Theodore Hyrtakenos’ Description of the Garden of St. Anna and the Ekphrasis of Gardens

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It is with some trepidation that scholars enter the world of the Byzantine garden. On the one hand, the garden and garden motifs are ubiquitous in Byzantine literature and art; rhetorical descriptions and extant monuments and objects provide a rich array of textual and visual examples from which to work. On the other hand, the garden, by its very nature, is part of the ephemera of the past, particularly in a conquered culture such as the Byzantine Empire; no archaeological remains of gardens have yet been excavated that would allow us precisely to reconstruct or situate the allusive paradisiacal landscapes that once ornamented the city of Constantinople or its shores along the Bosporos or Sea of Marmara. Yet the romance of the Byzantine garden has tantalized twentieth-century scholars since the early-century publication of M. L. Gothein’s Geschichte der Gartenkunst, which first appeared in 1913 (published in English in 1928), with its short description of Byzantine garden culture.1 Recently, A. R. Littlewood and H. Maguire have lamented the limitations for scholarly reconstructions in their own attempts to broaden the scope of our knowledge.2 However,

We would like to extend our great appreciation to Henry Maguire and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn for their support and always helpful suggestions and for organizing, with Antony Littlewood, the colloquium on Byzantine garden culture (November 1996) that resulted in this volume. We also thank Kenneth Helphand, Charles Lachman, Amy Papalexandrou, Alice–Mary Talbot, and the two anonymous readers for their advice and contributions to our project. Our translation of the text of Theodore Hyrtakenos benefited from the useful remarks of the participants in the Dumbarton Oaks seminar on Byzantine ekphrasis (1994–95). Finally, we are indebted to Kate McGee, a landscape architect in Eugene, Oregon, for aiding in the visualization of Hyrtakenos’ garden ekphrasis through her fine drawings illustrating this article.


2 Littlewood, “Gardens of Byzantium,” 128, and H. Maguire, “Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal,” in New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1994), 181–82. Maguire writes: “At present, our best sources of information are the texts, but if we turn to Byzantine literature for information about gardens we often find that it is extremely difficult to recon-
consultation of the secondary sources on Byzantine gardens indicates that Gothein, in fact, set forth much of the essential information that still forms the core upon which current interpretations and adumbrations are based. It is into this fray that our own contribution hastens, as we elucidate a previously neglected ekphrastic text by the early fourteenth-century literatus Theodore Hyrtakenos, the Description of the Garden of St. Anna (see Appendix 1).³

Little biographical detail is known of Hyrtakenos except that he was born on the Kyzikos peninsula and that he was a writer and teacher in Constantinople. His writings include a panegyric on the Theotokos and an encomium on the anchorite Aninas, as well as ninety-three surviving letters to various members of the elite of Constantinople, including Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, Patriarch John XIII Glykys, and Theodore Metochites.⁴ His Description of the Garden of St. Anna has excited little interest, eliciting only a terse statement from Herbert Hunger, with no further elaboration or evidence, that this ekphrasis was based on a painting seen by Hyrtakenos.⁵ Our analysis suggests otherwise: this overwrought rhetorical description positively reeks of allusions, textual and visual, that relate to the literary, artistic, and religious concerns of the intellectual milieu in which Hyrtakenos labored.⁶ Ekphrastic connection to a specific or identifiable work of art is unnecessary to maintain in order to draw on its rich texture. The multiple allusions to divergent genres, in effect, contribute to more precise definitions of late Byzantine culture, not the least of which is its sustained attraction to gardens, real or imaginary.

The text itself begins and ends with Anna, first contemplating her childless fate and, finally, receiving news of her conception of the Virgin. These very brief narrations frame the lengthy description of the garden in which Anna muses and that forms the heart of Hyrtakenos’ narrative. The obvious starting point for discussion of Hyrtakenos’ ekphrasis on the garden of St. Anna is that which inspired the framing story around the garden portrayal: an apocryphal Gospel text such as the Protoevangelion of James (1–4:2). Written to promote struct actual gardens from the written accounts. Either the texts are excessively brief in their descriptions, or else they are prolix, but at the same time opaque, rhetorical, and vague on specifics.⁷ Analysis of the focus of this study, Hyrtakenos, will only provide further proof of this characterization.


⁴ For a summation of Hyrtakenos’ life, see ODB, 2:966–67. For a discussion of his letters, see A. Karpozilos, “The Correspondence of Theodoros Hyrtakenos,” JÖB 40 (1990): 275–94. It is evident from his letters that he often asked his influential patrons for financial help and for various gifts. Letters to individuals of high status pressing for financial concessions were usual among Hyrtakenos’ contemporaries; these demands do not necessarily indicate dire need. For an assessment of the social standing of 14th-century intellectuals, see I. Sevcenko, “Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century,” Acts du XVe Congrès international des Études byzantines, Bucarest 1971, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1974), 69–92; repr. in idem, Society and Intellectual Life in Late Byzantium (London, 1981).

⁵ H. Hunger, Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner (Munich, 1978), 1:184: “Von Theodoros Hyrtakenos (14. Jh.) lesen wir noch die Ekphrasis des Gartens der hl. Anna, der Mutter Mariens, nach einem Gemälde.” Hunger’s statement has been repeated as accepted fact with no further supporting evidence in the ODB entry.

⁶ Like many 14th-century authors, Hyrtakenos’ texts and letters are replete with erudite allusions to ancient literature; see ODB, 2:967, and Karpozilos, “Correspondence of Theodoros Hyrtakenos,” 286–90.
and expand the story of the Virgin, it begins with the sad state of affairs of her childless parents, Joachim and Anna. Key to Hyrtakenos' text, and embedded in the narrative, is a bare outline of the garden to which Anna retires to lament her barren fate. Unadorned references to the disposition of the garden, the trees, animals, birds, and a source for water (possibly a fountain?) indicate a setting on which Hyrtakenos could base his much more florid description of the garden of her lamentation. The lushness of his writing conjures up the repetitions of the words fruit and fruitful found in the Protoevangelion and assigns them with more poignant meaning as they contrast with Anna's condition. Hyrtakenos does not fail to underscore the issue of fertility, or the lack thereof, in all aspects of his text, as we shall see. It is useful to address the textual insinuations and sources in his ekphrastic text before turning to an analysis of the descriptive devices and their connection to the “real” or artistic world in which Hyrtakenos functioned.

The topic selected by our author, the Annunciation to Anna, is perhaps significant in light of the relatively few textual precedents on which he could draw. Aside from the original inspiration, the Protoevangelion of James, other sources include homilies and encomia that date from the eighth through twelfth centuries. The feast of the Annunciation to Anna was a minor one in the Byzantine liturgical calendar and was not celebrated until well after the fourth century. Thus the early church fathers did not address this event in their own rhetorical works. One of the first authors to discuss Anna's annunciation is Andrew of Crete (late 7th–early 8th century) in his Kanons (although his homily has been considered spurious). Other authors who treat this event are John of Euboea (mid-8th century), George of Nikomedea (late 9th century), Patriarch Euthymios (early 10th century), Peter of Argos (late 9th–early 10th century), and James of Kokkinobaphos (12th century). It is interesting to note that the well-known homilies on the Virgin from James of Kokkinobaphos do not attempt to describe Anna's garden; the images of her annunciation found in the two deluxe illustrated versions of his text from the second quarter of the twelfth century (Vatican Library, gr. 1162, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 1208) are far more evocative than his words. His homily on the conception of the Virgin (the first of six) contains the word παραβδέασος (garden) in three passages. He emphasizes the serenity of the garden over its appearance.7


9 For instance, ἀκεφαλικὸν πνεύμα καὶ ἀπεκτύτητον τὸν τοῦ παραβδέατος καταλύμασα χαρον ("Anna came to the place of the garden, that was calm and away from the noise") (PG 127:556α); τὸν
Yet the authors of these texts, like Hyrtakenos, depended on that early source for their own descriptions and interpretations of Anna’s annunciation. Unlike Hyrtakenos, however, they chose not to highlight the physical setting of Anna’s garden through any extended ekphrasis. In fact, the two most informative texts concerning her garden are contained in the Protoevangelion and Hyrtakenos’ ekphrasis, and even the former is limited in its depiction compared to the latter. It mentions a laurel tree, birds in the branches, animals, and indicates the presence of water. The other homilies and encomia tersely situate Anna in a garden, but are silent on its characteristics or meaning.¹⁰ Thus Hyrtakenos relied mainly on the apocry-

¹⁰ One author, John of Euboea, does connect Anna’s garden to the garden of Eden, which he states was regained for mankind because the Virgin’s conception took place in a garden. See his Sermo in conceptionem sanctæ Deiparœ, PG 96:1465A: Ἰδοὺ Ἰωάκημ καὶ Ἄννα, ὁ μὲν νηστεύων ἐν τῷ ὅρμῃ, ἡ δὲ ἐν παραδείσῳ, τὸν θεῖον ἐκδυσαστικῆν, δοξολογοῦν ἔλαβον τοῦ στέφανος τῇ ὁρῇ καὶ τὸν παραδείσῳ φυτεύσαντος· Ἰδοὺ ἐν παραδείσῳ εὐφροσύνης εὐσεβέλτα, ἵνα ὁ ἁρχαῖος παραδείσου τοὺς ἀνθρώπους παραδώθη· (“Lo! Joachim and Anna, he fasting on the mountain, she in the garden, praying to God, received a vessel from the One who erected the
phal text for the basic narrative and hardly at all on other religious literature; his allusions to pagan literature are far more prominent and precise.\(^\text{11}\)

Hyrtakenos’ description of Anna’s garden sets forth several *topoi* that conform to other types of textual descriptions as well as to visual material extant from the middle and late Byzantine periods (Figs. 1, 2). Alluding to the wealth of Joachim and Anna mentioned in the *Protoevangelion*, he begins with a vivid image of the enclosure surrounding the garden (located in an estate); it is a wall made of stone in the shape of a ring and perfectly round. Atop the wall rises a double frieze, making the whole enclosure a complicated (and fanciful) but, significantly, very secure barrier from the outside world. The two most well known

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2 Istanbul, Kariye Camii, Annunciation to Anna

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\(^\text{11}\) One of his biblical references is in error—that Fenanna was childless (Boissonade, *AvecGr*, 3:69). Hyrtakenos’ allusions to classical literature give some sense of his training. The structure of the ekphrasis follows the instructions of Aphthonios by describing the garden from the outside toward the inside (from the outer walls to the fountain in the middle) and by mentioning what is inside the garden (trees, flowers, and birds); H. Rabe, ed., *Aphthonii Progymnasmata* (Leipzig, 1926), 37, lines 6–14. See also O. Schissel, *Der byzantinische Garten: Seine Darstellung im gleichzeitigen Romane* (Vienna-Leipzig, 1942), 8–9.
images of the Annunciation of Anna, the late-eleventh-century mosaic at the church of the Koimesis, Daphni (Fig. 1), and the early-fourteenth-century mosaic at the Kariye Camii, Istanbul (Fig. 2), do not indicate an enclosed garden, but a fifteenth-century fresco at the church of the Holy Cross at Pelendri in Cyprus (Fig. 3) does depict an awkward wall that encircles Anna and her house. A post-Byzantine manuscript (Προσκυνητάριον), Mount Athos, Grigoriou monastery, cod. 139 (fol. 12r; Fig. 4), has a little painting of a rectangular stone wall enclosure identified as ο Κήπος, which evidences similar arrangements in Byzantine gardens. But Hyrtakenos ensures that his enclosure has its own impregnable integrity, and does not leave to chance his audience’s understanding that Anna’s haven is protected from carnal love, a topos so often found in Byzantine romances:12

<The garden> had a surrounding wall in the shape of a ring; the shape of a ring is circular. A double frieze was raised upon the surrounding wall, soaring aloft high in the air. And each was a beautiful ornament for the other, encircling the garden in safety. One, <the frieze>, was put together with the stonecutter’s craft, so that nei-

ther the clever thief could indulge in theft, nor the one who enslaves his eyes to love could burn into carnal fire because of curious looks <into the garden>. Rid of all disturbances, it gave its mistress freedom to converse with God, whom she desired, raising her mind <to him> without distraction.13

Accordingly, the heroine is often found in a garden, awaiting her love (and awakening to it in the highly charged confines of the luscious landscape). For example, in the twelfth-century romance of Eustathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, the hero finds the eponymous and flirtatious heroine in a garden (book 4), where she welcomes and resists his sexual advances.14

In contrast, the hero of the early-fourteenth-century romance *Kallimachos and Chrysorroe* has far greater success with his conquest; Chrysorroe surrenders completely (in the “safety” of the garden) to his (and her) passion.15

And after the first or second hour of night the hired laborer ran up and crossed the garden. He approached the pavilion, went up to the curtain, and there spied the

4 'Ο κήπος. Mt. Athos, Grigoriou monastery, cod. 139, fol. 12r (photo: after S. M. Pelekanides et al., *Treasures of Mount Athos* [Athens, 1975], 1:377, fig. 484)

queen, who also saw him. She rose trembling with desire. He came to her as though on wings. Words, no matter how fair, cannot tell of the passion, the joy, the love with which they embraced. It can only be described by a tender heart. The ineffable sweetness of their kiss watered their fair but dead hearts like a river. . . . And when they had spent the greater part of the night kissing, he joyfully took Chrysorroe to bed and their bodies were united. She in turn embraced Kallimachos and they then experienced a delicious rapture beneath the trees, a rare and wondrous pleasure. Their dead hearts began to beat again in unison. Then it was that they returned to the living. Their souls, which had completely suffocated under so much passion, revived and came back to life. Streams of a fountain of joyful tears poured down. They derived much pleasure from this flood that rose from a spring of happy weeping. . . . Amidst weeping, sighs and lamentation, and through fear of the crowd, their bodies parted. The hired laborer, a laborer again, went out into the garden as if to tend the plants and put in trees.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., 75–76, verses 1950–90.
Anna, of course, is not about to confront human passion, but rather, is free to commune with the divine in an equally fertile garden, and that will lead to the “fruition” of her desires.

In addition to the wall and double frieze (as if that were not enough!), the garden was also wreathed with a “chorus of cypress trees.” Hyrtakenos informs us that these trees were configured through manmade artifice, indicating that they are topiaries. He describes the trunks of the trees as stripped bare and shaped in a conelike foliage. In another fourteenth-century romance, Belthandros and Chrysantza:

Belthandros immediately entered on his own. He saw both banks of the river variously set with white vines and red flowers of narcissus and with a covering of trees. He threw a glance up at them and saw their beauty, their pleasing symmetry

17 The comparison of the cypresses to dancing maidens is inspired by the myth recorded in the Geoponika (11.4.2), the 10th-century compilation of different authors from late antiquity; the daughters of Eteocles stumbled and fell into a well while dancing in honor of the goddesses. Gaia (earth) had pity on them, sprouting trees in their place that were as comely as the maidens.
and the graceful rise of their trunks. You would certainly have said that a carpenter had turned them smooth on a lathe, set them upright and planted them.\(^{18}\)

Examples of topiaries or what appear to be topiaries occur in middle Byzantine manuscripts such as the Gospel book, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 74 (second half of the 11th century), or the Homilies of James of Kokkinobaphos, Vatican Library, gr. 1162, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 1208, as well as in the contemporary mosaics in the Kariye Camii (Enrollment for Taxation and detail of a peacock in a garden; Figs. 5, 6). The visual evidence suggests the use of topiaries, an artificial manipulation of landscape, and an obvious attraction to the fantastical treatment of the landscape in Byzantium.\(^{19}\) That Hyrta\(\text{ke}\)nos


\(^{19}\) Littlewood also marshals visual evidence, from manuscripts in particular, as allusions to topiaries and their use in Byzantine gardens in the face of no surviving examples. He too acknowledges that the artistic renderings of trees are often imaginative and fantastically colored, which complicates the distinction between the real and the fanciful. See “Gardens of the Palaces,” 29 and figs. 1 and 2 (Paris, B.N., gr. 74, fols. 52r and 149v), and “Gardens of Byzantium,” 137 and fig. 18 (Paris, B.N. gr. 74, fol. 61r).
includes it in his ekphrasis is a critical **textual** allusion to this gardening practice reproduced in the visual material, but the modern audience cannot disentangle easily the real (that he describes from something he saw in life) from the literary/artistic allusion.

Hyrtakenos thus has already given, early in his description, ample details for us to attempt a visual reconstruction of Anna’s garden. In fact, with the help of a landscape architect, Kate McGee, we have done just that. Her drawings illustrate this essay and give a sense of the garden conception so nicely suggested by Hyrtakenos’ rhetoric. The drawings follow his text closely, and we have interpolated where necessary. In reconstructing the garden from this ekphrasis, perhaps we extend its puzzle as we take up the challenge of his description (Figs. 7, 8).

Hyrtakenos continues to speak of the science of gardening, the deliberate incorporation of human control of the landscape, in an otherwise romanticized narrative. The trees must be evenly spaced, and trees of different species must not intermingle, but be planted by kind, according to the rules of gardening. This configuration emulates the guidelines found in the *Geoponika*, as well as *topoi* established in earlier descriptions found in literary texts and in illustrated manuscripts such as the late-eleventh–early-twelfth-century menologion, Mount
Cross section of Hymnaios' garden (reconstruction drawing: Kate McGee)

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Thus the chorus of cypresses (the only non–fruit-bearing tree in this garden) is joined by choruses of mostly unspecified fruit-bearing trees (later in the text, he mentions olives, laurels, and myrtles), underscoring the fertility theme that permeates Hyrtakenos’ ekphrasis. The disposition of the trees in the garden of Anna can be visualized in the oft-cited early sixth-century floor mosaic of the basilica at Herakleia Lynkestis in Macedonia (see Fig. 14). The trees are nicely lined up in a row and by species: pine, cherry, apple, olive, two cypresses, a dead tree, pear, fig, and pomegranate. However, Hyrtakenos eloquently compares his choruses of trees to a hippodrome, so that the reader comprehends that the fruit trees, like the cypresses, encircle the garden, and are obviously terraced to conform to the hippodrome seating analogy (Figs. 9, 10). His description depicts several concentric circles of trees, the outermost being the tallest, the cypress (and thereby also removing both the least fertile and the most protective and fencelike to the outer boundary of the garden), with each successive fruit tree moving in toward the center (Fig. 8):

20 The *Geoponika’s* popularity in Byzantium is reflected in its extensive manuscript tradition. Because of its established renown, it also represents gardening practices still followed in the 14th century. Parallelisms with Hyrtakenos’ text include the instructions that the garden be fenced (10.1.1) and that plants should be arranged according to species (10.1.2); see Littlewood, “Gardens of Byzantium,” 135, and idem, “Gardens of the Palaces,” 30; see also R. Rodgers, “Herbs in the Field of the Field and Herbs of the Garden in Byzantine Medicinal Pharmacy,” in this volume, 159–175.

21 These trees are listed in most descriptions of gardens wherein the author enumerates the species. They are also attested in the *Geoponika* (book 10).

22 Littlewood, “Gardens of Byzantium,” 136. Littlewood explains (n. 30) that the dead tree has been restored as a date palm in the reconstruction drawing of the mosaic, but that a dead tree would make more sense in the context of this mosaic. See also H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park, Pa.-London, 1987), 36–40.

23 Likewise, the *Geoponika* (11.5.4) contains the advice that cypresses should be placed at the outer barrier to act in concert with it as a fence around the garden: *Δημόκριτος δὲ ἂν ἐκεῖ, ὡς ἐνδοθέν τοῦ θρηγοῦ τὴν κυπαρίσσιον δεῖ φυτεύσει, ἵνα καὶ ἐφυσαίρῃ εἰς τέρψιν καὶ περιάφρηγη γένηται* (“Demokritos says that cypresses should be planted within the enclosing wall, so that they become both something to enjoy and a fence.”). Theodore Metochites describes the contribution of the desirable, yet unfruitful, cypress to the garden next to a church in his encomium for Nicaea:

> Αὐτὸν τοῦ νεώτερου παραχώρημα ἀπαντᾶ, ἢ που πολλὴ χάρις, ὅραν ἐνθέν μὲν λειμάνοις κεχυμένους, ἐνθέν δὲ φυτῶν εὐκαρπίαν τε ὠμοί καὶ πολυκαρπίαν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἐνώπιον σαπραίαν ἐνταῦθα εἰσφέροντας· καὶ γὰρ ἄκαρπον μὲν ἀλλὰ ἱθυγένες ὢς κυπάρισσι μὲν εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἄναγγειρεν, ἢ σουκεῖν ἐτεργήνας ὑπόδεικνυε τοὺς ἐκεῖ θεολογοῦσίν, ὅπως δει τρέξεις καὶ ἀνατείνεσθαι, μετά τῆς ἀνόδου κατάβασας τὰ περίττα τῆς ὑψη ἀποθεμένον καὶ στενοχωμένον πρὸς τὴν ἀνάβασιν.

And what meets one on leaving the church, and a very pleasant thing it is, is to see on one side meadows spread out and on another an excellent and a rich growth of trees; and to see even the unproductiveness of some there make its contribution. For an unfruitful thing, yet a straight-standing one, is the cypress, which in rising even to the skies, as it seems to me, proclaims without artifice to those who meditate there the way in which they are to walk and strive upward, laying aside gradually as they go up the excess of their material part and growing thinner as they rise. (Trans. C. Foss, *Nicaea: A Byzantine Capital and Its Praises* [Brookline, Mass., 1996], 180–81.)

Immediately after the chorus of cypresses there were several other choruses of all kinds of trees, winding around <the garden> in turns, neither indiscriminately, nor in utter confusion, nor mingling the different species; and none whatsoever was barren or even declining with regard to its edible efficacy, or did not offer fruit surpassing all others of the same nature by being greatly superior. But each <chorus> was neatly arranged according to its kind and species, and knew how to differ from the others in only one thing: <the chorus situated> further behind was more elevated, while the one on the inner side would always be somewhat lower, so that it allowed for the beauty of the outer chorus to be visible, and so that all of them could see the life-giving sun. It is possible to see something similar happening in the theaters of the hippodrome, where the spectators sit together as on a ladder, beginning with the highest seats, always sitting lower in the inferior level, until they descend to the lowest level, so that it is possible <for everybody> to watch the competitors.24

This disposition of trees is echoed in sources from the late antique period through the late fourteenth century. For example, both the late antique romance Daphnis and Chloë and the twelfth-century romance Drosilla and Charikles stipulate that the non–fruit-bearing trees were placed on the outside and the fruit trees in the center.25

24 Ἐκφράσεις εἰς τὸν παράδεισον τῆς ἀγίας Ἀννῆς, in Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:64.
25 The description in Daphnis and Chloë (4.2.4) states, ἐνδόν ἦν τὰ καρποφόρα ὑπάρχοντα, καθάπερ φρονούμενα ἐξειδέθηκε περιειστεκεῖ τὰ ἄκαρπα, καθάπερ θρηγκός χειροποιητός· καὶ ταύτα μέντοι λεπτῆς ἁμαρστάς περιέθει περίβολος. (“The fruit-bearing trees were inside, as if they were guarded. The non–fruit-bearing trees were toward the outside, like an artificial fence. These were surrounded by a thin wall.”). R. Hercher, ed., Erotici Scriptores Graeci, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1858–59), 305, 17–19. The same arrangement is found in Niketas Eugenianos’ romance, Drosilla and Charikles (1.77–80): Λευμόν γὰρ ἦν ἤδιστος αὐτῆς ἐν
In addition, a fourteenth-century allegorical poem by Theodore Meliteniotes, Sophrosyne (see Appendix 2), dating later than our ekphrasis, describes a garden with trees planted in concentric circles again following this same arrangement of species. The garden is described twice, once by the heroine, Sophrosyne, and once by the narrator. The second description (verses 2334–2524) portrays a garden enclosed by a square wall, but the trees are planted in three concentric circles called “choruses.” The outside circle is formed by non–fruit-bearing trees, the next by evergreens, and the third, in the center, by those that bear fruit:

Who could talk about the garden to an assembly? Or is it clear to all of them that <the garden> is unrivaled? For all around, near the <enclosing> wall, non–fruit-bearing trees were standing in rows, as if they were a first chorus. Then, a second

12 Plan of Hyrtakenos’ fountain (reconstruction drawing: Kate McGee)
chorus, that of evergreen trees, was standing within the <chorus> of the non–fruit-bearing ones. The fruit-bearing trees were standing as a third chorus, having all the branches leaning toward the earth, and all of them nodding downward because of the weight of their fruits.27

The text also asserts that the trees are planted in pleasing symmetry and order (στοιχεῖον and κατ’ ἐυθείαν, verses 2355–57). Other details of the garden correspond variously to those found in Achilles Tattos, Makrembolites, or Hyrtaenos: fruit hang heavy from the branches, a sweet Zephyr is blowing, a pool is situated in the middle of the garden with animals and birds adorning its rim, water spouting from their mouths, and the garden is mirrored in the water of the pool. The final verses of the poem, which interpret its allegorical symbols, state that the garden of Sophrosyne is comparable to the garden of Eden (verses 2909–3062, especially 3054–59).

27 Miller, Poème allégorique de Meliténiote, verses 2335–45.
Yet all of these other cited garden ekphraseis refrain from Hyrtakenos’ degree of detail (Figs. 9, 10); his circular and stepped tree (hippodrome) arrangement (for once) does not have an obvious source in middle or late Byzantine texts. Michael Psellus, in his biography of Constantine IX (1042–55), describes the gardens of the church of St. George of Mangana in Constantinople:

All round were buildings bordered with porticoes on four or two sides and all [the grounds] as far as the eye could see (for their end was not in sight) were fit for horse-riding, and the next [buildings] were greater than the first; and in addition there were meadows full of flowers, some extending all round, others in the middle; there were water conduits that filled fountains; there were groves, some on high ground, others sloping down towards the plain; there were baths of indescribable charm.28

But is this his imaginary invention, or is he describing the plan of an aristocratic garden in Constantinople?

Hyrtakenos’ garden does not lack its requisite ornament, a fountain; he proffers an effusive illustration of this magnificent structure in the enclosure of the by-now-forgotten Anna. It is, not unexpectably, in the very center of the circle of trees (Figs. 7, 11, 12). Made of three different colored marbles, it shone brilliantly in the light of day. Porphyry, which threatens to enflame all around it, and a green and a golden stone form a tricolor scul
ture, which Hyrtakenos likens to creation (and the garden of Eden). The colors may allude to Phison, one of the four rivers of Paradise.29 The description of the fountain begins simply enough: it had a round basin (green stone) with a cylinder (golden gleaming stone) rising from the middle with a pinecone (porphyry) on top.30 Holes were drilled into the cone, seven in all, from which jets of water streamed (like the tears of Niobe). Again, it is not difficult to locate images of fountains with pinecone spouts in Byzantine art; they are omnipresent.31 Foremost are the two depictions of the Annunciation to Anna from Daphni (Fig. 1) and from the Vatican Kokkinobaphos manuscript (Fig. 15); in each, water spews forth, streaming into the basin below. The elaborate marble fountain at Daphni also reflects the multicolored appearance of its textual sister. Fountains proliferate in manuscripts of all types, such as Gospel books, lectionaries, and menologia. For example, the canon tables of

29 ονόμα το ἑνι Φισων, οὗτος ο κυκλών πάσαν την γήν Ευλατ, εκεὶ οὗ έστιν το χρυσόν το δε χρυσόν της γῆς έκείνης καλών και εκεί έστιν ο άνθρας και ο λίθος ο πράσινος (Gen. 2:11–12). The word άνθρας was understood to be a red stone in Byzantium. A reference to this stone is found in Theophrastus, άνθρας καλολίμωνος . . . έρυθρόν μέν το χρώματι; F Wimmer, ed., Theophrasti Eresii Opera Omnia, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1862), 18.
30 Littlewood briefly discusses other kinds of connections made between marble colors and patterns and the natural world in other Byzantine texts; see “Gardens of Byzantium,” 131 (and his note 21 for more sources).
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the Gospel books Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 64 (11th century; Fig. 16), Parma, Palatina Library, cod. 5 (late 11th–early 12th century), and Mount Athos, Dionysiou monastery, cod. 4 (13th century), or the headpiece of the lectionary Mount Athos, Chilandar monastery, cod. 105 (late 11th–early 12th century; Fig. 17) are surmounted by elegant and often flamboyant fountain constructions, with pinecone spouts and flanked by an array of fanciful birds and animals, again suggestive of Hyrtakenos’ confection, as well as Byzantine fondness for landscape and animal motifs.

Historical sources corroborate the existence of similar fountains in imperial and aristocratic gardens in Constantinople and its surroundings. No examination of Byzantine gardens fails to mention those few references. Constantine VII, in the Vita Basilii (85–86), describes the Mesokepion in the Great Palace precinct near the Nea Ekklesia built during the reign of Basil I (867–886). The fountains of the atrium of the Nea are described as follows in the Vita Basilii:

On the western side, in the very atrium, stand two fountains, the one to the south, the other to the north. . . . The southern one is made of Egyptian stone which we are wont to call Roman [porphyry], and is encircled by serpents excellently carved. In the middle of it rises a perforated pine-cone supported by hollow white colonnettes disposed in circular dance formation, and these are crowned by an entablature that extends all round. From all of these [elements] water spouted forth and inundated the underlying surface of the trough. The fountain to the north is made of so-called Sagarian stone (which resembles the stone called Ostrites) and it, too, has a perforated pine-cone of white stone projecting from the center of its base, while all round the upper rim of the fountain the artist has fashioned cocks, goats and rams of bronze, and these, by means of pipes, vomit forth jets of water onto the underlying floor. Also to be seen there are cups, next to which wine used to spout up from below to quench the thirst of passers by.33

32 This manuscript has been erroneously dated to the late 13th–early 14th century in S. M. Pelekanides et al., Treasures of Mount Athos (Athens, 1975), 2:393, and more recently in the catalogue for the Mount Athos exhibition in Thessalonike, Treasures of Mount Athos (Thessalonike, 1997), 247. Instead, Chilandar cod. 105 fits easily into the early Komnenian period in both its script and ornament. Moreover, it is closely allied with other abridged middle Byzantine lectionaries such as Florence, Laurentian Library, Med. Palat. cod. 244.

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Heraklea Lynkestis, Large Basilica floor mosaic, reconstruction drawing (after G. Cvetković-Tomašević, Heraklea, vol. 3, Mosaic Pavement in the Nunnery in the Large Basilica Heraklea Lynkestis [Bitola, 1967])
Thus the two fountains were located in an enclosed space on the north and south sides, one porphry and one marble; both sported a pinecone spout from which water spewed, similar to that of Hyrtenos (and given visual reality in the second quarter of the 12th-century Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzos, Mount Sinai, St. Catherine’s monastery, cod. 339, fol. 4v; Fig. 18). Other fountains recounted with lesser detail include the Mystic Fountain of the Trikonchos palace, which is described as bronze crowned with a silver and gilded cone, and fountains in the Aretai palace.34

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15 Annunciation to Anna. Vatican Library, gr. 1162, fol. 16r
(photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)

εξερευγόμενοι καὶ οίον ἐξεμοῦντες κατὰ τὸ τῆς φιάλης ὑποκειμένον ἐδαφὸς, ἐνθα καὶ κύλικες ὀρῶνται, περὶ ᾧ τότε οἶνος ἀνεβλύζε κάτωθεν, τοὺς παριώνας ποτίζον καὶ δεξιοῦμενος. Theophanes Continuatus, Vita Basilii, 85, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 327 (line 4)–328 (line 2).

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poem of John Geometres (translated by Maguire), the presence of fountains is attested, but they are not described. The Mystic Fountain is described in Theophanes Continuatus, *Vita Theophili*, 43, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn ed. (1838), 141–42 (lines 10–16), trans. Mango, *Art of Byz. Empire*, 162. A contemporary, and correspondent of Hyrtakenos, Theodore Metochites, wrote a poem concerning his palace and its gardens. It contains a slight reference to the presence of fountains spouting water and a beautiful decorated pool. A portion of the garden grounds was encircled with a path (similar in idea to Anna’s garden?); R. Guilland, “Le Palais de Théodore Métochite,” *REG* 35 (1922): 82–95. For an abridged, but more accurate translation of Metochites’ text, see Mango, *Art of the Byz. Empire*, 246–47. In addition to Metochites’ poem describing his estate garden, in his encomium for Nicaea, he may also allude to fountains in his description of a church garden in that city. He mentions the water in the garden, that which comes from nature and that which comes through artifice. See his *Nikæos* in Sathas, MB, 1:147–48; and the recent edition and translation by Foss, *Nicaea*, 180–181. But he does not suggest that the fountains or water sources in either of his texts included automata.
Although Hyrtakenos’ fountain had an obviously decorative function, he still suggests that its water irrigated the surrounding plants (maintaining a link to the science of gardening), and it provided a pool in which the fish he describes could swim: “At one point there was as a landmark a fountain that could both reserve water and gush it forth, occupying the place of the center, as if setting up to view evenly all the lines flowing from the center toward the periphery and again rebounding toward the center.”

However, he reserves his greatest enthusiasm for the sculptural features of the marble basin at the heart of the fountain (Figs. 11, 12). No simple, smoothly curved bowl was this. Instead, according to Hyrtakenos, the artist has created an assemblage of bounding lions, leaping leopards, and swaying bears that are so lifelike they could frighten an onlooker. In addition, carved birds are perched on the basin and, he alleges, appear to drink from the water. As he rhapsodizes:

35 Έκφράσεις εἰς τὸν παρόδους τῆς ἀγίας Ἁγίας, in Boissonade, AnecGe 3:61. In the reconstruction drawing inspired by Hyrtakenos’ description, the fountain has been positioned in the center with streams of water running from four sides. This divides the circular garden into four quadrants; the four streams could suggest the four rivers of paradise (and fit with Hyrtakenos’ paradisiacal allusions); one opening into the garden is indicated in the drawing according to his stress on the idea of protective enclosure (see Fig. 7).
The bounding of lions, the leaping of leopards, and the swaying of bears, as well as the images of other wild animals that the craftsman had excellently carved, were so close to moving that the beholder wished he could withdraw somewhere far away, lest the beasts suddenly leap on him and tear him to pieces.

These very things were on the fountain, around the outside surface. Around the rim <the craftsman> had shaped and positioned birds as admirable as a myth would describe the eagle on the scepter of Zeus, to the point that they seemed to dip their beaks and drink from the water, and would almost fly away, if anyone approached.36

36 Ἐξάφρασις εἰς τὸν παράδεισον τῆς ἁγίας Ἀννης, in Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:62–63.
Birds of different species (and one assumes of many hues) fly about the cylinder as they spread their wings in flight (Figs. 11, 12). But Hyrtakenos does not permit his ekphrasis to stand on its own eloquence; he compares the artist’s handiwork to Apelles and depreciates his own poor attempts at description by invoking the eloquence of Demosthenes(!) (“It takes the eloquence of Demosthenes to describe how well they imitated nature.”) Nevertheless, unidentified, yet underlying his fountain ekphrasis, are any number of other textual and historical sources. Aside from his literary prowess, Hyrtakenos here suggests his knowledge of complex mechanical devices invented to entertain and flabbergast that have a long history, real and fantastical. Hyrtakenos’ fountain is more than a sculptural assemblage; his account implies that this fountain was an automaton. Although it is unclear from his description whether the bounding lions, leaping leopards, and swaying bears, which were so lifelike, were part of a mechanism that caused them to move about, yet the birds conform to similar descriptions of objects known to be automata. Hyrtakenos’ fountain certainly alludes to a connection with automata, even if implicit rather than explicit in his choice of descriptive words. The heroine’s garden in the fourteenth-century romance, Byzantine Achilleis, includes a fountain with a pool adorned with statues of lions and leopards, with water spurring from their mouths, breasts, heads, and ears. Historical narratives reveal that there were automata in the Great Palace at least in the ninth and tenth centuries. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913–959), in his Book of Ceremonies, mentions three automata related to the “throne of Solomon” in the imperial court. They include trees with singing birds, roaring lions, and moving beasts. The western ambassador and chronicler Liudprand of Cremona also alludes to automata in the palace with lions and singing birds in his memoirs of his trip to Constantinople (949): In front of the Emperor’s throne was set up a tree of gilded bronze, its branches filled with birds, likewise made of bronze gilded over, and these emitted cries appropriate to their different species. Now the Emperor’s throne was made in such a

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37 Hyperbole of this sort is typically found in Byzantine literature as a technique to emphasize the nature of the beauty described (human, object, or landscape) and to bring some luster to the author through the backdoor association with literary luminaries of the past. See R. Beaton, The Medieval Greek Romance, 2d ed. (London–New York, 1996), 22–29 and 65–69; and Betts, Three Romances, xxviii. The invocation of the famous Apelles stresses the closeness to nature achieved in this manmade fountain. See also S. Bann, “Zeuxis and Parrhasius,” in The True Vine: On Visual Representation and the Western Tradition (Cambridge, 1989), 27–40. Bann repeats the famous passage from Pliny concerning the Greek painter Zeuxis and his “lifelike” painting of grapes (which could deceive birds) and discusses the tradition of ekphrasis.


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cunning manner that at one moment it was down on the ground, while at another it rose higher and was seen to be up in the air. This throne was of immense size and was, as it were, guarded by lions, made either of bronze or wood covered with gold, which struck the ground with their tails and roared with open mouth and quivering tongue. Leaning on the shoulders of two eunuchs, I was brought into the Emperor’s presence. As I came up, the lions began to roar and the birds to twitter, each according to its kind, but I was moved neither by fear nor astonishment. . . . After I had done obeisance to the Emperor by prostrating myself three times, I lifted my head, and behold! the man whom I had just seen sitting at a moderate height from the ground had now changed his vestments and was sitting as high as the ceiling of the hall. I could not think how this was done, unless perhaps he was lifted up by some such machine as is used for raising the timbers of a wine-press.40

Several Byzantine chroniclers give evidence for automata at the court of Emperor Theophilos (829–842) and the destruction of them under his successor, Michael III (842–867), suggesting that by or during the time of Constantine VII more automata had been constructed for the palace confines.41 Unfortunately, historical sources contemporary with Hyrtakenos were apparently silent on this issue. There is more extant evidence of a fascination with fantastic devices in the Islamic world. For example, ‘Abbāsid palaces in the ninth-century capital of Samarra may have had automata, and there survives a Muslim account of the visit of two Byzantine ambassadors to the ‘Abbāsid court in Baghdad (917) that remarks on their amazement at the sight of a lavish artificial tree with singing birds placed in a pond.42 Yet it is important to bear in mind that in both cultures such contraptions were

41 Theophanes Continuatus, Vita Michaelis, 21, Bonn ed. (1838), 173 (lines 6–10). For further bibliography see Littlewood, “Gardens of the Palaces,” 32 n. 139.
42 R. Ettinghausen, “Introduction,” in The Islamic Garden, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture 4, ed. R. Ettinghausen and E. B. MacDougall (Washington, D.C., 1976), 3–4. A succinct discussion of Islamic automata with useful references is found in Y. Tabbaa, “The Medieval Islamic Garden: Typology and Hydraulics,” in Garden History: Issues, Approaches, Methods, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture 13, ed. J. Dixon Hunt (Washington, D.C., 1992), 322–29. Tabbaa suggests a development in Islamic garden design that moves from the use of more fantastical devices, in its early period, to the more tempered use of hydraulics both to enhance the aesthetics of the design and to produce virtuoso effects with water (329). See also Littlewood, “Gardens of the Palaces,” 32, with further references to the 10th-century visit of Byzantine ambassadors to the ‘Abbāsid capital at Baghdad described by the historian Khāṭīb al-Baghdādī. The issue of automata in the Byzantine and Islamic realms highlights the complex relationship that exists between these two cultures in terms of influences in each direction. It has been tempting to surmise that Byzantine garden design was dependent on Islamic schemes, mostly because more has survived and there are more extant text descriptions to muster for evidence from the Islamic world. Yet the Islamic court is known to have purposely imitated Byzantine palaces (why not gardens too?). Barber aptly confronts the problem of direction of influence between these two cultures in “Reading the Garden,” 2–5; Littlewood also alludes to it in “Gardens of the Palaces,” 25. For discussions and descriptions of Islamic gardens, see Tabbaa (cited above) and the essays in The Islamic Garden and Les Jardins de Islam/Islamic Gardens, Proceedings, 2nd International Symposium on Protection and Restoration of Historical Gardens, International Council of Monuments and Sites, 29 October–4 November 1973, Granada, Spain (Granada, 1976). Literary descriptions of Islamic gardens are collected in M. J. Rubiera, La arquitectura en la literatura árabe (Madrid, 1981).
based on the same principles devised by engineers of late antiquity such as the first-century A.D. inventor Heron of Alexandria, who wrote two works, Pneumatika and Peri automatopoietikes, describing wonderful mechanical devices. In 1206 the Artuqid sultan, Našir ad-Dīn Mahāmūd (1200–1222) ordered a book on automata from his engineer al-Jazar, Book of Knowledge of Mechanical Devices (Kitāb fi Maʿrifat al-Ḥiyal al-Handasiya). Fourteenth-century illustrated copies of this text provide delightful images of fanciful devices, which may approximate their appearance in Byzantium, such as an elephant clock, or a hand-washing device in the form of a servant pouring water from a pitcher, which is driven by a complicated hydraulic system.

Closer to home and more consequential is the insertion of automata into the garden descriptions of the twelfth- and fourteenth-century romances. For instance, in Hysmine and Hysminias (1.5–6), Makrembolites portrays a multicolored marble fountain with a gilded eagle, with wings spread, spurring water from its beak at top, and beneath the eagle a goatherd milking a goat, a hare washing its chin, and various birds that also spurt water from their beaks and sing. Also from the second half of the twelfth century is the romance by Niketas Eugenianos, Drosilla and Charikles (1.91–104), containing an analogous albeit more cursory description of a garden fountain with automata.

Contemporary with Hyrtakenos, the romance Belthandros and Chrysantza provides a protracted and lively enumeration of an

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45 R. Ettinghausen, Arab Painting (New York, 1977), 93–95. The image of the elephant clock is from a manuscript in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.51.23. The image of the hand-washing/servant device is from a manuscript in the Freer Gallery, the Automata of al-Jazar, acc. no. 30.75r; see E. Atil, Art of the Arab World (Washington, D.C., 1975), 110.

46 Schissel, Der byzantinische Garten, 25–28; Littlewood, “Gardens of Byzantium,” 147. The birds Makrembolites names are a swallow, a peacock, a dove, a turledove, and a cock. For the description of the fountain, see R. Hercher, ed., Erotopi Scriptores Graeci, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1858–59), 163.3–164.9. Passages will be quoted according to Hercher’s text. Another edition of Makrembolites’ romance (with the same book and chapter divisions) is I. Hilberg, ed., Eustathii Macrembolitae protonobissimi de Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus (Vienna, 1876), 1.5.4–6.

47 Eugenianos states only: “in the middle of the beautiful spring stood a circle of well-hewn statues of white marble. The statues [ἀνθρώπινες implies statues of men rather than beasts; Eugenianos may have used the word ἀνθρώπινες to avoid repeating the word ἡμάτα in the previous verse] were the works of Phidias and the opus of Zeuxis and Praxiteles, men excellent in sculpting statues.” (λευκών δὲ πετρῶν τὴς κολύης πιγῆς μέσων/αγάματον ἐστηκεν εὐξέτους κύκλος/οἱ δὲ ἀνθρώπινες ἔσθιν ἐργα Φείδιου/καὶ Ζεύξιδος πόντημα καὶ Πραξιτέλους/ἀνθρῶπινα εἰς ἐγαμαμτουργίαν.). Conca, De Drosillae et Chariclis Amoribus, 1.100–104; for the garden in general, 1.77–104 (pp. 35–37) and for the fountain and automata, 1.91–104. See also Schissel, Der byzantinische Garten, 30.
The automaton fountain observed by Belthandros when he entered Eros’ castle, which featured a griffin with water spouting from its mouth:

He [Belthandros] then came upon a remarkable fountain whose water was as cold as snow. The beauty which the fount of the cupids possessed in boundless measure, I am wholly at a loss to describe. A carved griffin was standing there with extended wings and its back arched to a level with them. Its tail was bent round to its head. In its front paws it held a beautiful round basin carved from a precious stone. Water came from its mouth and flowed into the basin without the smallest drop falling down to the ground. For some time Belthandros stood contemplating the griffin’s construction and the strange property of the water. How was the water, which came from the griffin’s mouth, held in the small basin, which had no aperture at all? Or did the water change direction to escape? But how could the water flow back from the basin’s lips? He marveled at where the water went. Suddenly the griffin stamped away from where it was standing, crossed the river and stood there.48

The author narrates Belthandros’ wonderment at the sight, querying how the water worked its way from the griffin’s mouth to the basin and back again. Most remarkable was the sudden escape of the griffin, who crossed the river and stood opposite, a moment in the narration that may serve to stress the feat of mechanical engineering that enlivened the beast. The later romance by Meliteniotes, Sophrosyne, similarly portrays an automaton fountain:

In the very middle of this Garden there was a pool of generous width, having little depth toward the bottom. It was an indescribable structure made with rock crystal of the most pure whiteness. On the lips of this admirable pool stood a chorus of numerous birds and animals, also hewn in rock crystal. The mouths of these animals and birds were opened by some kind of mechanical device. Some were receiving the streams of water in their feet through some pipes, and were again spitting them forth through their mouths inside the pool, pouring like a spring.49

Thus the romances indicate that the inclusion of fountain automata was a critical topos in the ekphrases of gardens, bolstering the possibility that Hyrtakenos’ construction may well allude to such fantastic devices. From the resemblances between Hyrtakenos’ description of the fountain in the garden of Anna and those of the literary texts, a context can be adduced for our author’s literary construction. It proffers mounting evidence that Hyrtakenos in part relied on romance literature as a means to construe an appropriate environment for Anna that could only intensify the significance of her lamentable situation. It is also the case for both Hyrtakenos and the romance authors that allusions to earlier writers further bolstered their own positions as they relentlessly demonstrated their erudition, as we have

49 Miller, *Poème allégorique de Meliténiote*, verses 2390–2405.
Heron of Alexandria provides useful narrations of automata and, in particular, has apt descriptions of garden fountains with similar features to our text and the various romances. Heron's works give detailed information concerning the mechanical workings of these devices. One is a basin with a bird on its rim as if about to drink, and other more complex assemblages have birds in trees perhaps singing and with some drinking from the fountain basin. All of these automata bear some similarity to those described in the later Byzantine texts, particularly Hyrtakenos' ekphrase of Anna's garden (Figs. 19, 20). Curiously, but without the mechanical paraphernalia, a headpiece in a fourteenth-century lectionary, Mount Athos, Dionysiou monastery, cod. 13, fol. 2r (Fig. 21), displays a large fountain basin with two oversized birds dipping their beaks into the water that may be a visual reflection of automata-like fountains.

Visualization of fountain automata does not occur in the most likely visual sources for Hyrtakenos' garden of Anna: the images of this scene at Daphni (Fig. 1), the two Kokkinobaphos manuscripts (Fig. 15), and Kariye Camii (Fig. 2) present varying degrees of complexity in the structures of the garden fountains without mechanical additions. Moreover, the contemporary fountain image at Kariye Camii is the simplest one of them all: it has a square basin on a base with water flowing from a lion spout into a rectangular basin at a slightly lower level. Renditions such as these imply that sources from the visual arts did not play as much of a role in Hyrtakenos' garden creation as did those from the literary (and possibly historical) realm.

Hyrtakenos does not end his ekphrase with the stupendous fountain automaton/construction in Anna's garden (Figs. 7, 11, 12). Continuing his narration laden with allusions in all directions, he describes an assortment of multihued birds flying or singing their sweet songs in the trees. He names four species: nightingale, parrot, peacock, and swan, but fails to mention the sparrows of the Protoevangelion. In fact, none of the sources that discuss this

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19 Automaton (Heron of Alexandria), reconstruction drawing (after W. Schmidt, Herons von Alexandria: Druckwerke und Automatentheater [Leipzig, 1899], 1:89, fig. 16)
event allude to the sparrows found in that text. The appearance of Anna’s garden is indirectly described in her lament wherein she compares her own barrenness with the fruitfulness of her surroundings. Once again, James of Kokkinobaphos does not supply a depiction of the specific features of her garden, omitting mention of the birds or water present in the Protoevangelion. All of these birds are mentioned in different combinations in earlier garden descriptions, and some of them, such as the nightingale and peacock, inhabited real Byzantine gardens. For example, Achilles Tatios mentions the parrot, peacock, and swan, and the

51 James of Kokkinobaphos, PG 127:560bc:

Πολύφορος ἡ γῆ τῆς ἁθονίαν διηνεκέος κατὰ τὸ σὸν ἐπικομίζουσα πρόσταγμα: καρποφοροῦσι λειμώνες καὶ τὰ εὐευδή τῶν φυτῶν ἀνθοφορεῖ βλαστήματα, καρπῶν τε καίριον ὁμοῦ καὶ ἴδιοτον προβάλλοντα, καὶ τῇ τῶν μετεχόντων εὔχαριστία σοι τὴν δοξολογίαν ἀναφέρουσι: τούτων ἔγετό τῆς χάριτος ἁμέτοχος, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῷ μη κατ’ ἄξιον συναρπαθεῖσθαι τούτως, δημιουργήσατε γε οὕτων ἀγαθότητος τῆς σῆς, ἐκείνην καταψηφίζομαι. (“The earth is prolific, because it constantly brings plenty, according to your command. The gardens bear fruit and the comely offshoots of plants flower, and they produce most pleasant and timely fruit, and offer praise to you through the gratitude of those that taste them. I do not partake of their grace, since I am not even worthy of being numbered among them, the creations of your goodness; I therefore find myself guilty.”)

As noted previously (note 7), James’ text (which has the advantage of surviving in two illustrated versions) is copying from the earlier homily (III) of George of Nikomedea, PG 100:1393c–1396a.
Geoponika (book 14), which discusses the upkeep of domesticated birds, only mentions the peacock from Hyrtakenos’ group. Hyrtakenos displays some ignorance of parrots and swans, since he claims that they were singing; his description of them is most likely based on literary antecedents. In a finishing poetic flourish, Hyrtakenos signals the presence of elegantly arranged flowers: a rose, a lily, violets, narcissus, lotus, hyacinth, and silphium:

The rose emerged delightful, setting the bud ajar. The lily sprang forth sweet, breaking through the pregnant womb. The violet frisked splendidly, like an infant bounding without its swaddling clothes. The beautiful narcissus was twisting with desire. The “dewy lotus,” as a disciple of Homer might call it, as well as the crocus and the hyacinth were dancing around elegantly. Silphium was smiling charmingly, admired

52 Peacocks, swans, and parrots are mentioned in Achilles Tatios’ Leukippe and Kleitophon (1.15.7–8, 2d century A.D.):

The singing of parrots is described in Digenes Akrites (Escorial, verses 1657–59; see the recent edition and translation by E. Jeffreys, Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions, Cambridge Medieval Classics 7 [Cambridge, 1998], 360–61), and Meliteniotes’ Sophrosyne (verse 2517). Lyrical descriptions of preening peacocks, browsing swans, and singing parrots in a garden context are also found in the Grottaferrata version of Digenes Akrites (6.21–28 and 7:31–41; Jeffreys, Digenis Akritis, 152–55 and 204–5). Schissel, Der byzantinische Garten, discusses the dependence of Digenes Akrites on Achilles Tatios (10–21), for example: "Several kinds of birds lived in the grove—tame peacocks, parrots and swans; the parrots hung on the branches and sang, the swans browsed for food in the water, the peacocks paraded their wings among the flowers’ colors in their wings.” (6.21–26; Jeffreys, 152–53). Sophosyne also echoes Achilles Tatios’ romance in imagery and vocabulary. In John Eugenikos’ encomium to a plane tree, he exaggerates that a parrot and fourteen other species inhabit its foliage (J.F. Boissonade, Anecdota Nova [Paris, 1844; repr. Hildesheim, 1962], 334). Hyrtakenos’ knowledge of swans was probably based on literary sources, and he may have been misled by passages such as the one in the romance Daphnis and Chloe (2.5.1, usually dated to the 2d century A.D.), which describes the voice of Eros in the garden of Philetas: "At this point he laughed loudly and made an utterance which was neither like a swallow, nor like a nightingale, nor like a swan becoming as old as myself.” Swans sing once, just before they die. Hercher, Erotici Scriptores Graeci, 1:265.1–2.
more than others. The Beauties were laughing, the Delights were leaping, the Muses were chanting, the Nymphs were accompanying their song with the lyre; "nor did they lack aught of the beauteous lyre that Apollo held," "while the player struck the chords in prelude to his sweet lay."  

Personified, symbolic, and studiously connected to classical predecessors, they intensify the luxuriant disposition of the garden and how the individual confined inside would experience it.

Struggling mightily, Hyrtakenos finally returns to the crucial focus of the narrative, Anna and her annunciation. He proclaims as he synopsizes:

54 A 12th-century anonymous work analyzes individual trees and plants according to their symbolic and virtuous nature; see M. H. Thomson, ed. and trans., The Symbolic Garden: Reflections Drawn from a Garden of Virtues, a Twelfth Century Manuscript (North York, Ont., 1989), 16–126. The rose is the most popular flower in garden descriptions, and the lily, violet, narcissus, and hyacinth are also frequently enumerated. The Geoponika (10.1.3) advises gardeners to plant roses, lilies, violets, and crocuses among the trees because of their appearance, smell, and usefulness, as well as because they are income producing and beneficial to bees.
Why should one enumerate the olive groves and the vineyards, the laurel and myrtle groves, the beds of the plants, the appearance of cultivated trees, the attributes and qualities of the fruits, as well as their beauty and magnitude, the bursting of transparent springs and the bubbling up of the sweetest waters, the clear songs of birds that are not inferior to the charms of music, and the other things, each one of which is worth talking about and narrating, <why should one> spend time describing them? Especially since they did not offer the slightest consolation to Anna, though they were so lovely and wonderful. For, once a soul has experienced sad ideas and is brought down by grief, it does not easily want to look up nor to change mood. Rather, like a ship dipped in a billow and sunk by an influx of waves one after the other, it cannot shake free and rise from the surface. In any case, she was not well disposed toward anything pleasant. But, whence she might <derive> some repose, therefrom she rather stored up burdens of misfortune, and anything sweet she deemed as “good for nothing.”

In other words, as Hyrtakenos elaborates further, the wonders, sights, and smells of this luscious paradise are all lost on Anna (as is Hyrtakenos’ rhetorical prowess), so absorbed was she in her lament with which the description began. Amidst this fertile environment, Anna’s barren state is all the more evident. But, all is not lost, in fact, because it is within the sensual potency of this setting that Anna symbolically re-loses her virginity. For the Archangel Gabriel (“who knows how to release the fetters of barrenness”) appears to Anna and triggers her conception of the Virgin; the hapless Joachim, brooding in the wilderness, contributes little to this desired event.

Within his ekphrasis on the garden of Anna, Hyrtakenos constructs multiple layers of meaning in his narrative. The story of Anna herself is simple enough; he leads the reader into her lamentation and exits through her annunciation and conception. The garden description, however, functions in a variety of ways for the audience by providing a highly charged context for an important religious moment. Hyrtakenos founds his ekphrasis on the modest narrative in the Protoevangelion of James, but he broadens its scope through the vivid presence of the garden and through the orchestrated erection of literary allusions, ancient and Byzantine. The idea of παραδείσος, of course, goes back to the original paradise, the garden of Eden (“Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden away to the east, and there he put the man whom he formed. The Lord God made trees spring from the ground, all trees pleasant to look at and good for food; and in the middle of the garden he set the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Genesis 2:8–9), which Hyrtakenos does not fail to mention in his text, “But whence had the transplanting of those unwithering plants come? Whence the water of the leaping springs? Clearly, indeed, from Eden and the Euphrates [one of the four rivers of Eden].”

Similarly, Eden and the Euphrates are invoked in the early romance Digenes Akrites in book seven:

55 Ἐκφρασθεὶς εἰς τὸν παραδείσος τῆς ἁγίας Ἀννῆς, in Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:68.
56 Ibid., 3:67.
after he had bravely subdued all the frontiers, capturing very many cities and rebellious districts, chose to settle close to the Euphrates. This river was the loveliest of all, with its source in the great Paradise itself; because of this it has a most fragrant sweetness, and a coldness from recently melted snow. Channelling water from this river, he planted another delightful pleasure garden there, a remarkable grove, truly a good sight for the eyes. There was a wall around the grove, high enough, with four sides of smoothed marble.57

Hyrtakenos’ text, like many with romantic pretensions, also implies an association with the Song of Songs. The garden plays a familiar role in this biblical text, full of fervent fertility with its flowers, fruit trees, and singing birds. It is the paradigm for the enclosed garden of the romances, of Anna, and of the Virgin (“My sister, my bride, is a garden close-locked, a garden close-locked, a fountain sealed.” [Κήπος κεκλεισμένος ὁδελῇ μου νύμφῃ, κήπος κεκλεισμένος, πηγὴ ἐσφραγισμένη, 4:12]). In the West, late medieval (ca. 1400) Virgin iconography developed an image of the Annunciation to the Virgin that positioned her in an enclosed or walled garden with flowers (lilies, violets, and roses), often with a fountain, based on the words of the Song of Songs.58 The imagery clearly reflects the type of depictions, verbal or visual, that in Byzantium were associated with Anna (Figs. 1, 2, 15). In contrast, the Byzantine Annunciation to the Virgin does not evolve into a popular portrayal of her in an enclosed garden with a fountain. Instead, she is usually depicted in front of an architectural structure as the Archangel Gabriel approaches. Nevertheless, garden imagery does appear in the Virgin annunciation scenes to varying degrees, as for example, in the famous Annunciation icon at the monastery of St. Catherine’s, Mount Sinai (Fig. 22). Trees, flowers, and birds with their wings spread or perched in the trees enhance the event and underscore the relationship of her annunciation with the fecund period of spring. Even enclosures and fountains or wells are included in some instances, but as part of the background, not as a confining space for the Virgin.59 Aside from its obvious metaphorical

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57 Jeffreys, Digenis Akritis, 7.5–16, 202–3.
59 For a useful summary of Byzantine Annunciation iconography and its relationship to ekphrasis, see H. Maguire, Art and Eloquence in Byzantium (Princeton, N.J., 1981), 42–52. Maguire analyzes different versions of the Annunciation in conjunction with textual sources that use metaphorical description to connect the Virgin to the idea of renewal and fertility. Near in time to Hyrtakenos, Isidore, archbishop of Thessalonike, uses an ekphrasis of spring in his Sermo in annuntiationem Beatae Virginis Mariae (Sermon III), PG 139:112d.
intent, all of this seasonal simulation is appropriate for the Annunciation to the Virgin, a feast day celebrated in spring (25 March).

It is useful to remember that the Annunciation to Anna was celebrated on 9 December, not a time of year associated with either fertility or renewal. It becomes imperative, then, to fabricate a most fruitful garden as a counterpoint to that seasonal dilemma, again to enhance the significance of this event. Accordingly, aside from its calculated proximity to topoi in the Virgin’s Annunciation, Hyrtaenos’ overabundant garden representation contrives to situate Anna in an unmistakable equivalence to her daughter. From the Protoevangelion of James to the Description of the Garden of Anna, the texts expanding the narrative of the life of the Virgin strive to increase her purity and holiness. Her virginity at the conception of Christ is declared in the canonical Gospel texts, but her status is heightened through the escalation
of her mother’s status. Her un-virgin mother whose womb God has shut up dons her bridal garments and becomes like a virgin again; she too can partake of a divine intervention that insures a pristine conception of the Virgin. A further reference to virginity may be found in the pinecone spout with its seven orifices at the top of the fountain. Byzantine writers attached meaning to the number seven, referring to it as ἀμήτορ (without a mother) and παρθένος (virgin) because it is the only single-digit number that can be neither divided by nor divide another single-digit number. Hyrtakenos’ descriptive detail may have been a subtle, but deliberate, attempt to enhance Anna’s status for her virginlike conception of her daughter.

Therefore, another one of the multiple layers of meaning in Hyrtakenos’ ekphrasis is intertwined with romance literature. We come back to that very daunting circular barrier that encloses Anna’s garden (Figs. 7, 9). With the circles of trees, it seems a particularly potent protective construct, and its presence aligns itself with the many enclosures found in the Byzantine romances and ancient literature. As A. R. Littlewood and C. Barber have pointed out, in the romances the garden is a metaphor for woman; she is sequestered securely behind its walls. In Hysmine and Hysminias and Kallimachos and Chrysorroe, for example, the heroines await their lovers in an enclosed garden. The walls of the gardens, at least for Hysmine, stand for her virginity, yet the abundant plant life refers to the heroine’s fertility and ability to reproduce. Likewise, within his version of the apocryphal narrative,
Hyrtakenos has engineered an enclosure for Anna, in the same vein, that simultaneously suggests a heroine-as-virgin role and provides the agency for her pregnancy by divine intervention (or by the gardener/male). His use of the staunch barrier only augments her claim to an undefiled conception and is a necessary construct in her case, unlike that of her daughter (who really does not need to be in an enclosure for the conception of Christ). His dependency on topoi associated with the romance heroine indicates that the Description of the Garden of Anna was itself conceived as a mini-romance despite its religious underpinning.

Like Hyrtakenos, however, we too digress. It is necessary to return to the issue of the garden itself. Peeling back Hyrtakenos’ metaphorical approach to the narrative of Anna, his many allusions to classical and Byzantine texts, and patent delight in the pictorial aspects of the garden he describes, it remains to determine how aptly he has re-created a Byzantine garden for his audience (to return to the question, is it real or is it imaginary?). It will be remembered that he makes a point to invoke science as well as the art of gardening (“One could consider those the artifacts and gifts of diligence and agriculture”). This is a garden created by following understood, but not delineated, rules such as the manufacture and use of topiaries, the insistence that the trees and flowers be evenly spaced in their planting according to species, the needed hydraulics for watering (in this case through the automaton fountain), and the enclosing wall. Hyrtakenos gives us enough data to suggest a scheme for the garden (Figs. 7, 8, 10, 11), but not the specific measurements or even a sense of scale. The limited references to the science of gardening may be based on Hyrtakenos’ practical knowledge of the topic, which can be gleaned from treatises such as the Geoponika or even literary sources such as the anonymous twelfth-century text concerning a symbolic garden, which specifies many of the features found in Hyrtakenos’ description, including the need for a “safe fence.” The few extant historical sources also convey a picture of what Hyrtakenos may have been familiar with in terms of actual gardens in Constantinople or its surroundings; his social contacts indicate that he would have had access to the estates and gardens of the upper classes. In addition, evidence from his correspondence reveals that Hyrtakenos owned a grove with fig trees and he sent gifts of pomegranates to Emperor Andronikos III,

concentric in plan and organization and has at its center singing birds and a spring full of fish. See P. F. Watson, The Garden of Love in Tuscan Art of the Early Renaissance (Philadelphia, 1979), 28. The rise of popular romances in the West and the use of the enclosed garden as a major theme may have influenced the later development of a new iconography of the Virgin which depicts her in an enclosed garden similar to the situation in Byzantium with regard to Hyrtakenos’ Description of the Garden of Anna. Interesting analogies may also be made with the Renaissance text Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (Venice, 1499) and its garden descriptions. Thanks to Barbara Lynn-Davis for useful discussion on this text. See F. Colonna, Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, repr. of 1499 Venice edition published by Aklius Manutius (New York, 1976). In addition, the text by Meliteniotes, Sophrosyne, is also very rich in its garden descriptions and in its similarities to western romances such as the Roman de la Rose. We intend to pursue our analysis of Hyrtakenos and Meliteniotes in a future publication. See J. V. Fleming, The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography (Princeton, N.J., 1969), and K. Brownlee and S. Huot, eds., Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception (Philadelphia, 1992).
which suggests that he had some pragmatic familiarity with gardens or at least with orchards. Yet, although his personal experience of real gardens may have influenced his description, the inclusion of obvious references to textual sources, whether scientific or not, thwarts our current efforts to extract a precise representation of gardens in this culture.

If Hyrtakenos’ garden does not reflect a fixed image of this medium, it leads us to the other part of the conundrum in this text: is it an ekphrasis of an actual painting of the Annunciation to Anna as Hunger claimed? It has been demonstrated here that comparison of Hyrtakenos’ description to extant images indicates that the textual visualization corresponds to them only in the most generalized manner. In fact, the text is more elaborate and allows the audience to imagine the specific scheme of Anna’s garden that transcends the lush but constrained renditions in material culture. True, there may have been more paintings in churches and manuscripts than have survived; seven churches dedicated to Anna are known to have existed in Constantinople at one time. Unfortunately, we have no indication of their decoration, and it is unlikely that our text reproduces the one (now lost) exquisitely detailed representation in the visual arts. Moreover, our analysis of Hyrtakenos’ text has underscored his practice of mimesis, his unabashed use of previous sources, religious or romantic, to produce his description. His use of identifiable rhetorical devices, as a testament to his status as a literatus, also distances his text from an actual work of art. Through his clever use of words, he pictorializes an event, its garden context, and its emotional impact in order to move his audience, of whom he is quite aware, as he makes clear at the end of his piece: “However we, oh you who are present, should now end the description” (ημὴν δ’, ὃ παρὼντες, ἀναπαυστέον ἤδη τὴν ἐκφρασίν).

In conclusion, Hyrtakenos’ Description of the Garden of St. Anna offers a complex combination of affectations that encompass pointed references to other texts, reflections of gardens in literature and in Constantinople and its surroundings, and even allusions to visual images that may have been known to him. It is, most of all, an artifice, a work of art unto itself, transcending any specific connection to the real. Hyrtakenos achieves for his audience the entire panoply of emotions that his set piece evokes as he builds on every one of

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65 A. Karpozilos, “Realia in Byzantine Epistolography XIII–XV c.,” BZ 88 (1995): 75. Hyrtakenos sent the pomegranates along with his expressions of hope for an heir. In a letter to the imperial protopsaltes, he requested a gall-insect (διλωθεῖς), which inhabits wild fig trees, so that he could produce more fertile fig trees in his own garden.


67 "Εκφρασὶς εἰς τὸν παραδείσου τῆς ἀγίας Ἀννῆς in Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:70. For a recent discussion of ekphrasis and art in Byzantium, see L. James and R. Webb, “‘To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places’: Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium,” Art History 14 (1991): 9–17. James and Webb separate ekphrasis as aesthetic description from its rhetorical and spiritual function in this society. They argue against it as a realistic re-creation of a work of art (“We have tried to show how they [ekphrasis] are indeed largely irrelevant to a reconstruction of the material appearance of art,” 13).

68 See R. Beaton’s pertinent discussion on artifice in literature, Romance, 65–69.
Moreover, there were some things <in the garden> that enslaved the senses of the body. One captured vision. Another, by tickling hearing, made the listener hang upon his ears. Yet another weakened smell by remembrance alone. A fourth one hardly suggested itself to taste and the hook of delight seized the chest. As for the sense of touch, even before experiencing the smoothness <of the fruits and flowers of the garden>, one’s capacity to touch was weakened. Thus one was overcome from all sides, even if he struggled very hard to resist. He was overthrown not only with regard to <his senses>, but also with regard to the powers of the soul.69

Indeed, does the imagination need anything other than Hyrtañenos’ verbal images to re-create this vivid picture of a garden?

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69 Ἐκφρασις εἰς τὴν παράδεισον τῆς ἑγίας Ἀννης in Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:66. The appeal to the senses is a theme of the garden descriptions of the romances and is also included in the anonymous 12th-century treatise (Thomson, The Symbolic Garden, 18–19).
Theodore Hyrtakenos, Description of the Garden of St. Anna, the Mother of the Mother of God [AnecGr, 3:59–70]

Nazareth is a town of Judea; Anna was dwelling in the town. The town was the homeland of the Mother of God, formerly undistinguished and unimportant, but later distinguished and extremely important. For there Gabriel brought to the Virgin the glad tidings of the conception without seed, because it was, indeed, it was necessary that the birth of Christ by his mother be devised anew without a father, as <his birth> by his father was without a mother. However, Joachim (for he was the father of the maiden), due to the divine tribulation of childlessness that had been inflicted upon him, as was already [60] mentioned, considered even mingling with men as a major point of shame. And indeed, he was living together with wild animals in the thickets of the mountains. As for Anna the mother (but why should I put in words how utterly distressed she also was, when I can describe it in deeds?), she paid no attention to any of her household <affairs>, but abandoned everything because <she considered it> treacherous and responsible for her barrenness. She only frequented one of the neighboring estates (this estate was a garden) and conversed with God in solitude. What kind of garden this was, blooming with how many and what kind of goods, my words will proceed to describe.

The garden had a surrounding wall in the shape of a ring; the shape of a ring is circular. A double frieze was raised upon the surrounding wall, soaring aloft high in the air. And each was a beautiful ornament for the other, encircling the garden in safety. One, <the frieze>, was put together with the stonemason’s craft, so that neither the clever thief could indulge in theft, nor the one who enslaves his eyes to love could burn into carnal fire because of curious looks <into the garden>. Rid of all disturbances, it gave its mistress


2 In other words, Christ was born as man by the Virgin without a father. He was also born as God by the Father without a mother.

3 Here Hyrtakenos refers to the contents of his encomium for the birthplace of the Virgin. See Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:18.

4 Περιβάλλων ἐν εἴκοσι σχήμα φέρειν σφενδόνην· τῇ σφενδόνῃ τὸ σχῆμα περιφερές. The word σφενδόνη is translated as “sling” and περιφερές as “revolving; rounded or curved” in H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, with a Supplement (Oxford, 1968). However, the Souda, as well as other Byzantine dictionaries that include entries from the same tradition, interpret these two words as follows: σφενδόνη of διακολών or περιφερέεια and περιφερές κύκλος, στρογγύλος. See A. Adler, Suidae Lexicon, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1928–38; repr. Stuttgart, 1967–71), s.v. σφενδόνη and περιφερές. Moreover, the only other time when Hyrtakenos uses σφενδόνη is in his encomium for St. Annas, where the word refers to the ring of Gyges (Boissonade, AnecGr, 2:428: ὅπερ ὁ μύθος τῷ Γύγη τῇ στροφῇ τῆς σφενδόνης ἀπεχρίσατο). There can be no doubt that Hyrtakenos understands the shape of the garden as that of a ring, that is, circular, which concurs with his description of the position of the garden’s fountain further in the text. Makrembolites (1.5.1) used many of the same words in order to describe a circular fountain: Φρέατος ὁπείς οὐράριστο τέτταρα· σφενδόνη τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ φρέατος· κυκλωτῆς αὐλὸς περὶ τὸ μεσαίτατον κέντρου λόγον ἐπέχων πρὸς τὸ τοῦ φρέατος κύκλωμα. See also below, note 8.
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freedom to converse with God, whom she desired, raising her mind <to him> without
distraction. The other, <the wall>, was enwreathed with a chorus of cypresses. The trees
were sufficiently stripped of stems in their trunks, and from there grew straight [61], so that
they shot up in an upright foliage shaped like a cone, and were so well pushed up and were
held in check in such a way, that one would think he was looking at well-girded maidens
stretching their hands to one another reciprocally and setting up a noble and harmonious
dance.\(^5\) Both knowledge and craft had gathered together, and each vied emulously to bring
forward its own good offices to <these maidens>: <craft> by competently burying <their>
roots in a certain way according to the rules of gardening, and by requiring as much dili-
gence as craft needs caution; knowledge by measuring <the intervals> between each other
so that they could not meet, since they were parallel,\(^6\) and so that the intermediate space be
neither too much nor too little, avoiding both too long and too short a distance.

At one point there was as a landmark\(^7\) a fountain that could both reserve water and
gush it forth, occupying the place of the center,\(^8\) as if setting up to view evenly all the lines
flowing from the center toward the periphery and again rebounding toward the center. The
bowl <of the fountain> was hewn in light green stone. [62] In the middle of the bowl an
upright cylinder was soaring aloft. A cone was posted upon the cylinder like a head on a
neck, pierced with as many holes as there are on a head, three plus four.\(^9\) From the holes

\(^{5}\) This simile is obviously inspired by a myth recorded in the Geoponika, 11.4.1–2. See above in article,
note 17. Cf. Makrembolites 1.4.4: ἐφασπάζοντος τοὺς κλάδους ὡς χείρας καὶ ὀπέστερον χορὸν συστη
μόμεντα καταφούσων τὸν κήπον. For the branches of trees likened to stretched arms, see A. R. Littlewood,
The Progynasmata of Ioannes Geometres (Amsterdam, 1972), 55 n. 11.29.

\(^{6}\) Cf. Boissonade, AnecGr, 2:418 n. 3.

\(^{7}\) Εὖν γὰρ μὲν τὸ σημεῖον, ὑδροδότη καὶ ὑδροχώρια φιάλη τῆς ἡ τὸ σημεῖον. Paronomasia with hom-
oneous. Hyrtakenos is playing with the multiple meaning of the word σημεῖον, “point” in geometry and “sign,”
“portent,” “token,” “landmark,” etc. in other contexts. The remainder of this period contains a number of other
geometrical terms as well.

\(^{8}\) … ὑδροδότη καὶ ὑδροχώρια φιάλη τῆς ἡ τὸ σημεῖον, λόγον ἐχούσα κέντρου, πάσας ἐπίς ὅραν ἐπιστηρισμάτωσα ὀπέστερο ἀπὸ κέντρου πρὸς κύκλων ῥυθμουμένας γραμμὰς καὶ πᾶλιν πρὸς τὸ κέντρον ἀνακλομένας. Cf. Makrembolites 1.5.1 (quoted above in App. 1, note 4). In another text, Hyrtakenos describes
the rays of the sun in similar words: ἡ μὲν ἀκτίνες ἠλλαξαὶ ἐκκείθη ἐκδισκευόμενοι κάκειτο πᾶλιν ἀνακλομέναι, ἢ καὶ πρὸς κύκλων ἀπὸ κέντρου γραμμαί ρυθμουμέναι καὶ πρὸς τὸ κέντρον ἀνακαλύπτουσαν (Boissonade, AnecGr, 1:252).

\(^{9}\) Seven all together, as there are two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, and a mouth. The idea that the number
seven corresponds to the openings of the human head is expressed in the work of Anatolius, Περὶ δεκαδός καὶ
tῶν ἑνός ἀντίς ἄρτιβαν (ed. J. L. Heiberg, Annales internationales d’histoire, 5th section, Histoire des sciences
Hyrtakenos is aware of the mystical significance of this number, as is evident from a passage in his encomium for
the birthplace of the Virgin Mary (Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:43–44): μονικός γὰρ ἰδὼν ὅ ἐπτά καὶ σεπτάς
προσμαρτυρεῖται καὶ τίμησε, εἶ τῶν ἐπτά παρεπεῖρον ἵνα χαρισματὸς τοῦ τοῦ πνεύματος, εἰ τῷ τῶν
τριάδα καὶ τετράδια οἱ ἐννοιώρεσθαι καὶ τῷ δημοσίῳ τῆς δημοσίων συνάπτεσί, εἰσὶ τῶν τοῦ παρθένου
εἶναι καὶ καθαρός, εἰ τῷ καὶ διὰ λόγου ἅλλους οὗς αὐτῷ τὸ πνεύμα μόνον ἐπίσταταν. (“For seven is a
mystical number from above and is confirmed as revered and worthy of honor, having received this <qual-
ity> either because of the seven endowments of the Holy Ghost [Is. 9:2], or because both three and four can be
observed in it joining the creation with the creator, or because it is a virgin and pure number, or even for other
reasons that the Spirit alone is aware of”). Anatolius (ibid., p. 35) cites the Pythagoreans for calling number seven
ἀμήτερον (“motherless”) and παρθένος (“virgin”), because it is the only one-digit number that can neither
darter up as many jets of water as there are veins. Rather, they flowed as if <they were> streams of tears <flowing> from eyes, for craft had wrought the holes in such exact likeness to eyes. Compared to these, what were the tears of Niobe, which were not tokens of pleasure and gladness, but rather proof of suffering and mourning? And if Niobe changed into stone, one could suppose, or, rather say, seeing it, that the tears of joy and delight that were streaming down from all sides turned the stone into a human being, for the fountain received the showers with such fondness that, whatever it embraced in pleasure, it then with great enjoyment drew off to the plants for irrigation.

The bounding of lions, the leaping of leopards, and the swaying of bears, as well as the images of other wild animals that the craftsman had excellently carved, were so close to moving that the beholder wished he could withdraw somewhere far away, lest the beasts [63] suddenly leap on him and tear him to pieces.

These very things were on the fountain, around the outside surface. Around the rim <the craftsman> had shaped and positioned birds as admirable as a myth would describe the eagle on the scepter of Zeus,11 to the point that they seemed to dip their beaks and drink from the water, and would almost fly away, if anyone approached.

It was possible to perceive the cone as an ornament upon an ornament, and as being to the fountain what the fountain was to the garden. For it was hewn in porphyry, while the tube was constructed from a different, gleaming12 stone, so that the creation and position of everything appeared there in small scale, since purple was at the top, bright green at the bottom, and in between them both there was linen-color.13

Moreover, various species of birds sculptured on the tube were as if swimming through the air, delightfully spreading their wings and flying around, here and there. In addition,
somedone there the fish, unable to swim in the tube, were swimming steered by their tails, unpredictable in their restlessness,14 jumping about in the artificial sea. For where further could they go, since porphyry, being aether, was threatening to enflame anything that might touch it? [64] The craftsman had decked out <the birds15> with such precision, as if he were a second Apelles. It takes the eloquence of Demosthenes to describe how well they imitated <nature>.

Immediately after the chorus of cypresses there were several other choruses of all kinds of trees, winding around <the garden> in turns, neither indiscriminately, nor in utter confusion, nor mingling the different species; and none whatsoever was barren or even declining with regard to its edible efficacy, or did not offer fruit surpassing all others of the same nature by being greatly superior. But each <chorus> was neatly arranged according to its kind and species, and knew how to differ from the others in only one thing: <the chorus situated> further behind was more elevated, while the one on the inner side would always be somewhat lower, so that it allowed for the beauty of the outer chorus to be visible, and so that all of them could see the life-giving sun. It is possible to see something similar happening in the theaters of the hippodrome, where the spectators sit together as on a ladder, beginning with the highest seats, always sitting lower in the inferior level, until they descend to the lowest level, so that it is possible <for everybody> to watch the competitors.

As for the birds, and especially those that the craft of nature beautified with multifarious hues, some were flying in all directions, while others were sitting on the bottom of the trunks and the topmost leaves of the trees,16 and it was possible to think that those going in the middle <did> neither, so that the beholder would wonder which of the two is closest to the truth, that they sat <on the trees> or that they flew around. Moreover, each was striking up its own music, and they vied with each other in a worthy competition, who would sing a sweeter melody. [65] From one side a nightingale with variegated neck17 was singing more sweetly than the Sirens.18 From another spot the bright green parrot was singing. The peacock, the gilded bird, a most splendid sight, was delighting in its own hues.19 A swan spreading its wings to Zephyr20 was sounding a harmonious lyre. And if myth knows a monstrous all-seeing man, then, by all truth, the garden possessed all tongues.21

14 τὸ μὴ μένειν ἀπρόσποτον (literally, “unforeseen in not staying still”).
15 ἐκεῖνα = “those,” “the former.”
18 On the Sirens, see also Hyrtakenos in Noties et extraits 6:38 (letter 78); ibid., 42 (letter 86).
21 The mythological all-seeing man that Hyrtakenos refers to is Argos Panoptes, whose body was covered with eyes. When Zeus transformed his beloved Io into a heifer so as to hide her from the jealousy of Hera, Hera sent Argos to watch over Io and never leave her in peace. Argos is extensively referred to by Hyrtakenos in Boissonade, AnecGr, 1:292.
Throughout spring, how could words ever express what beauty was attained by the multifariousness and polychromy of the flowers, smelling better than the perfumes from Arabia and India?22

And whenever the season of fruits arrived, when the matchmaking full bloom happened to be appointed as the mother of fruits, what beauty, size, smoothness, shine, and sweetness of juices they obtained called for one’s ability to distinguish the pleasures rather than a descriptive narrative.

Moreover, there were some things that enslaved the senses of the body. One captured vision. Another, by tickling hearing, made the listener hang upon his ears. Yet another weakened smell by remembrance alone. A fourth one hardly suggested itself to taste and the hook of delight seized the chest. As for the sense of touch, even before experiencing the smoothness of the fruits and flowers of the garden, one’s capacity to touch was weakened. Thus one was overcome from all sides, even if he struggled very hard to resist. He was overthrown not only with regard to his senses, but also with regard to the powers of the soul.

One could possibly call those the artifacts and gifts of diligence and agriculture. But the plants that the earth brought forward by itself, how would he discuss them?23

For the face of that land was richly painted and variously ornamented, as nothing else, since all the seasonable harvests yielded everywhere had assembled there together, as if at a signal. One could justifiably call her Bride of Solomon, adorned with lilies better than a field. The rose emerged delightful, setting the bud ajar. The lily sprang forth sweet, breaking through the pregnant womb. The violet frisked splendidly, like an infant bounding without its swaddling clothes. The beautiful narcissus was twisting with desire. The “dewy lotus,” as a disciple of Homer might call it, as well as the crocus and the hyacinth were dancing around elegantly. Silphium was smiling charmingly, admired more than the others.

The Beauties were laughing, the Delights were leaping, the Muses were chanting, the Nymphs were accompanying their song with the lyre; “nor did they lack aught of the beauteous lyre, that Apollo held,” “while the player struck the chords in prelude to his sweet lay.”29

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22 For other references to the perfumes of Arabia and India by Hyrtakenos, see Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:23; Notices et extraits, 6:17 (letter 54).
23 Cf. Longos, Daphnis and Chloe, 4.2: ἤσαν καὶ ὀνθὸν προσαιαὶ, ὅν τὸ μὲν ἔφερεν ἡ γῆ, τὰ δὲ ἐποίει τέχνη. (“There were also beds of flowers, some of which the earth brought forth, and others that craft created.”).
25 Cant. 2:1.
26 ἄνθω τὸ ῥόδων, παραναγόν τὴν κάλυκα, προκύπτετε ἢδον προεπίδῃ τὸ κρίνον, τὴν κυκλοφοροῦσαν γαστέρα διαρρήγχουν ἀγλαῖν ἐσκίρτα τὸ ἱὸν, ὡς βρέφος ἀπεσαργασσομένου ἀλλόμενον. Cf. Makrembolites, 1.4.1: τὸν προσηθά τῶν φύλλων καὶ μετ’ ὀδήμα ὀφραίζει τὴν ὑφιν’ τῶν ῥόδων τὸ μὲν προκύπτει τῆς κάλυκας, τὸ δ’ ἐγκυμονεῖται, ἄλλο προκέκκυθεν, ἐστι δ’ οἷο τειμαθενεν κατὰ γνὴν ἐρρήπ. 
<There were> Graces all over, charms everywhere. From one side Luxuries, from the other Delights were calling. All was beautiful, all lovely, and every single thing considered it a shameful defeat not to excel among all others. Such was their noble competition with each other.30

But whence had the transplanting of those unwithering plants come? Whence the water of the leaping springs? Clearly, indeed, from Eden and the Euphrates. For everything beautiful from everywhere had assembled there as if to one abode, and truly constituted “the most fertile of lands.”31 Why <did> that silly little garden of Alkinoos the Phaeacian <exist>, raised, as they say, above the earth, planted suspended up in the air?32 Why <were there> the Islands of the Blessed and the “asphodel meadows”33 and the Elysian Fields that are beyond decay,34 this nonsense of the poets35 [68] and the talk of inebriated old crones, the silly meadows that the Hellenes36 deemed worthy of silly heroes, because they were stranded away from Paradise as we know it? <They existed> so that those whom neither green pasture would feed, nor dew of grace would refresh, be seized by spiritual thirst and hunger, and <so that> they be condemned neither to Kokytos nor to Pyriphlegethon,37 but <have> a river of eternal fire and the flame of hell as a resting place.

Why should one enumerate the olive groves and the vineyards, the laurel and myrtle groves, the beds of the plants, the appearance of the cultivated trees, the attributes and qualities of the fruits, as well as their beauty and magnitude, the bursting of transparent springs and the bubbling up of the sweetest waters, the clear songs of birds that are not inferior to the charms of music, and the other things, each one of which is worth talking about and narrating, <why should one> spend time describing them? Especially since they did not offer the slightest consolation to Anna, though they were so lovely and wonderful. For, once a soul has experienced sad ideas and is brought down by grief, it does not easily want to look up nor to change mood. Rather, like a ship dipped in a billow and sunk by an

30 Cf. Makrembolites, 1.4.2: σύν ον ει δικαιητης καθησης ουτων, ουκ ουδ' ο την νικησαν άποψαςη.
31 Iliad, 9.141 and 283.
32 Suspended were the gardens not of Alkinoos but of Semiramis. See Boissonade, AnecGr, 3:67 n. 4. It is a literary topos to judge the beauty of any garden by comparison to that of Alkinoos. For a list of examples, see Littlewood, Progymnasmata, 47. To these add Libanios' description of a garden in R. Foerster, Libanii Opera, vol. 8 (Leipzig, 1915; repr. Hildesheim, 1963), 485–86.
33 Odyssey 11.539.
34 For the Elysian Fields and the Islands of the Blessed in ancient literature, see Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, new rev. ed. by G. Wissowa and W. Kroll (Stuttgart, 1893–), s.v. Elysion.
35 Cf. Makrembolites 1.4.3: Ταυτ' ιδου των Άλκινους κήπων εδώκουν όρην, κατ' μύθον ουκ είχον το παρά τοις ποιητας σεμιλογογομένον πεδίον Ηλυσιον.
36 The pagan Greeks.
37 Hyrtakenos refers to Pyriphlegethon again in Notices et extraits, 5:732 (letter 9). For entries of Byzantine dictionaries on Kokytos and Pyriphlegethon, see Suidae Lexicon, s.v. Ηλυσιον πεδίον: εν ό οι παρ’ Έλλην άκατω αυλίζονται, μετά θάνατον έκεισε ελευσόμενοι: οι δε κολάσεως άξιοι εν το Κωκυτό και τη Πυριφλεγθέθον άπελευσόνται. ποταμοι δε ούτωτο, ο μεν Κωκυτός ψυροττατος, ο δε Πυριφλεγθέθον θερμοττατος. (“Elysian Field: where the just ones dwell, according to the Hellenes, arriving there after death. Those who deserve punishment will depart to Kokytos and Pyriphlegethon. These are rivers, Kokytos a very cold one and Pyriphlegethon very hot.”).
influx of waves one after the other, it cannot shake free and rise to the surface. In any case, she was not well disposed toward anything pleasant. But, whence she might derive some repose, therefrom she rather stored up burdens of misfortune, and anything sweet she deemed as “good for nothing.”

At any rate, from time to time she stretched not only her mental thoughts but also her physical eyes together with her arms toward heaven, sometimes beating her breasts with both hands, other times fixing her brow and knees on the ground, and, in distress of both soul and heart, she uttered such pitiful cries to God as “I ought not to have been conceived in the first place, nor should my miserable mother have borne me in her womb. Rather, I should have seen to it so that I be aborted as soon as I was conceived, or that I die as soon as I was born. Thus I would not have met with such an evil destiny. Otherwise, since I have reached such an age, either become a mother or depart from among the living!”

Such were her words. And since she could not produce thunder, nor make torrential rains fall, she was doing what befitted her nature, uttering deep sighs and gushing forth fountains of tears. What then? Contemplating Sarah and Anna, the mother of Samuel, and Fenanna, and all the women who, like them, met up with that terrible demon of infertility, and how each one changed into bearing children, was that reason for better hope? By no means. For Anna considered their situation as curable, while her own as the only incurable one.

But I proclaim to you to have courage, Anna! Look at Sarah, who brought forth Isaac. Behold Anna, the mother of Samuel. The archangel Gabriel, who knows how to release the fetters of barrenness, near. He foretells to you that you will conceive, Anna. For, as <the Old Testament> Anna conceived Samuel, likewise you will conceive a virgin daughter. In her turn, she <will conceive> the one who is God over all, about whom John, the son of Elizabeth, will prophesy that he is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. And he will point him out not only by his words but also by his finger, saying “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Praise to you for the glad tidings! More than praise for the graces! Now you have truly become what your name signifies, or, rather, you will become what you have been called. Know the interpretation of your name: “Anna” is Hellenized as “grace,” and, by becoming Hellenized, it is ennobled. For grace will

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38 Οὐδὲν ἱερὸν (“nothing sacred”): ancient proverb that Hyrtakenos also uses elsewhere in his writings. Cf. Boissonade, AneGr, 3:68 n. 1. Cf. also Suidae Lexicon, s.v. οὐδὲν ἱερὸν: Ἡρακλῆς εἶπεν Ἀδωνίδος ἵδων ἔζων, ὅς τῶν εὐφρενοῦνταί τοῦς ἄνθρωπος μόνος ἔσων τιμᾶθαι ἢ ὅτι οἱ κατάφυγοντες εἰς αὐτὸ δοῦλοι ἄδειαν ὡς εἶχον. (“Nothing sacred”: Heracles said that when he saw the cultic statue of Adonis, because, in his opinion, only those who were benefactors of humans ought to be honored. Or, because the slaves that fled there for protection were not granted indemnity.”).
40 εἰς τὸν ἡλικίαν παραγγέλασα. Παραγγέλλω εἰς = “to enter the ranks of” (see Lampe, s.v. παραγγέλλω).
41 See Boissonade, AneGr, 3:69 n. 3.
42 John 1:29.
not give birth to grace, as they say, but to the mother of all graces and the one who filled our nature with grace, that is, the graceful Mother of God and mistress of both angels and humans. Therefore you, <Anna>, prepare yourself for the conception, and, after conceiving, give birth, and after giving birth rejoice and exult and dance. However we, oh you who are present, should now end the description.

43 Sophocles, *Ajax*, 520.
Theodore Meliteniotes, *Eis Sophrosynen*

Description of the Garden

[The poem *Eis Sophrosynen* is written in fifteen-syllable “political” verses. The narrative voice employed is the first person throughout. The poem begins with an introduction stating its didactic character: the authors of fiction are usually admired, though they disfigure the truth and compose false tales. On the contrary, the narrative that will follow is truthful. On the first of May, the best of all months, the narrator went for a walk in the midst of flourishing nature. While enjoying his surroundings, he saw a strange light emanating from a distant dome. A comely and dignified maiden appeared in front of him and explained that the dome was the roof of her home, and that she was the mistress of the land surrounding it. She had seen him approach her estate, unaware of the deadly dangers ahead of him, that neither human nor angel could avoid without her guidance. Worried for his safety, she had hastened to meet him. She explained that her home and its surrounding garden were protected by seven defensive obstacles: an impassable river, a bridge about to collapse, a closed iron gate, a plain with man-eating beasts, a steep trench, a dense woodland, and an immense enclosing wall. The narrator implored the maiden to let him visit her home and garden and then allow him to go back in safety. Moved by his tears, she agreed and guided him through the aforementioned dangerous obstacles, at this point described in detail, to the gates of her garden. Cerberus, who was prevented from devouring the narrator only by the maiden, watched outside these gates. An angel with a flaming sword, who was about to attack the narrator and was ordered not to by the maiden, guarded inside the gates. As soon as the gates closed behind him, the narrator started trembling with fear.

[Verses 758–827] When the maiden saw me standing and trembling, she said: “Rejoice, oh human, do not be afraid, do not tremble, for you have now escaped the causes of fear. But see inside, admire everything as you have asked <to do>, even my own house, where I dwell. Do not overlook my bed, which is situated <therein>, oh stranger. Look at the

1 “To Sophrosyne,” that is, the maiden who led the narrator into her garden. Her name could be translated as “Moderation,” “Probity,” or “Chastity.” See Lampe, s.v. *σωφροσύνη*.
2 The verses of the poem chosen for translation were strictly those pertinent to the landscaping of Sophrosyne’s garden. The summary of the verses omitted (including the description of the buildings contained in the garden) is given in italics. The subtitles preceding different sections of the translation were apparently placed there not by the author, but by a scribe, and were repeated by the editor. They are retained in the translation in order to aid the reader. References to other texts in the notes are not exhaustive, but only indicative of the number of rhetorical *topoi* employed by the author. For the connections between Meliteniotes’ poem and other texts, see E. Dölger, “Quellen und Vorbilder zu dem Gedicht des Meliteniotes ‘Eis την Ἑσοφροσύνην’: Mit einer Einleitung über die Person des Dichters” (diss., Munich, 1919). See also V. Tiftixoglou, “Digenes, das ‘Sophrosyne’-Gedicht des Meliteniotes und der byzantinische Fünfzehnsilber,” BZ 67 (1974): 1–63.
3 Many of the elements used in this part of the poem for the depiction of spring will reappear in the description of Sophrosyne’s garden.
4 The description of the woodland (verses 642–57), the last obstacle before the surrounding wall, reverses the *topoi* employed in the description of a pleasure garden: everything is covered with thick ivy, bramble, and an infinite number of holm oaks filled with thorns, while the bushes grow tangled and in total confusion. No wild or domesticated animal and no bird or other fauna lives there.
Garden\(^5\) and <the attributes> of the Garden, [765] the statues of the sculptors that are positioned in it, that are standing above, all around the walls, others looking like they were made of iron, others showing off a form made of copper, others of gold, others of some kind of silver. [770] Also look at the pleasant site of this Garden, its valley, the position of the place, the fragrance of the flowers that are in the Garden, the unusual beauty and colors of the herbs, the meadows [τὰς πότας], the likes of which no human eye has seen, [775] the ineffable and divine beauty of the shrubs. Behold the comeliness of the infinite plants, wonder at the delight that they bring here, see the assembly of the evergreen trees. Do not pass without awe, oh stranger, do not, by God. [780] But be surprised at the novel fruits <that grow> in it, and do not shun the vines <that are> thither, and see the form of the bunches of grapes, while you happen to be there.\(^6\) For they bring a lot of pleasure to their beholders and insatiable enjoyment to those who look at them. [785] Look at the grapevine, if you do not shrink from it. You will see many and multicolored grapes on it, some crystal-like, others blackish, while yet others have a purple appearance, offering a multiple and novel delight. [790] Do not overlook the tame\(^7\) and beautiful birds, those that sing sweetly and those that are used for hunting, those that love water and those that eat fish, for you will be delighted and will rejoice greatly. Behold the multitude of quadruped animals, and, [795] while looking at the springs and fountains of the garden, admire the extraordinary structure of the pool, gazing at the novel limpidity of the waters, and the multitude of fish that live in the pool. Admire the Sirens together with the Erotes,\(^8\) [800] and the decorous and great dance of the Graces,\(^9\) and the water-loving trees all around the pool, and the fowl that likes the nature of waters. Admire how my bath has been erected by a sensible builder near the pool,\(^10\) [805] and do not bypass my conspicuous throne, which, as is expected from its beauty and the ornamentation of its precious stones, has by far defeated the throne of Cyrus, which the scriptures vaunt as being a very brilliant one. Moreover, admire the two statues that are near it, [810] and you will by all means know the prudence of the most wise.

\(^5\) In the translation that follows, “Garden” (with capital initial) renders the Greek Παραδέσιος, which means both “garden” and “Paradise.” The importance of the double meaning of this word in the context of Meliteniotes’ heavily symbolic poem is obvious. For the garden of Sophrosyne, Meliteniotes also uses the word λειμών, which means both “garden” and “meadow.” Since “meadow” in English signifies a grassland, we rendered the Greek λειμών with “garden” (without initial capital).

\(^6\) [verse 782] We accept the editor’s emendation of οὐτω τῷ οὖντι.


\(^8\) Cf. Achilleis, p. 61, verse 720N, and p. 103, verse 488L.

\(^9\) Cf. Achilleis, p. 61, verse 720N, and p. 103, verse 488L.

\(^10\) The bath is described in detail later, but it is the only structure gracing Sophrosyne’s garden for which no allegorical interpretation is provided at the end of the poem. Baths are often described in the gardens and castles of the Byzantine romances (such as Kallimachos, 291–354, Belthandros, 457–59, Achilleis, p. 62, verses 776–94N, and p. 104, verses 514–29L), so it is possible that Meliteniotes’ mention of the bath is simply a repetition of a literary topos. However, baths in Byzantine culture had become associated with healing, a connotation that was also employed in Christian symbolism. See ODB, s.v. Bath. See also P. A. Agapetos, “The Erotic Bath in the Byzantine Vernacular Romance of Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe,” Classica et Mediaevalia 41 (1990): 257–73.
craftsman. Look also at the divinely erected temple that I have, oh stranger, which is consecrated in the name of God, my redeemer and savior. See also my tomb near the temple, which is a gloomy memorial for me, the wretched one. [815] Then look at the great gate that this Garden has, how it is locked. And after becoming a spectator of this all in there, you will feel pleasure, since you are human, and will admire even more the great and divine power of God. [820] And if there are puzzles that are difficult to understand, let me manifestly explain their meaning to you, so that you can learn from facts about my nobility. For which human mind could be suitable enough for telling? Those who beheld the construction of the castle from far away, [825] you could see them regard it as supernatural in their stupefaction. For they thought they were seeing snow, since <the castle> was twined by the whiteness and harmonious joining of its stones.

[Above the castle there was a cruciform apartment that is described in detail (vv. 828–1106). In it there was a bed decorated with precious stones, enumerated in alphabetical order (vv. 1115–97).] The posts of the bed ended in dragon heads that looked as if they were about to devour the sleeper. The legs of the bed were in the form of four men carrying it on their shoulders, as if in a funeral procession. The bed was covered with a purple veil (vv. 1198–1221). The narrator admired the house of the maiden, then climbed to the roof and gazed at the garden planted around it. The garden was surrounded by a wall made of rock crystal, above which there were labyrinthine galleries adorned with statues that faced the garden. The statues were sculpted by the famous sculptors of antiquity. Those that adorned the first wall of the garden represented ancient poets, orators, philosophers, grammarians, magicians, astronomers, and wise soothsayers, in one word those that were familiar with “Hellenic wisdom”: Adam, Seth, Cain, Solomon, Homer, Hezekiah, Orpheus, Epimetheus, Deucalion, Cecrops, ancient doctors such as Hippocrates, Galen, Posidonius, Paul of Aegina, and Archigenes, etc. The southern wall of the garden was adorned with statues of the Greek gods: Saturn, Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, Hades together with Tityus, Tantalus, Charon and Rhadamanthus, Phaethon, Hermes Trismegistos, Orion, Ares, Dionysus, Hephaestus, Cronus, Aphrodite, Athena, Rhea, Demeter, Artemis, Hera, Selene, and the statues of wise men that the ancients honored as gods (vv. 1485–1858). The statues of the third wall represented Moses, Samson, David, Goliath, Jonathan, and other Old Testament figures known for their victories against the enemies of their people, as well as Herakles, Achilles, Nestor, Odysseus and other Homeric heroes, and Alexander (vv. 1859–2295). The fourth wall was adorned with statues of virtues: Gratitude, Vigil, Prudence, Humility, Charity, Continence, Truth, etc. Such was the position of the statues (vv. 2296–2334).

[Verses 2335–2524] Who could talk about the Garden to an assembly? Or is it clear to all of them that <the Garden> is unrivaled? For all around, near the <enclosing> wall, non-fruit-bearing trees were standing in rows, as if they were a first chorus. Then, a second chorus,
that of evergreen trees, was standing within the <chorus> of the non–fruit-bearing ones. The fruit-bearing trees were standing as a third chorus, having all the branches leaning toward the earth, and all of them nodding downward because of the weight of their fruits. Seeing the compactness of those trees, one would think that he was looking at a very dense mountain inside the Garden. At the very edge of this Garden innumerable kinds of shrubs were planted, that were in every way beautiful in form and appearance, rendering splendid the Garden of the Maiden. It was possible to see that the manner in which the trees were planted was unexpected: for the multitude of fruitless and fruit-bearing trees and the sounds of the birds that were in the shrubs represented the dance of female dancers that were singing a sweet song while dancing. The craftsman had pitched the trees in such rows, and had positioned the chamber in such a straight line, that he managed to please everybody by the view alone. This circular shape of all the trees created a magnificent plain, filled with trees and all kinds of herbs, as well as various flowers that adorned the place with their manifold colors and almost caused heavy torpor with their perfumes. In the very middle of this plain, on an elevation, there were fragrant, novel, and strange garden beds, bringing a sweet smell to the nostrils and delighting the soul with their unusual pleasantness. Who would not immediately be astounded, if he saw the thick shade of all the trees, the variation of the leaves, the kind of fruits, the close order of the shrubs and vines, the composition of the herbs, the fixing of the reeds, the beauty of the flowers, and the color of the pigments? Moreover, there were such big fruits hanging on the branches that all the shoots were bending downward because of their load. I therefore rejoiced looking at the fruits and pomes, some having their sweetest taste on the outside, and others guarding their delicious flavor inwardly. Amidst the continuous trees, violets and lilies, as well as balsam trees and basil together with roses, were sprouting in the garden, which offered a significant spectacle to the viewers. So unusual was the delight of this garden.

On the waters of the garden

The Garden also had several springs and fountains jetting forth from the ground and outpouring around in a circle, much cooler than melted snow, all uniting in one straight canal from which that whole garden was watered, receiving thus thoroughly sufficient irrigation.

On the pool of the garden

In the very middle of this Garden there was a pool of generous width, having little depth toward the bottom. It was an indescribable structure made with rock crystal of the most pure whiteness. On the lips of this admirable pool stood a chorus of numerous birds and animals, also hewn in rock crystal. The mouths of these animals and birds were opened by some kind of mechanical device. Some were receiving the streams of water in their feet through some pipes, and were again spitting them forth through

14 Cf. above, pp. 115–18 and note 25.
15 See above in App. 2, note 9.
16 The idea that the beauty of nature in a garden imitates the beauty of art can also be found in Longos, 4.3.5: έδοξει μέντοι καὶ η τοιούτων φύσις εἶναι τέχνη.
their mouths inside the pool, pouring like a spring. These offered immeasurable delight with their abundance. The water was so limpid and diaphanous [2405] that the bottom of the pool was clearly visible, and it seemed as if the pool was a mirror for the Garden, as all the fruitless and fruit-bearing trees, the multitude of fruits, plants, and shrubs, as well as the herbs and the colors of the fragrant flowers, [2410] the grass and the species of birds and animals, and all that was growing in the Garden, appeared inside this admirable pool. This was an awe-inspiring sight for the onlookers. And whenever perchance the wind blew, [2415] it was possible to see the pool swelling with low waves, gently agitated because of the volume of the water, and the fish rising above it. For, one could see, swimming in the water, plenty of

On the fish inside the pool [2420] urchins, red mullets, sargues, frogs and skates, huge octopuses, stingrays and mylluses, crabs, eels, parrot-wrasses, and the whole species of molluscs, cuttlefish, breams, carp, scorpion fish and sprats, gudgeons together with bass, prawns and shrimp, [2425] swordfish, turbots along with pipers,18 lyscae,19 braizes and flat-fish, sea-wolves and cod, sardines,20 a multitude of mormyrs, tunnies, and gobies and perch, and several other species of edible fish, that were meant, I believe, as food and sustenance for the admirable Maiden.

On the grapevine of the garden [2430] I even saw a grapevine all around the pool, bearing many diverse and enormous grapes, others having a surface like that of a ruby, others with a black color, and yet others golden. Even as I looked at their size, my mind boggled.

On the vine in the garden [2435] For an enormous vine, stretching high, roofed the roofless pool in an admirable way, and I believe that the single sight of it was something incredible for its beholders. The multitude of the bunches and the size of the grapes forced the vine twigs to bend toward the earth. [2440] What words can accurately depict their flavor? Who could inform with words the completely ignorant ones? The touch of the grapes was so enjoyable to the heart, their taste was so pleasant and so very sweet, and they were so delightful to the soul and so filled with honey, [2445] that I believe even the queen would rejoice and luxuriate in the beauty of their clusters and the multitude of their berries. The interweaving of the vine twigs and the vines, and the mass of the tendrils and the clusters of the grapes <created> something like another luminous ceiling above the garden.

17 Cf. Achilles Tatios, 1.15.6: τὰς ὑδατίνις ἁπάντων ἐν καταπατημένης, ὡς δόξης τὸ ἀλληθώς εἴναι δειπλοῦν. τὸ μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ δὲ τῆς σκεύης (“the water served as a mirror for the flowers, giving the impression of a double grove, one real and the other a reflection”). Trans. Loeb (London, 1917), 47.
18 φιλομηλία = “piper, trigla cuculus,” not “apple-loving,” as is implied by the editor’s punctuation.
19 See E. A. Sophocles, Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1914), and D. Demetrakos, Mega Lexikon τῆς Ηellenikeς Γλώσσης (Athens 1936–50), s.v. ἰσκα and ὕσκα (verse 2425).
20 The text here reads ἰσκα. The editor (verse 2426 and n. 11) suggested its correction to κατὰ μὐξα (“and mussels”). The translation of the word given here follows the correction of Spyridon Lampros (Νέος ΣΛΑ, 12 [1915]: 19) to ἰσκα (“small fry of various fishes”) in Liddell et al., Lexicon; εἶδος μικροῦ ἴχθους, σαρδέλλα in Demetrakos, Mega Lexikon.
21 The emendation of πανθείαι to ἀνθείαι, as suggested by the editor (verse 2427 and n. 12), is acceptable.
On the beauty of the garden

[2450] It was possible to see an incredible sight in all this. That festal assembly of plants was growing a thick foliage. The branches of the fruitless trees a multitude beyond description, while the chorus of fruit-bearing trees was also growing there, as well as the evergreen and water-loving trees, while the swarm of leaves and the crowd of shoots, and of boughs and of all the saplings, and the composition of the fruits and the forest of the trees, were imitating the ceiling of a palatial home. Thus had the admirable craftsman covered it, thus had he roofed this admirable garden, that even the sun itself could not penetrate inside it, except only in times of windy weather in the garden, when most of the trees generally lose their leaves and drop all their adornment.

[2465] Such were the plants and the vines.

On the fragrant garden beds

Could the garden beds of those fragrant flowers, which were filled with plants breathing sweet unguents, be easily described by anyone? I do not think so. For who could outline with words their composition, order, and beauty, as well as their ultimate symmetry? Their skillful gardener seemed to have used measuring cords of equal length. Some were growing roses, others were bringing myrtles to bloom, and yet others narcissus, violets and lilies together with balsam trees, different beds were bringing forth different flowers, and holly and several other plants, and it is possible to mention anything fragrant that the earth produces.

On the colors of the fragrant herbs

The color of the flowers was seen all-variegated. For the swarm of roses stood purple, the myrtles possessed an emeraldlike appearance, the narcissus seemed from afar as platinum, and the dark blue of the violets like the color of the sea. And if the garden...
enjoyed some chance breeze, it trembled slightly, like small waves, so that the many who were gazing at it from afar could see [2485] a calm ocean inside the Garden. The whiteness of those pure lilies and the splendid and green-colored sight of the balsam trees seemed to the beholders like a spraying river, and it was reckoned by the wayfarers as an emerald stone.

On the birds in the garden

[2490] As for the voices of the birds that were in the orchard, and the honey-flowing songs of those that were singing, who will possibly tell their tale, what words could hand it down, even if one had ten thousand tongues and was immensely boastful <of his eloquence>? Some <birds> were sitting on the earth and were often singing, [2495] others were flying around uttering sweet songs, while yet others were seated together on the young shoots of the branches, delivering musical notes as if accompanied by a lyre.27

On the winds of the garden

In addition, the garden possessed yet another delight: a gentle breeze was eternally blowing inside it, [2500] softly swaying the trees and all the herbs, and moving and throwing down the swarm of fruits. You could say this is the Zephyr of Paradise. It blew for the growth of everything in there and for the flourishing of the unconstrained <plants>, and in order to send out ineffable joy and incredible fragrance. [2505] Know that such was the comeliness of the garden, such was its adornment, and such its appearance, that it could even delight the angels, as I believe. For the blowing of Zephyrs in the Garden, the sound of both the <exceptionally> enjoyable and the <more> common little trees, [2510] the din of the fruits and the scented lotuses, the breathing of the waters, the rattling of the shrubs, the multicolored sight of the blooming herbs, and the fragrance of all the fragrant flowers, as well as that wonderful and awesome wind [2515] and the voices of the sweet-singing sparrows, the humming of the nightingales, the twittering of the swallows, the songs of the parrots, the melodies of the finches, and the odes of the cicadas that chirruped loudly brought a novel delight all over the Garden, [2520] wherefrom the heart of the Maiden was sweetened, and a wind filled with delight blew there. The sight of the garden was this splendid, full of many strong perfumes and unbelievable mirth, wondrous and graceful for everyone who laid eyes on it.

[The narrator goes on to describe in detail other structures in the garden, beginning with the splendid bath that was situated in its westernmost section (vv. 2525–67). He then describes the throne of Sophrosyne. Its legs represented the four virtues (Prudence, Valor, Truth, and Justice) and on its sides stood the statues of Life and Death (vv. 2568–2728). The garden also contained a church that was superior to the Temple of Solomon (vv. 2729–48). In the courtyard of the church there was an empty mausoleum, meant as a tomb for the maiden Sophrosyne (vv. 2749–2809). Finally, the narrator describes the appearance of the maiden herself (vv. 2810–67). After the narrator had thanked Sophrosyne for allowing him to enjoy such pleasant surroundings, she led him to the gates of the garden and provided the symbolic interpretation of all that he had seen, so that he might warn and admonish others. The path that he had taken while walking on his own, filled with trees and flowers that are transient

27 Cf. Achilles Tatios, 1.15.7. Cf. also Hyrtakenos in Boissonade, *A necGr*, 3:64.
and subject to corruption, was the path of life led astray, filled with pleasures but leading to destruction. But, since humans are endowed with the ability to look up to a moral way of life, the narrator was able to perceive the light from afar, though he could not have reached the source of this light without the guidance of Sophrosyne (and her homonymous virtue). The seven obstacles represented the passions of flesh that one has to fight. The statues of the wise men and heroes that surrounded the garden were a reminder that the virtuous attain the eternal kingdom. The church with the tomb in its courtyard symbolized freedom from sin, which is impossible to obtain without remembering death. The gates to Sophrosyne's estate should be understood as the Earth, on which man arrives and from which he departs naked. Those who live on it sinfully are condemned to the fire of Hell, while those who live virtuously will enjoy Paradise (vv. 2868–3016). The narrator then addresses a eulogy to God (vv. 3017–60), which ends with a final reminder that the Garden of Sophrosyne was, indeed, Paradise:

[Verses 3054–60] I now appeal to Your love toward humanity, oh King of all, so that I do not become alien to spiritual Paradise. But, as I have now seen this garden, which can be perceived with the senses, and have joyfully enjoyed its graces, may I likewise see that spiritual garden and enjoy all its delightful graces, as well. For glory beseems Thee, oh King, all into the ages, oh Trinity of three persons with one single substance; glory to Thee, thrice-illuminating, who bestows the end.