

Athanasius' *Life of Antony*: Style, Rhetoric, and Prose Rhythm

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Abstract: Athanasius' *Life of Antony* has been researched intensively by modern scholars, but one crucial facet of this text—its style—has yet to receive any focused treatment, an oversight which has resulted in an underappreciation, and uninformed negative assessments, of its overall stylistic merits. This article demonstrates that the *Life* in fact abounds in the kind of rhetorical ornamentation and accentual rhythm that are hallmarks of artistic late Greek prose, and these findings in turn shed new light on Athanasius' virtuosity as a prose stylist.

Keywords: Athanasius; *Life of Antony*; style; rhetoric; rhetorical devices; prose rhythm.



ATHANASIUS' *LIFE OF ANTONY*,¹ which the embattled bishop of Alexandria composed during his third exile (356–62),² has the distinction of being the very first specimen of monastic hagiography on record.³ Even before the close of the fourth century it was well on its way to becoming a “classic” of early Christian literature, earning along the way high praise from the likes of Gregory of Nazianzus⁴ and John Chrysostom,⁵ and enjoying wide diffusion in the Latin-speaking West due to two Latin translations independently produced within a decade of the release of the Greek *Life*.⁶

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¹ The critical edition is Bartelink 2004, which is a revised version of the edition that first appeared in 1994; for a review of its importance, see Hägg 1997. All translations of the *Life* which appear in this article are my own.

² On his literary activities during this period, see Martin 1996, 474–540; Gwynn 2012, 43–49.

³ The *Life of Antony* is the first but not the only piece of Greek monastic hagiography to have been produced during the second half of the fourth century. In the 390s an anonymous monk from Jerusalem composed the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (the title of Rufinus' Latin translation of it and the title by which the Greek original commonly is known today), which purports to chronicle the deeds and sayings of contemporary Egypt's miracle-working desert monks. For a comprehensive study of this work, see Cain 2016, and for an annotated translation-*cum*-analysis of Rufinus' Latin version, see Cain 2019.

⁴ *Or.* 21.5. This oration is a panegyric on Athanasius which Gregory delivered in Constantinople in 380.

⁵ *Hom. 8 Mt.* (PG 57, 88–89).

⁶ The first, more literal translation remains anonymous, while the second, more elegant one was done by Evagrius of Antioch in the late 360s or early 370s. For critical editions of both translations, see Bertrand and Gandt 2018, and on their character, see Hoppenbrouwers 1973 and Gandt 2008.

The *Life* captivates scholars today perhaps just as much as it did pious readers in antiquity, though for very different reasons. But for all the scholarly attention that it has garnered over the past century and a half,⁷ one crucial aspect of this text—its style—has yet to receive any systematic or sustained treatment. Such neglect has resulted in a general unawareness or underappreciation of its overall stylistic merits and, worse still, it occasionally has led to unflattering and ultimately misguided assessments of the quality of its prose. To take one example, Ewa Wipszycka critiques “the shortcomings of Athanasius’s style of writing” in the *Life* and alleges that “his rhetorical and literary skills left much to be desired. He was certainly not one of the best stylists.”⁸ Timothy Barnes, referring to Athanasius’ works more generally, alleges that he “did not compose and order his works according to contemporary rhetorical theory” and that he did not “employ traditional rhetorical methods.”⁹ Both scholars fail to substantiate their sweeping verdicts with any concrete specifics, and in fact a close inspection of the *Life of Antony* reveals that these judgments are unjustified.

Athanasius’ learned contemporaries assessed stylistic excellence in literature (and oratory) according to certain objective criteria, such as the prevalence and strategic deployment of both traditional rhetorical figures and rhythmic *clausulae*. In this article I evaluate the artistic quality of his prose in the *Life* on the basis of these criteria and demonstrate that he displays some of the same stylistic pretensions that are associated with the literary aesthetic of the Second Sophistic.¹⁰ For the sake of organizational clarity I taxonomize and analyze the data for the rhetorical devices according to the following categories: Sound (paronomasia, parechesis), Repetition (anaphora, antistrophe, kuklos), Redundancy (periphrasis, pleonasm), Parallelism (perfect parison, homoioteleuton, antithesis, chiasmus), Imagery (comparison, metaphor, ekphrasis), and Other Figures of Rhetoric (diaporesis, hyperbaton, paradox).¹¹ I then examine Athanasius’ prose rhythm and conclude by exploring the implications of this study’s findings.

⁷ Much of this attention has been focused on delineating the *Life*’s ascetic ideology (e.g., Brakke 1995) as well as its literary pedigree and antecedents (e.g., Festugière 1937; Bartelink 1982; Overwien 2006; Rubenson 2006; Gemeinhardt 2012; Cain 2023).

⁸ Wipszycka 2018, 40.

⁹ Barnes 1993, 11.

¹⁰ The term “Second Sophistic” may designate such things as a discrete historical period encompassing roughly the first three centuries AD (Swain 1996, 1) and a literary and cultural phenomenon within this period (see Anderson 1993; cf. the essays in Borg 2004); on problems of definition, see further Whitmarsh 2005, chap. 1. In my usage of the phrase “Second Sophistic” I am referencing the prevailing rhetorical tastes and trends that characterized Greek literature during the first three centuries AD but that continued to exercise a profound influence on patristic authors into the fourth century. On the stylistic aesthetic of the Second Sophistic, see Schmid 1964.

¹¹ I follow the same methodology deployed in comparable stylistic treatments which exist for numerous other early Christian authors. These include the following titles which are cited throughout this article: Méridier 1906; Guignet 1911; Ameringer 1921; Campbell 1922; Gallay 1923; Parsons 1923; Barry 1924; Adams 1927; Way 1927; Stein 1928; Burns 1930; Dunn 1931; Buttell 1933; Halliwell 1939; Hritz 1939; Maat 1944; Oroz 1955; Ruether 1969; Lawless 1997. For an exploratory essay proposing

Rhetorical Devices in the *Life of Antony*

Alliteration, the recurrence of the same letter or letters in at least two words that are positioned closely enough so that the sound effect is not obscured, comes in three distinguishable varieties: initial-sequent (words with the same initial letter(s) immediately follow one another), initial-interior (the initial letter of one or more words is the same as that in the interior of a word immediately preceding or following), and initial-interrupted (one or more words implanted within an alliterative sequence interrupt its continuity). Alliteration was used for artistic effect by classical Greek and Latin poets and prose authors as well as by classically trained patristic authors and orators.¹² Athanasius, who in keeping with Greco-Roman literary custom certainly intended his work to be read aloud,¹³ shares their tremendous delight in this device. The alliterative sequences in the *Life* include everything from simpler combinations of two or three words to more complex ones comprising up to six words in which Athanasius overtly plays to the acoustic sensibilities of his audience. For instance, in 13.6 he does so, and simultaneously strengthens his point about Antony's spiritual reinvigoration, through sixfold initial-sequent π -alliteration punctuated by one instance of initial-interior π -alliteration: πολλήν αὐτῷ τῶν πόνων ἀνάπαυλαν παρείχε καὶ πλείονα προθυμίαν παρεσκεύαζεν. Athanasius employs alliteration not only for the sake of his audience's auricular stimulation but also (especially in the presence of other rhetorical figures) to support some broader rhetorical goal. For example, when he is confronted by Antony, the devil complains: Τί μέμφομαι με μάτην οἱ μοναχοὶ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι πάντες χριστιανοί; Τί με καταρώνται καθ' ὥραν; ("Why do the monks and all other Christians censure me for no reason? Why do they constantly curse me?") (41.2). Here the rhetorical flourish of the devil's words—the fivefold μ -alliteration (initial-sequent and initial-interior) in the first sentence, the anaphoric Τί...Τί, and the chiasmic μέμφομαι με...με καταρώνται—symbolize his proverbially smooth-tongued cunning.¹⁴

criteria for evaluating the style of late Greek prose texts, see Ševčenko 1981; cf. Dover 1997, 1–12 (concerning classical Greek texts).

¹² Basil (Campbell 1922, 42); Chrysostom (Ameringer 1921, 33; Burns, 1930, 27–28); Gregory of Nyssa (Stein 1928, lxxv–lxxvi); Zeno of Verona (Malunowicz 1973); Jerome (Hritz 1939, 43); Augustine (Parsons 1923, 264; Barry 1924, 82–85; Lawless 1997, 55–56). In ancient Greece alliteration also had the more primitive function of serving as a mnemonic device for memorizing magical formulae and religious texts (see Defradas 1958). On euphony in ancient Greek more generally, see Stanford 1967.

¹³ On *recitatio* as the norm in Roman antiquity for the presentation of literary texts in both public and private venues, see e.g. Valette-Cagnac 1995; Dupont 1997; Skinner 2001.

¹⁴ In other monastic literary sources, too, the devil complains about being persecuted by monks. For example, in one story he appears to an elder anchorite and asks him in a tone of mock innocence: "What have I done to you, abba? Why do you shower me with insults? Did I ever cause you any trouble?" (Anon. *APanon* 34; trans. Wortley 2013, 29).

Paronomasia (*adnominatio*), a favorite sound device among literarily self-conscious Greek and Latin authors,¹⁵ is a type of pun involving the concurrence of words of the same root which are similar in sound but dissimilar in meaning. Of the two types of paronomasia that appear in the *Life*, words with the same root but a different or added prefix (Type I) and words with the same root but different derivatives (Type II), Athanasius has an overwhelming preference for the latter. Although the position of the corresponding words in the sentence(s) is in principle unimportant for this device, he tends to place them in close proximity to each other for an improved tonal effect:

TYPE I:

- 16.8 πάλιν δὲ **φθαρτὸν** ἀποθέμενοι τὸ σῶμα, **ἄφθαρτον** ἀπολαμβάνομεν αὐτό
 27.4 οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς μῆτε **ἀκούωμεν** αὐτῶν ὡς ἄλλοτριῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν, μῆτε
 ὑπακούωμεν αὐτῶν
 56.1 τοῖς δὲ **πάσχοι** **συνέπασχε** καὶ συνήχετο
 85.1 τοῦ στρατηλάτου διὰ πολλῶν ἀξιώσαντος αὐτὸν **κατελθεῖν**, ἐλθὼν καὶ ὁμιλήσας
 ὀλίγα
 86.3 **παραγγέλλας** **ἀπαγγέλλειν** Ἀντωνίῳ ταῦτα

TYPE II:

- Prol. 4 ἐπεὶ **κἀγώ**, προτραπεῖς παρ' ὑμῶν, ὅσα ἂν διὰ τῆς **ἐπιστολῆς** σημάνω, ὀλίγα τῶν
 ἐκείνου μνημονεύσας **ἐπιστέλλω**
 1.1 **χριστιανῶν** δὲ αὐτῶν ὄντων **χριστιανικῶς** ἀνήγετο καὶ αὐτός
 3.1 ὡς δὲ πάλιν εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸ **κυριακὸν** ἤκουσεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ **Κυρίου**
 λέγοντος
 3.1 τὴν δὲ ἀδελφὴν παραθέμενος γνωρίμοις καὶ πισταῖς **παρθένους** δοῦς τε αὐτὴν εἰς
 παρθενίαν ἀνατρέφεισθαι
 5.7 καὶ ὁ **σαρκὸς** καὶ αἵματος κατακαυχώμενος ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπου **σαρκοφοροῦντος**
 ἀνετρέπετο
 11.3 οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ **ὁδὸς** αὐτῆς τετριμμένη, οὐκ ἔστιν ἵχνος **ὀδευσάντων** ὧδέ τινων
 12.4 ἐν τῷ **μοναστηρίῳ** **μόνος** ἔμενεν ἔνδον
 14.7 ἡ ἔρημος **ἐπολίσθη**, **μοναχῶν** ἐξεληθόντων ἀπὸ τῶν ιδίων καὶ ἀπογραψαμένων τὴν ἐν
 τοῖς οὐρανοῖς **πολιτείαν**
 19.1 ἔχομεν γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ καὶ τὸν Κύριον **συνεργόν**, ὡς γέγραπται· παντὶ τῷ
 προαιρουμένῳ τὸ ἀγαθὸν **συνεργεῖ** ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν
 26.1 οὐαὶ ὁ ποτίζων τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ **ἀνατροπὴν** θολεράν. τὰ γὰρ τοιαῦτα
 ἐπιτηδεύματα καὶ ἐνθυμήματα **ἀνατρεπτικά** τῆς εἰς ἀρετὴν φερούσης ἔστιν ὁδοῦ
 28.5 οὔτε **φίλους** ἡμᾶς ὁρῶσιν ἵνα φείσωνται, οὔτε **φιλάγαθοί** εἰσιν ἵνα διορθώσωνται
 33.1 οὕτω συνέστη τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων **μαντεῖα** καὶ οὕτως **ἐπλανήθησαν** παρὰ τῶν
 δαιμόνων τὸ πρῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ οὕτω **πέπαιται** λοιπὸν ἡ **πλάνη**
 36.4 οὕτως Ἀβραάμ ἰδὼν τὸν Κύριον **ἡγαλλιάσατο**· καὶ Ἰωάννης, γενομένης φωνῆς
 παρὰ τῆς θεοτόκου Μαρίας, ἐσκίρτησεν ἐν **ἀγαλλιási**

¹⁵ Spencer 1906; Gygli-Wyss 1966; Minn 1975; Focardi 1978; Sadler 1982; Günther 1998; Diem 2007. Volkmann (1885, 480) claims that paronomasia is as prevalent among the Greeks as it is rare among the Latins, but this generalization falls apart when certain Latin patristic authors are considered. For instance, while paronomasia is rather sparse in Leo (Halliwell 1939, 28), it is abundant in Hilary (Buttell 1933, 65), Jerome (Hritz 1939, 33), and Augustine (Barry 1924, 65).

- 44.3–4 καὶ ἦν ἀληθῶς ἰδεῖν ὥσπερ χώραν τινὰ καθ' ἑαυτὴν οὐσαν θεοσεβείας καὶ δικαιοσύνης. οὐκ ἦν γὰρ ἐκεῖ ὁ ἀδικούμενος
- 45.5 ἔλεγε χρῆναι τὴν πᾶσαν σχολὴν διδόναι τῇ ψυχῇ μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ σώματι καὶ συγχωρεῖν μὲν διὰ τὴν ἀνάγκην ὀλίγον καιρὸν τῷ σώματι, τὸ δὲ ὅλον σχολάζειν τῇ ψυχῇ
- 46.7 ὑπηρέτει συνηθῶς τοῖς ὁμολογηταῖς, καὶ ὡς συνδεδεμένος αὐτοῖς ἦν κοπιῶν ἐν ταῖς ὑπηρεσίαις
- 48.1 Μαρτινιανὸς τις ἄρχων στρατιωτῶν ἐλθὼν ἐγένετο δι' ὄχλου τῷ Ἀντωνίῳ. εἶχε γὰρ ὑπὸ δαίμονος ἐνοχλουμένην τὴν θυγατέρα
- 49.3 ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπουσί μοι ἡρεμεῖν οἱ ὄχλοι, διὰ τοῦτο βούλομαι ἀνελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ἄνω Θηβαῖδα, διὰ τὰς πολλὰς τῶν ὧδε γινομένας ὀχλήσεις
- 49.4 εἰ δὲ θέλεις ὄντως ἡρεμεῖν, ἀπελθε νῦν εἰς τὴν ἐσωτέραν ἔρημον
- 56.1 πολλάκις τε ἐν πολλοῖς
- 63.1 μετὰ μοναχῶν μόνος
- 67.1 τὸν τε κανόνα τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὑπερφυῶς ἐτίμα καὶ πάντα κληρικὸν τῇ τιμῇ προηγείσθαι ἤθελεν ἑαυτοῦ
- 67.5 οὐδὲ τῷ πλάτει διέφερε τῶν ἄλλων, ἀλλὰ τῇ τῶν ἡθῶν καταστάσει
- 68.1 οὔτε Μανιχαῖοις ἢ ἄλλοις τισὶν αἵρετικοῖς ὠμίλησε φιλικὰ ἢ μόνον ἄχρι νοουθεσίας τῆς εὐσεβείαν μεταβολῆς, ἡγούμενος καὶ παραγγέλλων τὴν τούτων φιλίαν καὶ ὁμιλίαν βλάβην καὶ ἀπώλειαν εἶναι ψυχῆς
- 74.2 ἔλεγε δι' ἐρμηνέως, τοῦ καλῶς τὰ ἐκείνου διερμηνεύοντος
- 74.5 σέβειν τετράποδα καὶ ἔρπετα καὶ ἀνθρώπων εἰκόνας; ταῦτα γὰρ ὑμῶν τῶν σοφῶν ἐστι τὰ σεβάσματα
- 76.1 τί δ' ἂν εἶποιτε περὶ τῶν ἀλόγων, ἢ ἀλογίαν καὶ ἀγριότητα
- 76.5 θεοποιῆσαι τὰ ποιήματα
- 82.9 ἢ ἀρπαγὴ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, ὅτε καὶ τὰ σκευὴ μετὰ βίας ἀρπάσαντες
- 84.5–6 οὐκ ἀνωφελὲς δὲ πάλιν ἦν ὁ σκυλμὸς αὐτοῦ. πολλοῖς μὲν γὰρ εἰς δνησιν ἐγένετο καὶ εἰς εὐεργεσίαν ἢ ἀφίξις αὐτοῦ. τοὺς δὲ δικαστὰς ὠφέλει
- 87.2 ὡς νομίζειν μὴ ἄλλους, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸν πάσχοντα
- 93.3–4 τῆς θεοφιλοῦς αὐτοῦ ψυχῆς ἐστὶ γνῶρισμα. οὐ γὰρ ἐκ συγγραμμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ τῆς ἐξωθεν σοφίας οὐδὲ διὰ τινὰ τέχνην, διὰ δὲ μόνην θεοσεβείαν ὁ Ἀντώνιος ἐγνωρίσθη

Parechesis is identical to paronomasia except that verbal resonance is obtained through the concurrence of words, similar in sound but dissimilar in sense, which are from different roots. Like other patristic authors,¹⁶ Athanasius in the *Life* shows relative restraint in his use of this device. He also often directly juxtaposes the involved words for maximal effect:

- 3.1 τὴν δὲ ἀδελφὴν παραθέμενος γνωρίμοις καὶ πισταῖς παρθένους δούς τε αὐτὴν εἰς παρθενίαν ἀνατρέφεισθαι
- 3.6–7 δεῖ κατ' ἰδίαν προσεύχεσθαι ἀδιαλείπτως. καὶ γὰρ προσεῖχεν οὕτω τῇ ἀναγνώσει
- 25.4 εἰς ἀπόγνωσιν ἐνέγκωσιν
- 29.5 μὴδὲ χοίρων ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν
- 41.2 τί με καταρῶνται καθ' ὥραν
- 52.1 ὁ μὲν οὖν διάβολος, ὡς ψάλλει Δαβὶδ, παρατηρεῖτο τὸν Ἀντώνιον... ὁ δὲ Ἀντώνιος παρεκαλεῖτο παρὰ τοῦ Σωτῆρος

¹⁶ E.g., Basil (Campbell 1922, 43), Ambrose (Adams 1927, 120), John Chrysostom (Burns 1930, 30), and Jerome (Hritz 1939, 36).

- 54.5 πιόντες οἱ πάντες
 65.6 διὰ πόσων πόνων ἔχει τις διαβῆναι τὸν ἀέρα
 66.3 κακείνον ἐκτείνοντα τὰς χεῖρας
 66.5 διανοιχθείσης αὐτοῦ τῆς διανοίας
 75.4 πᾶν μοι δοκεῖτε ἀδικεῖν
 84.1 ὁ δὲ Ἀντωνίου φιλανθρωπεύμενος καὶ θεραπεύων τοὺς πάσχοντας

Anaphora is the repetition of a word at the beginning of two or more successive clauses or sentences. In its general application it enforces a point by reiteration and imposes a sense of orderliness through similarity of construction. Athanasius employs this device rather often in the *Life* (e.g., 21.4, 28.10, 79.1, 82.6). For instance, in 6.2 the anaphoric πόσος gives the devil's boast a certain piquancy: Πόσους θέλοντας σωφρονεῖν ἠπάτησα. Πόσους ὑποκρινομένους μετέπεισα γαργαλίζων ("How many who want to live chastely have I deceived! How many who profess to want this have I convinced otherwise by inciting them to lust!").¹⁷ In 39.2 Antony's victories over demons are accentuated by the anaphoric exclamatory ποσάκις: Ποσάκις ἐμακάρισάν με, καὶ γὰρ κατηρασάμην αὐτοὺς ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου. Ποσάκις προειρήκασιν περὶ τοῦ ποταμίου ὕδατος, καὶ γὰρ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἔλεγον· Ἀλλ' ὑμῖν τί περὶ τούτου μέλει; ("How often have they called me blessed, and I have cursed them in the Lord's name! How often have they prophesied about the Nile's water, and I would retort: 'Why do you care?'").¹⁸ The most striking example of this device is in 87.3–6. Here an eightfold repetition of the interrogative pronoun τίς emphatically illustrates the edificatory reach of Antony's ministry:

Τίς γὰρ λυπούμενος ἀπῆντα καὶ οὐχ ὑπέστρεφε χαίρων;
 Τίς ἤρχετο θρηνῶν διὰ τοὺς αὐτοῦ τεθνηκότας καὶ οὐκ εὐθέως ἀπετίθετο τὸ πένθος;
 Τίς ὀργιζόμενος ἤρχετο καὶ οὐκ εἰς φιλίαν μετεβάλλετο;
 Τίς πένης ἀκηδιῶν ἀπῆντα, καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ καὶ βλέπων αὐτόν, οὐ κατεφρόνει τοῦ πλούτου καὶ παρεμυθεῖτο τὴν πενίαν;
 Τίς μοναχός, ὀλιγωρήσας καὶ ἐλθὼν πρὸς αὐτόν, οὐ μᾶλλον ἰσχυρότερος ἐγίνετο;
 Τίς νεώτερος ἐλθὼν εἰς τὸ ὄρος καὶ θεωρήσας Ἀντώνιον, οὐκ εὐθέως ἐξηραίνετο τῶν ἡδονῶν καὶ ἡγάπα σωφροσύνην;
 Τίς ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν ὑπὸ δαίμονος πειραζόμενος καὶ οὐκ ἀνεπαύετο;
 Τίς δὲ ἐν λογισμοῖς ἐνοχλούμενος ἤρχετο καὶ οὐκ ἐγαληνία τῇ διανοίᾳ;

Who visited him in distress and did not leave in high spirits?
 Who came mourning his dead and did not immediately put aside the grief?
 Who came angry and was not put in a peaceable disposition?
 What despondent pauper came and did not despise wealth and take comfort in poverty after seeing and hearing him?
 What discouraged monk did not become all the more resolute after visiting him?

¹⁷ For comparably effective uses of anaphoric πόσος, see Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.25; Polyb. 5.75.3; Luc. *Nigr.* 22; *Tyr.* 22; Cass. Dio 44.30.4.

¹⁸ For some other examples of this twofold anaphoric exclamation, which here underscores Antony's heroics in spiritual warfare, see Luc. *Phal.* 1.8; Orig. *Hom. 11 in Ps.* 7; Lib. *Decl.* 45.2.19.

What young man came to the mountain and, after beholding Antony, did not sense his illicit pleasures drying up and did not love chastity?
 Who came to him tempted by a demon and did not get relief?
 Who came troubled in his thoughts and did not find peace of mind?

Antistrophe (or epiphora), the opposite of anaphora, is the repetition, for the purpose of emphasis, of a word (or words) at the end of succeeding cola.¹⁹ This rhetorical figure is not uncommon in patristic literature, as we observe from the letters of Jerome and Augustine and the homilies of Basil and John Chrysostom.²⁰ In the *Life* there are four examples of perfect antistrophe (Type I), in which the repeated word(s) is identical in form, and two occurrences of imperfect antistrophe (Type II), in which the correlative verbs are inflected differently:

TYPE I:

- 1.4 οὔτε δὲ πάλιν ὡς παῖς ἐν μετρίᾳ περιουσίᾳ τυγχάνων ἠνώχλει τοῖς γονεῦσι ποικίλης καὶ πολυτελοῦς ἕνεκα τροφῆς οὔτε τὰς ἐκ ταύτης ἡδονὰς ἐζήτει. μόνοις δὲ οἷς ἡῦρισκεν ἠρκεῖτο καὶ πλέον οὐδὲν ἐζήτει
- 16.7 οὐκ ἴσα τοῖς ἑκατὸν ἔτεσι βασιλεύσομεν, ἀλλ' ἀντὶ τῶν ἑκατὸν αἰῶνας αἰῶνων βασιλεύσομεν
- 20.5 οὐκοῦν ἡ ἀρετὴ τοῦ θέλειν ἡμῶν μόνου χρεῖαν ἔχει, ἐπειδὴ περ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστὶ καὶ ἐξ ἡμῶν **συνίσταται**. τῆς γὰρ ψυχῆς τὸ νοερὸν κατὰ φύσιν ἐχούσης ἡ ἀρετὴ **συνίσταται**
- 29.5 εἰ δὲ μὴδὲ χοίρων ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν, πολλῶ μᾶλλον τῶν κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ γεγενημένων ἀνθρώπων οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν

TYPE II:

- 27.5 οὐ δεῖ δὲ φοβεῖσθαι αὐτούς, καὶ ἐπέρχεσθαι δοκῶσι, καὶ θάνατον ἀπειλῶσιν. ἀσθενεῖς γὰρ εἰσι καὶ οὐδὲν δύνανται ἢ μόνον ἀπειλεῖν
- 79.3 τὰ μὲν ὑμέτερα οὐδέποτε ἐδιώχθη, ἀλλὰ καὶ παρὰ ἀνθρώπων κατὰ πόλιν τιμᾶται, οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διώκονται

Anadiplosis is the repetition of the final word (or word group) of one clause at the beginning of the succeeding clause.²¹ There is one example of perfect anadiplosis (Type I) in the *Life* and four examples of imperfect or polyptotic anadiplosis (Type II), in which the repeated element or a component thereof is subject to inflectional change:

TYPE I:

- 23.1 πρῶτον μὲν ἐπιχειροῦσι καὶ πειράζουσιν ἐχόμενα τρίβου τιθῆναι **σκάνδαλα**. **σκάνδαλα** δὲ αὐτῶν εἰσιν οἱ ῥυπαροὶ λογισμοί

¹⁹ Cf. Lausberg 1960, § 631.

²⁰ Campbell 1922, 35; Parsons 1923, 233; Burns 1930, 17; Hritzu 1939, 22–23.

²¹ On the importance of this device in Athenian oratory, see López Eire 2000. Its usage in select patristic literature is noted by e.g. Campbell 1922, 35–36; Barry 1924, 53–56; Halliwell 1939, 19–20; Hritzu 1939, 23–24; in these patristic studies the figure is termed *anastrophe*, though it is more conventionally known as *anadiplosis* (see Lausberg 1960, § 619), and I have followed this prevailing custom.

TYPE II:

- 29.3 εἰ γὰρ ἰσχυσεν, οὐκ ἂν ἤτησεν· αἰτήσας δὲ οὐχ ἅπαξ ἀλλὰ καὶ δεύτερον, φαίνεται ἀσθενῆς καὶ μηδὲν δυνάμενος
- 31.5 ἂν τις ἄρξῃται περιπατεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς Θηβαίδος ἢ ἀπὸ τίνος ἄλλης χώρας, πρὶν μὲν ἄρξῃται περιπατεῖν, οὐκ ἴσασιν εἰ περιπατήσῃ. περιπατοῦντα δὲ τοῦτον ἑωρακότες προτρέχουσιν, καὶ πρὶν ἔλθεῖν αὐτόν, ἀπαγγέλλουσιν
- 38.3 μὴ χαίρετε, ὅτι τὰ δαιμόνια ὑμῖν ὑποτάσσεται, ἀλλ' ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν γέγραπται ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐν οὐρανῷ γεγράφθαι τὰ ὀνόματα, μαρτύριόν ἐστι τῆς ἡμῶν ἀρετῆς καὶ τοῦ βίου
- 45.3–4 παρητήσατο καὶ μακρὰν ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀπήλθεν, νομίζων ἐρυθριαν εἰ βλέποιτο παρ' ἐτέρων ἐσθίων. ἦσθιε μέντοι καθ' ἑαυτὸν διὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀνάγκην

Kuklos (or *epanalepsis*) is the recurrence of the same word or words at the beginning and end of a clause or period. As with other figures of repetition, its primary function is to stress a particular idea being conveyed, but it may have other ancillary functions as well. In the *Life* there are two occurrences of imperfect or polyptotic kuklos, in which the verbs in question are morphologically different due to the syntax, and both instances are in statements attributed to Antony. In 19.3 kuklos tightens the logical connection between the two complementary clauses that it begins and ends: Ἐγειρόμενοι καθ' ἡμέραν, νομίζωμεν μὴ μένειν ἕως ἑσπέρας, καὶ πάλιν μέλλοντες κοιμᾶσθαι, νομίζωμεν μὴ ἐγείρεσθαι (“The gist of the [Apostle’s] saying is as follows. When we get up each day, let us imagine that we will not survive to the evening, and likewise when we are about to go to sleep, let us imagine that we will not get up”).²² In 75.1 kuklos serves to emphasize the nouns (ἐπιβουλὴ and θάνατος) accompanying the two participles (ἐπαγομένης and ἐπαγόμενον) and to give more prominence to the redemptive theme of the surrounding prose: Περὶ δὲ τοῦ σταυροῦ τί βέλτιον ἂν εἴποιτε, ἐπιβουλῆς ἐπαγομένης παρὰ πονηρῶν ὑπομένειν σταυρόν καὶ μὴ πτήσσειν τὸν ὀπωσδήποτε θάνατον ἐπαγόμενον (“As for the cross, which would you say is preferable: when a plot is concocted by wicked people, to endure the cross and not to cower from death in whatever form it has been devised”).

Periphrasis (or *circumlocutio*), which is prominent in both the sophistic and colloquial Greek of the fourth century AD,²³ is the implementation of more words than are necessary to express a single idea. This turgescence can be calculated to create clarity or emphasis through redundancy, it may serve as nothing more than empty ornamentation, or it may be a euphemistic way of expressing an offensive or unpalatable concept. Athanasius employs periphrasis rather often in the *Life*. Sometimes he does so for inanimate things, such as *askesis* (ἡ ἡμῶν ἀρετὴ καὶ ὁ βίος) (38.3),

²² The somber observation about life’s unpredictability (especially as it concerns the unexpectedness of death) is a well-worn trope of classical and early Christian literature. See e.g. Cic. *Amic.* 102; *Fin. bon. et mal.* 2.27.86; *Leg.* 1.24; Sen. *Ep.* 66.10; Plin. *Epp.* 2.10.4, 3.10.6; Lact. *Inst. div.* 3.11.12, 3.12.7, 4.16.2, 5.8.6, 7.11.5; Amb. *Ep.* 4.17.12; Jer. *Ep.* 108.27.3; Joh. Chrys. *Hom. Gen.* p. 625; Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 16.5.

²³ Zilliacus 1967, 51–61.

mortal existence (ἡ ἐν σώματι ζωὴ²⁴) (93.1), Nicene theology (ἡ εὐσεβὴς πίστις²⁵) (82.12, 89.6), and human excrement (τοῦ σώματος τὰ περιττὰ²⁶) (64.1). More often he resorts to periphrasis when referring to people: the Minor Prophet Habakkuk (προφήτης ἀποσταλὴς παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου) (26.1), pagan philosophers (οὗτοι τῶν παρ' Ἑλληνιστῶν δοκούντων εἶναι σοφῶν²⁷) (74.1), wealthy people (οἱ τὰ πολλὰ κεκτημένοι²⁸) (87.2), Arians (ἡ ἀσέβεια²⁹) (82.12), Christians (Χριστῷ γνησίως λατρεύοντες καὶ πιστεύοντες εὐσεβῶς εἰς αὐτόν) (94.2), and monks, who are variously called ἑκαστος δὲ τῶν βουλομένων ἑαυτῷ προσέχειν (3.2),³⁰ οἱ φιλάρετοι καὶ θεοσεβούντες (28.5),³¹ and οἱ ἀναχωροῦντες ἀπὸ τοῦ βίου τούτου (87.1).³²

Pleonasm, which like periphrasis is a feature of both sophistic and colloquial fourth-century Greek,³³ is the juxtaposition of synonymous or nearly synonymous words, phrases, or clauses, usually for the purpose of amplifying the subject matter at hand. Pleonasm recurs regularly throughout the *Life*. In some cases it expresses Antony's (and others') devotion to the ascetic life. For instance, when Antony was still an ascetic novice, he gave "all of his passion and every bit of his effort" (ὅλον δὲ τὸν πόθον καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν σπουδὴν) to intensifying his ascetic self-discipline (3.5). As Antony progressed in *askesis* he became an object of admiration and "many *longed and aspired* to emulate [him]" (πολλῶν ποθούντων καὶ ζηλῶσαι θελόντων) (14.2).

²⁴ For the expression ἡ ἐν σώματι ζωὴ ("the life in the body"), see also Greg. Nys. *Hom. Ecl.* p. 285; Theod. *Hist. rel.* 21.3; Cyr. Alex. *Comm. proph. min.* vol. 2, p. 162; *Exp. Ps.* p. 929. For its Latin equivalent *vita in corpore* with the same sense, see Amb. *Exp. Ps.* 118 3.18; Jer. *C. Iob.* 33; Aug. *Civ. Dei* 21.24.

²⁵ Throughout Athanasius' writings ἡ εὐσεβὴς πίστις consistently connotes "orthodox" Nicene Christianity. See *Sent. Dion.* 14.4, 24.2; *Apol. c. Ar.* 45.4; *Hist. Ar.* 34.3; *Ep. ad mon.* p. 1188; *Ep. ad Epict.* 3; *Ep. ad episc. Aeg. et Lib.* 18.3, 20.1; *Or. 1 c. Ar.* 2.1, 9.1; *Ep. 1 ad Ser.* 1.3, 20.3; *Apol. Cons. imp.* 28.2.

²⁶ This phrase is a euphemism for κόπρος, "excrement." On late antique hagiographers' penchant for using polite circumlocutions for bodily functions, see Cain 2016, 103.

²⁷ The pejorative expression τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι σοφῶν here is code for non-Christian intellectuals (cf. Orig. *C. Cels.* 7.66; Eus. *V. Cons.* 3.30.2; Joh. Chrys. *Exp. Ps.* p. 230; Soc. *Hist. eccl.* 1.9). The substantive Ἑλλήν is a derogatory designation for pagans ("Hellenes"), a specialized usage this word had acquired on a wide scale among Christians by the mid-fourth century (Opelt 1965, 5–9; Bauer and Danker 2000; van Liefferinge 2001; Johnson 2020). It has this meaning elsewhere in the *Life* (22.2, 33.1, 37.3, 70.2, 70.3, 72.2, 94.2) and other Athanasian writings (e.g., *C. gen.* 1, 6, 10; *Inc. verb.* 2.3, 33.2; *Hist. Ar.* 55.1).

²⁸ For this common periphrasis for "the wealthy," see also Isoc. *Or.* 20.19; Xen. *Oec.* 3.2; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.48.2; Plot. *Enn.* 2.9.9. Sometimes in this expression πολλά acts not as a substantive but as a regular adjective modifying χρήματα (cf. Cass. Dio 42.2.1; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 2.5.22.2; Joh. Chrys. *Virg.* 53).

²⁹ In Athanasian parlance, ἀσέβεια denotes irreverence toward God but also simultaneously implies unorthodoxy, typically Arianism.

³⁰ In its usage here the idiom ἑαυτῷ προσέχειν ("to keep watch over oneself") possibly recalls biblical exhortations to be self-aware about virtuous living (e.g., *Deut.* 4.9 LXX; Lk. 17.3, 21.34; cf. Rousseau 2000, 90); otherwise, it has an ascetic connotation (cf. Vernay 1937).

³¹ This pleonastic circumlocution for "monks" is attested for the first time in the *Life* and not again until the seventh century in Leon. *V. Iob. Eleem.* p. 343.

³² For the same ascetic sense, cf. Bas. *Hom. Ps.* p. 281: ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ βίου τούτου ἀναχώρησις.

³³ See e.g. Tabachovitz 1943, 29–37; Zilliacus 1967, 37–52; Ruether 1969, 66–67. This tendency toward pleonasm is even more pronounced in colloquial late Latin; see Löfstedt 1933, 2.173–232.

As a mature monk, “he remained *alone* on the mountain *with nobody else keeping him company*” (ἔμεινεν ἐν τῷ ὄρει μόνος, οὐδενὸς ἐτέρου συνόντος) (50.2); μόνος is sufficient by itself, but οὐδενὸς ἐτέρου συνόντος combines with it to underline his solitariness. On numerous occasions Athanasius deploys pleonasm to dramatize evil spirits’ negative qualities, such as their aggression toward monks. When demons see monks thriving, they initially “try and endeavor” (ἐπιχειροῦσι καὶ πειράζουσιν) to place obstacles in their way (23.1), and in their pursuit to trip up monks, demons are always ready “to change their appearance and alter their form” (μεταβάλλεσθαι καὶ σχηματίζεσθαι) (25.1). The devil himself is the epitome of mendacity: “he lies and utters absolutely nothing truthful” (ψεύδεται γὰρ καὶ οὐδὲν ὅλως ἀληθὲς λαλεῖ³⁴) (24.4), and “he is always a liar and never speaks the truth” (ἀεὶ ψεύστης ὢν καὶ μηδέποτε λέγων ἀλήθειαν) (41.5).

Second Sophistic rhetoric was preoccupied with the formation of symmetrical periods by means of the so-called Gorgianic³⁵ figures of parallelism: **perfect parison**, **homoioteleuton**, **antithesis**, and **chiasmus**. All of these figures are prominent throughout the *Life*, and indeed Athanasius’ stylistic sensibilities become especially apparent through his construction of well-balanced sentences, often by allying these devices with one another (or with other rhetorical figures) as well as by extending the syntactical parallelism to parallelism of ideas in the corresponding cola.

Perfect parison occurs when two or more consecutive phrases, clauses, or sentences share the same or a strikingly similar internal structure. One palmary example in the *Life* is at 9.7, where Athanasius describes the phantasmal beasts that threaten Antony: Ὁ λέων ἔβρυχε θέλων ἐπελθεῖν, ὁ ταῦρος ἐδόκει κερατίζειν, ὁ ὄφις ἔρπων οὐκ ἔφθανε, καὶ ὁ λύκος ὁρμῶν ἐπέιχετο (“The lion roared, poised to attack; the bull seemed to gore him; the snake slithered but did not reach him; the wolf rushed at him but was held back”). Despite its relative brevity, this sentence lands a hefty rhetorical punch with its quick succession of compact, action-packed clauses: perfect parison gives them a collective balance, and asyndeton (with the exception of a sole καὶ) and the imperfect tense (ἔβρυχε, ἐδόκει, ἔφθανε, ἐπέιχετο) convey vividness and rapidity.

A similarly brief but device-rich sequence is in 11.3, where Antony wonders aloud about how a large silver dish could have found its way into a remote part of the desert: Οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ὁδὸς αὕτη τετριμμένη, οὐκ ἔστιν ἵχνος ὁδευσάντων ὧδε τινων (“The road itself is not well travelled, nor is there a trace of anyone journeying this way”). This *bicolon crescens* is balanced by perfect parison and marked by anaphora

³⁴ For a similar formulation, see Theod. *Hist. ecl.* p. 24: Πάντα γὰρ οἱ γόητες ψεύδονται, ἀλήθειαν οὐ μὴ λαλήσουσιν.

³⁵ They are referred to as “Gorgianic” after the fifth-century BC Sicilian sophist Gorgias of Leontini. Second Sophistic rhetoricians looked to him as the founder of their particular conception of rhetorical theory and practice; see Goldhill 2002, 54.

(οὐκ ἔστιν...οὐκ ἔστιν), asyndeton, and paronomasia (δόδος—ὀδευσάντων), all with the cumulative effect of throwing into relief Antony's puzzlement.

During his debate with some philosophers Antony touts Christianity's triumph over an obsolescent paganism, and at one point he asks: Ποῦ νῦν ὑμῶν ἐστι τὰ μαντεῖα; ποῦ αἱ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἐπαοιδίαι; ποῦ τῶν μάγων αἱ φαντασίαι; ("Where are your oracles now? Where are the Egyptians' incantations? Where are the sorcerers' illusions?") (79.1).³⁶ This taunt is stylistically rich and effective due to its framing as a threefold rhetorical question, the anaphoric ποῦ,³⁷ overall economy of expression which is facilitated by asyndeton, and the tight-knit syntactic parallelism imposed by perfect parison.

Homoioteleuton consists in the similarity of sound at the conclusions of sequent cola. It is, then, a form of symmetry whose charm lies in end-rhyme. Although some ancient rhetoricians cautioned against its use (or over-use) in certain contexts,³⁸ it was a favorite stylistic conceit during the Second Sophistic and is a pronounced feature of the prose of patristic authors such as Hilary of Poitiers, Basil, Jerome, Augustine, and Zeno of Verona.³⁹ In the *Life* Athanasius deploys it strategically, one example being in 93.6, where he comments on saints' reluctant celebrity: Κἂν γὰρ αὐτοὶ κεκρυμμένως πράττωσιν, κἂν λαμβάνειν ἐθέλωσιν, ἀλλ' ὁ Κύριος αὐτοὺς ὡς λύχνον δείκνυσιν πᾶσιν ("For even if they go about their business in secret and wish to go unnoticed, the Lord nevertheless exhibits them before all like a lamp").⁴⁰ The twofold anaphoric κἂν and the homoioteleutic verb-ending -ωσιν work in tandem to tighten the parallelism between the two clauses and to accentuate the humility of ascetics wishing to keep a low profile.

³⁶ Cyril of Scythopolis echoes this passage when he relays the following statement by Terebon, who reflects on his paralysis right before it is healed by Euthymius: ποῦ ἐστιν ἡ ματαιότης τοῦ βίου καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ἱατρικὴ τέχνη; ποῦ εἰσιν αἱ φαντασίαι τῶν ἡμετέρων μάγων καὶ ἡ δύναμις τῶν σεβασμάτων ἡμῶν; ποῦ αἱ ἐπικλήσεις καὶ αἱ μυθοποιαὶ τῶν ἀστρονόμων τε καὶ ἀστρολόγων; ποῦ αἱ ἐπαοιδίαι καὶ αἱ γοητικαὶ ἐρεσχελαί; (*V. Euth.* pp. 19–20 (Schwartz 1939)).

³⁷ Antony's threefold interrogatio likely is modelled on the tricolon crescens that Paul poses at 1 Cor. 1.20 to convey the cross' victory over worldly elements: Ποῦ σοφός; ποῦ γραμματεὺς; ποῦ συζητητὴς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου; ("Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?").

³⁸ For example, Cicero (*Or.* 84) says that it should be avoided in the plain style, and the anonymous author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (4.32) regards it as a stylistic affectation and recommended that it be used sparingly.

³⁹ See e.g. Campbell 1922, 88; Parsons 1923, 249; Buttell 1933, 121; Hritzu 1939, 91–92; Palanca 1972.

⁴⁰ Hagiographers sometimes liken their protagonists to light-giving lamps. Thus Callinicus calls John Chrysostom ὁ λύχνος τῆς ἐκκλησίας (*V. Hyp.* 11.5), Palladius likewise compares John to a λύχνος (*Dial.* p. 113), and Symeon the Stylite the Younger's hagiographer refers to him as the λύχνος of the Holy Spirit (Anon. *V. Sym. Styl. iun.* 34). Cyril of Alexandria more broadly calls all holy people λύχνοι (*Comm. proph. min.* vol. 2, p. 334). In many other cases, the metaphor in its Christian usage takes the form of light from a non-specified source. The prototypical example is Jesus calling his disciples τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου and exhorting them to let the light of truth within them shine (Mt. 5.14–16; for light as truth or spiritual enlightenment, cf. Eph. 5.8). Echoing this passage, Pachomius' disciple Abba Zachaeus hails Antony as "the light of this whole world" (παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου τούτου τὸ φῶς) (Anon. *V. Pach.* G' 120), and Ps.-Nilus of Ancyra Nilus of Ancyra calls him "the divine lamp of the Egyptians" (ὁ θεῖος λαμπτήρ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων Ἀντώνιος) (*Ep.* 1.232).

Antithesis is the juxtaposition of concepts that are opposite in meaning. The contrast, which aims primarily at producing clarity of expression, is intensified when this figure is allied with other forms of parallelism. Examples abound in the *Life*, but three representative ones give a good sense of Athanasius' deft handling of this device. One day while Antony is traveling on a rural road, he chances upon some gold strewn about on the ground: Εἶτα πάλιν οὐκέτι φαντασίαν, ἀληθινὸν δὲ χρυσὸν ἐρριμμένον ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς ἐώρακεν ἀπερχόμενος ("Then as he went on he saw not an illusory image as before but actual gold scattered on the road") (12.1). The word φαντασία evokes the mirage of a large silver dish that Antony saw on the road earlier (11.2),⁴¹ and here Athanasius contrasts its illusory nature and the realness of the gold through the direct antithetical juxtaposition of φαντασίαν and ἀληθινόν; because this gold is real, it poses a greater temptation which Antony nevertheless easily resists. In 39.5 Antony briefly recounts an experience of demonic visitation: Ἐσεισάν ποτε τὸ μοναστήριον· ἐγὼ δὲ ἡνυχόμεν ἄκίνητος μένειν τῷ φρονήματι ("They once shook my hermitage, but I prayed to remain unshaken in my spirit").⁴² Antony's heroism is made more pronounced by the antithesis between the demons' literal shaking (ἔσεισαν) of his abode and his own determination to remain metaphorically unshaken (ἄκίνητος).⁴³ Further on in the same discourse to monks Antony encourages them not to be discouraged by the prospect of demons stalking them: Μηδ' ὅλως ἐνθυμώμεθα τοιαῦτα μηδὲ λυπώμεθα ὡς ἀπολλύμενοι· θαρρῶμεν δὲ μᾶλλον καὶ χαίρωμεν αἰεὶ ὡς σωζόμενοι ("Let us not entertain any such thoughts at all, nor let us be distressed as though all is lost. Let us instead take heart and rejoice as people who are being saved"). This exhortation gains rhetorical potency from its combination of perfect parison, homoioteleuton (ἀπολλύμενοι...σωζόμενοι), and multi-tiered antithesis (μηδ'...ἐνθυμώμεθα...μηδὲ λυπώμεθα—θαρρῶμεν...χαίρωμεν and ὡς ἀπολλύμενοι...ὡς σωζόμενοι).

Chiasmus is the crosswise arrangement of pairs of words in either the same clause or in succeeding clauses. This figure of parallelism, which historically may have arisen from the desire to avoid the monotony of parison,⁴⁴ is used liberally by

⁴¹ Throughout the *Life*, φαντασία is used almost exclusively of demonic illusions, oftentimes manifested as apparitional forms which either deceive or threaten monks (6.1, 9.5, 9.6, 11.2, 12.1, 13.4, 22.2, 23.3 bis, 23.5, 24.4, 24.7, 28.8 bis, 28.9, 28.10 bis, 35.3, 36.1, 36.5, 37.2, 37.3, 39.4, 40.1, 40.3, 40.4, 40.6, 42.5, 42.6, 43.1). It takes on this sense in other Christian literature as well (e.g., Athan. *Inc. verb.* 48; Evag. *Eul.* p. 1124; Anon. *Hist. mon. Aeg.* 21.4; Callin. *V. Hyp.* 24.101; Cyr. Scyth. *V. Sab.* p. 110 (Schwartz 1939)).

⁴² The violent shaking of structures (sometimes to their very foundation), as if simulating a localized earthquake, is one of the tell-tale scare tactics attributed to demons in the literary sources. They may shake statues (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 5.2.1) and pillars (Anon. *V. Sym. Styl. iun.* 39), and dislodge boulders from their place, causing them to crash down in the hope of killing their human targets (Joh. Eph. *Lives* p. 113 (Brooks 1923–25)). They also shake monks' cells (Anon. *V. Pach. SBo* 21, G¹ 19, G² 18; Joh. Mosch. *Prat. spir.* 63; cf. Evag. *Mal. cog.* 21, 23; Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 16.2–3), as they do in Antony's case.

⁴³ Cf. Ps.-Nil. *Anc. Ep.* 3.98, who counsels monks not to be afraid when demons cause their dwelling to shake (τὸν σάλον τοῦ οἴκου). See Fontaine 1982 on the hagiographic cliché of the immovable saint.

⁴⁴ Hannan 1933, 126.

biblical,⁴⁵ classical,⁴⁶ and patristic authors.⁴⁷ In the *Life* Athanasius employs it on numerous occasions and in very adept fashion. In 53.3 he caps the account of Antony's encounter with the onocentaur with these concluding remarks: Τὸ δὲ θηρίον σὺν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ δαίμοσιν οὕτως ἔφυγεν, ὥς ὑπὸ τῆς δξύτητος πεσεῖν καὶ ἀποθανεῖν. Ὁ δὲ τοῦ θηρίου θάνατος πτώμα τῶν δαιμόνων ἦν ("The beast along with its demons fled so quickly that its speed caused it to fall and die. The beast's death was tantamount to the demons' fall").⁴⁸ Athanasius stresses the demise of the onocentaur and the demons through the chiastic structure and pithiness of the second sentence. The correlation between this sentence and the preceding clause (ὥς...πεσεῖν καὶ ἀποθανεῖν) is made more pronounced by lexical parallelism in that the noun-forms θάνατος and πτώμα essentially restate for emphasis their corresponding verb-forms ἀποθανεῖν (ἀποθνήσκειν ⇒ θνήσκειν) and πεσεῖν (πίπτειν). In 19.4–5 Antony encourages his fellow monks to be steadfast in their monastic resolve and to remember Paul's saying, "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15.31a), which he gives an asceticizing gloss:⁴⁹

Οὔτε τινὸς ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχομεν οὔτε μνηιοῦμέν τι· οὔτε θησαυρίζομεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἀλλ' ὥς καθ' ἡμέραν προσδοκῶντες ἀποθνήσκειν, ἀκτήμονες ἐσόμεθα καὶ πᾶσι πάντα συγχωρήσομεν. ἐπιθυμίαν δὲ γυναικὸς ἢ ἄλλης ῥυπαρᾶς ἡδονῆς οὐδ' ὅλως κρατήσομεν, ἀλλ' ὥς παρέρχομένην ἀποστραφυσόμεθα.

We will not have a craving for anything, nor be angry with anyone, nor store up wealth on earth. Rather, if daily we expect to die, we will have no possessions and will forgive everyone for everything. We will not merely have mastery over the desire for a woman or for another sordid pleasure but we will turn away from it as if we had not noticed it.

An elaborate chiastic parallelism governs this passage. Pivoting concentrically around the clause ὥς καθ' ἡμέραν προσδοκῶντες ἀποθνήσκειν are three things which a keen awareness of death's imminence is supposed to eliminate from the monk: illicit desire (οὔτε τινὸς ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχομεν ⇒ Ἐπιθυμίαν δὲ γυναικὸς ἢ ἄλλης ῥυπαρᾶς ἡδονῆς...ἀποστραφυσόμεθα), a lack of charity towards one another (οὔτε μνηιοῦμέν τι ⇒ πᾶσι πάντα συγχωρήσομεν), and material prosperity (οὔτε θησαυρίζομεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ⇒ ἀκτήμονες ἐσόμεθα).

⁴⁵ E.g., Radday 1973; Thomson 1995.

⁴⁶ E.g., Steele 1891 and the various essays in Welch 1981.

⁴⁷ E.g., Campbell 1922; Halliwell 1939, 70–71; Lawless 1997, 62–64.

⁴⁸ For the importance, within the broader scheme of the narrative, of Antony's confrontation of this creature, see Cain 2020.

⁴⁹ What specifically Paul means by "I die daily" is debated by scholars. Some connect it to the fights with "wild beasts" at Ephesus which he mentions in the very next verse (Malherbe 1968) or even to evil spirits at work in the demon-possessed, sorcerers, and idol-worshippers in Ephesus (Williams 2006). Whatever the case, Paul does seem to be referring to some kind of physical threat to his person, and so his statement about dying daily appears to have "nothing to do with piety and the daily dying to self and sin" (Fee 1987, 769). Nevertheless, this connotation of self-mortification is exactly what is being expressed here as well as two other times in the *Life* (89.4, 91.3), and in each of these three instances this verset situates asceticism in the broader context of death's inevitability (cf. Malone 1956, 215–16). For some other examples of this ascetic reading of Paul's words in 1 Cor. 15.31a, see Ps.-Eph. *Par. ad asc.* p. 354; Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 11.13; Jer. *Ep.* 127.6.

We find another noteworthy instance of chiasmus in yet another statement ascribed to Antony at 78.2, this time a retort directed at some pagan philosophers: Ἡμεῖς ἐπερειδόμεθα τῇ πίστει τῇ εἰς τὸν Χριστόν, ὑμεῖς δὲ σοφιστικαῖς λογομαχίαις. καὶ τὰ μὲν παρ' ὑμῖν τῶν εἰδώλων φαντάσματα καταργεῖται, ἡ δὲ παρ' ἡμῖν πίστις ἐπεκτείνεται πανταχοῦ (“We rely on faith in Christ, whereas you rely on sophistic logomachies.”⁵⁰ The idols’ delusions in your midst are being done away with, whereas our faith is spreading everywhere”). Note the chiastic arrangement of these two sentences which presumably is intentionally symbolic of Christianity’s hemming in of paganism: tokens of Christian triumph (ἡμεῖς...Χριστόν—ἡ...πανταχοῦ) are the book-ends that enclose signs of paganism’s desuetude (ὑμεῖς...λογομαχίαις—τὰ...καταργεῖται).

The examples of chiasmus noted above concern the syntactical disposition of words within adjacent clauses or sentences. Another form of chiasmus which deserves mention because Athanasius makes abundant use of it in the *Life*—ring composition—serves as an internal ordering principle for the broader narrative rather than for individual sentences. Many examples may be adduced, but two will suffice. In one case Athanasius connects the beginning and end of Antony’s life through biblical typology, implicitly comparing him, first as a boy at home and later as an elder monk on his deathbed, to the biblical patriarch Jacob. In *Life* 1.3 he says of the child Antony: “He had the singular desire, as it is written, to live in his home as one not influenced by the outside world” (τὴν δὲ ἐπιθυμίαν πᾶσαν εἶχε, κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον, ὥς ἄπλαστος οἰκεῖν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ). The formulaic phrase κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον signals a Scriptural allusion, and it is to Gen. 25.27 LXX: “So the boys grew up, and Esau was a man who knew how to hunt, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living at home (Ἰακωβ δὲ ἦν ἄνθρωπος ἄπλαστος οἰκῶν οἰκίαν).”⁵¹ On his deathbed, Antony “lifted his feet and...he died and was gathered to the fathers” (ἐξάρας τοὺς πόδας...ἐξέλιπε καὶ προσετέθη καὶ αὐτὸς πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας) (92.1).⁵² Athanasius draws his phraseology directly from Gen. 49.33 LXX: “When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he lifted his feet (ἐξάρας τοὺς πόδας) on the bed, died, and was gathered to his people (ἐξέλιπε καὶ προσετέθη πρὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ).”

⁵⁰ For the conventional patristic opposition between learned disputation and unadorned faith, see Tat. *Or. ad Gr.* 14.1; Lact. *Div. inst.* 3.1; Joh. Chrys. *Hom. Rom.* p. 401; *Hom. 1 Tim.* p. 591. Cf. Cain 2013b, 114.

⁵¹ In the biblical passage, ἄπλαστος (Heb. נח) seems to point to a domesticated lifestyle in contrast to a nomadic lifestyle as typified by Esau (Hamilton 1995, 181), and so Athanasius pictures the child Antony as a homebody in the biblical mold of Jacob.

⁵² The expression προσετέθη καὶ αὐτὸς πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας, a Jewish euphemism for death, is used in the LXX (e.g., Jdg. 2.10; 2 Kgs. 22.20; 1 Macc. 2.69) and once in the New Testament (Ac. 13.36). Other monastic hagiographers also use it to describe the deaths of their protagonists in biblicizing terms (e.g., Anon. *V. Olymp.* 10; Pall. *Dial.* 11; Callin. *V. Hyp.* 51.6; Theod. *Hist. rel.* 5.7; Cyr. *Scyth. V. Euth.* p. 59 (Schwartz 1939); Adom. *V. Col.* 3.23; Anon. *V. Sym. Styl. iun.* 36; cf. Poss. *V. Aug.* 31.5; [*Augustinus*] *dormivit cum patribus suis*).

The other example of ring composition forms one important component of Athanasius' agenda to portray Antony as the father of eremitic asceticism. The monastic urbanization of the desert is a prominent motif of the *Life* (8.2, 14.7, 41.4, 44.4). Athanasius first voices it explicitly at 8.2, where he comments that the devil fears that Antony, at the time a budding ascetic, will transform the desert into a city through his *askesis* (φοβούμενος μὴ κατ' ὀλίγον καὶ τὴν ἔρημον πολίσει τῇ ἀσκήσει).⁵³ In that passage the verb πολίζω is in the subjunctive mood (πολίσει), expressing potentiality. Further on, at 14.7, Athanasius declares: Καὶ οὕτω λοιπὸν γέγονε καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσι μοναστήρια καὶ ἡ ἔρημος ἐπολίσθη ("Consequently, from then on there sprang up monastic habitations even in the mountains and the desert was made a city").⁵⁴ Here he recycles πολίζω but this time puts it in the indicative mood (ἐπολίσθη), expressing the certainty of an event that has come to pass (hence the aorist tense). Athanasius thus uses the same verb in both instances as a nexus to create an internal ring composition within the narrative so as to emphasize that what the devil had feared would happen did in fact happen, and the end result spells both a resounding defeat for him and a victory for Antony and the monastic movement he spawned.

Comparison (or simile) is a figure whereby one person or thing is compared to another through an illustration that is meant to clarify or vivify the person or thing in question.⁵⁵ An introductory word such as οἶον/οἷα or ὥσπερ customarily announces the device. Athanasius makes ample and diversified use of similes in the *Life*. Antony himself is compared to a prudent honeybee that culls the nectar of virtues from senior monks (3.4),⁵⁶ a fish out of water when he is not in solitude

⁵³ Cf. Anon. *V. Pach.* G³ 117, where an arch-demon casts aspersions on Pachomius for colonizing the desert with monks (συνάξας γὰρ κατ' ἐμοῦ τοσοῦτον πλῆθος καὶ πολίσας τὴν ἔρημον).

⁵⁴ Like Athanasius, other hagiographers credit their protagonists with spear-heading the monastic colonization of the desert. Palladius remarks that the monk Elpidius, who lived in the caves near Jericho, transformed this desert and mountainous region into a city (τὸ ὄρος ἐπόλισε) (*Hist. Laus.* 48.2). Cyril of Scythopolis invokes the desert-as-city commonplace rather often. He credits Sabas with founding a πόλις εὐσεβῶν in the desert (*V. Sab.* p. 100 (Schwartz 1939)) and with colonizing it with a huge number of monks (τὴν ἔρημον πολίσας τῷ πλήθει τῶν μοναχῶν) (*V. Sab.* p. 158 (Schwartz 1939)), and he asserts that Euthymius populated the formerly uninhabitable desert with his spiritual seed (πάσης τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτοῦ σπερμάτων πολισθείσης ἐρήμου) (*V. Euth.* p. 24 (Schwartz 1939)). The anonymous author of the Greek *Historia monachorum* in Aegypto claims that Apollo of Bawit's proselytizing efforts resulted in there being more monks concentrated in the desert than laypeople living in the rest of the world (Anon. *Hist. mon. Aeg.* 8.20).

⁵⁵ It accordingly is essential for the object used in the illustration to be more readily familiar to the audience than the thing it illustrates; see Quint. *Inst. or.* 5.11.22, 8.3.72.

⁵⁶ Apian imagery captures monks' diligence in other contexts as well. For instance, in his Latin translation of the *Greek Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, Rufinus likens the monks of Nitria to a swarm of bees who pour out of their cells to welcome pilgrim-visitors: "As we approached this place, and when the brothers realized that foreign travelers were arriving, they all immediately poured out of their cells like a swarm of bees and ran up to meet us with joy and eagerness" (*Hist. mon. Aeg.* 21.1.3; trans. Cain 2019, 181); Rufinus is subverting the Roman historiographic topos of bee swarms, representing opposing armies, as a familiar prodigy portending Roman defeat (cf. Rosenberger 1998, 98–99, 114–15, 135).

(85.3–4), a physician given by God to Egypt (87.3), a lamp of spiritual light to the world (93.6), a father to all monks (15.3, 16.2, 50.4, 54.6, 66.7, 88.3), a deaf man ignoring the devil's taunts (39.5), and numerous figures from the Bible.⁵⁷ Athanasius also employs similes oftentimes to capture the awfulness of various personages. The devil prowls around like a lion looking for monks to devour (7.2).⁵⁸ Demons are likened to unruly mobs loudly raising a ruckus (13.1),⁵⁹ scorpions and serpents (24.5), thieves and robbers (31.4, 33.2, 42.6),⁶⁰ and fully armed battalions of soldiers (23.3);⁶¹ and, demonic apparitions are said to vanish like smoke when rebuked (11.5, 40.4).⁶² Furthermore, in an extended simile Athanasius has Antony compare the Arians to senseless mules that brutally attack the church of God (82.6–10).

Metaphor is akin to comparison except that one thing is substituted for another and not simply likened to it by means of some introductory word of comparison. Athanasius draws from an impressive array of metaphors. A culinary one envisions Antony's speech as being seasoned with divine salt (73.4). The imagery of luminescence depicts saints, and especially Antony, as brightly-shining lamps giving light to the whole world (79.5, 82.12, 93.6). Athanasius invokes the trope of death as metaphorical sleep (88.3),⁶³ and he also uses the language of burning to give some sense of the violence that a holy person's rebuke does to demons (41.6). The devil tries to inflict his own violence on Antony, stirring up a "dust-cloud of thoughts in his mind" (κονιορτὸν λογισμῶν ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ) (5.3).⁶⁴ Athanasius thus dramatizes his mental assault by evoking the militaristic imagery of a dust-cloud being raised by horses or chariots on the move. The bulk of his metaphors are reserved for charac-

⁵⁷ See Movrin 2011.

⁵⁸ On leonine imagery for the devil in the New Testament, see Schwank 1962 and Thurén 2013.

⁵⁹ This is a stereotypical analogy for demonic soundscape. Cf. Jer. *V. Hil.* 10.10; Sulp. Sev. *V. Mart.* 23.6; Joh. Eph. *Lives* p. 114 (Brooks 1923–25).

⁶⁰ Cf. Tat. *Or. ad Gr.* 14.1, 18.3; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.17.84.6; Amb. *Exp. Luc.* 7.73; Shen. *Sel. disc.* p. 184; Callin. *V. Hyp.* 28.57; cf. Bartelink 1967; Crawford 2021, 52–58.

⁶¹ The devil and demons often masquerade as soldiers in monastic literature. See Jer. *V. Hil.* 3.7, 31.4; Anon. *Hist. mon. Aeg.* 2.9–10; Anon. *V. Pach. SBo* 21; Anon. *APanon* 620; Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 16.2, 25.4; Theod. *Hist. rel.* 21.26.

⁶² In hagiographic literature evil spirits often make abrupt exits, and these dispersals frequently are described in terms of disappearing smoke, imagery which is meant to capture their ephemerality and instability. See Evag. *Antirr.* 4.48; Anon. *V. Pach. SBo* 113, G¹ 96; Sulp. Sev. *V. Mart.* 24.8; Anon. *APsys* 4.71, 11.11; Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 16.4; Bes. *V. Shen.* 73; Greg. Tur. *Virt. Mart.* 2.18.4; Anon. *V. Sym. Styl. iun.* 39, 125; Joh. Ruf. *V. Pet. Ib.* 53; Fel. *V. Guth.* 30, 33, 34.

⁶³ The metaphorical identification of sleep with death was a well-worn topos in classical Greek and Latin literature (e.g., Hes. *Theog.* 756; Hom. *Il.* 11.241; Aesch. *Choeph.* 906; Lucr. *Rer. nat.* 3.909–10; Cic. *Tusc. disp.* 1.97; Virg. *Aen.* 6.278). The New Testament writers employ it as well, especially in connection with the doctrine of the resurrection (e.g., Mt. 9.24; Jn. 11.11–13; 1 Cor. 7.39; Eph. 5.14; 1 Thess. 4.13–15; 2 Pet. 3.4), as do many patristic authors (e.g., Iren. *Adv. haer.* 4.48.2; Orig. *C. Cels.* 2.73; Tert. *Res. mort.* 24; Cyp. *Ep.* 1.2; Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 13.9; Geront. *V. Mel.* 49; cf. Rush 1941, 1–22).

⁶⁴ In Greek literature the imagery of a dust-cloud being raised—e.g., by horses and chariots on the move—typically has militaristic undertones (App. *Mith.* 396; Polyæn. *Strat.* 4.19.1, 7.44.1; Lib. *Or.* 59.101), and Athanasius taps into this connotation to create a word-picture of the mental consternation that the devil stirred up against Antony.

terizing the ascetic life and making its essence accessible and relatable from multiple conceptual angles. This life is pictured metaphorically as a journey (3.4), a martyrdom (47.1, 52.2), servitude to Christ (52.3), a mystical cult for select initiates (14.2), and above all an athletic contest (especially a wrestling match), with ascetics themselves as well-trained athletes (5.3, 5.7, 12.1, 16.1, 21.1, 46.1–2, 88.2).

Ekphrasis is a graphic description of something in lifelike detail which enables the audience to visualize what is being depicted.⁶⁵ Like other patristic orators and authors,⁶⁶ Athanasius is resourceful in his application of this device. The ekphrastic insets in the *Life* fall primarily under the heading of *τοπογραφία*, a graphic representation of geography and topography.⁶⁷ Recruiting biblical allusions to fill out his portraiture, Athanasius paints the monastic settlements in the desert mountains, which sprang up under Antony's inspiration, as a utopian landscape, a "land unto itself," in which righteousness prevails and monks spend all their time praying, fasting, and co-existing in mutual harmony (44.2–4).⁶⁸ In 49.7 Athanasius conjures up a brief but picturesque description, reminiscent of classical pastoral poetry, of Antony's Inner Mountain (Mt. Colzim): ἤλθεν εἰς ὄρος λίαν ὑψηλόν. καὶ ὕδωρ μὲν ἦν ὑπὸ τὸ ὄρος διειδέσθαι, γλυκὺ καὶ μάλα ψυχρόν. πεδιάς δὲ ἕξωθεν καὶ φοίνικες ἀμεληθέντες ὀλίγοι ("He arrived at a very lofty mountain. The water at its base was crystal-clear, sweet, and very cold, and beyond there was a plain and a few scraggy date palms").

In amplifying their subjects in panegyric oratory and hagiographic literature Christians in Late Antiquity availed themselves of traditional rhetorical techniques to which they had first been exposed during the course of their educational *cursus*. One of the most frequently deployed of these rhetorical devices was **diaporesis**,⁶⁹ whereby an orator or author pretends that he is altogether incapable of treating the subject matter at hand in a manner befitting its loftiness. The fundamental aim of such self-deprecation is not to induce the audience to lose confidence in the communicator but rather to convey the impression that the subject matter transcends the limits of *all* human discourse, no matter who happens to be the communicator. In the Prologue (§ 4) Athanasius ostensibly downplays his account of Antony's life with the claim that it contains "only a few things from my recollection of his

⁶⁵ See e.g. Heffernan 1993; Webb 2009.

⁶⁶ E.g., Basil (Campbell 1922, 128–45) and Chrysostom (Ameringer 1921, 86–100).

⁶⁷ See Lausberg 1960, § 819.

⁶⁸ Athanasius evokes the geographical and conceptual otherness of monastic Egypt and paints it as something of a post-biblical Promised Land. In his eighth homily on Mathew, John Chrysostom strikes the same utopian chord (*Hom. 8 Mt.* (PG 57, 87)), as does Jerome in *Ep. 2.1*: *Spectarem desertum, omni amoeniorem civitatem, viderem desolata ab accolis loca quasi ad quoddam paradisi instar sanctorum coetibus obsideri.*

⁶⁹ True diaporesis has a low rate of incidence in some sectors of patristic literature. Hritzu (1939, 67) claims only three "doubtful examples" in Jerome's letters. In all of Hilary's writings there is only one (Buttall 1933, 93); twenty-three in Augustine's sermons (Barry 1924, 133); eleven in Basil's sermons (Campbell 1922, 56); seven in Chrysostom's panegyric sermons (Burns 1930, 45); and three in Leo's works (Halliwell 1939, 81).

deeds” (ὀλίγα τῶν ἐκείνου μνημονεύσας) and he goes on to invite his addressees to ask other eyewitnesses about Antony, though even “when each person tells what he knows, the cumulative account about him would perhaps still barely do him justice” (ἐκάστου λέγοντος ὅπερ οἶδε, μόλις ἐπαξίως ἢ περὶ ἐκείνου γένηται διήγησις); the suggestion, then, is that no single account—not even Athanasius’—can adequately compass Antony’s life and deeds.⁷⁰ At the end of the *Life* Athanasius circles back to this inexpressibility *topos*: Εἰ καὶ μικρὰ ταῦτα πρὸς τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐκείνου, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τούτων λογίζεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὅποῖος ἦν ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος Ἀντώνιος (“Even if this account is insignificant compared to his virtue, nevertheless ascertain from it what the man of God Antony was like”) (93.1).

Hyperbaton is the intentional displacement of two or more syntactically connected words or groups of words from their natural order for the purpose of emphasizing either the words thus displaced or the interpositioned word(s), or sometimes both simultaneously. This was one of the most salient rhetorical figures in ancient Greek literary language.⁷¹ Athanasius employs this device to great effect, as three typical examples demonstrate. For instance, in the Prologue (§ 3) he writes: Ἔστι γὰρ μοναχοῖς ἱκανὸς χαρακτήρ πρὸς ἄσκησιν ὁ Ἀντωνίου βίος (“For monks Antony’s life is a sufficient pattern for ascetic discipline”). This sentence has a palpable gnomic quality which enhances it as a paraenetic prescription. Additionally, its subject is delayed until the very end and also hyperbatically displaced from its copulative verb, and the resulting effect is emphasizing the paradigmatic nature of Antony’s βίος. In 81.1 Athanasius speaks of Antony’s fame in high places: Ἐφθασε δὲ καὶ μέχρι βασιλέων ἡ περὶ Ἀντωνίου φήμη (“Talk of Antony reached even as far as emperors”). Two species of hyperbaton are observable in this sentence, one in which an article is separated from its corresponding noun (ἡ περὶ Ἀντωνίου φήμη), and the other in which the main noun is separated from its verb—and by seven intervening words, no less; this latter hyperbaton syntactically underscores the extent of his celebrity. Finally, Athanasius opens his multi-chapter account of Antony’s encounters with various pagan philosophers with the following assertion: Καὶ φρόνιμος δὲ ἦν λίαν (“Antony also possessed practical wisdom to an extraordinary degree”) (72.1). The pithiness of this statement gives it an air of *gravitas*, and the adverbial modifier *λίαν* achieves somewhat more forcefulness both because it is hyperbatically separated from φρόνιμος and because it is postponed to the end of the short sentence, whereas elsewhere in the *Life* it precedes its adjective four times (23.5, 42.8, 49.7, 58.1) and follows it three times (20.6, 40.1, 72.1); the overall effect is emphasis on Antony’s practical wisdom, which ends up confounding all of his philosopher-interlocutors.

Paradox, the juxtaposition of words or concepts which are mutually exclusive apart from the context, is a device that patristic authors and orators found especially useful for communicating some small sense of the ineffability of the theological

⁷⁰ This is a trope of hagiographic literature; see Cain 2013a, 99–105.

⁷¹ Cf. Markovic 2006.

mysteries of the Christian faith.⁷² This device is applied diversely in the *Life*, as just two examples demonstrate. In 74.6 Antony confronts pagan philosophers: Πῶς δὲ χλευάζειν τολμᾶτε ἡμᾶς, λέγοντας τὸν Χριστὸν ἄνθρωπον πεφανερῶσθαι; (“How do you presume to mock us for saying that Christ appeared as a man?”). Antony is referencing the (Athanasian) doctrine of the Incarnation, and he highlights its inherent paradoxicality by directly juxtaposing “Christ” and “man.” In 14.7 Athanasius describes the concrete effects of Antony’s monastic proselytizing: Καὶ οὕτω λοιπὸν γέγονε καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσι μοναστήρια καὶ ἡ ἔρημος ἐπολίσθη, μοναχῶν ἐξεληθόντων ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ ἀπογραφασμένων τὴν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς πολιτείαν (“From then on there sprang up monastic habitations even in the mountains and the desert was made a city, as monks left all that was theirs and registered themselves for citizenship in heaven”). Embedded in this statement are not one but two paradoxes: the uninhabitable desert is made habitable, and monks are citizens of heaven yet still live on earth.⁷³

Prose Rhythm in the *Life of Antony*

The stylish deployment of traditional rhetorical figures, especially in complex combinations with one another, is one important hallmark of artistic late Greek prose. Another is the consistent incorporation of rhythmic *clausulae* into sentences to maintain a melodious tempo. Here, too, Athanasius demonstrates his attentiveness to the finer points of his literary craft. Like the rhythm used by other stylistically conscientious contemporary and near-contemporary writers in Greek, his is predominantly accentual rather than quantitative. The standard forms attested in their works are found also in the *Life*. They are differentiated from one another by the number of unstressed syllables which separate the last two accents of a clause; the number of syllables either preceding or following these two stressed syllables is irrelevant. The table below lists these forms, along with one example, and indicates the relative frequency of each:⁷⁴

Form 0 x x	αὐτῷ ἄρτους (50.4)	13%
Form 1 x ~ x	γυμνὸν ἰδεῖν (60.6)	28%
Form 2 x ~ ~ x	ἐπιστὰς ἐκταράξει (42.2)	30%
Form 3 x ~ ~ ~ x	ταῖς ὑπηρεσίαις (46.7)	19%
Form 4 x ~ ~ ~ ~ x	Ἀντώνιος ἐγνωρίσθη (93.4)	9%
Form 5 x ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ x	διεγείρουσιν εἰς προσευχάς (25.2)	1%

⁷² Cf. Campbell 1922, 67–69.

⁷³ Whereas Paul claims that *all* Christians already have become citizens of heaven (Phil. 3.20; cf. Anon. *Ep. ad Diog.* 5.9), Athanasius is more exclusive and reserves such citizenship in the here and now only for monks of the desert (the desert being the reflection of the heavenly *polis* of Jerusalem which is to come), while for non-monastic Christians citizenship in heaven remains a future, eschatological possibility, not a present certainty (Øistein Endsjø 2008, 70). On monks as citizens of heaven, see further Anon. *Hist. mon. Aeg.*, prol. 5; Joh. Cass. *Inst. coen.* 6.6; Callin. *V. Hyp.* 51.13; Marc. diac. *V. Porph.* 4.

⁷⁴ The percentages given have been tabulated on the basis of the complete text of the *Life* and its prologue, and thus they are not extrapolations from a limited number of randomly selected clausulae.

Form 6x ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ x	ἐσκίρτησεν ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει (36.4)	0% ⁷⁵
Form 7x ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ x	ἐμνημόνευσεν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής (17.5)	0% ⁷⁶

Of the seven varieties that appear in the *Life*, Athanasius favors Forms 1 and 2 the most, with Form 2 accounting for nearly one-third of all clausular endings. Form 2 in fact is the accentual pattern overwhelmingly preferred also by many other late Greek authors and orators,⁷⁷ such as Libanius, Himerius,⁷⁸ Themistius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa,⁷⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus,⁸⁰ John Chrysostom,⁸¹ Synesius of Cyrene,⁸² Procopius,⁸³ Isidore of Pelusium,⁸⁴ and Sozomen.⁸⁵

Conclusion

The *Life of Antony* prominently exhibits key stylistic features associated with the aesthetic prose of its time. The mere occurrence of this or that rhetorical device here and there would not in itself be conclusive proof of intentional sophistication,⁸⁶ but the sheer frequency and abundance of devices, not to mention Athanasius' penchant for aggregating multiple ones in close proximity for heightened effect, do speak to a certain degree of deliberate artifice, as does his rhythmic prose. These findings are noteworthy on their own terms because they lend to a new-found appreciation of the *Life* as a literary artifact. They also complement those of other studies which affirm that in his writings Athanasius evinces a facility with advanced rhetorical techniques and argumentation,⁸⁷ and they likewise counter the claims of some scholars that his works, such as the *Life of Antony*, are devoid of rhetorical embellishment.⁸⁸

None of this is necessarily to assert, however, that Athanasius must have received extensive formal training in rhetoric in his youth like other fellow Greek-speaking

⁷⁵ The actual percentage is 0.18—based on five total occurrences (31.5, 36.4, 38.2, 58.4, 82.12)—but because and it rounds down to 0%, this value is statistically insignificant.

⁷⁶ The actual percentage is 0.044—based on a single occurrence (17.5)—but this value is statistically insignificant and rounds down to 0%.

⁷⁷ The percentages for the authors and orators listed above are given in Dewing 1910b, 321. Cf. Hörandner 1981, 51–78.

⁷⁸ de Groot 1919, 135.

⁷⁹ Méridier 1906, 184–89; Stein 1928, xc.

⁸⁰ Skimina 1931.

⁸¹ Skimina 1927.

⁸² Terzaghi 1912.

⁸³ Dewing 1910a.

⁸⁴ Fehrle 1924.

⁸⁵ Hansen 1965.

⁸⁶ For cautionary remarks along this line (but in the context of gospels criticism), see Edwards 2006, 51–52.

⁸⁷ See Stead 1976. Kennedy (1994, 264) comments that Athanasius is “a skilled but unscrupulous dialectician.” Likewise Flower 2016, 21: “It is clear that he had some acquaintance with the techniques of oratory that were current in fourth-century political discourse.”

⁸⁸ E.g., Barnes 1993, 11; Wipszycka 2018, 40.

Christian authors in antiquity such as Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea.⁸⁹ We know virtually nothing for certain about his educational pedigree, and what precious little we reliably can know must be derived indirectly from his writings.⁹⁰ Our findings nevertheless indicate, even conservatively, that he had significant exposure to the art of rhetoric—if not in a classroom setting,⁹¹ then perhaps through rhetorical handbooks and/or through attentive study of the writings of Irenaeus, Origen, and other Christian authors who wrote rhetorically adroit prose.⁹² Whatever the case, it is abundantly clear from the *Life* at least that he not only knew his rhetoric well but also knew how to marshal it in order to refine his message for his Hellenophone audience.

Furthermore, our investigation yields an interesting insight into Athanasius' portraiture of Antony. Proportionately speaking, the rhetorical figures are relatively evenly interspersed between the text presented in Athanasius' voice as narrator and in the direct speech he attributes to Antony. Nevertheless, the fact that they are present at all in, much less pervasive throughout, speech purportedly uttered by Antony is noteworthy because the historical Antony was a native Coptic-speaker and evidently either could speak no Greek or had so little spoken proficiency in it that he had to communicate with Greek-speakers through an interpreter.⁹³ Athanasius' depiction of him as speaking stylistically decorous Greek (albeit, in translation from Coptic) therefore is rather ironic, given that in the narrative Antony repeatedly eschews Hellenic *paideia* and all of its trappings,⁹⁴ of which a mastery of rhetoric is of course one.

⁸⁹ Some scholars are inclined to think that Athanasius did not progress far enough in his educational *cursus* to undertake formal study under a *rhetor* (e.g., Barnes 1993, 11–12, 126; Louth 2004, 275; Gwynn 2012, 3–4). Cf. Rubenson 2006, 207, who describes Athanasius as “a literate man educated in Alexandria,” the implication being that he did undergo some kind of rhetorical training.

⁹⁰ The ancient historiographic and hagiographic *testimonia* for Athanasius' educational background are not on the whole trustworthy; for a critical review of them, see Gemeinhardt 2011, 79–82. In his panegyric on Athanasius, delivered seven years after his death, Gregory of Nazianzus claims that the bishop had had only a modicum of training in philosophy (ὀλίγα τῶν ἐγκυκλίων φιλοσοφίας) (Or. 21.6). Although scholars (e.g., Anatolios 2004, 4) sometimes take Gregory's comment at face value, we have no way of verifying how historically reliable it is, and at any rate it must be taken with a grain of salt because Gregory makes it in the broader context of emphasizing that Athanasius immersed himself in Scripture more than any other human being.

⁹¹ Bartelink (1982, 55) suggests that Athanasius was trained in rhetoric through schoolroom exercises.

⁹² Stead (1976, 121) reaches the same conclusion. For Athanasius' reading of Irenaeus and Origen, see Anatolios 1998, 205–6; Anatolios 2001; Kannengiesser 2003, 889–99.

⁹³ At 16.1 Athanasius notes that Antony spoke to fellow Coptic monks τῇ Αἰγυπτιακῇ φωνῇ. As a linguistic descriptor, the adjective Αἰγυπτιακός (lit. “Egyptian”) refers to Coptic, the vernacular written and spoken language of late antique Egypt (cf. Fournet 2009). On three different occasions in the *Life* Athanasius refers to Antony's use of interpreters to communicate with Greek-speakers (72.3, 74.2, 77.1).

⁹⁴ See e.g. 1.2 on the child Antony's rejection of Hellenic education. By contrast with Antony, the prototype of the “unlettered” saint, some later hagiographic protagonists are depicted as having been diligent, even precocious, students as children. Theodore of Sykeon learned his letters very thoroughly (πάνυ καλῶς) (Georg. Syk. *V. Theod. Syk.* 10), Hilarion was a virtuoso at oratory (Jer. *V. Hil.* 2.2), Paul of Thebes was a young master of Greek and Coptic (Jer. *V. Paul.* 4.1), the Egyptian ascetic Sarap-

What, if anything, are we to make of this discrepancy? It may well not have occurred, or even mattered, to Athanasius. He deployed the devices of sophistic rhetoric ultimately as the means to an end, to convey his narrativ content in an aesthetically attractive manner which in turn renders this content more persuasive, more captivating, and therefore more palatable to his target audience.⁹⁵ For Athanasius, then, the rhetorical embellishment and verbal euphony serve a practical rather than a purely or even predominantly epideictic purpose and do not distract from the fundamentally didactic objective at hand.⁹⁶ Indeed, the embellishment does not so clutter his prose as to create the impression of pretentious and flamboyant showmanship, nor does it give his writing a distinct air of artificiality or turgidity. His syntax likewise is not sinuous or convoluted but straightforward and lucid, thus rendering the work readily accessible and comprehensible to any readers of humble or at least non-elite origins.

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ion was highly literate (ἐὺγράμματος) (Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 37.1), Macrina soaked up Scriptural lessons (Greg. Nys. *V. Macr.* 3), Lupus bishop of Sens surpassed his sodales in *facundia* (Anon. *V. Lup. Sen.* 3), Eucherius of Orléans surpassed the best of his peers in his studies (Anon. *V. Euch.* 3), and Leutfred of Évreux successfully implored his parents to give him access to exercitia litterarum in scholis (Anon. *V. Leut. Madr.* 1).

⁹⁵ Ancient rhetoric, at least in its classical Roman expression, had a threefold function—to instruct (*docere*), to entertain (*delectare*), and most of all to persuade (*persuadere*). From our analysis it is clear that the *Life* neatly satisfies all three of these criteria.

⁹⁶ Cf. Rapp 1998, 437, who, referring to Greek hagiographic texts in general, notes that "the absence of stylistic embellishment enables the audience to focus on the content of the story without the distractions of a lofty style."

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