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Rupert Rainer
University of Graz / University of Erfurt

A *Hymn to Justinian*? The Aspect of Hymn Poetry in the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* by Paul the Silentiary

The Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*, written by Paul the Silentiary in 562 AD, is known for its vivid description of Hagia Sophia. However, the Greek hexameter poem also includes panegyrics to Emperor Justinian. In v. 145–185, Justinian is praised with a hymn that resembles the* Homeric Hymns*. This is remarkable because the* Homeric Hymns *did not conform with the concept of hymns of the 6th century, which was defined by liturgical hymns. In the* Ekphrasis*, the contemporary concept is very present. The text frequently refers to liturgical chanting and even relates to a specific hymn. Thus, the aspect of hymn poetry in the* Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia *appears very ambiguous. This paper addresses this ambiguity. It discusses how hymn poetry is involved in Paul's* Ekphrasis *and asks if the contrast given by the Hymn to Justinian in v. 145–185 reflects the literary programme of the poem.*

Keywords: *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*, Hymn, Paulus Silentiarius, Justinian, *Homeric Hymns*, Late Antiquity, Christian classicism

In 557 AD, a heavy earthquake hit Constantinople and caused the dome of Hagia Sophia to collapse. Five years later, on Christmas Eve of 562, the church was finally re-inaugurated. For this solemn occasion,[1] Paul the Silentiary composed a poetic presentation of the church that is known to us as *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*.[2] The text, comprising 1029 lines, con-

[1] On the occasion of the *Ekphrasis*, see Whitby (1985).
[2] Paul also wrote an appendix to the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*, the *Ekphrasis of the Ambo*, which is not included in this paper.

sists of two iambic prologues (vv. 1–80; 81–134) and a hexameter poem (vv. 135–1029) that can be divided into three parts. The main theme of the *Ekphrasis*, the description of the newly-restored Hagia Sophia, is given in the central part of the text (vv. 311–920). It reviews the re-inauguration ceremony and takes the reader on a virtual tour through the sacred space.[3] The description is preceded by an extensive introduction (vv. 135–310). The vv. 920–1029 conclude the poem. The three parts of the *Ekphrasis* have very different foci. While the central part focuses on the church, in the other parts the building is only of secondary interest. Instead, they are dedicated to the Patriarch of Constantinople, and foremost to the emperor Justinian (reg. 527–565), who was responsible for the construction of Hagia Sophia.

The introduction focuses in particular on Justinian. He is basically the main character of the entire section. In this context, vv. 145–185 are noteworthy. These forty lines appear to praise the emperor with a hymn. This is not unusual, for hymns were very popular in late antique poetry and we often find hymnic sections integrated in larger contexts.[4] But the example from the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* seems to be exceptional. First, because the object of praise is a person, whereas hymns conventionally address divine agents. And second, because it strikingly resembles the Homeric Hymns. In Late Antiquity, however, these archaic hymns were generally not used as models for the composition of praise. At best, they were used as sources for phrases and narratives of classical mythology. [5]

Due to its similarity with the archaic Homeric Hymns, the passage of vv. 145–185 contrasts the concept of hymn singing employed in the *Ekphrasis*. The poem frequently mentions the chanting of prayers and

[3] For an analysis of the ekphrastic technique of Paul the Silentiary, see Macrides–Magdalino 1988; Webb 1999.
[4] An ideal example is the *Dionysiaka* by Nonnus of Panopolis, which includes several hymns. See Braun 1915.
[5] On the Homeric Hymns in Late Antiquity, see Agosti (2016).

psalms in and outside the Hagia Sophia. In this regard, the *Ekphrasis* reflects the concept of hymn poetry of the so-called 'Age of Justinian', which was defined by Christian liturgical chants. Moreover, the *Ekphrasis* is closely related to a specific hymn that was composed for the very same occasion. Paul's poem seems to refer to that hymn, employing the same motifs and using similar images.

Hymn poetry appears to be a key aspect of the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* – although, so far it has not received much scholarly attention.[6] However, this aspect is rendered ambiguous by the vv. 145–185. On one hand, the entire poem is interrelated with Early Byzantine hymnography. On the other hand, it includes a hymn that does not correspond to this concept but resembles a form, which is commonly associated with the praise of pagan deities. This paper addresses this ambiguity by discussing the aspect of hymn poetry in the *Ekphrasis* and, in particular, the passage of vv. 145–185, which I would like to call *Hymn to Justinian*. What characterizes that passage as a hymn? In what sense does it contrast the concept of hymn-singing reflected in the *Ekphrasis*? And how can this contrast be contextualised? Is it a mere literary play by an erudite poet? Or is it an expression of the programme on which the poem is based? However, before turning to the *Hymn to Justinian*, it seems appropriate to look at how hymn poetry is generally involved in the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*.

I

The aspect of hymn-singing is introduced right at the beginning of the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*. In the opening hexameters we read: 'Let us sing the house (…) with very holy hymns' (οἶκον […] | εὐιέροις ὕμνοισιν ἀείσομεν, vv. 142–143).[7]

[6] Only Macrides–Magdalino (1988) seem to deal with the issue.
[7] All quotations from the original text of the *Ekphrasis* are taken from De Stefani (2011). All translations are by the author, except for the translation of vv. 331–336 (see below).

This example demonstrates the complexity of the matter, for in this sentence 'hymns' has various connotations. Over the centuries, the term *hymnos* (ὕμνος) resp. the verb *hymnein* (ὑμνεῖν) underwent profound changes in meaning.[8] In archaic sources, for instance, *hymnos* can refer to any poetic text, regardless of its purpose or content.[9] In classicising texts, this lived on until Late Antiquity (e.g. Nonn. *D*. 1, 15). The definition of *hymnos* as a praise specifically of a deity is first attested in Plato (Pl. Lg. 700b) – although it is already implied in the Homeric Hymns. Plato distinguishes the *hymnos* from the *enkomion* that addresses persons (Pl. *R*. 607a). This is elaborated further by grammarians like Menander Rhetor (1st century AD), who explains the different types of hymns (Men. Rh. 333, 1–344, 14). In panegyrics, however, *hymnos* is also used as *topos* for praise in general.

All of this is relevant for Paul's *Ekphrasis* – a classicising text, which is strongly influenced by imperial age rhetoric theory.[10] Thus, the opening lines could indicate the following hexameter poem. Or, more generally, represent a panegyrical *topos*. However, there is also a religious connotation, emphasised by the attribute 'very holy'. The *Ekphrasis* is firmly rooted in the Christian world of 6th-century Constantinople. Thus, the Judaeo-Christian understanding of *hymnos* is relevant here. In that context, *hymnos* can refer to sung prayers and psalms[11], and liturgical hymns such as the Kontakia. These chanted homilies were very popular in the 'Age of Justinian'. They were established elements of the liturgy and had a strong place in the cultural life.[12] In his poem, Paul of-

[8] The transformation of the concept of hymn cannot be covered in this paper. Lattke (1991) offers a comprehensive overview.
[9] See Bremer (1981: 193–194). See e.g., Hes. Op. 662.
[10] For these aspects of the *Ekphrasis*, see e.g. Friedländer (1912: 105–132), Macrides–Magdalino (1988), Webb (1999), Bell (2009).
[11] The psalms are called *hymnoi* already by Philo of Alexandria (see Lattke [1991: 3 and 129–132]).
[12] On the history of Early Christian liturgical hymns, see Koder (2005: 14–25). For the Kontakia in the byzantine liturgy, see Lingas (1991).

ten mentions liturgical chanting in- and outside the Hagia Sophia. This means, the announcement to 'sing the house with very holy hymns' in vv. 142–143 could also anticipate the references to liturgical hymn-singing in the *Ekphrasis*.

These references are relevant for the purpose of this paper. However, as the example of vv. 142–143 shows, they cannot be identified solely on the basis of passages that include the term *hymnos,* due to its ambiguity. Moreover, we should also expect them in passages where the term does not occur at all. Nevertheless, the instances of *hymnos*[13] in the *Ekphrasis* offer a suitable starting point for a discussion about how liturgical hymn-singing is used as a motif in the poem.

The term *hymnos* occurs seven times in the *Ekphrasis*, including the v. 143 discussed above. But only in the context of the description of the church it appears to explicitly describe liturgical hymn-singing. This concerns two instances: v. 335 and v. 342.[14] They are both in the passage that prepares the detailed description of Hagia Sophia by reviewing the day of the re-inauguration (vv. 311–353). And both instances refer to liturgical acts. The one in v. 342 is embedded in the review of the procession towards Hagia Sophia. The text says, the participants chanted 'pious hymns with suppliant mouths' (ἱκεσίοις στομάτεσσι θεουδέας ἤπυεν ὕμνους, v. 342). Later, in vv. 350–353, we learn from an intertextual reference to Psalm 24 that they were singing that very psalm.[15]

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[13] The verb *hymnein* is barely relevant for this observation, for it occurs only twice in the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*. In vv. 311–312, as part of a rhetoric question, it translates to 'sing' in the sense of 'praise' (ἀλλὰ τί δηθύνω λαθικηδέος ἦμαρ ἑορτῆς | ὑμνῆσαι;). In v. 313, we read θεὸν δ' ὑμνήσατε μύσται. Whether this refers to hymn-singing or not, seems to be a question of interpretation, for it calls the priests either to 'sing hymns to God' or to 'praise God'.

[14] The other instances are either in the introduction (v. 143; 146; 172) or in the conclusion (v. 967; 970).

[15] This is also mentioned by John Malalas (MalalT 18, 143). On the intertextual reference, see Opstall (2018: 44–46).

Before describing the procession, the *Ekphrasis* discusses the vigil the night before the re-inauguration ceremony. This brief passage is particularly relevant in the context of hymn poetry and is thus worth a closer look (vv. 331–335):[16]

καὶ δὴ νὺξ τετέλεστο προηγέτις εὔποδος ἠοῦς
εὐφροσύνην καλέουσα, θεοῦ δ᾽ ὑπεδέξατο κῆρυξ
ἄμβροτος ἀγρύπνοιο χέων[17] κελάδημα χορείης
θεσπεσίοις τεμένεσσι νέοις, ὅθι μύστιδι φωνῇ
παννυχίους Χριστοῖο βιαρκέος ἀνέρες ὕμνους
ἀσπασίως ἐβόησαν ἀσιγήτοισιν ἀοιδαῖς.

And so the night guide of fair-footed dawn, had come to an end,
summoning joyfulness, and God's immortal herald
gave welcome, pouring out song from the unsleeping choir,
in the wondrous new precincts, where men
with mystic voice gladly shouted night-long hymns
for life-preserving Christ in songs never silent.

The *Ekphrasis* in general reflects the Neoplatonic idea that the absence of light equals the absence of the divine. Night and darkness are therefore presented very negatively throughout the entire poem.[18] But the night of the vigil is introduced in a surprisingly positive way. It is a joyful, sacred night. And it is a night full of chanting. In these only six lines, hymn singing is mentioned three times. So, it appears that according to the *Ekphrasis* the terror of this particular night was taken by the constant chanting of hymns.

[16] The translation is taken from Opstall (2018: 41).
[17] The Pal. Gr. 23, the only manuscript that preserves the text of the *Ekphrasis*, reads λαῶν κελάδημα in v. 333, which has already been substituted in the manuscript. De Stefani (2011) changes λαῶν to χέων.
[18] For a discussion of this aspect, see Schibille (2014: 16–41).

It becomes clear from this passage that for the presentation of the vigil the motif of hymn-singing fulfils a specific purpose: It serves to convey the poem's philosophical-theological concept. In other instances, this motif seems to support the characteristic purpose of an ekphrastic description, i.e., to 'bring the subject matter vividly before the eyes.'[19] This seems to be the case, for example, in the description of the Narthex of Hagia Sophia (vv. 417–443). The text says that 'from there at night a melodious sound rises continuously and cozens the ears of life-giving Christ' (ἔνθα δέ τις κατὰ νύκτα διαμπερές ἦχος ἀνέρπων | εὐκέλαδος Χριστοῖο βιαρκέος οὔατα θέλγει, vv. 429–430). Here, the image of the high-rising sound illustrates the height of the architectural structure. In this way, it can support the reader in visualising the space that is constructed on the literary level. Furthermore, this image charges the virtual space with a religious atmosphere similar to that one could experience in the actual Hagia Sophia. Thus, the motif of hymn singing contributes to the vividness of the ekphrastic description. It conveys the spiritual soundscape of the liturgy on the literary level. So, it can give the reader the impression of being actually surrounded by the sacred space and perceiving the contemplative sounds.

The *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* was recited some days after the re-inauguration of Hagia Sophia on December 24th 562.[20] For those, however, who were present at the re-inauguration ceremony, the references to hymn singing must have evoked memories of the liturgy on that day, which was most certainly celebrated with an abundance of hymns. One of those hymns has been preserved. The Kontakion *On the Inauguration*

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[19] See the definition of ekphrasis by Nicolaus Rhetor: ἔκφρασίς ἐστι λόγος ἀφηγηματικός, ὑπ' ὄψιν ἄγων ἐναργῶς τὸ δηλούμενον (Nicol. Prog. 68, 8–12). For ekphrastic description in general, see Webb (2009).

[20] The text of suggests that it was recited either on 6th of January 562 or on 31st of December 562. See Friedländer (1912: 109–110); Macrides–Magdalino (1988: 63–67). The vv. 1–81 were recited in the Palace of the Emperor, the rest in the Palace of the Patriarch.

of Hagia Sophia[21] was composed by an unknown poet, especially for this occasion, just like the *Ekphrasis*. However, the two texts are not only connected through the common occasion. They also employ the same key motifs when depicting the Hagia Sophia and equally present the church as a manifestation of divine power on earth that will outlast all times, using similar images.[22]

The parallels between the *Ekphrasis* and the Kontakion suggest that the two texts are supposed to convey the same message to different addressees.[23] The Kontakion reaches out to the community of faithful gathered in the Hagia Sophia for the liturgy of the re-inauguration ceremony. Its language is close to the New Testament and patristic homilies and the symbols are taken from the Bible, so the participants of liturgies in the 6th century were most likely familiar with them. The *Ekphrasis*, on the other hand, provides a fundamentally different text. Paul the Silentiary followed the poetic tradition of Nonnus of Panopolis (5th century), the poet of the *Dionysiaka* and the *Paraphrasis of the Gospel of John*.[24] This means, his poem is based on the principle of variegation (ποικιλία). It displays a variety of expressions and a plethora of images that sometimes make it difficult to follow the description. In addition, the *Ekphrasis* draws on a long tradition of epic poetry in various ways. Paul reuses motifs and phrases from the works of Nonnus, but also from other poets like Callimachus and the Homeric Epics. To comprehend this elaborate, complex text required a high level of literary education. Against this background, the *Ekphrasis* has rightly been considered the more erudite version of the Kontakion.[25]

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[21] For a short introduction and an edition of the text, see Trypanis (1968: 139–147).
[22] See the comparison in Macrides–Magdalino (1988: 76–78).
[23] See Macrides–Magdalino (1988: 77–78): '(The Hymn) did not need the Ekphrasis in order to be understood, whereas the Ekphrasis had to assume prior knowledge of the concepts expounded in the hymn.'
[24] See e.g., Friedländer (1912: 112 passim); De Stefani (2011: XXVI passim).
[25] See Trypanis (1968: 139); Macrides–Magdalino (1988: 77–78).

II

In the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*, the complex interrelation between the text and hymn poetry is not only reflected through references to the latter. In vv. 145–185, the poem even includes a passage that can be read as a hymn. The object of praise is the emperor Justinian. The Hymn to Justinian follows immediately after the ten opening hexameters and starts with an invocation to Roma (vv. 145–151):

> Ἀλλὰ σύ μοι βασιλῆα φερέσβιον, ὄμπνια Ῥώμη,
> στέψον ἀκηρασίοισι χύδην καταειμένον ὕμνοις,
> οὐχ ὅτι σὸν ζυγόδεσμον ἐφήρμοσεν ἔθνεσι γαίης,
> οὐχ ὅτι σῶν ἐτάνυσσεν ὑπέρβια μέτρα θοώκων
> τέλσα παρ' ἐσχατόωντα κατ' ὠκεανιτίδας ἀκτάς,
> ἀλλ' ὅτι σὸν περὶ πῆχυν ἀπείρονα νηὸν ἐγείρας
> Θυμβριάδος ποίησε φαεινοτέρην σε τεκούσης.
>
> Come you, nourishing Roma, and crown the life-bringing Emperor,
> who is covered abundantly with pure hymns,
> not because he fastened the people of the earth to your yoke;
> not because he extended the unmeasurable dimensions of your seats
> from the most remote land to the coast of the Ocean;
> but because he erected in your arm an eternal sanctuary
> and made you more splendid than your mother at the Tiber.

Roma is identified with Constantinople. This becomes clear from the reference to her mother at the Tiber (v. 151). She is called to honour the emperor – not for his conquests, but for building the Hagia Sophia and making her more glorious than Rome in Italy.[26]

[26] The exposition of why the emperor deserves to be glorified is given with a priamel. This figure of speech is very common in hymnic literature. See Race (1982: 43–54 for

To sing in honour of the emperor, who is already 'covered abundantly with pure hymns' (v. 146), appears to be a key theme of the *Hymn to Justinian*. In vv. 155–156, Constantinople, referred to as Anthusa, is called to sing the emperor together with 'honey-voiced choirs' (μελιφθόγγοισι χορείαις, | χρυσοχίτων Ἀνθοῦσα, τεὸν σκηπτοῦχον ἀείδειν) because he defeated the barbarians and the personification of Envy (v. 157–163; this passage is discussed below). Later, in vv. 164–167, 'Roma Latina of Old' (πρεσβυγένεθλος Λατινιὰς Ῥώμη, v. 164) is asked to sing together with 'new blooming Roma' as if with a single voice (σύνθροον ἀείδουσα μέλος νεοθηλέϊ Ῥώμῃ, v. 165).

In v. 168, the priests are summoned to celebrate the re-opening of Hagia Sophia and to join the praise (μέλψομεν […] εὔποδας ὕμνους, v. 172).[27] They should glorify Justinian because he 'made all sorrows vanish' (ὅλας ἤμβλυνε μερίμνας, v. 175) that followed the collapse of the 'work of the rulers' (δούπησεν ἐρισθενὲς ἔργον ἀνάκτων, v. 176). With the call to the priests, the hymn gradually passes from praising the emperor to preparing the next section, the account of the earthquake in 557 AD (vv. 186–213). In the last lines of the hymn, the singer repeatedly asks the emperor to forgive him for recalling that sorrowful event (vv. 176–185, see below).

As stated above, since Plato hymns are traditionally regarded as songs specifically for deities. Hence, the question arises of how the praise of Justinian in vv. 145–185 of the *Ekphrasis* can be a called hymn.

Roman emperors used to be venerated as deities. But this changed after the 4th century due to the rising impact of Christianity. The emperor could no longer be regarded as God. Instead, he was seen as legitimised by the Christian God and appointed by Christ as a placeholder on earth until doomsday.[28] Justinian, however, emphasised this divine

the priamel in the Homeric Hymns; 99–104 for the hymns by Callimachus).

[27] The attribute εὔπους (lit. 'with good feet'), relating to the rhythm, makes clear that ὕμνοι here must mean 'songs'.

[28] For this conception of the ruler in Late Antiquity, see Meier (2001: 115–116).

legitimisation. This becomes clear, for example, from his legislative documents, in which he presents himself as acting by God's direct mandate and as particularly close to God. Sometimes he seems to consider himself as almost equal to a deity.[29]

The portrayal of Justinian in the *Ekphrasis* seems to reflect this imperial propaganda, esp. in vv. 145–185. A key point is the presentation of the emperor in the lines quoted above, where he is called 'life-bringing' (φερέσβιος, v. 145). This is an unusual attribute for a person. It is first attested in Hesiod (T. 693) and the Homeric Hymns (h.Cer. 450; h.Ap. 341), always applied to fertile land. In later texts, it was used for several deities: Prometheus (A. Fr. 204b**, 12), Demeter (S. Fr. 754, 2–3), Hera (Emp. 6, 3) and Helios (Orph. L. 301). Gregory of Nazianzus finally adopted it for the Christian God (*De vita sua,* 1326, 6; 1448, 9). However, it remains very uncommon for humans. The only example of a person being called 'life-bringing' seems to be Ino, the wet-nurse to Dionysos in the *Dionysiaka* by Nonnus (*D*. 5, 560). We find the term several times in Nonnus' works. In the *Dionysiaka*, it is mainly used for body parts and almost exclusively in the context of birth-giving and parenthood – as in the example of Ino. But in the *Paraphrasis*, φερέσβιος is frequently applied to Jesus Christ (e.g. 6, 99; 8, 92).

As we can see by the few instances of φερέσβιος in ancient literature, the attribute serves to present something or someone as life-providing. And in general, the term relates that quality to divinity. Against this background, it seems plausible to assume that by calling the emperor 'life-bringing', the *Ekphrasis* suggests right at the beginning of the *Hymn to Justinian* that he should be regarded as a divine figure.[30] The frequent

[29] Meier (2001: 107–114) demonstrates this on the example of the legal document *Deo auctore* by Justinian.

[30] One might read φερέσβιος in v. 145 in context with the invocation to Roma, who in the same line is called 'nourishing' (ὄμπνια Ῥώμη). In this way, Justinian would be portrayed as the agent by whom the nourishment provided by Roma creates life.

use of φερέσβιος in Nonnus is particularly relevant in this context. Since Nonnus was very influential to Paul the Silentiary, Paul could have drawn inspiration from his works when calling the emperor 'life-bringing'. With the *Paraphrasis* in mind, one can even speculate that v. 145 of the *Ekphrasis* suggests comparing the emperor to Jesus Christ.

III

The presentation of Justinian as a divine agent, who deserves veneration, continues throughout the whole passage of vv. 145–185 and qualifies it as a hymn. However, the *Hymn to Justinian* is also distinguished by the formal arrangement. In this regard, it sharply contrasts the way the motif of hymn singing is generally employed in the *Ekphrasis*. In the poem, references to actual hymn singing, like in the passages discussed above, always relate to liturgical hymn chanting. The *Hymn to Justinian*, however, features characteristics of ancient, non-Christian hymnic texts. The most conspicuous characteristic is the structural arrangement of the passage, which seems to follow the distinctive structure of the extensive Homeric Hymns (*Hymn to Demeter*, *To Apollo*, *To Hermes*, and *To Aphrodite)*.[31] Those hymns basically consist of three parts: In the beginning, the deity the hymn is dedicated to is not addressed directly, but only mentioned; the middle part tells myths about the deity or explains his/her attributes; only in the closing lines, the deity is addressed directly with a salute (e.g., χαῖρε) or a plead (e.g., κλῦθι).[32]

The 'movement from the distant third-person announcement of the opening to the proximity of the final meeting'[33] is the most distinctive aspect of this structure. It is also discernible in the *Hymn to Justinian*. In

[31] The collection consists of 33 hexameter hymns from the 7th century BC to the 5th century AD. They differ in length and style. The hymns mentioned above are considered the oldest of the corpus. See Allen–Halliday (1963); Faulkner (2011).
[32] For this structure, see Janko (1981); Clay (2011).
[33] Clay (2011: 236).

the beginning, the text addresses Young Roma – the emperor is only referred to (βασιλῆα φερέσβιον, v. 145). Only after addressing once more Constantinople, then Old Roma, and finally the priests, the singer turns to the object of praise. In the final verses of the hymn the emperor is directly addressed (vv. 176–177):

> […]· ἵλαθι μύθῳ,
> ἵλαθι τολμήεντι, μεγασθενὲς ἤρανε γαίης,
>
> (…). Be gracious to the tale,
> be gracious to the bold one, powerful ruler of the earth,

So here, like in the Homeric Hymns, the singer and the object of praise come closer to each other in the course of the song. This progression seems to characterise the *Hymn to Justinian* as a hymn in the style of the Homeric Hymns and distinguishes it from other late antique hymnic texts. Only very few examples from that period feature the same distinctive structure, like some hymns by Proclus (412–485).[34] Most of the material, however, reflects the structure known from the Orphic Hymns: The object of praise is invoked in the opening lines, followed by an accumulation of attributes.[35]

The Homeric Hymns generally did not experience a vivid reception in Late Antiquity, not even by archaising poets like Nonnus.[36] They were, however, reused by the Hellenist poet Callimachus (ca. 305–240 BC), who also wrote hymns. Six of them have come down to us: *To Zeus*,

[34] According to Agosti (2016: 223), the hymns by Proclus are 'the only Late Antique corpus showing an influence of the Homeric Hymns.' Three of them are structured like the Homeric Hymns: *Hymn to Aphrodite*, *To the Muses*, and *To the Lycian Aphrodite*. See Van den Berg (2001).

[35] See Agosti (2016: 223), who rightly points out that most of the hymnic material from this period is probably lost.

[36] On Nonnus and the Homeric Hymns, see De Stefani–Magnelli (2008: 557–562), Agosti (2016: 224).

To Apollo, *To Artemis*, *To the Bath of Pallas*, *To Demeter*, and *To Delos*. Callimachus imitates the extensive Homeric Hymns and adopts their distinctive structure. Paul the Silentiary drew great inspiration from Callimachus.[37] The *Hymn to Justinian* even includes a striking intertextual reference to the Callimachean *Hymn to Apollo*. In the final passage of the *Hymn to Apollo*, the god confronts the personification of Envy (v. 105–107, ed. Pfeiffer [1953]):

> ὁ Φθόνος Ἀπόλλωνος ἐπ' οὔατα λάθριος εἶπεν·
> 'οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν ἀοιδὸν ὃς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος ἀείδει.'
> τὸν Φθόνον ὠπόλλων ποδί τ' ἤλασεν ὧδέ τ' ἔειπεν
>
> The insidious Envy said to the ear of Apollo:
> 'I don't admire the singer who doesn't sing about what is as large as the sea.'
> Apollo chased the Envy off with a kick and said: (…)

In this famous passage, Envy can be seen as a chiffre for those, who accuse the poet of not writing extensive poems. Apollo could represent the poet's patron, who supports him even though he prefers to write short poetry.[38] Paul reuses this image and applies it to the emperor. After presenting Justinian as victorious over external enemies in vv. 157–160, the text goes on as follows (vv. 160–163):

> ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς
> τετριγὼς ὑπέροπλα μέλας Φθόνος ὤκλασε τόξῳ
> ἀστυόχου βασιλῆος, ἐπασσυτέροις δὲ βελέμνοις
> ῥωγαλέος δούπησε, πέσων δ ἐβάθυνε κονίην.

[37] For references to Callimachus' works in the poem by Paul, see De Stefani–Magnelli (2008: 562, n. 111).
[38] For this interpretation, see Williams (1978: 85–97).

> Even
> the black Envy sank down, shrieking, by the bow
> of the Emperor, the protector of the city, and torn by one arrow
> after the other, he crashed, and tumbling he fell deep into the dirt.

The parallels between the two passages are remarkable. But in the *Ekphrasis*, the motif does not seem to concern poetological discussions. Instead, given the context of fighting enemies, Envy most probably stands for the emperor's rivals referring to failed attempts to overthrow Justinian.[39] Or, more symbolically, for the forces of misfortune that pose a threat to his reign. However, it seems crucial how Paul reuses the Callimachean image. Apollo only kicks the Envy, whereas Justinian kills him and his fall is described in detail. This is no *imitatio* of the Hellenistic hymn, but clear *aemulatio*.

On a meta-level, the reference to the Callimachean *Hymn to Apollo* implies a comparison between Justinian and the Olympic God. This is further suggested by the portrayal of Justinian with Apollo's attributes, bow and arrow, that provides a very unusual depiction of a Roman emperor as an archer. Under this aspect, the *Ekphrasis* makes Justinian appear as a better Apollo, who is more effective when fighting his enemies. The *Hymn to Justinian* thus seems to elevate the emperor above the Olympic God. One might read this comparison in the context of the conflict between Christianity and Polytheism. Justinian is known to have pursued a harsh policy towards non-Christians and to even have persecuted them. Thus, one interpretation of this comparison between Justinian and Apollo might be that it is supposed to emphasise the superiority of Christianity, represented by the most pious emperor, over Polytheism, represented by Apollo.

[39] Like the ominous Nika-Revolt of 532 or a failed coup in 562, which the *Ekphrasis* discusses in v. 22–39.

IV

The role of the *Hymn to Justinian* in the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* can be considered in two contexts. First, as an aspect of the panegyrical programme of the 6th-century poem. The hymn in v. 145–185 displays right from the beginning of the hexameter text, how we ought to see Justinian when reading the following presentation of Hagia Sophia: As a divine figure that embodies God's power on earth; Justinian introduced a new Golden Age for the Roman Empire through his many deeds; but in particular, he deserves veneration for (re-)constructing Hagia Sophia, because the church provides a space on earth for the heavenly power to transcend. Thus, it gives proof of Justinian's godlike wisdom.

Secondly, we can gather the literary programme in the poem by Paul the Silentiary, if we compare the *Hymn to Justinian* to the concept of hymn reflected in the *Ekphrasis*. The description frequently uses the motif of hymn singing to visualise the literary space of Hagia Sophia and charge it with a religious atmosphere. In this context, the text only refers to liturgical chanting and relates to the Christian concept of hymns. The *Hymn to Justinian*, however, contrasts this concept. It is designed according to an archaic, Hellenic tradition of hymn poetry. Thus, through the *Hymn to Justinian*, Paul reveals the classicist character of his poem right from the beginning. We might further regard the *Hymn to Justinian* more specifically as an expression of Christian Classicism.[40] Paul takes the conventional elements of a literary genre that is commonly regarded as archaic and Hellenic and reuses them in a new, distinctively Christian context. The programme behind this seems to be aimed at integrating ancient literary forms into the contemporary Christian world. In this light, the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* appears to adapt the non-Christian way of praising divine agents to the Christian context of the Age of Justinian through the *Hymn to Justinian*.

[40] See Kaldellis (2007: 173–187).

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