Among the numerous poetic works of Gregory of Nazianzus, the seven poemata quae spectant ad alios, as the Maurists have labelled the group carmina II,2, take a singular position. They are traditionally regarded as verse letters, a genre familiar from Latin authors but not represented in Greek literature before Gregory. The poems are addressed to heterogeneous acquaintances of Gregory’s (ranging from a tax collector to a young bride), known from other sources as well, often from his own prose letters. From a literary point of view, the most original and attractive texts are those not written in propria persona but in the name of friends or relatives: II,2,3–5. Two of them are edited here, in the Italian collection Poeti cristiani, which is doing pioneering work for the Gregorian corpus.

As the subtitle of this book indicates, the diptych impersonating Nicobulus father and son represents a discussion within this wealthy Cappadocian family. In the first poem (208 hexameters), junior asks from his father, in a rather brutal way, the permission and the financial means for advanced studies. The second poem (282 hexameters) is the father’s reply: the elder Nicobulus criticizes his son’s disrespectful tone, argues that what he requested is a favour, not a right, then inserts a forceful eulogy on the /G89/G67/G6B/GE0/G6B/G6C/G69/G6F/G77/G70/G61/GDD/G64/G65/G79/G73/G69/G77/, and finally allows his son to study in Beirut, Alexandria and Athens. The rhetorical modus thus evolves from a refutation over an encomium to a propemptikos logos.

Whether or not the background of these poems was an actual «discussione in famiglia» (we know from his prose letters that Gregory was concerned with the education of the younger Nicobulus), the unity of their composition is obvious. What we are reading is a kind of versified declamationes, the rhetorical exercises in which a conflict between father and son is often the fictitious subject. Gregory’s authorship of the father’s reply has sometimes been disputed, and some scholars have attributed II,2,5 to Nicobulus senior himself, as it criticizes some points made in the first poem, and defends positions that seem hardly compatible with Gregory’s own thoughts.¹ This attribution has no basis in the manuscript tradition, and fails to take into account the generic nature of the diptych: the compositions have to be regarded as èthopoiiai: what would – or should – an ambitious Christian young Cappadocian say to his father when wanting to study classical paideia? And what would – or should – be the rich and devout pater familias’ reply? A clear distinction between the narrators or personae (the Nicobuli) and the author (Gregory) is necessary for a good comprehension of the literary make up of the poems – I come back to this point. As it comes to the authorship, moreover, the book under review here proves in detail that the whole diction, style and metrical technique of the two poems are homogeneous and genuinely Gregorian.

¹ Apart from the authors casting doubts upon the poem’s authenticity, mentioned in Moroni p. 32, n.33, see now the (otherwise outstanding) article by Neil McLynn, «Among the Hellenists: Gregory and the Sophists», in J. Børtnes & T. Hägg (ed.), Gregory of Nazianzus. Images and Reflections (Copenhagen 2006), 213–239. He discusses II,2,5 as «the father’s reply, endorsing the project in equally fluent iambics (sic KD)» (p. 237–238).
As for a large part of Nazianzen’s verse, scholars had to rely on the Patrologia Graeca reprint (with errors) of the 1840 Paris edition by A.-B. Caillau, which was based on the Maurists’ 18th century material. The situation is ameliorating gradually, with several dispersed editions of individual poems or cycles of poems, like those in the Poeti cristiani collection, and with two ongoing major projects: the Belles Lettres series which started in 2004 with II,1,1–11 (A. Tuillier – G. Bady – J. Bernardi), and the Corpus Christianorum which plans an editio critica maior by Christos Simelidis, based on decades of preparatory work by Martin Sichler and his team. Meanwhile, the Moroni edition should definitely replace the PG text (see below).

Her book opens with an impressive bibliography (p. 7–25), listing only the works referred to with abbreviations in the numerous notes and comprehensive commentary. The Introduction (p. 29–69) first presents the protagonists of the verse letters and their relationship with Gregory; discusses the possible date of the poems (arguing cautiously but plausibly for 382–384); analyses structure and theme (in fact rather a careful paraphrase of the contents, with references to parallel passages in other works by Gregory and his fellow Cappadocians Basil of Caesarea and Amphilochius of Iconium); briefly assesses genre and style (stressing the originality of the verse poems and their dependence on the Homeric style and language); describes the manuscript tradition (respectively 24 and 23 mss, ) and the indirect testimonies, notably the commentary of the Byzantine scholar Cosmas of Jerusalem; gives a survey of the existing editions and translations (for non-Hellenists, the poems are only available in Latin and Italian: Ivano Costa in the collective Gregorio di Nazianzo, Poesie 2, Roma 1999); examines their metrical peculiarities (finding, as noted before, a typically Gregorian practice, while observing an unusually low dactyl/spondee ratio in both poems – without attempting an explanation, however; might it be related to the high number of Homeric borrowings and/or the determinably high presence of ‘pagan’ material?); and concludes with the criteria of the edition (a negative critical apparatus, including the editorial tradition) and the stemma codicum.

The text itself (Ad patrem: p. 74–89; Ad filium: p. 174–193) comes with a facing translation. Apart from changes in punctuation, capitalization and conventional accentuation (before commas, especially), the deviations from the PG edition are not very numerous, but sometimes consequential. Given the standard academic practice of referring to the PG (which is also the TLG text), it is regrettable that there is no marginal indication of the matching columns (PG 37, 1505–1542), nor a concordance listing the deviations.

For the sake of convenience, I give them here, PG > Moroni: II,2,4, v. 30 οὐθὲς > αὐτὴς; 74 ὅτε (typo) > ὅτι; 77 δοκὶ κέλευον > δοκὶ κέλευντε; 85 ἐγκατέστησον > ἐγκατέστησον; 104 ποντοποροῦσα > ποντοπόροις; 108 πλέον (typo) > πνεύσον; 113 πείθομαι > πείθομαι; 117 δὲ > δή; 124 κλῆσον > κλήσον; 145 η > ἡ; 156 ἀφροδίσεως > ἀφροδίσεως; 159 λόγος > λόγῳ; 194 οἵον > ἄροι; 195 ἐγγεέδει > ἐγγεέδει; II,2,5, v. 56 ἀλλὰ > ἀλλα (missing in Moroni’s apparatus); 79 ὅποιας > ὅποιας; 71 ἐς ὅποιον > ὅποιον; 74 ποιήσαν > πανδέοσαν (seems a lectio faciundae); 76 χαμαίλεος > χαμαίλεος; 81 τείχος > τείχος; 89 ἐπιτείχει > ἐπί τείχει (compare change in v. 74, though); 97 μνημεία > μνήμεια; 107 ὄψιν... ὄψιν... καθέδεξι... ὄψιν... ὄψιν... καθέδεξι... 109 πλείστων > πλείστων; 113 ἀληθοῦντος > ἀληθοῦντος; 139 ὀμοίων > ὀμοίων; 162 κλέει > κλέει; 174 ἐρείπει > ἐρείπει; 185 ἀπόμενος > ἀπόμενος; 197 μετὰ > κατα;
Besides, the Moroni text has to be corrected at two instances: II,2,4, v. 196: the dash has to be transposed to the beginning of v. 197 (clearly a typo, since the translation has it right); II,2,5, v. 32: εἰ καθέουσαν is to be joined into one word (the PG has the same error, probably not by coincidence; the list of deviations above should hence include 32 εἰ καθέουσαν > εἰ καθέουσαν).

The translation is faithful and trustworthy, and it corrects Costa’s version on several points. I think it needs improvement at only a few passages.

- II,2,4, v. 67 translating δόσως as «gli accorgimenti per mezzo dei quali» seems to imply that δόσως has the same antecedent as οίς in 65: «gli accorgimenti della logica sotto i quali», whereas it is either used absolutely or anticipates the following ἤπει ἣ (among the educational disciplines, 65–6 deal with logic, 67 with ethics);
- II,2,5, v. 31–32 Ei δὲ νόμιμα τόσον (s.i. τὸς δόσως, perhaps rightly) εἰκάθεομεν (see above, one word), διὸς βίος ἤρθε’; δόσως is translated as «Se venissimo meno a tali leggi tutta la vita sarebbe cancellata e distrutta», suggesting that not living up to νόμιμα τόσον would destroy human life. However, whereas Nicobulus sr admits in the preceding verses that nature unites parents and children, as his son has argued (25: Φύλτρο μὲν συνέδεη φύσις...), he now starts his refutation of the son’s affirmation that parental gifts are consequently a kind of legal duty. Ei δὲ νόμιμα has clearly to be taken in an oppositional sense: ‘Yet, if we were to yield to those laws (of yours)...’;
- II,2,5, v. 51 ἐποίησ εἰκάθεομεν is translated as «hai pagato le conseguenze», as if from τίνων; I would take it as a form of τίνως (‘to honour’),2 which makes more sense when compared with the verses II,2,4, 40–41, of which 51–2 is an ironic rebuke (surprisingly, the commentary skips these verses).

The commentaries (p. 93–170 and 197–279 respectively) are admirable pieces of philological and encyclopaedic competence. They give abundant and (mostly) relevant information, focusing on the (nearly always convincing) editorial choices; on loci similes for rare words, conspicuous iuncturae and metrical sedes; on stylistic devices; and on parallels from Greek and Latin literature as it comes to motives, toponi and realia. The bibliographical mastery is astonishing and many adduced passages are revealing indeed. Although the verse-per-verse structure is regularly alternated with good summaries of coherent passages, the commentary cannot really avoid the typical drawback of the genre: it is sometimes difficult to see the wood for the trees. That is, the overall rhetorical structure of the poems and the parallels between them do not stand out clearly enough, to my mind.

To have a closer look at the trees, though: exceptionally one or two verses are not given an entry in the commentary. Moroni passes these over in silence without indicating whether she does not deem them worth a comment or is faced with a difficulty of interpretation (as with the somewhat obscure verse II,2,5 v. 51, mentioned above). At least some of these verses would have deserved an explanation, e.g.

- II,2,4, v. 57 elaborates on χρόνος, time, ὁν πάντες ἐνέποιησαν διδάσκαλον ἠμερίσασαν. In line with the exhaustiveness of the entire commentary, one would have expected an identification of those ‘many authors’: candidates are Sophocles, fr 664 Radt (γῆνας διδάσκει πάντα καὶ χρόνον τρυβέ) or Philemon, fr 149 Kock (‘Οσοι τέχνοι γεγόναν ταύτας [...] πίσες ἐδιδάσκασιν ὁ χρόνος).

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1 See Hesychius’ Lexicon ε 89 (Latte): εἰκάθεομεν > παραγράφεομεν.
2 This is also the way the word was interpreted by the Byzantine paraphrasts, who give the equivalent ἔτιμμος, see p. 325 and 347. For the paraphrases, see below.
At II, 2, 5, v. 90–95, Nicobulus inserts an adynaton: a dolphin would never complain to his Creator of his life in a marine environment. In a hypothetical protopoeia the dolphin is made to assert that he would prefer to do the oxen’s work among the mortals, ἃς τοις νηπίδευσιν ὄμοιθροις ἐνάπεσεν. This is an unmistakable – and significantly ironic – allusion to Od. 11, 489–491, where Achilles complains that he would prefer to be the servant of a poor farmer, ἃς τοις νηπίδευσιν κατουρμήκυσαν ἐνάπεσαν. Whereas Moroni gives several parallels for such standard expressions as ἐγνώρισεν καὶ τοιοῦτον ἑπετροῖς in the preceding verses, the meaningful parody of the famous nekyia verse goes unnoticed. The jocular atmosphere of the passage is confirmed in v. 100–101, where Nicobulus states that a crow also is pleased with his position: he would never want to fly as high as an eagle. I would refer here not only to the traditional opposition between the crow and the eagle, as Moroni does (p. 227), but especially to the Aesopic fable where the crow does want to imitate the eagle (fab. 2 Hausarb). Despite all the formal parallels listed in the commentary, Moroni overlooks what I take to be the point of the whole passage: Gregory has Nicobulus unconsciously undercut his own arguments.

The latter example is representative of what I consider to be the main shortcoming of the commentary: Moroni does not sufficiently take into account the distinction, typical of this kind of literary ‘fiction’, between author and narrator on the one hand, and audience and (internal) narratee on the other. Within the narrated world, the dramatic characters, father and son, argue in turn and towards each other; this is what narratology calls the ‘argument’ level. At the external or ‘key’ level, the author, Gregory, communicates his own messages to his audience – which included, no doubt, the Nicobulus family: the fictitious narrators are at the same time the real audience – while the real author casts himself as one of the characters, when both Nicobuli refer to Gregory as an inspiring model. The dramatic irony and ambiguities resulting from this sophisticated construction are barely explored in Moroni’s book. At moments, she even seems to ignore this double layer of communication, as we read such phrases as ‘il Teologo biasima aspramente le parole con cui il giovane Nicobulo rivendicava il diritto...» (p. 197) or ‘Gregorio, infatti, desidera riformulare l’affermazione del giovane...» (p. 201). As a result, an apparent difference of opinion between Moroni and an early publication of myself, can be reduced to a misunderstanding. Discussing a passage in the first poem, in which the son concludes his long request for a ‘study grant’ with the promise that he will devote his life to God afterwards, she writes (p. 120): «Non sembra del tutto condivisibile il giudizio espresso da Demeen, Attitude, p. 257, a proposito dei vv. 77–88, ritenuti ‘un addizione che fa un’altra artificiale impressione in contest (sic KD)»1: [...] questa sezione ha un ruolo essenziale nell’economia del carme.» I admit that my remark is too brief as it stands, and hence misleading. Yet, it does not at all deny that the passage plays an essential role in the text as a whole. It is, I would rephrase now,


an intrusion of the author, who speaks less ‘in character’ than he does in the preceding parts of the poem: the impetuous young Nicobulus suddenly (or ‘artificially’) becomes a devout ascetic, who wants to imitate the life of his great-uncle Gregory... The whole point is that Gregory gradually shifts from a portrait of Nicobulus as he was, to a sketch of the ideal Christian intellectual. When near the end of his answer, the father refers to his son’s words as ἐκ πολὺς νεότητος (II,2,5, v. 221), Moroni rightly mentions the topos of the puer senex. At the key level, however, the expression may be interpreted as a metalinguistic hint of Gregory himself, pointing at the emergence of the grey-haired author and the young narrator of II,2,4.

The book concludes with three appendices. First (p. 281–304) comes a new edition of the relevant parts of Cosmas’s commentaries on Gregory’s poems, viz. on the pagan and biblical stories, and on the marvels of nature. The complete Cosmas text, transmitted in a single 12th century manuscript, has been edited recently, but Moroni corrects it on several occasions. Moreover, as an important indirect witness of the Gregorian text, it is useful to have it at hand. This is a fortiiori the case with the second appendix (p. 305–357), the editio princeps of two anonymous Byzantine paraphrases. The first is preserved in four mss, the oldest of which (11th century) has only the paraphrase, not the poems themselves. The paraphrase thus appears to have circulated independently; it is interesting not only for the constitutio textus, but also as a witness of the middle Byzantine literary koinè. The second paraphrase, preserved in six mss, follows the original syntax and word order more closely, replacing the epic vocabulary with synonyms, sometimes varying over the six testimonies. The last appendix is less helpful for the (interpretation of the) text of Gregory himself: an edition of the Latin translation of the poems by Giacomo Olica da Cremona (p. 359–374).

All in all, Moroni has provided us with a trustworthy edition of a most interesting corpus of texts.

Gent

Kristoffel Demoen


Elia Borza si è formato con Monique Mund-Dopchie e si è segnalato sin qui, in piena consonanza con gli interessi scientifici della sua maestra, per alcuni con-

1 As Moroni expresses it elsewhere (and in other terms), «Gregorio mostra una spiccata capacità di immedesimazione con i personaggi-autori» (p. 252).

2 This explains also the somewhat unexpected insertion of an explicit refutation of gladiator fights, horseraces, pantomimes and the like (v. 149–167), on which Moroni correctly observes: «la presenza all’interno della poesia di una sezione in cui il Teologo condanna questi tipi di attività trova la sua giustificazione anche nel timore che gli studenti, lontano dalla famiglia, si lasciano corrompere da cattive abitudini» (p. 151).