

Mircea Grațian Duluș

**ALLEGORIZING LOVE IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY:  
PHILAGATHOS OF CERAMI AND THE ALLEGORICAL  
EXEGESIS OF HELIODORUS' *AETHIOPICA***

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

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*AETHIOPICA***

By  
MIRCEA GRAȚIAN DULUȘ  
(ROMÂNIA)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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I, the undersigned, MIRCEA GRAȚIAN DULUȘ, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 25 May 2007

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Signature

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## ABREVIATIONS

- LSJ* Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- PG* *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844-64.
- PGL* *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- SC* *Sources chrétiennes*.
- RAC* *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*

## 1.INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Defining the problem: Who is the real author of the *Interpretation* of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*? Why is this question important?<sup>1</sup>

Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*<sup>2</sup> is probably the last surviving Greek novel of antiquity written in the fourth century CE.<sup>3</sup> The contents of the novel reflect ideas of faithfulness and chastity of an élite pervaded by the mystique of ancestry and the perpetuation of their own kind, in a context in which married love was held in high esteem even in the 'pagan' environment.<sup>4</sup> The work became popular both with its contemporary audience and with subsequent ones, as we shall see. As a modern scholar put it, the interest of this novel and its unique place among other Greek novels consists in its alluring way of combining a profound religious sensibility with a chaste erotic intrigue and, above all, with philosophical ideas giving thus to the novel an

<sup>1</sup> I must apicially thank to Cristian-Nicolae Gaşpar who gave generously his time, energy and suggestions throughtout the duration of writing the present thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* was critically edited by R.M. Rattenbury and T.W. Lumb, Héliodore, *Les Ethiopiques*, 3 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1935-43).

<sup>3</sup> On the problem of dating Heliodorus, see G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 149-159, where he argues quite cogently that the novel was certainly written in the last quarter of the fourth century. The main issue that settle the long ongoing debate about the dating is the fact that in the panegyric speeches of Emperor Julian to the emperor Constantius II the detailed description of the Nisibis siege parallels closely the siege of the city of Syene as is described in Book 9 of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*. The scholarly debate was concerned with establishing the original source for this description. The question was whether Julian quoted Heliodorus or viceversa. But as Bowersock, 154, put it, "the notion of Julian's borrowing from a work of fiction in official praise of an emperor concerning a recent historical event seems so obviously absurd that it is hard to believe that either Szepessy himself or anyone else could have believe it." Thus, it is probably safe to assume that the novel of Heliodorus was written after 350 CE.

<sup>4</sup> Simon Swain, "A Century and More of Greek Novel," in *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel*, ed. S. Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 28, where he discusses the change in sexual ethics in the High Roman Empire when "married love was given an intellectual credibility denied to homosexual relations." Swain argued that this change is paramount for understanding the sexuality of the Greek novels. See also Aline Rousselle, *Porneia. De la maîtrise du corps à la privation sensorielle: 3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> siècles de l'ère chrétienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983) and Paul Veyne, "La Famille et l'amour sous le Haut-Empire Romain," *Annales ESC* 33 (1978): 35-63, English translation in P. Ariès and A. Béjin, ed., *Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 26-35; also, M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, *The Care of the Self*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).



appearance of profundity.<sup>5</sup> Although many ideas expressed in the novel belong to Neoplatonism the work cannot be regarded as “committed to any particular religious or philosophical tradition.”<sup>6</sup> These general considerations should be kept in mind when I will discuss why this particular novel was allegorized in twelfth-century Sicily.<sup>7</sup> In this context, the controversy regarding the author of the novel should also be mentioned; if one accepts a late-fourth century dating—at this moment the most probable—, this might have been the same Heliodorus who was identified by the fifth-century ecclesiastical historian Socrates with the bishop of Trikka in Thessaly during the reign of Theodosius I.<sup>8</sup> As G. W. Bowersock remarked “most scholars have refused, perhaps a little too hastily and indignantly, to countenance this identification,”<sup>9</sup> Although it appears plausible. It is hardly surprising then, if indeed the author of *Aethiopica* is the one who became bishop of Trikka in Thessaly, that another Christian would later find this text appealing for a Christian hermeneutic approach.

With the title Τῆς Χαρικλείας ἐρμῆνευμα τῆς σώφρονος ἐκ φωνῆς Φιλίππου τοῦ φιλοσόφου (“An Interpretation of the Chaste Charikleia from the Lips of Philip the Philosopher”)<sup>10</sup> is extant in the *Codex Marcianus Graecus* 410 an

<sup>5</sup> Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian. Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 149-150.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 149. I have accepted here Lamberton’s opinion although there are different interpretations regarding the ideological affiliations of the Greek novels and of this one in particular. See, Swain, “A Century,” 31 where he claims that the Greek novels were “written for a ‘pagan’ élite under threat from a state-sponsored Christianity.” But if the author was in fact the same man who is attested as a Christian bishop, his audience might have been somewhat different and more probably reflected an age when ‘pagans’ and Christians were not so much opposing each other.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion of this matter see p. 71-73 below.

<sup>8</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.22, ed. Robert Hussey (Oxford, 1853; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1992 ), 51.

<sup>9</sup> Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 149; Heinrich Dörrie, “Die griechischen Romane und das Christentum,” *Philologus*, n.s. 47 (1938): 273-276.

<sup>10</sup> Hereafter I will refer to the allegorical exegesis of Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica* as the *Interpretation*; the text was edited as *Commentatio in Charicleam* in Heliodori *Aethiopica*, ed. Aristide Colonna (Rome: Typis Regiae officinae polygraphicae, 1938), 372-8. I will also refer to the first critical edition of this text by R. Hercher, “*Fragmentum Marcianum*,” *Hermes* 3 (1869): 382-88; an English translation of Hercher’s text is available in Lamberton, *Homer*, 306-311; This translation is sometimes seriously distorting because based on the improbable attribution of the text to an anonymous late antique

allegorical interpretation of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, which could have been written, according to some scholars,<sup>11</sup> "as early as the late fifth century, although there is some reason to suspect that it may be an archaizing Byzantine composition,"<sup>12</sup> dating from the twelfth century. In close connection with dating the text emerges the question of authorship that shall be tackled in the present study. Who is the real author of the *Interpretation*? The special interest of this question lies in the fact that the *Interpretation* is the only extant allegorical exegesis of a Greek erotic novel, and perhaps the only one ever written.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it would obviously not be the same thing to ascribe the authorship of the text in question to a certain anonymous Neoplatonic philosopher living in the sixth century or to a Christian monk living in Norman Sicily in the twelfth century. And this for various reasons.

The most important aspect of the question, in my opinion, is that if indeed the *Interpretation* was written in Late Antiquity, as some claim, then the history of 'pagan' allegorical interpretation will be enriched with a new type of allegory (i.e., of an erotic novel), which so far seems not to have been attempted by any other 'pagan' allegorist. Crucial to mention at this point is the fact that that the 'pagan' allegorical exegetic tradition interpreted allegorically only the texts that founded the religious identity of the 'pagan' world, namely the 'Homeric Scriptures,'<sup>14</sup> the myths and the

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Neoplatonist; it should, therefore, be used with great care. In what follows, all translations of ancient sources are mine unless notes otherwise.

<sup>11</sup> For example see K. von Fritz, "Philipp von Opus und Philipp der Philosoph," *Philologus* 92 (1937): 243-247; Leonardo Tarán, *Academica: Plato, Philip of Opus, and the Pseudo-Platonic Epinomis* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1975), 115; idem, "The Authorship of an Allegorical Interpretation of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*," in *Chercheurs de sagesse. Hommage à Jean Pépin*, ed. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé *et al.* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1992), 203-30.

<sup>12</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 149.

<sup>13</sup> Apart from some timid attempts to allegorize Heliodorus' novel in Byzantine literature, we have no information about any other Greek novel ever being contemplated for an allegorical interpretation. For the fate of Heliodorus' novel in Byzantine literature see p. 33 below.

<sup>14</sup> I prefer the term 'Scripture' for the Homeric poems in line with Lamberton, *Homer*, 14, because "no clear distinction was made between reading Homer as 'literature' and reading him as scripture." For the status of Homer in the Greek cultural tradition see also Félix Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973); J. J. Keaney, "Homer in Antiquity," in *A*

other ‘pagan’ religious traditions,<sup>15</sup> but never attempted to allegorize something that was regarded as purely fictitious,<sup>16</sup> like the Greek novels. In short, the ‘pagan’ writers had no reason to interpret allegorically an erotic novel, for never were these literary production regarded as defining the religious identity of the various philosophical and religious movements in the ‘pagan’ world.

If the *Interpretation*, on the other hand, was written by a Basilian monk in twelfth century during the brief, but intense boom of Greek culture in the Norman Kingdom of Sicily<sup>17</sup> in the time of Roger II (1130-1154) and William I (1154-1166), then our picture of the Italo-Greek monastic culture and in general of the amplitude of this cultural renewal will receive a more accurate account. At the same time, the unique character of this exegetic text will become, perhaps, even more exceptional for being the work of a monk who wrote the only extant allegorical interpretation of a Greek erotic novel. If this is indeed so, then the following question that arises almost naturally is what possible reasons might a Christian monk have had to allegorize such an apparently unsuitable literary production? At this point I will just mention the fact that by the twelfth century the allegorical method was so much embedded in the Christian interpretative tradition,<sup>18</sup> that its use became somewhat of an automatism for

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*New Companion to Homer*, ed. I. Morris and B. Powell, 33-54 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); G. J. M. Bartelink, “Homer,” in *RAC*, vol. 16, ed. E. Dassmann *et al.* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> The problems that the Greek thinkers had to face regarding the Homeric poems were summarized by Lamberton, *Homer*, viii, as follows, “On the one hand, these interpreters strove to redeem the reputation of Homer as a bulwark of pagan Greek culture by demonstrating that his stories and the model of reality that could be deduced from them were in fact compatible with contemporary idealist thought. On the other hand, the more exoteric Platonists were simultaneously concerned to make use of Homer’s prestige--to whose appeal no Greek could be immune--to bolster the doctrines of later Platonism.”

<sup>16</sup> Here it should be noted that only divinely inspired literature was regarded as a source of truth and as describing reality in Greek thought. The Greek novels were never perceived as divinely inspired works. Moreover, in Late Antiquity, some people felt that their lecture should be avoided as detrimental to one’s morals. See below, p. 31, n. 114.

<sup>17</sup> For a useful introduction to the history of the Normans in Sicily see Donald Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Special mention should be given to Lamberton’s remark, *Homer*, 147, that even in the fourth century CE the Christian tradition of allegorical reading “had a place of respect in the intellectual and spiritual life of the community that it appears to have lost at this period in the pagan community. Indeed, the fact

Christian writers who were approaching the Scriptures. Beside this justification, a more relaxed attitude towards the Greek culture as the one advised by Basil of Caesarea, namely to make use of anything good that can be found in Greek culture for Christians' own edification,<sup>19</sup> might have determined a monk to profit from a novel that praised chastity and purity.

## 1.2. The text; its history; modern editions, translations.

*The Interpretation*, as has been already mentioned, is extant only in the *Codex Marcianus Graecus* 410 (coll. 522),<sup>20</sup> which was written in Southern Italy in the monastery of San Salvatore of Messina during the twelfth or thirteenth century.<sup>21</sup> The text was first published and critically edited by R. Hercher in 1869. Later, Aristide Colonna re-published the *Interpretation* with a short introduction in his edition of Heliodorus. The text in Colonna's edition has 131 lines progressively numbered.<sup>22</sup> In addition to these editions, important remarks for the textual history of the *Interpretation* have been made by August Brinkmann, who demonstrated that the

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that we have only bits and pieces of interpretive literature from pagan antiquity, whereas the Christian tradition of textual exegesis is far better represented, is also an indication that the elaboration of the meaning of a text was never, in pagan tradition, held in the respect it had in the Christian context."

<sup>19</sup> Agostino Pertusi, "Aspetti organizzativi e culturali dell'ambiente monacale greco dell'Italia meridionale," in *L'eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII*, ed. A. Pertusi (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1965), 409, argued that the Italo-Greek monks followed Basil's advise of not disregarding worldly literature. This claim is supported by the fact that the typicon of the monastery of San Salvatore in Messina mentioned the existence of such literature within the monastery. For this, see S. Rossi, "La prefazione al Typicon del Monastero del SS. Salvatore scritta da Luca primo archimandrita," *Atti della Accademia Peloritana* 17 (1902-1903): 79-81; T. Minisci, "I Typikà liturgici dell'Italia bizantina," *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata* 7 (1953), 103; The *typikon* of San Salvatore was also analyzed by M. Scaduto, *Il monachesimo basiliano nella Sicilia medievale. Rinascita e decadenza, sec. XI-XIV* (Rome: Edizioni di "Storia e letteratura," 1947), 196-213.

<sup>20</sup> Our treatise appears on fol. 122-133v.

<sup>21</sup> The manuscript was dated at the beginning of the thirteenth century by E. Mioni, *Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum Codices Graeci Manuscripti*, vol. 2, *Thesaurus Antiquus. Codices 300-625* (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1985), 166-167.

<sup>22</sup> All throughout this thesis, I will refer to the text by quoting the numbering of the lines of Colonna's edition, referring to it as Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, followed by the page number and the indication of the lines referred to.

opening of the piece (i.e., lines 1-10) is a close imitation of the opening lines of the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus*.<sup>23</sup>

Two parts can be clearly distinguished in the text. Lines 1 to 35 represent the introduction to the author's attempt to allegorize Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, where he explains that in spite of his age he undertakes this task at his friends' behest and in order to defend Charikleia against her detractors. The second part, which contains the real allegorical exegesis begins at line 35 and is not transmitted in its entirety in the manuscript because the text breaks off while describing the adventures of Charikleia and Theagenes, the main heroes of the novel, in Ethiopia. However, modern scholars assume that, in spite of the loss of its last part, the text is nearly complete since the analysis of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* as we now have it reaches to the events of the eighth book out of the ten that form the novel.<sup>24</sup>

There is an English translation of the *Interpretation* made after the text of Hercher by Robert Lamberton incorporated in the appendix to his book, *Homer the Theologian. Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*.<sup>25</sup> As I will show below, this translation is problematic in several ways, not only because it is based on an older critical edition that disregarded the readings of the unique manuscript in favor of its German editor's conjectures—which are not always very fortunate—, but also because the translator sometimes distorted the meaning of the Greek original due to his ideological interpretative bias.

<sup>23</sup> August Brinkmann, "Beiträge zur Kritik und Erklärung des Dialogs Axiochos," *Rheinisches Museum* n.s. 51 (1896): 441-445.

<sup>24</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 156.

<sup>25</sup> All references to Lamberton's English translation of the text will be explicitly identified.

### 1.3. Overview of existing scholarship on the topic; its methodological and ideological limitations.

The scholarly debate regarding the authorship of the *Interpretation* started as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. The main issue at stake at that time was to identify which ‘pagan’ philosopher was hidden beyond the appellative Philip the Philosopher, the name given to the author in the very manuscript where the text was preserved. For William A. Oldfather, the Philip of the *Interpretation* was an anonymous Neoplatonist of the fifth century CE (or later); Oldfather argued that the text was published with the title “from the lips of Philip the Philosopher” (ἐκ φωνῆς Φιλίππου τοῦ φιλοσόφου) because the anonymous writer intended that the fragment be taken as the work of Philip of Opus, Plato’s student, the *Interpretation* being thus a piece of usual anachronistic pseudo-epigraphy.<sup>26</sup> Karl Praechter regarded this interpretation as possible.<sup>27</sup> These interpretations are now outdated, for they cannot give an account of the citations from the Old and the New Testament and of the references to Patristic authorities (the latter not always clearly identified in previous literature) that are present in the *Interpretation*.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, these analyses illustrate very well a tenacious ideological assumption—never justified properly—that a work with a manifest philosophical tendency must be the fruit of a philosopher necessarily rooted in the ‘pagan’ classical tradition. This attitude is also exemplified by K. von Fritz, who claimed that the *Interpretation* is the work of Philip, an otherwise unknown Neoplatonist working in the latter part of the fifth century CE and not later in Constantinople. Although he identified the biblical quotations in the text, von Fritz still maintained that the contents of the allegorical interpretation are

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<sup>26</sup> William Abbott Oldfather, “Lokrika: Sagensgeschichtliche Untersuchungen,” *Philologus* 67 n.s. 21 (1908): 411-472.

<sup>27</sup> Karl Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums* (Berlin: Mittler, 1926), 647.

pagan, not Christian.<sup>29</sup> During this first phase of the controversy, the scholarly debate did not take into consideration the possibility that the *Interpretation* could have been written by a Christian, let alone by a Christian monk.

New elements were brought into the debate by Aristide Colonna, who for the first time argued that *the Interpretation* was the work of a Christian monk identified by him as the “most learned and most eloquent Theophanes Kerameus,” a never-existing archbishop of Taormina in Sicily,”<sup>30</sup> under whose name an impressive number of Byzantine manuscripts transmitted a collection of homilies for the Sunday readings and for all the feasts of the liturgical year. A further, essential step in the right direction was made by the studies of A. Ehrhardt<sup>31</sup> and, especially, of G. Rossi-Taibbi,<sup>32</sup> who established beyond doubt that the *Homilies*<sup>33</sup> ascribed to the fictitious “Theophanes Kerameus” are, in fact, the work of Philagathos of Cerami, a man whose name before turning monk was given in several manuscripts of his *Homilies* as Philippos “the Philosopher.”<sup>34</sup> Once the identity between Philippos the Philosopher and Philagathos of Cerami was soundly established, the hypothesis of Colonna was further advocated by B. Lavagnini<sup>35</sup> and C. Cupane,<sup>36</sup> and accepted by P. Canart,<sup>37</sup>

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed discussion of this matter see p. 74-85 below.

<sup>29</sup> K. von Fritz, “Philipp von Opus und Philipp der Philosoph,” 243-247.

<sup>30</sup> Aristide Colonna, “Teofane Cerameo e Filippo filosofo,” *Bolletino del Comitato per l'edizione nazionale dei classici* n.s. 8 (1960): 25-28.

<sup>31</sup> A. Ehrhardt, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1952), 631-681.

<sup>32</sup> G. Rossi-Taibbi, *Sulla tradizione manoscritta dell'omiliario di Filagato di Cerami* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1965).

<sup>33</sup> For critical editions of the *Homilies*, see Filagato da Cerami, *Omellerie per i vangeli domenicali e le feste di tutto l'anno*, ed. Giuseppe Rossi Taibbi, vol. 1, *Omellerie per le feste fisse* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1969); Gaia Zaccagni, ed., *Dieci omellerie di Filagato da Cerami (per il periodo prequaresimale e per l'inizio della Quaresima)*, PhD Dissertation, Università di Torino, 1999; Franciscus Scorsus, *Sapientissimi et eloquentissimi Theophanis Ceramei Archiepiscopi Tauromenitani homiliae in evangelia dominicalia et festa totius anni* (Paris, 1644; repr. in PG vol. 132, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1864), coll. 136-1042). Stefano Caruso has published another three homilies, “Le tre omellerie inedite ‘Per la Domenica delle Palme’ di Filagato da Cerami,” *Ἑπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 41 (1974): 109-27.

<sup>34</sup> The personality of Philippos-Philagathos is discussed in the next subchapter.

<sup>35</sup> Bruno Lavagnini, “Filipo-Filagato promotore degli studi di greco in Calabria,” *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* n.s. 28 (1974): 3-12.

and N. G. Wilson.<sup>38</sup> With the exception of Carolina Cupane, who was the only one to attempt a direct comparison of the text of the *Interpretation* with the *Homilies* of Philagathos—the next obvious thing to do, methodologically speaking—, in the scholarship of the problem there has been no systematic attempt to carry out a thorough analysis of the *Interpretation* from the perspective of Philagathos' *Homilies*. Even Cupane's work has its limitations, since she did not compare the texts in what regards the content of the allegorical interpretation, but limited her approach to identifying several identical features at a purely formal level. For his part, Colonna was especially concerned with identifying the exact location of the dramatic setting of the dialogue which opens the *Interpretation* and to establish the author's knowledge of Latin, for he believed that, given the fact that Philippos was a Greek-speaking monk who knew some Latin and, moreover, who was dwelling in Southern Italy, he could be none other than Philagathos of Cerami, who lived and wrote in the same region.<sup>39</sup> It was mainly such marginal issues as the dramatic setting of the first lines of the text that concerned Colonna<sup>40</sup> and Lavagnini,<sup>41</sup> for they believed that in the lines 3-5, ("one day I was going out of the gate of Rhegium that leads toward the sea"<sup>42</sup>) the author was referring to a precisely identifiable city gate in Rhegium, Southern Italy.<sup>43</sup> Both these scholars also assumed that 'the gates of the temple' mentioned in the *Interpretation*<sup>44</sup> alluded to a church of the Virgin Mary.<sup>45</sup> Now, considering that

<sup>36</sup> Carolina Cupane, "Filagato da Cerami φιλόσοφος e διδάσκαλος. Contributo alla storia della cultura bizantina in età normanna," *Siculorum Gymnasium* n.s. 31.1 (1978): 1-27.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Canart, "Le livre grec en Italie méridionale sous les règnes normand et souabe: aspects matériels et sociaux," *Scrittura e civiltà* 2 (1978): 135-137.

<sup>38</sup> N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983), 216-217.

<sup>39</sup> Aristide Colonna, "Teofane Cerameo e Filippo filosofo," 27.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Lavagnini, "Filipo-Filagato," 5.

<sup>42</sup> Trans. Lamberton, *Homer*, 306.

<sup>43</sup> K. von Fritz, "Philipp von Opus und Philipp der Philosoph," 246, believed that "the door of Rhegium" referred to a certain city gate in Constantinople.

<sup>44</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 366, 10: τὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ προπύλαια; 367, 32: τῶν ἱερῶν πυλῶν τοῦ νέω; 367, 34: αὐτὸν τὸν τῆς ἱερᾶς πύλης οὐδόν.



the whole introduction is an obvious imitation of the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus*,<sup>46</sup> the dramatic-setting is more likely than not just a literary fiction, and thus cannot serve for the identification of any real place, although the possibility of this being an autobiographical reference cannot be ruled out completely.

Although it seemed that the hypothesis of Colonna and Lavagnini had settled the debate once and for all, their arguments were called into question by Leonardo Tarán in two studies, the last one published in 1992.<sup>47</sup> The core issue in Tarán's endeavor was to prove that the tendency of the allegorical interpretation of our work was typical to late Platonism and that it did not contain any peculiarly Christian dogma, because he conjectured that the *Interpretation* "could hardly have been written much later than the sixth century A.D."<sup>48</sup> Had Tarán been successful in proving that the ideological affiliation of the work is more akin to the 'pagan' philosophical tradition than to Christianity, then it would have been unlikely, as he admitted, for any reasonable scholar to advocate that the *Interpretation* was composed in twelfth-century Sicily by Philagathos of Cerami. Yet, Tarán's argumentation, which is undermined seriously both by methodological flaws and by the author's strong ideological bias, is far from convincing. Before describing his arguments in some detail I should say that Tarán's opinion was accepted by Robert Lamberton in his influential book *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*.<sup>49</sup> This uncritical acceptance, unfortunately, has determined Lamberton to adopt a distorting view of the Greek text of the *Interpretation*, which he mistranslated in several instances in order to bring it in line

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<sup>45</sup> Lavagnini, "Filipo-Filagato," 6; Colonna, "Teofane Cerameo e Filippo filosofo," 28.

<sup>46</sup> As shown long ago by Brinkmann, "Beiträge," 441-445.

<sup>47</sup> Tarán, *Academica*, 115; idem, "The Authorship," 203-30.

<sup>48</sup> Tarán, "The Authorship," 229.

with the biased hypothesis of a late-antique Neoplatonic author as suggested by Tarán.

Tarán admitted as a securely established fact that Philagathos' name before he became a monk (a "priest" in Tarán's reading) was Philippos the Philosopher, the very name of the author of the *Interpretation* as indicated in the manuscript that transmits this text. However, this does not prove in his opinion "that Philip-Philagathos is the author of the allegorical interpretation of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*. [...] For Philip was a common name and so was the appellative 'the philosopher'."<sup>50</sup> If Philip indeed might have been a common name, surely this was not the case with the appellative 'the philosopher,' which was not, at any time, given just to anyone. Tarán's general approach was to refute systematically all the arguments advanced by Colonna and Lavagnini which linked the *Interpretation* with southern Italy and thus with Philagathos. Thus, Colonna maintained that in the author's statement "the seventh is a secret number, virgin and august among numbers, as the language of the Italians explains [by giving it the name *septem*]" is implied that the author of the *Interpretation* knew Latin and consequently that he must have been a Greek who lived in a mixed environment such as that of Norman Sicily.<sup>51</sup> Tarán agreed that Philippos' words implied "that he knew Latin, or some Latin, but not that he lived and worked in southern Italy, or when he lived."<sup>52</sup> This, indeed, is not an accurate statement on either side, if we only remember that the interpretation of number seven in an identical manner, which linked it with the Latin word for "seven," was current since Philo of Alexandria and might have in this case been just a routine borrowing

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Lamberton, *Homer*, 148: "Aristide Colonna's observation that Theophanes the Keramite (tenth-eleventh centuries) used a similar pseudonym (viz. Philip the Philosopher) does not prove either that Theophanes was the author or that the work is as late as the tenth century."

<sup>50</sup> Tarán, "The Authorship," 208.

<sup>51</sup> Colonna, "Teofane Cerameo e Filippo filosofo," 27.

<sup>52</sup> Tarán, "The Authorship," 207.

from a long and well-established exegetical tradition.<sup>53</sup> At this point, although anticipating the solution I would like to offer for the debate concerning the authorship of the *Interpretation*, I should mention that Philippos-Philagathos surely knew Latin as it is shown by the following example taken from one of his *Homilies*.

For this name (viz. Bonifacius) is interpreted as “the one who has done good deeds,” if someone translates [it] from the [language] of the Romans into Greek.

[...] βονιφάτιοι (τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦτο τὸν ἀγαθὰ διαπραττόμενον ἐρμηνεύει, εἴ τις τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων εἰς Ἑλλάδα μεταβάλλει φωνήν)<sup>54</sup>

All throughout his argumentation, by a methodologically dubious approach, Tarán consistently attempted to minimize and, subsequently, disregard the importance of any clue that might hint at an Italian origin of the text in question so as to avoid any possible connection with Philagathos of Cerami. Thus, commenting the dramatic setting of the *Interpretation*, he accepted that by “door of Rhegion that leads to the sea” is meant a door in the city of Rhegion in Southern Italy; nevertheless, for him “this is not evidence that he (viz. the author) was a native of this city or an Italian at all.”<sup>55</sup> This is indeed so. Neither the reference to Rhegion nor the fact that the author of the *Interpretation* was a Christian “support the notion that our Philip lived and wrote in Southern Italy; even less that is to be dated to the twelfth century A.D.”<sup>56</sup> At this point a clear tension in Tarán’s theory becomes obvious, which shall be revealed throughout the present study, determined by the fact that he had to square the author’s

<sup>53</sup> See p. 54-55. Similar doubts were expressed by Augusta Acconcia Longo, “Filippo il Filosofo a Costantinopoli,” *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* n.s. 28 (1991), 8: “La simbologia del numero sette, ad esempio, che appare sia nello scritto di Filippo il Filosofo sia in un’ omelia di Filagato da Cerami, e un motivo talmente frequente da non costituire un aggancio significativo tra le due opere. Così come l’accostamento tra ἑπτὰ-σεπτός (latino *septem*), che, lungi dall’essere una prova del presunto bilinguismo di Filagato da Cerami, si trova già in Filone d’Alessandria, e, nella sterminata letteratura che riprende la simbologia del numero, non dovrebbe rappresentare una rarità, se anche gli etimologici bizantini fanno derivare ἑπτὰ da σεπτός e σέβω.”

<sup>54</sup> *Hom.* 29.23 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 197); the homilies are quoted as follows: the number of the homily, then the paragraph, followed by the indication of the edition and by the page number in that edition.

<sup>55</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 209.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

Christianity, which he admits, with the fact that in his opinion the *Interpretation* does not contain any peculiar Christian dogma, and moreover, that it has been written for “an audience which at the very least included many pagans, or perhaps was mainly pagan.”<sup>57</sup> Since he postulated a ‘pagan’ audience, Tarán was forced to silence as much as possible all the possible allusions to Christianity contained in the text—and, as I will show below, these are much more numerous than hitherto admitted. Thus, he considered that it is only likely, “though not certain, that Philip, the author of our treatise, was a Christian,”<sup>58</sup> and believed that “since these (viz. 1 Cor 3:13 and Song 1:3) are the only two quotations or references to Biblical texts, one may reject without further ado Colonna’s claim that Philip refers to the Bible ‘con frequenti richiami’.”<sup>59</sup> Tarán judgment, as it will become clear in the next chapters, where more proofs of the author’s Christianity will be revealed, may strike us as rather hasty and somewhat presumptuous. What has been outlined above makes evident the main shortcoming of Tarán’s approach, namely that he denied to Philagathos the authorship of the *Interpretation* without even trying to compare the text with the *Homilies*, to see whether there might be a similarity between the two works in what regards the method of allegory and the items to which this was applied or, indeed, to ponder if the vocabulary or the imagery of the *Interpretation* resembles the one used in his *Homilies*. As it appears from his study, Tarán did not even contemplate, at any time, the possibility of such a comparison, although, methodologically speaking, this is the rather self-evident course to take before ruling out Philagathos-Philippos the Philosopher as the possible author. Apparently, Tarán was unwilling to consider seriously the hypothesis that this work might have been written by a Christian and dismissed it after a summary, biased, and methodologically questionable discussion.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 207.

This judgement may sound harsh, yet this conclusion becomes almost inescapable if one looks at the manner in which Tarán proceeded with his arguments. At first, he discussed the evidence advanced by Colonna and Lavagnini in favor of the Philagathean paternity “merely by number,”<sup>60</sup> grouping the various items together in “thematic” groups. This, of course, had the effect of avoiding an overall picture of *all* the numerous elements that all point to a certain monk who lived in South Italy in the twelfth century and accidentally bore the name of Philippos the Philosopher—the same as that of the author of the *Interpretation*.

Thus, instead of attempting a comprehensive discussion and refutation of all the elements that would speak in favor of a Christian coloring of the allegorical interpretation, Tarán preferred to scatter these throughout his text. After mentioning the two biblical quotations from the *Interpretation* he admitted that there were other items that pointed to the author’s Christianity, yet he decided to deal with them later, “since they are either not relevant to, or not decisive for, the question of the identity of Philip.”<sup>61</sup> Through this manner of argumentation Tarán could claim, in spite of all evidence, that the reference to the Song of Songs is not essential for the author’s justification of his attempt to allegorize an erotic novel. At the same time, Tarán regarded as paramount “the reference to Socrates’ own invocation of the antecedent of Simonides’ ‘Palinode’ to Helen in Phaedrus 243 A-B as a justification for his own palinode to love (represented by Socrates’ second speech in 244 B ff.).”<sup>62</sup> Tarán’s apodictic statement that the presence of a quotation from the Song of Songs is not essential to the author’s purpose is strange, to say the least. At the same time, he attached more importance for a proper understanding of the author’s justification of

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 207, n. 24.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 215.

undertaking the exegesis of an erotic novel to what he believed to be a direct reference to Plato's *Phaedrus*, but what is in fact, as we shall see, a *verbatim* quotation from Basil of Caesarea—yet another clear pointer to the fact that the author of the *Interpretation* was a Christian.<sup>63</sup> The second biblical quotation is discussed by Tarán significantly towards the end of his study; once more, in his opinion, the quote from 1Cor 3:13 “does not imply that our work is of a peculiarly Christian character,” but “it is any case the *Aethiopica* that motivates our author's reference to a trial by fire.” This, of course, implies that it would be perfectly normal for a work directed to a ‘pagan’ audience to use quotations from the New Testament. Next, although he admitted as very likely that the prologue is a literary fiction,<sup>64</sup> Tarán nevertheless made a fairly practical use of it in his argumentation. He took the reference to a supposed temple of Artemis and to the fountain of Aphrodite contained in the prologue as, in his opinion, incongruous with the author's Christianity.<sup>65</sup>

Another striking and quite disputable feature of Tarán's method of argumentation is his particular way of referring to the history of the ideas that are underpinning the *Interpretation*, for he systematically avoids to mention whether a particular idea came to be part of the Christian spiritual or exegetic tradition or whether its meaning is different from the one attested in the ‘pagan’ interpretative tradition. One such example is that of the word *hypostasis*, which Tarán understood as referring to the Plotinian notion, not even mentioning the possibility of this term being used in the *Interpretation* with a specifically Christian meaning.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Lines 26-31 (Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 367) of the *Interpretation* were taken by Tarán as an allusion to the above-mentioned passage from Plato's *Phaedrus*, while they are in fact a direct quotation from Basil the Great; for a more detailed discussion, see p. 76-77 below.

<sup>64</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 211, 213.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-214.

<sup>66</sup> In fact, as I will show below (see p. 43, n. 151), the meaning given to this word in the *Interpretation* is hard, if not impossible to reconcile with the hypothesis of a ‘pagan’ Neoplatonist author, but makes perfect sense in the context of Christian theology.

Last, but certainly not least, although many other reasons to criticize Tarán can be easily found, I will point out one that particularly casts the shadow of doubt over his entire approach, namely, his somewhat distorting manner of quoting Colonna's Greek text when making his own interpretation of it.<sup>67</sup> Although this author presumably knew very well the published text, sometimes he quoted it very selectively, omitting words from the original text and then discussing the resulting sentence as if it were the original. Quite expectedly, this new, unproblematic "original" proved quite apt to buttress the author's ideas.

Unfortunately, such unilateral approaches, which rule out the possibility that the author of the *Interpretation* may have indeed been Philagathos-Philippos the Philosopher of Cerami without considering properly and in a comparative context the wealth of available evidence can provide no clear and incontrovertible solution to the problem of the authorship of the *Interpretation*.

In my opinion, the only possible solution to this problem is to undertake a complete analysis of the two works, namely the *Interpretation* and the *Homilies*, that would leave aside unessential issues such as the dramatic setting or whether the author knew or not Latin, for which incontrovertible evidence cannot be provided in any case. Instead, the comparison should focus on essential matters, which concern both the form and the contents of the two works. Thus, in the second chapter, I will analyze the technical terminology, the vocabulary, the imagery, and the metrical features of the two works in order to look for any formal parallels, resemblances (or even identical items) that would speak in favor of the Philagathean paternity of the *Interpretation*. Then, in the third chapter I will pay special attention to the role of allegory in constructing a deeper meaning in both texts, focusing mainly on the way

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<sup>67</sup> See below p. 45, n. 180.

names and numbers are interpreted allegorically and, once again, looking for possible parallels between the two texts. Finally, I will offer a systematic discussion of the Christian elements of the *Interpretation*, not attempted so far by the scholars who have dealt with this text, because I consider these of paramount importance in establishing the ideological affiliation of the allegorical interpretation proposed in the *Interpretation*.

#### 1.4. Philippos the Philosopher and Philagathos of Cerami.

Since some scholars seem to think that nothing is known of Philippos the Philosopher “beyond the text in question [viz. the *Interpretation*],”<sup>68</sup> it is necessary to address this intricate issue in some detail. Although, as I have already mentioned, Tarán claimed that “Philippos the Philosopher” was a common name, there is, in fact, no attestation of any other author with this name, with one singular and significant exception, which will be discussed in what follows.<sup>69</sup>

Philippos the Philosopher is the name given to the author of a collection of homilies, usually referred to as the “italo-griechische Homiliar” (A. Ehrhard) in several manuscripts that transmit this corpus of *Homilies*. In Rossi-Taibbi’s classification of the various branches that form the textual tradition of this homiletic corpus the manuscripts that belong to the group II of the Italo-Greek branch of the

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<sup>68</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 148.

<sup>69</sup> We know only of Philip of Opus, Plato’s student and the alleged editor of the *Laws*, whose name comes closest to our Philippos the Philosopher. There were indeed scholars (such as Oldfather, for instance; see above p. 9, n. 27), who thought that Philippos the Philosopher mentioned in the title of the *Interpretation* is none other than Philip of Opus. But, as Tarán rightly argued (see “The Authorship,” 4), this is highly unlikely, for Philip of Opus was never known or referred to with the appellation ‘the philosopher,’ because he “was not a famous or well known philosopher.” At this point we may note to what extent Tarán’s arguments are self-contradictory; he admits that the appellation in question (viz. ‘the philosopher’) can be attributed only to “a famous or well known philosopher,” while at page 208 of his study, he states that “Philip was a common name and so was the appellation ‘the philosopher.’”



textual tradition clearly attest as the author of the corpus a certain Philippos the Philosopher.<sup>70</sup>

On the Catching of the Fish—the work of Philippos the Philosopher from Cerami      Περί τῆς ἄγρᾱς τῶν ἰχθύων· ποίημα Φιλίππου φιλοσόφου τοῦ Κεραμίτου<sup>71</sup>

Now, as Rossi Taibbi has shown, with very cogent arguments, it was only the Italo-Greek branch of the entire, enormous textual tradition of the *Homilies*, represented by only thirteen manuscripts that preserved the real identity of the author, Philippos-Philagathos the Philosopher.<sup>72</sup> It is important to emphasize here that, according to the most accurate textual tradition of this homiletic corpus, which has all the chances of going back to a collection of the *Homilies* made during the lifetime of their author and by people close to him, the author of the *Homilies* was sometimes (viz., in the group II of the Italo-Greek branch of the textual tradition) named Philippos the Philosopher with the important addition Κεραμίτης ‘of Cerami.’ To my mind, this proves that this author’s fame as a philosopher must have been indeed great in his lifetime already, since it is very seldom in manuscripts of ecclesiastical literature that we find authors characterized in this way, i.e., by their secular name. In fact, in some of the manuscripts of the same group, Philippos the Philosopher was preferred—as a means of identification—to the monastic name of the same author, as the example quoted above clearly attests. The fact that Philippos the Philosopher also had a monastic name is proved by the following inscription contained in the codex *Vaticanus Barberinus Graecus* 465, which gives both the names of this author.

<sup>70</sup> Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, xxxv.

<sup>71</sup> *Codex Messanensis S. Salvatoris* 162; for the description of the manuscript, see Ehrhard, *Überlieferung*, vol. 3, 653-54; Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, xxxv. For the correct interpretation of the word Κεραμίτου, see *ibid.*, lvi: the word indicates the place of birth of Philagathos in north-eastern Sicily.

A book of the wisest and most educated Philippos of Cerami, who, upon embracing the divine and angelic appearance changed his name to Philagathos the Monk.

βίβλος τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ  
λογιωτάτου Φιλίππου τοῦ Κεραμίτου  
τοῦ διὰ τοῦ θείου καὶ ἀγγελικοῦ  
σχήματος μετονομασθέντος  
Φιλαγάθου μοναχοῦ.<sup>73</sup>

The importance of this inscription for ascribing the authorship of the *Interpretation* did not escape the notice of Lavagnini, for it proved beyond any doubt that Philippos the Philosopher was the same person who later, when he became a monk, changed his name to Philagathos.<sup>74</sup> Lavagnini went on to argue that “il nome monastico é una rettifica del nome di battesimo, in quanto sostituisce ‘all’amore dei cavalli,’ suggerito dalla etimologia, lo amore del bene.”<sup>75</sup> To this particular moment when Philippos turned Christian monk and changed his name may allude the *Interpretation* when it says: “But at present we have been turned away towards our philosophy—[a philosophy] both in outward appearance and in name.”<sup>76</sup> This can be perhaps an indication that the *Interpretation* was written after the author became a monk and may suggest that, after taking the monastic garb, Philagathos did not abandon the philosophical lifestyle of constant readings, polemics, debates, which probably won him the sounding title of “the Philosopher,” attached even to his monastic name.

This much is suggested by the fact that even as a monk, Philagathos’ name was associated with the appellative ‘the Philosopher,’ which was persistently used alongside his new monastic name. It certainly seems that this association defined the personality of Philippos-Philagathos to such an extent that the appellative became somewhat *de rigueur*, as the following manuscript inscriptions suggest.

<sup>72</sup> Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, xxiv, n. 25.

<sup>73</sup> *Codex Vaticanus Barberinus Graecus* 465; for the content and the description of the manuscript, see Ehrhard, *Überlieferung*, vol. 3, 656; Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, xxxvi.

<sup>74</sup> Lavagnini, “Filipo-Filagato,” 4.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: in Greek Φίλιππος means “the lover of horses” and Φιλάγαθος “the lover of the Good.”

A homily by Philagathos, the work of the Philosopher	ὁμιλία Φιλαγάθου πόνημα τοῦ φιλοσόφου <sup>77</sup>
The work of Philagathos the Monk, the Philosopher	Πόνημα Φιλαγάθου μοναχοῦ τοῦ φιλοσόφου <sup>78</sup>

Bearing in mind that Philagathos' secular attribute (viz. "the Philosopher") was used to identify him as the author of an ecclesiastical work, namely his *Homilies*, as the following example shows, it will not be at all surprising to see his lay name used to identify him as the author of an apparently worldly work, i.e., the allegorizing interpretation of a famous erotic novel.

The work of Philippos of Cerami, [a.k.a.] Philagathos the Philosopher	Φιλίππου τοῦ Κεραμίτου καὶ Φιλαγάτου τοῦ φιλοσόφου ποίημα <sup>79</sup>
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It is unanimously accepted in the scholarship that the appellation "the Philosopher" bestowed upon Philippos-Philagathos was a general recognition of the amount and quality of his classical Greek and Christian knowledge.<sup>80</sup> Carolina Cupane saw in Philagathos "una figura di monaco di tipo assolutamente nuovo, con orizzonti letterari non riscontrabili in nessuno dei suoi pur illustri predecessori e paragonabili soltanto a quelli dei maggiori eruditi costantinopolitani dell'epoca."<sup>81</sup> For the limited purpose of the present study, a full discussion of Philippos-Philagathos' knowledge of classical and Christian authors, although certainly very interesting, would be out of place. I will limit my discussion, therefore, to an essential

<sup>76</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 366, 20-21; for a more detailed discussion of this passage see p. 69-71 below.

<sup>77</sup> *Codex Matritensis Graecus* 4554; the content and the description of the manuscript are given in Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, xxxiii.

<sup>78</sup> *Codex Ambrosianus Graecus* 196; for the description of the manuscript, see Rossi-Taibbi, *ibid.*, xxxiii.

<sup>79</sup> *Codex Messanensis S. Salvatoris* 162; for the description of the manuscript, see Ehrhard, *Überlieferung*, vol. 3, 653-54; Rossi-Taibbi, *Sulla tradizione manoscritta*, 79.

<sup>80</sup> Cristian-Nicolae Gașpar, "Praising the Stylite in Southern Italy: Philagathos of Cerami on St. Symeon the Stylite," *Annuario. Istituto Romeno di cultura e ricerca umanistica* 4 (2002), 96; Lavagnini, "Filipo-Filagato," 10; Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, li.

<sup>81</sup> Cupane, "Filagato da Cerami," 5.

question, namely whether Philagathos knew and referred in his *Homilies* to Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* or not. It is necessary to establish this fact, since Tarán emphasized in his study that Philagathos' acquaintance with Heliodorus' work is "certainly far from established"<sup>82</sup> and used this as an argument to deny the identity of Philippos the Philosopher, the author of the *Interpretation*, and Philagathos, the author of the *Homilies*. Now, while it is true that Philagathos never refers to Heliodorus *expressis verbis*—as he does for instance with Plato, Homer and others—the *Homilies* nevertheless attest that he was indeed familiar with the *Aethiopica*. This was proved by Gaia Zaccagni, who in her critical edition of Philagathos' *Homilies* identified an unacknowledged quotation that can be traced back to Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*.<sup>83</sup>

If one tries to identify the source of Philagathos' impressive knowledge of Greek literature and philosophy, first of all one has to reckon with the rich monastic libraries scattered across Sicily and Calabria.<sup>84</sup> Special attention deserves, in this respect, the Monastery of the Holy Saviour in Messina, for it was closely associated with Philagathos. This monastery from the moment of its foundation, as its *typikon* attests, was endowed with codices containing, among other things, non-ecclesiastic literature as well.<sup>85</sup> If we bear in mind that this was one of the places that contributed to preserving the name Philippos the Philosopher in the title of Philagathos' *Homilies*, constantly associating the appellation "the Philosopher" to his monastic name, it

<sup>82</sup> Tarán, "The Authorship," 208.

<sup>83</sup> *Hom.* 40.1 (ed. Zaccagni, 142): πυκνοῖς φερόμενοι καὶ κούφοις τοῖς ἄλμασιν; see Zaccagni, *Dieci omelie*, 158 for the commentary *ad loc.*, where she remarks that this expression which resembles the one used by Heliodorus (*Aeth.* 4.17.1.3: ἐσκίπτων ἄρτι μὲν κούφοις ἄλμασιν εἰς ὕψος αἰρόμενοι ἄρτι δὲ τῇ γῇ) was "una formula ricorrente che doveva essere particolarmente cara a Filagato," for it appears in *Hom.* 45 and 38 as well. As Zaccagni also noted, another possible source for Philagathos' formula is Gregory Nazianzen, *Carm. mor.* 625.6: ἄνω δρόμος ἄλμασι πυκνοῖς.

<sup>84</sup> Cupane, "Filagato da Cerami," 5.

<sup>85</sup> An English translation of this foundation document by Timothy Miller is available in *Byzantine Monastic Foundations: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founder's Typica and Testaments*, ed. John Tomas and A. Constantiniades Hero (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 643-47; see also Lavagnini, "Filipo-Filagato," 10; Agostino Pertusi, "Aspetti

becomes obvious that, unlike for some modern scholars, for Philagathos' contemporaries there was no confusion in what regards the identity of person known by the name Philippos the Philosopher. This is an important fact to keep in mind when one reads the rather confused modern scholarly debates, in which the impossibility to identify any well-known philosopher named Philippos the Philosopher led to the invention of an anonymous Neoplatonist bearing the same name, even though this was never attested outside the title of the *Interpretation*, or to ascribing the authorship of the *Interpretation* to Philip of Opus, who was never known as Philippos the Philosopher. As I have tried to show in the previous paragraphs and as I will argue in more detail in the following chapters, there is really no need to invent a Neoplatonist Philippos the Philosopher. A man safely attested with this name, who read and commented Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* in twelfth-century Sicily, was a Christian intellectual prominent in his time, albeit less popular with modern scholars, also known as Philagathos of Cerami.

Before going further to the detailed comparison between the *Interpretation* and Philagathos' *Homilies*, which will provide more proofs in support of the identity of the authors of these two works, it is necessary to say a few things about the intellectual context in which Philagathos lived and wrote. The first thing that should be remembered in this respect is the important place held by the newly established Monastery of the Holy Saviour in Messina (1131) in King Roger's (1130-1154) project to revive the Greek monastic movement in Sicily and Calabria.<sup>86</sup> The founding of the Monastery of the Holy Saviour in Messina was probably part of a systematic

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organizzativi e culturali dell'ambiente monacale greco dell'Italia meridionale," in *L'eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII*, ed. A. Pertusi (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1965), 413.

<sup>86</sup> Bruno Lavagnini, "Aspetti e problemi del monachesimo greco nella Sicilia Normanna," in id., *Atakta. Scritti minori di filologia classica bizantina e neogreca* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1978), 632-37; André Guillou, "Il monachesimo greco in Italia meridionale e in Sicilia nel medioevo," in *Il*

project of Roger II to organize and control Greek monasticism in his kingdom; this is suggested by the fact that he entrusted the monastery with archimandrital authority over a number of twenty four monasteries in Sicily and Calabria. The first settlers of the monastery founded by St. Bartholomew of Simeri were twelve monks from the Monastery of New Hodegetria of Rossano in Calabria, the very place where Philagathos became a monk. The importance of this new monastic foundation is also suggested by the fact that it was in order to endow it with the necessary books and icons that St. Bartholomew of Simeri traveled to Constantinople sometimes between 1110 and 1118 and enlisted the prestigious patronage of none other than emperor Alexios Comnenus himself, who made a significant donation of books, icons etc.<sup>87</sup> It was the same Bartholomew of Simeri, as Scaduto<sup>88</sup> and Lavagnini<sup>89</sup> believe, who suggested to King Roger II to appoint Luke as the head of the newly founded monastery of the Holy Saviour in Messina, to which he then donated half of the books, icons, that the New Hodegetria monastery had gathered. After his death during Roger II's lifetime, Bartholomew was recognized as a saint; the *Life* which promoted his cult is likely to have been written by the very same Philagathos of Cerami.<sup>90</sup> This is so far an intriguing hypothesis, which can be ruled out or accepted only after a close comparison of Philagathos' *Homilies* with the *Life* itself.

As for Philippos-Philagathos of Cerami, his importance for the religious policy of Roger II has been recognized quite early, one scholar even calling him a

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*mezzogiorno dai Bizantini ai Longobardi*, ed. A. Guillou, 367-8 (Torino: UTET, 1983); Agostino Pertusi, "Aspetti organizzativi," 408-410.

<sup>87</sup> Mario Re, "Sul viaggio di Bartolomeo da Simeri a Costantinopoli," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* n.s. 34 (1997), 75, considers that "la donazione di Alessio e Irene non avrà costituito il fondo originario della biblioteca, ma lo avrà arricchito con volumi in quel momento Bartolomeo non era in grado di procurarsi in altro modo."

<sup>88</sup> Scaduto, *Il monachesimo basiliano*, 174.

<sup>89</sup> Lavagnini, "Aspetti e problemi del monachesimo greco," 61.

<sup>90</sup> This is a hypothesis put forth by Gaia Zaccagni, "Il bios di San Bartolomeo da Simeri," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* n.s. 33 (1996): 203.

“predicatore ufficiale alla corte dei re normanni.”<sup>91</sup> As one of the most important representatives of the intense cultural renewal in the Norman Kingdom of Sicily,<sup>92</sup> Philagathos testifies for the profound impact that the Byzantine model had upon the court of Roger II,<sup>93</sup> since he represented perhaps the most specific way in which Byzantine culture and spirituality was expressed in these regions,<sup>94</sup> the so-called Italo-Greek monasticism.<sup>95</sup> The Norman king strongly supported and reorganized the Greek

<sup>91</sup> Carolina Cupane, “Filagato da Cerami,” 4.

<sup>92</sup> Carolina Cupane, “Filagato da Cerami,” 4: “In questa ripresa degli stadi di greco un personaggio chiave è Filagato da Cerami, monaco del monastero della Nuova Odigitria di Rossano e predicatore ufficiale alla corte dei re normanni.”

<sup>93</sup> The role of Byzantine influence upon the Norman kingdom is a disputed topic. See H.L. Menager, “L’Institution monarchique dans les états normands d’Italie,” *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 4 (1959): 311-330; Hélène Wieruszowski, in her article “Roger II of Sicily. Rex Tyannus in Twelfth-Century Political Thought,” *Speculum* 38 (1963), 50, follows H.L. Menager’s opinion that the absolutist aspect of Roger’s government has been greatly exaggerated. For her, the Byzantine model for the new kingdom was limited only to external aspects, such as state symbolism and ceremonies. This author claims that the Byzantine influence did not extend to political institutions. The possibility of Byzantine influence on political ideas at the royal court should not be dismissed so easily. L. Morangiu, in the study “La Concezione di sovranità di Ruggero II,” *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Ruggeriani* (Palermo: Scuola linotipografica Boccone del povero, 1955), 29-48, pointed out that Roger’s choice of the title *rex* instead of *imperator* was determined by his desire of being at the same standing with the Byzantine emperor, because the title *basileus* was usually rendered by the Latin *rex*. This is the very reason that underlines Roger’s ambition to be recognized by the Byzantine emperor as his equal.

<sup>94</sup> The cultural-artistic program of Roger II was also much indebted to the Byzantine model. For this aspect see F. Burgarella, “Aspetti della cultura greca nell’Italia meridionale in età bizantina,” *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata* n.s. 41 (1987): 19-46; Guglielmo Cavallo, “La trasmissione scritta della cultura greca antica in Calabria e in Sicilia tra i secoli X-XV. Consistenza, tipologia, fruizione,” *Scrittura e civiltà* 4 (1980): 157-245; For King Rogers’ artistic patronage I can mention here the studies of Slobodan Curcic, “Some Palatine Aspects of the Capela Palatina in Palermo,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 125-144; Mark. J. Johnson, “The Lost Royal Portraits of Gerace and Cefalu Cathedrals,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999): 237-262, and Hans Belting, “Byzantine Art among Greeks and Latins in Southern Italy,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974): 1-29.

<sup>95</sup> Giovanni Vitolo, “Les monastères italo-grecs de l’Italie méridionale,” in *Moines et monastères dans les sociétés de rite grec et latin*, ed. Jean-Loup Lemaître (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1996), 99: “Le monachisme fut en effet le mode d’expression le plus original des régions hellénisées du Sud de l’Italie.” This is one of the few articles that were available to me in Budapest. The bibliography on the topic is extensive; see, M. Scaduto, *Il monachismo basiliano nella Sicilia medievale. Rinascita e decadenza, sec. XI-XIV* (Rome: Edizioni di “Storia e letteratura”, 1947); Agostino Pertusi, “Monaci e monasteri della Calabria bizantina,” in *Calabria bizantina. Atti del 1° e 2° incontro di studi bizantini*, 17-46 (Reggio Calabria: Paralelo, 1974); E. Morini, “Eremo e cenobio nel monachesimo greco dell’Italia meridionale nei secoli IX e X,” *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* 31 (1977): 1-139, 354-390; L. R. Ménager, “La byzantinisation religieuse de l’Italie méridionale (IX-XII) et la politique monastique des Normands d’Italie,” *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique* 53 (1958): 747-74; D. Hester, *Monasticism and Spirituality of the Italo-Greeks* (Thessalonica: Patriarchikon Idrima, 1992); V. von Falkenhausen, “I monasteri greci dell’Italia meridionale e della Sicilia dopo l’avvento dei Normanni: continuità e mutamenti,” *Il passaggio dal dominio bizantino allo Stato normanno nell’Italia meridionale. Atti del secondo convegno internazionale di studio sulla civiltà rupestre medievale nel Mezzogiorno d’Italia*, ed. Cosimo Damiano Fonseca (Taranto, 1977), 197-229; eadem, *La dominazione bizantina nell’Italia meridionale dal IX all’ XI secolo* (Bari: Ecumenica, 1978); G. Costa-Louillet,

monastic movement in Calabria and Sicily<sup>96</sup> and ascribed to Philagathos a key role in this process. As the manuscript inscriptions of his *Homilies* attest, Philagathos was very much of an itinerant preacher; he roamed widely through Calabria and Sicily and delivered his compositions at the royal court, sometimes in the presence of the King Roger II.<sup>97</sup> Philagathos also preached in the church of the Monastery of the Holy Saviour in Messina,<sup>98</sup> at Rossano,<sup>99</sup> at Reggio,<sup>100</sup> at Palermo,<sup>101</sup> at Taormina,<sup>102</sup> at Cerami, his birthplace,<sup>103</sup> and at other, unknown, locations.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, he traveled to Constantinople for unknown reasons and on his way back he was on the point of being taken prisoner by the Saracens.<sup>105</sup> He even got as far as Jerusalem, probably as a pilgrim.<sup>106</sup>

Bearing in mind how much connected Philippos-Philagathos was with all the monastic centers in Sicily and, moreover, with Calabria, where his monastery was

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“Saints de Sicile et d’Italie méridionale aux VIII<sup>e</sup>, IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles,” *Byzantion* 29-30 (1959-1960): 89-173; Francesco Giunta, *Bizantini e bizantinismo nella Sicilia normanna* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1974).

<sup>96</sup> See especially Bruno Lavagnini, “Aspetti e problemi del monachesimo greco,” 627-40, where he discusses the reorganization of Greek monasticism in Sicilia and Calabria undertaken by King Roger II, esp. 628: “vediamo invece attuarsi una politica di largo favore verso l’elemento monastico greco, del quale anche nella riconquistata Sicilia viene con estrema generosità incoraggiata e promossa la rinascita.”

<sup>97</sup> For instance *Hom.* 27 pronounced in the chapel of the royal palace in Palermo; *Hom.* 50 delivered in the cathedral of Palermo. For the date of this homily see Ernst Kitzinger, “The Date of Philagathos’ Homily for the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul,” in *Byzantino-sicula II. Miscellaneo di scritti in memoria di Giuseppe Rossi-Taibbi* (Palermo: Istituto di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1975), 301-306.

<sup>98</sup> Stefano Caruso, “Note di cronologia filagatea (Omelie IV, VI e IX di Rossi Taibbi),” *Siculorum Gymnasium* n.s. 31 (1978), 206-207.

<sup>99</sup> Rossi -Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, liv; *Hom.* 12 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 78-84); *Hom.* 31 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 206-220).

<sup>100</sup> Rossi -Taibbi, *Tradizione*, 70-71.

<sup>101</sup> See id., *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, lv; *Hom.* 35 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 239-244); *Hom.* 22 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 141-147); *Hom.* 23 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 148-155); *Hom.* 21 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 138-140); *Hom.* 27 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 174-182).

<sup>102</sup> *Hom.* 26 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 168-173).

<sup>103</sup> *Hom.* 18 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 118-123).

<sup>104</sup> Rossi -Taibbi, *Tradizione*, 70-71.

<sup>105</sup> Cupane, “Filagato da Cerami,” 5, n. 14, where she identifies the passages that allude to this trip, otherwise not clearly mentioned in the *Homilies*, and concludes that “non si può in realtà escludere che il silenzio di Filagato riguardo ad un suo viaggio a Costantinopoli sia invece dovuto ad esigenze di opportunità politica, comprensibili in un personaggio così legato alla dinastia normanna qual’egli era.” To my mind there is no reason to suppose that Philagathos’ trip to Constantinople might have endangered his relation with the Norman dynasty.



situated, and where his fame as an exquisite preacher and as philosopher was preserved,<sup>107</sup> I believe, following Lavagnini, that it is not by chance that the manuscript which contains the text of the allegorical interpretation of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* and identifies it as the work of Philippos the Philosopher also comes from Calabria.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> This is implied in *Hom. 27* (PG vol. 132, col. 568); see Bruno Lavagnini, *Profilo di Filagato da Cerami: con traduzione della omelia 27, pronunciata dal pulpito della Cappella Palatina in Palermo* (Palermo: Accademia nazionale di Scienze, lettere e arti, 1992), 83.

<sup>107</sup> Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, liii, "I codici italo-greci fanno seguire al nome dell'autore il titolo di ὁ φιλόσοφος."

<sup>108</sup> Lavagnini, "Filipo-Filagato," 5. Lavagnini's description of the manuscript deserves to be quoted *in toto*: "Il prof. E. Mioni, da me interpellato, così me ne scrive: 'Un riesame del codice m'induce ad assicurarla che il Marc. 410 (Eliodoro, Filippo Cerameo) è di origine italo'greca. Lo confermano: la membrana rozza e male lavorata, le fascette dei titoli spalmate di giallo e talora verde, la grafia abbreviata e minuta che fa pensare a *scriptoria* calabresi del sec. XII-XIII. La mancanza di qualsiasi altra decorazione (si notano soltanto delle piccole iniziali in rosso estremamente semplici) non permettono di meglio identificare la scuola calligrafica.'"

## 2. Comparing the *Interpretation* and the Homilies: The Formal Evidence.

### 2.1. The technical terminology of allegoric interpretation: lifting the veil of the written word

Throughout the centuries, the method of allegorical interpretation was the main tool used to mitigate earlier texts that were suddenly found culturally shocking<sup>109</sup> in a changed historical, religious, or cultural milieu. From this point of view, the allegorical method is not merely an interpretative method, but a tool to define identity. David Dawson perceived this function of the allegorical interpretation

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<sup>109</sup> The discussion concerning “allegorical” exegesis as opposed to “literal” as well as that of a connected issue, namely, whether there is any difference between “typology” and “allegory” has a long history. Jean Daniélou, as early as 1950 in his *Sacramentum futuri: études sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950), 15-16 and 52, advocated a sharp distinction between allegory and typology. In his opinion, the former would be an inheritance from the ‘pagan’ philosophic approach which discarded history by neglecting the historical referent of the texts, while the latter would be “an authentic extension of the literal sense with roots in the Palestinian exegesis.” Thus for Daniélou, among the Fathers, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Ambrose, and Gregory of Nyssa were the representatives of this antihistoricist approach. Daniélou’s distinction is based on the assumption that there is a sharp distinction between Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis. However, Karlfried Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 20-21, considered such a distinction to be a modern construct, and he insisted that “the Antiochene theologians admitted a higher sense of Scripture,” which is identical with *θεωρία* “allegorical interpretation.” He also maintained that the Antiochene exegetic approach had the same purpose as that practiced in Alexandria: to lead the reader towards a spiritual truth. For a similar opinion, see Maurice Wiles, “Theodore of Mopsuestia as Representative of the Antiochene school,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. P.K. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 20-21; while speaking of Theodor of Mopsuestia, this author acknowledged that “the Antiochene theologians admitted a higher sense of Scripture.” In the same line of thought, see John O’Keefe, “Impossible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology,” *Theological Studies* 58 (1997), 42, who noted that an “emerging consensus of scholars suggests that the difference between Alexandria and Antioch cannot be explained by an appeal either to method or to historical awareness,” “because there was no historical-criticism in antiquity, and neither school was interested in history [as such].” In an earlier study, “Christianizing Malachi: Fifth-Century Insights from Cyril of Alexandria,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 50 (1996), 140, when characterizing Cyril of Alexandria’s *Commentary* on Isaiah, O’Keefe argued that the methodology of the Alexandrian exegete was “essentially identical to that of his Antiochene counterparts.” Henri de Lubac, “‘Typologie’ et ‘allégorisme,’” *Recherches de science religieuse* 34 (1947): 204, 206-207, also dismissed the distinction between Alexandrian “allegory” and Antiochene *theoria*. For a similar rejection, see Jacques Guillet, “Les Exégèses d’Alexandrie et d’Antioche: Conflit ou malentendu?” *Recherches de science religieuse* 34 (1947): 257-302. As this distinction was increasingly blurred in the scholarship, a new terminology has been suggested in order to avoid distinguishing between the literal-typological and allegorical exegesis. De Lubac in his “‘Typologie’ et ‘allégorisme,’” 204 and 208, suggested that modern scholars should implement a new vocabulary in order to eschew the shortcomings of the traditional distinction between typology and allegory. This was the aim of Elizabeth A. Clark in *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 74-75, where she tried to bring a “small contribution to the development of such a vocabulary and to a revised understanding of one aspect of patristic exegesis.” She proposed a new term, “figurative interpretation,” which should stand for both types of exegesis, thus she would say “The Fathers employ ‘spiritual,’ that is, figurative, readings of Scriptures for a variety of reasons” (ibid., 78).

very well when he emphasized the fact that the distinction between literal and non literal readings “stemmed from efforts made by readers to secure for themselves and their communities social and cultural identity, authority and power.”<sup>110</sup> The aim of the present chapter is to compare the practice of allegorical interpretation in the *Homilies* composed by Philagathos of Cerami and in the *Interpretation* of Heliodorus’ erotic novel *Aethiopica*, traditionally ascribed to a certain “Philippus the Philosopher,” yet which, as I have already argued in the previous chapters, can be also attributed on various grounds to Philagathos. In comparing the two texts, I will first take into account the various types of allegorical exegesis employed in the *Interpretation*, which will be then compared with relevant examples of such interpretation taken from the *Homilies*. This ultimately means that, in what follows, I will describe the relation between ἱστορία (lit. “story,” i.e., the literal level of the text) and θεωρία (lit. “contemplation,” i.e., the allegorical or figurative meaning of the text) as it emerges from the two texts. In doing so, I will primarily focus on the very conspicuous similarities of the two works in what regards the content of allegorical interpretation and the concrete means of expressing it.

The purpose of comparing the usage of allegory in the two texts is to show that Philagathos’ style of figurative exegesis is identical in the *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation*. Thus, I will emphasize that it is not merely a coincidence that exactly the same means of allegorizing are employed to the same extent in the two works. The numerous resemblances, which often go as far as literal identity can only be explained by the fact that it was the same author who composed both texts discussed here.

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<sup>110</sup> David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 2.

Before going any further, however, it is, perhaps, not out of place to consider a very important question, closely related to Philagathos' choice of allegory as an exegetical method and to the objects to which he applied it. Why would Heliodorus' novel, the *Aethiopica*, be found culturally shocking in his time, why was there such a need to integrate this text into the Christian cultural heritage, and why did Philagathos choose this particular novel?<sup>111</sup>

The main issue at stake was whether the novel could be attributed any educational value at all. In the history of allegorical interpretation, the educational value of a given text was an aspect addressed almost naturally by all those who employed this type of exegesis. All the 'pagan' allegorists agreed on one essential point with Socrates' critique of Homer's poems, namely, in thinking that, if read literally, these were unfit for the education of the youth, who were considered unable to see beyond the surface meaning of the story.<sup>112</sup> As Robert Lamberton put it, the late antique Neoplatonist Proclus goes no further on this point than saying that, Socrates was right, "but he might have added that nearly a thousand years of Greek educational thought and practice were on trial as well."<sup>113</sup>

However, Philagathos, the philosopher turned Christian monk, seems to have gone beyond this attitude and eschewed the basic problem of whether Heliodorus' story befitted the education of the youth. The danger was not the text in itself, but the manner of reading it. As there is no text without interpretation, Philagathos wanted to provide the appropriate understanding of Heliodorus' novel, so that even the young could benefit from it. Although the Byzantine literature of his time was imbued with a

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<sup>111</sup> Basil of Caesarea advised Christians to make use of the Greek classics for their own ends; see Ernest Fortin, "Christianity and Hellenism in Basil the Great's Address *Ad adolescentes*," in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honor of A. H. Armstrong*, ed. M.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus (London: Variorum, 1981), 30-57; see also Lamberton, *Homer*, 139.

<sup>112</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 153.

taste for allegorical interpretation, there was no real systematical allegorical exegesis of a Hellenistic erotic novel before Philagathos, although one can notice a certain exertion of some Byzantine scholars to absorb dubious texts such as this into the Christian cultural heritage.<sup>114</sup> His choice appears even more exceptional if we think that, as early as Late Antiquity, erotic novels as a genre had been explicitly condemned as immoral and improper for educational purposes.<sup>115</sup>

Philagathos' use of allegorical interpretation for a non-scriptural text can be explained by the fact that this method was enshrined in a long and at that time unchallenged tradition of allegorical interpretation, which "had so transformed the meaning of certain Homeric episodes that they had become available as images charged with inherent spiritual meaning."<sup>116</sup> What went for Homer, was certainly worth trying for Heliodorus as well. So, in order to express the fact that an erotic novel was, after all, apt to convey a moral teaching, the author of the *Interpretation* compared Heliodorus' book with Circe's brew (Κίρκαιῳ κυκεῶνι ὁμοίωται), which turns base men into pigs, but makes initiates out of those who read it in a philosophical manner, leading them towards higher realities (μυσταγωγοῦσα τὰ ὑψηλότερα). In his homily on the prodigal son, Philagathos made use of the same

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 197, 91-107; Proclus, *In Platonis Rem publicam comentarii*, ed. G. Kroll (Berlin: Weidmann, 1899-1901; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965), vol. 1, 100-106.

<sup>114</sup> H. Gärtner, "Charikleia in Byzanz," *Antike und Abendland* 15 (1969): 47-69. Among Byzantine readers Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* appealed to Psellus and Photius who tried to put forward an apology for Heliodorus because he was criticized by people who thought his novel was dangerous for the youth. The defense that Psellus and Photius attempted is rather inconclusive. Their insight is concerned with grammatical and rhetorical features of the novel and they were evidently interested in recording what a Byzantine ὀρθῶς can find useful in these texts.

<sup>115</sup> See, for instance, Emperor Julian's harsh words in his *Letter to a Priest* 301B: "we must avoid all fictions in the form of narrative such as were circulate among men in the past, for instance tales whose theme is love, and generally speaking everything of that sort" (trans. W. C. Wright in *The Works of Emperor Julian*, vol. 2 (London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1969, 327). Although coming from a known enemy of Christianity, this condemnation of erotic novels was based on moral reasons which Christian patristic authors would have probably found thoroughly unobjectionable: "For words breed a certain disposition in the soul, and little by little it arouses desires, and then on a sudden kindles a terrible blaze, against which one ought, in my opinion, to arm oneself well in advance" (ibid.).

image of Circe's brew when explaining how men can be turned into pigs by indulging themselves in pleasure. Although not stated explicitly, like in the *Interpretation*, the implications of such a description are clear in subtext: Circe's potion can also be put to good use by those with superior understanding. When drunk properly and with measure, even intoxicating drinks (i.e. erotic contents) may serve better purposes (i.e. attaining a philosophical lifestyle).

Ἡ βίβλος αὕτη, ὦ φίλοι, **Κιρκαίῳ**  
**κυκεῶνι** ὁμοίωται, τοὺς μὲν  
βεβήλως μεταλαμβάνοντας  
μεταμορφοῦσα πρὸς χοίρων  
ἀσέλγειαν, τοὺς δὲ κατ' Ὀδυσσέα  
φιλοσοφοῦντας μυσταγωγοῦσα τὰ  
ὑψηλότερα.

ἡ γὰρ ἡδονή, καθάπερ **Κιρκαίῳ**  
κρατῆρι, τῷ ἑαυτῆς **κυκεῶνι** τῶν  
ἄφρόνων τὸν νοῦν πρὸς τὴν χοιρώδη  
ζωὴν μεταμείβουσα, λάτρως ἑαυτῆς  
τίθησι.

This book, my friends, is very much like Circe's brew: those who take it in a profane manner, it transforms into licentious pigs, but those who approach it in a philosophical way, in the manner of Odysseus, it initiates into higher things.<sup>117</sup>

Indeed, pleasure, as if with Circe's bowl, changes with her potion the mind of the fools to follow the lifestyle of pigs, and makes them her slaves.<sup>118</sup>

Besides this justification, couched in the language of classical literature, another important justification for Philagathos' attempt to provide an allegorical exegesis of an erotic novel was offered, as we shall see,<sup>119</sup> by the tradition of the mystical interpretation of Song of Songs "the popular source for 'gender-binding' as well for spiritual Christian exegesis in general."<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 153.

<sup>117</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 367, 35-37; trans. Lamberton, 307.

<sup>118</sup> Zaccagni, *Dieci omelie, De filio prodigo*, 38.7, 5-6; see Zaccagni's commentary: "I porci erano considerati dagli Ebrei animali impuri e vengono perciò utilizzati come metafora del τῆς ἀκολασίας πάθος. Ma ecco che Filagato si abbandona ad una similitudine che si rifà all'omerico incantesimo della maga Circe: secondo l'uso risalente agli albori del Cristianesimo, i miti antichi erano riutilizzati in veste di metafore cristiane" (ibid., 100). The text of this passage in the *PG* is slightly different: see Scorsus, *De filio prodigo, Hom.* 17, col. 384B: ἡ γὰρ ἡδονή, καθάπερ Κιρκαίῳ κρατῆρι **τὸν ἑαυτοῦ κυκεῶνα κεράσασα**, καὶ τὸν τῶν ἄφρόνων νοῦν πρὸς τὴν χοιρώδη ζωὴν μεταμείβουσα, λάτρως ἑαυτῆς τίθησι.

<sup>119</sup> See p. 71-73 below.

<sup>120</sup> Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 140.

The exegetical method that Philagathos systematically employed in his *Homilies* is based on the regular interplay between ἱστορία (“the literal meaning of the text”) and θεωρία (“the allegorical, figurative meaning”). He stated several times that in doing so he was not innovating, but simply following the teachings of the Church Fathers.<sup>121</sup> Most of all, he relied on Gregory of Nyssa, from whom he was largely borrowing his interpretations.<sup>122</sup> One telling proof of this dependence is the fact that the image of Circe’s potion, which, as I have showed above, played such an important part in Philagathos’ exegesis was most probably borrowed from Gregory of Nyssa, who used it in his *Contra Eunomium*.<sup>123</sup>

Philagathos practiced an exegesis that consistently started by identifying the ‘literal-historic’ part (ἱστορία) of the text, i.e., the one that would correspond to the unfolding of events in the narrative, and then proceed to disclose the hidden meaning which would enable the purified spirits, the initiates,<sup>124</sup> to grasp the spiritual dimension (θεωρία) of the story.<sup>125</sup> In his own words, the ‘literal-historic’ part is “merely the outer body of our discourse (to speak as St. Maximus does),” which

<sup>121</sup> *Hom.* 6.3 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 38): Φαμὲν τοίνυν πατρικαῖς ἀκολουθοῦντες φωναῖς “we say thus following the sayings of the Fathers”; *Hom.* 8.13 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 58): Φαμὲν οὖν ἐπακολουθοῦντες τῇ δόξῃ τῶν ταῦτα προεξετασάντων πατέρων “we say then so following the opinion of the Fathers who have investigated this before us.”

<sup>122</sup> Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, xlv: “tra questi padri della Chiesa [Basilio di Caesarea, Cirillo di Alessandria, Epifanio di Cipro, Eusebio di Caesarea, Giovanni Climaco, Giovanni Crisostomo, Gregorio di Nazianzo, Gregorio di Nissa, Massimo il Confessore, Simeone Metafrasta] i più di frequente menzionati sono Gregorio di Nazianzo e Massimo il Confessore, mentre Gregorio di Nissa è esplicitamente nominato poche volte, ma con particolare rilievo”; see also Zaccagni, *Dieci omelie*, 23. For Gregory’s exegetical method, see Jean Daniélou, “La θεωρία chez Grégoire de Nysse,” *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972): 130-145.

<sup>123</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 3.2,77: ἄλλος τις οὗτος Ὀμηρικός κυκεών, οὐ τὰ σώματα τῶν φαρμακευομένων ἀλλάσσω εἰς ἀλόγων μορφάς, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τῶν ψυχῶν ἐνεργῶν τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄλογον αὐτῶν μεταμόρφωσιν.

<sup>124</sup> *Hom.* 36.3 (ed. Zaccagni, 4): Τούτων τὴν μὲν ὑψηλοτέραν ἀναγωγὴν εἶδεῖεν ἂν οἱ καθαροὶ τὴν ψυχὴν “Those people who have a pure soul should be able to understand the higher import of these things.”

enables us to “breathe the spirit into it [viz., into the story] by considering its innermost significances!”<sup>126</sup>

Nothing could indicate better that Philagathos is the author of both the *Homilies* and the *Interpretation* of Heliodorus’ novel than the complete identity of both the exegetical method and the imagery used to express its principles between the two works. This becomes most conspicuously obvious when we find in both texts the interplay between *ἱστορία* and *θεωρία* explained by means of the same metaphorical image of the “mixing the wine of contemplation into the water of the tale,” as illustrated below.

παιδαγωγικὴ γὰρ ἡ βίβλος καὶ ἠθικῆς  
φιλοσοφίας διδάσκαλος, τῷ τῆς  
ἱστορίας ὕδατι τὸν οἶνον τῆς  
θεωρίας κεράσασα.

Καὶ προτίθουσιν ἡμῖν ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ  
σοφία διδασκαλίας κρατῆρα, τῷ  
οἴνῳ τῆς θεωρίας τὸ τῆς  
παραβολῆς ὕδωρ κεράσασα.

The book is educational and teaches ethics by mixing the wine of contemplation into the water of the tale.<sup>127</sup>

And the wisdom of God sets before us the bowl of learning, mixing the wine of contemplation into the water of the parable.<sup>128</sup>

In addition to playing an essential part in the metaphoric imagery which embodies the exegetical principles used by Philagathos and appearing as the counterpart of the spiritual sense (*θεωρία*), the word *ἱστορία* is also used on its own, in another striking image, which introduces very vividly a moral lesson. In this respect also, the *Homilies* and the *Interpretation* provide almost identical examples.

<sup>125</sup> Often qualified as βαθυτέρα θεωρία “the deeper spiritual meaning” or ὑψηλὴ θεωρία “the higher spiritual meaning.” Cf. also Rossi-Taibbi, *Hom.* 17.14 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 116): Γνῶθι τὸ δόγμα τὸ κεκρυμμένον τῷ ῥήματι “Learn the teaching hidden in this word!”

<sup>126</sup> *Hom.* 1.3, (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 4): Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν οἶον σῶμα ἔστω τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἐορτῆς, κατὰ τὸν ἱερὸν φάναι Μάξιμον· φέρε οὖν καὶ ταῖς ἑνδοθεν θεωρίαις τοῦτον ψυχάσωμεν; trans. Gaspar, 102.

<sup>127</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 367, 37-39; trans. Lambertson, 307.



βοᾶ γὰρ ἡ ἱστορία μόνον ουχὶ  
φωνήν ἀφειῖσα τοῖς γράμμασιν

for the story itself cries out! The very  
letters all but speak!<sup>129</sup>

Βοᾶ διὰ τούτων ἡ ἱστορία, ὡς ὅταν ἡ  
πρακτικὴ ἀρετὴ ἀφειῖσα τῇ θεωρίᾳ  
ἐφέπεσθαι

through these things the story itself cries  
out in the same way as when the practical  
virtue makes way for contemplation.<sup>130</sup>

The fact that both metaphors discussed above do not appear, as far as it can be ascertained, in any other patristic texts, and, consequently, may be regarded as an original contribution of Philagathos to the technical vocabulary of allegorical exegesis deserves special mention here. These unique images are present in both texts investigated in this chapter and, moreover, their verbal expression is identical. This, in my opinion, constitutes solid proof in favor of claiming Philagathean paternity for both the *Homilies* (not challenged since Rossi Taibbi established it beyond any reasonable doubt) and the *Interpretation*. Assuming that two different authors could have come up with two identical metaphors to express an identical exegetical principle seems rather far-fetched.

There is also a third metaphoric image worth mentioning in this context. This compares the movement from the literal towards the symbolical meaning of a text to unveiling the maiden's resplendent robe and thus revealing the holy chiton beneath (in the *Interpretation*). In the *Homilies* the same meaning is conveyed through the image of lifting off the curtain of the written words (τὸ γραφικὸν καταπέτασμα) in order to reach the figurative meaning beneath.

<sup>128</sup> *Hom.* 2.2 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 10). Rossi-Taibbi, *Filagato da Cerami. Omelie*, li, n. 41, already noted the identity between the expression from the *Interpretation* with the one from the *Homilies*.

<sup>129</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368, 64; trans. Lamberton, 308.

<sup>130</sup> *Hom.* 27, *PG* vol. 132, col. 568C. For a similar image see *Hom.* 40.6 (ed. Zaccagni, 148): βοᾶ τοῖνυν διὰ τούτων ἡ ἱστορία, πᾶν τὸ ἔξω τῆς χρείας ὑπὸ πλεονεξίας περιερχόμενον “Therefore by these [words] the story cries out [saying] that everything which goes beyond what is necessary leads to greed.”

οὕτω μὲν εἶσω τῶν τῆς ἱστορίας  
 πυλῶν ἡμᾶς ὁ λόγος εἰσήγαγεν  
 ἡθοποιῶν καὶ τὴν λαμπρὰν  
 ἀμπεχόνην τῆς κόρης **διάρας** ... τὸν  
 ἔνδοθεν ἱερὸν **χιτῶνα** ὑπέδειξε.

ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸ γραφικὸν **διάραντες**  
 κατεπέτασμα, τῇ θεωρίᾳ τὸν νοῦν  
 προσερείσομεν.

Thus our discussion had led us within the  
 gates of the story as we have articulated its  
 capacity for moral instruction, and lifted  
 off the maiden's resplendent robe ...  
 revealing the holy chiton beneath.<sup>131</sup>

We, on the other hand, attempting to lift off  
 the written curtain will direct [our] mind  
 towards contemplation.<sup>132</sup>

Finally, the opposition between the literal (ἱστορία) and allegorical (θεωρία)  
 meaning may also be expressed through the distinction between living at the entrance  
 of the temple as opposed to living within the precinct of the temples of divine  
 teachings (τὰ τῶν θείων δογμάτων ἀνάκτορα); this corresponds to the difference  
 between remaining among earthly thoughts and elevating one's spirit towards  
 contemplating the things on high. In the *Homilies* as well as in the *Interpretation* this  
 idea is expressed once more through identical terminology.

εἶτα εἰς τὰ τῶν θείων δογμάτων  
**ἀνάκτορα** εἰσῳκίσθημεν

when we went out to live in the temples of  
 divine truth.<sup>133</sup>

περὶ γὰρ **τὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ προπύλαια**  
 πολλοὶ τῶν φιλολόγων ἀυλισθέντες  
 τὴν Χαρικλείας βίβλον  
 ἀναγινώσκουσιν

Around the outer gates of the temple there  
 is a great encampment of lovers of

ἀλλ' ὥς **προπυλαίοις** τοῖς  
 λελεγμένοις χρήσασθαι πρὸς τὴν  
 τῶν νοημάτων εἰσέλευσιν. Εἰ δέ τοι  
 τοιούτοις **τὰ προπύλαια**  
 καλλωπίζεται, τίνα ἄν ἔιεν **τὰ ἔνδον**  
**ἀνάκτορα;**

but we should use what had been said as  
 some outer gates to gain entrance to  
 towards the higher concepts. And since the  
 propylaea are embellished in this way, just  
 imagine what awaits [us] in the interior of  
 the temple!<sup>135</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368, 76-79; trans. Lamberton, 309. Lamberton admitted that his translation of ὁ λόγος ... ἡθοποιῶν is not supported by any meaning given in the *LSJ* for ἡθοποιέω.

<sup>132</sup> *Hom.* 5.6 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 34). For similar vocabulary, although in a different context, *ibid.*, 35: Πολλοὶ **διαρῶνται** τὸ εὐαγγελικὸν ἐπεχείρησαν δίκτυον, οἷος ἦν ὁ δυσσεβέστατος Ἄρειος, ὁ **διαρῶντας τὸν χιτῶνα** τοῦ Μονογενοῦς "Many attempted to tear apart the fishing net of the gospels; such was the most impious Arius, who tore apart the chiton of the Only-begotten."

literature reading Chariclea's book.<sup>134</sup>

## 2.2 Common imagery and vocabulary

The investigation of the imagery and vocabulary usage in the *Interpretation* and in the *Homilies* constitutes another important sphere of inquiry since it can provide significant proof for ascribing the authorship of the *Interpretation* to Philagathos. Thus, the focus of concern here will be to reveal similarities between the imagery and vocabulary employed in Philagathos' *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation*.

The longing of Charikleia for Theagenes represents, for the author of the *Interpretation*, the mystical elevation of the soul 'drunk with a sober drunkenness' who scorns the earthly things and tends only toward her beloved. The metaphoric image 'drunk with a sober drunkenness' also occurs in the *Homilies*, where it depicts the soul smitten by the sweet arrow of love. It is not difficult to see that Philagathos' use of this image was inspired by his reading of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentaries on the Beatitudes*, where the soul also becomes filled with a sober drunkenness.

ὕφ' οὗ πλησθεῖσα καὶ μέθην  
μεθυσθεῖσα τὴν σώφρονα καὶ  
γεγονυῖα ὡς εἰπεῖν ἐρωτόληπτος  
καταφρονεῖ μὲν συνήθων, ἀλογεῖ δὲ  
τοῦ σώματος, πρὸς μόνον δὲ τὸ  
φιλούμενον συννεύει τὸ φρόνημα.<sup>136</sup>

ὁ Νυσσαεὺς καὶ μέγας Γρηγόριος, ἐν  
ὁμιλίας ὀκτὼ τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ κάλλος  
ἐξηγησάμενος· καὶ ἐξέσθαι τῷ  
βουλομένῳ τὰ τῆς πανσόφου ἐκείνης  
βίβλου ἀρύσασθαι νάματα, καὶ  
μέθην μεθυσθεῖσα τὴν σώφρονα<sup>138</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 366, 19-20; trans. Lamberton, 307.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 366, 10-11; trans. Lamberton, 306.

<sup>135</sup> *Hom.* 45.7 (ed. Zaccagni, 241); see also Zaccagni's comments on this passage: "l'uso di termini tecnici propri del lessico architettonico, quali στοαί, κρηπίδες, ἀψίδες, λίθιναι, βαθυμίδες, πύλαι, accostati agli avverbi di luogo che ne determinano la collocazione spaziale (κάτωθεν, ἀμοιβαδόν, ἔξωθεν, ἄχρῳ), creano un piccolo saggio di letteratura ecfrastica, quasi che Filagato stia descrivendo un tempio a lui ben noto" (ibid., 57).

<sup>136</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 104-107.

<sup>137</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 310.

<sup>138</sup> *Hom.* 20.9 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 134).

Filled with this love and drunk with a sober drunkenness--carried away, so to speak, by love--she scorns her former habits, utterly unmindful of her body, and her thought tends only toward her beloved.<sup>137</sup>

And even the great Gregory of Nyssa explained in eight homilies the beauty of this, and he enabled anyone who desires it to draw running water from that most wise book, and to be drunk with a sober drunkenness.

In another passage, where Philagathos provided an explanation of the episode of the two sisters Martha and Maria narrated in Lk. 10:38, he stated that Maria, while hearing the word of Christ, became ‘entirely drunk with a drunkenness without drinking wine.’ From my standpoint it is important that the image of the ‘sober drunkenness’ is present both in the *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation*, and above all, that it is expressed through identical words. This, in my opinion, constitutes yet another solid argument that the author of the *Interpretation* is Philagathos.

After she had received in the heart the sweet arrow of his love (viz., of Christ), she became entirely drunk with a drunkenness without [drinking] wine.

τὸ γλυκὺ βέλος τῆς ἐκείνου ἀγάπης  
δεδαγμένα ἐγκάρδιον ... ὅλη γίνεται  
... μέθην μεθυσθεῖσα τὴν  
νηφάλιον.<sup>139</sup>

Yet, behind its use here, there is a long history of interpretation of the notion of the soul’s ‘sober drunkenness.’<sup>140</sup> The notion is attested first with Philo of Alexandria<sup>141</sup> and was frequently used in the Christian exegetical tradition for describing the Pentecostal inebriation,<sup>142</sup> or, in general, the mystic state of those inebriated by divine wisdom.<sup>143</sup> When searching for Philagathos’ source of inspiration

<sup>139</sup> *Hom.* 51.14-15 (ed. Caruso, 145)

<sup>140</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 224, relying on Hans Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1929), 52, connects the notion of the soul’s ‘sober drunkenness’ with Plato’s notion of ‘divine madness.’ The mystical state in Plotinus is expressed seldom through a “drunkenness with nectar,” for “it is better for it [viz. the Intellect] to be drunk with a drunkenness like this than to be more respectably sober” (Plotinus, *Enn.* vi. 7.35).

<sup>141</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 224.

<sup>142</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 17.19: the apostles at Pentecost were “drunk with a drunkenness without wine,” μεθύουσι μέθην νηφάλιον; the image of ‘sober drunkenness’ as ‘inebriation without wine’ is also an image found in Philo, *De opif. mundi* 71 (ed. Cohn, 24), μέθη νηφάλιω. For more examples, see also, Lampe, *PGL*, 838, s.v. μέθη.

<sup>143</sup> *PGL*, 838, s.v. μέθη.

it may be relevant to stress that the only place, as far as can be ascertained, which bears an almost complete resemblance with the vocabulary used in the *Interpretation* and in the *Homilies* is a homily ascribed to Macarios the Aegyptian.<sup>144</sup> This is, of course, another argument that links the *Interpretation* through the image of the ‘sober drunkenness’ with the *Homilies* and in the same time alludes to the Christian interpretative tradition of ‘mystical inebriation.’ This should be kept in mind when I will discuss the tendency of the allegorical exegesis of the *Interpretation* and the christianizing perspective of the same work.<sup>145</sup>

Charikleia, drunk with a ‘sober drunkenness’ rushes to recover the pristine nobility of her birth.<sup>146</sup> This imagery in the *Interpretation* calls to mind the imagery of longing for the paradise lost, abundantly attested in Philagathos’ *Homilies*, which is a commonplace in Christian thought. Also, in the *Homilies*, it is the image of the prodigal son representing the symbol of man *in statu viatoris* heading towards the blissful homeland in order to recover the pristine nobility of birth parallels the image of Charikleia’s journey in the *Interpretation* towards her true descent for recovering the same pristine nobility of birth.<sup>147</sup> At this point it is worth stressing that in the

<sup>144</sup> Ps.-Macarius, *Hom.* 63.4.6 (*PG* vol. 34, col. 817D); for a similar image see Eus. *Commentarius in Ps.* 35. 9, *PG* vol. 23, col. 321B: μέθη δὲ σώφρων καὶ νηφάλιος.

<sup>145</sup> See p. 71-80 below;

<sup>146</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 107-108, καταλαβεῖν ἐπείγεται τὴν πρώτην εὐγένειαν.

<sup>147</sup> See *Hom.* 7.16 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 51), where the prodigal son “is giving up his original nobility” (χαρίζεται τὴν πρώτην εὐγένειαν). The same image of *homo viator* journeying towards the blissful homeland is also present in the commentary on the parable about the prodigal son in *Hom.* 40.4 (ed. Zaccagni, 146); in *Hom.* 39.8 (ed. Zaccagni, 115), Philagathos presents the journey of the purified mind towards the gleeful homeland, an image that resembles that of the soul’s longing for the true homeland in the *Interpretation*: “The mind after having served with vigilance by observing the the six commandments becomes free of passions and is proceeds full of joy towards its blessed homeland and towards its spiritual descent” (τὸν νοῦν καλῶς δεδουλευκότα τῇ τηρήσει τῆς ἑξάδος τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐλεύθερον γίνεσθαι τῶν παθῶν καὶ χαίροντα βαδίζειν πρὸς τὴν μακαρίαν πατρίδα καὶ τὴν νοουμένην συγγένειαν). Similar ideas are expressed in *Hom.* 2.10 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 13) and in *Hom.* 38.1 (ed. Zaccagni, 68). Naturally, my interpretation of these passages does not exclude the possibility that τὴν πρώτην εὐγένειαν (viz. ‘original nobility’) in the *Interpretation* may refer to the Neoplatonic concept of the soul’s relation with the higher hypostases. Read in Neoplatonic terms (see Lamberton, *Homer*, 155), this means that Charikleia, by learning her own true

*Interpretation* the image of the soul's journey towards the true homeland, mentioned three times,<sup>148</sup> is explicitly connected with the quotation from 1Cor 3:13. Although it will be referred to in another context,<sup>149</sup> this text is worth quoting here as well because it proves, to my mind, that the imagery of soul's aspiration for returning to the true homeland and inheritance is to be counted among the other elements from the *Interpretation*, which are alluding to Christian imagery and terminology.<sup>150</sup>

But the soul escorted will march toward  
her own country and be put to trial by fire—  
for 'the fire shall try every man's work of  
what sort it is [...].<sup>151</sup>

ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ δορυφορούμενη πρὸς τὴν  
ἰδίαν πατρίδα πορεύσεται καὶ  
δοκιμασθήσεται μὲν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ·  
ἐκάστου γὰρ τὸ ἔργον ὅποιόν ἐστι τὸ  
πῦρ δοκιμάσει.<sup>152</sup>

inheritance, discovers her affinity with the Neoplatonic higher hypostases. Yet not even such an explanation can damage significantly the claim for Philagathos' paternity of the *Interpretation*, since in the *Homilies* we find similar passages of Neoplatonic flavour. See, for instance, *Hom.* 31, *PG* vol. 132, col. 458B.

<sup>148</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 103-104; *ibid.*, 369, 107-108; *ibid.*, 370, 129-130;

<sup>149</sup> See p. 73-74 below.

<sup>150</sup> Tarán, "The Authorship," 223, argued that "[Charikleia] drawn by what she desires, she presses hard to grasp her pristine nobility of birth, and she (i.e. Charikleia=the soul), who before had been proud and spurned love, throws herself willingly at Theagenes. Everything in this passage contains allusions and makes use of imagery, terminology, and doctrines which we can trace back to Platonism and Neopythagorism." It is necessary to point out that Charikleia is not just a symbol for the soul, for the text explains that Charikleia's name is a synthesis as it represents the soul united with the mind and body in one single substance (μία ὑπόστασις) or person (Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368, 29-32). The problematic word ὑπόστασις present in the *Interpretation* was not discussed by Tarán while Lamberton, *Homer*, 156, stated that the term ὑπόστασις along with the conception of the relationship of soul, mind, and body expressed in the *Interpretation* is dependent primarily upon the Neoplatonic tradition and especially on Plotinus. Lamberton goes on to explain that the longing of Charikleia for the true homeland in the *Interpretation* "has close affinities with passages in *Enneads* 5.1, where Plotinus laments the soul's forgetfulness of its true family and describes its relationship to the higher hypostases." In my opinion, the word ὑπόστασις in the *Interpretation* is not dependent upon the Neoplatonic tradition since there the term describes the reality as being based on three hypostases: the One, the mind, and the soul while in the *Interpretation* hypostasis is the union of mind, soul, and body. I will not attempt to give a summary of the complexity of the concept of hypostasis in Plotinus and in later Neoplatonists; for a brief summary see Laurence J. Rosánbut in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), s.v. "Proclus." For the division of the higher hypostases in later Neoplatonism, see R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 131. I would like, however, to mention the fact that the ascension of the mind, soul and body together towards Divinity is typically Christian, founded on the belief that Christ is the perfect union between Divinity and the human nature (viz. the union between mind, soul, and body). Philagathos (*Hom.* 25.8-9, ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 165) provides an accurate description of the aforementioned teaching by considering "the manner in which the most perfect divinity of the Word was united, in a way that is beyond words, with the body through the mediation of the rational and sensible soul" in the person of Christ.

<sup>151</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 311, translates "spear in hand, the soul will advance toward her own country and be put to trial by fire[...]." This translation is certainly mistaken, since the medio-passive form δορυφορούμενη cannot mean anything but "surrounded, shielded, protected."

<sup>152</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 370, 129-131.

The parallelism in vocabulary between the *Homilies* and the *Interpretation* is quite clearly evidenced in passages like the one already mentioned<sup>153</sup> about Martha and Maria, where Maria's enthusiasm toward the evangelic grace is described, beside the image of 'sober drunkenness,' with the term "willingly" (αὐτόμολος 'of someone's own accord'), which is the same very word used in the *Interpretation* for depicting Charikleia's throwing herself at Theagenes. The term αὐτόμολος occurs countless times in the *Homilies*; it depicts, for example, the young man's willing embracing a pigsty life-style or Jesus' desire to heal the sick. The emphasis laid on the word αὐτόμολος at least in the *Homilies* testifies to the importance that the concept of personal responsibility for the individual salvation holds in Christianity. It may well be that even the *Interpretation* alludes to this since the longing of Charikleia for Theagenes, who symbolically represents the Divinity, is described as due to her own will.

“ἔται πρὸς Θεαγένην αὐτόμολος.”<sup>154</sup>

she throes herself willingly at  
Theagenes.<sup>155</sup>

That young man, who had so unfortunately  
turned of his own accord toward a swinish  
lifestyle

Ἦται τοίνυν ἐπὶ τὴν ἱασιν  
αὐτόμολος ὁ Σωτήρ<sup>156</sup>

And so the Savior willingly applies himself  
to the healing..

πρὸς δὲ τὴν εὐαγγελικὴν χάριν  
αὐτομολήσασα<sup>157</sup>

[Mary] going of her own accord toward the  
evangelic grace.

ὁ νέος ἐκεῖνος, ὁ κακῶς μὲν  
αὐτομολήσας πρὸς τὴν χοιρώδη

<sup>153</sup> See p. 51 above.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 369, 109.

<sup>155</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 310.

<sup>156</sup> *Hom.* 13.6 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 87).

<sup>157</sup> *Hom.* 32.6 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 223).

ζωήν<sup>158</sup>willingly drawn away towards the Jerichon  
of sinκαὶ πρὸς τῆς ἀμαρτίας Ἰεριχὼ  
**αὐτόμολως** ὑποσυρεῖς<sup>159</sup>and [we were saved from the sin because]  
he came towards us although we went  
willingly towards the snakeκαὶ [διὰ]γενομένου καθ' ἡμᾶς πρὸς  
τὸν ὄφιν **αὐτομολήσαντας**<sup>160</sup>

Another conspicuous similarity between the *Homilies* and the *Interpretation* is the distinction the author made between a practical and a contemplative life and between practical and theoretical virtue, respectively. In the *Homilies* Martha and Maria stand as symbols for the practical life (βίος πρακτικός) and respectively for a life dedicated to contemplation (βίος θεωρητικός), while in the *Interpretation* the same distinction is applied to Charikles, who represents βίος πρακτικός, and respectively Charikleia, the symbol for βίος θεωρητικός. Both passages follow the same line of argumentation for they present as praiseworthy and blessed both types of lives and virtues while at the same time implying that contemplative life and virtue are the highest.<sup>161</sup> The emphasis placed in the *Interpretation* on practical vs. contemplative virtue appears even more natural if we remember that the ideal of the monastic life was to find the balance between βίος πρακτικός and βίος θεωρητικός and the *Interpretation* is highly likely to have been written by a monk.<sup>162</sup>

Ἐκ τούτων οὖν δηλον ὡς Μάρθα μὲν  
τῆς πρακτικῆς ἀρετῆς ἐστὶ σύμβολον,καὶ ἡ πρακτικὴ γὰρ ἀρετὴ οἰκεῖα ἐστὶ  
τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ χάριν καὶ κλέος αὐτῇ<sup>158</sup> *Hom.* 40.1 (ed. Gaia Zaccagni, 142).<sup>159</sup> *Hom.* 12.17 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 83).<sup>160</sup> *Hom.* 3.6 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 19).<sup>161</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 222, emphasized the fact this distinction between practical and theoretical virtue that “originated with Aristotle but which later became a commonplace. This, however, he [viz. the author of the *Interpretation*] combines with the more orthodox Platonic doctrine of the four cardinal virtues.” At this point I may say that the combination between virtues and practical life is a common trait of Philagathos’ work as can be seen, for instance, in the *Hom.* 39.8 (ed. Zaccagni, 115).<sup>162</sup> André Guillou, “Il monachesimo greco,” 361.



Μαρία δὲ τῆς θεωρίας. Ἀμφω μὲν οὖν προξενεῖ.<sup>164</sup>  
ἐπαινεταὶ καὶ μακάριαι καὶ ἀλλήλων  
ἐξέχονται, καὶ δεξιαὶ καὶ φίλαι, πρὸς  
τὴν μακαρίαν τελειότητα φέρουσαι.<sup>163</sup>

Thus, from these facts it is evident that Martha is the symbol of practical virtue, while Mary of contemplation. Indeed both of them are praiseworthy and blessed and complement each other and are convenient and dear and are guiding [the soul] towards the bliss of perfection.

Practical virtue is likewise fitting for the soul itself and procures grace and fame for it.<sup>165</sup>

In the same way as the six commandments are seen as teaching practical philosophy in the *Homilies*, in the *Interpretation* Calasiris through his good counsel in practical things helps the soul to elevate itself through the practice of the four cardinal virtues towards the contemplation of the Divine. Practical life in a similar manner (i.e., “practical philosophy,” in the author’s own terminology), explains Philagathos in the *Homilies*,<sup>166</sup> is acquired through the practice of the six commandments, which by subduing the senses enables the soul to aspire to the Divine.

[Calasiris] will be a good counselor in practical things, leading the soul in a state of calm through the salt sea and the waves of life.<sup>167</sup>

[Καλάσιρις] ἔσται γὰρ σύμβουλος ἐν τοῖς πρακτέοις καλός, διὰ τῆς ἄλμης καὶ τῶν βιωτικῶν κυμάτων διαβιβάζων ἀκύμονα τὴν ψυχὴν.<sup>168</sup>

It is also worth mentioning in this context the moralizing perspective common to the *Interpretation* and to the *Homilies*; no evil deed, both texts tell us, will be forgotten or left unpunished. In my opinion, special attention should be paid to this idea for, once again, it is expressed through identical vocabulary both in the *Homilies*

<sup>163</sup> *Hom.* 32.8 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 224); in *Hom.* 39.8 (ed. Zaccagni, 115) practical life is even named ‘philosophical life.’

<sup>164</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 98-99.

<sup>165</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 310.

<sup>166</sup> *Hom.* 39.8 (ed. Zaccagni, 115).

<sup>167</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 310.

and in the *Interpretation*. The total identity between the two expressions (evidenced in the quotation below), which do not appear elsewhere in other patristic texts, would be another surprising and quite unlikely coincidence between the two writings if someone should still venture to argue that the *Interpretation* and the *Homilies* are the work of two different writers.<sup>169</sup>

ὀνομάζει δὲ καὶ τὰς σχούσας βίον  
ἐπίμωμον<sup>170</sup>

and nominates those who live blameworthy  
lives

δείκνυσι δὲ καὶ τοὺς σχόντας<sup>171</sup> βίον  
ἐπίμωμον<sup>172</sup>

presenting those who live blameworthy  
lives<sup>173</sup>

In addition to the striking textual and lexical similarity between the two works discussed above, a word should be said about the manner in which the Song of Songs is mentioned in the *Interpretation* and in Philagathos' *Homilies*, for this was not noted so far in the scholarship of the problem. The Song of Songs is named in the *Interpretation* as the “mystical song” (τῷ μυστικῷ ᾠσματι),<sup>174</sup> which is far from being a common way of referring to this Bible book and alludes to a certain familiarity with the Scriptures that only a Christian could have. In this respect, it should be stressed that there is no attestation for the combination between μυστικὸν and ᾠσμα in any text that belongs to the ‘pagan’ philosophical tradition. This clearly suggests that the *Interpretation* could not have been written by someone belonging to the ‘pagan’ philosophical tradition. The combination between μυστικὸν and ᾠσμα

<sup>168</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 113-114.

<sup>169</sup> It should be mentioned that the identity between the two formulations in the *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation* (discussed here) was already noted by Carolina Cupane, “Filagato da Cerami,” 18.

<sup>170</sup> *Hom.* 22. 4 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 142).

<sup>171</sup> The manuscript reads σχόντας, which Colonna maintained, while Hercher emended to ἔχοντας, but in the light of the perfect similarity with the expression from the *Homilies*, I believe no doubt remains that the correct textual variant is the one in the manuscript.

<sup>172</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368, 62-63.

<sup>173</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 308.

<sup>174</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 367, 23.

as as a name for the Song of Songs is extremely rare; apart from the *Interpretation* it only appears in Philagathos' *Homilies* and in only one other instance, quite significantly, within the Christian exegetic tradition.<sup>175</sup> As for the *Homilies*, the Song of Songs is referred to simply as "the Song,"<sup>176</sup> the "Song of Solomon,"<sup>177</sup> the "sublime song,"<sup>178</sup> and, finally, as "the mystical song."<sup>179</sup> Now, the fact that this rare combination of terms as a name for one of the biblical books appears both in the *Interpretation* and in Philagathos' *Homilies* is undoubtedly another very solid proof for Philagathos' authorship of the *Interpretation*.

Finally, both in the *Interpretation* and in the *Homilies*, the imagery of ascension, i.e., the description of the *itinerarium mentis in Deum*, is expressed through an identical terminology often imbued with a conspicuous philosophical tendency.<sup>180</sup>

<sup>175</sup> See Ps.-Chrysostom, *Ascetam facetiis uti non debere*, PG vol. 48, col. 1058D: ὁ τὸν μυστικὸν ἄσμα γεγραφώς. For a very similar, although not identical expression, see Olympiodorus, *Comm. In Job* (ed. U. Hagedorn and D. Hagedorn in Olympiodor Diakon von Alexandria, *Kommentar zu Hiob* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984, 357): τὸ ἄσμα τῶν ἀσμάτων σωματικὰ μὲν διαλέγεται πάντα, μυστικὴ δὲ ἐστὶ βίβλος καὶ ὅλη πρὸς ἀλληγορίαν βλέπει "for the Song of Songs although it speaks about everything in corporeal terms, is, however, a mystical book and entirely oriented towards allegory."

<sup>176</sup> *Hom.* 14.8 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 95); *Hom.* 17.7 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 113); *Hom.* 23.14 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 153); *Hom.* 32.3 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 222).

<sup>177</sup> *Hom.* 6.19 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 44); *Hom.* 19.8 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 127).

<sup>178</sup> *Hom.* 23.14 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 153): τὸ ὑψηλὸν ἄσμα.

<sup>179</sup> *Hom.* 7.10 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 49); *Hom.* 39.9 (ed. Zaccagni, 116): καὶ μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτο φιλοσοφεῖν τὸ ἄσμα τὸ μυστικὸν ἐν τῷ λέγειν 'ἐξήκοντά εἰσιν βασιλίσσαι.'

<sup>180</sup> See the commentary of *Hom.* 39 in Zaccagni, *Dieci omelie*, 138: "la terminologia filagatea è legata ad espressioni matematico-filosofiche, di sapore platonico: ad esempio, la τριχῇ διάστασις μῆκος καὶ βάθος καὶ πλάτος ἐκ τριγώνων ricorda una definizione platonica del Timeo (Tim 53.c. 4-8)." For example, notions like τὰ ὑψηλότερα defining the higher truths or the elevation of the soul towards the higher realities present in the *Interpretation* (Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 367, 37) occurs with the same meaning in the *Homilies*; see for this *Hom.* 2.8 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 12), *Hom.* 4.22 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 31), *Hom.* 29.9 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 134), *Hom.* 36.3 (ed. Zaccagni, 4): τὴν ὑψηλότεραν ἀναγωγὴν; for μυσταγωγέω (Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 367, 37) with the meaning 'to initiate,' 'to guide,' see *Hom.* 3.2 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 18). Special mention should be given to the word θεῖος which appears in the *Interpretation* (Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 366, 19-20) in the following context: εἴτα εἰς τὰ τῶν θείων δογμάτων ἀνάκτορα εἰσφύκησθαι μὲν ("but now when we went to live in the temples of divine teachings"). Now, the word θεῖος in the context mentioned above was connected by Tarán, "The Authorship," 214, with the philosophical notion of τὰ θεῖα that would represent the highest objects of philosophical interpretation. In

The resemblance between the *Interpretation* and the *Homilies* in what regards the common terminology and imagery, the conspicuous similarity of the way the Song of Song is referred to in both works with the same rare expression, the total identity between some other formulations are far from being due to a mere coincidence between two works supposedly written at a distance of eight centuries. By far the most economical as well as logical explanation for what would otherwise be a suspiciously long series of unlikely coincidences is to accept that like the *Homilies*, the *Interpretation* was also the work of Philagathos of Cerami, once known as Philippos the Philosopher.

### 2.3. Common metrical features: the *clausulae*.

A very significant and incontestable piece of evidence for ascribing the authorship of the *Interpretation* to Philagathos is the identical use of *clausulae* in his *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation*. This was made available to researchers through the accurate analysis of Lidia Perria of the use of *clausulae* in Philagathos' *Homilies*; although it has, unfortunately, remained almost unnoticed,<sup>181</sup> her contribution to the scholarly debate regarding the authorship of the *Interpretation* is invaluable.<sup>182</sup> Based

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establishing this connection between the usage of the word θεῖος from the *Interpretation* and τὰ θεῖα, Tarán, "The Authorship," 214-215, wanted to suggest that because of the fact that "τὰ θεῖα was so used by the Neoplatonists and by several earlier philosophers," the word occurs in the *Interpretation* with the same meaning and thus indirectly proves in Tarán's view the 'pagan' philosophical tendency of the work and thus will entail the conclusion that "the *Interpretation* could hardly have been written much later than the sixth century A.D." This interpretation is not supported by the text of the *Interpretation* itself, where the word θεῖος is used in adjectival form qualifying the word δόγμα (τῶν θείων δογμάτων) and does not have the substantival meaning implied in Tarán's argumentation. Moreover, when he commented the passage in question here in order to support this theory Tarán simply 'forgot' to transcribe correctly the text of the *Interpretation* by leaving aside the word that would modify his construction (viz. δόγμα). Thus, his version of the *Interpretation* became εἶτα εἰς τὰ τῶν θείων ἀνάκτορα εἰσῳκίσθημεν (Tarán, "The Authorship," 214). For a similar word combination between θεῖος and ἀνάκτορα see the *Hom.* 27.1 (ed. Rossi- Taibbi, 174).

<sup>181</sup> Tarán, for instance, seems to ignore Perria's results.

<sup>182</sup> Lidia Perria, "La clausola ritmica nella prosa di Filagato da Cerami," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32.3, *XVI Internationaler Byzantinischerkongress, Akten* II/3 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982): 365-73.

on Rossi-Taibbi's critical edition—therefore, on a sound textual basis—and following a methodology already used for the study of the rhythmical prose of other Greek writers,<sup>183</sup> Perria established the overall patterns of the *clausulae* used of in the philagathean prose. Since her results are extremely important for establishing the true authorship of the *Interpretation*, it does not seem out of place here to offer a brief summary of the main points established in her study.

Perria observed that the use of *clausulae* in Philagathos' *Homilies* is not merely “un artificio puramente esteriore e limitato ad alcune sedi prestabilite” but “si potrebbe parlare di una musicalità intrinseca alla lingua filagatea, che si presta con estrema duttilità alle esigenze della retorica.”<sup>184</sup>

As the two tables below show, there is no significant difference in the use of the *clausulae* between the two works discussed here. A conspicuous similarity between the *Interpretation* and the *Homilies* is the similar percentage of the use of *clausulae* with an even interval of atonic syllables (most often an interval of two syllables; the interval of four syllables is also well represented) between the last two accentuated syllables before a significant break in the phrase. In addition to this, common to the both works is the almost complete avoidance of *clausulae* with the intervals six and seven, as shown in the comparative tables below.<sup>185</sup>

Statistic comparative data concerning the use of all the *clausulae* in the *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation*

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Hom.</i>	1.6	4.2	64.5	3	24.9	0.7	0.9	0.08
<i>Inter.</i>	4.4	4.4	61.3	5.2	23.1	1.6	-	-

<sup>183</sup> R. Maisano, “La clausola ritmica nella prosa di Niceforo Basilace,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 25 (1976): 87-104; G. Chr. Hansen, “Prosarhythmus bei den Kirchenhistorikern Sozomenos und Sokrates,” *Byzantinoslavica* 26 (1965): 82-93.

<sup>184</sup> Perria, “La clausola ritmica,” 365.

<sup>185</sup> Both tables reproduce the data gathered by Perria, “La clausola ritmica,” 366, 368-369.

Statistic comparative data concerning the use of the final *clausulae* in the *Homilies* and *Interpretation* :

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Hom.</i>	0.3	1.8	69.5	1.2	26.5	0.3	0.3	-
<i>Inter.</i>	2.3	2.3	69.7	2.3	23.2	-	-	-

The almost perfect identical use of *clausulae* strongly suggests that it is quite likely that the *Interpretation* and the *Homilies* were composed by one and the same person—Philippos the Philosopher *aka* Philagathos of Cerami. Combined with other significant formal evidence analyzed so far as well as with the important similarities of contents and method that will be investigated in the following chapter, such evidence makes Perria’s remark that the fragmentary allegorical *Interpretation* of Heliodorus’s novel is “attribuito ormai unanimemente a Filagato,”<sup>186</sup> appear almost self-evident.

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<sup>186</sup> Perria, *ibid.*, 368.

### 3. Moving beyond the Form: The Uses of Allegory in the Interpretation and in the Homilies

#### 3.1. The allegorical interpretation of names: playing with words, but seriously.

In addition to the use of metaphoric images such as the ones analyzed in the previous chapter, another very characteristic feature of Philagathos' allegorical exegesis is the constant, one may even say obsessive recourse to the allegorical explanation of proper names. This is employed on a large scale both in the *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation*. Philagathos derived meaningful etymologies from almost all the names that he happened to come across.

Thus, in the *Interpretation*, Chariclea is decrypted as the union between 'fame' κλέος and 'grace' χάρις; her name thus stands as a symbol for the unity of the mind, i.e., soul and body. When discussing this particular interpretation, Leonardo Tarán pointed out that "the intermediacy of the soul between νοῦς and the body (implied in the triad νοῦς-ψυχή-σῶμα), and the concepts of "matter" and "form" goes ultimately to Aristotle."<sup>187</sup> However, this statement does not tell us anything about the cultural identity of the author of the *Interpretation* where such intermediacy is proposed. On the other hand, we meet in Philagathos' *Homilies* the same sophisticated exegesis of names, which, very much in the same way as in the *Interpretation*, teems with cross-references and unacknowledged quotations.

In the homily for the feast of St. Panteleemon, Eubule and Eustorgios, the names of the saint's parents provide Philagathos with an opportunity for a masterly display of his favorite technique. Eubule 'the great counsel' (ἡ μεγάλη βουλή), and Eustorgios who showed such love toward us (τοιαύτη στοργή) are also regarded as "our parents," as they immediately remind Philagathos of "the great counsel" held by

God for our creation.<sup>188</sup> Next, Philagathos played on the name of Eustorgios, which he explained as signifying great love (τοιαύτη στοργή), an obvious allusion to John 3:16: “He gave his only-begotten son” as ransom for us. In this way, through this sophisticated allegory of names and through some brilliant biblical cross-referencing, Philagathos is able to connect God, who “is our mother and father,” with St. Panteleemon’s parents.

**Χαρίκλεια** σύμβολόν ἐστι ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ ταύτην κοσμοῦντος νοός· **κλέος** γὰρ καὶ **χάρις** νοῦς ἐστὶ συνημμένος ψυχῇ. οὐ διὰ τοῦτο δέ μόνον τὸ ὄνομα σύνθετον, ἀλλ’ ὅτι συντίθεται καὶ ψυχὴ σώματι, μία μετ’ αὐτοῦ γινομένη ὑπόστασις.

Ἐκαστος ἡμῶν υἱὸς **Εὐστοργίου** καὶ **Εὐβούλης** ἐστὶ ... Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὸ Θεῖον κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν οὐτ’ ἄρρεν οὔτε θήλυ ἐστὶ, καὶ μήτηρ ἡμῶν λέγεται καὶ πατήρ, **Εὐβούλη** μὲν διὰ τὴν **μεγάλην βουλήν** τῆς παραγωγῆς, καθ’ ἣ ἦν ἔλεγε· “*Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν, Ἐυστόργιος* δέ, ὅτι τοιαύτην **στοργήν** εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐνεδείξατο, ὥστε τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν **μονογενῆ** δοῦναι λύτρον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.

Chariclea is a symbol of the soul and of the mind that sets the soul in order, for ‘fame’ [κλέος] and ‘grace’ [χάρις] are (respectively) mind, and soul united with it. Moreover, this is not the only reason that her name is a synthesis. It is also because the soul is united [συντίθεται] with the body and becomes a single substance with it.<sup>189</sup>

We are all sons of Eustorgios and Eubule ... since the Divinity, in accordance to its nature, is neither male nor female, and is called our mother and father. It is called Eubule because of the great counsel (μεγάλην βουλήν) [held] for our creation when He said: “Let us create men in our own image and likeness.” It is also called Eustorgios because he showed such a love (στοργήν) towards us, that “He gave his only-begotten son” as ransom for us.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Leonardo Tarán, “The Authorship,” 221.

<sup>188</sup> Gen. 1:26: “Let us create men in our own image and likeness.”

<sup>189</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 385, 79-82; trans. Lamberton, 309.

<sup>190</sup> *Hom.* 30.18 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 204).



The same principle is applied elsewhere: the name of Theagenes, Charikleia's lover, brings to mind the divine descent (γένος θεῖον) of the soul, while Pantoleon is the one who acts in all respects like a lion (πάντα τοῦ λέοντος).

**Θεαγένην ... πρὸς θεάν τοῦ γένους**  
ἀναγών τὴν ψυχὴν

Theagenes...leads the soul upward to its divine family.<sup>191</sup>

**Παντολέων ἐστί, πάντα τοῦ λέοντος**  
τὰ φυσικὰ πάθη φέρων ἐκ  
προαιρέσεως

Pantoleon [Παντολέων] means all that is characteristic for a lion [πάντα τοῦ λέοντος] because he endures willingly all the physical suffering.<sup>192</sup>

In the *Interpretation*, Kalasiris is the one who draws the soul to the good (τὰ καλὰ σύρων), while in the *Homilies*, the names of the famous doctors Hippocrates and Galen are explained as “the one who masters the body like a horse” (ὥς ἵππον κρατεῖν τὸ σῶμα) and “the one whose teaching induces a calm life in the body” (γαληνὸν βίον ἔχειν), respectively.

νυμφοστολεῖ δὲ ταύτην ὁ γέρον  
**Καλάσιρις** ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ  
κοσμούμενος. εἴη δ' ἂν οὗτος ὁ πρὸς  
τὰ **καλὰ σύρων** ... τὴν ψυχὴν  
ἀνάγων διδάσκαλος

Old Calasiris escorts the bride, orderly in word and deed. This would be the teacher who draws [σύρων] the soul to the good [τὰ καλὰ].<sup>193</sup>

ἡ ἠθικὴ παιδεύσει φιλοσοφία  
**Ἱπποκράτους** καὶ **Γαληνοῦ** τὰ  
παιδεύματα, τουτέστιν ὥς **ἵππον**  
**κρατεῖν** τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὰς ὁρμὰς  
τούτου δουλαγωγεῖν, καὶ **γαληνὸν**  
βίον ἔχειν καὶ ἡσυχον.

Moral philosophy will instruct us in the teachings of Hippocrates [Ἱπποκράτους] and Galen [Γαληνοῦ], that is how to rule our body as we would a horse [ἵππον κρατεῖν] and to enslave its instincts, and have a calm [γαληνὸν] and peaceful life.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>191</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 103; trans. Lamberton, 310.

<sup>192</sup> *Hom.* 30.18 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 204).

<sup>193</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 110-112; trans. Lamberton, 310.

<sup>194</sup> *Hom.* 30.19 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 204).

Not only good things may come out of such fanciful etymologies; the negative heroes bear, both in the *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation*, names behind which Philagathos will inevitably discern some sinister omen. Thus, in the *Homilies*, Phalkon is the one who draws us toward sin (ὁ ὑφέλκων), Lysson is the lover of raving desire (ἡ λυσσώδης ἐπιθυμία), Herod “the swine” (χοιρώδης),<sup>195</sup> Origen “the raving one” (τῆς ὀργῆς Ὠριγένους).<sup>196</sup> Similarly, in the *Interpretation*, Trachinos, who plots against the chaste heroine of Heliodorus’ novel cannot be anything less than “the harsh [τραχεῖα] rebellion of the emotions,” while Cybele, another opponent of Charikleia, is aptly interpreted as “the one who conceives the weapons for the assaults” [κύουσιν τὰ βέλη τῶν προσβολῶν] of “carnal pleasure” [ἡ ἡδονὴ ἡ σαρκική], a phrase which sounds very much like the name of yet another negative character of the novel, Arsace.<sup>197</sup>

Κὰν Τραχῖνος ἐπιβουλεύη, ἡ  
τραχεῖα τῶν παθημάτων στάσις, ἡ  
εὐβουλία τοῦ Καλασίριδος  
ἀντιπράξεται.

If Trachinus, the harsh [τραχεῖα]  
rebellion of the emotions, plots against  
her [ἐπιβουλεύη], the good counsel  
[εὐβουλία] of Calasiris will stand  
against him.<sup>198</sup>

Εἶεν δ’ ἂν Φάλκων μὲν ὁ ὑφέλκων ἡμᾶς  
εἰς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν πονηρὸς λογισμὸς,  
Λύσσων δὲ ἡ λυσσώδης ἐπιθυμία τῶν  
ἀτόπων ὀρέξεων.

Let us say that Phalkon [Φάλκων] is the wicked  
thought which draws [ὑφέλκων] us towards sin  
and Lysson [Λύσσων] the raging desire [ἡ  
λυσσώδης] for inappropriate lust.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>195</sup> *Hom.* 27, *PG*, vol.132, col. 573A: “But then Herodes [Ἡρώδης] the swine [χοιρώδης]...”

<sup>196</sup> *Hom.* 22, *PG*, vol.132, col. 468C: “The [theory] of restoration to the former state imagined by Origen [Ὠριγένους] named after his raving madness [τῆς ὀργῆς] is silenced.”

<sup>197</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 387, 19-21; trans. Lamberton, 311: “Carnal pleasure [ἡ δὲ ἡδονὴ ἡ σαρκική] in the form of Arsace [Ἀρσάκη] plots against her, with Cybele [Κυβέλην] for her pimp, representing the senses, who conceives the weapons [κύουσιν τὰ βέλη] for the assaults [προσβολῶν].”

<sup>198</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 115-116; trans. Lamberton, 311.

<sup>199</sup> *Hom.* 29.22 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 197).

Such fanciful etymologies are not simple flights of creative fantasy. I believe that my close reading of both the *Homilies* by Philagathos of Cerami and of the allegorical *Interpretation* of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* has shown that these etymological wordplays, as little serious as they may seem to us today, play an essential part in the exegetical strategy of our author. In both works, such etymologies allow the author to subsume even the most insignificant detail of the raw textual material on which he is exercising his linguistic skills to the higher, moral values that, in his opinion, these texts convey. Together with the metaphorical images analyzed in the previous chapter, such etymologies are the concrete expressions of a single, coherent, and creative exegetical mind—that of Philagathos of Cerami. In view of the arguments presented so far, I believe it is safe to say that the *Interpretation* was not the work of an unknown late antique Neoplatonist working in Constantinople or of a Christian addressing a pagan audience and, by a strike of luck, coming across the same expressions and wordplays, not to speak of the fanciful etymologies, as those found by Philagathos of Cerami several centuries later, in Southern Italy. Like the *Homilies*, with which it shares so many common features, the *Interpretation* was the work of Philagathos himself, or, to be more precise, the work of the man who before becoming a monk used to be called Philippos the Philosopher.

### **3.2. The allegorical interpretation of numbers: combining numbers and virtues.**

A highly original feature of Philagathos' exegesis, as it will be shown, is also the constant reliance on the allegorical interpretation of numbers. As in the case of the allegorical interpretation of proper and sometimes even of common names,<sup>200</sup> the

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<sup>200</sup> *Hom.* 36.3, (ed. Zaccagni, 5), where it is explained why the name of the sycamore (ῥή συκομορέα) is a unity. The principle of this explanation is similar to that present in the passage which explains why

allegorical explanation of numbers is, perhaps, the other most conspicuous feature of Philagathos' homiletic style. Although it may go back to pre-Platonic Pythagoreanism, the idea that the syllabic or subsyllabic elements of names and their corresponding numerical value discloses the true nature of things formed the basis for later Platonic, Stoic, and even Christian speculation on etymology.<sup>201</sup>

In what follows I will show that the exegesis of numbers extant in the *Interpretation* perfectly resembles the numerical symbolism encountered in Philagathos' *Homilies*; this, to my mind, testifies without doubt for Philagathos' paternity of the *Interpretation*.

The perfection or the imperfection to the highest degree is often expressed through number, "the wisest of beings,"<sup>202</sup> with seven as perhaps the most common number to symbolize perfection. The similar usage of the symbolism of number seven both in the *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation* has already been pointed out<sup>203</sup> as a proof for Philagathos' authorship of the *Interpretation* and for his identity, i.e., a Greek-speaking Italian who also knew some Latin.<sup>204</sup> Both the wording of the exegesis concerning this number and the notion that ἑπτὰ must have been originally σεπτὰ, connected to the Latin word *septem* are identical in both works.

<p>ὁ ἑβδομος ἀριθμὸς μυστικός ἐστι καὶ παρθένος καὶ σεπτὸς ἐν τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς καθὼς ἡ τῶν Ἰταλῶν ἐρμηνεύει</p>	<p>Ὁρᾶτε ὅσα ἡ δοκοῦσα μικρὰ ἐορτὴ περιέχει μυστήρια, καὶ ὅπως ὁ μὴν οὐκ ἄθεεῖ παρὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις</p>
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the name of Chariclea is a unity in the *Interpretation* (Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 29-32). Also see *Hom.* 37.1, (ed. Zaccagni, 31) where the name Pharisee (Gr. φαρισαῖος) is analyzed.

<sup>201</sup> See Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, 45.

<sup>202</sup> Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum commentaria*, 16.5, ed. G. Pasquali (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908), 27: ἐρωτηθεὶς γοῦν Πυθαγόρας, τί σοφώτατον τῶν ὄντων ἀριθμὸς ἔφε. On the symbolism of numbers and in particular of number seven see H. Meyer and R. Suntrup, "Zum Lexikon der Zahlenbedeutung im Mittelalter. Einführung in die Methode und Probeartikel: Die Zahl 7," *Fruhmittelalterliche Studien* 11 (1977): 1-73; F. Dölger, "Antike Zahlenmystik in einer byzantinischen Klosterregel," *Hellenika* 4 (1953): 183-89.

<sup>203</sup> Carolina Cupane, "Filagato da Cerami," 19.

<sup>204</sup> The relation between the usage of the symbolism of number seven and whether the author of the *Interpretation* knew or not Latin are discussed in the Introduction; see above, p. 11-12.

φωνή<sup>205</sup>

ὠνομάσθη Σεπτέμβριος; Οὐ μόνον  
ὅτι ἑβδομος ἐστι (σέπτε<μ> γὰρ παρὰ  
τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ὁ ἑβδομος ἀριθμός),  
ἀλλ' ὅτι καὶ σεπτὸς ἐστι καὶ  
σεβάσμιος.<sup>206</sup>

The seventh is a mystical number, virgin  
and holy among numbers, as the language  
of the Italians explains [by giving it the  
name *septem*]

Do you see what great mysteries are  
contained in this seemingly small holiday  
and how this month was not uninspiredly  
called September by the Romans? Not only  
because it is the seventh in a row (for  
*septem* is the Latin name of the number  
seven), but also because it is holy  
(σεπτὸς) and venerable (σεβάσμιος)!<sup>207</sup>

The idea that ἑπτὰ was originally σεπτὰ and the fact that the Latin word  
*septem* is a clue for the sigma which had vanished from the Greek word for “seven” is  
attested first in a passage from Philo of Alexandria.<sup>208</sup> It is worth mentioning that  
Philo’s work was not known or studied outside Jewish, and, later, Christian  
communities when searching for Philagathos’ source of inspiration.<sup>209</sup> Indeed, it can  
be assumed that, rather than drawing directly on a ‘pagan’ philosophical source,  
Philagathos inherited in fact a Christian interpretation of number seven,<sup>210</sup> which was,  
nevertheless, common both to the ‘pagan’ and to the Christian exegetic tradition.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>205</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368, 84-85.

<sup>206</sup> *Hom.* 1.9 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 6).

<sup>207</sup> Trans. Gaspar, 104.

<sup>208</sup> Philo, *De opificio mundi* 127: διό μοι δοκοῦσιν οἱ τὰ ὀνόματα τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς  
ἐπιφημίσαντες ἅτε σοφοὶ καλέσαι τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἑπτὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ περὶ αὐτὸν σεβασμοῦ καὶ  
τῆς προσούσης σεμνότητος: Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ καὶ προστιθέντες τό ελλειφθέν ὑφ’ Ἑλλήνων  
στοιχείον τό Σ τρανοῦσιν ἔτι μᾶλλον τὴν ἔμφασιν, ἐτυμώτερον σέπτεμ προσαγορεύοντες  
ἀπὸ τοῦ σεμνοῦ, καθάπερ ἐλέχθη, καὶ σεβασμοῦ. (ed. Leopold Cohn, *Philonis Alexandrini  
opera quae supersunt*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Reimer, 1896; repr. 1962).

<sup>209</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 75.

<sup>210</sup> A conspicuous example is Procopius of Caesarea, who also mentioned the connection between ἑπτὰ  
and σεπτὸς which he linked with the Latin word *septem*: see Procopius, *Bella* 3.1.6 (ed. G. Wirth,  
*Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1963): Σέπτον καλοῦσι τὸ ἐκείνη  
φρούριον οἱ ἐπιχώριοι, λόφων τινῶν ἑπτὰ φαινομένων ἐνταύθα: τὸ γὰρ σέπτον ἑπτὰ τῇ  
Λατίνων φωνῇ δύναται.

<sup>211</sup> Nichomachus, [*Iamblichus*] *theologoumena arithmeticae*, ed. V. de Falco (Leipzig: Teubner, 1922),  
57: ὅτι τὴν ἑπτάδα οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι οὐχ ὁμοίαν τοῖς ἄλλοις φασὶν ἀριθμοῖς, ἀλλὰ

However, for the present inquiry even more important than the simple literal resemblances is to observe the peculiarity of Philagathos' method of constructing an allegorical interpretation around the number seven in a strikingly similar way in the *Interpretation* and in the *Homilies*. His homily "For the Beginning of the Indiction and for Saint Symeon the Stylite"<sup>212</sup> is to such an extent constructed on the allegorical interpretation of number seven that, in order to strengthen the presence of that number in the symbolism of the date he was discussing (the 1<sup>st</sup> of September), the author felt compelled to move to that date the celebration of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, who were never celebrated on that date by the Church.

And think also of how on this day, which is the beginning and the crowning of the year, we celebrate the common feast of many saints who help us to live virtuously throughout the year! For on this day we celebrate the memory of the ... seven bloodless martyrs of Ephesus<sup>213</sup>

Ἀθροει δέ ὅπως καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν ταύτην, ἣτις ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ καὶ στέφανος τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, πολλῶν ἀγίων συνέστη πανήγυρις, συναρρηγόντων ἡμῖν εἰς τὴν κατ'ἀρετὴν τοῦ χρόνου περραίωσιν. Ἐν ταύτῃ γὰρ μνήμην ἄγομεν τῆς ... ἀναγνώσεως ... τῶν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἀναιμοσι μαρτύρων ἑπτὰ<sup>214</sup>

σεβασμοῦ φασιν ἀξίαν: ἀμέλει <σεπτάδα> προσηγόρευον αὐτήν, καθά καὶ Πρῶτος ὁ Πυθαγορικός ἐν τῷ Περί τῆς ἑβδομάδος φησί: διὸ καὶ ἐξεπίτηδες τὸν ἐξ διὰ τῆς ἐκφωνήσεως τοῦ κάππα καὶ σίγμα (ταῦτα γὰρ ἐν τῷ ξι συνεξακούεσθαι) ἐκφέρουσιν, ἵν' ἐν τῇ συνεχείᾳ καθ' εἰρμόν ἐπιφορὰ τὸ σίγμα συνάπτηται τῷ ἑπτά. Cf also Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem commentarii* 158 Olympiodorus. *Commentary on the first Alcibiades of Plato*, ed. L.G. Westerink (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1956; repr. 1982): Ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἑπταέτερις γένωνται: κατὰ γὰρ ἑπτὰ ἔτη ἐνήλλαττον τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν: διότι τιμία ἐστὶν ἡ ἑβδομάς ὡς κρίσιμος, καὶ ὅτι τὰ ἑπτάμηνα ζώσιμα, καὶ ὅτι ἑπτὰ' λέγεται ὡς σεπτὰ. Leonardo Tarán, in "The Authorship," 206, argued in a rather misleading way that the passage discussed above constitutes "evidence of Neopythagorean influence on our author"; in stating this, he simply disregarded the possibility of the existence of a similar Christian exegesis of the passage or of a tradition that could be linked with Philo of Alexandria rather than any 'pagan' author. Moreover, Tarán seems to have intentionally avoided to present the history of the exegesis of the number seven in a chronological order, for this would have meant ascribing the primacy to Philo, a move that would have been quite damaging for his argument, for he wanted to stress the Pythagorean/Neoplatonic connection as the only possible interpretation according to his line of argument. Given the impressive amount of classical knowledge (direct or second-hand) that Philagathos possessed, it is more appropriate to say that he could have borrowed his interpretation of number seven either from the Christian tradition, which I find more likely, or from that of 'pagan' philosophy.

<sup>212</sup> This is the only homily of Philagathos which has been translated into English to date; see C. Gaspar, "Praising the Stylite," 93-109.

<sup>213</sup> Trans. Gaspar, 104.

<sup>214</sup> *Hom.* 1.9 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 6).

As it has been noted long ago by Hippolyte Delahaye,<sup>215</sup> Philagathos is the only author who sets the celebration of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus on the first of September, while they are usually commemorated on 4 August and 22 October. As an explanation for this, Cristian Gaşpar pointed out that “it was rather the convenient (exegetically speaking) number of saints that led to their inclusion in the list in order to buttress [Philagathos’] interpretation which relied so heavily upon the symbolism of number seven.”<sup>216</sup> For the same exegetical purposes Philagathos chose, among the several versions of the *Life of St. Symeon the Stylite* precisely the one which gave the height of Symeon’s column as thirty-six feet, a number around which a very convenient allegorical interpretation could be built.<sup>217</sup> In the same manner, in the *Interpretation*, Philagathos wanted so much to emphasize the number seven that he counted separately the three component parts of 777, the total numerical value of the Greek letters which make up the name of Chariclea in Greek, as seven, seventy and seven hundred.

[Chariclea is a symbol of the soul and of the mind that sets the soul in order] ... You can understand this more clearly if you count the elements of the name and establish their number as 7, 70, or 700. [...] It is fitting that the meaning of 7 is maintained on the levels of monads, decads, and hecatontads. The venerable and the perfect are indicated by 700, the soul itself by 70, causing that which is tripartite to be brought into order by the four perfect virtues, since four decads plus three decads equals 70. Seven itself represents the body, to which mind is attached, which holds in the middle of the soul the pentad of the senses and being the substance and the image from which it came to be.<sup>218</sup>

[Χαρίκλεια σύμβολόν ἐστι ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ ταύτην κοσμοῦντος νοός] ... ἐκδηλοτέρως δε τοῦτο γνοιῆς τὰς τοῦ ὀνόματος μονάδας ἀριθμήσας εἰς ἑπτὰ ποσομένας καὶ ἑβδομήκοντα καὶ ἑπτακόσια. [...] εἰκότως ἡ κλησὶς ἐν ταῖς μονάσι καὶ ταῖς δεκάσι καὶ ταῖς ἑκατοντάσι τῆς ἑβδόμης σημασίαν τετήρηκε διὰ μὲν τῶν ἑπτὰ ἑκατοντάδων σημαίνουσα τὸ σεβάσμιον καὶ τέλειον, διὰ δὲ τῶν ἑπτὰ δεκάδων αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν, ταῖς τελείαις τέσσαρσιν ἀρεταῖς κοσμοῦσα τὸ τριμερές· τέσσαρες γὰρ

<sup>215</sup> Hippolyte Delehay, “Quelques dates du martyrologe hiéronimien,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 49 (1931): 48, n. 2 as quoted by Gaşpar, “Praising the Stylite,” 105, n. 89.

<sup>216</sup> Gaşpar, “Praising the Stylite,” 105, n. 89.

<sup>217</sup> Gaşpar, “Praising the Stylite,” 106, n. 103.

<sup>218</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 309-310.

δεκάδες ταῖς τρισὶ συντιθέμεναι  
 πληροῦσι τὰ ἐβδομήκοντα. ἢ μέντοι  
 ἀπλῇ ἐβδόμας τὸ σῶμα δηλοῖ, ᾧ  
 συνάπτεται ὁ νοῦς, διὰ μέσης ψυχῆς  
 τὴν πενταδικὴν αἴσθησιν ἔχων καὶ  
 τὴν ὕλην καὶ τὸ εἶδος ἐξ ὧν  
 γέγονεν.<sup>219</sup>

According to Tarán, there are no “parallels to the sacred character of 70, 700, or 777 by itself.”<sup>220</sup> Philagathos’ preference for the number seven is attested to by its constant presence in his *Homilies*, where it usually denotes the perfection of the age to come or the renovation of the world during the seventh millennium:<sup>221</sup>

But even the number of the years is indicative for the nature and for the time, in which the disease of impiety will prevail over nature: for the time is in the seventh period, and the senses are five.

Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ τῶν ἐτῶν ἀριθμὸς τῶν  
 περὶ φύσεώς ἐστι καὶ χρόνου  
 δηλωτικός, ἐν οἷς κατεκράτει τῆς  
 φύσεως τῆς ἀσεβείας τὸ νόσημα·  
 ἐβδομαδικὸς γὰρ ὁ χρόνος, πενταδικὴ  
 δὲ ἡ αἴσθησις.<sup>222</sup>

The same principle of contriving an allegorical interpretation on the basis of the computation of the numerical value of the Greek letters, which make up a given name, is used in the *Homilies*, just as in the *Interpretation*, to explain the meaning of the name of St. Gabriel the Archangel.

As the wise Maximus has taught us that we can ascend towards the higher significations [of things] based on both the letters of the names and on their numerical [value], seven letters make up the name of Gabriel, his name showing that Christ, whose birth he was announcing, would come for the salvation of the entire world, which is governed by this seven-fold movement of time and which shall come to an end after [the passing of] seven

Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἡμᾶς ὁ σοφὸς ἐδίδαξε  
 Μάξιμος, καὶ ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων τῶν  
 ὀνομάτων ἐκ τε τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ αὐτῶν  
 πρὸς ὑψηλοτέρας ἐννοίας ἀνάγεσθαι,  
 ἑπτὰ δὲ στοιχεῖα τὴν κλῆσιν  
 ἀναπληροῦσι τοῦ Γαβριήλ, ἐμφαίνει  
 τὸ ὄνομα ὡς ὁ ὑπὸ Γαβριήλ  
 εὐαγγελιζόμενος τεχθῆναι Χριστὸς  
 ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ ἦκει τοῦ κόσμου παντός,

<sup>219</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368-9, 80-92.

<sup>220</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 220, n. 87.

<sup>221</sup> *Hom.* 1.8 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 5); *Hom.* 40, *PG* vol. 132, col. 764B; *Hom.* 24, *PG* vol. 132, col. 508B;

<sup>222</sup> *Hom.* 11.18 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 76).



millennia. And if the scrutiny should not seem useless to the crowd, [let me also say] that the number resulted from the single units of the name is not devoid of mystical signification. And even from this we may discover the foretold divine providence of the holy Scripture. Because one hundred and fifty four , which is the total sum of the letters in Gabriel's name, reveal him as the one who announced [Jesus as] a perfect God and a perfect human being. As even the number ten is perfect, since it contains [in itself] all the numbers, when it is multiplied by itself, it gives the number one hundred, which symbolizes perfect divinity. The five decades, on the other hand, are the symbol of the perfect human soul, which takes its perfection from the intellect and acts through the [five] senses. The number four represents the four elements which form the body. Therefore the total numeric value of the name foretells the conceiving of the one who was being announced [i.e., of Christ], namely the manner in which the most perfect divinity of the Word was united, in a way that is beyond words, with the body through the mediation of the rational and sensible soul.

τοῦ μετρούμενου ὑπὸ τῆς  
ἐβδοματικῆς ταύτης τοῦ χρόνου  
κινήσεως καὶ περατουμένου ἐν  
αἰῶσιν ἑπτὰ. Εἰ δὲ μὴ περιεργος δόξει  
τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ἐξέτασις, οὐδὲ τῶν τοῦ  
ὀνόματος μονάδων ὁ ἀριθμὸς ἐξω  
πέπτωκε θεωρίας τῆς μυστικῆς· καὶ  
ἐκ τούτου γὰρ τὴν πρόνοιαν τῆς  
ἀγίας Γραφῆς μηνυομένην  
εὐρήσομεν. Τὰ γὰρ τέσσαρα καὶ  
πεντήκοντα πρὸς τοῖς ἑκατόν, ἅπερ  
ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Γαβριὴλ συνάγεται  
κλήσεως, δηλοῖ τὸν εὐαγγελιζόμενον  
τέλειον Θεὸν καὶ τέλειον ἄνθρωπον.  
Ἡ γὰρ τοι δεκάς τελεία οὖσα, ὡς  
περιεκτικὴ παντὸς ἀριθμοῦ, εἰς  
ἑαυτὴν πολυπλασιαζομένη τὴν  
ἑκατοντάδα ποιεῖ, ἥτις δηλωτικὴ ἐστὶ  
τῆς παντελείας θεότητος· ἡ δὲ  
πενταδικὴ δεκάς τῆς τελείας τοῦ  
ἀνθρώπου ψυχῆς ἐστὶ σύμβολον,  
ἐχούσης μὲν τὴν ἐκ τοῦ νοῦς  
τελειότητα, ἐνεργούσης δὲ διὰ τῶν  
αἰσθήσεων· τὰ γε μὴν τέσσαρα τὸ  
τετράστοιχον σῶμα ἐμφαίνουσι.  
Δείκνυσι τοίνυν ὁ ἀριθμὸς τοῦ  
ὀνόματος τοῦ εὐαγγελιζομένου τὴν  
σύλληψιν, ὡς ἡ ὑπερτελεία τοῦ  
Λόγου θεότες διὰ μέσης νοερᾶς καὶ  
αἰσθητικῆς ψυχῆς ἀρρήτως ἡνώθη τῷ  
σώματι.<sup>223</sup>

In the same way as he had done with Charikleia's name, Philagathos counts the three components of 154, the total numerical value of the Greek letters in Gabriel's name, separately as 100, 50, and 4, because he wished to establish a symbolic relation between the numbers, the elements, and the senses.

<sup>223</sup> *Hom.* 25.8-9 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 165).

It is, perhaps, appropriate to stop here for a brief comment on the character of the philosophical doctrines that our author uses in his exegesis. The triad νοῦς-ψυχή-σῶμα as it is pre-supposed by the parsing of the number 777, the numeric value of Chariclea's name, in three separate parts, 7 corresponding to the body, 70 to the soul, and 700 to the intellect, certainly comes from a Neoplatonic tradition,<sup>224</sup> but cannot be possibly confined to it. This distinction is such a commonplace with the Christian Neoplatonists, that hardly needs a detailed discussion.<sup>225</sup> On the other hand, and this fact needs some emphasis, as it has escaped the notice of most commentators, the fact that the union of soul, mind, and body is presented by the author of the *Interpretation* as forming a unity, one substance, (μία ὑπόστασις)<sup>226</sup> pleads for an unambiguously Christian context because this particular use of ὑπόστασις, as defying the union between body, soul and mind is atypical for 'pagan' philosophy, but very much in line with the language of the Christological formulations.<sup>227</sup> It is also a commonplace to state that for the Platonic tradition the union of body, soul, and mind is an uneasy one, since the body as matter is something that needs to be cast away in order to liberate the soul. Philolaus, a Pythagorean contemporary of Socrates, formulated what would remain true for 'pagan' philosophers for many centuries to come, namely that "the ancient theologians and seers bear witness that the soul has been yoked to the body as

<sup>224</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 156.

<sup>225</sup> Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère*, 257-278.

<sup>226</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 385, 30-31.

<sup>227</sup> At the Council of Chalcedon (451) *hypostasis* in Christology was equated with the concept of person, a teaching further developed by John of Caesarea and Leontios of Byzantium, who defined hypostasis as "being-for-itself," distinguishing two degrees of individuation, the nature and the person. Maximus the Confessor and Anastasios of Sinai analyzed this formula as well. See A. de Halleux, "'Hypostase' et 'personne' dans la formation du dogme trinitaire," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 79 (1984): 313-369, 625-70; Karl-Heinz Uthemann, "Das anthropologische Modell der hypostatistischen Union," *Kleronomia* 14 (1982): 215-312; id., "Das anthropologische Modell der hypostatistischen Union bei Maximus Confessor," in *Maximus Confessor*, ed. F. Heinzer and C. Schönborn (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1982): 223-233.

a punishment, and buried in it as in a tomb.”<sup>228</sup> This is not exactly the conception that emerges from the *Interpretation*, where body and soul are presented as closely-knit together into one single ὑπόστασις. The idea of the soul imprisoned in the body is well known to Philagathos as the following passage shows.

Now, the soul is imprisoned in the body like in some prison, as even some philosophers from outside (i.e. Christianity) have thought, calling the body a cave, a cavern, and a grave.

Νῦν γὰρ ὡς ἐν δεσμωτηρίῳ  
καθεῖρκεται ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν τῷ σώματι, ὡς  
καὶ τινες τῶν ἔξωθεν  
πεφιλοσοφήκασιν, ἄντρον, καὶ  
σπήλαιον, καὶ σῆμα τὸ σῶμα  
καλέσαντες.<sup>229</sup>

Moreover, Philagathos also alluded, both in the *Interpretation* and in the *Homilies*, to another Platonic idea, which became a commonplace of Greek thought,<sup>230</sup> namely, that the soul must disregard the body and long for its true homeland in order to contemplate the true being.

Οὗτος γὰρ οἶκος ἡμέτερος, ἐξ οὗ  
κακῶς ἀπερρέψαμεν, καὶ οὗ λαβέσθαι  
σπεύσωμεν διὰ τῆς ἐργασίας τῶν  
τεσσάρων γενικῶν ἀρετῶν· καὶ τὸ  
σῶμα βαστάζοντες, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν  
γῆινων προσπαθείας αἴροντες τὴν  
ψυχὴν πρὸς ἔφεσιν τῶν αἰωνίων  
ἀγαθῶν.<sup>231</sup>

ὑφ’ οὗ πλησθεῖσα καὶ μέθην  
μεθυσθεῖσα τὴν σώφρονα καὶ  
γεγονυῖα ὡς εἰπεῖν ἐρωτόληπτος  
καταφρονεῖ μὲν συνήθων, ἀλογεῖ δὲ  
τοῦ σώματος, πρὸς μόνον δὲ τὸ  
φιλούμενον συννεύει τὸ φρόνημα.<sup>232</sup>

This is our home, from which we were  
banished so terribly. Let us hurry to

Filled with this love and drunk with a sober  
drunkenness--carried away, so to speak, by

<sup>228</sup> Philolaus, *Fr.* 14, ed. H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. 1, 6th ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951; repr. 1966): μαρτυροῦνται δὲ καὶ οἱ παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι τε καὶ μάντιες, ὡς διὰ τινος τιμωρίας ἡ ψυχὰ τῷ σώματι συνέζευκεται καὶ καθάπερ ἐν σώματι τοῦτῳ τέθραπται.

<sup>229</sup> *Hom.* 24, *PG* vol. 132, col. 497A; see also *Hom.* 34.7 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 235): Καὶ τί θαυμαστόν; Ὅπου καὶ ἀνδρῶν Ἑλλήνων οἱ σοφώτεροι καὶ μᾶλλον ἡμῖν προσεγγίσαντες σπήλαιον καὶ δεσμωτήριον καὶ σῆμα τὸ σῶμα ἐκάλεσαν καὶ οἷον ἐνταφείσαν ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀποδύρονται, ἀμέλει καὶ τῶν δεσμῶν λύσιν καὶ τοῦ σπηλαίου φυγὴν τὴν ἐντεῦθεν τῆς ψυχῆς πορείαν δοξάζουσιν;

<sup>230</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 223.

<sup>231</sup> *Hom.* 31, *PG* vol. 132, col. 458B.

<sup>232</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 104-107; trans. Lamberton, 310.

recover it through the practice of the four cardinal virtues. And while carrying this body [as a burden], let us elevate our soul from the earthly longings to the desire for eternal good.

love--she scorns her former habits, utterly unmindful of her body, and her thought tends only toward her beloved.

If we keep in mind that in this passage Charikleia herself becomes a symbol of the soul while Theagenes is a symbolic representation of Divinity, the supreme object of contemplation, the resemblance between the two fragments is again striking<sup>233</sup> for it presents the ascent of the soul towards the true homeland through the practice of the four cardinal virtues. In a similar manner is described in both fragments the ascent of the soul since the writer presents the body as a burden.

Both in the *Interpretation* and in the *Homilies* the author emphasizes the relation between numbers, names, and virtues, for him, Heliodorus' work being an archetypal portrait of the four cardinal virtues.

Thus the book has been shown to be what we may call an archetypal portrait of the four general virtues.<sup>234</sup> Calasiris teaches you piety for the divine ... He also teaches self-restraint in fleeing Rhodopis, as does Knemon fleeing the illicit love of Demainete. Most of all, however, Theagenes and Charicleia [are models of continence. ... Let these two also be a fine example to us with regard to justice ... and let Hydaspes be a similar example, defeating the enemy by bravery and good fortune, while he defended those near him out of justice.

οὕτω τῶν τεσσάρων γενικῶν ἀρετῶν οἶον ἀρχέτυπος πίναξ ἢ βίβλος προτέθεται. [...] [ὁ Καλάσιρις σε διδάσκει] τὴν μὲν οὖν περὶ τὸ θεῖον εὐσέβειαν ... σωφροσύνην δὲ αὐτός τε ἐκδιδάσκει τὴν Ῥοδῶπιν φυγὼν καὶ Κνήμων Δηναϊνέτης τὸν ἄθεσμον ἔρωτα, πάντων δὲ μάλιστα Θεαγένους τε καὶ Χαρίκλειας ... δικαιοσύνης δὲ πέρι αὐτοὶ τε ἡμῖν ἀγαθὸν ὑπόδειγμα ἔστωσαν, [...] καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα Ὑδάσπης, ἀνδρεία μὲν καὶ τύχῃ κρατῶν τῶν ἐχθρῶν, δικαιοσύνη δὲ τοῖς οἰκείοις ἀρκούμενος<sup>235</sup>

<sup>233</sup> Tarán, "The Authorship," 221 has already noted that Charikleia and Theagenes in this passage symbolically represent the image of the soul's ascension towards the highest object of contemplation.

<sup>234</sup> The four general virtues are: εὐσέβεια (piety), σωφροσύνη (continence, self-restraint), δικαιοσύνη (justice), and ἀνδρεία (courage).

<sup>235</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 367-8, 53-60; trans. Lamberton, 308. .

The four virtues mentioned here would reflect a Platonic trait, as Tarán emphatically argued when trying to establish the precise affiliation of the philosophical interpretation of this work as typical to late Platonism.<sup>236</sup> However, typical seems to be for Philagathos the constant usage of the four cardinal virtues in elaborating his analysis of the scriptural passages he discusses in his *Homilies*.<sup>237</sup>

The homiletic style of Philagathos is imbued with the desire for disclosing the hidden meaning of numbers using every biblical episode that mentions them to derive a spiritual interpretation.<sup>238</sup> For Philagathos, no number is haphazardly mentioned in the Holy Writ. The woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years, the twelve years of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue,<sup>239</sup> Jesus' fast for forty days in the desert,<sup>240</sup> or the hour of Adam's creation,<sup>241</sup> the Gospels being four, all have a symbolic meaning.<sup>242</sup>

According to Philagathos, the number of the Gospels is not greater than four because four are the elements that make up the universe perceived by the senses; moreover, four are also the cardinal virtues that govern the rational part in us.<sup>243</sup> The very same idea is expressed in the *Interpretation*,<sup>2</sup> where Charikleia is considered a symbol of the soul and of the mind that sets the soul in order and governs the tripartite soul by means of the four cardinal virtues. Nevertheless, Tarán claims that “the reference of the mind's (νοῦς) ‘ordering’ of the soul points to Neoplatonic influence,

<sup>236</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 222, 229.

<sup>237</sup> See *Hom.* 30.13 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 202).

<sup>238</sup> A symbolic interpretation of the number 10 and 8 e.g. in the *Hom.* 13.4 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 90) and *Hom.* 24, *PG* vol. 132, 508B-C; of the number 10 in *Hom.* 20.5 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 133) as the number of the commandments given to Moses, here equated with the Dekapolis region (Δεκάπολις means literally ‘ten cities’).

<sup>239</sup> *Hom.* 6.18-19 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 44): τὸν τε γὰρ τῆς χήρας υἱὸν νεανίαν ὀνομάζει τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον, καὶ ἡ θυγάτηρ Ἰαείρου νεᾶνις ἦν δωδεκαετής. Τί οὖν ἐκ τούτων ὑψηλότερον διδασκόμεθα; “For the Gospel calls the son of the widow an adolescent and the daughter of Iair is also a young girl twelve years old. Therefore, what higher things do we learn from this?”

<sup>240</sup> *Hom.* 24, *PG* vol. 132, col. 508B-C.

<sup>241</sup> *Hom.* 27, *PG* vol. 132, col. 593B.

since it almost certainly alludes to the Neoplatonic principle of the ‘ordering’ (κοσμεῖσθαι) of the ‘lower’ by the ‘higher’.”<sup>244</sup> At this point one should notice the identical terminology (αἱ γενικαὶ ἀρεταὶ αἱ κοσμοῦσαι) between the *Interpretation* and the *Homilies*. Whether the idea of the ‘ordering’ of the ‘lower’ by the ‘higher’ attests or not Neoplatonic influence in the *Interpretation*, this does not represent a meaningful argument for claiming non Philagathean authorship for the *Interpretation* since the reference to the mind ordering of the soul occurs in the *Homilies* as well. The fact that the history of this idea can justly be traced to Platonic, Neoplatonic or Pythagorean environment does not say anything about the paternity or about the philosophical affiliation of the *Interpretation*, since it represents merely a commonplace inherited by the Christian tradition. The same can be said in respect to the usage of the four cardinal virtues in the *Interpretation*, identified by Taran as an element that alludes to the classical philosophical tradition, but as we have seen, the same concept is present in the *Homilies*.

The same recourse to the analogy between numbers, virtues, and characters as the one present in the *Interpretation* is a constant and a fundamental feature of Philagathos’ *Homilies* as well.<sup>245</sup> Six is the number around which revolves much of the

<sup>242</sup> See *Hom.* 5.3 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 32-33)

<sup>243</sup> See previous note.

<sup>244</sup> Taran, “The Authorship,” 219-220.

<sup>245</sup> *Hom.* 39.8 (ed. Zaccagni, 114), connects the Christian virtues as listed in Mt. 25: 35-37 with the number six; here also Philagathos discusses the ‘perfection’ of other numbers like eight or twelve. “Let us learn what does this division of the commandment in six parts mean and how come the manner of reciprocal love is not divided in more or less parts. From this we realize right away the perfection of virtue, since the number deriving from six units is perfect being composed by its own parts, so that nothing would be missing or abound in it. Indeed is necessarily perfect either the thing which does not need something else for achieving its completion either the one that never is more than itself. Suitably the number six had encompassed the perfection of the commandment. This number also contains three dimensions, namely, the length, the depth, and the width, as one composed of triangles.” Καταμάθωμεν τίς ἡ ἑξαχὴ τῆς ἐντολῆς αὕτη διάρσεις καὶ πῶς οὐκ εἰς πλεον ἢ ἑλαττον τῆς φιλαλληλίας ὁ τρόπος διώρισται. Τάχα τὸ τέλειον τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐντεῦθεν μανθάνομεν· ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ὁ ἀπὸ μονάδων τῶν ἑξ προίων ἀριθμὸς ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων μερῶν συντιθέμενος, ὡς μήτε τι λείπειν ἐν αὐτῷ μήτε πλεονάζειν, τέλειος ἐστὶ· τέλειον γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μήτε τινὸς ἑτέρου προσδεόμενον εἰς συμπλήρωσιν μήτε πλεονάζον ἑαυτοῦ πώποτε. Εἰκότως

allegorical interpretation of many of Philagathos' homilies. Thus, he links the six virtues with the six years that Moses prescribed for an enslaved Jewish child to become free again.<sup>246</sup> The same very same six commandments could also mystically explain for Philagathos why sixty queens are mentioned in the Song of Songs.<sup>247</sup>

The same computing technique used in the *Interpretation* for the number seven is used for the number six in the homily "For the Beginning of the Indiction and for Saint Symeon the Stylite," pointing indirectly to the same authorship for the *Interpretation*.<sup>248</sup>

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τὸ τῆς ἐντολῆς περιέλαβε τέλειον· ἔχει δὲ ὁ ἀριθμὸς οὗτος καὶ τὴν τριχῇ διάστασιν, μῆκος καὶ βάθος καὶ πλάτος, ὡς ἐκ τριγώνων συγκείμενος.) For the number eight, see *Hom.* 41, *PG* vol.132, col. 802C.

<sup>246</sup> *Hom.* 39.8 (ed. Zaccagni, 115): "And it is to this that Moses alluded in the old laws, saying that a Jewish child after being enslaved for six years returns free to his own family"; for the numbers six, ten, and sixty see also *Hom.* 24, *PG* vol. 132, col. 508B-C).

<sup>247</sup> *Hom.* 39.9, (ed. Zaccagni, 116); "And in my opinion, this is the philosophy implied in the mystical Song [of Songs] when it says: 'There are sixty queens,' as if it multiplied by ten, through [virtuous] actions, the six commandments and made them sixty."

<sup>248</sup> *Hom.* 1.16 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 8), Ταῖς κατὰ μικρὸν προσθήκαις εἰς τὸν στῦλον τῶν ἀρετῶν ἀναγόμενοι, πρότερον μὲν ἐν ἑξαπτήχει φθάσαντες ὕψει, τὰς ἑξ ἐντολὰς δηλαδὴ ὡς κρηπίδα θέντες τῆς ἀναβάσεως, δι' ὧν κληρονομοῦσι τὴν οὐρανῶν βασιλείαν οἱ δίκαιοι· ὁ γὰρ ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης κεκαθικὼς βασιλεὺς τοῖς ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀμοιβὴν τῶν τηρηθεισῶν αὐτοῖς ἑξ ἐντολῶν τὴν οὐρανῶν βασιλείαν χαρίζειται. Εἰ δὲ καθάπερ μινᾶν ἢ τάλαντον πολυπλασιάσοιμεν τὰς ἀρετὰς διὰ τῆς ἐργασίας πληθύνοντες, τότε ὁ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἡμῖν κύκλος ἀποτελεῖται, εἰς ἑαυτὴν πολυπλασιασθείσης τῆς ἑξάδος τῶν ἐντολῶν, ὡς γενέσθαι τὰ ἑξ τριάκοντα ἑξ. Κακέϊσε γὰρ, οἶμαι, εἰ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν ὁ τοῦ μεγάλου Συμεὼν στῦλος μέχρι τοσούτου ἀνύψωτο, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ὁ ἀριθμὸς οὗτος καὶ κύκλος ἐστὶ καὶ τρίγωνος καὶ τετράγωνος, τὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐσήμαινε τέλειον, ὅπως τε πάγιος ἦν πρὸς τὴν εἰς τὴν Τριάδα εὐσέβειαν καὶ ὅπως τῷ κύκλῳ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐστεφάνωτο. Trans. Gaspar, "Praising the Stylite," 108, "Let us mount the column of virtue with small steps, first reaching to a high of six cubits; this obviously means that we should make the fundament of our further ascent those six commandments through which the just will inherit the heavenly kingdom. For the King Who sits on the throne of glory will grant the kingdom of heaven to those sitting at His right hand as a reward for having kept the six commandment. [...] And if we multiply our virtues like a mina or a talent, increasing them through our effort, then the cycle of our virtues will be complete, the hexad of the commandments being multiplied by itself so that the six may become thirty-six. For there, I think, if the column of the great Symeon was raised to this height (as the story goes), it is because this number is a circle, and a triangle, and a square, and it signifies the perfection of his virtue, how he was unshaken in his reverence for the Trinity and how he was crowned with a rounded wreath of virtues."

### 3.3. The Christianizing perspective: creative uses of the Bible.

The existing scholarly literature which has addressed the thorny issue of the authorship of the *Interpretation* has generally accepted the idea that the author was a Christian but the extent to which his religious identity is reflected in the text remains a matter of debate.<sup>249</sup> I shall therefore try to reopen the argument and in what follows I will discuss the biblical citations contained in the text, the references to patristic authorities, as well as the phrases, words, and ideas that undoubtedly belong to the Christian tradition. By doing so, I wish to challenge the opinion that “the philosophical elements of the allegorical interpretation are typical of late Platonism and do not contain any peculiarly Christian dogma [...]. For they indicate that the author addressed or meant to address, an audience which at the very least included many pagans, or perhaps was mainly pagan.”<sup>250</sup>

To my mind, a very strong indication of the fact that the author belonged to the Christian tradition is his very attempt to provide a justification for his allegorical exegesis of an erotic novel by invoking the long-established tradition of spiritual Christian interpretation of the Song of Songs, as we would indeed expect from a Christian.<sup>251</sup> As a long line of patristic authors had repeatedly stated, the two lovers in that biblical book were not to be interpreted literally as a man and a woman in love, but spiritually as Christ and the Church, or Christ and the individual soul. None of the

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<sup>249</sup> Cupane, “Filagato da Cerami,” 16-20; Tarán, “The Authorship,” 205, 229; Lavagnini, “Filipo-Filagato,” 766-67.

<sup>250</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 229.

<sup>251</sup> A useful overview of the literature on this topic can be found in Elizabeth A. Clark, “The Uses of the Song of Songs: Origen and the Later Latin Fathers,” in ead., *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1986), 386-427; on the Commentary on the Song of Songs by Gregory of Nyssa, see Verna Harrison, “Allegory and Ascetism in Gregory of Nyssa,” *Semeia* 57 (1992): 113-130; on the interpretation of the Song of Songs by Augustine and



biblical texts susceptible of being interpreted allegorically lent themselves to a mystical interpretation so well as the Song of Songs. There was no better justification for someone who, like the author of the *Interpretation*, attempted to read an erotic novel in a mystical key than the mystical tradition of interpretation which had developed in the Christian tradition around the Song of Song! The Song of Songs thus offered Philagathos the perfect justification to apply an ascetic (i.e., “philosophical,” in his own terminology) and Christian reading to a dubious text which, like the Song of Songs, was all about a young woman in search of her lover. As it will appear from the quotations below, in his *Homilies* Philagathos used in a very similar, unambiguously Christian context the same quotation from the *Song of Songs* which the author of the *Interpretation* also invoked; the lexical and structural parallelism between the two texts is striking.

οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔρωτος  
**γηραιαὶ ψυχαὶ ἢ νηπιώδεις**  
 αἰσθάνονται, ἀλλ’ αἱ νεάζουσai καὶ  
 ἀκμάζουσai, εἴ τι δεῖ τῷ μυστικῷ  
 πείθεσθαι ἄσmaτι λέγοντι, “διὰ  
 τοῦτο νεάνιδες ἠγάπησάν σε”<sup>252</sup>, ὡς  
 μόνης τῆς τοιαύτης ἡλικίας  
 χωρούσης τὰ ἐρωτικὰ οἰστεύματα.<sup>253</sup>

Neither gray old souls nor infant souls  
 experience this divine love, but only those  
 of young men and of men in the prime of  
 life, if we can put our faith in the mystical  
 song that goes, “Therefore do the virgins

Ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς τὴν τελειωτικὴν διὰ τοῦ  
 Ἐυαγγελίου παρέχων ζωὴν τῆς  
 τελείας ἐφάπτεται ψυχῆς, ζωὴν  
 νοερὰν αὐτῇ παρεχόμενος, ἥτις,  
 διαβᾶσα τὴν νηπιώδη κατάστασιν  
 καὶ τῆς πνευματικῆς ἡλικίας  
 ἀκμάσασα, οὐκ ἐπαλαιώθη τῇ ῥυτίδι  
 τῆς ἁμαρτίας καταγερᾶσασα. Καὶ  
 τοῦτο αἰνίττεται λέγον τὸ ἄσμα τὸ  
 Σολομώντειον· “Διὰ τοῦτο νεάνιδες  
 ἠγάπησάν σε.”

But Christ, by offering a perfect way of life  
 through the Gospel, reaches out to the  
 perfect soul, offering rational life to it,  
 which, after surpassing the state of infancy  
 and flourishing at the spiritual time of life,

Ambrose, see F. B. A. Asiedu, “The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Language of Mysticism,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 55.3 (2001): 299-317.

<sup>252</sup> Song 1.3: καὶ ὁσμὴ μύρων σου ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ ἀρώματα μύρον ἐκκενωθὲν ὄνομα σου  
 διὰ τοῦτο νεάνιδες ἠγάπησαν σε.

<sup>253</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 366-7, 22-25.

<sup>254</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 307.

<sup>255</sup> *Hom.* 6.19 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 44)

love thee.”<sup>254</sup>

will not fade, made old by the wrinkles of sin. And this is what the Song of Solomon alludes to when it says: “Therefore do the virgins love thee.”<sup>255</sup>

The second direct and unacknowledged scriptural quotation in the *Interpretation* comes from 1Cor. 3:13. The very fact that such a text is quoted and the fact the quotation is unacknowledged leads us to believe that the author of the text had in mind a Christian audience when composing it.<sup>256</sup> However, Tarán, who claimed that the *Interpretation* was the work of a Neoplatonic philosopher, was not at all concerned by the “accidental” presence in the text of this biblical quotation.<sup>257</sup> If we were to follow his line of thought, we may justly presume that the so-called ‘pagan’ audience he implied for the *Interpretation* must have been thoroughly imbued with the knowledge of the Gospels to be served with not one, but two scriptural quotations, one of which even identified, albeit not *expressis verbis*.

ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον φανερόν  
γενήσεται· ἡ γὰρ ἡμέρα δηλώσει, ὅτι  
ἐν πυρὶ ἀποκαλύπτεται καὶ ἐκάστου  
τὸ ἔργον ὅποιόν ἐστιν τὸ πῦρ  
δοκιμάσει.<sup>258</sup>

ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ δορυφορούμενη πρὸς τὴν  
ἰδίαν πατρίδα πορευσέται καὶ  
δοκιμασθήσεται μὲν τῇ ἐσχάρᾳ·  
ἐκάστου γὰρ τὸ ἔργον ὅποιόν ἐστι  
τὸ πῦρ δοκιμάσει.<sup>260</sup>

[...] each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.<sup>259</sup>

But the soul escorted will march toward her own country and be put to trial by fire—for ‘the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is’—and radiant....<sup>261</sup>

<sup>256</sup> This biblical reference was in fact identified by the modern scholars who had analyzed the text; see Lamberton, *Homer*, 156; Lavagnini, “Filipo-Filagato,” 764.

<sup>257</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 228: “It is in any case the Aethiopica itself that motivates our author’s reference to a trial by fire, and so the quotation from Paul, though significant and pointing to the probability that the author of the allegory was a Christian, does not imply that our work is of a peculiarly Christian character.”

<sup>258</sup> 1Cor. 3:13 as in *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

<sup>259</sup> Trans. from the *New King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>260</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 370, 129-131.

In fact, if more proof is needed that the author was a Christian, nothing could indicate better the identity of the author and the spiritual affiliation of the allegorical interpretation in the *Interpretation* than the important passage where the author describes himself not just as a Christian but even as a monk.

But at present, we have been turned away  
towards our philosophy both in outward  
appearance and in name.

νυνὶ δὲ πρὸς τὸ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς  
φιλοσοφίας καὶ σχῆμα καὶ ὄνομα  
ἀνθειλκύσθημεν<sup>262</sup>

The translation of this passage is crucial for establishing the identity of the author of the *Interpretation*.<sup>263</sup> Curiously enough, Tarán (mis)interprets the key words--‘our philosophy’--as referring to a philosopher in the ‘pagan’ tradition, although it is common knowledge that the word ‘philosophy’ in a Christian context routinely refers to the monastic way of life as early as the fourth century.<sup>264</sup> In addition to mistranslating the text, Tarán’s explanation is in itself contradictory, since he accepts the Christianity of the author of the *Interpretation*, but, at the same time, by reading ‘our philosophy’ as philosophy in the classical sense, he necessarily ends up with an author who is a Christian who defines his faith as ‘pagan’ philosophy. This is hardly credible. At this point I may add that ‘philosophy’ is the very word employed to describe the highest Christian knowledge in the *Homilies* as in the

<sup>261</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 311, translates “spear in hand, the soul will advance toward her own country and be put to trial by fire.”

<sup>262</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 366, 20-21.

<sup>263</sup> This is why Tarán, “The Authorship,” 215, contrived an explanation that would suit his theory by mistranslating the text: “All the sentence means is: “But at present we have been drawn (sc. from our youthful education) to the form and name of the philosophy appropriate to our time of life.” Then, in the footnote 56 he goes on to explain that in “φιλοσοφίας καὶ σχῆμα καὶ ὄνομα, the genitive is a genitive of definition, and the phrase means ‘both the essence and the name of philosophy,’ that is, philosophy in name and in essence. In any case it cannot refer to the habit and name of the priesthood.”

<sup>264</sup> Discussing a passage from Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.26, G. Rinaldi, *Christianesimi nell’ antichità* (Roma: Confederazione Nazionale delle Università Popolari Italiane, 2005), 233 remarked “la designazione della fede cristiana come ‘filosofia’: ci troviamo in un contesto ben diverso da quello di Col. 2,8; quest’uso, inoltre, anticipa la consuetudine invalsa dal sec.IV in poi per indicare col termine ‘filosofia’ lo stile di vita monastico.” The correct translation of this crucial text did not escape Bruno Lavagnini, “Filipo-Filagato,” 765: “L’autore, pur sotto il velo della espressione classicheggiante, ci fa intendere chiaramente di avere da tempo assunto l’abito e il nome del filosofo

*Interpretation* is presented the ascent of Chariclea from ignorance to the highest knowledge, as we have already seen. In the *Homilies* the word, ‘philosophy’, is used by Philagathos for defining the Christian faith.<sup>265</sup>

Indeed some of them (i.e. those who lead a righteous life) ascended to the apex of philosophy through gratitude and patience, inheriting the blessed state in the bosom of Abraham, just like Lazarus; others, instead, who chose to do evil do not do all that they would like to do and the disease of their body becomes for them guardian of their soul.

Οἱ μὲν γὰρ τούτων εἰς ἄκρον  
φιλοσοφίας ἀνέβησαν, δι'  
εὐχαριστίας καὶ ὑπομονῆς τοὺς  
ἀβραμιαίους κληρῳσάμενοι  
κόλπους, ὥσπερ ὁ Λάζαρος, οἱ δέ γε  
κακοὶ τὴν προαίρεσιν οὐ πράττουσιν  
ὅσον ἐθέλουσι καὶ γίνεται τούτοις ἡ  
τοῦ σώματος βλάβη ψυχῆς  
φυλακὴ.<sup>266</sup>

On the basis of what has been said above, I would like to conclude that the author of the *Interpretation*, when writing about the philosophy “appropriate to his time of life” as misinterpreted by Tarán, in fact referred to Christian philosophy, i.e., maybe to monasticism.<sup>267</sup>

Thus far I have examined the most obvious allusions to Christianity as well as the meaning of the word ‘philosophy’ in the *Interpretation*. The remaining Christian

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cristiano.” See also G. Penco, “La vita ascetica come ‘filosofia’ nell’antica tradizione monastica,” *Studia Monastica* 2 (1960): 79-93.

<sup>265</sup> *Hom.* 12.5 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 79), ‘pagan’ philosophy is called ἡ ἑξωθεν φιλοσοφία (“the philosophy from outside” as differentiated of “our philosophy,” i.e., Christian philosophy); see also *Hom.* 40.3 (ed. Zaccagni, 144): Καίτοι καὶ ἡ ἑξωθεν φιλοσοφία πάντων φησὶν ἀδικώτατον τὸ μὴ ὄντα δοκεῖν (“even the Pagan philosophy says that the most unjust thing than everything is to appear as not it is”); elsewhere, *Hom.* 14.8 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 95) a distinction is drawn between “true wisdom” (i.e. Christian knowledge, in Philagathos’ understanding), ἡ ἀληθὴ σοφία, and the “Greek wisdom” ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ σοφία. In addition to this, a similar distinction appears in the *Homilies* between the Christian sage and the ‘pagan’ philosophers; see *Hom.* 24, *PG* vol. 132, col. 501A: Λέγεται παρὰ τε τῶν θύραθεν, καὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων σοφῶν, μικρὸς κόσμος ὁ ἄνθρωπος, διὰ τὸ περιεχεῖν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ στοιχεῖα, ἐξ ὧν συνέστη πᾶν τὸ φαινόμενον, καὶ διὰ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς νοερόν, ὃ κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι πιστεύομεν. “Truly was man called a small world by the sage from outside (i.e. Christianity) and by our sage, because embraces in himself all the elements from which is constituted all what is seen, and because of the intellectual part of the soul which we believe to be created after the image of God.” For the same distinction see *Hom.* 24, *PG* vol.132, col. 497A and *Hom.* 5.3 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 32-33).

<sup>266</sup> *Hom.* 45.4 (ed. Zaccagni, 239).

<sup>267</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 366, 20-21.

allusions are either hidden in the Prologue<sup>268</sup> or contained in some words and expressions that refer to the Christian tradition.

As it has been noticed long ago, the beginning of the Prologue is a deliberate imitation of the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus*.<sup>269</sup> Another part of the Prologue was also identified by Tarán<sup>270</sup> and Lamberton<sup>271</sup> as being a close reference to Plato's *Phaedrus*.

Well, since the sage said, 'Even graybeards play, but the games are solemn,' let us play our part in the solemn mode and venture a bit beyond the meditations of the philosopher and turn to the erotic palinode.<sup>272</sup>

ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ κατὰ τὸν εἰπόντα σοφὸν  
παίζει καὶ πολιὰ, τὰ δὲ παίγνια  
σεμνά, φέρε δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς σεμνῶς τῷ  
πλάσματι παίζωμεν καὶ τῆς  
φιλοσόφου συννοίας ἐκστάντες  
μικρὸν πρὸς παλινωδίαν τραπῶμεν  
ἐρωτικήν.<sup>273</sup>

In fact, this reference is not to Socrates, but to Basil of Caesarea!

For we have been taught to play by our wise men, but nevertheless the games are holy as if beseeeming for the graybeards.

παίζειν παρ' ὕμῶν ἐδιδάχθημεν, ἀλλ'  
ὅμως τὰ παίγνια σεμνά καὶ οἴοναι  
πολιᾶ πρέποντα.<sup>274</sup>

Since he ascribed wrongly the passage the reference to Song of Songs as Philagathos' most important justification for his attempt to rescue Heliodorus text from the mockery and ridicule of some lovers of letters, i.e., of literature,<sup>275</sup> was

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 366-367, 1-35.

<sup>269</sup> August Brinkmann, "Beiträge," 441-445.

<sup>270</sup> Tarán, "The Authorship," 215.

<sup>271</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 307, n.1.

<sup>272</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 307.

<sup>273</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 367, 26-29.

<sup>274</sup> Ps.-Libanius, *Epistularum Basilii et Libanii quod fertur commercium*, ep. 23.1 (ed. R. Foerster, Leipzig: Teubner, 1922, repr. 1997).

<sup>275</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 366, 10-11: πολλοί τῶν φιλολόγων ἀυλισθέντες τὴν Χαρκλείας βίβλον.

regarded by Tarán as not essential when he discussed the justification for allegorizing an erotic novel from the *Interpretation*.<sup>276</sup>

In a far subtler manner is the *Interpretation* alluding to the Jewish-Christian tradition of exegesis when it speaks of “the Egypt of ignorance,” the land to be crossed by Charikleia in the company of Calasiris, the teacher who accompanies the soul on its initiatic journey.

How long will he be her fellow traveler and companion? Until she passes through the Egypt of ignorance.<sup>277</sup>

ἀλλὰ μέχρι πότε συνοδίτης καὶ  
συνοδοίπορος γενήσεται; ἕως ἂν  
παρέλθῃ τῆς ἀγνοίας τὴν  
Αἴγυπτον.<sup>278</sup>

Now, the classical Graeco-Roman philosophical interpretative tradition always held Egypt in the highest esteem as the fatherland of theology according to the principle that says, “the most ancient is the most revered.”<sup>279</sup> Only in the Jewish-Christian tradition was Egypt scornfully viewed since it was always a reminder of the sorrowful captivity from where the Jews had to flee in order to become worthy of receiving the revelation of the true God. In the Christian ascetic interpretation, the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt was understood as the ascetic flight from the world while their

<sup>276</sup> Tarán, “The Authorship,” 215: “While Colonna duly records the reference to Socrates’ sitting with Phaedrus 230 B, he omits the more important and significant reference to Socrates’ own invocation of the antecedent of Simonides’ ‘Palinode’ to Helen in Phaedrus 243 A-B as a justification for his own palinode to love (represented by Socrates’ second speech in 244B ff.).” See also Lamberton, *Homer*, 307: “This entire passage refers to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, where Socrates evokes the story of Simonides’ palinode to Helen in order to explain the necessity of his delivering a second speech to apologize for slandering love (242e-243b).”

<sup>277</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 311

<sup>278</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 116-117.

<sup>279</sup> Aristotle, *Metaph.* A 983B, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924): τιμώτατον μὲν γὰρ τὸ πρεσβύτατον. Numenius attests this opinion when saying in Περὶ τὰ γαθοῦ: “[With regard to theology] it will be necessary, after stating and drawing conclusions from the testimony of Plato, to go back and connect this testimony to the teachings of Pythagoras and then to call in those peoples that are held in high esteem, bringing forward their initiations and doctrines and their cults performed in a manner harmonious with Plato—those established by the Brahmins, the Jews, the Magi and the Egyptians.” The present translation is from Lamberton, *Homer*, 60. In addition, it is well known Herodotus’ favourite thesis that the Greeks had borrowed their most notable religious ideas and even their deities, from the Egyptians (Herodotus, 2.123) and Aristotle’s claim that mathematical arts were founded in Egypt.

longing to return there<sup>280</sup> as the yearning for “the fleshpots of Egypt.”<sup>281</sup> Therefore, the negative image of the “Egypt of ignorance” used in the *Interpretation* is to be connected with the Christian affiliation of our work.

There is also another pointer to author’s familiarity with the Christian exegetic tradition, namely the typically Christian use of the verb πληρόω (“to fulfill”) in connection with a Hesiodic moral statement. As Lamberton pointed out, such a use of the verb πληρόω is “abundantly attested in the New Testament but rare, or perhaps absent, in pagan literature.”<sup>282</sup>

... the fulfillment of what Hesiod said:  
“He who contrives evil for another  
contrives evil for his own heart.”<sup>283</sup>

καὶ τὸ τοῦ Ἡσιόδου πληρούμενου ὃς  
κακὸν ἄλλω τεύχων ἑῷ κακὸν ἥπατι  
τεύχει.<sup>284</sup>

Finally, through a fanciful etymological word play on the concept of “fear,” the text of the *Interpretation* introduces the concept of ‘fear of God’ that would rather indicate a Christian environment.<sup>285</sup>

The ruby will keep her unblemished, for

ἡ παντάρβη ταύτην διατηρήσει

<sup>280</sup> Num. 11:5, 18.

<sup>281</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 134; Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 32.2, *PG* vol. 31, col. 996A; John Cassian, *Conlationes* 3.7, *SC* 42, 148, 146.

<sup>282</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 156.

<sup>283</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 309; Tarán, “The Authorship,” 219 argued that “the number of references or allusions to pagan literature are surely remarkable. One must also take into account the narrator’s insistence that he is a philosopher and a philosopher in the ‘Platonic’ tradition.” But, as we have already seen, Philagathos was quite familiar with the Platonic tradition. As for the allusions to pagan literature, even more remarkable is their appearance in Philagathos’ *Homilies*. Lavagnini, “Filipo-Filagato,” 767 noted that “l’interesse per la letteratura profana attestato dallo scritto in difesa del romanzo di Eliodoro appare confermato al lettore di omiliario. A ragione il Rossi, nella prefazione al primo volume, sottolineava nell’autore la conoscenza di scrittori profani (Omero, Esiodo, Platone, Euripide, Menandro, Teocrito, Ippocrate, Galeno).”

<sup>284</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368, 69-70.

<sup>285</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 156, observes that “the concept of ‘fear of God’ as a protective force (387.25-27) is not a part of pagan tradition.” In the Christian tradition fear was interpreted mostly as a spiritual emotion. Basil the Great (*PG* vol. 29, col. 369C) distinguished between a good fear, which bring salvation and a base fear of God, which was contrasted with fear of punishment. Tarán, “The Authorship,” 226-227, in total disagreement with his method, omits to analyze the concept of “fear of God,” and argued that the text by saying θεὸς γὰρ τὸ πᾶν alludes to a characteristic ‘pantheistic’ doctrine that points to Neoplatonic influence, and which otherwise would be hard to square with the author’s Christianity.” However, the ‘pantheistic’ statement has merely a tactical place in the wordplay that Philagathos conceived around παντάρβη and θεὸς in perfect resemblance with his method employed elsewhere. See the subchapter on the allegorical interpretation of names.

the ‘ruby’ is that which ‘fears all’ or ‘is afraid’ and hints at the fear of god, since god is all things.<sup>286</sup>

ἀλώβητον. παντάρῃ δὲ ἢ τὸ πᾶν  
ταρβοῦσα ἥτοι φοβουμένη ἐστίν,  
αἰνίττεται δὲ τὸν εἰς θεὸν φόβον·  
θεὸς γὰρ τὸ πᾶν.<sup>287</sup>

At this point I may conclude that it is more likely for a Christian author to produce such a text rather than for a philosopher in the Platonic tradition, who supposedly was addressing a ‘pagan’ or a mainly ‘pagan’ audience.<sup>288</sup> In twelfth-century Sicily, this seems out of question. As Lamberton noticed, the *Interpretation* shows “the clear influence of Christianity because it probably belongs to a period when pagan Neoplatonism’s practical concern with textual exegesis was a thing of the past.”<sup>289</sup> One may simply add that at this time pagan Neoplatonism was well buried in the shadow of the ages. Instead, one may define this text as belonging to the Christian Neoplatonic tradition. Philagathos’ allegorical defense of the late antique erotic novel emerges and develops strictly within the tradition of Christian ascetic reading. For this very reason the *Interpretation* is so rich in moral exhortations: “Even now when you are treated unjustly, be content with the anomalies of chance and bear them nobly, suffering with Theagenes and Chariclea, so that you may end rich and prosperous”<sup>290</sup>; “here let the strong will be made tougher! Let it be cast into the fiery furnace of temptation!”<sup>291</sup>; “Understand what the riddle is telling you,”<sup>292</sup> and “Let these two also be a fine example to us with regard to justice.”<sup>293</sup>

<sup>286</sup> Trans. Lamberton, 311.

<sup>287</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 370, 124-126.

<sup>288</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 147: “the fact that we have only bits and pieces of interpretative literature from pagan antiquity, whereas the Christian tradition of textual exegesis is far better represented, is also an indication that the elaboration of the meaning of a text was never, in pagan tradition, held in the respect it had in the Christian context.”

<sup>289</sup> Lamberton, *Homer*, 157.

<sup>290</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368, 74-76: ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀδικούμενος στέργε καὶ φέρε γενναίως τὰ τῆς τύχης ἀνώμαλα, μέτα Θεαγένους καὶ Χαρικλείας κακαπαθῶν, ὅπως ἔχῃς τὸ τέλος πολυόλβον; trans. Lamberton, 309.

<sup>291</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 370, 123-124: ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἀνδρεῖον λῆμα στομούσθω μᾶλλον καὶ τῇ καμίνῳ τῶν πειρασμῶν ἐμβληθῆτω, trans. Lamberton, 311.



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<sup>292</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 369, 101: ὁ τι σοι λέγει τὸ αἴνιγμα. Tarán, “The Authorship,” 223, noticed that this is a “proverbial expression which originated with Pindar (σύνες ὅ τοι λέγω) and which later became a commonplace; but it is noteworthy that Philip in all probability borrowed it from Plato’s *Phaedrus* [σύνες ὅ τι σοι λέγω, *Phaedrus*, 236 D], a dialogue that strongly influenced him, and where the saying appears with the word σοι.” However, the combination between σύνες and αἴνιγμα appears in Philagathos’ *Hom.* 35.14 (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 244): Σύνες τὸ κεκρυμμένον ἐν τῷ αἰνίγματι.

<sup>293</sup> Colonna, *Commentatio in Charicleam*, 368, 57-58: δικαιοσύνης δὲ πέρι αὐτοί τε ἡμῖν ἀγαθὸν ὑπόδειγμα ἔστωσαν, trans. Lamberton, 308.

#### 4. Conclusions: Identifying the Author of the *Interpretation*.

The scholarly debate regarding the authorship of *the Interpretation* revolved around the intricate issue of establishing the ideological affiliation of the allegorical interpretation of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* ascribed to Philippos the Philosopher, i.e., whether this is dependent upon the 'pagan' philosophical tradition or has rather a Christian source and color. The former assumption was preferred, and, therefore, by assuming a 'pagan' audience and a Neoplatonic affiliation for *the Interpretation*, as a natural conclusion, the authorship of Philagathos was denied and, instead, was an anonymous Neoplatonist philosopher living in the fifth or the sixth century was invented.

Looking now back at the evidence collected throughout the present study, it can be resolutely stated that the author of the *Interpretation* was Philagathos-Philippos the Philosopher. The formal identity between the metaphors used in Philagathos' *Homilies* and in the *Interpretation*, which do not appear in any other patristic texts, constitutes the most solid evidence for establishing Philagathean authorship for the *Interpretation*. Moreover, familiarity with the Scriptures as is shown by the unacknowledged biblical quotations, by the manner of referring to Song of Songs, or to the patristic authorities circumscribes very clearly the ideological affiliation of the work and demonstrates that the *Interpretation* could not have been written by someone belonging to 'pagan' philosophical tradition.

The detailed comparison between the *Homilies* and the *Interpretation* revealed the complete identity of exegetical method and imagery, the same means of allegorizing, an almost identical use of *clausulae* in both works; in my opinion, all this undoubtedly prove that Philagathos was the author of the *Interpretation*. The exceptional character of this allegorical interpretation in its historical context gives a

new prominence to the personality of Philippos-Philagathos of Cerami, who had already been recognized as one of the most important exponents of the flowering of Greek culture in the time of Roger II (1130-1154) and William I (1154-1166). At the same time, the history of Christian allegory is enriched with a new type of allegory, that of an erotic novel.

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