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## Rhetorical Devices in the Septuagint Psalter\*

### I. Introduction

Usually the LXX Psalter is considered to be a very literal translation of a Hebrew *Vorlage* very close to the Masoretic consonantal text. Indeed, a thorough comparison of the consonantal text preserved in the MT and the LXX shows that the word order and the syntax of these two Psalters versions diverge only slightly.<sup>1</sup> It might be deduced from this comparison that the translator as a general rule confined himself to rendering his Hebrew source text word for word.<sup>2</sup> This conclusion implies that the traces of the theological and cultural knowledge the translator has left in the Greek text are only of minor importance. However, a more detailed analysis of the LXX shows that the Greek translator was much more creative than is usually supposed.<sup>3</sup> A number of rather free translations indicate that he did not shrink from interpreting his Hebrew *Vorlage*, e.g. when he had to translate difficult or rare words or expressions. Elsewhere the translator was not afraid to correct the Psalter text.<sup>4</sup> This might be the case when he found himself confronted with passages that appeared to him theologically unacceptable, e.g. verses that dealt with an alleged plurality of gods (e.g. Ps 8:6; 97:7; 138:1). Nonetheless, this argument cannot explain all the subtleties of

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<sup>1</sup> F. Austermann, *Von der Tora zum Nomos. Untersuchungen zur Übersetzungsweise und Interpretation im Septuaginta-Psalter* (MSU 27; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 42–106, provides plenty of material in order to prove the accuracy of this hypothesis.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. A. Pietersma, “Exegesis in the Septuagint: Possibilities and Limits (The Psalter as a Case in Point)”, in W. Kraus/R. Glenn Wooden (ed.), *Septuagint Research. Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (SCSt 53; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 33–45, on pp. 38–9.

<sup>3</sup> For this opinion, see e.g. F. Siegert, *Zwischen Hebräischer Bibel und Altem Testament. Eine Einführung in die Septuaginta* (Münster: Lit, 2001), 311: “Der Psalter ist reich an behutsamen ‘Interpretamenten’, die jedoch nie den Charakter von Glossen oder Erweiterungen haben, sondern den einer interpretierenden Wortwahl.”

<sup>4</sup> Several examples are quoted in two earlier articles: E. Bons, “Die Rede von Gott in den Psalmen<sup>LXX</sup>”, in H.-J. Fabry/D. Böhler (ed.), *Im Brennpunkt: Die Septuaginta. Band 3: Studien zur Theologie, Anthropologie, Ekklesiologie, Eschatologie und Liturgie der Griechischen Bibel* (BWANT 174; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 182–202, on pp. 185–99; id., “Der Septuaginta-Psalter – Übersetzung, Interpretation, Korrektur”, in M. Karrer/W. Kraus (ed.), *Die Septuaginta. Texte – Kontexte – Lebenswelten* (WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 450–70, on pp. 464–468.

the Greek text, which is, in my opinion, much more than a mere word for word translation. In this paper, I would like to raise the question of what kind of rhetorical skill can be recognized in the Septuagint Psalter. Obviously, the passages where the Greek translator does not go beyond a literal translation of a Hebrew rhetorical device do not prove anything. Therefore, one has to single out verses or cola whose rhetorical features cannot be explained by the extant Hebrew Psalter text including the Qumran manuscripts. In recent studies, this problem has not attracted much attention, so that careful and detailed studies on this subject are still missing. In order to fill this gap at least partially, in this paper I shall focus on word order as well as the choice of Greek words in the Greek Psalter text.

## II. Some examples of hyperbaton, alliteration and paronomasia

### 1. Hyperbaton

In a small number of cases, words belonging together are separated by at least one other word although the extant Hebrew Psalm texts (Qumran fragments, MT) do not reveal an analogous word order. Let me quote two examples:

Ps 34(33):13b:

<p>מי האיש החפץ חיים אהב ימים לראות טוב</p>	<p>τίς ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὁ θέλων ζωὴν ἀγαπῶν ἡμέρας ἰδεῖν ἀγαθὰς</p>
<p>“What man is there who desires life, and covets many days, that he may enjoy good?” (NRSV)</p>	<p>“What man is there that desires life, loving to see good days?” (Brenton)</p>

It is obvious that the translator completed the Greek word ἡμέρας by the attribute ἀγαθὰς whereas the Hebrew text considers the corresponding word טוב as the direct object of the infinitif לראות. This syntactical structure would lead to the Greek translation \*ἰδεῖν ἀγαθόν (cf. Job 7:7; Eccl 3:13; PsSal 18:6 [ἀγαθά]). However, this adjectival form nowhere appears in the extant Greek Psalter manuscripts. Conserving the word order instead of the syntactical structure of the second colon, the Greek text displays a hyperbaton. Apparently, this word order has bothered some of the ancient copyists of the Septuagint text who rearranged the line in the following way: ἀγαπῶν ἰδεῖν ἡμέρας ἀγαθὰς (so e.g. codex B). Just like this textual variant, the NT quotation of the Psalm verse, 1 Pet 3:10, reads ἰδεῖν

ἡμέρας ἀγαθὰς.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the word order ἡμέρας ἰδεῖν ἀγαθὰς is in no way unusual, the hyperbaton is even recommended when the verb does not finish the clause (Quintilian, *Inst.* IX, 4, 26).<sup>6</sup> After all, one cannot say that the expression ἡμέραι ἀγαθαί does not make sense. On the contrary, it is not completely unknown to biblical wisdom literature. It occurs e.g. in the Book of Ben Sira where the sage warns his disciple not to deprive himself of a happy day (Sir 14:14).

Ps 37(36):16:

טוב מטע לצדיק מהמון רשעים רבים	κρεῖσσον ὀλίγον τῷ δικαίῳ ὑπὲρ πλούτων ἀμαρτωλῶν πολύν <sup>7</sup>
“Better is a little that the righteous person has than the abundance of many wicked” (NRSV)	“A little is better to the righteous than abundant wealth of sinners” (Brenton)

Whether the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX read רבים or another word<sup>8</sup>, it is sure that in the LXX text πολύν characterizes πλούτων. However, the LXX does not change the word order of the Hebrew text. It only translates its last word differently, making it the exact semantic counterpart of ὀλίγον in the first colon of the verse<sup>9</sup> insofar as each of the two adjectives respectively refers to the property of the righteous and the sinners. In so doing, the LXX underscores the opposition between the modest possessions of the righteous on the one hand and the abundance of wealth of sinners on the other. In the wake of the LXX text, some modern commentators plead for an emendation

<sup>5</sup> In comparison with the Göttingen Psalter text, the quotation shows three further changes: the infinitive ἀγαπᾶν as well as the addition of two words: γάρ before θέλω and καί before ἰδεῖν. For a detailed study of the quotation, see e.g. S. Woan, “The Psalms in 1 Peter”, in S. Moysie/M.J.J. Menken (ed.), *The Psalms in the New Testament* (London/New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 213–29, on pp. 219–25. By contrast, the quotation of Ps 33:13b<sup>LXX</sup> in 1Clem 22.2 does not diverge from the text in the Göttingen edition.

<sup>6</sup> A detailed study of the genitive hyperbaton is provided by A.M. Devine / L.D. Stephens, *Discontinuous Syntax. Hyperbaton in Greek* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 106–7.

<sup>7</sup> In his Göttingen edition of the Psalter, Alfred Rahlfs does not quote any Greek variants.

<sup>8</sup> Analogously to the MT, the Targum reads רעשין טגיאין “[of] many wicked”. In the Qumran Psalm manuscripts, the variant רב\* seems not to be attested; see P.W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalm Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (STDJ 17; Leiden: Brill, 1997), chapter IV. D. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament, Tome 4: Psaumes* (OBO 50.4; Fribourg / Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 215, calls attention to 4Q171 (= 4QpPs37<sup>a</sup>), col. II, 22 where at least the letter yod of רב\* can be identified. In his *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos*, Jerome evidently does not translate the Hebrew text רבים רשעים מהמון (= MT), but a text similar to the LXX: *quam divitiae impiorum multae*.

<sup>9</sup> For a similar example, see Tob 12:8b<sup>BA</sup>; slightly different is Prov 15:29 (= 16:8<sup>MT</sup>).

of the MT (\*מהמון רשעים רב\*)<sup>10</sup> though this would result in an awkward word order.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Alliteration created by parallel use of compound words

The first two examples reveal that the translator sometimes takes advantage of a characteristic feature of Greek word construction, i.e. the use of *alpha privative* which has no equivalent in Hebrew.<sup>12</sup> The third example, however, can illustrate that alliteration results from the choice of rare words or *hapaxlegomena*.

Ps 49(48):11a:

יחד כסיל ובער יאבדו	ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἄφρων καὶ ἄνοους ἀπολοῦνται
“fool and dolt perish together” (NRSV)	“the fool and the senseless one shall perish together” (Brenton)

The Greek language has at least one positive adjective that would have been suitable for the translation of one of the Hebrew adjectives: μωρός. This word is quite frequent elsewhere in Biblical literature (see e.g. Deut 32:6; Sir 18:18; 19:11; Isa 19:11; 32:6; Matt 25:2,3,8). The LXX Psalter, however, employs it only once, in Ps 93:8<sup>LXX</sup> where the MT has כסיל. Instead of μωρός, in Ps 48:11<sup>LXX</sup> the translator employs two compound adjectives having an *alpha privativum* and forming a triple alliteration with the following verb ἀπολοῦνται. As for ἄνοους, this adjective is not only a rare word in the LXX but also a hapax legomenon of the Greek Psalter. Its use can be explained by the fact that בער in the sense “foolish” is quite rare and not always translated adequately (see Ps 72:22<sup>LXX</sup>: ἐξουδενωμένος), whereas Ps 91:7; 93:8<sup>LXX</sup> translate the root בער by ἄφρων. One can therefore infer that in Ps 48:11<sup>LXX</sup> the choice of the second adjective may have depended on the first one whose meaning was not doubtful. Repeated use of *alpha privativum* occurs elsewhere in the Greek Psalter (see Ps 91:7<sup>LXX</sup> where ἀνήρ ἄφρων ... ἄσύνητος form an alliteration) though this is not a rule.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen 1–59* (BK.AT XV/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989) 438; P. C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (WBC 19; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), 296.

<sup>11</sup> For this objection, see already W. Bühlmann / K. Scherer, *Stilfiguren der Bibel. Ein kleines Nachschlagewerk* (Biblische Beiträge 10; Fribourg: Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973), 47.

<sup>12</sup> See also Siegert, *Zwischen Hebräischer Bibel und Neuem Testament*, 138.

Indeed the opposite can be shown by Ps 93:8<sup>LXX</sup>. Nevertheless, parallel use of *alpha privativum* is not at all an isolated phenomenon which can be illustrated by the following example.

Ps 63(62):2d:

בארץ ציה ועיף בלי מים	ἐν γῆ ἔρημῳ καὶ ἀβάτῳ καὶ ἀνύδρῳ
“in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (NRSV)	“in a barren and trackless and dry land” (Brenton)

In this colon again, the translator is confronted with a relatively rare word, עיף, “faint, weary”, which he will translate by ἀνύδρος in Ps 142:6<sup>LXX</sup>. In Ps 62:2d, however, בלי מים demanded a similar Greek equivalent. Without translating literally by οὐ + ὕδωρ (see for an analogous case Ps 106:40<sup>LXX</sup>), the LXX has a compound adjective, ἀνύδρος.<sup>13</sup> As for עיף, the use of ἀνύδρος suggested translating it by a morphologically similar word. This word is certainly not an adequate equivalent of עיף. Nevertheless, by inserting ἄβατος the translator not only creates an alliteration but also a series of three parallel adjectives defining γῆ and ending in the vowel φ. Needless to say, these phenomena are absent from the Hebrew text which is more heterogeneous on both the syntactical and the morphological level.

Ps 51(50):12:

ורוח נכון חדש בקרבי	καὶ πνεῦμα εὐθές ἐγκαίνισον ἐν τοῖς ἐγκάτοις μου
“and put a new and right spirit within me” (NRSV).	“and renew a right spirit in my inward parts” (Brenton)

Both the verb ἐγκαίνιζω and the noun τὰ ἔγκατα are rare words in the Greek Psalter. The verb is even a Psalter *hapax legomenon*. Whereas the Hebrew verb חדש is translated by ἀνακαινίζω “renew, restore” in Ps 102:5; 103:30<sup>LXX</sup>, the verb preferred by the translator, ἐγκαίνιζω, might have the connotation of restoration and inauguration of a new era.<sup>14</sup> It is beyond doubt that this connotation is perfectly fitting in the specific context of Ps

<sup>13</sup> Sometimes an adjective with *alpha privativum* corresponds to a relative clause, see the examples quoted by E. Tov, “Compound Words in the Septuagint Representing two or more Hebrew Words”, in id., *The Greek and Hebrew Bible. Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (VT.S 72; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 131–52, on pp. 133–146.

<sup>14</sup> For further details see C. Spicq, *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament* (Fribourg / Paris: Editions universitaires/Cerf, 1991), 407–8.

50:12 whose first colon employs the verb κτίζω in the sense of “create”<sup>15</sup>: καρδίαν καθαρὰν κτίσον ἐν ἐμοί, ὁ θεός. As for ἐν τοῖς ἐγκάτοις μου as Greek equivalent of בקרבי, one should call to attention the fact that τὰ ἐγκατα as the rendering of כרר is only attested in Ps 108:18<sup>LXX</sup>. Instead, the translator disposes of a series of alternative renderings: ἐντός μου (Ps 38:4; 108:22<sup>LXX</sup>), ἐν ἐμοί (Ps 54:5<sup>LXX</sup>), ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ μου (Ps 93:19<sup>LXX</sup>). However, he had to avoid ἐν ἐμοί because this expression already occurs in v. 12a. The same applies for the noun καρδιά. Therefore the choice of ἐν τοῖς ἐγκάτοις μου is probably best explained by the need for a noun to give to the end of the verse a certain weight, on the semantic level and on the level of sound.

### 3. Paronomasia

In literature dealing with rhetoric, this technical term has various significations of which one is particularly important for the analysis of the LXX Psalter: the repetition of words deriving from the same root and being employed close together<sup>16</sup> (so called *annominatio* consisting in an “organic” change of the word<sup>17</sup>). In some cases of paronomasia in the Greek Psalter the underlying Hebrew text displays analogous phenomena which the translator seeks to render as literally as possible (e. g. Ps 30:21a: κατακρύψεις αὐτοὺς ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ τοῦ προσώπου σου [MT: פניך בַּחֹסֶן בְּרִמְתֶּיךָ]). On the other hand, this type of rendering can be observed as well in several cases where the Hebrew Psalter text offers words of different roots (e.g. Ps 50:8b: τὰ ἄδηλα καὶ τὰ κρύφια τῆς σοφίας σου ἐδήλωσάς μοι – Ps 83:4b: καὶ τρυγῶν νοσσιὰν ἑαυτῇ οὐ θήσει τὰ νοσσία αὐτῆς – Ps 91:7b: ἀσύνετος οὐ συνήσει ταῦτα). These few examples permit us to differentiate between two categories: paronomasia between two nouns and paronomasia between a noun and a verbal form. Let us illustrate this phenomenon by singling out some other striking examples:

<sup>15</sup> In the Biblical literature, this verb undergoes a semantic change, see E. Bons, “Le verbe κτίζω comme terme technique de la création dans la Septante et dans le Nouveau Testament”, in J. Joosten/P.J. Tomson (ed.), *Voces biblicae* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 49; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 1–15.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. F. Blass/A. Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, <sup>16</sup>1984), § 488.1.

<sup>17</sup> See H. Lausberg, *Elemente der literarischen Rhetorik* (Munich: Hueber, <sup>10</sup>1990) § 279; id., *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, <sup>3</sup>1990), § 638, 3a.

a) *Paronomasia between two nouns (substantive – substantive or substantive – adjective)*

Ps 18(17):16b:

<p>מגערתך יהוה מנשמת רוח אפך</p>	<p>ἀπὸ ἐπιτιμῆσεώς σου κύριε ἀπὸ ἐμπνεύσεως πνεύματος ὀργῆς σου</p>
<p>“at your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils” (NRSV)</p>	<p>“at your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of your wrath” (NETS)</p>

Unlike the parallel text 2 Kings 22:16 where the LXX uses the word πνοή (ἀπὸ πνοῆς πνεύματος θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ), the Psalter translator opts for inserting another noun, ἐμπνευσις. This word is not only a LXX *hapax legomenon* but is also considered a neologism of the LXX. By so doing, the translator achieves two effects: firstly, he creates the repetition of the syllable πνευ in two following words; secondly, he reinforces the parallelism between the two parts of the colon in matching the equivalent of נשמת to the parallel noun in the first part: ἐπιτιμῆσεως – ἐμπνεύσεως. No need to say that each of the two nouns is a compound, that they almost have the same length and, finally, the same ending.

Ps 45(44):2c:

<p>לשוני עט סופר מהיר</p>	<p>ἢ γλῶσσά μου κάλαμος γραμματέως ὀξύγραφου</p>
<p>“my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe” (NRSV)</p>	<p>“my tongue is the pen of a quick writer” (Bren- ton)</p>

The expression סופר מהיר occurs only once more in the Hebrew Bible, in Ezra 7:6 where the LXX reads γραμματέως ταχύς. Avoiding the rather literal equivalent ταχύς or another usual adjective or participle, e.g. σπυδων (see Isa 16:5), the Greek Psalter translator prefers a more elegant reading. By the choice of ὀξύγραφος he not only creates a paronomasia between the adjective and the preceding noun, but also expresses the writer’s specific dexterity.

b) *Paronomasia between a verb and noun*

Ps 18(17):27:

<p>עם נבר תתברר עם עקש תפתל</p>	<p>καὶ μετὰ ἐκλεκτοῦ ἐκλεκτὸς ἔσῃ καὶ μετὰ στρεβλοῦ διαστρέψεις [2 Kings 22:27: στρεβλωθήσῃ]</p>
<p>“with the pure you show yourself pure, and with the crooked you show your- self perverse” (NRSV)</p>	<p>“and with the select you will be select, and with the crooked you will pervert” (NETS)</p>

The Greek translation of v. 27a might be considered incorrect, especially the choice of ἐκλεκτός for the stem ברר (used here in the niph'al, “to purify oneself”, as well as in the hitpa'el “to show oneself pure”). The translator probably read a word like בחיר (see e.g. Ps 88:4a<sup>LXX</sup>) or בחור (see e.g. Ps 77:31b<sup>LXX</sup>). Nevertheless, it is clear that the first colon of v. 27 continues the pattern of the preceding v. 26 in so far as the adjective in the genitive introduced by the preposition μετὰ stems from the same root as the subsequent verb or predicative adjective. As for the second colon of v. 27, it is obvious that the translator sought to adapt it to the first one in matching the adjective and the following verb to one another. It deserves attention that the Hebrew text of v. 27b does not show any similar construction, the corresponding adjective and verb having different roots: the adjective עקש “crooked” as well as the verb תפתל hitpa'el “to show oneself perverse”. The latter is a Psalter *hapax legomenon* whereas עקש occurs only once more in the Psalter: Ps 101:4 reads לבב עקש “a false heart”, an expression the LXX renders by καρδία σκαμβή “a perverse heart”.

Ps 17(16):8:

<p>בצל כנפך תסתירני</p>	<p>ἐν σκέπη τῶν πτερῶν σου σκεπάσεις με</p>
<p>“hide me in the shadow of your wings” (NRSV)</p>	<p>“you will shelter me with the shelter of your wings” (NETS)</p>

As results from other Psalm passages, the translator is not at all unaware of the ordinary meaning of the verb סתר hiph. which he renders several times by κρύπτω or ἀποκρύπτω (Ps 18:7; 37:9; 68:5; 118:19<sup>LXX</sup>). However, in Ps 16:8 he deviates from this rule opting for the verb σκεπάζομαι, that is to say the verb fitting perfectly to the adverb of place ἐν σκέπη. As the next



example will illustrate, this phenomenon is not limited to only one Psalm quotation.

Ps 61(60):5:

אָהָבָה בְּסֹתֵר כַּנְפֵיךָ	σκεπασθήσομαι ἐν σκέπη τῶν πτερυγῶν σου
“I will find refuge in the shelter of your wings” (cf. NRSV)	“I will find shelter under the shelter of your wings” (cf. Pietersma)

Although the Greek Psalter equivalent of the Hebrew verb סָתַח “to seek refuge” is usually ἐλπίζω (see Ps 5:12; 7:2 etc.), the translator follows the model of Ps 16:8<sup>LXX</sup> instead of translating the verb “mechanically” by one and the same equivalent. Certainly, as for the image of the Psalmist’s hiding under God’s shelter, the translator does not proceed systematically, as one can deduce from the two quoted texts. In fact, in texts like Ps 26:5b; 35:8b<sup>LXX</sup> one does not find expressions consisting of a verb and an adverb of place deriving from the same Greek root. Such passages demand a detailed analysis of the respective contexts that cannot be carried out in this paper. Nevertheless, the tendency of creating paronomastic formulations between a verb and prepositional phrase is observable elsewhere in the LXX Psalter as the following examples can show.

Ps 149:3b:

בְּתֵן וּכְנֹר יִזְמְרוּ לוֹ	ἐν τυμπάνῳ καὶ ψαλτηρίῳ ψαλάτωσαν αὐτῷ
“Let them sing praises to him with tambourine and lyre” (NRSV)	“Let them sing praises to him with drum and harp”

In the Greek Psalter, the noun כְּנֹר is translated by two different Greek words: κιθάρα (Ps 32:2a etc.) and ψαλτήριον (Ps 32:2b etc.). Furthermore, the standard Greek translation of the Hebrew verb זָמַר is ψάλλω, at least in the Psalter (Ps 7:18 etc.). Therefore, it is possible that this verb has influenced the choice of the preceding noun whereas elsewhere this might not be the case (e.g. Ps 70:22b<sup>LXX</sup>).

A particular use of paronomasia can be noticed in comparisons introduced by ὡσεῖ. In the Hebrew Psalter, the noun following the preposition of comparison as well as the corresponding verb might derive from the same root. According to Ps 103:15, man flourishes like a flower of the field (כְּצִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה כֵּן יִצְיָן). As expected, the LXX follows the Hebrew style on this

point: ὡσεὶ ἄνθος τοῦ ἀγροῦ οὕτως ἐξανθήσει. Elsewhere however, the Greek Psalter stresses this kind of relationship against the Hebrew. Let us quote three examples:

Ps 72(71):6b:

כרביבים זרויף ארץ	ὡσεὶ σταγόνες στάζουσαι ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν
“like showers that water [?] the earth”	“like drops dripping on the earth” (NETS)

Ps 101(102):4b:

ועצמותי <sup>18</sup> כמוקד נחרר	καὶ τὰ ὀστά μου ὡσεὶ φρύγιον συνεφρύγησαν
“and my bones burn like a furnace” (NRSV)	“and my bones were burnt up like firewood” (NETS)

Ps 108(109):19b:

ולמזח תמיד יחגרה	ὡσεὶ ζώνη ἣν διὰ παντὸς περιζώννυται
“like a belt that he wears every day” (NRSV)	“and as a girdle with which he girds himself continually” (Brenton)

A closer look at the three texts reveals that each of them contains a rare word. To begin with, in Ps 72:6b the word represents זרויף one of the numerous difficult words of the Psalter whose sense and function are far from clear.<sup>19</sup> However, the translator knows רביבים which he had rendered by σταγόνες in Ps 64:11<sup>LXX</sup>. So it seems not too farfetched to fit in a word not only expressing the effect caused by the drops but also deriving from the same Greek root: στάζω “drip”.

As for מוקד in Ps 102:4, this word is a Psalter *hapax legomenon* as well. Rendering the verb חרר “burn” by συμφρύγω (see also Job 30:30<sup>A</sup>; Ezek 24:10<sup>A</sup>) the translator employs a noun deriving from the same root,

<sup>18</sup> Against the BHS text (כמו קד), one should follow the evidence of the Hebrew manuscripts reading only one word. See Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 221–2.

<sup>19</sup> W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Wörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (ed. H. Donner) (Heidelberg: Springer, <sup>18</sup>1995), 312: “Regenguß”.

φρόγυτον, in order to illustrate the manner the bones of the Psalmist are consumed as by fire.

Finally, the noun חָמַת “belt” in Ps 109:19b is also a Psalter *hapax legomenon*. The translator surely knows the verb גָּדַד “to gird” as well as its figurative sense which he renders by περιζώννυμι (Ps 44:4; 64:13). Since the parallel colon Ps 109:19a mentions the curse the wicked should put on like a garment (ἱμάτιον) it is possible that the translator inserted in the second line the noun ζώνη “belt, girdle”, i.e. the piece of clothing fitting to the verb περιζώννυμι.

### III. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this short article is to give an idea of the existence and diffusion of rhetorical devices in the Greek Psalter that cannot be explained by a slavish translation of a Hebrew *Vorlage*. Of course, one should be aware of the fact that the study of these examples can be deepened in several ways: Firstly, it is necessary to take into consideration the immediate context of the passages quoted. Secondly, it would be worthwhile to extend this study to the Greek Psalter as a whole in order to show that the examples presented above are not exceptions. As for the method of study, one conclusion can already be drawn: We have to change our perspective. That means to say that instead of wondering which element of the Hebrew text is reproduced in which manner in the Greek text we have to focus on the Greek text itself. Then the question will be: Which rhetorical devices of the Greek text have no model in the extant Hebrew Psalter texts? If we could answer that question we would gain more insight not only into the translation technique underlying the Greek Psalter, but also into the ideas the translator had of his own task.