

Call for Papers

Novel Saints. Novel, Hagiography and Romance from the 4th to the 12th Century

International Conference in Ghent, Het Pand, Thursday 22nd-Saturday 24th November 2018

Confirmed Keynote Speakers: Prof. Kate Cooper, Royal Holloway, University of London

Prof. Stratis Papaioannou, Brown University

The early history of the novel has not been written yet. The oldest representatives of this genre (also called ‘ancient romances’ in scholarship) were written in Latin and Greek in the first few centuries of the Common Era. Often, scholars have observed an interim period between the fourth and twelfth centuries from which no novels are said to have been preserved, and identify a so-called ‘re-emergence’ of the genre in Byzantium. Building on recent research that studies hagiography as *literature*, this conference of the ERC project *Novel Saints* (Ghent University) aims to challenge this view by studying hagiography as a continuation of novelistic literature during the so-called ‘dark age’ of the novel. A number of texts from this period have already received attention for their novelistic qualities, such as Ps-Nilus’ *Narrationes*, Ammonius’ *Report on the Slaughter of the Monks of Sinai and Rhaithou*, the *Historia Monachorum*, Palladius’ *Historia Lausiaca*, *The Martyrdom of Galaction & Episteme*, Jerome’s *Lives* of Malchus, Paul and Hilarion, and the Syriac *Life of Abraham and his Niece Mary*. Moreover, both ancient fiction and some of these (and other) hagiographical narratives are known to have impacted medieval romance (e.g. *Metiochus and Parthenope* as a source for the Persian love romance *Vamiq & Adbrā* and the *Life of Saint Eustace/Placidus* for chivalric romance in the West).

The conference aims to examine the persistence of ancient novelistic material in hagiography and instances of continuity of novelistic and/or hagiographical strands in medieval romances in the West, Byzantium and Persia. We invite papers exploring intersections between two or three of the following narrative traditions:

- 1) ancient novelistic fiction (broadly defined), including Greek novels (both extant and fragmentarily preserved; e.g. *Ninus*, Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*, etc.), Latin novels (Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, Petronius’ *Satyrica* and the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*), Jewish novels (e.g. the *Book of Tobit*, *Joseph and Aseneth*) and so-called ‘fringe novels’ or ‘novelistic biographies’ (i.e. the *Alexander Romance*, the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the *Pseudo-Clementines*, Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, the *Life of Aesop*, etc.); and/or
- 2) hagiography from the fourth to the twelfth century, including Lives, Martyr Acts, hagiographical romances, and edifying tales written in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopian and Coptic; and/or
- 3) medieval romance in the West, Byzantium or Persia.

Of particular interest are contributions that study:

- ancient fiction as a literary model in hagiography alongside other models (such as the Bible);
- different forms and types of the impact/relevance of the novelistic tradition on/for hagiographical texts: intertextuality, direct or indirect borrowings, common narrative techniques, generic *topoi*, etc.;
- conceptualizations of overlaps and similarities between novels and hagiography. Which theoretical concepts, tools or frameworks are useful to do so?

- evidence of the circulation of ancient fiction in Oriental Christian literatures like Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopian, and Coptic, which can lend support to discussions of the impact of the ancient novel on the hagiographical production in those languages;
- late antique and medieval literary practice: the role(s) of schools, classical education, ancient rhetoric, *metaphrasis* for the composition of hagiographical texts; hagiographers as students or readers of ancient prose fiction; etc.;
- implications of persistences of ancient pagan or Jewish fiction into Christian hagiography (or vice versa in the case of later novels, such as Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*): religious implications, literary implications; implications for the concepts of fiction at work, etc.;
- the continuation of hagiographical narrative traditions into medieval Western and Eastern romance;
- generic awareness: which are markers in hagiography that proclaim awareness of the novelistic tradition, indicate affinity with and/or a distance from it (or vice versa in the case of later novels)? To what extent and how do writers of novels, hagiography and/or romance present themselves as belonging to a particular genre and/or narrative tradition?
- the usefulness of the concept of genre: how useful is our current generic classification, labelling texts as 'novels,' 'romance' or otherwise, and establishing and promoting distinctions between 'novels,' 'romance,' 'fictional biography' and 'hagiography;' between 'core novels,' 'fringe novels;' 'family romances,' and 'hagiographical romances;' between 'epic passions' and 'historical passions,' etc.? Are there alternative ways to think about and study these texts and their interrelations?

Please send your abstracts to Flavia Ruani (flavia.ruani@ugent.be) by 15 April 2018

Abstracts (350 words max, in English or French) should include name, title of proposed paper, affiliation, and position. Notification about participation will be emailed by **15 June 2018**.

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