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Two Metrical Rewritings of the Greek Psalms

Pseudo-Apollinaris of Laodicea and Manuel Philes¹

This paper aims to offer an insight into the reception of the Psalms, as poems, from the point of view of two Byzantine poetic rewritings of the biblical text. The first poem which is taken into account is an anonymous *Metaphrasis Psalmorum* in dactylic hexameters, dating to the V century, traditionally attributed to Apollinaris of Laodicea (IV century). The latter is a rewriting of the Psalms in political verses composed by Manuel Philes (XIII-XIV century). Both texts are underexplored and even partially unpublished. They were written at least 800 years apart but are both an attempt to adapt the Septuagint text to the cultural and literary taste of two different historical periods. A comparative reading of the two poems will shade some light on the Byzantine reception of the Greek Psalms and on the different motivations that led two poets to compose similar poems, resulting in different outcomes.

The starting point of this research is the observation that the Psalms were written in Hebrew as pieces of poetry. It has been calculated that roughly one third of the Hebrew Bible consists of poetry,² being the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Lamentations and Job the most prominent poetic biblical books. This poetic nature was not explicitly kept in the Greek translation, as the Septuagint text does not follow any recognizable metrical pattern. However, this poetic taste was still perceived by Christian readers, as for example is testified by Eusebius, who stated in the IV century that Psalm 118 was originally written in heroic metre, or hexameter:

Ἐῖεν δ' ἂν αὐτοῖς [scil. τοῖς Ἑβραίοις] καὶ ἔμμετροι ποιήσεις, ὡς ἡ μεγάλη Μωσέως ᾠδὴ καὶ τοῦ Δαβὶδ ὁ ρηΐ Ψαλμός, τῷ καλουμένῳ παρ' Ἑλλήσιν ἡρώῳ μέτρῳ συντεταγμένοι. φασὶ γοῦν ἐξάμετρα εἶναι ταῦτα, δι' ἑκκαίδεκα συλλαβῶν πεποιημένα.³

“There would also be found among them [the Hebrews] poems in meter, like the great Song of Moses and David’s 118th Psalm, composed in what the Greeks call heroic meter. At least it is said that these are hexameters, consisting of sixteen syllables”.

¹ This contribution presents some preliminary results of a research which is being carried out within the framework of two research projects funded by the Flemish Research Foundation (FWO) and the Austrian Research Foundation (FWF): “The Legacy of the Psalms in Byzantine Poetry: Book Epigrams and Metrical Paraphrases”, supervisors: Kristoffel Demoen, Andreas Rhoby; “David, our Orpheus: Reception, Rewritings and Adaptations of the Psalms in Byzantine Poetry”, supervisors: Kristoffel Demoen, Reinhart Ceulemans. These projects aim to analyze how the poetic nature of the Psalms is reflected in various kinds of late antique and Byzantine poetry, especially metrical paratexts (book epigrams on the psalter) and metrical paraphrases.

² Fokkelman (2001) 1.

³ Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* XI.5.

The composition of poetic paraphrases can be therefore explained as an attempt to fulfil this need of giving a new life to the biblical poetry. The analysis of the passages that will be proposed below aims at recognizing both the poetic features of the Greek Psalms and the strategies that the two paraphrasts put in use in order to enhance these characteristics by means of the chosen metre and language.

The present contribution falls into four parts. The first section has a methodological character and focuses on terminology as well. In the second part is presented an introduction to the two poems, which is followed in the third section by a selective comparison of the two works, in order to get to some conclusions on the literary and cultural meaning of these *metaphraseis*, namely in the fourth and last section of the paper.

Methodology and terminology

In late antique and medieval literature, the custom of rewriting several books of the Bible in metrical form was widespread to such an extent that it is possible to identify a genre in itself, the so-called biblical epic. Metrical rewritings of biblical texts were produced both in Greek and in Latin.⁴ The most conspicuous examples (though not the only ones) of extant extensive biblical epos in Greek late antique literature are the *Paraphrase of St. John's Gospel* by Nonnus of Panopolis, the *Homerocentones* composed by the empress Eudocia and the *Metaphrasis* (which is by far the less studied among these three poems).⁵

The first step to introduce the comparative analysis proposed in this paper is a brief overview of the theoretical framework elaborated in scholarly literature to explain the trend of paraphrases in late antique and Byzantine culture, in order to figure out how this theory can relate to the two selected metrical rewritings.

The comprehensive study carried out by Michael Roberts remains pioneering to investigate the late antique paraphrases. In particular, he has inscribed the phenomenon of late antique literary rewritings in the broader concept of literary imitation, which can be furthermore articulated into abbreviation, transposition and amplification.⁶

In addition to the concept of imitation, the concept of appropriation is suitable to the study of paraphrases as well. Jeffrey Schnapp has applied this notion to the Latin

⁴ Besides the systematic study carried out by Roberts (1985), it is remarkable that Nazzaro (2006) 438–439 has strongly pointed out that it is methodologically acceptable to speak of “Parafrasi biblica e agiografica” as a literary genre.

⁵ For a detailed overview of paraphrases belonging to late antique Greek literature, see Agosti (2001) *passim*.

⁶ Roberts (1985) 3.

centos,⁷ and it can certainly be a valuable concept to read the late antique and Byzantine paraphrases as well. Paraphrases are in fact a form of appropriation of earlier texts, or even an extreme form of appropriation, by which the original texts are somehow replaced by a new one. The paraphrast imitates a source text, appropriates its content and focuses on how this content can be expressed in a more fruitful –or appealing– way to his readers.

This methodological introduction needs to be accompanied by a terminological discussion that relates to how these poems were labelled in their transmission, and especially to the difference between *paraphrasis* and *metaphrasis*. A reading of some relevant sources shows that the first definition of *metaphrasis* is to be found in the work of a ninth-century author, John of Sardis, who essentially proposed an equivalence between the two terms:

παράφρασις δέ ἐστιν ἐρμηνείας ἀλλοίωσις τὴν αὐτὴν διάνοιαν φυλάττουσα· τὸ αὐτὸ δὲ καὶ μετὰφρασις προσαγορεύεται· δεῖ γὰρ ἡμᾶς οὕτω ταύτην προφέρειν, οὔτε τοῦ λεχθέντος ἢ πραχθέντος ἀφισταμένους οὔτε ἐπ’ αὐτῶν ἀκριβῶς τῶν λέξεων μένοντας.⁸

“Paraphrase is the alteration of expression preserving the same meaning; the same thing is also *metaphrasis*; for we must articulate the meaning in such a way, so that we neither depart from what was said or done, nor retain precisely the same words”.⁹

A more articulated and complex explanation is expressed in a famous definition that many scholars quote as a standard reference, an interpolate passage by Pseudo-George Choeroboscus (a ninth-century rhetor), who sets the difference between *paraphrasis* and *metaphrasis* in the number of words used by the compiler:

διαφέρει δὲ φράσις, περίφρασις, μετὰφρασις, ἔκφρασις, ἀντίφρασις καὶ σύμφρασις. (...) μετὰφρασις δὲ ἡ ἐναλλαγὴ τῶν λέξεων κατὰ τὸ ποσὸν ἢ πλείονων ἢ ἐλαττόνων μετὰ ῥητορικοῦ κάλλους γινομένη, ὡς ὁ Μεταφραστής ἡμῖν δείκνυσιν ἐν ταῖς Μεταφράσεσι· παράφρασις δὲ ἡ ἐναλλαγὴ τῶν λέξεων κατὰ τὸ ποσὸν τῶν αὐτῶν, ὡς τὸ μῆνιν αἶδε θεά, παραφράζων εἶπε, τὴν ὀργὴν εἶπε ὦ Μοῦσα.¹⁰

“There is a distinction between phrasis, periphrasis, metaphrasis, ekphrasis, antiphrasis, and symphrasis. (...) metaphrasis is the alteration in diction in terms of quantity (using either more or fewer words) along with rhetorical beauty, as Metaphrastes shows us in his Metaphrases; paraphrasis is alteration in diction but using the same number of words, such as in paraphrasing “Goddess, sing me the anger” someone said “Muse, tell me the rage”.¹¹

⁷ Schnapp (1992) 100. He adopts the concept of *détournement*, as a process of “appropriating pre-existing artifacts and critically deflecting and historicizing their meanings without effacing them”.

⁸ John of Sardis, *Commentary on Aphthonios’ Progymnasmata*, 64.23–65.5.

⁹ Transl. Resh (2015) 757.

¹⁰ George Choeroboscus (?), *Περὶ τρόπων ποιητικῶν*, 14.

¹¹ Transl. Resh (2015) 779.

Juan Signes Codoñer has extensively studied the meaning of the words *metaphrasis* and *paraphrasis* in Byzantine sources¹², coming to the interesting conclusion that, among many possible ways to perceive a rewriting, the shift to a new literary genre was mostly connected with *metaphrasis* rather than with *paraphrasis*.

The manuscript evidence, in addition, shows that Byzantine scribes used much more often the label *metaphrasis* than *paraphrasis*, so that the first word became in Byzantine literature a technical term to design rewritings of hagiographical texts. A metaphrastic process is normally connected, in the perceptions of Byzantines, with a stylistic improvement and higher linguistic choices.¹³ The manuscript tradition of the two poems that are the object of the present paper, in particular, confirms that the word *metaphrasis* is the designed term used by the scribes to indicate such rewritings.¹⁴

Pseudo-Apollinaris of Laodicea and Manuel Philes: from Late Antiquity to Byzantium

The first metaphrasis that we take into account, chronologically, is the anonymous one also known as the “Homeric Psalter” attributed by the manuscript tradition to Apollinaris of Laodicea.¹⁵ This poem totals more than 5300 hexameters and consists of a poetic translation of each of the Psalms, which are accompanied by one or more metrical titles.¹⁶ The *metaphrasis* is introduced by a prologue of 110 dactylic hexameters.¹⁷ This metrical preface is labelled as *Protheoria* and gives interesting information about the historical context in which the poem was possibly created as well as about the intellectual motivations that guided the paraphrast in the composition of the *metaphrasis*.¹⁸ The programmatic value of the *Protheoria* is particularly evident in a passage which testifies the poet’s awareness of the poetic nature of the Psalms and justifies the composition of such a poem:

¹² See Signes Codoñer (2014) 76–83.

¹³ See Demoen (2004) 172 and Resh (2015) 787.

¹⁴ For Pseudo-Apollinaris, see Ludwich (1912) 8: “Ἀπολινάρῳ μεταφράσις τοῦ Ψαλτῆρος”. For Philes, see Vaticanus graecus 952 (first half of the XV century), f. 34r: “Μανουὴλ τοῦ Φιλῆ μετάφρασις τῶν ψαλμῶν ργ', γ', λζ', ξβ' ρβ', ν' διὰ στίχων πολιτικῶν”; Lond. Add. 17473 (a. 1423–1437), f. 166r: “Ψαλτήριον τερπνόν, εἰς Θεὸν μέλος· μετεφράσθη διὰ στίχων πολιτικῶν παρὰ τοῦ σοφωτάτου Φιλῆ κυροῦ Μανουὴλ ἐκείνου”.

¹⁵ See Golega (1960) *passim*. The only complete available critical edition is the Teubner one by Ludwich (1912). Gonnelli (1987) published a commented edition of Ps 21. A new edition is currently in preparation by Andrew Faulkner.

¹⁶ See Gonnelli (1987) 127–128. On the paratextual material related to the *Metaphrasis*, see Ricceri (forthcoming).

¹⁷ Annotated translations of this prologue are to be found in Golega (1960) 25–43 and Ugenti (2005) 208–215.

¹⁸ See Agosti (2001) 87–91 and Agosti (2009) 331.

οἷθ', ὅτι Δαυίδου μὲν ἀγακλέος ἦθεα μέτροις / Ἑβραίοις ἐκέκαστο (...) ἀτὰρ μετ' Ἀχαιίδα γῆρυν / αὖθις ἀμειβομένων κατὰ μὲν χάρις ἔφθιτο μέτρων. (...) ἡμεῖς δ', ὥς κ' ἐπέοικε, τὰ περ πρότεροι λίπον ἄνδρες / ἐκ μελέων, μέτροισιν ἐνήσομεν, εἰς δὲ μελιχρὴν / Δαυίδου βασιλῆος ἐγείρομεν αὖτις αἰοιδὴν / ἐξατόνοις ἐπέεσσιν.¹⁹

"You know, the glorious David's manners were adorned with Hebrew meters (...) but, once they were translated into Greek, the grace of meter was lost. (...) But, as it is convenient, we will put in verse the melodies that the men of former times left to us, and we reawaken again the sweet song of David the king in hexameters".²⁰

After the flourishing of late antique poetic paraphrases, in middle and late Byzantine literature the trend of biblical paraphrases declined and, as a consequence, biblical epos was no longer as widespread as in Late Antiquity. However, a remarkable case of metrical *metaphrasis* of a biblical text in middle Byzantine literature is the *Metaphrasis of the Odes* in dodecasyllables written by John Geometres (dated to the second half of the X century).²¹ This poem shares a common manuscript tradition with the Pseudo-Apollinaris' *Metaphrasis*, as the Odes follow the Psalms in the actual biblical transmission.²² Possibly, John Geometres is also the author of a metrical rewriting of the *Life* of St. Panteleemon, which is one of the few examples of Byzantine metrical hagiography.²³ Besides this *Life* written by Geometres, a number of metrical prefaces to hagiographical texts are preserved, and there is evidence that they were meant to be performed orally.²⁴

While metrical paraphrases were not widespread, in middle and late Byzantine religious literature the rewriting of hagiographical texts was a common practice, starting from the most famous and productive rewriter, the tenth-century compiler Symeon Metaphrastes, who promoted a comprehensive rewriting of the menologion.²⁵ In the massive corpus of hagiographical texts to be found in Byzantine literature, however, metrical works seem to be "a matter of individual and unsystematic efforts, which, as a result, convey an impression of fragmentation".²⁶

¹⁹ Pseudo-Apollinaris of Laodicea, *Metaphrasis Psalmorum, Protheoria*, 15–16, 18–19, 29–32.

²⁰ Translation by the author.

²¹ John Geometres' paraphrase of the Odes has been edited by De Groote (2004) *passim*. It is also noteworthy that a paraphrase of this *metaphrasis* (written in dodecasyllables as well, also published by De Groote (2002–2003) *passim*) was composed at a later stage and is preserved in a sixteenth-century manuscript.

²² De Groote (2004) 378.

²³ See Demoen (2004) *passim*.

²⁴ See Antonopoulou (2010) *passim*.

²⁵ For a systematic study of this important figure and relevant bibliography, see Høgel (2002) *passim*.

²⁶ See Efthymiadis (2014) 172. Antonopoulou (2017) has recently published a poetic corpus attributed to Merkourios the Grammarian (to be dated to the early Palaeologan period), which includes two hagiographical poems that are in fact paraphrases of the respective standard texts by Symeon Metaphrastes, and represent therefore the result of an interesting process of double rewriting.

The second *metaphrasis* that we examine is, therefore, quite exceptional in its time as a versified rewriting. It is attributed to one of the most prominent poets of the Palaeologan period, Manuel Philes. We do not know much of his life, besides some elements that we can infer from his own poems and this central literary figure has only recently begun to receive scholarly attention.²⁷ He lived between the last quarter of the XIII century and the first half of the XIV century and served as a court poet. Under his name a conspicuous poetic corpus (about 30000 lines) is transmitted, whereas there is very little evidence of prose production written by him.²⁸ He was mostly active as a poet on commission and his works encompass several poetic genres, which include encomiastic poems, didactic poems, epigrams on various topics, religious poems, verse letters, as well as a number of *metaphraseis*.²⁹ The vast majority of his poems are written either in dodecasyllable, which was by all means the most common metrical form for Byzantine epigrams, being the rest composed in political verse.³⁰

The *Metaphrasis of the Psalms* by Manuel Philes is a long poem of more than 3600 lines. Its accessibility is still affected by the lack of a full edition, as the only editor of this *metaphrasis*, Stickler only provides the text of a relatively small group of Psalms and some 3000 lines are still unpublished.³¹ The manuscript tradition of this rewriting is not ample, as the most extensive version of the text is transmitted only in the Vaticanus graecus 16, dating to the XIV century, whereas more limited selection of metaphrastic Psalms are preserved in six more manuscripts.³² Some of the Psalms are translated into political verse in two different versions, independent but both to be attributed to the same author.³³

Unlike the Pseudo-Apollinaris' *Metaphrasis*, Philes' work is not accompanied by any programmatic prologue that gives a clue about the scope of the work. Philes was very likely to be willing to convert the biblical text into a poem which could indulge

27 A detailed description of his life and works is to be found in Stickler (1992) 10–36. Bazzani (2013) has recently drawn attention to the literary qualities and the intellectual meaning of Philes' compositions, which, as she remarks, still deserve a deeper investigation. See Rhoby (2019) 276–284 for a general overview of Philes' abundant production.

28 The largest edition of Philes' poems is the one by Miller (1855–1857). On the *Theoria*, the only extant work in prose composed by Philes, see Stickler (1992) 27. I am grateful to Anna Gioffreda for drawing my attention to this work.

29 A list of manuscripts which transmit *metaphraseis* of liturgical texts under Philes' name is provided by Kotzabassi (1995) *passim*.

30 On the origin and features of this important Byzantine metrical scheme, see Jeffreys (1974) *passim*.

31 Ps. 3; 5; 32 (A-B); 37; 46 (A-B); 47 (A-B); 50; 62; 102; 103 (A-B). A new comprehensive edition of the *Metaphrasis of the Psalms* by Philes is foreseen in the context of a research project that is being carried out by Anna Gioffreda at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna (see *supra*, n. 1).

32 Provisional list drawn from Stickler (1992) 169 and from the Pinakes database (<http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/oeuvre/11815/> last accessed 10/02/2020).

33 See Stickler (1992) 126. Philes adopts the same techniques of double composition also in his epigrammatic poetry (Stickler (1992) 127).

the contemporary literary taste. It seems reasonable to suppose a didactic purpose for such a rewriting. In Byzantine poetry, moreover, the use of the political verse was strongly connected over the centuries with a didactic intention, as, for instance, is shown by the choice of Michael Psellos, who already in the XI century used the decapentasyllable for his didactic poems.³⁴

Features and adaptation techniques of the two paraphrases

A comparative analysis of the two paraphrases can shed light on the appreciation of the Psalms in two different historical contexts. These two texts, whose investigation still lacks some philological work, share remarkable affinities, as they are both versified rewritings of the same literary source and they are both faithful to the original text (although, of course, we cannot have a clear view of the exact text the two authors used as their hypotext).

The chronological boundaries seem to play a little role, if two different paraphrases of the same texts were written in very different periods, given the immense popularity of the Psalms. However, some major dissimilarities cannot be overlooked.

First, the metre that is used by the two metaphrasts is different, the former using the dactylic hexameter, the latter versifying the Psalms in political verse. This obvious discrepancy is worth to be mentioned because it points to the cultural context which the two *metaphraseis* were produced and underlines a fundamental difference of scope of the two poems. The dactylic hexameter is a recognizable mark of the most refined late antique Christian poetry and it immediately recalls the classical tradition. Manuel Philes, conversely, did not attempt to classicize his *metaphrasis*. He used the decapentasyllable, which is one of the two typical Byzantine metres together with the dodecasyllable, and adapted the biblical text to the perception of his own time.

The most striking literary feature of the late antique *metaphrasis* is the pervasive use of Homeric language. Actually, this poem has often been criticized as only scarce traces of interpretation or originality might be found.³⁵ Although this severe judgement should be mitigated³⁶. The, a modern reader can be disappointed indeed, but in the eye of a late antique paraphrast (and of his addressees) the adherence both to the biblical text and to the Homeric style was probably a sign of a successful

³⁴ Significantly, Psellos' *Poem 1 De inscriptionibus Psalmorum* (Westerink (1992) 1–13) is also written in decapentasyllables, as well as the two pseudo-Psellian poems 53 *Introductio in Psalmos* (Westerink (1992) 302–327) and 54 *Commentatius in Psalmos* (Westerink (1992) 327–390).

³⁵ See Gonnelli 1987 (54). On the *ad verbum* technique used by Pseudo-Apollinaris, see also Agosti/Gonnelli (1995) 364 and Faulkner (2014) 205.

³⁶ For an analysis of the aesthetic and exegetical merits of the *Metaphrasis*, see Faulkner (2019) 216–218.

rewriting. The words of the *Protheoria* were fulfilled: the grace of the Hebrew poetry (v. 19: χάρις μέτρων) was restored thanks to the epic language and metre. Manuel Philes was generally less concerned with the update of the vocabulary: he often stuck to the biblical lexicon, so that we get the impression that his *metaphrasis* is even more literal than the late antique one.

When approaching metaphrastic texts, we should bear in mind that a metaphrasis is either an elaboration or a simplification of the hypotext³⁷. The translational techniques of the two compilers can be investigated in the light of the triad connected to the literary theory of imitation, abbreviation, transposition and amplification.³⁸ The first of the three concepts, namely abbreviation, is generally not relevant to the two *metaphraseis*, as the rewriters tended not to skip any biblical word. Both poets use the amplification as a mean to fit the chosen metre, although in different ways. Pseudo-Apollinaris introduced Homeric expressions (or, more generally, poetic words) in his verses, whereas Philes relied on the typically Byzantine habit to include glossae and comments in the text and used synonyms next to the biblical words, both to fill the metrical structure and to insert new words that point to an interpretative activity of the poet.

All in all, one can cautiously state that the late antique *metaphrasis* is closer to what Høgel, speaking of Symeon Metaphrastes and using Jakobson's terminology, calls an "intra-lingual translation", as the new text keeps the content of the source one but is completely reshaped.³⁹ Manuel Philes, on the contrary, operated a metaphrastic process by means of systematic transpositions, as parts of the speech change their sequence for metrical reasons, as well as for exegetical purposes.

A close reading of a few brief passages taken from the Psalms, along with their two metrical rewritings, is helpful to detect some of the poetic strategies put in use by the two paraphrasts. Even if they chose a different style and used a partially different translational technique, they both perceived and appreciated the intrinsic poetic nature of the Psalms.

Ps. 32, 1–2

1 Ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, δίκαιοι, ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ·
τοῖς εὐθέσι πρέπει αἴνεσις.
2 ἔξομολογεῖσθε τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν κιθάρᾳ,
ἐν ψαλτηρίῳ δεκαχόρδῳ ψάλατε αὐτῷ.

³⁷ See Hinterberger (2014) 34.

³⁸ See *supra*, 224–226.

³⁹ See Høgel (2014) 182; Faulkner (2014) 196.

“Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous;
Praise befits the upright.
Acknowledge the Lord with a lyre;
With a harp of ten strings make music to him”.⁴⁰

Pseudo-Apollinaris, Ps. 32.1 – 4

1 Χαίρετε μοι βασιλῆι, δίκης ὑποφῆτορες ἄνδρες·
ἀνδράσιν ἰθυνόοις μεταπρέπει ἄσπετος αἶνος.
2 μέλψατέ μοι ζῶντα θεὸν φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ,
μέλψατέ οἱ δεκάδεσσι μέλος νευρῆσιν ἰέντες·

Manuel Philes, Ps. 32 version A.1 – 4

1 Ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, δίκαιοι, σκιρτῶντες ἐν κυρίῳ·
τοῖς γὰρ εὐθέσι καὶ χρηστοῖς αἴνεσις πᾶσι πρέπει.
2 ἐν δὲ κιθάρᾳ μουσικῇ τοῦτον ὕμνολογεῖτε
καὶ δεκαχόρδῳ ψάλλατε πρὸς τοῦτον ψαλτηρίῳ.

In this passage it is evident that both Pseudo-Apollinaris and Philes composed one line of poetry per each *stichos* of the Bible. Going deeper into each of the two versions, one may also notice that Pseudo-Apollinaris marked each verse with Homeric words or with Homeric forms. In the first verse, he addressed the righteous (δίκαιοι) using the periphrasis δίκης ὑποφῆτορες ἄνδρες. Homer (*Il.* XVI.23) used the form ὑποφῆτης, whereas here the paraphrast might also have had another epic poet in mind, Apollonius Rhodius, who at the beginning of his epic poem used the same word with reference to the Muses: I,22: Μοῦσαι δ' ὑποφῆτορες εἶεν αἰοιδῆς (“may the Muses be the inspirers of my song”). Moreover, ὑποφῆτωρ is also a Nonnian word (*Par.* V.156 – 158: ἐνὶ γραφίδεσσι δὲ κεῖναι / μαρτυρίην βοῶωσιν ἐμὴν ὑποφῆτορι μῦθῳ / ἄθανάτῳ σάλπιγγι). In fact, the *Metaphrasis of the Psalms* shares several unusual terms with Nonnus’ works, and this argument has also been used as a proof that the Homeric Psalter must be dated to the V century.⁴¹ The compiler of the late antique *Metaphrasis* heavily drew from a Homer-inspired language, but he could also rely on a multifaceted poetic language that encompassed a variety of classical sources.⁴²

The close of the following verse also has a clear Homeric inspiration: *Il.* IX.186 τὸν δ' εὖρον φρένα τερπόμενον φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ; *Il.* XVIII.569 τοῖσιν δ' ἐν μέσσοισι πάϊς φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ. In the first of the two passages of the *Iliad* where the same words occur, the expression “with a clear-toned lyre” refers to Achilles who is playing the lyre. Interestingly enough, the addressees are depicted as a new Achilles, or, in other words, there is a Christianization of the model.⁴³

Reading Philes’ adaptation of the same passage, one immediately notices that every line of poetry reproduces the words of the Septuagint (and the same holds generally true for the whole poem). The parallel reading of Philes’ verses and their

⁴⁰ Transl. Pietersma (2000) 562.

⁴¹ On the chronological relationship between Nonnus and the author of the Homeric Psalter, see De Stefani (2008) 5.

⁴² A survey of the poetic inspiration provided by Callimachus to our anonymous paraphrast is offered in Gonnelli (1988) *passim*.

⁴³ The ending “φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ” occurs also in *Protheoria*, 17. For a comment on this passage, see Ugenti (2007) 212.

source text results in a nearly perfect coincidence, as for the vocabulary. In this passage, the political verse seems to be the main poetic mark of his paraphrase.

Ps. 46, 6–8

6 ἀνέβη ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἀλαλαγμῷ,
κύριος ἐν φωνῇ σάλπιγγος.
7 ψάλατε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, ψάλατε,
ψάλατε τῷ βασιλεῖ ἡμῶν, ψάλατε,
8 ὅτι βασιλεὺς πάσης τῆς γῆς ὁ θεός,
ψάλατε συνετῶς.

“God went up with shouting,
the Lord with a sound of a trumpet.
Make music to our God, make music:
make music to our King, make music.
Because he is king of all the earth:
make music with understanding”.⁴⁴

Pseudo-Apollinaris, *Ps. 46.8–14*

6 Εἰσανόρουσε θεὸς βοῶν ἐπινίκιον οἶμην,
εὐκελάδου σάλπιγγος ἀνέδραμε κοίρανος ἡχῆ.
7 ἡμέτερον φόρμιγγι θεὸν φορμίζετ' αἰοδαῖς,
ἡμέτερον βασιλῆα σοφαῖς ἀναμέλψατε μολπαῖς.
8 οὐνεκα κοιρανέει πάσης θεὸς ἄφθιτος αἴης,
μέλψατέ μοι πινυτῇ κραδίῃ καὶ ἐχέφρονι θυμῷ.

Manuel Philes, *Ps. 46 version A.8–11*

6 ἐν ᾠσμασιν ἀλαλαγμῶν ὁ πλαστουργὸς ἀνέβη,
ὁ κύριος ἐν σάλπιγγι φωνούσῃ κατακράτος.
7 ψάλατε δὴ τῷ πλαστουργῷ, ψάλατε δὴ τῷ κτίστῃ
ψάλατε δὴ τῷ βασιλεῖ, ψάλατε τῷ δεσπότῃ,
8 ψάλατε δὴ καὶ συνετῶς πάσης τῆς γῆς κρατοῦντι.

It is striking how in verse 7 of the Septuagint the beginning and the ending of the two *stichoi* are marked by the anaphora and the epistrophe of the exhortation ψάλατε. The two rewriters dealt with this poetic feature in a different way.

Pseudo-Apollinaris employed an unmistakable Homeric style. He substituted the verb ψάλλω with φορμίζω and μέλπω and in doing so he strongly relied on a passage of the *Odyssey*:

μετὰ δέ σφιν ἐμέλπετο θεῖος αἰοιδὸς
φορμίζων· δοῖω δὲ κυβιστητῆρε κατ' αὐτοὺς
μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες ἐδίνεον κατὰ μέσσους.⁴⁵

“There was a bard also to sing (ἐμέλπετο) to them and play his lyre (φορμίζω), while two tumblers went about performing (μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες) in the midst of them when the man struck up with his tune”.⁴⁶

It is interesting to notice how the late antique metaphrast recognized the poetic character of the biblical pericope and kept it by using a different poetic model, which he drew from a non-Christian source.

⁴⁴ Transl. Pietersma (2000) 570.

⁴⁵ Hom. *Od.* IV.17–19.

⁴⁶ Transl. S. Butler.

Manuel Philes, as already pointed out, used also in this passage an *ad verbum* technique and was faithful to the structure of verse 7 of the Psalm. His rewriting of the passage recalls indeed the repetition of ψάλατε and each of the two political verses is articulated in two cola each, as the poet recurred to the synonymic amplification to accommodate the metrical pattern (7 ψάλατε δὴ τῷ πλαστουργῷ, ψάλατε δὴ τῷ κτίστῃ / ψάλατε δὴ τῷ βασιλεῖ, ψάλατε τῷ δεσπότῃ).

Ps. 102, 20–22

20 εὐλογεῖτε τὸν κύριον, πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ,
δυνατοὶ ἰσχύι ποιοῦντες τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ
τοῦ ἀκοῦσαι τῆς φωνῆς τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ·
21 εὐλογεῖτε τὸν κύριον, πᾶσαι αἱ δυνάμεις αὐτοῦ,
λειτουργοὶ αὐτοῦ ποιοῦντες τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ·
22 εὐλογεῖτε τὸν κύριον, πάντα τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ
ἐν παντί τόπῳ τῆς δεσποτείας αὐτοῦ·
εὐλόγει, ἡ ψυχὴ μου, τὸν κύριον.

“Bless the Lord, O all you, his angels,
powerful in strength doing his bidding,
to obey the voice of his words.
Bless the Lord, O all his hosts,
his ministers doing his will.
Bless the Lord, all his works
in every place of his dominion.
Bless the Lord, O my soul”.⁴⁷

Pseudo-Apollinaris, *Ps. 102.38–44*

20 ἄγγελοι αἰγλήεντες, ὁμοῦ κελαδήσατ'
ἄνακτα,
ἄλκιμοι, οἷσι μήμηλεν ἐγνημοσύνη βασιλῆος.
21 ἀλκαὶ παντοδαπαί, κελαδήσατε
παμβασιλῆα,
οἷς τ' οὐσας μεμέλῃται ἐπ' ἀθανάτησιν ἀνωγαῖς.
22 ἔργα πολυκλήεντα θεοῦ, κελαδήσατ'
ἄνακτα,
κοιρανίσιν δὲ κάρτος ἀεὶ τετανυσμένον ἴσχει·
θυμέ, τεδὸν βασιλῆα διαμπερὲς αἰνετὰ μέλπε.

Manuel Philes, *Ps. 102.36–43*

20 ὕμνεῖτε τὸν φιλόανθρωπον, αἱ τῶν ἀγγέλων
φύσεις,
αἱ δυναταὶ πρὸς τὸ πληροῦν τὰς παρ' αὐτοῦ
προστάξεις
καὶ τῆς φωνῆς τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ συνεῖναι λεγομένων·
21 ὕμνεῖτε τὸν ὑψίθρονον, αἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ δυνάμεις,
οἱ λειτουργοὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν ἐργάται θελημάτων·
22 ὕμνεῖτε τὸν φιλόανθρωπον, τὰ παρ' αὐτοῦ
πρακτέα,
ἐν δὲ παντὶ τῷ τῆς αὐτοῦ κυριαρχίας τόπῳ·
εὐλόγει μεγαλύνουσα, ψυχὴ μου, τὸν δεσπότην.

This passage is the conclusion of Psalm 102. Just as in the previous example, the text of the Septuagint has in these verses a harmonious and well-balanced structure, given by the anaphora of the exhortation to praise the Lord (εὐλογεῖτε τὸν κύριον) at the beginning of verse 20, 21 and 22 and by the reference to God by means of the genitive αὐτοῦ. Moreover, the exhortation is followed by vocatives that are further specified in the following *stichoi*.

Pseudo-Apollinaris inverted the order of the verbs and the vocatives, which open the verses in his version. Conversely, Manuel Philes kept the same order of a verb followed by a vocative. The repetitiveness of the αὐτοῦ of the biblical text is here replaced by a series of hyperbatons in each line⁴⁸.

In this case both the rewriters perceived the poetic nature of the model and challenged the source text achieving two different results, and giving life to an interesting form of creative appropriation of the biblical text.

Conclusions

The analysis of some of the literary features of the two *metaphraseis* of the Psalms has highlighted interesting similarities as well as some fundamental differences and has shed light on the reception of the Septuagint text in different periods. Both Pseudo-Apollinaris and Manuel Philes clearly aimed at providing their readers with a faithful rewriting of the biblical text. Their *metaphraseis* do not completely lack any exegetical intent but their texts are not primarily focused on interpretation and explanation of the Psalms.⁴⁹

On the one hand, the hexametric *metaphrasis* conveys some typical elements of late antique Christian poetry. The rewriter felt that something (i.e. the poetic nature of the Psalms) was lost and he wanted to restore it. His work contributed to the establishment of a highbrow poetry with Christian content, which could benefit from the use of the Homeric metre and the Homeric language. The late antique *metaphrasis* possibly played a role in the process that led to the creation of a Christian literary tradition and was pursued by means of a twofold appropriation: of Homer (and in general of the pagan culture) and of the Bible.

On the other hand, Manuel Philes' *Metaphrasis* of the Psalms is situated in Late Byzantine literature and is grounded in a well-established, thousand-year old tradition of Christian poetry. Psalmody (that is the recitation of the Psalms) was part of the daily life of all Byzantines. Philes did not feel the need to radically alter the biblical vocabulary, but he was mainly concerned with the stylistic alteration of his source text in order to fit the chosen metrical pattern. It has been calculated that in the Palaeologan period around 80% of hagiographical texts were the fruit of a metaphrastic rewriting.⁵⁰ Manuel Philes' metaphrastic effort tied in with this tenden-

⁴⁸ The introduction of hyperbatons is a recurrent feature in metaphrastic rewritings (see Hinterberger (2014) 46)

⁴⁹ It is certainly convenient to use the reference to exegesis with some caution and to remember what Faulkner has stated talking about Nonnus and the author of the *Metaphrasis*: “[they] interpret their source texts in ways that effectively refine the aesthetics and emphasis of their versions, whether or not theological exegesis is at play” (Faulkner (2014) 197).

⁵⁰ See Talbot (1991) 16–17.

cy and added a rather unusual tile to the variegated mosaic of Byzantine prose *metaphrasis*.

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