

Morwenna Ludlow, *Texts, teachers and pupils in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa* in L. Van Hoof and P. Van Nuffelen, *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD. Performing Paideia, constructing the present, presenting the self*. Mnemosune supplements 373, 83-102 (Brill, Leiden, 2015).

Texts, teachers and pupils in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa

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I. Introductionⁱ

While Origen of Alexandria is perhaps the archetypal Christian teacher of Greek Late Antiquity, Gregory of Nyssa might perhaps have a claim to be the archetypal pupil. Whether it is as the pupil-sibling trying to emerge from the shadows of Basil and Macrina, the erudite man of letters somewhat awkwardly trying to lay claim to the influence of Libanius, or the more confident author setting himself in a line of writers from Moses to Paul, Gregory's construction of his own persona seems frequently tied up with his self-perception as a pupil.

Unfortunately, we have all too little evidence with which to supplement Gregory's own self-presentation. Scholars might in the future fill out more details of the controversies in which he was involved, yet we know relatively little about Gregory's life and very little about his personal qualities – we possess no funeral orations such as those written for Basil, no hagiographies by later admirers and no autobiographical works such as those written by Gregory of Nazianzus. Nyssen's corpus of extant letters is much smaller than those of the other two Cappadocian fathers, containing a mere thirty to thirty-seven epistles (depending on how one settles various questions of attribution), compared to hundreds from Basil and well over a hundred from Gregory of Nazianzus. Furthermore, Nyssen's theological style is notoriously self-effacing and shows a marked tendency to deal with the abstract and the eternal, rather than with the actualities of daily life (except, perhaps when complaining about argumentative clerics and the discomforts of travelling). By contrast with Basil the church politician and monastic legislator, Gregory is usually read as the philosopher who struggles

with the question of the soul's knowledge of God. Unlike Augustine, however, who grappled with the same questions in his very self-reflective *Confessions*, Gregory shows himself reluctant to place himself directly before the reader as an object of theological enquiry. Ironically, the work that seemingly gives us the nearest thing to a self-portrait is Gregory's *Life* of his sister Macrina.

The framework of his life is simple. Gregory was a younger brother of Basil the Great, being born around 335AD, about ten years after Basil, and dying circa 395AD. Gregory was sympathetic to and supportive of Basil's monastic programme, but appears never to have been a monk.ⁱⁱ In fact, although there has been some controversy over the question, the current scholarly consensus is that Gregory was married – possibly not for very long.ⁱⁱⁱ In his late twenties Gregory took up teaching rhetoric, probably some time after the death of Julian, a profession which he apparently combined with the role of Reader in the Church.^{iv} He was consecrated bishop of the relatively unimportant see of Nyssa in 371 or 372, but it is unclear whether he had been ordained before this point. Together with Basil and Basil's friend Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory played an important role in the Trinitarian controversies of the last quarter of the fourth century, tirelessly defending an interpretation of the Nicene creed which asserted the full divinity and equality of Father, Son and Spirit against rival interpretations which to a greater or lesser extent subordinated the Son to the Father. At the Council of Chalcedon in 381, at which he played a significant role, Gregory of Nyssa was listed as one of those bishops with whom one had to be in communion to be deemed orthodox.^v Later, he was used as an ecclesiastical envoy, travelling to places such as Arabia and Jerusalem, not always with success.

From this one has very little concrete historical evidence to use when discussing Gregory's own experience of teaching and being taught – on the former question, one can draw a big contrast between him and writers such as Libanius and Himerius. Nevertheless,

Gregory's texts abound with references to teaching and teachers, and the question of what made a good Christian teacher preoccupied him a great deal. He not only pursued that question in relation to the normative texts of the Christian tradition – the Old and New Testaments and the writings of various Christian fathers – but he also viewed it through the lens of his classical inheritance. Consequently, my investigation into Gregory's pedagogy will be a fairly literary one, attending less to how Gregory taught and was taught and more to the way in which he constructs the social and theological roles of teachers and pupils in a subtle and complex way. However, my investigation will be literary in another sense, because I will argue that Gregory's construction of the role of teachers and pupils is intimately connected with texts, both the texts which teachers read and use in the classroom, and the texts which are the result of their teaching.

It will become clear that the terms 'teacher' and 'pupil' are used in this paper in a fairly broad sense which encompasses not only the formal arrangement between a teacher of, say, rhetoric or philosophy and a specific group of pupils, but also the relationship between a priest and his congregation and even a much more informal relationship between friends or family members. The last category is particularly important in Gregory's case, because he claims that since he was not able to travel to be educated he had no great teacher and that therefore his teachers were Basil and his oldest sibling Macrina.^{vi} A tension quickly becomes apparent, however, because Gregory names Basil as his teacher in some contexts and Macrina in others. Thus he exemplifies a phenomenon that we can observe as readily in our own culture as in late antiquity – that the claiming of a particular person as one's teacher as much reflects one's construction of one's own identity as it reflects historical fact.

In his *Letter* 13 to Libanius, Gregory of Nyssa claims that Basil was his teacher, albeit only for a brief time.^{vii} The primary intention in this letter, however, is to flatter Libanius: Gregory alludes to the fact that Basil was Libanius' pupil for a short while and thus expresses

thanks that at least some of Libanius' eloquence has flowed through Basil to himself. In Gregory's other works he frequently refers to Basil not only as ὁ διδάσκαλος, but ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν or τοῦ διδασκάλου καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν.^{viii} This, together with other evidence from the writings of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, suggests that we should take Gregory at his word when he says he was taught by Basil. However, while Gregory elsewhere implies that he is indebted to Basil for Basil's *theological* instruction, *Letter 13* focuses on *rhetorical* training and presents Basil and Gregory as being in a fairly conventional teacher-pupil relationship.^{ix} Gregory also pays tribute to that relationship in a fairly conventional fourth-century way: Basil taught him to do something well and Gregory demonstrates that skill to Libanius with an elegantly-constructed and (he hopes) persuasive letter. That is to say, his relationship to Basil is attested to by a text.

Texts are present elsewhere in *Letter 13* too. For example, even while Gregory constructs a genealogy of teachers which connects him through a line of *viva voce* pedagogy to an acknowledged master (a means of identification which was very common in the ancient world), he also identifies a second source of his learning: written texts by Libanius which he admits to having read in his spare time (therefore bypassing Basil). However, Gregory further asserts that his teachers were primarily *not* those of Greek rhetoric, but rather the teachers of the Christian faith, that is "Paul and John and the other Apostles and Prophets".^x Obviously, these were long dead persons whose teaching was available to Gregory only in textual form.

In what follows, I will suggest that it is typical of Gregory to construe the relationship between teacher and pupil as being mediated in one way or another by texts. This is perhaps not surprising, given the fact that all Christians were by then dependent on texts to convey the thoughts of the great teachers of their faith: not only the gospels, but also the writings of "Paul and John and the other Apostles and Prophets". However, it is more surprising when one considers the emphasis which Gregory seems to put on personal encounter with one's

teacher: pedagogy in Gregory's thought is emphatically not just the transmission of true doctrines or ideas, but also the embodiment of certain excellences (ἀρεταί), both intellectual and moral, which it is the pupil's job to imitate. So, Gregory writes in *Letter 19* about the qualities necessary in a bishop:

...the subordinate is conformed to his superior and ...the virtues of the leader become those of his followers. For as the teacher is, so is the disciple fashioned to be. For it is impossible that one who has been apprenticed to the art of the smith should fulfil his training by weaving, or that one who has been taught to work at the loom should turn out an orator or a surveyor. No, the disciple transfers to himself the pattern he sees in his master. It is for this reason it says, *every disciple shall be fashioned like his teacher* (Lk. 6:40).^{xi}

This notion of imitation is crucial to the three examples of teachers treated in this paper.

The first example is Basil (Part II). This great teacher is best praised, Gregory suggests, not by trying to describe his virtues and fine actions, but by imitating them – just as the best way to duplicate the pattern on a signet-ring is not to attempt a verbal depiction, but rather simply to impress it in wax.^{xii} In Gregory's work *De virginitate* he implies that Basil has been truly successful in imprinting his virtues on the members of his ascetic community, for he writes that if his audience wants an example to follow, but are too dazzled by Basil's own example, they should "look at the chorus of holy men arranged under him" who imitate his example of a virtuous life which combines the energy of youth with the wisdom of mature age.^{xiii} Gregory's metaphor is suggestive here, since he seems to be referring to a chorus such as in a Greek drama, whose members would be directed by, and would imitate the movements of, their leader.^{xiv} In Gregory's *Life of Macrina*, his sister's community of ascetic women is also described as a "chorus" and although the metaphor from drama is not so prominent, the narrative of the work demonstrates time and time again how Macrina succeeded in

encouraging others to imitate her: her mother, her brothers and her whole community followed her lead.^{xv} In this work Macrina is described as the διδάσκαλος not only of her youngest brother Peter, but also of her whole community.^{xvi} It is clear from the way in which Gregory uses διδάσκαλος for Macrina in this work and elsewhere that a large part of her teaching consists in being a model for the holy life: she was, as he says in his Letter 19, our “sister and a teacher of how to live” (ἜHv ἡμῖν ἀδελφὴ τοῦ βίου διδάσκαλος).^{xvii} In the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection* Gregory constantly refers to Macrina as ἡ διδάσκαλος. Macrina, therefore, will be my second example of a teacher (Part III). My third will be the character of the bride in the Song of Songs, a book which Gregory interprets in a series of fifteen sermons (Part IV). The bride, like Macrina, is depicted surrounded by a group of young women whom she instructs and just as Gregory calls Macrina ἡ διδάσκαλος, so in his *Homilies on the Song* the bride is repeatedly described as ἡ διδάσκαλος (a feature of the text which one English translation unfortunately entirely eradicates!^{xviii}). For Gregory, the bride becomes a type of spiritual teachers such as Moses and Paul. In the eyes of early Christians, the legacy of Moses and Paul was largely a textual one, so for Gregory the bride, ἡ διδάσκαλος, becomes a symbol of all theological writers, including Gregory himself.

II. Basil

In his encomium on Basil, Gregory repeatedly refers to the deceased Basil as ὁ διδάσκαλος, but this is several times combined with “shepherd” (ὁ ποιμὴν), as if to stress Basil’s difference from a purely intellectual teacher.^{xix} Furthermore, as we have seen, Gregory stresses that the best way to praise Basil is to imitate him, rather than depict him in words.^{xx} However, despite this exhortation to his listeners, Gregory is of course describing Basil’s virtues in very formal and elevated speech. Therefore, in time-honoured rhetorical fashion Gregory is on one level maintaining the fiction that he is not able to describe what he is in fact describing very well. On another level, however, he is obeying his own instructions:

that is, in his elegant and formal memorial oration Gregory is imitating his brother who was, as he reminds his audience at the beginning of the oration, “sublime in life *and* speech” (τὸν ὑψηλὸν βίῳ τε καὶ λόγῳ).^{xxi} It is particularly appropriate, then, to celebrate this man in words.

Basil’s own words are one major focus of Gregory’s works against Eunomius (the three books *Against Eunomius* and the *Refutation of Eunomius’ Confession*), because these continue an argument which Basil had begun against the same opponent (Basil’s five books *Against Eunomius*). Philosophically and theologically speaking, Gregory’s arguments are indeed very close to those of his brother (although he probably pushes the apophatic theology which Basil developed against Eunomius to more radical conclusions) and he acknowledges his debt to his brother: “it is right that we too should do battle with our opponents on this ground where our champion (ὁ πρόμαχος ἡμῶν) himself led the way in his own book”.^{xxii} Basil is, Gregory writes, “Christ’s noble soldier and frequent protagonist against the Philistines, that great spiritual man-at-arms”, who leads the “Lord’s army” bearing the “sword of the Spirit”.^{xxiii} But it is striking how Gregory also uses the text of *Against Eunomius* to assert his theological independence of his teacher. For example, at the beginning of his second book Gregory depicts Eunomius as the Philistine “loud-mouth” Goliath (*Eun* II.4-5), noting that Goliath was defeated twice: first when the stone struck him, secondly when he was decapitated. Gregory concludes from this that, just as David did not shrink from the second task of finishing him off for good, so must he, Gregory, “follow up the first blow with an attack on the fallen, so that the enemy of the truth may be shown to be totally headless” (*Eun* II.5). We might expect Basil’s to be the first work, and Gregory’s the second, but Gregory asserts, “I readily undertook the first verbal battle” and “I do not draw back from the second battle” (*Eun* II.9). Thus Gregory paints himself as the shepherd David, “a man with no training in the military arts” (ἀμελετήτῳ τῆς πολεμικῆς εὐστροφίας: *Eun* II.4); while Basil is

depicted as one of those who “has gained skill in warfare” (τὴν τοῦ πολεμεῖν ἐμπειρίαν: *Eun* II.10). There is surely an echo here of Gregory’s oft-repeated statement that he is ill-educated compared to his brother. At one level therefore, Gregory is praising Basil – he is a genuinely great leader – however at another level he is declaring that Basil’s military training was not enough to finish Eunomius off and that he, Gregory, had to step in heroically, despite his lack of experience in battle. The important point, however, is that Gregory is making these claims after Basil’s death: Gregory’s own output increased rapidly after his brother died, almost as if the presence of his former teacher cramped his style. After Basil’s death it seems that Gregory was able not only to write more, but also to explore *in his writing* the rather complicated teacher-pupil relationship which he had with his brother.

There is a similar dynamic in the way in which Gregory writes about his task in his works on the first two chapters of Genesis. On the one hand, he portrays himself simply as finishing off a task that Basil had begun. This is clear in Gregory’s *On the making of humankind* (*De hominis opificio*),^{xxiv} because Basil’s great work on the *Hexameron* – the first six days of creation – did not really discuss the creation of humankind. Gregory’s work is addressed to Peter, youngest brother of Gregory and Basil, so Basil is praised as “the father and teacher of both of us” (ὁ κοινὸς ἡμῶν πατήρ καὶ διδάσκαλος).^{xxv} He is also described in more general honorific terms: Basil is truly created in the image of God (so is worthy to describe creation);^{xxvi} he is the “great one” (τῷ μεγάλῳ), the teacher (τοῦ διδασκάλου/ τοῦ καθηγητοῦ)^{xxvii} whose work exemplified glory (τὴν δόξαν) and wisdom (τὴν σοφίαν).^{xxviii} If Gregory’s task is not done well, it is because Gregory “falls short even of worthily (κατ’ ἀξίαν) admiring” Basil, who is the only one who has “worthily (ἀξίως) considered the creation of God”.^{xxix} Interestingly, the whole reason for Gregory’s work is articulated in teacher-pupils terms: he is driven to write a work on the making of humanity, lest anyone who read Basil’s work might have cause to think ill of Basil’s work, not so much because he had

left the creation of humans out, but because his writing had produced no effect on his pupils. Gregory's excuse for filling in the gaps therefore is to prevent a scoffer from claiming that Basil "had not cared to produce in his hearers any habit of intelligence".^{xxx} Thus, this work, like Gregory's oration on Basil, aims to praise Basil by demonstrating that Basil was an effective teacher whose talents are transmitted in the work of his pupils – whilst at the same time always maintaining the appropriate distance from the master, through the conventional claims that the pupil falls short of his master.

More problematic, however, is Gregory's second work on Genesis, *On the Hexameron*, which could be accused of doing precisely that which Gregory eschewed in *On the Making of Humankind*: that is, duplicating Basil's own work. Indeed, Gregory's tone throughout is somewhat apologetic: he says he is writing in response to those who asked for a treatise on the subject; he is not afraid occasionally to take a different interpretation of a verse from his master, but again he apologises for doing so.^{xxxii} Consequently, Gregory here follows a slightly different strategy in describing his relationship with Basil.^{xxxiii} He begins with a familiar stance, praising his teacher Basil extravagantly and minimising his own worth by comparison. Gregory claims that "what [Moses] said briefly and in limited words" Basil expanded upon philosophically.^{xxxiii} Gregory mixes up various biblical metaphors to claim further that the relation of Moses' text to Basil's is as the grain to a spear of wheat or as the mustard seed to the full-grown tree.^{xxxiv} While this might seem to imply that Basil outshines his (long-dead) teacher Moses, Gregory's main point is that he, Basil's pupil, struggles to compete with his own "father and teacher".^{xxxv} In a delightful variation of this standard theme, developing the biblical figures he has just introduced, Gregory pictures himself as a little cutting from another plant: "How, therefore, is it possible for me to implant my little shoot into such a great and mature a tree of words"?^{xxxvi} He replies by alluding the "amazing" method used by gardeners to make one fruit tree bear fruits of several different kinds: like

these gardeners, who cut a mature tree to insert a slip which will grow into and with the tree, Gregory will insert his thought (τὴν ἐμὴν διάνοιαν) into the wisdom of Basil's teaching, where it will grow, nourished and sustained, until it becomes a full branch.^{xxxvii}

Secondly, Gregory insists that he is following one of Basil's key principles: to follow the literal meaning of the text of Genesis, so far as this is possible, in a clear rejection of more allegorical readings.^{xxxviii} That is, Gregory is both nourished by his master's teachings and loyal to his principles.

Thirdly, besides constructing himself as Basil's loyal but unworthy pupil, Gregory contrasts his and Basil's goals. On the one hand, Gregory claims that Basil was preaching to a general audience including some educated people, but also artisans, women, older folk and the very young.^{xxxix} Consequently, Basil aimed to explain Moses' text in such a way that it met their need for preaching which through a fine description of the visible creation would lead them carefully to the knowledge of its creator.^{xl} Nevertheless, the great orator Basil could temper his words to different kinds of audience, so that while his preaching "was wholly dedicated to a simple exegesis of the words (τῆς ἀπλουστεράς τῶν ῥημάτων ἐξηγήσεως), so that his sermon might be accommodated to the simplicity of his audience", at the same time "it raised up the exegesis of the same text (συναναβαίνειν πῶς αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐξήγησιν) for those listeners of a greater capacity, in such a way that the exegesis revealed the variety of knowledge of secular philosophy".^{xli} He specifically notes that Basil's intention was *not* to write a polemical treatise, defending the Scriptural account against certain objections brought against it (as, for example, some of Origen's discussions of creation had done).^{xlii} On the other hand, Gregory has a different audience: a questioner who brings detailed questions about creation. In order to answer these queries, Gregory's must leave the average listener behind and ascend to the darkness of the mystery of God.^{xliii} He describes his task as to focus in particular on "the necessary order of creation (τὴν ἀναγκαίαν τῆς

κτίσεως τάξις)^{xliv} and “to think of a connected and ordered interpretation of the creation of things that have come into being”^{xlv}.

The problem is, however hard Gregory tries to assert his loyalty to Basil and the fact that whatever he does is merely grafted on to Basil’s magnificent tree of words, he cannot but help distinguish his own task in terms which not only emphasise the difference of his text from his master’s but which – it must be admitted – flatter his own achievement. For Gregory describes himself not as a mere branch of Basil’s tree, but as a new variety engrafted into it. Although Gregory appears to be describing the production of a tree with two or more varieties of the same fruit – a technique still used today – in another common form of grafting used in viticulture it is only the scion, when grafted into the old stock, which bears the fruit! In any case, the relationship between scion and stock is perhaps slightly more ambiguous than it appears on the surface.^{xlvi} Secondly, although Gregory asserts his loyalty to Basil’s principle of avoiding of allegory, he seems to come fairly close to using allegory himself. Thus, he takes great pains to stress that what he is *not* doing is to construct a defence of elements of the text which appear on the surface to be contradictory in a way which imposes a new, coherent, layer of meaning on to the apparent literal inconsistencies of the text.^{xlvii} Yet, one might wonder how strictly he keeps to his aim to allow the text to “preserve its own meaning”^{xlviii} and wonder still more about the implications of his assertion that through his text one can rise above *hoi polloi*. Although this claim is strictly expressed in terms of Gregory’s and Basil’s texts having different audiences (and thus might be read in terms of stressing Basil’s rhetorical adaptability), nevertheless, it leaves one with the clear impression that Gregory is implying that his is the more scholarly text.^{xlix} One therefore gets the sense from Gregory’s works on Genesis 1 that it is *through writing them* that Gregory develops from being Basil’s pupil to being a distinct writer with, we might say, a distinctive voice of his own – a voice

which Gregory describes as being both dependent on, but also significantly different from that of his “master”.

III. Macrina

At first sight, Gregory’s relations with Macrina his sister look much more straightforward. As we have seen, Gregory describes her as his sister who “was for us a teacher of how to live” and in his hagiography of her he claims that she taught not only himself, but also his brother Peter and the women in her ascetic community at Annesi.¹ In these cases, the emphasis is on Macrina as an ascetic leader: she teaches Christian virtues primarily, it seems reasonable to infer, through inculcating them by example. Although she is described as having an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures,^{li} one might presume she passed this on to the others orally. To this extent, therefore, the pattern of Macrina as educator does not move far beyond the model of the Roman *mulier* who taught children basic literacy and was their moral compass.

Gregory’s work *On the Soul and the Resurrection* rather disrupts this picture, however, for in it Gregory presents his sister as leading him in a highly complex and theologically sophisticated dialogue on the nature and destiny of the human soul.^{lii} The dialogue is set at Macrina’s death-bed: Gregory had come to her for consolation on the death of their brother, Basil, only to find her dying too. In their ensuing conversation Macrina comforts him with a rigorous defence not only of the immortality of the soul, but of the resurrection of the body. In the work Macrina is presented as being not only highly educated theologically, but having some awareness of pagan education as well: including literature, mathematics, medicine and astronomy. Whether that is an accurate reflection of Macrina’s learning is very difficult to verify;^{liiii} the point is, that Gregory chose to present her that way. One aspect of this portrayal is that in the dialogue he constantly and emphatically refers to her as ἡ διδάσκαλος.^{liv} A second very important feature is that through echoing the subject-

matter, motifs and dramatic construction of Plato's *Phaedo*, Gregory also makes her a Socratic figure – Macrina plays the role of a second, Christian, female, Socrates, whilst also taking on some of the vatic qualities of Diotima in the *Symposium*.^{lv}

Basil does not mention Macrina in his writings.^{lvi} He might, therefore, be surmised to have had a slightly ambivalent relationship to his older sister, especially with regard to their respective ascetic projects. On the other hand, Gregory of Nyssa's admiration for Macrina is much more obvious and his relationship to Macrina comes across as less complicated than his relationship to Basil: Gregory does not, I think, undermine his praise of his sister in these works as he somewhat undermines his praise of Basil. This is not to say, however, that his portrayal of her is completely straightforward. In particular, he seems to use his texts about her to assert his own intellectual independence in a couple of quite subtle ways. So, for example, in the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Macrina is the dominant character intellectually and morally: she leads the conversation and she, unlike Gregory, manages to rise above the grief occasioned by Basil's death and her own imminent demise, while Gregory presents himself as her grief-struck, weeping, somewhat sceptical pupil.^{lvii} Nevertheless, as the interlocutor who probes Macrina's statements of faith and drives her to refine them, it is frequently Gregory who moves the dialogue on to a new and nuanced theological position: for example, getting Macrina to acknowledge, after her initial dismissal of all passion, that there are some forms of anger and love that it is good, even necessary, for the Christian to cultivate.^{lviii} Thus, one could argue that *On the Soul and the Resurrection* is, amongst other things, a development, or even a critique of Platonic dialectic. In Plato's dialogues Socrates almost invariably has the upper hand; in *De anima et resurrectione* Gregory depicts philosophical dialectic as he thinks it *ought* to be, with both pupil and teacher advancing in their understanding through an engagement which is much more evidently evenly-matched than the dialogues one finds in Plato. Clearly at one level, then, Gregory is making a

statement about the strengths of Christian, as opposed to Platonic, dialectic. At another level, he is presenting himself in the dialogue as the worthy pupil of Macrina.

Gregory also portrays himself as the weeping, grief-struck brother in *On the Life of Macrina*, a master-piece of narrative and narratives-within-narratives which was also occasioned by Gregory's arrival shortly before his sister's death, but which also recounts the rest of her life.^{lix} In this piece Gregory implicitly presents himself as the worthy pupil of Macrina, not so much in the sense that he is worthy to be her theological interlocutor, but more in the sense that he is worthy to preserve her memory.^{lx} In his *Life of Macrina* Gregory presents himself as the best possible biographer of her, the one who knew her best, the one who was there at her death-bed, the one who buried her. As he writes to the person who commissioned the biography:

The trustworthiness of our account does not come from hearing others' accounts, but experience was our teacher (ἡ πεῖρα διδάσκαλος ἦν); our words go over these events in detail, but not at all because we have called on others' hearsay as a witness. The maiden we have remembered was no stranger to my family, so that it was not necessary for me to learn the amazing facts about her from others.^{lxi}

Although Gregory presents himself as a godly man in the *Life of Macrina*, he is weak compared to his sister. He is the best pupil, not in the narrow literal sense that he was the best at following Macrina's ascetic route, but in a literary sense: he is the one who best preserved her memory. Gregory is therefore simultaneously using his text both to celebrate his teacher, but also to establish his claim to be her true heir – much as, for example, Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* not only praises the great philosopher, but portrays "I, Porphyry" as the true successor of the master, in the face of various possible rival claims.^{lxii} Just as it was easier for Gregory to articulate his relationship to his διδάσκαλος Basil after Basil died, so, for obvious

reasons it was easier for Gregory to lay claim to this special relationship with Macrina, ἡ διδάσκαλος, after her death. In both cases, his relationships with his teachers are articulated in the texts he wrote about them; but more than that, the texts themselves partly constitute or instantiate the kind of relationships he had with Basil and Macrina. One might even say that after their deaths Gregory uses his texts to mediate a kind of continuing relationship with them.

This idea of texts mediating a relationship is present more strongly in the *Life of Macrina* than in the texts concerning Basil. Halfway through his description of his sister's life, Gregory has a vision-like dream in which he sees himself bearing a body in his hands. It glows and he describes it as if it were already a relic.^{lxiii} When he arrives at Macrina's house he fears that it is her death that his dream portends and indeed when she dies, Macrina's body seems to him to glow like the relic in his dream.^{lxiv} Only then does Gregory fully recognise the significance of his dream. Having established Macrina's body as a relic, then, Gregory as author also makes connections between the "body" of his text (the narrative) and Macrina's own body. For example, Macrina final prayer to Christ weaves together the experiences of her own life with a brief resume of salvation-history.^{lxv} When she offers herself up to Christ at the end, the implication is that she is offering her whole self up: soul, body and her whole story. The question for Gregory then becomes: how can the memory of the saint be preserved? In conventional Christian piety, there would be two methods: the veneration of her relics and the recollection of her life, often taking the form of a *Vita* recited at her tomb on her feast-day. Thus the story of a life becomes associated with a body. In the *Life of Macrina*, the text itself seems to become a relic of his sister, a holy and almost sacramental object which brings the believer into contact with the saint. Derek Krueger comments:

As the vision reveals, Gregory holds possession of and control over the relics.

He handles her remains: first her body, and thus later her memory. As the

author of the text, Gregory holds authorial control over her story, manipulating her identity. Physical relics are the remains witnessing to the work of the indwelling Spirit in the life of the saint. Gregory's narrative offers an analogue, a narrative remembrance of the saint attesting her holiness, lest her virtue be forgotten. In the end, the text of the *Life of Macrina* is itself a relic, a witness to her saintly life, held in the author's hands. Materializing her memory, text substitutes for body.^{lxvi}

In this way, I suggest, Gregory did not write the *Vita* of his sister just to mediate his *own* continuing relationship with his sister; rather, his text allows a wider audience to come into her presence. Just as his own text shifts its focus from the individual and personal (Gregory's arrival and encounter with Macrina), to Macrina's community (his conversations with her companions), to the wider local public (the funeral), so Gregory's vision for the preservation of Macrina's memory expands beyond the narrative of the text itself. He hopes that by being drawn into her story, other Christians will be drawn to imitate her life. In other words, it is by writing this text, that Gregory negotiates the transition between being a pupil and becoming a teacher himself.

IV. The Bride

In this final section, I will suggest that Gregory thinks that the texts of Scripture function in a similar way as expressing, continuing and transforming the teacher-pupil relationship – but in this case, the teacher is Christ. For Gregory, Jesus Christ was the archetypal teacher.^{lxvii} The apostles were not just witnesses to the events of Jesus' life, but were disciples who passed on the truths of the Gospel and in that process of transmission became teachers themselves. Unlike some of the earlier Church fathers, however, Gregory sees such teaching in very textual terms. This is evident even in his interpretation of the Song of Songs, a biblical book which, on the face of it, would not appear to be about writing at all.

Gregory recognises that the Song of Songs is an extended poem which portrays the relationship between a lover and his beloved dramatically and in direct speech. His interpretation is clearly very heavily influenced by that of Origen of Alexandria (c.185-c.254); however, while Origen's exposition focused on the bride as a symbol of the individual soul or the Church, for Gregory she is the archetype of a teacher – Gregory repeatedly refers to the bride in the Song as ἡ διδάσκαλος. Furthermore, Gregory develops Origen's interpretation of the bride's friends. Origen noted that they were a pedagogical device: the bridesmaids are “learning to be brides” and the bride – having experienced the secrets of the bedchamber – “comes back to the maidens and tells them the things that she alone has seen”.^{lxviii} The hearer of the Song, therefore, is encouraged to identify imaginatively with the bridesmaids as well as the bride: “Listen to the Song of Songs and make haste to understand it and to join with the Bride in saying what she says, so that you may hear also what she heard. And, if you are unable to join the Bride in her words... then be with the maidens who stay in the Bride's retinue and share her pleasures”.^{lxix} The *Song* therefore is treated by Origen as an anagogical text: he believes that if it is read in the correct way it leads its readers further towards and raises them up to God. Gregory develops this line of thought by emphasising the bride's function as a teacher: for example, she teaches the maidens true doctrine (τὸ δόγμα) and is a seeker of wisdom (ἡ σοφία);^{lxx} as a good teacher should, she adapts her teaching to the level of her pupils.^{lxxi} But she does not merely communicate facts about Jesus Christ, but also points the way to him:

And the teacher (ἡ διδάσκαλος), like Philip who said “come and see”, directs (καθηγεῖται) the maidens towards the apprehension of the one whom they seek; instead of saying “see”, she indicates the location of the one who is sought and where she sees [him].... Therefore the bodily [aspect] of her speech (ἡ

σωματικῆ τοῦ λόγου) to the young girls, is a signpost by which they learn both where he is and where she is looking.^{lxxii}

This idea of pointing or leading the way seems to be an important function of a teacher according to Gregory, for in his commentary on the Beatitudes, for example, he several refers to Christ, the Word of God, as leading the way and he connects this specifically to Christ's teaching function.^{lxxiii} Besides telling the maidens about Christ, and showing them the way to him, Gregory thinks that the bride also gives her entourage of maidens a Christ-like example to imitate:

“Having taken on himself the stain of my sins, he shared his own purity with me and, with his own beauty, he made me perfect like him....” After these words, she urges the young girls to be beautiful themselves, showing them her own beauty, like the great Paul who said “Become as I am, for I also have become as you are” [Gal. 4.12] and “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ” [1 Cor. 11.1]. For this reason, she does not allow the souls who are her pupils to despair of becoming beautiful when they look back on their past life, but she lets them learn by example, looking at her.^{lxxiv}

One could compare the role of the bride here to the way in which Basil and Macrina were in different ways examples for Gregory and Gregory's readers to imitate. However, in Gregory's writings on the Song the process of imitation is entirely mediated by texts. Firstly, this is because the bride and her maidens are themselves fictional characters. Secondly, however, Gregory interprets them as *referring to* historical theological writers. By being drawn into the beautiful and dramatic text of the Song, the audience is encouraged not only to identify imaginatively with the bride and her maidens, but also to consider whom they might be portraying. A key comparison – as we have just seen – is of the bride to Paul: he is an example of someone who, in Gregory's words, “once he became a ‘vessel of election’ had the

Lord both with himself and in himself, in that... he no longer lived his life for himself, but showed Christ living in him and gave ‘proof that Christ is speaking in’ him’.^{lxxv} This interplay between the reception of divine grace and becoming its living conduit or communicator is very similar to the interplay we have noted above in relation to the bride. Indeed, in another passage Gregory makes the connection explicitly: “Paul, the bride, imitates the groom through the virtues”, breathing in Christ like incense and exuding his scent to others.^{lxxvi} Although Paul is primarily the teacher to whom the bride is compared, Gregory also draws comparisons with John, Moses and – by extension – with other biblical writers.^{lxxvii}

Of course the Song itself is a scriptural text, and by making the Song into a text about teachers Gregory is implying that the author of the Song too should be regarded precisely as one of those great teachers. That was not an obvious move in Gregory’s day, for it seems that there was some opposition to the reading of the Song as a Christian text because of its apparently overt eroticism. Gregory’s preface to his Homilies on the Song defends his allegorical interpretation of the text, but he seems to imply that if the Song were not read allegorically, it would not be read at all in Christian communities – hence he is working hard so that his work might have a “public hearing” (τὴν δημοσίαν ἀκοήν).^{lxxviii} In this way, many more can be enlightened by a text that was once regarded as dangerous or private. Thus, Gregory hopes for a public audience so that he might convey the fruits of this text more broadly, not so that he can make a literary “display” (ἐπίδειξιν) – that is, he is presenting himself as a teacher, not a rhetorician.^{lxxix} In his preface, Gregory also compares the Song’s symbolic style to Christ’s method of teaching, since he “exercised” his disciples’ minds “through words which were veiled and hidden in parables, in analogies, in obscure words and in apophthegms conveyed though riddles”.^{lxxx} Furthermore, Gregory defends his allegorical reading of the Song with reference to Paul’s method of reading the Old Testament.^{lxxxi} In doing this, Gregory is therefore setting himself as the pupil of such teachers as Paul – and

Christ himself. But that imposes on him the responsibility to teach what he has learnt. Just as the bride learned from the groom and taught her pupils, just as Paul learned from Christ and taught those to whom his letters were addressed, Gregory has his own pupils in the church to enlighten. Thus, although the Song compares the bride specifically to Paul, or John or Moses, the comparison is not restricted to those writers: I suggest that Gregory takes the comparison also to apply to himself.

To recapitulate my argument, I am suggesting that in his texts about Basil and Macrina Gregory of Nyssa does not merely commemorate his siblings in a “monument more lasting than bronze”.^{lxxxiii} Rather, the texts first articulate his relationship with them specifically as his teachers and, secondly, allow him to continue that relationship with them after their death. Thirdly, through these texts, his relationship with his sibling-teachers changes, because in the writing of them he ceases to become a mere pupil but becomes a teacher in their stead. In this way he is passing on the riches of his teachers to a wider audience. Gregory also sees his *Homilies on the Song of Songs* as designed for a wide audience, but while Gregory’s works on Basil and Macrina were designed to mediate his real-life encounters with his siblings to a wide audience through the medium of texts, his work on the Song is mediating an encounter with a *text* to that wider audience. In each case, Gregory portrays himself in the complex position of being a pupil-turning-teacher and – I suggest – portrays his process of writing as the means by which he moves from one to the other.

Gregory’s concept of pedagogy, therefore, is bound up with this particular social function of texts: they have a vital role in the complex interplay between teacher and pupils, a role which he sees as both fruitful and problematic. What makes Gregory’s thought on this question so interesting is that this social role of literature is both described in, and exemplified by, Gregory’s own writings.

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- ⁱ A note on texts: all references to the Greek are from the multi-volume Greek edition *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* [GNO], founder editor Werner Jaeger (Leiden), unless otherwise indicated. *PG* texts are published in the edition of J. P. Migne, *Patriologiae Cursus, series Graeca*. English translations are taken, unless otherwise indicated, from *Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, tr. W. Moore and H. A. Wilson, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [NPNF], series 2, vol. 5 (re-published Edinburgh, Grand Rapids, Michi., 1994).
- ⁱⁱ Anna Silvas suggests that Gregory was at least involved in Basil's early ascetic experiment at Annisa: Anna Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, 2007), p. 9. Pierre Maraval rejects this suggestion whilst agreeing that Gregory kept in close contact with monastic communities: Pierre Maraval, "Biography of Gregory of Nyssa" in Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero, eds., *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (Leiden, 2010), p. 105, 115.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See Silvas' excellent review of the evidence in her translation of *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, pp. 15-25 and 98-100. See also Maraval, "Biography of Gregory of Nyssa", p. 105.
- ^{iv} Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, p. 12-13; Maraval, "Biography of Gregory of Nyssa", p. 105 (citing Gregory of Nazianzus *ep.* 11).
- ^v Maraval, "Biography of Gregory of Nyssa", pp. 111-12 (citing *Cod. Theod.* 16.1.3).
- ^{vi} Gregory of Nyssa, *Epist.* 13; Maraval, "Biography of Gregory of Nyssa", p. 104
- ^{vii} *Epist.* 13.4
- ^{viii} ὁ διδάσκαλος: e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *Bas* 1.21, 15.2; 17.3; 17.5; 19.4; 27.16; ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν: Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* [*Eun*] 1.1.111.3-4; 21.1.653.6; 1.1.655.2-3; 2.66.2-3; 2.345.4; 2.612.2; *Epist.* 13.5.2; *Apologia in hexaemeron* [*Hex*] PG 44:64.3; τοῦ διδασκάλου καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν: Gregory of Nyssa, *Eun* 1.1.478.2. *Hex* PG 44:64.20.

^{ix} Basil probably instructed Gregory at Caesarea in Cappadocia around 356, after Basil returned from Athens (Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, p. 8).

^x *Epist* 13.4.1-4: διδασκάλους δὲ τοὺς ἡμετέρους, εἰ μὲν ὧν τι δοκοῦμεν μεμαθηκέναι ζητοίης, Παῦλον εὐρήσεις καὶ Ἰωάννην καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀποστόλους τε καὶ προφήτας.

^{xi} *Epist* 17.24 ἀλλ' οἶδεν ὅτι τῷ προέχοντι συμμορφοῦται τὸ ὑποχείριον, καὶ τὰ κατορθώματα τοῦ καθηγουμένου τῶν ἐπομένων γίνεται· ὁ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ διδάσκαλος, τοῦτο καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν ἀπεργάζεται· οὐ γὰρ ἔστι τὸν τῇ χαλκευτικῇ τέχνῃ μαθητευόμενον ὑφαντικὴν ἐξασκῆσαι, ἢ ἰστουργεῖν διδασκόμενον ῥήτορα ἢ γεωμέτρην γενέσθαι, ἀλλ' ὅπερ ἐν τῷ καθηγουμένῳ βλέπει ὁ μαθητής, τοῦτο καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν μετατίθησι. διὰ τοῦτο φησι· κατηρτισμένος ἔσται πᾶς μαθητής ὡς ὁ διδάσκαλος αὐτοῦ. For the issue of imitating the virtues of one's teacher, see also part IV below: "The Bride".

^{xii} *Bas* §26.

^{xiii} *De virginitate* [*Virg*] 23.6.10-12 ἀπόβλεπον εἰς τὸν ὑπ' αὐτῷ τεταγμένον τῶν ἁγίων χορόν. The text of these lines is disputed; here I have followed the text in GNO VIII/1, 340:4-5 (ed. J. P. Cavaernos), rather than Michel Aubineau's influential *Sources Chrétiennes* edition (*Grégoire de Nysse: Traité de la Virginité*, M. Aubineau (ed.), Sources Chrétiennes 119, (Paris, 1966)). My thanks to Neil McLynn for his comments on this passage.

^{xiv} As Aubineau has suggested, in *Virg.* 3 Gregory is reversing the tropes of an epithalamium (Aubineau (ed.) *Grégoire de Nysse: Traité de la Virginité*, 89-90). I would go beyond Aubineau to argue that Gregory extends his subversion of literary tropes appropriate to marriage to the whole text so that, for example, the various references to "choruses" not only indicate a spiritual community (as was common in Christian writing at this time), but are also intended as a mirror-image of the choruses usually present in wedding poems and speeches: see *Virg.* 2.1.5 (Christ is a "chorus-leader of incorruptibility" τῷ δὲ μονογενεῖ θεῷ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας χορηγῶ [GNO VIII/1, 253:13]); also *Virg.* 2.3.3: the "power of virginity [=

Christ?] dances with the supramundane powers” μετὰ τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων χορεύειν δυνάμεων [GNO VIII/1: 255:6]) . For this argument, see “Useful and beautiful: a reading of Gregory of Nyssa’s *On Virginity* and a proposal for understanding early Christian literature”, forthcoming in *Irish Theological Quarterly* 79:3 (2014).

^{xv} τῆς παρθενίας χορὸς: *De vita Macrinae* [*Macr*] 16.5; 29.1; τῶ τῶν παρθένων χορῶ: *Macr* 33.15.

^{xvi} Peter: *Macr* 12.13-14: Ἀλλὰ πάντα γενομένη τῶ νέω, πατήρ, διδάσκαλος, παιδαγωγός, μήτηρ, ἀγαθοῦ παντὸς σύμβουλος; community: *Macr* 26.9: μή που παρὰ τὸ διατεταγμένον αὐταῖς φωνῆς τινος παρ’ αὐτῶν ἐκραγείσης λυπηθείη πρὸς τὸ γινόμενον ἢ διδάσκαλος.

^{xvii} *Epist* 19.6.1; c.f. *De anima et resurrectione* [*An et res*] 46.12.16 ἡ ἀδελφὴ καὶ διδάσκαλος.

^{xviii} *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Commentary on the Song of Songs*, tr. and intro. C. McCambley (Brookline, Mass., 1987). A glaring example is on pages 262-3, where the translator writes, “The teacher [translating ἡ διδάσκαλος], like Philip, says “Come and see.” *He* leads the virgins to lay hold of him they seek [the groom] instead of saying “see.” *He* thus indicates the location of the sought-after One.... The bride says [translating φησὶ; no subject in the Greek].... she has shown.... She then shows....” (my emphasis). So, for McCambley, the bride is female, but symbolises a male teacher, even though in Gregory’s text the bride clearly *is* the teacher of the young women of the song (and thus symbolises a mature Christian teaching other Christians).

^{xix} ὁ διδάσκαλος e.g. *Bas* 15.2; 17.3; 17.5; 19.4; 27.16; ὁ ποιμὴν καὶ διδάσκαλος: 1.20; 1.23.

^{xx} *Bas* §26: Gregory argues that just as the best way to convey the beauty of the pattern of a signet-ring is to imprint it directly on to wax, rather than to attempt a verbal description, so the best way to praise Basil is simply to imitate him, rather than to enumerate his virtues.

^{xxi} *In Basilium fratrem* §1. Although it is often described as a funeral oration, the setting for this speech in honour of Basil seems to be a service held in his memory some time after his

death, perhaps even held on the anniversary of his death. As such, it was likely always intended to be transmitted in written as well as preached at the feast.

^{xxii} *Eun* II.11.14-16.

^{xxiii} *Eun* II.10

^{xxiv} Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* [*Op hom*] PG 44:124-256.

^{xxv} *Op hom* PG 44: 125.25-6

^{xxvi} *Op hom* PG 44: 125.23-5

^{xxvii} *Op hom* PG 44: 125.33, 37 and 54

^{xxviii} *Op hom* PG 44: 125.37 and 125.54-5

^{xxix} *Op hom* PG 44:125.31-2: τοῦ θαυμάζειν αὐτὸν κατ' ἀξίαν ἐνδεῶς ἔχοντες. PG 44:125.23-24: Μόνος γὰρ ἀξίως τὴν κτίσιν τοῦ Θεοῦ κατενόησεν.

^{xxx} *Op hom* PG 44:124:43-4: ὡς μὴ βουληθέντος ἕξιν τινὰ κατανοητικὴν τοῖς ἀκροαταῖς ἐνεργάσασθαι.

^{xxxi} *Apologia in Hexameron (Hex)* PG 44:124:9-20; 89:31-5.

^{xxxii} *Hex* PG 44:61-124.

^{xxxiii} *Hex* PG 44: 64.1-3

^{xxxiv} *Hex* PG 44: 61.21 – 64.15, alluding to 1 Cor. 15.35-58 (Paul's famous analogy for the resurrection of the body!) and Mt. 13 (and parallels).

^{xxxv} *Hex* PG 44: 64.19-20: τῆ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ διδασκάλου.

^{xxxvi} *Hex* PG 44: 64.15-18 Πῶς οὖν ἔστι τῷ τοιοῦτῳ καὶ τηλικούτῳ δένδρῳ τῶν λόγων, ἀντιφυτεῦσαι τὴν βραχεῖαν τῆς διανοίας ἡμῶν ἀποσπάδα; Ἀποσπᾶς appears to be the Greek technical term for a plant cutting used for propagation: modern English differentiates between a slip (a cutting placed directly in the soil) and a scion (grafted on to the root-stock of another plant).

^{xxxvii} *Hex* PG 44:15-33

^{xxxviii} Basil, *Hex* IX.1; Gregory of Nyssa *Hex* PG 44:124.17-19

^{xxxix} *Hex* PG 44:65.3-15

^{xl} *Hex* PG 44: 65.15-19

^{xli} *Hex* PG 44:65.23-8

^{xlii} In fact, the distinction which Gregory makes between his and Basil's approaches to Genesis 1 in some ways seems to echo the distinction between Origen's *Commentary on Genesis* (which – so far as it can be reconstructed – defended the theology of creation against pagan critics who thought Genesis to be incoherent) and his *Homilies* which drew a spiritual lesson from Genesis. Although Basil himself rejects Origen's use of allegory, his audience and aim are very similar. For the character of Origen's *Commentary* see R. Heine, "Origen's Alexandrian Commentary on Genesis." in L. Perrone (ed.) *Origeniana octava. Origen and the Alexandrian tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa 27-31 August 2001* (Leuven, 2003), 63-73. For the distinction between Origen's *Commentary* and *Homilies* on Genesis, see É. Junod, "Wodurch unterscheiden sich die Homilien des Origenes von seinem Kommentaren?" in E. Mühlenberg and J. van Oort (eds.) *Predigt in der Alten Kirche* (Kampen, 1994) pp. 50-81 and Morwenna Ludlow "Origen as Preacher and Teacher: A Comparison of Exegetical Method in His Homilies and Commentaries" in *Delivering the Word: Preaching and Exegesis in the Western Christian Tradition* William John Lyons and Isabella Sandwell (edd.) (Sheffield, 2012), pp. 45-61.

^{xliii} *Hex* PG 44:65.29 - 68.21

^{xliv} *Hex* PG 44:65.35-6

^{xlv} *Hex* PG 44:68.52-4: συνηρτημένην τινὰ καὶ ἀκόλουθον ἐν τῇ κτίσει τῶν γεγονότων ἐπινοῆσαι τὴν θεωρίαν.

^{xlvi} Gregory's confidence in dealing with the analogy suggest he is familiar with the practice of grafting, in literature if not in real life. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *Op hom* PG 44:

240.11 and *De anima et resurrectione* PG 46:125.31 (ἀποσπᾶς used in a metaphor for human reproduction) and also *Epist* 20 to Adelphius in praise of a garden.

^{xlvii} *Hex* PG 44:68.46-8: Οὐ γὰρ τοῦτό μοι πρόκειται, τὸ, συνηγορίαν τινὰ τοῖς ἐκ τοῦ προχείρου φαινομένοις ἐναντιώμασιν ἐπινοῆσαι· *Hex* PG 44:121.51-4: μήτε τι τῆς γραφικῆς λέξεως εἰς τροπικὴν ἀλληγορίαν μεταποιήσαντες, μήτε παριδόντες τι τῶν ἀντιτεθέντων ἡμῖν ἀνεξέταστον.

^{xlviii} μενούσης τῆς λέξεως ἐπὶ τῆς ἰδίας ἐμφάσεως: *Hex* PG 44:68.51-2 and 121.55.

^{xlix} See the deliberately scholastic language which Gregory applies to his writing at *Hex* PG 44:68.33-5.

^l *Epist* 19.6.1: Ἦν ἡμῖν ἀδελφὴ τοῦ βίου διδάσκαλος; *Macr* 12.13: Ἀλλὰ πάντα γενομένη τῷ νέῳ, πατήρ, διδάσκαλος, παιδαγωγός, μήτηρ; see also *Macr* 26.9: ἡ διδάσκαλος.

^{li} *Macr* 3.15-26

^{lii} *De anima et resurrectione* PG 46:12-160

^{liii} However, for a spirited defence of Macrina's learning, see Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, philosopher of God* (Turnhout, 2008) .

^{liv} *An et res* 46:12.15-6: ἡ ἀδελφὴ καὶ διδάσκαλος. ἡ διδάσκαλος: 12.22; 16.2; 17.4; 20.8; 21.12; 29.7 etc.

^{lv} There is a debate in the secondary literature about whether she should also be seen as a second Diotima (see Plato's *Symposium*): see, for example, Virginia Burrus, "*Begotten not Made*" *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 112-122. I analyse this debate in my *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern* (Oxford, 2007), p. 206-14.

^{lvi} On this – and the way in which Basil's ascetic reputation eclipsed Macrina's – see Susanna Elm, "*Virgins of God.*" *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994), p. 81-2.

^{lvii} On the theme of grief, see especially the opening lines: *An et res* PG 46:12.13 – 13.4; on (the character of) Macrina as being dominant, see Catharine P. Roth, “Platonic and Pauline elements in the ascent of the soul in Gregory of Nyssa’s dialogue on the soul and resurrection” *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992), p. 21.

^{lviii} Rowan Williams, “Macrina’s Death-bed Revisited: Gregory of Nyssa on Mind and Passion”, in Wickham, L. and Bammel, C. edd. *Christian Faith and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (= *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 19) (Leiden, 1993); see also J. Warren Smith, “A Just and Reasonable Grief: The Death and Function of a Holy Woman in Gregory of Nyssa’s Life of Macrina”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (2004), pp. 57–84 and J. Warren Smith, “Macrina, Tamer of Horses and Healer of Souls: Grief and the Therapy of Hope in Gregory of Nyssa’s De anima et resurrectione”, *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 52 (2001), pp. 37–60.

^{lix} For Gregory’s grief see especially *Macr* 17.17-20; 19.9-15; 26.1-22. For the structure and literary style of *Macr* Georgia Frank, “Macrina’s scar: Homeric allusion and heroic identity in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Macrina*”, in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 8:4 (2000), pp. 511-530.

^{lx} A theme present in Derek Krueger, “Writing and the liturgy of memory in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Macrina*”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 8:4 (2000), pp. 483-510.

^{lxi} *Macr* 1.17-22

^{lxii} Edwards, Mark, “Introduction” to *Neoplatonic Saints. The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students* ed. and tr. Edwards (Liverpool, 2000), p. xxxvi: Edwards notes that Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus* is very self-defensive: the disciple whose name appears most is his own – “almost always coupled with the emphatic pronoun *ego*”.

^{lxiii} *Macr* 15.12-22

^{lxiv} *Macr* 19.9-15; 33.8-12

^{lxv} *Macr* 23.11 – 24.46

^{lxvi} Krueger, “Writing and the liturgy of memory”, p. 504.

^{lxvii} See e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Beatitudinibus* [*Beat*] I.1 (GNO VII/2, 77.4 – 78.25); *De oratione dominica* [*Or dom*] I (GNO VII/2, 5.2-11)

^{lxviii} Origen, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* [*Hom. in Cant.*] I.5, tr. R. P. Lawson, in *Origen, The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies* Ancient Christian Writers (Westminster, MD, 1957), p. 274-5.

^{lxix} Origen, *Hom in Cant* I.1, tr. Lawson p. 267-8.

^{lxx} Gregory of Nyssa *In canticum canticorum* [*Cant*] GNO VI:51.10-11: οὐκοῦν τοῦτο παρὰ τῆς διδασκάλου τὸ δόγμα μανθάνομεν; 268.16-269: ἐπειδὴ γὰρ παρὰ τὴν μέλισσαν φοιτᾶν τὸν τῆς σοφίας μαθητὴν ὁ παροιμιακὸς βούλεται λόγος νοεῖς δὲ πάντως ἐκ τῶν μαθημάτων τὴν διδάσκαλον ἥτις ἐστίν. Cf the divine Word condescending to the level of human understanding: *Beat* GNO VII/2: 90.26 – 91.3. Translations from *Cant* are my own.

^{lxxi} *Cant* GNO VI: 381.14-16: τούτου χάριν πρὸς ταῦτα ἡ διδάσκαλος βλέπει καὶ περὶ τούτων ποιεῖται τὸν λόγον ὅσα δύναται γενέσθαι χωρητὰ τοῖς ἀκούουσιν; cf *Cant* GNO VI:45.20 – 46.1

^{lxxii} *Cant* GNO VI: 435.8-12

^{lxxiii} *Beat* I.1 (GNO VII/2:78.1-11); III.1(GNO VII/2:98.24 – 99.6)

^{lxxiv} *Cant* GNO VII/2:46.13 – 47.4

^{lxxv} *Cant* GNO VI:88.1-5; citing Acts 9.15 and 2 Cor. 13.3.

^{lxxvi} *Cant* GNO VI:91.4-13 (οὕτω καὶ Παῦλος, ἡ νύμφη, ὁ διὰ τῶν ἀρετῶν τὸν νυμφίον μιμούμενος)

^{lxxvii} e.g. John: *Cant* GNO VI:40.13– 42.3; Moses: *Cant* GNO VI:181.4-6. See also *Cant* GNO VI:301.19 – 303.2 (the bride, causing a fragrant stream of spices to flow, is compared to the Church and specifically to Paul, John, Luke, Matthew and Mark).

^{lxxviii} *Cant* GNO VI:13.17

^{lxxix} *Cant* GNO VI:13.8

^{lxxx} *Cant* GNO VI:8.6-10

^{lxxxi} *Cant* GNO VI:5.9 – 7.16

^{lxxxii} Horace, *Odes* 3.30