Satirical Elements in Hagiographical Narratives

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“Satire,” according to an important theorist of the genre, Northrop Frye, “is militant irony: its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured.”¹ As Frye concludes, “two things are essential to satire; one is wit or humour founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack.”² According to this definition, Byzantine hagiography is deeply satirical. As a literature of religious didacticism and criticism,³ hagiography includes various satirists and the objects of their mocking attacks. The most important ones are the different protagonists (e.g. martyrs, monastics, holy fools, lay, and miraculous saints), who, through the use of the fantastic and/or the grotesque,⁴ ridicule and are ridiculed by Roman anti-Christian officers, Satan, envious fellow monastics, fellow citizens, spouses, or sinners.

In Byzantine hagiography, the satirical impulse often has a twofold perspective. There are two antagonists who interchange roles: the one becomes both the “satirist” and the target of the other. Each antagonist assumes the role of the guardian of morality and (religious) truth who attempts to correct, criticize, and mock the other one. Of course, it is always the holy or faithful protagonist who, as the personification of the good, triumphs over his or her antagonist who features as the evil one.⁵ The saint and/or other pious characters of the

1 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ, 1971), 223.

2 Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 224.

3 For hagiography’s strong didactic character, see Stavroula Constantinou, “Women Teachers in Early Byzantine Hagiography,” in *What Nature Does Not Teach: Didactic Literature in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. Juanita F. Ruys (Disputatio 15) (Turnhout, 2008), 189–204.

4 For the fantastic in religious narrative, see Patricia Cox Miller, *The Poetry of Thought in Late Antiquity: Essays in Imagination and Religion* (Aldershot, UK, 2001); Laura Feldt, *The Fantastic in Religious Narrative from Exodus to Elisha* (New York, 2014). As for the grotesque, see Stavroula Constantinou, “Grotesque Bodies in Hagiographical Tales: The Monstrous and the Uncanny in Byzantine Collections of Miracle Stories,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 64 (2010): 43–54; Patricia Cox Miller, “Is There a Harlot in This Text? Hagiography and the Grotesque,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (2003): 419–35.

5 The opposition between good and evil, virtue and vice is a common element of medieval literature in general, and hagiography in particular (Charles Altman, “Two Types of Opposition and the Structure of Latin Saints’ Lives,” *Medievalia et Humanistica* 6 (1975): 1–11).

narrative appear as the true satirists who castigate the follies and vices of the wicked antagonist and his or her followers. With the group of the narrative's true satirists identifies also the hagiographer who, with his sarcastic comments, further ridicules the evil rival(s) and encourages the text's audiences to adopt an equally satirical stance.

Despite its importance, the satirical dimension of Byzantine hagiography has not received much scholarly attention.⁶ By contrast, the satirical works of 12th-century intellectuals, such as John Tzetzes and Eustathios of Thessalonike, or the fourth poem of Ptochoprodromos that mock monastic hagiography's heroes have attracted considerable scholarly interest.⁷ The present chapter has a twofold aim. First, to bring to light the strong satirical character of Byzantine hagiography by discussing the most frequent satirical features of some significant hagiographical narratives: Passion, monastic Life, and Miracle Story.⁸ Second, to analyze the uses of satire and its power as appearing in these genres.

6 See Charis Messis, "Deux versions de la même vérité: les deux vies d'hosios Mélétios au XII^e siècle," in *Les Vies des Saints à Byzance. Genre littéraire ou biographie historique? Actes du II^e colloque international sur la littérature byzantine. Paris, 6–8 juin 2002*, ed. Paolo Odorico and Panagiotis A. Agapitos (Dossiers Byzantins 4) (Paris 2004), 303–45. The satirical dimension of a hagiographical parody is also partly presented in Stavroula Constantinou, "A Byzantine Hagiographical Parody: The *Life of Mary the Younger*," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 34.2 (2010): 160–81. John Haldon points out, yet he does not further discuss, the mockery against doctors that exists in Artemios' miracles (John Haldon, "Humour and the Everyday in Byzantium," in *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Guy Halsall (Cambridge, UK, 2002), 48–72, at 63–64).

7 See, for example, Margaret Alexiou, "Ploys of Performance: Games and Play in the Ptochoprodromic Poems," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999): 91–109; Michael Angold, "Monastic Satire and the Evergetine Monastic Tradition in the Twelfth Century," in *Work and Worship at the Theotokos Evergetis, 1050–1200: Papers of the Fourth Belfast International Colloquium 14–17 September 1995*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Anthony Kirby (Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 6.2) (Belfast, 1997), 86–102; Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261* (Cambridge, UK, 2000), 355–59; Alexander Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 7) (Berkeley, CA, 1985); Paul Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. Sergei Hackel (London, 1981), 51–66.

8 Of course, satirical elements exist also in other hagiographical genres, such as the beneficial tale, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, and the collective biography (e.g. Theodoret Cyrrhus' *History of the Monks of Syria* and Cyril of Scythopolis' *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*). However, due to lack of space, these genres will not be discussed in the framework of this chapter. As for the genre of saint's Life that is under examination, its rich variety cannot be taken into consideration for the same reason. Here it is only the monastic Life that will be investigated. For the characteristics of the three examined hagiographical genres, see Stavroula Constantinou, "Subgenre and Gender in Saints' Lives," in *Les Vies des Saints à Byzance. Genre littéraire ou biographie historique? Actes du II^e colloque international sur la littérature byzantine. Paris, 6–8 juin 2002*, ed. Paolo Odorico and Panagiotis A. Agapitos (Dossiers Byzantins 4) (Paris,

In order to achieve their purposes, esthetic, religious, and propagandistic, Byzantine hagiographers often employ the typical elements of satire: abusive language, rhetorical tropes (e.g. hyperbole, irony, and allegory), irony (of situation or behavior), caricature, humor, hatred, anger, grotesque, surprise, violence, punishment, fantasy, and parody,⁹ through which they transform smaller or larger parts of their works into forceful satires. As will be shown in the following, the satirical elements that are employed each time, their functions, and frequency are determined by the satirist's and the attacked object's character, which, as noted above, differ from genre to genre.

1 Passion

At the heart of the hagiographical genre of Passion lies a fervent antagonism between the martyr and the Roman officer who arranges the former's public trial that dominates the narrative. This trial, that is an alternation of interrogation and torture, becomes a stage satire, which takes place in a large public space full of thousands of people.¹⁰ The two antagonists, the Christian and the pagan, openly mock each other's religion and behavior. The most frequent satirical elements of their verbal confrontation are abusive language and irony, which often have humorous effects.¹¹

The coarse language that both antagonists employ against each other includes insults, swearing, cursing, vituperation, and abomination. The most common insulting words that are used are derivatives and synonyms of the word "folly" (e.g. *μωρία, ἀνοία, ματαιότης*). Karpus, for example, a hero in the anonymous *Passion of Karpus, Papylos, and Agathonike*, says to the pagan proconsul who insists that the martyr offers sacrifice to the Roman gods:

2004), 411–23; Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances: Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 9) (Uppsala, 2005); Marina Detoraki, "Greek Passions of the Martyrs in Byzantium," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis, 2 vols. (Aldershot, UK, 2014), 2: *Genres and Contexts*, 61–101; Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Collections of Miracles (Fifth–Fifteenth Centuries)," in Efthymiadis, *The Ashgate Research Companion*, 2:103–42.

9 For an analytic presentation of satire's devices and techniques, see Leonard Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire* (Colorado, 1967; repr. 2008).

10 The martyr's antagonism with the interrogator is analyzed in Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances*, 38–53 where, however, the confrontation's satirical dimension is not discussed.

11 Debate and dialogue have been important characteristics of ancient satirical works too, such as those of Aristophanes, Ennius, Lucilius, and Varro (Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, KY, 1994), 40).

It is impossible for me to sacrifice to these demons with their deceptive appearances. For those who sacrifice to them are like them. [...] So too those who worship these gods take on the image of the demons' folly. [...] And so believe me, my consul, you are subject to no small folly.

Karpos' insulting words enrage the proconsul who says in reply: "Sacrifice to the gods and do not be a fool" (*Passion of Karpos, Papylos, and Agathonike*, 6.13–15, 9.24–25, 20.21–22).¹²

As suggested in the above-quoted dialogue, pagans see Christians as fools for they prefer torture and death to a sacrifice to the Roman gods. In Christians' eyes, on the other hand, pagans are foolish to worship false gods that are made by human hands. As formulated in the vast majority of Byzantine Passions through a quotation or a paraphrase of the biblical Psalm 115:4, pagan gods "have ears, but they hear not, they have eyes but do not see, they have hands but do not stretch them out, they have feet but do not walk" (*Passion of Apollonios*, 19.25–27).¹³ While martyrs ridicule their tormentors for their lifeless gods, the pagans in turn mock Christians for believing in and dying for a god who lived as a man and died on a cross as a criminal (*Passion of Konon*, 4.6.28–30).¹⁴

Both the pagan and the Christian satirist try repeatedly to correct each other's "foolishness" that is expressed in the adoption of a "wrong" belief:

"Obey us, Pionios," said Polemon.

Pionios said: "Would that I were able to persuade you to become Christians."

The men laughed aloud and heartily at him. "You have not such power that we should be burnt alive," they said.

"It is far worse," said Pionios, "to burn after death."

Sabina smiled at this, and the verger and his men said: "You laugh?"

"If God so wills," she said, "I do. You see, we are Christians. Those who believe in Christ will laugh unhesitatingly in everlasting joy." (*Passion of Pionios*, 7.3–5)¹⁵

12 *Passion of Karpos, Papylos, and Agathonike*, ed. and trans. Herbert Musurillo (with minor revisions), *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford, 1972), 22–29, at 23, 25.

13 *Passion of Apollonios*, ed. and trans. Musurillo (with minor revisions), *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 91–105, at 95.

14 *Passion of Konon*, ed. and trans. Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 186–93, at 189–90.

15 *Passion of Pionios*, trans. Musurillo (with minor revisions), 145, 147; ed. Louis Robert, *Le Martyre de Pionios prêtre de Smyrne* (Washington, DC, 1994), 24–25.

This extract from Pionios' *Passion* opens with the words of Polemon, the pagan temple warden, who yet again uses a friendly language in an attempt to convince Pionios to enter the temple. Earlier Polemon has gone so far as to tell Pionios that he is not obliged to sacrifice to the gods if he does not want to. He could just enter the temple, and in so doing avoid deadly punishment. Impressed by Pionios' character, his virtues, and the power of his speech, which captivates the listeners' attention and renders them speechless,¹⁶ Polemon does not want him to be killed. As he tells the martyr just before in an even more cajoling tone, "we love you. There are many reasons why you deserve to live" (*Passion of Pionios*, 5.3).¹⁷

Pionios' reaction to Polemon's second, yet unsuccessful, attempt to save him from violent death is equally kind. The martyr adopts Polemon's friendly manner to express his own wish to save pagans from divine punishment by converting them to Christianity. However, Pionios' words are met with the pagans' immediate derision. After their loud and wholehearted laughter, Polemon and his companions now challenge the martyr's persuasive power, which they had previously acknowledged. They humorously suggest that common sense prevents them from following Pionios' faith for which they will receive the punishment of burning alive. Of course, Pionios does not remain silent. He in turn mocks the pagans' attempted mockery by using the same imagery. His words, however, are even more ironic and witty: it is better to burn to death rather than to burn after death. In other words, it is more severe to be punished by God than by human beings, as the first punishment is eternal while the second is temporary.

The fact that the pagans cannot understand Pionios' irony adds to the humor of the scene. Being aware of the pagans' perplexity and delighted by Pionios' intelligent response, the Christian Sabina cannot help but smile. The pagans, who are outdone by Pionios' cleverness, turn to Sabina to express their irritation for both their verbal defeat and her subsequent derisive smile. The woman's reply to their question about the reason of her laughter prolongs Pionios' Christian irony and invites the texts' audiences to share the derision. Obviously, in this antagonism the Christians have the proverbial last laugh.

16 For Pionios' rhetorical qualities, see Pernot, "Saint Pionios, martyr et orateur," in *Du héros païen au saint chrétien: actes du colloque organisé par le Centre d'analyse des rhétoriques religieuses de l'Antiquité (C.A.R.R.A.), Strasbourg, 1er–2 décembre 1995*, ed. Gérard Freyburger and Laurent Pernot (Paris, 1997), 111–23; Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York, 2004), 92–102.

17 *Passion of Pionios*, 24, trans. 143.

The typical plot of the passion narrative presents the martyr as the greatest satirist, since he or she silences the pagan antagonist who resorts to grotesque violence in a desperate attempt to humiliate and shame the martyr. However, the tormentor is further ridiculed, as his machines of torture prove harmless for the Christians, but deathly for the pagan bystanders. Now the torturer is beside himself with rage. At the beginning, he is offended by the martyr's open violation of the law and his or her disdain for the official religion. As the narrative progresses, he feels totally disgraced and frustrated; his power is completely lost: there is no way to win the martyr over, neither by persuasion and threats, nor by force:

The impious tyrant grew enraged at these words of the holy martyr and said to him: "You may not obey me, but the tortures will teach you to cower. And if you despise the tortures, I shall kill you by throwing you to a most fierce lion, or else I shall give you as food to the beasts of the sea, or I shall have you put to death by hanging on a cross, or I shall throw you into a cauldron heated by a blazing fire and so melt away your flesh unless you sacrifice to the invincible and eternal gods."

The blessed martyr said to the impious tyrant: "This is unseemly conduct, prefect. Do you think you can terrify me by threatening me with mere words and thus suppose you can change my mind? You will not persuade me—God forbid! [...] For the tortures with which you threaten me cannot harm me; I have a God who gives me strength."

The tyrant said to him: 'If our tortures have no power over you, I shall devise even more painful ones for you.' (*Passion of Konon*, 5.4–9)¹⁸

As a result, the pagan's original portrait as a potential satirist turns into a caricature through which he is further mocked. In what follows, he is emphatically and recurrently presented as a wild beast, an enraged lion that invents more and more tortures with the intention of eradicating the martyr from the face of earth. As the latter survives intact from the machines of torture, the tormentor's frenzy progresses until it becomes totally absurd. Its absurdity is also reflected in the impossible forms that the tortures take. A case in point is the Emperor Diocletian in George's legend, especially in its apocryphal versions.¹⁹

18 *Passion of Konon*, 190, 191.

19 For the history of the legend, see John Matzke, "Contributions to the History of the Legend of Saint George with Special Reference to the Sources of the French, German and Anglo-Saxon Metrical Versions," *Modern Language Association* 17.4 (1902): 464–535. Despite the great popularity of saint George in Byzantine tradition, the martyr's legend has not attracted much interest from Byzantinists.

George's tormented body that constantly exceeds natural laws drives the Emperor Diocletian increasingly crazy. Being anxious to kill George, the emperor ends up subjecting him to a long series of ingenious tortures.

According to one of the official orthodox Greek versions,²⁰ Diocletian's first brutal torture is to have the martyr stretched on the ground of the prison, his feet very tightly tied on wood, and his breast pressed by a huge and heavy rock. Defying all expectation, George emerges unscathed from prison the next day, the emperor has the martyr's body crushed on a revolving wheel that is full of spikes, swords, blades, and knives. All the bystanders can clearly see George's blood running down his body and his torn body parts. Being convinced that George is already dead, Diocletian asks for the turning wheel to stop. He loses his mind, however, when he sees George leaving the wheel unharmed. The emperor immediately gives orders for the next torture. George is thrown into a pit of quicklime. He is found three days later in a happy and festive state. Diocletian's next move is to make the martyr run in red-hot shoes with long nails while at the same time he has him violently beaten. Covered with blood and suffering from his open wounds, George is dragged to prison. Sometime later the emperor sees him walking properly, and George explains that he actually finds his torture pleasant. Diocletian goes completely wild. He can find no other explanation. George must be a sorcerer. Looking for revenge, Diocletian asks a magician to prepare a poison for George, which has no effect. Now Diocletian is totally enraged and out of his mind. He has no other ideas—he cannot think of any worse torture. The only thing he can do is to ask George for an explanation which, however, he finds unsatisfying, and he sends the martyr back to prison. Unable to make George undergo any agonizing tortures, Diocletian is forced to order his decapitation from which the martyr dies.

The depictions of cruelty in passion narratives are exaggerations that satirize the excessiveness of the pagan emperor's torture instruments and question his power. Such harmless, yet horrendous and grotesque violence unavoidably has comic effects. George's tortures presented above are deeply funny, as they do not affect the tortured, but the torturer instead. Paradoxically, it is Diocletian who suffers through and because of the martyr's ineffective tortures, and thus he becomes an object of the hagiographer's satirical attack.

As the previous analysis has demonstrated, satire is a significant convention of the genre of Passion within which the genre asks to be interpreted. In other words, satire provides guidelines for the genre's approach, since it is to a great degree responsible for its specific character. The satirical debate between the martyr and the interrogator-torturer, as well as the grotesque violence that

20 *Passion of George*, in *Acta Sanctorum* Apr. III (1968), IX–XV.

goes with it, structure the passion narrative and determine the expectations raised by the genre itself. Through satire, the primarily male hagiographer achieves a number of purposes: religious, esthetic, and entertaining. He reveals the errors of other religions and their followers (for instance, there are Passions in which Jews apart from heathens are attacked, such an example is the aforementioned *Passion of Pionios*) while he establishes the superiority of Christianity. He teaches Christianity's truths and doctrines, promotes the cult of its most important heroes and heroines, and provides a good, well-told, and amusing story. It is for all these reasons, and particularly for the last one, that martyr legends were among the most popular Byzantine texts.²¹

All in all, martyr legends prove true Leonard Feinberg's words that "we read satire because it gives us pleasure. [...] The appeal of satire lies in its literary merit: brilliance, wit, humour, freshness."²² As has been shown, these literary features of satire are essential elements of martyr legends that are much more appealing than sermons. As Leonard Feinberg puts it, "we get more pleasure from satire than a sermon, even when the satire is making exactly the same point as the sermon [...] [because] we have an uncomfortable feeling that the minister expects us to do something about it. We enjoy the satire because [...] nobody expects us to do anything about it."²³

2 Life

Depending on their saintly roles, as suggested above, the protagonists of saints' Lives are confronted with different types of antagonists.²⁴ For example, lay saints mostly mock and are mocked by their impious spouses while cenobitic monks or nuns often satirize and are satirized by jealous and sinful fellow monastics.²⁵ However, the saint's most frequent satirist that appears in all categories of Lives, and less often in other hagiographical genres, such as the Passion and Miracle Story, is Satan whose aim is to destroy the saint's zeal

21 See Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances*, 19–23.

22 Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire*, 7, 8.

23 Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire*, 7.

24 For saintly roles, see Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances*.

25 For the relations between lay saints and their spouses, see Stavroula Constantinou, "Performing Gender in Lay Saints' Lives," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 38.1 (2014), 24–32; as for those between fellow monastics, see Stavroula Constantinou, "Same-Gender Friendships and Enmity in the Life of Eupraxia," in *After the Text: Byzantine Enquiries in Honour of Margaret Mullett*, ed. Liz James, Oliver Nicholson, and Roger Scott (in press).

toward God.²⁶ What Satan eventually achieves through his disguises and foolish trickery is to transform himself from a powerful enemy into a buffoon. Being always defeated and shamed by the saint, the Devil and his demons disappear helplessly and abruptly. Since the lack of space does not allow the examination of all satirical opponents detected in saints' Lives, in what follows only the monastic saint and his or her most frequent enemies, Satan and his demons, will be discussed.²⁷

Satan is generally pictured as a highly grotesque and monstrous creature. According to one of the most influential ascetics of the 3rd and 4th centuries, Antony, who follows the relevant description in the Book of Job 41.10–13, Satan has “eyes like the morning star. From his mouth come blazing lamps and flaming braziers shooting sparks. From his nostrils comes smoke blazing from an oven's fiery coals. His soul is a heap of coals, and fire issues from his mouth” (*Life of Antony*, 24.1.3–8).²⁸ When Satan attacks the monastic saint, apart from his natural form, he also adopts a number of other equally grotesque and monstrous appearances.

26 Concerning the significance of demons in monks' lives, see David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

27 It has to be pointed out that the most satirical saints' Lives that have been produced in Byzantium are those of the two holy fools: the *Life of Symeon* by Leontios of Neapolis (mid-7th c.), and the anonymous *Life of Andrew* (mid-10th century): *Life of Symeon the Fool*, ed. Lennart Rydén, in Léontios de Neapolis, *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, ed. André Jean Festugière (Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 95) (Paris, 1974), 55–104; Eng. trans. in Derek Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius' Life and the Late Antique City* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 25) (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 131–71; *Life of Andrew the Fool*, ed. and trans. Lennart Rydén, *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, 2 vols. (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 4.2) (Uppsala, 1995), 11: *Text, Translation and Notes*, 12–302. These two hagiographical texts are considered as the most satirical for two interrelated reasons. First, their authors use one of the satirist's most usual characters, the fool (see Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire*, 48–51), whose madness gives him the liberty to disclose his society's hypocrisy and his fellow citizens' sins. As expressed in both examined Lives, the holy fool's mission is to “mock the world” (ἐμπαίζω τῷ κόσμῳ (*Life of Symeon*, 1704 B, 26), τὸν κόσμον ἐμπαίζων (*Life of Andrew*, l. 323)). Consequently, the holy fool's persona is satirical by definition. Lastly, since the two protagonists in question become their societies' constant satirists, large parts of their Lives are inevitably replete with satirical devices and scenes. Thus holy fools' Lives acquire a satirical dimension that other hagiographical texts cannot contain. For satirical devices in holy fools' Lives, such as the fool's mask, irony, and humor, see Stavroula Constantinou, “Holy Actors and Actresses: Fools and Cross-Dressers as the Protagonists of Saints' Lives,” in Efthymiadis, *Ashgate Research Companion*, 345–64.

28 *Life of Antony*, ed. and trans. G.J.M. Bartelink, *Athanase d'Alexandrie, Vie d'Antoine* (Sources Chrétiennes 400) (Paris, 1994), at 200; Eng. trans. Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis, *Athanasius of Alexandria, The Life of Antony: The Coptic Life and the Greek Life* (Cistercian Studies 202) (Kalamazoo, MI, 2003), at 113.

In Antony's Life, for example, one evening, while enclosed in a tomb performing his harsh ascetic practices, the hero is brutally assaulted by a group of demons having the shape of various wild beasts and emitting loud sounds: "lions, bears, leopards, bulls, and poisonous snakes and scorpions and wolves."²⁹ "Lacerated and stabbed" by the monsters and under inhuman pain, Antony starts "mocking" (χλευάζων) the demons telling them: "If you had any power in you, one of you would be enough. But since the Lord has taken away your power, you attempt to terrify me any way you can by sheer numbers. Mimicking the forms of irrational beasts, as you do, only demonstrates your weakness, however" (*Life of Antony* 9.6.22–23; 9.8.28–29; 9.9.33–37).³⁰

Through his satirical words, Antony discloses the demons' trickery, and in so doing he proves their power powerless. Recognizing that the demons are behind this wild bestiality and violence, Antony defeats his fear and fights back his greatest enemies through his mockery and faith. He goes on to say to the demons: "Why do you bother me to no purpose? Our seal and wall of protection is our faith in the Lord." However, the demons do not immediately give up and "attempt to do many things against him and gnash their teeth at him." As a result, "they," as the hagiographer, Athanasios of Alexandria, points out, "only mock themselves all the more, not him" (*Life of Antony*, 9.10.39–41; 9.11.41–43).³¹ Athanasios' comment further highlights the demons' portrait as buffoons whose ridiculous behavior and defeat amuse both the hagiographer and his audience.³²

The demons' degeneration from mighty adversaries to grotesque and comic performers can be well traced in a number of monastic Lives. A case in point is a work of the 10th century, the anonymous *Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*. During one of Irene's night-long standing exercises, a group of extremely noisy demons enter her cell trying to interrupt her harsh ascetic practice. As the text reads:

29 For the importance of demons in Antony's Life, see Norman Baynes, "St. Anthony and the Demons," *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 40 (1954): 7–10; Jean Danielou, "Les demons de l'air dans la Vie d'Antoine," *Studia Anselmiana* 38 (1956): 136–47; Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago, 1987), 1–88. For a discussion of Byzantine demonology, see Cyril Mango, "Diabolus Byzantinus," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46: Papers in Honor of Alexander Kazhdan (1992): 215–23.

30 *Life of Antony*, trans. 83; ed. 160, 162.

31 *Life of Antony*, trans. 83; ed. Bartelink, 162.

32 Antony's fights with the Devil, particularly the one presented here, have exercised an extremely strong influence on later Byzantine monastic Lives in which the ascetics' conflicts with demons are patterned on Athanasios' demonology. See, for example, the Life of Auxentios and that of Abramios by Symeon the Metaphrast (*PG* 114: 1377–1436 and 115: 43–78).

One of them, being more evil as well as more insolent than the others, seemed to approach her and sneer at her, shouting such words as mimes use to utter. "Irene is made of wood," he said, "she is carried by wooden legs" [...]. Again he changed his tone and lamented, "How long will you oppress our race? How long will you lash us with your protracted prayers? How long will you burn us? How long shall we have to endure you? We have enough of the distress that you cause us."

Then also the rest of them seemed to be afflicted and give vent to loud lamentation, slapping their cheeks as if a great calamity had befallen them. (*Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, 35–36.18–27)³³

Here there is no presentation of the demons' monstrous appearances as is the case in the episode from Antony's Life discussed above. Additionally, at this time it is not the saint who speaks, but one of the demons, the most evil one, as the hagiographer remarks. The demon's first words and accompanying gestures are decidedly satirical. He goes next to the heroine and starts shouting at her calling her a wooden statue. The demon's mockery is an attempt to shake the heroine who stands immobile stretching her arms to heaven, and thus transforming herself to a lifeless figure. Unable, however, to destroy Irene's meditation through his satirical behavior, the demon quickly changes his tone. He laments his powerlessness and presents himself and his fellow demons as the heroine's miserable victims. His cries and words carry away the other demons that burst forth into a loud yell of lamentation and hit their cheeks. Through their rapid decline from powerful enemies to grotesquely comic performers, the demons become laughing stocks offering entertainment to the text's audiences.

Not managing to interrupt Irene's standing exercise either through derision or buffoonery, the demon uses violence in a desperate attempt to humiliate the saint and to reduce her zeal. He sets the heroine's body in flames. However, Irene being "all in flames stands immobile and unwavering and unconquered, paying no heed whatever to the fire" (*Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, 11.15–17).³⁴ The heroine's steadfastness shames and ridicules for a third time the demons who, as is the case with the demons in Antony's Life, have to escape showing another ridiculous aspect of their character.

33 *Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, ed. and trans. Jean Olof Rosenqvist, *The Life of St. Irene Abbess of Chrysobalanton: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation, Notes and Indices* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 1) (Uppsala, 1986), at 44, 45.

34 *Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, 46, 47.

Obviously, the Devil's use of violence in monastic Lives has similarities with that of the pagan prefect in martyr Passions. Like the prefect, the Devil tortures the saint, and his grotesque and inventive violence has equally comic effects, as the saint is not harmed, but is proved stronger instead, both bodily and spiritually. The burnt flesh of the aforementioned Irene, for example, is cured within a few days. As for Antony, the other ascetic discussed here, his impossible pains during the demons' attack are relieved as soon as his torturers fly away. There are also monastic saints, such as the nun Eupraxia (*Life of Eupraxia*, §§22–25),³⁵ whose body, like that of the martyr George, comes out completely unscathed from the Devil's tortures.

In the two episodes presented above, during the demons' attack there is no dialogue between them and the ascetic. It is either the saint (*Life of Antony*) or the demon (*Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*) that speaks. There are instances, however, in which a satirical duel between the saint and the Devil takes place, as, for example, when the holy man or woman performs an exorcism. In an attempt to expel the Demon from a possessed individual's body, the saint converses with him, just as Jesus talks with Legion—that is the name of the Gerasene demoniac's demons—in the Gospels (Mk 5:7–13 and Lk 8:26–33). A monastic saint's exorcisms recall those of Christ not just by their dialogic form and presentation, but also through the hagiographer's comments. For example, in Irene's Life, the hagiographer introduces the heroine's healing of Nicholas, a possessed man who falls in love with one of her nuns, with the following words: "How great a power against demons He had given her and His disciples, He who *treads on all the power of the enemy*, the following episode will suffice to demonstrate" (*Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, 53.12–14).³⁶

As for Irene's satirical conversation with Nicholas' invisible, yet talkative, demon, it reads as follows:

She threw herself to the floor, and after beseeching God with tears for a long time she [...] rose on to question the abominable spirit and said, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I say to you, evil and unclean spirit, tell me the cause why you have dared to enter into this creature of God, and tell me who sent you." At first he strove to escape and ward off the holy woman with insults as being the cause of his fetters, calling her "night-eater," "wooden leg," "insatiable stander," "iron-hearted," "subduer of stones" and such frivolous names. But as he was not released from the fetters binding him, he [...] said, "Unless *the angel encamping round about*

35 *Life of Eupraxia*, in *Acta Sanctorum* Mar. II (1668), 727–35.

36 *Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, 67 (trans. with minor revisions).

you was flogging me, I would not even deem you worthy of an answer. But now I tell you, the man has already for a long time detached himself from service and communion. As he also fell passionately in love with one of your disciples, this was reported to the Prince and I was sent to satisfy his desire. [...] But you, why do you injure me, chasing me from my house?" "Who," asked the holy woman, "is that 'Prince' you mentioned?" "You mock me, it would seem," he answered, "asking me something you are not ignorant of. For who [...] does not know what kind he is? [...] For if he [Jesus] had not been executed, you would not now have laid these fetters on me and mocked me, questioning me like a slave. You despise us and laugh at us only because there has been bound one so great and so strong that if he were set free, nobody would be able to withstand our power." "What is it," said the Saint, "that produces this powerlessness in you?" "God's power" [answered the demon]. (*Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, 56–58.13–30, 1–21)³⁷

In a highly authoritative and demeaning tone, Irene interrogates the demon by calling him "an evil and unclean spirit"; a characterization of Satan and his demons that is first used by Jesus and is often repeated by the protagonists of Byzantine monastic Lives. As such, Satan and his forces become the absolute antipodes of the Holy Spirit. Here Irene wants to know by whom and why the demon was sent to Nicholas' body. The demon in turn tries to escape from his humiliating position by assuming the satirist's role. Thus, instead of answering Irene's impertinent questions, the Devil satirizes her by insulting and calling her funny names, such as the ones used earlier by one of the demons who attack her during her ascetic practices. Once more the demon becomes a satirical commentator of Irene's night-long standing exercises. He calls her "night-eater" and "insatiable stander," as she spends the whole night in a standing meditation. For the Devil, the heroine is also the following: "wooden leg," "iron-hearted," and "subduer of stones," as her immovable body resembles a statue made of wood, iron, or stone.

Irene, in contrast, has no chance of reacting to the demon's mockery, for he is immediately forced through an angel's tortures to return to his previous humiliating position and to answer the heroine's questions. As he tells Irene, he was commanded by his prince to enter the body of Nicholas because of the latter's sins. But after answering Irene's questions, the demon changes his tone again. Now he adopts Irene's role of the interrogator asking her the reason for her attack against him. The heroine, however, does not answer the demon's

37 *Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, 71, 73.

question, but continues questioning him about his master's identity. Irene's interrogation meets the demon's ironic derision. He replies: "You mock me, it would seem asking me something you are not ignorant of," and he goes on to give a short report of Satan's wicked activities against Adam, Christ, and the Church. While the demon presents with pride the evilness of his Prince, he suddenly makes once more a fool of himself when he openly admits that Christ is stronger than his master, and he accepts his position as the victim of Irene's mockery. Acknowledging his defeat, the demon has to come out from the body of Nicholas whose soul is saved through Irene's intervention.

Through his abrupt and continuous changes from a powerful to a powerless position, from a satirist to an object of attack, the Devil appears more and more ridiculous. In general, the Devil's humiliation is a recurrent theme in monastic Lives. Each time they defeat the Devil, monastic saints impose upon themselves harsher asceticism, a fact that provokes their antagonist's further violence through which the latter is again ridiculed, and the same story might be repeated many times. The Devil's repetitive mockery, as a result of his naive trickery and his inability to understand his very naivety, make him seem even funnier. The more ridiculous the Devil appears, the more powerful the ascetic turns out to be and the more entertaining the Life becomes.

3 Miracle Story

The targets of satire in collections of miracle stories are mostly groups of people, such as doctors,³⁸ non-Christians—pagans, Muslims, and Jews—heretics, unbelievers, and sinners, and less often eponymous or anonymous individuals belonging to one or more of these groups. The satirical antagonism, which, as has been demonstrated, is central in Passions and Saints' Lives, is almost absent from Miracle Stories where satire mainly takes two other forms: monologue

38 For hagiographers' criticism of doctors, see John Duffy, "Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries: Aspects of Teaching and Practice," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38: Symposium on Byzantine Medicine (1984): 21–27, at 24; Alexander Kazhdan, "The Image of the Medical Doctor in Byzantine Literature of the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38: Symposium on Byzantine Medicine (1984): 43–51, at 45–49; Harry Magoulas, "The Lives of the Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 57 (1964): 127–50, at 128–33. In fact, doctors have been targets of satire throughout the ages. See, for example, Earle P. Scarlett et al., "Satira Medica: A Casual Anthology of the Satire Which Has Been Directed against Physicians in All Ages," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 32.2 (1935): 196–201.

and narrative.³⁹ The satirical monologue, which is predominantly spoken by the hagiographer himself, is primarily used when the object of attack is collective. The satirical narrative, on the other hand, basically concerns an individual who becomes the miraculous saint's target and the miracle story's punished protagonist.

Generally, the hagiographer engages in a satirical monologue as soon as he finishes the narration of a miracle story. The monologue's length varies: it may consist of a few lines, be as long as the miracle story or even longer depending on what is more important for the hagiographer's purposes each time: the narrative itself, religious propaganda in the form of satire or both. In his satirical monologue, the hagiographer addresses directly either his faithful audience or his victims. In both cases, he attempts to impose his negative ideas about a group of people whom he presents as enemies of orthodox Christianity, both in its religious and political dimension. As Haldon suggests, the hagiographers' attacks in miracle collections serve a "hidden agenda" reflecting "concern with orthodoxy in terms of individual behaviour and its outcome translated into concern with the orthodoxy of political and spiritual leaders and their actions."⁴⁰

A satirical monologue's significance is not only stressed by its length, but also by its relation to the preceding miracle story. When the monologue is not directly associated with the story, it becomes more striking and effective because it is completely unexpected. Its element of surprise, which is an important satirical technique,⁴¹ makes a greater impression on the text's readers or listeners who reflect on the monologue's content rather than on that of the miracle story. Such a surprising monologue is found in the 7th-century miracle collection of Artemios:

39 According to another important theorist of satire, Gilbert Highet, monologue and narrative are two of the three forms of satire. Parody is the third one. Highet also discusses satirical dialogue which he does not treat as an independent form, but as part of the three aforementioned forms (Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton, NJ, 1962)). Highet's threefold categorization is not valid for Byzantine hagiography, since it comprises works with satirical elements, but not pure satires. However, Highet's three forms are included in certain hagiographical genres and texts, such as miracle collection and the holy fool's Life. Unfortunately, for reasons of space, this chapter cannot examine the strong satirical dimension of the holy fool's Life.

40 John Haldon, "Supplementary Essay: The Miracles of Artemios and Contemporary Attitudes: Context and Significance," in *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of the Seventh-Century Byzantium*, intr. and trans. Virgil S. Crisafulli and John W. Nesbitt (Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures (400–1453) 13) (Leiden, 1997), 33–73, at 53–54.

41 Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire*, 143–75.

What will you say, nation of Jews, you who fashioned a cross for Christ, you who furiously shouted in Pilate's court: "Kill, kill, crucify Him"? The very cross which you fashioned for destruction, when made by Artemios, itself gives life. How, o brood of vipers, does Christ on account of Whom you shouted to Pilate "Kill, kill, crucify Him" raise up men who are close to death when He Himself is invoked by Artemios? How do St. John (who baptized Christ) and the wonderworking Artemios along with the gloriously triumphant martyress Febronia reclaim from death those who are held by Hades through the invocation of Christ? You, being covered with shame, can you bear to say? Artemios lays bare your *actions* and because of your *actions* scorns you, he crushes you into the ground, he flogs you with invisible scourges, he wounds you severely and you do not feel it. But let us leave the Jews to groan and return to the deeds [healings] of the martyr. (*Miracles of Artemios*, Miracle 38)⁴²

Here the anonymous hagiographer as satirist does not simply attack a contemporary religious group, but the entire Jewish people throughout their history.⁴³ It has to be pointed out that this is not his only outbreak against the Jews. In the collection's second part,⁴⁴ the hagiographer repeatedly satirizes the Jews, just as he does with heretics.⁴⁵ As for the above monologue, it is spoken as soon as the hagiographer finishes the narration of a miracle story about a certain

42 *Miracles of Artemios*, ed. Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia graeca sacra* (St Petersburg, 1909), at 63; repr. and Eng. trans. in Virgil S. Crisafulli and John W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Medieval Mediterranean 13) (Leiden, 1997), pp. 199, 201 with minor changes of my own.

43 Haldon believes that the anti-Jewish and anti-heretical polemics in Artemios' miracles were later additions because their style and content are different from those of the miracle stories (Haldon, "Supplementary Essay," 35). However, the change of style and content do not necessarily indicate that the monologues were written by another author who decided to add them to the preexisting stories. Satire or polemics, as suggested above, require a different style and sometimes an unexpected content in order to achieve their purposes.

44 According to Haldon, Artemios' miracle collection, as it has come down to us, is a work that was created by putting together two different collections: the first collection ends with miracle 31 and the second consists of miracles 32 to 45 (Haldon, "Supplementary Essay," 34–35).

45 The hagiographer's strong anti-Jewish stance reflects the 6th- and 7th-century persecutions of Jews in the Byzantine Empire. Satirical attacks against Jews were commonplaces in the literature of the time, a literary trend that is followed also by our hagiographer (John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, UK, 1990), 337–48 and "Supplementary Essay"; see also Vincent Déroche, "Forms and Functions of Anti-Jewish Polemics: Polymorphy, Polysemy," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil et al. (Jerusalem Studies in

George, reader in the church of John the Baptist in Oxeia where the relics of saint Artemios are deposited. According to the story, George suffered from a genital illness and was cured by Artemios with the help of the Forerunner and Febronia. The healing was achieved as soon as Artemios, having made the sign of the cross on George's suffering body, said: "Our Lord Jesus Christ our true God Himself cures him through our prayers."⁴⁶

The joyful tone in the conclusion of George's miracle story is in the monologue abruptly switched to a completely unexpected direction. There is a transformation from the miraculous saint's doxology to an angry address to the Jews that is full of hate language and irony. Our hagiographer's 13-line speech is dominated by four interrelated rhetorical questions—taking up around eight printed lines—through which the monologue acquires a dialogic form.

While in his opening question the hagiographer calls the Jews "Christ's killers," he at the same time asks them to express their opinion about George's miraculous healing. The Jews' presentation as God's murderers, which is found in the Byzantine literature of the time—and is still in use—has its roots in the four Gospels.⁴⁷ In fact, our hagiographer does not fail to recall the authoritative origin of his claim against the Jews; he quotes the latter's words as reported in the New Testament where they are depicted prevailing upon Pilate to crucify Jesus (Mt 27.20–23, Mk 15.8–14, Lk 23.13–23, and Jn 19.4–16). Even though the hagiographer uses rhetorical questions to express irony—rhetorical questions are deeply ironic as they ask for answers that are already known or given—his first rhetorical question entails also another layer of irony. This emerges from the discrepancy between the respondent's declared character and that of the question: the Jews as anti-Christians and Christ's killers are asked to confirm Christ's divinity, and in so doing to admit their outrageous crime.

With his second question, the hagiographer denigrates the Jews even further through the use of more insulting words and the rhetorical device of repetition, as well as through the emphatic continuation of the first question's irony. Now the Jews are first called "brood of vipers." They are thus literally provided with bestiality, which, as mentioned earlier, is associated with Satan. In other words, for the hagiographer, as is the case with the anti-Jewish authors of his times, the Jews are the Devil's offspring who killed Christ according to their father's will. In order to validate and underscore this assumption, the

Religion and Culture 14) (Leiden, 2012), 535–48; Vera von Falkenhausen, "In Search of the Jews in Byzantine Literature," in Bonfil et al., *Jews in Byzantium*, 871–92).

46 *Miracles of Artemios*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus in *Varia graeca sacra*, at 63; Eng. trans. in Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles of St. Artemios*, at 199.

47 See Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (Oxford, 2007), 9–72.

hagiographer goes on to reiterate the Jews' guilt, who, according to the Gospels, repetitively "shouted to Pilate 'Kill, kill, crucify Him.'" Having done so, our hagiographer formulates his second rhetorical question: how is it possible for Jesus, whom the Jews killed as man, to save people from near death? The question invites the Jews to testify for a second time their religion's wrongness and their impossible crime.

The following two inquiries are follow-up questions. The first follow-up question refers also to the other saints that were involved in George's cure—John the Baptist and Febronia—to show once more Christ's divinity, and effectively, the Jews' atrocity. These saints along with Artemios rescue people from death just by invoking Christ: how it is possible to explain this very fact, insists the hagiographer addressing the Jews. As for his last question, it enhances further the monologue's dialogic dimension. By asking the Jews whether their lack of response so far is the result of their unlimited shamefulness, the hagiographer makes the impression of their presence at the scene even stronger. The Jews' dead silence before the hagiographer's speech speaks about *their* guilt and *his* truth. Consequently, the superiority of orthodox Christianity is proved, and the Jews' position is rendered even worse.

In the monologue's final words, the hagiographer employs another stratagem so that the Jews' denigration reaches a sort of climactic peak, on the one hand, and his own role as the Jews' satirist is validated, on the other. In this case, he casts Artemios in the role of the satirist who performs the Jews' real and just punishment. As the hagiographer points out, the saint through his miracles brings to light and mocks the Jews' criminal act; in order to save people from death, Artemios both uses the sign of the very cross on which the Jews crucified Jesus and invokes His godly name. His art of healing acts as a violent source that "crushes" Christ's murderers "into the ground." It is like a lash that inflicts severe wounds. But, despite their humiliation, violent punishment, and even their own admission of guilt, the Jews do not give up their religion, a fact that makes them seem all the more ridiculous.

At this point, the hagiographer decides that he should not spend more time and words on the Jews, who through their former, present, and even future behavior provoke contempt, indignation, and scorn. He thus turns to his faithful listeners or readers and emphatically tells them: "Let us leave the Jews to groan and return to the healings of the martyr." Certainly, the "groaning" Jews, who are tortured by the saint while at the same time he saves Christians from unbearable pains, is a very strong satirical image that the hagiographer skillfully adds toward the end of the monologue to provoke a derisive laugh and to heighten the audience's feeling of religious superiority.

The satirical monologue analyzed here, which is part of a miracle narrative from the *Miracles of Artemios*, is obviously not written to make the Jews repent for their crimes. It is hardly possible that the text in question was ever listened to or heard by a Jewish audience. In other words, our hagiographers' anti-Jewish satires are written for a Christian audience in an attempt to fuel the hatred of Judaism among Christians in 7th-century Byzantium, on the one hand, and to create a dialogue with other contemporary texts with anti-Jewish satirical discourses, on the other.

The metaphorical punishment of the Jews in the *Miracles of Artemios* becomes an actual one in the miracles of punishment, which are narratives whose heroes or heroines are violently killed by the miraculous saint for their vices, wrongdoings, and anti-Christian actions. In these cases, the saint acts as a divine satirist and judge who through a mocking discourse associated with grotesque punishment restores justice and order, both social and religious. One of the vices that are castigated in punishment miracles is avarice, the sinful desire for wealth, which has traditionally been a frequent theme of satirical literature.⁴⁸ The punishment narratives in which avarice plays a central role become moral teachings on the social injustice of disproportionate profit and on the psychological and spiritual failings of the miser whose sinful behavior the faithful Christians are invited to rebuke and avoid.

A case in point is a story from the *Miracles of Thekla*, a 5th-century anonymous text that is the oldest miracle collection that has come down to us. The narrative in question opens emphatically with the miser's name, a certain Pappos, who, after the death of his business partner named Aulorios, gets the chance to satisfy his avaricious passion. Through a malicious plot, Pappos manages to "appropriate for himself alone the profit which the two men used to share in common, leaving only the debts for the former's children. Their misfortune [i]s thus doubled: they [a]re both orphaned and los[e] whatever meager wealth still remain[s] in them" (*Miracles of Thekla*, Miracle 36).⁴⁹

Pappos' unfairness toward the orphans does not escape saint Thekla's notice who, as the hagiographer remarks, "never ceases to assist [...] those [...]"

48 Avarice is, for example, mocked in ancient Graeco-Roman satire (e.g. in Aristophanes' comedies, Horace's satires, and Lucian's dialogues), in its Byzantine counterpart (e.g. Julian's *Misopogon* and *Timarion*), and in early modern and modern satires (e.g. Molière's *The Miser*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*).

49 *Miracles of Thekla*, ed. and trans. Gilbert Dagron, *Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle* (Subsidia Hagiographica 62) (Brussels, 1978), 35.7–11, p. 384; Eng. trans. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, in *Miracle Tales from Byzantium*, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot and Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 12) (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 1–201, at 145.

who are hard-pressed and suffer injustice.”⁵⁰ It has to be pointed out that the orphans’ bad situation is not the only thing to attract the holy woman’s attention. Throughout the miracle collection, Thekla often proves true the hagiographer’s comment that is quoted here. The collection includes a number of stories in which the holy woman assists the disadvantaged and reinstates justice,⁵¹ acts that she frequently performs through the use of satirical means.

Thekla’s first move toward the rectification of Pappos’ injustice is to appear before him in a satirical dream that the hagiographer describes in Homer’s words as “*a bad dream [which] stays by his head.*”⁵² In fact, Pappos’ divine dream is a parody of that of the Thracian king Rhesos in the *Iliad* 10.496–97. According to the Homeric epic, Diomedes, being encouraged by the goddess Athena and assisted by Odysseus, kills 13 sleeping Thracian warriors including Rhesos, their king during a night-time raid to the Trojan camp. Just before his cruel and devious murder, Rhesos is found gasping under the influence of an ominous dream, which stands above his head and is sent by Athena. In the Homeric epics, dream figures often stand above the dreamer’s head. The figures’ position supports a dream theory according to which their message is best received by the dreamers through their eyes and ears.⁵³

In Pappos’ ominous dream, Thekla takes the same position with possibly the same intention: she stands above the dreamer’s head to have her important message clearly conveyed. In contrast to the figure in Rhesos’ dream, Thekla is presented talking to Pappos and the tone of her speech is highly satirical:

“My good man,” she said, “what is this great battle you are waging against the orphans? What is this shameless greedy plot of yours against the orphans? What is this immense avarice that consumes you, that you would disregard all things alike—God, good faith, a conscience toward others—in order that you might ultimately profit only a little, bringing no increase to your own household, while inflicting harm on the household of those orphans? Know this well,” she said, “that your deceased colleague, Aulerios, who has been wronged by this, has presented himself before Christ the King of all to make a petition against you, and the sentence of death has already been pronounced against you, and you will

50 *Miracles of Thekla*, 35.11–13, p. 384; trans., 145.

51 See, for example, miracles 9, 12 (second part), 29, and 42.

52 *Miracles of Thekla*, 35.14–15, p. 384; trans., 145.

53 See James F. Morris, “‘Dream Scenes’ in Homer: A Study in Variation,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 113 (1983): 39–54.

join him without delay and there you will have to give an account of your common administration. You will die next week on this very same day.”⁵⁴

Like the hagiographer's monologue in the *Miracles of Artemios* analyzed above, that of Thekla is structured around rhetorical questions followed by a final statement. Thekla's irony is also obvious from her very first words. She addresses the unjust, inhuman, and sinful man by calling him a “good man” (ὁ βέλτιστε). Her equally angry and demeaning questions reveal the truth of Pappos' shameful crime: he has disregarded “God, good faith, a conscience toward others” to satisfy a ridiculous passion that in fact offers him little profit, while it causes immense misery to his deceased partner's orphans.

Having uncovered Pappos' offense, Thekla goes on to declare its fatal consequences through which justice will be restored and Aulerios' need for revenge will be satisfied: the offender will die in a week's time while in his afterlife he will be further humiliated by giving an account of his misdeeds to his partner. In contrast to Rhesos, who is killed during the bad dream, since the enemy could easily take his life while he was sleeping, Pappos is spared for another week. His life, which could any time be miraculously taken, has to be prolonged so that he may disclose his offense and return the stolen money.

Thekla's verdict takes up more or less the same narrative space with her rhetorical questions, since the announced punishment and how it is decided are as important as the nature of the crime which has to reflect and be reflected by the punishment. Taking advantage of Aulerios' death, Pappos starts turning the lives of his former partner's orphans into social death. His well-deserved death will now put an end to the orphans' undeserved sufferings that will be able to relive their life. The reason why Pappos' punishment should represent the basic elements of his crime is related to the punishment's disciplinary function. The offender's divine punishment teaches faithful Christians the seriousness of the passion of avarice, that is one of the deathly sins, since it leads the miser to perform essentially unjust actions: he forgets God's law, loses his humanity, becomes a thief, a liar, a hypocrite, and an oppressor of the infirm, his colleagues, and his friends. Pappos' avarice proves true the dictum of the 1 Timothy 6.10 that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” The miser thus receives a pathetic, exemplary, and well-earned punishment, which is not instantaneous, but prolonged, and agonizing. As soon as Pappos wakes up from his dream he is

54 *Miracles of Thekla*, 35.15–26, p. 384; trans., 145.

agitated with fear that no part of his body could keep still, and his limbs were seized by trembling, shaking, and quivering. His head was shaking, his eyes, already deprived of their sight, were rolling about, his tongue was paralyzed, his teeth were chattering, his heart was pounding—so strongly that it seemed to leap out of his body—and his feet, as if compelled to walk on some kind of spongy and slippery ground, were sliding out from under him without ever gaining purchase.⁵⁵

Rhesos' agony and helplessness during the bad dream is in Pappos' case experienced after the dream. The latter's situation when he wakes up shows that his punishment has actually started; his death, which will take place in a week's time, will follow after a series of grotesque tortures through which his body is disfigured and his bodily control lost. The social disunity and disharmony caused by the hero's avarice are now reflected on his very body and psychological state. Finding himself in such a grotesque situation, Pappos is forced "to confess his injustice, to renounce his greedy plotting, and to demonstrate his generosity."⁵⁶ The hero's confession, his grotesque appearance and sudden death become clear tokens of a serious crime and its fitting punishment. As a result, according to the hagiographer's conclusion, "no one [...] [i]s unaware of the fate that accompanies injustice."⁵⁷

Interestingly, the author of the *Miracles of Thekla* follows here a practice similar to that of the hagiographer of the *Miracles of Artemios*, who, as stated before, after his satirical monologue against the Jews addresses his audience to say that it is about time to change the subject. More specifically, Thekla's hagiographer, after concluding Pappos' story which is the last of a group of punishment miracles, expresses his intention of moving from "the gloomier miracles to the more splendid ones, from the more oppressive to the more delightful, so that we may raise up our souls which had been seized by fear and comfort them anew with some stories that are sweeter and more soothing."⁵⁸ That both hagiographers feel the need to openly articulate a transition from a part of their work, which here is described as satirical, to a part that has a different character and tone reveals an authorial stance toward satire.

Satire in the genre of miracle collection, either in the form of a monologue or that of a punishment narrative, should be dispersed lest an important convention of the genre, that is its doxological character emanating from the

55 *Miracles of Thekla*, 35.27–35, p. 386; trans., 145, 147.

56 *Miracles of Thekla*, 35.35–37, p. 386; trans., 147.

57 *Miracles of Thekla*, 35.41–42, p. 386; trans., 147.

58 *Miracles of Thekla*, 35.43–47, p. 386; trans., 147.

saint's beneficial miracles gets suppressed. Such a danger does not occur in the other hagiographical narratives examined here: the Passion and monastic Life. The pagan prefect in the first and the Devil in the second are transformed from dangerous satirists into buffoons through whose degradation the protagonist's holiness is attested. In other words, the satirical victimization of the saint's enemies in these genres functions as another form of praise for his or her spirituality and divine power.

In the miracle collection, on the contrary, the two ultimate satirists, the hagiographer and the miraculous saint, self-evidently do not undergo any transformation. Their satirical power is not the result of an antagonism with less efficient satirists, but it lies in the annihilation of their victims who are people that belong to the communities of the texts' audiences. The fatal and violent punishments of the miracle collections' satirical victims, who are mercilessly treated with no chance to repent and save their souls, provoke unavoidably, as suggested by the hagiographers, negative feelings, such as sadness and fear. The listeners or readers of the texts are expected to experience anxiety and terror because they might also identify with some of the victims whose passions they might share. As a result, the image of the miraculous saint as a philanthropist is negatively affected. Thus in order to change such a wrong impression, the hagiographer has to quickly and masterfully alter his text's satirical tone by moving to the saint's beneficial miracles that are characterized by their happy ending that produces pleasant and hopeful feelings.

As has been demonstrated in the examination of the most common satirical elements of three significant hagiographical narratives—Passion, Life, and Miracle Story—satire is an indispensable device of Byzantine hagiography. In other words, the analysis attempted here has shown that Byzantine hagiography cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration its satirical character. Satire is both an essential component of Byzantine hagiography's esthetics and a powerful means of serving religious polemics and other authorial intentions.⁵⁹

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