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Metaphrasis: A New Chapter of Textual (and Material) Scholarship

Review Essay of Anne P. Alwis, Martin Hinterberger & Elisabeth Schiffer (eds), *Metaphrasis in Byzantine Literature*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021, ISBN: 978-2-503-59344-9,

Stavroula Constantinou & Christian Høgel (eds), *Metaphrasis: A Byzantine Concept of Rewriting and its Hagiographical Products*. Leiden: Brill 2021, ISBN: 978-90-04-39217-5, and

Ivana Jevtić & Ingela Nilsson (eds), *Spoilation as Translation: Medieval Worlds in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Convivium Supplementum. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2021, ISBN: 978-80-210-9923-4.

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The scholarly titles on *metaphrasis* proliferated in recent years, and with good reason. Suspicions about their necessity disappear when we face a vast amount of material utilized in these studies and discover that more remains to be examined. Besides already published volumes, some of which will be reviewed in what follows, others are being prepared or are currently forthcoming.¹ The present essay addresses only a few selected titles within the rich scope of recent contributions.

The three edited volumes reviewed here, published in 2021, target the subjects of *metaphrasis*, rewriting, and reuse. In what follows, we will clarify whether these concepts should be equated. Of the three, two volumes have the term *metaphrasis* in their title. The volumes by Anne P. Alwis, Martin Hinterberger, and Elisabeth Schiffer, and Stavroula Constantinou and Christian Høgel go deeply to the heart of textual *metaphrasis*. The third volume, by Ivana Jevtić and Ingela Nilsson, does not exclusively address textual *metaphrasis*; it presents the case studies

of textual and material reuse covering a wide span from antiquity to modern times. It includes a variety of source materials.

Opening with an example of spolia – the reused pieces of tombstones now placed in the courtyard of the Monastery of the Zoodochos Pege (Balikli Kilise) in Istanbul, where they are used as a pavement – the introduction of the edited volume by Jevtić and Nilsson first provides their definition.² According to Dale Kinney, spolia are “artifacts incorporated into a setting culturally or chronologically different from that of their creation” (p. 12).³ The volume aims to study “interconnections between material and textual/literary cultures” and, further, to “uncover the broader artistic and cultural implications behind the phenomena of reuse in conjunction with the translation” (p. 13). Since spolia have tremendous potential to stimulate empathy, they “can create and carry their narratives across time and space” (p. 15). The volume promises that studying the notion of reuse helps us explore the entanglement of objects and people and reflect on empathy, identity, and memory (p. 15).

The choice of the three volumes’ subjects seems perfectly reasonable. The studies of rewriting and reuse may not have been as systematic in Byzantine studies previously; however, they thrived elsewhere. The calls for such studies are dated even earlier. To name a few of these calls, a French translation theorist, André Lefevere, who worked within Germanic studies during the twentieth century, stated that “the study of rewritings should no longer be neglected.”⁴ Paul Zumthor discussed the concept of “mouvance,”⁵ while Bernard Cerquiglini argued that “medieval writing does not produce variants; it is in itself a variance.”⁶

The volumes’ themes directly respond to the fact that variation probably characterized the majority, if not the entire textual transmission of medieval texts, including most, if not all, medieval literary genres.

² Jevtić and Nilsson 2021, 11–17.

³ Kinney 2006, 233.

⁴ Lefevere 1992.

⁵ Zumthor 1972.

⁶ Cerquiglini 1989.

The volumes about *metaphrasis* within Byzantine studies emerged shyly since the turn of the millennium.⁷ Nowadays, they experience their long-awaited and deserved avalanche. Recently, we could read from Stefanos Efthymiadis that “All Writing is Rewriting!” Stavroula Constantinou also restated that “rewriting is, as theorists such as Gérard Genette and Edward Said have shown, not only the *sine qua non* of originality, but also the very condition of literature.”⁸ *Metaphrasis* also earned its place among the three areas of study within Byzantine studies, praised for having implemented new theories and crossing traditional boundaries of philological research, according to the address of Ingela Nilsson at the XXIV *International Congress of Byzantine Studies* in Venice in August 2022.⁹ Nilsson also argued that “any artistic action at any time in history is based on recycling.”¹⁰ Scholars nowadays rightly suspect that the extent of variation within textual transmission in the Middle Ages likely surpasses our current knowledge of it.

However, one essential question needs to be clarified at the outset. The generous contribution to the scholarship has inevitably led us to the diverse definitions of *metaphrasis*. Judging by the reviewed volumes, the field is currently characterized by terminological havoc. The three volumes do not define *metaphrasis* in the same way, which necessitates the concept’s further refinement. This essay, which embarks on reviewing the three volumes, begins exactly from this definition. Before proceeding, it must be stressed that the edited volumes have a few exclusive authors (especially those by Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, and Constantinou and Høgel). As recognizable names in the field, several contributing authors reappear from one volume to another. At times, their views may also diverge in different volumes.

The three discourse subjects emerge in the volumes concerning the definition of *metaphrasis*. The first relates to how the three concepts, *metaphrasis* – *rewriting* – *translation*, are defined by different authors. Some questions to raise are: Could *metaphrasis* be equaled to rewriting?

⁷ Høgel 2002.

⁸ Constantinou 2021, 327.

⁹ Nilsson 2022, 141–160.

¹⁰ Nilsson 2021, 21–37.

Does one of these concepts have a broader meaning than the other, capturing the other concept within its meaning in this way? Is there another concept that could be added to the current *metaphrasis*–rewriting dichotomy? How does *translation* fit into the defining scheme? The second subject concerns whether *metaphrasis* is seen as a literary genre or a writing technique. The third question targets the relationship between *metaphrasis* and *paraphrasis*. To answer these questions, we now turn to the contributions to seek their understanding and definition of the concepts.

The volume by Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer starts from the idea that *metaphrasis* is “the transposition of a certain text to a different stylistic and/or linguistic level” (p. 9). The editors note that since antiquity, *metaphrasis* tended to be an umbrella term covering the rewriting of texts within the same language and their translations from other languages. It makes *metaphrasis* an encompassing term, which comprises rewriting within the same language and translation. Somewhat further, however, they suggest that *metaphrasis* presents one of the forms of rewriting, indicating that rewriting could include forms other than *metaphrastic* rewriting (p. 11). They pose a question of whether *metaphrasis* is “an all-encompassing concept like ‘rewriting’” and how far the concept of *metaphrasis* can stretch, as well as whether we should restrict the application of *metaphrasis* to specific forms of rewriting (p. 23). Such queries are legitimate in the emerging field with an unbound usage of terminology, especially as an introduction to further debate. The editors do not promise to resolve all the dilemmas, leaving some to future researchers. Part of the complexity in understanding the concepts may be in the provisional use of the term “rewriting,” whose meaning alternates from a specific to a more general one. Unlike it, “metaphrasis” is commonly understood as a technical term with a specific, precise meaning.

In the same volume by Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, Staffan Wahlgren contributes to this subject by distinguishing two different uses of *metaphrasis* in different genres. One implies the rewriting of hagiography in the style of Symeon Metaphrastes, presupposing a more refined form (p. 127). The other comprehends the late Byzantine

rewriting of essential pieces of historiography (of Anna Komnene, Niketas Choniates, and Nikephoros Blemmydes), aiming for a simpler form. Notably, Wahlgren calls these rewritten historiographies *translations* (p. 127). Further, in the same volume, Corinne Jouanno, discussing the *Alexander Romance*, poses the question of whether the term “*metaphrasis* could be fitting” for the revisions of this work (p. 153).

On the same subject of *metaphrasis* – *rewriting* – *translation*, Stavroula Constantinou, in her introduction to the edited volume with Høgel, starts by defining rewriting as both the inter- and intralingual reworking of a previous text by using Roman Jakobson’s terminology (p. 3).¹¹ Rewriting comprises both reworkings within the same language (probably an analogue to *metaphrasis*) and translations; in this way, rewriting is an umbrella term for both kinds of mentioned textual activities. We draw from the book’s title that *metaphrasis* in this volume refers to the Byzantine concept of rewriting. In her introduction, Constantinou uses the word *metaphrasis* only in a clearly defined and precise meaning within a specific context. Throughout the chapter, she instead utilizes the term “rewriting” in a general sense of textual reworking. In the same volume, Daria Resh stresses the difference between *metaphrasis* and rewriting by saying that *metaphrasis* in hagiography was a distinct form of rewriting from the ninth century. Regardless of its prehistory - since the term *metaphrasis* was known and used earlier - it has become associated specifically with hagiography from the ninth century.

Constantinou provides probably the most comprehensive overview of the different forms of rewriting from antiquity (“from Homer to Nonnos of Panopolis, to Symeon Metaphrastes, to Boccaccio, and Margaret Atwood,” p. 4). We draw from it that *metaphrasis* has a long history of use, but it also meant different things for different authors. For example, Suda considered *metaphrasis* to be, among other things,

¹¹ The volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer also stresses that both Jakobson and Genette, as theorists, largely contribute to the field with their fine-tuned terminologies. Constantinou herself, further in the introduction, thoroughly elaborates on Genette’s terminology (10–11). Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer 2021, 10–11; Jakobson 1959, 232–239.

interlingual translation, while Michael Synkellos used it in the sense of intralingual translation (p. 19). Constantinou introduces a broad spectrum of Genette's terms useful for the study of rewriting while displaying the history of its understanding. Some concepts she mentions could be equalized to *metaphrasis*, and many are understood as rewritings of different sorts.

To this debate, she introduces the term *translation*. With the help of Genette's terminology, Constantinou introduces rewriting techniques to be translation, stylistic changes, and changes in form (p. 18). She sees translation as a widely spread form of rewriting in premodern times (p. 21–22). Agreeing with Forrai that “both author and translator are treated as rewriters” (p. 9),¹² and with Bartlett that translation “is one of the earliest and most dramatic forms of hagiographical rewriting” (p. 50), she allows a broader meaning to rewriting than translation.

The volume of Jevtić and Nilsson is relevant for this debate since it promises to explore the relation between spoliation and translation. Nilsson starts with two concepts within Byzantine literature, imitation and reception, offering alternative and more valuable terms - spoliation and translation. Spoliation is transformation on a formal and technical level. At the same time, translation (*metaphrasis*) is transfer or translocation on the cultural/ideological level (p. 22). However, “such a clear distinction” of spoliation and translation as technical versus cultural-ideological notions “is impossible to uphold” (p. 29). Notably, Nilsson uses the term *translation* synonymously with *metaphrasis*.

In the same volume, Emelie Hallenberg devotes ample space to *translation* when discussing the reception of a Komnenian novel in Early Modern France. She finds similarities between translation processes and using spolia in architecture (p. 179). According to Even-Zohar and his polysystem theory, which she employs, “translations have different impacts on the target culture/literature, depending on the status of the source culture/literature.” She considers the translator the same as the author since he adapts his work to the new cultural milieu (polysystem) and the target audience (skopos) when translating. She concludes the

¹² “A medieval author/compiler [...], as well as a translator [...], would all use the same methods of rewriting.” Forrai 2018, 35.

article by posing a question of equating translation and spoliation when an original text has been liberally, almost brutally, transformed into something else. With it, she comes as close as possible to the definition in the volume's title that "spoliation is translation."

Although currently not used extensively in the study of textual *metaphrasis* beyond the reviewed volume, "spoliation" may be one of the concepts to gain more extensive ground as this field of studies progresses, in a similar way as is already used in the article of Baukje van den Berg.¹³ In her article, Hallenberg implements "remodeling" as another term to successfully apply to a variety of sources, both textual and architectural (although it is mainly used in this book for architectural monuments). We certainly do not necessitate further terms suggestive of this area of study. Nonetheless, this is not to say that they do not need further discussion and more regulated use. It remains to be seen whether spoliation equals translation or it could be seen only as an act of translation, which is not necessarily the same thing. Which of the terms has a broader meaning, and which term could be taking in the meaning of the other? Nilsson sees the two concepts mainly as distinct. In the conclusion of her article, she explains that spoliation can be significant, but it can also be random; translation, on the other hand, must presume agency in all cases (p. 33). The dichotomy between the two requires resolution in the future, in the same way as the concepts of rewriting and *metaphrasis* do.

The volume by Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer further promises the discussion on whether *metaphrasis* is a writing technique or a literary genre (p. 23). The editors refer to Marc Lauxtermann, who, having published previously on the subject, is inclined toward the former opinion. His views certainly oppose those of Daria Resh (although the two scholars work on different material).¹⁴ Resh leads in her argument that *metaphrasis* is a genre, based on the early passions entitled *metaphraseis* after they had been reworked in Byzantium. In her view, "the Byzantine use of the term suggests that *metaphrasis* was considered as a distinct genre." (p. 43) In this volume, Resh seeks the author of the

¹³ van den Berg 2021, 117–131.

¹⁴ Lauxtermann 2019, 227; Resh 2015, 754–787; Resh 2018.

first *metaphraseis* in Byzantine hagiography, finding it in the person of John, bishop of Sardis (ninth century). Resh grounds her argument in an in-depth textual and prosopographic analysis contextualized in a specific historical context. In the volume edited by Constantinou and Høgel, Resh conducts a detailed analysis of the concept of *metaphrasis*, going into the “literary phenomenology of it in its historical evolution” (p. 142). She expounds on various rewriting forms; not all of them were *metaphrasis* (p. 144). *Metaphrasis* was not “a constant feature of hagiography” (p. 144). It is a distinct form of rewriting from the ninth century because, unlike homiletic or encomiastic rewritings, “it introduces the art of storytelling into elite hagiographic discourse (pp. 144, 175). *Metaphrasis* is the elevation of narrative rather than the simple style elevation (pp. 174-175). One can draw from her argumentation what Resh has been stating elsewhere: that *metaphrasis* was understood as a distinct genre. The case of John of Sardis’ writings, however, also shows that *metaphrasis*, which “may have begun as a technique, was on its way to becoming a literary genre.” She restricts herself from stating that this could be said for the entire metaphrastic production (p. 175).

Interestingly, in the introduction of her volume with Høgel, Constantinou, based on the previous definition by Christian Moraru, stated that “rewriting is not a particular literary genre, but a mode employed for the production of texts belonging to all major premodern genres”¹⁵ (p. 9). The confrontation of the presented views regarding whether *metaphrasis* is a literary genre may also result from the diverse definitions of *metaphrasis* in different historical periods and contexts, as elaborated broadly above. While some authors presuppose its more general meaning, others solely assume the term’s specific use. Besides, the debate has evolved around whether we should cling to the textual titles or investigate their textual features, particularly compared to the earlier versions.

Finally, a few authors touched upon a neglected question of the relation between *paraphrasis* and *metaphrasis*. Constantinou probably dedicates most attention to it in the introduction of her edited volume, bringing

¹⁵ Moraru 2001.

out *metaphrasis* and *paraphrasis* as the two most common Greek terms for rewriting (p. 17). They are often treated as exact synonyms (p. 17). When *metaphrasis* became a more dominant word for rewriting with Symeon Metaphrastes in Byzantium, a possible historical injustice was done to the other term, which was gradually neglected. In the volume by Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, the editors agree that *metaphrasis* may not have been clearly distinguished from *paraphrasis* in the past; the two terms may have had the same meaning (p. 10).¹⁶ In the Byzantine era, the terms continued to be used. However, *metaphrasis* was probably more common (p. 10). In the volume of Jevtić and Nilsson, Margaret Mullett restates the significance of *paraphrase* besides *metaphrasis* (p. 100). Possibly, the two concepts will attain more thorough consideration and confrontation in future debates.

The questions of the metaphrastic method and the purpose of *metaphrasis* occupy the central part of the discussed volumes. Scholars have suggested an extensive list of points related to the method and its various purposes, from the most apparent linguistic reworking, through stylistic elaborations, to the ideological and political components of *metaphrasis*. Anne Alwis remarked in the volume of Constantinou and Høgel, based on the study of the *Passion of Tatiana of Rome*, that the purpose of *metaphrasis*, at least on the surface, seems to have been “a linguistic upgrade” (p. 176). The introduction to the volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer emphasizes that the linguistic aspect of *metaphrasis* is exceptionally pronounced in historiographical *metaphraseis* (p. 16). The same introduction refers to Bernard Flusin as the scholar who, in his previous work, emphasized that linguistic reworking was the core characteristic of *metaphrasis* (p. 23).¹⁷ Besides, Ziliacus is referred to as a scholar who “demonstrated that the replacement of certain categories of words – particularly Latin loanwords – is an essential part of the transformation of Symeon Metaphrastes’ texts” (p. 112).

¹⁶ Faulkner 2019, 210–220.

¹⁷ Flusin 2011, 94–95.

The same introduction to the volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer discusses the methods of *metaphrasis* in specific textual examples to be stylistic elaborations and transpositions to a higher stylistic level (p. 12). “The new version of a text could closely follow the overall structure and syntax of the older version,” but with lexical replacements and syntactical adaptations (p. 23). In other cases, it is “a more remote relationship between *metaphrasis* and model where word-for-word correspondence cannot be established” (p. 12). In the same introduction, the provisions of *metaphrasis* are examined: Is it a linguistic/stylistic dependence on an existing text? Is it a transposition to a different genre or an ideological adaptation (p. 23)? The introduction refers to Genette’s techniques of abbreviation, omission, addition, replacement, and repetition as useful in the study of *metaphrasis* (p. 10). Constantinou likewise thoroughly elaborated on various of Genette’s categories as indispensable in the study of *metaphrasis* in the introduction of her edited volume.

Martin Hinterberger’s article in the volume by Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer discusses the differences in vocabulary between high-style and lower-style literature, where classicizing vocabulary is one of the most apparent discrepancies (p. 109). He tests the model of high- and low-style on *metaphraseis* and the original texts (p. 110). In some cases, *metaphrasis* was directed from a high-style literature to a low-style register. Nevertheless, the same phenomena could be observed when studying both directions (high- to low-style and vice versa): specific morphological categories are diachronically characteristic for the given styles (p. 125). In his article in the volume of Constantinou and Høgel, Hinterberger discusses the phenomenon of *metaphrasis* in the fourteenth century on the three thus-far little explored authors and their encomia (Kalothetos, Kabasilas, and Makres). Focusing mainly on stylistic and philological analysis, Hinterberger notices the replacement of lower-style lexemes with high-style words (p. 322), the unstable transformations of the genre (p. 322), the expansions of the rewritten texts as rhetorical imaginations (p. 291), amplifications of praise of their saints’ virtues at the expense of their biographical details (p. 295), and the “generic transformation generated through linguistic refurbishing” (p.

304). Much of the language of the rewritten texts becomes classicizing and rhetorical. Some transformations are also ideological, fitting the fourteenth-century standards of holiness and sanctity.

Further in the volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, Laura Franco goes to the heart of metaphrastic rewriting, examining rewriting from pre-metaphrastic to metaphrastic versions of the *Passions of St. James the Persian*, *St. Plato*, and the *Life of St. Hilarion*. In a detailed textual analysis and with the use of manuscripts of the *Passion of St. James*, she observes the categories of revisions by implementing Genette's terminology as amplifications, shortenings, omits, condensing, limiting dialogues, direct speeches, and the first person, and inserting "transitional" or explanatory sentences (p. 72). The avoidance of Latin borrowings also becomes a trend of metaphrastic hagiography and the omission of prologues in the case of some manuscripts.

Laura Franco's other article in the volume of Constantinou and Høgel discusses how Symeon Metaphrastes and his team provided the psychological analysis of the characters. Comparing pre-metaphrastic and metaphrastic versions, she focuses on the diverse aspects of the text, including portraits of the saint and the persecutor, through philological and stylistic analysis. Symeon Metaphrastes tended to amplify pre-metaphrastic texts with rhetorical devices, spotlighting the emotional and psychological attitudes of the protagonists. The scenes detrimental to the saint's dignity are purged (p. 266). However, Franco also concludes that Symeon's project was a collective work since no systematic rewriting strategy could be detected when one examines a larger body of documents.

Further, in the volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, Lev Lukhovitskiy discusses the typical features of Palaiologan hagiography rewriting to be "a transposition from one genre category to another, the elimination of major plot lines, and the fusing of texts that belonged to different hagiographical dossiers into one narrative" (p. 157). Wahlgren expounds in the same volume on the philological analysis of the base historiographical text and its rewriting, assuming that similar textual handling practices were conducted in the other rewritten texts. Writers of historiographical continuations found themselves in a situation similar to that of a metaphrast (p. 137).

Resh adds to the subject of the method and the metaphrastic purpose by distinguishing several types of textual reworking: elaboration of style to a higher linguistic register, revisions to satisfy specific communities, the emergence of abridged versions, and the outburst of hagiographical production which relied on earlier hagiographies. Not all of these were considered *metaphraseis*. Only the fifth category, bearing the title *metaphrasis*, could be named as such (p. 145).

Further, in the same volume, Robert Wiśniewski emphasizes that the theological adaptation had a prominent place in textual revision. He discusses the texts translated from East to West, which were adapted to become more valuable and accessible but also changed heroes, settings, and meaning. These stories were reworked to promote theological views or specific monastic lifestyles. On the same subject, the volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer referred to Symeon Paschalides' note that "the primary objective of the hagiographical *metaphrasis* was to provide a dogmatically correct text, while the literary aspect of *metaphrasis* as a stylistic upgrade was its second objective" (p. 19).

In the volume of Constantinou and Høgel, Alwis builds up on the topic by discussing the ideological component of *metaphrasis*. Depending on the circumstances, rewritten hagiography could become an ideological vehicle in a given time or period. Studying the rewritten *Passion of Tatiana of Rome*, Alwis provides five possible options as to why the text was rewritten: to promote a rewriter, to improve its style to be read on her feast day, as an iconophile text, as an iconodule text, and as a polemic against Islam (p. 198). It is possible since "what various audiences thought and felt as they read or listened to the text over centuries is as important as the author's intention" (p. 177).

The introduction to the volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer also stresses that stylistic and linguistic upgrades could lead to the *aristocratisation* of hagiography; the ideological aspect of *metaphrasis* and the political dimension of hagiography in Byzantium are certainly their prominent features. In the same volume, Lev Lukhovitskiy, discussing Nikephorus Gregoras and the Paleiologan *metaphraseis* in Late Byzantium, notices their emphasis on the omission of unessential historical details, emotions of the heroes, human relations (for example,

true friendship), psychology, and shifting the point of view (p. 158). Lukhovitskiy's general method of placing texts into their historical contexts and observing their ideological side elsewhere works here to explain specific trends of the given time. He notices the added emotional aspects to the text and its development of psychological components, while miracles receive less attention (p. 164). We can also see a scientific digression about the nature of visions, another addition to the given time, aligning with the skepticism of saintly endeavors. Gregoras sees saints primarily as beings who felt as natural as other humans (p. 174).

Further, the second article of Constantinou in her edited volume with Høgel is the only one in the three volumes that elaborates on how rewritten texts influence the cult of saints. In the scholarship, the cult of saints is a well-studied and loaded subject; nevertheless, it cannot be ignored since it presents an essential aspect of any saint's sanctity. Constantinou here investigated the Pege miracle collection written by Nikephoros Xanthopoulos and suggested that it was rewritten due to the revival of Mariolatry in the Palaiologan period and the wish to attract pilgrims (p. 331).

Finally, a few scholars raise a much-desired question of the purpose and use of rewritten texts. In her volume with Alwis and Hinterberger, Elisabeth Schiffer poses the question of the purpose of the different versions of John Chrysostom's *Life*. The appearance of many versions in a short amount of time is confusing; were they meant for private or public (liturgical) use? In the editors' words, when discussing John Chrysostom's hagiography, Elisabeth Schiffer "goes into the minds of the revisers" (p. 21). Anne Alwis, as was already partially mentioned, argued in the volume of Constantinou and Høgel that the audiences' impressions were equally important as the author's intention. Alwis rounds off this subject by saying that "we can see that rewritten hagiography creates new ways to think about the purpose of literature, the roles of the author and audience, and the transmission of cultural memory by examining intent and by being aware of the audience's ability to find meaning" (p. 179). These Alwis' lines could be taken as a point of departure in future research of this study area.

All the conclusions drawn thus far and in what follows inevitably depend on the body of material that the volumes employ to answer *metaphrasis*-related questions. Their choices inevitably differ. The volumes of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, and Constantinou and Høgel focus on the analysis of textual *metaphrasis*. The volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer includes a variety of genres; besides hagiography, we can find historiographical rewriting, chronicles, and romances, with an occasional focus on manuscripts. This volume treats exclusively Byzantine literature. The volume of Constantinou and Høgel allows the analysis of several Latin hagiographies besides Byzantine hagiography, beneficial tales, Sayings of the Fathers, miracle collections, and synaxaria.

Unlike them, the volume of Jevtić and Nilsson mainly, but not exclusively, focuses on material evidence, aligning with the definition that reuse, as a material analogue to textual *metaphrasis*, goes beyond textual. It is led by the editors' premise that "all culture, material and textual, can be seen as palimpsestic" (p. 17). In this volume, only Margaret Mullett and Baukje van den Berg present their textual case studies about the Byzantine tragic trilogy *Christos Paschon* and the *Commentaries on Homer* by Eustathios of Thessaloniki, among the majority of works focusing on visual, material, and architectural evidence. This volume includes significantly broader material in comparison to the other two, comprising various historical periods, from antiquity until the modern times, and broader geographical areas, from the Roman Empire, ancient Greece, Egypt, Byzantium, and eastern Mediterranean to medieval Serbian Kosovo, Seljuk Konya, modern Turkey, and as far as Early Modern France.

Analogously to the body of material employed in the volumes, the views on the critical question of the extent to which medieval literature was exposed to *metaphrasis* naturally diverge. The volumes certainly do not fully answer the question of the range – as the complete answer thus far would be impossible to provide. However, according to the material they work on, they acknowledge utilizing of the metaphrastic practice in various genres. The volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer argues that *metaphrasis* appears in a range of genres (p. 9). The historiographical literature was likewise exposed to *metaphrasis* (pp.

15–17). In this introduction, the editors use Lauxtermann’s formulation that rewriting is deeply engrained in the social fabric and affects all forms of discourse” (p. 17).¹⁸ Also, Wahlgren discussed the chronicles as *metaphraseis* in the same volume. At the same time, Jouanno addressed the *Alexander Romance*, another genre of literature, in connection to the same notion.

When it comes to the volume of Constantinou and Høgel, Constantinou argues in the introduction in favor of the pervasive and omnipresent rewriting activity performed on all significant premodern genres (pp. 9–10). In her other article of the same volume, she restates that rewriting is a common phenomenon in Byzantine literature, not only hagiography but also in historiography, hymnography, homiletics, romances, and didactic literature (p. 329). Nevertheless, she clarifies that “not all writing is rewriting in the same sense” (p. 6). The *metaphrasis* of hagiography and the *metaphrasis* of historiography thus could differ.

In the same volume, some other scholars are likewise sensitive to the mentioned nuances. John Wortley noted that the scribes felt free to transform tales, understood as “more of an ‘oral’ literature,” but not the Sayings of the Fathers on an equal scale. Some variation was occasionally present in the Sayings of the Fathers, “but nothing like the scale on which Tales tend to be rewritten and reordered” (p. 89). Furthermore, Anne Alwis acknowledged that despite the standard underlined message that everything is metaphrased in medieval culture, “the Bible, homilies, hymns, religious treatises, novels, epics, poetry, panegyrics, and drama were not as rewritten and revised to the same extent as saints’ lives and passions” (pp. 177-178). Alwis’ statement seems like a fair assumption of the scope of rewriting in the diverse genres of literature. This direction of study certainly needs more comprehensive research to claim with certainty which genres and to which extent were exposed to *metaphrasis* (and what kind of *metaphrasis*?).

When it comes to expounding the history of *metaphrasis* in the given volumes, Constantinou and Resh take the lead. In the introduction of the volume she edited with Høgel, Constantinou writes that the

¹⁸ Lauxtermann 2019, 227.

“urge to retell” dates from antiquity (p. 4). She provides probably the most comprehensive history of *metaphrasis* from antiquity on, widely encompassing into her analysis all rewriting, including *paraphrasing* and *metaphrasis*, from Homer to Symeon Metaphrastes and from Boccaccio to contemporary authors (p. 4). When writing the history of rewriting, Constantinou has in mind a broader phenomenon than Resh.

In the volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, Resh discusses the early history of, as she calls them, (Byzantine) *metaphraseis*. Her article seeks the author of the first *metaphrasis*, finding it in the ninth-century writer John of Sardis, who wrote the earliest dated case of *metaphrasis* in Byzantine hagiography. In the volume of Constantinou and Høgel, Resh returns to the earliest examples of *metaphrasis*, focusing on the considerable evidence before Symeon Metaphrastes. Both volumes targeting textual *metaphrasis* provide an excellent introduction to the phenomenon’s history. Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer also review the historical development of *metaphrasis* in Byzantine hagiography from its beginnings until late Byzantium (pp. 12–15).

Among the most noteworthy points in the volumes are innovative methodological and theoretical approaches implemented into the studies of *metaphrasis* as suggestions of how to proceed in this area of study. Several of them evolve around narratology and intertextuality. Being a pioneer of introducing narratology into Byzantine studies, Ingela Nilsson here briefly revises some of Genette’s practical concepts in the article of her edited volume with Jevtić before she proceeds to stress that “she remains critical of how classical philology tends to use (Julia) Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality, limiting it to textual relations and ignoring her emphasis on the social function of culture” (p. 22). The concept of intertextuality may indeed have detached within Byzantine studies from its original meaning as in Kristeva’s and Genette’s writings and obtained its own “afterlife” in a somewhat modified sense. Nevertheless, Nilsson’s appeal to reconsider and modify how the concept is used does not deny the concept’s usefulness. Constantinou also, as was stressed, thoroughly elaborated on Genette’s terminology (pp. 10–18), including formal transformations, narrative transformations, and quantitative transformations (p. 11), to be taken as essential in the future study of *metaphrasis*.

Further, in his article in the volume of Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, Christian Høgel emphasized a much-needed incorporation of manuscript study into the study of *metaphrasis*. It is an essential but occasionally overlooked fact that hagiography in Byzantium was most commonly found in collections aligned by liturgical calendars and according to the saints' feast days. In this sense, both standardization of the collections and textual *metaphrasis* need to be considered. Also, his call for a much-needed study of texts concerning the time in which they were read, copied, and rewritten is likewise appreciated (p. 30).

Several other articles suggest insightful theoretical viewpoints when examining different *metaphrased* texts. In the volume of Constantinou and Høgel, Andria Andreou discusses the legend of Mary of Egypt, employing the approach of Jacques Lacan and his sensory realization, measuring the different levels of hearing and seeing/vision in the different versions. Analyzing Mary and Zosimas in the Greek text written by Sophronios and the other versions in Byzantine, Latin, and vernacular Western traditions, she offers the analysis of "the literary profiles of the two protagonists, formed by their gendered interaction," where different levels of hearing and vision could be observed (pp. 112–113). Despite the great diversity of the tales' Greek reworkings, the feature that remains stable in the Byzantine tradition is the "conscious distinction between different levels of hearing and vision; the interplay between these visions and hearings structures the protagonists' holy identities" (p. 137). *Metaphrasis* combines with the gendered analysis of the characters since the general "fading of Zosimas' character" and the advancement of Mary's in the various versions are noticeable.

In the volume of Jevtić and Nilsson, Emelie Hallenberg, discussing the translation of the novel *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* from the twelfth-century Byzantium to Early Modern France, introduces two translation theories: the polysystem theory by Itamar Even-Zohar and the skopos theory by Hans J. Vermeer. To explain the former, she gives an example of ancient Greek literature, which was central to the Byzantine polysystem. Accordingly, she investigates the place of twelfth-century Byzantine literature in the polysystem of Early Modern France. According to skopos theory, a translated text must function in the context and work for the intended audience. These theories help Hallenberg conclude

that “the three French versions of *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* (the subject of her analysis) are full of signs that indicate the period in which they were written (p. 188). The translators of these texts are visible, as “the translation process always leaves visible marks caused by the taste of the new audience” (p. 189). The preferences of the new audiences force the author-translator to adapt his work to the new cultural milieu (polysystem) and the target audience (skopos).

Further, the article of Klazina Staat, Julie Van Pelt, and Koen De Temmerman studies the Greek translation and adaptation of Jerome’s *Vita Malchi* by paying particular attention to the *double ego narration* with primary and secondary narrators. In the study that combines the points of view of narratology and translation, the authors notice “the translator’s tendency to downplay the effect of ambiguity installed by the narratological setup of double ego narrative” (p. 97). Primary and secondary narratives provide different information enacted by deleting and replacing textual segments. The deletion minimizes the presence of a primary narrator in the Greek translation and the general textual ambiguity. The strategy has been to produce “a better text,” the text that is more reliable.

On the other end, in the volume of Constantinou and Høgel, the article of Kristoffel Demoen discusses versification of the text called *Paradeisos*, based on the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Despite the vast potential of the material that turns versified through *metaphrasis*, Demoen approaches it, at least in the opening, by posing rather outworn and vexed questions of an unknown author, the date of the composition, and unknown source texts. It remains uncertain whether we can ever satisfy such quests by conducting “detective work” (p. 209) since “in many cases, the source texts (as well as two other aspects) appear to be irretrievably lost to us” (p. 212). The metaphrastic processes discussed in the article allow an array of possibilities, which Demoen further channels by discussing style and language, narrative structure and voice, genre, function, the context of the text within the Byzantine tradition, and its use. The search for the original version and the original author is something scholars nowadays largely avoid, since, oft-times, they lead to speculation and do not provide satisfying answers. Anne Alwis rightly claims in her article that we do

not need to know the previous models to read rewritten texts; they are not palimpsests” (p. 200).

The reviewed volumes inevitably served as a venue for presenting new projects. Martin Hinterberger explained his project as a study of lexical correspondences between metaphrastic texts and their sources, targeting the differences in vocabulary between high-style and lower-style literature. He compared *metaphraseis* and the original texts mainly of historiographical works, here Niketas Choniates’ *History*, aiming to provide a guide through the wide variety of Byzantine vocabulary (p. 126).

Finally, I conclude the review with the overall observations regarding the aims of the volumes and their coherence of topical choices. Some of them are more structured than others in the choice of subjects of individual articles and in how they follow the main thread, as promised in the introduction. Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer state in the introduction that the volume’s aim is “stimulating further discussion on *metaphrasis*” (p. 23). Although this goal seems specific, the editors still leave it to the individual authors to choose the direction of their case studies. This results in the volume with a rather unconsolidated framework. For example, Høgel’s article in this volume addresses some methodologically relevant questions, while Franco and Resh go deeply into their case studies and investigate questions relevant to their sources. Such a structure leaves the impression that the editors did not interfere with the topical choices of the authors as long as they touched upon the umbrella subject of the volume, that is, *metaphrasis*.

It is not the case with the volume of Constantinou and Høgel. Although the subjects of the two volumes evolve around the central theme of textual *metaphrasis*, the editors of this volume divide it into four parts that follow the chronology of rewriting. Constantinou explains in the introduction that the structure of the volume will be chronological, “including approaches to different hagiographical genres and rewriting techniques” (p. 51). The topics in the volume vary, not only regarding the authors’ choices but also regarding genres and even languages of the source material. Nevertheless, the volume of Constantinou and Høgel stays coherent by the main thread, which is the chronological alignment

of the articles. The volume does not promise to be all-encompassing, and its unevenly divided sections do not represent the actual state of matters as they were in Byzantium in different periods. For example, it does not mean that the notion of rewriting in the late Byzantine period was less prominent only because two articles represent it. Several articles in this volume provide curious case studies, for example, Høgel's article, which discusses the sanctification of the rewriter Symeon Metaphrastes, whose canonization is largely based on his literary and writing performance, or Marina Detoraki and Bernard Flusin's article, which targets short hagiographical notices recorded in synaxaria.

Although not given as much attention in this review since it does not center around the idea of *metaphrasis*, the volume of Jevtić and Nilsson is undoubtedly a worthwhile reading, with the closely knitted arrangement of articles that discuss spolia through an array of case studies. The articles cover a comprehensive time- and geographical span, targeting the remnants of the ancient past used in the medieval Italian cities, Byzantine, and the Mamluk Empires (Karen Ruse Mathews), various literary works from different languages and time periods that tackle Hagia Sofia's textual reincarnations (C. Ceyhun Arslan), the identity in the Eastern Mediterranean through self-identification of people as Romans by the use of material culture at San Marco in Venice, the Church of the Dormition in Merbaka, and the Seljuk caravanserais (Armin F. Bergmeier), the spolia of Euripides' pagan tragedy reused in the twelfth-century Komnenian tragic trilogy *Christos Paschon*, dealing with the passion and the resurrection of Christ (Margaret Mullett), the Commentaries on Homer by Eustathios of Thessaloniki, which reuse the ancient material while providing new interpretations and a new reading of Homeric poetry (Baukje van den Berg), the reconstruction of the Church of Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren by the Serbian king Milutin in the fourteenth century (Ivana Jevtić), the reuse of a figural relief, composed of two sarcophagus panels in the thirteenth-century walls of Seljuk Konya (Suzan Yalman), and reception and remodeling of a Komnenian novel in Early Modern France (Emelie Hallenberg). The volume ends with the elaborately written Postscript by Olof Heilo, which rounds off the debate by stressing that "reuse of the material and

its inclusion in the new contexts and realities of the constantly changing world cumulates its capital of meaning” (p. 195). Despite the diversity of articles dealing with material and textual culture, this is one tight volume with transparent coherency and structure. The success of an edited volume is primarily in the coherence of its contributions; in this sense, this volume has achieved its uttermost goal. Besides, the volume is adorned by splendid illustrations, with each article accompanied by an abstract and a summary in the Czech language.

Studies like these are altogether highly encouraged in the future. We end this review hoping that more books, edited volumes, and projects dealing with *metaphrasis* will gladden us soon.

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