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Imprisoned martyrs on the move: reading holiness in Byzantine martyrdom accounts

Abstract: This paper shows that the protagonists of Byzantine *Passions* are often depicted as attaining holiness while on the move: after their arrest by pagan soldiers, Christian martyrs are subjected to travels for legal reasons. Drawing on the anthropological concept of liminality (Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner), I will suggest that such inflicted travels or transfers in Byzantine *Passions* serve as liminal phases between interrogation, torture, imprisonment, and execution, by which the protagonists ascend to the state of holiness. The paper, structured in three major sections, focuses on scenes of ‘imprisoned martyrs on the move’ as delineated in both pre-Metaphrastic and Metaphrastic martyrdom accounts (fourth–tenth centuries). After a concise introduction to the theoretical background and the text corpus of this study, the main sections explicate the motif of imposed movement in conjunction with the literary construction of holiness, the spiritual formation of the audience, and the structure of a martyrdom narrative.

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Martyrdom accounts or *Passions* of martyrs constitute by far the most significant percentage of Greek hagiographical works and at the same time an extensive cor-

The present article developed out of a lecture delivered at the workshop on the topic of “Holiness on the Move: Travelling Saints in Byzantium”, organised in February 2019 at Newcastle University. I am grateful to all participants, and especially to our host Mihail Mitrea, for our inspiring conversations. The present study was completed within the framework of the project “Moving Byzantium: Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency” (PI: Prof. Claudia Rapp; <http://rapp.univie.ac.at/>) funded by the FWF Austrian Science Fund (Project Z 288 Wittgenstein-Preis). Further, the article profited from the workshop “Mobilität und Migration” organised by the “Moving Byzantium” project in collaboration with the project “Migration and Mobility in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages” (University of Tübingen) at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna) in September/October 2019. The “Moving Byzantium” project has also financed the open access publication of this paper. Last but not least, I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers whose suggestions have enhanced the quality of this work.

pus of Byzantine literature in general.¹ However, modern scholarship has been mostly limited to the investigation of the historical dimensions of these texts, while their literary character has been taken into account only in studies of the past two decades.² In this light, it is not surprising that many of the literary aspects of hagiographical texts – and, above all, *Passions* of martyrs – remain largely unexplored until today. For example, the concept of holiness, which Byzantine hagiographers strive to delineate in their accounts, has not yet been thoroughly examined in connection to martyrs and martyr narratives.³ The goal of this article is to study the literary construction of holiness, especially ‘holiness on the move’, through a close reading of martyr narratives dating from the early and middle Byzantine periods.

Accounts of martyrdoms are usually characterised by an arc of suspense which develops throughout the different phases of the story, beginning with the interrogation, then the torture, and finally the execution of the martyr as its narrative climax. As I have recently shown in my study on prison as a liminal space in Byzantine hagiography,⁴ imprisonment, which appears between the above-mentioned phases, plays a crucial role in the entire process leading the Christian protagonists to holiness. Prison is a transitional space where both the formation of corporeal endurance and the spiritual maturation of the protagonists take place, contributing to their identity as holy martyrs. Prison scenes

1 For the rich manuscript transmission of martyrdom accounts, see A. EHRHARD, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols. *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 50–52/2. Leipzig 1936–1952.

2 Cf. M. HINTERBERGER, Byzantine hagiography and its literary genres: some critical observations, in S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate research companion to Byzantine hagiography*, 2: *Genres and contexts. Ashgate research companions*. Farnham / Burlington, VT 2014, 25–60, esp. 26; M. DETORAKI, Greek *Passions* of the martyrs in Byzantium, *ibid.*, 61–101, esp. 61.

3 It should be noted here that, beyond a few relevant articles, the first monograph to discuss literary facets of holiness in relation to martyrdom on the basis of Greek *Passions* was only published in 2011 by A. P. ALWIS, *Celibate marriages in late antique and byzantine hagiography: the Lives of Saints Julian and Basilissa, Andronikos and Athanasia, and Galaktion and Episteme*. London/New York 2011. Also worth mentioning in this context is Stavroula Constantinou's chapter-length examination published in 2005, see S. CONSTANTINOÜ, *Female corporeal performances: reading the body in Byzantine passions and lives of holy women. Studia byzantina Upsaliensia*, 9. Uppsala 2005, esp. 19–58 (ch. 1: “The spectacular body of the female martyr”).

4 See CH. PAPAVERNANAS, *Gefängnis als Schwellenraum in der byzantinischen Hagiographie: Eine Untersuchung früh- und mittelbyzantinischer Märtyrerakten. Millennium-Studien*, 90. Berlin/Boston 2021. That study examines all *Passions* included in the tenth-century *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes along with their textual sources or other earlier martyr narratives dating from the fourth to the ninth century.

punctuate the narrative flow and serve multiple functions: a relaxing pause for the future martyr and the audience, the insertion of sermon-like exhortations and prayers, the introduction of additional characters, a delay of the martyr's death and building suspense for both characters and actual readers or listeners. In the following pages, I wish to expand on these ideas by investigating an adjacent transitional phase in martyrdom narratives, namely the mobility forced upon the imprisoned martyrs.

In the course of their trial and torture by the Roman (or other non-Christian) authorities, martyrs, holding the status of prisoners, are transferred for legal reasons from one place or city to another. Such transfers were carried out both overland and by sea.⁵ A striking case in point is the Christian protagonist Clement of Ancyra, who was sent to a total of eleven pagan opponents for the purposes of trial and ordeal, either from one city to another (e.g., from Ancyra to Rome) or from one district of a certain city to another.⁶ It should be noted here that often the terms δεσμώτης and δέσμιος (namely 'prisoner' or 'captive') refer to both the martyr while confined in prison and the martyr while being led to trial and torture.⁷ Most importantly, the martyrs themselves recognise that being transferred is necessary for the completion of their martyrdom, which will result in their spiritual perfection and holiness. Thus, they do not wish to avoid it at all. For example, when the Persian king Khosrow II (r. 590 – 628) commands that the martyr Anastasios, bound in chains, be brought from Caesarea in Palestine to Persia, the Christian protagonist declares that he would go to the king even with-

5 See, e.g., the pre-Metaphrastic *Passion of Ignatios of Antioch, the Theophoros* (i.e., *God-bearer*) (BHG 813): PG 5, 980–988, and its Metaphrastic version (BHG 815): PG 114, 1269–1285.

6 The Metaphrastic *Passion of Clement of Ancyra* (BHG 353): PG 114, 816–893; the anonymous pre-Metaphrastic version is still unedited (BHG 352).

7 For the term δεσμώτης, see, e.g., the Metaphrastic *Passion of Sergios and Bacchos* (BHG 1625): PG 115, 1005–1032, esp. 1025 (ch. 17); the Metaphrastic *Passion of Anthimos* (BHG 135): PG 115, 172–184, esp. 176–177 (ch. 5); the Metaphrastic *Passion of Anastasios the Persian* (BHG 85): ed. B. FLUSIN, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle*, 1: Les textes. Paris 1992, 305–361, esp. 323 (ch. 9.18–19) and 327 (ch. 11.11). For the term δέσμιος, see, e.g., the Metaphrastic *Passion of George Tropaiophoros* (i.e., *bearing a trophy*) (BHG 676): ed. M. MELITON, Ἀνεκδότων ἔκδοσις: Μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου τοῦ Τροπαιοφόρου. *Nea Sion* 28 (1933) 68–76, 227–230, 689–696 and 29 (1934) 272–274, 383–387, 443–451, 517–527, esp. 273, 519, cf. AASS Apr. III (1866) vii–xii [printed in the end of the volume], esp. ix (ch. 10) and xi (ch. 19); the pre-Metaphrastic *Passion of Nazarios, Gervasios, Protasios and Kelsios* (BHG 1323): ed. F. SAVIO, *La Leggenda dei Ss. Nazario e Celso*, in *Ambrosiana: Scritti varii pubblicati nel XV centenario dalla morte di S. Ambrogio*. Mailand 1890, 5–58, esp. 40, repr. in A. G. Gaggero (ed.), *Nazario e Celso antesignani della fede in Liguria: La loro opera – il loro culto in Liguria*. Genova 1967, 173–202, esp. 193.

out chains, since he is disposed to suffer for the sake of God.⁸ All this outlines the profile of the ‘imprisoned martyr on the move’, which is the central question of this paper.

Inspired by the anthropological concept of liminality coined by Arnold van Gennep (1909) and further developed by Victor Turner (1969),⁹ I will argue that this transfer, or rather forced movement, is a liminal phase, during which, through various actions and activities like teaching/preaching and praying, the Christian protagonists attain spiritual formation and assume the identity of holy men and women. Liminality was introduced in anthropological studies to distinguish the three phases of rites of passage: separation, the liminal or transitional stage, and incorporation. As I will show in my analysis, the protagonists are separated from society, and while being on the move, they achieve extraordinary spiritual advancement and are eventually incorporated back into the society as saints. In the present paper, imposed transfer or travel is thus construed as a liminal phase between interrogation, torture, imprisonment, and execution, which helps each protagonist approach the state of holiness by being on the move. At the same time, the scenes of imposed mobility may function as liminal phases for the audiences both inside and outside the text, who, as will be illustrated below, also experience spiritual progression and come closer to the divine, respectively, by witnessing or reading/hearing about the protagonists’ movements.

The motif of imposed transfer or travel inside or outside a certain city is investigated here through a literary analysis of both pre-Metaphrastic and Metaphrastic *Passions* of martyrs. Specifically, this study is based on a thorough reading of all edited *Passions* included in the tenth-century *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes (ca. 80 in number), as well as their extant and edited earlier versions dating from the fourth to the ninth century.¹⁰ In compiling his liturgical

8 The Metaphrastic *Passion of Anastasios the Persian* (BHG 85): ed. FLUSIN, Saint Anastase le Perse (as footnote 7 above), 339 (ch. 18.3–7); cf. the pre-Metaphrastic *Passion of Anastasios the Persian* (BHG 84): IBIDEM 40–91, esp. 71 (ch. 28.6–8).

9 A. VAN GENNEP, *Les rites de passage*. Paris 1909, in English IDEM, *The rites of passage*, trans. M. B. Vizedom / G. L. Caffee. London / Henley 1977; V. TURNER, *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*. The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures, 1966. London 1969. In regard to hagiography and the theory of liminality, Alison G. Elliott aptly pointed out that the earthly life of holy persons constitutes a liminal stage before Paradise, see A. G. ELLIOTT, *Roads to Paradise: reading the lives of the early saints*. Hannover / London 1987, esp. 178–180. In this sense, each phase in the lives of saints which appears to be crucial for their path to holiness and ultimate connection with God can be regarded as ‘liminal’.

10 Symeon Metaphrastes (*PmbZ* # 27504) was active towards the end of the tenth century and, from at least the first half of the eleventh century, his *Menologion* comprised a ten-volume col-

collection of hagiographical narratives, Symeon Metaphrastes largely rewrote and revised, stylistically and thematically, various stories of saints that had circulated in earlier – mostly anonymous – texts. Only a very small number of earlier hagiographical texts were included in his *Menologion* without alteration.¹¹ In this light, choosing both pre-Metaphrastic and Metaphrastic texts for the purposes of this study enables us to draw comparisons between the two different text versions and identify variations of the examined motif over time.

The examination of this rich text corpus leads initially to two main conclusions regarding the narrative motif of imposed mobility: first, at least 20 from a total of 79 martyrdom stories in their pre-Metaphrastic and/or Metaphrastic versions contain fairly extensive narrative scenes of martyrs-on-the-move.¹² Second,

lection of 148 full-length hagiographical texts. A great deal has been written on Symeon Metaphrastes and his reworking activity. See, for example, the monograph by CH. HØGEL, *Symeon Metaphrastes: rewriting and canonization*. Copenhagen 2002, which includes extensive references to previous literature and a comprehensive list of the Metaphrastic reworkings along with their textual sources or other earlier versions (p. 173–204). See also M. HINTERBERGER, *Byzantinische biographische Literatur des 10. Jahrhunderts: Quellenkritik – reizvolle Erzählung – Fiktion*, in S. Enderwitz/W. Schamoni (eds.), *Biographie als Weltliteratur: Eine Bestandsaufnahme der biographischen Literatur im 10. Jahrhundert*. Heidelberg 2009, 57–81, esp. 63, 72–81; P. MAGDALINO, *Byzantine encyclopaedism of the ninth and tenth centuries*, in J. König/G. Woolf (eds.), *Encyclopaedism from antiquity to the Renaissance*. Cambridge 2013, 219–231, esp. 222–223; CH. HØGEL, *Symeon Metaphrastes and the metaphrastic movement*, in Efthymiadis, *The Ashgate Research Companion* (as footnote 2 above), 181–196, esp. 183, 185–189; S. PAPAIOANNOU, *Voice, signature, mask: the Byzantine author*, in A. Pizzone (ed.), *The author in middle Byzantine literature: modes, functions, and identities*. BA, 28. Berlin 2014, 21–40, esp. 35–39; IDEM, *Christian novels from the Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes*. *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library*, 45. Cambridge, MA 2017, vii–xxvi; CH. HØGEL, *Euthymios the Athonite, Greek-Georgian and Georgian-Greek translator – and metaphrast?*, in A. Binggeli/V. Déroche (eds.), *Mélanges Bernard Flusin*. TM, 23/1. Paris 2019, 353–364, esp. 356 note 16, 358 note 30; IDEM, *Sanctification of hagiographers in Byzantium: the canonization of Symeon Metaphrastes*, in S. Constantinou/Ch. Høgel (eds.), *Metaphrasis: a Byzantine concept of rewriting and its hagiographical products*. The Medieval Mediterranean, 125. Leiden/Boston 2021, 270–281; PAPAVERNAS, *Gefängnis als Schwellenraum* (as footnote 4 above), with a list of Metaphrastes' martyrdom accounts and their earlier counterparts (p. 167–190), which updates and complements the material provided by Christian Høgel in his 2002 monograph.

11 Among the texts included in the *Metaphrastic Menologion*, there are also a very few new compositions by Symeon Metaphrastes. See HØGEL, *Rewriting* (as footnote 10 above), 91–110; IDEM, *Metaphrastic movement* (as footnote 10 above), 187.

12 The relevant stories are listed here alphabetically by the name(s) of the martyrs: Akepsimas, Joseph and Aeithalas (BHG 19 and BHG 23); Anastasios the Persian (BHG 84 and BHG 85); Artemios of Antioch (BHG 170–171c and BHG 172); Babylas (BHG 205 and BHG 206); Barbara (BHG 213–214 and BHG 216); Blasios (BHG 276 and BHG 277); Clement of Ancyra (BHG 353); Eleutherios (BHG 568–570); Euphemia (BHG 619–619a); Eustratios, Auxentios, Euge-

and as a consequence of the first point, the motif in question was relatively common within the narrative structure of a martyrdom story, as well as familiar and popular among the Byzantines. Its popularity is confirmed by the fact that it also appears in the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes, which was a ‘best seller’ in Byzantium. The figures speak for themselves: the *Metaphrastic Menologion*, including for the most part martyrdom accounts (ca. 80 out of 148 texts), is preserved in about 700 manuscripts and more than 100 fragments dating from the first half of the eleventh century onwards.¹³

In the following, I will focus on six pre-Metaphrastic and/or Metaphrastic martyrdom accounts, which offer a comprehensive picture of the motif under scrutiny: the *Passion of Euphemia* (pre-Metaphrastic version: BHG 619–619a), the *Passion of Barbara* (pre-Metaphrastic version: BHG 213–214; Metaphrastic version: BHG 216), the *Passion of Eleutherios* (pre-Metaphrastic version: BHG 568–570), the *Passion of Blaise/Blasios* (pre-Metaphrastic version: BHG 276; Metaphrastic version: BHG 277), the *Passion of Clement of Ancyra* (Metaphrastic version: BHG 353), and the *Passion of Eustratios, Auxentios, Eugenios, Mardarios and Orestes* (pre-Metaphrastic and Metaphrastic version: BHG 646). On the basis of these texts, I will explore how the motif of imposed movement contributes to the literary construction of the holiness of the protagonists, the spiritual formation of the audience and, ultimately, the creation of an elaborate narrative structure.

nios, Mardarios and Orestes (BHG 646); Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (BHG 1201 and BHG 1202); Galaktion and Episteme (BHG 665 and BHG 666); Ignatios of Antioch, the Theophoros (i.e., *God-bearer*) (BHG 813 and BHG 815); Karpos and Papylos (BHG 294 and BHG 295); Lukianos of Antioch (BHG 997); Mamas (BHG 1018 and BHG 1019); Merkurios (BHG 1274 and BHG 1276); Sergios and Bacchos (BHG 1624 and BHG 1625); Stephanos the Younger (BHG 1666 and BHG 1667); Trophimos, Sabbatios and Dorymedon (BHG 1853 and BHG 1854).

¹³ See HØGEL, *Rewriting* (as footnote 10 above), 11, 124, 130, 138; IDEM, *Metaphrastic movement* (as footnote 10 above), 183; IDEM, *Euthymios the Athonite* (as footnote 10 above), 354, 359. Høgel’s remarks mentioned above are based on EHRHARD, *Überlieferung*, 2 (as footnote 1 above), 306–659.

The martyr's movement and the literary construction of holiness

The pre-Metaphrastic *Passion of Euphemia* (BHG 619–619a), written by the eighth/ninth century,¹⁴ clearly shows that the imposed movement of the heroine is a central part of her path to holiness. The relevant passage reads as follows:

Ἀπαγομένων δὲ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῆς εἰρκτῆς, ἦλθεν δρομαῖος ὁ ἀνθύπατος ὡς ἄγριος ἄρπαξ καὶ ληστής, ὡς λύκος εἰς ποῖμνιον, καὶ ἀφῆρπασεν τὴν ἁγίαν Εὐφημίαν οἰόμενος, ὡς αὐτὸς σαθρός ἐστιν, καὶ σαθρὸν ὄργανον εὐρίσκειν. Ἡ δὲ φιλόχριστος περιχαρὴς ἐγένετο, καὶ τὸ ὄμμα εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐπάρασα λέγει· “Βοήθει μοι, Χριστέ· ἡ γὰρ ἐλπίς μου εἰς σέ ἐστιν· ἡ δὲ ὑπόστασίς μου μὴ ἀπόληται παρὰ σοί, κύριε.” Πρίσκος δὲ ἀκούων ταῦτα λέγει αὐτῇ· “Τίμησον σεαυτὴν καὶ τὴν χρεωστουμένην σοι διὰ τὸ γένος σου τιμὴν μὴ ἀπολέσης· ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ διεφθάρης λόγοις ὡς γυνή, μετατράπηθι καὶ θύσον τῷ θεῷ Ἄρει.” Ἡ δὲ γενναῖα ἀθλοφόρος λέγει αὐτῷ· “Ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἐν τῇ φύσει τῆς τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενείας τιμᾶσθαι σπουδάζομεν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ τῷ γενναίῳ τῆς ἀθλήσεως ἀνδραγαθεῖν ἀγωνιζόμεθα· ὅθεν τῷ φρονήματι ἀνὴρ σοι παρέστηκα ἐτοιμὴ οὔσα τυχεῖν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων μου.” Τότε Πρίσκος ὁ ἀνθύπατος θυμομαχῆσας ὅτι ὑπὸ γυναικὸς ἡττᾶται κελεύει ὄργανον κατασκευασθῆναι διὰ τροχῶν καὶ μέσσην αὐτὴν βληθῆναι, ἵνα τεινομένη καὶ συνθλιβομένη ἐν τάχει τὸ πνεῦμα ἀποδώσῃ.¹⁵

While they [i.e., the martyrs] were carried off to prison, the proconsul [i.e., Priskos] came running like a wild predator and robber, like a wolf after a flock, and snatched holy Euphemia away since, being rotten himself, he thought that he would also find [in her] a rotten instrument [i.e., servant]. But the Christ-loving [woman] rejoiced greatly and, raising her eyes to the sky, said: “Help me, Christ! For my hope is in you. May my existence not be separated from you, Lord.” Hearing this, Priskos said to her: “Bring honour to yourself and do not lose the honour owed to you because of your family. Even though you, as a woman, were corrupted with words, change your mind and offer a sacrifice to the god Ares.” However, the brave victorious [Euphemia] said to him: “We are not eager to be honoured through the weak nature of the body, but we strive to perform great [‘manly’] deeds through the nature of the spirit and the braveness of the struggle. Thus, I appear before you as a man in regard to my spirit as I am ready to carry out the command of my predecessors.” Then Priskos, the proconsul, became angry because he had been defeated by a woman, and ordered that a device with wheels be constructed and she be thrown between them [i.e., the wheels], so that she would die quickly by being stretched and crushed.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ed. F. HALKIN, Euphémie de Chalcedone. *Subsidia Hagiographica*, 41. Brussels 1965, esp. 55.

¹⁵ Ibid., 55–79, esp. 63–64 (ch. 6).

¹⁶ Translations from the Greek are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Under Diocletian, a group of forty-nine Christian men along with a young woman named Euphemia are apprehended, interrogated, tortured and imprisoned, because they refused to offer sacrifice to the Greek god Ares. After their trial in the courtroom, the proconsul Priskos, who had no other way to convert them to paganism, decides to send them back to prison and then to the emperor. During the transfer of the martyrs from the courtroom to the prison, the proconsul violently removes Euphemia from the group and endeavours once again to change her mind by reminding her of her weak nature as a woman and of her high social status as the daughter of a senator. In other words, Priskos urges Euphemia not to overestimate her physical endurance, but rather to behave appropriately with respect to the social rank of her family in order to avoid martyrdom. Nevertheless, Euphemia welcomes the new challenge with joy, while also praying to God for help and strength. Priskos, who cannot accept the fact that he was defeated by a woman (ὅτι ὑπὸ γυναικὸς ἡττᾶται), orders her to be tortured to death. It is important to note that all the above information is given in the text in the form of a dialogue between the Christian woman and the pagan adversary that takes place while both narrative characters are indicated as being on the move.¹⁷ In fact, this dialogue fills a gap in the narrative by covering the temporal and geographical distance from the place of interrogation to the place of torture. After her individual torment, from which she emerges by divine intervention as the winner, she is eventually consigned to prison.

On the narrative level, by means of this movement, the text vests the leading role in Euphemia. Her separation from the courtroom and the group of male martyrs brings her in a liminal phase connected with the aforementioned challenges which she is called upon to face while alone and on the move. When she ends up in prison like her companions, she is even more strengthened. What distinguishes Euphemia from her companions is hence not only her individual martyrdom, but also her gender and social status. The hagiographer creates a ‘narrative space’ to enable the protagonist-on-the-move to demonstrate her sublime holiness by rejecting both her social position and her female nature to suffer martyrdom. With her attitude, she manages to defeat the male representative of earthly

¹⁷ This is also the case with another pre-Metaphrastic version of the *Passion of Euphemia* (“*Passion ancienne*”, 5th/6th c., BHG 619d) which is almost identical to the text discussed above, see ed. HALKIN, *Euphémie de Chalcedone* (as footnote 14 above), 12–33, esp. 18–19 (ch. 6). On the contrary, the Metaphrastic version of this martyrdom story (BHG 620), which does not rely on the pre-Metaphrastic versions just mentioned (but probably on an unknown or a non-extant one), offers a different variation on the examined episode. Symeon Metaphrastes clarifies that the dialogue between the two narrative characters takes place in the courtroom (πρὸ τοῦ βήματος = before the court), see *ibid.* 145–161, esp. 149–151 (chs. 5 and 6).

and political authority. Her spiritual power and steadfastness of faith are also tested to a greater extent than those of her male companions, something that can be seen in the outcome of the entire story as well: the narrative concludes with the female protagonist being killed by a beast in the arena and the imprisoned men being transferred to the emperor Diocletian, without any indication of their end. Thus, the state of holiness of the protagonist is, in this case, strongly linked to her movement.

Another case in point is the martyr Barbara whose pagan father Dioskoros delivered her to the Roman authorities because of her Christian faith. Her tenacious refusal to renounce her faith leads to her martyrdom, which takes place under Maximian. During her public ordeal, a pious woman named Iouliane starts crying upon seeing the violent acts performed on Barbara's body. Her emotional reaction unveils her Christian identity and results in her immediate apprehension by the pagan soldiers. From that point on, the two Christian women undergo common interrogations, tortures and imprisonments until the governor Markianos orders that they be decapitated by the sword. Then both heroines are transferred from the place of torture and interrogation to the place of execution. This forced transfer of the two heroines preludes the end of the whole story, which comes immediately after their arrival at the place where their decapitation occurs.

This movement functions as a liminal phase that provides Barbara with the opportunity to communicate with God and negotiate with Him her posthumous status as a saint. Both the pre-Metaphrastic (BHG 213–214) and Metaphrastic versions (BHG 216) depict this movement in a broadly similar way. It is of great interest that Symeon Metaphrastes, who compiled his text based on a version almost identical to the just-mentioned pre-Metaphrastic one,¹⁸ maintained the entire episode of movement while describing it graphically:

Ἐν τῷ ὄρει τοίνυν ἀπαγομένη, καὶ Ἰουλιανῆς ταύτῃ συνεπομένης, ἡ Βαρβάρα καὶ πρὸς τῷ τέλει οὕσα, τῆς φίλης ἐφρόντισε προσευχῆς. Καὶ εἰς γόνυ κλιθεῖσα, “Ἀναρχε,” ἔφη, “Θεέ, [...] αὐτὸς καὶ νῦν ἐμοῦ δεομένης εἰσάκουσον, βασιλεῦ. Καὶ ὃς ἂν τοῦ σοῦ ὀνόματος καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ἀθλήσεως διαμνημονεύσει, μὴ λοιμώδης νόσος τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ ἐπισκῆψει, μὴ ἄλλο τι μὴδὲν τῶν λωβᾶσθαι σώματα καὶ λυπεῖν δυναμένων· οἶδας γάρ, Κύριε, ὅτι σάρκες ἡμεῖς καὶ αἷμα, ποίημα τῶν σῶν ἀχράντων χειρῶν, καὶ εἰκόνι σῇ καὶ ὁμοιώσει τετιμημένοι.” Ἐφη· καὶ

18 The anonymous pre-Metaphrastic version (BHG 213–214) is not considered as a textual source of the Metaphrastic version, but the similarities between the two versions are conspicuous. For the edition of this pre-Metaphrastic text, see ed. J. VITEAU, *Passions des SS. Écaterine et Pierre d’Alexandrie, Barbara et Anysia*. Paris 1897, 89–105, esp. 97 and 99. One of Metaphrastes’ textual sources is a still unedited text written by the bishop Ioannes of Sardeis (BHG 215i), cf. PAPAIOANNOU, *Christian Novels* (as footnote 10 above), 300.

φωνή τις παραδόξως οὐρανόθεν ἠκούετο, αὐτὴν τε καὶ Ἰουλιανὴν τὴν σύναθλον ἐκκαλουμένη πρὸς οὐρανόν, καὶ τῶν αἰτηθέντων ἅμα τὴν ἐκπλήρωσιν ἐπαγγελλομένη. Ταύτης δὴ τῆς γλυκείας φωνῆς ἐνωτισθεῖσα Βαρβάρα, ὁδοῦ τε εἶχετο, καὶ πρὸς τὸν τοῦ τέλους τόπον ἠπειγέτο. Ἐπει δὲ καὶ φθάσασα ἦν, τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνας, πατρικαῖς χερσὶ τῷ πατρικῷ ξίφει τὴν τελείωσιν δέχεται, καρπὸς ἀγαθὸς ἐκ πονηροῦ δένδρου παραδόξως ἀναφανεῖσα,¹⁹ καὶ Ἰουλιανῆς αὐτῇ πρὸς τινος τῶν ἐκεῖσε στρατιωτῶν συνάμα τελειωθείσης.²⁰

Led up to the mountain, with Iouliane accompanying her, Barbara, even as she was nearing her end, devoted herself to her beloved prayer. Going down on her knees, she said: “O God, [...] hear me too, now as I implore You, O king. Let no pestilence, nor anything else that can injure and harm one’s body, befall the house of whoever will mention Your name and remember my martyrdom. For You know, Lord, that we are flesh and blood, a creation of Your immaculate hands, honored by Your image and likeness.” She spoke and a voice was miraculously heard from heaven, calling to heaven Barbara as well as Iouliane, her companion in martyrdom, and, simultaneously, promising the fulfillment of her request. Upon hearing this sweet voice, Barbara took to the road, and hurried to the place of her death. When she arrived there, she bowed her head and received her death by paternal blade in paternal hands, she, a good fruit that miraculously appeared from a wicked tree. Together with her, Iouliane too was also killed by one of the soldiers there.²¹

On the way to her execution, Barbara addresses a last prayer to God which actually serves as a will containing her last wish or request. In fact, this very last prayer underscores Barbara’s holiness by demonstrating her ability to come in direct contact with God and to enter into an arrangement with Him. According to Barbara, anyone who invokes God’s help or commemorates her by recalling her martyrdom should be kept healthy and safe or be miraculously cured of pestilence and other diseases. Her special status as a martyr at the threshold of death may allow her to ask this favour of God, namely the ability to work posthumous miracles. Indeed, the voice of God resounds wondrously at this point. It announces that, after the completion of their martyrdom, both female martyrs will gain entry into Paradise, and at the same time, accepts Barbara’s request.²²

¹⁹ καρπὸς ... ἀναφανεῖσα: An allusion to Mt. 7:17 and 19; Lk. 3:9. Cf. PAPAIOANNOU, Christian Novels (as footnote 10 above), 304.

²⁰ Ibid., 154–180, esp. 176 and 178 (chs. 32 and 33).

²¹ Ibid., 155–181, esp. 177 and 179.

²² The last prayer of martyrs through which, right before their execution, the protagonists express their special requests to God for posthumous abilities, as well as God’s positive reaction are relatively common features of martyrdom accounts, see, for instance: the pre-Metaphrastic *Passion of Aikaterine of Alexandria* (BHG 31): ed. VITEAU, Passions (as footnote 18 above), 43–65, esp. 63 and 65 (ch. 24); and its Metaphrastic version (BHG 32): PG 116, 275–302, esp. 300–301 (ch. 21). The pre-Metaphrastic *Passion of Prokopios* (BHG 1577): ed. A. PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, Ἀνάλεκτα ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς σταχυολογίας, 5. St. Petersburg 1898, 1–27,

After hearing these encouraging words from God, Barbara hastens to the place of execution. This crucial moment for the spiritual advancement of Barbara occurs right before her decapitation and while being on the move. Her transfer to the peak of the mountain, namely the place of her imminent execution, may also symbolise the upward path toward heaven promised to her by God.

It is notable that at the closure of the story, the text exploits the episode of forced movement to place emphasis once again on the main heroine. Barbara is the most tragic character in the entire story since her father himself willingly takes on the role of persecutor, even leads the female martyr to the place of execution and performs the beheading with his own hands. In contrast to the pre-Metaphrastic version that refers tersely to the fact that her decapitation was performed by her father Dioskoros (i.e., ἐτελειώθη ὑπὸ τοῦ ξίφους τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῆς Διοσκόρου),²³ Symeon Metaphrastes' text delineates her tragic death following her movement with extensive and affective expressions, which were probably intended to trigger emotions of sorrow and grief in the recipients of the text throughout the Byzantine period and beyond.²⁴ Specifically, in the passage cited above, Metaphrastes stresses that the protagonist found death "by paternal

esp. 17.13–19, 26.21–30 and 27.1–4; and its Metaphrastic version (BHG 1579): AASS *Iul. II* (1721) 556–576, esp. 576 (chs. 74 and 75). The *Passion of Marina of Antioch* (BHG 1165): ed. H. USENER, *Acta S. Marinae et S. Christophori*. Festschrift zur fünften Säcularfeier der Carl-Ruprechts-Universität zu Heidelberg. Bonn 1886, 15–47, esp. 42.1–12, 43.13–33, 44.34–36 [140r], 44.1–20 [140v] and 45.21–26. The pre-Metaphrastic *Passion of Blasios* (BHG 276): PG 116, 817–830, esp. 820–821 (ch. 3); and its Metaphrastic version (BHG 277): ed. V.V. LАТΥШЕВ, *Menologii anonymi Byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt*, 1. *Subsidia Byzantina*, 12. St. Petersburg 1911, 328–336, esp. 335–336 (chs. 9 and 10).

²³ Ed. VITEAU, *Passions* (as footnote 18 above), 99.

²⁴ Focusing on emotions is one of the main characteristics of Symeon Metaphrastes' style of writing. For a thorough description of his re-writing techniques, including the delineation of human feelings ("Schilderung menschlicher Empfindungen"), see E. PEYR [SCHIFFER], *Zur Umarbeitung rhetorischer Texte durch Symeon Metaphrastes*. *JÖB* 42 (1992) 143–155. For the depiction of emotions in Metaphrastes' texts, see F. TINNEFELD, *Hagiographie und Humanismus – Die Darstellung menschlicher Empfindungen in den Viten des Metaphrasten*, in: *The 17th International Byzantine Congress* (Dumbarton Oaks/Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., August 3–8, 1986): Abstracts of short papers. New Rochelle, NY 1986, 351–353; W. LACKNER, *Die Gestalt des Heiligen in der byzantinischen Hagiographie des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts*, *ibid.*, 523–536; HINTERBERGER, *Byzantinische biographische Literatur des 10. Jahrhunderts* (as footnote 10 above), 77–81; PAPAIOANNOU, *Christian Novels* (as footnote 10 above), xvi–xvii, xix, 284 note 9, 291 note 13, 298 note 14, 307 note 9, 310 note 52; L. FRANCO, *Psychological introspection and the image of sanctity in the Metaphrastic Menologion*, in Constantinou/Högel, *Metaphrasis* (as footnote 10 above), 249–269; PAPAVERNANAS, *Gefängnis als Schwellenraum* (as footnote 4 above), esp. 120–152, where emotional scenes are examined not only in Metaphrastic but also in pre-Metaphrastic texts.

blade in paternal hands”, which was the result of her unjust fate of being “a good fruit [i.e., a pious daughter] that miraculously appeared from a wicked tree [i.e., a cruel and impious father]”. In general, considering also other parts of the text, Metaphrastes devoted a lot of ink and space to Barbaras’ father, “the child-murderer” (παιδοκτόνος),²⁵ in order to illustrate the circumstances under which the martyrdom and death of the protagonist took place. These events, described in powerful and emotional words, underscore the liminal stage between earthly life, death, and the afterlife in which the protagonist finds herself. At the same time, they compel the recipients to pay closer attention to the climactic development of the story as well as the transformation of the heroine into a saint, a process that is completed through her execution, the pinnacle of the narrative.

As already mentioned, during her transfer from the place of trial to that of the execution, Barbara is accompanied by Iouliane, who dies a martyr’s death, too. Iouliane’s beheading performed by an unnamed pagan soldier is also important, but it is summarised in just one brief sentence in both the pre-Metaphrastic and the Metaphrastic versions. Yet the pre-Metaphrastic text highlights the significance of Barbara’s death and her sanctity by mentioning that even up to the time of the author diseased people, especially lepers, who visit the place of *her* execution, are healed for the glory and praise of God (Μέχρι δὲ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας ὅσοι λωβοὶ παραγίνονται ἐν τῷ αὐτῆς κολύμβῳ, ἰάσεως τυγχάνουσιν εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον τοῦ παντοδυνάμου καὶ μεγαλοδώρου ἡμῶν θεοῦ).²⁶ This statement refers solely to the protagonist of the story and constitutes a conscious effort of the pre-Metaphrastic author to shift the focus onto Barbara, leaving Iouliane aside at least for a while. However, both the pre-Metaphrastic and Metaphrastic versions add at the end that a pious man named Valentinus took care of the bodies of both female martyrs, which were able to perform healing miracles. The indication of the posthumous status of both heroines as miracle-working saints brings the martyrdom narrative to a close.

The martyr’s movement and the spiritual formation of the audience

The intra-textual audience, consisting of secondary narrative characters, usually achieves spiritual formation through their contact with the Christian protagonist.

²⁵ See, e.g., ed. PAPAIOANNOU, *Christian Novels* (as footnote 10 above), 176 (ch. 31).

²⁶ Ed. VITEAU, *Passions* (as footnote 18 above), 99.

It is of great interest when their contact with the words or the holy body of the protagonist takes place on the move. As I have shown elsewhere, the Christian and pagan intra-textual audience serves as a role model ('Identifikationsfigur') for the Christian extra-textual audience, namely the actual listeners and readers of the text.²⁷ The intended audience may recognise themselves in the actions and reactions of the intra-textual audience and, thereby, they are encouraged to follow the example of the secondary characters delineated in the martyrdom accounts. In the passages analysed below, listeners and readers are called on to seek spiritual improvement through contact with the martyrs' relics and their words as transmitted in the text by the hagiographer. In this sense, not only the protagonists, but also the intra- and extra-textual audiences may experience a transitional phase in terms of spiritual and ideological transformation.

The pre-Metaphrastic *Passion of Eleutherios* (BHG 568–570), presumably written after 400,²⁸ affirms that the preaching or teaching activity of the captive martyr can lead the intra-textual audience along their path to spiritual formation. According to the text, pagan soldiers are sent by the emperor Hadrian to find and arrest the young bishop Eleutherios because of his Christian faith. When they arrive at the mountain where Eleutherios was living along with wild animals, the Christian man disarms them with his words, teaching them God's truth and calling upon them to convert to Christianity. At the same time, he expresses his willingness to comply with their command and follow them to Rome. During their travels there, about five hundred of the soldiers are converted to Christianity and ask Eleutherios to baptise them. Then they abandon the rest of the soldiers and generals travelling to Rome and continue their journey alone. Three of the generals are also converted to Christianity. The relevant passage reads as follows:

καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ μακάριοι ἔσεσθε. ὁμως ἐφ' ᾧ ἤλθατε πορευθώμεν. καταβαινόντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν Ῥώμην, πιστεύσαντες ἐβαπτίσθησαν στρατιῶται ὡς πεντακόσιοι καὶ ἑάσαντες τοὺς στρατηλάτας τοὺς ἐπιπορευομένους ἐπὶ τὸν Ἐλευθέριον ἀπῆλθον ἐπὶ τὴν Ῥώμην. ἦσαν δὲ καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τῶν στρατηλατῶν πιστεύσαντες ἄνδρες τρεῖς οἱ ἡγούμενοι αὐτῶν.²⁹

²⁷ CH. PAPAVERNANAVAS, The role of the audience in the pre-Metaphrastic Passions. *AB* 134 (2016), 66–82, esp. 76–80; IDEM, Gefängnis als Schwellenraum (as footnote 4 above), esp. 129–133, 160–161.

²⁸ Cf. P. FRANCHI DE' CAVALIERI, I martiri di S. Teodoto e di S. Ariadne con un'appendice sul testo originale del martirio di S. Eleuterio. *Studi e Testi*, 6. Rome 1901, esp. 145–146.

²⁹ Ed. FRANCHI DE' CAVALIERI, I martiri (as footnote 28 above), 149–161, esp. 159.1–5; the Metaphrastic version is still unedited, cf. HØGEL, Rewriting (as footnote 10 above), 192.

[Eleutherios said:] “And believe in God and you will be blessed. Still, let us go for the reason you came.” When they were going down to Rome, about five hundred soldiers believed and received baptism and, after abandoning those generals who were transferring Eleutherios, they came to Rome. And among the generals, there were three men who believed, who were their [i.e., the soldiers’] leaders.

This movement or travel can be interpreted as a liminal phase which exerts a crucial influence on the religious identity of the soldiers. Specifically, travel gave them the time and space to internalise the words of the martyr and become Christians through baptism. The very fact that they abandoned the group to which they initially belonged and followed another route to Rome manifests their new identity as Christians through an ideological and a spatial change. The narrative concludes with the beheading of the protagonist Eleutherios followed by that of his mother, named Anthia, who was present at the martyrdom of her son. Then Christians from the province Illyricum arrived on the spot and took care of the dead bodies.

In the pre-Metaphrastic and Metaphrastic versions of the *Passion of Blaise/Blasios* (BHG 276; BHG 277), the motif of the protagonist’s inflicted mobility appears in two significant episodes. The first episode can be found right at the outset of the narrative: the bishop Blasios flees Sebaste to reside with wild animals in a cave on Argeus Mountain for fear of being seized by the pagan soldiers. However, once the time of his martyrdom has come, like Eleutherios, Blasios is also ready to travel with the soldiers in order to be delivered to the Roman governor Agrikolaos. On the way to Sebaste, he teaches and converts several pagans to the Christian faith, while healing and helping, through his prayers to God, not only diseased people but also sick – tame and wild – animals. Blasios cures, for instance, the only son of a Christian woman who was about to die when a fish-bone became lodged in his throat and helps another poor woman find her pig which had been snatched by a wolf.³⁰ Hence the transfer of Blasios from the mountain to the city is a decisive turning point not only for him, but also for the people around him. With the help of God, he performs miracles, providing the bystanders with palpable evidence of his holiness while alive and on the move.³¹ In doing so, he also incites pagan people to become Christians and

³⁰ See the pre-Metaphrastic version: PG 116, 817–830, esp. 820–821 (chs. 3 and 4); and the Metaphrastic version: LATYŠEV, *Menologii* (as footnote 22 above), 328–336, esp. 329–330 (chs. 2 and 3).

³¹ Working miracles is not a precondition for achieving holiness, but an additional attestation of a holy person’s superhuman abilities on earth. Cf. M. KAPLAN, *Le miracle est-il nécessaire au saint byzantin?*, in D. Aigle (ed.), *Miracle et karāma: hagiographies médiévales comparées* 2.

Christian people to strengthen their faith, thereby leading them to an ideological and spiritual rebirth.

Immediately after his arrival in Sebaste, Blasios is first incarcerated and then questioned by the governor. Unable to entice Blasios to renounce his faith, Agrikolaos beats him with a stick and rips his flesh with iron combs. Then, bleeding, he is sent back to prison. The second striking episode related to the motif of inflicted mobility occurs at this very moment when Blasios departs the place of trial and torture to go to his prison cell. According to the text, while Blasios is on the way to prison, seven pious women follow him, collecting the blood flowing from his wounds and rubbing their bodies with it. Their actions do not remain unnoticed. Recognised as Christians, they are seized and delivered to the governor. The pre-Metaphrastic version (BHG 276; date unknown) describes this episode in the following words:

Ἀπαγομένου δὲ τοῦ ἁγίου ἱερομάρτυρος Βλασίου ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ, ἰδοὺ γυναῖκες ἑπτὰ εὐσεβεῖς καὶ φοβούμεναι τὸν Θεὸν ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ, δεχόμεναι τὰ ἀποστάζοντα ἐξ αὐτοῦ αἵματα καὶ ἑαυτὰς ἐπαλείφουσαι. Ταύτας τοίνυν ἰδόντες οἱ δῆμοι τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ κρατήσαντες αὐτὰς ἀπήγαγον τῷ ἡγεμόνι λέγοντες αὐτῷ ὅτι Καὶ αὗται Χριστιαναὶ εἰσιν.³²

While the holy hieromartyr Blasios was led away to the prison, behold, seven pious and God-fearing women followed him, collecting the blood flowing from him [i.e., from his wounds] and rubbing themselves [with it]. So, the executioners, seeing these women, arrested them and brought them before the governor and said to him that they were also Christians.

Symeon Metaphrastes dressed up this story to make the characters more appealing to the intended audience. Specifically, the Metaphrastic version of the *Pasion of Blaise/Blasios* (BHG 277), written on the basis of the above text, pictures the movement of the central hero and the reaction of the seven women by adding a few important details:³³ they view the blood of the Christian man as a *myron* (i.e., a fragrant holy oil) and anoint themselves *delicately* (ἀβρότερον) with

Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études. Sciences Religieuses, 109. Turnhout 2000, 167–196, esp. 171, 180–181, 192–193.

³² PG 116, 824 (ch. 6).

³³ Here a clarification is needed: it is likely that, for compiling his text version (BHG 277), Symeon Metaphrastes not only drew on the above-mentioned pre-Metaphrastic text (BHG 276), but also on further writings which are today unknown or lost. Therefore, it is not possible to say whether the details discussed above originate from the hand of Metaphrastes or other previous authors. At any rate, the very fact that Symeon Metaphrastes chose to include these vivid details in his account evinces his strong interest in emphasising the importance of the episode with the moving martyr and the seven women.

it.³⁴ Metaphrastes focuses on the behaviour of the Christian women who pay reverence to the holy man by gathering his drops of blood carefully and treating them as a sacred substance. The holiness of the protagonist is recognised once more while alive and on the move. Moreover, Metaphrastes highlights the movement of the women by pointing out that, through their great faith and attitude, they will gain a worthy celestial reward, namely entry into Paradise, *immediately afterwards* (κατὰ πόδας).³⁵ This means that their decision to approach Blasios simultaneously brings them closer to Paradise and God. Beyond its basic – figurative – meaning (that is, ‘immediately afterwards’), the phrase κατὰ πόδας (i.e., ‘on foot’) may also point to the fact that these women are literally on the move, closely following in the footsteps of Blasios and heading toward martyrdom. Thus, the transfer of the male protagonist to prison marks both the interruption of the protagonist’s martyrdom and the delay of his death, as well as the beginning of a subplot, namely the martyrdom of the seven Christian women who die at the end by decapitation and, in this manner, reach spiritual perfection and sanctity. The episode with the moving martyr and the seven women takes up in the pre-Metaphrastic version *ca.* one-third of the whole text and in the Metaphrastic version *ca.* half of the text.³⁶ Although the seven women remain unnamed to the end, in view of the length and significance of the relevant episode, they acquire a place among the leading roles of the narrative.

Even though, in its Metaphrastic version (BHG 353),³⁷ the *Passion of Clement of Ancyra* does include a similar episode, with the mutilated martyrs-on-the-move being followed by the faithful, the narrative neither introduces a meticulous subplot nor recounts the consequences that the faithful would have suffered after revealing their Christian identity. Therefore, unlike the aforementioned seven women, in this case, the unnamed believers can be ranked only among the secondary characters of the text. Overall, the relevant passage from the *Passion of Clement* is limited to the brief depiction of the following scene:

³⁴ Ed. LATYŠEV, *Menologii* (as footnote 22 above), 332 (ch. 5).

³⁵ *IBIDEM* 332 (ch. 5).

³⁶ See the pre-Metaphrastic version: *PG* 116, 817–830, esp. 824–828 (chs. 6–9); and the Metaphrastic version: LATYŠEV, *Menologii* (as footnote 22 above), 328–336, esp. 332–334 (chs. 5–7).

³⁷ The anonymous pre-Metaphrastic version of this *Passion* (BHG 352), dating from the eighth or early ninth century, is still unedited, cf. TH. ANTONOPOULOU, *The ancient Passion of St Clement of Ancyra: preliminary remarks on the planned first edition*, in E. Göransson et al. (eds.), *The arts of editing medieval Greek and Latin: a casebook. Studies and Texts*, 203. Toronto 2016, 22–33, esp. 22–23.

Μεταξὺ δὲ πρὸς τὴν φυλακὴν τῶν ἁγίων πορευομένων ἐκπίπτουσαι σὺν αἵματι τούτων αἱ σάρκες, τρέχειν ἀπανταχόθεν ἐπὶ τὴν συλλογὴν αὐτῶν τοὺς πιστοὺς, ὡς ἐπὶ τινα θησαυρὸν ἀγαθῶν, παρεσκεύαζον. Ὅσπερ ὡς εἶχον εὐθὺς αὐτῇ κόνει διψώσαις ὥσπερ χερσὶν ἀναιρούμενοι, εὐλογίαν ἐπισπᾶσθαι τινα καὶ χάριν ἐπίστευον.³⁸

In the meantime, whilst the saints [i.e., Clement and Agathangelos] were going to prison, the falling scraps of their flesh along with their blood made the believers run from all sides to gather them like a treasury of good things. With thirsty hands, they [i.e., the believers] immediately picked them up [from the ground], covered in dirt, because they were confident that they would gain a certain blessing and grace.

When Clement and his companion Agathangelos are on the way to prison, bloody flaps of skin fall from their bodies. Believers from near and far immediately gather and keep them like a precious treasure. The infinitive *τρέχειν* (i.e., to run) underscores the swift movement of the believers who were avid for contact with the martyrs and their holy flesh. In both cases, namely in the *Passion of Blasios* and the *Passion of Clement* and his companion Agathangelos, the movement of the wounded protagonists enables the Christian intra-textual audience to connect physically and spiritually with the martyrs by collecting fragments of their holy bodies. Correspondingly, the extra-textual audience can strengthen their connection with the divine through the commemoration of the saints and the veneration of their relics. In sum, by approaching and venerating the saints before or after their death, believers inside and outside the text pass through a liminal stage, during which they forge and finally enjoy a special relationship with the saints and by extension with God.

The martyr's movement and the structure of the text

In studying the above text examples, it becomes apparent that the usage of the motif of imposed mobility turns the martyrdom accounts into more elaborate and compelling reads. And this applies not only to the Metaphrastic texts which, in their majority, are more sophisticated, but also to the pre-Metaphrastic writings where earlier manifestations of the motif are attested. This last section of the paper focuses on the structure of a martyrdom account by examining the role of scenes of movement in the narrative and their potential effect on the extra-textual audience. The text example discussed below is the *Passion of Eu-*

³⁸ PG 114, 816–893, esp. 876–877 (ch. 74).

stratios, Auxentios, Eugenios, Mardarios and Orestes (BHG 646), which Symeon Metaphrastes integrated into his collection by directly taking it from an old *Menologion*.³⁹ This means that, in the present case, the Metaphrastic scenes of martyrs-on-the-move are identical with their pre-Metaphrastic versions. Consequently, the motif in question remained untouched and unchanged by any variation throughout several centuries.

The significance of scenes of movement can be appreciated by considering their positioning in the narrative, their content, and their length. The position of scenes of movement is central in the martyrdom narrative of Eustratios and his companions: they are situated in the middle of the account, thereby serving as a unifying component between the two distinct parts of the story, namely the beginning and the outcome, which are set in two different regions (Satala or Arauraka – Sebaste). The content of these scenes is also of crucial importance, as they depict the imposed transfer of Eustratios and his companions from Satala or Arauraka to Nikopolis (today Koyulhisar in the Sivas Province of Turkey) and then to Sebaste (today Sivas in Turkey), while suffering martyrdom on the move. Finally, the length of these scenes of movement underlines their special role within the whole text: the outset of the narrative takes up *ca.* 6 columns in the *Patrologia Graeca*, the central part with the transportation also *ca.* 6 columns, and the final part devoted to both the interrogation and the execution of the main hero, Eustratios, *ca.* 8 columns.⁴⁰ In other words, the scenes of movement take up approximately one-third of the text. The position of the scenes of movement in the entire work, as well as their length and content function as signs calling upon the reading and listening audience to pay particular attention to these segments of the story.

The story of Eustratios and his companions takes place during the reign of Diocletian and Maximian. Lysias, the *doux* of Satala in Armenia, and Agrikolaos, the governor of Sebaste, are ordered to persecute the Christians for their faith. One of the Christians apprehended is Auxentios, the priest of the Armenian city of Arauraka.⁴¹ During the public trial of the arrested Christians conducted by Lysias, Eustratios, who also hailed from Arauraka and acted as *scriniarius* and military officer, reveals his religious identity and is ready to suffer martyrdom for Christ's sake. He publicly undergoes physical tortures, from which he

³⁹ EHRHARD, Überlieferung, 2 (as footnote 1 above), 526–527.

⁴⁰ See PG 116, 468–505: 468–480 (the beginning); 480–489 (the central part examined above); and 489–505 (the end of the story).

⁴¹ The city Arauraka/Arabraka (or Sarabraka) in Armenia Minor is a doubtful place; it would probably have been located 47 or 50 miles west of Satala on the road to Nikopolis, cf. W. M. RAMSAY, *The historical geography of Asia Minor*. London 1890 (repr. New York 2010), 286.

miraculously emerges unscathed. This leads his friend Eugenios to join the martyrdom. Then both of them are sent to prison, along with Auxentios and the other unnamed Christians. The next day, Lysias sets out for Nikopolis and takes Eustratios, Auxentios and Eugenios with him. Two days later, they arrive at the fortress of Arauraka, where a builder named Mardarios is inspired by the endurance of Eustratios and publicly expresses his willingness to likewise suffer martyrdom. Mardarios is immediately arrested and imprisoned in the fortress together with the other three men. Lysias commands that Auxentios be brought before the court in an effort to change his mind and convert him to paganism. But because of his steadfastness in faith, Auxentios is executed by decapitation in an unspecified remote woody area, and his body is abandoned there unburied. Then Mardarios and Eugenios are separately interrogated, tortured and executed. While still on the way to Nikopolis, Lysias engages with the training of his soldiers. When the Christian identity of one of the soldiers, named Orestes, is unveiled, Lysias orders that he be bound like Eustratios and be transferred to Nikopolis for questioning. When Lysias arrives at Nikopolis, he is surprised at the announcement of a local group of soldiers that they themselves were Christians.

Amid this turbulence, Lysias feels compelled to implement other measures for the chastisement of both Eustratios and Orestes:

Ἐξαιρέτως δὲ ἐδεδίδει τὸν ἅγιον Εὐστράτιον μὴ ποτε αὐθις τῶν βασάνων αὐτῷ προσαγομένων ὁμοίως θαυματουργήσῃ τι, καὶ οὐ μόνον τοὺς ἤδη Χριστιανοὺς στηρίξῃ εἰς τὴν πίστιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας μεταστήσῃ τῆς τῶν εἰδώλων θρησκείας. Ἔδοξεν οὖν αὐτῷ τῇ ἐξῆς ἀναστάντι πρωΐθεν, παραπέμψαι ἐν τῇ Σεβαστηνῶν πόλει τῷ Ἀγρικολάῳ τὸν ἅγιον Εὐστράτιον καὶ τὸν ἅγιον Ὀρέστην. [...] τοῦτο προσέταξε γενέσθαι, γράψας ἐπιστολὴν [...] τῷ Ἀγρικολάῳ περιέχουσαν οὕτω· [...]. Λαβόντες τοίνυν οἱ στρατιῶται τὰ τοιαῦτα γράμματα, παραλαβόντες δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἁγίους δεδεμένους, εἶχοντο τῆς ὁδοῦ. Ὁ δὲ ἅγιος Εὐστράτιος ἅμα τῷ Ὀρέστῃ ἔψαλλε κατὰ τὴν ὁδόν· [...] Καὶ πληρώσας τὴν εὐχὴν, ἡρώτα τὸν μακάριον Ὀρέστην λέγων· Ἀδελφὲ Ὀρέστα, διήγησαί μοι ἐν ποίᾳ προθυμίᾳ ἐτελειώθη ὁ ἅγιος Αὐξέντιος, καὶ ἐν ποίῳ τόπῳ.⁴²

But [Lysias] was especially afraid of saint Eustratios, lest he would work some miracles, as [he had] previously, when tortures would be inflicted on him anew, thereby not only encouraging the already existing Christians in their faith, but also turning the pagans away from the worship of idols. Then, the next day, he [i.e., Lysias] woke up early in the morning and decided to deliver saint Eustratios and saint Orestes to Agrikolaos in the city of Sebaste. [...] He ordered this [i.e., the transfer of the saints] to be done and wrote a letter to Agrikolaos with the following content: [...]. The soldiers then received these papers, took the saints bound [in chains] and started their journey. On the way, saint Eustratios chanted psalms along with Orestes. [...] When he completed his prayer, he enquired of the blessed

42 PG 116, 468–505, esp. 485–488 (chs. 18 and 19).

Orestes: “Brother Orestes, tell me [please] with how much willingness and in which place saint Auxentios died”.

After the execution of Auxentios, Mardarios and Eugenios, Lysias decides to send Eustratios together with his companion Orestes to the governor Agrikolaos in Sebaste for the completion of their trial and martyrdom. This is mainly because Lysias is highly concerned that if he continues to question Eustratios publicly, the latter would not only strengthen the faith of the Christian bystanders through his words and miracles, but also convert many pagans to Christianity. At this point, both Christian men, bound in chains, begin their five-day journey from Nikopolis to Sebaste accompanied by pagan soldiers who are instructed to come before Agrikolaos and deliver him both the letter written by Lysias explaining the case of the two martyrs and the ‘tangible subject’ of the letter, namely the imprisoned martyrs themselves.

On the way, the Christian men chant psalms and discuss with each other. Eustratios asks Orestes about the details of Auxentios’ martyrdom, such as the zeal he showed during his ordeal and the place of his decapitation. Orestes starts out by recounting several events that up to that moment had been unknown not only to his companion Eustratios, but also to the extra-textual audience: Auxentios’ last wish before his execution was to visit Eustratios, but it was ignored by the pagan soldiers, who immediately led him to the so-called ‘Ororeia’ ravine (Ὠρώρεια); after addressing psalms and prayers to God, he told Orestes in a whisper that he would await Eustratios in heaven and that Eustratios should pray for him; then Auxentios was decapitated, and the priests of Arauraka took care of his dead body secretly at dark.⁴³ These words emotionally moved Eustratios who starts crying and hence becomes more encouraged and motivated to endure martyrdom bravely. Indeed, when the two men are brought before Agrikolaos, Eustratios witnesses the last moments of his companion Orestes, invoking him to recall and imitate the fortitude of Auxentios.⁴⁴ Shortly afterwards, Eustratios adopts a similar attitude towards martyrdom and death: when thrown into a fiery furnace, Eustratios also shows bravery and dies a martyr’s death. Thus, the words of Auxentios transmitted by Orestes greatly determine the end of the story by further heartening the main hero and his companion at their death. In this manner, the two Christian men achieve holiness by following the example of Auxentios.

⁴³ PG 116, 488 (ch. 20).

⁴⁴ PG 116, 500–501 (ch. 28).

Therefore, the journey from Nikopolis to Sebaste complements the information obtained from the description of the first journey beginning from Satala or Arauraka, while at the same time completing the whole story. In other words, the second imposed transfer of the martyrs comes to fulfil certain narrative functions in the structure of the text, namely, to fill gaps in the story through a flashback, thereby giving coherence to the entire text and great pleasure to the listeners and readers who expect an exciting and adventurous narrative. The well-thought-out structure of the text and the climactic development of the story, including the spiritual advancement of the martyrs-on-the-move, provide further evidence that such movements serve as liminal phases. This is because they contribute essentially to the process of attaining holiness. More precisely, these scenes, being high points of their respective text due to their content, length and place in the narrative, aim to convey to the audience the most dramatic twists and turns of the plot regarding the protagonists' initiation into sanctity. In this sense, the transfer of the imprisoned martyrs from one place to another proves to be an integral part of the plot.

By and large, the examined text uses every opportunity to give prominence to the motif of imposed mobility and its context. For instance, the hagiographer chooses to exploit the scenes of movement to introduce new heroes into his narrative. Contrary to many other *Passions*, in the martyrdom account of Eustratios, all new narrative characters are mentioned by name not only throughout the narrative but also in the title of the text. Additionally, it is probably not a coincidence that, already in his programmatic prologue, the hagiographer attempts to explain the real reason for the transfers inflicted on imprisoned Christians: after interrogating and torturing the Christian men and women arrested in the area of his governance, the *doux* of Satala, Lysias, used to send them, chained and accompanied by trustworthy soldiers, to Agrikolaos in Sebaste who then sentenced them to death; Agrikolaos, in turn, did the same, delivering the arrested Christians from Sebaste to Lysias; their intention was to punish the Christians as severely as possible, as they knew that it would be an immense distress to the Christians to die in a foreign land instead of remaining in their own land where they could be properly cared for or buried by their close friends and relatives.⁴⁵ The prologue of the hagiographer is a foreshadowing of the whole story.

45 PG 116, 469 (ch. 3).

Conclusions

All in all, the investigation of the ‘imprisoned martyr on the move’ enables a more nuanced understanding of the steps leading to advanced spirituality and holiness as delineated in the early and middle Byzantine martyrdom accounts. Several variations of the motif of imposed mobility have come to the fore through a comparison of different versions of the same martyrdom stories, written by different authors in different periods, that is, the anonymous pre-Metaphrastic versions (dating from the fourth to the ninth century) and the tenth-century reworkings by Symeon Metaphrastes. Martyrs’ imposed mobility appears to be a liminal phase which constructively affects not only the protagonists’ initiation process into holiness, but also the spiritual and ideological transformation of both the bystanders to the martyrdom and the recipients of the text. On the one hand, the imposed movement in the form of short or long travel affords the captive martyrs the opportunity to obtain a high level of spirituality and holiness by overcoming further challenges. On the other hand, the pagan and Christian bystanders to the martyrdom have first-hand experience of the holiness of the Christian martyrs-on-the-move and often come to emulate them in their pious way of life, either by abandoning the pagan religion to become Christians or by strengthening their Christian faith. Likewise, listeners and readers may follow the example of the narrative characters in their spiritual progression. Finally, scenes of martyrs’ mobility constitute a considerable part of the narrative and develop major events in the storyline. As the present survey has highlighted, in order to appreciate the role of scenes of movement in a martyrdom narrative (and beyond), one should examine them in their context, above all their position in the entire text, considering which events they follow and which they precede. In terms of content, length and positioning in the narrative, these scenes constitute the liminal phase that is necessary on the protagonists’ path to spiritual perfection and holiness.