

Conference reports

Cult of Saints in Late Antique Texts: 2018 Conferences

Narrating Power and Authority in Late Antique and Medieval Hagiographies from East to West, Rome, 15–17 February 2018

International Medieval Congress, Leeds, 2–5 July 2018

The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity, Warsaw, 27–28 September 2018

Understanding Hagiography and its Textual Tradition: the Late Antique and the Early Medieval Period, Lisbon, 24–26 October 2018

Novel Saints. Novel, Hagiography and Romance from the 4th to the 12th Century, Ghent, 22–24 November 2018

Several encounters in 2018 dealt with hagiographical research, while the veneration of saints in Late Antiquity in the Mediterranean area received a major share of attention. Below is but a very short summary on just five such events, without any claim of completeness.

The *International Medieval Congress* in Leeds traditionally hosts several panels dedicated to the cult of saints. This year's congress had 'Memory' as its special thematic strand, which attracted a number of panels and presentations revolving around the veneration of saints. The state of the art in hagiographical research was discussed in the papers presented within the panel '25 Years of Hagiographical Research: Past Achievements and Future Perspectives' (three sessions on 3 July 2018). The panel 'Remembering the Saints' (four sessions on 4 July 2018, organized by scholars members of the 'Cult of Saints' ERC project based at Oxford, see also below) included the sessions 'The Formation and Revision of Memory', 'Forgotten and Ephemeral Saints', 'Creating and Adapting Memory in the Late Antique Mediterranean', and 'Creating and Adapting Memory in Early Medieval England and Wales', the former three almost entirely relevant in the COMSt context. The papers dealing with the Byzantine tradition included Anne P. Alwis, 'Adapting Memory in Byzantine Hagiography', Robert Wiśniewski, 'Holy Time in a Holy Place: Annual Miracles at the Feasts of Saints in Late Antiquity', Aude Busine, 'How to Tell the Story of Obscure Martyrs?: Euppsychius, Mamas, and Gordius at Caesarea in Cappadocia', Christian Sagner, 'Syrian and Byzantine Saints in a 12th-Century Syriac Manuscript', Efthymios Rizos, 'The Transformations of the Legend of Athenogenes of Pedachthoe', and Stavroula Constantinou, 'Remembering St Febronia: The Textual Cult of a Nun Martyr'.

(Note: the IMC 2018 hosted a vast array of other panels of varying length relevant for the COMSt network which are not subject of this summary. Just to give some examples, these included, among others, ‘Constructing and Reconstructing the Past’ (2 July 2018, with two papers on Islamic Arabic literature), ‘Between Memory and Imagination, I: Medieval Religious Encounters from the Silk Road to the Indian Ocean, II: Jewish Engagements from Ethiopia to the Persianate World’ (2 July 2018, with papers in Ethiopian, Jewish, Arabic, and Syriac studies), ‘Mythical Figures, Legendary Characters, and Great Men in the So-Called Occult Sciences in Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Medieval Texts’ (3 July 2018), ‘Visual Memory in the Late Antique and Byzantine World’ (3 July 2018), ‘CEU 25, II: Jewish Studies; III: Byzantine Studies—Reactivations of Knowledge’ (3 July 2018), ‘Adaptation of Byzantine Hymnography in the Medieval World: East and West’ (4 July 2018), ‘Moving Byzantium, II: The Movement of Manuscripts’ (4 July 2018), ‘Remembering the Other in Islamic History’ (4 July 2018), ‘Communicating Medieval Heritage’ (5 July 2018, with a paper on Jewish manuscript heritage), ‘Medieval Provençal and Sephardi Texts between Secular Culture and Religion’ (5 July 2018), see the congress website <<https://www.imc.leeds.ac.uk/imcarchive/2018/>> for more information).

The international conference *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity* took place in Warsaw on 27 and 28 September 2018. It was the final event organized by the ERC project ‘Cult of Saints’, based at the University of Oxford (<<http://cultofsaints.history.ox.ac.uk/>>). The project investigates the origins and development of the cult of Christian saints in Late Antiquity. It maps the cult of saints as a system of beliefs and practices in its earliest and most fluid form, from its origins until around 700 CE (by which date most cult practices were firmly established): the evolution from honouring the memory of martyrs, to their veneration as intercessors and miracle-workers; the different ways that saints were honoured and their help solicited; the devotion for relics, sacred sites and images; the miracles expected from the saints. The conference papers covered material aspects of the cult and objects of veneration (e.g. relics, icons), the historical aspects of the development of cults of saints and martyrs, but also naturally considered texts and manuscripts connected with the saints (mainly, their hagiographies) in a variety of languages. Among others, Nikoloz Aleksidze spoke of the ‘Georgian sources for the study of the cult of saints in the Holy Land’, Eftymios Rizos of the ‘Relationship between hagiography and institutions of Cult: remarks on the legends of Athenogenes of Pedachthoe and Julian of Cilicia’, and Anna Salsano of ‘The Archangels Michael and Raphael in Coptic Acta Martyrum’. For the full programme, see <<http://cslaconference.ihuw.pl/programme/>>.

From 24 to 26 October 2018, an international conference on *Understanding Hagiography and its Textual Tradition* was convened by Paulo Farmhouse Alberto (University of Lisbon), Paolo Chiesa (Università degli studi di Milano), and Monique Goulet (CNRS/Paris-1, Panthéon-Sorbonne) at the University of Lisbon. The focus was on the remarkable process of transmission and rewriting that hagiographical texts underwent between the sixth and the eleventh century. While most papers dealt with general theoretical questions and occidental hagiographic traditions (Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, English, etc.), several papers fell specifically into the COMSt language scope. The fates of Byzantine Greek hagiographies in the Middle Ages were illustrated by Tina Chronopoulos in her talk on ‘The early Greek lives of St Katherine of Alexandria’ and by Anna Lampadaridi in her paper on ‘Lire saint Jérôme en grec: l’exemple de la Vie d’Hilarion (BHG 752)’. Two presentations addressed the fates of hagiographical texts in mediaeval Georgia: Eka Chikvaidze spoke of ‘St Barbara’s Martyrdom: the Georgian versions’ and Nikoloz Aleksidze discussed ‘The ‘discovery’ of old hagiographies and their new political lives in medieval Georgia’. Elizabeth Buchanan spoke of ‘Monastic use of early Coptic saints’ miracles as a prod to donate and a warning against theft’. Finally, Slavonic tradition was in the centre of the presentation by Marina Zgrablić on ‘Istrian hagiographical tradition in the context of political and ecclesiastical change in the Early Middle Ages’. The conference programme is available at <<http://uhttlisbon2018.letras.ulisboa.pt/>>.

Another ERC project, ‘Novel Saints. Studies in Ancient Fiction and Hagiography’, based at the University of Ghent (<<https://www.novelsaints.ugent.be/>>), convened two relevant conferences in 2018. The project team studies the early Latin and Greek novel in antiquity and its reception in later periods, with a focus on late antique and early medieval hagiographical narrative traditions. The conference *Narrating Power and Authority in Late Antique and Medieval Hagiographies from East to West* was organized by Ghazzal Dabiri in Rome (Academia Belgica) from 15 to 17 February 2018. It featured an array of papers dealing with Byzantine Greek hagiographic tradition (Roald Dijkstra, ‘Laughing till Death: The Power of Laughter in Poetic Martyrdom Accounts’; Maria Conterno, ‘Whose Dream Comes True? Negotiation of Primacy in the Legend of Theodosius and Theophilus’; Fabrizio Petorella, ‘Power and Prophecy in Late Antique Hagiography: The Life of Saint Daniel the Stylite’; Petros Tsagkaropoulos, ‘Between Emperor and Caliph: Literary Arbitrariness in the Representation of Power Relations in the Life of St John of Damascus’; Stavroula Constantinou, ‘The Hagiographer’s Power and Authority in Byzantine Greek Miracle Collections’; Yulia Mantova, ‘A State Official as a Hagiographer: Exploring the Case of the *Life of*

St. Theoktista of Lesbos (BHG 1723)'; Nike Koutrakou, 'The Supernatural and the Limits of Power: Imperial Middlemen between Saints and Emperors in Byzantine Hagiography'; Maïeul Rouquette, 'Two Churches, Two saints, One Island: The Narrative Construction of the Conflict between Tamasus and Salamis (Cyprus) through Heracleides and Barnabas'. Yet, a vast range of other related traditions was also covered, including Armenian (Zara Pogossian, 'True Cross Relics in Armenia: Between 'Popular Tales' and Princely Patronage), Georgian (Damien Labadie, 'The Caliph, the Jew and the Bishop: Power and Religious Controversy in the Georgian Life of John of Edessa'; Nikoloz Aleksidze, 'Relics as Treasure and Kings as Their Discoverers: Legitimizing Royal Rule in Late Antique Caucasia'), Coptic (Anna Rogozhina, 'O You Evil, Blood-Shedding Lion, You Dragon That Dwells in the Abyss: Representations of Roman Imperial Authorities in Coptic Hagiography'), Arabic (Paul Losensky, 'Marvels of Authority: *Karāmāt* and Crises of Power in *Ṣafwat al-ṣafā'*); Aaron W. Hughes, 'Establishing Prophetic Authority in Early Islam: Ibn Ishāq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*'; Manpreet Kaur, 'Learning to be Sufi, Writing to Make History: Malfūzāt in the Chishti Context'), Persian (Islamic, Christian, Zoroastrian: Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, 'Symbiotic Sainthood: The Intertwining of Regal and Spiritual Power in 14th-century Fars'; Mohsen Ghasemi, 'Rūmī and Political Authorities: The Politics of Rūmī's Poetry'; Annunziata di Rienzo, 'A Noble Christian Killer: Portraits of Apostate Executioners in the Persian Martyr Acts'; Maryam Musharraf, 'The Paradox of Junayd of Baghdad: Sobriety in a Drunken Cosmos'; Carlo Cereti, 'Zoroaster's Life According to the Seventh Book of the Denkard and the Zaratushtname'; Ghazzal Dabiri, 'Who's the Moral Authority Around Here? Zoroastrians in Medieval Sufi Hagiographies'), Ottoman Turkish (Eliza Tasbihi, 'Revisiting the Significance of Rūmī's Shrine: Redefining the Concept of Sacred Space in Mevlānā Mausoleum'; Sibel Kocaer, 'Encounters of a Muslim Saint with Christian Monks and Rulers: The Adventures of Sarı Saltık in Ottoman Times'), Ethiopic (Olivia Adankpo-Labadie, 'The Saint, the Bad, and the Ugly: Constructing Figures of Power and Authority through Hagiographical Narrative and Socio-political Dissent in 14th c. Ethiopia'), Slavonic (Enrique S. Marinas, 'Sins of Youth of Saint Rulers in the Byzantine and Russian Hagiographical Literatures'), and Syriac (Maria E. Doerfler, 'Solomon in Edessa: The Saint and the Law in the Syriac *Life of Rabbula*'). The conference programme is available at <https://www.novelsaints.ugent.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Narrating-Power-and-Authority_Prelim-Program-1.pdf>.

Finally, held within the framework of the same ERC project, the conference *Novel Saints. Novel, Hagiography and Romance from the 4th to the 12th Century* took place in Ghent from 22 to 24 November 2018. It was organized

by Koen De Temmerman and Flavia Ruani. Once again, Byzantine studies were the highest profiled. Edmund Cueva spoke on ‘Symeon Metaphrastes, Life, Conduct, and Passion of the Holy Martyr of Christ Saint Eugenia and Her Parent, 50)’. Charis Messis’ talk was entitled ‘When Holiness Becomes Literature: the Lives of Women in Byzantium from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century’. R. Gillian Glass spoke of the ‘Novel Martyrdom: The Passion of Theagenes and Charikleia?’. Fotis Vasileiou presented on ‘From Leucippe to St. Thomais. Literary Motifs, Narrative Techniques, and Female Virtue in Late Antiquity’. An extra panel was dedicated to the Alexander Romance, featuring papers by S. Peter Cowe, ‘From Roman Alexandria to Ilkhanid Iran: The Orientalizing and Christianizing of the Armenian Alexander Romance’, Fedor Veselov, ‘Origins of the ‘Encircled Nations’ Episode Illustrations in Illuminated Manuscripts of the Alexander Romance’, and Alex MacFarlane, ‘The Monks and the Monarch: Christian Stories about the Edges of the World in Armenian’. Armenian tradition was also in the focus of the talk by Chahan Vidal-Gorène and Agnès Ouzounian on ‘L’Histoire de Zosime, une hagiographie? Nouvelles perspectives à l’aune de la tradition arménienne’. Novel-like features of Ethiopic hagiographies were discussed by Olivia Adankpo-Labadie in her paper ‘Le gadl, un roman éthiopien? Quelques réflexions sur l’écriture romanesque dans la littérature hagiographique éthiopienne médiévale’. Syriac studies were addressed by Alexey Muraviev in his paper on ‘Narrative Structures in the Syriac Julian Romance and their Literary Antecedents’ and by Flavia Ruani, who spoke of ‘Thecla Beyond Thecla. Secondary Characters in Syriac Hagiography’. Judaeo-Christian relationships as reflected in Late Antique literature were approached in the papers by Amber May Bremner ‘The Relationship between the Jewish novel *The Testament of Job* and the 5th-century *Life of Simeon Stylites* by Antonius: an Example of the Literary Role of Hagiography’ and Benjamin De Vos ‘The Homilistic Disputes Between Clement and Appion – a Clash Between Judeo-Christianity and Paganism for the ‘True’ *Paideia*’. Several contributions dealt with the apocryphal texts, including María Paz López Martínez, ‘The Papyri of *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres* in the Context of the Greek Lost Novels’ and Jan Bremmer, ‘The Earlier Apocryphal Acts and the Novel, with Special Attention to the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Both in Greek and Latin’. For the full programme, visit <<https://www.novelsaints.ugent.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Novel-Saints-Conference-Definitive-Program.pdf>>.

It remains to be hoped that at least a part of the papers presented at the conferences described shall be soon published and become accessible to interested scholars.

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