

CLAUDIO DE STEFANI

Notes on Christophoros of Mitylene and Konstantinos Stilbes*

I. ON THE ΣΤΙΧΟΙ ΔΙΑΦΟΡΟΙ OF CHRISTOPHOROS OF MITYLENE

The standard edition of the *στίχοι διάφοροι* of Christophoros of Mitylene is still that of Eduard Kurtz (Leipzig 1903), at his days a beautiful critical achievement, which superseded the *princeps* of Antonio Rocchi (Roma 1887). In the early eighties of last century an Italian translation with notes appeared¹, which showed that the text could be further improved² and contributed on the whole to a better understanding of the “Canzoniere” of Christophoros: indeed, a detailed commentary would be of great utility, because these poems contain many a precious reference to the daily life of Byzantium in the first half of the XIth century; also the sources on which Christophoros drew still require a systematic investigation, which could be rewarding³.

As is well known, the greatest problem with these poems is that the only manuscript which contains them all, the Cryptensis Z. α. XXIX of Grottaferrata (= C), is badly damaged, and offers, for many a poem, only the first or the last half of the verse: in his edition Kurtz proposed a host of splendid supplements, some of which have been later confirmed by the discovering of other manuscripts. I have tried to reconstruct few passages of three poems transmitted only by C, using a CD reproduction of it.

44 Kurtz

The poem on the death of Christophoros’ brother Johannes is preserved in lacunose but intelligible verses until (roughly) v. 25, where C is very damaged: the text becomes clear again from 56. I try to elucidate vv. 24–28, which I first quote according to the edition of Kurtz:

ποῖαι πλοκαὶ γούν ἐκφράσουσι ῥητόρων,
20 ὅπως μὲν εἶχεσ δεξιῶσ πρὸς [τὴν φύσιν,
ὅπως δὲ καὶ σύμπασαν ἐπλούτεισ χάριν,
ὅπως δ’ ἐπήνθεισ οἶονεῖ [λοκρὸν ῥόδον
κἂν νῦν ἀπανθῆσ ὡσ μαρανθεῖσα χλόη;
ποῖαι δὲ γλῶτται καὶ [

* I wish to thank Enrico Magnelli and Alexander Sens for reading this paper and Angelo Mecca for inspecting with me the *Marc. gr.* 436 (see *infra*, II).

¹ Cristoforo di Mitilene. *Canzoniere*, a cura di R. ANASTASI – C. CRIMI – Renata GENTILE – A.M. MILAZZO – Giuseppina MUSUMECI – Marisa SOLARINO. Catania 1983.

² A few instances: on the ground of the clever translation of C. Crimi of 22. 1 Kurtz τί μακρὸν οὔτω καὶ συχνὸν τὸ πᾶ[“perché a lungo e frequentemente (gemi?)” (69) one might supply: τί μακρὸν οὔτω καὶ συχνὸν τὸ πᾶ[ν στένεισ; at 115. 7 K. Crimi plausibly supplied τὰ δ’ οὔα]τα (156).

³ For example: 6. 18 πεζὸς παρ’ ἄρμα λύδιον, φασί, δράμης, on the charioteer Iephthae, who fell from his cart, is thus translated by Crimi: “correresti [...] come un fante – lo dice il proverbio – in gara con un carro lidio” (53): but Christophoros did not refer to a saying: he quoted a fragment of Pindar which he had found in Plutarch, fr. 206 MAEHLER παρὰ Λύδιον ἄρμα πεζὸς οἰχνεύων.

- 25 ὧ γλῶτταν αὐτὴν ἠδίων ὑπὲρ μέλι,
 τὴν σὴν ἐφυμ[νήσουσι
 ἧς ταῦτα πάντως ἦσαν ἐν τούτῳ βίῳ
 ἄστειότης ἔχουσα τὴν εὐκοσμίαν
 30 σπουδῆς λόγοι φέροντες ἀττικὴν χάριν.

The rhetorical question at 19 draws back to parallels like Aristid. 25. 27 ποῖοι ταῦτα κήρυκες ἢ τίνας ποιηταὶ καταθρηνήσουσιν ἀξία τῇ φωνῇ; it is a typical feature of the ekphrasis⁴, whose archetypal can be identified with Hom. *Il.* 2. 488–490

πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,
 οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλώσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν,
 φωνὴ δ' ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δὲ μοι ἦτορ ἐνεΐη.

This archetype developed into another pattern, viz. the embarrassment of the poet / rhetor about his ability to express with adequate words the theme he is about to sing / declaim: he calls upon a famous literary authority of the past (Homer, Plato, ect.) to help or to substitute him. This feature obviously presents some variations, and is attested in Byzantine poetry: see for example Paul the Silentiary, *S. Soph.* 617–8:

καὶ τίς ἐριγδούποισι χανῶν στομάτεσσιν Ὀμήρου
 μαρμαρέους λειμῶνας ἀολλισθέντας ἀείσει...;

or Georg. Pis. *Avar.* 85–7:

ἐντεῦθεν ἡμῖν ποῖος ἀρκέσει λόγος
 ἢ νεῦρα φωνῆς ἢ δεκάγλωττον στόμα⁵
 δι' οὗ φράσαιμι τὸ ξενόσπορον τέρας;

Theod. Prod. *Hist.Ged.* 42, 61 Hörandner

οὐδ' εἴ κεν δεκάγλωσσοσ ἔοι καὶ Ὀλύμπια βάζοι.

slightly different, but still following this pattern, Man. Phil. I 217, 28–9 Miller:

τίς οὖν ἔχων στόματα καὶ γλῶττας δέκα
 τῶν σῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐκροφήσει τὴν χύσιν;

Now, v. 19 and the lacunose v. 24 are very similar to a couple of verses of Constantinos Manasses: although, as I said, this rhetorical play is very common, it might be that Constantinos had in mind the verses of Christophoros:

τίνων διηγῆσαιτο γλῶσσαι ῥητόρων; (*Hodoep.* II 13) and
 ποία λαλήσει γλῶσσα καὶ ποῖον στόμα; (*Hodoep.* IV 169).

⁴ Also in the poem of Christophoros these questions precede the summary descriptions of the qualities of his dead brother.

⁵ See the Homeric passage quoted above.

These passages perhaps help us to make sense of this lacunose passage, for which I propose a tentative reconstruction:

ποῖαι δὲ γλῶτται καὶ [λυρῶν ποῖον μέλος,
 25 ὦ γλῶτταν αὐτὴν ἠδίων ὑπὲρ μέλι,
 τὴν σὴν ἐφυμ[νήσουσι θαυμαστὴν φύσιν;
 ἦς ταῦτα πάντως ἦσαν ἐν τούτῳ βίῳ
 [. . . σημεία]

24. καὶ dinoscitur (per compendium): “καὶ hinter γλῶτται unsicher” Kurtz | cf. Plut. Mor. 713b λύρας μέλει, etc. 26. Cf. Plat. Euthyd. 303c ὦ μακάριοι σφῶ τῆς θαυμαστῆς φύσεως, Epinom. 990b, Epist. 326c, Phil. Spec. leg. 2. 177. 2, Strab. 12. 7. 3. 10, Plut. Mor. 941e, etc. 28. σημεία vel quid simile sensus postulat.

The repetition of ποῖος (and, I think, also its metrical position) is confirmed by Constantinos (see also the already quoted passage of Pisides). What followed in the poem, was, as it seems, the description of the physical and moral qualities of Johannes.

57 Kurtz

It is a pity that the beginning of the poem which Christophoros wrote on the death of his mother is lacunose: it is a nice piece, although it does not reach the beauty of the epitaph for his sister Anastaso (75 Kurtz). I deal with the first fourteen lines of the text: the rest is better preserved by C.

Ἦς φρένες ἦλθον ἅπαντα μακρᾶς ἀνὰ πείρατα γαίης
 ... πινυτῆς
 τῆσδε δέμας μαλακὸν κεῖται ὀλίγη ἐνὶ χώρῃ
 ... λ]άμπει ὄλην
 5 ἄμβροτος, ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήραος αἰὲν ἐοῦσα
 ... ε καλυπτομένη
 ὦ μοι μήτηρ ἐμή, ὅτι σὸς παῖς, ὃν φιλέεσκες,
 ... ατο Χριστοφόρος
 αὐτοκασιγνήτοισιν ἐοῖς ἅμα δειλαίοισιν
 10 ... γεύσατο καὶ ἀνίης·
 ὦ πόσα μοι ἐπέτελλες, ὅσα ψυχὴν ὀνίνησιν
 ... πνεύματος ἡμετέρου·
 οὐ γὰρ ἔης μήτηρ σαρκὸς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοῦ
 ... υ οὔποτε ὄλλυμένου.

I try to supply (partially) the missing verses in the following way:

Ἦς φρένες ἦλθον ἅπαντα μακρᾶς ἀνὰ πείρατα γαίης
]πινυτῆς
 τῆσδε δέμας μαλακὸν κεῖται ὀλίγη ἐνὶ χώρῃ
 λ]άμπει ὄλην
 5 ἄμβροτος, ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήραος αἰὲν ἐοῦσα
 ὅσσ]ε καλυπτομένη.
 ὦ μοι μήτηρ ἐμή, ὅτι σὸς παῖς, ὃν φιλέεσκες,
 ἐνθάδε σῆμ' ἀχέων εἶ]σατο Χριστοφόρος
 αὐτοκασιγνήτοισιν ἐοῖς ἅμα δειλαίοισιν,
 10 ὦν μέτα καὶ δακρῶν] γεύσατο καὶ ἀνίης·
 ὦ πόσα μοι ἐπέτελλες, ὅσα ψυχὴν ὀνίνησιν

ἦδ' ὄφελος πέλεται π]νεύματος ἡμετέρου·
οὐ γὰρ ἔης μήτηρ σαρκὸς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοῦ
πνεύματος ἀχράντο]υ οὐποτε ὀλλυμένου.

6 ὅσσε καλύπτων in ex. vers. saepius invenitur, cf. Hom. II. 4. 469, 503, 526, 5. 310, etc. Greg. Naz. Carm. 2. 1. 45. 39, et praesertim Eur. Tr. 1315 μέλας γὰρ ὅσσε κατεκάλυψε θάνατος. 8 σ rotius quam κ. cf. GVI 220. 1 μνάμα ... εἴσατο, GVI 226. 1 ἐμὲ ... εἴσατο τύμβον, etc. 14 cf. Paul. Sil. Ambo 31 πνεύματος ἀχράντοιο. vel αἰενάο]υ, cf. Greg. Naz. Carm. 2, 1, 1, 611 Πνεύματος αἰενάοιο.

78. Kurtz

Christophorus' friend, the schoolmaster Petros, liked his Anacreontics on the death of his sister and was late in giving them back. Christophoros facetiously rebuked him:

[Εἰς τὸν] γραμματικὸν Πέτρον, αἰτήσαντα [τὰ] εἰς τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἐπιτάφια ἱαμβεῖα, κατασχόντα [δὲ χρόνον] πολὺν καὶ μήπως φθάσαντα ἀποδοῦναι.

Ἦ λωτὸν εὗρες ἐμφυτευθέντα ξένως
[ἐμοῖς] ἱάμβοις, Πέτρε, τοῖς ἐντυμβίοις
τοῖς εἰς ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἐμὴν γεγραμμένοις
]τὸ χρῆμα τοὺς στίχους κρίνεις
5 καὶ ῥᾶστα τούτων οὐκ ἀποσπᾶσθαι θέλεις;
]ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὡς ἀναγνοὺς πολλακίς.

I think that the following supplements might fill the lacunae:

Ἦ λωτὸν εὗρες ἐμφυτευθέντα ξένως
[ἐμοῖς] ἱάμβοις, Πέτρε, τοῖς ἐντυμβίοις
τοῖς εἰς ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἐμὴν γεγραμμένοις
ἢ καὶ καλὸν] τὸ χρῆμα τοὺς στίχους κρίνεις
5 καὶ ῥᾶστα τούτων οὐκ ἀποσπᾶσθαι θέλεις;
χώρει δ'] ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὡς ἀναγνοὺς πολλακίς.

4 Cf. Aristoph. *Lys.* 83 ὡς δὲ καλὸν τὸ χρῆμα τῶν πιθῶν ἔχεις, fr. 73 K.-A. ὦ Ζεῦ, τὸ χρῆμα τῆς νεολαίας ὡς καλόν.

II. NOTES ON THE *CARMINA* OF CONSTANTINUS STILBES

Johannes Diethart and Wolfram Hörandner (hence D.-H.) have recently produced a complete edition of the poems of Constantinus Stilbes: an old *desideratum*⁶, for the achievement of which the two editors certainly deserve gratitude.

I. One of the poems is an epitaph for the patriarch Michael, a text first treated by Diethart in his doctoral dissertation and then published as *editio princeps* by Antonio Labate⁷. D.–H. anew inspected the original, correcting and bettering the *princeps*; as we shall see, the text might be further improved by a new inspection of the manuscript.

This poem, of 34 verses, is only preserved in the manuscript *Marc. gr.* 436 (XIV) = N, f. 3^V: the text of Stilbes is written on three columns, which are difficult to read because moisture damaged the script (at the edges) towards the end of the poem, in the first (22-25-28-31-34) and third column (27-30-33). I

⁶ See, for instance, K. HORNA, Die Epigramme des Theodors Balsamon. *BZ* 25 (1903) 165: "Der reichhaltige Nachlaß des Konstantin Stilbes ... harrt noch vollständig der Veröffentlichung".

⁷ A. LABATE, La monodia di Costantino Stilbes per il patriarca Michele III. *Messana. Rassegna di studi filologici, linguistici e storici* 17 (1993 [1995]) 91–111.

first reproduce the text of the last 14 verses according to the reading of D.–H., followed by their apparatus:

- 20 ἀναπεσὼν ὑπνωσεν εὐγενῆς λέων
 εἰς πέτρινον σπήλαιον, εἰς ψυχρὰν πλάκα,
 καὶ σκύμνος ὡσπερ ἀπερυγγάνειν φθάνει,
 καὶ κνώδαλον πᾶν ἐπτοήθη μακρόθεν.
 κοιμωμένου γοῦν τοῦ λέοντος ἀρτίως
- 25 τὰς τῶν ὀνύχων σου τρίχας ἔτι τρέμει·
 καὶ τῶν ἰχνῶν γὰρ ὑφορᾶται τοὺς τύπους
 καὶ δακτύλων ξυσμὰς τε τυγχάνειν θέλει
 καὶ πως ὀνύχων [...]μφ[...]ἰ πάλιν λέων.
 πλὴν ἀλλ' ἐγείρει τόνδε σάλπιγξ ἐσχάτη·
- 30 βρυχήσεται δὲ τῆς εὐπ[ει]θείας [...]
 καὶ πᾶν πτοήσει τοῦ καλάμου θηρίον.
 καὶ βασιλείας τῆς ἀνεσπέρου τύχης
 λεοντιδῆς γνήσιος ἐγκριθ[εῖς]]
 σκύμνος λέοντος, ὃν γραφῆς ὕμνεῖ στόμα.

25 σου τρίχας Diet; dubitat Lab; non clare legitur in N; an ἀμυχὰς legendum? 28 an ἐκφανῆ vel ἐμφανῆ legendum? 30 εὐπειθείας N; εὐπειθείας dubitanter, quia est contra metrum, Diet 32 τύχης Diet Lab 33 ἐγκριθήσεται dubitanter con. Diet

The dead patriarch is portrayed as a lion who sleeps in its lair (20–22): all the animals of the wood are still afraid of his claws (23–25); they search his tracks, and want (?) to get (?) the traces of his scratches (on the trees?) (26–28). But the last trumpet will wake him up, and the wild beast will roar again: the animals will fear him (29–31). He will obtain the kingdom without end (of the paradise) (32–34).

The chief problem is constituted by the sense of 26–28: the subject of ὑφορᾶται (26) and θέλει (27) is most probably the same as that of τρέμει (25) — that is, πᾶν κνώδαλον (23)⁸. If it is so, then the meaning of τυγχάνειν θέλει, however clumsy, should be “tries to get, tries to find out” the footprints, viz. lest he would appear again: as Labate rightly pointed out, ὀνύχων ... λέων (28) is an allusion to the saying ἐξ ὀνύχων λέων⁹. The end of the poem (32–34) is difficult to reconstruct in every detail, but the overall meaning is clear enough.

I inspected the passage in the manuscript with a Wood lamp, and have produced a text that is slightly different from that of the Teubner editors but which confirms many of their conjectures:

- 25 τὰς τῶν ὀνύχων ἀμυχὰς ἔτι τρέμει
 καὶ τῶν ἰχνῶν γὰρ ὑφορᾶται τοὺς τύπους
 καὶ δακτύλων ξυσμὰς δὲ τυγχάνειν θέλει
 ἢ ἐξ ὀνύχων ἐμφανῆ πάλιν λέων.
 πλὴν ἀλλ' ἐγείρει τόνδε σάλπιγξ ἐσχάτη·

⁸ Not the lion, as LABATE 110, thought: “essendosi dunque il leone appena addormentato... esamina le impronte delle orme e vuole che si imbattano nelle graffiature delle dita”, etc.

⁹ Labate referred to D.K. KARATHANASIS, *Sprichwörter und sprichwörtliche Redensarten des Altertums in den rhetorischen Schriften des Michael Psellos, des Eusthathios und des Michael Choniates sowie in anderen rhetorischen Quellen des XII. Jahrhunderts.* München (Diss.) 1936, 111, n. 235, as well as D.-H.; I couldn't consult this book, but, for the reception of this saying in Christian literature, I refer to Kertsch ad Greg. Naz. *Carm.* I 2, 10, 6 (Gregorio Nazianzeno Sulla virtù. Carme giambico [1,2,10]. Introduzione, testo critico e traduzione di C. CRIMI. Commento di M. KERTSCH. Appendici a cura di C. CRIMI e José GUIRAU. Pisa 1995). For the presence of it in Byzantine poetry, see for instance Const. Manass. *Chron.* 3408 and 4232, Mouzalo 129, v. 635 (S. DOANIDOU, Ἡ παραίτησις Νικολάου Μουζάλωνος ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Κύπρου. Ἀνέκδοτον ἀπολογητικὸν ποίημα. *Hell* 7 [1934] 109–150).

31 βρυχήσεται δὲ τῆς εὐπειθείας χά[ρ]ιν
καὶ πᾶν πτοήσει τοῦ καλάμου θηρίον.
καὶ βασιλείας τῆς ἀνεσπέρου τύχης
λεοντιδῆς γνήσιος ἐγκριθεῖ ...
σκύμνος λέοντος, ὃν γραφῆς ὑμνεῖ στόμα.

25 ad ἀμυχὰς cf. e.g. Psell. Poem. 62, 8, Christ. Mityl. 22, 31. 27 δὲ clare legitur 28 possis μὴ | ἐκφανῆ D-H, recte. 30 in εὐπειθείας adhibetur εὐ- tamquam syllaba brevis, cf. D-H, xvii. 32 τύχης N : corr. D-H 33 ἐγκριθεῖς ἄνω possis

What is the point of these images? Both Labate and D.–H. rightly related them to the poetical speech held by Jacob before his death to his sons, especially:

σκύμνος λέοντος Ιούδα·
ἐκ βλαστοῦ, υἱέ μου, ἀνέβης·
ἀναπεσῶν ἐκοιμήθης ὡς λέων
καὶ ὡς σκύμνος· τίς ἐγερεῖ αὐτόν; (Gen. 49, 9)¹⁰.

This is doubtless the most important source of the passage: one might also recall, in the same context, the mention of the σπήλαιον where Jacob was buried¹¹. Given the identification of the lion of Jouda with Christ, the patriarch is implicitly compared to Christ: and this was the plausible assumption of Labate. In fact, we may add that Christ appeared as a lion already in one passage of the *Carmina* of Gregory of Nazianzus:

ὡς τις ἐλαφροτέροισι λέων θήρεσσιν ἐπιστάς (*Carm.* I 2, 1, 606)¹²

and that the lair of the lion in Stilbes' poem is probably an allusion to the resurrection of Christus from the tombstone where he was buried, as clearly in the case of Const. Manass. *Hodoep.* 1. 225–229, which unambiguously draws on Gen. 49. 9:

κατησπασάμην τὸν πολύτιμον τάφον,
ἐν ᾧ δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς παρηνομηκότας
καθαπερεῖ λέοντος ὑπνώσας σκύμνος¹³
ὁ χοῦν φυράσας εἰς Ἀδὰμ διαρτίαν
τοῖς ἐξ Ἀδὰμ ἔβλυσεν ἀειζωίαν.

Thus, the resurrection of Michael at the Apocalypse is associated in the epitaph of Stilbes with the glory of the resurrection of Christ. Therefore, these verses are certainly, mainly construed with biblical images, as Labate and D.–H. pointed out; however, I think that there also might be a recollection of a passage of profane poetry, perhaps the verses of Constantinus Manasses, an older contemporary of Stilbes, quoted just before, or:

μικρὸν προκύψας τοῦ τάφου, βρούξον, λέον (Jo. Geom. *Var.* 24, PG 106, 920B)

where Geometres in a poem written probably in 975 celebrated the emperor Nikephoros Phokas, who died in 969; the following verse mentions, as in Stilbes, the fear of lesser animals:

δίδαζον οἰκεῖν τὰς ἀλώπεκας πέτραις.

¹⁰ Monodia di Costantino Stilbes, 105, who also mentions the lion of Jouda as an image of victorious Christ (*Ap.* 5. 5); D.–H., in the *apparatus fontium*.

¹¹ Θάψατέ με μετὰ τῶν πατέρων μου ἐν τῷ σπηλαίῳ ... ἐν τῷ σπηλαίῳ τῷ διπλῷ κτλ. (*Gen.* 49, 29–30).

¹² Cf. Gregor von Nazianz: Der Rangstreit zwischen Ehe und Jungfräulichkeit (*Carmen* 1, 2, 1, 215–732), Einleitung und Kommentar von K. SUNDERMANN. Paderborn/München/Wien/Zürich 1991, 195.

¹³ See v. 34 of the monody.

Another possible source might be a famous passage of Gregory of Nazianzus (who also was bishop of Constantinople) about himself (*Carm.* 2. 1. 6. 7–12):

καὶ νῦν ἐγὼ μὲν ὡς λέων βρυχώμενος
μακρὰ στενάζω...
εἰ γὰρ ἔλθοι μοι σθένος,
ὡς πρὶν, Τριάς, σὸν, καὶ βρυχησαίμην πάλιν
ἐν σοί, τάχ' ἂν τι θῆρες εἴξειαν πάλιν.

II. The long poem by Stilbes on the fire of Constantinople (1192?) is published by D.-H. for the first time: it is transmitted by two Italian manuscripts, M (= *Marc. gr.* 524, XIII/XIV) and B (= *Vat. Barb. gr.* 240, XIII *ex.*). The two witnesses show the same text (with differences obviously due to scribal mistakes) only from v. 327 onwards: before it, each of them offers a different version (1–207 in B, 1–326 in M). D.-H. assume that the text of B represents a later reworking, whereas that of M could be a earlier draft, closer to the event.

B is a damaged manuscript: some lines are not complete, because the edge is cut; others are lacunose, because of holes or other damages. Such a state of the codex accounts for the lacunae marked in the text by the editors: since Stilbes' style is on the whole rather involved, it is often very difficult to conjecture the possible missing words.

I have checked the original at Rome, and can restore the meaning of at least one passage towards the end of the poem. I first reproduce the text by D.-H. with their notes:

ἄλλος ἐδίδου δραστικὴν ναοῖς χέρα,
τοίχους μὲν οὐδὲν οὐδὲ τὰς πλίνθους ψύχων –
τὸ πῦρ γὰρ ἐκράτησε πάσης ψυχρίας –
ἀλλ' ἐκφορήσας τῶν ἐπίπλων τὴν χάριν
145 σκευῶν τε φαιδρότητα λιθομαργάρων·
τὸ πῦρ γὰρ ἐστράτευσε καὶ τοῖς ἐντίμοις,
καθάπτεται δὲ τῶν πανάγνων ἐκ θράσους
ζηλοῦν με τάχα τοῦ παρανόμου τρόπου
ἂν ὦν μυσαρὸς καθαροῖς προσεγγίσω,
150 ἢ μᾶλλον ἡμῶν ἐξελέγχον τοὺς ῥύπους,
...φ... γὰρ ἀναθημάτων χάριν
ἐξαπονίπτει τῶν ἐμῶν μολυσμάτων.

“146 γὰρ B 151 ἐξέφυγε?”

In these verses Stilbes describes a believer who, giving up the hope of stopping the fire by pouring water, takes away the furniture and the holy vestments from a church, trying to rescue them. In fact, the fire also attacks the holy places: either because it imitates the poet, when he approaches the eucharist without having been purified before, or because it purifies the places from his sins¹⁴. Verse 151 is lacunose: and the supplement proposed by the editors is not convincing. It presupposes a parenthetical phrase (like e.g. 143):

ἢ μᾶλλον ἡμῶν ἐξελέγχον τοὺς ῥύπους,
– ἐξέφυγε γὰρ ἀναθημάτων χάριν –
ἐξαπονίπτει κτλ.

¹⁴ Throughout the poem, the attitude of the poet towards the fire is ambiguous: obviously is it cruel and doesn't spare holy places and innocent creatures, but it also is a punishment sent by God against the sinners.

But the fire *does* purify the church polluted by the sinners, because *it burns it*¹⁵. Moreover, the traces of the manuscript do not support the reading of D.-H.: before φ traces are distinguishable of a letter compatible either with τ or σ (but more probably τ)¹⁶; over τ there is a compendium (-ος, perhaps); after φ I read λ, then a gravis ` , then a small letter and (clearly) γ, with (as it seems) a compendium over it. *Ne multa:*

ἡ μᾶλλον ἡμῶν ἐξελέγχον τοὺς ῥύπους·
 [ἐν]τὸς. φλ[έ]γ[ον] γὰρ ἀναθημάτων χάριν
 ἐξαποníπτει τῶν ἐμῶν μολυσμάτων.

¹⁵ One might also point out that ἐξέφυγε is prosodically not attractive.

¹⁶ It is quite similar to the τ of v. 114 τις.