I. Introduction

The text of the Metaphrase of Niketas Choniates' *History* (Χρονικὴ διήγησις) ("MNCH") has enjoyed a long, albeit marginal, presence in the editorial odyssey of Choniates' work, and was perceived, if not exactly as a kind of ugly duckling, at least as an eccentric curioso in relation to the majestic swan of Niketas' magnum opus. From the time of the editio princeps of the *History* published by Wolf in 1557, through the editions of Fabrot for the Paris corpus (1647), of Bekker for the Bonn corpus (1835), and of Miller (1875) for his volumes covering the Greek sources for the Crusades, MNCH was, on each occasion, either consulted by the editor or given space – sometimes more, sometimes less – in the apparatus criticus, while on rare occasions words or phrases were elevated to a place in the actual edited text.[1] However, with the publication of two key studies by J.-L. van Dieten,[2] stemming from his work on the critical edition of *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* ("NCH"),[3] the real position and quite distinct compositional background of MNCH were brought more sharply into focus.

Following his collation of all the manuscripts of the *History*, including those containing the Metaphrase, van Dieten concluded that MNCH is a text of sufficiently independent status to deserve a separate edition of its own.[4] The edition we present here, therefore, seeks to meet this desideratum.

Of course, as we contemplate MNCH in its surviving form it tends to generate more questions than answers. For instance, when was it composed? Who was (or were) the Metaphrast(s)? Why was it produced or commissioned, and for whom? What exactly is the nature of the language in which it is cast? To none of these questions can we give truly clear-cut answers; the most we can do is present the text itself as a field for further exploration, and, in our accompanying material, suggest possible lines of approach for analysing the mass of data included therein. That said, we nevertheless venture to offer, albeit tentatively, a possible framework for the genesis of the Metaphrase, at the end of our chapter on the Metaphrast's method.

Exploratory forays into the large volume of material provided by MNCH have been made in the past, notably in van Dieten's article "Bemerkungen," which,

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1 For an overview of these earlier editions of Niketas' *History*, see van Dieten, "Einleitung," CV–CVII. Regarding the four MNCH mss B, S, X and Y, Wolf and Bekker consulted B, while both Fabrot and Miller consulted B and Y.

2 Van Dieten, "Noch einmal," and "Bemerkungen."

3 *Nicetae Choniatae Historia,* ed. J.-L. van Dieten, Berlin/New York 1975.

4 See van Dieten, "Einleitung," LXXXVII–LXXXVIII, and esp. CIII–CIV, where he explains the reasons why he makes only limited use of the variant readings of MNCH in his critical apparatus. In his concluding remarks (p. CIV) he states: "It is to be hoped that a separate edition of this linguistically interesting text will one day complement this edition." See also his comment in his review of the English translation of the *History* by H. J. Magoulias, *BZ* 79 (1986), 50: "The Paraphrase is a text that deserves a full critical edition of its own."

focusing on three extracts of the Metaphrase, examined its language and the problem of where to rank it on the scale from high-style to vernacular in medieval Greek. Certain aspects of the manuscript tradition and stemma of MNCH were reconsidered by Davis in an article that looked at two extensive passages that present significantly diverging metaphrastic renderings of NCH (one version in ms B, the other in mss SXY), as if the Metaphrast (or early copyist) attempted a reworking of the text at these points, perhaps revising a first draft.[5] Later, another article by Davis looked at aspects of MNCH's vocabulary, shared features of MNCH with the metaphrase of Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*, and a curious comment preserved in the margin of the key MNCH ms, Monacensis gr. 450 ("B"), which provides strong evidence that the text was copied and read in the Byzantine capital.[6] Other features of the language – with regard to the larger and more nebulous issue of "stylistic levels" – and a consideration of what MNCH was, and was not, seeking to accomplish (vis-à-vis Niketas' original), and, last, a suggestion regarding the possible audience of the text of the Metaphrase, are considered in a third article by Davis.[7] In *Niketas Choniates: A Historiographical Study*, Alicia Simpson makes a detailed analysis of the manuscript tradition of Niketas' original, alongside evidence provided also by the text of the Metaphrase, concluding that "it becomes likely that the Metaphrast (or again the original copyist) was working from a hybrid text of the *History*."[8] In our chapter on the manuscripts of MNCH below, we revisit this evidence in detail.

As to when MNCH was produced, the little secure evidence that we have, coupled also with the existence of other similarly pitched metaphrases from this era (discussed in more detail at the end of our chapter on the Metaphrast's method), points to the second quarter of the 14th C. We say "little secure evidence" because all the manuscripts preserving MNCH are mutilated, with only one – the youngest, S, produced around 1500 – still containing its first page, although no information regarding the provenance and authorship of MNCH is given there. Nevertheless, we believe there are good reasons for assuming that ms Monacensis gr. 450 probably lies very close in date to the inception of MNCH.

In the respective secondary literature, references to MNCH usually appear alongside discussion of two other similarly pitched "metaphrases"[9] of the Palaiologan era,

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5 Davis, "A Passage of the 'Barbarograeca' Metaphrase."

6 Davis, "The History Metaphrased."

7 Davis, "Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates 'translated'."

8 Simpson, Niketas Choniates: A Historiographical Study, esp. 119–125.

9 Hunger, *Anonyme Metaphrase zu Anna Komnene* (hereafter "MA"), 7, citing the arguments of Pignani, "Parafrasi o metafrasi," explains why the term "metaphrase" is preferable to "paraphrase" when talking about these particular texts. Throughout this edition we use the term "Metaphrase" (rather than "Paraphrase") when referring to our text, so as to keep the distinction clear. A recent discussion of these terms can be found in Signes Codoñer, "Towards a Vocabulary," and Hinterberger, "Between simplification and elaboration," 37–38.

i.e. the anonymous metaphrase, already mentioned, of Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* ("MA"), only a section of which has survived, from the middle of book XI to the end of book XIII, and the metaphrase of Nikephoros Blemmydes' Βασιλικὸς ἀνδριάς ("MBA"), or *Imperial Statue*, produced by George Galesiotes and George Oinaiotes.[10] They share many features in common with MNCH, are of a closely related linguistic register, and have been published in modern editions with extensive commentary and analysis.[11] These editions sought to examine the way in which these texts transposed the language of their learned originals to a lower register, to identify and categorize their correspondences and differences, and more generally to assess the key mechanisms of simplification in syntax and vocabulary, while also seeking to elaborate on any historical facts underlying their genesis.[12] There is no need here to go into the general topic of stylistic, or linguistic, levels in Byzantine written discourse, as the subject has been treated extensively elsewhere.[13] Suffice to say, the language, or register, of the Palaiologan metaphrases overall ranges midway between the learned style of classicizing authors and the vernacular.[14] In other words, it presents the features of what Hans Eideneier termed the "Schrift-Koine," or "written Koine,"[15] the use of which had a long history, especially in Byzantine administrative and ecclesiastical contexts. This middle linguistic register appears to have become particularly popular

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10 Hunger and Ševčenko, *Des Nikephoros Blemmydes* Βασιλικὸς ἀνδριάς *und dessen Metaphrase*. Regarding the dates of George Galesiotes and George Oinaiotes and their collaboration as the metaphrasts of the *Βασιλικὸς ἀνδριάς*, see specifically pp. 31–35 of Hunger and Ševčenko's edition, and relevant entries in ODB. It is notable that in the title of MBA, Galesiotes is named as sakellion of the Great Church, a position he is known to have held from 1334 onwards.
11 We do not examine here the abbreviating version of the historical work of George Pachymeres, which has been published and examined by A. Failler, as we consider its style and register to be rather distant from the texts under consideration here: for a discussion, see Davis, *Η Μετάφραση*, pt. 1, 129–131. Likewise, George Akropolites' *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* exists in a paraphrase, but this was produced by the author himself, and, again, presents an abbreviated version of the original rather than a metaphrase in the sense under consideration here: see Davis, *Η Μετάφραση*, pt. 1, 131–132.
12 A recent treatment of the metaphrastic phenomenon, with up-to-date bibliography is Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer, *Metaphrasis in Byzantine Literature*.
13 The standard, older accounts include Ševčenko, "Levels of Style in Byzantine Literature," and Browning's "The Language of Byzantine Literature," while recent treatments include Hinterberger's chapter on "Language" in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, and Hinterberger (ed.), *The Language of Byzantine Learned Literature*, both of which contain extensive and up-to-date bibliographies on the subject.
14 The opposite (i.e. transposing from a lower to a higher register) and much earlier metaphrastic project of the Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes has been examined by C. Høgel in *Symeon Metaphrastes. Rewriting and Canonization*, and his other studies of Symeon Metaphrastes and middle Byzantine hagiography, and more recently Constantinou and Høgel, *Metaphrasis: A Byzantine Concept of Rewriting and Its Hagiographical Products*.
15 Eideneier: review of Hunger's edition of MA, where he explains the reasons for preferring the term "Schrift-Koine" instead of "Umgangssprache" in the case of these texts.

in the twelfth century, in the time of the Komnenian emperors. In the literary sphere at this time, certain writers such as Theodore Prodromos and Michael Glykas appeared to be at ease using a range of literary forms and registers, delving on occasions into the resources of what looks more like vernacular language. In prose the terrain leading up to the appearance of the metaphrases in the 14th C. is not entirely clear: surely the 13th-C. dislocation and rift resulting from the Fourth Crusade had an impact on the linguistic realm, albeit with a delay and with multifarious ramifications. Whatever the case, it was in the wake of these literary-linguistic and socio-political developments that works such as NCH, the *Alexiad* and the *Imperial Statue* were transposed into a lower, simplified linguistic register.[16] The reasons for their appearance may be many or may be few and very specific: without knowing the actual context, it is hard to place them within a clearer historical frame.

Martin Hinterberger has argued for a more nuanced understanding of "vernacular" versus "popular" literature, suggesting that the two terms are not synonymous and are determined in part by the genre in which the author is writing.[17] This observation surely contains a large element of truth, and is manifested most obviously in sections of MNCH where we encounter direct speech, often in fact converted from Choniates' reported speech (e.g. M9.15–18, 14.7–9, 14.13–14, 124.4–6, 137.3–7, 191.3–12, 214.11–20, 317.27–31, et al.), and in the various narrative vignettes of Choniates that seem to invite transposition into a vivid, somewhat more colloquial register (e.g. the story of Ioannes Poutzes in the central bazaar, M14.4–22, the seduction episode of Skleros Seth and the maiden, M68.11–18, the flying Turk episode, M50.15–51.9, the German warrior, M250.20–251.10, the wedding entertainment arranged by Alexios Angelos for his daughters, M319.19–320.13, et al.). To some extent, one may argue that the vernacular had not yet really entered dynamically into those areas of written discourse that had a strong tradition of classroom learning underlying them. Direct speech and vivid, anecdotal vignettes were areas where it was legitimate perhaps for writing to slip out of accepted lexical and syntactical conventions.[18] As our Commentary shows, the boundaries of these conventions are tested and stretched repeatedly throughout MNCH.

Thus, while the term "Barbaro-Graeca" and related variants, such as "vernacular," "popular" and "vulgärgriechisch," have often been applied to the language of MNCH (from the time of Hieronymus Wolf and Martin Crusius in the 16th C.), they need to be treated with caution. In the introduction to his *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur*, Beck notes that the text contained in the "celebrated" ms Monacensis gr. 450 (i.e. ms B of MNCH) "does not preserve, of course, as some claimed in the past, a vernacular Greek paraphrase of the work, but definitely constitutes an

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16 Horrocks, *Greek*, 227 and 244–272.
17 Hinterberger, "How should we define vernacular literature?"
18 Hinterberger, "How should we define vernacular literature?" 6–9.

endeavour to simplify the language, thereby making it easier to understand."[19] This view was reasserted by van Dieten in "Bermerkungen" in 1979; indeed, he concluded in no uncertain terms that MNCH "gehört nicht zur vulgärgriechischen Literatur,"[20] as he in turn appealed to the clear-cut distinction that Krumbacher had made between the vernacular and the Koine of Byzantine standard written discourse (describing the latter as standing "on an intermediate level between the Attic pure style and the mutable language of the people"[21]).

In our edition and examination of MNCH we are not really concerned with placing it in a particular category, but seek simply to set out the evidence that lies before us. Accordingly, in our chapter on the language of MNCH, we describe the more notable features of the language of the text, drawing attention to its particularities and those features that have a direct impact on our editorial principles, as well as the ways many of these features fall within patterns that can be found elsewhere.[22] Hinterberger has remarked, in the context of a broader examination of texts lying just outside the commonly recognized vernacular canon (including notably the case of Kanabutzes, 15th C.), that the vernacular can be seen to be lurking in the "deep structure" of texts of this kind.[23]

It is the case, however, that MNCH often resists our attempts at tidy categorization, and instead presents almost irreconcilable linguistic and expressive tensions. These are in part due inherently to the enterprise of recasting a massive text using the resources of the same, rather than a different, language, and in part due to the apparently unfinished – perhaps, in fact, hasty – nature of much of that attempt (it's worth noting also that roughly a quarter to one third of NCH was retained in the Metaphrase without any, or only very little change or modification). Related to the first of these two factors is also a sense of ongoing negotiation, throughout MNCH, of the boundaries defining metaphrastic "utility" – i.e. where and when does the Metaphrast deem it necessary to recast the text, and to what degree. Taking this point further, we are able to see five types of correspondence between Niketas' original and MNCH: preservation of the original text, word-for-word transformation of the text, looser ("paraphrastic") interpretation of the text, bypassing or elision of the text, and expansion or elucidation of the text. One could even propose, albeit rather uncharitably, a sixth type of correspondence: garbled or misunderstood recasting or improvisation. These

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19 Beck, *Volksliteratur*, 6.

20 Van Dieten, "Bemerkungen," 77. This view has been affirmed also by Hinterberger, "Bemerkungen zur Sprache der Choniates-Metaphrase."

21 Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, 387.

22 Some of these phenomena have been examined in separate studies by Martin Hinterberger during the course of preparing our critical edition, e.g. Hinterberger, "Between simplification and elaboration," "Bermerkungen zur Sprache der Choniates-Metaphrase," and "From Highly Classicizing to Common Prose," esp. 180–190.

23 Hinterberger, "How should we define vernacular literature?" 10–11.

tendencies and correspondences are examined both in the commentary and in our chapter on the Metaphrast's method, including a section that offers a sample comparison of NCH and MNCH.

A significant layer of insecurity in our efforts to retrace the steps from the Metaphrase back to Niketas' original stems from the fact that Niketas' own text was probably published at a number of successive moments in its evolution, meaning that differing versions were released into the public domain in the last years of Niketas' life, each then generating its own "tradition," and meaning also that we do not have a wholly secure anchor, in the form of a stable and surviving source text, with which to moor the seeming fluidity and inconsistencies of MNCH.[24] Just as Niketas himself seems never really to have finalized his *History*, so too the Metaphrase embodies an ongoing process of interpretation and transposition that has not reached, in many parts, finalized form. For the editor, as has been pointed out by commentators on editorial practice applied to medieval texts more generally, this means we are forced to focus on a particular version (or versions) of a text, as preserved in a specific manuscript or manuscripts; we do not attempt, as might be the case in trying to restore a classical work, to reconstruct an original from out of the waves of subsequent transmission and copying through the centuries, but instead try to achieve a modus vivendi with an imperfect text that in all probability embodies just as many imperfections as the Ur-Metaphrase may have done, whatever form that may have taken. The rationale behind our presentation and editing of the Metaphrase is set out in detail in our chapter on Editorial Principles, and has been considered elsewhere by Hinterberger in an article on metaphrases and their modern editorial presentation.[25]

In "Bemerkungen," van Dieten gave a broad assessment of the Metaphrast's educational profile: "a man of modest learning, he was able to read the high-style text of Niketas, but did not understand it correctly everywhere and did not always manage to write flawless sentences. General knowledge of Attic grammar, which he had had to memorize at school, he retained. The syntax, which demands more than just a good memory, was more open to extraneous influences, whether the living language, or sub-Atticizing literature."[26] Hunger reached a similar conclusion with regard to the anonymous metaphrast of the *Alexiad*.[27] Given the occasional fluctuations in quality of MNCH, it is tempting to speculate that it may have been the product of team work – i.e. that differences in quality from one passage to another may simply be due to different metaphrastic "authorship" in different parts of the text. Such a hypothesis,

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24 See the following chapter on the mss of MNCH, as well as the respective discussions in van Dieten, "Einleitung," LXXXVII–LXXXXVIII and Simpson, *Niketas Choniates. A Historiographical Study*, 119–124.

25 Hinterberger, "Between Simplification and Elaboration," esp. 51–56.

26 Van Dieten, "Bemerkungen," 64.

27 MA 265.

of course, immediately situates the Metaphrase within a complex and problematic frame from the moment of its genesis.

Hans-Georg Beck described these Palaiologan metaphrases as symptomatic of "the desire of the Byzantines to not let linguistic barriers stand between them and their own historical awareness."[28] Elsewhere we have made a suggestion regarding the possible stage-setting for the appearance of MNCH, together with its sibling, MA, and its close cousin MBA.[29] Here in our accompanying chapter on the Metaphrast's method, we refine somewhat this scenario that may explain how MNCH, bundled together with the other metaphrases, appeared in the 1330s or 1340s. Our suggestion (and it is no more than that) is based purely on circumstantial evidence and chronological coincidence. If one accepts that all three of these texts are part of a specific metaphrastic enterprise, then it is necessary to propose a unifying explanation that allows for a milieu that embarked on this project and that had a particular person or persons as the intended audience. For various reasons, we do not think it plausible that a literary salon was the target audience or source, not least because many of the distinctly "literary" aspects of these texts were effectively bypassed in the metaphrases. The milieu that created MNCH may have been closely related to the Patriarchate and its team of learned or, at least, modestly educated employees, and the target audience may have been associated with the imperial court. Indeed, Stephanos Efthymiadis has made a case for linking these metaphrastic texts to the Patriarchate and conservative church circles, which clearly does not conflict with this general picture.[30]

Ultimately, of course, we may never know for sure for whom these texts were intended. Whatever the case, however, the process and event of metaphrasing the histories of Anna and Niketas were surely responses to actual pressures and needs at a particular time. In other words, contemporary political and cultural parameters were part of the fabric of the new versions of these histories.

With this edition, therefore, we offer the text for exploration, and provide in our accompanying material suggestions regarding ways in which it may yield further information and stimulate insights into wider linguistic, metaphrastic and cultural issues. The edited text seeks to be faithful to a particular, and very interesting, manuscript (i.e. Monacensis gr. 450, dubbed "B" by Immanuel Bekker). The manuscript text itself presents, for the most part, broad internal consistencies of orthographical and syntactical practice. As we explain in the chapter on our editorial principles, we have sought to preserve this aspect of the character of B in our edited text. If this

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28 Beck, *Volksliteratur*, 6.

29 Davis, "Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates 'translated'," 55–70. Of course, MBA belongs to a different genre to the historical texts, and accordingly vocabulary differs substantially. Nonetheless, the level and depth of transposition is very similar in all three metaphrases.

30 Efthymiadès, "Déclassiciser pour édifier ?" esp. 149–150, and "Rewriting," 358.

edition of MNCH helps others to cast more light onto the obscure background of the text, we shall not have failed altogether in our endeavour.