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## Agonistic Mimêsis and Genre Bending in Gregory Nazianzen's Orations against Julian the Emperor

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### *Introduction*

“Every talent must unfold itself in fighting,” famously professed Friedrich Nietzsche in his unpublished essay *Homer's Contest*.<sup>1</sup> In tune with this motto Harold Bloom in his *Anxiety of Influence* reviewed and analysed the many ancient, modern and contemporary approaches to the agonistic character of all fiction.<sup>2</sup> Philosophical as this topic is, it has been at the core of literary theory ever since classical antiquity. Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle launched the discussion and highlighted its literary, educational, political, philosophical and even biological strands. Not only did these thinkers methodologically frame the everlasting debate but they also produced examples of excellent style and literary composition, which have recently received as much praise as attempts at dethroning their pre-eminent status. In such a way, the so-called neoclassical authors built their self-identity while admiring and trying to surpass the works of their great predecessors.

Pondering the social resonance of mimetic practice in the period of the Roman empire, Nicolas Wiater remarked that for thinkers like Dionysius of Halicarnassus practicing the Classical language “carried with it a conception of Classical identity, an interpretation of past and present, and a claim to intellectual as well as social elitism<sup>3</sup>”.

In late antiquity, the debate about *mimêsis*, and its echoes in the social and political spheres, took an even more peculiar turn. Christians claimed full legal rights over the classical heritage, which they used and modified as they wished, thus violating the established *decorum*. This *status quo* brought charges against Christian intellectuals. Julian the Emperor even promulgated an edict forbidding Christians to teach, or receive, classical education in Hellenic schools.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the emperor protested against the manner in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nietzsche 1994 [1872], 37.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bloom 1997, 52.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wiater 2011, 352.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jul., *Epist.* 61c. The content of the edict is preserved in: Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.18; Socrates Schol., *Hist. Eccl.* 3.16.1.

which Christians imitated classical heritage, which he recognised as agonistic and destructive.

How justified were these accusations? Is it accurate to attribute agonistic imitation exclusively to Christians? What comparable approaches to the classical legacy can be found in the texts of neoclassical authors? To put it differently, what was the stylistic, social and educational rationale of Christian imitative practice in the context of classical and neoclassical debates about mimesis?

To answer this question, I shall analyse the destructive impetus of Christian author Gregory Nazianzen, who embedded his reaction to Julian's policy in the two orations<sup>5</sup> written in a, *sui generis*, agonistic imitation of the eulogies<sup>6</sup> which Libanius had addressed to his protector the Emperor. In order to examine this agonistic triangle, I shall start by recalling the initial stage of the debate around *mimêsis* directed by Isocrates, Plato and his great pupil. Then I take a look at the subsequent reception of this classical discussion especially, in particular concerning the treatment of the classical genres or the practice of genre bending. Finally I make a comparative analysis of Gregory's orations against the emperor and Libanius' eulogies, which I hope will result in a persuasive explanation of the historical background and immediate context of Gregory's imitative practice.

### *Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle on mimêsis*

Maybe somewhat surprisingly, the question of *mimêsis* troubled the minds of Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle not so much because of its abstract philosophical implications but principally because of its practical application in education and politics. In other words, the great teachers of antiquity discussed in what way mimetic practice should be used in the educational process, what examples of classical literature deserve to be studied and imitated, what stylistic and moral criteria should determine the canon of readings of a properly educated citizen.

Isocrates held a rather simplistic view of *mimêsis* rooted in the tradition of musical education, which included memorization and recitation of verses. He argued that an ambition to speak well and to persuade listeners can make people better and worthier (cf. *Antidosis* 275–276). Isocrates equated the practice of imitation of great speeches to philosophy and argued that studying various examples of great thoughts develops practical reason and the ability to make choices and to carry out plans. Importantly, these ideas of Isocrates did not have the sort of strong ethical flavour which appeals to us at first sight. On the contrary, he explicitly claimed that it was not his concern to polish the morals of his students but rather to make them men of reason capable of acting and speaking well.<sup>7</sup> In this way Isocrates emphasised the literary strand of his educational program and distanced himself from Plato whose widely known goal was to “implant justice in the souls of the citizens” (cf. *Gorgias*

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<sup>5</sup> I am talking about orations four and five known as the orations against Julian the Emperor (Κατὰ Ἰουλιανοῦ Βασιλέως Στηλιτευτικός πρῶτος καὶ δεύτερος).

<sup>6</sup> I mean oration twelve, known as *To the Emperor Julian as Consul* (Εἰς Ἰουλιανὸν αὐτοκράτορα ὕπατον, written in 363), and oration thirteen, known as *To Julian* (Προσφωνητικός Ἰουλιανῶ, written in 362).

<sup>7</sup> On the identification Isocrates made between *eu legein* and *eu prattein* — doing well and speaking well — see: Haskins 2000, 7–33.

504d). This does not mean however that Isocrates was in favour of immoral philosophy. He discovered his primary specialisation in making good political speeches, which, he believed, contribute to creating good politicians. In sum, Isocrates underscored the practical and didactic value of memorising and imitating classical examples for the sake of broadening the experience and thesaurus of his students.

Plato and Aristotle went for an opposite strategy, i.e. they both concentrated on making good politicians, with the difference that Plato disavowed the utility of either representational or performative *mimêsis*, while Aristotle elevated the representational *mimêsis* of the tragic plot to a high philosophical status. Plato conceived of imitation as nothing better than falsification and degradation of reality, which can induce corruption in the audience. Aristotle maintained that imitation is an inherent and physiologically determined principle of upbringing, that it is natural and harmless to enjoy play in imitation and that the destructive potential of a bad example can be realized only if a person decides to carry out its mimetic play to the extent of appropriating the imitated characteristics. In this case, as Gabriel Zoran has justly noted, play in imitation yields before the practice of appropriation which brings no pleasure and is usually painful.<sup>8</sup>

Contrary to Plato, Aristotle claimed that a well-constructed *mimêsis* of tragedy is not only equivalent to, but even better than, reality because it contains a good proportion of probability, necessity and inevitability, and brings about the enlightenment of the audience i.e. *catharsis* (cf. *Poet.* 1448b4–17).

Aristotle also stressed the practical significance of *mimêsis*, although in his view a good imitation does not amount to a snapshot of reality. On the contrary, Aristotle associated a praiseworthy kind of imitation with properly composed literary fiction, which does not show life as it is but as it should be (cf. *Poet.* 1460b5–11). Hence, Aristotle's defence of tragedy indirectly contributed to the development of fictional aspects in literature. In the period of the so-called Second Sophistic this tendency became particularly ostensible due to the widespread idealisation of the Hellenic past and literature. Interestingly enough, this inclination to admire the classical age was balanced by an apparent intention to critically examine, re-consider and re-write classical examples, which can be seen, for instance, in post-classical literary theory.

### *Genre bending in post-classical literary theory*

In his insightful article *Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel* Harold Attridge suggested a fresh look at the multicoloured literary tissue of the gospel according to John.<sup>9</sup> Having examined various formal characteristics of different genres interwoven into the text of the fourth gospel, Attridge assumed that “the use of most of these forms suggest that none of them is adequate to speak of the Word incarnate.” And hence, he concludes that “John's

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Zoran 2015, 468–486.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Attridge 2002, 3–21.

genre bending is an effort to force its audience away from words to an encounter with the Word himself<sup>10</sup>”.

The psychological effect of mistake and paradoxical language was well-known to the classical authors and teachers of rhetoric, as well as the practice of genre bending. Thus, Quintilian in the first century AD affirmed that although every speech should belong to one of three kinds of eloquence (court, political, epideictic), it should nonetheless have characteristics of two or all three of them (cf. *Institutio Oratoria* 3.4.14). Hermogenes (at the end of the second – beginning of the third centuries) and Nicolaus the Sophist (in the fifth century) supported this position. Thus, in his analysis of Demosthenes’ speech *De corona*, Hermogenes stated that although this oration undoubtedly fell into the category of court eloquence (i.e. δικανικὸν εἶδος) it also contained characteristics of political and epideictic eloquence (i.e. συμβουλευτικὸν & πανηγυρικὸν εἶδος, cf. *Περὶ ἰδεῶν* 1.1.66–70).<sup>11</sup>

A similar sort of genre bending was displayed by Nicolaus the Sophist in Isocrates’ *Panegyris*, which although an example of political eloquence contains encomiastic material (cf. *Progymnasmata* 48.11). Thus, it is fair to say that in Hellenic literature the restrictive genre regulations proved powerful only in the rhetorical classrooms, while the real life of Hellenic eloquence was a place of altered rules and double standards. This was particularly so in the period of late antiquity.

A good example of this situation can be found in Gregory Nazianzen’s orations against Julian the Emperor, written, as I shall argue, during the two years from the summer of 362 until the spring of 364. I imagine that the various *topoi* of the different genres applied in these orations reflect the circumstances of their production and particularly Gregory’s polemical reaction to certain texts and proclamations of his opponents. Since I want to be a little intriguing I shall start with a quick review of various characteristics of different genres that can be detected in the orations and then I show how to read this puzzle and what it tells us about Gregory’s views on *mimêsis*.

### *The agonistic triangle of Julian, Libanius and Gregory*

Most scholars who have studied Gregory’s orations against Julian contend that the speeches were performed in the genre of invective.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Rudolf Asmus and Martin Sand<sup>13</sup> have highlighted in the orations such typical elements of epideictic speech as comparison (i.e. σύγκρισις<sup>14</sup>) and description (i.e. ἔκφρασις<sup>15</sup>). Gregory drew an image of Julian as an ugly and disagreeable person whose vices contrasted with the virtues of his predecessor Constantius.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Attridge 2002, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. also Anon. *Proleg. in Hermogenes Περὶ στάσεων* 14.230.3–231.8: “Ὅτι ὁ Περὶ τοῦ στεφάνου Δημοσθένους λόγος δικανικοῦ εἶδους ἐστίν, πανηγυρικῆς δὲ ἰδέας”.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Asmus 1910; Moerschini 1997, 165; Quasten 1975, 242; McGuckin 2001, 119; Daley 2006, 10; Børtnes / Hägg 2006, 40, 213; Ruether 2003, 163; Gallay 1943, 78.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Sand 2007, 109.

<sup>14</sup> For a comparison of Julian and Gallus see *Or.* 4.24–33, of Julian and Constantius — *Or.* 5.16–18.

<sup>15</sup> For a description of Julian's appearance see *Or.* 5.23; a metaphoric description of Julian's character is given in comparison with the volcano Etna in *Or.* 4.85.

To add evidence in support of the general scholarly opinion about the genre of Gregory's orations four and five, I would like to point out that Gregory used certain typical invective *topoi* known since Lucian's famous psogos, *Alexander the false prophet*. In the introduction to his speech Lucian complained about the unworthy goal of his talk, i.e. to retain for future generations a memory of a despicable man. We find a similar complaint in Gregory's fourth speech.<sup>16</sup> Besides, Lucian declared Alexander the worst of all the well-known criminals; in a similar vein Gregory juxtaposed Julian with Old Testament sinners.<sup>17</sup>

As with Lucian's invective, the reasons for Gregory's literary wrath were not imaginary, but came from real life. It is most likely that Gregory personally met Julian during his studies in Athens. In any case, Gregory's brother Caesarius was definitely acquainted with the Emperor for he served as a physician at Julian's court and was obliged to quit his job when Julian started his anti-Christian politics. It appears clear from Gregory's narrative that he was particularly embarrassed by Julian's rescript, announced in June 362, against Christian teachers.<sup>18</sup> That same summer of 362 Caesarius left Constantinople and returned to Nazianz, no doubt filled with indignation against the Emperor and, very likely, with some fresh rumours about his extravagant conduct. A month later Libanius, in anticipation of Julian's official visit to Antioch, composed an address to Julian (i.e. προσφωνητικός λόγος, *Or.* 13) performed in a typical encomium manner, which matches the structure of royal speech (i.e. βασιλικός λόγος) described by Menander of Laodicea in his manual *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν*.<sup>19</sup> In the spring of 363 Libanius wrote another encomium *To the Emperor Julian as Consul* (*Or.* 12).

Gregory's first oration against Julian contains a number of sequential parallels with these encomiums of Libanius. On the whole, it looks as if Gregory decided to contradict Libanius word-for-word and began to write his anti-encomium to the Emperor, which eventually resulted in the orations four and five against Julian. Below I list some of these parallels accompanied by brief explanations of the structure of epideictic speech taken from Menander's manual.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lucianus, *Alex.* 2.1–10: "I am devoting my energy to such an end, to the exploits of a man who does not deserve to have polite people read about him (σπουδὴν ποιουμένου ἐπὶ τοιαύτῃ ἱστορίᾳ καὶ πράξεσιν ἀνθρώπου, ὃν οὐκ ἀναγινώσκεισθαι πρὸς τῶν πεπαιδευμένων ἦν ἄξιον)" (transl. by A.M. Harmon cited from 1925, available on-line); Greg., *Or.* 4.605.11–12: "a fact of such importance, and by no means deserving of oblivion, may be handed down to those who come after us (ὡς καὶ τοῖς ἔπειτα παραδοθῆναι πρᾶγμα τοσοῦτον, καὶ ἥκιστα τοῦ λαθεῖν ἄξιον)" (transl. by Ch.W. King from 1888, available on-line).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lucianus, *Alex.* 2.16–22: "We shall commemorate a far more savage brigand, since our hero plied his trade not in forests and mountains, but in cities, and instead of infesting just Mysia and Mount Ida and harrying a few of the more deserted districts of Asia, he filled the whole Roman Empire, I may say, with his brigandage"; *Alex.* 4.9–14: "But he made the worst possible use of them, and with these noble instruments at his service soon became the most perfect rascal of all those who have been notorious far and wide for villainy, surpassing the Cercopes, surpassing Eurybatus, or Phrynonidas, or Aristodemus, or Sostratus". Gregory compared Julian to the Old Testament sinners who were "insignificant princes and injuring but a small part of the land of Israel" while Julian "the public and private enemy of all in common... has madly raged and threatened much upon earth" (cf. *Or.* 4.532.35–42).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.636.2–5: "...for though there are many and weighty reasons why that person deserves to be detested, yet in no case will he be shown to have acted more illegally than in this: and let everyone share in my indignation who takes a pleasure in words".

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Russel 1998, 17–53.

*Oration four — an anti-encomium to Julian? Genre bending in Gregory's speeches*

In his introduction (i.e. προοίμιον)<sup>20</sup> Libanius declared that the virtues of Julian call for a word of praise (cf. *Or.* 12.7), while Gregory introduced the goal of his speech as “a gift of praise to God for a just punishment of the Apostate” (cf. *Or.* 4.5).

Both Libanius and Gregory placed an account of the talents, aspirations and inclinations of young Julian at the beginning of the narrative part (i.e. διήγησις)<sup>21</sup> of their speeches.<sup>22</sup> Both authors gave their views on Julian's initial Christian education: Libanius said that it was forced on Julian by his teachers (cf. *Or.* 12.27), while Gregory began a dramatic story of Julian's corruption, claiming that he forgot the good principles he had learned from his first teachers (cf. *Or.* 4.23).

The next section of the narrative part of both speeches contains a detailed description of Julian's classes (i.e. ἐπιτηδεύματα)<sup>23</sup>. Gregory contended that Julian's philosophical education brought about his apostasy (cf. *Or.* 4.30). Libanius admired the Emperor's enthusiasm for philosophy, which brought his natural gifts to perfection (cf. *Or.* 12.43). The authors gave a contrasting appraisal of the Asian classes of Julian (cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.31 vs. Lib., *Or.* 12.12), of the influence of Hellenic philosophers on the future Emperor (cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.43 vs. Lib., *Or.* 13.13) and of Julian's pointed interest in rhetoric (cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.44 vs. Lib., *Or.* 13.30).

The classes section is followed by the accounts of the death of Constantius, which Libanius depicted as an incident, while Gregory insisted on a usurpation of the throne plotted by Julian (cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.46 vs. Lib., 12.59). It is also within these stories that Libanius and Gregory made their contrasting comparisons of Julian and Constantius (cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.45 vs. Lib., *Or.* 12.44).

The next narrative section of encomium is generally known as deeds (i.e. πράξεις).<sup>24</sup> The most informative and significant part of the speech, it normally includes accounts of the military achievements and successful politics of a governor. Libanius depicted Julian as a typical καλὸς κάγαθός person distinguished by such Platonic virtues as courage (i.e. ἀνδρεία), justice (i.e. δικαιοσύνη), wisdom (i.e. σοφροσύνη), judgment (i.e. φρόνησις) and philanthropy (i.e. φιλανθρωπία). Gregory, on the contrary, painted Julian as a coward (cf. *Or.* 4.55), unjust (cf. *Or.* 4.57), stupid (cf. *Or.* 4.58), silly (cf. *Or.* 4.67) and cruel (cf. *Or.* 4.62).

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<sup>20</sup> Menander contended that an introduction to encomium should mention the goal of the speech, which in the case of encomium is to praise a deity or a king, (cf. Men., *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 368.18–20, Greek text and English transl. by D.A. Russell and N.G. Wilson from 1981).

<sup>21</sup> According to Menander, an encomium narrative should include the following parts: origin (i.e. γένος), birth (i.e. γένεσις), upbringing (i.e. ἀνατροφή), classes (i.e. ἐπιτηδεύματα), deeds (i.e. πράξεις), comparison (i.e. σύγκρισις). The first two points are absent from both Gregory's and Libanius' narratives (although in other panegyrics of Gregory they are present).

<sup>22</sup> In Menander's manual this section is called “classes” (i.e. ἀνατροφή); Menander maintained that its task was to show how the natural gifts and talents of a future governor were developed and accomplished (cf. Men., *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 371.18–25f.)

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Men., *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 384.20; cf. also: Theon, *Rhet.* 110.7; Quint., *Inst. Orat.* 3.7.15.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 7.36.

Both authors paid attention to the same facts of Julian's biography. Thus, discussing the circumstances of Julian's accession to the throne, Libanius maintained that Julian was reluctant to replace Constantius and yielded only because of the divine oracles (cf. *Or.* 12.59), that favourable oracles motivated Julian's actions (cf. *Or.* 12.59), that demons forced Julian to slay Constantius (cf. *Or.* 12.68), and that the success of Julian's army was supported by demons (cf. *Or.* 12.62), while the army of Constantius welcomed the victory of Julian (cf. *Or.* 12.67).

Gregory, in his turn, accused Julian of Constantius' murder (cf. *Or.* 4.47), refused to believe that any of Julian's success was due to the help of pagan deities and ascribed it only to his own scheming (cf. *Or.* 4.47), and denied that the army of Constantius saluted Julian as a new Emperor (cf. *Or.* 4.48).

Talking of the policy of Julian, both authors emphasized his particular attention to religious affairs (cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.52 vs. Lib., *Or.* 12.69). Libanius endorsed Julian's initiation into Mithraism while Gregory despised it (cf. Greg., *Or.* 13.12 vs. Lib., *Or.* 4.52). Libanius approved of such of Julian's military reforms as the requirement for soldiers to venerate pagan deities; Gregory scorned it (cf. Greg., *Or.* 12.90 vs. Lib., *Or.* 4.66). Libanius praised Julian's Persian campaign; Gregory declared it ill-judged and precipitate (cf. Greg., *Or.* 12.79 vs. Lib., *Or.* 4.52). In sum, Libanius proclaimed that the whole Roman Empire rejoiced and prospered during Julian's reign while Gregory reported it plunged into misery (cf. Greg., *Or.* 13.43 vs. Lib., *Or.* 4.75).

Obviously, in the terms of the form criticism Gregory's anti-encomium is a good example of *psogos*. Moreover, Gregory himself indirectly hinted at his intention to contradict the praises written by the Emperor's friends and admirers. Several times throughout his speeches Gregory referred to the texts of Libanius and probably also Eunapius and Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>25</sup> However it is also true that Gregory's speeches have a strong flavour of personal embarrassment with the policy of Julian and a pronounced concern for socio-political affairs, which one would not expect in a classical epideictic speech. As opposed to Libanius, who managed to observe the same facts of Julian's biography from a polite distance, Gregory's writing is simply too real, too emotional and too personal. In view of this circumstance some scholars have been inclined to look at Gregory's speeches as examples of court and political kinds of eloquence.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, conforming to the rules of court eloquence, Gregory did not simply boast with fury against Julian but appealed to law and referred to the *ipsissima verba* of the Emperor in order to prove his accusations. For example, he argued against Julian's *Rescript against Christian teachers* (cf. Jul., *Ep.* 61c30–31 vs. Greg., *Or.* 4.101), and other religious innovations of the Emperor preserved in his speech *To Heracleion the Cynic* (cf. Jul., *Πρὸς Ἡράκλειον κωνικὸν* 2.5–10 vs. Greg., *Or.* 4.107), and *A letter to the priest*, – all published in 362.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.79: "The rest I shall leave to such as choose to inquire into or to write about him ... since I think that many, to whom it will seem a pious deed to cast a word at a sinner, will be interested in what I know not whether to call the tragedy or the comedy of that season... for the benefit of those who so greatly admire his conduct, that they may be convinced they are endeavouring to praise a person for whom it is not even possible to find censure equal to his deserts."; and also *Or.* 4.91; *Or.* 4.94.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Bernardi 1983, 58–59, 61.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jul., *Or.* 7; *Fragm. Epist.* 89b. Gregory explicitly referred to Julian's own words (cf. *Or.* 4.102, 103). Cf. also *Or.* 4.637.34; *Or.* 4.636.43.



Now turning back to the historical situation of 362, we can try to draw an animated picture of the polemics between Gregory, Julian and Libanius. I imagine that shortly after Julian had published his *Rescript Against Christian Teachers* in June 362, Gregory started working on his oration four, so that the earliest part of the speech preserves his polemics against Julian's educational reform and has a strong apologetic flavour. As I mentioned earlier, at about the same time Gregory's brother Caesarius left Constantinople and returned to Nazianz, where he likely announced an upcoming visit of the Emperor. Julian had been planning a journey to Antioch with a probable stop at Nazianz,<sup>28</sup> thus it was Gregory's duty to prepare himself and his congregation for this visit. It was a common habit of Christian apologists to prepare speeches in anticipation of an Emperor's visit. In the fourth speech we find a traditional condemnation of pagan morals and myths, which had previously occurred in the apologetic works of Athenagoras<sup>29</sup> and Athanasius.<sup>30</sup>

Besides, we know that in July 362 Gregory wrote a speech for the forthcoming celebration of the memory of the Maccabee martyrs<sup>31</sup> which falls on the first of August. In this speech Gregory recounted the plot of the book of Second Maccabees, chapter seven; he cited the words of the Maccabee martyrs and thus encouraged his congregation to be brave in facing the challenges of evil times. Moreover, in his orations against Julian Gregory recalled the same Old Testament miracles as mentioned in the *In Machabaeorum laudem*. Remarkably, the Maccabee martyrs promised to dishonour their persecutor with "seven victorious monuments" (cf. *Or.* 15.6: "ἐπτά τροπαίοις σε στηλιτεύσοντας στηλογραφίαν ὡσπερ τινὰ τοῖς μεθ' ἡμᾶς καταλείβομεν"). The same image of pillar, and the στηλιτεύ-derivates, are crucial for the orations against Julian (cf. *Or.* 4.20). Thus, Gregory was conceiving of his speeches as pillars of shame<sup>32</sup> "which is higher and more manifest than the pillars of Hercules" (cf. *Or.* 5.42: "στήλη, τῶν Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν ὑψηλότερα τε καὶ περιφανεστέρα").

So much for the motives of court eloquence in Gregory's speeches. To complete this survey of genre bending in Gregory's speeches, I should also mention some characteristics of the epideictic genre found there. The orations have such traces of epitaph as threnos (i.e. θρήνος) and consolation (i.e. παραμυθία), hymns to God and paeans in honour of his favours, which find its prototypes in the Old Testament (cf. *Or.* 4.12: "let us chant the song of triumph (ἐπινίκιον) which Israel sang of old over the Egyptians"; *Or.* 4.17: mark how I weave my hymn (ᾠδὴν) to God; and also *Or.* 5.25; *Or.* 5.29).

I believe that Gregory composed these epideictic parts after the death in June 363 of Julian. The entire fifth oration is devoted to the Emperor's death and to didactic instructions to future governors. The fifth speech has no reference to the epitaph to Julian written by

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<sup>28</sup> For details, see Grant, R.M., *Five Apologies*, in: Vig. Chr. 42 (1988), 1–17.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Athenagoras, *Legatio sive Supplicatio pro Christianis* 32.1.1–9; Greg., *Or.* 4.653.13–16, 656.4–5, and also *Or.* 4.661.4–5.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 12.1–10; 12.21–28; 16.1–3; 26.19–26, Greg., *Or.* 4.656.21–25; 657.7–10; 660.34–36.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Greg., *In Machabaeorum laudem* (*Or.* 15).

<sup>32</sup> This is how Pseudo-Nonnus, a Byzantine commentator, explained the meaning of Gregory's metaphor: "A pillar is a rectangular piece of stone or bronze upon which is engraved the outrageous act of the one who is the object of the 'pillar-posting' (τοῦ στηλιτευομένου)" (cf. Ps-Nonnus, *Schol. Mythol.*, *Or.* 4, Pr. 6–7, transl. by Smith 1992, 49).

Libanius. I have no doubt that Gregory had not read it because he made no answer to Libanius' having accused the Christians of the attempted murder of Julian, although he discussed several other less provocative versions of Julian's death, which he heard of or knew from other sources. Hence, I suggest that Gregory finished his orations in the spring of 364 before Libanius' epitaph was published. In spring of 363 Gregory visited his friend Basil of Caesarea, showed him his yet unpublished orations and inscribed afterwards at the end of the fifth speech: "These words Basil and Gregory send you, 'those opponents and counterworkers of your scheme,' as you wanted to call them and persuade others to do the same".<sup>33</sup>

To sum up all the presented evidence concerning genre bending in the speeches against Julian I made the following table.

<b>Oratio 4</b>				<b>Plausible date &amp; motives of the composition of the orations</b>
№	section	§§	genres	
1	προοίμιον	1–20	πανήγυρις ὕμνος (ἐπινίκιον)	363–364, Julian passed away
2	διήγησις	21–99		
2.1	ἀνατροφή	21–29	ψόγος σύγκρισις (24–26)	362 Anti-encomium
2.2	ἐπιτηδεύματα	30–45	ψόγος κατηγορία / ἀπολογία θρῆνος σύγκρισις (39–42)	362 Anti-encomium
2.3	πράξεις	46–99	ψόγος θρῆνος κατηγορία	362–363 Anti-encomium
3	πίστεις	100–123	κατηγορία ἔπαινος	362–363 Apologetic motives, polemics against Julian's works
<b>Oratio 5</b>				
1	προοίμιον	1–2	πανήγυρις	363–364
2	διήγησις	3–18		
2.3	τοῦ θεοῦ πράξεις	3–18	ψόγος ἔπαινος	363–364

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Greg., *Or.* 5.39: "These words Basil and Gregory send you, 'those opponents and counterworkers of your scheme,' as you wanted to call them and persuade others to do the same — doing us honour by what you did threaten us with, and moving us all the more to piety — persons who being well known for their life, discourse, and mutual affection, and with whom you have been acquainted ever since our common residence in Greece..."

			σύγκρισις (16–18)	
4	ἐπίλογος	19–42	ψόγος ὕμνος θρῆνος ἐπινίκιος ἀοιδή παραινετικὸς λόγος	364

### Instead of the conclusion: Gregory's *panēgyris* and rhetorical tradition

The exceptionally multi-coloured literary tissue of Gregory's speeches has puzzled many scholars. What appears most intriguing to me is why Gregory would so obviously try to contradict and almost re-write Libanius' encomiums in conformity with epideictic manuals and, at the same time, so openly violate the genre of invective by mixing in his speeches the features of court eloquence? What were his general methodological views on the mimetic mechanism of literature and education, which could explain such behaviour? Is it safe to affirm with Julian that the purpose of Christian rhetoricians was to defile, ridicule and damage the classical heritage, motivated by a destructive agonistic *mimēsis*? A first glance at the genre bending of Gregory's speeches seemingly proves the truthfulness of this claim. However, this thesis does not explain why Gregory so thoroughly followed epideictic manuals if his only intention was to disprove Libanius and distort rhetorical decorum.

I believe that Gregory brought together various typical features of epideictic (praise to God and invective of Julian) and court eloquence in order to create a vivid and persuasive political speech. I think that he used the structure of panegyric as, *sui generis*, an umbrella genre. Such an action was not scandalous in late antiquity, because by this time the term πανήγυρις had acquired a broader meaning than it had in the classical epoch. Thus, Isocrates categorized panegyric speech as a political kind of eloquence (i.e. τὸ συμβουλευτικὸν γένος) and juxtaposed it with epideictic fiction<sup>34</sup> (i.e. παίγιον). In the fourth century BC, a change of political regime deprived Greek rhetoricians of their influential political status. In the fourth century AD, after the legalization of Christianity, Christian bishops to a certain extent regained their influence as public speakers. In the rhetorical manuals of late antiquity and the Byzantine epoch, the term πανηγυρικὸν γένος, formerly associated with political eloquence, acquired a special connotation of solemn public speech and began to be used instead of ἐπιδεικτικὸν γένος.<sup>35</sup> In my opinion, this shift shows that in the Imperial period political speeches drifted away from the court eloquence of democratic times and took on the features of a more ceremonial and imposing epideictic eloquence. This change reflected

<sup>34</sup> In the introduction to his *Panegyric* Isocrates characterized the ideal speech as elegantly elaborated and having a great public importance: "I have singled out as the highest kind of oratory that which deals with the greatest affairs and, while best displaying the ability of those who speak, brings most profit to those who hear; and this oration is of that character" (cf. *Paneg.*, 4.4–5, transl. by Norlin 2016, available on-line).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Hermogenes, *Περὶ ἰδεῶν* 1.1.53; Troilus Soph., *Prolegomena in Hermogenis Artem Rhetoricam* 53.33; Nicolaus Rhet., *Progumnasmata* 48.11; Stephanus Gramm., *In Artem Rhetoricam Commentaria* 281.27; Hermias Phil., *In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia* 219.13; Psellus Michael, *Poemata* 7.10; Doxapatres Joannes, *Prolegomena in Hermogenis Librum Περὶ ἰδεῶν* 14.423.15; Eustathius Philol., *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem* 1.249.23.

not only the alteration of political regime but also the results of the stabilization and systematization of rhetorical education.

Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, it is no wonder that Gregory composed his orations within the framework of a panegyric setting, that is to say bearing in mind both the socio-political and solemn epideictic potential of the genre. Thus, at the beginning of the fourth oration he introduced his work as praise to God for a just punishment of Julian (cf. *Or.* 4.5). In tune with Isocrates,<sup>36</sup> Gregory depicted a large assembly – *panêgyris*,<sup>37</sup> gathered for the celebration of this glorious event, the triumph of divine justice (cf. *Or.* 5.35). In his orations Gregory created a solemn atmosphere of divine presence. Twelve times throughout his orations he applied various derivatives of *πανηγυρ*-<sup>38</sup>. These signs of epideictic eloquence primarily appear in the introduction of the fourth oration and in the conclusion of the fifth oration. It is likely that Gregory started working on the fourth oration within the invective genre and after the Emperor's death added the fifth oration and edited the previous one and transformed the whole composition into a peculiar version of panegyric.

Suppose my hypothesis about an umbrella panegyric setting of the orations against Julian is true, the question still remains: how can we reconstruct Gregory's view of *mimêsis* taking into account his frivolous genre bending? I venture to propose that Gregory's treatment of classical *decorum* was, despite being innovative, nevertheless not enough to break with tradition. On the contrary, I believe that he took a creative impetus from the works of Isocrates and Aristotle. Isocrates insisted on the preeminent significance of politically charged panegyric speeches. So deeply was he in favour of socio-political topics that he even touched upon them in his epideictic fiction, such as the encomia to Helen and to the Egyptian cannibal king Busiris. In these speeches he devoted particular attention to rather boring and meticulous socio-cultural contemplations, which was an odd thing to do in an encomium. Guided by didactic zeal, Isocrates meant his eloquence to play an important social role in the education and public affairs of his fellow-citizens. Aristotle shared with Isocrates a positive view of the benefits of good fictional literature in public education, yet the literary requirements of Aristotle were much more demanding than those of Isocrates. As I have mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Aristotelian ideal was not merely a beautifully written didactic speech on a political topic but a correctly composed tragic plot, capable of showing the hidden meaning of historical facts.

If bearing this in mind we look again at Gregory's orations, it appears that we may start to discern the rationale of his mimetic design. Gregory conveniently combined epideictic and political *topoi* in order to, on the one hand, solemnly praise God for a just punishment of the apostate and to lament about his eternally lost soul, and at the same time, to argue with the laws and actions of Julian thereby giving a lesson of improper political conduct. Several times throughout his speeches Gregory acknowledged an instruction for

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<sup>36</sup> In his first letter to Dionysius, Isocrates noticed that large gatherings of people (sc. *πανηγύρεις*) are suitable (cf. *1 Ad Dion.* 6.2–3) for epideictic speakers.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Greg., *Or.* 4.12: “we have purified with the word the plenitude of our chorus”. At the beginning of the fourth oration Gregory exclaimed: “and in order that my proclamation may be greater, every power of heaven, all the angels” (cf. *Or.* 4.1).

<sup>38</sup> The term *πανήγυρις* is featured in *Or.* 4.8.1, 4.11.2, 4.69.9, 4.71.25, 4.96.12, *Or.* 5.16.9; *πανηγυρίζειν* in *Or.* 4.82.12; 5.29.34; *πανηγυρισμός* in *Or.* 4.7.1. *πανηγυριστής* in *Or.* 5.35.34.

future generations as a chief motive of his speeches. Hence, I believe that his agonistic mimetic regard spread no further than the fourth century AD and had as its goal not a fatal destruction of classical rhetorical *decorum* but the disproving of Libanius' witnesses in an innovative quasi-traditional and didactic way. In view of these considerations I assume that the stylistic, social and educational rationale of Gregory's imitative practice implied a constructive educational intention to creatively employ common rhetorical *topoi* in order to maintain continuity with tradition and to manifest his literary skills.

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