

PSELLOS' HAGIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS: RESOURCES AND NEW DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT. Resources available for Byzantine scholarship in general and for studying Psellos in particular have improved greatly in recent years. Electronic databases assist editors of texts in isolating an author's stylistic habits and in identifying parallel and source texts, while increasingly sensitive search engines provide wide access to scholarly articles, online manuscript catalogues, online publications of texts and translations and great potential for further expansion. Teubner has published Psellos' extensive writings in genre-defined volumes such as poetry, philosophy, forensic orations and hagiographic orations that represent modern categories of literature but do not capture Byzantine conceptualizations. Two examples illustrate this observation. (1) Although the oration on the Miracle at Blachernae is among Psellos' hagiographic writings, it contains a brief ecphrasis of a "living icon" prominent in art-historical discussions; however, the oration chiefly focuses upon the Byzantine court system and Psellos' suggestion for designating a miracle to resolve a vexed legal case. (2) Psellos' Encomion on Symeon Metaphrastes resembles a saint's vita and his hymn/canon for Metaphrastes represents a step towards honoring a "new" Byzantine saint. This process continued for 400 years. The 14th-century Hesychast movement used Metaphrastes' writings to validate their own views and expedited his inclusion in the Synaxarion of Constantinople in the 15th Century.

Keywords: Blachernae Oration, Byzantine courts, Hesychasm, hagiographical resources, "new" Byzantine Saints, Mark Eugenikos, Psellos' hagiography, Symeon Metaphrastes, Synaxarion of Constantinople, Teubner Psellos.

To begin², I note with appreciation that Frederick Lauritzen has compiled and circulated over the years an electronic list of publications on Psellos,

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² This essay is in response to Frederick Lauritzen's clarification to me about his intentions for the Round Table. In an email of February 25, 2015, he wrote, "The aim of the RT is not only to produce a volume on different aspects of Psellos' writings and interests but to discuss a status quo of interpretations and editions." I welcome this opportunity to expand or update references now where necessary.

including critical editions and interpretations of Psellos' hagiographical writings. I do not therefore intend to attempt a bibliographical survey of that topic. Instead, I will examine the scholarly resources and directions for new research that have emerged and developed since I produced my own Teubner edition of Psellos' hagiographical essays, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes hagiographicae*. What I have to say reflects my own experience but will also apply to others' editions not only of Psellos' hagiographical texts but also of other categories of Psellos' immense literary output.

The Teubner series aimed to provide a comprehensive publication of Psellos' virtually innumerable works in distinct categories like hagiography, philosophy, poetry, funerary orations, forensic compositions, etc. The collection of Psellos' hagiographical orations as conceptualized by L. G. Westerink includes eight *logoi* on various holy subjects.³ Only the *vita* of Auxentios⁴ and the encomion of Symeon Metaphrastes⁵ represent traditional hagiographical compositions, i.e. biographies of men and women who lived extraordinarily holy lives, although additional *vitae* and encomia may await identification and publication. For example, G. Makris recently edited an encomion of St. Panteleemon preserved in two 11th-century manuscripts and argued that Psellos authored that encomion as well as unpublished *vitae* of Sts. Kallinikos, Laurentios, and Prokopios.⁶ Thus Psellos' traditional hagiographical compositions represent two separate genres (the *vita* and the encomion) and also present the challenge of attributing anonymous works that resemble Psellos' compositions to Psellos himself. Makris used now classic studies of Psellos' literary style by Renauld,⁷ Böhlig,⁸ Ševčenko,⁹ and Ljubarskij¹⁰ as well as Kaldellis' recent stylistic assessment¹¹ in order to provide parallels for passages from the unattributed encomion of Panteleemon. It is difficult to provide definitive proof by means of such a stylistic attribution; Paschalidis considers the encomion of Pantaleemon

³ *Michaelis Pselli - orationes hagiographicae*, ed. E.A. Fisher, (Stuttgart-Leipzig, 1994).

⁴ Βίος και πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Αὐξεντίου τοῦ ἐν τῷ Βουνοῦ, *ibid.*, 6-94.

⁵ Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν Μεταφραστὴν κῦρ Συμεῶν, *ibid.*, 269-288.

⁶ "Τὸ ἐγκώμιον πρὸς τιμὴν τοῦ ἁγίου Παντελεήμονος BHG 1418c καὶ ὁ συντάκτης του," in S. Kotzabassi and G. Mavromatis (eds.), *Realia Byzantina*, (Berlin, 2009), 103-135.

⁷ É. Renauld, *Étude de la langue et du style de Michel Psellos*, (Paris, 1920).

⁸ G. Böhlig, *Untersuchungen zum rhetorischen Sprachgebrauch der Byzantiner mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Schriften des Michael Psellos*, (Berlin, 1956).

⁹ I. Ševčenko, "Levels of Style in Byzantine Prose," in *JÖB* 31 (1981): 289-312.

¹⁰ J. Ljubarskij, *Michail Psell. Lichnost' i tvorchestvo. K istorii vizantiiskogo predgumanizma*, (Moscow, 1978).

¹¹ A. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters. The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos*, (South Bend IN, 2006), 41-45.

“securely” Psellos¹², while Kaltsogianni¹³ is less certain. Because the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* has expanded to include medieval texts, the prospect of assessing an anonymous work in terms of an author’s unconscious stylistic habits has become more possible, based on solid philological evidence. Patterns of favored word usage and habitual word collocations can be examined and tested with the aid of the *TLG*. However, formulating productive searches for this rich resource is a significant challenge.

The remaining six hagiographical *logoi* in the Teubner hagiography collection illustrate Westerink’s recognition that the category “holy subjects” extends beyond saints’ lives and into broader areas of Psellos’ thinking, such as reflections upon events celebrated in feasts of the Church. Four orations commemorate scriptural and liturgical events, i.e. the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple,¹⁴ the Annunciation,¹⁵ the Beheading of John the Baptist,¹⁶ and the Crucifixion,¹⁷ while an unusual historical oration describes the miraculous intervention of the Archangel Michael during Heraclius’ Persian campaign.¹⁸ This oration testifies to the power of holy individuals to affect historical events and to leave physical evidence (the immovable military cross in the Archangel’s church) as evidence of their supernatural activity. The Blachernae Oration is also an unusual item among hagiographical *logoi*.¹⁹ In it Psellos turns his attention to the functioning of the Byzantine court system and proposes a new method to decide vexed legal cases using a miracle in place of the normal and corruptible system of Byzantine courts and judges with special jurisdictions. The oration becomes in effect a detailed discussion of contemporary Byzantine legal practice and theory, which Psellos accomplishes by quoting and explicating fifteen separate *Basilics* related to legal procedure and jurisdiction of courts at lines 498-603. Twice Psellos interrupts his catalogue of relevant laws to quote his own legal writings verbatim—*On Divination by Shoulder Bones and Bird Flight*²⁰ at lines 522-524 and *On the Division of Legal Actions*²¹ at lines 579-583. The oration demonstrates either that Psellos had near total recall for

¹² S. Paschalidis, “The Hagiography of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” in S. Efthymiades (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, I, (Farnham, Surrey-Burlington VT, 2011), 148.

¹³ E. Kaltsogianni, *BMCR* 2010.06.07 (online, consulted March 13, 2017).

¹⁴ Λόγος, ὄτε προσηνέχθη ἡ ὑπεραγία θεοτόκος εἰς τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων, ed. E. Fisher, *Orationes*, 258-266.

¹⁵ Λόγος εἰς τὸν Χαριτισμὸν, ed. E. Fisher, *Orationes*, 96-113.

¹⁶ Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν ἀποτομὴν τοῦ πανευφήμου προφήτου προδρόμου καὶ βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου, ed. E. Fisher, *Orationes*, 290-323.

¹⁷ Λόγος εἰς τὴν σταύρωσιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ed. E. Fisher, *Orationes*, 116-198.

¹⁸ Λόγος εἰς τὰ θαύματα τοῦ ἀρχιστρατήγου Μιχαήλ, ed. E. Fisher, *Orationes*, 231-256.

¹⁹ Λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ ἐν Βλαχέρναις γεγονότι θαύματι, ed. E. Fisher, *Orationes*, 200-229.

²⁰ “Michaelis Pselli, Περὶ ὠμοπλατοσκοπίας καὶ οἰωνοσκοπίας, ex codice Vindobonensi,” ed. R. Hercher, in *Philol.* 8 (1853): 166-168.

²¹ G. Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos*, (Munich, 1973), 288-291.

laws and his own legal writings or that these texts stood near his writing table as he worked. Psellos' famous description in this oration of the miraculous lifting of the Virgin's veil at the Blachernae Church, so well known to art historians, is incidental to Psellos' primary purpose.²²

In short, Westerink's rather elastic category "Orations on Holy Subjects" reflects his recognition that the Byzantines admitted spiritual reasoning into areas we consider secular, i.e. military history and legal theory. Teubner's division of Psellos' writings into volumes classified by generic subject matter is a useful organizational method, but it does not represent Byzantine categories of thought. For example, Hinterberger recognizes hagiographical elements in Psellos' funeral oration for the abbot Nicholas and notes strong affinities between Psellos' biography of his mother and a traditional hagiographical *vita*.²³ Kaldellis moreover sees an ironic comment on the genre of hagiography in Psellos' *Chronographia*. Although the rather eccentric *Chronographia* belongs to the genre of history, in it Psellos praises the notoriously self-indulgent Constantine IX Monomachos as holy or "divine" (*theios*); in Kaldellis' view, Psellos may be subtly questioning the concept of a saint and warning his Byzantine audience to read with a skeptical eye his own heavily rhetorical hagiographical essays.²⁴ Similarly, in a much admired analysis of Psellos' *Vita Auxentii*, Kazhdan noted the striking and even amusing parallels Psellos inserted to make the saint resemble the hagiographer himself (e.g., both loved to sing, and both had three close friends in Constantinople).²⁵

Despite Teubner's rather procrustean classification system, critical editions of Psellos' works are essential to our field, and Teubner makes editions available not only in individual volumes but also in a complete online set that may be purchased at awe-inspiring cost. For libraries reluctant to sacrifice shelf space and for readers without ready access to a scholarly library, the online collection is a great step forward. Time will tell where it leads us. An emerging online venue for Byzantine texts and translations is the stable URL, where length is not a consideration and additions and corrections are easy for an author to make once a text is uploaded. Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies has given an electronic home to a few Byzantine texts, such as my own heavily

²² E. Fisher, "Michael Psellos on the 'Usual' Miracle at Blachernae, the Law, and Neoplatonism," in D. Sullivan, E. Fisher, and S. Papaioannou (eds.), *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, (Leiden-Boston, 2012), 187-204.

²³ M. Hinterberger, "Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres. Some Critical Observations," in S. Efthymiades (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, II, (Farnham, Surrey-Burlington VT, 2014), 39.

²⁴ A. Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia*, (Leiden-Boston, 1999), 135-136.

²⁵ A. Kazhdan, "Hagiographical Notes, 3. An Attempt at Hagio-autobiography: The Pseudo-Life of 'Saint' Psellos?," in *Byzantion* 53 (1983): 546-556.

annotated translations of Psellos' encomion for Symeon Metaphrastes and of his oration on the Blachernae miracle.²⁶ A Google search yields the site readily, where the translation is available in full at no cost to readers and without restriction on the author regarding subsequent print publication. In fact, in addition to publication on the Center's site, these two orations are included in a volume of translations from Notre Dame University Press dedicated to Psellos' writings on literature and art.²⁷ Due to the constraints of publishing hard copy, readers of the Notre Dame translations are referred to the notes in the online publication for the Greek text of passages that are discussed in detail in the print publication.

I have also found that online publication offers an editor or translator useful opportunities unavailable once a text is published in hard copy. The Center for Hellenic Studies allowed me to make a few changes to my translation and to include as a frontispiece on the site a high quality digital image of Psellos accompanied by his eye-rolling student Michael VII Doukas who requested the oration.²⁸ The image cost nothing either to me or to the online publisher but adds a visually arresting imperial context for Psellos' work.

Online publication also provides resources that assist scholars greatly in producing a critical edition. Online manuscript catalogues are searchable, and manuscripts themselves are gradually coming online. Thus the tasks of locating and collating manuscripts is becoming easier, more efficient, and available to more scholars. Also, the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* has expedited immeasurably the task of compiling a *corpus fontium*, as I have experienced in the course of editing, annotating, and translating Psellos' texts on the Blachernae miracle and on Symeon the Metaphrast. When I began editing these texts for Teubner, the *TLG* was available only in its very early stages, and a search of the full corpus could take hours. Nevertheless, pure gold was to be found. One of my fellow Teubner editors, for instance, was astonished to learn that the *TLG* had enabled me to identify the phrase "nets of <rhetoical> delights" (τοῖς τῶν χαρίτων θηράτροις) as a reference to Longinus' fragmentary *Ars rhetorica* in the encomion to Symeon Metaphrastes (lines 262-263). Without the *TLG*, an editor relied upon verbal memory to identify references like this. However excellent, human memory is not a resource able to match the limitless potential of the *TLG*. As classical works first entered the *TLG* canon, we recognized the broad range of authors read and quoted by learned Byzantine authors like Psellos; with the addition of medieval texts, we continue to learn what Byzantine authors were familiar to Psellos and

²⁶ <http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5584>

²⁷ *Michael Psellos on Literature and Art: A Byzantine Perspective on Aesthetics*, ed. C. Barber and S. Papaioannou, (Notre Dame IN, 2017).

²⁸ Wikimedia Commons under Public Domain Mark 1.0

his contemporaries. For example, in the encomion to Symeon Metaphrastes (line 64) Psellos displays his own wide reading and vast command of obscure vocabulary by using the previously hapax προσεμβιβάζειν, a rare word evidently coined by the patriarch Nicolaus I Mysticus in his correspondence with Pope Anastasius III (Ep. 32 line 307).²⁹ The future promises further revelations, as editions of Byzantine theological writings become available and enter the *TLG* database.

Although Google Scholar enables scholars to locate editions and translations rapidly and Google Books makes sections of valuable texts available online, we have not solved the problem of simultaneous labor on the same text by two scholars unknown to one another. The online registry of editions and translations in progress maintained by Alexandra Bucossi is an attempt to address this frustrating and wasteful situation, provided that individual scholars make use of it (greek.editions.translations@gmail.com). A stable URL as home for Bucossi's valuable initiative is highly desirable.

Finally, I would like to outline the direction of my own current research in the hagiographical writings of Psellos. As an extraordinary intellectual and accomplished rhetorician, Psellos is not a typical hagiographer, although Paschalidis notes that he shares interests and qualities with other 11th-century scholars like Xiphilinos, Theophylact of Ohrid, and Mauropous, and further that both Psellos and Mauropous entered the lively controversy that denied the possibility of recognizing new, i.e. contemporary, saints.³⁰ Psellos contested this view by composing not only an encomion of Symeon the Metaphrast but also a canon for the Metaphrast, thus creating a sort of festal resource for celebrating a new saint. Was this aspect of Psellos' hagiographical activity an initiative to gain sainthood for Symeon Metaphrastes, a scholar like Psellos himself? Since there was no formal route of canonization in Byzantium, this question has brought me to examine what process enabled the Byzantine Church to recognize a new saint. In the case of St. Symeon the Metaphrast, the process begun by Psellos took several centuries and very nearly foundered.

Michel Kaplan has sketched the qualities that characterize a saint by analyzing some ten saints of the Middle Byzantine period.³¹ His work suggests the template for sanctity that existed in the consciousness of Psellos and his contemporaries.

²⁹ *Nicholas I, Patriarch of Constantinople, Letters*, ed. R. J. H. Jenkins and L. G. Westerink, CFHB 6, (Washington DC, 1973).

³⁰ S. Paschalidis, "Hagiography," 153-154.

³¹ M. Kaplan, "Les normes de la sainteté à byzance (VI^e-XI^e siècle)," in *Mentalités: histoire des cultures et des sociétés* 4 (1990) : 15-34, esp. 29-31.

First, a saint was a man or woman considered to be the recipient of extraordinary gifts from God and therefore the object of attention from followers; among these followers was an associate who recorded the events and miracles occurring during the saint's virtuous life and even after his or her blessed death. Second, a public tradition honored and venerated the saintly person persistently through time by such means as the formation of a cult, pilgrimage to the holy gravesite, or commemoration during the celebration of the liturgy. Third and finally, the status of a saint merited the establishment of a special day of commemoration recognized in the liturgy of the Church and recorded in one of three forms of chronological records that contained material associated with the saints—the *menologion*, or collection of saints' lives; the *menaion* or collection of liturgical texts used in celebrating individual saints' feast days; and finally, the Synaxarion of Constantinople that consisted of a series of short notices describing the subject of each feast celebrated in the Great Church of St. Sophia. It must be noted that some figures achieved extraordinary status near to sainthood but never received that final recognition in the Synaxarion of Constantinople. The martyred 10th-century emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) is such a figure. Although the day of his death was commemorated for a time with a special office or *akolouthia*,³² his cult gained no official recognition in the Orthodox Church and soon disappeared.³³

The compilation of the Synaxarion of Constantinople in the mid-10th century effectively closed the roster of saints accepted as genuine by Orthodoxy.³⁴ Within a generation, the ecclesiastical hierarchy firmly and definitively rebuffed a local attempt to establish Eleutherios of Paphlagonia as a saint; during the same period the Patriarch and Synod of Constantinople examined and condemned Symeon the New Theologian for treating his master Symeon the Studite as a "new" saint.³⁵ Although Psellos' encomion and canon provided the faithful with a liturgical means to honor Symeon Metaphrastes, neither did the two works survive together in the manuscript tradition nor were they sufficient to gain Symeon Metaphrastes recognition as a saint of Orthodoxy.

The encomion apparently achieved some limited popularity, for it survived in two manuscripts of the 13th century, one of the 14th and one of the 15th.

³² Anonymous, "Office inédit en l'honneur de Nicéphore Phocas," ed. L. Petit, *BZ* 13 (1904): 328-420.

³³ G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, (Cambridge UK-New York, 2003), 149-154 and most recently V. Deroche, "L'âge d'or de l'hagiographie: nouvelles formes et nouvelles tendances," in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, (Belgrade, 2016), 35-39, esp. 39 n. 17.

³⁴ N. Oikonomides, "How To Become a Saint in Eleventh Century Byzantium," in E. Kountoura-Galake (ed.), *Hoi heroes tes Orthodoxes Ekklesias*, (Athens, 2004), 473-491.

³⁵ A. Rigo, "Le cas de deux nouveaux saints aux X^e-XI^e siècle: contrôle et repression de la hiérarchie," in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, (Belgrade, 2016), 41-58.

However, Psellos' canon for the Metaphrast barely survived at all, preserved only in a single manuscript of the late 13th or early 14th century as a part of an *akolouthia* for the Metaphrast.³⁶ My current project seeks to determine whether the *akolouthia* incorporating Psellos' canon might be a composition of the Palaeologan period and in effect augmented Psellos' compositions in order to provide a more robust resource for celebrating a feast in honor of Symeon the Metaphrast. The process of gaining holy status for the secular scholar Symeon Metaphrastes extended into the mid-15th century, when Mark Eugenikos composed the entry for St. Symeon Metaphrastes (November 28) in the Synaxarion of Constantinople³⁷ and established in the calendar of the Great Church a feast honoring the "new" saint presented by Psellos some four centuries earlier.

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³⁶ *Michael Psellus*, "Poem 23. Officium Methaphrastae", *Poemata* ed. L. G. Westerink, (Stuttgart-Leipzig, 1992), 277-285.

³⁷ Μάρκου Εύγενικοῦ, συναξάριον Συμεῶν Μεταφραστοῦ, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Μαυρογορδάτειος Βιβλιοθήκη. Ἀνέκδοτα ἑλληνικά*, (Constantinople, 1884), 100-101. The Hathi Trust has posted this entire book online for subscribers. Evelina Mineva has edited Eugenikos' Synaxarion entry in Evelina Mineva, *To hymnographiko ergo tou Markou Eugenikou*, (Athens, 2004), 407-409.

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