

## CHRONIQUES – KRONIEKEN – CHRONICLES

**Late Antique Latin Hagiography, Truth and Fiction:  
Trends in Scholarship\*****Introduction**

It is commonly known that hagiography cannot easily be defined in terms of fact and fiction. Although hagiographical texts usually employ strategies to underline their authenticity, they can also contain fictionalised elements – even the saints themselves can be invented. This article aims to provide a critical discussion of the ways in which scholarship has reflected on questions related to truth and fiction in hagiography, in particular Latin texts produced in the late antique period. Related to this question, it explores the various ways in which scholars have discussed possible interconnections with ancient fictional traditions such as the ancient novels and *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*.

The article is not the first attempt to evaluate earlier scholarship on these complex issues.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it reflects the broader academic trend to broaden the corpus of ancient novelistic narrative as to include texts like *Tobit* and *Joseph and Aseneth*, as well as early Christian narratives, such as the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* and the pseudo-Clementines.<sup>2</sup> I single out various developments, which are

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<sup>1</sup> See P. TURNER, *Truthfulness, Realism, Historicity: A Study in Late Antique Spiritual Literature*, Farnham/Burlington, 2012, p. 1-22 for a critical reflection on earlier research on the topics of truthfulness, realism and historicity in late antique hagiography, including a useful bibliography. For a discussion of fictionalisation and novelisation in Greek and Byzantine hagiography, see C. MESSIS, “Fiction and/or Novelisation in Byzantine Hagiography”, in S. EFTHYMIADIS (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography II: Genres and Context*, Farnham/Burlington, 2014, p. 313-342.

<sup>2</sup> For general overviews of the interconnections between ancient fictional traditions and Christian and Jewish narrative, see R.F. HOCK, J.B. CHANCE and J. PERKINS (eds), *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1998; I. RAMELLI, *I romanzi antichi e il Cristianesimo: constesto e contatti*, Madrid, 2001; J.-A. BRANT, C. HEDRICK and C. SHEA (eds), *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative*, Leiden/Boston, 2005; M.P. FUTRE PINHEIRO, J. PERKINS and R. PERVO (eds), *The Ancient Novel and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: Fictional Intersections*, Groningen, 2012; D. KONSTAN and

partly simultaneous and complementary: a first trend, in the tradition of the Bollandists, oriented towards the historical value of hagiographical texts; a second, under the influence of the German tradition of the *Rezeptionsästhetik*, interested in the reception of the ancient novel and other fictional traditions in hagiography, as well as the effect of this literary modelling on the edifying and entertaining function of Christian narrative; and a third, concerned with the literary stylisation of the hagiographical genre and its performative function. In conclusion, I sketch some recent developments.

### 1. The tradition of the Bollandists: the question of historical truth

The concept of truth poses a problem which will be familiar to each scholar of late antique hagiography: it is interpreted in many different ways and employed to various uses. Early scholarship on hagiography often puts the emphasis on the aspect of historical truth, assuming that hagiographers were aimed at describing saints as they would have existed in the real world outside the text. Accordingly, scholars make a strong opposition between the historical truth of the accounts and what I call their “fictiveness”: the lack of verifiable historical and factual information, often referred to as “untruth”, “lies”, “invention”, “fabrication” or “imagination”.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, this fictiveness has often been called “fiction” in the scholarly literature.

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I. RAMELLI, “The Novel and Christian Narrative”, in P. CUEVA and S. BYRNE (eds), *A Companion to the Ancient Novel*, Chichester, 2014, p. 180-198; I. RAMELLI and J. PERKINS (eds), *Early Christian and Jewish Narrative*, Tübingen, 2015. Studies specifically focusing on the connections between the novels and apocryphal literature are R. SÖDER, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike*, Stuttgart, 1932; T. HÄGG, *The Novel in Antiquity*, Oxford, 1983, p. 154-165; J. PERKINS, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, London/New York, 1995; K. COOPER, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1996; R. PERVO, “The Ancient Novel becomes Christian”, in G. SCHMELING (ed.), *The Novel in the Ancient World*, Leiden/New York/Cologne, 1996, p. 685-712; D. KONSTAN, “Reunion and Regeneration: Narrative Patterns in Ancient Greek Novels and Christian Acts”, in G.A. KARLA (ed.), *Fiction on the Fringe: Novelistic Writing in the Post-Classical Age*, Leiden/Boston, 2009, p. 105-120; J. KÖNIG, “Novelistic and Anti-novelistic Narrative in the Acts of Thomas and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias”, in G.A. KARLA (ed.), *Fiction on the Fringe: Novelistic Writing in the Post-Classical Age*, Leiden/Boston, 2009, p. 121-149; and J. PERKINS, “Reimagining Community in Christian Fictions”, in E.P. CUEVA and S. BYRNE (eds), *A Companion to the Ancient Novel*, Chichester, 2014, p. 535-551. See S.F. JOHNSON, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2006 for the Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thekla and the novelistic tradition; and J.N. BREMMER (ed.), *The Pseudo-Clementines*, Leuven, 2010 for the pseudo-Clementine tradition.

<sup>3</sup> I derive this conceptualisation of “fictiveness” from K. DE TEMMERMAN, “Ancient Biography and Formalities of Fiction”, in K. DE TEMMERMAN and K. DEMOEN (eds), *Writing Biography in Greece and Rome: Narrative Technique and Fictionalisation*, Cambridge, 2016, p. 5. See on p. 1-7 for further discussion of the use and the meaning of “fictiveness” in the study of ancient biography, including references to modern literary theory.

The desire to distinguish truth and fictiveness formed the basis of the critical study of hagiography from its beginning. Aiming to distil historical truth in hagiography, Heribert Rosweyde decided to compile, edit and translate the *Vitae Patrum* in 1615, which in turn resulted in the monumental project undertaken by the Bollandists: the publishing of the *Acta Sanctorum*.<sup>4</sup> As Michel De Certeau notes, the Bollandists' endeavour had an enormous impact on the study of hagiography: "It introduces criticism into hagiography. A systematic research of manuscripts; a categorisation of sources; a transformation of texts into documents; a privilege granted to 'facts', no matter how minuscule their order; a discreet passage from dogmatic truth to historical truth as an end in itself..."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the Bollandists set the agenda of much subsequent research in the field of hagiography, not only facilitating an easier access to the texts by the publication of editions, but also providing a framework for interpretation based on the opposition between historical fact and fictive information.

This is most clearly illustrated in the seminal work of Hippolyte Delehaye, who provided for the first time an analysis of late antique hagiographical texts that paid attention to their interconnection with ancient novelistic traditions. Delehaye considers it as the main task of the critic to define the historical truth of hagiography.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, in *Les légendes hagiographiques* (1905), the scholar makes a first attempt to categorise hagiographical texts on the basis of their historical value. He distinguishes six categories of martyrological documents. These categories reveal an increasing degree of literary invention:<sup>7</sup>

0. The official reports of the interrogatories of the martyrs, which are based on the official court records and represent the facts in an unaltered form;
1. The accounts of eyewitnesses or reports of well-informed contemporaries recording the testimonies of other witnesses present at the scene of martyrdom;
2. Acts which are principally based on a written document;
3. Historical novels, which represent real events and characters, but describe them within a framework of imagination;
4. Imaginative novels, which do not deal with real characters, but describe saints who are created by the hagiographer;
5. Forgeries, which are designed with the intent to deceive the reader.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See the various contributions in the volume of R. GODDING, B. JOASSART, X. LEQUEUX and F. DE VRIENDT (eds), *De Rosweyde aux Acta Sanctorum. La recherche hagiographique des Bollandistes à travers quatre siècles (Subsidia Hagiographica, 88)*, Brussels, 2009 for the importance of the work of Rosweyde, the history of the *Acta Sanctorum* and the scholarship on hagiography by the Bollandists in general.

<sup>5</sup> M. DE CERTEAU, *The Writing of History*, New York, 1988, p. 271.

<sup>6</sup> H. DELEHAYE, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, Brussels, 1921, p. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> ID., *Les légendes hagiographiques*, Brussels, 1905, p. 125-130.

<sup>8</sup> This category does not denote a subjective aesthetic qualification, but is based on the author's intention to deceive the reader through the description of the events and characters. Delehaye admits that this intent is often difficult to ascertain, especially when the author is unknown or the text is a rewriting of a previous version. In those cases, the text must be placed in one of the other categories; see Delehaye, *o.c.* (n. 7), p. 130.

Delehaye also mentions the “hagiographical novel” (*roman hagiographique*), denoting a type of work which, “in a series of incidents, partly true, partly fictitious, ... has attempted to depict the soul of a saint honoured by the Church”.<sup>9</sup> It seems that this type of narrative is to be located somewhere between the fourth and the fifth category, as it represents a narrative which is partly historical and partly invented.

In his later *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (1921), Delehaye reduces the six categories to three: “historical passions” (*passions historiques*), which go back to the eyewitness accounts and documentary evidence of people present at the place of martyrdom; panegyrics; and “artificial passions” (*passions artificielles*), which are written much later than the narrated trial and draw more on literary conventions than on eyewitness accounts.<sup>10</sup> Specifically the historical and artificial passions are important for the present discussion of the concepts of truth and fictiveness in the study of late antique hagiography. Delehaye is clearly mostly interested in the historical passions, providing an elaborate analysis of the narrative elements which give them their historical value and underline the historicity of the accounts.<sup>11</sup> The artificial passions, in turn, are subdivided according to their literary model: “epic passions” (*passions épiques*) can be related to the ancient epics, since they concentrate on a mortal hero of an elevated status, while the “novelistic passions” (*passions romanesques*) share similarities with the ancient novelistic tradition.<sup>12</sup> Delehaye pays a fair amount of attention to the ways in which the epic passions are embellished in the description of the characters, the interrogations, the trials, and the miracles. The novelistic passions receive much less attention. Delehaye identifies a few subtypes of hagiographical texts: the adventure novel (*roman d’aventures*), the idyllic novel (*roman idyllique*) and the didactic novel (*roman didactique*). Although Delehaye provides some examples of each, he does not offer clear definitions or analysis of the categories.<sup>13</sup> The adventure novel is only loosely connected to the Greek novelistic

<sup>9</sup> DELEHAYE, *o.c.* (n. 7), p. 4: “... s’il a voulu dépeindre, dans une série d’aventures moitié réelles, moitié imaginaires, l’âme d’un saint honoré par l’église, il faudra, bien que le terme n’ait point passé dans l’usage, donner à son œuvre le nom de roman hagiographique.” The translation is taken from V.M. CRAWFORD (transl.), *The Legends of the Saints. An Introduction to Hagiography. From the French of Père H. Delehaye, S.J., Bollandist*, London etc., 1907, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> See DELEHAYE, *o.c.* (n. 6), p. 11-182 for a general discussion and for textual examples of the historical passions, p. 183-235 for the panegyrics, and p. 236-364 for the artificial passions.

<sup>11</sup> Delehaye discusses various forms of evidence: stenographical notes concerning the martyrdom, the reference to place and time, specific information regarding the audience, and the report of the dialogue between the magistrate and the martyr as it is recorded in the official *acta* of the trial; see Delehaye, *o.c.* (n. 6), p. 173-182.

<sup>12</sup> See DELEHAYE, *o.c.* (n. 6), p. 236-364.

<sup>13</sup> Delehaye notes mainly Greek hagiographical texts, and occasionally a Latin one. He mentions as adventure novels the *Passion of Eustathius* (BHG 641-643), the pseudo-Clementines and the *Life of Xenophon and Maria* (BHG 1878-1879); as idyllic novels the *Passions* of Adrianus and Natalia (BHG 27-29), Caecilia (BHL 1495) and Galaction and Episteme (BHG 665); and as didactic novels the *Passions* of Nicephorus (BHG 1331-1334),

tradition on the basis of its focus on travels and recognitions, but it remains unclear how the idyllic and the didactic passions are related to the ancient novels. Significantly, Delehaye connects only one passion explicitly to a novelistic model, namely the “idyllic” *Passion of Galaction and Episteme*. In his discussion of the passion, Delehaye observes that Galaction’s parents (Leucippe and Clitophon) can be identified as the main heroes of Achilles Tatius’ novel.<sup>14</sup>

Despite his predilection for classification, then, Delehaye does not give full definitions and explanations of the specific categories of passions. Nevertheless, the importance of his contribution for the study of hagiography in general and for the late antique passions in particular cannot be overstated, since he is the first scholar who more or less systematically assesses different types of narratives on the basis of both their literary origins and their historicity. Delehaye’s distinction between historical, epic and novelistic passions has been taken up by Renée Aigrain’s study of the late antique Latin passions.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, although Delehaye complained that his definition of the “hagiographical novel” had “scarcely passed into common use” in his own time, the concept became frequently used in later studies on hagiography – albeit often loosely defined and in a variety of meanings.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1950s and 1960s, the study of Latin hagiography is given a new impetus by the appearance of important studies on the four major Latin saints’ lives of Late Antiquity: Jerome’s *Lives* of the desert ascetics Paul (BHL 6596), Malchus (BHL 5190) and Hilarion (BHL 3879), as well as Sulpicius’ *Life of Martin* (BHL 5610). Significantly, while scholars, in the tradition of the Bollandists, initially focus on the question of the historical character of the *Lives*, they paradoxically discover their literary character. Eduard Coleiro’s article on the *Lives* of Jerome (1957) illustrates this development. Coleiro places himself in the tradition of the Bollandists, posing the question of whether the *Lives* are “histories” (i.e. providing historical information), or “romances” (which does not seem to denote a strong link with specific ancient novels, but rather a type of narrative which lacks historical accuracy). Although Coleiro argues that the *Lives* have a historical aim, he provides little evidence. Instead, he points to the invented dimension of the *Lives*, identifying so-called “elements of romance” or techniques of narration which through “their appeal to the imagination and their romantic associations make [the *Lives*] undeniably delightful works of

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Bonifatius (BHG 279-282) and the seven sleepers of Ephesus (BHG 1593-1599). See DELEHAYE, *o.c.* (n. 6), p. 317-320.

<sup>14</sup> DELEHAYE, *o.c.* (n. 6), p. 319.

<sup>15</sup> R. AIGRAIN, *L'hagiographie: ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire*, Brussels, 2000, p. 140-150 [reprint of R. AIGRAIN, *L'hagiographie: ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire*, Poitiers, 1953].

<sup>16</sup> DELEHAYE, *o.c.* (n. 7), p. 4. See, for instance, HÄGG, *o.c.* (n. 2), p. 164-165; V. BURRUS, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography*, Philadelphia, 2004, p. 32 and S. REBENICH, “Inventing an Ascetic Hero: Jerome’s Life of Paul the First Hermit”, in A. CAIN and J. LÖSSL (eds), *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings and Legacy*, Farnham, 2009, p. 18 (for an overview of other studies referring to Jerome’s *Life of Paul* as a [hagiographical] romance).

art”.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, Coleiro admires the *Lives* for their romantic charm, but refuses to call them romances, because “there is no doubt that [Jerome] intended the *Lives* to be considered as history.”<sup>18</sup> Coleiro’s article seems to be troubled by conflicting intentions: the author aims to demonstrate the historical truth of the *Lives*, but he rather identifies the elements which add to their fictiveness and call for the readers’ imagination. As such, he demonstrates that the research initiated by the Bollandists can have a paradoxical outcome, as De Certeau phrases it: “not the discovery of what is true, but of what is false.”<sup>19</sup>

While Coleiro focuses on fictiveness or the historical (in)accuracy of hagiographical texts, Jacques Fontaine develops a different approach in his monumental edition of Sulpicius’ *Life of Martin*. Rather than making a strong distinction between fictiveness and historical truth, he tries to reconcile the two, considering “fiction” as the literary form which surrounds a historical core of the text. The question of the historicity of the *Life of Martin* goes back to the work of Ernst-Charles Babut (1912), who dismissed the *Life* as fictive, arguing that Sulpicius had invented it as an emulation of Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* (BHG 140) in order to support his position within the Gallic monastic environment.<sup>20</sup> Against Babut, Fontaine contends that the work is based on a historical core and not created *ex nihilo*.<sup>21</sup> Yet, Fontaine argues, the historical core is “enveloped” in a literary form, and this constitutes what he calls its “fictional” aspect.<sup>22</sup> In the wake of Delehayé, Fontaine considers it as the task of the critic to distinguish this invented or fictional form from the historical fact.<sup>23</sup> However, he goes further than any of his forebears by devising a method for assessing the dual historical and invented nature of hagiography. More specifically, he describes a system of “triple metamorphosis” (*triple métamorphose*) through which the “bare facts” receive a literary form: they have their basis in Martin’s subjective experiences, but are subsequently transformed in the collective memory of the bystanders, and finally transposed into narrative by Sulpicius.<sup>24</sup> Scholars have questioned Fontaine’s approach, arguing that no clear distinction can be made between the various stages of

<sup>17</sup> E. COLEIRO, “St. Jerome’s Lives of the Hermits”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 11, 3 (1957), p. 171. On p. 171-177, Coleiro identifies the following elements of romance: the interest in weird characters, unexpected situations and travel adventures; the propensity for description; the characterisation of the hero through the description of a setting; as well as a strong appeal to the ascetic.

<sup>18</sup> COLEIRO, *l.c.* (n. 17), p. 177.

<sup>19</sup> DE CERTEAU, *o.c.* (n. 5), p. 271.

<sup>20</sup> E.C. BABUT, *Saint Martin de Tours*, Paris, 1912.

<sup>21</sup> This is repeated in Fontaine’s later work, for instance, J. FONTAINE, “Le partage du manteau dans la *Vita Martini* de Sulpice Sévère”, in *XVI<sup>e</sup> centenaire de la mort de saint Martin. Colloque universitaire 22-23 octobre 1997*, Tours, 1997, p. 29: “Vérité et fiction, donc et non pas vérité ou fiction; à prendre ici en son sens premier en latin, la *fiction* modèle et remodèle, elle n’invente pas *ex nihilo*” (author’s emphasis).

<sup>22</sup> J. FONTAINE (ed.), *Sulpice Sévère: Vie de Saint Martin. Introduction, texte et traduction*, 3 vols (SC 133-135), Paris, 1967-1969, p. 188.

<sup>23</sup> FONTAINE, *o.c.* (n. 22), p. 188-189.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183-188.

this transformation process, and that the historical basis of the *Life of Martin* can never be ascertained.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, as one of the first scholars, Fontaine re-interprets the concept of fiction, not relating it to the question of historical accuracy, but to the stylised nature of the *Life of Martin* as a piece of literature.

To summarise, while scholarship of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is defined by the desire to identify the historical elements of hagiography, it paradoxically discovers its literary quality. This involves a redefinition of fiction: being first used in order to denote the a-historical or “fictive” elements in hagiography, it is subsequently employed as an indication not simply of the invented but also of the constructed and stylised nature of the texts. As I intend to show in the next paragraph, subsequent scholarship more deeply explores the formal and literary dimensions of hagiography.

## 2. Jerome’s *Lives*: intertextuality, reader response and the challenge of historical truth

The work of Coleiro gave rise to a series of studies on Jerome’s *Lives*, which, often from a philological perspective, analyse the interplay of the texts with other literary genres on the level of the narrative construction. An example is Johannes Bauer, who, in the tradition of Harold Hagendahl’s work on the use of classical literature in early-Christian Latin literature,<sup>26</sup> explores the presence of the novelistic tradition in Jerome’s *Life of Paul*. Bauer explicitly states that he does not aim to take a stance in the debate concerning the authenticity of the *Life*, but simply wants to clarify its literary origins.<sup>27</sup> For Bauer, “novelistic” implies a textual or thematic connection with the ancient novels: he specifically mentions verbal parallels with the works of Apuleius, Longus and Achilles Tatius. While he only briefly notes that these reminiscences lend the *Life* a “delicate charm” (*zarten Charme*),<sup>28</sup> other scholars more deeply explore the effects of novelistic elements on the reception of hagiographical texts by the audience, which reflects the contemporary rise of *Rezeptionsästhetik* in German literary theory. The concept of fiction is usually not related to the historical value of the *Lives*, but rather to the aspects of edification and literary entertainment.

<sup>25</sup> For a critical re-evaluation of earlier scholarship on the question of historical truth in the *Life of Martin*, see D. PRAET, “The Divided Cloak as *redemptio militae*. Biblical Stylization and Hagiographical Intertextuality in Sulpicius Severus’ *Vita Martini*”, in K. DE TEMMERMAN and K. DEMOEN (eds), *Writing Biography in Greece and Rome: Narrative Technique and Fictionalization*, Cambridge, 2016, p. 133-159.

<sup>26</sup> H. HAGENDAHL, *Latin Fathers and the Classics*, Göteborg, 1958, p. 89-328. For recent discussions of the literary models of Jerome’s *Lives*, see A.A.R. BASTIAENSEN, “Jérôme hagiographe”, in G. PHILIPPART (ed.), *Hagiographies. Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550 (Corpus Christianorum, I)*, Turnhout, 1994, p. 105-119 and REBENICH, *l.c.* (n. 16), p. 18-20.

<sup>27</sup> J.B. BAUER, “Novellistisches bei Hieronymus Vita Pauli 3”, *Wiener Studien* 74 (1961), p. 130 [reprint J.B. BAUER, “Novellistisches bei Hieronymus Vita Pauli 3”, in *Scholia Biblica et Patristica*, Graz, 1972, p. 215-223].

<sup>28</sup> BAUER, *l.c.* (n. 27), p. 130.

Manfred Fuhrmann, for example, draws attention to the literary models of Jerome's *Lives*, detecting verbal similarities with many of the Latin and Greek novels, as well as ancient biographical writings.<sup>29</sup> According to Fuhrmann, the borrowings of the novels and biography serve a double goal: *Erbauung* ("edification"), lending the stories of the desert ascetics a coherent form which facilitates moral improvement, and *Unterhaltung* ("entertainment"), fulfilling the readers' desire for literary amusement through the incorporation of fantastic detail.<sup>30</sup> Simultaneously, Herbert Kech similarly argues that the inclusion of earlier literary models in Jerome's *Lives* gives an entertaining form to their edifying contents.<sup>31</sup> More recently, these views have been extended to other late antique hagiographical texts. Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich, for instance, draws attention to a range of apocryphal and Latin hagiographical texts, claiming that they arouse different forms of reading pleasure: the delight of recognising reminiscences from the various pagan and Christian literary genres, as well as the voyeuristic pleasure involved in reading the vivid descriptions of seductions and martyrdoms.<sup>32</sup> Although both types of pleasure are embedded in the larger Latin fictional tradition, Huber-Rebenich argues, they are directed towards a new goal in the Christian narratives: the edification of the reader.<sup>33</sup>

While most of these scholars are concerned with questions related to reception rather than historical truth, Virginia Burrus turns the discussion again to the question of the historicity of Jerome's *Lives*. Following Fuhrmann and Kech, who emphasise that the entertaining aspect of the *Lives* is closely related to their relationship with earlier literary models, she points out that the entertaining effect of the *Lives* of Jerome is located in their generic ambiguity: they incorporate many thematic and structural elements from earlier literary traditions, both historical (for instance, historiography and biography) and fictional (for instance, the ancient novels). This, Burrus argues, blurs the distinction between history and invention and prohibits any evaluation of the *Lives* in terms of their historical value.<sup>34</sup> As I will demonstrate in the

<sup>29</sup> See M. FUHRMANN, "Die Mönchgeschichten des heiligen Hieronymus: Formexperimente in erzählender Literatur", in M. FUHRMANN (ed.), *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'Antiquité tardive en Occident: huit exposés suivis de discussions (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique, 3)*, Genève/Bern, 1977, p. 50, 57, 64, 85.

<sup>30</sup> See FUHRMANN, *l.c.* (n. 29), p. 82-89, especially p. 87.

<sup>31</sup> H. KECH, *Hagiographie als christliche Unterhaltungsliteratur: Studien zum Phänomen des Erbaulichen anhand der Mönchsviten des hl. Hieronymus*, Göttingen, 1977, p. 172-177. See C. GRAY (ed.), *Jerome, Vita Malchi: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Oxford, 2015, p. 25-30 for a recent discussion of novelistic material in Jerome's *Life of Malchus*, including further references.

<sup>32</sup> Huber-Rebenich discusses the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the pseudo-Clementines, some Latin late antique martyr acts and passions, Sulpicius' *Life of Martin*, Jerome's *Lives* of desert saints, and Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*; see G. HUBER-REBENICH, "Hagiographic Fiction as Entertainment", in H. HOFMANN (ed.), *Latin Fiction: The Latin Novel in Context*, London/New York, 1999, p. 190-207.

<sup>33</sup> See HUBER-REBENICH, *l.c.* (n. 32), p. 205-207.

<sup>34</sup> See BURRUS, *o.c.* (n. 16), p. 19-24. On p. 171 n. 16, Burrus explicitly discusses the value of the works of Fuhrmann, Kech and Coleiro for her own thinking about the *Lives* of Jerome. In a more recent study of the *Passion of Perpetua* (BHL 6633), Marco Formisano



next paragraph, Burrus' conclusion ties in with the broader trend in scholarship in the late twentieth century to suspend the question of the historical value of hagiographical texts.

### 3. From historical truth to intended truth

From the 1980s, scholarship on Latin hagiography replaces the search for historical reality with the exploration of more abstract forms of cultural and intellectual truth. To be sure, the attention for such forms of truth is not new: already Delehaye pointed to the dogmatic and moral truths conveyed in the so-called novelistic passions.<sup>35</sup> But since the rise of structuralist and poststructuralist analysis in the second half of the twentieth century (the so-called "Linguistic Turn"), scholars from across the humanities have re-evaluated the relationship between text and reality, questioning to what extent history can be expressed in words.<sup>36</sup> The work of Peter Brown is notable in this respect: instead of focusing on the historical fact, he reads texts from sociological and anthropological perspectives as sources of information about the ideological concerns and social norms which motivated the late antique religious life.<sup>37</sup>

A similar development can be observed in the study of hagiography. For instance, Averil Cameron claims, "it is not clear to what extent these Christian texts were thought of by contemporaries as historical narratives, but they certainly belong to the realm of intended truth."<sup>38</sup> Importantly, this "intended truth" is usually understood in an ideological rather than a historical sense. For instance, Cameron argues that hagiography may not represent specific historical information about a particular saint, but can give insights in broader cultural developments, such as "the social aims and composition of second- and third-century Christian communities", as well as "the development of Christian discourse".<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in her famous book *Roads to Paradise*, Alison Goddard Elliott argues that hagiography aims at "ethical" truth,

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draws a similar conclusion, arguing that the *Passion's* edifying aim is supported by its entertaining quality, which is in turn created by its internal generic hybridity; see M. FORMISANO, "Perpetua's Prisons: Notes on the Margins of Literature", in J.N. BREMMER and M. FORMISANO (eds), *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, Oxford, 2012, p. 329-347.

<sup>35</sup> See DELEHAYE, *o.c.* (n. 6), p. 319-320.

<sup>36</sup> TURNER, *o.c.* (n. 1), p. 2. See E.A. CLARK, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2004, p. 156-185 for further reflection on the importance of the Linguistic Turn for the study of late antique Christian narrative.

<sup>37</sup> P. BROWN, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity", *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), p. 80-101 and P. BROWN, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley, 1982. See TURNER, *o.c.* (n. 1), p. 11-14 for further discussion of the importance of Peter Brown's work for the study of late antique hagiography.

<sup>38</sup> A. CAMERON, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse*, Berkeley, 1991, p. 118.

<sup>39</sup> CAMERON, *o.c.* (n. 38), p. 118-119.

providing the readers with exemplary models of holiness. As Elliott suggests, portraits of saints are usually not based on historical reality, but rather on earlier folkloristic and novelistic traditions, which can be fruitfully examined by means of literary and structuralist paradigms. Although these traditions may not represent historical reality, they can convey information about the ideals and literary norms underlying the portrayal of the saintly hero. Consequently, Goddard Elliott argues, one should turn to the “fictional” (which in her case means “invented”) rather than the more genuine *Lives*, in order to elucidate the functioning of the hagiographical genre and its ideological concerns.<sup>40</sup> Marc Van Uytfanghe also positively evaluates the invented aspect or what he calls “literary stylisation” or the enrichment of “hagiographical discourse” by earlier literary traditions.<sup>41</sup> Rather than discarding such stylisation as compromising the historical truth of the narrative, Van Uytfanghe argues that it supports the so-called “performative function” of the hagiographical discourse.<sup>42</sup> More specifically, he states that the portrayal of the saint often comprises elements that do not relate to historical reality but rather express the ideas and ideals which the hagiographer wants to convey to the readers for their moral edification. Such fictional elements are thus employed for communicative goals, Van Uytfanghe argues: “[...] *la stylisation la plus importante vient du prisme interprétatif des auteurs, qui projettent, dans une large mesure, leurs propres idées ou idéaux sur les figures qu’ils évoquent. Tout saint est un saint « construit », y compris le cas échéant à l’aide d’éléments fictifs.*”<sup>43</sup>

Such approaches, which pair an interest in the ethical function of late antique hagiography with literary-critical types of analysis and a focus on the constructed or “fictional” aspects of hagiography, have been very influential in studies of Latin late antique hagiography over the past three decades.<sup>44</sup> They also inform studies focusing

<sup>40</sup> See A. GODDARD ELLIOTT, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints*, Hanover, New Hampshire, 1987, p. 1-15.

<sup>41</sup> Van Uytfanghe’s interest in literary stylisation is inspired by Fontaine’s idea of “triple metamorphosis”, in which the historical core of the saint’s life is enveloped in a literary form. The literary stylised representation of the (purported) historical reality is but one core element of what Van Uytfanghe calls “hagiographical discourse”, the others being the presence of a godlike but not divine hero; a performative rather than descriptive function of the narrative; and a focus on specific themes and archetypes (e.g. virtues and miracles) which motivate the literary stylisation. The concept hagiographical discourse allows one to elucidate the mutual influences between pagan and Christian forms of narrative, as well as the generic hybridity which often characterises hagiographical texts. For more discussion, see M. VAN UYTFANGHE, “Heiligenverehrung II (Hagiographie)”, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 14 (1987), cols 150-183; ID., “Biographie II (spirituelle)”, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* Suppl. 1 (2001), cols 1088-1364; and ID., “L’origine et les ingrédients du discours hagiographique”, *Sacris Erudiri* 50 (2011), p. 35-70. See there on p. 60 for the influence of Fontaine’s work on Van Uytfanghe.

<sup>42</sup> VAN UYTFANGHE, *L’origine et les ingrédients du discours hagiographique*, l.c. (n. 41), p. 60.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> For references and evaluative discussions of this approach, see J. HOWARD-JOHNSTON and P. HAYWARD, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2002 and TURNER, *o.c.* (n. 1), p. 8-9.

on what is sometimes called “novelisation” or the interaction between hagiographical and ancient novelistic traditions. Some studies explore the adaptation and transformation in hagiography of (episodes and/or motifs from) ancient novelistic and apocryphal traditions, such as the virgin in the brothel, the recognition and the defence of chastity. Typically, the various ways of adaptation of such motifs in hagiography are interpreted as indicators of changing religious and social convictions in the late antique Christian world.<sup>45</sup> For instance, Annelies Bossu demonstrates the various ways in which late antique Latin accounts of female martyrs adapt the *topos* of the defence of chastity, popular in the Greek novels, interpreting them as an indication of the various conceptualizations of love and chastity in Late Antiquity: “whereas the novelistic heroines safeguard their chastity for their worldly lover, the heroines of the passions want to remain chaste for Christ”.<sup>46</sup> Other studies focus on the novelisation of particular texts, often precisely those which were neglected in scholarship because of their purported fictiveness.<sup>47</sup> While some of these studies have a clear philological aim, namely clarifying the literary origins of the hagiographical texts,<sup>48</sup> most consider

<sup>45</sup> For more discussion of this trend, see A. BOSSU, *Quick-witted Woman: Literary Studies of Female Characters in the Latin post-Nicene Passions of the Martyrs*, Ghent, Doctoral Dissertation Ghent University, 2014, p. 18-22. Bossu discusses various studies, for instance, F. RIZZO NERVO, “La vergine e il lupanare. Storiografia, romanzo, agiografia”, in *La narrativa cristiana antica. Codici narrativi, strutture formali, schemi retorici. XXIII° Incontro di studiosi dell’antichità cristiana. Roma, 5-7 maggio 1994*, Rome, 1995, p. 91-99 (which focuses on the novelistic *topos* of the virgin in the brothel in Greek and Latin hagiographical narratives, arguing that the various transformations of the *topos* reflect the different positions taken by late fourth-century Christian leaders with regard to the issue of suicide in case of rape); P. BOULHOL, *Anagnorismos: La scène de reconnaissance dans l’hagiographie antique et médiévale*, Marseille, 1996 (on the ways in which the pseudo-Clementines and late antique Greek and Latin hagiographical texts adapt the recognition motif, no longer employing it as a closural device like in the Greek novels, but describing it as a transitional stage which the saint has to pass on his/her journey towards God); K. CHEW, “The Chaste and the Chased: σωφροσύνη, Female Martyrs and Novelistic Heroines”, *Syllecta Classica* 14 (2003), p. 205-222 and K. CHEW, “The Representation of Violence in the Greek Novels and Martyr Accounts”, in S. PANAYOTAKIS, M. ZIMMERMAN and W. KEULEN (eds), *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, Leiden/Boston, 2003, p. 129-142 (which consider the defence of chastity motif in Greek and Latin female martyr accounts as an indication of the desire among Christians to replace the traditional marriage with the spiritual union with God).

<sup>46</sup> A. BOSSU, “Steadfast and Shrewd Heroines: the Defence of Chastity in the Latin post-Nicene Passions and the Greek Novels”, *Ancient Narrative* 12 (2015), p. 115.

<sup>47</sup> This also pertains to BOSSU, *l.c.* (n. 46), which studies late antique Latin passions that were long neglected because of their purported a-historical dimension. Similarly, Greek and Byzantine late antique and early medieval martyr accounts have yet received only little attention for their possible interconnections with the ancient novelistic tradition. Q. CATAUDELLA, “Vite di santi e romanzo”, in *Letterature comparate: problemi di metodo. Studi in onore di E. Paratore. Vol. II*, Bologna, 1981, p. 931-952 is still an important starting point, providing an elaborate overview of the motifs and the topical elements shared by both ancient Greek novels and Greek hagiographical writings.

<sup>48</sup> Most importantly, Cécile Lanéry’s book-length article “Les Passions latines composées en Italie”, in G. PHILIPPART, *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiogra-*

the texts from a literary- or socio-historical perspective as proofs of the changing mentalities in the contemporary Christian society.<sup>49</sup> William Robins, for example, highlights different strategies or “romance modes” through which the *History of Apollonius King of Tyre* is adapted in various late antique Latin hagiographical texts, interpreting these modes as indications of the various ways in which the fifth-century aristocratic circle in Rome adapted itself to the Christian ideal of asceticism.<sup>50</sup>

These studies give important new insights into the versatile ways in which hagiographical narrative adapts topical material from the ancient fictional traditions. Yet, besides the topical material, scholars have so far paid little attention to the formal aspects and the narrative techniques through which hagiographical narratives are constituted, as well as the implications of the borrowing of novelistic elements for the question of truth and fiction in hagiography. As I aim to discuss in the next paragraph, this has only recently started to change in research which concentrates on the formal aspects of hagiography and proposes a different approach to the problem of fiction, namely as referring to a type of text which is constituted by the use of various authenticating and fictionalising techniques of narration.

#### 4. Recent approaches: narrative techniques, novelisation and fiction(alisation)

Recent research in the field of Latin hagiography signals a return to the literary construction of the narrative. This can be considered as part of the recent trend in late

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*phique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550 (Corpus Christianorum, V)*, Turnhout, 2010, p. 15-369, which provides a general typology and literary-historical discussion of the late antique Roman passions, including, for instance, those of Caecilia (BHL 1495), Anastasia (BHL 1795), Eugenia (BHL 2666-2667), Agatha (BHL 133), and Agnes (BHL 156).

<sup>49</sup> Examples are the Passions of Anastasia, Agnes and Eugenia. For the *Passion of Anastasia*, see P.F. MORETTI (ed.), *La passio Anastasiae. Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione*, Rome, 2006, p. 15-22. For a discussion of the *Passion of Agnes* and its interconnections with the novels, most importantly the *History of Apollonius King of Tyre*, see A.A. KORTEKAAS (ed.), *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri. Prolegomena, Text Edition of the Two Principal Latin Recensions, Bibliography, Indices and Appendices*, Groningen, 1984, p. 105, 236-237 n. 582; A.A. KORTEKAAS (ed.), *The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre: a Study of its Greek Origin and an Edition of the two oldest Latin Recensions*, Leiden/Boston, 2004, p. 21; S. PANAYOTAKIS, “The Temple and the Brothel: Mothers and Daughters in Apollonius of Tyre”, in S. FRANGOULIDIS (ed.), *Space in the Ancient Novel*, Groningen, 2002, p. 98-117; and H. JONES, “Agnes and Constantia: Domesticity and Cult Patronage in the Passion of Agnes”, in K. COOPER and J. HILLNER (eds), *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 127-128. For the *Passion of Eugenia*, see K. COOPER, “The Virgin as Social Icon”, in M. VAN DIJK and R. NIP (eds), *Saints, Scholars and Politicians. Gender as a Tool in Medieval Studies*, Turnhout, 2005, p. 19-20.

<sup>50</sup> W. ROBINS, “Romance and Renunciation at the Turn of the Fifth Century”, *J ECS* 8, 4 (2000), p. 531-557. Robins’ article is important for the study of late antique Latin hagiography, because it solely concentrates on Latin texts, which are often studied in close connection with their Greek counterparts otherwise. Robins analyses Jerome’s *Life of Malchus* and his Latin translation of the *Book of Tobit*, Rufinus’ pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, and Sulpicius’ *Life of Martin*.

antique and medieval studies that has been called “neo-formalism”, because of its occupation with the study of the narrative techniques employed for the description of saints.<sup>51</sup> This shift does not imply that former research was not concerned with the literary form: as we have seen, it was an important aspect of the study of hagiography in the 1970s, and Delehayé also discussed various techniques through which narratives present themselves as history in his discussion of historical passions. Yet, drawing on insights from the fields of classical and postclassical narratology, scholars pay more detailed attention to specific narrative techniques in order to elucidate their possibly novelistic and fictional dimensions. For instance, in an article on Jerome’s *Life of Malchus*, Jiří Šubrt explores the techniques of ego-narration and focalisation in order to assess its relationship with the ancient novelistic tradition.<sup>52</sup> He argues that the technique of narration in the *Life* should be considered as an “influence of novelistic literature”, more specifically, of Achilles Tatius’ novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*, which makes use of ego-narration and focalisation in a way similar to the *Life of Malchus*.<sup>53</sup> Recalling the type of interpretation promoted by Fuhrmann and Kech, Šubrt argues that this technique of narration supports the *Life of Malchus*’ edifying goal.<sup>54</sup> Comparably, Annelies Bossu and others study some late antique Latin accounts of female martyrs with a focus on character construction, highlighting from a narratological perspective how some female martyrs defend their chastity.<sup>55</sup> They demonstrate that the texts convey a rather high degree of literary sophistication and originality.

The work of Šubrt and other scholars who have discussed the aspect of novelisation in hagiographical texts raises important questions related to what Irene de Jong calls “narratological intertextuality”, or the use of similar narrative devices by different authors across time and space. “Can we imagine author X consciously following the example of author Y”, de Jong asks, “or should we rather think in terms of narrative universals, i.e. assume that different authors may employ the same device independently? Or should we allow for both possibilities?”<sup>56</sup> Šubrt, and many scholars with him, seem to follow the first strategy: they consider specific motifs or

<sup>51</sup> See E. VON CONTZEN, “Introduction”, in E. VON CONTZEN and A. BERNAU (eds), *Sanctity as Literature in Late Medieval Britain*, Manchester, 2015, p. 1-4 for a discussion of a similar neo-formalist trend in the study of medieval hagiography.

<sup>52</sup> J. ŠUBRT, “Hagiographic Romance: Novelistic Narrative Strategy in Jerome’s Lives of Hermits”, in M. FUTRE PINHEIRO, G.L. SCHMELING and E.P. CUEVA (eds), *The Ancient Novel and the Frontiers of Genre*, Eelde, 2014, p. 207.

<sup>53</sup> ŠUBRT, *l.c.* (n. 52), p. 207.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>55</sup> See D. PRAET and A. BOSSU, “A Marriage of Equals? Characterization in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*”, *Philologus* 159, 2 (2015), p. 301-326; A. BOSSU, K. DE TEMMERMAN and D. PRAET, “The Saint as a Cunning Heroine. Rhetoric and Characterization in the *passio Caeciliae*”, *Mnemosyne* 69, 3 (2016), p. 433-452; and A. BOSSU, D. PRAET and K. DE TEMMERMAN, “Erotic Persuasion and Characterization in Late Antique Hagiography. The *passio Caeciliae* and the *passio Susannae*”, *Latomus* 74, 4 (2016), p. 1059-1072.

<sup>56</sup> I.J.F. DE JONG, “Diachronic Narratology. (The Example of Ancient Greek Narrative)”, Website *The living handbook of narratology*, 2014, <<http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/diachronic-narratology-example-ancient-greek-narrative>>, accessed on 2 February 2017, § 17.

narrative techniques as “novelistic”, presuming that they are borrowed from the ancient novels. However, it can often be objected that particular techniques or motifs are of a more universal nature; the use of ego-narration, for instance, has its basis in a work as old as the *Odyssey*. Consequently, more research and theoretical reflection is needed in order to clarify what terms like “novelistic” and “novelisation” precisely mean, and to assess the generic specificity of certain techniques of narration and motifs.

Besides the problem of genre, moreover, the question of novelisation (i.e. the borrowing of novelistic elements in hagiography) also raises the longstanding problem of fiction. Reinstating the old claim of the Bollandists, Peter Turner has recently emphasised the “truth-telling” aim of hagiography, laying bare the various techniques of narration which enhance and underline the historicity, realism and trustworthiness of the account and the saintly characters.<sup>57</sup> If hagiography is indeed a truth-telling discourse, how should we then evaluate the use of narrative techniques and motifs known from ancient fictional traditions like the novels?

In my view, a valuable starting point for further reflection is Charis Messis’ article on the notions of fiction and novelisation in hagiography, which, although it concentrates on Greek/Byzantine texts, is also valuable for the study of Latin late antique hagiography.<sup>58</sup> First of all, Messis argues that the presence of shared themes in hagiography and the ancient Greek novels does not say much about the novelistic character of hagiography, since motifs can be borrowed from other literary traditions as well, most importantly the Scripture. Hence, besides the shared motifs, one should always consider “the adoption of novelistic techniques” (what Messis calls “novelisation”<sup>59</sup>) in order to evaluate the influence of novelistic literature on hagiography.<sup>60</sup> However, not all techniques are equally important. According to Messis, only those techniques are novelistic which align narratives with the “conventions of realism”: “If one of the basic goals of the novels ... is the flight from reality and an escape to a dream-world and fantasy, the ancient novels simultaneously attempted to build bridges to the real world of its audience. It devised and activated means by which to render the fantastic a version of the real.”<sup>61</sup> Messis here relates the question of novelisation to the problem of fictionality, claiming that hagiography borrows from the ancient novels precisely those techniques of narration which resort a realistic effect. Two techniques are particularly important, Messis argues, namely narrative digressions and ego-narrative: they are techniques of authentication, introducing a realistic element into the hagiographical narrative through the reference to common knowledge and realistic detail respectively.<sup>62</sup> In his conclusion, Messis emphasises

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<sup>57</sup> See TURNER, *o.c.* (n. 1) for a discussion of the various techniques of narration aiming at the historicity, realism and trustworthiness of hagiographical accounts, such as the reference to documentary evidence, eyewitness accounts and claims of truth and veracity.

<sup>58</sup> MESSIS, *l.c.* (n. 1).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319, 315.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315-320 (for a discussion of the two techniques of narration and 328-329 (for the “authenticating” effect of the novelistic techniques of narration).

that these novelistic strategies of narration do not make the hagiographical texts fictions in the sense of genre: they “are reoriented to become bearers of new meaning and so they contribute to the construction of a new anthropological type: the Christian saint.”<sup>63</sup>

Messis’ alignment of narrative techniques and thematic similarities is surely refreshing. With respect to de Jong’s question, it suggests that narratological intertextuality is indeed possible, insofar as hagiographical texts employ specific narrative devices with a similar thematic interest and in the same functional way as in the novels.<sup>64</sup> Even more important, Messis bends the traditional discussion about the question of truth and fiction in hagiography in a new direction. His claim that techniques of narration used in fictional traditions have the aim to enhance the realism of hagiography implies a departure from earlier research, which tended to classify hagiographical texts as fiction in a generic sense when they contained elements from the ancient novelistic tradition, but did not pay much attention to the fictionalising or authenticating effects of specific techniques of narration.<sup>65</sup> As Messis indicates, novelistic strategies and themes do not make hagiographical texts fictions in a generic sense. They rather have a communicative goal, underlining in a paradoxical way the authenticity of the texts as well as their ideological message. Messis so goes beyond the mere distinction between fictiveness (denoting in its generic, ontological sense the status of a text as an untruth, lie, invention, fabrication, etc.) and truth (in its historical and ideological sense), which characterised much of the earlier research.

However, Messis’ article also raises new questions, especially when related to other studies in the field of ancient narrative. As has recently been noted with respect to ancient biographies, these texts contain, despite their aim to provide a historical and realistic account of the hero(ine)’s life, many strategies of narration which can be called “fictionalising”, since they imbue the texts with elements which are invented and do not represent historical reality.<sup>66</sup> This ties in with John Morgan’s older but still important article on the ancient novel, which demonstrates that techniques of narration pointing out the fictional aspect of a narrative occur side by side with elements which underline its historicity and realism.<sup>67</sup> The same pertains to hagiographical texts, which employ techniques of authentication together with strategies which in scholarship have been considered as markers of fictionality, having their basis in invention rather than in historical reality.<sup>68</sup> However, the various fictionalising and

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315-316.

<sup>65</sup> Delehayé seems to be an exception, since he pays quite some attention to the strategies of authentication in historical passions; DELEHAYÉ, *o.c.* (n. 6), p. 173-182. An important recent study is TURNER, *o.c.* (n. 1). See n. 11 and 57 in this article for further discussion of these publications.

<sup>66</sup> See the various contributions in DE TEMMERMAN and DEMOEN, *o.c.* (n. 3).

<sup>67</sup> J.R. MORGAN, “Make-believe and Make Believe: The Fictionality of the Greek Novels”, in C. GILL and T.P. WISEMAN (eds), *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, Exeter, 1993, p. 175-229.

<sup>68</sup> Examples of such narrative strategies are the representation of the characters’ thought by the third-person narrator, the inclusion of knowledge which is heuristically inaccessible, and

authenticating effects of specific narrative techniques have not yet been fully explored in hagiographical texts. Moreover, extending Messis' argument, one could wonder whether novelistic narrative strategies, besides the effect of realism, could also have a fictionalising effect in hagiography; in other words, make the text fictional by drawing attention to its status as a literary invention.

### 5. Conclusions

I have explored various phases in the scholarship of Latin late antique hagiography. In the broadest terms, we may conclude that attention has shifted from the historical value of texts to their literary qualities. This sits together with a shifting interest in "fictiveness" (the ontological status of a text as an invention, fiction, untruth, fabrication etc.) to the "fictionalised" aspect of texts (the use of fictionalising strategies of narration which emphasise the constructed nature of a text, and are used for specific goals, which can even be authenticating). But I have also pointed to a few deep-rooted complexities underlying this shift. A recurrent problem in scholarship on Latin hagiography is that terms such as "fiction(alisation)", "fictiveness", "invention" and "novel(isation)" are not often clearly defined and are used in different ways and with different meanings, depending on the period of time and the scholarly traditions in which studies are written.

These complexities, together with the fact that many late antique Latin hagiographical texts have not yet been subjected to detailed literary and/or narratological analysis, indicate that much space is still left for further examination of the literary, fictional(ised) and novelised dimensions of hagiographical narrative. Eventually, such analysis should go beyond the mere interest in truth (be it historical, ideological, or otherwise) and fictiveness: the presentation of historical untruths. As has recently been noted with respect to ancient biographies, "[they] were not meant to be read as hermetically sealed depositories of a 'historical' truth and no simple dichotomy between fact and fictiveness can adequately grasp the complexities of narrative literature."<sup>69</sup> The same is true for hagiography, in which authenticating techniques of narration are used together with techniques of fictionalisation which draw attention to the text's invented character. Future research should further analyse these techniques of narration, in order to better understand notions such as fiction, fictionalisation, novelisation and truth in hagiography.

*Ghent University  
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy  
Blandijnberg 2  
B-9000 Ghent  
klazina.staat@ugent.be*

Klazina STAAT

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instances of literary modelling and intertextuality which imbue a text with elements taken from earlier texts rather than historical reality. See DE TEMMERMAN, *l.c.* (n. 3), p. 17-25 for an extensive overview of such fictionalising strategies in ancient biography.

<sup>69</sup> DE TEMMERMAN, *l.c.* (n. 3), p. 6.