Recent work on Nonnus’ Paraphrasis of John’s Gospel has shown the emphasis given by Nonnus to the exegetical side of his Paraphrasis, which, in the words of Gianfranco Agosti, is ‘più vicina all’esegesi che alla parafrasi stricto sensu’. Though relying heavily on Cyril of Alexandria’s Commentary on John, Nonnus nonetheless made use of a larger number of exegetical sources. This is hardly surprising for the poet of the Dionysiaca, who ‘in his mythological learning and countless allusions to earlier poetry is a true successor to Hellenistic writers of the Callimachean school’. His theological scholarship could not but be of the same level.

In the first part of this chapter, I concentrate on four notoriously difficult passages of John’s Gospel and their handling by the poet of the Paraphrasis. Nonnus is not only aware of contemporary debates, but he treats patristic exegesis with a critical mind and in some cases he would seem to offer some rather original exegetical solutions, although it is difficult to know insofar as not all of Nonnus’ sources have survived. Whether Nonnus was a Christian bishop or not, his theological expertise was impressive. For the Gospel’s exegesis he must have drawn on a variety of patristic works, other than commentaries. The most interesting points for the understanding of a difficult passage may emerge not from the actual commentaries, but from patristic writings of other kinds which may refer to the same passage. It would also be expected for a scholar of Nonnus’ learning to have read

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1 Agosti (2003) 111. For exegesis in the Paraphrasis, see the relevant introductory sections in the editions (with commentaries) published so far; for example, on Par. 13 see Greco (2004) 15–28.
2 See, for example, Livrea (1989) 154 (on Par. 18.92); Agosti (2003) 53, 295 (on Par. 5.6) and 372 (on Par. 5.34).
3 Hopkinson (2012).
4 See Livrea (2003); cf. the chapter by Accorinti in this volume.
5 As was concluded by Ramelli (2008) 119 n. 22, following her long discussion of patristic exegesis for John 24.
much more Christian literature than is concretely traceable in his works. Good indications of this are noted in recent commentaries on the *Paraphrasis*: for example, in his rendering of healing miracles, Nonnus was influenced by contemporary forms of Christian healing, while for topographical details of the Holy Land he may have drawn on pilgrims’ reports.6

In the second part of this chapter I discuss Nonnus and Gregory of Nazianzus. Nonnus appreciated Gregory’s verse and he seems to have used it as a major source of language and inspiration. Even Nonnus’ use of μάρτυς/μαρτυρέω/μαρτυρίη or the famous line (Dion. 12.171) Βάκχος ἄναξ δάκρυσε, βροτὸν ἵνα δάκρυα λύσῃ (‘Lord Bacchus has wept tears that he may wipe away man’s tears’) may owe something to Gregory. But could Gregory have been influential for Nonnus in any other respect? I suggest that the metrical liberties of the *Paraphrasis* may also owe something to Gregory of Nazianzus and they may be better understood as a sign of maturity (and not the opposite, as has been argued).

1. Nonnus and Patristic Literature

At John 4:43–45 we read that Jesus, after the two days he spent in Samaria, arrived in Galilee:

Μετὰ δὲ τὰς δύο ἡμέρας ἐξῆλθεν ἐκεῖθεν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· αὐτὸς γὰρ Ἰησοῦς ἐμφανίσθη ἐν τῇ Ἰεροσολύμῳ ἔχει. ὁτί τοι ἀνακόλουθος ἦν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰεροσολύμος ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ.

After the two days he went forth from there into Galilee. For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honour in his own country. When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all the things that he did in Jerusalem at the feast.

In these lines there seems to be a contradiction between the proverb stated by Jesus in v. 44 (‘a prophet has no honour in his own country’) and his reception by the Galileans in v. 45. Origen, who explicitly regards this as an *anacolathon* (πάνυ ἀνακόλουθος ἡ λέξις φαίνεται), argues that by ‘his own country’ Jesus did not refer to Galilee, but to Judea, which he had earlier

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left (John 4:3) to go to Samaria. John Chrysostom also wonders about the presence of the proverb here and thinks this is said because Jesus did not go to Capernaum, which he believes should be taken here as his homeland. Cyril also feels the need to explain the proverb and says that the reason for this remark is that, when Jesus entered Galilee, he passed by Nazareth without stopping. Nonnus deals with this ‘notorius crux’ by adding a verse between verses 43 and 44 of the Gospel, to say (4.196): ‘ούνην δ’ οὐκ ἔπατησεν ἐγν ζηλήμονα πάτηρν’ (‘and only his own jealous homeland he did not visit’). This addition smoothes the transition from v. 43 to v. 44. Nonnus does not name Jesus’ homeland (as Judea or Capernaum or Nazareth) and thus there is no reason to believe that he wanted to follow the specific view of one of the above-mentioned commentators. However, it is worth considering some hypotheses made by Origen: if, he says, Jesus’ homeland was Samaria and he had suffered dishonour there, and for this reason he did not stay for more than two days, then the proverb could make sense. Origen goes on as follows:

Ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰ ἐγέγραπτο· μετὰ δὲ τὰς θύσιν ἡμέρας ἐξῆλθεν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐγένετο ἐν τῇ ἱδίᾳ πατρίδι· ‘αὐτὸς γὰρ Ἰησοῦς ἐμαχτύρησεν ὅτι προφήτης ἐν τῇ ἱδίᾳ πατρίδι τιμὴν οὐκ ἔχει’, καὶ οὕτως χώραν τὸ λεγόμενον ἔχει ἄν.

If it had also been written: ‘after the two days, he went into Galilee, but did not go to his own homeland; for Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honour in his own country’, in this case as well the proverb would have a place.

Nonnus’ additional verse corresponds to the above-cited phrase (in italics) by Origen. Origen’s hypothesis is applied by Nonnus in his Paraphrasis,
which may well depend on Origen here, although Nonnus does not go as far as adopting Origen’s theory in detail.

At John 3:8, as Jesus attempts to explain to Nicodemus that no one could tell how the Spirit would operate in a person’s life, he evokes the motion of the wind:

τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου ἑλεῖ πνεῖ καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ’ ὥσ πάνταν ἔρχεται καὶ ποὺ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἔστιν πάς ὁ γεγενημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος.

The wind blows where it wants and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

But πνεῦμα, used in Greek for both the wind and the spirit (or breath), allows for more interpretations (in its first instance at 3:8). Chrysostom and Cyril understood the word here as referring to the wind. But it seems Chrysostom also addresses critics of this view: ‘he does not say “it blows where it wants” as if the wind had any choice, but he simply indicates that its natural motion is powerful and cannot be hindered’. His friend Theodore of Mopsuestia does not just disagree, but is amazed at how some take πνεῦμα here as meaning ‘wind’: ‘It is amazing that some think this is said about the wind. How could the words, it blows where it chooses, be applied to the wind, which has no will and is moved by an irrational force?’ He goes on to say that people know the directions of the winds and give them names accordingly. So Theodore has a strong view that πνεῦμα here is the Holy Spirit. The same view was taken earlier by Origen and later by Maximus the Confessor, who confirms that this was a matter of debate. Where does Nonnus stand on this debate? He seems to combine the two interpretations (3.41–45):

πνεῦμα παλινβινητον ἀθηήτῳ τοῖς παλμῷ

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13 Cyril in both his commentary on John and his commentary on the Prophets; see Pusey (1872) I, 220 (τὸ πνεῦμα ταυτί τὸ ἐγκόσμιον τε καὶ ἐναέριον) and (1868) I, 452 (τούτι τὸ ἐν ἄερι τε καὶ ἐγκόσμιον), respectively. Chrysostom in both his commentary on John (hom. 26.1) and his commentary on 1 Corinthians (hom. 29.4); see PG 59.154 and 61.246 (εἰ καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἀνέμου εἴρηται).


15 For Origen see fr. 37 (cf. fr. 123) Preuschen (1903). For Maximus see Qu. 188 Declerck (1982).
The ever-whirling spirit blows about rapidly and invisibly wherever it wants; you hear closely its airy booming sound, divinely moved, as it falls on your ears. But you cannot feel with your eyes where it comes from or where it goes.

The epithet ἡερίης clearly suggests the wind (thus following Chrysostom and Cyril), while δεσδίνης, a word found only in the Paraphrasis,16 points to the interpretation of Origen and Theodore of Mopsueitia. Perhaps Nonnus anticipates the view of C.K. Barrett: ‘Each of these translations [sc. wind or Spirit] taken by itself is wrong; the point of John’s Greek is that it means both, and the double meaning cannot be simply reproduced in English. The Spirit, like the wind, is entirely beyond both the control and the comprehension of man: It breathes into this world from another.’17

At the wedding in Cana, when Jesus’ mother points out the fact that there is no wine, Jesus takes her remark as a request to work a miracle and responds with the following enigmatic words: τι ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γυναι; σὺ πώ ἦκει ἢ ὥρα μου (John 2:4). The question has been understood by some ancient and most modern scholars as a reproach to Mary and a wish by Jesus to stand at some distance from her. Most modern translations read: ‘Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.’ However, Ilaria Ramelli has recently argued in favour of a different interpretation of this phrase at John 2:4: ‘What does this [i.e. the lack of wine] matter to me and you?’ With this meaning Jesus wants to distance himself from the situation, not from his mother. Patristic commentators are not always entirely clear about the way they understood this particular phrase.18 There is no doubt that this was a controversial phrase, which

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16 On the other three instances of this word, see De Stefani (2002) 169–170 (on Par. 1.93); Caprara (2005) 199 (on Par. 4.67); Franchi (2013) 379 (on Par. 6.81).
17 Barrett (1955) 176. Cutino (2009) 234 thinks that Nonnus agrees here with Cyril, but if Nonnus wanted to follow Cyril he would not have added δεσδίνης.
18 See Ramelli (2008) 119–133. In my view the interpretation offered by Gregory of Nyssa (discussed by Ramelli) and Theodore of Mopsueitia, who understand the question as a reproach to Mary (‘Why do you bother me?’), but also take σὺ πώ ἦκει ἢ ὥρα μου as a rhetorical question (‘has my hour not come yet?’ or ‘am I not grown up enough to decide for myself?’), makes better sense with what follows. In Theodore of Mopsueitia’s words, ‘if the words, My hour has not yet come, had been spoken in a definite or imperative sense, as
seems to have been exploited by critics of Christianity. How is Christ sinless, if he rebuked his mother in this way, asks one of Ps.-Justin’s Questiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos, probably from early fifth-century Syria.\(^9\) The response is the first clear attestation of the translation endorsed by Ramelli: there is no rebuke here, but the phrase in question means: ‘It is not we who ought to take care of the wine.’\(^{20}\) Nonnus’ paraphrase (2.21) should also be considered in this context, because it has an interesting feature, noticed by Friedrich Blass.\(^{21}\) It replaces ‘and’ by ‘or’: τί μοι, γυναι, ἦ ἐ σοι αὐτῇ;\(^{22}\) This very slight alteration is highly significant for the meaning of the phrase, which would now be: ‘What is that to me or to you?’\(^{23}\) Blass prefers this meaning, but he is concerned with the absence of this reading (ἡ) from the Gospel’s manuscript transmission. He focuses on the textual criticism of John’s Gospel and tries to establish whether Nonnus preserves evidence for ancient variant readings. However, there should be no doubt that Nonnus’ rendering here simply reflects his own understanding of 2:4, but also his awareness that John’s expression could be understood in at least two ways. With the removal of ‘and’, the other interpretation (‘What have you to do with me?’), which Nonnus certainly knew, becomes

some have thought, as if he refused to perform the deed, his mother would have given up and would not have ordered the servants to obey him. For Gregory of Nyssa see In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius 8.19–26 Downing (1986); for Theodore of Mopsuestia’s Commentary on the Gospel of John see Conti/Elowsky (2010) 26–27. It is significant that this interpretation is supported by the Arabic Diatessaron, where οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὄρε μου is a question. See Hill (1894) 60 and Knabenbauer (1898) 118.

\(^9\) Papadoyannakis (2008) 115. For this question as possible criticism (for example, by Porphyry) against Christians, see von Harnack (1916) 80.

\(^{20}\) Ramelli (2008) 131. See PG 6.1388–1389 (ed. by the Benedictine monk Prudentius Maranus). The work has also been edited by Otto (1881) 2–246, again as a pseudonymous work of Justin, and by Papadopoulos-Kerameus (1895), where however it is falsely attributed to Theodoret. The early twelfth-century Byzantine theologian Euthymius Zigabenus (PG 129.1148C) should be added to the testimony for this interpretation offered by Ramelli. See Knabenbauer (1898) 119 and Livrea (2000) 185.


\(^{22}\) Blass (1898) 238 n. 1 explains why one should not conjecture ἢ δέ for ἦ ἐ: ἢ δέ does not occur in Nonnus and would also be incompatible with αὐτῇ. The other cases mentioned by Blass where Nonnus renders καί with ἦ are due to textual variants or have absolutely no consequence to the meaning of the Gospel text.

\(^{23}\) Cf. τί μοι (with the Loeb translation) at, for example, Dion. 8.300 ἄλλα τι μοι βιεστό γάμου τύπος ἢ νηφετοί; (‘But what have I to do with wedlock in shape of a bull or a shower?’) and 48.897 τί μοι κακά δηλωτεράων; (‘what have I to do with the sorrows of women?’).
impossible. What is also important for the argument of this chapter is that Nonnus’ familiarity with this particular problem does not seem (as far as we can tell) to be due to his usual patristic sources for John’s exegesis. Nonnus must have drawn on Christian writings of various kinds, not just commentaries on the Gospel of John.

When Jesus is asked by the Jews who he is at John 8:25, he responds: τὴν ἀρχήν δὴ καὶ λαλῶ ύμιν (edited with either δ καὶ and a full stop or δὶ καὶ and a question mark).²⁴ This is another difficult sentence which has puzzled readers and commentators.²⁵ In this case, the Greek fathers, including Chrysostom, Cyril and Theodore of Mopsuestia, share the same view and understand the sentence as meaning: ‘Why do I speak to you at all?’ (τὴν ἄρχην δὲ καὶ λαλῶ ύμιν).²⁶ Christ treats the Jews’ question as scornful and provocative and refuses to answer it. Nonnus’ paraphrase shows a very different understanding of the sentence (8.61–62): ὅτι περ ὑμῖν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὀάριζον (‘(I am) just what I told you from the beginning’). It is only Nonnus who offers this interpretation, which has been accepted by most scholars since the Renaissance. It is worth citing John Maldonatus (1534–1583): ‘Ego et verissimum, et simplicissimum sensum esse arbitror, quem Nonnus poëta tribus expressit versibus, et multi ante me docti et Catholici interpretes approbavere’.²⁷ Chrys Caragounis has recently studied the passage in detail and proposed this translation (without considering Nonnus).²⁸ This is not the place to discuss the two interpretations in

²⁴ See Metzger (1994) 191, although Nestle/Aland²⁸ prints δ καὶ with a question mark.


²⁶ Chrysostom, In Jo. hom. 53.1 (PG 59.293) paraphrases the sentence as follows: τοῦ δὲ λόγω ἀκούειν τῶν λόγων τὸν παρ’ ἐμοῦ ἀναξίοι ἀνετε, µήτε γε καὶ μαθεῖν, ὅτις ἐγὼ εἰµι: ‘You are not worthy to hear my words at all, let alone to learn who I am’; for Cyril see Pusey (1872) II, 23: ἐδεί γὰρ µε, φησίν, σὺχ µὺν δὲ λόγῳ προσλαλῆσαι κατὰ τὴν ἄρχην (‘I should not at all, he says, have conversed with you from the beginning’); for Theodore of Mopsuestia see Conti/Elowsky (2010) 79. Later Byzantine theologians, for example Theophylact of Ohrid (PG 124.20B) and Euthymius Zigabenus (PG 129.1288C–D), follow the same interpretation and do not record any other views. For a linguistic parallel see Ps.-Clem. hom. 6.11 (perhaps from the fourth century) εἰ µὴ παρακολουθεῖς οὐ λέγω, τί καὶ τὴν ἄρχην διαλέγώμαι (‘If you do not follow what I am saying, why should I speak at all?’).

²⁷ Maldonado (1844) 168.

²⁸ Caragounis (2007) confirms that τὴν ἀρχήν can be interpreted as ἐξ ἀρχῆς and that the present indicative (λαλῶ) ‘can be used of an action that began at some point in the past and continues in the present.’
detail. It may suffice to say that they both have advantages and disadvantages, but they offer clever and competent interpretations of a difficult text, which may in fact be corrupt. In the margin of P.Bodm. II (P66, copied around 200) there is an addition of two words at the beginning of this sentence, which looks like a conjecture by the original scribe or the first corrector: ἐξεχών ὑμῖν τὴν ἀρχὴν ἃ τι καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν (‘I told you at the beginning what I am also telling you now’). This suggests an understanding of the sentence very similar to Nonnus’ rendering. But there is no way to establish whether Nonnus was helped by a different text or follows a source unknown to us (Origen is not available for this passage) or offers an original idea of his own. In any case, Nonnus’ impressive rendering of such a difficult passage confirms not only his linguistic expertise, but also his comprehensive understanding of John’s Gospel and its ideas.

In the four passages discussed above, Nonnus shows awareness of serious exegetical problems in John’s Gospel and deals with them in a critical way. In one case (John 4:43–45) he depends on patristic exegesis (Origen, Chrysostom and Cyril), which is unanimous but exhibits a slight variation in detail. Nonnus does not follow in detail any of these three fathers, although he seems to have versified a phrase from Origen. In the second case (John 3:8), Nonnus apparently combines two different interpretations, one by Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia and another by Chrysostom and Cyril. This combination appears to have a striking similarity with the opinion of C.K. Barrett. In the third (John 2:4), he depends on patristic interpretation, which however does not come from the known commentaries on John. Here, his textual solution to the problem is really impressive. In the fourth passage (8:25), Nonnus appears to offer an original interpretation of his own, which has impressed scholars.

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29 For criticism of the patristic interpretation, which has also been accepted by many scholars and translators, see Caragounis (2007) 141.
30 Cf. Sakkos (1969) 32. What is also intriguing is that P66 has a unique variant in the next sentence and this variant (ἐξαίρων for ἔχω) is also supported by Nonnus: John 8:26 πολλὰ ἔχω περὶ υμῶν λαλέων καὶ κρίνων (‘I have much to say about you and much to condemn’) – Par. 8.62 ἔχων νηρὺδω ψάλμων καὶ λαλέων. See Smothers (1958) 111–115. Of course in a case like this we should not consider ἔχων in Nonnus’ copy of the Gospel as anything more than a mere possibility.
31 It is not true that the Paraphrasis is written ‘in strictly Cyrilian terms’ (Livrea (2003) 454). This over-emphasis on Cyril’s presence in the Paraphrasis has perhaps led scholars to quick conclusions on specific passages (see my notes 11 and 17 above).
and is often considered the best solution to the problem. It seems that Nonnus was fully aware of the problems and he carefully considered a wide range of material before making his own decision. Thus, to take another example from the fourth Gospel, I have no doubt that Nonnus was aware that the punctuation at John 1: 3–4 was related to a dispute concerning the origin and nature of the Holy Spirit. In this passage, a full stop is placed either before or after δ γέγονεν:

\[\text{πάντα δι' αυτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αυτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἐν δ γέγονεν. ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν.}\]

All things came into being through him, and without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life.\(^32\)

Arians and Macedonian heretics had pointed to this passage, punctuated before δ γέγονεν, to claim that the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as one of the created things. In my view, Nonnus was aware of this and this was the reason why he conscientiously did not follow Origen and Cyril in taking δ γέγονεν with v. 4, but followed instead Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia in taking these words with v. 3.\(^33\) Chrysostom and Theodore both refer to the danger of the opposite view, which they assign to heretics. ‘Contra Alexandrinos cum Antiochenis’, declares Baumgarten-Crusius for Nonnus’ standing in this case,\(^34\) but I hope that the above has already shown that we should not limit Nonnus’ sources in any way. On this particular passage, Nonnus’ view could also have been informed by Gregory of Nazianzus, who in his theological oration on the Holy Spirit (or. 31.12 Gallay (1978)) considers δ γέγονεν a vital part of v. 3:

\[\text{καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνο φοβηθῆσομαι τὸ πάντα διὰ τοῦ Υιοῦ γεγονέναι λέγεσθαι, ἣς ἐνὸς τῶν πάντων ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ἀγίου Πνεύματος. Πάντα γὰρ δὲ καὶ γέγονεν, ἔρησαι, οὐχ ἀπλῶς ἢπαντα: οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ Πατὴρ, οὐδὲ διὰ µὴ γέγονεν. Δείξας οὖν ὃτι γέγονε, καὶ} \]

\(^{32}\) Nestle/Aland\(^{28}\) punctuate before δ γέγονεν, but see Metzger (1994) 167–168.

\(^{33}\) Cf., however, De Stefani (2002) 112: ‘È difficile dire se in questo luogo discusso Nonno segua in modo pedissequo l’interpunzione del suo testo giovanneo (il Tischendorf 741, inserisce il Panopolitano tra i testimoni che recano pausa dopo γέγονεν) o se il testo della Parafraesi non rappresenti invece una scelta esegetica, frutto di una meditata lettura dei commentari, soprattutto di quello del Crisostomo.’

\(^{34}\) Baumgarten-Crusius (1836) 201. Cf. Grillmeier (1996) 97–98 on the paraphrase of John 1.14, which ‘sounds more Antiochene than Alexandrian’ and would have been read by Cyril ‘only with a shaking of the head’.
So I will not be alarmed by the argument that 'all things' are said to 'have been made by the Son', as if the Holy Spirit also were one of these things. For it says 'all things that were made', and not simply 'all things'. For the Father was not, nor were any of the things that were not made. Prove first that the Spirit was made, and then give Him to the Son, and number Him among the creatures; but as long as you cannot prove this, you will gain nothing for your impiety from this comprehensive phrase. For if He was made, it was certainly through Christ; I myself would not deny that. But if He was not made, how can He be either one of the all, or through Christ?35

Nonnus must have been familiar with Gregory's orations, whether or not he is responsible for the mythological scholia on four orations that survive.36 Gregory's passage also confirms, once again, a debate, of which Nonnus was certainly aware. To return to Baumgarten-Crusius' statement, the few cases discussed in this chapter indicate that there were disagreements among the Alexandrian and the Antiochene theologians. Perhaps this is the case with this last example as well. In its treatment of John 1:3–4, De Trinitate, a fourth-century work of Alexandrian theology which is ascribed to Didymus the Blind, appears to ignore the view of the Alexandrians.37 These were heated debates in which able scholars would have often formed strong personal views. Nonnus was one of them. With his Paraphrasis he enters seriously and actively into these debates.

2. Nonnus and Gregory of Nazianzus

Arthur Ludwich38 and Joseph Golega39 first argued that Nonnus borrows from Gregory of Nazianzus and offered several convincing examples.

35 Translation adapted from Browne/Swallow (1984).
36 On this possibility see Accorinti (2013) 111 (with bibliography) and the first chapter in this volume.
37 De Trinitate I, 15.13–18 (Honscheid (1975) 50). De Trinitate ignores ὃ γέγονεν and the resulting interpretation of the passage is far from Origen and Cyril. In fact Cohee (1995) has argued that ὃ γέγονεν was a gloss added to the text. The author of De Trinitate seems to treat it as such. For the authorship of this work see Heron (1989) 178: 'The De Trinitate seems beyond all reasonable doubt to date from late fourth-century Alexandria. If Didymus is not the author, it is hard to imagine who else could have been.'
38 Ludwich (1887) 233–236.
Gennaro D’Ippolito discussed this issue in detail and offered more examples. The recent commentaries on Gregory and Nonnus have revealed even more examples. Several secure examples leave no doubt that Gregory was a model and a source for Nonnus. This means that a great number of other similarities could also be due to Gregory’s influence, even if there are additional earlier sources for the same similarities. Even in cases where Nonnus had in mind a source common to him and Gregory, the fact that he met the same word or phrase in Gregory as well would have had an impact. For example, for οἷνος πτερόεις (‘like a winged mind’) at Par. 6.82 there are earlier sources than Gregory, including a similar expression in Homer and elsewhere: Pind. Isthm. fr. 1α 6–7 Maehler (1989) νώφ | πτε[ρ]οε[ and Triph. 373 πτερόεις ... νόοιο. Still Nonnus’ phrase may owe something to Gregory’s carm. 1.2.36,[520]28 νόον πτερόεντα and 2.2.4.69 Moroni (2006) πτερόεντι νώφ (= AP 8.91). The frequency of some expressions in Gregory is likely to have made an impression upon Nonnus, even when these expressions also occur elsewhere. For example, ἡμαρ ἐπ’ ἡμαρ (Dion. 42.175) occurs earlier once in Theocritus (11.69 ἡμαρ ἐπ’ ἡμαρ), once in Oppian, four times in Gregory and twice in the Palatine Anthology (once in Palladas); its metrical sedes in Nonnus coincides only with Theocritus and two of the cases in Gregory. Generally, Nonnus seems to have been inspired by Gregory’s innovative use of words and phrases, often adapted to suit Gregory’s Christian or autobiographical context. I offer some more examples below, mostly taken from recent commentaries on Gregory and Nonnus. They include examples of single words, expressions related to Christian notions, combinations of verbs and nouns, unique forms and expressions that occur at the same metrical sedes, and, finally, some similarities of language and thought. We should not forget that there is always the possibility that both authors drew on lost Hellenistic and Classical works. But the amount and type of evidence is such that Gregory’s position as a source for Nonnus cannot be challenged. It suffices to say that,

42 The number in square brackets in references to Gregory’s poems indicates the column in Migne, PG 37. If a poem is available in a modern edition, a reference to the edition is given instead, the first time I refer to it.
43 Cf. also carm. 1.2.1.[522]6 πρὸς Θεόν υψιμέδοντα νόον πτερόν ἐνθεν ἀείρων.
for example, in Claudio De Stefani’s commentary on Paraphrasis 1 there is hardly a page with no reference to Gregory.

Examples of single words which seem to indicate a knowledge of Gregory by Nonnus44 include ἀρτιφαής (in the meaning of ‘newly shining’)45 and ζυτοκέλευστος, which is used by Nonnus both in the classical sense of the word (‘self-bidden’, i.e. ‘unbidden’) and its different use by Gregory, where it means ‘self-determined’.46 The use of βαθύκολπος in the meaning of ‘very deep’ (instead of the earlier meaning ‘deep-bosomed’) only occurs in Gregory before Nonnus.47 The use of the word ἀσήμαντος in the sense of not simply ‘unguided’, but also ‘unmarked’ or ‘unsealed’ (in association with the seal of baptism), occurs only at Par. 1.110 and carm. 2.1.19.66.48 Nonnus’ use of ἔρευγεσθαι (‘blurt out’) seems also to have been influenced by Gregory.49 ἀλιτρόβιος (‘living wickedly’) is found twice in Nonnus, in both Par. 15.73 and Dion. 12.72 and once in Gregory (2.1.28,[1288]12).50

Words and expressions related to Christian notions include πνεύματος αἴγλη (‘the radiance of the Spirit’), at Par. 7.149–150 and carm. 2.1.19.56 Simelidis (2009). ἀμπλακή is used (like ἀμφικτία of sin in Christian contexts; it occurs more than 18 times in Nonnus’ Paraphrasis and is also found 20 times in Gregory. Similarly, μυστικός (‘solemnizing mysteries’) in a Christian context occurs in the Paraphrasis and Gregory.51 υψόβρονος (‘enthroned on high’) is used twice by Pindar (of one of the Nereids and of the Fate Clotho) and is then found seven times in Gregory’s carmina, applied mainly to God, Christ, officers and bishops, followed by three times in Nonnus’ Par. in contexts similar to Gregory’s.52 The expression ζωῆ άθάνατος (‘immortal life’), twice in the Paraphrasis, occurs earlier in Greek poetry at carm. 2.1.13,[1231]45.53 ὑπερμάχοις (‘fighting against God’) occurs 28x Dion.; 3x Par.; once in Greg. Naz. (only once earlier, in Flavius Josephus).

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44 On single words see also Golega (1966) 10 n. 1 and D’Ippolito (1994) 208.
50 See Knecht (1972) 132–133. Cf. also Gregory’s ζεύγιος (‘living alone’, of ascetics), κοσμόβιος (‘one who dwells in this world’).
51 See Agosti (2003) 426 (on Par. 5.68).
53 See Agosti (2003) 482 (on Par. 5.114).
οὐρεσίφοιτος (‘frequenting mountains’), used of John the Baptist at Par. 1.14 and 5.128 was earlier used by Gregory on the ascetic life (1.2.17.43 Simelidis (2009)).\(^{54}\) The use of θυηπόλος (‘performing sacrifices’) on Christian priests might also have been inspired by Gregory.\(^{55}\)

Combinations of verbs and nouns that occur only in Nonnus and Gregory are also suggestive. In addition to the cases noticed by Golega and D’Ippolito, the Homeric βοηθόον with ὀπάξω (‘grant an assistant’) at Par. 6.169 occurs elsewhere only in Gregory.\(^{56}\) The same applies to ἄξω with χόλος (‘increase the wrath’) at Dion. 8.104 and 26.154.\(^{57}\) Also, δινεύειν with πούς/χόνος is only found at carm. 1.2.2.[605]343 πόδα δινεύειν and Dion. 15.67 ἄξον (= πόδας) δινεύοντες ... ἄμφρα χορείν (‘twirling their steps for the dance’); in Homer and Apollonius of Rhodes δινεύειν is intransitive.\(^{58}\)

Similar unique forms or expressions that occur at the same metrical sedes are also significant. For example, καθύπερθεν ἀερθείς (‘having been lifted above’) is found twice in Gregory and καθύπερθεν ἀείρας once in the Par., always at the end of the verse.\(^{59}\) ποιμενῆς σύριγγα (‘shepherd’s pipe’), found twice in Gregory’s poems at the beginning of the verse, is the source of ποιμενῆς σύριγγα, found three times in the Dion. at the same metrical sedes.\(^{60}\) ἄφρονι θυμό (‘crazed spirit’) occurs only at Par. 5.57 and carm. 2.1.1.434 Tulier/Bady (2004),\(^{61}\) while οὐ ποτὲ λήξω (‘I will never cease’) twice in the Dion. and once in Gregory, always at the end of the verse. οὐ μετὰ δὴν (‘not long after’) occurs only at Dion. 27.306 and carm. 1.2.2.[590]148, at the beginning of the line.\(^{62}\) Dion. 37.404 ῥυπόωσι χιτώνες (‘dirty coats’) seems inspired by carm. 1.2.2.[601]299 ῥυπόωσι χιτώνιν (the form ῥυπόωσι occurs in no other authors, while ῥυπόωσαν is found twice in Gregory and at Dion. 3.91, at the same metrical sedes). Some rare expressions, which are found in a few additional authors, are placed by Nonnus in the metrical sedes where

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\(^{55}\) Cf. Livrea (1989) 154 (on Par. 18.91); Sundermann (1991) 78 (on 1.2.3.16) and Caprara (2005) 227 (on Par. 4.110).

\(^{56}\) See Simelidis (2009) 204 (on carm. 2.19.65).

\(^{57}\) See Tringali (2011) 322–323 (on carm. 2.2.3.326).


\(^{60}\) See Simelidis (2009) 204 (on carm. 2.19.65).


only Gregory uses them. For example, μούνος ἐγὼ is found at Callimachus, ep. 29.4 Pfeiffer, *Batracomyomachia* 110 and three times in Gregory's poems; only in Gregory is it found (in all three times) at the beginning of the hexameter, where it is also placed by Nonnus seven times (6 times in *Dion*. and once in the *Par*.).

There are also cases of similar language and thought which prove that Gregory was a major source of inspiration for Nonnus. In the last years of his life, Gregory considered himself ‘a breathing corpse’: on four occasions he uses the phrase νεκρὸς ἔμπνοος or νέκυς ἔμπνοος, with the latter occurring also twice in *Dion*. For *Dion*. 16.293 νυχίας ἐρέθισεν ὅνειρος (‘provoked in dreams of the night’) cf. *carm*. 2.1.32.12 Simelidis (2009) 181.178 (= 26.169) κομῶντα βαθυπλούσιοι μετάλλοις recalls *carm*. 2.2.4.121 and πλούτῳ κομῶντα καὶ αἴματι καὶ πραπίδεσθην. For *Dion*. 20.373 ὡς κεν ἀεθλεύσαμι cf. three similar beginnings, only in Gregory: ὡς κεν ἀεθλεύσαντι, ὡς κεν ἀεθλεύσας, ὡς κεν ἀεθλήσας. ὡς κεν ἀεθλῆσας. διότα μοῦνα (‘only bones’) at *Dion*. 5.472 occurs earlier three times in Gregory. Nonnus’ ἐν ἡερι ταρσὸν ἑλίσσων (‘swinging his feet around the air’), twice in the *Dion*. at the end of the verse, could have been inspired by καὶ ἡερι ταρσὸν ἑντα at 2.2.3.93 Tringali (2011). For *Dion*. 18.17 ἁναζ κελίζετο (‘speak soothing words’), and also 9.57 θεός κελίζετο, cf. 2.2.3.121 Ἀναξ κελίσσετ. For *Dion*. 20.59 σκεδάσασα ... ἐνυό (‘scattered the assault’) recalls ἐκέδασε Ἰνυό at *carm*. 2.2.3.232 ἀπείρων with χείρ only at *Dion*. 2.512 χείρας ἀπείρων (‘endless hands’) and 2.2.3.247 μεγάλη καὶ ἀπείρων χείρ. The end of *Par*. 18.178 καὶ πάς, ὃς προβέβουλεν ἀληθείας ἥκον ἐλκεῖν (‘whoever chooses to bear the yoke of truth’), corresponding to John 18:37 καὶ πάς ὃ ὧν ἐκ τῆς

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69 See Tringali (2011) 250.
70 Cf. Tringali (2011) 265.
ἀλήθειας, is modelled on *carm.* 1.2.2.[615]444 ἀτυχίας ζυγὸν ἔλκων and 470 ζυγὸν ἔλκειν.76

Perhaps even more significant are cases where Nonnus builds a line or two in a way that clearly recalls Gregory as a model. For example, De Stefani has noticed the following case:

Par. 1.32  ἀπλανίες δέξαντο καὶ οὐ νόσον εἶχον ἀλήθην  
2.1.85.[1431]7  μικέτε πλάζει, θυμέ, νόσου στροφάλγησκεν ἀλήτου.77

Ludwich has also offered an example (*Par.* 1.91–92 ~ *carm.* 1.2.1.321–322),78 and Sundermann noticed more, interestingly also from *carm.* 1.2.1:

Par. 9.104–105  πώς δὲ εἰ ἀμφιθρήτες ἀνωθενησαν ὡσπαί  
1.2.1.[561]523–524  καὶ τίς ἁρωτιττών βλεφάρων ἐκθέασαν ὁμήρην  
Dion. 42.47–48  οὔθε οἰ εἰσορώνωτι κόρος πέλεν- ἱσταμένη γάρ  
1.2.1.[564]563–564  πορθένον ὅσσον ὡσπα, τόσον πλέον ἰδελε λεύσσειν.

Such examples indicate careful study of Gregory’s poems by Nonnus and leave no doubt that Gregory’s verse had a major impact on Nonnus, in terms of versification and vocabulary. These three examples from *carm.* 1.2.1., entitled παρθενίης ἐπαινος (‘A praise of virginity’), in 732 hexameters,79 give more weight to the rest of the similarities noticed by Sundermann (who only worked on lines 215–732 of the poem).80 It is worth citing a selection of what I consider significant cases (an asterisk indicates same metrical sedes):

1.2.1.216 μύστινις – *Dion.* 46.172*; *Par.* 12.6; 1.2.1.223 δεσµὰ βίοι – *Dion.* 37.4 βίον βρότου γανίτα δεσµά; 1.2.1.232 ὡσα λάχον – *Dion.* 26.295* ὡσα λάχον; 1.2.1.241 φοίνιξι πόθου νόµος – *Dion.* 3.143* φοίνικι πόθον; 1.2.1.245 ὡς ἐπέπου ὁ – *Dion.* 13.349*, 18.25;  

76 See Livrea (1989) 197.  
78 See Ludwich (1887) 233–234 and D’Ippolito (1994) 204.  
79 It is ‘a hexameter panegyric in the high style following all the rules of the genre—but on virginity’ (Cameron, Al. (2004) 349).  
Obviously, Gregory’s Praise of virginity was in Nonnus’ mind during the composition of both the Dionysiaca and the Paraphrasis.

Gregory seems also to have inspired the use of μάρτυς/μαρτυρεώ/μαρτυρή on some occasions in Nonnus. In his detailed study of this case, Vian (1997) argues that the ‘strong’ use of the words in the Paraphrasis (related to the extensive use of these words in John’s Gospel) could not derive from their ‘weak’ use in the Dionysiaca, which as a result must have been composed after the Paraphrasis. However, there are two problems with this view. First, it closely associates Nonnus’ study of John’s Gospel and other Christian literature (which, inspired by John, could also make significant use of these words) with his project of the Paraphrasis. However, Nonnus, whether he was always Christian or not, could have always been learned in Christian scholarship. Allusive Christian images and notions, Johannine concepts and Gregorian vocabulary in the
Dionysiaca, indicate Nonnus’ familiarity with Christian literature and theology, and not necessarily that the composition of the Paraphrasis was earlier. Second, Vian did not consider Gregory’s use of μάρτυς/μαρτυρέω/μαρτυρίη. Indeed, Gregory could have been an additional source for Nonnus’ use of these words. To take Vian’s example, singled out by Alan Cameron as particularly suggestive, the phrases μάρτυς ἀληθείης (‘witness of truth’) and μάρτυς ἑτημοίης could also have been inspired by Gregory’s ἀριστε... μαρτύρων τῆς ἀληθείας (at or. 25.1.22 Mossay (1981), on a Christian philosopher) and μάρτυρες ἀτρεκίης (AP 8.118.6, on the holy martyrs). John’s Gospel is certainly behind Nonnus’ extensive use of these terms in the Paraphrasis, but it seems it was not his only source of inspiration. And, in my view, the composition of the Paraphrasis should not be considered a prerequisite for the ‘weak’ use of these terms in the Dionysiaca. Christian literature, with which Nonnus must have always been familiar, makes abundant use of these terms. To add a few other examples from Gregory’s poems, for Par. 5.71 ἐπιμαρτυρον ἑστω (‘amen, let it be testified’) cf. Θεὸς δ’ ἐπιμαρτυρος ἑστω (twice in Gregory, 1.2.2,[610]410 and 2.2.4.181) and for Par. x8 μάρτυρι μόδις cf. 2.1.11.527 Tuillier/Bady (2004) τοῦτο μαρτύρει, λόγε; 2.1.11.558–561 τὸν λόγον | ἐξητε τούτον, [...] μαρτυρίαν δὲ τοῖς φίλοις | ὑν ἡδισθημεθ’ οὐδὲν ἡδονεκότες (‘you may have this account [...] as a testimony to my friends of the ways I was mistreated although I had done nothing wrong’) and 1.1.1.18 Moreschini (1997) μάρτυρε μύθων (‘witnesses of [divine] sayings’, on Moses and Isaiah). Nonnus’ use of the word in the Paraphrasis is still very extensive and rich in variety of forms. But two fundamental claims by Vian and Cameron, namely that these words were ‘never common in earlier poetry of any kind and date’ and that ‘Nonnus’ original inspiration was undoubtedly the Gospel he was paraphrasing.

78 Cameron, Al. (2000) 180. The phrases occur three times in the Paraphrasis (18.177, 20.138, 21.140), where they refer to Jesus or the author of the Gospel, and once in the Dionysiaca (37.270), where μάρτυς ἀληθείης is used of an umpire in a chariot race.

79 Cf. also Gregory’s carm. 2.1.11.63–64 (on his mother testifying on the truth of what he wrote earlier about his parents) σὺν ἐπάξομεν, ἀντίτημα, | ἐμὴν τεκούσαν, τῆς ἀληθείας στόμα.

80 Cf. also Gregory’s or. 24.7 Mossay (1981) λόγοι ἡμάρτωμεν.

should be modified to take into account Gregory’s use of the word in his Christian poetic contexts.\textsuperscript{83}

Similarly, the line which always seems ‘to leap out of its context in the “pagan” Dionysiaca (12.171): Βάκχος ἀνὰς δάκρυσε, βροτῶν ἵνα δάκρυα λύσῃ (‘Lord Bacchus has wept tears that he may wipe away man’s tears’), apart from Cyril’s commentary of John’s Gospel,\textsuperscript{88} occurs also in one of Gregory’s theological orations (or. 29.20 Gallay (1978)): (sc. Jesus) δακρύει, ἀλλὰ παύει δάκρυον.\textsuperscript{84} According to Cameron, this line confirms that Nonnus first did his research (and composition) of the Paraphrasis and then wrote the Dionysiaca:

> It is not easy to believe that a man who so obviously preferred spending his leisure hours reading the poets and mythographers found either time or motive to wade through this [i.e. Cyril’s commentary] immensely long, difficult, and highly polemical work in twelve books.\textsuperscript{85}

However, it turns out that Cyril was not Nonnus’ only possible source for this idea and, more significantly, it seems that Nonnus must have also spent his leisure hours reading Christian literature, including the Bible and various patristic texts. In my view, Nonnus was genuinely interested in Christian theology and exegesis and his reading and learning went far beyond the time and requirements of his Paraphrasis of John’s Gospel.

Given Nonnus’ undoubtedly significant debt to the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus, I am tempted to wonder whether he could have been influenced by Gregory’s verse in any respect other than vocabulary and verse construction. For example, could Gregory’s metrical practice have encouraged Nonnus to take more liberties in the Paraphrasis (compared to his (earlier?) practice in the Dionysiaca)? Gregory of Nazianzus’ ‘imperfect’

\textsuperscript{83} For other uses of this word in Gregory’s poems see, for example, 1.2.1.[551.397] μάρτυς ἐμὸν ἐπέων καὶ σὸς πόθος; 2.2.1.[1470]260 μάρτυσε σωφροσύνης; 1.15.[477]9–10; 1.2.24.[806]227.
\textsuperscript{88} See Cameron, Al. (2000) 180–181 (and cf. Cameron, Al. (2011) 700–701), who attributes this parallel to Golega (1930) 79. Cyril’s line is: δακρύει δὲ ὁ Κύριος ... ἵνα ἡμῶν περιστείλῃ τὸ δάκρυον.
\textsuperscript{84} Cyril has ἵνα, but Gregory’s παύει corresponds better to Nonnus’ λύσῃ. For ἵνα cf. Greg. Naz. or. 37.2 Moreschini (1985): (sc. Jesus) τάχα καὶ δακρύει ἵνα τὸ δάκρυον ἐπαινετῶν ἀπεργάσηται.
\textsuperscript{85} Cameron, Al. (2000) 181.
metrical practice was conscious and deliberate and this may be a better way to understand the liberties of the Paraphrasis as well, instead of placing its composition at an earlier period, when Nonnus' metrical technique might not have been fully developed. There are cases of false quantities or hiatus in the Paraphrasis which could have been easily avoided by Nonnus. With the Dionysiaca Nonnus proved his ability at metrical perfection, but (later?), in his Christian poem, he gave priority to the content or simply wanted to make a statement that in this case perfection in meter was not necessary and meter would give way to the (Christian) content. Like Gregory, Nonnus might have felt that metrical perfection would not (or should not) matter for a Christian poet and his audience. Or, like Gregory, Nonnus perhaps came to realize that there was little point in striving for metrical perfection in an age where quantitative versification was a purely artificial practice. I would see a deliberate metrical imperfection and flexibility on his part as a sign of maturity, perhaps a feature of Nonnus' 'late style', and I would like to close this

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86 Cf. Cameron, Al. (2004) 338–339: '[G]iven the fact that in everything but prosody Gregory shows considerable technical competence, his "false" quantities (a characterization that reveals our own classicizing perspective) are not really likely to be the result of ignorance. The explanation of this paradox is surely that he deliberately ignored classical quantities when it suited him. [...] Within the parameters of his classicizing, Gregory was (I suggest) making a half-hearted attempt to come to terms with the pronunciation of his own day, anticipating the Byzantine doctrine of dichrona.'


88 Maas (1962) 14: 'in his paraphrase of St. John's Gospel the subject-matter forces him to commit several false quantities (e.g. Νικόδημος and also κρίμας, for which there is no excuse). For a case of hiatus that could not occur in the Dionysiaca, see Par. 13.123 ή ἃ τι πτώχεσι (corresponding to the Gospel's ή τοίς πτώχεσι ήα τι), on which cf. Agosti in Agosti/Gonnelli (1995) 350.

89 Cf. Dihle (1994) 606–607: 'As some remarks by Gregory prove, these slight variations from tradition [i.e. Gregory's occasional non-poetic words or phrases and his sloppiness in metrical composition] were conscious, as well as presumably intentional. In any case, his technique helped him to deal with a great variety of themes, and in spite of its ties to very old conventions at odds with contemporary linguistic reality, to make his poetry the vehicle of a living expression of current thoughts and feelings. [...] it is certainly legitimate to see Gregory as the herald of a different age, with other demands on, and other possibilities for, poetry.'

90 A term illustrated and defined in the twentieth century by Adorno (2002), in an essay originally published in 1937, and Said (2006). I would not make an attempt to apply Said's modern definitions to ancient authors. However, the notion that works from an artist's
chapter with a quotation by Sir Edmund Gosse (on Robert Louis Stevenson):

He had mastered his manner and, as one may say, learned his trade, in the exercise of criticism and the reflective parts of literature, before he surrendered himself to that powerful creative impulse which had long been tempting him, so that when, in mature life, he essayed the portraiture of invented character he came to it unhampered by any imperfection of language'.

As suggested by Mary Whitby, we are justified in wondering if Nonnus composed the *Dionysiaca* to limber up for this more challenging task of the *Paraphrasis*.\(^{92}\)

\(^{91}\) Gosse (1903).


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