Estudios bizantinos 2 (2014) 187-204
ISSN: 2014-9999. DOI: 10.1344/EBizantinos2014.2.7

SOCIEDAD ESPAÑOLA DE BIZANTINÍSTICA

'A LIVING PORTRAIT OF CATO': SELF-FASHIONING AND THE CLASSICAL PAST IN JOHN TZETZES' CHILIADS

Sophia Xenophontos
Classics, School of Humanities
University of Glasgow
65 Oakfield Avenue
Glasgow G12 8QQ
United Kingdom
sophia.xenofontos@glasgow.ac.uk

ABSTRACT
The aim of this article is to examine the creative ways in which John Tzetzes (c.1110–after 1160) uses the figure of Cato the Elder within his *Chiliads*. In appropriating Cato's care for his son's education to his own pedagogical relationship with his father, Tzetzes departs significantly from Plutarch's original (*Life of Cato Maior*). This recreation leads him, as I argue, to engage with notions of Hellenism in twelfth-century Byzantium, to uncover his anxieties stemming from the oppressive feeling of poverty, and to castigate current social conditions that irritated him, for instance the corruption of the ecclesiastical establishment. I additionally cast light on Tzetzes' scholarly inventiveness; that is manifested in the way he infuses his own self-portrait with Cato's qualities in an attempt to exonerate it from public censure.
Metadata: Byzantine Literature, Reception of Classical Texts in Byzantium, Roman History, John Tzetzes, Plutarch, Cato Maior

RESUMEN
Este artículo pretende examinar las vías creativas a través de las cuales Juan Tzetzes (*ca.* 1110–*post* 1160) muestra la figura de Catón el Viejo en sus *Chiliades*. Apropiándose de la preocupación de Catón por la educación de su hijo para abordar su propia relación pedagógica con el padre, Tzetzes se separa significativamente del original de Plutarco (*Vida de Catón el Viejo*). Esta recreación le permite —según argumento— introducir su opinión sobre el tema de Helenismo en el Bizancio del siglo XII, poner de manifiesto la ansiedad que le provoca el sentimiento opresivo de pobreza y criticar las condiciones sociales de su época que lo irritaban, por ejemplo, la corrupción de quienes estaban al frente de la Iglesia. Complementariamente, ilustro que la inventiva erudita de Tzetzes transforma el relato de Plutarco, como se pone de manifiesto en el modo en que infunde las cualidades de Catón en el retrato de su personalidad en un intento de exonerarlo de la censura pública.
Metadata: Literatura bizantina, Recepción de los textos clásicos en Bizancio, Historia romana, Juan Tzetzes, Plutarco, Catón el Viejo

'A LIVING PORTRAIT OF CATO': SELF-FASHIONING AND THE CLASSICAL PAST IN JOHN TZETZES' CHILIADS

Sophia Xenophontos[*]

1. Introduction

One of the major transformations marking twelfth-century Byzantium was the emergence of a class of professional literati, who earned their living by composing works on demand and versing members of the imperial families in the treasures of classical literature.[1] Commissioned scholars sometimes had good chances of entering the state or ecclesiastical circles, although their settlement seems to have been a matter of concern for them.[2] Eustathios of Thessalonike (c.1115–1195/6) is a case in point, who in his speech on the occasion of Michael's appointment as patriarch of Constantinople discusses the fragility of his position.[3]

* Special thanks are owed to Petros Bouras-Vallianatos and Michael Grünbart for their helpful comments. I am grateful to the editor and the two anonymous referees for their suggestions.

1 See M. Mullet, "Aristocracy and patronage in the literary circles of Comnenian Constantinople", in M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy: IX to XII centuries*, Oxford 1984, 173-201.

2 For the social and cultural setting in twelfth-century Byzantium, see R. Macrides – P. Magdalino, "The fourth kingdom and the rhetoric of Hellenism", in P. Magdalino (ed.), *The perception of the past in twelfth-century Europe,* London 1992, 117-156, here 117-120. For the status of intellectuals in the twelfth century, see A. Kazhdan – A. W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries,* Berkeley 1985, 130-135. For the features of the intellectual industry of this period, A. Vasilikopoulou-Ioannidou, *Ἡ ἀναγέννησις τῶν γραμμάτων κατὰ τὸν ΙΒ΄ αἰῶνα εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον καὶ ὁ Ὅμηρος*, Athens 1971-72, R. Browning, "Homer in Byzantium", *Viator* 6 (1975) 15-33, here 25-29, and A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: the transformations of Greek identity and the reception of the classical tradition*, Cambridge 2007, 225-307.

3 P. Wirth, "Zur Biographie des Eustathios von Thessalonike", *Byz* 36 (1966) 262-282; reprinted in his *Eustathiana*, Amsterdam 1980, 11-33.

Estudios bizantinos 2 (2014) 187-204. ISSN: 2014-9999. DOI: 10.1344/EBizantinos2014.2.7

In contrast to Eustathios, John Tzetzes (c.1110 – after 1160)[4] never really managed to occupy a public post[5] and struggled throughout his life to survive by means of his literary production.[6] Poverty is not merely a *topos* in his texts, it is a factor that determines his authorial decisions. His earlier writings *Theogony*[7] and *Iliad Allegories*[8] show Tzetzes' constraint to serve the needs of his literary market, *i.e*. the imperial ladies to which the works were dedicated, the former to the wife of the Sevastokrator Andronikos, the latter to Manuel I's first wife.[9] His later poems, however, are free from the pressures of a

[4] On Tzetzes in general, see C. Wendel, "Tzetzes" *RE* (1948) VII A 2, cols. 1959-2011, H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner,* München 1978, vol. 2, 59-63; N. G. Wilson*, Scholars of Byzantium,* London 1962, 190-196; A. Kazhdan, "Tzetzes" in A. Kazhdan et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* New York – Oxford 1991, 2136. For Tzetzes' dates, I follow the entry by A. Rhoby in the forthcoming *Lexikon der Byzantinischer Autoren (LBA),* edited by M. Grünbart and A. Riehle. I thank the editors for allowing me access to this entry. I also took into account the study by M. Grünbart, "Byzantinisches Gelehrtenelend - oder: Wie meistert man seinen Alltag?", in L. M. Hoffmann – A. Monchizadeh (eds.), *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie. Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*, Mainz 2005, 413-426, here 424-425, which is in line with Rhoby. In light of Tzetzes' short poem dedicated to Michael Psellos which survives in the codices Neapol. III.E.12 and Par. gr. 3058, Agiotis has recently argued that 1174–1178 is a safer *terminus post quem* for Tzetzes' death; see N. Agiotis, "Tzetzes on Psellos Revisited", *BZ* 106.1 (2013) 1-8. The traditional dates for Tzetzes used to be c.1110 – before 1180 and 1185 (according to *ODB,* as above).

[5] In his youth, Tzetzes had to abandon the post of the secretary due to his improper behaviour towards the wife of his superior, the eparch of Berroia, Isaac; C. Wendel, "Tzetzes" (cit. n. 4), cols. 1961-1962.

[6] 'My speeches […] and my writings, by which I obtain the necessities of life, by which alone I am nourished, turning my Muse to silver, as Pindar said of Simonides […]' [οἱ λόγοι μου […] καὶ συγγράμματα, οἷσπερ καρποῦμαι τὰ πρὸς ζωήν, οἷσπερ καὶ μόνοις ἐγὼ διατρέφομαι, τὴν μοῦσαν, καθὼς ὁ Πίνδαρος περὶ Σιμωνίδου φησίν […]: ep. 75, p. 109-110, ed. P. L. M. Leone*, Ioannis Tzetzae epistulae,* Leipzig 1972, 1-157. For his poverty, ep. 5, p. 8, ep. 9, p. 17-18, ep. 49, p. 70.

[7] Ed. I. Bekker, *Ioannis Tzetzae Theogonia (ex codice Casanatensi)*, Berlin 1841, 3-25.

[8] Ed. J. F. Boissonade, *Tzetzae Allegoriae Iliadis,* Paris 1851.

[9] See especially A. Rhoby, "Ioannes Tzetzes als Auftragsdichter", *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 15.2 (2010) 167-183, who also argues in 164-166 that Constantine Kotertzes acted as a sponsor for part of the *Iliad Allegories* and the *Histories.*

specific readership,[10] allowing him flexibility and experimentation.[11] Tzetzes' *Histories* or *Chiliads* in particular, a collection of commentaries in political verse on his *Letters*, is exceptional not only in that it presents no generic precedent, but mostly because it merges the author's experiences with his strong antiquarian interests.[12] That reflects a key issue in the intellectual discourse of this age, namely the revival of Byzantine Hellenism, and, as scholars have noticed, the Byzantines' identification with their Greek ancestors.[13]

Tzetzes was a significant contributor to the reinforcement of the Hellenic bonds, as he had been the first to claim Greek descent.[14] On the other

[10] M. Jeffreys, "The nature and origins of the political verse", *DOP* 28 (1974) 144-195, here 155.

[11] The chronology of Tzetzes' works is in some cases relatively exact: *Allegories on the Iliad* and *Odyssey*, ordered between 1142 and 1146, 'published' soon after 1146, *Theogony* after 1142 but before 1147; the *Histories* are dependent on his *Letters* which cover the years between 1135 and 1160. See A. Rhoby, Ioannes Tzetzes (cit. n. 9), 160 and 168.

[12] Ed. P. L. M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae historiae,* Napoli 1968.

[13] C. Jouanno, "Les Barbares dans le roman byzantin du XIIe siècle. Fonction d'un topos", *Byz* 62 (1992) 264-300; P. Magdalino, "Hellenism and nationalism in Byzantium", in *Tradition and Transformation in medieval Byzantium*, Aldershot 1992, no. 14, 1-29; D. R. Reinsch, "Ausländer und Byzantiner im Werk der Anna Komnene", *Rechtshistorisches Journal* 8 (1989) 257-274. See also P. Marciniak, "The Undead in Byzantium. Some Notes on the Reception of Ancient Literature in Twelfth-century Byzantium", *Troianalexandrina* 13 (2013) 95-111, for how the Greek classical tradition was as intensified as ever in the literature of twelfth-century Byzantium, acting as a means of creativity and cultural redefinition.

[14] Ἔγνως κατὰ μητέρα μὲν Ἴβηρα τοῦτον ὄντα·
πατὴρ δὲ τούτου Μιχαὴλ ὃς καὶ παιδεύει τοῦτον
ἐν λόγοις καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν ὡς τὸν υἱὸν ὁ Κάτων. *(Chiliads* 5.614-616)
And: Οὕτω κατὰ μητέρα μὲν ὁ Τζέτζης ἐστὶν Ἴβηρ,
κατὰ πατέρα δὲ μητρὸς καὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα
γονῆς Ἑλλάδος καθαρᾶς, γονῆς ἀκραιφνεστάτης. (*Chiliads*, 5.628-630).
See P. Gautier, "La curieuse ascendance de Jean Tzetzès", *REB* 28 (1970) 207-220, here 209, A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium* (cit. n. 2), 301-306, and R. Beaton, "Antique nation? 'Hellenes' on the eve of Greek independence and in twelfth-century Byzantium", *BMGS* 31.1 (2007) 76-95, here 90-91.

hand, he also recognises that the origins of the Byzantine empire were Roman, although in his letter to Isaac Komnenos (ep. 6, p. 9-10) and the hagiographic writing *The Life of Saint Loukia*[15] he goes as far as to equal Roman power to barbarism. His stance against the Roman component of antiquity is therefore not sharply defined, yet Tzetzes permeates his *Chiliads* with a great number of Roman stories, and admires mostly Cato the Elder (234 BC–149 BC), whom he mentions quite often. That background has already been sketched by Kaldellis,[16] however no deeper discussion has been attempted on how exactly Tzetzes elaborates his source material or what the reasons lying behind his treatment of the Roman hero might be.

In this article, I examine Tzetzes' employment of Cato in comparison to his occurrence within Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* on which Tzetzes drew.[17] I argue that the figure of the Roman hero becomes part and parcel of Tzetzes' self-projection. Furthermore, by considering the sophisticated adjustments that Tzetzes introduces to his material, I aim to cast light on the social and cultural conditions that inform his text, and show that the Graeco-Roman past is a complex medium for contemporary critique.

Although Tzetzes refers in passing to some other Plutarchan Roman heroes, for instance Marcus Cedicius from the *Life of Camillus*, ch. 14 (*Chiliads* 6.661-669), Vindicius (Οὐϊνδίκιος) from the *Life of Publicola*, ch. 4 ff. (*Chiliads* 6.513-521), or Julius Caesar from the *Life of Caesar* (*Chiliads* 3.79-85), he deals with the persona of Cato in a much more extensive and systematic way, that goes beyond the narration of historical events.[18] Tzetzes' deliberate

[15] Ed. O. Garana, "Santa Lucia di Siracusa. Note agiografiche", *Archivio Storico Siracusano* 1 (1955) 15-22.

[16] A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium* (cit. n. 2), 305-306.

[17] Tzetzes refers explicitly to Plutarch many times in his *Chiliads*, 1.823, 2.35, 3.157, 3.401, 3.880, 4.200, 4.388, 4.931, 6.513, 6.661.

[18] The same seems to be the case with Tzetzes' use of Plutarchan Greek heroes, for instance Solon. In this case, Tzetzes quotes very closely the Plutarchan original and does

focus on Cato might be explained in light of the hero's reception in Byzantium, who, contrary to his previous obscurity,[19] now features prominently in the Komnenian literature, in the works of Nikephoros Basilakes,[20] John Zonaras,[21] Konstantinos Manasses,[22] Niketas Choniates,[23] and Theodoros Prodromos,[24] as well as in the contemporary pseudo-Lucianic satirical dialogue *Timarion*.[25] Cato's figure was therefore well-known and appealing to contemporary audience, and this must have facilitated Tzetzes' identification with his model.

not proceed to any radical alterations of his source. It is obvious that Solon, unlike Cato, does not partake in Tzetzes' self-presentation in any significant ways. ep. 1.2, *Chiliads,* 4.923-931; cf. Plutarch, *Life of Solon* 5.1.

[19] Cato seems to have been much less known in the previous centuries, cited a couple of times by Georgios Synkellos (ed. A. A. Mosshammer, *Georgius Syncellus. Ecloga chronographica*, Leipzig 1984, 228, 365), in the historical collections of Constantine Porphyrogennetos (ed. C. de Boor, *Excerpta historica iussu imp. Constantini Porphyrogeniti confecta,* vol. 1, *Excerpta de legationibus,* pts. 1-2, Berlin 1903, 545, 547; ed. T. Büttner-Wobst – A. G. Roos, *Excerpta historica iussu imp. Constantini Porphyrogeniti confecta,* vol. 2, *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis,* pts. 1-2, Berlin 1906-10, 1.311, 2.225), and by Michael Psellos (ed. G. T. Dennis, *Michaelis Pselli orationes panegyricae*, Stuttgart 1994, Or. 2.210 and Or. 15.13; ed. A.R. Littlewood, *Michaelis Pselli oratoria minora*, Leipzig 1985, Or. 7; ed. D. R. Reinsch, *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia* (Millennium Studies 51), 2 vols., Berlin – Boston 2014, 7.75.5). Cf. von W. O. Schmitt, "Cato in Byzanz", *Klio* 48 (1967) 325-334.

[20] Ed. A. Garzya, *Nicephori Basilacae orationes et epistolae*, Leipzig 1984, Or. B4, p. 75; ed. R. Maisano, *Niceforo Basilace. Gli encomi per l'imperatore e per il patriarca* (Byzantina et neo-hellenica neapolitana 5), Napoli 1977, *Or.* 2.

[21] Ed. L. Dindorf, *Ioannis Zonarae epitome historiarum,* 3 vols, Leipzig 1868-70, vol. 2, 299-300.

[22] Ed. O. Lampsides, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 36, Series Atheniensis), Athina 1996, l. 1754.

[23] Ed. J. van Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae orationes et epistulae* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis 3), Berlin 1972, Or. 7, p. 56 and Or. 15, p. 158.

[24] Ed. W. Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos, Historische Gedichte* (Wiener Byzantinistische Studien 11), Wien 1974, Poem 56c, l. 13.

[25] Ed. R. Romano, *Pseudo-Luciano, Timarione* (Byzantina et neo-hellenica neapolitana 2), Napoli 1974, l. 1101, 1111, 1114.

2. Cato in Plutarch and Tzetzes

Unlike Plutarch's *Life of Cato Maior* that encompasses the description of the hero's life from birth to death, Tzetzes focuses on the education that Cato provided to his son (*Chiliads*, 3.105-234), interacting mostly with Chapter 20 of Plutarch's account.[26] The diligence with which Cato disciplined his son becomes an analogy for how Tzetzes' own father educated him.[27] The analogy derives from Tzetzes' ep. 77, dated to 1150,[28] addressed to Ioannes Smeniotes. Here Tzetzes expresses his satisfaction that Smeniotes praises him in the fine exhortation he has written for his son, and which happens to resemble Cato's exhortation to his own son. In incorporating the analogy within his *Chiliads* as to make it conform to his case, Tzetzes manipulates Plutarch's narrative, streamlining some of its points in particular.

In Tzetzes' verses, Cato introduces his son into both Greek and Roman letters (Αὐτὸς αὐτῷ διδάσκαλος γίνεται τῶν πραγμάτων | Ἑλληνικῶν, Ῥωμαϊκῶν […], 3.113-114), distorting Plutarch's discussion according to which Cato had initiated his son to Roman education alone. Plutarch in fact stresses Cato's Romanism, for instance when he refers to the hero's insistence to write out with his hand in large characters his *History of Rome* so as to make it easily accessible to his son, who would then use it as an aid to acquaintance with his country's ancient traditions (*Cato Maior*, 20.7). In a nearby chapter, Plutarch elaborates on Cato's aversion against Greek culture by reporting that Cato ordered his son not to converse with Greek philosophers (cf. 12.5-7), and mocked Socrates in particular, referring to him as a mighty prattler (23.1); the hero additionally ridiculed the school of Isocrates (23.2) and detested the import of Greek medicine in Rome (23.4-6). It is true

[26] Ed. K. Ziegler, *Plutarchi Vitae parallelae,* Leipzig 1969[4], vol. 1.1, 287-324.

[27] The education provided by a father to his son is a matter dear to Tzetzes; see ep. 62, p. 92, ep. 77, p. 114-116.

[28] M. Grünbart, "Prosopographische Beiträge zum Briefcorpus des Ioannes Tzetzes", *JÖB* 46 (1996) 175-226, here 203.

that Plutarch offers an isolated instance where it is conceded that there are signs of Greek influence on Cato's works (*Cato Maior,* 2.4)[29], but the overall picture we get from him is certainly an anti-Hellenic one. By suppressing the details of Cato's anti-Hellenism, Tzetzes appears as an advocate of the Graeco-Roman culture in which Greekness figures prominently.

In relation to the above, although Tzetzes reproduces faithfully that Cato became a reading-teacher (γραμματιστής in Plutarch, 20.6 = διδάσκαλος τῶν λόγων in Tzetzes, 3.121), an athletic trainer, and taught his son how to hurl the javelin, fight in armour, ride the horse, box, and endure heat and cold (3.122-125), following Plutarch's own order (20.6), it is striking that he refrains from mentioning that Cato also trained his son in the law (νομοδιδάκτης, 20.6), a particularly Latin field of distinction. Furthermore, Tzetzes omits two related details that show Cato's respect for the Roman custom of bathing: firstly, that Cato attended his son's bathing when he was a baby (20.4), and second, that he never bathed with his son when the latter became an adult (20.8). Tzetzes' decision to mute Roman achievements and customs from the training of Cato's son, as well as his silence over the mutual interdependence between the Greek and Roman bathing custom that occurred later on (20.8)[30] suggests a prejudice against the Roman element.

Plutarch mentions that Cato undertook his son's instruction although he had an accomplished slave, Chilo (20.5-6), but Tzetzes stresses that Cato

[29] 'Further than this, it is said, he did not learn Greek till late in life, and was quite well on in years when he took to reading Greek books; then he profited in oratory somewhat from Thucydides, but more from Demosthenes. However, his writings are moderately embellished with Greek sentiments and stories, and many literal translations from the Greek have found a place among his maxims and proverbs.' (Translation by B. Perrin, *Plutarch. Plutarch's Lives, with an English Translation*, Cambridge [Mass.] – London 1914).

[30] 'Afterwards, however, when they had learned from the Greeks their freedom in nakedness, they in their turn infected the Greeks with the practice even when women were present.' (εἶτα μέντοι παρ' Ἑλλήνων τὸ γυμνοῦσθαι μαθόντες, αὐτοὶ πάλιν τοῦ καὶ μετὰ γυναικῶν τοῦτο πράσσειν ἀναπεπλήκασι τοὺς Ἕλληνας).

did so although he had thousands of literate slaves, one of whom Salonios (3.115-116). Plutarch refers to Salonios in a subsequent chapter to indicate Cato's under-secretary, whose young daughter Cato eventually marries (24.3-9); and although Tzetzes seems to be well familiar with the niceties of the story (*Chiliads* 6.309-319),[31] he still reproduces the name of the schoolteacher as Salonios instead of Chilo. The difference in the naming is probably owed to a *lapsus memoriae* on Tzetzes' part, who often affirms his independence from books, as he was compelled to sell them due to poverty.[32]

Another significant mannerism in Tzetzes' version of Cato's story is that of the 'perspective' or 'point of view' from which each text is narrated. The Plutarchan treatment explains how the education that the son received made him the man he was, assigning praise to the son's abilities rather than his father's devotion in training him. The concluding remark of this section in Plutarch, commenting on the marriage of Cato's son to the daughter of

[31] Κάτωνι τῷ προτέρῳ μέν, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ τῷ δευτέρῳ,
Σαλώνιός τις γραμματεὺς ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς ὑπούργει.
Ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν οὐκ ἔδωκεν ἐν λόγοις ἐκπαιδεῦσαι,
ὅπως μὴ χρέος μέγιστον ἐκείνῳ χρεωστοίη.
Αὐτός δ' ἀνῆγε τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πράξεσι καὶ λόγοις.
Τῆς δὲ μητρὸς τῆς τοῦ παιδὸς τοῦ Κάτωνος θανούσης,
τῇ Σαλωνίου θυγατρὶ συζεύγνυται ὁ Κάτων.
εἰπὼν πρὸς τὸν Σαλώνιον· ἔζευξας σοῦ τὴν παῖδα;
Εἰπόντος, οὐδὲ ζεύξω δε, εἰ μή σοι βουλευθείην,
ὁ Κάτων, εὗρόν σοι γαμβρὸν ἄμεμπτον, λέξας τούτῳ,
εἰ μὴ τὸ γῆράς μου μισεῖς, τῇ κόρῃ συνεζύγη.
Τοῦ δὲ υἱοῦ πρὸς Κάτωνα φάντος τὸν φυτοσπόρον,
μή τί σοι παρηνώχληκα καὶ γάμοις συνεζύγης;
οὔκουν, ὁ Κάτων ἔφησεν, ὡς δὲ καὶ ἄλλους παῖδας
τεκνοποιήσω κατὰ σέ, ζεύγνυμαι πάλιν γάμῳ.
Τούτῳ μὲν ὥσπερ εἴπομεν, Κάτωνι τῷ προτέρῳ
ἦν γραμματεὺς Σαλώνιος, ὁ Σαρπηδὼν δευτέρῳ.

[32] Ἐμοὶ βιβλιοθήκη γὰρ ἡ κεφαλὴ τυγχάνει,
βίβλοι δ' ἡμῖν οὐ πάρεισι δεινῶς ἀχρηματοῦσιν
('My library is in my head; I own no books due to dire poverty'), *Iliad Allegories*, 15.87-88 (p. 183).

Aemilius Paulus as a prize for his military valour, is revealing: '[…] and his admission into such a family was due *no less to himself* (emphasis mine) than to his father. Thus Cato's careful attention to the education of his son bore worthy fruit'.[33] In Tzetzes, by contrast, it is the father who leaves the strongest impression, in that he claims responsibility for the son's entrance into Paulus' family by having instilled him with bravery via the education he offered: 'He (sc. Cato) educated him extremely properly in all respects, so that the general Paulus admired him so greatly as to marry him to his daughter, Tertia' (3.133-135).[34] Tzetzes' turn of emphasis strengthen the didactic standing of his own father and his important contribution to his education: 'My father has been a universal teacher to me, just as Cato the Elder had been to his son' (3.159-60).[35]

In establishing the pedagogical comparison, Tzetzes links his recollections from his earlier years to an idealised view of Cato. He narrates how his Cato-like father (himself idealised as we shall see) was engaged personally with his education and only rarely did he send him to teachers. He remembers the progress he made by the side of his father, and that a one-day training with him surpassed a monthly interaction with other tutors (3.161-164). This exaggerated remark leads him to state that his father shielded him against his enemies, rendering him another Bellerophon (a traditional slayer of monsters), a knight riding a winged horse, and another Perseus, the winged murderer of the Gorgons (3.166-168). Such statements are likely to reflect the quarrelsome nature of Tzetzes' character and the related sense of oppo-

[33] ὕστερον δὲ καὶ Παύλου θυγατέρα Τερτίαν ἔγημεν ὁ νεανίας, ἀδελφὴν Σκιπίωνος, οὐχ ἧττον ἤδη δι' αὑτὸν ἢ τὸν πατέρα καταμειγνύμενος εἰς γένος τηλικοῦτον. ἡ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἐπιμέλεια τοῦ Κάτωνος ἄξιον ἔσχε τέλος. (*Cato Maior*, 20.12)

[34] Οὕτως αὐτὸν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐπαίδευσε κοσμίως,
ὡς ὕστερον θαυμάσαντα τὸν στρατηγὸν τὸν Παῦλον
ἐπὶ Τερτίᾳ θυγατρὶ γαμβρὸν αὐτὸν ποιῆσαι.

[35] Οὕτω κατὰ τὸν Κάτωνα τὸν πρότερον ἐκεῖνον
κἀμοὶ πάντων διδάσκαλος πατὴρ ἐμὸς ὑπῆρξε.

sition that he aroused to his critics, mostly by virtue of the classical rigidity that so firmly professed.[36] In connection with this, Tzetzes goes on to say that his father also taught him how to despise worldly pleasures, as well as offices, fame, honours, and money – pursuits, as he says, that characterize treacherous men (3.169-171). These are indeed qualities of Cato the Elder that we get from independent contexts in Plutarch's *Life of Cato* (e.g. aversion to money and fame 19.1-7; against luxury 16.7), but they are not virtues that he teaches to his son in particular, as Tzetzes argues. Moreover, by transposing traits that normally belong to his Cato-like father onto his own moral self, Tzetzes renders the pedagogical analogy unnatural, especially when he claims that whoever needs to learn what kind of man Cato was, one could observe Tzetzes, who is a living portrait of Cato,[37] and not his father, as we would expect. This allusive strategy is a testimony to his resourcefulness, and I take it as no coincidence that the following line mentions along with Cato the hero Palamedes, known in mythology for his wondrous inventions and discoveries.[38]

[36] M. Jeffreys, "The nature" (cit. n. 10), 149-150, observes Tzetzes' polemical attacks against other authors, and notes that he was particularly inimical against those who did not obey to the rules of stern orthodoxy in the interpretation of classical literature. The public criticism that Tzetzes experienced is manifested in his ep. 1, p. 1-4, ep. 6, p. 12-13, ep. 12, p. 20, ep. 55, p. 77-79, ep. 69, p. 98.

[37] Οὕτω παιδεύει με πατὴρ ὡς τὸν υἱὸν ὁ Κάτων·
εἰ δέ τις καὶ τὸν Κάτωνα χρῄζει μανθάνειν οἷος,
ἐμὲ βλεπέτω Κάτωνος ἔμψυχον ζωγραφίαν […], (3.172-174)
In Seneca's *De tranquilitate animi* 16.1 Cato is called 'a living image of all the virtues'.

[38] ἐμὲ βλεπέτω Κάτωνος ἔμψυχον ζωγραφίαν
καὶ Παλαμήδους τοῦ σοφοῦ παιδὸς τοῦ τοῦ Ναυπλίου. (3.174-175)
The inventiveness of Palamedes employed here must be stemming from the following section of the *Allegories on the Iliad,* Prol. 870-874:
Ὁ Ἀχιλεὺς δὲ μάλιστα τὰς πόλεις ἐξεπόρθει,
τοῦ Παλαμήδους σὺν αὐτῷ συστρατηγοῦντος τότε
τοῦ Εὐβοέως, τοῦ σοφοῦ, τοῦ μηχανικωτάτου,
τοῦ ἀριθμοὺς καὶ γράμματα, καὶ τὸν πεσσὸν εὑρόντος,
ζυγοὺς καὶ παρατάξεις τε, σὺν τούτοις ἄλλα πόσα.

Tzetzes goes on to juxtapose his character to that of Palamedes and Cato, and in all cases justifies the moral drawbacks from which he is afflicted. Both men were free from anger, but Tzetzes attributes his own irascibility to his warmth temperament, namely to a factor that is beyond his control.[39] Another difference that he sees is that Cato was very greedy of gain (φιλοκερδέστατος, 189) and sparing (φειδωλός, 3.189), whereas he himself is not like this.[40] The alteration of the original comes into play, because Plutarch

Cf. *Allegories on the Iliad,* Prol. 899-900, 960, 968-976, 1034, 1058, and *Chiliads* 5.806-808, all passages referring to Palamedes' wisdom and inventiveness. Similarly, in his ep. 82, p. 122, Tzetzes refers to Palamedes as the inventor of the sequence of letters.

[39] […] Ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν Παλαμήδης
μηδέποτε θυμούμενος, ὡς λόγοι παριστῶσι·
τοῦτο καὶ μόνον πρὸς ἡμᾶς διάφορον ἐσχήκει,
σωματικοῖς καὶ ψυχικοῖς ὅμοιος ὢν μοι πᾶσιν,
ὡς καὶ τὴν κόμην αὐχμηρὰν ἴσην ἡμῖν κεκτῆσθαι
Ἐξ ἀλουσίας δε ἀμφοῖν τοῦτο συνδεδραμήκει
ἡμεῖς εὐχαῖται φύσει γαρ καὶ τῶν ἁβροβοστρύχων,
ὁ Κάτων δὲ διέφερεν ἡμῶν τῷ μὴ θυμοῦσθαι,
εἰ τέως οὐχὶ ψεύδονται τῶν συγγραφέων λόγοι.
Αἱ κράσεις αἱ τοιαῦται γαρ θερμαί τε καὶ θυμώδεις (3.178-187).
In the *Allegories on the Iliad,* Prol. 724-739, written before the above passage from the *Chiliads (*3.178-187), Tzetzes uses almost identical language to explain his affinity to the physical and psychic characteristics of Palamedes and Cato. He also argues that his warm and spirited temperament is the result of deficit of phlegm in his body, in comparison to the excess of phlegm in the case of Palamedes and Cato that explained their calmness and unemotional spirit (733-734). Such statements show Tzetzes' wish to explain his behaviour in medical terms. Tzetzes exhibits interest in medicine in his *Letters*: ep. 23, p. 41, ep. 36, p. 51-52, ep. 46, p. 67, ep. 92, p. 132-134. A study on Tzetzes' relation to medicine is still missing. On the other hand, as I have argued in the main text, this helps Tzetzes to imply that his temperament is not an aspect within his powers, just a given by nature. Similarly, in his commentary on Hesiod's *Works and Days* 414-422 his natural fragrance is paralleled only to that of Alexander the Great, a statement arousing his pride; in M. L. West, *Hesiod: Works and Days*, Oxford 1978, 69.

[40] The same passage in a slightly different version is found in the *Allegories on the Iliad*, Prol. 735-739:

Καὶ τῷ φιλοκερδέστατος καὶ φειδωλὸς ὑπάρχειν,
ἐμοῦ Κάτων διέφερεν, ὅμοιος ὢν τοῖς ἄλλοις.
ἐμοὶ δὲ πλέον τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τοῦ Κάτωνος ὑπάρχει

praises Cato for his frugality and self-restraint rather than rebukes him for thrift. The denouncement of money-seeking alludes to the financial setbacks that tormented Tzetzes, and his overt dissociation from Cato's purported love of money is meant to attract the benevolence and compassion of his readers. It is significant to note here that in his *Letters*, Tzetzes' financial neediness, his ἀχρημοσύνη, is again given in a positive light, as it provides him with personal freedom and self-sufficiency.[41] In similar fashion, the author returns to his irascibility, which he vindicates from public accusation by associating it with the fair wrath (θυμὸς ἐπὶ δικαίοις, 3.193) of Cato the Younger, citing the relevant episode from Plutarch (*Cato Minor* 3.3-7):[42] extremely angry at the sight of Sulla, who carried in his hands the heads of people he had slaughtered, Cato asks his tutor, Sarpedon, to give him a sword, so that he may slay Sulla and set his country free from slavery. The moral of Cato's story fits Tzetzes' purposes, who similarly wishes he could be given a sword with which to save his country from its own tyrants, the shameful priests and

τὸ μὴ κρατεῖσθαι χρήμασι. θυμὸς ἐπὶ δικαίοις
πῦρ πνέων, ὥσπερ Κάτωνι δευτέρῳ, παρυπῆρχε.

[41] Ep. 19 (p. 35): ἀλλ' ὡς ἔοικεν ἄρα τις τῆς ἀχρημοσύνης μου καταγνούς, οὐκ ἐπιγνοὺς δέ μου τὸ ἐλευθέριον, τοιοῦτον καὶ τοῖς τρόποις με ὑπετόπασεν. ἀλλ' ἄρα ὁ τοῦτο ὑποτοπάσας πολὺ τῆς γνώμης μου διημάρτηκεν. ἐγὼ γάρ, εἰ καὶ κομπηρὸν φάναι με, ὑπεροχὰς σεβαστῶν παρωσάμενος καὶ βασιλέως παῖδας τοὺς πάντας σχεδὸν μεθ' οἵων με λιπαροῦντας τῶν παρακλήσεων συνδιάγειν καὶ παραδυναστεύειν αὐτοῖς, ὀβελίαν ἄρτον ᾑρετισάμην καὶ ὕδωρ ἐσθίειν μετ' ἀπράγμονος βιοτῆς ἢ ταῖς Σαρδαναπάλου τρυφαῖς ἁβρῶς διαζῆν καὶ περιρρεῖσθαι τῷ πλούτῳ ὀχλοχαρεῖ καὶ θορυβώδει τῷ βίῳ. ἀρκεῖ γὰρ ἐλευθερίως μικρά μοι καὶ πλειόνων ἀνελευθέρως οὐ κέχρημαι. Cf. ep. 39 (p. 58): πρὸς δὲ τὸ πενιχρὸν ἐμοῦ ἀπιδὼν ὡς ἀνδραποδώδη καὶ ἀνελεύθερον ἀνελευθέροις δώροις οἴεται χαίρειν με; ἄπαγε, πολύ μου τοῦ τρόπου διήμαρτες καὶ τῆς ἐλευθεριότητος ἐπιλέλησαι, δι' ἣν ἀρχικάς τε διατριβὰς παρωσάμενος καὶ βασιλέων λατρείας, καὶ 'ἀρκεῖ μοι μικρὰ' προσειπὼν 'καὶ πλειόνων ἀνελευθέρως οὐ κέχρημαι', ᾑρετισάμην βίον τὸν πενιχρὸν καὶ ἐγγώνιον. τοιούτοις τισὶν ἀλλοπροσάλλοις ἀπεμαχόμην τοῖς λογισμοῖς. An English translation of *Letter* 39 is provided by J. Shepard, "Tzetzes' letters to Leo at Dristra", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 6 (1979) 191-239, here 192-193. Shepard offers a selective commentary and discusses issues of chronology for epp. 39, 66, 80, and 82.

[42] Ed. K. Ziegler, *Plutarchi Vitae parallelae,* Leipzig 1964², vol. 2.1, 32-92.

deacons.[43] This is his starting point for an acerbic censure against the clergy exposing their immorality (3.207-234), which he might have experienced, for instance, during his sojourn in the monastery of the Pantokrator (ep. 79, p. 117-118),[44] but about which he complained long before he settled in the monastery. What strikes one in the framework of Tzetzes' insolent registry is his obvious deviation from the model of Cato the Elder; although he assured that his only differences with the Roman hero rested on Tzetzes' liberal use of money and irascibility, we also come across his insolence, from which Cato discouraged his son, as Tzetzes himself had narrated above.[45] This should be coupled with Tzetzes' observations elsewhere that his father taught him decency and propriety in the mode of Cato the Elder.[46] Such alterations are

[43] […] ξίφος ἐμοί τις δότω,
κἀγὼ τυράννων ἀπηνῶν ῥύσομαι τὴν πατρίδα.
Κἀμοὶ θυμὸς τοιοῦτος τις ἐστὶν ἐπὶ δικαίοις,
καὶ ζῆλος μέγας Ἠλιοῦ πιμπρῶν μου τὴν καρδίαν,
ὡς ἱερεῖς ἂν ἔκτεινα κἀγὼ νῦν τῆς αἰσχύνης. (3.202-206)

[44] Many contemporary authors, such as Prodromos, Balsamon, Eustathios, and Niketas Choniates, were negatively inclined against monastic indecency. Tzetzes attacks the clergy in his ep. 14, p. 25-28, ep. 41, p. 59-60, ep. 46, p. 65-66, ep. 55, p. 75-77, ep. 57, 79-84, ep. 67, p. 96-97, ep. 106, p. 153-155.

[45] Φρουρὸς ὑπάρχων τοῦ παιδὸς ἄχρι καὶ τῶν ῥημάτων·
οὕτως αὐτὸν ἐφρούρει γαρ, ὡς ἱερὰν παρθένον,
σεμνότιμον ἱέρειαν παρθένον ἑστιάδα,
ὡς μήτε ῥῆμα πῶ ποτε φαῦλον εἰπεῖν τὸν παῖδα,
μήτε τινὰ τῶν Κάτωνος, ἐλεύθερον ἢ δοῦλον,
παρόντος τούτου τοῦ παιδὸς αἰσχρόν τι ῥῆμα φάναι. (3.127-132)

[46] Ὡς πρὶν γὰρ Κάτων τὸν υἱὸν ἐπαίδευσεν ἐν πᾶσιν,
οὕτως ἡμᾶς ἐμὸς πατὴρ ἐν λόγοις καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις
καὶ πᾶσιν ἐξεπαίδευσε σωφρόνως καὶ κοσμίως,
μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων πλέον με καταφρονεῖν διδάξας
πλούτων καὶ τύφων καὶ ἀρχῆς καὶ τῆς πρωτοεδρίας.
Ἐγγὺς πεντεκαιδέκατον τρέχοντα γὰρ τὸν χρόνον,
τὸ νέον καὶ εὐόλισθον τηρῶν τῆς ἡλικίας,
αὐτῷ με συνεκοίταζε, πᾶν παραινῶν τὸ δέον,
ᾗπερ ὁ Κάτων τῷ υἱῷ […]. (4.564-572).

not inconsistencies but emulative readings of Plutarch, which grant Tzetzes flexibility in the handling and modernisation of the original.

I have mentioned previously that in presenting Cato as a thrift man who longs for money, Tzetzes 'distorts' the hero's frugal way of living (as elated by Plutarch), in order to stress effectively his own freedom from money. The self-consciousness with which Tzetzes employs Cato is manifested in another account devoted to him, at 10.624-674 of his *Chiliads*. Here Tzetzes seems to be aware of Cato's restraint, as he describes the daily contact he kept with his household servants and his simple manners (cf. *Cato Maior*, 3.2). Tzetzes also cites the famous anecdote of Cato's encounter with Lucullus, which attests to the former's simplicity as opposed to the latter's luxury (10.631-638; cf. Plutarch, *Lucullus* 40.1-2, *Pompeius* 2.6). All the above Tzetzes adduces to persuade his readers that Cato was not a braggart (ἀτυφότατος, 10.626, ἐκ τοῦ ἀτύφου τρόπου, 10.627, τὸ Κάτωνος μὲν ἄτυφον, 10.639). He also claims to prove that Cato was totally incorruptible (ἀδωρότατος, 10.625, Ὅτι καὶ ἀδωρότατος, νῦν ἐξ ἑνός μοι μάθε., 10.640), and paraphrases an incident on the basis of which the kings of Britons sent him boxes of gold with the aim of obtaining his friendly disposition.

The incident is reported in a compressed version in *Cato Maior* 2.2, where interestingly those that sent the gold were the ambassadors of the Samnites (οἱ Σαυνιτῶν πρέσβεις) instead.[47] On palaeographical grounds it is difficult to suggest that the two readings were interchangeable.[48] On the other hand, it is also unlikely that Tzetzes recalled the Plutarchan original mistakenly, because 'Britons' is a rare word within Plutarch's biographical

[47] Cf. Tzetzes' *Scholia et Glossemata in Chiliades,* 189: Φιλοκερδέστατος ἀφιλοχρηματώτατον τὸν ἄνδρα εἰδὼς ἐκ τῶν σταλέντων ἐκ Βρεττανίας χρημάτων αὐτῷ, ἐπείσθην τοῖς ἀσκόπως ληροῦσι, φιλοχρήματον τοῦτον εἰπεῖν οἰκονομικῶς τοὺς γεγηρακότας τῶν αὐτοῦ ἀπεμπολοῦντα βοῶν; ed. P. L. M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Historiae*, Napoli 1968, 545-602.

[48] There are no common letters except for the ending of the genitive plural -ῶν.

corpus, mentioned only five times in his *Parallel Lives*.[49] The reference to Britons is a deliberate change, which facilitates Tzetzes' identification with his model figure. By suggesting that Cato's fame extended as far as Britain (10.641), he might be echoing his own statement in ep. 42 (p. 62) that his authorship is known in all four corners of the world, from Ceylon to Britain.[50] This extravagant self-praise came as a response to individuals who had attempted to pass some of Tzetzes' works as their own, for instance his funeral oration to the emperor John Komnenos or his commentary on Lykophron. Against the backdrop of the defence of his intellectual output, Tzetzes' boast too is eventually exonerated. Moreover, the adjustment of this incident from Cato's life to Tzetzes' experiences is shown in the author's admission that when one is bought by money this is not called friendship but slavery (as he claims in ep. 93, p. 135),[51] and that he has been the most honest friend without ever accepting gifts (10.659-660).[52] Here the author's comparison to Cato who was an exemplar of integrity, immune to receiving gifts, points to the relevant section from ep. 73 (p. 107). This letter (dated to 1148-1150)[53] is addressed to

[49] *Pompeius* 51.1, *Caesar* 16.5, 23.2, *Cato Minor* 51.4, *Comparatio Niciae et Crassi* 4.2.

[50] Budelmann discusses Tzetzes' strong authorial presence in his commentaries in relation to mainstream Byzantine criticism, and his relevant anxieties for plagiarism, F. Budelmann, "Classical commentary in Byzantium: John Tzetzes on ancient Greek literature" in R. K. Gibson – C. S. Kraus (eds.), *The classical commentary: histories, practices, theory*, Leiden 2002, 141-169, here 148-153.

[51] ὡς ἔοικε γὰρ ἀγνοεῖς τὰ ἡμέτερα· ὁ Τζέτζης οὔτε ἀνδράποδον εἰς δουλείαν, ἀλλ' ἐκ δουλείας ὠνεῖται […]. Tzetzes' aversion towards slavery is also seen in ep. 104, p. 150: ὁ Τζέτζης γὰρ ἔργον πλεονεξίας, ἀλλ' οὐ τῆς φύσεως εἰδὼς τὴν δουλείαν οὐκ εἰς δουλείαν, ἀλλ' ἐκ δουλείας ὠνεῖται, καὶ ἱκανήν, οἶμαι, τοῦ πράγματος αὐτὸς τὴν πεῖραν ἀπείληφας, ὅπως τὴν ἐναντίαν τοῖς ἄλλοις παρ' αὐτῷ οἱ θεράποντες φέρονται. ἐνταῦθα μὲν γὰρ ἱκανῶς ὁ δεσπότης ἀχρηματεῖ, τοῖς δὲ οἰκέταις τὸ πᾶν προσπορίζεται, οὕτω γὰρ αὐτὸς πλουτεῖν οἴεται· τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις ὅπως ἔχει δουλεία καὶ δεσποτεία, εἰ τέως αὐτὸς ἀγνοεῖς, παρ' ὅτου βούλει πυνθάνου.

[52] In similar tone, he despises gifts and the flattery that is employed to win them, ep. 75, p. 111; cf. ep. 48, p. 68-69, ep. 82, p. 122.

[53] M. Grünbart, "Prosopographische Beiträge" (cit. n. 28), 211.

Tzetzes' nephew, Ioannes Basilakes, stressing among other things that Tzetzes, in the fashion of the ancient Cato, detests gifts, and that Basilakes should therefore stop sending them to him. At another juncture, he resorts again to Cato's integrity to show that he resembled him in that he was not interested in receiving dowry, merely in securing some food for himself and his servants (11.13-19; ep. 80, p. 119-120).

Tzetzes' mastery in employing the figure of Cato is encapsulated in his concluding pride that he can elaborate numerous stories about him, not just in one or two verses but in whole books (*Chiliads*, 10.665-674). This brings him close to his spirit of vain self-advertisement in other instances in his writings; in his *Theogony* he believes that he possesses greater knowledge of the genealogy of gods and heroes in comparison to a huge number of ancient authors, including Homer;[54] he elsewhere minimises the intellectual role of Proclus in relation to his own, and curses the 'wooden' history by Thucydides elevating his own literary sweetness.[55]

3. Conclusion

By resorting to one of Plutarch's most famous Roman heroes in a period in which the *Parallel Lives* were read extensively,[56] Tzetzes proves to be at the heart of contemporary scholarly activity. The transformations he ushers in the classical text, however subversive these may look at first sight, are linked to the most peculiar features of his idiosyncrasy and bear witness to his inner thoughts, the way he wished to be seen and treated by those around him.

[54] *Theogony,* 26-33.

[55] Ed. W. B. Stanford, "Tzetzes' Farewell to Thucydides", *Greece & Rome* 11 (1941) 40-41.

[56] S. Xenophontos, "Resorting to rare sources of antiquity: Nikephoros Basilakes and the popularity of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* in twelfth-century Byzantium", *Parekbolai* 4 (2014) 1-12. Cf. A. Catanzaro, "Plutarch at Byzantium in XII century: Niketa Choniates and Plutarchan political areté in the Chronikè Diéghesis", in G. Pace – P. Volpe Cacciatore (eds.), *Gli scritti di Plutarco: tradizione, traduzione, ricezione, commento*, Napoli 2013, 111-117.

Cato's stance towards the Graeco-Roman tradition was not just an antiquarian piece of information, but a heated issue in twelfth-century Byzantine thought. Despite his unquestionable sense of Greekness which he tries to intensify in line with the general demands of his age, Tzetzes exhibits at the same time a kind of awkwardness as to how to compromise Hellenism with those traits of *Romanitas* that had inherently defined Byzantine identity up to that point. A clear pattern is difficult to decipher, but not so with his personal identity. Cato's careful profile stresses Tzetzes' family background, and especially his idealised relation to his father which is meant to confirm the quality of his education and morality at the face of malignant detractors. The past is not dead, it is an existing reality offering living portraits. Tzetzes' outlook to the past opens the path for a better understanding of ancient criticism and authorial self-projection in twelfth-century Byzantium.