Between Philosophy and Heroism: Gregory of Nazianzus on his Suffering in the Letters and Poems

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GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, judging from his writings, must have been a man who suffered a lot. Gregory mentions his suffering in several of his letters and orations, but even more striking is the frequency of references to suffering in his personal poems.[1] It almost goes without saying that Gregory shows different linguistic preferences when talking about his suffering in prose and in poetry, and it is also hardly surprising that he chooses different expressions in his dactylic poems (written in hexameters or elegiacs) and in his iambic poems. Nevertheless, these evident differences in the representation of suffering raise significant questions. From a modern perspective, large parts of Gregory's writings can be

[1] Cf. e.g. Č. Milovanović, "'Here I am a Breathing Corpse': Did Gregory of Nazianzus Suffer from Leprosy?" *AnalBoll* 127 (2009) 273–297, at 273: "One theme runs like a red thread throughout his personal poetry, the theme of pain, anguish, and suffering" (she suggests a major physical illness, most probably leprosy, as a reason for these laments). For similar statements see N. McLynn, "A Self-Made Holy Man. The Case of Gregory Nazianzen," *JECS* 6 (1998) 463–486, at 466; B. K. Storin, *Self-Portrait in Three Colors: Gregory of Nazianzus's Epistolary Autobiography* (Oakland 2019) 16–17; E. Pataki, "Εμφιλοσοφεῖν τῷ πάθει: la raison d'être de la souffrance du corps dans l'épistolographie de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze," *AAHG* 56 (2016) 245–271, at 245–246. Cf. E. Rapisarda, "Il pessimismo di Gregorio Nazianzeno," *Miscellanea di Studi di Letteratura Cristiana Antica* 3 (1951) 136–161.

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called autobiographical in the sense that they contain reflections on his life and convey a specific image of his personality (in fact, Gregory's personal poems can be counted as one of the first corpora of autobiographical poetry in ancient literature).[2] Against this background, do the different generic traditions affect merely the linguistic surface, e.g. by imposing metrical constraints, or do they shape the autobiographical material more substantially? And if there is a deeper influence of genres, to which models are the different accounts indebted?

I argue in this paper that Gregory's references to his sufferings are, at least in some respects, even more deeply influenced by genre than the different choice of words might suggest, as the influence affects the very core of the autobiographical accounts: the construction of the autobiographical persona, or, less technically, the way Gregory describes himself. In antiquity, genres were often associated with fixed literary personae or typical heroes. What I intend to show in this paper is

[2] For an overview see Storin, *Self-Portrait* 5 (with remarks on the tradition and definition of autobiography at 13–17); cf. J. Bernardi, "Trois autobiographies de saint Grégoire de Nazianze," in M.-F. Baslez et al. (eds.), *L'invention de l'autobiographie d'Hésiode à Saint Augustin* (Paris 1993) 155–165; J. A. McGuckin, "Autobiography as Apologia in St. Gregory Nazianzen," *Studia Patristica* 37 (2001) 160–177; J. R. Stenger, "'Beim Häuten der Zwiebel'. Gregory of Nazianzus' *De vita sua* as Autofiction," in N. Kröll (ed.), *Myth, Religion, Tradition, and Narrative in Late Antique Greek Poetry* (Vienna 2020) 93–112. Autobiographical poetry can be traced back at least as far as Ovid (*Tr.* 4.10; one may add passages in satires by Lucilius and Horace), but Gregory is the first to extend it to such a scale. (Partly) poetic autobiographical accounts by Christians before Gregory include the *Epitaphium Abercii*, a metrical funerary inscription (ca. 200), and the lost work of Acilius Severus (death ca. 370), which according to Hier. *Vir.ill.* 111 was written *tam prosa quam uersibus*; cf. G. Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie*[3] I.2 (Frankfurt am Main 1950) 405–407. Note that autobiography is a modern term and was not seen as its own genre in antiquity: G. A. Benrath, "Autobiographie, christliche," *TRE* 4 (1979) 772–789; H. Görgemanns, "Autobiographie II–III," *DNP* 2 (1997) 349–351.

how Gregory evokes such role models associated with a specific generic tradition when he refers to his sufferings. This does not imply that Gregory's autobiographical accounts are purely artificial; however, the different models allow him to present himself in different ways. In order to demonstrate my point, I will focus on those genres that have the clearest autobiographical focus, the letters and the personal poems (in different metres).[3] As indicated in the title, the major role models will be philosophers and epic or tragic heroes who are characterized by suffering.

Two further preliminary remarks on the significance of the subject and the methodology of this paper: Glenn Most has pointed out that a majority of ancient Greek autobiographies are "tales of woe"; in fact, he goes so far as to claim that the autobiographical mode, which might have been otherwise considered obtrusive, was essentially justified by the speaker's desperate situation.[4] As Bradley Storin adds, this focus on hardships also applies to much of Christian autobiography, starting with the autobiographical sections in the corpus of Pauline letters, where references to suffering can be considered to underline the author's credibility.[5] Suffering, therefore, is not

[3] Some of the speeches have a partly autobiographical character, too (e.g. *Or.* 43, cf. Bernardi, in *L'invention de l'autobiographie* 162), but I will leave this genre apart in order to keep this study concise. The letters and most of the personal poems do of course not constitute full-fledged autobiographies in the sense of lengthy narrations about the author's life; my terminology follows Storin's programmatic presentation of the letters as an "epistolary autobiography" (*Self-Portrait*).

[4] G. W. Most, "The Stranger's Stratagem: Self-Disclosure and Self-Sufficiency in Greek Culture," *JHS* 109 (1989) 114–133. According to Most, the deeper reason behind this peculiarity is the Greek ideal of self-sufficiency: self-disclosure is justified when self-sufficiency is lost.

[5] Storin, *Self-Portrait* 15–16. On the autobiographical qualities of Paul's letters see also D. Wolff, *Paulus beispiels-weise. Selbstdarstellung und autobiographisches Schreiben im Ersten Korintherbrief* (Berlin 2017).

just an arbitrary topic that happens to play a role in Gregory's writings but one of the central issues of ancient Greek autobiography, both pagan and Christian. Gregory inserts himself into this long-standing tradition, and intertwines it with the different generic traditions he draws on; by referring to his suffering, he lays claim to autobiographical credibility, although his attitude towards suffering differs from genre to genre.[6]

As already indicated, Gregory refers to suffering in various contexts and with various expressions. The most general term is πάθος with its cognates, which essentially means "that which happens to a person or thing" but is often transferred to "that which befalls the soul," particularly in the sense of "a suffering or illness of the soul" (its most frequent meaning in late antiquity).[7] However, there are many other lexemes centering on the concept of suffering, including, but not limited to, πόνος, κάματος, λύπη, ἄλγος, ἄχος, μόχθος, and their cognates, not to speak of terms associated with suffering such as νόσος, γῆρας, ἀσθένεια, ἀρρωστία, and their cognates. Moreover, these terms can refer to rather different types of suffering, ranging from physical to mental or even moral. This paper cannot provide a survey of all of the lexemes, nor does it aim to discuss the various types of suffering. My intention is to single out a limited number of terms and concepts linked with suffering that can be associated with more or less specific generic traditions. In other words, I will adopt an exemplary approach that focuses on

[6] On the connection of suffering and credibility in Gregory's poetry see also T. Kuhn-Treichel, "A Man Completely Devoid of Falsehood? Creating Credibility in Gregory Nazianzen's Autobiographical Poems," *VigChr* 74 (2020) 289–302, at 296.

[7] Cf. M. Hinterberger, "Emotions in Byzantium," in L. James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Chichester 2010) 123–134, at 126; more theoretical reflections will be found in the forthcoming volume of the network *Emotions through Time. From Antiquity to Byzantium.*

specific ways of talking about suffering rather than certain types of suffering or their chronological development.[8] My paper offers a series of close readings, which nevertheless aim to shed some light on the general question of how Gregory's autobiographical writing is framed by generic traditions.

1. *Suffering in the letters*

Gregory's letters do not contain as many references to personal suffering as the poems, but some of the passages in which he treats his suffering are passionately expressed. For the point I want to make, it is sufficient to focus on passages that include a form of πάσχω or πάθος and their cognates (sometimes coupled with other terms denoting suffering). Two of the most conspicuous cases can be found in a letter to the otherwise unknown Theotecnus, dating from Gregory's time in Constantinople, and a letter to his old friend Sacerdos, dating from after his retirement to Nazianzus. Both letters use perfect forms of πάσχω (*Ep*. 78.3 and 214.2):[9]

> δεινὰ πεπόνθαμεν· εἰ δὲ βούλει, πρόσθες οἷα μηδεὶς ἄλλος ἀνθρώπων. ἀλλὰ μὴ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἀδικήσωμεν, μηδὲ τοσοῦτον εὐσέβειαν μισήσωμεν ὅσον ἡμῖν οὐ συμφέρει.
>
> We've[10] suffered terrible things; if you'd like, you could even add, what no other human has suffered. However, let's not for

[8] This approach differs in several aspects from that of Pataki, *AAHG* 56 (2016) 245–271, who discusses the anthropological and ethical notions of physical suffering in the letters in a chronological perspective.

[9] Text P. Gallay, *Gregor von Nazianz: Briefe* (Berlin 1969); transl. B. K. Storin, *Gregory of Nazianzus's Letter Collection: The Complete Translation* (Oakland 2019). According to P. Gallay, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze. Lettres* I (Paris 1964) 98, *Ep*. 78 was written shortly after Easter 379; thus also M. Wittig, *Gregor von Nazianz: Briefe* (Stuttgart 1981) 33. Storin (194) dates the letter to April-November 380; cf. J. A. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood 2001) 257, who seems to date the attack forming the background of the letter to 380. For the date of *Ep*. 214 see P. Gallay, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze. Lettres* II (Paris 1967) 105; McGuckin xi; Storin 88.

[10] Storin translates the plural verbs in the singular ("I've"; cf. his ex-

> that reason also commit injustice against ourselves, and let's not hate piety to the extent that we bring harm upon ourselves.
>
> ἐμαυτὸν προτίθημί σοι καὶ τὰ ἐμά· ὑβρίσμεθα, μεμισήμεθα, τί γὰρ οὐ πεπόνθαμεν τῶν δεινῶν, ὅσον ἐπὶ τοῖς βουληθεῖσι; εἶτα τί; τῶν λυπούντων ἡμᾶς ἀπηλλάγμεθα.
>
> I offer myself and my experiences to you. We've been insulted, we've been hated. Inasmuch as it was up to those who wanted to do it, what terrible thing have we not suffered? What did we do next? We removed ourselves from the causes of our distress.

Short as they are, both statements present Gregory as someone whose sufferings have exceeded any usual degree. Gregory, it appears, distinguishes himself from common people through the measure and quality of his suffering. The reasons for his suffering are only briefly indicated but must have been comprehensible enough to the two addressees. In *Ep.* 78 he alludes to an attack on the Easter Vigil, which was disturbed by Arian monks and nuns who forced their way into Gregory's local church and threw stones at the congregation.[11] In *Ep.* 214 he appears to think of his misfortunes in Constantinople in general. But in spite of Gregory's emphatic statements, it has to be noted that in both cases, the idea of suffering is balanced by other thoughts.

To start with, in both letters the verbs denoting suffering are grammatically plural. These plurals can easily be taken as authorial (a device that is particularly frequent in letters, hence sometimes labeled 'epistolary plural'), but they may also carry some semantic value, implying that Gregory is not alone in his

planation, p.11); I retain the plural because it is relevant for my interpretation.

[11] The episode has attracted much scholarly attention; see C. Crimi, "Nazianzenica VII. La tentata lapidazione nella Pasqua del 379," *Cassiodorus* 4 (1998) 211–223; A. Hofer, "The Stoning of Christ and Gregory of Nazianzus," in C. A. Beeley (ed.), *Re-Reading Gregory of Nazianzus: Essays on History, Theology and Culture* (Washington 2012) 143–158.

suffering.[12] This is probably more obvious in the first case, where the addressee was also part of the attacked congregation, but even in the second example, where the shift from singular to plural seems suggestive of an authorial plural, one can argue for a deliberately inclusive phrasing that supports the protreptic intent. More significantly, in both letters the references to suffering are qualified by their immediate context: in *Ep.* 78 Gregory counters his suffering with his resolution to remain loyal to his belief, and in *Ep.* 214 he hastens to add that he was finally delivered from his oppressors (214.3), implying that he can be grateful for the injury because it allowed him to experience God's help.

What we can observe in these two cases seems to be typical of Gregory's letters. Suffering may be mentioned, even in such a drastic manner as here, but it has to be balanced by rational resolutions. Even in such a striking case as the extremely dismal *Ep.* 80, there is a rational counterweight in the end as Gregory evokes θάνατος as the solution to his suffering, as is typical of Christian ethos.[13] The tension between suffering and self-control is made even more explicit in a letter to Gregory's Athenian former classmate and fellow-ascetic Philagrius, in which physical suffering is denoted by ἀλγέω, followed by

[12] For general reflections on the use of numeri in Greek letters and beyond (including potential semantic values of supposedly meaningless plurals) see Wolff, *Paulus* 97–102.

[13] Addressed to Philagrius and written between 380 and 382, cf. Gallay, *Lettres* I 103: ἐρωτᾷς πῶς τὰ ἡμέτερα. καὶ λίαν πικρῶς. Βασίλειον οὐκ ἔχω, Καισάριον οὐκ ἔχω, τὸν πνευματικὸν ἀδελφὸν καὶ τὸν σωματικόν. ὁ πατήρ μου καὶ ἡ μητήρ μου ἐγκατέλιπόν με, μετὰ τοῦ Δαυὶδ φθέγξομαι. τὰ τοῦ σώματος πονηρῶς ἔχει, τὸ γῆρας ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς, φροντίδων ἐπιπλοκαί, πραγμάτων ἐπιδρομαί, τὰ τῶν φίλων ἄπιστα, τὰ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἀποίμαντα. ἔρρει τὰ καλά, γυμνὰ τὰ κακά, ὁ πλοῦς ἐν νυκτί, πυρσὸς οὐδαμοῦ, Χριστὸς καθεύδει. τί χρὴ παθεῖν; μία μοι τῶν κακῶν λύσις, ὁ θάνατος. καὶ τὰ ἐκεῖθέν μοι φοβερά, τοῖς ἐντεῦθεν τεκμαιρομένῳ.

πάσχω in the next sentence (*Ep.* 36.1–2):[14]

> ἀλγῶ τῇ νόσῳ καὶ χαίρω· οὐχ ὅτι ἀλγῶ, ἀλλ' ὅτι τοῦ καρτερεῖν τοῖς ἄλλοις εἰμὶ διδάσκαλος. ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὸ μὴ πάσχειν οὐκ ἔχω, τοῦτό γε τῷ πάσχειν παρακερδαίνω, τὸ φέρειν καὶ τὸ εὐχαριστεῖν ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς εὐθύμοις, οὕτω δὴ κἀν τοῖς ἀλγεινοῖς, ἐπειδὴ πείθομαι μηδὲν ἄλογον εἶναι παρὰ τῷ λόγῳ τῶν ἡμετέρων, κἂν ἡμῖν οὕτω φαίνηται.
>
> I feel pain in the disease and I'm glad, not because I feel pain but because I'm a teacher of endurance to others. Since I can't not suffer, from my suffering I've at least sneaked away with this: forbearance and thanksgiving as much in joy as in pain, since I'm convinced that none of my efforts are lacking in reason—even if it might seem so to me—next to Reason.[15]

The first sentence suggests that Gregory's ambivalent attitude towards suffering is closely connected with his claim to be a teacher (διδάσκαλος). As a bishop sending a letter to a friend, Gregory takes up the role of being a moral example, also when it comes to the question of how to cope with suffering. In fact, the issue of suffering and passions more generally (both of which are facets of the term πάθος) must have been particularly vital for Gregory because it plays a major role in philosophy, especially in Stoicism, but also in other philosophical schools.

The philosophical subtext underlying Gregory's attitude towards πάθος becomes overt in letters addressed to Philagrius and to the sophist Stagirius, who was also trained in Athens (*Ep.* 30.1 and 165.2):[16]

[14] The date is unknown, cf. Storin, *Letter Collection* 131, and Gallay, *Lettres* I 46. For further information on Philagrius see M.-M. Hauser-Meury, *Prosopographie zu den Schriften Gregors von Nazianz* (Bonn 1960) 145; R. Van Dam, *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia* (Philadephia 2003) 146.

[15] For the connection of πάσχειν and καρτερεῖν see also *Ep.* 223.4: ἡμῖν δὲ καὶ τὸ πάσχειν ἔμμισθον, ὅταν διὰ τὸν Θεὸν καρτερῶμεν.

[16] According to Storin, *Letter Collection* 132, *Ep.* 30 was written in late 369 or early 370 (Gallay, *Lettres* I 37: end of 369). The date of *Ep.* 165 is unknown. For further reflections on πάθος and φιλοσοφία see *Ep.* 31.3, 32.1–3,

> Καισάριον οὐκ ἔχω. ἐρῶ γάρ, καὶ εἰ μὴ φιλόσοφον τὸ πάθος· στέργω τὰ Καισαρίου, καὶ ὅ τί ποτ' ἂν ἴδω Καισαρίου γνώρισμα περιπτύσσομαι καὶ ἀσπάζομαι…
>
> I don't have Caesarius. I'll admit it, even if my suffering is not philosophical. I cherish Caesarius's possessions, and whenever I see a reminder of Caesarius, I embrace it and kiss it…
>
> οὔτε τὸ λίαν ἀπαθὲς ἐπαινῶ, οὔτε τὸ ἄγαν περιπαθές· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀπάνθρωπον, τὸ δὲ ἀφιλόσοφον. ἀλλὰ δεῖ τὴν μέσην βαδίζοντα, τῶν μὲν ἄγαν ἀσχέτων φιλοσοφώτερον φαίνεσθαι, τῶν δὲ φιλοσοφούντων ἀμέτρως ἀνθρωπικώτερον.
>
> I don't praise either excessive passionlessness or extreme emotionality: the former is inhuman, the latter unphilosophical. No, treading the middle path, one[17] ought to appear more philosophical than those who cannot control themselves at all, but more human than those who practice philosophy without moderation.

Gregory does not make explicit which school or concept he has in mind when he speaks of philosophy. John McGuckin described him as "a pragmatic eclectic" combining (Neo-) Platonic, Aristotelian, Cynic, and Stoic influences.[18] Moreover, like the other Cappadocians, Gregory can use the term philoso-

215.2, 223.12, and Pataki, *AAHG* 56 (2016) 245–271. On philosophy in Gregory's letters more generally, Storin, *Self-Portrait* 121–145. The beginning of *Ep.* 30.1 is also examined by C. Simelidis, "Emotions in the Poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus," *Studia Patristica* 83 (2017) 91–101, at 91. On Stagirius see Hauser-Meury, *Prosopographie* 157–158; Wittig, *Briefe* 253 n.322; Pataki 257; Storin 39.

[17] Storin translates slightly differently: "The one who treads the middle path, however, …"

[18] McGuckin, *Saint Gregory* 57. On Gregory's philosophical formation more generally see C. Moreschini, *Filosofia e letteratura in Gregorio di Nazianzo* (Milan 1997), esp. 11–21, and "Gregory Nazianzen and Philosophy, with Remarks on Gregory's Cynicism," in *Re-Reading Gregory of Nazianzus* 103–122. See also R. R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus. Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford 1969) 129–175.

phy to denote a monastic and ascetic way of living.[19] The two letters quoted above exemplify several of these aspects. In *Ep.* 30, written shortly after the death of his brother Caesarius, he describes a general opposition between passions and philosophy, thus alluding to ἀπάθεια, a philosophical ideal with a complex history.[20] As is well known, it was most vigorously promoted in the Stoa, especially in the Early Stoa, which deemed passions in general irrational and reprehensible and therefore defined the σοφός as being free of passions.[21] However, it also made its way into Christian teaching, especially in the Greek East, where Clement of Alexandria and Origen adopt it as a moral ideal and impart it to the three Cappadocian Fathers, all of whom endorse ἀπάθεια as an ideal at least in some contexts (especially in asceticism).[22]

In short, Gregory does not pluck the idea of ἀπάθεια directly out of a Stoic matrix, but inserts himself into a complex tradition of pagan and Christian models. Nevertheless, he makes

[19] N. Baumann, '*Götter in Gottes Hand': Die Darstellung zeitgenössischer Kaiser bei Gregor von Nazianz* (Münster 2018) 148; on the range of "philosophy" in the Cappadocians see A.-M. Malingrey, *Philosophia. Etude d'un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque, des présocratiques au IV^e siècle après J.-C.* (Paris 1961) 207–261 (with remarks on philosophy and suffering in the letters to Philagrius, 231).

[20] For an overview of the concept in pagan and Christian thinking see P. de Labriolle, "Apatheia," *RAC* 1 (1950) 484–487. More comprehensive studies are provided by R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford 2000); P. L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford 2004); M. C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton 1994), esp. 351–401.

[21] Cf. Sorabji, *Emotion* 194–197, and Gavrilyuk, *Suffering* 26. The (later) *locus classicus* is Diog. Laert. 7.117 (ἀπαθῆ εἶναι τὸν σοφόν).

[22] E.g. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 6.9; Origen *In Mt.* 15.17; Basil. *Ascet.* 1.1–2 (in the context of asceticism); Greg. Naz. *Or.* 26.13; Greg. Nyss. *Hom. 1 in Cant.* 30 Langerbeck; cf. Sorabji, *Emotion* 385–395, and de Labriolle, *RAC* 1 (1950) 486.

explicit that he regards freedom from passions as a philosophical concept, not just an element of Christian ethics in general (even if these two areas tend to converge in the way the Cappadocians use φιλοσοφία and φιλοσοφέω). In the case of his deceased brother, Gregory is not quite able or willing to live up to this philosophical ideal, but he confesses his grief with some sense of guilt, indicating that he does not question the concept of ἀπάθεια in general. In *Ep.* 165, Gregory takes a more differentiated stance: when he speaks of ἀφιλόσοφον, φιλοσοφώτερον, and οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες, he can still be understood as hinting at Stoic concepts, but in advocating a middle way between τὸ λίαν ἀπαθές and τὸ ἄγαν περιπαθές, he follows another philosophical ideal, viz. the Aristotelian μετριοπάθεια, which the Stoics opposed with their concept of ἀπάθεια.[23]

The two passages show that, like other patristic authors, Gregory oscillates between the competing positions of extirpating or moderating passions.[24] But regardless whether he strives for ἀπάθεια or for μετριοπάθεια, it is clear that his philosophical background prevents him from abandoning himself to his sufferings: he may mention them, but he must not indulge in them; talking about suffering has to be balanced by talking about philosophy. At any rate, this is how Gregory presents himself in his letters, and this brings us back to the question of genres. When Gregory depicts himself as a man with philosophical ideals, is this simply how he perceives himself in real life or does it, at least in part, reflect an influence of the genre of epistolography? I would argue for the latter. Of course, Gregory, who in one letter calls himself a "father of philosophers" (φιλοσόφων πατέρες, *Ep.* 174.3), is likely to have held

[23] On the long-running debate between the two concepts see Sorabji, *Emotion* 194–210.

[24] In some cases, the juxtaposition of the two concepts was even theoretically justified: Philo and Basil state that ἀπάθεια and μετριοπάθεια are ideals for different people, cf. Sorabji, *Emotion* 385–392.

philosophical ideals in real life, too, all the more so since late antiquity was "a boom time for philosophers," as Bradley Storin puts it.[25] Nevertheless, in light of the history of the genre, writing letters and publishing them are likely to have fostered his self-presentation as a philosopher.

Two of the earliest published collections of letters were those of Plato and Aristotle, and many of the later Greek and Latin authors whose private letters were published (e.g. Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, and Julian) were philosophers or men of philosophical learning, too.[26] In other words, although epistolography is not *a priori* connected with philosophy, there is a connection in terms of literary history. As Gregory himself published his letters as didactic examples, he must have been cognizant of the association of epistolography and philosophy, if not when initially writing the letters, then at least when revising them for publication.[27] It is hardly coincidental that φιλοσοφία and its cognates appear more frequently in Gregory's letters than in any other genre of his writings. A TLG search for φιλοσοφ yields 118 results for the letters (without the *epistulae theologicae*), about one occurrence per 352 words. This is not only a significantly higher frequency than in the poems, where φιλοσοφία and its cognates can only be used in iambs

[25] Storin, *Self-Portrait* 122 (see also 121 on *Ep.* 174 and 123–127 on philosophers in fourth-century public life).

[26] For an overview see C. P. Jones, "Greek Letter Collections before Late Antiquity," in C. Sogno et al. (eds.), *Late Antique Letter Collections. A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide* (Oakland 2017) 38–53, and M. R. Salzman, "Latin Letter Collections before Late Antiquity," in the same volume, 13–37. For late antiquity see C. Sogno and E. J. Watts, "Epistolography," in S. McGill et al. (eds.), *Blackwell's Companion to Late Antique Literature* (Hoboken 2018) 389–400.

[27] On the purposes of Gregory's letter collection in general and the importance of philosophical reflection, see further B. K. Storin, "The Letter Collection of Gregory of Nazianzus," in *Late Antique Letter Collections* 81–101, at 83–87.

(ten occurrences, approximately one per 10,184 words), but also than in the speeches (279 occurrences, approximately one per 779 words).[28] As these raw numbers indicate, philosophy as a topic is by no means restricted to one of the genres, but at least on the linguistic level, it is particularly prominent in the letters, and there seems to be a similar tendency for self-presentation as a philosopher.[29]

I would suggest that this situation reflects the history of the genre of epistolography: at least to some degree, the generic frame evokes the role model of the philosopher and therefore provides an additional stimulus for Gregory to present himself as a philosopher (in a Christianized sense) who tries not to indulge in his sufferings. This is not so say that the genre left Gregory no other choice. His older contemporary Libanius provides an interesting counterexample as he refers to personal suffering, both physical and emotional, in several of his surviving letters but does not as a rule balance his description with philosophical or other reflections, at least not the way Gregory does.[30] In fact, the term φιλοσοφία and its cognates are not

[28] All data are based on the TLG. For the speeches I include *Or.* 1–45 (the largest cluster is in *Or.* 43 with 39 occurrences, ca. one per 443 words), for the poems, the *Carmina dogmatica*, *Carmina moralia*, *Carmina in seipsum*, and *Carmina quae spectant ad alios* (the largest cluster is in *De vita sua* with five occurrences, ca. one per 2374 words).

[29] Cf. the examples of self-presentation as a philosopher listed in Baumann, *Götter* 148 n.414 (one case from the speeches, three from the letters).

[30] An instructive *comparandum* is *Ep.* 388, where Libanius describes his reactions to the destruction of Nicomedia: he says he could free himself of a part of his suffering by writing a lament (τοῦ πάθους τι μέρος ἐπὶ τῆς γραφῆς ἐκβαλών), but nevertheless ends up moaning (λείπεταί μοι στένειν, ὃ δὴ καὶ ποιῶ). For this and further examples see E. Watts, "The Historical Context: The Rhetoric of Suffering in Libanius' *Monodies*, *Letters* and *Autobiography*," in L. van Hoof (ed.), *Libanius. A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge 2014) 39–58. On Libanius' letters more generally see L. van Hoof, "The Letter Collection of Libanius of Antioch," in *Late Antique Letter Collections* 113–130.

nearly as prominent in Libanius' letters as in Gregory's (only 65 occurrences in more than 1500 letters, about one per 3331 words). Gregory's epistolary self-fashioning, then, is a personal choice and reflects more than the tradition of the genre (most obviously, the role of a priest counseling his friends, which clearly sets him apart from the pagan rhetorician Libanius). Still, I would argue, the way of talking about suffering described above can be linked to the genre of epistolography; at any rate, other genres of Gregory's oeuvre pursue other strategies, as the following discussion will show.

2. *Suffering in dactylic poems*

In the poems, the situation is different from that of the letters. References to suffering are not only more frequent, but they are also less counterbalanced by philosophical reasoning.[31] What is more, Gregory includes specifically poetic expressions to describe his sufferings, some of them almost stereotypical.[32] Some of the terms used by Gregory exclusively in dactylic poems (i. e., in hexameters or elegiac couplets) are ἄλγος ("pain, grief"), ἄχος ("pain, distress"), ἄχθος ("burden, sorrow"), and μογέω ("toil, suffer"), all of them poetic words frequently used in Homer though also attested in tragedy.[33] I would like to focus on the last of these terms, which constitutes a case in point, not

[31] Philosophy as such plays a role in some of the poems, too, most conspicuously in *De vita sua*, which according to Storin, *Self-Portrait* 133, "offers his most comprehensive attempt at defining himself as a philosopher whose authority exists outside the church's clerical offices."

[32] To be sure, there are also words used both in the letters and in the poems; most noteworthy is πάσχω.

[33] Some of these lexemes are also attested in the *Christus patiens*, which most scholars however deem non-Gregorian, cf. G. W. Most, "On the Authorship of the *Christus Patiens*," in A. Jördens et al. (eds.), *Quaerite faciem eius semper. Studien zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum* (Hamburg 2008) 229–240; P. Rimoli, "La paternità del *Christus patiens* tra Gregorio di Nazianzo e Teodoto di Ancira," *Adamantius* 22 (2016) 215–230.

least because it is often (though not exclusively) used in a formulaic way.[34] Gregory seems to be particularly fond of the phrase πόλλ' ἐμόγησα, which he employs six times in his personal poems and poetic letters (sections 2.1 and 2.2 in *PG*). Not all of the passages are concerned with suffering inflicted from outside; in his grand hexametric autobiography commonly known as *De rebus suis*, Gregory employs the phrase twice, the first time with regard to his strenuous studies in Athens, which were of course self-imposed but are nevertheless presented in a similar fashion (*Carm.* 2.1.1.96–98):[35]

> μοῦνον ἐμοὶ φίλον ἔσκε λόγων κλέος, οὓς συνάγειραν
> Ἀντολίη τε δύσις τε καὶ Ἑλλάδος εὖχος Ἀθῆναι.
> τοῖς ἔπι πόλλ' ἐμόγησα πολὺν χρόνον…
>
> Only the fame of letters was dear to me, letters brought together by East and West and the pride of Hellas, Athens. On these, I toiled a lot for a long time…

The second occurrence is more concerned with external hardships. In order to show that his present sufferings exceed everything he has ever had to endure, Gregory gives a summary of the major misfortunes that previously befell him; having listed a shipwreck, an earthquake, illness, and a serious accident, he concludes with a generalizing statement (2.1.1.307–338):[36]

[34] For an expressive non-formulaic usage cf. *Carm.* 2.1.19.1, ed. C. Simelidis (κακοῖς μογέων μεγάλοισιν…); the poem is tellingy entitled σχετλιαστικὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν αὐτοῦ παθῶν).

[35] I quote *Carm.* 2.1.1–11 from A. Tuilier, G. Bady, and J. Bernardi, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze. Oeuvres poétiques* I.1 *Poèmes personnels* II.1.1–11 (Paris 2004); the rest of the poems are from *PG* unless otherwise indicated. The lines discussed recur almost exactly in *Carm.* 2.2.7.43–45 (a poetic letter to Nemesius).

[36] On the context and structure of the passage see M. A. T. Poulos, *Callimachus and Callimacheanism in the Poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus* (diss. Catholic Univ. 2019) 73.

ἀλλ' οὔπω τοιόνδε τοσόνδε τε ἄλγος ἀνέτλην·
οὐδ' ὅτε …
οὐδ' ὅτε …
οὐδ' ὅτε …
οὐδ' ὁπότ' …
ἄλλα τε πόλλ' ἐμόγησα·[37] τίς ἂν τάδε μυθήσαιτο,
οἷς με Θεὸς τείρων τε καὶ εὐμενέων ἐκάλεσσεν;

But I have not yet endured a grief of such measure and quality; not when …; not when …; not when …; and not when … And I have suffered many other things; who could tell over everything with which God, oppressing and being gracious, called me?

Another case where the phrase is used to sum up a variety of sufferings is in the poem entitled *A Dream about the Anastasia* church, written in elegiac couplets (*Carm.* 2.1.16.63–65):[38]

ἦ μὴν πόλλ' ἐμόγησα καὶ εἰν ἁλί, καὶ κατὰ γαῖαν
ἐχθροῖς, καὶ φιλίοις, ποιμέσιν, ἠδὲ λύκοις,
νούσῳ τε στυγερῇ, καὶ γήραϊ καμπυλόεντι…

Indeed, I have suffered a lot both on the sea and on the land, under enemies, friends, priests, and wolves, under hateful disease and crooked old age…[39]

Although the passages differ in the sort of suffering they refer to, the very repetition of the phrase πόλλ' ἐμόγησα, in one case even in the same poem, adds up to the image of Gregory as a man whose life is characterized by constant toil and suffering.

[37] Here I retain the *PG* text. According to the edition of Tuilier and Bady, most manuscripts transmit πολλ' ἐμόγησα as in 98, only two have πολλὰ, and only one μόγησα *post correcturam*. The editors adopt the reading πολλὰ μόγησα, which does not seem justified to me.

[38] For an introduction to this poem see Poulos, *Callimachus* 198–200.

[39] The two further occurrences of the phrase are in *Carm.* 2.1.17.45–46 (ἦ μὴν πόλλ' ἐμόγησα καὶ εἰν ἄλλοισιν ἀπίστοις, / οἷσιν ἔνι γλώσσης ἦχος ἔθ' ἡμετέρης) and 2.2.1.323–324 (καὶ γὰρ πόλλ' ἐμόγησα, Θεὸς δέ μοι ἐγγυάλιξε / ποιμαίνειν πολλὰς εἰς ἐτέων δεκάδας). See also 2.1.1.622 (πάντη δ' ἀθρήσας τε καὶ ἐν πάντεσσι μογήσας, / ἐκ σέθεν, εἰς σέ, μάκαρ, λεύσσω πάλιν, ἄλκαρ ἐμοῖο).

This image is decidedly stronger than in most of the letters, as there are no 'philosophical' reflections to balance these statements.

What makes the phrase πόλλ' ἐμόγησα so interesting for this paper is its Homeric background. In the Homeric epics, the formula πολλὰ μογησ- or πόλλ' ἐμογησ- (with various endings)[40] is used no less than nineteen times, four in the *Iliad* and fifteen in the *Odyssey*; later epic poets use it, too, but, judging from the surviving texts, far less frequently (three occurrences in Quintus of Smyrna make up the most noteworthy accumulation between Homer and Gregory). It is difficult to discern whether Gregory had one specific Homeric line in mind. The most likely model would be a line from *Iliad* 1, frequently quoted by grammarians, in which Achilles defends himself against Agamemnon, who wants to take Briseis from him (*Il.* 1.161–162):

καὶ δή μοι γέρας αὐτὸς ἀφαιρήσεσθαι ἀπειλεῖς,
ᾧ ἔπι πόλλ' ἐμόγησα, δόσαν δέ μοι υἷες Ἀχαιῶν.

And now my prize you threaten in person to strip from me, for which I labored much, the gift of the sons of the Achaians.

In writing τοῖς ἔπι πόλλ' ἐμόγησα (*Carm.* 2.1.1.98) Gregory seems to imitate the first hemistich as a whole. It should also be noted that this is the only case where Homer uses the formula in the second and third foot of a hexameter, while Gregory does it in all of the six cases, which suggests, though it does not prove, that it is this line that Gregory had in mind. But what is more important than the question of a specific source is the general connection with Homeric epic. Achilles is not the only Homeric hero who claims or is said to have "labored much": the list also includes Phoenix, Antilochus, Eumaeus, Laertes, and, above all, the notoriously "much-enduring" (πολύτλας) Odys-

[40] In most cases where both πολλὰ μογησ- and πόλλ' ἐμογησ- are grammatically possible, the manuscripts transmit both readings. I quote Homer from West's editions; my translation follows Lattimore.

seus, who is the subject of most of the occurrences of the formula in the *Odyssey*.[41] Given the number of heroes to whom this formula is ascribed, it seems legitimate to say that "laboring much" is typical of Homeric heroes in general, and that Gregory, when transferring the formula to himself, evokes the model of Homeric heroes, possibly, though not necessarily, with some emphasis on Achilles and Odysseus.[42]

Needless to say, use of mythological *exempla* is anything but unusual in Gregory's writings. Kristoffel Demoen has studied Gregory's use of *exempla* in detail, and although he does not take up any of the lines containing the πόλλ' ἐμόγησα formula, he documents twelve passages in the poems in which Gregory refers or alludes to Achilles, Odysseus, or Eumaeus.[43] According to Demoen's classification, most of these references or allusions serve an ornamental or evidential function; only two are assigned a model function, one of them a doubtful allusion to Achilles refusing the presents of the Greeks, the other a more obvious allusion to Odysseus plugging his ears with wax while

[41] Nine cases (*Od.* 2.343, 5.223, 449, 6.175, 7.147, 8.155, 19.483, 21.207, 23.338) plus three cases indirectly referring to Odysseus (3.232, 23.101, 23.169). The list of heroes reflects the semantic development of μογέω described in *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* s.v.: while in the *Il.* μογέω always refers to "action under difficulty" (often in war, as in the case of Achilles), in the *Od.* it "is often used compendiously…, and means now *undergo hardship* or simply *suffer*" (thus in the case of Odysseus). As to *Il.* 1.162, see J. Latacz, R. Nünlist, and M. Stoevesandt, *Homers Ilias. Gesamtkommentar* I.2 (Munich 2000) 81 ("Der Kampf erscheint bei Homer oft als mühevolle Arbeit").

[42] For further thoughts on the connection of heroism and suffering in Homer see e.g. E. Cook, "'Active' and 'Passive' Heroics in the *Odyssey*," *CW* 93 (1999) 149–167; cf. Most, *JHS* 109 (1989) 132, who observes that most of the first-person stories told by Odysseus in *Od.* 12–24 are "tales of woe."

[43] K. Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla in Gregory Nazianzen: A Study in Rhetoric and Meaning* (Turnhout 1996) 331–433 (inventories I and II). Interestingly, in one case Odysseus is explicitly associated with Gregory's struggles (Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐκεῖνος, οὗ τὰ πόλλ' ἀθλήματα, *Carm.* 1.2.10.402).

passing the Sirens.[44] These numbers are in keeping with Gregory's use of mythological *exempla* more generally: while mythological *exempla* as such are quite numerous in his poems, only a small minority function as models, and an even smaller minority as positive models (usually "episodes in which the pagan gods are absent").[45]

It is not difficult to find reasons for Gregory's reservations about using mythological models. Already in pre-Christian culture, the Homeric epics, and mythological epics in general, were often regarded as containing "lies" or "false" elements (e.g. Sol. fr.29 West, Arist. *Poet.* 1460a18–19, Hor. *Ars P.* 151, Luc. *Philops.* 2).[46] Jewish and Christian authors developed an even more critical stance, and Gregory is no exception in this respect: his explicit judgment of Greek mythology is clearly negative, not only because of its doubtful historicity, but even more because of its ethical or theological implications.[47] Against this backdrop, it is only natural that Gregory hesitates to present mythological *exempla* as models for his (or others') life. But how does his use of the πόλλ' ἐμόγησα formula relate to this attitude? In Demoen's taxonomy, the relevant passages

[44] *Carm.* 1.2.2.129–133 (οὐδ' εἴ μοι χρυσοῖο, καὶ ἠλέκτροιο τάλαντα, / καὶ πεδία χλοάοντα καὶ εὐρέα πώεα δοίης, / … / οὐδέ κεν ὣς λιπόχριστον ἐγὼ βίον αἰσχρὸν ἑλοίμην, possibly alluding to *Il.* 9.379–386); 1.2.33.65–66 (κηρῷ τὰ ὦτα φράσσε πρὸς φαύλους λόγους, / ᾠδῶν τε τερπνῶν ἐκμελῆ λυγίσματα).

[45] Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla* 229.

[46] The passages reflect early concepts of fictionality. For detailed studies see S. Feddern, *Der antike Fiktionalitätsdiskurs* (Berlin 2018); A. Cullhed, *The Shadow of Creusa: Negotiating Fictionality in Late Antique Latin Literature* (Berlin 2015); on the above-mentioned passages see also M. Hose, "Fiktionalität und Lüge. Über einen Unterschied zwischen römischer und griechischer Terminologie, " *Poetica* 28 (1996) 257–274.

[47] On the beginnings of Jewish-Christian criticism of Greek mythology see R. Bloch, *Moses und der Mythos: Die Auseinandersetzung mit der griechischen Mythologie bei jüdisch-hellenistischen Autoren* (Leiden 2011); for Gregory's position, Demoen, *Exempla* 212–229, with examples from his writings.

would have to be added to the small group of mythological *exempla* functioning as positive models. In fact, they could be compared to the cases discussed by Demoen insofar as the episodes alluded to focus on humans rather than gods.

That said, the formula works somewhat differently than do the *exempla* investigated by Demoen. When using a phrase like πόλλ' ἐμόγησα (or other Homeric formulae for suffering, e.g. ἄλγεα πολλά, ἄλγεα πάσχ-),[48] Gregory does not so much identify with a particular mythological hero; rather, he evokes a generic model associated with epic on a more abstract level. Gregory's use of these formulae is not contingent on whether the heroes really lived or how their deeds as told by the poets are to be judged from an ethical or theological perspective. The crucial point is that the epic genre provides him with a paradigm that he can use to shape his autobiographical persona in a way different from the letters. Adopting such a paradigm has different implications. One could argue that by alluding to epic heroes Gregory aims to heroize himself, which would entail some degree of fictionalization (a matter recently put forward by Jan Stenger, who goes so far as to discuss Gregory's poems as "autofiction").[49] I do not intend to reject this interpretation but rather wish to propose a different perspective.

While in the letters the model of the self-controlled philosopher imposes restraints on the description of suffering, the model of the Homeric hero evoked in the poems allows Gregory to refer to his suffering more freely. Set against the Homeric background, expounding one's sufferings is not only unobjectionable but even honorable, and this gives Gregory the justification to put as much emphasis on them as he

[48] A similar case could be made for the formula ἄλγεα πάσχ-, used fifteem times in Homer, which Gregory takes up in two of his personal poems (*Carm.* 2.1.1.155, 2.1.50.89).

[49] Cf. Stenger, in *Myth*, esp. 101–102, where he discusses the impact of Euripidean and Homeric reminiscences and formulae.

chooses. In elegiac poems such as *Carm.* 2.1.16, the traditional association of elegy with mourning may have fostered the focus on suffering even further, even if in most cases Gregory seems to use hexameters and elegiacs interchangeably. At any rate, the generic background, and most of all the hypotext of Homeric epic, allows or maybe even compels Gregory to develop a different autobiographical persona, a persona characterized by toil and suffering and not ashamed to talk about it.

3. *Suffering in iambic poems*

In the iambic poems, references to suffering are at least as frequent and extensive as they are in the dactylic ones. Generally speaking, the lexemes denoting suffering in the iambic poems are not as genre-specific as in the dactylic poems, which employ more artificial language. However, there is one obvious counterpart to μογέω, viz. μοχθέω, which is used more or less as a synonym but, at least in Gregory, restricted to iambic poems. μοχθέω is often combined with πολλά as well. A particularly instructive case is found in the famous iambic autobiography *De vita sua* (2.1.11.17–19):[50]

> ἀκούσατ', ἄνδρες, ἀνδρὸς ἀψευδεστάτου
> καὶ πολλὰ μοχθήσαντος ἐν πολλαῖς στροφαῖς,
> ἐξ ὧν ὑπάρχει καὶ τὸ γιγνώσκειν πλέον.
>
> Listen, you men, to a man who is completely devoid of falsehood, and who has struggled greatly amid many twists of fortune, out of which there has also arisen a greater understanding.

There are two elements that make the passage so enlightening for this paper. First, just as πόλλ' ἐμόγησα establishes a link to epic, πολλὰ μοχθήσαντος ties this passage to tragedy. The verb

[50] My translation follows C. White, *Gregory of Nazianzus. Autobiographical Poems* (Cambridge 1996); a commentary is provided by C. Jungck, *Gregor von Nazianz. De vita sua* (Heidelberg 1974). Cf. *Carm.* 2.1.12.831–832 ed. B. Meier (νομίζεσθ', ὡς βούλεσθε· πλὴν μέμνησθέ μου / τοῦ πολλὰ μοχθήσαντος ἐν φίλων τρόποις…) and 2.1.14.59–60 (ἦ πόλλ' ἐμόχθησ', ἀλλ' ὅμως οὐκ ἄξια / μισθῶν, ὅσοι μένουσι τοὺς Θεῷ φίλους).

μοχθέω is particularly frequent in Euripides, and the juncture πολλὰ μοχθησ- or πόλλ' ἐμοχθησ- is attested in five of his tragedies (though not all of the lines in question seem to be genuine). In four of these, a tragic hero applies the formula to himself; the heroes in question are Iolaus, Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Telephus.[51] From the Hellenistic period onward, the phrase πολλὰ μοχθησ- is also used in prose, especially by historians such as Polybius, Diodorus, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[52] However, when Gregory uses the formula in an iambic poem, he is most likely to have the Euripidean model in mind, all the more so since one of the occurrences in Gregory might be based on a specific Euripidean line, in which Telephus talks about his sufferings.[53]

In spite of this possible connection with a concrete model, the overall situation is similar to that in the dactylic poems. Two of the four heroes listed above are also included in Demoen's list of references or allusion to mythological figures (Agamemnon and Telephus, always with an ornamental or evidential function). However, rather than aligning him with a specific mythological hero, the phrase πολλὰ μοχθησ- evokes the generic model of tragic (first and foremost, Euripidean) heroes who are characterized by much toil, be it through self-imposed efforts or through external misfortunes, which of course often come together in tragedy. Gregory is not dependent on

[51] *Heracl.* 448 (πολλὰ μοχθήσας, Iolaus); *IA* 690 (πολλὰ μοχθήσας, Agamemnon); *Tro.* 862 (πολλὰ μοχθήσας, Menelaus, mostly regarded as interpolated, but defended by W. Biehl, *Euripides Troades* [Heidelberg 1989] 329–330); fr.696.8 Kannicht (πόλλ' ἐμόχθησ', from *Telephus*, with Telephus speaking); *Phoen.* 552 (πολλὰ μοχθεῖν, referring to Eteocles, in a question asked by Iocaste). Cf. also Ar. *Plut.* 282 (οἳ πολλὰ μοχθήσαντες).

[52] Polyb. 1.54.7; Diod. 5.39.2 (quoting Posidonius); Dion. Hal. *Ant.Rom.* 2.42. Cf. also Luc. *Hermot.* 69 (quoting a proverb).

[53] Cf. Greg. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.12.832 (ἦ πόλλ' ἐμόχθησ', ἀλλ' ὅμως…) with Eur. fr.696.8 (καὶ πόλλ' ἐμόχθησ', ἀλλὰ…, in the same metrical position, which makes an imitation even more likely).

whether the individual heroes really lived and how their deeds are to be judged. What matters is that the tragic genre to which he is linked through his metre constitutes a framework in which he can bemoan his sufferings in a way that he would not allow himself to do in the letters. The model of the tragic hero shapes his autobiographical persona in way comparable to the dactylic poems but markedly different from the letters.

The second aspect to be discussed concerns the connection between suffering and knowledge. Gregory presents himself as someone who has become wise through his sufferings. Again, one can see a connection to tragedy: one may think of the gnomic "learning by suffering" (πάθει μάθος) in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (177),[54] or one may associate this connection with tragic heroes such as Oedipus who have learned from much suffering. However, Gregory's statement gains an additional layer of meaning in a Christian world where suffering is considered a typical feature of saints, especially of martyrs. The cult of martyrs played a major role in fourth-century Cappadocia, a role that is reflected in the writings of the three Cappadocian fathers; a particularly telling example is Gregory of Nazianzus' speech in praise of the "holy martyr and saint" Cyprian.[55] To be sure, the texts tend to focus on the martyrs' struggling and fighting (reflected in the popular comparison of martyrs to athletes), but the basic idea remains that they endure suffering. In this sense, when foregrounding his hardships, Gregory can

[54] The idea is of course not restricted to Aeschylus and is probably of proverbial origin, see the references in J. Bollack, *L'Agamemnon d'Eschyle* I.2 (Lille 1981) 223–227.

[55] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 24, esp. 24.4 (πᾶσι μὲν δὴ μάρτυσι πανηγυριστέον, καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνοικτέον ἑτοίμως καὶ γλῶσσαν, καὶ ἀκοήν, καὶ διάνοιαν, καὶ λέγοντάς τι προθύμως περὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ἀκούοντας, καὶ πάντα ἐλάττω νομίζοντας τῆς ἐκείνων ἀθλήσεως). For an extensive study see V. M. Limberis, *Architects of Piety: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Cult of the Martyrs* (Oxford 2011). For other voices on suffering and martyrdom see e.g. W. Bähnk, *Von der Notwendigkeit des Leidens: Die Theologie des Martyriums bei Tertullian* (Göttingen 2001).

also be regarded as alluding to the model of saints and martyrs who achieved their exemplary position through their endurance. In fact, since his self-presentation as a man who has learned from his suffering makes him a model for other Christians, one can go so far as to speak of an 'autohagiographic' element (a term applied to Gregory in some recent papers).[56]

Another, even more important Christian model for suffering is Christ himself. That Gregory saw a connection between his suffering and Christ's suffering becomes evident in the first lines of the lengthy iambic poem *On himself and about the bishops* (2.1.12.1–5):[57]

Ἴσως μὲν ἐχρῆν, ὡς κακούμενον φέρειν
ταῖς τοῦ παθόντος ἐντολαῖς τυπούμενον,
οὕτω παθόντα καρτερεῖν καὶ τὸν λόγον,
ὡς ἂν τελείως ὦμεν ἠγωνισμένοι
καὶ μισθὸν ἐλπίζωμεν ἐντελέστερον.

Maybe I ought, just as I ought to endure being maltreated, obeying the commands of the one who suffered, likewise, having suffered, also to restrain my speech in order to fight to the full extent and hope for a more complete recompense.

Gregory describes both Christ and himself with παθών (παθόντος, παθόντα), indicating that in suffering he becomes similar to

[56] S. Efthymiadis, "Two Gregories and Three Genres: Autobiography, Autohagiography and Hagiography," in J. Børtnes et al. (eds.), *Gregory of Nazianzus. Images and Reflections* (Copenhagen 2006) 239–256, at 245; B. K. Storin, "Autohagiobiography. Gregory of Nazianzus among his Biographers," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 1 (2017) 254–281. For the role of suffering in Gregory's self-fashioning as a holy man see McLynn, *JECS* 6 (1998) 466.

[57] Ed. B. Meier, *Gregor von Nazianz. Über die Bischöfe (Carmen 2,1,12).* (Paderborn 1989); my translation. Lines 1–2 have been variously construed: the Latin translation reproduced in *PG* renders φέρειν as a finite verb ("ut … pertuli"), while Meier takes it with τυπούμενον ("wie ich … dazu angehalten werde, … zu ertragen"). I take φέρειν to be parallel to καρτερεῖν, governed by a supplied ἐχρῆν. The passage is also discussed in Kuhn-Treichel, *VigChr* 74 (2020) 292.

Christ.[58] The idea of connecting one's own and Christ's sufferings, which can be traced back to Pauline theology, inserts itself into the broader context of Gregory's "Christomorphic autobiography" and "autobiographical Christology" studied by Andrew Hofer.[59] In this context, suffering is important on more than one level. One of the central concepts of the Christology elaborated by Gregory against Apollinarism is that through his incarnation (σάρκωσις or ἐνανθρώπησις), Christ has also blended man with divinity.[60] In several places, this concept is linked to suffering: in another personal poem, Gregory points out that Christ has "deified me" through his sufferings, in other cases he states that Christ suffered to "provide remedy for our suffering" or even "suffers with our suffering."[61] This model allows Gregory to see his sufferings as related to his divine model in an almost ontological way: as Gregory cannot be separated from Christ, so his suffering is necessarily interwoven with Christ's.

The idea of restraining one's speech (καρτερεῖν καὶ τὸν λόγον) forms part of this connection with Christ as it alludes to Jesus suffering silently (Matt 27:14, cf. Is 53:7).[62] At first sight, such a

[58] Cf. Meier, *Über die Bischöfe* 77: "Die Traductio (vgl. Lausberg §§647; 658) und die gleiche Wortstellung im Vers sollen G.s enge Christusnachfolge hervorheben."

[59] Hofer, in *Re-Reading Gregory* 143–158. Cf. Col 1:24: νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου.

[60] Thus described by Hofer, in *Re-Reading Gregory* 147–149; cf. D. F. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation. A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1979) 87–88; C. Crimi and M. Kertsch, *Gregorio Nazianzeno. Sulla virtù. Carme giambico [I,2,10]* (Pisa 1995) 205–206.

[61] *Carm.* 2.1.34A.83–84 ed. T. Kuhn (καὶ Χριστοῦ παθέων κλέος ἄφθιτον, οἷς μ' ἐθέωσεν, / ἀνδρομέην μορφὴν οὐρανίῃ κεράσας); 1.2.14.90–92 (Χριστὸς ἐὴν μορφὴν ἡμετέρῃ κεράσας, / ὡς κεν ἐμοῖς παθέεσσι παθὼν Θεὸς, ἄλκαρ ὀπάζοι, / καί με θεὸν τελέσῃ εἴδεϊ τῷ βροτέῳ); *Or.* 44.4 (τῷ ἡμετέρῳ πάθει πάσχει Θεὸς, γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος). Cf. Hofer, in *Re-Reading Gregory* 153–155.

[62] Gregory himself followed this precept in his self-imposed silence in the

rational reflection may recall the way Gregory restricts his description of suffering in the letters, as discussed above. It is even possible to interpret the transition from singular (παθόντα, 1–3) to plural (ὦμεν, ἐλπίζωμεν, 4–5) as an implied generalization (rather than just a reaction to metrical constraints) comparable to the potentially inclusive use of the first person plural in the letters quoted above. However, here the context is different: Gregory ponders whether he should remain silent about his sufferings (ἴσως μὲν…, 1), but then ultimately decides to tell what he has endured from his enemies (8–15), and towards the end of the poem he even uses the formula πολλὰ μοχθήσαντος (832). To put it bluntly, Gregory imitates Christ in suffering, but when it comes to talking about his suffering, he prefers the example of tragedy evoked by the meter, where heroes are allowed and even expected to bemoan their hardships.

4. *Conclusion*

I hope to have shown that the way Gregory refers to his sufferings is deeply influenced by the generic traditions he draws on and the role models associated with these genres. In the letters, Gregory is mostly influenced by the ideal of the self-controlled philosopher who must not indulge in his suffering, while in the poems he allows himself to take up the model of epic or tragic heroes who are free to expound on what they have endured. Additional models such as the saints or Christ can influence the self-presentation. The precise framework shaping the autobiographical persona differs from genre to genre and, to some degree, even from poem to poem. There are differences between the Homeric heroes evoked as a model in the dactylic poems and the Euripidean models alluded to in the iambic poems. Most obviously, the Homeric heroes are

Lent of 382 (in which, however, he did not cease to write, cf. *Carm.* 2.1.34–37). *Carm.* 2.1.12 is likely to predate this silence, cf. Meier, *Über die Bischöfe* 17.

more concerned with fighting (though in the *Odyssey* less than in the *Iliad*), which implies that their suffering can also result from self-imposed efforts as in the case of Gregory's studies in Athens (e.g. when Achilles labors to win Briseis as his prize of battle).[63] By contrast, Euripides shows a predilection for 'ragged heroes' who have suffered for a long time and can therefore be a model for other aspects of Gregory's life (one example being Telephus).[64]

That said, the most important distinction in Gregory is that between the letters with their philosophical background and the poems with their epic-tragic subtext. Hence, in simplified terms, we can contrast the philosopher of the letters with the epic-tragic hero of the poems, and we may feel inclined to ask which one of them comes closer to the historical Gregory. However, such a polarization would be rather misleading. All of Gregory's autobiographical accounts are shaped by certain models, and these models can be seen to complement each other as they highlight different aspects of a complex and partly contradictory personality. As Stenger has pointed out with regard to the poems, Gregory tells his life "in variation," and this is all the more true when it comes to different genres.[65] In the cases discussed in this paper, the model of the philosopher encourages a focus on self-control, while the model of epic and tragic heroes legitimizes an emphasis on suffering that might have been otherwise considered inappropriate. In this sense, the different genres add different facets to the autobiographical portrait, and this intrinsic diversity, which is exemplified by the

[63] *Il.* 1.162 (quoted above), cf. 2.690. In the *Odyssey* the formula is most frequently applied to Odysseus' misfortunes on his way home; cf. n.41 above.

[64] On Euripides' 'ragged heroes' see e.g. D. Kawalko Roselli, "The Theatre of Euripides," in L. K. McClure (ed.), *A Companion to Euripides* (Chichester 2017) 390–411, at 402.

[65] Stenger, in *Myth* 110.

different attitudes towards suffering, is one of the reasons that make Gregory's writings such an outstanding example of ancient autobiography.[66]

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