

In this chapter I analyse a single *kontakion*, *On the Passion of Christ*, focusing on Romanos' different rhetorical techniques. In the course of this tour through his rhetoric, I paint a more detailed picture of Romanos' *kontakia* and the *kontakion* genre. I demonstrate Romanos' proficiency in rhetoric and the wide range of figures he uses to communicate his ideas and make his poetry engaging, vivid and dramatic. We will see how Romanos uses, appropriates and transforms biblical and homiletic material, and the ways in which rhetoric embodies and communicates the central ideas of correction and perfection ('the second Adam'), new creation ('the second creation') and preparation for its consummation in the eschaton ('the second coming'). In seeing these rhetorical figures and theological ideas as they are presented in one *kontakion*, the rhetorical and conceptual coherence of these central ideas begins to emerge. The following chapters will take up individual ideas in more detail and we will be inevitably drawn back into Romanos' use of rhetoric and imagery.

This hymn was probably sung on Good Friday,¹ the day which commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus. It narrates Christ's appearance before the high priest Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate: the events leading up to his crucifixion. Romanos creates a lengthy debate between Jesus and the Jewish crowd about healing on the Sabbath, and explores Jesus' interactions with Caiaphas and Pilate, in order to demonstrate the significance of the crucifixion for human salvation. As such, it is a particularly appropriate choice for establishing the coherence of Romanos' soteriology and how the key themes of correction and perfection, new creation, and participation and anticipation fit together in one composition.

¹ Schork (1995), 115.

Dramatic Beginnings

On the Passion of Christ begins dramatically, setting the tone for the rest of the hymn. Romanos brings the events of the Passion into the present in the first proem with the word ‘today’ (Pr.1.1):

Today the foundations of the earth trembled ...²

Σήμερον ἔταράττετο τῆς γῆς τὰ θεμέλια

Combined with imperatives in strophe 1 (e.g. ‘stand back’, ‘do not dare’), the opening presents the events of the Passion as contemporary ones. This is a dramatizing device, which brings to life the church’s liturgical calendar, and makes the events of Christ’s crucifixion present. The congregation lives out this episode (and the whole Gospel week by week) through Romanos’ hymns. The incarnation is made a present reality in much the same way in Romanos’ famous Christmas hymn: ‘Today a virgin gives birth to the one who is beyond being’ (ἡ παρθένος σήμερον τὸν ὑπερούσιον τίκτει).³ This dramatic device makes two connected theological points. Romanos believes that Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection dramatically changed the world; the incarnation was an eschatological event. Part of this was a change in the nature of time: time is not linear after the incarnation, but rather past, present and future events converge. This altered world is a new creation, in which Christians are called to participate. This period is one of confirmation of the eschaton before its final consummation. Romanos makes Gospel events present to encourage his congregation to participate in the life of Christ and thereby in God’s life. By creating a vivid and contemporary narration of the crucifixion, Romanos enacts the change in time which he believes took place at the incarnation, and he calls his congregation to participate in the ‘second’ creation inaugurated at that point. These two ideas, new creation and participation, are important facets of Romanos’ theology.

These changes in the nature of time are echoed by changes in the natural world, which increase the drama and emphasize the significance of the Passion (Pr. 1.1–2):

... the foundations of the earth trembled,
the sun hid, not able to endure seeing [what was happening].

... ἔταράττετο τῆς γῆς τὰ θεμέλια,
ὁ ἥλιος ἠλλοιοῦτο μὴ στέγων θεωρῆσαι.

² All references to Romanos’ *kontakia* in this chapter are to Oxf. XX, *On the Passion of Christ*, unless otherwise stated.

³ I.Pr.1. See also, for example, II.Pr.2; V.Pr.1.

Like the change in time, disruptions of nature demonstrate both how unnatural and how world-changing was Christ's crucifixion. The natural world cannot accept what humanity has done, so it rebels against it in earthquakes and eclipses. Romanos elides the events which Matthew's Gospel narrates at the death of Jesus (Matt. 27:45, 51):⁴

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ... At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split.

Romanos combines these Gospel verses and personifies the natural world, making its revulsion more personal and the events more dramatic. Such upheaval in the natural world was associated with divine displeasure in contemporary writings. The chronicler Malalas refers to earthquakes as 'the wrath of God' (e.g. 18.37, 18.40) and, according to the historian Procopius, the plague in Constantinople occasioned a change in behaviour for the unrighteous (*Wars* II.22–33), who felt that their sinfulness may have been to blame.⁵ In the *Secret History* Procopius blames the plague (and many other disasters) on the impiety and immorality of the emperor Justinian (*SH*. 18.44–5).⁶ If the emperor had behaved better, perhaps God would have spared the people. Overtones of this topos of divine displeasure manifesting itself in natural disasters would have resonated with Romanos' congregation. Thus the reaction of the natural world might suggest divine anger with those who crucified Jesus: the Jews.⁷ Most fundamentally, these extraordinary events indicate the world-shattering significance of Christ's Passion. Like the conflation of time, Christ's entry into the world and the events of his life change the behaviour of the natural world. The incarnation transforms creation.

This theme continues in the first stanza after the two proems, in which Romanos calls (in a dramatic tricolon) on the natural world to respond to the crucifixion by being properly horrified (1.1–3):

Stand back, shuddering, O Heaven; plunge into chaos, O Earth;
do not dare, Sun, to look on your master
who hangs on the cross by his own will.

⁴ Compare Mark 15:33 and Luke 23:44–5.

⁵ For a list of the earthquakes in Malalas including those referred to as 'the wrath of God', see Jeffreys (1990), 155–9.

⁶ Cf. Cameron (1985), 42. On the type of plague, where it came from, numbers of dead and aftermath, see Allen (1979). On Malalas' and Procopius' different interpretations of events, see Scott (1985).

⁷ On the Jews in Romanos, see further below and in Chapter 3.

Ἐκστηθὶ φρίττων, (ᾧ) οὐρανέ, δῦνον εἰς χάος, ᾧ γῆ,
 μὴ τολμήσης, ἦλιε, σὸν δεσπότην
 κατιδεῖν ἐπὶ τοῦ ξύλου βουλήσει κρεμáμενον·

These addresses and imperatives call for the correct (and expected) response from the natural world: one of horror. The most stable and most predictable elements in nature are repelled by the crucifixion of God's son to the point that they cannot bear to continue their normal behaviour. As we saw above, the Gospels emphasize the natural world's revulsion at this unnatural event. The direct addresses to heaven, earth and the sun, however, are Romanos' creation. The Gospel writers merely report the natural world's reaction, but Romanos enters the story and talks to the natural world in a dramatic use of apostrophe.⁸ These imperatives personify and make characters out of the heaven, earth and sun. They have become players in the drama of the Passion, and Romanos (as director) calls on them to play their part.⁹

Romanos draws his tricolon to a dramatic close (the cross) and uses the rhetorical form to emphasize the significant theological point: the free will of Jesus Christ. Christ was not compelled to be crucified, but freely chose it. Here Romanos is influenced by the christological formulations of, among others, the Cappadocians. The freedom of Christ, according to Gregory of Nyssa, is evidence of his true humanity.¹⁰ Freedom, or choice, is something which humans are granted by God, it is part of what it means to be human.¹¹ So Christ's willingness to go to the cross is evidence of his humanity but also of his divinity, since his actions are the perfection of humanity; he exercises perfect virtue and demonstrates the type of human God calls everyone to be.¹²

For those who supported the Council of Chalcedon in 451, it became important to acknowledge the free will of Christ, as it provided evidence

⁸ On narrative apostrophe in Romanos, see Barkhuizen (1986a).

⁹ Although I use a dramatic metaphor, I do not suggest that Romanos' *kontakia* were literally part of a liturgical drama. There is no firm evidence of liturgical drama in the sixth century in the East. La Piana suggested that dramatic homilies were delivered by several presbyters who performed the dialogues, and argued for the existence of trilogies of liturgical drama. See La Piana (1936). See also Carpenter (1936). So far nothing conclusive has been proved. *Contra* La Piana on the existence of Byzantine theatre before the iconoclast period, see Schork (1966). On liturgical dramas in the West, see Muir (1995). There were certainly dramatic homilies, by which Romanos was probably influenced. See, for example, Cunningham (2008), 875. On the influence of Greek drama on Romanos, see Tomadakis (1974), 401–9.

¹⁰ *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium* in *Gregorius Nyssena Opera* (hereafter *GNO*) 3.1:181.14–22. For the edition, see Mueller (1958), 127–233.

¹¹ Harrison (1988), 40–1. See also Harrison (1992).

¹² *GNO* 3.1:198.1–7; 199.6–11. See also Daley (2002b), 482.

of his true humanity.¹³ Their opponents, they believed, placed either too much emphasis on the divinity of Christ and so risked diminishing the importance of his humanity for the salvation of the world,¹⁴ or emphasized the union of the two natures to the extent that the human nature was obscured by the divine.¹⁵ So, in the passage above, Romanos emphasizes that Christ is divine (using the term ‘master’, line 2), while simultaneously drawing attention to that faculty of will which marks him as human.

One of Romanos’ near contemporaries, Leontius of Constantinople, similarly mentions Christ’s *willing* suffering at various points in his homilies.¹⁶ In his fourteenth homily, entitled *A Homily on the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Leontius says

... here Christ our rational sheep, even if
 he was sacrificed,
 was sacrificed nevertheless of his own will,
 was buried of his own will,
 rose of his own will,
 ascending into heaven of his own will,
 will come again of his own will in glory of his Father ...¹⁷

ἐνταῦθα τὸ λογικὸν ἡμῶν πρόβατον Χριστός, εἰ
 καὶ ἐσφάγη, ἀλλ’ ὅμως
 βουλήσει ἐσφάγη,
 βουλήσει ἐτάφη,
 βουλήσει ἀνέστη,
 βουλήσει εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνῆλθεν,
 βουλήσει ἐλεύσεται ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ...¹⁸

Leontius’ emphatic rhetorical repetition strongly underlines that Jesus, although incarnate, was not bound by human desires, but exercised his perfect human will freely to choose the path he did. In such insistence in Romanos and Leontius on Christ’s voluntary suffering we see something of the christological concerns of the sixth century, informed both

¹³ McLeod (2012), 382.

¹⁴ Küng (1987), 515, McLeod (2012), 382. In the seventh century, concerns about the two natures of Christ translated into a debate about whether Christ had one or two wills. On which, see Hovorun (2008).

¹⁵ Cyril of Alexandria was emphatic that Christ was fully human but that this did not diminish his divinity. See Young (2013), 217–18. On the importance of the human nature of Christ in Cyril’s understanding of soteriology, see Anderson (2014), chapter 1.

¹⁶ See the introduction in Allen and Datema (1991), 9–10.

¹⁷ Translation taken from Allen and Datema (1991), 184.

¹⁸ Homily XIV, lines 59–65: Allen and Datema (1987).

by the Council of Chalcedon and by earlier theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa.

The dramatic opening of the Passion *kontakion* continues with another ascending tricolon (1.4–7):

Let rocks shatter, for the rock of life is now wounded by nails.
 Let the curtain of the temple be split,
 since the master's body is being pierced with a lance by the lawless.
 Let all creation together shudder and groan at the suffering of the creator.

ῥαγήτωσαν πέτραι, ἡ γὰρ πέτρα τῆς ζωῆς
 νῦν τοῖς ἦλοις τιτρώσκεται·
 σχισθήτω τοῦ ναοῦ τὸ καταπέτασμα,
 σώματος δεσποτικοῦ λόγχῃ νυσομένου ὑπὸ ἀνόμων·
 ἀπλῶς πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις τοῦ κτίστου τὸ πάθος φρίξῃ, στενάξῃ.

Once again Romanos calls for the Gospel events to take place, both exhibiting an authoritative relationship with scripture and playing the role of director or storyteller in bringing the events before his audience/congregation. The tension builds up through the reactions from the natural world (rocks) and an inanimate, man-made object (the temple curtain), leading up to Romanos' call for the whole creation to groan. Each reaction is a response to a particular part of Christ's suffering (the *arma Christi* in later tradition):¹⁹ the whole creation mirrors the suffering of Christ. The repetition of 'rock' in line 4 creates a pun on Christ as the rock (1 Cor. 10:4) and the stones on the ground which react to the crucifixion (Matt. 27:51).²⁰ The temple curtain is another reference to this passage of Matthew and to the similar accounts of Mark 15:38 and Luke 23:45. Romanos also makes a word play on creation and creator in line 7, emphasizing it by juxtaposing the two words. This tricolon (and the word plays in it) highlights the paradoxical nature of Christ's crucifixion and the incomprehensibility of the salvific suffering of the creator.

Paradox is part of the new reality, in which the incomprehensible can and does happen. From the Gospels and the first Christian theologians, paradox had been at the heart of Christian doctrine.²¹ The virgin birth, for instance, or the death of the immortal God on the cross, are events which require a different sort of discourse than that needed to talk about 'ordinary' events

¹⁹ This tradition is mainly western and many centuries after Romanos, but is likely to have been influenced by Byzantine traditions. See Hirsh (1996), 127–9. On the *arma Christi* tradition more broadly, see Cooper and Denny-Brown (2014).

²⁰ On the witness of rocks, see also Luke 19:40.

²¹ Cameron (1991a), 156, 158.

like human death or birth.²² The apostle Paul famously used paradoxical language to talk about the crucifixion in 1 Corinthians 1:22–5:

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

For Paul the Christian life is also one of paradox: 'For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.' (2 Cor. 4:11). Paul believed that living the life of an apostle necessarily meant participating in Christ's suffering,²³ and he endured many hardships as a result of his ministry. We will look further at paradox later in this chapter and in Chapter 3.

Direct Address and the Self

But before Romanos moves on to his imaginative narration and exploration of the biblical story, he addresses Jesus directly: the second strophe of the *kontakion* is a prayerful apostrophe which highlights in a personal way the significance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (2):

My saviour, you took my [nature] so that I might take yours.
 You accepted the suffering,²⁴ so that I now
 might look down on sufferings. By your death I live again.
 You were placed in a tomb and gave heaven to me as my home.
 [By] going down into the depths, you raised me up.
 [By] destroying the gates of Hades you opened the heavenly gates for me.
 You withstood everything clearly because of the fallen one and endured everything,²⁵
 so that Adam might dance.

Εἴλου, σωτήρ μου, τὰ ἐμά, ἵν' ἐγὼ λάβω τὰ σά·
 κατεδέξω τὸ παθεῖν, ἵν' ἐγὼ νῦν

²² I am indebted to Averil Cameron for her work on Christian discourse. See Cameron (1991a), especially chapter 5. Paradox was also used to talk about the nature of God, e.g. Ephrem *Nis* 3.2, in which he uses kataphatic and apophatic language to talk about God, setting the two up against each other in a paradoxical way. On this aspect of paradox in religious language, see Young (1979). We will deal here with paradoxes relating to the new creation, which are usually those relating to the incarnation or the crucifixion and resurrection.

²³ Savage (1996), 173–4.

²⁴ On the word play and the link between passions and suffering, see further below.

²⁵ The 'fallen one' is singular and could refer either to 'me' or to 'Adam', but the point is the same.

τῶν παθῶν καταφρονήσω· σὺ θανάτῳ ἀνέζησα·
 ἐπέθης ἐν τάφῳ καὶ εἰς οἴκησιν ἐμοὶ ἔδωρήσω παράδεισον·
 εἰς βάθος κατελθὼν ἐμὲ ἀνύψωσας·
 πύλας Ἰδαίου κατελθὼν πύλας οὐρανοῦς ἠνέωξάς μοι·
 σαφῶς πάντα ὑπέστης διὰ τὸν πεσόντα· πάντα ἠνέσχου,
 ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἄδάμ.

Through this direct address Romanos characterizes Jesus, but more importantly creates a persona for himself with which he expects the congregation to identify. He makes a statement about his salvation which nevertheless refers to human salvation in general: Romanos represents his congregation's experiences and hopes for salvation. Since Romanos recognizes the difficulties involved in imitating Christ without some assistance or mediation, he creates a persona for himself in which he represents both humanity in all its brokenness, and also an appropriately penitent Christian.²⁶ The congregation can thus identify with him but also seek to imitate him. So in this passage he relates Christ's actions directly to himself. The personal nature of this view of salvation is also intended to appeal to listeners, who can place themselves in the first-person pronouns: Christ's actions save humanity in general but also every person individually. This device, narrative apostrophe, works to connect Romanos (and thereby his congregation) closely with the events described.²⁷ Romanos becomes a player in the Passion drama and, through him, so does the whole congregation, living the life of Christ through this performance. Thus Romanos draws his congregation into a closer relationship with Christ.

Inserting himself as an example of redeemed humanity is not meant to elevate Romanos above his congregation. The purpose, rather, is to demonstrate that redemption is available to all. In other hymns, Romanos portrays himself with carefully constructed humility in a penitential persona. Perhaps the best example is from *On the Sinful Woman*, in which Romanos not only likens himself to the prostitute, but even says he is not as worthy as she (X.1.9–11):

... terrified, the prostitute no longer remained a prostitute.
 But I, although terrified, persist
 in the mire of my deeds.

... πτοηθεῖσα ἡ πόρνη οὐκέτι ἔμεινε πόρνη·
 ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ πτοούμενος ἐπιμένω
 τῷ βορβόρῳ τῶν ἔργων μου.

²⁶ Krueger (2006a), 256, 259. See also Krueger (2013), 290–302. On the influence of Romanos on later homilists including in relation to the penitential persona, see Cunningham (2010). See also Chapter 4 below.

²⁷ Barkhuizen (1986a), 19, 26.

Throughout this hymn Romanos plays the penitent, begging not only for forgiveness but for the ability to repent completely. As in the hymn on the crucifixion, the congregation is thus meant to identify with his sinfulness, just as he identifies with the prostitute's, and, like both characters, to repent of their sins. The prostitute is held up as the prime example of repentance,²⁸ but Romanos' calls for God's assistance indicate that all is not lost for listeners who find themselves unable to repent as completely as the sinful woman of the Gospels.²⁹ His portrayal of the possibility of redemption is consistently and characteristically optimistic.

The basis for this optimism is Romanos' insistence on the great exchange whereby sinful humanity is able to participate in the life of God. In this hymn on the crucifixion (stanza 2, above), metrical units emphasize the opposition of characters and roles being made in this passage and highlight the great exchange which takes place in the crucifixion. Romanos' references to Christ are always in the first metrical unit and the following units in each line are related to Romanos himself. This structural device and the paradoxical statements it houses emphasize the lengths to which God went to save humanity from death: he became human that humans might become divine (i.e. 'you took my [nature] so that I might take yours'). This exchange formula is central to the concepts of correction and perfection which will be important for Romanos (as we will see in Chapter 2): God became human in the person of Jesus to correct human sin and perfect human life.

The paradoxes in this paragraph reflect the counter-intuitive reality of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. God's descent to earth dramatically altered norms and shattered expectations. Christ's descent means human ascent, his passion means an end to passions (and suffering – see further below); death now means life.

Narrative

Romanos follows the dramatic opening and direct address to Jesus with a creative narration of the story of the Passion.³⁰ *On the Passion of Christ* is based on the Gospel accounts of the events leading up to Christ's crucifixion (the Passion narratives), but rather than following a particular Gospel,

²⁸ Krueger (2013), 294.

²⁹ On Romanos' self-portrayal as a penitent Christian, see further in Chapter 4 below and Krueger (2006a), 255–74.

³⁰ On narrative and drama in the *kontakia*, see Eriksen (2013).

Romanos' hymn is a combination of the different accounts. For instance, Caiaphas' statement that it is better for one man to die (4.2–3) appears only in John's Gospel (John 18:14) and only in Matthew and Mark does Jesus make no reply to Pilate's charges (7.1–6; Matt. 27:14; Mark 15:5). This blend of stories reflects Romanos' conception of scripture as a unity, but also his emphasis on creating the fullest possible context for the reading of the day. While we know that Romanos used a (Syriac) harmonized Gospel (*diatessaron*) – another reflection of his belief in the unity of scripture – as well as the four individual Gospels, it is not clear that he does so here.³¹ Rather, we can see in Romanos a concern to contextualize the daily lection, drawing on other scriptural passages where necessary to create the richest reading of the Passion possible.

Romanos is also concerned with crafting a good story and with teaching. So he chooses from the different accounts the details of the story which are relevant to his purpose.³² Caiaphas' statement 'Did I not say rightly before: "It is fitting | that this man alone die and not the whole nation?"' (Οὐ καλῶς εἶπον τὸ πρὶν· 'συμφέρι | ἀπολέσθαι τοῦτον μόνον καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ ἔθνος;') (4.2–3), for instance, allows Romanos to digress (in a highly rhetorical strophe) on the miracle that makes an enemy of God foretell the truth (4.4–7):

Who [ever] saw the snake bringing forth sweet honey instead of its own venom?
 Who [ever] beheld a flame sprinkling dew?
 Who ever heard a liar speaking the truth like Caiaphas?
 Without meaning to, he prophesied that you would die for the sake of all ...

τίς εἶδεν ἀσπίδα ἀντὶ τοῦ ἰοῦ αὐτῆς γλυκὺ μέλι προφέρουσαν;
 τίς ἐθεάσατο φλόγα δροσίζουσαν;
 τίς ἀκήκοε ποτὲ ψεῦδος ἀληθεῦον ὡς Καϊάφαν;
 μὴ θέλων προφητεῦει ὅτι ὑπὲρ πάντων θνήσκεις ...

The three rhetorical questions of lines 4 to 6 form a tricolon, ending in the true-speaking liar, Caiaphas.³³ The first two lines of the tricolon help to

³¹ A *diatessaron* is a unification of the four Gospels. Petersen has made a detailed study of phrases in Romanos which seem to have been borrowed from a Syriac *Diatessaron*. See Petersen (1985b), especially 52–168. Petersen does not argue that Romanos only used a *diatessaron*, but that he made use of one in addition to the four individual Gospels. See Petersen (1983), 491.

³² Constructing a narrative always involves choosing to include some elements and leave out others. See Nilsson (2006), 28, White (1980), 14.

³³ Schork's argument that Caiaphas comes to recognize the truth of his statement seems unlikely: Schork (1957), 311. Romanos is concerned rather to show that nothing is impossible for God. He can enable even liars to speak the truth.

make the third more dramatic and contradictory. The anaphora (repetition of ‘who’ at the beginning of each line) emphasizes the tricolon. The paradoxes employed in this passage emphasize the miracle: the power of God to prophesy through an enemy.

Paradoxes also signify that nature has been changed because of Christ. Snakes now spit out honey instead of venom, liars now speak the truth, and so on. Honey and venom, and fire and water go together in the new creation just as life and death go together in Christ’s crucifixion. He died, but by his death he saved all humankind from sin and death. Rhetorical questions highlight how impossible these paradoxes are. Jesus’ silence before Pilate similarly allows Romanos to employ clever paradoxes, emphasizing the significance of the crucifixion for humanity. Paradoxes change reality and thus perform and are symbols of the post-incarnation reality.

Romanos also uses Caiaphas’ statement to dwell on the faults of the Jews, who not only refuse to recognize the Messiah but actually put him to death. The first paradox in the passage above is a reference to Psalm 140: ‘They make their tongue sharp as a snake’s, and under their lips is the venom of vipers’ (Ps. 140:3). It is a call for deliverance from enemies.³⁴ Through this biblical allusion Romanos places Caiaphas (and thus the Jewish crowd) in the place of the enemies who plot Christ’s downfall (Ps. 140:4). Romanos excludes the Jews from the new creation, blaming them collectively for the death of Jesus and claiming that their rejection of him as their Messiah excludes them from participation in the new reality which he instituted.³⁵

Romanos’ freedom with the text allows him to combine different Gospel accounts into one narrative about Caiaphas. It also enables him to change and augment the story. The *kontakion* focuses on a dialogue between Jesus and the crowd (strophes 8 to 12) which is not part of the Gospel Passion narratives but draws on an earlier event in the Gospels (Mark 2:23–3:1–5; Luke 6:1–10, John 5:9b–18) in which Jesus heals on the Sabbath and the Pharisees are angered. In this story Jesus says, ‘The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath’ (Luke 6:5), just as he does in Romanos’ dialogue (10.2–3). But Romanos’ dialogue moves well beyond this Gospel story. Romanos gives Jesus a lengthy speech and allows the Jews only

³⁴ Psalm 140 is part of a group of lament psalms. See Wallace (2009), 188.

³⁵ Romanos’ theological understanding of the Jewish place in salvation history will be explored further below and in Chapter 3. For a theological reading of references to Jews in contemporary Orthodox liturgy, see Theokritoff (2003a), (2003b).

short responses. Jesus rebukes the crowd with the imagined retorts of the Gentiles (11.1–2):

You have heard the blame from the many [nations] dwelling around you,
that you observe the Sabbath and [yet] are sick

Ψόγον ἠκούσατε ἐκ πολλῶν τῶν παροικούντων κύκλω,
ὡς τηροῦντες σάββατα καὶ νοσοῦντες.

Through this creative extension of the biblical narrative, Romanos argues that the Jews, along with their laws and the Sabbath, represent the old order, which no longer defines reality. It no longer suffices to observe the Sabbath; now humanity must live Christ-like lives in preparation for the final judgement and consummation of the eschaton. Romanos' imaginative recreation and extension of the Gospel story is one way in which he expounds scripture and teaches his congregation about the new reality and how they should live in it.

This freedom with the text places Romanos firmly within the homiletic tradition. The preacher is vested with authority to interpret and teach the scriptures and this enables him to play around with the story for interpretive and teaching purposes. One Syriac writer used the story of the 'Good Thief' who was crucified with Jesus (Luke 23:40–3) to develop a long dialogue between the Thief and the Angel who guards the entrance to paradise.³⁶ This dialogue enabled the author to explore various themes around the crucifixion, resurrection and salvation of humanity. Leontius, presbyter of Constantinople, expands the dialogue of the story of the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1–44) to allow Jesus to counter Arianism.³⁷ Leontius' Jesus interprets Martha's statement ('if you had been here, my brother would not have died') as a foreshadowing of Arianism and corrects her. In Romanos' creative reinvention of the Passion narrative, he focuses on Jesus' miracles (8.4–8) to emphasize his divinity. This reminder of the miracles and the debate over the Sabbath together point out the Jews' lack of understanding and faith. Jesus' remarks about the Sabbath also allow Romanos to explore God's reasons for becoming human: to save humanity from sin and death.

For Romanos, constructing a good story involves imaginative creation.³⁸ The freedom to bend the Gospel narratives a little, combined with

³⁶ Brock (2002).

³⁷ Homily II, lines 291–312. See also Allen and Datema (1991), 48.

³⁸ We know from numerous other Byzantine authors that storytelling was an important element of Byzantine culture. Roger Scott has demonstrated that the one story may be adapted by different authors for quite different purposes, so that a story which was once propaganda for Emperor Michael III becomes anti-propaganda in the hands of Pseudo-Symeon. See Scott (2009), 41–2, (2010), 115–31.

the sorts of rhetorical devices available for a poet, enables Romanos to construct a coherent narrative and persuasive theology. By appealing to his congregation's desire for a good story Romanos makes the Gospel account more vivid and thus draws the congregation into participation in the life of Christ.

Dialogue

Romanos constructs a vivid narrative primarily through dialogue and related techniques.³⁹ He makes extensive use of biblical and non-biblical dialogues and monologues in his hymns, using both biblical and invented characters. They add drama to his homilies, as he creatively invents speeches and situations which help to draw the congregation into participation in the performed life of Christ. In *On the Passion of Christ*, Romanos has Jesus refute the arguments of the crowd in a fairly one-sided dialogue which asserts Jesus' superiority over his opponents. It is a highly rhetorical speech, full of repetition, antistrophe, alliteration, and assonance, clearly designed to persuade. The speech lasts for over five strophes, but here is one extract (9.3–6):

[Crowd:]: 'You are not crucified for the sake of these things,
but for breaking the Sabbath.'

[Jesus:]: 'And what is better, to have mercy on the sick
or to honour the Sabbath?

You have broken Sabbaths many times,
and I did not come from my Father's bosom for the sake of Sabbaths ...'

Ἐπίγραμμα
 'Χάριν τούτων οὐ σταυροῦσαι, ἀλλ' ὡς λύων τὸ σάββατον.
 'Καὶ τί καλὸν ἄρα, ἐλεῆσαι ἀσθενεῖς ἢ τιμῆσαι τὸ σάββατον;⁴⁰
 ἔλυσατε ὑμεῖς πολλακίς σάββατα,
 καὶ ἐκ κόλπων πατρικῶν οὐ παρεγενόμην χάριν σαββάτων ...'

Repetition of 'Sabbath' in the antistrophe here and throughout the speech (e.g. 10.3–5) emphasizes the main point of contention. Romanos repeats

³⁹ On the importance of dialogue in homiletics and poetics before Romanos, see Cameron (1991b), 92, 95, Cunningham (1995), 71, (2003), 101, Kecskeméti (1989), (1993). On dialogue as a dramatizing device, see also La Piana (1936), 176. On Syriac dialogue hymns, see Brock (1983), (1987), (1991), Upson-Saia (2006). On their naissance, see Brock (2001). See further in Chapter 4 below.

⁴⁰ I have followed the SC edition in the accentuation of καὶ τί. See Grosdidier de Matons (1967), 214.

‘for the sake of’, ‘honour’ and ‘to crucify’ throughout, focusing on the coming crucifixion and its effects, as opposed to the effects of honouring the Sabbath. We will look at this section of the speech again shortly. Yet it is not the crowd who is to be persuaded by all this rhetoric, but rather Romanos’ congregation. He does this through the technique of characterization.

Characterization (*Ethopoeia*)

Characterization (*ethopoeia*) is defined in rhetorical handbooks as the ‘imitation of the character of a person supposed to be speaking.’⁴¹ In *On the Passion of Christ*, Romanos works hardest to develop the character of Jesus. Christ is characterized as a clever speaker as an excess of rhetorical figures are put into his mouth. He employs numerous devices including repetition, anaphora, antistrophe, rhetorical questions, assonance and synecdoche. Christ is also a vivid and engaging character: his argumentative speech is lively and heartfelt and makes him seem present to the listeners.

Most importantly, however, Romanos sets Jesus up as a formidable opponent and an authoritative interpreter of scripture. Jesus reverses the arguments of the Jews, turning their own words against them; his opponents are silenced by his arguments; his interpretation of God’s words confounds them. Christ’s apparent disrespect for the Sabbath is not disrespect at all, but rather by healing on the Sabbath he has glorified it. In the Gospel stories (Matt. 12:9–14; Mark 3:1–6; Luke 6:6–11) Jesus confounds the Pharisees by responding to their query about whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath with ‘Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?’ (Mark 3:4). Naturally the Pharisees cannot respond that it is lawful to do harm on the Sabbath, and since their only possible response is to admit that healing on the Sabbath is lawful, they remain silent. In these accounts, Jesus does not need to berate his opponents further, since their silence is proof of his victory. In contrast, Romanos’ Jesus does not hold back. He argues that the Jews have made many other transgressions and that his purpose in coming was not to uphold a small facet of the Law, but rather to restore health to all creation. Romanos’ Jesus says that the Jewish observance of the Sabbath has done them little good (11.1–2, 7):

You have heard blame from the many who dwell around you,
that ‘they observe the Sabbath and [yet] are sick’ ...

⁴¹ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*. See Kennedy (2003), 84. See also Patricia Matsen’s Appendix II in Rollinson (1981), 160ff.

but I, by saving all on the Sabbath, have brought much glory

[to the Sabbath] ...

Ψόγον ἠκούσατε ἐκ πολλῶν τῶν παροικούντων κύκλω,

ὡς τηροῦντες σάββατα καὶ νοσοῦντες...

ἐγὼ δὲ πάντας σώσας τ[ῶ] σαβ[β]άτῳ πλέον

κλέος παρέσχον ...

Jesus gives voice to the Gentile critics of the Jews, sympathizing with their rebuke of the law-abiding Jewish community. Their observance of the Law has gone too far; it has caused them to be blind to their own Messiah and to the plights of their fellow human beings, like those Jesus healed. Romanos asserts that, although the Jews do not realize it, Jesus' acts of healing are part of the new reality which he has instituted. In this *kontakion* and throughout the corpus, Romanos reminds his readers of the Jews' incomprehension and blind rejection of Jesus. This resonates with contemporary violence against Jews and other non-Christian groups, and encourages listeners to maintain this stance against Judaism. Romanos' general treatment of Jews in the *kontakia*, including such damaging rhetoric, will be explored further in Chapter 3, and at the conclusion of this chapter.

Refrain

The debate between Jesus and the Jews is another way in which Romanos weaves his congregation into the events of the Passion story, making them play first the crowd and then Jesus through the refrain. This refrain, 'so that Adam might dance' (ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἀδάμ), which concludes each stanza and which the congregation (or perhaps a choir representing them) sang, is the most obvious way in which listeners participate.⁴² Romanos puts this line into the mouths of the various characters in the hymn, thereby making the congregation enact different roles within one *kontakion*. In strophe 7 (lines 7–8), the crowd says to Pilate:

'He is liable for death for what we claim he did. For this reason he is silent, so that Adam might dance.'

... Ἐνοχος ἔστιν ὧν ἡμεῖς αἰτοῦμεν· ὅθεν κωφεύει,

ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἀδάμ.

⁴² Grosdidier de Matons (1980–1), 40, Maas (1910a), 289. On the role of the congregation, see further in Chapter 4 below.

The congregation sings the refrain, playing the part of the crowd. Then (at 8.7–8) the same words are spoken by Jesus:

‘Perhaps it is not because of these things, rather in pay for them,
that I suffer and die

so that Adam might dance.’

μη τάχα διὰ ταῦτα, μᾶλλον δ’ ἀντὶ τούτων πάσχω καὶ θνήσκω,
ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἀδάμ

Now the congregation plays Jesus. By performing parts of the narrative they perform the life of Christ. They thus participate in the new reality inaugurated by the incarnation. But they also perform the exclusion of the Jews. The congregation plays both saviour and sinner, concluding the debate between Jesus and the crowd in the role of the former. The congregation is to imitate Christ, and this means living in the new reality, not being bound into the old pre-incarnation reality (exemplified by the Jews).

There is also a theological irony in placing the same words in the mouths of both Jesus and his attackers: the crowd speaks the truth without realizing it. Christ does indeed keep silent for Adam’s sake (7.7–8). The end of this strophe mirrors the close of the previous one, which ends with Romanos’ explanation of Jesus’ silence (6.7–8): ‘But he, so that he might suffer, endures in silence for a while, standing wordless, so that Adam might dance’ (αὐτὸς δὲ ἵνα πάθῃ, σιγῶν τέως στέγει, ἄλαλος στήκων, ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἀδάμ.).⁴³ Christ’s silence is calculated to bring about the restoration of humanity: Jesus could have prevented his death, but he chose silence so that he might die for the sake of his creation. The Melodist’s explanation is thus echoed by the unwitting crowd. This irony would not have been lost on the congregation, which played all three roles in the refrain: narrator (Romanos), crowd and Jesus.

Irrespective of which character says the refrain, its theological significance in this *kontakion*, as well as helping to enact the congregation’s participation in the new reality, is that it points to the ideas of correction and perfection. Christ, the second Adam, came into the world to correct the first Adam’s sins, perfect human existence and overturn human death. Thus, all Christ’s actions bring redemption and life to the first Adam: the bound Adam will be free and dance for joy as a result of God’s descent to earth in Jesus Christ. In moving the congregation through different roles, from the blind, sinful crowd to the persona of Jesus, the *kontakion* performs the redemptive correction and perfection of the Passion.

⁴³ Ignatius, among others, recognized the importance of silence in confessing God as well as speaking. See *Letter to the Ephesians* 15.

Although for most of Romanos' hymns the refrain remains the same throughout the hymn, in *On the Passion of Christ* it changes. Initially it is 'only Adam dances' (μόνος χορεύει ὁ Ἀδάμ), but in the second strophe it changes to 'so that Adam might dance' and continues as such for the rest of the hymn. This change might suggest that a select group sang the refrain, perhaps a trained choir. But I see no reason why the cantor could not have explained the change before beginning. The change makes more grammatical and semantic sense and so would not have been difficult for the whole congregation to pick up.⁴⁴

Paradox

The long speech Romanos gives Jesus, and in which the congregation takes part, infuriates the crowd (whom Romanos describes as bloodthirsty and like lions) and Pilate sends him to be whipped. The following strophe is an extended paradox (14.1–8):

The Redeemer endures scourgings, the Releaser was bound,
stripped and stretched out on the cross.

He who in a pillar of cloud once was speaking with Moses and Aaron,
he who made firm the pillars of the earth, as David said, is bound to a pillar;
he who showed to the people a path in the desert –
for the fiery pillar appeared before them – is held fast to a pillar.

The Rock is on the pillar, and the church is hewn for me
so that Adam might dance.

Μάστιγας φέρει ὁ λυτρωτής, δέσμιος ἦν ὁ λύτης,
γυμνωθεὶς καὶ ἐκταθεὶς ἐπὶ στύλου
ὁ ἐν στύλῳ πρὶν νεφέλης Μωσῆ καὶ Ἀαρὼν συλλαλῶν·
ὁ τῆς γῆς τοὺς στύλους στερεώσας, ὡς Δαβὶδ
ἔφη, στύλῳ προσδέδεται·
ὁ δείξας τῷ λαῷ ὁδὸν εἰς ἔρημον –
πύρινος γὰρ πρὸ αὐτῶν ἔφαινε ὁ στύλος – στύλῳ προσήχθη·
ἡ πέτρα ἐπὶ στύλου, καὶ λαξεύεται μοι ἡ ἐκκλησία,
ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἀδάμ.

⁴⁴ The changes in the pronunciation of Greek from the classical period to the sixth century mean that there would have been little if any difference between the vowels εἰ and η, so that χορεύει would sound just like χορεύει, but the replacement of μόνος with ἵνα remains a problem. See Moleas (2004), Palmer (1996), 176. Grosdidier de Matons, while agreeing that a changing refrain makes it unclear, nevertheless argues for the participation of the whole congregation in the refrain on the basis of Romanos' invitations to take part in some of the hymns. See Grosdidier de Matons (1977), 46. Cf. *On Judas* XVII.23.7–9 where Romanos calls for listeners to cry out directly before the refrain.

As we have noted, the central mysteries of the Christian faith are paradoxes (e.g. the virgin birth, the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection). Like other early Christian writers, Romanos employs paradox repeatedly; paradoxes and oxymorons are recurrent devices in this and almost every *kontakion*. In this passage, Romanos develops an elaborate layered paradox involving 'pillar' or 'cross' (*stulos*). The word is repeated again and again in different contexts, linking the Redeemer on the cross with the God of the Old Testament, and finally concluding the paragraph by making a connection with the Christian church. This strophe illustrates the contradictions inherent in the crucifixion. Verbal and structural repetition, alliteration and allusions to well-known biblical stories make this layered paradox particularly effective. Line 1 emphasizes Christ's role as the saviour of humanity by naming him 'Redeemer' and 'Releaser', two words cognate with the verb for loosing or releasing, while simultaneously connecting the Redeemer with words of scourging and bondage (*mastigas*, *desmios*). These contrasts emphasize, as does the whole stanza, the miraculous nature of the crucifixion, the extent of God's sacrifice. Christ, who by definition is associated with release and redemption, is bound and whipped. Wonder at God's miracles and full realization of his sacrifice on the cross are two important themes which run throughout the corpus of Romanos' hymns. Lines 3 to 5 in this paradoxical stanza all define God by referring to different events in the Old Testament, as we will see shortly. The pillars of the Old Testament which associated God with strength and power are contrasted with the pillar (i.e. the cross) which makes God in Christ suffer.

The pillar, and in particular the 'fiery pillar [which] appeared before them', recalls the Exodus. Romanos uses the same word (*stulos*) as that used in the Septuagint for the pillars of cloud and fire: 'The Lord went in front of them in a pillar (*stulō*) of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar (*stulō*) of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night' (Exodus 13:21). In the Exodus story, God leads and protects his vulnerable people. Romanos compares this narrative with the behaviour of the Jews towards God when he is vulnerable: they crucify him; whereas before God became a pillar for their salvation, now they have made a pillar for his destruction. Line 4 recalls Psalm 75:3: 'When the earth totters, with all its inhabitants, it is I who keep its pillars (*stulous*) steady.' God is the one who protects the foundations of the earth, who can keep the earth from being destroyed by its inhabitants. God, who has been a pillar for the Jews in numerous ways, protecting and guiding them, is rewarded by being bound to a pillar until he dies.

An interesting allusion to a biblical pun finishes this extended paradox in the reference to the rock as the foundation of the church. This simultaneously refers to Jesus and to his disciple Peter. In 1 Corinthians, Paul says: ‘For they [i.e. the Israelites in the desert] drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ’ (1 Cor. 10:4). Paul’s imagery is cleverly mixed, connecting the rock from which the Israelites drank not only with Christ but also with God in the pillars of fire which followed them at night as they journeyed through the desert (Exodus 13:21). In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus says to Peter: ‘And I tell you, you are Peter (*petros*), and on this rock (*petra*) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it’ (Matt. 16:18). Both passages spring to mind here. Romanos’ substantial point is the strength of the church and its foundation in Christ, which is the cause of its strength. Just as death (Hades) did not prevail against Christ who was crucified on the cross, death will not prevail against the church which is founded on Christ, the Rock, through his disciple, Peter (rock).

This is the most elaborate paradox in *On the Passion of Christ*, but Romanos uses other paradoxical imagery and oxymorons elsewhere in the *kontakion* to re-enact in language the incongruity of the crucifixion. Standing before Pilate, Jesus refuses to speak (7.1):

The Thunderer stands silent, the Word is without a word.

Ἄφωνος ἴστατο ὁ βροντῶν, λόγου ἔκτός ὁ Λόγος.

How can the thundering one not thunder? God is all powerful and controls the heavens and all the dramatic weather which emanates from them. Yet here God stands without making a sound. It is equally incomprehensible that Jesus, who is called the Word (e.g. John 1:1), and who is defined in terms of his role as the Word of God, should say nothing. Romanos explains why (7.2–3): ‘for if he had broken into speech, he would not have been beaten; and if he had won he would not have been crucified nor saved Adam’ (εἰ γὰρ ἔρρηξε φωνήν, οὐχ ἤττατο | καὶ νικῶν οὐκ ἔσταυροῦτο καὶ Ἀδάμ οὐκ ἐσώζετο). What seems most natural is changed in the crucifixion. Death means life: Christ’s death on the cross means life for all humanity. We have seen this sort of natural change expressed already in the opening of the hymn. Human categories break down in the face of this miraculous deed of God, and language is left with paradox, which performs the new creation.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ See further in Chapter 3 below.

Another paradox in this *kontakion* reverses the roles of Jesus and Pilate (6.5):

A condemned man judges the righteous judge ...

τὸν δίκαιον κριτὴν [κρίνει κ]ατάκριτος,

Jesus is the condemned man in the Gospel story, since he is the one brought before Pilate for judgement and condemned to death. But Romanos makes Pilate the condemned man, doomed to die like all humanity, and particularly damned for his role in Christ's crucifixion. By contrast, Jesus, whom Romanos places at the beginning of the line to emphasize his importance, is the 'righteous judge'.

Later Romanos emphasizes that Pilate made the wrong choice, through a paradoxical rhetorical question (16.4–6):

For hearing that he would be Caesar's enemy, the coward was scared.

Did he wish to be an enemy of the almighty or of Caesar,

by honouring life now rather than the Life?

ἀκούσας γὰρ ὅτι ἔσται Καίσαρος ἐχθρός, ἐπτοήθη ὁ δειλῆος·

τοῦ παντοκράτορος ἢ γὰρ τοῦ Καίσαρος

θέλει εἶναι δυσμενής, τῆς Ζωῆς τὴν ζωὴν νῦν προτιμήσας;

Pilate's decision to honour Caesar above God is laughable when put in these terms. Who would willingly choose to be an enemy of God rather than an enemy of a mortal ruler? Pilate's choice is a short-sighted one, focusing on his earthly life 'now' rather than on eternal life. Romanos encourages his listeners to avoid Pilate's mistake and orient their lives towards eternal life.

Another brief oxymoron once again emphasizes the reversal of all norms in the crucifixion, this time using the imagery of taste (22.1):⁴⁶

They gave the Fount of Sweet Streams vinegar to drink

Ἵδρος ἐπότισαν τὴν πηγὴν τῶν γλυκερῶν ναμάτων

By drawing on the sense of taste (and perhaps smell), Romanos makes the contrast more bodily and vivid, and therefore more immediate to his audience.

Vivid Description (*Ekphrasis*)

The vivification achieved through taste imagery in this paradox (and in dialogic and narrative techniques) is extended to events and objects through *ekphrasis*. *Ekphrasis* or 'vivid description' was a way to bring an

⁴⁶ On Romanos' use of the senses, see chapter 2 below.

object or scene before the eyes of the listener.⁴⁷ The fourth-century rhetorician Aphthonius defines *ekphrasis* as ‘a speech which leads one around, bringing the subject matter vividly before the eyes’ (“Ἐκφρασίς ἐστι λόγος περιηγηματικός ὑπ’ ὄψιν ἄγων ἐναργῶς τὸ δηλούμενον).⁴⁸ ‘Leads one around’ is an appropriate translation for περιηγηματικός since the speech should take the listener around the object being described. If it is an *ekphrasis* of a church (for example, Procopius of Caesarea’s *ekphrasis* on Hagia Sophia),⁴⁹ then the *ekphrasis* should describe the church in such a way that the listener feels as if they are being led around the church itself. It was supposed to do this so vividly that the person listening to the *ekphrasis* would actually see the thing being described in their mind’s eye. Nicolaus the Sophist says: ‘the former [i.e. *ekphrasis*] tries to make listeners into spectators’ (ἡ δὲ πειρᾶται θεατὰς τοὺς κούοντας ἐργάζεσθαι) (68).⁵⁰

Byzantines did not see *ekphrasis* simply as a description of a work of art (as it is still often conceptualized today despite the definitive studies of scholars such as Ruth Webb), but rather an advanced narrative exercise, used to describe people, places, times, events, nature and so on.⁵¹ So narrative and *ekphrasis* are closely connected in Byzantine rhetoric.⁵² Vivid description is certainly part of the way in which Romanos constructs a coherent and dramatic narrative. These *ekphraseis* are not simply digressions from the narrative, unrelated to the meaning or flow of the story. They are carefully integrated into the narrative and although they may at first seem to create a gap, closer inspection proves they often assist the temporal movement of that narrative.⁵³ In strophe 18, Romanos describes human thirst and Christ’s quenching of it in an *ekphrasis* followed by a short speech by Jesus:

The earthly race was destroyed by thirst, consumed by burning heat
as they wandered in the desert, and in waterless land
the wretched [race] has not found a cure for its thirst.
For this reason my Saviour, the fount of good things, gushed forth a stream of life,

⁴⁷ James and Webb (1991), 4, Macrides and Magdalino (1988), 49.

⁴⁸ Rabe (1926), 36, line 22. The translation is Ruth Webb’s: Webb (1999b), 11.

⁴⁹ Procopius, *Buildings* I.i.23–65.

⁵⁰ Nicolaus *Progymnasmata* section 68: Kennedy (2003), 166.

⁵¹ Webb (1999b), 11. See also Webb (2009), 61–86. Webb includes a useful table (p. 64) on the subjects of *ekphraseis* in the different *progymnasmata*, and art works appear in only one of these. Even in cases where the subject matter could be broadly defined as art, as in the Shield of Achilles, the first-century (AD) rhetorician Theon sees the *ekphrasis* as a description of the process of manufacture rather than a description of a work of art. See Theon *Progymnasmata* section 119 and Webb (1999b), 11.

⁵² James and Webb (1991), 6, Webb (1999a), 64.

⁵³ On the relationship between narrative and *ekphrasis* and how the latter can involve temporal as well as spatial movement, see Nilsson (2005), 127–8.

saying, 'You were thirsty because of your side.

Drink from my side and do not ever thirst.

This is a twofold stream. It washes those who are dirty and quenches thirst, so that Adam might dance.'

ᾠλετο δίψῃ ὁ γηγενής, καύσωνι κατεφλέχθη

ἐν ἐρήμῳ πλανηθεῖς, ἐν ἀνύδρῳ

καὶ ἰάσασθαι τὴν δίψαν οὐχ εὔρεν ὁ δύστηνος·

διὸ ὁ σωτήρ μου, ἡ πηγὴ τῶν ἀγαθῶν, ζωῆς νάματα ἔβλυσε

βοῶν· Ἐὐχάρῃς πλεωρᾶς ἐδίψησας,

πίε τῆς ἐμῆς πλεωρᾶς καὶ οὐ μὴ διψήσεις εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα·

διπλοῦν ταύτης τὸ ρεῖθρον· λούει καὶ ποτίζει τοὺς ῥυπωθέντας,

ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἀδάμ·

The thirst of those in the desert is emphasized by repetition of 'thirst' and words related to water ('fount', 'stream'), and by the juxtaposition of 'in the desert' and 'in waterless land'. Adam's side is a metaphor for Eve, who caused human thirst, and the image of drinking from Christ's side recalls the eucharist. Romanos creates a picture of a spiritually and physically thirsty humanity, which is redeemed and whose thirst is quenched by Christ's crucifixion. This is an image of correction (Christ corrects the sins of Eve) and perfection (he stops humanity thirsting).

The motif of thirsting in the desert also calls to mind the water which burst from a rock to quench the thirst of the Israelites in their journey through the desert (Exodus 17:1–6): 'The Lord said to Moses, "... strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.'" (17:6). Yet this water did not quench human thirst forever, nor did it restore humanity to everlasting life. It is in the eucharist, which is both a symbol of and a participation in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, that human thirst is quenched.

This reference to the eucharist, which links Romanos' preaching with other rites of the church or parts of the liturgy, reminds the congregation of the most obvious way in which they participate in the life of Christ: by receiving the sacrament of his body and blood. This reminder is central to Romanos' endeavour to make his congregation participate in the new creation which he believes is present after the incarnation. Participation does not only take place in the eucharist, but these references may keep the idea of participation in the minds of listeners. They are also appeals to the senses, encouraging the congregation to remember the taste of the bread and wine;⁵⁴ the *ekphrasis* thus appeals not only to sight, but also

⁵⁴ On the senses, see further in Chapter 2 below and Frank (2005), 163–79, Harvey (2006).

to the feeling of thirst, both physical and spiritual. The congregation is made to picture the Israelites in the desert and not only to imagine but also to identify with, even feel, their thirst. This Good Friday *kontakion* looks forward to Easter Day, the day in which Christ is resurrected anew in the liturgical year and the eucharistic feast is celebrated. Lay eucharistic communion was infrequent, but Easter was one major feast at which lay Christians usually received the eucharist.⁵⁵ Romanos prepares his congregation to receive the sacraments, making them thirst for the 'stream of life'.

Romanos also invokes memory of baptism and perhaps foreshadows approaching Easter baptismal rites. Biblical allusions to water often carry connotations of baptism, at least as far as many patristic exegetes were concerned, and Romanos' allusion is no exception.⁵⁶ The waters of baptism save in a way that the water which burst from the rock did not. Romanos elsewhere makes the comparison between the parting of the Red Sea and baptism (Exodus 14:26–9; XXXVI.8): baptism saves eternally, whereas the parting of the Red Sea only saved those particular Israelites from being killed (or returned to slavery) by the Egyptians.⁵⁷ Baptism is another rite which, although it only takes place once in a person's life, is an important participatory moment. Through baptism Christians participate in the baptism of Christ and, as we will see later (Chapter 3), Romanos sees this as the point in which humans are re-clothed in the divine garment which they lost at the Fall and restored to paradise.⁵⁸ In Jesus' speech following the *ekphrasis*, he connects his crucifixion and death both with the eucharist and with baptism: it is a twofold stream (18.7). It is perhaps a reference to the blood and water which came forth from Jesus' side: the blood is the thirst-quenching eucharistic wine and the water the restorative waters of baptism.

Ekphrasis is itself a way in which Romanos makes his congregation perform and participate in the story, irrespective of whether eucharistic imagery is involved. Its vividness is designed to make the listener visualize the situation and react in a particular way.⁵⁹ As discussed above, many rhetoricians and commentators have explained these techniques as ways

⁵⁵ Krueger (2006b), 13.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Ambrose *On the Mysteries* 3.1.3 in which he sees the waters in Genesis as a type for baptismal waters. On Old Testament types for baptism, see Daniélou (1956), 70–113. On fish and water images and their relation to baptism, see Drewer (1981).

⁵⁷ See Chapter 3. On this type for baptism more generally, see Daniélou (1956), 86–98.

⁵⁸ On this type of clothing metaphor in Syriac homiletics and poetry, which probably influenced Romanos, see Brock (1982a).

⁵⁹ Webb (1997), 112 and *passim*.

of making eyewitnesses out of listeners.⁶⁰ By employing these devices Romanos changes the congregation from passive listeners into active participants in the events he vividly describes. They are no longer simply listening to him tell them about the thirsting Israelites, but they see the Israelites before them and experience their thirst. Romanos thus encourages his listeners to recognize their thirst, their sinfulness and therefore their need for God. He makes them thirst for God. But it also enables him to emphasize that Christ quenches thirst. Unlike the Israelites who will go on thirsting, his congregation's thirst will be eternally sated by Christ.

Structure

This *ekphrasis* also helps to cover a temporal gap in the story, between Pilate's decision to crucify Jesus (stanza 17) and the carrying of the cross and the crucifixion (stanza 21). Far from the *ekphrasis* causing a halt in time and thereby making the narrative disjointed, we are carried through a change of scene and time in the narrative proper by this vivid description of human thirst.⁶¹ The *ekphrasis* holds the attention of the audience, elaborating on an important point through vibrant imagery and at the same time helping to move the narrative from one scene to the next. This type of structural device adds to the drama of the musical homily.

The Passion story is interspersed with such stanzas of analysis, *ekphrasis* or Old Testament references, which help to set up the story as a drama by assisting the temporal and spatial movement of the narrative. Between the stanzas on Caiaphas (3–4) and Pilate (6ff.), Romanos analyses Caiaphas' statement and links the events to the Old Testament story of Cain and Abel (4–5). Like the *ekphrasis* above, this analysis covers a gap in time and a change of scene. The drama moves from the courtyard of Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters in the time it takes for Romanos to examine Caiaphas and his actions.

Dramatic comparisons or oppositions of two characters are also supported by structural techniques (2.1–3):

My saviour, you took what was mine, so that I might receive what is yours.
 You accepted the suffering, so that I now
 might look down on passions.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Nicolaus the Sophist, section 11, quoted above, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus *De Lysia* 7. See also, for example, James and Webb (1991), 4, Webb (1997), (1999b), esp. 13, Zanker (1981), 297.

⁶¹ On *ekphrasis* as a narrative technique in Konstantinos Manasses, see Nilsson (2005), (2006). On temporal movement as an element of *ekphrasis*, see Nilsson (2005), 128.

Εἴλου, σωτήρ μου, τὰ ἐμά, ἴν' ἐγὼ λάβω τὰ σά.
κατεδέξω τὸ παθεῖν, ἴν' ἐγὼ νῦν
τῶν παθῶν καταφρονήσω·

The first half of each line (and first metrical unit) refers to what Christ has done, the second to the reason and effect on Romanos (and therefore on all humanity). The word play, which strengthens the comparison, is difficult to render in English, but the word for suffering and the word for passions come from the same root in Greek so that a paradox is created: Christ accepted suffering to get rid of human passions. This word play is repeated in several places in this *kontakion*, including in the acrostic.

Romanos also highlights the comparison through repetition of the following construction: a) a clause in which Christ is the subject, describing his actions; b) caesura; c) a clause expressing Christ's purpose in so acting. This sort of structural repetition, using the metrical caesura to separate the two phrases, is not uncommon for Romanos.⁶² Here it accentuates the significance of the incarnation and crucifixion for human salvation: that Christ perfects our human life. The metre is similarly used in *On the Annunciation II* (XXXVII.8.1–3). Metre and structure combine to play the role of much of Romanos' rhetoric in his hymns: emphasizing theological points.

Similar structural repetition occurs at 8.1, 4–6:

'Do I now owe you my death,' my Saviour said ...
'because I once "demanded back" Jairus' daughter with a single word,
because I "gathered in" the only son of the widow
and with my voice showed to all lifeless Lazarus hastening [from the tomb]'

Ἐθάνατον ὤφειλον νῦν ἐγὼ, ἔφησεν ὁ σωτήρ μου ...
ἀνθ' ὧν ἰαεῖρου τὸ θυγάτριον ποτὲ λόγῳ μόνῳ ἀνέπραξα,
ἀνθ' ὧν μονογενῆ τῆς χήρας ἤγειρα⁶³
καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον φωνῆ τρέχοντα τὸν ἄπνουν ἔδειξα πᾶσι'

The repetition of lines 4–5 accentuates the miracles Jesus performed, and suggests a plethora of others unmentioned. The placement of the repeated 'because' at the beginning of these lines matches the placement of 'death' in the first line, emphasizing the paradox that such miraculous reversals of death should necessitate Jesus' death.

⁶² On the metre of Romanos' *kontakia*, see Maas and Trypanis' metrical appendix: Maas and Trypanis (1963), 511–38. The metrical scheme for this *kontakion* is xix, Maas and Trypanis (1963), 526.

⁶³ This word is ambiguous. It could come from ἐγείρω or ἀγείρω. I have chosen the latter, because I think Romanos is using debt imagery, following ὤφειλον, but 'raised' would certainly be an appropriate translation in this context, so I do not argue that my reading is the only possible one. On this use of imagery, see below.

Word Play

Contrasts and comparisons of characters are also made through etymological word plays. In strophe 8 Romanos makes a play on ‘word’ (*logos*) (8.2–3):

for he did not judge Pilate worthy of a word,
since he considered him irrational.

τὸν Πιλάτον

οὐδὲ λόγου γὰρ ἤξιου λογισάμενος ἄλογον-

Romanos contrasts Jesus with Pilate. Jesus is silent in response to Pilate’s questioning. In the story Pilate speaks, but Jesus considers him ‘wordless’ or ‘reasonless’ (*alogos*). By contrast, Jesus is the one who ‘reasons’. *Alogos* has also come to mean ‘horse’ or ‘animal’ by this period, further strengthening the notion of Pilate’s irrationality.⁶⁴

This strophe also plays on images of debt, money and exacting payment. Jesus asks whether he ‘owes’ death (1), because he ‘demanded back’ or ‘exacted’ Jairus’ daughter (4) and ‘gathered in’ the widow’s son (5). These miracles are put in terms of debt recoupment and money collection. In line 7 he says that ‘in pay for these things’ he must suffer and die. To suggest that raising someone from the dead is equivalent to collecting a debt makes a mockery of the Jewish claim. Romanos’ use of money imagery thus demonstrates how ridiculous the suggestion is that Jesus ‘owes’ the Jews anything. But it also uses everyday language, monetary terminology which would have been familiar to all, to appeal to (or even amuse) his audience, giving them a more accessible route to an understanding of the text.

In strophe 21, Romanos makes plays on the word ‘cross’ to reverse roles in the crucifixion: it is Christ who is crucifying Satan/Death by his death (21.1–3):

Providing victory to the humble, bearing, in the manner of triumph,
the cross on his shoulders, he went out
to be crucified and to crucify the one who severely wounded us.

Νίκην παρέχων τοῖς ταπεινοῖς, δίκην τροπαίου φέρων
ἐπὶ ὤμων τὸν σταυρὸν ἐξῆλθε
σταυρωθῆναι καὶ σταυρῶσαι τὸν ἡμᾶς κατατρώσαντα·

Death’s apparent victory over Jesus is actually defeat. By this word play Romanos enacts the paradox of the crucifixion. Jesus turns death on its head and by his crucifixion crucifies death for all humanity.

⁶⁴ Lampe (1961), 78, A.1.a.

These sorts of close connections between words and ideas are made using alliteration and assonance as well. These devices enable a type of word play where there is no etymological link between the two words. For instance (5.1–4):

Thus the priest spoke, but he did not understand it.
For envy did not allow him,
but roused him to murder. For murder follows envy.
And the martyr Abel was envied by Cain, and afterwards murdered.

οὕτω μὲν ἔφη ὁ ἱερεὺς, τοῦτο δὲ οὐ συνῆκεν·
οὐ γὰρ εἴασεν αὐτὸν ὁ φθόνος,
ἀλλ' ἠρέθισε πρὸς φόνον· φθόνῳ φόνος γὰρ ἔπεται·
καὶ μάρτυς ὁ Ἄβελ ὑπὸ Κάϊν φθονηθεὶς, φονευθεὶς δὲ μετέπειτα·

In this passage Romanos asserts that murder (*phonos*) and envy (*phthonos*) are closely associated: murder follows envy. He makes this association all the more prominent by alliteration, assonance and repetition, and the juxtaposition of these similar-sounding words in lines 3 and 4. The reference to the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4), a story in which one brother murders another out of envy, hammers home the connection (on the typology of which, see further below). Here is a moral lesson in word play. Romanos provides a negative moral example in Caiaphas; he speaks the truth but is unable to comprehend it because of his envy of Jesus. Again, Romanos uses the biblical stories to educate his listeners about true Christian behaviour: avoid envy as it leads to murder. As we will see shortly, this could also be read as instructing listeners to avoid 'Jewish' behaviour.

Typology and Prophecy

Towards the end of this *kontakion*, Romanos presents Old Testament people as types for Jesus and Old Testament events prefigure events in the life of Christ.⁶⁵ Following earlier theologians, Romanos sees Isaac as a type for Christ and his resurrection (19.6–7):⁶⁶

Of whom [i.e. Christ] the patriarch Isaac on the mountain was a type.
He was slaughtered in the ram and brought down living like my saviour.

⁶⁵ We will look further at typology and prophecy in Chapters 2 and 3. For discussions of typology in Romanos, see also Reichmuth (1975), Schork (1962).

⁶⁶ For example, *Epistle of Barnabas* 7:3.

οὗ καὶ τύπος ὁ πατήρ Ἰσαὰκ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ὄρει·
ἐσφάγη ἐν ἀρνίῳ καὶ ζῶν κατηνέχθη ὡς ὁ σωτήρ μου

Romanos explicitly marks this comparison as a type (*typos*): Isaac foreshadows Christ's resurrection, since he was taken to be sacrificed and only replaced by the ram at the last minute (Genesis 22:9–13). He was therefore sacrificed (in the ram, which is his substitute) and yet returned alive with his father Abraham; Christ is sacrificed on the cross and then resurrected. Antitype surpasses type: the ram is substituted for Isaac and so Isaac returns alive, whereas Christ truly undergoes suffering and death and returns to life. It was important in Christian tradition, which Romanos certainly follows here, that Isaac did not suffer, but that he prefigured the one who would suffer for the sake of all.⁶⁷ This was in contrast to rabbinic interpretations of Isaac as the suffering one, whose blood was truly shed and who thereby demonstrated his willingness to obey God and his father.⁶⁸

Jonah is also a type for Christ and the resurrection (20.1–6; Jonah 1:17, 2:10):

Another type for Jesus was the prophet

Jonah in the belly of the whale.

He was swallowed but not digested, like the Lord in the tomb.

This man came out from the whale after three [days],

like Christ from the tomb.

This man, having preached to Nineveh, saved it,

but Christ redeemed every land and the inhabited world.

Ἄλλος δὲ τύπος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ γέγονεν ὁ προφήτης

Ἰωνᾶς ἐν κοιλίᾳ τοῦ κήτους·

κατεπόθη, οὐκ ἐπέφθη ὡς ἐν τάφῳ ὁ κύριος·

ἐκεῖνος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ κήτους μετὰ τρεῖς,

ὡς Χριστὸς ἐκ τοῦ μνήματος·

ἐκεῖνος Νινευὶ κηρύξας ἔσωσε,

πᾶσαν δὲ τὴν γῆν Χριστὸς ἐλυτρώσατο καὶ τὴν οἰκουμένην·

Jonah's descent into the belly of the whale foreshadows Christ's descent into the tomb and into hell, and the 'resurrection' of Jonah from the belly of the whale foreshadows the resurrection of Christ. Having been spat out by the whale, Jonah went on to save the people of Nineveh from destruction. From the New Testament (Matt. 12:38–41), Jonah had been seen as a type for Christ.⁶⁹ Romanos uses this incident as a type for Christ's salvation of the

⁶⁷ Kessler (2004), 131–7.

⁶⁸ Kessler (2004), 136.

⁶⁹ On patristic interpretations of Jonah, see Duval (1973).

whole world, clearly stating that the latter surpasses the former: Jonah only saved one city (and not eternally) whereas Jesus saves all humanity and restores them to everlasting life through his death and resurrection.

A less marked example of typology in this hymn is the reference to the murder of Abel by Cain (5.4–6; Genesis 4:1–8):

And the martyr Abel was envied by Cain, and afterwards was murdered.

Christ also submitted to this.

Being fond of the envious people, he drove them to hatred by showing them love.

καὶ μάρτυς ὁ Ἄβελ ὑπὸ Κάιν φθονηθεὶς,

φονευθεὶς δὲ μετέπειτα·

ὁ δὲ καὶ Χριστὸς ὑπομεμένηκε·

βάσκανον λαὸν ποθῶν εἰς ὀργὴν ἐκίνει στοργὴν δεικνύων ...

In the Genesis story, Cain kills Abel after God accepts Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's. Cain was envious of Abel's acceptance by God, and this led him to kill his brother.⁷⁰ In keeping with contemporary Christian interpretations of the story, Romanos sets up this first murder as a type of the most significant murder: that of Jesus Christ.⁷¹ The envy of Cain is a type for the sin of the Jews who are going to murder Jesus.⁷² God's love for the Jews, demonstrated in his sacrifice on the cross, led them to hate him rather than love him.

Abel is also described as a martyr, placing this Old Testament Jewish figure in a Christian role.⁷³ The 'martyr' Abel, whose sacrifice and death (the ultimate sacrifice) are acceptable to God, becomes an important type for Christ's sacrifice (or 'martyrdom') in late antique Christianity.⁷⁴ In Romanos, the 'martyrdom' of Abel foreshadows the ultimate martyrdom, the one which established the concept of martyrdom: the crucifixion of Jesus. Such moves point to the strongly typological mode of thinking that supports much of Romanos' imagery and argument.

Likewise, specific Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Christ. Such prophecies do not appear in this hymn, but occur frequently in others. For instance, in *On the Entry into Jerusalem* (XVI.10.1–2) Romanos refers to the

⁷⁰ We have seen the link made between murder and envy through assonance.

⁷¹ See Grypeou and Spurling (2013), 118–19.

⁷² On Abel as a type for Christians and Cain as a type for the Jews, see Byron (2011), 202–4.

⁷³ This image emerged in the New Testament (Matthew 23:35; Hebrews 11:4, 12:24) and was developed by patristic writers. See Byron (2011), 191–5, Hayward (2009), 110.

⁷⁴ Byron (2011), 196–8. Irenaeus of Lyon was the first to present Abel's sacrifice as a eucharistic type (*Adv. Haer.* IV.17.5–18.4): Hayward (2009), 114–15. The image of Abel takes on the same significance in the mosaics of San Vitale, Ravenna: Jensen (2000), 85. On the tradition which makes Abel a symbol of all the righteous who unfairly suffer, and even presents him as a vengeful judge, see Byron (2011), 181–90.

prophecy by Zechariah that the king would enter Jerusalem triumphantly, riding a donkey (Zech. 9:9); Christ fulfilled this prophecy, just as he does all other Old Testament prophecies. Fulfilment of prophecies is part of Christ's recapitulation of human life, but also a symbol of the new creation.

Old Testament types and prophecies are fulfilled in Christ. In this hymn and throughout the extant corpus of *kontakia* Romanos uses the fulfilment of prophecy to argue for a changed reality as a result of the incarnation. This new reality brings with it a radical change in the nature of time.⁷⁵ Before the incarnation, history was governed by prophecy; all events looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. Now that the Messiah has come, in Christ, there is no longer any need for prophecy. All prophecies are fulfilled and therefore the time of prophecies has ended. No longer are there types for the coming Messiah, his incarnation, death and resurrection. Instead of waiting for the coming Messiah and looking for signs which signal his advent, now Romanos believes humans are called to participate in the new creation and to recognize that all prophecies are fulfilled.

Anti-Judaism

And yet, as we saw above, 'humans' for Romanos does not include the Jews. Throughout his *kontakia*, Romanos characterizes the Jews as subhuman; he presents them as murderers and liars and paints them with images of bitterness and poison. In Chapter 3 we will look at Romanos' anti-Judaism in more detail and contextualize it in more depth; here it suffices to glimpse the anti-Judaism of *On the Passion of Christ*.

References to biblical imagery contrast the behaviour of the Jews and Jesus (13.1–3):

When Jesus spoke they heard these things, bloodthirsty,
the savage people, and like lions
they roared over the seizing of the life of Christ the lamb.

Λέγοντος ταῦτα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἤκουσεν αἰμοβόρως,
ὁ ἀνήμερος λαός, καὶ ὡς λέων
ὠρυᾶτο τοῦ ἀρπάσαι τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ ἀμνοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The image of the lamb carries with it connotations of helplessness, especially in comparison with lions. Romanos turns the Jewish crowd into a group of bloodthirsty, roaring lions, who rejoice in killing a helpless lamb. The characterization of Jews as murderers was a common one in Christian

⁷⁵ See MacCormack (1982), 287–309.

polemics against the Jews from the Gospels onwards and Romanos taps into this tradition. Ephrem the Syrian, for example, creates an image of the Jews from all time up to the present as killers, using the death of Jesus as the ultimate evidence of their murderous nature.⁷⁶

Romanos' use of animal imagery reveals Christ as God, while demonstrating that the Jews do not recognize him. The depiction of Christ as the slaughtered lamb recalls John 1:29, and the lamb in Revelation (5:6), which is also identified with Christ's sacrifice on the cross: 'Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered ...' The Jews are ignorant of the truth and sub-human in their actions.

Romanos figures Jewish rejection of Jesus through the image of taste (9.1–2):

And when the crowd heard the honey-flowing words,
as though filled with bitterness they replied

Ὅτε δὲ ἤκουσεν ὁ λαὸς τῶν μελιρρύτων λόγων,
ὡς πικρίας ἐμπλησθεῖς ἀπεκρίθη.

Romanos often makes such appeals to the senses, sometimes creating an *ekphrastic* passage for different senses than sight. Here it is as though the sweetness of Jesus has caused the Jews to be filled with bitterness (just as his love for them only engendered hatred); it is evidence that they have turned away from God and refuse to be drawn into his recreation of the world. We can see similar uses of the senses in earlier anti-Judaic literature and notably in Ephrem, who contrasts the foul stench of the Jews with the sweet scent of Christ.⁷⁷ Romanos uses simple physical contrasts like bitter and sweet to perpetuate the split between Judaism and Christianity, making them into direct opposites: bitter Judaism becomes completely incompatible with Christ's sweet paradise.

As suggested above, this depiction of the Jews illustrates Romanos' belief that they are excluded from the new creation. They turned their back on the Messiah who came to restore them to proper communion with God; they crucified him. In stanza 17 Romanos compares the Jews with his congregation:

Hurling the blame at them, [Pilate] killed Christ through them,
because he found them conducive, the ones who said,
that 'His blood will be on them and their children.'

⁷⁶ See Shepardson (2008), 56. See further in Chapter 3 below.

⁷⁷ See Harvey (1998), 109–28, Shepardson (2008), 49, 53. On the use of scent more broadly in late antiquity, see Harvey (2006). For a specific discussion of the use of scent in Syriac homilies on the repentant harlot, including Romanos' *kontakion On the Sinful Woman*, see Harvey (2002), 69–89. Also see further below (Chapter 2).

On the sons not [yet] begotten,⁷⁸ the fathers have prepared a cloak of curse,⁷⁹
 they added blow to blow against their offspring,
 amassing liability for wrongs for their race forever.
 But we, receiving the blood of our Saviour, have found redemption,
 so that Adam might dance.

Ῥίψας τὸ ἔγκλημα ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς κτείνει Χριστὸν δι’ αὐτῶν,
 ὑπουργοὺς αὐτοὺς εὐρῶν τοὺς εἰπόντας·
 <ὡς> ‘τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἔσται ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς σὺν τοῖς τέκνοισιν’,⁸⁰
 υἱοῖς μὴ τεχθεῖσιν οἱ πατέρες τῆς ἀρᾶς
 τὸν χιτῶνα ηὐτέρισαν·
 τοῖς γόνοις τῆ πληγῆ πληγὴν προσέθηκαν,
 δίκην ἔλκοντες κακῶν εἰς τὰς γενεὰς αὐτῶν εἰς αἰῶνας·
 ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῦ σωτῆρος τὸ αἷμα λαβόντες εὐρομεν λύτρον,
 ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἀδάμ.

Romanos contrasts the blood that curses and the blood that redeems.⁸¹ The Jews have Jesus’ blood on their hands, and have allowed this blood curse to pass on to their children as well (*eis tas geneas*), whereas Christians (‘we’), or particularly Romanos’ congregation, find redemption by receiving Christ’s blood at the eucharist. The Jews forced Jesus to die, whereas Christians are the recipients of Christ’s outpouring of his own life on the cross.

Through the imagery of eternity and generation, Romanos argues that the Jews have rejected their own inheritance, which is now received by Christians.⁸² He describes the sin or ‘curse’ of the Jews as ‘on their race’ or ‘on their generations’ ‘forever’. This recalls the passage in Luke 1:50 and 55: ‘his mercy is on those who fear him for generations and generations (*eis geneas kai geneas*) ... as he said to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever’. This song of Mary specifically mentions Abraham and the Jewish heritage of Christianity. By alluding to this biblical passage, Romanos argues that the Jews have stopped fearing God and have been denied their inheritance: God’s mercy. In fact, they seem to have openly rejected it, and have thereby brought upon themselves and their offspring an everlasting curse.

⁷⁸ The negative particle (μὴ) seems to imply that they may not be able to have sons. I have followed Grosdidier de Matons’s ‘encore à naître’ here. See Grosdidier de Matons (1967), 225.

⁷⁹ On the curse, cf. Matthew 27:25, Psalm 109:17–18.

⁸⁰ I have followed the SC edition in the insertion of <ὡς>.

⁸¹ Again, Ephrem does similarly, see Shepardson (2008), 34–5.

⁸² This is called ‘supersessionism’ and was the common belief amongst early Christian theologians. Athanasius, for example, argued that the Christian ‘passover’ (Easter) should have supplanted the Jewish one. See Brakke (2001), 454.

There is no room in Romanos for continued Jewish identity in paradise: God's promises to the Jews are instead confirmed in the Christian community alone. While Romanos' hymns nowhere advocate violence towards the Jews, and his emphasis is on the new creation which is in principle available to all humanity, his theological scheme and imagery sit all too easily with contemporary violence towards Jews. Contemporary chroniclers speak in similar terms of the unhuman nature of the Jews and their blind rejection of Jesus, and record contemporary efforts to convert Jews and constrain their worship. Such actions fit with a theological view that sees no continuing role for the Jews in the history of salvation after the coming of Christ.⁸³

Final Strophe

Many of Romanos' hymns end with a prayer and others with an exhortation to the congregation.⁸⁴ Both have the effect of relating the events described in the hymn strongly to the members of the congregation (and to readers). They either ask God for forgiveness or assistance, or call on the congregation to behave in a particular way. In *On the Passion of Christ*, it is the latter (23):

Hymn him, O earthly race. Praise the one who suffered
and died for your sake. Receive him whom a short time ago
you saw living, into your soul.
For Christ is about to rise up from the tombs
and make you new, humanity.
So make ready a pure soul,
in order that, by dwelling in it, your King might make it his Heaven.
In a short time he will come and will fill with joy those in pain,
so that Adam may dance.

Ἕμνησον τοῦτον, ὦ γηγενῆ, αἶνεσον τὸν παθόντα
καὶ θανόντα διὰ σέ, ὃν καὶ ζῶντα
μετ' ὀλίγον θεωρήσας τῆς ψυχῆς ἔνδον εἶσδεξαι·
τῶν τάφων γὰρ μέλλει ἐξανίστασθαι Χριστός
καὶ καινίζειν σε, ἄνθρωπε·
ψυχὴν οὖν καθαρὰν αὐτῷ εὐτρέπισον,
ἵνα ταύτην οὐρανὸν κατοικῶν ποιήσῃ ὁ βασιλεὺς σου·
μικρὸν ὅσον καὶ ἦξει καὶ χαρᾶς ἐμπλήσει τοὺς λυπηθέντας,
ἵνα χορεύῃ ὁ Ἄδάμ.

⁸³ The anti-Judaic rhetoric of Romanos' *kontakia* is treated in more detail in Chapter 3 below.

⁸⁴ On final prayers in Romanos, see Barkhuizen (1989), (1991a).

Romanos concludes his hymn on Christ's Passion in praise and exhortation. He calls on the world to praise God for the miracle of the crucifixion and exhorts his congregation to be ready for the coming of Christ: to purify themselves and prepare for Christ to dwell within them. This eschatological language is a reflection of Romanos' temporal and liturgical theology: Romanos' congregation relives the life of Christ in the liturgical cycle, made all the more vivid and real by the *kontakia*. This *kontakion* was sung on Good Friday, the day when Christ died. In this final strophe Romanos reminds listeners that they have witnessed this death. Only a day or so earlier they were witnesses of the living Christ ('whom a short time ago you saw living', lines 2–3), when they attended holy week services and perhaps heard another of Romanos' *kontakia* – *On Judas* perhaps, or *On Peter's Denial*.⁸⁵ And, as Easter fast approaches, Romanos tells his listeners that they will soon see him resurrected ('Christ is about to rise', line 4; 'in a short time he will come', line 7).

This final strophe is also somewhat self-referential. Romanos calls for a hymn to be sung to the crucified one having just finished singing such a hymn. The reason for this is that praise of God and participation in his new creation is not something which finishes with Romanos' *kontakion*, nor is it something which applies only to his congregation. Since the Byzantines believed that their liturgy was an imitation of that taking place in heaven and was partaking in worship in all time and space,⁸⁶ Romanos' call for a hymn to be sung by all the earthly race applies to all Christian worship, not just Good Friday in a particular year in sixth-century Constantinople. The change in the nature of time is evident in this final stanza as well. In lines 2–3, the congregation (and all humanity) is associated with the disciples who saw Christ alive after his crucifixion and resurrection. The events of Christ's life are not distant and removed, but ever-present; the disciples of the sixth century are not completely distinct from the disciples of the first century. Romanos' congregation is part of the Gospel account and the first disciples are part of sixth-century Constantinople.

The contrast between the opening strophe and the final one could not be greater. Romanos opened his hymn with the dramatic revulsion of the natural world at the crucifixion and ends with a joyous hope for the

⁸⁵ Maisano proposes that both these *kontakia* were written for Maundy Thursday: Maisano (2002), 100. There are several other *kontakia* likely composed for holy week. For example, *On the Sinful Woman*, and perhaps *On the Ten Virgins I* and *II*. See Maisano (2002), 100.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Pseudo-Dionysius *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* II.ii.4. See also the discussion in Chapter 4 below.

eschaton, looking forward to the resurrection of Christ, which is relived in the liturgy about to take place on Easter Day, and ultimately to the general resurrection.

Conclusions

The foregoing analysis has served as an introduction to Romanos' poetry. He adeptly employed a wide range of rhetorical figures and his *kontakia* are indebted for their imagery and rhetoric especially to biblical narratives and contemporary homiletics and liturgical poetry. The *kontakion* is carefully constructed, using a variety of devices, such as dialogue and characterization, *ekphrasis*, paradox, and various narrative and structural techniques. These literary devices are designed to attract the audience's attention and to make the poetry vivid and engaging.

Throughout the investigation of Romanos' use of rhetoric in his *kontakia*, we have seen that his literary devices are intimately connected with his theology. Poetic devices support, communicate and embody Romanos' theology. Many, particularly metaphor, typology, structural devices and narrative apostrophe, help to emphasize Christ's correction of Adam's sin (see Chapter 2). Others, including paradox, typology and prophecy, and characterization, make Romanos' congregation aware of a fundamental newness in the world around them. This is the subject of Chapter 3: new creation. Other devices, such as *ekphrasis*, characterization, use of the refrain and dialogue, are designed to make the congregation participate in this new creation and anticipate the eschaton. This is the subject of Chapter 4. All these themes are to a greater or lesser degree evident in the *kontakion* analysed in this chapter. In the following chapters we will investigate these theological ideas in detail, examining how Romanos uses the rhetorical devices we have seen in this chapter to argue for his theological agenda.