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Husband as a "Religious Other": Family Discord from Early Christian Apology to Medieval Hagiography

1 Introduction

This essay concentrates on an episode appearing in Christian writings from the earliest days until the late Middle Ages.[1] By episode, I mean a shorter narrative unit within a larger narrative, which describes an event or a few events and is part of a more extensive sequence. The episode, which describes the family discord over religion, where husband and wife do not share the same religious beliefs, materializes in many Christian writings, but not without transformations. The shared episode never stays entirely cemented when moving forward from one context to another. The episode's transformed elements are analyzed with the help of the theoretical perspectives expressed in Alexandra Georgakopoulou's and David Herman's writings, which both contribute to narratology.

To use the words of Alexandra Georgakopoulou, who wrote about "Small Stories, Interaction, and Identities," the episode in the case is present "in a larger history of interactions. It is intertextually linked and available for recontextualization in various local settings."[2] However, it is, first and foremost, "embedded in its immediate discourse surroundings."[3] The primary concern of this essay is the "embeddedness of stories in the immediate discourse surroundings," else named as "discourse contexts or occasions for telling." Such occasions concern the current prompting and motivation for telling a story whose core is otherwise rooted and already familiar in a tradition where the story seeks to belong. Recognizable stories within a specific culture are repeatedly retold for the reasons generated by current matters.

1 This article belongs to the broader research within the frame of the research programme "Retracing Connections: Byzantine Storyworlds in Greek, Arabic, Georgian, and Old Slavonic (c. 950–c. 1100)" (M19 – 0430:1, https://retracingconnections.org), where I have studied the transmission of the Metaphrastic *menologion* into Old Slavonic. I am grateful to the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for the opportunity to conduct this research.

2 Alexandra Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories, Interaction and Identities* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2007), 40.

3 Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories*, 40; David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 5.

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Georgakopoulou explains organizing a discourse into a text.[4] She argues that this process enables speakers to lift a text from one context to another, which conditions the iterability of texts. Texts are thus both constructed anew in new contexts (recontextualized) and relationally orientated to their previous contexts of occurrence.[5] In her view, "recontextualization of a narrative through repeated tellings over time leads to mini-tellings and ultimately to condensed quotable forms that can be reworked and stylized."[6]

David Herman, who refers to the work of Georgakopoulou, defines the narrative as a "mode of representation situated in a specific discourse context or occasion for telling."[7] When discussing what he calls "situatedness" – emphasizing that stories are the result of complex transactions involving producers of texts, texts themselves, and interpreters – Herman also asserts that interpreters and readers who seek to use textual hints to reconstruct a storyworld must also deduce about the communicative goals that structured the specific occasions of the telling.[8] The narrative occasions or occasions for telling are, in his definition, communicative environments that shape the interpretation of the acts of narration. Alternatively, they could be contexts shaped by storytelling practices.[9] The contexts give any story its point or reason for telling.[10]

From this theoretical standpoint, I approach the episode of family discord over religion in several Christian writings of diverse periods to analyze its "communicative environments" or "occasions for telling." In the episode, the wife is a Christian, while the husband belongs either to another religious group or does not have religious beliefs. Alternatively, his beliefs are not explicitly stated. In the various writings, the religious discord ranges from milder forms of dispute to conflicts with detrimental consequences, including domestic violence and homicide.

The core of the episode stays unchanged. It is embedded in an already familiar textual situation formulated earlier. Borrowing from already devised textual forms, established genres, and specific subjects was not only not foreign to Christianity. Such intertextuality was desirable. The Christians sought to use generic forms, borrow from authoritative scripts, and reuse quotes from the Bible and other appreciated writings to convey messages. The reuse likely reflects an admi-

4 Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories*, 11.
5 Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories*, 11.
6 Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories*, 11–12.
7 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 9.
8 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 17.
9 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 37.
10 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 74.

ration for previous forms and subjects. It presents a way of looking back at and up to the past.

Reuse, however, usually involves transformation. The episode amplified and elaborated certain content features, reflecting the assumptions about the readers' cultural background and knowledge. While the episode's core was transferred intact, its segments related to "communicative environments" or "occasions for telling" allowed some space to communicate messages of a given time rather than staying cemented. The transformed elements spoke directly to the contemporary audience. These sections were turned towards the present moment and responded to the current preoccupations of their readers. In this way, the episode was both intertextual and contextualized. The transformed worlds in the episode triggered Christian readers to receive various messages in different periods. Moreover, such transformations allowed readers to move from one storyworld to another.[11]

Besides re-emerging in diverse Christian texts of various periods through intertextual borrowing, the episode expectedly re-appeared in rewritings and translations. When translated to another language or rewritten within the same language, the episode obtains novel features in new contexts, surrounded by new communicative environments. The episode's appearance in a novel context of another version of the same narrative, another language, or a different narrative inevitably seeks the transformed elaboration of the "occasions for telling." It is even more so as in the intersectional studies of narratology and translation studies, there exists not only a "narrator's voice" and a "translator's voice," but also, according to some scholars, "the voice of the narrator of the translation."[12]

2 Justin Martyr, *Second Apology for the Christians*

The episode of religious discord appears in Justin Martyr, a second-century apologist and philosopher, or, more precisely, in his *Second Apology for the Christians*, written around 155–160 CE in Rome during the reign of Antoninus Pius.[13] Chapter 2

11 Catherine Slater, "Location, Location, Translation: Mapping Voice in Translated Storyworlds," *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3 (2011): 93–115, 111–12.

12 See, for example, Theo Hermans, "The Translator's Voice in Translated Narrative," *Target* 8/1 (1996): 23–48; Emer O'Sullivan, "Narratology Meets Translation Studies, Or, The Voice of the Translator in Children's Literature," *Meta: journal des traducteurs* (*Meta: Translators' Journal*) 48/1–2 (2003): 197–207, 202.

13 Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 6, 441–470; *The Fathers of the Church* (Saint Justin Martyr: The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks,

unveils an account of three Christians persecuted during Urbicus, an urban prefect between 150–163 in Rome. The episode's opening presents a lengthy side-story about a "woman who lived with an unchaste husband."[14]

Justin stresses that "she too had once been unchaste."[15] However, after learning the doctrines of Christ, "she became a self-controlled person," trying in this way to influence her husband.[16] She explained the Christian teachings to him. She warned him of the eternal punishment by fire reserved for those who live without chastity or right reason.[17] He, however, clung to the same shameful conduct, searching in every way for the means of sensual pleasure contrary to the law of nature. Thus, he lost his wife's affection; she desired a divorce.

Initially, she gave up on the idea of divorce when her friends persuaded her that things might change in the future. Nevertheless, when he went to Alexandria and behaved worse than ever, indulging in all kinds of bodily pleasures, sinful and impious acts, she gave him "a bill of divorce and left him."[18] The woman admitted that she used to behave the same way, engaging with servants and employees and taking pleasure in drunkenness and every wicked action. She, however, discontinued these activities once she learned about the Christian teachings. She wanted her husband to do the same.

Instead of being content that his wife changed her earlier lifestyle and wished him to do the same, the husband decided to bring a charge against her to the emperor, accusing her of being a Christian. He, moreover, brought claims against a man who instructed her in the Christian doctrine.[19] Her Christian instructor and two other men are further condemned to death because they confessed their Christian faith.

In the opening of the *Second Apology*, Justin stated that he aimed to write about "some recent events under Urbicus" and the Christian persecution in general.[20] He specifically targeted people with anti-Christian prejudices, trying to encourage them to change their minds.[21] His work thus has a protreptic purpose—

Discourse to the Greeks, The Monarchy or the Rule of God), trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 115.

14 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 443; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120–22.

15 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120.

16 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120.

17 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120.

18 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120.

19 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444–446; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 121.

20 Paul Keresztes, "The 'So-Called' Second Apology of Justin," *Latomus* 24/4 (1965): 858–69, 859; Robert M. Grant, "A Woman of Rome: The Matron in Justin, *2 Apology* 2.1–9," *Church History* 54/4 (1985): 461–72, 461.

21 Keresztes, "The 'So-Called' Second Apology," 859.

to persuade and instruct.[22] However, little attention in the episode is given to the trial, condemnation, and persecution of the three men, surprisingly, considering that Justin announced focusing on these aspects in his narrative.

Robert Grant argued that the martyrdoms of the three men in the story have no direct connection to the episode about the "matron of Rome," which we discuss here.[23] Grant believes she is the narrative protagonist; much focus is on her. On the contrary, Lorraine Buck sees the matron's pagan husband as Justin's main character because he has "a psychological profile of a second-century pagan denouncer."[24] Buck discussed this phenomenon and concluded that the purpose of the text was to address Roman authorities regarding the unjust system of private denouncing, which pagans often used against Christians.

When the text appeared, the pagan and Christian worlds coexisted. The Roman matron's views may have resembled the Stoic morality admired at the time. Some Pythagorean treatises revised and used by Christians recalled similar ideas. However, her fear of eternal fire is fortified by the teachings of Christ assembled in Rome at the time.[25] She is a Christian; if not converted yet, she empathizes with Christians.[26] Her marriage stands in the way of her new lifestyle and Christian convictions. She wishes to reconcile the two: the marriage and her beliefs. Reconciliation may be the best way to comply with both worlds she lives in—the world of the Christian faith and the Roman world, directed by Roman laws, including marriage laws. It may be why she tries to negotiate marriage with her husband. The words of the Apostle Paul from 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 7:13–15) that Christians should remain married to pagan partners, provided some compatibility was left, must have resonated in her mind. The Roman Christian Hermas recommended that Christians stay married to pagans unless adultery or pagan practices ensue.[27] Christianity, at least in its early days, apparently did not insist on radical decisions and actions regarding marriage with the "religious others."

Besides the marriage situation, other narrative aspects reveal further "occasions for telling" of this text. Justin may have been prompted to compose this episode, bearing in mind the issues of morality, chastity, and conversion. Grant like-

22 Keresztes, "The 'So-Called' Second Apology," 860.

23 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 462.

24 Lorraine Buck, "The Pagan Husband in Justin, *2 Apology* 2:1–20," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 53/2 (2002): 541–46, 541–42.

25 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 464–65.

26 Grant is suspicious about whether the woman had been baptized in the story. See Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 462.

27 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 465.

wise considers that Justin is here concerned with the moral situation.[28] Justin and the other prominent authors, such as Musonius and Clement, take a critical stance towards illicit love, slavery of desires, and pleasures. They promote marital self-control and restraint. These were the primary aspects of the "Christian formation" by the mid-second century.[29] Even if Buck is correct that the text's central idea was to talk about pagans denouncing Christians, this idea does not exclude the possibility that the author tackled the issues of morality and chastity. The points of view of both scholars seem relevant for the period, even if we are in closer agreement with Grant that the "matron of Rome" takes the focus of the text due to the moral concerns of the time. The narrative's audience may have focused on some or all these ideas and searched for signals that convey information about the underlined norms and values the Christian community mandated at the time.[30]

3 The *Martyrdom of Anastasia*

Moving further to another example: the *Martyrdom of Anastasia*, a late antique anonymous hagiographical text dating approximately to the fifth century, has a comparable episode of the family religious discord.[31] This martyrdom belongs to the "epic passions," commonly written within a certain timely distance from the Christian persecutions.[32] The term, coined by the Bollandists, implied an amount of freedom in narrating, particularly when it comes to the faithful adherence to the historical record. Various new details were added to these martyrdoms, including miracles. For these reasons, they were often discarded as historical sources, and they remain little studied.

28 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 463.

29 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 464.

30 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 69–70.

31 The precise date of the composition of the *Martyrdom of Anastasia* remains uncertain. The discussion of the various hypotheses regarding the dating is summarized by Paola Francesca Moretti. Moretti suggests a composition in the mid-fifth century, while Cécile Lanéry argues for an earlier dating, in the first half of the fifth century. Michael Lapidge suggests the text's dating around 425. See Cécile Lanéry, "Hagiographie d'Italie (300–550) I: Les Passions latines composées en Italie," in *Hagiographies. Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550* V, ed. Guy Philippart (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010): 15–369, 45–60; Michael Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs: Introduction, Translations, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 54–63; Paola Francesca Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae: *Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione* (Roma: Herder, 2006), 1–99, 24–39.

32 Matthieu Pignot, *Cult of Saints*, E02482 – http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E02482.

The text has the Latin and Greek versions preserved. Without examining the complex and unsettled issue of hyper- and hypo-texts (later texts and their earlier versions), we accept Xavier Lequeux's statement that the text initially had its Latin version before it was translated to Greek.[33] It makes the Latin version earlier than the Greek. Both versions pertain to their novel contexts and reach out for further "occasions for telling."

The textual versions in different languages further add to the complicated textual history of the *Martyrdom of Anastasia.* The text was written within a hagiographical cycle merged with several other martyrdoms in Latin. Besides Anastasia's martyrdom (BHL 401), which comes in at the end, the martyrdoms of Chrysogonus (BHL 1795), Agape, Chione, and Eirene (BHL 118), and Theodota and her children (BHL 8093) are also placed in the cyclic narrative.[34] In Lapidge's view, "it is clear that the author of the *passio* stitched together four separate *passiones.*"[35] The text fragmented in the Middle Ages into numerous abbreviated versions and variant recensions.[36] The individual sections of the more extended narrative all have their Greek translations. The Greek *Martyrdom of Anastasia* is preserved together with Agape, Chione, and Eirene (BHG 81–83).[37]

In the Latin episode of our concern, which appears within BHL 1795, Anastasia is described as a daughter of an illustrious senator (*vir illustris*) Praetextatus from Rome, and a wife of a pagan, Publius.[38] Despite being a wealthy aristocrat, she leads a humble life, taking care of the prisoners. She was to be taught by a Christian teacher, Chrysogonus. She is married but enters a conflict with her husband due to their different worldviews:

> Meanwhile, while she was doing all this attentively, and had withdrawn from congress with her husband through feigned illness, it came to the notice of this jealous man that she was

33 Xavier Lequeux, "Latin Hagiographical Literature Translated into Greek," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* 1, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011): 385–400, 386.

34 Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 57.

35 Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 57.

36 Pignot, *Cult of Saints*, E02482.

37 Socii Bolandiani, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1909), 12.

38 Lapidge testifies that this text is preserved in many manuscripts. Two editions of the Latin text are available, one by Delehaye in 1936 and another by Moretti in 2006. Delehaye used two manuscripts to edit the text, while Moretti collated a much higher number of manuscripts, particularly those that were early dated. Lapidge published the translation of the Latin text based on the edition of Moretti. The analysis is here based on the translation of the Latin text by Lapidge. See Hippolyte Delehaye, *Étude sur le légendier romain: Les saints de novembre et de décembre* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1936), 221–49; Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae, 102–87; Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs,* 63–87.

> circulating among the prisons in plebeian attire and was visiting the confessors of God with great diligence. Then, in great indignation, Publius, her husband, appointed such guards over his own household that they would not allow Anastasia access to look out of even one tiny window.[39]

Although Diocletian imprisons him, Chrysogonus keeps secretly exchanging letters with Anastasia. In the correspondence, Anastasia explains that she had been a Christian since childhood. She is married to the pagan Publius but keeps her virginity, pretending to be ill.[40] Desperate because Publius holds her captive and has access to her wealth, but also because she notices that her body gradually betrays her, she asks Chrysogonus to pray for her husband to convert to Christianity or die:

> When this man squandered my patrimony—from which he is made illustrious—through unworthy and foul idolatries, he also committed me, as if I were a wicked sorceress, to such burdensome custody, that I suspect that I am losing my earthly existence. Nothing remains for me except, having given up the ghost, to succumb to death. In such a death, although I would rejoice in the confession of my Lord Jesus Christ, my mind is nevertheless greatly disturbed, because my wealth, all of which I have dedicated to God, down to the last penny, is being used to serve foul purposes alien to God; and therefore I beg you, man of God, that you pray insistently to the Lord, that He either see to it that He allow Publius to live so that he may come to His faith, or if He sees that he is to remain in the perversity of his unbelief, that He bid him to make way for His worshippers. For it is better for him to breathe out his spirit than to deny the Son of God and to hinder those who confess Him.[41]

When Publius takes up a military campaign, he leaves Anastasia imprisoned at home with guards, ordering that she be left to die without food and hoping to seize her wealth upon his return. However, Publius himself dies in the campaign, after which Anastasia is finally free. She sells all her goods and continues to take care of prisoners.

Kate Cooper, Cécile Lanéry, and Michael Lapidge all agreed that much of the narrative cycle containing the *Martyrdom of Anastasia* concentrated on women saints, matrons, and virgins.[42] Lapidge asserted that "this passion was arguably

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39 Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae, 106–8; Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 65.

40 In her letter to Chrysogonus, Anastasia reveals the details of her marriage: "After (my mother's) death, I undertook marriage to a profane husband, whose marriage-bed, through God's mercy, I was able to avoid through a feigned illness" (Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae, 110; Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 66).

41 Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae, 110; Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 66.

42 Lapidge, *Roman Martyrs*, 61. See also Kate Cooper, "Of Romance and Mediocritas: Re-reading the Martyr exemplum in the Passio Anastasiae," in *Modelli di santità e modelli di comportamento: Contrasti, intersezioni, complementarità*, eds. Giulia Barone , Marina Caffiero and Francesco Scorza Barcellona (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1994): 107–23, 108–11; Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the*

composed for a circle of Roman matrons interested in ascetic practice which perhaps, like Anastasia, detested their husbands."[43] Anastasia's martyrdom was in a line of martyrdoms with similar subjects, discussing the delicate balance between Christian devotion and marriage. A clash of ideologies existed between the ascetic movement and those who argued for the goodness of marriage: "Marriage required alternative strategies of interpretation since woman bound in marriage had far less opportunity than virgins to accommodate a chosen religious identity."[44] Marriage becomes a spiritual battleground different from those of an ascetic or a martyr. The wife, spiritually superior, is expected to convert her husband. She becomes the instrument of his salvation and the preserver of the ancient Roman notion of *concordia* within the marriage, in charge of preserving conjugal unity.[45]

However, in this narrative, Anastasia does not manage to convert her husband. Two options are in front of her: that he converts to Christianity through her intercession or that he dies. The latter happens to her joy. Thus, even if a conjugal unity, the marriage is less sustainable outside Christianity. The "religious others" are expected to be converted. Between religion and marriage, the matron chooses the former. Elsewhere, Cooper admittedly argued that "a wife's role in a man's religious state was more rhetorical artifice than an accurate reflection of real life."[46] Michele Salzman's study points out that only a few aristocratic women were married to spouses of another religion during late antiquity. In practice, Christians tended to marry within their own community.[47]

Another aspect appears striking from the point of view of the "occasions for telling." Anastasia's wealth and, to an extent, Anastasia's virginity and widowhood are of concern in the text. Her virginity and later widowhood are, naturally, connected to the issue of marriage, elaborated above. The wealth, however, could be singled out as the most prominent feature of the text. Peter Brown argued that

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Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity (Cambridge, Mass. – London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 116–43; Lanéry, "Hagiographie," 58.

43 Lapidge, *Roman Martyrs*, 61.

44 Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 95–97. See also Constance E. McLeese, "Review of *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5/3 (1997): 465–66.

45 McLeese, "Review of *The Virgin and the Bride*," 466.

46 Kate Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): 150–64, 150; see also Geoffrey Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity: The Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 87.

47 Michele R. Salzman, "Aristocratic Women: Conductors of Christianity in the Fourth Century?" *Helios* 16/2 (1989): 207–20.

by the fall of Rome, the church became wealthy beyond measure.[48] His book *Through the Eye of a Needle* presents the vexing problem of wealth in Christianity in the late Roman Empire. Likely, besides the ascetic practices, the "communicative goals" in the text related to the issue of wealth. Even while weakening in prison, Anastasia thought about what would happen with her patrimony. She did not want it to be spent improperly. The text likely instructed the audience—wealthy Christians, or, mainly, wealthy Christian women—what to do with their properties once they decide to retreat from the world.

In the Greek version of the *Martyrdom of Anastasia*, which is dated to the ninth century, the "occasions for telling," at least those related to marriage, transform.[49] Anastasia turns into being forcefully married to her husband by the will of her father. This notion makes her – a would-be martyr – free from responsibility for the marriage that she did not choose by her own will. It transforms her at the same time into a less erring character and more of a martyr character, as she is forced into something she did not want: "And now, she does not openly profess (her) beliefs, given in marriage involuntarily from the side of her father to the Greek (pagan) man by the name of Publius, attempting, as it is said, to mix those things which cannot be mixed."[50]

Unlike in the Latin version, where she weakens in prison and slowly withers, Anastasia becomes more confident standing up to her husband. She informs Chrysogonus that she will leave her husband.[51] She begs Chrysogonus to pray for her so that she can escape from the husband and start taking care of the would-be martyrs in prisons. Anastasia comes closer to the idea of a divorce or a separation than dying in the Greek version. Moreover, the Greek text does not insist on the husband's conversion as much as on the wife's liberation from the marital bonds. Her attitude towards her martyrdom, marriage, her husband's conversion, and the limits of her body is transformed in the Greek version. She approaches the idea of entering into open confrontation with "religious others," specifically her husband. The translated text introduces fresh features that corroborate novel "oc-

48 Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

49 Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 116, 573–609. For the dating, see Basil Lourié, "The Legend of Anastasia the Widow Translated into Georgian from Arabic and Its Byzantine Vorlage," in *Петербургская эфиопистика. Памяти Севира Борисовича Чернецова. К 75-летию со дня рождения*, eds. A. Yu. Zheltov and S. A. Frantsouzoff (St. Petersburg: МАЭ РАН, 2019): 214–34, 214.

50 *Patrologia graeca* 116, 576: Καὶ νῦν μὲν οὐ παῤῥησιάζεται τὴν εὐσέβειαν, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἄκουσα πρὸς γάμον ἀνδρὶ Ἕλληνι ἐκδοθεῖσα, Ποπλίῳ τοὔνομα, πειρωμένου μιγνύειν, τὸ τοῦ λόγου, τὰ ἄμικτα. The Greek translated excerpts of this text are mine.

51 *Patrologia graeca* 116, 576: Ταῦτα τῷ Χρυσογόνῳ σημήνασα τελευταῖον καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀποδημίαν γνωρίζει.

casions for telling," which are related and relevant to the ninth-century Byzantine contexts.

4 The *Life of Monegundis*

Further, in the sixth-century Latin Gaul, Gregory of Tours, the prominent bishop and author of hagiography, wrote the *Life of Monegundis* in Book 19 of his *Life of the Fathers*.[52] It is a collection of twenty Lives of the sixth-century Gallic saints, mainly Gregory's contemporaries, with a focus on their exemplary behavior. These saints have earned their sainthood by the merits of their earthly activities and whereabouts. Gregory's work at first appears to be mainly didactic in purpose. It aims to teach the proper way to lead a fulfilling Christian life and "to encourage the minds of listeners to follow saints' examples."[53]

Gregory also intended to show that sainthood and saintly actions were not a matter of the past but very much of the moment in which they lived. Thus, the focus in these texts is on contemporary saints. Most of the saints acted within the two dioceses with which Gregory was most familiar: his native Clermont and Tours, the city of his episcopate. Through this work, Gregory promoted his two dioceses and possibly attracted visitors to the holy places within them.[54]

The *Life of Monegundis* is a single Life of a female saint in the collection. Monegundis was a woman from Chartres who was married and had two daughters. They both died when they were very young. Mourning them, she enclosed herself in a room of her house. Withdrawing from the world, she devoted herself to God, becoming a rigorous ascetic, often staying without food and water. She also withdrew from her husband: "There (in her room), despising the vanities of the world and having nothing more to do with her husband, she devoted herself entirely to God."[55] Her servant left her because of her strict asceticism.

To "avoid the trap of vainglory," she left her husband and went to the Basilica of St. Martin in Tours.[56] Her husband, hearing of her growing reputation for sanc-

52 Bruno Krusch, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum. Gregorii Turonensis Opera* I.2: Miracula et opera minora (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1885), 736–41. For the translations, see *Gregory of Tours: Life of the Fathers*, trans. Edward James (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), 118–25; *Gregory of Tours: Lives and Miracles*, ed. and trans. Giselle de Nie (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

53 James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, xiv.

54 James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, xiv.

55 Krusch, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 736; James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, 119.

56 Krusch, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 737–38; James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, 120.

tity, took her back home to live in her old cell. However, she returned to Tours and, thanks to St. Martin, stayed there untroubled by her husband.

Her husband's religious beliefs are not revealed. He appears to be against her rigorous asceticism and devotion, as well as her newly acquired reputation. On the other hand, her devotion to God appears to be a justification for her independence from her husband's authority. Besides her unquestionable asceticism and exemplary Christian behavior, the text does not refrain from suggesting the betrayal of marital bonds and the transition from the husband's authority to the authority of a male saint if necessary.

Gregory elaborates on Monegundis' rigorous asceticism and the ways of survival without food and sometimes water. At home, as well as in the convent, Monegundis does all that she should do as an exemplary saint: she spends the days and nights in prayers, fasts, and vigils.[57] Gregory extensively promoted her healing miracles. This aspect is particularly prominent in the last section of the text, in which she healed many people during her stay in the convent. The "occasions for telling" of Gregory of Tours are here prompted by the idea of promoting the area, particularly the place where Monegundis stayed, as the holy site, a place of medicinal tourism, which supplies aid for those in need. The successful stories of Monegundis' healing attracted many who were needy to seek their cure in this area.

5 The *Martyrdom of Shushanik*

Another example of family discord, the *Martyrdom of Shushanik*, an original Georgian fifth-century hagiography, describes an Armenian noblewoman, Shushanik, who dies by the hand of her spouse, Varsken.[58] The husband, previously Christian, renounced Christianity and embraced Zoroastrianism.[59] The text exists in several versions in Georgian and Armenian. Its original is attributed to Jacob of Tsurtav, a fifth-century religious writer and a priest, apparently a witness of the event.

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57 Krusch, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 738; James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, 121.

58 For the dating of the text, see Stephen H. Rapp Jr, *The Sasanian World Through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 37. Rapp here elaborates on the idea that the *Martyrdom of Shushanik* was, over time, adjusted by scribes to be in accord with the theological views of the time.

59 For the text, see Iakob C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," in *Dzveli hagiograpiuli literaturis dzeglebi* I [Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature I], ed. Ilia Abuladze (Tbilisi: Mecniereba, 1963): 11–29; as for translation, see David Marshall Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints* (London: Mowbrays, 1976), 44–56. See also Margit Bíró, "Shushanik's Georgian Vita," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38/1–2 (1984): 187–200; Rapp Jr, *The Sasanian World*, 33–105.

The "episode" here stretches almost to the entire narrative in a sequence of events where Shushanik and her husband encounter each other to her demise. Varsken had renounced Christianity after visiting the royal court of Persia, where he submitted himself willingly to Zoroastrianism. Moreover, he promised the Iranian Shah that he would convert his wife and children to the same religion upon his return.[60] When he returned home, he learned that Shushanik had left their house for fear of him. On the other side, she hides, spending her days and nights without food or rest, crying, and praying. She hopes to convert her husband back to Christianity, but on the outside, she does not act in any way other than praying.[61] She admits: "I had imagined that I could convert him to my faith so that he would acknowledge the True God."[62] She knows that when they meet for the first time, she should be "resolved in her heart to meet her death."[63]

When they finally meet, he is severely violent towards her. He first utters insults and kicks her.[64] Then he crashes an iron stick on her head and injures her eyes. He strikes her face with his fists, drags her by the hair, and beats her severely. No part of her body remains untouched by the beating. He leaves her wounded to lie in the prison of his palace, thinking that she may be dead. Shushanik takes a long time to recover due to the wounds and severe swelling. She nevertheless recovered and was liberated from the prison of her husband.

He, however, did not leave her alone. When he meets her on a second occasion, in a church, he grabs her by the hair and drags her outside. He takes her to his house through thorns and stumbling blocks, stones, and bushes.[65] Her entire body is torn to pieces, as the terrain is rough. Her blood forms a path, not just by leaving traces on the ground but by saturating it entirely. Varsken keeps her in prison in iron fetters and chains, surrounded by guards. He performs these acts of torture in an attempt to convert her. Nevertheless, he does not persuade Shushanik to convert to Zoroastrianism either by violence or by treathening and convincing. She spent six years in prison with affliction, starvation, thirst, and distress, dying in the seventh year.

The husband's violence towards the wife must affect the readers in this narrative. Beyond the considerations of the possibility that such violence could have

60 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 11–12; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 45.
61 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 15; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 45.
62 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 15; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 48.
63 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 16; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 49.
64 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 17; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 49.
65 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 19–20; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 52.

been performed between spouses,[66] as well as beyond the possibility of the story's historicity,[67] readers must be considering the messages that the narrative sends about Zoroastrianism, "otherness," and inter-religious marriage, specifically within late antique Georgia, and with the "religious others" who are of the Zoroastrian religion. Georgia has been converted to Christianity since the fourth century. It is known that the appearance of Zoroastrian Sasanians became a source of problems for the Christians. The text identifies the local agents of the Sasanians as the immediate threat to early medieval Caucasia.[68] The ultimate acts of violence in the text, as the "communicative environments" that veil the episode of the family discord, make a strong point about these life-threatening consequences of a marriage or any involvement with the followers of the Zoroastrian religion. The text's atrocities are directly proportionate to the horror of engaging with "religious others" in the eyes of the Christians of Georgia at the time.

6 The *Martyrdom of Panteleimon*

For the rest of the article, I wish to reflect on another example, the *Martyrdom of Panteleimon* (BHG 1414), a metaphrastic Greek hagiography about a physician and healer who suffered in 305 CE. The metaphrastic Greek version is rewritten based on an earlier, pre-metaphrastic version, which was probably written during late antiquity (fourth–ninth century).[69] The metaphrastic version, included in the well-known Metaphrastic *menologion*, reworked by Symeon Metaphrastes, appeared first in the eleventh-century manuscripts. Thus, the story, written approximately at the beginning of the fourth century, transformed from the pre-metaphrastic to the metaphrastic version. Further, when the metaphrastic text was translated into Old Slavonic and found its way into the late medieval South Slavic manuscripts (the earliest dated to the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries), the new contexts again imposed reformulated "occasions for telling."

66 This idea has led some Georgian scholars to inquire into the legal basis of such conduct in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. According to Georgian law, most of them agree that such an act would be considered a crime. See Medea Matiashvili, "Homicide of Wife-Husband in the Old Georgian Law," *Journal of Law* 1 (2016): 5–21; Zurab Targamadze, "Social and Legal Status of Women in Medieval Georgia," *International Journal of Culture and History* 3/1 (2017): 72–79.

67 This issue is referred to in Rapp Jr, *The Sasanian World*, 43.

68 Rapp Jr, *The Sasanian World*, 38.

69 Pinakes, Textes et manuscrits grecs, "Panteleemon m. Nicomediae, Passio," 28/01/2022 https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/oeuvre/17424/

In the episode, mentioned only in passing, Panteleimon's parents are of a different religion: his mother is a Christian, and his father is a pagan. In the pre-metaphrastic version, the text's opening mainly focuses on the father, Eustorgios, a senator in Nicomedia, and it hardly refers to the mother. She had previously died, and his father took care of the saint's medical education, sending him to the official physician of the court to study medicine:

> There was a senator named Eustorgios in the city of Nicomedia. He had an only-begotten son named Panteleimon, whom he handed over to study the finest letters to an official physician of the court, certain Euphrosynos, who healed those at the court from complicated and different diseases. Accepting Panteleimon, this one taught him medicinal lessons, and he constantly returned with him to the palace. Those at the palace and the influential men of the king, watching Panteleimon, said to Euphrosynos: "Whose son is this young man?" Panteleimon was exceedingly pretty by appearance and in good shape, and you could not find anybody at the court similar to him. Euphrosynos said: "He is the son of Eustorgios the senator, who, when his mother Euboule died, handed him over to me to teach him medicine.[70]

The metaphrastic version turns the attention from the father to the mother. Panteleimon's father is, from the outset, depicted as impious due to his pagan beliefs. On the contrary, his mother is described as faithful and very different from her husband in terms of her faith. The father is referred to as "her husband." The mother takes all the credit for the son's upbringing in this section of the text:

> He is called Panteleimon, the son of Eustorgios, illustrious for his life and even more prominent for his impiety. He respected the Greek (pagan) faith and had a burning zeal for it. His mother was faithful and positioned diametrically opposite to her husband in matters of faith. Her name was Euboule, and she had the manners of a Christian. The fine boy, bred by such a mother and a teacher, was deprived at once of her bodily and spiritual nourishment by the law of death and and the common nature at his immature and imperfect age.[71]

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70 Vladimir V. Latyšev, "ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΔΟΞΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΠΑΝΤΕΛΕΗΜΟΝΟΣ," in *HAGIOGRAPHICA GRAECA INEDITA* XII, ed. Vladimir V. Latyšev (St Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1914): 40–75, 40: Ἦν δέ τις ἐν τῇ πόλει Νικομηδείᾳ συγκλητικὸς ὀνόματι Εὐστόργιος. Οὗτος εἶχεν υἱὸν μονογενῆ ὀνόματι Παντολέοντα, ὃν καὶ παιδεύσας τὰ κάλλιστα γράμματα παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ἀρχιατρῷ τινι ὀνόματι Εὐφροσύνῳ, ὃς τοὺς ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ποικίλαις καὶ διαφόροις νόσοις ἐξεταζομένους ἐθεράπευεν. Οὗτος παραλαβὼν τὸν Παντολέοντα ἐδίδασκε τὰ τῆς ἰατρικῆς μαθήματα καὶ συνεχῶς ἀπῄει σὺν αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ. Οἱ δὲ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ὄντες καὶ οἱ μεγιστᾶνες τοῦ βασιλέως θεωροῦντες τὸν Παντολέοντα ἔλεγον τῷ Εὐφροσύνῳ. "Τίνος υἱός ἐστιν ὁ νεανίας οὗτος;" Ἦν γὰρ ὁ Παντολέων σφόδρα ὡραῖος τῇ ὄψει καὶ καλὸς τῷ εἴδει, ὡς μηδένα εὑρίσκεσθαι ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ὅμοιον αὐτοῦ. Ὁ δὲ Εὐφρόσυνος ἔφη. "Εὐστοργίου υἱός ἐστι τοῦ συγκλητικοῦ, οὗ ἡ μήτηρ Εὐβούλη τετελεύτηκεν, παρέδωκεν δὲ αὐτὸν ἐμοὶ μανθάνειν τὰ τῆς ἰατρικῆς. The translations of this text are mine.

71 Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 115, 448–477, 448: Παντολέων μὲν καλούμενος, υἱὸς δὲ ὢν Εὐστοργίου, ἐπιφανοῦς τὸν βίον, ἐπιφανεστέρου πολλῷ τὴν ἀσέβειαν. Τὰ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων

Further in the story, Panteleimon again mentions the parents. In the pre-metaphrastic version, Panteleimon describes the parents in a neutral tone:

> "I am the son of Eustorgios senator and the mother, Euboule, whose time has come to an end." The priest said: "Of which religion were they?" Panteleimon answered: "The mother, Christian, died, and the father, Greek, lives until now." The priest said: "And whose side did you belong to, that of the mother or the father?" Panteleimon said: "When she was still alive, my mother wished me to be among hers. My father disagreed. He wished me to be a soldier for the court. I wished more to be with my mother. When she died, my father took me with him."[72]

When asked who his parents were in the metaphrastic version, Panteleimon says that his mother died as a Christian, while "the father is dead, while living," because of his pagan beliefs:

> And Panteleimon immediately said everything according to the truth, and how his mother died when she was already Christian, and father is dead while living, by partaking the Greek religion. And then the priest asked: And you, nice boy, he said, whose side do you prefer, and you respect more? And Panteleimon said: My mother, he said, when she was still alive, advised me to join hers, which I wished myself. And the father, who even now has a greater strength forces me to devote myself to his religion.[73]

The specific detail, characterizing those of a different religion as "living dead," is fascinating regarding the "occasions for telling." When this episode was translated

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σεβόμενος ἦν καὶ θερμὸν ἔχων περὶ ταῦτα τὸν ζῆλον. Μήτηρ δὲ ἐκείνῳ πιστὴ, καὶ ὅσα περὶ τὸ σὲβας, ἐκ διαμέτρου πρὸς τὸν αὐτῆς ἀνδρα διακειμένη εὐβούλως τε ἡ Εὐβούλη (τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτῇ ὄνομα) πρὸς τὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἔχουσα. Ὑπὸ τοιαύτῃ τοίνυν μητρὶ καὶ διδασκάλῳ ὁ ἀγαθὸς τρεφόμενος παῖς τὴν σωματικὴν ἅμα τροφήν τε καὶ τὴν πνευματικὴν ἀποστερεῖται ταύτης νόμῳ θανάτου καὶ τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως, ἀτελῆ ἔτι καὶ ἄωρον ἄγων τὴν ἡλικίαν.

72 Latyšev, "MAPTYPION," 41: "Υἱὸς μέν εἰμι Εὐστοργίου τοῦ συγκλητικοῦ, μητρὸς δὲ Εὐβούλης, ἥτις χρόνον ἔχει τελευτήσασα." ὁ δὲ πρεσβύτερος ἔφη. "Ποίας θρησκείας ἦσαν;" Καὶ ὁ Παντολέων εἶπεν. "Ἡ μὲν μήτηρ μου χριστιανὴ ἐτελεύτησεν, ὁ δὲ πατὴρ Ἕλλην ὑπάρχει ἄχρι τῆς δεῦρο." καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἔφη. "Αὐτὸς δὲ ποίου μέρους τυγχάνεις, κατὰ τὸν πατέρα ἢ κατὰ τὴν μητέρα"; Παντολέων εἶπεν. "Ἔτι ζῶσα ἡ μήτηρ μου ἐβούλετό με ἔχειν μεθ' ἑαυτῆς. Ὁ δὲ πατήρ μου οὐ συνεχώρει, βουλόμενός με ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ στρατεῦσαι. Ἐγὼ δὲ μᾶλλον σὺν τῇ μητρί μου ἐβουλόμην εἶναι. Τελευτησάσης δὲ αὐτῆς ὁ πατήρ μου πρὸς ἑαυτόν με προσελάβετο."

73 *Patrologia graeca* 115, 449: Καὶ ὁ Παντολέων εὐθὺς ἅπαντα πρὸς ἀλήθειαν καταλέγει, καὶ ὡς ἡ μὲν μήτηρ ἀποθάνοι ἤδη τὰ Χριστιανῶν σεβουμένη, ὁ πατὴρ δὲ ζῶν τέθνηκε τὴν Ἑλλήνων μετιὼν θρησκείαν. Εἶτα ὁ πρεσβύτης προσθείς. Αὐτὸς δὲ, παῖ καλὲ, ἔφη, τίνος μέρους εἶναι βούλει καὶ πότερου σεβάσματος: Καὶ ὁ Παντολέων. Ἡ μὲν μήτηρ, εἶπεν, ἔτι περιοῦσα τοῖς αὐτοῖς με συνθέσθαι παρήνει, ὅπερ δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς ἠβουλόμην. Ὁ δὲ πατὴρ ἅτε καὶ μείζονα τὴν ἰσχὺν ἔχων, τῇ αὐτοῦ προσέχειν ἀναγκάζει θρησκείᾳ.

into Old Slavonic,[74] appearing in a fourteenth–fifteenth-century manuscript, the line about the father, says: "And my father dies alive by conducting the Hellenic service."[75] Although the nuance in meaning from "dead while living" to "dies alive" is possibly minor, it nevertheless underlines that his father is still alive in the Old Slavonic version, while he is dead in the metaphrastic Greek text. The different shades of meaning in Greek may be influenced by the Greek perfect, τέθνηκε, which reflects on the present condition of the past action. The Old Slavonic verb form of the present tense does not have the same power (although it could have been intended to imitate), and the action stays in the present.

Thus, the "occasions for telling" transformed when the text transitioned from the late antique pre-metaphrastic to the metaphrastic, late tenth-century version, and from the latter version to its translation in Old Slavonic, recorded in a fourteenth–fifteenth-century manuscript. The transition brought in the emphasized role of the Christian mother as a likeness to the growing importance of the Virgin Mary in Byzantium. More importantly for the subject of this essay, the pagan beliefs of Panteleimon's father are, in the metaphrastic and Old Slavonic versions, equalized to death.

7 Concluding Remarks

Naturally, the pagan beliefs are observed through the lens of a specific timely distance. These are the contemporary views towards the things past, towards the issues long overcome. The medieval versions, rewritings, and translations could not handle the issue of inter-religious marriage in the same way as early Christian or late antique texts. The episode did not change its core; nevertheless, the "communicative environments" could not be expressed in the same way as in the previous periods. The medieval versions had no tolerance for such religious compromise between spouses; this issue was no longer considered. When it comes to "religious others," be they husbands or parents, they are considered "the living dead."

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74 This text first appears in the Old Slavonic manuscript PAH152, dated to the fourteenth-fifteenth century, and kept in the monastery Neamț, located in north-eastern Romania, built in the fifteenth century. The manuscript is, according to Ivanova, copied in Athos or eastern Bulgaria and brought to the monastery Neamț later: Klimentina Ivanova, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica* (Sofia: Profesor Marin Drinov Publishing House, 2008), 113–15.

75 Old Slavonic manuscript PAH152 (Romanian Academy of Sciences, Bucharest), fol. 255v–256r: "Ѡц҃ь же мо́и жи́вь оумр҃ѣтъ, ѥ҆ллиньскоую бо прохо́дитъ слоу́жбоу." I wish to express my gratitude to the Romanian Academy of Sciences, Bucharest, especially to Dr. Andrei Timotin and Dr. Mihail Mitrea, for their support in obtaining this manuscript.

In Christian literary history, these and similar examples were not rare. As I argued, the motivation for their emergence and reiteration was rooted in the generic expression of their beliefs. Christians were fond of reprised forms and core episodes, such as the episode of religious discord, which circulated abundantly among many Christian communities without linguistic or territorial barriers. However, the examples teach us that, besides the intertextual component that Christian texts bore, the room was also provided for the various "occasions for telling." The latter textual segments were more important because, besides the respect for things past, there were always burning issues within the Christian communities that the texts needed to address. Their task was to speak directly to their contemporary audience.