

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE MULTIMEDIATION OF HOLINESS:  
HAGIOGRAPHY AS RESISTANCE IN GREEK ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL CULTURE

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For my spouse and my father, my pillars of strength,  
for my mother, with us in spirit,  
and for my son, about to arrive.

*My heart, listen as only  
saints have listened: until some colossal  
sound lifted them right off the ground; yet,  
they listened so intently that, impossible  
creatures, they kept on kneeling.*

*~Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies I*

**THE MULTIMEDIATION OF HOLINESS:  
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## *Stylistic Notes*

The images I have included in the dissertation are my own (or a family member's) photography, except where otherwise noted and explicitly acknowledged. With the exception of images in the public domain or published under a Creative Commons license, I have sought permission for all images that are not my own, or are my photos of sites and objects under the administration of the Republic of Cyprus' Department of Antiquities (to which special acknowledgement is due for their permission to publish numerous images), the ecclesiastical museums of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus (in Nicosia, Paphos, and Peristerona), the Council for the Historical Memory of the EOKA Struggle (SIMAE), the Center for Visual Arts and Research (CVAR), the Cyprus Folk Art Museum, and the Blyth Valley Team Ministry (in Suffolk, England). I am most grateful to all of these institutions for their support of this work. My sincere thanks also to three individuals for permission to reproduce their own work: Panayiotis Christodoulou, Georgios Konstaninou, and Lefteris Olympios. Your wonderful artwork has enriched my consideration of the themes depicted therein.

\*

This study contains extensive analysis of Greek-language materials, both published and unpublished, both modern and ancient. My practice is to transliterate Greek words appearing in the body of the text, while providing original Greek in the notes—this is a compromise intended to allow readers without Greek to engage with recurring words and concepts (for instance, *antistasē* rather than ἀντιστάση, above the line). Doing so, I aim to observe the transliteration guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style and the Journal of Modern Greek Studies. Modern Greek is notoriously difficult to transliterate into English, and in any available systematic approach, compromises must be made. For the most part, I provide one-to-one transliterations by letter, even if the modern Greek pronunciation of a given word would seem to vary from the spelling. For instance, I would transliterate ελευθερία as *eleutheria* rather

than *eleftheria*, βασιλοπούλα as *basilopoula* rather than *vasilopoula*, μπορώ as *mporō* rather than *borō*. However, there are a few exceptions to the one-to-one transliteration practice. Where certain pronunciations have made their way into English borrowings from Greek, they are worth retaining for the sake of sense (for instance, αγγλοκρατία as *anglokratia* rather than *agglokratia*). And when I am using the established common name of a place or person (typically without italics), I follow convention rather than strict transliteration: for instance, Yiannis rather than Giannēs, Hadjioannou rather than Chatzēiōannou, Stavrovouni rather than Staurobouni. Where variations in spelling appear in my sources, deriving from Katharevousa or Cypriot dialect, I retain them in the transliterations: for instance, *hagios* rather than *agios* in many ecclesiastical texts (whereas the latter is normal in conversation), or *tziai* rather than *kai* in folk tales, songs, and proverbs. I do not transliterate accents.

In my bibliography and notes, I retain the original titles for works of scholarship in Greek, while providing bracketed translations in the bibliography only. However, I tend to use the translated titles for classic works (for instance, *The Life of Antony*). For those authors whose names have been widely transliterated, I defer to convention; for those whose have not, I have looked for evidence of their own preferences; where this evidence is lacking, I transliterate names according to the above principles.

\*

Citations from the critical editions of J. P. Migne (*Patrologia Graeca*) are designated in the notes by “PG.” Citations from the Bible, if not my own translation, are from the New Revised Standard Version.

\*

I use “she” and “he” mostly interchangeably for a singular generic referent (“the hagiographical consumer and her concerns”). Although there will be certain times when gender is implied by the referent (“a village priest and his community”), for the most part my usage will roughly alternate and should not be taken to express particular assumptions about the referents in question.



## *Preface & Acknowledgements*

The decision to pursue a doctoral dissertation in which extended fieldwork abroad would be necessary was not taken lightly: first, because of the material difficulties and personal uncertainties of doing so, and second, because the human cost of my research would no longer only be upon me and my own family. I do not subscribe to a positivistic framework for ethnographic research in which, as Yael Navaro-Yashin puts it, scholars “assume that the world is a laboratory from which they can pick and choose sites for fieldwork.” Contrary to such a framework, I would agree, “anthropology is fruitful only insofar as the anthropologist is able to establish a relationality with the people whom she or he is studying.”<sup>1</sup> This term, “relationality,” is key, and not only in anthropology: while it is certainly not the case that the sole criterion for authorizing human research is the desire of the researcher, it is also not the case that only members of a community or culture can or should have the opportunity to study it, contributing their skills to its public interpretation.

I was not, in the beginning, invited to Cyprus. I have no Cypriot heritage or family. I do not purport to have—and I take this absence to be a strength, not a weakness, of the study—any “right” to the island and its interpretation, whether offered by others or claimed by force of will. My posture in this work, then, is not that of the laboratory scientist but rather that of the grateful stranger; my longstanding experience of the celebrated hospitality of the Mediterranean attunes me to the debt owed and the risk borne in the course of such a project. There is no doubt, for instance, that by studying Cyprus and its people I am contributing to changing them, both in the course of the conversations I have had and through the final product that will be available for their consideration. The issue with this is not that of an earlier generation of ethnographers’ worry about interfering with data through their presence or questions; it is, rather, the obligation to conduct myself (both in person and in print) in a way that

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<sup>1</sup> Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space*, xii.

acknowledges how my presence on Cyprus is “politically mediated”<sup>2</sup> by my status as a foreign researcher, supported by powerful institutions (the American academy, the U.S. State Department), in a society haunted by foreign interference. As a scholar of theology attempting to meet and give an account of religio-political dynamics in a society and tapestry of traditions not my own, I know that the duties incumbent on the guest and stranger (*o xenos*) go beyond pragmatic or political concerns: they are sacred.

The field research component of my dissertation was reviewed by and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Chicago. All study on Cyprus was undertaken in keeping with the written and unwritten ethical standards for research with human subjects, and all names used in the text, except where explicitly noted (and permission granted), are pseudonyms. However, the IRB regulations are insufficient. They provide an important baseline for what is ethically acceptable, yet I recognize and regret the ways in which the contribution I trust I am making may yet be hurtful to people who have been so generous in welcoming me to their land, society, and communion of saints. As Rebecca Bryant articulates her own experience of ethnographic vulnerability on Cyprus: “Much has been written about the ethics of research, but nothing had prepared me for the demands of loyalty and the inevitability of betrayal.”<sup>3</sup> I, like Bryant, discuss aspects of the island’s history and culture that Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots themselves might find misguided, embarrassing, or shocking, and I do so guided by the hope that empathetic scholarship can contribute to the pursuit of justice, peace, and relationships where there have been none or where they have been corroded. To those Cypriots who feel betrayed, in any way, by the interpretation to follow, I ask for your forgiveness, promising that everything herein is expressed in love, gratitude, and the hope of better things to come.

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<sup>2</sup> Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*, 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> Bryant, *The Past in Pieces*, 184.

It is hard to imagine that the acknowledgements owed at the completion of this work could be less extensive than the work itself. My foremost thanks are owed to my dissertation's co-supervisors, Dwight Hopkins and Andreas Glaeser, whose support for me and this project have come in all manner of forms over the years: great and small, professional and personal. Dwight, your continuing and patient invitation to locate myself and put down roots in a tradition of thought has fortified me for professional life and deepened my engagement with my own principles. Harmonizing with this, Andreas, your assurance that my intellectual nomadism had the makings of a real interdisciplinary contribution has been absolutely indispensable to my confidence in completing this work and my courage in continuing to roam. Meeting with you both regularly over the past eight years has been the highlight of my time at the University of Chicago, and I look forward to continuing the conversation in new ways.

My other dissertation committee members, Jaś Elsner of Oxford University and Vera Shevzov of Smith College, have likewise enriched this work immeasurably with their penetrating insight and breadth of perspective, rescuing me repeatedly when I could not see beyond the walls I had built around myself. Thank you both for your encouragement and challenge in equal measure; I am honored to have you as conversation partners and guides.

The whole community of the Divinity School has shaped me in ways more fundamental than are evident in the dissertation, but special acknowledgment is due here to those faculty members who have been conversation partners that have helped make this work what it is. Margaret Mitchell and Richard Rosengarten have been committee members in all but name, dedicating substantial time and indispensable insight to the project and my career trajectory more broadly. Additionally, Arnold Davidson, Kevin Hector, Angie Heo, Karin Krause, Omar McRoberts, Françoise Meltzer, Bruce Lincoln, Willemien Otten, Lucy Pick, William Schweiker, and Michael Sells have all contributed in ways that are evident in the final product or the underlying framework. Finally, I thank David Tracy, who insisted that

the work was worthwhile when I was losing clarity on how to proceed, and whose encouragement early on that the project's apparent convolution reflected rather than compromised its significance came at a critical time. David's gift of an icon of St. George hangs near me as I complete this dissertation, and I cherish its presence, hagiographically perhaps, as a material connection to a personal theological hero.

Beyond the University of Chicago, certain colleagues have served as mentors, going beyond any expectation in their generous support for my work and emerging career. George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (Fordham), Derek Krueger (UNCG), Gerard Mannion (Georgetown), and John D'Arcy May (emeritus, Trinity College Dublin) have been crucial sources of moral and intellectual support, guiding me in calibrating the specificities of this work (and in John's case, of a disciplinary apparatus that has become entirely implicit in the dissertation but has equipped me for work yet to come) to the wider conversations in which I hope it will intervene. My former advisors at Swarthmore College and Trinity College Dublin—Steven Hopkins and Mark Wallace, Andrew Pierce and Geraldine Smyth—have remained important conversation partners since my time working with them directly. Mark in particular, your periodic counseling with regard to the eccentricities of our alma mater has meant more than you know. All of you have set high standards as models of professional integrity and magnanimity.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of the funding bodies that have provided the material conditions necessary for my intellectual labor. These past two years, my Martin Marty Center and William Rainey Harper Fellowships have provided the resources necessary to write up the dissertation at a careful pace, relatively free from the economic precarity faced by so many doctoral students. I do not take this for granted and I am as grateful as I am committed to working toward an academic environment that can be more supportive and humane for more people. My special acknowledgement and thanks are due to the Fulbright Scholar Program and the staff of the U. S. Embassy in Cyprus, who enabled my extended fieldwork in Cyprus in 2016 and invited me to consider my work as

a contribution to international peace and political fitness, an invitation to which I hope I have lived up in this time of upheaval.

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Chicago  
April 23, 2018  
Feast of Saint George

## **Introduction: Holiness, Hagiography, Hermeneutics**

*Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

~Hebrews 12:12-14

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*Abba Poemen said of Abba John the Dwarf that he had prayed God to take his passions away from him so that he might become free from care. He went and told an old man this: 'I find myself in peace, without an enemy,' he said. The old man said to him, 'Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you may regain the affliction and humility that you used to have, for it is by warfare that the soul makes progress.' So he besought God and when warfare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, 'Lord, give me strength for the fight.'*

~The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

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*Saints legitimize vocabularies, but they subvert syntactical rules. Even when they justify the existing order, they serve as demonstrations that contradictions are possible. They are social chimeras in a world that refuses to believe in monsters.*

~Aviad Kleinberg, "Apothegmata"

The modern academy is rediscovering what the modern world has never forgotten: the magnetism and multivalence of saints, those who are “holy” (*sancti; hagioi*).<sup>1</sup> Holiness is a theological category, yet theological understanding orients personal behavior and validates institutional practices, extending its power deep into the realm of political existence. This dissertation investigates, first by way of an ethnographic case study of a Greek Orthodox community in Cyprus, and then through a critical analysis of key theological writings whereby an Orthodox paradigm of holiness was first threshed out and ultimately canonized, how holiness is *mediated*, that is, inscribed and mobilized in human societies by way of the saints, the array of material media that represent them, and the psychosocial processes of identification, interpretation, and communication by which their influence is digested locally. I argue that the many means of mediating holiness at work in Orthodox communities and their intercultural milieux constitute a *lived theology of struggle* with cultural, political, and religious configurations that are perceived/constructed as anti-Orthodox.<sup>2</sup> Such theology—formally and informally enunciated (or indeed tacit), embedded in a wide range of media and practices—can be identified as an enduring current in Orthodox self- and other-understanding. The mediation of holiness continues to warrant and enact all manner of resistance where Greek church communities experience themselves as subjugated, but the pattern was scripted already in antiquity: it was strategically vital to the formation of the Orthodox theological paradigm in which materiality, sensuality, and imagination are indispensable to the salvation and sanctification of human beings.

This introductory chapter has three tasks: (1) to frame the problem that I am undertaking within the horizons of Orthodox imaginaries of holiness, (2) to provide the parameters of the approach with

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Meltzer and Elsner, Introduction to *Saints*, ix: “The modern (scientific, materialist) world has abolished the figure of the saint or at least dismissed it as some sort of primitive throwback.” Fortunately, the tide is turning on this assessment even in the last decade, a turn to which their volume contributes.

<sup>2</sup> This key term, “lived theology,” as well as the variation in the subtitle of the dissertation (“theological culture”), will be defined and discussed in section 3 of this introductory chapter.

which I address this problem (by developing a new account of “hagiography” as composed of multi-mediating processes), and (3) to establish the hermeneutical apparatus that allows me to proceed with my analysis in the interstices of theology and sociology. So doing, I will be able to orient the chapters that follow according to the interwoven layers of my argument: *what* the multimедiation of holiness is, *how* it shapes a lived theology of struggle, and indeed *why* it is treated by Greek Orthodox Christians as fundamental to establishing a rectified life and identity in the world.

### (1) The Problem of Holiness

The prospect of a dissertation on “holiness” is, in a sense, absurd. Whether or not we can accept Nathan Söderblom’s sweeping claim that holiness “is the great word in religion ... even more essential than the notion of God,”<sup>3</sup> and even deferring the question of the extent to which holiness is an interreligious or transreligious category, something called holiness must at least be seen as architectonic in the ways that Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities have made sense of their purpose and practice in the world. Through the vagaries of history, the whole inhabited earth has come to be conditioned, culturally and politically, by contrastive proclamations of holiness and its absence.

The problem proliferates as we pass from identifying this vertiginous category to searching for footholds stable enough to approach it. For one thing, holiness is by no means a single phenomenon, and no one method of accounting for the people, places, times, and objects designated as holy will suffice, however narrowly we define our interest.<sup>4</sup> More challenging still is the fact that “holiness” or “the holy” as an object of inquiry has become deeply divisive for the intellectual industry within which it may be meaningfully engaged. Robert Orsi’s comments are paradigmatic:

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<sup>3</sup> Söderblom, “Holiness,” 731; Söderblom’s influential claim is also used as epigraph in Orsi, “The Problem of the Holy,” 84. Cf. Rogerson, “What is Holiness?,” 6

<sup>4</sup> See Davies, “The Sociology of Holiness,” 48; and Hopgood, Introduction to *The Making of Saints*, xi-xv.

‘The holy’ has the musty smell of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century bourgeois European piety about it, of the canon’s study and the don’s lecture hall. . . . As it was developed at the turn of the twentieth century, moreover, the concept of ‘the holy’ was implicated in the European ideology of Western superiority that underwrote the colonial project, because invariably the most perfect experience of the holy was judged to be the modern European Protestant Christian. In the contemporary academic context, the very aim of the holy as a concept – to name the really realness of religious phenomena independent of cultural and social coordinates – seems jejune.<sup>5</sup>

Insofar as holiness, as classically construed, is purported to elude social genealogy and instead represent religion’s irreducible *sui generis*,<sup>6</sup> it is a category that more than most earns the ire or at least the disqualification of religious studies scholars finely attuned to the endurance of the guild’s crypto-Christian suppositions and tools of analysis. Meanwhile, even when the theological framing of holiness is left untroubled (where divine presence is a warranting feature of the scholarly language-game, instead of divine absence serving the same role),<sup>7</sup> holiness more often provides texture and aura to other kinds of analyses (for instance of martyrdom, pilgrimage, or authority) than it is itself a target for intellectual apprehension. After all, holiness in this theological vein is regularly invoked to name what is construed as inarticulable, excessive, and wholly other. The very act of definition seems to risk making holiness other than what it is, reducing the ineffable to language and futilely attempting to pin it to the page like a moth.<sup>8</sup>

And yet, even as we acknowledge the concept’s tarnished record as a shibboleth and its history of bad disciplinary blood, even as we recognize that holiness is not a single thing or even a “thing” at all, it is nonetheless a topic of paramount importance to theological and sociological inquiry alike. It is to our discredit to exile holiness from the study of religion, as much as it is to treat it theologically in platitudes

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<sup>5</sup> Orsi, “The Problem of the Holy,” 85.

<sup>6</sup> This classic construal in its most academically pervasive forms is well laid out and interpreted in Rogerson’s treatment of Nathan Söderblom, Rudolph Otto, and Mircea Eliade: see “What is Holiness?” 5-16.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* 509: “I really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say ‘can trust something’).” Cf. Orsi, *History and Presence*, 57-65, on the “postulate of absence” (62) in modern religious studies scholarship.

<sup>8</sup> As I will argue in what follows, neither of these rationales for avoiding holiness as an object of analysis are ultimately valid: in the first case because this classic construal of holiness is not determinative of how it ought to be studied in any discipline, and in the second case because the dynamics and warrants of what I will discuss as *hagiographical mediation*, by which holiness is realized in human language, action, and institution, are theologically inseparable from holiness “as such.”

and mystifications. As Orsi argues, there is an “empirical warrant for continued interest in the term” insofar as people around the world continue to seize on it as the most adequate articulation of something in their experience.<sup>9</sup> It is, on the other hand, a “double intellectual tragedy” when the studied reality is “explained away” and thus constrained by the scholar’s reality, which thereafter cannot itself be enlarged or reoriented by what it has, instead, domesticated and subordinated.<sup>10</sup> To resolutely confront and whet one’s academic apparatus with human experiences of holiness is, as I take it, a synecdoche for the merits of maintaining theology as a resource rather than a bugbear for interdisciplinary religious studies.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of my project in particular, it must be acknowledged that the particular analysis of Orthodox Christian institutions, practices, and discourse is quite deficient in the absence of a sustained treatment of the parameters and dynamics of holiness. Truism though it may be that the saints are ubiquitous in Orthodoxy, this is not an accidental prominence but a deliberate installation of the saints, as so-designated “holy ones,” at the gravitational center of Orthodox theology, ecclesiology, and society.<sup>12</sup> It is those who are *holy* that are the “supreme theologians” of Orthodoxy,<sup>13</sup> whose minds have been freed from

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<sup>9</sup> Orsi, “The Problem of the Holy,” 86. As Ann Taves puts it, casting her net as widely as possible, “it would appear that the tendency to set some things apart as special is a deeply rooted human characteristic” (“Special Things as Building Blocks of Religions,” 68); cf. Rogerson, “What is Holiness?,” 21, on “recurrent features of human experience.”

<sup>10</sup> Orsi, *History and Presence*, 64 (cf. de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 343). Orsi’s argument up to this point on the constraint of religious studies by (crypto-Protestant) suppositions about religious absence, which have led to a totalizing framework of social constructionism and a “serious and massive failure of the intellectual imagination” (63; drawing on Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough*), is forceful and provocative. It is key to my own entry into the world of Orthodox theology that the “everyday life of the theorist and historian [not become] the ground for judging the experience of others” (63).

<sup>11</sup> As the eminent public theologian Duncan Forrester suggested: “Perhaps the task of theology in the university is to be like the grit in the oyster around which the pearl may gather, by asking in the academy the hard unfashionable questions which are often a productive irritant . . .” (*Forrester on Christian Ethics and Practical Theology*, 218). Cf. Thatanamil, “Comparing Professors Smith and Tillich,” 1178: “By insisting that we must take the other seriously as other and not merely as an object of our theoretical scrutiny, theology can destabilize positions of power and privilege that theoreticians grant themselves.”

<sup>12</sup> See McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 228-33; Skedros, “Hagiography and Devotion to the Saints,” 451; Krueger, “The Practice of Christianity in Byzantium,” 9-12 (as well as the discussion in several other chapters of Krueger [ed], *A People’s History of Christianity*); Hanganu, “Eastern Christians and Religious Objects,” 45-50; Luehrmann, “A Duel Quarrel of Images on the Middle Volga,” 60-64.

<sup>13</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 232; cf. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 8. John Romanides goes further than McGuckin in this matter, making the saint not only the supreme theologian but indeed the *only* theologian (from

captivity to the frames of world and thus freed for true contemplation (*theōria*); it is the saints whose physical presence (rather than their discourse or moral example in isolation) renders God's likeness perceptible and inscribable for transmission in space and time. Thus both theological and sociological/anthropological treatments of Orthodox Christianity rightly place a premium on holiness and its manifold mediation in language, praxis, and material culture.<sup>14</sup>

This premium is in part an empirical recognition that the prominence of the saints is owed intellectual attention, but it is also a deliberate self-construction and validating reverberation of Orthodox self- and other-understanding. Although it is true that, as Karl Felmy aphoristically declares, “Orthodox theology is neither as monolithic as it would sometimes like to view itself nor as monolithic as it is sometimes accused of being,”<sup>15</sup> holiness provides a lens through which diverse representatives of Orthodoxy have historically constituted their tradition as “orthodox” and have concomitantly set themselves apart from religious others and from the powers of the world. So doing, I will argue, Orthodox Christians have relied on the *inscription* of holiness in the human person and the human world as means for the struggle to be free of those forms of cultural, political, and spiritual power that are understood as dominating, distorting, or otherwise working to the detriment of Orthodoxy and the mission of God.

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influential comments made by Romanides in the course of Orthodox-Lutheran dialogues, discussed in Saarinen, *Faith and Holiness*, 221).

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, entire (but with the logic of deification as a likeness to and participation in the holiness of God introduced on 1-3); Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life*, 155-58 (in which holiness is the defining category for human being); Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 2 (“The central theme, or intuition, of Byzantine theology is that man’s nature is not a static, ‘closed,’ autonomous reality, but a dynamic reality, determined in its very resistance by its relationship to God”—that is, as Meyendorff will repeatedly [138-39, 169, 176-77, 226] make clear, a relationship defined by participation in and assimilation to holiness); Chryssavgis, “The Spiritual Way,” 150-51, 160-62 (on the relationship between deification and the labor of the soul to make space for holiness); and the chapters by Hanganu, Luehrmann, Mahieu, and Engelhardt in Hann and Goltz (eds), *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective* (33-127), as well as Hart, *Time, Religion, and Social Experience in Rural Greece*, 193-223, on ways in which these presuppositions and priorities are appropriated in Orthodox Christians’ everyday lives.

<sup>15</sup> Felmy, *Die orthodoxe Theologie der Gegenwart*, xii: “Die orthodoxe Theologie ist weder so monolithisch, wie sie sich selbst zuweilen sehen möchte, noch so monolithisch, wie ihr manchmal vorgeworfen wird.” Thus, when I discuss an “Orthodox idiom” in this dissertation, I do not mean to identify a unanimous understanding but rather to distinguish a field of intellectual and material culture whose sources of authority can be traced and whose styles of mediation—the key question for this project—can be recognizably shared by those identifying themselves as members of this tradition.

So I find myself in a situation akin to that articulated by Emily Apter as the definitive challenge of translation: I cannot possibly, and so I must, maintain holiness as the beating heart of this work.<sup>16</sup> With Michael Plekon, I accept that holiness is as diverse as it is widespread, precisely because “holiness” in the abstract is never encountered, indeed is a human logical and rhetorical distillation, for a panoply of purposes, born of a great diversity of encounters with people, places, and things experienced as holy.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, rather than chase after a stable definition of holiness to anchor the project, I will lay out the parameters of three *tensions* that I take to shape the ways that Orthodox Christians historically have construed, interpreted, and mobilized holiness and the saints.<sup>18</sup> They are: (i) a tension between *alterity* and *mediation*; (ii) a tension between *purity* and *vulnerability*; and (iii) a tension between *power* and *resistance*.<sup>19</sup> These tensions, like taut strings, vibrate when struck by events of discourse and (other kinds of) practice that enunciate holiness; they provide a set of well-known parameters and recurring motifs to which my interpretation will continually refer for orientation.

As David Clines rightly maintains in his study of the Hebrew root *qđš* (the etymological baseline for the range of biblical concepts translated by the Greek *hagios*, “holy”), it is a mistake to assume that

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<sup>16</sup> See Apter, *The Translation Zone*, 91, on the challenge “to balance the singularity of untranslatable alterity against the need to translate *quand même*.” Cf. Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel,” 222-23, interpreting the myth of Babel as a simultaneous obstruction and mandate of human communication; and Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?*, 37-42, on the utterly commonplace quality of translation in spite of the aura of philosophical interdiction around its possibility.

<sup>17</sup> See Plekon, *Hidden Holiness*, 14-15, 42-43. Even in tracing holiness to the persons of the Trinity does not result in a stable, final definition, since divine holiness too is known only in *relation* with the world confronted, summoned, and transformed by it. Cf. Taves, “Special Things as Building Blocks of Religions,” 59.

<sup>18</sup> Throughout this project, when I am studying a feature of Orthodox theology or theopraxy and observe that it is habitually bound up with Orthodox adherents’ ways of understanding their world, I am not claiming that therefore the feature is *distinctively* Orthodox and alien to other configurations of religious life. If analogous dynamics are found elsewhere, so much the more interesting; and yet, in light of my argument that understandings of holiness and holy mediation in particular *are* central to Orthodox projects of self-distinction, these understandings should be studied at the very least as important features of specifically Orthodox identity formation and validation.

<sup>19</sup> I should stress at the outset that I am not arguing for “essential” or “basic” meanings of holiness with which all later formulations and appropriations must somehow correspond (as is ably but somewhat excessively denounced in Clines, “Alleged ‘Basic Meanings’ of the Hebrew Verb *qđš*”). Rather, these tensions are those that appear typically, frequently, and overtly in both the ancient and the modern materials that I will address, and moreover are prevailing concerns in the secondary literature on holiness, holy ones (saints), and holy places or objects.

prevailing uses and connotations in the many centuries of biblical reception can provide a “basic meaning” of holiness.<sup>20</sup> However, if what we seek is not a definitive essence of the term but a field of associations that shape human understanding and motivate human action, we may begin with the very meaning that is first to be scrutinized by Clines: the sense of holiness as separateness, as *alterity*.<sup>21</sup> Insofar as holiness is understood to be a property or a relationship pertaining to the deity,<sup>22</sup> this sense of otherness is inevitably implied in Judeo-Christian usage, even as the *degree* of divine otherness is widely contested over time—along a spectrum between the God who has come as near to us as a husband to a wife, as present to us as our own flesh,<sup>23</sup> and the God who “is superior to being and is unspeakable and unnamable,” whose holiness “transcends everything.”<sup>24</sup> Whatever is holy is (somewhat tautologically) set apart from what is not holy, which not only reflects *somebody’s* perception or commitment to its specialness, but also implicates the one who does the setting apart as embedded in a relationship with that

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<sup>20</sup> Clines, “Alleged ‘Basic Meanings’ of the Hebrew Verb *qds*,” 1, 15; cf. Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 109: “the etymology of a word is not a statement about his meaning but about its history.” The problems with nailing down “basic meaning” is only compounded by turning to Greek uses deriving from the Septuagint and the New Testament, for, as Christopher Walter observes, “the Greek word ἅγιος, rarely applied to persons in pagan tradition [but rather more frequently, for instance in Herodotus, to places where sacrifice took place or the presence of divinity could be perceived], was exploited in the Septuagint to translate over twenty Hebrew words and widely used with the general meaning of holy” (“The Origins of the Cult of St. George,” 297). However, Clines’ argument about the insufficiency of such meanings as “separate,” “purify,” “prepare,” etc, is *not* to suggest that these meanings are not profoundly and extensively active in the history of holiness, rather it is only to caution against lexicographical absolutes that foreclose on precisely the sort of flexibility and tension that I mean to explore.

<sup>21</sup> This alterity may be *perceived*, as with the holiness of an angel or a miracle, or *established*, as with the holiness of an altar or a sabbath—or *both* at the same time, as with the holiness of a saintly person.

<sup>22</sup> See Clines, “Alleged ‘Basic Meanings’ of the Hebrew Verb *qds*,” 14-15.

<sup>23</sup> In 1 Corinthians, for example, Paul’s prevailing metaphors for the relationship between the holy community of the faithful (indeed described by him as ἅγιοι) and the Holy One of Israel oscillate between images of that of a temple, with God’s presence in its midst (3:16-17; 6:19); a body of many limbs, whose healthy functioning has implications for God’s own well-being (12:12-14); a loaf of bread, either kept free of contaminating “leaven” on the holy days or corrupted by worldly conduct (5:6-8); and a bride being prepared for the arrival of her groom, anticipating the day when they will see each other “face to face” (13:12) and become one flesh (6:16, cf. Genesis 2:24). See Westerholm, “Is Nothing Sacred?,” 92-95, on Paul’s conceptions of a community made holy through proximity to God and alienation from the world.

<sup>24</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* 1.5, 12.3. In Greek patristics, Dionysius is paradigmatic for a tradition of divine transcendence of and alterity to all the human conceptions or representations of divinity. However, it is crucial that divine otherness in the tradition of Dionysius is still not a *wholly*-otherness in the sense of Søren Kierkegaard, Rudolph Otto, and (the early) Karl Barth, for whom the “infinite qualitative difference between God and man” (Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, 124) is itself definitive of divine holiness (see also Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 25-30; and Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 10, 42-54, 356-57). Cf. Clines, “Alleged ‘Basic Meanings’ of the Hebrew Verb *qds*,” 5.

which is understood (by them) to be holy.<sup>25</sup> And this relationship between the human beings who recognize divine holiness and the deity whose holiness is implicative for human life and human institutions is, precisely, where we reach the question of *mediation*.

It is not going too far to suggest that the mediation of holiness and the limits of divine alterity form a problem at the very core of theology as a human activity. How is it that what is construed as radically outside the confines of human culture can be communicated in the terms of that culture, for the sake of validating or transforming it? If the theological assertion of alterity is not to collapse into a helpless silence, it must be balanced by the possibility of mediation, in two senses: (i) mediation in the sense of *inscription*, the flexible fixation of meaning in media that can be transmitted to others and shared by (indeed helping to constitute) publics;<sup>26</sup> and (ii) mediation in the sense of *impartation*, the bridging of two domains understood to have been distinct, such that each comes to be present to the other.<sup>27</sup> Mediation presupposes, and is warranted by, alterity.<sup>28</sup> “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord”; *and yet*, “you shall be holy, for I am holy.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Taves, “Special Things as Building Blocks of Religions,” 59. Cf. Söderblom’s treatment of the ascription of holiness as a *reaction*, discussed in Rogerson, “What is Holiness?,” 6-8.

<sup>26</sup> See Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 25-37; Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 203-06; Geertz, “Blurred Genres,” 31; and Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 65-124.

<sup>27</sup> This mediation of exchange and impartation is the sense at work in Athanasius of Alexandria’s programmatic statement in *On the Incarnation* 54.3: “For [God] became human [ἐνληθρώπησεν] so that we might be made divine [θεοποιηθῶμεν],” and in the discussion of deification in Pseudo-Dionysius’ *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1.3: “divinization [θέωσις] consists of being as much as possible like and in union with God.” See also Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 1, 169-78, 248-62.

<sup>28</sup> For a definition of “media” that takes this constitutive relation with alterity into account, see Herzogenrath, “Media/Matter,” 1: “Media transmit, save, and symbolize. They communicate an ‘Other’ that evades direct access, something that is neither only sign, nor only perception, nor only representation: media are the *in-between*, that which facilitates transmission and thus belongs to neither of the (at least) two sides between which it transmits and negotiates—a status of difference that makes a general definition of ‘medium’ and ‘media’ next to impossible and thus has so far resulted in a myriad of converging attempts to do exactly this.”

<sup>29</sup> Isaiah 55:8; 1 Peter 1:16 (citing Leviticus 20:26—“You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine”). I am aware, of course, that these texts emerge from markedly different intellectual contexts and have agendas that cannot be reduced to one another; I conjoin these articulations to express the poles of a tension, not to assert an essential equivalence of their terms.

In other words, in order for holiness to be possible as a concept in the first place, referencing or even just registering (with the tools of human comprehension, limited though they are) divine alterity, this alterity still must be experienced as *present*, an immanent transcendence, transformative of human lives and the human world, mediated by words, images, objects, activities—and holistically and archetypally, by holy people (saints).<sup>30</sup> As Edith Wyschogrod puts it, saints are “the ‘native speakers’ of the language of alterity”;<sup>31</sup> to *speak* is to fix what is imperceptible in sensory data available to others. I would therefore go further and suggest that, theologically speaking, saints are the outstanding *translators* of divine alterity: they reconstitute what is outside human culture in human terms, reproducing holiness in the stuff of the world while yet leaving it uncanny, recognizable as a present otherness, queer and unstable, not wholly accounted for in the perceptible presence and performance of the holy mediator.<sup>32</sup>

A final feature of this tension between the alterity and mediation of holiness that bears emphasis is the possible *consequence* of mediation. A prevailing worry in the theorization of holiness, both by Orthodox theologians and widely beyond, is that to mediate what is holy is to degrade it, to mistake the representation for what it represents or even to miss the mark entirely, substituting a fantasy of human design for the divine alterity that exceeds any attempt to constrain it. In the pivotal periods of Orthodox dogmatic theorization that I will discuss—the material/imperial turn of the fourth and fifth centuries and the iconoclastic controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries—the question of the legitimacy and limits of

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<sup>30</sup> This construal of the holy person is likewise the starting point for Meltzer’s and Elsner’s Introduction to their edited volume, *Saints*: “Saints queer stable binary structures. The saint is a figure of mediation who by definition enacts or suggests ‘vertical’ access to a supernatural power or a higher dimension of being” (ix).

<sup>31</sup> Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism*, 183.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Steiner, *After Babel*, 269: a proper translation “does not pre-empt the authority of the original but shows us what the original would have been like had it been conceived in our own speech”; and Benjamin, “On Language as Such and the Language of Man,” in *Reflections*, 331: “language is in every case not only communication of the communicable but also, at the same time, a symbol of the noncommunicable.” See also Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism*, 247 (drawing on Kierkegaard, Freud, Heidegger, and Kristeva), on the *Unheimlichkeit* of saints performing “abjection” within human culture; York, *The Purple Crown*, 23, on the martyr as an agent of difference, enacting alterity to the epistemological and political order of things; and Orsi, “The Problem of the Holy,” 99-101 on the “tradition of the more” or the “2 + 2 = 5” that attempts to account for that aspect of holiness that eludes accounting, through a kenotic theorization of what is opaque but present to the theorizing lens.

*mimēsis* (imitation, representation) are fundamental both to the theological efforts to warrant holy mediation and to the ways that these efforts enact the construction of and resistance to heterodoxies within and beyond the church.<sup>33</sup> With John Chrysostom we will consider the appropriation of non-Platonic views of *mimēsis*, by means of which the theologian is able at once to critique and supplant Greek culture by means of the holy theater of the saints. With John Damascene, we will consider the conflict between the “centrifugal” mediation of holiness in diverse representations and the “centripetal” anxieties of dominant church authorities who sought not to destroy holiness but to preserve it by limiting its mediation. But first, through the thorough analysis of a saint’s cult in modern Cyprus, we will observe the high stakes (as much as the ubiquitous practice) of mediating holiness in human terms and in support of human cultural and political projects.

In modern lived Orthodoxy and classical dogmatics alike, the tension between the alterity and mediation of holiness is not only ontological but also political: as Meltzer and Elsner put the challenge: “To sanctify excess is a form of domestication; in the institutionalization of a saint there frequently lies the attempt to neutralize, to appropriate, or otherwise bring under rule. Politics is never far behind.”<sup>34</sup> Mediation as *appropriation*: although I will argue that appropriation is indispensable for the formative and transformative capacities of holiness, my analyses will make much of the double valance of appropriation, recognizing along with its necessity the threat of that which is mediated being overshadowed (or even

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<sup>33</sup> These are prevailing questions of an entire field of philosophical and artistic mediation on μίμησις, on which there is an ocean of literature. I will refer to specifics as they become pertinent to my argument, but for definitional considerations, see Potolsky, *Mimesis*, 1-11 (as well as 49-91, for specific considerations of rhetorical and theatrical μίμησις, as will be germane to this project); Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 1-33; and Gefen, *La mimēsis*, 13-42. The long negotiation of apophatic and kataphatic impulses in Christian theology bear out such anxieties in abundance and generate ingenious solutions to them.

<sup>34</sup> Meltzer and Elsner, Introduction to *Saints*, xii; cf. Kleinberg’s rather more provocative claims, winking at the tension as he draws it tauter, in his “Apophthegmata,” 394: “The Incarnation is God’s nightmare. God breaks forth out of his nothingness; he soils himself with being. He breaks his own laws, mixing divine oil with human water. He becomes an ontological scandal. Or rather the outrage is forced on him by us. . . . Desecrated, desanitized, dedeified, he groans on the cross: ‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’ The Incarnation shows what we can do to God. It is a solemn warning. Every day the community reaffirms its sacrilegious power by eating God and making him an integral part of its sinful flesh. . . . God is devoured by humans. He is no longer what he is. He is mediated.”

corrupted) by the frameworks *into which* it is mediated.<sup>35</sup> And this iteration of the tension of alterity and mediation leads directly into the second tension: that between *purity* and *vulnerability*.

One of the most intricate and paradigmatic puzzles in Christian articulations of holiness appears in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, and it serves as a fitting introduction to the second tension that shapes my analysis. For Paul, while the world's general, baseline impurity (*akatharsia*) can be washed away with the sanctification of baptism,<sup>36</sup> the holiness of the church is at grave risk of defilement by the more powerful, proactive unholiness of the fallen order of the *kosmos*.<sup>37</sup> While Paul imagines the community of the faithful to be "called holy ones" (*klētoi hagioi*) and to be "washed clean and sanctified" (*apelousasthe ... hēgiasthēte*) as other than the world,<sup>38</sup> yet this holiness can be penetrated and corroded by iniquities, like a temple of God made with infirm materials, as capable of being polluted as the Holy of Holies in the Pentateuch.<sup>39</sup> Holiness, in other words, seems to operate according to contradictory logics of purity: what is sanctified is made pure, washed clean, freed from captivity to the world and its

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<sup>35</sup> My use of "appropriation" reflects Ricoeur's sense of digesting meaning within one's own world of experience and value, "[including] the otherness within the oneness" (*Interpretation Theory*, 43; see also Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 182-93).

<sup>36</sup> Note, of course, that Paul's discussions of "sanctification" (ἀγιάζειν) in chapters 6 and 7 of 1 Corinthians do not operate in a vacuum and do not even function as "a proposition on holiness. The conception of holiness is already prescribed [though this is rather too strong a claim] for Paul by his Jewish upbringing" (Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 122).

<sup>37</sup> See Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 170: "The body of Christ is not polluted by mere contact with the cosmos or by the body's presence in the midst of the corrupt cosmos, but it may be polluted if its boundaries are permeated and an element of the cosmos gains entry into the body."

<sup>38</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11. The ἅγιοι live on hallowed ground, in hallowed time, as these notions effervesce from the Biblical texts and history of interpretation. Their relation to the world (κόσμος) is analogous to that between the Temple and its surroundings (see Fitzmeyer, *First Corinthians*, 203); their relation to the age (αἰών) is analogous to that between the feast of unleavened bread and the year (cf. Exodus 12:14-16, with a logic of leaven cast out from pure bread that Paul appropriates in 1 Corinthians 5). On pentateuchal associations (but not synonymy) between holiness and purity, see Clines, "Alleged 'Basic Meanings of the Hebrew Verb qdš,'" 7-10.

<sup>39</sup> Paul articulates the vulnerability of the holy community by comparing it to a lump of dough corrupted by bad leaven (1 Corinthians 5:6-7), and to a temple made of infirm materials (3:12-15); so too, he warns his audience of the impurity imposed on Christ himself by their own mistreatment of their bodies (6:15-18; cf. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 178). The vision of a vulnerable holiness expounded here should be read in light of Leviticus 17-26, with its discussions of the risks of introducing impurities to the Temple of God. See Wright, "Holiness in Leviticus and Beyond," 252, as well as Douglas' classic, if certainly insufficient, study of defilement in Leviticus: *Purity and Danger*, 51-71.

corruption,<sup>40</sup> and yet the very body of God that has sanctified the community of the faithful is at risk of being violated by impurities introduced to it by worldly people (*kosmikoi*).<sup>41</sup>

As the cult of the saints develops through late antiquity, the saints' holiness comes to *purify* what it encounters, healing disease and driving out demons, and continuing even after a saint's death to be mediated into the world by relics and images, "wellsprings of spiritual streams" that "ignite our understanding."<sup>42</sup> "He who touches the bones of a martyr," insists Basil of Caesarea, "partakes in the sanctity and grace that reside in them."<sup>43</sup> *And yet*, the requirement that one who would approach holiness be purified in advance so as to avoid corrupting the "purity that is total and is utterly untainted"<sup>44</sup> continues to complicate this picture of divine holiness flowing out into and healing the world. Holiness must somehow be kept safe from the very people whose impurity, under the right circumstances, it could transform. Thus, for Chrysostom, the festivals of the saints have the potential to heal the hearts and ignite the minds of those who attend them—but only if they are approached the right way, by people who have been purified in advance of unedifying habits. For Damascene, the vulnerability of holiness to all-too-human misappropriation and misapplication is an unfortunate but necessary corollary to the divine benevolence of mediating holiness *to* human beings in the first place, since holiness thus mediated must be constituted as we are: as a psychosomatic synthesis, as vulnerable to abuse as the body of Christ. And

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<sup>40</sup> On the ambiguities associated with this "contagious" character of holiness, see Fitzmeyer, *First Corinthians*, 300 (on "contagious holiness" in Paul) and Lockshin, "Is Holiness Contagious?," 254-56 (on four verses in the Torah where rabbinic interpreters struggled to interpret *away* a sense that holiness could transfer inappropriately to objects and people who were not meant to be consecrated).

<sup>41</sup> On the later development of this polarity between ἅγιοι and κόσμικοι, see Brown, *Late Antiquity*, 63-71.

<sup>42</sup> Chrysostom, "On the Holy Martyrs" 2-3 (PG 50.649.20,51).

<sup>43</sup> Basil, "Homily on Psalm 115," cited in Leemans et al. (eds), *Let Us Die That We Might Live*, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* 12.2. Gregory of Nyssa, likewise, treats this problem through the figure of Moses, who is purified on his ascent to Sinai in order to avoid introducing worldly uncleanness into the presence of the Almighty, and yet he himself returns aglow with what he encounters there, "transformed to such a degree of glory that the mortal eye could not behold him" (*Life of Moses* II.217). Cf. 1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and what we will become is not yet revealed. But we know that when it is revealed, we will be like him, because we will see him as he is. And so, everyone who has this hope in him purifies [ἀγνίζει] himself, just as he is pure [ἄγνός]."

for the Orthodox Cypriots who imagine their own personal and political struggles in terms of saintly solidarity, the vulnerability of the greatmartyr St. George to the crushing violence that he must endure is like a distillation that separates him—and by metonymy, the suffering, struggling, martyred island of Cyprus—from all that is base in his humanity, elevating him to the right hand of Christ.<sup>45</sup>

The figure that most fully embodies this tension between purity and vulnerability is the martyr. Even before their deaths, martyrs' bodies and souls had been purified and rarified, made Christ-like through their renunciation, endurance, and self-sacrifice;<sup>46</sup> at their deaths, they are “washed” and indeed “baptized” by blood, their holiness rendered more fully than that of the community of faithful more generally.<sup>47</sup> Representations of martyrs seized on this theme, rendering the executed saints untouched by the horrors to which they were subjected, radiant and cheerful as the world tries in vain to extinguish what they represent.<sup>48</sup> But it is the *vulnerability* of the martyrs—their fragile humanity that is there to be violated (even if in the event it is, miraculously, not violated) and the risk of their recantation or failure to endure—

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<sup>45</sup> See Plekon, *Hidden Holiness*, 12, on the logic of holiness that is incarnate being vulnerable precisely insofar as it is incarnate in human persons constituted in human cultures and politics; thus holiness is not to be mistaken with perfection but rather should signal a *struggle* with and within all that makes us what we are.

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., Whitfield, *Pilgrim Holiness*, 28-31; Cunningham, “Christian Martyrdom,” 8-9; Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 131-49; Efthymiadis, Introduction to *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, II.4. Dietrich Bonhoeffer observes: “No other Christian is so closely identified with the form of Christ crucified [than the martyr]. When Christians are exposed to public insult, when they suffer and die for his sake, Christ takes on the visible form in his church. Here we see the divine image created anew through the power of Christ crucified” (*The Cost of Discipleship*, 342).

<sup>47</sup> For such theologians as Origen, Tertullian, and Cyril of Jerusalem, the “baptism of blood” is greater, more completely purifying, than the baptism of water (see York, “Early Church Martyrdom,” 29-30). Consider too the theme of purity, washing, and the end of vulnerability in John of Patmos' vision of the multitude martyred during “the great ordeal” (τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης) of Emperor Nero's reign: “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them” (Revelation 7:14-15, emphasis mine). For the “triumph of ‘clean’ over ‘unclean’ or unjust power” in modern Greek Orthodoxy, see Hart, *Time, Religion, and Social Experience in Rural Greece*, 214-16 (drawing on Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, 102).

<sup>48</sup> A particularly well-known example of the martyr remaining undefiled by the exertions of his executioners is that of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, in which the saint is to be burned alive, but cannot be: “For the fire made the shape of a vaulted chamber, like a ship's sail filled by the wind, and made a wall around the body of the martyr. And he was in the midst, not as burning flesh, but as bread baking or as gold and silver refined in a furnace. And we perceived such a sweet aroma as the breath of incense or some other precious spice” (15.2, translated in Richardson [ed], *Early Christian Fathers*, 155). More directly pertinent to my own research, the festival homilies of John Chrysostom and the *Martyrdom of St. George* (in Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia*, 203-35; and Doukakis, *Μέγας Συναχαριστήρς*, 346-64) alike contain ample evidence of this theme.

that secures their holiness as an aegis for the whole community that sees itself reflected and reinforced in the mysterious “triumph of frail, human flesh over the fleshless nature of Satan.”<sup>49</sup>

The figure of the martyr unfolds, no less, the third tension with which I am orienting my treatment of holiness: the tension between *power* and *resistance*. The priestly and holiness literatures of the Hebrew Bible operate with a basic framing of the deity as a powerful king—of the universe, of the spiritual powers, and as the model for the rulers of the people of God.<sup>50</sup> So too, for Paul and the early Christian evangelists, it is “in power [*en dynamei*] according to the spirit of holiness”<sup>51</sup> that Christ is known to be the Son of God both before and after his resurrection; identified as “the Holy One of God,” “he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”<sup>52</sup> When this archetypal “holy one” dies on the cross, the bonds of death cannot hold him—as Orthodox iconography represents it, the resurrection is a trampling down of the gates of hell, liberating those trapped within it. As John Chrysostom exults in his Easter homily, echoing 1 Corinthians 15:55, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory?’ Christ is risen, and you have been cast down! Christ is risen, and the demons have fallen! ... To him be *glory and power* unto the ages of ages.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Constatas, “A Spiritual Warrior in Iron Armor Clad,” 245. See also Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 621, on this theme in the Apocalypse of John, the author of which “characterizes those killed by ‘the beast’ as in reality having conquered him through their death” (15:2-4); and Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 104-33, on how early Christians seized upon the vulnerability of martyrs and turned it toward the flourishing of Christian culture.

<sup>50</sup> The association of holiness with power can be discerned widely in the Psalms as well as in the Pentateuch and the Prophets. See, for instance, Schipper and Stackert, “Blemishes, Camouflage, and Sanctuary Servants,” 459-60, 465-70 on the “characterization of the Israelite god as a superhuman king” (459) in the Pentateuchal Holiness literature. In the Psalms, see 89:5-7: “Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord, a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome above all that are around him?” And in the prophetic literature, see for instance Isaiah 6:3, a passage that would subsequently become an anchor of Christian doxology: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts [sometimes translated ‘God of power and might’]; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

<sup>51</sup> Romans 1:4. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:43: the resurrected body “is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power [*ἐν δυνάμει*].”

<sup>52</sup> Mark 1:23, 27. See also Matthew 8:27, at which point the disciples marvel: “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

<sup>53</sup> Chrysostom, “Catechetical Sermon on Holy Pascha” (PG 59.724.1-3, emphasis mine). Although Migne considers this homily “spuriously” attributed to Chrysostom, the weight of this attribution is immense in Orthodox liturgical tradition, where the homily is typically recited during the Easter vigil liturgy.

The saints, too, are powerful. They have been sought out for healing, for exorcism, for political guidance; they have advised emperors, won wars, and warded off natural disasters.<sup>54</sup> Although (as we will see in Part One) the physical extent and moral orientation of this power are not always clear, it is generally agreed by Orthodox devotees of the saints that their power is from God; that is, they are conduits for divine power into the world both during and after their deaths.<sup>55</sup> But this relationship with power is often ambivalent, manifesting not as the overwhelming mediation of divine agency in a world that cannot stand against it, but rather as a bulwark of resistance—not always materially successful, but, as I will argue, epistemologically strengthening—against the forms of political, religious, cultural, and demonic power that threaten the saints’ communities.<sup>56</sup>

As Tripp York observes, “early Christianity never had any qualms with viewing the world as a contest”—an *agōn*, in the established vocabulary of antiquity.<sup>57</sup> The metaphorical logic and cultural

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<sup>54</sup> On such motifs of saintly power, see, e.g., Valantasis, “Constructions of Power in Asceticism,” 800-14; Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” 85-91 (“Above everything, the holy man is a man of power,” political no less than spiritual—87); Patlagean, “Sainteté et pouvoir,” 96-98, 104-05; and Louth, “Hagiography,” 359.

<sup>55</sup> See Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 106-27, and Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 52, 55-74, 179, on the power that the relics of saints in particular were experienced to produce. Holiness, Salisbury argues, charged people with miraculous power whether or not they had been executed by a hostile political power—what mattered was their battle with the demons, a battle waged through asceticism. And if this asceticism was rewarded with miracles, the orthodoxy of the saint was in turn proven.

<sup>56</sup> This specificity reveals, as Patlagean appreciates, that the power mobilized by saints (as much as the modalities of saintly resistance) are not always the same but differ from place to place and time to time: “*Les pouvoirs de la sainteté, les rapports de celle-ci avec les pouvoirs politiques et sociaux ont changé en conséquence*” (Patlagean, “Sainteté et pouvoir,” 92).

<sup>57</sup> York, *The Purple Crown*, 17; cf. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 364-65: “While Orthodoxy knows that God sees and blesses all things, it is also filled with a sense that there is a warfare in progress around us, a struggle with hostile spiritual forces that contradict the divine plan at many instances; but also that we are surrounded by great powers that assist and bless us according to the command that God has given them to watch over the earth and to watch over the saints.” Particularly important for understanding the multivalence of this “struggle” in an Orthodox idiom is the tendency for patristic uses of the term ἀγών to reflect a psychosomatic integrity: primary uses include “martyrdom” itself, plus “spiritual struggles” for salvation, perfection, or the betterment of others, as well as the “agony” of temptation or the anticipation of death (see Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s. v. ἀγών). Most of these cases represent a metaphorical mapping from the source domain of an arena (where an athletic or gladiatorial contest takes place) to the “arena” of the soul where the contestants are virtues and passions, fears and convictions. And yet, the mapping goes both ways, since the physical arena that functioned in some cases as the site of execution and in others as a metonymy for the death of a martyr was also invested with all the above psychospiritual associations.

sources of this way of seeing have been amply discussed by others,<sup>58</sup> but of sustained importance to this study is how understandings of persecution reverberate through the formative period of Christian identity, doctrine, and practice, figuring this world-struggle not as a match between equal forces but as a doubly-asymmetrical warfare on two planes of reality. In the visible, historical arena of the pre-Constantinian Roman Empire, the church's antagonist was indisputably dominant, capable of destroying Christians and suppressing Christian institutions through the exercise of state power.<sup>59</sup> But for those with the eyes to see, a cosmic battle “between Christ and those powers in rebellion to Christ”<sup>60</sup> was simultaneously taking place, in the very bodies of the martyrs that were revealed (by hagiographical accounts)<sup>61</sup> to frustrate and overcome the punishments inflicted on them. Christ could not lose *this* battle—indeed, he had already won for all time through his own execution by worldly power.

The paradoxical position of the martyrs, then, was one of *resistance* to the dominion of worldly powers, which themselves were resistant to the rule of Christ; resisting these powers, the martyrs were simultaneously aligned with the *far greater power* of Christ, who evacuates himself of that power to be crushed by the world and, so doing, to liberate it from its corrupt dominion and to rectify God's creation.

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<sup>58</sup> See Boyarin, *Dying for God*; Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*; Leemans (ed), *More than a Memory*; Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* [hereafter *Radical Martyrdom*]; York, *The Purple Crown*.

<sup>59</sup> The extent to which the persecution of the early church can be said to be “historical” or “manufactured” has long animated scholars, as sketched by Middleton's introduction to *Radical Martyrdom*. Generally, a pendulum has swung between scholarship persuaded by early Christian testimony to the high frequency and severity of imperial persecutions and that which rejects such testimony as “tainted with hagiography [*nota bene*] and presupposition,” sometimes on such grounds as that “Christians needed Roman persecutors, or at least stories about Roman persecutors, rather more than Romans saw the need to persecute Christians” (Keith Hopkins, “Christian Number and Its Implications,” 198; cf. Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*, 13-21, 215-46). Middleton himself attempts a middle way, rather more sociologically sophisticated than either pole, arguing that “a lack of an official Imperial policy of persecution against the Christians does not mean that Christians did not experience persecution or trouble” (*Radical Martyrdom*, 2). In any case, it is not my intention to fix this pendulum in place. Rather, what is significant to this study is precisely the (abundantly evident) Christian *self-construction in a martyriological mode*—irrespective of whether this construction is the chicken or the egg—and the dynamics of *how* (not merely that or whether) such persecution aided the development of an Orthodoxy of resistance that far outlived the first three centuries of the church.

<sup>60</sup> York, *The Purple Crown*, 32; cf. York, “Early Church Martyrdom,” 33-34; Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 9-29.

<sup>61</sup> Archetypally, in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*; the prominence of this theme in the *Life* of St. George will be considered in Chapter I, section 2a. Moreover, this double-vision will be a theme of paramount importance to Chapter V.

Paul's observation becomes paradigmatic: "Our contest is not against blood and flesh, but against the powers, the authorities, the cosmic rulers of this darkness, the spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places."<sup>62</sup> Resisting only the "flesh and blood" institutions of empire, Christians in periods of persecution were doomed to lose, but by imagining and representing the death of a witness to Christ as a participation in a larger victory over the spiritual forces of evil,<sup>63</sup> they could ensure that their destruction galvanized and fueled rather than demoralized and drained their fledgling communities. "As the deaths increased," contends Joyce Salisbury, "so did the resistance of surviving Christians"—stitched together across time and space into a common imaginative fabric of Christian *agōn* with the unholy powers.<sup>64</sup> But in this sense, the resistance of the martyrs is in turn what Antonio Negri describes as "counterpower": the socially-consequential interruption of hegemonic normalcy.<sup>65</sup> The Roman persecutions *failed historically*—in no small part because they failed imaginatively, being appropriated as a paradoxical victory for the crucified God and his holy community.<sup>66</sup>

Resisting captivity—their own and their communities'—by the powers and principalities at war with Christ, the saints render a prevailing association between holiness and *freedom*. Irenaeus of Lyons gives a clear and early view of this association in his treatment of the Virgin Mary's recapitulation (*anakephalaiōsis*) of Eve, mother of humanity: as Eve's (innocent) disobedience resulted in bondage to

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<sup>62</sup> Ephesians 6:12.

<sup>63</sup> See Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 6: "not only did [martyrs] believe themselves to be *participating* in this war [between God and Satan], they actually saw their deaths as *contributing* to the final outcome."

<sup>64</sup> Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 28. Cf. Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 21: "The sociological effects of both successful martyrdom and denial were not lost on the early Church. Martyrdom was promoted as a means of strengthening fragile communities, invigorating the resolve of future martyrs and helping to define strong community barriers. Successful martyrs brought the new religion to the attention of pagan society and, significantly, won many converts [this will be a crucial theme in the hagiographical media pertaining to St. George, and in particular to his appropriation as "greatmartyr," (my topic in Chapter III)]. The blood of the martyrs was indeed seed [as Tertullian famously put it]." See also Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 104-33, on martyrdom as a public spectacle intended to transform its audience and their capacities to interpret their position in the surrounding social order.

<sup>65</sup> See Negri, *Reflections on Empire*, 139-47.

<sup>66</sup> Much has been written on this appropriation and reinterpretation—see, for instance, Fowl, "The Primacy of the Witness of the Body to Martyrdom in Paul," 44; Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 32, 173; Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 120-24.

death, so Mary's (knowing) obedience resists that bondage and brings a new freedom into the world.<sup>67</sup> Her holy obedience is thus liberative, and becomes paradigmatic for the position of the saints to come being one of standing-against the fallen powers, rendering with their own freedom pockets of wondrous and inspiring alterity to a corrupt social order.<sup>68</sup>

The saints are, in ways that will be explored at length, *imitators/representors* (*mimētai*) of Christ—a path that, for many, has led to the cross, to being crushed by political power and the cultural institutions that habituate it.<sup>69</sup> For those who appropriate and inscribe their stories, the martyrs' destruction (like that of Christ) is a fishhook with which this power is yanked off-balance and ultimately overturned.<sup>70</sup> But when the martyrs are crowned in glory at their deaths, what becomes of the power they defy? Is it overthrown? Or is the script flipped, the holiness of the dead saints mediated in ways that secure this

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<sup>67</sup> Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching* 33: "And just as through a disobedient virgin man was struck and, falling, died, so also by means of a virgin, who obeyed the word of God, man, being revived, received life. ... For it was necessary for Adam to be recapitulated in Christ, that 'mortality might be swallowed up in immortality' [cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54, 2 Corinthians 5:4]; and Eve in Mary, that a virgin, become an advocate for a virgin, might undo and destroy the virginal disobedience by virginal obedience." See also Guroian's commentary on this passage in "Mother of God, Mother of Holiness," arguing with Alexander Schmemmann, however, that Mary's "anthropological maximalism" in the holy freedom of her obedience is *not* "a matter of power" but rather a matter of doxology, representing and celebrating with her whole person, body and soul, "the beginning of the great reversal" (345-48).

<sup>68</sup> On the Jewish and Hellenic underpinnings of this theme, see Whitfield, *Pilgrim Holiness*, 22-38; and Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 27-31. Cf. the amplification of this resonance between holiness and freedom in much later liberation theologies in the United States and South America: "Liberation is not simply a consequence of the experience of sanctification. Rather, sanctification *is* liberation. ... Viewed from the perspective of oppressed people's struggle of freedom, the holy becomes a radical challenge to the legitimacy of the secular structures of power by creating eschatological images about a realm of experience that is not confined to the values of this world" (Cone, *Speaking the Truth*, 33-35; cf. Hopkins, "Slave Theology in the 'Invisible Institution'"). John Zizioulas insists that such a view is richly and historically Orthodox as well: "holiness means liberation or rather freedom," that is, freedom from the past (through forgiveness), from ego-centricity (through ascetic practice), from injustice and exploitation (through collaborative social action), even from death (through salvation)—and freedom *for* love, most powerfully and wondrously the love of our enemies; for authentic personal relations and creative differences without division; and for giving our life to others as Christ gave his on the cross (see Zizioulas, in Kinnamon [ed], *Signs of the Spirit*, 52-53).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Hebrews 12:3-4—"Consider the one who has endured such abuse against himself at the hands of sinners, so that you might not, growing faint, become sick at heart. In your own struggle against sin [πρὸς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι], you have not yet resisted [ἀντικατέστητε] until you bleed." On this relation between martyrdom and Christomimesis, see Cunningham, "Christian Martyrdom," 6-11; Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 619-25; and Moss, *The Other Christs*, entire (but especially 45-73).

<sup>70</sup> This image can be found in influential patristic idiom in Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration* 22-24, where the "hook" (ἄγκιστρον) in question is the divinity of Jesus, swallowed down by death in the guise of his humanity, and thereafter wresting death into powerlessness as Jesus is raised up again.

power for continued application by a church still defining itself by resistance to it?<sup>71</sup> As Howard Caygill warns (drawing on Hannah Arendt), “resistance is always close to *ressentiment* and, with this, to a subjectivity at risk of adopting the qualities of its oppressor.”<sup>72</sup> The tension between power and resistance thus overlaps with that between purity and vulnerability, specifically vulnerability to temptation by the very forms of political and spiritual power resisted by the saints. This arises in the hagiographical topography of Cyprus, where St. George has been mediated in ways that seem to bolster acts of brutal violence: a zeal for dragonslaying on the part of George’s devotees can conceal a metastasis of the very “draconic” dispositions to which the saint is archetypally opposed.<sup>73</sup> And it is a problem of paramount importance to Chrysostom and Damascene, who devote sustained attention to unedifying, diseased, or even diabolical appropriations of hagiography.

So the problem that this dissertation holds to its heart might well be described as the attempt to articulate the *relations* between the latter three terms of these core tensions of holiness: mediation, vulnerability, and resistance. The simplest form of my overriding thesis might indeed read: *the mediation of holiness is a privileged means of vulnerable Orthodox Christian resistance*. But as we have seen and will see throughout, holiness does not admit of mediation that is not uncannily conditioned by alterity, nor vulnerability that does not struggle with and for purity, nor resistance that is not susceptible to the allures

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<sup>71</sup> See Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 120-54; Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*, 247-60. Like most of the dynamics discussed in this section, such a tension is by no means *exclusive* to experiences and articulations of Orthodox Christians. Consider, for instance, the widely germane comments of Orsi in *History and Presence*, 42-43, on the ways that immaterial power enacts institutional power and validates powerful institutions while yet ever slipping out from their grasp, raising “the theoretical question of whether, once created by power, the gods do not turn around and trouble or thwart the agendas of power, as Catholic Church officials are surely able to attest.” Cf. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 4: “The saints are never innocent, nor are the effects of their presence singular. It is impossible to say that the saints and the Mother of God are either on the side of those with power in any social world or those without it.”

<sup>72</sup> Caygill, *On Resistance*, 104.

<sup>73</sup> Here recall the warning of Evagrius Ponticus in *On Prayer* 7: “Do not turn into a passion the antidote of the passions.”

of power. Therefore, none will be addressed except in light of the others—such complexity, even to the point of apparent self-contradiction, is the history of holiness.<sup>74</sup>

As Part One of this dissertation demonstrates, the lived texture of the mediation of holiness continues to be intimately bound up with resistance in an Orthodox idiom, in ways that reveal an easily-missed dimension of the intractability of conflicts in societies like Cyprus. But so too (as Part Two of this dissertation explores) holiness as an intercultural provocation has been coextensive with the imaginative emergence, institutional crystallization, and indeed theological ideals of what came to be known as Orthodox Christianity. I submit, then, that the linkage between holiness and struggle is a strategy scripted in antiquity, seeded in the topographies of Orthodox culture, and continually appropriated in new ways in the modern world. Where this scripting, seeding, and appropriation takes place is, above all, in the practices of *hagiography*, where the mediation of holiness is exemplified and theorized, materialized and mobilized. And so it is to hagiography, to the insufficiency of how it is ordinarily studied, and to the promise of a revised approach, that this dissertation turns.

## (2) The Promise of Hagiography

Unlike “holiness,” which has so immense a history of diverse use and effect, “hagiography,” as a modern scholarly term of art, has been subject to a fairly tight set of defining parameters.<sup>75</sup> Most commonly the term functions as a synonym or at least the chief identifying adjective (“hagiographical”) for the “literature of sanctity” that extended in popular and accessible fashion the devotion owed to some

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<sup>74</sup> See Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 159: “Christianity itself, not just Christian language, is sometimes seen as resting on impossible opposites, an idea that reappears in definitions of the holy.”

<sup>75</sup> On the semantic spread of the term as it tends to be used in modern scholarship, see Philippart, “Hagiographes et hagiographie, hagiologes et hagiologie.” Further sketches are given in Rondolino, *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Hagiographical Strategies*, 6-8, as well as (for Orthodoxy in particular) in Efthymiadis, Introduction to *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, II.13-14; and Skedros, “Hagiography and Devotion to the Saints,” 444. For rich bibliographic surveys of scholarship on hagiography (before 1983), see Lotter, “Methodisches zur Gewinnung historischer Erkenntnisse aus hagiographischen Quellen”; and Wilson, “Annotated Bibliography.”

holy person,<sup>76</sup> becoming enormously popular in late antiquity and the middle ages before (so it is easily and erroneously presumed) falling off in credibility with the rise of modern historical epistemology. Indeed, the very category of hagiography (as it is normally used today in the academy) came into being as a scientific distinction among those attempting to thresh out the scholarly value of documents whose content could no longer be accepted as “historical”—whether because of its miraculous reporting or its plainly incorrect geographical or chronological accounting.<sup>77</sup> The classic definition, then, would seem to contrast hagiography with history as a modality of written representation, at once warranting “scientific” scrutiny of the former by the latter and fixing scholarly attention on the written word as the site where hagiography takes place.

A closer look, however, troubles not only the opposition between hagiography and history but also the restriction of hagiography as a viable analytic category only for specific genres (such as *Lives*,

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<sup>76</sup> Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 504. Bartlett defines hagiography in conventional fashion, that is, as “writing about the saints and their miraculous powers.” On the generic tropes and conventional structure of the *Lives* of the saints, see Louth, “Hagiography,” 359.

<sup>77</sup> On this shift in the definition from “sacred writings” (such as Psalms and Proverbs) to “writings on the saints” in the middle of the nineteenth century, see Philippart, “Hagiographes et hagiographie, hagiologes et hagiologie,” 7-12; and Lifshitz, “Beyond Positivism and Genre,” 109. See also Van Ommeslaeghe, “The *Acta Sanctorum* and Bollandist Methodology,” 155-63; and Delehaye, *The Work of the Bollandists through Three Centuries*, 56-57, noting that the “paramount object” of this preeminent hagiographical society “was to gather together *and criticize* works bearing on the history and the adoration of the saints” (emphasis mine). By isolating and dispelling the false or rhetorically exaggerated elements, the Bollandists attempted to uplift the “authentic documents” (Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, xxx) and so to ensure that the saints themselves did not face the disrepute owed more properly to the hagiographer’s distortions or inventions. In his manual of “scientific hagiography,” *The Legends of the Saints* (first published in 1905 and rapidly becoming the classic of the field), Delehaye takes as his task “to sketch the method for discriminating between materials that the historian can use and those that he should leave to poets and artists as their property, and to put readers on their guard against being led away by formulas and preconceived ideas” (xxvii). Nevertheless, Delehaye does move to ensure that even the fabulous elements of hagiographical narratives not be discarded wholesale, but rather to understand them in terms of their edifying power, as will be discussed at length below. De Gaiffier (a more recent Bollandist) confirms as a central task of the scholar of hagiography to be “*d’interroger les productions hagiographiques pour voir dans quelle mesure elles sont susceptibles de fournir des données valables pour reconstruire le passé*” (“Hagiographie et historiographie,” 139); yet Efthymiadis consigns this approach already to the past and wishes to rescue the Bollandist critical method of evaluating the historicity of hagiographical sources from the scholarly aims with which this method has been usually coupled: “The days of fact-finding are over: Rubens’ paintings are not worth gazing at only to confirm European society’s former preference for fat women” (“New Developments in Hagiography,” 160; cf. Ševčenko, who complains that the Bollandist method reduces hagiography to “a quarry for something else” [*Observations on the Study of Byzantine Hagiography in the Last Half-Century*, 11]). On the significance of the colloquial usage of “hagiography” as “inherently false idealization . . . constructed as the enemy of history, and thus of truth,” see Monge, “Saints, Truth, and the ‘Use and Abuse’ of Hagiography,” 9-10.

passion accounts, or miracle collections) or even specific media (that is, typically, texts). Hippolyte Delehaye, the preeminent figure in the Belgian Jesuit *Société des Bollandists* during the early twentieth century, began his hagiographical methodology with the puzzle that, on the one hand, “[t]he term should not be applied indiscriminately to any and every writing that bears on the saints,”<sup>78</sup> while on the other hand, it is introducing needless distinctions to exclude from the category any given form of writing (from a formal, florid martyriological account, to a synopsis included in a liturgical calendar, to the inscription of praise on the tomb of a saint) purely because of its form.<sup>79</sup> His solution was that, rather than defining and delimiting hagiography by its *form*, scholars may look to *function* as the distinguishing feature: “So we see that to be strictly hagiographical the document must be of a religious character and aim at edification [*édification*]. The term then must be confined to writings inspired [*inspiré*] by religious devotion to the saints and intended [*destiné*] to increase that devotion.”<sup>80</sup> Delehaye’s easily-ignored insight, in other words, is that it is not that hagiographical texts are trying and failing to provide objective historical accounts, but rather that they are hagiographical precisely insofar as their primary priority is the (quite historical) effect that they bring about—what Wyschogrod calls their “imperative” or “perlocutionary” force.<sup>81</sup> To study

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<sup>78</sup> Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Even in the early years of the Bollandist enterprise, the composition of the *Acta Sanctorum* required the sourcing and synthesis of diverse types of documents that had been composed for a range of purposes, organizing it by feast date rather than by genre: see Delehaye, *The Work of the Bollandists through Three Centuries*, 56-86. By appealing to Delehaye’s framing here, prior to generations of strong scholarship on hagiographical literature, I am of course *not* suggesting that genre is irrelevant to academic considerations of hagiography, nor that hagiographical producers themselves did not conform deliberately to generic expectations. Productive and practice-oriented considerations of genre as a category in the study of hagiography, its producers, and its audiences, can be found, for instance, in Krueger, “Hagiography as an Ascetic Practice,” “Early Byzantine Historiography and Hagiography as Different Modes of Christian Practice,” and especially *Writing and Holiness* (e.g. 1-14 on hagiographical genre[s] as grounded in and determined by practices of authorship and recognition). My point is that genre should not be viewed as *determinative* or even *limiting* of the sorts of functions that hagiographical genres of literature do, indeed, enact.

<sup>80</sup> Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, 3, compared with the French original (*Les légendes hagiographiques*, 2). On “edification” there will be much more to say in section 2b.

<sup>81</sup> See Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, 54: “The hagiographer, then, shares the ideas of history current in his day. But he writes history with a special, clearly defined object in view ... for he writes not only to interest people, but above all to edify them, to ‘do them good’. And so a new form of literature is born, part biography, part panegyric, part moral lesson.” Therefore, rather than condemning the hagiographers as “misleading historians, we ought to ask ourselves whether the term ‘history’, as we understand it today, should be applied to their writings at all.” Hagiographers ought then to be classified with the “poets” and “painters” (xxxii), rather than with the historians they can nonetheless resemble to the

hagiography “scientifically,” in Delehayé’s view, is to distinguish the historical kernels from the rhetorical and artistic edifice within which they are enshrined—to separate “history” from “legend” but then to evaluate *both* for what they can teach us about the authors and audiences, that is, to read hagiography in light of its surrounding cult rather than as an isolated text with autonomous significance.<sup>82</sup>

Although Felice Lifshitz has amply shown how this way of defining hagiography as dedicated to edification *rather than* factual reporting relies on now-obsolete positivistic historical suppositions, we need not lose the core insight when we accept the critique of its corollaries.<sup>83</sup> The perlocutionary force of hagiography need neither disqualify it as a form of “historical” writing nor trap it within a given body of literature that must be carefully delimited.<sup>84</sup> While for Lifshitz, the category of “hagiography” as a distinct literary project goes up in smoke once its nineteenth-century invention as part of the rise of positivistic historiography is revealed, my own solution is different: by decoupling hagiography from genre, we may abolish our anxieties over how to define hagiography according to form, content, and historical merit (or lack thereof) and instead recover a productive use of the concept focusing on *how hagiography works* and

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untrained eye. Cf. Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism*, 6: “I define hagiography as a narrative linguistic practice that recounts the lives of saints so that the reader or hearer can experience their imperative power”; and 28: “The success of the life’s appeal is in part the result of sheer perlocutionary force.” On the concept of “perlocution,” see Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 101-03, 109-20.

<sup>82</sup> See Delehayé, *The Legends of the Saints*, xxxiv: “To say that legend has flourished luxuriantly in the neighbourhood of shrines is simply to underline the importance of the cultus of saints in the life of peoples. Legend is a homage that the Christian community pays to its patron saints. As such, one cannot ignore it. Only, do not mistake it for history.” The shortcomings of Delehayé’s approach are well-known (see for instance Ševčenko, *Observations on the Study of Byzantine Hagiography*, 3-7, and Louth, “Hagiography,” 361), and I do not want to give the impression of a return to his *method*, even as I recover certain of his insights.

<sup>83</sup> See Lifshitz, “Beyond Positivism and Genre,” 98-102, on the tight connections between the development of a category of “hagiography” (in Western Europe, notably) with that of the rise of positivistic historiography. The suppositions of this positivism are most abundantly on view in Delehayé’s *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique* (for instance 7-17).

<sup>84</sup> It is one of Lifshitz’s prevailing arguments that many if not most of those writers we would now call “hagiographers” *did* consider themselves to be writing “history” (consider as classic examples, e.g. Theodoret’s *History of the Monks of Syria* or Palladius’ *Lausiac History*). Therefore: “Nothing authorizes us to excise from the history of historiography everything which is now perceived as ‘false,’ or to excise from the roll-call of historians everyone whose methods and conclusions we do not accept” (“Beyond Positivism and Genre,” 100). Moreover, although Lifshitz does not herself move in this direction, the fictional dimensions of hagiographical literature may indeed register it as all the *more* historical, in the sense theorized by Ricoeur, de Certeau, White, Iser, and other leading hermeneutical critics of historical positivism. On the merits of such a hermeneutic, see Monge, “Saints, Truth, and the ‘Use and Abuse’ of Hagiography,” 13-22.

*what it does* (even when the borders of what is included remain blurry and these dynamics change from context to context, tradition to tradition).<sup>85</sup>

It is among the chief aims of this dissertation, then, to promote this alternative method of construing and interpreting hagiography, a method which begins anew from Delehayé's core insight (too easily dismissed as outmoded with the rest of his method) but proceeds rather differently. With the affixture of hagiography to genre already well-loosened (not only by Lifshitz's critiques but also by the prevailing hagiographical scholarship),<sup>86</sup> I will take the subsequent logical step—to treat not only specific genres of literature but also literature in general as *exemplary, rather than definitive*, of hagiographical mediation. That is, it remains correct to refer to the authors of the *Lives* of the saints as “hagiographers”—though it is no less correct to classify as hagiographers the painters of icons, the builders of reliquaries and, and even, in a special sense, the devotees who inscribe their own practices (venerating icons or relics, contributing to the currents of processions and festivities, leaving votives of various kinds in holy places) into the lifeways of the public sphere, the shared textures of holy multimediation.

The *multi*-mediation of holiness: In what remains of this section I will introduce the two key parameters of my approach to hagiography as multimediation, which I take to have untapped value for interpreting the power of holiness in the human world—particularly (though not exclusively) in the

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<sup>85</sup> My approach is thus felicitously aligned with the methodology proposed by Rondolino in *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Hagiographical Strategies*, in which “the hagiographical process is the *tertium comparationis* that allows us to compare [multiple] narrative traditions ... and their respective historical and cultural contexts” (20).

<sup>86</sup> For instance: Rapp frames hagiography primarily in terms of its *content* rather than its form (“For Next to God, You Are My Salvation” 64; cf. “The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism,” entire but especially 120-23). So too, Miller presents hagiography not merely as a literary genre, indeed merely as literature per se, but as “a set of discursive strategies for presenting sainthood” (*The Corporeal Imagination*, 118; see also 104 for arguments against the genre approach)—but as I will address presently, even this delimitation of hagiography as “discursive” (if discursive alone) is unwarranted. And see de Gaiffier, “Hagiographie et historiographie,” 140, on the analytic gains of considering “*calendriers, martyrologes, inscriptions, livres liturgiques (sacramentaires et bréviaires), litanies, hymnes, iconographie*” as relevantly hagiographical alongside *Vitae* and *Miracula*. Writing of Orthodox Christianity in particular, Skedros categorizes the forms of hagiography as “the life or *vita*, ... martyrdom accounts, collections of posthumous miracle accounts of a particular saint, sermons or panegyrics offered about the saint on his or her feast day, hymnography, and the *paterika* (wisdom literature and short stories of ascetics such as the well-known *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*)” (“Hagiography and Devotion to the Saints,” 445).

contexts of Orthodox Christianity. These parameters are (a) a move from texts alone to an unbounded (and overlapping) field of multiple media in which experiences or understandings of holiness are inscribed; and (b) a move from the material products of hagiography alone (texts, images, other objects) to account for and integrate as properly hagiographical the multiple psychosocial processes by which these products are produced and consumed, generated and mobilized (paramount among them what I am defining as imagination, representation, and edification).

### *2a) Multimediation 1: From Texts to Media*

As already noted, Delehayé's core insight in *Les légendes hagiographiques* is that the purpose and effect of hagiography, not merely its static representational form, is what makes a given text "hagiographical"; he avers that hagiography must have a "religious character," have "edification" as its aim, be "inspired" by devotion to a saint, and "intended" to promote such devotion.<sup>87</sup> In other words, supposing two otherwise-identical documents narrating the life of a saint, representing in the same words the same sequence of events, one would be hagiographical to the extent that it is written on the terms of the author's religious conviction and for the religious benefit of an audience, and the other narrative—if written, say, as a scribal exercise, with no attention paid by the copyist to the content, and promptly burned for kindling (that is, not read and reflected on by anybody)—*would not be hagiographical*.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Delehayé's original formulation, given in translation earlier: "*On le voit, pour être strictement hagiographique, le document doit avoir un caractère religieux et se proposer un but d'édification. Il faudra donc réserver ce nom à tout monument écrit inspiré par le culte des saints, et destiné à le promouvoir*" (*Les légendes hagiographiques*, 2).

<sup>88</sup> This is of course an extreme and somewhat ridiculous thought experiment, but the qualifications are necessary (for me more than for Delehayé) insofar as even unintentional or accidental uptake of a representation of holiness takes it into a hagiographical grey area where edification and the promotion of a cult are possible. While Delehayé is committed to authorial intention as a distinguishing dimension of hagiography, I would back off this consideration and insist on considering those hagiographical media that are made thus *by their consumers*. As will become clearer below, I see no reason to disqualify as hagiographical an accident of nature (for instance, a stone that appears to contain the imprint of a horse's hoof, as I will discuss in Chapter II, section 3b) that is seized upon by the imagination of a community as signifying the presence or patronage of a saintly figure, and treated as part of the "dossier" (a preferred term of Delehayé's) of the saint, installed within a shrine, visited for votive purposes, etc.

Hagiography, according to this logic, is not the narrative *per se* but the event of mediation between authors and audiences (both stakeholders in “*le culte des saints*”), which is bound up with contextual causes and effects that are intrinsic, not ancillary, to the product under consideration.<sup>89</sup>

Now, Lifshitz has shown that this definition of hagiography as inspired by and intended to promote devotion to the saints is untenable—if and only if we are committed to construing hagiography as a genre of literature.<sup>90</sup> By abandoning this formal restriction but maintaining the functional restriction, however, “hagiography” may fruitfully encompass whatever means of mediation are used to inscribe and mobilize holiness in such a way that “edification” is possible.<sup>91</sup> With Delehayé, we can affirm that hagiography is more adequately identified by its content and function than by its form: put in an updated scholarly idiom, we can distinguish hagiography as that which represents, inscribes, mediates holiness to (and by) those who appropriate and put it to use in their lives—so doing, indeed, producing it anew and mediating it onward in new ways.<sup>92</sup> Against Delehayé, however, we can recognize that these definitive functions of hagiography are not purely textual functions and that, indeed, even hagiographical texts themselves (insofar as they are *media*) are not purely textual but rather produced and consumed as an multimediated interplay with their contexts and interwoven with a social matrix of action.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Gell, *Art and Agency*, 6, on “art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it.” While I cannot go as far as Gell in this “rather than,” I would reinforce his attention to intentionality and agency. Such intentions according to which objects “change the world,” as will become clearer in my own more contemporary reworking of Delehayé’s principles, need not be on the part of “authors” alone—a work that was not *intended* to be hagiographical by its creator may nonetheless become hagiographical through its appropriation and use according to the intentions of consumers, who thereby co-produce the hagiographical work irrespective of the original generating impulse. This principle will be discussed at more length in section 2b.

<sup>90</sup> See Lifshitz, “Beyond Positivism and Genre,” 96-97.

<sup>91</sup> Thus we are already on the yonder side of the “broadest possible definition” of hagiography as given by Eftymiadis: “the mass of writings about the acts of the martyrs and other kinds of holy men and women” (“Hagiography of the Greek Fathers,” 371). Of course, “edification” itself still needs to be defined and discussed, as it will be shortly.

<sup>92</sup> For Delehayé such appropriation and use are still matters of formal cult, but this is a limitation to which I do not think hagiography should be bound. Rather, I will argue that idiosyncratic individual uses of the inscriptions of sainthood are still fruitfully considered as part of the overall hagiographical dynamic.

<sup>93</sup> See Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Introduction (the book is forthcoming and its page numbers are, at the time of my own submission, not yet final); drawing on Gell, *Art and Agency*, 5-7). Heo provides a sample reading of a particular work of hagiographical representation in light of its encompassing, interwoven, multisensory processes of mediation (a print

As W. J. T. Mitchell insists, *all* media are (from the perspective of how they are created and encountered) “mixed media” or “multimedia,” and moreover, mediation as such “already entails some mixture of sensory, perceptual, and semiotic elements”—in other words, media are the socially and temporally constituted syntheses, in one configuration or another, of materiality and meaning.<sup>94</sup> This is the first key principle for a reconstrual of hagiography, for if there is no purely textual medium, no purely visual medium, and so forth, then even the mediation taking place in a saint’s *Life* (that classic hagiographical exemplum) is *more* than textual, more than verbal, more than discursive. A saint’s *Life*, for instance, may be produced according the social and spiritual rhythms of a monastic working day, and it may be heard publicly during a festival or read privately in the course of a pilgrimage.<sup>95</sup> The inscription of holiness on the part of any given hagiographical medium is always indexed alongside and in relation to a field of signs that are not enclosed by that medium.<sup>96</sup> We need look no further than the inside of an Orthodox church to see this in action: images of saints (to take only one such example) are juxtaposed

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poster of the Virgin Mary, encased in glass to invite encounter while precluding direct touch, with a television feed broadcasting its dripping with oil that is collected and distributed). See also Elsner, “Relic, Icon, and Architecture,” 17-18.

<sup>94</sup> Mitchell, *Image Science*, 125-33. There is an extensive literature on media and mediation, which I cannot review in any comprehensive way, although the key frameworks on which I draw bear emphasis. Williams shows how the very concept of a “medium” developed from being the means of an artistic practice (e.g. oil and water as the media for pigments with which to paint) to a reified concept of a “work of art” divorced from the conditions of its production and consumption (*Marxism and Literature*, 158-60). Williams would prefer, then, to recover this sense of a medium as a “form of social organization” (159) or as “material cultural production” (162; cf. Mitchell, *Image Science*, 129). Modern media theory as a distinct scholarly enterprise has much of its foundation in the work of McLuhan, whose 1964 work *Understanding Media* established some of the key guidelines for understanding media as “the extensions of man” (3), which can and should be studied in terms of the “psychic and social consequences” (4) that are as much a part of these technologies as the materiality of which they are composed. Meyer argues (in conversation with de Vries) that “[i]f, as an understanding of religion as a practice of mediation suggests, religion and media need to be understood as co-constitutive, it makes little sense to claim that there is a religious essence that exists prior to, and independent of, the medium through which this essence is subsequently expressed” (Meyer, *Aesthetic Formations*, 11-12). On the essentially *material* and *political* character of mediation, see Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Introduction. In *Promoting Peace, Inciting Violence*, Mitchell considers the role of media in another mode of mediation, of particular pertinence to my chapters on Cyprus: mediation between communities in situations of conflict, insofar as media contribute to or undermine the perpetuation of violence. See also Munker (ed), *Was ist ein Medium?*; Krtilova, “Media Matter”; Hirschkind, “Media, Mediation, Religion”; de Vries, “In Media Res.”

<sup>95</sup> See Krueger, “Hagiography as an Ascetic Practice in the Early Christian East,” 219-25; Hart, *Time, Religion, and Social Experience in Rural Greece*, 202-11.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Introduction, drawing on the semeiotics of C. S. Peirce; and Mitchell, *Image Science*, 130-31.

spatially with one another, covered in words (including names, prayers, and scriptural references) that add discursive texture to the figures represented therein, experienced in liturgical contexts that suffuse the ears and nose no less than the eyes with sensory associations, and encountered through haptic practices (such as *proskynēsis*, bowing and kissing the representation of a holy person) that engrain for activation by bodily habits a range of discursive and emotional dispositions toward the saints.

However, to recognize this multimediation of media as such is not to *reject* textuality; narratives matter enormously, though we should not treat them as isolated or autonomous.<sup>97</sup> As “inscription,” writing functions as a metaphor that participates in what it communicates. Clifford Geertz, for all the outmoded entailments of his social thought, is quite right to observe that:

The great virtue of the extension of the notion of text beyond things written on paper or carved into stone is that it trains attention on precisely this phenomenon: on how the inscription of action is brought about, what its vehicles are and how they work, and on what the fixation of meaning from the flow of events—history from what happened, thought from thinking, culture from behavior—implies for sociological interpretation.<sup>98</sup>

It is important, moreover, not to let the cogent critiques of the hermeneutical habit of textualizing non-textual objects of interpretation blind us to the *peculiarly verbal character* of Christian theological

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<sup>97</sup> There is no doubt that hagiographical narratives (which need not be conjoined with a specific genre or certain rhetorical conventions, even as these conventions should indeed be studied as part of the dynamics of mediation) are the most directly *theoretical* of the media in which understandings and experiences of holiness are inscribed, that is, they provide the most explicit discursive frameworks for devotees to make conscious sense of holiness and appropriate it deliberately into their lives. In other words, without such discourse (whether written, in the case of a popular *Life* or martyrdom account, or oral, in the case of a homily or liturgical formula), other means of mediation drift apart from one another—the icon no longer conjures the events of a martyr’s confrontation of the powers of the world, the relic no longer can be identified as belonging to a particular saint, and the biblical resonances through which the holiness of the saints is interpretively filtered are lost. Moreover, it is important not to neglect the ways that textuality is used by hagiographical producers and consumers as a powerful metaphorical lens (with all the implications for thought and life with which contemporary metaphor theory would invest this usage) through which a wide range of media are actively interpreted.

<sup>98</sup> Geertz, “Blurred Genres,” 31. Geertz is drawing in these observations on Paul Ricoeur’s influential essay, “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 197-221. Insofar as actions have consequences that can be perceived and interpreted, they have “inscribed” the order of things in which they take place, leaving the mark of their meaning (even as this meaning is wholly open to divergent interpretation and indeterminate response). That action is not, properly speaking, either textual or exclusively discursive does not detract from the many ways that “[an] action leaves a ‘trace,’ it makes its ‘mark’ when it contributes to the emergence of such patterns which becomes the *documents* of human action” (*Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 206; see also 37 on the ways in which “the notion of the text prepares itself for an analogical extension to phenomena not specifically limited to writing, nor even to discourse”).

understanding and thus the emic power of this exact hermeneutical habit.<sup>99</sup> Insofar as “the Word” is an enduring font of meaning-making in Christian imaginaries, even apparently non-textual media (such as relics and reliquaries, amulets, buildings, mosaics, and the like) are nevertheless constituted in terms of a verbal construal of ultimate reality and within a linguistic metaphorical frame for understanding the most fundamental mediation of divine holiness to the human world: *the word made flesh*.<sup>100</sup> As we will see in the coming chapters, linguistic and textual metaphors prevail in the explicit theorization of hagiographical products and processes, by authorized institutional representatives and informal commenters alike.<sup>101</sup> Even if not for the range of other reasons I have given, it is worth considering visual and embodied representations of holiness and holy people as no less “hagiographical” than textual representations because this is the actual usage of the term, and as such it is worth taking seriously as an interpreter.<sup>102</sup>

So then, I proceed from the premise that textuality does not determine the boundaries of hagiographical mediation, and textual hagiography can itself be better interpreted by considering its specifically textual dynamics in light of (and as a subset of) broader processes of mediation that “turn the great silence of things into its opposite.”<sup>103</sup> Granted, this recognition comes at a cost: the risk of an analytic

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<sup>99</sup> For iterations of such critiques, see Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*; Gell, *Art and Agency*; Hekman, “From Epistemology to Ontology”; Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind*; and Sullivan, “Seeking an End to the Primary Text.”

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 5-9: “Christianity had a special relation to textuality. As Geoffrey Harpham has recently argued, it was centered on texts and took its metaphors from them: “The Christian God is modelled on language” (6; citation from Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*, 17).

<sup>101</sup> This is the case, it should be noted, not only because of the primacy of the word in Christian worldmaking, but also because of the specificity of the Greek language in shaping Orthodox hagio-graphy. Γράφειν, which is used to refer not only to writing but also to drawing and other forms of mediating inscription, allows for thinking of visual inscriptions of holiness in textual terms and vice versa. See Liddell/Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. γράφω (in Homer the term designates a physical act from which writing can subsequently derive its material logic—to “scratch,” “graze,” or “mark”; later, it is used for forms of material representation made by marking one thing by another, that is, drawing, writing, and painting, by contrast with representation through speech, dance, and the like); and Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. γραφεῖον (“pencil, paintbrush”), γραφικός (“of drawing or writing”), γράφω (“write,” “depict”).

<sup>102</sup> This is hardly a taken-for-granted interpretive stance, but I will address my own hermeneutical principles and their warrants in section 3b.

<sup>103</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 185.

flabbiness that can result when a concept that has been treated conventionally with a more specific meaning is expanded to include a broader array of meanings. This is Lifshitz's specific concern:

To the argument that 'hagiographical' materials also include relics, reliquaries, iconographic representations, breviaries, etc., I would respond that, logically, we are therefore also required to erect a genre 'politicalia' comprised of biographies of politicians, reports of office-holders to constituents, campaign posters, bumper stickers, and souvenir sponges.<sup>104</sup>

This analogy with "politicalia," in fact, quite resonates with what I am doing. Where I differ from Lifshitz is in what I take to be the intellectual merits of the move. To stick with her analogy, it is not that I take biographies of politicians to be owed attention only as strands of the larger tapestry of media, nor that I take their purpose or function to be identical with those of a souvenir sponge. Rather, I hold that accounting for the intersecting production and consumption of these many different kinds of media (and for and the mutually-reinforcing uses to which they are put within a common political field) *does* both improve our repertoire for interpreting the biographical narratives themselves (which our analyses too easily isolate) and reveal the significant political role played by the apparent marginalia (like bumper stickers). Thus too with hagiography: needing to add specificity to our uses of the category (as in "hagiographical literature," "hagiographical hymns," or "hagiographical images") is a small price to pay for greater clarity on the dynamic interconnectivity of these media and the psychosocial processes in which they emerge and take effect.

## *2b) Multimediation 2: From Products to Processes*

To study media adequately, I am persuaded, it is not sufficient to treat them as discrete objects. This is not merely to say that the work is not an autonomous world unto itself, independent of its context; it also is to insist that what distinguishes media from mere stuff is that they are enmeshed in processes of

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<sup>104</sup> Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre," 97n10.

production and consumption that constitute them *only* as extended in time and between constituencies.<sup>105</sup>

Thinly sliced trees marked with pigments are not media: what makes manuscripts media is that they are dynamic rather than static, that their materiality is written and read, encoded and decoded with agency and within a topography of meaning. Media are alive, insofar as they co-create the social world of which they are a part.<sup>106</sup>

My approach to hagiographical media, then, is a kind of double seeing, observing them not only *in situ*, as material products apprehended in themselves (that is, in their sensory ratios, their internal logic, and their material poetics), but also in terms of the psychosocial processes *of which* we can pin down only the products and *according to which* such products make their mark as inscriptions of the social world. Of these processes I have identified three as most pertinent to understanding hagiographical media in particular: *imagination*, *representation*, and *edification*. Of each of these, an enormous literature exists, which I will not attempt to treat systematically; instead, I will introduce each process only insofar as it is properly *hagiographical*, that is, inextricable from the mediation of holiness.

Imagining holiness, Christians<sup>107</sup> call its representatives to mind and frame them in meaningful relation to their own contexts of thought and life, thus rendering themselves able to perceive holy media *as*

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<sup>105</sup> See Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 26-30, for a middle path between the “intentional fallacy” and the “fallacy of the absolute text”: “If the intentional fallacy overlooks the [limited, as Bakhtin and Burke would insist] semantic autonomy of the text, the opposite fallacy forgets that a text remains a discourse told by somebody, said by someone to someone else about something. It is impossible to cancel out this main characteristic of discourse without reducing texts to natural objects, i.e., to things which are not man-made, but which, like pebbles, are found in the sand” (30).

<sup>106</sup> See again Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Introduction; and Gell, *Art and Agency*, 6.

<sup>107</sup> My theoretical apparatus is developed not in the abstract, but through my in-depth study of (ancient and modern) Greek Orthodox Christianity, and I am of course not making universal claims. However, I take the transferable analytic value of this apparatus to be substantial, not least because the ancient Christian settings in which hagiographical mediation was threshed out as a core dimension of Christian life and witness are appealed to not only by Orthodox Christians today but far more broadly (it is no coincidence that my test cases for the patristic emergence and crystallization of the hagiographical idiom, John Chrysostom and John Damascene, are enormously influential, ecumenically). Moreover, while these processes are clearly conditioned by the religious epistemes in which they take place, they are deliberately defined in such a way as not to be specifically Christian in their psychosocial causes and effects. Even “edification,” the term with the most direct biblical resonances, is available as a productive analytic category for, say, Muslim and Buddhist hagiographies.

holy, as imperative for their lives. Representing holiness, they enunciate their understanding in culturally-configured discourse and diverse media—including their own bodies and social practices.<sup>108</sup> Being edified by holiness, they cultivate private and public relations with hagiographical media and memory, resulting in changed patterns of understanding, identity, and behavior.<sup>109</sup>

The specific introduction of (what I am heuristically distinguishing as three) hagiographical processes can best be made by beginning not at the logically prior process of imagination, without which no representation or edification are possible, but with the most apparent process of *representation*. An inscription of holiness or a holy person involves the proposition (and acceptance) of something as a substitute for something else, so as to make something or someone *present*, temporally and spatially, in a way that it would not otherwise be.<sup>110</sup> The saint is not identical to the icon of the saint: it *stands in* for him, more frequently in the sense of serving as a stimulus to the mind to lay hold of someone who is (apparently) absent, but also occasionally (as we will see in the chapters of Part One) in the sense of acting on the saint's behalf, invested with his power or rendering his resistance. To represent in media is to *simulate* something by means of something else—it is a metaphorical substitution, a living relationship in

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<sup>108</sup> See again Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 158-64.

<sup>109</sup> It may seem to be a liability that I must use nominalizations derived from Latin, when my actual analysis of these processes in action takes shape within a Greek epistemological history and, moreover, treats imagining (φαντάζειν), representing/imitating (μιμῆσθαι) and edifying/being-edified (οἰκοδομεῖσθαι) with the dynamism of the verbal forms. However, the power of the standard English terms is that they plug into a rich history of philosophical and cognitive analysis of phenomena that are in no way exclusive to their formulation in Greek. For example, my three hagiographical processes, here heuristically disentangled but in life intimately interwoven, bear more than a fleeting resemblance to Paul Ricoeur's "threefold mimesis," his interpretive schema in *Time and Narrative* for organizing the "connections" established by a work of art between the events and characters animated therein and the world out from which the poetic work is generated, from which it takes its intelligibility, and to which it in turn contributes its newly generated meaning. As I will develop in the chapters to come, I would suggest that *all* hagiography is "imitative" or "mimetic" (in Ricoeur's threefold sense), eliciting appropriation and calibration to the particular lives of persons and communities, in turn enlarging their interpretive possibilities and refiguring their future as much as celebrating (indeed constituting) their past and organizing their present. A fuller discussion of the pertinence of Ricoeurian hermeneutics to the study of hagiography can be found in Monge, "Saints, Truth, and the 'Use and Abuse' of Hagiography," 20-22.

<sup>110</sup> See Webb, *Understanding Representation*, 2-4, 8; Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation*, 4-5 (Prendergast notes also that this sense of making apparently present something that is in itself absent—a sense that is thoroughly undermined by the early Christian theorization of holy mediation—is closely bound up with the tradition, tracing to Plato, of associating representation with illusion or deception); cf. Sheppard, *The Poetics of Phantasia*, 2-6.

which both the objected represented and that which is used to represent it are changed by their asserted association with the other.<sup>111</sup>

Such representation is also an act of *imitation* on the part of the one creating the representational inscription—an imitation that requires assembling a prior imaginative model of the object of mediation, such that this model may be copied by a hagiographical producer into the material modalities of any number of mediating options (including one's own bodily conduct).<sup>112</sup> Moreover, as we will see, the representation of holiness can and often will involve some *delegation* of the role of what is being mediated to the media themselves. For instance, the prayer of St. George to bolster the hearts of subjugated Christians is transmitted/constituted by the narratives and images that represent it, which media (rather than the saint's own words, if we are even to postulate that they took place) take effect upon those communities in which they are mobilized.<sup>113</sup>

These varying but closely interrelated English terms—"simulation/depiction," "imitation/copying," and "delegation/substitution"—are warranted to be discussed under a common process of representation, *pace* Derrida,<sup>114</sup> because they are all entailed together in the crucial (to the history of

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<sup>111</sup> This is meant to be inclusive of metonymic and synecdochic types, for instance the representation of a saint by means of a cloak that the saint had worn or a representation of the whole person by means of their painted appearance alone. That is, representation need not only take place by way of overt *resemblance*: the representation of a nation by means of a flag (see Webb, *Understanding Representation*, 91-92) deals with resemblance between medium and mediated rather differently than does Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, and rather more differently still than a poster of *Starry Night* that one might pick up in a museum gift shop.

<sup>112</sup> Thus we will find such eminent hagiographical theorists as John Chrysostom and John Damascene instructing their audiences to make *themselves* and their public conduct (πολιτεία) into new media that continue to represent the holiness that has transformed them. Arnold Davidson's rich reflection on the concept of "conduct," as it animated Foucault's hermeneutics of the subject, is helpful here insofar as it frames the discussion of μίμησις as resistance that will follow: "conduct" is never only one's own, but is forged in relation between individuals and institutions. See Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct," 26-27.

<sup>113</sup> Therefore, at a great remove from the ancient debates over the intrinsic falsehood or unreality of representation, it seems obvious to me that representations are realities in their own right, that is, at one and the same time signs and things, of which new signs can in turn be rendered.

<sup>114</sup> See Derrida, "Sending," 302, in which he, mimicking Socrates, badgers the sum of philosophers to account for why they have failed to answer the questions: "what is representation in itself and in general? What makes all these representations called by the same name? What is the eidos of representation, the being-representation of representation?" See also the discussion in Webb, *Understanding Representation*, 12, and Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation*, 3 (which describes Derrida's difficulty as the recognition that, "in the very act of talking about representation, in trying to define

Christian thought in general and to the construal of hagiography as process in particular) concept of *mimēsis*. To “imitate” a person with one’s deeds and character is no less to *represent* that person (as we may speak of representing an ideal or an institution), to manifest something of that person in a way perceptible to others, than is to produce a simulation in verbal or visual media.

To be able to represent someone in any of these ways, however, requires a preexisting understanding gained through others’ mediation. So it is at this point that we must pivot back to *imagination*, that process of forming virtual representations in the mind from the apprehension and reconstitution of external stimuli. Imagination is logically prior to and practically entailed in representation not only because the deliberate representation of something requires some manner of conception of what is to be represented,<sup>115</sup> but also because representation is itself not self-sufficient—one thing does not automatically make another thing present, it does so only insofar as it can be imagined that the former is in some way sufficient to stand in for the latter.<sup>116</sup> As Mitchell interprets Ernst Gombrich, the “innocent eye” is blind—it is the mind that sees.<sup>117</sup> Hagiographical media can only be produced by way of

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representation, one effectively begs the question. Assuming you can talk about representation is the same as assuming you can represent representation”). However, exposing an intellectual fallacy in philosophizing about the process of representation in no way means that the process itself is undermined. Is representing representation begging the question, waving away a philosophical impossibility? So be it—human beings do impossible things (such as translation, another of Derrida’s dismantlements) all the time, sometimes as many as six before breakfast.

<sup>115</sup> See Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, xxxiv: the “image” that may or may not be rendered in whichever manner of representation, is, precisely, the product of imagination. Cf. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 1-17, on the distinctions between the “invisible” image and the “economic” icon. Note that such a conception need not be wholly conscious or wholly discursive, nor necessarily a matter of authorial intent more than a matter of imaginative seeing an accidental configuration of matter as a relevant representation. Here again the example of the oddly-shaped stone that is *taken to represent* the hoofprint of St. George (as will be discussed in Chapter II) is instructive.

<sup>116</sup> See Webb, *Understanding Representation*, 10: “Let’s look again at ‘elephant’; I can only say that word meaningfully because as a culture we have earlier established those chains of equivalence between the huge mammal and the word ... [which] is empty except when it is put to work in a specific context, and for people who can decode it.”

<sup>117</sup> Mitchell, *Image Science*, 132; cf. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 296-301 (particularly the difficulty of distinguishing what we “really see” from what we “know to be there”), 321. The notion bears a more than passing resonance with the conception of imagination in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, where imagination “has to bring the manifold of intuitions into the form of an image” (A120)—an image-concept that not only reflects prior perception but *shapes* subsequent perception, serving to provide a “unity of apperception [that] forms out of all possible appearances, which can stand alongside one another in one experience, a connection of all these representations ...” (A108; cf. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, III.185).

an imagination of holiness that shapes the poetics of representation; but they can also only be recognized *as* hagiographical (that is, as mediating holiness rather than something else) by the imaginative “quasi-seeing” that lights the way of encounter with such media by affixing them within a topography of meaning, forming the subsequent apprehension of holiness in other forms and settings.<sup>118</sup> In other words, the material culture of hagiographical representations is (like all material culture) inseparable from intellectual culture and discursive practice: its materiality depends for its configuration on the meaningfulness that precipitates in the process of imagination. Yet the Orthodox Christian theorization of hagiography makes the reciprocal point with no less clarity and urgency: a truly meaningful representation of holiness is not merely an intellectual notion but a fully incarnate, material presence, a presence that does not remind the mind of an absent holiness but rather conveys that holiness into the here and now, where it can have palpable (indeed political) effects.<sup>119</sup>

Imagination, conventionally speaking, refers to the generation of images in the mind—either those by which the mind synthesizes and represents to itself what has previously been perceived (calling to mind the image of one’s first bicycle), or those that generate an image of something that has not been perceived but which is conceivable in quasi-perceptual forms that rely on a sensual repertoire as a point of reference (calling to mind the image of a blue bumblebee the size of a house).<sup>120</sup> Yet in the ancient

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<sup>118</sup> See Glaeser, “Sociotheology,” 6, on imagination as a “presentation of the absent [that] works in quasi-sensory modalities, mostly in quasi-hearing and quasi-seeing.” Cf. Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 9, on the late antique development of “a poetics of matter in order to redirect, indeed to form, sensuous apprehension of the presence of the spirit in the material world,” and 101, on the ancient rhetorical/imaginative technique of ἔκφρασις, which “almost makes the things depicted visible to the sight.” Webb’s, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, is a more comprehensive treatment of these crucial issues—but I will be dealing with them at length in my own work, particularly in Part Two.

<sup>119</sup> For the Orthodox, as Skedros argues, such media do not only call to mind the holiness of the saint or of Christ but transport and transmit it, to “convey the power of the saint” in the full double-meaning of the term “convey” (“Hagiography and Devotion to the Saints,” 446). Cf. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 115, on how narratives are vehicles not only for moving meaning but for transporting the people who rely on them to make sense of their worlds: “Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice.”

<sup>120</sup> This standard notion of imagination, while still useful, has been criticized and nuanced further by such philosophers as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle, on the grounds that imaginative “seeing-as” need not involve the active generation of mental images so much as a pre-reflective interpretation according to a repertoire of possible images (as in Wittgenstein’s famous thought experiment of the duck-rabbit, which can be seen as either animal according to perceptual

philosophical world from which Christian hagiography derives much of its logic, this imagination itself involves an “inscription”: the inscription of external stimuli on the mind, which stores them up as memories and retains them as available images for reproduction and reuse: “so deeply does sight engrave [*enegrapsen*] on the mind images [*eikonas*] of actions that are seen.”<sup>121</sup> The metaphor of engraving or inscription (*graphein*) as the basis for imagination (the subsequent recall of *eikonōn* in the mind) is an indication that it is appropriate to conceive of the imagination of holiness as *itself* “hagio-graphical,” whether or not a material product is subsequently generated, in the sense that the imagination depends (in this Greek idiom) on the inscription of the mind by what is mediated to it in a myriad of ways.

But when the Neoplatonists, and the early Christian theologians who relied on them, recalibrated Aristotle’s theory of the imagination, they moved beyond the notion of the passive wax tablet into which external stimuli are inscribed. The generation of images in the mind now became an active extension of the mind toward the object of its apprehension, seeking to absorb it into itself and so generate it anew: imagination as the *production* in itself of that which it apprehends.<sup>122</sup> This view of imagination would be enormously influential on modern hermeneutics, but it also is the prerequisite for the Christian theorization of the mediation of holiness as involving the inner transformation of those who encounter

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habits that precede the active generation of mental images)—see Sheppard, *The Poetics of Phantasia*, 7-8, for discussion of these issues. In Greek antiquity, this process of calling to mind something that is not currently perceivable by the senses was known as ἐνάργεια, a technique of making what is absent vividly present *in the mind* as opposed to in the perceptual realm (μίμησις). See Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, 87-106, 127; cf. Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book*, 6: “Imagining is an act of perceptual mimesis.”

<sup>121</sup> This formulation belongs to the fifth-century (BCE) rhetorician Gorgias (*Encomium on Helen* 17), upon whose foundation Aristotle builds his peerlessly influential treatment of imagination (as the conversion of αἰσθήματα, sense impressions, into φαντάσματα, mental images available for reuse). Aristotle develops the metaphor of the seal (τύπος) on wax in *On Memory and Recollection* 450a. Gorgias and Aristotle are both discussed in Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, 111-13. See also Sheppard, *The Poetics of Phantasia*, 6-10, for an excellent summary of Aristotle’s theorization of imagination as a “power” (δύναμις) of the soul, specifically being “the power to deal with appearances rather than those appearances themselves” (7), closely connected with the dynamics of *desire* (as will be of great importance to my analysis of hagiography).

<sup>122</sup> Sheppard, *The Poetics of Phantasia*, 7; Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 7-15. As will become extremely important in Part Two, however, Christian theologians would adapt Plato’s distinction (in *The Sophist*) between φαντασία and φάντασμα as a way of distinguishing a purely “fantastic” production of the mind with no true referent (Scrooge’s famous undigested beef) from the properly hagiographical cooperation (συνεργία) between divine grace and human imagination.

the media of sainthood, by way of an imaginative digestion of holiness, where it becomes part of the mind's repertoire for perceiving and intervening in the world.<sup>123</sup> The consequence of this imaginative digestion of hagiographical representations is what I am designating as *edification*: a “building up” or reinforcement of a particular subjectivity (inclusive of political interactivity) by the appropriation of representations of holiness, in such a way as is experienced (and/or promoted by authorities) as communally beneficial.<sup>124</sup> We have been considering the “formative purpose” and the “imperative force” of hagiography,<sup>125</sup> but we must also consider formative *facticity*: how does hagiography *actually* shape and orient human lives and human institutions? In Austin's terms, not only what is done *in* hagiography, but also what is done *by* hagiography?<sup>126</sup>

The prototypical discussions of edification in a Christian sense can be found in the letters of Paul, where “building up” (*oikodomein*) functions as a metaphor for the transformation of souls and societies by the gospel, thus strengthening and shoring up of the holy community against error, vice, and cultural (indeed cosmic) threat.<sup>127</sup> But for our purposes it is crucial to note that, for Paul, edification by the gospel

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<sup>123</sup> As Glaeser puts it, “the imagination matters because it is the very medium in which we paint our futures while connecting them at the same time with the present and the past. One could also say that the imagination[,] presenting that which is absent or otherwise inaccessible[,] furnishes context and thus meaning to our life” (“Sociotheology,” 5).

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Delehay, *The Legends of the Saints*, 54: “The hagiographer ... writes history with a special, clearly defined object in view, and this is not without influence on the character of his work; for he writes not only to interest people, but above all to edify them, to ‘do them good.’” However, this basic sense of benefit, though well grounded in the Greek hagiographical writings (where *οικοδομῆναι*, to edify, and *ὠφελεῖν*, to help or benefit, are frequently treated more or less synonymously), is insufficient for the use to which I will put the term. Treating edification as a psychosocial process, rather than just an authorial intention, requires investigating how hagiographical audiences actually *use* hagiography in ways that they or others construe as beneficial, transformative, and the like. Thus edification in my sense may be inclusive of what Rondolino describes as “sectarian legitimation as well as doctrinal and political polemics” (*Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Hagiographical Strategies*, 7), even as scholars may decline to assume that such a process is indeed “beneficial.”

<sup>125</sup> On “formative purpose,” see Fowl, “The Primacy of the Witness of the Body to Martyrdom in Paul,” 44; on “imperative force,” see again Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism*, 3, 6.

<sup>126</sup> See Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 110; cf. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 197-203.

<sup>127</sup> The double-meaning in the English (derived from the Latin *aedificare*, to build) holds true for the Greek as well: *οικοδομῆσθαι* is the verbal form of *οικοδομή*, a building or house. Cf. Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 272: The hagiographical “return to origins allows unity to be reestablished at a time when the group, through its development, runs the risk of being dispersed. Hence memory, whose construction is linked to the disappearance of beginnings, is combined with the productive ‘edification’ of an image intended to protect the group from dispersion.” In Part Two, when the notion of “divine economy” (*οικονομία*) comes to the fore, the tight linguistic connectedness with edification will be emphasized.

cannot simply be declared by fiat—it must be *mediated* and it must be *appropriated* in a loving way.<sup>128</sup> Imitating/representing Christ crucified, Paul mediates holiness to his communities; “receiving” or “taking hold of” (*dexamenoi*) what is represented to them (including Paul himself), those communities become able to represent Christ in themselves and to others, mediating holiness onward before the face of the world.<sup>129</sup> But this is only possible if they themselves as a community are *edified* by what they receive, that is, if they do not merely embrace the gospel for their own selfish benefit (metaphorically represented as building on the foundation of Christ with hay or straw) but rather use it as mortar for continuing to “build up” the steadfast temple of God.<sup>130</sup> This dynamic of mediating onward the holiness that has been mediated by others, by taking hold of it and making it one’s own, is at the very heart of hagiographical process in an Orthodox idiom,<sup>131</sup> and will recur at length in each of the chapters to come.

To clarify by way of a modern example more pertinent to the material I will be analyzing: Christodoulos Vasileiades, a modern Greek-Cypriot theorizer of “the craft of hagiography” (*hē technikē tēs hagiographias*),<sup>132</sup> conceives of the task of the hagiographer—*prior to beginning his own work of hagiographical representation*—as a threefold act of contemplation, so that prior representational resources

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<sup>128</sup> As Margaret Mitchell puts it, Paul makes of himself “a one-man multi-media presentation of the gospel of Christ crucified,” representing it not only with his narratives but also with his own person, which his audience must “imitate” (“Epiphanic Evolutions in Earliest Christianity,” 189). See, e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:1 (“Become imitators [μιμηταί] of me, just as I am of Christ”); and Galatians 4:12 (“Become as I am, for I have become as you are—I beg you, brothers”). Mitchell addresses in depth (187-91) the multi-sensory mediation of the gospel in Paul’s body as well as his words, analyzing the “ethical program rooted in his call for others to imitate him, even as he offers himself as a μιμητής, ‘graphic copy,’ of Christ’s suffering death” (191).

<sup>129</sup> See 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 (“And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, taking hold [δεξάμενοι] of the word with the joy of the Holy Spirit, even in great affliction, with the result that you yourself became the model [τύπον] for all those believers in Macedonia and Achaia.”)

<sup>130</sup> See 1 Corinthians 3:10-17.

<sup>131</sup> Examples will abound in the following chapters, but as a foretaste from what is often considered to be the birth of Christian hagiography (in its narrowest, generic sense), consider Athanasius of Alexandria’s introduction to the *Life of Antony* (SC 400.124-28), in which he enjoins his audience to *believe* (ἠκούσατε . . . μη ἀπιστεῖτε) what they hear and read about Antony (appropriating what is mediated to them), to *remember* it (μνημονεύειν—storing it up in their imagination where it will be available for use) and thereby to *emulate* (ζηλώσαι—literally, to be zealous for) the example of what they remember (deploying anew what they have appropriated, making it available in turn to others).

<sup>132</sup> The work is, notably in light of my argument in section 2a, a manual for iconographic production.

may be absorbed by the senses (*aisthētēria*), then the mind (*nous*, viewed as the seat of the imagination, *phantasia*),<sup>133</sup> and finally the heart (*kardia*), “where insights become life,” and from where the hagiographer is finally prepared to mediate holiness onward to others.<sup>134</sup> The hagiographer here places himself in the status of a devotee, a consumer and appropriator of hagiography, before he is prepared to contribute new hagiographical production. Perceiving a prior representation of holiness, the hagiographer allows his senses to be filled, “consciously or unconsciously,” with the “energies” (*energeies*) of the work.<sup>135</sup> So doing, they may be processed by his mind and converted into “insights” (*gnōseis*) but also into the image that will be subsequently mediated onward in his own hagiographical production. And, crucially, he insists that it is not enough to have this image and these insights available in the mind—they must “become life/experience” (*ginontai biōma*), that is, become not only the copying of a prior example but a new authentic enunciation of holiness in the world. This difference is analogous to “memorizing” the lines of a play and “knowing them by heart,” where in the latter case they may be spoken *as one’s own*.

So far, however, we are still considering edification in terms of its (intended/asserted/theoretical) effects, rather than the *process* by which those effects might be precipitated. To take up the challenge of the latter, we must look more closely at the hermeneutics of appropriation, by which publicly available understandings are not only perceptively synthesized and remembered, but “made one’s own,” so to

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<sup>133</sup> The gradual changes in Orthodox Christian theological anthropology, their variation on classical models, and their interactions in modernity with trends in psychology and ultimately cognitive science, are well outside of my purview here. Suffice it to say that, although imagination is also associated with the soul, ψυχή, here in Vasileiades’ manual it is clear that the progression being named is that deriving edification from imagination, which in turn had absorbed and synthesized available αισθήματα (sense-data) into “insights” (γνώσεις) for use in the heart. In this way Vasileiades is aligned with the theological anthropology of the great eighteenth-century systematizer and theorist of holy mediation Nikodemos Hagiorites, who describes imagination as “stand[ing] between the mind and the senses” where it serves as “the map and guide to the mind... [with] the power to awaken it and redirect it” (*Handbook of Spiritual Counsel*, 146, 77).

<sup>134</sup> Vasileiades, *Η τεχνική της αγιογραφίας*, 3. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of modern Greek sources are my own; English translations of the titles can be found in the bibliography. Throughout the dissertation, this notion of γράφειν (writing or painting upon) the heart with prior representations of holiness will recur and be devoted substantial attention.

<sup>135</sup> Vasileiades, *Η τεχνική της αγιογραφίας*, 3. “Energies” is a key term in this description, due to its association (especially following the hesychastic controversy of the fourteenth century) with the real presence of God as it may be experienced in the human world.

speak.<sup>136</sup> Appropriation refers to the necessity that a place be found for the object of understanding within the epistemological framework and historically-effected consciousness of the interpreter.<sup>137</sup> However, as Ricoeur insists, such appropriation is not a mere squeezing of an encountered other into existing boxes of understanding; “it is to receive an enlarged self from the apprehension of proposed worlds which are the genuine object of interpretation.”<sup>138</sup> In other words, appropriation is then part of a dialectic that “includes the otherness within the ownness,” generating new insights in an encounter with difference and converting them into forms of life.<sup>139</sup>

Appropriation, then, helps us get at the dynamic discussed so brilliantly by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*: how “consuming” media is at the same time *continuing to co-produce them*, not only producing new meanings in and for themselves but producing the social facticity of the media themselves: their reach, their impact, their very existence as mediating phenomena.<sup>140</sup> The open-ended,

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<sup>136</sup> See Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 178: “An interpretation is not authentic unless it culminates in some form of appropriation (*Aneignung*), if by that terms we understand the process by which one makes one’s own (*eigen*) what was initially other or alien (*fremd*).”

<sup>137</sup> See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 390: “The text brings a subject matter into language, but that it does so is ultimately the achievement of the interpreter. Both have a share in it.” In other words, our understanding of a text is not a matter of “reconstructing the way the text came into being”—rather, “one intends to *understand the text itself*. But this means that the interpreter’s own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text’s meaning.”

<sup>138</sup> Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 182-83. Or again, on 192: “Far from saying that a subject, who already masters his own being-in-the-world, projects the *a priori* of his own understanding and interpolates this *a priori* in the text, I shall say that appropriation is the process by which the revelation of new modes of being – or, if you prefer Wittgenstein to Heidegger, new ‘forms of life’ – gives the subject new capacities for knowing himself.” In *Political Epistemics*, Glaeser provides a more contemporary articulation of the ways that (and conditions under which) new stimuli may validate or disrupt existing patterns of understanding. See also Webb, *Understanding Representation*, 10.

<sup>139</sup> Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Science*, 43. Appropriation is thus coupled and balanced with the work of “distanctiation”: the interpretive necessity—and impossibility, according to Gadamer—of alienating oneself from one’s own apparatus of understanding. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 459-69; and Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 43, and *Time and Narrative*, III.247: “Individual and community are constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that become for them their actual history.” On the everyday utility of such appropriation from a specifically theological point of view, see Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 69-71.

<sup>140</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xxi (on reading as “a silent production” that “pluralizes” a work that had begun its life as a single, “proper” production), 29 (on the *artistry* of manipulating institutional systems meant to produce particular effects so that they are consumed otherwise than intended—this *otherwise* is the making of something new), 117 (on how the *practice* of space makes it real—and continually renewed—rather than stabilized as an abstract), 173 (on the reader as a “novelist” in the sense of a navigator or a colonist). Cf. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 16-20, on appropriation as the conversion of “objective facticity” into “subjective facticity,” and subsequently, through social action, subjects co-produce the social worlds from which they themselves are woven. Consider, for an example, how the *Mona Lisa* is not just

undetermined consumption of hagiographical media is itself a production of significant social facticity—the appropriation of hagiography is a form of hagiographical production, in the self and in the world.<sup>141</sup> And for the specific concerns of this dissertation, de Certeau’s application of this principle to religious media is directly germane to my analysis of hagiography as a means and warrant for cultural, political, and spiritual struggle: “A (‘popular’) use of religion modifies its functioning. A way of speaking this received language transforms it into a song of resistance . . . .”<sup>142</sup>

From the perspective of edifying “benefit,” however, appropriation is an equivocal issue. This making-one’s-own, necessary for real understanding and creative reproduction of what one consumes, entails the risk of overshadowing what has been mediated by the frameworks (ideological, cultural, biological) into which it is mediated. Theologically speaking, hagiographical mediation *should* be beneficial, and appropriating such media should be a pathway of improvement, ultimately of sanctification, for those who do so.<sup>143</sup> However, because edification presupposes appropriation, and depends for its effects on the personal and interpersonal conditions under which it takes place, the

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a painting—it is a painting *made* what it is because of how it is treated by its consumers; the phenomenon of the work is also the proliferation of the painting’s reproductions in postcards, clothing, and vast array of variations, manipulations, and parodies by other artists (examples are no farther than a Google Image search for “Mona Lisa”—the co-productive appropriations begin almost immediately and vastly outstrip images of the “original”). Gell’s notion of “distributed objects” is pertinent here, insofar as “artworks at once anticipate future works and hark back to others” (Thomas, Foreword to Gell, *Art and Agency*, xii; cf. Gell’s own comments on 222).

<sup>141</sup> Or indeed, again, such co-productive consumption can make something other than hagiography *into* hagiography: A poster of a saint created to make a buck can become hagiographical insofar as it is used as an icon; a rock with a hoof-like mark, created by chance, can become hagiographical insofar as it is appropriated for the celebration of a saint’s patronage and presence.

<sup>142</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 18; cf. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 33, and Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over*, 254-56, on the maskedness and symbolic subtlety of such forms of everyday resistance as songs and games woven into forced labor, and their plausible deniability before the organs of power (by contrast with the more overt engagement of revolt or revolution). De Certeau might as well be speaking about two songs that will be discussed at length in Part One of this dissertation: the “Christ is Risen” paschal hymn used by Greek-Cypriots to imaginatively cast the hope for national liberation in the light of resurrection (see Chapter III) and the τραγούδια (folksongs) of St. George’s dragon-legend, known around the Greek world but of particular prominence and popularity in Cyprus, which link the struggles of the poor of the land against landlords and politicians to the spiritual register of the great soldier of Christ (see Chapter IV).

<sup>143</sup> As we have seen articulated in the letters of Paul, the holiness invested in human forms of life can burn through those forms and enhance the community that takes hold of them (reinforcing it against its political and religious antagonists, as well as against its own vicious impulses). Cf. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 173, articulating theologically how the Holy Spirit manifests itself not as an imposition but from within, making grace *ours*.

digestion of holiness into the building projects of human social life risks becoming any number of things besides what would be recognized as sanctification.<sup>144</sup> It may become a crystallization of authorized attitudes through the power of charismatic figures, a rigidification or reification of identities and forms of life, or a self-interested consumption of hagiographical media that corrupts rather than enhances the common life of the community. The building up of a fortress in place of a temple.

This worry over whether a given appropriation of holiness is actually edifying will be a refrain of the hagiographical theorists and practitioners we meet throughout the dissertation. It points us to the final dimension of hagiographical process to be introduced in this section: edification as the hinge between the *inscription* of holiness and the *impartation* of holiness.<sup>145</sup> We have dealt with the social-hermeneutical appropriation of understandings of holiness, insofar as they are installed within and activated for the sake of an apparatus of meaning-making and meaning-use. But this dissertation shows how this psychosocial appropriation of holiness is *itself* of theological significance, in an Orthodox idiom, for understanding what Peter Brown describes as “the greatest mystery of all”: “how do saints produce saints?”<sup>146</sup>

In other words, we have dealt with the *graphy* of hagiography; what then of the *hagio*? We have begun to consider some of the ways that hagiographical representations condition the imagination of holiness and how they thereby become part of the (edifying) apparatus of self- and other-understanding—through appropriation in Ricoeur’s sense, co-productive consumption in de Certeau’s

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<sup>144</sup> Although the dynamic of *differing* assessments of the same appropriation of holiness (such that, for instance, the identification of a saint as an emblem of national liberation or as an agent of interreligious antagonism may be hailed as edifying by some and treated as morally ruinous by others within the same community) will be of prevailing interest.

<sup>145</sup> See again the discussion of these two dimensions of mediation in section 1, and in particular the discussion of θεοποίησις.

<sup>146</sup> Brown, “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity,” 22. Brown continues: “That is, how, for many religious persons, does the inimitable come to be absorbed [*nota bene*, in light of the foregoing discussion of appropriation] in such a way as to provide a glimpse of wider, heroic horizons beyond the cramped confines of their normal life? On this issue, it is a relief to learn that the saints tend to give as many different answers to that question as do professors.” This last point is an important caveat to my theoretical efforts—I do *not* mean to suggest that these processes work in the same way in every place and time, but rather that they are analytic categories that can be posed as questions to a wide range of contexts and materials, with varying dynamics and varying results in each.

sense, or as Gaston Bachelard puts it, by the representation taking root in the one who encounters it, “expressing us by making us what it expresses.”<sup>147</sup> But hagiographical mediation is not *only* a matter of inscription (in objects, in selves, in societies), as it might remain if we were content to stick to a sociological perspective. It is also (when the emic theological rendering is taken seriously as part of scholarly encounter with a world other than its own)<sup>148</sup> a matter of impartation (*metadosis*): divine investment of holiness in the persons and societies to whom it is mediated and who reinscribe the holiness they encounter in their own hearts, lives, and worlds.<sup>149</sup>

In the Orthodox idiom under consideration, we will see that consuming, digesting, and being refigured by hagiographical media is considered to be an encounter with holiness as such, not only with its representations. From this perspective, hagiography is properly defined not merely by its intent to edify but rather by its being a *holy inscription*, a vehicle and not only a sign of holiness.<sup>150</sup> Hagiographical inscription here can be said to participate in the theology and hermeneutics of incarnation—or more precisely, “enhumanment” (*enanthrōpēsis*)<sup>151</sup>—a reconstitution of divine holiness in human forms, in modes as psychosomatic, intrinsically social, and prone to extension in material media as we ourselves are.<sup>152</sup> But this very encounter, perceived and promoted as edifying in the sense of being beneficial to the soul and the community, has historically been edifying *also* in the sense of shoring up and validating the boundaries of Orthodox identity. As the coming chapters will demonstrate, the theological paradigm in

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<sup>147</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, xxiii. We will see, in varying ways, how this formulation in particular resonates with formal and informal Orthodox theorizations of how hagiographical media ignite the desire for sanctification, for becoming more like that which is encountered in the saints. Cf. Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects*, 8-17, on the formation of Christian subjectivity in liturgy, hymnography, and indeed (other forms of) hagiography.

<sup>148</sup> See again note 10 on the “double intellectual tragedy” (Orsi, *History and Presence*, 64) of scholarship failing to be open to reorientation by what it encounters, and instead reinscribing a power-dynamic of the scholar over the native.

<sup>149</sup> Μετάδοσις (to impart, to give a share of) and μετάληψις (to participate in, to receive a share of) are among the most important terms of the wide hagiographical lexicon I will be considering in the course of the dissertation.

<sup>150</sup> See again Skedros, “Hagiography and Devotion to the Saints,” 446.

<sup>151</sup> See again Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 54.3; and Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. ἐνανθρώπησις.

<sup>152</sup> This formulation will be pivotal to the hagiographical theorization of John Damascene, analyzed at length in Chapter VI. On media as the “extensions of man,” see again McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 3.

which the multimediated inscription of holiness (*hagiographia*) is indispensable to the sanctifying impartation of holiness (*theopoiēsis*)<sup>153</sup> has been consistently, intimately, and strategically associated with the struggle of “orthodoxy” to resist and rectify “heterodox” alternatives. Before I introduce the specifics of how hagiography both warrants and enacts a lived Orthodox theology of struggle, however, I must turn to the methodological interplay with which I intend to undertake this interpretation.

### (3) The Practice of Hermeneutics

To understand another’s understanding: this is the challenge that strikes at the heart of the humanities and social sciences,<sup>154</sup> the challenge that has given rise to the possibility of history as we know it (beyond the mere chronicling of events) and has swept across our intellectual terrain as a disciplinarily cross-fertilizing wind. Interpreting others’ understanding (whether that understanding is inscribed in books, activated at sites or in relationships, organized by and as institutions, and so forth) means both attending justly to the other’s world *and* reconstituting it within the interpreter’s own sense-making apparatus, which cannot be dispelled or even adequately bracketed.<sup>155</sup> Hermeneutics provides a rigorous reflexivity, a method for destabilizing and reorienting one’s own perspective by opening to another’s.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> See again note 27 on the basic patristic case for the human person being reconstituted by an encounter with the incarnate God (by way of material mediation), thus themselves being “made divine” (θεοποιηθῶμεν).

<sup>154</sup> See Hekman, “From Epistemology to Ontology,” 206-11, on the “universality of hermeneutics” due to the omnipresence of its orienting problem (a perspective derived from Gadamer, building on Heidegger); and Hermans and Moore, “The Contribution of Empirical Theology by Johannes A. Van der Ven,” 1-5, on hermeneutics as coextensive with the reflexivity of modernity. Glaeser’s comments in “Hermeneutic Institutionalism” (207-09, 216-17) about why hermeneutics has been nearly extinguished in American sociology, and about the costs of this loss, are motivating impulses in my own work.

<sup>155</sup> My sense-making apparatus, for instance, includes the theoretical resources that have honed my instruments of inquiry—for instance, to use Ricoeur or Burke in interpreting hagiography in Cyprus is *not* to say that their theory governs what is happening in Cyprus, but rather to say that they help me as an interpreter to organize my inquiry and to integrate something from outside my own horizon, bringing new dialogical possibilities to light. See Hekman, “From Epistemology to Ontology,” 209-10 (on Gadamer’s influential critique, to this effect, of Schleiermacher and Dilthey); Glaeser, “Theorizing the Present Ethnographically,” 75-79 (on social theory’s shift from final truth-seeking to metaphorical exploration); and Campany, “On the Very Idea of Religions,” 290 (on the necessity of juxtaposing our own theoretical apparatus with the theorizations—the ways that stuff is turned into thought—of those whom we study).

<sup>156</sup> It is crucial, as McCutcheon recognizes, “not to confuse the emic perspective [as identified by a researcher] with the so-called insider’s own actual viewpoint, as if our descriptive work somehow allows us to leave our own bodies and read

Therefore, insofar as this dissertation is an interpretive engagement with theological media and contexts, aiming at maximal intelligibility of actual religious commitments and worked out explicitly within a certain set of cultural, institutional, historical circumstances, it is hermeneutical to the core.<sup>157</sup> I proceed from the basic premises that (i) human understanding (including theological understanding) is worldly, that is, *in media res* and unautonomous, being interdependent with the institutional, cultural, and ecological conditions within which it finds itself; and (ii) that social existence is co-constituted by the textures and topographies of understanding thereof.<sup>158</sup> In this respect, theologies of holiness are not supplemental to human life and institutions, but intimately bound up with their contextual continuation.

In the chapters that follow, I am indebted to the hermeneutical traditions of my core disciplines: theological (focused on the construal of “culture” and its relationship with theological knowledge and inquiry) and sociological (conceiving of social existence in a state of constant flux and comprised of processes that are owed interpretation). These traditions and their concrete indications for my project’s methodology and argument will be introduced in the remaining two sections.<sup>159</sup> But it is important to stress at the outset that the shared hermeneutical orientation, between these different disciplines, provides my project with a common methodological engine and preserves it, I believe, from trying and failing to be

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other people’s minds” (*Studying Religion*, 52). Yet the point of articulating an “emic” perspective is not, in fact, to provide a snapshot of another’s understanding “as it is,” but rather to reform, enlarge, or disrupt the interpreter’s understanding through the attempt to know another’s. Here we are thrown into what Bellos (following Jerrold Katz) calls the “axiom of effability” (*Is that a Fish in Your Ear?*, 146-55): we cannot “perfectly” translate a poem by Neruda or a play of Chekhov, but insofar as it can be articulated (that is, inscribed on the page rather than remaining “ineffable”) it can be translated in a valid, useful way. Likewise, we cannot experience another’s experience or understand another’s understanding *as they do*, but the attempt to do so, to translate with care, is worthwhile and can be effective nevertheless.

<sup>157</sup> My thanks are owed to Kevin Hector for helping me articulate these distinctions with added care and perspective.

<sup>158</sup> See Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 43-62 (especially 50 on the interconnectivity of understanding after Dilthey, and 56 on the de-psychologized worldliness of understanding after Heidegger); Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination*, 279, on language and conception being in a constant state of borrowing and “living rejoinder” within a dialogue already in process; and Glaeser, “Hermeneutic Institutionalism,” 210-13, on the principles of “process ontology” that can survive the sustained and valid critiques of eighteenth-to-twentieth-century social hermeneutics (of this, more will be said in section 3b).

<sup>159</sup> It should be noted that this interplay and mutual reinforcement of sociological and theological hermeneutics takes place in *both* halves of the project, and not (as might be presumed) with Part One as the “sociological” half and Part Two as the “theological” half.

two things at once—as H. Hickerson colorfully puts it, wearing methodological “pants that [have] one leg of buckskin and the other of wool.”<sup>160</sup> In the remainder of this introductory chapter, before I tighten my focus onto the extended case study (St. George in modern Cyprus) that anchors the dissertation’s analysis, I will endeavor to show that the disciplinary interplay of my project is not absurd in this way, but rather stages a productive “conflict of interpretations” with a shared ruleset, less like an all-encompassing synthesis and more like an ecumenical encounter, fetishizing neither sameness nor difference,<sup>161</sup> but rather seeking to make space for dignified disagreement within a horizon of shared commitment.<sup>162</sup>

### 3a) *Theological Hermeneutics: Questions of Culture and the Analysis of Lived Theology*

The puzzle of the relation between theology and culture—between the making and using of meaning pertaining to God or gods,<sup>163</sup> on the one hand, and the world of dynamic semantic resources and patterns from which this meaning is assembled and within which it is mobilized,<sup>164</sup> on the other—is one of

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<sup>160</sup> Such that, in other words, “The whole is rendered absurd by the relation of its parts” (Hickerson, Review of Saum, *The Fur Trader and the Indian*, 822: cited in Fenton, “Field Work, Museum Studies and Ethnohistorical Research,” 72).

<sup>161</sup> See Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, 15-17, and de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 69-86, on these reciprocal transformations of difference into sameness and sameness into difference, which belong to the liability but also the very nature of ethnographic and historiographic writing.

<sup>162</sup> Bühler argues that interdisciplinarity *as such* is a “conflict of interpretations,” that is, a “space for creative interactions” between alternatives rather than the framing of conclusive syntheses (“The Space of Interpretation,” 251). Indeed, argues Vanhoozer, we *need* such a conflict of interpretations so as not to be blinded by a sense of final adequacy accruing to one (“What is Everyday Theology,” 36-37). There are clearly additional challenges here, some rooted in the (often-oppositional) history of disciplines, which I certainly do not mean simply wave away or vault over; I am not claiming to provide analysis that will be of equal and uncontroversial value to sociologists, theologians, historians, and art historians. And yet, we might take heart that not solving incompatibilities between disciplinary frameworks is a small price to pay for the benefits of an enlarged, more realistic view of the phenomena at hand. Perhaps better than “conflict of interpretations,” then, might be a metaphor drawn from ecumenical studies: a “reconciled diversity” of interpretations in service of a reality that is never exhausted by its heuristic divisions.

<sup>163</sup> On a capacious, intellectually responsible usage of the term “gods” “as a term for all the special suprahuman beings with whom humans have been in relationship in different times and places,” and therefore as a subject matter for religious studies / theology well beyond the confines of established doctrines, see Orsi, *History and Presence*, 4-5.

<sup>164</sup> A particularly textured and measured (though hardly universally adequate) working definition of culture can be found in Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, 27: the Comaroffs “take culture to be the semantic space, the field of signs and practices, in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others, and hence their societies and histories. It is not merely an abstract order of signs, or relations among signs. Nor is it just the sum of habitual practices. Neither pure langue nor pure parole, it never constitutes a closed, entirely coherent system. Quite the contrary: Culture always contains within it polyvalent, potentially contestable messages, images, and actions. It is, in short,

the defining theological problems of modernity and one of the key conversations from which this project takes theoretical and methodological cues.<sup>165</sup> In later work, I will dig into the wide-ranging conversation in hermeneutic theology following World War II, which sought ecumenical (and thus intercultural) clarity on the fertile tension between their theological efforts and the cultural worlds from which they arise, within which they communicate, to which they are native. For the present task, however, it is more pertinent to anchor my work in (i) the recent generations of theological hermeneutics at the University of Chicago, where they have flourished and where I have been trained, and (ii) in the wider development of an “ethnographic theology” that has cleared the ground for the work I undertake in Part One.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, David Tracy and Don Browning worked at the vanguard of an agenda to revise Paul Tillich’s correlationist approach to theology and culture,<sup>166</sup> transforming it from a “one-way street” (theological answers rendered for cultural questions) into a “two-way street” (in which theological enterprise took responsibility for both its dependence on and its influence within culture,

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a historically situated, historically unfolding ensemble of signifiers-in-action, signifiers at once material and symbolic, social and aesthetic. Some of these, at any moment in time, will be woven into more or less tightly integrated, relatively explicit worldviews; others may be heavily contested, the stuff of counterideologies and ‘subcultures’; yet others may become more or less unfixed, relatively freefloating, and indeterminate in their value and meaning.”

<sup>165</sup> Moreover, if we permit ourselves the analogical use of the modern term “culture” and the transposition of its referents into other contexts, as I do in this work, we will find that the integrity, interpenetration, interdependence, and contestation of theology with its encompassing cultures are by no means a modern discovery but have indeed been problems at the heart of Christian self- and other-understanding from the earliest period. As Niebuhr articulates it: “The Christ and culture issue was present in Paul’s struggle with the Judaizers and the Hellenizers of the gospel, but also in his effort to translate it into the forms of Greek language and thought. It appears in the early struggles of the church with the empire, with the religions and philosophies of the Mediterranean world, in its rejections and acceptances of prevailing mores, moral principles, metaphysical ideas, and forms of social organization. The Constantinian settlement, the formulation of the great creeds, the rise of the papacy, the monastic movement, Augustinian Platonism, and Thomistic Aristotelianism, the Reformation and the Renaissance, the Revival and the Enlightenment, liberalism and the Social Gospel—these represent a few [and it is noteworthy, if not surprising, that Niebuhr’s few do not include any of copious examples from post-patristic Orthodoxy] of the many chapters in the history of the enduring problem.” (*Christ and Culture*, 10). In this section, however, I aim to position myself within a specific conversation in academic theology, which therefore confines me to recent decades and their proximate influences (and so too, embarrassing though this may be from a wider perspective, to the intellectual constellations of the elite Western academy—which I hardly take to be sufficient or self-evidently authoritative).

<sup>166</sup> In Tillich’s approach, “the basic task of theology was to provide a response from religious tradition to the particular concerns and predicament of contemporary life”; therefore, “culture is allowed to set the focus for the conversation,” and the discipline of theology takes up the challenge to respond, authoritatively, out of its own resources (Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 102, drawing on Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 49).

seeking a more robust hermeneutics that could take seriously not only the questions posed by cultural formations but also the insights attained by attending to culture *as it is*, without presupposing existing theological norms).<sup>167</sup> Tracy proposed a double hermeneutic—first, to make sense (within a contemporary horizon of intelligibility) of what the central motifs and arguments of the Christian tradition have meant in their own historically-effected, culture-bound, contextual, situated enunciation; and second, to engage in a phenomenological exploration of contemporary patterns and structures of human experience in order to discern the religious reality of the present to which theological inquiry and interpretation are dedicated—in other words, not presupposing the current validity of the Christian classics but rather allowing the cultural-contextual reality to test the analogical capacities of past meanings.

Browning's contribution shares with Tracy's its essentially hermeneutical orientation and apparatus, but its methodological structure more directly influences my own. Browning's fundamental theology pushes even further than Tracy's in rendering the interpretation of socio-cultural contexts a *prerequisite* for meaningful historical, systematic, and practical theological argumentation. This primary mode of inquiry, which Browning dubs "descriptive theology," takes realism as a motivating principle: "What, within a particular area of practice, are we actually doing? What reasons, ideals, and symbols do we use to interpret what we are doing? What do we consider to be the sources of authority and legitimation for what we do?"<sup>168</sup> Browning's descriptive interrogation of culture, seeking to illuminate the

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<sup>167</sup> Such a formulation still does not, however, take adequate stock of theology's *being* a cultural production itself and so the *intra-cultural* dynamics of such a rendering of "answers"—this will be an important watershed of the subsequent generation. See Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 103.

<sup>168</sup> Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 48. Note too that Browning's interrogation of culture not only as a source for subsequent theological reflection but indeed as a *site* of theological productivity is explicitly linked with a "hermeneutic sociology" that both is capable of analyzing "the horizon of cultural and religious meanings that surround our religious and secular practices" but also can be rigorously attentive to and responsible for the researcher's own epistemic apparatus and topography of understanding (47-48). See also 81, on the necessity for theology "to have a strong and positive [and conceptually precise] relation with the modern human sciences." Scharen and Vigen observe (*Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 33) that Browning's appeal to social scientific inquiry (in a hermeneutical mode), and his commitment to "thick description" as not only a partner to theological reflection but indeed as a proper activity of duly realistic theology, served as crucial support for the boom in ethnographic approaches to discerning theological meaning and productivity from early 2000s onward (the contours of which will be discussed shortly). My own

theological “concerns, beliefs, values, practices, and experiences” already operant within it,<sup>169</sup> serves then as a less philosophical and more pragmatic, less phenomenological and more ethnographic, less universalizing and more determinedly particular treatment of the theological source described by Tracy as “common human experience and language.”<sup>170</sup>

Descriptive theology (upheld, if possible, by sound sociological methods) is, for Browning, a logical and methodological priority, but it is not self-sufficient. Following the investigation and interpretation of a living community’s active theological commitments, Browning proposes turning to *historical theology* (“What do the normative texts that are already part of our effective history really imply for our praxis when they are confronted as honestly as possible?”), *systematic theology* (“What new horizon of meaning is fused when questions from present practices are brought to the central Christian witness?”), and finally *practical theology* (“How do we critically defend [or, I would add, adjust or reimagine] the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation?”).<sup>171</sup> Although my overall agenda is different from Browning’s in that I am dedicated to the interpretation of a tradition *other* than my own, we may recognize in Browning’s methodology a preliminary rationale for my combination of a focused *descriptive-theological* study (the multimediation of St. George in modern Cyprus) with a *historical-theological* treatment of the mediation of holiness in the patristic canon (here exemplified by the authoritative and historically-effective voices of John Chrysostom and John Damascene).<sup>172</sup> Although his other two

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reliance on hermeneutic sociology as a core disciplinary resource (albeit in a more contemporary mode than that of the social science exemplars heralded by Browning—83-93) will be discussed in section 3b.

<sup>169</sup> See Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 106. Cf. Taylor, *The Theological and the Political*, 3, on how “the theological” is a much more capacious category than the Theology of an academic guild, “haunting” “wide sectors of secular and public life, even . . . purportedly nontheological and nonreligious sectors,” although this theological miasma is all-too-rarely taken up for interpretation by the guild of authorized interpreters of theology (12-18).

<sup>170</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 34.

<sup>171</sup> Browning gives these questions, and a few others, as exemplary of the respective theological moves: *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 49-56. Lynch addresses the logic of this order of operations in *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 106-09.

<sup>172</sup> Why specifically I take up these two figures will be addressed in the conclusion of this introductory chapter.

moves—the “systematic” and the “practical”—are not engaged here, Browning’s framework is a key warrant for the methodological integrity of this work.

Less than a decade after the publication of Browning’s *Fundamental Practical Theology*, a “new agenda for theology” was articulated by Kathryn Tanner in her 1997 work, *Theories of Culture*—a watershed that nonetheless was resonant with Browning’s earlier theological hermeneutic. Tanner takes as her starting point the radical changes in anthropological and sociological construals of culture since the 1970s.<sup>173</sup> This “decisive postmodern shift in the anthropological study of culture,”<sup>174</sup> Tanner argues, holds enormous promise for culturally-and-contextually-attuned theology—not because theology should self-evidently be deriving its categories and vectors of analysis from the social sciences, but because (in keeping with Browning’s emphasis on “realistic” theology) a collegial openness toward and critical engagement with those disciplines whose attention and labor are firmly fixed on culture is likely to yield a sounder and less parochial appreciation of sociocultural dynamics.<sup>175</sup> In light of the anthropological and sociological challenges to their own prior cultural paradigms,<sup>176</sup> Tanner takes up her own “new agenda”: to recalibrate theological treatments of culture by taking these challenges seriously.

For the present project, Tanner’s argument concerning the nature and tasks of theology in light of “a chastened, postmodern view of culture”<sup>177</sup> offers the following two guidelines in particular. First, we

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<sup>173</sup> That is, being developed while theologians such as Tracy and Browning were embracing the relevance for their own work of the *prior*, symbolic-structuralist paradigm of culture dominant from the 1920s-1960s.

<sup>174</sup> Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, x.

<sup>175</sup> See Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 38: “It seems less and less plausible to presume that cultures are self-contained and clearly bounded units, internally consistent and unified wholes of beliefs and values simply transmitted to every member of their respective groups as principles of social order. What we might call a postmodern stress on interactive process and negotiation, indeterminacy, fragmentation, conflict, and porosity replaces these aspects of the modern, post-1920s understanding of culture, or, more properly as we will see, forms a new basis for their reinterpretation.”

<sup>176</sup> See Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 40-56. These challenges to a modern construal of culture include (and are fleshed out in the chapter): “the charge of inattention to historical process,” “against cultures as internally consistent wholes,” “against consensus” (that is, a charge of blindness to the power dimensions of meaning-making and meaning-using), “against culture as a principle of social order,” “against the primacy of cultural stability,” and “against cultures as sharply-bounded, self-contained units.” Cf. Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life*, 11-26, on the “strong program” in cultural sociology, aligned with these critiques.

<sup>177</sup> Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 61.

must recognize that theology is itself a cultural process and product.<sup>178</sup> But if (in a chastened, postmodern view) there is no such thing as culture in general, only cultures in particular, then theology too must account for its embeddedness in and among historical contingencies, its enunciation in favor of one or another agenda of a fragmented whole, its variable political voltage and its contribution to or dependence on specific power-mobilizing institutions. The inherent contextuality of theology includes the ever-shifting ground of its own sense-making apparatus *vis-à-vis* God and the world. Second, we must recognize that theology is produced throughout cultures in a diversity of ways and for a diversity of aims, not only by authorized producers operating within institutional agendas.<sup>179</sup> This is not to wave away the apparatus of authorization and transmission that has historically ensured the preservation and promotion of canonical theologies, but it *is* to recognize that specialized theologies (such as the two studied closely in this work, those of John Chrysostom and John Damascene) are neither *less* cultural nor *more* theological than the myriad of “everyday theologies” produced and lived out by people across the whole range of sociocultural positions.<sup>180</sup> In turn, everyday theology operates within a constant interplay with the

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<sup>178</sup> See Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 63: “Like all human activities, it is historically and socially conditioned; it cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of human sociocultural activities.” She continues below (63-64), deftly preempting an objection that such a construal of theology as cultural product is a disavowal of revelatory inspiration: “Where is God’s influence felt if theology is a human work? Such a question is, however, no harder (or easier) to answer when expressed in cultural terms than it is when expressed, as it has been for the last several centuries, in terms of a modern Western historical consciousness. The task of figuring out theology’s connection to God’s influence on human life is much the same whether theology is viewed as a part of human history or a part of human culture.”

<sup>179</sup> See Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 69: “Putting theology into the cultural context of a Christian way of life challenges [the identification of theology with the institutionally-supported productions of educated elites]; it makes theology much more an integral part of daily life.” Cf. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over*; and “Slave Theology in the ‘Invisible Institution,’” on theological productivity on the (unauthorized) underside of slaveholding society. Moreover, in light of the insights of the postmodern, poststructuralist sociological view to which Tanner insists we must attend (and to which I will, in section 3b), this very notion of “institutional agenda” must itself be revised by an improved sense of what an institution actually is, how it is formed, how it is continually produced by those taking part in and validating their own understandings and forms of life by reference to it, and how it dissolves.

<sup>180</sup> What they are, then, is educated within and specialized on the terms of specific institutions, as well as calibrated according to spiritual struggles undertaken through tradition-bound ascetic regimes. They are *special instances of* theological production, but not definitive of it. Note that there have numerous formulations (with varying connotations and analytic emphases) to get at the kinds of theological understanding that are generated and mobilized beyond the discourses that are (often *post facto*) designated as “official” or “institutional” or “formal” theology. Thus we find discussions of “everyday theology” (in Tanner and Vanhoozer), “ordinary theology” (in Astley, Barclay, and Fulkerson), “lived theology” (in Marsh, Slade, and Azaransky), “biographical theology” (McClendon), “found theology” (in Quash),

specialized theologies that have helped (through the contingencies and institutional agendas of history) to organize its living cultural topography, its semantic repertoires, and its political praxis.

Finally, it is in the flourishing of liberation theology that this trajectory of Chicago theological hermeneutics deploys its theoretical capacities for engagement with concrete human circumstances, in part through Tracy's belated turn to political context and marginalized voices in *On Naming the Present*, but more robustly in the black theology of liberation developed by Dwight Hopkins. Hopkins' hermeneutic draws heavily on the contours of black theology as it emerged at the end of the 1960s, but provides these contours with a global scope and more thoroughgoing attention to developments in womanist theology and critical cultural studies. Pointing decisively to the experience of the oppressed as a hermeneutical key to the claims of Christian theology, Hopkins grounds in theological anthropology his reconception of the texture of theology itself, inclusive of a wider range of media in which subordinated peoples inscribe and communicate theological understanding.<sup>181</sup> Beginning from where James Cone left off in his tantalizing but undertheorized *The Spirituals and the Blues*, Hopkins turns to folk sources—songs, tales, jokes, and letters—in order to identify and interpret modes of theology that may be fragmentary and *ad hoc*, too easily missed by academic eyes.<sup>182</sup> In such a model of theology, culture is not an other that must be engaged, correlated, described, or restored as context: there is only *theological culture* in a living coinherence, constituted in “God-walk” no less than in “God-talk.”<sup>183</sup>

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and “vernacular theology” (in Flueckiger); and the subdiscipline that attends to these we find described as “descriptive theology” (in Browning), “empirical theology” (in Van der Ven), and “ethnographic theology” (in Scharen, Vigen, and Wigg-Stevenson).

<sup>181</sup> See Hopkins, *Being Human*, 35-39. Hopkins is not arguing that *only* the oppressed engage in theology more broadly than in formal theological treatises, but rather that, if theological anthropology is to be Christian, it must foreground the voices, experiences, and particular expressive means of the oppressed in each context—not only because it is hermeneutically sound or politically appropriate but indeed because of the very claims of the gospel to privilege the cry of the poor to the ear of God.

<sup>182</sup> For this hermeneutic in action, see especially Hopkins, *Shoes that Fit Our Feet; Down, Up, and Over*; and “Self (Co)Constitution.” *Being Human*, 53-56 also includes a discussion of the merits of this expanded construal of theology.

<sup>183</sup> See Hopkins, *Being Human*, 8. Cone, the pivotal progenitor of liberation theology in the United States (and my own *Doktorgroßvater*), had already by 1970 made the crucial move of insisting on the essential contextuality and culturality of theology *as such*, not only of the theologies of marginal groups. In his seminal work, *Black Theology and Black Power*, he

In the effort from Browning forward to raise up such everyday theologies, a growing number of theological scholars have come to recognize the enormous benefits of adapting ethnographic methods for theological interpretation and constructive argumentation.<sup>184</sup> The turn to ethnography, I wager, helps to correct the risk of overinterpretation of lived cultural worlds and their rich theological vernaculars by the theological canon that might encase them within its own prevailing itinerary. It is, therefore, the subdiscipline of ethnographic theology with which I will conclude this section—as it is where my own theological hermeneutics sharpens into the point of a research methodology for the first, “descriptive” phase of my analysis. I take ethnographic methods to be keenly suited to my investigation of lived theology, which I take to refer to *the theological understanding actually at work in a particular context, inclusive of its formal and informal enunciations and its unconscious shaping of motives*.<sup>185</sup>

Mary McClintock Fulkerson is often identified as a pioneer of ethnographic theology, and although a subsequent generation has greatly expanded and qualified her approach, that approach remains instructive for the specificity of its emergence from the principles of liberation theology (feminist

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exposes mainstream theology’s ignoring of its own culturality and its devaluing of certain kinds of experience while universalizing its own (for instance, on 68: “White liberal preference for a raceless Christ serves only to make official and orthodox the centuries-old portrayal of Christ as white. The ‘raceless’ American Christ has a light skin, wavy brown hair, and sometimes—wonder of wonders—blue eyes”). See also Daveney, “Theology and the Turn to Cultural Analysis,” defining culture as “the dynamic and contentious process by which meaning, and with it power, is produced, circulated, and negotiated by all who reside within a particular cultural milieu. Hence, the notion of culture points simultaneously to the totality of relations and dynamics that constitute human life and to the specificity and concreteness of particular human historical configurations” (in *Converging on Culture*, 5).

<sup>184</sup> Hermans and Moore note that practical theology, broadly construed, has looked to empirical research and some manner of social scientific methodology for well over a century (see “The Contribution of Empirical Theology by Johannes A. Van der Ven,” 3); I am concerned here, however, not with the overall history of theological engagement with social science, but with the arts of ethnography in particular, which more precisely frame my own contribution.

<sup>185</sup> This formulation resists overlapped and unsustainable dichotomies between “popular” and “elite” religion, analogous to that which we will see in the theory and methods of “lived religion” (in section 3b). Thus I do not accept so unambiguous a divergence between lived religion and lived theology as Marsh does in his introduction to *Lived Theology*, 6-9. Marsh’s concern is to distinguish between lived theology *in a constructive mode* and the nonconfessional agenda of lived religion scholarship. For Marsh, lived theology involves foregrounding “the position of experience and embodied particularity” in the pursuit of theological knowledge and narrative; he does not consider the independent merits of such an approach for the sake of *interpreting* others’ theology, precisely *as* a dimension of their lived religion.

in particular).<sup>186</sup> Resisting the over-standardized presentation of “women’s experience” even by mainstream feminist accounts, Fulkerson began to enhance her research by engaging in extensive interviewing and participant observation in particular communities. In this way, she began to explore the relevance for theology of the diverse voices and experiences of people that cannot be reduced to ideas that they are “supposed” to uphold.<sup>187</sup> Fulkerson insists on rethinking “what would count as ‘theological’ in a Christian community.”<sup>188</sup> Rejecting assumed polarities and hierarchies between discourse and practice, Fulkerson treats the ambivalence, polyphony, material conditions, and noncognitive communicativeness of theological context as fundamentally relevant.<sup>189</sup> But crucially, Fulkerson also articulates as an agenda-setting principle the abandonment of any pretense to an “objective’ analysis of [a] community;” seeking instead a new “theological reading of a contemporary situation”<sup>190</sup> that is woven of the *encounter* of the everyday lives, habits, and ideas of community members with the specialized historical or theoretical apparatus of the professional theologian. Each can aid in illuminating the other’s blind spots and offer the

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<sup>186</sup> Indeed, the very possibility of an ethnographic theology, rooted in a theological hermeneutic attuned both to theology’s own encultured character and to the (often imperceptible) theological saturation of cultural forms, would be inconceivable without the contributions of liberation theology and feminist theology. The rapid proliferation of liberation theology in the Americas and subsequently around the world has indicated the necessity for theology to take subaltern voices seriously not only as sources to be appropriated for new constructive theology but also as theological voices in their own right. Such insights are foundational to ethnographic theology as an intellectual project and, in particular, warrants my own commitment to avoid devaluing the theological vernaculars of colonized Cyprus as “merely” popular or folk forms of hagiographical imagination or discourse. Cf. Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 104-06; Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 67-68; Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 54-58, 69-79.

<sup>187</sup> See Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 5-9; and Scharen and Vigen, “The Ethnographic Turn in Theology and Ethics,” in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 29-30.

<sup>188</sup> Fulkerson, “Ethnography in Theology,” 115: “Is it the scripture reading? The sermon? Recital of creeds? Singing of hymns—that is, if they are orthodox? Is the chatter at church suppers or the work to clean the yard ‘theological’? Or does ‘theological’ only refer to certain things said in sanctuary space? If so, where does that leave those who live on the streets—whose major vocation is survival? And what does the color of bodies and the status accorded different bodies in our culture to do with ‘theology’? Unfortunately, many expert definitions of ‘theological’ do not offer ways to read these other spaces, practices, and material realities.” But, ethnography *does* open up the possibility of a theology that can take these dimensions of life seriously and account for their theological productivity.

<sup>189</sup> See Fulkerson, “Ethnography in Theology,” 124-27. Cf. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 3: “There is no such thing as ‘theology’: there is only *contextual* theology ...”

<sup>190</sup> Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 7, 9. Cf. Fulkerson’s Foreword, in Scharen and Vigen (eds), *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, xi-xiii.

other new resources for understanding—not as a corrective of one by the other but as a collaborative production of new knowledge.<sup>191</sup>

The second generation of ethnographically-engaged theologians (and ethicists), exemplified by the contributors to Christian Scharen’s and Aana Marie Vigen’s edited volume, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, have been committed “to not merely ‘use’ social science as a resource for theological reflection, but to explore that work as part of theology proper.”<sup>192</sup> In other words, as Browning and Tanner recognized and Fulkerson began to thresh out, the choppy crossing between traditional theological and ethnographic methods is not being made for the sake of poaching sociological techniques and sites of data collection, but rather because human life in its texture and intersectionality is (i) no less authentically the concern of theological than it is of sociological or anthropological inquiry and (ii) no less vibrantly the site of theological productivity than it is of other kinds of meaning-making. These two recognitions correspond to the two prevailing approaches identified by Scharen and Vigen in the burgeoning coordination of ethnographic practices and theological objectives: (i) as a way of doing justice to the inconvenient but no less actual complexity of the worlds that theology purports to interpret and counsel,<sup>193</sup> and (ii) as a way of attending to underappreciated theological voices and priorities, that is, those that do not have an established place within academic discourses.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Cf. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47-49 (Fulkerson herself cites Browning in *Places of Redemption*, 13); and Hermans, “When Theology Goes ‘Practical,’” 24, on how Ricoeur (among others) has established this interplay between understanding (*Verstehen*) and explanation (*Erklären*), enhancing each by way of the other. See also Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology*, 29: Like zooming out on a map to put the local into context, “academic theology needs to step back from the everyday if it is to offer historicizing and systematic insights. But the further it steps back and the longer it stays away, the less chance it has of reconnecting in a way that is intelligible to the local context.” My own approach to ethnographic ethics and methods will be addressed in Chapter I, section 1b.

<sup>192</sup> Scharen and Vigen, Preface to *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, xix. Cf. Fulkerson, “Ethnography in Theology,” 118.

<sup>193</sup> See Scharen and Vigen, “Theological Justifications for Turning to Ethnography,” in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 61, tying this insight back to the debates over the place of *human experience* as a (critically interpreted) theological source, some of which I have already addressed above.

<sup>194</sup> See Scharen and Vigen, Preface to *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, xxii, on these two approaches; and their “Theological Justifications for Turning to Ethnography,” 65-68, for more texture and justification of the latter in particular. I have already signaled the earlier articulation of such principles as these in liberation and feminist theologies.

With the development of ethnographic theology through Fulkerson, Scharen's and Vigen's collection, and especially in the full-scale theological ethnography of Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, we may also see cast into relief a key justification of my own adoption of ethnographic inquiry: the ethnographic attunement to "how theologies become mapped onto our bodily ways of being in the world," on the one hand, and how theology takes place and is socially/culturally productive "in the mode of not only thinking or talking but also of acting."<sup>195</sup> Drawing especially on Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, these theologians identify an under-appreciated dimension of theological understanding that is particularly, if not only, accessible through participant-observation: the *kinesthetic* dimension, where theological ideas or affects are, through practice, engrained in the life-ways of particular human bodies situated in specific cultural-ecological contexts,<sup>196</sup> and where bodily and spatial presence constrain and reshape discursive forms, even those which bear the same names as quite distinctive understandings lived by others in other places and times. Wacquant and his interpreters offer to theology an indispensable reminder that much of what constitutes human understanding—including theological understanding—is unconscious, nonverbal, somatic, and habituated.<sup>197</sup> Therefore, Wigg-Stevenson, even more than Scharen and Vigen, undertakes a study of the "carnal theologies" that are not only *inscribed in* but truly *generated from* the

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<sup>195</sup> Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology*, 20, and see also her reflection on Tanner's notion of "everyday theology" being "embodied" and not only articulated, on 26-30. Cf. Hopkins' construal of the field of theology (and thus the recommended interests of its interpreters) including not only "God-talk" but also "God-walk" (*Being Human*, 8).

<sup>196</sup> As James McClendon has cautioned, a theology limited to propositional content or the internal logic of a repertoire of symbols "becomes (in a pejorative sense) objective—remote from actual Christian life, a set of empty propositions more suited to attacking rival theologians than to informing the church of God" (*Biography as Theology*, 176). By contrast, he argues, the motifs, ideas, narratives, and images of religion and theology are not the property of books in particular, but belong no less and possibly even more to *lives*—both by compelling them and being carved anew in them, given new content insofar as they are active in this contextual, living way (192).

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 9-17. Glaeser's hermeneutic institutionalism (with its robust treatment of kinesthetic and emotional understanding, in light of their inextricable conditioning by and of the discursive) offers, moreover, what I take to be a satisfactory response to Wacquant's concern that meaning-making "is not a mental affair liable to an intellectualist reading, as the hermeneutic tradition, trapped in the scriptural metaphor of social action as text, would have us believe" ("Carnal Connections," 466). I take it, then, that the hermeneutic tradition critiqued by Wacquant is that of an earlier era which is rightly critiqued and now substantially improved.

bodies of those to whom she had apprenticed herself.<sup>198</sup> The theological field, in her view (and mine), is comprised not only of the artifacts and enunciations of intellectual and material culture, but also of the sensory, somatic digestions and navigations of that culture.<sup>199</sup>

From the perspective of this project, then, the adoption of ethnographic inquiry as a central feature of the theology of holiness should come as no surprise.<sup>200</sup> If, as explored in section 2, we take seriously the axiom that hagiographical consumption and mobilization *is* hagiographical production, *is* the mediation of holiness, then we must indeed attend to the lived theologies of devotees and to the embodied hagiopraxies that may or may not be authorized but which, regardless, harvest in unpredictable ways the hagiographical field sown by religious institutions. I submit, moreover, that ethnographic hermeneutics and methods enhance not only the work of *descriptive* theology (in Browning's terms) but *historical* theology as well: by attending to both to underprivileged voices and to the extra-discursive, extra-cognitive, material, and spatial dimensions of a religious situation, we can more capably extrapolate a fuller picture of religious realities that have been drastically filtered by the historical traces thereof. In

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<sup>198</sup> See especially Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology*, 117-41. But Scharen also discusses the possibility of a "carnal theology" (analogous to Wacquant's "carnal sociology") that "seeks to situate itself not outside or above practice but at its 'point of production' [, requiring] that we immerse ourselves as deeply and as durably as possible into the cosmos under examination; that we submit ourselves to its specific temporality and contingencies; that we acquire the embodied dispositions it demands and nurtures, so that we may grasp it via the prethetic understanding that defines the native relation to the world—not as one world among many but as 'home'" (Wacquant, "Carnal Connections," 466; cited in Scharen and Vigen, "The Ethnographic Turn in Theology and Ethics," in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 44).

<sup>199</sup> In *Ethnographic Theology*, 138-39, Wigg-Stevenson's haunting description and razor-sharp analysis of a church group's reading of Elie Wiesel's "God on the gallows" passage, and the bodily struggle with a meaning that exceeds intellection, shows with clear ethnographic lines what a chapter of systematic theological analysis would fail to communicate. The author has the adult education group that she is teaching answer the question "Where is God?" before and after reading the excruciating passage from Wiesel (*Night*, 61-62), depicting a child being hung at Auschwitz, in which the narrator hears a voice within himself speaking the incomprehensible answer to this question: "Where is he? This is where – hanging here from this gallows." One of Wigg-Stevenson's students answers that God is "everywhere", as he had done before reading the passage—yet "Mike's body was now hunched over, slumped in the chair, his tone dejected and with a grasping edge to it. The words of his answer were the same, but the answer was nevertheless different. . . . In contrast to his initial confidence, Mike's response now bore a distance between body and words, a distance within which both doubt and hope had the power to compete for the chance to reconstruct Mike's theological agency into something new. Mike's *talking theology* stayed the same; his *acting theology*, however, now bore the potential, if only for a moment, to be transformed."

<sup>200</sup> The main variation in my own synthesis of theological inquiry with ethnographic methods is that this project has an ecumenical rather than a confessional orientation. That is: unlike Browning, Fulkerson, Scharen, Vigen, and Wigg-Stevenson, I am undertaking ethnographic theology in dialogue with a tradition that *is not* my own.

this project, ethnographic investigation of practices and narratives pertaining to actual media experienced as holy not only illuminates the appropriative/co-productive capacities of hagiographical audiences but also identifies new questions to pose to the classics of theological reflection on the mediation of holiness. The dimensions of religious praxis and context explored by ethnography are no less integral to the phenomena we seek in studies of the past.<sup>201</sup> What, then, might the multisensory textures of a saint's-day procession or the "teaching of the grandmothers"<sup>202</sup> illuminate about the homilies of John Chrysostom or about the lived sociality of theological understanding more broadly? It is with such questions as these that I approach the historical-theological chapters of Part Two.

### *3b) Social Hermeneutics: Theological Culture and the Lived Processes of Understanding*

My turn to ethnography as a method for interpretive theology reflects a reciprocal recognition: that theological understanding is itself a part of religious culture and indeed of "lived religion," on the one hand, and that religion, however it is lived out in space and time, is saturated with theologically validated habits of understanding, on the other.<sup>203</sup> This the case for the producers of authoritative theological

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<sup>201</sup> See Orsi, "Everyday Miracles," 17: "As Freud [and Faulkner] should have taught historians, the past is never dead, or even past; yet we persist in naturalizing this boundary . . . . Indeed, the discovery of a resonance between our experiences in the present and those of people in the past is so fearsome to historians that they have branded it a heresy, and history departments strain to ensure that their neophytes are free of any taint of this notion. Thus it is assumed, for instance, that the lives and perspectives of contemporary Pentecostals have nothing to tell us about the motivations and desires of their counterparts at the beginning of the century, as if the intervening generations did not constitute a broader shared history linking present and past."

<sup>202</sup> See Luehrmann, "A Duel Quarrel of Images on the Middle Volga," 69.

<sup>203</sup> See Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street*, xxxvii-xlii. Orsi's definition of "lived religion" as including "the work of social agents/actors themselves as narrators and interpreters (and reinterpreters) of their own experiences and histories" (xxxviii) makes it particularly clear how lived religion must *include* normative theological traditions insofar as these are composed, received, debated, promoted, and used to steer institutions by people for whom theological resources and narratives are among the privileged strategies for meaning-making and social endeavor (even the critics of this approach would be unlikely to deny that theologians are "social agents/actors"!)." See also Orsi, "Is Lived Religion Irrelevant to the World We Live in?" 172: "The study of lived religion situates all religious creativity within culture and approaches all religion as lived experience, theology no less than lighting a candle for a troubled loved one, spirituality as well as other, less culturally sanctioned forms of religious expression. Rethinking religion as a form of cultural work, the study of lived religion directs attention to institutions *and* processes, texts *and* rituals, practice *and* theology, things *and* ideas—all as media of making and unmaking worlds." And recall that Kathryn Tanner's "new agenda for theology" in *Theories of Culture* (as of 1997) left

discourse, generating it as a practice within the rhythms of (for instance) their episcopal and monastic lives, and it *also* is the case for all those who, in the course of their own greater or lesser investment in the traditions asserted as authoritative for or by them, appropriate theological ideas, symbols, warrants, expectations, and self- and other-identifications as means for their own processes of social existence. My core argument around the multimediation of holiness warranting and enacting an Orthodox theology of struggle, which I will pull taut in the conclusion of this chapter, depends both on a lived religion model of the social nature of theology and on a hermeneutic sociological model of culture as “a dense thicket of processes” that is “continuously in the process of making, remaking, and unmaking itself.”<sup>204</sup>

Nancy Ammerman charts the “remarkably fruitful” rise of scholarship on lived religion in the 1990s, as the “endless debates” over secularization and over a putative divide between “popular” and “elite” forms of religion were becoming increasingly stale (in the American academic context) and in need of a breakthrough.<sup>205</sup> Although many of the studies advancing a lived religion approach in sociology, history, religious studies, and theology “offer no explicit definition of lived religion,”<sup>206</sup> patterns of analysis have

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no doubt that theology is “a form of cultural activity” (63), “a material social process” (72), and indeed “a form of social action ... [that] reproduces the practical tensions that surround beliefs and values in everyday life” (82)—including, but not limited to, the everyday life of the specialized producer or analyst of theology.

<sup>204</sup> Glaeser, “An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes,” 27; Abbott, *Processual Sociology*, ix. Cf. Gluckman’s earlier but aligned contribution to a “processual turn” in sociology, for instance in his Introduction to Epstein (ed), *The Craft of Social Anthropology*.

<sup>205</sup> Ammerman, “Lived Religion as an Emerging Field,” 83. As David Hall observes, however, “*la religion vécue*” had already “long been current in the French tradition of the sociology of religion” by the time the concept boomed in the American academy (Introduction to *Lived Religion in America*, vii). Both of the two most cited leaders in the field, Hall and Orsi, have issued extended critiques of a prevailing “high/low binary” in religious studies, although as Ammerman discovers, a majority of the recent journal literature identifying itself as upholding a lived religion approach nonetheless focus deliberately on what it identifies as non-elites and non-institutional activities, and incredibly, almost half of the articles she surveys claim that “belief is not part of the lived religion equation” (“Lived Religion as an Emerging Field,” 87). This pattern strikes me as an all-too-common overcorrection, motivated by a desire to expand research into areas that have been insufficiently treated in the past, and, so doing, losing traction on elements that have been abundantly studied but should not, by that fact, be marginalized (that is, the scholarly trap of replacing an either/or with an opposite either/or, thus being right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny). Ammerman herself is quite clear on this point: “When lived religion scholars exclude actions that are tied to traditional religious institutions, they not only exclude much of what most people would think of *as* religious practice, but also much of what people are actually doing” (88).

<sup>206</sup> Ammerman, “Lived Religion as an Emerging Field,” 84. Indeed, as Streib et al. observe in their Introduction to *Lived Religion* (ix-x), a “basic insight” of a lived religion approach is the “transfer and dispersion of definitional authority” such that, on the one hand, nothing that a given community or even individual understands *as* religion or religious is ruled out

emerged in which the practical, material, spatial, contextual elements of religious life-worlds need not be wrested free of the discursive, logical, cognitive, textual dimensions that suffuse them and are conditioned by them to the core.<sup>207</sup> This is certainly the achievement of Robert Orsi, who articulates and deploys a hermeneutics that

identifies what is urgent and pressing in a religious culture—what doctrines, rituals, or signs have taken on special and pointed immediacy—and it knows this because these are the doctrines, rituals, or signs that men and women have picked up in their hands and are using to engage their immediate world, taking us well beyond empty claims about what a religious culture ‘means’ or what ‘religious’ men and women ‘believe’ or have been taught.<sup>208</sup>

Therefore, as Meredith McGuire observes, lived religion (and its theological dimension, what I am calling “lived theology”) need not be logically coherent—organized by consistent principles or explained the same way in each instance. What it is, rather, is *practically* coherent—bound together by the actual procedures of living in a particular context, fueled by that context and oriented toward the work of living in it.<sup>209</sup> But if lived religion can never be reduced to the theological organization thereof, it also cannot be purified (try

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from relevance, and on the other hand, a scholarly apparatus may be deployed to identify as religious, parareligious, religio-entangled, and so forth, aspects of their lives that they may *not* identify as religious but which are richly informative of that which they do.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Morgan, Introduction to *Religion and Material Culture*, 1-12, on the need to heal the bifurcation in scholarly interest *between* beliefs and practices by attending more deeply to this reciprocal conditioning—or, better, redefinitions such that materiality and meaning are not even juxtaposed in the first place but rather both already entailed in either. In other words: “Rather than marginalizing belief [in religious studies], we need a more capacious account of it, one that looks to the embodied, material features of lived religion” (7).

<sup>208</sup> Orsi, “Is the Study of Lived Religion Irrelevant to the World We Live in?,” 172-73. On Orsi’s own critique of the scholarly bifurcation between “elite” and “popular” forms, and concomitantly of “theological” and “cultural” concerns in the study of religion, see especially his Introductions to each successive edition of *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street* (from 1985, 2002, and 2010 respectively). These introductions provide a record of Orsi’s visual shift from an uneasiness with the “popular religion” discourse to which he himself was contributing to an eventual repudiation of the discourse as doing interpretive injustice to the worlds under study (see especially xxxi-xlii, from the second edition). David Hall, likewise, observes that “Where lived religion goes its own way is in breaking with the distinction between high and low that seems inevitably to recur in studies of popular religion. That is, these case studies are not built around a structure of opposition. Nor do they displace the institutional or normative perspectives on practice, as historians of popular religion so commonly do” (Introduction to *Lived Religion in America*, ix)

<sup>209</sup> See McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 15-16. Where McGuire goes too far is in seeming to identify “lived religion” with “individual religion” and separating too cleanly “the actual experience of religious persons” and “the prescribed religion of institutionally defined beliefs and practices” (12); this was indeed Ammerman’s concern (see again note 208). This may be helpful for researching the distinctive qualities of the former, but it risks neglecting the ways that institutions shape understanding, which itself is not ultimately “individual” but constituted and contoured culturally, indeed linguistically.

as some might) of its theological saturation. This saturation is not deterministic, with the categories of the authorized tradition producing the ways of life of its adherents, but rather more polytropic, with the epistemological, political, and even spatial order within which lived religion takes place being conditioned by theological validations and semantic organizations of the ways that religious understanding is crystallized into behavior and institutionalized for a shared and contested political existence.<sup>210</sup>

I take the social hermeneutic at work in the literature on lived religion to be a salutary framework for my project in particular, because so much of the rich scholarly literature treating hagiographical phenomena through social scientific lenses, by marginalizing or recoding the theological commitments and explanations of practitioners, risks de-theologizing religious culture in ways that may be heuristically productive but ultimately unrealistic.<sup>211</sup> Such recoding, useful as it has been to the theoretical successes of anthropological and sociological approaches to religion, can obscure the enormous epistemic and political

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<sup>210</sup> See, for instance, Ammerman, “Studying Everyday Religion” 219: “The people we have met in the field are more and less attentive to spiritual matters, but what they see and hear and do when they do pay attention is often subtly shaped by the institutions that have carried the dominant religious traditions in those places. Even intensely “personal” mystical experiences are likely to contain significant strands of image and symbol borrowed from the recognized theologies of the day.” Although (as Orsi rightly notes) the ways in which people approach and understand their encounters with holiness “exceed the limits of clerical idealization of their lives” (*History and Presence*, 58), these ways are neither rote nor autonomous, being rather movements within imaginaries that have been to a greater or lesser extent fashioned and fed by (those the actors themselves take to be) religious authorities. In this respect, lived religion is (to adapt a term from Sally Cuffee and Dianne Diakité) *theographical*, in the sense that theological epistemology (including unconscious reasoning and overt reflection) is inscribed and actualized in the many modes of religious praxis, transmission, and the interplay of meanings (Diakité, “The Limits of Theology,” in Saliers et al., “Ethnography and Theology,” 7-9; and commentary in Flueckiger, “When the Goddess Speaks Her Mind,” 166).

<sup>211</sup> For instance, the influential volume of anthropological perspectives on Christian pilgrimage edited by John Eade and Michael Sallnow accepts as its orienting logic the “persistent division” (*Contesting the Sacred*, 1) between the deconstructionist approaches favored in the volume and the phenomenological approaches (of theologians) that could not be reconciled with the volume’s grounding in the “essential heterogeneity” (2) and “mutual misunderstandings” (5) of the perspectives involved in pilgrimage. It is a fetishization of division at the expense of relationality to claim, for instance, that “nothing unites” (13) the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Christian Zionist pilgrimages to Jerusalem besides their presence in the same spaces. More generally, there is a tendency in this literature (for instance, chapters in Hopgood [ed], *The Making of Saints*; Bowman [ed], *Sharing the Sacra*; Marten and Neumann [eds] *Saints and Cultural Trans-/Mission*) for divergent explanations given for attendance at shared festivals and shrines to be read as revealing a theological thinness (participants are *really* taking part for medical, economic, or social reasons) rather than a *multi*-theological fabric in which such personal concerns are themselves located within a theologically-inflected cosmos. By contrast, the contributions in Krueger [ed], *A People’s History of Christianity*; and Hann and Goltz [eds], *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*, seem generally more balanced in their probing into the theological explanations given by the actors they study, exploring how intellectual repertoires may be applied and adapted in the itineraries of lived religion.

power of normative theological authority, as well as the ways that historically-effected and -effective theological consciousness validates and helps to organize the repertoires with which people live. Particularly where the mediation of holiness is concerned, even *perceiving* something or someone as holy is bound up with an array of (apperceptive) expectations for what holiness is, how it registers as a source of power or a means of resistance in one's life, and how it may and may not be interacted with—expectations which are thoroughly conditioned (and never determined) by institutional authorities.<sup>212</sup> It is an interpretive curiosity, in other words, to peel back theological master narratives in favor of cultural bricolage only to neglect the ways that theological stories, symbols, warrants, and patterns of identification are themselves gleaming attractively among the means at hand and have helped to shape the *bricoleur's* understanding of what is worth building in the first place.<sup>213</sup> Thus the force of my terminology of *theological culture*: lived theology may be individual and idiosyncratic, but it is nonetheless woven of its world of meaningful materiality, as publicly constituted as any understanding.

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<sup>212</sup> Thus even a sophisticated anthropological analysis may work to take seriously the theological frameworks that condition people's perceptions and practices, as recommended by Hann and Goltz, Introduction to *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*, 11-12: by contrast with generations of scholars who distort their object of study by "approaching the East in narrow Western terms," the contributors to the volume seek to illuminate "local, 'bounded' rationalities" by "turn[ing] to address Orthodox theological issues in Orthodox terms." Section 1 of this introductory chapter is my own framing of such terms pertinent to my own project, that is, the patterns of construing holiness that are especially active in the lifeworld that anchors my analysis. See also Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 281, and Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," 81, on the inadequacy (and historical construction) of viewing "popular" belief as necessarily less complex (and less theological) than establishment thought and authorized practices.

<sup>213</sup> To take one example: Stuart Hall, writing out of a clear contrast and "dialectic of cultural struggle" between "dominant" and "popular," even as he deconstructs any remaining sense of two separate realms of operation and relevance ("Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" 447-49), argues that the production and consumption of "popular culture" is bound up with resistance to the ways that dominant agents and institutions in society pursue the "reformation" of the people according to their own aims and standards. Considered from within this paradigm, hagiographical culture might be promoted from above as morally, spiritually, and indeed politically formative (edifying) for the laity, but the laity might generate their own attitudes and practices around the saints that *resist* this desire of the institutional church to edify, so as to attempt to determine their own means and ends of relations with the saints. A lived religion / social hermeneutics approach, by contrast, would not be so quick to categorize edification as a strategy of the elite owed resistance by the people, simply because church authorities promote and have a stake in it—it (that is, I) would instead take seriously both the range of ways that edification is understood and sought within a community—not exclusive to but including those promoted by authorities—and the ways that institutional authority serves to shape and validate, always incompletely and often obliquely, the appropriative practices and orientations of those who seek their own diverse forms of edification thereby. (As Orsi warns us in "Everyday Miracles," 15-16, let us not *overemphasize* the agency of people enmeshed in relations of power and cultures that condition their understanding and desire.)

As Jeffrey Alexander argues, cultural (including theological) structures, categories, and logics constrain but also enable human life by providing a topography of “affect and meaning” upon which we make our itineraries.<sup>214</sup> In this respect, a cultural order is like a spatial order, insofar as each “organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further),” and is each the venue within which (and by no means outside of which) inhabitants appropriate and so actualize the possibilities available to them.<sup>215</sup> Michel de Certeau’s famous and much-analogized essay on “walking in the city,” therefore, can function fruitfully as an extended metaphor for the flexibility of the ways that theologically-conditioned culture is actualized in the uses to which it is put.<sup>216</sup> A walker, as it were, uses the terrain to get from point A to point B; she may do so, however, more or less efficiently, for a variety of reasons, with stops or detours according to her needs. She may be detained or rerouted by others, such as a police officer or a friend taking an alternate path; she may jaywalk or help another across the street.<sup>217</sup> That is to say: the diversity of the uses of theological culture,

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<sup>214</sup> See Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life*, 3-12. Put another way (more dramatically than seems necessary): “Fantasy and reality are so hopelessly intertwined that we can separate them only in a posthoc way” (5). As we will see in Cyprus, for example, the martyriological traditions and associations of Orthodox theology are topographically present in this way, providing imaginative grooves into which the conduct and the memorialization of the anticolonial warriors of the 1950s have been set and which they continue to deepen. Meyer makes the case for political effectiveness of imaginaries more forcefully (and usefully, with regard to my own focus on hagiographical media), drawing on Michael Maffesoli to argue that imagined communities are concretized and socialized in shared topographies of intellectually-infused material culture (see Meyer, Introduction to *Aesthetic Formations*, 5-11). Cf. Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, 36: “however open ended, systems of meaning have determinations of their own. They do not just bend to the will of those who wish to know and act upon them; to the contrary, they play a significant part in shaping subjectivity.”

<sup>215</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 98. Cf. Orsi, “Everyday Miracles,” 16, on how “[r]eligious idioms make desire and imagination possible at the same time as they constrict and discipline desire and imagination.”

<sup>216</sup> No less than a cityscape, such culture is established over time through variably durable exercises of authoritative construction and the variable receptivity of a much larger community of users. It is worth considering whether the historical transmission of theological doctrines or other such stable formulations might be imagined in line with spatial practices of *preservation*, *renovation*, and *reconstruction*. When are the venerable edifices of theological understanding preserved for future generations to enjoy as lasting symbols of identity and continuity, at the potential expense of utility (like the Colosseum)? When are they repaired using up-to-date materials and according to contemporary principles, so that they may continue to be used without risk of collapse under new strains, at the potential expense of consistency (like the Louvre Museum)? And when might they be disassembled and reassembled for new needs but bearing the same name and appealing to the same heritage, at the potential expense of authenticity (like the Globe Theater)?

<sup>217</sup> Or indeed, she may herself discern and be impressed by the spatial logic that is intended to organize the movement of peoples, and accordingly embrace what she takes to be “proper,” authorized routes. Such usage, cleaving to an “elite” understanding, is not by that fact any less lived, culture-bound, or appropriative.

*including* uses by those in a clerical hierarchy and uses that (from the perspective of authorizing agents) fall on a spectrum of deviance, are that culture's enactment and actualization.<sup>218</sup>

The above topographical metaphor, useful though it is for articulating how theological understanding (such as, in my case, understandings of holiness) can constrain and invite social action, has a major shortcoming: the apparent *stability* of the cultural framework figured as a cityscape.<sup>219</sup> This would be a view of society that has produced far more problems than it has resolved in the course of the last several decades of social theory. Indeed, a gradual bifurcation in the social sciences between “culture” approaches and “structure” approaches to theorizing the social world has resulted in a kind of mania for adjudication between objective and subjective explanations for why things are ultimately the way they are, in place of the effort to work out flexible syntheses that resist totalization and essentialism.<sup>220</sup> In a sense this problem can be traced to (reductive views of) Marx and Weber—do material conditions produce understanding, *or* does understanding produce material conditions?<sup>221</sup>

A metatheoretical framework in sociology that allows for a particularly productive alternative to this objective-subjective seesaw is the *processual* view of the social world, as articulated in depth by

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<sup>218</sup> See de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 98: “And if on the one hand [a walker] actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he only goes here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours) and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory).” De Certeau’s own linguistic analogy hammers home the point: any speech act is both an appropriation of a (virtual) grammatical and lexical system *and* a vernacular enunciation that “acts out” and so makes real a system that is otherwise hypothetical but nonetheless quasi-determinative (97-99); this is the case, indeed, whether the speech act is enunciated in the Queen’s English or in the latest internet slang. Taking such co-production seriously “point[s] us to the creativity and improvisational power of theology as a component of lived experience, to the practice of *theologizing* in determinate circumstances” (Orsi, “Everyday Miracles,” 9).

<sup>219</sup> This stability is loosened somewhat if we presuppose the ever-changing nature of a city, with its constant renovation and expanding suburbs, yet we are still left with an overall picture of a theological-cultural structure that is fixed except when some change is added to it, for instance some intervention by a great theologian. And this is a view of the history and sociality of theology that is not uncommon indeed—are we not often inclined to think of the state of Christian culture “after Augustine,” or the like?

<sup>220</sup> See Glaeser, “An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes,” 18, and “Hermeneutic Institutionalism,” 208-09. Cf. Abbott, *Processual Sociology*, 291-92.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Miller et al., Introduction to *Domination and Resistance*, 4, on the “series of all-pervasive dualisms” in modern sociological thought that follow from these questions.

Andreas Glaeser and Andrew Abbott.<sup>222</sup> I defer to these experts' own painstaking work of justifying the processual view over and against other possible frameworks, but it does fall to me to sketch its essential parameters, which shape the undertaking and root concerns of my own argument.

Although the different proponents of a processualist social hermeneutics articulate its principles distinctly, common among them are (i) the view of social process not as a periodic transition between states but as itself the underlying state of change out of which social stabilities of greater or lesser rigidity congeal temporarily (and contextually); and (ii) the effort to overcome a dichotomy between understanding and materiality. For Abbott:

The world of the processual approach is a world of events. Individuals and social entities are not the elements of social life, but are patterns and regularities defined on lineages of successive events. They are moments in a lineage, moments that will themselves shape the next iteration of events even as they recede into the past. The processual approach, in short, is fundamentally, essentially historical. All the micro-elements with which the other approaches begin are themselves macrostructures in the processual approach. Their stability is something to be explained, not presumed.<sup>223</sup>

A processual ontology affords the opportunity to lay to rest the broken dualities and essentialist explanations favored by many other social ontologies.<sup>224</sup>

Glaeser, no less historical and reflexive in his approach yet more attuned to the paramount value of ethnography for studying and theorizing social dynamics, articulates a “distinctive, process-oriented

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<sup>222</sup> This framework is indeed rooted in generations of Chicago School social theory, ethnographic method, and pragmatist philosophy. See Abbott, *Processual Sociology*, x, on this “immediate ancestry of processualism.”

<sup>223</sup> Abbott, *Processual Sociology*, ix-x. Cf. Glaeser, “Hermeneutic Institutionalism,” 213, on how a “process ontology ... sees the world as primarily made up of flows or happenings rather than of thing-like entities as most of the traditional European Plato and Aristotle inspired metaphysics does.”

<sup>224</sup> Processualism presents “a world of actors but without reification of individuals and groups, a world of large forces but forces that must replicate themselves perpetually or waste away, an historicism without the dead hand of overarching historical determination, a symbolic analysis that does not forget the centrality of sympathy and action” (Abbott, *Processual Sociology*, 292). Abbott does not miss the irony that that process too is, in this framework, a kind of fundamental purporting to provide a more adequate basis for social analysis. The difference is, in Abbott's view (drawing not least on Wittgenstein, as does our other Chicago processualist, Glaeser, even more heavily), reflexivity: a process perspective *knows* itself to be temporary and contextual—the “rightness” of the theory rests not in essences but in appropriateness for untying the knots of contemporary social theory and opening a healthier moral and intellectual posture in the present situation.

analytic focusing on the generation, maintenance, and transformation of peoples' understandings and their dialectical relations to political institutions."<sup>225</sup> By developing a theory of "institutiosis," by which social stabilities are produced through variably authorized fixations or validations of the constant flux of human understandings (which themselves shape and are shaped by interpersonal action),<sup>226</sup> Glaeser succeeds in refreshing an earlier hermeneutic paradigm of social life as constituted by understanding. However, this in no way suggests a mere cognitive or linguistic solipsism. Understanding in this tradition is an *activity* that unfolds temporally (and thus must be treated historically and not only phenomenologically). It is *material* and indeed *materially mediated* (insofar as the media used to form and communicate understandings constrain those understandings by their material parameters and their embeddedness in a concrete environment, and insofar as the body itself is the "base medium from which understanding proceeds as an extension").<sup>227</sup> It is *social* insofar as the components of understanding are inherited, shared, and validated by others' (more or less authoritative) use. And yet, at the same time, it is intensely *individual* in the sense that (despite the individual's fundamental and inescapable sociality) the historically-effected combination of discursive, emotional, and kinesthetic engagement with the world coalesces and activates in an unprecedented, unrepeatable here-and-now-and-who.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, xxv.

<sup>226</sup> See Glaeser, "Hermeneutic Institutionalism," 228: "I call this process of stabilization through continuous referencing to that which is already more stable *institutiosis*"—resulting in the objectification of understanding (the verb) into *an* understanding (the noun), which in turn connects with and helps to validate other understandings shared by and constraining of interpersonal practices. Institutiosis is thus the "poietic principle of enduring features of social life" (231). On the "validation" of understanding (through "recognition," "resonance," and "corroboration"), see Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 22-26; and "Hermeneutic Institutionalism," 225-27.

<sup>227</sup> Glaeser, "Hermeneutic Institutionalism," 212.

<sup>228</sup> See Glaeser, "Hermeneutic Institutionalism," 210-13, for summary considerations (drawing on a critical grounding in the social thought of Giambattista Vico and Johann Gottfried Herder) of all these dimensions of an understanding-in-process that overrides dichotomies between sociality and individuality, between imagination and materiality. See also 223-25 (and Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 9-17), on the integrity between the various modes of understanding (discursive, emotive, and kinesthetic) that combine distinctly in any particular instance. On the sociality and historicity of individuals in this vein, see also Abbott, *Processual Sociology*, 3-15. Such a picture of the social world relies in no small part on Wittgenstein's decisive elimination of the plausibility of private language (*Philosophical Investigations* 256-71), and on Bakhtin's treatment of heteroglossia and sociological poetics (*The Dialogic Imagination*, 275-300; "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art," 93-116). See *Political Epistemics*, 12, 172-76, and "Hermeneutic Institutionalism," 227-29, on the

Such social-hermeneutical parameters have direct entailments for how I study human understanding and human sociality (as rendered in hagiographical dynamics) in this project. Hagiographical dynamics are always *historical* and *material*: they are formulated in terms of a relationship with the continually reconstructed past and projected future, and they are lived bodily in a material world that constrains them while being continuously transformed by them. The theological culture of hagiography is *contextual* to the core, and therefore in need not only of descriptive, ethnographic investigation but also of historical juxtaposition with the long development and interplay of authoritative theological traditions that have shaped (and are habitually referenced by) Orthodox institutions.<sup>229</sup> And so, when we hold up to the light of inquiry a particular process (such as the *resistance*, imagined and pragmatic, that hagiographical media facilitate, warrant, and record), we are bound to remember that it is constituted together with a whole ecology of forces and actors for which we can only ever begin to account. Hermeneutics is that which helps us to avoid mistaking our interpretation of a part for sufficient explanation of the whole.<sup>230</sup>

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importance of Wittgenstein in particular for establishing “the fundamental sociality of mind” (227; cf. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 2-3) as a pillar of a viable contemporary social hermeneutics, alongside Wittgenstein’s other basic commitments to understanding meaning as use and the linguistic as more-than-linguistic. But note Hekman, “From Epistemology to Ontology,” 219-21, on the hermeneutic limits of Wittgenstein.

<sup>229</sup> See Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 9: “Only by approaching [a public] historically can one understand these preconditions of its intelligibility.” In the case of the publics of Orthodox hagiographical media, there is more and there is less direct influence/authorization of the new by the old. In the chapters that follow we will find, for instance, Archbishop Makarios III (most prominent of modern Greek-Cypriot clerical authorities) retrieving, curating, modulating, and repurposing the theology and even the rhetorical style of Chrysostom and Damascene (among, of course, many others). We may, I take it, consider “the Fathers” as a constellation by whose light local and ecumenical church authorities navigate and apart from whose intangible zodiac influence the church community cannot imagine itself. Yet of course, this influence and ongoing reference to patristic theology is itself thoroughly modern and should be interrogated as such; as Papadakis insists of the study of Cyprus in particular (though the claim could indeed be generalized): “this socially specific mode of relationship with the past should be analyzed not as lying outside modernity but as part of modernity” (Introduction to *Divided Cyprus*, 5-6).

<sup>230</sup> See Abbott, *Processual Sociology*, xi, and 33-74. Cf. Glaeser, “An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes,” 32, and “On Theorizing the Present Ethnographically,” 77-78: “It would be a step forward if we became ethically cognizant and practically comfortable with the regulative idea that the conceptual apparatuses we construct stand at best in an insight-generating metaphorical relationship to the world. ... Theorizing the world as a metaphorical operation works precisely because concepts are different from what they try to illuminate.” See also Healey, “Fuck Nuance,” 118-19: phenomena are *always* more complex than a theorization thereof, and reproducing this complexity as accurately as possible cannot ultimately be the point of the theory, since this effort “blocks the process of abstraction on which theory

## Conclusion: Hagiography as a Lived Theology of Struggle

Having now covered (1) the dimensions and stakes of holiness as a theological problem for Orthodox Christians; (2) the inadequacy of prior theoretical frameworks for addressing the mediation of holiness and my proposal of a theory of hagiographical processes that carry out such mediation; and (3) the theological and social hermeneutics with which I am undertaking the investigation; it is finally time to turn to the specifics of the argument I mean to make.

The argument in brief: insofar as holiness is an absolute measure of worth (for the human being, for the church, and ultimately for the human world and all creation), access to holiness always involves some manner of resistance to the perceived order of things that are insufficiently holy. To the extent that the person and the world are experienced to be distorted, the attractiveness of the saints (those who mediate holiness in this world by means of their own persons, and whose holiness continues to be preserved and transmitted by others in an array of media) is founded in a desire for proximity and assimilation to that which appears to escape this distortion, that which represents an alternative to human devaluation. Such a devaluation may be biological or ecological (devastation by disease or deterioration of climate), it may be economic or political (exploitation by a holder of debt or alienation by a system of colonization), it may be spiritual or existential (captivity to disturbing and unloving dispositions or subjection to a sense of universal brokenness), and indeed most often it may be all these as aspects of one another and metaphors for one another. To the extent that holiness represents a desirable and value-laden rightness that is otherwise warped or lost, the struggle *for* that rightness entails the struggle *against* whatever would diminish or obscure it. Resistance, then, is inherent to an orientation toward the holy. It is

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depends, and it inhibits the creative process that makes theory a useful activity” (119). I am reminded of Borges’ fantasy (in “On Exactitude in Science”) of a map the size and complexity of the terrain it purports to map: that is, useless. The role of theory is to provide a tool with which to work, not a life-sized model of that on which we would work.

the myriad *mediation* of holiness (theorized here as hagiographical processes, and specifically imagination, representation, and edification) by which such theologically-oriented resistance is empowered, enacted, and validated by Orthodox Christians, all of which in turn reinforces the communal identification of those engaged in this holy mediation.

Much like hagiography or indeed holiness itself, resistance is not one thing that can be shaved down to a stable phenomenon or discourse. In modern social thought, resistance has usually been paired with power or domination as the latter's constitutive other or limit—that which power must overcome to effect the ends of its agents; without resistance, power is not power, only activity.<sup>231</sup> It is widely agreed (for what this is worth) that resistance is constituted by *acts of opposition*,<sup>232</sup> and it has been frequently investigated in terms of its “macro” and “micro” registers—a spectrum from organized opposition and even open insurrection, which resists institutional power through the production and mobilization of an

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<sup>231</sup> See Barbalet, “Power and Resistance,” 531-46, and Miller et al., Introduction to *Domination and Resistance*, 4-17, for thematic sketches of this tradition of analysis. Pile, however, takes issue with resistance being only the underside of domination, locked in an intractable relation with power. This kind of lens will reveal only certain kinds and certain tactics of resistance. He wants instead to open up “resistant political subjectivities ... constituted through positions taken up not only in relation to authority ... but also through experiences which are not so quickly labelled ‘power,’ such as desire and anger, capacity and ability, happiness and fear, dreaming and forgetting” (Introduction to *Geographies of Resistance*, 3). He (and I, as I will address shortly) treats resistance where and how it *takes place* for the particular people and cultures involved, not only as it conforms to one or another existing theory of power. So too, Negri provides a more textured analysis of how resistance of a range of forms and textures need not be construed as an opposite to power but rather itself as a *power of opposition*. For Negri, “counterpower” involves three distinct but interrelated components: (i) *resistance*, which is a diffuse and multi-agential “*destructuring* [of] the opposing power ... a continuous digging, a putting into crisis of the single relationships and the singular compromises/manipulations which in every angle of social space constitute the totality of command” (141-42); (ii) *insurrection*, which “pulls together the various forms of resistance into a single knot, homologizes them, [and] arranges them like an arrow which, in an original manner, succeeds in crossing the limit of the given social organization, of constituted power” (140); and (iii) *constituent power*, which “is the *potenza* to give form to the innovation that resistance and uprising have produced, and to give them a new and adequate historical form which is teleologically effective” (140; cf. Pile, Introduction to *Geographies of Resistance*, 26, on how the struggle between domination and resistance often manifests as a struggle *for power*).

<sup>232</sup> Conducting a survey of the available literature in 2004, Hollander and Einwohner (“Conceptualizing Resistance”) typologize theoretical understandings of resistance along the lines of two questions: (1) must resistance be *recognized* by others? And (2) must resistance be *intentional*? The literature is divided on these variables, but Hollander and Einwohner find that there is virtual consensus that resistance involves *action* and *opposition*. Cf. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 5-11. On 11, she provides a useful three-point synthesis: “(1) Domination, its strategies, and the hegemony that reinforces it provide the conditions for and objects of resistance. (2) Acts of resistance proceed from the intention to limit, oppose, reject, or transform hegemonic institutions (and cosmologies ...) as well as systems, strategies, and acts of domination. (3) Resistance is effective action. It limits power and influences outcomes, where power is understood as an agent’s ability to carry out his or her will.”

alternative power, to practices of thought or private activity (such as sticking out one's tongue behind the back of an authority figure), which may not have obvious social consequences but that carve out space for an individual to recover dignity or small concessions in the face of perceived powerlessness.<sup>233</sup> "This is the aim of [what post-Foucauldian theorists have described as] agonal resistance," notes Stephen Yusuff, that is, resistance which is dedicated to affirming one's strength of character more even than toward any pragmatic change.<sup>234</sup> Resistance in this sense is not only an *activity* (much less only a *reactivity*), but also and primarily a *stance*, a cultivation of ethical capacity that, while not exterior to domination, forms a subjectivity that is not defined by or dissolved into the agendas of the powers—unless it should, itself, become representative and reproductive of those powers.<sup>235</sup>

The theoretical literature concurs, however, that resistance is never merely material, not *only* a chipping away at systems of exoteric exploitation:<sup>236</sup> "It is also a struggle over the appropriation of

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<sup>233</sup> This is not to say that such "micro" resistance has no concrete sociopolitical effect. Quite the contrary: For James Scott, resistance is constituted by a slow accretion of everyday insubordination on the part of the powerless into "a political and economic barrier reef" (*Weapons of the Weak*, 36) on which, occasionally but no less pragmatically, powerful institutions run aground. Scott, like de Certeau (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 24-28), emphasizes the maskedness and symbolic subtlety of everyday resistance, its plausible deniability before the organs of power, by contrast with the more overt engagement of revolt or revolution (*Weapons of the Weak*, 33; cf. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over*, 254-56; and Orsi, "Everyday Miracles," 14). As we will see throughout Part One, certain manifestations of St. George in modern Cyprus bear out these traits and activate these questions (such as the iconography of a boy dressed in Ottoman garb being rescued by the saint [discussed in Chapter II] or puppet theater used to tell traditional stories with new details satirizing colonial agents [discussed in Chapter IV]). I will likewise address the situation of open revolt on Cyprus in the 1950s and the martyriological tradition that provides theological-cultural texture to this more dramatic form of confrontation.

<sup>234</sup> Yusuff, "Foucault's Resistance and its Adversaries," 20: "agonal resistance claims that its aim is to make future resistances possible, to create conditions that make wider and more effective resistance a strong possibility." Thus, against the critique of Foucault's notion of resistance that micro-resistance does not really resist domination at all, being more like walking to the back of a moving train (26-27), Yusuff explains that, for Foucault and his inheritors, the simple opposition between resistance is power is too simplistic: "resistant practices can simultaneously reproduce and alter power just as power can simultaneously enforce domination and create opportunities for effective resistance" (29). In this way, the individual/cultural and macro/micro distinctions, so common to the social-theoretical literature on resistance, begin to break down.

<sup>235</sup> See Yusuff, "Foucault's Resistance and its Adversaries," 17; and see Elgendy, "Power, Complicity, and Resistance," a dissertation that takes up this question of resistance without exteriority, in conversation with Michel Foucault and Karl Barth, with great depth and sophistication.

<sup>236</sup> For instance, in in Scott's accounting, by way of "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage, surreptitious assault and murder, anonymous threats, and so on" ("Everyday Forms of Resistance," 5).

symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labeled, a struggle to identify causes and assign blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history.”<sup>237</sup> Thus, patterns of cultural production and consumption provide the means to extend resistance beyond immediate, individual choices: cultural forms, in other words, are both the fuel and the enduring byproduct of collective resistance.<sup>238</sup> And as such cultural dynamics generate alternative matrices of meaning or alternative categories for reframing dominant narratives (“counterscripts,” “counterdiscourse,” “countermythologies”),<sup>239</sup> they in turn shape and orient their participants as *counterpublics*.

Counterpublics provide “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups [or rather, social groups that *experience* and/or *construct* themselves as subordinated, which is an overlapping but more capacious category] invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs”—with quite real social effects, despite (or rather, inclusive of) the fictional quality of the publics thus generated through the mobilization of meaning.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, xvii; cf. Caygill, *On Resistance*, 10. Cf. Pile, Introduction to *Geographies of Resistance*, 24-25 (drawing on Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*), on the importance of *psychic resistance* and inner struggle; and Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular,’” 442-43, 447, on the “dialectic of cultural struggle” (although in my judgment Hall remains too trapped by the division between “popular” and “elite” that Orsi has dismantled, his analysis is apt as to the ways that culture may be used in ways that resist its validation or invalidation by authorities).

<sup>238</sup> This crucial issue is discussed at length in, e.g., Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*; Fanon, “On National Culture”; Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture”; Pile, Introduction to *Geographies of Resistance*; and Caygill, *On Resistance*. See again de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 15-28, on proverbs, tales, legends, and other forms of “ordinary culture” (15) being transformed into “a song of resistance” (18).

<sup>239</sup> See Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 122-25, on how Christian martyrs and their hagiographers took control of the spectacle into which they were thrown by “acting out of turn, upsetting expectations, even stage-managing the events,” generating a “counterscript [that] offers a powerful alternative version of events and a way for the spectacle to work toward Christian advantage” (122); Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 11-23, on how the appropriation and inversion of established symbols (such as, paradigmatically, the Christian uses of the sign of the cross) “delivers an epistemological and theological critique” (16); and Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 3-5, on how “those living on the margins of power claim . . . imperial myths on their own interpretive terms, creating alternative categories of power in which they construct themselves as the primary beneficiaries of newly reformulated social hierarchies.”

<sup>240</sup> Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 67; cf. Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 117-24. In Warner’s view, “[a] counterpublic maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public but a dominant one. . . . The discourse that constitutes it is not merely a different or alternative idiom but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness” (119). These dynamics, I will show, are resonant with the identity- and institution-formation of Orthodox Christianity on the basis of the spiritual-political struggle enacted in hagiography.

So far so good: and for those interested in pursuing the study of resistance in sociological and anthropological circles, it is doubtless the case that hagiographical media, the cultural dynamics in which they are embedded, and the personal/political purposes to which they are directed by those devotees will be yielding indeed. However, as Miller, Rowlands, and Tilley insist at the very beginning of their volume, *Domination and Resistance*, the limits of our current theorization “are based on the Western experience of ‘modernization’”—which of course “have specific preoccupations that cannot be universalized.”<sup>241</sup> So to study resistance as it effervesces in the Greek Orthodox theological culture around holiness, I must move beyond resistance as an established theoretical discourse to develop a conceptual framework more calibrated to what and whom I am studying.<sup>242</sup>

This framework, as I have introduced in brief above, is that of *struggle* (in Greek, *agōn*) a notion of biblical pedigree and explicit application across the history of Christianity), which I consider to be constituted of what I am translating as resistance (*antistasē*) and rectification (*anorthōsē*).<sup>243</sup> To construe resistance in the Orthodox paradigm of *agōn*, in other words, is to view it as if it were a curved line—convex because and insofar as it is also concave. Resistance to distorted modalities of human being here presupposes the imagination of a rectified humanity made again *orthon* (right/straight) and *kalon* (beautiful/good) in the reconstitution of its likeness to God.<sup>244</sup> The struggle against “the powers, the

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<sup>241</sup> Miller et al., Introduction to *Domination and Resistance*, 3. So then, indeed, “there is a need for a more radical recontextualization of social theory than has hitherto been the case.”

<sup>242</sup> Thus, similar to how Portier-Young develops her own apparatus for studying “theologies of resistance” in early Judaism (in *Apocalypse Against Empire*: see especially 5-11), in what follows I am not claiming to be capturing resistance *per se*, but rather dealing with resistance *as* a dimension of holiness and its mediation.

<sup>243</sup> I take it as indispensable for my analysis (given my methodological positioning in ethnographic theology and lived religion) that all three of these terms (*agōn*, *antistasē*, and *anorthōsē*) are actively used within the tradition I am investigating, in ways both explicitly and implicitly pertinent to the hagiographical media and practical/political dynamics that constitute my body of data. Although I certainly do not subscribe to the view that a social actor is fully and adequately conscious of her own epistemology (such that she should need to accept the conclusions drawn about her), I do insist that an analysis of this sort be at least *recognizable* to those in dialogue with whom the research is conducted.

<sup>244</sup> See Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life*, 155-58, on Orthodox theological-anthropological construals of the *normalcy* of holiness to the integrity of the human being; and Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Chapter 1, on her encounter with Orthodox concerns for “rightness” in power relations—between the self and others, between the self and God, and between the self and the self.

authorities, the cosmic rulers of this darkness, the spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12) is at the same time and in the same way a struggle for and with that which is *orthos*, that which is undistorted and whole, that which will remain when these distorting powers and the political, cultural, and religious configurations they bolster pass away. The psychosomatic, pneumatopolitical *agōn* mediated by hagiography is, as Gail Corrington Streete succinctly describes it, a “resistant asceticism.”<sup>245</sup>

Within the imaginative terrain of asceticism, moreover, we may clearly see the insufficiency of models of resistance that position it in stable opposition to power or domination or discipline: the powers and principalities of the world (terrestrial and spiritual alike), precisely in their forms of constraint and captivity, make space for the “beautiful struggle” (*ton kalon agōna*—2 Timothy 4:7) in which the crown of sanctification may be won:

Abba Poemen said of Abba John the Dwarf that he had prayed God to take his passions away from him so that he might become free from care. He went and told an old man this: “I find myself in peace, without an enemy” . . . . The old man said to him, “Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you may regain the affliction and humility that you used to have, for it is by warfare that the soul makes progress.” So he besought God and when warfare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, “Lord, give me strength for the fight.”<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Streete, “*Askesis and Resistance in the Pastoral Epistles*,” 299; cf. Valantasis, “Constructions of Power in Asceticism,” 813-15. Earlier in the essay (797), Valantasis provides an aligned definition of asceticism as “*performances within a dominant social environment intended to inaugurate a new subjectivity, different social relations, and an alternative symbolic universe*” (emphasis original). See also Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, and Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, both s.v. ἀγών. Danker discusses how the paradigmatic usage of ἀγών in the New Testament is a transposition “to the moral and spiritual realm” of the exoteric sense of “athletic competition” (another domain often metaphorically connected with asceticism—see Valantasis, “Constructions of Power in Asceticism,” 793: “The root metaphor of asceticism is taken from sport and connects the definition of power with the subject’s empowering training for success”). Consider for instance the example given above the line of Ephesians 6:12 (where the author uses a synonym for ἀγών that commonly refers to a “wrestling match”). Lampe confirms that this sense of ἀγών as “spiritual struggle” proliferates in the early centuries of the church, pertaining to struggles *against* temptation and heresy or *for* perfection and salvation, and referring especially to the struggle of *martyrdom*—which (as was discussed in section 1) provides an enduring idiom for holy resistance that escapes bifurcation into political and spiritual modalities.

<sup>246</sup> *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 87-88. Orsi adopts a similar principle for articulating how discipline and constraint and tradition provide the parameters within which spontaneity and variation (on the part of the many users of tradition) can flourish, showing moreover how the “movements of opposition” at work in modes of resistance “may be at the same time idioms of discipline” for selves and others (“Everyday Miracles,” 15; cf. Yusuff, “Foucault’s Resistance and its Adversaries,” 25).

If it is “by warfare that the soul makes progress,” it should be no surprise that the multimediation of holiness—the many modes of imagination, representation, and edification by which holiness is inscribed and mobilized in and for the human world, for the sake of that world’s transformation—is intimately bound up with the logics and forms of resistance. Rendered in a cultural matrix that integrates epistemology and politics while mediating between past, present, and future, hagiography equips its participants to “stand against” their own and others’ distortions. At the same time, it shapes their perception of a holy alternative as it is digested as fuel for their many forms and ways of life in the world.

The dissertation’s argument, then, has three dimensions: the *what*, the *why*, and the *how* of hagiographical mediation. In accordance with the framing of this introduction, the coming chapters work to show empirically as well as theoretically what hagiography *is*: that it should be analyzed in terms of a field of multimedia and the psychosocial processes of which they are temporary stabilities and semiotic vehicles. I consider at length the (formal and informal) theological reasoning as to the nature, significance, and purpose of holiness being mediated, so as to account for the play of meanings that motivate the production and consumption of hagiographical media. But the plumb-line of the argument concerns the *how*: how Orthodox understandings of the mediation of holiness, embedded in shared cultures,<sup>247</sup> constitute lived theologies of struggle in which both saints and their (many, diversely situated) hagiographers resist distorting forces and so solicit the rectification of persons and communities *by* mediating holiness. And throughout, the essential caveat recurs, as much in the authoritative theologies as in the ethnographic evidence: the struggle rendered by hagiography is a human one, and can yield to the very realities it resists, coming to reproduce or even to produce in the first place the forms and patterns of power against which it is constituted.

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<sup>247</sup> That is, as we will see, such understandings are evident not only in how this mediation is described and acclaimed by individuals, but also in how hagiographical culture is generated and mobilized apart from discursive explanations thereof.

**Part One** examines how Orthodox Christians struggle (*agōnizontai*) by means of hagiography through sustained attention on a single saint's cult in a particular context: St. George in colonial and postcolonial Cyprus (1878 to the present). In Cyprus, St. George appears in dreams, riding from Palestine to Cyprus and back again warning that Orthodox Cypriots are politically subjugated because “they do not believe”: the saint deploys to inspire faith as a means of resistance. George stars in folktales in which he rescues Greek boys from the Ottoman aristocracy, appearing as an agent of resistance and a sign of divine displeasure toward imperial treatment of Christians. George's name is inscribed on the boat bearing weapons for the struggle against British rule: the saint is claimed as a patron of resistance, but is also metonymically linked with the vessel itself and its crew, who would be captured, imprisoned, near-destroyed, and ultimately vindicated. And George's churches dot the landscape, standing guard over freshwater sources in a parched land, supplying symbolic nodes for a matrix of rural resistance to natural and cultural threats to agricultural flourishing, from pestilence to exploitative landlords to government interference.<sup>248</sup> Cyprus, a repeatedly colonized, exploited, and violated island at the cultural crossroads of the Mediterranean, is an outstanding site to explore the dynamics of hagiography as resistance, dynamics which might be not unique to Cyprus but which are abundantly evident there.

**Chapter I** provides an orientation to the history of Cyprus, to the figure of St. George, and to the specifics of my ethnographic approach. In **Chapter II**, I consider St. George as “Swifthelper” (*tachyboēthos*), a saint of rescues and healings, of border-crossings and border-keepings, at once benevolent and fierce as he liberates those who cry out for his aid and provides surreptitious semiotic texture for everyday resistance. In **Chapter III**, George's identity as triumphant “Greatmartyr”

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<sup>248</sup> As I address in Chapter I, images and legends of George are extremely common in Cyprus, not least due to the fact that he has been a figure of special identification and patronage for each of the dominant powers in Cyprus over the centuries, shared and contested by the communities coexisting under their rule: Greek Byzantium, the Latinate crusader kingdoms, the Ottoman Empire (with its wealth of Sufi-inflected folklore, reflecting a willingness to embrace syntheses between Muslim and non-Muslim beliefs), and indeed the British colonial administration.

(*megalomartys*) comes to the fore, earning by his own suffering the authority to intercede for and galvanize with courage those who struggle against imperial oppression, and exploding from within the systems of domination against which his holiness is poised. In **Chapter IV**, I turn to the imagination surrounding George as “Dragonslayer” (*drakontoktonos*), juxtaposed with one of the most fertile and interculturally charged symbols of Orthodox Christianity: the dragon that exploits the land and poisons the heart. These three epithets correspond to the iconic types of the saint: each of which, I argue, structures a distinctive paradigm of relation between saint and society and thus too a distinctive paradigm of hagiographical *agōn*—which I find enacted in the island’s ecological, political, and spiritual entanglements.

On its own, this single, contextual account of hagiography as struggle in the lived religion of a colonized and divided society yields abundant implications for Orthodox Christian and interreligious studies, for ethnographic theology and ecclesiology, for the social hermeneutics of mediation, and indeed for peace and conflict studies. But, when we ask about the origins of these dynamics and the conditions of their continuing possibility, we find that such formulations of struggle through the material, psychosocial mediation of holiness are by no means a modern phenomenon alone. Rather, they were crucial to the formative institutionalization of Orthodox Christian doctrine, identity, and aesthetic idiom, scripting a strategy of resistance/rectification that has been continually retrieved and reconstituted thereafter in unpredictable ways (that is, ways that are dependent on but undetermined by the topographies of authorized theology).<sup>249</sup> The struggle for a triumph of “orthodoxy” over “heterodoxy,” I suggest, was more

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<sup>249</sup> In general, my analysis relies on de Certeau’s notions of *strategy* and *tactics*: the former as “the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power . . . assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it”; and the latter as “a calculus which cannot count on a [position of recognition as] ‘proper’” (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix). When the saints and the material-cultural media representing them are used diversely and transversally in the lives of those who are not able to claim “proper” authority, these “tactical” theologies of local resistance are constrained but not determined by the “strategies” that had provided authoritative warrant for what de Certeau would call the “rules of the game” (see *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 22-24, 29-30).

consistently bunkered in the resistance (and more than occasionally, the *ressentiment*) of the martyrs than in the stature of the right-believing church and the glory of the church-enshrining state.

On this wavelength, **Part Two** excavates classic enunciations of the nature and purpose of holy mediation, highlighting continuities and discontinuities with the modern hagiographical dynamics (which are alike owed attention), and considering how the inscription and appropriation of hagiography as resistance came to be pivotal to the constitution of Christian “orthodoxy” as such. **Chapter V** turns to the post-Constantinian “material turn” of fourth-century Christianity, exploring the multimedia poetics of saint’s-day festivals through the eyes of one of these festivals’ most influential promoters and interpreters: John Chrysostom. I analyze the social theatricality and theological stakes of hagiographical mediation in terms of the three processes I have identified as constitutive of hagiographical mediation, each of which Chrysostom himself considers at length: imagination (*phantazein*), representation (*mimeisthai*), and edification (*oikodomeisthai*).

**Chapter VI** traces these hagiographical processes and their intercultural stakes through the eighth-century theological synthesis of John Damascene, which was developed concurrently with changing concentrations of religious authority in the Byzantine state and in explicit resistance to religious configurations that would curtail the mediation of holiness. Damascene holds that human beings are created as a synthesis of materiality and spirituality, and have as their highest calling to mediate God’s love to creation and between the many dimensions of creation—to *become*, as it were, hagiographical media that participate in inscribing and circulating holiness in the social realm.<sup>250</sup> Damascene’s theory of integral psychosomatic mediation, however, is not only a work of dazzling erudition and interconnection: it also works to frame the anti-hagiographical positions of iconoclastic Christians, Muslims, and Jews as

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<sup>250</sup> Material inscriptions of holiness, again, are understood not as objects whose sanctity is self-sufficient or self-enclosed, but rather as objects whose sanctity and significance are rendered by human generation of, interaction with, and transformation by them—a patristic theological reading of hagiography that is strikingly resonant with anthropological readings that draw on contemporary media theory.

“heretical,” devoid of genuine connection with the divine. Although Damascene’s system was condemned by an imperial council shortly after his death, it would subsequently come to provide the keystone for a resurgent, materially-committed paradigm of world-transforming holiness, culminating in the so-called “Triumph of Orthodoxy” in 843.<sup>251</sup>

Thus, into late Byzantium and beyond, Damascene’s filtration of the patristic paradigm (drawing not least on Chrysostom’s immense exegetical and hagiographical productivity) would be invested with the authority of a “pre-eminent bearer of accumulated tradition,” such that “the pattern of [his] theological synthesis became determinative” for subsequent Orthodox theological production, ecclesiastical education, and ecumenical polemics.<sup>252</sup> In Part Two, then, I will have shown how these classic treatments of the multimediation of holiness were paramount contributors<sup>253</sup> to a theological script that is still, in the present day, retrieved and reimagined to shape patterns of Greek Orthodox resistance to religious alterity and spiritual-political domination.

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<sup>251</sup> Byzantium is thus, as Cameron puts it, the society in which “orthodoxy became Orthodoxy” (“The Violence of Orthodoxy,” 107), a process that she conceives as one of “intolerance” (114) and “violence” (111) but that the moral perspective of its agents might reframe as a process of “resistance” and “counterpower.”

<sup>252</sup> Louth, *St John Damascene*, 16, 3.

<sup>253</sup> Among others: including Athanasius of Alexandria, Maximus Confessor, Neophytos the Recluse, Gregory Palamas, and Nikodemos Hagiorites. Although I do not treat these other figures in any depth in the dissertation, my focused studies of Chrysostom and Damascene should serve as prompts and possible prototypes for subsequent work in this vein.

**PART ONE**  
**THE CASE OF SAINT GEORGE IN MODERN CYPRUS**

**I**

**An Island of Saints:**  
**Intercultural Entanglement and Hagiographical Resistance**

*Δεν μπορείς να λύσεις ένα πρόβλημα με μια αντίληψη μικρότερη από αυτή που το δημιούργησε.*  
*Bir problemi onu yaratan algıdan daha küçük bir algıyla çözemeyiniz.*  
*You cannot solve a problem with a perception smaller than the one that created it.*

*~Occupy Buffer Zone*

## Introduction: A Glimpse of St. George's Hill

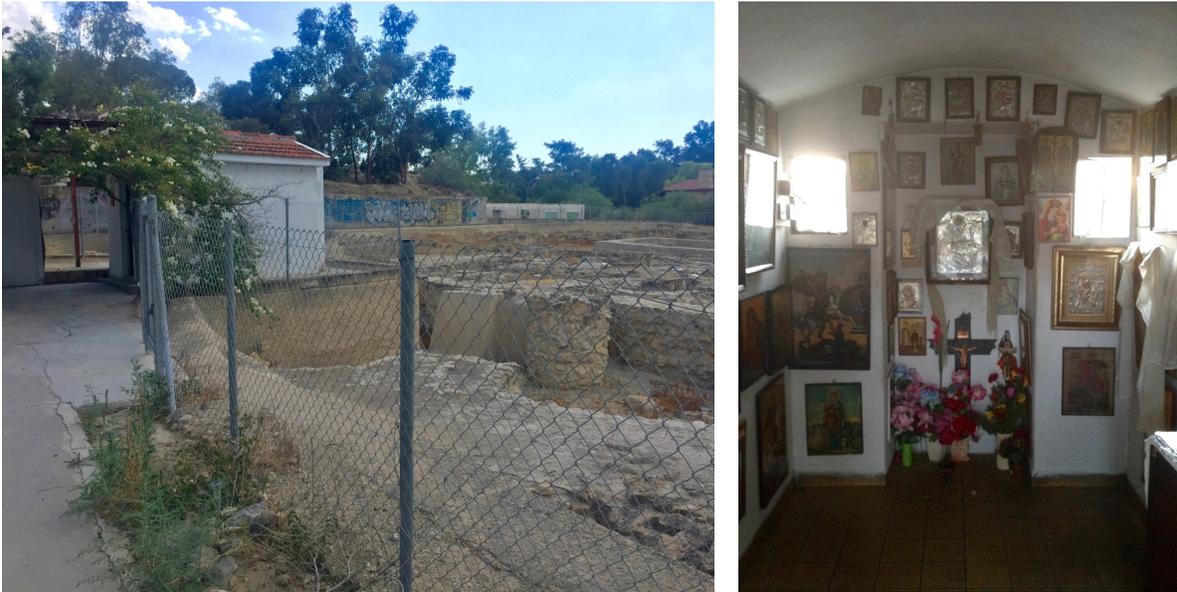


Figure 1.1: Archaeological site and paraklèsion on St. George's Hill, Nicosia: exterior and interior.

On a dusty hill in Nicosia, about half a kilometer from the old Venetian walls of the divided capital of Cyprus, there stands a small white building with a roof of ruddy shingles, little more than a shack. The building is perched above an open archaeological site, stone walls spreading out for some distance behind a series of fences. Approaching the shack from the busy street below, one must wind up a tight staircase and under some low-hanging trees, one of which is adorned with rags, ribbons, and other tokens left by visitors. The only indication from the street that there is anything above is a laminated icon of St. George, installed into a brick pillar by the road and washed out by the sun. Approaching the shack, one passes a sign for the nearby toilets (which draw their own share of pilgrims) and a few bowls of cat food, left out for the local fauna by the people who look after the site.

The tiny building is a shrine (*paraklèsion*) dedicated to St. George.<sup>1</sup> Inside, the short aisle of a room smells powerfully of incense and flowers. It is covered in icons of diverse sizes and styles, most of

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<sup>1</sup> The name of this type of religious space (παράκλησιον) suggests its function of παράκλησις—supplication or petition. In a plaque on the inside of the shrine, the building is also described as a ναίδριον, using a Byzantine diminutive for ναός (usually used of parish churches), making it clear that the site was considered by its sponsors to be part of the formal

which represent St. George but several images of the Panagia (the “all-holy” mother of Christ) share the space, as do those of other martyrs, warrior-saints, and local Cypriot saints. Two tables covered in aluminum foil display candles, matches, an oil lamp, bottles of olive oil left by devotees; on the floor lie bouquets of flowers and wax effigies, some in the shape of body parts, some in the shape of human babies. The south wall contains an alcove with a locked window, behind which is



*Figure 1.2: Wood icon beneath a gold relief (ependysē) and plexiglass window. St. George's Hill, Nicosia.*

installed an image of St. George with a golden cover, and in front of which are placed coins and votive tabs (Figure 1.2). On any given day, especially weekdays when the road is well-trafficked by people making their way to and from work, the shrine sees a stream of visitors. Living across the street from St. George's Hill, as it is known, I witnessed many of these visitors duck into the site with a distinctly contemporary pace and style: driving up beside the small staircase, they hop out with their cars still running, make a quick circuit of the shrine, venerate the icons in turn, hop back in their cars, and continue onward.

I am completing a catalogue of the images and objects present within the shrine when I hear, outside the building, a woman speaking in Arabic. She is on a mobile phone, and ends her call as I am leaving the shrine, making her way past me through the door. I linger on the bench outside, and to my surprise the woman comes back to get my attention—she cannot find matches to light her votive wick for the oil lamp. I point them out, and when she finishes her prayer, she introduces herself and we strike up conversation. Yara is Lebanese, but moved to Cyprus after her son married a Greek-Cypriot woman. She has come to this shrine at the behest of her daughter-in-law, who is returning to the island tomorrow but

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church despite its modest character. See Cyprus State Archives, SA1-1712/52, in which the 1952 renovation to the shrine is discussed, resulting in a “properly built small church” in place of the former “unsightly shrine.”

is terrified of flying; she petitions St. George every time she flies, both for protection in her travel and for deliverance from her fear. It is not that the daughter-in-law cannot pray to St. George herself when abroad—but she knows and loves this shrine, feeling that it has a special connection to the saint, and she has asked Yara to come here on her behalf. “We are all crazy!” Yara laughs, relating the story. “But here I am. In Lebanon it is the same. Christians, Muslims, it does not matter... we all love St. George, we all need his help, and he helps everybody!”<sup>2</sup>

St. George’s Hill is only one of the thousands of shrines, chapels, churches, wells, and trees dedicated to St. George on the island of Cyprus; like most, it is tightly entangled with the intercultural history and imagination of Cyprus from the present day back into antiquity. The current modest *paraklēsion* was built in 1952 (after failed petitions in 1911 and 1921) on land belonging to the British colonial government, after a group of Nicosia locals petitioned the government for permission to erect a permanent structure in place of the “tiny structure of loose stones” that had housed a wonder-working, gold-plated icon of St. George during the early decades of the century.<sup>3</sup> On one of my visits I meet a man in his sixties who has worked near St. George’s Hill for decades, Charalampos—“like Saint Charalampos!” he adds while introducing himself, winking and making the sign of the cross. He relates the story to me

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<sup>2</sup> April 15, 2016. At first, speaking with Yara during this chance encounter, I assume that she is an Orthodox Christian—she behaves at the shrine in ways I associate with Orthodox devotion, and she has moved to be closer to her son and their Greek-Cypriot in-laws. It is only upon later reflection that I realize she has given no overt indication of religious affiliation, and indeed has made mention of Christians and Muslims alike being devoted to St. George. It is entirely possible (though perhaps unlikely) that she is a Muslim visiting this shrine to conduct her Christian daughter-in-law’s petition to a saint whose power and benevolence are recognized across ordinary borders of religious identity. Throughout my fieldwork, I found that the notion or memory of Muslim devotees of St. George feeds a powerful discourse of lost multicultural solidarity in Cyprus, a discourse of which there will be much to say below, both in section 2d and in the chapters to come.

<sup>3</sup> The original request had been brought to the government’s attention in 1911 by a minor officer who had been asked by the Orthodox Archbishop to secure permission “to put up a small building over the altar known as Ay Yorghis . . . below the site of the English Church which was removed” (State Archives, SA1-756/11). The request was denied, but ten years later, several petitioners wrote directly: “We beg to be allowed to bring to Your Excellency’s knowledge that we have the intention to cause a small room to be built in order to put in it the ikon of Saint George. The space set apart by the Government for Saint George’s ikon, is a tiny structure of loose stones, surrounded by railing, near the meteorological station at Nicosia, near the public Offices, which is considered to be insufficient. We, therefore, beg Your Excellency to allow us some more room at the same spot, of about 3 feet, outside and all round the railing which separates now the said tiny structure from the Government property” (SA1-701/21).

with no shortage of enthusiasm (and with the aid of a police officer who had stopped by to chat with him and was capable of rephrasing his impenetrable Cypriot dialect in Greek I could comprehend). The marvelous golden icon had been discovered in a pile of rubble, he insists, after the Anglican church that once stood on the hill was found to have unstable foundations and was demolished in 1889.<sup>4</sup> “There was a great earthquake and the whole floor of the English church cracked down the middle!” Charalampos is animated, punctuating the story with sound effects and showing with his hands (how he imagines) the shape and width of the crack. *Because of the saint?* I ask him. He gives an exaggerated shrug of his shoulders, and a sly grin. “Well, we don’t know...”<sup>5</sup>

Despite the lukewarm attitude of the colonial administration toward the devotional reclamation of the site,<sup>6</sup> the shrine has occupied the hill ever since, being dedicated especially to St. George’s aspect as a healer and rescuer—“religious associations from time immemorial.”<sup>7</sup> Two of my interlocutors in their sixties, Agathi and Elizaveta, recalled visiting the site as a child and seeing it filled with babies’ shoes, in light of an old tradition of St. George guiding lame children in overcoming their bodily difficulties. Theodoros, a local buff of ecclesiological history, recalled the site being known as “St. George of the Captives” (*Agios Georgios tōn Aichmalōtōn*) during World War II, when the wives of soldiers and particularly of prisoners of war would visit the shrine to beg the saint for their loved ones’ safe return—as happened again, still others attested, when thousands of Cypriots went missing in the aftermath of the Turkish invasion of 1974. Each of these associations will be interpreted in depth in the coming chapters.

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<sup>4</sup> The Anglican church had been erected on the site only four years earlier, in 1885, soon after the British administrative takeover of the island (Pilides, “A 19th-Century View of St. George’s Hill,” 82). For more extensive history of this church and its stakeholders, see Christofides, *A Small but Suitable Church*, 94-129.

<sup>5</sup> February 8, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> State Archives, SA1-701/21: “This should be allowed I think,” one official writes in his memo. “The ikon is visited by hundreds of people. I believe this land is really registered as Church property that seems to be regarded as Govt. land.” The matter had already been discussed in 1911, other officials reply, and permission to build the *vaidrion* was denied to the Archbishop at that time. “I am of opinion that it would be undesirable to grant permission for any structure to be erected at this place. The shrine seems to be readily accessible at the present time. I think the best course is to forget to reply.”

<sup>7</sup> State Archives, SA1-1712/52.

Prior to the erection of the Anglican church, so far as evidence yields, St. George's Hill had lain still for some three hundred years. Although the chief excavator of the archaeological site has called for caution in identifying the site too precisely,<sup>8</sup> the hill has long been associated with the medieval monastery of St. George of the Presses (*Agios Geōrgios tōn Manganōn*)—a monastery that was expanded at the expense of the queen of Cyprus, Helena Palaiologina, in order to accommodate monks who had fled the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and arrived in Cyprus as refugees.<sup>9</sup> The story thins as it recedes into history, but does not evaporate: excavations have revealed the remains of Byzantine buildings on the site from well before the first British occupation of the island (that of Richard the Lionheart in 1191), and possibly as far back as the fourth century; below that, Roman and Hellenistic layers appear to have housed a temple of a ram-headed god, “a protector of animals and a local Cypriot deity” associated with agriculture and healing.<sup>10</sup> If the latest archaeological findings are borne out, the hill had been used by the pre-Hellenic kingdom of Ledras, and even before that, had been settled well into prehistory.

This glimpse of the history of St. George's Hill, one fuzzy thread of a much larger tapestry of spaces, voices, images, and practices, begins to indicate the deep roots and near omnipresence of St. George in Cyprus. In Part One of this dissertation, I treat St. George as a case study in order to tell the story of a Greek Orthodox community whose multimediation of holiness—in diverse but entangled media, and in the social processes by which these media are produced and consumed—renders lived

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<sup>8</sup> See Pilides, “A 19th-Century View of St. George's Hill,” 85; and Pilides, “A Short Account of the Recent Discoveries Made on the Hill of Ayios Georgios” (in Michaelides [ed], *Historic Nicosia*, 212-14).

<sup>9</sup> Further discussion of this site will follow in Chapter II, section 2c. The name given to this monastery derives, Kostas Papageorgiou suggests, from *ta mangana* (τα μάγγανα), which were presses or engines with which the Byzantines manufactured materials for warfare—a double association with the military aspect of St. George and with the district of Constantinople from which the refugee monks had come (see Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος ο Τροπαιοφόρος στην Κύπρο* [hereafter *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*], 49, 115). The monastery was evacuated and demolished in 1567, while the Venetians were fortifying the walls and outskirts of Nicosia in preparation for war with the Ottomans—fitting, given the military associations of the monastery, but ultimately a doomed effort, as emblemized by the Ottoman use of St. George's Hill for a fort from which to engage in besieging the city. *Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of modern Greek sources are my own; English translations of the titles can be found in the bibliography.*

<sup>10</sup> Evripidou, “Nicosia excavation closest evidence yet of lost kingdom of Ledroi,” *Cyprus Mail*, 12/06/2015.

theologies and indeed pragmatic means of struggle.<sup>11</sup> That is, as I will show, the inscriptions of holiness<sup>12</sup> both promote and enact a struggle with forms of cultural, political, religious, and spiritual power that are understood to dominate, distort, or otherwise work to the detriment of the Orthodox Church and the mission of God.<sup>13</sup> By way of hagiography, moreover, Orthodox Christians not only struggle *against* (resistance) but at the same time struggle *for* (rectification)—in particular, for the liberation and indeed the sanctification of the land, the state, and the soul of Cyprus. It is St. George who, among the saints, is associated most consistently and vigorously by Greek-Cypriots with such struggle and the ends it seeks.

What then of Yara's self-conscious favor to her daughter-in-law and Charalampos' cheerful account of the destruction of the British church; the refugees of 1453 and the missing persons of 1974; the overlapping space and blurred imaginary between St. George and the ancient agricultural deities whose religious functions he absorbed? What does all this have to do with hagiography and resistance? In each of these glimpses of a saint intervening in an intercultural society's struggles with diverse crises and dominating powers, both material and spiritual, St. George's primary relationship to his devotees is as a *liberator*—whether in a quotidian fashion, loosening the grip of a fear of flying and keeping livestock healthy, or a revolutionary fashion, toppling a colonizer's church and freeing prisoners of war. In what follows, we will find that the saint's various ways of being mediated in and to Cyprus serve also for its people as ways of narrating the story and identity of the island. St. George comes frequently to function not only as a liberator of the land but also as a stand-in for the land itself.<sup>14</sup> The hagiographical culture

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<sup>11</sup> As established in the general introduction, section 3a, "lived theologies" of holiness include both those that are enunciated verbally by Greek-Orthodox Cypriots and those that are implied, performed, or presupposed in extraverbal hagiographical mediation of the saint.

<sup>12</sup> "Inscriptions," that is, both in the material representations of the saint and in all the ways that these representations refigure the understandings and thus the lives of those who use them. Recall the discussion of the multivalence of "inscription" as a term of art for social theory as well as for material representation, in the general introduction, section 2a.

<sup>13</sup> It will be significant to my argument throughout that the *designation* and *delimitation* of "orthodoxy" are themselves part of the rhetorical enactment of hagiography as resistance.

<sup>14</sup> *That* it is the case that the miracles of St. George become political symbols or ways of telling the story of Cyprus is not itself unusual—the same can be said (though certainly less extensively) for St. Mamas, St. Marina, St. Lazarus, and others.

around St. George is strategically theorized (by those with the authority to do so) and tactically mobilized (by any who perceive the practical power, indeed the counterpower,<sup>15</sup> of the saint) in ways that fuel new forms of resistance and reflect the prior struggles illuminated by the saint's presence and patronage.<sup>16</sup> Such struggles represented and animated by St. George are at once ecological and sociological, at once political and personal, at once material and spiritual, at once "outer" (*ektos* or *exoterikos*) and "inner" (*entos* or *esoterikos*).<sup>17</sup> We will see the integrity of these registers of resistance in each of the traditions under investigation, and through this lens we will explore the entwined processes of hagiographical imagination, representation, and edification in modern Cyprus.<sup>18</sup>

In the four chapters of Part One, my task is twofold: (i) to demonstrate in detail what hagiographical multimediation *is* and how it works (as promised in the general introduction, section 2), but also, by showing these hagiographical processes in action, (ii) to make the cogent case that they constitute lived theologies of struggle, entailing both resistance (*antistasē*) and rectification (*anorthōsē*). This done, I will be able to argue (in Part Two) that this theology of struggle by way of the psychosomatic mediation of holiness is not idiosyncratic to modern Cyprus but can be traced to the emergence and

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Indeed, if St. George were *sui generis* in this respect he would be less, rather than more, fruitful for the larger task of honing our theoretical tools for interpreting hagiographical dynamics and media in the modern world. Therefore, at the center of my argument is not *that* St. George becomes identified with and is rendered in a patronal relationship with the land, people, and political history of Cyprus, but rather *how* this turns out to be the case, and what clarity is gained thereby for broader hagiographical questions.

<sup>15</sup> See again the discussion of counterpower as a modality of resistance, in the general introduction, conclusion.

<sup>16</sup> See Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 173-74, on the ways that hagiographical media (for Salisbury, as for most, written texts in particular) develop over time in ways that "speak to the values of different ages" and reflect changing challenges to the communities that produce and consume them. And see again de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix, 22-24, 29-30, on strategies and tactics (on the merit of such analysis for modern Cyprus, cf. Herzfeld, "Transforming Lives," 42).

<sup>17</sup> I am not suggesting that these pairs are opposed to one another to begin with: this simultaneity is what we should expect, though it is still worth highlighting as an explanatory feature of mediating processes. The psychosomatic synthesis that we will find threshed out in the long-authoritative Orthodox anthropology of John Damascene (and insisted upon, no less explicitly, by ecclesial authorities in contemporary Cyprus) erodes binaries between human beings' inner and outer conditions; will explore throughout the dissertation how the personal and the political dimensions of hagiographical imagination, representation, and edification are no less integral than the second and third dimensions of a cube; and any sociology worth its salt will not fail to recognize the profound ecological embeddedness of human society and culture (which itself, as I use the term "culture" throughout this project, is no less a "psychosomatic synthesis").

<sup>18</sup> As introduced at length in the general introduction, section 2b.

crystallization of (so-designated) “orthodox” theology in late antiquity. I am wagering, indeed, that St. George is so prominent in Cyprus (and around the Orthodox Christian world ) in no small part *because* he so vigorously renders the archetypal and authoritative patterns of Orthodox hagiographical struggle. Therefore, while I hope that these chapters contribute to persuasive theory development around hagiography in modernity (a field of inquiry underrepresented in the contemporary religious studies academy and central to my own research agenda subsequent to this work),<sup>19</sup> the dynamics explored herein are not intended to draw attention to themselves in isolation. Rather, they should feed the study of Orthodox Christianity writ large, as well as the interdisciplinary conversation around the technologies and topographies of religious sanctification, particularly in divided societies where religious understandings both validate and erode intractable conflicts. It is, as it were, through a narrative *ekphrasis*—a visceral evocation of particular forms—that I hope to call attention to the lived religion and hagiographical fertility of a remarkable time and place, and thereby to refine the tools needed to carry out successive inquiry well beyond the island of Cyprus.

### (1) Interpreting a Theological Culture of Holy Mediation

In saying that the multimediation of holiness constitutes a lived theology of struggle, some further scrutiny is owed to the theoretical apparatus with which I can pursue this claim through the hagiographical topography of modern Cyprus. Most of this apparatus has been provided in the general introduction, along with the guiding principle that this ethnographic component of the project reflects *interpretive* rather than *constructive* theology: although the two can never be wholly divorced, my

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<sup>19</sup> As Glaeser suggests, the analytic force of ethnography and *in situ* cultural analysis is “to engage questions about the social world in which we live and theoretical problems dialectically right from the start of the project. This means that the arena of investigation is chosen not just for its intrinsic interest but at least as much for the theory development potential it holds” (*Political Epistemics*, 56; cf. Glaeser, “An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes,” where ethnography affords the privileged methodological apparatus for studying social *processes* in particular: “a dense thicket of processes” [27] which is not pinned down or reduced to essences in fixed media of a verbal or a non-verbal nature).

excavation and interpretation of the theological understanding actually at work in a particular context (“lived theology”) takes priority over any of my own “theological reading of a contemporary situation.”<sup>20</sup>

What remains to introduce, then, is explicit reflection on my *sources*. In this section, I will develop (a) what precisely I take to be the subject matter of my inquiry, and how I have categorized and organized the immense diversity of holy media and ideas about those media that are pertinent to my interpretive-theological argument; and (b) how I have gone about studying this subject matter on site in Cyprus, integrating historical and art historical research with ecclesiological and ethnographic data.<sup>21</sup>

### *1a) Questions and Sources for an Ethnographic Theology*

Transitioning into this case study of the figure of St. George in modern Cyprus requires, first and foremost, some identification of what in fact *is* the subject matter at hand. I claim to be studying “St. George”: is this a historical *person* from the third century CE who intervenes in the history of Cyprus from beyond the grave? A (consistent or inconsistent) *character* belonging to a continually refreshed oeuvre of representation by generations of Cypriots whose lives have been enriched in a variety of ways by these representations, to which their own actions and testimonies continue to contribute? A *symbol* or set of symbols that is available to be applied across the domains of human social existence, but whose uses need not be considered to bear any relation to one another? A (organized or disorganized) *culture* of religious

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<sup>20</sup> Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 9: this is her basic encapsulation of the nature of ethnographic theology. Cf. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47: the task of what he calls “descriptive theology” (and what I would call the interpretation of lived theology) is, to an extent, “horizon analysis; it attempts to analyze the horizon of cultural and religious meanings that surround our religious and secular practices . . . . [It] would be close to sociology if sociology were conceived hermeneutically.” As noted in the general introduction, section 3b, my own project’s aims are distinct from Browning’s and Fulkerson’s (whose ultimate goal is constructive theological productivity within the tradition under analysis), but this formulation of how the arc of theological inquiry connects descriptive analysis to mining historical influences provides some clear structure for my own study of hagiography and resistance in an Orthodox idiom.

<sup>21</sup> “Historical” includes published writings and state archives; “art historical” combines existing scholarly analysis with new interpretations of hagiographical images and their interventions in the world around them; “ecclesiological” includes church archives, scripted prayers and public addresses to the saint, plus formal/canonical representations of the saint in a variety of media; and “ethnographic” includes observation of lived religion, personal conversations, and archived folk media (what in Greek is known as λαογραφία), which reveal a rich field of (inter)personal associations.

activity that is constituted primarily by the practices that it motivates and coordinates? A “realm of competing discourses ... constituted by mutual misunderstandings,” such that we cannot speak of *a* cult or even *a* person of St. George but must rather look for answers in the presuppositions and agendas of those who seek, diversely, to assert such coherence and consistency?<sup>22</sup> And whose authority has the final say in including or excluding given media or events that are asserted to be the work of the saint?

I negotiate such questions by taking an approach that could be described as “concentric.” This notion of concentricity clarifies how I address three basic problems of delimiting the subject matter of the case study, problems that require attention in any ethnographic research pertaining to hagiography: (i) the uncertain facticity of the events and objects described; (ii) the power-relations that shape but never determine how hagiography is produced and consumed in a community; and (iii) the often-stark contrast between observable practices and articulated understandings.

(i) The historicity of a saint, in my analysis, is not at odds with but rather *includes* the legendary or even outright contrived deployments of the saint’s name, image, or influence. In other words, I approach St. George not as a singular figure whose significance is subordinate to and determined by his historicity as a once-living individual, but rather as a transpersonal historical reality *inclusive* of the ways that he is experienced and appropriated in the lives of others. It is this figure who is the subject of Part One: the posthumous, multipresent, kaleidoscopic St. George, who appears in battles to protect his people, whose icons have miraculous properties to heal the incurable and to drive malefactors insane, who leaves (figurative and literal) footprints around the island to this day. This frees my analysis from the anxieties often manifest in scholarship on hagiography around the criteria for distinguishing between “historicity”

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<sup>22</sup> This last is the approach articulated by Eade and Sallnow in their Introduction to *Contesting the Sacred*, 5. Flueckiger, in “When the Goddess Speaks Her Mind,” likewise raises this line of questioning *vis-à-vis* her own interest in accounting for the *agency* of a divine figure in a South Asian social world, though she comes to rather different conclusions than Eade and Sallnow, refusing (even from within an anthropological vantage point) to recode the goddess’ interventions as illuminating, for instance, “family or institutional structures, power and gender dynamics, agency, and so forth” (168).

and “legend.”<sup>23</sup> It may be true, for instance, that the institutional church has different (and tighter) criteria for evaluating the validity of a miracle than do the people who experience a miracle (and whose experience can be explained in any number of ways); however, what warrants my analysis is *that* and *how* this experience is attributed to St. George, not *whether* the attribution is accurate or authorized. The possibility of and justifications for local distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate media of St. George are themselves internal dynamics (rather than boundaries) of my object of inquiry.<sup>24</sup>

(ii) So too, establishing and organizing a field for research on St. George in Cyprus has yielded a concentric approach to thinking about problems of authority in the generation and mobilization of hagiographical media. Rather than divide media sharply into authorized and unauthorized categories, I think of formal authorization (of a place, object, or event associated with the saint) as one of several operations that may take place within an ecclesial community, both validating and orienting a much

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<sup>23</sup> Such concerns, indeed, are live not only in classic scholarship in the Bollandist vein but also in contemporary work—such as in the papers and discussions of the Fourth International Conference on the Hagiography of Cyprus (Paralimni, Cyprus, February 1-3, 2018). See also Bouteneff, “Sacred Narrative and the Truth,” for sustained reflection, within the context of Orthodox Christian hagiography and its effects in the lives of adherents, on the question of “what does it mean if [a beloved, identity-shaping, practice-motivating miracle, event, or even life] did not happen.” At the same time, like Joyce Flueckiger and Robert Orsi, I need not stake my scholarship on an assumption that the “gods” I am studying are *not really present*. Is St. George a living presence or a symbolic resource for shared storytelling? Certainly the latter, but this need not disbar the former, so long as we have a scholarly syntax for studying a world of “gods” without preemptively casting them in the role of symbols, social constructions, or tools of powerful people, but instead meeting them as aspects of a lifeworld that are met and treated as agents by those to whom they matter.

<sup>24</sup> This issue will arise quickly in Chapter II, where one paradigm of St. George veneration is grounded by a legend recognized (by local authorities) as a form of “misunderstanding.” More generally: if someone tells me (as has happened regularly) that St. George is more beloved in Cyprus than anywhere else in the world, the fact of their telling me this does not make the claim itself factually true. If we could measure such things, we might be justified in making a case, for instance, that St. George is *more* beloved in Georgia (which was, after all, named after him). But there is a facticity to the *understanding* that George is most beloved here, a facticity that has force in the world insofar as Cypriots’ claim to the saint affects their imagination, their identification, and their action. Even if a given interlocutor makes the claim in questionable faith—whether he is spitballing, exaggerating, or lying—the choice to make the assertion and the wider rhetoric of which it is a part are a historical reality owed interpretive scrutiny. Moreover, when I hear claims such as this over and over again, it can be recognized as a *pattern* whose force is, accordingly, greater than that of an individual account of a miracle that is not well known (though even this can be part of a pattern, once the miracle is classified, for instance, as the defense of a powerless person against a powerful person who seeks to exploit her). Cf. Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology*, 35, on not vouching for the veracity of interlocutors’ claims but including and interpreting them nevertheless as pertinent to the reality of a social situation; and Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 28-29, on the importance of evaluating “rhetorical and ideological work” performed by our sources independent of (often-unresolvable) questions of their historicity.

broader field of hagiographical culture—to which the acts of authorization themselves belong. Kevin Vanhoozer offers a helpful analogy for articulating the relationship between informal theologies and the authorized theologies that inform but do not exhaust them: theological activity carried out by non-specialists in the context of their cultural topographies and demands of their daily lives is akin to the “everyday meteorology” conducted by people who look out the window or feel the dampness of the air and predict the day’s conditions. It is not necessary to have a degree in meteorology or a career as a weather-reporter to engage in such activity (to say nothing, yet, about the quality or accuracy of the activity), any more than one must be a professional musicologist or performer to carry a tune, sing in the shower, or indeed play an instrument well and participate in a talented ensemble. *And yet*, there are professional meteorologists whose expertise matters to the people who watch them on television or read their reports on the internet, and make changes in their lives accordingly.<sup>25</sup> So likewise, it is a grave error to assume that lived (or “everyday,” “informal,” “vernacular,” or “popular”) theology is *necessarily* divergent from the theological understanding of church authorities on a given issue—on the contrary, we will witness in the coming chapters how the lived theology of laity often *includes* (without being reducible to) a

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<sup>25</sup> See Vanhoozer, “What is Everyday Theology?,” 19-21. Of particular importance for my work is Vanhoozer’s recognition that the *culture* of meteorology integrates both specialized and everyday forms, the former of which informs the latter through regular communication and instruction (here we may analogize the weather report with the specialist theology conducted in the context of a sermon, insofar as it is specifically dedicated to forming the understanding of nonprofessionals) but is also a *type* of the latter (that is, carried out within the lived praxis of the professional, as a monastic theologian’s theologizing belongs nonetheless to the everyday lived religion of the monk). See again the framing discussion of ethnographic theology and its approaches to these issues in the general introduction, section 3a. Flueckiger, in exploring the pertinence of theological understanding as a data source for ethnographic anthropology, makes a similar move in recognizing the everyday theological productivity of her interlocutors, who, far from having their thoughts and actions determined by an inherited theological tradition, locate themselves within that tradition and use its resources to make sense of their world and the divine or semidivine agents with whom they interact (“When the Goddess Speaks Her Mind,” 170-71). My own material confirms this approach: for instance, in the opening vignette of this chapter, Charalampos’ half-suggestion that St. George has brought about the destruction of the English church built on his sacred ground is not merely wishful or fanciful thinking but draws from and redeploys a traditional hagiographical culture in which the holy friends of God continue to act in the human world after death, performing public signs of divine favor and disfavor. Compare, for instance, Charalampos’ informal narrative with John Chrysostom’s narrative *On Blessed Babyllas and Against the Greeks*, in which divine wrath burns down the temple of Apollo as soon as the impious Emperor Julian has moved the relics of the saint from their rightful resting place.

deferral to the understanding of a religious professional, the authority of whom is thereby reinscribed as a reassuring benchmark of validity: “Ask the priest—he can tell you!”<sup>26</sup>

(iii) Finally, then, it is crucial to distinguish between (without disassociating) “hagiography” and “hagiology” in categorizing my sources for the study of St. George; I treat the latter as concentrically included within the former. I am not speaking here of formal disciplinary distinctions but rather of modalities of inscription. By “hagiology,” I mean discourse about holiness, such as is uttered formally in the course of a sermon about a saint or uttered informally in the course of a conversation. Such discourse is crucial to perceiving and interpreting the wider “hagiographical” system (within which it is only one means of mediation), but it cannot be granted a blanket priority over nondiscursive hagiographical dynamics.<sup>27</sup> Understanding is not wholly conscious (and indeed may be generated or recalibrated in the course of conversation with a researcher), and so there is no reason to expect either that a given mode of holy mediation (hagiography) is given adequate attention somewhere in writing (hagiology), nor that an

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<sup>26</sup> It is important to stress at this point that “lived theology” is here an etic concept—part of what theology is and how it works, in my scholarly assessment (that is, it is both authorized and unauthorized, both formal and informal, and mediated diversely—in images, objects, and actions as much as in words). Θεολογία, in the ecclesiastical lexicon of Greek Orthodoxy, tends to signify something very different and has historically (in the ascetic tradition in particular) been treated as product of great spiritual struggle, and thus as the province of the saints alone, those whose contemplation (θεωρία) of God has so completely reshaped their souls that their (firsthand) discourse on matters divine is free of the distortion of the passions to which most human beings are captive. Such a definition of “theology” would exclude the majority of the discourse and other inscriptions of holiness under review in this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> Philippart treats the distinction between these terms helpfully, but rather differently than I do (as he is concerned mainly with Latin and French sources). In “Hagiographes et hagiographie, hagiologes et hagiologie,” he describes *hagiographie* as the textual material itself (of whatever nature—recognizing correctly that the term has been used for “sacred writings” besides those relating to the saints) and *hagiologie* as the study thereof, thus making hagiology into a second-order interpretation of a first-order hagiography. In the sense that I am using these terms (and see again the general introduction, section 2, for a fuller account), Philippart’s distinction might in certain instances hold: texts about holy people may indeed be a type of hagiography, and interpretation of those texts may indeed be a type of hagiology. But in terms of the source material for this study, “hagiology” includes all the things that are said or written about holiness or a particular holy figure like St. George, making it one branch of a multimediated “hagiography” that includes but is not exhausted by it (and may indeed demonstrate dimensions of its failure to grasp a particular phenomenon adequately). See also Rondolino, *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Hagiographical Strategies*, 1-17, on “hagiography” as a “metalinguistic category” and “hagiology” as an academic discipline dedicated to comparative, cross-cultural study thereof. I prefer, however, to let “hagiology” include both discourses of holiness and disciplinary considerations thereof—as “theology” includes both committed enunciation (“Augustine’s theology of creation”) and academic analysis (“the faculty of historical theology”), or as “ecology” includes both the natural science and, for instance, “the ecology of the Amazon.”

interlocutor *can* adequately explain the mediation in which she participates.<sup>28</sup> Here again the concentric approach is fruitful: discursive celebrations and narrations of the saint's powerful presence are one type of practice that can be situated *within* the more capacious contours of hagiographical practices, spaces, and objects, shaping as they do a topography of mediation that is only ever partially enacted in language.

Moreover, as we will see, hagiographical media themselves have their own lives independent of but interdependent with those who created them and those who put them to use. Objects, images, buildings, and other material configurations coalesce out of diverse agendas,<sup>29</sup> and in their use they offer multiple meanings (at a range of proximity to authorized meanings), functioning as catalysts for new understanding on the part of human beings.<sup>30</sup> They exist as part of the flourishing "cognitive ecologies" of a living society,<sup>31</sup> and they enable the imagination, which is so real in the organization of lives and societies, to be "felt in the bones."<sup>32</sup> But holy media also, precisely in their uniqueness and lifespan of

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<sup>28</sup> Castelli insists (*Martyrdom and Memory*, 2) that to be *unaware* of hagiographical dynamics is not by that fact to be *uninvolved* in them; and the Comaroffs warn about equating meaning "merely with explicit consciousness" (*Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, 35). Therefore, it is also an ethnographic fallacy to take an insider's reported perspective as a factual report, as though that perspective (any more than the researcher's own) were capable of total recognition of its preconscious conditioning and epistemic calibration. Dunier comments on this "ethnographic fallacy" in *Sidewalk*, where he cautions against reporting respondents' own understanding of their own situation (in his case, homelessness) *as if* they adequately appreciated the larger forces in play (structural policies, segregation and gerrymandering, hiring patterns, etc). Cf. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 6: "To be in a relationship with someone . . . is not necessarily to understand him or her; but the relationship, which arises always on a particular social field and is invariably inflected by needs, desires, and feelings, conscious and not, that draw on both parties' histories and experiences, becomes the context for understanding."

<sup>29</sup> Consider, for instance, an icon that has been commissioned by one or more persons authorized to do so, produced from raw materials and artisan labor, and installed in a particular building whose custodians needed to accommodate a range of requirements for juxtaposing new with old devotional imagery.

<sup>30</sup> For instance, we will consider (in Chapter III) the Greek-Cypriot couple who, in dreams, are instructed by St. George to visit a particular spot in the hills and dig; doing so, they discover a derelict chapel and a chest of bones—which launches the remainder of their lives on a new trajectory. See also Morgan's evocative passage in his Introduction to *Religion and Material Culture*, 8: "Most believers live their religion in the grit and strain of a felt-life that embodies their relation to the divine as well as to one another. The transcendent does not come to them as pure light or sublime sensations in most cases, but in the odor of musty shrines or moldering robes or the pantry where they pray. . . . And all of these sensations intermingled to embody contrition, petition, offering, pledge, and redemption. The saints themselves returned the gaze of the penitent. They looked at the devout and expected a response." See also Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life*, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Malafouris' *How Things Shape the Mind*, 5. Malafouris' work is a provocative reading of cutting-edge cognitive science into the study of material culture, locating in the latter a co-constitution with human intellection and mental frameworks.

<sup>32</sup> Meyer, Introduction to *Aesthetic Formations*, 5. For Meyer, material media are the missing link between Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities and the visceral, rigorous investiture of such imaginaries in people's everyday existence. Media, in this view, are the sites of actuality and experience that make fictions into truths—they are key to the

interactivity, do not only shape people's experiences and understandings of holiness but also enact new possibilities of the holiness that they mediate.

So then, in a more comprehensively social sense than is implied by McClendon's "biographical theology,"<sup>33</sup> the lived theologies surrounding St. George in Cyprus are as interpersonal as they are personal, as transhuman as they are all-too-human. They constitute an integrative theological culture, not only a collective of individual perspectives, concentrated as much in the collective effervescence of festivals and in shrines containing the cumulative votive contributions of generations of visitors as they are in the encounter with such festivals or sites at a moment in any particular person's biography.<sup>34</sup> On the basic disciplinary thesis, in any case, I agree with McClendon that theology cannot only be a study of religious symbols or of the propositional content woven around them—it must, rather, "involve the examination of the role of [conceptual] images in actual lives, the role of images in the experience of life."<sup>35</sup> In this view, when Greek-Cypriot political cartoons depict the island of Cyprus as an innocent girl menaced by a monstrous British official, and when the boat with which Colonel George Grivas ferries

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"how" of macro-level forces bearing upon and taking new shape in individual experience. See also Meyer's discussion of "sensational forms" (13-17), for indications of how "religious mediations address and mobilize people and form them aesthetically . . ." This is a dimension of the autonomy of culture from intention that Bakhtin discusses under the theoretical rubric of "sociological poetics": the ways that cultural inscriptions intervene in and interrupt the social world that has made them ("Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art").

<sup>33</sup> See McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, 176: "Biographical theology need not repudiate and should not ignore the propositional statement of theological doctrine. What it must insist is that this propositional statement be in continual and intimate contact with the lived experience which the propositional doctrine by turns collects, orders, and informs."

<sup>34</sup> I am thinking in analogy to David Morgan's treatment of "belief": we can look for "theology" not *only* in the discursive formulations of religious agents but also in the "slowly sedimentary practice . . . [of] how people behave, feel, intuit, and imagine . . . . This will mean regarding utterances as symbolic events that are anchored to much larger processes" (Morgan, Introduction to *Religion and Material Culture*, 4-5). I hope then to be responding to Glaeser's call for "better integration between [ethnographic] approaches focusing on conscious reflection and those focusing on practices and emotions" ("An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes," 38).

<sup>35</sup> McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, 99. McClendon conceives as the discursive content of religion as a repertoire of metaphorically-resonant *images* (such as, in his own tradition, "exodus," "crucifixion," "eucharist"), available for use in the lives of individuals and institutions, which—in such use—informs not only the activity but the very perception of those in whose existence they are applied. The meaning of the Exodus, then, includes its appropriation to and reanimation by the prophetic enunciations of Martin Luther King, Jr; theology is metempsychosis, a river rather than a reservoir.

munitions to Cyprus in order to rescue her is named the *Saint George*,<sup>36</sup> this is not only a borrowing of classical associations to name the present but indeed a continuation of the turbulent hagiographical processes that brought us St. George in the first place and has made him so prominent a champion of imperial and anti-imperial projects alike. And such hagiographical processes, I reiterate, are not exhausted by even the



Figure 1.3: The gunrunning caique Saint George, commissioned by George Grivas to bear munitions to Cyprus in January 1955. To be discussed in Chapter IV.

most expansive and nuanced hagiological discourse that attends to them (including, of course, my own).<sup>37</sup>

My field of study, then, is a theological culture of holy mediation, as all-pervasive, constraining, and enabling as culture more generally.<sup>38</sup> In keeping with my concentric approach, the many transversal categorizations that can be applied to my sources are facets rather than binaries: my sources are *oral/aural*, *written*, *visual*, *olfactory*, *organic*, *practical*, *spatial*, and *festival*.<sup>39</sup> All of these sources can be understood as

<sup>36</sup> See Figure 1.3. The Greek-Cypriot “national struggle” will be briefly introduced below, in section 2c, and its hagiographical dynamics and resonant deployment of St. George will be discussed at more length in Chapters III and IV.

<sup>37</sup> This concentric complementarity of hagiological discourse and hagiographical process—the latter richly informed by and indeed including, yet ever outstripping, the former—is, I hope, more helpful than the binary of “elite” and “popular” for organizing my research on St. George. Such binaries find their way into the theoretical apparatus of much religious studies scholarship, but they risk distorting the dynamics of Orthodox Christian contexts (and not only such Orthodox cultural contexts). See Brown, “A Dark-Age Crisis,” 17-19; Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 4-10; and Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street*, xxxi-xlii. The relation between the understandings of classes of people is never so simple as incommensurability or incomparability, never so tidy as an “elite” textual tradition and a “popular” practical tradition. There is rather a mutually informative interaction between them, insofar as authority, wealth, political influence, and spiritual charisma all have real social force.

<sup>38</sup> For theorization of “theological culture,” see again the general introduction, section 3b. In brief, I am here aligned with arguments by Tanner and Orsi that “theology” is not purely a specialized, professional discourse but includes repertoires of understanding that warrant and suffuse wide swaths of human social existence. I also depend on the “strong program in cultural sociology” as described by Alexander, which aims “to demonstrate that culture is not a thing but a dimension, not an object to be studied as a dependent variable but a thread that runs through, one that can be teased out of, every conceivable social form” (*The Meanings of Social Life*, 7). In this way I aim to leave behind the historical numbness and “unmusical” attitudes toward the reality and force of “meaning” (including, of course, theological or hagiological meaning) across human social existence (15).

<sup>39</sup> By “*organic*” I refer especially to the human remains of holy people (relics), which function in distinctive ways in a hagiographical topography. A bone, for instance, is a material object (as are icons and texts), though it need not be *seen* to be hagiographically effective: a relic inside a reliquary is *known* to be there and this invisible (and so imagined) presence

*material*, despite their greater or lesser physicality, and *meaningful*, despite their more or less overt articulation as such.<sup>40</sup> The products, moreover, are inextricable from the social processes by which they are produced and consumed, and as such they call us to attend to their constitution in the thick of political consciousness, interreligious polemics, and spiritual psychology.<sup>41</sup> Construing the multimediation of St. George as a theological culture, moreover, ensures that text and context are not held at a prim arm's length from one another; here, the world of hagiographical consumers' actual dwelling suffuses the meaning and power of holiness in any particular media, and vice versa. Ultimately, I wager, turning to the cultural integrity of hagiographical processes and products, in a modern setting amenable to such direct examination, enables dimensions of analysis that will be unavailable in the discursive theological studies of Part Two—dimensions to which my overall hermeneutical orientation requires that I remain attuned, however, in spite of the rather different theological methodologies in play.

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or partial visibility is what mediates; a relic, one might say, is a certain kind of image, as an image is a certain kind of relic (these reciprocal relations will be addressed in greater depth in Part Two; cf. Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 22-24; Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons*, 15-17; and Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," 115-19). Also included in "organic" sources might be the flowers, seeds, and other agricultural/ecological realities that I will discuss insofar as they are used to mediate St. George and a certain paradigm of his involvement in agricultural struggles for flourishing. By "practical" I mean especially my observation of actions taken by individuals to interact with and co-mediate the holiness of the saint (from the everyday acts of icon-veneration and candle-lighting to the more special acts of votive-donation or abandonment of crutches) By "spatial" I mean both the formal organization of church buildings (which includes, of course, its visual and aural capacities, such as level of light in a chapel or the acoustics of a sanctuary) as well as spaces such as museums and memorials, taking special note of how such spaces orient or invite/prohibit movement. "Festival" sources include the many ephemera of individual and social actions as part of the *mise-en-scène* of celebratory settings (not only formal festivals of St. George but also other kinds of collective social celebration such as national commemorations). Another important category of hagiographical mediation, that of the *apparition*, must be subsumed in my research under the categories of *written*, *oral*, and *visual*, since I have not experienced such apparitions myself and cannot address them directly, relying instead on secondary depictions of them in texts, conversations, and visual art.

<sup>40</sup> That is, oral accounts, prayers, songs and the like are material insofar as their mediating apparatus includes vocal cords and sound waves; sweet smells of shrines and relics are material insofar as their presence is composed of chemical compounds diffused in air; even apparitions are material insofar as the imagination on which apparitions are imprinted is integrated with brain function and neural activity. Even if "intellectual culture" and "material" culture is a useful heuristic, there is no instance in which one does not include the other. These clarifications will be of particular significance in the theoretical extensions of Part Two, where the *material and psychosocial mediation* of holiness is central to the formation of a dominant Orthodox hagiographical paradigm.

<sup>41</sup> The general hermeneutic of my research insists that private mediation is no less constituted within and contributed to (however obliquely) a processual social existence. Happily, the Orthodox theological anthropologies bound up with hagiographical mediation in Cyprus are also aligned with this view, treating the human being and all her actions as interpersonal as much as (and insofar as) they are personal, created in the triune, interpersonal image of God.

### *1b) Methods and Ethics for an Ethnographic Theology*

My research in Cyprus took place over a total of eleven months, in four periods between 2012 and 2018, all based at the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI) in the capital, Nicosia. Seeking a diversity of perspectives and patterns on the island, I did not work to anchor myself within a single community (such as a parish or a monastery).<sup>42</sup> Instead, I sought a greater number of data points through micro-interactions at a wide variety of sites, the main criterion for the selection of which being an association with St. George, whether formal or informal, ancient or recent.

Churches and monasteries were obvious hubs for my research, as they could provide (i) people inclined to speak with a stranger about the saints in Cyprus; (ii) people of varying social, theological, and institutional perspectives (i.e. clergy and laity, as well as more fine-grained distinctions within these categories); (iii) institutional memory and records relating to how hagiographical dynamics were enacted in earlier generations; (iv) repositories of nonverbal hagiographical media (including especially images of St. George, but also other kinds of material objects, such as votive offerings or stones miraculously imprinted through the intervention of the saint); (v) names and epithets that usually could be traced to folklore or miracle accounts,<sup>43</sup> and provided their own patterns across the island (such as the prevalence of St. George churches named after sources of fresh water); and (vi) the opportunity to observe public devotional practice, both in ordinary time and during the times specially demarcated for hagiographical observance of the saint (festivals).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Such an approach might have yielded more depth, but at the expense of interconnection between apparently discontinuous sites of understanding—for instance, see the reports of St. George protecting towns threatened by violence, on opposite sides of the island (in Chapter II, section 3b).

<sup>43</sup> Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, was of special assistance (but by no means sufficient) in tracing these epithets.

<sup>44</sup> Although the monasteries of Cyprus are well-integrated with the religious life of the populace (insofar as they regularly receive visitors coming for spiritual instruction, hagiographical festivity, or even just a peaceful getaway), the monks' forms and patterns of life are more completely structured by the maintenance of a theological heritage and of ecclesiological norms—the saturation of their daily lives by theological (and certainly not least, hagiological)

In addition to the formal ecclesiastical sites, I identified, visited, and studied informal sites associated with St. George, including rural devotional shrines, sites identified in folklore as bearing the imprint of George's activity, and ruined churches that have been reclaimed and reinvested with hagiographical activity (Figure 1.4). At such sites, often empty of people but bearing the record of visitation and devotion, I was interested to understand how the materiality and spatiality of the sites themselves become



*Figure 1.4: Ruined church of St. George, Karavas. Filled again informally with hagiographical media and devotional tools. Photo taken in February, 2016.*

new hagiographical inscriptions produced over time by many people unknown to one another and with no authority over one another, remaining available to intervene in the hagiographical imagination of each new visitor. In a few cases, I was invited to Cypriots' homes, where I could engage them in private conversation and observe, if not private devotion, at least the spatial organization of hagiographical material (for instance, specific icons on walls) relative to other sensory textures of the home.

Other primary sites were museums and monuments, often operated by or affiliated with the Orthodox Church of Cyprus but just as often managed by other organizations and, nevertheless, full of hagiographical dynamics. Of particular importance to the time period under investigation and the prominence of St. George within it are those museums and monuments relating to the Greek-Cypriot

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understanding is especially dense. Therefore, without severing monastic perspectives from the rest of the hagiographical topography of the island, I nonetheless take the monasteries to yield particularly overt patterns in the entanglement of hagiography, land, and politics in Cyprus, and their voices will recur throughout. It is the case, moreover, that despite the island's partition in 1974 and the decades of intercommunal mistrust preceding it, Cypriot Muslims are reported in a variety of sources to have visited the monasteries, engaged with the monks in conversation, made offerings, and participated in festivals. Thus the monasteries had long been sites of *multireligious* presence and activity, though clearly on the terms of one community rather than another. In addition to the four active monasteries dedicated to St. George (Mavrovouni, Kontos, Alamanos, and Symvoulos), I spent time interviewing monks (and visitors) at Kykkos, Machairas, Stavrovouni, Agios Neophytos, and Apostolos Andreas monasteries, in search of evidence pertaining to the hagiographical topography and dynamics of the island (as St. George never exists or acts in isolation).

“National Struggle” (*ethniko agōna*) of (Greek) Cyprus. More than tangential to the study of St. George in Cyprus, the National Struggle museums and monuments constitute a secant cutting across the hagiographical topography of the island, carving out space for the heroes and the victims of Cyprus’ twentieth-century theater of violence within the cognitive ecologies of sanctification, while invoking the patronage of the saints, particularly St. George and the Mother of God, upon new phenomena and political configurations.<sup>45</sup>

Aside from the hagiographical record (and its human enaction) at diverse sites around the island, I devoted much time and attention to the textual archive. The Cyprus State Archive in particular was yielding, containing reasonably well-organized records of the British colonial administration’s activities and internal communications, not least pertaining to relations with the religious institutions and cultures of the island. The Orthodox Church of Cyprus Archive, though more difficult to navigate and read (its early materials in particular are impenetrably handwritten), contained worthwhile records of the communication and administration of each successive Archbishop of the modern era. Indispensable libraries included the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation Library, the Center for Visual Arts and Research (CVAR), the Kykkos Monastery Research Center, and my own Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI), each of which in its own way yielded extensive insight through published studies of Cypriot history, folklore, ethnography, art, intellectual and material culture, and religiously-infused politics. These texts made it possible to study the hagiographical dynamics of the past and to explore the *longue durée* of media and sites that may or may not still be active in the present.

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<sup>45</sup> The intersection and elision between *heroism* and *martyrdom*, so important to my analysis in Chapter III, is hardly a modern phenomenon alone—it traces to the very earliest manifestations of Christian hagiographical imagination in the antique Roman world, with its precursors evident in Thucydides, in Herodotus, and indeed in Homer. These associations of contemporary martyrdom with ancient heroism arise not mere scholarly dot-connecting: they are active and overt in the political-hagiographical productions of National Struggle memorialization.

The people whose voices appear in these chapters are real people, not composites, although all names (except where specifically noted and secured by permission) have been changed to pseudonyms. When I quote rather than paraphrase, it is because I believe I was able to capture near-exact sentences or turns of phrase;<sup>46</sup> however, even when I paraphrase a conversation, I will aim to make it clear when I am communicating my interlocutor's ideas rather than my own interpretation of them.<sup>47</sup> I conducted only a few involved interviews, preferring to speak with Cypriots *in media res* at sites of pertinence to the study. Therefore, I take this study to be more successful at highlighting patterns of discourse and practice than at plumbing the psychology of particular Cypriots *vis-à-vis* the hagiographical heritage of the island. Indeed, this approach required less time, and yielded less depth, than would be required for a conventional anthropological or sociological ethnography; but given that this is a study of the theological culture and sociological poetics of Orthodox hagiography, I believe the findings to be highly promising.

It is a long-recognized puzzle of ethnographic method that one cannot begin an investigation of lived phenomena without a pre-existing theoretical orientation (of the sort that would precipitate from disciplinary training and would be entailed in the selection of a particular community, problem, or practice as worthy of study), and yet, as Victor Turner articulated it, “the general theory you take into the field leads you to select certain data for attention, but blinds you to others perhaps more important for understanding of the people studied.”<sup>48</sup> Theory, *theōria*, is indeed what helps us to see, but it can narrow

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<sup>46</sup> I took careful notes during and following conversations. I did not use a tape recorder.

<sup>47</sup> Although, if we are to take the insights of hermeneutics and translation theory seriously, my interpretation is certainly not missing from even the direct quotations (insofar as many of them were spoken in Greek but presented here translated, by me, into English). Therefore there may be instances in which my rendering of another's words is not merely approximate but even erroneous if I have misunderstood a comment made to me in Greek. While it is certainly the case that my interlocutors themselves may make mistakes in what they communicate to me (although it is invariably the understanding communicated to me, rather than the factual basis to which it refers, that is the subject of my study), in other instances the mistakes may be mine, for which I take responsibility.

<sup>48</sup> Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 63. Cf. Glaeser, “An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes,” 32: “Theory provides us with a notion of what kind of systematic action-reaction-effect linkages to expect. And we can see whether they hold up under particular circumstances. Thus, theory gives us clues for tracing processes; it moves our gaze in certain directions.” At the same time, the field site must not merely remain the sandbox for theoretical experimentation; ethnographic inquiry (in an era that has rejected the model of ethnographer-adventurer documenting pristine lives and

even as it sharpens our field of vision. While I cannot (and would not want to) conduct analysis of hagiographical dynamics in modern Cyprus free of an array of theological and sociological concerns derived from disciplines well-established in the western academy, there is general consensus in the field that much of importance is missed in studies that fail to recalibrate their methodological apparatus and its guiding logics to the local conditions of societies conditioned by Orthodox Christian imaginaries and a post-Ottoman political order.<sup>49</sup> This dissertation, then, represents one attempt at a dialectic between deductive and inductive reasoning, and between application and emendation: how may we productively affix our (theoretically-tuned) attention to new objects, processes, and agents of social reality while, at the same time, gathering from these local realities the theoretical tools necessary to break open our prior configurations of scholarly understanding and retune them to resonate with that which they have not yet learned to accommodate?<sup>50</sup> The specific interpretive grid upon which my analysis is coordinated will be established in this chapter's conclusion, but from the vantage of ethnographic method, it bears note that the broader theorization of Orthodox hagiography (as introduced in the general introduction and to be analyzed at length in Chapters V and VI) is not being deductively *applied* to Cyprus but rather is functioning as a seed around which inductive research and the coordination of local categories can accrue, like pearl in an oyster's shell.<sup>51</sup>

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practices for the consumption of the academy) should work to amend or generate theory on the basis of local realities that have much to teach, thus becoming "one of the ways in which we develop languages of the social that help us make sense of the world in which we live" (37).

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, Hann and Goltz, Introduction to *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*, 11-12; Roudometov, "The Glocalizations of Eastern Orthodox Christianity," 227; and Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 4-10.

<sup>50</sup> Clifford Geertz, with typical color, envisions the result of this ethnographic needle-threading as "an interpretation of the way a people live which is neither imprisoned within [natives'] mental horizons, an ethnography of witchcraft written by a witch, nor systematically deaf to the distinct tonalities of their existence, an ethnography of witchcraft written by a geometer. ... To grasp concepts which, for another people, are experience-near, and to do so well enough to place them in illuminating connection with those experience-distant concepts that theorists have fashioned to capture the general features of social life" ("From the Native's Point of View," 29).

<sup>51</sup> It is a similar situation with Mitchell Dunier's use of Jane Jacobs as a "seed theory" for his research with a community of street vendors in New York (I owe this insight about Dunier's use of Jacobs to Omar McRoberts), a theory which is neither "applied" nor strictly speaking "tested," but which conditions the research questions he asks and remains in the atmosphere of his interpretation as found in his work, *Sidewalk*. I understand "emic" concepts or analyses, then, not as immediate

This is a crucial justification for hermeneutical (beyond mere journalistic) methods in the study of others' understanding and the media in which it is inscribed and mobilized; I am not only reporting but also interpreting hagiographical patterns in Cyprus. Therefore, I accept as a guiding logic of my own research the dialogical exchange between researcher and informants that does not reserve final authority to explain others' understanding but rather calls upon multiple forms of understanding (outsider, insider, and the thick spectrum of real positions between these abstract poles) to meet and bear upon one another, arriving to explanatory power only through their interaction and illumination of one another's blindnesses.<sup>52</sup> I make no claim either to perfect phenomenological entry into the other's point of view nor to the final authority of my own; my sense of the significance of holy mediation in the Orthodox world is a contribution to, rather than an encapsulation of, Cypriot society's "dense thicket of processes."<sup>53</sup>

The ethical complexities of studying the lives of communities and persons are well known and much discussed in ethnographic literature; insofar as ethnography has been incorporated into theology,

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reproductions of an "insider's view," but rather as derivation and interpretive lead-taking from local discourses or forms of life. St. George as "swift-to-help" or a particular custom being "edifying," in this respect, is akin to participants in Jelly's bar falling along a spectrum from "street" to "decent" in Elijah Anderson's *A Place on the Corner*—the categories are not Anderson's invention, but they are adopted to highlight interpretive dynamics already at work in his fieldsite. Cf. van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*, 4, on ethnography's negotiation between two systems of meaning, attempting what might be called a harmonization with "the distinct tonalities of [another's] existence" (Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View," 30)—*not* a self-effacement in total adoption of those tonalities. Different blind spots, moreover, affect those observing their own habituated culture from those that affect outsider interpreters. In any social setting, multiple inter-subjective orders of meaning overlay and penetrate one another, in ways that are incompletely visible to observers; saints (and the places, objects, times, images, and discourses associated with them), do not then resolve into single interpretations.

<sup>52</sup> I find myself aligned with Dunier's attempt to tread a middle ground between determinism (studying macro-level forces and trusting them to ensure individual behaviors) and impressionism (treating the individual testimonies and cultural details observed by the fieldworker as a tableau for presentation without reference to larger issues, or dealing with the latter, if at all, in separate chapters): he tries (as do I) "to grasp the connections between individual lives and the macroforces at every turn, while acknowledging one's uncertainty when *one cannot be sure how* these forces come to bear on individual lives" (*Sidewalk*, 344, emphasis mine).

<sup>53</sup> Glaeser, "An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes," 27. Bakhtin's sense of "polyphony," it might be said, here functions as an ethnographic virtue: as the characters of Dostoevsky live "on the borders of someone else's thought," taking on agendas and viewpoints that need not resolve into the final validity of authorial perspective, so too the "characters" of my ethnography (my Cypriot interlocutors are real people, of course, but insofar as they are reconstructed in prose they are, inevitably, diminished and to an extent falsified) have an independent existence and perspective beyond their being called upon to speak as evidence for my argument. It is important to acknowledge at the outset that I do not mistake the evidence that they provide (for the soundness of my argument) with the fullness of their perspective on any given matter.

ethics have been all the more affixed to the heart rather than the periphery of research.<sup>54</sup> In the chapters that follow, the past is not past: I interact with fiery convictions on the part of Cypriots and come face to face with impactful traumas, dragons that still haunt the imaginative landscape. I deal with some uses and interpretations of hagiographical media that I (and readers) may find troubling or even abhorrent, yet it is among my methodological commitments to seek empathy (not justification) with the positions I encounter.<sup>55</sup> This attempt at empathy even toward morally dubious patterns of hagiographical production and consumption is well-warranted by a hermeneutic sociology that seeks out the internal logic and visceral force of personal and cultural understandings.<sup>56</sup> But as we will see, such a move is also consistent with the Orthodox theological anthropology on which the study turns its lenses: for holiness to transform the human person and the human world, it must first be mediated to and appropriated or digested by that world, and *indigestion* is all-too-common, requiring pastoral care and asceticism as palliative.<sup>57</sup>

Ultimately, the ethnographic ethics at work in this project reflect my commitments but are not entirely within my control. As Rebecca Bryant cautions: “Historians and social scientists [and indeed interpretive theologians] working on Cyprus are not and cannot be neutral actors, because whatever subject they choose, whatever method they use, there are always political implications of their work that

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<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, 211-24; Punch, “Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research,” 166-80; Fine, “Ten Lies of Ethnography,” 270-77; and Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, xix-xxiii.

<sup>55</sup> Here, empathy is not a deferral or abdication of critical reason but rather an ethical orientation toward otherness that seeks to allow another’s world to strike into and disrupt the self-evidence of our own, rather than defaulting either to irreconcilable opposition or the imposition of a master position. I see in this position an intellectual affinity to Orsi’s interest in the “vertigo” of a scholar’s encounter with a world that does not align into the scholarly orthodoxies of social construction, and in the attempt to breach one’s own organizing imagination, however temporarily, to see into such a world (*History and Presence*, throughout). Cf. Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, 137-52; and Tracy, “Western Hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogues,” 11.

<sup>56</sup> See McRoberts, “Beyond Mysterium Tremendum,” 201-03, where empathy is not an alternative to objectivity (nor of course is either an absolute) but rather “a methodological heuristic” (202), a part of the inquiry process (aiding in destabilizing an outsider’s presuppositions while still drawing on an outsider’s experiences as potential analogy) rather than part of the conclusions.

<sup>57</sup> Though it is no stretch, theologically or historically, for pastors and ascetics of all stripes to be among those whose hagiographical appropriations are sites of violence to the self or the world.

affect both its writing and its reception.”<sup>58</sup> Even such basic decisions as the names used for the contested places and interrelated people of Cyprus are mired in hurtful histories, hidden supremacies, and intractable disagreements. I can only promise that, while my study of the Greek Orthodox hagiographical imagination and what it bears out on the island is an inescapably one-sided contribution,<sup>59</sup> it is undertaken in the spirit of the Cyprus Critical History Archive.<sup>60</sup> That is, this project is an effort not to provide determined answers to chop to the core of the dynamics at work in the island’s history of conflict, but rather to unspool one thread of the hagiographical fabric of Cyprus in the hopes that the questions it raises and the connections it highlights can prove a resource, offered in humility and friendship, for the pursuit of sustainable peace on Cyprus.<sup>61</sup> In turn, the analysis is intended not only to illuminate the lived theologies of Cyprus but also to point beyond its own limits of apprehension to suggest lines of inquiry for appropriation and emendation in the broader study of hagiography and divided society alike.

## (2) Lives and Afterlives of St. George

In the remainder of this chapter, we will proceed through an overview of the multidimensional and intercultural figure of St. George as he has inspired the communities of Cyprus, and as he has been

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<sup>58</sup> Bryant, “Introduction” [to a special issue of the *Cyprus Review* (23.2) on British-ruled Cyprus], 15. Thus she divides that crisscross the history of Cyprus “in turn etch the parameters and limits of the discipline, indeed of the permissible, even the possible” (16).

<sup>59</sup> After all, I draw at this stage neither on the Turkish language nor on more than a small number of Turkish-Cypriot, or for that matter British, interlocutors.

<sup>60</sup> “The Cyprus Critical History Archive (CCHA) is a joint initiative between the Association for Historical Dialogue & Research (AHDR) and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) to digitize, catalogue and make available to the public, Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot newspaper articles on inter-communal relations and conflict-related violence during the 1955-1964 period” (<http://www.ccha-ahdr.info/about>, accessed January 12, 2017).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 17-26, on ethnography’s potential contribution to positive change—not through patronizing assumptions of the ethnographer’s capacity and authority to “liberate” their research subjects, but rather by being “humble, reflexive, collaborative, and audacious” (17) in contributing intellectual labor to “the needs and challenges a community faces” (25). I stand with Robert Bellah and his collaborators in *Habits of the Heart* (297-307), in claiming that for the human or social sciences to be good in a technical sense they must also be good in a moral sense, “part of the whole they are analyzing” (302) and committed to the flourishing of that whole.

remade by them. This section is organized so as to highlight the distinctive relationship that each of the major communities of Cyprus (Greek, Turkish, and British, each with its own imperial legacy on the island) has cultivated with the saint in the course of the history of Cyprus. The latter three sections, then, each combines an introduction of one cultural current of appropriation of St. George with a consideration of certain key elements of the social history by which each empire shaped the life of the island (important background for the analyses to follow in Chapters II-IV).<sup>62</sup> After (a) briefly discussing themes in of the *Life of St. George* as it emerged in antiquity and has been transmitted, with varying elements and emphases, to the present day, I will examine the figure of the saint as he (b) appears among the Byzantine warrior-martyrs, an informal but influential class of saints that continue in modernity to anchor Greek Orthodox notions of terrestrial and spiritual warfare; (c) comes to western Europe and is adopted as a unifying figure for British Christianity, ultimately as a patron of the British Empire and its political imaginaries; and (d) has been adopted by Islamic folk traditions—particularly in the Ottoman Empire, where the saint both maintained his broad Mediterranean recognition as a champion of the oppressed and attained a new syncretic prominence in association with the Qur’anic trickster-prophet, al-Khidr.

### *2a) The Historical and Fictive Holy Man*

To reiterate: my discussion of St. George in Cyprus is concerned not with the person that the saint may have been in the third century CE but rather with the person he has since become: a figure woven of manifold representations, emerging diversely in the signifying acts of entangled communities. To stress this at the outset, however, is not to take a negative position on the “historicity” of the person of St. George. The bare contours of George’s historical characterization—a Christian aristocrat from third-

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<sup>62</sup> There are many excellent published histories of Cyprus, which will be cited below when relevant, but whose narrative accounts of the history of the island I will make no attempt to replicate in details. It is, rather, with St. George as my Virgil that I mean to make this introductory and partial pass through the history of Cyprus.

century Cappadocia, rising through the ranks of the Roman army, caught out by the imperial prohibitions on Christians serving in the army,<sup>63</sup> declaring his fidelity to his religion before a powerful Roman official, earning both execution and the celebration of the surrounding community of Christ-believers—are entirely plausible.<sup>64</sup> Yet the historical significance of the saint is that of the rich history of effects of stories about him, of the many ways that George (the traditional events of his life and the purported miracles of his afterlife) have inspired, motivated, and served as interpretive tools for many peoples over many centuries. The holiness of the saint is not concentrated in his life and death, instead flowing through and fountaining up in every subsequent relationship with and transformation by his living memory.

This cumulative and reverberating historicity of St. George, then, is richly *fictive*—by which I am suggesting not a compromised truth-value of the tradition but a poetic shaping of the human world, which is made real through cultural configuration of matter and time, and is organized for understanding by the voraciously dialogical imagination.<sup>65</sup> The fictive dimension of such hagiographical traditions, then, is that which enlarges reality, becoming historical through its ongoing intervention in history and its

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<sup>63</sup> For (more or less) historical contours of the anti-Christian policies promoted by Emperors Diocletian and Galerius, see Ste. Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, 35-78; Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 477-535; Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 22-28; and Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* [hereafter *Warrior Saints*], 20-21. An ancient account is given in Lactantius, *Of the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died* 9-11.

<sup>64</sup> According to Christopher Walter, “what was written about [St. George] was almost entirely fictitious” (*Warrior Saints*, 264) and so the plausibility of his life story comes without much anchorage in evidence. Therefore, “some sort of comparative, structural method is necessary for the study of Saint George” (Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of Saint George,” 295). Even aside from questions of the validity of its aims, the classical Bollandist method of peeling away accretions and establishing the authentic original core of a saint’s narrative simply does not work with St. George. The earliest extant life is clearly fabulous, while the later narratives were increasingly interested in retrofitting historical plausibility. Thus Delehayé’s attempt to establish the ancientness of the George cult (for instance in *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, 45-76) now needs qualification: however ancient, it is exceedingly difficult if not impossible to prove that there is a single ur-figure rather than a cluster of figures whose narratives and material cults (i.e. the imagination concerning whom) rapidly bled together.

<sup>65</sup> I am, of course, relying on the generally revised status of “fiction” in hermeneutical theory (in the company of Ricoeur, de Certeau, Iser, and others) as interwoven with all history and not least with sacred history, dependent as it is on the poetic potential of the “eyes of faith” (as will be discussed at length in Chapter V). With regard to hagiography in particular, see also the closing words of Delehayé, *Legends of the Saints* (181), echoing Aristotle and touching on this hermeneutics of fiction ahead of his time: “in that it makes this sublime ideal a reality for us, legend, like all poetry, can claim a higher degree of truth than history.”

inspiration of the historical world's inhabitants, shaping their perception of selves and others and their motivation to act accordingly.

It is in this light that the *Life of St. George* remains of crucial importance, entirely aside from questions of its factual elements. Though the saint's significance far outstrips his characterization in the *Life*, this characterization serves as a seed that will be planted in and tended by the imagination of living communities, that will blossom in the representations of many media produced and consumed by those communities, and that will bear diverse fruits in the effect-history of personal and political edification. The figure of St. George, however widely he spreads and dramatically he transforms in the thought and life of people in Cyprus, has in his *Life* a consistent identity and primary characteristics that bear the weight of his diversely flourishing cultural significance.

This version of the *Life* appears as a *synaxis* (summary for liturgical purposes) in the *Great Synaxarion* of Konstantinos Doukakis (1892) and is adapted virtually without edit from Nikodemos Hagiorites, who had modernized the tenth-century epitome of Symeon Metaphrastes.<sup>66</sup> Merely three paragraphs long, the narrative concentrates on the confrontation between St. George and Emperor Diocletian, leaving out almost all discussion of the saint's pious upbringing and loyal military career, the

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<sup>66</sup> Although it is originally a publication of the Orthodox Church of Greece, this *Synaxarion* of Doukakis is evidently used by the Church of Cyprus during the period under my examination: it is the version that prevails in the archives and libraries of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation (dedicated to preserving the heritage and documentation of the church from the Ottoman period forward), and extracts of this narrative still appear in devotional materials promoted by the monasteries of Cyprus. For other (pre-Metaphrastic) versions of the *Life* of importance to the history of the representation and celebration of St. George in Greek Orthodoxy, see especially Krumbacher, *Der heilige George in der griechischen Überlieferung* [hereafter *Der heilige Georg*]. It is Krumbacher, the great Byzantinist, who established that most of these versions rely to some extent on an account (which he calls "*das alte Volksbuch*") that may have been set down as early as the middle fourth century, which is mostly lost except for a few leaves of a palimpsest in Vienna (see Krumbacher, *Der heilige Georg*, 1-3; cf. Barnes, "Prosopography and Roman History," 93). More complete versions of this early text survive in (sixth-century) Syriac and Coptic translations of the Greek original—they, along with translations, can be found in Brooks (trans), *The Acts of Saint George* and Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia* [hereafter *Martyrdom and Miracles*]. It is telling that this text omits the episodes from George's early life found in later Greek versions and transmitted to modernity: here, he is introduced as the only one of a group of suspected Christians brave enough to declare to the face of the king, "I am a Christian." Only subsequently do we learn the Christian's name. The *alte Volksbuch* is in turn accepted as genuine eyewitness (though is unlikely to be such, due to the panoply of historical errors) by Theodotus of Ancyra and Theodosius of Jerusalem, writing encomia to St. George in the early- to middle- fifth century (Budge, *Martyrdom and Miracles*, xxvii; translations at 236-331).

most beloved miracle stories (such as the heroic slaying of the dragon and rescue of the princess), and even the extensive gory detail of longer martyrdom accounts. Instead, we encounter a George characterized purely by his fearlessness in the face of imperial power and his scorn in the face of religious error. Resistance to anti-Christian domination, frustrating from below the great power of the world, is indisputably the prevailing tenor in the *Life* of St. George.<sup>67</sup>

It is the second sentence of the *synaxis* (after the majority of the saint's life is crammed into the first) that establishes the overarching theme:

But when the impious Diocletian set in motion the persecution of the Christians and gave out the imperial order—that Christians must reject Christ and exchange him for the imperial honors, and that those who were not persuaded to reject [Christ] would receive the death penalty—this great George, being found present, announced himself to be a Christian and held forth on the falseness and weakness of idols, mocking those who believed in them.<sup>68</sup>

This mockery sets the tone for what follows: a series of increasingly outlandish tortures assigned by an increasingly frustrated emperor, met each time not with meekness but with contempt. The confrontation between saint and emperor is, moreover, a drama with an audience. Diocletian and his officers pour violence upon George, promising that it will end if he only will publicly venerate the *eidola* and so reaffirm the spiritual-political order of the empire for all who are watching. The resistance of the saint, however, has as its objective not to defeat the emperor by matching strength with strength, but rather to win the long game, demonstrating *to the emperor's followers* that their religious understanding is bankrupt and that there is an alternative: the true God who has blunted Diocletian's spears, healed George's mutilated body, and reanimated corpses of men and animals to testify to the Christian message. Instead of venerating the idols, George commands them to speak and bear witness to their own falsehood—which they do, subsequently toppling to the ground and provoking reactions of wonder and conversion on the part of

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<sup>67</sup> In light of the basic tension between power and resistance in Orthodox Christian conceptualizations of holiness (as discussed in the general introduction, section 1), this martyriological fixation on resistance should not be surprising.

<sup>68</sup> Doukakis, *Μέγας Συναχαριστής*, IV.337.

many, outrage and futile anger on the part of others (Figure 1.5).<sup>69</sup> Through his public, theatrical confrontation of the imperial and demonic powers, George “attracted many Greeks to faith in Christ.” Thus the *triumph* of the saint is not merely the “crown of martyrdom” that he ultimately receives by beheading but also the “many Greeks [who, observing the conduct of the saint,] believed in Christ and with one voice glorified God”—ranging from the humble farmer Glykerios to the Empress Alexandra herself.<sup>70</sup> They, no less than his own holy death, are the trophies that George will bear to God as *Tropaiophoros*—“trophybearer,” a primary epithet of the saint to this day.<sup>71</sup>



Figure 1.5: Panel depicting the saint toppling idols. Paralimni, Old Church of Saint George, 1901.

A few features of this distilled characterization of the saint and representation of his sanctifying deeds bear emphasis. First: the narrative is boiled down to its essentials, presenting one key event as the hinge between a virtuous life and a liberating death. The story of St. George is here the story of a soldier coming into conflict with, defying, being destroyed by, but ultimately triumphing over the imperial regime that he has spent his life supporting but that has turned against him and his community. Such a saint will resonate differently in the many different contexts where he is celebrated, but in modern Cyprus—existing within a series of imperial occupations, with their variable and sometimes fickle attitudes toward the Orthodox Church—this central theme electrifies the figure of George with an immediate relevance.

<sup>69</sup> The significance of this figuration of St. George as an exorcist and idol-smasher will be discussed especially in Chapter IV, section 3a, where the elision between cultural warfare and demonic warfare will come to the fore (as it will remain, throughout my analysis of John Chrysostom in Chapter V).

<sup>70</sup> Doukakis, *Μέγας Συναχαριστής*, IV.337-38. Constan notes likewise that, in an earlier *Martyrdom of St. George*, “Diocletian himself, falling into a deep silence, reflected on the bloom of the saint’s youth, the symmetry of his limbs, the beauty of his form, and marveled at his unflinching boldness” (*The Art of Seeing*, 175n40).

<sup>71</sup> This interpretation of the martyr’s “trophies” will be developed in greater depth in the conclusion to Chapter III.

Second, and the obviousness of this element belies its import: no mention is made of Cyprus in the narrative. George is not a figure whose local cult depends on the accidents of birth and death; he is not even of the category of holy people whose connection to the island is rendered by a time spent thereupon.<sup>72</sup> Not being a Cypriot saint or a Cyprus-sojourning saint, then, George falls into a third category, that of the “ecumenical saint”:<sup>73</sup> as Bishop Neophytos of Morphou puts it, “he was not Cypriot by birth nor did he ever live on Cyprus, but ... the love of the Orthodox people has made him Cypriot and settled him forever in the land and in the heart of the island.”<sup>74</sup> Although Cyprus does not want for saints born and bred on the island, it is significant that George is treated as more popular and powerful than any of them (besides the Mother of God); the relationship Cypriots uphold to him is one of love and devotion alone, an identification of spirit rather than of blood.

Third and finally: although in the setting of the narrative the adjective “Greeks” (*Hellēnes*) functions as a synonym for “pagans,” by the time of the story’s reuse in the modern Orthodox Church there is an imaginative premium on Greekness as a positive ethnic identifier. The plot of the *synaxis* highlights the *conversion* of the Greeks—that is, their rescue from religious error and their integration into the faithful people of the Christian God. In the modern setting, this emphasis renders George an etiological hero at the foundations of the Greek Christian community that is celebrating him, and with him, celebrating the Christian identity of the (ancient and modern) Greeks that he has rescued.

Might it be the case, as E. A. W. Budge proposed, that the characterization of St. George is an invention spun from a historical germ: the anonymous young man at Nicomedia, reported by Eusebius and Lactantius to have torn down the edict of Galerius and Diocletian against the Christians in 303,

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<sup>72</sup> See Makarios III, *Κύπρος ή άγια νήσος*, 3.

<sup>73</sup> The Fourth International Conference on the Hagiography of Cyprus, focused on this category, presented no fewer than four different papers on St. George.

<sup>74</sup> Neophytos of Morphou, Prologue to Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 6.

subsequently being burned to death?<sup>75</sup> We cannot know. However, it is worth considering that this young man's act of everyday resistance, if indeed it is the bedrock of the many subsequent centuries of hagiographical abundance around the figure of St. George, was a powerful act indeed—hardly “micro” in the sense that theorists of resistance might consider it to be, and not only because of its tragic cost, but rather insofar as something so simple as ripping up a posted decree might, through the ceaseless proliferations of hagiographical imagination, representation, and edification, come to engender a global phenomenon of such profound theological and political significance as that of St. George.

## *2b) From the Ranks of the Byzantine Warrior-Martyrs*

The enormous prominence of Saint George in the modern Mediterranean cannot be traced solely to the effects of hagiographical literature such as is found in the *synaxaria*. To understand George's hold on the Greek Orthodox imagination in Cyprus (to say the least), we need to outline the logic of the religio-political tradition of which George has long been a radiant exemplar. This means a brief sojourn in Byzantium, in an imaginative as much as in a historical register.

During the many centuries of inconstant military fortunes that followed the rule of Constantine, a group of martyrs, (most of) which consisted of soldiers in the Roman army who were executed during the reigns of Emperors Diocletian (285-305) and Julian (361-363),<sup>76</sup> grew dramatically in stature—not only with the successes but also with the painful failures of Byzantine military enterprise to secure or expand the imperial borders. Whereas the New Testament authors had worked to adapt the biblical literary vision of God-given victory against terrestrial enemies to the plane of a struggle against evil that transects the

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<sup>75</sup> See Budge, *Martyrdom and Miracles*, xxx-xxxii; cf. Eusebius, *History of the Church* VIII.5, and Lactantius, *Of the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died* 13. The young man is also sometimes identified as a Euethius of Nicomedia, but this is a later attribution; the accounts of the event in Eusebius and Lactantius do not provide the man with a name.

<sup>76</sup> See White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus* [hereafter *Military Saints*], 1; Constas, *The Art of Seeing*, 172.

political world and the human heart,<sup>77</sup> the post-Constantinian church found extensive opportunities to retrieve what Walter (somewhat indelicately) calls the “bellicosity of the Israelites” as a symbol of communal identity and a sign of divine sanction upon the Byzantine political project.<sup>78</sup> Emperor Constantine himself, so enduring a symbol of this political project, “features largely in the legend of St. George: in many respects Constantine might be described as his human analogue.”<sup>79</sup>

Certainly, warrior-martyrs like St. George were first sanctified for their martyrdom, rather than for their warfare, yet this genetic logic of their cult did not foreclose on the magnetic pull between their martyrdom and their devotees’ understandings of the martial fortunes of the empire.<sup>80</sup> James Skedros is correct that the Byzantine attitude toward the possibility of divine sanction of warfare was at best ambivalent, and that the presence of hagiographical media on the battlefield (icons, relics, crosses, liturgical practices, spiritual exercises) does not signify a sanctification of warfare itself.<sup>81</sup> However, as

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<sup>77</sup> Paradigmatically, in Ephesians 6:11-17. I will discuss this passage and its significance for the mediation of St. George in Cyprus in Chapter IV, section 3b.

<sup>78</sup> “In Byzantium,” White suggests, “the initial development of the corps of holy warriors was a phenomenon of the court rather than the Church. Although there is no evidence to suggest that the Church opposed the militarisation of a handful of martyrs, the works which most clearly show the changes in their cults originated in imperial circles. These innovations were, however, incorporated into church texts and rituals, with the result that many ecclesiastical writings featured the same interplay of the attributes of martyrdom and military prowess as the works of art commissioned for the court” (*Military Saints*, 203). See also Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 31; and Constan, “A Spiritual Warrior in Iron Armor Clad,” 245.

<sup>79</sup> Stace, *St. George*, 34; Stace continues, noting that “Eusebius relates that Constantine had an image made of himself overcoming a dragon, a symbol of the devil, and such an image is thought to have been displayed in the church he built over George’s shrine at Lydda” (this claim is made by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine* III.3).

<sup>80</sup> The narrative and theological primacy of George’s sanctifying death over his military career is evident in the earliest passion texts: see Krumbacher, *Der heilige Georg*, 1-40; cf. White, *Military Saints*, 21-22: “It is not entirely implausible that the *passiones* are implying a contrast between the saint’s service in the army, as a purely secular undertaking, and the more impressive achievement of his martyrdom.” It is the post-Constantinian context that begins to make the figure of the martyr-who-had-been-a-soldier into the distinctive synthesis of the warrior-martyr; George, at least, is evidently associated with appeals for intercession in war already by the seventh century, in Cyprus among other military frontiers. See also White, *Military Saints*, 10, 23-24, 64-65, 77-79; Grotowski, *Arms and Armor of the Warrior Saints*, 70-71; and Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 280: Part of Byzantine ideology was the identification of the enemies of the Byzantine armies as the enemies of God. This led to heavily religious canons for military organization and activity: “Crosses and icons were, of course, carried into battle; standards were blessed; there was a period of three days fasting and purification before starting a campaign . . .”

<sup>81</sup> Moreover, as Skedros argues, “the Church’s reluctance to canonize soldiers who fell on in battle is not at all to denigrate heroism on the battlefield, but to say that the Church knows that war is part of the fallen world” (“War, Byzantium, and Military Saints,” 12). As far as St. George is concerned, even as the military stature of George prior to his martyrdom came

Christopher Walter observes, these increasingly pragmatic Christian attitudes toward war, soldiers, and military service<sup>82</sup> were not self-contained on the battlefield but rather were corollaries of a more comprehensive reorientation of Christian perspectives on the relationship between divine holiness and the human political order. Between the Constantinian Dynasty (306-363) and the Macedonian Dynasty (867-1056)—encompassing the period in which the canonical Orthodox hagiographical paradigm took shape, and along with it a stable and widespread cult of St. George—we witness the political ramification of the two interpenetrating trends that Walter argues are fundamental to the associations of martyrs with warfare in Byzantium. These are: (i) “the commitment of all the saints to a conflict ‘against cosmic powers..., against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens (Ephesians 6, 11-12),”<sup>83</sup> and (ii) “a connection between this cosmic struggle against evil forces and the terrestrial situation of Christians, who would progressively associate Satan and his machinations with the attitude of contemporary society [including that which existed beyond the frontiers of the empire] against them.”<sup>84</sup>

This came particularly to be the case in the final centuries of Byzantine polity, when the martyriological associations of this corps of warrior saints (already active during the Arab and Slavic

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to be of greater interest and devotional relevance in middle Byzantium, “no author from this period attempted to reconstruct George’s hagiography to make these details a focal point” (White, *Military Saints*, 75).

<sup>82</sup> See Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 29, on variable Christian attitudes toward war in this period. With the emperor professing at least a nominal Christianity, one of the primary grounds for rejecting military service had dissolved. Cf. Grotowski, *Arms and Armor of the Warrior Saints*, 63-74; White, *Military Saints*, 2; Conostas, “A Spiritual Warrior in Iron Armor Clad,” 245.

<sup>83</sup> Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of Saint George,” 300. Cf. Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 9-11, on the emergence of these themes in apocalyptic literature from the letters of Paul to the Apocalypse of John.

<sup>84</sup> Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of Saint George,” 300. Although images of saints in military aspect date back to the fourth century (see Grotowski, *Arms and Armor of the Warrior Saints*, 74-78), it is toward the end of this period—following the first Arab invasions and the iconoclastic controversy—that we have a boom in warrior-martyrs being represented as soldiers, with the arms and armor that would become typical of hagiographical treatments of them both pictorial and poetic; these styles of representation “make sense because later Byzantine emperors became very aggressive at reclaiming Byzantine territory seized by Bulgarians in the Balkans and by Arabs in Eastern Asia Minor and Syria” (Skedros, “War, Byzantium, and Military Saints,” 17-18). See also White, *Military Saints*, 13-14, on the particular cultic promotion of warrior saints as military patrons by the Macedonian Dynasty. Thus too we see the warrior-martyrs assimilated to the corps of warrior angels: see Conostas, “A Spiritual Warrior in Iron Armor Clad,” 248; Pancaroğlu, “The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer,” 155; and Raptopoulos, *Ο Άγιος Μεγαλομάρτυς Γεώργιος ο Τροπαιοφόρος*, 29 (on St. George as τῆς οὐράνιου στρατιάς ὁ συνόμιλος—coordinator with the heavenly army).

conflicts) came back to the fore of their Byzantine cult.<sup>85</sup> As the frontiers shifted and the Byzantine polity entered its final phase, the cult of the warrior-martyrs found its venerable leitmotifs modulated into a minor key, and devotion to them was redoubled.<sup>86</sup> They had always been celebrated as “protectors and defenders,”<sup>87</sup> but in late Byzantium—and beyond, into the centuries of Ottoman and indeed British rule—the martial appeal of these saints was set ablaze with the martyr’s defiant resistance to overwhelming power and the mystery of a martyr’s triumph wrested from the shock and shame of apparent destruction. The endurance of these saints in the face of earthly suppression, which had always been the warrant for their sanctification, now became also the primary mode of their summons to personal and political *mimēsis*. It is this bivalent characterization of warrior-martyrs like George, I suggest, that makes them distinctively posed as resources for anti-imperial and anti-colonial (and thus, national) identification.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> See Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 284: “With the Latin conquest of Constantinople and the continual advance of the Turks into Europe, the triumphal attitude of the Byzantines to the warrior saints whose special function had been to lead them to victory was modified. Now they needed above all protection from their conquerors. The apotropaic function of warrior saints came back into vogue.” Cf. White, *Military Saints*, 2-5. Her analysis presses further than that of Walter’s: “Although Walter recognises that the saints’ military cults were particularly prominent only from the tenth century onward, their continued importance as martyrs and the relationship between the two attributes receive little attention” (5). And as for St. George in particular, see Conostas, “A Spiritual Warrior in Iron Armor Clad,” 246: especially in the late Byzantine period, St. George is “invoked for protection against the empire’s many enemies, and he appears frequently in apotropaic representations, near church entrances, guarding the gate of the sanctuary, at the entry of the apse, and generally at the head of the army of martyrs.” Note that the cult of St. George by this time had already long thrived among *conquered peoples* incorporated into the Byzantine empire (see Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 5), now protected by the spiritual patronage that had overthrown them.

<sup>86</sup> Chrysochoides makes this case in his paper “Στρατιωτικοί ἅγιοι,” arguing that the veneration of military saints across Byzantium is cultivated (not least through military propaganda) during the centuries of Byzantine might, but that their prominence increases rather than decreases as the empire is increasingly threatened, increasingly further still as protectors of Orthodox identity as a subordinate community under Ottoman rule. In other words (though he does not say as much explicitly), the corps of saints that came into being as a reflection of imperial power found their enduring identity and relevance to their devotees not as emblems of terrestrial power but as anchors of resistance. See also White, *Military Saints*, 77-93, especially 91-92: “Perhaps not surprisingly, these martyrs, defenders of both the faith and the empire, did not lose their popularity even after the victories of the Macedonian period had been reversed. . . . Indeed, sources from the eleventh and twelfth centuries indicate that, if anything, the military saints became even more popular and established” (92). The devastating Battle of Manzikert in 1071, after which an uninhibited mass migration of the Seljuk Turks into Anatolia resulted in a new intercultural (and thus too a new hagiographical) texture in the region, will recur as a touchstone for the Byzantine and post-Byzantine identification of the warrior-martyrs, and above all George, as a frontier-saint and border-keeper. It is from the eleventh century onward, indeed, that striking changes will occur in the representation of George (beginning in the eastern frontiers of the empire), rendering him increasingly militaristic, if not apocalyptic, in the waning centuries of Byzantium.

<sup>87</sup> Skedros, “War, Byzantium, and Military Saints,” 19.

<sup>88</sup> As we will explore at length in all three of the remaining chapters of Part One.

These broader Byzantine trends of hagiographical politics are borne out in Cyprus as well, which from the seventh century onward was raided and ransacked, reciprocally conquered, and jointly ruled for almost three hundred years by the representatives of Emperor and Caliph.<sup>89</sup> Even after its reconquest by Emperor Nikephoros Phokas in 965, Cyprus remained a frontier environment subject to intercultural skirmishes and exchanges through the time of its final Byzantine ruler, the renegade governor Isaac Komnenos. With Isaac's overthrow by Richard the Lionheart (who quickly sold the island to the Knights Templar), Cyprus became incorporated into a Latin Catholic economic, political, and religious network for the following four hundred years.

Throughout this time, the Orthodox Christian imagination of St. George was incandescent with Byzantine identifications and the vision of a heavenly warrior standing at guard to resist all that would erode or topple Byzantine society. Arcadius II, a seventh-century Archbishop of Cyprus, imagined St. George in a string of lofty epithets that are defiantly recited even today in the Greek-Cypriot festal liturgies of the saint (and note the explicit vocabulary of resistance and rectification):<sup>90</sup> "George, unconquerable shield [*hoplon*] of the soldiers of Christ; George, the defender [*promachos*] of the kingdom; ... George, you who are protection for the captives [*aichmalōtōn prostaia*], fortification [*teichos*] for fighting men; ... George, demolition [*kathairesis*] of idols and rectification [*anorthōsis*] of the faith."<sup>91</sup> The endurance of this

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<sup>89</sup> For a brief accounting of this period, see Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 181-202, and Zavagno, "Two Hegemonies, One Island." For a more recent and more nuanced, monograph-length treatment, see Zavagno, *Cyprus between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Zavagno calls into question the traditional historiographical narrative of these centuries as being the Cypriot "Dark Ages," looking to archaeological and material evidence (given the dearth of textual evidence) to reveal the island as a economically vibrant, multicultural frontier with ample local strategies for making the most of the larger conflict between empires, rather than what has usually been assumed: condominium Cyprus as "a sort of no man's land, a barren victim of the conflict between powers" ("Two Hegemonies, One Island," 4; for an example of the "dark ages" narrative, see Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, 28: "Cyprus was invaded and pillaged by Arab forces, its churches destroyed, thousands of its inhabitants massacred or sold as slaves, and the remnant subjected to the most oppressive taxation. The island groaned under her Mahomedan oppressors for nearly a century and a half").

<sup>90</sup> Specifically, in the Church of Cyprus' *Κύπρια Μηνναία*, III.30-32.

<sup>91</sup> Arcadius, "Ὁμιλία εἰς τὸν ἅγιον μεγαλομάρτυρα Γεώργιον," lines 20-21, 26-29: "Γεώργιος, στρατιωτῶν Χριστοῦ ὄπλον ἀήττητον. Γεώργιος, τῆς βασιλείας ὁ πρόμαχος ... Γεώργιος, αἰχμαλώτων προστασία, πολεμουμένων τεῖχος ... Γεώργιος, εἰδώλων καθαίρεσις καὶ πίστεως ἀνόρθωσις." See commentary on these epithets in White, *Military Saints*, 23-24.

figuration should not surprise us: it articulates the magnetic appeal of the warrior saints in times of intercultural duress—times that, in Cyprus, have yet to conclude. But where the cult of such saints as Demetrius and Theodore (though popular in the Byzantine era)<sup>92</sup> ultimately dwindled to negligibility, that of St. George only continued to intensify. There are numerous reasons for this, which I will explore in the coming chapters; but in no small measure, I believe, it is due to the intercultural *appeal* of St. George (as a patronal figure of special importance to Frankish and Venetian Catholics, to Ottoman Muslims, to British Protestants),<sup>93</sup> more so than that of the other warrior martyrs, with the result that Orthodox Christian Cypriots found themselves for centuries struggling to assert their relations with and patronage by the saint as a modality of resistance to their occupying powers' own claims to him.

It is to these relations with St. George on the part of the British and Turkish communities of Cyprus, and to historical sketches of how they came to be significant, to which I now turn. Although the imagination of St. George as a defender against Frankish and Venetian exploitation will figure occasionally in the coming chapters, I will conjoin the relevant introduction of the Latin crusader-kings' devotion to St. George with that of the establishment of the saint as patron of the British empire—since their stories are entwined, beginning, so far as Cyprus is concerned, with the arrival of Richard the Lionheart in 1191.

### *2c) St. George Goes West: Crusades and Colonies*

The story of British rule (*Anglokratia*) in Cyprus, and of that rule's association with the patronage of St. George, begins with Richard the Lionheart, King of England between 1157 and 1199, whose arrival

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<sup>92</sup> See Demosthenous, *Byzantium*, 72-73, on St. Demetrios in Cyprus and the popularity of warrior saints in Cyprus due to the “psychological needs of the Cypriot society.”

<sup>93</sup> I recognize also the significance of St. George to the Maronite and Armenian communities of Cyprus, each of which has a long history on the island. I have visited their churches of St. George and have interviewed some members of their communities; with unlimited space and time I would gladly include their distinctive perspectives. However, as my argument gravitates around the larger-scale political tensions between the Orthodox Christian population of Cyprus with the British and Turkish states, from 1878 to the present, I will not address these other Christian minorities in this project.

to and rapid conquest of Cyprus were (according to the romantic English imaginary, at least) an unplanned act of gallantry. In the classic account, Richard's fleet is pummeled and separated by storms on the way to Acre; the ship carrying his sister and fiancée runs aground on Cyprus, where its passengers are taken hostage by the island's Byzantine governor, Isaac Komnenos.<sup>94</sup> Retaliation is swift and decisive: Richard's armies seize Limassol Castle as a headquarters and subsequently, with the aid of Guy de Lusignan and other crusader lords from the mainland, take control of the entire island within a month.<sup>95</sup> Isaac Komnenos is banished and imprisoned; Richard marries the Spanish princess Berengaria in the chapel of St. George at Limassol Castle,<sup>96</sup> and simultaneously crowns himself and his bride King and Queen of Cyprus. Although the island would quickly pass into the control of the Knights Templar and then of Guy de Lusignan, whose descendants would rule the island for almost three hundred years, the brief reign of King Richard, under the flag of St. George, remains an imaginative and even a legal touchstone for the resumption of British administration of Cyprus in 1878.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See, for instance, Luke, *Cyprus*, 37-41; Home, *Cyprus*, 43-54; and Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, 29-30. The reasoning for this action on the part of Isaac is never established, but it seems plausible that—if it truly took place—Isaac may have been seeking a ransom that would have bolstered his financial security against the interference of Constantinople, from whose authority he had declared independence.

<sup>95</sup> There is a strong argument to be made that the crusaders' conquest of Cyprus was not, as it is often recounted, a mere side effect of Richard's romantic rescue of his captive beloved. On the contrary, there was ample strategic importance in the island as a hub for the transit of crusader supplies and personnel to and from the Holy Land. See Coureas, "To What Extent Was the Crusaders' Capture of Cyprus Impelled by Strategic Considerations," 198-201; and Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 46 (which in turn draws on the more extensive biographical treatment of John Gillingham's *Richard I*), suggesting that the occupation of Cyprus was part of Richard's strategic agenda from the beginning, not least due to the English king's suspicion that Isaac Komnenos, in open rebellion against Constantinople, had made arrangements of mutual support with Saladin. Nevertheless, the chivalric image of Richard riding across the sea to rescue his princess from the scheming, furious lord Isaac continues to play in informal remembrance of the event (including that of British soldiers stationed on Cyprus in the 1970s, some of whom I had the opportunity to interview) as resonant with the dragonlegend of St. George.

<sup>96</sup> The site of Richard's and Berengaria's wedding is sometimes erroneously given as Kolossi Castle, west of Limassol. However, Kolossi had not yet been built in 1191, and the chapel of St. George was more fitting in any case for the British monarch, if indeed he had already taken St. George as the patron saint of his armies.

<sup>97</sup> See Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 60, 94; cf. Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, 29-30; Cavendish (ed), *Cyprus 1878*, 112 (it is noteworthy, here, that Sir Garnet Wolseley, Cyprus' first British High Commissioner, treats with contempt the notion that the legacy of King Richard I is plain to see in Cyprus, as if "engraved on the rocks"; nonetheless, despite his sour attitude toward there being much remnant of Richard's rule that had not been trampled by the intervening regimes, Wolseley takes great interest in how, "after his great battle near this [island], he adopted St. George as England's patron"—this etiology, factual or not, renders for the first Commissioner a noteworthy continuity between the first and the second

Richard's adoption of St. George as the patron saint of his army is itself an important lesson in hagiographical dynamics that would continue to bear fruit in the history of Cyprus and the formation of British identity (and so too, eventually, of English nationalism). George had been introduced to Britain as early as the sixth and no later than the eighth century, by missionaries and pilgrims who had visited the holy land and come away impressed by the vitality of George's cult at Lydda.<sup>98</sup> A version of the *Acts of St. George* would be translated into Anglo-Saxon, including episodes in which the saint visits sacred sites (such as Glastonbury and Caerleon) while on tour with the Roman army—providing preemptive validation for a local cult of George firmly grounded in the saint's presence (before he was even a saint).<sup>99</sup> But it was indeed the Crusades that entrenched George's stature in the Latin Church, not least in Britain: after accounts spread westward of the warrior martyr's apparition and intervention to break the second Siege of Antioch (1098), winning the day for the crusader army, George was adopted by the Catholic Church in Britain as the patron saint of soldiers.<sup>100</sup> Richard's own adoption of the saint as his army's emblem a century later had a significant dimension of local politics as much as crusading hagiographics: with his army composed of troops from across his domain, from the French region of Aquitaine to the border of Scotland, the banner of a local saint (such as St. Alban of England or St. Elgius of Aquitaine)

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British occupations, flying the same banner of saintly patronage). Decades later, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the British administration of Cyprus, in July 1928, an op-ed appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* comparing the prosperity brought by the modern colonial administration with that inaugurated by Richard: "This was not ... the first British occupation of the island. ... The three centuries during which it was ruled by [Richard] successors were the golden age of Cyprus, when its laws, its wealth, and even its literature were famous throughout Europe" (State Archives, SA1-735/27).

<sup>98</sup> See Collins, *St George and the Dragons*, 85-89, and Fox, *Saint George*, 59-60. "It is extraordinary," Walter observes ("The Origins of the Cult of Saint George," 315), "how widely Saint George's relics and cult spread in Western Europe." Gregory of Tours knows and praises the miracles of George's relics in the middle sixth century, and churches are dedicated to him during the sixth and seventh centuries throughout (what are now) Germany, Belgium, and especially France: at "Mainz, Amay, Metz, Chelles and Saint Bohaire, as well, perhaps, as at Soissons, Paris, Bordeaux and Arles" (316).

<sup>99</sup> See Collins, *St George and the Dragons*, 89-90; Riches, *St George*, 20-21; and Stace, *St George*, 27-29. Cf. Bengtson, "Saint George and the Formation of English Nationalism," 319, on such "early attempt[s], relatively common among other saints' vitae, to adapt the hagiography of a foreign saint to fit the conceptual framework of the native population of England."

<sup>100</sup> Collins, *St George and the Dragons*, 90-92; cf. Riches, *St George*, 12. It is noteworthy that it is not only the eyewitness accounts of St. George's apparition that secured his prominence as a patron saint of soldiers (for indeed, there were also accounts of apparitions by St. Mercurius and St. Demetrius in the same battle), but also the enthusiasm of the Byzantine soldiers, whose special devotion to St. George in particular seemed to be infectious among their temporary Latin allies.

may have exacerbated regional rivalries within an army whose loyalty and solidarity were indispensable.<sup>101</sup> St. George, by contrast, belonged to nobody and so could belong to everybody—a dynamic we will see played out among the Orthodox Christians of Cyprus and beyond, and indeed engendering new tensions where colonized and colonizer assert their patronage by one and the same saint.

It is with the entanglements of St. George with British colonialism that this account must conclude, as it is here that St. George of the British intersects again with Cyprus and the analyses of this case study.<sup>102</sup> The chivalric ethos bound to St. George in Britain tilted into a new register with the Age of Exploration, in the course of which the Church of England sanctioned the spread of Christianity as part of a larger civilizing imaginary. Colonial institutions, validated by understanding that they were bearing the light of progress and authority into regions mired in darkness, found themselves reflected in the mythic image of St. George, penetrating into regions where the maps had proclaimed that “here be dragons,” exterminating the horrors of the swamp and making space for the city of God in its place.

This is the kind of imagery we find applied to Cyprus in the early generations of British rule. Although the British papers were euphoric when Cyprus was acquired from the Ottoman Empire and placed under British administration in 1878, Sir Garnet Wolseley, the first British High Commissioner of

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<sup>101</sup> Andy McSmith, in a St. George’s Day article in *The Independent* (“The Big Question: Who was Saint George, and why is celebrating him so contentious?”: April 22, 2009), makes a similar case regarding the later adoption of St. George as a unifying symbol in the Hundred Years War. Note that Laborderie (like Collins, who relies on him) casts doubt on the long-accepted account of Richard’s adoption of St. George as a patron for his crusading army, seeking to interpret instead the *imagined* connection between Richard and George (including the legendary visit of Richard to George’s tomb in Lydda) that would become so firmly entrenched in later English chronicling and imperial cult, establishing an elision between the king and the saint at a (later) time when St. George was already robustly present as a national symbol (see Laborderie, “Richard the Lionheart and the Birth of a National Cult of St. George in England,” 37; and Collins, *St George and the Dragons*, 92-94). Given my study’s gravitation to concern with the latter kind of questions over any purification of the historical record, I need not adjudicate between these contrasting accounts, instead accepting that, even if Richard’s devotion to and patronage by St. George is apocryphal, the political significance of this relationship is anything but.

<sup>102</sup> It is important, if perhaps obvious, to note that the historical account that follows is distilled from a wide range of sources, many of which “were written by Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, Greek, Turkish or British authors in periods of intense violence” (Papadakis, “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” 125—this is from Papadakis’ own introduction to his analysis of Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot school books purporting to present the history of Cyprus). It is doubtless the case that none of these sources is an adequate accounting of the whole.

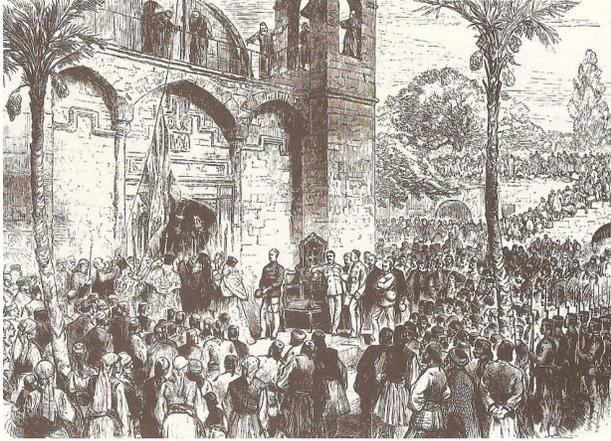


Figure 1.6: “Greek priests blessing the British flag at the Church of St. Procopios in the yard of the Kykko Monastery, Nicosia.” *Illustrated London News*, September 21, 1878.

Cyprus (and himself a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George) referred to the capital of the island as “one great cess-pit into which the filth of centuries has been poured,” while Wolseley’s comrade William Butler conceived of the island as an “infernal hole” that the British soldiers would need all their courage and patience to confront.<sup>103</sup> For Wolseley’s administration, the

tenuous political alliance between the British and Ottoman empires did not in the least raise the estimation of Ottoman civilization—on the contrary, the Ottoman island registered to them simultaneously as a chaotic wasteland and a diamond in the rough, a daughter of classical antiquity who needed, above all, to be rescued by gallant British authority and thus restored to her glory.<sup>104</sup>

Already in the 1840s, in light of the Greek revolution and the dwindling of Ottoman military supremacy, leading Ottoman statesmen began to recommend arrangements by which the Sultan would secure the empire’s borders by making deals with western European powers, exchanging land for political

<sup>103</sup> See Cavendish (ed), *Cyprus 1878*, 33; cf. Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 101-07.

<sup>104</sup> As Morgan puts it, the early years of the occupation were buoyed by “a widely held belief that the British presence in Cyprus, after centuries of Ottoman rule, would be not only civilising but also redemptive” (*Sweet and Bitter Island*, 8). British Parliamentarian and periodic Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone summarizes this position, as reported in *The Times* of London (December 30, 1878): “What then is the case of Cyprus? It is the case of an island inhabited by people who had been civilised for centuries when we were barbarians, and nothing but barbarians, and who never lost the essentials of civilisation, except indeed, their form. They had been an oppressed people . . . despotically governed by the Turk.” To similar effect, in an 1878 letter to his wife, Wolseley writes that “Cyprus has long ceased to be the green forest country our imagination had painted it to be, but I hope that under British rule, it may ere many years elapse, bloom out again as one of the brightest ornaments in the Mediterranean” (the letter is preserved in the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia). Similar sentiments can be found throughout Wolseley’s journals, for instance: “It is no wonder that the Christians should rejoice at our coming to relieve them from an oppression under which they have groaned so long” (Cavendish [ed], *Cyprus 1878*, 10). Of similar attitude as Wolseley’s commentary, but from an explicitly religious perspective, is an English evangelist’s 1878 exploration of “England’s new possession” and “its place in Bible history”: “May we not hope that a new and better day is dawning for Cyprus, when it shall shake off the yoke of slavery and other vile Turkish institutions; and that in this, one of the most interesting cemeteries of extinct civilizations, there shall speedily be a resurrection of intellectual and spiritual life?” (Davidson, *Cyprus*, 56-57).

support. The Russians, in particular, posed a grave threat to Ottoman and British interests alike, and it is on the basis of mutual resistance that the two powers came to an agreement, in 1878, to grant the island of Cyprus as a protectorate to Britain in exchange for alliance against possible Russian incursion into the eastern Ottoman Empire.<sup>105</sup> For the British, Cyprus represented a crucial strategic outpost from which the Suez Canal could be protected and military interests throughout the Middle East could be pursued, but the island also had a special romantic allure as the gateway to a lost Holy Land once within the grasp of King Richard and the remnant of a lost classical Hellenism to which British ideals could be traced in pedigree.<sup>106</sup> And so, in spite of the punishing natural and cultural conditions, the British administration set about trying to restore Cyprus to an imagined glory. Part of this operation was concerned with material improvement (roads, irrigation, hospitals, and the like) and part of it with the rectification of the people themselves according to “modern principles”: paramount among these principles, “separating the church and the state, civil structures and identifying the inhabitants along ethnic lines.”<sup>107</sup> And a new flag of Cyprus was envisioned, a quixotic solution to mistrust between the people and the administration: “a red St George Cross on a white background with the arms of Richard I.”<sup>108</sup>

As the inhabitants of Cyprus were disentangled along ethnic and religious lines—lines that had certainly existed during the Ottoman period but were administrative rather than ontological—there came to be reified a sense of two non-overlapping “communities” on the island. “Greek-Cypriot” and “Turkish-

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<sup>105</sup> See Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, 35-45; Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 53; Morgan, *Sweet and Bitter Island*, 2-4; and Holland and Markides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 162-67. Mallinson gives a sharper analysis of the geostrategic underpinnings of this alliance, in light of the nineteenth-century “British obsession with Russian power” (*Cyprus* [2010], 31; cf. Mallinson, *Cyprus* [2005], 9-20). Thus he invokes the prophetic sentiments of Sir Edmund Lyons, from 1841, as pertaining to Cyprus as well: “A truly independent Greece is an absurdity. Greece can either be English or Russian, and since she must not be Russian, it is necessary that she be English.” (32). The classic, thorough account of the first year of British occupation of Cyprus can be found in Hill, *The History of Cyprus*, IV.269-304.

<sup>106</sup> See Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 60.

<sup>107</sup> Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 158.

<sup>108</sup> This being the recommendation of Haynes Smith, High Commissioner of Cyprus from 1898-1904. See Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 181.

Cypriot” are, in other words, categories which were not invented by the British administration but were certainly solidified by British administrative procedures.<sup>109</sup> It is in keeping with these developments that a panhellenic identity came to flourish among Orthodox Christian Cypriots. A bitter dispute between candidates for the Archbishopric of Cyprus, following the death of Archbishop Sophronios III in 1900, polarized the Orthodox population, driving Hellenism as a wedge ever deeper between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and (with the eventual rise to power of the Greek nationalist Archbishop Kyrillos II) “repositioning the church as a political and ideological opposition to the British.”<sup>110</sup> The figuration of St. George in this period (by Anglicans and Orthodox alike) will be of particular interest in this study, for as Benedict Englezakis observes, the diverse resources of the church to provide “social tonic in times of special national need” were in high demand and robust mobilization.<sup>111</sup>

With the outbreak of World War I, the British and the Ottomans found themselves on opposite sides, justification enough for the former to annex the island entirely—first offering the island to Greece in

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<sup>109</sup> Such procedures included census (between the 1881 and the 1946 censuses, for instance, the range of categories for selection had collapsed from thirteen, linked to religious affiliation, to two, fixed as ethnonational alternatives), representational local governance and access to colonial resources, and the promotion of “purified” Greek and Turkish languages where there had prevailed a hybrid tongue “heavily influenced by various Greek idioms, as well as Frankish, Venetian, and Ottoman idioms” (Varnava, “Sophronios III,” 109; cf. Beckingham, “The Turks of Cyprus,” 170-71) spoken by a majority of Christians and Muslims alike. The State Archives, particularly the indices SA02 and SA03 (collecting files from 1878 and 1879), reveal the early British administration developing a strategy of willingness to intervene in “intercommunal” but not in “intracommunal” disputes—thus engendering a firmer dividing line through the pragmatics of relating to each community distinctively and to the two discretely. As is made clear by the documents of the 1878 Cyprus Convention, however, this strategy of relating distinctively to “each community” of Cyprus is in no small part developed as Great Britain’s way of safeguarding the rights of the island’s Muslim inhabitants (rights to *sharia* courts, to the maintenance of mosques and cemeteries, to religious education, and so forth)—a particular concern of the Ottoman administration that was woven into the terms of granting the island as a British protectorate. See Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, 41-43; and Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 152-201. See also Hatay, “Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 81-82, and Constantinou, “Aporias of Identity,” 256-60, on the ways that, during the period of British rule, a flexibility in religious affiliations was dismantled according to the presuppositions of western European biopolitics; and Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, 119-20, for parallel dynamics (e.g. the census reifying religious fluidities) in Crete.

<sup>110</sup> Varnava and Pophaides, “Kyrillos II,” 175; cf. Kitromilides, “Greek Irredentism in Asia Minor and Cyprus,” 10-14.

<sup>111</sup> Englezakis, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus*, 426. Englezakis argues that the Church of Cyprus, entering this nationalistic phase without yet having freed itself from the degraded “mental outlook” it had assumed during the Ottoman period (422), only succeeded in “rais[ing] morale without increasing the sources of spiritual vitality and without resolving the spiritual conflicts from which Cypriot society suffered” (426). These concerns will be addressed in Chapter IV, section 3b.

exchange for military action against Bulgaria, and when this offer was declined, formally declaring Cyprus a Crown Colony in 1925.<sup>112</sup> By this time of the years following the Lausanne Treaty and leading up to the centenary of the establishment of Greece as a nation, a fervor for *Enōsis*—unification with the nation of Greece—was on the boil in Cyprus.<sup>113</sup> Liberation is an intoxicating ideal, the mantle of which the British administration had gladly assumed for itself in its colonization of Cyprus. But the enslavement from which Wolseley and others had envisioned themselves delivering the Cypriots would ultimately be cast as a charge against the British administration itself. The churches of St. George (by no means exclusively, but amply) were the sites of commemoration and demonstration that imagined the “resurrection” of Cyprus as vouchsafed by the martyrs of the church, who indeed shared their glory with the “martyred island.”<sup>114</sup>

October 1931 saw the first major civil unrest that insisted on the uncompromising Greekness of Cyprus and demanded that the British Governor “clear out from our country, for the sake of his own purification, this abomination which is called English Occupation and Administration of Cyprus.”<sup>115</sup> Harsh sanctions were imposed by the government on the operation of the Church of Cyprus, responding to what the government viewed as an intolerable collusion of ecclesial and political agendas (which were, however, seen by the Church as entirely integrated);<sup>116</sup> through the years of civil restriction that followed, compounded by seasons of terrible drought and the well-meaning but tone-deaf British response thereto, these tensions never again reduced below a simmer. After a second World War, during which thousands of Greek-Cypriots again enlisted in the British military and again had their expectations of national

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<sup>112</sup> See Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, 172-83, and Mallinson, *Cyprus* [2010], 34-35.

<sup>113</sup> See Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, 160-71; Hill, *The History of Cyprus*, IV.488-568; Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 314-18, 335-37; and Kitromilides, “Greek Irredentism in Asia Minor and Cyprus,” 4-10.

<sup>114</sup> One such commemorative event, that of the unveiling of a statue of the Ethnomartyr Kyprianos at the church of St. George in Strovolos, will be discussed at length in Chapter III, section 1b.

<sup>115</sup> From the Manifesto issued by Nikodemos of Kition, October 1931. On the unrest of 1931 and its repercussions, see Varnavas, *Ιστορία του Απελευθερωτικού Αγώνα της ΕΟΚΑ*, 12-15; Hill, *The History of Cyprus*, IV.546-54; Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 342-51; Morgan, *Sweet and Bitter Island*, 125-40; and Holland and Markides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 213-15.

<sup>116</sup> Such sanctions (including the Flags Prohibition Law and Bells Regulation Law of 1931) and the logic of Orthodox resistance to them will be discussed especially in Chapter III, section 3b.

recognition in return for their service frustrated, Archbishop Makarios III finally organized a Plebiscite that sought to sidestep appeals to the British administration entirely, instead demanding support for (Greek-)Cypriot self-determination from the UN and the government of Greece.<sup>117</sup> This Plebiscite, like so many articulations of the identity of Cyprus before it, framed the island’s history martyriologically: it had struggled; it had been repeatedly crushed; it would rise again.<sup>118</sup>

And so, in April 1955, armed anti-colonial warfare erupted on Cyprus, carried out by the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (*Ethnikē Organōsis Kyprīōn Agōnistōn*; EOKA) that had been founded in secret by Archbishop Makarios III and Colonel George Grivas, a decorated Greek officer of Cypriot origin who returned to the island to coordinate its military

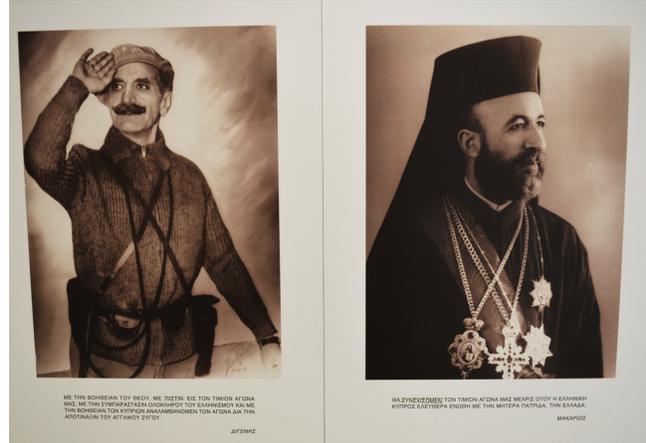


Figure 1.7: Colonel George Grivas and Archbishop Makarios III. Photos on display in the Greek-Cypriot National Struggle Museum, Nicosia.

efforts. It began with a campaign of bloodless sabotage of colonial governmental and military installations, but soon expanded into open guerilla warfare as well as assassination, intimidation, and violence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (as well as between hard-liner and moderate Greek-Cypriots).<sup>119</sup> The hagiographical figuration of this “national struggle for liberation” (*ethniko apeleutherōtēs agōna*) is an important dimension of my analysis to follow, particularly in Chapters III and IV: we will see that St. George, as the saint of liberation *par excellence*, was entailed in many of the media in which the EOKA

<sup>117</sup> See Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 352-65.

<sup>118</sup> The original Plebiscite, its full text and many volumes of signatures, and copies of referenda and pamphlets making reference to it, are in the National Struggle Museum of Nicosia (to be discussed in Chapter III, section 2b).

<sup>119</sup> For a closely-involved British administrator’s novelistic account of the outbreak of anticolonial warfare on Cyprus, see Durrell, *Bitter Lemons*, 247-89. More modern, scholarly accounts can be found in Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 363-72; Morgan, *Sweet and Bitter Island*, 211-57; and Karyos, “The EOKA Struggle 1955-1959”. Full histories of the EOKA struggle can be found in Foley and Scobie, *The Struggle for Cyprus*; and Varnavas, *Ιστορία του Απελευθερωτικού Αγώνα της ΕΟΚΑ*.

struggle was promoted and commemorated, illuminating the dynamic entanglement of spiritual and political struggle in the idiom under consideration.

An independent Republic of Cyprus was finally established in 1959, but the independence established by a tri-power summit in Zurich, to which the future president of the republic (Archbishop Makarios III) was invited but in which he was scarcely permitted to participate, must be considered ambiguous at best. The extensive conditions imposed by the “guarantor powers” of the Republic (Greece, Turkey, and Great Britain) ensured that the local government was set up from the beginning with sharply limited capacity to take action against the geostrategic interests of NATO and with fail-safes by which any of the three powers could act to curtail local developments that advantaged one over the others.<sup>120</sup> Britain maintained two sovereign base areas on the southern coast of the island, Akrotiri and Dhekelia, within which “complete control” might be exercised in the continued pursuit of British interests in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>121</sup> It is not surprising, then, that in the first years of his presidency Makarios drew deeply on the martyriological heritage of the Orthodox Church in order to articulate his vision of the nation. The “national struggle” of Cyprus was not presented as complete; on the contrary, as Maria Hadjipolycarpou observes: “Sacrifice and self-denial—formerly the qualities attributed to Christian saints—were promoted as national characteristics” for continued appropriation and emulation.<sup>122</sup> Makarios foresaw that the political forces in whose web Cyprus remained caught would not be dispelled by the formation of the Republic, and that the spiritual-political resistance embodied by the saints would remain paramount. His

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<sup>120</sup> On these dynamics, see Mallinson, *Cyprus* [2010], 58-75; Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 373-77; and Morgan, *Sweet and Bitter Island*, 239-57. On the geostrategic interest in Cyprus beyond the three guarantor powers (for instance, on the part of the United States), see Stefanides, *Isle of Discord*, 175-206.

<sup>121</sup> The texts of the central documents pertaining to the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus government, including the formative logic of the British sovereign base areas, can be found in the State Archives, SA1-1000/59.

<sup>122</sup> Hajipolycarpou, “The Nation of Saints,” 140. See also 145: “Quite unexpectedly for a national leader, instead of praising the greatness of the Cypriot people, Makarios praised their insignificance. At the same time, however, he characterized this as their greatest advantage, carrying out God’s will before the rest of the world . . . .”

public celebration of the liberated “island of saints” would always be tempered by the warning that there is no holiness apart from struggle, this side of the eschaton.<sup>123</sup>

#### *2d) St. George in Islam: Shared Saint or Trickster-Prophet?*

Finally, and with woeful brevity, we must turn to the prominence of St. George in the religious lives of Cypriot Muslims, completing our survey of the figure of St. George as a patronal figure for each of the three major communities of modern Cyprus. To do so, three considerations are required: (i) of the holy figure of al-Khidr in Islamic tradition, who is frequently associated or even identified with St. George (not least in Cyprus) (ii) of the broader pattern of Muslim attention to St. George in the Ottoman world that so deeply conditioned the religious life of Cyprus; and (iii) of the local historical contours within which these broader associations have played out in Cyprus, rendering a relationship of special significance between St. George and Turkish-Cypriots. Although the Islamic St. George will not be in the foreground of my analysis in the coming chapters, my priority in this section is to establish once more that St. George is both singular and multiple: he is encountered and embraced, in his Christian configuration, by Muslims, and at the same time he is recreated in Muslim idiom and within a Muslim hagiographical topography. It will not, and cannot, be finally adjudicated whether al-Khidr “is” St. George or whether, indeed, Muslim devotion to St. George is indicative of a “shared” tradition, “hybridity,” “fluidity,” or two different realities that happen to have the same name. Considered from the vantage of hagiographical dynamics, the entanglement and indeterminacy are themselves the answer.

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<sup>123</sup> The chronicler Leontios Machairas designated Cyprus as “the holy island” (τὴν ἅγια νῆσον) in his fifteenth century *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus, entitled ‘Chronicle’* [hereafter *Chronicle*], I.30. This designation caught on and often appears as “the island of saints” in later discourse; as we will see in Chapter III, moreover, Cyprus is regularly represented as an “island of martyrs” following the Greek uprising and Ottoman reprisals in 1821. Makarios III himself reinforced the attribution with his public discourse and published booklet on the saints of Cyprus, titled *Κύπρος ἡ ἅγια νῆσος* (Cyprus the holy island).

So who is al-Khidr? Encounters with the mysterious green-clad man<sup>124</sup> begin to appear in Arabic literature in the ninth century, “shaped as traditions traced back through chains of transmission to the companions of the prophet, their successors or other reliable authorities.”<sup>125</sup> Such encounters were represented (particularly in Sufi accounts) as rare opportunities to gain esoteric wisdom, special esteem from the Almighty, or help in moments of desperation—but the one fortunate enough to encounter Khidr had to pass the first test of recognizing him (for Khidr would almost always disguise his identity, appearing as an elderly Bedouin or an innocuous servant). Bursting into popularity first in the Islamic epic and romance traditions, in which Khidr is associated with immortality (having discovered and serving as a guardian of the water of life), it was later that Khidr comes to be identified with the unnamed teacher of Moses in Surah 18 of the Qur’an.<sup>126</sup> On the basis of the Qur’anic passage, Khidr comes to be known as a trickster-prophet, roaming across time and space,<sup>127</sup> behaving in ways similar to those of the Christian tradition of holy folly in order to teach and to help, and appearing not only to Muslims but also to Jews and Christians: to the one disguising himself as Elijah, to the other as St. George.

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<sup>124</sup> *Al-khidr* is a description rather than a proper name, meaning “the green man.” Franke notes the variations in the name across Khidr’s extraordinary popularity in global Islam: “In Arabic he is also called *al-Khadir*, *al-Khadr*, and *el-Khudr*, in Persian the pronunciation is *Khezr*, in modern Turkish *Hızır*, in Bengali *Khijir*, in Javanese *Kilir*, in Tamil *Hilir*, and so on” (“Khidr in Istanbul,” 45n9).

<sup>125</sup> Franke, “Khidr in Istanbul,” 46.

<sup>126</sup> See Laird, “Boundaries and *Baraka*,” 46-47, and Wolper, “Khidr and the Politics of Place,” 147-49. The episode identified as a scriptural anchor for al-Khidr is found in Qur’an 18:60-82, and depicts the prophet Moses traveling in the wilderness, to “the junction of the two seas” (60) where he meets “a servant from among Our servants to whom we had given mercy and had taught him from us a [certain] knowledge” (65)—this is the figure identified by tradition as al-Khidr. Recognizing the servant’s divine favor and wisdom, Moses asks to accompany him and learn from him, but the servant warns Moses about not having patience for learning the inner meaning of events that is not evident in their occurrence. Indeed, Moses proves impatient and proceeds to question the servant after the latter performs three incomprehensible acts: making a hole in the hull of a ship that is carrying them, killing a young boy, and fixing the wall of a town that has refused to offer them hospitality. Only later, once Moses has failed to trust the servant three times and the servant severs their relationship, does he reveal that all these things have happened according to the will of God: the now-defective ship would be passed over by a cruel pirate king, the boy would have grown to be a transgressive disbeliever, and beneath the wall was buried the treasure of two righteous boys, who would have had it stolen if the townsfolk had repaired the wall themselves.

<sup>127</sup> The stories about Khidr drinking from (and subsequently holding the key to) the water of life serve to “explain Khidr’s extraordinary longevity. For it is a popular belief that Khidr, a person already active in pre-Islamic times, is still alive in the present day and will not die before the end of time” (Franke, “Khidr in Istanbul,” 45; cf. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 319).

Indeed, around the eastern Mediterranean and beyond, St. George and al-Khidr are frequently venerated together, or as one and the same.<sup>128</sup> Although Arabic, Persian, and South Asian traditions make much of this elision as well, it is especially in the Turkish world that the veneration of Khidr (known in Turkish as Hızır) and St. George coincide. Wolper suggests that this is due to the existing prominence of St. George in Anatolia, which became the Turkish heartland in the centuries of migration after the Battle of Manzikert in 1071.<sup>129</sup> During these centuries the profile of Khidr was raised considerably in Anatolia, providing as he did Islamic authorization and texture to the (Muslim and Christian) veneration of St. George. The two figures, after all, already shared attributes (such as dragon-slaying and water-guarding) and came to share more still in the course of their association—most overtly among these, their patronage of living things and agricultural cycles, distilled by a common feast day (April 23) at the transition of the seasons, where they are celebrated as figures that overcome death and mediate new life to their devotees.<sup>130</sup>

There is also a *political* continuity between George and Khidr that fired the Ottoman imagination. As St. George had been, for the Byzantine state, a “defender of the kingdom” and an emblem of

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<sup>128</sup> Lance Laird reports, for instance, on the tight entanglement of Christian and Muslim veneration in the Palestinian town of Al-Khadr (named, of course, for the trickster-prophet, but with a prominent monastery of St. George in its center). He relates both the ubiquity of identifications between the two holy figures but also the variable authorization thereof: his Orthodox Christian interlocutor Abuna Theophilos is in the midst of insisting that the elision of the identities of George and Khidr is a mere popular confusion when the monastery’s Muslim handyman interjects boldly: “No. He is one person. Muslims believe that he lived at the time of Moses, and Christians think he lived after Jesus. But he is really the same person. We are not so concerned with the time. He has the same story and the same power” (“Boundaries and *Baraka*,” 48). Laird also cites (40) Canaan’s observations (in his 1927 work, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*) about the Jews, Christians, and Muslims who would visit the same pilgrimage sites, considering them to be, respectively, dedicated to Elijah, George, and Khidr. Cf. Haddad, “Georgic’ Cults and Saints of the Levant,” 26-27.

<sup>129</sup> Wolper, “Khidr and the Politics of Place,” 154-56; cf. Pancaroğlu, “The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer,” 152, 159. Hasluck had argued differently in 1929, suggesting that “In Turkey the connexion between S. George and Khidr seems to be less close than in Syria, where the two seem almost synonymous” (*Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 325-26); however, the examples he gives from Syria (and Palestine) are Ottoman-era, their interreligious elisions reflecting a long cultural continuity with Anatolia and its warrior-saint tradition. So too, after 1571, in Ottoman Cyprus: see Luke, *Cyprus*, 129: “S. George, himself the successor of a pagan god, preserves his identity among Moslems under the alias of Sheikh Khidr.”

<sup>130</sup> See, for instance, Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 324-25; and Haddad, “Georgic’ Cults and Saints of the Levant,” 26-30. These issues will be discussed at some length in the coming chapters, though in a rather different key than that of the long tradition of scholarly interest in St. George as a synthesis of pre/extra-Christian agricultural cults (see Krumbacher, *Der heilige Georg*, ix, on the range of scholars, particularly in the German tradition, who traced St. George and various traditions associated with him to Horus, Perseus, Thammuz, and others).

“fortification for fighting men ... demolition of idols, and rectification of the faith,”<sup>131</sup> so too the apparition of Khidr came to legitimate and (re-)sanctify the Ottoman takeover and transformation of Byzantine imperial rule, religious culture, and sacred space. Thus it is that “a well-known legend tells us that [Khidr] went to meet the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II, when, after his conquest of [Constantinople], he entered the Hagia Sophia church. At that time Khidr stuck his finger in one of the pillars of the church and turned the building on its own axis until it was aligned with the *qibla*.”<sup>132</sup> So likewise, in Cyprus, a shrine of Khidr was erected within the Augustinian monastery of Nicosia after the Ottoman army breached the walls of the capital;<sup>133</sup> local legend has it that Khidr himself participated in the siege of the city, and that, when a group of the city’s Christian defenders had made their stand within the walls of the monastery, Khidr went to them and asked them to lay down their arms and surrender peacefully. How indeed, mused the Turkish-Cypriot interlocutor who relayed the legend to me, would this request have been persuasive, had the trickster-prophet not appeared to the Christians as their own St. George?<sup>134</sup>

But an identification with al-Khidr is far from sufficient explanation of Muslim devotion to St. George, particularly because, as Maria Couroucli notes, the connections between the two figures, so exciting to scholars, are simply not known or not important to many Muslims who visit and venerate the

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<sup>131</sup> Arcadius of Cyprus, “Ὁμιλία εἰς τὸν ἅγιον μεγαλομάρτυρα Γεώργιον,” lines 20-21, 27-29.

<sup>132</sup> Franke, “Khidr in Istanbul,” 43-44. Franke’s analysis is well-worth reading in full (40-45), not only for its discussion of the uses of Khidr at once to promote religious toleration and to symbolize Muslim authority over (and parameters of) that toleration, but also for its treatment of the Ottoman appropriation of Byzantine *patria* legends about miraculous features of the construction of Hagia Sophia. Most significantly, some twenty years after the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II, the dervish Shems ed-Din Kharabati was commissioned to write a new account of the origins of the city and its central church. In this account, Emperor Justinian himself is visited by Khidr in his dreams—the emperor is presented with plans for Hagia Sophia and, subsequently, told where he can find a buried treasure to help finance the church. Khidr informs the emperor, moreover, that he will be the building’s protector in perpetuity, in the name of God. The takeover of Constantinople by Ottomans and the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque is, thus, presented as a preordained fulfillment of this patronage.

<sup>133</sup> See Bağışkan, *Ottoman, Islamic, and Islamised Monuments in Cyprus*, 120-21.

<sup>134</sup> August 12, 2014. As we will see in Chapter II, such confluences between St. George and al-Khidr mediate both interreligious rapprochement and interreligious one-upmanship.

saint.<sup>135</sup> A robust literature exists on Muslim appropriations of St. George, *as St. George*, in multireligious societies where they may visit sites and participate in festivities that are operated by Christians.<sup>136</sup> Couroucli, for instance, shows how such veneration boomed in the Ottoman period and continues to the present day, noting crucially that such religious confluences do not occur in isolation but in three dimensions—the other two being, in her view, family kinship and local solidarity across the differences typically identified as religious.<sup>137</sup> In Cyprus, more specifically, visitation of the

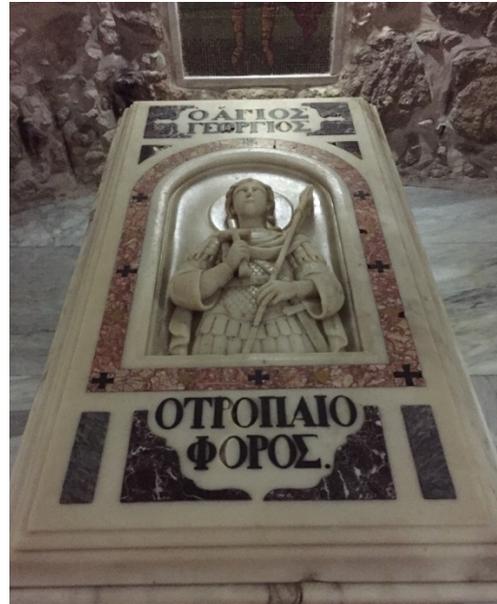


Figure 1.8: The tomb of St. George in Lydda (now Lod, Israel), beneath a Greek Orthodox church that has been attached to an Ottoman-era mosque.

<sup>135</sup> See Couroucli, “Saint George the Anatolian,” 132, on the disjuncture of the Julian and Gregorian calendars resulting in the feast days of Khidr/Hızır and St. George no longer being identical; and Couroucli, “Empire Dust,” demonstrating that, for many of the enormous numbers of Muslims who visit the monastery of St. George on Prince’s Island (Istanbul), Hızır is not a factor of any significance in their visit. The fact that the trickster-prophet’s festivities were once held on St. George’s day had been “lost, to the nonerudite at any rate” (“Empire Dust,” 224); moreover, she argues, the link back to an authorized Muslim holy figure *need* not be made, since the “imagined community that comes into being for a day in Istanbul [on St. George’s Day] . . . appears to be built around traditional ways and habits dating back to Ottoman times” (228), or at least, around an imagination of such ways and habits that “can be seen as validating a certain representation of the past, the tradition of multiculturalism and ‘tolerance’ in Ottoman society” (222).

<sup>136</sup> Hatay refers to this mode of interreligious encounter as “(temporary) submission” (“Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 73), in that the efficacious power of a site and its patronal figure are widely recognized, not being limited by particular religious commitments, but the site itself is mutually recognized as belonging to one group or another. A clear example would be that of the Turkish-Cypriot Muslim who visits the church of St. George or the Virgin Mary to light a candle and pray to the saint for healing or a flourishing crop. The Christian figures visited in this way tend to be (but certainly are not always) correlated with the high Qur’anic status of the saint in question: in particular, the mother of Jesus. As we will see, St. George is ambiguously related to this category, as his identification with Khidr is unofficial (as is Khidr’s identification with the unnamed servant of God in Surah 18 of the Qur’an). Hasluck adds that “this frequentation of Christian sanctuaries by Moslems does not seem to imply any desire on the part of the Moslem population to usurp the administration of the sanctuary in question” (*Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 69). In extreme cases, a Muslim administrative operation might be established in parallel to that of the earlier Christian operation. For instance, at the tomb of St. George in Lydda (Figure 1.8), the post-Byzantine Muslim rulers permitted the continuing administration of the site by Christians *so long as* a mosque could be installed as well atop the tomb. Where the Byzantine basilica of St. George once stood, then, there now exists a smaller Greek Orthodox church adjacent to the Al-Khidr Mosque, which maintains some of the original architectural elements of the earlier basilica.

<sup>137</sup> Thus where scholars may be prepared to see only syncretism between “different” religious communities, Couroucli insists that they learn to recognize the force of *συγγενεία* and *συγχωριανισμός*—kinship and territoriality—as relativizing these differences that are too readily accepted as impermeable or irreconcilable. See Couroucli, “Saint George the Anatolian,” throughout but especially 121-24; cf. Couroucli, “Chthonian Spirits and Shared Shrines” and “Empire Dust,” where her analysis of St. George in Muslim devotion expands to include agricultural continuities and political

abundance of St. George sites by Muslims is reported as early as the 1830s, is noted regularly in the literature on the “popular” religious traditions of the island, and will be addressed in my own chapters in light of the rhetorical patterns at work in Greek-Cypriot explanations of Muslim devotion to the saint.<sup>138</sup>

Of particular significance as context for my analysis of holy multimediation, in the intercultural matrix of Cyprus, is the contested reasoning *among* Muslims as to the legitimacy of devotion to St. George. Some may insist that a Muslim may honor St. George only insofar as the saint is *really* a disguised form of al-Khidr. Here, the very anxieties over syncretic slippage that would resist Muslim visitation of Christian shrines can yield a reinterpretation of the situation that figures this visitation as a genuinely Islamic practice, warranted by hidden knowledge over and against the naïveté of Christian devotees of St. George who do not know the saint’s true identity.<sup>139</sup> Others make no effort to justify the practice by any appeal to institutional religious approval or identification, simply recognizing the saint (*Aya Yorgi*) as an effective resource in difficult times: for instance, the eighteenth-century American missionary, Lorenzo Pease,

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mobilizations of a “cosmopolitan” Ottoman past. At the time of writing, R. Brian Siebeking is preparing a book-length manuscript on the appearance and figuration of St. George in Muslim legend. Other scholars who address the Muslim veneration of St. George include Hasluck, who provides precious eyewitness evidence from rural Ottoman regions in what are now Greece, Turkey, Syria, and Israel/Palestine, focusing primarily on “transferences from Christianity to Islam and vice versa” (*Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vi); Haddad, who argues (in “Georgic’ Cults and Saints of the Levant”) that the rootedness (pun intended) of the celebration of St. George in ecological and agricultural cycles that are shared around the Mediterranean provides the saint with a basis for being honored (especially by rural, farming communities—as I will certainly show to be the case in Cyprus) that resonates with but is not exhausted by religious affiliation; and Pancaroğlu, who discusses (in “The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer”) how the recurrence of key, imaginatively resonant images across religious traditions (here, the mounted dragon-slayer) were adaptable to the wide range of meanings made from them, with the result that multicultural communities came increasingly to identify such figures with one another and trade/synthesize their narrative, semantic, and practical elements.

<sup>138</sup> The American missionary Lorenzo Pease reports on such mixed veneration in the 1830s: “Our school master in speaking of the cure there mentioned that many are cured who go to the churches, and that the Turks are induced to bring their possessed to St. George to be healed, through fear! For they fear him much. When I laughed at this narration, he asked me with apparent surprise, or in a doubting manner, if I did not believe it!” (Severis [ed], *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 522-23). The claim that Muslims venerate St. George out of “fear” will recur in my own analysis of more contemporary hagiographical dynamics, insofar as the claim validates a maintenance of the imaginative border between Christians and Muslims that would seem to be eroded by the practices of mixed veneration (see Chapter II, section 3c). See also Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 11, and Paraskevopoulou, *Researches into the Traditions of the Popular Religious Feasts of Cyprus* [hereafter *Popular Religious Feasts*], 92.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Hatay’s notion of *contested sharing*, where mixed devotion may reflect a mutual recognition of a given site or figure, but in the context of a disputed, or simply bi-legitimated, identification of its basis of sanctity (“Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 84-88).

describes encounters with the “Turks” who came in droves to the feast of St. George in Larnaca seeking cures and boons but also enjoyment of the games and the economic benefit of the fairs.<sup>140</sup> However, even such economic rationales risk naturalizing the fixed boundaries between religious communities that may be authorized but are not, by that fact, determinative of the behavior of real people in real contexts. On the contrary, in practice, people’s religious commitments color outside the lines set by religious institutions all the time: the Turkish-Cypriot scholar Mete Hatay, for instance, describes his grandmother’s visits to the church in her village (which “had a functioning church without having any Christian inhabitants”),<sup>141</sup> where she would light a candle and recite prayers from the Qur’an in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary. St. George may be less of a figure of formal Islamic dignity than Mary, who is honored overtly in the Qur’an, yet in spite of not being officially a Muslim saint, might he not be so in actuality, venerated by Muslims *qua* Muslims, despite the consternation of (certain of) their authorities?<sup>142</sup>

In the course of the twentieth century, the increasing ethnic reification of the “communities” of Cyprus came increasingly to foreclose on practices that could be viewed by religious authorities as an “attempt to cross religious boundaries”—boundaries that were being entrenched in real time due to the intensification of ethnonational politics on the island.<sup>143</sup> The Muslim veneration of Khidr/St. George on Cyprus (to whatever unresolvable extent the two should be distinguished) declined sharply during these decades, along with the Sufi orders more generally that had promoted it.<sup>144</sup> The Islamic St. George was, in

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<sup>140</sup> Severis (ed), *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 1039. Hatay describes this mode of interreligious sharing as “economic,” in the sense that it would not need to be correlated with a recognition of the holiness of the site or the figure, so long as the benefits of visiting were apparent (“Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 73, 88-90).

<sup>141</sup> Hatay, “Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 8; and personal conversation, February 3, 2016.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Beckingham, “The Turks of Cyprus,” 173: “The Orthodox Cypriot did not become a Muslim when he prayed at the shrine of the Forty (Kirkklar, Ayii Saranda) ... nor did the Cypriot Muslim become a Christian when he sought the aid of the Holy Cross at Stavrovouni ...”

<sup>143</sup> Hatay, “Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 82, 88; cf. Constantinou, “Aporias of Identity,” 259-60.

<sup>144</sup> See Hatay, “Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 80-84, 88; Constantinou, “Aporias of Identity,” 256-260; and Luke, *Cypriote Shrines*, 38-47. Luke in particular provides contemporary details on the waning significance of shared shrines in light of the increasing rigidity of ethnic identities. For instance, the lively Hızır shrine at the Ömeriye mosque of Nicosia

Cyprus, by and large a casualty of the fissures that widened between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots during the years surrounding the anticolonial struggle of the 1950s. Participants in forms of hybridity which had prevailed for centuries were “pressured to make a final choice, either for Christianity/Greekness or Islam/Turkishness.”<sup>145</sup> Yet for a time, as Constantinou hints, this hybridity (including not least an insistence that a Muslim community could be perfectly comfortable with the patronage of St. George) offered real resistance to the stabilization of a self-evident ethnonational logic. It is no coincidence that

such transgression may constitute a deliberate political move, an act of resistance to power regimes, a counter-performative against the forgotten performances that fix and police the boundaries of ethno-religious identity. One does not need to romanticize Cypriot hybridity ... to appreciate that subverting the fixity of ethno-religious identity can work against the forms of domination that are being legitimated in the name of that fixity ... .<sup>146</sup>

Although St. George of the Muslims will pass again out of the spotlight of this study, except insofar as he registers as a mirror for Orthodox Christian imagination, rhetoric, and resistance (as he will, in Chapter II especially), it is crucial to establish that this Muslim devotion is not *only* a feature of ethnonational memory politics but, rather, a record of the intercultural tension and fusion that could never be wholly contained, nor wholly accounted for, by the secular and religious governing mechanisms that sought for so many centuries to shape the history of Cyprus.

The chapter of that history that remains to be introduced is its most recent, and in some ways its most painful: the 44 years that have passed since what Costas Kyrris calls “the July 1974 twin crime.”<sup>147</sup> On

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was demolished during the early twentieth-century renovations of the mosque and its grounds, as part of what one Muslim interlocutor gravely referred to as the “Sunni-ization” of the religious monuments of the city (August 12, 2014).

<sup>145</sup> Constantinou, “Aporias of Identity,” 259; cf. Bryant, *Imagining the Modern*, 66, and Kitromilides, “The Dialectic of Intolerance,” 24-29.

<sup>146</sup> Constantinou, “Aporias of Identity,” 249.

<sup>147</sup> Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 400; cf. Papadakis, Peristianis, and Wenz, Introduction to *Divided Cyprus*, 2-4. While I can do no more than gesture to the historical complexity and multi-party agency of this critical moment, there are numerous detailed and measured accounts of the crisis of 1974 (from which this paragraph is distilled), especially Mallinson’s two monographs (*Cyprus: A Modern History* and *Cyprus: Diplomatic History and the Clash of Theory in International Relations*) and Anastasiou’s two-volume *Beyond the Broken Olive Branch* (see especially 1.75-108 for his historical overview). Foley and Scobie (*The Struggle for Cyprus*) offer a viewpoint of particular interest, in that their history of the anticolonial struggle and its aftermath ends with the death of George Grivas in January 1974, with the impending invasion both inevitable and unthinkable. After the invasion but prior to publication of the book in 1975, the authors produced a five-

July 15, 1974, the power-sharing government of the Republic of Cyprus was overthrown by a Greek-Cypriot faction in favor of unification with Greece, with the support of the military junta that had come to power in Greece in 1967. Although President Makarios escaped the assassination attempt, the precarious intercommunal and international situation in which the island was poised exploded. The conditions of the original government established in 1960 had been disrupted, and Turkey claimed the authority to intervene five days later, declaring a “peace operation” (Operation Attila) to be necessary in order to neutralize the threat of ethnic cleansing to which Turkish-Cypriots would be subject. The invasion was swift and conducted with overwhelming force. The Turkish army swept through the island from the north, killing or displacing almost a third of the Greek-Cypriot population; Turkish-Cypriots in the south, fearing reprisal, fled to the north. The ceasefire line, which became an impassible border of barbed wire and minefields for the following thirty years, was not arbitrary: the Turkish army ended its drive southward roughly along the course of the buffer zone that had been established already in 1964, as a peacekeeping mechanism (and test for a possible partition of the island) after the first outbreak of intercommunal violence in 1963, drawn on a UN officer’s map of Cyprus in a thick green line.<sup>148</sup>

The border represented by the Green Line was finally opened, fittingly perhaps, on the canonical Feast of St. George: April 23, 2003.<sup>149</sup> Since then, it has been possible for Cypriots of both sides of the border to cross into a land whose loss remains inconceivable, which looks enormously different than their

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page Epilogue that attempts to make the most immediate sense of the coup and invasion. Bryant, *The Past in Pieces* (59-78), provides the most poignant account, stitched together from interviews with families from both sides who had fled “without even a handkerchief” or had no choice but to leave their homes after finding that “not even a needle” had been spared by looters.

<sup>148</sup> For the history of the partition and the reification of a dividing line meant to quell hostilities into a decades-long impassible wall, see Calame, *Divided Cities*, 121-42.

<sup>149</sup> “Canonical” because the ecclesial activities of George’s feast day are moved to the Monday after Easter in years when April 23<sup>rd</sup> falls during Lent, a decision that will be discussed in the coming chapters. Although that particular year did not see formal church recognition of St. George on the day of the border opening, the date—“κοστροείς του Απριλίου” (Cypriot dialect for “April 23<sup>rd</sup>,” a phrase that Greek-Cypriots often reached for instinctively when talking about their understanding of the saint, and a phrase that concludes several versions of the Cypriot folksongs of St. George, to be discussed in Chapter IV, section 1b)—would have registered widely as St. George’s Day nevertheless.

memories thereof, to which no return is possible beyond mere spatial access and the flickering hope of a reconciled future.<sup>150</sup> That a majority of Cypriots of both sides have chosen not to take the opportunity to cross over reflects the depth of the island's trauma.<sup>151</sup> But the haunting of contemporary Cyprus by the “echoes of the dead zone”<sup>152</sup> is by no means complete, by no means a total captivity to antagonism and resentment. The possibility of slippage out from fixed religious repertoires and ethnonational identities, represented temporarily but robustly by the Muslim veneration of St. George in the Ottoman and British eras, have not perished from the island.

In November, 2011, a group of Cypriot youths from both sides of the border set up a camp within the UN-administered buffer zone between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot checkpoints at Ledras Street, Nicosia. Taking their inspiration from the global Occupy movement, the youths declared a loud and vibrant rejection of the continuing division between the communities of Cyprus—indeed a rejection of even the conceptual categorization of “two communities.” Refusing to be identified as “Greek” or “Turkish,” the members of Occupy Buffer Zone “declared that we have already established peace and we are living it, living the



Figure 1.9: The tents and graffiti of the “Occupy Buffer Zone” movement, within the Ledras Street border crossing. Creative Commons.

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<sup>150</sup> See Bryant, “Partitions of Memory,” 333, and Bryant, *The Past in Pieces*, 2-4, 21-26, 30-38. She makes the crucial case that *imagination* has adapted to the fact of the open border more slowly than the practical possibilities of crossing over; it is easier to return spatially than it is to return epistemically. In the first months after the border opened, she shows, numbers of visits to psychiatrists skyrocketed (*The Past in Pieces*, 52).

<sup>151</sup> Research conducted by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (Cyprus Centre) in 2015-2016 (presented in Nicosia on April 15, 2016: “The Post-Annan Generation: Student Attitudes towards the Cyprus Problem”) demonstrated that, even among the generation of current college students (who were young children when the border opened and have always known access to the other side), 45% of Turkish-Cypriots and an astonishing 91% of Greek-Cypriots have “never” or “rarely” crossed the border. Indeed, there is evidence of certain authorities on both sides encouraging their populations *not* to cross, despite the opportunity to do so: see Bryant, *The Past in Pieces*, 113.

<sup>152</sup> This is Yiannis Papadakis’ evocative phrase, with which he titles his memoir of crossing over to the “other side,” seeking to understand his own hauntedness by seeking to understand the Turkish-Cypriots he had been taught to fear.

solution ... what [the police] did was to destroy what we created. They are the destructive forces, we are the creative forces. They are *thanatos* (death), we are *eros* (love).”<sup>153</sup> As Constantinou suggests:

That individual Cypriots can re-hyphenate their identity, transverse ethnic boundaries with the force and gusto of rural bandits, is seditious to the dominant ethno-national regimes. These regimes will readily brand such attempts as deceitful, criminal and treacherous. They will point out that ethnicities and religions are total and mutually exclusive. They will view ‘Greekness’ today and Turkishness ‘tomorrow’ [or, as with Occupy Buffer Zone, the rejection of the polarity entirely,] as an anomaly, monstrous hybridity or false consciousness. Consequently, they will miss how such transgression may constitute a deliberate power move, an act of resistance ... .<sup>154</sup>

The fluidity with which Cypriots once lived in the interstices of Christian and Muslim forms of life, derided from Ottoman times onward as weakness, confusion, or cynicism,<sup>155</sup> is available to be reclaimed in contemporary Cyprus as an icon of resistance to the border-laden mentality that continually reproduces the traumas of a border-bound land. St. George was once a figure of enormous importance to these in-between Cypriots, a point of continuity that could be rationalized or contested but never contained. And as much as we will see St. George, in what follows, as a patron and agent of intercommunal struggle, so too we will find that he can “turn around and thwart the agendas of [even the] power” that mobilizes him in the human world.<sup>156</sup> The frontier saint slips the grasp of whatever institution would pin him down, liberating those captive to others and to themselves, as he goes.

## **Conclusion: Entanglement and Iconicity**

In a tangle of strings, it is not always possible to tell how many strings there are. Two or more discrete strings of a similar appearance can be tangled up together such that they seem to be a single

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<sup>153</sup> From a press release by the representatives of Occupy Buffer Zone, shortly after their eviction in April 2012. That it was a Turkish-speaking member of the movement that articulated the philosophical commitment of resistance to the border in Greek terminology only reinforced the point.

<sup>154</sup> Constantinou, “Aporias of Identity,” 249.

<sup>155</sup> Or else, explained away as evidence of the shallow quality of Cypriot Islam. We will consider these perceptions of Christian-Muslim hybridity in Cyprus, on the part of people known as *Linobambakoi* (“cotton-linen people”), in Chapter II, section 3c.

<sup>156</sup> Orsi, *History and Presence*, 42.

string; or one string, multicolored and diversely textured, when tangled up with itself, can give the impression of multiple strings together. A tangle might consist of strings that had once been separate but have been knotted together at one or both ends, and it might consist of a single string that has, in an effort to disentangle it, been cut in one or more places—and if this disentanglement were ever complete, two or more strings might result where one had been before. This is a picture of entanglement, I hope, that does not accidentally reinforce the very thing the metaphor seeks to strip of its self-evidence: discrete and self-sufficient “traditions,” “cultures,” or “religions” that exist as closed entities before they are, subsequently and contingently, tangled together. But so too, it would be deconstructive excess to claim that, for instance, Orthodox and Anglican hagiographical dynamics (much less those of Christians and Muslims) are only apparently distinctive. These differences are just as real as they are constituted in, with, and because of their interaction and (sometimes too-close-for-comfort) family resemblance.

Is there “a” cult of St. George juxtaposing and catalyzing a great diversity of discourses and uses, or “many” cults that are entangled in time and space but otherwise inhabit different imaginative topographies?<sup>157</sup> How do we relate the multimediated cultures pertaining to the figure of St. George *to one another*, beside their orientation around this single holy figure? Rather than trying to conclude whether we are dealing with “discrete” cultures that are tangled up together or with a “single” culture-matrix with diversities and identifications that, given certain stimuli, will engender and entrench division,<sup>158</sup> my approach is to accept the entanglement itself as evidence of my claims: a *both-and* condition in which

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<sup>157</sup> This is an analogous question to that which animates Glenn Bowman’s analysis in “Christian Ideology and the Image of a Holy Land.” Bowman lands firmly on the latter answer (“Jerusalem does not, in fact, appear so much as *a* holy city but as a *multitude* of holy cities”—98), whereas I, both disciplinarily and dispositionally, gravitate to the former, insofar as the normal state of an imaginative topography is that of cross-fertilization, and identifications and pragmatics of differentiation between religious others themselves belong to the self-configuration of religious selves and bounded communities (see Cheetham, Pratt, and Thomas, Introduction to *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, 1-3). Nonetheless, getting trapped by this debate can forestall the actual work of investigating the contexts, agents, and extents of interactivity.

<sup>158</sup> This is a problem that has animated much scholarship on the history and contemporary division of the island—most helpfully, for my work, that of Yiannis Papadakis and Rebecca Bryant. See, for instance, Bryant and Papadakis (eds), *Cyprus and the Politics of Memory*; Papadakis, Peristianis, and Wenz (eds), *Divided Cyprus*; Bryant, *Imagining the Modern*.

culture is always intercultural, in which its divisions are as real as they are constructed (and real precisely by virtue of having been constructed), and in which the procedures and authorizations of “knotting” and “cutting” are more interesting than any question of how many strings constitute the site of inquiry, or the question of whether “there is a Something [a core essence] that runs through the whole thread.”<sup>159</sup>

The entanglement of St. George with the history and cultures of Cyprus is, moreover, temporal as much as it is spatial. I began this project by researching the period of British rule in Cyprus (1878-1960), and this delimited period remains helpful as providing a core for analysis of hagiographical dynamics in the political particularity of the colonial context. But it became quickly clear that research on St. George prior to 1960 must not disbar the emotional retellings of those who knew this time first- and second-hand, or to treat as relevant only what can be gleaned from archives unfermented by decades of grief and anger. Rather, the colonial past and the post-colonial present are entangled together, just as the forms of life current during period of British rule would be unimaginable were they not in turn entangled with—and often subjected to deliberate procedures of disentanglement from—the cultural, political, religious patterns of Ottoman Cyprus.<sup>160</sup> There is no colonial Cyprus in a temporal vacuum any more than there is

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<sup>159</sup> See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* 67. Cf. Thierry Fabré’s preface to Bechev and Nicolaidis (eds), *Mediterranean Frontiers*, xii: to do justice to the study of the modern Mediterranean means to accept neither “clash of civilization” narratives nor their opposite, construing an undifferentiated goulash of peasant habits papered over by religious authorities. Indeed, as Bechev and Nicolaidis observe in their Introduction to the volume (1-11), each of these narratives has deep roots in the region and its emic imaginaries, not only in the scholarship—as do essentialist anthropologies of “a” Mediterranean character (3) and “discourses of Mediterranean vocation” (8) that reinforce political and ethnic ties to Europe. More useful, then, might be the metaphor of the kaleidoscope: there are real borders—but they shift as the world turns, and the borders we expect to find are often different than the ones there are, or were until recently.

<sup>160</sup> The data themselves often bear the characteristics of such a temporal entanglement, making them slippery as evidence of any particular time in isolation. One particularly vivid example, with which I will spend more time further into the chapter, is an exchange between an elderly monk and a little girl, at the monastery of St. George the Alaman early in the twentieth century, about the miracle of St. George rescuing a Turkish boy from a giant viper, whereafter the boy builds a church in gratitude. The account of the miracle is traced to and concerns Ottoman Cyprus, but it is a tale related during the British period—first by the girl’s grandmother to the little girl, and second by the girl to the elderly monk whose experience of the Ottoman period and the transition to British rule is as firsthand as the grandmother’s. Yet the whole episode, in which the narrator recalls her youth spent with her family near the monastery, appears in an altogether more modern publication—compiled and re-narrated by a children’s author, published by *Alamanos* monastery in 2011 (Mersene Vigopoulou, *Λέρα Μόνη Αγίου Γεώργιου του Αλαμάνου*). These three enunciations—the Ottoman-era tale of the rescued Turkish boy, the British-era retelling and commentary thereupon, and the twenty-first-century publication as a children’s book—are entangled with one another, but are they “one string” or “three”?

an Orthodox Church of Cyprus unconditioned by its long subsistence in the flows of Mediterranean exchange.<sup>161</sup> As Peter Loizos describes it, then, the ethnographic task cannot be to grasp “the flux of facts” and hold it stationary for scrutiny, but is rather “to look for shapes, patterns, regularities” in diverse sources and to treat these patterns, even more than the individual comments and memories that contribute to them, as the primary sites of interpretation.<sup>162</sup>

And yet, scholarship cannot proceed without delimiting and organizing its subject of inquiry, and so a second principle, of “iconicity,” also characterizes my approach and justifies my organization of the chapters to come on the figure and force of St. George in Cyprus. If entanglement exposes the instability of delimiting “a” culture, cult, or character of St. George, iconicity insists that we maintain the effort to do so, with care. Here it is the iconic representation of St. George himself that serves as explanatory metaphor. There is not one single portrayal of George in the Orthodox iconographic tradition, but several. He is sometimes represented as a standing soldier, with the arms and armor of a Roman soldier and wearing the red cloak (*mandya*) and angelic crown of a Christian martyr; he appears on horseback, in dynamic motion as he plunges his spear into the mouth or neck of a dragon, as a princess and her city watch on; and, more rarely, he appears on horseback but without the dragon, riding over waves and fish rather than dry land, bearing on the back of his horse a small boy who is dressed and equipped as a servant.

These three iconic types correspond to the most famous of the marvels credited to St. George. However, with numerous icons of the saint, these narratives are depicted *together*, overlapping despite

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<sup>161</sup> See Kitromilides, “Ορθοδοξία και συλλογική ταυτότητα στη Νοτιοανατολική Ευρώπη” and “The Orthodox Church in Modern State Formation in South-East Europe.” Cf. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street*, xxviii-xxix: “The precise configuration of the relation between the present and the past is not inherent in the nature of history but is constituted by historians and others engaged in the work of remembering (and forgetting) as they tell stories and write histories out of the needs, desires, and fears of their present circumstances.”

<sup>162</sup> Loizos, *The Heart Grown Bitter*, 46. Loizos describes with care his awareness of the “sheer impossibility of ever catching, still less recording, all the things that went on in the village,” an awareness that “sometimes threatened to overwhelm me in those early days, until I accepted that most of what was happening would escape me, as it must all observers. The answer was not to try to grasp the flux of facts, but to look for shapes, patterns, regularities.”

their distance from one another in the life and afterlife of the saint, and despite deriving from vastly different sources in the tradition. In such representations, George appears slaying the dragon, the rescued boy on the back of his horse, the red cloak of martyrdom flying behind him: an image of miraculous simultaneity, of the saint's ever-presence. Presented as a unity, the iconic types initiate their viewers into the continuity between the diverse times and places transfigured by the saint's presence and patronage.<sup>163</sup> Hagiographical process as a whole is writ small, as it were, on the surface of the panel.

In other words, as these multiple traditions of St. George coexist and co-catalyse on a single icon (which itself exists in juxtaposition with the other media of a given church and with the larger ecclesial context), so too do the diverse significations of the saint on the island of Cyprus. In what follows, I will show that St. George has become a resource for telling the story of Cyprus, and indeed a resource for Cypriots' living out that story in real time, in several different but interpenetrating paradigms<sup>164</sup>—in all of which, St. George is figured as the saintly liberator *par excellence*. These paradigms can be identified with the three iconic types just introduced:

George as Swifthelper (*tachyboēthos*), George as Greatmartyr (*megalomartys*), George as Dragonslayer (*drakontoktonos*). And as these iconic paradigms can be



Figure 1.10: Wall-painting of St. George, with compound depiction of three iconic types: slaying a dragon, rescuing a captive, and being crowned as a martyr. Panels depicting the martyrdom of the saint surround the central image in the archway, and votive objects are leaned against the image or hung nearby. Paralimni, Old Church of St. George, 1901.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Symeon of Mavrovouni, *The Theological Basis of Byzantine Iconography*, 5, discussing how *time*, in an icon, “becomes pliable and obedient to the laws of the spirit”; and Constat, *The Art of Seeing*, 166, on the dynamic relationship between past and present in the mediation of a saint's history and presence *to a viewer* at the point of the icon.

<sup>164</sup> This prevailing line of inquiry and interpretation is motivated in no small part by Victor Turner's *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, in which “social actions of various kinds acquire form through the metaphors and paradigms in their actors' heads (put there by explicit teaching and implicit generalization from social experience), and, in certain intensive circumstances, generate unprecedented forms that bequeath history new metaphors and paradigms” (13).

heuristically studied in turn while acknowledging their intersection and reciprocal amplification, so too with the hagiographical dynamics with which St George's presence and force are mediated in Cyprus. The following chapters are structured by just such a heuristic separation: each chapter explores one of the paradigms of understanding and mobilizing St. George. In each chapter, then, my analysis of hagiographical processes (imagination, representation, and edification) constituting lived theologies of struggle (resistance and rectification) will emphasize a different body of practices and associations: those involving the rescue and restoration of desperate people (Swifthelper), those involving patronage of and identification with those who lay down their lives for the higher good (Greatmartyr); and those involving the confrontation and elimination of powerful, indeed monstrous, antagonists (Dragonslayer).



Figure 1.11: Key details of St. George's three primary/paradigmatic iconic types: as Swifthelper, Greatmartyr, and Dragonslayer.

These three primary paradigms in the figuration of and relationship with St. George, I argue, shape in distinctive but interconnected ways the modes of struggle (*agōn*) that are promoted and enacted by the hagiographical media of the saint. In the chapters to come, I organize these modes upon a “grid” of resistance that integrates different domains of life in different ways. On one axis of this (unfixed) grid is the polarity between what has been conventionally referred to as “micro” and “macro” resistance—which more sophisticated theoretical approaches and the evidence analyzed throughout these chapters demonstrate to be less a toggle between alternatives and more a spectrum where *personal* practices and

*communal* cultures interweave and enact, validate, or amplify one another. On the other axis can be found the three prevailing domains of St. George's intervention (as rendered in Greek-Cypriot understandings and mediating practices): the *ecological*, the *political*, and the *spiritual*.<sup>165</sup> The hagiographical processes whose analysis is the substance of my project weave across and integrate these domains, rendering them aspects of, and often metaphors for, one another.

Thus the short hymn (*apolytikion*) used in modern Cyprus to summarize and initiate the feast of St. George can also summarize and initiate my interpretation of the theological culture of St. George: "As the emancipator of the captives and the champion of the poor, the doctor of the sickly, the defender of kings, Trophybearing Greatmartyr George, minister to Christ our God, that our souls may be saved."<sup>166</sup> The saint is named first and foremost as a liberator; each of the actions ascribed him in the *apolytikion* is an act of resistance to forces of domination and despair. It is resistance, then, that unites what otherwise may appear as disparate associations, that is locally appropriated and tactically re-deployed in Cyprus by means of hagiographical media. *That* and *how* this is the case are the crux of my argument in Part One about the multimediation of holiness. Freeing captives and recovering the missing, succoring and advocating for the impoverished, healing the sick of body and mind, toppling tyrants while guarding rightful leaders from destruction—and indeed, advocating before God for devotees' salvation and mimetic sanctification—are facets of St. George's kaleidoscopic significance, which continues to animate the imagination, solidify the warrant, and provide the texture of Orthodox Christian struggle in Cyprus.

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<sup>165</sup> Thus, while we can identify a register and domain of resistance where a given hagiographical instance is especially resonant, none of these specifications is isolated from the others. Examples we will encounter include: *micro-ecological* (healing of an individual's cancer), *macro-ecological* (driving off a plague or securing a stable harvest), *micro-political* (rescuing a devotee from raiders or threatening an exploitative landlord), *macro-political* (protecting a town from invasion), *micro-spiritual* (conquering a devotee's phobia or delivering a devotee from a gnawing grudge), *macro-spiritual* (a community's becoming a beacon of holiness to others, particularly religious others, demonstrating the authority of Christian truth over demonic power).

<sup>166</sup> Doukakis, *Μέγας Συναχριστής*, IV.335: Ὡς τῶν αἰχμαλώτων ἐλευθερωτής, καὶ τῶν πτωχῶν ὑπερασπιστής, ἀσθενούντων ἰατρός, βασιλέων ὑπέρμαχος. Τροπαιοφόρε μεγαλομάρτυς Γεώργιε, πρέσβευε Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ, σωθῆναι τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.

So too the dissertation itself, focusing in to consider modern Cyprus as a case study of broader hagiographical dynamics, serves in this way as an “iconic” synecdoche: distilling a broad matrix of traditions that thrive well beyond the one site in which they are here represented, and bracketing off the rest of the world to focus attention, temporarily, on the depths of that distillation point.

## II

### **Saint George as Swifthelper: Liberating Holiness in an Intercultural Matrix**

*In its totality, and from its initial words, the Life of a Saint is subjugated to a time other than that of the hero; its time is that of ritual, of festivity. The liturgical here and now outweighs a past that has to be narrated. The incipit confers its own permanent status upon discourse.*

*~Michel de Certeau, The Writing of History*

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*It is people who make a place and a place that makes people.*

*~Cypriot proverb*

## Introduction: Bending toward Holiness

Approaching the image from a distance, the red-and-gold rider before an indigo sky resolves to reveal a more textured plane of representation. The figure is three-dimensional, with an apparatus of beaten metal affixed to certain features of the saint, pushing out from the panel. Most striking is the halo: the serene face of the saint is tightly surrounded by an aura of *repoussé* silver, its whorls and fern-like sprays giving the illusion (particularly by candlelight) of an undulating movement, as if the saint's human face is wreathed in light and shimmering heat, breaking in from another world. But let the gaze wander from the face of the saint and other such three-dimensional attributes appear. Saint George's hands are covered in silver, and the spear with which he slays the dragon is formed of a slender metal pike upon the painted wall.<sup>1</sup> More metal can be found nearby: tin tablets, smaller than playing cards, each bearing a relief image of a part of the human body (an arm, a leg, a pair of breasts, a heart, a head). Such votive tablets are accompanied by wax effigies, shaped in the form of body parts or infants with wide, glassy eyes.

Each of these additions to the image of the saint—the impressive silver halo, the metal accoutrements, the tin tablets, the wax effigies—falls within the category of *tamata*, votive offerings from the



Figure 2.1: Wall-painting of St. George (section) with metal halo, hands, and spear. Church of St. George, Strovolos. Late nineteenth century, metal added and paint restored more recently.

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<sup>1</sup> See Pentcheva, “The Performative Icon,” 636-38, for a well-textured reading of the play of light and sensuality rendered by metal relief icons; much of the same phenomenology is at work in the relief elements and multiple media of a panel icon or wall-painting (τοιχογραφία) as well, in some ways even more so as these elements appear to break the plane of representation and intercede from the space of the image into that of the viewer. Mitchell’s more general claim that “All the so-called visual media turn out, on closer inspection, to involve the other senses (especially touch and hearing)” (*Image Science*, 125) will be amply borne out throughout my study of Cypriot hagiography.



Figure 2.2: Wax votive offerings attached to the image of St. George in Figure 2.1. Photos taken in June 2016.

public, involving vows made to God in hope of or in gratitude for the assistance of the saints in the struggles of one's life.<sup>2</sup> In this way, the attitudes and personal histories of the faithful infuse the sensorium of the ecclesial space, forming a collective record of help sought and help received—a virtual history called to mind by the wax and tin. Bound together are the images of holy people and the objects that render, as it were, the precipitation from individuals' experiences of bodily and

spiritual linkage with them. These votive objects, as *individual*

representations of the ailments or woes for which they were offered, accrue together as a *collective* representation (and performance) of human indebtedness to, solidarity with, and support by the saints—which in turn reinforces, for those who visit the space thereafter, a felt understanding that transformation in holiness is accessible.<sup>3</sup> The *tama* thus functions as a clear material synthesis of my three core categories of hagiographical process: imagination, representation, and edification.<sup>4</sup> This participatory, cumulative interplay between the image of the saint and those who approach it (seeking some dimension of their lives to be made right or ascribing such rectification [*anorthōsē*] to the saint's intervention) is as fundamental to a Greek Orthodox idiom of holiness-among-us, holiness mediated and manifest, as are the shimmering metal of the halo and the piercing gaze of the saint's large eyes.

<sup>2</sup> On the logic and history of such votive traditions, see Constantelos, "The Interface of Medicine and Religion in the Greek and the Christian Greek Orthodox Tradition"; Teske, "Votive Offerings and the Beliefs of Greek-Philadelphians"; Handaka, "Anthropological Reflections on Greek Orthodox Votive Offerings (Tāmata)"; Hart, *Time, Religion, and Social Experience in Rural Greece*; and, at more of a remove but still of significant value for interpreting the apotropaic power and reciprocal gaze of such objects, Weinryb, *The Bronze Object in the Middle Ages*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Casarella, "The Communion of Saints and Social Solidarity," 60; and Skedros, "Hagiography and Devotion to the Saints," 450. On the phenomenon of private vows becoming public heritage through the construction of and contribution to local ecclesial spaces, see also Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, 116; and for comparison with Catholic shrines, see Orsi, *History and Presence*, 104.

<sup>4</sup> See again the general introduction, section 2b, for the full introduction of these categories.

Panos is a middle-aged father who works part-time as the warden of a nearby church in south Nicosia; he comes to greet me while I am lingering after the Pentecost liturgy. Learning that I am studying the saints of Cyprus and how they are active in the life and thought of Orthodox Christians, Panos is eager to lead me around the church, introducing me to its collection of images and objects, and no less to the saints represented by them. He explains the significance of *tamata* offerings thus:

When you venerate an icon, you open your heart to holiness, you take a step toward holiness—but as you are stepping, just this little bit [he demonstrates a step toward the icon to kiss it], God and the saints are taking so many more steps toward you! They are *rushing* to help you. And because they help us, we need to acknowledge this and be grateful. If St. George or the Panagia does something outstanding for me, I want to do something outstanding for them, and so maybe I help to adorn their icons like this [he points to the silver hands on several images in the church].<sup>5</sup>

Before I leave the church he grips my arm, searching for recognition that I understand the significance of what he has been saying. “This is one the biggest truths of Orthodox Christianity, life with the saints. They are among us, transforming us, freeing us from sin ... and it is up to us to struggle [*na agōnisoume*] so we can grow in holiness [*agiotēta*], like they did. We have to train to run a race, don’t we? Why would we think holiness is possible without struggle [*agōna*]?”<sup>6</sup>

Beneath Panos’ comments, we may hear the *cantus firmus* upon which this dissertation plays. The “struggle” of which he speaks so ardently is bound up with both the activity and the identity of the saints: they who have “waged the beautiful struggle”<sup>7</sup> *against* domination by anti-Christic powers are at the same time struggling *for* a life unbound and uncorrupted by those powers, a life overflowing with divine mercy.

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<sup>5</sup> Panos’ explanation is resonant with the comments of a range of other Greek-Cypriot churchgoers and clergy, articulating that people bring images of their loved ones or an afflicted part of themselves to the churches, dedicating them to the saint from whom they have sought and experienced help. The most elaborate of these offerings are the beaten-metal halos that adorn particularly prominent icons, often having been made (at least partially) from melted-down jewelry given by grateful devotees. His comment on the saints rushing to be near us when we take the slightest step toward them is echoed by Bishop Vasilios of Constantia-Ammochostos, who describes how the relationship with the saints is not as much one of holding ourselves to be worthy of their company as it is one of opening ourselves to their eagerness to draw near us in love (“Οϊκουμενικοὶ ἅγιοι στὴν Κύπρο”).

<sup>6</sup> June 19, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Timothy 4:7; Makarios III, *Κύπρος ἡ ἅγια νῆσος*, 6.

This is a consistent meaning of holiness at work in the lived theology of Cyprus: *freedom from* domination and *freedom for* love and life abundant. Indeed, the struggles of those holy people now represented in the churches and shrines are not, Panos suggests, all that different from the struggles that Christians continue to face—struggles with inner and outer domination (by “sin”—he does not specify whether this sin is one’s own or the sin of others, and this ambiguity/duality is fitting indeed), and struggles to be aligned with what is right (*orthos*) in themselves, in their world, and in their relationship to God.<sup>8</sup>

This agonistic perspective, construing Christian life metaphorically as an athletic contest or a military conflict, is of course not uniquely Orthodox; its contours are clear in the New Testament and its utility across an enormous range of Christian contexts from antiquity to the present is well known.<sup>9</sup> I argue, however, that *how* this (inner/outer, personal/political) struggle gets bound up with the (multi)mediation of holiness is a matter of deliberate, strategic (and tactical) Orthodox self-construction.<sup>10</sup> Panos’ informal theological claim about God and the saints “rushing to help” Christians in their struggles insists on the material icon (and the physical act of *proskyneisthai*, inclining oneself to kiss, the medium)<sup>11</sup> as the crucial interface: a wholly embodied, carnal/spiritual embrace-of and being-embraced-by holiness. The intimacy of “open[ing] your heart to holiness” ramifies as a public act insofar as the record of one’s life being rectified (that is, such *tamata* as votive objects, silver adornments of icons, or even the material

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<sup>8</sup> Let us note again a prevailing Orthodox Christian identification with and active concern for the maintenance of *rightness* in power relations, in relations of the present to the past and the future, and indeed in the relation of the self to the self and of the self to the heavenly order of God and the saints.

<sup>9</sup> See again discussion of these metaphors in my general introduction, section 1.

<sup>10</sup> In Part Two’s studies of theologians whose treatments of the mediation of holiness become closely tied to the crystallization of Orthodox doctrine and identity over and against “heterodox” or “heretical” alternatives, it will be clear how these strategies of struggle by means of hagiographical media came to be not exclusively but *definitively* “Orthodox.”

<sup>11</sup> Προσκύνησις (προσκύνηση in modern Greek) itself serves, I believe, as a palpable encapsulation of the lived theology of struggle intimated here by Panos. *Bending toward* the icon, the holy medium, is at once a somatic and a psychic act: bending *toward* holiness (bodily and spiritually) is a bending *away* from distortions of life, and an *unbending* of the human person by stretching toward (επέκταση) and appropriating the sanctified exemplar in one’s own life. It is in keeping with my argument about the psychosomatic integrity of hagiographical processes that the haptic and emotive qualities of the act of προσκύνηση, bending one’s body and inclining one’s heart, cannot be alienated from the discursive theological significance that is, even if not articulated intellectually by all who participate in it (though Panos demonstrates that this too is not unreasonable to expect), imbibed and reproduced in Orthodox Christian liturgical habitation.

detritus of a struggle endured—like the crutches frequently found piled against icon stands) is added to and amplifies the mediating interface for all who follow after.

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In this case study, we encounter the polysemic, polytropic figure of St. George through three paradigms (“Swifthelper,” “Greatmartyr,” and “Dragonslayer”) of relationship and synthesis between the human and the holy. We will see that the saint and his hagiographers (those who inscribe and mobilize saints in diverse media) seek to resist distorting forces and rectify persons and communities, in a modern Cyprus fertilized by intercultural exchange and scarred by political trauma. They do this by enacting, before the eyes of flesh and the eyes of faith, magnetic alternatives to distorted institutions and forms of life, radiant nodes in a shared cultural apparatus for knowledge and action within the topographies of domination. On the basis of the theological culture of Cyprus, I will show that the liberation sought from St. George and the resistance enacted by his appropriation are never purely psychological nor purely political but rather are consistently an integrity of the two. Interpretively calibrating the matrix of associations with St. George with their own lives in society, Greek-Cypriots have woven together the material and discursive representations of the saint with the ecological and political order of the island, imbuing threatened places and experiences of exploitation with the resonant undertones of an inbreaking, divinely-sanctioned alternative, in which they may participate and mediate that participation to others.

The conclusion of Chapter I introduced the iconographic tradition that synthesizes the three key narratives of St. George, using them to depict the saint in a transtemporal moment of triumph-in-struggle and inviting the viewer to share in his glory. To reiterate, I am arguing that these iconic types,<sup>12</sup> variably combined and distinguished, should be understood not only as visual representations of famous legends

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<sup>12</sup> These types bring into the foreground, respectively, St. George’s figuration (i) as *deliverer*—rescuing an innocent from captivity to return him where he belongs, among his own people and way of life; (ii) as *martyr*—suffering and dying at the hands of anti-Christic political power, while bearing witness to the truth that cannot be contained by this power; and (iii) as *slayer*—exterminating an inhuman (sometimes supernatural) beast that threatens the land and those who depend on it.

associated with St. George, but also as equally integrated-but-distinguishable patterns of *relation* with the saint, models for understanding the texture of George’s intervention in individual and collective struggles, and paradigmatic repertoires for Orthodox Christians’ own ways of resistance and rectification.

Now, in this chapter, I focus specifically on the paradigm of George’s mediation as being “swift to help” (*tachys eis boētheian*), that is, the saint understood by Greek-Cypriots as a presence ready at hand to deliver individuals and communities from danger, sought for his direct, palpable intervention in personal, political, and ecological affairs—each of which is bound up as integral



Figure 2.3. Compound icon of St. George, depicting his crowning with the wreath of martyrdom (and his passion in medallions), the slaying of the dragon, and the deliverance of a captive boy. Monastery of St. Barnabas near Famagusta, now a Turkish-Cypriot icon museum. 1878.

with the others. As the festal prayer, sung in packed churches on the feast days of the saint, has it: “At sea with those who sail, on the road with those who walk, at night with those who sleep, safeguard us; keeping a watchful eye, save us, all-blessed George; and deem worthy in deed, by the will of the Lord, what I would obtain, and on the day of judgment of the things [that took place] in life, bring about my deliverance, since you are the one who rushes forward in your protection [of us].”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Koutloumousianou (ed), *Μηναίον του Απριλίου*, 89: Ἐν θαλάσῃ με πλέοντα, ἐν ὁδῷ με βαδίζοντα, ἐν νυκτὶ καθεύδοντα, περιφρούρησον· ἐπαγρυπνοῦντα διάσωσον, παμμακάρι Γεώργιε· καὶ ἀξίωσον ποιεῖν, τοῦ Κυρίου τὸ θέλημα, ὅπως εὖροιμι, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τῆς δίκης τῶν ἐν βίῳ, πεπραγμένων μοι τὴν λύσιν, ὁ προδραμῶν ἐν τῇ σκέτῃ σου. See also Papageorgiou, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γεώργιος*, 141; and see the homily for the Feast of St. George, written by the current secretary to the Bishop of Morphou and published on the Metropolitanate website (<http://www.immorfou.org.cy/local-saints/1454-aggeorgios.html>, accessed May 2017), which dilates on the above themes—including explicit foregrounding of George’s identification as *ταχὺς εἰς βοήθειαν*. Christodoulou categorizes the miracles of St. George (besides those of the dragon-legend, which he deals with separately, as do I) in six sets: “(a) those related to his veneration; (b) the protection of cities and islands from the raids of other peoples or natural disasters; (g) the healing of the sick; (d) the defense of the powerless (the poor, the imprisoned, the unjustly-treated); (e) various good works in times of famine, drought, and epidemic; and (st) those in which he works miracles through his icons” (“Τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου,” 92).

## (1) The Boy on the Horse: Whose Liberation?

As a way into what I am calling the “Swifthelper” paradigm of relation to and appropriation of St. George, I would like to consider in some depth the legend of George’s miraculous rescue of an enslaved youth, in light of the specificities of its multimediation in modern Cyprus.

In those days (the story goes), when the Barbary corsairs were terrorizing much of the eastern Mediterranean, there lived a boy with his widower father in the town of Pegeia, on the west coast of Cyprus. The family was poor but respected by the other villagers, and the father, no matter how hard he had to work to support his family, dedicated some of his income and labor to the maintenance of the church of St. George. One day, pirates landed at Pegeia and carried off the boy into servitude on one of their ships; finding that he had been taken, his father ran to George’s church in desperation and threw himself before the icon of the saint, begging for help in returning his son and promising even greater gifts to the saint “if only his son could return.” But unbeknownst to him, George was already riding to the rescue—galloping over the waves on his white horse, he landed in a flash on the deck of the pirate ship and whisked away the boy before the astonished eyes of the Turks.<sup>14</sup> That very same afternoon, then, the boy reappeared in Pegeia—wearing the foreign costume in which the pirates had dressed him and still carrying the bowl of soup that he had been about to serve the pirate captain when the saint snatched him away. And to the amazement of the townspeople, the soup was still hot, so swiftly had St. George ridden to return the boy home!<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Although the Barbary corsairs were not only or even primarily Turkish in origin, it is telling that Greek-Cypriot accounts of the miracle, when anchored in this context of Barbary raids, assume the Turkish connection.

<sup>15</sup> See Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 381; and Paraskevopoulou, *Researches into the Traditions of the Popular Religious Feasts of Cyprus* [hereafter *Popular Religious Feasts*], 92. Versions of this story, transmitted in several similar but unidentical tellings (some recorded from the period of British rule, others articulated to me by the people of Pegeia themselves, in 2016), are here synthesized and retold—as indeed the earlier versions would themselves have come into being as syntheses, adaptations, incompletely-remembered or partially-relevant retellings.

George's miraculous, posthumous rescue of a young man from enemies who have taken him from his own society and forced him into servitude in theirs is well-known, being several centuries older and more widespread than the pirates that did, indeed, trouble the coast of Cyprus in early modernity. However, connoisseurs of the legends associated with St. George might find themselves unsettled by the Cypriot version I have recounted, which would seem familiar, but with several elements askew: the story's setting in modernity rather than in the Byzantine period, the boy's conscription as a pirate scullion instead of his capture as a prisoner of war, the bowl of hot soup replacing a ewer of water or a glass of wine. The versions of this story recorded in Cyprus are variations on a theme of deliverance, cobbled together from different sources and calibrated for specific communities. How, then, does the figure of the boy on the horse (multimediated in image and tale, liturgical objects and the organization of space), serve to shape Greek-Cypriots' theological understanding of and felt alignment with a Christian struggle in the world, helping to validate their self-positioning in relation and resistance to antagonistic power?

### *1a) "Interwoven with their life and their works": Local Calibration of Imagined Intervention*

First, while the essential structure of the tale is consistent with other versions that appear in written and oral tradition around the eastern Mediterranean, specific details about the boy's family, the enemy from whom he is rescued, and even the tangible/sensible vestige of the miracle (the foreign container, the still-hot liquid) are *calibrated* for the community in which the story is told. By "calibration," I mean a specific dimension of what Paul Ricoeur construes more broadly as "appropriation":<sup>16</sup> the presence of particular elements that ease imaginative digestion of a medium as recognizably relevant to the here

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<sup>16</sup> Ricoeur purports that a reader (by analogy here, a consumer of oral tradition) achieves proximity to world of a narrative or work of art by locating its meaning within her own world of experience and value, yet not so completely that its own power to move is dissolved into a background of ordinariness. Such proximity thus retains the distance necessary for wonder and being-changed-by the work of art (that is, here, the hagiographical medium); it "suppresses and preserves the cultural distance and includes the otherness within the oneness" (*Interpretation Theory*, 43). See also Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 182-93.



Figure 2.4: Wall-painting depicting St. George and the rescued boy (detail). Old Church of St. George, Paralimni. 1901.

and now of the consumer, that render it *at home* among its tellers/hearers (and render its tellers/hearers at home with it), “interwoven with their life and their works.”<sup>17</sup> Such calibration is not a new phenomenon, being crucial to hagiographical inscription and appropriation; we will continue to observe it at work.

In the earliest available versions of this legend (eleventh-century) the youth is a servant in the church of St. George; he is taken prisoner during the ninth-century Arab invasion of Paphlagonia,<sup>18</sup> forced to work in the army kitchens, rescued by the saint after his own prayer for deliverance, and dropped off at a monastery of St. George in his Arab servant garb, startling and subsequently joining the monks.<sup>19</sup> Later

<sup>17</sup> “At different places on the island,” Papageorgiou observes (*Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 10) “the pious imagination of the people [ἡ εὐσεβῆς φαντασία τοῦ λαοῦ] wishes to see the ‘steps’ of the saint’s horse stamped into the earth, even if the place is rocky and barren [see Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 407, for examples]. [St George] still has his own cave and pool, and close by to these, the place where he kills the dragon and sets free the princess, since the Cypriots want the saint for their own, interwoven [συνφασμένο] with their life and their works.”

<sup>18</sup> Note, therefore, that “calibration” does not mean necessarily staging a medium *in* the present, but rather rendering it as sufficiently pertinent to present social and spiritual concerns—in this case, the Arab-Byzantine conflicts in the context of which the miracle-account arose.

<sup>19</sup> The version published by Aufhauser (*Miracula S. Georgii*, 13-18) is paraphrased by Grotowski, “The Legend of St. George Saving a Youth from Captivity and its Depiction in Art [hereafter ‘St. George Saving a Youth’],” 29: “During their invasion of Paphlagonia the Agarenes took many people into captivity, among them a young boy who was a servant in the church of St. George in Phatris. Some of the prisoners were killed, the rest turned into slaves. The boy was of such beauty that he was chosen as a servant for the Arabian ruler. As he rejected the offer to become a Muslim, he was sent to work in the kitchen. In his misfortune the poor boy prayed to Saint George. Once at evening, when he was lying in bed, he heard a voice coming from the yard and calling his name. The boy opened the door and saw a rider who caught him and placed behind himself on the horse. Then the steed rushed forward and started to gallop. The rider brought the boy to a certain

versions embellish the character and recalibrate the circumstances: the youth becomes a soldier in the Byzantine army *striking back* against the Arabs (or the Bulgarians) at the frontiers of the empire, he is given a name (“George,” establishing his own prior patronal relationship with the saint),<sup>20</sup> his parents or a single widowed parent enter the story as additional characters whose own devotion to St. George is emphasized, the day of the rescue is specified as the Feast of St. George (establishing a feedback in which devotees’ own participation in the annual celebrations is imaginatively infused with the saint’s ongoing intervention in the lives of ordinary people in painful situations), and the youth is reported to bring back from his captivity not only the foreign clothes in which he has been dressed but also a *particular implement* that represents both the service in which he has been engaged and the swiftness with which he has been rescued by the saint.<sup>21</sup> This serving vessel (*koukoumion*) is of particular interest to questions of mediation. The vessel’s visual representation in iconography serves to differentiate between variations on

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building, and then disappeared. The exhausted youth fell asleep and next morning was awakened by the people, who were dismayed because his Arabian clothes suggested the presence of enemies. The boy recognised those people as monks. As it transpired, he had been brought to Monastery of St. George. All of them went to a church to offer a thanksgiving prayer to God for saving the youth.” See also Christodoulou, “Τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου,” 95-96.

<sup>20</sup> The *naming* of children can itself function as a kind of votive offering in Greek Orthodox hagiographical imaginaries. The (formerly greater) importance of the name-day celebration in Orthodox societies reflects an association of one’s identity being closely linked with that of one’s saintly patron (προστάτης). In Cyprus, it is explained to me on a few occasions that the ubiquity of the name Γεώργιος on the island is due to the popularity of the saint: Marina relates with great pride, while telling me about all the good things St. George has done for her town of Paralimni, that both her husband and her son are named after him; Alexandros, describing the gratitude felt by Cypriots toward St. George, observes that the saint “makes everything right [ορθό] when it has been broken, and people name their children after him, they are so grateful”; and Fr. Symeon of Stavrovouni instructs me in the standard explanation of the church that parents *should* name their children after saints who mean something to them, who have helped in their own lives, so that the saints might be invoked to watch over the children as well. Cf. Ohnefalsch-Richter, *Greek Customs and Mores in Cyprus*, 204; Skedros, “Hagiography and Devotion to the Saints,” 446; and Kakkouras, “Η τιμή τοῦ ἁγίου Γεωργίου στὴν Κύπρο.” In Chapter III, the related significance and mediating texture of the relationships between St. George the Greatmartyr and the “minor/lesser Georges” (Γεωργίων ἐλασσόνων) martyred in modernity will be of some importance.

<sup>21</sup> Young George is alternatively made the cupbearer of the Emir of Crete (thus ascribing the miracle to the ninth century, prior to the Mediterranean reconquests of Nikephoros Phokas) or the table servant of a Bulgarian chieftain (fixing it in the tenth century, in the context of several brutal Byzantine defeats on the northern frontier). These versions also appear in Aufhauser (*Miracula S. Georgii*, 18-44, 100-03) and Grotowski (“St. George Saving a Youth,” 30-32). The nineteenth-century *Great Synaxarion* (edited by Doukakis) used in Cyprus has both versions back to back (*Μέγας Συναξαριστής*, IV.358-61, in a martyrdom-and-miracles account drawn from the sixteenth-century monk Damaskenos the Studite), connected by an aside of the narrator noting that one such miracle would be wondrous, but so great is St. George that he did not accomplish it only once! Of note here is the specific naming of Phokas’ wars of *reconquest* against “the Bulgarians, the Hungarians, the Scythians, the Medes, and the Turks” (IV.358) as the context of George’s miraculous help.

the miracle while yet retaining the ecumenical structure of the narrative: young George brings back a goblet of wine from the Emirate of Crete, a jug of hot water from the Bulgarian army camp (still hot when he returns to his family, so swiftly had St. George ridden to return him home!), or, in the above variation from post-Byzantine Cyprus, a bowl of soup from the Barbary pirate ship.<sup>22</sup> Yet there are also accounts that end with this goblet, dish, or ewer—accidentally pilfered from the antagonists’ court in the moment of St. George’s miracle—remaining in the church of St. George *as a tangible trophy*, thereafter sanctified and used as a liturgical implement, “destined to be raised up to my Lord upon the altar.”<sup>23</sup> The material reminder of the boy’s captivity is transformed into the emblem of his liberation, and the object which reminds the community of the trauma of his absence is enshrined within a counterpoised enactment of memory: the eucharistic *anamnēsis* of Christ’s deliverance of the downtrodden and condemned.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 2.5: Ottoman hand-washing set (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century): objects depicted in the iconography of St. George and the rescued boy. Cyprus Medieval Museum, Limassol Castle.

<sup>22</sup> In any case, it is not my interest to adjudicate between versions of folklore (nor between visual representations of Ottoman copperware, which appear with some diversity on the icons of St. George, reflecting differences in the understanding of the hagiographers themselves and of their patrons), but rather it is to point again to the processes by which such alternative versions emerge and become part of the heritage of a community. Certain sites, indeed, themselves display such diversity and development in their own representation of the miracle—the church of St. George at Strovolos, for instance, has a large wall-painting of the swift-helper saint in which an earlier depiction of the boy carrying a goblet of wine had been replaced, in a later repainting, by a boy bearing a modern-looking ewer (see Figure 2.6).

<sup>23</sup> Aufhauser [ed], *Miracula S. Georgii*, 34: ἔμελλον ἀναγαεῖν ἐν τῇ τραπέζῃ πρὸς τὸν κύριόν μου; cf. Grotowski, “St. George Saving a Youth,” 31, 45.

<sup>24</sup> I am uncertain as to whether there are Orthodox churches with eucharistic serving vessels that are actually attributed to the miraculous rescue of the boy on St. George’s horse, that is, as secondary relics of the saint’s posthumous miracle. It would not surprise me, though, in the slightest: such an identification would be entirely in keeping with how material relics are used to invite imaginative re-presentation of long-past events, collapsing time and space to stage the present liturgical or festal moment as part of an ongoing (and enduringly sense-perceptible) spectacle of community-edifying holiness. See Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Chapter 1, and Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 7-14.



Figure 2.6: Wall-painting in the Church of St. George, Strovolos, with an older image of the rescued boy bearing a flask of wine (left; now restored) alongside a newer image of the boy bearing a ewer (right).

### 1b) “Freed from ethnic slavery”: Iconic Identification and Affective Self-Reference

Second, we must take note that out of the abundant miracles of deliverance attributed to St. George, it is *this* story of “strange and wondrous liberation” (*paradoxē kai thaumastē apeleutherōsē*),<sup>25</sup> in all its local and temporal specificity, that is added to the formal iconography of the saint and becomes so widely known.<sup>26</sup> I wager that this elevated prominence of the rescued boy is in no small part related to the role played by the *powerful antagonist* in the story.<sup>27</sup> Unlike miracles concerning the healing of epileptics or the opening of freshwater springs, and even unlike those concerning the saint’s direct punishment or conversion of “Greeks” or “Saracens,”<sup>28</sup> the rescued boy represents the (only apparent) powerlessness of an Orthodox devotee of St. George made captive to cultural/religious otherness. St. George is figured as both an *agent* of resistance and a *patron* of those who, however ineffectively on their own, resist (including the

<sup>25</sup> Raptoroulos, *Ο Άγιος Μεγαλομάρτυς Γεώργιος ο Τροπαιοφόρος*, 48. Cf. Hadjikostas, “Το τραγούδι τ’ Αη Γιώργη και μία προσπάθεια ερμηνείας του” [hereafter ‘Το τραγούδι τ’ Αη Γιώργη’] 101; Aufhauser (ed), *Miracula S. Georgii*, 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> The first legends of the rescued boy “must definitely have been composed between the second half of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century” (Grotowski, “Saint George Saving a Youth,” 33; cf. Gorescu, “Saint Georges délivre l’adolescent emmené en captivité par les infidèles,” 128-31), or at least no earlier (due to the historicity of the references to specific Arabian and Bulgarian antagonists), and the images begin to appear at almost the same time or shortly after, in Georgia—a country struggling at this time with the arrival of the Seljuk Turks.

<sup>27</sup> As we will see, George’s position of resistance to a powerful antagonist is just as central to the other two prevailing miracle-accounts / icon-types: George’s martyrdom by the Roman emperor and his facing off against the dragon.

<sup>28</sup> Collections of miracle-accounts (including variations on each of the above, among other tropes) are widely available in Cyprus, sold as booklets in churches and monasteries for a few euros. Usually these combine the universally-known miracles (the accounts of George’s passion, the slaying of the dragon, and usually one or more versions of this story of the rescued boy) with miracle accounts specific to the local community.

boy who anxiously awaits rescue, the boy's parent, who prays daily for the saint's intervention, and the tellers of the story, who broadcast the miracle in order to bolster others' hope). The widespread image of the boy on the horse can thus promote confidence in the opposition between holiness and unjust power exerted against Orthodox Christians.<sup>29</sup>

Such a reading of the boy on the horse is supported by the history of the iconographic type in which this miracle-account is foregrounded. Most frequently the boy simply appears as an element added to the ubiquitous dragon-slaying icon type, but certain icons are dedicated solely to the visual representation of the boy's rescue. In these, known collectively as the "*Diasōritēs*" type,<sup>30</sup> George is mounted on horseback and rides not over dry land but over water, depicted in the most elaborate icons by swirls of waves and a variety of sea creatures (Figure 2.7)—a striking representation of George's swift ranging across the Mediterranean in defense of his devotees. Such icons begin to appear roughly in the eleventh century, but become especially popular "in Christian societies under Muslim control," and even

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<sup>29</sup> A variety of other interpretations exist of the boy on the horse, some more sustainable than others. As Grotowski has discussed ("St. George Saving a Youth," 35-36), Rice envisions the figure as a knight's squire imported from the crusader veneration of George as one of their own, or even as an androgynous depiction of the princess rescued from the dragon ("The Accompanied St. George," 383-87), whereas Howell ("Al Khadr and Christian Icons") looks to intercultural exchange with the Arab world for his explanation, viewing the boy's implements and the aquatic imagery as derived from the Qur'anic depiction of the prophet Moses, who meets al-Khidr (associated with St. George, as we considered in Chapter I, section 2d) after being instructed by God to carry a live fish in a vessel and look for this mysterious teacher where the fish would escape into a river (Qur'an 18:60-70). Though there is a shortage of evidence for a positive adoption of such interpretations, I am not so quick to dismiss them as Grotowski, as cross-fertilization of Orthodox hagiography with Arabic narrative and crusader culture, particularly in Cyprus, is certain even as the causality of such exchanges is near impossible to determine.

<sup>30</sup> See Raff, "Der hl. Georg als Knabenretter," 116, on this type featuring the "autonomous theme of liberation of a boy from captivity" (*das autonome Thema der Befreiung eines Knaben aus der Gefangenschaft*), without depicting a dragonslaying and even without narrative scenes such as rescue of the boy from the palace or his being returned to his parents. Grotowski, following Thomas Raff and Henri Grégoire, believes that the epithet *Διασωρίτης* is originally "toponymic," referring to the ancient name of a district of Cappadocia where George was said to have been born ("St. George Saving a Youth," 50-51). However, the epithet is more overtly linked with a substantive form of the verb *διασώζω*—to rescue, preserve, or deliver from danger (the verb appears frequently in the versions published by Aufhauser to describe the action taken by the saint. For instance, see *Miracula S. Georgii*, 39, where the boy on the horse is "miraculously rescued" (*διασωθείς παραδόξως*) and 40, where George has "miraculously rescued the captive boy ... having freed him from ethnic slavery" (*τὸν αἰχμαλωτισθέντα παῖδα ... ἐκ τῆς ἐθνικῆς δουλείας ἐλευθερώσας παραδόξως διέσωσεν*). It is this association that is undoubtedly more active in the hagiographical imagination of Greek-Cypriots (see Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 141).

more precisely, in Cyprus and other island contexts in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>31</sup> Although Piotr Grotowski points to the apparent “anti-Muslim overtone and [promotion of] the saint as a guardian of Christians, protecting them against infidels,”<sup>32</sup> I would add that, while a context of Muslim conquest may be pertinent to the prevalence of these representations, the function of this miracle in the hagiographical dynamics of a society like modern Cyprus is anything but exhausted by its narrative structure and cast of characters. Not only in the *Diasōritēs* icon type, not only in the presence of the



Figure 2.7: Saint George the Deliverer (*Diasōritēs*). Church of the Archangel Michael, Pedoulas. 1474.

boy on the back of uncountable horses in the iconographic tradition around St. George, but even more in the wide cultural web of significations and forms of life in which the saint is integrated into people's lives, the rendering of George as swift to help (*tachys eis boētheian*) refers at a fundamental level to the *present* as well as to the past, a present in which the community finds itself in continuing need of deliverance, great and small. The boy on the horse, this “wondrously rescued George” (*thaumatourgika diasōtheis Geōrgios*)<sup>33</sup> is a visual symbol especially tuned to the need of devotees to appropriate the hagiographical tradition into

<sup>31</sup> Grotowski, “St. George Saving a Youth,” 36, drawing on the art historical scholarship of Otto Meinardus, Thomas Raff, and Leopold Kretzenbacher. Cf. Dimitrokallis, “Saint Georges passant sur la mer,” 368-69, on some variations and examples of this sea-borne type. Karagianni also emphasizes this concentration of *Διασωριτής* icons in the islands (“Η τιμή του αγίου Γεωργίου”), a detail that I would take to be indicative of a pattern of *self-reference* in the representation of St. George as Deliverer riding to the rescue over waves. It is noteworthy that the oldest known example of this icon type depicting the rescue scene without the dragon-slaying as well can be found in Cyprus, at the Monastery of St. John Chrysostom at Koutsouvendis (see Grotowski, “St. George Saving a Youth,” 43, and Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus*, 456-67).

<sup>32</sup> Grotowski, “St. George Saving a Youth,” 42.

<sup>33</sup> Vasileiou, *Ο ιστορικός νάος του Αγίου Γεωργίου της Άρπερας στην Τερσεφάνου*, 34. The author of *De filio ducis Leonis* similarly refers to the boy as “ὁ δὲ διασωθεὶς παραδόξως παῖς Γεώργιος” (in Aufhauser [ed], *Miracula S. Georgii*, 39). Cf. Stavridis, *Βιβλιογραφία κυπριακῆς λαϊκῆς ποιησῆς*, 536, for references in poetry where the miracle is referred to as “the freedom of the enslaved boy George” (ἡ ελευθερία/ του σκλαβωμένου παιδιοῦ Γεωργίου).

their own lives and, in turn, locate themselves within the care and patronage of the saint, within his mediation of holy resistance to their world.

Some concrete examples of this appropriation should help us avoid telling “half-stories,” neglecting the appropriative imagination of hagiographical audiences themselves.<sup>34</sup> In the church of St. George of Arpera (near Tersephanou), the boy on the horse is wearing the distinctive fur cap and luxuriant robes of a dragoman (Figure 2.8).<sup>35</sup> The narrative logic of the miracle would be hard-pressed to support a variation in which the kidnapped boy was made a dragoman—a coveted and skilled position—but the hat is explicable in that the financier of the church and commissioner of the iconography within was himself an eighteenth-century dragoman of Cyprus, Christophakis Constantinou; the inscriptions on the icon reflect an understanding that he and his family were under the special care of the swift-helper saint. Thus on the wall of the church, beside and above the congregation gathered for worship, the rescued boy is overtly rendered a metonymic stand-in for the community’s prominent benefactor.<sup>36</sup>

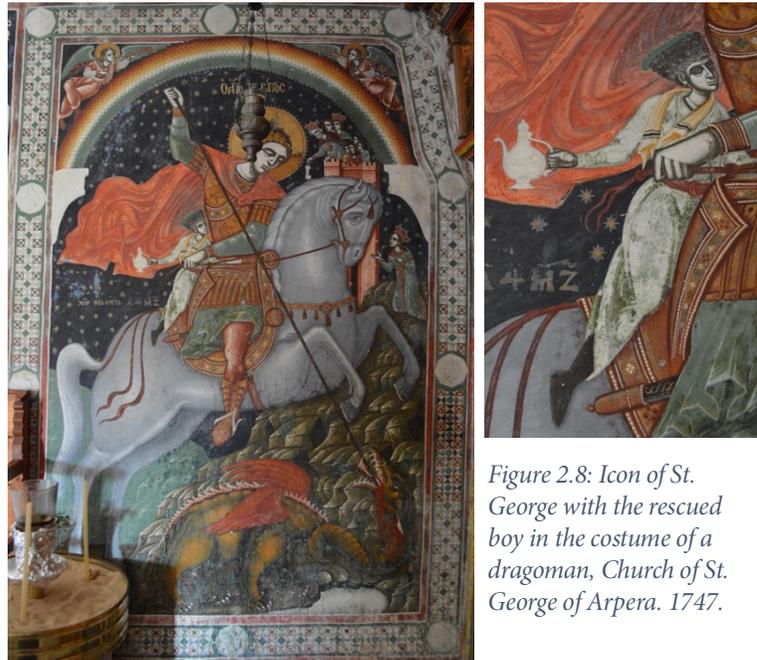


Figure 2.8: Icon of St. George with the rescued boy in the costume of a dragoman, Church of St. George of Arpera. 1747.

<sup>34</sup> See Kleinberg, “Apophthegmata,” 395.

<sup>35</sup> A dragoman was a (typically upper-class) translator-interpreter who served as an intermediary between Christian communities and the Sublime Porte. See, e.g., Diriker, “On the Evolution of the Interpreting Profession in Turkey.”

<sup>36</sup> For more on this church and its iconography, see Vasileiou, *Ο ιστορικός ναός του Αγίου Γεωργίου της Άρπερας στην Τερσεφάνου*; Stylianos, “The Historic Church of St. George of Arpera”; and Stylianos, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus*, 440-46. Over the north door of the church, the dragoman and his family are depicted offering the church to St. George, who receives it with a gesture of blessing. The Stylianos translate the inscription beneath the saint: “I have received many favours from you the martyr of Christ, not only in a dream, but especially in prompt deeds, and because I always found you a firm (supporter) in my country, but (also) a keenest saviour beyond measure in foreign lands, for which favour I erected this church to you from the foundations – which, oh! athlete, may you receive as an accepted offer – interceding always for me, your wretched (humble) servant, the Interpreter Christophakis Constantinou . . .” (*The Painted Churches of Cyprus*, 440-41).

When it comes to the masses who do not commission icons representing themselves in dynamic interaction with the saints, we find that the image of the boy on St. George's horse is a site of imaginative fertility that does not even require knowing the authorized story of the miracle. The image, rendered in paint and positioned (more often than not) in places of prominence in church buildings, is *available* for visitors to make meaning as they approach the saints and ask favor upon their own lives, situating themselves within the imaginative world produced by the legends of the saints without being confined by existing narrative accounts. In the course of asking clergy and lay visitors to churches what they made of the figure of the boy, I was hardly prepared for the range of responses: there were those who spoke of the boy representing a servant or devotee of the saint, offering him gifts in gratitude for his protection.<sup>37</sup> Others knew and retold (in their own words, with their own emphases) some version of the deliverance narrative traced above: at least three distinct interlocutors told me that they saw the vessel carried by the boy (identified in the hagiographical narratives as a ewer of perfumed water) as an Ottoman-style coffee pot, drawing the connection between the rescue narrative and the Ottoman child-levy.<sup>38</sup> The boy, in their eyes, represents a child abducted during the early years of Ottoman rule of Cyprus, raised in the Pasha's court as a house servant, and whisked away by St. George in the act of serving coffee to the Pasha's guests.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Note that here too, in a less ostentatious way than that of the dragoman who has the boy depicted in dragoman's uniform, is an *identification* of the boy in the icon with the living devotee who sees in the image a representation of his own devotion and service.

<sup>38</sup> On the child-levy (Greek: παιδομάζωμα [gathering of children] / Turkish: *devşirme* [collection]), in which children of Christian families were seized from their families and raised by and in service to the Ottoman state between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor*, 234-42; Faroqhi, "Ottoman Populations" 373-74; and especially Argo, *Stolen Boys of the Ottoman Empire*.

<sup>39</sup> Still others conflated this story with that of the dragon, supposing the serving boy to be one of the children sent to feed the beast; their lived theology allows the dragon-legend to be allegorical for Ottoman oppression and invites interpretation of the dragon as a figure of the Sultan (on this, more discussion will follow in Chapter IV). My interlocutors placed explicit emphasis on the context of the rescue-story being the Ottoman child-levy, by contrast with the less political (and delightfully idiosyncratic) variation told to Talbot Rice by an elderly Greek-Cypriot priest, which likewise replaces the water in the boy's pot with coffee. In this version, St. George is relaxing at a *kapheneio* when he hears that a dragon is threatening the princess; the saint rushes off to rescue her without drinking his coffee, but the server at the café "refused to allow the Saint to go unrefreshed to such an encounter, and jumped up onto the horse behind the Saint, coffee pot in hand" (Rice, "The Accompanied Saint George," 383; cf. Stylianou, "The Historic Church of St. George of Arpera," 154).

Such encounters with iconography have a clear political voltage, which charges the imaginative act of hagiographical calibration with the cultural situation in which the saints' devotees find themselves.<sup>40</sup> An image with no overt representation of "Turks" or "Turkish oppression" comes in the course of personal interaction with the hagiographical medium to signal, semi-surreptitiously, saintly opposition to unjust practices recalled from Ottoman history.<sup>41</sup> And for still others, the boy on the horse may not even register as a discreet element, belonging as it does to a semantic and affective totality that need not be discursively available to be animate in their lives. One such interlocutor, Paisia, was eager to tell me about her own experience and understanding of St. George, his sacrifice, and his swiftness to help from the perspective of a devout Orthodox laywoman; asked what she made of the boy riding with the saint, clearly visible on the icon of George in her own living room, she responded: "What boy?"<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Even aside from the discursive re-narrations, much Cypriot iconography displays the characteristic combination of jug, dish, and towel, identifying the boy as being borne by the saint from an Ottoman court, where the *ibrik* and *leğen* (the set used by servants to wash and perfume guests' hands upon welcoming them into the home—see again Figure 2.5) were indispensable implements of hospitality. Kretzenbacher confirms that the "folk interpretation" ("*Volksdeutung*") of the boy's identity as a young man taken by the child-levy to be raised in the Janissary corps is not idiosyncratic to Cyprus (see "Sankt Georg mit dem Jüngling auf dem Streitross," 184-86; cf. Grotowski, "St. George Saving a Youth," 37); in this way he explains the prominence of this icon-type in the Ottoman Balkans and its deployment in propagandistic materials of the Bulgarian National Resistance. The situation in Cyprus is analogous, but further complicated by the island's post-Ottoman incorporation of the island into a different empire with mixed implications for the position of Greek Orthodoxy. Therefore, I am interested in considering the boy as a plausible symbol for *the island itself*, within the imaginative contours of Cypriot Orthodoxy during the time of the British administration: captured and incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, but then (at least as the British takeover was at first perceived by Greek Cypriots) liberated from it, still bearing the cultural forms into which it had been assimilated, and now clinging to the saint's guardianship in the midst of the Mediterranean, being borne anxiously back to the arms of its mother...

<sup>41</sup> Along these lines, the dress of the boy in Cypriot iconography is interpretively fertile: sometimes he is wearing a turban or other recognizably Ottoman garment (as the story usually has him dressed in new clothes by his captors), and although sometimes he is wearing a Byzantine helmet (referring both to his early incarnation as a prisoner of war and to his association with St. George as a patron of military and ethnic border-keeping), more often the boy is depicted with a Phrygian cap—which, during the neo-classical boom preceding the American and French revolutions (and subsequently during the Greek uprising of the 1820s), had come to be associated with emancipation from slavery (see Korshak, "The Liberty Cap as a Revolutionary Symbol in America and France"). This emancipatory association is clearly at work in the St. George iconography, not least because the cap's prevalence in revolutionary-era Greece inscribes an imaginative link between the liberation of the Greek motherland and the continuing need for liberation on the part of colonized Cypriots.

<sup>42</sup> February 11, 2016. See Hynes, "Reconceptualizing Resistance," 568-72, responding to expectations in the literature that resistance must be both *recognized* as such (by its agents and its targets) and *intentional* (on the part of the former); on the contrary, she argues, an affect of resistance may be promoted in a variety of ways that are not reducible to the discursive identification thereof.

It is a few days after my lecture at the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute, where I had introduced a few of my initial hypotheses concerning the appropriations of the boy on St. George's horse. I am going for coffee with Elizaveta, a well-regarded and cosmopolitan Greek-Cypriot intellectual, who had attended the lecture and signaled afterward that she had quite a few thoughts on the matters I discussed. We have barely sat down and she launches into something approaching a tirade, beginning that she is "pissed off"—not at me or at my research, she clarifies upon seeing what must have been my stricken face, but rather at "all these Cypriots who talk rubbish," who are all too quick to provide "erroneous information" to the eager foreign researcher:

This business with the bowl of soup, or the boy carrying off a Turkish coffee pot... They *think* in Cyprus that the jug [of perfumed water, from the Bulgarian account of the miracle,] is a coffee pot—people misinterpret the icons all the time! But it's rubbish, making the icon about the Turks, just like they make St. Helena [the mother of Emperor Constantine] into a new Panagia.<sup>43</sup> You have to be very careful, because people will tell you whatever they happen to think without worrying whether it's right or wrong.<sup>44</sup>

For Elizaveta, who is an active participant in Greek-Cypriot/Turkish-Cypriot reconciliation work, "right or wrong" seems to have a double-valance: the (factual) *incorrectness* of the miracle-account, which she ascribes to the informal interpretations of the iconography that I have collected, reflects at the same time the (moral) *wrongness* of intercultural grudge-bearing. When Greek-Cypriots "make the icon about the Turks," they are imposing their ethical and political attitudes on an object that does not share those attitudes, but can be used to reinforce them, thus hindering the way forward for a Cyprus in need of intercultural respect and changed attitudes to a sordid history. I manage to tell Elizaveta, during our coffee,

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<sup>43</sup> I did not ask Elizaveta to follow up on this point about St. Helena being made "a new Panagia," but context would suggest that she is referring to an outsized importance bestowed upon the mother of Constantine in Cyprus, first because of a wide array of hagiographical accounts in which Helena stops in Cyprus on her way home from the Holy Land, founding monasteries and exterminating vipers—and second insofar as the imperial cult of Constantine and Helena has become associated (in Cyprus as broadly elsewhere in the Orthodox world) with a nostalgia for Byzantine rule and (Orthodox) imperial stability.

<sup>44</sup> April 13, 2016.

that this kind of ethically-charged appropriation and reimagination (however “wrong”) is precisely what interests me, in light of how it may inflect actual political interactivity in a still-divided society. But it is only later that I appreciate how her own reading of the situation, of this “misinterpretation” of hagiographical media by Greek-Cypriots haunted by Ottoman history, is *itself* an effort to seize the reins of mediation, to calibrate the significance of these media to the situation in which she and her community find themselves. And though she may not agree, I wager that the media of St. George and his boy not only are susceptible to this kind of meaning-making appropriation (both hers and those of the Ottomanizers) but indeed invite it. As I will develop at more length in Part Two of the dissertation, appropriation is as much a part of the strategic purpose of hagiographical media, as they are authoritatively theorized, as it is part of their actual usage in particular places and times.

### *1c) “Call him first!” Mediating the Immediacy of a Frontier Saint*

Finally, let us consider two of the themes, apparent in the symbolic shorthand in the narrative and visual culture around the boy on the horse, that are ubiquitous in the attitudes and practices relating to St. George in modern Cyprus. Of particular significance is the fact that the boy’s liberation, effected by the saint, has the conceptual structure of a *border-crossing* and a *border-keeping*, simultaneously. That is, on the one hand, George functions as a frontier-saint,<sup>45</sup> arriving from one civilization in order to intervene in another,<sup>46</sup> treating a sea of separation as no more than another thoroughfare to ride in defense of those on

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<sup>45</sup> As I introduced in Chapter I and will explore in more detail in Chapter IV, St. George is one of the saints most prominently associated from Byzantine times forward with the borders of Greek civilization (both political and imaginative) and in particular with the class of frontier-patrolling warriors known as ἀκρίτες. On this association in Cyprus in particular, see Tsilipakou and Christodoulou (eds), *The Veneration of Saint Mamas in the Mediterranean*, 101: George had been identified for some centuries, in the song cycles of Cyprus pertaining to the epic hero Digenis Akritas, as belonging to the corps of saints (along with Sts. Demetrios and Mamas) “who defend the freedom of the Greeks after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453.”

<sup>46</sup> This is the case in the logic of the narratives, though not necessarily in the historical settings to which they refer—it is hard to make the case that the victims and the beneficiaries of the Ottoman child-levy, for instance, occupied different civilizations, even as cultural faultlines clearly undergirded their relations.

its shores.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the saint's crossing into enemy territory results in the reestablishment of the perceived ethnic boundary that had been violated by the boy's capture (particularly in the Ottoman-calibrated version in which the boy is destined to be raised as a Janissary, his heritage trained out of him)—even as this boundary's porousness is highlighted again by the boy's return bearing the material-cultural apparatus of the abducting society.<sup>48</sup>

The *swiftness*, moreover, with which the narrative represents George riding to the rescue of the youth—before his father or mother had even finished their desperate prayer for help; before the soup, the perfumed water, the coffee had even cooled—is among the most recurrent characteristics of George's special importance to the people of Cyprus. I hold that this swiftness, as a multimediated attribute of the saint,<sup>49</sup> encapsulates the emotive sense of security associated with St. George in Cyprus, reinforcing the sense that he is not distant even if he cannot be seen. Several epithets of the saint in Cyprus besides “swift-helper” (*tachyboēthos*) and “deliverer” (*diasōritēs*) bear out the characteristics of this devotional paradigm: George has been known as “swift-listener” (*tachyepēkous*), “speedy” (*gorgos*), “keen” (*oxys*), and “deft” (*epitēdeiōtēs*), particularly when he is called upon to protect or rescue the Christian community from perils both natural and cultural, to be at hand in an instant to bolster their resolve in resistance.<sup>50</sup> In what

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<sup>47</sup> Moreover, it is precisely *as* a border-crosser (between invisible and visible, between absence and presence, between the peace of heaven and the earthbound struggles he rushes to support) that St. George and the traditions that render and calibrate his presence are grounded in the fundamental logic of Orthodox hagiography: the inscription of what is proper to God (holiness) in what is proper to humanity (intellectual processes and material media, indeed in the psychosomatic synthesis of the human person), thereby securing the ontological bridge of the latter's participation (μέθεξις) in the former. See again the general introduction, sections 1 and 2a, for a more thorough treatment of this logic.

<sup>48</sup> Recall Yara's comments in the introductory vignette of Chapter I, extending this positively-imagined ecumenicity of the saint into an interreligious register: “Christians, Muslims, it does not matter... we all love St. George, we all need his help, and he helps everybody!”

<sup>49</sup> Multimediated in that it is described in discourse, ritually sung in glorifying hymns (μεγαλυνάρια: see Doukakis, *Μέγας Συναχαριστής*, IV.335), represented visually in the galloping horse of the Διασωρίτης icons, and validated psychically by dreams and apparitions (such dreams and apparitions will be discussed below, particularly in section 3. On apparitions as “forms of mediation” with robust political power, see Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Introduction).

<sup>50</sup> On these epithets, their etymology, and various Cypriot traditions associated with them (some of which will be specifically germane to my analysis below), see Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 119-44. Some of these philological details are themselves traditions in miniature, associations that reverberate in hagiographical imagination. For instance, οξύς, meaning “sharp,” “piercing,” or “cunning” as well as keen to act, refers to the link between the saint's swiftness to help and

follows we will encounter a range of traditions where George arrives in the blink of an eye, in the nick of time, in the last instant before calamity; he functions, paradoxically, as both a first responder and a last resort. “In Cyprus, St. George is like 911,” the proprietor of a restaurant named after the saint (it should come as no surprise that there are many) is eager to tell me: “You call him first when you are in trouble!”<sup>51</sup>

## (2) Deliverer of the Desperate: Resisting Sickness, Poverty, and Captivity

To interpret the significance of St. George’s hagiographical figuration<sup>52</sup> as Swifthelper in colonial and postcolonial Cyprus, we should proceed by asking: *in what ways* has the saint helped people, and what circumstances are associated with need or proof of the saint’s intervention? What has George (in and through the whole mediating apparatus of the tradition of his helpfulness) helped individuals to do, to understand, to endure, to overcome? These findings on the dynamics of how the saint’s help has been understood and claimed will enhance our theorization of Orthodox *agōn* as invested in modern hagiographical dynamics. The theological suppositions and articulations that are evident in St. George’s inscription onto specific realities and conditions will aid in illuminating the force of hagiographical imagination in enduring (and more rarely, overcoming) circumstances of inner and outer domination.

Where section 3 will bring out the *political* interfaces and interplay of communities construed as ethnically

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his readiness to confront oppressors or abusers (as will be discussed below, in section 3a). George is known as γοργός (a Cypriot-dialect synonym for the Greek γρήγορος, meaning “quick” or “early,” like the Italian *presto*) because “he is not slow to mediate [μετατέψει] with the All-Good God, such that the faithful are helped with whatever request of theirs is hot [that is, pressing or immediate], so that any problem is left behind because of his power” (139). Although I have chosen the more specific epithet “swifthelper” to anchor this chapter, “γοργός” does have the advantage of rendering a pun with George’s name, making this an epithet of greater interest to such Greek-Cypriot scholars as Georgios Kakkouras (“Η τιμή του ἁγίου Γεωργίου στήν”), who describes Ἅγιος Γεώργιος ο Γοργός as rendering an imaginative association with the youthful, brave, chivalric George who is at your side in an instant if you are in need; in this respect, I see its use as essentially synonymous with ταχυβοηθός, “swifthelper.”

<sup>51</sup> February 21, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> As discussed in the general introduction, section 2b, by “figuration” I mean to suggest not only the formal contours of media such as images and narratives, but also the whole psychosocial apparatus that surrounds, shapes, and establishes the significance of these contours, as suggested by Ricoeur’s model of threefold mimesis (*Time and Narrative*): an interplay of “prefiguration,” “configuration,” and “refiguration.”

bounded,<sup>53</sup> this section is especially concerned with the *personal* appropriation of the figure and figuration of George for the conditions of struggle.<sup>54</sup>

I consider three categories of people in modern Cyprus who have been particularly associated with the patronage of the saint and the possibility of liberation through his intervention: the *sick* (especially those ill with psychic maladies), the *poor* (especially those whose fortunes were bound to the health of the land), and the *imprisoned* (especially those whose imprisonment was due to the wrongdoing of external forces). In each of these categories of captivity, St. George has been sought as a breaker of the chains that bind people to fates not of their own making. It is hardly that George is *sui generis* in his being sought for deliverance from illness, poverty, and captivity—these are associations as old and as widespread as the cult of the saints.<sup>55</sup> Rather, it is the combination that bears interest in this investigation: in these mutually-reinforcing cases, the saint gives holy countenance to the struggles of the weak for economic and political dignity, integrity of body and soul. The possibility of George’s deliverance, even if it does not manifest in a given case, infuses the present moment of difficulty with a liberative logic, helping to abolish the pain of isolation and replacing it with an affect of sympathetic presence and solidarity with the saints.<sup>56</sup>

## 2a) “*This is where they come*”: *St. George of the Sick and Possessed*

One morning, when I arrive to the shrine on St. George’s Hill, I find a woman in her fifties tending to the upkeep of the site. Stavroulla is sweeping out the detritus that accrues from the steady use of the site:

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<sup>53</sup> Construed, that is, in different ways by the Ottoman and British imperial administrations, and subsequently by Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots themselves. See again Chapter I, section 2c and 2d.

<sup>54</sup> This is not, of course, to suggest that the personal is not also the political—quite the contrary, particularly where hagiographical resistance it is concerned. I merely mean to organize the chapter in such a way that individuals are in the foreground in section 2, and communities are in the foreground in section 3.

<sup>55</sup> And indeed, they are prototypically *biblical* categories, found across the liberative/salvific acts of Jesus in the gospel narratives—narratives which would be appropriated and imitated in a proliferation of new, but familiar, forms.

<sup>56</sup> See again Hynes, “Reconceptualizing Resistance,” on how affect provides a connective tissue between “micro” and “macro” forms of resistance.



Figure 2.9: The paraklèsion on St. George's Hill, Nicosia.

paper towels in which offerings have been brought, used wicks from the oil lamp, flowers no longer fresh. Her maintenance is interwoven with her own devotions: she lights a charcoal disk in a handheld clay censer and adds crystallized incense, the censer crackling as she moves clockwise around the tiny chapel, wafting the incense smoke across the faces of the saints in turn. Having refilled the oil in the lamp, she then lights a new wick and lays it to float on the surface, crossing herself with a slight bow toward St. George's miraculous image, installed in the wall behind glass.<sup>57</sup> Stavroulla backs out of the shrine, places the censer on the ground by the door and turns, noticing me seated on the bench under one of the trees that shades the site. With a warm smile she hails me, an opening for which I have been hoping as I have visited the site regularly during the previous weeks. I proceed, as I have done with other community members, to ask about the power and purpose of this site in its visitors' lives.

"In Cyprus," Stavroulla tells me, "St. George helps people in all sorts of ways, not only with healing—but people do need healing, when nothing is working, and this is where they come."<sup>58</sup> She proudly informs me that she has been coming to this shrine for most of her life, and now helps to maintain it; she beams when I tell her that from my balcony I can see a steady stream of people coming to the site each morning. Others I meet at St. George's Hill confirm Stavroulla's description of the healing power of the place. "Some people call this church 'St. George of Treatment' [*Agios Geōrgios tēs Therapeias*];"

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<sup>57</sup> See again the discussion of this site that opens Chapter I, for the history of this gold-covered icon and its utility for Greek-Cypriot self-narration *vis-à-vis* the colonial administration.

<sup>58</sup> August 12, 2014.

I am informed by Damara, a businesswoman who stops by the shrine another morning while I am visiting.<sup>59</sup> Agathi, the owner of a nearby bookshop, recalled visiting the site as a child in the 1950s: it was so full of babies' shoes, left there by devotees, that one couldn't even reach the icons to venerate them. I would continue to hear similar testimonies at sites around the island: St. George comes to the rescue of those who cannot help themselves.

The textual record of devotional traditions from the period of British rule, moreover, bears out this pattern of help-seeking and help-giving over several generations. When a child was slow to take its first steps, or to speak its first words, many parents found cause to worry: was this slowness in development a symptom of something more serious? In the absence of adequate testing for genetic disorders, and facing the prospect of raising a child with needs greater than their capacity to provide, parents sought the intervention of the saint who could be counted on to help the innocent. They would bring the children to the churches of St. George, many of which had a special stone or platform set up before a venerable icon of the saint for this purpose. Standing the child before the image (or upon a “footprint of St. George” located near the church), they would entreat the saint to “shake a leg”<sup>60</sup> in helping their child to take its own steps or (less common) to find its words straightaway—and, so doing, to demonstrate the absence of whatever unknown and unspoken malady lurked in the worry of its parents.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> August 25, 2014. It is noteworthy that Papageorgiou, who so comprehensively catalogues the epithets of St. George on Cyprus, does not discuss this one in his monograph, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*. This is unlikely to be simply because Άγιος Γεώργιος της Θεραπείας is not the formal name of the shrine, as Papageorgiou reports on numerous epithets that belong to local oral traditions; more likely is that the “some people” who attribute the shrine in this way are not in need of a wider corroboration of the name for it to be significant in their lives. *For them*, this is the chapel of St. George of Treatment, even if it is officially named in memory of the monastery that is believed once to have stood on the site (see Figure 2.13).

<sup>60</sup> The proverbial prayer, related to me by a priest in Arediou (home of one of the island's distinctive icons acclaiming George explicitly as τάχος εις βοήθειαν, swift-to-help) and found in variant form in Papageorgiou's chapter on proverbs, legends, and traditions (*Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 207) is: “Άη Γιώρκη βοήθα μου, και έσύ του πόδα τάραττε,” or “Άη Γιώρκη βοήθα μου, κούνα τζι' έσύ το πόδιν σου” Cf. Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση της Κύπρου,” 133). The verbs in these prayers are colorful and colloquial, warranting the idiomatic translation, “shake a leg!”: τάρασσω, to agitate or stir up, and κουνώ, to shake or swing.

<sup>61</sup> See Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 118; Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος και η Κύπρος,” 3; Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 10, 119; Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 92; Severis (ed), *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 523; and

When the child walked or spoke, the parents would leave a pair of its shoes (or, more dramatically, a wax effigy of its head) at the church as a sign of gratitude for the saint's help.<sup>62</sup> This practice endures to the present day (Figure 2.10).



Figure 2.10: Children's shoes hung outside the church of St. George of Arpera. Photo taken on April 23 (canonical Feast of St. George), 2016.

A final category of illness from which St. George's deliverance has been regularly sought bears particular interest, as here the appeal to the saint directly reinforces the expectation of integral (that is, psychosomatic, interior/exterior) liberation that I argue is central to the cult of St. George. This category is that of mental illness or psychic malady, long considered in Cyprus and beyond to be evidence of demonic meddling.<sup>63</sup> Particularly prior to medical advances relating to epilepsy, St. George was the distinctive patron and helper of epileptics: during the British period, a person afflicted with fits and seizures would be brought on the Feast of St. George to some church of the saint.<sup>64</sup> There, it was hoped that the mere

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Papacharalampous, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 74 (reporting a unique tradition from Kelokedara—the child is stood up before the icon of the saint but also grasped by the shoulders and made to walk behind the priest, imitating his gait).

<sup>62</sup> Not only attested in the colonial period by those who remember it firsthand (and in the above references of note 61), these shoes and baby-head effigies can still to this day be seen clustered in a pile of offerings before particularly venerable icons of the saint, or in some cases nailed to the outside of churches as evident trophies of George's history of helpfulness.

<sup>63</sup> Constantelos addresses this elision as well as the importance of the saints in treating epileptics, tracing back into the ancient Greek world ("The Interface of Medicine and Religion," 11); Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 238-40 dilates on the continuing association among Ottoman Christians; Talbot, *Faith Healing in Late Byzantium*, and Pitsilis, "Of Demons and Disease," further explore the specific contributions of famous (indeed saintly) exorcists. Beyond the Orthodox imaginaries, a rich literature explores the relationship between insanity and possession from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Moreover, recall from Chapter I, section 2b, the enduring significance of saints' (and especially the warrior-martyrs') configuration as soldiers and commanders in the spiritual combat between the demonic powers of "the world" and the powers aligned with Christ.

<sup>64</sup> As with the baby shoes offered at churches, George's association with the healing of illnesses of the brain still persists in some parts of the island today. Elizaveta, now in her sixties, has witnessed on a few occasions the bringing of people with epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and severe mental infirmities to St. George in search of relief; she was insistent, hearing of my interest in St. George Swiftheper and St. George of Treatment, that I devote particular attention to this phenomenon.

proximity of the afflicted to the holy shrine would drive out the illness;<sup>65</sup> if such an exorcism-by-proximity did not take place, the afflicted might set certain flat stones (known as *anathematourka*) in the yard of the church, where it was hoped that the saint would drive out the malady into the stones.<sup>66</sup> Besides epilepsy, other forms of madness, even crippling phobias, could be addressed through these and other rituals.<sup>67</sup> By Christians and Muslims, laity and clergy, George is sought as an exorcist for captives of mind and soul.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> And if the epileptic vomited on the threshold, as seems to have been hoped for and sometimes to have happened, then he would be assured of healing. See Papacharalampous, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 216; Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 91; Yiangoullis, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 109.

<sup>66</sup> See Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 10, 213; Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος και η Κύπρος,” 3. The name of these ritual implements is fascinating and somewhat obscure. Papageorgiou suggests that αναθεματούρκα were used during the period of Ottoman rule as well, and that they had an apotropaic purpose for communities that the administration hassled or “oppressed” (καταπίεζε) (*Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 213). Two other possibilities are that the prayer/spell of exorcism is learned from the Turks during the Ottoman period (thus making the act a “Turkish anathema”), or that the stones come to represent the Turks in times of increasing intercommunal duress; after all, the driving out of a psychic malady into another entity bears clear affinities with biblical accounts of exorcism, e.g. among the Gerasenes (Mark 5:1-13, Luke 8:26-33): such an association would both reinforce the association of epilepsy in particular with demonic possession and serve as an (unfortunately quite plausible) Christian association of Muslim Cypriots with the pigs of the biblical account.

<sup>67</sup> Other rituals include the passing of a loop of chain around the afflicted person three times—a practice I witnessed myself in Larnaca in the summer of 2012. It is not, in any case, unique to Cyprus: Bowman reports on it taking place at the Palestinian monastery of Mar Ilyas, where Christians and Muslims took part in the same actions but described their significance differently (see Bowman, “Identification and Identity Formations around Shared Shrines in West Bank Palestine and Western Macedonia,” 14; cf. Couroucli, “Chthonian Spirits and Shared Shrines,” 52).

<sup>68</sup> See also Mayeur-Jaouen, “What do Egypt’s Copts and Muslims Share?” 161, and Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Chapter 4, on St. George’s function as exorcist and on the tradition among Muslims of consulting Orthodox priests in matters of exorcism.

Also falling into the category of psychic captivity, it is fascinating to note, is *lovesickness*. All over Cyprus, stories emerge of young people visiting the churches of St. George to be delivered from the emotional pain and psychic distress of a lost love, an unrequited love, an absence of love. In Dali (site of an ancient sanctuary of Aphrodite), young people in love would visit St. George and stick coins upon the icon of the saint—if the saint holds the coins to himself, then the object of the youths’ desire will be theirs. If the coins do not stick, then with it will fall away the near-madness of unrequited love. (It is worth noting that coins can be seen stuck to icons of St. George even today, or scattered on the floor of shrines where they fail to stick.) In Larnaca, single women approached St. George for help in securing husbands: they would arrive during the day on Saturday, before the church opened for vespers, and knock on the closed door, saying “We’re knocking on your door—like this, make a husband come knock on our door!” Even the contextual framing of this last tradition is thick with romance: the young women would come to the saint on Saturdays in particular because George was thought to spent the week across the sea, helping the Christians of Lebanon, Palestine, and beyond. On the weekends, however, the saint would ride across the water and spend Sundays rushing from church to church, going to be with all the people of Cyprus who are so devoted to him. But on Saturdays, he has just arrived to the island, making landfall first at Larnaca (so said the people of Larnaca!), still dripping wet from the waves of the sea as he hurried to be at their service. (Discussion of these traditions can be found in Papacharalampous, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 216; Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 144, 209-11; Paraskevopoulos, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 91-92; Severis, *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 523; and Yiangoullis, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 110.) There is a clear chivalric enthusiasm in St. George being understood to be far away, helping innumerable others, and then rushing back here, near, to help us in particular—thus I contend that the Larnaca church epithets “ο Μακρύς” (the Far) and “ο Κοντός” (the Near) refer not only to the relative positioning of his churches relative to the town center and the pilgrim route but also to the characterization of the saint as far-ranging, far-

2b) “What is that baking in the oven?”: St. George of the Thirsty and Hungry

Throughout the modern Cypriot figuration of St. George, manifest in different ways between the primary paradigms of mediating relationship with the saint that I have identified, the association between George and the land is paramount. Aside from the simple etymological link (*geōrgos*, farmer; *geōrgia*, agriculture), much has been written and there is much more to be said about St. George’s cultic prominence in rural areas, integration into the agricultural cycles of the year, and preservation of widespread Mediterranean traditions deriving from pre-Christian “georgic” deities.<sup>69</sup> Here, however, I wish to highlight the plight of poorer farming communities during the *Anglokratia* in particular, surveying the ways that traditions of St. George provided imaginative texture to such communities’ responses to this plight. As we will see, the *land* is a critical arena for personal and political struggle alike; the ecological dimension of this struggle, and so of the hagiographical resistance and rectification engaged therein, recurs in all of my chapters on Cyprus.

Among those seeking George’s benefaction to the helpless, the desperate, those captivated to forces out of their control, of particular prevalence in colonial Cyprus were the rural people whose

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reaching, even far-away as he belongs to and is beloved by the whole world, and at the same time as near to any of his devotees as an instant of personal prayer.

<sup>69</sup> For instance, note the widespread appeal to St. George as the protector of livestock: traditions and stories abound in Cyprus of the miraculous (or indeed, quite quotidian) healing by the saint of sheep, horses, and chickens, and in some parts of the island (as Fr. Lampros, a parish priest in Arediou, is quite happy to acknowledge and explain) the robust rural devotions to George maintain ancient Greek cult practices dedicated to Apollo Malous, protector of the flocks. St. George, as Louis Palma di Cesnola observed in the 1870s, “has now as many shrines in Cyprus as Apollo formerly had temples” (di Cesnola, *Cyprus*, 346). On George’s defense of animals, see Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 206, and Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 450-51. The Abbot of Mavrovouni Monastery reports that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “a great festival took place [at the monastery], greater than that of Larnaca’s Saint George. There were so many chickens there that ‘the monks collected the eggs in large baskets.’ And that ‘when the chicken would hatch eggs, the women of the village of Troulli would promise a bird to Saint George, who is the doctor of chickens’” (Symeon of Mavrovouni, *The Monastery of Saint George Mavrovouni*, 2). On analogous traditions beyond Cyprus, cf. Haddad, “‘Georgic’ Cults and Saints of the Levant,” 22-28, on George’s peerless importance “wherever the main occupation of the populace is agriculture and animal husbandry” (22). Other relevant Cypriot studies include Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων έλασσόνων άναφορά”; Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση τής Κύπρου”; and Ohnefalsch-Richter, *Griechische Sitten und Gebräuche auf Cypern*.

livelihood depended on the cycles of the year and the availability of sharply limited resources. Given the unreliable rivers and sparse rain in some parts of the island, drought in particular was a constant and dire threat, devastating as it often was to the yield of the land, to the health of the flocks, and to the availability and safety of drinking water.<sup>70</sup> For the farming communities of the island, a time of prolonged drought could compel the choice between few and painful options: to borrow money from predatory lenders, to leave ancestral lands and go to work as day-laborers in the cities, to form agricultural unions to pool resources and hope to ride out difficult conditions (while earning the ire of the political right and, often, the censure of church authorities wary of communistic leanings), appeal to the colonial government for (more or less forthcoming) relief<sup>71</sup>—and/or to seek deliverance from ecological failure through appeal to the saints. Sainly intervention, in this respect, represented a means of maintaining dignity that would otherwise be lost through dependence on economic and political elites. The miraculous interruption of the

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<sup>70</sup> The colonial archives reveal an abiding concern for the administration of water supplies around the island and the difficulty in addressing the consequences of drought. The late 1920s and early 1930s in particular saw a multi-year period of serious drought on the island, resulting in “the failure of drinking water supplies” and “hardship and destitution ... throughout the country” (State Archives, SA1-432/32; cf. SA1-471/33, SA1-415/34, SA1-606/43); several of the traditions and associations I discuss here belong to this context of periodic drought and the incapacity of the colonial administration to rectify the situation, particularly when Cypriot farmers were suffering not only due to the natural conditions but also due to taxation policies insensitive to the variable climate, as well as to the exploitative practices of landowners and moneylenders. See also the historical accounts of agricultural distress in Morgan, *Sweet and Bitter Island*, 100-01; Hill, *The History of Cyprus*, IV.257-58, 448-55; Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, 142-51; and Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus*, 175-82. As early as 1851, the traveling Dutch officer Carel van de Velde takes note of the declining agricultural stability of the island, offering as interpretation the prior, armchair explanation of Olfert Dapper: “the Turks have since (1571) been in possession of the island, and according to their usual custom, have so laid waste the land, that now scarce one of the Christian inhabitants has the means of eating bread during a whole year ...”. Since the clearing of the woods [van de Velde adds], rain has almost ceased in Cyprus, and thus one of the most fertile soils on our earth has been changed, as it were, into a crust of brass” (*Narrative of a Journey in Syria and Palestine*, 47-48).

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., State Archives, SA1-1581/52, in which a group of villagers write to the government asking it to buy lands belonging to the Sina Monastery (a dependency of the Monastery of St. Catherine on Sinai) and redistribute them among the desperate farmers of the area whose own land was insufficiently yielding. “If this solution is not made possible,” they plead, “and the Monastery is left to sell freely pieces of land to Doctors and others, who have no idea about cultivation, we shall be bound to become labourers thus abandoning every relation with land and at the end our position will deteriorate.” The farmers’ union had run into trouble with the local church authorities in the See of Paphos, and their desperation was such that they were even willing to cede control of the use of this land to the colonial authorities. SA1-606/42 has more material on the struggles of the farmers’ unions for support by the government, but also the bewildered responses from the government that “It is quite untrue to say that the recommendations of the rural population have not been taken into account....” Similarly, see SA1-1576/55 for a general government attitude, even after the onset of anti-government action by EOKA, of promoting technological and genetic development of agriculture on the island.

ordinary order of things by holy agents is an unsurprising feature of subaltern theology: St. George here offers a way made out of no way, a transformation of desperation into triumph, a suspension of the rules of the game in favor of those against whom the rules are ordinarily weighted.<sup>72</sup>

Of the cohort of saints that are connected to agriculture and climate conditions around the eastern Mediterranean, none is beseeched for help more zealously than St. George.<sup>73</sup> Rural Cyprus is no exception: among the innumerable rural chapels (*xōlēsia* or *exōlēsia*, from *exō*, “outside” the village) dotting the Cypriot landscape, where farmers and herders could worship without needing to travel to the towns, by far the majority of them are dedicated to George. These farming and herding communities—comprised of those Cypriots most directly bound to the land, those “soldiers of the home-front”<sup>74</sup> under the particular patronal protection of the farmer- (and soldier-, and exorcist-, and exterminator-) saint—have upheld distinctive traditions of St. George. Among these, the most widespread and high-profile is the celebration of a second feast day for St. George, on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, known as the feast of *Agios Geōrgios tou Sporou*, St. George of the Seed.

Although the whole Orthodox world respects this second commemoration,<sup>75</sup> Cyprus is distinctive in that the November feast is on balance *more* prominent than the April feast—in no small part because of

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<sup>72</sup> Here again, consider the defining feature of resistance as articulated by Pile (drawing on de Certeau): resistance as a refusal to play according to the rules of “proper” authority, or to contravene a certain set of rules (here, those of the economic order) by appealing to others (those of saintly solidarity with the poor) (Introduction to *Geographies of Resistance*, 15). Cf. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 302, on “survival strategies that deny or mitigate claims from appropriating classes”—it is not that the appeal to holy intervention is a “strategy” per se, but it is a “countermythology” (Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 3) that features prominently in the affective, semantic dimensions of resistance.

<sup>73</sup> A prayer placed in the mouth of St. George prior to his martyrdom in the (likely sixth-century) *Acts of Saint George* demonstrates the antiquity and endurance of this association with ecological well-being: “Lord God, grant to my name and to my bones . . . that when clouds are gathered together and men remember me in that country there shall not be there burning heat or hail” (Brooks [trans], *Acts of Saint George*, 48).

<sup>74</sup> State Archives, SA1-606/1/42: this is how signatories of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cyprus Farmers’ Conference (1 May 1943) represent themselves in their resolution delivered to the colonial government, surely in part due to the ongoing warfare in Europe and the participation of many Cypriots in the British armed forces—but it is unthinkable that the centuries-deep metaphorical bond of the farmer with the soldier, distilled and mediated through the figure of St. George, is not also in play in this self-identification of the beleaguered farmers of the island.

<sup>75</sup> In particular, this feast commemorates the interment of George’s relics in Lydda, whereas the feast of George that falls canonically on April 23<sup>rd</sup> commemorates the date of his martyrdom. Maria Couroucli treats the agricultural (and so



Figure 2.11: The inside of a rural chapel of St. George of the Seed, with plants laid on the altar. Near Kurmajit, a Maronite village of northern Cyprus under the patronage of St. George. Photo taken in June, 2016.

the utmost importance of the agricultural well-being of the island.<sup>76</sup> On the feast of George of the Seed, the saint is honored “as a friend of the farmer and a mediator [*mesitēs*] with God that he be blessed and that his seed should thrive in the earth, to ensure the daily bread of his family.”<sup>77</sup> As the cataloguers of Cypriot folk customs and the memories of the older generation preserve the traditions of the *Anglokratia*,

the farmers would bring to the church of St. George a collection of the seeds that they were about to sow in the earth, along with a jug of fresh water. At the saint’s liturgy, the seeds and water would be blessed and returned to those who brought them—so that the seeds could be mixed in with the rest of the farmers’ stock and the water used as *agiasma* (holy water) to sprinkle the fields and irrigate their endeavor with divine grace.<sup>78</sup> Apart from the liturgy and the subsequent rituals of the farmers, the day served as an opportunity for a joyful celebration of rural life abundant—a space of creative freedom opened within the

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interreligious) logic of these two major feasts as they took shape in Ottoman Anatolia: see “Chthonian Spirits and Shared Shrines,” 47.

<sup>76</sup> This distinctive prominence of the celebration of St. George of the Seed in Cyprus is mentioned by Kakkoura (“Κύπρια άγιολογικά του άγιου Γεωργίου”) as being the case since the Byzantine period at least; both Cypriot bishops with whom I spoke (and I have not myself done the extensive comparative work necessary to corroborate the following claims) maintained that the outsized prominence of the November feast relative to the April feast in Cyprus is comparable only with the hortological patterns of Georgia, the only country in which St. George is “even more beloved than in Cyprus” (the claim is certainly not baseless; see for instance Schrade, “Byzantium and its Eastern Barbarians,” 170-77). In any case, there is fascinating subsequent research to be done on how the contours of the hagiographical heritage of Cyprus are aligned with the ecological contours of the island—how, for instance, the feast of St. George of the Seed (and the associated traditions in which the saint is petitioned for agricultural aid) is more prominent in the eastern and northern reaches of the island, where the rainfall is sufficient for extensive farming yet still sparse and variable, than it is west of the Troodos mountains, where the farming communities have not struggled with drought to the same extent.

<sup>77</sup> Yiangoullis, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 153. It is noteworthy (and will be discussed at more depth in Chapter III, section 1a) that, even though the November feast of George is specifically dedicated to George in his agricultural aspect, the April feast is likewise full of references to and symbolizations of George’s agricultural patronage.

<sup>78</sup> See Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση της Κύπρου,” 134; and Varvounis, “Η πανελλήνια λαϊκή λατρευτική τιμή του άγιου Γεωργίου,” on how religion and recreation would coincide at the feast days, ultimately taking on nationalistic significance as well (as I will discuss in Chapter III, section 2b).

ordinary parameters of severe constraint.<sup>79</sup> Outdoor games, horse- and donkey-races, athletic contests, and general revelry would ensue, belying and defying “the desperate situation of the agricultural people of Cyprus,”<sup>80</sup> in which the saint’s help would continue to be indispensable.<sup>81</sup>

George’s association with and patronage of the poor of the land is not limited, however, to the farmers and herders. In various parts of the island (Limassol, Larnaca, and Famagusta regions) we find churches dedicated to *Agios Geōrgios o Phtōchos*, St. George the Poor, a threefold designation pointing to the saint’s own being stripped of everything in advance of his torture and execution, to the poverty of the devotee who can count on refuge with the saint who knows and speaks up for his plight before God, and even in one case to the poverty and humility of the church building itself.<sup>82</sup> But more significant still is the story told in the eastern Cypriot district of Avgorou about *Agios Geōrgios tōn Abiōn*, St. George of Those Without Livelihood. Just south of the town is a locale that had since ancient times been known as Avion (*Abiōn*), after the poor servants of King Evagoras of Salamis,<sup>83</sup> who were said to have come to take shelter there while the king was bathing in the nearby springs. In modern Cyprus, however, the patron saint of

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<sup>79</sup> See Yusuff, “Foucault’s Resistance and its Adversaries,” responding to critiques of Foucault’s view of celebration, laughter, games, and so forth, within a system of domination as “real” resistance, that is, not merely a “political demobilization” (28) that wrests some small space for joy but undermines the drive for more robust and practical opposition.

<sup>80</sup> State Archives 606/1/42: letter from the Pancyprian Agricultural Union (PEK: Παναγροτική Ένωσις Κύπρου) to the Governor of Cyprus.

<sup>81</sup> See Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 152; Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 11, 131, 211; Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 93; Yiangoullis, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 153-54. Papacharalampous discusses, in addition to the rituals associated with this feast day, some of the ancient prototypes in the θαλύσια of Demeter, when “the first-fruits of the various cereals were offered to the gods” (*Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 203). Note that there is reliable evidence of this festival in the Ottoman period as well (even as it can be presumed to be far older still): Pease reports on the celebration of the festival of George of the Seed in November, 1835 (see Severis [ed], *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 745); his report is consistent with the traditions collected during British rule by Cypriot ethnographers and folklorists.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 27, 31, 136. Such associative webs are due at least in part to clusters of competing etymological or etiological accounts, not dissimilar to the several identifications of the boy on St. George’s horse which are ultimately embraced as complementary rather than contradictory. However, as with the figure of the rescued boy, the local epithets of St. George and his churches are appropriated by devotees as identifiers and meaning-making instruments for themselves as much as for the sites and for the saints who mediate holy power there. This appropriation of a particular representation of the saint into the imaginative conditions and contours of a relationship between saint and devotee is of particular interest in a study of hagiographical processes.

<sup>83</sup> See Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ἄβιος: “without a living, starving . . . having no fixed subsistence, nomad.”

the whole Avgorou area (a farming community distinguished by its rich red soil)<sup>84</sup> had become St. George, and the people of Avion calibrated the saint's general affiliation with the poor to articulate how the saint had blessed them in particular.

“A poor woman once lived in the district,” the story goes: she worked as a baker for a wealthy woman in a nearby village. Every evening, the poor

woman would leave her work without washing her hands, so that from the flecks of dough that covered them she could roll together some small lumps to bake and have bread for her children. But when the rich woman became furious when she realized what her servant was doing—she ordered the other woman to wash her hands clean of the leftover dough before she would be allowed to leave, preferring the scraps to go to waste rather than be “stolen” from her. So the poor woman returned home with nothing to bake for her children. Rather than tell them they would have no supper, however, she placed some flat stones in the oven, hoping that her children would fall asleep while waiting. At a loss, she prayed for guidance. Just then, there was a knock on the door. It was a ragged-looking man in a disheveled cloak, apparently even poorer than she—he begged her for shelter and a bite to eat. “You may come in and take shelter,” she told him, “but I’m afraid we have no food, though whatever we had I would share.” “If you have no food,” the man replied, “then what is that baking in the oven?” And suddenly the poor woman smelled the delicious fragrance of baking bread. Rushing to the oven, she discovered that the stones were gone and large golden loaves had taken their place. She turned in wonder back to the stranger—but he was gone. When she told



*Figure 2.12: Farmland among the “Red Villages,” outside Sotira: a town of 5500 people with three separate churches dedicated to St. George.*

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<sup>84</sup> Indeed, if there is anywhere on the island where George's veneration is especially concentrated, it is in this red-earth agricultural region and the “Red Villages” (Κοκκινοχώρια) of southeastern Cyprus, between Famagusta and Xylophagou (see Figure 2.12).

the other villagers what had taken place, they agreed that the stranger must have been St. George, since he is the one who rushes to help the poor and desperate, those who are at the mercy of cruel and powerful lords.<sup>85</sup> And together they built the original church of *Agios Geōrgios tōn Abiōn*.

This story was relayed to me by a regular conversation partner, Modestos, on the front porch of *Agios Geōrgios tōn Abiōn*. Modestos spent an afternoon with me in his hometown of Avgorou and the surrounding area in support of my research, and had even, generously, gathered stories representing the local significance of St. George from his older family and other sources in the town. As he spoke, I perceived again how—like so many of the hagiographical folktales passed down through generations—the tale of St. George coming to the aid of a poor woman abused by her powerful neighbor refers fundamentally to the present as much as to the past or to a mythological time-out-of-time.

As will be all the more the case with the legend and images of George as dragon-slayer, hagiographical media are multifariously interpreted in ways which edify *particular* ways of seeing the world and seeing oneself. For Modestos, and for his family of proud participants in the Greek-Cypriot national struggle, the significance of St. George as champion of the poor was drawn less from the island's legacy of *economic* exploitation (to which other interlocutors and indeed certain documents in the State Archive made regular mention) and more from the position of Avgorou and the district of Avion in the *political* crisis of the island's division by Turkey. After 1974, when Greek-Cypriots were driven out of the north by Turkish armed forces, many were resettled in refugee housing zones throughout the south. One of these zones was Avion, where the churchgoers among the refugees (whose homes stand all around the church) have since come to embrace St. George of Those Without Livelihood as their own. Although there were certainly other reasons, more pragmatic than affinities with local religious lore, for the Greek-Cypriot authorities to resettle refugees where they did, the fact remains that the refugee community here

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<sup>85</sup> In the terms of the απολυτίκιον of St. George, well-known to regular churchgoers, the saint is identified as “τῶν πτωχῶν ὑπερασπιστής, “champion of the poor.”

*did* come to be gathered around St. George, and the little church of *Agios Geōrgios tōn Abiōn* (as in other parishes that saw a major influx of refugees) needed to be rebuilt as a much larger edifice to accommodate the new crowds.<sup>86</sup> This presence, and the deliberation or instinct that led Modestos to highlight it in his accounting of *Agios Geōrgios tōn Abiōn*, are alike part of the hagiographical topography of the island, part of the web of significations that embed the multifarious mediations of holiness in the political and cultural struggles of Cypriot society.

### 2c) “So swiftly had he ridden”: St. George of the Imprisoned and Exiled

The association of St. George with refugees, and with the prisoners of war who were not so fortunate as to escape, is by no means limited to the postcolonial period. The medieval monastery of St. George of the Presses (*Agios Geōrgios tōn Manganōn*) was famous for receiving refugee monks fleeing the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 (and receiving financial support to do so from the Greek queen of Latin Cyprus at the time, Helena Palaiologina).<sup>87</sup> This monastery, demolished during the Venetian preparations for the siege of Nicosia by the Ottoman forces, would through its very absence provide a symbolic anchor for the Church of Cyprus, reinforcing its tight linkage with the beleaguered Greek world beyond the shores of the island, evoking a legacy of defiance against overwhelming hostile power.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Not only in Avgorou, but in Achyritou and Larnaca as well, refugee settlements were planted in *Agios Geōrgios* neighborhoods. Of course, there are plenty of refugee housing projects in towns and districts of other names as well, and when I probe the connection between refugees and St. George, Modestos cautions me against drawing the connection with too bold a line. The point is well taken, even as I insist that I am identifying not an *exclusive* connection of St. George with the refugees of 1974 but rather emphasizing the fact of the connection, such as it is (a dotted rather than a boldface line, perhaps), being a pertinent feature of hagiographical dynamics on the island and the matrix of associations within which St. George moves. On the post-1974 expansion of the church of Avion, see Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 98.

<sup>87</sup> See again the introduction of this site in the opening pages of Chapter I. Additional sources pertaining to the history of the monastery are Coureas, “Η Μονή Αγίου Γεωργίου των Μαγγάνων επί Φραγκοκρατίας”; Hackett, *A History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus*, 361; Perdakis, “Hermitages and Monasteries in Cyprus,” 63. A synopsis is also presented in the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia, “The Establishment of the Latin Church.”

<sup>88</sup> Papageorgiou draws on the medieval historians Stephanos Louzinianos and Georgios Boustronios, making it clear that the monastery has an enduring place in the firmament of Cypriot Christian self-understanding and historical identity.

The Cypriots who first wished to build a chapel on St. George's Hill in Nicosia, to house their miraculous icon, referred in their proposal to this ruined monastery, given its historical and symbolic significance.<sup>89</sup> Yet even before the chapel was finally built in 1952, the icon had its stream of visitors. Along with those seeking deliverance from illness, the shrine attracted the wives of Cypriot soldiers who were missing from the battlefields of World War II, who would pray for the return of their husbands, for deliverance from war and the encroachment of enemies.

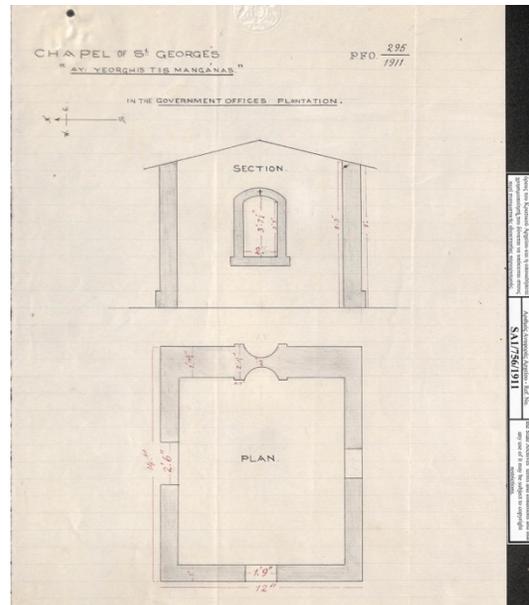


Figure 2.13: Plan for a chapel on St. George's Hill, proposed in 1911 and identified as "Ay. Yeorghis tis Manganas." State Archives, SA1-756/11.

And three decades later, atop this hill that had housed the refugees from fifteenth-century Constantinople, people fearing the worst came to St. George on behalf of the refugees from twentieth-century Famagusta, Morphou, Kyrenia, Karpasia—if anyone could bring the missing persons of 1974 to safety, it would be St. George Swifthelper, who had whisked away the captive boy on his horse: St. George of the Captives, St. George of Those Without Livelihood, St. George of the Engines of War.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See Figure 2.13. It is this hill atop which the English church had been built in 1885 and soon moved due to unstable foundations or saintly intervention (depending on whom is asked). See Pilides, "A 19<sup>th</sup> Century View of St. George's Hill in Nicosia," and Christofides, *A Small but Suitable Church*, as well as the discussion in the introduction of Chapter I.

<sup>90</sup> See again Papageorgiou, *O Ayios Teóργιος*, 49-51, 115, on the name of the monastery deriving from *ta mangana* (τα μάγγανα), presses or engines with which the Byzantines manufactured materials for warfare. Two of my interlocutors on the subject of seeking St. George's help for the captive or missing emphasized that this site in particular became so important for the people of Nicosia because of its privacy and intimacy (though the chapel is no longer remote, with the sprawl of the new city past it, it remains sheltered from the street even as it is easily accessible and readily accessed to this day by a stream of visitors). Elizaveta observed how at this site, unlike at a church, people could approach the saint at any time, one-on-one, without all the trappings of the church building. Efstathios, visiting the shrine with his partner, observed that here one is truly alone with God and his saints—an extraordinary privilege and needed comfort for those in pain or grief. The twentieth-century appeal to St. George for the return of captives and missing persons is not, in any case, a wholly novel phenomenon: Vryonis discusses similar dynamics in late Byzantium, when certain saints—not only but particularly the warrior saints George and Theodore—were known to answer the prayers of the families of lost captives, and were typically thanked for their release by various invading armies (see *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor*, 37-38).

The prominence of St. George in the affective gravitation around the personal and political significance of refugees (from Constantinople as from the north of the island) is not only a feature of the informal devotional and petitionary practices of Greek-Cypriots; it is also institutionalized by the hierarchy and the topography of the Church of Cyprus. Each of the two bishops I interviewed made mention, unprompted, of the saint's eminence on the island being related to a history of captivity and fleeing from captivity. Bishop Neophytos of Morphou observed that the refugees (*prosphygies*) who sought asylum in Cyprus over the centuries (throughout the Latin and Ottoman periods, not only at the point of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453), fleeing violence on the mainland, came to know St. George as their patron.<sup>91</sup> Bishop Vasilios of Constantia-Ammochostos, in turn, bade me attend to how the role of St. George as a deliverer (*apeleutherōtēs*) of those at risk of being imprisoned or imperiled at the hands of hostile powers is of special significance to the people of the island; every place, he affirms, has its own local traditions that lay claim to this association and draw people toward gratitude to the swift-helping saint. I will consider several of these traditions and their local calibration in the coming section. Yet even beyond these statements made on the record by Greek-Cypriot bishops, St. George's patronage of refugees is baked into the very spatiality of the post-1974 church. Each of the three Metropolitanates from the north of Cyprus (Morphou, Kyrenia, and Constantia-Ammochostos) has been re-established south of the border, setting up a "temporary headquarters" (*prosōrinē edra*) from which the work of the diocese may continue to be carried out "in exile" (*stēn exoria*). Can we guess which saint is the patron of all three towns where the Metropolitanates have been "temporarily" reestablished (Evrychou, Aglantzia, Paralimni)?<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> In keeping with this patronage of refugees, note also donor-inscription in the church of St. George at Arpera (by the eighteenth-century dragoman Christophakis, who also commissioned the image of the rescued boy in dragoman costume—see again Figure 2.8 and the discussion in section 1b) thanking George for being a "tireless mediator" (*AKOYPAΣTON MEΣIITHN*) and a "most-ready deliverer for one in exile" (*ΠΥΣΤΗΝ ΤΕ ΕΤΟΙΜΟΤΑΤΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΞΟΡΙΑΣ*): see Stylianou, "The Historic Church of St. George at Arpera," 150-51.

<sup>92</sup> It's St. George.

### (3) Boundary-Keeper and Boundary-Crosser: Contranymic Resistance

“For the saints,” submits Stavros Fotiou, “power is synonymous with service.”<sup>93</sup> Holiness in this idiom is self-mediating holiness, holiness-with-and-for-others, holiness recognized as such only in light of the (perceived) needs of others. In this chapter, we have encountered St. George as “swift-to-help” and traced the contours of the power ascribed to the saint in his aspect as liberating helper: from the miracle-literature and the iconographic tradition to the therapeutic, economic, and other material specificities of George’s presence and power in modern Cypriot society. We have observed how the power exerted by the saint in defense of his devotees is at the same time a diffusion or deflection of power exerted by others: a sanction *of* psychological and political resistance by way of a sanction *on* dominating configurations. In the mobilization of holy power in such representations of the saints, there is an affinity with the insight of Steve Pile (following Fanon), who rejects a simple binary *between* resistance and the power it resists. Rather, “resistance to power” is at the same time “resistance for power”: “the map of resistance is not simply the underside of the map of domination – if only because each is a lie to the other, and each gives the lie to the other.”<sup>94</sup> Resistance, in this sense, is a contranym: a term that includes its own opposite. The act of standing against (*antistasē*), refusing to play another’s game or bending the rules of that game,<sup>95</sup> proceeds precisely by accepting and asserting the functionality of alternative rules or an alternative paradigm, from the vantage of which the bending of established rules is not a distortion but a bending back towards rightness, an *anorthōsē*. Standing-against is, then, standing-with. Sanction is sanction.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Fotiou, “The Spiritual Tradition of Cypriot Saints,” 73.

<sup>94</sup> Pile, Introduction to *Geographies of Resistance*, 23-24.

<sup>95</sup> See Pile, Introduction to *Geographies of Resistance*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> It is not inconsequential to this study of the political voltage of the inscription of holiness that this term “sanction” refers etymologically to establishing a boundary between sacred and profane, a rule to be followed in relating to holiness or a penalty for violating such a rule. See again the general introduction, section 1, on holiness as a complex of tensions between alterity and mediation, between purity and vulnerability, and between power and resistance.

In this light, there is one more dimension of the topography of resistance traversed by St. George as Swifthelper to be addressed, before turning to the mediating paradigm of St. George as Greatmartyr: the way that the saint's service to the Orthodox community as a whole includes "safeguarding [its] spiritual identity" during times of experienced occupation and oppression,<sup>97</sup> shoring up the borders of its understanding in times of cultural and epistemic slippage,<sup>98</sup> and facilitating what I will call *political edification*<sup>99</sup> by driving off or preventing the access of that which would undermine the community's safety or stability as a bounded community.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, St. George is notorious throughout the eastern Mediterranean and beyond for being a "shared" saint,<sup>101</sup> a powerful representative of holiness whose appeal overflows the boundaries of religious institutions and political configurations, fertilizing the frontiers where religious understandings coexist and cross-pollinate (even as antagonism between them is part of their co-constitution). It is this apparently self-contradictory dynamic that concerns us here: St. George as boundary-keeper and boundary-crosser, shoring up the political self-understanding of the Greek Orthodox community even as the saint's figuration is clearly edifying across that community's edges and in its interstices.

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<sup>97</sup> Fotiou, "The Spiritual Tradition of Cypriot Saints," 74.

<sup>98</sup> Tijana Krstić develops at length this central function of hagiography in the Ottoman empire, particularly in the media associated with neomartyrs and the work of these martyrs' "impresarios" to collect and disseminate relics, commission icons, write *Lives*, and otherwise represent the martyrs as having lived and died in a way that reinforced communal boundaries and solidified Christian self-definitions. See *Contested Conversions*, especially 121-64. We will return to this theme in the coming chapter.

<sup>99</sup> See again the general introduction, section 2b, on the ways that building up a community involves a relation with and a position toward otherness and the communities or institutions that represent that otherness in a given social setting. Just as hagiographical media summon their audiences to become *μυηταί*, refiguring themselves under the sign of the work, so too their renewed participation in the cultural and political currents of which they are a part will have, however open-ended, an institutionally refiguring effect. And indeed, the *sanctification* toward which edification is intended by the producers of hagiographical media is itself no more individual than this process of refiguration: in an Orthodox idiom, an isolated and self-oriented saint is a contradiction or misapplication of terms.

<sup>100</sup> See again Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 272-73, on hagiographical edification as the protection of a group from dispersion, in light of its relation to other groups, and the discussion of this reading in the general introduction, section 2b.

<sup>101</sup> Such interreligious "sharing" has been introduced in Chapter I, section 2d, and will be further scrutinized below.

### 3a) “Guarding against the barbarians”: St. George’s Fierce Generosity

The benevolence that characterizes St. George (which we have seen in his rescuing, healing, relieving, and safeguarding) is a sharp-edged benevolence: generosity and ferocity are joined in the logic of liberation. Unlike in his Greatmartyr aspect, where George is victorious over his enemies and eludes their dominating grasp *even as* he is crushed by them, we have seen that George as Swifthelper is understood to successfully resist natural and cultural threats—whether he does so by blocking their advance, destroying or removing their damaging capacities, or even transforming them so they come to promote the good of those the saint is protecting.<sup>102</sup>

Let us take account, then, of the indispensable role played by material media in anchoring hagiographical traditions in the shared imaginative topography of communities, providing sense-perceptible texture and concrete “signifying linkages”<sup>103</sup> to strengthen the open-ended appropriation of these traditions into the living struggles of Cypriots. A few examples are worthy of analysis.

The town of Drouseia, in western Cyprus, has a tradition associated with the ruined monastery of St. George of the Victorious Wood (*Agios Geōrgios tou Nikoxylitē*, a fuller account of which will begin Chapter III) reporting that, after the monks had been slaughtered in reprisal for the Greek uprising of 1821, the monastery was looted by “many Turks.” The story proclaims that one of the raiders, in an act of “hyperbolic impiety,” fired his gun at the iconostasis of the chapel and was “immediately ... driven out of

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<sup>102</sup> In the Morphou region, for instance, inscriptions on early-twentieth-century chapels refer to St. George roaming the land at night on his horse, blessing and increasing the crops while the farmers slept, helping those who were struggling and punishing—with terror, physical affliction, or insanity—any thieves or other malefactors he should come across. Even more explicit is the account from the region of Sylikou, where St. George is known as ο Αγαθιώτης, the Do-Gooder. To him is given the thanks that, during the Ottoman conquest of the island, this town and its farmland remained unharassed. The story goes that, as the Ottoman army approached Sylikou, instead of seeing the trees around the town they saw a thick hedge of prickly pears (παπουτσουσκιές), and they left without daring to approach the place again. The townspeople believed that it was their own kindness and good deeds as a community that warranted the do-goodly kindness-in-turn of the saint, keeping oppressors at bay and leaving the community to continue living in peace. See Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 118, 97. Cf. Severis’ note on Ottoman-era iterations of this theme in *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 523: “People claimed to have heard the neighing of [St. George’s] horse, which spread panic to the wrong or evil doers...”

<sup>103</sup> Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Chapter 5; drawing on C. S. Peirce.

his mind and remained in this state until this death—while all his descendants were born schizophrenic.”<sup>104</sup> Of note in this account is not merely the contranymic power of St. George to inflict as well as to cure madness, but also the role played by the damaged icons themselves (Figure 2.14). Phaidon



Figure 2.14: Damaged icons from the Monastery of St. George Nikoxylites: “St. George Nikoxylites” and “Christ the Savior,” both from 1779, now housed in the Ecclesiastical Museums of Peristerona (left) and Paphos (right).

Papadopoulos, a researcher impressed by

the frequency of the story’s enunciation in the Drouseia region, notes that although the miracle belongs to “the tradition of the inhabitants of the area” and cannot be traced in any more historical sense, *the icons themselves* bear the “truthful witness” (*apseudēs martyras*) to what took place, standing now “guarded in the Museum of the Holy Metropolis of Paphos.”<sup>105</sup> Although the punishment of the raider by the saint is said to be “immediate” (*amesē*), it is at the same time necessarily mediated by the icons that bear in perpetuity “the scars [*ichnē*] from the impious Turk’s shots.”<sup>106</sup> Although the material icons do not represent the punishment of the shooter in any sense-perceptible way, their “scars” summon to the local imagination a (hagio)biography of the object in which the oral account is virtually realized. In the

<sup>104</sup> Papadopoulos, *Η Μόνη του Αγίου Γεώργιου του Νικοξυλίτη Δρουσείας*, 34. This episode, Papadopoulos claims, is “paradigmatic” of St. George’s readiness at hand to “punish the impious.”

<sup>105</sup> One of the icons mentioned in this account (an icon of Christ) is indeed on display in the Ecclesiastical Museum of Paphos, the bullet holes quite evident on its surface. Another, not mentioned by Papadopoulos but remembered by the people of Drouseia, is in the Ecclesiastical Museum of Peristerona—it is the original icon of St. George from the monastery prior to its destruction. Although only one deep gouge in the icon could be considered potentially a bullet hole, this icon has its lower third severely burned away, presumably (at the very least, it is what would likely be presumed by those Greek-Cypriots who know and take seriously the account of the monastery’s destruction by the “hyperbolic impiety” of the Turks) by a fire set in the chapel after the massacre of the monks of Nikoxylites. See Figure 2.14.

<sup>106</sup> Papadopoulos, *Η Μόνη του Αγίου Γεώργιου του Νικοξυλίτη Δρουσείας*, 34.

ecclesiastical museums, the distance between the past and the present, between the intercultural history and the political stakes, collapses on the marred surface of the icons of Christ and St. George.<sup>107</sup>

In the hill town of Lefkara, likewise, the George's swiftness to help is synthesized with his vigilance toward those who would bear harm and the sharpness of his response. Here, he is celebrated as *Agios Geōrgios o Oxys* (the Keen, or the Sharp), and the small church building itself, perched dramatically on a crest between the town



Figure 2.15: The chapel of St. George referenced in the poem of Leontios Hadjikostas, "Tradition stands guard."

and the sea far below (Figure 2.15), renders a spatial image of the saint's benevolent resistance. Consider how Archimandrite Leontios Hadjikostas (1918-2004) conjures political significance from the physicality of the chapel's position: "Tradition stands guard/ on the hill of Lefkara,/ a stalwart protector of the town/ guarding against the barbarians./ The little church [of St. George] looks like a fortress/ with the cross on its roof like a lighthouse/ to scout the enemy [ton echthro] far away:/ the ships and privateers of the Saracens."<sup>108</sup> The metaphor at work extends the saint's protective function to the building in which his invisible presence is made visible; the (material) cross on its roof is ignited as an (imaginative) beacon of safety from and exposure of an approaching "enemy." Lefkara's other church of St. George is identified as

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<sup>107</sup> For consideration of such damaged icons as sites for analysing how Orthodox discourses of (and practices of resistance to) "iconoclasm" are used, see Touna, *Fabrications of the Greek Past*, 86-88. On the importance of "virtual reality" for the affective dimension of resistance, see Hynes, "Reconceptualizing Resistance," 565. See again the discussion of media as extended in time and space in the general introduction, section 2a. It is relevant, moreover, that the icons are now housed in *museums*, whose understudied role in the matrix of hagiographical mediation will come into focus in Chapter III.

<sup>108</sup> Cited in Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 120. Hadjikostas, whose academic work on St. George (in particular the Cypriot folksong tradition) is also cited in my study, was a Cypriot monk formed at Stavrovouni (famous for its hagiographical production), who traveled widely and wrote voluminously, serving as a chaplain in the Greek army during World War II and subsequently spending years in the Greek minority communities of London and Djibouti before returning to Cyprus. See Kokkinoftas, "Η ζωή και το έργο του λόγιου Αρχιμανδρίτη Λεοντίου Χατζηκώστα."

*Agios Geōrgios o Exorinos* (the Exiler).<sup>109</sup> In this aspect, the saint “exiles or ... drives away sickness or enemies,” indeed pushing them into the sea to make safe the people of the island.<sup>110</sup> The tradition of George as exiler is just as contranymic, rendering the saint associated with exile in a doubled, protective/punitive sense (recall section 2c on George’s patronage of refugees), but also just as materially mediated: Gunnis and Paraskevopoulou alike report a ritual act taking place in Lefkara, in which “any person who has a grudge against another goes into the church [of St. George the Exiler] and collects a little dust from the floor[;] this is then taken away, placed in a small rag and cast into the sea in the belief that the person will thus exile his enemy from the island.”<sup>111</sup>

Such traditions as this need not be authorized or rehearsed in formal liturgical settings to be collectively effective. They provide sensory resources for psychic resistance, available to all who interact with the churches in whatever capacity: gathering dust from the floor and gazing gratefully on a steeple are both individual acts that do not require authorization (as would, for instance, the procession of relics around a town), yet they are no less *collectively* available, no less a part of a civic heritage for being enacted individually. And their effectiveness need not be a matter of immediate result—keeping or driving out an enemy from the community—since they reinforce a cosmology of saintly solidarity that “delivers an

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<sup>109</sup> The epithet is also present in the eastern reaches of the country, in the region of Famagusta; here, Christodoulou suggests that the significance is equivalent (pertaining to St. George’s “exiling” of whatever or whoever intends evil—see “Τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου,” 95). Papageorgiou gives an alternative account of the epithet “Ἐξορινός,” suggesting that the application of the name to certain churches is due to their having been built and operated originally by Nestorians and thus being “outside” or “exiled” from the mainstream Church of Cyprus (*Ο Ἅγιος Γεώργιος*, 142; cf. Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ἐλασσόνων ἀναφορά,” 123).

<sup>110</sup> Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 93.

<sup>111</sup> Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 321; cf. Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 93: “One scratches up a little soil and throws it at one’s enemy believing this will drive him far away.” See also Loizos, *The Heart Grown Bitter*, 45, where the wife of a Greek-Cypriot man who is having an affair with a Turkish-Cypriot woman is advised to visit the shrine of “a saint who can cast people out”—unfortunately, Loizos does not pursue the conversation further, but it seems likely that the saint in question is either George or Marina (who has some similar traditions in this fierce-benevolent mold of driving out enemies and securing the peace; she will be relevant again as belonging to the corps of Orthodox greatmartyrs). And see Hadjioannou, *Λαογράφικα Κύπρου*, 133: “It is believed in Cyprus that those towns which do not have Turks are thus because the saints did not allow them to inhabit these places. For instance, in Achna, as soon as any Turkish family came to settle there, immediately St Marina trampled upon them at night, until this would force them to leave.”

epistemological and theological critique”<sup>112</sup> of that against which devotees are struggling. The fact of *material mediation* of these struggles under the patronage of the saints erodes the conventional micro/macro binary in analyses of resistance: the mutually accessible sites and the presence of objects available for imaginative and practical appropriation render a shared cultural fabric in which individual struggles are reinforcing studs. This is not to say that individuals are all feeling the same thing or acting for the same reasons, but rather that such locally recognizable practices and symbolic signifiers can “generate, above and beyond the sharing of feeling, an undetermined ‘reservoir of political potential’” that “may quite literally expand affective capacities, adding intensity to the claim that another world is possible.”<sup>113</sup>

A final example should make this quite clear. In the southern town of Episkopi, there was an Orthodox church of St. George that was turned into a mosque during the Ottoman period.<sup>114</sup> This building remained a functioning mosque through the British period and indeed until 1974, when the majority of the Turkish-Cypriot population fled north. And so the Episkopi mosque stands, shuttered and sealed;<sup>115</sup> yet it is also tagged by graffiti that renders—obliquely, symbolically, synecdochally—a counterdiscourse that rejects the legitimacy of the mosque and, by association, of the irenic multiculturalism often ascribed to “the way things used to be.” On the outer wall of the mosque is inscribed a dark red cross and the name, “AG. GEÖRGIOS” (Figure 2.16): the memory of the site once having been a church of St. George is materialized as a public enunciation, embodying and emboldening resistance to both the political state of play and the rules therein accepted by the institutional church. The

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<sup>112</sup> Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 14.

<sup>113</sup> Hynes, “Reconceptualizing Resistance,” 569, citing Brian Massumi, “Of Microperception and Micropolitics,” 6. On this micro/macro-resistance binary being unsatisfactory more generally, see Hynes, “Reconceptualizing Resistance,” 562-69, and Yusuff, “Foucault’s Resistance and its Adversaries,” 28.

<sup>114</sup> See Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 31. Note that this contradicts the recurrent claim by my interlocutors, lay and clergy alike, that Orthodox churches of St. George in particular were *not* turned into mosques by the Ottomans due to the Muslims’ respect or fear for the saint. This claim will be discussed in more depth below, in section 3c.

<sup>115</sup> The official position of most local governments and of the Church of Cyprus has been to preserve carefully these mosques in the south, as a gesture of willingness to welcome back the Turkish-Cypriot population that once used them but also as a silent rebuke of the more callous treatment of churches in the north of the island.

graffito, in this case, is unquestionably a hagiographical medium. It appeals to the *imagination* of those who see it (whether or not, though in different ways, they are aware of the history of the site), inviting a quasi- or double-seeing in which the distance between the “eyes of the flesh” and the “eyes of faith” is collapsed.<sup>116</sup> It *represents* the saint in name and as a spectral presence, inscribing on the stone of a contested place both the saint’s standing with a community (and *against* another community) and the claim made by the saint upon the memory and the intentions of those who view themselves as faithful devotees. And it *edifies* those who encounter it with a certain kind of appropriative attitude, those for whom it reinforces personal convictions, capacities for struggle, and orientations toward the church militant and church triumphant, empowering those who are so edified to co-mediate such convictions, capacities, and orientations onward to others in their social arena.<sup>117</sup>



Figure 2.16: Graffito of a cross and the name of St. George on the wall of a mosque, closed but preserved, in Episkopi. Photo taken in February, 2016.

### 3b) “His angel of peace to guard us”: St. George at the Threatened Border

Traditions of St. George driving enemies off the island or away from a specific community are particularly yielding in the interpretation of St. George’s role in the politically edifying effects of Cypriot hagiography as it shapes a lived theology of resistance. Such traditions have deep roots on the island,

<sup>116</sup> On this distinction and its ancient pertinence to Orthodox hagiographical dynamics, see again the general introduction, section 2b; and Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 82-84; and 103, where she discusses the patristic coordination of immanence and transcendence through “endowing of the ocular with affect.” Chapter V will likewise take up this issue in more depth.

<sup>117</sup> See again Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Chapter 5: a saint’s image is a *medium*, she notes, insofar as it is not merely an object bounded by material and formal configuration, “but rather the image in relation to the larger organizational complex of signs within which it is embedded.” Here again, in light of my overall theoretical approach to hagiography as multimediating processes as well as mediated products (as introduced in the general introduction, section 2b), we may expand the pertinence of this claim to other media besides iconic media.

stretching back to (or being anchored by modern Cypriots in) the Arab raids of the seventh century, and they continue to shape the Cypriot hagiographical imagination around St. George into the major conflicts of the twentieth century. Such associations, and the sites and material culture associated with them, reconfigure the memory of the island's political crises such that these crises themselves become episodes folded into an ever-expanding hagiographical corpus, in which the people of the island play minor but meaningful roles: the Acts of St. George in the Struggles of Cyprus.

East of Paphos, on the southwestern coast of the island, a system of caves contains a remarkable set of rock-cut shrines, all of them dedicated to St. George, and all of them filled with icons, devotional objects (candles, crucifixes, votive tablets and effigies, knotted rags and prayer ribbons), and evidence of burnt offerings; collectively they are known as the *Ephtha Aigiōrgēdes*, the Seven St. Georges. Local tradition has it that during the first series of Arab raids on the island, in the mid-seventh-century, there were seven Cypriot youths who stayed behind to buy time for their fellow villagers to flee from the coast, by waging guerilla combat against the raiders. They hid in these caves, and they were aided by St. George, who raced



Figure 2.17: One of the seven caves near Paphos dedicated to St. George and used as chapels for private/communal devotion, the "Seven Saint Georges." Photo taken in March, 2016.

across the sea to join them, filling them with courage and cunning to carry out their exploits.<sup>118</sup> The narrative fans out with variable endings: in one, the boys all perish at the hands of the raiders, becoming themselves martyrs associated with the Greatmartyr who arrived to stand beside them in their trials—and to whom their caves remained dedicated as shrines, full of the images and votives brought for innumerable reasons by locals and visitors alike.<sup>119</sup> In another version, they succeed in driving off the raiders: through them, St. George Swifthelper frustrates the foreign threat and secures, however temporarily, the Cypriot coast.

So too, during the raids of the Mamluks in the 1420s, the chronicler Leontios Machairas reports a narrative in which St. George (along with two other warrior saints) intervenes—almost—in the defense of Cyprus. A boy named George and his mother, from Alexandria, are making their way on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They stop to rest at an oasis, but a fearsome snake (*ophin*) comes upon them and lurks in the trees, preventing them from reaching the water below. The mother assures her son that the Lord “will send his angel of peace to guard us,” whereupon the boy, filled with courage, takes up his bow and kills the beast. Immediately,



Figure 2.18: Scene from Leontios Machairas' Chronicle: "The dream of young boy George." Painting by Lefteris Olympios.

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<sup>118</sup> An alternative accounting of these "Seven Saint Georges" has it that they were ascetics who lived in the caves, followers of St. Hilarion and St. Kendeias who lived in the area for a time, all named George (less unlikely than it may seem)—see Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 144.

<sup>119</sup> Among the objects to be found in the Εφτά Αιγλώρηδες caves are Russian and Romanian icons—not only of St. George, moreover, but of the Virgin Mary and of a variety of other saints. The phenomenology of these sites includes their attractiveness to Orthodox visitors who need not share the local knowledge of the provenance of the caves and their association with the Arab raids of the seventh century, but who recognize a site of holy mediation when they see one and who have their own cherished traditions of St. George. Thus the site functions in different ways for different visitors, with varying discursive and emotional associations that are layered upon the striking and eerie sensuality of the cave shrines; the shrines, in turn, grow and change with the participation of their visitors, who leave objects behind and so participate in rendering the conditions of hagiographical consumption for those who follow them. See again the comments on this phenomenon in Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, 116; and my own analysis above in section 3a.

however, the boy finds himself paralysed and can only lie beneath the tree, where he soon falls asleep and has a visionary dream: “he saw three young soldiers, handsome knights, the one on a white horse and the second on a black horse and the third on a bay,”<sup>120</sup> who heal the boy and inform him that they “are sent to help the Cypriots against the Saracens.” But three nights later, the boy has another dream in which he sees the warrior saints riding back across the sea from Cyprus. Asked why they have returned, the saints sadly report that “God has commanded us to leave Cyprus, because they do not put their hope in God, but they hope in their vain weapons.”<sup>121</sup> That warrior saints should be envisioned riding off to the defense of an embattled Orthodox people should not by this point be surprising; but of the additional logic of saints’ patronage and protection being *dependent* on the faith and activity of the people to whom they mediate God’s will, more will be said in section 3c.

At a smaller scale than this defense of the borders of the island as a whole, but representing no less potent an inscription of holiness as indicative or invitational of political resistance, are the experiences of the older generation in two towns on opposite sides of the island pertaining to George’s encircling and warding their community during times of immediate military crisis in the twentieth century. These accounts are not idiosyncratic—on the contrary, they bear out Bishop Neophytos of Morphou’s observation about how St. George is prevailingly imagined in Cyprus:

Mounted on his horse, he wanders night and day to different parts of the island . . . . Many people have seen him circulating on the roads at night and close to the villages and cities; many others have heard the hooves of his horse in times of persecution or some other fearful evil . . . when he rushes to stand beside [*symparastathei*—note how George’s action is construed as a *standing beside* Cypriots as they *stand against* (that is, resist) those evils that befall them] those aching, unfortunate people.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> St. George with his white horse and St. Demetrios with his bay or red horse are recognizable among the trio, leaving the third figure with his black horse unidentified but with some likelihood of representing St. Theodore, the conventional third partner to George and Demetrios. Of particular note is the method used by the horsemen to heal the boy, taking him by the limbs and stretching him out—St. George does the same in the miracle texts collected and translated by Budge (*Martyrdom and Miracles*, 245-48). See Dawkins, Notes to Machairas, *Chronicle*, II.220.

<sup>121</sup> Machairas, *Chronicle*, I.648-51.

<sup>122</sup> Neophytos of Morphou, Introduction to Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 10.

I had observed Marina singing with particular gusto in the vespers of the cathedral church of St. George in Paralimni, a town that, since 1974, has housed the “temporary headquarters” (*prosōrinē edra*) of the Metropolitanate of Constantia-Ammochostos just on the other side of the island’s dividing line. She is middle-aged and sharply dressed, with a confident voice. Seeing that she lingers after the service and helps to stow the piles of candles and pamphlets available to visitors, I strike up conversation, learning that she was born and raised in the town and has continued actively to serve the parish as she can. When I asked the significance of St. George’s patronage of the town, she reported to me that throughout the British period and particularly during the anticolonial struggle of the 1950s, St. George would protect the towns under his patronage whenever violence broke out, preventing Paralimni from becoming a battleground even as terrible violence wracked the surrounding region. And again, in 1974: “The old people say,” Marina confides, speaking slowly and confidently, “that they could hear the hooves of St. George’s horse galloping all around the walls of the town, protecting the people inside.”<sup>123</sup> It is because St.



Figure 2.19: A new shrine erected in 2011 to enshrine a stone, celebrated in the region of Paralimni, in which the “hoofprints” (*pathkia*) of St. George’s horse are seen.

<sup>123</sup> February 12, 2016. Paralimni has older traditions associated with the protective encircling of the town by St. George, dating back at least to the Ottoman era; in a beautiful shrine (renovated and filled with painted hagiography in 2011: see Figure 2.19) about three kilometers east of the town, a glass panel in the floor opens onto a stone containing the “Παθκιά τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου” —the hoofprints of St. George, said to have been left by the vehemence of his leaping from the sea to defend Paralimni from Ottoman troops. The stone has for centuries been a holy site for locals and pilgrims, and the renovation reflects continuing investment in the tradition. Indeed, as one priest from the central church of St. George in Paralimni reports to me, people have in recent years taken to being married at the site of the hoofprint-shrine, where George’s care for and blessing upon the community has continued to be mediated and appropriated. Kakkouras confirms (“Ἡ τιμὴ τοῦ ἁγίου Γεωργίου στὴν Κύπρον”) that these παθκιά are found quite broadly in Cyprus—as is, I would add, the imagination that apprehends them as such. The παθκιά thus exemplify my theoretical understanding that hagiographical media need not be produced by human art or “intended” for edification (see again the discussion of this point in the general introduction, section 2b). This shrine is a good example, moreover, of the slippage between formal and informal, professional and everyday: the hoofprints had been visited and treated as a holy place, mediating St. George truly and powerfully, well before the formal shrine was built by the church to recognize it as such. With the ecclesial edifice,

George has demonstrated his protection of Paralimni so many times over the years, she continues, that there are so many sites in the vicinity dedicated to his glory.

An account framed almost identically can be heard in the village of Pachyammos, tucked up against the Buffer Zone of the island in the west, as Paralimni is in the east. Eirene, an elderly woman tending to the upkeep of the tiny church of St. George, describes how there had been savage intercommunal violence in this region between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots in the 1960s.<sup>124</sup> And when the Turkish army arrived in 1974, all seemed lost. “The soldiers surrounded the town and were shooting at us from that ridge up there”—Eirene takes me by the arm and pulls me out of the church, points with a steady hand at the rocky terrain overshadowing the town—“but Saint George did not abandon us. He was riding around the town, and even with the gunfire we could hear the hooves, and he drove them back! The Turks didn’t come down from the ridge. They didn’t come into the town and kill us. He is so beautiful, so wondrous, our St. George.”<sup>125</sup>



Figure 2.20: Church of St. George, Pachyammos. In the background, the ridge featured in Eirene’s story.

There is, in such stories as these—both written into the history of the island and seared into the memory of its inhabitants—a clear recognition that St. George and the help he affords to the desperate are ongoing factors in the political fortunes of the island. St. George is, in towns like Paralimni and

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however, an informal pattern of hagiographical consumption has been formalized, taking direction for a procedure of authorization from a local pattern of devotion.

<sup>124</sup> Eirene sets her jaw as she explains that it was the British who introduced these problems during the *Anglokratia*, this hatred where before there had been relative peace and friendship. Recall the discussion in Chapter I, sections 2c and 2d, on the fissures widened and reified during the period of British rule between Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots. This area of Pachyammos, which lies adjacent to the northwestern end of the Green Line, suffered terribly in the 1960s and 70s and—as will be explored further in Chapter III—yields particularly robust examples of the martyriological identity of the island.

<sup>125</sup> March 12, 2016. I mentioned that I had heard of a similar miracle taking place in Paralimni, and the old woman was not surprised—though she had not known before of such things. She had never in her life been to Paralimni.

Pachyammos, experienced in ways calibrated to the specific nature of the borders being defended.

Whereas the above accounts of St. George's aid (or aborted aid) in pre-modernity concerned especially the threat of invaders from *beyond* the island and so configured the saint as riding over the sea to secure the coast,<sup>126</sup> the accounts from the twentieth century concern violence *internal* to the island (less clearly demarcated by a threatened coastline) and so transpose the sensory validation from the mode of visual apparitions of the saint approaching from afar to that of auditory apparitions of the saint encircling on all sides.<sup>127</sup> Perceiving such a protective presence or trusting the perceptions of others, Greek-Cypriot devotees of St. George are primed to encode their own adversities as aligned with the saint's traditions of rescue from unjust captivity, frustration of barbaric empires, and retaliation against the agents of persecution. So doing, their own resistance of mind and body to the desperate situations of the island's twentieth-century disruption finds stable footholds in the imagined hoofprints of St. George.

### 3c) "*Even they love him*": Muslim Devotion in Christian Imagination

The borders secured by St. George between Orthodox communities and those they understand to be their antagonists are, like any frontier, traversable. In the Greek hagiographical traditions of modern Cyprus, George does not only drive away or punish Turks but also *helps* them—and so doing, (only) sometimes, converts them. Two possibilities must then be considered: that Greek hagiographers are promoting the imagination of this help given by St. George to Turks as being in some way edifying for

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<sup>126</sup> This trope of George's riding over the sea to the rescue is recognizable from the Διασωρίτης archetype (see again note 30), despite the varying purpose of his voyage; this imaginative appropriation of an available repertoire of images is, I suggest, part of the basic process of hagiographical calibration.

<sup>127</sup> More research and comparison are owed to the mediating specifics of such *auditory* apparitions, categorically distinct from but continuous with other saintly apparitions, mediated visually, that show solidarity with a venerating community or reinforce resistance against a dominating force (as are explored in Seraidari, "Objects of Cult, Objects of Confrontation"; Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*; Cruz, *Mother Figured*, and Lindsey, *The Woman and the Dragon*).

their audiences, or that it is not only the audiences of hagiographical media who may subvert the aims of such media but also their starring characters who may be subversive.

In Pegeia, a couple of Greek-Cypriot laborers relaxing near the old church of St. George (the new church being flooded with Russian tourists) were surprised and charmed that I could speak with them in Greek. They were eager to recount a story about the building beside which we were sitting: when the Ottoman conquerors reached the west coast and took the town, they turned the Byzantine church of St. George into a barracks to accommodate soldiers. One of these soldiers, sleeping in the former church, had a dream: standing on the shore of Cyprus below the church, gazing out into the sea, he saw a shape growing larger on the horizon, until he could see that it was a man riding a horse, impossibly, across the waves. As the rider approached, the Turk could see that he was clad in armor and his face was shining like the sun. It was St. George himself! The saint reached the shore and leapt up towards him—and he awoke from the dream. But when the man left the church where he had been sleeping, he found a white horse standing outside, staring at him. Seized with pious dread, he converted to Christianity on the spot.<sup>128</sup>

Straightforward enough—but contrast this story with an account from the end of the Ottoman period, conveyed by Mersene Vigopoulou in her colorful account of the history and lore of the monastery of St. George the Alaman:

Here in the neighboring village of Pentakomo, there lived a certain Turk who was called Souleiman. One day, then, he came here to this area [where the monastery now is] to hunt. And right where he was seeking to find some rabbit to feed his family ... there sprang up before him a huge snake. The gun which he had was old and not easy to fire quickly. The snake began to chase him. The boy in his desperation began to seek help [*boētheia*] from St. George, begging for the saint to save him [*na ton sōsei*]. And behold! he receives an infusion of courage and, making a sharp turn, shoots and kills the snake. To thank the saint for the miracle that he did, he built on this spot a small chapel for the saint's sake.<sup>129</sup> Because of this, people began to call the place 'O Aï-

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<sup>128</sup> March 13, 2016. Cf. Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 381, and Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 92, where we find an account from Pegeia that is different in its message from the above oral account, but with similar elements (minus the dream apparition): A Turk had lost his mule, and went to make an offering at this same church of St. George; no sooner had he finished his offering and left the building than he saw his mule in the water, swimming in to shore.

<sup>129</sup> *Nota bene* the significant presence, which should by now be expected, of a material/architectural trace that bears witness to the encounter and remains a public hub of the its onward mediation.

*Giōrgēs tou Souleïmanē* [phonetically close to *tou Alamanou*, the current name of the monastery] ... [and] gradually this became *Salamanou* and thus this whole area received its designation.”<sup>130</sup>

The name of this Orthodox monastery, attributed formally to St. George the Alaman (one of a number of soldiers who had given up military life on the mainland, become monks, and taken up residence in Cyprus), is reassigned by popular legend as deriving from the piety of a Muslim saved by St. George.<sup>131</sup>

In the first of these accounts, the Turk is threatened after taking actions to the detriment of the Orthodox community, is menaced by the saint in his dream, and thereafter changes his religious affiliation: the border between communities is (in the imagination of the storyteller) undisturbed. In the second account, young Souleiman *need not convert to Christianity* to seek the help of St. George, nor to receive that help in the form of an infusion of courage to face a dragon-like beast, nor indeed to thank the saint by building a little church in his honor. George’s border-crossing, to provide help to all the people of Cyprus irrespective of religious affiliation, does not here so evidently resolve into a reassertion of communal distinction. So what is the nature of the resistance articulated or affectively thickened in such (Christian) accounts of Muslims edified by St. George?

It is indeed historically the case that St. George is a figure of substantial importance to Muslims, in Cyprus as around the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>132</sup> Scholarly sources corroborate, to an extent, what I have

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<sup>130</sup> Vigopoulou, *Ἱέρα Μόνη Ἁγίου Γεώργιου του Αλαμάνου* [The Holy Monastery of Saint George the Alaman], 21. In another account from the same collection of stories, a Turk sneaks into the monastery of St. George at night and steals all the money he finds there—but upon reaching the threshold of the building again, he is frozen to the spot. Immediately repenting and loudly crying out St. George to set him free [να τον ελευθερώσει; note the irony here, given George’s typical associations with liberation from *unjust* captivity], the monks come running to investigate the commotion. The man hands over the money and explains the miracle, which thereafter spread all around, being retold by Turks and Greeks alike. “It is true, then, that even the Turks have great respect for St. George” (37).

<sup>131</sup> This logic of inter-saint patronage, according to which George the Alaman’s monastery is covered in representations of the greater St. George and considered to be one of the St. George monasteries of the island, will be discussed at greater length in Chapter III. The accounting of the monastery’s name as related to the Alaman saints, contrasting with the account in Vigopoulou, may be found in Papageorgiou, *Ο Ἅγιος Γεώργιος*, 76-78, 101. On the Cypriot tradition around the Alaman saints, see also Kyrris, “The ‘Three Hundred Alaman Saints’ of Cyprus,” 203-35; Sathas, “Vies des saints allemands de l’Église de Chypre,” 405-11 (followed by *Lives* of certain of these saints); and Neophytos of Morphou, “Μικρὰ Ἀσία-Συροπαλαιστίνη,” 309-23.

<sup>132</sup> Recall the discussion in Chapter I, section 2d, for details on the range of Muslim attitudes toward St. George and what indeed it might mean for Muslims to “believe in” the saint, in light of the intercultural exchange that resulted in the

been told again and again: that “the Turks believed in and respected St. George also,” that “even they love him,” that festivals of St. George (like those of the Panagia) were, in the years of Ottoman and early British rule, attended by Christians and Muslims together.<sup>133</sup> However, when attention is paid to explanations given by Cypriot Christians of Muslim devotion to St. George, we find that the very understanding of St. George as a border-crosser in Cyprus, as “shared” in imagination and celebration, came during the *Anglokratia* (and to a large part continues to this day) to reinforce border-keeping understandings of the saint’s Orthodox partisanship. That is, the widespread reiteration of Muslim respect for and even active veneration of St. George, in Orthodox hagiographical imagination and representation on the island, is in most cases shaded by a connotation of Islam’s tenuous hold in Cyprus.

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I am about a half hour into my interview (over coffee and sweets, naturally) with Fr. Epiphanius, a Greek-Cypriot cleric who is a refugee from the north of the island. He spent years as a monk, has traveled broadly and participated in major inter-Orthodox synods, and is deeply learned in church history, theology, philosophy, and political science. An intense and imposing figure, Fr. Epiphanius is nonetheless eager to hear about my research and about what leads me to select St. George in particular as my focal point. We have spoken about the significance of George’s martyrdom as a personal and a political model under the island’s successive imperial regimes, and about George’s universality among Christians despite the basic Protestant and Catholic misunderstanding of who he is (a topic that will be addressed in Chapter III), but it is when I ask about Muslim reverence for St. George that his tone changes, becomes less confrontational and more irenic. “Historically, Turkish-Cypriots have loved St. George almost as much as we do, and have sought out his blessing upon their lives. This is because they are Greek or Armenian *in*

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association of St. George and al-Khidr / Hızır. Coming to the fore here, however, is *Christian* border-keeping discourse *vis-à-vis* such Muslim attitudes, regardless of whether they have been accurately interpreted.

<sup>133</sup> See, for instance, Severis, *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 522, 1039; Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 11; Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 92.

*origin*.<sup>134</sup> They became Muslim after the Ottomans arrived, yes, but rarely wholeheartedly—to this day many of them are agnostic, but they still visit the saints in their times of need and difficulty.”<sup>135</sup>

The identification of Turkish-Cypriots as *once having been Christian* plays powerfully in the Orthodox imagination. As I established in Chapter I, in relaying such claims as Fr. Epiphanius’ I am not arguing for either their accuracy or inaccuracy.<sup>136</sup> To do so would open a rabbit hole that would lead us away from the actual matter of hagiographical logic and patterns at work within the island’s political epistemics. What is significant for my analysis, rather, is *that* it is Greek-Cypriot clergy, in positions of authority, who hold forth in this way on this relationship between Turkish-Cypriots and Christian faith, and *how* the hagiographical mediation of St. George is used as evidence in this matter. From such a perspective, the love (once) held for St. George by the island’s Muslims serves doubly as evidence: even if they were able to give up most of the contours of Christian existence, the power and prominence of certain figures in their lives (George, the Virgin Mary, the Apostle Andrew) were so great that they overrode the change in religious affiliation, proving both the “essentially” Christian heritage of the island (strengthening a panhellenic political position) and the preeminent position of George in the communion of saints (reinforcing Greek-Cypriots’ own veneration of and resistance by means of the saint).<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> This statement in particular is echoed repeatedly by others; and there is indeed some historicity to the claim, insofar as no small number of Ottoman settlers after 1571 belonged to the Janissary corps, “‘acquired’ as Greek toddlers, to be raised in the Ottoman military fashion” (Mallinson, *Cyprus* [2005], 1). For other commentary on this phenomenon, see Herzfeld, “Transforming Lives,” 35.

<sup>135</sup> June 6, 2016. Cf. Heo’s analysis of Pope Shenouda’s comment that “Muslims love and praise the Virgin more than some of the Protestants” (*The Political Lives of Saints*, Chapter 3). Muslims see and respect Marian apparitions, Heo observes, whereas the Protestant missionaries of Egypt reject or seek to explain away the phenomenon as a human or diabolical trick. As I will continue to address, this dynamic operates with some regularity in Cyprus too, in relation to Turkish and British attitudes and practices toward the saints.

<sup>136</sup> In this respect my position is akin to that of Herzfeld’s, in his recognition that the (limited) historical verifiability of such claims, about patterns of Cypriot Christian conversion to Islam and assimilation into Turkish-speaking communities during the Ottoman era, all too easily obscures the political narrative “that no Turkish interest in Cyprus is justified” (“Transforming Lives,” 35)—a narrative whose entanglement with and mediation by means of hagiographical dynamics are, for a study such as mine, at least as significant as the historical data themselves.

<sup>137</sup> Nor is this position limited to Orthodox Christians. Beckingham’s 1957 survey, “The Turks of Cyprus,” outlines the account of shared religiosity, such as that of St. George devotion, that predominates in the colonial period. It is likely, Beckingham concludes after considering some contrasting possibilities, “that these people [Turkish-Cypriots, many of

Thus it is that the Ottoman phenomenon (and rhetorical trope) of *Linobambakoi*—“linen/cotton people”<sup>138</sup> who were recognized by the authorities as Muslim but who participated to a variable extent in Christian ceremonies, customs, and ideas—came to be tolerated less and less during the *Anglokratia*, even as the fact of their having existed became increasingly significant to the political implications of religious dynamics on the island (including, of course, the hagiographical *mise-en-scène* of St. George’s Cypriot omnipresence).<sup>139</sup> Irrespective of the precise nature of their religious understandings and identities,

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whom spoke Greek as well as Turkish and shared almost all Greek customs besides [the painting and sale of icons] are descended from Cypriots converted to Islam after 1571, who changed their religion but kept their language” (“The Turks of Cyprus,” 170). The political utility of this position during the *Anglokratia* was clear, insofar as cases for the “essential” Greekness or Christianity of the island were increasingly deployed in favor of political unification with Greece. Varnava traces the irony of such explanations being the most readily accepted by the British administration for their own construal of fixed religious differences on the island: a simple Hellenic island that had been through political upheavals but never an alteration of its essence was easier to understand and administrate than the cultural indeterminacy they had found in the 1870s; thus, “British rule not only created the space for the introduction of Hellenism, it planted its seeds. This divided Cypriot society and made British rule difficult” (*British Imperialism in Cyprus*, 33).

<sup>138</sup> The colorful, figurative term derives from a type of material used for making clothing, weaving together cotton and linen; the metaphor contains within its cognitive/rhetorical logic a relative evaluation of the two materials (linen is more valuable but cotton has its pragmatic uses), as well as a spatial orientation of which fabric (that is, which culture, which religion) is closer to the wearer’s heart—the fabric, we are led to understand, looked like cotton but contained linen on the inside. Di Cesnola, writing at the very end of the Ottoman administration of the island, describes *Linobambakoi* as follows: “While to outward appearance they are Turks, and are so recognised by the local authorities, in reality they are Christians whose ancestors, at the time of the Turkish conquest, were forced to declare themselves Mussulmans and to embrace Islamism in order to save their lives and property. Many, if not all of them, had been adherents of the Latin Church, though it is still frequently a matter of dispute between the Greek bishops and the Latin priests as to which Church they rightfully belong to, each church being desirous of claiming them as its adherents. The marriage and baptismal ceremonies of the *Linobambaki* are performed in secret by a priest of their choice” (di Cesnola, *Cyprus*, 185). Ohnefalsch-Richter considers the *Linobambakoi* to be what we might today refer to as double religious believers, and notes the concomitant threat of syncretism to religious border patrollers: “The *Linobambakoi*, to use their most common name, attended the churches and mosques, had their children baptised by Greek priests, while they were circumcised by Turkish *hodjas*. They gave their children Greek and Turkish names. They got married in the Muslim, Turkish and Greek Christian traditions. The men spoke mostly Greek and Turkish, the women one of the two languages. Both the Turks and the Greeks despised these islanders, who oscillated between Christianity and Islam” (*Greek Customs and Mores of Cyprus*, 86). Cf. Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 327; Englezakis, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus*, 437-38; Hatay, “Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 81; and Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων έλασσόνων άναφορά,” 122.

<sup>139</sup> See Hatay, “Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 82: By the 1940s, “even the most innocent attempt to cross religious boundaries [was] now rigidly policed by the new ethnonationalist forces within each community.” In 1954, a Turkish-Cypriot newspaper editorializes in no uncertain terms: “Some of our birdbrains, forgetting that they’re Muslims, make offerings to idols in the monasteries, thinking that they’ll help them! It seems these Orthodox saints have found the cure for everything! ... Hoping for help from idols! It’s time to erase these superstitious beliefs from our minds! Because worshipping idols and waiting for miracles from them is what the Christians do” (*Halkın Sesi*, 5 August 1954. Translated in Hatay, “Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred,” 83; recall also the discussion of anti-syncretic backlash to the Muslim veneration of St. George in particular, in Chapter I, section 2d. So too, Beckingham observes that the “theological hospitality” of the *Linobambakoi* “is now vanishing rapidly, not because of religious fervor, but through national feeling” (Beckingham, “The Turks of Cyprus,” 173).

Muslims who attended the festivals and visited the shrines of St. George<sup>140</sup> came, precisely in their disregard for communal borders that were otherwise evident, to reinforce other, deeper borders in the understanding of those who observed them.<sup>141</sup> Insofar as Muslims came to seek the help of St. George, for whatever intentions, they were performing a public recognition of the saint's power. They had made themselves part of a matrix of psychosomatic mediation, that is, they could be perceived as submitting to the saints on Orthodox terms. Therefore, Christian observers were far from troubled by what seemed to Turkish-Cypriot authorities as unacceptable syncretism. When "even the Turks" acknowledged the power of the saints, an appealing asymmetry could be evoked and appealed to in the intercultural imagination of Greek-Cypriots: religious others (*allothrēskoi*) seeming that they could not stay put beyond the borders they had made for themselves, knowing what is on the other side to possess a potency that could not be rivaled or ignored.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> These shrines, apart from those formally installed in the churches, often belonged to no community in particular, being tended and visited by all. See again Hatay's "three ways of sharing the sacred" on Cyprus, different types of sites involving variations in patterns of hagiographical consumption and intercultural interaction (or lack thereof). Hatay contrasts "spaces of (temporary) submission," where a site clearly "belongs" to one community rather than the other but where members of other communities come for personal engagement, with "contested shared spaces," where "competing accounts of the site's origin" lead to parallel devotions that are usually not overseen by anyone's religious institutions, and "economic spaces," where a site (or special time, such as a festival) is held to be holy or efficacious by one community, but adopted pragmatically by members of other communities due to the benefits (often economic) of shared participation. These categories are heuristic and useful on the whole, but particular sites may blur or transition between them at different times. See Hatay, "Three Ways of Sharing the Sacred," 73.

<sup>141</sup> See again Constantinou, "Aporias of Identity," 249, on the transgressiveness of such religious fluidity from the perspective of both the religious authorities and the colonial administration: "That individual Cypriots can re-hyphenate their identity, transverse ethnic boundaries with the force and gusto of rural bandits, is seditious to the dominant ethno-national regimes. These regimes will readily brand such attempts at deceitful, criminal and treacherous. They will point out that ethnicities and religions are total and mutually exclusive. ... Consequently, they will miss how such transgression may constitute a deliberate power move, an act of resistance to power regimes, a counter-performative against the forgotten performances that fix and police the boundaries of ethno-religious identity ..."

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Heo's analysis of the importance (for Coptic Christians) and ambivalence of Muslim witnesses to Marian apparitions in Egypt, both bolstering the crowdsourced authority of the apparitions and placing additional tags on a topography of interreligious jockeying for validation. Such phenomena complicate the sense of Mary, or of St. George, as a "shared" figure, since Muslim attitudes and practices *vis-à-vis* these figures are, for Christian observers, easily interpreted as evidence of Muslim inability to deny the favor of the saints on Orthodox churches, where they appear; in other words, this shared status "clearly falls short of securing Christian-Muslim unity in public theaters of collective perception" (*The Political Lives of Saints*, Chapter 3). Couroucli observes similar dynamics of veneration and discourse in modern Turkey, relating "how the saint manifests himself near his shrine either to punish those who have shown disrespect to his sacred place or holy day (usually Turks being struck ill or paralyzed until they undo the wrong they committed by going to the priest to pray and bring offerings) or to reward with a miracle those who acknowledged his power by treating the saint

A final comment, by the abbot of a Cypriot monastery, will serve to tie up—and leave perfectly entangled—the multireligious veneration of St. George Swifthelper on the Island of Saints. Fr. Moses, slender but severe, tells me during my audience that St. George is “loved by the whole world”; his prominence in modern Cyprus is due not only to the Orthodox identification of George as a preeminent patron and helper, but also to the Ottoman authorities’ inability or unwillingness to suppress his veneration and hassle his sacred places. So, Fr. Moses continues, when the churches of Cyprus were threatened, they would sometimes change their dedication, becoming churches of St. George and finding themselves free of persecution at the same time.<sup>143</sup> The rest, in other words, is history: Cyprus concluded the Ottoman period with far more churches of St. George than it had begun, along with a populace of Christians and Muslims who were by the 1870s more accustomed than ever to recognize the saint as a peerless holy presence and influential patron. An explanation such as that of Fr. Moses appropriates and represents *Muslim* love/fear of St. George in the past as an integral part of the prominence of the saint among *Christians* in the present, providing a particularly rich example of hagiographical edification

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well or praying to him” (“Chthonian Spirits and Shared Shrines,” 53). Yet the asymmetry embraced in Christian discourse is, in this case, due to an *opposite* asymmetry in the political order: “In Anatolia as elsewhere, Muslims visited Christian shrines within a certain system of belief where the Christian ‘other’ is both familiar and inferior, and this is why entering Christian sanctuaries implies no ritual pollution” (57), whereas Christians would have been (officially, if not actually) prohibited from entering Muslim holy places. Cf. Couroucli, Introduction to *Sharing Sacred Spaces in the Mediterranean*, 3-9, on the varying configurations and typical patterns of visitors to “others” sacred places; and Hayden, “Antagonistic Tolerance,” for his eponymous theorization of how apparent tolerance to interreligious sharing of a religious site or figure can, in certain contexts, promote the further marginalization of a minority group.

<sup>143</sup> June 15, 2016. This account is given also by other clerical interlocutors, as well as in academic research (e.g. Kakkouras, “Η τιμή του ἁγίου Γεωργίου στὴν Κύπρο”); so too, the Russian pilgrim Barsky offers an important witness of visiting churches of St. George and the Panagia in the Paphos region in the 1730s, and noting that most of the other churches had been destroyed (see Barsky, “A Pilgrim’s Account of Cyprus,” in Wallace and Orphanides (eds), *Sources for the History of Cyprus*, III.55-57). Thus two explanations pertaining to Muslim devotion to or fear of the saint coexist, all given by contemporary Greek-Cypriots as both explanation and evidence of the indisputably outsized importance of St. George on Cyprus: (i) as above, that churches would change their dedication to St. George because they knew such churches would not be hassled by Turks (whether out of love or fear of the saint); or (ii) that the Ottoman administration was only willing to permit the construction of new churches of St. George and the Virgin Mary, because of Muslim respect for these figures featured in the Qur’an (St. George, in this case, is identified with al-Khidr, the trickster-teacher of the Prophet Moses—see again Chapter I, section 2d). The third (and in my judgment, most likely) possibility, which need not outright exclude either of the others, is that devotion to St. George, so incandescent in the history of Orthodox hagiographical imagination as a defender and deliverer of embattled Orthodoxy, would be *expected* to increase during a period of perceived oppression.

conditioning and being conditioned by its intercultural situation. The material and spatial ubiquity of St. George on the island is, in this telling, at once the product and the fuel of a people's struggle: *against* assimilation into an empire conceived as ungodly and *for* a holy alternative, an island whose very stones cry out in praise of God and the saints. Even the hagiographical practices of religious others (variably perceived and constructed) may thus provide meaningful texture for a lived theology of resistance.

### **Conclusion: Sheltering beneath the Shield of St. George**

As we began this exploration of St. George's multimediation as "Swifthelper" in Cypriot society with an icon, so we conclude it with two icons: the only two Cypriot icons that, to my knowledge,<sup>144</sup> bear the explicit epithet "St. George Swift-to-Help" (*o Agios Geōrgios Tachys eis Boētheian*). These two images represent the saint in dramatically different ways, but were both created in 1851, and the narratives woven around them—the ways that these richly representative objects are active in the lives of communities—distill the paradigmatic function of St. George as a border-crosser and border-keeper, a fiercely benevolent punisher of oppressors and a deliverer of the desperate. Like the many other material and political inscriptions of St. George's holiness, these images are theological enunciations that blend and give voice to the understandings of some (the iconographers, the donors, the communities embracing the products, their institutional leaders) and contribute to a hagiographical topography of mediation in which no object stands alone. Each icon is enmeshed with and serves in turn to validate multiple, sometimes incompatible, self-understandings of the community and its struggles.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Papageorgiou, who has exhaustively catalogued the iconic epithets of St. George in Cyprus, also does not know of any others; see *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 122-23.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, 171: "Historically, ... the meaning of icons for individual believers and for the faith community at large in Orthodox Christianity stemmed not merely from the visual image and the narrative it depicts but also from the story behind a particular icon, from the believers' experiences associated with an icon, which comprised that icon's history or life and led to its special veneration."



Figure 2.21: St. George Swift-to-Help, Church of St. George, Arediou. 1851.

The first image, found in the church of St. George at Arediou (Figure 2.21), does not represent the saint with his rescued boy devotee at all. Instead of showing the saint *in media res*, rushing over the waves in the very act of liberation, it portrays him still and dignified in a neutral space, the red flag of a martyr in place of his spear. The figure of the donor, pictured resonantly beneath the shield (the protection) of the saint, is identified as a Fr. Christodoulou, whose prayer beseeches St. George to intercede for his own well-being, and that of his wife, his children, and his parents.

Although he does not know more about the circumstances and fate of “long-suffering” (*polytla*) Christodoulou, Fr. Lampros, a local priest who (apart from his sunglasses) looks rather like the devotee represented in the icon, relates to me the tale of how St. George, swift-to-help, looks after the village and protects it from potential threats:

During the period of Ottoman rule, Fr. Lampros begins, Arediou was on a busy caravan route and saw more than its fair share of traders from elsewhere, not all of whom had noble intentions toward the town—often threatening its women or roughing up its men. One day, such a group of Turkish traders is passing through,<sup>146</sup> and they have made their camp on top of a nearby hill, where a temple of Apollo had stood in ancient times. Of this temple there remained only the stone altar, and the men think to themselves: if we carve out the middle of this stone, it would make a sturdy trough for watering our

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<sup>146</sup> Although the twentieth- and twenty-first-century ethnic categorizations do not completely map onto the cultural topography of Ottoman Cyprus, and there are the usual reasons to interrogate how Ottoman-era intercommunal relations are construed in the postcolonial present, I am here reporting the terms and categories conveyed in the story.

camels. So they plan to take it down to the village the next day and find a mason who could be forced into hollowing the stone out for them. But in the morning, the stone is missing. The caravan-men look all around for it, and only once they come down into the center of town do they discover it—sitting in the yard of the church of St. George. The ancient altar has, they see, been hollowed out just as they had planned, but it is carved in the shape of a cross! Knowing this to be the work of St. George, *whom the Muslims also loved and feared*, they behave themselves while trading in the village and depart in peace. And ever since, the altar of Apollo, now claimed by St. George as his own, rests outside the church and is used as a baptismal font (Figure 2.22).



Figure 2.22: Baptismal font of the Church of St. George, Arediou. On a pedestal with stone mosaics: fish, chalices, Chi-Rho insignia.

The spatial, material, and narrative juxtapositions of this tradition—the stone font bearing mute testimony to Muslim deference to a Christian saint, the hill above the town where St. George has taken over the patronal role of Apollo Malous,<sup>147</sup> the icon of the swift-helper saint in a place of honor<sup>148</sup> in the central church and the image of poor Fr. Christodoulou taking shelter beneath his shield—render together a single interpretive field, yet its possibilities for self-narration and other-understanding are not exhausted by any given connection between the many nodes of this field. No object has a singular meaning, or a single role to play in the plurality of relationships that interact with it, taking it as a resource for varying

<sup>147</sup> See again note 69 on the broader association of St. George in Cyprus with Apollo Malous, protector of the flocks. The town adjacent to Arediou, tucked under the hill to which the story refers, is to this day named Malounta after this local patron deity (who may indeed predate the association with Apollo).

<sup>148</sup> That is, set apart from but adjacent to the iconostasis on the south wall of the church in a distinct and decorated alcove—this position, either on the south or north wall, has been described to me on multiple occasions as a “place of honor” (θέση της τιμής) for the saint represented therein (a usage borne out in Stylianos, “The Historic Church of St. George of Arpera,” 163). It is unlikely to be coincidence that, in a great many churches of Cyprus that *are not* dedicated to St. George, George nevertheless appears in this place of honor (as he does as well, usually, in his own churches).

trajectories of thought and life.<sup>149</sup> Who St. George was and is to the people of Arediou, how this figure and these stories and those objects have been appropriated by their individual and communal imagination, cannot ultimately be pinned to the page. We may analyze how these various media refer, however obliquely, to one another and the wider cultural-theological topography of modern Cyprus, yet this is only ever part of their reality. From the perspective of his Orthodox devotees, St. George is not a dead man locked up in the objects, stories, and ways of life that preserve and proliferate his memory. Rather, the psychosomatic mediation of his holiness-for-and-with-others in the human world continues to fill the mirrored treasury of his presence as his devotees make him at home in their hearts and their society, struggling with his help against domination and for abundant life.

The other icon of St. George Swift-to-Help serves to bend our attention laterally as we transition to the second of our paradigms of George's multimediation in modern Cyprus, that of the saint as Greatmartyr (*megalomartys*). Though also created in 1851, the second icon renders a very different act of



Figure 2.23: St. George Swift-to-Help, Church of St. Kassianos, Nicosia. Replica of the 1851 icon now kept at Machairas Monastery.

representation than the swift-helper icon in Arediou.<sup>150</sup> Where the first icon configures the saint in a moment of stillness and separation, the second has him in the full-blown confluence of his many miraculous interventions: George is mounted, slaying the dragon, rescuing the boy, surrounded by sixteen panels detailing the gory events of his torture and execution, while simultaneously and eschatologically receiving the crown of his martyr's triumph.

<sup>149</sup> See Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 153-54.

<sup>150</sup> I can only show a replica due to the request of its caretakers that the original not be photographed; see Figure 2.23.

An ancient monk, Fr. Onouphrios, welcomes me to join him where he sits in the stalls of the Machairas Monastery chapel, and he narrates in a near-inaudible voice how the monastery came to acquire this remarkable image. This image once belonged to the only church of St. George within the walls of the Cypriot capital; it had been their most precious, honored icon, known for being a powerful point of access to the overflowing grace of the swift-helper saint. But in August of 1974, the capital Nicosia was torn in half.<sup>151</sup> In the midst of the invasion's violence and panic, people of the parish detached the icon of St. George from its alcove and carried it south, out of the city and into the mountains, where it was given for safe keeping to the monks of Machairas Monastery. The community of this Monastery of the Blade<sup>152</sup> was and is indelibly associated with the Greek-Cypriot National Struggle (*Ethniko Agōna*) of the 1950s, as the wooded slopes beneath its edifice were the site of the most celebrated confrontation of the Struggle: the pitched combat between the guerilla leader Gregoris Afxentiou and the British squadron sent to terminate him, culminating in Afxentiou's death by burning petrol (his "holocaust," *olokautōma*) and his immortalization as a Greek-Cypriot "heromartyr."<sup>153</sup>

But the story of the icon of St. George Swift-to-Help is not quite complete. Although the original remains on prominent display at Machairas, visited by streams of pilgrims, a replica was created and returned to Nicosia—not to the church of St. George but to its nearest neighboring church, St. Kassianos. There, positioned against the north wall mere meters from the island's dividing line, the replica (its own

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<sup>151</sup> Although the Turkish invasion of Cyprus began on July 20, 1974, the capital city was not divided until August 14. See again the discussion of the invasion and its aftermath in Chapter I, section 2d.

<sup>152</sup> There are a few accounts of the origin of the name "Machairas" (from *μαχαίρι*, knife or blade). One traces to the surname of a local landlord who owned the land that was acquired for the monastery; one involves a "legend about the finding of a miraculous Icon of the Holy Virgin in a cave"; and one refers to the natural terrain in which the monastery is located, with its so-called knifeplants (see Kokkinoftas, *Holy Royal and Stavropegic Monastery of Machairas*, 5-7). None of these accounts connect the monastery to the blade of a warrior-martyr, and yet the association emerges nonetheless in light of the well-documented efforts of the monks of Machairas during the EOKA struggle of the 1950s—not least because of the double-edged (pun intended) valance of the symbol of the blade: the weapon wielded by the warrior and the weapon with which the martyr is executed.

<sup>153</sup> Of these matters, and of their entanglement with the multimediation of St. George in colonial and postcolonial Cyprus, much more will be said in Chapter III.

mimetic configuration mediating not only the saint portrayed on it but also the *specific* inscription, in wood and paint and social history, of the evacuated icon) draws the imagination past the wall of the church to the city's Buffer Zone (or "Dead Zone")<sup>154</sup> between south and north, where the church of St. George has since 1974 stood unoccupied and overgrown behind barbed wire.

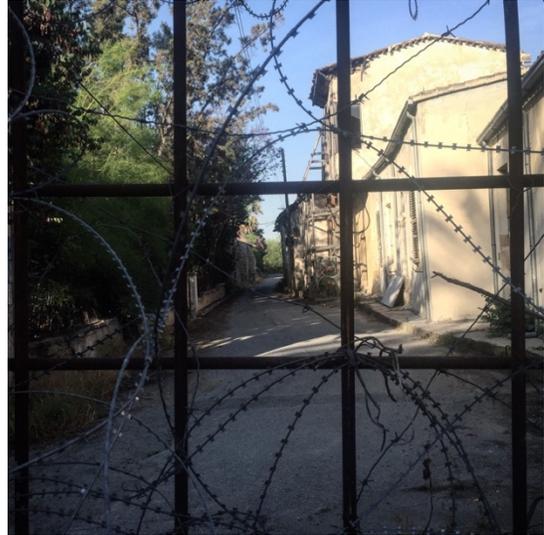


Figure 2.24: Church of St. George, Nicosia (center left); within the island's Buffer Zone since 1974. Photo taken in April, 2016.

Among the hundreds of churches left derelict in the north of the island, St. George of the Dead Zone is a material, spatial, and symbolic reminder—almost out of sight but by no means out of mind—that this “dead zone” is not dead to the hagiographical imagination but rather lying in the condition of a martyr: dead to the eyes of the flesh but alive to the eyes of faith, incandescently resistant to the anti-Christic powers of this world, crowned with the glory of the world to come.

We have observed in the course of this chapter that *what people do* is integrated with the prismatic onward mediation of the holy power of the saint, thickening the affective texture that unites individual and collective forms of resistance. Buying or making votive offerings (*tamata*) and bringing them to the churches of St. George, people contribute material emblems of their personal appropriations of the saint's power to the shared, sensory-semantic *mise-en-scène* of the shrines where the saint is embraced. Invoking George's wrathful benevolence as an explanation and interpretation of intercommunal affairs, people move through the institutions of shared existence within an imperial power framework motivated by centuries-old symbols of liberation from tyrants and protection of rightful rulers. And, calling upon St. George for deliverance from times of particular duress or desperation, people take heart that the local

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<sup>154</sup> On the tensive imaginative contrast between the various ways of construing the dividing space in post-1974 Cyprus, see Papadakis, Peristianis, and Wenz, Introduction to *Divided Cyprus*, 3.

circumstances of their need can be located and clarified within the web of signification that the saint spins out in his headlong ride across geography and history. As we now turn to the paradigm of St. George as Greatmartyr, such strategies of hagiographical appropriation and re-signification come especially to the fore as the people of Cyprus, the Island of Saints, erect an epistemic edifice within the mimetic entailments of Orthodox Christian martyrdom.

### III

## Saint George as Greatmartyr: Mimetic Death and the Reverberation of Glory

*And what dying person would be sad, when she sees the people liberated? Or are you unmindful of the deeds which were done in the days of our fathers, when a father offered his son as a holocaust, and the son did not dissent but rather gladly gave his consent to that man, so that the one who was the offering was ready, and the one who made the offering rejoiced?*

*~Pseudo-Philo, Book of Biblical Antiquities 40.2*

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*I regret that I was not allowed to kneel at the graves of our dead and reverently bend my knee before the greatness of their sacrifice. Cyprus is beholden—out of respect for them but also for the sake of teaching future generations—to erect a high monument to be their glorification; [let it be] somewhere high up, very high, so that they may embrace with their gaze the whole of Cyprus and Cyprus may embrace them, and let it be on blood-soaked soil, for such soils are worthy for heroes to have as their bed and shroud.*

*~George “Digenis” Grivas, farewell pamphlet, 1959*

## Introduction: Martyrdom and Resistance

Down a rocky one-track road, near the town of Drouseia in the west of Cyprus, a ruined stone wall surrounded by citrus orchards and agricultural fields encloses what once was a monastery dedicated to St. George. *Agios Geōrgios tou Nikoxylitē*, St. George of the Victorious Wood,<sup>1</sup> had been a small but thriving monastery for at least eight centuries, until the Greek uprising of 1821 and the reprisals taken by the Ottoman government for the Orthodox Christian clergy's putative conspiracy with the Greek revolutionaries.<sup>2</sup> Kostas Papageorgiou writes of the massacre of the Nikoxylites monks, his narrative tone recognizably hagiographical, juxtaposing the martyrs' innocence with their destroyers' cruel inhumanity:

After the tragedy which had happened [executions of clerical leaders] ... the monastery was to pay its own heavy price to the fury of those religious others [*allothrēskōn*]. The unprecedented savagery of the Turks, which manifested against the defenseless monastic brothers of Nikoxylites, except for the abbot (who according to tradition escaped the slaughter [*sphagē*]—yet his fate remains unknown ...). The savagery of the Turks was not limited to the cowardly massacre of the monks but extended also the complete destruction of the monastic buildings [*katastrophē tōn*

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<sup>1</sup> My translation of the monastery's name hypothesizes a reference to the crucifixion of Christ, which perhaps highlights George's own christomimetic martyrdom, or else (more likely) derives from a tradition of the monastery's foundation with a piece of the cross of Christ, as is the case with several of the monasteries of Cyprus. Phaidon Papadopoulos relates a tradition according to which the monastery was founded by St. Helena, on her return from the Holy Land bearing the pieces of the cross; indeed, in this version it is the mother of the emperor Constantine who "transported to Cyprus for the first time the honoring of the person of St. George" (*H Mōnē tou Άγιου Γεώργιου του Νικοξυλίτη Δρουσειας* [hereafter *H Mōnē tou Άγιου Γεώργιου*], 51). Yet Papadopoulos does not himself draw the connection with this founding legend as a source of the name, noting that concrete testimonies to the origins of the name are not forthcoming in available sources—whether historical surveys, ecclesiastical records, encyclopedias, or even articles on philology or folklore (43). He speculates that this monastery was once an outpost (μετοχή) of a different monastery of St. George on the heavily forested Akamas peninsula, and that it had been dedicated to St. Nicholas before the Akamas monastery closed (and so, Papadopoulos explains, perhaps Νικοξυλίτη was renamed in its memory, in the sense of: "Monastery of St. George – St Nick of the Forest"). Alternatively, he suggests that the name may once have been Οικοξυλίτη—"House of Wood"—reflecting its material construction or its economic contribution as lumber-providers to the community (45-48)—this variation, indeed, might be supported by the comments of one of my interlocutors in the town of Drouseia, who relayed a tradition that the villagers there had brought wood from their own houses to help construct the monastery, which they thereafter could view as "theirs" in a material as well as a spiritual way (December 27, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> The first known mention of this monastery appears in 1483, in the chronology of a certain monk Gregory (see Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 53). On its later history and destruction, see Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, IV.119-36; Hackett, *A History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus*, 226-31; and Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 281-83. Michalis Michael provides further detail ("Kyprianos, 1810-1821," 54-62) on the complex position of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus in relation to Ottoman power politics and the elaborate range of motives for Küçük Mehmed's administration to execute senior clergy and hamstring the wealthy Orthodox class.

*monastikōn oikodomēmātōn*], burning it to the ground. After this invasion and the crime perpetrated at this holy monument, the monastery’s operation was definitively terminated.<sup>3</sup>

Papageorgiou’s description of the perpetration of a massacre “at this holy monument” (*sto hiero mnēmeio*) is resonantly proleptic, since the monastery was not a “monument” until *after* the death of its inhabitants and the cessation of its liturgical life—yet this is precisely what it would become, and indeed this would be its most important role in the religious history of Cyprus: a martyred space.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 3.1: (Left) Chapel of the Monastery of St. George of the Victorious Wood, Drouseia. (Right) Detail of monastery buildings left ruined after the site’s restoration. Photos taken in December, 2017.

It is, however, only partially accurate that Nikoxylites Monastery would cease to operate. From shortly after the destruction of the monastery, through the period of British rule and into the present, the restored chapel of the monastery has been used by locals as a site for devotion, a site echoing with the sanctifying martyrdoms that had taken place there.<sup>5</sup> Although the monastery has been restored several

<sup>3</sup> Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 54. Cf. the longer account of the monastery’s destruction in Papadopoulos, *Η Μόνη του Άγιου Γεώργιου*, 65-71. Note that Papadopoulos likewise uses verbs such as *καταστραφώ* and nouns such as *σφαγή* for the end of the monastery (e.g. 34, 69, 72). It is of course entirely possible that Papageorgiou is reading Papadopoulos and has adopted these words from him (though the latter does not appear in the former’s bibliography); regardless of the specifics of this matter, I wish to call attention to the shared discursive register of the narration. The British surveyor Rupert Gunnis, by contrast, refers (in 1936) only to the destruction of the monastery by *fire*, rather than by the “fury of religious others”—see Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 221.

<sup>4</sup> This notion of “martyred space” is certainly owed an article of its own, but by it I mean to signal not merely a space where martyrdom has taken place (and indeed, such spaces where martyrdom has occurred are not necessarily “martyred space”—for instance, the yard of the Phaneromeni Church in Nicosia, which has a memorial to the martyrs of 1821 but otherwise is full of cafes, buskers, and anarchists), but rather a building or landscape that is *itself* imagined and materially represented in martyriological ways. Martyred space is, then, a subcategory of holy space.

<sup>5</sup> Papadopoulos refers directly to the space of the monastery as “sanctified ground” (*αγιασμένα χώματα*) in *Η Μόνη του Άγιου Γεώργιου*, 127. See also 72-74, on the reconstruction of the chapel by local Christians already in 1834, its further

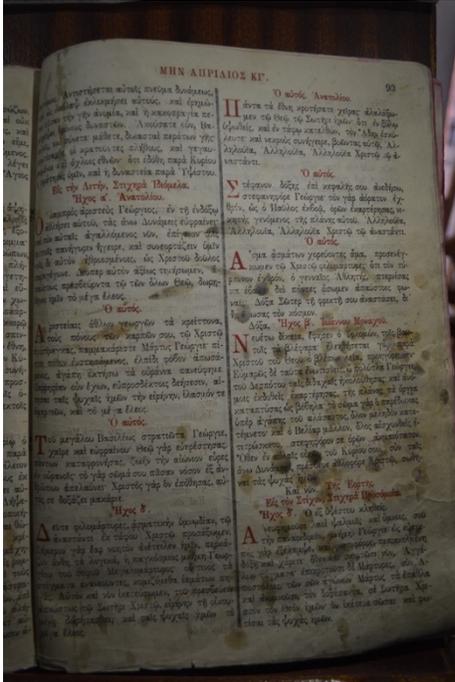


Figure 3.2: April mēnaion, open to the service of Great Vespers for the Feast of St. George. Chapel of the Monastery of St. George of the Victorious Wood, Drouseia. Photo taken in March, 2016.

times (repairing damage and wear to the building), it has been left each time in a semi-abandoned state, displaying the material scars of its former destruction as part of the site’s mediating configuration. The chapel was reconstructed not as a working church or monastery but in “cemetery style” (*koimētēriakou typou*) with cypress trees planted all around the grounds of the former monastery in a haunting reminder of the fate of its nineteenth-century occupants.<sup>6</sup> In the center chapel of the ruined monastery, a variety of liturgical objects and images were restored to the space after its destruction, and on the lectern has remained, to this day, a copy of the April *mēnaion* (the Byzantine rite’s monthly liturgical book) from 1904. While most of the book

is clean parchment, the pages of the St. George Day liturgy are covered in smudges and candle burns, the record of heavy usage (Figure 3.2). A festal liturgy for the saint continues to be celebrated at Nikoxylites on the two feast days of St. George,<sup>7</sup> in addition to the private devotions of visitors year-round.

I begin with an exploration of the ruined and reanimated Nikoxylites Monastery because, taken together, the site’s history, materiality, and continuing usage render for us a compound image of the specifically *martyriological* valance of St. George’s edifying power in Cyprus—his “formative purpose in

restoration and enhancement in 1923-24 following another fire, its being badly damaged in an earthquake in 1953, and the commitment of the people of Drousia and the Metropolis of Paphos continually to restore the site, leaving it in “good condition” (καλή κατάσταση)—good condition, that is, as a monument of martyrdom.

<sup>6</sup> Papadopoulos, *H Μόνη του Αγίου Γεώργιου*, 73. Around the Mediterranean, since antiquity, cypress trees have been planted in cemeteries as a symbol of mourning. Today, the cypress trees surrounding the chapel (planted in the 1920s) have been heavily pruned and have their trunks painted partially white, a technique used on Mediterranean terrain to protect young trees from heat damage—and a technique usually deployed in the season of St. George’s Day, both pragmatically, in alignment with the beginning of the hot season, and symbolically, in line with the broader practices of whitewashing buildings, streets, squares, and trees at Eastertide.

<sup>7</sup> This has been the case, suggests Papadopoulos, since 1924: see *H Μόνη του Αγίου Γεώργιου*, 73-74.

the lives of those believers who remain alive.”<sup>8</sup> The dynamics introduced above are not uncommon. It is rare to explore a derelict shrine in Cyprus (or indeed around the Orthodox world more broadly) without finding evidence of continued conditioning of the space by people who have brought icons, candles, rags, and votives (*tamata*)—conditioning it as a public nexus for the continued, contextual mediation of holiness.<sup>9</sup> What is pertinent to this study, then, is less *that* such sites are filled with new hagiographical activity and more *how* such activity is woven into the web of signification within which St. George is configured as a liberator and mobilized for resistance and resilience in the struggles of modern Cyprus.

The twentieth-century usage of Nikoxylites Monastery, this space whose holiness (like that of its patron saint, St. George) is effervescent from its destruction by a powerful, imperial antagonist, is anchored in the imagination of its inhabitants’ martyrdom. The site left behind by the monks, far from fading into overgrown obscurity, becomes a point of reference for the surrounding community’s continued self-understanding. The nearest town of Drouseia, although under the formal patronage of St. Epiphanius of Salamis, received and continues to cherish some of the original icons that survived the massacre.<sup>10</sup> When I stop to ask about the monastery, a church warden in the central church—a middle aged woman with a wide smile and two scampering children—assures me that these original icons, themselves relics of the martyred community of Nikoxylites, are the most precious in their care.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Fowl, “The Primacy of the Witness of the Body to Martyrdom in Paul,” 44.

<sup>9</sup> It is a matter of considerable interest, bound up with the island’s complex history of violence and outrage, that this retrieval of ruined space is commonly the case in the north as well as in the south of Cyprus. While many of the Orthodox churches of the north are stripped bare and in a decrepit condition (see extensive details in Demosthenous, *The Occupied Churches of Cyprus*), they are often left unlocked and so they too accrue the material record of images, votive objects, flowers, and other iconic or aniconic representations of visitors’ devotional commitments. The effect of a bare and broken (indeed subjected to ruinous violence) sacred space with new hagiographical media perched in its sills and corners is a powerful one—for a photograph of such a space, the church of St. George at Karavas, see Chapter I, section 1b.

<sup>10</sup> New icons have been set up in the restored monastery chapel, and the most illustrious icons have been removed to the ecclesiastical museums of Paphos and Peristerona; see again Chapter II, note 105.

<sup>11</sup> These icons, notably, are an ideal example of material-semantic integrity in hagiographical processes: the objects represent a range of saintly figures, and none of them depict the Nikoxylites martyrs themselves, yet the local knowledge of the icons’ provenance and all that is subtly associated with this provenance serves to congeal an undisputed recognition of the objects’ special status—a holiness that is not inscribed in their aesthetic configuration but discursively associated with the objects and transmitted orally to those (such as myself) whose knowledge of local history is incomplete.

Moreover, the small chapel in the town's cemetery was rededicated to St. George following the martyrdom of the Nikoxylites monks. Thus the living and the dead are woven together by hagiographical imagination: although the slain monks of the monastery are not themselves depicted in the icons nor interred in the cemetery, the patronage of St. George calls them to mind and



Figure 3.3: The municipal cemetery of Drouseia, with mosaics representing St. George and St. Epiphanius.

registers their sacrifice as pertinent to the continued identity of the Drouseia community.<sup>12</sup> The monastery—as recollected, and curated by the surrounding society, which narratively appropriates and continues to multimediate its martyrdom<sup>13</sup>—shares in the triumph of its patron saint, uncontained by the grave in which it is laid due to the “fury of those religious others” (*menos tōn allothrēskōn*) who strove, in vain, to vanquish it.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> We see here a well-recognized feature of imagined community, on a smaller but no less functional scale than Benedict Anderson's treatment of nationhood or Michelet's “*cit  commune entre les vivents et les morts*” (*Oeuvres Compl tes*, XXI.268, cited in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 198). However, where Anderson argues that imagination becomes necessary where the scale of a community grows beyond face-to-face contact, it seems clear that the imagined commonality with the martyrs is no less the case at the small scale of a rural village. Here too, others' violent deaths are continually enacted as part of the self-understanding of the present: not only registered as milestones in a historical narrative or causal events in a communal etiology, not even made audible through a “reversed ventriloquism” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 198) in which the heroic dead are claimed as represented through the discourse of the living, but indeed appropriated into the very sense of self of those living, in the course of their daily lives. The martyrdom of Nikoxylites is, in this sense, remembered by (some) people of Drouseia as “our own” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 206; cf. Papadopoulos, *Η Μ νη του Αγίου Γε ργίου*, 33-34). We can make no claim on the memory of “the people” as a whole, of course, yet we must consider as institutional the hagiographical assertions to this effect, through the treatment of the Nikoxylites relic-images in the parish church and the inscription of Nikoxylites' patron saint in mosaic upon the cemetery gates. See also Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 5, on “how particular ways of construing the past enable later communities to constitute and sustain themselves.”

<sup>13</sup> See again the general introduction, section 2b, on how and why narration, and μ μησης more generally, were from the earliest days of Christian martyrdom indispensable to the identification and function of a martyr.

<sup>14</sup> Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γε ργιος*, 54. See again Touna, *Fabrications of the Greek Past*, 110-15, on the “symbolic discourse” of Orthodox Christian representations of religious others as committed to doing damage to holy images, and so too on the identity-constructing power of discourses of others' “iconoclasm.”

In Chapter II, we examined and invested with initial interpretations a wide range of traditions celebrating St. George as a miraculous helper, defender, and liberator, empowering struggles against cultural, political, even ecological domination. In this chapter, we move to a different dimension of the figuration of St. George, in which the saint's identity *as a martyr* comes to the fore. As a "greatmartyr" (*megalomartys*), St. George is crushed by anti-Christian power but rises again in glory and mediates liberation through suffering, by contrast (but continuity) with the aspect of the saint that lends miraculous aid, untouched by the crises from which he liberates his devotees. In the terms of Peter Brown's now-classic formulation, we are moving from a paradigm of St. George as inimitable benefactor to one of St. George as imitable hero.<sup>15</sup>

With the imaginative resonances and representational tropes of martyrdom in the foreground of this chapter, we must take immediate note that the central categories of my argument about this mode of Orthodox hagiography—struggle (*agōn*), entailing both resistance (*antistasē*) and rectification (*anorthōsē*)—are central, original features of Christian martyrdom. Understanding how martyrs' (and their hagiographers') resistance to narratives and institutions perceived as anti-Christian was fundamental to their identity and socio-spiritual status, we will be able to recognize in modern Cypriot appeals to St. George as *megalomartys* an electric current of continuity (both instinctually tapped and quite deliberately directed) between the martyrs' struggles in antiquity and the status of St. George as a patron saint of liberation from modern imperial domination.

Two crucial considerations, building on the general introduction's treatment of holiness as a tension between power and resistance, deserve to be expanded here. First, to whatever extent we can

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<sup>15</sup> Like the contrast between these terms themselves, the contrast between these hagiological and hagiographical paradigms is basically heuristic; they are mutually inclusive insofar as they coexist in the same stories, traditions, and sites of veneration. (Indeed, the central argumentative thread of Brown's article "Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity" concerns what he identifies as a paradoxical synthesis of imitability and inimitability in the lived cult of the saints in late antiquity—and, to an extent he only begins to suggest, into the medieval and modern world).

reconstruct the intentions and actions of martyrs themselves, their reported refusal to sacrifice to the gods of Rome indeed enacts a form of political resistance, an active undermining of the expectations of imperial institutions that the restoration of traditional religion would bring political stability and military success to the realm.<sup>16</sup> However, the struggle of martyrs was no less (and possibly rather more) the struggle of their hagiographers: it is well established that much of the martyrs' (counter)power is grounded in the narratives told of them, indeed the media made of them, to disseminate and institutionalize their resistance to and (participation in their God's) rectification of the surrounding socio-spiritual order.<sup>17</sup> The hagiographers' work is the site of the "countermythology" that could, in the long term, subvert imperial ideology and mitigate its power, while simultaneously advancing an alternative account that could "claim these imperial myths on their own interpretive terms, creating alternative categories of power in which they construct themselves as the primary beneficiaries of newly reformulated social hierarchies."<sup>18</sup> It is the hagiographers who mediate the person of the saint to contemporary concerns, and vice versa. It is the hagiographers who transmute flesh into word, engendering art forms with the power to motivate and the

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<sup>16</sup> See Walter, "The Origins of the Cult of Saint George," 300, and Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 13-17. Salisbury in particular traces how Roman officials such as Pliny the Younger viewed Christians as politically depraved because of their obstinacy—their resistant position—in rejecting not only the established familial and devotional networks that "formed the backbone of conservative Roman society" (16) but also "the ways of their ancestors—the Jews" (17). At the time of their execution, Christian martyrs are depicted inserting a *countercultus* into the spokes of the Roman cultic apparatus: they replace the death they are expected to offer to the gods of Rome with a libation of blood poured out to the God of Israel. Refusing to recant or to die in abject submission to the state, they slip out from the attempted restoration of social/cosmic order and make of it an alternative sacramental rite: a baptism of blood, a participation in the broken body of Christ (here take special note of the *bread* imagery in such seminal martyrdom accounts as that of Ignatius and Polycarp: the martyrs' body ground like grain by the teeth of beasts, or emitting the sweet scent of baking bread upon the pyre), and thereby an enactment of freedom from the form of citizenship they were expected to embrace, the production of an alternative political agent. See also York, *The Purple Crown*, 49-70; York, "Early Church Martyrdom," 29-39; Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 18-20; Gray, "Away with the Atheists!" 206-09; Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 40-70; and Young, *In Procession Before the World*, 1-2, 9-15.

<sup>17</sup> See Fowl, "The Primacy of the Witness of the Body to Martyrdom in Paul," 43: "... in recent works on early Christian martyrdom it has become a truism to note that one of the constitutive elements of martyrdom—if not the primary one—is the narration of the martyr's death." Cf. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 34: "Martyrdom is not simply an action. Martyrdom requires audience (whether real or fictive), retelling, interpretation, and world- and meaning-making activity."

<sup>18</sup> Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 3. Cf. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 122, and Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, Part Three. Fowl too comments to this effect that "in the absence of an alternative account, the authorities, in this case Rome, will always narrate the death of believers as the justified execution of stubborn and potentially dangerous criminals" ("The Primacy of the Witness of the Body to Martyrdom in Paul," 43).

flexibility to endure, who are able to appropriate the setting and even the logic of cosmic struggle from the (literal) arenas in which Roman society perceived it to take place.<sup>19</sup> To this extent, the hagiographer succeeds in *imitating the martyr*, participating in the martyr's struggle, extending it and mediating it beyond himself to the world interrupted and refigured by it.<sup>20</sup> Still to this day—as we will see in the modern martyriological media under analysis in this chapter—the role of hagiographical producers and consumers alike is paramount to the power and indeed the possibility of the martyr.

Second, since the purpose of the martyrs' struggle is not merely to perform but also to promote Christian resistance, the holy deeds of the one participating in Christ's liberative sacrifice must be *materialized*.<sup>21</sup> Holiness, however mysteriously imparted and intellectually contemplated, can only be available for others' imitation (and so for communal institutionalization) by way of material media.<sup>22</sup> As will be the topic of extensive analysis in Part Two, such media as relics and reliquaries, written texts and oral sermons, images produced in a wide array of substances, and the festivals that coordinate these all into synthetic ensembles, are the necessary vehicles of imparting holiness to the imagination, and from the imagination to the mind and the heart, to the voice and the pen and the brush and the political demonstration. Without such stimuli, the martyr's struggle is not only not transmittable to future generations—it is not even imaginable as such in the first place. In this respect, the martyr *is himself* a hagiographer of sorts, representing and indeed inscribing holiness in the social order by way of actions

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<sup>19</sup> See again York, "Early Church Martyrdom," 29-34; Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 79-82, and Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 3, 18-20, and especially 29: "What ensured that the martyrs' struggles would influence much more than the establishment of the church were the texts that preserved the memory of their deeds. . . . The deeds of the martyrs were extraordinary—indeed miraculous—but it is the memory of their deeds that continued to haunt the world."

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Krueger, "Hagiography as an Ascetic Practice in the Early Christian East," 230-32, and *Writing and Holiness*, 94-109.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. York, *The Purple Crown*, 55: "If the body is the site at which power is contested, it will require training and disciplining to resist certain counter-forms of power (the 'principalities and powers') inscribing their narratives on the body. The body must undergo a transformation that will enable it to perform its 'world' as well as resist other worlds attempting to form it."

<sup>22</sup> See again the general introduction, section 1, on the tension between the alterity and the mediation of holiness.

and gestures, comportment and countenance, audible testimony.<sup>23</sup> Even if the martyr dies alone, shut away from her supporters by authorities all too aware of the subversive power of her voice and physical presence, her bodily conduct must be imagined and included in the (material) mediation of her death. It is this materiality, the possibility of transmission in a physical order from human being to human being, that renders the dead disciple a “witness” (*martyrs*) at all, the testimony of her body and spirit perceived by others, in her own time and the time to come.<sup>24</sup>

It is this world, this web of associations, these practices of somatic and imaginative resistance, that St. George evokes as Greatmartyr. The *Martyrdom of Saint George* casts him as a victim of the greatest, especially vicious persecution of Diocletian and Galerius, a climax point of the age of martyrs before the world is flipped upside down (in the exultant vision of Eusebius)<sup>25</sup> by Constantine’s edict of toleration in 313.<sup>26</sup> Yet St. George’s cult does not develop in earnest until the subsequent phase of the church ascendant,

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<sup>23</sup> Polycarp is again instructive: acknowledging the extent to which the narrative of the martyr’s death is a construction of its author, consider the specifics of what Polycarp is said to *do* in the arena. Before the eyes and ears of the crowd (both those calling for his death—“Jews” and “heathens”—and those supporters “of ours” [τῶν ἡμετέρων—*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9] anxiously awaiting his miraculous victory in the spiritual struggle), he *strides* confidently into the arena, expressing a visible ironic distance from his age and expected terror (8); he *motions* with his hand to the crowd when instructed to rebuke “the atheists” (9); he *groans* at them and *turns his face upward* in a recognizable (and funny, it must be noted—another inscription of ironic distance from the expected gravitas of what is taking place) exasperation and refusal to take the authorities and their claims seriously (9); he *verbally chides* the proconsul and the executioners for their proposed method of execution (11-13); and he *prays* audibly enough that the hagiographer can (or purports to) hear his theologically-sound interpretation of his own death. Again, entirely aside from the question of how much of this Polycarp actually did, the logic of his martyrdom requires that he does so, and the hagiographer takes pains to report it.

<sup>24</sup> Young reminds us, crucially, that the effectiveness of the martyrs’ witness is not just to reinforce (edify) a community already inclined to support them against imperial institutions. In ancient hagiography—and no less in modernity, as we will continue to see—the perceptibility of the martyr *to her persecutor* is a major theme. “As victims in the sacrifice, [martyrs] provide food not only for the benefit of their own communities . . . but for their persecutors as well” (*In Procession Before the World*, 9). Ground like grain by the teeth of wild beasts, Ignatius (that other paradigmatic exemplar) “has already described himself in Eucharistic terms” (9), yet this is an offering for the salvation of his executioners, who watch astonished, as much as for the Christians who will celebrate and imitate the martyr thereafter. “When the Eucharist was still private, not open to non-Christian view, the martyrs’ sacrifice was public and dramatic” (12)—this drama will be a central theme of my own Chapter V.

<sup>25</sup> “Thus all men living were free from oppression by the tyrants and released from their former miseries, . . . there was unspeakable happiness, and a divine joy blossomed in all hearts as we saw that every place which a little while before had been reduced to dust by the tyrants’ wickedness was now, as if from a prolonged and deadly stranglehold, coming back to life” (Eusebius, *History of the Church* 10.2; cf. Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 29).

<sup>26</sup> A number of early martyrdom texts in both Greek and Coptic identify the antagonist as alternately Dadian or Dacian, “governor of Persia.” Some of the fragments presented by Krumbacher in *Der heilige Georg* do so (see 1-40 for the available

the first golden age of hagiographical proliferation, in which the forms of resistance honed under persecution were retained but recalibrated toward intra-Christian “heresy” (often on the part of the emperor or powerful families) and putatively extra-Christian cultural dynamics and political entities.<sup>27</sup> It is in this time that the confrontation between George and the Roman emperor acquires a powerful new significance: not only that of the triumphant martyr, but now also that of the avenging warrior.<sup>28</sup>

Illuminating the force of this confrontation is a legend reported by Christopher Walter:

Diocletian sends an official to Lydda [where George has been buried after his execution by the emperor]. When he breaks a glass lamp before Saint George’s icon, a piece of glass sticks in his

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Greek texts older than the tenth-century “*Normaltext*” that would come to be recognized as standard, and which was available in Cyprus, as Kakkoura argues [“Κύπρια Ἀγιολογικά τοῦ ἁγίου Γεωργίου”]), as do the *Martyrdom* attributed to the fourth-century Pasikrates and the fifth-century encomia of Theodotus and Theodosius. Budge concludes (following Peter Heylin: see *Martyrdom and Miracles*, xxviii-xxxi, 203) that, since there is no Persian ruler at this time by this name, the name must refer instead to Galerius Maximianus, co-emperor with Diocletian, who had been born in Dacia (thus “Dacian”) and who defeated Narses (King of Persia) around 297, earning the honorific “governor of the Persians.” It is only after this conquest of the Persians that Diocletian, perhaps even on Galerius’ recommendation, puts into effect his edicts against the property and the lives of Christians. Later versions (including the standard Metaphrastic account that would be modernized by Nikodemos Hagiorites and preserved in the standard Greek Orthodox *Συναξαριστές*, as well as medieval and early modern encomia by Andrew of Crete and, notably, Gregory of Cyprus) do specify the emperor Diocletian as the direct antagonist and executor of George—streamlining the narrative by collapsing the distance between the emperor who issues the edicts of persecution and the martyr who perishes under them.

<sup>27</sup> The first (extra-textual) evidence for a thriving cult center at Lydda (Palestine) is from the early sixth century. See Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of Saint George,” 317. Budge, however, provides encomia that (if dated correctly) hail from the early to middle fifth century, and these celebrate “the mighty deeds that God wrought by the hand of Saint George after his martyrdom and after the coming of his body into Diospolis [a name for Lydda between the third and sixth centuries] his native city, and after the building of his shrine” (“The Encomium by Saint Theodosius,” in Budge, *Martyrdom and Miracles*, 236)—indicating that there must already have been a functioning *martyrion* by this time.

<sup>28</sup> The conversion of Constantine and the church’s concomitant administrative and rhetorical transformations required less a new cohort of saints and more a new *mode* of mediating holiness, to and through a Christian community attempting to array itself simultaneously in the graveclothes of Christ and the banners of earthly triumph. See York, “Early Church Martyrdom,” 40-41: York makes the case that the very *possibility* of the military martyr emerges only after the end of an age of persecution, in the “attempt to maintain continuity with the early church while accepting the newly ordained role of being in charge.” White argues (*Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus*, 21-25), moreover, that the extreme primacy of St. George’s identity as a *martyr* over that as a *soldier* in the earliest narratives and cult (even to the point of establishing a rhetorical opposition between “the saint’s service in the army, as a purely secular undertaking, and the more impressive achievement of his martyrdom” [22]) begins to give way in the context of increasing Byzantine political struggles with the ascendent Islamic polity, such that, by the seventh century, St. George is preeminently recognized as a patron of soldiers and a champion of the Christian empire. The effect of this shift can be witnessed not least in the seventh-century encomium of Arcadius of Cyprus, which identifies George as “George, unconquerable shield of the soldiers of Christ; George, the ally of the emperor; [and] fortification of fighting men” (translation in White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus*, 23; original Greek text in Krumbacher, *Der heilige Georg*, 78-81).

hand. He develops leprosy and dies. Then Diocletian himself goes to Lydda, where the archangel Michael intervenes. Diocletian goes blind and dies shortly after.<sup>29</sup>

This story, which may be the source for the early iconography depicting St. George spearing a fallen man,<sup>30</sup> is an essential counterpoint to the martyr-narrative in which George defies the emperor, frustrates him through his bodily endurance and success in converting onlookers to Christianity, but ultimately submits to execution. Here, the martyr (aided by the great heavenly warrior) takes his revenge on the archetypal representative of pagan antiquity, dispatching him—and standing ready at hand to support devotees in their own struggles with religious and political alterity.<sup>31</sup> The age of the warrior-martyr had begun.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will explore the resounding entailments of St. George's martyrdom for the life and land of modern Cyprus. He functions as an archetype for personal and political *mimēsis*, and as an aegis under which to understand, narrate, and promote liberation. Cyprus itself comes to be configured in the stories of its people (especially but by no means only its political and ecclesial authorities) not only as a holy island but indeed as a *martyred island*, with a relationship to St. George that elides at times between devotion to and identification with the saint. Functioning as a paradigm of personification no less than as a paradigm of patronage, George as Greatmartyr infuses

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<sup>29</sup> Walter, "The Origins of the Cult of Saint George," 317 (a summary of the much longer account by Theodosius of Jerusalem). See also Budge, *George of Lydda*, 20-21, 145, and *Martyrdom and Miracles*, 269-74, 325 (where, in the encomium of Theodotus of Ancyra, George blinds Diocletian and drives him from the imperial palace, explicitly in order to make way for Constantine).

<sup>30</sup> See Walter, "The Origins of the Cult of Saint George," 317. It will be discussed further in Chapter IV that this image of St. George exterminating a *human* antagonist (here identified with Diocletian but open to a variety of interpretations according to the circumstances of the image's use) predates by far the iconography of George as dragon-slayer, of which the earliest certain example is from the early eleventh century (see Walter, "The Origins of the Cult of Saint George," 320; Pancaroğlu, "The Itinerant Dragon Slayer," 153; and Schrade, "Byzantium and its Eastern Barbarians," 176-77).

<sup>31</sup> See the remarkable (and immediately answered) prayer spoken by George in the sixth-century *Acts of Saint George*: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of all the ages, send the fire which thou sentest in the days of Elijah the prophet, and it devoured the captain of fifty and the fifty who were with him, and let it devour the kings who believed not in the signs which they saw done through me" (in Brooks [trans], *Acts of Saint George*, 48. The prayer is taken up and expanded in the encomium to St. George by Theodotus of Ancyra: see Budge, *Martyrdom and Miracles*, 319). Cf. Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 55-73, on the burgeoning interreligious polemics of the warrior martyr tradition. However, note also White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus*, 22, noting that such accounts as this of George defending his sanctuary and striking down his devotees' antagonists are not unique to the warrior martyrs, and that these pre-Iconoclasm miracle collections do not feature George explicitly interceding on behalf of an army or engaging in terrestrial combat.

Cypriots' accounts of their own history with a logic of sanctification-through-suffering, a “beautiful struggle” (*agōna ton kalon*)<sup>32</sup> by means of which the island’s people and the island itself, like the martyrs they hold so dear and know as their own, attain proximity to and transfiguration by holiness.

### (1) A Martyred Island: Imagining Land and Society Martyriologically

You were revealed to be cultivated [*geōrgētheis*] by God, a most-honored farmer [*geōrgos*] of piety, gathering for yourselves the sheaves of virtue. For you sowed with tears but reaped with gladness; you competed [*athlēsas*] with your blood and took home Christ. With your ministrations, holy one, you secure forgiveness of faults for everyone.<sup>33</sup>

These words (and wordplay), heard at every festal liturgy in Cyprus dedicated to St. George and printed in countless devotional booklets and pamphlets, serve as an encapsulation of the martyr’s significance and the logic of his authority, but they also introduce the metaphorical linkage between the various domains of his application in Cyprus. With his death, George has “sowed” his own suffering in the soil of his people’s history of domination; with his defiance of imperial might, he has inspired his people’s capacity and resolve to do likewise. In this section, however, I am not yet primarily concerned with the mimetic entailments of George’s martyrdom. Here, I will consider two registers in which the resistance of St. George as Greatmartyr functions as a metonymic representation of the island of Cyprus itself: in its long-frustrated struggles for *ecological* and *political* rectification.

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<sup>32</sup> Makarios III, *Κύπρος ή άγια νήσος*, 6, referencing 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Cf. the festal prayers to St. George in which his “sacred struggle” and “divinely inspired struggles” are featured, warranting George’s heavenly joy and authority to advocate for his devotees before the Lord. See, for instance, the devotional canons of the monastery of St. George the Near, which address the saint as “Great George, you who have competed in the sacred struggle [*άγωνισθείς, τον θεϊον άγώνα*], you who were deemed worthy to attain the celestial festivities, ministering before the Lord on behalf of your servants” (from the monastery’s petitionary canon [*κάνων παρακλητικός*], 11). Consider also the comments of Archbishop Makarios III on the devastation of the church buildings in northern Cyprus after 1974: with the island severed, he insisted, the church is engaged in “a struggle for the holy and the sacred, a fight for home and religion. It is an all-out struggle” (cited in Demosthenous, *The Occupied Churches of Cyprus*, 3). Demosthenous concurs, and crucially (from the vantage of a hagiographical analysis), views his own volume collecting images of ruined churches and defaced icons as a contribution to this “struggle for the holy and the sacred”—it is the “graphic representations” of the devastated religious places and objects that, he believes, will “assist in strengthening memory” and so fortifying for continued struggle those who appropriate the very loss of these places “as vital to our history” (14).

<sup>33</sup> *Kontakion* for the Feast of St. George, in Doukakis (ed), *Μέγας Συναχαριστής*, IV.335.

The imaginative topography of George's cult in Cyprus combines the inheritance of ancient Mediterranean associations with a dying and rising deity who sustains the life of the land and the community dependent on it,<sup>34</sup> on the one hand, with George's christomimetic death(s) and resurrection(s),<sup>35</sup> which stimulate anti-imperial conviction and imparts (an imagination of) holiness to the political and religious configurations of the threatened island, on the other. In the *ecological* order, the dying and rising of the saint resonates with the agricultural seasons of sowing and harvest, which alike fall under George's protection from drought and pestilence,<sup>36</sup> and which (so identified with the martyr's self-sacrifice for his people) reinforce the Georgic personification of the island. In the *political* order, the lengthy and brutal suffering of the saint, endured and overcome through repeated resurrections even as more torture is promised, serves as a symbol ripe for Cypriot self-narration as having endured recurrent periods of imperial oppression, from which resurrection is always due even if long in coming.

### 1a) "Waters the tree of faith with his blood": Relics, Seeds, and Agricultural Sanctification

It is already clear that St. George functions as a protector and patron of the living land, yet more must said of how the agrarian traditions of Cyprus are suffused in their actual, annual undertaking by an imagination of St. George as a chthonic figure. George's dying and rising again—for Christ's sake and for

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<sup>34</sup> Karl Krumbacher gathers and discusses a range of scholarship making much of these figures—such as Thammuz, Horus, Kautar (who is also proposed as a root of Islamic traditions around al-Khidr—see again Chapter I, section 2d), Perseus, and Adonis (see *Der heilige Georg*, ix; cf. Budge, *Martyrdom and Miracles*, xxxiii; Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 123; Haddad, "Georgic' Cults and Saints of the Levant," 36; Fox, *Saint George*, 39-58).

<sup>35</sup> Extensive literature explores the christomimetic dimensions of martyrdom, but the premier focused study of this theme (in its early iterations) is Moss, *The Other Christs*. George's martyrdom is distinctive in this respect, that he is at least killed multiple times, yet each time he is raised up to suffer again, to the frustration, embarrassment, wonderment, and partial conversion of the imperial family. See Severis (ed), *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 444, for a folk variation of the martyrdom, current in the nineteenth-century Levant, in which George is executed fully seven times!

<sup>36</sup> This association has been discussed at some length in Chapter II, but here let me recall the prayer of St. George in his *Acts*, demonstrating that this connection to ecological well-being is ancient indeed: "Lord God, grant to my name and to my bones . . . that when clouds are gathered together and men remember me in that country there shall not be there burning heat or hail." (Brooks [trans], *Acts of Saint George*, 48).

the edification of the community loyal to Christ—is materially mediated in the living cycles of the land, infusing the island’s ongoing ecological struggles and agricultural triumphs with martyriological meaning and, reciprocally, metaphorically characterizing martyrdom as an agricultural process of sowing and reaping. H. S. Haddad, in his analysis of St. George’s chthonic aspect, pursues a well-trod path of comparative mythology, arguing for the absorption of various fertility gods’ characteristics and responsibilities into George’s portfolio.<sup>37</sup> I would take a different tack, observing that the outsized devotion to St. George among agricultural communities results in a distinctive imaginative/material mediation of the saint’s martyrdom, a sanctification of agricultural time, and a reinforcement of peasant resilience in the face of profound natural and cultural challenges to their livelihood.

First, let us take note of the small but significant role played in the martyrdom narrative itself by a farmer, Glykerios. On the whole, the *Life* of St. George preserved in the 1892 Great Synaxarion is winnowed down from the *Martyrdom* texts of the ancient world.<sup>38</sup>

But while numerous episodes are omitted or shortened in the *Life*,



Figure 3.4: Panel depicting George blessing the farmer Glykerios (with his resurrected cow). From a bios icon of St. George, Church of St. Marina, Tersephanou.

<sup>37</sup> See Haddad, “Georgic’ Cults and Saints of the Levant.” It is likely going too far to suggest, as Haddad does (36-37), that the *repeated* dismemberment and reassembly in the picture of health, in St. George’s martyrdom accounts, amounts essentially to Christian plagiarism of ancient agricultural deities (such as Tammuz or Baal-Hadad) who are dismembered, die, and rise again. The imbuelement of the agricultural cycle by deity or hero who does not only bless but undergoes its process of death and rebirth is ancient indeed, but it is also quite contemporary; it is only classificatory bias (or wishful thinking) that would make such a mediation of holiness in and through the life of the land a “pagan” phenomenon rather than no-less-robustly “Christian.” That being said, it is not only nineteenth-century academic enthusiasm that ties St. George to Kautar, Tammuz, Osiris, and Adonis; or indeed ties the Panagia to the Great Mother cult that, in Cyprus, far precedes a Hellenic presence on the island but would come to be associated above all with Aphrodite. The hypothesis that the unparalleled popularity of Mary and George is a Christian recapitulation of the island’s eternal devotion to Aphrodite and Adonis was proposed to me a number of times *by* Cypriot interlocutors, who were nonetheless quite clear that they did not mean thereby to diminish the legitimacy of the Christian saints and their celebration. The continuity between pagan and Christian, for these interlocutors, was a positive norm of Hellenic civilization, not a deconstructive critique of Christian syncretism.

<sup>38</sup> It had already been distilled by Symeon Metaphrastes in the tenth century and further tweaked by Nikodemos Hagiorites in the eighteenth century. See again the discussion of the 1892 *Life* in Chapter I, section 2a.

and the litany of individuals who are mentioned as having been converted to Christianity by the sufferings and miracles of the saint are for the most part anonymized as “many others” or “many Greeks” whom George brought to Christ, Glykerios the Farmer remains—the only convert to be mentioned by name besides the Empress Alexandra. “The farmer Glykerios, whose dead cow the saint had raised up and who was secured into faith in Christ through this miracle, was cut down by the swords of the unbelievers—and so the glorious [*aidimos*, ‘worthy of song’] man received [his own] crown of martyrdom.”<sup>39</sup> The martyrdom of the humble farmer (a *georgios* by profession) is linked with that of the greatmartyr, bestowing hagiographical relevance (for others) on this representative figure whose own salvation has been mediated by St. George.<sup>40</sup> In this sense, Glykerios functions not only as a demonstration of a key facet of hagiographical process at work in the narrative itself, but also as an enduring emblem (in text, image, and rural festivity) of George’s special connection to the people of the land, and of their committed devotion to (and identification with) St. George in the Greek Orthodox world.

Although St. George is venerated and petitioned year-round, especially in rural areas of the island, it is pertinent to focus attention at this point on the two feast days on which the saint is in the communal foreground: April 23 and November 3. First and foremost, let us note that the two feasts commemorate the martyrdom (April) and the interment of the relics (November) of the saint and are, not coincidentally, calibrated with the sowing and harvest seasons.<sup>41</sup> In April, the juxtaposition between the churches’ and

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<sup>39</sup> Doukakis (ed), *Μέγας Συναχαριστής*, IV.338. For this episode, expanded in the pre-Metaphrastic *Martyrdom of Saint George*, see Krumbacher, *Der heilige Georg*, 48.

<sup>40</sup> “St. Glykerios,” indeed, appears in Doukakis’ *Συναχαριστής* (IV.387) under the list of saints whose feasts occur on the same day as the Greatmartyr’s: April 23<sup>rd</sup>. See also Vasilios, “Βίος και Μαρτύριον τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου,” 86. As we will explore further in section 2 of this chapter, the tight association between the Greatmartyr and a host of “lesser” martyrs has the effect of radiating the holy prestige of St. George onto local communities that are able to identify with them.

<sup>41</sup> See Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 207, discussing a Cypriot proverb that praises the good farmer who sells from the previous harvest on the feast of St. George Greatmartyr, whatever he does not need to live, while at the feast of St. George of the Seed, he equips himself with everything he needs to sow in the coming season. Kokkinoftas corroborates the applicability of the proverb by noting that the monastery of St. George in Larnaka used to conduct a great livestock fair [*ζωοπανήγυρη*] on November 3, “and many farmers came to prepare properly for their agricultural work by purchasing animals” (“Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση της Κύπρου,” 134) at the same that they visited the monastery to celebrate the saint’s feast day.

monasteries' commemoration of George's terrible passion and death and the beginning of the summer season with its blooming flowers and trees yielding fruit renders an imaginative field in which the affective dualism of the martyrdom of the saint—outrageous pain and overwhelming joy—can be viscerally felt, mediated by the very vitality of the earth (and the appropriations of this vitality into the discursive formulae of ecclesial celebration). “Today,” the formal liturgy of Great Vespers for the feast of St. George proclaims, “a spiritual springtime [*ear noēton*] rises up for us and the flowers of our minds ripen: [this is] the universal commemoration of George the wise Greatmartyr.”<sup>42</sup>

Such is the refined liturgical language of the institutional church, but the lived theology of laypeople is no less suffused in the cultural field. For instance, Kokkinoftas records a Cypriot folksong for the (April) feast of St. George that imagines the martyr's red cloak as full of spring flowers, brought as a gift



Figure 3.5: Elderflowers, referenced in a Cypriot folksong for the April feast of St. George, imagined carried in the martyr's cloak. Photo by G. Konstantinou, *Protection of the Natural Heritage and the Biodiversity of Cyprus*.

for his devotees.<sup>43</sup> The informal, no less than the formal, enunciations of this “spiritual springtime” metaphorically map the spiritual benefits of the saint's martyrdom onto the vitality and healing qualities of the land (and vice versa) reinforcing an intellectual, affective, and indeed thickly sensory integrity in which the island itself exudes veneration and praise of divine holiness made profoundly present in the saints.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Koutloumousianou (ed), *Μηναίον του Απριλίου*, 90.

<sup>43</sup> These are flowers of “the *zampoukkos* [elder], a tree which blossoms in April and whose flowers, when dried and made into a tea, are used for therapeutic purposes” (Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση της Κύπρου,” 134).

<sup>44</sup> It is worth taking note that the April feast of St. George has, since the adoption of the Gregorian calendar by Orthodox societies (1924, in Cyprus), often needed to be moved to the Monday immediately following Easter so that it does not fall during Lent (see Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση της Κύπρου,” 134; and Coroucli, “Chthonian Spirits and Shared Shrines,” 46). This is significant to my study for two reasons: first (as will be more significant in the coming subsection), the position of the feast when moved renders all the more tightly the association between St. George and Easter—between the death of the martyr and the resurrection of Christ. Second, as I was told on multiple occasions when asking Cypriot Christians about the significance of changing the date of the feast (for my own participant-observation in the feast of St. George was conducted during such a year), the feast simply *could not* be held during Lent,

And—as in the biblical imaginary of the land lifting up a chorus of voices in praise of its creator and benefactor, insofar as the land belongs to God and God’s chosen ones<sup>45</sup>—the visceral integrity between the saint and the land strengthens an affect of rural resistance (at least in the everyday sense of an inner freedom, a resilience that can overcome despair) to those forces, natural and cultural/political, that would curtail the thriving of the people of the land.<sup>46</sup>

As the vernal feast commemorating George’s martyrdom draws on the sensorium of springtime to affectively render the martyr’s fertilization of the “Greeks” allegiance to Christ, the autumnal feast (which canonically recognizes the translation of George’s relics and their interment in his tomb in Lydda)<sup>47</sup> invests the *seeds* with which the island of Cyprus will sustain its life with the metaphorical resonance of the saint’s *relics* and of edifying relations thereto. On this feast of St. George of the Seed, Cypriot farmers (both Christian and Muslim, significantly) would traditionally bring a collection of seeds to the church for the saint’s blessing, then return to mix them with the remainder of their seeds and plant them during the upcoming sowing season.<sup>48</sup> This simple act is rather more than a pragmatic pursuit of agricultural insurance from a powerful holy figure: it simultaneously has the effect of imaginatively transmuting living

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since the occasion’s affect of *joy* (what Kokkinoftas calls its “joyous disposition”—εὐθυμης διάθεσης) is indispensable to its proper commemoration. Cf. Englezakis, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus*, 238: Study joy in Cyprus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and you will see how the whole vocabulary of joy is closely connected with the greatest religious festival of the people, Easter – Πάσχα or Λαμπρή.”

<sup>45</sup> See, for instance, Isaiah 55:12 (“For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands”) and Psalm 65:12-13 (“The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy”). Such biblical references, like the modern seeding of hagiographical imagination with local ecological texture, render an imaginative solidarity between the land and the people who lay claim to it as part of themselves, their identity, their past and their future.

<sup>46</sup> See again Chapter II, section 2b, on the psychospiritual necessity of the joyful, sportive dynamic of these feasts; and the conclusion of the general introduction, for categorization of the modalities of resistance.

<sup>47</sup> In most contexts, this November feast of St. George is celebrated with much lower intensity than the April feast of the saint, whereas in Cyprus (*like in Georgia*, the Bishop of Constantia-Ammochostos told me—affiliating Cyprus with the country he recognized as that of the greatest fervor for St. George), the opposite is the case. Indeed, in many parts of the island, the festival of St. George of the Seed is enacted with an intensity and investment usually associated with Easter in Orthodox contexts.

<sup>48</sup> See Yianguoullis, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 153; Papacharalampous, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 203; and Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 131-32.

seeds *into* relics themselves. Like a pilgrim's cloth rubbed on a sacred site in the Holy Land, the seeds transport the power of the saint and represent the burial of his bones in a land whose people will reap—at once literally and metaphorically—the benefits of his sacrifice. “You sowed with tears, but reaped with gladness,” as the *Kontakion* has it.<sup>49</sup> We see here a reciprocal metaphorical mapping: from the domain of agriculture onto that of martyrdom, and vice versa.<sup>50</sup>

The feasts of St. George thus illuminate the mediation of varying aspects of his martyrdom by way of the living dynamics of the agricultural sphere. We need not choose to interpret these days as *either* metaphorical appropriation of the cycles of the land for religious purposes or strategic religious authorization of agricultural activities.<sup>51</sup> The sanctification of agricultural time involves both at once, edifying precisely by way of the combination: the life of the community is reinforced and justified by divine favor, insofar as the land is the bedrock of its flourishing.<sup>52</sup> A handful of seeds or a cup of floral tea, then, can be no less a hagiographical medium than a sermon or an icon. In Cyprus, St. George does not

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<sup>49</sup> *Kontakion* for the Feast of St. George, in Doukakis (ed), *Μέγας Συναχαριστής*, IV.335: σπείρας γὰρ ἐν δάκρυσιν, εὐφροσύνη θερίζεις. Cf. Psalm 126:5-6: “May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.”

<sup>50</sup> See Sant Cassia, “Missing Persons in Cyprus as *Ethnomartyres*,” 275, on the ways that “land and bones are intimately linked in Greek culture.” Cf. Tertullian, *Apology* 50: “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” For the now-classic treatment of metaphor as a cognitive mapping of abstract domains of understanding using the images and procedures of other (usually more concrete) forms of experience, see Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

<sup>51</sup> Note that Orthodox saint's-day festivities do not take place purely or even primarily within the church building; for every attendant in the (usually packed) churches there are several more milling outside, lining the processional routes, awaiting the fireworks, eating and drinking, buying and selling. That being said, there can be no easy distinction made between the ecclesiological functions and the various other dynamics of the festivals, not least because the liturgical prayers, commentary, and exhortations heard in the festal liturgies are repeated or supplemented in the streets and the fields, as relics and images are processed out of the churches or shrines and among the people (and animals). In more recent years this blending of the interior and exterior of the church during festal periods is all the more substantial, as loudspeakers carry the unbroken discursive accompaniment of any and all liturgical activities well beyond the walls and above the din of festal environments.

<sup>52</sup> As the Psalm (104:5) on which the Monastery of St. Nicholas of the Cats invites visitors to meditate for the April feast of St. George asserts, this is “A Day of the Earth: God is he who set the earth secure on unwavering foundations, so that it never in the ages shall be shaken.” This monastery's invocation of “wise words” for the November feast is likewise ecosophical in valance: “The entire cosmos is a gift of God to humanity and humanity is a gift of God to the cosmos.” These invocations and scripture passages for contemplation are found in the monastery's small *Ημερολόγιον* booklet: a calendar of saints' days and relevant devotional materials for each.

only sow the seeds and secure the yield of its people's virtue—he is also a physical presence sown in the land and a personification of its total well-being, “water[ing] the tree of faith with his blood.”<sup>53</sup>

*1b) “Amēn, tziai pote?” Thirsting for Liberation and Resurrection*

“We are worried,” writes Arestis Kleanthus in the course of his theological reflection on St. George, “for the land that is called society. A lot of pest[s] have been sowed and grown. A lot of farmers of good are needed. Workers are needed to cultivate the ‘georgio,’ the land of God, in order to produce Saints, new martyrs, and great martyrs, new flowers for paradise.”<sup>54</sup> The land that is called society: the well-being of a community, of course, is never purely ecological any more than it can ever be divorced from ecological sustainability. As the repeated death and triumphant resurrection of St. George has, in Cyprus, provided a metaphorical resonance for the continual resurgence of life in an often desperate agricultural context—“indicating cyclic change as well as external continuity”<sup>55</sup>—so too they provide semantic resources for Greek-Cypriots understanding themselves as a community repeatedly subjugated by external imperial powers, repeatedly raised up in liberty from them, and still awaiting a final vindication. Imagining the island as martyred space, Greek Orthodox Cypriots have drawn on the defiance and hope

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<sup>53</sup> Kleanthus, “Great Martyr Saint George the Triumphant,” 38. Kleanthus’ use of the term γεώργιο (arable land, farmland, field for sowing) illustrates the ease with which the martyriological and agricultural domains can be overlaid in a Greek imaginary, and in particular how St. George (Γεώργιος) can so readily serve as a personification of the land. Recall the comment of the Bishop of Morphou that George “was not Cypriot by birth nor did he ever live on Cyprus, but ... the love of the Orthodox people has made him Cypriot and settled him forever in the land and in the heart of the island” (Forward to Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 6).

<sup>54</sup> Kleanthus, “Great Martyr Saint George the Triumphant,” 38. Operating within the scope of this same metaphor, Kleanthus has already said of St. George himself that he “was a farmer in the field of God. We see him during his life uproot the pests. He tears down the idols of the false gods and cultivates to the people the faith of the True God. He then waters the tree of faith with his blood.” On the image of the martyrs as “flowers for paradise,” note that the ecological metaphor has deep roots indeed. Nikodemos Hagiorites describes the Neomartyrs as “spring flowers and roses in the heart of winter” in his introduction to the (eighteenth century) *Νέον μαρτυρολόγιον* (10), and John Moschos’ *Λειμών* (*Meadow*, often translated *The Spiritual Meadow*) is archetypal in the imagination of saints as the flowers that bloom from within the soil of their societies, arresting the gaze of all who pass by, affording “delight both to nostril and to eye on every side,” and so edifying those who perceive them through their “delight” “fragrance,” and “benefit” (*Meadow*, introduction).

<sup>55</sup> Haddad, “Georgic’ Cults and Saints of the Levant,” 38.

narrated in the *Martyrdom* of St. George (and its proliferation of local reproductions across the whole range of hagiographical media) as resources for political resistance to Ottoman and British imperialism. Thus a central theme of this dissertation continues to recur: an orientation toward holiness *entails* resistance to ways of life, personal and communal alike, that are construed as distorted by sin and the agents of sin. Insofar as captivity and oppression are identified as such, their opposite (freedom) is imbued with holiness and comes to be pragmatically and ideologically glorified (in the full theological sense).

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It is the first day of Great Lent and I have been invited up into the Troodos foothills for a traditional Clean Monday celebration. For one accustomed to the somber and introspective atmosphere of Ash Wednesday, the cheerful tone and abundant vegan food of Clean Monday come as a bracing contrast: having asked forgiveness of one's neighbors during the church services the night before, those present today enjoy the purity of a fresh start: singing, dancing, delighting in crisp homegrown vegetables and fragrant bread while making numerous toasts expressing gratitude for the blessings of this life, especially the gifts of friendship and solidarity. As a guest and foreigner, attention to me is constant, with explanations of Clean Monday traditions and offers to refill my wine in equal, ample measure.

Among the people I meet at the celebration is Pavlos, a musicologist who has dedicated much time to the collection and archiving of the folksongs (*tragoudia*) of Cyprus. Learning of my research, Pavlos presses me to consider St. George not only in isolation, as a rich and complex figure in his own right, but in the liturgical and temporal context of his feast day. "Just think," he says, "how the feast of St. George moves along with the date of Pascha so it always follows after, never before. This is because St. George is a paschal saint, not a lenten saint. He signifies liberation, not bondage." I ask how this association is reflected in the folk songs, and Pavlos smiles, a conspiratorial look crossing his face. "The Greeks of Cyprus," he continues, "could always fool their oppressors by singing religious songs. To sing the

ballads of St. George *was* to sing about liberation, to inspire a love for liberation.” And why, I wonder, does it matter that these songs were sung during the Easter season?

Think about what the people were singing—they were singing ‘*Christos anestē*’ [Christ is risen], but at the same time they were thinking ‘*Laos anestē*’, the *people* have risen!<sup>56</sup> Of course this was a wish, not yet a reality. So in place of the traditional response, ‘*Alēthōs anestē*’ [Truly, he is risen], some people in colonized Cyprus took to responding: ‘*Amēn, tzi ai pote?*’—this is what we say when there is a wish that is long in being fulfilled! ‘Yes—but when?’<sup>57</sup>

The interplay Pavlos describes between Easter and the feast of St. George is generally corroborated both by scholars of Cypriot folk customs and by the formal liturgies of St. George’s Day.<sup>58</sup> But Pavlos’ specific interpretation, connecting the vernal feast of St. George and its traditional songs to an injection of Eastertide symbols with a covert political imperative, also introduces a resonant heartstring of how the martyrdom of St. George is appropriated in modern Cyprus: *the counterposition of freedom and*

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<sup>56</sup> We have here an especially precise example for the strand of my argument around hagiographical mediation being always *both* (or integrally) material and psychological. The song itself is a material/embodied act, produced by the vocal cords and perceptible by the ears, reverberating in spaces configured in specific architectural ways to condition sound. And the reception or appropriation of this physical sound entails (in Pavlos’ interpretation, but the point is valid regardless of the specific thoughts of individuals) both the intellectual association between resurrection and liberation and the unconscious emotional juxtaposition of paschal celebration with political dissatisfaction, reinforcing communal self-understandings through embodied practices.

<sup>57</sup> March 14, 2016. Note that “*Αμήν, τζιαι πότε;*” is spoken in Cypriot dialect, but the phrase is not unique to Cyprus: it is an idiomatic saying common to Greek more generally, used (as Pavlos describes it) to express frustration with delayed fulfillment of something wished for. See, for instance, the “commemorative album” published by an expatriate Greek-Cypriot community in Sheffield, England, entitled *Άγιος Γεώργιος: Άγιος της πονεμένης Ρωμηοσύνης* (Saint George: Saint of much-suffering Hellenism). In this collection of accounts relating to churches and festivities of St. George in the occupied north of Cyprus, we find similar expressions of Easter used as a symbol or code for political rectification: “At Easter the bell [of the church of St. George] sounded joyfully in a triple tone. . . . To-day the church is pillaged and desecrated. It has no bell to call the faithful who are now far away as refugees. An Easter without the triple festive toll of the bell is not an Easter. How we long for ‘Easter’ [*nota bene* the quotation marks] to come again” (23). Cf. the (more or less) covert appropriation of biblical themes in the songs and stories of enslaved African-Americans, to wrest control over the meaning of present experience and assert a divine solidarity with the oppressed: see Cone, *The Spirituals & the Blues*, 34-46; Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over*, 119-22; and Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 33, and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 153-54 (on euphemism as “political disguise”).

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Yiangoullis, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 109, on the feast of St. George being “interwoven with Holy Week,” whether it comes before or after. Kokkinofas also observes that the vernal feast of St. George is “considered by the people as a second Easter” (“Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση της Κύπρου,” 133-34). Moreover, consider again the Vespers liturgy for the springtime feast: “Come, friends of the martyrs, let us bring forward a chanted hymn to Christ risen from the grave. For today a spiritual springtime [ξάρ νοητόν] rises up for us and the flowers of our minds ripen: [this is] the universal commemoration of George the wise Greatmartyr.” Or, from the Orthros liturgy: “Behold it rises up, the springtime of grace [τὸ τῆς χάριτος ξάρ]; it shone forth from Christ, the Resurrection of all, and now it bursts this day from George the Martyr, this lightbringing day, celebrated by all [πανέορτος]. Come, all you inspired bearers of this radiance, let us celebrate brilliantly” (Koutloumousianou [ed], *Μηναίον του Απριλίου*, 90-91).

death, such that the symbolism and religious affect of resurrection can imbue political liberation with powerful salvific significance and warrant.

This counterposition of freedom and death is, I argue, the thematic current that powers the prominence of St. George Greatmartyr in modern Greek political imaginaries. As Pavlos did in our conversation, Kleanthus discusses in his theological reflection the importance of St. George's Day to the Greek-Cypriot desire for, indeed near obsession with, liberation:

In the history of our nation during the period of being captured by the Turks the name of Saint George was a symbol of struggle and freedom. On the Saint's name day ... the young men sang and had a good time. They also used to ask the Saint to help in order to free their enslaved land. On that day they celebrated at the Saint's remote deserted churches, and they also competed for target shots for training. The great martyr was distinguished as a soldier of Christ. Our brave ancestors who fought for 'the faith of Christ and our motherland in bondage' are also considered to be soldiers for Christ. On the day that they were celebrating the name day of the Saint, thousands belonging to the enslaved Hellenism used to psalm: 'Liberator of prisoners of war...'<sup>59</sup>

The historicity of such occurrences is largely beside the point: what concerns us is how and why this association continues to be made. George is presented here as the one who stands as the model and epitome of those other "soldiers for Christ" who fought for their "motherland in bondage." It is no coincidence that several of the flags used during the Greek uprising of the 1820s bore an image of St. George spearing the dragon, and St. George remains to this day the patron saint of the Greek and Cypriot infantries.<sup>60</sup> Yet it is not to the Greek uprising itself that we must now turn, but rather to how Cyprus—



Figure 3.6: Panel from the large mural, "Hymn of Freedom," by Andreas Makariou. Panel entitled: "Freedom emerging from the holy bones of the Greeks" (a verse from Dionysios Solomou). "Heroes' Grove" (Erōon), Amiantos.

<sup>59</sup> Kleanthus, "Great Martyr Saint George the Triumphant," 43. The first quotation in the passage is unattributed; the second is the beginning of the *apolytikion* of St. George.

<sup>60</sup> St. George appears more often on the flags of the Greek revolutionary forces than any other human or superhuman figure, even more than the Emperor Constantine, to whom goes second place. St. George was carried on the flags of Athanasios Diakos (with the inscription, "Freedom or Death"), Markos Botsaris (with the inscription, "Freedom, Religion,

which did not revolt in the 1820s—has nonetheless been framed as a participant in this martyriologically-figured “national” sacrifice and salvation, conditioning the political discourse and religious self-understanding of the Orthodox Christian community of Cyprus ever since.

In the course of the summer of 1821, the archbishop of Cyprus (Kyprianos) along with the senior bishops of the island and as many as 500 other civic, religious, and economic leaders were rounded up and executed on the authority of Governor Küçük Mehmed.<sup>61</sup> There had been (prior to 1821) numerous parties with an interest in deposing Kyprianos, and the executions were at least as much motivated by desire to seize the assets of this large group of non-Muslim notables as they were by desire to quench a conspiracy to spread the revolution to Cyprus (indeed, the archbishop’s own words and actions do not bear out association or even much sympathy with the Greek revolutionary spirit of the 1820s).<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, Kyprianos is indelibly remembered and remobilized *as a martyr*,<sup>63</sup> specifically as an “ethnomartyr” whose sacrifice was not only out of commitment to his faith and his people, but also and especially for his commitment to the Greek-Christian *nation*.

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Fatherland”), the cavalry of Epirus (without inscription), and the general Greek infantry (without inscription), as well as on the flags of several minor companies (see Kokkonis, *Ελληνικές σημαίες*, 34-45; and Tzortzis, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος ο Μεγαλομάρτυς και Τροπαιοφόρος*, 6). Multiple conversations in the course of my fieldwork revealed that this patronage of the military (and the prominent representation of St. George in military functions and parades) is well known by clergy and laity alike, and several chapels on military bases are dedicated to St. George—unsurprising, considering St. George’s officially-recognized patronage of the armed forces of the Republic of Cyprus, which often bears a flag with the image of St. George in its military parades. See Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος και η Κύπρος,” 5; Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 27, 37-39; and Kakkoura, “Κύπρια άγιολογικά του Άγίου Γεωργίου.”

<sup>61</sup> Mehmed had been appointed to the island specifically to undermine Kyprianos’ growing power in Ottoman politics. See again Michael, “Kyprianos,” 54-62. Cf. Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, IV.119-36; Hackett, *A History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus*, 226-31; and Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 281-83.

<sup>62</sup> See Michael, “Kyprianos,” 42-44, 63; cf. Englezakis, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus*, 279-301, which transcribes and interprets the last known document of Archbishop Kyprianos, urging restraint and obedience on the part of Cypriot Christians toward the Ottoman administration, and insisting on prayers said for the sultan and the governor of the island—who would in short order orchestrate the archbishop’s execution.

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., the account of “the tragedy” in Georgiades, *History of Cyprus*, 218-20, which explicitly refers to him as such. Drawing on early-British-period Greek sources that may well mix history with hagiography (the latter being clearly as informative as the former), John Koumoulides reports that Kyprianos, prior to his execution, made the sign of the cross over the gallows and blessed the instrument of his martyrdom (see *Cyprus and the War of Greek Independence*, 85).

The well-documented occasion of the centenary commemoration of Archbishop Kyprianos' execution, which was held beneath the imaginative aegis and in the iconographic presence of St. George, is most instructive in this attempt to interpret the martyriological figuration of Cyprus. In honor of this occasion, a statue of the cleric was commissioned, carved in Athens, and (in April 1930, coinciding with the centenary of Greece's establishment as an independent nation-state) unveiled at the church of St. George in Strovolos, where the archbishop had been born.<sup>64</sup> The festivities performed and promoted a Cypriot self-narration according to the logic of martyrdom and patronage by the martyrs. First of all, the statuary and pictographic representations of the martyred archbishop contained inscriptions that integrated the political fortunes of Cyprus (envisioned as part of Greater Greece) into the narrative arc along which martyrs are only apparently destroyed but, unseen by their executors, bathed in divine glory. "You who have been killed for the light," one inscription proclaimed, "get up to see the sun/ Get up to see your blood which has been turned into a kingdom." "Your snow white marble," another promised, "will be sharpened by the honored sword of the great liberation."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> It was indeed Archbishop Kyprianos himself who commissioned this church of St. George in his home village. "The founder of the church was the Ethnomartyr Archbishop Kyprianos, who during the period of the reconstruction of the church of [Panagia] Chryseleousa, also managed to construct this church of St. George despite the prohibitions of the Ottoman occupiers. Local tradition conveys how Ethnomartyr Kyprianos enclosed the place where the church of St. George would be built and thus the construction was not seen by the Turks. Upon completion of the work, the Ethnomartyr bribed the pasha so that he would not retaliate, while the Ottomans if they saw that the church was dedicated to St. George, did not create any problem." (Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 178).

<sup>65</sup> For this and the remaining citations from this event, see State Archives, SA1-913/29, primarily containing reports by a police inspector to the Chief Commandant of Police and the Colonial Secretary, translated into English (such that I do not have access to the original Greek statements), of the statue-installation proceedings. The bust of Archbishop Kyprianos, atop a white pillar, contained a more straightforward inscription: "The Orthodox Church of the community of Strovolos, which was [his] mother and nurse, gathered through the communal fundraising of grateful people this sign [of] the eternal memory of Kyprianos, Archbishop of Cyprus: 1756-1821. He was martyred willingly and gloriously [ΜΑΡΤΥΡΗΣΑΝΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΦΡΟΝΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΚΛΕΩΣ] on behalf of faith and fatherland [ΥΠΙΕΡ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΤΡΙΔΟΣ]." Two other, temporary "arches" were erected for the procession and ceremony (thus rendering these representations in a different hagiographical category than that of the bust, one more aligned with the temporary *mise-en-scène* of the festival), each with a "photo" of the Archbishop. It is these arches, no longer at the site, that contained the inscriptions discussed above. The bust and column, since 1930, have been moved a short distance away from the church of St. George to a newer and larger church of the Panagia, where it has been combined with a similar statue of Archbishop Makarios III. The two busts face one another on the little square, with the church standing to one side and a flagpole bearing the blue and white flag of Greece on the other (Figure 3.7).

Second, during the unveiling ceremony, in between a requiem service for Kyprianos and three renditions of the Greek national anthem (no less joyfully incessant than the *Christos anestē* hymn at an Orthodox Easter service), a series of dignitaries engaged in a theater of

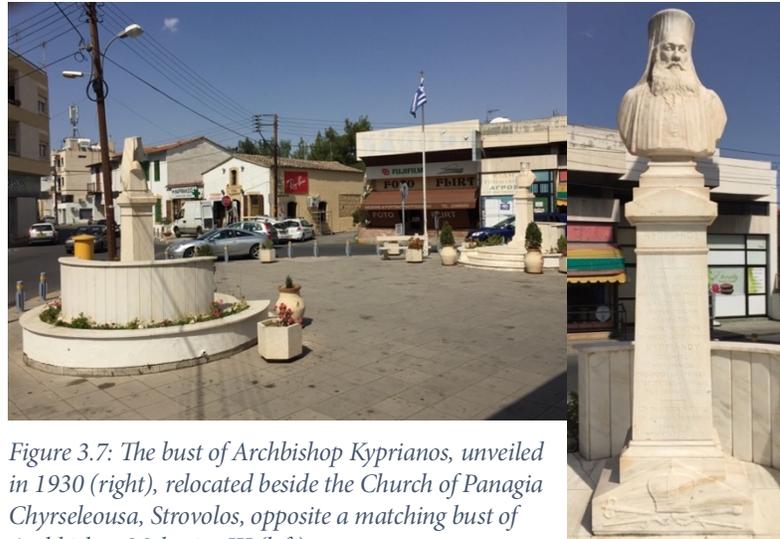


Figure 3.7: The bust of Archbishop Kyprianos, unveiled in 1930 (right), relocated beside the Church of Panagia Chyrseleousa, Strovolos, opposite a matching bust of Archbishop Makarios III (left).

reciprocal exhortation and apostrophic appeal to the long-dead archbishop—mediated in the present by the physical presence and stern countenance of the statue. The former mayor of Nicosia addressed the statue directly, praising Kyprianos’ having opened a “way of liberty” through his death, extolling the coming “resurrection of your mother country,” and challenging the current archbishop of Cyprus to *promise the martyr* (in the uneasy presence of the British police force) that we “shall not cease struggling until we succeed our liberty.”<sup>66</sup> The chief advocate of Limassol, after other “patriotic words” from patriotic people, again spoke to the statue of Kyprianos:

Keep asleep, Kyprianos, because if you wake up, you will see that the rope with which you were hanged by the barbarous, was taken over by [British] Christians and tied our hands and keep[s] us enslaved. If you get up you will see your mother country covered with black clouds and your soul will be grieved. Keep asleep and wake up only when we shall call you. You who have been killed for the light get up to see the sun.

The arch-martyr of Cypriot modernity is represented as having been betrayed and his glorification marred by the island’s subsequent history. The liberation of the island from the Ottomans resulted only in another domination, all the more shameful since it is domination “by Christians.” The land and people of Cyprus, who shared spiritually in Kyprianos’ edifying death, have yet not been raised to glory with him. Although

<sup>66</sup> Recall Pavlos’ interpretation of the “Christ is risen” hymn as a covert declaration that “the *people* are risen”: Λαός ανέστη!

Kyprianos laid down his life in a martyr's sacrifice for the "freedom" of faith and fatherland, that freedom has not yet come—*Amēn, tziai pote?* The performance of shame before the silent gaze of the ethnomartyr, on the part of the advocate of Limassol, mediates psychosomatically (that is, with the martyr's marble representation reflecting, concentrating, and intensifying a collective intellectual and emotional grievance) a *debt* owed to the martyr by the ones on whose behalf he perishes. This debt, once conjured before the eyes and ears of the crowds present for the centenary celebration, can press upon the imagination of those present, precipitating religious motivation for individual and collective struggle in the political sphere. As Kleanthus puts it, discerning such a debt to St. George and the later martyrs under his patronage:

The unbending and bright figures of our martyrs ... orders us to reflect upon our own duty and responsibility. ... Our shoulders are heavily pressed with the inheritance of the blood of the martyrs. Only a small glance at their sacrifice will be enough to channel to our soul a strong current of holy shiver and excitement. It will push us to a life that is Christian, gallant and heroic. We are descendants of martyrs. We are heirs of a certain duty. We must follow their heroic example.<sup>67</sup>

As we will shortly explore in more depth, the logic of the island's own martyrdom and deferred glorification amplifies to fever pitch in the 1950s, when the "sacrifice" of Cyprus—in 1821 and in the World Wars of the twentieth century—comes to infuse with a powerful hagiographical imagination the yearning of many for the island's union with "her free mother Greece" [*tēs eleutheras mētros tēs Hellados*].<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Kleanthus, "Great Martyr Saint George the Triumphant," 47 (*nota bene* the use of the adjective "unbending" implying a resistance to that which would bend something straight out of shape). Cf. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 52-55; Moss, *The Other Christs*, 77-87; and Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 131-35. Salisbury in particular proposes that there is an enduring tension, in ancient and modern Christianities alike, between the broadly (interculturally, interreligiously) recognized power of blood-sacrifice and the Pauline notion that the sacrifice of Christ was supposed to be all-sufficient. However, considering the hagiographical trope of sacrifice from the vantage of theories of resistance, this tension may be less pronounced: when the martyrs are led to their deaths in the space and according to the logic of a Roman sacrificial rite, they are represented as undermining that rite by interrupting it with a sacrifice of their own and enclosing the event within their own counternarrative: that of Christ's own bursting the expectation of his abject death, for the liberation of all people and the greater glory of God.

<sup>68</sup> From the 1950 plebiscite in favor of the unification of Cyprus with Greece (*Το Δημοψήφισμα του Κυπριακού Λάου*—on display at the Greek-Cypriot National Struggle Museum); "Cyprus has not succeeded," the Plebiscite insists, "in obtaining her freedom despite the fact that she too shared in the sacrifices of 1821 through the sacrifice of the Bishops and of the other clergy and prominent laymen who were hanged or massacred by the Turkish rulers of the island." See also State Archives, SA1-1566/52 (protests and backlash to the purported British efforts to "de-Hellenize" the island by exerting

No one is more responsible for this infusion than Archbishop Makarios III, whose public rhetoric during this pivotal period deploys holiness as a crucial category for Greek Cypriots to appropriate into their own understanding of the past, present, and future of the island.<sup>69</sup> Narrating the island's political history since 1821 as a kind of Holy Saturday—awaiting a divinely-willed resurrection from its entombment by only-apparently-invincible imperial power—Makarios would continue (even after his election as President of the independent Republic of Cyprus) to interweave “the ‘pain’ and ‘martyrdom’ of the Greek struggle with that of the Cypriot experience, which he urged the men and women of contemporary Cyprus to imitate.”<sup>70</sup>

To imitate, however, is precisely what they had already done: not merely by behaving in ways they held to be consonant with that of iconic heroes of the past but also by appropriating the narratives and other hagiographical culture around the great martyrs of the faith, old and new (exemplified in this section by St. George and Archbishop Kyprianos), *as their own*, that is as interpretive ciphers to their own experience and validating matrices for their own forms of resistance.<sup>71</sup> As the Secretary of a local chapter

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more control over its education system), for recurrent contrast between “free mother Greece” and Cyprus the captive in need of liberation.

<sup>69</sup> Hadjipolycarpou's article, “The Nation of Saints,” undertakes an admirable study of Makarios' rhetoric in four stages of his career: (1) as a bishop and during his first year as an archbishop, 1948-1950; (2) during the EOKA struggle, 1955-1959; (3) during the first years of his presidency, 1960-1962; (4) and following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, 1974-1977. She argues that in the omnipresent medium of Makarios' speech to the (Greek) Cypriot people, “one deciphers a hagiological glossing over of national ideologies” (131). Sainthood becomes a *national* and not only an ecclesiological ideal, with the iconic, heroic Cypriot, worthy of *mimēsis*, being characterized as a virtuous sufferer—and if necessary, tireless fighter—“for shrine and hearth to the end” (Makarios III, *Ἀπαντα*, VI.305; cf. Hadjipolycarpou, “The Nation of Saints,” 146).

<sup>70</sup> Hadjipolycarpou, “The Nation of Saints,” 144; cf. Makarios III, *Ἀπαντα*, VI.143. Note that it is not only the experience of Cyprus since the Greek revolution of the 1820s that is represented as a time of martyrdom, but the island's successive periods of subjugation and (temporary) vindication over a longer duration. Consider, for instance, the comments of Kleitos Ioannides, *The Church of Cyprus*, 104, on the period of Latin rule (1191-1571): “In spite of oppression during this period the Orthodox people of the island managed to transcend their crucifying trials and tribulations and with the ultimate sacrifice of tis children the Church of Cyprus managed to preserve the purity of the Orthodox faith of the hellenism of Cyprus. The Church of Cyprus, though slain like a lamb, proved to be strong and mighty.”

<sup>71</sup> As Scott insists, resistance is never solely a matter of taking action to undermine constraining power, it is also (and at times much more importantly) a matter of “symbolic and ideological struggle” (*Weapons of the Weak*, 186), of the appropriation, mobilization, and generation of meaning that can take on a life of its own (as “culture”—41) apart from the idiosyncrasies of individual voices. Cf. Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” 53-60, on the culture of oppressed peoples as a refuge from assimilation and demotivation. Kenneth Burke's classic discussion of “identification” is also of definite relevance at this point: no less than in the case of the biblical characters with which he makes his point, identification with the martyrs (whose stories are retold and whose images are erected as an interpretive legend for their inheritors' maps of meaning) enables “a ritualistic kind of historiography” in which the outcome and the moral stature of

of the Cypriot Farmers' Union (PEK) had put it in 1952, in one of countless such letters of protest to the colonial government: "We shall never lose our courage and hope for the early resurrection [*anastaseōs*]<sup>72</sup> of our slave country. We firmly believe that the fullness of time is nearing when the last conqueror of our island will leave the holy soil [*to hieron edaphos*] of our martyred country. Long Live Enosis!"<sup>73</sup> Liberation is itself sanctified, becoming a political cognate of eschatological life-abundant.

But "the last conqueror" was not to be the British Empire, and the "holy soil of our martyred country" was to undergo martyrdom again in 1974. In both the recollections and practices of refugees *vis-à-vis* the parts of northern Cyprus they have left behind, St. George figures prominently. To take only one example: the expatriate community of St. George the Martyr (in Sheffield, England) published a book in 2001 "dedicated to the occupied towns and villages of Cyprus with churches or chapels of St. George," looking back on its "martyred country" (*martyrikē mas patriida*) through the recollections of community members and praying for the "liberation" of Cyprus "through the intercession of St. George the Great Martyr."<sup>74</sup> One such recollection collected therein is a fitting synecdoche for a much wider pattern, in which the material media of St. George become crucibles whereby the Greatmartyr's immense suffering and divinely-bolstered resistance may be distilled as a badge and buttress of the community's collective identity. Thus it is, report the refugees of Phyllia, that:

From the sacred church of St. George of Philia [Φυλλιά], its inhabitants, forced by the Turkish bombardments, managed, at the risk of their lives, to take with them the icon of St. George, which, today, is to be found in the nearby village of Peristerona. The Philiotes use this icon, every year, for litany in their organised march towards our occupied village.<sup>75</sup>

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current antagonisms (here, the struggle between those with a debt to the martyrs and the imperial powers that continue to benefit from this debt going unpaid) can "substantially" be foretold (see *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 19-20).

<sup>72</sup> Although the original letter has the word ἀναστάσεως, "resurrection," at this point, the government officer who translated it into English for review and archiving has rendered the Greek term as "liberation."

<sup>73</sup> State Archives, SA1-1566/52.

<sup>74</sup> Greek Orthodox Community of St. George the Martyr, *Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 1, 6. In the subtitle of the collection, again, George is identified as the "saint of much-suffering Hellenism" (*Άγιος της πονεμένης Ρωμηοσύνης*)—or rather, of "much-suffering *Rōmēosynē*," a Byzantine-inflected understanding of Hellenism somewhat different and more introverted than Greek nationalism in the Enlightenment mold (see Herzfeld, *Ours Once More*, 18-23).

<sup>75</sup> Greek Orthodox Community of St. George the Martyr, *Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 12.

## (2) Reverberating Representations: Greatmartyrs, Neomartyrs, Ethnomartyrs

It should by now be clear that St. George's own struggles, (set) at the beginning of the fourth century, provide orienting logic and metaphorical texture to a large array of subsequent struggles—private and public, ecological and political and spiritual—which are framed intellectually and carried out manifestly such that they themselves become part of the representational prism through which the Greatmartyr is radiated, and through which he seen as all the greater. It is, as some of my monastic interlocutors insisted, precisely this *effectiveness* of George's martyrdom that distinguishes him as a *great-martyr*: those who witnessed the *agōn* of the saint were converted in droves, and those who have taken George as paradigmatic for their own lives have been, in the centuries since, greatly distinguished in their own struggles for holiness, truth, and liberation.<sup>76</sup> It is therefore, I insist, a mistake to study St. George by studying *only* St. George.

Throughout this chapter, St. George Greatmartyr must periodically move into the background, allowing those ordinarily in his shadow (and in some cases, explicitly under his patronage) to be seen and arrayed in relation to one another. I am suggesting that the refraction of hagiographical imagination around St. George into a panoply of forms, which strengthen and add texture to the whole, belong to widely operant Orthodox understandings of how the holiness manifest in the saints is mediated, and for what purpose. Although the accounts given by professional theologians tend to place priority on the saints' "extension" of transformative divine power into the world,<sup>77</sup> as a one-way conduit of mediation, we

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<sup>76</sup> It is noteworthy that this account, foregrounding μίμησις and edification, is conditioned by the monks' comprehensive formation in the canonical Orthodox theologies of holiness, such as those I will analyze in Chapters V and VI. More often, asking of non-monastic or clerical interlocutors the question "Why is St. George known as 'greatmartyr,'" the answer or guess was that the name refers to the extremity and horror of his martyrdom itself.

<sup>77</sup> Christodoulou's comments are emblematic in "Τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου," 90 (emphasis mine): "The miracles of the saints are the *expression* of their share of the divine gifts [ἔκφραση τῆς μετοχῆς τῶν θείων χαρισμάτων] ... they participate in the redemptive work of the Lord [μετέχουν σὸ λυτρωτικὸ ἔργο τοῦ Κυρίου], conquering the power of evil and *extending* [ἐκτείνοντας] the perpetual renewing power of God into the world."

will see below that the mediation of holiness is thoroughly multi-directional: what I describe as a *reverberation* between the holiness imprinted on the lives of those who experience it and all the forms of life in which human beings seek to celebrate and live up to it. The “glory” (*doxa*) of the saints is, in this sense, not just divine radiance passively received by the faithful, but a *glorification* by all-too-human worshipers, a complex hermeneutical process of apprehension and appropriation, a making-meaning of saintly glory within the contours of human institutions and political endeavors.<sup>78</sup> Divine glory and human esteem cannot be so easily disentangled, as we will see, because the former is recognized and celebrated within the frames and by the available means of the latter. The saints—here not only St. George but the array of other martyrs whose own exploits mirror and serve to interpret the significance of the Greatmartyr—are themselves reconstituted by all the ways that their imitators mediate them.

Such analysis, I wager, will help unfold the dynamic hagiographical matrix in which St. George is a radiant, magnetic, but never isolated node. In particular, two other categories need to be put into conversation with one another, interpenetrating with George’s position as a *greatmartyr*.<sup>79</sup> These categories are (i) *neomartyrdom*, distinguishing those put to death for Christ’s sake following the fall of Constantinople in 1453;<sup>80</sup> and (ii) *ethnomartyrdom*, infusing the symbolism and patronal power of the martyr with the imagined solidarity of national homogeneity.<sup>81</sup> Exploring the cultural manifestations

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<sup>78</sup> The Greek term δόξα bears a cautionary double valence, referring both to dazzling divine splendor *and* the human response to it (which may run on a spectrum between rightful praise and self-serving esteem). See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. δόξα. The glory of God, that is, is never unmediated—as the halo of an icon must itself be painted on, or commissioned at the expense of donors (who hope for the elevated profile of their local church or for the fulfillment of a personal cause). The purity and vulnerability of holiness, again, are co-constitutive (see in the general introduction, section 1; the co-constitution of holiness by hagiographical mediation will also be taken up at length in Part Two).

<sup>79</sup> Which, again, distinguishes George and others for both the particularly intense suffering they endured and the particularly extensive resonance of their struggle in the hearts of the surrounding political and religious order—resulting in a ripple effect of conversion and sanctification so potent as to be considered miraculous.

<sup>80</sup> During which time, in light of the non-Christian empires contextualizing these martyrs’ deaths, hagiographers perceive and perform resonant parallels with the martyrs belonging to pre-Constantinian Christianity.

<sup>81</sup> That is, a martyrdom “for faith and fatherland.” This is the formula that we find inscribed on the monuments to Archbishop Kyprianos (1901, Archbishopric; 1929, Church of St. George, Strovolos), the Cypriot ethnomartyr *par excellence* (see again note 65).

described by these categories, we will be in a better position both to situate Greek-Cypriot appropriations of St. George within the broader martyriological attitudes in play and to evaluate how the theology of resistance at work in modern martyr-glorification (not least but not only dedicated to St. George) has shored up self- and other-understandings in intercultural Cyprus—wherein we will glimpse a hagiographical edification with profound political power.

## 2a) “Now marshalled together”: *The Logic and Praxis of Neomartyrology in Cyprus*

Speaking to an American audience in 1957, in the course of his ongoing effort to build international support for the Greek-Cypriot national struggle, Archbishop Makarios III maintained that “out of the 159 ecumenical patriarchs who led from the fall of Byzantium until today, only 21 had a natural death, preserving their office, 105 were dethroned violently, 6 were put to death, and 27 had to resign. The Greek Orthodox Church is, indeed, a Church of Martyrs.”<sup>82</sup>

In this address, Makarios is rendering two rhetorical identifications, in Kenneth Burke’s sense. First, he is retrieving and redeploying the martyriological imaginaries of the early church in order to identify the present political configuration of the British administration of Cyprus with the (proximate) Ottoman Empire and the (archetypal) pre-Constantinian Roman Empire, effecting a “consubstantiality” that invites the properties of one polity to be applied to the history and present of the other.<sup>83</sup> Makarios can thus, as Burke puts it, “substantially’ foretell the triumph of his vanquished faction.”<sup>84</sup> The present political struggle, whose outcome was anything but certain before the eyes of the flesh, becomes wreathed

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<sup>82</sup> From a speech at Columbia University, 31 October 1957. Original English in Hadjipolycarpou, “The Nation of Saints,” 149; the Greek version disseminated in Cyprus can be found in Makarios, *Ἄπαντα*, III.71. Cf. Kleanthus, “Great Martyr Saint George the Triumphant,” 44: “Our Church is a Church of martyrs. Her entire history is written with the blood of the martyrs. This is why the hymnographies present the church as a woman whose gown is painted in the blood of her martyrs that makes an impression of being ‘red and purple.’”

<sup>83</sup> See Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 20-23.

<sup>84</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 19.

imaginatively with the triumph of the martyrs in their seemingly impossible *agōna ton kalon*, their “beautiful struggle” with the powers and principalities.<sup>85</sup> Second, Makarios is performing an identification between the martyred patriarchs and the church as a whole, inviting the concentration of the moral status and horizon of the church in the fate of the martyrs, rendering them (and himself) saintly synecdoches for the whole people.<sup>86</sup> So doing, Makarios cultivates a self-image of “contested and token sainthood”—an image “which he sought to transpose onto the national imaginary.”<sup>87</sup> Thus the holiness of the struggling martyrs becomes a category for the project of the state, representing and reinforcing the resistance of those (Greek-Cypriots) kept from realizing politically their spiritual unity with a holy motherland.<sup>88</sup>

The Archbishop’s rhetorical strategy in his Columbia University speech (and indeed in much of his public discourse before and after the independence of Cyprus)<sup>89</sup> is hardly novel; on the contrary, it relies on the hagiographical logic of *neomartyrology*. The term was “first used for the iconophile martyrs” of the eighth and ninth centuries, their “newness” registering their (shocking) status as martyrs after the

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<sup>85</sup> See again Makarios III, *Κύπρος ή άγια νήσος*, 6; cf. 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

<sup>86</sup> See Anagnostopoulou, “Makarios III, 1950-77,” on Makarios’ appropriation of “the historical role that the Patriarchate of Constantinople had definitively abandoned, was becoming the emblematic figure of the ethno-religious leadership of the nation” (253).

<sup>87</sup> Hadjipolycarpou, “The Nation of Saints,” 137. Hadjipolycarpou’s analysis, itself making reference to Burke, deserves citation in full: Makarios’ saintly self-image is “contested in the sense that, among other things, it expressed the constant struggle of the church to preserve its political role against the political forces of the Western world that demanded the formation of the nation on a solid secular basis. Those features he also ascribed to the island itself. While identifying himself with the island as ‘weak and the small,’ Makarios constituted himself and the island as vehicles for God’s plan. Quite unexpectedly for a national leader, instead of praising the greatness of the Cypriot people, Makarios praised their insignificance. At the same time, however, he characterized this as their greatest advantage, carrying out God’s will before the rest of the world—which speaks to what I described earlier as his bombastically humble attitude” (145).

<sup>88</sup> See Ioannides, *The Church of Cyprus*, 127-33, on Makarios’ appeals to the people of Cyprus and to the British government with regard to this spiritual unity. See also Anagnostopoulou, “Makarios III, 1950-77,” 249-54; and Hadjipolycarpou, “The Nation of Saints,” 131, 138, 146.

<sup>89</sup> See again Hadjipolycarpou, “The Nation of Saints,” for analysis of this and other themes in four stages of Makarios’ career: (i) as a bishop and during his first year as Archbishop of Cyprus (1948-1950); (ii) during the EOKA struggle (1955-1959); (iii) during the first years of his presidency (1960-1962); and (iv) following the Turkish invasion and partition of the island (1974-77).

end of the pre-Constantinian age of persecution.<sup>90</sup> It is this hagiographical strategy that was renewed (indeed greatly expanded) in the Ottoman era, paradigmatically in Nikodemos Hagiorites' eighteenth-century compendium, the *Neon Martyrologion*. In addition to compiling and narrating the trials of as many Christians who had been executed by the Ottoman state as he could find (already mediated in a variety of ways), Hagiorites wove his synopses through with moral and ascetic aims, which he called on his audience to embrace.<sup>91</sup> And embrace they did, not only intellectually but with the full psychosomatic apparatus of hagiographical practice: Tijana Krstić discusses the industriousness of the neomartyrs' "impresarios," who not only produced and disseminated media representing these martyrs to the Christian population but also, in some case, accompanied and helped to prepare those eligible for martyrdom.<sup>92</sup> No less in the twentieth century, Orthodox neomartyrs have continued to be acclaimed and diversely mediated as the lifeblood of a church marked (that is, marking itself) by spiritual-political struggle. Although we can obviously not *limit* the Orthodox theology of resistance to the representation and mobilization of the neomartyrs, it is significant that interpreters both within and outside Orthodox

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<sup>90</sup> Brady, "Eastern Christian Hagiographical Traditions," 433. As Brady observes, this assertion of a link between old and new imperial oppression "not only legitimized and honored resistance but also implied that iconoclast and pagan emperors posed an equivalent threat to the very survival of the Christian *oikoumene*."

<sup>91</sup> These aims were: (i) the renewal of Orthodox faith among those who doubt God is still with them; (ii) the recognition that those without such faith cannot use their social conditions as an excuse; (iii) the public representation of these martyrs as the glory and pride of the Church and the shame of the heterodox; (iv) the inspiration of patience and endurance for all Orthodox under the Ottoman yoke; and (v) the personification of "the sort of courage deserving of imitation [να μιμηθούν] in the deeds of all Christians" (Hagiorites, *Νέον μαρτυρολόγιον*, 10; cf. Vaporis, "The Price of Faith," 191-94; and Cavarnos, *The Significance of the New Martyrs in the Life of the Orthodox Church* [hereafter *New Martyrs*], 9-16).

<sup>92</sup> See Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 125-32, on these "impresarios" (particularly significant among them, monks from Mount Athos), who would encourage former Christians who had converted to Islam to repent, prepare themselves ascetically for martyrdom, return to the site of their conversion, and publicly denounce Islam. "In addition to making sure that the martyr-to-be did not waver at the last moment, these companions' roles were to initiate the process of canonization following the trial and execution—collecting the martyr's remains, writing his vita, and painting his icon. The story of the new martyr, composed in popular language, would then be disseminated among the Christian population by the wandering Athonite monks (*taxidiotes*)" (129). Hagiorites himself commends those of his audience who "have divided among themselves [the neomartyrs'] blood-soaked clothes for their own sanctification [ἀγιασμόν], and continue to hold on to them to the present day as talismans [φυλακτῆρια]" (Hagiorites, *Νέον μαρτυρολόγιον*, 11; translation in Vaporis, "The Price of Faith," 195).

Christianity concur that the very term *neomartyr* “denotes resistance”<sup>93</sup> and that the presence and commemoration of those willing to endure (or, in some cases, seek out)<sup>94</sup> death in order to edify and galvanize their communities “was decisive for preserving the Orthodox Church ethos” in eras construed as those of definitive cultural and political domination.<sup>95</sup>

Among these martyrs of modern Orthodoxy, we are in this chapter most concerned with the so-called “minor Georges,”<sup>96</sup> those other saints sharing not only the name but also variations of the fate of our Greatmartyr. Of the 39 saints honored by the Orthodox Church with the name of George, observes the aptly-named scholar Georgios Georgis, “9 were Cypriots or their life was related to Cyprus. Many times they are identified, spoken of together,



Figure 3.8: St. George and two Neomartyrs George, grouped in a compound icon at Machairas Monastery.

<sup>93</sup> Brady, “Eastern Christian Hagiographical Traditions,” 435. Brady concludes: “The new martyrs indicate the tenacity of the Orthodox Christian vision in the face of inter-faith rivalry or inter-communal conflict and the onslaught of a succession of nationalist or secular ideologies” (436). Cf. Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 132-41, arguing that the martyrdom (and hagiographical mediation) of Ottoman-era Orthodox Christians booms in response not only to blurring social and cultural boundaries between Orthodox Christians and Muslims, but *also* in reaction to escalating Protestant and Catholic missionary activity among Orthodox Christians in Ottoman lands.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Krstic, *Contested Conversions*, 125-32, on the promotion of martyrdom as the only sufficient repentance for apostasy: “By the end of the eighteenth century, martyrdom thus became a legitimate culture of resistance that was openly promoted” (131), in spite of the formal rejection of the deliberate seeking of martyrdom in earlier canons (see Hagiorites, *Νέον μαρτυρολόγιον*, 45).

<sup>95</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 112. Cf. Cavarinos, *New Martyrs*, 11-14, on how the neomartyrs “constitute a confutation and negation of the heretics and a justification of the Orthodox Church” (11).

<sup>96</sup> Georgis uses the phrase directly in the course of his article “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ελασσόνων [lesser or minor Georges] ἀναφορά” to describe all the Saints George (Αἰγιώργηδες) honored by Orthodoxy besides the more celebrated Greatmartyr. As we will see (and can glimpse already in Figure 3.8), there is in addition to this lesser prominence a spatial or temporal relationship of minority (in the configuration of images and the timing of festal celebrations) of these saints relative to Great St. George. In various churches, moreover, I found icons of St. George that had small paper images of neomartyrs tucked between the gold leaf and the icon’s frame—each one a small act of individual contribution to a collective hagiographical matrix. Reciprocally, a print of an icon of Greatmartyr George, the saint surrounded by panels depicting scenes from his martyrdom, is included in (at least the third edition of) Nikodemos Hagiorites’ *Νέον μαρτυρολόγιον* (27), as the hinge between Hagiorites’ introduction and the *Lives* of the neomartyrs. Cf. Hagiorites, *Συναξαριστής*, II.551, providing a couplet in honor of Neomartyr George’s induction into the communion of saints and his being eternally honored by his namesake, Greatmartyr George: “George is now together with George/ The new with the old is now marshalled together.”

or celebrated together with Greatmartyr George.”<sup>97</sup> It is the logic of their being “identified” (*tautizontai*) with St. George that concerns me here: the *reverberation of glory* between saints whose likeness to or resonance with one another serves to shape and augment the edifying potential of each.

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It is 6:30 in the morning, and I am pulling myself through the silent streets of Nicosia, making my way to the neighborhood of Agios Dometios, the site of the largest and closest church of St. George in the capital.<sup>98</sup> The date is May 2, 2016—the morning after Easter, and this year, the



Figure 3.9: The Church of St. George, Agios Dometios (Nicosia).

moved feast of St. George. When I arrive to the church, it is already full; the Divine Liturgy has begun, but the attention of the room is on a bier positioned in front of the iconostasis, decked with flowers of white and red. A line of parishioners fills the center aisle and snakes off to one side; joining it, I make my way slowly to the front and find that the bier holds two silver chests, one larger and one smaller, both lids up. The smaller of the two has an outline of Greatmartyr George etched in silver inside the lid, and resting in the chest is a tiny sliver of bone: a precious fragment understood to be a relic of St. George himself. The larger chest has two larger bones laid out in parallel, and an inscription specifying that these are the relics of Neomartyr George of Cyprus.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων έλασσόνων άναφορά,” 125.

<sup>98</sup> That is, since 1974 and the entombment of the center-city church of St. George in the Dead Zone (on this church and its place in the imaginative topography of Nicosia, see again the conclusion to Chapter II).

<sup>99</sup> Georgis summarizes the life and death of Neomartyr George (“Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων έλασσόνων άναφορά,” 125): He is born in Cyprus at the beginning of the eighteenth century and, once grown, he goes to work at the European consulate of Ptolemais, the landing for boats voyaging to the Holy Places. Every day, he buys eggs “from a poor Ottoman woman,” whose neighbors (out of jealousy) report that he had had relations with her. Put on trial, he is offered an opportunity to save his life through conversion to Islam, but he insists that “he had been born a Christian and he will die a Christian,” and so he is condemned. The furious Muslim crowd present at the trial rushes upon him with swords and knives, and they strike him down on April 23, 1752 (Georgis mistakenly writes April 25, which no other sources share; indeed the timing of the feast in the church calendar confirms the 23<sup>rd</sup>, aligning his feast with that of Greatmartyr

The association of the two saints, the Greatmartyr and the Neomartyr, is not limited to the physical proximity of their relics laid out for veneration on the feast day of the former—significantly, so tightly are the saints “identified” with one another that the feast of Neomartyr George, canonically held on April 23 along with that of the Greatmartyr, *moves with the Greatmartyr’s feast* to Easter Monday—even though there is no independent reason that the feast of Neomartyr George of Cyprus could not remain in the season of Lent. So this is a double feast day,<sup>100</sup> and the material pragmatics of the sacred space and the festival liturgy bear out the “identification” of these two saints in abundance. On the icon stand at the crossing point of the two main aisles of the church, an icon of Neomartyr George stands in front of an icon of Greatmartyr George, which is larger and covered entirely in silver—representing the two in what is almost an optical-imaginative illusion: the Greatmartyr as a presence behind and above the Neomartyr, as if the former were a halo seen glowing around the latter (see Figure 3.10).<sup>101</sup> After communion, when the standard Divine Liturgy gives way to festivities for the feast of the day, the *troparia* sung for Greatmartyr

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George)—in front of the mosque beside the sea. However, the narrative concludes, “immediately after his decapitation a terrible storm broke out, and the fearful Turks handed over his relics to the Christians for burial. His grave quickly became a site of veneration [προσκυνηματος] and the reputation of the neomartyr as a wonder-worker quickly was spread back to the Christians of Anatolia. On 13 April 1967, on the initiative of Archbishop Makarios, his bones were translated to the land of his birth and placed in the cathedral church of St. John [Nicosia].” But it was not until the 1990s that the relics were distributed from the cathedral church to churches of St. George around the island, such as the church of St. George in Agios Dometios. A fuller account of the life and death of George of Cyprus can be found in Hagiorites, *Νέον μαρτυρολόγιον*, 136-37 (English translation in Vapori, *Witnesses for Christ*, 180-81). An abbreviated version of the *Life* was published in two Greek-Cypriot newspapers (*Ελευθερία* and *Φιλελεύθερος*) on April 14, 1967 (the day after the translation of his relics), as a way of recognizing the saint’s homecoming and promoting his cult among those who may not have known of him. More details of the reception of the neomartyr’s relics and their procession through the streets of the capital can be found in the book of canons composed for the saint on the occasion of his relics’ translation: Μικραγιαννιτου, *Άκολουθία του Αγίου Ένδόξου Νεομάρτυρος Γεωργίου του εκ Κύπρου*, 3-4.

<sup>100</sup> Not even to mention the other saints canonically celebrated on May 2, whose commemoration here paled in comparison to the fervor around the two Martyrs George.

<sup>101</sup> It is noteworthy also that, when I had visited the church of St. George at Agios Dometios a few days earlier, on Good Friday, all the icons had (as is traditional) been veiled with black cloth—*except* the icons of the angels on the iconostasis and these icons of Greatmartyr and Neomartyr George. Although priests and laity alike, asked about the juxtaposition of icons, stressed that they do not think there to be any particular reason for it, the patterns of practice (not only the formal juxtaposition of the icons of “sympathetic” saints, in one interlocutor’s expression, but also the informal devotional practice, observed in various churches of Cyprus, of slipping playing-card-sized icons of neomartyrs into the frame of an icon of St. George) make it clear that to such representational alignments *are* important to the hagiographical field, whether or not they are hagiologically articulated as such (see again discussion of this tension in Chapter I, section 1a).

George are followed immediately by those for Neomartyr George.<sup>102</sup> And finally, at the climax of the (liturgical) festival, when the bells of the church ring out wildly and the congregation surges out from and around the church following a procession of clergy and acolytes, it is the two chests of relics that lead the way, followed by four icons: those of our two Georges, an icon of the Resurrection, and an icon of a set of three other neomartyrs whose feast day was to be held the following day (on whom more shortly). This procession and its visual mediators of invisible presence encircle the church, reinscribing spatially and somatically the reverberations already discussed—between St. George and the liberative Resurrection, between the Greatmartyr and the neomartyrs who reflect and refract his glory in new places and times, between the panoply of saints and the people of Cyprus, the martyr-island.



Figure 3.10: Scenes from the Church of St. George, Agios Dometios. Feast of St. George: May 2, 2016. (Left) Icon of the Neomartyr George leaned against an older, silver-clad icon of Greatmartyr George. (Right) Congregants at the festal liturgy passing beneath the icons of the Resurrection, the Greatmartyr, and the Neomartyrs.

There are indeed eight other Cypriot Sts. George, all of whom are considered by the church to be “same-named co-athletes” (*homōnymous synathlētes*)<sup>103</sup> with the Greatmartyr, each of whom could yield an account of his own with worthwhile details of hagiographical processes and illustrations of

<sup>102</sup> Examples of these sung verses (adopting some of the same agricultural metaphors as are found in the acclamations of Greatmartyr George) can be found in Mikragiannitou, *Ακολουθία του Αγίου Ενδόξου Νεομάρτυρος Γεωργίου του ἐκ Κύπρου* (composed originally for the occasion of Neomartyr George’s relics returning to Cyprus).

<sup>103</sup> Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ἐλασσόνων ἀναφορά,” 127.

neomartyrological logic and praxis.<sup>104</sup> Yet it is a different set of saints whose case I will take up now, not *homōnymoi* but nevertheless entangled with St. George in their patterns of representation and in their edifying power for the Orthodox community. These are the three neomartyrs whose icon was carried last in the procession just narrated: Raphael, Nikolaos, and Eirene, the Neomartyrs of Lesvos.

I first encounter the Neomartyrs of Lesvos in the remote coastal town of Pachyammos, where I had gone seeking a St. George church which I had heard featured a memorial to the victims of intercommunal violence in Cyprus during 1963-64.<sup>105</sup> Upon arriving, I had discovered that the large, picturesque church indeed had a mosaic of St. George adorning its rear entrance, but that the primary iconography in the church, and the inscription on its main entrance, referred to Raphael, Nikolaos, and Eirene. Striking up conversation with a priest, who is milling about after conducting what seems to be an impromptu blessing for some parishioners, I hear a narration of the strange and wondrous



Figure 3.11: Icon of Sts. Raphael, Nikolaos, and Eirene (upholding the local church), with accompanying votive icons brought by visitors, in the central church of Pachyammos.

<sup>104</sup> These other eight Sts. George (sketched by Georgis in far less detail than he does the Neomartyr—see (“Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ἐλασσόνων ἀναφορά,” 126-27) include George *Chozebitēs*, George *Machairōmenos*, George *Trimythountos*, George *Monachos*, George *Perachōritēs*, George *Babatsiniōtēs*, George *Epitēdeōtēs*, and George *Alamanos*. Only the last of these will I have occasion to discuss in any depth. I will note, however, that these saints do not see a great deal of mediation in or around the churches of Cyprus, with two exceptions: in the localities from which they are said to hail (for instance, Tremetousia, Vavatsinia, and Pera Chorio had or have churches dedicated to their local Georges; and Lefkara has shrines and icons of its own George *Chozebitēs* connected with and spatially subordinated to those of Greatmartyr George—even as, the locals are quick to tell me, the lesser Georges’ festivities are *greater* in this particular town than those of the Greatmartyr, proud as they are of his ascetic achievement!), and in the churches of St. George Greatmartyr, where can sometimes be found prominent icons of the “minor Georges,” typically juxtaposed (adjacent, beneath, opposite, on rare occasions even sharing an icon or fresco with—see again Figure 3.8) Great George, such that it can be immediately grasped that these saints are associated or identified with Great George, the patron of that church.

<sup>105</sup> This is the same Pachyammos discussed in Chapter II, section 3b—a town protected by St. George, according to its residents, during the invasion of 1974.

discovery of these neomartyrs, who have since been embraced as co-patrons of Pachyammos, along with St. George. Hearing that I would like to learn about the three saints whose iconography (including several large and gory martyrdom scenes) adorns the church, Fr. Demetrios' face lights up: hagiological tour guide is a role he plays well.

The Neomartyrs of Lesvos, Fr. Demetrios explains, are of some distinction among the Orthodox saints, because—although they were some of the first martyrs following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453—they were “only recently discovered,” in the 1960s, through the dreams of Orthodox Christians on the island of Lesvos and subsequently through material excavations that seemed to corroborate them.<sup>106</sup> Why, I ask, did they wait five hundred years to reveal themselves to the church? Fr. Demetrios responds that it was only in the twentieth century that they were most needed—to warn the Orthodox not to lose the vigilance of their faith in an increasingly materialistic time. The conversation shifts into a more philosophical, didactic mode at this point:

What these saints teach us is not just local to Lesvos, it has universal [*pankosmē*] significance. We need not be so worried about what parts of what they revealed to people are historical, and what parts are purely spiritual truths. Do we need to know that they were martyred in 1463, or another year, in this or another place? This is not the whole story! Yet so many people, even Orthodox Christians, yes, even in Greece, are always running around after money and fame and material goods, and so their spiritual nature [*pneumatikē physē*] is stunted. This is why we need the saints. They show us that human being is not just a material creature but a psychosomatic synthesis [*psychosomatikē synthesis*], a unity but not a monism. If we were no more than material beings, all

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<sup>106</sup> In the 1960s, the townspeople of Thermi began to have dreams and visions about the monks who had once inhabited a ruined monastery near the coast. Further excavating the grounds of the monastery, they discovered a hitherto-unknown tomb, with unmarked bones. The people who had had the visions, however, knew the name of the person to whom they belonged—Saint Raphael—and professed to have seen the events of his martyrdom. Through a continuing process of excavation and correlation with the dreams and apparitions of the townspeople, two additional bodies were discovered, and identified (miraculously) as St. Nicholas, the deacon of St. Raphael, and St. Eirene, a village girl who attempted to take refuge at the monastery before she was viciously killed along with the others. Once all three martyrs had been discovered, the townspeople were able to compare their visions and so to piece together not only the events that had taken place but also how the martyrs should be represented iconographically—and so they celebrated the miracle of how these saints had come to teach the Orthodox people of Mytilene how to remember and celebrate them. A full account of their lives and deaths is available in Cavarnos, *Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Eirene of Lesvos*, 113-22, along with an introduction that essentially aligns in its explanation with Fr. Demetrios' account of how the saints were rediscovered (Cavarnos places the first apparitions of the three neomartyrs in 1959); most interesting is that there is no source given or needed *besides* the visions of the people of Thermi for the narrative, or indeed the teachings (which have been, likewise, received in visions and dreams; many of these are reported in Carnavos, 145-55), of these saints.

we would have is their bones. But instead, we know who they are, and how greatly they suffered due to the ferocity of the Turks.<sup>107</sup>

Despite Fr. Demetrios' appeal to the "bones," on the one hand, as the material fact of the martyred Christians, it is their intellectual appropriation that renders *these* individuals not only worthy of remembrance but of elevated veneration specific to this community. Here at last was the explanation for why Pachyammos had adopted them, recognizing their *sympatheia* with the town's longstanding patron St. George. Raphael and Nikolaos, Fr. Demetrios tells me, had been monks near Constantinople before the city's conquest by the Ottomans, after which they had to flee and came as refugees to Lesvos. The "ferocity of the Turks" that drove them from their homes, pursued them to their safe haven, and slaughtered them along with the innocent girl Eirene who had taken shelter with them—*this* is the resonance that makes them at home in Pachyammos, that led the people of Pachyammos to rebuild and repaint their central church, dedicating it to the newly-revealed neomartyrs.<sup>108</sup> The memorial outside the church is indeed dedicated to the victims of intercommunal violence and of Turkish air bombardment in the early 1960s (their deaths linked temporally with the discovery of Raphael, Nikolaos, and Eirene); it is these victims whose own struggle is co-sanctified (however informally or even subconsciously) by identification with the neomartyrs, whose "fearlessness in the face of death," as Fr. Demetrios summarizes it, continues to inspire and galvanize those who remember them.

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<sup>107</sup> March 12, 2016. Fr. Demetrios' formulation of theological anthropology in terms of "psychosomatic synthesis" has helped greatly to clarify my interpretation of the interplay and integrity between the material and the intellectual processes of holy mediation in an Orthodox idiom. Psychosomatic synthesis will be a crucial category especially in Chapter VI, on the work of John Damascene, from whose magisterial and immensely influential dogmatic theology Fr. Demetrios may well have derived his understanding of theological anthropology.

<sup>108</sup> After my visit to Pachyammos, I began to notice the compound icon of Raphael, Nikolaos, and Eirene everywhere—more often than not juxtaposed with St. George in a manner otherwise most often seen with the "minor Georges" or the other male and female greatmartyrs (for instance Demetrios, Theodore, Minas; Marina, Barbara, Katerina). The association is explicable in several ways, among them the similarity of their tortures (Raphael is sawed apart; Nikolaos is beaten until his heart stops; Eirene is burned alive), the resonance of their patronage of refugees, and their connection with the fall of Constantinople (see again Chapter II, section 2c, on St. George's associations in this vein).

In Cyprus, then, both the “minor Georges” and the Neomartyrs of Lesvos are illustrative for understanding how St. George Greatmartyr is linked spatially, associatively, and narratively with *later* martyriological experience—both that of established neomartyrs and that of suffering communities, who locate their own experience within a martyriological field and so gird their endurance with the faith that apparent destruction can conceal ultimate triumph like a seed in the earth. The struggles of these modern figures, not coincidentally configured *against* domination and assimilation by a powerful religious other (the Islamic Ottoman state) and *for* the incandescent christomimesis of a beleaguered church, help calibrate the intensity of St. George’s presence and patronage toward resistance to subsequent forms of domination: the British administration and the Turkish army.

*2b) “Your blood which has been turned into a kingdom”: Ethnomartyrs of the National Struggle*

After 1878, Georgis reports, “the celebration of the memory of the saint [George] in ecclesiastical settings had acquired a distinctively ethnic character.”<sup>109</sup> “This day,” reported the newspaper *Alētheia* (in a 1912 feature about the celebrations of St. George’s Day), “constitutes for us Greeks an inexhaustible font of patriotism, willful sacrifice, and duty on behalf of the great ideals of the Greek race. . . . This day has been marked with golden letters in the annals of Greek History and rightly stirs every Greek heart.”<sup>110</sup> Such sentiments are due to a confluence of associations and resonances between the multimediation of St. George and the intensifying attention in Cyprus to Greek nationhood, identity, and history. It may have been a coincidence but it was certainly not treated as such that the feast of St. George was the name day of King George I of Greece (“on whom the Greek race rests its sweetest hopes,” in spite of the king himself being Danish). St. George’s day had also by this time absorbed the commemoration of the death of

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<sup>109</sup> Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ελασσόνων αναφορά,” 128.

<sup>110</sup> *Αλήθεια*, 26 April 1912; see commentary in Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ελασσόνων αναφορά,” 128-29.

Athanasios Diakos, the famous commander (and “martyr”)<sup>111</sup> of the Greek revolution who had borne an image of St. George on his battle standard (Figure 3.12).<sup>112</sup> In early twentieth-century Nicosia, St. George’s Day was celebrated as a “holy feast of faith and fatherland,” with the abundant Greek flags “giving to the air a grace (*charin*) that only Greek lungs could perceive”<sup>113</sup> while St. George’s identity as patron saint of the beloved king of Greece led to the saint’s

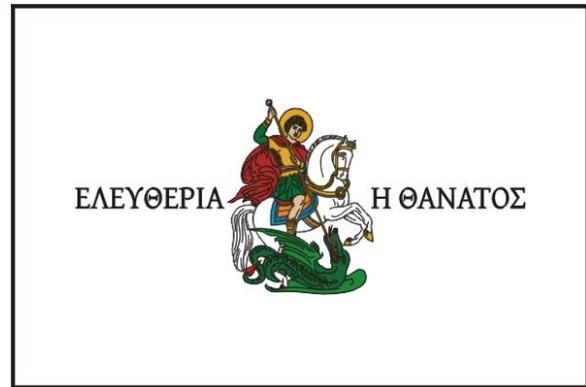


Figure 3.12: A reconstruction of the battle standard of Athanasios Diakos, with the legend, “Freedom or Death.” From Kokkonis, *Ελληνικές σημαίες*, 39.

concomitant celebration as a patron of longed-for “Panhellenic unification.”<sup>114</sup> That political

<sup>111</sup> Diakos is explicitly described as such in Brewer’s recent history of the Greek Revolution: *The Flame of Freedom*, 86.

<sup>112</sup> The specifics of Diakos’ death are themselves instructive for demonstrating the reciprocal activation of hagiographical imagination and the logic of national struggle. Captured following the fierce, pitched Battle of Alamana (April 22, 1821), in which Diakos chose to stay behind with 48 men to allow others time to escape, the commander is brought before the leader of the Ottoman forces—where, according to the (surely embellished) traditional account, he is invited to spare his life by switching sides and becoming an honored officer in the Ottoman army. But Diakos refuses, saying only: “I was born a Greek and I will die a Greek” (Zervas, *Formal and Informal Education during the Rise of Greek Nationalism*, 131). The precise similarities between this narrative and the trials of the neomartyrs in Hagiorites’ *Νέον μαρτυρολόγιον* and other collections such as Vaporis’ *Witnesses for Christ* are too close to be coincidence. Far more likely is one or both of the following possibilities: (i) Diakos himself, aware of the *Lives* of the neomartyrs, consciously or unconsciously styled his behavior *in extremis* on their model, appropriating for his own situation what he viewed to be a paragon of moral-spiritual victory in death; (ii) the witnesses to his death (or subsequent commemorators) construct and disseminate a narrative that identifies Diakos with the neomartyrs, infusing his memory with hagiological significance and reinforcing the synthesis between political resistance and hagiographical edification, on the part of those Greeks who continued to fight for liberation with Diakos’ memory in their imaginative arsenal. But the similarities are all the more instructive for one key difference: Diakos (the man or the character) substitutes “Greek” in the neomartyr’s formula: “I was born a [Orthodox] Christian and will remain a [Orthodox] Christian.” The original formula (“I am a Christian”) appears in martyr-encomia of the early church as “the central performative and ritual speech act of the martyr” (Mayer, commentary in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 64; see also Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 95, and Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 30, 77) and was itself being imitated by the neomartyrs. The specifically *ethnic* character of Diakos’ akilter martyrdom account bears out Herzfeld’s claim that (martyrs’) blood is “the medium through which political leaders reconfigure kinship as ethnicity and then as national identity” (“Transforming Lives,” 35).

<sup>113</sup> The newspaper’s description of this synesthetic and affective mediation of “grace” by way of the color of the flags is completely in keeping with the argument I have been making about psychosomatic mediation as the core nature and function of hagiography. Here, the intellectual association between St. George and King George justifies draping of the city streets with the Greek flag on St. George’s Day; the blue and white (keyed to discursive and emotional associations with “motherland” and “freedom”) shapes an affect that is articulated by means of religious language (“grace”) but reinforced through what Herzfeld calls “cultural intimacy” (the understanding that “only Greek lungs” would be attuned to perceive this subtle something with which the feast day suffuses the atmosphere).

<sup>114</sup> *Αλήθεια*, 26 April 1912: “The holy feast of faith and fatherland [Η ιερά της θρησκείας και της πατρίδος έορτή] was celebrated [έπανηγυρισθή] in Nicosia in all its magnificence. The city was wrapped in flags, not only outside the houses on

demonstrations against British rule accompanied the feast of St. George already in 1912 emphasizes what I have discussed (following Wyschogrod) as the “perlocutionary force” of hagiographical representation.<sup>115</sup> The martyriological model wherein the saint’s media (produced and mobilized by hagiographers) fuel the commitment of their audiences across time and space, igniting it into diverse forms of *mimēsis* shaped by the cultural frameworks with which these media are calibrated, suggests that these demonstrations themselves “represent” St. George through practices of public resistance in his name.<sup>116</sup>

To interpret this “ethnic character” burgeoning within the hagiographical dynamics around St. George in early twentieth-century Cyprus, we must note the generally increasing self-identification of Christian Cypriots as a Greek *ethnos* at this time. Doing so, we would be unsurprised that the celebration

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the main road but also waving throughout the remote districts of the city, the blue-white giving to the air a grace [χάρην] that only Greek lungs could perceive.” Later in the article: “Praise and wishes for many years were sung for the King ... [along with hopes that] he strengthen the land and sea forces of the nation, for the sake of liberating [ἀπελευθερώσεως] our distressed and subjugated brothers and for the sake of unifying our precious homeland with our Mother Greece, [indeed] for the sake of Panhellenic unification [Πανελληνίου ἐνώσεως].”

<sup>115</sup> These demonstrations are discussed by Varvounis in “Ἡ πανελλήνια λαϊκὴ λατρευτικὴ τιμὴ τοῦ ἁγίου Γεωργίου.” On hagiography’s “perlocutionary force,” see again Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism*, 28, and my discussion in the general introduction, section 2b.

<sup>116</sup> Such an interweaving of political resistance with the ecclesial organization of space and time would remain a prevailing dynamic of twentieth-century Cypriot history. Consider, for instance, the involvement of the Church of Cyprus in the civil unrest of 1931, imaginatively conditioning the uneasy relation between colonial administration and colonized community (*sic*—already by this time the public discourse of the church was largely ignoring the existence of a Turkish-Cypriot population) in light of the age of the greatmartyrs. The colonial administration had instituted two laws—the Flags Prohibition Law (which prohibited the flying of “foreign” flags—that is, Greek flags—in public spaces, and particularly on churches where the administration believed, quite erroneously, that “there can be no justification of the practice on religious grounds”—SA1-1399/31) and the Bells Regulation Law (which restricted the ringing of church bells solely to “religious purposes”—a more hazy and frustrating restriction to enforce, since the churches continued on ringing bells “to summon the people to political and seditious meetings” with the excuse that of course they were purely ringing the bells to celebrate whichever holy feast day happened to befall that day—see SA1-1431/31). In response to these laws, the churches engaged in several forms of material resistance, including flying of Greek flags *inside* churches when they were prohibited outside, or even more subtly, ringing bells at times with special meanings known to Greek-Cypriots (such as “anniversaries of any ancient Greek victories” or the birthdays/namedays of Greek kings—see the memos in SA1-1399/31 complaining about this practice) that would be plausibly deniable to the British (cf. the discussion of reluctant and apparent compliance in Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*). This material resistance, in turn, was conjoined with an imaginative imbue of the present moment with a sense of “sacred duty” (τὸ ἱερὸν καθήκον) to “remember ... the much afflicted but glorious history of our race” (Μνήσθητε ... τῆς ὅλης μαρτυρικῆς ἀλλ’ ἐνδόξου ἱστορίας τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν) (SA1-1433/31). Thus the Archbishopric engaged in another form of resistance that used material means to achieve a martyriological affect: advising local priests *refuse* to ring bells even on the Sundays and feast days on which they were permitted to do so, so as to “hold religious feasts *as in the ancient times when Christianity was in persecution*” (SA1-1433/31, emphasis mine), that is, mediating the time of the greatmartyrs through absence rather than through inscription.

of a saint so bound up with the community's self-understanding (and with the Greek national revolution in particular) would, concomitantly, share this identification. But in the remainder of this section I will trace these dynamics forward, examining how the hagiographical imagination distilled in the above example by St. George's Day would come to condition the Greek-Cypriot "national struggle." In the course of that struggle, the Orthodox martyriological heritage was fused with the morality and charisma of ancient Greek hero culture, generating a "culture of martyrdom"<sup>117</sup> befitting a struggle not only for self-determination but also for self-understanding (as perennially and essentially Greek).

Among the ranks of the neomartyrs, there have been many that have been given the special designation of "ethnomartyr," a category inextricably linked with the emergence of national consciousness in the nineteenth-century Orthodox world.<sup>118</sup> As a subset of the neomartyrs in logic as well as in number, ethnomartyrs designate those whose deaths as Christian martyrs reflect, and reinforce, the struggle of a people imagined as a whole (that is, construed as a definite *ethnos*, a reification of the nation or culture). In Cyprus, the ethnomartyr *par excellence* is Archbishop Kyprianos, already considered above (1b).<sup>119</sup> But as

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<sup>117</sup> Morgan, *Sweet and Bitter Island*, 213.

<sup>118</sup> See Brady, "Eastern Christian Hagiographical Traditions," 435. Kitromilides shows how the French Revolution of 1789 was met with prevailing suspicion on the part of Orthodox church leaders, and argues that the ecclesiastical position on Greek nationalism began to shift in earnest only after 1821, when the reprisals taken by the Ottoman state had fused, in the imagination of the populace, the national ambitions of the revolutionaries with the martyriological mode of resistance celebrated by the likes of Nikodemos Hagiorites. See Kitromilides, "The Orthodox Church in Modern State Formation," 36-41, and "On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism," 31, on the gradual process by which the ideals and imaginaries of "Byzantium could be canonized as the *telos* to which the Greek state and Greek destinies were expected to strive to approximate." More recently, the category of ethnomartyrdom has been extended back into Byzantium itself (for instance, applying it to Constantine XI, the last emperor of Byzantium), reflecting post-nineteenth-century views of nationhood and ethnic stability. For Cyprus in particular, see also Englezakis' chapters on Archbishop Kyprianos in *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus*, 257-301. Discussions of the ethnomartyrs of Cyprus, on the part of the hierarchy of the Church of Cyprus itself, can be found (in poor condition, however) in the Church of Cyprus Archives, *Biblia* KB, MF, ME, and MZ. Archbishops Kyrillos II and Kyrillos III, despite their sharply differing positions on numerous matters of church and state, alike found in the ethnomartyrs of 1821 a "martyr's call" (κλησιν μαρτυρικήν—*Biblion* ΜΣΤ, 122) to be heeded by the people of Cyprus, and in particular by the ethnarch-archbishop who represents the identity and destiny of the whole *ἔθνος* in his person (see Varnava and Pophaides, "Kyrillos II," on the twentieth-century refashioning of the role of the ethnarch).

<sup>119</sup> This is in no small part due to Kyprianos' parallelism with Gregory V: the Patriarch of Constantinople who likewise struggled to negotiate between the demands of an Orthodox population and the responsibilities of a position of Ottoman authority, who likewise was executed by the Porte in 1821 (at least officially) as reprisal for Greek revolutionary activity, and who is likely the most widely known and celebrated ethnomartyr outside of Cyprus. Like Gregory, Kyprianos' death



Figure 3.13: Image of the EOKA fighters hanged by the British, marked with crosses. At the “Monument of Freedom,” carved by Evangelos Moustakas (1997). “Heroes’ Grove” (Erōon), Amiantos.

we have seen, it is not until the first three decades of the twentieth century, leading up to and capitalizing on the centenary of the trauma and triumph of 1821,<sup>120</sup> that “the heroic deeds of the semi-divine [*hēmitheou*] generation of ‘21”<sup>121</sup> would come to function as a mimetic paradigm for inspiring revolutionary activity in Cyprus, for the sake of its own “national struggle for liberation” (*ethniko agōna apeleutherōsēs*).<sup>122</sup> It is as

*ethnomartyrs*, installed into and upheld by the long martyriological heritage and identity of Orthodoxy, that these representatives of Christian nationalism provided the struggle of the 1820s with moral texture that promised an enduring political validity into the 1950s and beyond.

Touring the young Republic of Cyprus shortly after its independence, Archbishop and President Makarios III mobilized the martyriological imaginaries already discussed at length:

We bring to our memory the heroic children of the town—and of the island in general, [who] continuing the sacred tradition of our nation, sacrificed their lives for the homeland. Their blood, like a sacred libation, will irrigate the tree of freedom in perpetuity, and their bright offering ...

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was far more important than his actions in life in defining his remembrance and representation as an *ethnomartyr* (see Michael, “Kyprianos,” 63). But even this is, Varnava argues, a belated association: “During this period [following 1901], the death of Sophronios offered ... the opportunity to embark upon a memorialisation process in an attempt to create a script of a Greek nation in Cyprus. It started with the memorialisation of Archbishop Kyprianos as an *ethno-martyr* through the erection of a statue in 1901, out of funds raised in Greece” (“Sophronios III,” 138).

<sup>120</sup> This centenary fell, moreover, in the midst of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922), at the conclusion of which some two million people were subject to forced population exchanges on religious grounds (Christians in Anatolia being deemed “Greek” and Muslims in Greece being deemed “Turkish”), exacerbating nationalistic sentiments on both sides. The years following the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), then, saw an influx into Cyprus of Christian refugees from the young nation of Turkey (refugees who were now unambiguously “Greeks”), and a concomitant, nigh-retaliatory offer of Turkish citizenship to Turkish-Cypriots—paving the way for cultural differences and political disagreements to devolve into “national” combat. See Morgan, *Sweet and Bitter Island*, 97-98.

<sup>121</sup> From a newspaper report on the feast of St. George in Paralimni, 1901 (*Evagoras*, 4 May 1901; cited in Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων έλασσόνων αναφορά,” 130): these “heroic deeds” of the Greek revolutionaries were praised during the festival in a panegyric celebrating the contemporary significance of St. George’s Day—on the significance of this, more shortly.

<sup>122</sup> On an outline of the history by which the “national struggle” was conceived and carried out in the 1950s, see again Chapter I, section 2c.

will constitute one of the most valuable chapters of our national history. They lived as simple people, but they died like heroes.<sup>123</sup>

Like the ethnomartyrs of 1821, the young men of EOKA “sacrificed their lives for the homeland.”<sup>124</sup> Like the greatmartyrs of the early church, that sacrifice fertilizes the edification of the generations to come. Yet when summarizing their deaths, Makarios asserts that they have died not “as martyrs” but “as heroes”—a secular category is substituted for (or, in many other uses, conjoined with) the theological category.<sup>125</sup> As Athanasios Diakos’ purportedly substituted “Greek” for “Christian” in the neomartyr’s formula of witness before the oppressor,<sup>126</sup> here Makarios appropriates the ancient notion of the martyr’s blood as a “sacred libation” on the altar of God and makes it a libation before the “tree of freedom.”<sup>127</sup> Neither case, that of Diakos or of Archbishop Makarios, should be considered a rejection of the tradition in favor of a new national imaginary, but rather a fusion of the two so that “Greek” can stand in for “Christian” and vice versa, and likewise freedom can stand in for salvation, and vice versa—becoming two formulations of an integral understanding.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Makarios III of Cyprus, cited without attribution in Hadjipolykarou, “The Nation of Saints,” 127.

<sup>124</sup> *Nota bene* the adoption of the term Αγωνιστών (in EOKA’s name, Εθνική Οργάνωσις Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών), already laden with a martyriological imaginary, rather than the more neutral μαχιτών or πολεμιστών. Identifying the anti-colonial campaign as an αγών, a struggle, rather than a πόλεμος, a war, aids the invocation of a spiritual register in the military activities taking place and of the moral orientation of its participants).

<sup>125</sup> In other addresses, the category of martyrdom is named explicitly alongside that of heroism. See for instance Makarios’ homily in Nicosia upon his return to Cyprus, 1 March 1959 (in Pavlides, *Μακάριος*, III.263): “Heroes of Cyprus! Your sacrifice has not proven to be in vain. . . . From your Golgotha was illustrated [επεξήγασεν—a useful term signaling hagiographical inscription, a *mediation* of what follows:] the Resurrection of our nation. From your graves, Freedom leapt forth, exceedingly beautiful. / Those people were martyrs”; and his homily in Nicosia following his election as President, 14 December 1959 (in *ibid.*, III.273): “The honor belongs to those heroes and martyrs [ήρωας και μάρτυρας].”

<sup>126</sup> See again note 112.

<sup>127</sup> See, for instance, 2 Timothy 4:6 (“For I am already being poured out as a libation [σπένδομαι], and the time of my release is at hand”); and the *Letter of Ignatius to the Romans* 2 (in Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 103: “Grant me no more than to be a sacrifice [σπονδισθῆναι—literally, ‘to be poured out as a libation’] for God while there is an altar at hand”). Cf. Kleanthus, “Great Martyr Saint George the Triumphant,” 38: St. George “waters the tree of faith with his blood.”

<sup>128</sup> See Stewart, “Syncretism as a Dimension of Nationalist Discourse in Modern Greece,” 134–42, on “pagan Hellenic and Orthodox Christian syncretism” (139); Herzfeld, *Ours Once More*, 58–60, on the mixed reception in the Orthodox Church of rural banditry hailed as “Greek” cultural authenticity; Papadakis, “Greek Cypriot Narratives of History and Collective Identity,” 154–56, on Hellenism as synchronic, diachronic, and religious; Kitromilides, “Athos and the Enlightenment” and “The Orthodox Church in Modern State Formation,” on the tension between appeals to ancient Greece and to medieval Byzantium in the pre-national Greek intellectual debates; and Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, 65–71, for a

None of this is to say that the glorification of the EOKA dead (which began even before the Struggle had ended, has been inscribed and rendered interactive in elaborate monuments and museums around the island, and continues to irrigate cultural and political life in Cyprus to this day) results in the straightforward “sanctification” of the fighters, such that we would see their icons in churches or shrines where people would appeal for their posthumous, miraculous help. Yet I do submit that the commemoration of the EOKA dead is properly “hagiographical,” insofar as, in the political culture of Cyprus from 1955 to the present, the sacrifice of the fighters is (i) infused with understandings of holiness (and unholiness) that give this sacrifice context and value,<sup>129</sup> and (ii) mediated in ways that enact and promote resistance on the part of those who commemorate the fighters as “ethnomartyrs” (or as “heromartyrs,” reflecting a distinction between those who suffer and die at the hands of imperial power and those who actively take up the struggle as their own),<sup>130</sup> inscribing the significance of these figures’ *bioi kai politeia* in their own lives.

Nowhere are these dynamics clearer than in the National Struggle Museum in south Nicosia.<sup>131</sup> This museum, founded in 1961 (only shortly after the Republic of Cyprus itself), renders for local and

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more pointed reading of the fusion of Orthodox identity with national identity as an evacuation of the former to make room for the latter, such that the landmarks of national history become new religious *teloi* acclaimed by the church.

<sup>129</sup> These understandings are themselves, of course, drawn from multiple sources: in particular, the post-Byzantine Orthodox church, the age and ethos of the Christian greatmartyrs (archetypally, St. George), and the pre-Christian heroic ideals of Greek antiquity—all of which will be discussed below.

<sup>130</sup> The term “heromartyrs” (ἡρωομάρτυρες) appears with some regularity on the monuments and memorials of Cyprus relating to the anticolonial struggle of the 1950s—among others, the National Struggle Museum and the Imprisoned Graves of Nicosia, the Heroes’ Grove of Amiantos, the EOKA Hideout of Palaiochori, and the April 1 Memorial of Avgorou. A fuller analysis of this category of “heromartyrdom” (virtually unstudied but offering significant insight into the modern dynamics of hagiography as resistance, particularly in light of the fusion between post-Byzantine martyrology and imagined/retrieved heroic virtues of classical antiquity) is will appear in my article, “The Heromartyrs of Cyprus.”

<sup>131</sup> There is, in fact, a second National Struggle Museum in what is now north Nicosia, situated within the military headquarters of the Turkish armed forces on the northmost bastion of the city walls, presenting the Turkish experience on the island of Cyprus as its own “national struggle” in need of commemoration and celebration. The parallels and contrasts between the two museums—in terms of their collected materials, their styles of representation, their narrative configurations, their historical framing, and their moral and religious characteristics—are deeply fascinating and worthy of attention, though they are outside the purview of my study at this time. Papadakis’ 1994 article, “The National Struggle Museums of a Divided City,” provides an excellent comparative treatment; see also Stylianou-Lambert and Bounia, *The Political Museum*, 41-67.

international publics a hagiographical aura around the fallen heroes of the anticolonial struggle. It does so through its spatial *mise-en-scène*, its progressive orientation of visitors who move through its halls, its ways of curating belongings and images of the dead, its narrative construction of the life and conduct of the fighters, and its subtle evocation of traditional saintly patronage associated with the island's communities. Although the overtly hagiographical commemoration of the EOKA dead takes place and shape elsewhere on the island as well,<sup>132</sup> zeroing in on the single institution of the National Struggle Museum both allows us to engage in more penetrating analysis and has the added benefit (from the vantage of the dissertation of the whole) of considering a distinctively modern multi-medium (the museum) that has not yet been investigated using the analytical apparatus of hagiographical process.

Understood as a distinctively modern “social technology” for the institutionalization of meaning,<sup>133</sup> the National Struggle Museum is not only the physical space that it occupies and organizes,

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<sup>132</sup> The fallen fighters of EOKA are indeed ubiquitous in Cyprus, commemorated in statues, plaques, paintings, and pamphlets in every corner of the island (not least in the churchyards of the Church of Cyprus). The public artwork of Cyprus, catalogued through a research project of the Open University of Cyprus between 2011-2013, is comprised of more works dedicated to the memory of the national struggle of the 1950s than to any other category. The website of the Public Art of Cyprus project makes this clear in its own detailed categorization of the works: “The memorials commemorate mainly the EOKA 1955-59 struggle and its fighters who claimed the independence from British rule during the 1950s, and pursued the goal of official union with Greece. Second in series, given the numbers, are the memorials to the victims of the multiple inter-communal conflicts from 1958 till 1967; those killed during the 1974 coup against the President Archbishop Makarios III; and, last but not least, the dead and the listed as missing during the 1974 Turkish invasion and the consequent division of the island”; the Public Art of Cyprus researchers make note also that the “law which was voted by the Parliament in 1987 (article 48/1987) provided maintenance costs budgets especially for the EOKA 1955-59 memorials.” This law, in their view, is “indicative of the symbolic power of that struggle” (<http://publicart.ouc.ac.cy/?p=4975#commemo>, accessed March 6, 2018).

<sup>133</sup> See Preziosi, “Brain of the Earth's Body,” 97: Preziosi argues in tight focus on the museum, but in accordance with broader theoretical considerations like those of Benedict Anderson, that “We live today in a profoundly museological world, a world that in no small measure is itself a product and effect of some two centuries of museological mediations. Museums are one of the central sites at which our modernity has been generated, (en)gendered, and sustained over that time. ... Our world is unthinkable without this extraordinary invention.” Cf. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 178, including the observation that, as instruments of colonial and postcolonial narrativization (indeed of world-building), “museums, and the museumizing imagination, are both profoundly political.” Anderson then continues to discuss the ways that colonial archaeology would museumize local sites, sterilizing them and situating them within the project of enframing the society as a subordinate resource: lawns planted around temples, explanatory plaques, usage priority for tourists rather than devotees, and the like. Yet it is *this* mode of “political museumizing” (183) imposing a grid of authorized significance on a past purged of anomalies, that many postcolonial states (including Cyprus, chockablock as its cities are with museums and its remote reaches with monuments) inherited, knowing well its power for their own self-narration and imbueing of the past with deep-seated present meaning.



Figure 3.14: (Left) The exterior of the Greek-Cypriot National Struggle Museum (Μουσείον Αγώνος). (Right) National Struggle Museum, entry hall with a selection of photos and documents from 1955-1959.

nor only the artifacts it assembles and the explanations it devotes to them. It is of course *also* these things: a rectangular building with a climbing ramp and rooms radiating off it, organized roughly chronologically and thematically, filled with personal effects, recreations of prison cells and guerilla hideouts, newspaper articles and political cartoons, graphic photos of corpses and funerals, bloodstained clothing and burnt wood, all of which are accompanied by text in Greek and English to tell the story of the anticolonial struggle as commentary upon the objects that represent this history. The story tells of the perennial Greek identity of the island since its Mycenaean colonization, preserved as a “national character” simmering under the lids of successive “foreign dominations,”<sup>134</sup> finally given the scent of freedom before the promise of self-determination is broken by the British. The young men of the island rise up in a selfless and sacred commitment to fight for liberation, maintaining their gallant love for neighbor and enemy alike even in the face of brutality on the part of the British administration and its Turkish-Cypriot collaborators. The story concludes jarringly, the struggle paused but not brought to completion, when independence as a multicultural, power-sharing republic is offered to Cyprus as a compromised alternative to the union with Mother Greece for which the EOKA fighters had laid down their lives.

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<sup>134</sup> National Struggle Museum, “Cyprus.” Moreover: “The nature of this bond” between Cyprus and the Greek race, we learn, “is one of politics, blood, religion, and civilization in general” (National Struggle Museum, “The Plebiscite of the Cypriot People”).

But the museum is more than a narrative and the three-dimensional texture of objects that mediate it materially: there is also the “fourth dimension” of visitors’ own encounters with the museum, its collection, and its ethos, an encounter which involves the visitors maintaining an imaginal bridge between past and present, but which also consists of visitors’ emotional and interpretive trajectories, their subjective time of “enchanted looking”<sup>135</sup> during and after the period of visitation. The hagiographical process of an institution like the National Struggle Museum is a matter of *mimēsis* on the part of participants as much as on the part of curators and other privileged interpreters, insofar as human beings are co-agents of mediation rather than screens onto which mediation takes place.<sup>136</sup> In a space and time set apart from the outside world, visitors are brought into the presence of items suffused with an aura of martyrial authority derived from the self-sacrifice of the EOKA dead. Kinesthetically, emotionally, and discursively, visitors are drawn into a staged narrative of their own political history and national identity, each suffused with religious significance.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” 49. Greenblatt’s key museological concepts, though deployed in his essay with regard to museums of fine arts, are quite pertinent to the National Struggle Museum. “Resonance,” he proposes, refers to “the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand,” while “wonder” signifies “the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention” (42).

<sup>136</sup> Stocking discusses the four-dimensionality of a visit to a museum (or indeed, seven-dimensionality, when he continues to consider power relations, ownership questions, and reliance on / confrontation of aesthetic norms), but only in the sense of objects’ “survival” out of their own time in a museum and a visitor’s need to “cross a barrier of change in time” in order to experience these objects and make meaning of them (“Essays on Museums and Material Culture,” 4); Stocking’s account is truncated, in my judgment, because it does not address the endurance of these objects and the meaning made of them in the subjective time of visitors both during and after their visit, since do not only cross into the past in their imagination but continue to produce meaning in their personal and political lives. As Marstine observes, “Museums are about individuals making subjective choices” (Introduction to *New Museum Theory and Practice*, 2)—both those individuals and committees of individuals curating the museum on the basis of their own understanding and those individuals choosing to interact with the aesthetic, symbolic, and ethical landscape of museum exhibits in indeterminate but meaning-generative ways. It should go without saying that these “choices” themselves are not entirely conscious and certainly are not free of the socially-engrained patterns of understanding in which all individuals in question are enrolled.

<sup>137</sup> The National Struggle Museum, then, corresponds with the *museum-as-shrine* paradigm discussed by Marstine (Introduction to *New Museum Theory and Practice*, 9-11), even more tightly than the examples she herself deploys (the National Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City). In such a paradigm, she argues, the objects brought together in museums are done so because they are special, because they exert a pull on the imagination of the visitor, provide a meditative or reverential experience for her, and exert on her a powerful, even potentially transformative effect.

Two exhibits in particular of the National Struggle Museum are owed attention in my analysis here, insofar as they reveal with particular clarity how the martyriological tradition of the church—including that tradition’s cultivation of a resistant identity and agency on the part of those who embrace it—provides the conditions of possibility for the ways that the EOKA dead are mediated as representatives and icons of holy liberation, for the edification of the Greek-Cypriot population. The first of these exhibits is dedicated to fighters who were killed by fire or explosives; the second is the culminating room of the museum, known as the *Ērōon*, where photos of all 108 fallen fighters surround a reproduction of the British gallows.

A special aura surrounds those EOKA martyrs who met their end in the course of three events during the national struggle, events known collectively as “holocausts” (*olokautōmata*). The term, meaning here a “completely-burnt offering,” has deep and potent roots in the martyriological tradition of the Greek church.<sup>138</sup> Offered as sacrifice to expiate the sins of the people, Christ abolishes the very law and logic of sacrifice; yet the martyrs find themselves once more upon the sacrificial altar that has been



Figure 3.15: “The sacrifice of Gregoris Afxentiou.” Mural by Andreas Makariou, in the “Heroes’ Grove” at Amiantos.

<sup>138</sup> The *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, an ur-text for much hagiographical imaginative and representational convention thereafter, imbues its martyr with an image of Christ going willingly to his destruction (as atonement for the sins of his people) and a biblical logic of sacrifice derived from Leviticus: “And he, placing his hands behind him and being bound, just like an illustrious ram from a great flock [selected] for an offering, being prepared as a worthy burnt-offering [όλοκαύτωμα] for God, looking up to heaven, spoke...” (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14.1). Just as the holocaust offering in Leviticus is turned by fire from flesh into smoke, rising as “an odor of sweetness [ὄσμη εὐωδίας] to the lord” (Leviticus [LXX] 1:9 and repeated thereafter), so too the body of Polycarp, being burned alive, produces “so sweet a smell [εὐωδίας τσσαύτης] that we perceived it as wafting out incense or some other precious perfume” (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 15.2). It is noteworthy as a theological flourish of this early Christian hagiographical masterwork that, although Polycarp is burned like a ram, to the surprise and wonder of everyone his body is *not* consumed but instead refined “like baking bread” (15.2). From meat into bread—the old sacrifice of the law is transformed into the new sacrifice of the gospel. Cf. 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, in which the holy ones of God “are the aroma of Christ for God [χριστοῦ εὐωδία ... τῷ θεῷ], among those who are being saved and those who are being destroyed.”

abolished,<sup>139</sup> for the holiness with which they have been entrusted entails representing with their whole selves the life and death of Christ.<sup>140</sup> In the context of the Cyprus Struggle, the holocausts refer to the six fighters who were killed by burning gasoline or explosive devices, while holding out to the end despite terms being given for surrender.<sup>141</sup> In each case, little remained of the bodies; this complete consumption by fire is continually emphasized in the media, evoking the sacrificial imagery of



Figure 3.16: Bloodsoaked objects from the site of Afxentiou's death, on display in the National Struggle Museum, Nicosia ("The Sacrifice of Gregoris Afxentiou").

Leviticus, where flesh becomes smoke with no remains returning to those who had offered up the sacrifice.<sup>142</sup> There is in this exhibit a powerful, jarring mode of iconicity, akin to the juxtaposition at work in icons of saints surrounded by panels depicting their tortures and martyrdom: unflinching photos of charred, unrecognizable remains side by side with portrait photos of the same fighters in the prime of life.<sup>143</sup> The wholly-burnt heromartyrs, and in particular Gregoris Afxentiou (who held off some sixty

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Hadjikosta, writing in 1985 about St. George in these terms, in "Αη Γιώργης," 207: "Occupying an exceptional place in Christian hagiology are the Greatmartyrs, who, even beside their voluntary holocaust [τὴν ἑκούσιάν τους ὀλοκαύτωση] upon the altar of the Nazarene religion, added also in another way a precious contribution to the consolidation and progress of the Church."

<sup>140</sup> See Young, *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ*, for the now-classic treatment of the relationship between biblical sacrificial models and the theology of sacrifice in Christ. Young does not deal in any length, however, with the martyrs' own Christomimetic sacrifice; see then Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory* (especially 50-55); Moss, *The Other Christs* (especially 45-73); and Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs* (especially 131-49).

<sup>141</sup> These terms and their rejection function as a crucial point of resonance with the narratives of the Ottoman-era neomartyrs, as can be found in Hagiorites, *Νέον μαρτυρολόγιον*, and Vaporis, *Witnesses for Christ*. For the specifics of the three "holocaust" events (the Battle of Machairas, March 3, 1957; the Battle of Liopetri, September 2, 1958; and the Battle of Dikomo, November 19, 1958), see Varnavas, *Ιστορία του Απελευθερωτικού Αγώνα της ΕΟΚΑ*, 198-201, 311-315, 325-28.

<sup>142</sup> Grisly though it is to consider the details up close, it is significant that the Levitical imaginary of the wholly-burnt offering overrides some of the actual technicalities of these fighters' deaths. Kyriacos Matsis is the key case in this regard—he is regularly included among the "holocausts" and the "fighters who were burned alive," even though he was killed by a grenade rather than by burning gasoline, and the monument in his honor in Nicosia depicts him striding forward beside a gigantic metal flame.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Sant Cassia, "Piercing Transfigurations," 23, in which he observes that, in the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot efforts to document the tribulations of their communities through photography and artwork, Turkish-Cypriot suffering is represented predominantly in a "realist" fashion (meaning, for Sant Cassia, that such images function "as self-evident representations of truth and 'what really happened'" [28]), whereas Greek-Cypriot suffering is represented predominantly in an "iconic" fashion (meaning that images rely on literary, mythical, or hagiographical traditions to imbue particular

British soldiers from a mountain cave before they finally poured gasoline into the cave from above and set it alight) are afforded an augmented status both in the museum's narration of the national struggle and in its material mediation of these martyrs' relics.<sup>144</sup>

After the emotional ordeal of the *olokautōmata*, only one more room remains, where the museum's atmosphere is suddenly transposed into another key, even as its hagiographical *mise-en-scène* is maintained. The visitor arrives, at the end of the museum's upward path, to the *Ērōon*: an atrium flooded with sunlight, where the gallows on which nine of the EOKA martyrs were executed has been



Figure 3.17: Upper-level atrium of the National Struggle Museum, with a reconstruction of the British prison's gallows surrounded by photos of the EOKA dead, with votive candles.

reconstructed, suspended in open space over the gallery's entry hall on the ground floor.

Surrounding the gallows are the frontal photos of all 108 of the EOKA dead, each of them installed in a rectangular alcove with a placard noting the fighter's date of birth, date of death, and manner of death. In each alcove is an electronic votive candle, flickering without cease and casting an

moments of representation with a perennial, associative, symbolic range, and to “employ a triangular relationship between the person depicted in the photograph, the absent person evoked, and the viewer” [28]).

<sup>144</sup> In particular, we may take note of the small fragments of rock and wood soaked with Afxentiou's blood (Figure 3.16): objects which do not in themselves advance the prevailing narrative of the museum, that is, do not prove anything, document anything, or demonstrate the martyr's bravery or prowess, but rather, as a martyr's (secondary) relics, exert an enduring pull on visitors' imagination, catalyze their transposed seeing, and summon them to a new ethical *politeia*. The notion of “transposed seeing” will come to the fore in Chapter V, as it is a paramount objective of John Chrysostom's hagiographical homilies. Cf. again Greenblatt's museological categories in “Resonance and Wonder,” 42. Beyond the National Struggle Museum, it is worth noting that the site of Afxentiou's death near Machairas Monastery is itself commemorated in a robustly hagiographical fashion, mediating awe and devotion on the part of its keepers and encouraging it on the part of the visitors. Banners with the Church of Cyprus emblem have been placed upon the outside of the cave along with numerous wreaths (which continue to this day to be laid by groups from schools and churches), while inside the cave can be found images of the martyr (both professional portraits and innocent, folk-style drawings, at least one clearly produced by children) flowers, and flags. At this site, since 1960, annual commemorative services have been held, including in some cases dramatic reenactments of the Machairas holocaust and speeches exhorting remembrance and emulation of Afxentiou's heroic character. Evidence of such appropriation on the part of visitors to the site has been left inscribed on the site itself, for instance in the form of words scratched on the rocks nearby: “You are deathless, Gregoris Afxentiou!” (ΑΘΑΝΑΤΕ ΓΡΗΤΟΦΗ ΑΥΞΕΝΤΙΟΥ), and alongside the words a crude Greek flag.

eerie ecclesial glow into the otherwise airy space.<sup>145</sup> In this final area of the museum, visitors have passed from the chronological, pedagogical approach into a sanctum dedicated to devotion and edification. They have moved from diverse representations of the Struggle and its heroes into the most direct encounter with these heroes *as* martyrs, surrounding with their gaze an instrument of their martyrdom,<sup>146</sup> telling no narrative but rendering a symbolic center that undergirds the spirit of the whole narrative that preceded it. The national struggle, this museum insists for its visitors, *was* and *is* those who lay down their lives for liberation, who have won immortality by their sacrifice for holy freedom. The heroic martyr serves as the ultimate figuration and mediation of the struggle and its intangible values.<sup>147</sup>

In the National Struggle Museum's interweaving of a perennial Hellenic-Christian *ethos/ethnos*, this struggle is "our legend" (*o thrylos mas*).<sup>148</sup> It is a story that makes a common synthesis of diverse and even incompatible identifications: Athens and Sparta, once bitter enemies, are syncretized in name of

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<sup>145</sup> The representational and affective similarity to an Orthodox church's iconostasis, with frontal images of the martyrs of the church glowing by candlelight and stretching across the front of the church's sanctum, is likely deliberate. There are obvious and important differences between the two visual-spatial media, as well as between the sanctuary of an Orthodox and this "sanctum" of the National Struggle Museum in which visitors ultimately find themselves. Nonetheless, the latter depends for at least some of its imaginative power on the representational poetics of the former, and the museum guide itself describes the atrium as being "arranged in such a way as to remind one of the *iero* (sanctuary), the most sacred part of a church" (see Papadakis, "The National Struggle Museums of a Divided City," 403)—in this area, Papadakis observes, "visitors are confronted with "a combination of symbols referring to ancient Greece and to Orthodox Christianity: the candles (*lampadhes*), the sacred lamp (*kantili*), the pictures on the wall almost like *ikons*, the altar covered with the Greek flag, earth from the Parthenon and a laurel wreath"; see also Stylianou-Lambert and Bounia, *The Political Museum*, 129-30. Cf. Marstine, Introduction to *New Museum Theory and Practice*, 10: "The museum as shrine is a ritual site influenced by church, palace, and ancient temple architecture. Processional pathways, which may include monumental staircases, dramatic lighting, picturesque views, and ornamental niches, create a performative experience"). Moreover, there is a version of this room that appears in print, in a small book on sale at the Imprisoned Graves that collects these same photos of the EOKA dead, the same information on their birth and death, *and nothing else*: it is titled *Εικονοστάσι* (Iconostasis). I will discuss this book at more length in section 3a.

<sup>146</sup> Only nine of the 108 EOKA dead lost their lives on the gallows, but it functions nonetheless as a concentrated symbol of the martyriological nature of the whole Struggle. In an exhibit enclosed by glass, immediately before a visitor reaches the atrium, is one of the three actual nooses used for executing EOKA fighters, suspended before a black background but surrounded by a halo made out of the faces of those nine fighters who were executed upon it, each of them within a circle of white light. Here, the hagiographical configuration of the heromartyrs is more explicit still, as the instrument of their execution (as in the case of the Cross of Christ) is grafted into the form and character of their commemoration.

<sup>147</sup> Even though the museum is structured so that a visitor may engage its exhibits in a linear fashion, arriving at the end to the atrium at its uppermost point, I have observed multiple groups (from local schools, primarily) *beginning* their tour of the museum at the atrium, contextualizing their whole visit in this space, before (however inefficiently) returning to the bottom floor and beginning the ascent again in chronological fashion.

<sup>148</sup> National Struggle Museum, "Ο Ύμνος της Ε.Ο.Κ.Α."

essential Greekness, mythic and historical figures alike are joined as national icons, polytheist heroes are imbued with Christian virtue while ancient heroic conduct is hailed as illustrative of Christian martyrdom in the twentieth century.<sup>149</sup> It is “for Christ and Greece” that the fighters of the liberation struggle offered their whole lives, becoming martyrs insofar as their *bios kai politeia* are subsequently considered worthy of ongoing appropriation and emulation.<sup>150</sup> Although the EOKA dead are not treated as saints in the conventional, ecclesial manner—in the sense of being beseeched for heavenly intercession, their relics approached for miraculous intervention, and so forth—they *are* treated like saints in the sense that their memory is called to mind for the sake of personal and political edification, their heroic conduct and martyrial character are glorified in public and private settings, and they function for many in post-war Cyprus as mediating symbols of ultimate value.

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<sup>149</sup> See Stewart, “Syncretism as a Dimension of Nationalist Discourse in Modern Greece,” 142: “Greek discourse on syncretism applauds the mixture of two discrete and, from the point of view of the Orthodox Church, incompatible religions. At first sight [but only at first sight] the strategy of refuting racial mixture by asserting religious mixture appears an original, possibly even progressive, means of establishing cultural authenticity; all the more so when the usual negative reaction to syncretism as indicative of inauthenticity is considered.” It is telling that, in a political context where “liberation” signifies not only political self-determination but also ethnic integrity, the heroic figures of Greek myth serve as prototypes for the EOKA fighters’ imaginative association—both in their self-association and in their commemorative representation by their society. Many of the fighters took on *noms-de-guerre* from the Greek heroic tradition, such as Theseus, Atlas, Leonidas; others adopted codenames from the heroes of the Greek War of Independence (Zedros, Athanasios). The heroes of ancient Greek battles for liberty (for thus are they interpreted)—Marathon, Salamis, Thermopylae—are invoked to contextualize the deeds and character of the EOKA fighters within an eternal struggle between freedom and domination, between righteousness and degeneracy. For instance, the “Hymn of EOKA” is inspired by these battles and makes reference to Digenis “going forth with a torch in hand bearing the light of Marathon” and to the “unconquered” EOKA fighters returning “with shield or upon it.” Grivas’ own pamphlet “To the Cypriot Youth” (Στά Κυπριακά Νιάτα), integrates ancient and modern by placing Marathon, Salamis, and Themopylae upon “the blood-splashed road to freedom,” and instructs Cypriots to “become drunk” on the “Cypriot epic” of EOKA, “with the holocaust of Afxentiou, the sacrifices of Drakos, Mouskos, Lenas, Georgallas, Kyprianos, and of our other martyrs and heroes”—just as they have already been invited to “become drunk on the immortal wine of [18]21.” In the course of this new legend, “free Greeks will weave the wreath of Cypriot glory . . . [as] a symbol of sacrifice, but also as a lesson for all people.” See National Struggle Museum, “Ο Ύμνος τῆς Ε.Ο.Κ.Α.”; “Leaflets Circulated by EOKA.”

<sup>150</sup> Ioannides, *The Church of Cyprus*, 137: “Christ and Greece formed the ideological basis of the freedom fighters. Subsequently, it was for Christ and Greece that men like Gregoris Afxentiou, Markos Drakos, Kyriacos Matsis, the fighters at the barn at Liopetri, Michael Karaolis, Andreas Demetriou, Michalis Parides, Evagoras Pallikarides [note that all these men mentioned were either hung by the British administration or wholly-burned in the course of the struggle—the two groups most often grouped under the category of the heromartyr] and so many other martyrs of the national struggle of Cyprus sacrificed their lives.” Cf. Varnava, *A Brief History of the Liberation Struggle of EOKA*, 12, commenting on the significance of the first members of the resistance being drawn from the Christian youth organizations: “This lack [of experience with arms and tactics] was filled in by . . . the spiritual strength of their members, who were willing to fight with all their might and in a spirit of self-sacrifice for the success of the Struggle.”

On balance, in this section, St. George has been more a spectral presence than a starring figure. But these considerations are pertinent to a study of St. George even when the saint is not overtly named, insofar as a living hagiographical matrix in the sense for which I have been arguing is a matter of cultural entanglement, imaginative appropriation and redeployment, and atmospheric association, not necessarily of straightforward cause and effect. It is, to use Geertz's timeworn metaphor, a "web" of significations more than a wire stretched to supply current from point A to point B.<sup>151</sup> Even when the connection is not made explicitly, St. George is unquestionably the patron saint of liberation in modern Cyprus, and a conflict so comprehensively framed and understood as a struggle for liberation both political and spiritual cannot but be relevant to the total understanding of this patronage—and vice versa. Indeed, the very concepts of "national," "struggle" and "liberation" are deeply indebted in this context to an Orthodox theological and hagiographical heritage, and from well before the outbreak of anticolonial warfare in the 1950s they had as ideals been filled with religious zeal and direct ecclesial investment—that is, saturated by centuries-old interpretive and practical patterns around hagiography and resistance.

The foregoing analysis reveals that, in the distinctive hagiographical matrix of modern Cyprus, the logic of martyrdom is not confined to "religious" imagination—it is baked into Greek-Cypriot national mythos. Crushed by a superior martial power, the sacrifice of the EOKA dead earned a multicultural compromise in place of the ethnic self-determination which they had been assured was the righteous cause. Yet, as with the martyrs of the pre-Constantinian church, the right kind of seeing could recognize transcendence and divine favor simmering within political realities that would seem through fleshly eyes to be a failure.<sup>152</sup> As Photis Pittas puts it, "everyone who struggles is free," even before and beside any

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<sup>151</sup> See Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5.

<sup>152</sup> See Papadakis, "The National Struggle Museums of a Divided City," 407-09; and see again the discussion of these martyriological tropes in the introduction and section 1b of this chapter.

political consequence of their (invariably political) struggle;<sup>153</sup> and as the young EOKA fighter Evagoras Pallikarides evokes in his famous poem, even the stairs to the gallows are “the stairs to freedom.”<sup>154</sup> To be a martyr in this setting—whether heromartyr, ethnomartyr, neomartyr, or indeed greatmartyr—is both to be liberated and to ignite liberation in the imagination of those who spectate, appropriate, imitate.

### (3) Suffering and Radiance: Edification in the Presence of Greatmartyr George

Chryssanthi is a woman in her thirties, with two children; she is married to a village deacon and she speaks with an intensity that matches the tenor of her stories—the saints, to her, are the subjects not only of belief but of direct experience. She approaches me, the lone foreigner in this church of St. George, after the morning liturgy on the Feast of the Three Hierarchs, to find out who I am, where I come from, and what I am doing there. Fascinated to hear that I am studying the saints and St. George in particular, she waxes eloquent on how having her home covered in the images of the saints makes her feel safe, warm, part of a community (or a communion—*koinōnia*). But for Chryssanthi, it is not the sight of holy people that most inspires her, but rather the *smell*: when the saints visit the places where we express our faith in them, she tells me animatedly, these places become redolent with the scent of myrrh (*myrōn*).<sup>155</sup> It is,

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<sup>153</sup> Ο κάθε αγωνιζόμενος είναι και ελεύθερος; the phrase is inscribed on Pittas’ public memorials, for instance at Achna. There is a felicitous resonance in this sentiment with the early Christian appropriation of the language of “martyrdom” to describe the struggles of still-living saints: Pittas’ phrase would not be out of place in a work of ascetic theology (cf., for instance, the apophthegm of Abba John the Dwarf that serves as an epigram to my general introduction: “Abba Poemen said of Abba John the Dwarf that he had prayed God to take his passions away from him so that he might become free from care. He went and told an old man this: ‘I find myself in peace, without an enemy,’ he said. The old man said to him, ‘Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you may regain the affliction and humility that you used to have, for it is by warfare that the soul makes progress.’ So he besought God and when warfare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, ‘Lord, give me strength for the fight’” (Ward [trans], *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 87-88).

<sup>154</sup> For the text of the full poem (in a collection with Pallikarides’ other writings), see Pallikarides, *Ποίηση*, 84-87. This verse the beloved poem of Pallikarides has been used as an inscription at various EOKA memorials around Cyprus, most prominently at the Heroes’ Grove (Ηρώον) of Amiantos—the verse is upheld as a figuration of the spirituality of the national struggle and the elevated motivations of the fighters.

<sup>155</sup> Myrrh is a substance with a powerful set of associations in the Orthodox Church, being used liturgically as an oil of chrismation (for the confirmation of Christian commitment), yet also for the anointment of the dead (being recollective of the death of Christ); it is, moreover, the substance claimed to seep from certain “myrrh-gushing” (μυροβλήτες) icons (such as the two icons of St. George that were observed by Cypriots to gush in 2013, one in the monastery of St. George



Figure 3.18: Icon of St. George, reported to have been gushing myrrh in 2013, partially curtained and surrounded by votives. Church of St. George, Kampi.

therefore, the ambient smell of St. George's presence that is, for Chryssanthi, representative of how he works in her life and the lives of her community, bringing comfort even when invisible:

He helps people when they are sick or dying, or when they have lost hope. He has brought many people to faith when they think they cannot believe, like he did when he lived in ancient times. And because he suffered so greatly, endured terrible tortures, he can help us when *we* suffer—because those who suffer more greatly for the faith are rewarded more greatly and are closer to God.

Spyros, an elderly man whom I later learn has had a long commitment to political activism (including involvement in the anticolonial struggle of the 1950s) has been listening to our conversation and now chimes in, in English, agreeing: “It is *because*

he suffered so greatly that St. George is appointed to help us to endure our own suffering.”<sup>156</sup> And he proceeds to tell a story that he had heard from a Greek-Cypriot monk on Mt. Athos:

There is a farmer who struggles with poor yield from his land year after year, and year after year he prays to St. George for help. But the saints can only intervene in the affairs of the world if they have God's permission, and for whatever reason this permission had not been given. So the farmer prays and prays, and finally, St. George has had enough—he marches up to the throne of Christ and boldly demands that he be allowed to rush to the aid of the farmer. He challenges Christ! ‘Didn't I suffer on your behalf,’ he asks—‘Didn't I suffer *even more than you did?*’ And so the farmer was relieved through this ‘demanding prayer’ of St. George, because he had suffered for Christ's sake even more than Christ had suffered for the world's sake.<sup>157</sup>

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the Near and the other in the village church of Kampi, high in the Troodos mountains—see Figure 3.18, and Chapter IV, section 3), icons that invariably become destinations for pilgrimage, whose mediation of holiness quite literally overflows from the visual representation of the saint. Conviction, suffering, miraculous material mediation: the myrrh becomes a metonymy for the compound holiness of the martyr. Cf. Vigopoulou, *Ιέρα Μόνη Αγίου Γεώργιου του Αλαμάνου*, 14: “And in even the most humble deserted chapel, one can smell the Grace of Christ, the Panagia, and our Saints.”

<sup>156</sup> January 30, 2016. Cf. the conviction expressed to the American missionary Lorenzo Pease by a priest of the church of St. George the Far, in Larnaca, in 1835: “St. George has entrance before God and influence, because he spilt his blood, so that both he is saved and is able to mediate for us” (Severis [ed], *The Diaries of Lorenzo Warriner Pease*, 901); and the martyrdom account preserved in the 1892 *Great Synaxarion*, where the thrust of George's final prayer in the moments before his death is that those who suffer, as he has, will not long await his solidarity at their side: “as for those who call upon my name for help, grant them what they seek” (Doukakis [ed], *Μέγας Συναχαριστής*, IV.357: ἐκείνους δέ, ὅπου ἐπικαλοῦνται τὸ ὄνομά μου διὰ βοήθειαν, χάρισέ τους τα ζητήματά των).

<sup>157</sup> Spyros' (paraphrased) story of the “demanding prayer” of St. George is aligned with the more generalized theoretical comments of Fr. Symeon, a monk of Stavrovouni Monastery with whom I had multiple occasions to speak. Fr. Symeon

In this final section, I will offer analyses of the ways that experiences of suffering on the part of Greek-Cypriots are interpreted and endured (at least in part) by associating them with the experiences of the martyrs. The hagiographical process in the foreground here is *edification*: the building up of an identity, a community, or a repertoire for resistance and rectification, by appropriating shared representations of holiness such that they validate and fortify understandings of selves, others, and the world.<sup>158</sup> Therefore, after exploring (a) examples in which individual Greek-Cypriots have become means of mediation that shape the experiences of others, in spaces where resistance to suffering is thickly cultivated through the memorialization of martyrs, we will consider (b) the ways that the Orthodox Christian appropriation of St. George as Greatmartyr is conditioned also by apprehension of the saint's *insufficiently* martyriological function among heterodox others—in this context, among the “Protestants” of the British colonial administration. As we will continue to see, edification is at once a private and a public process: the meaning that individuals make of holiness is distinctively their own, even as this meaning and its reinforcing potency are constituted within shared multimediating matrices and inescapably intercultural horizons.

### 3a) “Stairs that lead to freedom”: People and Places as Living Media

Such accounts as those of Chryssanthi and Spyros are hagiographical appropriations that are simultaneously new hagiographical productions. They have taken up preexisting traditions (various

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observes (seemingly in oblique refutation of Catholic doctrines around the Immaculate Conception) that the saints, but especially Mary and George, earned their *παρρησία* (boldness, audacity, the right to speak freely or frankly, the elevation of an inferior to a position of proximity to a superior) with God through *struggle* for holiness rather than the divine bestowal of a sinless nature—it is for this reason that we may take heart that they are models for our own lives, rather than benefactors alone (June 22, 2016). Arcadius of Cyprus too, in his dazzling encomium on St. George (composed in the seventh century but included in the present-day Church of Cyprus liturgy for the November feast of St. George), refers specifically to the greatness of George's *παρρησία*: Πολλή σου ἡ παρρησία, Γεώργιε (*Κύπρια Μηνναία*, III.31)

<sup>158</sup> On edification and appropriation, see again the general introduction, section 2b.

explanations of St. George's status as a greatmartyr) and shared sensory data (the evocative scent of sacred spaces) and made these their own; appropriating St. George's holy suffering, they make sense of it and in turn mediate that sense on to others—in this case, to a curious researcher, but also in all the ways their actions are conditioned by and co-constitute their understanding.<sup>159</sup> Such hagiographical appropriations are, themselves, everyday contributions to and complexifications of Orthodox theology of holiness: though informally expressed without explicit reference to institutional norms, they reveal the uptake and habitual usage of the church's theological culture. They are the lifebreath and the activity of this theology. Narrating their own experience as linked with that of the martyrs, moreover, these Greek-Cypriots are able to take heart that their own suffering is preemptively wreathed with triumph, indeed with proximity to God. This is the sense in which Vigopoulou writes of the martyrs' effective care for the island of Cyprus: "Through the ages, our martyred island [*to martyriko nēsi mas*] has ascended to its own Golgotha. It has suffered with the Martyrs of our Faith, and is sanctified by its Saints. It mourns atop the tombs of its children, and comforts each refugee who patiently awaits the Resurrection."<sup>160</sup>

Vigopoulou's comment, introducing her narrative about Alamanos Monastery, taps into a history of mimetic martyrdom that, in particular, the monasteries of St. George on Cyprus preserve as deeply embedded in their own identity. The two of these monasteries that are no longer in operation (*Agios Geōrgios tōn Manganōn*, St. George of the Presses; and *Agios Geōrgios tou Nikoxylitē*, St. George of the Victorious Wood) have already been discussed: the first as closely linked in history and memory with the fall of Constantinople, with the protection of the refugees and the mourning of those who did not escape

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<sup>159</sup> It is significant that such understandings as these did not need to be coaxed out in the course of extended interviews—they were eagerly volunteered as explanations of why they (actively, that is, rather than unconsciously) see St. George as being of special importance.

<sup>160</sup> Vigopoulou, *Iéra Mōnē Agiou Geōrgiou tou Alaμάνου*, 14. Cf. Vasiliadis, *Eθνομάρτυρες του κυπριακού έπους*, 36, referring to 800 years of the "enslavement" (σκληραβιὰς) of the island by Latins, Turks, and Brits as representing "our martyred Cyprus" (τὴν μαρτυρικὴ Κύπρο μας). I have likewise heard the phrase "our martyred island" (and similar expressions) during several personal conversations in the course of my fieldwork; see above, section 1b.

the Ottoman conquest,<sup>161</sup> and the second with the nineteenth-century Ottoman reprisals for Greek rebellion.<sup>162</sup> Another monastery, that of Christ the Counselor, suffered a similar fate during the ninth century as that of the Victorious Wood did during the nineteenth, but it was reconstructed at the end of the twentieth century and rededicated in the name of St. George alongside that of Christ (*Monē tou Symbolou Christou – Agiou Geōrgiou*).<sup>163</sup>

Symvoulos Monastery, tucked into a craggy valley within the still-British territory of Akrotiri, has two sections: the monastic settlement itself, situated atop a hill covered with serene gardens, and below, a squat, small church surrounded by a larger covered antechamber.<sup>164</sup> This area surrounding the church, in addition to containing a gift shop and an information desk (with a convenient basket of votive *tamata* for purchase by devotees), displays plentiful icons, a trophy case full of photographs and written testimonies of pilgrims who had been healed, and a large white tank of “holy drinking water of St. George.” Against the western wall of the church’s antechamber, a box of wood and glass contains a jumble of bones, along with a handwritten note explaining that these are the bones of monks, martyred here by Arab raiders and rediscovered by Eleni and Leonidas Skourou—the couple whose miraculous healing by St. George is

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<sup>161</sup> See again Chapter II, introduction and section 2c.

<sup>162</sup> See again this chapter’s introduction.

<sup>163</sup> The reason for this rededication is the discovery of the relics of the ninth-century martyrs on the site by a couple from Limassol in need of a healing miracle, drawn to the site (in their words) by St. George’s guidance in visions. According to pamphlets distributed by the monastery, Eleni Skourou was facing serious heart problems, declared by her doctors to be incurable. Her husband, Leonidas, prayed without ceasing for divine intervention, eventually receiving a dream in which St. George and the Apostle Andrew appeared to him and took him to the top of a hill above a familiar valley. The saints told him to come to this valley, and to find and restore the church of St. George. When they did so, they found a ruined, overgrown church, and inside it—a large, centuries-old icon of St. George. From this point on, Eleni’s heart problems subsided, and she and her husband made plans and raised funds to restore the church. But when the workers broke ground, they found human bones—which they immediately knew to be holy relics of long-dead saints. The bishop and the monks of Stavrovouni confirmed that there had once been a monastery in this area, and so what had begun as the restoration of a tiny church blossomed into the restoration of a monastery. The Skourous both subsequently took monastic vows (taking the names of St. George’s parents as their monastic names: Polychronia and Gerontios). Eleni died in 2005, and she is buried in a large sarcophagus at the entrance of the lower church of St. George, outside the monastery proper.

<sup>164</sup> This low church had been known as “St. George the Poor” (Άγιος Γεώργιος ο Φτώχος; cf. Chapter II, section 2b), possibly because of the state of its disrepair prior to its incorporation into the renewed monastery. See Neophytou, *The Holy Monastery of Christ*, 9; and the monastery’s own publication, *Ιερά Μονή Συμβούλου*, 12.

understood to be the originating event justifying the monastery's restoration.<sup>165</sup> These bones function as a foundational symbol for the community and its legacy of succor for the suffering, and yet while I am there, nobody goes to venerate them; attention is concentrated, instead, around an elderly man seated beside the opposite wall. I speak with him only briefly and with difficulty, for his Cypriot dialect is stronger than my skill with the language, but I soon learn from Anna (a middle-aged woman who has come for his blessing) that this is Leonidas Skourou himself.<sup>166</sup>

Skourou spends much time here, below the community of monks he helped to found, meeting with pilgrims and blessing them. He not ordained or canonized, but his presence is clearly recognized as one of the interlocking modes in which the holiness of the site are mediated onward. Anna tells me, her eyes wide, that she began coming to Symvoulos because she had chronic pain, like Eleni Skourou, and she was sure that here, St. George would help her like he did Eleni and her husband. The site of George's miracle for Eleni and Leonidas reverberates, in her view, with miraculous power—amplifying the likelihood of similar interventions in the lives of others, each making the glory of the saint more radiant like additional facets

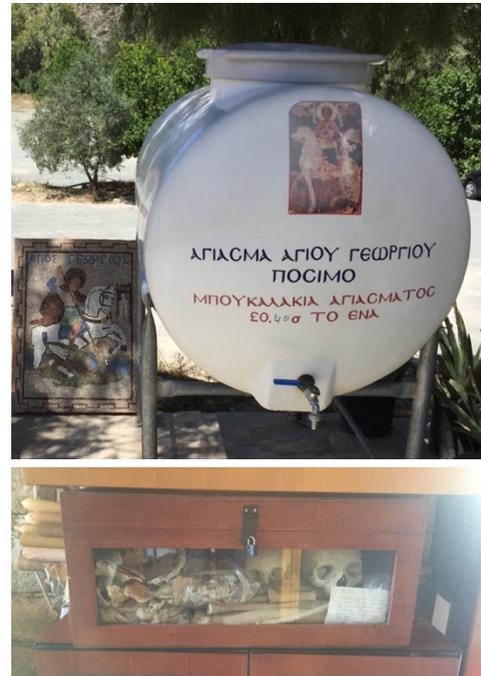


Figure 3.19: Holy media at the Monastery of Christ the Counselor – St. George: (above) “Holy drinking water of St. George”; (below) a chest of “martyrs’ bones” discovered on the site.

<sup>165</sup> The publications produced by the monastery likewise articulate this account of the death of those whose bones were discovered beside the ancient monastery, though to my knowledge there is no independent evidence that this is how they died; Neophytou, however, notes that the bones were discovered all together and near the surface, suggesting “that the Monks were buried quickly and hastily after the destruction of the monastery” (*The Holy Monastery of Christ*, 15). More important than the historicity of the events, in any case, is the role played by the “Arab raiders” in the martyriological narrative and for the power invested in the bones for the modern revival of the monastery.

<sup>166</sup> I use his real name in this segment rather than a pseudonym, as Skourou has become a public figure, who did not communicate any personal information to me, and because his identity is essential to the hagiographical dynamic at work in this monastery. The same will be the case for Savvas Taliodoros, below.

in a diamond. And indeed, after numerous visits and tireless prayer,<sup>167</sup> Anna's pain ceased, galvanizing her devotion to the site, to the saint, and to this man who is the living icon of its history. Sitting opposite the box of martyrs' bones, Leonidas *bears witness* with his presence, his blessings, and his relaxed conversation with visitors—witness to a saint who stands in solidarity with the suffering and pours his power upon and through them. The man himself is a hagiographical medium: his presence embeds a narrative of St. George's solidarity in the imagination of others, his words and his very body represent metonymically the history of saintly intervention at the site, and his blessing (freely given to any who ask) is taken by visitors such as Anna as maintaining a link between the past and the present, reinforcing the hope and the will that they may be victorious in their own struggles.

As we have continually encountered resonances between the hagiographical dynamics of the personal and the political appropriations of St. George's reverberating glory, so too I encountered a parallel with this living icon of saintly solidarity at the Imprisoned Graves (*Phylakismena Mnēmata*) in Nicosia's Central Prison. The Imprisoned Graves are now a monument and the site of annual civic/religious festivities, but their existence dates to the heart of EOKA's anti-colonial struggle, when Governor John Harding ordered that the bodies of the fighters executed by the British in the Central Prison should not be returned to their families or permitted to have standard Orthodox funerals, on the grounds that the bodies and funerals would whip up anti-British sentiment and start riots.<sup>168</sup> Instead, the men were buried

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<sup>167</sup> Anna observes that “St. George always comes to me at the *last moment* of my prayers, just before I give up and stop praying; so I don't give up until he comes to me, and I feel this great sense of peace” (June 4, 2016).

<sup>168</sup> Fuller discussions than mine of the Imprisoned Graves can be found in several Greek texts, including Stylianos and Christodoulou, *Τα Φυλακισμένα Μνήματα*, and Kosmos Proskynitaris, “Τα Φυλακισμένα Μνήματα” (in Vasileiadis, *Εθνομάρτυρες του κυπριακού έπους*, 73-90). For brief English accounts and analyses, see Toumazis, “Saints, Martyrs and Heroes,” 92-94; Koureas, “Recirculating Images of the ‘Terrorist’ in Postcolonial Museums,” 7-9; and Karyos, “Museum of the National Struggle, Imprisoned Tombs, Machairas’ Hideout,” 432-33. In personal conversation (February 15, 2016), Karyos cites a 1955 telegram from John Harding, suggesting that the funeral of Charalampos Mouskous (discussed briefly above in section 2b) was “the moment when the British realized that they had not only a military problem but also a spiritual problem”—resulting in the prohibition on dead fighters’ funerals and the creation of the Imprisoned Graves. A copy of Harding’s telegram is held by the Council for the Historical Memory of the EOKA Struggle (SIMAE), E 208/1: “Harding to Lennox-Boyd, 18 December 1955.”

in a yard within the prison itself, sometimes two or more to a plot; the only funeral permitted was a remote ceremony outside the walls of the prison. Subsequently, the yard was used to bury not only fighters executed within the prison, but also the remains of particularly prominent fighters killed in action (including Gregoris Afxentiou and Kyriakos Matsis, two of the EOKA men who met their end in “holocausts,” as discussed in section 2b), if their remains were at risk of being gathered and treated as relics to galvanize resistance.<sup>169</sup> It is of course significant that the British administration perceived the power of the dead and sought to curtail it (not unlike the Roman officials depicted in the ancient Christian martyr accounts); no less significant is the preservation of the grave site as a space of edification in the post-independence era. The monument provides access to the wards where the “hanged heromartyrs”<sup>170</sup> had been held, along with the gallows (left intact, with numerous flowers and other tokens cast into the pit), and the graveyard itself—with its large inscription encapsulating the martyriological ethos in play: “The death of a brave man is not considered death.”<sup>171</sup> Freedom and death: to be martyred *is* to be liberated, in a fashion that even the imprisonment of the martyr’s remains is powerless to forestall. Indeed, as in the martyrdom accounts of the early church (and no less of the Ottoman era), even the strategy of preventing mediation of the martyr’s holiness by shutting away or destroying their relics is turned upside down, their glory shining out all the more brightly as it defies the attempt to contain it. The Imprisoned Graves are richly demonstrative of long-term collective resistance insofar as a space intended by imperial power to mute the edifying potential of the bones of the glorious dead is seized and transformed into an amplifying apparatus for that very edification.

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<sup>169</sup> George Grivas himself makes mention in his memoirs of the administration’s *fear* of the power of the dead Kyriakos Matsis: “Even after they had succeeded in killing him the authorities were afraid of this fine young patriot. To prevent a magnificent demonstration at his funeral they refused to hand his body over to his parents” (Foley [ed], *The Memoirs of General Grivas*, 178).

<sup>170</sup> Text of an informational plaque at the site: “Το Διαμέρισμα 7” (Ward 7).

<sup>171</sup> ΤΟΥ ΑΝΔΡΕΙΩΜΕΝΟΥ Ο ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ/ ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ ΔΕΝ ΛΟΓΕΙΤΑΙ (see Figure 3.20).

On April 1, 2016, I am visiting the Imprisoned Graves so as to witness the formal celebrations in honor of the start of the anti-colonial struggle. After a procession from the city’s archiepiscopal church of St. John to the entrance of the prison, the Archbishop of Cyprus (along with a group of other clerics) enters the site and conducts a commemoration mass for the heromartyrs buried within. The large crowds outside are not permitted in, and must remain at the gate—in an imitative experience of being barred from the burial of the fighters. But at the conclusion of the service, the gate is opened and visitors stream in. Many enter the gallows, circumambulating the pit beneath and throwing flowers, a striking number them accompanied by children (see Figure 3.20)—mediating onward in words and movements the martyriological significance of the site, attempting to ensure that the dead and their struggle continued to be remembered *rightly*.<sup>172</sup> Others group together and sing, including both political rallying songs (such as “*Ellada Mas*”—Our Greece) and hymns for the dead (including “*Aiōnia ē Mnēmē*”—Memory Eternal—and a *Kyrie Eleison*); one of the songs, moreover, has set to music a poem written by Evagoras Pallikarides, the



Figure 3.20: Areas inside the Central Prison of Nicosia: the Imprisoned Graves (left) and the prison gallows (right).

<sup>172</sup> During another visit to the Imprisoned Graves, a school group is there on a tour—which concludes with flowers distributed so that each student could lay one on a heromartyr’s grave, thus being taught to participate in the praxis of commemoration. So too, the bookshop attached to the memorial contains a large number of children’s books about the Struggle, about religious topics, and about Greek and Cypriot folklore—the man running the shop explains that such literature belongs here because the liberation struggle was not just about political self-determination but about securing a future for the ethnic and religious heritage that the fighters held so dear. Such concern for inter-generational transmission of the martyrs’ memory will be a core concern of Chapter V as well.

last of the heromartyrs executed at the site: “I will take an uphill road/ I will follow the path by foot/ to find the stairs/ that lead to freedom.”<sup>173</sup> And a crowd gathers within the graveyard itself, where an elderly man dressed in full military uniform is standing erect against the back wall of the yard, holding aloft an enormous Greek flag.

This is Savvas Taliodoros: an EOKA veteran, and a comrade of Markos Drakos, one of the heromartyrs interred in the prison. Taliodoros is a public figure, indeed a “cult figure of sorts,” as my friend Modestos would describe him: he has participated in countless national commemorations (I would encounter him again before the conclusion of my research in Cyprus), mediating an understanding of the holiness of the Greek-Cypriot national struggle with both his appearance and his discourse. His position in this space is one of edifying power, like that of Leonidas Skourou, as a living icon that



Figure 3.21: Savvas Taliodoros, an EOKA veteran, standing beside the vigil lamp at the Imprisoned Graves, Nicosia Central Prison. April 1, 2016.

augments the multimediating dynamism of the Imprisoned Graves. In at least three ways, his presence as a veteran—that is, as a confessor (relative to the fallen heromartyrs)—facilitates the hagiographical edification of those who come seeking an encounter with the EOKA dead, and who appropriate the memory of their struggle into their own understandings of self and world. First, standing erect and silent in formal uniform beside the vigil lamp (*kantili*), his position mimics the visual reference of an icon beside an icon lamp—a connection that may not be made consciously but that could not fail to register at some level in the eyes and imagination of a person habituated in the Orthodox church.<sup>174</sup> Second, he is

<sup>173</sup> Θα πάρω μιαν ανηφοριά/ Θα πάρω μονοπάτια/ Να βρω τα σκαλοπάτια/ Που παν’ στη Λευτεριά. See Pallikarides, *Ποίηση*, 84-87.

<sup>174</sup> Taliodoros himself, when the crowd has thinned and I am able to speak with him, explains that the lamp “guards the graves” (φυλάει τα μνήματα)—a turn of phrase etymologically resonant with, but inverted from, the name for the site

repeatedly asked for photographs by visitors to the site, including many who ask to be photographed beside him. While this is of course hardly a distinctively hagiographical practice, it signals the desire on the part of visitors to be linked by a materialized memory with this individual and what he represents; it is a form of (once again, psychosomatic) mediation owed greater attention in hagiographical analysis. Finally, at one point while I am observing the goings-on in the Imprisoned Graves, Taliodoros begins to speak to the crowd, making what sounds to be an impromptu, impassioned speech about the sacrifice of those buried here and the meaning of what they struggled for:

They [the politicians] must go home, if they will not change their policy, to allow this place to be united [with Greece], to be set free! If they do not, then the voices of the heroes will echo—the voice of Afxentiou, of Digenis, of Lenas, of Matsis, of Drakos—they will echo these words: ‘If you desire freedom, do not rely upon foreigners. You must seize it yourself—otherwise you are not worthy of it.’ *The opportunity will be created again. We live on the Island of Saints—this place will be set free; the time has come! There is a higher power [that wills it]:* they do not believe in it, but I believe in it.<sup>175</sup>

In his discourse no less than his presence, Taliodoros explicitly connects the struggle for political liberation with holiness—the holiness of life abundant, of the undistorted freedom of the human being, mandated by God, worth struggling for.

During a later visit to the Imprisoned Graves, I have the opportunity to meet another close relation of one of the men buried within. Nikos, the brother-in-law of one of the executed EOKA fighters, is a thoughtful man committed to educating a new generation about the sacrifices on which the Republic of Cyprus is built. He cautions me, as did the staff of the National Struggle Museum, that

they are not ‘heromartyrs’ because they became saints of the church after they died. No miracles took place when they were executed, like St. George. . . . But their martyrdom was their whole life, even before they laid their lives down for the Struggle. They believed in freedom with their whole hearts, and *they sacrificed themselves* so that others could have it. For us, *freedom is a holy thing!* So

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itself: the *imprisoned* graves (τα φυλακίσμενα μνήματα). In this veteran’s way of expressing it, the graves once guarded antagonistically by the British colonial administration are now guarded benevolently and gratefully by the memory of the people and the prayers of the church.

<sup>175</sup> April 1, 2016; emphasis mine. Modestos, with whom I discussed my experiences at the Imprisoned Graves, believed that Taliodoros was quoting Nikos Kazantzakis on seizing freedom or not being worthy of it—but I have been unable to locate any exact passage in Kazantzakis to this effect.

in this sense they are true martyrs, because they *bring others closer to the truth*. This is why we have the saying, ‘a heroic death is no death’: such a death as theirs is the path to immortality. We will honor them, remember them, call them to mind, emulate them forever.<sup>176</sup>

Such claims as these hammer home the hagiographical dynamic at work in the Imprisoned Graves, and at commemorative sites for the EOKA dead around the island—as we have seen. “Freedom is a holy thing”: and in this understanding it is *mediated* to the whole Greek-Cypriot people by the fighters, but most of all by those who sacrificed themselves on the altar of a martyred land so that others might live abundantly.<sup>177</sup> And these others, in turn, are expected to change their own lives accordingly, to be built up over time through public ceremonies and private moral orientations.

The heromartyrs of EOKA are not, Nikos claims, conventional saints of the church. And yet as I am about to leave the memorial, my eye catches a small book among the many that celebrate the deeds of the EOKA fighters and transmit their stories in many different ways. It is titled *Eikonostasi*: “Iconostasis.” Using the same black-and-white photos of the EOKA dead installed in the alcoves in the National Struggle Museum’s upper atrium,<sup>178</sup> the book provides no narrative, no discursive information at all besides the heromartyrs’ age, place of birth, and manner of death. They are not conventional saints, to be sure—but the multimediation of their memory in texts, images, sites, and objects has drawn deeply from and repurposed diversely the hagiographical repertoire of Greek Orthodoxy. The publishers of this volume have deemed it beneficial to make these images widely available, believing the faces of the EOKA dead to capture and communicate something of human being at its purest, its holiest: “because freedom is the quintessence of the human being [*anthrōpinēs hypostasēs*], which ensures eternal youth and

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<sup>176</sup> June 7, 2016; emphasis mine. Cf. the official leaflet of the Imprisoned Graves, which describes the site and its purpose as “a sacred temple of freedom founded on the bones of the immortal EOKA fighters.” See Carpentier, “Ethics, Killing, and Dying,” 177.

<sup>177</sup> See again Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 131, on this (Greco-Roman) sense of martyrdom that entered Christian consciousness early on and remains active to this day, as a bargain whereby the martyr offers his own person to the gods in exchange for benefit to his community.

<sup>178</sup> See again note 145.

immortality.<sup>179</sup> Like Anna, who testifies to her reverence for Leonidas Skourou, who in turn reflects from his little chair in the corner the power of St. George to change lives and refashion societies, the faces of the heromartyrs are made links in a network of mobilizing and appropriating deeply-held and politically-electrifying understandings of holiness.<sup>180</sup> That is to say, such media are hagiographical to the core.

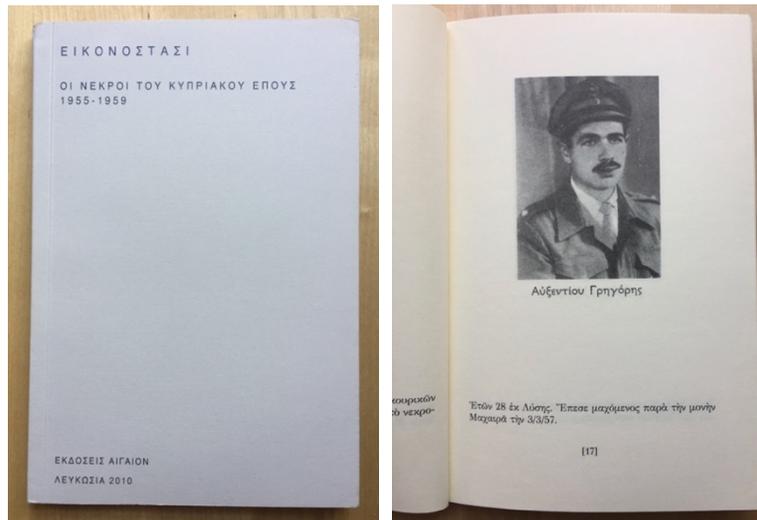


Figure 3.22: *Εικονοστάσι*, a volume by a political publishing house (Εκδόσεις Αιγαίου) in Nicosia. Cover and inside view (with detail on Gregoris Afxentiou).

And St. George? Is our Greatmartyr a presence at the Imprisoned Graves after all? Nikos believes he is, even though his image cannot be seen within the site itself. “St. George was indeed important to the prisoners here,” Nikos insists. “Our tradition tells that George liberates prisoners like these, and so whether or not he comes, he gives hope to those who remain captive that their captors will be defeated. They need this hope from the saints—not only for themselves, you know, but also for their whole people [*ethnos*].”<sup>181</sup> Hope for one’s people, and the imagined solidarity of one who has suffered far more gravely and who stands with the martyrs of all ages—these are indeed palpable resources for resistance, both on the part of prisoners with no other recourse, and on the part of their communities beyond the wall.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>179</sup> From the book jacket of *Εικονοστάσι*, which contains no other narrative text.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints*, Chapter 5.

<sup>181</sup> June 7, 2016.

<sup>182</sup> Indeed, a second shop run by the memorial foundation, near the bookshop, advertises and sells “αγιογραφίες”: images and narratives of the saints, including St. George—the largest and most prominent of the holy figures on display.

### 3b) “Only a crusader”: Interpreting George to Interpret Self and Other

Toward the conclusion of Chapter II, I addressed a recurring theme in Greek-Cypriot narratives of St. George: the love and fear of Turkish-Cypriots toward the saint, reflecting (or constructing) the particular authority of the saint, on the one hand, and the crypto-Christianity of Turkish-Cypriots, on the other. Now, an analogous rhetorical contrast comes to the fore: between Orthodox appreciation of St. George as a *martyr* and “Western” reduction of St. George to be only a *soldier*. On the part of clergy, monks, and laity alike, the prominent position of St. George among the British<sup>183</sup> is viewed as indicative *not* of shared history but rather of Western Christian failure to understand the full significance and true presence of the saints. Where devotion to St. George among “the Turks” is met with a rhetoric of assimilation, devotion to St. George among “the Latins” (represented as shallow, immaterial, and lacking miraculous response) is seized as evidence of the abandonment of the heterodox by the saints, and thus their disapproval by God. As with the Greek-Cypriot accounts of Turkish-Cypriot punishment, conversion, and assistance by St. George, these interpretations of Western Christian hagiography (or deficiency thereof) are used to reinforce Orthodox self-understandings as the community among whom the saints have real presence and real power (in spite of and indeed resistant to that community’s political subjugation), truly mediating holiness rather than merely reflecting worldly desires.

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I am visiting one of the island’s monasteries, in search of insight into how the monks—who are regularly sought out for spiritual guidance by visitors—view the significance of George’s martyrdom for the lives of those they counsel. After some pleasantries with the few monks seated outside near the entrance, the youngest of the brothers (Br. Eutybios) asks if I would like a tour of the monastery, its

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<sup>183</sup> And so too (as is often imaginatively identified with British rule) among the medieval Latin rulers of Cyprus.

various chapels, and the images within. As we go, Br. Eutybios explains the renovations taking place, expanding the monastery to account for the ever-increasing number of visitors. I ask why he believes the monastery is seeing such a boom in visitors. He does not know, but he does not believe it to be a sign of increasing piety or spiritual commitment in Cyprus, and he takes the opportunity to explain his concern for the spiritual well-being of the island:

Many people visit monasteries, it is true, but people are not as pious as they once were. Even regular people in Cyprus used to live like monks! More and more, we are being educated to think only with our minds, not with our hearts. We are not taught to love—only to excel. But we do what we can, when people come here for vespers, for liturgy, for a festival... we try to remind them that spiritual matters should be the concern of one's whole life, not only when they make a visit to a monastery!

Pressed to explain further what he meant by this worry that “people are not as pious as they once were,” Br. Eutybios suggests that the crisis of 1974 and the division of the island has left a scar on the psyche of the island: concern for the political order overshadows everything and is no longer in balanced integrity with the life of the spirit. He describes a situation, prior to the division of the island, in which “people were more faithful, to one another as much as to God. They consulted the saints for everything, gave thanks for everything. Even the Turks of Cyprus knew and loved the saints—above all the Panagia and St. George.” I seize on this reference, and in the course of the discussion that follows, I inquire, almost in passing, whether the British living in Cyprus also attended the festivals and paid respect to St. George. And here, Br. Eutybios articulates the contrast under consideration in this section: “The British have pictures of St. George, yes, but for them he is more a soldier than a martyr, he is only—” he searches for the right word: “he is only a *crusader*, a symbol of conquest. But for the Orthodox, he is a greatmartyr. His weapons and his conquest are spiritual, his victory is his death, his trophies are in the Kingdom of Heaven!”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> January 17, 2016.

For Br. Eutybios, it seems, British understanding of and devotion to St. George fails because it is too exoteric, too concerned with worldly power, rather than with spiritual struggle—that is, resistance to the passions and invisible powers that corrupt the heart and lead to abuses of worldly power in the first place, and rectification of persons and institutions such that they facilitate rather than obstruct God’s healing of the world. Constructing Western Christian views of holiness as representing only *exoteric* victory (and failing to understand the martyr as more than a soldier) serves rhetorically to identify the very category of martyrdom with Orthodox views of material-spiritual integrity in the mediation of holiness. In other conversations, this same (other-defining) contrast and (self-validating) identification would be established by opposite means: rather than critiquing British understandings of St. George as crassly political and excessively exoteric, I found Orthodox clerics critiquing British uses of St. George as



Figure 3.23: Stained glass window in the Church of St. Mary, Chediston, Suffolk. From a war memorial (1949) in which St. George appears above the seal of the RAF Bomber Squadron.

excessively *intellectual*, that is as “a mere ethnic symbol” and as “a military myth” rather than as “a real person.”<sup>185</sup>

What may at first seem to be a contradiction (British engagement with holiness viewed as both too material and not material enough) is in fact a consistent rhetorical construction of heterodoxy as both devoid of real spirituality and of the real presence of the saints. The spirituality of the martyr’s warfare combined with the materiality of his intervention in the life of the island serves as a wedge of distinction between orthodox and heterodox appropriations of the same saintly figure. In the latter, the

<sup>185</sup> This case was made, for instance, by Fr. Epiphanius—the senior cleric whose comments on Turkish-Cypriot reverence for St. George I analyzed in Chapter II, section 3c). Fr. Epiphanius argues that “George is their [the British] patron saint, yes, but this George is a mere ethnic symbol, not a real person. He is a symbol of killing, of destroying evil, of one empire conquering another—a military myth. So the British would come to the holy festivals during the *Anglokratia*, but they would come to buy things, and to eat and drink, not to pray” (June 6, 2016).

saint is distorted as an emblem of merely material warfare and merely symbolic intervention. This is by no means only a recent hagiographical tactic: already in the early generations of Frankish rule on Cyprus (after 1191), iconographic elements can be found that perform resistance to what their producers and consumers clearly viewed as an illegitimate appropriation St. George by the heterodox crusaders. Most overtly, in the church of the Panagia at Asinou, George's shield is detached from his body so that its heraldry may be prominently displayed: a crescent moon enclosing an equal-armed cross (Figure 3.24). As Andreas and Judith Stylianou explain, this image



Figure 3.24: Detail from an image of St. George, church of the Panagia at Asinou: the saint's shield featuring the Byzantine crescent and cross. Late twelfth / early thirteenth century.

combines the emblem of the crescent of classical Byzantium with the emblem of the cross of Christian Byzantium-Constantinople . . . . The Western Crusaders, with their shields emblazoned with their family coats of arms or the arms of the Orders they served, were soon to demolish the Byzantine Empire while on their way to Jerusalem. The Byzantine painters reacted in their own way. . . . In Asinou in Cyprus, the painter used the Greco-Christian emblem to react against the intruders. St. George is defined here as a Byzantine Crusader, in opposition to the Crusader conquerors of the island and their heraldic devices, including the red cross on the shield of their St. George.<sup>186</sup>

As will become increasingly significant in Chapter IV, the visual rhetoric at work here illuminates that the operative contrast is *not* simply between heterodox militarism and Orthodox mysticism/martyrdom (as Br. Eutybios would seem to suggest), but rather between Western European authority and Byzantine authority, each political in nature *but only the latter* also attuned to the holiness invested in and responsive

<sup>186</sup> Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus*, 138. Broader context for this mode of iconographic resistance may be found in Demosthenous, *Byzantium*, 75-83 (in an essay called, notably, "The Saint and the Crusader"); Efthymiou, *Greeks and Latins on Cyprus*; and Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades*. Note that this element of the Byzantine crescent/cross on George's shield is not a one-off symbolic element; it has been retrieved by modern iconographers and may be seen in other images as well, such as a twentieth-century icon in the church of St. George of the Elbow at Avgorou, and a twenty-first century icon in the church of St. George at Agia Napa.

to this authority. As Fr. Symeon, a monk at Stavrovouni Monastery, articulated this active linkage to me: “God’s spirit blows where it wills, and where it wills is to be with the fullness of truth. This is why only the Orthodox Church *continues* to produce saints, who continue to show us what God’s holiness looks like”—by contrast with non-Orthodox churches, whose imagination and representation of the saints is corrupt, showing forth not God’s holiness but their own dispositions.<sup>187</sup>

Thus, as Turkish-Cypriots engaging in Orthodox-approved, psychosomatic hagiographical practices *vis-à-vis* St. George (lighting candles, leaving votive offerings, attending festivals, receiving and relating dream apparitions) provided evidence to Greek-Cypriots of Islam’s tenuous hold in Cyprus, Western Christians’ *insufficiently* material interactions with (an excessively exoteric) St. George have often seemed to corroborate for Greek-Cypriots their British colonists’ tenuous grasp on Christianity. The archives bear out that differing views on the intensity of religious devotion and the appropriate distance between religious and political commitments were matters of some tension between Greek-Cypriots and the British administration. In one instance from 1929, Orthodox members of the Forest Guards<sup>188</sup> began refusing to work on Sundays, insisting that in Christian nations Sunday is a day of rest.<sup>189</sup> The Colonial Secretary’s response made the government’s position clear that going to church was well and good, but that resting the remainder of the day was out of the question, as “the interests of the Govt. Service must come

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<sup>187</sup> August 26, 2014. Thus the *physical* miracles worked by the saints in the Orthodox world—by explicit contrast with the solely “symbolic” and “metaphorical” miracles of the Western churches—were considered by the monk to be proof that holiness is truly mediated into and genuinely builds up *only* the Orthodox church as the body of God. Cf. Hanganu, “Eastern Christians and Religious Objects,” 34, commenting on (Russian) Orthodox Christians’ attitudes toward the relation between miracle and orthodoxy: “the icon [brought by traveling nuns from village to village] would not perform miracles in communities with an inappropriate religious life.” Fr. Epiphanius makes an aligned point from the opposite side: citing a Greek-Cypriot expression (“A saint who does not work miracles is not glorified”—Ἅγιος που δεν θαυματουργεί δεν δοξάζεται), he insists no less that the quality of devotion is directly correlated with the tangibility of saintly intervention, and that the robustness of devotion to St. George in the Orthodox world is indicative of the power and prolificity of his miracles (June 6, 2016).

<sup>188</sup> Service members under the command of the colonial district commissioners, assigned to “watch and protect” the forested lands of the island from natural threats and criminal malfeasance. See Hutchinson and Cobham, *A Handbook of Cyprus*, 21-23.

<sup>189</sup> *Nota bene*—the implication is that the British either would be shamed into complying or would be forced to admit that theirs was not a Christian government.

first” and “failure to work on Sundays when ordered to do so would thus constitute an act of disobedience.”<sup>190</sup> In 1931, following civilian revolts among Greek-Cypriots, the British administration acted to crack down on the ways that religious clubs and church operations appeared (in the colonists’ eyes) to use religious symbols and practices inappropriately for political purposes—to general outrage from the Orthodox who viewed such celebrations of Greek liberation and such demonstrations for Greek unification as thoroughly religious, indeed holy, causes.<sup>191</sup>

In each of these examples, British attitudes toward material and spiritual concerns belonging to separate domains are understood (or more precisely, mobilized) by Orthodox Cypriots as impinging on the proper conditions of “a Christian nation” and revealing the more authentic faith of the colonized over that of the colonizers.<sup>192</sup> Even explicitly hagiographical production and praxis on the part of the British seemed to substantiate their religious deficiencies: any Forest Guards or others appointed in Troodos (a major colonial base and summer headquarters) could not have failed to notice that the Anglican Church

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<sup>190</sup> State Archives, SA1-535/29. And disobedience it was, or at least, a style of resistance that James Scott might characterize as “foot-dragging”: the Forest Guard originally censured for his Sunday behavior was not attending church and returning to work, but rather spending the remainder of the day in the café. “He has since,” reports the Principal Forest Officer, “adhered to his principles, abandoning work, and attending Church, until his behavior was remarked by one of the Mounted Forest Guards, who reported that the man behaves as though he were not a Forest Official; that he sits in the café and ignores his superiors. . . . Other Forest Guards are now beginning to follow his example, and to manifest at once, a preference for Church and a disinclination for work on Sundays.”

<sup>191</sup> See Church of Cyprus Archives, *Biblion* ME, including correspondence relating to the 1931 “disturbances” and the response of the colonial government, for instance prohibiting the use of church bells apart from religious ceremony—since they had been “commonly employed to summon the people to political and seditious meetings from which they proceeded to the commission of illegal acts and acts of violence” (166); and State Archives, SA1-1399/31 (correspondence regarding the Flags Prohibition Law of 1931, expressing the Attorney General’s conviction “that the displaying of Greek flags on the anniversary of the Greek Revolution *have a political and not a religious significance*, and if any are displayed in Churches on that day proceedings should, in my opinion, be taken against those responsible” [emphasis mine]) and SA1-1431/31 (discussing the greater difficulty of disentangling religious from political uses of church bells, and including correspondence from Archbishop Kyrillos III protesting that all “religious purposes” for church bells must be permitted—the critical loophole remaining the understanding that “freedom” and “unity” are themselves holy causes). Cf. Mitsides, “The Church of Cyprus during the Twentieth Century,” 70 (on the significance of and backlash to the prohibition of churches’ flag-flying and bell-ringing); Hill, *The History of Cyprus*, IV.569-606 (on the relations between the Church of Cyprus and the British administration); and Loizos, *The Heart Grown Bitter*, 34 (on perceptions of the church’s spiritual and political purposes).

<sup>192</sup> Cf., for instance, Vasileiadis’ comment, in the course of his discussion of the Orthodox faith of the anticolonial fighters as “their secret” (τὸ μυστικό τους) that “the British saw the Christian life of the Cypriots they ruled and marveled [θαύμαζαν]” (*Εθνομάρτυρες του κυπριακού έπους*, 48).

of St. George of the Forest had no representations of the supposedly-beloved saint on the outside of the edifice other than the mere name on the sign.<sup>193</sup> And in the course of my own conversations, a group of elderly friends in Limassol remembered from their youth seeing soldiers from the British base at Akrotiri visiting the Orthodox church on St. George's Day with flowers to lay at the door before departing again—a lovely gesture, they admitted, but tone-deaf when it came to expressing proper devotion to the saints.<sup>194</sup>

In this section, we have again observed that the Greek Orthodox hagiographical idiom in which the mediation of holiness is at once spiritual and material, at once personal and political, serves not only to organize Orthodox encounters with and practices toward the saints but also to interpret the position of religious others as dysfunctional precisely to the extent that it falls short in one of these registers or seeks to disentangle (that is, distort) them. Hagiographical edification, as the refiguration of self-understanding by way of saintly media, does not only reinforce “orthodox” personal and communal identifications with holiness but also, at the same time, renews the image of “heterodox” inadequacy, which must thus be identified and imagined in order to be resisted.



Figure 3.25: The Anglican Church of St. George of the Forest, Troodos.

<sup>193</sup> Venturing inside, they would not have been any more impressed: an Orthodox icon of St. George from Governor Ronald Storrs' private collection, brought to Troodos when the Government House was burned down in 1931, is attached to the balcony where it cannot be venerated, and can indeed barely be seen, from the floor of the church (see Figure 3.25). For some of the history of this church and its single ill-placed icon, see Morgan, *Sweet and Bitter Island*, 111-12.

<sup>194</sup> July 5, 2016. The subtlety of this breakdown in ecumenical *rapprochement* is instructive: though doubtless intended as a sign of respect and an effort to earn goodwill on the part of Orthodox Cypriots, this laying of flowers seems to have registered instead as a half-measure and as evidence of hagiographical laxity, rather than signifying a shared piety *vis-à-vis* St. George.

## Conclusion: On Trophybearing

An epithet of St. George that I have not discussed at length, though it may indeed be the most prominent of them all, is *Tropaiophoros*: “trophy-bearer.”<sup>195</sup> Although *Tropaiophoros* does not correspond to any of the three major iconic types of the saint in isolation, it covers them all and reflects the *triumphant* aspect of his miracle accounts: the triumphant liberation of the captive boy bearing the material goods of the enemy state, the triumph over the tortures of the frustrated Emperor Diocletian and the crown of martyrdom awarded at their completion,<sup>196</sup> the triumph over the exterminated dragon and the restored livelihood of the city besieged by it. But St. George is Trophybearer not only because his *own* triumphs, as a study of the monastery of St. George the Alaman (one of the “minor Georges” of Cyprus) makes clear.<sup>197</sup>

Entering Alamanos Monastery, there can be no doubt that the minor saints are overshadowed by the major: though the monastery is dedicated to St. George the Alaman, the image of the Alaman saint in the entranceway before the monastic edifice proper is juxtaposed, but decentered and dwarfed, relative to the image of Greatmartyr George (Figure 3.26). Likewise, entering the main building of the monastery, visitors are greeted by a large mosaic of the Greatmartyr above the central stairs, and must wait for the wall of the chapel for another view of the patron of the place. As with the neomartyrs discussed in section 2a,

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<sup>195</sup> See Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 109, drawing on the *Miracula S. Georgii* published in the Bollandists’ *Acta Sanctorum* of April 1675 (152-55), which contains an early discussion of the prominence of the epithet. See also Guilcher-Pellat, “La légende de Saint Georges.”

<sup>196</sup> Indeed, in some renderings, the severed head of St. George is itself the “trophy” which he lifts in triumph, offering it up to Christ as a gift and proof of total dedication. See Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 142-44; and Walter, “St. George ‘Kephalphoros.’” Cf. John Chrysostom’s observation that the beheaded martyrs Juveninus and Maximinus (former soldiers, like George), by “holding up their severed heads in their hands and showing them off in the middle [of the heavenly host], can easily bring about everything they wish from the King of Heaven” (“On the Holy Martyrs Juveninus and Maximinus” 10 [PG 50.576.59-62]).

<sup>197</sup> For background on St. George the Alaman and varying interpretations of the larger category of “Alaman” saints (some arguing that they had been Germanic soldiers that became monks in the holy land, others that they came to Cyprus from specific sites in the Levant (such as the monastic center of Mt. Amanus in Syria), see Kyrris, “The ‘Three Hundred Alaman Saints’ of Cyprus,” 203-07; and Neophytos of Morphou, “Μικρά Ασία-Συροπαλαιστίνη,” 315-17. Short hagiographical narratives of these saints can be found in Sathas, “Vies des saints allemands de l’Eglise de Chypre,” 412-26. More discussion of the monastery of St. George the Alaman and the traditions that thrive there can be found in Chapter II, section 3c.

the resonance between these saints is clear: not only is the Alaman named George,<sup>198</sup> but in most accounts the Alaman is also a former soldier, leaving behind his martial career and taking refuge in Cyprus to devote himself to ascetic practice and the edification of the church. Like Greatmartyr George, the Alaman saints are held to be “pillars” of the “Greek-Cypriots’ struggle for survival under foreign domination,” working miracles on behalf of the people and “securing their eternal existence.”<sup>199</sup> In the spatial rhetoric of the monastery’s architecture, the Alaman George’s patronage of the monastery built where his grotto had stood is a participation in, co-mediation of, and amplifying reverberation back into the glory of Greatmartyr George—whose presence in the monastery far outweighs that of the Alaman himself.



Figure 3.26: St. George the Alaman and St. George Greatmartyr, at the entrance to the monastery of St. George the Alaman. Note that this image is taken facing back toward the exit. Entering the monastery, only the Greatmartyr is visible at first.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, St. George’s holiness shines through and intensifies the edifying potential of his imitators (*mimētai*—inclusive of hagiographers of all stripes, formal and informal, as well as those “minor” saints who imitate and so mediate with their bodies and souls the deeds and character of the Greatmartyr). It was at Alamanos Monastery that I came to understand how this intensification is by no means a one-way process, nor limited to the relationships between saints recognized as such by the church. The earthly devotees of the saints, visiting their churches, monasteries, and informal shrines, likewise draw off the power of such figures as St. George into their own lives,

<sup>198</sup> Thus making them “same-named co-athletes”: see again Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ἐλασσόνων ἀναφορά,” 127.

<sup>199</sup> Kyrris, “The ‘Three Hundred Alaman Saints’ of Cyprus,” 204.

representing to others the presence and benevolence of the holy communion. Thus they bear witness (*martyria*) in various ways to their own participation, mundane or miraculous, in holiness.

In the inner courtyard of the monastery, there is a large glass case full of trophies. People have delivered them from all over the island and beyond—they are trophies awarded especially for athletic feats, including running, archery, karate, and kickboxing. There are other kinds of trophies as well—a diploma from a London university, a semi-precious geode discovered in the earth, even what appears to be an engagement ring. The trophies cannot even be contained by the glass case—they spill out in front of it and are leaned against the front wall of the church itself, where they act as a façade of glorious clutter, of overflowing and uncontainable grace. These physical objects render a multidirectional mediation. On the one hand, their presence here inscribes the gratitude of St. George's devotees for the help he has (in their experience) afforded them into the monastery's devotional and hagiographical *mise-en-scène*: that these people have chosen to dedicate the material record of their own triumph to a sanctuary of St. George serves as evidence *to others* that the help of the saint is real and effective, and that those who put their faith in the saint will triumph as he did. The trophies bear witness both to the devotees' confidence in and to their mimetic identification with the saint. On the other hand, the witness of these trophies and the other



Figure 3.27: Tropaia (trophies) of St. George's devotees at the monastery of St. George the Alaman: (left) trophy case and (right) plaques bearing witness to and expressing gratitude for the help of St. George.

material objects, testifying to St. George's *standing beside* his devotees,<sup>200</sup> registers the devotees themselves in a co-mediating matrix that fuels and amplifies the holiness of the greatmartyr. His stature and edifying efficacy are known to be *greater*, indeed psychosomatically mediated all the more thickly, due to the hagiopraxies of those who are grateful to him, who assert his investment in their triumph. The mimetic holiness and edification of those in relationships with St. George are *part* of the great saint's triumph, their successes numbered among the *tropaia* he bears.<sup>201</sup>

Thus it is, as Kleanthus puts it, that the sacrifice of St. George Greatmartyr “speaks, guides, urges” the people of Cyprus—a people, he continues, that is “responsible for a lifetime for an inheritance that was begotten by the blood of the martyrs.”<sup>202</sup> This “perlocutionary force” of the martyr's inscription in the lives of his community,<sup>203</sup> this sense of gratitude and responsibility, is materialized and co-mediated by the trophies of the people on display at Alamanos Monastery and elsewhere. It is a two-way reverberation of the glory of the saint to the mutual enhancement of him and his devotees. And, as eloquently as any authoritative text or informal theological comment, the trophy case and its panoply of objects *bear witness* to the resistance and rectification realized in the multimedia of the saints. These objects mediate—in both senses, that is by inscribing for perception and transmission, and by imparting through the validation of

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<sup>200</sup> Several of the plaques erected at the entrance to the monastery chapel include the same phrasing: “I thank you, St. George, for standing beside me . . .” (Σ’ ευχαριστώ, Άγιε Γεώργιε μου, που στάθηκες δίπλα μου. . .). Others mention “the power you gave me” (την δύναμη που μου έδωσες) to, for instance, complete medical school exams or find work in a competitive field.

<sup>201</sup> Alamanos Monastery is by no means the only place where these phenomena are evident, merely the most explicit and instructive, in my judgment. Similar trophy cases can be found at Symvoulos Monastery, and at the monastery of the Apostle Andreas, as well as at parish churches of St. George such as that in the Agios Dometios neighborhood of Nicosia.

<sup>202</sup> Kleanthus, “Great Martyr Saint George the Triumphant,” 41, 46. See also Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 133-49; and see Psillita-Ioannou, *Οι ηρωομάρτυρες της ΕΟΚΑ*, 7, on how the continued commemoration of the EOKA dead serves to “stimulate the ethnic sensibility [το εθνικό φρόνημα] of our people, which continues, after the passage of forty years, to struggle for freedom and the attainment of vindication [δικαίωση].” Here too, as with our greatmartyr, the heromartyrs’ sacrifice “stimulates” (and in my terms, edifies) by registering as an investment in the long-term fortitude of a struggling community; the community both is solidified by shared participation in the debt and has been invested with the holiness of the martyr necessary to fulfill it.

<sup>203</sup> Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism*, 28.

shared experience—confidence that the struggles of the people are meaningful, that they are bolstered by the solidarity of the saints in success and failure alike.

It is important, therefore, that this trophy-bearing sense of St. George's support for and elevation by the struggles of his people is not limited to the identification of Orthodox Christians with the saint *as a martyr*. In the final chapter of my study of St. George in Cyprus, a very different register of this identification between saint and community rotates into the foreground: that of the captivity of the people to monstrous forces and the active confrontation with them (more active still, that is, than resistance in the sense of endurance, hope, and refusal to despair) that is illustrated by the dragonslaying saint. The saint's archetypal triumph over the dragon, no less than his endurance of imperial torture and ultimate glorification by divinity and humanity alike, mediates combative resolve into the lives of his devotees—resolve to face ecological, political, and indeed spiritual struggles with the uplifting grace of the indomitable warrior of God.

## IV

### **Saint George as Dragonslayer: Confronting the Captive Land and the Poisoned Heart**

*Say to them that are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

*~Isaiah 35:4-10, King James Version*

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*The heart itself is but a small vessel, yet there also are dragons and there are lions; there are poisonous beasts and all the treasures of evil. And there are rough and uneven roads; there are precipices. But there is also God, also the angels, the life and the kingdom, the light and the Apostles, the treasures of grace – there are all things.*

*~Pseudo-Makarios, Homily 43.7*

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*Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist,  
but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.*

*~Neil Gaiman, Coraline*

## Introduction: The Accursed Serpent

Once there was, and twice there wasn't, a crisis at the gates of Istanbul. A terrible dragon was threatening the city, haunting caves along the road and terrorizing those who tried to enter or leave, and poisoning the land on which the city depended for its food and water. In desperation, the Sultan and his Vizier let it be known that a great reward would be given to anyone who succeeded in killing or driving away the monster: that person would be given the hand of the Sultan's daughter in marriage and made heir to the throne. Many of the citizens, spurred on by such a reward, declared that they would attempt the feat, but one after another they either lost their courage and fled upon seeing the dragon in the flesh or else were gobbled up upon engaging the beast. But eventually the people of Istanbul, watching from the walls, saw a shining figure on a white horse appear in the distance, racing toward the cave of the dragon. The skirmish was brief but with an unexpected outcome: the rider prevailed, driving his spear through the neck of the monster. The citizens were overjoyed and awaited the rider outside the Sultan's palace. But when he arrived, it became clear that this was no ordinary warrior, but—Alexander the Great, riding straight out of the mists of history! The Sultan was prepared to make good on his word, offering his daughter to the legendary hero, but Alexander refused, saying that he had only come in order to spread reason, justice, and civilization in the Sultan's benighted country.

This eccentric narrative,<sup>1</sup> reweaving the famous story of St. George slaying the dragon so that it takes place in the Ottoman capital and stars Alexander the Great in the saintly/heroic role, belongs to a

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<sup>1</sup> Eccentric, that is, from the vantage of the conventional Greek account of the "dragon-wonder" (θαῦμα ... περὶ τοῦ δράκοντος) of St. George, in which the saint arrives to a city of "idolaters" who are being punished by God for their impiety and lack of compassion, a punishment which takes the form of a dragon that encamps on their water supply. When the king's daughter has her lot drawn to be fed to the dragon, the Lord sends St. George to intervene—he slays the dragon, rescues the princess, and persuades the people of the city to accept Christ, whose power allowed the saint to defeat the beast. Versions of the dragon-legend can be found in Aufhauser, *Das Drachenwunder des heiligen Georg*, 30-176 (in several versions in formal and vernacular Greek, the earliest from the twelfth-century Codex Romanus Angelicus [46, in BHG 687; see Ogden, *Dragons, Serpents, and Slayers*, 249-50, for an English translation], and including Aufhauser's commentary on each); Doukakis, *Μέγας Συναξαριστής*, IV.338-45 (a later account preserved on Mt. Athos and included in the standard *synaxarion* in use in British-ruled Cyprus); as well as several other recompositions of the narrative in

tradition of storytelling that enjoyed immense popularity in Cyprus during the period of British rule, and in particular during the volatile decades between 1910 and 1960: puppet theater. This theater and its numerous beloved narratives were performed around the island by puppeteers who, though they were in many cases poor and itinerant, enjoyed the admiration of enchanted audiences of all ages. The central, chameleonic character was one Karagiozis—a ridiculously ugly, fourth-wall-shattering hunchback, a “boaster who mocks the powerful, but puts his tail between his legs as soon as he is faced with trouble”<sup>2</sup>—through whose crossed eyes and sharp tongue the people of Cyprus learned the affairs of the day, tilted on their side as satirical or allegorical puppet shows.<sup>3</sup> Often current events would be commingled with themes and characters from ancient Greek history or from “Byzantine hagiology,” or indeed from the two together—as in the case of the puppet play, more beloved than most, known as “Alexander the Great and the Accursed Serpent” (*O Megas Alexandros kai to katarameno psidi*).<sup>4</sup>

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devotional literature (such as Vasilopoulou, *Άγιος Γεώργιος ο Τροπαιοφόρος*, 63-70) and other compendia of saints’ miracle accounts (such as Raptopoulos, *Ο Άγιος Μεγαλομάρτυς Γεώργιος ο Τροπαιοφόρος*, 40-45).

<sup>2</sup> Chrysanthou, *Here Comes Karagiozis!*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Chrysanthou gives some background for the art and politics of Karagiozis puppetry (see especially *Here Comes Karagiozis!*, 14-55), which seems to have originated as “a means of teaching religious dogmas in Egypt” (17) particularly during Ramadan when the dancing puppets and poetic dialogues provided diversion from the difficulties of fasting. The art spread through the Ottoman empire, which annexed Egypt in 1517, and in this context it was adapted for modes of storytelling besides the pedagogical. Karagöz, a poor but wily Turkish carpenter, became a stock character (alongside his wealthy and influential friend Hacivat) who came to star in a variety of popular tales, changing them in surprising and delightful ways. Karagöz was known as Karagiozis (Καραγκιόζης) in the Greek-speaking areas of the empire, which developed new variations on the stories and characters with which ironic, insolent Karagiozis would interact. Over time, the Karagiozis theater of Greek areas “was gradually abandoning some of its Ottoman elements and acquiring more Greek traits over time, in its themes, its stories, the language and setting” (28). Current events, particularly around the time of the Greek uprising of the 1820s, sharpened the satirical edge of the puppet theatrics and deepened their utility for communicating news and political possibilities, as the puppeteers traveled between regions. Thus too, in Cyprus (where Karagiozis puppetry was popular at least since the late nineteenth century), as initial optimism over British rule gave way to cynicism and resistance, the puppet theater followed suit and adapted its classic stories to new political conditions, the hunchbacked hero confronting puppet-governors and puppet-colonial-secretaries in the company, ultimately, of puppet-EOKA-fighters. The puppeteers had to be careful, of course, and many of these contemporary characters were presented as veiled variations on the classic Karagiozis stories, but for an audience that knew the stories well, the variations themselves spoke volumes.

<sup>4</sup> See Chrysanthou, *Here Comes Karagiozis!*, 32; and Demetriou-Protopapa, *Ο Καραγκιόζης*, 41. In the Alexander-as-George play, Karagiozis appears as a citizen of Istanbul who mocks the faux-brave citizens who offer but are of course unable to slay the dragon, then tries unsuccessfully to spread a rumor, after Alexander’s departure, that he himself had been the one to kill the beast (Chrysanthou, *Here Comes Karagiozis!*, 81-82).



Figure 4.1: Handheld replicas of the Karagiozis puppets for Alexander the Great and the “accursed serpent.”

In this puppet play, recasting St. George’s most famous miracle account (such that it stars a symbol of Hellenistic heroism) and restaging it in the Ottoman homeland (even after the story continued to be told in British-ruled Cyprus), we can observe a kaleidoscope of hagiographical entanglements that will be most instructive as we proceed into the third and final

paradigm of St. George’s manifestation in modern Cyprus. A few observations about the puppet theater will serve as an orientation to St. George as *drakontoktonos* (dragonlayer) in Cyprus and to the paradigm of hagiographical resistance and rectification multimediated by way of the legendary beast.<sup>5</sup>

It is significant, for instance, that the puppet play retells the story of St. George and the dragon without ever mentioning St. George, and deploying Alexander the Great in his place. In “Alexander the Great and the Accursed Serpent,” the material and discursive representation of Alexander borrows from the hagiographical tradition of St. George in more ways than the basic structure and monstrous antagonist of the legend: for instance, the spear carried by the puppet-Alexander, in the typology shared by many puppeteers, is styled with a cross on the rear end, and in the tellings of some puppeteers, Alexander charges to engage the dragon while calling a phrase such as “Help me, Christ and Panagia!” Both of these Christian elements are, of course, anachronistic to the figure of Alexander the Great, but they are instructive as to the symbolic function of the ancient hero as an altero-George. Alexander’s “greatness,”

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<sup>5</sup> I am most grateful to Christodoulos Antoniou Paphios, the grandson of the great puppeteer Paphios and himself an artist working to preserve the Karagiozis theater in contemporary Cyprus, for taking time to help me better understand the puppet theater tradition and in particular the referential and hortatory subtleties of “Alexander the Great and the Accursed Serpent.” The younger Paphios is not only a vital witness to an artistic tradition that has almost died out, he is also an agent of that tradition’s revival: building a community of puppeteers, performing around the island, and teaching the techniques of creating and animating Karagiozis puppets to a younger generation. Paphios’ identity is included with permission; however, the interpretations appearing in this section, including any controversial or erroneous treatment of the puppet theater and its significance in Cyprus, are my own and should not reflect on Paphios or his work.

unlike that of George (particularly as Greatmartyr), derives not from the extent of his suffering for God's sake or his winning of souls to mimetic holiness, but rather from his prowess at conquest, in his quest to transform supposed barbarity into civilization. There is, I wager, a hagiographical id at work in the use of Alexander to play the part of St. George in the puppet play. More militarily robust than the soldier who lays down his arms to be tortured and executed, Alexander facilitates a Greek appeal to an idealized imperial imagination, matching rather than merely resisting the power of "barbaric" empires. This elision with St. George is evidence that the deep devotion around St. George (as Dragonslayer) is connected with a thirst for martial, political success in addition to spiritual triumph.

Moreover, the figure of the dragon and its defeat by the virtuous rider, the story's clearest borrowing from the hagiography of St. George, registers the cultural-political pertinence of the play to current events surrounding its performance, particularly in the late-Ottoman or late-British period in Cyprus. On the one hand, the dragon encamped at *Istanbul* in particular yields a not-terribly-obscure reading as the captivity of Constantinople to a monstrous threat to its heritage and future: Ottomanism itself. It is (George as) Alexander the Great—that is, the spirit of enlightened Hellenism—who is the only one that can resist and defeat the dragon, thereby restoring "civilization" to the lands of the Sultan. But on the other hand, as Paphios insists, the dragon as it appears in the puppeteering tradition also represents *amorphosia*: all that is "ignorant, backwards, uncivilized."<sup>6</sup> That is, the defeat of the dragon is representative not only of conquest but also of civilization or cultivation; it hints at the dream of benevolent rather than oppressive imperialism, the eradication (and also, in the particular mediating apparatus of the Karagiozis puppet theater, the mockery) of a corrupt cultural force that has kept a people captive and incapable of reaching its full potential, a profound political rectification made possible by a hero's struggle.

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<sup>6</sup> April 25, 2016.

The Karagiozis puppet theater has been, from its Ottoman emergence to its contemporary revival, enjoyed for the simultaneous endurance and adaptability of its stories. Like the living hagiographical tradition on which the Alexander/George play draws, the narrative can be performed with subtle changes and can be used in different ways, depending on the aims of the puppeteers and the commitments of the audience. This play in particular seems to have appeared during the late-nineteenth century, after the south of Greece had achieved its independence but before the north had joined it. According to contemporary puppeteers, their forerunners had performed this story in northern villages, in no small part to rouse the people there to their own revolt.<sup>7</sup> The dialogue would have changed again, the characters subtly modernized, the symbolism subtly redirected, when the story was retold during the period of British rule in Cyprus. If the imagination of the audience is not captured, if the satire does not cut precisely at the point where the cultural and political conditions of the day are unconvincing, the performance will not have been a success. It is highly probable, then—though as ephemeral as the shadows on a screen in a coffee shop—that George’s dragon, in colonial Cyprus, came to breath a British firepower and threaten a Sultan with all-too-western attributes.<sup>8</sup>

The example of the Karagiozis theater and its reinvention of a hagiographical heritage serves, I hope, to set the tone of analysis and shed light on the kind of multivalent symbolic texture that prevails in this chapter on St. George as Dragonslayer. In this chapter, even more clearly than in the previous two, the struggles of Orthodox Christian Cypriots and the hagiographical repertoire with which they are waged can be organized upon what I have called a “grid” of resistance that integrates different (but

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<sup>7</sup> April 25, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> It is evident, at least, that some of the leading puppeteers were investigated and sometimes detained on charges of sedition during the period of increasing suspicion and legal curtailment following the Cypriot unrest of 1931. “This situation [of police searches of suspected dissidents] was a stranglehold for the puppeteer, who staged patriotic plays that talked about freedom, which had as protagonists Athansios Diakos, Katsantonis, etc [heroes of the Greek revolution]. The prosecution and prohibitions of Palmerocracy [the restrictive laws instituted by Governor Richmond Palmer] were an obstacle, a Damoclean sword for puppeteers, journalists, writers, intellectuals, for anyone who dared to articulate, one way or another, political arguments that disputed their subjugation” (Chrysanthou, *Here Comes Karagiozis!*, 100).

interconnected) domains of life in different (but interdependent) ways: *personal* and *communal* registers of resistance across the range of *ecological*, *political*, and *spiritual* problems in which St. George intervenes.<sup>9</sup> I continue to argue that while we can typically identify a register and domain of resistance where a given hagiographical instance is especially resonant, none of these specifications is isolated from the others. Thus it is these three dimensions that structure the chapter, each one coming into the foreground in the three successive sections, even as all are entailed throughout.

The dragon-slaying of St. George remains a particularly thorny patch in the topography of his tradition, distinctive in that the extent of its representational prominence in Orthodox Christianity (not only, of course) is rivaled only by that of its obvious ahistoricity.<sup>10</sup> It has motivated and continues to motivate a broad range of figurative interpretations with powerful cultural and intercultural consequences: among them, the dragon has been read as a symbol for the emperor Diocletian and his savage persecution of Christians, for the chaotic passions holding the soul captive, for the whole history and temptation of idolatry, for an eschatological evil against whom St. George is shown to be arrayed, or indeed, as in the case of the puppet theater, for the *amorphosia* of the Ottoman Empire. The dragon is as readily externalized as it is internalized, activates profoundly public stakes as much as it does private devotional practice,<sup>11</sup> and is as useful for bolstering associations of the saint's martial prowess and

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<sup>9</sup> See again the conclusion of Chapter I.

<sup>10</sup> Not everyone would agree. Certainly efforts are made to historicize the episode, such as claims that the dragon is an embellishment of a fearsome crocodile or python that George had exterminated during his time in the Roman army (see, for instance, Papageorgiou, *O Ayios Iewpγiowc*, 141, where the slain beast is presented as “a huge snake that *resembled* a dragon” [emphasis mine]); other approaches, further afield from Cyprus, take the dragon-slaying episode more literally, such as in the Creation Museum of Kentucky, where stories of dragons such as that appearing in the St. George tradition are supposed to be derived from stories of contact with dinosaurs, passed down through the generations.

<sup>11</sup> In some versions (including the earliest extant Greek account in the Codex Romanus Angelicus, but also in the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine from which the dragon-wonder is best known to Western Europe), the dragon is tamed rather than slaughtered outright, and led before the walls of the city it has captivated in order to be used as a bargaining chip in converting the populace to Christian faith. Here, no less than in the martyrdom account of St. George, the triumph of the saint has immediate and enduring political consequences for ambient religious others (for a critical edition of the Greek, see Aufhauser, *Das Drachenwunder des heiligen Georg*, 52-69, especially 65-67 where the bargain is struck; and Ogden, *Dragons, Serpents, & Slayers*, 249-50, for an English translation). Accordingly, the dragon-legend's usage for self-identification and self-narration in the political order (as is the case not only for Cyprus but for Greece and for England,

patronage as it is for insisting that George's sword is the sword of the spirit and his shield the shield of faith.<sup>12</sup> Even as St. George is beseeched to drive out the dragons of a sinful heart (including unclean dispositions of rancor and resentment), clearing the way for the fresh, living water of the Holy Spirit, Orthodox Christians' apprehension of the demonic captivity of the powerful to their own excesses of force, and of infidels to their own error, seems to render these others (in the hagiographical imagination) quasi-human or monstrous devourers of the people. In other words: all these chords of associations—the agricultural and the institutional, the pragmatic and the ascetic—sound together in the harmony and dissonance of modern Cyprus. The dragon-wonder of St. George is, at its base, a story of integral liberation: the deliverance of a people through deliverance of the land they depend on, and the overcoming of political captivity by way of a spiritual, indeed a cosmic, confrontation.

### **(1) Monsters of the Land: Resisting Ecological Cruelty**

As with the other two paradigms of St. George's patronage of and identification with the land of Cyprus, the dragon-legend is inscribed indelibly in the island's agricultural imagination.<sup>13</sup> It reflects a long heritage of Mediterranean theriomachy as a mythic framework for narrating the need for ecological stability, on the one hand, and a warranted obsession with the preservation or corruption of precious water sources, on the other. But so too, the dragon-legend serves as a symbolic tool to confront the cultural *causes* of agricultural desperation, such as exploitative landlords, oppressive taxation, and foreign conquest. The ecological dynamics are not apolitical, nor the political dynamics anecological: the dragon-legend's specific forms and motivating meaning in Cyprus are traceable not only to the island's agricultural

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the latter of whose hagiographical imagination is heavily dependent on the *Golden Legend*), is due sustained attention. Cf. Pancaroğlu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer," 156: "The image of the equestrian dragon-slayer functioned like a mold from which interrelated and new identities could be generated, ensuring the continuous reproduction of the image itself."

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ephesians 6:10-17, a passage regularly cited in association with Saint George.

<sup>13</sup> See again especially Chapter II, section 2b; and Chapter III, section 1a.

vulnerability but also to its position as a frontier between empires (Greek, Arab, Latin, Turkish, British), awash in rich folk traditions and poetic creativity in the interstices of inter-cultural exchange and inter-imperial conflict. And as we will see, the esoteric accounting is never far behind, even in the most quotidian of draconic imaginings.

Much of the scholarship dedicated to St. George over the years has striven to explain the provenance and power of several aspects of his saintly portfolio (such as his protection of livestock, his blessing of seeds and harvests, and indeed his cyclical dying and rising in the martyrdom accounts) by rooting them in ancient Mediterranean mythologies and traditions pertaining to agricultural cycles.<sup>14</sup> The dragon-legend is no exception, being variously linked to associations (or derivations) of St. George and (or from) Apollo, Perseus, Heracles, Horus, or indeed Michael the Archangel and Alexander the Great.<sup>15</sup> And yet, St. George's dragon-slaying is not coextensive with his hagiographical prominence; it took the saint some six centuries to acquire a dragon as antagonist, long after other saints of variable prominence in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean had been celebrated as dragonslayers.<sup>16</sup> It cannot be the case,

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<sup>14</sup> Such a pattern in the scholarship traces especially to a nineteenth-century history of religions paradigm in Germany (as indicated by Krumbacher, *Das heilige Georg*, ix), as well as to the Bollandist strategy of accounting for (and winnowing out) all “legendary” accretions to the historical kernel of a saint's *Life*. See again the general introduction, section 2.

<sup>15</sup> See Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ἐλασσόνων ἀναφορά,” 121 (on Apollo's slaying of the Python as an obvious reference point for George's dragon-wonder; recall also that Apollo's agricultural patronage as Apollo Malous, Apollo of the Flocks, has already been identified by Cypriots as being taken over by St. George—see Chapter II, section 2b). See also Fontenrose, *Python*, 515-20 (on specific resonances of St. George with Perseus); Fox, *Saint George*, 39-58 (on the powers and limits of a mythological approach to St. George); Riches, *St George*, 140-78 (including some wider contours of dragon-slaying mythology, including its figuration of a victory of light over darkness, order over chaos, and air/fire over earth/water, and indeed male over female—associations as old as civilization); Krumbacher, *Der heilige Georg*, ix (on the German tradition of mythological interpretations of St. George); and Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 13-46 (on the appropriation of dragon imagery into Jewish and Christian literature). Ogden's sourcebook, *Dragons, Serpents, & Slayers in the Classical and Early Christian Worlds*, contains a well-organized and indexed compendium of dragon- (and other serpent-) battles, from Echidna (the mother of monsters in Hesiod's *Theogony*) to the medieval dossiers of St. George and St. Patrick, and including English translations of texts pertaining to most of the dragon-slaying gods and heroes referenced above. The preeminent philological study on (what he takes to be) the pan-Indo-European theme of dragon-slaying is Wadkins, *How to Kill a Dragon*.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, among the saints associated with dragonslaying prior to George (between the third and ninth centuries—well before St. George himself fought a beastly dragon and not only a metaphorical “dragon” such as the Emperor Diocletian), we can count: St. Theodore Teron, Sts. Thomas and Philip the Apostles, St. Silvester of Rome, St. Marina of Antioch, and St. Elizabeth the Wonderworker. See Ogden, *Dragons, Serpents, & Slayers*, 202-04, 207-20, 228-46; Walter, “The Thracian Horseman,” 661, 665; White, “The Rise of the Dragon in Middle Byzantine Hagiography,” 152-53, 157-66;

then, that George's dragon-wonder is sufficiently explicable as a renarration of classical heroic literature or cosmogonic myth, starring a new, church-approved hero; resonance and entanglement are not the same as derivation, even less as significance. In this section, then, I am concerned less with promoting or dispelling any of these accounts of mythological parallelism, but rather with examining the actual patterns of meaning-making and meaning-use in modern Cyprus around St. George's dragonslaying, such as are pertinent to struggles in an ecological domain.

### *1a) "Hideous and antisocial!" Natural and Cultural Threats to Biological Flourishing*

The hero's slaying of a dragon that is holding a princess captive is of course a deep-seated and widely-enjoyed narrative, inspiring innumerable cultural configurations from Perseus to Super Mario.<sup>17</sup> In Cyprus, however, it is less the element of the princess and more another aspect of the story that is calibrated to the island communities' self-understanding *vis-à-vis* ecological and economic constraint: the dragon's encampment upon a *water* source, befouling it and preventing it from reaching the people who depend so immediately upon it. Throughout the Middle East, St. George is intimately linked with fresh water, and Cyprus is no exception: the innumerable sites associated with George on the island (not only churches but rocks, trees, bridges, caves, wells, and the like) are, far more often than not, related in some

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and Fox, *Saint George*, 46-47. Pancaroğlu argues ("The Itinerant Dragon Slayer," 152) that the dragon is unlikely to be an "original" feature of the hagiographical profile of even those other saints that become associated with them, being more likely an elision between saints with apotropaic qualities (particularly military saints) and "an ancient tradition of magical amulets with so-called Holy Rider iconography, which appeared as early as the sixth century in Byzantine Syria and Palestine and which also circulated in Anatolia"—her case cannot be sustained for all the saints mentioned here, but it is a compelling possibility for understanding St. George in particular.

<sup>17</sup> See again Ogden, *Dragons, Serpents, & Slayers*, 82-96, 162-78, on Perseus' combats with Medusa and the sea-monster of Ethiopia; and Fontenrose, *Python*, 515-20, on Perseus' parallels to St. George's dragon-wonder in particular, including (516) the tendency for both heroes' dragon antagonists being alternately referred to as lions or incorporeal spirits in modern folksongs (τραγούδια, a hagiographical medium to be discussed at length in section 1b): a flexibility that will become important below. On the Mario Bros. game franchise's remediation of an ancient dragon-slaying, girl-rescuing myth structure see Fraga, "The Digital Mythology of... Super Mario," as well as the 2005 artwork by Butt Johnson casting Mario in a Renaissance-style image of St. George as dragonslayer: "Mario, Patron Saint of Brooklyn."

way to a water source, and the folklore concerning the saint treats him as cleansing springs, unblocking rivers, making available water to all when contrary forces would hoard it or otherwise restrict its availability.<sup>18</sup> These sites have names and stories relating to St. George of the Fountains (*tōn Brysiōn*), St. George of the Spring (*tēs Pēgas*), St. George of the Cistern (*tēs Sternas*), St. George of the Wells (*tōn Pēgadiōn*), St. George of the Lake (*tēs Limnēs*), St. George of the River (*tou Potamou*), as well as several sites where the saint acquires the name of the specific water source blessed by the saint's presence.<sup>19</sup> The utility of these sites for the sustainability of the communities near them is at the heart of the tradition of St. George's protection of the land and deliverance from its oppressors: St. George churches are often built in

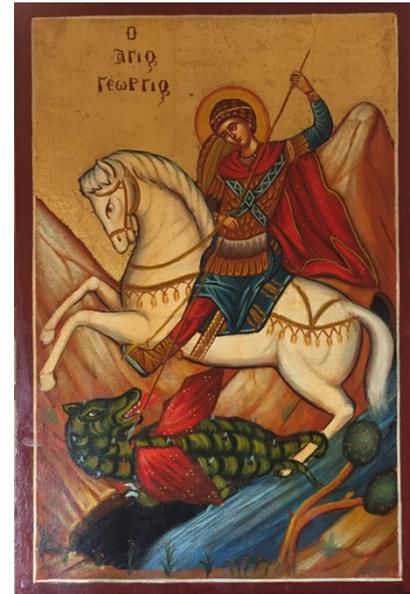


Figure 4.2: Two icons featuring the dragon encamped upon a water source. One from the hagiographical school of Stavrovouni Monastery, now at the church of St. George, Vasa (left); the other more rustic and inexpertly painted, unattributed, in the church of St. George of the Wild Animals (agridiōn), Yeroskopou.

<sup>18</sup> See Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 91, noting that the dragon's hoarding of the water receives particularly extensive attention in Cypriot lore and poetry, and that one of the saint's common local interventions is to have made a freshwater spring burst forth from arid rock (for the biblical underpinnings of this image, see for instance this chapter's epigraph from Isaiah 35, but also Exodus 17:1-7, in which Moses strikes a rock with his staff to yield a fresh spring for the desperate Israelites in the wilderness). Howell identifies the water-and-vegetation cult of St. George as providing "a convenient cover for a number of traditional pagan beliefs and practices," such as those committed to Thammuz/Adonis ("St. George as Intercessor," 124; cf. Haddad, "Georgic Cults and Saints of the Levant," 36, and Fontenrose, *Python*, 517, 545-49). This well may have been the case (we have evidence, for instance, St. George churches in Cyprus built directly over former temples to Adonis as well as other agricultural deities like Apollo Malous—see Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 217), but it is important to recognize such origin accounts as a facet rather than an end of interpretation, particularly given how robust a tradition the watery associations continue to be in modernity.

<sup>19</sup> Papageorgiou's catalogue of epithets has been most helpful in identifying this pattern of associations (see, for discussion of the above sites: *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 37, 39, 83, 101, 102, 105, 115, 125, 127, 133, 137, 138), though it is evident in other texts (such as Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*) and in local accounting throughout the island.

the midst of orchards or arable land, or beside water sources that are actively used in quotidian ways. There is no contradiction in, for instance, an *agiasma* (holy water) spring being used to feed a water fountain or power a water wheel<sup>20</sup>—on the contrary, the abundant life of the community entails the free and productive use of natural resources in sustainable ways.

As linked as St. George is with the water sources of the island, it is unsurprising that the dragon he eliminates should be associated with these sources' destruction, corruption, or exploitation.<sup>21</sup> That is, this final paradigm of George's relation to the people of Cyprus is as a liberator-by-

extermination (whereas we have already studied him as a liberator-by-rescue and a liberator-by-self-sacrifice). On an agricultural register, this requires not merely blessing the seeds or delivering the people from periods of drought, but also directly confronting and eliminating the *causes* of agricultural disaster. This can manifest in as straightforward a tradition as St. George doing away with an infestation of insects,<sup>22</sup> or it can take a more complex and significant form, such as an elaborate story from the region of Morphou in which St. George rushes to stop a deadly (and, in the narrative,



*Figure 4.3: The view from the church of St. George of Arpera, situated among orchards, much closer to nearby farmland than the nearest town (Tersephanou).*

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<sup>20</sup> The former can be found at the main church of Pegeia (the water fountain in question even has a modest mosaic representation of George spearing the dragon). The latter is the case at the church of St. George of the Spring (της Πήγας), near the once-Turkish-Cypriot village of Kotsiatis—local tradition has it that the source was produced by a blow from St. George's spear in an otherwise treeless, barren spot. The spring is considered a holy site, and the local industry that it enables is likewise under the patronage of St. George and dedicated to his honor. See Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 125.

<sup>21</sup> Particularly since the water sources on the island are so few and frequently unreliable—the most reliable have long been the “perennial springs” (State Archives, SA1-1452/57) that are regularly given as the setting of the dragon-legend when it is transplanted to Cyprus. Note that, in this archival file, an event is reported in which the colonial government seizes control of a perennial spring according to the Water Development and Distribution Law—in spite of the administration's assertions of benevolent intent, the local population were deeply skeptical that the appropriation of the spring water would rebound to their benefit, and they fiercely resisted the government's activities on the land.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ohnefalsch-Richter, *Greek Customs and Mores in Cyprus*, 87, discussing the conventional role of saints (not only St. George) “as vermin exterminators.” On the frequent periods of drought on the island during the early twentieth century, along with uncontrolled outbreaks of pestilence and livestock diseases, see State Archives, SA1-432/2/32.

sentient and malevolent) plague that *takes the shape of a dragon* when terrorizing the people.<sup>23</sup> Such a variation on the classical dragon-legend (in which the beast is just a beast and not a personified and transmogrified plague) is telling, in that it highlights the usage of the dragon-symbolism both to enframe the real threat as experienced by the narrative's society and to celebrate the triumph over that threat, even if this triumph is temporary and always at risk of reversal.

Two sites in Cyprus—both *caves*, notably—and the encounters associated with them, will serve to flesh out these hagiographical dynamics. The first site is known as the “Cave of the Dragon” (*Spēlia tou Drakou*), situated near Pachyammos on the northwest coast of Cyprus (Figure 4.4). The cave can be accessed by a path well-marked from the main road, demarcated with pavestones and carefully fenced off between two properties.<sup>24</sup> Descending to the cave, I find evidence of devotional use (rather different than the *tamata* and icons left at more conventional shrines): a red string has been tied to the cave entrance, and a cairn of stones sits on an outcropping, inviting each new visitor to contribute. Within, some water

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<sup>23</sup> The story is reported, with some variations, in three sources: Kyriazis, “Παλαιογραφικά,” 297-99; Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 207-08; and Kokkinophtas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση τής Κύπρου,” 133. To paraphrase: A long time ago there was a vicious plague that decimated the population of the island, and the people set all their hope for salvation (from the plague) in God and his saints. When the plague had come to Kaminaria, near Morphou, pious Christians called for help to Saint George, and he heard their prayers and rushed to help them. But the deadly sickness upon the land had taken the shape of a dragon and was terrorizing the people, bringing to ruin anyone who came near the freshwater sources they so needed to survive. In vain the villagers begged the plague-beast [την πανούκλα - θειρό] from afar to let the water flow again. The beast thought it over and replied that it would only release clean water when the community sent it one of its children to eat. The poor villagers, not having another option, since without water they would all die, accepted this nightmarish proposal. Even the local ruler, when the time came to honor the agreement, sent his daughter as food for the beast. But, just as the girl arrived to the place where the plague-beast lurked, she met an unknown young man, who asked her the reason for her presence and listened with concern. Then the awful plague-beast appeared, and shouted: “I’ll stuff myself with the boy, and afterwards the girl, and then the little horse, saddle and all.” But the young cavalier on his horse struck a powerful blow with his spear right in the mouth of the beast and finished it off. The king, when he learned the thankful news, wanted to reward the lad for his self-sacrifice and achievements, and suggested to marry him to his daughter and make him heir to the realm. But the stranger revealed that he was Saint George, refused the authority and the princess and asked only that they build a church in his name on the spot. And the land to this day retains the marks of the saint’s deliverance: imprints in the rock where George’s horse beat its path to exterminate the deadly plague-beast, and rocks that run red from the blood of the monster.

<sup>24</sup> It seems likely that the fences were erected after the property was purchased, to funnel people who otherwise would have been accessing the site by whatever route they saw fit, particularly if no convenient access had been provided through the property; or else the public access may have been included in the deed. When I return to the site two years later, the path is even more developed, with a concrete walkway and a railing where there had only been worn-down rock.



Figure 4.4: The "Cave of the Dragon" near Pachyammos, containing a freshwater spring and evidence of devotional activity. Photos taken in March, 2016.

jugs lie beside a small freshwater spring, while the trickle of water flows out of the cave in a lazy rivulet, leaving a red mineral residue that looks for all the world, to a hagiographically-primed imagination, like blood. Small lizards scurry around the rocks, darting into the darkness as I approach. According to several citizens of Pachyammos I ask about the site, however, the cave is so-named not because they believe George really did slay the dragon at that spot—at least, they were rather concerned to communicate this to the curious foreign researcher—but rather because the cave's freshwater spring *reminds* them of the miracle account and thus of George's patronage. Some people, I am told by a teenage church attendant in Pachyammos, still go out of their way to bathe there using the spring water. The cave's association with the dragon is thus one of absence rather than presence: the absence of the threats and costs that the dragon represents. Here, as broadly around the island (though rarely so explicitly), the welling up of accessible fresh water in an unlikely place, free of charge and without strings of debt attached, brings St. George to mind and may invite a variety of hagiopraxies on the part of Greek-Cypriots.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> And indeed of Turkish-Cypriots, whose challenges in times of agricultural constraint were for centuries likewise resisted in the imaginative company and under the representational aegis of *Aya Yorgi*. Another "spring of the dragon" (*ejderha yay*) is purported by Papageorgiou (*O Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 209) to be found in northern Cyprus, west of Kyrenia. I was unable to find it, my Turkish being so rudimentary that my efforts to ask locals devolved into shrugs and smiles—although the man I encountered working in a garden, near the (now-ruined, and reclaimed as a Russian Orthodox shrine) church of St. George above Karavas, was clearly aware of such a site, gesturing with his hands to indicate, in between where we stood in the hills and the city of Kyrenia below, a winding *yılan*—snake or serpent.



Figure 4.5: Monastery of St. George of the Caves, under construction in February, 2016.

The second site is known as “St. George of the Caves” (*Agios Geōrgios tōn Spēlaiōn*), north of Kolossi Castle near the southern coast. One morning, I am packed into an ancient car with Spyros and two of his friends, as the former has enthusiastically offered to take me to visit an out-of-the-way St. George site near his home (and the latter have deemed it a diverting way to spend a morning). In fact, Spyros tells us as we bounce along, it is not one cave but more like a network of caves, which have been rediscovered only within the last ten years, along with evidence of an eremitic community dating back to the era of the Crusades and the period of Frankish rule of Cyprus. Since their rediscovery, the surrounding community has been enormously generous in donating funds (supplemented by the Metropolitanate of Limassol) to build a new monastery on the site, revitalizing the heritage of these cave-dwelling monks from so many centuries before. As we approach the site from the town of Kolossi, I can see that they have not only donated money—they have distributed posters and signs directing visitors to the caves, even before the monastery has been completed.

We arrive to a construction site, with no caves in view, but with an enormous Greek flag flying from the wall. It quickly becomes clear that the outer shell of the monastery edifice has been erected surrounding the caves themselves, which are already open to—and evidently used for—the devotions of visitors. Beyond the courtyard are the caves, unsecured and deep, receding in darkness beneath the entryway; but a chapel, planned as a formal part of the monastery, is already springing up through the earnest efforts of visitors, who have perched icons and votives, and even a makeshift altar, around the largest cave. It is here, after inviting us to explore (carefully), that Spyros offers more of his understanding about the significance of this site in particular:

These caves once contained a spring, whose water was thought to be *agiasma* [holy water]. According to tradition it flowed even in times of drought. So of course the place was dedicated to St. George! People would come in times of drought to get water and pray for help. But once they found the monks' things from the *Frankokratia* it was clear that this was probably an important place for the people suffering under feudal rule. . . . Land in Cyprus was communally owned until the Crusaders came and brought feudalism. They built castles like the one in Kolossi, and took over the land for themselves. . . . This was completely alien to the Cypriot people and our customs. But the water in these caves belonged to St. George, and the monks must have protected it from the Crusaders.<sup>26</sup>

In Spyros' account, the association of St. George with springs and wells had pragmatic consequences: another source of fresh water might be claimed, controlled, and monetized by rulers of the land, but a spring that "belonged to St. George" was more difficult to seize, especially with a community of monks maintaining it and sanctifying it. The spring water becomes locally known as "holy," I would argue, not *because* it escapes the control of feudal landowners, but insofar as it is recognized as a source that facilitates and mediates a small measure of freedom from domination, under the auspices of the saint who can be counted to make a way out of no way, water from bare rock. The architecture of the monastery now being built at the Caves of St. George bears out a resonance with this logic: its courtyard contains a large stone pool, through which flowing water will be pumped, in celebratory evocation of St. George's liberating act at the cave of the dragon (Figure 4.6). And in one of the icons set up in the still-unfinished cave chapel, the princess held captive by the dragon stands beside a modern *agiasma* spigot, designating (anachronistically) the dragon's cave as a shrine yielding holy water—insofar, and only insofar, as its monstrous guardian will be eliminated by the saint.

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<sup>26</sup> February 5, 2016. I would visit again two years later and meet one of the monks who, by 2018, had moved into the site to aid more actively in its completion. Br. Iakovos tells a slightly different account from that of Spyros, in that he claims the original ecclesial use of these caves to date to the Byzantine period, but that they likely needed to be abandoned when the area was under feudal control by the Franks—"we found instruments for making wine, which the Franks were doing all around this area—even in these caves that had been the home of monks!" (January 21, 2018). Whoever is correct—whether the caves were protected by the monks from being appropriated for Frankish use, or whether the monks were driven out by the feudal lords of the area—the rhetorical register of the two accounts is the same: attribution of a site to patronage by St. George is a claim of struggle against the exploiters of the land, whether victory in that struggle comes sooner or much, much later.



Figure 4.6: Two views at the Monastery of the St. George of the Caves: within the cave chapel (left) and the fountain being restored in the central courtyard (right). Photos taken in February, 2016.

The notion of “feudalism” (*pheoudarchia*), raised by Spyros explicitly in juxtaposition with the liberative associations of St. George, has a long history of imagination and representation as a monstrous presence haunting the land of Cyprus. The British colonial archives depict a situation in the early decades of the twentieth century in which the already-strained ecological conditions of the island were *further preyed upon* by powerful people.<sup>27</sup> During times of particular agricultural difficulty, the colonial administration was inundated with pleas (and in some cases prophetic warnings) pertaining to the exhaustion of the farming communities of Cyprus and their desperation for relief—*not* primarily from the natural conditions themselves, which are “very difficult to remedy . . . similar to old age and death,” but rather from real “cause of destruction”: the “hideous and antisocial feudalism” by which the farmers were exploited economically by creditors, leaving them the “slaves of others” and their land in the control of the

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<sup>27</sup> During times of desperation, moneylenders could insist on higher interest rates, pushing farmers further into debt and ultimately appropriating their lands, leaving them impoverished laborers on lands that had once been theirs. Note, however, that the “material and moral exploiters of farmers” (as the Rural Council of Limassol put it in a 1933 proclamation—see State Archives, SA1-471/1/33) included not only capitalists but communists as well, seen by many as opportunistic in promising amelioration so as to gain political power on the backs of suffering agricultural communities. The government, in turn, came under suspicion of deliberately limiting the extent of its aid so as to maximize its own “surplus,” and is in various letters accused of heartlessness and hoarding for not varying taxation rates with regard to the vagaries of the climate. With every agent that promised amelioration experienced by the farmers as corrupt or indeed ready to devour the livelihood of very people they claimed to be helping (moneylenders, communists, colonial administrators), farmers came to organize themselves into cooperative societies, which had some success in taking over loans “due to moneylenders” and reissuing them more humanely (see State Archives, SA1-415/34), but these societies were often unable to resist adequately the pressures they faced.

wealthy and powerful.<sup>28</sup> No less eminent a figure than the Abbot of Kykkos Monastery responded to the drought of the early 1930s by figuring the “usurers” of the island as a monstrous, captivating threat that, “under cover of affording facilities . . . sucked and is still sucking the farmer’s life-blood”;<sup>29</sup> and a professional forest conservator reports to the government on the “great despair” of the peasants who are trapped in the “snake-like coils and ever-tightening grip of the usurers.”<sup>30</sup>

Although no overt reference to St. George appears in these documents, they are suffused by the imagination of the *drakos*—which, in Cyprus (as elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean), often appears to be implicitly or explicitly humanoid.<sup>31</sup> The *drakoi* of Cypriot folklore (not least those confronted by St. George, as we will see) tend to resemble ogres in that they speak, deliberate, set conditions, demand respect, and bear a relationship to the land that more resembles that of a wealthy landlord than that of a fearsome beast. Of particular note are those *drakoi* who appear as local tyrants that work their laborers brutally in the fields, but feed them sumptuous food and wines in the evening—to fatten them up for eating.<sup>32</sup> The threat to the land, in other words, is never purely natural, as in the case of plague or

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<sup>28</sup> The above quotes are from a farmer’s petition (May 5, 1934) to the Governor of Cyprus, asking for government intervention in curtailing the exploitation of impoverished farmers by predatory (*nota bene*) moneylenders. Other letters and government memos confirm the severe period of drought, in the central plains of the island (Mesoraria) in particular, between 1929 and 1934. The specific phrase about “hideous and antisocial feudalism,” however, is the Agricultural Treasurer’s summary paraphrase of the accusations made both by the farmers themselves and their advocates (such as the Abbot of Kykkos Monastery, specifically in response to whom the Treasurer is writing). All texts can be found in the State Archives, SA1-471/33. The reaction to such letters on the part of the administration was variably sympathetic: on the one hand, pointing to evidence of improved agricultural conditions due to British intervention, and on the other hand, coolly reminding themselves that “there is . . . a prevalent idea that the peasant does not get a fair deal and that his illiteracy prevents him from coping with the sharp practice of the usurer” (State Archives, SA1-471/33).

<sup>29</sup> Letter dated June 14, 1933. In State Archives, SA1-471/33.

<sup>30</sup> Report from February 2, 1933: “The Urgent Need for a Detailed Survey of Indebtedness of Peasants in Cyprus, and Loans made by Money-Lenders to Them” (in State Archives, SA1-630/28). Other such monstrous images of “voracious” moneylenders can be found in SA1-471/2/33, for instance, the farmers’ sense of being trapped in “the claws of usury.”

<sup>31</sup> On the slippage of the δράκος in Greek folklore between serpentine and ogrish paradigms, see Alexiades, *Οι ελληνικές παραλλαγές για τον δρακοντοκτόνο ήρωα*; and Livanos, “A Case Study in Byzantine Dragon-Slaying.”

<sup>32</sup> Nearchos Kliridis and Ismene Hadjicosta have collections of Cypriot folklore that bear out these tropes in abundance. See Kliridis, *Κυπριακά παραμύθια* (Volume 3, significantly, is subtitled “Tales about Dragons”), in which δράκοι might be disguised as schoolteachers (37), be described as having large eyebrows and warranting the polite address “grandfather” (πάππου—70), be a monstrous humanoid (“a giant [ἕνα γίγαντα], who appeared very savage” —77) with a huge fortune and a willingness to share it under certain conditions (if those conditions are not met, of course, he will gobble up his

pestilence; the dragons that haunt it function as a symbolic inscription of *cultural* and specifically *economic* causes of disaster, and it is in this respect that the Cypriot hagiographical heritage reflects a deep understanding of the entanglement of the fortunes of the land with its use and misuse on the part of (sinful, often to the point of becoming monstrous) human beings.<sup>33</sup>

Such a wider tradition of dragon-legends helps to condition how the significance of St. George is interpreted and represented in Cyprus, establishing a cultural-epistemological synapse that links the

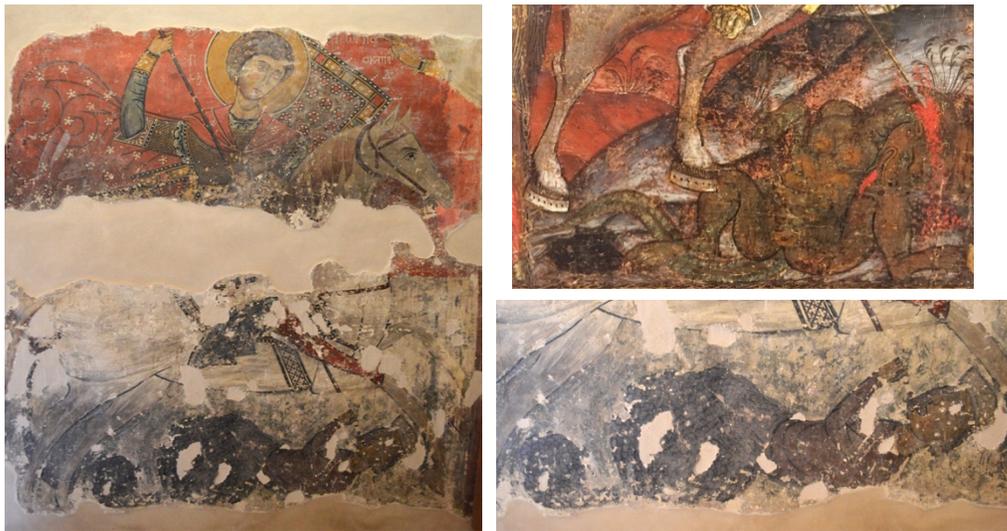


Figure 4.7: Anthropomorphic drakoi in Cypriot iconography. Counterclockwise from left: (a) "St. George the Cappadocian": wall-painting of St. George in the Church of the Panagia, Moutoullas (thirteenth century); (b) detail of the half-serpent, half-human dragon from the same image; (c) detail from an icon of St. George from the Church of St. George, Acheleia (eighteenth century), now housed in the Ecclesiastical Museum of Paphos.

petitioners), and in one case, live in a fortress with a "general" (ἀρχηγός—95); and Hadjicosta, *Η Κύπρος κι' η ζωή της*, including a fable about the folk hero Tyrimos, who outwits and steals from a wealthy, landowning δράκος, killing him in the process and being rewarded with the daughter of the king.

<sup>33</sup> See Pancaroğlu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer," 152-53, on the relationship of St. George's dracontomachy to traditions of half-human, half-dragon hybrids (such as the one depicted in the icon of St. George from Moutoullas—see Figure 4.7); The Moutoullas image is further discussed in Perdikis and Myriantheus, *Ο Νάος της Παναγίας στον Μουτούλλα*, 43-46; Mouriki, "The Wall Paintings of the Church of the Panagia at Moutoullas," 193-94; Stylianos, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus*, 328-29; and Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 129. However, against Walter and the Stylianos, who claim that the human half of the figure is specifically female, Karagianni argues (in "Η τιμή του αγίου Γεωργίου") that its lack of a beard is not enough evidence to assert the dragon's femininity (and no breasts, the other obvious indicator, may be seen—as they can in the Acheleia image in Figure 4.7). On the contrary, the figure's crown makes it more likely that it is representative of a king or emperor: either the emperor Diocletian, George's usual antagonist in the martyrdom account (Perdikis and Myriantheus support this reading), or an apocalyptic interpretation of Satan as "prince of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), or indeed the Latin King of Cyprus—for the image is painted not long after the end of Byzantine rule and the beginning of Frankish rule on Cyprus, a time when apocalyptic sentiments were fermenting and surreptitious resistance to the Latin regime is in iconographic evidence elsewhere (such as at the church of the Panagia at Asinou, discussed in Chapter III, section 3b).

desperate letters and increasingly militaristic language of the farmers of Cyprus with a hagiographical atmosphere in which St. George is the soldier-saintly combatant of “feudalism” (not only literal feudalism but as a catch-all for a variety of forms of economic exploitation) no less than an opponent of impious empire. For instance: Hector, a young waiter at a restaurant in Paphos with whom I had struck up conversation over the course of a couple visits, was quick to tell me—on learning that my research pertained to the figure of St. George in Cyprus and the particularities of his significance to the people of this place—that he thought of the dragon as a symbol for *debt*, specifically that owed to a wealthy landlord:

Typically the farmers have very little to spare and the landlords have all the wealth—and still they want more! But what can the farmers do? They can’t pay, they can’t fight—all they have is each other, and the saints. *Agios Geōrgios*—Saint Farmer, you see! I think he is a symbol that people and communities can use, when they are frustrated and have nowhere to turn. There must be an emotion or a desire in people that creates St. George and his dragon ... a desire to be free.<sup>34</sup>

As the long-simmering anti-colonial sentiment among Greek-Cypriots intensified during the 1940s, we find the farmers’ organizations formed during the 1930s to combat economic exploitation reconceiving themselves as “soldiers of the home front,”<sup>35</sup> waging a single unified (agricultural-political-spiritual) struggle against “slavery,”<sup>36</sup> and no less committed to liberation as the saint they had long upheld

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<sup>34</sup> February 21, 2016. It should be noted that Hector’s kind of psychologizing, para-religious interpretation of the ubiquitous symbolism of St. George and the dragon are not, in my experience, the norm. It is significant, I think, that Hector is younger than most of my interlocutors—no older than 30 at the time of our conversation. His explanation perhaps reflects the concerns of a more cosmopolitan, less devout generation of Greek-Cypriots—but note that, in spite of his explanation’s less overtly religious character, it displays nonetheless a significant resonance with broader patterns of understanding around St. George as a patron of rural resistance to exploitation and scarcity, with the sought-for rectification figured as “freedom.”

<sup>35</sup> State Archives, SA1-606/1/42; see again Chapter II, section 2b. For some time before this articulation of the farmers’ unions as “soldiers of the home front,” government officials had expressed worries that “PEK [the Pancyprian Farmers’ Union, Παναγροτική Ένωσις Κύπρου] appears to be in danger of developing into a Greek nationalist organization with politics taking priority over rural affairs.” This same archival file also contains evidence that, although the rural associations of the 1930s were composed of Greek and Turkish Cypriots working together (for instance, the Rural Council of Limassol, in 1933, had issued an invitation to “you brother farmers, both Christian and Turkish,” to form a union—see SA1-471/33), during the 1940s, by contrast, Turkish-Cypriot organizers cease to be elected and Turkish-Cypriot members begin to withdraw, in some cases staging public protests at the increasing elision between agricultural and political affairs.

<sup>36</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Pancyprian Farmers’ Union (September 14-15, 1949) resolves the following: “We declare once more our determination to regain our freedom. We are Greeks, a part of the heroic race that for ten years running keeps on fighting for the peace and freedom of the world. We can no longer endure our bondage. The sacrifices of the Greek

as their patron: George. We will return once more, in section 2, to the entanglement of St. George with the “national struggle” of Greek-Cypriots for self-determination (which meant, for most, “unification” [*enōsis*] with Greece). But first, we need to zero in on a particular folk tradition whose fruits are abundant in the hagiographical culture of St. George to this day, but whose roots lie in long centuries of Cyprus’ incorporation and negotiation by five powers: Byzantine, Arab, Frankish, Ottoman, and British. This tradition provides a medium *par excellence* where the ecological and the political registers of resistance in Cyprus coincide: the *Tragoudi t’ Aē Giōrgē*—the Song of St. George.

*1b) “A child to eat, so he would let the water flow”: The Cypriot Song of St. George*

With the boyish enthusiasm of a learned village priest faced with the opportunity to show off his underappreciated knowledge, Fr. Lampros has ushered me out of the church of St. George in Arediou, which he has unlocked in order that I may examine a rare icon of St. George Swift-to-Help,<sup>37</sup> and insisted on driving me up the road to another, rarely seen church of the Panagia Hodegetria. We continue our animated conversation as we drive, but once we arrive to the small wood-and-stone church—much older than the main village church from which we have come—the priest’s mood darkens. He opens the door and steps in to turn on the light, saying: “This church used to contain the finest hagiography of St. George and the Panagia in this area, from the thirteenth century, but—come and see.” In the narrow room, I see immediately that the walls are stripped of paint in many places, and in others, the freschi can still be seen but are slashed and scraped so that only fragments remain. On what would once have been a magnificent, almost life-sized image of St. George slaying the dragon, only the saint’s torso and head remain, with the small figure of the princess in the background, the saint’s eyes and hair scratched off and the dragon

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People must be given their due. The principles of self-determination must be applied. We claim to be united with our gallant mother Greece. We are no longer resigned to the fate of being slaves.” In State Archives, SA1-606/2/42.

<sup>37</sup> See again the conclusion to Chapter II.

entirely missing. “The Turks did this,” Fr. Lampros says, his eyes fixed on the image. “In the 1820s there was great violence when many priests and bishops and monks were slaughtered. This was a monastery, but they came here, killed the monks, and destroyed the iconography with fire and knives.” I nod and stay silent, allowing the priest to continue. He does, but seemingly with a non-sequitur: Do you know the *Tragoudi t’ Aē Giōrgē*? We sing it at the feast of St. George, and the people play on instruments that they bring to the church.” And he starts to sing, his voice echoing in the narrow space: “*Deutera ‘tan tēs Katharēs, pou kophkan tēn nomadan...* It is a favorite song of the Cypriots! It tells the story of how St. George goes to kill the dragon that enslaved the people.” He turns again to the wall-painting. “This is the dragon, right here. We don’t see him any more in the image, but look: [he gestures to the scratched and missing paint]. It is a cruel and terrible thing to desecrate a church! It is evil... You see why we depend on St. George so much in Cyprus?”<sup>38</sup>

It is by appealing to the legend of St. George and the dragon that Fr. Lampros articulates an understanding of the opposition between the holy ones and the “evil” forms of oppression and violence faced through their history. It is saints like George who are held to stand beside those who struggle (and



Figure 4.8: Wall-painting of St. George, Church of the Panagia Hodegetria, Arediou. Thirteenth century.

often fail) to resist domination or destruction. And in the hagiographical folksongs (*tragoudia*), composed in Cypriot dialect and beloved across the island, this struggle is given a multilayered, symbolic narration. In this section, I offer a full English translation of one rendition of this diverse and lively folksong tradition, along with initial commentary pertaining to my broader considerations of hagiography as resistance in modern Cyprus. To my knowledge, no formal English translation of a Cypriot *Tragoudi t’ Aē Giōrgē* has yet been published,

<sup>38</sup> April 22, 2016. See again Touna, *Fabrications of the Greek Past*, 110-15.

and certainly no critical edition—the hundreds of slight variations in the poetic text, and its long evolution over time prior to its recording in writing, would make such an edition challenging.<sup>39</sup> The translation I provide here adopts an English meter equivalent to that of the original Greek (so that it might be sung to the same music, although I have needed for the most part to abandon the original's rhyming couplets).<sup>40</sup> Without a doubt, more in-depth analysis is owed than what I can provide in this initial study.

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<sup>39</sup> There are numerous small divergences between renditions of the song, but the overall narrative and symbolic repertoire is consistent across these versions. Scholars concur that the τραγούδι τ' Αη Γιώργη far predates the modern era (as an oral tradition), likely tracing to the bardic traditions of the Byzantine-Arab frontiers (see Hadjikostas, “Το τραγούδι τ' Αη Γιώργη,” 99, and Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση της Κύπρου,” 135). The songs begin to be written down, however, in the period of British rule on Cyprus (after 1878). According to Costis Kokkinoftas (“Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση της Κύπρου,” 135), the first extant written version is that of A. P. Michailidis (1892), followed by versions published by Panayiotis Solomou (1922), Vasileos Themistoklis (1933), and Nikos Ptochopoulos (1952), among many others published informally as φυλλάδες—pamphlets disseminated by traveling poets or bards, who would be relied upon for news and commentary particularly in the smaller villages of the island (for more information on these φυλλάδες, see the entries pertaining to St. George in Stavridis, *Βιβλιογραφία κυπριακής λαϊκής ποίησης*). Other versions available in the literature (besides the one I will provide in full below, from Hadjikostas, “Το τραγούδι τ' Αη Γιώργη”) include: (a) an unattributed version from 1906, published in Kitromilidou, *Κυπριακά δημοτικά θρησκευτικά ποιήματα*, 126-31; (b) a version set down by Georgios Andreou Paschalis in 1916, a fragment of which is published in Yianguoullis, *Κυπριακά ήθη και έθιμα*, 110-11; (c) one set down in 1927 by the monk Chrysanthos of Machairas, published in the journal *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ*, and included in Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 196-202; as well as (d) unattributed versions included in Raptopoulos, *Ο Άγιος Μεγαλομάρτυς Γεώργιος ο Τροπαιοφόρος*, 57-62; and Hadjicosta, *Η Κύπρος κι' η ζωή της*, 56-60. Hadjicosta includes also (65-66) an otherwise rarely discussed Τραγούδι τ' Αη Γιώρκου του Σπόρου (Song of St. George of the Seed), which I regrettably do not have the space to consider at this time. Moreover, various Greek-Cypriot musicians have performed and recorded various versions of the Τραγούδι, which may be heard online (e.g. a particularly well-known version by Alkinoos Ioannides: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xV49vXw1wtA> [accessed March 7, 2018]; the lyrics of Ioannides' version may be found, with an informal English translation by a fan, at <http://lyricstranslate.com/en/τ'-άη-γιωρκού-t-ai-yorkou-saint-george.html>). Christakis Sikkis was the first to record the song professionally, in 1989, for which sheet music can be found in Lambrou, *Της Κύπρου η παράδοση στον τόπο τζιαι στα ξένα*, 219-21. More recently, the group Dunya, an ensemble of Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot musicians, likewise recorded a version for their album *Music of Cyprus*, emphasizing the shared (however ambivalent this sharing has been, as we have seen in Chapter II) celebration of St. George among the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus.

<sup>40</sup> On the Cypriot melodic form known in Greek as a “voice” (φωνή), to which this song adheres, and on its regional variations, see Syrimis, “Ideology, Orality, and Textuality,” 206-09. The Greek text translated below is published in Leontios Hadjikostas' 1980 study, “Το τραγούδι τ' Αη Γιώργη και μία προσπάθεια ερμηνείας του [The song of Saint George and an attempt at its interpretation].” Although I have come across numerous other versions, the one collected by Hadjikostas (recited to him from memory by a refugee from Kyrenia) was current in the middle-twentieth century, the heart of my research period, and is also the most substantially formulated in Cypriot dialect. This was the assessment of George Demetriades, the proprietor of the “Seven Saint Georges” restaurant near Paphos, who was enormously generous of his time and linguistic skill in helping me to translate a poem whose dialect I found largely impenetrable on my own. Although the translation is my own rendering, this would not have been possible without Demetriades' guidance with the Cypriot vocabulary and local associations, and I credit him as my co-translator.

It was Clean Monday, when we ‘cut the noses from our faces,’<sup>41</sup>  
when I went out from where I dwell, that first week of our fasting.  
And seven days and seven nights it took to reach Beirut,  
No bread or water could be found in all the land around us.

Of bread and water would be much, however broad the country,  
and yet within that land there lived a large and mighty dragon.<sup>42</sup>  
The arrangement he demanded was a child to eat,  
so he would let the water flow again into their land.

The families that had six or seven would send one to him.  
But then there came the time and turn of the great king among them:  
He only had one daughter, whose own marriage was approaching  
when the dragon’s message came demanding her as tribute.<sup>43</sup>

The aged king spoke with his mouth, yet in his eyes was crying:  
“When you were only three, my dear, and were becoming four,  
better far, my daughter, had I given you to Charon,<sup>44</sup>  
instead of sending you this day as tribute for the dragon.”

“Hush, oh hush, my father—for this is my destiny.  
In the dragon’s belly will my tomb forever be.”<sup>45</sup>  
She ran then to her mother, to say goodbye to her.  
And when her mother saw her, she could not contain her cries.

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<sup>41</sup> Κόφκων τὴν νομάδων—this phrase is still used today in reference to Clean Monday (Δευτέρα τῆς Καθαρῆς), which is the first day of the great period of fasting prior to Easter (the equivalent point of the calendar, yet with a wholly different affect, to Ash Wednesday at the beginning of Lent in Western Christian traditions—see again Chapter III, section 1b). Although the phrase most directly refers to the beginning of a time of restraint and asceticism (cutting off one’s nose, that is, in the sense of not even smelling the savory scents of meats and cheeses, which are not eaten during the fast), it is likely that the phrase also contains an oblique reference to circumcision, which was traditionally associated with lenten purification, in the sense of a circumcision of the heart. Throughout the poem we will find such double-entendres, with which one body part is used to symbolize another, in order to overlay multiple registers of meaning.

<sup>42</sup> The implication of this contrafactual is that the scarcity of food and water was not due to the land being unproductive, but rather to the presence of the dragon—the mythic figure associated above all with the hoarding of resources and the heartless exaction of exchange for what the land produces.

<sup>43</sup> This is the first instance of several in which the dragon behaves in specifically human fashion: the sending of a message to the king, demanding his daughter as “tribute/gift/offering” (κατίσσιον).

<sup>44</sup> Χάρων—the Ferryman, a personification of death, who in ancient Greek mythology would ferry the souls of the dead to Hades, and who remains an active figure in modern Greek folklore.

<sup>45</sup> A second double-entendre, likely sexual: the girl envisions being buried in the dragon’s “belly” ([κ]οιλίαν), an image both of being devoured or consumed and of being crushed beneath his belly, that is, raped. The force of this second register of meaning becomes greater when we consider the political contexts of the song’s composition and currency: feudal and imperial forms of domination in which powerful men might demand sexual enjoyment of the daughters of their debtors, subjects, or beaten adversaries (in support of this interpretation, see Hadjikostas, “Τὸ τραγούδι τ’ Ἀη Γιώργη,” 100). I am told by Elli, a 35-year-old museum staff member in Nicosia, that still today the term δράκος is consistently used in conversation and media to refer to rapists.

“When you were only three, my dear, and were becoming four,  
better far, my daughter, had I given you to Charon,  
instead of sending you this day as tribute for the dragon.”

But lifting herself up,<sup>46</sup> the mother opened then the chest:<sup>47</sup>  
“Wear gold beneath, my daughter, and above it wear this crystal;  
and on top of all wear golden cloth as soft as wheat.”<sup>48</sup>

So going out then, hand in hand, they traveled to the crossroads:  
“Take this road,” the mother said, “and follow well this trail,  
and it will take you straight, unfailing, to the dragon’s pool.<sup>49</sup>  
And so she took that road, indeed, and followed well that trail,  
and so it led her straight, unfailing, to the dragon’s pool.

The dragon was not in just then, for he had gone out hunting.  
She found a stone half-buried and there sat to keep from falling,  
and her weeping was as great as five wide-open fountains,  
and driven by her sighs her tears flowed out through many ditches.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Σηκώννεται—the same Cypriot verb, “to lift oneself up” is used for the observation of lenten fasting, that is, to elevate oneself spiritually through purification.

<sup>47</sup> Σεντοῦτζιν—a large chest or trunk, ordinarily painted, carved, or otherwise decorated, where a family might keep its prized possessions; can also be used as a metaphor for a coffin or reliquary.

<sup>48</sup> The mother is dressing her daughter in the family’s finery, in a tragic inversion of a mother’s preparation of her daughter for her wedding: here she provides clothing threaded with gold and jewels to match. This moment is another significant piece of evidence that the girl is being delivered for the sexual rather than the culinary satisfaction of the δράκος. It would make no sense, if she were simply going to her death, for her mother to dress her in jewels and fine clothes; rather, it seems more likely that she is dressed this way in an effort to make her as appealing as possible (physically and, perhaps, financially as well), in the hopes that she will be treated well.

The phrase I render as “golden cloth as soft as wheat” is χρυσὰ μαλαματένα—μάλαμα is a barely-translatable Cypriot word, signifying gold but also wheat that has been harvested and winnowed (thus μαλαματένα can also mean “soft,” more precisely “wheaten”), and each is used metaphorically to imply the other, in the sense that wheat is as precious as gold for an agriculturally-dependent society. There is a Cypriot saying: όπου Γιώργος τζιαι μάλαμα—“where there is a George, there is *malama*,” that is, a heart of gold. Some also say that μάλαμα has a connotation of cleverness or cunning: a heart of gold after the fashion of a Robin Hood—or indeed of a St. George, whose benevolence is understood to be oriented especially toward the poor, the weak, and the oppressed at the expense of the rich, the powerful, the oppressor (see again extensive discussion of these themes in Chapter II). The expression itself plays on the double-meaning of Γεώργιος/γεωργία (George/agriculture): where there is good earth / a good farmer, there is a good harvest of wheat and, by extension, a flourishing of the land and its people. There are, in turn, Cypriot folktales about a “Princess Malamatenia”—her name perhaps referring both to her soft golden hair and her heart of gold.

<sup>49</sup> Πηγάδι—as throughout Mediterranean mythologies, the dragon is established not only as a hoarder and exploiter of a precious source of fresh water but also as himself making his home atop the source and stopping its flow.

<sup>50</sup> The metaphor here is noteworthy, since the crisis that the dragon represents is a stopping up of the water and preventing it from flowing out to irrigate the land. Here, the princess’ tears are represented as new water sources, welling up like “fountains” (βρύσες) and flowing outward through “ditches” or irrigation channels (αύλακούδκια), foreshadowing the defeat of the dragon and the return of the water’s ordinary course. Indeed it is the princess who, by drawing St. George’s attention and inspiring him to fight the dragon, will ultimately be the cause of the dragon’s defeat and the unblocking of the water for the land.

But by chance the place was on the way of that great George,  
Saint George the near at hand,<sup>51</sup> the very one from Cappadocia,  
who had a saddle made of gold, and a strong grey horse.<sup>52</sup>

“What are you doing, lovely girl,<sup>53</sup> at the dragon’s own pool?”  
“My father sent me, master,<sup>54</sup> to be eaten by the dragon,  
so he will release the water back into our country.”

“Attend my horse, you lovely girl, until he ceases sweating;  
and when the dragon shows his face again, you let me know.”  
“Get out of here, my master, oh my master, save yourself,  
or else the only tomb you have will be the dragon’s heart!”<sup>55</sup>

They had not finished speaking when the dragon reappeared;  
and when he saw all three of them, they looked so good to him.  
“At breakfast-time, I’ll eat the man; for lunch, I’ll have the girl,  
and last of all I’ll eat the horse beneath the setting sun.”

“At breakfast-time, you’ll eat my blade;<sup>56</sup> for lunch, you’ll have a chain;

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<sup>51</sup> Κοντοῦ—another double meaning here, in that this second adjective used to describe the saint (after “great”) means both “near” (as in the sense of “Saint George the Near,” discussed in Chapter II, section 2a), but also “short” (evoking the figure of a stalwart, stocky *pallikari*—the bandits who roamed the countryside plundering the Ottoman nobility and otherwise enacting peasant resistance to imperial domination). As will become important in section 2a of this chapter, Cypriot folklore also renders Digenis Akritas, the great Byzantine frontier hero (who himself is conjoined with St. George in ways that will be given analysis), as short, stocky, and ugly—a huge departure from the epic poem tradition in which Digenis is a paragon of youthful beauty (again, like St. George in the classical mold).

<sup>52</sup> Γρίβαν—not only a description of color (off-white or grey), but also connoting nobility and strength, as if carved from marble. That George’s horse is described as *grivas* in the Cypriot folksongs (not only in this version, that is, but also the versions provided by Papageorgiou and Hadjicosta) is likewise of preemptive significance for section 2b, when we will discuss the appropriations and imaginative elisions between St. George and George Grivas.

<sup>53</sup> Κόρη λυερή—this address might be considered dismissive in modern Greek (perhaps best translated into English as “missy” or “sweet thing”), but in Cypriot Greek, more inflected by archaic Greek, it would come across as respectful—like the idealized girls (*korai*) represented in archaic sculpture. Note that *korai* were used in the ancient world as funerary gifts or grave markers: there may be a lingering sense here of her being on the threshold between life and death.

<sup>54</sup> Ἀφέντη—a term of respect found in medieval Greek and Arabic (*efendi*), which was absorbed into Turkish with the Ottoman conquest of Byzantine-Arab lands. The term has fallen out of use in modern (post-independence) Greek but remains active in Cypriot Greek (along with other Turkish titles, such as *mukhtar*, a village headman).

<sup>55</sup> Here is another metaphorical transference of one bodily part/function to another. If “belly” before had a sexual connotation, here “heart” has a digestive connotation: a metonymy for the dragon’s stomach or innards generally (Papangelou has this sense of “stomach” or “center” included even in the primary usage—see *Το κυπριακό ιδίωμα*, s.v. καρδιά). But also, in light of the specific use of the Greek καρδία in Orthodox theological anthropology, we may consider the dragon’s “heart” as a metonymy for his corrupt nature, his greed and cruelty which would be (the princess fears) the death of her would-be rescuer.

<sup>56</sup> Χαντζιαρκάν—a Cypriot formulation of the Arabic *janbiya* dagger, a short curved blade worn by men, particularly in the Arabian peninsula and parts of eastern Africa, as a status symbol and ready all-purpose blade; it is intriguing that St. George is represented here as a high-status Arabian rather than as a Byzantine soldier with his spear and longsword.

And last, beneath the setting sun, I'll make of you a game."<sup>57</sup>  
"Come on, whose son are you that you can talk with me like this?"  
"I am the son of lightning bright, and grandchild of the thunder,  
And I will wreck this cave, your bed, and it will crush you under."

The dragon, when he heard all this, took it rather poorly:  
And straightaway he opened up three mouths to eat them down.<sup>58</sup>  
But with one blow of George's dagger, he was bathed in blood,  
and then the saint kneeled down to fight with miracles alone.<sup>59</sup>

He reached into his saddlebags and there he found the chain,  
And bridling the dragon then he made of him a game.<sup>60</sup>  
"Drag him to your father's country, lovely girl, so that  
the Christians and all others there will see and will believe,  
so even the unlawful ones will see and be astounded."<sup>61</sup>

The dragon, with a mighty roar, shook the earth within,  
so much, they say, that far away the king's throne toppled over.<sup>62</sup>  
"I praise you, God on high, who sits among the highest places,  
who brings to light those things that are both hidden and revealed."<sup>63</sup>

The prayer was scarcely finished when the maiden reached the door:

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<sup>57</sup> Παιχνίδι—a game or toy. The suggestion is that after defeating the dragon, the saint will humiliate him as well, treating him not as a serious adversary but as a plaything.

<sup>58</sup> The figure of the dragon, anthropomorphic though he is, remains monstrous: he is said to have either three heads or three mouths on one head—which of these two it is, however, is left to the listener's imagination.

<sup>59</sup> Θαμμάσῃ πολέμῳ—an important phrase, establishing that George will be victorious over the dragon (and all he represents) not by force of arms alone, but also through divine favor mediated through him. After the one blow and what seems to be a prayer, the dragon is made docile enough (or at least incapable of retaliation) to be chained up.

<sup>60</sup> In a moment of comedy, the "chain" (ἀλυσίδι) that George promises to feed the dragon for lunch is here revealed to be not the chain that would be expected to contain a dangerous beast but rather a bridle (bit and reins), placed in his mouth as if to ride the dragon like a horse or yoke him for labor.

<sup>61</sup> Στραωθοῦσιν—to be astounded, blinded, or dumbstruck. This is a common concept, if not quite a common word, in Greek hagiographical representations of the effects of saintly miracles on those (especially unbelievers) who witness them.

<sup>62</sup> It is highly significant, as I will discuss, that the last we see of the dragon in (this version of) the song is his roaring in frustration, having been yoked and humiliated, pacified and led back as a prisoner. This is not so much the tale of George's dragon-slaying as it is of George's intervention to invert power relations: the dragon who had held the whole country hostage to his greed is now at the mercy of those he has oppressed.

<sup>63</sup> It is unclear who speaks this prayer—St. George, glorifying the God through whom he accomplished the feat; the princess, praising God for her rescue; the king, who prays in wonderment and hope at the portent of the earth shaking; or even the narrator, interjecting to remind his listeners of the religious significance of the dragon's defeat. In my judgment, it is most likely to be either the princess speaking this prayer (echoed by her father a few lines further down), since the next line has the princess as the subject of the sentence, arriving at her door before the prayer is even complete; or else the king, since we have seen (in Chapter II) the common trope in the miracles of St. George that the rescued captive is returned to her or his parent so swiftly that the prayer of the parent for George's help is barely complete (and that the hot liquid, in the case of the boy on the horse, has not even cooled). In either case, however, the presence of these prayers sets up the conclusion of the song, which emphasizes the augmented Christian faith of the people of the country that has been saved.

“Open up, my father dear, and see that I’ve returned!”  
He opened up his arms for her and glorified his God.

“I praise you, sweetest God, and I will glorify your name,  
for there can be no labor done except what you would will.  
If I could only know who came and did for me this kindness,  
To him I would be pleased to give my girl, my only daughter,  
And I would be his servant through the night and each day after.”

“But I do not desire that you give away your daughter,  
nor that you become my servant through the night and day.  
Only build a church and dedicate it to Saint George,  
where every April twenty-third you’ll celebrate his day.”<sup>64</sup>

So as the saint instructed him, thus the king obeyed:  
he even built a dome thereon and spangled it with pearls.  
And with a cart he brought the candles; with a flask, the oil;  
and with a team of mules he brought the holy gifts and treasures.

Whosoever now is found to sing this thrice a day,  
will not be burned in fire, nor be swept off by a river  
and even struck by lightning fierce, he will never be touched.  
But he who sang the story first, the one you name the bard:  
he must be honored most of all, so pray for his reward.

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In the *Tragoudi t’ Aē Giōrgē*, we have a multimediated (in narrative and music, potentially dance as well) representation of personal and communal liberation from ecological scarcity. This scarcity is not accidental but imposed, and, contrasting with the period of bodily fasting for spiritual enrichment within which the narrative is framed (Great Lent), it is not construed as ascetically salutary in any way (as it might be, for instance, as a scarcity which teaches the people of the land to cooperate and sacrifice for one another) but rather is personified as a dragon: an archetype of greed, exploitation, and self-serving cruelty. The sacrifice required of the people is a terrible, devil’s (dragon’s!) bargain, requiring the community to

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<sup>64</sup> That there is already a feast-day of St. George, commemorating the day of the saint’s martyrdom, establishes that this episode is not staged during the life of the saint (as a “historical” event) but rather imagined as a posthumous miracle—the saint who stops to defeat the dragon is either an apparition or an allegory.

sacrifice their future (their children) to ensure their survival in the present. The situation is degrading and devastating, not purifying; and yet, purity and purification are central themes of the song, and St. George's actions are figured as both holy and sanctifying. After a token blow with his dagger, for instance, the saint is able to defeat the dragon by means of his purity of heart—kneeling down before the beast, he wages a battle of miracles (*thammasta polemon*) rather than of blades.<sup>65</sup> But more generally, the specificity with which the narrative is framed temporally registers its whole trajectory as oriented by a process of spiritual purification. The poem begins with the first week of Great Lent, a time of particular cleansing and repentance between Clean Monday and the Feast of Orthodoxy,<sup>66</sup> and it ends with the establishment of a feast-day for St. George (the date on which the song is most regularly sung and heard),<sup>67</sup> a feast connected with Easter resurrection and the “spiritual springtime” (*ear noēton*) of life abundant.<sup>68</sup> That the narrative concludes with the edification of Christians and the astoundment of “the unlawful” is a reminder that St. George's victory is understood to be not over scarcity or exploitation alone, but also over unbelief. It is a triumph of the holy one in the beautiful struggle for the redemption and sanctification of others.

The origins of the *Tragoudi t' Aē Giōrgē* are uncertain. The few scholars who have dedicated attention to it concur that it is related to the “akritic” contexts of the medieval Mediterranean—that is, it likely emerged as part of a larger cultural proliferation in the borderlands or imperial extremities (*akra*)

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<sup>65</sup> Moreover, not only purity but impurity is at stake: the fate of the princess is understood, for instance, to be worse than death—otherwise, her parents would not lament that she would have been better off to have been “given to Charon” as a child. This sentiment likely reflects a sexual valance of the dragon's anticipated violation of his victim, another encapsulation of the oppressor's total control.

<sup>66</sup> The significance of this feast, which celebrates Orthodoxy's “triumph” over the last of the greatest heresies construed by the church (Iconoclasm) will be engaged in Chapter VI, as it is pivotal to the authoritative Orthodox hagiographical paradigm that provides conditions of possibility for the practices and understandings discussed in this study.

<sup>67</sup> Along with the November 3 Feast of St. George of the Seed, on which, as Varvounis reminds us (“Η πανελλήνια λαϊκή λατρευτική τιμή του αγίου Γεωργίου”), St. George is petitioned not only to bless the seeds and their fruitful potential but also to safeguard the winter's rainy season: *to let the water flow*.

<sup>68</sup> See again this association in Koutloumousianou (ed), *Μηναίον του Απριλίου*, 90, along with the discussions of the paschal character of the Feast of St. George in Chapter III, sections 1a and 1b.

where Byzantine, Persian, Arab, Latin, and Turkic civilization overlapped.<sup>69</sup> It is during this period and indeed in this frontier context that St. George acquires his dragon in iconography, narrative, and so too (argues the literature) in folksong.<sup>70</sup> An important chapter by Guy Saunier should lead us to caution with regard to attributing the songs too directly to this period, since they were not written down until the nineteenth century, during which there was (no less than there continues to be) nationalistic value available in the memory of the frontier struggles between Byzantium and its antagonists, and in their purported cultural continuity with the present.<sup>71</sup> However, for my purposes, less important than whether

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<sup>69</sup> From the seventh through the eleventh century, the Byzantine administration deployed *akriteis* to protect the borders of the empire during the centuries of warfare and reciprocal raiding against Arabic and Turkic societies, soldiers who were imagined to have the warrior saints as patrons; and from the end of the eleventh century through the end of the thirteenth, crusaders from western and northern Europe invaded Anatolia, Cyprus, and the Levant and established local kingdoms under Latin rule, adding an additional plane of intercultural intersection and antagonism to a region already crosshatched by networks of political and economic contestation. The frontier experience of Cyprus is distinctive in at least two ways: (a) in that, between 688 and 965, the island was jointly ruled (and taxed) by representatives of the Byzantine emperor and the Arab caliph; and (b) in that the era of Latin rule endured far longer than that of the other crusader kingdoms in the region, with Cyprus remaining in the control of the French Lusignan dynasty until 1474 and for another century under the rule of Venice.

<sup>70</sup> See Hadjikostas, “Το τραγούδι τ’ Αη Γιώργη,” 99: “Although the saint was already praised as ‘trophybearer’ and ‘defender of kings in wars’ in his sung *akolouthia* by the conclusion of the ninth century, he was not represented in ecclesial hagiography as a mounted warrior until the tenth century, but rather [was represented] as a citizen. At that time he was found as a cavalier, but still without the scene of the dragonslaying. This [scene of the dragonslaying in the *Τραγούδι*], then, coincides with the time of the frontier struggles [ἀκρῆτικῶν ἀγώνων]. As a soldierly native of Cappadocia [at the heart of the Byzantine frontier in this period], the saint was indisputably the patron of those defending the borders of the Roman Empire.” Kokkinofas, likewise, identifies the most probable origin of the folksong tradition around St. George and the dragon to the frontiers—contexts “which were dominated by the exploits of the *akrites* and in which the Saint began to be portrayed on horseback” (“Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση τῆς Κύπρου,” 135); cf. Hadjichristodoulou, “Ένας ἀκρίτας ἅγιος στὴν Κύπρο,” on the Byzantine (and Byzantine-inspired) songs in which these *akrites* and their patron saints feature (especially George and Mamas, in the Cypriot context).

<sup>71</sup> See Saunier, “Is There Such a Thing as an ‘Akritic Song?’” (and cf. Herzfeld, *Ours Once More*, 61-69, for an analogous discussion of the similar, indeed interpenetrating, “klephtic song” tradition). Note that even Saunier does not “propose to dispute the antiquity, or even the Byzantine character,” of the Greek and Cypriot folksong tradition ordinarily described as “akritic.” In other words, there is no evidence *against* the attribution of the tradition to an oral transmission from its original emergence in the culture of the frontier struggles. Saunier’s point is that we should turn our analytic spotlight on what is *gained* in modernity by the maintenance and inclusivity of this slippery category—including with regard to songs, like our own *Τραγούδι τ’ Αη Γιώργη*, that do not overtly address stock akritic characters or narrative tropes but nonetheless *evoke* them for modern audiences, as is undoubtedly the case in Cyprus. See also Herzfeld’s crucial point in *Ours Once More* (13) that the study of Greek-language “folklore” (λαογραφία) has been “politically committed from its inception, and no study of it can ever be anything other than an excursion into ideology.” That is, the identification of particular media as belonging to a collective “folk,” whose categorical continuity over time is presumed, conditions and indeed burdens the study of these media with an expectation of unearthing something “authentic” to a wider, politically significant reality beyond the media themselves (this is certainly the case with the few interpretations of the *Τραγούδι* that I will consider, and indeed it is the case with my own analysis, self-consciousness about the matter notwithstanding). Cf.

these songs first emerged in the tenth century or the nineteenth century is the fact that in colonial and postcolonial Cyprus, this enduring and beloved song tradition is *associated*, by nonspecialists and specialists alike, with the *akrites* of Cyprus—and with the centuries of exploitation of the land by non-Greeks and non-Orthodox that they, and their patron saint, resisted.

Emblematic of such a way of reading the *Tragoudi* as symbolically rehearsing Byzantine resistance to and victory over foreign threats is Hadjikostas' own "attempt at an interpretation," which he includes with the text of the song. Hadjikostas is precise in his determination of the allegorical referents. The narrator references the seven days it takes to reach Beirut; this suggests, to Hadjikostas, that the narrative takes place "somewhat east and inland, around the middle Euphrates"—specifically, he believes, in the kingdom of Edessa, seized and defended by Baldwin I during the First Crusade.<sup>72</sup> The rest of the allegory falls into place: the dragon "should be considered as the tight siege of Edessa by part of the Muslim army in the effort to retake the city," while the demand for the children, and particularly the daughter of the king, "allegorizes the onerous conditions which the strong aggressor imposes on the powerless victims of the siege"—including, quite specifically, a princess for marriage in exchange for some military relief.<sup>73</sup> St. George becomes the emblem of liberation for the Christian East—Hadjikostas elides the struggles of the Byzantine *akrites* and of the Latin crusaders together, stamping them both (as they stamped themselves) with the figure of St. George, whom he construes above all as a defender against "the barbarians."<sup>74</sup>

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Touna, *Fabrications of the Greek Past*, 116-39, on the categories of "tradition" and "traditional" Greek culture, along with the "modern interests [that] drive that very definition" of something as "traditional."

<sup>72</sup> Hadjikostas, "Το τραγούδι τ' Αη Γιώργη," 99-100.

<sup>73</sup> Hadjikostas, "Το τραγούδι τ' Αη Γιώργη," 100.

<sup>74</sup> Recall from Chapter II, section 3a, that Hadjikostas was also the author of the poem about St. George the Keen (ο Οξύς), in Lefkara—the chapel that, standing on a crest between the hill town of Lefkara and the sea, "looks like a fortress/ with the cross on its roof like a lighthouse/ to scout the enemy far away:/ the ships and privateers of the Saracens" (cited in Papageorgiou, *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 120).

While Hadjikostas' dragon is unambiguously a figure of "the Muslim hurricane" against which Latin and Greek warriors struggled together,<sup>75</sup> other interpreters would read the same symbols as reflecting the situation that *resulted* from the crusaders' actions. In modern Greek-Cypriot accounts, the era of Latin rule is remembered as one of brutal domination and abuse of the agricultural and spiritual riches of the island: its material resources directed elsewhere at the expense of the local population, and its dignity as a noble child of Byzantine Orthodoxy degraded by the condemnations of Roman Catholic Church authorities.<sup>76</sup> Kleitos Ioannides' description is typical: rule by the crusader-kings was



Figure 4.9: Kolossi Castle, one of several fortresses built by the Latin military orders occupying Cyprus to provide both a military stronghold and a base for economic activity. Thirteenth century, rebuilt fifteenth century.

an onerous and harsh period ... with much suffering, oppression and persecution. ... During the entire Frankish-Venetian period, from 1192 till 1571, the Church of Cyprus was fighting and resisting with the blood of martyrs to save the Orthodox faith and culture of the country. It was struggling to preserve the Greek Christian character of the island intact. To naked suppression it opposed the sacrifice of martyrs.<sup>77</sup>

If anything, then, when Ismene Hadjicosta suggests that the *Tragoudi t' Aē Giōrgē* and its figuration of a hoarding, exploitative dragon were what "the imagination of the people created in a time of drought or in the time of some brutal ruling dynasty," it is the Frankish period and the Lusignan dynasty to which she

<sup>75</sup> Hadjikostas, "Το τραγούδι τ' Αη Γιώργη," 102.

<sup>76</sup> See Efthymiou, *Greeks and Latins on Cyprus*, 36-38. He cites contemporary accounts, for instance by Wilbrand, Count of Oldenburg, attesting in 1211 to the requirement that the Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy "obey[s] the Franks and pay[s] tribute like slaves" (38).

<sup>77</sup> Ioannides, *The Church of Cyprus*, 97. For more measured but ultimately aligned treatments of Frankish rule by other Greek-Cypriot historians, see Efthymiou, *Greeks and Latins on Cyprus*, 25-52, and Englezakis, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus*, 151-205.

gestures.<sup>78</sup> And as we have seen, the Franks can be explicitly imagined as water-hoarding ogres—protection from whom is, not least, the purview of St. George.<sup>79</sup>

I am suggesting that a direct allegorical application of the song's narrative to specific events is too hasty, failing precisely by foreclosing on the abundantly transferable themes and liberative message of the song. The utility of this medium is that its narrative does *not* indicate a preferred referent or application, such that those who use and transmit the song over the course of centuries (not least in modernity) may appropriate it to their own concerns without even changing the details of the poem. Each new threat perceived (variably) by Orthodox Cypriots—from raging Islam to greedy Catholicism, from lurking communism to devouring capitalism—can be cast as alien and monstrous by means of St. George's mediation in the *Tragoudi*. The song is a *unifying* medium, in that it can gather into itself all of a community's many instances of oppression and exploitation, framing them within a common symbolic field; yet it is also a *divisive* medium, in that its draconic figuration, as a kind of Rorschach test, can reinforce opposition between economic or political factions that would see one another in the symbol.<sup>80</sup>

Let us recall the comments of the musicologist Pavlos, on Clean Monday itself, that “the Greeks of Cyprus could always fool their oppressors by singing religious songs. To sing the ballads of St. George *was* to sing about liberation, to inspire a love for liberation.”<sup>81</sup> During the period of British rule, Kokkinoftas shows, the *Tragoudi t' Aē Giōrgē* was transmitted in multiple ways, in multiple media. It was “particularly beloved by the older inhabitants [of Cyprus], most of whom knew it by heart and who were accustomed to

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<sup>78</sup> Hadjicosta, *H Κύπρος κι' η ζωή της*, 56. Contemporary witnesses to the inauguration of Frankish rule are far more explicit: see Englezakis, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus*, 151-205, for St. Neophytos the Recluse's contemporary (and no-holds-barred) depiction of the “misfortunes of the land of Cyprus” (164) during the early years of Frankish rule. Recall from Chapter III, section 3b, moreover, the ways in which the appropriation of St. George by the crusader armies and crusader state in Cyprus was resisted by Orthodox iconographers in Cyprus.

<sup>79</sup> See again the conversation with Spyros at the monastery under construction at St. George of the Caves, in section 1a.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Herzfeld, *Ours Once More*, 141, on rival (and reciprocally antagonistic) readings of Greek folksongs as rendering “national epic” or “class conflict,” interpretations that emerged along a left-right political spectrum on the part of those (at every point on that spectrum) attempting to claim the prestige of authentic Greek heritage for their causes.

<sup>81</sup> See again this episode in Chapter III, section 1b.

sing the song after vespers on the feast days of the saint, April 23 and November 3, in the yards of the churches.”<sup>82</sup> But it was also written down in various versions and disseminated as *phyllades* (pamphlets) for visitors to the churches of St. George to read and take home with them, and it was sung by the island’s wandering *poiētārēdes* (bards) as paid performances that—increasingly as the twentieth century continued—reminded Greek-Cypriots of a vanishing past. Varvounis notes that the *tragoudia t’Aē Giōrgē* were typically sung not only on the feast days of the saint but also on the anniversaries of major Greek military victories.<sup>83</sup> So was the song used to celebrate the end of the Ottoman regime, or to inspire resistance to the British regime? Recited to pray for relief from agricultural failure, or to pray in gratitude for the help of the saint in any number of personal triumphs, exoteric or esoteric? Listened to in polished concerts of folk singers, or sung by groups of people who learned it from their parents and for whom the strains of the song carried the sound of continuity and community? All of the above.

The *Tragoudi t’ Aē Giōrgē* is, I submit, a vernacular liberation theology. It conjures an imaginative repertoire that bridges the time-out-of-time of the saints with the struggles of the present, inflecting the latter with the moral and spiritual valance of the former. This imagery includes a scarcity of food and water; a cruel and powerful individual, who maintains the scarcity for his own benefit; a personification of a community’s dignity and nobility, threatened with extinction; and the saint himself, paragon of resistance and rectification. When sung by heart and collectively, as especially at the feasts of St. George, these representations inject the sensory *mise-en-scène* of the ecclesial celebration with the surrounding material-political conditions within which they are taking place, imagined diversely by the song’s participants but using a shared symbolic syntax. Indeed, the Cypriot dialect itself in which the poem is

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<sup>82</sup> Kokkinoftas, “Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος στη λαϊκή παράδοση τής Κύπρου,” 135; cf. Varvounis, “Η πανελλήνια λαϊκή λατρευτική τιμή του άγιου Γεωργίου.” See also Hadjicosta, *Η Κύπρος κι’ η ζωή της*, 43, on the synthesis of ancient Greek heroism and Byzantine piety in these songs.

<sup>83</sup> Varvounis, “Η πανελλήνια λαϊκή λατρευτική τιμή του άγιου Γεωργίου.”

rendered reflects what Herzfeld would identify as “cultural intimacy,” flipping upside down the “social, political, and economic exclusion” of a formal linguistic register, creating an enclosed linguistic space that allows for unpoliced and multivalent critique.<sup>84</sup> Whatever the particular struggles in the context of which the song is enunciated, the symbolic openness and illocutionary defiance of the dragon-slaying narrative promote “power and courage for the final prevalence of the good and the right.”<sup>85</sup>

As mediated by the *Tragoudi t' Aē Giōrgē*, then, the figure of St. George's dragon (and the event of the dragon's defeat) is a knot of all the modalities of resistance by which, I have argued, we may catalogue St. George's interventions in Cyprus: individual and collective; ecological, political, and spiritual. The ways that the song tradition was used throughout the twentieth century, at least, integrates all these registers of resistance and is not (*pace* Hadjikostas) reducible to any one. And today? In my visits to two separate feasts of St. George, one in Agios Dometios and one in Larnaca, I listened in vain for the strains of the *Tragoudi*. Much is different about these feasts in twenty-first century Cyprus, to be sure, and more than one festival participant with whom I interacted lamented how much smaller and less vibrant they were than in decades past.<sup>86</sup> But Modestos, a young interlocutor from the rural east of Cyprus, drew a different conclusion: “You didn't hear the *tragoudia* because you were in the city! City people forget too easily, they

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<sup>84</sup> See Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, 14-21. Cf. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 133-34 (on “the elaboration of a subordinate culture that is opaque to those above it”) and 136-82 (especially 160-62), on a variety of linguistic and dialectic tools for “political disguise.”

<sup>85</sup> Christodoulou, “Τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου,” 97.

<sup>86</sup> At the church and monastery of St. George the Near in Larnaca, the festivities are packed with people, and a loud, joyful procession moves between the new church (constructed in 1984) and the monastery chapel, bearing icons and relics beneath clouds of incense and the incessant ringing of bells. However, when the procession ends and the assembled devotees have venerated the icons of the monastery chapel, people disperse quickly. Stalls are set up for an outdoor πανηγύρι (festival or fair), but business is slow. As one of the women staffing the πανηγύρι tells me, “the festival is much more subdued this year than it should be. They move the day of the feast sometimes [so that it does not fall during Lent; in 2016 the feast of St. George was officially held on May 1, but in Larnaca it was postponed until May 8], so fewer people come. But it's not just the date. People today are less interested in such matters, their lives are so busy... but I remember times when these celebrations carried on the whole weekend!” (May 8, 2016). Cf. Yiangou et al., *Elements of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Cyprus*, 102: “Fairs are still held all over Cyprus, but their commercial and social importance has diminished owing to the enormous changes brought about in Cyprus by the modern way of life. Nowadays, there are still peddlers selling their wares and delicacies to be bought at village fairs, but to a much more limited extent.”

move on too quickly. Next time, come out to the country for the feast day. Rural people, we know that St. George is our own and we don't fail to keep up the traditions. Come to my village—you'll hear it there!"<sup>87</sup>

## (2) St. George, Imperial and Anti-Imperial

In the preceding section, we have seen that the draconic imagination distills an atmosphere of ecological precarity into a single antagonist against whom a struggle may be waged—whether in the pragmatic fashion of irrigation procedures or pest eradication, or through unionization and organized campaigning against predatory lending and landowners' exploitative practices toward workers, or indeed through the subversive, multidimensional mediation of a folksong tradition that rhetorically identifies the exploitation of the land with a terrible bargain: the sacrifice of the future to ensure the survival of the present. In each of these cases, the figure of the dragon serves to concentrate the dispositions and practices of resistance, at once simplifying complex and diffuse problems into arenas of combat in which common effort may be applied and representing these problems with a moral texture that galvanizes opposition to them as *right* and not merely as *good*. Here, we see once more, resistance (*antistasē*) and rectification (*anorthōsis*) are two sides of the same coin.

This function of the dragon-legend's broad semantic field comes further into relief as the political register of St. George's mediation orbits again into the center of our analysis. The deployment of dragons as metaphorical representations of political antagonists is, of course, not a phenomenon that emerges in modernity; rather, as David Sánchez demonstrates, even the earliest Christian appropriation of "the Dragon Slayer myth" was itself an act of countercultural resistance to the Roman imperial state (which had made foundational use of that myth "for the construction of a new Roman imperial identity").<sup>88</sup> In the

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<sup>87</sup> January 2, 2018.

<sup>88</sup> Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 13. Sánchez proceeds (19-22) to explore the political utility of maintaining the identification of the Roman emperor with the dragon-slaying god-hero in the generations to come, *particularly* by the

inverted Christian apocalyptic account, the child born to slay the dragon is Jesus, in place of the emperor, and the dragon due for destruction is reconfigured as the political-spiritual force (emblemized by the pagan emperor) that oppresses the church on earth even as it has been preemptively defeated in heaven.<sup>89</sup> Sánchez identifies this appropriation as emblematic of the ways that “those living on the margins of power claim these imperial myths on their own interpretive terms, creating alternative categories of power in which they construct themselves as the primary beneficiaries of newly reformulated social hierarchies.”<sup>90</sup> As a “struggle over the appropriation of symbols,”<sup>91</sup> the Christian countermythology that establishes dragon-slaying as emblematic of holy *power* is among our clearest frameworks in which to assess how understandings of holiness are fueled by and validating of political *resistance*.

Such countermythological appropriation of Roman dragon-wonders in the earliest generations of Christianity provides, moreover, essential context for the acquisition of dragon-antagonists by the saints, not least by St. George. Although George is not represented pictorially with a *drakos* until roughly the tenth century, and the full narrative of George’s dragon-wonder appears to develop later still,<sup>92</sup> it is in the earliest accounts of his martyrdom that George is pitted against the *metaphorical* dragon that is his political antagonist: the Roman governor or emperor. Long before any narrative or iconographic representation of George’s dragonslaying appeared in Byzantium, the early martyrdom accounts of

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Emperor Nero (who is often considered to be the politically figure most directly in the crosshairs of the *Apocalypse of John*). As Eugene Boring describes it, “A grateful citizen of the Roman world could readily think of the story as a reflection of his or her own experience, with the following cast: the woman [in the story] is the goddess Roma, the queen of heaven; the son is the emperor, who kills the dragon and founds the new golden age; the dragon represents the power of darkness” (Boring, *Revelation*, 151, cited in Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 21). For the narrative of Apollo and Python that is the clearest comparand for the narrative of Revelation 12 (that is, the account in Hyginus’ *Fabulae* 140), see Ogden, *Dragons, Serpents, & Slayers*, 39-40. For further discussion of the book of Revelation’s strategies of appropriation and inverted representation for the sake of a culture of resistance, see Lunceford, *Parody and Counterimaging in the Apocalypse*.

<sup>89</sup> See Revelation 12, especially verses 3-5, 7-9, 13-17. And recall from the general introduction, section 1, the discussion of this theme of divine victory over the temporary powers of persecution.

<sup>90</sup> Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 3. Cf. York, “Early Church Martyrdom,” 33-34, and *The Purple Crown*, 27-48; and Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 621.

<sup>91</sup> Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, xvii.

<sup>92</sup> See Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of Saint George,” 320-21, and Pancaroğlu, “The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer,” 153-55.

Pasikrates, Theodotus of Ancyra, and Theodosius of Jerusalem all describe George's imperial antagonist as a dragon, both by placing this ascription into the mouth of the saint and by the narrator's own use of the term to refer to the ruler.<sup>93</sup> Such a verbal representation of the persecuting emperor as a dragon would only later enter the iconographic tradition as well, as the standard visual representation of St. George on horseback spearing a *man* (usually identified as Diocletian) gave way to the figure of a *dragon* in place of the fallen emperor.<sup>94</sup>

From the vantage point of the post-Constantinian Church, St. George is only apparently or temporarily vanquished and is now revealed as himself a great vanquisher. The encomia of Theodosius and Theodotus, for instance, narrate St. George as descending from heaven (along with the Archangel Michael, the holy dragonslayer of Revelation) to physically cripple and expel the emperor Diocletian, who had brought about his execution, so as to “set Constantine the emperor on the throne in his stead.”<sup>95</sup> I

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<sup>93</sup> See Krumbacher, *Der heilige Georg*, 3-4, from the *Athener Volksbuch*: “Therefore, the dragon of the abyss [ὁ βύθιος δράκων] said ... [Sacrifice] to Apollo, who suspended the heavens.’ George replied: ‘... are you not ashamed, dragon of the abyss, to name as gods what are actually demons?’”; and 44, from the *Normaltext*: “Looking at him, Emperor Diocletian, like a dragon of the abyss, spoke ... .” See also *The Martyrdom of Saint George* (in Budge, *Martyrdom and Miracles*, 206): “The dragon looked at him, and said, ‘Every person who has gone forth from the benevolent guidance of the gods perishes ... . The governor said to him, ‘I desire thee to worship Apollo who hung out the heavens, and Poseidon who made fast the earth.’ Saint George answered and said, ‘Neither for thy sake, O evil dragon, nor for that of the governors thy companions will I speak about the righteous ones and thy dead god, but for the multitudes here present.’” And later (e.g. 212, though the formula recurs on 223): “And the dragon of the abyss commanded them to throw [George’s] bones outside the city into a dry pit, saying within himself, ‘Lest the Christians find a bone of his, and build a martyrion over it, and bring up his blood against us.’” So too in the encomia, we find George’s imperial antagonist repeatedly referred to as “dragon of hell,” “dragon of death,” and “[the devil’s] dragon” (here George is compared to “a new David who destroyed Goliath, that is the devil *and his dragon*”—referring, I would argue, to a rhetorically rendered relationship between the imperial agent of persecution and the diabolical motivation of that persecution) (for examples of these formulations, see Budge, *Martyrdom and Miracles*, 280, 284, 288; cf. Walter, “The Thracian Horseman,” 661).

<sup>94</sup> See Pancaroğlu, “The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer,” 153; and Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of St. George,” 316-19. Schrade notes that the iconographic type of St. George slaying “the impious king Diocletian” persists through the eleventh century in Georgia, where (she suggests) the figure of the saint overcoming the Roman emperor reflects “the conflicts between Georgia and Byzantium following the struggles for territory and political power,” with Diocletian standing in for the Byzantine emperor (“Byzantium and its Eastern Barbarians,” 176-77).

<sup>95</sup> Budge, *Martyrdom and Miracles*, 325; see also 273-74. It is noteworthy, I think, that Constantine represented himself as a dragonslayer (according to Eusebius), brilliantly appropriating for himself the Roman god-emperor dragon-slaying imagery deployed by such earlier emperors as Nero while, at the same time, authorizing the existing Christian culture of resistance by means of dragonslayer imagery directed at the *pagan* emperors in particular (for instance, as we have seen, in the damning of Emperor Diocletian as “abyssal dragon”). See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* III.3: “This [image] he displayed on a very high panel set before the entrance to the palace for the eyes of all to see, showing in the picture the Saviour’s sign

would suggest that this “ninth miracle” of the recently-martyred George can be identified as the earliest instantiation of St. George as Dragonslayer: St. George not only *resists* the imperial power that inhibits Christian life but succeeds in *rectifying* that power by exterminating the “abyssal dragon” (*bythios drakōn*) that hoards it, thus securing it for those who can, supposedly, be trusted to exercise imperial power to sanctify the political order.

In this section, then, I argue that the hagiographical dynamic of imagining, representing, and appropriating St. George’s dragonslaying for the sake of political rectification can aid us in understanding the tight entanglement between Greek-Cypriot anti-imperial and pro-imperial imaginaries, and the availability of St. George as a mediator of each. In order to explore this dynamic, as was the case with the neomartyrs and ethnomartyrs of Chapter III, we cannot be content to maintain a laser focus on St. George. Rather, the coming subsections will highlight George’s elision with and infusion of how Greek-Cypriots mobilize other characters of profound political significance in modern Cyprus: (a) Digenis Akritas, the (anti)heroic Byzantine “border lord” who slaughters monsters and men alike in his pursuit of autonomy and orthodoxy; and (b) George “Digenis” Grivas, the military leader of the anticolonial struggle of the 1950s, who appropriates and to whom accrues elements of St. George’s struggle with the dominating foe. In the introduction of this chapter, the figure of Alexander the Great (elided with St. George) appeared as an anchor for the modern political imagination of Greater Greece and a rallying point for covert anti-imperial sentiment. So too, each of these two other relationships results in distinct tensions in how St. George mediates holiness in the political order of Cyprus—tensions between anti-imperial and pro-

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placed above his own head, and the hostile and inimical beast, which had laid siege to the Church of God through the tyranny of the godless, he made in the form of a dragon borne down to the deep. For the oracles proclaimed him a ‘dragon’ and a ‘crooked serpent’ in the books of the prophets of God (cf. Isaiah 27:1); therefore the Emperor also showed to all, through the medium of the encaustic painting, the dragon under his own feet and those of his sons, pierced through the middle of the body with a javelin, and thrust down in the depths of the sea. In this way he indicated the invisible enemy of the human race, whom he showed also to have departed to the depths of destruction by the power of the Saviour’s trophy which was set up over his head.”

imperial agendas, and between the purported purity and the evident vulnerability of the holiness represented by the figure of the saint. In the Dragonslayer paradigm, the long and ambivalent association of the warrior martyrs with terrestrial warfare comes into the fore, in constant counterpoint to their mediation of *spiritual* warfare (the subject of section 3). These two registers of resistance to domination by unholy powers interweave in Cyprus, however: political liberation is tightly associated, even viewed as a prerequisite for, spiritual fitness and freedom of the heart.

2a) “*Flashing like the sun and brandishing his lance*”: Saint George (and) the Frontiersman

As *drakontoktonos*, even more than the other two iconic paradigms in which St. George is multimediated by Greek-Cypriots in edifying ways, the saint is aligned with a perennial Hellenic heroic ethos that is, for George’s devotees, entirely in keeping with Orthodox Christian moral and spiritual orientations.<sup>96</sup> Like Heracles, who defeated the many-headed Lernaean Hydra, tore the skin off the Nemean Lion, and stole the cattle of the monstrous ogre Geryon before being deified for his struggles; like Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world and brought the light of civilization to barbarous places; like Digenis Akritas, who held the Byzantine-Arab frontier and slew wild beasts with superhuman strength before being defeated only by Death himself—St. George is inscribed in the Greek heroic tradition in ways that continue in modernity to animate political ambition and personal *mimēsis*. In an inverted but integrated parallel to the rendering of George as Greatmartyr (where his triumph is posthumous, in his reception in heaven and the extent of his inspiration of others), in this heroic mode we encounter the saint achieving glorious earthly victories and vouchsafing the victories of others. It is, unsurprisingly, as Dragonslayer and not as Greatmartyr that St. George appears on the flags of the Greek

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<sup>96</sup> On the dynamics of what Stewart calls a “pagan Hellenic and Orthodox Christian syncretism” in modern Greece (“Syncretism as a Dimension of Nationalist Discourse in Modern Greece,” 139), see again Chapter III, sections 2b and 3a.

revolutionaries of the 1820s (see again Chapter III, section 2b), and as Dragonslayer that St. George inspires *tragoudia* (folksongs) and *phyllades* (poetic leaflets) that stir up a spirit of resistance to British rule in Cyprus (this chapter, section 1b).

As the iconographic and narrative traditions of St. George as a dragon-slaying saint were exploding into popularity across West Asia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, another tradition of heroic representation had already emerged on the eastern frontiers of the Byzantine empire. The oral, bardic art form of the *akritika* (frontier songs—as introduced in section 1b) reminisced in great detail about the tensions and fusions of the Byzantine-Arab frontier prior to the decisive battle of Manzikert (1071), after which the territories of “central and eastern Anatolia were lost to Byzantium.”<sup>97</sup> This literature reflects forms of life that had long persisted in the interstices of inter-imperial contestation for land, resources, and loyalty; for at least two centuries, these songs “continued to grow and to diversify until eventually someone, perhaps the singers themselves, but probably scribes, wrote them down.”<sup>98</sup> In the most famous and influential of these poems, we meet the ambivalently heroic Basilios, known as *Digēnis Akritēs*:<sup>99</sup> the “two-blood border-lord,” son of a Muslim emir and a Christian general’s daughter, who fights

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<sup>97</sup> Magdalino, “*Digenis Akrites* and Byzantine Literature,” 2. Magdalino here describes this most significant example of the akritic literature as “a manifesto for a heroic past, implicitly and even explicitly claiming a place for this among the other heroic pasts available to medieval Greek writers.” On the shifting Byzantine-Arab frontiers, see Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, and “The Frontier”; and Korobeinikov, “Raiders and Neighbors.”

<sup>98</sup> Hull, Introduction to *Digenis Akritas*, xxi. Livanos is not so sanguine about the chronology: “We will never know whether the Akritic songs predated the epic versions of *Digenis Akritas* or vice versa. It is probably more productive simply to view both, as well as the modern Akritic songs, as part of a dynamic and vibrant tradition in which oral performances and written texts long coexisted” (“A Case Study in Byzantine Dragon-Slaying,” 126). Although the earliest extant manuscript (the Grottaferrata version) is from approximately 1300, textual analyses have demonstrated that versions of the genre-defying poem were available in writing from the early twelfth century (Magdalino concurs: see “*Digenis Akrites* and Byzantine Literature,” 3), but that these versions may synthesize earlier oral or written materials. See Livanos, “A Case Study in Byzantine Dragon-Slaying,” 125, and Elizbarashvili, “The Formation of a Hero in *Digenis Akrites*,” 437-38, on the two distinct times and contexts that are reflected in the poem, one which belongs to the ninth century (prior to Byzantine reconquests east of Cappadocia), one to the tenth (after those reconquests had pushed the frontier to the Euphrates River).

<sup>99</sup> Διγενής Ἀκρίτης is the formulation of the name in Byzantine Greek, in which the epics are written. In modern Greek, the name becomes Διγενής Ἀκρίτας, and it is this version that appears in the majority of the stories and songs that shape Cypriot understanding of the hero (thus, this spelling will prevail in my discussion, despite the variable names).

for love and glory in the wilderness, slaying beasts both mundane and supernatural with the aid of the warrior-martyrs of Byzantium.

I suspect that the akritic song tradition provided crucial inspiration for the development of St. George's dragon-slaying paradigm,<sup>100</sup> which proliferated co-contextually with the akritic literature in the eleventh- and twelfth-century eastern frontiers of Byzantium. St. George is himself cast as a "two-blood border-lord" in this context and in some versions of his *Life* identified as the child of an interreligious marriage between a pagan father and a Christian mother.<sup>101</sup> However, the historical background of this literature and the references to St. George in the medieval poetry concern me less than the reciprocal influence between Digenis and George as they animate the modern hagiographical dynamics of Cyprus. It is in no small part the resonances with St. George that shape the afterlife of *Digēnis Akritēs* into a synthesis of political countermythology and chthonic heroism that would become "the symbol of the eternal spirit of Hellas to the modern Greeks."<sup>102</sup> In Cyprus, not least, the elision between Digenis and George provides tectonic underpinning both to the self-representation and to the communal commemoration of General

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<sup>100</sup> That is, beyond the posthumous defeat of Diocletian discussed in the introduction to this section.

<sup>101</sup> See Krumbacher, *Der heilige Georg*, 18-20, 136-37, for pre-sixth-century fragments in which this is evident; and see discussion in Couroucli, "Chthonian Spirits and Shared Shrines," 47; and Elizbarashvili, "The Formation of a Hero in *Digenis Akrites*," 443. Cf. the similar account of Alexander the Great's two-bloodedness in the *Romance* tradition (see Saunier, "Is There Such a Thing as an 'Akritic Song'?" 141). It should by this point go without saying that two-bloodedness is a feature of particular resonance in the hagiographical repertoire of Cyprus.

<sup>102</sup> Hull, Introduction to *Digenis Akritas*, xv. This "soul of eternal Hellenism" belongs, of course, to the enormously influential *afterlife* of the poem more than to the poem itself, the ethos of which "is not nationalism or patriotism ... [and] the Hellenism it celebrates is not ethnic but cultural" (xxv). Nevertheless, the poet's own descriptions of Digenis' exploits do provide clear underpinning to the political-religious synthesis of modern Hellenism: see for instance the encomiastic comment on 112: "the youth received from God such grace/ That just his name would rout his enemies." I must then reject Stewart's claim that "syncretism in Greece [between the cultural ideals and orientations of ancient Greece and those of (particularly Byzantine) Orthodox Christianity] is entirely subordinate to the larger nationalist assertion of cultural continuity. Nationalism created Greek syncretism in the first place, and then demanded its positive evaluation" ("Syncretism as a Dimension of Nationalist Discourse in Modern Greece," 142). On the contrary: this "syncretism," whether we are inclined to use the loaded term or not, is abundantly in evidence in the akritic poetry, which is continually oriented with reference to the heroes of Homer as well as to the adventures of Alexander the Great, but insists that it is shaped above all by Orthodox Christianity. Examples may be found in the poem at I.1-4,15-20; IV.27-33,36; and VIII.301-04,309-13. The Orthodoxy of *Digenis Akritas*, argues Hull, is "not exclusive, but all-embracing" (Introduction to *Digenis Akritas*, xxv). Cf. Hadjicosta, *Η Κύπρος κι' η ζωή της*, 43, on this synthesis in the Cypriot songs that derive from the epic.

George “Digenis” Grivas, the military leader of the Greek-Cypriot “national struggle.” Grivas’ own patron saint (George) and *nom de guerre* (Digenis) interweave in my analysis (in section 2b), shaping my return to the Struggle’s often-overlooked hagiographical topography through the lens of dracontomachy, having already considered it (in Chapter III) through the lens of ethnomartyrdom.

Although Digenis shares characteristics with Achilles and Heracles, Alexander the Great and Emperor Basil II, it is his association with the warrior saints of Byzantium that is especially robust. From the first lines of the poem, indeed, Digenis’ struggles are identified as being aided by

the victorious great martyrs,  
Both the all-glorious Theodores,  
The army leader and recruit,  
And noble George of many labors,  
The miracle-working martyrs’ martyr, [and]  
Sublime Demetrius, the patron  
Of Basil, and the boast and pride  
Of him who vanquished all his foes,  
The Hagarenes and Ishmaelites  
And barbarous Scyths who rage like dogs.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Hull (trans), *Digenis Akritas*, 3-4 (I.20-29). Although Digenis’ own birth name is indeed Basil, it seems likely that the reference to St. Demetrius being “the patron of Basil” refers to the emperor Basil II (even as this reference binds Digenis more closely to the emperor and with the formal, imperial hagiographical apparatus): Basil II was perhaps most renowned for his war against the Bulgarians, for which he was, in the twelfth century, hailed as Βουλγαροκτόνος—“Bulgar-slayer.” St. Demetrius, too, is closely associated with defensive and offensive victories over the Bulgarians. Basil II also (unlike Digenis) was a conqueror of areas of Georgia and Armenia—an area associated with the ancient Scythians. I make this case not only to disambiguate and to identify the significant reference to Digenis and Basil II having a common “patron” in the warrior saints, but also to register that we should not think of Demetrius as being in any way *more* associated with Digenis than George and the Theodores. Granted, if Digenis were to be assigned any one figure of maximal patronage in the medieval epic, it might be St. Theodore rather than St. George; after all, Theodore was known and celebrated as a dragonslayer before St. George was, and in the epic itself he is more frequently invoked by the hero. The protagonist is indeed identified as being under the patronage of “noble George of many labors” (Hull [trans], *Digenis Akritas*, 4 [I.23]), but it is “by Saints Theodore, Christ’s witnesses” that Digenis swears to whisk away the girl with whom he has fallen in love (46 [IV.477]), the Theodores whose golden icons he receives as a wedding gift (57 [IV.907]), and in “the name of Theodore, saint and martyr,” that he builds a shrine in which to bury his father (100 [VII.104-05]). In the broader culture of Cyprus, however, the association between Digenis and George is more substantial, to the point that Theodore and Demetrius virtually vanish from view. In the akritic songs that proliferate on the island for centuries after the diffusion of the epic, “Digenes prays to the Virgin Mary, saints Mamas and George and the archangel Michael, asking for their help,” as these holy figures have themselves become “the new Akritai who defend the freedom of the Greeks after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453” (Nikolaos Bonovas and Christodoulos Hadjichristodoulou, in Tsilipakou [ed], *Η Τιμή του Αγίου Μαμάντος στη Μεσόγειο*, 101); cf. Hadjichristodoulou, “Ένας άκριτας άγιος στην Κύπρο.”

Not only the narrator's assertions but Digenis' own words and deeds manifest a warrior-saintly ethos, as encapsulated in (but by no means limited to) his injunction to the Byzantine emperor, who has come to admire the champion at his home on the frontier:

I beseech your glorious majesty:  
 Love him who is obedient, pity the poor,  
 Deliver the oppressed from malefactors,  
 Forgive those who unwittingly make blunders,  
 And heed no slanders, nor accept injustice,  
 Sweep heretics out, confirm the orthodox.  
 These, master, are the arms of righteousness [cf. Ephesians 6:11-17]  
 With which you can prevail over all foes.<sup>104</sup>

Some of these elements appear explicitly in the standard Byzantine hymns and prayers to St. George (such as pitying the poor, delivering the oppressed, driving out heresy, and waging the beautiful struggle with



Figure 4.10: Twelfth-century Byzantine dish depicting Digenis Akritas fighting a dragon. Housed in the Ancient Agora Museum, Athens. Photo by Giovanni Dall'Orto; public domain.

the arms of righteousness).<sup>105</sup> The visual and narrative traditions around St. George as a dragon-slaying cavalier are developing concurrently with the akritic literature, and it is not, I wager, coincidental that Digenis is characterized in a closely resonant way: as a strapping man in his prime with blond curls,<sup>106</sup> as a horseman racing to snatch away the noble virgin from her cruel and possessive father,<sup>107</sup> and above all, as the slayer of a water-

<sup>104</sup> Hull (trans), *Digenis Akritas*, 61 (IV.1032-39).

<sup>105</sup> See again, for instance, my consideration of the *apolytikion* of St. George in the conclusion of Chapter II. For more on the hagiographical texture of the epic and a range of associations from the hymnography of St. George, see Trapp, "Hagiographische Elemente im Digenes-Epos," and Bousias, "Ἱμνογραφικά Ἁγίου Μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου τοῦ Τροπαιοφόρου."

<sup>106</sup> "Indeed the young man was a handsome figure:/ Blond hair a little curly, great big eyes,/ A white and rosy face, and jet black eyebrows,/ A breast like crystal, a full fathom wide" (Hull [trans], *Digenis Akritas*, 38 [IV.196-99]).

<sup>107</sup> "The youth between, all flashing like the sun/ And brandishing his lance in his right hand,/ A green Arabian lance with golden pennon./ .../ [Digenis asks:] 'Whose is this great and most impressive house?/ Is this the General's whose fame they tell,/ Whose daughter, widely praised, resides within?'/ 'Yes, my dear boy,' his father answered him,/ 'And many noble Romans have perished for her.'/ 'How did they perish, Father' asked the boy./ 'They wished to carry off the girl, my son,/ Because of her great beauty, so they say./ The General, the maiden's father, knew this,/ Set traps for them, and captured

dwelling *drakos* that threatens the girl under his protection.<sup>108</sup> Although some elements of his beast-slaying exploits doubtless draw more on the labors of Heracles than on the dragon-wonders of Saints George and Theodore,<sup>109</sup> it is clear that these traditions of classical heroism and Byzantine warrior sainthood are in a process of synthesis that can no longer be so easily divvied up between its sources.



Figure 4.11: (Left) The "Petra tou Romiou," Stone of the Roman, at Aphrodite's Beach. Attributed by Cypriot legend to being thrown by Digenis Akritas. (Right) The Pentedaktylos Mountains, view from Kantara Castle. Attributed by Cypriot legend to the shape of Digenis Akritas' handprint.

There is, finally, a meaningful overlap between Digenis and George in their *spatial* mediation on the island of Cyprus: in both cases, the *thrylikos* (legendary hero) is imagined as a liberator from beyond the sea, rushing to the aid of the islanders and leaving the physical record of his landing imprinted on the terrain: St. George's hoofprints are noted and celebrated,<sup>110</sup> while Digenis' handprint is often given as the folk etymology for the name of the *Pentedaktylos* (five-finger) mountain range.<sup>111</sup> Likewise, the local

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every one./ Some he beheaded, others still he blinded;/ He has great power and glory in the land" (Hull [trans], *Digenis Akritas*, 40-41 [IV.249-51,288-99]).

<sup>108</sup> "The girl was thirsty, and went to the spring,/ And, while she wet her feet there happily,/ A dragon transformed into a handsome boy/ Came up to her, desiring to seduce her. But she, knowing just what it was, remarked,/ 'Dragon, give up your wish. I'm not deceived./ My lover, who's been watching, is now sleeping'/ .../ 'But if he wakes and finds you, he will hurt you.'/ .../ And when I reached the thing, it looked fantastic,/ A thing fearsome to men and horribly big,/ With three large heads that were ablaze with fire,/ And were emitting flames that flashed like lightning/ .../ Believing what I saw was nothing much,/ I raised my sword up high, and with full fury/ I brought it down upon the creature's heads,/ Getting them all" (Hull [trans], *Digenis Akritas*, 73-74 [VI.45-54,63-66,73-76]).

<sup>109</sup> See Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 208-11, on the paradigm of Heracles as a model for later appropriation.

<sup>110</sup> See again Chapter II, section 3b.

<sup>111</sup> One interlocutor, a local tour guide, has a well-rehearsed accounting and historicizing of the legend: "Digenis Akritas was a historical figure," she suggests, "who was sent by the Byzantine emperor to help defend the island against the Arab raids. Serving the people of Cyprus in this way, he became so beloved that they came to consider him as a kind of giant with mythical properties. So we say that when Digenis was called away from Cyprus again, to take care of problems in Anatolia, instead of taking a boat he simply placed his hand on the mountains and lept up across the sea! And the imprint of his hand was left on the mountains—so they are called the *five finger* mountains" (August 9, 2014). See also Georgiades,

legendarium of Digenis' exploits in Cyprus tend to do above all with the release or redirection of fresh water, in the service of a royal patron—a pattern of intervention particularly familiar to connoisseurs of St. George.<sup>112</sup> I argue, then, that this poetic tradition is a key source for understanding the emergence of St. George Dragonslayer's own *thrylika* qualities, which increase over time and continue to distill a (syncretic) Hellenic-Orthodox ethos into the modern world.

## 2b) “No lion shall be there”: St. George, General George, and the Beaten Beast

With this background established as to Digenis Akritas' special significance in Cyprus *vis-à-vis* the island's outstanding devotion to and identification with St. George, we may now zero in on the figure that, in contemporary Cyprus, cannot help but be evoked by a joining of the names “George” and “Digenis,” and whose own exploits continue to be mediated in ways that vividly illuminate the entanglement of Orthodox hagiography with political resistance: George “Digenis” Grivas. I have already introduced Grivas in terms of his general role in leading the Greek-Cypriot anti-colonial struggle of the

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*History of Cyprus*, 149, on the victims of the seventh-century Arab raids adopting the akritic heroes as their own; Ethymiou, *Greeks and Latins on Cyprus*, 21, on Cypriot folklore's attraction to Digenis in particular, in later centuries. Cf. my discussions of St. George's intervention in the Arab raids of Cyprus (Chapter II, section 3b).

<sup>112</sup> Barnabas, the owner of a restaurant who had expressed interest in my research, was enthusiastic to tell me about Digenis' exploits on the island: “There are all sorts of stories about him here! When you see a place named after a *regina*, there is likely a story about Digenis there: Digenis, the famous frontier man, came to Cyprus to seek the hand of the queen in marriage. But she gave him tasks to complete before she would be willing to marry him—fetch precious water for her castle, or redirect the river so it flowed freely to them, something like this. But when he finished her tasks, she still refused to marry him, so he became very angry and picked up a huge boulder and threw it, which landed in the water and still stands there today” (July 1, 2016). Papageorgiou corroborates the local naming of sites after this “*regina*” (Latin for “queen”) as being associated with a popular queen, likely either Helena Palaiologina or Caterina Cornaro (the two famous queens of Latin-ruled Cyprus) or a composite of the two, relying for aid on a horse-riding, water-delivering hero—but Papageorgiou's research identifies this hero as *St. George*, rather than Digenis Akritas (see *Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος*, 152-53)! It is precisely this slippage and reciprocal association that I mean to highlight. However, the queen of the legend could just as likely refer to the goddess Aphrodite rather than to a historical queen—Aphrodite, the ancient patron and enduring personification of Cyprus. Alternative versions of the Digenis narrative in Cyprus indicate this possibility (with the famously lustful hero traveling to Cyprus in order to marry the goddess of love), as do contemporary practices at *Petra tou Romiou* (the “Stone of the Roman”—see Figure 4.11): those who are unlucky in love are encouraged to swim around the boulder three times, so that Aphrodite will reward them for their prowess.

1950s and in terms of his martyriological rhetoric as they suffuse the commemoration of that struggle.<sup>113</sup> Now, in light of the above discussion of Digenis Akritas, Grivas' own selection of "Digenis" as his *nom de guerre* and his appropriation/mobilization of St. George's hagiographical culture come into focus.

In his memoirs, Grivas discusses explicitly his lifelong fascination with Digenis Akritas and articulates his understanding of that figure's significance as an emblem of national struggle.<sup>114</sup> Although he begins to use the name simply as a password meant to be unintelligible to the British but inspiring to Greek ears,<sup>115</sup> by the time of

the formal start of the anticolonial campaign, Grivas "had already taken as [his] *nom-de-guerre* 'DIGHENIS,' the great hero of Byzantine legend." It was in this name that Grivas penned his "first revolutionary proclamation, calling on the people to throw off the English yoke and be worthy of the Greek heroes, the 300 of Leonidas and the fighters of 1821."<sup>116</sup> These reference points in Grivas' accounting



Figure 4.12: Roughly life-sized relief bust of George Grivas installed at the base of the "Heromartyrs' Stairs," at the Heroes' Grove, Amiantos.

<sup>113</sup> See again Chapter I, section 2c, and Chapter III, sections 2b and 3a.

<sup>114</sup> As a child, "I enjoyed my studies, in which the glories of Greek history always took first place. I was particularly fascinated by the legends of Dighenis Akritas, the half-mythical guardian of the frontiers of Alexander's empire [*nota bene*]" (Foley [ed], *The Memoirs of General Grivas*, 3). Grivas continues to comment on a tradition akin to that which we have already considered elsewhere on the island: "Not far from Trikomo [Grivas' birthplace in northeastern Cyprus] was a huge rock, which the village elders assured me had been hurled there by Dighenis, and my mother often sang folk songs recounting his acts of heroism" (3).

<sup>115</sup> See Foley (ed), *The Memoirs of General Grivas*, 24-25 (on an instance of its use as such) and 39 ("The name of Dighenis is an enigma to the British. And it is a legend as well."). Cf. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 148-52 (on the power of anonymity in the issuing of threats against the powerful and mobilizing the subordinate); and Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, 14-21 (on "the coding of intimacy" by claiming vernacular speech and lore as sources of "secret pride," including those who recognize the referents and excluding those who look down on or ignore them).

<sup>116</sup> Foley (ed), *The Memoirs of General Grivas*, 32. Cf. Foley and Scobie, *The Struggle for Cyprus*, 39-40, and Varnavas, *Ιστορία του Απελευθερωτικού Αγώνα της ΕΟΚΑ*, 56-57. It was no small concern of Grivas' to be considered worthy of these legendary heroes, these θρυλικοί. He need not have worried: since the foundation of the Republic of Cyprus, Grivas has been regularly referred to as θρυλικός ("legendary/heroic") in speeches and memorials honoring him. See for instance the encomiastic comments of Archbishop Makarios III in Pavlides, *Μακάριος*, III.263, 273; the several speeches I heard in person at an annual commemoration of Grivas' death (January 21, 2018) bore out this pattern.

are what one might hastily conclude to be “secular” representatives of Greek triumph: the outnumbered Spartans against the might of the Persian Empire, the Greek revolutionaries seeking freedom from the Ottoman Empire, and indeed Digenis Akritas himself, who in the modern imagining was responsible for maintaining the Byzantine inheritance of Alexander the Great’s own great Greek empire.

And yet, in Cyprus, the adoption of Digenis (and indeed of Leonidas and the fighters of 1821, as discussed in Chapter III) configures the “national struggle” in ways conditioned by St. George’s hagiographical mediation. Digenis as a figure stands under the aegis and ethos of the warrior-martyrs—as George Grivas would have understood himself to be as well, at least (though in fact rather more than) by virtue of his given name, that of his patron saint: Saint George. George, as a perennial rallying symbol of Helleno-Christian triumph over barbarism, conditions both the medieval figuration of Digenis as a keeper of the Byzantine borderlands and his modern figuration as a hero who will return from mythic slumber to battle back the Ottoman empire or the Turkish state from around the beleaguered Greeks.<sup>117</sup>

It should come as no surprise, in other words, that one of the two ships selected by Grivas to ferry munitions to Cyprus in order to begin his military campaign against the British was named the *Saint George*. The story of this boat, not only during the anticolonial war in which it played a foundational role but all the more in the complex of visual, performative, and spatial mediation with which it continues to be commemorated in Cyprus, is the test case where all the above interrelationships come together.

In January of 1955, with Grivas’ plans in place and his operatives ready to begin their campaign of sabotage, a final shipment of weaponry was loaded onto the *Saint George*, a sturdy caique (traditional Greco-Turkish fishing vessel), in Athens. For two weeks the ship traveled, delayed by storms and unable to

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<sup>117</sup> See Hull (trans), *Digenis Akritas*, xxiv: “[Digenis] so impressed the imagination of the people that even as late as 1922 during the unfortunate military campaign in Asia Minor, the peasants of Pontus awaited the awakening of Digenis Akritas with his huge mace and terrible war cry.” Hull does not mention Cyprus specifically in his introduction, yet Digenis’ association with the island and its protection is substantial enough that Lawson can refer to him as “Digenis the Cyprian” (as well as the “Heracles of modern Greece”) in *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (104).

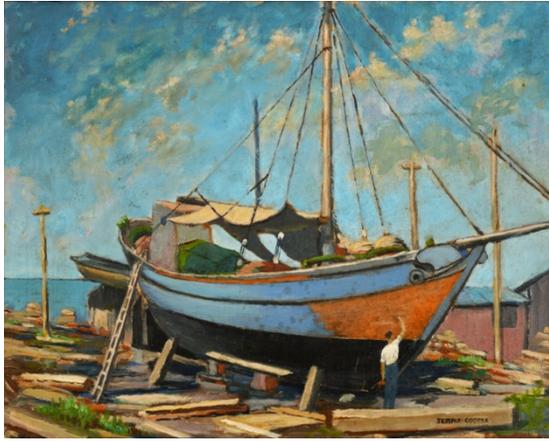


Figure 4.13: Painting by Temple Cooper, “Gun Runner ‘St. George’, Famagusta, 1958. Painted under guard of Turk Policeman.” Costas & Rita Severis Foundation, Center for Visual Arts & Research, Nicosia.

be contacted at sea; in Cyprus, Grivas and his operatives waited, only able to hope that the *Saint George* would elude the British and arrive armed “for the Struggle, for the freedom of the Cypriots.”<sup>118</sup> But an informer had prepared the British administration to sweep the coast for the gunrunner. On January 25, the *Saint George* was intercepted as it arrived at the coast at Chlorakas: the crew and its allies on shore were

arrested, the weapons seized, and the boat impounded. For the moment, the caique’s story was over—the imprisoned crew did not reveal the larger plans for armed struggle and the *Saint George* was moored in Paphos and forgotten. But once the warfare had begun in earnest, the British administration needed to turn its attention to the caique once more—placing it under guard by policemen and quickly selling it to a buyer who would remove the boat to the other side of the island, “because it was becoming a shrine.”<sup>119</sup>

The hagiographical imagination around St. George suffuses the story of the boat that bears his name. It is no coincidence, I submit, that it is the *Saint George* that is commemorated with paintings, news articles, festivities, a chapel dedicated to St. George, and a newly-renovated memorial museum (each of which I will address shortly)—even though the boat made only one munitions run, which it failed to

<sup>118</sup> Για τον Αγώνα, για ελευθερία των Κυπρίων: phrasing from the *Saint George* memorial that has stood since 1968 at the site of the caique’s landing.

<sup>119</sup> This was the impression of Elizaveta, the Cypriot scholar so perturbed by the “rubbish” accounts told of the boy on St. George’s horse (April 13, 2016; see again Chapter II, section 1b). A painting from 1958 (Figure 4.13) corroborates one aspect of her account, namely that the boat had to be guarded by police even after it was moved to Famagusta, which “suggests that control of the boat remained politically controversial for some years” (from the extended label of the painting where it is housed at the Center for Visual Arts and Research, Nicosia). In his own account of events following the capture of the boat, Kleououlos Papakostas (son of the leader of the shore party that was arrested by British authorities, to be introduced shortly) agreed that the *Saint George* was “a very important symbol of the Struggle” and so “the British had to get rid of it, [selling] it to a buyer in Paphos who then moved it to Famagusta, taking it away from the people here” (January 5, 2018). For historical accounts of the voyage and capture of the *Saint George* caique, see Varnavas, *Ιστορία του Απελευθερωτικού Αγώνα της ΕΟΚΑ*, 45-48, and Foley and Scobie, *The Struggle for Cyprus*, 30-34.



Figure 4.14: (Left) The gunrunning caique Saint George, commissioned by George Grivas to bear munitions to Cyprus in January 1955; now on site at a memorial museum in Chlorakas. (Right) The caique Siren, on which Grivas himself arrived to Cyprus in 1954, stored in a much less hagiographical space on the grounds of Grivas' tomb.

complete, while another caique (the *Siren*) made two successful runs, including its first carrying Grivas himself to direct the Struggle.<sup>120</sup> The imagination of George Grivas, atop the *Saint George*, under the aegis of the saint whose name both man and boat assume, is fitting: racing across the sea to rescue the captive innocent (a trope that manifests both in the figure of the abducted boy and in that of the sacrificed princess), armed and ready to strike at the heart of the violent antagonist (the imperial governor, the land-and-water-hoarding beast), and ultimately betrayed to, imprisoned by, and violated by the cruel imperial administration before being revealed as triumphant even in its apparent defeat, vindicated by all those who would rise up in celebration and emulation. The *Saint George* caique both distills in itself much of the hagiographical resonance that echoes in Greek-Cypriots' acts of self-narration and identification, and at the same time *adds* to and amplifies that resonance by mediating St. George in new ways.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> But it is the *Saint George* that stands out in Greek-Cypriot memory, to the extent that some of my interlocutors had forgotten entirely about the *Siren* and assumed that Grivas had ridden to Cyprus on the *Saint George*. Adding to this amnesia regarding the *Siren* is the far less public and commemorative manner in which the *Siren* is displayed today: it is kept on the grounds of Grivas' tomb in Limassol, but the site is rarely open to the public, and indeed the warehouse itself in which the boat is kept is bare and unhagiographical, with no religious resonances whatsoever (see Figure 4.14).

<sup>121</sup> It is important to establish that I am not denying that the naming of the boat and indeed the naming of the man were *accidental*, with regard to the hagiographical interweaving of St. George with the Greek-Cypriot national struggle. The

After visiting the memorial and museum surrounding the *Saint George* caique several times, I have come back to Chlorakas for a meeting that promises new texture beyond what is on display: I have been connected by a mutual acquaintance with Kleovoulos Papakostas, the son of the leader of the shore party that was meant to receive the *Saint George* but was instead arrested by the colonial authorities (Papakostas Leonidas).<sup>122</sup> Now working at the hotel (Hotel Saint George, naturally) that dominates the site today, the younger Papakostas is able to take some time to share with me his family's experience of the capture, and the commemoration, of the *Saint George*. He leads me back down to the ship, where it is positioned within a small museum building, and begins by tracing the general outline of the Struggle as he understands it: the Struggle did not begin, he insists, in 1955 with the outbreak of fighting or in 1950 with the plebiscite declaring the will of the Greek-Cypriot people to be unified with "mother Greece," nor even in 1821, when the Greeks rose up against Ottoman tyranny; rather, the struggle for freedom is as old as humanity, with the heroes and saints of all ages participating in it. "The Cypriots," Papakostas concludes, "have borne witness [*martyria*] to this struggle all along."<sup>123</sup>

Papakostas rehearses some of the history that I have already gathered from other sources: after two successful runs bearing munitions to Cyprus, the *Siren* would be forced on its third run to abandon its

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boat was named well before its selection and commissioning as a gun-runner for Cyprus (though its *selection* for the purpose to which Grivas put it is unlikely to be accidental). Grivas himself was, in fact, quite possibly named after St. George—his grandfathers were Michalis and Ioannis, and he had no uncles with the name of George, whereas his mother's home had an alcove by the front door where an icon of St. George was prominently placed, reflecting the family's particular devotion to the Trophybearer (see Leonidou, *Γεώργιος Γρίβας Διγενής*, 9-10)). This naming provides a precious glimpse of the likely texture of Grivas' affiliation with the saint even in his youth, but the choice to place him under the patronage of St. George could not have had any intentional association with his future exploits. This accidental quality does not, however, reduce the *actual* mediating significance of the saint's name for yielding hagiographical texture around the objects, persons, and events in view (as was the case with the "hoofprints" of St. George discussed in Chapter II, section 3b). We can eliminate the possibility that Grivas and the *Saint George* caique are celebrated in ways suffused with the imagination of St. George only because of the accidental quality of the name-association: if this were the case, we might expect also to see the deployment of siren-imagery from Greek mythology (hardly a taboo source for national-struggle cultural reference points), yet we find no such thing.

<sup>122</sup> Offered the option of a pseudonym, Papakostas expressed his preference to be identified by name. Indeed, as with certain other interlocutors, his identity as a figure related publically with the events about which he informed me makes his identification particularly appropriate.

<sup>123</sup> January 5, 2018.

mission, having been spotted by the British, and so needing to dump its cargo and escape back to Greece. The new ship commissioned in its stead, the *Saint George*, was not so fortunate—yet, Papakostas suggests, in another way its capture was more fortunate than could have been imagined. “The *Siren* ran in secret, but the *Saint George*, when it was captured, was revealed [*phanerōthēke*] to everybody. It captured the attention of the people, inspired their imagination... so much so that you could say that *this* was the real beginning of the war.”<sup>124</sup> This perception that the earlier boat was able to provide the necessary functional means for the Struggle, but not the ethos or the will that the people would need to commit with their whole being, dovetails with my reading of the capture and subsequent commemoration of the *Saint George* as hagiographically saturated. As with the martyrdom of St. George the person, so too with *Saint George* the gunrunner: the seal of martyrdom is the uptake, the appropriation, indeed the edification that results in the surrounding society from the spectacle of apparent defeat by the imperial antagonist. It is in this way that the *Saint George*, rather than the *Siren*, is the ship that played “a significant part” in “the psychological preparation of the people of Cyprus” for the Struggle.<sup>125</sup>

And again, as with the saint, so with the boat: it is its afterlife of multimediation, more than its life and death (as it were), that is definitive of the *Saint George*'s power in Cypriot history and imagination. In

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<sup>124</sup> This comment about the capture of the *Saint George* being the beginning of the national struggle contradicts, but only in a certain philosophical sense, Papakostas' earlier observation that the struggle did *not* begin in 1955 but rather is as old as humanity. We need not quibble, for the lack of consistency is less significant than the understanding that this phase of the struggle is launched not by the arrival of Grivas on the *Siren* or by the armaments spread around the island in secret but rather by the martyriological moment of the defeated and imprisoned crew of the *Saint George* rousing their community to mimetic resistance.

<sup>125</sup> Ioannides, *The Church of Cyprus*, 137-39: Ioannides confirms (though with far less texture than in Papakostas' account) that “the trial that followed and the conviction of the freedom fighters awakened and moved the people of Cyprus,” though he contrasts Papakostas in suggesting that the arrests “filled with disappointment and gloom the long-suffering people of the island,” rather than arousing their conviction and zeal for emulation (which is doubtless the more hagiographical reading of the situation). Note too that the National Struggle Museum has an exhibit dedicated to “The Story of the Caique ‘Ayios Georgios,’” but none dedicated to the several runs of the *Siren*. An eloquent, somewhat fatalistic account of the capture and trial, from a British administrator's perspective, can be found in Durrell, *Bitter Lemons*, 243-45: he notes, for instance, that “the whole thing had the air of a good-natured farce—it belonged to that operatic world of fictions based in the Greek attitude to modern history. ... [The prisoners] beamed when the sentences were passed and cocked an appreciative ear to the hubbub outside. They felt themselves to be heroes and martyrs” (245).

1959, after the conclusion of hostilities, Archbishop Makarios III (at this point about to be installed as President of Cyprus) bought the *Saint George* from its owner in Famagusta and donated it back to the people of Chlorakas,<sup>126</sup> who spent time deliberating over how best to use this “very important symbol of the Struggle”<sup>127</sup> before installing it, in 1961, as a memorial on the coast where it had been captured. From the triumphant vantage of the new Republic of Cyprus, the event of the boat’s capture and its crew’s arrest has its significance inverted, its apparent failure celebrated as the sacrifice that awoke, edified, inspired the nation to emulation. There is no question of this religious—indeed, in the terms of this study, properly hagiographical—significance of the boat being a later imposition or an overextension of scholarly enthusiasm: the people of Chlorakas ensured that this significance would be registered straightaway, by constructing (simultaneously with their installation of the boat at the shore) a small but lavish chapel on the hill above the site, overshadowing the caique both figuratively and spatially.

It should not be surprising that this chapel is dedicated to the patronage of St. George. Even aside from the obvious continuity between the boat and the saint in light of their shared name, the construction

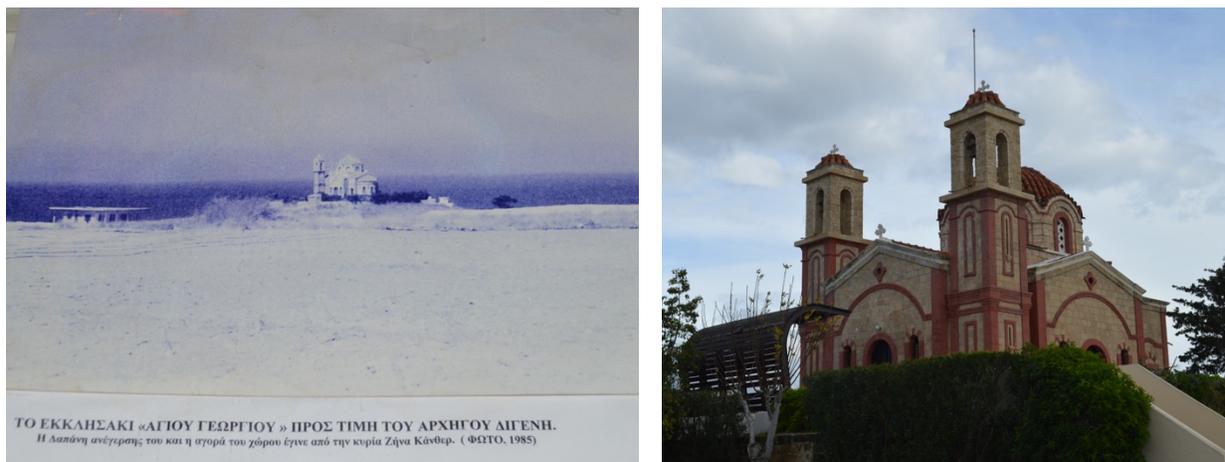


Figure 4.15: (Left) Photo on display at the Saint George caique museum showing the memorial that houses the boat and the chapel of St. George in 1985, standing alone in the landscape. (Right) The chapel in 2018, perched above the parking lot of the Hotel Saint George, a popular (if ironic) resort destination for British holidaymakers.

<sup>126</sup> A full narrative of Makarios’ actions at this point with respect to the *Saint George* was reported by the newspaper *Φιλελεύθερος* on 8 November 1959.

<sup>127</sup> This is Papakostas’ assessment, which I take to be corroborated by other sources, such as the press of the 1950s and the many styles of continuing commemoration of the beached ship.

of the chapel of St. George makes it clear that the church's prevailing support of the anticolonial struggle would be represented here by doubling down on the boat's hagiographical associations. The chapel concretizes in stone, iconography, and liturgy the patronage of St. George not only upon the boat that bore his name but also upon the man who commissioned it and upon the struggle initiated by its sacrifice.<sup>128</sup> The presence of the chapel, along with all that took place there during the years following the conflict,<sup>129</sup> registers the boat not only as a happenstance borrower of the name of St. George but as a *hagiographical medium* of the saint's identification with and even involvement in the "holy struggle"<sup>130</sup> of the Greek-Cypriots against the British empire. The boat *Saint George* is hagiographical in the sense that it renders a material and psychological continuity between the emancipating ethos of the saint whose name it claims and the political struggle to whose ends it was deployed, and for which it continues to stand in as a monument and metonymy.

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<sup>128</sup> The inscriptions on the chapel themselves are explicit that the building's functions as a church of St. George are carried out "for the honor of the leader of EOKA 1955-1959, General George Grivas."

<sup>129</sup> Although an in-depth discussion will need to wait for a subsequent article, it is significant that the "γιορτή της μέρης που ήρθε ο Διγενής" ("feast of the day when Digenis came"—a comment of Papakostas, January 5, 2018) was celebrated at the Chlorakas site each year between 1959 and 1963. Known as the Διγενεία, this festival was attended by huge crowds, up to ten thousand people in its first iteration. Photographs of the events adorn the *Saint George* caique museum and appeared in the newspapers of the time, showing activities that are abundantly hagiographical in their dynamics, such as: images of George Grivas being processed from a boat offshore onto the beach, and then up into the chapel of St. George (after 1961; to the main church of Chlorakas, before the chapel had been built); liturgies invoking the blessing of God and the saints on the memory of the EOKA struggle and on its paradigmatic figure Grivas; soil (χώμα) brought from the landing site of the *Siren* and the *Saint George* up into the church, an act which, according to Papakostas, was "symbolic... to show that the Struggle had entered into Cyprus for good, had become part of its life and its Orthodox ethos"; and village-wide panegyric festivities (calibrated to the hagiographical heritage of both Digenis Akritas and St. George) including feats of strength, athletic contests, dances, and folksongs. The Διγενεία, then, was another way of hagiographically processing the EOKA struggle and reinscribing that struggle's appropriation of modes of resistance and rectification evoked by the patronage of St. George the Dragonslayer.

<sup>130</sup> This particular phrase derives not from my conversations about the hagiographical dynamics of the EOKA struggle (though it is aligned with such assessments as those of Nikos, at the Imprisoned Graves, that "freedom is a holy thing") but rather from the press contemporaneous with the years of fighting. The newspaper *Έθνος* featured a story on 10 November 1959 entitled "Πως ήρχισεν ο άγιος αγών" (How the holy struggle began), relaying an account by Socrates Loizides, the captain of both the *Siren* and the *Saint George*, on his experiences bearing arms to Cyprus and being ultimately arrested upon the capture of the latter boat by the British.



Figure 4.16: Political cartoons from the late 1950s: Cyprus represented as a brutalized or otherwise threatened young woman (on left, pinned down by the bestial form of the British Prime Minister; on right, with her mother Greece protecting her from false promises by NATO). On display in the National Struggle Museum, “Slogans – Cartoons.”

In other words, the relationship in modern Cyprus between the archetypal Orthodox “liberator of the captives” and George “Digenis” Grivas is not only a matter of saintly patronage (though it is clearly this as well), but also a more active juxtaposition or metaphorical elision, igniting apprehension of Grivas as a latter-day St. George, riding across the sea to slay the beast and rescue the princess—that is, the island of Cyprus herself, so often represented in public and private media as a young woman of noble birth, the captive daughter of Greater Greece (Figure 4.16).<sup>131</sup>

As it was with Digenis Akritas, so it is too with “Digenis” Grivas. The interwoven representation of the Greek-Cypriot military commander with St. George promotes resistance to and rescue from the imperial threat to Cyprus, in light of the counter-imperial hagiographical imagination of a lost—and yet to be vindicated—Byzantium. The symbolic lion of British imperialism, from Richard the Lionheart (who

<sup>131</sup> Such metaphorical strategies as we have seen in the cartoons of Figure 4.16 or even in the selection of the *Saint George* caïque as Grivas’ gunrunner function in no small part by establishing a cognitive link that cannot be unseen, once recognized in light of a wider cultural topography of imagery and associations. See Moran, “Seeing and Believing,” 91: “the full appreciative comprehension of a metaphor can make any subsequent denial of the point it makes seem feeble or disingenuous, in much the same way that appreciative understanding of a joke can overpower any subsequent refusal of the point it makes. If someone is described as having all the charm of a damp kitchen sponge, it’s no good simply to deny it, after he or she has registered an appreciation of the phrase”; cf. Cohen, “Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy,” 3-12. My thanks to Kelli Gardner for calling my attention to the applicability of these latter references. See also Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, 5, on the “claim to intimacy and familiarity” on the part of state ideologies, rendered by the use of somatic and familial metaphors for a vulnerable community in need of defending.

seized Cyprus in 1191 and ushered in four centuries of Latin rule) to Harold Macmillan (who yielded Cyprus in 1959, in spite of maintaining sovereign military bases on the island),<sup>132</sup> becomes just another beast to be overcome by the eternal Greek *thrylikos*: whether by Grivas, Diakos, Digenis, George, Alexander, Heracles, or some combination thereof. And so indeed it is represented in the media used to promote the anticolonial war (Figure 4.17).



Figure 4.17: A poster from pro-EOKA demonstrations in the 1950s, featuring an archetypal Greek in 1820s garb fighting a lion with a club (the preferred weapon of Heracles and Digenis Akritas), beneath the slogan: “Freedom or death.” Displayed in the Greek-Cypriot National Struggle Museum,

But there are consequences to this ongoing elision between Hellenic heroic imagination and Byzantine martyriological imagination. The tragedy of Heracles is that, for all the monsters he slays, he cannot avoid becoming a monster himself and destroying his wife and children.<sup>133</sup> So too Digenis Akritas: as he remains on the margins between empires, he also remains on the margins between human and bestial, raping and pillaging even as he periodically repents and purports to represent Orthodox virtue.<sup>134</sup> And George “Digenis” Grivas: the celebrated freedom fighter of the anticolonial struggle would become, within a generation, the widely vilified terrorist of EOKA-B, an organization unsatisfied with independence and ready to engage in intimidation, sabotage, and ultimately insurrection to overthrow the power-sharing government of the Republic of Cyprus.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup> The significance of these British bases, and the tentative nature of the decolonization of the island, are discussed in Varnava, “Reinterpreting Macmillan’s Cyprus Policy.”

<sup>133</sup> See, for instance, Euripides, *Herakles Mainomenos*, and Seneca, *Hercules Furens*.

<sup>134</sup> See Livanos, “A Case Study in Byzantine Dragon-Slaying,” 138-39: “Digenis cannot fit into any community. Despite his parents fervent Christianity, he is ultimately too violent and lustful to lead an exemplary Christian life or even accommodate to Christian society. The hybridity that ought to lead to union of all people under the Gospel really leads to a monstrous otherness.” Ultimately, Livanos argues, it is Death himself who must assume the role of the hero, the only one who “was so strong he conquered the unbeaten” [from *Digenis Akritas*, VIII.267] by triumphing over Digenis and preventing the world from being populated by Digenis’ superhuman progeny.

<sup>135</sup> As Afroditi, a refugee from Kyrenia, put it (encapsulating an array of comments I had heard from people across the political spectrum about Grivas being the most polarizing figure of twentieth-century Cyprus): “In 1955 and 1960 we loved him, he was a savior, everything was good—and then came the 60s, and it became terrible, and he was to blame.

So we must consider: if these great *thrylikoi* become monsters, what about St. George when he becomes a *thrylikos* in his Dragonslayer paradigm? Does he escape becoming what he resists? Do the uses to which his media are put? Here, then, is the final dimension of St. George's hagiographical culture that we will explore: the tensions between exoteric and esoteric understandings of George's dragon-slaying in the lived theologies of Cyprus, and the ethical risks entailed in appropriating George's dragon-slaying as a modality of resistance and rectification.

### (3) The Inner Dragon

It takes much of the afternoon to wind my way through some of the remotest reaches of the eastern Troodos mountains, but eventually I reach Kampi, a sleepy satellite village with not much more than a hundred residents, perched above the larger town on what passes for a main road below. It takes only a few minutes of asking around to locate the elderly woman, Efthymia, who keeps the key to the church of St. George. After years of Kampi being passed by, she has grown used to visitors seeking to see the church at the summit of the town. In particular, they come (as have I) to see a certain large icon of the saint that, on the Feast of St. George in 2013, was recognized as myrrh-gushing (*myroblētē*): a special, miraculous status attributed to certain icons. Efthymia's accounting of the miracle to me was heartfelt but clearly well-worn:

The icon became so heavy as we were processing it that it could not be carried by two men—it took six to carry it! And when they set it down again in the church, it began to flow with myrrh and the whole church became fragrant. . . . Then people started to come on pilgrimage. After the

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Even the invasion might not have happened if it were not for Grivas and EOKA-B... we should not think of them at all like the heroes of EOKA-A!" (January 3, 2018). So it is no coincidence that, in my conversations with Greek-Cypriots, the notion of Grivas' actions being mediated in a *hagiographical* (rather than a putatively *historical*) manner has prompted no small measure of revulsion and resentment. Grivas, clearly, was no saint, regardless of the extent of his hagiographical appropriation. See also George Koumoullis, "The truths the hagiographies don't tell," in the *Cyprus Mail* (June 18, 2017): "Despite the fact that Eoka did not achieve its objective, Grivas returned to Greece a national hero. Like [Henri Philippe] Petain, Grivas wrecked his hero status by setting up Eoka B, a criminal organisation that murdered its 'enemies', blew up police stations, government buildings and the cars of its critics in order to achieve... enosis." Note well the pertinent title of the op-ed.

miracle the church was kept open all the time, as long as people were coming. Now there are fewer, of course, but anywhere miracles happen will always be a draw for people.<sup>136</sup>

Inside the tiny church, the impact of the event can be clearly seen. The walls have been freshly supplied with painting in the neo-Byzantine style, and heaps of votives demonstrate the new popularity of the site for visitors from beyond the town. I am expecting a solemn atmosphere, with an aura of inaccessibility around the wonderworking, fifteenth-century icon—which is indeed almost completely veiled by a red curtain, leaving in plain view only the unusual dragon (depicted as tamed *rather* than slain, the saint’s spear unbloodied in George’s hand)—but my expectations are quickly upended.

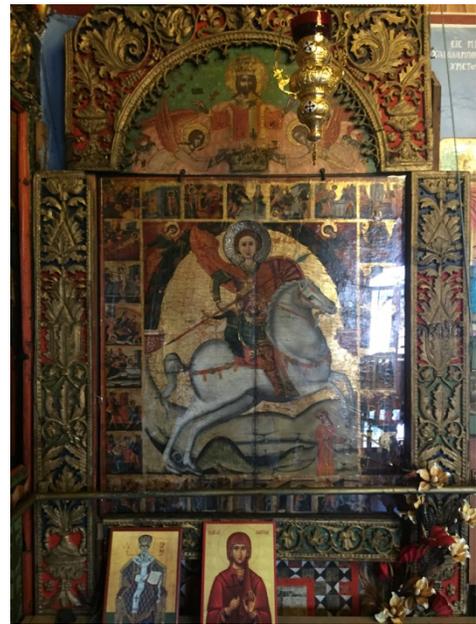


Figure 4.18: *The myrrh-gushing icon of St. George (with its curtain removed), Kampi.*

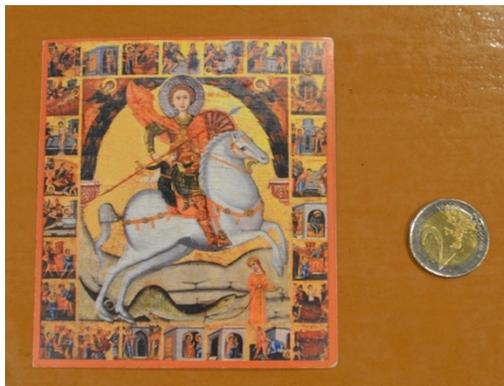
After learning that I am researching and writing on St. George in Cyprus, Efthymia marches straight to the icon and pulls back the curtain, revealing the face of the saint. Then she beckons me over: “Come—you are tall—you can reach the rod.” She insists that I reach up and remove the entire curtain from in front of the icon, so that I can see it in its totality. “You must include a photo of our icon in your book! So more people will know about it...” In this moment, mediation trumps alterity: the holiness that has been rendered here is best respected and glorified by making it accessible more widely, not by reserving it as the prize for an

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<sup>136</sup> April 22, 2016. The myrrh itself, according to the testimony of those present, was “a thick liquid that was fragrant and mixed with the varnish of the icon”—see the account of the event by Metropolitan Isaiah of Tamassos (who was not himself present at the event, but was called in to evaluate the icon by the parish priest, at which time he took testimonies from villagers), recounted in John Sanidopoulos, “An Icon of St. George is Gushing Myrrh in Cyprus” (May 8, 2013: <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2013/05/an-icon-of-st-george-is-gushing-myrrh.html>, accessed January 22, 2018. Sanidopoulos provides another account as well, translated from an email sent in by a pilgrim: “A Personal Testimony About the Myrrh-Gushing Icon of St. George in Cyprus” [<http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2013/05/a-personal-testimony-about-myrrh.html>]).

arduous pilgrimage. Because indeed, fewer people are coming. And if St. George has made his presence felt on the mountaintop, he is needed more than ever down below.

For Efthymia and others in Kampi, this icon of St. George has become a touchstone of holy presence in a time when miracles are less in fashion than they were, in a time when the living presence of the saints must be asserted rather than assumed. It is clear that getting the word out, mediating the holiness of the image beyond the blessed community of Kampi to a society assailed by the temptation of unbelief, is of paramount importance. Not only is this clear from Efthymia's words, and not only in the pilgrims' testimonies posted and promoted online, it is also evidenced by the pile of thick cards on a table beside the door, on each of which is a reproduction of the wonderworking icon (Figure 4.19).<sup>137</sup> Efthymia



hands me one, then reconsiders and scoops up a whole handful of them. “To share,” she explains. “So people can see the saint who is here, and believe in him. He will defeat atheism like he defeats the dragon.”<sup>138</sup> The web of mediation extends a strand with each new visitor: each visitor who believes that a miracle took place here may participate in the

Figure 4.19: Reproduction on thick paper stock of the myrrh-gushing icon of St. George, Kampi.

<sup>137</sup> On the rear of the card there is text explaining the miracle: “Icon of St. George, Kampi. Dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. On Bright Monday [Δευτέρα του Πάσχα], 6 May 2013, on the feast of the Saint, the icon began to gush myrrh [μυροβλίζει] and to make fragrant [ευωδιάζει] the church. The memory of the Saint is celebrated on 23 April.” This practice of making cards to disseminate the image of a wonderworking icon is not idiosyncratic; for instance, the Monastery of St. George the Alaman also distributes cards with the image of their own icon of St. George that, according to the sisters, began to weep myrrh in October 2016.

<sup>138</sup> This is not an uncommon symbolic interpretation of St. George as Dragonslayer (around the Orthodox world, not only in Cyprus), as I will discuss in more depth below: the dragon as a figure either of religious alterity or of an atheistic skepticism that threatens the faith of the Christian. See, for instance, a homily of Metropolitan Avgoustinos Kantiotes, Bishop of Florina in northern Greece: “We saw the fearsome dragon that was at the spring, and did not allow anyone to refresh themselves. But besides that dragon, which St. George killed with his spear and with the Cross, in our days first and foremost, another dragon appears much worse than the dragon that St. George killed. And that worse dragon, which chokes all of mankind and endangers with the greatest destruction, is atheism, godless materialism. With this dragon, our small country must struggle heroically, not to fall into its mouth” (provided in anonymous translation on the “Full of Grace and Truth” blog: <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com.cy/2015/04/homily-on-st-george-trophy-bearer-by.html>, accessed January 22, 2018).

persuasion of others, helping them to resist skepticism and cynicism, helping them to struggle for holiness of self and world.

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This last section is anchored by a problem that has been a dimension of everything we have covered in this study but that often recedes into the background when more immediate crises summon St. George to an Orthodox imagination. This problem is that of the *struggle for holiness*, that is, of St. George as an agent or sponsor of resistance to, and ultimately liberation from, what is perceived as an inner captivity: impure dispositions of mind and body, failures of faith, instances of succumbing to outright sin. As endlessly re-identifiable as the dragon is when considered as a political symbol, so too as a symbol of spiritual corruption or demonic malevolence the dragon slain by St. George figures for Orthodox Christians an endlessly flexible, ever-threatening evil, to resist which requires the help of the saints. Yet, as has been continually clear in these chapters, the personal and the political cannot be disjoined—a turn to spiritual struggle does not absolve us of the political questions, as the liberation of the heart is contextualized by the defeat of exoteric dragons: the religious or political others who impose the conditions that threaten to corrupt Orthodox persons. So likewise, as we will see, political liberation is tightly associated with cultural-spiritual healing, emancipation of the mind, or even exorcism of the soul. In this respect, defeating the *outer* dragon takes on the hagiographical cast of a struggle for *inner* freedom, a condition long associated with the holy saints and martyrs of the church.

This Greek-Cypriot understanding of internal conditions shaped (both distorted and rectified) by external conditions should be familiar not only to students of Orthodox theological anthropology but also to students of colonial and postcolonial theory. In his incandescent essay of 1959, “On National Culture,” Franz Fanon discusses his theory of “cultural alienation” in stark terms: in short, he argues that colonization not only is a material exploitation, by which the dignity of a colonized people is

compromised by the fruit of their labor being redirected to others, but also involves “serious psycho-affective mutilations” by which colonized people come to *perceive themselves and their world askew* and so, frequently, to act in ways that perpetuate their own subordination.<sup>139</sup> Crucially, this warping of the colonized self results in a special tragedy for those who try to reclaim their dignity by way of cultural assertiveness: the colonized African who seeks rectification in a universal “Negro” culture has already come to “obey the same rules of logic” by which the colonial powers have imagined and asserted a vast and homogenous African “nonculture.”<sup>140</sup> In other words, even the instinct for cultural resistance has been distorted by colonial domination in such a way that the struggle for (outer and inner) rectification is itself misaligned and self-defeating.

The dialectic explored at length by Fanon cannot be simplistically applied to the living situation of colonial/anticolonial/postcolonial Cyprus, but it aids us in apprehending the entanglement between



Figure 4.20: Graffiti on the streets of Nicosia articulating an understanding of immaterial captivity. Photo taken July, 2012.

cognitive and political conditions, and thus between inner and outer modes of cultural (here specifically hagiographical) resistance, between “personal struggle” (*prosōpiko agōna*) and “national struggle” (*ethniko agōna*). The problem invites us to consider the dynamics of and obstacles to hagiographical edification from a new angle: to consider not only the esoteric understandings of St. George and his dragon-slaying, but also the possibility that the cultural deployment of these understandings to resist inner and outer captivity may have

<sup>139</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 154-55. See also 149: “the final aim of colonization was to convince the indigenous population it would save them from darkness.” Colonialism relies, in Fanon’s colorful imagery, on the perception of the foreign administration not as a kindly, doting mother but as a stern mother who must punish in order to protect a wayward or unruly child “from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology, and its ontological misfortune.” These dynamics are explored in far more psychological depth in Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

<sup>140</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 150.

already been corrupted by and assimilated to the forms of unholiness they purport to resist.<sup>141</sup> This possibility is, of course, not only a warning of theorists like Fanon and church historians like Englezakis but also a core supposition of the Greek Orthodox ascetic tradition, and the voices of monastic interlocutors will be of particular import in this section. The monastic communities of Cyprus, who were among the most vehement supporters of the armed national struggle of EOKA, are also today those with some of the clearest resources for understanding and articulating the *risks* of identifying esoteric struggle with exoteric struggle too completely.

Thus the tension between *purity and vulnerability*, constantly operative in Orthodox understandings of holiness, comes at last into the foreground. As Dragonslayer, St. George renders a confrontation between, on the one hand, the ways that appropriating holiness into one's life (by way of hagiographical media) serves the aim of spiritual rectification,<sup>142</sup> and on the other hand, the pitfalls of such appropriation when the psychospiritual framework into which holiness is digested may itself be corrupt. Thus we will conclude by considering the faultlines between two overlapping Greek-Orthodox modes of mediating St. George: that which claims saintly support for the military project of liberation and that which warns that such a project is a house of mirrors where demonic dispositions are amplified and the only saints that can be met are those of our own projection. These two positions, I think, are not ultimately

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<sup>141</sup> The church historian Benedict Englezakis observes that “from the point of view of the anonymous, deep and silent history of their mental outlook it is questionable whether the Cypriots have even now been delivered from the Ottoman yoke” (*Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus*, 422). Englezakis develops this claim in the subsequent pages, in order to make a point aligned with the “cultural alienation” of Fanon. He argues that Greek-Cypriot mentalities during the period of British rule (such as a total elision of national and religious identity, and more strongly put, “a repulsive combination of deference to strength and oppression of anything weak”), should be identified as “poisonous fruits of the experience of long servitude”—that is, as an *invisible but continuing oppression* by what had been made of the Greek-Cypriots by their embeddedness in the Ottoman Empire. These mentalities would, in Englezakis’ judgment, have profound consequences for twentieth-century Cypriot history, not least for the less savory dimensions of collusion between the Church of Cyprus and the paramilitary struggle of EOKA. By framing the problem of cultural captivity in this way, notably, Englezakis is able to absolve the Church of Cyprus of a measure of responsibility: the failure is *ascetic* (being unable to exorcise and rectify an inherited distorted character) rather than *ethical* (being willing to take and support sinful actions with eyes open).

<sup>142</sup> That is, through resistance to and liberation from psychic captivity—whether the captivity described by Fanon or that described by Orthodox ascetic theologians.

irreconcilable. The Greek-Cypriot view that outer and inner liberation are isomorphic and codependent, as is abundantly evident in the uses of the St. George tradition, does not excuse the pursuers of such integral liberation from recognizing that this struggle is itself an arena of temptation in which holiness can turn to ashes when it is appropriated demonically. As Aristotle Papanikolaou puts it:

The political community is not the antithesis to the desert but one of the many deserts in which the Christian must combat the demons that attempt to block the learning of love. In no other field is the temptation to demonize the neighbor more compelling or seemingly justifiable than in the field of politics; in no other space than in the political, then, is the Christian more challenged to fulfill the commandment of love.<sup>143</sup>

To hunger for slaying dragons is to risk becoming the dragon one seeks to slay. In light of this possibility, the question is the extent to which hagiographical mediation includes the resources for self-resistance.

### 3a) “That ancient serpent”: *The Draconic and the Demonic in St. George’s Mediation of Holiness*

Although the precise relationship between dragons and demons in Orthodox Christian imaginaries through the centuries is imprecise and variable, there is no question that the two bear more than a family resemblance and occupy similar hagiographical terrain as figures of unholiness. Among the earliest and most influential conjunctions of draconic and demonic/diabolical identities is in the

*Apocalypse of John*, chapter 12:

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.<sup>144</sup>

In the apocalyptic text, the generic framework of a visionary encounter allows the image of a great beast (the Dragon) to be revealed as figurative for an invisible power (the Devil) that is asserted to work actively

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<sup>143</sup> Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political*, 4.

<sup>144</sup> Revelation 12:7-9. On Origen’s fleshing out the identification between the devil, the dragon, and the demons, see Mango, “Diabolus Byzantinus,” 217; and Russell, *Satan*, 123-48. See also Moss, *The Other Christs*, 97-98.

and continuously to deceive, tempt, and corrupt “the whole world.”<sup>145</sup> As Monica White observes, however, the relative prominence of the two forms of antagonists shifted over time in Byzantine literary productions, with the late antique obsession with demons and demonic warfare yielding to a boom in dragon-legends from the tenth century forward.<sup>146</sup> This shift is significant for two reasons: first, because in some cases saintly legends were rewritten to star a dragon *in place of* a demon in the antagonistic role, suggesting a measure of interchangeability between them in hagiographical imagination and representation;<sup>147</sup> and second, because of the eventual shift *back* to a prominence of demonic or spiritual threat in the post-Byzantine period, such that even the dragons appearing in hagiographical media came ever more to be metaphorically interpretable as symbols of demonic power.

These elisions and substitutions should call our attention to two key differences between dragons and demons, which, perhaps paradoxically, help us to interpret their continuing hagiographical integration. First: unlike with such literature as the *Apocalypse of John* or the ascetic homilies,<sup>148</sup> when dragons are first absorbed into Christian saints’ *Lives*, they are physical beasts, different in degree but not (yet) in kind from a crocodile or a serpent. Their destruction may be impressive and heroic, but it is not in

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<sup>145</sup> The singular figure of the Devil would be, in the early centuries of the church, unfolded into a more capacious demonological theory, such that demons would come to be seen as the ever-present agents of Satan rather than (as they had been in the New Testament) impure elemental spirits that resisted the power of Christ and brought about “sickness and derangement in humans and animals” (Mango, “Diabolus Byzantinus,” 217) but could not be identified as a coherent army with a common purpose. See Mango, “Diabolus Byzantinus,” 215-22; and Boulhol, “Hagiographie antique et démonologie,” 258-68. See also the helpful chapters on New Testament and Patristic demonology in Frölich and Koskenniemi, *Evil and the Devil*.

<sup>146</sup> See White, “The Rise of the Dragon in Middle Byzantine Hagiography,” 150-51.

<sup>147</sup> See White, “The Rise of the Dragon in Middle Byzantine Hagiography,” 157-62, for the interesting case of St. Marina, whose earliest hagiographical narratives have her dispatching first a dragon and then a demon, but whose later media often omit the demon or attribute its properties to the dragon (the exception being an enduring iconographic style in which Marina beats the head of a small demon with a hammer—but even this action is often appropriated for her dragon-legend, for instance in inscriptions celebrating how Marina had “crushed the head of the dragon,” or in the eleventh-century *Menologion*, in which Marina beats a *dragon* with the hammer that she otherwise uses on her demonic antagonist).

<sup>148</sup> Such as those of Pseudo-Makarios, who famously describes the human heart as “but a small vessel, yet [within it] there also are dragons and there are lions; there are poisonous beasts and all the treasures of evil. And there are rough and uneven roads; there are precipices. But there is also God, also the angels, the life and the kingdom, the light and the Apostles, the treasures of grace – there are all things” (*Homily* 43.7).

and of itself a sign of holy authority. Demons, by contrast, had always been figured as immaterial forces, whether the ambient or elemental “unclean spirits” of the New Testament or the more deliberate tempters and harriers of the Desert Fathers, whose banishment is direct evidence of the exorcist’s investiture with divine power. As belief in the physicality of dragons evaporates in the modern era, therefore, an elision between dragons and demons becomes a way to maintain the legitimacy and authority of the saintly dragon-legends—the dracontomachy of St. George, paramount among them, need not be *historical* or even necessarily *allegorical* (in the sense of the political interpretations considered above) if it can be understood as a *metaphorical* figuration of the saint’s aid in delivering the human heart from its captivity to sin.<sup>149</sup> Second: externalizing those aspects of human experience understood to be demonic makes them easier to confront and dissociate from oneself.<sup>150</sup> Although Orthodox ascetic theology maintains the both-and tension in the identity of the demons (as psychological dispositions *and* malevolent agents), dragons would appear to have no such ambivalence, being figures *par excellence* of monstrous otherness.<sup>151</sup> To the extent that an esoteric interpretation of the dragon-legend develops such that it can refer to the struggle with the passions, the symbol of the dragon represents these distorted modes of being (*akatharoi tropoi* or *logismoi*) even more starkly as foreign to the self. This may have mixed consequences: both a redoubling of

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<sup>149</sup> This dehistoricizing of the miracle can be seen evidenced in the hagiographical media themselves—consider, for instance, the icon of Sts. George and Theodore in Sotira, discussed by Hadjichristodoulou (“Ενας άκρίτας άγιος στην Κύπρο”), in which the two saints are depicted together slaying a *single* dragon—a representation that appears in none of the miracle accounts, but which resolves into intelligibility insofar as the dragon destroyed by each saint separately can be said to be the *same*: that is, not a historical monster killed twice but a figure of archetypal evil against whom the saints are collaboratively arrayed in the eternal struggle. Cf. Pancaroğlu, “The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer,” 155-56, for her analysis of equivalent imagery in Cappadocia, arguing (on the basis of written inscriptions as well as visual logic) that the imagery “establishes a semantic relationship between the idea of Christ’s triumph over evil on the cross and the saints’ victorious impaling of the dragon.”

<sup>150</sup> See Mango, “Diabolus Byzantinus,” 215.

<sup>151</sup> The *Martyrdom* of St. George presents dragons as native creatures of hell and as, explicitly, “evil” (see again note 93); certain images in the Orthodox iconographic repertoire bear this out (for instance in many representations of Jacob’s Ladder), where the gate to Hell is figured as a dragon’s mouth.

resistance to such dispositions (insofar as they are identified as truly other) and a new temptation to avoid responsibility for them (insofar as they are identified as truly other).



Figure 4.21: Panel depicting St. George as driving out the demons of a Roman temple, to the frustration of the emperor Diocletian. Detail from the large mosaic icon of St. George, Church of St. George the Far, Larnaca. 1706.

From the early days of his cult, St. George was known as an exorcist and bulwark against the “demonic forces [that] were supposedly in retreat” following the great supersession of Diocletian by Constantine (but which remained a threat to ordinary people, particularly on the outskirts of the empire).<sup>152</sup> In the *Martyrdom* accounts of St. George first written at this time, multiple episodes pertain to the martyr’s exorcism of idols and people in the time leading up to his execution, earning the frustration of the imperial

administration and the gratitude (and conversion) of those who had been liberated from demonic influence. In other words, long before his reimagination as Dragonslayer, St. George was already a preeminent opponent of demons and ally in the struggle to be free of demonic captivity. With this foundation in mind, let us turn back to modern Cyprus, in order to interpret St. George’s enduring conditioning of Greek-Cypriot understandings of how to struggle *inwardly*: with sin and the demonic, that is, with distortions of the self and with the agency to which these may be attributed.

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<sup>152</sup> Mango, “Diabolus Byzantinus,” 218. Cf. Walter, “The Origins of the Cult of St. George,” 298, on George’s outstanding role in the saintly host who were known to help fight off demons or expel them from devotees; and 314, on the inscriptions declaring that, wherever George’s relics are interred, “a house of God has replaced the dwelling of demons.” This tradition is evidenced as early as the sixth century, in the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, in which St. George “took hold of [Theodore] and, like a man wielding a sword, chased [the demons] from him” (*Life of Theodore* 8, in Dawes and Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, 92), and in which St. George’s relics (among those of other saints) “radiated their [antidemonic] powers like dispersed beacons shining in the dark” (Mango, “Diabolus Byzantinus,” 218). See also Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 33-38, on the presence and function of “Holy Riders” on late antique apotropaic amulets, and on the uptake of this tradition into the increasing popularity of warrior saints in Byzantium.

The fortresses of demonic warfare in the Orthodox world have been, from the fourth century to today, the monasteries. This does not mean that demons are not at all a part of the wider cosmologies of the Orthodox laity—on the contrary, demons have remained a functional dimension of Orthodox cosmology and moral outlook across the Greek world.<sup>153</sup> What it does mean is that the understandings at work in the monasteries of Cyprus, which in turn are frequented by members of the wider Orthodox community in search of spiritual instruction and leadership, not only can be identified historically as dissemination points of ideas about demons but also *are* identified by lay Cypriot interlocutors as “where you should go if you want to hear more about that.” So says Andreas, a fifty-something father willing to speak with me about the various churches in his town of Tersephanou; he is knowledgeable, but quick to defer to the understanding of the local priest or that of the nearby monks of the Monastery of St. George of the Black Mountain when the conversation turns to demons and to esoteric interpretations of St. George as Dragonslayer. This is not to say that Andreas has no idea or interest in such esoteric matters—it is rather to recognize that his own understanding *includes* a deferral to authoritative positions articulated by religious professionals. I realize that asking him about how the saints might aid in struggles with demons is coming across like asking a civilian about military strategy when there are officers on hand.<sup>154</sup>

It is unsurprising, then, that the monasteries yield the most developed understanding of the purpose and method of hagiography as a means for the struggle for holiness. For instance, Archimandrite Neophytos Enkleistriotis of the Monastery of Saint Neophytos describes the dragon-wonder of St. George as “a very *optimistic* story, a story about the possibility that the enemy can be defeated!”<sup>155</sup> And which

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<sup>153</sup> See Stewart, *Demons and the Devil*, especially 137-61.

<sup>154</sup> January 31, 2018. Not all lay interlocutors are so reticent to explain their own perspectives on spiritual struggle, of course. Recall, for instance, the comments of Panos in the introduction to Chapter II, on how the saints are “among us, transforming us, freeing us from sin . . . and it is up to us to struggle so we can grow in holiness, like they did” (June 19, 2016).

<sup>155</sup> January 27, 2018. Neophytos Enkleistriotis’ name and identity are reproduced by permission. I would extend again my special gratitude to him and to the community of St. Neophytos Monastery for their hospitality, rich conversation, and generosity of time and spirit during my visits in 2016 and 2018.

enemy? “That ancient serpent” of the Apocalypse, “who has always been with us and is with us still.”<sup>156</sup> As our conversation proceeds, I begin to think aloud about the use of the dragon as a symbol for wrongness in general rather than a particular wrong, but Fr. Neophytos intervenes quickly and with intensity:

You are making him into a symbol—and he is not just a symbol! To imagine that the spiritual agents of evil are just symbols of bad habits or ethical failures is handing them the victory. Christians in the West make this mistake constantly. “The dragon means X or Y”—okay, but if we convince ourselves that we have *invented* the Devil because we need a symbol for something else, we have done his work for him! ... We [Orthodox Christians] know that, as soon as we begin to pray, there is another mind fighting against our mind, angry that we are praying and committed to stop us at all costs. ... *This* is the dragon inside us: the enemy we struggle with in our prayer, from whom we struggle to be free so we can be with God. The dragon is *real*, and he is in our heart.<sup>157</sup>

Fr. Neophytos, like Fr. Eutychios and Fr. Symeon in Chapter III (3b), mobilizes the resistance of St. George to the esoteric perils of the heart and the world as his own act of resistance to heterodox errors concerning the nature of the threat.

How then, are the material media of the saint understood to facilitate this victory over the devil, this transformative liberation that is both personal and political? An in-depth consideration of a Cypriot

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<sup>156</sup> Thus, in the discourse of Fr. Neophytos, the warrior saint is imaginatively conjoined with the warrior *angel*, Michael, who wars against the great dragon, Satan. This is an interpretive move with a lengthy pedigree: see Conostas, “A Spiritual Warrior in Iron Armor Clad,” 248, on the history of this elision between George and Michael in Byzantium.

<sup>157</sup> January 27, 2018, emphasis original. Cf. the insistence by another Greek-Cypriot religious professional, Christodoulos Christodoulou, that the mythological framing of the dragon-wonder “hides a spirit of truth,” that is, the need for saintly intervention to help people disrupt the states of sin in which they find themselves captive and unable to overcome on their own. He continues to spell out the symbolism: “The dragon represents evil [ἀντιπροσωπεύει τὸ κακὸ] in whatsoever form, while the location where the young princess is found reflects [ἐκφράζει] the state into which humanity had come prior to the arrival of Christ to the world” (“Τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου,” 96). For Christodoulou, moreover, the inability of the people in the dragon-legend “to resist the power of Satan” is related to their being idolaters, “immersed in the despair to which their demonic religion drives them.” That is, he reads the dragon-legend not only as a story of liberation from demonic influence but also as one of condemnation of the cultural frameworks in which that influence is allowed to flourish. The slaying of the dragon represents a “redemption” (λύτρωση) that is at once private and public: the elimination of the demonic forces that occupy the human heart *in view of* the structures of religious alterity to whom such liberation is figured as a challenge and a summons. Indeed, as with George’s martyrdom, an easily overlooked feature of the dragon-legend (which Christodoulou takes pains to emphasize) is the conversion of the liberated city to Orthodoxy. Other clerical interlocutors go further: Fr. Matthaios, answering a few questions about the dragon-slaying of St. George as he responds to my entreaty to be let into a locked church near Larnaca, instructs me that the dragon slain miraculously by St. George was a “*real dragon*” (πραγματικός δράκος), a huge threatening beast of some kind, but that the event later became a symbol and motivating image “for the victory of Christianity over Islam, that is, the dragon of Islam [ο δράκος του Ισλαμισμού]” (January 31, 2018).

monastery of St. George where this mediation takes place—not only in the extensive hagiographical production of the monastery’s abbot but also in the very construction and spatial significance of the monastery itself—will serve as our arena for wrestling with this question, concluding the subsection.

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The Monastery of St. George of the Black Mountain (*Agios Geōrgios Maurobouniou*, known as Mavrovouni) stands on the cusp of the Buffer Zone that has divided Cyprus west to east since 1974. Although the monastery had been defunct since the mid-nineteenth century, the central chapel was



Figure 4.22: Interior courtyard, Mavrovouni Monastery.

restored in the 1920s and again in the 1960s, in order to maintain the historic building for private devotion and periodic liturgical celebration. But the state of affairs was altered here, as it was on the island as a whole, in 1974. Witnesses from the nearby villages reported with sorrow that, during the tense days that followed the Turkish invasion and the ceasefire, they saw that this church building that had been repeatedly restored was now set ablaze again, smoking on the “black mountain” that was now blackened by deliberate fire.<sup>158</sup> The land was ultimately bought by the government of Archbishop Makarios III, but it was not until 1993 that the monastery began to be rebuilt by three monks from Larnaca.

It is a specific, imaginative aspect of this process that bears special attention, indicative as it is of hagiographical resistance. According to the Abbot of Mavrovouni, Archimandrite Symeon, it was a verse from Isaiah 35 that leapt to mind and stuck with him when he visited the site in 1993, with no expectation of restoring it as a monastery: “In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes” (Isaiah 35:7). The passage continues:

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<sup>158</sup> On this testimony, see Symeon of Mavrovouni, *Monastery of Saint George Mavrovouni*, 4.

And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for [the holy]: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.<sup>159</sup>

The memory of the chapel's destruction during the Turkish invasion of 1974—along with the continuing occupation of the north of the island—was imaginatively overlaid for Symeon and his brothers by the image of a “habitation of dragons” that would be “redeemed” by the reconstruction of a monastery of St. George on the edge of the Buffer Zone.

The political sense of this redemption would be (in retrospect) rendered even more overt in light of a conversation that one of the Mavrovouni monks reports between himself and none other than St. (then Elder) Paisios the Athonite:

Elder Paisios prompted the above brother to become a monk in Cyprus, [saying:] ‘There is one where you will go, you will become two. Another one will come and you will become three. You three will go somewhere and make a spiritual base. These bases will expel the other bases. The problem of Cyprus is spiritual, not political, and there is need for spiritual resistances.’<sup>160</sup>

In spite of the Elder's assertion that “the problem of Cyprus is spiritual, not political,” the *solution* to that problem—here articulated as the holiness sought, concentrated, and mediated at Mavrovouni through the *agōn* of “spiritual resistances”—does have concrete political consequences: the expulsion of the Turkish and British military installations on Cyprus. As St. George has been hailed for centuries as *Exorinos*, sought for aid in driving the enemies of the Church of Cyprus from the island,<sup>161</sup> so here the physical edifice of the monastery is invested with the trust that the rectification brought about by proximity to

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<sup>159</sup> Isaiah 35:7-10 (KJV). This is the version cited in the translation of Archimandrite Symeon's *Monastery of Saint George Mavrovouni*, 4, when discussing the monk's first contemplation of the ruined site as owed renovation as a monastery.

<sup>160</sup> Reported in Symeon of Mavrovouni, *Monastery of Saint George Mavrovouni*, 7. The Abbot includes a footnote to the sentence, “These bases will expel the other bases,” to make explicit that the community understands this to refer to “the British and Turkish bases on the island.”

<sup>161</sup> And celebrated for his direct agency in doing so—see again Chapter II, section 3a.

holiness is not only the result of resistance (necessary to make space for holiness) but also a performance of new resistance: like a shield with the power to push away an enemy and make safe the land.

In conversation with the monks of Mavrovouni, I find that they are eager to articulate an understanding of how a hagiographical medium is a means of transformation—a “transformation by holiness,” they aver, that is the purpose of all our struggles: As one of the brothers (who preferred to remain anonymous) put it:

St. Gregory Nazianzen insisted that we need to speak of God in a manner befitting God [*theoprepōs*]. But this cannot be taken for granted, being creatures such as we are! Even Gregory the ‘Theologian’ warned about speaking of our creator with our little minds and imagining we get it right! ... But when we represent [*eikonizoume*]<sup>162</sup> the saints, we do not need to speak directly of divine things. We render the saints present with our paints and our colors, we do not get tangled up in definitions and reasoning but allow the saints to stand in for all they have witnessed and the lives that they have passed down through the tradition.

I press him further, on the cusp of understanding what he is getting at but hope he will be more explicit: how does this representation of saints bring about the “transformation by holiness” that he had mentioned at the start of his explanation?

We were speaking of St. George. When St. George was martyred, he did not only win salvation for himself, but for the great number of people who converted, witnessing his struggle [*agōna*]. When St. George slays the dragon, a whole city witnesses his triumph and is brought to God. So? [He gestures to the iconostasis.] We too can witness the saint’s struggle and his triumph.<sup>163</sup>

Representing the saints is not only a depiction of important or even miraculous events; it is a certain mode of theology whereby the *person* whose life has been transformed in holiness substitutes for (and so does not get reduced within the limits of) discursive explanations of the meaning of that holiness and its

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<sup>162</sup> When this monk used the verb *εἰκονίζω* (although he continued on to use examples from visual representation, as this was the topic of our conversation at this point), I took him not to be referring in a narrow sense to visual depiction but to the significant distinction between two modes of legitimate theological enunciation—(1) that of the prophet, mystic, or “theologian” (in the Orthodox sense of the one whose mind has been purified by long ascetic practice and ceaseless prayer), a discursive mode that purports to communicate truth about divine matters but which is very risky and easily leads passionate minds astray; and (2) that of the hagiographer who depicts the person of the saint (whether in images or in the narration of deeds), whose whole life is theomimetic and so renders something of the same divine truths without passing so directly through the traps of language and mental categories.

<sup>163</sup> June 15, 2016.

presence in the human world.<sup>164</sup> We need not have a penetrating theological analysis in order to witness the saint's struggle, the saint's triumph, and be edified. And as with rectification, so with resistance: we need not labor to pin down the exact definition of the dragon, its palette of symbolic significances, which "derives from the many fears and worries of human beings in the world ... [and] all the ways we are haunted by demons and led astray by the devil, or by any number of evils within and without."<sup>165</sup> We are nonetheless given hope by being in the presence of the dragon's represented destruction, given the strength to withstand whatever we may associate with the symbol.

But: whence this association? Can human beings, with our "little minds," trust that our associations are not themselves corrupt? Do we have the discernment to recognize the demons as such, and avoid imagining what is not demonic to be demonic? Here is the ancient question of the purity and vulnerability of holiness: under what conditions does the mediation of holiness realign the distorted creature, and under what conditions is holiness itself appropriated in a distorted fashion?<sup>166</sup> We zero in on this question in section 3b, and will take it up at length in Part Two of the dissertation.

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<sup>164</sup> See again McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, 188-203, on how human lives are "theographical," carving anew the contents of faith in the concrete forms of human experience, new media that reconstitute the message they bear.

<sup>165</sup> The same monk as above, in response to my questions about the figure of the dragon in particular. June 15, 2016.

<sup>166</sup> The Abbot of Mavrovouni, too, takes up this question with regard to what he views as the "catastrophe" of Orthodox hagiographers' assimilation to western art forms in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: "The influence [of Frankish rule in Cyprus] was minimal and did not affect the essence of the icon. *In times of slavery a people resists instinctively*. ... It was when Greece achieved independence and the Bavarian kings arrived that the catastrophe commenced, a catastrophe which had already taken place in Orthodox Russia as a result of the reforms of Peter the Great. It is amazing to think that only a hundred years ago our own university professors were referring to Byzantine icons as 'monstrosities' and advocating their substitution with naturalistic Western paintings. *We had actually become enemies of our very selves*" (Symeon of Mavrovouni, *The Theological Basis of Byzantine Iconography*, 43, emphasis mine). Note the alignment of Abbot Symeon's reading of these trends in hagiographical production with Fanon's sense of cultural alienation. This is not to say that Symeon believes icons that are un-Byzantine in style to be demonic or incapable of leading people to the saints (he is quite explicit, in conversation anyway, that "fine art isn't important for holiness, nor are the specific colors used or the specific lines drawn; rather, it is enough that the saints are with us. *Their glory* is the reality, not how artistic the icon is"—June 15, 2016). Rather, the point is to indicate how easily efforts at edification can themselves become corrupt and self-defeating, how human beings fall out of sync with the traditions devoted to shaping their encounters with holiness, and how caution and discernment are needed even to assess one's own hagiographical instincts.

3b) “Generations of poison, centuries of poison”: Ascetic Warnings about Hagiographical Struggle

From the first generation of Christian literature, formulations of the Christian task in the world were woven with metaphors of warfare. These metaphors, at one and the same time, (i) evoked and affectively fermented a bellicose framing of Christian identity against “the world” (*ton kosmon*), its representatives, its institutions, and its ideals; and (ii) precisely insofar as they are presented overtly as metaphors,<sup>167</sup> registered the esoteric significance of the “warfare” being conceived. Among an array of Pauline representations of Christian believers as “soldiers” (*stratiōtes*) in a common cause,<sup>168</sup> the most elaborate and influential (for the warrior-martyr tradition, at least) is that of Ephesians 6:11-17, which is anchored not only by the metaphor of arms and armor but also by the somatic-kinesthetic metaphor of *standing* and *standing-against*: “Gird yourself in the armor of God,” the author entreats:

so as to have the power to stand against [*stēnai pros*] the schemes of the devil. For our contest is not against blood and flesh, but against the powers, the authorities, the cosmic rulers of this darkness, the spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take upon yourselves the armor of God in order to have the power to resist [*antistēnai*] on the day of wickedness and, having prevailed in all things, to stand firm [*stēnai*]. Stand [*stēte*], therefore, and gird your loins with the truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. And, having bound up your feet with readiness [to proclaim] the gospel of peace, along with all this take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to snuff out all the flaming arrows of the wicked one. And receive the helmet of salvation, and the blade of the spirit, which is the word of God.<sup>169</sup>

We find in this passage a fertile tension that would be drawn up into the heart of both the ascetic heritage of Orthodox Christianity and the hagiographical topography around the warrior-martyrs of Byzantium.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> I mean that the images are effective by using vocabulary *only* found ordinarily in one domain (e.g. “helmet”) to shape understanding of another (e.g. “salvation”), rather than what I would consider a less overt mode of metaphorical representation in which the vocabulary being used draws on a domain like warfare as a conventional expression of difficulty or victory (e.g. “The journey was hard, but I battled through”).

<sup>168</sup> Note that these representations invariably combine the metaphor of the soldier with other professions (such as athlete or farmer) where the point the author is trying to make can be made with a slightly different shading—the combination serves, generally, both to activate and to diffuse the military metaphor. See, for instance, 1 Corinthians 9:7; Philippians 2:25; 2 Timothy 2:3-4; and Philemon 1:2.

<sup>169</sup> Ephesians 6:11-17, my translation.

<sup>170</sup> See Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 14; and see Constanas, “A Spiritual Warrior in Iron Armor Clad,” 248-49: “Most of the metaphorical weaponry with which Paul subsequently arms the ‘new man’ is derived from the symbolism of the Old Testament (cf. Isa 11:5, 52:7, 59:16-17; Wis 5:16), and had already become part of the Christian catechetical tradition (cf.

These armaments of God, activated in the imagination as the instruments of terrestrial warfare, are nonetheless asserted to be instruments of peace. And how? By waging war and defeating “the spirits of wickedness.” And how? By standing firm, by *resisting*, rather than by attacking: an un-warfare of the peaceful, guarded (*phyllassomenē*) heart, as the earliest extant narrative of the dragon-wonder of St. George has the saint defeat the beast not through the violence of a spear blow, but solely with a prayer and the sign of the cross.<sup>171</sup>

Influential though this paradigm would remain, distinguishing spiritual warfare from the warfare “against blood and flesh,” it cannot be taken in isolation. Rather, it must be juxtaposed with the Orthodox understandings (not least, those on ample display in these chapters) that the saints, and the warrior-martyrs above all, *are indeed* the patrons and agents of terrestrial warfare. To this day, the ascetic vision of demonic warfare and struggle with the anti-Christian powers is interwoven, intimately and integrally, with worldly configurations of war and peace, fear and hope, resistance and rectification. St. George’s spiritual victories are, as we have seen throughout these chapters, concretized in particular frameworks of human-to-human power relations and antagonisms of varying depths of entrenchment. If we have seen spiritual resistance figured in ascetic thought as politically consequential (“these bases will expel the other bases”—see above, section 3a), so too we have found political struggles figured in Greek-Cypriot discourse as spiritually liberating (“for us, freedom is a holy thing”—see again Chapter III, section 3a), a New Jerusalem gleaming seductively on the far side of the burst bonds of imperial domination or colonial exploitation.

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Rom 13:12; 1 Thess 5:8). The ‘weapons’ in question are not simply human virtues, but divine energies, participation in which alone enables victory in the fight against demonic powers. Paul’s spiritual vision of the martial arts, in which human aggression is redirected against the onslaught of demonic attack, deeply influenced not only the discourse of martyrdom, but the literature of asceticism as well.” The passage is read, for instance, during the rite of monastic tonsure (see Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 180).

<sup>171</sup> See Ogden, *Dragons, Serpents, and Slayers*, 50. Conostas describes the paradox of this passage from Ephesians, exemplary of a broader both-and polarity in early Christian theology, as “a link between two seemingly opposite qualities that belong to or describe the same reality” (*The Art of Seeing*, 68).

To an extent, this spiritual-political integrity is a mainstay of Orthodox Christian ontology: a single whole not severed by “western” excesses of mind-body and person-polis dualism. But when we consider this current of understanding from the vantage of the ascetic tradition that has flowed within and around it these many centuries, we will find that there remains something unsettled in the tradition of warrior saints intervening for the sake of military triumph, something uncanny, “like the Old Testament prohibition on boiling a kid in its mother’s milk, a mixing of two distinct states and an unnaturalness that can’t be gotten around.”<sup>172</sup> What, then, does the dragon-slaying of St. George offer to an interpretation of this uncanniness, when considered from an ascetic vantage—as a hagiographical warning about the encampment of the evil one on the waters of the heart, holding it hostage to demonic dispositions: greed, anger, pride? Holding in one hand the “spiritual resistances” envisioned by St. Paisios for Mavrovouni Monastery—the distillation of holiness in the heart that radiates out and abjures the enmity of the encroaching world—let us take up, in the other hand, the spiritual resistance that Orthodox ascetic theology would turn inward, striving for constant vigilance toward and rectification of the ways that one’s own most cherished values and most deeply felt perceptions of the good can themselves be corrupted.

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“Human desire,” writes Maximos Conostas in his own meditation on the spiritual resistance mediated by St. George, “is never pure; it is never entirely without risk for the one who is drawn to beauty, and thus it always stands in need of transformation.”<sup>173</sup> This observation, of the all-too-humanity of the very desire to be transformed by holiness, is turning over in my mind as I disembark from the minibus that has bounced me up the six miles from upper Paphos to the Monastery of Saint Neophytos, where I will be spending the next two days in monastic rhythm and conversation with the brothers. Some months

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<sup>172</sup> *Road to Emmaeus* interviewer, in Skedros, “War, Byzantium, and Military Saints,” 25.

<sup>173</sup> Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 175. Cf. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, 112-13, on desire for God and its risks of bending aside.

before, Archimandrite Neophytos had given an electrifying lecture on the iconography of the hermitage of St. Neophytos, reassuring me that the questions I had been asking about mediation and resistance are alive and well in the ascetic understandings of contemporary Cyprus. Crammed into the tiny cave of the hermitage, among the swarm of saints painted on every inch of rock, Fr. Neophytos had proposed that, “with the Fall of humankind,”

our love for God is no longer a love experienced face to face. Instead, it has become *pothos*, a nostalgic desire, a search for what has been lost. . . . And because it is the yearning love for something that one does not possess, such *pothos* for God requires the guidance and imitation of those who are closer than we are to the object of our desire: spiritual elders, angels, saints. . . . Otherwise, without this guidance, we are likely to be led astray by our desire, even our desire for God, which can easily captivate us and turn us away from the reality that we desire back towards ourselves. . . . So the road to God is like traveling through the desert: following the saints on a secure path but also taking care to avoid the mirages of our own hope.<sup>174</sup>

This “optimistic practice of Christianity”<sup>175</sup> (by which, cleaving to holiness, the innumerable ways that human beings are distorted can be surmounted and reversed), in other words, requires an unshackling of the very capacity to receive holiness and be remade by it, rather than appropriating it toward our own distorted ends and (as with the classical sense of the *pharmakon*) ingesting a poison by misusing what should be a cure.

So then, some months after I first met Fr. Neophytos and heard his summary of the theological anthropology that warrants hagiographical *mimēsis*, I am joining him in his cell for a longer conversation about my research. The cell seems like an annex to the monastery library—it is covered floor to ceiling in bookshelves, except for the shelf that holds a fat brown candle, beneath an icon of the ascetic saint to whose name and patronage Fr. Neophytos has



Figure 4.23: The Hermitage of St. Neophytos, Paphos. Twelfth century, with twentieth century restorations.

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<sup>174</sup> February 22, 2016.

<sup>175</sup> Fr. Neophytos’ phrase; February 22, 2016.

joined himself. Our conversation ranges widely, but for the questions at hand there is one exchange in particular that frames the possibility of hagiographical resistance reinforcing corrupt dispositions and mentalities rather than liberating from them. “It is natural that we should interpret our political reality by looking at it through what we have learned from the saints,” Fr. Neophytos observes, in response to my asking about the hagiographical modes of mediation around the EOKA struggle.<sup>176</sup>

But there is always the risk that, when we do so, we will remain on the psychological, emotional level of the struggle to be free. This is part of what is needed, but it is never enough, and if it is mistaken for the whole, then we are closing off part of the reality of our captivity and degrading the insights we might gain through the saints.<sup>177</sup>

It is possible, in other words, to encounter St. George in the register of national identification and yearning, allowing oneself to be satisfied with the ways that he resonates on this register. So doing, one easily forgets that such national identification and yearning are human values subject to all the forms of corruption identified by the ascetic tradition as the inheritance of fallen humanity. If these values are subjected to ascetic scrutiny, however, the identity of the dragon is again exposed: the tempter of humanity, who would like nothing better than for us to misplace this identification onto other human beings, making them into dragons in our minds and treating them as such in our actions, so allowing our own heart’s draconic captivity to be further entrenched.

I must be clear that my purpose is not to arbitrate between perspectives on the figure and significance of St. George in modern Cyprus, insisting on the rightness of an ascetic perspective over the many others we have considered. Rather, from the vantage of theorizing hagiography as resistance, my purpose is to identify and explore what I see as a *tension* between different registers of Orthodox appropriation of the dragon-legend, insofar as it is understood to refer to the crisis of human captivity. In the one, a human antagonist or antagonists—an emperor, a sultan, a feudal lord, a moneylender—imposes

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<sup>176</sup> On this mediation, see again Chapter III, especially sections 2b and 3a; and this chapter, section 2b.

<sup>177</sup> June 30, 2016.

conditions of desperation and indignity, in which the saint intervenes by exacting vengeance on behalf of his suffering community; in the other, the desire for revenge (including a crying out to the saints to this effect) and the imagination that overlays draconic symbolism upon such terrestrial antagonists are themselves part of a deeper crisis of spiritual captivity, part of the overall poisoning of the human heart to which toxic political and economic conditions contribute but which they do not excuse.<sup>178</sup>

This tension with regard to political interpretations of the mediation of St. George is not then a purely etic theoretical concern (though it is clearly this as well) gleaned from the interpretive friction between, say, Franz Fanon and Hannah Arendt.<sup>179</sup> Rather, the tension explored above is itself part of the historical hagiographical topography of modern Cyprus, no less than British or Turkish-Cypriot engagements with St. George are themselves *part* of the repertoire with which Greek Orthodox Cypriots make meaning and take action from their relationships with holiness. Part of the resistance warranted, validated, and indeed enacted by St. George in the Orthodox Christianity of modern Cyprus is a *self-*

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<sup>178</sup> It should not escape notice, for instance, that the representation of moneylenders as monsters in the State Archives, an instance in which both the colonial administration and the suffering farmers could see eye to eye (or imagination to imagination), tells the story of rural resistance to ecological and cultural stresses in a way that is quite willing to establish a scapegoat, an unambiguous villain. But this stripping of ambiguity and the making of monsters comes with grave liabilities—if it is not quite as severe as the virulent representation of Jewish moneylenders in western Europe, the representation that prevails on the part of farmers and administrators nonetheless obscures the fact that most of these moneylenders were indeed providing money to farmers that could not be secured any other way, in light of plummeting markets beyond the island and a lack of tax relief on the part of the administration (whether Ottoman or British). As my interlocutor Agathi puts it, reflecting on her own youth in the 1950s and the discussions of her parents: “It was taxes that were straining the farmers, and until the cooperative societies and the agricultural bank got going, the moneylenders were their only hope. And it’s not meaningless that they were willing to help. Of course, some of them did behave quite poorly, all the interest they wanted... but there was no sinister scheme, just business as usual. Every country does it to its own people – the rich screw the poor!” (January 30, 2018).

<sup>179</sup> Fanon, whose articulations of cultural alienation expose the spiritual corrosiveness of imperial or colonial domination, warranting violent insurrection in order to secure a (putatively) fresh start; and Arendt, who warns of the ways that resistance all too easily hardens into *ressentiment*, coming ultimately to replicate and reinscribe the influence of the powers (and passions) being resisted. As Caygill notes, however, the two were less at a remove from one another as might be supposed, given their differing emphases and warnings: “Fanon’s insight into the dangers of a reactive resistance ... is far from the celebration of violence for its own sake that Arendt later read into his work, closer indeed to her view that resistance is always close to *ressentiment* and, with this, to a subjectivity at risk of adopting the qualities of its oppressor” (*On Resistance*, 104). Indeed, my reading of Fanon (see above in section 3a) is that he grappled persistently with this very question. Cf. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over*, 262, on the risks (and ethical self-defeat) of resistance hardening into “narrow nationalist cultural self-glorification.”



Figure 4.24: Icon of "St. George the Lover of Mercy," by Panayiotis Christopoulos, 2010.

*resistance*, struggling not only to win integral freedom but also to transform the desires that have shaped the island's history and, it may be said, warped that freedom with varieties of viciousness towards political and religious others. Such a transformation, considered within the symbolic repertoire of the dragon-legend of St. George, would be a "saving wound" that "transforms the 'mind of the flesh' into the 'mind of the spirit.'<sup>180</sup> That is, it would enact a painful but ultimately restorative confrontation with the ways that a history of struggle leaves residues of rancor, residues ultimately corrosive of even the freedom for the sake of which they have been accumulated.

I do not know the full extent to which such ascetic interpretations as these are active understandings among the population of Cyprus. I have encountered this line of thinking mostly (but not exclusively) in the monasteries—and its extrapolation, to consider the dragon-wonder as an auto-cautionary tale about becoming more draconically enslaved in the course of struggling with what we

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<sup>180</sup> Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 177. This phrasing resonates with the discourse of several of my own monastic and non-monastic interlocutors, including: Spyros, who describes his own awakening to a spiritual pacifism after his involvement in the EOKA warfare of the 1950s as a recognition that he was wounding himself by waging war, and Fr. Neophytos, who appeals to John Chrysostom to make sense of human tendencies to cram divine insights into our own narrow frames of perception and warped habits of will. Both of these men described, on different occasions and with different (but aligned) vocabulary, the experience of perceiving the suffering of the world opening up "like a poem" (June 30, 2016), the nature of things as they are gleaming with the possibility of what could be. It is such possibility that I find evocatively rendered, more clearly than it would be with words, in a recent icon of "St. George the Lover of Mercy" (Figure 4.24).

identify (correctly or not) as dragons, is my own. It is, for what this is worth, consonant with the patristic theorization of hagiographical appropriation and vulnerability (to be explored in depth in Part Two), which is taken as authoritative by the contemporary Church of Cyprus. It is important, then, to avoid two extremes of ethnographic fallacy: either (i) assuming that such ascetic understandings can belong only to the religious “elite” or “professionals,” or (ii) assuming that, because they are authoritative in a context, they are determinative of the social realities of that context. On the one hand, the monasteries of Cyprus are regular destinations for Greek-Cypriot laity in search of spiritual guidance and coaching in spiritual exercises. It is not for me to say the extent to which individuals may appropriate understandings such as these (if they even come up in the course of such interactions with religious professionals) into their own struggles and own perspectives on the struggles of others (whether celestial martyrs or terrestrial heroes) on their behalf. However, it is indisputable that the ascetic mentalities cultivated and promoted in the monasteries are available to the Church of Cyprus as a whole, to be put to use however individuals and communities see fit. On the other hand, the force of understanding (however fixed or fleeting) in actually shaping social circumstances and influencing the flow of events is an unresolvable problem for theology and sociology alike.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, I trust that I have shown how—without insisting on anything so mechanical as cause and effect—Greek-Cypriot ambivalences toward the history of the island’s political struggles are shot through with hagiographical representations, motives, warrants, and warnings, for all of which St. George serves as a sharp focusing lens.

The great Greek poet George Seferis came to Cyprus in the 1950s, became instrumental in the diplomatic efforts toward a resolution of the anticolonial conflict, and remained haunted by the brutal

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<sup>181</sup> That is, it cannot be proven that a given way of thinking is the driving force or direct condition of possibility for the actions taken by historically-conditioned, ecologically-bound individuals. See Abbott, *Processual Sociology*, especially 33-74, on the ever-changing social “ecologies” in which individuals and contexts are co-constitutive, reminding us that even when we heuristically extract one process (for instance, hagiographical edification) for study, it is entangled with other powerful forces for which we can only ever begin to account.

inter-communal violence of the 1960s. His poetry until the end of his life was inflected by his experience of the island and its troubled history; Seferis frames the destructive potential of resentment and rancor in his reimagination of the Monastery of Saint Nicholas of the Cats, to whose eponymous residents the elimination of Cyprus' serpents is attributed by legend.<sup>182</sup> In Seferis' 1969 poem, "The Cats of St. Nicholas," the serpents take on the metaphorical register I have explored in this section, a register established by Seferis' epigram from Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, that greatest meditation on the costs of revenge: "But deep inside me sings/ the Fury's lyreless threnody:/ my heart, self-taught, has lost/ the precious confidence of hope."<sup>183</sup> I conclude, then, with Seferis' tragic vision of the spiritual costs of Greek/Cypriot dragon-slaying:

... 'Every day at dawn a bell would strike  
and the crew of cats would move out to battle.  
They'd fight the day long, until  
the bell would sound the evening feed.  
Supper done, the bell would sound again  
and they'd go to fight the night's war.  
They say it was a wonderful thing to see them:  
some lame, some twisted, others missing  
a nose, an ear, their hides in shreds.  
So to the sound of four bells a day  
months went by, years, season after season.  
Wildly obstinate, always wounded,  
they annihilated the snakes; but in the end they disappeared:  
they just couldn't take in that much poison.  
Like a ship gone down,  
they didn't leave a thing above the surface:  
no miaow, no bell even.  
Steady as you go!

What could they do, the poor devils,  
fighting like that day and night, drinking in  
the poisonous blood of those reptiles?  
Centuries of poison; generations of poison.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>182</sup> See Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria*, 48-49, 171-73, and Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, I.244-49. On the tradition of the cats of St. Nicholas in the literary archive and oral culture of Cyprus, see Krikos-Davis, "Cats, Snakes and Poetry," 228-30.

<sup>183</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, lines 990-94. It is relevant, as Krikos-Davis notes, that "Seferis agreed to the poem being first published in *18 Κείμενα*, a volume brought out by a group of intellectuals who had clearly declared (as the poet himself had by this stage) opposition to the dictatorship" of the Greek junta, which was remaking the Greek political order in its own image and would come to support the overthrow of Cyprus' power-sharing government in 1974 ("Cats, Snakes and Poetry," 234).

<sup>184</sup> Seferis, "The Cats of St. Nicholas," translated by Edmund Keeley.

## Conclusion: Dragons Yet to Come

It is New Year's Day, and I am seated on the bench outside the shrine on St. George's Hill, Nicosia, waiting for inspiration. Today it arrives in the form of Stavroulla, a woman who volunteers to participate in the upkeep of the site, supplying it with fresh candles and incense to keep up with heavy usage, and clearing out the remnants of others' devotions.<sup>185</sup> She is accompanied this time by a man, Loukas, who is dressed in an immaculate suit and stylish glasses. Initially they pay me no mind: there are icons to wipe down, cleaning off the smudges where countless people have kissed them; there are candles and incense to refill, lighting each in turn and suffusing the air of the shrine with the golden flicker and the heavy scents of holiness; and there are stray cats to feed, who rush to empty bowls beside the door. With these tasks completed, Loukas turns to me with a gesture toward the glowing room: "Would you like to venerate?" *In a minute, thank you, I reply, but may I ask—who is it that operates this shrine? Have you been sent—* He cuts me off: "No. No one wants to take care of it, there's no money to preserve it. She [nodding at Stavroulla] does what she can to keep it up, and I come when I can... People help out but no one is in charge." *That's surprising to me, since so many people come here—I see them here every day...* "Yes, but the chapel is too small for a proper service, so the Church doesn't get involved. They have it down on paper that there is an *ekklēsiaki* of St. George here, and they don't mind if people use it, but that's all. So we do what we can..." *It's a very peaceful place. Why do you think so many people come here?* "To pray. To be with the saints. To ask St. George... for whatever they need."

I thank him and enter the small room, crowded with saints. I try to see them again as if for the first time: Georges upon Georges, wherever I face, icons made over the course of a century and brought here by those who considered it meaningful to contribute to the shrine's plenitude of representations.

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<sup>185</sup> See again my first encounter with Stavroulla in Chapter II, section 2a.

Princesses of varying styles, crowned and uncrowned, some fleeing, some standing courageously. Boys perched upon George's horse, dressed in robes, turbans, helmets, Phrygian caps; they are clutching ewers, goblets, bowls. And dragons: fat and thin, large and small, threatening and docile, bleeding profusely from the strike of George's spear and subjugated by the sign of the cross alone. Looking around again I take stock of the other saints brought to share the space with its patron, a cast of characters I have met repeatedly during my time in Cyprus, seeing how they interweave with my chosen figure, reminding me that no saint—as indeed no case study—stands alone. Demetrius and Mercurius, warrior saints clad in the armor of faith and the arms of righteousness. Mamas, the youthful shepherd riding a lion he has tamed to confront the astonished Pasha, demanding relief from excessive taxation. Raphael, Nikolaos, and Eirene, the Neomartyrs of Lesbos, whose agonies at the hands of the Ottomans are regularly juxtaposed with George's at the hands of the Romans.<sup>186</sup> Neomartyr George of Cyprus, one of the island's own “minor Georges” and “same-named co-athletes.”<sup>187</sup> Constantine and Helena, bearers of the cross to Cyprus and emblems of a lost Christian empire. Paisios the Athonite, whose prophecies about the restoration of Constantinople echo with the hope of Constantine's empire restored. St. Michael the Archangel, locked in eternal combat with the ancient serpent, our eternal foe. The Mother of God, the only saint who outstrips George in the devotions of Cyprus and around the Orthodox world. And the heart of the shrine, behind a pane of scratched glass and a layer of votive offerings: an icon covered in gold, St. George's face peering through, a silhouette of dark wood.<sup>188</sup> This icon represents not only the figure depicted on its surface but a whole history of local mediation, igniting imagination and hope, in solidarity with those generations of others who have come here to seek George's aid in their struggles.

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<sup>186</sup> See again Chapter III, section 2a.

<sup>187</sup> Georgis, “Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου και Γεωργίων ελασσόνων αναφορά,” 127.

<sup>188</sup> Recall the discussion of this icon, the reason for the shrine on this spot, at the beginning of Chapter I.

As I step outside again another group of people is walking up the path from the road: a mother and two children no older than ten. The mother instructs them to wait as she comes past me into the shrine and begins her devotions, lighting the censer again and wafting incense over the icons. The children wait, sitting on the wall and talking quietly with one another, until Loukas catches one of their eyes: “Would you like to venerate?” he asks them, as he asked me. “No thank you,” the elder responds. “We’re not Christian.” Loukas is visibly taken aback, and he says nothing as the children meander away along the fence, looking at the archeological site beside the shrine until their mother finishes and comes out to collect them. Loukas tries again: “And the children? Wouldn’t they care to venerate?” “No, that’s okay,” the mother replies, not quite apologetically, but with the patience of someone used to having to explain. “You see, they’re not Christian. Well—happy new year!” They depart, and when Stavroulla returns from tidying up the nearby shed, Loukas immediately tells her in a hushed voice what has just happened; she, too, seems somehow both incredulous and fatalistic, her eyebrows raised and mouth pulled back. She looks at me with a *what-can-you-do?* shrug, before the two of them stand again, lock the door to the shrine, wish me well in my research, and walk slowly down the path toward the road.

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Cyprus is changing rapidly, not only because of global technological and political shifts but also because its younger generations uphold new perspectives on the place of the church in their lives and of the place of Cyprus in the wider world, in spite of their formal schooling being frequently combined with *katēchētikon*, religious instruction.<sup>189</sup> And yet, the saints have not lost their hold on the youth of Cyprus, even if these youth encounter them differently than their parents and with new stimuli to skepticism and distraction. In 2012, for instance, the secondary schools of Larnaca and its surroundings engaged in two public art projects, each school collaboratively producing (for one project, *The Boat*) the large cutout of a

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<sup>189</sup> See Spyrou, “Children Constructing Ethnic Identities in Cyprus,” 125.

boat painted to represent the island of Cyprus and (for the other project, *Aphrodite*) a smaller cutout of the goddess Aphrodite, likewise painted or covered in collage and text to represent a vision of the island's identity or history. In these art projects, the former displayed all along the Larnaca waterfront and the latter housed within the Larnaca Municipal Gallery, the saints of Cyprus dominated the representations—none more so than St. George, or, even in his absence, the dragon with whom he is indelibly linked.

In these images, the island is over and over represented as menaced by a dragon, alongside other more overtly political images: the island pierced to the heart by Turkish armaments, or as the goddess Aphrodite wrapped tight in barbed wire, bleeding and plaintive.<sup>190</sup> St. George predominates in these images, as he does in others produced by children, such as the 2016-18 art projects for Nicosia elementary schools, *Journey into Byzantine Art* and *Hymn of Freedom*, displayed (as of Winter 2018) in the halls beneath the Archbishopric's Ecclesiastical Museum. It is no surprise, of course, that a dragon should ignite the imagination of children: stories about *drakoi* constitute a whole third of Nearchos Kliridis' great compendium of Cypriot



Figure 4.25: Examples from the *Aphrodite and The Boat* public art projects for Larnaca district secondary schools, featuring St. George and/or the dragon. Photos taken in August, 2012.

<sup>190</sup> As we have seen in some of the other media dealing with Aphrodite (e.g. National Struggle artwork and folk tales about Digenis Akritas), the personification of the island of Cyprus as the young and vulnerable Aphrodite—either yearning to be reunited with her royal mother Athena/Greece or being aided by Digenis in securing water for her threatened homeland—is itself strongly resonant with the hagiographical imagination around St. George as Dragonslayer.

fairy tales.<sup>191</sup> This gravitation to and creative reformulation of the imagery around St. George is not novel, but this is precisely the point; we see in these children's art projects the replication and reinscription of the hagiographical processes to which have been attending all along. George is not always represented along with these dragons, neither in the fairy tales nor in the children's art projects. But he appears often and diversely enough alongside his eternal foe that there can be no doubt that our saint—the exiler, the do-gooder, the triumphant martyr, the liberator of captives, the defender of “much-suffering Hellenism”<sup>192</sup>—is a pillar of the imaginative edifice continuing to be constructed by Greek-Cypriot youth from an early age.

The struggles waged and bolstered by St. George in Cyprus are no less than the paramount challenges of our time: the struggle for sustainable flourishing of the earth against those forces, natural and cultural, that would compromise it and lead to the land's incapacity to provide for future generations; the struggle to realize a vision of the good in the conditions and institutions of the political order, along with resistance to those conditions and agents thereof that are perceived to undermine it; the struggle to be fully human, to stand without shame as the representation of one's most fundamental values, declaring against all the pressures to bend into the shapes of violent self-interest that another world is possible, a world that begins in a heart made painstakingly, agonizingly clean.



Figure 4.26: Images of St. George and the dragon produced by the elementary schools of Nicosia, on public display beneath the Ecclesiastical Museum of Nicosia. Photos taken in January, 2016.

<sup>191</sup> Kliridis, *Κυπριακά παραμύθια*, vol. 3.

<sup>192</sup> See again the “commemorative album” produced by the Greek Orthodox Community of St. George the Martyr, Sheffield: *Άγιος Γεώργιος: Άγιος της πονεμένης Ρωμηοσύνης*.

As we have seen, the domains and registers<sup>193</sup> of hagiographical resistance explored in these chapters not only become metaphors for one another in the imagination of their participants but are, already, comprehensively entangled. Agricultural and political concerns coincide, in the positioning of the farming communities (and their patron saint) against reckless capitalism, opportunistic communism, and indeed colonial governance; land use and the demands on its primary cultivators have been key to the making and breaking of the regimes of Cyprus from antiquity. And the political order is no less a battleground of spiritual (de)formation, insofar as the institutions within which and constrained by which human life undertakes its itineraries serve to shape religious understandings and ethical orientations.

St. George, I have shown, is the integrating figure *par excellence* in modern Cyprus for activating and mobilizing a sense of holiness in the thick of these struggles. He serves, not coincidentally, as a patron and personification of the farmer, the soldier, and the ascetic, three figures of paramount importance in the past 140 years (at the very least) of the island's history. I have shown, moreover, that hagiographical mediation—not just the material products themselves but the psychosocial processes by which they are produced and consumed, and by which they take on lives (even agency) of their own—matters deeply to how these arenas of struggle are understood and engaged, and in turn how this engagement reshapes the people involved in it. Thus, the *differences* between the entangled iconic paradigms of St. George (as Swifthelper, Greatmartyr, and Dragonslayer), which incorporate varying approaches to these common struggles and varying modes of relationship with the saint, themselves reflect and reproduce the diversity of Orthodox appropriations of St. George. In a difference as simple as the position of the spear of the saint—is it up, in a position of defense and guardianship against the power of brutal regimes? Or is it down, in a position of attack and proactive extermination of all that would exploit the precarious land and poison the well of the heart?—we can glimpse the fractal complex of dynamics by which hagiographical

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<sup>193</sup> According to my usage throughout: ecological, political, spiritual; personal and communal.

media validate and facilitate diverse modes of resistance, modes which may indeed be at odds with one another. How these diversities and tensions should be interpreted *theologically* (and by whom) is another, subsequent question; what is out of the question is ignoring them.

In the remaining chapters of this dissertation, I will both narrow and widen my scope. On the one hand, I am turning back in time to the formative centuries of Greek Christianity, to dwell on certain core aspects of the problems I have considered in Cyprus through the interpretive lenses of two authoritative figures (John Chrysostom and John Damascene), whose theoretical and practical contributions were instrumental in shaping the conditions of possibility for all the hagiographical dynamics we have witnessed so far. On the other hand, this constriction has as its purpose the widening of the scope of the questions I have first posed through a tightly defined case study. I will demonstrate, in what follows, that the ways that Orthodox Christians have struggled in modernity by means of hagiographical mediation are by no means modern inventions but rather were, in varying forms, instrumental in the very formulation of “Orthodoxy” as a discourse and a (counter)culture. By focusing on the two pivotal moments of the fourth-century “material turn” (through the saint’s-day homilies of Chrysostom) and the eighth-century “iconoclastic controversy” (through the dogmatic theology of Damascene), I will excavate the emergence and crystallization of an Orthodox hagiographical paradigm that remains authoritative to this day, in order to show that the hagiographical struggles of modern Cyprus are, for better or worse, the continuing tactical mobilization of strategies scripted already in antiquity, strategies indispensable to the long creation of Orthodox Christianity.

**PART TWO**  
**THE EMERGENCE AND CRYSTALLIZATION OF AN ORTHODOX**  
**HAGIOGRAPHICAL PARADIGM**

**V**

**Breathing Fire:**  
**Holy Dramaturgy in the Festival Homiletics of John Chrysostom**

*For heroes have the whole earth for their tomb; and in lands far from their own, where the column with its epitaph declares it, there is enshrined in every breast a record unwritten with no monument to preserve it, except that of the heart.*

*~Pericles, "Funeral Oration"*

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*For I think that God displayed us apostles last of all, as those condemned to death, so that we might become a theater to the world, both to angels and to humans.*

*~1 Corinthians 4:9*

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*The question is not what you look at, but what you see.*

*~Henry David Thoreau, Journal*

## Introduction: A Theater to the World

In Part One of this dissertation, the figure of Saint George in colonial and postcolonial Cyprus spread our attention like a kaleidoscope between the many domains in which Orthodox Christians negotiate their personal and communal existence as an arena of struggle, a struggle in which the saints are intimately invested. I demonstrated how the multimediation of holiness is a privileged means by which modern Greek Orthodox Cypriots have both validated and performed opposition to forms of life they perceive as threatening. But no thread of the argument—*that* hagiography is best understood as multimediation (“multi” in its array of psychosomatic processes and material-meaningful media in which they are rendered and catalysed), *how* this multimediation functions as a lived theology of resistance and rectification, or *why* the mediation of holiness is so consistently pivotal to Orthodox Christian life and identity—reveals a phenomenon native to modernity. On the contrary, the Greek hagiographical paradigm in which the mediation of holiness serves as a theological means of struggle against alternative Christianities and extra-Christian power is very old indeed. It was, we will now see, threshed out in late antiquity, becoming tightly interwoven with the invention of “Orthodox” Christianity between the fourth and the ninth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The dynamics we have studied in depth in Cyprus, in other words, represent *not* an aberrant slippage between Orthodox tradition and modern politics but rather the continued tactical appropriation of strategies scripted in and for the formative periods of Orthodox identification.

The earliest centuries of church history galvanized a paradigm of Christian life, indeed of Christian cosmology, as an *agōn*: a pneumatopolitical struggle metaphorically rendered in terms of the public arenas of Roman civic society.<sup>2</sup> When it appeared that “Christ had defeated Rome” with the

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<sup>1</sup> See again Cameron, “The Violence of Orthodoxy,” 107, on Byzantium as the society in which “orthodoxy became Orthodoxy.”

<sup>2</sup> Among these arenas were the theater, the law court, the athletic stadium, and other venues for public, often ceremonial contestation. See again the discussion of this paradigmatic rendering in the general introduction, section 1.

ascension and conversion of Constantine I (at least, until the reversals of Julian),<sup>3</sup> this resistance at the heart of Christian self- and other-understanding did not evaporate; it was redirected, rather, toward (what Christian authorities purported to be) *extra-Christian culture* and *intra-Christian heresy*.<sup>4</sup> These final chapters provide a preliminary investigation of how the multimediation of holiness was crystallized in the authoritative theology of the Greek church as a privileged means of resistance, coming ultimately to be a definitive pillar (and ecumenical shibboleth) of the authorized edifice of “Orthodoxy.” I submit that canonical Orthodox Christianity is produced as a result of and indeed as a form of such resistance, which is invested and carried out in a preeminent way in the multimediation of holiness—especially but by no means exclusively once the Greek church once again found itself in a subordinate social position in imperial and colonial settings (particularly those we considered in Part One: Latin, Turkish, British).

We turn, then to two pivotal moments in the development of a Greek theology of the mediation of holiness—the fourth-century “material turn” and the eighth-century “iconoclastic controversy”—in which the mediation of holiness comes to the fore as a crucial dimension of the struggles by which Greek Christian leaders conceived of and asserted their vision of orthodoxy. This chapter focuses through the theological lenses of John Chrysostom, and the next through those of John Damascene. I have chosen these figures not only because of their significance to the church history and theological development of these two pivotal moments, but also because the theorization of the mediation of holiness was central to their own contribution and outstanding influence (including upon the religious and political epistemics of modern Cyprus), and because their theorizations of hagiographical dynamics were themselves produced

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<sup>3</sup> Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this study, it is important not to take such formulations as “extra-Christian culture” to designate as *factual* what in fact are constructions on the part of the producers (and consumers) of hagiography. To recognize the power of these binaries and delimitations in the lived theology of the contexts in question should not be to reinscribe them in our own work (for instance, in what follows, John Chrysostom is at pains to delimit the public theaters of late Roman society as non-Christian or anti-Christian institutions, when a less invested view would perceive that Christians frequented these theaters and recognize that most did not, as Chrysostom did, perceive them as a threat to their religious affiliation or commitments). Such processes of institutional inclusion and exclusion belong, indeed, to the dynamics under consideration in this work.

as acts of resistance to the surrounding political, cultural, intellectual, religious regimes. I will show Chrysostom and Damascene to be engaged in developing a hagiographical strategy that helped provide the conditions of possibility for the hagiographical struggles of St. George and his people.

It is important to recognize that the in-depth studies of Chapters V and VI (like the case study of Chapters I-IV) are *exemplifications* rather than *exclusions* of the broader scope of ecclesiological dynamics and theological contributions (by Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, Maximus Confessor, Gregory Palamas, and so forth—all of whom are owed analogous attention). My objective is to dig deeply into two particular inhabitations of the problem, not to suggest that Chrysostom and Damascene were single-handedly responsible for the authorized repertoire of hagiographical dynamics that could thereafter be tactically appropriated. On the contrary, as with St. George in Cyprus, the argument embraces evidence of parallels and continuities. Other scholars have provided admirable surveys of many of the dynamics that I treat in close-up;<sup>5</sup> without their work, my analyses below would be less resonant contributions to the broader picture of hagiography as resistance in the formation of Orthodox Christianity.

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On a summer day in the last decade of the fourth century CE, a crowd gathered among the tombs near Antioch, where they had come from the city and surrounding villages for the annual festival (*panēgyris*) in honor of Saint Barlaam.<sup>6</sup> The attendees of the festival had come for many reasons. Some came for the “spiritual nourishment” and “recollection” of visiting the hallowed ground where martyrs lay buried, others for a refreshing day in the countryside with friends or family; some to make devotional

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<sup>5</sup> See especially Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*; Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*; and Moss, *The Other Christs*. Other important literature for background on the matters treated in this chapter include Boyarin, *Dying for God*; Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*; Graf, *Roman Festivals in the Greek East*, Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*; Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*; York, *The Purple Crown*.

<sup>6</sup> Barlaam, a Christian from Antioch put to death in 304 CE, was a local hero who nevertheless seems not to have had a specific tomb associated with his remains. The date of the festival is also unclear, as conflicting traditions assign Barlaam's feast day alternately to May 31 and to August 14. See Wendy Mayer, Introduction to “On Saint Barlaam” (in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 177-78).

offerings and petition the saints for prayers and healing, others to conduct business in the fairs that sprung up at the annual event or to enjoy the plentiful food and drink on offer.<sup>7</sup> Such reasons were by no means mutually exclusive. But among them, on this day, was the opportunity to hear one of their own, the celebrated preacher John of Antioch—who would go down in history as *Chrysostomos*, the golden-mouthed—deliver a homily in which he would perform a public remembrance of the saint and articulate a vision of a Christian community struggling to be transformed by that saint’s presence and patronage.

Coming before the crowd at the tombs, Chrysostom began to speak:

Blessed Barlaam has called us together to this holy feast-day and its festival, not so that we might applaud him, but so that we might emulate him; not so that we might become hearers [*akroatai*] of his praises, but so that we might become imitators [*mimētai*] of his accomplishments. . . . For the martyrs receive the greatest sense of their own honor when they see their fellow servants catching up to the fellowship of their own goodness. Therefore, if someone wishes to praise martyrs, let him imitate martyrs . . . .<sup>8</sup>

Chrysostom begins with a contrast between two crucial terms: “we,” he proposes, should strive to pass from being mere *akroatai* (listeners, those who attend) to being *mimētai* (imitators, those who represent). Chrysostom is not, of course, asking his audience to cease being an audience, to cease attending the

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<sup>7</sup> See Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 5-22 (quoted phrases on 10), for a concise and vivid discussion of the diverse components and ways of participation in fourth-century saint’s day festivals. See also Vryonis, “The *Panēgyris* of the Byzantine Saint,” 207: “The word *panēgyris* itself seems to have gone through an evolution from meaning simply a large gathering of people to indicating a religious feast at which large numbers gathered, to indicating finally a large religious festival with important commercial and other social activities such as athletic contests.” This evolution should remind us that even the Christian uses of the term maintained a conceptual interface between the celebration of the Christian saint’s-day festivals and the religious functions of the imperial cult that were being replaced and, as it were, stripped for parts. The environment and content of such festivals, at which Chrysostom’s homilies were prominent centerpieces, are a major concern of this chapter and will be treated in section 2a, below.

<sup>8</sup> “On the Holy Martyr Barlaam” 1 (PG 50.675.30-34,39-44). Except where otherwise noted, all translations from Chrysostom are my own, from the critical editions collected in Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca* (PG). See Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 51, on the scholarly debate over whether “at least some of Chrysostom’s sermons were delivered *ex tempore* without prior composition and were written down at the time of preaching by a stenographer.” However, what we have is not necessarily what was said on the day; as Leemans observes, “Chrysostom, as other late antique homilists, took care of the ‘editing’ of his homilies, often on the basis of stenographers’ notes. In some instances we even do have evidence of such deliberate revisions in the form of several versions of the same text . . .” (Leemans, “John Chrysostom’s First Homily on Pentecost,” 286). Kelly likewise observes (*Golden Mouth*, 57-58), drawing on the fifth-century histories, that Chrysostom revised his sermons for publication, regardless to the extent that he had composed them before delivery. Cf. Allen and Mayer, “Computer and Homily,” 262-69, on the two concentric contexts of Chrysostom’s preaching: the city and the liturgy.

festivals, to cease listening to the narratives of the saints.<sup>9</sup> He is asking them to be an audience *of a certain sort*, an audience that is *not only* an audience: participants who have stored up the representations of the saints in themselves and are using them to reconstitute themselves ethically, so in turn mediating to others what has been mediated to them, and becoming part of the spectacle they have first come to see. They must not approach the saints in order to be an audience, to be entertained for a day; they must become an audience in order to approach the saints, to learn from them how to “imitate” and actively perform divine holiness on the stage of their interpersonal and intercultural relationships, being themselves reconstituted by that holiness in the process. In opening his homily this way, Chrysostom mobilizes a classical tradition of Greek epideictic rhetoric, concerned with the transmission of virtue from one generation to the next.<sup>10</sup> He aims to persuade his audience (both those at the tombs and his readers through the ages) that the *purpose* of inscribing holiness in perceptible and transmittable media such as those of the festival is the assimilation of the object of mediation into the recipients of mediation—and vice versa.

But *how* is this assimilation to take place? After proceeding to narrate the martyrdom of Barlaam, Chrysostom concludes his festival homily by returning to the problem of the relation between viewing/hearing and imitation. Now, however, a new ambiguous contrast and favorite topic of Chrysostom’s enters the picture: the audience of the church and the audience of the theater.

Don’t you see that those coming back from the theaters have become softer? The cause is that they pay zealous attention to what takes place there. And so they go away having stored up in their souls the rolling of eyes, the gyration of hands, the circling of feet, indeed [having stored up] the imprint of all the images on display [*phanentōn eidōlōn*] from the twisting of a contorted body.

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<sup>9</sup> Thus the crucial word “only” (μόνον) in “On the Holy Martyr Barlaam” 4 (PG 50.680.44-45): Ταῦτα μὴ μόνον ἀκούωμεν, ἀγαπητοὶ, ἀλλὰ καὶ μιμώμεθα (“Let us not *only* listen to these things, beloved, but let us also imitate them”). See also John’s “On the Holy Martyr Julian” 4 (PG 50.672.26-31): “But pay attention: for today I want to slice away a wicked old custom, so that not only [μὴ μόνον] might we come to be near the martyrs but also [ἀλλὰ καὶ] that we might imitate martyrs. For the honor [due to] martyrs consists not only [μόνον] in being around them but also, more than this [ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸ τούτου], in emulating their courage.” We find this μόνον positioned significantly in other comments by Chrysostom on how his congregants are treating the saint’s-day festivals, as will be discussed below.

<sup>10</sup> My sincere thanks to Margaret M. Mitchell for drawing my attention to the longevity of this strategy. Chrysostom’s own discourse, then, renders a prime example of the fluctuating and constructed nature of any lines of demarcation between “Christian” and “extra-Christian” culture.

How could it not be inappropriate, therefore, that they exhibit so much determination in corroding their own soul and keep such a deep-seated memory of what goes on in that place; while we, who are going to be reckoned among the angels because of our *mimēsis* in this place,<sup>11</sup> do not match their expenditure of zeal when it comes to safeguarding the things being said [here]? So let's not—I beg you, I beseech you—let's not neglect our own salvation, but rather let us all store away the martyrs in our own minds, along with the iron griddles, the cauldrons, and the other instruments of torment. That is, just as painters will often wipe clean a painting that has become darker with much smoke and soot and time, so also you, beloved, must do this to your memory of the holy martyrs...<sup>12</sup>

When they are enraptured by the spectacles of the stage, audiences are bombarded by images (*eidōla*) of what is displayed to their senses, with the result that their souls receive, are marked by, and indeed changed by, the impressions (*typoi*) of what was mediated to them and welcomed by their attentiveness. Chrysostom argues here and recurrently in his homiletic discourse that it is the responsibility of those who attend the festivals of the saints to treat them, *in certain ways*,<sup>13</sup> like the theatrical festivals to which they are accustomed. Coming to gaze attentively on the images and relics of the saints, and to hear a vivid narration of their lives and deaths performed by the preacher, they are to encounter (through the festival's rich blend of sensorial, emotive, and discursive stimuli) and so to “store away” (*enapothōmetha*) the martyrs as they once did the characters on stage. Coming to experience a multimedia representation of the saints, they are to purify the very imagination that has been filled with shameful memories in the theaters by wiping it clean and restoring it so that it may provide an edifying alternative to those memories. And because the object that is mediated through the *panēgyris*—represented to the audience, assimilated by their senses, invested in their souls to produce purifying effects, continually imagined after the festival has ended, and mimetically reproduced in the presence of others who were not there—is *holy rather than unholy*, John can in the same breath excoriate the theaters for the ruination of souls and commend as edifying the analogous psychosomatic process of the festival over which he presides.

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<sup>11</sup> The crucial and enormously complex dynamics of μίμησις will be explored throughout this chapter; see again the introductory considerations in the general introduction, section 1.

<sup>12</sup> “On the Holy Martyr Barlaam” 4 (PG 50.682.11-31).

<sup>13</sup> Those other ways in which audience members are *under no circumstances* to treat the hagiographic festivals like theatrical festivals will be addressed below.

It is my contention that Chrysostom is performing an operation on the Greek theater roughly analogous to (and continuous with) the operation of appropriation performed more broadly by early Christian leaders upon Greek philosophy and education.<sup>14</sup> His assault on the theaters involves a theorization of the church, at the center of the cosmos it is working to reshape in God's image, *as the true theater*: the saints as its (beloved, instructive, and inspirational) heroic characters, their festivals as its spectacular productions uniting heaven and earth, preachers as its performing narrators, and congregants not as mere audience members but as novice enactors of the same drama, growing into their own mimetic capacities to mediate holiness on the world stage, being themselves sanctified before the eyes of God and humanity in the process. Claiming the power and the poetics of theatrical mediation, Chrysostom seizes a starring role in the first major boom in Orthodox hagiographical production, illustrates the tight entanglement of the (interpersonal and intercultural) processes through which hagiography is produced and consumed, and grounds these processes of mediation with theological warrants so as to insist not merely on their legitimacy but indeed on their indispensability for human participation in holiness.<sup>15</sup>

I submit that such an appropriation of the theater, even more so than Chrysostom's appeals to athletic or military metaphors, functions as a hermeneutical key to his theorization and enactment of hagiography as resistance. Although it was the emperor Nero who, according to Tacitus, first made the

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<sup>14</sup> See Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 29-31, on the "cultural continuity" between the classical-polytheist and the late antique Christian world as evident in the use of mythological and theatrical scenes for educational purposes; and see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 33-37, 194-201, for important examples and discussion of the theme of Christianity as "true philosophy."

<sup>15</sup> Serving as my representative figure of this pivotal early stage in Christian hagiography, Chrysostom is in essential agreement with the major figures of the prior century on the necessity and dynamics of the mediation of holiness, prolific and clear in his hagiographical theorization, and profoundly influential both through the whole history of Greek Orthodoxy and across the range of Christian traditions. Chrysostom is of course not the only early Christian figure who draws on theatricality as a resource for Christian edification; already in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (4:9) the holy community is imagined as a *θέατρον* (an authoritative rendering not lost on Chrysostom), and figures such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, and the Cappadocian fathers are quite comfortable drawing on theatrical themes to make their respective arguments and theological positions clear. In other words, Chrysostom is participating in a broader post-Constantinian process of Christian engagement with and appropriation of Roman public institutions. Nonetheless, Chrysostom is a capstone figure of the major fourth-century developments and an especially creative *user* of the church-as-theater imaginary to illuminate and proliferate the hagiographical field.

deaths of Christians into a *spectacle*,<sup>16</sup> Christian authors were, within a few generations, appropriating the imagery and rhetoric of Roman spectacle, turning it upside down as a countermythology of the arena and resisting imperial hegemony over the facts and significance of what had taken place.<sup>17</sup> Chrysostom takes this appropriation a step further, relying on the cultural continuities between the Roman arenas and the Roman theaters to imbue the longstanding martyriological emphasis on the martyrs' victory in their own "contests" (*agōnes*) with the pedagogical and moral dynamics of the classical theater. For as we will see, the theater more closely resembles Chrysostom's vision of the ethical and political power of hagiographical mediation than do the athletic games or the clashes of armies. The theorization of church as a "spiritual theater,"<sup>18</sup> as offering psychic and political benefits that the public theaters of Roman society were attempting but failing to provide, illustrates not only *that* but also *how* the struggles of the martyrs were multimediated so as to equip the Christian community for their own, mimetic, resistance to the endurance (and even, with Emperor Julian, renaissance) of supposedly non-Christian culture.

The chapter is structured according to my working theorization of hagiographical process, the three prevailing dimensions of which are abundantly to be found in the primary sources. I address (1) how Chrysostom conceives the functions and consequences of hagiographical *imagination*, that is, the construal of holiness and its inscription in the soul (specifically in light of his appropriation of theatricality); (2) what *representational* practices are associated with this construal of holiness and how they engender/mobilize meaningful products (here, in the context of the saint's-day festival); (3) how the synthesis of hagiographical production and consumption is held to be *edifying*, that is, personally

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<sup>16</sup> Nero used these executions, argues Castelli, as a means of "reinscribing social identities and hierarchies, power relations, and public allegiance (*Martyrdom and Memory*, 107). Cf. Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> It is noteworthy that the crucifixion of Jesus can also be described in these terms, as an appropriation and inversion of an imperial spectacle of condemnation, reimagining it as a spectacle of glorification. Such dynamics have been introduced in Chapters III and IV, in the analytic company of Anthea Portier-Young (*Apocalypse Against Empire*), Joyce Salisbury (*The Blood of Martyrs*), David Sánchez (*From Patmos to the Barrio*), and Tripp York (*The Purple Crown*).

<sup>18</sup> "On the Holy Martyr Julian" 4 (PG 50.673.44) and "On the Holy Martyr Pelagia" 3 (PG 50.582.58-59): τὸ πνευματικὸν τοῦτο θέατρον. See discussions of the phrase itself in Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, 325-31; and Jacob, *Das geistige Theater*, 69-71.

beneficial and institutionally fortifying. As I am arguing throughout, the interpenetration of these key processes renders an Orthodox theology of holiness in which hagiographical mediation is essential rather than auxiliary to God's salvific economy, enacting and propagating the struggle that is perceived to be necessary for orthodoxy to flourish in the midst of all that would corrode it.

## (1) Hagiographical Imagination as Theatrical Mediation

The hostility of John Chrysostom toward the theaters of his two cosmopolitan milieux is justifiably famous. Extensive analysis has been given to this dimension of John's pastoral theology and homiletic production,<sup>19</sup> but not due to the mere fact of his rejection of a major institution of Greek education and enculturation.<sup>20</sup> This alone would be unremarkable: Christian leaders throughout the Hellenistic world had found cause to critique the institutions that resisted assimilation by Christian culture or actively opposed its growth, and the theaters in particular had baited such reactions on the part of Christian theologians with their parodic representations of gospel narratives and liturgical practices.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, for John to scold his audience that "*this* theater is not [a theater] of laughter"<sup>22</sup> would be surprising to few among either his contemporaries or his modern interpreters, since such expressions of

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<sup>19</sup> Such prior analysis of Chrysostom's theater-polemics will frequently be relevant below, and will be referenced and evaluated accordingly. A selection from the literature in which it appears: Bergjan, "Das hier ist kein Theater"; Brown, *The Body and Society*; Coleman-Norton, "St. Chrysostom's Use of the Greek Poets"; Jacob, *Das geistige Theater*; Kelly, *Golden Mouth*; Leyerle, "John Chrysostom on the Gaze" and *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*; Miles, "Unmasking the Self"; Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo*; and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*.

<sup>20</sup> On the educational and cultural function of the theater in Chrysostom's contexts, see especially Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 13-31; but see also Barnes, "Christians and the Theater," 315-31, and Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, 56-70, 87-94.

<sup>21</sup> See Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 25-27. For further scholarship documenting Christian condemnations of "the theater, theatrical performances, and those who attended them"—as well as "evidence that Christians habitually indulged in the behavior condemned"—see Barnes, "Christians and the Theater," 317.

<sup>22</sup> "Homilies on Matthew" 6.6 (PG 57.70.30): Οὐ γάρ ἐστι τὸ θεάτρον τοῦτο γέλωτος.

contrast between the holy community and the society it was trying to remake in its own image were common currency and well-worn rhetorical *topoi*.<sup>23</sup>

What is striking about Chrysostom's antipathy to the theater, then, is not its existence but its relentlessness, on the one hand, and its apparent inconsistency, on the other. The extraordinary fire John reserves for his damnation of the theaters, the spectacles on their stages, and the moral leniency of their festival atmosphere is fueled by a deep familiarity with them, a fluency with their techniques and tropes, and a willingness to appropriate their styles of self-presentation. Granted, Chrysostom is a product of an educational culture whose "backbone"<sup>24</sup> of content and logic was the classical literary, mythological, and artistic heritage; his familiarity with the theaters of his own time as well as with the classics is easily explicable from his biography.<sup>25</sup> But disgruntled familiarity is one thing; precise and creative deployment to new, constructive ends is another. Even as he excoriates the theaters of Antioch and Constantinople for their depravity, Chrysostom uses technical theater vocabulary to articulate the content, form, and effect of

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<sup>23</sup> Similar statements and the feisty critiques accompanying them were issued no less regarding philosophy, widely in the early church—including, unsurprisingly, by Chrysostom himself (for whom Christianity provides no less the true philosophy than it does the true theater). Kelly's biography, *Golden Mouth*, is rich with details of Chrysostom's schooling in philosophy and rhetoric, including the influence of Plato, Demosthenes, and Homer, and of his being "passionately fond of the theater" (14). This early appreciation sheds light on his complex rejection of these domains of classical culture, in which he takes care to distinguish the insights of philosophy from its excesses or errant conclusions (as he does with theatrical mediation and numerous dimensions of classical *paideia*). Coleman-Norton's article, "St. Chrysostom and the Greek Philosophers," illuminates many specifics of Chrysostom's critiques of philosophy: certain manifestations of it may be faddish, "cheap" currency (305); it may be deliberately obscure, gaining its profundity only by shrouding its insights (306). Chrysostom expresses ambivalence toward Socrates, but appears to prefer Aristotle to Plato, even relying on Aristotelian (and Stoic critiques) in order to condemn Plato for foolishness, postures of depth, and moral laxity (310-16).

<sup>24</sup> Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 29.

<sup>25</sup> See Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 6-8. Coleman-Norton discusses this dynamic with regard to Chrysostom's use of Greek poets even beyond the dramatists, in that even as he dismisses much of their content as unsound for education when taken on its own, he presupposes the relevance of the poets to the lives of his congregation and uses quotations of their work, carefully interpreted, to illustrate points of moral persuasion ("St. Chrysostom's Use of the Greek Poets," 213, 217-18). But Leyerle notes that the "common cultural lexicon" reinforced by the popularity of the theaters in Chrysostom's contexts was a particular nuisance to the preacher: John complains about parents taking their children to the theater as site of education at odds with the education they would receive in the church, resulting in his congregation habitually speaking and thinking with the images of the stage (as we might refer to a "glass slipper" in casual conversation) (*Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 26-28).

his own discourse, while inviting his audience to approach the festivals *as* they had approached the theaters and to fill their souls with the drama of the saints' narratives.<sup>26</sup>

My task in this section, then, is to interpret Chrysostom's forging and fostering of a hagiographical imagination through his *affinity* for the very theater he rakes over the coals of his pastoral discourse—as if, by roasting something raw, to release the enticing odors of holiness and provide true nourishment where only toxic indigestion had awaited. I would suggest that the full force of the contrast between church and theater is only available in light of the continuity between them, in terms of Chrysostom's (immensely influential) understanding of the dynamics of moral and spiritual formation. He is able, thereby, to reject the theatrical mediation of Greek mythology and burlesque sensuality while simultaneously embracing the lexicon, narrative tropes, and mediating techniques of the theater for his celebration of holy people and his attempts at catalyzing holiness in those who celebrate around him.<sup>27</sup> So doing, Chrysostom configures the holiness of the saints as simultaneously resistant and rectifying: to gaze at the saints is to have the moral degeneracy of the (so-designated) surrounding culture exposed, and to receive a liberating medicine where that culture's adherents had been accustomed to consuming poison.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> As Rylaarsdam observes (*John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 6), Chrysostom is in keeping with most other early Christian leaders in his use of the categories of classical culture “in a way which overturns or transforms them,” while still retaining them as discursive tools (see also Coleman-Norton, “St. Chrysostom's Use of the Greek Poets,” 221, on Chrysostom's deployment of tragic adages). In other words, we should be reading Chrysostom's extreme negativity toward the theaters of his day as part of a larger illocutionary strategy: to detach his congregations from *some aspect* of the theater while appropriating and remodeling those other aspects of it that may still provide ecclesial benefit.

<sup>27</sup> Leyerle is the preeminent interpreter (in *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*) of Chrysostom's rhetorical use of σύγκρισις (contrastive juxtaposition) to degrade the objects of his polemics by identifying them with the empty spectacle of the contemporary theater. His hagiographical discourse is grounded in traditional epideictic rhetoric (as Mitchell shows to be the case also with Chrysostom's portrayal of Paul as saint and model for μίμησις), which “has as its central purpose the praise or vituperation of persons in public oratory that seeks to impress upon its hearers the salutary nature of the shared values the subject of the speech exemplified, and to stir them to fervent response in kind” (*The Heavenly Trumpet*, 95). Common ground with the culture that he resists is therefore a fundamental component of Chrysostom's oeuvre and pastoral strategy; as Burke theorizes around the rhetorical dimension of human understanding more generally, juxtaposition and division can only exist the grounds of some pre-perceived commonality; “there would be no strife in absolute separateness, since opponents can join battle only through a mediatory ground that makes their communication possible, thus providing the first condition necessary for their interchange of blows” (*On Symbols and Society*, 184).

<sup>28</sup> As we will see, this is possible not through a total disentanglement of medium from message, nor merely through established strategies for “despoiling the Egyptians.” Rather, Chrysostom's assimilation of theatrical mediation is grounded in the rehabilitation of the bodily faculties (both those of holy persons and those of their observers) as *capable* of

1a) “The images they bear”: Chrysostom’s Resistant Theorization of Theatrical Mediation

To interpret Chrysostom’s deployment of theatrical metaphors and strategies of representation at the hagiographical festivals of his time, we begin neither with his own hagiographical discourse nor with his explicit prescriptions of how to receive and relate to it. Rather, the force of the theatrical theme in Chrysostom’s hagiographical performance is rooted in his *diagnosis* of the effects of theatrical mediation on the human soul—it is precisely by exposing what is wrong with the theatrical shows that the preacher can make his case for the superior, salutary theatricality of the festivals of the saints.<sup>29</sup> Before the ethical faculties of the soul can be degraded by the theater, however, it is the imagination (*phantasia*) on which theatrical mediation makes its immediate impact. The imagination, in this context, functions as an organic bridge between body and soul; it is an apparatus for the senses to take in external stimuli, store them as memories, digest them into the soul, and regenerate them as understanding that yields conduct.<sup>30</sup> It is at

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perceiving, internalizing, and accurately signifying holiness, due to the incarnation of God’s Word. As Georgia Frank puts it: “According to fourth century theologians... the sanctifying effect of God’s incarnation extended to the physical world; in this broader understanding of Incarnation, God was revealed not only in Jesus and humanity but also throughout creation... The Incarnation, in theory, legitimated all forms of sense perception as a means of knowing God” (“The Pilgrim’s Gaze in the Age Before Icons,” 102-03). See also Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 4-9, on the theology of material rehabilitation; and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 26-29, on Chrysostom’s reliance on Origen’s theory of the incarnation in Chrysostom’s own enthusiasm for corporeal imagery and appeals to the senses.

<sup>29</sup> As Leyerle and Bergjan both observe, it is the *effect of spectacle on the soul* that is at the foundation of John Chrysostom’s critique of the theaters: see Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 68-69, and Bergjan, “Das hier ist kein Theater,” 570-71. Bergjan in particular makes much of the fact that Chrysostom’s orations are clearly not “stage reviews” (*Theaterkritiken*): the preacher provides very little detail about the plots or stagecraft, he does not consider “artistic deficits” (*künstlerische Defizite*) in the quality of the performances, and he does not articulate the merit or demerit of some genres relative to others. It is the *influence* of the shows rather than their form or content that drives Chrysostom’s polemics; their true topic is not the theaters themselves but *Christians as theatergoers*, and as Bergjan later notes (575), Chrysostom only uses arguments in which he can put the conditions of theater into relation with the divine, with the church, with his congregations and their concerns (perhaps more accurately, his concerns for them). Cf. Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, 211-19. Gildenhard and Revermann observe that concerns about the transformative power of theatrical mimesis were by no means limited to Christian commentators (Introduction to *Beyond the Fifth Century*, 24); Chrysostom’s own teacher, the Roman polytheist Libanios, praises Emperor Julian for keeping his mind taut and active, rather than losing himself in “mental relaxation” at the theater (see Barnes, “Christians and the Theater, 316).

<sup>30</sup> So it is not, as in later anthropologies, a power to produce mental images of that which does not exist. Late antique conceptions of *φαντασία* are an enormous topic, which I can only trace in light of their hagiographical significance. See Sheppard, *The Poetics of Phantasia*, 1-14, for her broader discussion of the varying uses of the term in high and late antiquity. Key groundwork for later treatments can be found in Plato: *Phaedo* 73, *Republic* 6.507, and *Theaetetus* 184-93.

this hinge between the somatic senses and the immateriality of the human soul that John makes his stand for the transformation of human persons—by the holiness of God’s grace, active in the saints, in place of the corrosive social forces that had long sought to ignore, mock, or exterminate them.

Although Chrysostom provides indications and instructions related to the danger posed by the theater to Christian life throughout his corpus, he gives a particularly explicit account of the effects of theatrical mediation on the imagination in his homily “Against the Games and Theaters.”<sup>31</sup> After narrating back to his congregation the occasion for his treatment of this topic,<sup>32</sup> he suggests that they must have been driven to the games and shows as “the devil’s prisoner,” since even greater richness and spectacle was available in the “spiritual festival” (*panēgyrin pneumatikēn*) being celebrated in honor of Peter and Paul at the same time.<sup>33</sup> John then begins to explain what it is that has been happening to them when they have so blithely been feasting their eyes on the spectacles, indeed even bringing their children and unwittingly

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Sheppard suggests, however, that it is Aristotle’s view (particularly in *On the Soul* 428ab) that would be most influential for the context with which I am concerned. In this passage, φαντασία is “that [process] according to which we say that a mental image [φάντασμα] comes to us,” and it is also the faculty (δύναμις) or state (ἔξις) of the soul “according to which we judge and ascertain the truth or falsehood” of what we perceive; imagination cooperates with the senses and continues when sensation is lacking, enabling us “to form an opinion exactly according to what has been perceived.” See also Hett, Introduction to Aristotle, *Poetics*, xiii: “The word [φαντασία] is used by Aristotle in two senses: (1) sometimes it operates in the presence of the sensible object and thus ‘interprets’ the object to the mind; (2) sometimes it operates in the absence of the sensible object, and then is either a form of memory of what we call ‘pure imagination.’” This position of the imagination, crudely put, “between” the senses and the soul is the warrant by which, as Mitchell suggests, “artistic and ethical theory merge in the conception of μίμησις” (*The Heavenly Trumpet*, 51). Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, likewise, insists that the style or delivery of discourse, *as with acting*, has a significant impact on how the imagination of the audience will receive and process the content of speech (*Rhetoric* III.1.5-7). On φαντασία in ancient rhetoric more broadly, see also O’Gorman, “Aristotle’s *Phantasia* in the *Rhetoric*,” and Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, 107-31. On the development of the anthropology of imagination (in ways pertinent to the education of Chrysostom) by Longinus, Quintilian, and the Neoplatonists, see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 231-35, and Sheppard, *The Poetics of Phantasia*, 82-92. On the ancient contrast (and hierarchy) but continuity between imagination and imitation, see Sheppard, *The Poetics of Phantasia*, 80-81, and Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 26-28.

<sup>31</sup> PG 56.263-70; translation available in Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 119-25. The homily was preached in 399, only a year after his arrival to Constantinople (see Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 118, and Barnes and Bevan, *The Funeral Oration for John Chrysostom*, 57n).

<sup>32</sup> This occasion, he claims, is the shame felt by the pastor when his congregants, after attending to spiritual teaching in church, squandered its fruits by rushing off to the theater and the hippodrome, where they “were carried off in Bacchic frenzy” (ἐξεβακχεύθησαν): “Against the Games and Theaters” 1 (PG 56.263.16).

<sup>33</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 1 (PG 56.264.17-18; 56.265.15-16). This logic of persuasion will be particularly to my argument in the next subsection.

“destroying their soul[s].”<sup>34</sup> In the stands of the theater, gazing at the actors and (especially) the actresses, their embodied souls receive fuel from their senses and soon are “kindled by desire [*epithymias*].”<sup>35</sup> When they leave the theater, though they no longer have the spectacles before their eyes, the damage is done: “the phantom image [*to eidolon*] [of the actress] is stored up in your soul, [as are] her words, her figure, her glances, her strutting, her swaying, her elocution, her lusty melodies—and receiving [all these as] countless wounds, you withdraw.”<sup>36</sup> The imagination of the observers has become “stuffed full” of what they have fed it,<sup>37</sup> and it is changed for the worse, for it cannot un-digest this feast and is now producing within itself imitations of the imprint made through the eyes. Because the stimuli stored up in the imagination continue to provide “fuel for the fire,”<sup>38</sup> the imaginers are “captive” (*aichmalōtos*)<sup>39</sup> to this process of regeneration, even if they do not return to the site of the spectacle. They will find that the images they bear produce dangerous emotions: dismissive anger at those who are trying to heal them and desires that cannot be sated, including the desire to rush after those who continue to harm them.<sup>40</sup> Their imagination

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<sup>34</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 2 (PG 56.266.14-15). See Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 13-41, and Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, 97-207, on patterns in the production and consumption of theatrical shows in Chrysostom’s time; Jacob’s discussion of the rhetorical contrasts between the two theaters is also illuminating (*Das geistige Theater*, 29-47). I do not interrogate this material, as my objective is not to evaluate Chrysostom’s accuracy in criticizing the secular theater, but rather to see how his diagnosis forms the basis for *prescribing* a theater of another sort.

<sup>35</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 2 (PG 56.266.26). For a thorough treatment of Chrysostom’s concern with the (particularly female) gaze as seductive and deadly, and with the (particularly male) eye as vulnerable as a gate for introducing impurities to the soul, see Leyerle, “John Chrysostom on the Gaze.”

<sup>36</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 2 (PG 56.267.3-6). It is a matter of some (likely intentional) irony that, in narrating to his audience the effects that are likely to persist in their imagination once they leave the theater, Chrysostom is himself calling into their minds the very images he is warning against (the bare head of the actress, her enticing movements, her seductive voice). This strategy belongs to an orator who has been trained in the persuasive power of leading his audience to visualize the objects of his discourse; but this strategy may have been all the more effective when those objects of discussion are, precisely, phantasmal images persisting in the minds of an audience led unwittingly to visualize them. In listening to the preacher’s warning, the theater-going audience members could have felt the pernicious images that he claimed to be planted in them rising up before their eyes, in a kind of oratorical prestidigitation. Nor is John’s exhortation at this point the hypothetical grumbling of an out-of-touch curmudgeon. He is, rather, a *convert* who in his formative years partook in all the cultural institutions that he has come to see as corrupt; he has personal experience of such infection by unwanted images and the ascetic dedication it takes to resist them. See Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 14-18, 28-29.

<sup>37</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 2 (PG 56.267.10).

<sup>38</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 3 (PG 56.267.22).

<sup>39</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 1, 2 (PG 56.264.17, 267.11).

<sup>40</sup> See “Against the Games and Theaters” 3 (PG 56.267.23-37). See Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, 220-33, on John’s diagnosis of the theater’s “moral pedagogy”; see Kallares, *City of Demons*, 63-65, on theater’s demonic power.

is, strange to say, both slashed apart and full to bursting; “everything is topsy-turvy.”<sup>41</sup> And for what? The “small pleasure” of the secular theater, when the greater pleasure and greater benefit of the church—this spiritual theater and hippodrome of the heart—is next door.<sup>42</sup>

In this descriptive warning to his congregation, Chrysostom alternates between two principal metaphors, the relationship between which yields key insight both into his understanding of what theatrical mediation *is* and into the logic of the soul’s corrosion by the stimuli present at theatrical shows. The first of these metaphors, that of the fuel drawn into oneself to maintain “an oven of inappropriate desire [*erōtos*],”<sup>43</sup> supports a construal of imagination as a process that is closely connected with a crucial theological category of the early Greek church: *erōs*. In order for the soul to pursue what is absent from it and with which it seeks union, it needs to be oriented by imagining the object of its pursuit, even if these images are ultimately to be left behind.<sup>44</sup> The crisis of the theatergoer’s imagination, in Chrysostom’s view, is not merely that it is populated by images that kindle fleshly desires. Rather, the wrong kind of fuel for the imagination warps the theatergoer’s *erōs*, drawing his soul not only toward trivial and hedonistic

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<sup>41</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 3 (PG 56.267.23): πάντα ἄνω καὶ κάτω. Cf. the description of this process in Chrysostom’s “Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.665.20-666.2): returning from the theaters, his congregants are “all jumbled up” (συντεταραγμένοι), “thrown into confusion” (συνκεχυμένοι), and “softened/weakened” (μαλακιζόμενοι), because they are “bearing the images of all the things that took place there” (τὰ εἰδωλα πάντων τῶν ἐκεῖ γεγενημένων φέροντες).

<sup>42</sup> See “Against the Games and Theaters” 1 (PG 56.265.28-30) and 3 (PG 56.267.39); a similar comparison appears in the “Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.664.18-20) between μικρὰν ἡδονὴν (there, of the taverns and markets) and the greater enjoyment of the hagiographical festival and the heavenly kingdom it manifests. The rhetorical logic of a *minore ad maius* (from lesser to greater) is woven throughout Chrysostom’s contrastive affinity between the spectacles of the church and those of the city. He warrants ecclesial theatricality by its carrying out better and to better ends the mediating practices of the theaters (and indeed, of other institutions of public spectacle). See, for instance, his “Homilies on John” 1.1 (PG 59.25.11-21): “And if, in the case of rhetors, pipers, and athletes, people sit with such great enthusiasm to watch (or rather watch and listen together) to them, then how much zeal and enthusiasm would it be right for *us* to offer—when now it is not some piper or sophist coming forth for a contest, but rather a man proclaiming from heaven and letting loose a voice more magnificent than thunder? For he has held fast, he has summoned, he has filled up the whole inhabited earth [οἰκουμένην] with his voice—not by means of forceful shouting but through the stirring of [his] tongue with divine grace.”

<sup>43</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 3 (PG 56.267.43). This is, again, an inappropriate desire of which Chrysostom himself has *experience*, by his own account: see *On the Priesthood* 6 (in Sources Chrétiennes [hereafter SC] 272.342-46), on the “vanity of [his] secular studies” as a youth, and Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 29, on the available reports of Chrysostom’s early life.

<sup>44</sup> Already for Plato and Aristotle, imagination played a crucial role in explaining desire and the human pursuit of what was absent and perhaps had never even been experienced (see Sheppard, *The Poetics of Phantasia*, 6-7; Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 234; and Barish *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 8-9). Cf. the discussion in Chapter IV, section 3b, on the risks inherent in desire for what is absent, by which we are liable to be led astray without guidance.

objects of pursuit but also *away* from its proper orientation in desire for God.<sup>45</sup> It is no coincidence, in other words, that he refers to the reconstitution of Christian theatergoers' imagination as *porneia*: "fornication," or spelled out, a breakdown of holiness relating to sexual infidelity or illicit desire.<sup>46</sup> Thus it is that Chrysostom unfavorably compares his theatergoing congregants, whose ill-fueled, topsy-turvy imagination draws them toward what makes them ill and repels them from the possibility of restoration,<sup>47</sup> with wild animals, who at least have the common sense and desire for well-being to flee what hurts them!

The second (and connected) recurring metaphor in Chrysostom's diagnosis of the theater's effect on his congregants' imagination is that of *sickness* and *healing*: as junk food or rotten meat sicken the body, so inappropriate fuel for the imagination sickens the soul. Chrysostom deploys this metaphor both to convey what is happening to his congregants at the theater and to explain the consequences when it comes to their participation in the church. "Do not say to me that what is taking place [on stage] is just an act [*hypokrisis*],"<sup>48</sup> he warns his audience in an exegetical homily: it is all too real in its infection of the soul, with severe consequences for the family and the community. Those in the grip of this fever abuse their loved ones, suffer lascivious hallucinations before the eyes of their mind, and shun those who try to help

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Webb, "The Protean Performer," 9, on the danger of *mimēsis* when "copying the wrong models." However, in Chrysostom's "Homily on Martyrs," which will be examined in more depth shortly, we find him *praising* the "unstoppable desire" (ἀκατάσχετον ἔρωτα) kindled by the spectacle on display in "this splendid theater" (τὸ λαμπρὸν τοῦτο θέατρον) of the saint's-day festival (PG 50.663.23-26). Cf. Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 235-38, on the (risky) pedagogical strategy of molding character by shaping mental images and reinterpreting those that are already present.

<sup>46</sup> See "Against the Games and Theaters" 4 (PG 56.269.22). Chrysostom's lesser known homily "Against the Theaters" likewise makes extensive use of the imagery of *πορνεία* and *μοιχεία* (adultery), drawing on the logic of 1 Corinthians 5 to explain the severe inappropriateness of theatergoing Christians' taking communion: "And what other, greater sin than this do you look for, when they [theatergoing Christians]—making of themselves total adulterers, shamelessly, being frenzied just like dogs—invade the holy table?" (PG 56.543.10-13). Chrysostom then proceeds to cite Matthew 5:28 (Jesus' claim that one who looks on a woman with desire in his heart has already committed adultery) and applies the passage to his congregants' looking to the theaters for enjoyment and instruction. See Jacob, *Das geistige Theater*, 48-52, 154-60.

<sup>47</sup> See "Against the Games and Theaters" 3: "For how is it that someone who does not hate his wound, nor wish to be delivered from it, would seek out the doctor?" (PG 56.267.35-37). Cf. Aristotle, *On the Soul* 429a (trans. Hett): "because *phantasiai* persist in us and resemble sensations, living creatures frequently act in accordance with them, some, *viz.*, the brutes, because they have no mind, and some, *viz.*, men, because the mind is temporarily clouded over by emotion, or disease, or sleep."

<sup>48</sup> "Homilies on Matthew" 6.8 (PG 57.72.1-2). See Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 68.

them; they are no longer able to concentrate on the holy liturgy and the teachings of the church.<sup>49</sup> Even worse, as they succumb to the desires kindled by the diseased imagination, “the Greeks will jeer at us and the Jews will treat us as comedy [*kōmōdēsousin*].”<sup>50</sup> In this fascinating formulation, the theatergoers will have *become* the bawdy spectacle on which they feasted with their eyes and which they digested into their souls—resulting in a direct diminution of the Christian community’s intercultural position, which Chrysostom is so consistently concerned to reinforce. Therefore, Chrysostom regrets to inform them, so long as they are unfaithfully ruining themselves through “the untamed infirmity of the theater,”<sup>51</sup> he cannot receive them at the eucharistic altar. Chrysostom’s explanation of the prohibition is in keeping with his warrant: “Just as shepherds separate out their sheep which are full of mange from the healthy ones, so that they will not share their illness [*nosou*] with the others, thus too am I doing [with you].”<sup>52</sup>

Hyperbolic though all this may seem, these two prevailing metaphors of Chrysostom’s warning in “Against the Games and Theaters” work together not only to shock and shame, but also to promote an *alternative* to the crisis that Chrysostom wants his congregation to agree is at hand. In the first metaphor, the type of fuel that fills the imagination corresponds with the orientation of human *erōs*; if unholy fuel maintains the “oven of inappropriate desire,” *holy* fuel for the imagination will power the raging flame of love and longing for God that we will find to be so central an image in Chrysostom’s hagiographical

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<sup>49</sup> See “Against the Games and Theaters” 3 (PG 56.267.23-268.2). Likewise, in “On the Holy Martyr Julian” 5 (PG 50.674.7-16), Chrysostom compares those who abandon the festival for the associated markets and pageantry of the nearby city to sick people who do not want to follow their doctor’s instructions, while comparing those congregants who will stay at the festival to the relatives that need to enjoin treatment continually upon them.

<sup>50</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 4 (PG 56.269.17-18), rendering a resonance with 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 (on Christ crucified as “a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles”). Note, however, that Christians are by no means distinctive in their critique of the theater as “dragging [spectators] toward what is worse” (from a lost work of Aristides, quoted by John’s own teacher Libanios—see Barnes “Christians and the Theater,” 326-27).

<sup>51</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 4 (PG 56.268.35).

<sup>52</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” 4 (PG 56.268.38-40). So too, Chrysostom’s other homily “Against the Theaters” begins with the preacher’s desire to identify those who were accustomed to skipping church to attend the theaters, so he could exclude them from communion—in order that, shamed, they might “return having been straightened out [or rectified—*διορθωθέντες*]” (PG 56.541.53). If such Christian theatergoers, with their “depraved public conduct” took communion against this prohibition, however, they would be in Christ’s eyes *more* outside the holy community “than those who are shut outside and not ever able to partake of the holy table” (PG 56.542.57-61). Cf. *Discourse on Blessed Babylas and Against the Greeks* [hereafter *On Blessed Babylas*] 30, 39 (SC 362.130, 140).

homilies. Likewise, in the second metaphor, if the theatrical shows have the effect of infecting the imagination and making it sickly and weak, it would be logically consistent to look for an analogous possibility of *healing* the imagination and restoring its strength as an instrument of ecclesial well-being. It is precisely this possibility that is found in hagiography—which, in Chrysostom’s performance of it, exerts its healing effect through the same dynamics of mediation (from the senses through the imagination to the soul) to begin with.<sup>53</sup> Taking the burlesque of the theaters into his soul, a Christian becomes a ridiculous player on the stage of the city; but instead, assimilating the spiritual theater through the festivals of the saints, he may become what he views and participates in conveying to others, “proclaiming through bodily movements [*kinēmatōn tou sōmatos*] the philosophy he holds within.”<sup>54</sup>

Paradoxically, it is through a continuity, rather than a stark division, between the spectacles of the stage and those of the saints, that Chrysostom strives to resist the attractiveness of the former, which continued to threaten the assertion of Christian countercultural distinctiveness.<sup>55</sup> By seizing the means of theatrical mediation, moreover, Chrysostom could assure his audiences that the church was not a dreary evacuation of Roman culture but rather its perfection and replacement. After all, the hagiographical festivals no less than the theatrical shows involved an enclosure of special time and space that sits apart from yet points back to and confronts the self-understanding of the audience. They alike linked events in the temporal and causal sequence of a story, establishing agential characters in relation to one another. The

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<sup>53</sup> Thus we find Chrysostom insisting, in the “Homily on Martyrs,” that an intended effect of attending the “splendid theater” of the hagiographical festival is that, “with the light of the martyrs blazing down into your thoughts, all the sicknesses there are obliterated and the radiant flame of our philosophy is kindled” (PG 50.663.40-43). Likewise, John explicitly describes his own hagiographical performance in delivering the sermon at the center of the saint’s-day liturgy as “furnishing the afflicted with medicines [φάρμακα]” (“On Saint Phokas” 1, PG 50.699.18).

<sup>54</sup> “Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.666.7-8). Note that the same term, *κινήματων*, is used by Chrysostom in “Against the Games and Theaters,” and by other commentators such as Lucian, to describe the pantomimic movements of stage actors. It is a prevailing strategy of Chrysostom’s rhetoric to create an overarching identification between the lives of the saints on the stage of cherished and edifying narratives, the lives of the contemporary Christian congregation on the stage of the public sphere, and the theaters that form a negative object lesson against which their engagement with the saints is analogous and opposite; more discussion of this strategy will follow.

<sup>55</sup> See Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 63-90, and Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 37-41. Chrysostom, of course, “was aware of the political role exercised by the theater” (Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 39) and its pedagogical success in shaping public opinion in ways unhelpful to church agendas.

senses of audiences were attuned not only to the agents of the stage but also to its manifold spectacle, a synesthetic field of voice, gesture, costume, setting, and special effects. And as will become increasingly significant, the whole theatrical multimediation (in theater and festival alike) involved *mimēsis* on the part of authors, actors, and audiences: simulating events, translating them from medium to medium, engraving the memory of them in the imagination.

Chrysostom's goal is to produce salutary effects in his community by combining heroic content, narrative form, and processes of multi-sensory mediation in new ways.<sup>56</sup> Thus the seizure of theatrical mediation was a theological as much as a rhetorical and political strategy:<sup>57</sup> his view of the particular perniciousness of the theaters is tightly associated with his recognition of the theological legitimacy and sanctifying potential of specifically theatrical mediation for the church.<sup>58</sup> It is to this assimilated power and its rectifying intervention in the imagination of Chrysostom's congregations that we now turn.

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<sup>56</sup> This reading is resonant with how Chrysostom seems to have conceived of his regeneration of classical *paideia*; see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 31-37, 55.

<sup>57</sup> Why indeed is it the theater in particular (more so than the games in the hippodrome or the many streetside spectacles of cosmopolitan Antioch and Constantinople) that is so pernicious as to draw Chrysostom's most sustained attacks and so powerful as to warrant, despite these attacks, his investment in its tropes and techniques for his most important work as a pastor of souls? Several hypotheses have been offered and tested. Timothy Barnes argues that the extra vehemence of Chrysostom's treatment of the theater corresponds with the permanence of the damage done there to the Christian soul (see "Christians and the Theater," 327), but this is unsatisfactory, because Chrysostom is not giving up on theatergoers as permanently broken but attempting to heal them. It is precisely in the name of *undoing* this damage that Chrysostom organizes his hagiographical appropriation of the theater. Others have argued, quite reasonably, that the felt sense of proximity and competition between church and theater can account for the particular importance of driving a wedge between them: see Bergjan, "Das hier ist kein Theater," 576, 585; Brown, *The Body and Society*, 314; Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 60-67; Miles, "Unmasking the Self," 104; and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 199. I would hazard, however, that such explanations do not adequately distinguish between the *institution of theaters*, with which Chrysostom is driving such a wedge of disaffection and dis-identification, and the *processes of mediation* taking place there, which are not in themselves incompatible with the theological and ecclesiological aims of Christianity but rather a vital resource that Chrysostom was more successful than most in Christian history to retrieve and redeploy.

<sup>58</sup> Chrysostom is hardly alone in this recognition, even in his own time. Tertullian and Augustine offer an important counterpoint to Chrysostom's treatment of the theaters, demonstrating not only a comparable vehemence in denouncing the theaters but also "an acute awareness of the transformative power of the art" (Webb, "The Protean Performer," 3). Augustine even approaches Chrysostom's own assimilative approach, in his own discussions of the "theater of the heart" (*theatro pectoris*): see Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 87. See also Puchner, *Greek Theatre between Antiquity and Independence*, 52-90; and Brockett and Hildy, *History of the Theatre*, 65 on the continuing "ambiguous attitude toward the theatre" in Christian Byzantium. Yet when it comes to the deployment of theatrical mediation for an interplay of celebrating and imitating the saints, John's astonishing clarity and creativity are second to none.

1b) “Drugs for the sick”: Chrysostom’s Rectifying Configuration of Church as True Theater

Chrysostom narrates the predicament of his congregation to them in stark, binary terms. Many among them have had their imagination infected and so their orientation toward God and world corrupted. If this crisis of their imagination can be undone, they would be rescued from the destruction toward which they, with their warped *erōs*, are rushing eagerly; if it cannot, they must be cut off as an infected limb would be amputated. Yet the diagnosis given in “Against the Games and Theaters” is just that: grounds for a prescription, upon which the prescription must follow. And this prescription is, in short, a *retraining of human perception* by means of hagiographical media.

In his exegetical homilies, Chrysostom describes the breakdown and restoration of human capacities to know God through their senses. Rylaarsdam summarizes:

Although, from the beginning, each soul had ‘creation as a book sitting before her in open view,’ humans were not willing to approach God in the way in which he commanded. Their desires were directed toward earthly things, ‘for the devil was eager everywhere to drag people down before the images of creeping things.’ Although God had commanded them, ‘Rest not in the creature, but by means of it contemplate the Creator,’ people pursued their own wisdom. As a result, they neither found God nor any distinct knowledge about creatures. They became spiritually frail...<sup>59</sup>

Not being willing to know God through the beauty and harmony of creation, humanity satisfied itself with what it could sense of creation, forgetting that divine wisdom lay behind it. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden represents a further decline, from mere *unwillingness* to reach God through created things to complete *inability* to do so.<sup>60</sup> Redemption through Christ, then, healed the capacity to meet divinity

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<sup>59</sup> Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 57, including citations from Chrysostom, “On 1 Corinthians” 7.9 (PG 61.60), “On Romans” 3 (PG 60.414), and “On 1 Corinthians” 5.3 (PG 61.41); the influence of Romans 1:18-25 also seems likely. Discussing the strategies of classical *paideia* that Chrysostom deploys in his homiletics, Rylaarsdam emphasizes the importance of using corporeal images to meet people at the level of their understanding: “God gave the world as a tablet, framing it in such a way ‘so that by an analogy from the things which are seen [ἀναλόγως ἐκ τῶν ὁραμένων] the Maker may be admired.’ Through creation, humans were led by the hand... [making] it sufficiently possible for all people to mount up to him” (*John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 56-57; with citation from Chrysostom, “On 1 Corinthians” 4 [PG.61.32]). Although, as I will show, this is far from a sufficient explanation of Chrysostom’s theatrical configuration of the saints, it nonetheless introduces an important theological warrant for his hagiographical strategies.

<sup>60</sup> In Chrysostom’s view, it is only the prophets who were graced to see through creation and hear the voice of God, even if dimly, in the period of human history represented by the Old Testament. That these prophets were so often at odds with the Jewish people, from whom they were called out and to whom they were sent as instructors, serves the preacher as

through the senses, through the contemplation of created things, but it has *not* necessarily restored the willingness to do so. Christians must, in other words, be habituated by the church in directing their gaze and interpreting its contents properly.<sup>61</sup> As Leyerle puts it: “To see correctly is to find all things changed.”<sup>62</sup>

And it is, for Chrysostom, the saints and those who imitate/represent [*mimeontai*] them who continue to take the leading role in this work of reconstituting the imagination of the community of Christ. The words and deeds of holy people (whether the heroes of the biblical canon or the saintly witnesses of the present) have always been needed as visible spectacles to those around them: “a theater to the world, both to angels and to humans,” as Paul described the public mission of the apostles.<sup>63</sup> But it is now the task of hagiographical media to transmit these spectacles, to amplify their effect by restaging them and igniting the imagination of those who did not see them in person. In other words, the purpose of hagiography is to catalyse the sanctification it celebrates. The ethical, political, cultural, and theological effects of these holy spectacles are opposite to those of the theaters, though they address the imagination in the same way. That is, they heal at the site of the harm: it is through theatrical mediation—a risky but powerful medicine, a *pharmakon*<sup>64</sup>—that Chrysostom hopes to dislodge his congregation’s self-satisfaction

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proof of human incapacity and need for the intervention of Christ. But it also provides a linchpin of Chrysostom’s anti-Jewish polemics and so must remind us that theological warrants cannot be extracted from (inter)cultural anxieties. See Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 105-111; cf. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 130.

<sup>61</sup> See Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 133, on Chrysostom’s soteriology, including at its heart “a restoration of humanity to its condition before the fall.” See also 216: “A consistent theme in Chrysostom’s spiritual diagnosis of his listeners is their poor eyesight, which causes them to chase appearances rather than truth.” As Leyerle points out (“John Chrysostom on the Gaze,” 161-2), Chrysostom often associates clarity of soul with clarity of sight, indeed appreciating not only the “lethal capacity of the eye” (165) but also its great potential benefit.

<sup>62</sup> Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 178.

<sup>63</sup> From 1 Corinthians 4:9—“For I think that God displayed us apostles last of all, as those condemned to death, so that we might become a theater to the world, both to angels and to humans.” Chrysostom’s exegesis of this Pauline passage emphasizes that “our struggles [ἡμῶν παλαίσματα] are so great as to be worthy of angelic contemplation” (“On 1 Corinthians 12.3 [PG 61.99.50-52]), because their stakes are cosmic as much as they are political.

<sup>64</sup> Chrysostom describes his work as a hagiographical homilist as, explicitly, a preparation of “drugs for the sick” (τοῖς ἀσθενοῦσι φάρμακα) (“On Saint Phokas,” PG 50.699.18; cf. *On Blessed Babylas* 52, 55-56 [SC 362.105,162]). The term φάρμακον (drug) is justifiably famous for its utility in philosophy (both ancient, archetypally Plato’s, and modern, archetypally Derrida’s) as the substance, idea, or intervention that can both poison and heal, depending on how it is used. It is a classic contronym (a term that contains its own opposite), as used already in Plato’s *Theaetetus* (149c-d) as a

and disoriented *erōs*,<sup>65</sup> to feed their imagination and excite their passion for sacred things, to mediate God's own holiness into their lives, and to strengthen their capacities of vision and understanding. It is precisely "the imagination of the martyr" through which this is possible.<sup>66</sup>

Bergjan's formulation, that Chrysostom "uses forms from the theater to transport his audience out of the world of the theater,"<sup>67</sup> is therefore misleading. Chrysostom is no more leading his audience away from the *theatron* and its force in their lives than he is leading them away from *philosophia* or *paideia*. He is, rather, resisting the "theater of transgression"<sup>68</sup> that fuels a culture he views as ungodly and corrosive by means of a theater reconstituted in the image, message, and purpose of the gospel.<sup>69</sup> The theatricality of the church is profound and salutary, providing "benefit" as well as excitation, whereas that of the theaters is shallow and harmful, its excitation cultivating deleterious habits and disorienting the desire of its attendees. Pleasure and applause are no less (indeed greatly more) appropriate at the spectacles of the

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metaphor for the very enterprise of philosophy: both poisoning the well of conventional or uncritical thought, inflicting the pain of confusion and forcing it to eject its unsalutary habits of mind, and thus at the same time healing it of forms of ignorance. See Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication*, 151, on Chrysostom's recommendations that bad habits (such as apotropaic marks of mud) be not merely abandoned but *replaced* with good habits in the same mold (in this case, making the sign of the cross).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 69, on Chrysostom's analysis of the Abram account in Genesis, in which "God uses corporeal images in order to counteract Abram's vision of things around him that undermine his faith" See *On Genesis* 32.5 (PG 53.294) and 37.6 (PG 53.344).

<sup>66</sup> "On the Holy Martyrs" 2 (PG 648-43): τοῦ μάρτυρος ἡ φαντασία. Chrysostom plan, then, is to rescue those at risk and to "swiftly fortify against [the devil's] entrance" by "stretching out the nets of teaching" and catching his errant congregants even as they pursue the pleasures of the theater ("Against the Games and Theaters" 3 [PG 56.268.10-12]); it is as if he must catch his congregants up in holiness precisely where they have gone to satisfy their unholy desires.

<sup>67</sup> Bergjan, "Das hier ist kein Theater," 586. See also Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 249: "He uses the language of the theater in order to abolish its view of reality." But this language of abolition is unfaithful to Chrysostom himself, who wants to *rectify* what is upside down and used for ill but might still be recovered for good. As Mitchell observes (*The Heavenly Trumpet*, 154), Chrysostom overturns the *values* of the philosophical or rhetorical (and I would add, theatrical) techniques he uses, not those techniques themselves. The analogy remains pertinent: Chrysostom's repudiation of the philosophical schools and his frequent contrast between them and the church in no way implies that Christian theology is or should be unphilosophical.

<sup>68</sup> "Against the Theaters" 1 (PG 56.542.50): τὰ θεάτρα τῆς παρανομίας. The formulation is fascinating and in keeping with my analysis throughout, as its logic would appear to indicate its opposite: a lawful or loyal theater, that is, the church.

<sup>69</sup> See "Homily to the People of Antioch" 2.4 (PG 49.38.32-33): "The church is not a theater so that we can listen for the sake of our amusement; we need to depart here having benefitted [ὠφεληθέντας]." Cf. "Homily on Matthew" 17.7 (PG 57.264.23-25).

church,<sup>70</sup> yet they are not ends in themselves; they are invested in an imaginative constitution different from that of the theaters, a different ethical momentum, and a profound *integrity* between the visible and the intelligible evidences of God's love and sanctifying purpose.

Thus Chrysostom appropriates and adapts the *means* of theatrical mediation while overturning its *object*. In other words, unlike his no-less-pugnacious antecedent in North Africa, Tertullian, John Chrysostom does not hold theatrical mediation *per se* to be vicious, because he does not hold its mimetic force to be inherently degrading to its object.<sup>71</sup> “If something is bad,” Chrysostom reasons, “to imitate it is also bad”;<sup>72</sup> but if not, it is not. Indeed, since much of his critique of the theaters is that their *mimēsis* of immorality amplifies the effect of that immorality through infecting the imagination of others with it, it follows that to imitate/represent holiness is likewise to amplify its effectiveness by mediating it to others and igniting their imagination with its goodness. It is, we might say, only through an endorsement of *mimēsis* as a mechanism of strengthening and spreading divine revelation in human society that a hagiographer can so passionately narrate the deeds of the saints in his homilies and render them as heroic

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<sup>70</sup> See “On the Holy Martyrs” 1: “For if those who have been driven wild by the theaters and who were gaping fools before the contest of horses never are satiated by those inappropriate spectacles, how much more insatiably should we hold fast to the feasts of the saints? . . . But, don't those [spectacles] provide some pleasure? Not so much as these” (PG 50.645.17-21,24-26). See also “On the Holy Martyr Julian” 4: “For you can gratify yourselves with this delight [of sightseeing in Daphne] on another day, and be free of sin. But if you wish to have enjoyment of delights now, what is more delightful [τερπνότερον] than this assembly? What is more gorgeous than this spiritual theater [θεάτρου τοῦ πνευματικοῦ]?” (PG 50.673.40-44). The same sentiment can be found in his “Homilies on John” 1.1 (PG 59.23.42-59.25.31).

<sup>71</sup> In Plato's *Republic* and *Sophist*, Socrates argues the opposite: that μίμησις lacks the power to provide us with true accounts or explanations of essences, resulting instead in the degradation of the prototype of what is imitated/represented and the “deception” of those who rely on μιμήματα τῶν ὄντων (see Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 3-37; Sörbom, *Mimesis and Art*, 117-62; Mason, *Ancient Aesthetics*, 28-47; and Nussbaum, “The Speech of Alcibiades,” 153). Note that Chrysostom's attacks on Plato are more common and more severe than his attacks on Aristotle. Though Chrysostom is quite content to consign Aristotle to the dustbin, he retains and repurposes those ideas that serve the glory of Christian truth (such as, we will see, Aristotelian restoration of the dignity and capacity of μίμησις). On these matters, see again Coleman-Norton, “St. Chrysostom and the Greek Philosophers,” 307, 310-13. For Tertullian, who along with Augustine and Chrysostom is one of the most outspoken critics of the late antique theater (above all in his excoriating treatise *De Spectaculis*), public spectacle is *illusory* because its protean performers mimic reality and disguise their true selves, *idolatrous* because of its origins in Dionysiac ritual, and *immoral* because it displays vicious habits (in its *mythos* and *eidōs*) and arouses vicious emotions (in its *pathos*). See Barnes, “Christians and the Theater,” 325; Barasch, *Icon*, 108-23; and Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 112-17.

<sup>72</sup> “Homily on Matthew” 6.8 (PG 57.72.10-11): Εἰ γὰρ αὐτὸ κακὸν, καὶ ἡ μίμησις τούτου κακόν.

characters populating the Christian imagination.<sup>73</sup> Chrysostom grants that the divine truth staged in hagiographical media cannot itself be encompassed either in the poetics of such media nor in any “prosaic account” available in theological treatise;<sup>74</sup> the perceptible spectacles that mediate this truth to the soul do so in a partially veiled fashion appropriate to the limits of the human mind and its sense-fueled imagination, yet they nonetheless do so without corrupting their revelatory message.<sup>75</sup>

Thus Chrysostom invests a sense of wonder and astonishment in the paradoxical but praiseworthy capacity of mortal flesh to “mimic ... the impassibility of the bodiless powers.”<sup>76</sup> Chrysostom opens this homily with a metaphor of light cascading from the many stimuli of the festival onto the people gathered to celebrate it: “Our theater is brilliant today and the assembly glittering. What on earth is the cause,” he asks, of the assembled festival participants “glittering” like the very “martyr’s fire” they have

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<sup>73</sup> See Jacob, *Das geistige Theater*, 176-80. It should not come as a surprise that the limits of the attention that can be paid in this space to questions of mimesis are far exceeded by the relevant considerations in the literature. Although there is extensive reflection in Chrysostom’s exegetical discourse as well on the only-partial continuity between divine realities and the human language and behavior by which they are conveyed (see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 101-5, 111-32; and Papadopoulos, “The Holy Trinity and the Parousia of the Holy Spirit According to St. John Chrysostom,” 101), it is not only in his manifold interpretation of the Apostle Paul (as Mitchell has decisively shown: see *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 42-43, 50-53, 104-21) but also in his festival homilies on the saints that Chrysostom palpably and compellingly develops the theme of a μίμησις that does not demean the object of imitation and deceive its viewers but rather glorifies its object and enhances both the producers and consumers of the imitation. See Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die that We May Live*, on the construction of recognizable stock characters to function as “players in the martyr’s drama” (31), and on the crafting of “fictional” monologue and dialogue to instill more vividly the truthful meaning of the episode at hand (33). Cf. de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 277, where hagiography “connects the order of appearance to an order of being.”

<sup>74</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 32 (SC 362.130): ψιλῶ τῷ ῥήματι (more literal might be “bare speech,” but I follow Schatkin and Harkins in their translation (*Saint John Chrysostom*, 94) of “prosaic account” because of the contrast given with John’s own poetic account with its sustained embrace of theatrical techniques of emplotment and emotional excitation.

<sup>75</sup> Rylaarsdam emphasizes that, for Chrysostom, whatever of God is mediated by way of human signification is both partial and veiled, but if it is truly from God, its relation to its object is one of “accuracy” (ἀκρίβεια). Although, in the visions of scripture (as in the holiness invested in and carried out by the saints), “God appears not as he is, the perceptible objects or experiences through which he reveals himself accurately imitate God’s essence and therefore communicate with precision” (*John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 105). It is significant, however, that “accuracy” is not synonymous with “commensurability” or “worthiness” (see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 124; with citations from Chrysostom, *On Genesis* 12.12-15, 13.4-8 [PG 53.103-107]): mediation connects, it does not collapse or encompass.

<sup>76</sup> “Homily on All the Martyrs” 3 (a misleading title, as Wendy Mayer notes, since the homily is clearly given for the Constantinopolitan festival of Acacius in particular. For the sake of citation clarity I will retain the title. The homily is unedited in critical edition, but appears in the manuscript Stavronikita 6, ff. 138v-146r. English translation in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 241-255 [here 242]).

come to celebrate?<sup>77</sup> Unlike the imitations of stage actors representing realities that they are not (and should not become), the spectacular words and deeds of the saints truthfully communicate the possibilities of human life transformed by grace and becoming ever more Christ-like (that is, *Christomimetic*).<sup>78</sup> In other words, the relation between the saintly lives of the past and the Christian community of the present can be envisioned like that of sunlight reflected from mirror to mirror, glowing upon green plants: the dazzling theatricality of the hagiographical festival “arouses [our] soul to bearing fruit, and... causes them to hang heavy.”<sup>79</sup> It is thus the obligation and opportunity of the preacher to so fascinate the eyes and ears, so stimulate the imagination, and so fertilize the souls of his audience by conducting their encounter with the festival’s mediation of holiness.

Radiating out from the mimetic task of the preacher himself, moreover, we find in two other important respects that Chrysostom imagines a contrastive affinity between the *panēgyris* and the *theatron*, positioning the church as the true theater against the theater of falsehood: (i) in the affective participation of the audience and (ii) in the cultural-political stakes of institutional theatricality.<sup>80</sup>

In his early treatise, *On Blessed Babylas and Against the Greeks*, Chrysostom discusses at length the power exerted on those who come to the tombs and festivals to interact with the saints. Indeed, he suggests, “after the power of the word, the tombs of the saints take second place in arousing the souls of

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<sup>77</sup> “Homily on All the Martyrs” 1 (in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 241).

<sup>78</sup> It is the distinctive trait of these holy spectacles that their appearance *corresponds* with reality and, thus, they resonate with and support the philosophical quest to see things as they really are. And see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 217: “Chrysostom’s homiletic techniques... include the use of corporeal images intended to activate and direct the eye of listeners’ souls, so that truth rather than appearances guides their way of life.” Yet true seeing is not the only purpose of the spectacular/theatrical nature of the relation between saints and celebrants; changed vision changes the imagination as well, and with it the ethical and theological orientation of the human person.

<sup>79</sup> “Homily on All the Martyrs” 1 (in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 241). Absorbing this light of holiness, in John’s view, is not sufficient; his audience is also expected to *reflect* it upon others, to themselves become mimetic transmitters of what they themselves receive of the saints. Much more will be said of this, but see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 221-25, on the continuing pedagogical task that is intimately bound up with what it means to be educated and edified by a homily.

<sup>80</sup> I will discuss two further dimensions of this affinity in later sections: the festival atmosphere itself and the poetics of its multimедiation (section 2), and the co-creative appropriation of the saintly archetypes by festival attendants (section 3). In this section I am still primarily concerned with how the hagiographical festival is conceived by John as occupying/appropriating/recuperating the kind of mediation misdirected in the theaters.

those gazing [*theōmenōn*] on them to the same zeal [as that of the saints themselves].<sup>81</sup> Although the grace of the Spirit is a crucial element of the transformation taking place among hagiographical audiences, we should take note of the role played (in Chrysostom's diagnosis and prescription) by the imagination in the powerful affectedness of the attendees of the secular and spiritual theater alike.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Chrysostom hopes (and intends to help facilitate), one who properly experiences the *panēgyris* will leave the sacred space and time "filled with great enthusiasm and having become other than what he was."<sup>83</sup>

Fueled by the imagination, the souls of shrine-visitors and festival-participants are envisioned by Chrysostom to be the site of profound emotional investment, to the point of a substantive change in character.<sup>84</sup> We find sustained concern on Chrysostom's part that the audience of the holy spectacles should experience certain kinds of emotions (and not others) with certain enduring effects (and not others); he appears to hold, as Aristotle does, the emotional excitation of the audience brought about by poetics to be part of their quality, positive or negative.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, not only do "the theaters without"<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 65 (SC 362.174).

<sup>82</sup> Well before he was a prominent player in the hagiographical festivals, Chrysostom appreciated that it is the whole *mise-en-scène* of the site and not only the formal liturgy taking place there that results in "the appearance [φαντασία] of the departed spring[ing] up from the [burial] places into the souls of the living" (*On Blessed Babylas* 66 [SC 362.176]). The comparison here is with professional mourners who, upon reaching the grave site, are filled with the sort of emotions they would have if they saw the dead person standing before them again.

<sup>83</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 65 (SC 362.174). This internal change is, soon, given a more remarkable metaphorical cast: one who comes to the shrine "straightaway rushes up to the coffin, becoming more reverent by the sight [of it] and imagining [φαντασθεῖς] the blessed one; by coming there and driving out all pettiness, he takes to himself a greater fear and departs again, having become a winged being [πτηνός]" (*On Blessed Babylas* 70 [SC 362.184]). This metaphor of wingedness will be further discussed in section 3a. See also Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 37-41, on the late antique theater being a site where audiences were persuaded and indeed *changed*, and on Chrysostom's awareness of the political roles and psychagogical prowess of the theaters.

<sup>84</sup> The preacher is likely (though not certainly) aware of the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, and he is disposed to use aligned considerations to serve Christian ends. See White, "Adventures in Recording Technology," 387-91, on the cross-fertilization between rhetorical and dramatic training between Aristotle's time and Chrysostom's, particularly with regard to the production of appropriate emotions in an audience. Moreover, as Leyerle reports: "When comparing the merits of the story of Cain and Abel and that of Jacob and Esau, he observes that the latter 'gives more pleasure inasmuch as its reversal of fortune is greater.' Not only does Chrysostom seem to borrow from Aristotle's *Poetics* the concept that a story's excellence depends on dramatic reversal, but he uses the technical term, *peripeteia*" (*Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 31; with citation from Chrysostom, *On Vainglory* 43 [SC 188.140]).

<sup>85</sup> See Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452a.

<sup>86</sup> In the preface to his "Homilies on John" (PG 59.23.42-59.25.31), Chrysostom explicitly contrasts the musical, rhetorical, and athletic "contests of the theaters without" (τῶν ἀγώνων τῶν ἔξωθεν θεατῶν), and "the masses" (οἱ πολλοί) that rush to

provide ethically unsound models for mimetic appropriation into Christian souls,<sup>87</sup> they also impede the church's ability to mediate superior models in a suitably theatrical mode, as they teach their audiences (so Chrysostom believes) to treat such mediation as providing a day's titillation rather than a life's edification.<sup>88</sup> The preacher's oratorical performance at the heart of the hagiographical festival will be received (he fears) not as holy theater but as profane theater if he cannot first break his congregants of the habits of appropriation learned through vaudeville and burlesque.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the damage done by the theaters in its intervention in the imagination of audiences is even more grave a concern than the ethical missteps that follow, precisely because it erodes the capacity for an edifying alternative.

However, *if* Christians can be kept from corrupting their imagination, their emotional understanding, and their ethical orientation in the profane theaters, the emotional impact of theatrical mediation in the hagiographical festival should be counted among the festival's greatest boons:

For *just as* those coming back from the theaters are visible to everyone as being all jumbled up, thrown into confusion, and weakened by the images they bear of all the things that took place

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devote their attention to them, with "the stirring of a tongue with divine grace" (μετὰ τῆς θείας χάριτος κινήσαι τὴν γλῶτταν) in the scriptures and the voices to be found in the church, "sweeter and more full of longing than all the harmony of music" (πάσης μουσικῆς ἀρμονίας ἡδίων καὶ ποθεινοτέρα). More broadly, Chrysostom habitually uses the term ἔξωθεν, "without," for distinguishing between those civic institutions he is concerned to excise from Christian culture and the dimensions of their activities that he means to claim and retain for the church.

<sup>87</sup> In "Homilies on Matthew" 6.7 (PG 57.71), for example, Chrysostom speculates that the false theaters were created by the devil to corrode their participants' emotional understanding; the μῦθοι of these theatrical spectacles outside the church drive a wedge of ironic distance between human beings and the objects of their perception, such that they laugh at sights that should make them grieve, take pleasure in vice rather than virtue, and treat as trivial or embarrassing the sacred things that should inspire them to joy.

<sup>88</sup> Chrysostom complains periodically (for instance in "A Homily on Martyrs" [PG 50.663.48-61] and "On the Holy Martyr Pelagia" 3-4 [PG 50.582.57-583.31]) of his congregants' treating the saint's festival like a contemporary theatrical festival, as trivial and debauched—whereas he is striving to create a different kind of theatrical festival, sober and ethically constructive. Bergjan suggests a consistent contrast in Chrysostom's rhetoric between casually applauding the theatrical spectacles and what he expects of his own congregation: not merely to applaud him but to take his words to heart and to change their lives accordingly ("Das hier ist kein Theater," 582). This contrast, though John often deploys it for effect, is something of a sleight of hand, since it is precisely the life-changing effects of theatrical mediation that most concern him about the perverse orientation of the theaters of the day.

<sup>89</sup> This is the logic, in "Against the Games and Theaters" (PG 56.265.18-20), of Chrysostom's scolding the congregation (at a festival of Peter and Paul) for "neither becoming stupefied by fear" nor "educated by the greatness of the apostles' achievements." See Miles, "Unmasking the Self," 105, on the preacher's complaints that his audience refuses to be reformed even when edifying narratives are staring them in the face. See also Bergjan, "Das hier ist kein Theater," 574, and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 253, on the expectations placed on preachers being similar to those on stage orators.

there, *in this same way* it is necessary that the one returning from the viewing/contemplation [*theōria*] of martyrs is recognized by everyone: by his face, his bearing, his gait, his compunction, the composure of his mind.<sup>90</sup> [He is recognized because he is] breathing fire, drawn taut, ignited as if by friction,<sup>91</sup> clear-headed, wide awake, proclaiming through bodily movements the philosophy he holds within.<sup>92</sup>

To attend the theater of holiness is to be affected “in this same way” as in the theaters of the city. Yet the opposite effect ensues: rectification rather than ruin (and Chrysostom is perfectly capable, when his rhetoric requires it, of emphasizing the opposition over the continuity). Turning the “eyes of faith” upon the holy bones,<sup>93</sup> and hearkening to the word-painting of the preacher, festival participants assimilate saintly character and storied action through the imagination and, in so doing, themselves become part of the astonishing, public drama. It is due to our affective participation and assimilation into the holiness of the saints, Chrysostom recurrently asserts, that God has allowed their relics to exert such public power.<sup>94</sup>

It is, then, this public and indeed political character of the mediation of holiness that rounds out its contrastive affinity with the theaters of late antiquity. The theaters of the day were sites of interpretation of and intervention in the affairs of state, both on the part of the actors and on the part of the audience; neither the stories played out on stage (even those in mythological settings) nor the enclosed space of the theater occupied any universe but that of the cultural, political, cosmic, and theological order surrounding

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450a6-b11 and 1456a34 on how dramatic characters reveal *διάνοια* (mind or understanding) through their bodily forms.

<sup>91</sup> This may be a stretch as a translation of *συντριμμένον*—but see Foucault (*The Government of Self and Others*, 251-52) on Plato’s notion of philosophical “friction” (*τριβή*), including analysis of Plato’s concern with *realizing* philosophy in the soul through the rubbing together (*συντριβεῖν*) of inquiry and the ways of life challenged by it to self-awareness.

<sup>92</sup> “Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.665.20-666.8), emphasis mine. On audiences’ zeal for imitation/emulation of what they encounter at the festivals as the anticipated outcome of their presence, see Jacob, *Das geistige Theater*, 180-83.

<sup>93</sup> The crucial notion of the “eyes of faith” will be interpreted at length in section 2b.

<sup>94</sup> See, for instance, *On Blessed Babylas* 65-66 (SC 362.174-76); “On the Holy Martyrs” 2 (PG 50.648.14-33); “On the Holy Martyr Julian” 4 (PG 50.671.63-672.16); “On Saint Eustathius of Antioch” 2 (PG 50.600.41-601.15); and “On the Holy Martyrs Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina” 7 (PG 50.640.43-60—here especially, note how Chrysostom insists that those who “repeatedly come among them [are] coming into the saints’ own state of being” [*τῆ δὲ διηνεκεῖ πρὸς αὐτὰς ἀφίξει καταστήσαντες ἑαυτοῦς οἰκείου αὐτῶν*]).

and vouchsafing it.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, even the apparent isolation of the stage of the theater, as a space of representation, positions it opposite its audiences, facing them and their world like a refracting glass.

The porousness between drama and state is an essential dimension of Chrysostom's project of hagiographical rectification, rarely expressed so clearly as in the hagiographical treatise *On Blessed Babylas and Against the Greeks*.<sup>96</sup> Chrysostom concludes his discourse with reflections on *why*, after Emperor Julian has had the saint's relics moved from the temple precinct, "God discharged his wrath not on the emperor but rather on the demon, and why the fire did not destroy the temple entirely but rather obliterated the roof while stopping short at the image [of Apollo]."<sup>97</sup> The answer he gives is a masterpiece of reinterpreting an inconvenient portent to the greater benefit of his cause: God has spared the inner sanctum and the statue of Apollo so that the *memory* of the event may not perish, and instead, with the temple standing but scarred by fire, "each person who stops at the place is disposed in his soul just as he would be if the conflagration had just occurred" and "imagines and inscribes [*phantazetai kai*

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<sup>95</sup> See Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 36-41: On stage, jokes and satires on public figures and civic norms, though sometimes met with reprisal from the authorities, were largely tolerated and indeed expected. "Actors enjoyed a quasi-official license to deliver jokes at the expense of officials, who were expected to take them well. Emperors who reacted poorly were widely condemned, and nowhere more than Antioch. [However:] Stage jokes represented only one register of the theater's political voice" (37). The dominant political role of the theaters was not to be antagonistic toward the state but to vouchsafe a political order and embrace the populace within it. Chrysostom himself, being "aware of the political role exercised by the theater... [and knowing] that the theater is a place where citizens too can exert political influence" (39), observes citizens leaping to their feet to glorify—or abuse—the public figures who had sponsored the shows. Among the diverse attendees, powerfully unified perspectives coalesced at this point of overlap between the distinct space of the theater and the common and encompassing space of the civic order, perspectives which "exerted considerable pressure on the powerful... Officials were swayed not only by the mass shouting of slogans but also and perhaps even more by being received in eerie silence" (38).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Chrysostom's significant comment in his later homily "On the Holy Martyr Babylas" 4 (SC 362.302) that "wherever [there is] the memory of martyrs, in that place is also the shame of the Greeks" (ὅπου μαρτύρων μνήμη, ἐκεῖ καὶ Ἑλλήνων αἰσχύνη). It is crucial to recognize that, for Chrysostom, this "memory of martyrs" and "shame of the Greeks [religious others]" are two aspects of one and the same thing, not an extra feature attached to hagiographical commemoration at particular moments as need be. Maxwell argues that, in Chrysostom's telling, "[t]he Greeks also became a marker of the outer limit of acceptable Christian behaviour as Chrysostom could always accuse his audiences of behaving exactly like Greeks. ... it was Christians who should 'put Greeks to shame' not the other way around..." (*Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 65). See also Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 24-25, on the interreligious polemics woven into saint's-day homilies; and Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places*, 58-91, for a more comprehensive study of the "politics of memory" around the relics of St. Babylas in particular.

<sup>97</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 114 (SC 362.250).

*hypographe*] the form” of the divine triumph over rival worship.<sup>98</sup> The impact on *society* is greater, since the drama of the saint is enacted not only in the minds of his faithful celebrants but in the very architecture of the city: “the temple and the martyr’s shrine are memorials that stand for both the mania of [the emperor] and the power of the saint.”<sup>99</sup> And so, Chrysostom concludes, the horizon of the drama of the saints extends over its audience and their society from generation to generation—astride the same (or other but perceived as analogous) intercultural faultlines.

This linkage of the acts of the saints with the places (and cultures, and cultural interfaces) in which they are carried out, and the generations who will remember and be affected by them, is a serviceable summation of what I have described in this dissertation as “hagiographical process.” These extraordinary people make of themselves (and are made by others) a spectacle with profound philosophical and ethical import. They behave in ways that capture the attention of the eyes of flesh and the eyes of faith, they make the political and cultural order of which they are a part into a stage upon which they fashion themselves into something more than themselves—characters in a story that will outlive them, that will captivate others and draw them onto the same stage. It is then the responsibility of those who narrate this story to tell and retell it in such a way, with such a vivid and passionate performance, that its hearers, for a time, can view nothing else against the screen of their imaginations, and so internalize it, inscribing it on the walls of their hearts and showing its influence in the actions of their bodies. And it is the responsibility of those who hear this story to contribute their own lives and poetic capacities to the continuing, public dramatization of these images they bear, until they too become glowing impressions in the imagination of others and live embers in the oven of desire for salvation, sanctification, and participation in God’s love for the world. For, if the saints have made their society a stage so that their audiences in their own time and

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<sup>98</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 114-5 (SC 362.250-52).

<sup>99</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 126 (SC 362.272). In section 2 we will consider more thoroughly the *spatial* politics at work.

thereafter could be grafted into the holy drama, these audiences never merely remain audiences.<sup>100</sup> They are performers with an audience of their own: God and the heavenly host, whose “unsleeping eye” observes every deed and sees through every mask to the truth.<sup>101</sup> Those who imagine the saints become those seen, imagined, celebrated, desired, and ultimately assimilated by God.

## (2) The Poetics of Hagiographical Representation at the Saint’s-Day Festival

In the foregoing section, we considered *that* Chrysostom is working to turn his audiences from mere *akroatai* (audience members) to *mimētai* (imitators/representors) by the appropriation of a theatrical idiom for hagiographical mediation, in order to graft his audiences into the visible drama of the saints’ victory over intra- and extra-Christian heterodoxies. In spite of Chrysostom’s regular presentation of Nicene Orthodoxy as a *fait accomplis*, there was in Antioch and Constantinople alike a shifting array of Christian groups that each identified each other as heretical (and had been coming in and out of ecclesial power in the decades surrounding Chrysostom’s tenure), in addition to the lively endurance of Judaism and Roman polytheism.<sup>102</sup> In his theater-inflected idiom, then, holiness needed to be mediated in a way

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<sup>100</sup> Recall John’s recurrent exhortation to this effect, e.g. in “On the Holy Martyr Barlaam” and the “Homilies on Matthew.” So too, in “On the Holy Greatmartyr Drosis” 1 (PG 50.683.36-684.14), the very sight of the martyrs’ tombs “compels” (ἀναγκάζει) a new attitude toward matters of life and death, resulting in changes in behavior that are visible to others.

<sup>101</sup> See again 1 Corinthians 4:9 (and Chrysostom’s commentary in “On 1 Corinthians” 12.6) on the apostolic theater before the eyes of angels as well as humans. Chrysostom appeals to the “unsleeping eye” (τὸν ἀκοίμητον ὀφθαλμὸν) in his hagiographical homilies as well, for instance in “On the Holy Martyrs Juveninus and Maximinus” 3 (PG 50.576.7-8), and in “On the Holy Martyr Pelagia” [PG 50.584.10-11]. Leyerle discusses this theme in *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 54, and “John Chrysostom on the Gaze,” 170-71; as does Jacob in *Das geistige Theater* 77-80 (noting in particular the inverted valuation of the heavenly audience: the apparent defeat of the martyrs is “*im Theater der Engel als ein Sieg gewertet*”). There is more than a trivial resonance, in the notion of the divine eye watching and approving the drama of holiness, with the ancient theatrical trope of the gods speaking above the stage and validating the dramatic festival in the civic order.

<sup>102</sup> The continuing appeal of which to members of his flock frustrated the preacher to no end. On the precarious position of Chrysostom’s faction in Antioch, reminding us that it is in no way self-evident that his positions should have come to be registered as “orthodox” (much less “Orthodox”), see Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 39-47; Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places*, 11-19, including her excellent notes; Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 60-66; and Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 10-16, 66-94. For a longer view of interreligious dynamics in Antioch, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 14-26. Even after the ascension of Chrysostom to the patriarchal throne in Constantinople, he did not enjoy unfettered authority over defining proper Christian identity and commitment: a “significant, aggressive Arian minority in the capital” would hold rival services and caricature Nicene positions in hymns chanted in the streets” (see

that not only would touch the lives of Christians through face-to-face proximity and narrative ignition of faith in the power of the saints (and the authority of those who mediated them), but also would change how these audiences perceived the world and interacted with it thereafter. Thus, the task of the hagiographer was to recast and fuel the imagination, that oven for cooking perception into meaning and desire for the soul, in ways that construct enduring and trafficable bridges between the (absent, needing to be re-presented) world of the saints and the (present, open-ended) world of the audience. In this section, then, we turn to the question of *how* the saint's day festival in particular mediated resistance of the surrounding cultural order: sensually and epistemologically, spatially and temporally.

A significant component of the “material turn” in fourth-century Christianity, in which “the sensible world came to be viewed as a medium for the disclosure of the divine,”<sup>103</sup> is church authorities’ increasing recognition of the physicality of *space* as both a venue for and a means of hagiographical imagination, representation, and edification.<sup>104</sup> And when it comes to evidence from the ancient world of the religious value-laden configuration and usage of space (including the interwoven textures of materiality and meaning that constitute space as culturally-particular, power-bound places), we can do no better than to consider the dynamics of saint's-day festivals (*panēgyreis*)—not only because of the festival's prominence in this fourth-century explosion in hagiographical devotion but also precisely because it resists reduction to one or another of its conjoined and interplayful media. The multi-sensory, multi-

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Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 137-38). Of course, these two primary contexts in which John was a participant in and developer of hagiographical festivals were very different in their dynamics (see Mayer, Introduction to Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 19-29, and Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 20-25). However, the diversities themselves contribute to an interpretive sketch of the festival that makes no claim to exhaustiveness but strives at least to provide resources for posing questions and generating answers in other contexts further afield.

<sup>103</sup> Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 4.

<sup>104</sup> See Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places*, 3: “physically controlling the appearance and use of places and rhetorically shaping perceptions of them were significant, though as yet [in 2014] largely unrecognized, means through which ancient leaders negotiated the complex power struggles of their times.” Shepardson is taking her orientation in this important work from the widespread “spatial turn” in the humanities and the social sciences, a body of literature that demonstrates how “the rhetorical and physical manipulation of places plays a significant role in the development of the events that take place in and around them” (7).

directional “spectacle” is as much a part of a festival’s inscription and transmission of holiness as is any representational narration by the preacher, in spite of the latter regularly receiving outsized attention.<sup>105</sup>

In Chrysostom’s time, festivals formed an annual high point in the usage of martyrs’ shrines, accommodating but exceeding all the ordinary actions that people might undertake when visiting them (petitioning for healing or bringing gifts of thanks, touching the relics to “[partake] in the sanctity and grace that reside in them,” or merely spending refreshing time away from the bustle of home).<sup>106</sup> They involved formal elements of liturgy and collective remembrance (all-night vigils, eucharistic services, public prayers, hymns, readings) the joyous procession of relics from site to site (a spectacle that might draw crowds from far away), and crafted orations to retell the narrative of the saint’s life and/or death, model emotional reactions to it, identify points of moral benefit and religious instruction in the story, and connect the story of the saint to current events through an array of allusions and thematic resonances.<sup>107</sup>

These many interlocking means of mediation at the saint’s day festival are *poetic*, in that they do not merely convey existing meaning but also generate new meaning in the event of representing holiness to those that are called to encounter it.<sup>108</sup> The *poetics of hagiographical media* are the core concern of this

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<sup>105</sup> The semantic spread of the term ὄψις (“spectacle”) can include not only the visual tableau, the object of the gaze, but also the faculties and behaviors by which the gaze would be turned upon its objects, as well as the impression taken away from the encounter—sometimes connoting a *mere* impression of externals, sometimes connoting the impressive force of something witnessed firsthand. While Aristotle holds that such stimuli (ὄψις—the visible dimension of theatrical performance, but we may fruitfully take this as a metonymy for other sensory dimensions: the musical, the olfactory, the haptic, indeed the spatial) are attendant upon dramatic μίμησις but are “artless” and “belong least” to it (*Poetics* 1450a-1451b), my argument throughout Part One registered that textual tunnel vision can never adequately account for the thick actuality of the poetic context (or, we might say, co-text), whose many components contribute to the effective, meaning-making currents of mediation. See also Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 93-98, on spectacle and the sacred.

<sup>106</sup> Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 12. Cf. Limberis, “The Cult of the Martyrs and the Cappadocian Fathers,” 41: “The feasts of the saints punctuated the year, shaping the rhythms of time for local clergy and laity alike, and were significant occasions for social, political, and economic activity. . . . For the laity, the martyr festivals provided opportunities for trading and family visits. These festivals encouraged civic and collective expressions of piety, bridged public and private devotion, and reinforced the proximity of holiness. Whether alive or dead and buried, people at the shrine were ‘with the martyrs,’ who themselves were with God.”

<sup>107</sup> See Skedros, “Shrines, Festivals, and the ‘Undistinguished Mob,’” 95, and Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 137-51, 213-43.

<sup>108</sup> Miller, writing of the “poetic” image as deployed in the texts of third/fourth-century Christianity, describes it as “the image that deforms or changes how one apprehends a text’s meaning” (*The Poetry of Thought in Late Antiquity*, 7). In the terms of own hermeneutical approach, I would add that the metaphorical work of *seeing-as* (so crucial to the inscription of

section: the relationship between composition and signification, between the co-configuration of these media in their common context and the dynamics of their meaning-making insofar as they intervene in the perception and comprehension of their audience.<sup>109</sup> The two subsequent subsections, then, will flesh out my analysis of how hagiographical festivals mediate holiness as resistance and rectification, concentric in relation to one another: one dealing with the multimediation of the festival surrounding the narrative homily, and one dealing with the particular poetics of Chrysostom's homilies in the midst of that festival context. If the former (2a) illuminates the spatiality and sensuality of festivals as ways of asserting (and so resisting) the bankruptcy of "Greek" and "Jewish" cultural attractiveness, the latter (2b) will deal with the particular poetics of Chrysostom's festival homilies (contextualized by this broader sensuality and spatiality) as rectifying counternarratives, laying claim to publicly-perceptible events and objects in an effort to shape how they are remembered, ultimately in order to build up an orthodox public whose understanding of themselves and the world would be safe from corrosive influences.

2a) *"A living and spiritual tomb": The Festival as Public Synesthesia and Spatial Resistance*

The fourth-century *panēgyris*, as has already been noted, "seems to have gone through an evolution from meaning simply a large gathering of people to indicating a religious feast at which large numbers gathered, to indicating finally a large religious festival with important commercial and other

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holiness in human media, whether verbal, visual, spatial, or other) provides not only a diverting alternative to habituated ways of seeing the world but also a compelling imaginative synthesis of stimuli that intervenes in and filters perception itself. Cf. Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons*, 18, on the impact that styles of representing holy people in images had on the perception of such people in the social order, that is, by infusing "pre-iconic" relationships with iconic ways of seeing.

<sup>109</sup> Saints' festivals, in this respect, are "both actual and fictional places" (Beyers, "The Festival as Heterotopia in the City as Shared Religious Space," 359). See also Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 89-93 (on the relation between the artistic structure and the "structure-maintaining" qualities of hagiographical narratives); Messis, "Fiction and/or Novelisation in Byzantine Hagiography," 314-15 (on the question of truth-value of the fictional elements of hagiographical representations); and Burke, *On Symbols and Society*, 89-95 (on the relation between semantics and poetics in terms of their social force). On classical poetics as the relation between composition and effect, see Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451ab.

social activities such as athletic contests.”<sup>110</sup> The variety of possible activities at the festivals was extremely diverse, with long local histories and cherished customs.<sup>111</sup> In this light, as Speros Vryonis warns, we dare not use the sources we have as “negative evidence” ruling out dimensions of the *panēgyris* as impossible or even improbable.<sup>112</sup> The thickest description of hagiographical festivals possible on the basis of our literary and archaeological evidence will fail to exhaust the practices (and certainly the configurations of understanding) that constituted the festivals in even a single context, much less when taking that context as implicative for hagiographical processes more broadly. So the broad lines that we can sketch are not fixed in place, but blurry with the energetic variation of masses of people and the flexible particularity of the myriad sites involved. We must, then, allow ourselves to hypothesize those interpersonal and epistemological dynamics of the festival that do not make their mark on the historical record, if we are not to satisfied ourselves with a truncated view of its proceedings.<sup>113</sup>

Scholars of the cult of the saints in late antiquity, when attempting such a thick description of hagiographical festivals, often begin by discussing the *shrines* that provided the spatial context and attention-focusing axes for the liturgical and other social activities of the festival.<sup>114</sup> From a historical perspective there is certain value in beginning this way, insofar as the emergence and proliferation of the

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<sup>110</sup> Vryonis, “The *Panēgyris* of the Byzantine Saint,” 207.

<sup>111</sup> See Mayer, Introduction to Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 19: “Rich as this picture is [of the festival atmosphere, presented in Chrysostom’s homilies], it is further enhanced by the different circumstances of the two cities within which John preached his sermons. One, Antioch, displays for us a cult that had developed naturally over a long period of time and in which the historic link between past and present was concrete and immediate. It is a city that provides the earliest record of some of the fourth-century cultic developments and in which the tombs of martyrs are still confined to the exterior of the city limits. The other, Constantinople, takes us into a cult that has a shallow past and few historic links between past and present. It is a city in which relics have been deliberately imported into the urban churches and in which the peculiar topography and its imperial status have led to the appropriation of imperial ritual. The cult in each place has a quite distinct flavor.” See also Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 22-25.

<sup>112</sup> See Vryonis, “The *Panēgyris* of the Byzantine Saint,” 204-5.

<sup>113</sup> It is, I would suggest, one of the advantages of pursuing this research in coordination with a modern case study of equivalent dynamics that we are primed to interrogate aspects of the festivals’ human and material texture that might not otherwise appear in the textual archive.

<sup>114</sup> See, for instance: Grabar, *Martyrium*, vol. 1; Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 5-14; Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 61-104; Mayer, Introduction to Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 20-29; and Skedros, “Shrines, Festivals, and the ‘Undistinguished Mob’” 83-91. Elements of their analyses will be raised below.

*martyrion*, as a Christian transformation of the burial cults and holy places of Mediterranean society, tells an illustrative story of the cultural exchange and conflict that makes this period so rich for inquiry.

However, I aim to take a more phenomenological approach to the festival, moving in the company of its participants, and trying to encounter its media as they would have.

Participants would have had no birds-eye view of the shrines, but rather would have reached them only gradually, after gathering in a church or public square, then winding through the streets toward the tombs, traversing familiar urban ground but facing it transformed, bathed in the light of candles and echoing with the sound of psalms and hymns. While individuals would visit saints' shrines throughout the year for the sake of private devotion or petition, the festival was a thoroughly public occasion, one that "brought together men and women, old and young, rich and poor, native and foreigner in a celebration that often lasted several days."<sup>115</sup> It would begin at a prearranged place and time, at which people from diverse demographics would gather in common, however grouped with family, friends, or fellow pilgrims from abroad. The crowd would grow, as would the noise and the energetic proximity of so many bodies; merchants would be attracted to the crowd, as would beggars and buskers. Dignitaries of various sorts, local and foreign, civil and ecclesial, would be present with their own (competing) retinues, eliciting curiosity or, on occasion, vocal disapproval.<sup>116</sup> As David Hunt tells it: "Cities were turned inside out as Christian bishop and clergy led their people away from the old urban centre, heartland of now discarded pagan gods, to the martyr shrines which encircled the outskirts."<sup>117</sup>

Yet the story is more complex than a pied-piper exodus from the old and profane city to the new and sacred gravesites of those who defied this social order for the glory of God. The festival did not merely rehearse an accomplished fact of Christian ascendancy; it *enacted* this ascendancy and the divine power

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<sup>115</sup> Skedros, "Shrines, Festivals, and the 'Undistinguished Mob,'" 95.

<sup>116</sup> See Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 17-21, and Mayer, Introduction to Chrysostom, *The Cult of The Saints*, 24-26.

<sup>117</sup> Hunt, "The Church as a Public Institution," 254.

warranting it, moving through and engraining contested public space with the visible, audible, olfactory manifestation of communal participation in the holy drama.<sup>118</sup> Well in advance of the preacher's homiletic persuasion of the crowd to understand their presence in a certain way, the physicality of the festival gathering and procession was already drawing them into a performance of cultural validation and mobilizing them on this validity's behalf. We may locate in the hagiographical procession what de Certeau has called a "rhetoric of walking,"<sup>119</sup> a persuasive enactment of belonging and non-belonging in the city streets and a kinesthetic reinscription of the secular streets with an ecclesial meaning.<sup>120</sup> Yet, as the interpretive thrust of this project continually affirms, what is rhetorical is also poetic, and vice versa. Each component of the festival's configuration, indeed, is mediated according to a material rhetoric of identification with and exclusion from holiness.

Late antique descriptions of festival processions emphasize their potent impression on three of the senses in particular: sight, hearing, and smell. In addition to the spectacular sight of the mass of people moving together (before the eyes of mixed and variably sympathetic onlookers), led by vested clergy and occasionally a splendid reliquary featuring a relic of the saint being celebrated,<sup>121</sup> the copious light of candles and torches seems to have been a captivating sight.<sup>122</sup> The intensity of light from a procession full

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<sup>118</sup> See Andrade, "The Processions of John Chrysostom," 177, on how Chrysostom viewed processions as flushing out the demonic cityscape and restoring it with holy presence and patronage.

<sup>119</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 100.

<sup>120</sup> See Andrade, "The Processions of John Chrysostom and the Contested Spaces of Constantinople," 164: on the basis of his experience in Antioch, using "human bodies and their physical properties to alter the material conditions and thereby the meanings of public spaces built and maintained by the imperial household." Modern scholarship on public, religious-political processions, bear out similar dynamics: see, for instance, the study of "Orange Marches in Northern Ireland and temperance parades in antebellum America" by Smithey and Young, "Parading Protest." Such a parade or procession, they argue, "is a spectacle choreographed to express a common identity and purpose to participants, supporters, bystanders, and opponents" (393).

<sup>121</sup> The practice of leading the panegyric procession with the relics of the saint being celebrated would become quite standard in later centuries; in Chrysostom's time, this was less common but by no means unheard of. Chrysostom himself makes reference to the relics of the saint "leading" the festival procession on two occasions, both in the Antiochene context—see Mayer, Introduction to "On Saint Drosis," in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 191.

<sup>122</sup> See Leemans, Introduction to *'Let Us Die That We May Live'*, 15-16; Skedros, "Shrines, Festivals, and the 'Undistinguished Mob,'" 95-98; and Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*, 216-18. Chrysostom himself makes repeated reference to the visual effect of the processions' many lights, stretching like a river of fire from the heart of the city

of torches, lamps, and candles would contribute substantially toward the making-strange or making-special of the spatial and temporal extension of the festival through the otherwise ordinary urban environment, transfiguring buildings, roads, and bodies in the omnidirectional glow. No less than the visible spectacle of the festival procession incandescent with fire, the “harmony of the psalmody”<sup>123</sup> and the smell of the incense traveled with the flow of bodies and contributed to the festival’s multimedia texture. The rising of musical harmony in the thick of a cacophony of other sounds produced by so many bodies moving in space would have produced an effect of angelic solidarity, argues Andrade, giving an aural intimation of another world resisting (indeed invading) the rudeness of the secular order.<sup>124</sup> In similar fashion, the drifting of incense within the urban smellscape of streets and bodies (concentrated around the reliquaries, to which special attention would have been given by the thurifers) would render an uncannily liturgical association and otherworldly character to the procession’s traversal of ordinary space.<sup>125</sup> Burke’s notion of “consubstantiality” is insufficient to capture the bivalent sensual rhetoric at

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out to the site of the festival liturgy. “Thus the torches,” he reports in a prominent Constantinopolitan homily, “packed tightly and commingled throughout the night, stretched out all the way to this *martyrion* and furnished the imaginative vision [φαντασίαν] of a fiery river to those who saw them” (“Homily After the Remains of Martyrs” [PG 63.470.19-22]; see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 140, for further detail on this occasion). When festival routes crossed the water, moreover, the river of light provided a powerful image for Chrysostom to use in celebration and exhortation. On the second day of a festival of St. Phocas, when the relics that had been brought into the city on the previous day were to be returned to his tomb across the water, John urged his congregants: “Let us again make the sea into a church by going out into it with torches, both soaking the fire with water and igniting the water with fire” (“On Saint Phocas” 1 [PG 50.700.20-22]).

<sup>123</sup> From *The Life and Miracles of St. Thecla*, translation in Skedros, “Shrines, Festivals, and the ‘Undistinguished Mob,’” 96. The same text, notably, praises as other “wonders of the *panēgyris*” the brilliance of its many lights, the size of its crowd, and the beauty of its liturgy. Psalms and hymns were indispensable to the continuity of processions as they stretched from start to finish, as well as to their command of attention as they moved through public spaces. Raising their voices in common song, festival participants moved within a comprehensive but multifaceted soundscape. Harmony would emerge, temporarily, stretched and ragged from the distance between participants; sung lines would have been variably well-known and clearly-sung by participants, echoing in fragmented fashion as they were produced at different tempi.

<sup>124</sup> See Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom,” 179: “Even after the processions of anti-Nicene Christians were prohibited, John’s psalm-singing processions remained an integral component of his efforts to generate Christian solidarity. They were regularly staged, and they occurred when new saints were introduced to the city or when the feast days of resident saints were celebrated. John claimed that by singing in unison, psalm-singers eradicated the worldly social divisions that separated them and created a chorus characterized by ‘equality of speech’ in ways that made the earth into an image of heaven.” Andrade notes Chrysostom’s belief that singing together could help bring about not only συμφωνία, harmony of voices, but also ὁμόνοια, harmony of minds (180).

<sup>125</sup> Andrade, following Harvey, suggests that Chrysostom himself was wary of the use of incense, since it would have been associated with pagan sacrifice by many in his context; however, Chrysostom’s hesitation seems not to have been shared by

work—this visual, aural, and olfactory inscription of the city streets would have, at one at the same time, appropriated the urban environment into the ecclesial spectacle and asserted a *contra*-substantiality between its ordinary operation and the radiant authority of the saints of orthodoxy.<sup>126</sup>

Alongside and reinforcing these three sensory dimensions of the festival procession, it is worth recalling a fourth as well—the tactile act of walking itself, devoting one’s body to the hagiographical celebration in such a way that required temporal and physical exertion. The procession functions, we might say, as a non-discursive “enplotment” of space; it has a beginning, a middle, and an end, enacted by participants who are transported by (and who thereby help to retell) the story of a saint’s intervention in the civic order.<sup>127</sup> Through such means as these, the festival procession performed holiness upon the stage of the civic order; its poetic intervention was temporary, an event set apart in sanctifying alterity from the year that enshrined it, but through that very ephemerality the procession accomplished its inscription in a fashion all the more spectacular and interruptive of ordinary time and space.

At the end of the procession route we arrive to the shrine: a hagiographical inscription of space that is not a temporary tracing over the existing ink of public squares and streets, but rather (continuing the textual metaphor) more like the permanent illumination of a manuscript to transmute raw words into a garden of symbolic associations. Limberis describes the architectural design and layout of the shrines,

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the wider ecclesial leadership, and the incense found increasing prominence in hagiographical festivals and other liturgical contexts through the fourth and fifth centuries. See Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom,” 182; and Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, 75-83. In any case, Chrysostom is no less attuned to the power of smell in the hagiographical *mise-en-scène*, for he uses incense at least as a metaphor when appealing to his audiences’ senses, and he expresses pleasure in the “sweet smell” (εὐωδία) of the relics themselves (see, e.g., “On Saint Phocas” 1 [PG 50.699.11]).

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 19-23.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 115, on being transported by the metaphors in which and through which we make our lives. See also de Certeau’s *The Writing of History*, 281, on the way that the hagiographical narrative functions as a kind of travelogue, transporting people to the terrain traversed by the saint. We might envision the reverse to hold as well: by walking the ways of the city transformed by the patronage of the saint, festival participants are transported also into the hagiographical narrative. Since well before Constantine and the fourth-century hagiographical boom, however: “Physical movement enabled citizens to experience the interconnectivity of the civic topography while filling it with their own sights, smells, and noises. It activated the narratives of citizen solidarity and Roman imperial tradition intimately connected to urban architecture, and it made visible the intersecting segments of the city in ways that emphasized ‘communal visual relationships’ and earmarked the urban landscape for popular consumption” (Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom,” 168)

often quite complex and including church buildings as well as tombs, as an enduring “visual prayer,” drawing together human and natural beauty into an aesthetic whole.<sup>128</sup> The tombs that had rendered a strong association with impurity in Roman polytheist and Jewish discourses (necessitating the tombs’ being removed from urban centers to begin with) had been gradually claimed for a counter-association with not even neutral cleanliness but active *purification* and the expulsion of demonic influences through the enduring presence and apotropaic power of the holy dead.<sup>129</sup> Thus the very existence of the martyr’s shrine is as a nucleus of resistance to broader attitudes (held by Jews and Roman polytheists alike as self-evident) concerning death, purity, and the status of the bodies of the dead, a resistance realized not only in the material fact of the holy bones but also in the meaningful practices of their staging—spatially in the festivals and rhetorically in the festival homilies.<sup>130</sup>

In the roughly seventy-year period between the Edict of Milan and the preaching tenure of John Chrysostom, the modest monuments that had been erected above the tombs of martyrs “were replaced by more splendid buildings: both *martyria* proper and martyrs’ sanctuaries attached to or within the walls of

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<sup>128</sup> Limberis, “The Cult of the Martyrs and the Cappadocian Fathers,” 42.

<sup>129</sup> See Mayer, Introduction to Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 15-17. “By the late fourth century, unlike other burials the martyr’s relics were not a grim reminder of death...but rather a triumphal expression of death’s suppression. Whereas the fetid smell of death hung around ordinary bones, those of the martyr exhaled the sweet smell of sanctity. At the translation of relics the social order became inverted, with the emperor and/or empress stripped of all outward show and, along with the rest of the city, humbly obedient to the martyr, indicating the subservience of earthly power to the divine power present in the ash and bones” (17). See Leemans, “Celebrating the Martyrs,” 253, on all-night vigils at the martyrs’ shrines as Christian appropriation of and competition with the classical Greek practice of temple incubation; cf. Graf, *Roman Festivals in the Greek East*, 241-67.

<sup>130</sup> On the “fundamental conceptual shifts” concerning places and bodies in the period leading up to Chrysostom’s activity in the fourth century, see Mayer, Introduction to Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 14-19, and Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 1-22. On the development of a Christian logic of death that was constituted such that it clashed with non-Christian logics of death, see Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication*, 160, and Brown, “Christianization and Religious Conflict,” 660. And see Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 15-16, and Cunningham, “Christian Martyrdom,” 12, on the horror expressed by the polytheist aristocracy at Christian festival processions. Emperor Julian, among others, decried the “carrying of the corpses of the dead through a great assembly of people, in the midst of dense crowds, staining the eyesight of all with ill-omened sights of the dead...” (Julian, *Epistulae et Leges*, cited in both Brown and Leemans); Schatkin and Harkins also note (Introduction to *Saint John Chrysostom*, 37) the Neoplatonic objections to the reverence of martyrs, “ostensibly because of the impurity associated with the dead,” and Salisbury too discusses the disgust felt in the Roman world toward cadavers (*The Blood of Martyrs*, 50-53). The inversion of this broader cultural disgust as a sanctification of the bodies of the martyrs is a crucial element in the early cultivation of a Christian counterpublic (recall Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 119, on the formation of a cultural idiom “that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness”).

a church building.”<sup>131</sup> Such buildings were variable in form: cruciform or polygonal floor plans were often adorned with small chapels or reliquary alcoves, and topped with domes and windows for light. To consider a saint’s shrine as a mere venue for a liturgical event would be to miss the theologically rich and powerfully communicative contours of the space itself, as well as its widespread private use for prayer, votive exchange, contact with relics, visual encounter with the images of saints, even ascetic practices.<sup>132</sup> On the contrary, attending adequately to the poetics and rhetoric of the festival requires continuing to consider the movement of participants through such spaces—movement constrained by the symbolic shapes of the buildings and “attracted by the magnificence of what they see.”<sup>133</sup>

Although we have ample evidence of figural imagery forming part of the configuration of fourth-century saints’ shrines,<sup>134</sup> it is significant that Chrysostom’s own festival homilies do *not* frequently make reference to the external figural imagery in the presence of which the celebrations took place. Instead, we find as an abiding theme in the homilies of Chrysostom the exhortation to festival participants that the walls of their own minds and hearts are where the images of the saints most belong. Ending a homily

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<sup>131</sup> Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 7. Cf. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 193-202.

<sup>132</sup> See Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 213-43. De Certeau is again helpful to understanding how space constrains, co-animates, and adds echoes to the activities undertaken within it: “Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body” (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108).

<sup>133</sup> From Gregory of Nyssa, “Homily on Theodore the Recruit,” translation in Leemans et al. (eds), *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 85. Gregory’s homily is a valuable parallel to our consideration of Chrysostom, as it draws our attention to the intricacies of a particular shrine’s visual representations of the martyr commemorated therein: “The carpenter shaped the wood until it had the form of animals and the mason polished the stones until they had the smoothness of silver. The painter coloured the blooms of his art, having depicted on an image the martyr’s brave deeds, his opposition, his continuous pain, the beastly appearance of the tyrants, the insults, the blazing furnace that was the athlete’s most blessed end, the representation of the human form of Christ . . . . For even though it remains silent, painting can speak on the wall and be of the greatest profit. And the mosaicist, for his part, made a floor to tread on that was worthy of the martyr’s story.”

<sup>134</sup> See, for instance, Grabar, *Martyrium*, II.105-28; Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 9, and “Schoolrooms for our Souls”; and Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm,” 86-89, which describes the softening (after Constantine) of Christian associations of images in holy places with a Roman sacrificial idiom. Although we do not find evidence of *veneration* of the images of martyrs in the sense that will become a key consideration in Chapter VI, we do find them in the shrines and accordingly part of the multimediating apparatus by which participants in hagiographical festivals encountered the holiness of the saints.

given at a festival for confessors of the church in the season of Pentecost, Chrysostom delivers one of the more remarkable iterations of this theme:

Just like those who make their houses radiant by adorning them throughout with colorful painting [*graphē*],<sup>135</sup> in this way should we paint the torment of the martyrs on the walls of our mind. For while the other kind of painting is in vain, this kind bears fruit: this painting does not require having or spending money, nor does it need any skill, but in place of all this it is sufficient to furnish our enthusiasm and our well-conceived, sober reasoning, and so with this to trace their torment as if [guided] by a master hand. Let us therefore paint on the soul those saints lying atop iron griddles, those buried in embers, those plunged into boiling cauldrons, those swallowed up in the sea, ... so that, radiantly furnishing our house with such manifold painting, we might make it a suitable lodging for the king of heaven. For if he should see paintings like this in our mind, he will come with the Father and will take his rest among us, alongside the Holy Spirit ...<sup>136</sup>

Although the straightforward indication in such passages is that Christ will enter into and edify (as the Holy Spirit seems already to be doing) the person who makes of himself a mimetic memorial to the saints, there is an important resonance between the connection drawn in the homily and the spatial setting in which it is given. In a transformation palpably analogous to that exerted on the profane theater in describing the hagiographical festival as a theater of holiness, Chrysostom establishes a contrastive affinity between the rich person who paints the walls of his house (a metaphor for the disposition of his heart) with frivolous images and so surrounds and identifies himself with their subject matter, on the one hand, and the faithful Christian, the disposition of whose heart resembles the walls of the shrine in which the saints are celebrated in the presence of God's grace and holiness, on the other. If this affinity appears obliquely in "On the Holy Martyrs," it is overt in "On Saint Eustathius of Antioch":

For saints' memorials are not urns, coffins, monuments, and inscriptions, but rather righteous deeds and faithful zeal and vigorous conscience toward God. Indeed, this very church has risen up more radiantly than any monument upon the martyr, not having [mere] silent inscriptions but rather through [our] deeds themselves sounding out more brilliantly than a trumpet the memory and great radiance of that man. And each of you present *is* a tomb of that saint, a living and

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<sup>135</sup> In agreement with Wendy Mayer (Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 226), I translate γραφή as "painting" throughout this passage, but the multivalence of the term should be preserved, as discussed in the general introduction, section 2a.

<sup>136</sup> "On the Holy Martyrs" (PG 50.712.5-18,23-28).

spiritual tomb! For if I could open up the conscience of each of you, I would find this saint inhabiting your mind.<sup>137</sup>

The proper posture of the festival-goer, Chrysostom suggests, is mimetic *not only* in relation to the saints themselves but also in relation to the sites of their remembrance and exaltation. In other words, again, he theorizes the sanctifying mediation at work in the hagiographical festival as assimilative, making participants more like what they encounter there.<sup>138</sup>

Functioning in an overlapping way for the festival participants are the *relics* of the saint or saints: the bones, clothing, or other remains that were housed at the shrines and “were the tangible center of the cult because they guaranteed the real presence of the martyr.”<sup>139</sup> It is in this light that Chrysostom himself places so much more emphasis on the coffins and reliquaries of the martyrs than on other points of participants’ emotional and aesthetic contact with the shrine. They are for him a kind of partial or fragmented image of the saints, providing a vivid encounter with the physical reality of the holy person, while remaining stark and strange enough in their form to “compel” the imagination beyond what is overtly represented therein.<sup>140</sup> “For,” Chrysostom proclaims at the Antiochene festival of St. Drosis,

...as soon as someone sets foot upon the threshold [of the shrine], straightaway a multitude of tombs on all sides fall before the eyes, and wherever one might look, he would see the coffins and memorials and funerary chests of those who have gone before. In no small way indeed, our gazing [*theōria*—also contemplation] on these tombs itself contributes to our [entry] into philosophy. ...

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<sup>137</sup> “On Saint Eustathius of Antioch” 2 (PG 50.600.24-35). For a classical parallel (and rhetorical archetype) for this sentiment, see the passage from Pericles’ Funeral Oration that serves as an epigram to this chapter.

<sup>138</sup> What they encounter there, as we have seen, is the memorialization and the amplification of the martyr’s life, a memory that runs counter to the decays of time and blooms all the more in the festival participants themselves, who continue to reenact it in their own hearts and in the cultural-political order. Cf. “On All the Martyrs” 8 (in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 247: “... everything else diminishes with time—physical beauty, the greatness of houses, kingdoms, positions of power, glories—and, as if swept away by river currents, departs and is passed on into oblivion. Only the martyrs’ memory is beyond all time and higher than these obstacles, and no one can expunge it from eternity. Instead, it increases substantially and, as time goes by, doesn’t grow old but flourishes abundantly and blooms all the more.”)

<sup>139</sup> Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 9. Maraval expresses this centrality of the relics in the structure of his analysis, proceeding in concentric fashion from the relics to the architecture of the sanctuary, and only thereafter to the personnel and surrounding cultural apparatus of the shrines (*Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 183-92).

<sup>140</sup> See Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 87, on how martyrs’ shrines exerted their powerful influence on the imagination through an “art of closed surfaces.” Cf. Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 80: “As relics, the bodies of martyrs were neither opaque nor transparent; they were poetic.”

For the spectacle [*opsis*] of the tombs compels each of those who view it—even if he is unwilling—to think philosophically about his own end . . . .<sup>141</sup>

The relic, in other words, is itself a kind of image that exerts a summoning force on the mind of one who experiences it with the senses and digests it into the imagination—where the holy bones, only partially or virtually seen at the site of their containers, can compel a change in the relationship of the self with itself. Here again Chrysostom deploys terminology from the theater to wrest his audiences away from the *wrong kind* of theater, inviting them to feast their senses on those spectacles where ethical ruin will not follow.

Festival participants themselves, so far as we know, took eagerly to injunctions such as Chrysostom's to "embrace their graves with faith . . . [and] ignite our understanding."<sup>142</sup> Particular petitions for salvation, healing, or exorcism would be made at the tombs, in combination with anointing an afflicted part of the body with oil, water, or dust dispensed at the site for this purpose; small votive offerings would be left in gratitude or in hope, and small souvenir blessings (such as "loaves of bread, lead or clay tokens, or flasks containing oil, water, or some other substance") would be acquired.<sup>143</sup> But we should not be too quick to drive an interpretive wedge between the private practices of festival participants and the public theorization of the power of relics on the political stage, as pronounced by church leaders such as Chrysostom.<sup>144</sup> While we do not have preserved the individual interpretations of the many thousands who flocked to the festivals during Chrysostom's tenure, and they doubtless differed to variable extents from the version rendered aloud and preserved in text, they belong to and configure the interpersonal composition of the festival. Here, personal attitudes and activities collectively constitute the public milieu of hagiographical mediation. Apart from its people in their wholeness and relationality, there is no

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<sup>141</sup> "On the Holy Greatmartyr Drosis" 1 (PG 50.683.38-43,684.9-12).

<sup>142</sup> "On the Holy Martyrs" 3 (PG 50.649.50-51). The verb I translate "ignite," διαθερμανθῶμεν, means literally "to heat through," as if cooking something raw—both metaphors align with Chrysostom's broader patterns of describing the psychic effects of an encounter with the tombs of the saints.

<sup>143</sup> Skedros, "Shrines, Festivals, and the 'Undistinguished Mob,'" 92.

<sup>144</sup> As we have witnessed also in Cyprus, the multimediating patterns of saints'-day festivals are *inclusive* of the many forms of understanding and authorization through which they are enacted from within, and any interpretive tensions that result remain part of the festival's overall configuration.

festival.<sup>145</sup> Chrysostom himself would concur, insisting on the presence of devotees and their whole-body investment to demonstrate the potency of the saints to those—within or outside the church—who might be watching. The devotions of festival participants become a conduit for the reverberation of holiness. In his Constantinopolitan homily, “After the Remains of Martyrs,” the preacher affirms the relic-oriented devotions of festival participants by declaring that “the grace of the Spirit that holds fast to these bones and abides [*synoikousa*] in the saints also proceeds into others who pursue it with faith; it runs forth from souls into bodies, and from bodies into clothing, and from clothing into shoes, and from shoes into shadows.”<sup>146</sup>

It is in the festival *liturgy* especially that we may recognize Chrysostom’s theatrical configuration of the church and its hagiographical festivals to be more than a clever rhetorical appropriation. There is a genuine theatricality to what takes place in the carefully choreographed multimediation of liturgy (complementary to the quite different, more effervescent and improvisational theatricality of the festival procession): its coordination of movement, costume, song, speech, audience participation, and the special effects of light shimmering on mosaic floors and figural imagery.<sup>147</sup> The very uneasiness felt by church leaders like Chrysostom toward the theaters<sup>148</sup> becomes, in the context of the theater of holiness, a source

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<sup>145</sup> Cf. Skedros, “Shrines, Festivals, and the ‘Undistinguished Mob,’” 100: “Shrines and festivals were public spaces and events filled with private devotions. The qualitative difference between communal participation in a procession during the festival of St. Glykeria and individual devotion such as incubation at the shrine of St. Artemios is difficult to assess.... Both experience drew the Byzantines from their homes into very public spaces and brought them into contact with sacred space, sacred time, sacred objects, and sacred people. While believers could bring the blessing of these public spaces into their private homes, the primary encounter with the holy took place in the public arena of the shrines and their festivals.”

<sup>146</sup> “Homily After the Remains of Martyrs” 1 (PG 63.469.47-53).

<sup>147</sup> On the spectacular or theatrical quality of festival liturgies, see Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, 251-85, and Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 213-21. On audience participation in particular, see again Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 45, and Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom,” 180. Participating in the liturgy could allow Christians to overcome individual differences and experience a transcendent unification (given metonymically in the interpenetrating glow of the many lamps)—this experience, Andrade argues, is key to John’s vision of angelic life on earth as an arch-metaphor of his hagiography. More broadly, Knowles considers “the role of the spectator in the production of [theatrical] meaning” in *How Theatre Means*, 72-80.

<sup>148</sup> Owing not only to the putative immorality of its content but also to the “numinousness” of its special setting and emotional elevation, and to the “vulnerability” of its participants to emotional and psychological change. See Webb, “The Protean Performer,” 10: “To add to the potential sense of numinousness with which they were surrounded, theater performances took place as part of larger festivals in a time when normal activity was temporarily suspended, and in a particular place, the theater. The idea that people are vulnerable when sitting together in a theater is clearly expressed” by Christian and non-Christian sources alike.

of spiritual kindling. As in the theater, the meaning made in the liturgy is a matter not only of its poetic configuration on the part of the clergy but also of the reactions of lay participants to the liturgical sequence *and* to each other's reactions. The liturgy, like the theater, relies on an "informational polyphony ... [that is,] a *density of signs*"<sup>149</sup> rendering a relational and mutually reinforcing texture between its components.<sup>150</sup> Its particular contours of time and space serve as "organizational principles" for its communicative work,<sup>151</sup> being set apart from but referential to the time and space that surround it (what I have been referring to as "staging")—yet this time and space are not *merely* contours but thickly textured as an atmospheric process and a semantic glue, a *mise-en-scène*, where heterogeneous elements are integrated and relieved of any individual need to function as an isolated unit of semiosis: "the bringing together or confrontation, in a given space and time, of different signifying systems, for an audience."<sup>152</sup>

And so, it is within the thick *mise-en-scène* of the festival liturgy that we return, finally, to the preacher's narrative performance, the purpose of which is to transmute the multifariousness of existence into *words*, to reconfigure the intensely heterogeneous stimuli of life in the cultural order as a persuasive, discursive key to their interpretation. As such, it is unsurprising that such verbal inscription of holiness has occupied a privileged place in the analysis of Christian theology and the world it helps to organize. So too, although the highly educated and prescriptive considerations of a John Chrysostom are anything but a transparent window on the realities of fourth-century Christian life, and although they do not suffice to understand the dynamics of hagiographical production and consumption in this crucial period, they are of profound importance to those dynamics *precisely* by rendering authoritative syntheses of the festival environment and disseminating them as discursive and emotional signposts for others' traversal.

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<sup>149</sup> Barthes, "Literature and Signification," 262. See also Knowles, *How Theatre Means*, 43.

<sup>150</sup> This texture is what Peirce calls "intercommunication" between different possible understandings of the same signs that contribute to their being perceived as powerful or overflowing with significance. See Knowles, *How Theatre Means*, 40-41.

<sup>151</sup> Knowles, *How Theatre Means*, 58 (see 55-68).

<sup>152</sup> Pavis, "From Text to Performance," 86. See also Knowles, *How Theatre Means*, 68-70.

Because the next subsection will zero in on the poetic technique of Chrysostom's festival homilies, it is all the more important to conclude this section with the position of these homilies within the overall festival situation, which warrants and co-constitutes them as much as it is authoritatively interpreted by them. Chrysostom himself, certainly, understands his own task to be integral with the overall course of the festival and its resistant/rectifying intervention in the social order. What the festival-participants are all doing together includes his contribution as part of a whole: "Supporting a martyr [means] to come together in his memory, to share in narrating his trials, to be in wonder [*thaumasai*] before the things that took place, to emulate his virtue, to convey his bravery to others."<sup>153</sup> The preacher, in other words, not only is a festival participant exercising a particular function but also *himself one of the media* through whom the holiness manifest in the saints reaches those who have come to celebrate and participate in it. He is (i) the representative of the saintly narrative itself, in whose voice the drama of the dead saints is brought by way of the ears into the imagination of the audience. He is (ii) a conductor or director in the holy theater currently being enacted at the festival, helping to shape reaction to its spatial and temporal distinctiveness, its spectacular multimediation, and its liturgical *mise-en-scène*. And he is (iii) a teacher of saints-in-training, whom he invites to enact anew the drama of holiness on the stage of the world by imitating the saints of old—to the frustration of those who stand in the role of the drama's villains. As the discursive climax of the festival proceedings and the central enunciation of interpretive authority over what surrounds it, the festival homily's narration of the unseen drama of the saints calls upon the audience to co-create the scene in their minds, metaphorically inflected as the preacher has synthesized it for their benefit, leaving them with an imaginative and emotional investment in it and equipping them to mediate its edifying effects on them to others in turn.

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<sup>153</sup> "On the Holy Martyr Lucian" (PG 50.522.41-45).

2b) *“As if upon roses”*: *Metaphorical Transposition as Rectifying Representation*

In section 1, Chrysostom’s appropriation of the tropes, themes, and techniques of the theater was shown to be warranted by the capacity of narrative and spectacle, when conjoined, to ignite the imagination and thereby fuel the soul’s desire for the objects of mediation. In other words, in his festival homilies, Chrysostom is striving to do the work whose effects he has theorized in oppositional affinity with the theater. He is trying to enact, in a holy fashion, the very thing he resists when it is carried out frivolously or perversely: to summon mental images and bring about ethical changes through his performance of captivating stories and the manifestation of emotional states. In this way he means to be the “master hand”<sup>154</sup> that will guide his hearers in recreating in their own hearts the images they have seen and the stories they have heard. I argued that Chrysostom’s theatrical appropriation is not only a classic rhetorical *synkresis*, contrasting the church and theater by comparing them (though it surely is this in part), but also reclaiming and rectifying the means of mediation represented by the theater in order to graft the audience of the saints into the spectacular confrontation of the world they have come to observe and enjoy. In other words, Chrysostom receives Christians on one stage (the festival) and redeploys them on another (the cultural-political order), performing the same ongoing drama of divine holiness remaking the world in God’s image. Chrysostom’s homiletic purpose, as I am arguing throughout this chapter, is to achieve rectification by means of resistance: to catalyze in his audience the sanctification that he celebrates in the martyrs of old, who show how to stand fast against the corrosive influences of the world.

Chrysostom’s festival homilies, which simultaneously perform the story of the saint(s) being celebrated and attempt to guide an audience’s interpretation of that story,<sup>155</sup> take their cue from the pre-

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<sup>154</sup> See again the discussion above (2a) of this image of his audience members painting the saints on the walls of their minds as if guided in their own co-creation of the images “by a master hand” (“On the Holy Martyrs” [PG 50.712.14]).

<sup>155</sup> See Krueger, “The Practice of Christianity in Byzantium,” 13, and Maxwell, “Lay Piety in the Sermons of John Chrysostom,” 26-30, on modes of homiletic influence over the “collective imagination” of laity. The performer, then, is not just a purveyor of narrative but also a sculptor of its shared interpretation. See Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 62-65, for theological explanations for how the words and deeds of holy people are veiled by their humanity, in

Constantinian martyr-narratives insofar as they wrest control of the spectacle of a martyr's death and turn the meaning ascribed to it by the martyr's executioners upside down.<sup>156</sup> They provide counterscripts that emphasize the inability of the heterodox (both Christian and otherwise) to *truly see* the holiness of the saints before their eyes, even as it interrupts and reconfigures the stage of the city. In Chrysostom's own contexts, such a narrative strategy no longer must oppose its counterscript to an imperial norm—now, a rhetorical positioning within a place of resistance to pagan Rome becomes a metaphorical resource for staging the saints as the vanquishers of unholiness wherever it may continue to be found. The light pouring off the saints and their relics, as we will see, at once *illuminates* the righteous and *blinds* the wicked: we will find few more succinct and brilliantly exercised articulations of the total integrity of resistance and rectification as enacted by hagiographical media.

The festival homilies of John Chrysostom, then, are *acts of imaginative synthesis*: they re-render the festival participants' own gathering in the presence of the holy dead with a discourse that mirrors them and their world, reflected in the translucent glass of the lives and deaths of the saints.<sup>157</sup> Such a rendering serves as a convergence between past and present, in that the dead are recalled to live and move again in

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need of privileged interpretation; and see Kelly, *Golden Mouth* 73-81, for examples of Chrysostom's being wholly willing to oblige, *dramatizing* and even *fictionalizing* events so they could be maximally edifying.

<sup>156</sup> On this function of the hagiographical narrative, see again Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 122-33; Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs*, 173; Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 3; Fowl, "The Primacy of the Witness of the Body to Martyrdom in Paul," 43-44; and the discussion of these issues in the introduction to Chapter III.

<sup>157</sup> These homilies were delivered to a particular audience on a particular occasion, their content calibrated to the status of that community (often referencing its past or present behavior and its relation to other cultural forces), and yet they were also edited for publication after the fact, determined by Chrysostom and the institutional church to be worthy of transmission to other settings and future generations. As Efthymiadis and Kalogeras rightly observe, we cannot determine the precise differences between what was delivered at the festival itself (much less, what was heard by whom and what was understood to what extent) and what was added or altered in the revision process (see "Audience, Language and Patronage in Byzantine Hagiography," 255); this uncertainty, however, is the price of confidence that Chrysostom's commitment to long-term social impact is woven into his hagiographical production. Maxwell is convinced, however, that the evidence "points toward a close correlation between the spoken and the written versions," since "the structure, language, and tone of the texts indicate that they were presented, and probably even composed, orally" (*Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 6); we might add that the sheer quantity of Chrysostom's output suggests a limit to how much editing (by the author) would have been possible. See again note 8 on the evidence of and discussion around Chrysostom's editing and publication of his sermons.

the hearts of the living,<sup>158</sup> and between present and future, in that the narrations are interwoven with moral and spiritual exhortation and kindled by emotional expectancy in relation to lives still being transformed. In all these cases, according to Margaret Mitchell, the hagiographer's task is "to recreate a vivid, fresh emotional reaction to past persons and events through a novel oral restaging of them,"<sup>159</sup> representing holiness as transforming not only the space and time in which it has been lived out but also that in which it is remembered and refashioned in ever-new aesthetic and political iterations. Restaging the drama of the saints at the festivals, the homilist likewise restages his audience and its social world as a continuation of this drama.<sup>160</sup>

Although Chrysostom's rhetorical technique in his hagiographical homilies is peerless in its combination of nuance, complexity, and clarity, I will zero in on his use of *metaphor*, which allows for poetic images to function as eddies in which present sense-perception and imagined history could converge into one compelling current. Imagery and terminology drawn from scripture, but just as much from the stadium, the army, and indeed the theater, at once fill the narrative at hand with quasi-conscious associations and facilitate the domains from which the images are drawn to be seen in new light.<sup>161</sup> Such metaphorically rich narration, therefore, is *not* reducible to description, since it produces the effects of attention rather than objects for attention.<sup>162</sup> As Ricoeur puts it, a metaphorical synthesis renders

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<sup>158</sup> See Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 121-23 (on *ekphrasis* as necromantic); Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 14 (on the dramatic re-staging of the dead); and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 230 (on the preacher's resurrection of the martyrs as characters in his discourse).

<sup>159</sup> Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 118.

<sup>160</sup> Miller, likewise, contributes substantially to our understanding of the "poetics of matter [developed by fourth-century Christian authors] in order to redirect, indeed to form, sensuous apprehension of the presence of the spirit in the material world" (*The Corporeal Imagination*, 9). She argues that "Late ancient arts such as [*ekphrasis*, vivid descriptive speech meant to summon the mental image of the thing described,] actually worked to subdue potential dichotomies between body and spirit, earth and heaven, material and immaterial by setting in motion an aesthetic play between planes of reality . . ." (10).

<sup>161</sup> See Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 29. Cf. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 58: "Metaphor is at the heart of Christian language."

<sup>162</sup> Cf. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 78-79. Turner, synthesizing several different theories of metaphor, concurs: metaphor serves to "engender" thought in the "coactivity" of different domains, rather than merely comparing one thing to another or "substituting" one thing for another (*Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 29). "[L]ike a chord in music" (51), a metaphor's meaning comes into being when its components are enunciated anew and conjoined. Harrison refers to this

the appearance of kinship where ordinary vision does not perceive any relationship. . . . [It] brings together things that do not go together and by means of this apparent misunderstanding it causes a new, hitherto unnoticed, relation of meaning to spring up between the terms that previous systems of classification had ignored or not allowed. . . . A metaphor, in short, tells us something new about reality.<sup>163</sup>

The metaphorical texture of the festival homilies, then, serves as an invitation to certain patterns of *seeing-as*;<sup>164</sup> the homilies represent the world back to itself, but synthesized with the transfigured world in which the saints move and which they teach their audiences to see and inhabit as well. The strategies and instantiations of such seeing-as (the crucial signaling word in Chrysostom's Greek being, *hōs*, something "as" or "as if" something else) organize my analysis of the festival homilies in the remainder of this section.

If there is a root metaphor at work in Chrysostom's hagiographical homilies, it is that of the "eyes of faith" (*tēs pisteōs hoi ophthalmoi*). Underlying this notion—and the concomitant notion of an inner theater—was the "ancient rhetorical practice of *enargeia*, a type of composition that consisted of 'vivid, sensuous word-painting' or 'words that paint our thoughts' . . . ."<sup>165</sup> The trope of the eyes of faith signals an integration of this power of performative *quasi-seeing* (the exercise of the imagination at the tombs of the saints, or hearing the vivid performance of the homilist telling of the torment of the martyrs)<sup>166</sup> with the

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compound evocation of metaphor as a theological strategy, generating "verbal icons" that cannot be reduced to their semantic components ("Word as Icon in Greek Patristic Theology," 40). See also Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 22-37, on the metaphorical poetics of the homilies as means of exhortation.

<sup>163</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 51-53. Ricoeur's point here is specifically directed at the *invention* of metaphor, and it comes across as overstated where traditional/scriptural or rhetorically fashionable metaphors are concerned, since such relationships between domains are certainly not "hitherto unnoticed" and are hardly "not allowed" in existing cultural classifications of the world. Such metaphorical tropes occupy a kind of middle ground between poetic innovation and the "dead metaphors" that have fossilized among the ordinary structures of language (e.g. the fruitfulness of an idea, the derailing of a conversation, etc.), not so much illuminating something wholly new about the world but rather reinforcing or undermining patterns of habitual understanding.

<sup>164</sup> See Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 51: "When Shakespeare speaks of time as a beggar, he teaches us *to see time as . . .*, to see time like a beggar" (ellipsis original, emphasis mine). See also Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I.64, on mimetic configuration as the "kingdom of the *as if*," and III.155, on the work of the analogical *as*.

<sup>165</sup> Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 87; see also 11-14, on "visceral seeing," by which audiences were drawn "to bring together the 'real' and the transcendent, the material and the spiritual, in a single image" (12). On *ἐκφρασις* and *ἐνάργεια*, see Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 23-28; Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, especially 64-75; Leemans, Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 34; and Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 101-04, 118-21.

<sup>166</sup> See Hunt, "The Traffic in Relics," 178-79; and see Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 65-66, and 83, where she notes that the two kinds of quasi-seeing promoted by Chrysostom at the festivals are distinct. First, he urges his audience to

metaphorical intervention of *seeing-as* (to experience anew or transfigured what one are accustomed to seeing more mundanely).

To open the eyes of faith, then, is not to flee from the senses of the body but rather to orient them and interpret their objects of perception by a metaphorical linkage to domains of imagination that are not present but are made *as if* present.<sup>167</sup> In his homily “On Saint Barlaam,” with which this chapter began, Chrysostom suggests that

[i]t is on account of this that we lead you to the funerary chests of the holy martyrs: so that *from the spectacle* you might take some encouragement to virtue . . . . For indeed, if even hearing of a princely commander straightens out a soldier, much more so does seeing and gazing [*opsis kai theōria*], and especially when, coming into the commander’s very tent, [the soldier] sees his bloody sword, the head of the enemy lying there, the plunder hanging overhead . . . . Likewise on account of this, we too have assembled here. For it is a soldier’s tent, such a tomb of martyrs. And *if you open up the eyes of faith*, you will see for yourself the breastplate of justice lying here, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the greaves of the Gospel, and the blade of the Spirit—shearing off to the ground the very head of the devil.<sup>168</sup>

Establishing an interplay between the heard exploits of the martyrs in the sermon and the (quasi-) seen evidences of those exploits (and the participation in divine holiness that they represent to the world) displayed at the martyrs’ tombs to those who can open the eyes of faith,<sup>169</sup> the preacher can vividly infuse

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“immerse yourself perpetually in the stories of [the martyr’s] struggles” (in other words, reenacting the saintly drama in the mind of the spectator). But at the same time, he wants them to *see the bones themselves* (in the present tense) as manifesting holy light and power distinct from that represented by the living saint.

<sup>167</sup> See Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 84, on the *cooperation* rather than the competition of the eyes of the body and the eyes of faith, and 103, on the coordination of immanence and transcendence through “endowing of the ocular with affect.” If the theatrical mask is a corrosive μίμησις that makes the human being less than she is, the hagiographical representation is a translucent μίμησις that mediates something more than human in and through the human. Cf. Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 111-12, and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 243-47.

<sup>168</sup> “On the Holy Martyr Barlaam” 4 (PG 50.680.53-681.11), emphasis mine. In passages such as this, there is a double coordination between perceptible representations and the imagined wholeness of what they represent. In the metaphor deployed by Chrysostom, the soldier who sees the physical traces of a superior’s exploits will be inspired by the imagination of those exploits themselves, yet for the festival audiences, even these traces (the saints’ “shield of faith,” “sword of the Spirit,” etc.) must themselves be imagined in order to be treated *as* representative traces. Cf. Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 76: discussing the salutary effects of attending these festivals, John “urges his congregation to ‘go out and see the holy men’”; in this sense, “sanctity shared much with the world of the stage.” See also Cameron, “Form and Meaning,” 81, on the importance of the saint’s visible appearance.

<sup>169</sup> See “On the Holy Martyr Babylas” 2: “Don’t look at it like this, that the naked body of the martyr lies before you desolate of its vital energy. Instead, consider that another power, greater than the soul, abides in it: the grace of the Holy Spirit, testifying to all on behalf of the resurrection through its wonderworking.” (SC 362.296). So too, in his “On the Holy Martyrs” 1 (PG 50.647.22-23) Chrysostom observes that “even though they are silent, martyrs have greater strength of

the present experience of his audience with the significance of the past events he recounts. Simultaneously, he provides an interpretive safeguard against the worry that the festivals are a matter of mere merriment and not jubilation *in* the victories of the saints and of the God they represent. Those attendees who are more concerned with the markets and taverns than with the relics and rituals—and indeed those non-Christian participants in the civic pomp of the processions and the expectations of healing at loci of spiritual power—are rhetorically framed by John as seeing with their bodily eyes alone and not with their bodily eyes given the transfigured sight of faith.

“Please don’t tell me about the dust,” Chrysostom pleads with his audience at the Antiochine festival of the Seven Maccabees,<sup>170</sup> “and don’t consider the ash or the bones wasted away by time, but open the eyes of faith and see the power [*dynamis*] of God seated among them, the grace [*charis*] of the Spirit enveloping them, the glory [*doxan*] of heavenly light ablaze around them.”<sup>171</sup> The scene that presents itself to the festival participants is an ambivalent spectacle: on the one hand, as discussed above, it is a vibrant, multisensory feast of song, scent, fire, and the press of bodies, but on the other hand the special place at which it takes place is full of tombs, and its holy center of gravity is in the fragmented bones and clothes of the dead, many belonging to innocents put to death by hostile powers. The cheerful atmosphere of the festivals is already out of joint with self-evident attitudes in such places, lending itself to the rich rhetoric

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voice than we do in all our talking.” On the pedagogical interplay between the heard and the seen, see Leemans, “Schoolrooms for our Souls,” 119-26, and Introduction to *Let Us Die That We May Live*, 24; and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 68-69.

<sup>170</sup> On this festival’s dating and location, see Mayer, Introduction to “Homily 1 on the Maccabees,” in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 135-36. Of special interest is the likelihood that the Jewish and Christian celebrations of this festival “co-existed harmoniously” until the accession of Theodosius I (379), when “vigorous efforts were made to separate the two” (Martha Vinson, cited by Mayer on 136). Whether or not Jewish participants were present for this homily, their presence would have been embedded in recent memory, sharpening the edge of interreligious polemic in John’s trope of the “eyes of faith.” See also Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 69, on the importance of proper seeing alongside proper belief as a key component in Chrysostom’s construction of Christian identity, by contrast with Greekness or Jewishness.

<sup>171</sup> “On the Maccabees” 1.1 (PG 50.617.26-32). Cf. “On the Holy Martyr Julian” 3: “Did you see how the wounds of the martyrs are more luminous and more marvelous than the stars of heaven—and have greater strength [ισχύς]?” (PG 50.670.12-14).

of paradoxical inversion that Christianity had exercised from its earliest days.<sup>172</sup> Chrysostom's exhortation to transfigure what is seen with the eyes of faith provides theological reinforcement to this disjuncture between the torment of the saints and the celebration thereof, between the coffins and broken bones of the saint's shrine and the conviction that the saints are living purveyors of healing and intercessors with God: "If you look at the nature of what took place, what took place was fighting and war and a line of battle. But if you scrutinize the meaning [*gnōmēn*] of what took place, what was accomplished was dancing and good cheer and festivals and the greatest pleasure."<sup>173</sup> In the pocket episteme validated by Chrysostom's authoritative counternarrative to what only *seemed* to be the case, the power of God overrides and rectifies all that the saints have resisted.

In his festival homilies, Chrysostom consistently represents martyrdom in terms of its reversal of the expected order of things, reflected in the transformed perception of the martyrs and their *mimētai* alike. Such a reversal occupies the place of a dramatic *peripeteia*, narrated by the preacher at the climax of the festival proceedings—yet it is not the same. In Chrysostom's hagiographical vision, the relevant change is not a flipping of the hero's fortunes within an unyielding universe but rather a flipping of the very world in whose ordinary operation the saint's unbreakable mediation of divine holiness intervenes. "For, tell me," the preacher challenges his audience to see, "what greater sign of [Christ's] resurrection do you seek, when you see that so great a transposition of the order of things [*metastasin pragmatōn*] has taken place?"<sup>174</sup> The

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<sup>172</sup> Recall the changed, countercultural attitudes toward death that had been cultivated among Christians between the second and fourth centuries, as addressed in section 2a.

<sup>173</sup> "On the Holy Martyrs" 1 (PG 50.707.49-53). Perhaps a better term than quasi-seeing, more reflective of Chrysostom's viewpoint, would be *trans-seeing* or *hyper-seeing*: he exhorts his audiences not "almost" to see something that is not there, but indeed to see *more* than is there, to see it *as* there, and to have faith that it is truly there even if they only *almost* can see it as such. Cf. Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 9, on the difference between "seeing more than was there" and "seeing the more that they believed was there."

<sup>174</sup> "On the Holy Martyrs Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina" (PG 50.629.39-41). Wendy Meyer translates the key term in this passage as "reversal of reality," which brings out the contrastive affinity with the poetic tropes of the theater (in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 159) but loses some of the (etic as well as emic) richness of the more precise "transposition." Below, John uses the term *μετάστασις* again for what the martyrdom of the saints communicates to us—"Do you see how excellent is the transposition [*μετάστασις*] that has come to pass?" (PG 50.629.52-53). *Μετάστασις* is joined in John's lexicon of poetic transfiguration by other key vocabulary, moreover. In this same homily he instructs his

“transposition” of which he speaks is precisely the breaking of the terror of death and the establishment of a rectified system of significance within which people and events may be located. We may welcome the felicitous musical connotation of the English: a public function of the saints (as represented hagiographically) is to play the world around them in a different key. Through his metaphorical evocation of a world transposed in the eyes (or ears) of faith, Chrysostom thus attempts both to *celebrate* this key sounded in the lives of the martyrs and to attune the perception of his audience to its perpetuation.<sup>175</sup>

Thus we find metaphorical *perception-as* deployed throughout the homilies to communicate to our imagination the transposed world perceived by the saints: the martyrs saunter across hot coals “*as if upon roses,*” jump into fire “*as if into streams of cool water,*” admire the blood rushing from their wounds “*as if it were gold flowing all around them,*” They caper and rejoice while being tortured “*as if dancing in a sacred procession*” or “*playing in a verdant meadow.*”<sup>176</sup> The mother of the Maccabees prepares her children for execution “*as if adorning [one] with a wedding stole,*” or “*setting up a wedding pavilion*” for another; and when she looks on the pyre where her children are burning, she “*considered herself to see not a punishing fire but a nuptial torch*” (emphasis mine on the lexicon of seeing-as, in all cases).<sup>177</sup> In

Chrysostom’s restaging of the martyrdom of the beloved local hero Ignatius of Antioch, “in the middle of

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audience to “be in wonder before the God responsible for the change [μεταβολῆς]” brought about by the life and death of Christ (PG 50.629.46-47). In “On the Holy Martyrs,” John celebrates “how the greatest of evils, the crown of our miseries, which the Devil introduced—I mean death—changed [μετέβαλε] into our honor and glory...” (PG 50.707.31-34). And in his homily “On Saint Romanos,” John describes how God’s salvific economy—richly inclusive both of the deeds and the representations of the saints, as I have been arguing—is “turning [τρέπειν] whatever the Devil schemes... upon his own head” (PG 50.610.40-43).

<sup>175</sup> See Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 116-17, on “encomiastic reversal.” See also Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 155-65, on how rhetoric from below (of the grave, the slaughtered martyr, and so forth) was preserved and mobilized (through an embrace of paradox) to continue a process of Christianization even in the context of an elevated social position. De Nie makes an aligned case about the illocutionary quality of saints’ *Lives*, drawing on Clifford Geertz to articulate the effects of rehearsing the “myths” of a community: “Such a myth [in this case, the victory of Christ that allows the mimetic death of the martyrs to be associated with pleasure and joy] would contain and present not only models of the reality postulated by religion, but also—and especially—models for what he calls ‘producing’ that reality in the perception of the worshipper” (“Seeing and Believing in the Early Middle Ages,” 70; cf. Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 87).

<sup>176</sup> See “On Saint Romanos” 2 (PG 50.609.32-46); the same image of lying on coals “as if upon roses” (καθάπερ ἐπὶ ῥόδων) appears in “On the Holy Martyrs” 1 (PG 50.708.57-58).

<sup>177</sup> “On the Maccabees” 2.2 (PG 50.626.3-8).

the theater [*en mesō tō theatrō*] with the whole city sitting in attendance,”<sup>178</sup> the martyr sees the place of his execution as a stage for pleasure-taking and cheerful behavior rather than the expected spectacle of a stern reassertion of state authority. He refuses to act the part assigned to him, treating the wild animals with affection and encouragement (“Bless those beasts!”); the world transposed before his senses, the martyr observes and enacts a different drama than the one these theatergoers thought they were attending.<sup>179</sup>

The festival participants are invited not only to see martyrdom as a joyous occasion, a wedding, a baptism, and the like for individual heroes of the faith, but also to see the rectifying *impact* of martyrdom on the world they inhabit as itself an acclimatization of the entire community to the sunburst of holy power, as if their eyes must adjust to a sudden flaring of light in their midst. “How luminous and exuberant is our city,” John declares at the beginning of his panegyric on the Maccabees and their mother,

... not because the sun is today sending out its rays in a more conspicuous way than usual, but because the light of the holy martyrs is illuminating our city beyond [the capacity] of any lightning. For they are more radiant than thousands of suns and brighter than the greatest stars. Because of them, the earth is today more pure [*semnotera*] than heaven.<sup>180</sup>

Chrysostom’s recurrent use of the image of the saint’s name, face, or deeds as a *lamp* held in the heart or in the home reinforces the logic of the illuminating (or better, re-luminating) presence of a holy person spreading through the whole community and transposing how it looks at itself and at the world around it.<sup>181</sup> His narration of what has just occurred at one Constantinopolitan festival (in a fine example of

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<sup>178</sup> “On the Holy Martyr Ignatius” (PG 50.594.2-3).

<sup>179</sup> See “On the Holy Martyr Ignatius” (PG 50.594.13-14). Chrysostom presents this statement of Ignatius’ as the result of his learning the manner of his execution and *seeing* it “joyfully” (ἀσμένως) (PG 50.594.10-11). Even more explicit is “On the Maccabees” 2.1 (PG 50.624.30-37), in which, when the youngest brother stood ready for death in the arena, “the tyrant and the martyr did not see the same things; for on the one hand they both had the same eyes—the eyes of the flesh [ὄφθαλμοὶ ... τῆς σαρκός]—but on the other hand, they did *not* have the same eyes of faith. Rather, that one saw only the present life, whereas this one saw the life to come, to which he was about to fly off; and where the tyrant saw [only] iron griddles, the martyr saw the abyss into which the tyrant was preparing to throw himself.”

<sup>180</sup> “On the Maccabees” 1.1 (PG 50.617.19-26).

<sup>181</sup> For instance, in “On Saint Meletius” 1, “just as people sitting in the dark kindle many lamps from one lit torch and each person introduces it into his own house, like this also, when that familiar [person] fell upon the city like a light, each person introduced the name of that blessed one into his house, as if kindling a lamp ...” (PG 50.516.7-14). For a few (of many) analogous examples of such metaphorical construal, see “On Saint Phokas” 1 (*as if* looking at the sun, “one who honors a martyr does not make him more radiant, but rather draws onto himself the blessing of that one’s light”—PG

Mitchell's "restaging"), imaginatively synthesizes the light of the torches and the stars with the spiritual luminosity of the crowd as a "golden and continuous chain"—both in space (along the procession route) and in time (linking back to the martyrs whose holiness is the object of transfiguring display):

Didn't this night become more luminous [*phaidotera*] than the day, with everyone leaping about in such an excess of joy, possessing a spiritual joy, since so great a mass of people poured out and deluged the street and the marketplace? ... Through the entire journey you showed [the world] a single chain, golden and continuous, a single river borne along with a mighty roar. And, looking up into the heavens, we saw the moon and stars in its midst; but when we looked down, we saw the crowd of the faithful ...<sup>182</sup>

The metaphor of blazing light, however, does not only serve as Chrysostom's encouragement of his congregation to see the world by the light of the martyrs' lives; it also reinforces the double-edged social logic of holiness. The triumph of the saints, the preacher repeatedly insists, is the *triumph of the community* that claims them and their power over other cultural configurations. The "transposition of the order of things" [*metastasin pragmatōn*] that the martyrs Bernike and Prosdoke perceive is invoked not only in celebration but also in evidence for a polemic sounded in overtones through the homily and pronounced with particular force precisely at this point: "Who wouldn't be dumbstruck? Let the Greeks be filled with shame, and let the Jews shrink away, they who distrust the resurrection of Christ. For, tell me what greater sign of [Christ's] resurrection do you seek ...?"<sup>183</sup> When the saints blaze forth as beacons of God's holiness, this light both facilitates the true seeing (-as) of those who trust in their sanctification and *blinds* or *veils* the seeing of hostile others, both human and demonic.<sup>184</sup>

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50.700.16-19), "On the Egyptian Martyrs" 2 (the martyrs "are given to us in place of [ἀντί] the heavenly lights"—PG 50.698.24), and "Homily on All the Martyrs" (those who do not "see the change for the better" in the presence of the saints are like people who are "blind in the middle of the day"—in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 254).

<sup>182</sup> "Homily After the Remains of Martyrs" 2 (PG 63.470.40-50).

<sup>183</sup> "On the Holy Martyrs Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina" 1 (PG 50.629.37-40). Recall the logic at work in "On the Holy Martyr Babylas" 4 (SC 362.302), that "wherever [there is] the memory of martyrs, in that place is also the shame of the Greeks." See Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places*, 72-79, and Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 93, 101-03, on martyrdom discourse as a contribution to strategies of disentanglement between "orthodox" Christianity and Christianities that clove too close to (or, in Boyarin's view, had not yet been adequately gerrymandered away from) Judaism.

<sup>184</sup> For instance, preaching on the martyr Julian near the diverse Antiochine suburb of Daphne, Chrysostom proposes to his audience's eyes of faith that "the martyrs' wounds are more radiant than the fixed stars in the sky," for although humans and demons can alike look at the stars, "humans who believe can look upon this one's wounds, but demons don't dare to

Thus we may pivot once more, from the rectifying vision of the martyr's glory embracing the orthodox community within its light and warmth back to the modalities of resistance invited by these homilies insofar as they are appropriated by audiences members—both individually and as a public. For if Chrysostom's audiences are initiated into a hagiographical quasi-seeing of the world around them, they are also assured that those who gaze on the martyrs *without* the eyes of faith will see only falsehoods and crudities. In one of Chrysostom's clearest enunciations of this theme, he deploys the metaphor of a smelting furnace refining gold:

And just as with gold, while the ignorant person stands by and observes it melting and flowing down and mingling with the ashes, he thinks that it is destroyed, the skilled person [*technitēs*] who understands these matters exactly knows that in this way [the gold] is being purified, and after this melting process he draws out the gleaming [gold], collecting it all over. It is the same with regard to that woman [Drosis]: those without faith [*apistoi*] who were watching the melting down of her flesh thought that she was becoming ashes and dust, but the faithful [*pistoi*] knew with great accuracy that the one being burned was entirely separated from her impurities, and that all the more radiantly she rose to take part in immortality.<sup>185</sup>

In other words, it is not only the time and space of the festival that are catching fire in the holiness mediated by the saints, it is also the festival's *participants*. “Even hotter than that visible fire [of the procession's torches] was the flame of *your* enthusiasm,”<sup>186</sup> Chrysostom insists: that is, the spectacle of the saints in their own time drove off demons and challenged religious others, but now the spectacle in which his audience finds itself and that it will continue to display in the public order must do the same. “Because of these things we will not stop declaring you blessed—and not only we, but also all the generations to come. . . . These [generations] with us will hear, and those after us will hear, and no time will abandon to

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look directly at them; rather, even if they attempt to look, straightaway their eyes are blinded, since they are not able to bear the flash of light bursting from there” (“On the Holy Martyr Julian” 2 (PG 50.669.49-57). Likewise, in Chrysostom's homily “On the Holy Martyr Pelagia,” when the girl leaps to her death to avoid violation by Roman soldiers, her soul flies to heaven and “her body, remaining, was hurled down, flashing brighter than any lightning strike, smiting the devil's eyes” (PG 50.581.65-582.1).

<sup>185</sup> “On the Holy Greatmartyr Drosis” 4 (PG 50.688.55-689.7). While the *sight* of her body burning divided the faithful from the unfaithful, moreover, the *sound* of the pyre and the *smell* of her incineration banished the spiritual powers arrayed against her “and suffocated all the demons flying through the air, driving away the devil..” (PG 50.689.19-21).

<sup>186</sup> “Homily After the Remains of Martyrs” (PG 63.470.26.27).

forgetfulness what has taken place . . . .<sup>187</sup> The festival becomes not only the refigured deployment of the past but at the same time the symbol and vouchsafe of what is yet to come.<sup>188</sup> That the homilies I have examined in this section are themselves strung between two modes of hagiographical mediation (between oral performance and written/edited/published transmission), by which they integrate present and future generations within their horizon of address, should leave us with no doubt that the *appropriation* of hagiographical representations by their audiences is an indispensable dimension of the process taking place around and beyond the preacher.

### (3) Hagiographical Edification between the Heart and the World

Again and again, in Chrysostom's hagiographical discourse, we meet the conviction that the saints are lifted up by God as attracting beacons, their remains are invested with the therapeutic grace of the Holy Spirit, and their lives and deaths are inscribed in human media for continual remembrance and celebration, all *so that* the church may benefit and *so that* the world may be saved. Chrysostom joins with the other major figures of the fourth-century hagiographical boom in articulating a fundamental attitude of divine benevolence toward creation, and more precisely, toward the human creature that has lost its way and must be restored to wholeness. This benevolence (*philanthrōpia*), is for Chrysostom a hermeneutical skeleton key across his diverse theological and pastoral concerns. It is the logical basis for the self-disclosure of an incomprehensible God in revelation and ultimately in incarnation, the attitude taken by a preacher striving to be faithful to the gospel and its arch-interpreter Paul, that of which the miraculous

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<sup>187</sup> "Homily After the Remains of Martyrs" (PG 63.471.13-19).

<sup>188</sup> See again "On All the Martyrs" (in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 246-47): "But if you want to gain proof of the future from present events, too, please have a look at this crowd here and the people's eagerness and the length of time and consider to yourself why on earth ordinary people who were both insignificant and known to no one before they died, became after their death more prominent than emperors and more famous than any human being . . . . Yet everything else diminishes with time—physical beauty, the greatness of houses, kingdoms, positions of power, glories—and, as if swept away by river currents, departs and is passed on into oblivion. Only the martyrs' memory is beyond all time and higher than these obstacles, and no one can expunge it from eternity. Instead, it increases substantially and, as time goes by, doesn't grow old but flourishes abundantly and blooms all the more."

power of relics is proof, and indeed, theological grounds for the joyful cast otherwise so out of sync with the commemoration of violent death.<sup>189</sup> In Chrysostom's idiom, hagiography's existence as a (necessarily sensory) spectacle, its elemental logic of the self-mediating nature of divine holiness, and its prevailing tone of inverting the expected order of things are all owed to the understanding that the holiness of the saints in which the whole church should celebrate, desire, and imitate is the outpouring of a God of love who will rush to bridge the chasm that cannot be crossed by human being on its own.<sup>190</sup> This holiness and the many means of its mediation share their logical structure with the incarnation in John 3:16—*because* God loved the world, he gave his only Son, *so that* whoever believes in him would have eternal life.<sup>191</sup>

Such a theological basis and ecclesial rationale for hagiography provide a fourth-century warrant for my own project's efforts to interpret, as belonging *constitutively* to the hagiographical process, the ways that media are received, consumed, digested, and mobilized in the living world of their recipients. As the preceding sections have focused on imagination and representation in turn, this section turns to *edification* as its principal category: the appropriation of hagiographical media by those to whom they are mediated, in light of and invested into their interpersonal and intercultural relations, such that the

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<sup>189</sup> On divine benevolence manifesting as self-disclosure, see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 22-30, and Zincone, *Giovanni Crisostomo*, 20-21. On benevolence and flexible homiletic pedagogy, see Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 38-40, 159-64, and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 214-18. On divine benevolence and the power of relics, see *On Blessed Babylas* 65: "But God, being philanthropic [φιλόανθρωπος ὤν] and giving us countless occasions to be saved, also carved out [διέτεμεν] for us this sufficient way in addition to many other [ways] to be called toward virtue: giving over to us, for the time being, the relics of the saints. After the power of the word, the tombs of the saints take second place in arousing the souls of those gazing [θεωμένων] on them to the same zeal [as that of the saints themselves]" (SC 362.174). Later in *On Blessed Babylas* (102), moreover, Chrysostom conceives of the saints themselves as participating in this divine φιλανθρωπία and, from beyond the grave, conjoining their will to God's that human salvation result from their miracles and relics: "For such are the saints: they will those things to be accomplished [that are oriented] toward the salvation of human beings, not only [so that] it also may be displayed to many people that the successes are theirs, except where some need necessitates it; and I say 'need,' again, [to mean] a care for those being saved" (SC 362.230). And on the affective disjuncture between the commemoration of violent death and the divine benevolence mediated through it, see again my discussion in section 2b on the "transposition of the order of things" (μετάστασιν πραγμάτων).

<sup>190</sup> See Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 14-18, on the logical integrity between divine benevolence and divine incomprehensibility.

<sup>191</sup> See also Ephesians 5:1-2: "Therefore become imitators/representors [μιμηταὶ] of God, like beloved children, and abide in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave himself up on our behalf [as] an offering and sacrifice to God."

resulting orientation toward holiness “builds up” identities and institutions by (i) expurgating what is purported to compromise them and (ii) aligning and inclining what remains toward holy archetypes.<sup>192</sup>

As we turn to consider hagiographical edification as the appropriation of holiness from its imitable representatives/representations that are seen, heard, and felt at the festivals, it is crucial to remember that very little about John’s audiences, who these people were, what they thought and felt, how they understood the sermons and made meaning in their lives at the festivals, is preserved in the historical sources and therefore in the secondary literature.<sup>193</sup> Yet it is our responsibility to acknowledge the reality of the consumers of hagiography, to account for why they and their ways of perception matter, and to draw out as best we can the logic of their personal and political relationships. And our way toward the uptake of these audiences remains through what we have: sources that *address* them.<sup>194</sup> Clearly the hagiographers themselves are concerned with the relationship between hagiography and its effects on people and institutions, indeed dedicating their acts of production to these effects.<sup>195</sup> Such texts as Chrysostom’s homilies mirror, partially, a reality outside the text, but they are also taking action to *create* a reality outside the text.<sup>196</sup> The image of that world appearing in the text is a refracted image—and one that generates heat

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<sup>192</sup> We must keep in mind the preparatory discussion in the general introduction, section 2b, on the equivocal nature of “appropriation” as a means of making apprehensions of holiness at home within the very cultural categories and orientations that holiness is purported to transfigure.

<sup>193</sup> See Mayer, “The Dynamics of Liturgical Space,” 105, and Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 13-20. Maxwell helpfully includes a chapter that attempts a categorization of the demographic diversity of Chrysostom’s audiences according to whom he addresses and how often. Here, we learn of specific instances of Chrysostom’s communication with poor laborers, rich merchants, artisans, farmers coming (rarely) in from the countryside, hereditary landowners, slaves, masters, pickpockets (!), the curious unbaptized, Jews (not least in homilies related to the popular and shared cult of the Maccabees), clergy, politicians, and in the final, grab-bag section of the chapter, “children, catechumens, monks, demon-possessed, heretics” (*Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 65-87).

<sup>194</sup> This is a basic principle of rhetorical analysis in the hermeneutical mode of theology and sociology alike. See Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 10: “Because texts providing direct evidence about the lives of ordinary people are scarce, we must try to detect their influence on the sources that do survive. . . . [From] the activity of a learned man speaking to ordinary people, addressing their concerns, questions, arguments, and behavior, and shaping both the style and the content of his sermons in response to them . . . much can be learned about the people who listened to what Chrysostom said. At the same time, we find out that the preacher, too, heard his audience . . .”

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Krueger, “The Practice of Christianity in Byzantium,” 9-15.

<sup>196</sup> To take one important example, Sandwell observes that, although the stark cultural and religious categories (“genuine” Christians, “half” Christians, “Greeks,” etc.) with which Chrysostom saw the world cannot be taken as given, since

outside itself, as if through a focusing lens. In what follows, then, I will consider (a) Chrysostom's efforts to mold his audiences' appropriative habits, promoting their edification as the cultivation of a subjectivity *resistant* to the various vulnerabilities associated with the sensuality of mediated holiness; and (b), the relations between such personal transformation and the cultural-political reinscriptions that carve borders between (what Chrysostom invites his audiences to perceive as) orthodox Christianity and those disordered cultural, religious, political forms from which the mediation of holiness facilitates liberation.

### 3a) "Flying and dancing and borne aloft": Resisting Pitfalls on the Way of Sanctification

Throughout the century prior to Chrysostom, preachers and teachers "had talked about the double-edged dilemma of sense perception."<sup>197</sup> On the one hand, as they came to recognize, the world of experience through and in the context of which human beings attain to understanding is multisensory in its availability to the mind. Even the most rarified articulations of spiritual matters are constructed in language dependent on the manifest world for its logic, content, and analogy—all of which was legitimated by God's adoption of the material (and political) world as the means of self-disclosure.<sup>198</sup> As we have seen in Chrysostom's homiletic appeals to the "transposition" (*metastasis*) of perception, moreover, sense perception could be the partner and venue of spiritual apprehension (the eyes of the body become further "opened" as, simultaneously, eyes of faith) due to the gift of Christ's anthropological

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alternative ways of organizing and making sense of the social world were alive and well, Chrysostom is using them as natural and self-evident categories not only because he himself sees the world in this way but because he is dedicated to his audience seeing and living in the world accordingly. Chrysostom's preaching, in other words, is doing *work* not only to rename but also to reorganize the understanding and so the ways of life and institutional contexts of his community. See Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 63-65.

<sup>197</sup> Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 239. See also Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 5-7.

<sup>198</sup> Frank discusses the ways that, among fourth-century theologians, "the sanctifying effect of God's incarnation extended to the physical world. In this broader understanding of Incarnation, God was revealed not only in Jesus and humanity but also throughout creation. What had once been inaudible would now be heard; what had once been invisible could now be seen. ... [And so] the incarnation, in theory, legitimated all forms of sense perception as a means of knowing God" ("The Pilgrim's Gaze in the Age before Icons," 102-03). Rylaarsdam observes that "Theologians used the language of sense perception to structure the language of spiritual experience" (*John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 241n), and that Chrysostom in particular is adept at appealing to the senses as a venue for *μίμησις* of the God whose revelation to human beings comes in perceptible forms and vivid imagery.

restoration.<sup>199</sup> On the other hand, the voices of the fourth-century “material turn” have no doubt that the senses can misperceive or lead to erroneous conclusions and actions, with grave consequences; Chrysostom’s own extensive and vehement concern with the imaginal, psychic, ethical costs of sense perception at the theaters (as addressed above in section 1a) should serve as a particularly robust case in point. And the whole hagiographical multimediation of the festival bears out this dilemma: participants encounter God’s gifts of holiness with their ears, their eyes, their hands and feet, and yet many of them, in Chrysostom’s chagrined perspective, *listen carelessly, see wrongly, walk impiously* to the markets, taverns, and theaters directly before or after visiting the shrines of the saints.<sup>200</sup>

In other words, hagiographical edification is *not only* a matter of placing the senses in the proper *mise-en-scène*, of substituting holy for unholy objects of mediation, thus repopulating the imagination and healing the distorted desire of the soul. As Chrysostom understands it, a Christian who approaches the holy festivals with the disposition of a (profane) theater-goer will perceive them wrongly, and will fail to be edified by them. Even hagiographical media produced in alignment with the holiness they represent can still be consumed, by particular people in particular settings, in a misaligned manner.<sup>201</sup> In parallel to his concern that his audience in the church will absorb from the profound revelation of God only what they

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<sup>199</sup> See again Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 84: Chrysostom’s occasional distinction between the “eyes of flesh” and the “eyes of faith” does not override the logic by which the physical senses cooperate “in endowing the soul with a set of mental spectacles, as it were, with which to envision the saint.” The senses, for Chrysostom, provide the stimulus for [or catalysis of] theological imagination.

<sup>200</sup> For instance, in “On the Holy Martyr Julian,” Chrysostom bewails the “wicked old custom” (πονηρὸν ἔθος καὶ παλαιὸν) by which “some of us gathered here today . . . will leave us behind tomorrow and leap away to Daphne [where could be found ample irreligious festivity capitalizing on the crowds of the festival—see Kallares, *City of Demons*, 65-67] because of their laziness and foolishness, throwing away tomorrow what they’ve gathered up today and demolishing what we have built up [ῥυκοδομήσαμεν]” (PG 50.672.27,36-42). Thus Chrysostom himself is keenly aware that the festivals over which he presides can be double-edged and can bring harm as well as good to the community, when festivalgoers treat them as opportunities for frivolity and drunkenness—when the theater of holiness is attended *as if* it were the theater of profanity.

<sup>201</sup> It is also, of course, possible and indeed evident that hagiographical media can be *produced* in a manner misaligned with the holiness that they attempt to communicate—this is no less a corollary of the incarnational logic of the material turn even if the hagiographical producers of the period tend to take great confidence in the safeguarding of their mediation by the Holy Spirit.

“dare to take away in a human mode [*anthrōpinōs*],”<sup>202</sup> Chrysostom chastises his audience at the tombs for their “cheap” behavior that will disrupt their edification and that of others. Out of their own agency—their irreverent viewing and inconsiderate action—they are “unfeastly at the feasts” (*en heortais aneortoi*).<sup>203</sup> Resistance must be offered, then, not only against what Christian authorities strive to render as non-Christian culture but also against Christians’ own complacency, laziness, and unedifying habits.

How the senses are *used*, then, becomes the arena for a miniature struggle in the individual behavior of hagiographical audiences. For Chrysostom, it is not sufficient to turn the senses toward holy objects, and likewise, it is not merely given that unholy objects bring about ruin in the soul. If holy content can be diverting and titillating to a person committed to profanity, so too can shameful content be edifying to a person whose senses are rightly aligned. In one of the most dramatic scenes of *On Blessed Babylas and Against the Greeks*, the violent emperor Decius and his extensive retinue arrive to the church where Babylas is bishop, where they are met and subsequently ejected by the saint. Interpreting the scene he has just narrated, Chrysostom suggests that the holiness of Babylas was so great that *even* the shameful, duplicitous, and extravagant “spectacle [*opsis*] on display escorted his mind to the emperor above [*ton anō basilea*]”;<sup>204</sup> though he is gazing at the armor-bearers and courtiers of the earthly emperor, a spectacle of misplaced dignity, his imagination is nonetheless filled with an inverted spectacle of the heavenly host crowding around the “emperor above.”

What these alternatives reveal is vital to Chrysostom’s logic of hagiographical edification. Babylas’ sense-perception has been refined such that he is able to be edified by the thoroughly unedifying object captured by his senses. But for those who are not yet mature in faith or psychic disposition, the fleshliness

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<sup>202</sup> “Homily on Genesis” 13.3 (PG 53.108.23-24). See Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 123, for discussion of this point.

<sup>203</sup> “Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.663.3-4). Recall (from section 2b) Chrysostom’s metaphor of the ignorant person watching gold being refined, in “On the Holy Greatmartyr Drosis” 4 (PG 50.688.55-689.7). Cf. Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 57, on humans’ degraded preference to contemplate creatures rather than the creator (as articulated in Chrysostom’s homily “On Romans” 3).

<sup>204</sup> *On Blessed Babylas*, 34 (SC 362.134).

of the senses is a liability, and the quality of the objects of mediation matters greatly—thus the intervention of hagiography.<sup>205</sup> The stories of the saints, the holy *politeia* (way of life)<sup>206</sup> that they publicly display, and the radiance of their remains can all be used to heal the distorted imagination and lead the heart in the direction of sanctification. However, human beings are not necessarily *willing* to be so healed and led, and they may appropriate even holy media in ways that reinforce uncharitable frameworks of thinking and living or that treat the senses as ends in themselves rather than serving a higher purpose of using them. Which leaves the crucial question: *how can unedifying habits of encounter be resisted and rectified?*

To be sure, Chrysostom recommends a range of practices to aid in transposing the perception of those at risk of slipping into “unfeastly” behavior: to whip up their emotional state in excitement about and yearning for the martyrs, to repaint their imaginations and recurrently call to mind the stories and sights of the festival, to strive to emulate in their own lives the virtue and fidelity they have come to celebrate, and so forth. But he also takes pains to express that these changes in their inner and outer existence are only partially within their power—that they may not be able to *choose* to be edified when their imaginations are lacerated by scandalous perceptions and busy digesting the spiritual junk food on

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<sup>205</sup> The risks associated with the appropriation of hagiography reflect, at this still-early stage of Greek Christian hagiographical theorization, an ambivalence toward the materiality of the salvific economy. As Athanasius’ authoritative argument presents it: by assuming the wholeness of human being, God reestablishes the integrity of spirituality and physicality, *enabling* the visibility and communicability of the image of God in human media—but not *ensuring* that this image will be treated as it should be (see Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 14, 16, 54). The theologians following Athanasius recognize that, although the mediation of holiness to human beings is necessarily incarnate and encultured (with “the powers of perception (αἰσθησις) providing the mediating ground between the two” components of human being, the spiritual and material—Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 5), this fleshliness and worldliness of the resulting media indicate that their sanctifying potential is not automatically vouchsafed, but rather depends on how they are appropriated.

<sup>206</sup> Πολιτεία, a key concept in hagiographical dynamics, has meanings that serve to hinge between personal and communal domains, as will be especially significant in section 3b. The major configurations are πολιτεία as “way of life” or “habitual behavior,” either exhibited by an individual or ascribed to a group, and πολιτεία as an “organized society,” a “commonwealth,” or a “polity” in the sense of that group of individuals who belong to one another in their commonality of life. Additional technical meanings appear in hagiographical narrative in the formula βίος καὶ πολιτεία (“life and conduct” signifying the genre convention of a narration of events interwoven with ethical or theological reflections on the significance of particular deeds), in theological or Christological discussions of “divine life” as manifested in the incarnate Christ or the inspired behavior of the apostolic community, and in ascetical discourse when construing the life of faith as an all-encompassing πολιτεία. For more detail on specific usage, see Lampe (ed), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. πολιτεία.

offer at the games and theaters.<sup>207</sup> Thus among Chrysostom's preaching recurs the image of a sick person either complying with the ministrations of a physician or refusing to take his medicines (*pharmaka*) and abusing the one who has come to offer healing.<sup>208</sup> The consent of Christians to their own rectification by holiness is by no means guaranteed, when their very subjectivity is habituated (not least by their cultural conditions) to resist the medicine itself.

It is, then, by means of a sacramental logic of the Holy Spirit's adoption (*huiiothesia*) of materiality and human epistemology that Chrysostom breaks through the impasse—a logic which complements and completes another theological theme central to Chrysostom's theorization: God's adaptation (*synkatabasis*) to human capacities.<sup>209</sup> In short: God not only communicates through human media and corporeal means due to the natural limitations of human beings after the Fall, out of a "will to make himself known and to

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<sup>207</sup> Cf. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 146-50. Maxwell considers how habitual behavior and cultural norms such as theater attendance, oath swearing, or laughing about moral failings, not only were construed as normal and natural, but also were firmly enough integrated into an overall *habitus* that attempts to weed them out were met with skepticism or active disgruntlement, even when they were told that it was hurting their souls not to alter their habits. Chrysostom's approach to try to break through this *habitus*, it is noteworthy, relies on the power of imagination: he injects disturbing *παντασία* into habitual moments in order to denaturalize them. For instance, he instructs his congregants, when they swear an oath, to imagine the severed head of John the Baptist crying out against them! (Here Maxwell draws on the "Homilies on the Statues" 14.1, PG 49.144).

<sup>208</sup> See again the discussion of this theme of the hagiographical consumer needing to be forcibly administered his medicine, in section 1b. And recall the discussion (in Chapter IV, section 3b) of Greek-Cypriot ascetic discourse in which those more advanced in holiness (spiritual elders, saints, and angels) are needed to guide Christians through the desert of life in the world, helping them to avoid the mirages that they would not be able to distinguish for themselves.

<sup>209</sup> On Chrysostom's pneumatology generally, see Limouris, "The Sanctifying Grace of the Holy Spirit"; Papadopoulos, "The Holy Trinity and the Parousia of the Holy Spirit"; and Zincone, *Giovanni Crisostomo*, 31-36. Cf. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 129, and Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 243-47, on the need to participate (*μετέχειν*) in the Spirit in order to see truly and interpret properly what is seen. In his monograph on the theme of *συγκατάβασις* in Chrysostom, Rylaarsdam acknowledges that "[w]hen people use the senses properly, they perceive physical things as signs of spiritual realities" (*John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 240), yet he stops short of recognizing the second side of sacramentality: that physical things are made wellsprings of spiritual presence and instruments of spiritual effects. In an article published online a year before his untimely death ("Deification and Sonship According to St Athanasius of Alexandria"), Matthew Baker provides a detailed analysis of this logic of sacramental adoption (*υιοθεσία*) in light of Athanasius' famous formula from *On the Incarnation* 54.3, "He was made man that we might be made god." This "making-god" (*θεοποίησις*), Baker explains, imputes something that is not the case by nature but is, for that fact, nonetheless real and meaningful; it is a gift of the "Spirit of sonship" held in the church not by nature but through the love of God and the will to adoption. That which is the recipient of the Spirit's sacramental grace (e.g. the water of baptism or the representational poetics of hagiography) need not be idolized as divine by nature to be venerated as divinized by divine love, as conduits for the catalytic mediation of holiness. Such distinctions will be of sustained importance in Chapter VI.

teach humans on their level,”<sup>210</sup> but *also* infuses created phenomena, human processes, and material substances with grace and opens them to possibilities greater than those natural to them, such that they, along with the people who partake of them, become instruments of divinization.<sup>211</sup> The starring role that Chrysostom assigns to the Spirit in the sacramental life of the church—baptism, chrismation, ordination, marriage, and especially eucharist—is consistent with the preacher’s configuration of hagiographical media in all their sensuality as central to the edification of the human person, of the church, and of the world beloved by God.<sup>212</sup> It is because of the vulnerability of the human being that divine providence must adopt material and psychic attractors as conduits of grace, helping even those committed to distorted pleasures to overcome the dispositions that counteract the rectification of their ways of life.

In this light, let us consider again the “Homily on Martyrs” in which the preacher complains to his audience of their “unfeastly” behavior and dispositions. Chrysostom worries that his listeners “want to indulge” and are likely to depart the festival without the “fire” that they should be “breathing” sufficiently kindled; although they have come willingly to the festival and have gathered “with longing [*pothō*] for the martyrs,” they may not yet be *mimētai* who actively seek to represent the saints’ ways of thinking, perceiving, and acting in their own lives.<sup>213</sup> An intervention is needed, one which will not merely be appropriated by their baser tendencies. So Chrysostom tells them how they can satisfy their impulses in such a way that the very enjoyment and pleasure that they are already inclined to seek will reward their all-too-human desires with divine grace and support upon the way of sanctification:

Do you wish to indulge? Stay close by the tomb of a martyr; pour out fountains of tears there . . . . Linger forever among the stories of his struggles [*palaismatōn*—wrestling matches]. Be curled up around a reliquary, affix yourself to the coffin . . . . Take holy oil and coat your whole body, your tongue, your lips, your neck, your eyes . . . . For with its scent the oil reminds you of the martyrs’

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<sup>210</sup> Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 102. Cf. Zincone, *Giovanni Crisostomo*, 148-52.

<sup>211</sup> See Matsoukas, “The Economy of the Holy Spirit,” 399, on the patristic theme of matter, such as the water of the baptismal font or the bones of the martyrs, being capable of “perfection” through the Spirit’s “gift of adoption.”

<sup>212</sup> See Zincone, *Giovanni Crisostomo*, 44-52, and Limouris, “The Sanctifying Grace of the Holy Spirit,” 290-92, for details on Chrysostom’s vision of the Holy Spirit at work in sacramental life.

<sup>213</sup> “Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.663.35,37-38; 50.664.45; 50.666.5).

struggles [*athlōn*—contests], and it soothes every intemperance, it holds you fast in great patience, it prevails over every sickness of the soul.<sup>214</sup>

Do human beings want the adrenaline of exciting narratives or the luxury of sweet perfumes? Rather than forbidding such pleasures, Chrysostom recognizes the *philanthrōpia* of God in investing precisely such human desiderata with sanctifying grace, lowering the hurdle of edification for are not yet strong enough to resist their impulses.<sup>215</sup> Spiritual healing, as Chrysostom proverbially describes it in *On Blessed Babylas*, often requires “dealing with a sick person unwilling to take beneficial medicines by concealing the medicine in something sweetly relishing.”<sup>216</sup> Or else, in the metaphor Chrysostom deploys in “Against the Games and Theaters,” the Spirit provides the gift of a “yoke” so that human passions and earthly desires, though accustomed to racing after worldly ends, may be driven “toward the prize of a higher calling.”<sup>217</sup> The Spirit provides the yoke by which human beings may resist the pressures (psychological and cultural) that would turn them astray, yet each person must do the running. The whole of human life, indeed “everything that bears a relationship to the believer,”<sup>218</sup> may be irrigated with grace, but the fruit that grows may be used in different ways, or else squandered or prevented from taking root in the first place.

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<sup>214</sup> “Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.664.45-665.2).

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 156: “Since people were going to observe the Kalends [of January, that is, the new year] regardless of their association with paganism, Chrysostom offered a compromise. Christians should celebrate the Kalends by giving thanks to God, by weighing their sins against their good works, and by meditating on the passage of time as it related to their Christian beliefs.” In his typical way, Chrysostom models his own pastoral care on what he views to be God’s own philanthropic design; as we know him to be a μιμητής of Paul’s interpretive and attitudinal flexibility (Mitchell), of Christ’s consoling but scandalous promises of a new world (Leyerle), and of the Father’s benevolent and accommodating pedagogy (Rylaarsdam), here we can see him as a μιμητής of the Spirit’s investiture of otherwise worldly forms and habits with the grace necessary to reclaim them for God.

<sup>216</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 71 (SC 362.186).

<sup>217</sup> “Against the Games and Theaters” (PG 56.265.27). Note, then, the integrity of this economy of the Spirit with the economy of the *Son* in the “adoption and deification of human nature” (Papadopoulos, “The Holy Trinity and the Parousia of the Holy Spirit,” 106). Cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 15: “For since human beings, having rejected the contemplation of God and as though sunk in an abyss with their eyes held downwards, seeking God in creation [γένεσις] and things perceptible, setting up for themselves mortal humans and demons as gods, for this reason the lover of human beings [*nota bene*] and the common Savior of all, takes to himself a body and dwells as human among humans and draws to himself the perceptible senses of all human beings . . . .”

<sup>218</sup> Limouris, “The Sanctifying Grace of the Holy Spirit,” 294.

We have reached that “intersection between the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader; the intersection, therefore, of the world configured by the poem and the world wherein real action occurs.”<sup>219</sup> This intersection is the matrix of meaning-making where the poetics of representation (here, the hagiographical sermon as richly embedded in the *mise-en-scène* of the festival/liturgical space and time) exert force upon the experience of those to whom the representation is mediated. To read a book, to hear a song, to walk the steps of a procession route in the shared rhythm of hundreds, to touch a gold-wreathed bone and call to mind the formidable deeds of the one to whom it belonged: all these are to have one’s own world “refigured,” in Ricoeur’s terms, that is, seen more or less anew, approached more or less differently, understood more or less rigorously “under the sign” of the work.<sup>220</sup> Or, extending Chrysostom’s own colorful metaphor, hagiographical consumers have the capacity, “just like bees from their hives, [to] rush out to the wounds of the martyrs and hold fast to their torments”<sup>221</sup>—and so to return to make their own honey in their own hearts and in their own world.

Such a refiguration of the world of the hearer in light of the world being represented is without a doubt a principal concern of the producers of hagiography. Yet the particularities of this appropriation are anything but mechanical or compulsory, even as certain attitudes, practices, and self-reflective understandings come to be validated and rewarded. The reception of media is an *active* process, is indeed itself “mimetic” in its appropriation and application of that which is received.<sup>222</sup> recall the consistency with

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<sup>219</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I.71. This is the interface discussed as the site of “mimesis,” or “refiguration.”

<sup>220</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I.77. Such an appreciation of human tendencies to be moved and changed (even if in unpredictable or uncontrollable ways) by the media they consume is why I cannot trust, as Sandwell does, that “Chrysostom’s ideological, rule-bound constructions of exclusive religious identities made little permanent impact on people” (*Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 280). We cannot take these constructions as given and natural—yet it would be an opposite mistake to treat them as if they were a mist of elite imagination no more than dampening the solid material culture below! See Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 168-87, on the validation of understanding in networks of authority.

<sup>221</sup> “On Eleazar and the Seven Boys” 5 (PG 63.530.47-49).

<sup>222</sup> Ricoeur describes the interplay between passivity and activity in one medium of mediation, the act of reading, thus: “On the one hand, the received paradigms structure readers’ expectations and aid them in recognizing the formal rule, the genre, or the type exemplified by the narrated story. They furnish guidelines for the encounter between a text and its readers. In short, they govern the story’s capacity to be followed. On the other hand, it is the act of reading that accompanies the narrative’s configuration and actualizes its capacity to be followed. To follow a story is to actualize it by

which Chrysostom insists that “the honor of martyr is the imitation of a martyr [*mimēsis martyros*].”<sup>223</sup> He exhorts his audience: learn the stories of the saints, visualize their forms, call to mind their virtues, exert yourself to see the world transposed as they did, so that you are able to build up your life according to their blueprints, so that you will share their victories, and so that the world may experience you as you experience them. The models of holy living presented by the saints are manifold for the benefit of those who gaze upon them: different people, with their different dispositions and experiences, will be reached more profoundly by stories and images that intervene in the world that they know and set some part of it ablaze with a new way of seeing.<sup>224</sup> The patristic logic of edification, it seems, supports and is supported by the hermeneutic phenomenology of poetic appropriation.

Already in *On Blessed Babylas*, Chrysostom had conjured the praiseworthy figure of a visitor to the saints who, by way of imaginative intake and psycho-ethical refiguration, undergoes a transformation of life analogous to the saint’s own. Such a visitor “straightaway rushes up to the coffin, becoming more reverent by the sight [of it] and imagining [*phantastheis*] the blessed one; by coming there and driving out all pettiness, he takes to himself a greater awe and departs again, having become a winged being [*ptēnos*].”<sup>225</sup> It is in respect of this metaphor of wingedness and the pneumatological grace implied by it

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reading it. And if emplotment can be described as an act of judgment and of the productive imagination, it is so insofar as this act is the joint work of the text and reader, just as Aristotle said that sensation is the common work of sensing and what is sensed.” (*Time and Narrative*, I.76). De Certeau also is convinced that reading “modifies its object” and that a work of literary mediation “has a meaning only through its readers”; the reader, in this respect, is for de Certeau a “novelist” in the sense that a navigator traverses and charts a sea (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 169-74).

<sup>223</sup> “Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.663.2-3). Recall also the “On the Holy Martyr Barlaam” 1: “If someone wishes to praise martyrs, let him imitate martyrs [*μιμείσθω μάρτυρας*]” (PG 50.675.43-44).

<sup>224</sup> See Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 73-77, on the diversity of forms and stories with which God teaches human beings in their own diverse capacities and expectations. Astonishingly (though perhaps understandably for a Reformed interpreter), Rylaarsdam focuses on prophetic discourse and the scriptural imagery, and does not address Chrysostom’s hagiographical production or the manifold examples of the saints in discussing this variability with which the people of God are edified.

<sup>225</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 70 (SC 362.184). Such a linkage between edification by hagiographical media and sanctification of the edified person is often expressed by Chrysostom in this metaphor of wingedness—clearly resonant with his language of “angelic life” and appearing consistently as a potent image of saintliness. See Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 51n284, with examples from Chrysostom’s homilies on Romans, Genesis, Matthew, 2 Timothy, and from other assorted texts. The festival homilies likewise make use of the image, for instance in “On Saint Meletius” 2 (PG 50.517.34-

that Chrysostom himself, modeling for his audience his own refiguration by the festival and the great “spiritual pleasure” to be taken in it, exclaims that he is “flying and dancing and borne aloft in the air, hereafter quite drunk on this spiritual pleasure.”<sup>226</sup>

Chrysostom’s efforts to train his audiences to resist unedifying habits of hagiographical appropriation would be nonsensical were he not still banking on the *capacity* of human sense-perception to be an organ of participation in the divine grace radiating from the bodies and stories of the saints. Maxwell suggests that the participatory edification-by-festivity promoted by Chrysostom was the realistic alternative to expecting all Christians to become ascetics. And yet, what was asked of them can be understood as a *form* of asceticism, an aesthetic asceticism: the dedication and attunement of all the senses to the multimedia spectacle of holiness such that participants are changed for the better.<sup>227</sup> Peter Brown rightly considers asceticism, in its most basic sense, as the *art of the self*, as open to diverse formulations and amateur expressions as any art.<sup>228</sup> Such an expansive sense is applicable to the mimetic consumption and co-production with which fourth-century hagiographical audiences digested what they perceived into themselves (or at least were actively encouraged and rewarded for doing so) and used it to shape their own

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36), in which the grace of the Spirit elevates the holy man’s mind “as if by wings” (ὡσπερ ὑπὸ τινῶν πτερῶν); and in the Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.663.35), in which the festival itself “has given wings to [your] yearning for the martyrs” (τῷ πόθῳ τῶν μαρτύρων ἐπτέρωσεν). Rylaarsdam suggests (*John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 145, 285-26) that the metaphor of the soul given wings is as much about learning to see the world “from a divine vantage point” as it is about the “angelic life” of sanctification.

<sup>226</sup> “Homily After the Remains of Martyrs” 1 (PG 63.467.44-45). It is in this light that we may again interpret the remarkable refrain in Chrysostom’s sermons of the *pleasure* that results from attendance of the spiritual theater, joining in the company of the faithful and interacting with the many media that communicate the holiness of the saints.

<sup>227</sup> Asceticism has often been identified with the regularity and community of monasteries, yet this association is not a given. On the contrary, ordinary Christians in Chrysostom’s contexts were expected to listen to and process priestly instruction, and to attend to the mimetic models of the saints and even of living monks. See Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 401-04 (on the “worldly asceticism” that Chrysostom derives from Paul and promotes to his audiences as a model for their πολιτεία); Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 163-64 (visiting monks for instruction, shared prayer, and edifying models of behavior); and Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 35 (on Chrysostom’s insistence that Christians living in the world are no less accountable for the standards of perfection that eremitic monks seek out through isolation and shelter from distractions). Matsoukas notes that asceticism is at work in whatever aligns one’s body and soul with the connecting and transforming work of the Spirit (“The Economy of the Holy Spirit,” 403-04), and Harpham elegantly describes asceticism as making one’s whole self a perceptible *sign* of the gospel in the world, rewriting oneself as part of the narrative of the divine λόγος (*The Ascetical Imperative in Culture and Criticism*, 277; recall Ricoeur’s mimesis<sub>3</sub> from *Time and Narrative*).

<sup>228</sup> See Brown, “Asceticism: Pagan and Christian,” 604.

whole-person *politeia*. Thus the “refiguration” discussed by Ricoeur at the interface between media and the world of the reader or hearer can be recognized, in the theological cast given it by Chrysostom, as a *transfiguration*. To the physicality of human sense-perception is imparted the divine grace necessary “to satisfy even their sight [*opsin*], and to show them then [in their own lives], and in a way that it is possible for them to learn it, that glory [*doxa*] with which [God] is yet to come forth.”<sup>229</sup>

### 3b) “They take to their heels and flee”: Holy Politeia on the World Stage

Insofar as hagiographical edification is personal, it is interpersonal. Like Augustine’s *theatro pectoris*, the “stage of the heart” upon which the drama of Christian life is played out before the eyes of the world and with real institutional/civic consequences,<sup>230</sup> the holy theater of John Chrysostom is, I have argued, staged simultaneously on multiple interpenetrating levels. The Christomimetic martyrdom of the saints that astounded their onlookers has become a glorious, anti-tragic drama for future generations to retell and absorb into their imaginations through the spectacular, multimedia *mise-en-scène* and homiletic narration of festival culture, so that, through the *philanthropia* of the Father and the *parousia* of the Spirit, these generations could become a continuation of the drama they have celebrated—before the eyes of all the world and of the spiritual powers.<sup>231</sup>

This onward mediation on the stage of the city, of the political order, is an inextricable dimension of edification and so of hagiographical process writ large: just as the media of the festival summon their

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<sup>229</sup> “Homilies on Matthew” 56.1 (PG 58.549.16-19); this is, note, a homily on the Transfiguration in particular. See also Leemans, “John Chrysostom’s First Homily on Pentecost,” 288, on such cooperation between divine grace and human capacities. These matters will be taken up in more depth in Chapter VI.

<sup>230</sup> See Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 87, drawing on Augustine, *Sermon* 315.10 (in *Patrologia Latina* 38.1431).

<sup>231</sup> I have had occasion to discuss Chrysostom’s views of *φιλανθρωπία* rather more than those of *παρουσία*; however, it may be said that for Chrysostom, Pentecost is an ongoing, ever-present reality, equal to and inseparable from the redemption of Christ’s life and death. See Limouris, “The Sanctifying Grace of the Holy Spirit,” 290; Papadopoulos, “The Holy Trinity and the Parousia of the Holy Spirit,” 104; and Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 67-68. Taking hold of the mind, the Spirit inspires brilliant theological and pastoral discourse (and facilitates the smoking out of heretical ideas); taking hold of the soul, it cultivates virtue and cleans the passions; taking hold of the body, it rarifies the bodies of the saints while they are alive and makes their remains into inspirational and protective cornerstones in the edifice of the church.

audiences to become *mimētai*, refiguring themselves under the sign of the work, so too their renewed participation in the cultural and political currents of which they are a part will have, however open-ended, an institutionally refiguring effect. And indeed, the *sanctification* toward which the producers of hagiographical media orient their work is itself no less political than this process of refiguration: in the emergent Orthodox idiom focused here by Chrysostom, an isolated and self-oriented saint is a contradiction or misapplication of terms.<sup>232</sup> The rectifying mediation of holiness is ecumenical in the broadest possible sense—it is oriented toward the drawing together and harmonizing like notes in a cosmic chord everything that has been divided and imagined, erroneously, as belonging only to itself.<sup>233</sup>

The “material turn” of the fourth century, we must remember, was no less an *imperial turn*, in which the institutional structures of Christianity within the Roman Empire came to reconfigure their modalities of authority through an alignment with political power, thus needing to sublimate the martyriological imagination of authority through political weakness. In this context, the spectacular manifestation of the holy drama of the martyrs is a potent instrument of division and domination before it can be the grounds for unification: when the saints act before the eyes of the world and the spiritual powers, certain observers (those ascending into political authority) will be edified and uplifted, seeming to float with the wings of the Spirit, but others (those whose religious reign has come to an end) will be scandalized or shamed, rightly bewildered at the collapse of their own deeply-held story.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> See Limouris, “The Sanctifying Grace of the Holy Spirit,” 294: “The church of Christ does not work the sanctification of humankind only, but of the whole creation. And just as creation fell away with the disobedience of the first Adam, so it can be restored by the obedience of the new Adam [here should be read both the figure of Christ and the remade image of God in each human]. The Holy Spirit sanctifies everything that bears a relationship to the believer: time, space, objects, all things can be spiritualized within their sphere of activity.” It is crucial to note that this language of “spiritualizing” which Limouris uses should *not* be taken to suggest a divestment of materiality, a becoming-less-material as a corollary of becoming-more-spiritual. The two are not playing a zero-sum game. Rather, the spiritualization of all things is referring to what I aimed to discuss in section 3a as the sacramental (indeed incarnational) logic of adoption and irrigation of material reality precisely as material. Such distinctions will be of paramount importance to Chapter VI.

<sup>233</sup> See Matsoukas, “The Economy of the Holy Spirit,” 402.

<sup>234</sup> Consider again the deep integrity for Chrysostom between the celebration of saints and the confrontation of those who do not hold them to be holy: “wherever [there is] the memory of martyrs, in that place is also the shame of the Greeks”

Even on the celestial plane the bifurcating effect of saintly mediation is stark: while the angels crowd thickly around the martyr and those who embrace the grace he mediates, the demons gnash their smoky teeth and flee the scene.<sup>235</sup> As Sandwell argues, such an integrity between the affirmation of one position and the repudiation of other positions comes into play where distinct identities are perceived and respected (by those doing the identifying and those who aim to assert such identification) as natural.<sup>236</sup> In this respect, like the interpersonal facticity of personal life, the culture within which hagiography takes shape and in the lexicon of which it addresses itself is also, already, always *intercultural*. Its struggle to be itself is oriented-against insofar as it is oriented-toward. To build up a community, then, involves a relation with and a position toward otherness and the communities or institutions that represent that otherness in a given social setting.<sup>237</sup> So it is no surprise that the “edification” wrought by the repositories and networks of holiness might include the bolstering-against or effacing of otherness—even physically “fortifying”

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(“On the Holy Martyr Babylas” 4, SC 362.302); and the bifurcation of perception among the onlookers of martyrdoms, e.g. of St. Ignatius and St. Drosis (see again section 2b).

<sup>235</sup> Andrade’s “The Processions of John Chrysostom” sheds valuable light on how, for Chrysostom, “the sights, noises, and smells of civic spaces and performances did not generate or refer to abstract signs; they invited either holy or demonic presence” (166). Chrysostom’s homily “On All the Martyrs” contains one of the richest celebrations of this hagiographical frustration of the demonic powers: “What could one say about the sufferings of demons? For whenever those invisible powers who are terrifying and relentless, who fight against us unannounced, who despise spears and swords and armies and emperors and everything, come and see the martyr’s ash and bones, they are frantic, they get upset, they scream, they burst into flame and take a beating and, through their howls, yell out the martyrs’ power and against their will abandon the bodies which they besieged from the beginning and, driven to violence by the invisible power, they take to their heels and flee” (in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 248). See also “Homily After the Remains of Martyrs” 1 (PG 63.469.31-39), in which the demons, who “do not suffer at all when they look at the sun”, shield their faces from holy relics: “they are blinded and run away and hide a great distance away,” repelled by the same force that “sanctifies [ἁγιάζουσα] those who approach with faith.” Throughout our examination of hagiographical processes, such discourse of the demonic has been and will continue to be a fertile field when considering the intercultural stakes and salvos of Christian polemic; Chrysostom, indeed, applies the poetic heft of demonic associations to every cultural institution that upholds or has once had an affinity with Greek religion (see Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 88-89, and for broader context, Kalleres, *City of Demons*, 1-21). As useful as it is to read such language in light of the political contours of the day that would warrant such an opprobrium, the association works both ways: the political, intercultural contours within which hagiography operates themselves have theological stakes, and as much as the hagiographical media are conditioned by the dynamics of the social order, that social order is actualized and developed by people perceiving it to be transfigured by the presence and power of holiness.

<sup>236</sup> See Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 3-4, although the argument is made throughout her work.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 65, on the ways that Chrysostom’s effort to instill and enhance Christian ways of life made “constant reference to what it was to be Greek or Jewish.”

(*teichnizei*) Christian cities against the weapons of their enemies, “more securely than any impregnable wall of adamant.”<sup>238</sup>

And so: I conclude my study of Chrysostom’s contribution to the emerging Greek Orthodox paradigm of hagiography as a theology of struggle with an analysis of this encultured, intercultural edification: ancient developments that, as we have already seen in Part One, have a long and powerful afterlife.<sup>239</sup> In the particular contexts in which Chrysostom’s hagiographical production takes place, we may identify three cultural interfaces at which his discourse constructs walls and checkpoints for the edifice of holiness. These interfaces, to be examined in turn, are the intra-church anxieties over “Judaizing” and anti-Nicene factionalism, the fourth-century culture wars between the appropriating tendencies of Hellenized Christianity and the enduring allegiances of Roman polytheism, and the all-too-worldly imperial state against which Chrysostom configured his vision of a rectifying holiness.

For Chrysostom, *orthodoxia* was not merely a matter of unanimity on matters of faith and worship. What people believed about the relationship between divinity and humanity would ramify directly into their experience of self and their behavior in all walks of their life—their *politeia*. Yet *orthodoxia* was by no means ensured by Christian identity, and public edification was by no means a unified vision. Among the range of rival Christian groups were the faction of Chrysostom and his bishop Meletius but also “Anomoean” Christians,<sup>240</sup> committed to different theological formulations but also to different configurations of ecclesial community and authority. Chrysostom refers to still others as

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<sup>238</sup> “On the Egyptian Martyrs” 1 (PG 50.694.25-34). Here too the bodies of the saints “do not only ward off the attacks of these sense-perceptible and visible enemies, but also the schemes of the invisible demons” (who are still, here, presented by Chrysostom as the *more dangerous foe*, not as a metaphor for religious or political antagonists; see also Kalleres, *City of Demons*, 87-112, on the elision between the demons and the Jews in Chrysostom’s *Against the Jews* homilies).

<sup>239</sup> As Shepardson agrees, “Demonstrating the power dynamics of controlling the places of fourth-century Antioch might, for example, facilitate a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of Israeli ‘settlements’ in Palestinian territory; explain some of the challenges that a country will face as long as individuals’ primary political identity is, for example, Sunni or Shi’i instead of Iraqi; give voice to some of the silent forces at play in, for example, Kurdish bids for, and other nations’ opposition to, an independent Kurdistan; and it provides a sharp reminder about the erasure of cultures and people that can too easily happen when places are renamed and redefined without attention to the power dynamics involved and active care for those who are disenfranchised.”

<sup>240</sup> On Anomoean Christianity, a form of hard-line rather than moderate Arianism, see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 10-13, 60-62.

“Judaizers” (*Ioudaizontes*), who appear not to have been multiple-belongers in a modern sense but rather to have not understood “Christian” and “Jewish” as separate positions or identities in the first place—in sharp contrast from Chrysostom’s work to reinforce precisely that distinction.<sup>241</sup>

Meletius, the Nicene bishop of Antioch who presided over Chrysostom’s baptism and was exiled by Arians (under emperor Valens) three times before his death in 381,<sup>242</sup> was a divisive figure, one whose universal acclaim by those attending the festival could not have been taken for granted by the homilist. Chrysostom’s praise for Meletius therefore had to perform a vision of edification-by-excision. “Because of this that man is enviable: he begat children such as this; and you too are enviable, because you were allotted such a father. Noble and wondrous is the root, but also the fruits of that root are worthy of it.”<sup>243</sup> A metaphorical division is indicated between two kinds of children in a household (*oikos*)—those who take after their parent and are worthy of him, and those who do and are not.<sup>244</sup> Meletius’ posthumous patronage of those who love him and the configuration of *orthodoxia* and *politeia* that he represents, like his exile and return in life, “show forth the firmness of your faith to those enemies fighting you and

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<sup>241</sup> For more on the jockeying of these factions in Antioch, see Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 45-47, and Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places*, 92-128. Interpreters of these fourth century ecclesial divisions more often turn to the sermons “Against the Jews” and “Against the Anomoeans,” mining them for the clearest available sense of who these alternative Christians were and why the stakes of their presence and commitments were so high for ecclesiastics like Chrysostom (see, for instance, Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 82-90, and Wilkin, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 68-79, 116-27). Considering, as I am, the intercultural struggle enunciated in specifically *hagiographical* media and the public transformation they are expected to render, it better serves to remain with festival homilies where Chrysostom configured the saints as mortaring shut such ecclesiological fissures and helping to erect the sanctifying unity of the church on the toppled walls of other possible edifices.

<sup>242</sup> See Mayer, Introduction to “On Saint Meletius,” in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 39, and Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 24, 36-37.

<sup>243</sup> “On Saint Meletius” 1 (PG 50.515.18-22). However, Mayer suggests that the upbeat attitude Chrysostom takes toward his audience’s enthusiasm for the saint may also be an indication of rival liturgical calendars (such that the supporters of Meletius’ rival simply may have been elsewhere). See Mayer, Introduction to “On Saint Meletius,” in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 40.

<sup>244</sup> The longstanding tangle of associations between idolatry and adultery, and between heresy and the inappropriate influence of particular “heresiarchs” whose disseminated influence can be traced back to their “seductive” influence in the church, can be discerned here; Christian groups asserting divergent theologies or ecclesiologies are imagined as bastard children, threatening the integrity of the household.

fighting over his experienced teaching.<sup>245</sup> Returning to his theatrical metaphor, Chrysostom identifies Meletius in his governing position at the Council of Chalcedon as a living martyr before the eyes of powerful spectators, “such that the theater for that blessed man was dazzling [*lampron ... to theatron*].”<sup>246</sup> For Chrysostom in a divided church of Antioch, the life of Meletius was “dazzling” in two tightly-connected ways, consistent with the equivocacy of hagiographical edification more generally: it was both awe-inspiring for those many bishops who were sympathetic and edified by the “archetypal image” of his holiness, and stunning or blinding for those bishops who were aggrieved and challenged by his position. The reaction to the presence of holiness in the person of the saint here constitutes a shibboleth of orthodoxy that can later be mobilized as proof by the hagiographical homilist.

No less than the sermon on Meletius, Chrysostom’s treatments of the Maccabees were invested in winnowing the available interpretive and cultural positions to edify one and topple others.<sup>247</sup> With the martyr cult of the Maccabees having been adopted by gentile Christians only as late as the fourth century (and even later in Constantinople than in Antioch), Chrysostom was faced with a two-front struggle with those who “do not have the proper opinion about these saints”:<sup>248</sup> he strove, on the one hand, to manage the Jewish/Christian co-celebration of the cult in a way that did not cede ground to so-called “Judaizing” Christians who viewed Jewish and Christian religiosity as fully compatible, and on the other hand, to

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<sup>245</sup> “On Saint Meletius” 2 (PG 50.517.45-47).

<sup>246</sup> “On Saint Meletius” 3 (PG 50.518.40-41). Chrysostom does not miss the opportunity to reaffirm the pivotal role Meletius had in further authorizing the Nicene position at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, where he died by God’s design in a place of prominence so that bishops everywhere the world over, gazing upon his holiness [*ἀγιωσύνην*] as if it were an archetypal image [*ἀρχέτυπον εικόνα*] and taking from him a clear paradigm of the service accordant with this [position of] sovereignty, might have a steadfast and extremely clear standard with which they must administer [*οἰκονομεῖν*] and steer the churches” (“On Saint Meletius” 3 [PG 50.518.20-25]).

<sup>247</sup> Moreover, the same imaginative bifurcation of the saints’ doubly-dazzling quality is used: insofar as the “flashes and blazes” (*μαρμαρυγαὶ καὶ λαμπηδόνας*) of light streaming from their relics, in Chrysostom’s rhetorical prestidigitation, make the places where the martyrs are celebrated “glowing and exultant” (*φαιδρὰ καὶ περιχαρῆς*), and at the same time “put out the eyes of the devil” (*ἀποτυφλοῦσι τοῦ διαβόλου τὰς ὄψεις*): these passages are from Homily 1 on the Maccabees” 1 (PG 50.617.19-36). See again the discussion of this metaphorical strategy in section 2b.

<sup>248</sup> “On Eleazar and the Seven Boys” 1 (PG 63.525.36-37). The seven Maccabee brothers, their mother, and their rabbi are reported in the Septuagint to have been executed by the Greek state in the second century BCE for refusing to touch sacrificial meats and asserting the Law of God to have their allegiance over the law of the kingdom.

promote the cult of the Maccabees as a legitimate and edifying hagiographical complex for Christians at risk of neglecting continuities between the old and new covenants.<sup>249</sup> Preaching in church on the eve of the festival of the Maccabees, John seeks to leave no doubt that this is a truly *Christian* festival and to equip attendees with persuasive arguments with which to confront the Jews, Jewish-Christians, and “Judaizing” Christians they are likely to encounter there. Preaching to those present at the festival itself, he again drives an interpretive wedge between the prophetic insight of the Maccabees, coming to see *in extremis* the author of their (and the Jews’) salvation, and the incomprehension of the onlookers, metaphorically mapped onto those of Chrysostom’s own time who refused to see the martyrs in “befitting” ways.<sup>250</sup>

Around the eastern Mediterranean, the fourth century was a crucial hinge between the intercultural and interreligious configurations of Graeco-Roman antiquity and those of the Byzantine era. It involved not only ecclesial infighting and the lingering, messy bifurcation of Judaism and Christianity but also “open contact and conflict [between] the cultural institutions of the pagan world” and the ascendant religio-political institutions of Christian imperialism,<sup>251</sup> the latter of which reached one early peak in assertiveness with the Theodosian dynasty through which Chrysostom lived and with which he came to grapple. An obvious and powerful component of the hagiographical dynamics at work in Chrysostom’s discourse and the festivals over which he presided is the construction of Greek religion as a constitutive other to Christianity. Even as Chrysostom is continuing the broad patristic project of

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<sup>249</sup> See Mayer, Introduction to “Homily 1 on the Maccabees,” in Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, 135-36; and Wilkin, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 88-94.

<sup>250</sup> For instance, Chrysostom is not shy about claiming the Maccabees’ allegiance “to the Jesus they desired [ποθούμενον Ἰησοῦν]” two centuries before his birth; he expounds at length on the involvement of Christ in the covenant for which the Maccabees gave their lives (and therefore, that “they received their wounds on behalf of Christ [ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ]”) (see “Homily 1 on the Maccabees” 3 [PG 50.622.38] and “On Eleazar and the Seven Boys” 2 [PG 63.526.24]). Although I have focused in this section mainly on the situation in Antioch, it should be noted that John’s hagiographical production in Constantinople was no less invested in the shoring up an ecclesial edifice atop church divides. The historians Sozomen and Socrates alike note that the festival processions John organized through the streets of the capital served to counteract and even directly oppose the celebratory activities of anti-Nicene factions; Chrysostom himself describes the transmission of the relics of St. Phocas through the city as “leading out a battle line [παράταξις] [opposite] the heretics” (“On Saint Phocas” 2 [PG 50.700.41-42]). See Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom,” 178-79.

<sup>251</sup> Vryonis, “The *Panēgyris* of the Byzantine Saint,” 209. See again the discussion of such fusions and tensions in section 1a.

appropriating and remolding the intellectual and cultural heritage of antiquity as a Christian treasure (as was especially important with classical *paideia*, much of the philosophical tradition, and as we have seen, the psychagogic resources of theatrical mediation), his saints are characters whose *politeia* emplots a zero-sum attitude toward Greekness as a cultural construct.

This attitude is especially vivid in Chrysostom's treatise *On Blessed Babylas and Against the Greeks* and his later festival homily "On Babylas the Martyr." In these texts, linked by a dramatic theomachy between Apollo/Emperor Julian and Christ/Babylas/Meletius/Chrysostom, the preacher relentlessly contrasts *apparent* polytheist goods with *actual* Christian goods, excoriates the Greek festivals for their enticements to idolatry while exalting the divine power manifest in Babylas' relics, and "uses the principles of Greek ethical theory to demonstrate that the Hellenic ideal of virtue is realized only among Christians."<sup>252</sup> Chrysostom's audiences, passing the burned-out ruins of the temple of Apollo at Daphne, are invited to perceive them as monuments to *their own* communal victory over the demonic powers, and so doing, to participate in the reinscription of the physical landscape of Antioch with a Christian narrative of political and cultural inevitability.<sup>253</sup> In the case of Babylas, the "great treasure of benefit" offered by the saint to the Christian household,<sup>254</sup> is a key to the proper understanding of events, by which meaning can be made and asserted in a civic order whose intercultural history is engraved on the very streets and buildings that orient the daily lives of a mixed populace long after the saint is gone.<sup>255</sup> "Such," Chrysostom concludes in the treatise, "is the strength of the martyrs—both living and dead, both while standing in

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<sup>252</sup> Schatkin and Harkins, *Saint John Chrysostom*, 42.

<sup>253</sup> See Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places*, 50-56 (on fourth-century strategies of asserting control over space by narrating its meaning) and 67-79 (on the "politics of memory" at work in Chrysostom's [and Julian's] investment of the ruined temple with evidential force in the shifting interreligious contestation of Antioch).

<sup>254</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 40 (SC 362.140).

<sup>255</sup> As Lillios keenly observes, "Memories are not primarily about revisiting the past, but are about defining the present and managing the future of individuals and groups within meaningful, yet shifting, contexts" ("Creating Memory in Prehistory," 146). See also Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 132-43.

these places and again after they have left them behind. For their achievements flow together [and] are joined from beginning to end.”<sup>256</sup>

Edification, then, is powerfully *spatial*, in that the reinforcement and ramification of holiness—enshrining cultural currents both relies on the lived interpretation of landscapes/cityscapes and results in the transformation of this culturally cohabited terrain, including how it is used and contested.<sup>257</sup> The final interface I will consider as a site of public hagiographical edification in the fertile time of Chrysostom manifests this spatiality all the more robustly: the interface between conflicting visions or currents of Christian *politeia* in the institutional sense—one the Christianization of an empire, the other an imperialization of Christianity. Arriving to Constantinople as its new bishop in 397, Chrysostom took quickly to his expanded authority, intervening in church affairs far afield from the capital and working to erode rival Christian imaginaries.<sup>258</sup> During the subsequent decade, he “endeavored to convert Constantinople into a truly Christian city ... [trying] to dominate the ideologically charged landscape of the city and to transform its public spaces from havens for demons into the gathering places of an ‘angelic’ community.”<sup>259</sup> Whereas the Theodosian dynasty had reaffirmed an imperial culture of extravagant

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<sup>256</sup> *On Blessed Babylas* 127 (SC 362.274). This pluriform “end” (τέλους) it is clear, is neither the end of the saint’s life, nor the end of the saint’s *Life*. The narrative performance of the latter in the context of a festival dedicated to the celebration of a former serves to graft the audience—to whom the holy drama is mediated—into the continuation of that drama, as was always, Chrysostom insists, the point of the spectacular character of the acts and miracles of the saints to begin with. As he had already asserted at the beginning of the narrative (22), the events of the saint’s life and the events of his readers’ lives “each bear upon each other, and it is not possible to disjoin their conformity [ἀκολουθίαν]” (SC 362.118).

<sup>257</sup> Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places*, 3-10, addresses directly the value (for the study of late antiquity) of analysing the construction and remembrance of places. Part One of this dissertation has made much of such analysis in modernity.

<sup>258</sup> See Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City*, 10-12, and Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 103-09, 137-41. Critical to these efforts was continuing to pack the young capital with the relics of saints from around the Christian world. Chrysostom did not begin these efforts but doubled down on them and is rightly famous for their public prominence. As Kelly observes, “Constantinople, having been founded after the cessation of persecution, unfortunately could not boast of martyrs of its own. From 381 onwards if not earlier, the authorities had been diligent in importing sacred relics, some from places which had a surplus of them and others of special relevance to the city, and installing them in shrines where they could be venerated” (*Golden Mouth*, 139).

<sup>259</sup> Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom,” 162. See also Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 123-24, on the delicacy of such a recasting of public space as hagiographical (that is, inscribed by and representational of holiness). For instance, monks occupying the streets of Constantinople might have initially appeared desirable, but in fact they would become a hagiographical challenge for Chrysostom; he wanted his congregants to have monks as models of Christian πολιτεία, but

political pomp and a cult of (secular) personality surrounding the ruling family,<sup>260</sup> Chrysostom strove to assert as the correct (*orthoí*) representatives of Christ on earth the Spirit-transmitting network of priests and bishops, monks and virgins, and martyrs both living and dead, all of whose *politeia* (way of life) was for the new bishop the proper lifeblood of a Christian *politeia* (commonwealth).<sup>261</sup>

The ways that Chrysostom deployed celebratory processions and festival culture to fill the Constantinopolitan cityscape with ecclesial associations provide powerful evidence for and interpretation of this contestation.<sup>262</sup> We can, moreover, see it at work in the festival sermons themselves from this period. In his “Homily After the Remains of Martyrs,” Chrysostom commends the holy *mimēsis* of the empress Eudoxia (with whom his relationship was unsteady, to say the least)—precisely insofar as she has *divested* herself of imperial regalia for the festival procession over which he is presiding. The degree of the empress’ proper, praiseworthy subordination to the power of the saints “in the midst of such a great theater” is emphasized, slyly, by contrast with her typical “human vanity” and “masks,” with which the imperial family has elevated itself.<sup>263</sup> The appropriation, imitation, and onward mediation of the martyrs’ holiness became possible *for the empress* only insofar as she “cast aside her royalty and diadems and all of the vanity associated with great abundance, [and] clothed herself in a cloak of humility in place of the purple [imperial garb]—because of it, shining all the more.”<sup>264</sup> That the empress is praised for this putative

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he also sought to rarify the image of the monks in their imagination, and living examples that contradicted this by milling about in mundane ways did no such thing!

<sup>260</sup> Both of which “framed their spectators within the fold of a perceived civic community and a shared Roman past” (Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom,” 166).

<sup>261</sup> See Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 125-32. See also 123: “Much has been written about whether the fourth century was a time of conflict between distinct religions or a time of toleration and coexistence. What is less often noted is that having an understanding of how far religion is seen as a separate sphere from others and as a private rather than a public and political matter is crucial to answering this question.”

<sup>262</sup> See Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom,” 164, on the role of “human bodies and their physical properties” in the political aims and effects of hagiographical festivals. My own attempt at a phenomenology of the festival procession (section 2a) should also be of value in fleshing out Chrysostom’s strategy and its effectiveness.

<sup>263</sup> “Homily After the Remains of Martyrs” 1 (PG 63.469.11-15). Of course, it is not clear whether such a subordination is indeed her intention and not merely Chrysostom’s renarration of the festival so as to score the point!

<sup>264</sup> “Homily After the Remains of Martyrs” 2 (PG 63.470.58-61). See Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 171, and Barnes and Bevan, *The Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom*, 29-30 (on the context of these hostilities); Zincone, *Giovanni Crisostomo*, 131-40 (on

self-subordination only thinly disguises the sharp theological-political indictment at hand and the role played by the festival in disseminating this perspective.

In this all-too-brief orbit of three interlocking cultural interfaces at which Chrysostom's hagiography constructs and endeavors to stimulate a political edification, my intention is certainly not to *promote* Chrysostom's intransigent and often coarse political and theological positions toward otherness. Nor am I highlighting the contingency and contextuality of heresiological discourse merely to demand a repudiation of it. The point, rather, is that even in the face of a frustrating shortage of evidence into the reception of Chrysostom's discourse, we may take hermeneutical confidence that the rhetoric *matters* in the shifting institutions and cultural currents that make the social world what it is, even as the precise effects of the rhetoric cannot be readily measured.<sup>265</sup> The poetics of the hagiographical festival in all its irreducible complexity are *productive*—productive of patterns of perception, productive of group identities and the political reverberations thereof, productive of institutional authority and the differing social positions and belief structures that are necessary to maintain, or undermine, such authority.<sup>266</sup>

The images with which Chrysostom strives to energize his audiences as proper hagiographical recipients and onward hagiographical mediators leave no doubt that their participation is indispensable for the emerging Orthodox vision of a world remade by the material, sense-perceptible, psychagogical mediation of holiness. As and after they participate diversely in the festivals—walking to the tombs, singing the hymns, touching the bones, hearing the stories, returning to the city—hagiographical consumers act in public, becoming “emissaries of liberation [*eleutherias proxenoi*] to others.”<sup>267</sup> The saints

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Chrysostom's relationship with political power more generally); and Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political*, 22-26, 52-54, 71 (on Chrysostom's subordination of state authority to the aims of the church).

<sup>265</sup> While Sandwell argues that “Chrysostom's ideological, rule-bound constructions of exclusive religious identities made little permanent impact on people” (*Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 280), Shepardson demonstrates how Chrysostom's homilies *contributed* to the transformation of space in real time, just as material *relics* change the use and affect of places where they are installed (*Controlling Contested Places*, 7-10, 241-51).

<sup>266</sup> See Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 13.

<sup>267</sup> “Homily on Martyrs” (50.666.17).

are the roots, they the fruits;<sup>268</sup> the saints have their true repose not in tombs of stone but in living flesh, in the hearts of their *mimētai* and their “righteous deeds and faithful zeal and vigorous conscience toward God ... [and in] this church [that] has risen up more radiantly than any monument upon a martyr.”<sup>269</sup> For Chrysostom, the liability of a concentration of holiness among venerable saints was that the *continuity* of God’s transformative outpouring into the world would be compromised, leaving in its place a charismatic patronage asking little of its adherents and allowing them to appropriate holiness as reservoirs rather than as conduits. Edification in this sense of personal satisfaction was an ongoing risk and an unacceptable outcome; personal transformation was the means, not the end, of sanctification.<sup>270</sup>

It may be said, then, that (in this hagiographical paradigm) the holiness manifest in and mediated by the saints is not their own, but is commensurate with the degree of its givenness to the church and to the world. Though Christians may celebrate the stories of particular people, “the honor is held in common”<sup>271</sup> and the refiguring glory living through those stories belongs to all. “How could this be?” Chrysostom ponders at the opening of a homily “On Saint Romanos”; it is “because the martyrs are part of us, our very limbs. ... Glorious are the limbs, but the preeminence of their glory does not put them into estrangement from their connection with the remaining parts. For in this way they become especially glorious, when they do not break away from their connection [*synapheian*] to us.”<sup>272</sup> Holiness *is*, in this respect, the mediation of holiness: the *connectedness* of the saints to the world they have been lifted up to serve and save, the overflowing of a fundamental divine benevolence entrusted to them and radiant from their very bones like the white heat of a blacksmith’s iron.

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<sup>268</sup> See again the use of this image in “On Saint Meletius” 1.

<sup>269</sup> This is part of a remarkable passage from “On Saint Eustathius” 2 (PG 50.600.23-35), already discussed in section 2a.

<sup>270</sup> See Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 118-43, on Chrysostom’s prioritization of the community over the individual, ascetic charity over ascetic purity, and the challenge of convincing his congregations of the mimetic value of saintly πολιτεία while downplaying the distance between saintly spirituality and that of the laity.

<sup>271</sup> “On Saint Romanos” 1 (PG 50.605.36).

<sup>272</sup> “On Saint Romanos” 1 (PG 50.605.31-32, 607.1-4). In the omitted section, Chrysostom cites 1 Corinthians 12:21-26 and exegetes it by analogy to the communal celebration of a victor in the Olympic games.

## Conclusion: The Making and Breaking of St. John Chrysostom

Would Chrysostom's audiences have recognized in their own lives the possibilities and pitfalls articulated to them? Would they have gone on to interpret their own experiences in light of the tools provided to them by a beloved preacher? Could they even have done what Sandwell seems to have prematurely ruled out—chosen to see themselves and their world as more intelligible in these terms, and to carry out their lives in accordance with what they believed it all meant?<sup>273</sup> There is, of course, no guarantee whatsoever that the people who crowded at the tombs to hear the golden-tongued preacher interacted with the multimedia at hand in the ways that Chrysostom expected or hoped that they would.<sup>274</sup> As Maxwell puts it: “The preacher’s popularity gave him influence but not control over the laity’s beliefs about their religious obligations.”<sup>275</sup> Indeed, an assimilation of discourse or practice all too readily involves making the object consumed *similar to oneself*, rather than the other way around.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> See Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 20: “The attitude of rule-bound Christian leaders could never fit with the more subtle ways in which most people were using religious allegiance in the practice of their daily lives. However hard Christian leaders sought to impose their views on the world, the habitual sense of ordinary people as to what was appropriate would continue to resist this.” As Maxwell notes, however, the sermons are certainly no *less* than points of contact and exchange between elites and masses—they can only be more, though to what extent is uncertain (see *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 8). Shepardson, likewise, quite rightly observes that it “would not be reasonable to assume that leaders were always or entirely successful in shaping the identities and behaviors of those who lived in Antioch” (*Controlling Contested Places*, 2), but that the opposite is no more to be presumed, and that it took the participation of the many and not merely the elite few to inscribe the space of Antioch with the sort of intercultural topography she analyzes in her monograph.

<sup>274</sup> Indeed, there is some evidence that they frequently do otherwise: we find him frequently trying to curtail risky habits of appropriation, or else acknowledging that his continual warnings about cultural norms strikes many of his listeners as “tiresome and ponderous and hard to satisfy . . . cutting out some of the pleasure of life” (“On 1 Corinthians” 12.6 [PG 61.104.40.42])! See Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 162, as well as 107-08, where she finds Chrysostom’s impression of his audience’s habits of appropriation to be mixed and inconsistent (understandably, given the realities of a mixed audience and the diversity of rhetorical ends to which his sermons were directed), sometimes within a single sermon: “[Chrysostom] might complain that his listeners were not learning anything at all from him, that he repeated the same precepts daily without anyone improving in any way, but elsewhere he complimented them on their enthusiasm, intelligence, and breadth of knowledge.”

<sup>275</sup> Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 169. See also 108, on Chrysostom’s varying rhetorical configuration of his audiences, for different purposes, which would likewise have exerted influence but not control over their corporate self-apprehension.

<sup>276</sup> See de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 166, and also 18: “[a] (‘popular’) use of religion modifies its functioning.” De Certeau’s argument that consumption is *necessarily* such a “poaching” rather than a transformative interplay is, it is safe

However, the effectiveness of Chrysostom's words, his leadership, and all he represented in his public *politeia* is clearly enduring, even if its specific effects upon specific people is impossible to ascertain. Through the continuing circulation of such a wealth of homilies, as channels of instruction for the church at large, his "audience" was invited to continue in perpetuity. Insofar as Chrysostom was acclaimed as a saint by many in his own lifetime and celebrated as a martyr shortly after his death,<sup>277</sup> his homilies can be construed to mediate holiness in a second, no-less-important respect. For those many across the ecumenical terrain who continue to view Chrysostom as a saint and hierarch, the words that come from his "golden mouth" are not merely authoritative discussions of holiness but themselves holy enunciations, sense-perceived relics of human ignition by the Spirit. To perceive Chrysostom as a representative of holiness is to identify his words with the same well-fueled imagination, fire-breathing representation, and heated-iron edification that he celebrated in the saints and sought to catalyze in his audience.

The funeral oration for Chrysostom, given by a Constantinopolitan deacon shortly after news of his death in exile reached the capital, gives the clearest sense of the early hagiographical energy around the great hagiographer himself.<sup>278</sup> The speech bears all the signs of having appropriated and attempting creatively to reuse Chrysostom's hagiographical logic. It imagines his presence in Constantinople as having

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to say, an overcorrection. Ricoeur's two-way exchange at the interface of refiguration may better respect the real ways in which human beings are influenced, conducted, and indeed transformed by the media they consume, especially when those media are invested with (not least, religious) authority and institutional prominence.

<sup>277</sup> Drawing on the fifth-century church histories, Maxwell notes the immediacy of Chrysostom's investiture of authority by the masses of Constantinople: "When he was chosen as bishop of Constantinople, he was taken away from Antioch secretly, so as not to upset the citizens of Antioch. In the capital, his sermons solidified his relationship with the laity, so that they did not abandon him when his enemies spread rumors that questioned his orthodoxy. Later, when he was sent into exile from Constantinople after a falling out with the imperial family, riots ensued" (*Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 3). See also Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 130, on Chrysostom's popular preaching habits in Constantinople, and 232, on the "furious outburst of popular indignation" following his exile.

<sup>278</sup> Besides the documents of the synod that deposed him, this oration is the earliest surviving (and probably the earliest composed) account of Chrysostom's ministry by someone other than himself. While it is anything but an unbiased portrayal, the powerful impact of Chrysostom on his followers and their own investment in saint-making and saint-celebrating is, indeed, precisely the funeral oration's interest here. See Barnes and Bevan, *The Funeral Speech for John Chrysostom*, 32-33. But see also Mayer, "Media Manipulation as a Tool in Religious Conflict," for a study of the war of information and representation between Chrysostom's supporters and his detractors, in which the former succeeded ultimately in suppressing hostile sources and engraving the hagiographical account into the broader imaginary.

drawn down the angels into the city spaces, having had a kindling effect on the zeal of the citizenry, and having shamed into submission those who were committed to heterodox position; Chrysostom comes to rest in the capital as a cornerstone of personal and public edification.<sup>279</sup> The funeral oration adopts Chrysostom's own style of metaphorical transposition and imaginative synthesis: when the bishop returns to the city after his first exile, the crowds coming to meet him light up the Bosphorus with their torches as if it were a garden of luminous roses, and recognize in the bishop's calm return the figure of Moses returning once more to chastise Pharaoh for his hardheartedness.<sup>280</sup> When Chrysostom is ultimately persecuted by parties threatened by the rectifying impetus of his holy discourse and conduct, he and his faithful congregants respond not by fighting them on their level of political intrigue, but by flipping the script to use even the worldliest spaces of Constantinople *as if* they were churches of the most spiritual cast.<sup>281</sup> And the author of the funeral oration even imagines the possibility that Chrysostom is still alive, having been hidden away by executioners who know that a dead saint is more powerful than a living saint.<sup>282</sup>

Given the invariable *multimediation* at work in this emerging hagiographical idiom, however, we should not expect a funeral oration alone to inscribe the hagiographer into the ranks of the hagiographed. Chrysostom's bones have their own story to tell. Thirty-five years after the preacher's death, his remains

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<sup>279</sup> See *The Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom* 16-19 (in Barnes and Bevan, 47-49).

<sup>280</sup> See *The Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom* 80-82 (in Barnes and Bevan, 83-85). The author of the speech asserts that it is the *Jews* of the city who make the connection between Chrysostom and Moses, a claim of interest given Chrysostom's own polemical stance toward the Jews. This detail, most likely invented, serves to evoke a sense of reconciliation—a reconciliation, of course, that involves religious others recognizing the holiness of one who has resisted them all along.

<sup>281</sup> See *The Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom* 96-97 (in Barnes and Bevan, 93): after the prefects and soldiers forcibly remove John from presiding at Hagia Sophia and drive out the congregation into the streets, they take to the hippodrome, the markets, even the bathhouses, continuing to sing and pray, "so that it appears to me that it is due to [Chrysostom] that all [Constantine's] works became churches – the colonnades, the marketplace, the city, the baths, the hippodrome, all of which had been filled with prayers while the holy father was present, but reverted to their former status after he had departed, including the church itself, which has taken the name and function of a public square." The historian Socrates confirms that Chrysostom's partisans, taking to call themselves "Johannites," held services in the bathhouses and other public institutions after Chrysostom's second deposition (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.18). See also Andrade, "The Processions of John Chrysostom," 175-83, for further interpretation of how this behavior of John's partisans after his deposition can be traced to his deliberate strategy of public/spatial Christianization during his time as bishop.

<sup>282</sup> "If then he still survives, my brothers, we will see him at some time sitting on the throne like Joseph and distributing with spiritual sustenance to all; but if he has really migrated to the true life and has returned to the longed-for Christ, we have a martyr to serve as an intercessor for us" (*The Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom* 136 [in Barnes and Bevan, 114]).

were transported back into Constantinople from where they had rested in Comani, to be interred in the Church of the Holy Apostles—but not before Emperor Theodosius the Younger “had laid his face upon the coffin, and entreated that his parents might be forgiven for having so unadvisedly persecuted the bishop.”<sup>283</sup> These relics were removed again during the crusaders’ sack of Constantinople in 1204 and brought west to sit in a place of honor in the Vatican, where the embrace of this Greek saint by the Latin church belied the ecumenical violence of his seizure for eight hundred years. But in 2004, Chrysostom’s relics were repatriated, tying up this one strand of the many that could be traced of Chrysostom’s long hagiographical irrigation of history. Patriarch Bartholomew’s words upon accepting the repentant gift of the Vatican recall Chrysostom’s own on the joyful crowds filling the Bosphorus and lighting up the night:

The bodies of the Saints, as dwelling places of the grace of God and of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, are as holy as are their souls. Their holiness and grace were not left behind after their sleep in the Lord, but reside in their holy relics. ... Therefore, when we approach and venerate the holy relics with piety, we become participants in divine grace and in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. ... We have before us the ‘tangible’ example of the Saint whose holy relic we venerate. He believed, he loved, he hoped, he struggled, he persevered, he gained, he was united, he was sanctified, he was crowned, he became the ‘extension’ of Jesus Christ to the present time and forever more. ... So our hearts with emotion again exclaim words of filial love, infinite respect and pious supplication to these Saints. We all unanimously cry out once more to Saint John Chrysostom to take ‘your throne,’ as shouted by the lords and people when his holy relic was returned for the first time to Constantinople from its exile ...<sup>284</sup>



*Figure 5.1: Patriarch Bartholomew I blessing the relics of John Chrysostom following their return to the Cathedral of St. George, Patriarchate of Constantinople. November 30, 2004. Photograph courtesy of the Press Office of the Apostolic Pilgrimage to Jerusalem.*

<sup>283</sup> Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.36; cf. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.45. See also Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 286-90, on the translation of Chrysostom’s relics to Constantinople. It should be clear by this point that Emperor Theodosius’ actions as reported by the church historians need not be strictly factual to be highly significant.

<sup>284</sup> Bartholomew I, “On the Occasion of the Arrival of the Holy Relics of Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom,” 426-27.

With this chapter on the multimediation of saint's-day festivals and their peerless impresario, John Chrysostom, we backtracked from Part One's modern case study (of the lived theology of struggle enacted and warranted in hagiographical media) in order to consider how the mediation of holiness was already in the fourth century being authoritatively theorized and strategically mobilized as resistance to a wide range of heterodoxies, and so doing, continuing to construct both those heterodoxies and the orthodoxy defined by its opposition to them. As with the modern case study, moreover, the ancient festivals and Chrysostom's homiletic distillation of them provided an arena to explore not only *how* hagiography has manifested resistance and rectification, but also *what* are the processes that, I argue, offer a more satisfactory construal of what hagiography is (in light of its psychosomatic inscription and appropriation, its interpersonal and intercultural voltage). It is the case, I have begun to show, that the multimediation of holiness has been a privileged means of resistance in Greek Orthodox theological culture not only in modernity, but already in this pivotal period in the constitution of Christian orthodoxy following the reign of Constantine I.

We have considered *hagiographical imagination* insofar as the impressions made on the soul by sensory stimuli come to infuse the understanding and so the action of human persons. As the food digested by the body changes over time the capacities of the body, so too do the images stored up in the soul have detrimental or beneficial effects on how a person is able to view and to interact with the world. In appropriating a theatrical idiom for the festivals in which he played a starring role, Chrysostom seeks to refuel and so reconstitute the imagination of his communities, rectifying the damage he considers to have been done there by the theaters "without" (*exōthen*) which mediate profanity instead of sanctity.

In examining the *hagiographical representation* at work in the festival, we have recognized that the mimetic mediation of holiness is a venue of participation by which festivalgoers both *interact* with

inscriptions of holiness (whether concretely in stone and paint or metaphorically in the city streets and the emotional manifestations of the clergy) and *become* themselves a part of the mediating matrix. Thus it is that the bodies of people walking and singing in procession to the tombs are no less hagiographical media than the bodies of saints laid in those tombs, and so too that the audience of the festival homily is a constitutive part of that homily's representational act. But the *mise-en-scène*, the total signifying system of the festival, does not stand in total interpretive openness to its participants; there is still an authoritative discourse that filters and endorses a certain interpretation what has taken place, not determining but certainly influencing how the whole festival is processed in the experience of its participants. It is in this discourse, here represented by Chrysostom's homilies, that we find a metaphorical synthesis at work not only between the hagiographical media of the festival and the authorized theological reading he intends to promote, but also between past, present, and future: the remembered and narrated lives of people once perceived as holy, the active experience of those who have come together to celebrate them, and the contested intercultural/political order into which festival participants will return and intervene.

Finally, we have considered the interpretive uptake and open-ended reuse of festival media by their participants as themselves constitutive of hagiographical process, that is as the site of *hagiographical edification*, while acknowledging the difficulty of studying precisely this uptake in detail. Nonetheless, consumption of hagiographical media involves appropriative habits that may be influenced and validated by the church authorities whose discourse we have preserved. These authorities, Chrysostom among them, argue that sensory mediation has been adopted by the Spirit as a conduit of grace, a means of sanctification; on the other hand, the very earthiness of the appropriative pathways puts them at risk of the corruption to which bodies and cultures are held to be liable. We explored this vulnerability of hagiographical appropriation by examining the cultural interfaces where encounters with holiness shape and validate expurgations of perceived religious and political error. Thus it is that Chrysostom uses the

same image for participants in the saint's-day festival that he does for participants in the Eucharist: they are *breathing fire*, and before this fire the devil himself flees in vain terror, ceding ground that he once had held.<sup>285</sup> As such a triumph over the devil and all he represents, hagiographical mediation in all its materiality serves for Chrysostom as a means of cauterizing a broken world, clearing imaginative and institutional space for a Christian community coming to define itself by exclusive alignment with the blinding light and searing heat of the martyrs' victory over the fallen order of things.

As Miller observes, three remarkable and mutually constitutive movements took shape between the fourth and the seventh centuries, giving shape to Orthodox Christianity and in particular to its theology of holiness: "the cult of the saints, the cult of relics, and the production of iconic art—all of which were premised on the conviction that the material world, particularly in the form of the human body, was a locus of spiritual presence" and means for the mediation of holiness.<sup>286</sup> We now transition to the eighth century, in the course of which the "the religious significance of the material world"<sup>287</sup> was crystallized into canonical norms around holy mediation writ large. These norms, however, continued to be formulated and promulgated from a position of exteriority and resistance to forms of heterodoxy that prevailed both within and beyond the church. In the company of John Damascene, a figure of no less theological insight and preeminent influence than Chrysostom, we will consider the synthesis of a canonical model of hagiographical multimediation in which words, images, relics, and liturgies reciprocally infuse one another to address and transform human being. This eighth-century synthesis, moreover, is shaped to the core by intra- and inter-religious controversy and contestation, and the attitudes it enshrines towards Jews,

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<sup>285</sup> I have addressed above the image of the martyr-mimic "breathing fire" (πῦρ πνέοντα) in the "Homily on Martyrs" (PG 50.666.5). In the treatise *To the Catechumens* 3.12 (SC 50.158), Chrysostom describes the devil fleeing the Christian who has just received communion "as if he had seen lion breathing flames from its mouth" (discussed in Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 246).

<sup>286</sup> Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 116.

<sup>287</sup> Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 3. See also 6-7, on the value of juxtaposing the "the new embrace of the holy body as relic, saint, and icon vis-à-vis idolatry and, more particularly, vis-à-vis the iconoclastic controversy that erupted in the eighth century and roiled on into the ninth."

Muslims, and Christians construed as heterodox would remain entangled with the afterlife of its theological achievements. For us it functions as a second focusing lens, by which the diverse hagiographical imaginaries of the patristic centuries have been distilled, correlated, and transmitted as an authoritative whole to late Byzantium and beyond.

## VI

### **Hagiography or Heresy? John Damascene's Microcosmology of Mediation and the Triumph of Orthodoxy**

*The whole human person would not have been saved unless the Lord had taken upon him the whole human person.*

*~Origen, Dialogue with Heraclides*

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*Art does not reproduce what we can see, but rather makes visible what we cannot.*

*~Paul Klee, Creative Credo*

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*Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.*

*~Walter Benjamin, Theses on the Philosophy of History*

## Introduction: The Narrow Way of Holiness

If only there were given to me a honed tongue, worthy to praise him! If only I were set back in those days of old, when in the form of tongues there blazed a divine fire, searing into each of the apostles like a single flame in many parts, so that there might be proclaimed the unified doctrine in many languages! For thus were gathered back into one those many pieces broken apart by error, that ancient error for which men conspired to build the Tower [of Babel], and so earned the wages of their impiety: the sundering of language and, through this, the tearing apart of knowledge. If only there were imparted [*metadoiē*]<sup>1</sup> to me this tongue of the spirit, that I might bear witness to the supernatural excellence of this spirit-bearing man! Then there would be an ocean of words, and a bottomless depth of thoughts—but the grace of the spirit does not yield to words. For a man without the spirit who wishes to speak the things of the spirit would be more successful as a blind man, speaking of the light while yet having darkness for his guide. Therefore, I will now return again to this revered man, kindling my speech as if lighting my own lamp from the radiance of his divine knowledge, so that he himself may be the foundation of my praise and the chorus-leader [*chorēgos*] of us who recognize him.<sup>2</sup>

So wrote Yanah ibn Mansur, more commonly known as John of Damascus, during the first decades of the eighth century. The text is that of his encomium for the feast day of St. John Chrysostom, whose fame for giftedness with language and zeal for the mediation of holiness, so praised in the homily, the author would come to share.<sup>3</sup> In the passage above, immediately prior to Damascene's narration of the saint's life, we may recognize not only longstanding encomiastic tropes but also a particular indebtedness to Chrysostom's own hagiographical logic, as explored in the previous chapter. Like Baarlam or Babylas in Chrysostom's discourse, Chrysostom himself comes to function for his panegyrist, three centuries later, as a link in the white-hot chain mesh of mediation between the Holy Spirit and the human world. For Damascene, the fiery "tongue of the spirit" provides the power for inspired discourse but, at the same time, exceeds the possibility of words to capture the holiness that overflows any attempt to contain it in human media.

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<sup>1</sup> I highlight the use of the verb μεταδίδωμι here, as it will be a theological term of central importance in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> John Damascene, "Encomium to St. John Chrysostom" 4.6-21. All citations from Damascene, unless otherwise noted, refer to chapter and line numbers in P. B. Kotter's *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, and are my own translation from the original. See bibliography for the specific volume and page numbers of these works in Kotter's multi-volume critical edition.

<sup>3</sup> John Damascene was, according to the eighth/ninth-century chronicler Theophanes, referred to also as John Chrysorrhoeas ("flowing with gold"), "because of the golden gleam of spiritual grace that bloomed both in his discourse and in his life" (cited in Louth, *St John Damascene*, 6).

Therefore Chrysostom's prevailing theatrical metaphor is activated, with Damascene's image of the saint as chorus-leader suggesting again the desired transformation of audience members (*akroatai*) into imitators (*mimētai*), participants in the drama and co-mediators of holiness. It is not good enough for onlookers to warm themselves beside the spiritual incandescence of the saints; they must, themselves, catch fire.

Despite the conventional nature of the claim, it is clear that John Damascene is indeed committed to "light his own lamp" from his predecessor's hagiographical achievements. Damascene's own contribution would prove quite different in kind from that of Chrysostom, yet in that contribution we will find the adoption and continuation—indeed the systematization—of Chrysostom's (and many others') commitment to struggle, by means of the mediation of holiness, for an edifice of orthodoxy unbent by the assault of religious and political others. Damascene's theorization of holy multimediation is woven throughout a systematic treatment of Trinitarian theology, cosmology, anthropology, Christology, and ecclesiology. This system, then, is my second drill site for Part Two's investigation of the emergence and crystallization of a canonical hagiographical paradigm between the fourth and ninth centuries. I will continue to make the case that this paradigm was the product of a perceived need for resistance on the part of the seekers of "orthodoxy" to the encroachment of heterodoxies on all sides (both intra- and extra-Christian). The intellectual culture of the iconoclastic controversy (in which Damascene's theology registered an early salvo) was contoured by Byzantine politics and intercultural anxieties, and formed an arena in which the hagiographical developments of the preceding centuries (and their theological warrants) were fiercely debated. Although Damascene himself was briefly anathematized after his death (around 750), by the mid-ninth century both he and his extensive theorization of holiness as authentically mediated in *all* available human media had been rehabilitated. This paradigm of what I will call a "hagiographical maximalism," of which Damascene would thereafter be recognized as the preeminent articulator, had come to be authorized as an unshakeable dogmatic commitment for Greek Christianity.

Chrysostom, we have seen, provided a wealth of evidence and insight into the widening flows of hagiographical production and consumption at the end of the fourth-century boom in the Greek theology of holiness. He tapped into and directed these currents, arguably becoming their outstanding contributor, but he left them free-flowing. No systematicity was needed, from Chrysostom's perspective, to draw Christian communities into the drama of divine mediation and make them "a theater to the world, both to angels and to humans"<sup>4</sup>—hagiography was medicine, was fuel, to be directed where and in whatever forms it was needed. But over the subsequent three centuries, the cult of the saints resounded between the cities and the deserts of the Christian East. Preachers and writers seized on every minute detail of the lives of the holy people, delivering them to their audiences with an eye to "edificational value,"<sup>5</sup> but verbal accounts and *ekphraseis* commanded only a fragment of the hagiographical imagination that boomed during this period; the poetics of saintly life and death could not be contained by any one medium. What we have seen at length in Chapter V continued to proliferate: the conviction that "the material world, particularly in the form of the human body, was a locus of spiritual presence"<sup>6</sup> that animated a culture of intense, diverse, and cross-class interactivity with holiness. Such culture was to be found not only in the periodicity of the calendar of feasts and the associated multimediation of saint's-day festivals, but also in ongoing devotion to the relics of saints gone by and to the living ascetics, virgins, wonder-workers, and holy fools who acted as "icons and benefactors."<sup>7</sup> These figures were seen as living witnesses to the transformation of human existence by divine presence and favor—presence and favor that could be imparted to those who

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:9.

<sup>5</sup> Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 43. Cf. Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 66, and de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 269-76.

<sup>6</sup> Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 116.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, *The Body and Society*, 327. See also 445: "The shrines of the martyrs were visited with increasingly fervor in the fifth and sixth centuries, as places where new life and healing bubbled up for the faithful from the cold bones of the dead. For the martyrs' shrines contained the bones of men and women on whom the Holy Spirit had come to rest." An important complication of Brown's reliance on Theodoret for developing his portrait of 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>-century devotion to holy men can be found throughout Muehlberger, "Simeon and Other Women in Theodoret's *Religious History*."

would approach these representatives and come away again with relics of their own: a piece of cloth, an ampulla of dust, an image seared into the imagination.<sup>8</sup>

By the start of the eighth century, however, the Christian world, its imaginaries and institutions, and its intercultural frontiers had dramatically changed, and with them the function and force of the mediation of holiness. Four additional Ecumenical Councils had come and gone, with profound repercussions not only for doctrine and theology but no less for the political negotiations of divergent (indeed antagonistic) Christian communities and the role of imperial authority in church affairs.<sup>9</sup> The Roman Empire had halved in size and was severely shaken both infrastructurally and morally: its urban and rural environments alike had been undergoing a process of wartime reorganization, three of its ancient cultural centers and holy patriarchates (Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch) lay in conquered regions outside imperial jurisdiction, and calls for the reestablishment of religious clarity and purity were an urgent refrain.<sup>10</sup> The church was hungry for (but sharply divided on how to attain) the profound and politically-consequential reconfiguration by holiness that the church fathers like Chrysostom had so eloquently motivated and celebrated.

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<sup>8</sup> On the state of saints, relics, and images in the centuries between John Chrysostom and John Damascene, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History* [hereafter *History*], 32-68; Brown, *The Body and Society*, 428-47; Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 116-63; and Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 13-38 (his discussion of the image of Symeon Stylites, pressed into clay made from the earth surrounding Symeon's pillar, is especially illuminating of the interpenetration of these modes of mediation and the traditions that developed around and between them. "The power of God is efficacious everywhere," Symeon persuades a devotee concerned that the blessing of the saint can only carry as far as his personal presence; "Therefore, take this eulogia of my dust (τῆς κόνεως μου), depart, and when you look at our figure in the seal, it is us that you will see" [22-23, drawing on Van den Ven, *La Vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune*]).

<sup>9</sup> See Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 134-289, and Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 11-22.

<sup>10</sup> On the social changes taking place and the political "urgency" of theological interpretation, see Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis," 1-2; Barasch, *Icon*, 186-91; and Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 18-32, 777-82. Note especially 29, where the authors argue that, since divine retribution in particular was supposed to be at work in the changes and stresses the empire was undergoing, the role of the church in getting its house in order—orthodoxy versus heresy—was increasingly presumed to be paramount to the civic flourishing of the state. Louth's identification of the upheaval and redrawn frontiers of the seventh century as "the beginning of a new configuration in the political geography of the Middle East" (*St John Damascene*, 4) is likewise of particular note, as he considers how the palette of fears and hopes rendered in this period are essential to understanding the Christian thought and life of the eighth century.

It was in this context that John Damascene worked. In the early years of the eighth century, he moved from Umayyad Damascus to the monastic network of Palestine, where the monks' longstanding ascetic identity as embattled defenders of orthodoxy continued to be galvanized by their survival in Islamic territory and their concomitant refuge from interference by the imperial church hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> In Palestine, a setting of "tremendous religious and theological pluralism,"<sup>12</sup> he set as his task the synthesis of the patristic heritage, through to the church of his own day, as a narrow trail threading between fields of unkempt error on all sides. This imaginary of the "middle way," I will argue, was formulated precisely as a counterscript in resistance to trends that Damascene saw as liable to take over the church (as Monotheletism, another imperial compromise, had threatened to do in the time of Maximus Confessor).<sup>13</sup> Thus Damascene's dogmatics (contextualized and oriented by his heresiology, as I will address in section 1b) claimed and asserted a position of centrality from what was in fact a position of marginality. And in particular, this "middle" position on the mediation of holiness—which served as a vanguard of larger fronts of resistance to (what was thereby constructed as) monism and dualism, spiritualism and materialism—became the hill on which Damascene would make his stand for the soul of the church.

The dissertation as a whole has coordinated an argument about what hagiography *is* (the multimediation of holiness) with arguments about what hagiography *does* (enacts and warrants resistance and rectification) in a Greek Orthodox idiom. Accordingly, my analysis in this chapter coordinates a

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<sup>11</sup> As Louth observes, the Palestinian monks were thoroughly "Roman" in cultural and ideological positioning, even while Damascene "almost certainly ... never in his life set foot on territory ruled by the Byzantine Emperor" (Introduction to Damascene, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, 9; cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 28); it was no small part their location within the Muslim state that protected these monks' theological controversializing against the imperial Byzantine position, even as their agenda was no less and indeed all the more urgently anti-Islamic. See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 11; Khoury, *Jean Damascène et l'Islam*, 38-47. I do not take up many open questions of Damascene's life and cultural context, but there are some fine sources for those who wish to do so: see, for instance, Louth, *St John Damascene* (3-14); Jugie, "Jean Damascène" (693-96); Nasrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas* (1-104); Kotter, "Johannes von Damaskus" (127-32); and Studer, *Die Theologische Arbeitsweise des Johannes von Damascus* (7-30).

<sup>12</sup> Twombly, *Perichoresis and Personhood*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> On Monotheletism (the doctrine of the single will of Christ, as opposed to the ultimately victorious doctrine of a coinherence of divine with human will in the single person of Christ) and the controversy in which it was proposed, debated, and finally rejected, see Tanner, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 260-68, 279-84.

consideration of the inner logic and theological contribution of Damascene's theorization of holy mediation with a consideration of this theorization's conditions and functions—formulated as it is against a purported matrix of error that it seeks to resist and rectify, and insofar as it would be received by the later church as a warranting touchstone for orthodox (indeed Orthodox) positions on materiality and mediation, reshaping the patristic heritage for those who would appeal to it thereafter.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, more than the previous chapters, this chapter will provide a fine-grained analysis of formal theological discourse, while the priority on lived theology in the previous chapters (even Chapter V, with the lived theology of hagiographical festivals and their intimately invested, golden-mouthed preacher) will recede. This is because a core objective of this final chapter is to show that the paradigm of hagiography-as-struggle came in the pivotal period of iconoclasm to anchor Orthodox dogmatics *as well as* the lived theology and hagiographical intercultural that we investigated in Part One. While this material may be of lesser interest to some readers, it is important because it would become resoundingly authoritative in the centuries to follow. Moreover, it demonstrates how the multimediation of holiness is not only tactically appropriated in the resistant key for which I have been arguing, but is also baked into the dogmatic core that would be declared “triumphant” in the mid-ninth century. This dogmatic core would continue to shape church life by means of the many ways in which its authority was reproduced, providing conditions of possibility for modern Orthodox struggles by means of the mediation of holiness.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Like Chrysostom, Damascene would be invested with the role of “pre-eminent bearer of accumulated tradition” (Louth, *St John Damascene*, 16). See also Hunt, “Byzantine Christianity,” 80-86, on the thick intertextuality of Byzantine conceptions of παράδοσις (tradition) and on Damascene's position within the “golden chain” of illuminated wisdom; cf. Pallis' discussion of Damascene's “indispensable role in the stabilization of the Orthodox faith for the following centuries” (“A Critical Presentation of the Iconology of St. John of Damascus,” 174).

<sup>15</sup> As Louth puts it, “the pattern of John's theological synthesis became determinative” for late-Byzantine, Ottoman-era, and post-Ottoman Orthodoxy alike (*St John Damascene*, 3; cf. Barasch, *Icon*, 190). Cf. Adrahtas, “John of Damascus,” 267, discussing how, “according to the manuscript tradition of *The Fountain Head of Knowledge*, it seems that from the tenth century onwards this work by the Damascene became the dogmatic handbook of Byzantine theologians.” However, it is noteworthy that Damascene's influence was outsized also in the great edifice of Roman Catholic scholastic theology and was influential even upon Protestant intellectual projects (by way of Schleiermacher), making him both a figure of profound and pivotal significance for Greek Orthodoxy and another nexus of real ecumenical confluence. Adrahtas traces Damascene's explicit reception in the Latin west, through the numerous Latin translations produced of his work as well as

Although his *Apologetic discourses against those who attack the holy images*<sup>16</sup> may be more regularly studied, Damascene's most important contribution to the theology of holiness and its mediation to/through human culture is found not in his polemical but in his dogmatic theology. Here, not only the icon but hagiographical mediation of all types found an unequivocally "strong position in the context and unfolding of orthodoxy."<sup>17</sup> In his *Precise exposition of the orthodox faith*,<sup>18</sup> Damascene integrates the particular problematics of the media that had sparked controversy in his time into a comprehensive narrative of divine creation, revelation, and salvation. So doing, he delivers the firmest, clearest, and most enduring theoretical foundation for the dogmatic paradigm in which the (material and perceptible as well as intelligible) mediation of holiness is not peripheral but fundamental to the right thinking of the church and its mission in the world.<sup>19</sup>

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through the citations of and commentaries on Damascene's thought in the work of the Scholastic theologians: see "John of Damascus," 268-73. Jugie notes that even the extent to which we recognize Damascene's influence is likely to be less than the actual extent of that influence, since "*les Byzantins ont communément l'habitude de piller leurs devanciers, sans les nommer*" ("Jean Damascène," 748; 748-51 concerns Damascene's influence in the Catholic West in particular). Moreover, see Nasrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas*, 169-78, for Damascene's reception history beyond Europe, for instance in Armenia, Georgia, and Slavic societies. It is also as significant as it is unsurprising that Damascene's thought is received and redeployed in the Arabic theological and disputational culture of the Abbasid period, not least in Christian-Muslim polemical exchanges (see Adrahtas, "John of Damascus," 270-71, and Nasrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas*, 179-89).

<sup>16</sup> Hereafter *The Holy Images*.

<sup>17</sup> Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 478. Indeed, it can be argued that *The Fountain of Knowledge* is not only a far more influential text than *The Holy Images* (see Baranov, "The Iconophile Fathers," 340: with iconophilia increasingly presupposed after the ninth century, the apologetic treatises were simply less useful as resources, whereas the dogmatic theology became the anchor for Damascene's influence of the later Byzantine church), it is also more *comprehensively* iconophilic in that it emphasizes the integrity of holy images with the whole spectrum of forms of life in the church and the economy of creation and salvation (thus my formulation of "hagiographical maximalism")—an integrity which is not nearly so well-developed in *The Holy Images*, where the grounding of iconophilia in unquestioned Christological principles is the exclusive concern. It is important to recognize, as Parry does, that the debate over icons is the particular context in which a far more thoroughgoing theology pertaining to the relations of matter and spirit is crystallized ("Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephorus," 169). My own prevailing emphasis on Damascene's dogmatic rather than his polemical theology reflects this twofold concern with Damascene's enduring authority as patristic synthesizer, on the one hand, and with the position of hagiographical mediation within the larger theological and ecclesiological topography, on the other.

<sup>18</sup> Hereafter *The Orthodox Faith*.

<sup>19</sup> In this work, as we have already considered in depth, the *inscription* of holiness (for which I have been using the umbrella category of ἁγιογραφία) is seized upon as indispensable to the transformative *impartation* of holiness (for which I have found θεοποίησις to be the most adequate Greek theological nomenclature). See again the discussion of these terms in the general introduction, section 2b. Damascene is, of course, not solely responsible for the crystallization of this paradigm in its canonical form, even as he stands out "with rare distinction" (Barasch, *Icon*, 187) in the process of its

In Damascene's system, the material inscriptions of holiness are not understood as objects whose sanctity is self-sufficient or self-enclosed (for this would be the magical or idolatrous position against which he takes such pains to position himself). Rather, they are objects whose sanctity and significance are rendered by the processes through which human beings interact with and are transformed by them—transformed, in all their human dynamism and complexity, *into* hagiographical media with whom others will interact and by whom they too may be transformed.<sup>20</sup> For Damascene, the anthropological foundations of hagiography are constituted only in (what we would now call) a sociological field: the human being, as a microcosm of the whole intelligible-material creation and formed in the image of divine self-giving love, is not closed upon itself but is constituted in relationships and subject to distortion by institutions and political dynamics as much as by the wayward desires of the soul. The panoply of hagiographical media with which the human creature extends its mediating reach (like the brush in the hand) have legitimacy not in isolation, but rather only insofar as they facilitate resistance to such distortions of self and society. In this way, they serve to rectify those human beings who approach and appropriate them rightly, reshaping them (psychosomatically) as *representatives* of divine holiness in the full double-valence of the term.<sup>21</sup> Like Chrysostom, Damascene views the ultimate aim of holy mediation as “participation [*metochē*] in the divine radiance [*ellampseōs*]”<sup>22</sup> that inscribes in the world what has been inscribed in the heart.

In section 1, I examine the context of Damascene's theorization of holy mediation, framing it in terms of that to which it aimed to activate resistance: a lineage of heresy in which contemporary

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articulation. In my conclusion, I will briefly highlight the contributions of Theodore Studites and Patriarch Nikephoros I, which were indispensable to the final institutional enshrinement of hagiographical maximalism in the Orthodox Church.

<sup>20</sup> Recall the discussions throughout Chapter V on festival participants becoming part of the drama they have come to see.

<sup>21</sup> See the discussion of representation as simulation and substitution in the general introduction, section 2b.

<sup>22</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 26.35-36. The key term, ἔλλαμψις, is often translated as “illumination,” but I fear that to do so is to connote a private illumination or beatific vision when the logic of Damascene's use in the context of his larger hagiological theorization should serve to emphasize that this is a participation of the human being in divine *effulgence*, the radiance that shines forth or shines upon others. See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. ἐλλάμπω and ἔλλαμψις.

developments in church policy could be anchored. In section 2, I undertake a close reading of the theological warrants for hagiographical multimediation in Damascene's *The Orthodox Faith*, interpreting his interconnections between creator and creation, between anthropology and sociology, as the conditions for a hagiographical maximalism that would preserve the struggle for holiness by excluding its alternatives. In section 3, I analyze in depth how Damascene treats the mediation of holiness itself, and specifically its enactment in the mimetic human processes I have considered throughout (*imagination*, *representation*, and *edification*), establishing the inextricability of the hagiographical inscription of holiness from the theo poetic impartation of holiness. In conclusion, I will trace the remarkable reversals of the century following Damascene's death, interpreting the entrenchment of his (slightly revised) hagiographical paradigm as an arsenal of resistance in the context of impending ecumenical schism, and considering how the icon in particular became a preeminent emblem of Orthodox identity.

### **(1) The Pedigrees of Error: Resisting the Restriction of Holiness**

The period of the iconoclastic controversy (typically considered to extend from roughly 726, when Emperor Leo III “began speaking about abolishing the holy and venerable icons,”<sup>23</sup> to 843, when Empress Theodora brought a formal and ceremonial end to Byzantine iconoclastic policy)<sup>24</sup> is a fitting

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<sup>23</sup> This is the report of historian Theophanes (cited in Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 25), whose chronicle of significant events in Byzantium from the time of Diocletian to the early ninth century remains an important proximate source. More proximate still are the letters of Pope Gregory II (715-731), who wrote to Emperor Leo, referring to specific comments the emperor had made describing icons as being “in the place of idols” and boasting of “driv[ing] idols out of the churches” as “Hezekiah, the King of the Jews, drove the bronze serpent out of the temple” (see texts and commentary in Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 24-30, and Gouillard, “Aux origines de l’iconoclasme,” 253-307); however, Brubaker and Haldon note that these letters do not survive except contained within later synodal documentation, and might even be later compositions [*History*, 89-94]. Cf. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III* [hereafter *Leo III*], 103-12. There is indeed a cottage industry dedicated to determining what precisely iconoclastic policy involved, the extent to which it was actually implemented, and the ways that the controversy has been shaped and colored by the subsequent renarration of the victors.

<sup>24</sup> The extent to which this moment was in fact an overthrow of formal policy at all, rather than a discursive gesture on the part of some elites toward other elites, is a wide open question (see, for instance, Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 385, and Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 642-63) but one that does not disturb my argument in one way or another. To make matters worse, the lexicon of “iconoclast,” “iconoclasm,” and the like, are quite rare in Byzantine usage (with a wide array of terms proliferating in their place) and more robustly present in French and English scholarship from the sixteenth

context for my analysis. This is certainly not because it was the last intra-church controversy, nor even the last in which the mediation of holiness was the pivotal concern (the fourteenth-century hesychastic controversy, for instance, could fall in this category), but rather because it can serve as a bookend to the dynamics that blossomed in the fourth century, as considered in Chapter V. There, we took a sounding from the early generations of what Peter Brown describes as a “centrifugal” attitude toward holiness and its mediation to and through the human world: a “piety that had spread the charge of the holy onto a multiplicity of unconsecrated objects”—or rather, objects that came to be *perceived* as consecrated by the God who had adopted them as fountains of overflowing, incendiary grace.<sup>25</sup> We now turn to a period in which certain ecclesial leaders and the imperial authorities promoted by them found this centrifugal, multimedia proliferation of holiness a cause of alarm and moved to curtail it. Resisting these developments, a small group of theologians—the embattled monks John Damascene and Theodore Studites, and the soon-to-be-deposed patriarchs Germanos and Nikephoros—would thresh out a theological paradigm by which this “centrifugal” mediation of holiness could be sown so tightly into the dogmatic fabric of orthodoxy that it would never again, after the ninth century, be threatened. What policies and pro-or-anti-iconographic activities actually took place (which is notoriously difficult to determine) is less important, for my analysis, than the ways that this moment of powerful pressure upon the mediation of holiness came thereafter to serve as a foil to the constitution of Orthodox Christianity. The solutions developed by Damascene and the other iconophile authors would thus become the seal and triumph of a hagiographical tradition galvanized in the long-smoldering idiom of resistance.<sup>26</sup>

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century. See Bremmer, “Iconoclast, Iconoclastic, and Iconoclasm,” and Touna, *Fabrications of the Greek Past*, 88-97. As with the heresiological discourse, below, the extent that opposing positions are constructed by the discourse opposing them need not be adjudicated in order to study the logic and entailments of the opposition itself.

<sup>25</sup> Brown, “A Dark-Age Crisis,” 9. Cf. Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 32-38.

<sup>26</sup> It is instructive to consider (as we will in this chapter’s conclusion) how, by the end of this period, the icon and the broader material mediation of holiness were so entrenched in Greek Orthodox identity (and not only in the newly dominant theology or ecclesiology) that the formal endorsement of iconic production and use in 843 became known as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy”; the prominence of the icon as a symbol of the church remains secure to this day.

Understanding the positive position on icons, what they represent, and how they came to emblemize an entire theological paradigm, therefore, is only possible in light of that to which this iconophilic (indeed, hagiographically maximal) theology of holiness is generated to resist.<sup>27</sup> The extensive scholarship on the causes, implications, and effects of iconoclastic policy contains important analyses on which I will draw, although this section is dedicated specifically to the role of iconoclasm in shaping Damascene's theory of holy mediation, in two respects.<sup>28</sup> First, I mean to consider the stakes and contours of the problem to which he addresses himself, by evaluating the shared anxieties around the mediation of holiness that invited divergent, reciprocally antagonistic solutions. Second, I will examine Damascene's resistance to iconoclasm in light of his broader heresiological agenda, through which he renders a stark identification between the curtailing of representations of holiness and a set of archetypal errors at perpetual risk of corroding the straight path of the orthodox church.

### 1a) *"I have driven out the idols": Deciphering Hagiographical Anxieties*

There is such voluminous literature on the history surrounding the theological defenses of pictorial representation, in the eighth and ninth centuries, that another pass is hardly necessary and

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<sup>27</sup> This approach is consonant with my earlier considerations of John Chrysostom's assault on and appropriation of the late antique theater. Indeed, as Cameron suggests, "the concept of orthodoxy—like the nature of God—is much more difficult to grasp than that of heresy," and the formulation of orthodoxy that "was the mirror image" of the rejection of heresy has often taken a back seat in the scholarship (see "The Concept of Orthodoxy," 344, 347).

<sup>28</sup> Mondzain is right, to a point: "To privilege the icon in the study of a crisis referred to as the 'crisis of iconoclasm' would seem to be obvious" (*Image, Icon, Economy*, 1; cf. Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 7) even as numerous interpretations are available that root iconoclasm in something else entirely, stripping the iconoclast position of its independent theological heft (see, for instance: Brock, "Iconoclasm and the Monophysites," and McGuckin, "The Theology of Images and the Legitimation of Power" [hereafter 'Legitimation of Power']). My approach embraces this centrality of the hagiographical medium itself while still insisting that an icon is always more than an icon, is a concrescence of processes of mediation (imagination, representation, edification) that are politically fundamental no less than theologically thick. In other words, I am not interested in planting my stake anywhere along the spectrum of debate between iconoclasm-is-about-images and iconoclasm-is-about-politics, but to say that it is the latter precisely *because* it is the former, once we reconstrue the product as a temporary stability formed and borne by its constitutive processes. It is precisely because iconomachy was at once a theological, anthropological, and sociological/political struggle that it is a crucial site for this dissertation's inquiry and for demonstrating this dissertation's central claims.

unlikely to add new texture. My task in this section, rather than rehearsing the history in depth, is to briefly address *what* might have changed in the treatment of images in the latter decades of the seventh century, and *why* an expansion in the mediation of holiness might warrant restriction by authorities of church and state. The literature on iconoclasm falls into roughly two categories on these questions, one treating iconoclasm as a reaction to developments in the cult of images (in light of its logical continuity with the centrifugal holiness of the cult of relics), the other identifying the expansion of the veneration of images (or the very fact of that veneration) as itself a reaction to debates over the validity of pictorial representation—what I would gloss as a new modality of hagiographical mediation born of resistance.<sup>29</sup> I am no expert in Byzantine history and will not attempt to adjudicate between these currents of historical analysis. Instead, I would emphasize that *either way*, the dynamic significant to my interpretation is one and the same: a condition for the possibility of a debate about the legitimacy of pictorial representation of Christ and the saints is the shared understanding that the representation of holiness (in both senses of “representation”: material simulation and personal substitution) is a matter of paramount importance to the constitution of orthodoxy. The solutions proposed in the course of this period—both the proposals for restricting the mediation of holiness and the (ultimately triumphant) cultivation of a hagiographical maximalism—are constituted by resistance to caricatured versions of one another, caricatures that are used to reinforce the urgency of the case being made but that obscure the shared suppositions and common anxieties at work.

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, Brown falls the former camp with his treatment of “centripetal” pushback to the increasing spread of holiness beyond the direct control of ecclesial authorities (“A Dark-Age Crisis,” 30-34). Miller concurs, showing that the logic of the cult of images followed upon that of the cult of holy people and the cult of relics, but that, despite a shared understanding of the incarnation resulting an open border between the heavenly and earthly realms, disagreement broke out over whether this implied the “triumph of spirit over matter” or the “triumph of flesh over human fallenness” (*The Corporeal Imagination*, 116-18, 147). Kitzinger’s classic article suggests that it was new practices of devotion and appeal to images for intercession that provoked the backlash of iconoclasm, such that an aniconic suspicion of holy objects and images bubbled over where it had merely simmered previously (see “The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm,” 85-87). But Brubaker and Haldon suggest that we are dealing with a “fundamental transformation in the ways holy portraits were understood” between 680-730, and that the concomitant boom in iconography thereafter has its roots in the controversy itself than in any long-developing attitude toward images in particular (see *History*, 58-66).

It has been argued widely and persuasively that the veneration of images acquired its logic and the general contours of its practice from the cult of relics.<sup>30</sup> As we saw in Chapter V, the relics of the saints were the preeminent sites for the mediation of holiness in the fourth century (and through the centuries that followed, until *after* iconoclasm), around which the other media for recollection and appropriation of the saints took more peripheral positions. The earliest images to be venerated and to have hagiographical narratives of their own (concerning their miraculous behavior) were, unsurprisingly, images that were *also* relics: for instance, images stamped onto clay purportedly gathered from the foot of Symeon Stylites' column, or the famous images of Christ "not made with hands" (*acheiropoiētai*) but made rather through the direct and miraculous impress of Christ's face.<sup>31</sup> The veneration of relics was not and did not become controversial in the early eighth century—what became controversial were the ways that Byzantine Christians were coming to treat images that were *not* overtly relics as genuine mediators of holiness and sites of participation in divine grace.

This is significant to my study because it reminds us that the debates over images were not primarily concerned with whether it should be acceptable for images of Christ and the saints to *exist*, but rather concerned with how they should be *used*. Should they be placed in churches, and if so, should they be accessible to the people, who might bow to them and kiss them in an expression of "adoration" (*latreia*)? Should they be processed around the city walls in times of duress, and if so, is this meant only to

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<sup>30</sup> See Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 23-39; Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis," 15-17; Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 32-40, 50-62; Grabar, *Martyrium*, II.343-57; and Kitzinger, "The Cult of Icons in the Age before Iconoclasm," 115-17.

<sup>31</sup> Barber shows (*Figure and Likeness*, 15-17, 20-23) how images had long been conjoined with relics—not merely as a means of identifying them (not unlike how later Orthodox icons would acquire verbal inscriptions to ensure that no mistaken identification would take place—otherwise, for instance, the clay token from Symeon's column would bear no overt connection to the saint) but indeed as a "double representation" that conditioned an imaginative relationship with the relics in a more extensive way than could be accomplished through mere assertion of the relic's identity. On the latter type of image, known in Orthodox settings as the Mandylion (after a sermon by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus narrating its arrival to Constantinople), see Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," 112-15, and Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 47-77. In Chapter 1 of her *Portraits and Icons*, Marsengill makes the intriguing and significant case that images *as such* could reasonably be considered to be (and were explicitly stated to be, in the documents of Nicaea II) relics of those whom they represent, insofar as the "countenance" (χαράκτηρ) of the holy figure is preserved and made really present in the image.

demonstrate a certain kind of devotion to the holy figures of the orthodox faith, or is it performing a protective measure that will reinforce martial resistance by the presence of holiness? In short: should images (and what sort of images?) be treated *as relics are treated*, and if so, why, and if not, why not?<sup>32</sup>

The notion of a “fundamental transformation in the ways holy portraits were understood” between 680 and 720 is surely putting the matter too strongly,<sup>33</sup> given the continuities with a long-emerging paradigm of mediation.<sup>34</sup> Yet, whether images came to be treated as viable mediators of holiness no earlier than the end of the seventh century (Brubaker and Haldon), by the end of the sixth century (Kitzinger, Brown), or potentially even earlier (Elsner), it is at least clear that there was a shift in critical consciousness toward the ways that images of Christianity’s holy figures should be used and understood prior to Damascene’s theoretical interventions. The efficacy of relics had come to seem insufficient for the enormity of need for the power mediated in them: “The state, the church, and the individual orthodox believer – all in a state of spiritual crisis – needed help, in the form of new channels of access to divinity. Relics worked, but they were not infinitely reproducible . . . .”<sup>35</sup> The specific crises at hand included not

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<sup>32</sup> Again, it is worth recalling—and it is significant to my argument around an Orthodox hagiographical idiom being forged in a position of resistance—that prior to iconoclasm we are dealing with the question of *including* images as a means of holy mediation alongside relics, scriptures, festivals, and the like. It is these struggles over the inclusion of icons that engendered, in their wake, a defiant insistence on icons as the preeminent symbols of victorious orthodoxy.

<sup>33</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 58.

<sup>34</sup> I also take to heart Elsner’s warning that—in light of ample evidence of “significant image cultivation by people who saw themselves as Christians” as early as the second century CE (“Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 371)—the general scholarly consensus that icon-veneration was substantially expanded in the sixth and seventh centuries may not be warranted. Elsner’s view (supported by Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 43-46) that “it is possible there was no rise in the cult of images, just a rise in the textual noise about the cult in the materials that have survived to us” (372) is an important reminder of the grave interpretive liability of arguments from silence. Dimensions of hagiographical practice and affect that are not preserved in the historical archive, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, are not by that fact absent from the phenomena themselves.

<sup>35</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 782. Their argument, though woven through an exhaustively-researched study of the available evidence, can to a skeptical eye read like the exposure of a get-rich-quick scheme, whereby the “transference of physical presence to representation” (by way of the intermediate stage of contact relics) becomes for the institutional church a way of printing their own holiness, so to speak—creating representations to make more broadly available, controllable, and fungible what had been concentrated in unique sites of physical presence designated only by divine will. Taking this tack, they are responding to and seeking to overturn the earlier theorization of Kitzinger in which the imperial image-veneration of the sixth century had provided an idiom with which to produce and celebrate icons of Christ and Mary by the beginning of the seventh (see Kitzinger, “The Cult of Icons in the Era Before Iconoclasm,” 115-25). Brown provides a more measured, if still over-confident, reading of the benefits and costs of extending the recognition of relics’

only the rise of Islam and the early Arab conquests,<sup>36</sup> but also brewing hostility with the western church in light of the continuing Lombard threat and the willingness of certain ecclesial representatives to ally with the northern invaders.<sup>37</sup> And although it was no new crisis, we must not neglect the continuing anxiety over “Jewish” or “Judaizing” tendencies within the Christian church, given a civic atmosphere in which Jewish and Christian intellectual culture continued to confront one another’s skepticism and outright antagonism.<sup>38</sup> The rise of image-veneration, then, can be viewed in light of the perception of an enduring two-front struggle between the self-appointed representatives of orthodoxy with corrosive religio-political configurations *within* and *beyond* the church—a struggle which is in evidence in the earliest Christian literature, which we have already considered in the homiletics of Chrysostom, and which will palpably shape not only Damascene’s heresiology but also his apologetic presentation of Orthodoxy as a middle way beset by error on all sides.

In such a context, it is unsurprising that images should be embraced as means for mediating the holiness that had long been understood to be a paramount font of political as much as spiritual support. It

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holiness to images of the saints, in light of the “deep demoralization” of seventh-century Byzantium (“A Dark-Age Crisis,” 23-24; cf. 10-11). However, see also Cameron, “The Language of Images,” 19-20, which resists anchoring the rise of icons in “disturbed social conditions.”

<sup>36</sup> These conquests had, by the time of Leo III, stripped the empire of substantial and important territory and laid siege twice to the very capital of the empire. McGuckin notes that the ascension of Leo III to the imperial throne took place *during* the second Arab siege of Constantinople (717-718), and argues that the immediacy of the threat to the heart of Byzantium at this moment was both a key condition for the selection of Leo (the accomplished general) as a non-hereditary emperor and a suffusing context for the first iconoclast bishops’ arguments that something was rotten at the core of Byzantine Orthodoxy, warranting such a dramatic divine chastisement (“Legitimation of Power,” 41-43). Cf. Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 18-22, 73-77: although these historians place Leo’s ascension to the throne a few weeks prior to the siege rather than in its midst, they agree with McGuckin as to the logic of the emperor’s selection and the tenor of his early reign.

<sup>37</sup> See McGuckin, “Legitimation of Power,” 41, and Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 81-83.

<sup>38</sup> On the ambiguous social position of Byzantine Jews during the period in question, see Barnard, “The Jews and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy,” especially 125-26. But more important to this study than the lived conditions of Jewish communities themselves are the roles played by the *idea* of the “Jews” in Christian literature, theology, and polemic. Olster’s book, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response and the Literary Construction of the Jews* interprets the anti-Jewish imagination of seventh-century Byzantium in light of the political strain on the empire and the evaporation of the optimistic vision of Justinian I. This sense of “defeat” yields what Cameron describes as “a rejection of history in favour of an apologetic of restoration [or, I might say, rectification] . . . in which the Jews function as the cardboard villains who allow the Christian writers a ‘brazen’ assertion of their own imperial superiority” (Cameron, “Byzantines and Jews,” 249-50, commenting on Olsen, *Roman Defeat*, 180-82).

is not coincidental that what little image theory had been produced prior to this period was concentrated in anti-Jewish polemic, responding (at least claiming to be responding) to “Jewish accusations of Christian idolatry” and identifying opponents within the church as “Judaizers” (a trend which would continue well into the polemics of the iconoclastic controversy).<sup>39</sup> At the Quinisext Council (691-92; also known as the Council in Trullo), the first explicit enunciations of the theological legitimacy of pictorial representations of Christ were likewise anchored in anti-Jewish warrants about the incarnation of Christ marking a definitive break from Jewish epistemologies of knowing God.<sup>40</sup> In the closing years of the seventh century, moreover, a remarkable “polemic of images” was waged between Emperor Justinian II and Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik in the arena of coinage, as Elsner discusses in depth: what begins as a figurative language generally shared by Byzantine and Arab coinage comes in the span of a few years to be two radically incompatible representational paradigms, one featuring the face of Christ and the other stripping away figures entirely in favor of text from the Qur’an (such that in the years to follow, imperial opposition to images could virtually be seen to consubstantiate itself with creeping Islamic, as well as Jewish, influence).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: The Sources* [hereafter *Sources*], 268-72. Significantly, they note that “the Jews were, in Christian eyes, not all that different, at least according to initial perceptions, from the Muslims in the fundamentals of their beliefs, so that attacks from Judaism against Christianity could also be seen as threats from Islam, while Christian polemic against Judaism could serve as a form of defence against Islam” (269). On Judaism (and Islam) as a perceived threat and motive for positive reflection on the validity of religious images, see Speck, *Ich bin’s nicht*, a monograph entirely dedicated to “the influence of demons, Jews, and Muslims on iconoclasm”; see also Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 50; Gero, *Leo III*, 59-84; Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 16-21; Barnard, “The Jews and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy,” entire; Cameron, “Byzantines and Jews,” 258-62; and McGuckin, “Legitimation of Power,” 43-44.

<sup>40</sup> See Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 40-42. Quinisext Canon 82 purports that while symbols of divine grace have a long and venerable pedigree (being the only mode of prefiguring Christ within the Hebrew scriptures), it is no longer necessary (nor indeed preferable) to obscure within symbols what has been made manifest and real in history, that is, the “depth of the humility of the Word of God” which may and should be depicted “even in paintings.” The Canon thus sets up a contrast (later adopted by Damascene) between symbolic representation, as the only modality of knowing God available prior to the incarnation of Christ, and direct figuration, as the more-edifying alternative available to those whose faith in the incarnation has prepared them to see God “face to face.” See “The Canons of the Council in Trullo,” in Nedungatt and Featherstone (eds), *The Council in Trullo Revisited*, 41-186 (Canon 82 on 162-64; cf. Canon 11 on 81-82, which explicitly prohibits association with Jews).

<sup>41</sup> See Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 374-75; Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 61-62; and Grabar, “Islam and Iconoclasm,” 46-47. Elsner’s analysis comes with the benefit of images of the coins in questions, which show the rapid divergence as a reciprocal rhetoric of identification of political bodies with and against images. Where the coins of both rulers had, before the early 690s, featured images of themselves and emblems of religious warrant for their political power on the obverse (the cross of Christ on steps; the scepter of the Prophet), between 692 and 695, Justinian issued new coins

It is, therefore, one of the great ironies of the iconoclastic period that *both* the seventh-century hagiographical developments and their rejection (by Emperor Leo III and the bishops responsible for articulating the danger of image-veneration) “derived essentially from the same need for purification in the face of catastrophe,” sharing an intense fear of the misuse or disrespect of holiness where it had been granted to the community and was at risk of being withdrawn.<sup>42</sup> Both the developments and the anxieties about the developments are assuming that distortions in church polity and practice have profound political consequences, and more specifically, that the mediation of holiness, for the sake of “transformation of the human into the divine,”<sup>43</sup> is a means and a warrant of resistance to these distortions.<sup>44</sup> Yet, the same crises and similar assumptions about hagiography as resistance would elicit opposite hagiographical strategies, based in opposite assessments of the shape and limits of holy mediation, for the sake of rival constitutions of “orthodoxy.”

When Emperor Leo III issued “restrictions on the placing of images in public places – churches in particular – and possibly on the production and display of certain categories of image”<sup>45</sup> in 726, the policy

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replacing his own face with the face of Christ, and displacing himself to the rear of the coin, identified as “slave of Christ” (in an apparent barb at the rival ruler, ‘Abd al-Malik, “slave of the chief”). ‘Abd al-Malik retaliated in kind, in a “response to Justinian’s master stroke [that] was an equal master stroke: the decision to coin an entirely nonfigurative epigraphic coinage, replacing images with Qur’anic texts, and, in effect, [denying] that the game could any more be played by the old rules. His new kind of nonfigurative image heralded Islamic art’s break from the Greco-Roman representative tradition” (Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 374).

<sup>42</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 787; cf. Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm,” 119.

<sup>43</sup> Barber, “Writing on the Body,” 113, noting that this basic conception of holiness was shared by both the iconophile theologian John Damascene and the iconoclast emperor Constantine V, even as their conclusions on how holiness is appropriately mediated were constitutively opposed to one another.

<sup>44</sup> See McGuckin, “Legitimation of Power,” 50, on the basic premise (shared for centuries by Byzantine emperors of all stripes) that political flourishing was “directly related to the religious Orthodoxy of the Empire.” See also Brown, “A Dark-Age Crisis,” 6, on how the central issues of holiness, its limits, and how to relate appropriately with it were shared concerns of both sides of the controversy.

<sup>45</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 177 (see also 117-35, and Gero, *Leo III*, 94-112, 212-17, on the evidence for and an evaluation of the actions taken by Leo III to curtail the production and use of images). Where Brubaker and Haldon provide the deconstructive conclusion (against Gero) that the extent of Leo’s “iconoclasm” is generally overstated, Elsner offers a constructive interpretation (in “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 377-78) of Leo’s putative replacement of an image of Christ above the Chalke Gate of Constantinople with an image of the cross (without the depiction of Christ)—and more importantly, of the ways that this event, even if it is a later fabrication, becomes an anchor for ideation and discourse around the violence of iconoclasm. See also De’ Maffei, *Icona, pittore e arte al Concilio Niceo II*, 121-62, for a comprehensive study of the conflict around this particular image.

was in no way (as later iconophile polemicists sought to portray it) a barbaric king's capitulation to foreign influences and suppression of church tradition. Rather it seems to have been an attempt to purify the church and maintain the narrow path of orthodoxy by resisting errant practices and ideas that were at risk of calling down divine wrath upon the church.<sup>46</sup> In his letters, Leo constructs himself in parallel to "Hezekiah, the King of the Jews [who] drove the bronze serpent out of the temple," purifying the holy of holies of superstition and idolatry.<sup>47</sup> If genuine, this rhetorical self-construction as an ancient King of Israel should not be taken as evidence of Leo's sympathy to Jewish mentalities toward the mediation of holiness. On the contrary, in spite of the accusations of iconophiles, Leo's imperial policy was no less hostile to the Jews than their own theological proposals, even if it promoted the opposite conclusion.<sup>48</sup> Resisting "Jewish" distortions of the legitimate mediation of holiness meant, for Leo and his episcopal supporters, meant restricting the means by which Christians were liable to the "shame" of idolatry, heaped on them by (imagined or rhetorically constructed?) Jewish polemicists.<sup>49</sup> Resisting these same distortions, for Germanos and Damascene, meant doubling down on the site of the difference, taking accusations of idolatry (by "Jews" and "those who attack the holy images" alike) as evidence of epistemological failure.

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<sup>46</sup> See again McGuckin, "Legitimation of Power," 42-43; Barnard, "The Jews and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," 126; Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis," 28; and Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 58-62. There are, of course, numerous and divergent interpretations of these developments, between which it is not my task to adjudicate. As Louth notes, much of this is (however interesting in its own right) beside the point for understanding Damascene's theology, and vice-versa—particularly in light of the later Byzantine/Orthodox commitment to view the entire iconomachic episode and the theological paradigm that prevailed through a narrative of straightforward ascendancy and canonicity (see Louth, *St John Damascene*, 198; cf. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 478, and Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis," 3).

<sup>47</sup> From a quotation of Leo's letter to Pope Gregory II, contained in Gregory's response. In Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 28; cf. the critically-edited text in Gouillard, "Aux origines de l'iconoclasme," 287-89. On the significance of this self-presentation, see Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis," 23-24; McGuckin, "Legitimation of Power," 44; and Gero, *Leo III*, 101-04.

<sup>48</sup> In 721, Leo had taken action to compel Byzantine Jews to convert to Christianity, in keeping with his broader agenda of purifying the capital of dissent and superstition, as he had staved off the threat of Arab conquest (see Barnard, "The Jews and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," 126-28). Leo's legal manual, *Ekloga*, promulgated in 726, likewise attempts to restrict the rights and civic influence of the Jews (see Gero, *Leo III*, 48-58).

<sup>49</sup> See Barnard, "The Jews and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," 127. Recall Chrysostom's worry that "the Greeks will jeer at us and the Jews will treat us as comedy" ("Against the Games and Theaters" 4 [PG 56.269.17-18]; see Chapter V, section 1a) if Christians attend the theater and succumb to its morally corrosive effects. Chrysostom too would deny the "Jews" this satisfaction by extracting his congregants from the theater where this danger lay in wait; yet, like Damascene with graven images, he would not discard the theater entirely, instead carefully appropriating its means of mediation for the inscription and impartation of holiness.

It cannot be said, however, that the iconophobic authorities were opposed to the material and perceptible mediation of holiness as such. Leo III “seems to have been especially interest in emphasising the [thoroughly material and visual] cross of Christ as the sign of imperial authority and victory,” a role it had played with variable intensity since the military victories of Constantine I in the early fourth century.<sup>50</sup> The cross served Leo as an integrating symbol of the orthodoxy of the people and/under the authority of the emperor, and the figure of the cross was installed in prominent public locations.<sup>51</sup> While Damascene and other iconophile writers would work to bind together the image of the cross and the images of Christ and the saints (as we will see), for Leo and his ecclesial party the cross could be upheld by contrast with these other images (indeed as a “figure” or “sign” *rather* than an “image”), in that it symbolized, without representing directly, a well-ordered relationship between Christ and the people *by way of* the imperial family and the hierarchy of the church.<sup>52</sup> So too, in the subsequent, more theologically textured iconoclastic position articulated at the Council of Hieria (754), not only the cross but also the eucharist and the church building itself were identified as legitimate holy objects, their legitimacy rooted in the prayers of consecration that could only be performed by properly ordained representatives of the church—not through miraculous intervention by saints.<sup>53</sup> While it is a mistake to *reduce* the iconoclastic

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<sup>50</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 140 (see 140-43). Note that the imperial cult of the cross is itself anchored in an anti-Jewish self-constitution of Byzantine orthodoxy, as a symbol of the new dispensation over and against the old.

<sup>51</sup> See Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 135, 155, and Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 377-78. Elsner notes the “delicious irony” of referring to Leo as an “iconoclast” in the context of his (purported) removal of an icon of Christ at the Chalke Gate of Constantinople to erect a cross in its place—since it is not clear that there *was* a prior image of Christ at the Chalke Gate, rather than the memory of such an image being a “phantasmagoric prefiguration of an icon that really was set up by the iconophile Empress Irene” to replace the cross that Leo had installed. If this is so, both sides of the controversy can be said to be engaged in “act[s] of iconophile iconoclasm,” in different respects.

<sup>52</sup> On the cross as a “sign” [σημείον] or “figure” [τύπος] *rather* than as an “image” [εἰκών], see Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 83-105, and Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 158. Cf. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 72, on how the cross could provide not a representation of God but a representation of God’s triumph, precisely insofar as Christ is absent from the cross. The eucharist, in turn, would be viewed in iconoclast through as “pure similitude without relative resemblance.” See also McGuckin, “Legitimation of Power,” 44-49 (including a reading of Leo’s appeal to Old-Testament models of kingship), and Brown, “A Dark-Age Crisis,” 28-34 (on the stakes of imperial power as vested and represented in holiness). This reading of the iconoclastic attraction to the cross is in keeping with Brubaker’s and Haldon’s argument “that the relationship between individuals and the holy was redefined at the same time as that between individuals and their ruler” (*History*, 10).

<sup>53</sup> On the Council of Hieria and its theological arguments, see Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V* [hereafter *Constantine V*], 53-110; Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 189-97 (especially the excellent summary on 193-94);

position to a cynical concentration of power, as is too frequently done (and which no patient reading of their own theological articulations should allow),<sup>54</sup> it is clear that the eighth century manifestation of iconoclasm in particular *includes* the effort to concentrate spiritual and political power, against an apparently uncontrolled “haemorrhage of the holy” that threatened the clear and orderly alignment of holiness with the temporal structures of church authority.<sup>55</sup>

At issue, then, is less the *validity* of the existence of holy images and more the *restriction and authorization* of holy mediation more generally.<sup>56</sup> In keeping with my broader analysis of hagiographical media and processes in light of the larger whole, rather than treating each of them distinctly, I am approaching iconoclasm (and the iconophilic position that emerges in constitutive opposition to it) as a negotiation of the limits of hagiographical mediation within a common discourse founded—at first—on common suppositions about the nature and purpose of holiness. Where the iconoclasts saw the unauthorized *diffusion* of holiness as a grave theological and political liability, the iconophile paradigm (threshed out most comprehensively by Damascene) fights back by framing the *restriction* of holy mediation as evidence of theological incoherence and political hubris. By the end of the iconoclastic

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and Brown, “A Dark-Age Crisis,” 5-6. Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 47-175, contains a full translation of the Sixth Session of the Second Council of Nicaea [787], where the *Definition* [ῥπος] of Hieria was read out and refuted point by point); Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 227-32 offers a selection of the most important points. See section 268C of the *Definition* in particular (in Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 97), where it is complained that no prayer of sanctification has been said over the images of holy people); see also commentary in Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 379; and Brock, “Iconoclasm and the Monophysites,” 57. Some discussion of the significance of Hieria will follow in the conclusion (including its forceful anathema of Damascene).

<sup>54</sup> Thus I reject the suggestion that iconoclasm is not “about” Christology or even directly about the holy media themselves. Claims to this effect are made in Brock, “Iconoclasm and the Monophysites,” 53, 57, and in McGuckin “Legitimation of Power,” 48 (although McGuckin at least is more cautious about divorcing the theology and the politics). Nonetheless, I take it that this is a problem of McGuckin’s “Legitimation of Power,” which reads the iconoclastic position as primarily political and the iconophilic position as its theological corrective, rather than recognizing both as political *and* theological, and each insofar as it is the other. See also Touna, *Fabrications of the Greek Past*, 95, although Touna is noting only the scholarly rhetoric by which a reduction to political factors would seem to “downplay the essence of the debate.”

<sup>55</sup> See Brown, “A Dark-Age Crisis,” 8 (including the above phrase), 30-34; Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 234-47; Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 71; and McGuckin, “Legitimation of Power,” 46-48, 57.

<sup>56</sup> See Brock, “Iconoclasm and the Monophysites,” 57: “The Iconoclasts wished to confine the sphere of divine ‘interference’ ... to certain given areas, in particular the Eucharist, and the saints, not allowing it to spill out untidily into other areas where humanity was perfectly well in control.”

controversy, however, this bout of mutual resistance would result in a fundamentally changed game. Whatever the actual events that inaugurated Byzantine “iconoclasm,” the response from those resistant to these developments were not merely a push back along the same axis but a rearticulation of the core commitments of Christianity so as to exclude anything of the sort from the boundaries of orthodoxy.<sup>57</sup> We come, then, to consider the undergirding logic of this resistant rearticulation, in the magisterial enunciation of John Damascene.

### *1b) “From these, those in succession”: Damascene’s Heresiological Strategy*

The inauguration of iconoclastic policy would be, for John Damascene, the impetus to gather, integrate, and argue in coherent discourse for what he views as the orthodox position on the validity of material media representing divine holiness in the human sphere. Not only in his apologetic discourses on images, though, but also in his systematic masterwork *The Fountain of Knowledge*, Damascene maintains the longstanding role of error in spurring the (however rhetorically reluctant) articulation of truth. Resistance, once more, is overtly presumed as foundational to orthodoxy. Therefore, before proceeding to lay out his epistemological toolbox and provide his “precise exposition” of the so-deemed orthodox heritage on God, creation, humanity, salvation, and society, Damascene claims that he must also “organize the babbling of the God-hated heresies [*theostygmōn haireseōn*], so that by recognizing the lie we may grasp more of the truth.”<sup>58</sup> Damascene’s strategy of resistance proceeds by configuring the iconoclasts’ rejection of (certain kinds of) holy mediation as belonging to a long and complex catalogue of heretical errors that can be understood and responded to as a coherent whole, marking off a continuous boundary at which the orthodox church must fortify itself.<sup>59</sup> Although there is no firm chronology for his corpus,

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<sup>57</sup> See Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 378.

<sup>58</sup> *Philosophical Chapters*, Proem.51-53.

<sup>59</sup> Unsurprisingly but significantly, Damascene conceives of “the orthodox faith” as an unbroken whole that is successively articulated in history in response to the changing needs of the present. And as Cameron observes, even the secular

and both the chapter on iconoclasm in *On Heresies* and the threefold structure of the *Fountain* itself seem to be later revisions (quite plausibly by Damascene himself, to bring an earlier work in line with evolving ecclesial needs),<sup>60</sup> they may be taken as belonging to the mature vision of Damascene's dogmatics, in the form that it would be transmitted to future generations.<sup>61</sup>

As Averil Cameron observes, the categorization and interconnection of disbarred forms of religious thought and life (as are found in heresiological texts and interreligious polemics) dare not be treated merely as an outdated embarrassment; heresiologies “have a poetics of their own,” helping to shape the theology that finds its footing within the bounds set out as orthodox.<sup>62</sup> Even if it cannot be used to deduce “the existence and the nature of Byzantine heresy as an objective entity,”<sup>63</sup> the delimiting logic and

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scholarly approaches to analyzing this interrelation between “orthodoxy” and “heresy” in the long threshing out of authoritative dogmatic paradigms in late antique Christianity are indebted to this conception. She identifies an “essentialist” approach, interested in how the threat of new forms of Christianity led earlier forms to imagine and articulate themselves anew with each such threat but which remained essentially continuous, and a “constructivist” approach reacting to it, which is committed to viewing “orthodoxy not as gradually revealed through the repeated onslaughts but as emerging or being constructed out of a mass of competing versions” (“The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 345). However, for my purposes it is sufficient to highlight the fact of constant dependence of the articulation of orthodoxy on the delimiting and narrating of heresy. On the significance of Damascene's heresiology for his overall theological method, see Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus*, 85-99.

<sup>60</sup> See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 7, 33-35. I am accepting, then, Louth's conclusion that, although the earliest manuscripts of the *Fountain* contained only shorter versions of the *Philosophical Chapters* and *The Orthodox Faith* combined together, Damascene's prefatory letter to Bishop Cosmas was included posthumously in manuscripts of the *Fountain*—along with the *Heresies* that the letter bespoke Damascene's unfulfilled intention to include.

<sup>61</sup> Nikephoros I, less than a century later, already cites as authoritative the version of Damascene's *On Heresies* containing the chapter on iconoclasm (see Louth, *St John Damascene*, 59n15). That the chapter could be written by another, even by Nikephoros himself, is just as plausible as its being a revision by Damascene himself; however, as it is assuredly part of the enduring *authority* of Damascene, I will treat it in this section as significant (and if it is not Damascene's own writing, the argument as to its consonance with both the heresiology and the dogmatics is unmoved). Likewise, that Damascene should have, belatedly, conceived of integrating his heresiology with his exposition of the orthodox faith is no evidence for or against the choice certainly being that of Damascene himself, but it is again in full keeping with the tradition to which Damascene commits himself as interpreter, synthesizer, and representative. Epiphanius himself had done the same (with the *Panarion* that constitutes much of the base material for Damascene's *On Heresies*), as had the *Acts* of the several ecumenical councils dedicated to winnowing out error from truth (see Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 347).

<sup>62</sup> See Cameron, “How to Read Heresiology,” 471-73, and “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 344-51. Cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 58 (see also 83: heresiology functions from Irenaeus and Epiphanius onward (including Damascene's *On Heresies*) as a “sociology of knowledge” wherein “potential bewilderment is reduced to comforting order.” Cameron concurs, drawing on Mary Douglas: “I suggest we read these compositions, so strange to our minds, as part of Byzantine pedagogy and the Byzantine sociology of knowledge, self-perpetuating constructions that helped to formulate thought and underpin social norms” (“How to Read Heresiology,” 484).

<sup>63</sup> Cameron, “How to Read Heresiology,” 472.

prevailing currents of concern in Damascene's *On Heresies* are themselves essential and underappreciated aspects of his position on the mediation of holiness.

Damascene, like other Byzantine heresiologists, believed that neither the truth (which needed to be rearticulated in and for each context) nor the errors that corrupted it (eliciting such rearticulation) could be considered innovations.<sup>64</sup> To understand why a given position was erroneous, then, it should only be necessary to link it with the logic belonging to primal attitudes of opposition to the gospel, with which the orthodox church had struggled from the start and continually in new forms. The chapter on iconoclasm in Damascene's heresiology is a late addition to the project, if it is even written by the man himself and not by a later disciple, and it does not possess the far greater nuance and color of *The Holy Images*. And yet, it is here that "prosecuting deliberate dishonor [against] the holy and august images"<sup>65</sup> is integrated with the overall mosaic of heresies—inherited from Epiphanius, Theodoret, and other earlier writers, and brought up to date by Damascene's chapters targeting Monotheletism, various contemporary schismatic movements, and (significantly) Islam within the heresiological picture as a whole.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> This is a somewhat paradoxical but fascinating position, since Damascene's interpretation of Paul would have it that the gospel and church of Christ are able to break away from captivity to earlier categories of confusion precisely because they are a "new creation" (*On Heresies* 4.8). In this light, heresy would be *older* than orthodoxy, more deeply entrenched—at the same time that it represents a falling away from the original creation through God's word which is construed as identical with the new creation that restores it.

<sup>65</sup> *On Heresies* 101/2 (PG 94.773). This chapter, being an addition to the original text, is only present in some manuscripts and not included in Kotter's edition; moreover, some editions include a chapter on the "Autoproscopae," the self-offenders, prior to that on the Ishmaelites, which inclusion changes the chapter numbers by one. Note that, since it was by no means self-evident that iconoclasm was heretical, its implantation and organization within "the realm of the techniques of heresiology" (Cameron, "How to Read Heresiology," 480) was itself a form of argumentation, prior even to the specific links rendered with the taxonomy of errors or the specific claims made against the rejection of images as material mediators of holiness. See also Speck, *Ich bin's nicht*, 557-63.

<sup>66</sup> This picture is one in which behind every contemporary departure from the (would-be) authorized faith hovered the genius of a much older, archetypal error. The principle is expressed in axiomatic form in the prefatory letter to Epiphanius' *Panarion*, where it serves Damascene as the classic basis for his own heresiology: "from these, those in succession" (ἐκ τούτων αἱ καθ' ἑξῆς) (Preface to the *Panarion* 2 [PG 41.160]). Damascene changes the wording somewhat, but he incorporates the spirit of the principle directly into the full title of his project: "*On Heresies*, in hundredfold division, whence they have their beginning and on what account they exist; the mothers and prototypes of all heresies being four: (a) Barbarism, (b) Scythism, (c) Hellenism, (d) Judaism [cf. Colossians 3:11], from which all the others sprang up" (*On Heresies*, title). Although this tendency of Byzantine heresiologists "to use old names for new ideas" may be annoying to a scholar looking for factual evidence of living alternatives to the authorized tradition (Cameron, "How to Read

In Damascene's heresiology, two primary pedigrees of error *vis-à-vis* the mediation of holiness entwine around orthodoxy like a double helix, promoting extremes through which the truth threads as a middle way and against which it must be ever stand vigilant.<sup>67</sup> "Hellenism" had introduced both the worship of statues as gods and the unbridgeable distinction between matter and spirit; "Judaism" had both insisted on a material circumcision to act on the symbolic command of God and had instituted a rigid and superstitious system of purification to rid themselves of the dross of material existence.<sup>68</sup> In other words, in Damascene's view, *monism* and *dualism* are the poles of error that had attracted every generation—being often incoherently combined within the same culture.<sup>69</sup> Positions that approach the former are those which decline to distinguish between divine and human, between matter and spirit, between historical and metaphorical, or the like; those that approach the latter are those which amplify such distinctions to become unbridgeable walls, or which take one half of such pairs to be exclusively worthy of concern.<sup>70</sup>

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Heresiology," 474-75), it is no such thing for a scholar more interested in the *imagination of otherness* at work in an ongoingly-authorized tradition.

<sup>67</sup> This is a common theme in Damascene, which will be owed further discussion: see *The Holy Images* II.3, *The Orthodox Faith* 7, *Against the Jacobites* 3, and *Against the Nestorians* 1. Cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 158, 179-80. Although Damascene adapts a fourfold arch-heresy from Epiphanius' fivefold structure (by construing Samaritanism as a blend position between Jews and Greeks), "Barbarism" and "Scythism" fall from importance almost immediately, belonging to the time of Genesis and the far reaches of the earth where neither Hellenism nor Judaism have taken hold, and so it is these latter two that constitute the intellectual underpinnings (the "mothers and prototypes," as Damascene's title has it) of virtually all the heresies to follow. It should go without saying, but will not, that my objective in this section continues to be to articulate an emic understanding and so does not endorse as factual the highly problematic construal (from Epiphanius and adopted by Damascene) of "Hellenism," "Judaism," and their putatively heretical inheritors.

<sup>68</sup> See *On Heresies* 3-4, 5-8, 14-20.

<sup>69</sup> To take some of Damascene's examples, interpreted through this lens: Ebionism, Arianism, Monophysitism, and Monotheletism veer toward the former pole and "destroy the mystery of the Incarnation," being convinced that Christ's human form is his sole or truest form, or that Christ is a creature infused with (but different than) divinity, or that distinguishing between the human and divine natures or wills of Christ is equivalent to violence done to the single whole (see *On Heresies* 30, 69, 83, 99). On the other side, the threat of dualism is especially strong among the Manichees, the Massalians, the Nestorians, and the Gnosimachi, to name only a few of these branches on Damascene's tree of error: among such groups, people "impose two eternally-existing principles, evil and good" (66.3-4), claim that Christ only appeared to suffer in the flesh but was in fact not touched by earthen realities, claim that only prayer and not the sacraments or any deeds of the body can be considered sacred, allow marriages to be dissolved for the sake of individual quests for purity, separate the two natures of Christ and grant them separate existences, or claim that only good deeds and no form of knowledge or spiritual experience can bring the human being closer to God (see *On Heresies* 66, 80, 81, 88).

<sup>70</sup> Louth's excellent chapter on the *Heresies* is in accordance with this interpretation. He devotes substantial space to the three heresies in particular on which Damascene dilates at length: Manichaeism (material here is principally drawn from a separate treatise), Massalianism, and "Ishmaelism" (that is, Islam). Louth explains how the name of "Manichaeism" was

Damascene, presenting the orthodox way, attempts to temper and mediate between the integrity of monism and the distinctions of dualism (a strategy upheld as paramount since the Council of Chalcedon),<sup>71</sup> and to thresh out a theory of matter and spirit that is interrelational and sacramental. In the coming sections, we will see the fruits of this effort in Damascene's presentation of the *neither-monistic-nor*-dualistic mediation between creator and creation.

The more subtle (and so more pernicious) heresies more closely resemble this middle way. To read the epitome of Iconoclasm in *On Heresies* in conjunction with the polemics and apologetics of *The Holy Images* (to which we will attend below) is to understand that Damascene's diagnosis of Iconoclasm is precisely as an incoherent combination of (rather than a subtle middle ground between) monism and dualism—and thus, as an attack on orthodoxy as a whole, not only on images themselves.<sup>72</sup> So too, Damascene's construal of Islam as the heresy of "Ishmaelism" takes shape as a portrait of monistic and dualistic positions jumbled together. On the one hand, Damascene mocks Muslims for various monistic confusions, claiming that they worship the Ka'aba as a god of stone, consider the book of the Qu'ran to be

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associated from the fifth century onward with the claim that matter is essentially evil, and "Messalianism" is presented (in Damascene's heresiological epitome, much-expanded from the version in Epiphanius), as an unbalanced spiritualism that gave undue dignity to individual experience at the expense of communal sacramentality. Louth's treatment of Damascene's invaluable early Byzantine impression of Islam (both in *On Heresies* and in a separate *Dispute Between a Saracen and a Christian*) is most interested in his apparently well-informed disputation of Muslim claims about Christ, the Word of God, and the teaching of Mohammad). See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 60-83. Louth argues that it is dualism in particular with which Damascene, like "the Byzantine mind" more generally, was "obsessed" (*St John Damascene*, 64); this is explicable at least in part in that the position of Cyrilline Chalcedonianism to which Damascene subscribes is *closer* to dualism than it is to monism, making the former more threatening as a more persuasive error.

<sup>71</sup> The Chalcedonian formula for the two natures of Christ being integrated with "no confusion, no change, no division, [and] no separation" (Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, I.86: ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαίρετως, ἀχωριστως) is a key basis for Damascene's treatment of the integrity of the material inscription and spiritual impartation of holiness. Cf. Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 69: "We see, then, a kind of bipolar structure informing God's self-manifestation, with an emphasis on the coming together of opposites in such a way that they continue to coexist. Opposites are not absorbed into an all-encompassing unity; the philosophical pull toward simplicity is rejected."

<sup>72</sup> See *On Heresies* 101/2. Cf. Elsner, "Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium," 478: "Now Iconoclasm's attack on *images* had necessarily to be construed as a full-frontal attack *on the Faith itself*: the image was protected by the whole weight of the context in which it was a part – namely the Orthodox religion." And see 482-83 on the "single process" by which monastic Orthodoxy responded to iconoclasm and Islam. Thus again, iconophilia is never just about the validity of a single religious practice, but is about identifying icons as integral with and exemplary of the mediation of holiness that belonged to the nature and purpose of the Christian church, indeed of creation as a whole.

uncreated, and collapse spiritual realities and ethical principles into the domains of law and warfare. On the other, Damascene notes the Muslim interpretation of Christ's crucifixion as illusory, and responds to the Muslim charge of *shirk* (associating creatures with the transcendent divinity) with the counter-charge of *koptein*, that is, severing God by dissociating God from God's Word and Spirit.<sup>73</sup>

Imagining religious others as frustrating the authentic mediation of holiness, Damascene and his successors were quick to argue that anti-hagiographical positions (into which Iconoclasts, Jews, and Muslims could be lumped together) called into question not only the material images against which they were ostensibly directed but indeed the entire fabric of providence which divine love is mediated to the created world, a world that cannot apprehend or embrace that love apart from its own created constitution. The flourishing of heretical understanding, in this view, corrodes the edifice of orthodoxy; pinning down heresy's errors becomes paramount to the constructive elaboration of theological norms. Yet the threatening presence of religious alterity contributed in its own way to the strengthening of the paradigm deemed orthodox, as wind may feed rather than extinguish a flame. Damascene's defense of images of Christ, Mary, and the saints, we must understand, was never only about the validity of a single religious practice, but rather about identifying icons as integral with and exemplary of the mediation of holiness that belonged to the nature and purpose of the Christian church, indeed of creation as a whole. The iconophile insistence (incorrect though the judgment surely is) that iconoclasts had wholly lost faith in the incarnation of Christ is telling: it is a claim consistent with the understanding that the incarnation entails God's participation in and adoption of not only human flesh but also human experience and human vulnerability, human ways of knowing and communicating.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See *On Heresies* 100/101. Cf. Khoury, "Jean Damascène et l'Islam," 47-69. Recall also the Greek-Cypriot identification of British views of St. George as simultaneously too exoteric and too immaterial (Chapter III, section 3b).

<sup>74</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 62-72, 79, 86-91, which we will consider below. See also Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 66: "the art of speaking in order to show [is] to incarnate the Word in the flesh of language that cannot be anything other than our own living flesh. It is for this reason that the same word [οἰκονομία] speaks of the christic incarnation, the incarnation of speech and the incarnation of the image." Mondzain also makes much of the emergence of this economic

Damascene's contribution, then, continues to rely on the core principle of the hagiographical paradigm we have considered in this dissertation: that the *human being* is the ultimate hagiographical medium, with which all exterior media intersect and enrich by way of processes of human life, understanding, and communication. Considered apart from the polemical heat of the time, it is this processual continuity that most distinguishes the "triumphant" iconophile paradigm from the excised iconoclastic alternatives—alternatives in which the "living image" of the saint stood in stark and static contrast with the "lifeless image" of the external material medium.<sup>75</sup> Damascene seizes for the iconophile paradigm the same core suppositions of the iconoclastic prohibitions: that holy people are living icons, and that an inner mimetic imaging of and assimilation to holiness is the purpose of any exterior representation thereof (what I have described as the intimate interrelation of *hagiographia* and *theopoiēsis*). Yet while, for the iconophobes, this inner image is the *only* true image of holiness, for the iconophiles the inner image belongs to the same mimetic matrix that extends throughout the created order, including the human world and its institutions. In this light, Damascene's accusations in *The Holy Images* will depict the iconoclasts as right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny. The hagiographical logic that Damascene would promote as a *sine qua non* for the Orthodox Church, at this pivotal point in its ongoing struggle over the mediation of holiness, was both/and rather than either/or.<sup>76</sup>

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understanding already in the fourth century, not least in the theological and pastoral idiom of Chrysostom (24, 35-63). Cf. Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon*, 88.

<sup>75</sup> See Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 194; Anastos, "The Ethical Theory of Images," 154-56; Barber, "Writing on the Body," 116.

<sup>76</sup> See again *The Orthodox Faith* 88.61-62 for this both/and logic of the human being as hagiographical representative: "Let us erect monuments and visible images for them, but let us *also* become their living monuments and images [ἔμψυχοι στήλαι καὶ εἰκόνες] through imitation [μιμήσει] of their virtues." Put another way, the hagiographical model of Damascene and the iconophiles after him is not only an extension of incarnational Christology (see Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 136) but also a richly kataphatic counterpart to the apophatic understanding of deification (with which Dionysius is often so one-sidedly associated, as the opposite error can accrue to readings of Damascene—see Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 114-16). *The Definition* of Nicaea II gives the following account of both/and legitimacy of pictorial representations as a means of cultivating the inner image: "the more these [holy people] are kept in view through their iconographic representation [εἰκονικῆς ἀνατυπώσεως], the more those who look at them are lifted up to remember and have an earnest desire for the prototypes" (377D, in Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 179; cf. Elsner, "Iconoclasm as Discourse," 381-82).

This section has explored the resistant warrants for Damascene's rectifying formulation of the multimediation of holiness; the coming section will turn to *The Orthodox Faith* itself, interpreting the theological and cosmological framework into which the hagiographical theory fits as a beating heart. In the paradigm crystallized by Damascene and his successors, it is precisely the embrace and entailments of the *in-betweenness* of the human as a frontier between material and spiritual that sets Orthodox Christianity apart from heretical errors and from non-Christian religions. The historicity and above all the physicality of the incarnation would provide in this period a polemical corner to hold against all comers; by the mid-ninth century, "matter [had become] central to Christianity's identity" in Byzantium.<sup>77</sup>

## **(2) Human Nature and Purpose as Grounds for Hagiography**

We have now considered the wider frame of what Damascene's theology of holiness *does*, in its formulation against theologies that fail to mediate well between materiality and spirituality (resisting, moreover, such theologies' inextricable political implications) and in its effort to chart a straight (*orthos*) path between corrosive influences of religious error. So doing, we found that the intimate interconnection of rectification with resistance in the theorization and promotion of the mediation of holiness (as we have found to be the case also with Chrysostom and in the theological culture of modern Cyprus) is for Damascene inextricable from the construction and maintenance of orthodoxy as such. Having registered why Damascene's great synthesis was seen to be needed, in the remaining two sections we will consider what its theology of holiness *is*: a systematic integration of the hagiographical practices of the church with the whole edifice of orthodox theology, cosmology, and anthropology. As discussed, Damascene's paradigm of holy multimediation, would provide not only an arsenal for the struggle with iconoclasm but

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<sup>77</sup> Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 36; cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 180.

also an anchor for a post-iconoclastic construal of the theological marrow of the Orthodox Church.<sup>78</sup> So we now come to investigate the texture of the theological framework in which Damascene reconstructs a theory of holy multimediation as an inextricable part of the whole. Although the intellectual complexity of the synthesis would make these details obscure to many of the faithful, this paradigm nevertheless has provided enduring authorization (mediated by trained religious leadership) of their practices and thus conditions of possibility for so much of what comes afterward—including the hagiographical topography of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus.

Although Damascene's model is not an attempt at theological or even anthropological originality, as has been amply noted,<sup>79</sup> it construes (and demonstrates) the many elements of the patristic heritage as capable of being juxtaposed, even in their diversities and disagreements, to produce through this coordination a stable testimony to be deployed upon new pastoral and political problems. Damascene's theological edifice, in other words, is not merely the reorganization of earlier ideas. There is an artistry at work in it similar to that of the mosaicist, who brings forth a new image through the combination of materials, an image that can only partially be seen in the materials themselves.<sup>80</sup> Or, to take up Damascene's own metaphor for his work, his theology takes form by "imitating the way of the bee," gathering the pith of all available resources and making from it a common honey.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See again Adrahtas, "John of Damascus," 267, and Louth, *St John Damascene*, 3, on how "the pattern of John's theological synthesis became determinative" for Orthodox Christianity, invested with premier authority and used for the education of ecclesiastical leaders through to the present day. Cf. Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 30: "we see from the beginning of the eighth century, and especially in the context of the iconoclastic controversies, a more frequent use of the adjective 'Orthodox,' in the sense of 'upright,' 'unique,' 'balanced,' 'truthful'; an epithet with the same theological connotations as the original 'catholic.' From then on 'Orthodox' became the official appellation of the Eastern Church."

<sup>79</sup> See, for instance, Louth, *St John Damascene*, 15; Jugie, "Jean Damascène," 697; and Barasch, *Icon*, 188.

<sup>80</sup> Damascene's work has, indeed, been referred to as "a mosaic of quotations" (Lionel Wickham, cited in Louth, *St John Damascene*, 36), although the force of the metaphor deserves amplification. On the growing scholarly interest in the question of Damascene's "originality," see Adrahtas, "John of Damascus," 275.

<sup>81</sup> Damascene, *Philosophical Chapters*, Proem.48-49: Τὸν τῆς μελίσης οὖν τρόπον μιμούμενος . . . . We have already seen this image at work in the sermons of Chrysostom, where a festival audience is encouraged, "just like bees from their hives, [to] rush out to the wounds of the martyrs and hold fast to their torments" ("On Eleazar and the Seven Boys" 5, see again Chapter V, section 3a); it is also a favorite of John Moschus and Basil of Caesarea, and indeed of students of rhetoric and philosophy as far back as Isocrates (see Bouboutsis, *Singing in a Strange Land*, 116-21). There is a clear metaphorical

## 2a) “First tell me of yourself”: Knowing God in Limitation and Participation

The end of *On Heresies* and the beginning of *The Orthodox Faith* alike reiterate an underlying logic of Damascene’s dogmatic synthesis: “if you would busy yourself inquiring about God, first tell me of yourself and the things that pertain to you.”<sup>82</sup> Why? Because “no one has ever known God unless God disclosed to him,”<sup>83</sup> and such disclosure is (as Damascene agrees with Chrysostom) an accommodation (*synkatabasis*) to human capacities, a rendering of divine self-expression within human mental and sensual categories: “He has revealed knowledge of himself according to that which is attainable for us.”<sup>84</sup> Humans only meet God by way of human modes of understanding and human media of communication, embedded in human communities and conditioned by human contingencies. Theology, in other words, begins with and remains anchored in anthropology.<sup>85</sup>

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affinity between this image of drawing pollen from many flowers and a favorite method of Damascene’s patristic citation and coordination: the anthology (or florilegium), the “bouquet of words.” But the image also reflects the *ascetic* character of the work, by which its systematicity is not meant to be exhaustive but to be instructive, to guide its readers in being theological bees themselves, not merely to know but to traverse the landscape of divine economy and produce its honey in themselves (*nota bene* Kotter’s critical recognition of the century [ἑκατοντάς] format of *The Orthodox Faith*, suggesting a recognizable utility for ascetic contemplation on the part of Damascene’s monastic audience: see Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, II.xxiii-xxv, and *Die Überlieferung der Pege Gnoseos des hl. Johannes von Damaskos*, 4-5; cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 36-37). Thus, Louth cautions, despite Damascene’s genius for synthesis and juxtaposition, he should not be considered a lone “prophet in the wilderness” (Louth, *St John Damascene*, 12) but rather a paramount exemplar (no less and possibly rather more than Maximus Confessor and John Climacus) of a longstanding monastic tradition of patristic preservation, harmonization, and pedagogical articulation.

<sup>82</sup> *On Heresies*, Epilogue (PG 94.780). Note that Kotter’s edition (*Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, IV.19-67) ends with the chapter on the “Ishmaelites,” making the text a century, while other editions, such as that collected in Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca*, include three additional chapters (including that on the Iconoclasts) and the epilogue cited here.

<sup>83</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 1.11.

<sup>84</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 1.19. It is in this light that Damascene’s whole systematic project takes shape: holding together the limitations of thought with the necessity of thought, he begins with a full philosophical lexicon so as to sharpen the tools of human distinction and comprehension. See Studer, *Die Theologische Arbeitsweise des Johannes von Damaskus*, 102-25, on Damascene’s adaptation of ancient philosophical resources.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Elsner, “Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” 479-80. It is significant that this grounding of (the success conditions of) theology in (the painstaking cultivation of healthy) anthropology is a basic commitment of the monastic tradition in which Damascene is steeped, tracing back through the likes of John Climacus and Maximus Confessor to the Cappadocian/Egyptian synthesis of Evagrius Ponticus. This heritage provided Damascene with an intellectual and a practical syntax for authenticating theological discourse through psychosomatic purification: see, for instance, *Philosophical Chapters* Proem.21-26, full of Evagriian metaphor: “How can I, stained by the pollution of every sin, bearing within myself the tumultuous, choppy sea of the passions, and with neither my mind nor my understanding having been purified so as to function as a mirror of God and of the divine manifestations, nor having speech that is capable of even those things I understand—how then shall I utter those divine and indescribable things, which surpass the apprehension

And yet, our knowledge, however refined or inspired, remains human in its powers of apprehension. Revelation, as Damascene sees it, is not the bestowal of superhuman knowledge but rather God's coming to meet the human being where that being is, in nature and history: a sacramental adoption of the situated processes of human perception and understanding as created vehicles for self-mediation.<sup>86</sup> As Christ is formed of human blood and bone in the womb of Mary, so God mediates Godself in forms woven of human language, culture, and material substance.<sup>87</sup> And it is here that a core principle of Chrysostom's (to be found also in the Cappadocians, Dionysius, Maximus, and others) recurs with fundamental significance in the synthetic paradigm of Damascene: divine *philanthrōpia* as the key to the possibility of theology.<sup>88</sup> That is, faith in God and the salvific transformation of persons are possible only because God in Godself is self-giving love (1 John 4:8), because of which God desires and expresses to us that desire to be "the good mediation/impartation/communication [*metadosis*] of his [own] hiddenness, indeed of his knowledge, according to what is appropriate and attainable for each person."<sup>89</sup>

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of every rational creature?" Note that the monastic tradition had also been committed, from well before Damascene, to the wrangling of Greek philosophical vocabulary into the yokes of Christian theological commitments.

<sup>86</sup> Damascene's formulation of the mediating work of human language to articulate theological truth (accurately though not exhaustively), significantly, relies largely on the same logic as his theorization of the material-cultural mediation of holiness, as we will see. See *The Orthodox Faith* 2.2-9: "Therefore it is necessary, for anyone wishing to speak or hear clearly about God, to know that the matters of theology and the [divine] economy are neither entirely inexpressible nor entirely expressible, and they are neither entirely unknowable nor entirely knowable. . . . Moreover, many of the things that are only understood obscurely about God are not able to be described properly either, but rather we are obligated to say things that are beyond us in a manner suitable for us." Cf. Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 118, on the apophatic premises anchoring Damascene's theology, requiring him to evaluate the human means of theological understanding.

<sup>87</sup> Indeed, in Damascene's view, the generation and incarnation of the Word of God (which function, as we will see, as a synecdoche for the whole *oikonomia* of divine relationality with creation) partakes of the same logic as the conception and vocalization of a (materially enunciated, sensorially perceptible) human word from a human mind (see *The Orthodox Faith* 6-7). Recall Chapter V, section 3a, on the sacramental adoption of the material world as means of sanctification.

<sup>88</sup> Much of Damascene's dogmatic synthesis is owed to engagement with Chrysostom, being particularly indebted in these early chapters of *The Orthodox Faith* to Chrysostom's *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God* (see Louth, *St John Damascene*, 89-92).

<sup>89</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 12.15-17. The key concept of mediation in this passage, *μετάδοσις* (from *μεταδίδωμι*), belongs to the core lexicon of hagiographical analysis, insofar as it signifies not only the making-available of something not previously available but also the giving of a *share* in that which, thereafter, belongs to both parties without diminution. It is used by Origen and Athanasius for the impartation of divinity to Christ in the begetting of God's Son; by Didymus and Cyril for the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church; and by Chrysostom and Maximus for the sharing of God's spirit in baptism and God's body in the eucharist. See citations in Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. *μεταδίδωμι* and *μετάδοσις*.

In other words, although the inner life of God is unknowable “by nature,” it belongs no less to the nature of God to “become visible in his activities [*energeiais*].”<sup>90</sup> It is not only God’s apophatic qualities (“uncreated,” “uncircumscribed,” “uncontainable,” “inconceivable,” and the like) that “he has by nature, taking them from nowhere else,” but also those which are associated with the economy of creation and salvation: “life-giving,” “sustaining all things,” “sanctifying and mediating.”<sup>91</sup> It will come as no surprise, as we traverse *The Orthodox Faith*, that this last pair of qualities in particular reflects the divine love and theopoetic grace from which hagiographical production and consumption derive their legitimacy and power. God’s holiness, inseparable from God’s love, is its own mediation. In turn, human faith and human participation (*metalēpsis* or *methexis*) in holiness have no meaning except as a response to and transformation as a result of this loving self-mediation.

Thus it is, in chapter 86 of *The Orthodox Faith*, that Damascene will anchor in this logic (impartation + participation) what could well be construed as a distillation of his entire theology and the narrative structure that binds its numerous parts together.<sup>92</sup> “God—who is good, entirely good, surpassingly good, who is goodness in his entirety—because of the excessive richness of his goodness, could not bear that the good should only be his own nature and not shared [*metechomenon*] by anything.”<sup>93</sup> The result is creation: God creates first the intelligible (*noētos*) creation, then the sensible

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<sup>90</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 13.73-74. Mondzain investigates how the development of Trinitarian thought brought an “economic” relationality to the patristic construal of the inner life of God itself and so made economy a central theological category (*Image, Icon, Economy*, 20-25); that is, and this is a crucial prerequisite for Damascene’s model, God comes to be understood as *essentially* and not only energetically relational.

<sup>91</sup> These diverse attributions appear in *The Orthodox Faith* 14.2-10, along with many others: τὸ ἄκτιστον ... τὸ ἀπερίγραφτον, τὸ ἀχώρητον ... τὸ ἀπερινόητον ... τὸ ζωοδοτικόν ... τὸ ἀγιαστικὸν καὶ μεταδοτικόν ... φύσει ἔχει οὐκ ἄλλοθεν εἰληφῦα.

<sup>92</sup> As Louth observes (*St John Damascene*, 84-85), the division of Damascene’s 100 chapters into four parts (an organizational innovation of the 1224 Latin translation by Burgundio of Pisa) is certainly not arbitrary. The four successive theological moves (recognition of which motivates Burgundio’s grouping of the chapters), echoed above in the climactic synopsis of Chapter 86, orient the work as a single trajectory: from the revelation and recognition of God, to the integrated creation of which the human being is a microcosm, to the fall of humanity and its restoration in Christ, to the life of the church that maintains and continues to mediate the holy love of God until the end of days.

<sup>93</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 86.2-4. Note especially the language of *being* as the grounds for *activity*, essence as the cause of energy, even as we can only postulate the essence on the basis of the energy. Cf. 9.7-9: “Therefore it is necessary not to

(*aesthētos*), and then the human being as the perfect synthesis of the two. But human beings fail to “persevere in the good”<sup>94</sup> and so to maintain their likeness (*homiōma*) to and unity (*henōsis*) with their creator, thus falling into corruption (*phthora*) and coming to be in need of salvation. And God provides, “likening” (*hōmoiōthē*) Godself and “uniting” (*hēnōthē*)<sup>95</sup> God’s energies to human being (which is, again, a synthesis of the intelligible and sensible creation, of spirituality and materiality) so that human being might be restored to likeness with God. “For because he gave us a share [*metedōken*] of his own image and his own spirit and we did not protect it, he himself partakes [*metalambanei*] of the poverty and weakness of our nature, in order that he might purify us and render us incorrupt and establish us again as participators [*metochous*] of his divinity.”<sup>96</sup> Finally, the interpersonal ecclesiality so important to the final chapters of *The Orthodox Faith* is emphasized: Damascene insists that *metalēpsis* in the divinity of Christ in the eucharist is not only a personal but also a communal participation<sup>97</sup>—a logic that carries, in the chapters immediately following, into his treatment of the mediation of holiness by the Virgin Mary, the saints, and the media that represent them in human culture.

This theological synopsis (whose components will be plumbed below) only escapes absurdity insofar as its articulation is presented as the response to a divinely desired and enacted bridge between what would otherwise remain separate. It is this bridge of mediation, this stable relationality between creator and creature, uncreated and created, that is represented in Damascene by the arch-symbol of *oikonomia*. Although the technical term is already used in the Pauline epistles,<sup>98</sup> it was from the third

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suppose that any of the things being said about God signify what he is in his essence [οὐσίαν], but rather, to take it that they show what he is not, or show some relationship [σχέσιν] with what is distinguished from him, or show something that follows upon his nature, or show his activity [ἐνέργειαν].” Cf. Jugie, “Jean Damascène,” 722: “*Le motif qui a poussé Dieu à créer n’est autre que son immense bonté ...*”

<sup>94</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 86.17.

<sup>95</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 86.20-21.

<sup>96</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 86.21-25.

<sup>97</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 86.167-72.

<sup>98</sup> In the epistles, *οικονομία* is deployed in the context of discussing the providential governance of the world by God and in particular the “provision to restore/recapitulate [ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι] all things in Christ,” as was “set forth” (προέθετο)

century and the Trinitarian controversies forward that *oikonomia* came to be applied extensively to God's administration of the cosmic *oikos* for the sake of its flourishing,<sup>99</sup> nowhere more vividly and generously than in the incarnation of Christ. Damascene interprets *oikonomia*, in this light, as the bedrock of Christian theology and the warrant for Christian confidence that human being and the human world can be the site and substance of divine self-revelation.<sup>100</sup>

## 2b) "So that he might sanctify it all": Mediating Spirituality and Materiality, Nature and Culture

*Oikonomia* is therefore the framework within which the first part of *The Orthodox Faith*, clarifying the logic of how we are able to speak of God in the first place and of what may be said with conviction, leads seamlessly into the second set of chapters,<sup>101</sup> which focus on cosmology and anthropology (the latter of which we may, in light of Damascene's integration of it with the former, describe as "microcosmology").<sup>102</sup>

The cosmos and the human being alike derive from the self-giving goodness of God, a goodness identified

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in Christ's incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection—the mysterious intention made actual in the physical-historical world, and made graspable by the human mind. See Ephesians 1:7-10 and 1 Timothy 1:3-4.

<sup>99</sup> The term *οικονομία* had its origins in Greek philosophical thought "on the administration and management of domestic life" and soon of the political order as construed as an analogous *οἶκος* (home). See Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 18-20, for a semantic study of the term. See also Blowers, "Beauty, Tragedy, and New Creation," 10: "By the time of the Cappadocian Fathers, *theologia* had acquired the increasingly restrictive sense of knowledge of the Holy Trinity (the triune Creator) as distinct from knowledge of the *oikonomia*, the Trinity's cooperative action in creation and redemption. . . . *Theologia*, needless to say, is not a readymade trinitarian orthodoxy, a set of revealed propositions defining the Trinity, but a *questing* knowledge with certain linguistic and ascetical ground rules for proceeding into the holiest of mysteries; otherwise, declares Gregory Nazianzen, *theologia* easily becomes trivialized and vulgarized." As Mondzain pithily puts it: "The difference between theology and economy is the difference between believing without seeing and believing while seeing" (*Image, Icon, Economy*, 24).

<sup>100</sup> The first fourteen chapters of *The Orthodox Faith*, the most properly "theological" of the entire work, bear out this conviction in abundance. See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 85-95. As Blowers observes of the Cappadocians ("Beauty, Tragedy, and New Creation," 29), Damascene too would consider the true "theologian" to be not properly *θεόλογος* so much as *οικονομος*—"a steward of the mysteries still known in their fulness only to the triune God (cf. 1 Cor 4:1)."

<sup>101</sup> See again note 92 on the Latin division of *The Orthodox Faith* into four clusters of chapters, focusing in turn on God and the Trinity, creation and humanity, the life and death of Christ, and ecclesiology and eschatology. Yet *οικονομία* is in fact the logical momentum common and fundamental to the whole work—this must be drawn out when analysing how Damascene's treatment of hagiographical mediation is integral with the whole of his theological paradigm.

<sup>102</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 26.25-26: God made the human being "a sort of a second cosmos, a small one within the larger one" (οἶόν τινα κόσμον δεῦτερον, ἐν μεγάλῳ μικρόν). It is noteworthy that Damascene reverses the more startling and paradoxical formulation of Gregory Nazianzen from which he derives this claim, that the human being is "a sort of second cosmos, a greater one within the smaller" (*Oratio* 38.11 [PG 36.324.1]: οἶόν τινα κόσμον δεῦτερον, ἐν μικρῷ μέγαν).

with *holiness*: “that which is beyond justice, that is, the goodness by which we do good even to one who treats us unjustly.”<sup>103</sup> God creates, these chapters insist, because God’s goodness entails the impossibility of divine contentment with self-contemplation in the absence of self-communication. Such communication, however, requires that creatures both be other than and capable of participating in their creator.<sup>104</sup>

What then, in Damascene’s patristic synthesis, is the human being? We discover Damascene’s epitomized anthropology beginning in chapter 25 of *The Orthodox Faith*, at the conclusion of his survey of the “visible and invisible creation”:<sup>105</sup> the human is *mikros kosmos*, being created (like the macrocosmos) as simultaneously two-in-one, intelligible (*noētos*) and sensible (*aesthētos*), neither dimension reducible to nor divorceable from the other. In this integrated but dual constitution, the human belongs within creation and all things in creation pertain to the human, yet the human being is also fashioned “after [God’s] image and likeness from the visible and invisible creation.”<sup>106</sup> The human being, constituted as a psychosomatic synthesis of materiality and spirituality, represents the creator to creation and creation to the creator.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Philosophical Chapters* 3:12-13.

<sup>104</sup> See again *The Orthodox Faith* 86.2-4, and 16:2-6: “Because God, who is good and indeed beyond goodness, was not satisfied with contemplating himself, but in the excess of his goodness [ὑπερβολῇ ἀγαθότητος] deemed it right that there be something to be benefitted by and to participate in [εὐεργετηθησόμενα καὶ μεθέξοντα] his goodness, out of nothing and into being he brings forth and shapes the plenitude [of created things], invisible and visible, and the human being who is a composite [συνκείμενον] of visible and invisible.”

<sup>105</sup> In “Beauty, Tragedy, and New Creation”, Paul Blowers explores how, despite the underappreciated differences and divergences between the Cappadocian fathers, these three thinkers (following upon the achievements of Origen) were of particular significance in reworking the Greek cosmological traditions so as to align them with Christian theological concerns with creation from nothing and the authenticity of divine incarnation in the material world. The contributions of the Cappadocians are, in turn, at the heart of Damascene’s own synthetic theological cosmology. Blowers’ earlier work (*Drama of the Divine Economy*) provides a more “comprehensive approach to the early Christian vision of creator and creation” (4) schematizing and interrelating numerous Hellenistic and late antique discourses around the principles and dimensions of the created order.

<sup>106</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 25.2-3.

<sup>107</sup> Note how Damascene takes pains to emphasize the integrity of the human and the senselessness in separating one aspect from another, since “the body and the soul [including what would later be understood as the emotional and psychological dimensions of human being] were fashioned together, not one of them first and one of them later (as in the silliness of Origen)” (*The Orthodox Faith*, 26.22-23). See also Parry, “Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephoros,” 167, on the “psychophysical unity that lies at the heart of Orthodox theology”—due, in no small part, to the influential contribution of Damascene.

As it belongs to God's nature to mediate God's love to God's creation, it then belongs to this representational nature of humanity to be a mediator of a different but aligned sort: to render a "mixture" [*mixin*] of the many parts and dimensions of the created order, drawing them together and integrating them in one being. Damascene conceives this function of the human as "a way of binding together [*syndesmon*] the visible and invisible natures"<sup>108</sup> while simultaneously mediating on to the rest of creation the divine love due to which it all was made. This onward mediation belongs to Damascene's hermeneutics of the *image of God*,<sup>109</sup> as a representation that both refers back to that which is represented and refers onward to that to which it is represented. Such double representation is an electric current running through all of Damascene's theology: it is at work in his economy of Trinitarian life, warrants his identification of the nature and vocation of the human being as "a frontier, as it were, linking what is separate,"<sup>110</sup> and, as we will see, grounds his incandescent apologetic for material icons and the human industry of hagiography as a whole.<sup>111</sup>

This mediation of God to creation and between the different dimensions of creation is, for Damascene, the purpose of the human being; here again the theologian has provided a warrant for hagiographical representation at the core of his theological anthropology. But there remains a problem: humanity has fallen, drifting away from our original "familiarity" (*parrhēsian*)<sup>112</sup> with God and distorting our harmonious, noeto-aesthetic constitution. Humanity must be restored to its mediating integrity with

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<sup>108</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 26.9-12, quoting Nazianzen, *Homily* 38.11.

<sup>109</sup> This hermeneutic will be considered in more depth below, particularly in section 3a.

<sup>110</sup> Louth, *St John Damascene*, 133. Louth also notes (86) that this theme of humanity as the mediation between creator and creation is so powerfully pivotal to Damascene's overall theological vision that versions of *The Orthodox Faith* exist which place the chapters on ecclesiology and human social vocation *between* the sections on invisible and visible creation.

<sup>111</sup> See Elsner, "Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium," 479-81, on the "hierarchy of images" by which revelation and sanctification alike depend on responding to (and indeed becoming) images of holiness; and Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 72, on the iconophile position that images mediate between domains that are not consubstantial (versus the iconoclast assessment that a true image is determined by its being of the same nature as its prototype).

<sup>112</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 45.3-5: "And so by this assault of the demon who is the principle of all evil, humanity was ensnared and, not having kept the command of its creator, was denuded of grace and despoiled of his familiarity toward God ..."

itself, with creation, and with God—but how? The third group of chapters in *The Orthodox Faith* focuses in on that rectifying pivot point of divine *oikonomia*, around which the evolving Christian paradigm of cosmology and history continues to turn: the incarnation of Christ.<sup>113</sup>

Christ's incarnation is, in Damascene's synthesis, the central point of the whole cosmic history of mediation between creator and creation, the living paradox of that mediation, and the symbolic framework within which all human *participation* in and *imitation* of that mediation is intelligible. Damascene reiterates the conclusions of the Ecumenical Councils regarding the Christological controversies that had arisen in the preceding five hundred years. Because the anthropological paradigm at work has human nature as an inseparable integrity of materiality and spirituality,<sup>114</sup> the Word did not adopt flesh like clothing but rather became human (*enanthrōpēsanta*) in the sense of being constituted anew in the elements of human being.<sup>115</sup> As Damascene clarifies in a separate treatise, “incarnation is to partake [*metaschein*] in flesh and what pertains to flesh.”<sup>116</sup> And what is it that pertains to flesh, to the

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<sup>113</sup> Recall, as Damascene clearly does, the orientation of *oikonomia* toward ἀνακεφαλαιώσις (restoration or recapitulation) in Ephesians 1:10.

<sup>114</sup> So much so that Christ's flesh, distinguished though it is from his spirit, is inseparable from it and so itself can be said to be “animate, rational, and intellectual” and not merely the venue for the encampment of divinity (*The Orthodox Faith* 46.33: σὰρξ ἔμψυχος λογικὴ τε καὶ νοερά). See also, however, Chapter 60, where Damascene distinguishes between the single “species” (εἶδος) of the human being, in which body and soul are wholly integrated, and the distinct kinds of “substance” (οὐσία) represented by body and soul respectively; Damascene reserves the right sometimes to speak of human nature as singular and sometimes to speak of it as twofold, in light of these distinctions.

<sup>115</sup> The distinction drawn in *The Orthodox Faith* 46.25-31 is between God being “united to a flesh already existing by itself” on the one hand, and God entering the womb of Mary to “make flesh come into existence animated by a rational and intellectual soul,” on the other. In the latter case, on which Damascene insists, “the Word itself became the person for that flesh [τῇ σαρκὶ ὑπόστασις]”—that is, the divinity of Christ is the unifying principal of his own human body and soul, such that no part of Christ's humanity is *more* or *less* divine than any other part. The whole humanity is in “coinherence” (περιχώρησις) with the whole divinity, which is not circumscribed or corrupted by what is mortal but which, rather, makes what is mortal divine (θεοποιεῖ) without effacing its mortality (otherwise, Christ would not be capable of death). As Damascene articulates earlier on, “The soul is bound together [συνδέεται] with the body, the whole of the one with the whole of the other and not part with part; nor is [the soul] encompassed by the body but rather encompasses it, just like fire and iron, where the one carries out its proper activities in the other” (*The Orthodox Faith* 13.39-41. Cf. *Against the Jacobites* 52.40-43; and see *Philosophical Chapters* 42-43, on the definitions of “hypostasis” and “person”). See also Twombly, *Perichoresis and Personhood*, 42.

<sup>116</sup> *Against the Jacobites* 52.29-30. Note that Damascene (like his patristic forebears) frequently and explicitly uses “flesh” (and “soul,” likewise) as a synecdoche for the human being in its wholeness (see *The Orthodox Faith* 62). The “Jacobites” were a branch of non-Chalcedonian Christians who had in particular objected to the identification of the *incarnate* Christ as “one of the Trinity”; it was in no small part to bring them back within the fold that the emperor Heraclius had

human being in its integrated wholeness? This we have already learned, throughout chapters 15-44: the whole cosmological and anthropological (microcosmological) framework presented there is no less relevant to Christology than it was to the economy of creation. With some important qualifications,<sup>117</sup> Christ “took everything upon himself so that he might sanctify it all”:<sup>118</sup> human sensation, human imagination, human passion, human willpower—and with these, Christ assumed human historicity and human culture in the Roman Levant. For these indeed “pertain to human nature” in Damascene’s sense—however “accidental” their particular manifestations may be.<sup>119</sup>

That is, Damascene is clear that Christ’s experience is human insofar as that experience belongs to what his humanity is: to his rational body but also to his cultural, social, historical embeddedness. This is not to say that the *particular* cultural constitution of Christ is identified with human nature, but rather that *being-cultural* is part of the human being assumed by Christ. Incarnation includes enculturation—even if the cultural forms adopted by Christ are no more essential to his humanity than his hair color or height.<sup>120</sup> If we forgive the anachronistic term but acknowledge that it identifies a dimension of being human

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supported the compromise positions of Monenergism and Monotheletism, drawing the ire of Sophronios of Jerusalem, Maximus Confessor, and later, John of Damascus. See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 151-55, 161-62.

<sup>117</sup> Christ does not, Damascene emphasizes, take on the *sinful* qualities of human psychological and social existence, for sin is a distortion of goodness rather than an entity in itself; sin, that is, “is neither natural nor was sown in us by our creator” (*The Orthodox Faith* 64.3-5).

<sup>118</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 64.13: Πάντα τοίνυν ἀνέλαβεν, ἵνα πάντα ἀγιάσῃ.

<sup>119</sup> See *Philosophical Chapters* 13.6-7: that which is “accidental” (συμβεβηκότος) is that which does not need to be a particular way in any given species of being, “for it does not belong to the definition of the species.” For a characteristic to be accidental, however, does not suggest that it is wholly ephemeral (Damascene’s example of this being a man standing or a man sitting); it may be “inseparable” (ἀχώριστον) from a being’s existence (like skin color, height, native language), where even though the trait is not definitive of the being it nonetheless determines aspects of its way of existing.

<sup>120</sup> See especially *The Orthodox Faith* 69.3-6: “. . . through his love for humanity [διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν] the Lord assumed [ἀνέλαβε] our nature and all natural aspects of it, thus becoming human [γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος] in nature and in truth, and becoming human also in the experience of all things natural to us [τῶν φυσικῶν ἐν πείρῃ].” In another treatise, *On the Two Wills*, Damascene (following Maximus) makes clear how this “nature” of human being includes our positioning in time, space, and culture. The examples he uses of things “pertaining to the flesh” are clearly what a modern interpreter will call cultural (no less than, nor separate from, physical) characteristics: Jesus is circumcised; he rides a donkey, not an elephant; he speaks Aramaic, not Ethiopian; he weeps over the iniquities of Jerusalem, not Persepolis. . . (see *On the Two Wills* 36, and Louth, *St John Damascene*, 169). Cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 218, on the incarnation as no less an *ensemiōsis*, an entry into and deifying assumption of “the order of signs.” The phrase itself comes from Maurice de la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith*, cited in Jones, “Art and Sacrament,” 179.

essential to Damascene's paradigm, we may recognize "culture" as representing in the domain of social and semiotic interconnectedness what for an individual human is a unified experience both somatic and epistemic. The material-spirituality of human being is invariably social as much as it is individual, for such is the human being; culture is constituted like the human being is, and is coextensive with the human world of social productivity and significance.

One of Damascene's synonyms for incarnation, significantly, is *oikeiōsis*, God's "appropriation," "familiarization," "inhabitation," or even "at-homentment" of this incarnate/encultured human condition in its wholeness. And to be fully human is to participate in the spatial, temporal, social, cultural conditions in which humans exist, accidental and subject to perversion though these may be (no less than a person's vulnerable flesh and passionate soul).<sup>121</sup> Damascene thus affirms that, in the person of the incarnate Son of God, God "in his totality came into communion [*ekoinōnēsen*] with us"—as intimately as there is communion between the two natures of Christ.<sup>122</sup> The foregoing anthropological framework thus provides a crucial basis for the hagiographical dynamics to follow: the holiness of Christ, and that of the saints who participate in it and mediate it onward, is not incompatible either with materiality *per se* or with the material-intellectual syntheses of human culture, even as it dare not be confused with them.

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<sup>121</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 69.3-11: "It is necessary to know that there are two kinds of 'appropriation' [*οικειώσεις*]: one which is natural and substantial [*φυσική και οὐσιώδης*], the other of which is personal and relational [*προσωπική και σχετική*; *nota bene* the contrast but integrity of *nature* and *person*, as in the Christological categories, in what follows]. Therefore, the natural and substantial appropriation is that by which the lord in his benevolence took upon himself our nature and all that belongs naturally to it, becoming human in nature and in truth, indeed becoming human in his experience of what is natural to us. On the other hand, it is personal appropriation when someone takes upon himself another's countenance because of their relationship, I mean out of pity and love, and, on this person's behalf, produces words for his sake that are not his own possession. It is in this way that he appropriated our curse and our dereliction, such things as are not ours by nature, not because he was or had become [cursed], but because he took responsibility for how we present ourselves and appointed himself among us." Recall the discussion of the *φάρμακον* that cures by appropriating something of the ailment, healing at the site of the harm, in Chapter V, section 1b; cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 145.

<sup>122</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 50.26. See also 59.177-78: "Christ acts, therefore, according to each of his natures, and each nature acts in communion [*κοινωνίας*] with the other." Cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 201.

2c) “Rain for a new cultivation”: Christ, the Church, the Saints

As a result of the incarnation of Christ, human beings are drawn into a new mode of relating to their own humanity and all that “pertains to it.” Human being, already the site of mediation between the visible and invisible creation, is in Christ “restored to the original blessedness [*archaian ... makariotēta*]” of its mimetic likeness to God and its mediation between the created and the uncreated.<sup>123</sup> And being united hypostatically to divinity, Christ’s human existence (already representational of God as the restored image of God) is itself deified and becomes worthy not only of *mimēsis* but also of adoration: “I am afraid to touch the burning coal because of the fire suffusing the wood. I bow down before the compound being of Christ because of the divinity united with the flesh.”<sup>124</sup> As we see with greater detail in *The Holy Images*, the very same material nature that should under ordinary circumstances be respected and loved (as God loves it, the good creation) but not adored (in the sense owed only to the creator)<sup>125</sup> becomes in the person of Christ a divine flesh that in no way ceases to be material.<sup>126</sup> Christ walks on water with his bodily feet, even if he does so *because* of his supernatural power.<sup>127</sup> Iron does not burn by its own nature, but when it is united with fire, iron burns nevertheless; fire does not cut by its own nature, but when it is united with iron, fire cuts nevertheless.<sup>128</sup> Granted, Christ’s nature is understood here as one of a kind, “the only new

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<sup>123</sup> *The Holy Images* I.18.11-12. Cf. Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 36, tracing this logic back to Athanasius of Alexandria. See also Louth, *St John Damascene*, 145-46, and Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 74-75.

<sup>124</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 52.30.32.

<sup>125</sup> This distinction is hammered home repeatedly in *The Holy Images*: see, for instance, I.16, II.14, II.19, and III.28.

<sup>126</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 56.56-60: “For the Word became flesh, brought to life from the womb of the Virgin, but continuing as God after this assumption [*προσλήψεως*] [of flesh], the one being deified [*θεωθείσης*] by the other at the same time as its coming into being; so, all together three things took place, the assumption [of human being by the divine being], the constitution [of the unified person of Christ], and the deification of the flesh by the word.”

<sup>127</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 59.188-92: “He performed human actions in a superhuman manner—walking upon the unsteady water with his earthly feet, not because the water had been made earth but because it was made substantial and unyielding to the weight of material feet by the superhuman power of his divinity.”

<sup>128</sup> That which pertains to the one comes to pertain to the other. See *The Holy Images* I.67, and *The Orthodox Faith* 47.75-79: “The Word appropriates [*Οικειοῦται*] these human things (for whatever pertains to his holy flesh is truly his) and he imparts [*μεταδίδοι*] to his flesh what is his own, according to the manner of exchange [taking place] through the coinherence [*περιχώρησιν*] of each of his parts in the other, that is, according to the hypostatic union. This is because he was one, this Christ who carried out both divine and human things, each form in communion [*κοινωνία*] with the other.” However, there is still an asymmetry in the exchange of qualities; holiness is here imparted without itself being

thing under the sun”; he is not a member of a “common species.”<sup>129</sup> And yet, Damascene’s comprehensive treatment of the nuances of the incarnation (in particular the transformation of human nature through its assumption by divinity) identifies the economic event of the incarnation as the prototype of saintly deification,<sup>130</sup> brought to fruition in God’s impartation of holiness to the human being.

As with the incarnation of Christ, so to in the deification of the saints and the mediation of their imparted holiness through mimetic media: human being remains human in spite of its assimilation by divinity, and holiness is not limited to one part of the person (such as the mind or the soul or the activities) but rather suffuses the person’s whole being and interpersonal relations. What was once transcendent, invisible, and inconceivable becomes present and akin (however evanescently or uncannily) to psychosomatic human being and its material-intellectual, cultural-political world. And, as with Christ, the impartation of holiness to the saints is not merely a rescue of the saints themselves from distorted ways of being. Rather, their sanctification involves their assimilation into the “radiance” (*ellampsis*) of Christ’s holy humanity<sup>131</sup>—a participation that includes, as we will continue to see, the ongoing self-mediation of that holiness. To be sanctified, in Damascene as much as in Chrysostom, is to join in sanctifying others.

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contaminated. See again *Against the Jacobites* 52.40-43: “The better thing is not impaired by the worse: for as the iron is kindled, but the fire is not made into iron, and as the flesh is animated, but the soul is not made into flesh, thus the divine nature deifies [θεοί] the flesh, but is not itself made into flesh [οὐ σαρκούται].”

<sup>129</sup> *The Orthodox Church* 45.44-45. See also 47.50-53: “Concerning our lord Jesus Christ, it is not possible to have a common species [κοινὸν εἶδος], for there has not been nor is nor ever will be another Christ made of divinity and humanity, himself being both perfect God and perfect man in both divinity and humanity.” See also 60.30-31: “there can be found no species of Christs [εἶδος Χριστῶν].” Cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 145-46.

<sup>130</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 86.32-35: “He became the first-fruit of the resurrection, and he established himself as a way, a type, a model for copying [ὑπογραμμὸν—a crucial concept that will be discussed further below], so that we too, following in his footsteps, might become by attribution [θέσει] what he is by nature [φύσει]: children and heirs of God, indeed joint-heirs with [Christ].”

<sup>131</sup> See again *The Orthodox Faith* 26.35, and *The Holy Images* II.10.109-18 (cf. III.9): “Now, since the divinity has been commingled with our nature, like some life-giving and saving medicine [φάρμακον; recall the earlier discussion in note 121 and in Chapter V, section 1b], our nature has been glorified and transmuted [ἐδοξάσθη . . . μετεστοιχειώθη] into incorruption. Therefore the death of the saints is celebrated with feasts, and temples are raised for them, and images are engraved [ἀναγράφονται].” Louth notes that the odd verb μετεστοιχειώθη, here translated “transmuted,” had been used by earlier patristic authors to discuss the resurrected body of Christ, the deified humanity of Christ, and the consecrated nature of the eucharistic elements; see his notes in Damascene, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, 67 and 91.

And so, arriving to the concluding chapters of Damascene's dogmatic synthesis, we find the salvific *oikonomia* of the incarnation interlocking with those many aspects of human social existence that must themselves be rectified, that is, reoriented in order to align them with the new creation in which they are able (if properly calibrated) to participate. Dealing principally with ecclesiology and eschatology, the end of *The Orthodox Faith* narrates the nature and purpose of the church as relative to (and in some crucial ways isomorphic with) God's own ongoing stewardship and cultivation of God's people, so that they may benefit from the mediating matrix of the incarnation and not remain mere observers of the new creation but be themselves "[established] once again as participators [*metochous*] in divinity."<sup>132</sup>

Among the clear objectives of these final chapters is to show how the preceding theological and anthropological framework has clear *communal* entailments that need to be embraced and engaged as the living work of transforming the world.<sup>133</sup> As Louth observes, a common thread of Damascene's ecclesiology (no less than in his theology writ large) is the presentation of the church as a mediating matrix between material and spiritual creation, on the one hand, and between creation and the creator, on the other.<sup>134</sup> This discussion of the church and its organic activities—which should, I submit, be

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<sup>132</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 86.24-25. At the end of this same chapter, Damascene further clarifies the sacramental integration of the church community into the overall *oikonomia* of God, using much of the same lexicon of mediation that we have seen at work throughout the dogmatics: "It is called participation [*Μετάληψις*], for through this we come into a share of [*μεταλαμβάνομεν*] of Jesus' divinity. It is called communion [*Κοινωνία*] (and it is such in truth) on account of our coming into commonality [*κοινωνεῖν*] with Christ through it and [on account of our] partaking [*μετέχειν*] of his flesh and his divinity, also coming into commonality and being unified [*ἐνοῦσθαι*] with each other through him." (86.167-70). Recall the all-important distinction in Chrysostom between the mere *spectating* of holiness and the proactive *imitation* of holiness. See also Louth, *St John Damascene*, 145, discussing the necessity not only of a once-and-for-all conquering of the human being's distortion by Christ but also of the ongoing education and edification of humankind (including, as I will address shortly, by the faithful production and consumption of hagiographical media) "so as to benefit from this redemption." Cf. Elsner, "Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium," 480, and Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 29.

<sup>133</sup> Jugie expresses regret that "*le docteur de Damas n'ait pas consacré au moins un chapitre à la théologie de l'Eglise*" ("Jean Damascène," 715), but I see no reason that Damascene's ecclesiology should be viewed as any less robust for being spread over the course of many chapters, any more that we would say his cosmology is deficient because he writes of the creation in twelve chapters rather than one.

<sup>134</sup> See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 179-80: "There is, perhaps, another unifying factor that, in fact, is present in the whole of *On the Orthodox Faith*, and that is the idea of Christianity as a middle way, a way of mediation. . . . Because human kind exists on the border between spiritual and material reality, this is reflected in human religion, the human relationship to the Creator. . ." This living complementarity of the human being is "affirmed unconditionally" in the eschatological resurrection of the body—Damascene's own final topic in *The Orthodox Faith*.

understood as a “theological sociology” that follows upon and ramifies the incarnation, as theological anthropology preceded and warranted it—carries on with impeccable consistency the Chalcedonian logic of a twofold unity in which material and spiritual, human and divine, are never collapsed into each other but are intimately, reciprocally, transformatively related to one another. It is significant, of course, that for Damascene such a mediation that binds together what had been separate is a (if not the) trait that distinguishes orthodox Christianity from other religions and philosophies.<sup>135</sup> All that depends on the logic of this mediation—such as, we will see in the coming section, Damascene’s theorization of hagiographical processes—is therefore fixed in the position of reinforcing this alterity, and bolstering the mental and material resistance by which orthodox Christians are to protect themselves from heretical temptation.

As an encultured human institution, clay given breath by the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit, the church is as unitively twofold as the human being and as the God-man who restores that human being to its integrity. Its sacraments involve the sanctifying adoption of matter (baptism at once by water and the holy spirit;<sup>136</sup> the eucharistic bread that is the body of Christ without ceasing to be bread;<sup>137</sup> the scriptures that are the Word of God reconstituted in human language and as physical paper and ink).<sup>138</sup> The faith that sustains it, likewise, is fueled by in a two-in-one manner, by sense perception (hearing the word of the scriptures, seeing the great deeds of the saints, and evaluating these sense-perceptions appropriately) and

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<sup>135</sup> See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 180, and Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 36.

<sup>136</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 82.36-37: “Because the human being is twofold [διπλοῦς], [composed] out of soul and body, likewise twofold is the purification he gave us, through water and spirit.” On this and the following few examples in light of their twofold character, see also Louth, *St John Damascene*, 181-83, 187.

<sup>137</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 86.41-42 (“Because we are these twofold and composite [διπλοῖ ... καὶ σύνθετοι] beings, it is necessary also that the birth [of baptism] be twofold, and likewise that the food [of eucharist] be such”), and 86.90-93 (“Because it is a custom [*nota bene*, in light of the logic of enculturation belonging to that of the incarnation] for human beings to eat bread and to drink water and wine, he bound together [συνέζευξεν] his divinity with these things and has made them his own body and blood, so that through our customs and according to our nature [διὰ τῶν συνήθων καὶ κατὰ φύσιν] we may, in these things, become more than what is natural”).

<sup>138</sup> Although Damascene’s treatment of the scriptures in *The Orthodox Faith* does not make the point explicitly, the placement of the chapter on scripture among the many other material media of divine grace in the church (including the relics and images of the saints) suggests that the twofold, mediating logic carries through. In *The Holy Images* I.16/II.14, moreover, we find it explicitly stated that the scriptures are no less holy mediators of divine grace for being made of material stuff: “Or are the ink and the all-holy book of the gospels not matter?”

by hope in and intellection upon that which is not experienced but which inheres within and transfigures our experience as the gift of the Spirit.<sup>139</sup>

In each of its manifestations and in the communal interplay between them, then, the church is where “the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit becomes the rain for a new cultivation [*geōrgia*],” irrigating the personal and cultural existence of human beings.<sup>140</sup> The metaphors of water and nutritive growth course through these chapters: the benevolence of God is conceived as a single river running through the scriptures, the sacraments, the holy cross and the holy images, in which the roots of the strong, fruit-bearing tree of the church are planted.<sup>141</sup> Ecclesiology, including all the practices through which God is known and shown in the church, thus becomes the penultimate entailment of divine *oikonomia* (prior to eschatology): those who partake of the sacramental media of the church become more like them.<sup>142</sup> This is the interpersonal framework, blessedly and vulnerably human,<sup>143</sup> in which Damascene envisions the ongoing mediation of divine love and holiness into the world that is remade by them.

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<sup>139</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 83; recall Chrysostom’s (presciently pre-Chalcedonian) distinction-and-integration between the eyes of the body and the eyes of faith.

<sup>140</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 86.74-76.

<sup>141</sup> See, for instance, *The Orthodox Faith* 90.14-16: “Thus a soul watered by sacred inscription [*γραφῆ*]—in this chapter, the scriptures, but the logic is transferable to other forms of material mediation of divinity] swells up and gives ripe fruit, that is, its orthodox faith, and it bursts forth with evergreen leaves, by which I mean deeds pleasing to God.”

<sup>142</sup> See *The Holy Images* I.21.71-74: “Since we were brought to life through water and the spirit, we have truly been adopted [*υιοθετήμεθα*—recall the discussion of sacramental *υιοθεσία* in Chapter V, section 3a] and become heirs of God. Because of this, Paul calls the faithful *holy* [*τοὺς πιστοὺς ἁγίους ὁ Παῦλος καλεῖ*].” For more on Damascene’s understanding of the sacraments, see Jugie, “Jean Damascène,” 742-43.

<sup>143</sup> “Vulnerably,” in the sense prevailing in this dissertation, in that the “law of sin” can distort even the enactment of forms of holy mediation instituted by God. For instance, Damascene notes how a baptism may be conducted “in guile” (*The Orthodox Faith* 82.106: *ἐν δόλῳ*) and that icons may be woefully misunderstood and misused (*The Holy Icons* II.10/III.9)—both by those who venerate them and those who wish to abolish them! As Chrysostom railed against the misusers of hagiographical media, Damascene makes it an anthropological principle that the human mind is capable both of deification (through “participation in the divine radiance”—*The Orthodox Faith* 26.35-36) but also of participation in evil. The essentially good creation may be turned to evil ends through the mind’s willing consent to destructive physiological and psychological drives, against the prompting of the Holy Spirit: “The law of sin [*νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας*]—which is indeed the prompting by the law that is in our members, or by the appetite and propensity and activity of the body and the irrational part of the soul—is at war with the law of my mind [*νόμῳ τοῦ νοῦς μου*], which is found in the conscience. [The former] captivates me and ... deceives and persuades me to be enslaved to sin” (*The Orthodox Faith*, 95.19-26) Cf. Romans 8:6 on the “mentality of flesh” (*φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός*) versus the “mentality of spirit” (*φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος*). Damascene’s anthropology of perception, imagination, passion, memory, and reasoning will be addressed below, in section 3b.

### (3) Hagiographical Mediation as Theopoetic Matrix: A Synopsis

It is only in the context of this comprehensively interconnected synthesis of patristic thought—on the identity and relationality of a loving God, on human embodiment of the principles of creation, on the joining and entanglement of creator and creation in Christ, and on the nature and purpose of the church as social and historical ramification of the transformative Christ event—that Damascene broaches the topic of specifically hagiographical mediation, and it is clear that such media (the stories, images, and remains of holy people) are given no intelligibility apart from this whole.<sup>144</sup> Unlike in *The Holy Images*, icons and relics are not treated in *The Orthodox Faith* through polemical excursus but rather thoroughly integrated with the divine *oikonomia* that has driven the whole synthesis.<sup>145</sup> With this systematic framework now in hand, it becomes possible to read the much more developed hagiographical insights of *The Holy Images* both in light of their resistance to iconoclasm and as necessary entailments of the whole theological system—which itself is envisioned as a straight highway through the wasteland of heresy.<sup>146</sup>

In other words, even as Damascene's treatment of hagiography develops and thickens in reaction to iconoclasm, it functions not merely as an apologetic response but as a necessary entailment of the whole dogmatic system, insofar as he locates it (in abridged but consonant form) within his patristic synthesis in *The Orthodox Faith*. At the same time, this integration of iconography with the whole range of sacramental media, and these in turn with the whole theological/cosmological/anthropological/christological/ecclesiological economy, serves as the strongest feature of Damascene's attempt at decisively

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. Elsner, "Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium," 481: "After John of Damascus, it was no longer possible to see the feast or the iconic representation of the theme [of Transfiguration and all it implied about the integration of the eyes of the body and the eyes of faith] fully for what it was, unless one saw in it the resonances to the rest of the 'divine economy' that John had drawn out."

<sup>145</sup> Of course, this integration can itself be seen as a version of iconophile argumentation against those who would view material representations of holiness to be an aberrant custom divorced from tradition and theology. See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 28, 185.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Isaiah 40:3.

resisting the chipping away at any aspect of the centrifugal multimediation of holiness.<sup>147</sup> Judging by the authoritativeness of the results (since 787), this attempt was deemed an overpowering success and an inexhaustible arsenal for the enduring, self-constitutive struggles of orthodoxy with heresy.

In this section, I provide a synoptic view of how Damascene's theological paradigm configures and interrelates the processes of mediation that organized my interpretation of John Chrysostom's hagiological discourse in the previous chapter and were abundantly in evidence in the Greek-Cypriot cult of St. George: the imagination, representation, and edification of holiness. Of particular interest are the ways that these processes, precisely insofar as they operate at the interpretive interfaces between people and cultural configurations, are always sociological as much as they are anthropological in form and function, entailing an orthodoxy shaped by its struggles with otherness. The principle that organizes the hagiographical schema crystallized by Damascene is, I will continue to argue, that human beings themselves (inclusive of their diverse, interwoven, circumscribed, and often-dissonant processes of understanding and communication, face to face with and rhetorically identified toward/against one another) constitute the matrix through which holiness is mediated to the human world.

### 3a) *"A model for copying": The Graphability of Holiness and the Mimetic Imperative*

Already by the time of the Quinisext Council of 691-92, the argument that the incarnation of Christ had changed the conditions of possibility for knowledge of and relation with God was alive and

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<sup>147</sup> That is, it was iconoclasm that contextualizes this work, but the same system would do equally well to protect the veneration of relics, the sign of the cross, the venerability of the scriptures, the christomimetic authority of the priesthood, and so forth. In this light, Damascene's well-appreciated hermeneutics of the image validates a hagiographical paradigm that, though historically branded by the iconoclastic controversy, is by no means limited to visual mediation and serves to anchor the late- and post-Byzantine commitment to hagiographical media of all kinds (what I have been calling a "hagiographical maximalism." On the case that the veneration of icons only emerges in its mature sense through the painstaking effort to argue against an alternative, see Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 6, 62-64, 784 (a parallel case could well be made for the purifying status of the martyrs' bones, several centuries before). Indeed, as Cameron suggests, "the concept of orthodoxy—like the nature of God—is much more difficult to grasp than that of heresy," and the formulation of orthodoxy that "was the mirror image" of the rejection of heresy has often taken a back seat in the scholarship (see "The Cost of Orthodoxy," 344, 347).

persuasive.<sup>148</sup> Forty to fifty years later, Damascene's treatises on images made the claim and its logic all the more insistent: "Formerly, the bodiless and formless God was never portrayed [*eikonizeto*], but now that God has been seen in the flesh and has associated with human beings, I portray what is seen of God"; "therefore I boldly portray the invisible God—not *as* invisible, but as one who became visible for our sake by participation [*methexei*] in flesh and blood."<sup>149</sup> It is thus in the foundations of Christian witness and identity that Damascene anchors the understanding that, by God's own loving initiative, divine holiness has become graphable—*able* to be apprehended by the senses, digested by the imagination, and inscribed in representations composed with created means.<sup>150</sup> The incarnate Christ, himself the "true image" of the Father,<sup>151</sup> becomes for human beings the "copy-head" (*hypogrammos*): that which may be traced or

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<sup>148</sup> Barber clarifies (*Figure and Likeness*, 80-81) that it was the incarnation's "economic implications" that changed the conditions of possibility for knowledge and representation of God, as well as making material mediation "not only possible, but also necessary" for edification and deification. Elsner's argument in "Iconoclasm as Discourse" hinges on the shift in concern, already evident early in the iconoclastic controversy (in no small part dependent on the arguments of Damascene), from the risk of idolatry to the epistemology of material representation and the capacities of sensory knowledge. Cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 212, on the pertinence of the Quinisext arguments for Damascene.

<sup>149</sup> *The Holy Images* I.16.1-4; III.6.77-82. As discussed above, there are powerful anti-Jewish entailments of these claims; these are dismissed by Louth as belonging to an unfortunate, "shrill supercessionism" creeping into the Damascene's apologetics from the surrounding culture (Louth, *St John Damascene*, 188), yet I would argue that they cannot be divorced from the logic of the claims and must be addressed head on as such. If human beings are fundamentally twofold, we can only have experience of anything with our whole selves, body as well as spirit. In other words, for Damascene, the conditions that were changed are not *how* God is to be known but *that* God may be known; before the incarnation, *no one* knew God except "in enigma" (1 Corinthians 13:12, cited directly by Damascene in *The Holy Images* II.5/III.2.10-11), and the covenant of Israel can function only as an incubator for the prophetic promise of Emmanuel, the bridging of creator and creation. "Heretical" Judaism is that which persists in its commitment to pre-incarnation precepts concerning the manufacture of images and the impurity of dead bodies—their failure to know God casting into redoubled relief the glory of those who do. Much of this logic is developed in *The Holy Images* between II.7-II.10 (and III.4-III.9), where the Jews are treated as alternatively immature and unready for face-to-face encounter with divinity, or on the other hand "sick with the disease of idolatry, considering images to be gods and venerating them as gods . . ." (II.7/III.4.29-34). It is because (orthodox) Christians are free of the "curse" (II.10/III.9.102: *κατάραν*) of the Jews that they are not only permitted but obligated to "celebrate the death of the saints and raise up temples for them and record their images" (115-18).

<sup>150</sup> See my discussion in the general introduction, section 2a, on the logic and entailments of late antique understandings of *γράφειν*. See also Damascene's rewriting of the Mandylion episode (*The Orthodox Faith* 89.51-56, drawing on Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13 and the Syriac *Doctrine of Addai*), in which an artist is sent to make a portrait of Christ but is unable to do so; out of pity and love for the king "yearning" (*ποθοῦντι*) for it, Christ presses his radiant face into a cloth and imprints it with an image in negative. See again note 31; cf. Barasch, *Icon*, 209-11.

<sup>151</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 13.75-76 (drawing on Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:3): "The son is the image of the father, and the spirit is the image of the son, through which Christ, dwelling in human being, renders [*δίδωσιν*] to the human in accordance with this image." Later in the same chapter, Damascene further clarifies the basic logic of an image and its pertinence to the Trinitarian life by analogizing Christ's being the *image* of God with his being the *word* of God. The word is an image in that it is a discrete form generated by the "natural movement of the mind" (the inner image, as it

imitated by subsequent *graphai*.<sup>152</sup> Such representations are sacred (“offered up to God”)<sup>153</sup> while still pertaining to the “twofold” (*diplos*) nature of human beings, being both spiritually engendered and physically constituted. It belongs, indeed, to the salvific assumption and sacramental adoption of createdness by God that historically-embedded imagination and culturally-configured matter can be the site of an authentic mediation of divine holiness.<sup>154</sup>

However, as we have seen, it is not only because created matter has been adopted by God that it is the site of divine mediation; rather it is because the salvific economy involves mediation *to the human being* that the material-intellectual integrity of hagiographical media is essential to their purpose of theopoetic transformation.<sup>155</sup> Expanding on Leontius of Neapolis, Damascene makes it a principle of his

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were), and also the utterance of that form in a sensible and shared medium (voice, paint). Thus he construes the Word of God as intrinsically imagelike, being at once the “movement” (κίνησις), the “radiance” (ἀπαύγασμα), and the “messenger” (ἄγγελος) of the mind (see 13.91-94). See also *The Holy Images* III.18, in which Damascene also reflects on Christ as the “natural image” of God the Father—differentiating his imagehood from that represented in a material icon, but also warranting the latter insofar as the former is no less perceptible (the nature of an image being that it “shows” [δείκνυς]) and so no less *graphable* by those who perceive it. Cf. Verna Harrison, “Word as Icon in Greek Patristic Theology.”

<sup>152</sup> See again *The Orthodox Faith* 86.32-35: “He became the first-fruit of the resurrection, and he established himself as a way, a type, a model for copying [ὑπογραμμόν—the prototype that is set underneath to be traced over, to be imitated; the significance of this metaphor to our expanded sense of *hagio-graphhein* should not be missed], so that we too, following in his footsteps, might become by attribution what he is by nature . . . .”

<sup>153</sup> Such being-set-aside-for-God is, in Damascene’s view and apparently also in the view of those whom he was trying to persuade, what renders an object worthy of veneration and makes it worthy to “conduct” (προσάγειν, that is to be a mediating conduit for) our love for God and God’s love for us. See *The Orthodox Faith* 84.72-73 (“We venerate, therefore, all things that are dedicated to God, conducting [προσάγοντες] our adoration to him.” In the *The Holy Images* III.26.37-43, this logic extends to the total human existence of the saints, which is dedicated to God in its entirety and in turn graced with God’s sanctifying spirit.

<sup>154</sup> See Elsner, “Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” 484: “The sanctification of matter means that all matter and any part of matter is a direct channel to that which has sanctified it. The divine liturgy – perpetually enacted in icons on the vaults and arches in the church – is a perpetual reminder of the ‘divine economy.’” Recall the discussion of the classic philosophical questions of the truthfulness of μίμησις, particularly in Chapter V, section 1b; and cf. Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 28-29, and Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 783.

<sup>155</sup> See *The Holy Images* III.12.23-30: “Because we are twofold [διπλοῖ], constructed of soul and body . . . it is impossible for us to arrive at intelligible things apart from bodily things. Therefore, just as through perceptible words we hear with our bodily ears and understand spiritual matters, so too through bodily contemplation [διὰ σωματικῆς θεωρίας] we come to spiritual contemplation [πνευματικὴν θεωρίαν]” (recall also the logic of this “twofold” constitution in section 2b. Cf. Barasch, *Icon*, 205-06, commenting on *The Holy Images* I.11; and Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 31, noting that the same logic is adopted by Cyril of Alexandria to defend the necessity of Christ’s human birth from a human mother.

theory of hagiographical mediation that *any medium will do, and every medium is fractional*.<sup>156</sup> This is because no representation of holiness is an end in itself (for this would be to slip into idolization), being rather a process of mimetic production and an invitation to sacramental consumption, all in the service of the deification of human beings and the created world.<sup>157</sup> Images on walls and panels, verbal testaments of brave deeds, memorial sites and the celebrations taking place at them, even the physical remains of Christ and the saints: all are “set forth for the sake of contemplation and glorification, for wonder and zeal.”<sup>158</sup> “Let us erect monuments and visible images for them,” Damascene echoes Chrysostom, “but let us also become their living monuments [*empsychoi stēlai*] and images through *mimēsis* of their virtues.”<sup>159</sup> Any medium will do and every medium is fractional—because it is the human being as a whole that is the most faithfully mimetic medium for representing the loving holiness mediated in the Word-become-human.

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 19-20, and Elsner, “Images and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” 484. This principle is evident in Damascene’s treatment of the cross in *The Orthodox Faith* 84 (where the means used to represent a cross is both necessary for and independent of its ability to function as an image of the event, deserving veneration whether appearing in wood or stone or gesture), and in his various considerations of the representations of Christ and the saints in *The Holy Images* (see I.45/II.41: “Do you see how the work [ἔργον] of an image and of a word are one? For, as [Basil] says, ‘As in a drawing, we demonstrate [προδείξωμεν] by word’; and III.8.73-75: “Inscribe all these [deeds of those whose humanity has expressed divine holiness] in language and in colors, in books and on tablets”). Indeed, for Damascene it is a scandal to accept some material means of representation and reject others, since all matter has its origin in God and it is matter *as such* that is adopted in the salvific act of incarnation, not a particular class of object imbued with sole sanctifying authority—such a limitation, paradoxically, would be to cross over into undue elevation of matter beyond its nature.

<sup>157</sup> See Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 299-300.

<sup>158</sup> *The Holy Images* II.4.12-13: προτιθέναι εἰς θεωρίαν καὶ δόξαν καὶ θαῦμα καὶ ζῆλον. Thus too in II.6/III.3.1-10, Damascene chastises the devil/iconoclast: “Away with you, jealous devil, for you begrudge that we see the likeness of our master and that through it we are sanctified [δι’ αὐτοῦ ἁγιασθῆναι]; you begrudge that we see the salvation [that was] his suffering, that we wonder at his accommodation [συγκατάβασιν—that is, aligning himself with our nature and capacities], that we contemplate his marvelous deeds, that we recognize and glorify the power of his divinity. . . . You do not want us to see [the saints’] glory recorded [ἀνάγραπτον] for all time and become zealous for their bravery and faith. You cannot bear the psychosomatic benefit [σωματικὴν τε καὶ ψυχικὴν ὠφέλειαν] [that we have by] attaching ourselves to them with faith.”

<sup>159</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 88.61-62 (cf. Chrysostom’s adaptation of Pericles’ Funeral Oration, to this effect, in “On Saint Eustathius of Antioch” 2). Despite the apparently more static conception of hagiographical media in Damascene than in Chrysostom, we do find in *The Holy Images* (I.21.50-53) an embrace of saint’s-day festivals as well: Damascene distinguishes between the once-and-for-all burial and mourning of the biblical patriarchs and the fact that the deaths of the saints continue to be “celebrated” (ἐορτάζεται) (an argumentative move resonant with Chrysostom’s contrast between the fear of death and the sadness of mourning even among the biblical patriarchs, on the one hand, and the contempt for death on the part of the martyrs and their communities’ joyful celebration among their graves—see “On the Holy Martyrs Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina”). Likewise, Damascene challenges iconoclasts “either [to] abandon also the festival remembrances of the saints—as they contravene the old law—or accept these images that, as you say, are unlawful.”

In this respect, although human imaging of the divine is most refined and worthy of imitation in the saints—whose life and conduct (*bios kai politeia*) “graph” the likeness to their prototype with, as it were, greater clarity of line, chromatic subtlety, and arresting aesthetic *je ne sais quoi*—every human being may rightly be considered a site of hagiographical mediation. In Damascene’s logic: although we each graph our understanding or experience of holiness to a greater or lesser extent (and in ways more or less corrupted by sinful dispositions and institutions) in our individual/interpersonal lives,<sup>160</sup> the bottom line of this fundamental living-inscription of the image of God is that we are mandated to “venerate one another as having a share of God [*moiran theou*] and having come into existence according to the image of God in them, humbling ourselves to one another and fulfilling the law of love.”<sup>161</sup>

Here we see with particular vividness the reciprocal infusion of the two basic modes of the mediation of holiness (inscribing and imparting). The theo-poetic transformation of those who produce and consume hagiography is hagiography’s purpose, but *theo-poiēsis* (both that of the saints who are represented and that of those whose own saintly capacities are “stirred up” by these representations)<sup>162</sup> is itself a rendering of human personhood *as* hagiographical. This is what sainthood is in Damascene’s

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<sup>160</sup> Recall, from Chapter I, section 1a, McClendon’s conception of “biographical theology,” that is, theological repertoires that attain their reality by being carved (or indeed, “graphed”) in the lives of those who put them to use in an endless variety of ways. Cf. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 232, on the recognition of the saints as “supreme theologians” who “present Orthodox doctrine in graphic form.”

<sup>161</sup> *The Holy Images* III.37.1-4. See Louth, *St John Damascene*, 186, on the honor shown to each other human being as an image of God; Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 72-86, on underpinnings of this logic appearing in Plato, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus (and, though Barber does not iterate this point, adopted and adapted from them by Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus Confessor—mainstays of Damascene’s dogmatic program); and Elsner, “Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” 479-81, on the “hierarchy of images” by which the supreme, incomprehensible, and uncircumscribably Godhead can come to dwell and be sensually manifest in the human being (where, although Elsner does not iterate this point, the human person becomes an image of God *for others*, becoming part of a multimediating field that is not only “vertical,” between God and the human soul, but “horizontal” as well, between the saints and the whole spiritual-material human world).

<sup>162</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 89.44-46: “Likewise, the virtuous deeds of the saints are stirred up within / painted upon [ἐπαλείφοντα] us, [leading us] toward bravery and zeal and imitation of their virtue and the glorification of God.” Recall Chrysostom’s logic in “A Homily on Martyrs” (PG 50.665.20-666.8) that “the one returning from the viewing/contemplation of martyrs is recognized by everyone: by his face, his bearing, his gait, his compunction, the composure of his interior state . . . . He is breathing fire . . . .”

paradigm: to have our whole selves made into hagiographical media, such that our restored likeness of God is represented to others, through our words and deeds and bodies while living, through our relics and memorializing narratives and festivals after our deaths.<sup>163</sup> Sainthood, then, is defined in no small part by its own mediating character. The saints had long been described as “living images” or “living icons,”<sup>164</sup> but here the metaphor is anchored in the anthropological principle that human being is already an iconic, mediating field in need only of rectification by realignment with its prototype. Becoming more like Christ,<sup>165</sup> the saints better represent the likeness of God to those around them; those who encounter the saints venerate that likeness of God in them, but also imitate/represent it by imitating/representing the saints, using the multiplicity of human means available to them—language, stones, paint, actions.<sup>166</sup>

There remains to encapsulate the final piece of my argument around hagiography as co-constitutive of holiness in this model that emerges as a theology of pneumatopolitical resistance through the patristic period and is crystallized in the time of iconoclasm. How is hagiographical mediation, not only in images but in every mode of inscribing the human apprehension of holiness in material and meaningful media, understood to be united with and representative of the theopoetic promise that beats as the heart of Damascene’s vision of *oikonomia*? This all-important *how* is what is most clearly articulated through the construal (evident in Damascene, rejected by the iconoclast authors, and underappreciated in

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<sup>163</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 88.14-18, which describes the deification of the saints (that is, being made godly and worthy of being called godly) as “ruling over and becoming the lords of their own suffering [like Christ], and preserving unviolated their likeness to the image of God according to which they came into being (for the image of a king is also called ‘king’), and willingly uniting with God [ἐνωθέντας θεῷ] and receiving God as their inhabitant [ἐνοικον], and through participation [μεθέξει] in him becoming by grace what he is by nature.” Cf. Miller’s evocative discussion of the “image-flesh” of the saints in *The Corporeal Imagination*, 148-63.

<sup>164</sup> The metaphor, discussed in such depth by Brown (e.g. “A Dark-Age Crisis”), Miller (*The Corporeal Imagination*), and others, deserves to be applied in both directions: a hagiographical medium like an icon or a verbal narration is no less a “graven/graphed holy person,” standing in for and rendering a virtual or imaginative presence of the ones they represent.

<sup>165</sup> This becoming takes place in body as much as in soul, and in political as much as in personal constitution, for it is unthinkable to Damascene that Christ’s holiness pertain to one and not the others. This is important to emphasize insofar as the holiness of the saints is presented as indeed *perceptible* by the bodily senses, even if it must also be interpreted through the collaboration of the eyes of faith.

<sup>166</sup> See *The Holy Images* I.21.38-40: “I set down [ἀναγράφτους] their memorialized virtues and sufferings, such that I too may be sanctified [ἁγιαζόμενος] through them, being stirred up toward a zeal for imitation/representation [μιμήσεως].”

the modern scholarship) of hagiography as process more than as product. Hagiographical mediation, in this paradigm, is a use of human mimetic capacities in such a way that, in the event of perceiving and appropriating, patterns of habitual interpretation are interrupted and redirected, with ethical and institutional consequences.<sup>167</sup> These remaining sections offer my reading of Damascene's soon-to-be-canonical hagiographical model that would, in the century after his death, be intensified and enshrined as a delimiting border of Orthodox legitimacy and identity.

### 3b) “Bodily contemplation”: Hagiographical Imagination

John Damascene and the iconophile thinkers after him did not anchor their embrace of material *mimēsis* in the restored human capacities of the faithful but rather in the prior self-mimetic self-mediation of the divine, which becomes the trustworthy manifestation to which all human efforts at representation must hold fast.<sup>168</sup> In other words, the mimetic cycle of hagiographical mediation begins not with an *a priori* commitment to imitate or to represent, but with an encounter of the human person—by way of the senses, the imagination, and the interpretive mind—with holiness.

“Through sensation [*aisthēsis*],” Damascene suggests in his systematic anthropology in *The Orthodox Faith*, “a passion that is called imagination [*phantasia*] is constituted in the soul. From imagination there results an opinion [*doxa*]. Then when the understanding [*dianoia*] has examined the

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<sup>167</sup> As Miller puts it (*The Corporeal Imagination*, 104), again using written text as her case but leaving available the applicability of her statement to other media of (literal and metaphorical) inscription: hagiography is oriented toward eliciting “corporeal responses to word-pictures of the body, responses that implicate the reader in such a way that the boundary between text and reader begins to weaken, as the reader’s reality is invaded by a surreal presence.”

<sup>168</sup> As has been addressed above, God is described as the prototypical image-maker, the self-portraitist of holiness: in the creation of the human being, in the incarnation of Christ, and in the reconstitution of the souls of the saints whose imitation of Christ makes them living images for others’ perception. As Parry observes (*Depicting the Word*, 39), discussing the taxonomy of images in Damascene’s treatises, the “natural image” (εἰκὼν φυσικὴ) of God in Christ is the prerequisite for an image made through human attribution and imitation (θέσις καὶ μίμησις). See also Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 152-54, on iconophile theologians’ need to bridge the distinction between “natural” and “artificial” images rooted in Platonic philosophy.

opinion, whether it is true or false, it decides what is true. Because of this, this faculty is called understanding [*dianoia*] from its mental processing and its discerning.”<sup>169</sup> The imagination is a crucial component of Damascene’s theory of hagiographical mediation—as it was of Chrysostom’s homiletics—because it serves as a frontier between the capacities of the body and those of the soul (and likewise between the irrational and the rational soul), which are as indispensable to one other as they are to the human encounter with and reconfiguration by holiness. The imagination is both passive and active; it is impressed upon by sensory stimuli but also organizes such stimuli for use by the mind’s deliberation between possible interpretations.<sup>170</sup> The human being cannot encounter what is outside itself apart from the senses<sup>171</sup>—but apart from the imagination (which “communicates [sensory stimuli] to the thinking faculty”)<sup>172</sup> the human being cannot construe what is outside itself in light of its past experiences and broader understanding, so as to relate to it as meaningful.

Thus Damascene, drawing on the longstanding patristic concern with “contemplation” (*theōria*), identifies hagiographical imagination as precisely the interplay and interdependence between the physical and intellectual apprehension of holiness as an object for meaningful *mimēsis*. “Bodily contemplation” (*sōmatikē theōria*) and “spiritual contemplation” (*pneumatikē theōria*) are integral with one another, are each the means by which the other may achieve its purpose—and are equally human processes.<sup>173</sup> As

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<sup>169</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 36.36-40. Similarly, in *The Holy Images*, he observes that “by way of the senses, the imagination is constituted in the forward seat of the brain and thus conducted for discernment and stored away in memory” (I.11.16-19).

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Constan, *The Art of Seeing*, 17; and Nelson, “To Say and to See,” 153. See again the discussion of Kant’s notion of “apperception,” as a modern parallel, in the general introduction, section 2b.

<sup>171</sup> See again *The Holy Images* III.12.23-30: “Because we are twofold, constructed of soul and body ... it is impossible for us to arrive at intelligible things apart from bodily things ...”

<sup>172</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith*, 31-34, and especially 34.14-17: “The imaginative faculty [τὸ φανταστικὸν], involving itself with material things by means of the senses, delivers them over [παραδίδωσι] to the faculty of understanding or the faculty of reasoning [τῷ διανοητικῷ ἢ διαλογιστικῷ] (that is, to both), which in turn, having taken in and evaluated [the imagination of material things], pass it on to the faculty of memory [παραπέμπει τῷ μνημονευτικῷ].”

<sup>173</sup> *The Holy Images* III.12.29-30 (just cited in notes 155 and 171); and I.36/II.32.29-30: “Since I am human and enclosed by a body, I long also in a bodily fashion to consort with and to see holy things” (ἐπεὶ ἄνθρωπός εἰμι καὶ σῶμα περικείμει, ποθῶ καὶ σωματικῶς ὀμιλεῖν καὶ ὁρᾶν τὰ ἅγια). Recall the discussion of the “eyes of flesh” and the “eyes of faith” in Chapter V, section 2b; and see also Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 120; and Elsner, “Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” 61.

Maximos Conostas puts it, “*theoria* was a single act encompassing both hermeneutics and [theology],<sup>174</sup> a movement from the visible to the invisible. A word inscribed [*graptos*] on paper is visible to the eye, but its inner meaning is not itself an object of physical vision.”<sup>175</sup> To imagine holiness is for Damascene to construct and traverse a bridge between the present and the absent, between the outer and the inner, between the perceptible and the intellectual. Such imagination is a prerequisite both of the authentic production of hagiographical media and of their faithful appropriation, such that that the holiness inscribed in them can transfigure the senses and transform the heart of the one who approaches them.<sup>176</sup>

The all-important “distinction between idols and icons,”<sup>177</sup> in this light, is fundamentally a difference of imagination. One and the same image can be encountered *as* identical with that which is represented, or as wholly other than that which is represented, or (preferably) as middle ground between these two.<sup>178</sup> These are imaginative choices, alternative configurations of human apprehension and appropriation—as is the alternative between “veneration” (*proskynēsis*) and “worship” (*latreia*).<sup>179</sup> The category of idol, in other words, does not include some media and exclude others, but rather distinguishes certain kinds of imaginative relations with media. An idol is an image that is venerated the wrong way: an image that has itself been “deified” by humans, rather than made in recognition of and participation in God’s “deifying” of the saints.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Here the original is “Christology,” given the context in which Conostas makes the claim; the point, however, is that the appropriation and digestion of an external trace by the imagination involves, if religious meaning is to be made of it, not only a practice of interpretation (however conscious or explicit) but also a theological framework within which the meaning being made in the encounter will find its position.

<sup>175</sup> Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 66.

<sup>176</sup> Recall the discussion in Chapter V, section 3a, on the necessity for participants in the festivals to approach them rightly, so as not to fail to be edified due to behaving “unfeastly at the feasts.”

<sup>177</sup> *The Holy Images* III.42.11-12: τῆς διαφορᾶς τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῶν εἰκόνων.

<sup>178</sup> See *The Holy Images* I.16 and I.36, in which alike the abundant use of the preposition ὡς signals, as it did in Chrysostom (see again Chapter V, section 2b), imaginative alternatives available to one and the same sensory apparatus.

<sup>179</sup> These categories are already at work in patristic thought as early as Origen but are developed at length by Damascene. See Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 45, 166, and Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 65-66.

<sup>180</sup> In *The Holy Images* II.10 and III.9, the verb used by Damascene for the making of idols is indeed “θεοποίησις”—key here is that it is *humans* who are, erroneously, “making divine” rather than God who is “making *them* divine.” Granted,

In this respect, Damascene is ahead of the curve of a shift in broader theological and eccleiological concern, which would pick up speed by way of the battling councils of Hieria (754) and Nicaea II (787): a shift “from an emphasis of ontology (that is, the being of God) to a greater accent on epistemology (that is, how God is known).”<sup>181</sup> In the latter half of *The Holy Images* III, Damascene treats the ontology and the epistemology of hagiographical mediation together. In the previous section (III.16-26), he seeks to show that what an image is and does is much broader than is supposed by those who identify images as static mimetic products (an approach resonant with my own ongoing argument that “hagiography” cannot be locked into a single medium of representation). Subsequently (III.27-41), he seeks clarity on what forms of “veneration” are owed to representations of holy people, objects, or events—that is, what imaginative relations are in the service of edification and, ultimately, deification.

The key imaginative trait of such veneration<sup>182</sup> owed to creatures that participate in holiness is the recognition that such creatures have had their own nature “assimilated [*homoiōthentes*] to God as much as possible,” being “inflamed” (*pepyraktōmenos*) with the glory of God.<sup>183</sup> The metaphor of fire, conventional though it is, aids our appreciation of the actual effect of hagiographical imagination, as Damascene

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there are also moments in Damascene’s treatises where he distinguishes between images *worthy* of veneration (images of Christ, the Theotokos, the saints) and those which are *not* worthy of veneration (those of the pagan gods or of beasts and birds)—nevertheless, it is not the existence of such latter images that make them idolatrous, but rather how they are used, consumed, appropriated. To venerate an image of a wicked person is mistaken because such a person is not worthy of imitation and the act of veneration will not be edifying—but no more idolatrous than images of holy people treated “as gods” (ὡς θεοῖς; see II.4.4, II.5.5, III.5.1), which Damascene is no less at pains to avoid (e.g. in I. 56, III.9, III.26, III.59). To give any created image, even one of a holy person, the kind of veneration that is owed only to the creator is to *make* that image into an idol, making it an end rather than a means, imagining it to be a source rather than a conduit of holiness (see II.7-8). Cf. Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 48; McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 356; and Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 21-22: “The icon, [unlike the idol, which “dazzles and so arrests our vision, confining it within a closed, self-referential system”], aims neither to satiate vision, nor to restrict it to a particular point, but to free it by confronting it with the invisible, proposing to it that the boundaries of the possible are wider than they seem.”

<sup>181</sup> Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 376.

<sup>182</sup> The Greek noun, προσκύνησις, refers to a physical behavior rather than to its imaginative position, yet it is the *imaginative* apprehension of the object of veneration that, in Damascene’s view, renders the behavior either a warranted component of hagiographical process or an errant and potentially idolatrous self-delusion.

<sup>183</sup> *The Holy Images* III.33.7-11: Damascene again uses the conventional metaphor of the iron heated by fire being “inflamed” by “attribution and participation in fire” (θέσει καὶ μεθέξει πυρός) rather than by nature (φύσει).

understands it. The one who approaches the saints or the representations of the saints in this mode of imaginative recognition perceives himself (through the complex interplay of sense-perception and imagination, discussed above) to be bathed in the light and heat of the divine glory imparted to a saint's nature "by attribution and participation,"<sup>184</sup> such that the *venerator* is thereby also illumined, also heated. This mode of encounter is not limited to saintly people, but is owed to all the entities belonging to the history and sociology of the divine *oikonomia*—that is, to places and objects "like Mount Sinai and Nazareth, the manger in Bethlehem and the cave, holy Golgotha, the wood of the cross, the nails, the sponge,"<sup>185</sup> and no less to the objects with which *oikonomia* continues to be cultivated in the church: the gospel books, the sacred vessels, the lamps and altars, the buildings themselves.<sup>186</sup> Insofar as all these things represent the divine *oikonomia* to us and have been adopted by God for the sake of the world's deification, they are owed our imaginative apprehension as mediators of holiness—as indeed is every human being, since every human being is constituted as such a mediator, sharing the inviolable dignity of "having a share of God and having come into existence according to the image of God in them."<sup>187</sup> Failing to venerate the true mediation of holiness (in the scriptures, in hagiographical media, in another human being) is for Damascene as grave as the idolatrous apperception of an object that sets them up "as gods," mistaking the mediators for the mediated.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> *The Holy Images* III.33.11: θέσει καὶ μεθέξει.

<sup>185</sup> *The Holy Images* III.34.4-7.

<sup>186</sup> See *The Holy Images* III.35. These objects are given as a different category of venerable objects from those belonging to the history of the Christ event, but this should not be construed as a subordinate mode of veneration—rather, the relation between these objects is better interpreted through the lens of the organization of *The Orthodox Faith*, where (as addressed above in section 2c) ecclesiology and its material-spiritual forms of life mirror and continue to mediate the divine *oikonomia* manifest in the incarnation.

<sup>187</sup> See again *The Holy Images* III.37.2-3.

<sup>188</sup> See, for instance, *The Holy Images* II.2.17-19: "For not to bring deserved honor to those that are worthy is just as grievous as attributing unbecoming glory to those who are unworthy." This is a recurring theme in the refutation of the iconoclasts, since such a failure to venerate—rooted, we can now see, in a *failure of imagination*—is precisely that of which they are accused.

It is in this light that we may read the important distinction drawn by Damascene between *phantasia*, the image taking shape in the soul (and remaining there, as Chrysostom suggested, ready for reuse and influential in ethical formation) of a real object external to it—in this case the holiness that *really* is mediated in the object if only we have the eyes to see it—and *phantasma*, which has no prototype in the world in which to participate and which represents not a mediation but a conjuration.<sup>189</sup> Rendered in English, the holiness of media such as icons (and no less: crosses, shrines, narratives of saintly sufferings, the music that fills sacred spaces and times) is not “imaginary” in the sense of being the baseless invention of the mind but rather is manifest through a dialectic process of inscription in which the human mind and human capacities of representation are receptive to and mimetic of divine revelation.<sup>190</sup>

If a tendency toward monism or materialism would construe an image *as* its prototype,<sup>191</sup> and a tendency toward dualism or spiritualism would imagine there to be no contact whatsoever between the image and what it purports to represent, then the orthodox middle way would be that which apprehends the sensory stimuli that communicate holiness as sites of divine self-disclosure.<sup>192</sup> Hagiographical

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<sup>189</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 31; Damascene’s discussion of φαντασία and φάντασμα, notably, echoes classic patristic distinctions between an icon (an image that has a real prototype in the world), and an idol (which has no real object of which it is a representation). See Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 45, discussing Origen’s *Homilies on Exodus*. Such a transference of Origen’s concern into the domain of imagination is further evidence of the icon/idol distinction having become for Damascene an epistemological rather than an ontological difference (see again Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 376).

<sup>190</sup> See *The Holy Images* I.7 and II.8, citing Acts 17:29. The key issue here, for Damascene and his fellow iconophiles, was causality: “human craft and conceptualization” are not the *author* of holiness, even as they are indispensable to the mediation of holiness and therefore also to the constitution of holiness in the world. Theodore Studites will take the argument even farther: an image *necessarily* follows from a prototype, and *cannot* be invented from thin air, as there is no such thing as a shadow without a body that casts it (see Studites, *Refutations* III.D12; and Barasch, *Icon*, 269).

<sup>191</sup> Such a construal, it seems, is more of a rhetorical accusation than an actual problem: polytheist authors as early as Dio Chrysostom and Julian were more or less patiently explaining to Christian critics that their own sacred images are the means *through which* the gods may be worshipped, not the gods themselves (see Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 35). Nonetheless, it is by way of this straw man that the charge of idolatry can be turned back on iconoclastic proponents, in that one would need to take the images of Christ *as* attempts to set up many Christs of wood and paint in order to object so vehemently to the practice of representation.

<sup>192</sup> These stimuli may or may not be the result of another human’s deliberate poetics of representation. Of the six types of images discussed in *The Holy Images* III.18-23, only two (maybe even one and a half) are the direct consequence of human τέχνη: the symbolic images crafted in words and used in scripture to depict in “analogy” (ἀναλογία) what cannot be seen with the senses (III.21), and images created “for the remembrance of things that have taken place . . . for the benefit of those who later behold them [εἰς ὑστερον τῶν θεωμένων ὠφέλειαν]” (III.23.1-6).

imagination, which sees the material as suffused with the spiritual without being confused with it, is thus offered by Damascene as the only alternative—and indeed the most viable inoculation and means of direct resistance—to succumbing to one or another of the archetypes of heresy.

### 3c) “Everywhere, by sensory means, we display”: Hagiographical Representation

If *phantasia* is the mediation between sensation and intellection, and between present experience and absent (whether remembered, expected, or alternative) possibility,<sup>193</sup> it is no less a feature of the production and mobilization of hagiographical representations than it is of the encounter with and appropriation of them. “Every image,” Damascene observes in his discussion of the nature and purpose of images, “is a revelation and demonstration of what is hidden.”<sup>194</sup> In other words, the act of material inscription (*graphein*) establishes in the shared social realm what imagination establishes in the mind and the soul: a transformation of what is absent to bring about new conditions within which it may be grasped.<sup>195</sup> It is in this way that hagiographical representation belongs firmly within the divine economy of self-revelation and self-impartation to creation. The image of holiness, in whichever medium, is needed because the prototype is absent,<sup>196</sup> yet it would be inconsistent with the nature of what is absent—the

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<sup>193</sup> Damascene associates the symbolism of images and with memory and expectation; “we are united with [an image] in our understanding ... [as it is] a memorial [ὑπόμνησιν] of things that have happened and a prefiguration [προτύπωσιν] of things yet to come” (*The Holy Images* I.17.8-14).

<sup>194</sup> *The Holy Images* III.17.2-3: Πᾶσα εἰκὼν ἐκφαντορικὴ τοῦ κρυφίου ἐστὶ καὶ δεκτικὴ. Note the etymological linkage of imagination (φαντασία) and revelation (ἐκφαντορικὴ, ἐκφαίνειν), in their common categorization with visibility and the appearing of something formerly absent or imperceptible.

<sup>195</sup> See *The Holy Images* III.25.1-7: “We know therefore that the nature of neither God, nor angel, nor soul, nor demon is able to be observed, but by a sort of transformation [μετασχηματισμῶ] these things *can* be viewed, insofar as divine providence confers forms and appearances upon things that are bodiless and without form and which do not have bodily appearance, so that we might be taken by the hand and led to a rough and partial knowledge of them.”

<sup>196</sup> This absence might be either by circumstance, as when a saint has died and may no longer be encountered in person yet remains in the cloud of witnesses available to the imagination (see Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 164), or by nature, as when the perceptive capacities of human beings cannot apprehend angels despite their immaterial presence, or indeed by both, as with Christ—who is historically absent and whose spiritual presence, like the hypostatic union between his divinity and humanity, must be perceived by faith and the imagination.

holiness that is inseparable from the love of God—that it not be “revealed and demonstrated.”<sup>197</sup> Thus it is God, not humans, who first chose to represent Godself within the order of human embodiment and perception, transforming the very “relationship between the seen and the unseen.”<sup>198</sup>

Such an understanding of representation as a two-way relationship (the manifestation of one entity in another and the participation of the other entity in the first)<sup>199</sup> does not warrant an imaginative confusion of any given configuration of representation for the entity being represented. Nor does it succumb to the (rhetorically projected) iconoclasts’ concern that the all-too-human manufacture of hagiographical media from the material at hand in the human world disqualifies such media from any truthful communication of the holiness that is their object of representation.<sup>200</sup> By treating representation not as a self-sufficient product but rather as part of a living process with living participants, it becomes arguable that the making and using of co-mediating objects is a human imitation of the prior divine adoption of matter as worthy of self-mediation. It is this mimetic *practice*, not the objects that result from

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<sup>197</sup> Cf. Barasch, *Icon*, 200-211. In discussing Damascene’s concern for hiddenness and revelation, Barasch shows that Damascene does not resolve or reject the problem of the “uncircumscribability” of God and God’s holiness (of particular concern to iconoclast authors). Rather, he distinguishes (in a manner analogous to the distinction of idolatry and icon-veneration) between circumscription (περιγράφειν) and the kind of inscriptive mediation that *is* appropriate to God: a γράφειν of holiness that does not exhaust or substitute for but rather draws from and communicates what cannot be perceived otherwise. See also Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 3: “This relation [between visible and invisible reality, between the seen and the unseen] was based on the distinction between the image and the icon. The image is invisible, the icon is visible. The economy was the concept of their *living* linkage. The image is a mystery. The icon is an enigma. The economy was the concept of their *relation* and their *intimacy*. The image is eternal similitude, the icon is temporal resemblance. The economy was the theory of the *transfiguration of history*.”

<sup>198</sup> Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 37. Cf. Barasch, *Icon*, 210-11; Brown, “A Dark-Age Crisis,” 7; and of course Damascene’s own prevailing argument to this effect throughout *The Holy Images*. Here again, however, let us note the supercessionist entailments of the claim, vis-à-vis Judaism, as discussed in note 149.

<sup>199</sup> See Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 25-26, on the relation between image and prototype as one of participation; Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 121-23, on the relations between representation and participation in Damascene, Nikephoros, and Theodore; Barasch, *Icon*, 7-8, on iconoclastic and iconophilic appeals to Plato, Aristotle, and Proclus vis-à-vis participation; and Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 156-62, on the imaginative “double vision” that is needed to recognize both the alterity necessitated by representation and the integrity implied by participation.

<sup>200</sup> Barber suggests that “the iconoclasts refused a role for the Incarnation in [material] representation,” identifying the matter out of which hagiographical media were configured as “voiceless and bereft of breath,” unlike the living matter of body and blood, which they took to be a more truthful mediation (see *Figure and Likeness*, 91-98).

it, that registers hagiographical representation as a means of resistance to any monopolization of the sanctifying authority that belongs to God alone.

By tracing the production and interpretation of icons to a process of representation more fundamental than the aesthetic or methodological particularities of figural imagery, Damascene is able to show the integrity of the many modes of *hagio-graphēin* that are embraced by the church (including by its promoters of iconoclastic interpretation) and the integrity of the many perceptive and imaginative capacities by which human beings encounter holiness. “I say that *everywhere*, by sensory means, we display the countenance [*charactēra*] of the Word of God that became flesh.”<sup>201</sup> The construction of crosses of precious stones and metals, the pilgrimages taken to the sites of Bethlehem and Golgotha, the celebration of the lives of saints with processions and songs, the baking of bread and fermenting of wine for the eucharist, and the injection of ink into parchment to render the words of the gospel present in each ecclesial setting—all these require active manufacture by human hands, feet, eyes, ears, hearts, and imaginations. Neither their materiality nor their spirituality is compromised by the other, since their transformative signification within the human cultural world depends on both.<sup>202</sup> It is a stroke of genius, too easily neglected, that Damascene (before Theodore and Nikephoros in the subsequent generation) identifies the scriptures themselves as material mediations of holiness—as, precisely, *hagiai graphai*.<sup>203</sup> Not

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<sup>201</sup> *The Holy Images*, I.17.1-2 (emphasis mine). I.15-16 and II.14 contain much more of Damascene’s discussion of the many material means of holy mediation that *are* accepted by the iconoclasts, as well as what he takes to be an argumentative knockout: “Either do away with your adoration and veneration of all these things, or yield to ecclesiastical tradition and [allow] the veneration of images of God and the friends of God, sanctified by his name and on account of this overshadowed by the grace of the Holy Spirit” (I.16.28-32).

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Barasch, *Icon*, 80-86, drawing on the heritage of Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus—whose ideas about mediation became (despite these authors’ sustained criticism of Christianity) crucial to Orthodox thought from Dionysius onward.

<sup>203</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 90.17 (variations on the term *θείαι γράφαι*, sacred writings, also appear throughout the chapter, along with the proper noun *Ἁγιογράφα*); see again the indication in *The Holy Images* I.16 that “the ink and the all-holy book of the gospels” fall into the same category of material mediation as the wood of the cross (and the gold of the representations of the cross), the tomb of Christ, the altar of the sanctuary, and indeed the incarnate body of God. Cf. Elsner, “Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” 480-82, on the integrity of images with the liturgical plenum of sacred texts, objects, and spaces; and Constan, *The Art of Seeing*, 29: “When the Word became flesh (John 1:14), the verbal and the visual were granted inexhaustible significance, restored to their primal dignity as transparent bearers of the Spirit, and it is

only the ink and the inscribed parchment but the very words themselves are “images” of a no less worldly and sensory kind, “for each letter depicts [*eikonizei*] the word.”<sup>204</sup> Thus it is, argues Conostas, “churlish to protest that the image is somehow ‘less authentic’ than the archetype, or that the surface acquires meaning only through depth, for it is these very ‘limitations’ that enable creation to share in the life of God.”<sup>205</sup> Holy images—whether constituted “in language [or] in colors, in books [or] on tablets”<sup>206</sup>—participate in and ramify the revelatory paradigm through which the church exists in the first place.

A basic principle of Damascene’s theorization of holy representation, one which resists the isolation and invalidation of any particular medium, is a reciprocal co-inherence between media. We have seen that words and stories about holy people (whether written, as in the gospels, or oral, as in saint’s-day homilies) are images that render the absent as present in the shared conceptual and liturgical space of the church, and that the images that Damascene is so concerned to preserve are themselves texts in which their creators “set down the excellent deeds and sufferings [of the saints] as documentation [*anagraptois*], so as to be sanctified by them and encouraged toward a zeal for *mimēsis*.”<sup>207</sup> But there is also a cross-medium inclusivity between images and the relics (*leipsana*: that which remains) of holy people.

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only by recovering the true iconicity of creation that we can hope to find healing for our damaged sensibility.” Cf. Louth, *St John Damascene*, 187, interpreting this theme in Damascene, *Philosophical Chapters* 1 and *The Orthodox Faith* 90.

<sup>204</sup> *The Holy Images* III.23.8-9; see also I.36/II.32.7-11: “If you say that it is possible to join with God only intellectually, then do away with all bodily things—the lights, the sweet-smelling incense, indeed the prayer offered with the voice, the divine mysteries performed with matter, the bread, the wine, the oil of anointment, the figure of the cross!” Cf. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 6; and Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 41: “The point [Damascene] is making is that written words are just as much images as material objects. This was an important defence of the iconophiles because the iconoclasts sought to assert the priority of the written word.” So too, the phonemes of spoken reports of holiness can be recognized as sensory stimuli that produce a mental image of what is heard.

<sup>205</sup> Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 29; cf. Damascene, *The Holy Images* III.41.38-40: “Let us not reckon an image to be weaker and less honorable than a shadow, for truly it renders its prototype [σκιογραφεί γὰρ ἀληθῶς τὸ πρωτότυπον].”

<sup>206</sup> *The Holy Images* III.8.73-75: Πάντα γράφε καὶ λόγῳ καὶ χρώμασιν ἔν τε βίβλοις καὶ πίναξιν.

<sup>207</sup> *The Holy Images* I.21.38-40. In his florilegium of patristic commentary on images, Damascene cites Leontius of Neapolis as arguing that “we do not speak [adoringly] to the cross or to the forms of the saints, for they are not our gods, but rather *they are open books* [βίβλοι ἀνεωγμέναι] that are plainly set up and venerated in churches for the recollection of God [ἀνάμνησιν θεοῦ] and his honor” (*The Holy Images* I.56/II.52.70-74, emphasis mine). And in *The Orthodox Faith* 89.35-37, images are associated with the written record of holy events and the people involved in them, available to stand in for texts of ink and paper and fulfill the same function even more promptly, since “the fathers determined, just as [is

In my analysis of the hagiographical discourse of John Chrysostom, I observed that relics and reliquaries preserved in shrines or displayed in processions functioned as (synecdochic or metonymic) images of those whose bodies or possessions they had been, filling the imagination of those who gazed on them with the presence of those represented by their fragments or associations (as an egg or a birdcage conjures the mental image of a bird).<sup>208</sup> Damascene, no less, indicates that relics are the enduring portion of those holy people who “preserved unviolated their likeness to the image of God according to which they came into being,”<sup>209</sup> continuing to serve the function, in death, that they had served in life. There has been abundant analysis of the strategies with which iconophile writers strove to associate the cult of images with the well-established and more-broadly-embraced cult of relics,<sup>210</sup> efforts whose underlying hermeneutic is summarized by Barber:

This role of the icon in the material dissemination of holiness can best be understood by comparison with the practices adopted in regard to relics themselves. ... [Various church fathers, in this example Gregory the Great, distinguished] between objects that receive sufficient sanctification to be considered a relic and those that may provide personal protection, the distinction being drawn in accordance with actual and secondary contact with the saint's body. ... An icon can be one of these secondary relics because painting, understood as a form of visual contact between copy and original, maintains a trace of its origins in the act of representation.<sup>211</sup>

The icon, in this sense, is a relic of one aspect of its prototype's real existence: the visible aspect or countenance of the person represented. This countenance, or *charaktēr*, did not need to be represented as

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done with] certain excellent deeds, to inscribe [γράφεσθαι] these things [the events of the οἰκονομία, during and following the life of Christ] in images, as a concise reminder [ὑπόμνησιν σύντομον].” See also Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 127-32.

<sup>208</sup> This imaginative play of the egg, the birdcage, and the bird is rendered visually in René Magritte's wonderful paintings, “La Clairvoyance” and “Les Affinités Électives.” See also Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 276-98, on relics as images that evoke wholes by means of an imaginative engagement with fragments.

<sup>209</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 88.15-16: τὴν τῆς θείας εἰκότος ὁμοίωσιν, καθ' ἣν καὶ γεγένηται, ἀπαραχάρακτον φυλάξαντας.

<sup>210</sup> See again section 1a on the enduring authority of relics in the centuries leading up to iconoclasm and on the effort of the early iconophile texts to associate icons with relics. Note also the accusations made by the chronicler Theophanes and the participants in Nicaea II that the iconoclastic bishops had been consecrating churches *without relics* (see Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 39; and Gero, *Constantine V*, 153-54)—the association between images and relics is here made in the negative as well, the (largely incorrect but no less instructive) understanding being that those who would deny the mediating capacity of images would also have no use for the relics of the saints.

<sup>211</sup> Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 34.

identical to how our eyes would perceive the person in the flesh in order to be present in the material image. What is communicated there is a “coded system of description”<sup>212</sup> that regenerates in the imagination (*phantazei*), delineates in time and space (*eikonizei*), and engraves as a material record (*anagraphei*) that aspect of an entity that is grasped by others’ eyes and stored up in others’ memory.<sup>213</sup> As Theodore the Studite would later insist, the icon itself may not be Christ, but the appearance of Christ represented by and indeed present in the icon *is* Christ and *is of* Christ, in the same ways that one of his bones and a piece of his clothing would be.<sup>214</sup>

Damascene recognizes, however, that in order to recognize and be transformed by these interpenetrating resonances of the representation of holiness, it is necessary for the one who approaches hagiographical media not only to gaze at and allow the imagination to be kindled by them, but also to “traverse into the sacred symbols,”<sup>215</sup> surrounding himself with them drawing them through his senses into his soul, digesting them with his whole being.<sup>216</sup> Put another way, there is a dynamic relationship

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<sup>212</sup> Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 108. See Elsner, “Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” 61, and Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 172, on the visuality at work that need not be “natural” to be nonetheless a point of real contact.

<sup>213</sup> See Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons*, 16-18, and see again note 31. Barasch discusses the technical terminology of χαρακτήρ, meaning “that which is ‘cut in’ or ‘marked,’ the ‘impress or stamp on coins, seals, etc.’” This notion, he suggests, “forms the very basis of assuming a similarity between the icon and the divine figure it represents” (*Icon*, 152-53, cf. 275-76). This hermeneutic is precisely what would be rejected by the iconoclast authors (such as John the Grammarian—see Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 125-27).

<sup>214</sup> Theodore, *Refutations* I.11, translation in Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 129: “For [the icon] is perhaps wood, or paint, or gold, or silver, or some one of the various materials which are mentioned. But when one considers the likeness to the original by means of a representation, it is both ‘Christ’ and ‘of Christ.’ It is ‘Christ’ by homonymy, ‘of Christ’ by relation.”

<sup>215</sup> *The Holy Images* I.28/II.24.3-5; cf. I.11. This passage from Dionysius’ letter to Titus (the text that provides the most tantalizing glimpse of his symbolic theology), with which Damascene begins his first florilegium in *The Holy Images*, is the tip of a Dionysian iceberg in iconophile thought, which transformed the Dionysian symbol-theory to apply to the material-cultural media that they were concerned to preserve and proliferate in the church. See Barasch, *Icon*, 158-82; Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 173; and Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 42-43, on the significance of Dionysian thought to the victorious iconophile paradigm, presenting as it did the symbol as a genuine mediator (or, in Dionysius’ own terms, a conveyance or a transport) of that which it only ever partially enclosed.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Pentcheva’s observation that “Medieval objects were offered to the senses, their rich surfaces teasing the desire to touch, to smell, to taste, and to experience them in space . . . . Touch, smell, taste, and sound were part of ‘seeing’ an *eikon*” (*The Sensual Icon*, 1). Moreover, as Nelson observes: in an era before eyeglasses, approaching an icon with one’s body is, for many people, to *bring its image into focus* before one’s eyes, reminding us of the inescapable spatiality and bodily positioning of the act of seeing (“To Say and to See,” 148). Damascene may not directly reference these dynamics in his defenses, but this is no excuse for ignoring them when considering the phenomenology of such veneration.

between what images are, what images do, and what we do to images, that for Damascene and his successors is crucial to interpreting images' validity and power. Hagiographical media participate in the divine *oikonomia* not only as sites for the revelation and record-keeping of holy events but also—like all the symbolic representations at work in the church—as footholds by which human beings enter new ways of perceiving and indeed of being in the world.<sup>217</sup> It is with this expected and cultivated response to the representation of holiness that we turn again to the final dimension of hagiographical process: *edification*.

### 3d) “Publicly engraved and borne in triumph”: Hagiographical Edification

The saints, those who “have become storehouses and pure abodes of God,”<sup>218</sup> are represented and represent themselves to others so that those who encounter them may in turn become representative of the holiness they receive and digest in their imaginations. So doing, all are grafted into the mediating economy by which the human world is irrigated with divine love, transforming it from within. Damascene insists on no lesser purpose than this when fighting for the legitimacy of icon-creation/veneration:

It is necessary to seek out the truth and the purpose [*skopon*] of making [icons as hagiographical media] and, *if* these are true and upright [*orthos*], oriented toward the glory of God and his saints, and oriented toward a zeal for virtue and for escape from evil and for the salvation of souls, *then* [such media] are to be welcomed and honored as images and mimetic objects [*mimēmata*] and likenesses [of that which they represent].<sup>219</sup>

The structure of such a claim is unambiguous: *if, then*. The legitimacy of a hagiographical representation lies in its effective function—although as we have seen throughout the foregoing chapters, the possible ways of appropriating a mimetic medium are by no means fixed during its production.

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<sup>217</sup> See Barasch, *Icon*, 168-79, on κατάβασις and ἀνάβασις in the symbolic theology of Dionysius, so richly adapted by Damascene. “The image,” Barasch summarizes in light of this tradition, “is the starting point of the flight to heaven” (179).

<sup>218</sup> *The Orthodox Faith* 88.22: Οὔτοι ταμεία θεοῦ καὶ καθαρὰ γέγονασι καταγώγια.

<sup>219</sup> *The Holy Images* III.9.48-59, emphasis mine. Recall also *The Orthodox Faith* 88.61-62: “Let us erect monuments and visible images for them, but let us also become their living monuments and images through imitation of their virtues.”

Such questions, of the purpose of images and the dynamics of their actual effect in the (interwoven) epistemic and social spheres, are precisely the domain I am analyzing as that of “edification.”

Hagiographical media are, in Damascene’s judgment,

invented for the sake of guidance in knowledge, and for making manifest and public [*phanērōsin kai dēmosieusin*] that which was hidden, entirely for our benefit and improvement and salvation [*ōpheleian kai euergesian kai sōtērian*], so that we may come to know what was hidden when these things are publicly engraved [*stēliteuomenōn*] and borne in triumph [*thriambeuomenōn*], and so that we may yearn for and pursue after [*pothēsōmen kai zēlōsōmen*] what is good, while the opposite (that is, what is evil) we may shun and despise [*apostraphōmen kai misēsōmen*].<sup>220</sup>

The basic logic of such claims as these is the integrity between rectification and resistance as the function of hagiographical mediation: images of holiness facilitate assimilation to that holiness by realigning our apprehension so as to resist the desirability of the “opposite.” Whether this purpose is fulfilled, however, depends not primarily on the hagiographical producer’s mimetic fidelity but rather more on the hagiographical consumer’s mimetic appropriation. The icon that matters most—and that is most at risk of corruption—is the one in the heart of the venerator.

As explored above, the key distinction between veneration (*proskynēsis*) and worship (*latreia*) employed in *The Holy Images* is not one of action or description, but of imagination. But, as we can now appreciate, it is also a difference of effect.<sup>221</sup> Those kinds of veneration that are owed to creatures

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<sup>220</sup> *The Holy Images* III.17.7-14. Cf. Barasch, *Icon*, 199-220, on images as sources of profit, help, and salvation, and on the tensions between the conviction that the representation of holiness was divinely willed and the conviction “that any kind of art object, including the picture, does not have an autonomous value, that it is not valuable in itself. It may be tolerated, it can even be desirable, because of its effects” (200). For Damascene and his inheritors, however, this tension is resolved by the representation of holiness itself being a dialectic of μίμησις whereby a hagiographical medium is only effective if it results in the one who encounters it becoming himself mimetic of what has been mediated to him.

<sup>221</sup> My argument diverges here from that of Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 166: “But no matter how valid the distinction remains in terms of theology, it is, nevertheless, a purely nominal distinction which cannot be distinguished in practice.” Calling it a “nominal” distinction does injustice to the anthropology promoted by Damascene, whereby the practice includes not only the corporeal motions of bowing or kissing (which might indeed be shared by multiple modes of veneration, including worship) but also the psychological orientations or apprehensions by which an act of veneration is motivated and carried out. The two are as inseparable as body and soul, as kinesthetic and discursive understanding. Moreover, in light of the hagiographical theorization developed above, the visibility of the venerator to an onlooker’s own interpretive gaze is itself *part* of the practice in question. As sanctification includes the being-made-iconic for others, so then would an individual’s veneration (whether imaginatively appropriate or not) be available to others as part of the hagiographical sensorium in which the eyes of the body are conjoined with the eyes of faith.

participating in the self-mediation of God constitute, for Damascene, a middle way between pridefully refusing to acknowledge this holy participation, on the one hand, and abasing oneself to treat that which participates in and mediates holiness as equal to that which is mediated, on the other. Damascene is prepared to assert a concrete, historical effect springing from these alternatives. Those who approach the attendants of God without treating them as gods themselves “receive what they request [from God] ... for it was through [such an honored attendant] that they asked,” whereas those who are contemptuous or idolatrous of the saints are due for disaster (as those who “disdainfully heckled Elisha became food for bears”).<sup>222</sup> Veneration attunes the devotee to the mediating chain between creator and creation; worship stops that mediation in its tracks insofar as the worshiper traps himself in the medium and fails to encounter the living God who moves through and beyond it.

Yet the more immediate effect of engaging a holy representation is one of psychic disposition, of benefit or corrosion for the soul, building it up or toppling it over, fortifying it for the struggle or easing the way for capitulation. “Look how much strength and what kind of divine energy [*theia energeia*] are given to those who, with faith and a clean conscience, draw near the images of the saints.”<sup>223</sup> Such images are set up not merely to be looked at but rather, in the act of contemplation, to ignite “glory and wonder and zeal”<sup>224</sup> directed toward that which is represented, drawing the venerator towards and into that which is venerated. Thus again Damascene’s theorization of the edifying power of hagiographical media is indebted to that of Chrysostom, whose panegyric sermons were so explicitly oriented toward making hagiographical audiences into *mimētai*, themselves representative of the holiness mediated to them by festivals, relics, and narratives of holy deeds. As the festival of the saint was not just a setting aside of time and space in the city but needed also to become a special and transformative event in the soul, so too the

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<sup>222</sup> *The Holy Images* III.33.39-43; III.33.52-54.

<sup>223</sup> *The Holy Images* III.41.1-3.

<sup>224</sup> *The Holy Images* II.4/III.2.12-13: προτιθέναι εἰς θεωρίαν καὶ δόξαν καὶ θαῦμα καὶ ζῆλον.

encounter with the icon “can be said to embody a spiritual exercise, an anagogic ascent, through which sensual attachments can be recognized and redirected toward the beauty of the divine.”<sup>225</sup>

As ever, such an experience and the benefit associated with it is never solely individual: the elision between the heart and the world, between the churchgoer and the church as social institution, is crucial to the logic of hagiographical edification. In Chrysostom’s “Homily on Saint Meletius,” cited by Damascene in his florilegia, the preacher praises his audience who have inscribed the image of the saint both within and without, on the walls of their hearts and the walls of their houses—such a “double encouragement”<sup>226</sup> speaks directly to the theological anthropology/sociology promoted by Damascene. As the human being is *mikros kosmos*, both material and spiritual and both private and public (her ontology and epistemology being interpersonal insofar as each creature is constituted in its relationships, being “circumscribed by [particular] time and space”),<sup>227</sup> so then each Christian is *mikrē ekklēsia*: an atom of the church that is at the same time the representative and repository of the whole.

Thus the term “edification” (*oikodomein*), though it is not often used directly by Damascene in his dogmatic theology, remains a fruitful category for understanding the appropriation of hagiographical media into the reciprocal interpenetration of human beings and their social world, and the resonant embeddedness of each within the divine *oikonomia*.<sup>228</sup> Such appropriation, when carried out faithfully, is a

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<sup>225</sup> Constan, *The Art of Seeing*, 174. Cf. Barber, “Writing on the Body,” 117-19, on participation in holiness involving an *experience* of holiness—which, because of the constitution of the human, takes place in the body as much as in the soul.

<sup>226</sup> *The Holy Images* II.62.21-22: διπλήν . . . παραμυθίαν.

<sup>227</sup> See *The Holy Images* III.17.3-7: ὁ ἄνθρωπος . . . ὡς τόπω καὶ χρόνῳ περιγραφόμενος.

<sup>228</sup> Οἰκοδομεῖν and the range of cognates appear far more often in Damascene’s liturgical and exegetical works (for instance, Damascene’s commentary on 1 Corinthians 3). However, in *The Holy Images*, we find the metaphorical use more readily on display. In his closing exhortations (either before or following the florilegia), Damascene warns that abandoning hagiographical representation will “bring ruin to the whole edifice” (I.68/II.71.4: ἅπασαν τὴν οἰκοδομὴν καταρρήγνυσιν) of the communal body of Christ, in which the people of God fit together like the stones in a temple (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:9-17), and again noting that the “edifice” of the church is at risk if it is not continually built up by the worship of God *and the veneration* of the mother of God and all the saints (III.41). See also *Against the Jacobites* 95.9-10, in which Damascene refers to the rehabilitation of repentant heretics as the way that “we build up again” (πάλιν οἰκοδομοῦμεν) those who have been broken apart from the church. And see Damascene’s commentary on 1 Corinthians, stressing the double utility of the οἰκοδομή/ναός metaphor to questions of ecclesial unanimity and individual morality, and demonstrating again the elision of edification between personal and interpersonal registers: PG 95.592.45-53 (on 1

*home-making*—the establishment of an abode for the Holy Spirit.<sup>229</sup> Venerators of images who (by analogy with Chrysostom’s terminology) are *mimētai* and not mere *theatai* (viewers), make themselves into the temple of God by painting on the walls of their hearts those very images which are represented to them in the church.<sup>230</sup> Hagiographical consumption is in this way a mode of participation in the *oikonomia* of divine self-mediation, where human beings are heated by the glow of God-made-man, reflected between the communion of saints as if between a panoply of facing mirrors. Using the artifaction of hagiographical media to focus this light not only into themselves (as ascetic practice might achieve) but also onto their world, they become a home and a waystation for the Spirit, and thus, mysteriously, are themselves made divine (*theopoieisthai*). “I will glorify those who glorify me,” says the Lord.<sup>231</sup>

The image that takes shape in the mind of an architect is no house until it is wrought of materials and situated in shared space, and no house worth its nails fails to endure “when the builder ceases to build.”<sup>232</sup> That is, the saints “who have constructed themselves [and their imitators who now construct themselves] in the spirit as animate, rational temples [*naous empsychous kai logikous*] for the abode of the

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Corinthians 3:9) and PG 95.596.19-32 (on 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). *Nota bene* that these commentaries on the Pauline epistles, though the ascription to Damascene is dubious, are presented as adaptations of the exegetical homilies of John Chrysostom (Louth, *St John Damascene*, 25).

<sup>229</sup> The key scriptural anchorage points for such theological/economical categories include not only 1 Corinthians 3 but Ephesians 2:19-22: “Therefore you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens together with the saints [συμπολιται τῶν ἁγίων] and members of the household of God [οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ], which is built up [ἐποικοδομηθέντες] upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone—and every edifice [οἰκοδομῆ] that is fit together in him grows into a holy temple in the lord. In him you too are being built together [συνοικοδομεῖσθε] in the spirit, being made into a dwelling place of God [κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ].”

<sup>230</sup> In *The Holy Images* I.20, Damascene tells the story of King Solomon, commanded to prepare a tabernacle covered with engravings of cherubim and wondrous animals and plants; Damascene asks, then, “Is it not more honorable by far for all the walls of the house of the lord to be decorated [κοσμησαί] with the forms and images of saints rather than those of horses and trees?” (I.20.10-12). Recall Chrysostom’s exhortation to festival-goers to make themselves not only more like the saints being celebrated but also more like the shine in which they are celebrated (Chapter V, section 2a); cf. 1 Corinthians 3:9,16—the one faithful to Christ is to understand himself as “God’s building” and “God’s temple.”

<sup>231</sup> Damascene cites an array of scriptural axioms when considering the θεοποίησις of the saints in *The Holy Images* III.33 and *The Orthodox Faith* 88: not only the above (1 Kingdoms 2:30), but also “You shall be holy, because I am holy” (Leviticus 19:2), “I shall dwell in them and walk among them” (2 Corinthians 6:16), and, paraphrasing, “We are temples of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in us” (1 Cor 3:16).

<sup>232</sup> *Philosophical Chapters* 53.15-16: τοῦ γὰρ οἰκοδόμου παυσάμενου τοῦ οἰκοδομεῖν διαμένει τὸ οἰκοδομηθέν; cf. *The Holy Images* I.10.

living God”<sup>233</sup> are doing so “in a congregation [*en synagōgē*].”<sup>234</sup> God’s presence among them pertains not only to their spiritual state but also to their corporeal circumscription by time and space, by historical-cultural conditions and relationships. Their being edified is not a private but a public transformation, standing “boldly” before the world in God’s name.<sup>235</sup> Thus we are reminded once more to widen our view to the problem with which we began this chapter, and more broadly still to the dissertation’s abiding concern with the slippage of hagiographical edification between resistance and *ressentiment*, between fortification and entrenchment. Although Damascene’s dogmatic theology concerns itself more overtly and extensively with rectification than with resistance, it is no less the case that his theorization of the dynamics of hagiographical production and consumption was shaped by (and, in the *Images*, explicitly for) the surrounding cultural, political, and interreligious faultlines.

### **Conclusion: Resistance as Triumph, Triumph as Resistance**

There is, then, one final thread of this story to follow: how the hagiographical maximalism of Damascene’s theological synthesis (in which no material medium can be excluded from the centrifugal pouring of divine holiness into the world) came to be marshaled for the ninth-century watershed moment retroactively known as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy.” Graphic human participation in the world-transforming impartation and institutionalization of holiness would, thereafter, be a loadbearing pillar of the institutional edifice of Orthodox Christianity and a *sine qua non* of Orthodox identity.

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<sup>233</sup> *The Holy Images* I.20.25-27.

<sup>234</sup> *The Holy Images* I.19.27-28 and III.33.23-24, citing Psalm 81:1.

<sup>235</sup> See *The Orthodox Faith* 88.30-35: “Because God dwelt within their bodies by way of the mind, the apostle says: ‘Do you not know, that your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you?’ ... How, therefore, is it not necessary to honor these animate temples, these animate tabernacles of God? When they were alive, they stood boldly for God [ἐν παρρησίᾳ τῷ θεῷ παρεστήκασι].”

John Damascene died in Palestine during the years just prior to the Council of Hiereia (754), convened by Emperor Constantine V to institutionalize iconoclastic principles as orthodox doctrine, having never set foot in the Byzantine Empire whose ecclesiological rectification was his life's work.<sup>236</sup> The singular vehemence of Damascene's denunciation in the *Definition (Horos)* of Hiereia is important evidence (as was Chrysostom's exile and death in ignominy) not only of the theologian's productivity from a position of resistance and exteriority, but also of the effective threat posed by his work to the agenda of the emperor and his ecclesiastical company.<sup>237</sup> The extra dose of venom in Damascene's denunciation by the bishops of Hiereia was, of course, unsuccessful in keeping the theologian's model of comprehensive integrity between the material/sensory mediation of holiness and the great arc of divine providence from persuading the Byzantine church. Damascene's anathema was overturned by the refutations of Hiereia at Nicaea II (787) and his work praised glowingly, ensuring that he would enjoy a posthumous authority far greater than any that he had won in the course of his intellectual efforts in Umayyad Palestine.<sup>238</sup>

The Second Council of Nicaea, convened by the Empress Eirene soon after the death of her husband, Leo IV, served politically to secure the reign of her underage son by restoring the iconophile bishops to power (while giving the bishops of Hiereia an opportunity to recant and retain their thrones), putting them all in the debt of the imperial family. Doctrinally, however, the council's primary effort seems

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<sup>236</sup> See Louth, Introduction to Damascene, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, 9, and *St John Damascene*, 28.

<sup>237</sup> In the *Definition* of Hiereia (356CD, in Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 168-69), we find Damascene singled out for anathema along with Patriarch Germanos (who had resisted the early iconoclastic efforts during the reign of Leo III) and Archbishop George of Cyprus (about whom little is known but who may have been a disciple of Germanos, still alive in 754, who was outspoken in his opposition to the convening of the Council of Hiereia. Alone of the three, Damascene is declared anathema four times rather than one, on a range of different counts (racial as well as theological), including: his being "Saracen-minded" (σαρακηνόφρων), his worship of icons, his false writings, his insults to Christ, his teaching impiety, his misinterpreting the scriptures, and most intriguingly for my study, his "conspiracy against the kingdom"). Alone of the three he not given the dignity of being named by his ecclesiastical name but is referred to by his "vile-sounding" Arabic birth name, Mansur—apparently in an effort to further discredit him by his ethnicity. See Gero, *Constantine V*, 108-10: it is significant that Damascene is viewed by the bishops at Hiereia "not only as an annoying propagandist but also as the organizer of disloyal opposition," in spite of his remoteness from the capital and its ecclesiastical politics.

<sup>238</sup> On the restoration (and use) of Damascene during the Second Council of Nicaea, see Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 169-71. Cf. Van den Ven, "La Patristique et l'hagiographie," 336-38, and Uphus, *Der Horos des Zweiten Konzils von Nizäa*, 58-62.

to have been to pin any ecclesiological chaos on the bishops of Hierēia without swinging so far in the other direction that the doctrinal solutions offered would exacerbate, rather than end, the crisis.<sup>239</sup> The *Definition* of Nicaea II offers not exactly a compromise, but an attempt at ecumenical reconciliation by appealing to the merits of certain preferences of the iconoclast theologians even while correcting their restrictiveness.<sup>240</sup> “Next to the sign of the precious and life-giving cross [which had been praised and claimed as an iconoclastic emblem of appropriately restricted representation], venerable and holy icons – made of colours, pebbles, or any other material that is fit – may be set in the holy churches of God, on holy utensils and vestments, on walls and boards, in houses and in streets.”<sup>241</sup> So too, the veneration of icons is both encouraged and overtly subordinated to the cultivation of the inner image of the prototype that stirs up the devotee to a zeal for imitation (this inward imitation, according to Hierēia, being the *only* acceptable icon apart from the eucharist): “For the more these [holy people] are kept in view through their iconographic representation, the more those who look at them are lifted up to remember and have an earnest desire for the prototypes.”<sup>242</sup> Moreover, there is a lexical ambiguity in the Nicaea II *Definition* that yields no definitive sense (and has split the available translations) of whether the council *demand*s or merely *permits* the creation and veneration of material icons.<sup>243</sup> Most likely, the ambiguity is deliberate, in

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<sup>239</sup> See Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 35-41; Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 380-32; Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 260-76; and Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 290-322.

<sup>240</sup> This strategy is wholly in keeping with Damascene’s earlier argument, aiming to demonstrate that the iconoclasts were correct in what they affirmed and incorrect in what they denied. See again discussion of this point in section 1b.

<sup>241</sup> *Definition* of Nicaea II, 377D (emphasis mine; in Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 179).

<sup>242</sup> *Definition* of Nicaea II, 377D (in Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 179). Elsner describes this passage as a “direct riposte” to Hierēia’s assertion of opposition between the “animate icon” in the heart and the “inanimate and speechless icons made of material colours” (see Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 382; and the *Definition* of Hierēia, 345CD [Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 161]), but this is only the case insofar as it refutes the *opposition* between the two senses of “icon” and the *restriction* to the former. Nicaea II does not refute the overall logical superiority of the inner imitation, for the sake of which the material icon is produced. For fuller discussion of the opposition promoted by the bishops of Hierēia between “inanimate” and “animate” images, see Anastos, “The Ethical Theory of Images,” and Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 194-95.

<sup>243</sup> Elsner and Uphus discuss the philological indeterminacy of the term ὀρίζομεν (“we ordain”) used in the *Definition* of Nicaea II (see Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 393n128, and a fuller discussion in Uphus, *Der Horos des Zweiten Konzils von Nizäa*, 25-26, 202-03).

light of the larger agenda of Nicaea II to overturn Hiereia and restore the iconophile authorities without creating more fissures than it could close.

Such ambiguity would not endure in the decades to follow. The early ninth century saw another reversal, with Emperor Leo V reinstating the iconoclastic policy and doctrine of Hiereia through a new council in 815, apparently “seeking both an explanation for the catastrophic defeats that the Byzantines had suffered at the hands of the Bulgars, and a means of bolstering his own position and authority.”<sup>244</sup> The iconoclastic position at this stage was far milder in temperament and narrower in scope than had been the thoroughgoing Christological argumentation of Constantine V and the bishops of Hiereia. The argumentation focused on curtailing certain behaviors *toward* icons (moving them out of the range of somatic veneration, so that only mental contemplation would be feasible), not on the question of their legitimacy as educational and inspirational media that truly represent the holy people depicted in them.<sup>245</sup> But the resistance to this declawed iconoclasm of 815 was sharper than ever. The former patriarch Nikephoros I (who had warned Leo V against the compromises he was proposing, and been forced to abdicate prior to the council) and the prolific abbot of Studion Monastery, Theodore, doubled down on the validity of pictorial representation, elevating it to a status of mediating primacy. Both the patriarch and the abbot would issue *Refutations* (*Antirrhetikoi*) against the *Definitions* of 754 and 815, which push past even Damascene’s (and Nicaea II’s) promotion of a maximal inclusivity of hagiographical media.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 366-67. Cf. Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 42, and Alexander, “The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815),” 40-42.

<sup>245</sup> See Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 369-71 and Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” 382. Elsner, in particular, questions whether the policies of Leo V and his episcopal supporters can be called “iconoclastic” in any meaningful sense, as the Council of 815 “accepted that images are not idols, and . . . essentially abandoned the heavy-duty Christological arguments of Hiereia. Does this mean that the bishops of 815 though Hiereia’s Christology had effectively been defeated by John of Damascus and the arguments of 787?” Rather than iconoclasm, the Council of 815 offered recommendations to curtail “abuse in worship.” But Alexander cautions us not to discount the subtlety and creativity of these softened iconoclastic positions (“The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia [815],” 37-38).

<sup>246</sup> It should go without saying that my treatment of Nikephoros and Theodore in these concluding remarks addresses *only* the respect in which these thinkers—sophisticated and prolific in their own right, owed (and regularly given) the kind of penetrative analysis I have given Damascene—intensify the iconophile position and shape the conditions of the

Where Damascene's effort had been to integrate the various hagiographical media, rejecting the logic by which they could be disassociated with one another, iconophile argumentation in this subsequent period works to resist the endurance of iconoclasm by inverting, rather than rejecting, the earlier iconoclast opposition between media. Thus Nikephoros "introduces a hierarchy into his evaluation of the relative merits of ... verbal and visual" mediation (holding only the latter to be free of ambiguity), and reasons that the visual apprehension of the physical form and earthly deeds of Christ preceded any written testimony.<sup>247</sup> Theodore argues that to prefer words to images is to lapse into the Docetic heresy of mistrusting the incarnation of Christ, and that "honor" offered to holiness in the mind is *inferior* to "veneration" offered with the whole body.<sup>248</sup> Even as Nikephoros and Theodore do maintain the undergirding structure of Damascene's hagiographical theorization (the interpenetration of imagination, representation, and edification),<sup>249</sup> the position of the icon itself is substantially foregrounded. Both

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subsequent "Triumph of Orthodoxy." In a different kind of project, their own extensive theorization of the mediation of holiness would be a topic of sustained interest.

<sup>247</sup> Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 129. See Parry, "Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephoros," 179; Travis, *In Defense of the Faith*, 48-49; and Nikephoros, *Refutations* I.23, I.37, III.4. Theodore makes a parallel argument as to the priority of the visual apprehension of Christ over the verbal—see his own *Refutations* III.A2.

<sup>248</sup> Theodore Studites, *Refutations* II.D28. See also Parry, "Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephoros," 172; and McGuckin, "Legitimation of Power," 56-57. This strategy results in some startling contortions, such as iconophile theologians polemicizing against the (empty) cross as a "sign" that "belongs to the discourse of Old Testament prefiguration" (Theodore) or as a resource for knowing of the passion of Christ without yet providing grounds for making it "worthy of honor" (Nikephoros). See Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 95-101, offering translations of and commentary on the *Refutations of the Iconoclasts* by both men, as well as of Theodore's vitriolic response to poems dedicated to the cross on the Chalke Gate. Note that the argumentation against the symbolic depiction of Christ by means of something else can be found already in Canon 82 of the Quinisext Council of 691-92, but there the case is made that symbolic representation of Christ (as a lamb) is no longer necessary—not that it is actively doing dishonor to the prototype by refusing to represent him as he has made himself representable. As Gero observes, however, the notion of a "docetic iconoclasm" is more a smear tactic than any fair reading of the iconoclast authors ("Notes on Byzantine Iconoclasm," 35-36).

<sup>249</sup> For instance: Nikephoros' lengthy arguments (most clearly in *Refutations* II.12-16) refuting iconoclast positions on the relationship between "inscription" (γράφειν) and "circumscription" (περιγράφειν) make the case that since to exist within the created order *at all* is to be "circumscribed" by particular time and space (a position he shares with Damascene and Maximus), the act of representing Christ in material inscriptions (of varying media, all included in the concept of γράφειν) does not do him injustice by circumscribing what cannot be circumscribed (since Christ himself has willingly undergone this in the incarnation), and in fact does not affect Christ at all, but rather makes him accessible to others in a new way, opening a new link of mediation to the senses, the imagination, and the soul, to the benefit of all (see Parry, "Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephoros," 176-77, and Travis, *In Defense of the Faith*, 66-86). Theodore, in one of his many letters to his "brother Naukratis" (likely a monastic brother), gives what practically amounts to an explicit interweaving of imagination, representation, and edification. He proceeds in the opposite direction than I have: Images are *beneficial* to those looking at them, a benefit which derives from the mimetic relationship between the image and that

authors make the remarkable claim that “unless there are images of Christ the incarnation might as well not have taken place.”<sup>250</sup> If images of Christ are *not* produced and venerated, the Christian community is in effect hedging its acceptance of the sanctifying entailments of the incarnation, proving themselves (and worse, cultivating themselves) to be half-hearted believers of the gospel. Upon Damascene’s prodigious defense of the *legitimacy* of images, as inextricable from the many media (and mediating processes) of divine and human *oikonomia*, the apologetics of Nikephoros and Theodore build up a *mandate* of the production and consumption of holy images. It is this period and these theologians that provide the conditions of possibility for the holy icons to be, in subsequent Greek usage, discussed with terminology that had formerly been applied primarily to the holy scriptures: *hagiographia*.<sup>251</sup> Adopting icons into this category represents a huge elevation of their importance and draws us closer to the position attained by the icon in the mid-ninth century as a preeminent symbol and identity-marker of orthodoxy.<sup>252</sup>

One last effort at compromise (in Emperor Michael II’s offer of a mulligan, promoting freedom of conscience and invalidating all the councils pertaining to the controversy since 754) was followed by one last revival of restrictive policies toward image veneration by Emperor Theophilos and his Patriarch John VII (“the Grammarian”) in 815, before another empress, seizing the political and ecclesial opportunity of a

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which it represents (in this case, a *holy* object—images of mundane or profane prototypes, of course, have no such benefit), and from the “eyewitness” (αὐτοψίας) thereby granted to the devotee. Indeed, the icon is itself the record of a chain of eyewitnesses, but has concretized in the world what otherwise would have existed only as each successive hearer of a description might have constructed it in his own imagination; in the icon, then, “the imagination is cooked to perfection through its realization in enacted iconic form” (πραγματικῆς ἐνεργείας ἢ εἰκονοειδῆς φαντασία ὧπται ἀποτέλεσμα: *Epistle* 380.179-80, but see the whole passage from line 142, in Fatouros [ed] *Theodori Studitae Epistulae*, II.516-17). For further discussion of this passage, see Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 130-32.

<sup>250</sup> Parry, “Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephoros,” 177. See Studites, *Refutations* III.D10, and Nikephoros, *Refutations* I.26.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Skedros, “Hagiography and Devotion to the Saints,” 444. Skedros warns that the term “hagiography” had not been “historically used within the Orthodox tradition,” but this is only the case with regard to the *Lives* of the saints.

<sup>252</sup> This position would, indeed, continue to intensify. In Canon 3 of the Council of 869, following the “Triumph of Orthodoxy” (to which I now turn in conclusion), it is ordained not only “that the icons of our lord . . . are to be venerated and shown the same honor as is accorded to the Books of the Gospels,” but also that if “a man does not do homage to the icon of Christ, he also shall not be able to recognize His Form at the Second Coming” (translated in Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 150-51). The active veneration of icons is made, formally, an unambiguous soteriological requirement.

fresh start, reversed course once again.<sup>253</sup> The parallels between 787 and 843 are too close to miss: Theophilos’ recently-widowed empress Theodora, acting as regent for her underage son, convened a synod of iconophile clerics roughly a year after the death of her husband. This synod took place not in the great church of Hagia Sophia but rather in the imperial palace, reflecting the opposition of Patriarch John and his clergy; yet by the time the synod had finished, the authority of Nicaea II had been reinstated, John was pushed to resign, and the new Patriarch, Methodios, was able to lead a great procession—brandishing the recently forbidden icons, according to hagiographical representations of the event—from the palace to Hagia Sophia, where a solemn ceremony was conducted through the night.<sup>254</sup> This procession and liturgy, taking place on the first Sunday of Lent (March 11, 843), contributed something rather more than the tiresome wheel of antagonistic councils: an *inscription* of iconophilia into the holy center of Constantinople and into the holy time of Lenten repentance and purification.

These events have come to be known as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy,” and they continue to be celebrated to this day, in the Orthodox Church, with processions and hymns on the “Feast of Orthodoxy” (the first Sunday of Lent).<sup>255</sup> Yet considering how they

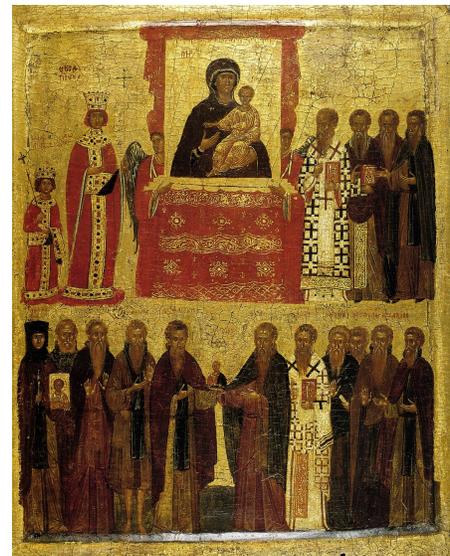


Figure 6.1: Festal icon for the Feast of Orthodoxy, late fourteenth century. National Icon Collection 18, British Museum. Public domain.

<sup>253</sup> See Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 386-411; Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 42-43; and Gero, “John the Grammarian.” Note that Michael does *not* seek to overturn Quinisext, to which iconophiles could readily appeal, suggesting that his aim was more irenic than critical.

<sup>254</sup> See Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 447-52; Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 43-44; and Vasiliev, “Sur l’année du rétablissement de l’orthodoxie,” 418-21).

<sup>255</sup> See Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 356-58, for reflections on the dilemmas that present themselves in the advertisement of these events as “triumphant”; and “How to Read Heresiology,” 483, on the *Synodikon* written for the occasion, in which we see “the defeat of iconoclasm [being] significantly, if inaccurately, defined in terms of the establishment of orthodoxy.” The festal icon of the Feast of Orthodoxy (Figure 6.1) is a representation of a representation. The icon depicts, in its center, a panel on which the Theotokos and Christ-child are shown; surrounding it are Empress Theodora and her son, Emperor Michael III, with Patriarch Methodios and several of the ecclesiastical leaders involved in the events of 843. See Kotoula, “The British Museum Triumph of Orthodoxy Icon,” 121-22.

came to be known as such, two decades after the fact, provides a fitting capstone to my argument: is in this twenty-year period after the conclusion of “second iconoclasm” that the significance of this chapter, indeed these last two chapters, is attuned especially clearly to the bigger picture of how hagiography has maintained resistance at the core of Greek Orthodox theological culture. Thus we must turn to the year 867, and to Homily 17 of Patriarch Photios I: a glittering encomium celebrating the inauguration of a new mosaic of the Theotokos in the apse of Hagia Sophia. In the course of this homily, the patriarch not only provides evidence of the institutionalization of hagiographical maximalism but also encourages the assembly to think on the restoration of ecclesial iconophilia (only now *concretized*, or “cooked to perfection” as Theodore Studites puts it, in the establishment of a new principal image in the principal church) as “the beginning and the day of Orthodoxy.”<sup>256</sup>

Drawing on arguments from Damascene, Photios celebrates the power of the resplendent image of the Theotokos “by which the rational part of our soul, being watered through our bodily eyes, and given eyesight in its growth toward the divine love of Orthodoxy, puts forth in the way of fruit the most exact vision of truth.”<sup>257</sup> He embraces the apologetics of Theodore and Nikephoros pertaining to the primacy of sight over hearing, and accordingly of iconographic mediation over textual mediation—even of the gospel itself.<sup>258</sup> And he does not miss the opportunity to hammer the decades-past representatives of iconoclasm as a personification of all the heretical buffeting continually endured by the Orthodox.<sup>259</sup> Thus Photios

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<sup>256</sup> Photios, Homily XVII.3 (in Mango, *The Homilies of Photios*, 291). Mango observes that this exhortation reveals that “the Sunday of Orthodoxy was not observed at this time” (285), twenty-four years after the event.

<sup>257</sup> Photios, Homily XVII.2 (in Mango, *The Homilies of Photios*, 290).

<sup>258</sup> In section 5 of the homily, so well-analyzed by Nelson (“To Say and to See”) for its evidence as to Byzantine conceptions of the physiology of the gaze, the patriarch insists that painting “presents the martyrdom of those blessed men more vividly to our knowledge” than speech or writing can do; “These things are conveyed both by stories and by pictures, but it is the spectators rather than the hearers who are drawn to emulation” (Photios, Homily XVII.5 (in Mango, *The Homilies of Photios*, 294). Cf. Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 135-37.

<sup>259</sup> See Mango, “The Liquidation of Iconoclasm,” 135-40: Mango suggests that Photios’ conjuration of iconoclasm as the paradigmatic anti-Orthodoxy is not evidence of the continued strength of iconophobic disputation in his time, but rather of the political benefit to which such a strategy would accrue. Photios had grown up in exile, imposed on his parents by Emperor Theophilus, and he could also claim a close connection to the ecclesiastical party that orchestrated the restoration of 843. Iconoclasm, in Mango’s view, functioned as a handy cudgel for Photios’ many ecclesiological struggles,

praises the “holy beauty” of the Virgin and the church building now adorned by her, contrasting it with the barbaric and sexually violent behavior of foreigners (the Isaurian emperors Leo III and Constantine V, motivated by “Jewish folly”) in “stripping the church” naked and afflicting her with “bitter wounds,” from which she has now recovered (indeed has been resurrected, leading the saints up from oblivion) and from which she must continue to be protected.<sup>260</sup>

It was long believed that this homily was delivered on the first Sunday of Lent, the anniversary of the repentant/triumphant liturgy of 843. Indeed, Photios rhetorically identifies his own program of iconic adornment with the restoration of 843, the achievement of Theodora and Methodios in 843 with Nicaea II, and Nicaea II in turn with Nicaea I, the very birth of Byzantine orthodoxy.<sup>261</sup> However, the preeminent scholar of the life and work of Photios, Francis Dvornik, has showed that it was more likely given at or just after the concluding session of the synod convened by the patriarch in 867. This synod served not merely to continue abjuring the representatives of iconoclasm—which had not resurfaced as a credible threat since 843—but also to condemn the all-too-current heretical errors of the *Latin* church, which had altered the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (adding the famous *filioque*, at least in certain regions), which was spreading doctrines viewed by Photios as antithetical to orthodoxy in its (rival) missionary activity, and which, indeed, had not accepted the ecumenical authority of Nicaea II. The synod participants took the

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which had relatively little to do with real iconophobic opponents but in which his own identification with the restoration of icons (and his opponents with their persecutors) would be an asset. Thus the homily at hand can be read as part of a larger self-installment into the continuation of an iconophile legacy, to the triumph of which he was more than happy to promote himself as contributing. See also Cormack, *Writing in Gold*, 141-78, on this homily, its rhetoric, and its contribution to “the illusion of tradition.”

<sup>260</sup> Photios, Homily XVII.3-5 (in Mango, *The Homilies of Photios*, 291-94); cf. Dvornik, “The Patriarch Photios and Iconoclasm,” 89-91. The remarkable passage in section 5 that identifies the restoration of the icons with the resurrection of Christ is as follows: “This is another shaft being driven today right through the heart of Death, not as the Saviour is engulfed by the tomb of mortality for the common resurrection of our kind, but as the image of the Mother rises up from the very depths of oblivion, and raises along with herself the likenesses of the saints” (in Mango, 293).

<sup>261</sup> See Dvornik, “The Patriarch Photios and Iconoclasm,” 89.

remarkable step of condemning Pope Nicholas I and the Latin bishops in Bulgaria, who were rebaptizing Greek Christians and encroaching on Byzantine territory, as heretical and tyrannical.<sup>262</sup>

This context of schismatic brinksmanship between Pope and Patriarch ignites the significance of Photios' rhetoric against iconoclasm in Homily 17, whose formal title refers not to the subject of the encomium (the Theotokos) but rather to the "triumph over all the heresies" just accomplished by the patriarch's synod. The proclamation of "triumph," concretized in the galvanizing symbol of the restoration of iconophilia (and the "trophy" of the apse mosaic),<sup>263</sup> was issued from a position of resistance to Latin encroachment and assertions of catholicity. By fixing the Pope and the Latin mission in Bulgaria within the crosshairs of the heresiological expurgation of iconoclasm, Photios succeeds in staining the Latins with the pedigrees of error against which the Greek church could be considered constitutively resistant and, at the same time, in entrenching the hard-won hagiographical maximalism of post-843 orthodoxy as an identifying anchor of a Byzantine church, an Orthodox Church, that would not be intimidated by Latin ascendancy. Ending his homily, Photios prays that the church *which has received God's grace through the icons* will "reign on earth to consecrate the remainder of the church too with holy images ... [which] have been made by Thee to be the eyes of the universe [*oikoumenēs*]."<sup>264</sup> This remarkable iteration of ecumenical struggle crystallized in the texture of hagiographical mediation, some two centuries before the formal schism between Rome and Constantinople, is a fitting emblem of the long emergence and enduring power of the dynamics that this dissertation showed to be alive and well in the contemporary Mediterranean.

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<sup>262</sup> See Dvornik, "The Patriarch Photios and Iconoclasm," 92-96, *Patriarch Photios in Light of Recent Research*, 30-31, and *Photian Schism*, 117-19 (Dvornik stops short, notably, of suggesting that these condemnations amount to an outright "attack on the Western Church and on the rights of the bishop of Rome in the Church" [129]). See also Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross*, 223-48.

<sup>263</sup> Indeed, not only in the title of the homily but in its first minutes Photios proclaims the "cause of the celebration" to be "splendid piety erecting trophies against belief hostile to Christ" (Homily XVII.2 [in Mango, *The Homilies of Photios*, 289]).

<sup>264</sup> Photios, Homily XVII.7 (in Mango, *The Homilies of Photios*, 296).

## **Conclusion:**

### **The Beautiful Struggle and the Way of Liberation**

*I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my release is at hand. I have waged the beautiful struggle, I have finished the race, I have guarded the faith. Awaiting me henceforth is the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will furnish for me on that day, and not only for me but for all who have longed for his appearing.*

~2 Timothy 4:6-8

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*The political community is not the antithesis to the desert but one of the many deserts in which the Christian must combat the demons that attempt to block the learning of love. In no other field is the temptation to demonize the neighbor more compelling or seemingly justifiable than in the field of politics; in no other space than in the political, then, is the Christian more challenged to fulfill the commandment of love.*

~Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political*

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*Hate, too, is a form of community; only indifference is not.*

~Hermann Graf Keyserling, *The World in the Making*

This dissertation has proceeded through an interweaving of three dimensions of analysis with regard to a new construal of hagiography, in a Greek Orthodox idiom, as “the multimediation of holiness.” Asking *what* hagiography is, I approached each of many media in which experiences and understandings of holiness are inscribed in light of its interplay and indeed co-constitution with the other media. In this way I have tested an approach to the study of hagiography that relativizes the study of texts to the larger array of media to which they belong, and understands these many hagiographical products in terms of the living, psychosocial processes by which they are generated and mobilized. Exploring what I propose to be three core processes of holy mediation (imagination, representation, and edification) has aided me in arriving more explicitly at an account of what is involved in and entailed by the inscription of holiness, broadly construed, in the hagiographical paradigm that exploded into unsystematic popularity in the time of Chrysostom, was threshed out so carefully and extensively by Damascene, and continues to flourish in modern Orthodox Christian social and spiritual life.

Asking *how* hagiography functions in Greek Orthodox theological culture, I have developed an argument that hagiography—in all its sensory and noetic profusion—constitutes a lived theology of struggle (*agōn*), equipped with which Orthodox Christians take action and make psychological space in themselves and their communities to resist (*antistēnai*) configurations of thought and life that they perceive as threatening. In the course of these chapters, I have demonstrated that both hagiographical media *themselves* (images, stories, shrines, votive objects of St. George in modern Cyprus; and the multimedia at work in fourth-century saint’s-day festivals, including the homilies of John Chrysostom) and the Orthodox *theorizations* of the nature and purpose of hagiographical media (by modern Greek-Cypriot clergy and laity alike; and by the theologians on both sides of the iconoclastic controversy, John Damascene most prominent among them) function in this way.

Finally, as a component of both these lines of inquiry, asking *why* hagiography is so prominent in the traditions under consideration, I have shown how the processes of hagiographical inscription have been intimately and inextricably bound to understandings of the “theo poetic” impartation of holiness, by which all that corrupts the human being and the human world may be rectified (*anorthōthēke*) and assimilated to the likeness of God—thus affixing hagiographical mediation to the deepest theological hopes of Orthodox Christianity. At the same time, these theological considerations should not be divorced from the robustly and fundamentally political valance of Orthodox conceptions of rectification, such that practices of the inscription of holiness (including hagiological discourse) acquire their significance also by serving to shape Orthodox identification *as* Orthodox and, concomitantly, *against* all that would contaminate or otherwise compromise the divinely ordained mediation of holiness to the world.

Methodologically, all of my chapters proceeded through a play of metonymy and synecdoche. By following the threads of hagiographical practice where they enact and interweave a variety of psychological and sociological processes, I have aimed to provide a heuristic in which hagiographical dynamics in one medium (such as the literary traditions where they are conventionally constrained by scholarship) are implicative for a far wider array of human action and communication. And by delving into one intensely situated saint’s cult in the modern Mediterranean, followed by studies of two outstanding early Christian theologians, rather than engaging in broader and shallower surveys, I hope to have opened up complex textures in the parts that can generate new lines of inquiry for the whole. Yet these chapters also had to maintain and integrate the interpretive work of metaphor and irony: continually seeking an encompassing grasp on “holiness” as something clearly present in people’s lives and overtly

named in their discourse, and at the same time, engaging in a certain interpretive nomadism to avoid being pinned down in the continual insufficiency of the categories put to work at any given moment.<sup>1</sup>

The reading I have offered throughout this dissertation, of Orthodox self-and-other understanding formulated and enduringly attuned in the key of resistance, is against the grain of much popular, academic, and even ecclesiological interest in Orthodox Christianity. Caricatures abound of Orthodoxy either as representative of the “mystical east,” enshrining lost Christian wisdoms and escaping the chauvinisms and obsessions with power and politics that afflict “the west” (to which image is owed thousands of sales of *The Way of a Pilgrim*); or, on the other hand, as authoritative and magisterial, inclined to suppress dissent and seek homogeneity and stability over change and improvisation (to which image is owed no small number of disillusioned converts from mainline Protestant churches and the creeping appeal of racial supremacy in American and European Orthodoxies). It is not sufficient, of course, for a new dissertation to reiterate the well-known insufficiency of these caricatures. In conclusion, then, I want to consider the positive *ecumenical* implications of the project, both in the sense of the (first-order) production of theological and ecclesiological understanding about the relationships between people divided by their religious differences, and in the sense of the (second-order) academic interpretation of this relationality and the empirical force of the resulting theological-political entanglements.<sup>2</sup> This project, I would suggest, brings new clarity to the Orthodox critiques of ecumenical engagement over the last century, but also lays the groundwork for promising new contributions to the intercultural conversation around political and spiritual resistance in challenging times.

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<sup>1</sup> On these four “master tropes” of understanding (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony) and the interlocking dialectics by which they organize a topic for hermeneutical analysis, see White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 1-25 (especially 4-7), and Burke, “Four Master Tropes.”

<sup>2</sup> In a future article, I will examine in more depth the heritage and tasks of “theology in an ecumenical key” as both a first-order and a second-order apparatus for making sense of religious difference on common grounds.

Since the conclusion of World War II, the World Council of Churches (WCC) has convened ten General Assemblies dedicated to confronting sites and sources of division between Christians and in the world at large. Although Orthodox Christians were involved from the beginning with the WCC's pursuit and organization of an ecumenical agenda, their participation has been and continues to be in a prevailing position of immanent critique, or indeed one of "radical criticism," simultaneously "engaged and estranged"—particularly around the theme of holiness.<sup>3</sup> Orthodox delegates at most of these major ecumenical gatherings of the past seventy years (and indeed in the course of more focused bilateral dialogues)<sup>4</sup> have delivered minority reports arguing that, unlike the other "marks of the church," holiness had been treated superficially, as an afterthought, or as an abstract or intellectual principle rather than as embodied in the life of the church.<sup>5</sup> To this day, Orthodox caution—or outright antagonism—toward inter-church and inter-religious reconciliation continues to be articulated through discourses of holiness as an immanent transformation of human culture and a wholly-embodied struggle with human distortion. In the Orthodox statements and minority reports from the major WCC Assemblies, there can be identified a fairly consistent theme that supports my reading of holiness as a paramount site of Orthodox self-construction: non-Orthodox understandings of and appeals to holiness are critiqued as being simultaneously *excessively exoteric* and *insufficiently embodied*.<sup>6</sup> Such views of holiness are, in a sense,

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<sup>3</sup> Visser't Hooft (ed), *The Evanston Report*, 76; Bouteneff, "The World Council of Churches," 15. On the pivotal involvement of Orthodox churches in the early ecumenical movement, see Meyendorff, *Witness to the World*, 25-26; Konrad Raiser, Foreword to Limouris (ed), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, ix; the "Report of a Consultation on 'Orthodox Involvement in the WCC,' Sofia 1981," in Limouris (ed), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, 89; George Tsetsis, "The Meaning of the Orthodox Presence in the Ecumenical Movement," in Limouris (ed), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, 272-73; Jillions, "Orthodox Christianity in the West," 276; Bouteneff, "The World Council of Churches," 16-17."

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Saarinen (ed), *Faith and Holiness* (an accounting of Lutheran-Orthodox dialogues between 1959 and 1994), and Torrence (ed), *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches* (between 1979 and 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Such critical voices from the major WCC assemblies include Georges Florovsky (at Amsterdam 1948); Parthenios of Carthage (at New Delhi 1961); John Meyendorff and Karekin Sarkissian (at Uppsala 1968); Parthenios of Alexandria, Emmanuel Clapsis, and John Zizioulas (at Canberra 1991); and Jakob Kurien and Aram I of Lebanon (at Porto Allegre 2006). Their concerns about holiness have been periodically amplified by Anglican and Methodist delegates, including Michael Ramsey (at Evanston 1954); W. R. Cannon (at New Delhi 1961); and Rowan Williams (at Porto Allegre 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Archetypally, in Georges Florovsky's recurring lamentation (drawing on John of Damascus and the "triumphant" theology of the end of the iconoclastic controversy) about Western Christianity's tendencies to idolatry on the one hand

considered to be both too material and not material enough—a critique that echoes longstanding tropes in Greek Orthodox self- and other-understanding from the fourth century onward, as we have seen.<sup>7</sup>

What is to be made of this? Extended analysis of this material and its significance will follow in its own article, but to close out the analysis of this project, I want to call attention to the position of holiness as both an overwhelming ecumenical priority for the Orthodox and a self-designating category of Orthodox difference at ecumenical interfaces. Indeed, the anxiety of Orthodox Christians toward ecumenical participation continues to be framed as a fear of corrosion of the true faith, of the risk of “infecting” the (vulnerable) purity of Orthodox life and thought by commingling it with error.<sup>8</sup> Theologizing around holiness in ecumenical settings, then, has been a means for Orthodox participants not only to level sustained critiques against the state of Christianity in its Protestant and Catholic

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and iconoclasm on the other: see Florovsky, *Christianity and Culture*, 12-21. Cf. McGuckin, “Orthodoxy and Culture,” 415-17, and Zernov, *Orthodox Encounter*, 102-03.

<sup>7</sup> And as we have not have occasion to see, as well. To take one influential current of Greek Orthodox thought, Yannaras’ chapter on the “Vigilance and Resistance” of early modern Orthodoxy identifies the theology and theopraxy of holiness (particularly as concentrated on Mount Athos) as the preeminent bulwark against barbarism, westernism, and modernism since the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. See, for instance, Yannaras’ description of the tight association of neomartyrs with the resistance of Greek society (*Orthodoxy and the West*, 112; cf. my own discussion of neomartyrs in Chapter III). Romanides is more extreme still, making of holiness a delimiting shibboleth of authentic Christianity and accepting “no possibility for repentance, spiritual struggle, holiness, sanctification, or even salvation” outside of the cultural remnants of the Roman world that have, however tenuously, preserved this precious heritage against a corrosive flood of cultural sickness (Kalaitzidis, “The Image of the West in Contemporary Greek Theology,” 149, drawing on Romanides, *Ρωμαιοσύνη*). See also Payne, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm in Modern Orthodox Thought*, 195-258, on these two thinkers’ promotion of an Orthodox exteriority to problems putatively deriving from Western philosophy, an exteriority anchored in the hesychastic tradition’s sensory apprehension of the energies of God; that this fourteenth-century tradition is presented as the last flowering of Byzantine theology only further imbues it with a special aura of (temporarily) lost glory. While Yannaras’ and Romanides’ treatments of the centrality of resistance to pre-twentieth-century Orthodoxy are themselves thoroughly twentieth-century in their perspective and purpose, Krstić’s excellent study of Ottoman-era Greek Christianity (*Contested Conversions to Islam*) demonstrates that the tight entanglement of holiness and resistance in Ottoman Christianity is not *only* a fantasia of twentieth-century anti-Western thought.

<sup>8</sup> Cavarnos, *Ecumenism Examined*, 52: “The reason why St. Paul and the other holy men whom I have mentioned advise avoiding repeated religious dialogues with the heterodox is clearly *the danger of being infected spiritually* by heretical ideas” (emphasis original). See also Jillions, “Orthodox Christianity in the West,” 282-83. This deeply felt and often-expressed anxiety is telling, particular since, from the perspective of those Orthodox Christians *involved* in ecumenical processes, the holiness of the church “is not vitiated by the sins and failures of her members” (from the Orthodox minority report at Evanston 1954: see Visser’t Hooft (ed), *The Evanston Report*, 95, and Limouris (ed), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, 29). Cf. similar sentiments expressed in the Anglican-Orthodox Dublin Agreed Statement of 1984 (“The Church’s holiness can be obscured but cannot be destroyed by the sins of its members”—11) and in John Meyendorff’s regular editorial column for the periodical *The Orthodox Church* (see Meyendorff, *Witness to the World*, 23-24).

configurations, but also to validate a self-understanding of Orthodoxy as bound to and correlated with a specific understanding of what holiness is and does, and how it is mediated to and through the human world. Therefore, for ecumenical theologians seeking a breakthrough in conversations about holiness (doubtless a black sheep of much ecumenical dialogue over the last century), this project offers, at the very least, ample groundwork for understanding the intensity and provenance of Orthodox critiques.

Stepping beyond the sphere of constructive ecumenical engagement, we find the dynamic redoubled in an energetic anti-ecumenical discourse, largely online, in which many Orthodox Christians explicitly constitute their own identity in resistance to “the heresy of ecumenism,” promoting a “walling off” to protect themselves from the “pollution” of that heresy.<sup>9</sup> Such phenomena show the applicability of my analysis in the most contemporary of terms, well beyond the domains I have considered. In the construal of ecumenicity as “heresy,” such that empathetic dialogue (and even, in the most extreme examples, democratic co-existence) with non-Orthodox and non-Christian interlocutors represents a threat to the purity of the church, which can be resisted by appeal to and imitation of the saints of the church,<sup>10</sup> this project’s prevailing modes of analysis would recognize a self-constitutive Orthodoxy of resistance, its attention fixed where holiness seems so quickly to be lost or compromised by religious others (whose heterodoxy is bound rhetorically to a maltreatment of holy mediation). With the collapse of Soviet communism, a majority of Orthodox communities are no longer in situations of political

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<sup>9</sup> Such “walling-off” takes the shape of an excommunication from below, a refusal to receive communion from Orthodox authorities deemed to have succumbed. See, for instance, Cyprian of Oreoi, “Walling-Off from the Ecumenists,” and the anonymous tract, “A Contribution to the Orthodox Theology of Resistance and Walling-Off,” both available under the “Orthodox Resistance” resources of the “Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece” ([www.hsir.org/Theology\\_en/Resistance.html](http://www.hsir.org/Theology_en/Resistance.html), accessed August 17, 2017). Many more examples can be found among the statements gathered by the “Orthodox Christian Information Center” (under the heading “Ecumenism Awareness”: [http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/ea\\_docs.aspx](http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/ea_docs.aspx), accessed August 17, 2017). Hopko discusses and criticizes the various radical critiques of ecumenism among the Orthodox (and among converts to Orthodoxy in particular) in *Speaking the Truth in Love*, 145-60.

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Studites and Nikodemos Hagiorites are regularly named on such websites, for instance, as pivotal figures in the continuing cultivation of holy multimediation as resistance in the centuries after John Damascene. Moreover, the “heretics” are explicitly encapsulated, in one formulation, as being those “who fight against the saints” (from a 2006 open letter to the abbots of Mt. Athos from representatives of twenty Athonite monasteries, against “the terrible heresy of Ecumenism and the deceit of Papism”: <http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/kelliotes.aspx>, accessed April 22, 2018).

subordination; it should not be surprising, in light of the foregoing analysis, that liberal democracy and global ecumenism would come to take the place of imperial domination in (these) Orthodox imaginaries, maintaining the validation of Orthodox identities of rectifying resistance and triumphant martyrdom.<sup>11</sup> It would be a grave error, in other words, to dismiss these elements as only an aberrant or reactionary fringe.

At the same time, my analysis reflects not only an ecumenical liability but also a substantial ecumenical opportunity. As Pantelis Kalaitzidis observes, ancient and modern Orthodox thought alike are suffused with nuanced concern for the issues that have electrified the liberation theologies of the last fifty years, yet with the appearance of explicit discourses of liberation theology (and indeed, contextual theology), these concerns appear “to have come to a halt or even lost ground in Orthodox circles”—exactly as they were “gaining momentum throughout the rest of the world.”<sup>12</sup> Kalaitzidis explains this by way of an argument around the Ottoman-era Orthodox churches’ efforts to preserve a Byzantine identity and culture, resulting in a national and ultimately a philosophical “introversion” that resisted accommodation to intellectual resources and trends outside the fold.<sup>13</sup> Here too, additional clarity into the shape of and potential approaches to the problem can be derived from my interpretation of the intimate alignment of Orthodox identity with forms of struggle conducted by means of hagiographical maximalism.

It is not my intention here to assess the validity of Orthodox critiques of liberation theology as excessively exoteric and materialistic (though it is not hard to see that these critiques are overstated); it is, rather, to consider what might result from non-Orthodox liberation theologians listening to and learning from Orthodox positions on the essentially-multimediated character of holiness *as a* privileged means of resistance to exoteric and esoteric domination. I am persuaded, on the basis of the foregoing work, that

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<sup>11</sup> See Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political*, 46-52. Cf. Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 187-98, on validation by “resonance,” in which existing understandings are held up as standards for accepting and interpreting new data. In this case, new political configurations are engaged insofar as they can resonate (entirely irrespective of whether this is a reasonable assessment of these configurations) with deep structures of self-understanding in positions of resistance.

<sup>12</sup> Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, 65.

<sup>13</sup> Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, 65-80.

Orthodox theological anthropology and hagiographical maximalism have a great deal to offer to ecumenical theologies of liberation, as much as they do to ecumenical conversations around holiness, if the critiques can be heard and engaged deeply.<sup>14</sup> Is it not the case that what I have been interpreting all along as a lived theology of struggle, enacted in and around the liberator-saint *par excellence*, St. George, is already an Orthodox liberation theology? The need for resistance to forces of ecological, political, and spiritual degradation is real and enduring. Orthodox hagiography offers a paradigm for anchoring this resistance in the profound particularities of human persons—persons whose constitution in the image of God maintains an ineffable center that remains other even in its mediation, whose imagination and representation by others is therefore never exhaustive or determinative, who slip between all the human agendas in which they are mobilized as inspirational beacons.<sup>15</sup>

As we considered in Part Two, it is in no small part due to the self-constitution of Orthodoxy in ecumenical resistance (*vis-à-vis* Jewish and Roman traditional culture, Byzantine iconoclasm and Latin assertions of catholicity) that the psychosomatic mediation of holiness came to be so centrally located in Orthodox theology, ecclesiology, and identity. It is therefore ironic, but nonetheless deeply significant, for John McGuckin to observe that the *beauty* of holiness and “its healing qualities” are not only “the

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<sup>14</sup> See Clément, “Orthodox Reflections on ‘Liberation Theology,’” for an early example of the encounter between Orthodox ascetic theology and (Latin American) liberation theology, which I take to be in need of substantial updating. This will not happen, of course, through a one-way conversation. Papanikolaou is clear that, as much as the principle of divine-human communion (his gloss of θεώσις, for which I have preferred the earlier form θεοποίησις and which I have showed to be intimately united with hagiographical mediation) is “the most substantial contribution that [Orthodoxy] can bring to any ecumenical gathering,” Orthodoxy has much itself to learn from liberation theology in particular, with regard to the very materialization of holiness that it acclaims to be indispensable (“Orthodoxy, Postmodernity, and Ecumenism,” 545).

<sup>15</sup> See Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 100, on human personhood as “a *kataphasis* implying an *apophasis*” (this claim is an encapsulation of a much broader argument, drawing heavily on the theological anthropology of Maximus Confessor and deeply in conversation with the Levinas’ notion of the “infinity” of the human person that escapes the “totality” of our interpretive schemes). Lifting up hagiography (with its grounding of theological significance in persons, events, and artistic or narrative representation) as a mode in which to pursue broader theological interpretation is a strategy that dovetails with Kallistos Ware’s argument that, if the dominant concern and task of Orthodox theology in the twentieth century pertained to ecclesiology, then the dominant concern and task in the twenty-first century will pertain to *anthropology*: “What does it mean, more specifically, to be a person-in-relation according to the image of God in the Holy Trinity?” (Ware, *Orthodox Theology in the Twenty-First Century*, 25). See also Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism*, 252-57, on how the figure of the saint represents a maintenance of particularity at the core of authentic relationality.

dominant motif of the entire Byzantine spiritual tradition” but also “the deepest level of ecumenical gift.”<sup>16</sup> Some would suggest that this emphasis on beauty is a contribution because it destabilizes the reliance on left-brain logical categories to which Catholic and Protestant intellectual traditions have been captive; this interpretation rests on a caricature of western theology, though the basic principle of ecumenical attentiveness to epistemological variation is sound.<sup>17</sup> However, for ecumenical and academic engagements with the mediation of holiness alike, the beauty of holiness in an Orthodox idiom is more than a self-distinguishing rhetorical flourish. Insofar as the struggle for holiness and its remaking of the world is, in the paradigm explored in this dissertation, a *beautiful struggle* (2 Timothy 4:7), the truth that it seeks and the means by which it pursues its ends are more than rational, more than propositional. *Theopoiēsis*, the assimilation of human persons and the human world to the likeness of God, here requires the full sensory poetics of hagiographical media, not only the content they mean to transmit.

There is indeed a powerful contribution here to the work of ecumenical theologies in pursuit of justice, peace, and sustainability on Earth: the situation of holiness at the heart of each, and of poetic imagination as the engine in which each is kindled for human aspiration. Such poetics far exceed a representation of reality striving for maximum resemblance; they correspond, rather, to the *mimēsis* described by Philip Sidney as “figuring forth” from the known to the possible, and by Ricoeur as the truth of “manifestation” that bursts the limitations of the truth of “adequation.”<sup>18</sup> No one who has heard the preaching of Martin Luther King, Jr., can deny the liberative power of such figuring forth: it may be

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<sup>16</sup> McGuckin, *Standing in God's Holy Fire*, 150-54.

<sup>17</sup> See Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, 351-53.

<sup>18</sup> See Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, 18, and Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 36. Monge makes much of this distinction as the basis for academic engagement with hagiographical sources along a different axis than the tired concern with factual verification of the events depicted in them or cutting through their legendary qualities to attain “historical” insights about the communities that produced them (see “Saints, Truth, and the ‘Use and Abuse’ of Hagiography,” 20-22). “In Ricoeur,” he suggests, “we find a model for taking seriously the empirical truth claims of a Delehayé, while affirming the existential truth concerns of Nietzsche and Gadamer. We can acknowledge the fictive elements of all historical writing with White driven by the human need for ‘meaning-making,’ while recognizing with Orsi that some events and people are ‘abundant,’ exceeding all our rational and fictive categories” (22).

unverifiable or even empirically unsound to claim that “the arc of the moral universe . . . bends toward justice,”<sup>19</sup> but as a poetic utterance its manifestational truth value is unmistakable. Moreover, considered from the vantage of the academic study of hagiography, it is promising indeed to consider hagiographical sources not as a counterfeit form of history but as a mode of historical enunciation oriented primarily toward the *future* rather than toward the past—a mode that is strongly resonant with Nietzsche’s yearning for an artistic history in the service of life abundant.<sup>20</sup> The ability to consider hagiographical sources as such manifestational productions, rooted in the imagination that “makes things come alive in the mind” and oriented toward forms of edification that shape and solidify communities of world-interpretation,<sup>21</sup> is a promising buttress to the interdisciplinary project of comparative hagiology that is only just beginning.<sup>22</sup>

And yet—we must let no such (ecumenical or academic) optimism obscure the grave reverberations of Chrysostom’s antagonism toward Jews and Damascene’s toward Muslims, as well as the varieties of violence that have been hagiographically warranted, fueled, or celebrated in the troubled modern history of Cyprus. It seems that the most pressing and sensitive criticism of the iconoclastic authors to the proponents of hagiographical maximalism, what I have been describing throughout as the *vulnerability* of holiness to the all-too-human modalities of its mediation, was never sufficiently answered.

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<sup>19</sup> King’s famous utterance is itself a mimetic echo of the 1853 sermon of Theodore Parker, “Of Justice and the Conscience.”

<sup>20</sup> The term “artistic history” is not Nietzsche’s own, but it reflects the trajectory of his essay “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” in its successive consideration and dismissal of three modes of historical consciousness (the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical) that each in its own way undermines the capacity for creativity; it is, then, “only if history can endure to be transformed into a work of art will it perhaps be able to preserve instincts or even evoke them” (Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 95). Nietzsche himself, of course, would likely be horrified by my suggestion that hagiographical imagination could provide anything along the lines that he viewed as genuinely artistic, and would likely slot hagiographical narrative into the category of “monumental history,” “deal[ing] in approximations and generalities, in making what is dissimilar look similar . . . [for] as long as the past has to be described as worthy of imitation . . . it of course incurs the danger of becoming somewhat distorted, beautified and coming close to free poetic invention . . .” (70).

<sup>21</sup> Daly and Pierce, “Christian Theology, Imagination, and ‘Religious Fundamentalism,’” 46. Cf. Higgins, “Holiness in the Future, Holiness as Future,” 171: the imagination of holiness is needed to “expel the dullness of prose from our discourse.” See also Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 149-52, on the capacities of mediated memory to contribute to the upbuilding (edification) of empathic and ethical relations.

<sup>22</sup> On the need for and preliminary contours of a “comparative hagiology,” see Rondolino, *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Hagiographical Strategies*, 1-18, and the forthcoming special issue dedicated to comparative hagiology in *Religions* (2019).

The iconoclast authors worried—a most reasonable worry, if the foregoing analysis is taken seriously—that the human manufacture of hagiography risked mediating holiness in a manner injected with human sinfulness, thus falsifying the actual object of mediation.<sup>23</sup> The mediation of holiness is indeed, we have seen, circumscribed by our human constitution in cultural configurations and epistemic topographies. This is not to deny that the eruption of holiness within these frames has real transformative power, but it is to acknowledge that the struggle enacted in the imagination, representation, and edification of holiness remains vulnerable to the demons encamped on the heart and in our institutions.<sup>24</sup> The eyes of faith, no less than the eyes of flesh, are human, native to a world of influences and institutions that cannot be absolved of the ascetic scrutiny owed to their practices of appropriating and imitating the holiness they perceive. This caveat—the need for self-resistance at the very heart of human struggles against domination and despair—is crucial as we consider the contribution and liability, for the challenges ahead, of hagiography as a lived theology of resistance and rectification.<sup>25</sup>

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It is August 15, 2012, and I am standing almost at the very tip of the island of Cyprus, gazing out upon a sea of impossible blues and greens, stretching to the horizon. This is a day of particular holiness for

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<sup>23</sup> See Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 103-05, 112-15, and Gero, *Constantine V*, 37-52. Landsberg too, in spite of her optimism around media that might open us beyond ourselves and make space in us for others' memories, is careful to note that there is nothing "inherently positive or progressive" about such forms of remembering (*Prosthetic Memory*, 154).

<sup>24</sup> See Kalaitzidis, "The Temptation of Judas," in which he regretfully concludes that the contemporary Church of Greece has succumbed to the "criteria and priorities" of messianic national zealotry.

<sup>25</sup> See Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, 121-22, on how an Orthodox political/liberation theology, insofar as it seeks "to expose the hideous and tyrannical face of every repressive authority (religious, political, economic), [and] to reveal the spiritual depth, the hidden Christological dimension of social and political action on behalf of our neighbor," must attend to its own temptations to power and repression. Cf. Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political*, 81-86, on the need for rigorous "ascetical struggle" as a core component of Christian politics. See also Patierno, "Palestinian Liberation Theology," as well as the various works by James Cone and Delores Williams in my bibliography, for discussion of the ways that resistance and liberation must not be ultimately dedicated to the reciprocal destruction and humiliation of an oppressor (for such would be a flipping of the script rather than a real undistortion of the human world), but rather the *inclusion* of the oppressor's own liberation from the corrosive investiture of misaligned power, and the deliberate *exclusion* of such violence and domination on the part of those seeking liberation in the first place.

Greek-Cypriots, the Feast of the Dormition of Mary, and it is a day of particular emotional complexity, as it was for decades one of the only annual opportunities for inhabitants of the south of Cyprus to travel across the border into the occupied areas of the island. Here at the Monastery of the Apostle Andrew, situated on the waterfront only a few kilometers from the island's remote northeastern end, liturgies were held in honor of two major feasts of the Virgin Mary, and the monastery would surge with visitors, Christian and Muslim alike.<sup>26</sup> It is here that two enormous wax votives were sent, during the height of the anticolonial struggle of the 1950s, in petition for the miraculous salvation of the EOKA fighters condemned to execution; it is this site that, in the aftermath of 1974, has become “a spatial representation of everyday struggles over national identity and its connection to the land.”<sup>27</sup> The liturgy for the Dormition has concluded by the time I arrive, but the temporary market set up outside the walls of the monastery is still bustling, and a number of pilgrims are venturing below the eastern wall of the edifice, where a faucet dispenses holy water from underneath the building (“very powerful,” I am assured by a cheerful man who is filling several plastic bottles worth; “you should bring some home!”).

I take shelter from the relentless sun in the shadow of the monastery and gaze out over the water. Sixty-four miles in front of me is the coast of Syria, where John Chrysostom and John Damascene were born and nurtured, and where at the time of my looking a brutal civil war had broken out only a year earlier, reshaping the life of the region in ways whose extent could only be guessed. Perhaps it is only the heat, but for a moment I am certain I see a bright shape far out on the water. My imagination goes to the figure whose trail I had only just begun to follow: St. George, who rides across the sea in defense of his devotees, who is beloved of Christians and Muslims alike, whose appearance heralds liberation or conquest, relief or dread, depending on how, and when, and by whom, and for whom, the story is told.

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<sup>26</sup> See Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 168-69; Paraskevopoulou, *Popular Religious Feasts*, 80-83; and Harmanşah, “Appropriating Common Ground?” 477-82.

<sup>27</sup> Harmanşah, “Appropriating Common Ground?” 479. Harmanşah cites Tzortzis’ observation that the monastery “symbolizes more than anything else our desire to return” (*Απόστολος Ανδρέας ο Πρωτόκλητος*, 28).

The shape on the water dissipates quickly, but it leaves an affective residue: a stutter in the normal procedures of inquiry, a momentary sense of inbreaking from an unseen horizon.

Before leaving the monastery, I slip back inside for another look around, and I encounter an object I had missed at first: a pale wax pole, about three feet long, leaned against the wall next to an icon of the Virgin Mary, whose frame is completely covered in metal *tamata* expressing hope or gratitude for bodily or psychological healing. At the top of the pole is a lump of wax that has been carefully shaped to resemble the island of Cyprus itself. The effigy of the island is not bare. Scratched into it, in letters reaching roughly from Kykkos to Kyrenia, is a single Greek word: *EIRĒNĒ*, “peace.” If anywhere, I wonder, why not here, beneath the eyes of the saints, beckoning with their gaze to those who approach them?



Figure 7.1: Monastery of the Apostle Andrew, Karpasia Peninsula. Photos taken August 15, 2012.



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