to crack the cosmogonic *Egg* from which the world is cre-
ated. Two (not really relevant) problems in the text of *Wings* are
adduced by the author as a 'proof' of the Orphic character of the Eros
described[30]:

Λεῦσσέ με τὸν Γᾶς τε βαθυστέρνου ἄνακτ' Ἀκμονίδαν τ' ἄλλυδις ἑδράσαντα·
μηδὲ τρέσῃς, εἰ τόσος ὢν δάσκια βέβριθα λάχνᾳ γένεια.
τᾶμος ἐγὼ γὰρ γενόμαν, ἁνίκ' ἔκραιν' Ἀνάγκα,
πάντα δὲ Γᾶς εἶκε φραδαῖσι λυγραῖς
ἑρπετά, πάνθ', ὅσ' ἕρπει   5
δι' αἴθρας.
Χάους δέ,
οὔτι γε Κύπριδος παῖς
ὠκυπέτας οὐδ' Ἄρεος καλεῦμαι·
οὔτι γὰρ ἔκρανα βίᾳ, πραϋνόῳ δὲ πειθοῖ·   10

28. Dieterich (1891: 199); Fraenkel (1915: 56); Ernst (1991: 33-45).
29. Wojaczek (1969: 59-64; 1993 *passim*).
30. Layout as in the Palatine manuscript, adopted by every modern edition. Text as
edited by Gallavotti. Prose translation by Paton (1918), adapted to my own interpretation
of the poem and the layout of the Palatine manuscript.

εἶκε δέ μοι γαῖα θαλάσσας τε μυχοὶ χάλκεος οὐρανός τε·
τῶν δ᾽ ἐγὼ ἐκνοσφισάμαν ὠγύγιον σκᾶπτρον, ἔκρινον δὲ θεοῖς θέμιστας.

Look on me, the lord of broad-bosomed Earth, who established the Heaven elsewhere,
and tremble not if, little though I be, my cheeks are heavy with bushy hair.
For I was born when Necessity was ruler, and all yielded to her
dire decrees, both creeping things of earth and those
that move through   5
the sky.
Of Chaos
The swift-flying son
I am called, not of Cypris or of Ares,
for in no way did I rule by force, but by gentle-voiced   10
persuasion, and earth and the depths of the sea and the brazen heaven
yielded to me. I robbed them of their ancient sceptre and gave laws to the gods.

In v. 1, Hephaestion and one of the two versions in the Palatine manu-
script read Γᾶς τε βαθυστέρνου, but manuscripts of the bucolic tradi-
tion read Γᾶς τε βαθύστερνον. Most editors consider that the
accusative is wrong and accept the first reading; Wojaczek proposed the
opposite and corrected the text to Γᾶν τε βαθύστερνον, so that Eros is
the king who separates earth from heaven as in Orphic cosmogonies[31].
Wojaczek proposes also to see an Orphic hint in vv. 4-7, arguing that
Χάους δέ should be read with the precedent and not with the following
lines: "als ihren verderblichen Ratschlüssen gehorchte alles, was kriecht
und alles, was fliegt durch Helle *(Aithra)* und Aufklaffen (Chaos)". The
'Orphic' interpretation of these passages as well as those of other pas-
sages of the Pattern Poems[32] becomes very difficult to accept in view of
the enormous amount of imagination shown by the author on the sole
basis of common terms that do not have in the context of the poems the
special meaning they have in religious works.

    More plausible is the hypothesis formulated by Wilamowitz, Fraenkel
and others[33], who relate the poems to epigraphical practice. Evidence
collected by them includes *IG* IV 537, 566; V 1, 225, 226, 1497, 1518,
1519, 1520; V 2, 102; *IPr.* 434, and *IG* XIV 643. Most of these inscrip-

    31. On the Orphic Eros, see frs. 20, 69, 75-80, 82, 83 and 86 Bernabé (=28, 54 and 57
Kern); it is open to discussion if the parody by Ar. *Av.* 673-702 should be credited or not.
Cfr. Martínez Fernández (1987: 201-202) and specially Bernabé (1995).
    32. Wojaczek finds further initiatory elements in ἁγνός (*Axe* v. 8), μάκαρ (v. 9),
ὄλβος (11), in the pure fountain from which Epeios takes water, in ἁγνᾶς (*Egg* v. 5) and
in an alleged cryptic reference to the myth of Procne and Philomela in vv. 1-5 of he same
poem. Other interpretations of the author, such as the 'discovery' of an initiatory *griphos*
in v. 2 of the *Axe* (Epeios is actually Epikepaios, the Orphic Eros) are plainly absurd; see
Martínez Fernández (1987: 203-204 and 211), and Cameron (1995: 36).
    33. Wilamowitz (1899); Fraenkel (1915); cf. also Ernst (1991); Martínez-Fernández
(1987: 195-196); Strodel (2002: 265-271). *Contra* see Reitzenstein (1907).

tions are very simple, often just a name of a dedicator. They certainly adapt the text to the surface of the object dedicated, but none of them really resembles a Pattern Poem, except perhaps the most frequently quoted example, an inscribed axehead from Calabria (*IG* XIV 643)[34]:

Τᾱς Ηέρας hιαρός Ι ἐμι τᾱς ἐμ πεδίλōῑ. Ϙύνιϛϙόϛ με ἀνέθēικε ὅρταμοϛ Ϝέργōν Ι δεκάταν.

I am consecrated to Hera of the plain. Kyniscus the butcher dedicated me as a tithe of his work.

"Quid amplius? Ecce tenemus securim, in cuius aere, versuum longitudine in versus diminuente dedicatio inscripta est", exclaimed Fraenkel (1915:58). If the origin of Simias' poems is to be found in objects like this, Pattern Poems are the result of the same process as gave origin to the literary epigrams of the Hellenistic age: a process of imitation of a popular form to which new contents coming from high poetry were added in a striking combination[35]. More precisely, they would be dedicatory epigrams *avant la lettre*, in which not only the style of popular dedications was imitated but even the form of the dedicated object. This interpretation justifies the inclusion of the poems in the *Greek Anthology*, although it is well known that there are many poems in the collection that have nothing to do with epigrams. Although it is plausible that epigraphical practice had some influence or the work of Simias, it is more difficult to accept, as do other authors who advance this interpretation, that the poems themselves were conceived to be inscribed on real objects such as a statue of Eros, a facsimile of Epeios' axe or an egg[36]. In his edition of the poems, Haeberlin postulated that they were purely literary pieces, written without real objects in mind; the different layouts preserved in the manuscript tradition reinforce this.

The Pattern Poems of Simias represent in any case an extreme development of literary tendencies that are commonly described as typically Hellenistic: formal (especially metrical) experiment and word-play. We can find parallels for metrical experiment in Hellenistic epigrams (both

34. On this inscription see Dittenberger (1878); Roberts (1887: I nr. 306); *SGDI* 1653; Schwyzer (1923: nr. 437); Jeffery (1961: 260); Maiuri (1962: 68-70); Guarducci (1974: 43-45). Photographs: Roehl (1907: 120); Landi (1979: 277 pl. 119); Guarducci (1974: 44).

35. On the transition from inscriptional to literary epigram, see Gutzwiller (1998: 47-114); Guichard (2004: 31-71).

36. See e. g. Cameron (1995: 34-35). Wojaczek (1993: 162-164) even tried to reconstruct the 'real' syrinx on which the text attributed to Theocritus could have been inscribed; as Gow (1914) demonstrated, this kind of syrinx with decreasing pipes is not documented for the Hellenistic period, in which only the square syrinx is attested.

inscribed and literary) and in the work of other minor poets such as Phi-likos, Boiskos, Kastorion of Soloi, Cercidas and Chaeremon[37]. Word-play is well attested also in epigrams and in enigmatic texts such as Lycophron's *Alexandra*. Even Callimachus and Theocritus used metrical experiment and *griphoi* at a much more moderate level. Theoretical approaches to the *griphos* are attested by an interesting text by Klearchos, Περὶ γρίφων[38], in which seven types are distinguished. Three of them are very clearly explained by Athenaeus; they refer to manipulation of formal elements such as letters, syllables and words[39]. A fourth type refers to metrics, as we also know from Athenaeus; as can be inferred from the same passage, the other three refer to manipulation of sense: improvisation, parodies, replies and *centones*, although their clas-sification is not clear[40]. In any case, the first four methods are the most important in relation with *carmina figurata* and give a context for the Pattern Poems as elaborated forms of poetry.

37. See West (1982: 149-152); Bing (1988: 22-27); Fantuzzi, in Fantuzzi – Hunter (2002: 40-44).

38. Edited with a brief commentary by Wehrli (1948: frs. 84-95b).

39. Clearch. fr. 86 Wehrli (*ap.* Athen. X 448c): ἐν δὲ τῷ περὶ γρίφων ὁ αὐτὸς Κλέαρχός φησιν ἑπτὰ εἴδη εἶναι γρίφων. ἐν γράμματι μέν, οἷον ἐροῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄλφα. ὡς ὄνομά τι ἰχθύος ἢ φυτοῦ, ὁμοίως δὲ κἂν ἔχειν τι κελεύῃ τῶν γραμμάτων ἢ μὴ ἔχειν, καθάπερ οἱ ἄσιγμοι καλούμενοι τῶν γρίφων· ὅθεν καὶ Πίνδαρος πρὸς τὸ σ ἐποίησεν ᾠδήν, οἱονεὶ γρίφου τινὸς ἐν μελοποιίᾳ προβληθέντος. ἐν συλλαβῇ δὲ λέγονται γρῖφοι, οἷον ἐροῦμεν ἔμμετρον ὁτιδήποτε οὗ ἡγεῖται βα, οἷον βασιλεύς, ἢ ὧν ἔχει τελευτὴν τὸ ναξ, ὡς Καλλιάναξ, ἢ ὧν τὸν λέοντα καθηγεῖσθαι, οἷον Λεωνίδης, ἢ ἔμπαλιν τελικὸν εἶναι, οἷον Θρασυλέων. ἐν ὀνό-ματι δέ, οἷον ἐροῦμεν ὀνόματα ἁπλᾶ ἢ σύνθετα δισύλλαβα, οὗ μορφή τις ἐμφαίνε-ται τραγικὴ ἢ πάλιν ταπεινή, ἢ ἄθεα ὀνόματα, οἷον Κλεώνυμος, ἢ θεοφόρα, οἷον Διονύσιος, καὶ τοῦτο ἤτοι ἐξ ἑνὸς θεοῦ ἢ πλεόνων, οἷον Ἑρμαφρόδιτος· ἢ ἀπὸ Διὸς ἄρχεσθαι, Διοκλῆς, ἢ Ἑρμοῦ, Ἑρμόδωρος· ἢ λήγειν εἰ τύχοι εἰς νικος. Translation by Gulick 1930:IV,531-533: 'And again in the treatise *On Riddles*, Clearchus says there are seven kinds of riddles. Depending on a letter, as when we are to tell, for example, the name of a fish or a plant beginning with *a*; similarly, when the propounder requires a word which contains or does not contain a certain letter, like the riddles called the *s*-less; whence even Pindar composed an ode against the letter *s*, putting forth, as it were, a kind of riddle in lyric poetry. Then there are riddles depending on a syllable, where, for example, we are to name something measured that begins with *ba*, like *basileus* (king), or that ends in *–nax*, like Callianax, or that has the lion for its leader, like Leonides, or contrariwise at the end, like Thrasyleon. Or riddles involving a whole noun, where, for example, we must give either simple or compound nouns of two syllables, wherein the form has a pompous or, conversely, a low implication; or names which are godless, like Cleonymus, or have a god in them, like Dionysius; in this case the noun may be made up from the name of either one or several gods, like Hermaphroditus; or a noun beginning with Zeus, like Diocles, or with Hermes, like Hermodorus; or one ending, per-haps, in *–nicus*.'

40. Cf. Clearch. fr. 63 (= 84) Wehrli (*ap.* Athen. X 457 c); the passage refers to sym-potic entertainment, but the fact that Klearchos quotes Kastorion of Soloi's permutative hymn makes clear that he is also thinking of literary texts.

3. Vocabulary and metrics

Vocabulary and dialect present the Hellenistic *koine* with a blending of Doric (lyric) and Ionic (epic) as is usual in other Hellenistic poets[41]. The proportion (and fluctuation) of both is very close to that of the 'mixed' *Idylls* of Theocritus (13, 16, 17, 24) and authors of epigrams like Asclepiades and Posidippus[42]. Apart from usual ᾱ, Doric is limited to gen. pl. (*Axe* v. 4 Δαρδανιδᾶν, v. 6 κρανᾶν ἰθαρᾶν, *Egg* v. 16 Νυμφᾶν, v. 17 θαλαμᾶν); a pronominal ταί in *Egg* v. 14 and ποκα in *Axe* v. 2[43]. Ionic and epic flavour are better attested, as for example the geminated dative in *Egg* v. 13 (τέκεσσι) along with the simple form in 15 and 20 (ποσί, ποσίν); uncontracted forms such as *Wings* v. 10 (πραϋνόῳ), 11 (χάλκεος), *Egg* vv. 16 and 19 (ὀρέων), 14 (ἱμερόεντα) and 20 (θοοῖσι, δονέων). Epic dat. pl. in –οισι and –αισι along with –οις and –αις. Epic gen. Ἄρεος in *Wings* v. 9, radical aorist ἔβαν in *Egg* v. 16 and epic imperative δέξο in *Egg* v. 5. The vocabulary shows the usual links to the poetic tradition with some *hapax* like ἀνδροθέᾳ (*Axe* v. 1), ἀμφιδέρκομαι (v. 10), μονόδουπος (*Egg* v. 12), ἀμφίπαλτος (*Egg* v. 17), and πετρόκοιτος (*Egg* v. 18), which are nowhere as numerous as those of the *Syrinx* or the *Altars*. Simias' Pattern Poems are thus, from the point of view of language and dialect, not very different from other Hellenistic poems.

As stressed by Wilamowitz, the metrics of Simias' Pattern Poems are of lyrical origin. Both *Axe* and *Wings* present a decreasing combination of choriambic *metra* from 'hexameter' – used later κατὰ στίχον by Philikos[44] – to a syncopated monometer[45]. Such a radical experiment is not so strange in the Hellenistic vogue of epodic metrics, in which Simias seems to have played an important role[46]. But the *Egg*, considered by

41. On the vocabulary and dialect of the poems see specially Martínez Fernández (1987: 218-225).

42. For examples and bibliography, see Gow (1950: I,lxxvi-lxxvii); Molinos Tejada (1990); Sens (20040; Guichard (2004: 103-108; forthcoming 2005).

43. The sigmatic aorist ἔκιξε in *Egg* v. 7 reported by Powell (and Martínez Fernández) as the reading of the Palatine manuscript is wrong: it reads ἀέξειν. Haeberlin conjectured Doric acc. νιν in *Egg* v. 6 against the *consensus codicum* μιν.

44. As noted by Hephaest. *Ench.* p. 30.21-31.14 Consbruch, Philikos boasted as being the first to use this metre (see Lloyd-Jones and Parsons on *SH* 677); *Sch. ad Theoc.* p. 341. 13-15 Wendel: τὸ δὲ μέτρον τοῦ Πτερυγίου καὶ τοῦ Πελέκεως χοριαμβικόν, 'the meter of *Wings* and Axe is choriambic'.

45. So e. g. Koster (1962: 254-255); Hopkinson (1988: 176); Martinelli (1995: 219); Guzmán Guerra (1997: 120-121). West (1982: 151) interprets them more precisely as aristophanean + choriambic with a final single iambus: *ar⁴‖ ar³ᶜ‖ ar²‖ ar‖ arᶦᶦiaₗᵢ*.

46. Among the few fragments preserved we can find a catalectic anapaestic trimeter (fr. 9 Powell), a *Simmiacum* (fr. 15) – considered a rare verse by Hephaestion –, and a catalectic dactylic pentameter or *Simmieum* (fr. 17); cfr. Koster (1962: 60,167,262).

West "the most complex product (metrically) of all Hellenistic book-poetry", presents a much more striking creation[47]:

Κωτίλας 1
τῇ τόδ' ἄτριον νέον 3
πρόφρων δὲ θυμῷ δέξο· δὴ γὰρ ἀγνᾶς 5
τὸ μὲν θεῶν ἐριβόας Ἑρμᾶς ἔκειξε κᾶρυξ 7
ἄνωγε δ' ἐκ μέτρου μονοβάμονος μέγαν πάροιθ' ἀέξειν 9
θοῶς δ' ὕπερθεν ὠκυλέχριον φέρων νεῦμα ποδῶν σποράδων πίφαυσκεν 11
θοαῖς ἴσ' αἰόλαις νεβροῖς κῶλ' ἀλλάσσων, ὀρσιπόδων ἐλάφων τέκεσσι· 13
πᾶσαι κραιπνοῖς ὑπὲρ ἄκρων ἱέμεναι ποσὶ λόφων κατ' ἀρθμίας ἴχνος τιθήνας· 15
καί τις ὠμόθυμος ἀμφίπαλτον αἶψ' αὐδὰν θὴρ ἐν κόλπῳ δεξάμενος θαλαμᾶν μυχοιτάτῳ 17
κᾆτ' ὦκα βοᾶς ἀκοὰν μεθέπων ὅ γ' ἄφαρ λάσιον νιφοβόλων ἀν' ὀρέων ἔσσυται ἄγκος· 19
ταῖς δὴ δαίμων κλυτὸς ἴσα θοοῖσι ποσὶν δονέων ἅμα πολύπλοκα μεθίει μέτρα μολπᾶς. 20
ῥίμφα πετρόκοιτον ἐκλιπὼν ὄρουσ' εὐνὰν, ματρὸς πλαγκτὸν μαιόμενος βαλιᾶς ἑλεῖν τέκος, 18
βλαχᾷ δ' οἰῶν πολυβότων ἀν' ὀρέων νομὸν ἔβαν τανυσφύρων τ' ἐς ἄντρα Νυμφᾶν· 16
ταὶ δ' ἀμβρότῳ πόθῳ φίλας ματρὸς ῥώοντ' αἶψα μεθ' ἱμερόεντα μαζόν, 14
ἴχνει θενὼν τε κρότον παναίολον Πιερίδων μονόδουπον αὐδάν, 12
ἀριθμὸν εἰς ἄκραν δεκάδ' ἰχνίων, κόσμον νέμοντα ῥυθμῶν, 10
φῦλ' ἐς βροτῶν ὑπὸ φίλας ἑλὼν πτεροῖσι ματρός, 8
λίγειά μιν κάμ' ἶφι ματρὸς ὠδίς· 6
Δωρίας ἀηδόνος. 4
ματέρος 2

Lo here a new weft of a twittering mother, a Dorian nightingale; receive it with a right good will, for pure was the mother whose shrilly throes did labour for it. The loud-voiced herald of the Gods took it up from beneath its dear mother's wings, and cast it among the tribes of men and bade it increase its number onward more and more – that number keeping the while due order of rhythms – from a one-footed measure even unto a full ten measures: and quickly he made fat from above the swiftly-slanting slope of its vagrant feet, striking, as he went on, a motley strain indeed but a right concordant cry of the Pierians, and making exchange of limbs with the nimble fawns, the swift children of the foot-stirring stag. Now these fawns through immortal desire of their dear dam do rush apace after the beloved teat, all passing with farhasting feet over the hilltops in the track of that friendly nurse, and with a bleat they go by the mountains, pastures of the thousand feeding sheep and the caves of the slender-ankled Nymphs, till all at once some cruel-hearted beast, receiving their echoing cry in the dense fold of his den, leaps speedily forth of the bed of his rocky lair with intent to catch one of the wandering progeny of that dappled mother, and them swiftly following the sound of their cry straightway darteth through the shaggy dell of the snowclad hills. Of feet as swift as theirs urged that renowned God the labour, as he sped the manifold measures of the song.

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47. Layout as in the Palatine manuscript, adopted by Haeberlin and Beckby; text as edited by Gallavotti. It is not known if Powell's (and Gow's) layout Represents to their own interpretation of how the poem could have looked or is just due to typographical reasons. Prose translation by Paton (1918).

Simias describes his poem as an ἄτριον νέον, 'a new weft', in which known meters and rhythms are combined in a new way[48]. The metrical expertise pursued by the poet consists thus in taking to its extreme the combination of meters already practised by himself and other poets: it is more a matter of elaborating new patterns than of radical invention. From this point of view, Simias is a Hellenistic poet of the 'elaborated' tendency, who works upon a material already known with a new focus.

4. The (necessary) Margins of the Canon

The literary context of Simias' Pattern Poetry has to be found in other 'hyper-elaborated' forms of poetry developed in the Hellenistic period: isopsephic poems, lipograms, anagrams, acrostics, permutative texts, rhopalic verses, lexical puns, riddles, etc[49]. These kind of literary games, conceived for the 'happy few' (or those who wanted to be considered so), produced interesting literary and inscribed texts. The most recent survey of Hellenistic Poetry groups them all among "aberrazioni 'marginali'"[50]. I agree with the authors that experimentalism, intellectualism, artificiality and other similar are not the best terms to define Hellenistic Poetry as a whole generation of philologists did[51]. The relative progress of the discipline requires no doubt the legacy of that generation to be revised, but it is important to avoid the critical 'anxiety of influence' that leads to contradict systematically past orthodoxy[52].

48. The clearest and most convincing metrical explanation remains Wilamowitz 1906:248-249, adopted by most editors: $tr_\wedge$ ‖ (vv. 1-2); $2tr_\wedge$‖ (vv. 3-4); $3ia_\wedge$‖ (vv. 5-6); $4ia_\wedge$‖ (vv. 7-8); ia | tl | $2ia_\wedge$‖ (vv. 9-10); $3ia$ | da | tr ‖ (vv. 11-12); $2ia$ | $2da$ | tr ‖ (vv. 13-14); sp | $3ia$ | $2ia$ ‖ (15-16); $3tr_\wedge$| $2da$ | $2ch$ ‖ (vv. 17-18); $3an$ | $2ia$ | $2da$ (vv. 19-20); as usual when dealing with lyric metrics, *kola* can be identified in different ways.

49. Hellenistic hyper-elaborated texts have not been collected and studied as a whole; the best treatment is Fantuzzi – Hunter (see next notes). For further bibliography, see Bing (1985); Cameron (1995b); Vogt (1965); Courtney (1990); Merkelbach-Stauber on *SGO* 06/02/27.

50. Fantuzzi – Hunter (2002: 40-44).

51. Fantuzzi & Hunter (2002: 40-41) explain this better than I can: *"Affermare la consciente ambizione di questi autori a costruire un (nuovo) sistema letterario, che in sostanza ha assai poco di ludico-arbitrario e presuppone invece un senso storico maturo e consapevole, non significa dimenticare che il III secolo a.C. alimentò senz'altro più che ogni altra epoca precedente anche la figura del letterato compiaciuto di sperimentalismi, e di contaminazioni prettamente sperimentali. Ma questa componente interessò quasi esclusivamente un certo numero di figure minori, e non è il caso di continuare a consentire con quegli studiosi che per amore di schematismi e contrapposizione polari rispetto alle epoche arcaica e classica hanno sopravvalutato la portata di tale componente anche nella poetica callimacheo-teocritea."*

52. Cameron (1995) is undoubtedly an excellent example of the virtues and risks of challenging orthodoxy.

Pattern Poems have been considered 'aberrazioni' both by past and present orthodoxy in great part because *they present themselves as such*; a type of poem existing in almost all literatures and periods can hardly be marginal, except if one of its basic features is that they *want to appear as marginal*. From Simias to most recent poets publishing extreme forms of poetry on the Internet, the appeal to originality, erudition and marginality is more than a topic: it is a calling card of the genre, a rhetorical sign of identity. Pattern Poems and the extensive widespread archipelago of related poetic types have thus a very important role in the canon: the forms that present themselves as the outsiders are in fact a part of a strong tradition and, paradoxically, are very conservative inside their own type. Kastorion of Soloi's permutative *Hymn to Pan* plays the same role as Raymond Queneau's *Cent mille milliards de poèmes*; Simias' Pattern Poems appear in their moment as innovative as Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* appear at their turn. Literature needs a territory that seems to be free, fresh and new; a territory at the limit of poetic discourse, that is in itself the limit of literary discourse.

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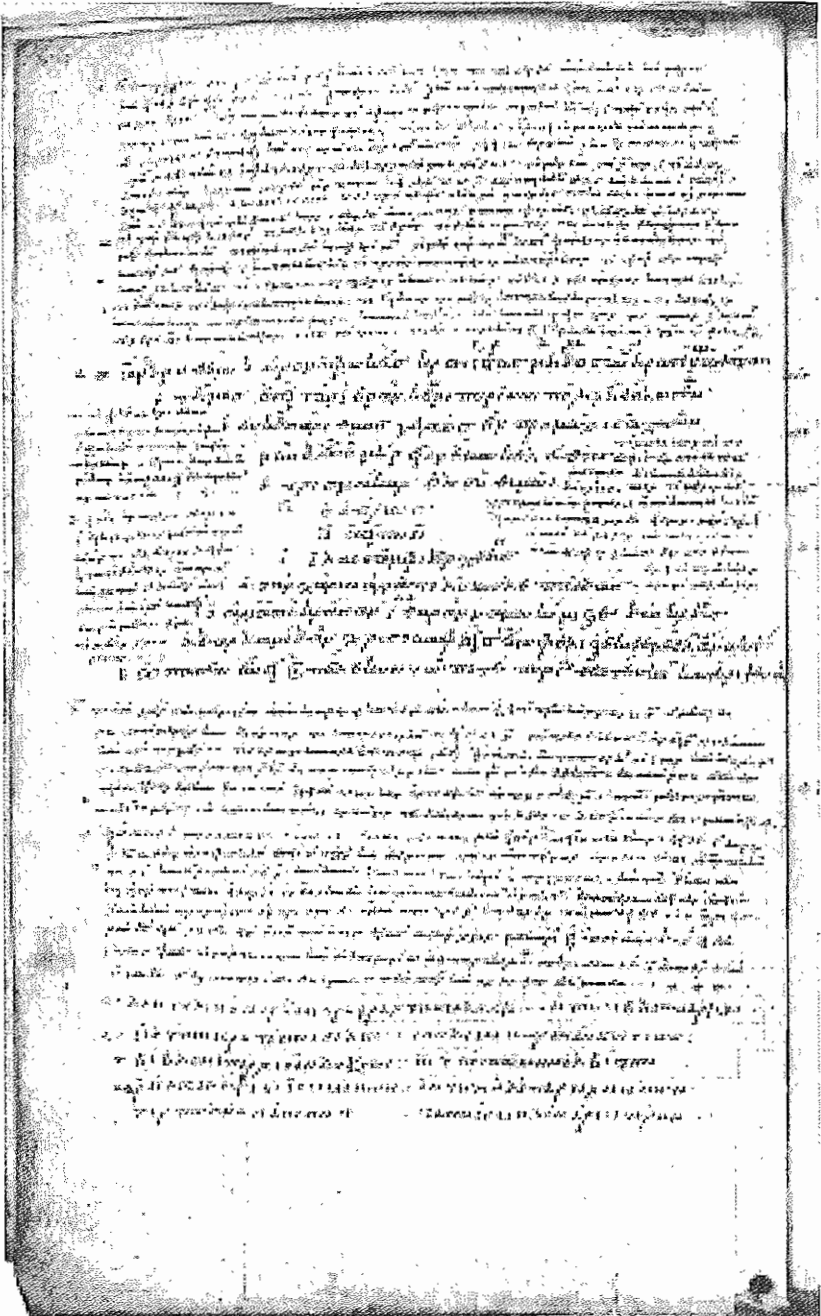
Plate 1: *Parisinus suppl. gr. 384*, f. 28v (s. X²/²)
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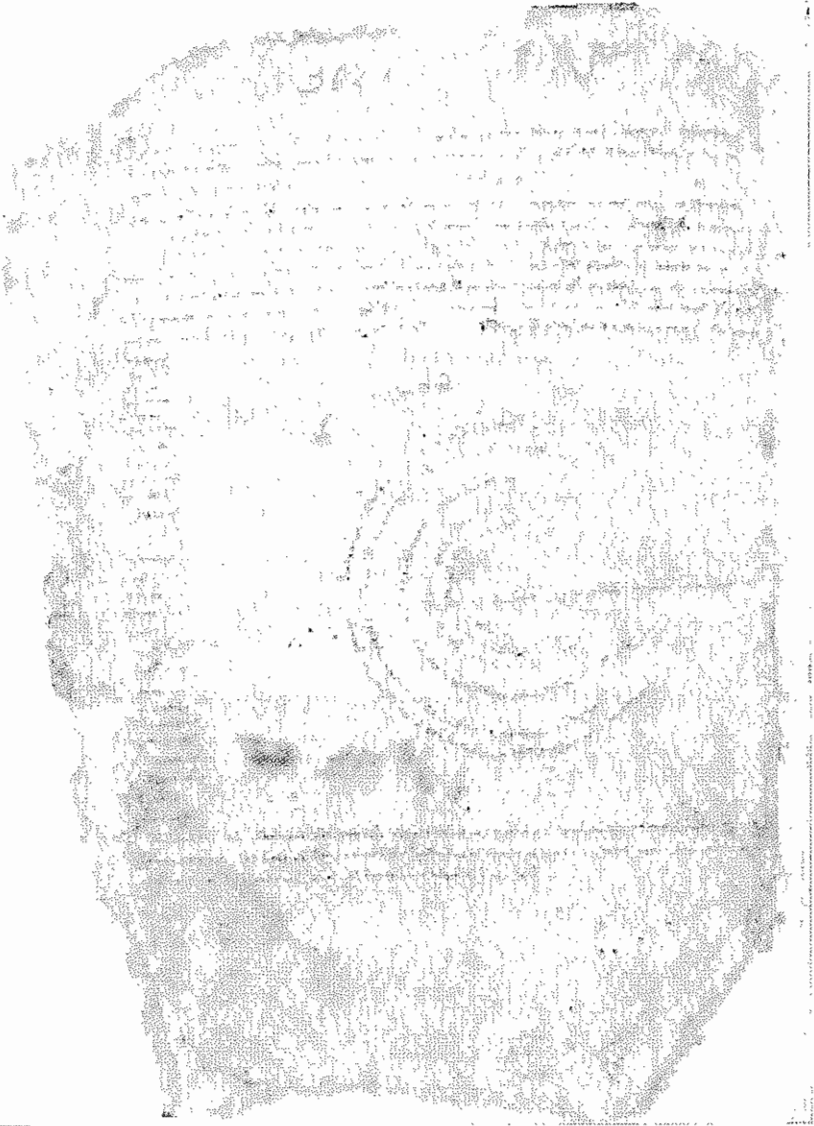
Plate 2: *Ambrosianus gr. C 222 inf.*, f. 362v (s. XIII[4/4])
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Plate 3: *Vaticanus gr. 434*, f. 3r (s. XIII-XIV)
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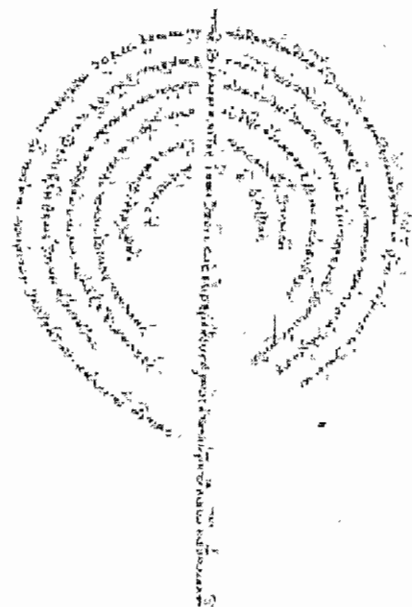
Plate 4: *Ambrosianus A 155 sup.*, f. 213v (s. XV$^{4/4}$)
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BEYOND THE CANON

Edited by

M.A. HARDER
R.F. REGTUIT
G.C. WAKKER

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