

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE STUDY OF BYZANTINE  
HAGIOGRAPHY IN THE LAST HALF-CENTURY**

**OR**

**TWO LOOKS BACK AND ONE LOOK FORWARD**

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# Observations on the Study of Byzantine Hagiography in the Last Half-Century or Two Looks Back and One Look Forward

Ihor ŠEVČENKO

*To the memory of the Reverend Father François Halkin, S.J.*

This essay will deal mostly with hagiography. Since, however, hagiographic studies are a part of Byzantine scholarship of our time, some of my remarks may find an echo among Byzantinists and even Medievalists at large, including the young ones among them.

The great Bollandist Father Hippolyte Delehaye died in 1941. That was slightly more than half-a-century ago, that is, at the time when those who are in the process of occupying key positions in the Byzantine academic establishments in Europe and in the United States were being born or were babies. Today, fifty years seems to be little in terms of the lifespan of vigorous men and women, but in terms of intellectual change within Byzantine studies, including the study of hagiography, these fifty years have seen developments unparalleled in more placid times.

In 1934, Father Delehaye published a short book entitled *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique*<sup>1</sup> still a revered text in some quarters. Let us hear a summary of four of these five lessons. In the first of them,<sup>2</sup> Delehaye established his two famous hagiographic coordinates: the day of the burial of the saint and the place of his burial. The reader of that first lesson will be forever wary of saints whose bodies disappear after their deaths, like the body of the symbolic Saint Irene, or the body of the elusive

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<sup>1</sup> H. Delehaye, *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique* [=Subsidia hagiographica 21] (Brussels, 1934).

<sup>2</sup> "Les coordonnées hagiographiques", 7-17.

Andrew the Fool, or that of Theoktiste.

In the second lesson, Father Delehaye dealt with hagiographic stories, especially the Acts of the Martyrs. On the one hand, he declared war against the conservative school that clung to unreliable documents concerning the martyrs — even the critically minded seventeenth-century erudite Le Nain de Tillemont, Eduard Gibbon's incomparable guide, had his wrist slapped. The conservative school would soon die out, Father Delehaye predicted.

On the other hand, our Bollandist strongly reacted against the inroads of the hypercritical school, represented, shortly before his day, by philologists like Hermann Usener and students of comparative religion, such as specialists in Buddhism. Is a saint's story legendary? This shows, said the hypercritics, that the saint either never existed, or was in fact a pagan God *declassé*. Delehaye retorted that the details of a saint's legend may be utterly false, and yet the saint's existence, firmly established.<sup>3</sup>

The relics of the saints were the subject of the fourth lesson. Father Delehaye's commonsensical point of departure was that all authentic relics must ultimately go back to the saint's original tomb. But how many such early tombs do we still have? Everything else was suspect. An authenticated relic is not the same thing as an authentic one.<sup>4</sup>

Father Delehaye's fifth and last lesson was entitled *Saints in Art*. It was also the longest one among those we have been summarizing, and art historians might reread it with profit even today. For instance, Delehaye's treatment of the history of the nimbus is, or so it seems, as good as the entry "Nimbus in Art" in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* of 1991. Delehaye's purview was vast, as it extended from the frescoes of Tokali Kilise in Cappadocia to Memling and Raphael, but his chief interest was iconographical, centering on the relations between iconography and the written word. Few Byzantine saints had attributes, except for such professionals as the physicians Cosmas and Damian. Otherwise, a name written next to the saint's image had to suffice. In general, the simplest explanations were the best. Hence Delehaye made fun of the German

<sup>3</sup> "Les récits", 18-41; for the criticism of Tillemont, cf. p. 21; for Usener, cf. p. 28. — On the value of hagiographic legends for history, cf. the Bollandist Father Michel van Esbroeck, "Legends about Constantine in Armenia", in *Classical Armenian Culture* (Philadelphia, 1982), 96: "A symbolic story is no less useful for writing history than an official report by a good historian". I owe this reference to Dr. Alexander P. Kazhdan.

<sup>4</sup> "Les reliques des saints", 75-116. For Father Delehaye's bon-mot about an authenticated relic not being necessarily an authentic one (for which I was once castigated in public), cf. p. 116.

scholar who interpreted St. Lawrence's grill in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna as a sun chariot.

Simple iconographic details gave birth to texts. On the other hand, attributes and types were sometimes due to verbal misunderstandings. Cephalophoric saints such as Dionysios the Areopagite proved the point. Saint Cecilia must have spurned secular music, but became the patroness of that art on account of a conflation in a liturgical antiphon in her honor. Cecilia the musician did not appear in art before the late 15th century. Saint Christopher got a dog's head in art not because of the influence of the Egyptian Anubis cult, perish the thought, but because his legend described him as a barbarian of the tribe of the *kynokephaloi*. Thus often textual legends, spun out of a word or a name, created iconographical types; in other cases, however, iconographical types, inspired by a name, gave birth to texts.<sup>5</sup>

To sum up, what Delehayé mainly studied in his lessons, were genetic relationships, either between texts, or between motifs. And the purpose of his lessons was to determine what was authentic, that is, to elicit the Truth. This Truth was about actual people who were saints: the scholar was to determine their identity and authenticity, to find out what was historical in hagiographic texts, and to study these texts and their genres in order ultimately to winnow away chaff from the wheat (a delicate task when it came to the evaluation of miracle stories by a critically minded member of a religious order). Finally, the scholar was to establish the true date and place of the burial of a saint, and to ascertain the historicity, rather than the history, of his relics.

Delehayé understood that in his fifth lesson, the one on Art, he was entering the field of artistic freedom; but even there he was after Truth and *authenticity*. That is why, on one occasion, he guessed that, exceptionally, images of some apostles may go back to authentic portraits.<sup>6</sup>

Once one believed that there was such a thing as authentic saints, the search for Truth about them became something of utmost importance, for it served God. The last sentence in Delehayé's book said this almost in as many words: the cult of the saints was nothing, unless it served Christ for Whom the saints had lived and suffered.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Les saints dans l'art", 117-146. On the nimbus, cf. pp. 119-124; on simple explanations being best, cf. p. 133; on St. Cecilia, cf. pp. 139-142; on St. Christopher, cf. pp. 142-146.

<sup>6</sup> Delehayé, *Cinq leçons* (as in n. 1 above), 127.

<sup>7</sup> Delehayé, *Cinq leçons* (as in n. 1 above), 146.

A year after the appearance of the *Five Lessons*, Father Delehaye gave three lectures on early Byzantine hagiography at the Collège de France. These lectures of 1935 were recently rediscovered and published with much piety by the Bollandists in 1991. For the beginner, they offer a lucid introduction; for the initiate, they provide a remarkable historical perspective. I shall make little use of Father Delehaye's Collège de France lectures in this essay, since, being quite close in time to the *Five Lessons*, they deliver the same general message as the latter, even if they pay less attention to methodology. They establish tests for historical authenticity; they distinguish between "literature" and ecclesiastical tradition; they prudently face the question of the reality of miracles. Even Tillemont and Usener, the two bad boys of the *Five Lessons*, reappear in the lectures, where they are unexpectedly joined by Henri Grégoire who, for a change, showed too little critical sense.<sup>8</sup>

Seen from today's perspective, Father Delehaye's horizon had its limits. He was of course aware of individual women saints and of collections of female saints' *Lives*, but devoted only a sentence to them as a class. He singled out St. Cecilia for his admiration, but it was on account of her having offered her virginity to Christ and of chanting a hymn to virginity in her heart, not because of her later patronage of music.<sup>9</sup> The word patronage itself was not in his vocabulary. Nor was the notion of the relic trade and its economic and political implications. Father Delehaye could conceive of images imitating texts and of texts imitating images, but he did not conceive of what has been bread and butter for later art historians, both of Weitzmannian and of post- or anti-Weitzmannian vintage, namely, that images imitate images, or patterns learned from painters' manuals.

For all that, Father Delehaye's was an enviable world. In that world, the student of hagiography served the highest of purposes. Hagiography was a science, and its practitioner could count on two cooperative and subordinate helpers, philology and history. He needed no one else. True, there were some intruders from outside, such as historians

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. H. Delehaye, *L'ancienne hagiographie byzantine; les sources, les premiers modèles, la formation des genres . . .* [= *Subsidia Hagiographica*, nr. 73] (Brussels, 1991), with a well-balanced preface by Gilbert Dagron. — One of the attractions of the book is that the editors, Fathers B. Joassart and X. Lequeux, give us again a full bibliography of Father Delehaye's. One understands why, but one regrets nevertheless that the editors did not provide, here and there, up-to-date bibliographical information on important topics treated by the author.

<sup>9</sup> Delehaye, *Cinq leçons* (as in n. 1 above), 119, and 139-140.

of pagan religion and religious comparativists, but they could be swatted like obnoxious flies — Father Delehaye turned out to be right on this point — and the overly and naively pious would soon disappear. Hagiography was to analyze documents on saints as history and literature as well, but principally it was to remain a field of study for its own sake, not a quarry for other concerns.

So much for Father Delehaye. To suggest that not much remains now of his enviable world, I shall turn to a selective summary of another small book, this time of collective authorship. It's called *The Byzantine Saint*, it dates from 1981, and it reflects the Fourteenth Birmingham Symposium under the same title, and we know that the organizers of Birmingham Symposia have been sensitive to new trends.<sup>10</sup>

The volume contains a number of papers that Father Delehaye would have understood and that we would call "normal science", such as Sir Henry Chadwick's study of Pachomius and the idea of sanctity which begins with a discussion of Gibbon's antimonkish prejudices,<sup>11</sup> the excellent treatment of the Holy Fool by Lennart Rydén,<sup>12</sup> or the summary of a paper on the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste in Art;<sup>13</sup> but quite a number of contributions contained in the volume would have puzzled the learned Bollandist. To begin with, six papers in *The Byzantine Saint* refer (with one exception), in their very first footnote to one or two articles by Professor Peter Brown and, but for one case, to his 1971 essay — in fact a very significant piece of work — on the Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity.<sup>14</sup>

These references, made in 1981, that is, ten years after the publication of Professor Brown's essay, could be compared to the background radiation reaching us from the depths of the Universe and, as we are told, going back to the Big Bang. Since the Big Bang of 1971 was about the holy man in society, the five papers of 1981, and some others as well, dealt with the saint in Byzantine society and politics; either the saint as protagonist in the ecclesiastical politics on a grand scale — with the

<sup>10</sup> Sergei Hackel, ed., *The Byzantine Saint. University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* [= Studies Supplementary to Sobornost, 5] (London, 1981).

<sup>11</sup> Pp. 11-24.

<sup>12</sup> Pp. 106-113.

<sup>13</sup> Pp. 190-194 (Z.A. Gavrilović).

<sup>14</sup> The six papers are by Anthony Bryer (p. 5, n. 3); Susan Ashbrook Harvey (p. 37, n. 1); Rosemary Morris (p. 43, n. 1); Paul Magdalino (p. 51, n. 1); Robert Browning (p. 117, asterisk note); Nicholas Gendle (p. 181, n. 1).

sixth-century John of Ephesus juxtaposed and contrasted with the seventh-century John Moschos<sup>15</sup> — or the saint as a Guru hobnobbing with provincial aristocrats or corresponding with the emperor in the Capital — the eleventh-century St. Lazaros of Mt. Galesios in Asia Minor being the case in point.<sup>16</sup> In an allusive French, Professor Evelyne Patlagean assessed the power wielded by the saints and found, not surprisingly for 1981, that, by the ninth-to-eleventh centuries at least, they stood high on the social scale, either through family or through service connections.<sup>17</sup>

Even Professor Robert Browning, in his treatment of "low-level" saints' *Lives*, composed in an unpretentious style, said next to nothing about style, but much about the "popular" saint's social and political stature, and his being a counter-hero of the dispossessed.<sup>18</sup> That many of the saints chosen as "popular" had high connections and therefore belied the paper's thesis, is beyond the point of my essay. In an intelligent paper on relics,<sup>19</sup> especially those discovered in the fifth century, Dr. E.D. Hunt dealt with their ubiquity and *traffic*, starting with those of the very first martyr Stephen. Do we need to report that the question of authenticity — Father Delehay's first concern — was not even asked? All of the relics were implicitly declared to have been false. The author put "it is asserted" in parentheses, when he referred to the seventy-three people cured by the newly unearthed body of St. Stephen.

In the volume's closing paper,<sup>20</sup> Professor Vryonis described the antecedents, the Byzantine stage, and the post-Byzantine manifestations of the fair held on a saint's day. He saw the fair as a religio-economic institution and arranged his texts in the light of social anthropology and its methods. True, except for the Life and Miracles of St. Thecla, the bulk of Professor Vryonis's evidence was non-hagiographic.

We must go beyond *The Byzantine Saint*, however, when we attempt to list significant trends present in recent studies based on

<sup>15</sup> Pp. 37-42 (Susan Ashbrook Harvey).

<sup>16</sup> P. 46 (Rosemary Morris). — In 1973, I devoted a few pages to the Vita of Lazaros at a Dumbarton Oaks Symposium. The text was later published in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 3/4 (1979-80), esp. pp. 723-726, and reprinted in *Ideology, Letters and Culture in the Byzantine World* (Variorum Reprints, London, 1982) as item VI. At present, the *Vita* of Lazaros is a well established item in papers on hagiography and social history.

<sup>17</sup> Pp. 88-105.

<sup>18</sup> Pp. 117-127.

<sup>19</sup> Pp. 171-180. Cf. p. 171 for "it is asserted".

<sup>20</sup> Pp. 196-226.

hagiography, for some of these trends were hardly reflected in that volume. Thus we read nothing on female sanctity in it, except for Dr. Susan Harvey's observation<sup>21</sup> that John Moschos's women were passive and preoccupied with dangers of sex, while those described by John of Ephesus were wilfull — which, I suppose, meant that they were aggressive — and except for Professor Patlagean's device of listing male and female saints' *Lives* separately.<sup>22</sup> That all of the saints in Father van Esbroeck's paper on the saints as a symbol<sup>23</sup> were female had merely to do with the fact that abstractions, such as Faith, Hope, and Love are feminine in Greek.

This lack of focus on female Sanctity in *The Byzantine Saint* must have been due to accident. It would be easy to quote recent works, dating from before and after 1981, that deal with women saints or saintly women — such as the chapter "Women — Glimpses from the *Vitae*" in the book *Saints, Holy Men and Byzantine Society* by the American Kathryn Mackay Ringrose,<sup>24</sup> the essay on Holy Women and Witches by the Anglo-Greek Dr. Catia Galatariotou,<sup>25</sup> several writings by Mme Patlagean,<sup>26</sup> or, finally, publications by such American women-Byzantinists as Dr. Alice-Mary Talbot<sup>27</sup> and Ms. Jane Baun.<sup>28</sup> It is noteworthy — and to me regrettable — that these works on female saints are due overwhelmingly to female authors.

It would also be easy to provide fillers for other omissions in *The Byzantine Saint* — omissions from the point of view of new trends. Thus the book lacked the treatment of the hagiographer's own psychological

<sup>21</sup> P. 41.

<sup>22</sup> Pp. 88-92 (27 men and 7 women).

<sup>23</sup> Pp. 128-140.

<sup>24</sup> Kathryn Mackay Ringrose, *Saints, Holy Men and Byzantine Society, 726 to 843* (Ph.D. Thesis, Rutgers University, 1976; New Brunswick, 1982), 132-146 (= Chapter VII).

<sup>25</sup> "Holy Women and Witches", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 9 (1984-85), 55-94.

<sup>26</sup> Here two examples: "L'histoire de la femme déguisée en moine et l'évolution de la sainteté féminine à Byzance", reprinted as item XI in E. Patlagean, *Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance*. . . [Variorum Reprints CS 134] (London, 1981); "Théodora de Thessalonique. Une sainte moniale et un culte citadin", in S. Boesch Gaiano and L. Sebastiani, eds, *Culto dei santi, istituzioni e classi sociali in età preindustriale* (Rome, 1984), 37-67.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. her "Old Wine in New Bottles: the Rewriting of Saints' Lives in the Palaiologan Period", *The Twilight of Byzantium*, ed. S. Ćurčić and D. Mouriki (Princeton, 1991), 15-26.

<sup>28</sup> For Ms. Jane Baun, cf. note 51 below.

drives and a discussion of how these drives may have intruded into the text he wrote. *The Byzantine Saint* was also silent on sex, as opposed to gender, in hagiography, sex for whose veiled and open manifestations hagiography is a rich depository indeed. Such topics were treated after 1981 by A.P. Kazhdan in his articles on Psellos's *Life of Saint Auxentius* and on Sex in *Lives of Saints*,<sup>29</sup> and I myself assembled a small dossier on sex in hagiography in the almost twenty year old, but still unpublished, essay entitled *Varieties of Byzantine Hagiography*.

Still, these qualifications aside, *The Byzantine Saint* of 1981 did register new trends, and comparing it not only with the collective volume *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés*, edited by Mme Patlagean in the same year of 1981,<sup>30</sup> but also with Dr. Catia Galatariotou's spirited and programmatic volume on Neophytos the Recluse (*The Making of a Saint*),<sup>31</sup> that appeared only four years ago, would bear me out.

Much of the material presented in the Birmingham volume has four common characteristics. The first of them is the realization that most saints enjoyed a comfortable social status. This realization is all to the good, because it comes from the texts themselves and needs no help from outside theory. Truth to tell, already Feuerbach, Marx's older contemporary, could have proclaimed that becoming a saint about whom posterity knows, was the work of society; and we may add today, that becoming a saint was a result of a team effort, and an expensive proposition to boot. The enterprise involved a supporting group, such as the rich lay family of the candidate for sanctity or the religious community, and paying an author for a *Vita* — without which it is difficult to conduct a scholarly study of a saint — was not the worst of the expenses.

The second characteristic displayed in the volume — and, *a fortiori*, in later publications — has little to do with hagiography, and much to do with the *Zeitgeist*: It is the entrance into the study of hagiography of ways of thinking coming from outside disciplines, such as sociology, social, Levi-Straussian or Geertzian anthropology, semeiology, and psychoanalysis —

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<sup>29</sup> "An Attempt of Auto-Hagiography: The Pseudo-Life of St. Psellus", *Ninth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, Abstracts of Papers* (1983), 16; "Byzantine Hagiography and Sex in the Fifth to Twelfth Centuries", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 44 (1990), 131-143.

<sup>30</sup> *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés, IVe-XIIIe siècles: Actes du colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris (2-5 mai 1979)* (Paris, 1981).

<sup>31</sup> Catia Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge, 1991). Cf. the review by Joseph A. Munitiz in *The Heythrop Journal*, 34 (1993), 209-212.

although the latter seems to be less en vogue, perhaps because psychoanalysis has had a bad press among Marxists, or because — but this is less likely— of the recent revelations about the shaky foundations of the data reported by Freud himself. This entrance — he might have said intrusion — would not have been a surprise to Father Delehayé, for he had to deal with such people as Buddhist scholars in his day — but it would have been more than he would be willing to bargain for.

Today, the modern counterparts of Father Delehayé's outsiders have entered his own field of study no longer as squatters or helpful servants, but as foreign advisers, if not as managers. This is not quite all to the good. To begin with, hagiography thus becomes a quarry for something else; secondly, the introduction of "theory" invites abstract treatments, verbiages, clichés and tautologies, of which the phrases "picture . . . of the dynamics of complex social relationships between monasticism and society" and "ideology (is) . . . generated through the contradictions within a specific culture" are examples. Mind you, there is nothing wrong with applying social analysis to hagiography, only with an analysis permissive of clichés and of occasional fuzzy thinking. To the credit of the Birmingham volume, Paul Magdalino's paper on the Byzantine Holy Man in the 12th century was free of such flaws.<sup>32</sup> It owed its success, among other things, to the absence of jargon and to simplicity. The author's sophistication is the sophistication of common sense; and his basic device consists in drawing upon texts which he had read in their entirety, and in interpreting them by conventional means. This was methodology enough to make Magdalino discern special interests and pressure groups among opinion— and policy—makers of the Comnenian period.

The third characteristic of the Birmingham volume was the relatively lackluster average quality of contributions of conventional kind, those belonging to "normal science". Of course, one must not generalize from one case; good "normal" work was going on during the seventies and the eighties, good texts of *Lives* were published in Europe, especially in Belgium, France and Italy — think of the Bollandists, of Professor Gilbert Dagron, of Professors Augusta Acconcia Longo and Enrica Follieri — and, in the United States — think of the treatment of such *Lives* and *Collections of Miracles* as that of Romylos co-published by Professor Angeliki Laiou,<sup>33</sup> of Nikon *Ho metanoëite* published by Dr. Sullivan,<sup>34</sup> of the

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<sup>32</sup> *The Byzantine Saint* (as in n. 10 above), 51-73.

<sup>33</sup> "Days and Deeds of a Hesychast Saint: A Translation of the Greek Life of Saint Romylos", *Byzantine Studies / Études Byzantines* 9, 1 (1982), 24-47.

posthumous miracles of Patriarch Athanasius I by Theoktistos the Studite edited by Dr. Alice-Mary Talbot,<sup>35</sup> and of Lucas of Stiris, being published by the Connor team.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, some two years ago, there appeared the short synthetic treatment of the Byzantine Saint by Professor Mango. It is a classical piece, but only in the sense in which one of Ottorino Respighi's *Antiche arie e danze* is classical. The piece's modernity is revealed to us when we compare the respective treatments that several obligatory variations on the hagiographic theme receive in Father Delehaye's Collège de France lectures of 1935 and in Professor Mango's chapter; while his *obiter dictum* echoing Usener's position and even more his verdict on the cognitive limits of some modern approaches to hagiography are post-modern.<sup>37</sup>

For all that, the era of giants of normal science in hagiography is over. The great men all died during the last fifty years. Hippolyte Delehaye, as we have heard, in 1941, Father Paul Peeters in 1950, the indefatigable translator Father A.J. Festugière in the late 1980's, Father François Halkin six years ago, and Monsignor Ehrhard, of the *Überlieferung und Bestand's* fame, already in 1940, even though the third volume

<sup>34</sup> Denis F. Sullivan, ed. and transl., *The Life of Saint Nikon* [= The Archbishop Iakovos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources 14] (Brookline, 1987).

<sup>35</sup> Alice-Mary M. Talbot, *Faith Healing in Late Byzantium* [= The Archbishop Iakovos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources 8] (Brookline, 1983).

<sup>36</sup> The text and translation of St. Lucas's *Life* by Professors Robert and Carolyn L. Connor is to appear in the Archbishop Iakovos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources. In the meantime, there appeared a new critical edition preceded by a modern Greek translation of the *Life*: cf. D.Z. Sophianos, *Hosios Loukas – Ho bios tou Hosiou Louka tou Steiriōtē* (Athens, 1989; also in paperback: id., *Hosios Loukas. Ho bios tou* [Athens 21993 = Hagiologikē Bibliothēkē 1]). — For Belgian contributions in the field of hagiography, cf. P. Yannopoulos, "Byzance", in L. Génicot, ed., *Vingt ans de recherche historique en Belgique 1969-1988* [= Crédit communal, Collection histoire, 82] (1990), 133-134. — Almost nothing for our purposes is to be gathered from Gordon Worthley, "North American Research in Medieval Hagiography. A Handlist", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 105 (1987), 435-444 (cf., however, John Howe and Franklin A. Sciacca); this is because for the Handlist, "medieval" meant "western medieval".

<sup>37</sup> Cf. C. Mango, chapter "Il Santo", in G. Cavallo, ed., *L'uomo bizantino* [Serie Storia e Società] (Rome - Bari, 1992), 383-422. For obligatory variations, compare Delehaye, *L'ancienne hagiographie . . .* (as in note 8 above), 26-27 (Saint Anthony); 54-60 (Story of John the Almsgiver); 31-38 (Stylite saints) with Mango, 390-393 (Saint Anthony); 404-406 (John the Almsgiver); 409-412 (Stylites and other mortificators of the flesh). For post-modernity cf. Mango, p. 385 and especially p. 388: "The modern reader does not believe in demons, but he believes in sociology, in economic factors and so on; still, he is in no better condition to understand the world of early Christianity."

of his monumental work appeared as late as 1952.

The action seems to have moved elsewhere. Professors Brown, Dagron and Mango are not primarily students of hagiography. It is worth pondering that in the fifteen page long bibliography of *Secondary Sources* to Dr. Catia Galatariotou's *The Making of a Saint*, published in 1991, Father Delehaye is represented by one item, and Mme Hélène Ahrweiler, hardly a student of Saints, by ten.<sup>38</sup> It is also touching, and historically significant, to realize that while Father Delehaye felt that he worked in the service of God, his present-day Bollandist successor wished to perpetuate the *humane* qualities of the first Bollandists. It must also be noted that the latest synthetic treatment of Byzantine hagiography issued by the Bollandists consists of the lectures that Father Delehaye gave in 1935.<sup>39</sup>

The fourth characteristic of the Birmingham volume — again it is to be met with elsewhere as well — is the use of hagiography as raw material for something else. The device is old, as old as Tougard's *De l'histoire profane dans les Actes des Bollandistes* of 1874 and Rudakov's *Studies in Byzantine Culture Based on the Data Provided by Greek Hagiography* of 1917, and, if we interpret the term "Byzantium" generously, Ključevskij's *Old Russian Lives of Saints as Historical Source* of 1871. This device, we note with high expectations, is being repackaged and given a modern wrapping now at Dumbarton Oaks.

Still, neither Tougard nor Rudakov claimed to practice *hagiography* in their books. The modern authors are more ambiguous, since their articles bear such titles as "The *Lives* of Byzantine Saints as Sources of Data for X in the Y Century". The technique here is to put whole *Lives* into a scholarly Cuisinart and shred them into onomastics, magical or medical terminology, hagiographical geography, and hospital lore. This technique is laudable and has its undisputed uses,<sup>40</sup> but, and I cannot stress it enough, it must not replace the treatment of the *Lives* as wholes.

So much for descriptions. The question I wish to raise next is: To

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Galatariotou, *The Making . . .* (as in note 31 above), 290-304, esp. pp. 290 and 294. Professor Dagron may have been too optimistic, when he stated in the very year of the appearance of Dr. Galatariotou's book that "today, as yesterday," Father Delehaye's name is to be read more often than any other in the notes to works dealing with hagiography. Cf. his Preface to Father Delehaye's *L'ancienne hagiographie . . .* (as in note 8 above), V.

<sup>39</sup> For the Collège de France Lectures of 1935, see note 8 above.

<sup>40</sup> This applies especially to the recent book by Élisabeth Malamut, *Sur la route des saints byzantins* (Paris, 1993), that describes (on the basis of some twenty *Lives*) travels and adventures of saints on the move.

what extent do the recent writings help us better understand hagiographic texts, the world these texts describe — or conceal — and the world they "really" reflect? In other words, do the present trends in hagiography lead to jobs better done?

A value judgement is involved here, and my own attitude is ambivalent. I spent too much of my time as a young student in the small Reading Room of the *Société des Bollandistes* in Brussels, not to feel a nostalgia for the older ways of doing hagiographic scholarship. As, on the other hand, I was formed on the writings of students of Marx, it is with the bittersweet feeling of *déjà-vu* that I acknowledge the achievements of the new studies when they reveal the social networking around the saint — nobody can gainsay the enrichment that such scholars as Peter Brown or Evelyne Patlagean brought to our studies — or when they rediscover — true, sixty years after Karl Mannheim — the problem of the Sociology of Knowledge.

We should search, however, for criteria more objective than value judgements based on one's own intellectual make-up before we decide whether the new approaches to hagiography result in jobs better done. I can propose no such strict criteria; all I can suggest are rules of thumb.

One rule of thumb would be for the reader to ask himself whether in a study of a Saint he could replace most theoretical terms by conventional ones; whether he could use "analyze" instead of "deconstruct"; put "funding a monastery to make sure of obtaining a place in Paradise" instead of "interconvertibility of symbolic and material capital"; whether he could read "being a mediator between Heaven and Earth" instead of "interstitiality"; finally, whether he would be able to substitute "core of one's personality" for "personal idiom".<sup>41</sup> If he could do so, and lose little

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<sup>41</sup> All the relevant phrases have been drawn from the Introduction of Dr. Galatariotou's *The Making . . .* (as in n. 31 above), 1-10. — The luxuriance of some modern hagiographic prose seems to go hand in hand with imprecise thinking. George Orwell exposed this trait in his once famous Essay of 1946, entitled "Politics and the English Language", most conveniently accessible in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, IV (London, 1968), 127-140. The Essay is still quoted for its priceless translation of *Ecclesiastes* 9:11 into sloppy modern English. To show how valid Orwell's strictures remain today, I quote his observation that "in art criticism and literary criticism it is normal to come across long passages which are almost completely lacking in meaning". Orwell considered writing precise English, free of pretentious diction and meaningless words, as a first step towards the political regeneration of the left, a view apparently not shared by present-day proponents of political correctness. — For ridiculing the vacuous Italian prose of our day, cf. Cesare Marchi, *In punta di lingua* (Milan, 1992), esp. the chapter

or nothing in understanding the author's line of thought in the process, then from one point of view the new terminology would be cosmetic in nature, and the value of the Study in question would have to be sought elsewhere. If, on the other hand, some new theoretical notions do not easily lend themselves to translation into common-sense language, then there is a possibility that a useful tool for better understanding is being offered to us. I must let others point to concrete examples of a fruitful application of such tools.

Another rule of thumb would be to divide the insights presented in new studies into those recently borrowed from other disciplines, and those that involve, or have been conditioned by, "objective" events and developments of our own time. I submit that one should expect as good an understanding, to say the least, of the world described by the hagiographic texts from the second kind of insights — from understanding the Past through the Present, to use Marc Bloch's phrase — as from the former kind: from inspirations provided by recent secondary theoretical literature.

To illustrate the latter point, I shall use an example coming from my own experience. I came to view the early Acts of the Martyrs not primarily as testimonies to the steadfastness displayed by Christian communities in the face of life-threatening ideological oppression, but as almost the reverse. I view them as morale-building tracts addressed to communities under severe stress, whose purpose it was to uphold the sagging morale of these communities and to counteract what was the rule rather than the exception: the widespread falling away from the faith under the pressure of governmental persecution. The authors of the Acts of the Martyrs, well aware of apostasies, set up shining individual examples of endurance; they did it to encourage, or shame, the mass of the potential *lapsi* into holding firm. This perspective came from the experience of the last seventy years or so, from observing the behaviour of large populations in totalitarian regimes of our time, and from our familiarity with modern resistance movements and with propaganda literature glorifying resistance heroes.

When one reads, for instance, the *Acts* of the Martyr Pionius in the light of such insights, and juxtaposes this work of ca. 250 with the contemporary writings of St. Cyprian, there is no need for outside theory or for a "scratching for premises". Our own historical position enables us to understand what was going on in the 3rd century better than the great Adolf von Harnack was able to understand it in 1910, that is, on the eve of

World War I, when he searched for the purpose of the *Acts of the Martyrs*.<sup>42</sup>

The foregoing example suggests that, for all their ingenuity, new theoretical tools used in the recent hagiographic studies are not all the working tools imaginable. Moreover, as I see it, some of these tools may be in need of further refinement, while others, whether conventional or not, are still lying on the workbench. As a result, some scholarly tasks still remain to be fulfilled, and aspects of Byzantine reality, accessible through hagiography, still remain to be put into relief, or uncovered.

The belief that hagiography as a whole is a "popular" genre<sup>43</sup> may have prevented the authors of recent studies from a closer look at the social function of hagiography written in high style, that is, in the kind of literary expression to which every hagiographer aspired — including, as we now know, the easily understandable Cyril of Scythopolis<sup>44</sup> — even if not every hagiographer succeeded in fulfilling this aspiration. If we read *Lives* of this numerically well represented category as wholes, we realize that, roughly speaking, hagiography in high style was a branch of literature produced by members or hangers-on of the upper class, for the members of the upper class, and about the members of the upper class (if we except the *Lives* of the earliest saints written in high style). This hagiographic literature was produced by means of special skills; and the ability to appreciate these skills formed a distinctive badge that identified its bearers either as members of

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<sup>42</sup> For my suggestion concerning the purpose of the early Acts of the Martyrs, cf. "Were the Early Acts of the Martyrs Morale-Building Tracts?", *Sixteenth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, Abstracts of Papers* (Baltimore, 1990), 2-3. For the answer given in 1910, cf. Adolf Harnack, "Das ursprüngliche Motiv der Abfassung von Märtyrer- und Heilungsakten in der Kirche", *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich-preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Berlin 1910, nr.-VII, pp. 106-125 (according to Harnack, authors of the Acts wished to prove to their audiences that God, who through Christ operated so visibly in this world in the time of the New Testament, continued to operate in it in later times as well).

<sup>43</sup> This view occurs in writings by some of the best of us: cf. Angeliki E. Laiou-Thomadakis, "Saints and Society in the Late Byzantine Empire", in *Charanis Studies, Essays in Honor of Peter Charanis* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1980), 84: "Saints' Lives are a relatively popular literary genre." Professor Robert Browning (cf. n. 18 above) considered the "low level" *Lives* as aiming at popular audience and readership, but counted among such *Lives* those of Daniel the Stylite, Theodore of Sykeon, Peter of Atroa and Lucas the Galesiote, texts written in middle style, and whose heroes had close contacts with members of high or highest society.

<sup>44</sup> This was shown in the excellent work by Bernard Flusin, *Miracle et histoire dans l'oeuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis* (Paris, 1983).

the upper class or individuals associated with it. We are able to give proof of noble pedigree for some authors of *Lives* in high style, of their membership in the upper class, and of their wealth. We can argue for upper class status for many saints and their families and we can quote a hagiographer or two with an elitist view of his literary prowess. Statistics, that is, the existence of a considerable number of *Lives* in high style, should prevent us from labeling Byzantine hagiography in general as a popular genre.

One case of an underutilized tool has to do with reconstructing the ways in which hagiographic writings satisfied the psychological needs of the Byzantine reading or listening public. The new research proceeds only gingerly here, possibly to avoid the pitfalls of amateurishness. Admittedly, setting up a model of the Byzantine public's psychology is a risky business, but it can be attempted on hand of Byzantine texts. The model that I will submit here is one in which feelings of insecurity and mistrust, and the concomitant quest for certainty, protection and wish-fulfilment were present, as also were curiosity, desire for entertainment and some esthetic needs. And I imagine that the world in which this reading or listening public, rich and poor alike, lived, was the world of scarcity, subject to the rule by powers of man and nature over which the individual, even a powerful one, had little control. Hagiography was able to do much to satisfy the needs of the dwellers in such a world by offering a reverse image, as it were, of their everyday reality. This explains the presence of, to quote only one instance, the Paradisiac visions that promised the reader or listener fragrance, vast expanses of vegetation, spacious, light-filled dwellings and abundance of flowers, water and on occasion of gigantic fruits, whereas many a poorer reader's everyday reality must have been that of stench, of small dark abodes and of scarcity and monotony of food.

Among the tasks ahead of students of hagiography that have not figured prominently on the agenda of recent research, one is straightforward — it is to edit whole *Lives* of saints and above all to translate them into modern languages — I am thinking particularly of the German language, where much work awaits younger people who might feel frustrated in the search for vanguard approaches. We are better off with English, for in the United States a concerted and systematic effort of translating Greek hagiographic texts is under way at Dumbarton Oaks.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The first group of texts to be translated in the Dumbarton Oaks project consists of seventeen *Lives*. Fourteen of them (apparently as a concession to the *Zeitgeist*) are *Lives* of female saints. The cause of the reconstruction of the Past, as well as that of Women Studies, would have been better served, if instead the project had included as one of its

Mind you, there is more to translations than mere ancillary service. In our age of attenuated contacts with originals, a complete, elegant and reliable translation, when accompanying an edition and followed by a good commentary, contributes to progress in a given discipline. In our own field, take the *Life* of Theodore of Sykeon; it had been easily available in Greek since 1884 and in partial English translation since 1948, but it was dormant; it took A.J. Festugière's edition and commented French translation of 1970 to bring forth a shower of historical and cultural studies in its wake.<sup>46</sup>

I shall close with a statement that is half reactionary and half forward-looking. Today, both in the study of the saints and elsewhere, we reconstruct — the present programmatic verb is "construct" — the past, historical and literary, in terms of abstract notions: imperial institution, the State, social status, feudal and private elements, urban or rural economy, function, form, continuity, deconstruction, death of the genre. All these abstractions reflect modern — along with, hélas, no longer modern — conceptual frameworks. The risk here is that of "privileging" the twentieth century debate over the concreteness of the Byzantine past itself.

Something is lost when we handle Byzantine hagiography predominantly in this fashion. That something is the Byzantium of flesh and blood, the real world of poor people, of smells, of cruelty and of passion, of greed and of concrete suffering — an entity that we might call The Other Byzantium. That Other Byzantium may not have been a bird of Paradise, but it once lived and I wonder whether it is not more attractive to paint it in the fullness of concrete detail than it is to record it the way Dürer had to record in his own time what had remained of the birds of Paradise when they arrived in Europe — he painted them as colorful, but disembodied skins. That Other Byzantium, as many of my readers know, is to be sought precisely in hagiography. And if finding it should require the use of the Cuisinart method for producing sizeable slices of hagiographic texts, so be it.

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first positions the full translation of a *Mēterikon*, that is, of an actual medieval manuscript containing, among other things, female Saints' Lives, and, we assume, destined for public reading in a nunnery. For such manuscripts, cf., e.g., P.B. Paschos, *Neon Mēterikon* (Athens, 1990), 14, n. 17, and, of course, A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand . . .*, Pt. I, Sect. III, pp. 906-915: "Textsammlungen für Feste weiblicher Heiliger" [five collections]. On the Slavic side, we have the *Bdinski Zbornik* of the year 1360 [*Lives* of sixteen female Saints].

<sup>46</sup> Including the study of the history of medicine. Cf. Peregrine Horden, "Saints and Doctors in the Early Byzantine Empire: the Case of Theodore of Sykeon", *Studies in Church History* 19 (1982), 1-13.

It is from such hagiographic texts as the apocryphal *Acts* of John that we learn how John the Evangelist bid the bedbugs temporarily to gather in one lump away from his bed and thus let him sleep unmolested at night;<sup>47</sup> it is there that we read of a marital triangle which ended in the third man's self-mutilation and his throwing his genitals into the face of his adulterous mistress;<sup>48</sup> it is there, in one of Cyril of Scythopolis's *Lives*, that we encounter two ascetics who surprised — to their own astonishment — a *female* hermit in the desert (as a young church singer she proved attractive to young men; she fled into the wilderness in order not to scandalize them);<sup>49</sup> it is in the *Miracles* of St. Artemius that we learn how the healing saint shared, in the dark, an open latrine with a patient residing in his shrine and waiting for a cure, and pretended to be afflicted by an illness as well;<sup>50</sup> it is in hagiography that we find monks naming a young ram after the saint who then indulged in a punning riddle; it is finally there, in visions reported by temporary visitors to the Beyond (one of them female, even if her report seems to have been ghostwritten by a male author), that we encounter bunches of grapes the size of a tall man, pomegranates the size of huge wine-vats, and walnuts the size of large barrels.<sup>51</sup> In 1935, Father Delehaye — who was after historical Truth in

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<sup>47</sup> *Acta Ioannis*, ch. 60-61 = *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, ed. M. Bonnet (reprint Hildesheim, 1959), 180,<sup>11</sup> - 181,<sup>14</sup> [= *BHG*<sup>3</sup> 907]. Cf. also E. Junod and J.-D. Kaestli, eds, *Acta Iohannis* [= *Corpus Christianorum*; Series Apocryphorum, 1] (Turnhout, 1983), 249-251; latest English translation in J.K. Elliott, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament* . . . (Oxford, 1993), 328.

<sup>48</sup> *Acta Ioannis*, ch. 48-54 = 175,<sup>7</sup> -178,<sup>15</sup>, ed. Bonnet [ *BHG*<sup>3</sup> 905]. Cf. also Junod-Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis* (as in n. 47 above), 231-239; and Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (as in n. 47 above), 324-326. St. John disapproved of the adulterer's act: the root of the evil was in the mind, not in the genitals. In the sixth century, the attitude towards sexual self-mutilation to avoid mental temptation was ambivalent: it was considered a kind of suicide and was at first condemned by S. Sabas. He expelled a perpetrator from his Laura, but later took him in and pardoned him. Cf. Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita S. Sabae*, ch. 41 = 131,<sup>9</sup> - 132,<sup>19</sup>, ed. E. Schwartz [= *BHG*<sup>3</sup> 1608].

<sup>49</sup> Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Cyriaci* = 233,<sup>4</sup> - 234,<sup>24</sup>, ed. E. Schwartz [= *BHG*<sup>3</sup> 463].

<sup>50</sup> *Miracula S. Artemii*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia graeca sacra* (St. Petersburg, 1909), Miracle nr. 35 = pp. 56,<sup>10</sup> - 57,<sup>8</sup> [= *BHG*<sup>3</sup> 173].

<sup>51</sup> For gigantic paradisiac fruits, cf. the *Life of Saint Philaretus the Merciful*, ed. M.-H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, *Byzantion*, 9 (1934), 163, <sup>7-13</sup> [= *BHG*<sup>3</sup> 1511z]. — For the female reporter on the Beyond, cf. *Apocalypsis Anastasiae*, ed. R. Homburg (Leipzig, 1903) [= *BHG*<sup>3</sup> 1868-1870]. The heroine's name is a pun. In spite of her sex, her visions reflect a male world and the text itself is likely to have been written by a

hagiography — had but contempt for stories of this kind.<sup>52</sup> For once, we should not follow the judgment of the great Bollandist, for it is with the help of such texts that we should begin to trace the story of Byzantine Sub- and Anticulture.

One — perhaps the most important one — of the *Zielgruppen* I have had in mind in the present essay has been the generation of people under fifty. I have tried to provide the members of this generation with some short-range historical perspective. May I also offer it some advice?

Should you take up the study of hagiography and just wish to be sure of an honorable place in the Annals of the hagiographic discipline, all you have to do, provided you do it well, is to translate. If you want to go beyond that, you certainly have the option, whether I like it or not, to politicize, sociologize, anthropologize, and to psychoanalyze; of course to understand what went on — and how things worked — in the Byzantine past, you must adopt the point of view of the Byzantines, including the audience of hagiography, and first consider individual *Lives* of Saints as wholes. Otherwise, you may contribute something to sociology, anthropology and so on, but will contribute less to the study of hagiography.

But if you wish to look for something exciting, and to get a truer — or at least a fuller — picture of the past, then search in hagiographic texts for The Other Byzantium.

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man (he refers to Anastasia's nunnery as "female monastery"). In any case some of its few manuscripts were destined for use by a male community. One such manuscript opens with an address to "fathers and brethren"; on occasion Anastasia is referred to by a masculine pronoun or participle. Almost all sinners in Hell are male; usually, they are clerics. Even the three categories of female sinners, those pro-choice women "who kill the infants in their wombs" (cf. 17, 10-11, both versions), priests' wives who do not show respect to their husbands, and adulteresses, are likely to have been put in Hell by a male author. — Cf. Evelyne Patlagean, "Byzance et son autre monde . . .", in *Faire croire. Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Table ronde [= Collection de l'École française de Rome 51] (Rome, 1981) 201–221. The latest treatment of Anastasia's Vision is by Jane Baun, "The Eschatological Vision as a Source for Byzantine Popular Religion", *Nineteenth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, Abstracts of Papers* (Princeton, 1993), 16.

<sup>52</sup> He called them "histoire grotesque d'une frivolité déconcertante" or "contes absurdes". Cf. Delehaye, *L'ancienne hagiographie . . .* (as in note 8 above), 64 with n. 14, 66, 67. "Histoire grotesque" comes from the Miracles of St. Cosmas and Damian (but occurs elsewhere as well); the saints bid a paralytic man rape a mute woman. The mute shouts for help; scared, the paralytic runs away. Result: a cure for both.

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