Philagathos of Cerami, Procopius of Gaza, and the Rhetoric of Appropriation

Mircea G. DuIuş

The Byzantine rhetorical culture presupposed a practice of authorship that demanded the imitation and appropriation (µίμησις) of sanctioned literary models. A fine illustration of this cultural attitude is afforded by the surprising array of rhetorical models employed in the Homilies of Philagathos of Cerami.¹ He was an influential preacher in the Norman Kingdom of Sicily during the reigns of Roger II (1130–1154) and William I (1154–1166). Setting forth new textual evidence, the present contribution brings to light Philagathos’ use of Procopius of Gaza’s Description of the Image

¹ Philagathos’ homiletic corpus is only partly critically edited; most notably, G. Rossi-Taibbi, Filagato da Cerami, Omelie per i vangeli domenicali e le feste di tutto l’anno I Omelie per le feste fisse (Palermo 1969), edited 35 sermons; other homilies have been edited by S. Caruso, “Le tre omelie inedite ‘Per la Domenica delle Palme’ di Filagato da Cerami,” EEBS 41 (1974) 109–132; G. Zaccagni, “Filagato, hom. XLI. Edizione e traduzione,” in N. Bianchi (ed.), La tradizione dei testi greci in Italia meridionale: Filagato da Cerami philosophos e didaskalos (Bari 2011) 149–163; C. Torre, “Inediti di Filagato Kerameus dall’Ambros. C 100 sup. (Omelie LVI e LVIII Rossi Taibbi),” Bizantinistica 14 (2012) 105–151; N. Bianchi, “Frammento omiletico inedito per la Vergine: Filagato da Cerami, hom. LXXXVI,” BollBadGr 6 (2009) 307–311; nonetheless, a significant number of homilies are still available only in Scorsus’ edition (Paris 1644) reprinted in PG 132.135–1078. In this essay Philagathos’ Homilies are cited according to the order established by Rossi-Taibbi, followed by paragraph, editor’s name, and page number; for the homilies available in PG alone, we first indicate the number of the homily according to Rossi-Taibbi’s numeration (hereafter RT), then the editor (i.e. Scorsus), the number of the homily in PG, and the column(s) and section(s).
I shall start by introducing the Byzantine reception of Procopius’ rhetorical writings and then offer an overview of Philagathos’ florilegic technique and use of sources for better contextualizing his appropriations of Procopian material. Next, I briefly describe his documented interest in the Procopian corpus, and then seek to present the new evidence on his engagement with Procopius’ oeuvre.

Procopius of Gaza’s (ca. 470–ca. 530) rhetorical corpus, despite its extremely limited manuscript tradition, was admired, imitated, and excerpted throughout the Byzantine period. Citations from Procopius were incorporated in various lexica and florilegia, as in the Lexicon Seguerianum (7th cent.), Florilegium Marcianum (9th cent.), Florilegium Georgideum (end of 10th cent.), and the Loci communes of Ps.-Maximus Confessor (10th/11th cent.). Photius in the ninth century praised Procopius’ polymorphous corpus, which he qualified as “worthy of admiration and a source of imitation” (Ἴξιον ζήλου καὶ μιμήσεως χρῆμα). In


4 Bibl. cod. 160, 103a (II 123 Henry).
the eleventh and twelfth centuries Procopius’ works were read and imitated by Michael Psellos (1018–1078), John Tzetzes (1110–1180), Nikephoros Basilakes (late 11th cent.), and Anna Komnene (1083–1153). A significant interest in Procopius’ corpus is attested during the cultural renaissance of the Palaiologan era (1259–1453), when were produced most of the surviving non-apograph copies of his works (Vat.gr. 1898, Marc.gr. 428, Par.gr. 1038, and Laur.plut. 60. 6). Moreover, E. Amato and A. Corcella, who in addition to making momentous contributions to the study of Procopius of Gaza, have offered indisputable evidence on Philagathos of Cerami’s reliance on the Procopian corpus. This essay builds on their findings.

Philagathos, a monk in the monastery of Theotokos Hodegetria in Rossano in Calabria, is one of the best-known homilists of the Byzantine world. His substantial corpus of homilies (88 altogether), the so-called Italo-Greek homiliary, marks the codification of the Byzantine exegetical tradition in Southern Italy. It reflects similar processes of systematization of Orthodox religious knowledge in Southern Italy as illustrated by the literary activity of Neilos Doxapatres. Neilos composed an ecclesiastical treatise in 1143/4, addressed to Roger II, on the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Byzantine church, and wrote, most probably in the San Salvatore monastery in Messina, a monumental theological anthology, De oeconomia Dei, which for the larger part amasses quotations from a striking variety of

5 Amato, in Procope de Gaza LXX.


authors. Similarly, the compositional technique of Philagathos’ homiliary reflects the same Byzantine florilegic habit, characterized by quotation (most often unacknowledged) of sanctioned authorities. Alongside a vast deployment of Christian writers, among whom prominently feature Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory the Theologian, Michael Psellus, the Monogenes of Makarios Magnes, Philagathos was steeped in the Byzantine rhetorical culture. Manifestly, he typified the Byzantine practice of authorship that prescribed the imitation of the literary models advocated in the various handbooks on style (Hermogenes, Aphthonios, and Dionysios of Halikarnassos among the most influential). A wide repertoire of rhetorical devices such as ekphrasis, synkrisis, antithesis, diegesis, ethopoia, and threnos are embedded in his Homilies.

What immediately deserves to be highlighted are the adaptations and quotations from the ancient novelists Achilles Tatius (2nd cent.) and Heliodorus (4th cent.), Lucian of Samosata (120–192), Alciphrong (2nd cent.), and Procopius of Gaza. It is


suggestive that the authors cherished by Philagathos were prominent literary models recommended in near-contemporary handbooks on style like the anonymous *On the Four Parts of the Perfect Speech* (*Περὶ τῶν τεσσάρων μερῶν τοῦ τελείου λόγου*) recently ascribed to the thirteenth century.  

The evidence hitherto uncovered for Philagathos’ use of Procopius concerns the lost *Monody for Antioch, Monody 1, The Ekphrasis of the Water-Clock, The Ethpopia of Phoenix*, and the *Epistles*. Thus, unacknowledged citations from the *Monody for Antioch* have been uncovered in Philagathos’ homily *For the Holy Innocents* (*Hom. 24 RT*).  

Snippets from *Monody 1* surface in the homilies *On the Widow’s Son* (*Hom. 6 RT*) and *On the Book of Generation of Jesus Christ and about Thamar* (*Hom. 22 RT*). Citations *ad verbum* from the *Ekphrasis of the Water-Clock* (*Ἔκφρασις ὡρολογίου*) have been revealed in Philagathos’ celebrated *La παράργος ὀφήγησις* in Filagato da Cerami: una particolare tecnica narrativa," *RSBN* 35 (1998) 47–65; Duluş, Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure 93–195.


*13* Corcella, *RET* 1 (2011/2) 3–4, and *BZ* 103 (2010) 33–37; e.g. *Hom. 22.6 (RT 143):* ὡς ἐν ὀνείρῳ τῷ γάµῳ πελάσασα, καὶ οὐδὲ παιδὸς εὐµοιρήσασα, εἰς τὸν τρίτον παιδὸς Σηλώ = *Proc. Op. 14.7 (Or. 4: 462.21 Amato):* ὡς ἐν ὀνείρῳ τῷ γάµῳ πελάσασα. In this essay the Procopian citations are from Amato, *Procop de Gaza*, and include paragraph, page number(s), and line(s).
phrasis of the Cappella Palatina (Hom. 27 RT).\textsuperscript{14} In addition, as Amato convincingly argued, the incipit of Philagathos’ ekphrasis imitates the incipit of Procopius’ Ethopoia of Phoenix (Ἡθοποία Φοίνικος).\textsuperscript{15} He further pointed out that in addition to verbatim quotations there are other passages in Philagathos’ Homilies that bespeak the imprint of Procopius’ works.\textsuperscript{16}

The parallels identified reveal that Philagathos relied on Procopius’ Epistles for describing the emotions experienced in his pastoral endeavor. This type of source use reproduces a rhetorical pattern of self-representation that required the imitation of established stylistic models for speaking about oneself or for describing one’s relationship with the audience. In fact, Philagathos often relied on the literary tradition for describing the affectionate relation with his audience.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{15} Hom. 27.1 (RT 174): Συνήδοµαι σοι, πόλις, καὶ σοί, θείε τῶν ἀνακτόρων νοέ = Proc. Op. 7.1 (200.4 Amato): Συνήδοµαι μὲν τοῖς “Ἔλλησιν. On this textual parallel Amato, Byzantion 82 (2012) 14, aptly commented: “La coincidenza è davvero fin troppo sospetta per escludere che Filagato, quasi strizzando l’occhio al suo pubblico, non abbia inteso effettivamente imitare il non citato oratore cristiano di Gaza, tanto più se si considera che nel manoscritto, da cui sono tramandati gli scritti ‘profani’ di Procopio (e, dunque, presumibilmente anche nell’antigrafo di partenza), l’Etopea di Fenice precede la Descrizione dell’orologio, modello, abbiamo visto, per la descrizione della recinzione del presbiterio della Cappella palermitana.”

\textsuperscript{16} Byzantion 82 (2012) 12–14.

\textsuperscript{17} See for instance Hom. 9.1 (RT 61), an appropriation from Heliodorus’ Aethiopica hitherto unnoticed in the scholarship: Ἐπέχει κατὰ τὴν γλῶσσαν ἡ νόσος τοῦ σώματος, λύει δὲ τούτην ὁ πόθος τοῦ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας πληρώματος. Οἱ πόνοι σιγαν ἀναγκαζοντο, τὸ φίλτρον καλεῖν ἀνασεπεῖνε καὶ μειώσει τῆς νόσου ἣ πρὸς ἵπταν ὡμᾶς ὡμιλεῖν καθίσταται. Τοιούτων ἡ ἀκραφιώς ἀγάπη; τῶν μὲν ἔξωθεν προσπιπτόντων ὑπερφρονεῖ, πρὸς δὲ τὸ φιλούµενον ἀφορόσα ἢδυνετα, “The disease of my body restrains my tongue, but the desire for the
These findings have established that Philagathos’ appropriations are based on first-hand knowledge of Procopius’ writings. At the same time, it has become manifest that the manuscript circulating in twelfth-century Southern Italy transmitted a larger collection of Procopius’ writings, including his now lost Monody for Antioch written about the devastating earthquake of 526.\textsuperscript{18}

A hitherto unnoticed use of Procopius’ œuvre occurs in Philagathos’ homily “The lamp of the body is the eye” (on Mt 6:22–23). It is applied in a rare description of an interaction with the audience. The homilist portrays a deacon who is sleeping during his exposition of the Gospel:\textsuperscript{19}  

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ἀλλὰ ὁ ἔρως τὸν ἑκάστην ἐκάθισεν διάκονον ὑπνοῦ βαροῦμενον: ἐφ’ ἰκανὸς γὰρ ὦρας ἐπιτηρήσας εἶδον ὡς κάτωθι περικραδαινόμενον, καὶ τὸ βλέμμα χαῦνον, καὶ τὸ σῶμα στηριγμάτων ἐπιθέλωμεν, καὶ τὴν ψυχήν ὄσπερ ἀριστομένην, καὶ ζῶντος τοῦ σώματος θάτερον δὲ πῆχυν τῷ ὑπνῷ λυόμενον καὶ μόλις ἀκροῖς δακτύλοις τῆς παρειᾶς ἐπιψάυοντα. Ἀλλὰ τὸ πάσχεις,}
\end{quote}

perfection of the Church unloosens it. The pain forces me to keep silence, the love persuades me to speak, and the speech before you is to me a consolation for my sickness. Such is the perfect love: on the one hand it overlooks whatever happens from without, on the other it delights in looking at the beloved object” = Aeth. 1.2 (ed. Colonna 58–60): Οὕτως ἂρα πόθος ἀκριβῆς καὶ ἔρως ἀκραφυνθῆς τῶν μὲν ἐξ εὐθείας προσεπιτόντων ὁλγεῖσθαι τε καὶ ἱδεῖσθαι πάντων ἀπεφρονεῖ, πρὸς ἐν δὲ τὸ φιλόμενον καὶ ὀρῶν καὶ συννεῖσθαι τὸ φρόνημα κατανυκτίζειν. “So it is that genuine affection and wholehearted love disregard all external pains and pleasures and compel the mind to concentrate thought and vision on one object: the beloved” (transl. J. R. Morgan, in B. P. Reardon [ed.], Collected Ancient Greek Novels [Berkeley 1989] 355).

\textsuperscript{18} Amato, Byzantion 82 (2012) 8–9, and Procope de Gaza LXVIII; Corcella, \textit{RET} 1 (2011/2) 4.

\textsuperscript{19} Hom. 63 (Scorsus, \textit{Hom.} 42; \textit{PG} 132.813D–816A). The text presented here is based on \textit{Matrit.gr.} 4554, f. 81v (M); on the manuscript see Gregorio de Andres, \textit{Catálogo de los códices griegos de la Real Biblioteca de El Escorial I} (Madrid 1965) 15–20; G. Rossi-Taibbi, \textit{Sulla tradizione manoscritta dell’omiliario di Filagato di Cerami} (Palermo 1965) 51–58.

\textsuperscript{20} περικραδαινόμενον suppellevi ex M] κραδαινόμενον Scorsus.

\textsuperscript{21} Ἀλλὰ τὸ πάσχεις \textit{M} | Ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ τὶ πάσχεις Scorsus.
ὦ οὗτος, ἀκαίρῳ νυσταγμῷ βαρυνόμενος; Τί δὲ σαυτὸν αἰσχύ-

νείς ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀκροάσεως ὑπνῷ δουλακωγούμενος; Εἰ δὲ

ποδοστρόφον Μενάδα 39 ὁρχωμένη ἑώρας, ἡ κασσωρίδα μαχλόσαν ἀσελγείας ἐν

ἐντῶν θείων ἑρηνευμένων φωνῶν ἡ τῆς ἀκηδίας σοι μολυβδίς ἐπιβαρύνει τὰς βλέφαρα.

But I see that honourable deacon oppressed by sleep; as I kept

an eye on him for a long time, I saw him quivering just as

though suffering from catalepsy, his eye foggy, his body lacking

support, his soul as if flying away, though his body is still alive; with

the other forearm slackened by sleep and only just lightly touching the

cheek with the end of his fingers. But, you there, what’s the matter with

you for being weighed down by untimely slumber? Why do you

shame yourself being enslaved to sleep at the time of instruction?

For if you had seen a frenzied woman dancing or a lewd harlot

chanting words of wantonness, you would have kept yourself

awake, both your sight and your sense of hearing. But now when

the divine words are explained, the leaden weight of your torpor

presses hard upon your eyelids.

Bitter irony and humour permeate the description of the

deacon.26 What is perhaps most fascinating about Philagathos’

account is his appropriation of Procopius’ Description of the Image

placed in the City of Gaza (“Εκφρασις εἰκόνος ἐν τῇ πόλει τῶν Γα-

22 Εἰ δὲ ποδοστρόφον Μ [Εἰ δὲ καὶ ποδοστρόφον Scorsus.

23 μενάδα Μ.


25 The verb μαχλάω is recurrent in Cyril of Alexandria; a congruent usage occurs in his Commentarius in xii prophetas minores 1.17.10 (ed. Pusey, Oxford 1868): καὶ τοῦτο μαχλόσαν καὶ πεπορνευμένην.

ζαίων κειμένης), a source not so far recognized in the homiletic corpus. Procopius’ renowned ekphrasis illustrates scenes of the myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus, as well as scenes from Iliad Book 3. Philagathos imitates and tailors to his own ends Procopius’ description of Phaedra:28

Ἀλλὰ τί τούτο πέπονθα; τῇ τοῦ ζωγράφου τέχνῃ πεπλάνη καὶ ζῆν ταύτα νεόμικα καὶ λανθάνειν τὴν θέαν, ὃτι πέροκε γραμματα. οὐκόν περὶ τῆς Φαίδρας, μὴ πρὸς ἐκείνην φθεγγώμεθα. τὸ γὰρ σχῆμα ταύτης ἐλέγχει τὸν ἔρωτα. ὥς εἰκός, ὑποκείεται τὸν νῶτον καὶ πέπειν τῷ σκῆμισι. ὁ δὲ πῆχυν καὶ πάθει λυόμενον καὶ μόλις ἀκρω δακτύλῳ τῆς παρειᾶς ἐπιψάοντα.

But what is this I experience? I am deceived by the art of the painter and think all this is alive, and my sight forgets that this is a painting. Let me speak about Phaedra, not to her. Her form proves her love. You can see her moist eye, her mind unsettled by passion, her body lacking support, her soul wandering, though her body is still alive. A couch laid under her for sitting yet lying close to the [king’s] bed, as was fitting, sustains her back and leads to the small bed. Behold the forearm slackened by passion and only just lightly touching the cheek with the end of the finger.

Philagathos’ appropriation echoes the scene taking place in


the palace. At the center of a hypostyle hall, Theseus, king of Athens, is shown lying on his bed, attended by Hypnos leaning on his bed and three boy servants. Close to the king’s bed sits his wife, Phaedra, accompanied by an old nursemaid, reading the thoughts of her mistress and persuading her to write a letter to Hippolytus expressing her love. Procopius’ account portrays Phaedra restless and tormented by her forlorn and tragic love for her stepson. What sparked Philagogos’ adaptation of Procopius ekphrasis for portraying the sleeping deacon is the analogy provided by the painting, which depicts Theseus asleep in the palace a few lines above. The homilist retrieved this literary context and combined it with the image of Phaedra’s uncontrolled desire and lack of self-restraint. In fact, the association between untimely sleep and passion reflects a well-established monastic mindset. Basil the Great in the Great Asketikon reports the question: “Why does untimely sleep come upon us and how can we thrust it out?” The Cappadocian explains that untimely sleep occurs when oblivion to God’s judgments comes the soul. It appears that the homilist connects the monastic theme of untimely sleep with wantonness and lack of self-restraint.

The exegetic connection is based on Procopius’ ekphrasis as the recrimination of the deacon (Ἀλλὰ τί πάσχεις, ὦ οὗτος, ἀκαίρῳ νυσταγμῷ βαρυνόμενος; Ἦδις ἐκεῖνον αἰσχύνεις ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀκροάσεως ὕπνῳ δουλαγωγούμενος;) is modelled on a passage of Procopius’ ekphrasis which speaks of Phaedra’s unbridled passion (Op. 9.16 [197.13–19]):

Θησεὺς μὲν καθεύδει καὶ τὴν τύχην οἰκέται βιάζονται. Φαίδραν δὲ ἐκείνην οὐ κατέσχε ἔρως. Ἐρώτας ἐνεμέτο. Ἀλλὰ τί πάσχεις, ὦ γυναι, ἀνόνητον πονεῖς οὐκ εὐτυχοῦντος τοῦ Ἐρωτος. πῶς γὰρ δὴ καὶ

30 Bas. Reg. brev. 32 (PG 31.1104C).
Theseus is asleep and the members of his household take advantage of the opportunity. But sweet sleep holds not Phaedra. Instead of sleep, Love has taken possession of her heart. *What is happening to you, woman? You suffer in vain from a love which cannot succeed. How will you persuade him who knows self-restraint? Why do you shame yourself by longing to approach a forbidden bed.* (transl. Kennedy)

Philagathos’ rhetorical interrogations are thus inspired by Procopius’ text. Notably, the image of Theseus held by sleep which triggered Philagathos’ adaptation is an innovation of Procopius. In Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (281, 660) Theseus is said to be away on a state visit when the first events unfold.  

It may not be just a coincidence that the same recrimination is addressed to Herod in Philagathos’ homily *On the Beheading of St. John the Baptist* (*Hom.* 35 [RT 239–244]): *Τί σαυτὸν αἰσχύνεις, λέχος ἐνυβρίζων ὁ ἡγνιον καὶ ἐπιδέμνα βαίνων παράνομα;* (“Why do you disgrace yourself by mocking thy brotherly bridal-bed and mounting lawless couches?”). If the reprimand appears too common to indicate a filiation, the similarity between contexts is striking in that both refer to illegitimate seduction and may in fact be indicative of a Procopian imprint.

But Procopius’ *Description of the Image* can in fact be demonstrated in *Hom.* 35. This sermon was pronounced at the liturgical commemoration of the biblical event on 29 August in the Church of St. John of the Hermits (San Giovanni degli Eremiti) in Palermo during one of Philagathos’ sojourns in the capital. Stylistically, it showcases his mastery of incorporating various rhetorical models. It contains a pictorial *ekphrasis* of St. John the Baptist based on passages from Basil of Caesarea’s *Homily on the Martyr Gordius*, Gregory of Nyssa’s *Eulogy of Saint Basil*, and quotations from the Homeric poems (*Il.* 16.235 and *Od.* 9.191).  

31 See on this Thénevet, in *L’École de Gaza* 237.

Noteworthy is the depiction of the emotions that divided Herod’s soul, modeled after an episode in Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon*. Similar to what is provided for *Toxaris*, however, the most arresting aspect of Philagathos’ sermon is the ekphrasis of the glamorous appearance and licentious dance of Herodias’ daughter (whom Josephus identifies as Salome) (*Hom. 35.8 [RT 241–242]*):

*Θυγάτριον ἥν τῇ Ἡρωδίαδι ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Φιλίππου νομίμων κηδεμούσων τεχθέν, ἀστεῖον μὲν καὶ τὴν ὀψιν αὐχέων, ἀλλὰς δὲ ἵπτωμών καὶ προπετές καὶ ἀναίσχυντον, καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς τῆς ἀσπίδος μητρὸς ἀπεικόνισμα. Ταύτην κοσμήσασα ἡ μοιχαλίς μὴ τρέφοντο καὶ νυμφικῶς περιστείλασα, πρὸς τοὺς εὐωχουμένους ὀρχησμένην ἐξέπεμψεν. Ἡ δέ, ὡς ἐν μέσῳ γένοιτο τῶν δαίτιων, πρὸς τῷ μη ἀισχυνθῆναι κορικὼς ἀποξύσασα τῶν προςώπων πάσαν αἰδῶν, ὀσπερ κορυβαντίωσα ἔβαχεν.*

33 Philagath, *Hom. 35.5 (RT 240–241)*: Ὅροιν γὰρ Ἡρωδῆς ὀργαιάς τὸν προφήτην τοὺς ἐλέγχοις τοῦτον μαστίζοντα, ἀνυποστόλῳ τῇ θάρσει τοὺς δυσοδεῖς τῆς φούλης προξενοῦντα, πολλοῖς ἐμερίζοντα τὴν ψυχήν, αἰσχύνη, ἔρωτι καὶ θυμῷ ἠσχύνετο τῷ κήρυκος τὸ ἀξίωμα, ὀργίζετο ἐλεγχόμενος, ὁ ἔρως τὴν ὄργην ἐπὶ πλέον ἀνέφλεγε, καὶ τέλος ἡ φιληδονία νυκτὸ τὸ ὀνόμαθον. “For Herod seeing the prophet violently flog him with rebukes and parading the filthiness of his foul deeds openly and fearlessly, had his soul torn apart by many conflicting emotions—shame, love, and anger; he was ashamed before the herald’s standing, enraged when chastised; for love greatly inflamed the anger and the lust for pleasure prevails at last over the one who has been taken captive” = Ach. Tat. 5.24.3: ὃς δὲ προϊόντα καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐνέτυχε, πάσαν μεθούσα τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐμερίζος πολλοῖς ὡς τὴν ψυχήν, αἰδῶν καὶ ὄργην καὶ ἔρωτι καὶ ζηλοτυπίαν. ἠσχύνετο τόν ὀνόμα, ὀργίζετο τοῖς γράμμασιν, ὁ ἔρως ἐμάραινε τὴν ὄργην, ἐξῆπτε τὸν ἔρωτα ἡ ζηλοτυπία, καὶ τέλος ἐκράτησεν ὁ ἔρως.*

34 On Philagathos’ Lucianic allusions see also N. Bianchi, “Filagato da Cerami lettore del De domo ovvero Luciano in Italia meridionale,” in *La tradizione dei testi* 47.


**Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies** 60 (2020) 472–497
Herodias had a little daughter born from her legitimate marriage with Philip, charming and not unappealing looking, but of uncommon impudence, reckless and shameless, truly the representation of her viperish mother. The adulterous mother, embellishing her daughter more gracefully and dressing her up in wedding dress, sent her out dancing in front of those sumptuously feasting. And she stepped out among the guests instead of being ashamed as a girl should be, and wiping off all modesty from her countenance danced as if filled with Corybantic frenzy, wildly moving her hair, twisting herself indecently, lifting up her elbows, disclosing her breast, raising up one of her two feet, laying herself bare by the swift bending of her body, and forthwith revealing something of those parts, which are unfit to be spoken; with unabashed expression she turned the eyes of the beholders toward herself, and by gestures of every kind she stupefied the spectators’ minds. At that moment, Herod truly seemed more beastlike than human, probably [he was] an object of derision, since he provided a young girl, a virgin, as it seems, to behave so shamelessly in the sight of men. Then, there was a further increase of evil, for the dance of the Maenad-born dancer pleased him. Being possessed by an ardent passion for her mother and overcome by drunkenness, and although it was nothing that the newcomer had asked, [Herod] promised her

37 μαναδογενής (“maenad-bred” or “maenad-descended”) is a hapax.
that he would even divide the kingdom for the sake of her obscene twisings and wild leaping of her feet, and the slave of licentiousness added to the promise a vow.

This is one of the most extensive accounts of her performance in the Byzantine homiletic literature. For this amplified description of Salome’s performance, Philagathos amassed a mosaic of vignettes on impudence plucked from Alciaphron’s letters, Heliodorus’ Aethiopica, and Procopius’ Description of the Image. For the characterization of Salome’s performance as exposing the hidden parts of her body (καὶ τάχα τι καὶ τῶν ἀπορρήτων ύποδεικνύουσα) recalls Procopius’ description of Phaedra, who “by wearing a transparent tunic reveals something of those parts, which are unfit to be spoken” (λεπτῷ δὲ χιτωνίσκῳ [σχεδόν τι καὶ τῶν ἀπορρήτων ύπέδειξεν). That Philagathos relied on Procopius’ text is reinforced by the fact that the same section about Phaedra’s passion is used in Hom. 63 in portraying the sleeping deacon, as noted above.

Philagathos’ description of Salome’s lecherous dance is surprising given the anxieties aroused by the image of the dancer in patristic literature and the rhetorical conception of language as a force that can affect the conscience through the power of words. For evocative descriptions were thought to have the same efficacy in stirring the imagination of the audience as the sight itself. This is, for instance, a recurrent theme in St. John Chrysostom: the great preacher argued that one should avoid the mere sight of a prostitute, since such sights creep into the viewer’s mind and it is impossible not to be affected by them.

In the twelfth century, Zonaras, commenting on the council of

38 Closest to Philagathos’ ekphrasis of the dance in terms of vividness is Basil of Seleucia’s Oratio XVIII in Herodiadem, PG 85.226D–236C. On the theme of dance in this sermon see R. Webb, “Salome’s Sisters: The Rhetoric and Realities of Dance in Late Antiquity and Byzantium,” in L. James (ed.), Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium (London 1997) 135–141.
40 See on this Webb, in Women, Men and Eunuchs 131–134.
41 C. ludos et theat., PG 56.266.
Trullo (A.D. 691/2), which outlawed public spectacle and dancing, explained that such sights were bound to arouse wantonness in the audience.\(^{42}\)

In the case of Philagathos, the assiduous imitation of rhetorical models elucidates the purpose of descriptive detail. The goal is to achieve vividness and emotional evocation. Indeed, behind Philagathos’ indulgence in conveying erotic details may stand the stylistic influence of Procopius’ *Description of the Image*. Besides the description of Phaedra’s transparent garments and seductive body, the *ekphrasis* includes other scenes suffused with dramatic and erotic appeal that may have affected Philagathos’ description of Salome’s performance. Thus, the image of Salome as “disclosing her breast” (παραγυνοῦσα τὰ στέρνα) recalls the licentious peasant woman nearly exposing her breasts (Procop. *Op.* 9.33 [206.7–8]: παραγυνοῖ τῷ μέρος καὶ τῷ μασθὸν ἄν ύπεδείξεν) while she watched the brutal spectacle of the servant beating the old nursemaid in the second episode of the myth. Furthermore, the exposed breast of the old nursemaid when struck down by the servant (Procop. *Op.* 9.25 [202.20–21]: γυνοῖς δὲ τοῖς στέρνοις ἐπιβαλοῦσα τὴν χεῖρα) provides another possible analogy for Philagathos’ imagery. Finally, in light of Philagathos’ acquaintance with Procopius’ *Monody* 1 (*Op.* 14), the depiction of Salome’s movements as “obscene twistings and wild leaping of her feet” (πορνικῶν λυγισμῶν καὶ ποδῶν ἀτάκτου στροφῆς) seems to reflect Procopius’ description of the excellence of the youth who “passed beyond wild leapings despite being very young” (*Op.* 14.3 [459.23–24]: νεώτατος ὑπερβας ἀτακτόντα πηδήματα).

It is opportune to note here that the account of the old nursemaid’s sufferings in Procopius’ *Description of the Image* recalls the extreme gestures of bereavement in Philagathos’ homily *On the Widow’s Son*. The mother’s desolation at the loss of her beloved son is vividly rendered as “burning up her entrails, withering

her lips, tearing her hair, baring her chest, unveiling her head... and almost breathing out her life along with him” (Hom. 6.8 [RT 40]: ἀπηνθρακωμένη τὰ σπλάγχνα, πεφρυγμένη τὰ χείλη, κεκαρμένη τὴν κόμην, γυμνὴ τὰ στέρνα, ἀπαρακάλυπτος τὴν κεφαλήν). In another passage Philagathos writes that upon “smiting her chest and head with stones she revealed the breasts with which she had nursed” (6.10 [RT 41]: λίθοις παίουσα καὶ στέρνα καὶ κεφαλήν, μαστοὺς ύπεδείκνυ τοὺς θρέψαντας). This homiletic context is congruent with Procopius’ description of the old nursemaid whose nakedness is similarly provoked by bereavement and self-inflicted pain: “smiting her chest, she probably wails her own fate” (Op. 9.25 [202.24–25]: πλήττουσα δὲ τὰ στέρνα, ὡς εἰκὸς, τὴν τύχην ἑαυτῆς ἀποδύρεται). Undoubtedly, these displays of grief represent a literary convention in laments and may point to other rhetorical models. In the Aethiopica, for instance, Theagenes is described as mourning his beloved Charikleia by “striking his head and tearing his hair” (Heliod. Aeth. 2.1.2: παίων τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τίλλων τὰς τρίχας). Nonetheless, it is important to stress that Philagathos in fact retrieved several snippets from Procopius’ Monody 1 in this sermon (more on this below), which would seem to add to the suggested imprint of Procopius’ ekphrasis on Hom. 6.

Besides Hom. 63 and 35, Philagathos can be seen to have employed Procopius’ Description of the Image in the homily For the Holy Innocents (Hom. 24 RT). The originality of Philagathos’ account consists in adding an ekphrasis of a painting featuring the Massacre of the Innocents to his detailed account of the event, as an ekphrasis within an ekphrasis. The first ekphrasis, as A. Corcella has pointed out, encloses snippets derived in all likelihood from Procopius’ lost Monody for Antioch. This section is worth retrieving here to emphasize Philagathos’ reliance on the Procopian corpus and to better contextualize his (possible) use of Procopius’ Description of the Image as discussed below (Hom. 24.6–7 [RT 158–159]):

Ἐθρήνουν πατέρες, προσέππυτον τοὺς στρατιώτας, ἱκέτευον, καὶ

Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 60 (2020) 472–497
μήτηρ περιεκέγυντο παιδά. 


44 Gr. Nyss. Beatt. PG 44.1285: οφθαλμοὶ μὲν ὑπὸ τὴν τῶν βλεφάρων περιγραφὴν ἐξωθοῦνται, ύφαινον τι καὶ δρακοντῶδες πρὸς τὸ λυποῦν ἀτενίζοντες. The allusion to Gregory’s text consisting in just one word is certified by Philagathos’ extensive reliance on Nyssen’s homily in Hom. 9.13 (RT 65): οφθαλμοὶ μὲν γὰρ ὑπὸ τὴν τῶν βλεφάρων περιγραφὴν ἐξωθοῦντα, ύφαινον τι καὶ δρακοντῶδες δεδορκότες πρὸς τὸν λυποῦντα. “The eyes wrenched out beyond the limit of the lids, were flashing forth something bloody and gazing snake-like to the one tormented by this [viz. demonic possession].”


47 Gr. Nyss. Nativ. PG 46.1145: ἄλλοι: ἐκρούτων τοῦ ἄλλου ἴδη φθεγγομένου καὶ μελαζομένη τῇ φωνῇ τὴν μητέρα μετὰ δακρύων ἀνακολούθως. τὶ πάθη· τίς γένηται; τῇ τίνος ἀντιβοήσει φωνῇ; τῇ τίνος οἰμωγῇ ἀντοδύρηται;

48 I. 10.455–457: the narrative context in the Iliad is Dolon, who although a swift runner was hopelessly hunted down by Diomedes and

Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 60 (2020) 472–497
The fathers wailed, they fell down before the soldiers kneeling, beseeching them; a mother embraced her child and a father called to his offspring. A woman rushed out fleeing, carrying the child as a burden upon her shoulders, but the henchmen’s running was faster. They collided with each other and mingled voices arose. The soldiers blustered terrible threats, flashing forth like snakes with savage eyes. The mothers wept bitterly, drenched by blood and tears; the babes sobbed when pitiablel clef asunder. For the swords, randomly raining down upon them, inflicted horrendous mutilations. One was deprived of hands, while one died with legs cut in half. Another had his head cut off, having detached the body’s most important part; another one was entirely cut, since wrath acting spontaneously brought death to every single one. Oh, how many children cut in half lay half-dead, not even having the benefit of a swifter death, but they expired only slowly. A child ran to his mother, and called her with faltering voice. But a soldier rushing towards him with the sword immediately severed his head; and “while he was yet speaking his head was mingled with the dust” (for the speech leads me to utter poetic words).

This extensive and bloody narrative of the Massacre is in a sanctioned pattern in Byzantine homiletics for describing this episode. As Henry Maguire has pointed out, the delight in cruel detail was absorbed into religious literature from descriptions of war and calamities. Thus, Philagathos intertwines snippets from Procopius of Gaza and Gregory of Nyssa, sparing no gruesome detail that might bring the scene before the eye. The attribution of these snippets to Procopius’ lost work is based on the indication given in the Lexicon Seguerianum: ἐκ τῆς Μονῳδίας Ἀντιοχείας. As Corcella has insightfully argued, the Procopian snippets incorporated by Philagathos are best explained by direct access to Procopius’ full corpus.

50 Corcella, BZ 103 (2010) 31–34, here 34: “Filagato ha evidentemente riadattato nella sua omelia questi brani, con alcune ovvie variazioni. Si potrebbe, a rigore, supporre che li abbia ripresi da questo o da analogo
That Philagathos used Procopius’ *Description of the Image* can be suggested for the next section of the sermon, which sets forth a description of a painting of the *Massacre of the Innocents*, which Philagathos claimed to have seen with his own eyes:\footnote{51 Hom. 24.9–11 (RT 159–160). It remains uncertain whether Philagathos described a real painting or based his account on the literary tradition; e.g. a similar emotion prefacing an *ekphrasis* of a painting of the Sacrifice of Isaac is expressed by Greg. Nyss. *Deit.*, PG 46.572C: Εἶδον πολλάκις ἐπὶ γραφῆς εἰκόνα τοῦ πάθους, καὶ οὐκ ἀδακρυτὶ τὴν θέαν παρῆλθον, ἐναργῶς τῆς τέχνης ὑπ’ ὅψιν ἀγούσης τὴν ἱστορίαν, “I often saw the representation of this suffering in painting, and I could not pass by this spectacle without tears, so vividly the art brought the story before my eyes.”}

Εἶδον ἐγὼ τοῦτο τὸ πάθος χρώμασι γεγραμμένον ἐν πίνακι, καὶ πρὸς οίκτον ἐκινήθην καὶ δάκρυα. Ἐγέραμπτο γὰρ ὁ μὲν τύραννος ἑκέινος Ἡρώδης ἐφ’ ὑψηλοῦ τινος θρόνου σοβαρῶς ἐφεζόµενος, δριµὺ τι καὶ θηριώδες ὁρῶν κεχηνοτὶ τῷ βλέµατι. Ὁρθὸν δὲ στήσας ἐν κολεῷ τὸ ἥφασιν ὑπ’ ὅψιν ἀγούσης, τὴν <δὲ> δεξιὰν προτείνων ἐπιτάττειν ἐῴκει τοῖς στρατιώταις ἀνηλεῶς θερίζαι τῶν νηπίων τὴν ἄρουραν. Οἱ δὲ θηριοπρεπῶς ἐπιθρώσκοντες,\footnote{52 Cf. Cyril. *Comm. xii I 640 Pusey: καταστάλαξε δὲ καὶ εἰς νοῦν αὐτοῖς καὶ κορδίαι, τὴν διὰ πλανήσεως μεθήν, ἐφ’ ἕ δικαίως καὶ ἀπολόλοσα, θηριοπρέπως ἐπιθρώσκοντες, παντὶ τε θράσει καὶ δουσμήσι χρώμενοι, “He distilled into their mind and heart an intoxication through error in which they rightly perish in a frenzy befitting wild animals employing utter audacity and abuse” (transl. R. Hill, *Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Twelve Prophets II* (Washington 2008) 209).} ἀφειδῶς τὰ δείλαια κατελίζον.\footnote{53 Cf. Cyril. *Comm. xii I 645 Pusey: καταμελίζοντας ἀφειδῶς, “chopping it unmercifully.”} I saw this [scene of] suffering painted in colors on a panel, and I was moved to pity and tears. For that tyrant Herod was depicted sitting on a high throne haughtily, looking with wide-open eyes, fierce and savage. While he rested his left hand upon the upraised and sheathed sword, he stretched forth his right hand [and] he seemed to...
be ordering the soldiers to cut off without pity the mothers. And springing like beasts they slaughtered mercilessly the wretched [lads].

Philagathos’ statement of being “moved to pity and tears” evokes the standard emotional response aroused by the work of art. This is a constituent element in the ekphraseis of paintings from Late Antiquity onwards.\(^{54}\) Given Philagathos’ practice of literary mimesis, the imprint of Procopius’ *Description of the Image* can be suggested for his description of Herod:

Procop. *Op.* 9.13 (196.2–5): ὅπως δὲ μὴ λάθῃ παραρρυέν, ὃρθὸν τούτο στῆσας τὸ σῶμα ἀνέκλινε, λαϊῶν συνέχον τῷ πήχει καὶ πρὸς ἀσφάλειαν τῇ χειρὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐρειδόμενος.\(^{55}\) 9.10 (194.9–12): τὸ δὲ παρὸν πρὸς τῷ ὑπερήμερα μῆκος ἀποκαλύμμενον ἐπὶ κλίνει ἐντεύτηκαί διανανταῖει τὸ σῶμα, τῆς μεσημβρίας τὸ πνῖγος ἀποπεμπόμενος ὑπνῳ.\(^{56}\) 9.39 (208.3–10): ὅρθην γὰρ στῆσας τῇ λαβῇ τοῦ ξίφους ἐπαναντασεῖτι τὴν χείρα. [...] πάρεστιν Ἀιας αὐτῷ τὸν Ὀδυσσέα καὶ τὸν Τυδέως εἰ βούλει τῇ χείρι μησμαθέους, ἐκ νότον Ἀγαμέμνονος προτείνων τῇ δεξιᾷ Πριάμῳ καὶ στήνας λέγων μηδὲν τι τῶν βασιλέως ἀπτόμενον.\(^{57}\)

Several contexts in Procopius’ text can have inspired Philagathos. First, the description of Herod has a parallel in Procopius’ description of the boy bearing the fan in the main scene of the painting, which features Theseus asleep surrounded by servants and his wife Phaedra. Second, Procopius’ similar use of διανα-

---


\(^{55}\) “In order that he does not fall without being aware, he had placed it [the fan] upright to serve as support for his body, holding it tightly with his left arm and resting his head on his hand, out of caution.”

\(^{56}\) “But at present, having grown weary at the height of the day he [Theseus] has turned to his bed and rests his body, sent off to sleep by the stifling heat of noon.”

\(^{57}\) “Holding it [his left hand] straight by leaning on the handle of his sword, he [Agamemnon] lets his hand rest; near him is Ajax who imitates, if you want, Odysseus and Tydeus’ son by stretching forth to Priam his right hand over the shoulders of Agamemnon and saying to stay still without even touching a hair of the king.”
παύω in picturing Theseus who “rests his body” (διαναπαύει τὸ σῶµα) while lying on his bed at noon at the center of a hypo-style hall: this appears to represent another pertinent context for Philagathos’ τὴν λαιὰν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ διανέπαυε. Third, the homily’s image of Herod “resting his left hand upon the up-raised and sheathed sword while stretching forth his right hand” (Ὀρθὸν δὲ στήσας ἐν κολεῷ τὸ ξίφος, τὴν λαιὰν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ διανέπαυε, τὴν <δὲ> δεξιὰν προτείνων) seems to recall the passage of Procopius’ Description of the Image featuring Agamemnon receiving Priam.58 Admittedly, these are tiny allusions for locating Philagathos’ source of inspiration. Nonetheless, since corroborated by Philagathos’ extensive use of Procopius’ ekphrasis for the deacon sleeping during the liturgy (Hom. 63), the hypothesis that Philagathos’ description of Herod is based on Procopius’ Description of the Image seems warranted.

Finally, I suggest that further allusions to Procopius’ corpus can be found in the homily On the Widow’s Son. The sermon showcases Philagathos’ propensity for emotional evocation achieved through a consummate florilegic technique.59 The same ekphrastic emphasis on conjuring the absent sight in the sermon on the Massacre of the Holy Innocents by a twofold account of the slaughter (i.e. Philagathos first described the Massacre itself and then repeated it in the ekphrasis of the painting) is found again here in the compositional structure of the homily. For its first part contains a lengthy citation from Gregory of Nyssa’s On the Making of Man, which incorporates almost all of Nyssen’s account of Christ raising Lazarus, while in the second part Philagathos introduces his own description made up of a mosaic of vignettes, so that he is able to present the

58 The passage refers to Procopius’ description of the panels in the upper part of the painting, which depict Priam accompanied by Antenor on a mission to Agamemnon, based on Il. 3.259–263; on the Iliadic allusions in Procopius’ ekphrasis see Amato, Procope de Gaza 176–177 n.65.

59 For a detailed mapping of sources in this sermon see Duluş, Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure 93–107.
episode twice over.⁶⁰ He wove into his account passages consonant with the theme of his sermon from Gregory’s On the Making of Man, Sermons on the Beatitudes, and Life of Saint Macrina, Basil of Caesarea’s Homily on Psalm 44, Gregory of Nazianzus’ In Praise of the Maccabees (Or. 15), the Life and Miracles of St. Nicholas of Myra, Heliodorus’ Aethiopica, Achilles Tatius’ Leucippe and Clitophon, Nilus of Ancyra’s Epistles, and Procopius of Gaza’s Monody 1 (Op. 14). Without a doubt, Philagathos resorted to Procopius’ Monody 1 because it dovetailed with the subject of the sermon. Therein Procopius offered consolation for the death of a recently espoused young man of aristocratic descent.

To begin with, an unambiguous appropriation is embedded in the ethnopoiia of the Widow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hom. 6.11–12 (RT 41–42)</th>
<th>Proc. Op. 14 (Or. 4) 463.16–18:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ώς ξύντι τῷ νεκρῷ διελέγετο: “Τίνα ταύτην, ιεν μου, τίνα ταύτην βαδίζεις ὅδεν τὴν μακράν τε καὶ ἀνεπίστροφον: […] Πρὸς τῷ σῷ τάφῳ πῆξομαι τὴν καλύπθην, καὶ τάχα μοι φανήσῃ καὶ λαλοῦντος ἀκούσομαι, μᾶλλον δὲ συντακῆσομαι σοι, ποθούμενε, καὶ τοὺς σοῦς νεαροῖς ὀστέοις σάρκες γηραιαὶ συντακῆσονται.”</td>
<td>ἀλλὰ πρὶν ἰδεῖν ἀπέπτυξι καὶ πρὶν ἰδοῦν τὴν μακράν τε καὶ ἀνεπίστροφον: […] Πρὸς τῷ σῷ τάφῳ πῆξομαι τὴν καλύπθην, καὶ τάχα μοι φανήσῃ καὶ λαλοῦντος ἀκούσομαι, μᾶλλον δὲ συντακῆσομαι σοι, ποθούμενε, καὶ τοὺς σοῦς νεαροῖς ὀστέοις σάρκες γηραιαὶ συντακῆσονται.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

She spoke with the deceased as if he were living: “What is this, my child, what is this long road, with no way back, that you walk? […] On your grave I shall fix a hut, and perhaps you would come forth to me and I shall hear you talking, or rather I shall bury myself with you, my darling, and the aged flesh will be consumed along with your youthful bones.”

But before looking you flew away, before rejoicing you disappeared, and on a sudden you became more cruel, walking a strange road and refusing my love, and you do not wish to behold your little boy, the last remnant of hope, but you who rejoiced in seeing him now have turned away by leaving. On your grave I shall fix the bridal chamber, and perhaps you would come forth to me and I shall hear you talking.

---

As suggested by this homiletic passage, the imprint of Procopius’ *Monody* extends beyond the verbatim citation identified by Corcella (πρὸς τῷ σῷ τάφῳ ... ἀκούσομαι).  

For Philagathos’ formulation (βαδίζεις ὅδον την μακράν τε καὶ ἀνεπίστροφον) appears to be inspired by Procopius’ parallel imagery (ὅδον βαδίζον ἕξνῃ ... ἀπεστράφης). Once again, this idea is reinforced by Philagathos’ certified use of *Monody* 1.

Furthermore, there are other passages in Philagathos’ sermon which could have been inspired by Procopius’ *Monody*; thus the simile of the young man lying dead like an uprooted tree (*Hom*. 6.9 [RT 40]):

Ὅ δὲ νέος ἔκειτο ἐκταθεὶς ἐπὶ τοῦ σκίμποδος ὑπτίος, οἶα πεύκη τις υψίκομος ἡ κυπάρισσος, ἦν ἄνεμον διέσεις προσβολὴ καὶ αὐτοῖς ρίζας ἐξέχλισεν, ἐλεεινὸν θέαμα καὶ δακρύων ὑπόθεσις, ἀρτὶ μὲν τὸν τῆς παρειᾶς ρόδον μεταβαλὼν εἰς ὑψήτητα, δεικνὺς δὲ καὶ οὕτω τοῦ κάλλους τὰ λείψανα.

The youth lay stretched out on his back upon the bier, like a towering pine or a cypress tree which the onslaught of winds has violently shaken and torn out by its roots, a pitiable spectacle and occasion for tears, even though the rose of his cheek has become pale, revealing still the remnants of a great beauty.

As has often been remarked, this is an ancient simile for death which goes back to the Homeric tradition. While not excluding other sources, the model for Philagathos’ reworking of the image may have been furnished by Procopius’ text (*Op*. 14.1 [458.8–16]):

ὁ δὲ τοῦ κειμένου πατὴρ ἔξαίφνη αἰσθήσεως ἀπαις ὁ πρεσβύτης καὶ ἔρημος, καὶ τὴν ἄγκυραν τοῦ βίου διέρρηξε τὸ δαιμόνιον, καὶ προσβαλόος θύελλα οἰκοῦ τε παντὸς διέσεις στήριγμα καὶ κεῖται νεώσαν εἰς ἔξαφρος, ὡσπερ τι δένδρον ύψηλόν τε καὶ μέγα καὶ τούτῳ γὰρ ἐξάκρυσε φυτουργός, ὃ ἐπὶ πολλ’ ἐμόγησε, φθόνοντι νινὸς προσβολῆν κατὰ γῆς ἱδὸν ἐφαπλούμενον.

---


But the father of the deceased became childless on a sudden in his old age, and on top of it, forsaken; Divinity tore apart the anchor of his life and a storm attacked and shook violently the foundation of the entire house; he lies on the sloping ground like a great and lofty tree; because he toiled much for him, the planter wept seeing him spread on the ground by the attack of envy.

At the textual level the similarities are limited to the verb διέσεισε, the compound σοφός of ἁπλόω (ἐξήπλωσεν / ἐφαπλούμενον), and the pair προσβολή / προσβαλοῦσα. However, the same Procopian passage offers a closer textual connection with another passage of Philagathos’ sermon. The εὐθοποιία of the Widow’s encounter with Jesus contains the metaphor “anchor of my life,” common to both texts (Hom. 6.9 [RT 40]):

Εἶπε γὰρ ἵσως δριμῷ τι ἀπιδοῦσα καὶ βλοσυρόν· “Ω τῆς ἀκαί-ριας ἄνθρωπε, ὅρξε οἶον κάλλος ὁ θάνατος πρὸ ὀρας ἐμάρανε καὶ ὅτι ἀπειμι τῇ γῇ κατακρύψουσα τὸ ἐμὸν φῶς, τῆς ζωῆς μου τὴν ἀγκύραν.”

Perhaps looking at Him, she might have said something stern and grim: “O senseless man, behold what beauty untimely death has withered and that I go to bury my light in the earth, the anchor of my life.”

Furthermore, Philagathos’ κάλλος ὁ θάνατος πρὸ ὀρας ἐμάρανε seems to reflect Procopius’ κάλλος, οὐμοι, μαραίνεται in his description of the moral qualities of the young man (Op. 14.3 [459.18–25]):

κάλλος, οὕμοι, μαραίνεται. μέχρι δὲ ἡμῶν ἐξ οὕριας ἡ τύχη, καὶ ποις ἐκείνος ἐτύγχανεν ὄν ὡς ἐξύβρισε χαριμάτων περιουσία, οὔτε μὴν ἐκ γένους ἡλαζονέσσατο, ἀλλ’ οὔδε τὸ κάλλος κοθύβρισεν, ἀλλ’ αἰδοὶ μειλιχίη καὶ σωφροσύνη κεκοσμίμηνος, νεώτατος ὑπερβας ἀτακτούντα πεττήματα, οὕς ἰππων δρόμοις, οὐχ ἡδονή σκηνῆς, οὔδε τῇ πεττείᾳ προσέκειτο.

Beauty, oh, is withering. Chance was favorable to him until he was our student and he turned out to be a boy whom the abundance of money did not lead into insolence and who did not pride himself on account of his lineage; neither did beauty heap insult upon him, but being adorned with gracious reverence and
temperance, bypassing the wild leaping of youth he was not devoted to horse races or to the pleasure of theatre or to gaming.

In addition to supplying a plausible connection to Philagathos’ formulation, this extended quotation is meant to introduce our final suggestion: that Philagathos’ description of Jesus’ journey towards the Galilean village of Nain echoes several details from Procopius’ Monody 1 (Hom. 6.13 [RT 42]):

"Ἰετὸ δὲ ὁ Σωτὴρ ἐκ τῆς Καπερναοῦμ, ἀρτι τὸν τοῦ ἐκατοντάρχου παιδὸ τεθεραπευκὼς ἐν δυσμαίς τοῦ βίου γενόμενον· ἵετο δὲ πεζῇ βαδίζων, ὡς ἔθος αὐτῷ, καὶ βάδην τὴν ὁδοποιίαν ποιούμενος, ὅμα μὲν παιδεύουν ἡμᾶς μὴ ἐνυβρίζειν τὸ σεμινὸν τῆς κατάστασεως ἀτάκτῳ βαδίζατε, ἀμα δὲ καὶ θαρρῶν ὡς, εἰ καὶ τάφῳ κατάκρυψαιεν τὸν νεκρόν, ἀναστήσει τοῦτον ὡσπερ τὸν Λάζαρον.

But the Saviour hastened from Capernaum, having just cured the centurion’s boy, who was at the setting of life; He hastened on foot, as was His habit, making the journey with measured step, at once teaching us not to disparage the seriousness of the [soul’s] condition with a disorderly walk, yet at the same time inspiring confidence that even if the dead were shut in the grave, He will raise him, as He did Lazarus.

Thus, Philagathos’ μὴ ἐνυβρίζειν recalls the ὑβρίζω compound in Procopius (οὐκ ἔξυβρίσε and οὐδὲ καθύβρισεν). Next, the imagery evoked by ἀτάκτω βαδίσατε corresponds to Procopius’ ἀτακτοῦντα πηδήματα. Then, a few lines later (469.3–4), Procopius’ description of the youth’s supreme rhetorical training by which “he was leading the herd with a lighter walk” (παρῆκ αὐτῷ ἀκρίβως κοντεύον ἀτακτοῦντα) dovetails with the imagery and wording of Philagathos.

To summarize, I have argued that Philagathos’ acquaintance with Procopius’ corpus is more extensive than hitherto realized. I have illustrated the adaptation of Procopius’ Description of the Image in Philagathos’ Hom. 63 and 35 and identified other possible imitations in Hom. 6 and 24. I have added further evidence on Philagathos’ appropriations from Procopius’ Monody 1 in Hom. 6. Overall, these impromptu retrievals of Procopian material indicate a profound rumination and assimilation of this rhetorical model. At the same time, they hint at a process
of memorization and systematization of knowledge, a feature often presumed for the practice of literary *mimesis*. This is emphasized by Quintilian’s appraisal of imitation, which remained pertinent to generations of rhetoricians from antiquity through the Byzantine period: “we shall do well to keep a number of different excellences before our eyes, so that different qualities from different authors may impress themselves on our minds, to be adopted for use in the place that becomes them best.” Quint. *Inst.* 10.2.1, transl. H. E. Butler.63

Clearly, Philagathos’ citation and adaptation of Procopian material confirms this recommendation.64

April, 2020

Research Institute of the
University of Bucharest (ICUB)
1 Dimitrie Brandza St.
Bucharest, 060102, Romania
mircea.dulus@icub.unibuc.ro

---

64 I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to István Perczel for having set up and supervised a research grant at the Central European University (Budapest) for completing this research. I am also grateful to Liviu Matei, Provost of Central European University, for having endorsed it. Moreover, I am thankful to the anonymous reviewer for his/her valuable comments and suggestions.