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Voices, Hearing and Acoustic Epiphany in Nonnus' Paraphrase of St. John's Gospel

At first, if we consider Nonnus' paraphrastic poem, we can state that the appearance of the Lord as a perennial theophany countermarks his epic devoted to a learned audience, which is comprised of Christians and not-Christians alike.¹ Hexameter rewriting of the Fourth Gospel relates to the outstanding interactionist process between Hellenism, not to be merely likened to 'paganism' and Christianity deeply engaged with Greek *paideia*.²

As far as it concerns epiphanic signs, this Christian poem deals with the prophetic power of the voice of Christ as an eminent proof of his divinity revealed to his witnesses.³ The discovery of Jesus' divine presence is not restricted to visual signs, such as beauty, brightness and radiance, which are traditionally attached to divine epiphany since Homeric epics.⁴ These signs are likewise linked with the nearness of Jesus in Nonnus' *Paraphrase*.⁵ Beyond any doubt, Nonnian light symbolism widely develops the idea of the Saviour as the φωστήρ, which enlightens the world by giving illumination to his disciples.⁶ Apart from explanations about light upon Gnostic sources,⁷ the Paraphrast, here, follows Alexandrian theology, especially Cyril's teachings.⁸

1 On cultivated readers and/or listeners of Nonnus' epics, see Agosti (2001) 97–99; Id. (2005); Id. (2009) 332; Whitby (2016) 216; Franchi (2016) 247.

2 On this intercultural meeting, see Dijkstra (2016) 83–84 with the *status quaestionis* of Nonnian studies. The use of Homeric *topoi* beside models drawn from Christian poetry is very common, not only in Gregory of Nazianzus and Nonnus, but also in epigraphic poems of the 4th and 5th centuries, see Agosti (2010) 329–330, 347–349; Id. (2016).

3 For epiphany as an arising phenomenon in the Graeco-Roman world, see Pfister (1924) 314–317, Pax (1955) 30, 109, 144; Gladigow (1990); Versnel (1987); Id. (2016) 37–43; Graf (1997), Id. (2004). On New Testament epiphany motives, see Frenschkowski (1995) 9–20; Id. (1997); Mitchell (2004) 183–187.

4 See Pfister (1924) 316; Beierwaltes (1957) 14–23; Pax (1962) 842; Bremer (1975) 1–12; Gladigow (1990), 98–100; Graf (1997) 1151; Bierl (2004) 51; Bravo (2004) 66–67; Versnel (2011) 38; Id. (2016) 38 with nt. 50, 60.

5 Heliac brightness explains theological key adjectives attributed to Jesus, see *Par.* 13.144: παμφαέος Χριστοῦ, with an Orphic ambience, see Greco (2004) 168 *ad loc.*, with Homeric, Classical and post-Classical parallels. Among them, similarities of Orphic poetry are very relevant, see *Orph. H.* 6.5 παμφαέος ἔργος, *Or. Chald. Fr.* 35.4 παμφεγγέος αὐγῆς, said of the sunshine of Noetic, that is, intellectual light. In Latin Poetry Iuvencus puts particular emphasis on light symbolism, see Röttger (1996) 80–91.

6 See Filoramo (1980) 28–42; Id. (1982) 868–880; Zoroddu (1994) 231–232; Thomassen (2004) 222–224.

7 For Jesus' self-identification with the Light, see Johnson (2016) 273; Sieber (2016) 314 with reference to the Logos in the *Par.* See Zöckler (1999) 127; Popkes (2004) 654–655; Id. (2005) 541 with nt. 83; Id.

Christ healing the man born blind is defined as a light-bringer (φαισφόρος) in *Par.* IX.28.⁹ Similarly, Nonnus puts great emphasis on the restoration of light at the Raising of Lazarus. This healing also establishes the identity between light and life.¹⁰ The language of sunlight in the *Paraphrase* is closely linked with the divine mission of Jesus as heavenly Saviour,¹¹ as well as with the opposition between the darkness of sins and the dawn of his redemption.¹²

As relevant as visual aspects may be, they are, however, not the only ones involved in epiphany according to a longdating tradition. Greek religious experience also puts emphasis on acoustic signs revealing the divine presence. It often happens that the listener recognizes a superhuman voice that addresses him through a numinous message and/or an order to be promptly executed.¹³ Starting from Homeric epics until Neoplatonic teaching, auditory revelations are focused on instructions,

(2007) 137; Onuki (2008) 297–299, 303, 307–317 with theological relation to the Gospel of Thomas and Manichaean dualism between Light and darkness.

8 See Livrea (2000) 155, with reference to Cyril's theology in his commentary to Johannine *logion* (8.12): ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου, that is explicitly overstated in *Ep. fest.* 5.2 = SC 372, 288.40–42. Élieux-Burns. In Alexandrian realm, see also Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.28.178: οὐκ ἄνευ τοῦ σωτήρος τοῦ καταγαγόντος ἡμῶν τῷ θεῷ λόγῳ τοῦ ὁρατικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν ἐπιχυθεῖσαν ἐκ φαύλης ἀναστροφῆς ἄνοιαν ἀχλὺδι καὶ τὸ βέλτιστον ἀποδεδωκότος, *Protr.* 11.113.2; Didymus Caec. *De Trin.* PG 39.728.

9 See Johnson (2016) 273–274: Nonnus puts emphasis on material elements such as clay and water used by Jesus as tools of Light. See also Pricoco (1991) 491–495, quoting Philostr. *VA* 8.23: ἔσται γὰρ τι ἐκ τῆς νυκτὸς ταύτης φῶς, discussed by Agosti (1998) 56 nt. 28, with further epigraphic parallels. On Homeric antecedent of Odysseus who brought light into the house and the polis, see Bremer (1976) 150–160 discussed by Birl (2004) 56, who points out the *Odyssey*, as “an extremely protracted performance of an epiphany of its main hero”. Isillus portrays the Pagan Healer god, Asclepius, as “gleaming with golden armament” in an epigraphic hymn set up in Epidaurus, where he describes his last divine epiphany in favour of Sparta against Philipp, = *IG* IV².1 128, ll. 63–64: σὺν ὅπλοισιν / λαμπόμενος χρυσέοις, see Bravo (2004) 67.

10 On the comparison between miracle reports in *Par.* 9 and 11, see Spanoudakis (2014) 88–90: the close association of these episodes is operative in art representations and theological contemporary debate. In *Dion.* 25, Dionysus heals an Indian born blind before enacting the resurrection of Tylus.

11 The healing of the blind man in *Par.* 9 is explained as a rebirth of a child emerging from the womb. Hence, the emphasis on the dawn as birth-panged (9.158: μογοστόκος) and unbeheld (9.178: ἀθήητος) underlies the idea of salvation given through revelation, which “in Nonnus’ vision is both creation and illumination”, as Franchi (2016) 260 remarks; see also Spanoudakis (2014) 91; Johnson (2016) 275 on the imagery of light as a mediumistic way of access to Jesus’ self-revelation.

12 See *Par.* 1.20–27a. See Platt (2009) 154; Ead. (2011) 11; Whitaker (2015) 55–58 on Johannine model of spiritual blindness needing the illumination given by Jesus; Bennema (2014) 253–255. On Christ as *Sol salutis*, see Dölger (1925); Agosti (1998) 55–57; Greco (2004) 111; Spanoudakis (2014) 179 on *Par.* XI.34a.

13 On *Wortepiphanie*, see Pax (1955) 20, 35; Id. (1962) 20, 30; Dodds (1959) 140; Benz (1969) 94–97, 150, 413–440; Speyer (1972) 340; Id. (1991) 288; Id. (1994) 18–20; Id. (1995) 75–95, Id. (2007) 91; Hanson (1980) 1411; Casadio (1989) 141; Dulaey (1989) 379 (*vision auditive*); Frenschkowski (1995) 195, 197, 220; Weber (2000) 42.

teachings, or prophecies.¹⁴ Notoriously, Gnostic doctrine is mostly related to heavenly voices. Marcos, a chief teacher of Valentinian School in Rome, was claiming to receive complex revelations by the voices of Pleromatic hypostases that he would have heard without seeing any superior being. This *modus apparendi* corresponds to usual didactic epiphany among the Gnostics.¹⁵

The lore of magic also focuses on the revelation of true names of gods unknown to the uninitiated through special acoustic sounds. Thus, the magical name βαρυχωωχ that expresses the hidden name of the highest god is based upon the prolonged sound of /o:/.¹⁶ Phonetic association, alliteration (/r/, /vr/, /t/), repetition and various other sound plays are widely exploited in Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri for these purposes.¹⁷

In the Graeco-Roman world, the spoken word quickly gained the significance of a fatal voice: the god chooses a human speaker as his medium in order to reveal hidden truths. Therefore, the κληδών as chance voice was conceived as embodying a presage of future events, the epithet κληδώνιος (producing an ominous voice) is attributed to Zeus. A personified divine voice, as Φήμη, was a vocal goddess who inspired a crowd of people by creating mutual feelings to everyone of them.¹⁸ Many examples of panic running through armies or assemblies because of mysteriously heard voices also come from the realm of Greek war.¹⁹ Words overheard accidentally were often interpreted as prophetic omens. The revelation was originated by single words or a complete phrase, a carelessly pronounced utterance was listened by somebody else in a wholly fortuitous and unexpected manner. The listener just simply had to link such word(s) through mental association to some plane, project, or event of particular importance for his personal destiny.²⁰ All these omens employed the human word as an outgoing presage. Therefore, a word's divination like *cladonism* was closely associated to Hermes, the divine Master of the Logos.²¹ If the children pronounced the fateful saying without being in any relation to the listener, they were

¹⁴ See Roloff (1970) 48–49 on Homeric heroes hearing godly voice; Procl. *In Crat.* 36.20; Hippol. *Ref.* 4.28 knows of tricks drawn by manipulating divine auditions, see Dodds (1959) 366 with nt. 3.

¹⁵ Marcos' teaching is a matter of a mystical doctrine about letters and numbers learned through revealing speeches, such as Derdekeas experiences in his teaching transmitted in the *Paraphrase of Sem*, see Casadio (1989) 126–127, 142.

¹⁶ In *PGM* IV l. 936, the magician prescribes to hold the numerical value of 3663 on a leaf of papyrus, in order to pray the mystical name of βαρυχωωχ quoted at l. 1057, see Brashear (1989), 123–124.

¹⁷ On these key issues of Ancient ritual experience, see Crippa (2015) 245–249.

¹⁸ Scholia to *Iliad* VIII.250; Eustathios 169.27. Denominative verb κληδονίζω is found in *P. Oxy.* VI 886 (= *PGM* XXIVa) ll. 13–15, 3rd century^p also means 'to receive an omen'. For the Ancient idea of Φήμη linked with divination by casual words, see Pritchett (1979) 132, 134–135; Crippa (2012) 550–553.

¹⁹ For military examples of chance voices in topic moments, see passages discussed by Pritchett (1979) 133–134, 137; Lateiner (2005).

²⁰ See Hopfner (1928) 1282–1283; Riess (1939) 373–376; Peradotto (1969) 8. As Johnston (2008) 131 puts out, "unexpected" is the key-word for this method of approaching the supernatural sphere.

²¹ See Peradotto (1969) 9; Johnston (2008) 100.

regarded as the most truthful ones.²² The most famous example in Christian milieu is the *tolle et lege* heard by Augustine.²³

All of this ascertained, acoustic revelation is worthy of further examination in this Nonniam poem. With respect to Biblical parallels, it would be a simplistic approach to overstate auditory elements in Old Testament epiphany, while to assign a major role to New Testament visual signs in accordance with typical Hellenistic and Late Antique trends.²⁴

In fact, visual and auditory elements are intertwined in the realm of godly revelation in the Old as well as in the New Testament.²⁵ If we analyze Old Testament reports about self-perception, the mystical narrator mostly refers to an epiphanic encounter with the divine without any distinction between seeing and hearing. For example, the prophet Isaias simultaneously describes the vision of the Lord sitting upon the throne and the hearing of his voice before receiving a commission.²⁶ Generally said, sensorial perceptions of seeing and hearing are interlinked in biblical epiphanic accounts. Similarly, Graeco-Roman thinkers were aware that seeing and hearing are in fact interchangeable as indicators of a revelation's superhuman encounter. This link clearly appears at the descent to the Trophonios' hole at Lebadeia in Boeotia. After a frightening *catabasis* into the hole meant with the hope of meeting the Chthonian hero, the enquirers were compelled to record everything they saw or heard.²⁷

As far as concerns Nonnus' epiphany reports, we remark that they are deeply engaged in acoustic effects. At first, Jesus' voice provides an auditory sign of his revelation as Messiah. Therefore, Christ's word is defined as Life-giving (βιοδότης). This is observed under a key theological perspective in *Par.* X.133:

βιοδότηρι μύθῳ.

This adjective (and its alternative form βιοδότης) is a standardized epithet used in Orphic Hymns. It has many Late Antique parallels, often with reference to traditional deities of a polytheistic pantheon. In this respect, an epigraphic sentence concerning the 'Life-giving Attica' (βιοδότης Ἀτθίδος) appears in an hexametric dedication

²² For children considered as ominous speakers among the Egyptians, see Plutarch., *De Is. et Os.* 14; Athen. 8.8; Hopfner (1928b) 1277; 1279; Peradotto (1969) 4 with n. 8; Somville (1989) 202–204; Montero (1999) 291.

²³ See Aug. *Conf.* VIII.12.29, Dulaey (1989), 379, 384, 389, see also Benz (1969), 95; Giannarelli (1989), 234. On children as privileged *medium* of divine revelation, see Courcelle (1953), 194–220; Johnston (2001), 97–99.

²⁴ See Björck (1946) 306–310; Pax (1955) 20, 110–111; Balthasar (1968) I, 261–262.

²⁵ See Moreira (2000) 18 with nt. 15.

²⁶ Is 6.1–8, see Pax (1955) 110; Déonna (1965) 62; Benz (1969) 98–99, 418 on the *Zusammenspiel* of sensorial perceptions; Speyer (1972) 340; Agosti (2003) 378–379.

²⁷ Pausan. IX.39.1–40 ἄλλα πού τις καὶ εἶδε καὶ ἄλλος ἤκουσεν, see Bonnechère (2003) 129–202.

of late 4th – early 5th century given by the proconsul Phaedrus, in order to celebrate his restoration of Dionysos' theatre in Athens.²⁸

Subsequently, Jesus' voice is the first way of access to salvation. It is people-saving, as the poet remarks in *Par.* VIII.1: λαοσσόον αὐδήν (in clause), while the Jews answer with a Bacchic voice in *Par.* VIII.7: θιιάδι φωνῇ (still in clause). Because of their spiritual blindness, they cannot but shout nonsensical words in reply to the divinely inspired word of the Saviour.²⁹

Superhuman force is expressly attributed to the Voice of the Lord in reply to Peter at the washing of the feet in *Par.* XIII.30:

καί μιν ἐρητύων βριαρῇ μελίζατο φωνῇ.

Here, the poet uses the pregnant adjective βριαρός in order to focus on strenght of divine Jesus' utterance.

Likewise, he says for Jesus speaking to Annah in *Par.* XVIII.95–96:

βριαρῷ δ' ἀντίαχε μύθῳ
Ἰησοῦς ἀδόνητος.³⁰

There is further evidence for epiphany as auditory revelation. Divine proximity is evidenced through Christ's liberating voice in the healing of the paralyzed man accounted in *Par.* V. At first, the Lord consoles the poor man through his voice that can breathe new life at v. 29:

καί μιν ἄναξ θάρσυνεν ἔη ζωαρκέι φωνῇ

The key adjective ζωαρκής³¹ probably echoes a Proclus' passage (*H.* 1.2) in praise of the Sunlight, where the role of Helios as creator of all things is described, as Agosti has pointedly illustrated.³²

Then, the Lord suddenly healed the paralyzed man through his word releasing grief at v. 37:

λυσιπόνῳ ταχυεργὸς ἄναξ ἰήσατο μύθῳ.³³

²⁸ *IG*^{II} 5021 discussed by Agosti (2010) 347.

²⁹ On the theological significance of properties enounced for the Word, see Sieber (2016) 313. On the blame against Jews, see Livrea (2000) 234–235 on *Par.* II.58.

³⁰ As Livrea (1989) 156 pointed out; see also Greco (2004) 95.

³¹ The verse recurs in *Par.* 4.224 (–μύθῳ), ζωαρκέι φωνῇ in clause also in 4.243 and 249, ζωαρκέι μύθῳ even in 15.32, 17.60.

³² Proclus' *locus similis* was recognized by Schneider (1892) 599; see also Golega (1930) 102; Agosti (2003) 362–363 assigns chronological priority to Proclus or alternatively to a common model in Neoplatonic writings. See parallels in the *Par.* and Ancient Christian literature quoted *ibid.*

³³ See Agosti (2003) 378–379 *ad loc.*

In this respect, Christ is focused as a clear counterpart for Dionysos who is equally portrayed as a celestial Healer through his Bacchic voice. Nonnus describes the ‘pagan’ god exercising his healing power in favour of Aristeus in *Dion.* XVII.373:

ἰήσατο Φοιβάδι φωνῇ.³⁴

Christ in turn bestows the Resurrection of the flesh through his Word of Life in *Par.* V.110:

Χριστοῦ φθεγγομένοιο.³⁵

A close association of revealing through vision and hearing is experienced at the first appearance of Jesus in the poem. Two disciples near to John the Forerunner and the Lord are still unaware of the divine nature of the latter in *Par.* I.129b-130:

δύω δέ οἱ ἄγχι μαθηταί
Χριστοῦ θεσπεσίας ἀδαήμενες εἰσέτι μορφῆς.

In the following, the epiphanic experience is fulfilled first through the holy word of John as the true witness, as it is remarked in I.135:

ζαθέην ... ἀληθέος ἀνδρὸς ἰωήν.

Here, John the Baptist’s utterance arises to the highest witness of the divine Logos. In *Par.* 20.138, John is also defined as a μάρτυς ἀληθείης, a witness to the Truth. Similarly, the author of the Fourth Gospel is a μάρτυς ἐτητυμίας in XXI.140.³⁶ The title of *martyr* is, here, subsumed as a technical word for the true witness who announces the forthcoming of the Messiah after having personally experienced the meeting with him.³⁷

Jesus himself gives the value of true witness to his prophetic words at the last supper in *Par.* XIII.85–89:

³⁴ Passage quoted by Agosti (2003) 379–380 with further *loci similes* relating to the healing power of Dionysus, who is an evident counterpart for Christ. Both gods enact a cathartic power exercised in favour of their elected. On healing by magic lullabies in Nonnus’ ‘pagan’ poem, see Gigli (1985) 221–223 with further parallels.

³⁵ On Theurgic power of Christ’s voice, see Agosti (2003) 140, 478 *ad loc.*; Rotondo (2008) 298–302.

³⁶ Ebener (1985) 406 and Sherry (1991) 276 wrongly refer this title to Jesus. On the value of the Fourth Gospel’s last chapter, see Sherri 2015.

³⁷ Therefore, the Baptist is defined as a *martyr* and John the Evangelist alike, see Vian (1997) 145; 150–154 with further examples about Nonnus’ special love for this semantic family; see also Accorinti (1996) 228 on XX.138.

γλώσση προφθαμένη, τόπερ ἔσεται, ἄρτι βοήσω,
 ὄφρα μιν ἦν τελέσειεν ἔλιξ χρόνος ἐγγύθεν ἔρπων,
 μῦθον ἀναμνήσθηθε παλαιάφατον, ὅτι περ ὑμῖν
 ἐσόμενον θέσπιζεν ἐμὴ πρωτόθροος ὁμφή.
 Μάρτυρος ἐμπεδόμυθος ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λόγος ἔστω.

The solemn address to the apostles is built around the notion of a prophetic, arcane voice, that carries great significance and discovers hidden meanings. There is relevance in the use of words borrowed from the oracular vocabulary of divination like θεσπίζω and ὁμφή at the same verse (XIII.89). All these remarks convey a super-human value to the Christ's voice according to a theophanic dimension, the divinity of the truthful Teacher being disclosed to his listeners.³⁸

The key idea of the true witness plays a major role in the *Paraphrase*. It is linked with a conceptual mode concerning the person of Christ. As the author of Apc 3.14. states, he is the true witness par excellence: ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός.

If we analyze the first meeting between the disciples of the Baptist and Jesus, sound and visual effects are intertwined, so as to allow the access to the divinity of the Messiah who is still disguised as someone standing roadside (I.131: πεζὸν ὁδίτην).

In the first encounter with Jesus in *Par.* 1, the two disciples are finally overcome by the godly gaze of Christ, which is defined as being self-learned (I.137: αὐτοδίδακτον ὁπωπῆν). Jesus has no need to have a teacher but his inner self-consciousness, as his gnosis has nothing to do with human knowledge that can be learned. However, revelation of divine presence is accompanied by authoritative words which are intimately connected with the vocation of the apostles.

Similarly, the miracle of Jesus in *Par.* VI.4 is enacted through his Word, even if it has a visual form for the observers:

θαύματα παπταίνοντες, ἅπερ κάμεν ἡθάδι μύθῳ.³⁹

In *Par.* XXI, the dialogue between the Risen Lord and Peter corresponds with a post-Resurrection appearance accounted under an ecclesiological perspective. Specifically, Peter is asked three times: "Do thou love me?" (vv. 83–107). This triple question focuses on his three-part denial previously accounted in *Par.* XVIII.70–129.⁴⁰ Jesus had already prophesied of Peter's denial until the cockcrows at the end of XIII.158–160.⁴¹

³⁸ On the *iunctura* μάρτυρος ἐμπεδόμυθος ἔστω in *Par.* 13.89, see Vian (1997) 160; Greco (2004) 130: this formula was created by Nonnus for his Christian poem and later introduced in *Dion*.

³⁹ On people observing the miracle performed through Jesus' usual word, see Franchi (2013) 278.

⁴⁰ See Livrea (1989) 143–153, 167–173; Costanza (2014) 136–137. Generally, the first place in Apostle's catalogues of the New Testament is always reserved to Peter, as Greco (2004) 91 remarks.

⁴¹ See Greco (2004) 174–176.

τρίς δὲ μόνης δασπλήτι μιῆς ἐνὶ νυκτὸς ἀνάγκη
Χριστὸν ἀπαρνήσαιο, πρὶν αὐχένα κυρτὸν αἰίρας
ὁξὺ μέλος κλάξειεν ἐγερσιβόητος ἀλέκτωρ.

Here, the first cockcrow is to be explained as another acoustic sign relating to epiphany, because the cockerel is a clear symbol of Christ.⁴² Nonnus paraphrases his *Vorlage* with consistent embroidery. His abundant adjectival use at v. 160 is far from being purely decorative. On the contrary, both ὁξὺς and ἐγερσιβόητος are, here, employed on the grounds of exegetical undertones.

From one perspective, the compound ἐγερσιβόητος, a powerful Nonnian hapax, refers to a spiritual soul's awakening according to a major initiatory trend of Late Antique religion, especially in Orphic milieu.⁴³ In contrast, the cockcrow is described as a high song in *Dion.* XI.89:

ὁξὺ μέλος κλάξαντος ἀπέπτατο θυμὸς ἀλήτης.⁴⁴

Symbolically, the image of the cockerel crowing in *Par.* XIII is referred to the voice of Christ himself following the exegetical explanations given by Cyril of Alexandria:

εἴτα τῆς τοῦ ἀλεκτρυόνος διαμέμνηται φωνῆς, κατ'οὐδὲν διαπίπτοντα τὸν τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ἀποφαίνων λόγον, προεγνωκότες τε καὶ προηγγελκότος τοῦ ἰδίου μαθητοῦ τὴν ἐν θορύβοις ἀσθένειαν.⁴⁵

Ultimately, Peter may receive his full investiture at the head of the apostolic group and also of the herd of believers in the course of Jesus' last appearance after his Resurrection in *Par.* 21. Indeed, this investiture is conferred upon him just after he has duly performed his profession of faith by speaking aloud with his Teacher in a dramatic verbal contest. This contest in which Peter is involved is comparable to that of Pallene in the last song of the either Nonnian epic. Both heroes are fighting with the god and reach him after diving into water. If Pallene is engaged with a hard physical fight against Dionysos, Peter must counterbalance the divine words of his Lord.⁴⁶

Finally, the Word of Christ in Nonnus' poem is not only convincing in rhetorical terms, but also revealing about God's presence to the cosmos awaiting its Redeemer. All these things considered, epiphanic issues in *Par.* renew a complex intertextual framework, in which auditory elements undeniably play a major role within a history

⁴² On Christian soteriologic idea, see Pintus (1985–86) 262–266.

⁴³ See Greco (2004) 176, who quotes similar compound adjectives created by ἐγερσι- in *Par.*, *Dion.*, in Proclus and Orphic milieu. These adjectives express the soul's awakening.

⁴⁴ See Cyril 609a, as Livrea (1989) 172–173 remarks with further parallels for the cockcrow; Greco (2004) 175–176.

⁴⁵ Indeed, Nonnus does not further develop the cockerel's symbolism in *Par.* 18.129, in order to keep the brevity of Gospel's narrative, see Livrea (1989) 173.

⁴⁶ For Pallene in *Dion.* 48.118–120, cf. *Par.* 21.41–42; see Costanza (2014), 125.

of multiform and disguise. Beyond any doubt, the Paraphrast overlooks Biblical exegesis and Greek poetry relating to the access to the divine. At the same time, he is able to adapt his narrative concerning theophany to many settings. Nonnus carefully establishes the necessity of auditory revelation as a source of theological knowledge, not merely because it helps humans to understand the truth of Christian faith, but because it is a privileged source of discovering the mysteries of the numinous upper world.

As a follower of Greek epic tradition, the poet is conscious of the mystical power of the Word and its great fascination. He could have exercised a stronger attraction to his listeners through his hexameters with their special subtle acoustics. Since his epics were reasonably destined to public performances, the voice of the poet echoes that of the heavenly Master and it is, subsequently, put at the service of the divine Revelation by conferring to it a special power of persuasion.

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