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‘Holy and pleasing to God’: a narratological approach to hagiography in Jerome’s *Lives* of Paul and Malchus

CHRISTA GRAY

University of Reading and Humboldt-Universität Berlin

What is hagiography? The answer to this question may vary according to the context in which it is asked. In the technical sense, a hagiography is ‘any written document inspired by the cult of the saints and designed to promote it’.¹ Hippolyte Delehaye, who first defined hagiography in those terms in 1905, was one of the most prominent scholars of the Société des Bollandistes, a Jesuit foundation devoted to the study of such documents. His definition is designed to be inclusive with regard to the types of document that might count as hagiographies and to focus not on their form but on their historical function as part of a well-defined cultic activity performed under the supervision of official church authority. Thus it emphasises their informative content and intentionality over any formal criteria. The aim of the Bollandists’ research is to collect and critically assess all of these documents as evidence for the cult of Christian saints from antiquity onwards, an undertaking to which they likewise refer as ‘hagiography’.²

¹ ‘[T]out document écrit inspiré par le culte des saints, et destiné à le promouvoir’: Delehaye 1973 (1905), 2. Cf. also Philippart 1994, 13: ‘Pour nous, la littérature hagiographique, c’est tout simplement celle qui est consacrée aux saints. Elle se définit donc exclusivement par son “objet”, ou son “contenu”, quelles que soient les différences de “genre littéraire” et d’usage qui puissent distinguer les œuvres entre elles.’ For the definition of a ‘saint’ in this context see Aigrain 1953, 7–8: ‘le saint est un homme qui, par sa correspondance à la grâce divine, a été constitué en état surnaturel de sainteté, mais il faut, pour que l’hagiographe ait à s’occuper de ce qui le concerne, que cet état de sainteté, avec les vertus héroïques qu’il comporte, ait été reconnu par l’autorité de l’Église, reconnaissance qui entraîne comme conséquences les manifestations d’un culte liturgique et public.’

² Barnes 2010, ix, with references to Delehaye 1934, 7 and Aigrain 1953, 7; cf. Philippart 1994, 10, Grig 2004, 146–147.

Beside these technical, quasi-objective, uses of the term ‘hagiography’, another meaning has developed which is encountered most frequently today:³ ‘hagiography’ is used disparagingly of biographical accounts of historical persons which are perceived to be biased and uncritical. Consider the following example from a review of *The Cambridge Mozart Encyclopedia* published in the Times Higher Education Supplement in 2006:

‘[F]or many people Mozart does enjoy iconic status as a devotional object. This does not promote rational consideration and produces a lot of bad literature. If you make an idol, you create idolatry. Biography is replaced with hagiography; legends about Mozart are legion. ... The first job must be to chip away at these encrustations and reassert that Mozart was a composer like any other—although an amazingly good one.’⁴

According to the author of the review, Hugh Wood, excessive admiration for the subject has the potential to produce ‘bad literature’ (note that this reproach is not levelled at the book under review, but at more popularly available accounts). The same phrase appears in an article by Dale Cressman, published in the same year:

‘Self-censorship and hagiography were the order of the day during the Victorian era. Biographies served to “inculcate morality and patriotism,” noted historian Scott Casper [with reference to Casper 1999: 10]. Not only did the biographies of the time make for bad literature, according to Casper, but also bad history. For example, the first notable American biography, Mason Locke Weems’s account of George Washington was later judged as “a mixture of fairy stories and outrageous panegyric” [quoted from Garraty 1958, 92].’⁵

‘Bad literature’ seems to have become part of the definition of ‘hagiography’ in this sense. It is easy to understand how the two senses relate to each other. There is no denying that late antique and medieval texts written by and for Christian believers about Christian saints can often seem rebarbative if they are not read with an attitude that is explicitly receptive to their edifying purposes—whether to confirm the readers’ faith and conviction, to make them more pious, abstinent, or obedient, or to make them identify more closely with the specific group which recognises the figures depicted as fundamentally important and admirable

³ This sense does not appear in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, where the latest entry on ‘hagiography’ dates from 1898.

⁴ Wood 2006.

⁵ Cressman 2006, 284.

characters.⁶ A reader whose aims in reading such texts do not coincide closely with their edifying principles will often find it challenging to engage with them, for many possible reasons: the works may be formulaic, episodic, and repetitive in style and content;⁷ they may appear to claim historicity for highly improbable or demonstrably counterfactual events;⁸ and, perhaps worst of all, they may insist on a particular ideological frame of reference which is ruthlessly pushed, to the exclusion of all divergent or complicating points of view. Within such texts, dissenters from the dominant view are often treated without compassion or humanity, and they are rarely given a fair hearing. Admittedly, not all of the thousands of texts in the category of Christian biography show all of these characteristics, nor do they appear in equal measure;⁹ but the feeling that they are prevalent has led to a general impression that these texts are inartistic, vulgar, sanctimonious, and even bigoted, and thus do not merit serious scholarly attention except as (often dubious) sources for historical events and social attitudes. Of course, this general impression is being countered by a host of more differentiated approaches to the material, and the literary qualities of late antique, medieval, and Byzantine Christian biography have enjoyed a very recent surge of interest. Even so, it remains difficult to know how exactly one should brace oneself for the experience of these texts.

What are the criteria for distinguishing between ‘good’ biography and ‘bad’ hagiography? There seems to be some agreement that the main point of contrast is historical accuracy and credibility: the events depicted in hagiography appear impossible, whereas those of biography, even if they cannot be independently verified, are at least probable, or in agreement with ‘rational’ thought. The criticism that hagiographical accounts contain ‘fairy stories’ therefore concerns their

⁶ The multi-faceted notion of Christian edification is well discussed in Kech 1977.

⁷ Cf. Elliott 1987 for themes repeated across different *Lives*.

⁸ Cf. e.g. Barnes 2010, 154: ‘But the fictions that swamped historical fact [in the successive treatments of the martyr account of Procopius] were not always innocent. It was the emperor Constantine’s propaganda machine that set in motion the process of transforming the pro-Christian Maxentius into a fearsome and bloodthirsty persecutor, a tyrant in every possible sense of the word.’

⁹ The numbers involved can be gleaned from the Bollandist publications. According to Philippart 1994, 11, the Latin texts alone run to 13,532 items, relating to 3,321 names of saints or groups of saints; 9048 *BHL* numbers can be found on the website, <<http://bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be>> (accessed 14/02/2017). The collection of Greek hagiographical texts (*BHG*) is catalogued in an index consisting of 8,750 cards, which are in the process of being digitised and made available online by Labex RESMED: <<http://www.labex-resmed.fr/les-manuscrits-hagiographiques?lang=fr>> (accessed 14/02/2017); the multilingual *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* lists 1251 items, not counting the appendix: Peeters 1910.

content and its relationship with reality.¹⁰ But the focus of my argument in this paper concerns the manner of presentation. This aspect is targeted in the second half of Garraty's phrase, 'outrageous panegyric': it refers to the amount of explicit praise and admiration expressed for the protagonist in Parson Weems' *Life and Memorable Actions of George Washington*, first published anonymously in 1800, where the narrative is peppered with evaluations.¹¹ Garraty's illustration includes a phrase which claims of Washington that during his schooldays he 'was never guilty of so brutish a practice as fighting'. The choice of the adjectives 'guilty' and 'brutish' forces the reader to understand that fighting one's schoolmates is bad, and that Washington therefore was a virtuous boy. Such aspects of hagiographical discourse are taken for granted, but they are often under-analysed.¹² Here I argue that understanding how texts encode and communicate such 'hagiographical' attitudes may remove a stumbling block for our literary appreciation both of saintly legends and of tendentious biography.

The objects of my analysis are two texts about desert ascetics written by Jerome: the *Life of Paul the First Hermit* (*Vita Pauli Primi Eremiti*, abbreviated *Pauli* in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*), composed in the early to mid 370s, and the *Captive Monk* (*Monachus Captivus*, also known as *Vita Malchi*, hence abbreviated *Malchi*),¹³ written around 391. The third of Jerome's *Lives*, that of Hilarion (*Vita Hilarionis*, abbreviated *Hilar.*), which was probably written shortly after the *Captive Monk*, will be treated in a separate essay for reasons of space.¹⁴ The relationship of Jerome's *Lives* with the concept of hagiography as outlined by Delehay is problematic: while it may be true to say that they are 'inspired' by the cult of saints in a general sense, their primary inspiration, as far as we can tell, is literary rather than cult-related. The subject of the *Life of Paul* appears to have no substantial foundation in historical fact,¹⁵ and Malchus, the first-person narrator of the *Captive Monk*, if he was a historic character, remained unknown outside

¹⁰ For this relationship as an important aspect of 'hagiographical discourse' ('discours hagiographique') see Van Uytenghe 1993, 148. Dillon 2006, 156 distinguishes hagiography from 'straight' biography and advocates a 'sliding scale between theoretical extremes of factuality and fantasy' (p. 164).

¹¹ Garraty 1958, 92.

¹² 'Kerygmatic inflection' is invoked in brackets in the context of assessing the degree of stylisation which separates the hagiographical account from historical reality in Van Uytenghe 1993, 148.

¹³ The title and its complications are discussed in Gray 2015, 95.

¹⁴ The three *Lives* are edited with an introduction, French translation, and notes in Leclerc *et al.* 2007. I use their section numbers and follow their text for the *Pauli* and *Hilar.*; the Latin text of the *Malchi* is taken from Gray 2015.

¹⁵ See Rebenich 2000, 25-27 for a summary of the debate. More recently Barnes 2010, 181-183 has confirmed that the arguments in favour of Paul's historicity are deficient.

the village of Maronias, where he settled in old age. Only the protagonist of the third text, the *Life of Hilarion*, is independently attested and was, indeed, a recipient of veneration in life and of cult after death.¹⁶ But the composition of all three texts was motivated not by the creation or maintenance of a cult site,¹⁷ but through literary rivalry with the *Life of Antony* published by Athanasius of Alexandria,¹⁸ which had just taken the Christian intellectual scene by storm.¹⁹ This concern is particularly evident in the *Life of Paul*, which sets Paul up as a superior and earlier pioneer of desert monasticism, who first withdrew into the desert during the Decian persecution in AD 250.²⁰ The polemical engagement with the details of the *Life of Antony* have been closely studied,²¹ and it seems clear that Jerome composed it for the sake of promoting himself as a writer on asceticism.²² The cultic element is relevant here as a background for making monastic biography a bestselling genre, but not in any specific sense. A further consideration is the date of these texts: they were the first original compositions of monastic biography in Latin. To an extent, therefore, they created a sub-class of hagiographical literature,²³ without sharing some of the essential characteristics, according to Delehay, of this literature.

¹⁶ The preface of the *Life* refers to an obituary letter by Epiphanius of Salamis (*Hilar.* 1,5), which is not extant. Sozomen gives complementary evidence in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (eds. J. Bidez and G. C. Hansen, GCS 50, Berlin 1960), 3,14,21–27 (pp. 121–122); 5,10,1–2 (p. 206); 5,15,15 (p. 216: in this passage Hilarion drives out a demon from Alaphion, which results in the conversion of Sozomen’s grandfather; this is not in Hier. *Hilar.*); 6,32,2–6 (p. 288). Questions of cult and the location of the dead saint’s body are addressed in the final chapters of Hier. *Hilar.*, 32,6–33,4.

¹⁷ Contrast the purpose of Jerome’s *Letter* 108, the obituary of his long-term companion and supporter Paula, which clearly seeks to establish her tomb as a cult site: see Cain 2013.

¹⁸ Barnes 2010, 160–170 has argued forcefully and convincingly that Athanasius redacted a pre-existing text or set of texts before circulating the *Life of Antony* as his own work. Athanasius’ Greek text appeared shortly after Antony’s death in 356 and was immediately translated into Latin twice, first by an anonymous translator and then by Jerome’s friend and patron Evagrius of Antioch.

¹⁹ The *Life of Antony* plays a central part in Augustine’s conversion to Christianity: Aug. *Conf.* 8,6,14; 8,12,29. Augustine further narrates the reaction of two imperial officials (*agentes in rebus*) who came upon the *Life of Antony* in Trier and were prompted to leave behind their worldly status (*Conf.* 8,6,15). This tale seems to echo what we know of Jerome and his sudden departure for the East from Trier, where he was pursuing an imperial career.

²⁰ Hier. *Pauli* 5,1.

²¹ See below, p. 11 with n. 49.

²² Compare Jerome’s agenda of self-promotion through publication of his letters, as analysed in Cain 2009.

²³ In fact, this class of monastic biography is often treated as representative of hagiography as a whole, e.g. in Rapp 2010.

Narrator, characters, and audience

Given the foundational role of Jerome's *Lives* for hagiography generally, I propose to discuss the extent to which their presentation specifically prefigures what was later condemned as 'outrageous panegyric'. This means considering the relationships which the texts construct between three entities among whom the conversation which interprets the events told in the story is conducted: the narrator, the characters, and the reader.

Although there is much controversy among narratologists about the precise domains of narrators, characters, and implied readers, the basic definitions are evident enough. The narrator is the voice which articulates the story that is told, and it can change in the course of a narrative. The concept of the narrator is different from that of the author, which denotes the historical figure (Jerome) who physically composed the texts in question (in this case probably through dictation).²⁴ The characters of the *Lives* are depicted through their actions and words, in direct or indirect speech, and sometimes through their unvoiced thoughts.

It is perhaps most helpful for my present purposes to regard the narratorial voice as moving on a spectrum between the author and the characters of the text: sometimes, especially in the prefaces, the dominant 'I' of one of the *Lives* is clearly very close to that which Jerome uses of himself in non-narrative contexts, for example in his letters; sometimes, as in the bulk of the *Captive Monk*, a character takes over the narrative and relates it in the first person (*Malchi* 3–10). Transitions can take place in subtle and almost unnoticeable ways: the main narrator's perspective can give way to that of a character without the explicit markers of direct or indirect speech. These transitions are usually described in terms of focalisation: what is expressed as known, felt, and considered relevant by a character is 'focalised through' that character. Thus each detail of a narrative can be questioned with regard to the angle of its focalisation: who notices a particular circumstance or aspect? Who judges its significance, and how?

On the other side of the conversation, as it were, we must not forget the audience. Here we distinguish, on the one hand, the 'implied' or 'ideal' reader (or listener). On the ontological plane, this figure complements the narrator and thus is also inscribed in the text, although they are not generally seen to express anything in speech; their anticipated reception of the narrative must be reconstructed from the strategies and arguments which the narrator considers effective for this reader. On the other hand, there are the historical recipients of the work, real

²⁴ Jerome comments on his practice of composing through dictation several times in his letters: e.g. *Hier. Epist.* 18a,16,2; 26,2; 33,6, 34,6 (including mention of a scribe); 59,2; 64,22; 69,8,1; 70,6. See Williams 2006, 202 for the implications of this method.

people who include the author of this paper, and whose response is in some ways conditioned by the degree to which we identify with the implied reader. If we understand the way in which Jerome’s Christian biographies construct the conversations between the narrators and the implied readers, this may go some way to explaining the adverse reactions to ‘hagiography’ on the part of a liberal, secular readership.

Narrative and argument

Formally speaking, narrative is concerned with the presentation of temporally successive events. We generally expect the main events of a narrative to have a causal connection, a plot which makes the story worth telling because of its insights into the workings of the (real or fictional) world. The choice and arrangement of such events and their connections necessarily involve certain fundamental beliefs about how the world works or ought to work, and narratives in which these beliefs are presented with some consistency and emphasis can be a powerful tool in promoting them beyond the literary sphere of the narrative itself. In ancient literary theory, which is largely based on the practical requirements of effective oratory, narrative is discussed primarily under the heading of evidence given in a forensic case: that is to say, it is fundamentally conceived as subordinated to the needs of the argument. Heinrich Lausberg discusses *narratio* in the context of the speech as a whole and emphasises its ‘Parteilichkeit’ (‘bias’),²⁵ as illustrated by Quintilian: ‘a narrative is an exposition of something that has been done or that resembles something done, for the purpose of persuasion.’²⁶ Bias is expressed in ‘narrationalen modi’,²⁷ as attested by Martianus Capella: ‘We narrate in six modes: by way of expanding or reducing something, by passing something over or emphasising it, and by eliciting favour or hatred.’²⁸ The function of narrative is to be ‘a basis for *argumentatio*’.²⁹ Biographical anecdotes are vital for illustrating precedents and distinguishing good from bad characters in oratory and elsewhere.³⁰

²⁵ Lausberg 2008, 164.

²⁶ *Narratio est rei factae aut ut factae utilis ad persuadendum expositio*, Quint. *Inst.* 4,2,31.

²⁷ Lausberg 2008, 164.

²⁸ *Narramus autem modis sex: augentes aliquid aut tenuantes, praetereuntes aut monentes [docentes], gratiam uel inuidiam comparantes*, Mart. Cap. 5,552.

²⁹ ‘Innerhalb der Gesamtrede ist die *narratio* das Fundament (Basis) der *argumentatio*’, Lausberg 2008, 164.

³⁰ For the significance of *exempla* in Cicero’s speeches and other works see van der Blom 2010. For their use outside oratory see Momigliano 1993, 68–69 on the telling of anecdotes for their own sake in the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*; cf. *ibid.* pp. 72–73 on Peripatetic

Indeed, as far as they can be identified, the origins of biography in the Hellenistic period seem to lie in laudatory oratory (panegyric/encomium) as much as in historical and quasi-historical narrative with strong ethical concerns.³¹

In the extant non-Christian biographical collections of antiquity, an extra-literary social concern was likewise identifiable: Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* construct a picture of ideal Greek identity and distinguish behaviour which is worth imitating from ignoble acts.³² In this sense biography was already 'edifying'. Although it leaves room for the reader's own interpretation, it was never meant to be read for pleasure alone. Other types of narrative texts are subject to similar dynamics: for example, the rich interplay between comedy, declamation, and novel has been illustrated by Danielle van Mal-Maeder.³³ The significance of the Greek novel in particular for establishing and shaping a nostalgic Hellenic identity for Greek subjects or citizens of the Roman empire has been shown to parallel the goals of Plutarch's biographical project in important respects: ethical and ideological concerns are close beneath the surface of these entertaining (and sometimes troubling) confabulations.³⁴ To turn the wheel further, characters in both novels and Christian narratives are characterised to a significant extent by their competence in using rhetoric, as Koen De Temmerman and his colleagues have brought out.³⁵

This interlinking between narrative and argument in the perception of ancient authors and readers provides important clues for reading Christian biographical works, whether fictionalised or not. The rhetorical laudatory stance in narrating a life (as if giving a funeral eulogy, or defending the lifestyle of a client)³⁶ is already evident in Pontius' *Vita et passio Cypriani*, which, as Walter Berschin has shown, essentially follows the rules of panegyric.³⁷ Many of the same attitudes can be observed in Jerome's model for his *Lives* of desert monks, the *Life of Antony*. But

anecdote collections, including paradeigmata which can be used elsewhere, e.g. in rhetoric, and Roman *exempla* collections by Cornelius Nepos, Hyginus, Augustus, and Valerius Maximus.

³¹ Momigliano 1993, 8: 'we have none of the biographical and autobiographical literature of the fifth century and have to rely on Isocrates' *Euagoras* and Xenophon's *Agesilaus*, which describe themselves as encomia, and on a philosophic novel, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, for some aspects of biography in the fourth century.' Hägg 2012, 187: 'Of the lost late Hellenistic authors, most wrote varieties of philosophical biography'.

³² Duff 1999 gives a careful and very detailed account of these aspects of Plutarch's biographical project.

³³ Mal-Maeder 2007.

³⁴ See especially Whitmarsh 2011 for these aspects of the Greek novel.

³⁵ De Temmerman 2010; 2014; Bossu *et al.* 2016.

³⁶ Cf. Momigliano 1993, 58: 'A very different kind of autobiographical production is the apologetic speech before a court of law.' An example (in self-defence) is Demosthenes, *De corona*.

³⁷ Berschin 1986, 63–5.

is the rhetorical shaping of these narratives merely a stylistic affectation which belongs to late antique aesthetics? I am not qualified to pronounce on Pontius or Athanasius, but in the case of Jerome this is unlikely to be the whole story. After all, Jerome is a famously argumentative personality, as he presents himself in his letters and polemical pamphlets. His works can be read as an ongoing project designed to carve out a space of significance and authority for himself.³⁸ Hence I shall go on to show that the rhetorical characteristics of Jerome's *Lives* are not superficial but closely integrated with fundamental concerns, by describing as accurately as possible the ways in which narrative and argument are integrated in these texts, and what the effect is on the reader.

My interpretation of the narratorial stances in Jerome's *Lives* makes use of two main concepts: firstly, an investigation of the narrators' distance from the events narrated; secondly, an assessment of the points of view and attitudes which appear as filters between the texts and the events narrated. In a series of articles, Caroline Kroon and Rodie Risselada have brought out the linguistic manifestations of distant ('diegetic') and close ('mimetic') modes in Latin texts.³⁹ These categories for analysing narratorial distance are developed from Gérard Genette's distinction between 'mimesis' and 'diegesis',⁴⁰ which was in turn inspired by Plato, *Republic* 392C–395E. The main difference between a 'mimetic' and a 'diegetic' stance is in the perceived closeness between the events depicted and the implied reader. The aim of mimetic discourse is to bring the audience close to the events which are the subject of a text, as if they were immediately witnessing them, whereas diegetic discourse creates distance: the events are not merely depicted by the narrator but evaluated and interpreted, connected to other events and reflected on. Diegetic discourse therefore has closer affinities with the argumentative discourse mode, which is concerned not with events but with 'states of affairs, Facts, and Propositions'.⁴¹ Kroon gives a helpful summary of linguistic features which are typical of the two modes respectively. They include, on the mimetic side, the 'use of relatively brief and non-complex clauses, usually occurring in a cluster' and the 'use of the historical present, the historical infinitive, or of ellipsis of the verb';⁴² on the diegetic side the 'use of complex clause structures' with 'connectives and other explicitly text-structuring devices (e.g. causal and

³⁸ A thorough analysis of Jerome's self-fashioning and self-promotion in his letters is Cain 2009.

³⁹ Kroon and Risselada 2002; Kroon 2002; Kroon 2004; Kroon 2007; Risselada 2013.

⁴⁰ Genette 1980 (1972), 162–169. In this technical sense, 'mimesis' is closer in meaning to 'representation' than to 'imitation'.

⁴¹ Smith 2003, 33.

⁴² Kroon 2002, 192.

adversative connectives)'.⁴³ Such linguistic markers, which enable us to deduce the narrator's position, can be identified objectively and with some precision.

Things become more complicated when we add the criterion of focalisation to analyse Jerome's *Lives*. It seems self-evident that if the perspective of a character within the narrative is presented, this is an aspect of 'mimetic' presentation. Although character focalisation provides an explicit angle and a necessarily subjective interpretation of the events of the narrative, this angle is itself part of what is being presented. The fact that a character experiences an event or a scene in a certain way belongs to the story which is narrated. In other words, when the narrator appears to hide or disappear behind a(nother) character, the implied reader's distance from the story is also minimised. The main challenge in considering focalisation is the problem of its linguistic manifestation: it is difficult to define the objective features in which focalisation is encoded, and to date there is no 'check-list' comparable to that of Kroon's for distance and closeness.⁴⁴ The basis for my observations on focalisation is thus necessarily less scientific.

My hypothesis is that Jerome's *Lives* are at their most propagandistic whenever the perspective cannot be definitively ascribed to either narrator or character.⁴⁵ Let us return to Garraty's example from Weems' *Life of Washington* and the phrase quoted above: 'he was never guilty of so brutish a practice as fighting'.⁴⁶ The evaluation of fighting as conferring guilt belongs to the narrator; but its condemnation as a 'brutish ... practice' may, at the same time, reflect the attitude of Washington himself, giving the reason why he decides against fighting with his schoolmates. If this is an acceptable inference, it means that Weems uses the method of focalising simultaneously through character and narrator to emphasise the validity of the moral decision depicted in his narrative. When the saint and the narrator agree on a point of evaluation, the space for the reader to apply a critical interpretation of the narrative is drastically reduced.⁴⁷

⁴³ Kroon 2002, 191.

⁴⁴ See Klauk and Köppe 2013 (2011), Section 6, for the difficulties involved in developing linguistic markers for focalisation. One promising approach is the formal analysis of subjectivity in Smith 2003, 155–184.

⁴⁵ The possibility of degrees of narratorial empathy with characters is postulated and analysed from a syntactic perspective by Kuno 1987, 203–270, and accepted by Smith 2003, 174–175.

⁴⁶ Garraty 1958, 92, quoted above, p. 4.

⁴⁷ cf. Duff 2011, 66 on Plut. *Alex.* 42,6–10, where Alexander's cavalry praise him for his 'self-control and high-mindedness': 'It is not wholly clear here to what extent the focalisation is to be taken as the narrator's or merely that of Alexander's men. But in fact there is no conflict: it is plain ... that the reader is expected to consider this a virtuous act. ... [M]ost readers will feel confident that the narrator's viewpoint coincides with that of such onlookers, and that they are expected to share both.'

The Life of Paul

The first of Jerome’s free-standing monastic biographies, the *Life of Paul*, belongs to the earliest group of works produced by this author. Its composition is announced in a letter which dedicates it to the centenarian Paul of Concordia (Hier. *Epist.* 10). It was evidently written during Jerome’s stay in Syria in the mid 370s, either at Antioch or at Maronias, on the estate of Jerome’s patron Evagrius—the same Evagrius who had recently translated the *Life of Antony* into Latin.⁴⁸

The *Life of Paul* depicts its hero as a rich young Egyptian withdrawing into the desert during the Decian persecution in 250–251. After finding a cave which supplies his physical needs with running water and a palm tree, he lives there in complete solitude until the age of 113. At this point the focus of the text shifts to Antony, to whom Paul’s existence is revealed in a vision. Antony makes his way across the desert to find Paul, guided by a centaur, a faun, and a she-wolf. Paul is initially reluctant to allow Antony into his cave, but eventually the two share a loaf of bread and converse about the developments in the world since Paul’s withdrawal from it. Paul then asks Antony to fetch a cloak from his monastery. By the time Antony returns, Paul has died. Two lions help Antony with the burial of Paul’s body. The text ends with a diatribe that contrasts Paul’s ascetic poverty with the luxury of the Roman aristocracy.

The point of Jerome’s *Life of Paul*, from one point of view, is to establish a predecessor who simultaneously exploits and eclipses Antony’s literary fame.⁴⁹ In effect, the *Life* is set up as a contribution to a debate: it begins with the words ‘Many have often debated who among monks has the best claim to having pioneered the desert life’ (Hier. *Pauli* 1,1).⁵⁰ This objective is approached through a narrative exposition of the problem that Paul, by virtue of being the much more perfect and unworldly ascetic, was almost completely invisible during his lifetime and is therefore in danger of losing his claim to priority through lack of evidence. This problem is solved by setting up Antony himself as authority for Paul’s

⁴⁸ Wiśniewski 2000, 105 for the date and further bibliography; Rebenich 2000, 28 and 1992, 54–75 for Evagrius and *ibid.* 86–98 for Maronias.

⁴⁹ Leclerc 1988 brings out the various ways in which the character Antony is belittled in the *Life of Paul*. Perhaps the most cutting is Antony’s own admission that he does not deserve the name *monachus* (Hier. *Pauli* 13: ‘*Vae mihi peccatori, qui falsum monachi nomen fero*’), a statement which creates an interesting tension with the authorial claim in the preface that Paul was the initiator *not* of the name but of the practice (*Pauli* 1,2: *Paulum quendam Thebaeum principem rei istius fuisse, non nominis*). A forthcoming article by Alan Ross elaborates on the interplay between the *Life of Paul* and the *Life of Antony*.

⁵⁰ *Inter multos saepe dubitatum est a quo potissimum monachorum eremus habitari coepta sit.*

existence and superiority, with Antony's surviving disciples as witnesses (Hier. *Pauli* 1,2).⁵¹ Besides this ostensible reliance on Antony, it is a striking characteristic of the narrative of the *Life of Paul* that elements which appear improbable or impossible are defended in the voice of the (authorial) narrator, whether by assertion, by autopsy,⁵² or through the appeal to other authorities or to laws of nature. For example, doubts about the existence of a mortal faun are allayed by the parallel example of a faun's body exhibited publicly in Alexandria.⁵³

Hoc ne cui ad incredulitatem scrupulum moueat, sub rege Constantio, universo mundo teste, defenditur. Nam Alexandriam istiusmodi homo uiuus perductus magnum populo spectaculum praebuit, et postea cadauer exanime, ne calore aestatis dissiparetur, sale infusum et Antiochiam, ut ab imperatore uideretur, adlatum est. (Hier. *Pauli* 8,6)

Lest this should trouble anyone and incline them to doubt, it was corroborated in the reign of Constantius, with the whole world as witness. For a live human of this type was brought to Alexandria as a great spectacle for the people, and afterwards the lifeless corpse was infused with brine, to prevent its disintegration in the summer heat, and brought to Antioch to be inspected by the emperor.

Fuhrmann notes the narrator's insistence on veracity and his concern for credibility and concludes that, despite all these asseverations to the contrary, Paul was most probably a product of Jerome's imagination.⁵⁴ He does not quite go so far as to suggest that Jerome's ongoing affirmations have themselves the effect of raising suspicions: instead he argues that Jerome failed in his attempt to outdo the *Life of Antony* by resorting to made-up claims in a debate where even Christians wanted real facts. However, it has long been recognised that in antiquity insistence on the literal truth of a narrative is the mark not of historians (who base their claim

⁵¹ It should be noted that, despite this statement, Jerome does not rely on Amatas' and Macarius' information. The sentence concludes *quam opinionem nos quoque probamus*; that is to say, the suggestion is that Jerome's narrator holds the view that Paul was the first desert hermit independently of Antony's disciples.

⁵² e.g. Hier. *Pauli* 6,2: 'Lest this seem impossible to anyone, I call to witness Jesus and the holy angels that I have seen and am still seeing monks in that part of the desert which lies between Syria and the Saracens [...].'

⁵³ A good discussion of the scholarly background which informs this episode is Harvey 1998.

⁵⁴ Fuhrmann 1977, 77–82.

to truthfulness on the absence of partiality from their account),⁵⁵ but, on the contrary, of lying tales and miracle stories.⁵⁶ It is not fashionable any more to argue, as Fuhrmann did, from the standpoint of authorial intention:⁵⁷ the question is what position the text itself imposes on the reader, and how this is achieved. As we have seen, those elements of the *Life of Paul* which appear to demand that the reader accept it as proof that Antony was not, in fact, the first monk, can easily be read (by those familiar with this literary technique) as evidence of its mendacity. If both options are available—that is to say, if educated readers amuse themselves by reading over the shoulders, as it were, of a more naive implied audience which takes the authenticating apparatus at face value—the earnest, ‘hagiographical’ voice of the narrator becomes problematised.

Another aspect worth investigating is the dynamic of different narratorial perspectives in the *Life of Paul*. I shall illustrate this by means of a short narratorial commentary on a randomly chosen passage in chapter 9. Here Antony has been searching the remote Egyptian desert for Paul, relying on the providential guidance which has reached him through the centaur and the faun in earlier episodes. Even so, his search has thus far been unsuccessful (*Pauli* 9,1–3):

- (1) Sed ut propositum persequar,
- (2) Antonius coepta regione pergebat,
- (3) ferarum tantum uestigia intuens et eremi latam uastitatem.
- (4) Quid ageret, quo uerteret gradum?
- [...]
- (5) Verum, ut Scriptura ait, ‘perfecta dilectio foras mittit timorem.’
- (6) Suspenso gradu et anhelitu temperato callidus explorator ingressus est,
- (7) ac paulatim progrediens saepiusque subsistens sonum aure captabat. [...]⁵⁸

- (1) But let me pick up my project again:
- (2) Antony continued to walk in the same direction,
- (3) seeing only the tracks of wild beasts and the wide vastness of the desert.
- (4) What should he do, whither should he turn his steps?

⁵⁵ Polybius 1,14–15; Sal. *Cat.* 4,2; Tac. *Ann.* 1,1. These discussions are evidence of an awareness of ‘hagiographical’ bias in antiquity.

⁵⁶ Weinreich 1923, 19–23, discussing Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis* in the context of Lucian’s *True Story*; cf. Reitzenstein 1963 (1906), 19. The relevance of these discussions for the *Life of Paul* has been pointed out by Dejesics 2012, 74 with n. 289.

⁵⁷ For a critique of approaches which conflate the *Lives’* narrators with the historical Jerome see Dejesics 2012, 69.

⁵⁸ The clause-by-clause presentation of this passage is designed to facilitate reference to the comments which follow.

[On the third day he sees a thirsty she-wolf enter a mountain through a cleft and follows her; he peers in, sees nothing, and decides to follow.]

(5) But, as Scripture says: 'True love casts out fear.'

(6) On tiptoes and with baited breath the shrewd explorer entered,

(7) and as he advanced little by little, stopping often, he strained to catch a sound in his ear. [...]

This passage lends itself well to demonstrating the interplay between close and distant presentation. Clause (1), *sed ut propositum persequar*, is unambiguously authorial: the narrator impersonates the author who returns to the main narrative after a digression. In (2) the grammatical subject switches from the first person of the narrator to the protagonist of the passage, *Antonius*. *Coepta regione* may be a narratorial cross-reference which reminds the reader of the direction in which Antony had started to walk: *pergo* is one of the most common verbs for 'go' or 'travel' in Latin, especially in prose.⁵⁹ However, it is also often used as a synonym of *perseuero*.⁶⁰ If this second force is felt here, there may be a suggestion that it conveys Antony's determination. In this case the phrase would be focalised through Antony, as if he was saying: 'This is the direction in which I have started to go; I shall keep going.' Phrase (3), *ferarum tantum uestigia intuens et eremilatam uastitatem*, could then be taken as a similarly subjective view of the obstacles to this determination to keep going: the desert provides no hints to confirm that the direction is in fact correct. The adverb *tantum* ('only') seems to reinforce this focus, and the participle *intuens* draws attention to what Antony himself sees. The next sentence, (4), renders Antony's state of mind: *quid ageret, quo uerteret gradum?* This signals a decisive end to Antony's earlier determination (if, indeed, that was what *pergeret* was designed to convey) through presenting his doubt and confusion in free indirect speech. It is still the narrator who speaks—hence the third person and the imperfect, signalling that the story belongs to the past—, but the feelings are Antony's: 'what shall I do, where shall I turn my steps?'⁶¹

After observing the she-wolf, Antony hesitates at the entrance of the cave: (5) *uerum, ut Scriptura ait, 'perfecta dilectio foras mittit timorem'*. The quotation is taken from the first Letter of John, 4:18 (in the version of the *Vetus Latina*: the Vulgate has *caritas* for *dilectio*). At first sight, it appears to be recalled by Antony himself, motivating him to step inside the dark cave—an action which is not

⁵⁹ *TLL* X,1,1,1428,23–27 for the general distribution, including exceptions.

⁶⁰ *TLL* X,1,1,1428,18–19: Don. Ter. Hec. 450 modo 'pergunt' pro eunt, alias perseuerant.

⁶¹ The same empathetic mode is used in the *Life of Hilarion* to render the perplexity of the devil at 3,2: *Quid faceret diabolus? Quo se uerteret?* Later it is used of Hilarion himself, at 28,5: *Vnde aestuans quid faceret, quo se uerteret, aliam parabat fugam, et solitarias terras mente perlustrans maerebat, quod tacente de se lingua miracula loquerentur.*

explicitly depicted. But on second thoughts, this reading is less plausible: Antony has no need to remind himself that he loves (presumably the referent is God, who has sent him to find Paul), and so the quotation may illustrate the transition from fear to love without reference to Antony's own conscious thought. As a quotation, this is a distant, diegetic remark. But at the same time, this is a moment where Scriptural language is mapped perfectly onto the events of the story: what was said in the Bible can be used with complete accuracy of Jerome's Antony, as a close observation of the workings of his emotions. This makes Antony a quasi-biblical character, a true imitator of Christ and his teachings, whose conduct should in turn be imitated.⁶² The abstract phrasing of the quotation and the suggestion of narratorial omniscience make it diegetic, while the empathy it conveys has some quasi-mimetic qualities. Here the argumentative level overlays and replaces the narrative.⁶³

The final sentence of my passage again shows an interesting combination of focalising (mimetically) through Antony, who holds his breath and steps carefully through the darkness, and the narrator, who comments externally on Antony's ingenuity by paraphrasing the sentence's subject as *callidus explorator* (6).⁶⁴ Then, immediately after this external assessment, the focus of perception switches back to Antony as he tries to capture a sound with his ears (7).⁶⁵

Besides the narrator's unreliable *Beglaubigungsapparat*,⁶⁶ then, the argumentative strategy of the *Life of Paul* takes two principal forms: firstly, after a brief set of introductory chapters outlining Paul's withdrawal into the desert in its context, much of the action is narrated from Antony's own perspective. The close empathy of the narrator with Antony becomes most pronounced when Antony fears himself lost in the desert during his search for Paul. Secondly, the narrator

⁶² cf. Williams 2008, 10 for this type of dynamic in Christian biography.

⁶³ Other places where the narrative is replaced or at least supplemented by quotations in the *Life of Paul* are 2,2 'And as Cyprian himself said, who suffered at his hands: "He did not allow those to be killed who wanted to die"' (adapted from Cypr. *epist.* 56,2), introducing two vignettes of martyrs tortured but not killed; 4,2 'He was present, he was threatening, he was exercising his brutality as though it were piety' (a close echo of Florus, *Epit.* 1,40,6), summarising the intention of Paul's brother-in-law to betray him to the authorities.

⁶⁴ For epithets as vehicles of subjectivity see Smith 2003, 176. Note, perhaps not incidentally, the use of the same adjective for the *callidus hostis* at *Pauli* 2,2, designating the Decian persecutors and probably hinting at their inspiration by the devil: see Kech 1977, 31.

⁶⁵ The interplay between Antony's eyes (he sees the empty desert, the wolf, and then nothing in the darkness of the mountain passage) and his ears (strained for any sound) is a prominent feature of this passage, which underlines the fact that Antony is the main focaliser, whose perceptions are intermittently explained or evaluated by a somewhat intrusive narrator.

⁶⁶ Above, p. 12–13.

periodically moves away from Antony's perspective to provide evaluations. As we have seen in the case of the quotation from 1John 4:18 ('true love casts out fear'), the narrator's interpretation can even replace the narrative altogether, in such a way that it is unclear whose exact perspective is being adopted. The divine voice of Scripture, the heroic determination of Antony, and the narrator's didacticism coincide in this presentation. Between them, these approaches may well be designed to foist a particular, 'hagiographical' interpretation on the reader, as authorial evaluation is underpinned emotionally by empathetic perspectives.

The Captive Monk

The story of Malchus, the 'captive monk', is depicted as arising from an encounter of Jerome with an aged and devotedly Christian couple at Maronias.⁶⁷ Jerome's question about the nature of their relationship becomes the motivation for Malchus to tell the story of his life. An only child of farmers in the area of Nisibis, he deserts his parents, who pressed him to marry, and becomes a monk in the desert of Chalcis. After his father's death he leaves the monastery against the will of his abbot in order to dispose of his inheritance, intending to keep a part of it for his own use. On the way back to his homeland, he is captured by Saracen nomads and made a slave in the desert. His master forces him to marry a fellow-slave, but during the wedding night the woman shrewdly proposes that they only pretend to be married, without having any sexual contact. Eventually the pair escape, and the pursuing master is killed by a lioness. Malchus' story ends as the couple reach Roman territory and pursue a celibate life among the monks and nuns respectively.

Because of its complex narratorial framing, the *Captive Monk* provides an interesting test case for the evaluative relationships between narrator and character.⁶⁸ The primary narrator, who is closely aligned with Jerome the author, appears at two different ages: as an 'old man' (*senex*) telling the story as a whole (speaking in chapters 1–2 and 11), and as a young man to whom the aged Malchus tells the story of his own life in the first person (chapters 3–10). Closely analogous to the young Jerome as the internal audience of Malchus' narrative is the internal audience of the aged Jerome, addressed in the final chapter and exhorted to pass the story on to subsequent generations. This latter audience can readily be constructed as a model for the 'implied reader' of the work as a whole.

⁶⁷ For Maronias see above, p. 11.

⁶⁸ See most recently Šubrt 2014.

The main crux of the *Captive Monk* has often been taken to be a consequence of this relationship between the outer and the inner narrative. In chapter 2, the young ‘Jerome’⁶⁹ encounters Malchus sharing his home with a woman, and it is his curiosity about the nature of their connection which prompts him to question first Malchus’ neighbours, who assure him that the couple are ‘holy and pleasing to God’,⁷⁰ and then to ask Malchus himself. Malchus then relates how he met the woman and agreed to live in a pretended, unconsummated, marriage (chapter 6); but once they escaped from the Saracens, he says, he ‘handed this one (*hanc*) over to the virgins’ while joining a monastery himself (chapter 10,3).⁷¹ While this end of the internal narrative flatly contradicts the arrangements observed by his listener in chapter 2, the use of the deictic *hanc* shows that Malchus is as aware as his listener is of the woman’s presence under his roof.⁷² It seems that Malchus decided against continuing the story to the point of their reunion, creating instead a point of tension between the couple’s separation at the end of their adventures and their present companionship.⁷³

Almost in spite of the carefully constructed complexities of the narrative situation, Malchus generally tells his story in a straightforward mimetic fashion. There are, of course, some rhetorical flourishes,⁷⁴ but compared to the *Life of Paul*, which openly displays its author’s literary erudition, they are fairly unobtrusive, and their effect is generally to make the depiction more vivid and exciting. The *Captive Monk* has relatively few narratorial interventions and evaluations.⁷⁵ Those that appear have been analysed comprehensively by Manfred Fuhrmann:

Die Ich-Erzählung des Malchus setzt dieses Verfahren [sc. of creating suspense through adopting a limited perspective] in der Weise fort, dass Malchus

⁶⁹ The quotation marks indicate the character Jerome, who is the narratorial ‘I’ in this passage.

⁷⁰ *Sanctos et Deo placitos*, Hier. *Malchi* 2,3.

⁷¹ *Me monachis reddo; hanc trado uirginibus*.

⁷² Orlebeke 2016, 552.

⁷³ Some later adaptations of the *Captive Monk*, including the Greek ‘translation’ published by Van den Ven 1900–1901 and the *Acta SS Octobris* (ed. van Hecke *et al.* 1869, 62), omit the woman from the introductory narrative, where (in Jerome’s text) she is seen in Malchus’ company. This means that their separation at the end of Malchus’ narrative is presented as final.

⁷⁴ For example, two triple asyndetic homoeoteleuta at *Malchi* 4,3 *rapimur, dissipamur, in diuersa distrahimur* (‘we were snatched, scattered, dragged apart in all directions’) and *Malchi* 7,1 *erudierat, tenuerat, perdiderat* (‘he had taught me, kept me, and lost me’).

⁷⁵ The economy of Jerome’s text becomes especially clear when we compare it with the Greek adaptation, where the narrative is constantly slowed down with summarising and explanatory remarks: see Gray 2016.

im allgemeinen aus der beschränkten Perspektive des einstigen, des erlebenden Ichs berichtet, dass er jedoch an kritischen Punkten des Geschehens aus der überlegenen, den Ausgang kennenden Perspektive des späteren, erzählenden Ichs hierzu Stellung nimmt.⁷⁶

Thus in chapter 3 Malchus comments on his decision to leave his monastery in order to claim his parents' inheritance (3,5): 'why do I blush to confess my infidelity?'⁷⁷ The evaluation of his conduct as *infidelitas* comes from a later perspective, when the older Malchus has already reflected on the meaning of his conduct, which he was not prepared to admit at the time. In the same chapter Malchus confronts his abbot, who seeks to dissuade him from this plan. The narrator, who has reached a higher level of understanding, exclaims (3,7): 'Woe to me, poor creature that I am! I achieved a base victory, thinking that his aim was not my best interests but his own comfort.'⁷⁸ The next intervention is again an exclamation: Malchus, intercepted on his journey from the monastery by marauding Saracens, settles into his new life as a shepherding slave, when it turns out that his master plans to marry him to a fellow slave. These new developments are introduced with the proleptic lament (6,1): 'But oh, nothing is ever safe with the devil! Oh, how manifold and unspeakable is his treachery! Even so, when I was in hiding, his envy found me.'⁷⁹ But thanks to the astuteness of the intended bride, who proposes to keep the marriage unconsummated and to hide this fact from the masters, Malchus is saved from suicide. Fuhrmann takes the following assurance to belong to the older narrator's plane as well (6,8): 'But I never looked upon her naked body, I never touched her flesh, fearing that I might lose in peace what I had kept safe in battle,'⁸⁰ on the grounds that it summarises the state of the 'marriage' as a whole. But does it have to be narratorial? Admittedly, the perfect tense and the rhetorical anaphora of *numquam* appear closer to the diegetic side of the spectrum. But the following participial phrase, 'fearing that I might lose in peace what I had

⁷⁶ Fuhrmann 1977, 60, followed by discussion on pp. 60–63. These interventions can be taken as instances of metalepsis, as first defined by Genette 1980 (1972), 234–235: 'any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse'. In the context of the *Captive Monk* with its dialogic set-up this device seems a naturalistic way to remind the reader of the setting of Malchus' narrative.

⁷⁷ *Quid erubesco confiteri infidelitatem meam?*

⁷⁸ *Vae misero mihi! Vici pessimam uictoriam, reputans illum non meam utilitatem sed suum solacium quaerere.*

⁷⁹ *O nihil unquam tutum apud diabolum! O multiplices et ineffabiles eius insidiae! Sic quoque me latentem inuenit inuidia.*

⁸⁰ *Numquam tamen illius nudum corpus intuitus sum, numquam carnem tetigi, timens in pace perdere quod in proelio seruaueram.*

kept safe in battle,’ refers mimetically to Malchus’ state of mind during the period in question. It is therefore not consistent with a perspective in which the narrator anticipates the result,⁸¹ i.e. that he did manage to leave the woman unlooked-at and untouched despite all the opportunities which he had to look and touch.⁸² Is it not possible that Malchus here tells us of his resolution every day not to look and not to touch, possibly up to the moment of speaking, and, in this case, is the perspective not closer to that of the ‘erlebendes Ich’? The answer may well be ‘both’: this seems to be an instance where the experiencing and the narrating perspectives overlay each other. The focus is simultaneously on rendering a past situation and on making a point pertaining to the present, that is to say, an argument.

The possibility that the sentence belongs to a grey area in terms of focalisation connects with an important distinction drawn by Fuhrmann regarding the narratorial comments:

Diese Kommentare des Erzählers [sc. from chapter 8 onwards] gehen gleichsam in die entgegengesetzte Richtung wie die Vorausdeutungen der Kapitel 3 und 6: während dort das erlebende Ich von der Warte des erzählenden Ichs aus beurteilt wird, ergreift hier das erlebende Ich mit seinen Ängsten und Freuden vom erzählenden Ich Besitz.⁸³

In my view the explanation for this change should be seen in Malchus’ conversion experience, first as a result of his capture, after which he develops a quasi-monastic lifestyle in the desert (*Malchi* 5), and next as a result of his chaste marriage (*Malchi* 6). Before these two events, Malchus was vulnerable to temptations, both material and sexual; afterwards, in chapter 7, his observation of a colony of ants brings home to him the true excellence of the monastic, cenobitic life, and from that point onwards there is no moral conflict between ‘erzählendes Ich’ and ‘erlebendes Ich’. Thus in chapters 8 and 9 the narrator can reflect and amplify the younger Malchus’ fears and joys, instead of adding dramatic irony through foreboding developments of which the younger Malchus is as yet unaware. Up to the point of the marriage crisis and its solution in chapter 6, the difference between narrator and protagonist is not just one of time, as Fuhrmann has it: it is a difference of character. For as long as Malchus goes through the experiences which

⁸¹ ‘[D]as Ergebnis vorwegnehmend’: Fuhrmann 1977, 62.

⁸² The gap between frame and narrative also comes into play here: if Malchus is still living with the woman, as the young ‘Jerome’ observes in ch. 2, it makes no sense to speak of a ‘result’, because their association is not in the past but continues into the narrator’s present. However, Malchus appears to deny that very fact which prompted his listener’s curiosity. Even so my objection concerning the perspective of the *timens* apposition remains valid.

⁸³ Fuhrmann 1977, 62.

force him to mature, the younger Malchus and the older Malchus are different types of people.⁸⁴ Once the conflict has ceased to exist, the subsequent plot is driven not by Malchus' moral decisions but by the external dangers of flight, persecution, and the creatures of the desert. The *Captive Monk* thus reverses the pattern of 'hagiographical' narratorial attitudes which I have postulated above. The evaluative narratorial comments, which are found only before chapter 7, are in open conflict with the evaluations of Malchus as a character. Once Malchus has been fully convinced of the values of communal monasticism through his observations of the ants, the narrator's comments cease to be evaluative, creating suspense instead. Malchus' conversion from sinner to saint then justifies the neighbours' talk about the couple's sanctity in the introductory narrative at 2,3.⁸⁵

At the end of his discussion Fuhrmann connects the evaluative attitudes displayed in the *Captive Monk* with its edifying purpose:

Andererseits unterliegt alles menschliche Tun einer rigorosen Bewertung nach fraglos feststehenden Normen; die Schrift propagiert eine bestimmte, religiös fundierte Lebensform. Um dieser Tendenz willen ist es wohl besser, die *Vita Malchi* schlicht als Erzählung auszugeben [sc. rather than a novella], und man mag sogleich hinzufügen: als erbauliche Erzählung.⁸⁶

The first question arising from these remarks is which exact 'Lebensform' it is which is advertised here: monasticism, yes, but cenobitic, eremitic, and cohabiting versions are presented as (almost) equally valid: the right choice depends on external situations. That is to say, for a slave in the desert it is good to live like a hermit; duress from a human master justifies an arrangement of chaste cohabitation; but the example of the ants shows that cenobitism is the best form, and Malchus subsequently risks his and the woman's lives to achieve it—although he is subsequently encountered not as a cenobite but as part of a devout couple, living not in the desert but in the village of Maronias. Further, the notion that cenobitism is intrinsically superior is severely challenged by the presentation of the *Lives* of Paul and Hilarion, whose protagonists both thrive in solitude. Perhaps the implication is that communal forms of monasticism are the best only for imperfect monks like Malchus.

Secondly, there is more to be said about the exact workings of the propaganda invoked by Fuhrmann and the extent to which the complex presentation of the story facilitates or thwarts this impression: in telling his story to the younger

⁸⁴ For the general narratological principle cf. Bal 2009, 9–10.

⁸⁵ See above, p. 17.

⁸⁶ Fuhrmann 1977, 68.

‘Jerome’, who appears as the listener in chapters 2 and 3, Malchus implicitly draws an analogy between his listener and his younger self. By listening empathetically, the young ‘Jerome’ can vicariously experience the story as it is told, and in this way he will be able to avoid Malchus’ mistakes—especially if he pays heed to the narrator’s evaluative interpretations. In chapter 11, the coda of the work, the narrator appears as an old man, encouraging a younger generation to learn from Malchus’ story the overwhelming importance of chastity and to pass on this message to those who come after: ‘Tell the story to future generations, so that they may know that amid swords, deserts, and wild beasts chastity is never taken captive, and that a man who is devoted to Christ may die but cannot be defeated.’⁸⁷ The final emphasis here is on preserving one’s chastity. However, it is possible to draw a slightly different message from the events which are told in Malchus’ story, as we see in the Greek adaptation, where Malchus himself concludes his narrative as follows:

The Lord had granted that these trials should befall me because of my failure to obey [διὰ τὸ παρακοῦσαι] the advice of the holy father, for the correction of many. And I have told you all these ordeals, my son, which befell me because of my disobedience [διὰ τὴν παρακοήν], for your edification and safety, so that you may achieve through obedience in perfect endurance [διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς ἐν ὑπομονῇ τελείᾳ] salvation in God.⁸⁸

In Jerome’s Latin *Captive Monk*, the emphasis on obedience is only narrated, focalised through the young Malchus in his conflict with the abbot and commented on by his older self, but not drawn out as a moral at the end. Its suitability for explicit moralising is recognised in the Greek translation, which, in consequence, comes across as more didactic and consistent but far less entertaining than the Latin original. On the surface, then, Jerome’s *Captive Monk* fails to be properly hagiographical: its complexity and incongruities counteract the narratorial attempts to impose a consistent moral interpretation. The Greek adaptation, on the other hand, removes the unexplained problem of the woman’s position and focuses on the moral of obedience more than chastity, while also introducing a much more controlling narrator. Thus the adaptation shows that, depending on its presentation, the narrative material of the *Captive Monk* can be suitable for unambiguous hagiographical propaganda.

⁸⁷ *Vos narrate posteris, ut sciant inter gladios, inter deserta et bestias pudicitiam numquam esse captivam, et hominem Christo deditum posse mori, non posse superari.*

⁸⁸ Chapter 12 of the Greek translation of the *Captive Monk*, edited by Van den Ven 1900–1901, 448–449.

Conclusion

One fundamental criterion for good, non-hagiographical biography is the critical attitude of the narrator (who is often taken to be identical with the author). In postulating that hagiographical, propagandistic presentation can be achieved not just through the content of a narrative but through the agreement of the saintly protagonist's evaluations with those of the narrator, I propose a literary perspective on the problem of defining an uncritical narrator: if the character makes the narrator's point for them, it becomes impossible for a reader to imagine the narrator as critical—at least at this moment in the text.

This last qualification is significant, as my analysis suggests that this method can be used selectively. In fact, Jerome's narrators are not one-dimensional and their voices may open up conflicting interpretations. A similar point applies to his characters: both Antony in the *Life of Paul* and Malchus in the *Captive Monk* are not designed as perfect paragons of sanctity but as doubting, struggling, and occasionally failing men. It is a part of the 'message' of these texts that their weaknesses do not prevent these characters from contributing to the achievement of a divine purpose. Paul himself is a different matter: his role is to model the perfection which others are trying to achieve. He does not need the narrator's validation: it is enough for Antony to admit Paul's superiority. In this way, the argument of precedence set out in the preface (Hier. *Pauli* 1,1–2) is decided in Paul's favour by focalising through Antony.

Further, hagiography in the sense of 'bad, tendentious biography' is concerned with the (mis)representation of real, historical people. In the case of Jerome's fictional creations, the pattern was effectively reversed: in due course Paul and Malchus gained entry into the canon of officially recognised saints, with annual commemorative feast days. Paul's feast day was initially set as the 10th January in some versions of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, as well as in the martyrologies of Bede, Ado of Vienne, and Usuardus.⁸⁹ In the *Martyrologium Romanum* it was later shifted to the 15th January,⁹⁰ the same day on which he is listed in Byzantine synaxaria.⁹¹ In the twelfth century Paul's body was 'discovered' and translated, first to Constantinople, then to Rome, to Venice, and finally to Budapest, where it arrived in 1381.⁹² The monastic Order of St Paul the First Hermit, founded in the mid 13th century, is active today in Hungary, Poland,

⁸⁹ Calìo 1990 (1968), 275.

⁹⁰ *Martyrologium Romanum*, s.v. January 15, <<http://www.breviary.net/martyrology/mart-cal.htm>> (accessed 27/02/2017).

⁹¹ Calìo 1990 (1968), 275. The Second Vatican Council removed Paul from the calendar of saints: Rebenich 2000, 27.

⁹² Calìo 1990 (1968), 275–276.

Australia, and the United States. Malchus was a subject of cult mainly in the East, with feast days recorded on the 20th and 26th March as well as the 16th April.⁹³ In the West Malchus was introduced into Hermann Greven’s revision of the *Martyrologium Usuardi* during the third quarter of the fifteenth century, sharing a day with Hilarion, who was already commemorated on the 21st October.⁹⁴ From there Malchus found his way into the *Martyrologium Romanum*, where he is still listed.⁹⁵ If, as it seems, the fabric of the *Lives*’ composition led some influential readers to believe that they could separate out their undeniably fantastic and improbable elements as ‘hagiographical’ and accept the rest as true in a historical sense, not merely as an edifying attempt to articulate some higher truth, then Jerome succeeded in an impressive feat of fraudulence—even by the standards of unreliability associated with hagiography today.

These developments reveal a telling dynamic in the status of the *Lives* of Paul and Malchus over the centuries. The protagonists’ cultic veneration was assumed to have started in local memory and reached official recognition by the church through the medium of Jerome’s writings. In consequence, they ended up perfectly aligned with a definition of hagiography based on external motivation and ecclesiastical function, as proposed by Delehaye.⁹⁶ But this process also obscured the imaginative achievement of their author by masking the essential nature of these texts as works of competitive fiction, whose hagiographical elements are determined by their literary qualities.⁹⁷

⁹³ Gordini 1988 (1966), 586.

⁹⁴ Gordini 1988 (1966), 586.

⁹⁵ *Martyrologium Romanum*, s.v. October 21, <<http://www.breviary.net/martyrology/mart-cal.htm>> (accessed 27/02/2017).

⁹⁶ See above, p. 1 with n. 1.

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