Erotic Magic in the Pulpit: Fictional and Historicist Contexts of Gregory's Panegyric of Cyprian (*Or.* 24)

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PREACHING IN CONSTANTINOPLE around the 2nd or 4th of October 379, the newly appointed Nicene priest of the city and future bishop Gregory of Nazianzus delivered a panegyric in memory of the renowned Cyprian of Carthage[1] on what seems to be the feast day of Cyprian of Antioch.[2] This was the first recorded time[3] that the famous Carthaginian bishop was

[1] *Or.* 24.6, τὸ μέγα Καρχηδονίων ὄνομα.

[2] The preacher said that he celebrated Cyprian a couple of days later than the precise date, the reason being that he was away from the capital for a few days. For the text and its dating between 379 and 380, J. Mossay, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 20–23* (SC 70: Paris 1980). Transl. M. Pollard Vinson, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Select Orations* (Washington 2003). On the date see also J. M. Szymusiak, "Pour une chronologie des discours de S. Grégoire de Nazianze," *VigChr* 19 (1965) 183–189, who argues that the feast was that of the Antiochene Cyprian and situates it in 379; H. Delehaye, "Cyprien d'Antioche et Cyprien de Carthage," *AnalBoll* 39 (1921) 314–332, at 315, correctly associates the feast with the Carthaginian martyr and situates it in 379. For 379, the year Gregory was appointed bishop in the capital, see also G. D. Dunn, "The Reception of the Martyrdom of Cyprian of Carthage in Early Christian Literature," in J. Leemans (ed.), *Martyrdom and Persecution in Late Antique Christianity: Festschrift Boudewijn Dehandschutter* (Leuven 2010) 65–86, at 70–73. On the Carthaginian Cyprian see J. P. Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop* (London 2002).

[3] Gregory is followed by Prudentius *Perist.* 13 in the early 400s, our second source for the fusion of the two Cyprians; see J. Petruccione, "Prudentius' Portrait of St. Cyprian: An Idealized Biography," *REA* 36

Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 65 (2025) 15–47
ISSN 2159-3159

portrayed in his youth as *doctissimus artibus sinistris* (Prud. *Perist.* 13.21). Gregory's panegyric allegedly 'confuses' the two Cyprians, the Latin-speaking bishop of Carthage and the Greek-speaking Antiochene sorcerer. Because of the orator's claim that he nearly forgot Cyprian, scholars have argued that this confusion is a product of haste.[4] Throughout the oration, however, the theologian stresses that his congregation was to benefit enormously from the tale of the saint's lustful pagan past, a unique lesson on chastity (*Or.* 24.9). This article suggests that Gregory intentionally fused the two Cyprians for two reasons: first, on the narratological level, to reform his audience's notion of carnal desire in a more saintly direction by reframing the language of *eros* found in erotic literature; and second, to propose a more tentative historicist hypothesis, that Gregory's interest in magic was prompted by the contemporary trials of pagan 'magicians' and the accusations against his archenemies, the Eunomians, who were accused of theurgy.

In *Oration* 24 Gregory fuses two Cyprians into a single hagiography, that of the Carthaginian Cyprian.[5] Cyprian of Carthage was martyred during Valerian's persecutions in 258, his feast day 16 September. He was an elite pagan with a secular education and became a bishop in the 250s. His biographer,

(1990) 225–241; and on Eudocia, R. Bailey, *The Acts of Saint Cyprian of Antioch: Critical Editions, Translations, and Commentary* (diss. McGill Univ. 2017); C. Bevegni, "Sui modelli del *De Sancto Cypriano* dell'imperatrice Eudocia," in E. Amato et al. (eds.), *Approches de la Troisième Sophistique. Hommages à Jacques Schamp* (Brussels 2006) 389–405.

[4] *Or.* 24.1: "We nearly forgot Cyprian!" Delehaye, *AnalBoll* 39 (1921) 315, speaks of hasty but meticulous composition.

[5] See Bailey, *The Acts* 18–19. Cf. T. Zahn, *Cyprian von Antiochien and die deutsche Faustsage* (Erlangen 1882); Delehaye, *AnalBoll* 39 (1921) 314–332; J. Coman, "Les deux Cyprien de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze," *StudPatr* 4 (1961) 363–372; L. Krestan and A. Hermann, "Cyprianus II (Magier)," *RAC* 3 (1957) 467–477; T. A. Sabatini, "S. Cipriano nella tradizione agiografica," *RivStudClas* 21 (1973) 181–204. For an overview see E. Rizos, in The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity (01/03/2016: http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E00886).

Pontius the Deacon, gives little information regarding his pagan career before his conversion.[6] During Decius' persecution (249–252) Cyprian went into voluntary exile, admonishing his congregation through the letters for which he became famous. He confronted the Novatians and argued against re-baptism of the *lapsi,* those who sacrificed during the persecution. He was arrested and decapitated in the next persecution. Very little of Cyprian's works would have been known to a fourth-century Western audience, and even less so in the East.[7]

Gregory treats the historical Cyprian in the second part of his sermon (ch. 12–17 out of the 19). He praises the Carthaginian bishop for a plethora of rather generic virtues (12): he stresses Cyprian's magnanimity and philosophical lifestyle, his ascetic conduct and rejection of wealth; he praises his speeches on virtue that contributed to his community's ethical formation, and his defence of and teachings on Trinitarian doctrine and hagiographical works, which are otherwise unattested.[8] Gregory knows of Cyprian's exhortations to his persecuted community (15)[9] and his exceptional perseverance during martyrdom (16),

[6] Cyprian's profession is obscure—lawyer, barrister, teacher of rhetoric: G. W. Clarke, "The Secular Profession of St. Cyprian of Carthage," *Latomus* 24 (1965) 633–638. Pontius (*V.Cypr.* 2) dismisses Cyprian's rhetorical training (*praetereo*) and pre-Christian life as not of interest.

[7] Petruccione, *REA* 36 (1990) 225–241, and Dunn, in *Martyrdom and Persecution* 65–86, show that only the bare minimum of his life and chiefly his martyrdom were known and celebrated in the West, and less so in the East.

[8] Delehaye, *AnalBoll* 39 (1921) 326–327. The very obscure issue of a treatise *De Trinitate* is beyond the scope of this paper. This treatise, according to Jer. *C.Ruf.* 2.19, was attributed to either Tertullian or Cyprian and circulated among the Macedonians/Pneumatomachians in Constantinople. Jerome believed the treatise to be Novatian on stylistic grounds. Bailey, *The Acts* 12, proposes that the treatise like the letter collection were circulating also in Greek and may thus have been known to Gregory.

[9] It is unclear whether Decius, who is mentioned at 24.14 and is associated with the bishop's exile, is still in power when Cyprian is executed (15). Dunn, in *Martyrdom and Persecution* 73, sees that as a historical mistake.

though Valerian remains unnamed. Cyprian's sanctity is confirmed when his miraculous relics are discovered (17) long after his death.[10]

Cyprian of Antioch was martyred in 304 in Nicomedia during Diocletian's persecutions; he is venerated on 26 September in the West and 2 October in the East.[11] *Oration* 24 is the *terminus ante quem* for a hagiographical dossier which first records the Faust legend. The so-called *Acts of Cyprian and Justa* are divided into three parts, *Conversion, Confession, Martyrium*, each of which probably stems from a different hand.[12] The *Conversion* narrates Justa's Thecla-like conversion after listening from afar to the preaching of a certain Praÿlios. Justa's parents convert too and she lives as a consecrated maiden. In what follows, Justa rejects the advances of the suitor Aglaidas, who, enraged, commissions Cyprian to bewitch the girl. Cyprian sends three demons to Justa, who repels them with the sign of the cross. The magus eventually becomes captivated by her beauty and faith and rejects paganism. The *Confessio* is a first-person recantation, describing Cyprian's initiation in mystery cults in Greece, Egypt, and the East. The recanting sorcerer tells of his life-changing encounter with Justa, followed by his conversion and the burning of his pagan books. The *Martyrium* narrates how Cyprian, now bishop of Antioch, and the now nun Justina (the other name of Justa)[13] were summoned to Nicomedia to be martyred; eventually the martyrs' relics are transported to Rome by sailors.

[10] Augustine *Sermo* 312.3 includes only generic information on the bishop's former life, even when quoting Cyprian's *Ep.* 1.3–4 to Donatus (*PL* 4.198–200), where Cyprian claims he was living in darkness before his conversion; this is exploited by Augustine to stress Cyprian's conversion. See A. Ployd, *Augustine, Martyrdom, and Classical Rhetoric* (New York 2023), on Cyprian as a model for Augustine's contemporary struggles. Cf. Dunn, in *Martyrdom and Persecution* 77–85.

[11] Zahn, *Cyprian* 86.

[12] The analysis here is based on the material collected in Bailey, *The Acts* 16.

[13] In the *Martyrium* Justa is usually called Justina: Bailey, *The Acts* 7.

Gregory knows the major facts of the Antiochene tale: his Cyprian dabbles in magic (8) when he—and not the suitor Aglaidas—becomes enamored of the unnamed consecrated virgin (9). To seduce her, Cyprian summons his demons in exchange for animal sacrifices. Seeing the maiden's devotion to Mary and her steadfastness—though no sign of the cross is mentioned here nor any dialogue between the girl and the devil—Cyprian rejects his pagan ways, burns his books, and even expounds publicly the foolishness of his pagan past (8, 12), a possible allusion to the *Confessio*. This Cyprian is the focus of the first section of Gregory's panegyric (5–11), and is described as the highlight of the sermon (9, ἥκει δὲ ἡμῖν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ κεφάλαιον ὁ λόγος) and the most pleasing piece (11, τὸ τοῦ διηγήματος ἥδιστον). In *Oration* 24 Gregory combines almost seamlessly these two portraits into one, but while he names Cyprian he leaves the virgin unnamed.

Was Gregory simply confused regarding the historical Cyprian? Hippolyte Delehaye notes with embarrassment that the theologian is in fact confused,[14] and the editor of the text, Justin Mossay, speaks of a "suprenant ectoplasme" of fact and fiction. Others have thought the confusion to be a product of haste, following the cues of the orator's initial excuses, or of ignorance.[15] For this panegyric Gregory claims intriguingly an oral exchange as the source of his material about Cyprian, whereas in other panegyrics like that for Athanasius he stresses the importance of the written evidence.[16] This implies at least a

[14] Delehaye, *AnalBoll* 39 (1921) 314: "que l'on est embarrassé de désigner."

[15] Mossay, *Grégoire* 9, 13–14, "ingénuité"; Petruccione, *REA* 36 (1990) 229, an "historical error"; J. A. McGuckin, *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood 2001) 251, "something of a disaster"; Dunn, in *Martyrdom and Persecution* 71, speaks of conflation; C. A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God* (Oxford 2008) 36, a "blunder." Cf. Bailey, *The Acts* 13 n.40.

[16] Gregory briefly mentions an unnamed oral source (*Or.* 24.12): "He

flexibility in handling historical sources on Gregory's part. The association between the two Cyprians may have been known before Gregory's oration, but neither speculation on lost sources[17] nor the theory of the alleged 'confusion' explains Gregory's seamless reworking of the two stories and his focus on the Antiochene material.[18]

Before embarking on a closer analysis of Gregory's narrative, it is useful to understand how 'confusions' may have been interpreted in antiquity. Intentional ambiguity between two namesakes may well have implied purposeful twists of information. At an early stage, for example, the two Simons, the Apostle and the Magus, were contrasted as opposite poles of godly or demonic agency.[19] Gregory too uses namesakes to accuse some fellow-bishops of impersonating Simon the Magus or Simon Peter at their convenience.[20] Likewise, hagiography is prone to such slip-ups, contributing to parallel developments of namesake martyrs'

becomes a holy sheep … and even, as I have heard (ὡς δὲ ἐγώ τινος ἤκουσα) a church menial." In the mirroring *Or.* 31.5 for Athanasius, however, he explicitly says his praise is "a historical (ἱστορίας) fact, not a panegyric (οὐκ εὐφημίας)." For the parallel treatment of the two bishops see S. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley 2012) 157.

[17] Delehaye, *AnalBoll* 39 (1921) 335, believed Gregory to be the source of the confusion; Zahn, *Cyprian* 87–90, and Reitzenstein, "Cyprian der Magier," *NAkG* 38–79, at 58–59, posited the existence of a lost source known to Gregory and Prudentius, a thesis rightly criticized by Bailey, *The Acts* 14.

[18] Bailey, *The Acts* 12–15.

[19] In a characteristic passage in the Ps.-Clementines, Simon Magus orders his double (Faustus) to confront Peter. Peter realizes the ruse but urges 'Simon' to convert (*Hom.* 20.19.1–7): "I am a fraud, a trickster, a mage (γόης), but I repent." See Zahn, *Cyprian* 12. I am kindly indebted to Benjamin de Vos for this parallel. Another famous one is Athanasius' collective use of Eusebius (οἱ περὶ Εὐσέβιον) to denote Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea (*De decr.* 3.2, 4.2).

[20] *De se ipso* (*PG* 37.1197.7): Σίμων Μάγος χθές, σήμερον Πέτρος Σίμων.

cults.[21] Occasionally namesakes allow one to draw similarities even between fictional heroes and 'historical' martyrs, as in the case of St. Hippolytus who died like Theseus' son, torn by horses,[22] the boundaries between fiction and history being murky.[23] Most importantly, recent studies of the transfer of knowledge have demonstrated how porous categories such as fact, deceit, or fiction were for ancient audiences.[24] An interesting case is the number of persons named Origen or Ammonius, for example, whose alleged direction of conversion (to/from Christianity) has been baffling. As Jeremy Schott and Ilaria Ramelli explain, Christians and pagans were prone to snatching some influential intellectuals depending on their competing narrative agendas.[25] Late antique spoliation aesthetics, the com-

[21] Bailey, *The Acts* 9–11, denies any direct correspondence between the name of the Carthaginian bishop and that of the mage and argues that the association was prompted by the Carthaginian's clairvoyance skills.

[22] Cf. Prud. *Perist.* 11.85–118; C. O'Hogan, *Prudentius and the landscapes of Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2016) 49. Other famous 'confusions' may be the earlier shadowy cult of Nicholas of Myra and the historical sixth-century Nicholas of Sion who died in Myra; the first-century Dionysius the Areopagite and the eighth-century Denis of Paris.

[23] See the always useful G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley 1994).

[24] For a similar confusion see P. Schneider, "The So-called Confusion between India and Ethiopia: The Eastern and Southern Edges of the Inhabited World from the Greco-Roman Perspective," in S. Bianchetti et al. (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Geography* (Leiden 2015) 184–205. Ancient authors were often sloppy regarding the distribution of factual and non- or semi- factual knowledge; e.g., M. Letteney, *The Christianization of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2023) ch. 3, shows that, in order to make a theological argument, Athanasius conveniently draws on more or less canonical sources, depending on his occasional, theological, and pastoral aims.

[25] J. M. Schott, " 'Living like a Christian, but playing the Greek': Accounts of Apostasy and Conversion in Porphyry and Eusebius," *JLA* 1 (2008) 258–277. For the alleged conversion of Origen and his identification with the Origen of Porph. *V.Plot.* 14 see I. Ramelli, "The Question

bination of old with new architectural or literary materials, may have further encouraged, if not justifiably, such fusions in a way that is appalling for the modern historian. As Michael Roberts stresses, in late antique pastiche compositions "not only do the seams show, but they are positively advertised."[26] 'Confusions', in other words, were interesting ways of thinking about a specific topic, and historical material could be easily tweaked if required.

In my view, the combination of the two Cyprianic tales is part of a similar fusion of knowledge and aesthetics. This merger may have taken place before Gregory, but it is the theologian who maximizes the uses of this confusion. This article therefore endorses the idea that Gregory's alleged 'fusion'[27] is an intended twist, as convincingly suggested by Ryan Bailey.[28] In contrast to Bailey, however, I do not believe that the intent of the fusion is to acquaint Gregory's congregation with the historical Cyprian by appealing to the audience's desire for the legendary tale.[29] This in my view would imply a subordination of fiction to facts

of Origen's Conversion, His Concept of Conversion, and Its Relevance to his Biblical Exegesis," in A. Despotis et al. (eds.), *Greek and Byzantine Philosophical Exegesis* (Leiden 2022) 61–108, esp. 84. M. Edwards, "One Origen or Two? The *status quaestionis*," *SymbOslo* 89 (2015) 81–103, argues for the existence of two Origens and two Ammonii.

[26] M. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style. Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Cornell 1989) 3. On cento pastiche compositions see A. Lefteratou, *The Homeric Centos: Homer and the Bible Interwoven* (Oxford 2023).

[27] Mossay, *Grégoire* 9–21, places the scene in Pisidia; Delehaye, *AnalBoll* 39 (1921) 314–332, does not indicate which 'Antioch' this is; Zahn, *Cyprian* 84–85, assumes this is the Antioch in Syria; Bailey, *The Acts* 95, opts for Antioch in Syria. Eudocia's praise of Syrian Antioch in her epic version supports that source of the legend, see A. Lefteratou, "St Cyprian in Late Antique Antioch. Eudocia's Performance of a Local Legend," in D. Hernandez de la Fuente et al. (eds.), *Nonnus of Panopolis in Context* V *Poetic Frontiers* (Leiden forthcoming).

[28] For a deliberate mistake, see Coman, *StudPatr* 4 (1961) 363–372; Bailey, *The Acts* 14, cannot believe that Gregory could not distinguish between history and legend.

[29] Bailey, *The Acts* 16.

rather than placing them on the same pedestal. Moving beyond the *Quellenforschung* for either Cyprian or the *terminus post quem* for the Faust legend, I propose an analysis of the oration in its late 370s context focusing on its didactic and theological agenda as centered around two topics, eros and magic.

This investigation provides for the first time a thorough narratological analysis of the erotic language in *Oration* 24 that showcases the rhetorical motivation behind the entanglement of the two tales: erotic and dramatic language, usually encountered in pagan and Christian fictions, is used to transform erotic desire into Christian chastity. The second part of the analysis focuses on the importance of magic in the sermon and speculates a link between the oration and Gregory's historical milieu. The article proposes that he evokes the events taking place in the 370s, the trials for magic and treason in Antioch, which were particularly prominent in invectives against anti-Nicene groups, especially Eunomians. Gregory's crafting Cyprian as a licentious magus then was instrumental for his moral and doctrinal instruction of his small Nicene congregation, steering them away from lust and heresy while preaching in the very language of eros and magic.

Preaching eros

Erotic rhetoric harks back to Plato's *Phaedrus* where on the banks of the Ilissos Socrates in a sweet style praises the workings of divine eros.[30] The story had a long afterlife in erotic fiction, pagan and Christian, and was considered a stylistic masterpiece.

[30] For the style see R. Hunter, *Plato and the Traditions of Ancient Literature: The Silent Stream* (Cambridge 2012) 151–184, esp. 158–164 on its influence upon Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 7.2, Longinus *Subl.* 13.3, Hermog. 1.7.2. Cf. also the sweetness of style in Longus *praef.* 1.3 (κτῆμα τερπνόν) and *loci amoeni* as places of erotic exchanges in Ach. Tat. 1.2.3 (τόπος ἡδύς… μύθων ἐρωτικῶν). For the equation between narrator and internal/external audience as lovers in the novel see e.g. K. ni Mheallaigh, "Philosophical Framing: The Phaedran Setting of Leucippe and Cleitophon," in J. Morgan et al. (eds.), *Philosophical Presences in the Ancient Novel* (Groningen 2007) 231–244. On reception see S. Delcomminette et al. (eds.), *The Reception of Plato's Phaedrus from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Berlin 2022)..

Novels like Achilles Tatius' open their narratives in lush landscapes, giving a philosophical tinge to their discussion, and Christian narratives used the theme to discuss God's love or idealized relationships between individuals.[31] Accordingly, homiletic texts employ the *Phaedrus* to exemplify the close relationship between preacher and audience in their mutual pursuit of divine love.[32] Similarly, *Oration* 24 employs erotic rhetoric to discuss the transformation of erotic desire in the same manner that erotic fiction mirrors erotic context and narrative.[33] As Roland Barthes

[31] Cf. Gregory's affection for Basil as a divine homoerotic bond, as discussed in J. Børtnes, "Eros Transformed*:* Same-sex Love and Divine Desire," in T. Hägg et al. (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 2000) 180–193. On fiction and Christian hagiography see K. de Temmerman et al. (eds.), *Constructing Saints in Greek and Latin Hagiography* (Turnhout 2023), with up-to-date bibliography. On fiction see J. Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London 1994); J.-A. Brant et al. (eds.), *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (Leiden 2005).

[32] For preacher and congregation as beloved ones see C. Harrison, "The Typology of Listening: The Transformation of Scripture in Early Christian Preaching," in W. J. Lyons et al. (eds.), *Delivering the Word: Preaching and Exegesis in the Western Christian Tradition* (Sheffield 2012) 62–79. On *Phaedrus* and preaching see J. D. Peters, *Speaking into Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago 1999) 33; I. Sandwell, "Preaching and Christianisation: Communication, Cognition and Audience Reception," in W. Mayer et al. (eds.), *Revisioning John Chrysostom: New Theories and Approaches* (Leiden 2019) 137–174. Sandwell argues convincingly that we cannot grasp ancient minds and that the impact of ancient sermons was probably less idealized than what modern Platonizing interpretations seem to suggest. For the reuse of rhetorical *topoi* by Christian exegetes see M. Ludlow, *Art, Craft, and Theology in Fourth-Century Christian Authors* (Oxford 2020).

[33] That a text engages with the author erotically and prompts voyeurism is the thesis of R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York 1975). Gregory's approach resembles the preface to Longus' erotic pastoral novel, in which the narrator attempts to distance himself from the allegedly seduced audience. See further F. Zeitlin, "The Poetics of Eros: Nature, Art, and Imitation in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*," in *Before Sexuality:*

famously notes, for an erotic narrative to fulfil its purpose it must engage with the reader erotically.[34] To establish himself as a worthy narrator of an erotic yet moral story the preacher-narrator presents himself as part of an author-audience community invested in exercising the chaste version of desire. Intriguingly, in delivering this oration, Gregory carefully sets himself beyond the constraints of desire and programmatically states that his ascetic training makes him invulnerable to the longings of the flesh (3, καὶ πάντα πόθον ἀπεσεισάμην). The preacher then is the only one who controls his narrative and is not seduced by it, and unlike other novelistic narrators like Longus, he is serious about it.[35]

Correspondingly, Gregory's preface abounds in erotic imagery metaphorically construed: the community and the bishop are presented as desirous lovers longing for each other (2, ἐποθοῦμεν ὑμᾶς … ἀντεποθούμεθα); reunited like long-separated paramours featured in paintings (2, διαζευχθέντες ἀλλήλων … καθάπερ οἱ ζωγράφοι τοὺς πίνακας, πάλιν συνήλθομεν … τοῖς τε ἀγαπητικοῖς τὸν τρόπον);[36] and eager to embrace each other

The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World (Princeton 1995) 417–464. On the reception of Foucault and Greek fiction see S. Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity: Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (Cambridge 1995); and V. Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia 2011). On narratology and classics see I. De Jong et al. (eds.), *Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature* (Leiden 2004).

[34] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 6: "the text you write must prove to me that it desires me."

[35] Cf. Longus *praef.* 4 : "for ourselves, may the god grant us to remain chaste (σωφρονοῦσι) in writing the story of others (τὰ τῶν ἄλλων)," transl. J. Morgan, *Longus: Daphnis and Chloe* (Oxford 2004); on the narrator's debatable *sophrosyne* see Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity* 1–45, esp. 26–27.

[36] Erotic paintings have long been the impetus for erotic narratives, cf. Long. *praef.* 1–4, discussed in Morgan, *Longus* 14; also Ach. Tat. 1.1.1, the Europa painting. Cf. the fresco of Ariadne at Pompeii in the Casa di Meleagro. For Gregory's use of classical erotic tropes in his poetry,

without wasting a day (3, τὸ ὡς τάχιστα προσδραμεῖν ἀλλήλοις καὶ περιπτύξασθαι … καὶ βίος ὅλος ἡμέρα μία τοῖς πόθῳ κάμνουσιν). In exchange for this longing, Gregory promises to deliver the most beautiful passage of his narrative (6, τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν ἡμετέρων διηγημάτων). The word διηγήματα (Latin: *narratio*) is one of the terms used in progymnasmata to describe fictions with realistic touches in contrast to μῦθος (Latin: *fabula*).[37] It is hardly surprising that Gregory offers his longing community a tale of divine love and redemption, which he highlights as his finest contribution (κάλλιστον). The story is intended as a jewel of *sophrosyne* (9, καλλώπισμα τὸ διήγημα), a story aimed to be received as true.

What Gregory advertises as his main story (τὸ κεφάλαιον) is an even more Christianized revision of erotic *topoi* found in the Antiochene dossier (9):[38]

> Ἥκει δὲ ἡμῖν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ κεφάλαιον ὁ λόγος. Καὶ μὴ πρὸς τὰ πρῶτά τις ὁρῶν Κυπριανοῦ, ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ἐφιέτω· τοῖς δὲ τελευταίοις σωφρονιζέσθω. Παρθένος τις ἦν τῶν εὐπατρίδων, καὶ κοσμίων. Ἀκούετε, παρθένοι, καὶ συναγάλλεσθε, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ ζυγὸν ὅσαι σώφρονές τε καὶ φιλοσώφρονες.
>
> We have now come to the heart of my sermon. Let no one observing Cyprian's early career abandon himself to pleasures. Rather, let subsequent events help to moderate his behavior. There was a young woman of good family and high morals. Hear this and join in rejoicing, young women and, more, all you matrons, too, who are chaste and love chastity.

including Sapphic and pederastic verse, see C. Simelidis, *Selected Poems of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Göttingen 2009) 44–45.

[37] Cf. S. Tilg, "Mythos, Fiktion, Geschichte: Ein Beitrag zum 'Realismus' der Antiken Romane," *AncNarr* 9 (2010) 1–16. Cf. R. Hunter, "History and Historicity in Chariton," *ANRW* 34.2.2 (1994) 1057–1084.

[38] Cf. Prud. *Perist.* 13.16: Cyprian is elected because of his eloquence (*derat apostolicis scriptis opulentus executor*) whereas his magical spells that include seducing brides (13.23–24) are only there to showcase the depravity of his character. Cf. Petruccione, *REA* 36 (1990) 231, associating Cyprian's learning with Paul's.

Like the novels that promote love-in-marriage instead of mythic-style love[39] this story is presented as an instructive erotic tale aimed at refashioning desire. Unlike pagan romances, though, the chaste end is not marriage but celibacy and martyrdom.[40]

Gregory seems to avoid some other perhaps more tantalizing themes that are found in the *Acts* such as the opposing parent, the unlucky suitor turned rapist, the suitor asking the help of a sorcerer, description of magic spells, and three demonic attempts on the virgin, even in her private chambers, as well as a monologue-palinode by the mage.[41] His long ekphrasis of Justa borrows vocabulary from the Song of Songs 4:12 (9, πηγὴ ἐσφραγισμένη) but also revisits the *topoi* of female beauty found in the novel: Justa is a statue-like beauty equally as beautiful as Callirhoe and Chariclea.[42] The fame of her beauty (9, φήμη) is enough to startle the young Cyprian (τὸν νεανίαν), in a story that seems to rework the love-at-first sight trope of romance.[43] Intriguingly, although the narrator leaves aside Justa's conversion by hearsay and the encounter between the maiden and the

[39] *Sophrosyne* in the novels may be kinky but always abides by the norms of the patriarchal society: Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity* 3, 17, 30, 157.

[40] Cf. Perkins, *The Suffering Self* 103.

[41] For the impact of the novel on Cyprian see D. Berranger-Auserve, "Cyprien, personnage romanesque dans *La Confession de saint Cyprien*," in B. Pouderon (ed.), *Les personnages du roman grec* (Lyon 1999) 299–307; Bailey, *The Acts* 50–53. On Eudocia's adaptation, B. Sowers, "Thecla Desexualised: The Saint Justina Legend and the Reception of the Christian Apocrypha in Late Antiquity," in L. M. McDonald et al. (eds.), *"Non-canonical" Religious Texts in Early Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York 2012) 222–238; A. Lefteratou "Justa's Uncontested Chastity: Intertextual Politics for Christian Virgins," in K. de Temmerman et al. (eds.), *ICAN* VI (Leuven forthcoming).

[42] *Or.* 24.9 ἄγαλμα ἔμψυχον, cf. Heliod. 1.7.2 ἄγαλμα ἔμπνουν; or Callirhoe in Char. 1.1.1.

[43] Fame is pivotal in Chariton (1.1.1). For the tropes of the Greek novel see F. Létoublon, *Les lieux communs du roman: stéréotypes grecs d'aventure et d'amour* (Leiden 1993) ; S. Montiglio, *Love and Providence: Recognitions in the Ancient Novel* (Oxford 2013).

prospective lover, the most popular scene of ideal romance,[44] he includes a digression on the desire aroused through lustful eyesight (9, ὀφθαλμοί … ὀργάνων ἀπληστότατον) which subverts the reflection of the divine eros into the lovers' eyes.[45] In Gregory's description, Justa possesses entrapping beauty (11, κάλλος ἐπίβουλον). Parallels are found verbatim in Chariton's and Xenophon's descriptions of the ensnaring beauty of novelistic heroines.[46] Such beauty does not only reflect her pure and divine soul (10, καθαραί, θεοειδεῖς) but is entrapping. Eventually, the mage is not just seduced but also attempts rape (9, οὐχ ἥλω μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπείρα), one of the common themes of romance. Just as in the novels there is a plot maker: the devil replaces Eros and is presented as a cunning sophist (10, σοφιστικὸς καὶ ποικίλος).[47] He is cast in the role of the go-between for the couple,[48] revising again themes encountered predominantly in romance.[49]

In managing the eroticism of the narrative the preacher treads the middle path (7, μέσην βαδίσω) between what his audience expects to hear (τοῦ πόθου τῶν ἀκουόντων) and chaste instruction. Thus he decides to retell one or two of the central themes of the Antiochene's tale (ἑνὸς δὲ ἢ δύο τῶν ἐκείνου διὰ βραχέων) both in prefacing the erotic part and in the Carthaginian narrative (13, ἵνα τὰ ἐν μέσῳ συντέμνω). It is hard to discard such claims as

[44] Gregory tactfully avoids this topic, *Or.* 24.9: "I know not why or how." For novelistic love through eyesight see Montiglio, *Love and Providence* 28–29; yet Thecla and Justa convert through hearsay, a more chaste version, see Lefteratou, in *ICAN* VI (forthcoming).

[45] As in Char. 1.1.6, Xen. Eph. 1.3.1, Ach. Tat. 1.9.4.

[46] Char. 5.5.3 and 6.6.63; Xen. Eph. 2.11.4 and 5.5.5.

[47] Eros as matchmaker: Char. 1.1.3; Xen. Eph. 1.2.1; Ach. Tat. 1.7.1.

[48] *Or.* 24.10: "for a go-between, he selects not an old hag from among those who practice the trade, but one of the demonic devotees of carnal delights." Cf. the nurse in Eur. *Hipp.* but also in Xen. Eph. See A. Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives: The Bold and Faithful Heroines of the Greek Novels* (Berlin 2017) 108–170.

[49] Eros as sophist is famously the topic in Ach. Tat. 5.27.4. On Gregory and the wicked sophists see Elm, *Sons of Hellenism* 166.

irrelevant to Gregory's narrative plan for this oration as he constantly draws the audience's attention to specific moments of the story and carefully weighs the amount of erotic language required to entice his audience's desire and deliver his message of chastity. In a metaleptic passage[50] he explains how the pagan life of Cyprian is enlightened by his Christian conversion (9, τὸ κεφάλαιον … τὰ πρῶτα … τοῖς τελευταίοις), an indication that in the manner of late antique aesthetics the first tale may appear separate from the latter, the 'legend' from 'history', and yet both together can be treated as a meaningful instructive whole.

One of the seams that demonstrates Gregory's intention to make the erotic story central to his narrative is found near the end of the first section. The preacher enters upon his story and questions his audience, glossing their narrative expectations thus (11):

> Ποθεῖτε τὰ ἑξῆς, οἶδ' ὅτι, τοῦ διηγήματος. Ἀγωνιᾶτε γὰρ ὑπὲρ τῆς παρθένου, καὶ τοῦ ἐραστοῦ δὲ οὐχ ἧττον, μὴ εἰς κακὸν ἀμφοτέροις ὁ πόθος ἔληξεν. Ἀλλὰ θαρσεῖτε καὶ ἡ μὲν τῶν πόθων φλὸξ ἀποσβέννυται, ἡ δὲ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀνάπτεται.
>
> I know you are impatient to hear the rest of the story because you are anxious for this girl but equally for her lover, and fear that his ardor will end by destroying both. Take heart. His ardor becomes an ally of faith and the lover who seeks to win the maiden's hand is himself won over by Christ.

Gregory, like an intrusive narrator, comments on the possible outcomes that the eroticism of his own story may have prompted and redirects the audience's possible desire towards a more profitable and chaste end. The remark that his listeners should be desirous of the outcome (ποθεῖτε) is not simply a rhetorical device but expresses what Barthes expects of a reader of erotic

[50] Metalepsis is any intrusion of the narrator or the narratee into the diegetic universe: G. Genette, *Figures III* (Paris 1972) 244; see also M. Fuldernik, "Scene Shift, Metalepsis, and the Metaleptic Mode," *Style* 37 (2003) 382–400, at 388 on how this enhances the audience's immersion in the fiction.

tales.[51] The matter of the story, the two potential lovers, Cyprian and the girl, (ἀμφοτέροις ὁ πόθος) evokes similar features in Greek romances[52] and endangers the new, chaste, Christian happy ending.

In the world of fiction, but also in Imperial public life, unexpected twists may endanger the plot's outcome, and they are usually presented in dramatic terms.[53] Gregory too uses dramatic language to explore other possible scenarios.[54] Like other famous allegedly pagan converts, some of them possessing a namesake such as Origen, Cyprian the pagan mage supplied a model that was good to think with when one wanted to illustrate God's omnipotence. The more dissolute was his pagan past, the more instructive his conversion then could become. Gregory's biblical analogue for Cyprian is Paul, the persecutor turned

[51] The phrase ποθεῖτε ἀκοῦσαι was popular and helps build suspense, e.g. Dem. *Phil.* 1.28, used as a model of sentence structuring in *Anon.Rhet.* III 137 Spengel. Cf. Ael. Aristid. *Or.* 41; Jul. *Euseb.* 15; Greg. Naz. *Or.* 23.5, *passim*.

[52] Thus an oracle anticipates the outcome of the lovers' adventures in Xen. Eph. 1.6.2: "Why do you desire to learn the beginning (*arche*) and end (*telos*) of this disease [of longing]?"

[53] E.g. Char. 4.4.2; Ach. Tat. 1.10.7, 6.16.6; Heliod. 1.3.1, 2.23.5; cf. Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives*, on the reception of Euripidean dramas so as to heighten suspense. Photius refers to Heliodorus as a dramatic story (δραματικόν, *Bibl.* 87, 66a). For the impact of drama on the novel see also M. Fusillo, *Naissance du roman* (Paris 1991) 31–41; S. Dworacki, "Theatre and Drama in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*," *Eos* 84 (1996) 355–361. On the general tendence towards theatricality in Hellenistic and Imperial times see the pioneering contribution of A. Chaniotis, "Theatricality beyond the Theater. Staging Public Life in the Hellenistic World," *Pallas* 47 (1997) 219–259.

[54] Gregory disapproves of theatrical performances, e.g. *Or.* 24.3, but like other Christian thinkers keenly appropriates tragic imagery and dramatic terminology. See P. M. Blowers, *Visions and Faces of the Tragic: The Mimesis of Tragedy and the Folly of Salvation in Early Christian Literature* (Oxford 2023), esp. 109–111 showing that Gregory understands reversal of fortune in dramatic terms. Blowers attributes that to the influence of tragedy, but the novel has a massive role here.

apostle,[55] but Cyprian's conversion is described in clearly dramatic terms, evoking a famous line from the *Orestes*, the most popular Euripidean tragedy.[56] Gregory's personal affection for the martyr is expressed as follows (5):

> καὶ ὅλος πρὸς σὲ μετανίσταμαι· τάχα μὲν διὰ τὴν τῶν λόγων οἰκείωσιν … τάχα δὲ διὰ τὸ τῆς μεταβολῆς ἀθρόον τε καὶ παράδοξον, ὃ κρεῖττον λόγου καὶ παραδείγματος. Ἐπεὶ γλυκὺ μὲν ἥλιος μετὰ νέφος, ᾧ τέως συνεκαλύπτετο· γλύκιον δὲ τὸ ἔαρ, ὅτι μετὰ χειμῶνος κατήφειαν· ἡδίων δὲ μειδιῶσα γαλήνη, καὶ θάλασσα ἡπλωμένη, καὶ ταῖς ἀκταῖς προσπαίζουσα μετὰ πνευμάτων στάσιν, καὶ ὠδίνοντα κύματα.
>
> I am oblivious to everything but you, perhaps out of an affinity for your eloquence … and perhaps in response to your sudden and wondrous conversion, an unparallelled event that exceeds my power to describe. Sweet is the sight of the sun emerging through the dark veil of clouds; sweeter is the spring-time that follows the winter's gloom; and more delightful the smiling calm and the smooth expanse of the sea as it frolics with the shore after the turbulence of the winds and the thrashing waves.

Gregory's language merges dramatic and rhetorical terms with conversion terminology[57] to illustrate that becoming a martyr is

[55] Cyprian is associated with the great biblical repenters, such as Paul, Matthew, and the Tax Collector (8), and becomes "mighty as both persecutor (διώκτης) and crowned victor (στεφανίτης)": Petruccione, *REA* 36 (1990) 230.

[56] Gregory here alludes to a proverbial line Eur. *Or.* 234, μεταβολὴ πάντων γλυκύ; cf. Arsenius *Paroem.* 11.31b. For the reception of the *Orestes* see P. Carrara, *Il Testo di Euripide nell'antichità. Ricerche sulla tradizione testuale Euripidea antica* (Florence 2009) 494–529.

[57] *Metathesis/metabole* are terms which among others are used in late antiquity to express conversion or change of ethos and/or of heart, both in philosophical and also in religious terms. Thus *Or.* 24.8 τῆς μεταθέσεως, 12 μετατίθεται τὸν πόθον, 16 πρὸς Χριστὸν μετατίθεται. Cf. Philo *Abr.* 17; Orig. *C.Cels.* 3.66, 69. For the terminology of conversion see the contributions in A. Despotis et al. (eds.), *Religious and Philosophical Conversion in the Ancient Mediterranean Traditions* (Leiden 2022); A. Papaconstantinou et al. (eds.), *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond* (Farnham 2015).

the only possible happy ending. The audience is invited to behold how Cyprian "becomes our own" (5, τῆς χάριτος … οὕτω Κυπριανὸς ἡμέτερος γίνεται) as the highlight of the twist of fortune (τῆς μεταβολῆς τὸ ἀθρόον τε καὶ παράδοξον).[58] This is a much better reversal plot than the myths presented on the stage which Gregory condemned earlier in his speech (3, κρότοι θεάτρων) as unacceptable for the devout Christian. God's philanthropy, he claims, can change everything for the better (7, Θεοῦ … τὰ πάντα μετασκευάζοντος πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον), namely the pagan into a Christian. God in his capacity as a production designer transforms the scene (μετά+σκευή) into a salvific plan.[59] For Gregory divine planning, *oeconomia*, is omnipotent (13, Θεός … καὶ διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων τὰ ἐναντία οἰκονομεῖσθαι, ἵνα καὶ μᾶλλον θαυμάζηται). Besides, *oeconomia* in Christian narratives could denote both the orator's planning and arrangement of his narrative but also God's providential planning for mankind.[60] Gregory's Cyprian experiences a change of heart (8, μετάθεσις), yet another term that is enmeshed with the dramatic and the religious outcome: namely the transformation of erotic desire into divine desire. Gregory's emphatic use of stage terms shows the importance of this character on the cosmic stage. Christianity's conscription of

[58] Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1452a: "*peripeteia* is a *metabole* towards the opposite of the course of action." μεταβολή as reversal of fortune is popular in imperial fiction, e.g. Ach. Tat. 5.15.4, Heliod. 9.2.1, 10.4.3; and in biography cf. Plut. *Pel.*, discussed in A. Lefteratou "Plutarch's Less Tragic Heroes: Drama and Epic in the *Pelopidas*," in T. Schmidt et al. (eds.), *The Dynamics of Intertextuality in Plutarch* (Leiden 2020) 421–439.

[59] σκευή is a dramatic term for the equipment used in performances, especially dress, e.g. Ar. *Ran.* 108, cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1450b20 σκευοποιός. μετασκευάζειν as a dramatic term is found in Ar. *Eccl.* 499 and in Imperial authors, e.g. Luc. *Apol.* 2 μετασκευάσαντες ἡμᾶς τὴν σκηνήν and Greg. Naz. *Fun.Basil.* 57 ὁ Θεὸς … μετασκευάζων ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον.

[60] οἰκονομία is a rhetorical term indicating the planning and arrangement of an argument: Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 25, Theon *Prog.* II 86 Spengel. Also in Christian authors, e.g. Epiph. *Panar.* II 275 Holl, Greg. Nys. *In Cant.* VI 427 Langerbeck. On the Christian use see Blowers, *Visions and Faces* 36–30, 133–178.

not just an elite pagan (the Carthaginian Cyprian) but of a powerful worshiper of demons (the Antiochene Cyprian) becomes the ultimate proof of God's plan of salvation.[61]

Gregory, at his most dramatic, announces the resolution (λύσις) of the Cyprian and Justa story. Thus when narrating Justa's encounter with the demons, Gregory pauses to ask his addressees what the solution to this evil plot may be (12, τοῦ κακοῦ τὴν λύσιν … τίς ἡ λύσις;). This interruption prevents him from further expounding upon details that may have sounded unholy for the preacher, such as the dialogue between Justa and the demon that features in the *Acta*. Instead, only the virgin's Marian devotion and extreme ascetic practices are mentioned (11). Similarly, when praising Cyprian's later life, Gregory decides hastily to move on and close his speech with the description of Cyprian's death (13, τῇ τοῦ βίου καταλύσει) that he relates to the ending (λύσις) of his speech (συγκαταλύσω τὸν λόγον), using a term that is strongly associated with the endings of dramatic plays, the λύσις.[62] Aristotle defined as a drama's δέσις the plot up to the twist of fortune for the better or worse (περιπέτεια, μετάβασις), and as λύσις what follows the *peripeteia* up to the end.[63] Cyprian's narrative is one of alternating fortunes/*peripeteia*, and Gregory's alludes to the end of his subject's life (βίου καταλύσις) and his tale's end (συν+κατά+λύσις, συγκατάλυσις).[64] Cyprian's life then features a twist of fortune, namely his conversion to Christianity and his martyrdom. Of these, the first is the topic of the first part, the entanglement (δέσις) of the

[61] Explicitly at *Or.* 24.14.

[62] On life's ending as a stage event and its metaliterary applications cf. Heliod. 1.3.3, "Kills us and bring so our story to a close!" (φόνῳ … τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν δρᾶμα καταστρέψαντες, transl. Morgan).

[63] *Poet.* 1455b: "*lysis* is [the part] from the beginning of the transition/*metabasis* [change of lot] to the end."

[64] Cf. Heliod 1.3.1, where the protagonist Chariclea begs the bandits to end their life of sorrows (λύσατε … τὸ δρᾶμα) with death in a dramatic manner: Lefteratou, *Mythological Narratives* 274. Cf. Xen. Eph. 1.5.8, Heliod. 7.17.7, Ach. Tat. 4.15.5.

narrative's plot. His martyrdom and death encapsulate the narrative's resolution (λύσις). Such narratorial intrusions indicate that Gregory told the two major events of Cyprian's life, conversion and martyrdom, to highlight the dramatic turning point of his conversion. Such a reading justifies his attentiveness to the story's erotic pinnacle (κεφάλαιον), without which the second part may have read as more clichéd. This careful crafting is certainly not the product of haste or an impromptu composition as the opening of the oration suggests. Gregory "forgetting" Cyprian (1) is the impetus of masterful composition.

Erotic desire aroused through his earlier 'erotic' recitation (9, μηδεὶς ἐφιέτω) was only meant to prompt his audience to see, through his voyeuristic narrative, the dangers of carnal love and to reorient desire towards a chaste ending. With the mage's conversion presented, the audience's passions are now converted, as are those of the tale's protagonist (9, σωφρονιζέσθω), into a tale of chaste love. For this reason, and despite the resonances with romance, Gregory keeps some 'fictional' elements found in the *Acta* limited and also avoids possible puns between his protagonist's name and Cypris.[65] As an able and chaste orator himself (3, πόθον ἀπεσεισάμην) he preaches to his congregation a reformed erotics to attain divine love and *sophrosyne*, a better alternative to any theatrical play or fictional story.

Gregory's meticulous corroboration of the two Cyprians raises two questions, one ethical and one historicist and contextual. First, the ethical: would Gregory lie to instruct his congregation? Tales about sorcery and love spells were considered the ultimate matrix of fiction. Magic however was a staple in the real life of late antique audiences, and ecclesiastical authorities, who, like John Chrysostom, repeatedly admonished their congregations

[65] Nowhere is Cyprian connected to Cypris/Aphrodite, who often leads the plots of romance as e.g. in Chariton 1.1.1. Augustine draws the paretymological biblical comparison between Cyprian's name and the *botrus cypri* of Cant 1:13, a fragrant tree (not the cypress), implying that his holiness perfumes the world: see Zahn, *Cyprian* 102, and Ployd, *Augustine* 57.

against spells and shams.[66] However, educated elites allowed for lies from an ethical perspective.[67] Augustine, for example, allows for well-meant lies, provided these do not contradict one's own thoughts and good intentions.[68] Likewise John Chrysostom justifies a timely and well-intended deception as morally correct (*De sacer.* 1.3).

We have seen that Gregory was consciously merging Cyprian's magical past with his 'historical' martyrdom. Even if he had doubts about the historicity of the first part, our analysis showed that it would have been thoroughly befitting for him to use both sources. The fact that Gregory does not silence elements of either phase of Cyprian's life (7, ἵνα μὴ ζημιώσω … τοῖς σιωπωμένοις) is crucial. In an apologetic mode, he defends the need to explain the martyr's dark past (9, τῇ μνήμῃ τῶν σκαιοτέρων) as not sordid, narrow-minded, or humiliating (λίαν ἀγεννὲς καὶ μικρόψυχον … καθυβρίζεσθαι). Although the sermon reverberates with elements that border on paradox and fiction (5, ἀθρόον τε καὶ παράδοξον), and Gregory admits to that by using the language of the novel and of paradox, his hybrid Cyprian was indeed the best model for instruction (ὃ κρεῖττον λόγου καὶ

[66] Selectively, see D. Ogden, *In Search of the Sorcerer's Apprentice* (Swansea 2007); John Chrys. *Adv.Jud.* 1.2.1–2, emphasizing the link between magic and Jews. On Cyprian and magic spells see D. Vaucher, "Cyprian im Bund mit dem Teufel: Grundlegende Unterschiede in den Quellenschriften der Cyprianlegende," *VigChr* 76 (2022) 324–346. Cf. H.-J. Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity* (Edinburgh 2000); R. Boustan and J. E. Sanzo, "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity," *HThR* 110 (2017) 217–240; M. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London 2001).

[67] E.g. Luc. *Philops.* 1. Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 12.38, with P. Sarr, "Discours sur le mensonge de Platon à saint Augustin: continuité ou rupture?" *DHA* 36 (2010) 9–29.

[68] *De mend.* 3.3. See B. Ramsey, "Two Traditions on Lying and Deception in the Ancient Church," *The Thomist* 49 (1985) 504–533; Sarr, *DHA* 36 (2010) 24.

παραδείγματος).[69]

We will never know the audience's actual response to the sermon nor the preacher's sources, but we have some embedded glimpses. In Gregory's words, some among his audience are aware of Cyprian and some are not. He summarizes Cyprian's pagan status, beauty, wealth, and *paideia* and mentions that his most beautiful narrative is intended to delight those who know and to teach those who do not (6, ἵνα οἱ μὲν εἰδότες, ἡδίους γένησθε … οἱ δὲ ἀγνοοῦντες, μάθητε τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν ἡμετέρων διηγημάτων), alluding to the erotic part. Gregory acknowledges the popularity of the Carthaginian Cyprian's orations (7, λόγων … λόγοι … λόγῳ) and directs his own speech (λόγῳ) to both those who know and those who do not know Cyprian's life. The preacher expects that the knowledgeable will instruct the others, if indeed there are such remaining among his congregation (ἐκδιδάσκειν τοὺς ἀγνοοῦντας, εἴπερ εἰσί τινες). Such details imply that his audience probably had a mixed knowledge of both Cyprianic lives, either separately or as a whole. Gregory's expectation that his preaching would encourage his congregation to discuss one another's version is suggestive of the anticipated impact of his sermon: to stir constructive debate. Gregory wanted to make this the ultimate version of Cyprian's life.

Gregory's apologetic stance may indicate that he was aware that he was crafting a unique character, the enamored mage turned martyr. Gregory may not have been the first to merge the two Cyprianic tales,[70] but he was certainly one the first to make the best use of the erotic material in it. By omitting the demonic courtship scenes and the potions, Gregory offers a priestly 'approved' version of the story. But why would Gregory

[69] At *Or.* 24.4, lives of holy men instruct virtue (πρὸς ἀρετὴν παιδευμάτων); martyrs are instructors (εἰς παιδαγωγίαν); 13, Cyprian mustered his body (παιδαγωγίαν); Cyprian as teacher virtue (ἦθος ἐπαίδευσεν) and doctrine (δογμάτων ἀπαιδευσίαν ἐκάθηρε); 14, Cyprian as teacher of martyrs (παιδοτριβοῦντος).

[70] It is impossible to know the exact version of the *Acta* which Gregory may have read: Bailey, *The Acts* 53.

risk a skirmish with fiction and wish to speak of a lustful mage turned martyr? So far we have explained the reason behind Gregory's merge of erotics and preaching. In what follows I attempt to contextualize the references to magic in the oration's Sitz im Leben and to give a possible historical motivation beyond Gregory's rhetorical and pastoral intentions.

Preaching magic

Were there any real life incentives behind Gregory's 'confusion'? For modern scholars *Oration* 24 is not of historical or theological importance as it is untrustworthy with respect to Cyprian of Carthage's life and writings. What follows is an attempt to place the oration in Gregory's early days in Constantinople. My first proposition is the that year 379 and the instability characterizing the transition from Valens to Theodosius[71] prompted the preacher to evoke the trials for magic in Antioch under Valens' rule. My second suggestion is that Antioch and its magicians, fictional or not, were used by Gregory as foils to describe his own situation as a Nicene preacher of a small congregation and as a plea to his opponents.[72]

Oration 24 is one of the earliest speeches Gregory delivered in Constantinople as a Nicene candidate for the bishopric to be appointed by the Antiochene Council of 379. Valens had died the year before, one year after visiting Cappadocia,[73] so memories of his reign were still vivid. Theodosius I, the first pro-Nicene

[71] Two days after entering the capital on the 26th of November 380, Theodosius I exiled the Arian Demophilus and his followers and installed Gregory as a bishop: Greg. Naz. *De se ipso* (*PG* 37.1325–1395); Socr. *HE* 5.7.4. N. McLynn, "Moments of Truth: Gregory of Nazianzus and Theodosius I," in S. McGill et al. (eds.), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: Later Roman History and Culture* (Cambridge 2010) 218–222.

[72] M. Kahlos, *Religious Dissent in Late Antiquity, 350–450* (New York 2020) 111: associating one's opponent with an archetypal heretic was a rhetorical trope with legal repercussions as well, as some heresies were prohibited by imperial legislation.

[73] Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* 20 n.5.

emperor in decades, was named emperor in 379, but he was based in Thessalonica from which he issued *Cunctos populos*, making Nicene Christianity the official religion of the Empire, only in 380.[74] Thus, at the time of *Oration* 24 the political and theological canvas of the Empire was complex and unstable and Theodosius' triumphal installation of Nicene Christianity can only be an argument from hindsight. Antioch and Constantinople are thus central in Gregory's mind.

Antioch, although the place where Christians were first named as such (Acts 11:19–26), it was home to Simon the Magus' heir, Menander of Samaria (Euseb. *HE* 2.13). Antioch was also visited by the last pagan emperor, Julian, in mid-July of 363, before his fateful campaign against the Persians.[75] Later Christian sources would see in this visit a show of supernatural forces at play. Julian's expulsion of the relics of the martyr Babylas from the precinct of Apollo's oracle, which was afterwards destroyed by fire, became synonymous with the apostate's defeat by the martyr: Julian, pagan emperor and mage, was defeated.[76] The *Acts* of Cyprian also show the influence of Julian's stay in Antioch, and Theodor Zahn finds it surprising that Julian is absent from Gregory's version.[77] The spectre of embodied magic never left Antioch. During the early and middle years of Valens'

[74] Nicene Christianity only slowly became the 'official' imperial religion. On the development of Trinitarian faith, see C. A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (Oxford 2012). See M. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils, AD 431–451* (Oxford 2018), on the consolidation of Nicaea between 381 and 451.

[75] Jul. *Misop.* 10, 15, 40, *passim.* On the influence of Simon Magus and Julian on the Cyprian legend see Zahn, *Cyprian* 115–116, 129.

[76] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 4.57 portrays Julian as a magician and in *Or.* 5.31 as a soothsayer; Socr. *HE* 5.19. See further C. Shepardson, "Rewriting Julian's Legacy: John Chrysostom's *On Babylas* and Libanius' *Oration* 24," *JLA* 2 (2009) 99–115.

[77] On Julian as influential for the saga, especially the conversion of the bearded priest Aidesimus and the use of 'Galileans' for Christians, see Zahn, *Cyprian* 103–105, and Bailey, *The Acts* 18–19.

reign, the city was ravaged in 371/2 by trials of the emperor's opponents. Already in the late 360s Valens's co-emperor Valentinian in the West had begun persecuting people suspected of magic, even senators.[78] In the East, trials of magic and treason a decade later are reported by Ammianus Marcellinus, Libanius, and John Chrysostom. The purge was directed against pagans and Christians,[79] removing alleged usurpers and conspirators and burning magic books.[80] Such was the fear of being captured that some elites burned whole libraries.[81]

Years later, John Chrysostom would remember and retell vividly these events.[82] For his older mentor Gregory these in-

[78] N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley 2014) at 109 and 230.

[79] The prosecutions began when two treasury officials were charged with embezzlement and others allegedly supported an usurper (Amm. Marc. 29.2.1–2, 29.1.25). A. Lotz, "Libanius and Theodoret of Cyrrhus on Accusations of Magic: Between Legal Norm and Legal Practice in Late Antiquity," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 14 (2019) 211–229; A. J. Quiroga Puertas, "The Old Man Vanishes: Magic, Literature and Political Philosophy in Libanius' *Or.* 19.30," *Hermes* 144 (2016) 242–251. On the lack of evidence in Libanius' trial for magic see Lenski, *Failure of Empire* ch. 5, and K. A. Langenfeld, "Imperial Crisis Response and the Antiochene Magic and Treason Trials of 372 CE," *SLA* 7 (2023) 242–285, at 252, on the exaggeration of the events in our sources. See also G. Kelly, "Ammianus, Valens, and Antioch," in S.-P. Bergjan et al. (eds.), *Antioch II. The Many Faces of Antioch: Intellectual Exchange and Religious Diversity, CE 350–450* (Tübingen 2018) 137–162, esp. 152–153. For the impact on the Faustsage see Zahn, *Cyprian* 102 n.3.

[80] Cf. E. Lafli, M. Buora, and A. Mastrocinque, "A New Osiriform Lamp from Antioch in the Hatay Archaeological Museum," *GRBS* 52 (2012) 421–439, at 437: the authors suggest a vague connection between the trials and Cyprian's legend.

[81] Amm. Marc. 29.2.4. Book burning was a frequent procedure of censorship increasingly applied to pagans and heretical groups, and magic was one of the reasons for persecuting them: D. Rohmann, *Christianity, Book-burning and Censorship in Late Antiquity* (Berlin 2016).

[82] The young John and a friend, who wished to become martyrs, risked

cidents would have had a long-lasting impact. This situation may have been influential for the invention of the Antiochene Cyprianic legend, and Gregory was probably sensitive to contemporary events, especially those taking place in his native Cappadocia.[83] Intriguingly, Gregory subtly refers to magic handbooks in the possession of Julian and Cyprian in a similar manner: he requests that the emperor silence his books of enchantment and divination (παῦσόν σου τὰς γοητικὰς καὶ μαντικὰς βίβλους) and shows the converted mage handing over his magic books (προτίθησι δημοσίᾳ τὰς γοητικὰς βίβλους).[84] In other words, there was in mid-fourth-century Antioch enough raw material to craft magicians in real life and in legend.

Unrest reigned in Constantinople too. In 379 the Nicene faith was not yet the winning party, as *homoousios,* the Nicene term for the consubstantiality of the Trinity, was not unanimously accepted.[85] In the capital, the theologian's chief opponents were the various hues of non-homoousians. Constantinople alone had two Arian bishops before him, the pneumatomachian Macedonius, a semi-Arian who rejected the consubstantiality of the Spirit, and the Arian Demophilus. Only in the autumn of 379 did the

being accused of magic by picking up one of these magic books (βιβλία γοητικὰ καὶ μαγικά): *Hom.* 38.5 (*PG* 60.274).

[83] Cf. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism* 20, 115. See also Beeley, *Gregory* 16–27, on the importance of Antioch in Gregory's formation and his theological beliefs.

[84] *Or.* 2.31 and 24.12. The expression γοητικαὶ βίβλοι is found only in Gregory and echoed by John Chrys. in *Hom.* 38.5 (n.82 above). Gregory uses γοητικός a third time (*Or.* 4.31), in connection with Julian's magic studies, in combination with astronomy: ἀστρονομίαν … καὶ τὴν ἑπομένην τούτοις γοητικήν). Elsewhere he uses γόης, γοητεία, γοητεύω, and their compounds, e.g. *Or.* 2.104, sorceries called γοητικαῖς τέχναις.

[85] See Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* chs. 2 and 3, on the events following Basil's death and 381; G. Studer, "Der geschichtliche Hintergrund des ersten Buches *Contra Eunomium* Gregors von Nyssa," in M. Brugarolas (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium I* (Leiden 2018) 3–39. The labels *homoians, homoiousians, anomoeans* were primarily used for inter- and cross-group polemics: Kahlos, *Religious Dissent*.

eventual Nicene bishop Meletius convoke a synod in Antioch to end the Antiochene schism and defend the Nicene cause against the Neo-Arians by sending Gregory to the capital.[86] In 381, Gregory succeeded as the Nicene bishop of the capital and eventually replaced Meletius too in chairing the Council of Constantinople. In comparison with this turn of events, 379 was a year less promising for Gregory's Nicene cause and his legitimacy was "paper thin."[87]

Closely read, the sermon therefore may reflect ongoing late-fourth-century theological and pastoral issues which invite a historical evaluation. The praise of the martyr gives the preacher the opportunity to express some theological concerns: he stresses for example the primacy of Christ as protomartyr at the expense of other martyrs, emphasizing that Christ is the first martyr (4, τοῦ πρώτου μάρτυρος) and only possible saviour of the preacher (κἀμὲ συναγαγόντος) and of every Christian, thus subordinating the importance of martyrs.[88] The Nazianzen thus draws the focus away from the martyr's relics, which features prominently in the apocryphal story.[89] It is Cyprian's deeds that gain renown (14), and only later is his relic discovered through divine revelation (17). The discovery, Gregory explains, was a way for God

[86] For the history of the Antiochene Schism see K. M. Spoerl, "The Schism at Antioch since Cavallera," in M. R. Barnes et al. (eds.), *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh 1993) 101–126, at 111–112; S. Parvis, "Constantinople 360 and Constantinople 381: A Tale of Two Councils," *StudPatr* 102 (2021) 153–171.

[87] So Parvis, *StudPatr* 102 (2021) 167.

[88] Cf. C. Moss, *The Other Christs. Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford 2020) 8, 22, 76.

[89] It is in a similar vein that, while he does not rebut the worship of martyrs, he eloquently stresses the priority of "Christ as the first martyr." Gregory even claims (*Or.* 15.1) that the Maccabean martyrs had mystic foreknowledge of the Logos. On martyrdom see L. Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London 2004); on martyrs and Christ, Moss, *The Other Christs*, e.g. ch. 2.

to honour the woman who kept the body, not the unblemished martyr. In delaying the discovery of the relics, he explains, God wished to "train the believers' yearning" for miracles (17, εἴτε τὸν πόθον ἡμῶν γυμνάζοντος) and to instruct them in pure faith without the need of relics. This is Gregory's main liturgical and ecclesiological argument.

Most importantly, Gregory praises Cyprian for his—otherwise unattested for modern scholars—dogmatic Trinitarian works (13).[90] Cyprian, Gregory asserts, defended the original notion of the Trinity against those who were dividing (τεμνομένην) the Persons or conflating (συναλειφομένην) them, carefully balancing between distinction and unity (ἐν ὅροις μείνας εὐσεβοῦς ἑνώσεώς τε καὶ συναριθμήσεως). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the preacher uses here the same formulation that he employs elsewhere for Athanasius' definition of the Trinity.[91] This theological, ecclesiastical, and pastoral concern is seen also in the closing words of the panegyric. Gregory here addresses Cyprian in the second person and prays for the martyr's help with "supervising … and shepherding or rather co-shepherding the holy sheep of this congregation" (19, σὺ δ' ἡμᾶς ἐποπτεύοις ἄνωθεν … καὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τοῦτο ποίμνιον ποιμαίνοις, ἢ συμποιμαίνοις), including chasing away the packs of heretic predator wolves, who "hunt for syllables and words" (τοὺς θηρευτὰς τῶν συλλαβῶν καὶ τῶν λέξεων). In such an unstable theological climate, Cyprian's mediation as representative of the catholic Nicene West (once the famous

[90] Delehaye, *AnalBoll* 39 (1921) 326; Dunn, in *Martyrdom and Persecution* 72, associates Cyprian's Trinitarian works with the teaching of the Antiochene Cyprian, a rather implausible argument.

[91] *Or.* 21.13; for the debated date see Mossay, *Grégoire* 99–102: Athanasius' feast was either the 2 May or 18 January. Some shared vocabulary between his Cyprian and Athanasius eulogies implies that Gregory intended them as a pair, one Latin-speaking father and one Greek, both from North Africa. E.g. θεοειδεῖς (souls) at *Or.* 21.21 and 24.10; "remaining within the boundaries of piety (ἐν ὅροις … εὐσεβείας)," 21.12 and 24.13; and the request to co-shepherd (συμποιμαίνοις) his congregation, 21.37 and 24.19. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism* 157, shows how Cyprian and Athanasius embodied Gregory's pastoral models.

Carthaginian and now treasured across the oecumene)[92] is needed to endorse orthodoxy across the Empire.

In crafting Cyprian as the archmage, Gregory may have had some archetypal heretics as models, such as the pre-Constantinian Sabellians or Monarchianists who stressed the oneness of the Godhead, thus confounding the differences of the Persons, or Modalists, who saw the three Persons of the Trinity as three different modes of God.[93] Nonetheless, the preacher's main theological opponents and the context of his congregation were the neo-Arians/Eunomians and the semi-Arian/Pneumatomachians: the first denied any similarity between the three Persons of the Trinity; the second objected more with respect to the Spirit. This care for adequate use of definitions and letters is seen everywhere in Gregory's orations against various opponents.[94] Among those groups, the Eunomians are mostly characterized as predators, θηρευταί, an adjective they share with sophists of various kinds.[95] Theological and Trinitarian immediacy there-

[92] *Or.* 24.6: "once the famous name of Carthage (τὸ μέγα ποτὲ Καρχηδονίων ὄνομα) and now of the world (νῦν τῆς οἰκουμένης ἁπάσης)."

[93] McGuckin, *St Gregory* 251, refers to Sabellians and Arians as anachronisms for current issues. In *Or.* 21.13 Sabellians feature among Athanasius' opponents. Allegedly Theodosius II erected statues of the infamous Arius, Sabellius, Macedonus, and Eunomius for people to spit or urinate on: Kahlos, *Religious Dissent* 32.

[94] Debating against Eunomians (*Or.* 27.1), Gregory quotes 1 Tim 6:4 λογομαχίας and condemns the conceited debates; in *Or.* 29.14 he reprimands those homoeans who say "similar" (ταῖς συλλαβαῖς χαρίζῃ τὸ ὅμοιο) but reject *homoousios.* Eunomians claimed Christ to be γεννητός and the Father ἀγέννητος and objected to the idea of eternal generation, e.g. Eunom. *Apol.* 27. In *Or.* 27.6 Gregory judges that Eunomius loses sight of the Father "for few syllables (δι' ὀλίγας συλλαβὰς)."

[95] Eunomians are presented as hunting for arguments in the weak points of the Nicene argument (*Or.* 27.5, ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις σαθροῖς … θηρεύουσι). In *Or.* 36.12 Gregory shows sophists hunting for public praise (καὶ τῶν δημοσίων θηρευταὶ κρότων). His *Liebliengswort* for his enemies is θῆρες (beasts), e.g. *Or.* 42.2. In *Ep.* 164.1, he shows his younger self as a virtuous hunter (τῶν καλῶν θηρευτής).

fore could have directed Gregory to portray Cyprian as he does and even to ascribe Trinitarian treatises to him. Gregory's Cyprian thus emerges as a staunch Nicene *avant la lettre.*

Though the practice of magic was a common theme of litigation among pagans and Christians,[96] we may be able to find some association between customary practice and Gregory's milieu. Several later catholic or later considered heretical Christians were accused of sorcery, including Athanasius of Alexandria. Most prone to such accusations however were those Christians with philosophical inclinations.[97] In Gregory's time the more obvious opponent would have been Eunomians as they were deemed more intellectually threatening.[98] A year after *Oration* 24 was delivered, in the fall of 380, the Nazianzen explicitly accuses Eunomius of charlatanism and theurgy (*Or.* 27.9):[99]

> καινὸν ἀσεβείας ἐργαστήριον ἐδημιούργησας …. βάλλε μοι τὸ κενόν, τὸ πλῆρες τῶν ληρημάτων, ὅσα περὶ θεῶν ἢ θυσιῶν, περὶ εἰδώλων, περὶ δαιμόνων ἀγαθῶν τε καὶ κακοποιῶν, ὅσα περὶ μαντείας, θεαγωγίας, ψυχαγωγίας, ἄστρων δυνάμεως, τερατεύονται.
>
> You have created a new workshop of faithlessness … attack the theory of void, full of absurdities, all those about gods and

[96] Since Simon Magus' times, magic and *superstitio* were the most popular vituperations:. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians* 201, 264–271; Kahlos, *Religious Dissent* 190–199; M. R. Salzman, "*Superstitio* in the *Codex Theodosianus* and the Persecution of Pagans," *VigChr* 4 (1987) 177–183. Legislation allowed for prosecution of *superstitio,* broadly defined. Increasingly heresy was associated with magic: Kahlos 96.

[97] Cf. Eusebius the Arian bishop of Emesa with studies in Alexandria: Dickie, *Magic and Magicians* 268–270.

[98] The other opponents were the Apollinarians, who were not associated with magic but with theological error. Gregory attacks the Eunomians openly (e.g. 29.19), and implicitly addresses also Apollinaris; see Beeley, *The Unity* 184.

[99] On the rhetoric of this passage see Ludlow, *Art, Craft, and Theology* 225. Against Eunomius' actual knowledge of pagan theurgy and his teacher Aetius' closeness to Julian, see M. DelGogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names* (Leiden 2010) 68–72.

> sacrifices, about idols, about good and harmful demons, all those sorceries about oracles, theurgy, psychagogy, and the astral divination.

This passage is followed by a list of Pythagorean, Orphic, Epicurean, and other allusions, to which Eunomius' theurgical practices are compared. For Gregory, Eunomius' dialectics in his capacity as an ordained Christian priest could lure the ignorant into his heresy. Gregory Nyssen's *Against Eunomius I* is composed around the time of the Second Council in Constantinople. In it Eunomius is presented as an opportunist dabbling in magic and theurgy, irrespective of whether he was actually inclined towards Neoplatonic practices, some of them shared between pagan and some radical Christian elites.[100]

In the early 380's, with Theodosius' edict and the Council ongoing, the Nicenes and Gregories may have felt at ease to openly accuse Eunomius of magic, something that may have not been possible in the fall of 379. We could thus speculate that Gregory's earlier portrait of Cyprian as the archmagician may have invited the audience to think of their preacher's anti-Nicene opponents, the Eunomians. In thus crafting Cyprian as a recanting mage, the Nazianzen may have tried to stretch out a hand to his contemporary Eunomians, provided they recanted their Trinitarian teachings, as Theodosius I asked of the capital's bishop Demophilus.[101] Cyprian thus could come to embody the utmost

[100] *C.Eunom.* 1.54 (*GNO* I 40.18–20): "this unspeakable mystagogy (μυσταγωγίαν) and the things that are being taught about the mysteries by the august hierophant (παρὰ … τοῦ ἱεροφάντου)." See P. M. Gregorios, "Theurgic Neo-Platonism and the Eunomius-Gregory Debate," in M. Brugarolas (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa* 240–260; Elm, *Sons of Hellenism* 239–245, esp. 253 on the "porous" boundaries between Neoplatonists and some Christian groups. On Eunomius' alleged entanglement with magic see also *C.Eunom.* 3.10 with discussion in M. Ludlow, "*Contra Eunomium* III 10—Who is Eunomius?" in M. Cassin et al. (eds.), *Contra Eunomium III* (Leuven 2014) 398–425.

[101] In *Or.* 27.5 Gregory calls Eunomians 'brothers' even if they do not behave accordingly (ἀδελφοὺς … καίπερ οὐκ ἀδελφικῶς ἔχοντας), but

possible rival who could still be accepted in the bosom of the Church. Theological error, in other words, could be forgiven for those recanting since God can reverse the fortune even of a pagan sorcerer. If this argument holds true, the confusion of Cyprians is indeed justified as a morally, theologically, and above all pastorally prompted deceit.

Conclusion

Rather than claiming that Gregory has confused the historical with the legendary Cyprian because of ignorance or haste, the first part of this analysis showed the great care the orator took in crafting a narrative that balances the two dossiers, evidence of diligent composition. The orator's metaliterary signposting, his erotics of preaching, and the unrelenting engagement with his listeners illustrate that Gregory presented the enamored mage as a novelty. His own addition to the story was the prominent place he gave to the erotic as he redeployed erotic tales (*textes de plaisire*) without compromising narrative pleasure (*plaisire du texte*) for a holy cause. His emphatic erotic language shows that the preacher intended to make the best of both Cyprianic tales. The second part of my argument provided a tentative contextual justification for this confusion. On the one hand, Antioch was a city associated with magic, and thus the story of the Antiochene mage may have reverberated on personal grounds with Gregory. On the other hand, the tale of the mage may have been used to allude to Gregory's opponent Eunomius who was later openly accused of magic and theurgy. The situation was more fluid, and Nicene faith was far from the winning side.

These observations do not imply that Gregory 'invented' the fusion but demonstrate his ingenious appropriation for moral and theological instruction. Ancient speakers and audiences did not necessarily feel the need to distinguish between fact and fiction at all costs, and historicity provided by a narrative (διήγημα) may have been considered true enough. Fiction could

virulently attacks their leader (e.g. 9, distinguishing between Eunomius and his followers).

be used for history and vice versa, to paraphrase Bowersock's title.[102] In the process of the transmission of knowledge, however porous and intentionally aggregated, other variants could be employed provided they served an argument, the 'deceit' being morally justified. The preacher's aims are moral, theological, and ecclesiastical, and Cyprian's combined lives are exemplary in this respect. Therefore just as erotics can be used from the pulpit to instruct *sophrosyne*, so can the theme of magic be employed to promote conversion and Nicene faith. Gregory is a moralist, not a historian, and thus is allowed to add a syllable or two to Cyprian's past for the sake of instructive deceit.

December, 2024

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[102] Bowersock, *Fiction as History*.