ENRICO CERRONI

Against the Tomb Profaners: A Commentary on Gregory of Nazianzus *AP* 8.170[*]

1. Introduction

Gregory of Nazianzus' epigrammatic production has been at the centre of renewed scholarly interest in recent years. In the past, any attention paid to the eighth book of the *Palatine Anthology* was traditionally perfunctory, if not outright disdainful. A more complex attitude towards the book has developed among scholars recently, whereby the book is evaluated as a whole: a coherent collection of epigrams focusing on the theme of death and burial[1]. The frequent repetition of similar motifs has undoubtedly hampered the positive reception of the collection. However, this propensity for repetition can be explained by the work's moralising aim[2].

In addition to the contents, in particular the allusions to the funerary practices of the fourth century AD, the epigrams' classical inspiration also draws scholarly interest. The growing attention being paid to the author's compositional techniques

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[1] See S. GOLDHILL, E. GREENSMITH, "Gregory and the Poetics of Christian Death", *CCJ*, 2020, 29-69. As to Gregory's epigrammatic production, in general, see F. E. CONSOLINO, "Σοφίης ἀμφοτέρης πρύτανιν. Gli epigrammi funerari di Gregorio Nazianzeno (*AP* VIII)", *Athenaeum*, 65, 1987, 407-425; F. CONCA (intr. and notes), M. MARZI (transl.), *Antologia Palatina. Libri 8-11*, Torino, 2009, vol. 2; M. CORSANO, "Tymboruchia e 'leggi' in alcuni epigrammi di Gregorio di Nazianzo", *VetChrist*, 28, 1991, 169-180; R. PALLA, "Gli epigrammi di Gregorio Nazianzeno contro i violatori di tombe, I. Tra 'raccolte metriche' e 'raccolte tematiche'", in V. Zimmerl-Panagl (ed.), *Dulce Melos II. Akten des 5 Internationalen Symposiums: Lateinische und griechische Dichtung in Spätantike, Mittelalter und Neuzeit. Wien, 25-27 November 2010*, Pisa, 2015, pp. 33-46; M. YPSILANTI, "Epigrammatic Topoi, Christian Ideas and Real Events in Selected Epigrams of Gregory of Nazianzus for Nonna, Caesarius and Basil the Great", *RCCM*, 60:2, 2018, 435-458; CH. SIMELIDIS, "Gregory of Nazianzus and the Christian Epigram in the East", in Ch. Henriksén (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Epigram*, Hoboken, 2019, pp. 633-648.

[2] CH. SIMELIDIS, op. cit., 2019, p. 645, suggests that it "can certainly be understood on the basis of Gregory's personal sensitivities, and perhaps even appreciated as having didactic purposes as well as offering a variety of models for Christian epitaphs".

Enrico Cerroni • Sapienza Università di Roma / Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara, enrico.cerroni@yahoo.it

has made it increasingly clear that Gregory was more classicizing in his epigrams than he was in the rest of his poetry[3].

In this article, I intend to analyse hexametric epigram *AP* 8.170, which has been attributed to Gregory, although some questions about its authorship have been raised by different scholars, as we shall see. The epigram deals with a traditional *topos*, on which Gregory often focused: the oath against the tomb profaners (ἀραὶ ἐπιτύμβιοι)[4]. This practice, τυμβωρυχία, had a long history in Greece and was documented by several authors, including Cicero, who described a law by Solon against sepulchre violators (*Leg.* 2.64 = fr. 72a [36] Ruschenbusch). During the imperial age, especially from the third century AD onward, cases of profanation of tombs increased significantly[5].

In this epigram, as we shall see, the exact type of desecration involved, whether of pagan tombs by Christians or vice versa, has long been a matter of perplexity. Below, I offer the text with a critical apparatus[6], a philological and linguistic commentary, and a general interpretation.

> Τρισθανέες, πρῶτον μὲν ἐμίξατε σώματ' ἀνάγνων
> ἀθλοφόροις, τύμβοι δὲ θυηπόλον ἀμφὶς ἔχουσι·
> δεύτερον αὖτε τάφους τοὺς μὲν διεπέρσατ' ἀθέσμως

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3 See V. Vᴇʀᴛᴏᴜᴅᴀᴋɪs, Το όγδοο βιβλίο της Παλατινής Ανθολογίας: Μια μελέτη των επιγραμμάτων του Γρηγορίου του Ναζιανζηνού, Athens, 2011, pp. 134-197. For Gregory's debt to the preceding literary tradition, see T. Kᴜʜɴ-Tʀᴇɪᴄʜᴇʟ, "Poetological Name-Dropping: Explicit References to Poets and Genres in Gregory Nazianzen's Poems", in F. Hadjittofi, A. Lefteratou (edd.), *The Genres of Late-Antique Christian Poetry*, Berlin / Boston, 2020, pp. 93-108. See also B. Wʏss, "Gregor von Nazianz: Ein griechisch-christlicher Dichter des 4. Jahrhunderts", *MH*, 6, 1949, 177-210, and K. Dᴇᴍᴏᴇɴ, "The Attitude towards Greek Poetry in the Verse of Gregory Nazianzen", in J. Den Boeft, A. Hilhorst (edd.), *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, Leiden / New York / Köln, 1993, pp. 235-252.

4 It is well known that the many epigrams on τυμβωρύχοι at the end of Book 8 are not proper epitaphs: "in most of them, profanation of the tomb is featured as something which has already occurred. The dead, or the tomb itself, or an occasional spectator is given voice to express distress, bitterness, disillusion for what had happened, and violation of the grave becomes the starting point for formulating more general reflections upon life, death, human nature, human and divine justice, and so on" (L. Fʟᴏʀɪᴅɪ, "The Epigrams of Gregory of Nazianzus Against Tomb Desecrators and Their Epigraphic Background", *Mnemosyne*, 66, 2013, 55-81, in particular p. 72). See also Cʜ. Sɪᴍᴇʟɪᴅɪs, op. cit., 2019, pp. 640-641, who points out that "the motif is otherwise unattested in the *Palatine Anthology*".

5 L. Fʟᴏʀɪᴅɪ, loc. cit., 58. On the laws concerning tomb profanation, A. D. Nᴏᴄᴋ, "Tomb violations and pontifical laws", in Z. Stewart (ed.), *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World. Selected and Edited, with an Introduction, Bibliography of Nock's writings, and Indexes*, Oxford, 1986², vol. 2, pp. 527-533. On the curses against the profaners of graves found in many epitaphs across Asia Minor, see also J. H. M. Sᴛʀᴜʙʙᴇ, *Arai Epitumbioi: Imprecations Against Desecrators of the Grave in the Greek Epigraphs of Asia Minor: A Catalogue*, Bonn, 1997.

6 *Conspectus siglorum*. P = *Palatinus gr.* 23 (ninth-tenth cent.); codd. = reading found in all codices; cett. = reading found in all codices except P. Apart from this, the four most important manuscripts for reconstructing the text are L = *Laurentianus* 7.10 (eleventh cent.), Am = *Ambrosianus gr.* 433 (H 45 *Sup.*; tenth cent.), Pd = *Parisinus gr.* 991 (sixteenth cent.), Pe = *Parisinus gr.* 992 (fifteenth cent.). For further discussion of the manuscript tradition, see P. Wᴀʟᴛᴢ, *Anthologie grecque. Book 8*, Paris, 1944, vol. 6, pp. 3-10 and 32-33.

αὐτοὶ σήματ’ ἔχοντες ὁμοίια, τοὺς δ’ ἀπέδοσθε,
πολλάκι καὶ δὶς ἔκαστον· ὁ δὲ τρίτον, ἱεροσυλεῖς   5
μάρτυρας, οὓς φιλέεις. Σοδομίτιδες ἄξατε πηγαί.

2 ἀθλοφόροις codd. : τοῖς ὁσίοις Boivin || **4** αὐτοὶ σήματ’] αὐτοῖς εἴματ’ P : αὐτοὶ σήματ’
cett. || ἀπέδοσθε] ἀπέδοσθαι P : ἀπέδοσθε cett. || **5** δὶς] τρὶς codd. : δὶς Boivin || ὃ] ὁ
codd. : ὃ Boissonade || ἱεροσυλεῖς] ἱεροσύλοις codd. : ἱεροσυλεῖς Boivin || **6** οὓς codd. :
οἷς Desrousseaux || ἄξατε] εἴξατε codd. : ἄξατε Boissonade : ἴξατε Jacobs.

> Thrice worthy of death: first you laid beside the martyrs the bodies of impure
> men and the tombs contain the body of a priest. Secondly, you unlawfully
> destroyed some tombs, you who have tombs like them; and others you sold,
> often each tomb twice. Thirdly, you are guilty of sacrilege against those martyrs
> whom you love. Spring forth, founts of Sodom![7]

French scholar Mabillon published the epigram in the updated second
edition of the booklet *Eusebii Romani ad Theophilum Gallum epistula de cultu S.S.
ignotorum* in 1705. He reproduced the text he received from Jean Boivin, whose
doubts about the epigram's authorship he shared. In his *Iter italicum* Mabillon
had already documented the early Christians' habit of re-using pagan monuments
and inscriptions[8], as attested in this epigram; he was well aware that this custom
was not generally approved[9]. The Greek title of the Boivin-Mabillon edition was
also indicative of the more common interpretation: εἰς τοὺς ἀνορύττοντας τάφους
προφάσει μαρτύρων. The Ambrosian scholiast, on the other hand, introduced the
title κατὰ τυμβωρύχων.

Muratori reprinted Boivin's text under the same title, along with a few textual
notes and a lengthy disquisition about tomb desecration (*de Christianorum sepul-
chris*)[10]. Regarding the epigram's authorship, Boivin did not attribute it to Gregory of

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7   For an English translation, see W. R. Paton, *The Greek Anthology*, London / New York, 1919, p. 475;
     for a French translation, see P. Waltz, op. cit., p. 84; for a German translation, see H. Beckby,
     Anthologia graeca. Buch VII-VIII, München, 1965², p. 533; for an Italian translation, see F. M. Pontani,
     Antologia Palatina. Libri VII-VIII, Torino, 1979, vol. 2, p. 455, and F. Conca, M. Marzi, op. cit.,
     p. 107.
8   "Inter alia ibidem invenimus quaedam fragmenta marmorum, in quibus ex una parte inscriptiones
     paganorum erant, ex alia Christianorum. Quippe Christianis mos erat, ut e sepulchris gentilium
     lapides revellerent in suos usus: et relicta ex ea parte, quae interiora Christiani tumuli spectabat,
     profana inscriptione, alia in exteriori apponerent ritu Christiano. Eius facti exempla occurrunt in
     Roma subterranea, ut superius monuimus" (J. Mabillon, *Iter italicum litterarium annis 1685 et
     1686*, Lutetia Parisiorum, apud viduam Edmundi Martin, 1687, p. 136).
9   "Certe quod ex eorum monumentis lapides revellerent Christiani ad ornandos Martyrum
     tumulos, non omnibus probabatur. Huius rei argumentum nobis praebent anonymi cuiusdam
     poetae versus Graeci, quos vir humanissimus et eruditissimus Johannes Boivinus cum versione
     latina ex codice regio communicavit, scriptos in eos qui gentilium sepulchra effodiunt praetextu
     Martyrum saepeliendorum" (J. Mabillon, *Eusebii Romani ad Theophilum Gallum epistula de cultu
     S.S. Ignotorum*, Parisiis, apud Carolum Robustel, 1705, p. 32).
10 L. A. Muratori, *Anecdota graeca*, Padua, 1709, pp. 138-139 and pp. 266-268.

Nazianzus, and even the Italian philologist admitted that it did not reflect Gregory's usual elegance[11].

2. Commentary

The poem is cleverly constructed on a triadic schema. Gregory reproaches the tomb profaners three times, and wishes death upon them equally as many times, denouncing the gravity of their crime. In the first two verses the mixing of the bodies of the unbelievers (σώματ' ἀνάγνων) with those of the martyrs (ἀθλοφόροις) is recounted, lines 3-4 describe the devastation of tombs, often containing precious objects (σήματα), lines 4-5 depict the resale of looted objects, and finally, in the last two verses, we witness the sacrilege against the martyrs (ll. 5-6), along with the invocation of the descent of the Σοδομίτιδες πηγαί.

At the metric level, some of the hexameters are holodactylic (ll. 5 and 6), whereas line 4 has a spondee in the first position, and lines 1 and 2 have it in the second position[12]. The distribution of the trithemimeral caesura in ll. 1 and 2 highlights the words in the *incipits*. In addition, a masculine caesura is used in ll. 1, 2, 3, and 6, alongside a feminine one in ll. 4 and 5, and a bucolic diaeresis in l. 4.

l. 1 Τρισθανέες: nominative plural of the adjective τρισθανής, -ές, "deign of dying three times", a *hapax* only attested in Gregory. This is a vehement *incipit*, underlined by the caesura and striking in its originality, thanks to the neologism. Faithful to his *modus operandi* of *variatio in imitando*, Gregory recalled the Homeric δισθανής "twice dead" *hapax* in *Od.* 12.22, expressed by Circe to Odysseus and his companions, who had just returned from the νέκυια and were therefore paradoxically destined to die twice[13].

ἀνάγνων: The adjective ἄναγνος, "impure", is attested in literature going back to a lyric fragment by Lasus (*PMG* 1). It has a prevalent poetic quality, as it was

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11   "Et revera in iis frustra requiras consuetam Gregori nostri elegantiam" (L. A. MURATORI, op. cit., p. 138).

12   Gregory's favourite patterns of hexameters are *ddddd* (31.69%) and *sdddd* (19.20%); in this regard, see also G. AGOSTI, F. GONNELLI, "Materiali per la storia dell'esametro nei poeti cristiani greci", in M. Fantuzzi, R. Pretagostini (edd.), *Struttura e storia dell'esametro greco I*, Roma, 1995, pp. 289-434, in part. 372-375. As to his predilection for first foot spondees and bucolic caesura, see G. AGOSTI, F. GONNELLI, op. cit., p. 380.

13   Among neologisms with the prefix τρισ-, some were successful, such as τρισάθλιος "three times unhappy" from Sophocles onward; others were curiously destined to remain rare, such as the compound τρισαλιτήριος, "three times cursed", *dis legomenon* in Septuaginta (2 Macc. 8.34, 15.3 and Esther 8.12 p.). "The not so numerous adjectives compounded with the intensive τρίς and τρι- to be found in Greek literature previous to 2 *Maccabees* occur almost exclusively in poetry, especially in the comedies of Aristophanes and Menander. In prose we encounter a single adjective expressing a positive meaning, τρισάσμενος, *LSJ* 'thrice-pleased, most willing' in Xenophon (*An*. 3.2.24), and the negatively loaded τρισκακοδαίμων, *LSJ* 'thrice-unlucky' in Aeschines (1.59), τρισκατάρατος, 'thrice-accursed' in Demosthenes (25.82), and τρίπορνος, *LSJ* 'a whore in the third degree' in Theopompus (*FGrH* 2b, 115, fr. 253.7). In the *Septuagint*, the mother of the seven martyrs is characterized as τρισαθλία 'thrice-unhappy' in 4 *Macc* 16.6" (N. DOMAZAKIS, *The neologisms in 2*

used by a number of Greek authors (including Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Lycophron), with a notable concentration in the *Sibylline Oracles* (13 uses), and among Christian authors, such as Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Gregory of Nazianzus himself (12 times, 9 in poetry). In late antiquity, the adjective was given new meaning by Christians, especially in reference to those considered to be the quintessential "impure": pagans. In the *Sibylline Oracles* it constituted a convenient hexametric clause; Gregory, on the other hand, varied its use by extending it to other positions (e.g. *carm.* 2.2.7.222) and other metres, such as the trimetre (e.g. *carm.* 1.1.6.71)[14].

l. 2 **ἀθλοφόροις**: the ἀθλοφόροι, less frequently ἀεθλοφόροι (literally "those who bear away the prize"), are the martyrs in the Christian vocabulary, because they have earned their victory through the suffering of martyrdom[15]. The term has a non-linear history, because in archaic and classical literature it probably sounded poetic; after Homer (5 occurrences, always in relation to horses, e.g. in *Il.* 9.124), it is sporadically attested in prose and poetry until the Imperial Age. Its true recovery started with the acts of the martyrs and the literature of late antiquity. Gregory particularly liked this term (20 examples, e.g. in the epigrams: ἀθλο- in *AP* 8.102.2, 8.152.2, 8.167.6, 8.169.1, 8.175.3; ἀεθλο- in *AP* 8.118.2, 8.166.2). It was also used by Nonnus (9 times), before becoming very common in Byzantine literature. Regarding the distribution between the form ἀθλο- and ἀεθλο- for this noun, the former is predominant in Gregory's work (13.7), with usage depending on metrical need. As to the history of the text, it is worth remarking that Mabillon, instead of ἀθλοφόροις, printed τοῖς ὁσίοις, which was Boivin's reading. Unfortunately, it is not clear what this conjecture, which is not supported by the manuscripts, was based on[16].

θυηπόλον: θυηπόλος, "performer of sacrifices", "priest", attested from Aeschylus (*Pers.* 202) onward. According to Pollux (1.14, Bethe ποιητικώτερον γὰρ τὸ θυηπόλοι), this was a poetic word. Its meaning in this context is not entirely clear. Gregory reprimands the tomb profaners for mixing the bones of martyrs with the bodies of non-believers (ἀνάγνων) and adds that the tombs (of the unbelievers?) thus likely contain the remains of a Christian θυηπόλον[17]. In his *Oratio funebris*, sixteenth century theologian Pachomius Rhusanus provided us with a useful paraphrase (καὶ

Maccabees, diss. Lund, 2018, p. 239). Regarding the elative value of the prefix τρισ-, "very commonly employed in affective speech", H. Thesleff, *Studies on Intensification in Early and Classical Greek*, Helsingfors, 1954, p. 177.

14 Regarding the influence of the *Sibylline Oracles* on Gregory, see Ch. Simelidis, *Selected Poems of Gregory of Nazianzus: I.2.17; II. 1.10, 19, 32: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary*, Göttingen, 2009, p. 47. As to the relationship between oracular poetry and literature in Late Antiquity, see D. Gigli Piccardi, "Ancora su Nonno e la poesia oracolare", *Aitia*, 2, 2012. Consulted online on 21 May 2021: https://journals.openedition.org/aitia/486; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/aitia.486.

15 Martyrdom was often termed an ἀγών and martyrs were imagined as athletes. See also G. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford, s.u.

16 P. Waltz, op. cit.

17 On the subject of the mingling of Christians and pagans in the tombs, see also M. J. Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared Tombs?", *JECS*, 5:1, 1997, 37-59.

οὕτως οἱ τάφοι τῶν βεβήλων ἱερέα περιέχουσι "so the tombs of the pagans contain a priest")[18] that is consistent with this interpretation and with the scholion of the *Codex Ambrosianus*: τύμβοι δὲ βεβήλων θυοπόλον πολλάκις μέσον ἔχουσι κείμενον[19]. Boivin also followed this reading, translating: "sepulchra Profanorum Sacerdotem Christianum in medio stantem habent"[20]. It is hard to imagine that Gregory was referring to a pagan priest, as Eusebius did on one occasion when he alluded to a θυηπόλος (*Vit. Const.* 2.51). This was Boissonade's interpretation, who rendered it as *flaminem*[21], as well as that of some modern translators, such as Paton, Pontani, and Conca-Marzi, whereas Waltz prefers "un donneur d'encens".

ἀμφὶς ἔχουσι: Gregory makes occasional use of this expression (8 times: in this epigram as well as in *AP* 8.137.2, *carm.* 1.1.1.9, 2.1.1.28, 2.1.22.21, 2.1.48.2, 2.2.1.200 and 2.2.7.144), meaning περιέχω, "contain", according to Homeric use. Among other authors of the imperial age, Quintus of Smyrna only used it in 1.472, whereas the innovator Nonnus ignored it completely. The word ἀμφίς is an epic form of ἀμφί[22].

1. 3 αὖτε: "again", "furthermore", or "on the other hand", a typical Homeric and epic particle, preserved in Hellenistic and late antique hexametric poetry. It appears in the *Sibylline Oracles* (14 times), Quintus of Smyrna (28 times), Gregory of Nazianzus (20 times) and Eudocia (31 times), but cannot be found in Nonnus' hexameter.

διεπέρσατε: The aorist of διαπέρθω, "destroy", is also an epic form, and a refined one at that, since Homer used it in the *Odyssey* in the third-person singular διέπερσε (*Od.* 9.265) and in the first-person plural inside a formula subject to small variations (*Od.* 3.130; 11.533; 13.316). The word appears only three times in the *Iliad* (4.53; 4.55; 9.46), which is slightly more often than the simple verb πέρθω. Interestingly, the verb in the aorist was still used by Quintus of Smyrna (4 times), by Gregory himself (7 occurrences: e.g. in *carm.* 12.1.7.9) and in the *Metaphrasis psalmorum* (2.93.12, 2.106.33), but not by the innovator Nonnus[23]. For other uses in the epigrammatic context in Gregory's work, see *AP* 8.209 and 8.219. An indication of its lexical

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18 J. Karmires, "Ἀνέκδοτος ὁμιλία τοῦ Π. Ῥουσάνου", Θεολογία, 14, 1936, 33-41, in part. p. 35. On Pachomius Rhusanus (1508-1553), a theologian and popular educator who lived under Turkish rule, see also J. E. Goehring, "Pachomius Rhusanus", in *Religion Past and Present*, 2011. Consulted online on 21 May 2021: https://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_SIM_024309.

19 F. Jacobs, *Anthologia graeca ad fidem Codicis olim Palatini nunc Parisini ex Apographo Gothano edita*, Lipsiae, 1817, vol. 3, pp. 439-440.

20 J. Boivin in J. Mabillon, op. cit., 1705, p. 33.

21 J. F. Boissonade, S. Chardon de la Rochette et alii, *Epigrammatum Anthologia Palatina, cum Planudeis et appendice nova epigrammatum veterum ex libris et marmoribus ductorum: graece et latine*, Parisiis, 1864, p. 556.

22 P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, Paris, 1969-1980, 2 vols, s.u.

23 On the renewal of epic language in Nonnus, see also G. D'Ippolito, "Nonnus' Conventional Formulaic Style", in D. Accorinti (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Nonnus of Panopolis*, Leiden, 2016, pp. 372-401. Changes in the hexameter, which had stylistic and lexical consequences, are addressed in the classic works of M. Whitby, "From Moschus to Nonnus: The Evolution of the Nonnian Style", in N. Hopkinson (ed.), *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus*, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 99-155, and G. Agosti, F. Gonnelli, op. cit.

preciousness comes from Hesychius, who glossed the form διέπερσας· ἐπόρθησας (δ 1616 Latte-Cunningham).

ἀθέσμως: "illegally", i.e. παρανόμως, according to Hesychius (α 1565 Latte-Cunningham). Gregory of Nazianzus is fond of this adverb (7 occurrences, 6 of which are in poetic texts), and uses it here to deplore the lack of respect shown by the profaners desecrating the tombs. The privative stem ἀθεσμ-, rare in Hellenistic prose, with two occurrences in the New Testament in the Second Epistle of Peter (2.7.2, 3.17.2), is used frequently in the *Sibylline Oracles* (16 times), with the adverb in a hexametric clause (3.524, 8.80, 11.313), as it is in Gregory's epigram.

l. 4 σήματα: "monuments" is the preserved form in all manuscripts except for the *Codex Palatinus*, which has αὐτοῖς εἵματ' ἔχοντες. Boivin and Muratori suggested emending σήματα as σώματα, but it is preferable to keep σήματα for thematic consistency, since the text concerns funerary monuments[24]. Gregory reproaches the profaners for the pointlessness of their act[25]. A similar divergence in the manuscript tradition can be seen at the end of the verse, where the *Codex Palatinus* has ἀπέδοσθαι.

l. 5 δίς: I accept Boivin's emendation, as did Muratori, according to whom τρίς "sequentibus non bene respondet". It is likely that during the trade in monuments and inscriptions condemned by Gregory, a looted object was sold more than once. The τρίς reading of the codices probably arose by mistake, in an attempt to match the meaning of the sentence to the epigram's triadic scheme, but here we run the risk of trivialization. Jacobs "probabiliter" and Waltz "fortasse recte" both support the emendation, while Paton, Beckby, Conca-Marzi and Pontani prefer the *lectio tradita*.

ἱεροσυλεῖς: "You are guilty of sacrilege". This word is an emendation by Boivin, accepted by Muratori, instead of the *lectio tradita* ἱεροσύλοις. In this way, it also re-establishes the usual dialogical style of the funerary epigram, dear to Gregory of Nazianzus[26], although with a rather abrupt change from the second-person plural (ἐμίξατε, διεπέρσατ', ἀπέδοσθε) to the singular. Another instance of the verb ἱεροσυλέω (2 occurences) in Gregory of Nazianzus in the meaning of "committing sacrilege against" with the accusative case can be found in *epist.* 206.9. The meaning "plunder" or "loot" does not fit the context.

l. 6 μάρτυρας: "martyrs". According to G. Lampe[27] three basic meanings ("witness", "martyr", and "confessor") are expressed by μάρτυς, and it is not always easy to distinguish between the different meanings of the word in early Christian writing or in Gregory's use. In this case, the author probably refers to ordinary believers, who suffered death for their faith in Christ, as in the other epigrams included at the end of this book (e.g. in *AP* 8.169.1: ἀθλοφόροι καὶ μάρτυρες).

οὕς: Alexandre M. Desrousseaux emended with οἶς, which was accepted by Waltz and Beckby. In this way, with the ellipses of the demonstrative and the attraction of the

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24 Thus P. Waltz, op. cit.; H. Beckby, op. cit.; F. Conca, M. Marzi, op. cit.; F. M. Pontani, op. cit.

25 Pachomius Rhusanus adds καίτοι οὐδεμία ἡ ἀνάγκη, since they also have similar funerary monuments: αὐτοὶ σήματ' ἔχοντες ὁμοία (J. Karmires, loc. cit., 36).

26 L. Floridi, loc. cit., 56-57.

27 G. Lampe, op. cit., s.u.

relative, the text appears to become clearer through a reference to those who receive the benefits from robbing the sepulchres (*dativus commodi*): "au profit des ceux qui vous sont chers"[28], "für deine Lieben"[29]. Thus, the sacrilege is clearly to the detriment of the martyrs' tombs for the betterment of the pagans' funerary monuments. Paton and Pontani, however, defend the *lectio tradita*. In this reading, Gregory censures the Christians who, in order to adorn the martyrs' tombs, do so with precious objects stolen from pagan funerary monuments, and who thus, even if motivated by good intentions, defile the graves of the martyrs they loved.

ἄξατε: from ἀίσσω "to rush / move violently", also in the sense of "to gush", is an emendation proposed by Boissonade, and accepted by Waltz ("jaillissez, sources de Sodome"), Pontani ("Torrenti di Sodoma, avanti!"), and Conca-Marzi ("Sgorgate, torrenti di Sodoma"), instead of the preserved εἴξατε, aorist of εἴκω "to give way". Before Boissonade, Muratori interpreted the last reading as "Sodoma, cede, maior enim est horum quam tua improbitas"[30]. Jacobs preferred ἵξατε, from ἱκνέομαι, "quae aoristi forma frequens est apud Homerum"[31]. In terms of style, Jacobs' emendation could lend an epic note to the passage. A valid alternative, according to Boissonade, may also be Salvini's emendation ἤξατε "come" (see e.g. Aeschylus, *Pr.* 133), discussed by Muratori[32] and accepted by Paton ("come, ye fiery founts of Sodom"). Nonetheless, ἄξατε seems preferable for two reasons. In the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus the verb ἀίσσω is more common (3 instances) than the aorist ἷξα, which is never attested. Furthermore, it seems more pertinent in this context, because it confers vividness to the described image.

πηγαί: "sources" but also "torrents". A reference to Σοδομίτιδες πηγαί seems odd here, and several scholars have suggested emending it: "novi quid iotacismus suadeat scribendum, nisi vetet Patris os sanctum"[33], whereas Paton's and Waltz's interpretation solves the problem by resorting to the biblical image of the torrents of fire and brimstone that incinerated Sodom (*Gen.* 19.24). Beckby's interpretation is similar: "Oh kommt ihr Sodomaquellen". In Gregory, in fact, the adjective Σοδομιτικὸς refers to fire (πῦρ) 7 out of 8 times (for instance *epist.* 77.10; *epist.* 95.1). The originality of the *iunctura*, an *unicum* in Greek and Byzantine literature and unattested in the corresponding passage in *Genesis*, is appropriate in the use of πηγαί[34].

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28 P. Waltz, op. cit.

29 H. Beckby, op. cit. P. Waltz, op. cit., p. 84, n. 1.

30 L. A. Muratori, op. cit., p. 267; as to the Latin translation as a whole, p. 138.

31 F. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 440.

32 "Talis aoristus fuit forsan et melioribus scriptoribus non ignotus" (J. F. Boissonade et alii, op. cit., p. 556). L. A. Muratori, op. cit., p. 139, explains "venite, prosilite, sulphurei fontes, qui Sodomam evertistis et istorum scelus expiate".

33 F. Boissonade et alii, op. cit.

34 Pachomius Rhusanus added a further interpretive possibility, namely that those who are stained with such serious faults are likely to be authors of other shameful acts, such as those attributed to the inhabitants of Sodom, but this is rather unlikely: ἢ σοδομίτιδας πηγὰς τοὺς τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας καλεῖ, ὡς ὅτι οἱ τοιαῦτα τολμῶντες εἰκὸς καὶ τἆλλ᾽ ἀθέμιτα πράσσειν (J. Karmires, loc. cit., 36).

3. Final remarks

In conclusion, a close reading of *AP* 8.170 offers readers a very rich sample of Gregory of Nazianzus' expressive abilities. Even though the Callimachean component, which was dear to Gregory, is missing, the author's debt to another genre of hexametric poetry, the *Sibylline Oracles*, is apparent. Examples of this debt can be found in the use of ἀθέσμως and ἄναγνος in verse-final position. The epic dimension suited to the Homeric hexameter reappears, however, in a series of other choices, such as τρισθανής, διαπέρθω, ἀμφὶς ἔχω, which blend into the Christian resignification of ancient terms such as ἀθλοφόροι. Finally, considering the explicitly moralizing message, culminating in a strong condemnation of the τυμβωρύχοι, it is likely that the epigram was not actually meant to be engraved, but rather was intended for publication in a book with a didactic and moralistic aim[35].

▾ **ABSTRACT**: This article offers a linguistic and stylistic commentary on an epigram by Gregory of Nazianzus (*AP* 8.170). This poem is part of a thematically similar series of epigrams dealing with tomb profaners. A survey of lexical occurrences allows the identification of elements common to another genre of hexametric poetry: the *Sibylline Oracles*. It also grants greater insight into Gregory's compositional techniques through the strong links with Homeric tradition, evident in certain references.

▾ **KEYWORDS**: Gregory of Nazianzus; funerary epigrams; desecration of tombs.

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35   L. FLORIDI, loc. cit., 78-79, despite Waltz's simple explanation, which justifies the high number of epigrams on the theme of τυμβωρυχία by referring to the high demand of customers interested in such texts. For further details, see P. WALTZ, op. cit., p. 25.