Merve Savaş

# DANGER IN THE BYZANTINE COUNTRYSIDE: A CASE STUDY OF GREGORY THE CELLARER'S *THE LIFE OF LAZAROS OF MT. GALESION*

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Central European University

Budapest

June 2020

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by

Merve Savaş

(Turkey)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Thesis Supervisor

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External Reader

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I, the undersigned, **Merve Savaş**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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# Abstract

This study intends to reread Gregory the Cellarer's *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion* to trace the dangers common people faced in the rural Byzantium, while it attempts to explore the textual meaning and function of these dangers in the account. Divided into three main categories, it focuses on nature-related risks, corporeal threats, and societal dangers. This thesis argues that the Byzantine countryside was an insecure environment: people were exposed to and cause dangers, but also sought ways and means of solutions. The authorial motivation of Gregory to refer such problems is to contextualize the world around Lazaros and underscore his sanctity.

The first chapter addresses the wilderness and problems (both physical and spiritual) it poses to the rural community, sheds light into the particular association between the wild landscape and the intervention of evil and suggests that the material environment is used to underscore the role of the holy man as saviour. The second chapter focuses on corporeal problems and physical vulnerability. It examines the ways in which people with ailing bodies sought cures and remedies, and subsequently, it explores the attitudes towards death. The third chapter delineates the social relations characterised by hostility. It emphasizes the representations of the local hostility towards the outsider, the threat the community poses to its own members, i.e., between neighbors and fellow peasants, and lastly the social tension between the lay and the monastic communities.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to my supervisors Baukje van den Berg and Volker Menze for their invaluable guidance and generous support from the stage of idea to the very end. I would like to thank Alice Choyke and Stephanos Efthymiadis for their insightful suggestions on my drafts. I would also like to thank Eszter Timar and Zsuzsa Reed for patiently editing my odd and cumbersome sentences. Last but not least, I owe special thanks to my mother, Bahar, and my aunt, Elif, for their continuous support and encouragement.

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# Introduction

The author of the *Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion*, Gregory the Cellarer, rhetorically asks, "Who, anyway, would have the strength to tell in detail, case by case, about those who used to go up to Lazaros every day and receive from him appropriate healing and release from grievous <woes> that were overwhelming them?"[1] The question of what these grievous woes that the holy father soothed might possibly help us in reconstructing the quotidian life of the agrarian communities in eleventh-century Byzantium. My aim is to explore everyday life stressors, dangers, and risks that people faced, as presented in the *Life*, from the intersection of socio-historical and textual perspectives. I use three main categories: nature, body, and community. By doing this, the present study analyses problems that beset common people and how the author employs them as a literary tool.

This thesis suggests that the hagiographic narratives, especially works which mirror Byzantine society are categorically literary and provide crucial information about social history. The *Life of Lazaros* is thus two-sided: it is both a literary work and a reflection of the socio-historical reality. Secondly, the central thesis of this study is that the countryside in eleventh-century Byzantium was fraught with natural and societal dangers that pose physical, mental, and spiritual risks to the rural population. In this dangerous environment, ordinary people were not only suffering victims but also stressors. Moreover, they were not merely exposed to problems but formed different mechanisms and strategies to cope with them. The holy man, with his mediatory role in society, was one of them. Lastly, this study argues that



[1] Gregory the Cellarer, *The Life of St. Lazaros of Mt. Galesion* 123; trans. by Richard P. Greenfield. The standard edition of the text is, Gregory the Cellarer, *The Life of St. Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint*, trans. Richard P. Greenfield (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000). Throughout this thesis, I use the translation by Greenfield.

Gregory, as a hagiographer, employs these problems—natural, corporeal, and societal alike—as a literary instrument for his ultimate authorial goal: the sanctification of Lazaros.

Before elaborating on these three-sided everyday problems, I aim to introduce the author, Gregory the Cellarer, the textual and historical aspects of his *Life of Lazaros*, and his protagonist, Lazaros. Next, I address the literature about the social history of the Byzantine countryside, and recent methodological discussions and approaches.

## The author, his text, and the holy man

Little is known about Gregory the Cellarer, the author of the *Life*; and the information we have is largely based on his own work.[2] Originally from Constantinople, Gregory became a monk in the monastery at Galesion in the region of Ephesos, where he also worked as a *trapezopoios* and cellarer in the early to mid-eleventh century.[3] What Martin Hinterberger states about Peter the Monk, the author of the *Life of St. Ioannikios*, may also apply to Gregory, since Gregory, too, is a "younger contemporary of the saint, who lived long enough in his hero's immediate environment to be able to base himself on his own experiences with the saint, on the stories told by the saint and by his other older companions in compiling his text."[4] This close relation, as Greenfield notes, makes Gregory's vita as "by far the longest, most detailed, and most trustworthy source on the saint."[5] Gregory wrote his work around the year 1057, shortly after the death of Lazaros.



[2] Based on the style and language of his work, Greenfield suggests that Gregory received a moderate level of education before he joined the monastic community. Richard P. Greenfield, "Introduction," in *The Life of St. Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint*, Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 53.

[3] Greenfield, "Introduction," 51.

[4] Martin Hinterberger, "The Byzantine Hagiographer and His Text," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 224.

[5] There are four other sources dealing with the holy man. Among them, as Greenfield underlines, the thirteenth-century reworking by Gregory of Cyprus, patriarch of Constantinople, is of value, as the other shorter accounts are based on his work. Greenfield, "Introduction." 1. For the metaphrastic hagiography see, Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Introduction," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis, vol. 2 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 11. Christian Høgel, "Symeon Metaphrastes and the Metaphrastic Movement," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 181–96. The main vita

Gregory's account is exceptionally laden with circumstantial details about the rural communities and everyday practices in the countryside of eleventh-century Byzantium.[6] Stressing the social-historical value of the *Life*, Greenfield states that "it is an unusually accessible, instructive, and refreshingly vivid piece of hagiography that not only provides an enormous wealth of material on Lazaros himself, but also much fascinating information concerning Byzantine society in the first half of the eleventh century."[7] The *Life*'s geographical focus is largely the region of Ephesos, thus it provides us with invaluable insights into the Ephesian ruralscape.[8] It depicts several different settlements in Asia Minor and the Holy Land where Lazaros travelled before he settled in the region of Ephesos.[9] Constantinople too is not entirely ignored either in the narrative, even though allusions to the city are limited to a few references to letter correspondences, visitors coming from the City, and monks sent to the City for occasional tasks.[10]

As a part of the Byzantine hagiographical tradition, Gregory's account broadly follows the expectations and standardized characteristics of the genre. Its structure is modelled on the earlier examples, such as Athanasios's *The Life of Antony*, the founding text of hagiographic literature. It, therefore, contains numerous hagiographic *topoi* such as the miraculous birth of

by Gregory, which was translated into English by Greenfield, was edited by Hippolyte Delehaye in the year 1910 on the basis of a copy in a fourteenth-century manuscript in Mount Athos. Greenfield, "Introduction." 49.

6 Our knowledge of the Byzantine countryside is mainly based on a combination of written sources such as hagiographic data, law texts, and military manuals and environmental studies, landscape studies, and archaeology. For the legal texts, Mike Humphreys, *The Laws of the Isaurian Era: The Ecloga and Its Appendices* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017). For a representative list of studies on environmental studies and landscape studies, see Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in Late Byzantium Art, Archaeology and Ethnography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Falko Daim and Henriette Baron, eds., *A Most Pleasant Scene and an Inexhaustible Resource: Step Towards a Byzantine Environmental History* (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2017).

7 Greenfield, "Introduction." 49.

8 For the region of Ephesos, see Sabine Ladstätter and Paul Magdalino, eds., *Ephesos from Late Antiquity until the Middle Ages. Proceedings of the International Conference at the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations* (Wien: Holzhausen Verlag, 2019).

9 For the map of Lazaros's travels, see *The Life of St. Lazaros*, xx.

10 The habitual correspondence between the author and his mother living in Constantinople can be gleaned from some passages. Greenfield, "Introduction." 52. Gregory writes, "…I received a letter, sent to me by my mother…" *The Life of Lazaros* 67. For the continuity of the familial relations despite the ascetic ideal of the monastic family, see Alice-Mary Talbot, "The Byzantine Family and the Monastery," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44 (1990): 119-129. For the monks sent to Constantinople see, *The Life of Lazaros* 233.

the holy man, the separation from the family at a relatively early age, and an extraordinary childhood.[11]

The *Life* depicts an exceptional holy man who is both a pillar saint and a monastic, both itinerary and settled. Lazaros was born in the second half of the tenth century, around the 980s, in Meander, Asia Minor.[12] He began his religious education when he was six and was taught by priests and monks, including his own uncle Elias, in different monasteries in his hometown until he left for Attaleia, where he spent seven more years practicing monastic life. Travelling to the Holy Land, he joined the Lavra of St. Sabas and the monastery of St. Euthymios. Lazaros returned to Asia Minor around the year 1009 after the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and set his pillar in the region of Ephesos.[13] Afterwards, he moved to Mt. Galesion at the age of fifty-two. Spending the rest of his life there, Lazaros established three monasteries so that the area flourished by becoming an attractive pilgrimage site.[14] He eventually died in the Monastery of Resurrection at the age of eighty-six in 1053.

[11] See Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). On the other hand, the earlier examples of hagiographical literature are highly influenced by the classical panegyric. Its structure can be traced in the handbooks of *progymnasmata* and the treatises of Menander Rhetor, which were widely used in Byzantium as part of the educational system. In *On Epideictic Speeches II*, Menander outlines the ideal structure of the imperial oration, whose principles, such as the brief introduction of the family, the supernatural signs at the protagonist's birth, and the exceptional childhood, are often applied to the praise of holy men as well. See, Menander, *Menander Rhetor*, trans. Nigel Guy Wilson and Donald Andrew Russell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). Gregory, too, praises Lazaros' parents, Irene and Niketas, in a way characteristics to the genre by highlighting their piety: "His parents were not the sort who care very much about wealth or life's other deceits but rather those who live piously, self-sufficiently, and devoutly, and to put it like the apostle provide their nourishment by their own hands…" *The Life of Lazaros* 2. However, this ordinary family background does not hamper the miraculous birth of the holy man. Gregory states, "Lazaros emerged from his mother's womb, a light at once shone forth miraculously from heaven and filled the whole interior of the house with an indescribable flash of lightning." *The Life of Lazaros* 2. Furthermore, the childhood of the holy man is also depicted as remarkable accordingly: Lazaros as a child shows signs of piety, eloquence, and compassion. See *The Life of Lazaros* 3.

[12] Lazaros's birth name was Leo until he adopted his monastic name, Lazaros. Having monastic names beginning with the initial letter of the real name was a common practice in Byzantium. See Alice-Mary Talbot and Stamatina McGrath, "Monastic Onomastics," in *Monastères, Images, Pouvoirs Et Société À Byzance*, ed. Michel Kaplan, Byzantina Sorbonensia (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2016), 89–100.

[13] Lazaros, as a pillar saint, is part of the tradition of the *stylite* asceticism which is, beginning in the fifth century with Symeon the Stylite the Elder, a significant branch in Byzantine Christianity.

[14] See Andreas Külzer, "Roads and Routes. Communication Networks in the Hinterland of Ephesos," in *Ephesos from Late Antiquity until the Middle Ages. Proceedings of the International Conference at the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations*, ed. Sabine Ladstaetter and Paul Magdalino (Wien: Holzhausen Verlag, 2019), 149–60.

## Literature and Methodology

The Byzantine countryside has received much attention in modern scholarship, with various monumental works dedicated to its study.[15] As Kondyni recapitulates, however, the Byzantine village and peasantry have largely been investigated "as productive and consumption units, studied mainly with regards to their fiscal obligations, social status, and ability to produce agricultural good."[16] These studies are now complemented by the scholarly attention given to the social aspects of the rural community.[17] The present study ties in with this trend by exploring the historical experience of natural, corporeal, and societal dangers by common people in the countryside. Moreover, such an attempt to unveil socio-historical experiences is indispensably related to religion both in a historical and a textual sense.[18] That is, such

[15] For a representative but not exhaustive list of studies of the Byzantine countryside: Paul Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium from the Origins to the Twelfth Century: The Sources and Problems* (Galway: Galway University Press, 1979). Alexander Kazhdan, "The Peasantry," in *The Byzantines*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 43–73. Angeliki E. Laiou, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977). Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Byzantine Village (5th - 14th Century)," in *Economic Thought and Economic Life in Byzantium*, vol. XI, 2013, 31–54. Jacques Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 101–13. Anthony Bryer, "The Means of Agricultural Production: Muscle and Tools," in *The Economic History of Byzantium*, ed. Angeliki Laiou, vol. 1, 2002, 101–13. Michel Kaplan, "The Producing Population," in *The Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 143–67. Nikos Oikonomides, "The Social Structure of the Byzantine Countryside in the First Half of the Xth Century," *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 10, (1996): 105–25.

[16] Fotini Kondyli, "Meeting the Locals: Peasant Families in 13th-Century Lemnos," in *Liquid & Multiple: Individuals & Identities in the Thirteenth-Century Aegean*, ed. G. Saint-Guillain and D. Stathakopoulos (Paris: Centre de recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2012), 77–78.

[17] John Haldon, ed., *A Social History of Byzantium* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008). Especially, John Haldon, "Towards a Social History of Byzantium," in *The Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 1–30. Gerstel, *Rural Lives*. Sharon E. J. Gerstel, "Mapping the Boundaries of Church and Village Ecclesiastical and Rural Landscapes in the Late Byzantine Peloponnese," in *Viewing the Morea Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese* (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2013), 335–70. Leonora Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Fotini Kondyli, "Meeting the Locals," 75–90.

[18] From a historical perspective, Jerry Toner, in *Popular Culture in Ancient Rome*, which has inspired the present thesis, highlights the process of the Christianization of the popular culture in the later Roman Empire. He states that "religion had always been a critical component of the popular culture, framing and informing most aspects of the non-elite's life." Jerry Toner, *Popular Culture in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2013), 191. From a textual perspective, E. H. Carr's plausible argument, quoted in Peter Sarris, can be informative about the selective transmission of the historical text and its potential deceptiveness: "When I read in a modern history of the Middle Ages that the people of the Middle Ages were deeply concerned with religion, I wonder how we know this, and whether it is true. What we know of the facts of medieval history have almost all been selected for us by generations of chronicles who were professionally occupied in the theory and practice of religion, and who therefore thought it supremely important, and recorded everything relating to it, and not much else. The picture of the Russian peasantry as devoutly religious was destroyed by the revolution of 1917." Peter Sarris, "Restless Peasants and Scornful Lords: Lay Hostility to Holy Men and the Church in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, ed. Peter Sarris and Matthew Dal Santo (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2. John Haldon provides a good example of how the non-religious can

experiences are not intended to be recorded, one should thus trace it indirectly in the existing sources, which are primarily written within the religious context. The hagiographic genre is one of them and offers us an opportunity to undertake such investigation since the holy man is located in the centre of social relations especially in the countryside.[19]

Hagiographical literature has long been studied as a source for the social history of Byzantium. Peter Brown notes that the hagiography "provided the social historian with most of what he knows of the life of the average man in eastern Europe."[20] Ihor Ševčenko underlines the significance of the hagiographical sources, stating "the narrative historical sources, largely centered on Constantinople, and the court rhetoric, centered on the palace, leave us with a picture of Byzantine society in which Constantinople, the head, looms large and everything else, the tail, appears insignificant."[21] Compared to other genres such as histories and chronicles, hagiographical material is more likely to present the common man in the provincial landscape. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that historical experience is easily attainable.

The last decades saw a lively discussion about historical methodology and the interpretation of historical sources, especially with the influence of the linguistic turn.[22] The relation between language and historical reality was criticized, and the textual reality and social logic of the text were highlighted. The critique of the traditional historiographical methods



be traced within primarily religious texts. Haldon explores the concept of "anti-social behaviour," which in fact did not exist in the Byzantine writing. Yet, he aptly suggests that this could have been expressed rather indirectly within religious discourse through "the notions of ungodliness and dishonour." John Haldon, "Everyday Life in Byzantium: Some Problems of Approach," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 10, no. 1 (1986): 65.

19 For the classical study on the holy man as a mediator in Late Antique society see, Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101. See also Sergei Hackel, ed., *The Byzantine Saint* (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

20 Brown, "The Rise and Function," 80.

21 Ihor Ševčenko, "Constantinople Viewed from the Eastern Provinces in the Middle Byzantine Period," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979): 713.

22 Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004). Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn,'" *American Society of Church History* 67 (1998): 1–31. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990): 59–86.

finds an echo in the field of Byzantine Studies as well. This fruitful discussion is essentially related to the present study concerning the source analysed, questions posed, and the social group examined in this study. To what extent can we succeed in retrieving the historical experience of ordinary people through such literary sources as hagiography?[23] Due to the gap between the modern historian and the past lives as well as the nature of the texts, these kinds of seemingly simple questions are recurrently asked by historians such as John Haldon and Susan R. Holman, to name but a few.[24]

The answer to this question seems to depend on what we look for and what we avoid, in other words, the ways in which we approach the historical material. Anthony Kaldellis suggests a middle way between traditional scholarship, which considers the text by taking it at face value with little or no criticism, and the "doctrinaire nihilism," that rejects the idea of the historical reality outside of the text. Instead, for hagiographic narrative, Kaldellis proposes "to differentiate between what we are being asked to believe and what authenticating details—that is, claims that we know are or well could be true—are being deployed to persuade us."[25] What do these authenticating details offer to historians? Michel Kaplan and Eleonora Kountoura-Galaki aptly ask, "how can they go beyond the mere gathering of realia?"[26] John Haldon underlines the necessity of a "structural, critical, and interpretational framework" that might provide a tool to surpass the opacity of the historical evidence.[27] Robin Lane Fox also suggests

[23] For the historiography of theoretical discussion in the field, see John Haldon, "'Jargon' vs. 'the Facts'? Byzantine History-Writing and Contemporary Debates," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 9, no. 1 (1984): 95–132.

[24] Susan R. Holman asks, "recognising that we view these individuals through both their and our contemporary interpretive reflections, one may still ask (without being unreasonably simplistic) what were their daily life experiences?" Susan R. Holman, "Constructed and Consumed: The Everyday Life of the Poor in 4th C. Cappadocia," in *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity*, ed. William Bowden, Adam Gutteridge, and Carlos Machado, vol. 3.1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 443. Similarly, John Haldon, for the study of everyday life in Byzantium, asks, "is it, anyway, possible or worthwhile asking questions about everyday life in such a remote society?" John Haldon, "Everyday Life in Byzantium," 52.

[25] Anthony Kaldellis, "The Study of Women and Children: Methodological Challenges and New Directions," in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (London: Routledge, 2012), 65.

[26] Michel Kaplan and Eleonora Kountoura-Galaki, "Economy and Society in Byzantine Hagiography: Realia and Methodological Questions," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 389–418.

[27] Haldon, "Everyday Life," 60.

comparing and contrasting the material with the "external evidence" in order to understand if "transitional events" are the invention of the author to support his narrative.[28]

Catia Galatariotou suggests approaching literary sources with a three-level reading to decipher different layers of the text: factual reality, cultural realities, and personal reality. In her study on travel accounts in the twelfth century, she explicates her methodological approach:

> These travelers' accounts have been combed by modern scholars in search of "objective" information reflecting factual reality. On the other hand, some scholars have also recognized that the information transmitted through such accounts may well not be factually correct or exclusively preoccupied with the recording of factual reality, but that up to a point they also reflect *cultural realities*. Within any given culture, the factual reality is mediated, as it were, through the system of ideologies in that culture; what emerges after this largely unconscious process is a perceived reality, which is no longer factual reality pure and simple but a collectively held interpretation of it. Correspondingly, a literary text—*any* literary text—reflects perceptions of reality which though founded upon elements of factual reality, are built with the symbolic bricks and mortar of assumptions, attitudes, and mentalities collectively held by members of the culture in which the text was produced. Furthermore, apart from the levels of factual and cultural realities, yet another, third level of reality, exists in texts: this is the level of *personal reality,* which refers to the subjective, individual perception of the author. At this level, the text acts as a vehicle which the author uses—whether consciously or unconsciously—to express primarily his or her own subjective, personal views.[29]

As a response to Galatariotou's three-partite reading, Margaret Mullett draws attention to the "literary context, generic discourse and the horizon of expectations of the textual community," and suggests underscoring the textual reality.[30]

For the genre of hagiography, specifically, "surpassing the opacity of the historical evidence," requires to be mindful of the genre. Hagiography is literature and, thus, it requires literary analysis in order to deconstruct the textual agenda of the author, the structure and fabric



[28] For Fox's approach to the Life of St. Daniel, see Robin Lane Fox, "The Life of Daniel in Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Lit. of the Roman Empire," in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, ed. Edwards Swain, M. J. Edwards, and Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 175–225.
[29] Catia Galatariotou, "Travel and Perception in Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 222–223.
[30] Margaret Mullett, "In Perils on the Sea: Travel Genres and the Unexpected," in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. Ruth Macrides, 10 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 283–84.

of the genre, and common literary tropes. Concerning the historical exploitation of hagiographic literature, Patrick Geary notes,

> While investigating the social function of hagiography, one must never forget the essential literary nature of these texts. Understanding the formal components and traditions of this literary genre is an essential requirement for proper historical exploitation of hagiography. And a primary aspect of this literature is that it is, in part, consciously propaganda.[31]

Likewise, in their study on the study of social and economic history through hagiographic texts, Kaplan and Kountoura-Galaki underline the authorial motivation and emphasize the significance of the contextualizing the text:

> Hagiography is an essential source for social history, but it must be used very cautiously. The most important thing is not the saint himself or herself: hagiographers are not attempting to tell what happened in reality, but to show their protagonists to be saintly. What is crucial for any appreciation of a hagiographical text is to know who wrote it and when, i.e., under what circumstances (…) We should always bear in mind that, if a hagiographer seldom had any idea about or gave a thought to the economy, a word which clearly meant something else to him, he always had his own view of what society was or should be.[32]

Charis Messis aptly suggests focusing on "the degrees and techniques of a text's novelisation, more specifically of the ways in which the otherwise strict and standardised forms of hagiographic narration are enriched with novelistic elements and literary strategies." He addresses essential plots elements of a novel such as the "exposure to countless dangers (kidnappings, attempted rapes, captivities, exposure to violent death)," and argues that "hagiographic narratives exist that are in dialogue with the ancient novel, drawing on its themes, whether directly or indirectly, and some even borrow its literary strategies," in a



31 Patrick Geary, "Saints, Scholars, and Society: The Elusive Goal," in *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, ed. Patrick Geary (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1994), 12.
32 Michel Kaplan and Eleonora Kountoura-Galaki, "Economy and Society in Byzantine Hagiography: Realia and Methodological Questions," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 406–407.

Christianized form.[33] The novelistic elements rather echoes in the personal profile of the holy man, and less in the minor figures that are more likely to ensure authenticity for the audience.

Stephanos Efthymiadis argues that the seventh-century hagiographer Leontios of Neapolis is "keen to record everyday reality and presented their heroes, especially the men, in the arena of daily life and oral culture," and explains this tendency by arguing that "vivid pictures of late antique society and descriptions of the conditions in which people lived are meant to set the saint into his or her social context and delineate his or her profile."[34] Likewise, Kaldellis argues, "they wanted to persuade people to believe in the saints' miracles, they recreated realistic settings with which readers could identify. This information often does not contribute in itself to any ideological agenda in these texts."[35] A similar remark is made by Kristina Sessa stating that "details that do not directly support that [ideological] framework" can be used "to derive knowledge about the daily experience of people."[36] My aim in this study is to trace this kind of indirect information in the *Life*.

This thesis analyses the *Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion* from the perspective of these minor figures that are more likely to function as literary vehicles for Gregory to create such a realistic environment. Hence, it does not attempt to unveil the experience, perception, and lifestyle of Lazaros but of the people around him. This study is divided into three main categories. Chapter one is concerned with predicaments associated with nature and risky environments, as well as with their textual representation in the *Life*. It examines threats of the natural landscape—mountains, gorges, and cliffs—and subsequently explores animals as a source of fear. It also addresses the association of darkness with insecurity and the perception



[33] Charis Messis, "Fiction and/or Novelisation in Byzantine Hagiography," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Volume II: Genres and Context*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis, trans. Anthony Kaldellis, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 315-316.
[34] Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Introduction," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis, vol. 2 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 8.
[35] Anthony Kaldellis, "The Study of Women and Children," 65.
[36] Kristina Sessa, *Daily Life in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 5.

of travel as a perilous undertaking. Chapter two deals with a variety of body-related dangers besetting people in rural life. It first focuses on the diseases and disabilities that threaten the physical well-being of people, and then looks at the ways in which people sought cures. Lastly, it discusses death and its perception. Chapter three discusses social threats in the agrarian community and presents social tension and hostility as characteristics of community life. It investigates the outsider as a source of hostility. It explores the enmity between the members of rural communities and aims to shed light on the mutual suspicion between laypeople and monks as well as their aversion towards each other.[37]



[37] Throughout this thesis, I use the terms of lay and monk for clarification purposes. I should note that this division is largely constructed, although it is commonly used in the literature. Mary Cunningham explains the symbolic division: "the term 'laity' (taken from laos, meaning 'people') refers to all members of the Christian community who are not ordained as clergy. Originally this included monastics, both male and female, who had dedicated their lives to God but were not authorized to administer the sacraments unless they had also been ordained to a clerical office. By the fourth or fifth centuries, however, monks began to be viewed as a separate category from clergy and laity; between the latter, a symbolic division became increasingly apparent. Mary Cunningham, "Clergy, Monks, and Laity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 534. On the terminology, see Rosemary Morris underlining the laity of the monks: "But monks did not constitute a separate caste within Byzantine society. They might follow different ways of life, or adhere to different spiritual priorities, but monks had all once been laymen and many laymen, after long years in the secular world, became monks. 'Abandoning the world' thus often meant not the abandonment of human relationships such as family feeling or friendship, or the discarding of claims to leadership in society, but the recasting of them in a different, spiritually orientated context." Rosemary Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), i.

# 1 Nature as a Threat

Gregory the Cellarer's *The Life of Lazaros* is laden with numerous pieces of circumstantial evidence about the everyday problems and living conditions of the people in the Byzantine countryside. One of the striking features of the *Life* is its extensive association of the life predicaments with nature, including natural landscapes, natural phenomena, living beings as well as the state of being in the natural environment.[38] The notion of nature-related danger is embedded in the narrative. Nature is most commonly associated with insecurity and vulnerability, which fuel a set of complex feelings such as unease, fear, and anxiety.[39] In the *Life*, it is frequently depicted as an unpleasant terrain of dangerous encounters, accidents, and death. This unfavourable aspect can be further traced in the ways in which a set of natural phenomena, such as darkness at night and fog in the winter, are employed in the narrative. Likewise, undertaking a journey is considered to be as a risky task associated with negative connotations when it requires the traveller to set foot in the natural landscape. Furthermore, it is no surprise that animals living in this habitat are also likely to be described in an adverse manner.

These characteristics of the account raise both historical and literary questions. What kinds of nature-related risks were people most likely to be exposed to in the Byzantine countryside? What can possibly be their textual purpose and role especially considering the authorial motivation and the characteristics of the genre? As an attempt to answer these



[38] For the world of nature as a common motif by the Early Christian writers see Henry Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art (Monographs on the Fine Arts)*, Monographs on the Fine Arts 43 (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), 17. See also Veronica Della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1.

[39] David Konstan cites Jean Delumeau's differentiation between fear and anxiety: "Fear, as Jean Delumeau puts it, 'relates to what is known,' whereas anxiety relates 'to the unknown.' Fear has a determinate object that one can confront. Anxiety does not and is experienced as a painful anticipation before a danger that is the more terrible for not being clearly identified." David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 149.

questions, by focusing on the theme of danger in connection with nature, I will investigate the ordinary life in the Byzantine countryside and explore the ways in which the *vita* employs it.

This chapter presents four main categories of nature-related hazards which are, directly or indirectly, a menace to people, ranging from quintessential stressors that cause constant unease and fear to stressors that jeopardize people's lives. The first category deals with rough terrains including mountains, gorges, and cliffs. The second one explores animals, including wild animals and insects, and the risks they posed. The third focuses on perils of night and darkness, while the fourth and last section is devoted to travel-related problems.

## 1.1 The Impassable Mountain

In this section, I will look at how the material world is employed in the *Life* in order to investigate how the natural world, especially the dangers it poses, is perceived. One of the most common themes in the *Life* is the perils of the natural landscape in general, and especially of mountains, cliffs, and gorges. First of all, Gregory depicts the world around the ordinary Ephesian peasant as surrounded by mountainous landscape. As Greenfield notes, "the journey up from Ephesos or its surrounding villages was a difficult and potentially dangerous one—the climb was steep, and there was at least one very narrow pass to negotiate."[40] From many aspects, as Gerstel suggests, mountain-heights provide safety for its inhabitants from many potential dangers.[41] Although the villages are generally located at the foot of mountains, as stated in the vita, the mountainous areas were not entirely free from inhabitation.[42]

The ways in which these landforms are described can, to a certain extent, be revealing about the Byzantines' perception of the wild landscape. The vast majority of the passages in

[40] Richard P. H. Greenfield, "Drawn to the Blazing Beacon: Visitors and Pilgrims to the Living Holy Man and the Case of Lazaros of Mount Galesion," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 216.
[41] Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 20.
[42] *The Life of Lazaros* 10. See also Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," 101–13.

which these sorts of natural landscape are used as a space emphasizes their wilderness, and hence inhospitality. Mountains are depicted to be "rocky and hard to climb," as well as "craggy and very rugged."[43] Along with the wilderness's obvious physical difficulties, it appears to be a menacing landscape in the Byzantine perception due to its associations with demonic intervention, which is reported to threaten the free will of especially, though not exclusively, monks.[44]

This perception of wilderness is not unprecedented as "for Greeks and Hebrews, wilderness, (…) lacked outer boundaries; it was an undefined space associated with death and disorder."[45] Analysing the textual usage of the hostile—specifically, abandoned—landscapes in hagiographic evidence, Timothy Gregory also argues that "the wilderness in these accounts plays a crucial role in the struggle and the conquest of the saint," adding that, "the authors of some of these biographies were fully aware of the tradition of Hellenistic romance, which frequently pictured the wilderness (forests, mountains, etc.) as the settings for miraculous acts."[46] It would be nothing but speculative to assume that Gregory was familiar with this literary tradition, nevertheless, he employs the wilderness throughout his account in the same way.

Wilderness in the *Life* appears to be a source of many deathly accidents of people, lay or monastic, either while working or passing through there. These occasions, from the textual perspective, serve to underscore the agency of Lazaros. We can begin with the examples of people encountering danger when they work.[47] As Gregory notes, a certain labourer working in the construction of the church of the Saviour was just about to die on the verge of a gorge as



[43] *The Life of Lazaros* 36.
[44] *The Life of Lazaros* 131.
[45] Della Dora, *Landscape*, 121.
[46] Timothy E. Gregory, "Narrative of the Byzantine Landscape," in *Byzantine Narrative* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 496.
[47] As Dennis notes "the workplace was full of hazards; again, saints' lives and miracle are very informative. Indeed, one could probably rely on the vitae of the saints to compile an essay on industrial accidents in Byzantium." George T. Dennis, "Death in Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 4.

he was picking and cutting wood.[48] The ways in which this story is conveyed are important because this narrative is given as an example for demonic attack. The evil, in order to lure the labourer, suddenly appears and frightens him near the gorge. But the labourer invokes Lazaros's blessing and overcomes the danger nonetheless.

Another work accident takes place when a group of peasants is harvesting honey on a cliff. This time, however, the mishap causes death. Their method of honey collecting is given in detail in the account as follows: "…after attaching a rope to the man who had told the father he was expert at this, began lowering him toward the cave. Before he reached it, however, the rope was cut through as if by somebody, <causing> the wretched man <to be> flung down the cliff."[49] This passage illuminates the details of everyday dangers the Byzantine villagers were exposed to and suggests the existence of the apicultural activity in the region. Furthermore, it is highly likely to have been penned with the intention of demonstrating how valuable and on-point Lazaros's advice was. Through this edifying story, Gregory implies one should take his advice seriously as the deceased villager was the one who ignored the holy man's warning.

The author also narrates that a certain young layman who decides to be tonsured in Lazaros's monastery was sent "by brother Ignatios (who is now our *trapezopoios*) to gather wild leeks," in an area called St. Onouphrios then, falling from the cliff, he died.[50] It is significant that both examples of deadly accidents taking place on the cliff are related to food gathering, either in a lay context or in a monastic context. Thus, one can perhaps assume that in the rural community, for the ordinary Byzantine, even providing food to supplement their diet was a risky work.



[48] *The Life of Lazaros* 41. Robert Ousterhout argues that "construction accidents are a topos in hagiographical literature." Robert Ousterhout, "Building Medieval Constantinople," *Proceedings of the Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference* 19/20 (1994-1996): 46.
[49] *The Life of Lazaros* 13.
[50] *The Life of Lazaros* 131.

There is no lack of examples of evil luring monks and putting their lives in danger around gorges. A monk, called John, experienced a demonic attack while he was praying "somewhere in the middle of the gorge,"[51] and terror-stricken due to the visions, he stopped going there. Gregory implies that this event was not an arbitrary accident as another monk, Antony, had also suffered similar problems there, attacked by evil.[52] Yet another similar experience can be found in the passage about the monk called Philippikos who "stupefied by the demons, ran to the steep <part> of the gorge."[53] Evil's temptation taking place in mountains, gorges, and cliffs, in the narrative, might go beyond a threat and might be life-threatening as seen in the story of the death of a certain old man on the cliff. As a result of evil temptation, the author explains, the man who decides to get tonsured was pushed to the cliff by evil and died there.[54] The passages mentioned above suggest a visible correlation between the demon and landscape, its intervention and wildernesses.

The potential dangers of the natural setting seem to be augmented when they are coupled with external factors such as cold and fog in winter. The vita narrates that the villagers in the region of Cappadocia warn Lazaros not to climb a certain mountain because "it was winter."[55] In winter, mountainous areas are not easily habitable, in certain cases, even not passable due to fog which reduces visibility.[56] In the account, when Lazaros does not take the villagers warning seriously and continues climbing the mountain, his journey is interrupted by fog so much that "even though he strained his eyes, he could not see to the right or left or anywhere else."[57]



[51] *The Life of Lazaros* 44.
[52] *The Life of Lazaros* 44.
[53] *The Life of Lazaros* 47.
[54] *The Life of Lazaros* 132.
[55] *The Life of Lazaros* 25.
[56] *The Life of Lazaros* 25.
[57] *The Life of Lazaros* 25.

Nevertheless, the Byzantine landscape does not always necessarily imply hostility.[58] We can begin with two main nuancing exceptions to this general picture drawn above. Although, mountainous areas instil fear and insecurity in people who are living nearby or passing through, from a certain point of view, though rarely in our account, wilderness can hold some advantages. The first example is based on religious motivations since remote and uninhabited space in the natural landscape was adequate for those who were seeking a sense of isolation. This wilderness, often symbolized with the desert in earlier hagiographic accounts such as the exemplary *Vita Antonii*, as a common literary *topos*, is associated with solitude, seclusion, and withdrawal from community.[59]

Lazaros, in his early years, followed the example of Paphnoutios, an ascetic monk who spent the last years of his life on Mt. Galesion, and climbed up there because the mountain "offers much tranquillity to the person who went there."[60] Thus, in the account, it seems that mountains are substituting the earlier symbolism of desert.[61] Moreover, the author occasionally underlines Lazaros' tendency for withdrawal, which supposedly functions to balance his open and outward-looking traits as a holy man.

Still, the ambiguity here is apparent. For an ascetic, the wilderness seems ideal due to its obvious physical difficulties. This physically challenging habitat, nonetheless, naturally has a charismatic feature. Della Dora underlines these aspects of the remote landscape, stating that "in the Judeo-Christian tradition God usually chose to speak through charismatic people



[58] Landscape in Byzantium is not an understudied subject, especially in poetry and romances, where the landscape is more likely to be depicted as appealing and peaceful space. See Roderick Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996). Moreover, gardens can be a good example of the tamed landscape in Byzantium. See A. R. Littlewood, "Romantic Paradises: The Role of the Garden in the Byzantine Romance," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 5 (1979): 95–114. Henry Maguire, "Gardens and Parks in Constantinople," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000): 251–64. Della Dora, *Landscape,* 93-117.

[59] Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*. Gregory, "Narrative of the Byzantine Landscape," 492.

[60] *The Life of Lazaros* 36.

[61] As Della Dora explains the holy men in the Mediterranean imitates the desert model by adapting it to their environment. Della Dora, *Landscape*, 120. She also historically interrelates the increasing role of the mountain as a holy place with Byzantium's loss of the holy land, see Della Dora, *Landscape,* 157.

(prophets and holy men) and through equally charismatic places (deserts, mountains, and caves) set apart from the World of cities and gardens — which is, through wilderness."[62] In the *Life*, the author notes Lazaros heard a voice from above in the Holy Land telling him to go back to his homeland in nowhere but wilderness. Gregory states, "one day Lazaros, as well as some other <monks> from the *lavra*, went out into the desert. While he was standing in a <dry> river bed in the middle of the day and offering up his prayers to the Lord, he heard a voice from above, as if from the cliff, saying this to him three times: "Lazaros, you must return to your homeland!"[63]

From the ascetic perspective, mountainous landscape is likely to imply peace of mind in contrast to the potentially troublesome life in town and city, as it has been considered a safe place in which an ascetic can possibly be at ease: release from the dangers of town life, which is interwoven with wickedness and sin.[64] This approach can be detected in the eleventh-century account of Gregory. In the rare occasions where the city appears in the *Life*, the author emphasizes its danger and degeneracy. For example, when Lazaros sent the monks Isaiah and Ioannikios to Constantinople for a mission, the latter was lured by what the city offered, i.e. the horse-racing, which is considered to be "a satanic spectacle" by his elder Isaiah.[65]

The second example is based on the earthly context and depicts the mountain as saviour. In this case, the natural landscape plays a role more terrestrial and practical, sheltering those who are in need. In his youth, Lazaros faced the danger of being sold by a fellow monk. Facing this danger, he "turned off the main road and quickly started to climb the mountain that lay nearby."[66] As seen in these examples, the positive aspects of the natural world as a shelter are



[62] Della Dora, *Landscape,* 118.
[63] *The Life of Lazaros* 18.
[64] Towns and cities are frequently associated with corruption and immorality in the Byzantine hagiographic tradition. That can also be seen in various other hagiographic accounts. For example, in the vita of *Symeon the Holy Fool*, Symeon's virtues are said to amaze people "*although* he lived in the city and associated with women and men." See Leontius of Neapolis, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's Life and the Late Antique City*, trans. Derek Krueger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 155.
[65] *The Life of Lazaros* 233.
[66] *The Life of Lazaros* 9.

highly related to, and even stem from the dangers of the communal life, within either a religious or worldly context. Nature, thus, seems to gain a positive meaning almost exclusively through an active threat found in the communal life.[67] In other words, when the civilized environment begins to be dangerous, wild nature gains this new role of protector in the account.

## 1.2 Lice Crawling

*Homo Byzantinus* had a multi-layered relationship with animals in the world around him. It goes without saying that the rural community used the domesticated animals for sustenance, transportation, and the cultivation of the land.[68] As Henriette Baron suggests, "human-animal relations (from whichever perspective) can contribute to an understanding of past environments and the life people led in them—after all, animals were an integral part of everyday life."[69]

The positive image of the peasants' exploitation of animals can be seen in the romantic and bucolic landscapes in some hagiographic, epistolographic and art-historical evidence.[70] But, the human-animal relations do not always bring profit to the former nonetheless. The upside-down approach to human-animal relations in which animals become a source of danger is a common theme in the form of animal attacks taking place in ferocious places throughout the account.



[67] It is discussed in chapter 3.

[68] On animals in Byzantium, see Ilias Anagnostakis-Taxiarchis Kollias and Eftychia Papadopoulou, eds., *Animals and Environment in Byzantium (7th-12th c.)* (Athens: IBR/NHRF, 2011).

[69] Henriette Baron, "An Approach to Byzantine Environmental History: Human-Animal Interactions," in *A Most Pleasant Scene an Inexhaustible Resource*, ed. Falko Daim and Henriette Baron (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2017), 171.

[70] For example, animals can appear as docile creatures in a calm landscape as seen in the letter of Basil of Caesarea to Gregory of Nazianzus. By emphasising the letter's realistic depiction, Timothy Gregory states, "he points out that there are wild animals in the area, but they are not dangerous ones—like wolves and bears—but more docile creatures such as deer, wild goats and hare." Gregory, "Narrative of the Byzantine Landscape," 484. Similarly, even wild animals can be part of a peaceful picture when the Constantinopolitan parks are considered. As Ševčenko points out, the wild animals served as pleasure and entertainment for the imperial circles in Constantinople. See Nancy Ševčenko, "Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park," in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. Antony Littlewood, Henry Maguire, and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 69–86. Moreover, from the art-historical perspective, as Ševčenko argues, the Byzantine visual sources, containing scenes of the interaction between human and animals are mostly depicting the victory of the former within the context of hunting.

In the *Life*, animals appear mostly in a dangerous context. For example, a certain monk, Menas confronts two bears fighting with each other in the mountain leading to Lazaros. Though being terrified, he "fervently invokes his blessing," and eventually this potentially dangerous encounter comes to an end with the bears "taking off towards the mountain at a run, as if they were being chased by him."[71] It goes without saying that the wild bear poses danger to those who encounter them in the wild in the countryside. From the textual perspective, Gregory uses the danger of wild animal to underline the spiritual power of Lazaros, emphasizing that one might be saved even from the most dangerous incidents such as encountering with wild bears, if prays to him.

The battle with the evil in the disguise of an animal is a common literary *topos* used in hagiographic texts, and Gregory' *Life* is not an exception to it.[72] In the early phases of his life, Lazaros meets a bear on the mountain of Argeas. This occurrence is interpreted by the author either as "the Evil one's intention to frighten him" or "God's allowing this as a trial of his faith and hope."[73] The dangerous animal as an intervention of evil can also be detected in the passage which narrates Lazaros's notice of a sheepdog chasing him when descending from the mountain. Since it was "raised up by the immaterial dog," it was able to leap up to the stone Lazaros climbed to protect himself and violently tore a piece of his leather tunic.[74] In the following lines, we see that he is, again, chased by a hostile dog barking so loudly before the cave he is in so that even the peasants from the villages around come and see with their swords.[75] Considering the Byzantine mentality which associates dogs with evil, it is not entirely



[71] *The Life of Lazaros* 64.
[72] In fact, this motif was common throughout the antiquity. The battle with the dangerous animals, such as scorpions and snakes, is commonly found in earlier texts. See Robert Browning, "The 'Low Level' Saint's Life in the Early Byzantine World," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. Sergei Hackel (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 124.
[73] *The Life of Lazaros* 25.
[74] *The Life of Lazaros* 26.
[75] *The Life of Lazaros* 27.

surprising to see dogs as an animal terrorizing people in the hagiographical texts.[76] There are many other dangerous encounters with wild animals in the source in relation to demonic attacks, including reptiles.

As Greenfield suggests snakes are, like dogs, associated with demonic power by Byzantines.[77] A snake appears in the *Life* when Gregory relates how evil disguised himself in the form of a snake with the intention of frightening Lazaros, and without his notice, it snuggled into his tunic. When Lazaros threw the tunic away, however, the snake changed its form and "went out of the window like a hurricane."[78] Here, we see Gregory instrumentalizing the encounter with the wild animal, and its hostile behaviour, which is perhaps expected to be part of everyday problems for villagers to demonstrate Lazaros as an excellent ascetic who withstands the trial of the evil.

Considering the kinds of dangers which ordinary people in the Byzantine countryside were exposed to wild animals are the obvious examples, and they frequently appear both in written and visual sources. Predictably, we find dog chases and bear attacks. However, the *Life* also provides us some insights into those animals who are seldom written about: parasitic insects such as lice. Though small and less frequently noted, bugs and insects were part of everyday life in the countryside and posed a threat to peasants.

The following passage from the *Life* about a certain monk called Nikon illustrates the problem: Gregory states "his flesh was also consumed by a swarm of lice that used to crawl about on the outside of his clothes <as well>; when he picked them off he would not kill them," and adding that, "but would drop them back inside the front <of his tunic> and would say, 'eat



[76] Richard P. Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1988) 133. In the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, dogs' positive image in Byzantine society is highlighted, yet their role in hagiography dramatically differs. They commonly appear "as a symbol of evil or even as the embodiment of the Devil." See 644. Apostolos Karpozilos and Anthony Cutler, "The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium," in *Dogs*, ed. Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 644.
[77] Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief*, 144.
[78] *The Life of Lazaros* 67.

from the flesh that God has given you for food.'"[79] This passage which seems to be originally designed to draw attention to Nikon's level of asceticism, depicts the very possibility of danger caused by poor hygiene of the body when coupled with animals. The author, then, states how far the danger it poses to the body reaches in case of no care and treatment: "<Nikon> developed a sore on the upper part of his foot, but he paid such little attention to it and neglected it <so much> that maggots bred in it."[80] The attitude of Nikon the monk towards the dangerous insects manifests the ideal asceticism while provides a crucial glimpse at the everyday threats the peasantry is exposed to.[81]

An important passage about the long-term illness of Lazaros before his death also illustrates threats coming from microscopic animals in the countryside within the textual context of the religious trial. To quote Gregory,

> In addition to his illness at this time, another trial was inflicted upon Lazaros by his tempter, and this was a triple one, that is to say, by lice, bugs, and ants. For the former proliferated into such a multitude that they were scurrying about on the outside of the pillar; while the ants in turn came out of the oak tree, which stood some way away from the pillar, and got inside the pillar by running up through the water cistern, as if they were being sent to it guided <there> by someone.[82]

Gregory states that the problem of lice, bugs, and ants can only be alleviated, after much effort, when the tree is cut by the monks. The unwillingness of Lazaros for this action can be considered as the idealized asceticism depicted by the author, as the holy man meeting with difficulties does not give up.

Not all but the vast majority of the animal-related life predicaments are orchestrated by the device of evil in the *Life* as the hagiographical evidence is heavily based on that motif. Gregory uses these animal-related threats for his own textual agenda. Thus, the animal—be it bear, dog, or snake— is successfully employed by the author either to demonstrate yet another

[79] *The Life of Lazaros* 171.
[80] *The Life of Lazaros* 172.
[81] The ascetic's approach to illness and treatment is discussed in Chapter 2.
[82] *The Life of Lazaros* 222.

trial the believer meets or to highlight the power of Lazaros as a saviour. Nevertheless, Nancy Ševčenko aptly underlines, this image is not always limited to a *topos* might indicate socio-historical meaning, since the ascetic, especially desert ascetics of the Late Antiquity, learnt how to live with these animals through their daily encounter. Ševčenko notes that "his ability to deal with the creatures of the desert, so praised by his biographers as a sign of sanctity, was, I would argue, the inevitable consequence of this choice of habitat and of long years of living amongst them.[83] This might be the case for Lazaros too who spent a large portion of his life in semi-wilderness. Finally, the account is enriched with possible dangers posed by everyday animals in ordinary-looking rural scenes and reflects on how accidental and potentially harmful encounters with animals were part of everyday reality for a Byzantine peasant.

## 1.3 When the Night Comes

At one point, Lazaros asks a certain monk called Meletios a striking question: "Aren't you afraid at all when you travel alone at night?" and then he adds, "For it was night-time then."[84] The exchange between the holy man and Meletios suggests that the darkness of the night was associated with fear and insecurity in the Byzantine perception, and highly likely in the other medieval societies as well since it stems from the Christian symbolism.[85] In the *Life*, night has a strong symbolism, it frequently is side by side with crime, particularly robbery—both lay and monastic. Along with this earthly stressor with which night and darkness are associated,

[83] Nancy Ševčenko, "The Hermit as Stranger in the Desert," in *Strangers to Themselves The Byzantine Outsider*, ed. Dion C. Smythe (New York: Routledge, 2000), 75–86.

[84] Though the perception of night has not raised academic interest in Byzantine Studies, overall it is not an understudied subject for the medieval period, for example, Jean Verdon's *Night in the Middle Ages* is one of the well-known studies which focuses on its representations in the written sources. Jean Verdon, *Night in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). See also Bryan D. Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness: Night Travels in the Histories of Transgression* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000). Deborah Youngs and Simon Harris, "Demonizing the Night in Medieval Europe: A Temporal Monstrosity?," in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 135. As they suggest, accidents are also among apparent problems that happen at night.

[85] David Brakke, "Ethiopian Demons: Male Sexuality, the Black-Skinned Other, and the Monastic Self," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 3/4 (2001): 507.

Gregory relates them to spiritual dangers, a predictable theme in the genre of hagiography. In some cases, these two aspects also intermingle in the narrative. However, it must be stated that night carried several, almost exclusively generic, problems to the Byzantines more or less in the same way as in any other pre-modern society.

Asceticism places a special emphasis on night-time. Keeping vigil at night is a common *topos* used in hagiographic accounts as a representation of the virtuous soul. Lazaros, too, is mentioned several times in the state of sleeplessness.[86] Metaphorical references made to light and darkness, both in the Old and New Testaments and in the writings of early Church fathers and medieval Christian thinkers, associate the former with divinity and the latter with the evil.[87] These can shed some light into the correlation between darkness and spiritual dangers found in the *Life*:

> The monk Neilos, while still a layman, was told by the cellarer to go out from the <monastery of the> Savior and show the way <down> to some laymen who had come there for a blessing. After he had done this, he left them and started back. But when he was in the middle of the southern stream, suddenly, although it was clear weather and broad daylight, it seemed to get dark around him; indeed <it was> so <dark> that he could not even see himself. He gazed up at the sky and thought that he could see the stars; so, looking carefully at these, he worked out the way to the <monastery of the> Savior from their positions and went on. When he got near the monastery, he turned his eyes to the ground but saw nothing in front of him, for everything was completely dark; the only thing that he <could> see, so he said, was the dome of the church. He knew <then> where he was and began to call out the <usual>, "Bless <me>, Kyris Ioannikios!" (for this was the cellarer's name). When <Ioannikios> replied "Bless <you>!" the darkness left him at once and the stars were no longer shining in the sky, but it was light and day again.[88]

In the *Life*, demonic attack at night is a common motif. For example, a certain monk called Nikon experiences an evil attack in the monastery, at night, when he was lying down on his mat. Beaten by the evil, he loses his ability to hear and talk.[89] Similarly, Gregory narrates that "another monk called John was praying at night while standing somewhere in the middle of

[86] As Greenfield suggests, these ascetic nocturnal practices were not only for holy men and monks but also for "the members of the community who engage in moderate asceticism." See Greenfield, "Introduction," 16.
[87] Harris and Youngs, "Demonizing the Night" 136-137.
[88] *The Life of Lazaros* 46.
[89] *The Life of Lazaros* 176.

the gorge; he had his eyes and his hands raised to heaven, when he suddenly discovered a sow with her piglets moving about at his feet. This scared him so much and made him <so> afraid, that he gave up his prayer and quickly left the place and never went back there again."[90] This passage is a great example of the textual symbolism of Gregory as it amalgamates his literary devices together. The danger of night is augmented by threat of the landscape and animal.

The nocturnal evil attack not only targets monks but also laymen. Gregory narrates that a certain Leo is attacked by the evil while sleeping at home. The villager hears some supernatural voices saying to him "Aren't you going to hit him?" and upon hearing the voices, he goes outside, looking for thieves around his house at night. Yet, demonic attack suddenly strikes him, "he immediately fell to the ground and lay there like a dead man, but he did just <manage to> call out, 'Oh no, I've been murdered!'"[91] Even though the main focus here is on the evil attack, the fact that the first thing was afraid of was robbery at night underlines the relation between the night and the fear of getting robbed for an ordinary Byzantine villager.

As mentioned, in the *Life*, the vast majority of criminal cases take place at night. For example, the robbery of horses that belong to the monastery happens at night. The related passage also implies that this event is not a one-off occurrence at all: the fellow monks insist on further security precautions such as building a new wall and locking the doors in order to protect the properties of the monastery, adding that, "we have suffered this <sort of thing> many other times <already>."[92]

The dividing line between spiritual and physical dangers is not always easy to draw throughout the text. One particular passage provides some insights into this vagueness. In this, night falls as a certain monk, sent to the city by Lazaros, is coming back to the monastery.[93]



[90] *The Life of Lazaros* 44.
[91] *The Life of Lazaros* 71.
[92] *The Life of Lazaros* 144.
[93] Though the story is narrated as an episode that happened to "a certain monk," Greenfield argues that Gregory, the author of this vita, actually refers to himself and his own experience in the passage in question.

Kyriakos, a local villager, advises him not to continue his way at night but to spend the night there in the village of Galesion. Ignoring him, the monk climbs the mountain and when some noises frighten him, he represses his fear with prayers. He, then, asks Lazaros, "if this was due to demons or to something else, such as wild goats, which normally live on the mountain." [94] Lazaros's answer, in turn, emphasizes the existence of the physical dangers as a concept in his mind, distinguished from the spiritual ones.

> Someone who is sent out somewhere by his own father should not fear or worry about physical dangers but should pay attention to <only> one thing, and that is to accomplish honestly and trustworthily what he has been ordered <to do> so that he may not be spiritually rather than physically endangered by straying from his task.[95]

That night-time journeys are directly associated with fear can also be clearly observed in Lazaros's question at the very beginning of this section. The same text sheds some light on the usage of night as a literary tool in this account: the night, being an uncanny scene holding several kinds of dangers, serves to accentuate the holiness of Lazaros. This is captured in the Meletios's answer: "No, father, because of your holy prayers."[96]

## 1.4 Dangerous Journeys

In many aspects, the vita of St. Lazaros is a narrative dramatically shaped by a variety of journeys. First of all, Lazaros was an itinerant ascetic in the early stages of his life. He left his homeland Magnesia, located in the western Asia Minor, not far from the region of Ephesos, for "the journey for which he was longing."[97] After a couple of unsuccessful attempts to escape from the monasteries in which he was staying, at the age of eighteen, he eventually travels to the Holy Land. On the way, he passes through many cities, towns, and villages, and visits different shrines and monasteries. All comes with a rich variety of human interactions. His

[94] *The Life of Lazaros* 154.
[95] *The Life of Lazaros* 154.
[96] *The Life of Lazaros* 50.
[97] *The Life of Lazaros* 4.

permanent settling down on the mountain of Galesion in the second half of his life does not bring the theme of journey to an end, it only changes directions. More precisely, Lazaros's holiness began to attract visitors who travel to visit him, either from the neighbouring settlements or from rather faraway places.[98]

Travelling has several disquieting and dangerous aspects which can be captured in different genres. From the legal perspective, the eighth-century law book *Ecloga* contained many chapters regulating of travelling and accidents. For example, chapter 5.8 describes the circumstances in which a wounded traveller makes a will.[99] The existence of this chapter, to a certain extent, implies the possibility of getting wounded with fatal consequences when travelling.

Among dangerous journeys, sailing is particularly convenient to point out the dangers of the wilderness. As Della Dora notes, "for the Byzantines, (…) even the familiar Mediterranean was looked at with awe and terror."[100] And this fear, which has its historical dynamics in the scripture and the ancient novels, finds its manifestations mainly through the depiction of the perils of sea travel. [101] Sea was a source of danger; it was considered hostile and seen as wild as mountainous areas. Traveling itself was full of risks but sea-traveling,

[98] As the archaeological studies strongly suggest the region of Ephesos in the middle Byzantine period was an important Christian centre which attracting many pilgrims. Sabine Ladstätter, "Ephesos from Late Antiquity until the Middle Ages. An Archaeological Introduction," in *Ephesos from Late Antiquity until the Middle Ages. Proceedings of the International Conference at the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations*, ed. Sabine Ladstätter and Paul Magdalino (Wien: Holzhausen Verlag, 2019), 14. Ladstätter quotes Keil, "If in this campaign a conclusion could not be reached, nevertheless that which has been accomplished has far exceeded all expectations, in that an extensive Christian burial- and cult-site has been brought to light at the holy places recorded by tradition; this is of great importance not only for local research at Ephesos, but furthermore it can count on attracting the interest of the entire Christian world."

[99] Ecloga 5.8 "If anyone wounded in war or while travelling on the road draws near death and wishes to make a will, and in both cases a notary or anyone else who can write cannot be found, he can make his will before seven or five or three witnesses, if only two can be found their evidence must be admitted and tried by the adjudicating magistrates." Humphreys, *The Laws of the Isaurian Era*.

[100] Della Dora, *Landscape*, 232.

[101] Della Dora, *Landscape*, 233. Margaret Mullett, "In Perils on the Sea: Travel Genres and the Unexpected," in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. Ruth Macrides, 10 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 269. George T. Dennis, "Perils of the Deep," in *Novum Millennium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture Dedicated to Paul Speck*, ed. Claudia Sode and Sarolta Takács (New York: Routledge, 2017), 81–88.

especially for sailors, was a perilous task, which is also indicated by the fact that many of them carry some amulets such as seals for the purpose of protection.[102]

The *Life* presents a significant anecdote about peculiarities of sea travel. Gregory recounts the story of the sailor with whom he encountered on his way. Referring to the amulet taken from Lazaros, the sailor states, "this has preserved me from many perils of the sea through the prayers of holy Lazaros." This sailor elaborates on his narrative by relating the miracle through which they were saved: one of his shipmates invokes "'Holy Lazaros, make haste and deliver us from our present danger!' Weeping, he cried out again, 'God help us, through the blessing of holy Lazaros who is on Galesion!' And so, against <all> hope, we were saved and were cast ashore, how we did not know."[103] That passage carries the utmost importance in several respects. While presenting the perils of sea travel which can be based on rough waves or winds coming from the wrong direction, it also demonstrates the ways in which the author uses the insecurity of sailing as a miracle of Lazaros saving lives.[104] As Mullett aptly states, "in the saint's life, all trials must be survived, by the saint, and others saved by him from perishing."[105] The sea is a convenient setting for this purpose as Della Dora also notes, "the *topos* of the stream as a dangerous obstacle and liminal space in which holy men manifested their miraculous powers endured in medieval hagiographical accounts across the Byzantine Empire."[106]



[102] *The Life of Lazaros* 75.
[103] *The Life of Lazaros* 75. A very similar story of the saint saving people by the violent waves can be found in the vitas of St. Niketas of Medikion and of St. Gregory of Dekapolis. See George T. Dennis, "Perils of the Deep," 84.
[104] Eating disorders and various kinds of illness, mental and physical, are among the problems. See Catia Galatariotou, "Travel and Perception in Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 228-229.
[105] Mullett, "In Perils on the Sea," 282.
[106] Della Dora, *Landscape*, 224.

## 1.5 Conclusion

In broad contours, this chapter approaches Gregory the Cellarer's *Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion* by using the theme of nature and all the threats it poses as a tool for attempting to analyze the everyday life realities of the Byzantine peasantry as well as the literary composition of Gregory the Cellarer's *Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion*. Gregory utilizes natural landscape and its related components as a setting that is suitable for his ultimate textual purpose: praising Lazaros as a holy man, narrating his virtues in a most persuasive way for his audience with appropriate hagiographical leitmotifs. It is possible, albeit highly unlikely, that the dangers examined here only serves the narrative on the textual level. Although the peasantry is known only through its representation in the text, their attitudes toward the material environment still seem to expose the present anxieties of the rural communities and their everyday problems concerning nature.

# 2 The Vulnerable Body

Referring to Lazaros, Gregory states that "…not one of those who went up to him was <ever> seen to return from there without having received the proper medicine for his sickness."[107] The vita is a valuable source for the discussion of the concept of well-being and its deficiency as well as physical suffering and death resulting from ascetic practices involving self-denial, physical withdrawal, a harsh regimen, of the healing capacity of the holy man as a key sign of sanctity, and the hagiographical *topos* of the perpetual physical and spiritual trial of evil.[108]

This chapter examines three aspects of body-related problems in the *Life*: illness, cure, and death. In the first part, I focus on diseases, disabilities, and accidents to investigate what the body could suffer from. In the second part, I look at the ways people searched for a cure to their ailment, highlighting the role of the church, monastery, and the holy man in healing. The last part treats death and its social reception.

The Byzantine countryside was fraught with danger concerning the body. First of all, the life of an ordinary peasant was by no means long. Angeliki Laiou estimates the life expectancy is around 25 years based on the *paroikoi* population in Macedonia.[109] Her estimation, as Chris Gilleard underlines, demonstrates the sharp contrast between the life expectancy rates of ordinary villagers and the imperial family, clerics, and monks in Byzantium.[110] The latter, including Lazaros who died at the age of eighty-six, enjoyed a considerably longer life.



[107] *The Life of Lazaros* 36.
[108] This binary division between the physical and psychological, between the body and mind, is nonetheless a modern conception. For the Christian perspective, these two constitute a unity. For Tartulian's conception see, Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (Columbia University Press, 1988), 77.
[109] Laiou, *Peasant Society*, 276.
[110] Chris Gilleard, "Old Age in Byzantine Society," *Ageing & Society* 27, no. 5 (2007): 628.

## 2.1 Illness

It goes without saying that the Byzantine rural community suffered from a variety of diseases**,** and some of them had fatal consequences.[111] Nevertheless, it is not always possible to identify them in the written sources for three main reasons. Firstly, as the ailing body was part of everyday life, many of the illnesses were presumably seen as quite ordinary and therefore did not deserve to be described in detail.[112] Secondly, the lack of the proper medical knowledge limited not only the treatment but also the diagnose of any sickness. Lastly, genre matters. Due to its rules, expectations, and textual structure, the hagiographic literature tends to emphasize certain diseases, while paying less or no attention to the others. For example, leprosy and epilepsy are among the most frequently noted illnesses in the hagiographic literature. Dental diseases, on the other hand, do not commonly appear in the genre, even though as Chryssi Bourbou argues, they are "the most frequently observed pathological conditions, affecting primarily middle-aged adults and male individuals."[113]

The hagiographic literature moreover tends to elucidate physical ill-being, accidents, and disability through the influence of evil.[114] This tendency can perhaps be seen in the *Life of Lazaros* in the case of Laurentios, a monk who had experienced a horse accident and demonic possession when he was a young layman. To quote Gregory,

> He saw a black ox suddenly come charging wildly at him out of the middle of the mastics. The horse shied and bucked when it saw this; it threw him to the ground and

[111] George T. Dennis, "Death in Byzantium," 4. Alexander Kazhdan, "The Peasantry," 64–65. See also H. J. Magoulias, "The Lives of the Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 57, no. 1 (1964): 127–50.

[112] Lutz Alexander Graumann, "Children's Accidents in the Roman Empire: The Medical Eye on 500 Years of Mishaps in Injured Children," in *Children and Everyday Life in the Roman and Late Antique World*, ed. Christian Laes and Ville Vuolanto (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), 267–86. Chryssi Bourbou, *Health and Disease in Byzantine Crete (7th-12th Centuries AD)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

[113] Chryssi Bourbou, *Health and Disease*, 168.

[114] On the other hand, that does not necessarily mean that the Byzantines considered the illness entirely within the context of spirituality. As Efthymiadis states, Anastasios of Sinai, in the seventh century, provided a rather a material explanation to this question: "Why is it that among us Christians, rather than among other unbelieving nations, there are often far more maimed people, and lepers, and those crippled with gout, and epileptics, and those in the grip of other complaints?"; his answer underlines the role of climate, race, and eating and drinking habits. See Stephanos Efthymiadis, "The Disabled in the Byzantine Empire," in *Disability in Antiquity*, ed. Christian Laes (London: New York: Routledge, 2017), 395.

> then went galloping back again into the fields. <Laurentios> was possessed by a wicked spirit in the fall, and lay there as if he were dead.[115]

As the passage above suggests, the author presents the physical and spiritual dangers as intertwined. Thus, it is an important question to ask what the author could have in mind when he particularly referred to the physical manifestation of evil possession. In other words, what are the criteria for the author to call an event a possession or not?[116]

Gregory provides a depiction of the evil possession and characterizes its visible physical consequences on the body in the case of Laurentios: "he was suddenly struck by the demon and thrown to the ground; he frothed at the mouth, rolled his eyes, <twisted> his hair, and did all the things that those possessed by demons usually do."[117] In another passage on a certain Philippikos, Gregory explains what happens to the possessed body: Philippikos lost control over his actions and speech and, "suddenly bent his head and his knees and fell onto his face, and he lay there until the brothers made him stand up again." He was, the author adds, "rolling his eyes horribly this way and that. Another time when he was standing singing with the brothers, he was spun round like a bobbin, and he did many other such things that made the brothers who saw them laugh."[118] Does this description reflect what was commonly recognised as demonic possession? Other examples in Gregory's account suggests it does. Another example allows us to trace the popular understanding and perception of demonic possession. Gregory relates that "a man who had the appearance of a demoniac went up to him [Lazaros]," and said, "I'm not possessed by a demon, but I pretend to have this problem," and explained how he performed and benefited from demonic possession:

> If I find someone established in a church somewhere (whether he's a monk or a layman) who's compliant with my <scheme>, I get him to ask around and find out who has a nice ornament or some other <such> object. After he's found this out and told me

[115] *The Life of Lazaros* 73.
[116] Grey discusses the case of demonic possession within the framework of societal dysfunction. See Cam Grey, "Demoniacs, Dissent, and Disempowerment in the Late Roman West: Some Case Studies from the Hagiographical Literature," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005): 39–69.
[117] *The Life of Lazaros* 74.
[118] *The Life of Lazaros* 47.

> the names of these people, I take a cross and go off to some place where it's damp; I then dig <a hole> and hide it there. After several days I make myself appear to be aroused by the demon**.** I first go into the church and get everyone there to follow me, as though they're under orders from the saint; then I go out with them to the place where I hid the cross by burying it. I dig with my own hands or with a spade, pull out <the cross>, pick it up, and go back to the church. I then begin to call <the people> by name and say, 'Oh, so-and-so, the saint commands you to bring this <particular> object of yours here so that your whole household may not be tormented by demons.' I do this every day and then, when I've gone through them all, I make myself appear to have been cured. Afterwards we split everything that's been brought, I and the person in charge of the church, and so I go off again somewhere else.[119]

The passage is striking for several reasons. It suggests that there might be a certain level of social expectation to be conformed about the symptoms of evil possession and about how it was supposed to manifest itself, as one can persuasively pretend to be possessed and cured. It also demonstrates that demonic possession is used and even abused by people, i.e. that people may feign and even use some illnesses in order to gain economic benefit.[120]

Concerning more tangible causes of the physical ill-being, one can illustrate the poor living conditions in the Byzantine countryside due to insufficient sanitary conditions, contagious diseases, and health problems. In addition to these health threats, the body was vulnerable in the face of potentially dangerous accidents in daily life.[121] One of the most commonly noted predicaments in the rural areas, however, is malnourishment due to a variety of reasons: famine, drought, and poor harvest along with the obvious economic reasons.[122]



[119] *The Life of Lazaros* 12.

[120] On the feigned evil possession, Magdalino cites the critique of Balsamon "in his commentary on canon 60 of the Council in Trullo condemning 'those who simulate demonic frenzy for gain,'" See Robert Browning, "The 'Low Level' Saint's Life in the Early Byzantine World," 59–60.

[121] Marcus Louis Rautman, *Daily Life in the Byzantine Empire*, The Greenwood Press "Daily Life through History" Series (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 302. Horden underlines how little we know about hygiene in the Byzantine context. Hygiene was obviously a precondition for health and was presumably poor. See Peregrine Horden, "Health, Hygiene, and Healing," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 685–90.

[122] The diet of the Byzantines plays a crucial role in the discussion of Byzantine well-being. Even though it largely depends on locality and changes from region to region, Chryssi Bourbou's study provides a general look at the Byzantine diet: "The investigation of written sources, supplemented by evidence retrieved from chemical analysis, has provided a picture of Byzantine dietary habits. Documentary evidence portrays a Byzantine diet based on grain (primarily wheat and barley), oil and wine, supplemented with legumes, dairy products, meat and marine resources, but the relative importance of each foodstuff in the Byzantine diet is not always as clear." Chryssi Bourbou, *Health and Disease*, 170. See also Anthony Bryer, "Food, Wine, and Feasting," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack (Oxford; New York:

Indicating the shortage of bread and water in the monastery several times, Gregory demonstrates even the monasteries were not economically stable.[123] From this monastic scarcity, one can presumably infer even worse conditions prevailing in the villages around. The author recounts that the rural populace suffered from starvation, as the crowds, afflicted by a severe famine, poured into the monastery, asking for food on a daily basis.[124] On the other hand, Gregory emphasizes Lazaros's harsh regimen throughout; the ascetic's self-induced hunger, however, is of a different kind.[125] While hunger is an outside reality, a severe predicament for common people, the ascetic voluntarily engages in undernourishment, as abstinence is one of the main ways to gain ascetic perfection.

Apart from these predicaments, Gregory refers to some particular diseases and disabilities. Among them is gout, which causes excessive pain in the joints, especially in the foot. When a certain John visits Lazaros to seek help for his uncle's illness, we learn that "he begged the father to pray for the health of his uncle Eustathios, called of Mita, since he had gout."[126] Concerning disabilities, one should be cautious since what the Byzantines considered disability may not always be regarded as disability today and vice versa. For example, as Efthymiadis explains, infertility for women is not considered a disability today, yet it was for the Byzantines; while bodily mutilation can be seen as a disability, eunuchs were not considered disabled in Byzantine society.[127] In the *Life*, Dorotheos's case is a good example of



Oxford University Press, 2008), 669–76. The *Life* also provides some information about what people eat mainly through the passages about the monastic charity towards the poor. Among the foodstuffs mentioned are flour, bread, wine, oil, a variety of pulses, cheese, vegetables, and milk. See *The Life of Lazaros* 146. According to Koder, these foodstuffs largely among the "everyday food for the masses." See Johannes Koder, "Stew and Salted Meat – Opulent Normality in the Diet of Every Day?," in *Eat, Drink, and Be Merry (Luke 12:19): Food and Wine in Byzantium : Papers of the 37th Annual Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, in Honour of Professor A.A.M. Bryer*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Kallirroe Linardou (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), 64–65.

123 For the bread shortage see, *The Life of Lazaros* 247. For the water scarcity see, *The Life of Lazaros* 174 and 186.

124 *The Life of Lazaros* 210.

125 The holy man does not drink wine unless at the Eucharist, avoids cheese, and oil while only consumes boiled, if not entirely uncooked, raw vegetable and pulses. See, Greenfield, "Introduction," 15. See also, Robert Browning, "Low Saints," 118. However, this idealized ascetic image Gregory constructs for Lazaros is not a representative of the conventional monastic dietary regimen.

126 *The Life of Lazaros* 103.

127 Stephanos Efthymiadis, "The Disabled," 389–390.

disability. Gregory narrates that he, a former priest from Ikonion and subsequently a monk, "lost the sight of his physical eyes."[128] Gregory argues that Dorotheos's blindness stems from his harsh ascetic regimen and thus considers it a sign of his spiritual excellence.

Examples of demonic possession, diseases, and disability thus function in the *Life* as a literary vehicle to underscore Lazaros's asceticism and ability of healing. They also possibly serve to alert Gregory's audience to the influence of the devil posing physical and spiritual threats to those who do not sustain a pious lifestyle but engage in wickedness.

## 2.2 In the search of a cure

What happens in the case of illness, mishap, or possession? Who does the rural population ask for help? What kind of treatment was available to the Byzantine peasantry? Gerstel notes that there are four different types of medical treatment available in rural Byzantium when discussing the example of Crete: "…that given by trained physicians, practical healers, magicians or spell-casters, and priests and monks.[129] In his *Life*, Gregory does not mention trained physicians, who are more frequently found in cities, and practical healers. Even though this does not necessarily mean that there were no physicians in the region, it does explicates the lack of the tension or even competition between the holy man and the physician, which is a common theme in hagiography, especially for the saints' lives from the earlier period.[130] Magicians and spell-casters, on the other hand, must have been present in the rural area as revealed by the passage on the poison receipt advised to the priest's wife.[131]



[128] *The Life of Lazaros* 177.
[129] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 154-155.
[130] Browning, "Low Saints," 122. Kazhdan underlines that after the seventh century their visibility in the hagiographic evidence decreases but after the tenth century the physician reappears because he "became too influential to be neglected." Alexander Kazhdan, "The Image of the Medical Doctor in Byzantine Literature of the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 51.
[131] It is discussed in chapter 3.2.

In the case of Laurentios, possible cures can be traced in the *Life*. When Gregory narrates what happened after Laurentios fell from the horse and was possessed by the evil, he states that "they carried him to their church, which was <dedicated> to the holy martyr Prokopios, and laid him <there>, placing the venerable cross on him. He lay like that for two days and nights, unable to regain consciousness at all because of the demon's attack." He continues, "however, when it was already the third day, he came to in the middle of the night and recovered his senses."[132] The passage sheds light on the cures used to treat the sick, such as laying the sick person in a sacred area and placing a cross on him. It also suggests that the treatment was primarily sought in the church and the Christian faith. Nevertheless, one should perhaps be cautious in drawing such a conclusion since it is expectable in the hagiographic literature to overstress the role of the church. As Horden notes, "most attempts at healing began at home, by waiting on the vis medicatrix naturae (i.e. doing nothing); by the self-help in the form of simple herbalism, prayer, or incantation."[133]

Along with the churches, monasteries played a crucial role in treating the sick in Byzantium.[134] For the non-elite rural monasteries, at least in the example of Galesion, this role is difficult to assess and seems to be more related to sheltering, basic nursing, and pain relief, as well as a set of holistic treatments such as incubation and prayer.[135] We know that sick visitors were provided with accommodation and food in the monastery. For the *Life*, Greenfield explains that the function of the guest house, *xenodocheion*, in the monastery is to serve especially for sick visitors.[136] For example, Lazaros tells Gregory that "'you <too>, if there is



[132] *The Life of Lazaros* 73.
[133] Peregrine Horden, "Health, Hygiene, and Healing," 688.
[134] Miller argues that monastic hospitals in Byzantium were not only a Christian charity shelter offering those sick people basic food and nursing service. Instead, these institutions, especially those urban-elite monasteries in Constantinople were medical centres where a proper treatment was given. See Timothy S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997). See also Peregrine Horden, "How Medicalized were Byzantine Hospitals?," in *Sozialgeschichte Mittelalterlicher Hospitäler*, ed. Neithard Bulst and Karl-Heinz Spiess (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2007), 213–35.
[135] Incubation as a method of curing is a common practice in monasteries. See Rautman, *Daily Life*, 303.
[136] *The Life of Lazaros* 150.

a sick visitor, give him generously all he needs from whatever you may have in the cellar, and let him stay as long as he wants. Don't throw him out!'"[137]

One of the most significant elements of the sanctity of the holy man is his role as a cure-giver in society, as both the monk and laymen are reported to visit him for healing. Jonas the monk "who used to be troubled by an evil demon," is cured only through "entering the pillar and touching the holy body of our blessed father."[138] Similarly, a layman from Attaleia, John Kouphalides, possessed by an evil spirit, visits Lazaros for healing. Gregory notes, "within a few days, by the reading of the holy Gospel and the lying on of the venerable cross, he was delivered from the wicked demon that was tormenting him."[139] Even though the author does not provide much detail about the torment the layman suffers, it illustrates the ways in which the holy man cures the visitor. Another layman from Attaleia, called Leo, visits Lazaros after having his hand paralyzed due to an attack of evil. Leo is first carried to a church, being anointed, and partially recovers there. Upon his visit to Lazaros, he fully recuperates.[140] In some cases, even the prayer of the holy man is enough for the recovery of the sick. Spiritual healing of Lazaros relieves the patient remotely, without a physical contact. For example, after being possessed by evil, Gregory notes that the monk Philippikos was cured "by the prayers of our blessed father [Lazaros]."[141] Furthermore, for common people, the holy man's healing power is not limited to curing illness but also includes preventing them, as they are reported to ask for an amulet, which has an apotropaic power, in order to avoid the evil and sicknesses to happen in the first place.[142]



[137] *The Life of Lazaros* 151.
[138] *The Life of Lazaros* 249.
[139] *The Life of Lazaros* 70.
[140] *The Life of Lazaros* 71.
[141] *The Life of Lazaros* 47.
[142] Peregrine Horden, "Health, Hygiene, and Healing," 687. For a sailor and the Arab Christian visitor receiving amulets from Lazaros respectively see, *The Life of Lazaros* 75 and 113 respectively.

Ailments of the body were both inescapable and a source of misfortune for laypeople. People sought a variety of cures in different places, in the church, monastery, or in the hands of the holy man. These are all related to religion. Nevertheless, we may perhaps assume the existence of other treatments sought by people such as herbal remedies and magic that Gregory would not like to refer in his vita due to their profane nature.

It should be noted that there is a difference between the perception of the sick body of the "ordinary" Christian and the ascetic. For the ascetic, illness is not an unfortunate event but a ladder to a more perfect asceticism. As Horden argues, for him, "the treatment of a physical ailment is unnecessary; indeed it is spiritually damaging."[143] Therefore, the holy man who cures the ailing body of the other, ignores and even consciously worsens his own physical pain.[144]

## 2.3 Beware, brother, because death is near

Gregory instrumentalizes the theme of death in order to emphasize the prophetic power of Lazaros. Whether the prediction is implied or directly expressed by the holy man, it eventually comes true. These passages about Lazaros's prophetic power give us some brief clues about the death of people. For example, when John of Mita, the *episkepsis* of Myrelaion in the Thrakesion theme, asks Lazaros to pray for his sick uncle Eustathios, the holy man foretells his



[143] Peregrine Horden, "The Death of Ascetics: Sickness and Monasticism in the Early Byzantine Middle East," *Studies in Church History* 22 (1985): 42.

[144] See *The Life of Lazaros* 248. For a similar attitude of Nikon, the monk who ignores the sore in his foot that is full of maggots, see *The Life of Lazaros* 172. Nikon strictly rejects the treatment for the ulcer on his foot and prefers to live with this open sore. His attitude can perhaps be better understood with Geoffrey Halt Harpham's argument about the perception of ascetic on physical disfiguration, as cited by Andrew Crislip: "For the Christian ascetic, pagan beauty was thematized as demonic, while disfigure was figured as the desirable." Andrew Crislip, *Thorns in the Flesh: Illness and Sanctity in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 2. Stavroula Constantinou also suggests the self-infliction of pain is an important element of ascetic practices in Byzantine hagiography: "Torture is an integral element of hagiographical literature, since it is through bodily violation that holy heroes and heroines fulfil their strong desire for spiritual existence. The form that torture takes in Byzantine hagiography is twofold: It is either a violent self-punishment or a cruel punishment inflicted upon the holy protagonist by another character of the narrative." Stavroula Constantinou, "The Saint's Two Bodies: Sensibility Under (Self-) Torture in Byzantine Hagiography," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 66 (2015): 285.

approaching death. He indeed dies shortly afterwards. The ways in which Gregory recounts this story reveals how the death of Eustathios is a device to underscore the holy man's clairvoyance, as he writes, "not long afterward the man about whom the request and the father's prediction was made reached the end of his life."[145] Lazaros foretells the death of the son of John Libanos, a sixteen-year-old Constantinopolitan student of letters, saying that "for although the boy is <as> clever as you say, he will not last long in this life," and a year later the mother of Gregory confirms the prophecy with a letter saying "and master George, the son of Libanos, died."[146] In another example, "George the flute player, who was also nicknamed Dog" dies a short time after Lazaros tells him, "Beware, brother, because death is near."[147] The author thus blends the miracle of prophecy with the concept of death.

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the honey-collectors from the village dies while harvesting honey, after Lazaros allusively warns them by saying "don't go <onto the cliff> there lest you return with a harvest of bitterness instead of the sweetness of the honey."[148] Death is thus part of the holy man's miracle when it is foretold: A miracle by which people forget death or the deceased person and drive themselves almost into a frenzy, as happens when the honey-collector dies.

> But they told everyone about the father's prediction and the words that he had spoken to them <in trying> to prevent them from going there. Those who heard about this were astounded and then were <quite> unable to control themselves; they went up to him, together with their wives and children, singing psalms and holding crosses in their hands. <Indeed>, there was little they did not do, clapping their hands, leaping about, heaping myriad praises on him, and eventually calling him a prophet.[149]

This example shows how the fulfilled prediction of death strips off the gravity of the fact and generates unmeasured adoration for Lazaros in the text. The authorial motivation of

[145] *The Life of Lazaros* 103.
[146] *The Life of Lazaros* 97.
[147] *The Life of Lazaros* 104.
[148] *The Life of Lazaros* 13.
[149] *The Life of Lazaros* 13.

Gregory about the death-related passages could also exhibit some aspects of the perception, social implications, and ritualism of death in rural Byzantium. For example, on the death of the honey-collector, Gregory notes: "he was smashed <on the rocks> and expired at once. So the others went down and picked him up, and then, with much weeping and wailing, went off to the village to bury him."[150] While highlighting the post-death rituals such as grieving and burial, it also sheds some light into the responses of the villagers in the process. The passage on Laurentios gives a similar picture of the reactions of the community in case of a mishap. When he fell from the horse, "some people from the village saw him, for it was not far away, and they went out with his mother and picked him up."[151]

The role of the mother in the story is another significant point. The mother's agency in case of sickness is highlighted in the hagiographical accounts.[152] Horden underlines "calling upon a family member, especially woman (mistress of the household, mother, wife)," was among the first things to do in case of sickness.[153] This stress put on the role of women, especially on the figure of mother, might reflect the "idealized female archetypes like that of the Virgin."[154] As Galatariotou states female figures only rarely appear in a positive framework in the Byzantine literature and argues, "good women are placed firmly within the context of the family, and since the family is patriarchal, it follows that they hold no power."[155]

Self-inflicted death is another important category which is alluded to in the text. Karpozilos, in his study on suicide in Byzantium, argues that the visibility of self-murder in the written sources declined from the Late Antiquity towards to the Medieval period, and hagiographic evidence on suicide is mainly colored by the intervention of evil and the lack of



150 *The Life of Lazaros* 13.
151 *The Life of Lazaros* 73.
152 Stephanos Efthymiadis, "The Disabled," 396.
153 Peregrine Horden, "Health, Hygiene, and Healing," 688.
154 Peter Hatlie, "Images of Motherhood and Self in Byzantine Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 63 (2009): 43. See also Catia S. Galatariotou, "Holy Women and Witches: Aspects of Byzantine Conceptions of Gender," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 9, no. 1 (1984): 55–94.
155 Catia S. Galatariotou, "Holy Women and Witches," 78. For her analyse of the image of good women in Neophytos's writing, see ibid., 78–94.

self-control."[156] Gregory's account provides a similar picture of the death of a young man. While the author notes that "he fell from the cliff and died," Lazaros's speech following this young man's death connects the death to the invention of evil, and emphasizes that it is not related to suicide: "This man did not go there of his own free will, nor did he die because he threw himself <off the cliff>, but <rather> he shed his blood out of obedience, for he was killed by the demons."[157] Even though it is not entirely clear whether the young man died by accident, or by the intervention of evil, or committed suicide, the demand of some monks for more clarification about the death, and Lazaros's particular insistence on the young man's lack of free will show how Gregory treats a potential suicide within the context of the hagiographical narrative and possibly sheds some light into the perception of suicide in Byzantium.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified some corporeal threats Byzantine people faced, the ways in which they sought healing, and their attitudes towards the ailing body and death. A wide range of illnesses, accidents, and disabilities threatened people in the Byzantine countryside and posed dangers to their physical well-being. The ailing body and death are mostly referred to within the context of either Lazaros's prophetic vision or his healing abilities. They are primarily applied to the holy man's sanctity and serve as edifying examples for the audience. The frightening image of the sick body or death is associated with an immoral life and the negligence to the holy man, as seen in the case of the death of George the flute player. Gregory recounts the causes of his death by saying "<Now>, although George perhaps took the father's



156 "The cause of suicide and the reasons why men are driven to self-destruction are usually attributed to the evil powers that overtake those that are weak in faith." Apostolos Karpozilos, "Suicide in Byzantium," *Ἑλληνικά* 57, no. 1 (2007): 80-93.
157 *The Life of Lazaros* 131.

words to heart a little at the time, at all events he again persisted in his former <behaviour>; he did not refrain from his wickedness nor did he pay attention to his <impending> death…"[158]

Within the *Life of Lazaros*, there is an essential distinction between the reactions of ordinary people and the ascetic to the ailing body in terms of intentionality and perception. Corporeal afflictions such as poor health, disease, and physical injury are embedded in spiritual causes and demonic possession, if happening involuntarily, and as self-challenge, if happening as a way of ascetic perfectionism. For the ordinary people the illness is related to demonic possession while for the ascetic, it is more likely to be a challenge presented by God for spiritual self-improvement. The ailing body was a menace to the ascetic too since they, to a certain degree, shared a similar environment and its dangers with common people around them. Yet, the difference lies in their perception of the ailing body. When afflicted by disease, the laypeople actively sought treatment and healing in the church, the monastery, or with the holy man. However, the ascetic was, or at least is depicted to be, submissive to the bodily suffering and even embraced by rejecting the treatment, as seen in the case of Nikon, for a deeper self-denial and devotion.[159]

The social aspect of illness becomes more visible in the *Life* in the feigned illness and the process of treatment. We see that demonic possession can commonly be abused in order to gain economic benefit. Moreover, the search for healing and death reveals the response of the people around the sick one, mostly the mother and neighbors of the sick.



[158] *The Life of Lazaros* 104.
[159] *The Life of Lazaros* 172. See also Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

# 3 The Rural Community: Suspicion and Hostility

Community life and complex social relations posed a set of distinctive social threats in the rural community. Stressing the prevailing conditions of considerable insecurity, in the provincial society where a limited governmental intervention is observed, Leonora Neville argues that people "attempted to control each other through physical intimidation, economic manipulation, and appeals from external intervention, and by gathering the support of community opinion," and adds, "wealth, capacity for effective violence, and access to the imperial court were also key factors that allowed one to act with authority."[160]

The account of Gregory the Cellarer delineates the social environment of the peasantry while providing an insight into relationship patterns among people that are characterized by social tension. My aim in this chapter is to analyze this social tension and its textual function in light of the following questions arising from the *Life*'s social portrayal of the countryside: In what forms and toward whom does the social hostility break out in the Byzantine countryside? To what extent do the variations of social tension pose a threat in everyday life? What strategies and defence mechanisms do the people employ to respond to risks or overcome dangers? What is the textual and literary function of ubiquitous references to the various social threats in Gregory's account?

To answer these questions, I have selected three main forms of hostility which frequently occur throughout the *Life*: toward and by the outsider, intra-communal, and between the lay and the monastic. The first category examines the textual representations of the social relations between the Byzantines and the outsiders, and its mutually antagonistic aspects.[161]



[160] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society*, 167.

[161] The terminology used here requires some explanation for the sake of clarity. In this chapter, and throughout the thesis as well, the term Byzantine is used to signify those people living in the border regions of the Byzantine Empire. Nevertheless, it is well-known that this term is adopted by the modern scholarship while the Byzantines predominantly called themselves the Romans, and their territory Romania, i.e. the Roman Empire. In the *Life*, Gregory does not use an ethnic descriptor specifically for the Romans. However, the author names the land they live in as *Ῥωμάνια*. Chapter 19 in "Vitae Lazari in monte Galesio," 515, l. 46. For a detailed discussion on the

The second category focuses on the hostility among the members of the same community, yet with a special focus on rural women and the kind of problems that particularly, but not exclusively, beset them. Finally, the last category is composed of the social tension between the lay and the monastic. More precisely, between the peasantry and ascetics, monks, and the monastic establishment.

## 3.1 The Mind Disturbed by the Outsider

The image of the outsider appears in the *Life* frequently and in various forms: as an individual, group, or military unit. The diversity of the outsider's identity and the Byzantine attitudes toward them calls attention to the ambivalence of the nature of the social encounters between these two groups. While Gregory enumerates various groups venerating the holy man, he moreover underlines the religious and ethnic diversity in the rural society, which could possibly lead to social tension. In subsequent passages where the author partially digresses from the main narrative, the author states the visits of Jews, Arabs, Georgians, and Paulicians.[162] These

Roman identity and the dynamics of the emergence of the term Byzantium in the modern scholarship, see Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019). Furthermore, it is significant that Gregory uses this particular word, *Ῥωμανία*, only once while narrating young Lazaros's departure from the Holy Land. This possibly indicates that the self-description, for the author, is required, mostly if not only, in relation to the other. For a classical study on the role of the other in the formation of the self within the context of Ancient Greek identity, see François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). Looking at the other side of the coin, I use the term *outsider* to define non-Byzantine groups. This large group, in the account, seem to largely but not exclusively consist of foreigners. The geographic background is not always clear for some religious groups in the *Life*. For example, Gregory does not specify where Jews or Paulicians come from when he refers to them. I assume these people are not foreigners. It is, at least, obvious for the latter as they live in Byzantine territory. Therefore, their difference does not seem to be based on their ethnicity but on religious identity. For that reason, I suppose 'outsider' is a more convenient term than foreigner for its comprehensiveness. I adopt the term from Dion C. Smythe, ed., *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider* (New York: Routledge, 2000). Moreover, for an extensive discussion of the concept of the outsider, see Smythe's thesis, Dion Smythe, "Byzantine Perceptions of the Outsider in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries: A Method" (Thesis, The University of St Andrews, 1992); A general discussion about the Byzantine identity and the literature see, Dion C. Smythe, "Insiders and Outsider," in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 67–81, especially 69-72.

162 They all represent slightly different pictures. For the Jews, Gregory's core point is the affirmation of holy man's sanctity through the Old Testament allusion made for the analogy between the leather tunic of Elijah and of Lazaros. See *The Life of Lazaros* 112. For the general historical background of the Jews in Byzantium see, Robert Bonfil et al., eds., *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); David Jacoby, "The Jewish Communities of the Byzantine World from the Tenth to the Mid-Fifteenth Century:

people are identified primarily as visitors and then as outsiders, and treated in the account exclusively through their submissive features, not as a source of hostility but religious approval. Nevertheless, the diversity visible in the *Life* suggests the potentiality of social tension among different ethnic and religious groups.[163]

The social picture is much more nuanced and ambivalent than the moralized textual atmosphere drawn by Gregory in the *Life,* despite the integrative role of the holy man. In fact, one can find hostile depictions of the outsider, even though scattered throughout the account. With unfriendly characterizations, if not threatening, the antagonistic outsiders are depicted to

Some Aspects of Their Evolution," in *Jewish Reception of Greek Bible Versions*, ed. Cameron Boyd-Taylor, Julia Krivoruchko, and Nicholas de Lange, 1st ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 157–81. Especially from the legal context see, Andrew Sharf, *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1995) 52-78. The following passage from an article by Robert Bonfil might explain the role of the Jews in Gregory's account: "Issued from Judaism, Christianity never succeeded in denying such filiation. The umbilical cord was never rescinded, because God who sealed up the alliance on Mount Sinai was that very same God who later sent His Son to rescue humanity. As a matter of fact, Christianity defined from the very beginning its divergence from Judaism in terms of Scriptural exegesis, and yet such divergence never resulted in radical opposition. On the contrary, the essential self-definition of Christianity as Verus Israel engendered the necessity of proving to the Jews the truth of Christian faith." Robert Bonfil, "Continuity and Discontinuity (641-1204)," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 74. Nevertheless, the image drawn here of Judaism as a mother religion for Christianity is criticised in modern scholarship. See Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003). The case of the Arabic visitor differs from the example above, as he is already a baptized Christian. The visitor's insistence on the acquisition of "something from Lazaros's own hands," seems to point out that the less outsider the visitor is, the stronger the holy man's influence is. See *The Life of Lazaros* 113. For the Georgian, we see the visit of Jeremiah the monk who becomes dumbfounded by touching the flesh of the holy man. His outsiderness is particularly marked through his physical appearance as part of his respectability with an analogy drawn by the author between the hairstyle and clothes of Jeremiah and John the Baptist. See *The Life of Lazaros* 114. Also, for the argument of the monastic communication between the Byzantine and Georgian communities see, Catherine Holmes, "Provinces and Capital," in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 55–67. For the Paulician, we see that the holy man's impact on the visitor grows as he not only impresses him with his ascetic perfection but also converts him into Orthodoxy without much effort. See *The Life of Lazaros* 115. The conversion of the pagan, Jew, or heretic is a Byzantine hagiographical topos which is seen as a miracle of the saint. Youval Rotman, "Christians, Jews and Muslims in Byzantine Italy Medieval Conflicts in Local Perspective," in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (London: Routledge, 2010), 223–235. For the Paulicians in Byzantium see, Peter Charanis, "Cultural Diversity and the Breakdown of Byzantine Power in Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks* Papers 29 (1975): 1–20, especially 13-15; See also Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy: A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Procinces of the Byzantine Empire* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011).

163 Nevertheless, overshadowed by their respect to Lazaros, their outsiderness primarily nothing but contributes more to Gregory's textual effort to persuade the reader about the charisma of the holy man. The author successfully uses the image of the submissive outsider to strengthen the holy man's virtues, demonstrating that he is capable of impressing not only his monks and the local community but also the outsider visitors. The author instrumentalizes this motif to persuade the reader of Lazaros's sanctity because the submissiveness of the outsider is likely to produce a stronger impression on the audience.

be a source of unease and danger either mentally or physically, to those who encounter them. In the *Life* the antagonistic outsiders mostly have Arab and Armenian identities.

In contrast to the Arab visitor who is astonished by Lazaros's moral qualities, a group of Arab people whom the young Lazaros encountered on his way to pick some chickpeas in the Holy Land presents a different picture: a distressing social contact.[164] Gregory explains the reasons behind Lazaros's uneasiness, in his own words: "some Arabs with their women and children came along with us. When I saw that they were almost naked and were fooling about in an improper way and saying shameful things to the monks, my mind was quite badly disturbed."[165] Given that the Holy Land was in control of the Fatimid Caliph in that time, an encounter with Arabs was not entirely unexpected.[166]

But, why is this group represented as a clear mental stressor? The passage might be suggestive of the antagonistic relations between different ethnicities, but it seems more likely that the troubling image of the Arab group is based on the nudity, immorality of their words, and improper behaviour which might base on the ancient stereotypical uncivilized image of the nomadic Arab.[167] On the other hand, the distress may have to do with tensions based on the encounter of the groups of laity and the monk. The passage's textual function, on the other hand, seems to do with the justification of Lazaros's return to the *lavra* of St. Sabas from where he had been dismissed due to his disobedience to his superior.[168] Since after this encounter, Lazaros decides to withdraw from the monastery of St. Euthymios and asks to be taken back to the *lavra* of St. Sabas.



164 How distressing the Arab as an outsider can also be inferred from the passage in which the evil appears as an Arab to disturb a certain construction worker. As examined in Gregory elaborates, "he suddenly saw someone appear before him in the dress of an Ishmaelite [Arab] with wild eyes and <dishevelled> hair on his head." *The Life of Lazaros* 42.

165 *The Life of Lazaros* 17.

166 What is interesting here is that the passage implies that Lazaros might be, to a certain extent, capable of understanding the disturbing words uttered by the group so that he became vexed: αἰσχρά τινα πρὸς τοὺς μοναχοὺς λέγοντας, οὐ μικρῶς τὸν λογισμὸν βλαβείς. Chapter 17 in "Vitae Lazari in monte Galesio," 514, l. 38-39.

167 For the stereotypical negative image of the Arab see, Najib George Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abu Qurrah's Theology in Its Islamic Context* (Boston/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 31-33.

168 *The Life of Lazaros* 17.

Not unlike Arabs, Armenians seem to be associated with social enmity. Possibly, it is this hostility that is personified in the malevolent monk who attempted to sell the young Lazaros in Attaleia. Gregory alludes to this monk's ethnic identity by noting that he spoke to the shipowner in the Armenian language.[169] Greenfield aptly explains this detail as follows: "There is possibly a hint here of the general mistrust and suspicion toward Armenians that was common in Byzantine literature, and so perhaps also in real life."[170] While it sheds some light on the Byzantine distrust toward other ethnicities, the passage also underlines the possible threat for the locals of being captured and turned into slaves, especially by this ethnic group.

The threat associated with outsiders mainly appears in the form of foreign military units. In Gregory's account, both the Arab and Armenian armies appear as fearful threats. For example, the passage about Lazaros's departure from the Holy Land provides us with some information about the murder and conversion taking place in Jerusalem during the reign of Caliph Al-Hakim. Evidently, the danger terrifies not only the young Lazaros and his fellow monks but also the Christian communities living there. Underlying the physical and religious threat, Gregory states "for <the Muslims> killed a lot of people, monks and laymen; even worse, many people who were afraid of physical death, alas, died spiritually by denying their faith and calling themselves Saracens instead of Christians."[171]

Furthermore, Gregory narrates the aggression of the Armenian troops and how they troubled the Byzantine peasants with their assaults. Near the city of Antioch, for instance, the young Lazaros witnesses "some people standing in the middle of the road, lamenting over a girl who had just been abducted by the Armenian army as it passed there."[172] When he attempts to rescue the captured girl, the hostility of the soldiers becomes even more evident in their



169 διελέγετο αὐτῷ τῇ Ἀρμενίων διαλέκτῳ. Chapter 9 in "Vitae Lazari in monte Galesio," 511, l. 47.
170 *The Life of Lazaros*, 86. See also Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 155-195.
171 *The Life of Lazaros* 19.
172 *The Life of Lazaros* 15.

answer to him: “be off so that you don’t lose your life along with the girl!”[173] While this does not terrify Lazaros; instead, the dangerous setting allows the author to highlight how courageous and capable the holy man is, as he manages solely with his words to turn the situation around: “the <soldiers> quickly changed their brutality into docility and their brash insolence to humility,” and not only let the girl go but also desperately ask him for his blessing.[174] Moreover, through this hagiographic motif, the passage also points out the explicit dangers of foreign armies, especially for the local Byzantine women.

## 3.2 Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself

The damage caused by the foreign military units to the countryside is a one-sided story and hence not fully representative, especially given that the Byzantines were afflicted by their own army as well. As Talbot Rice notes, “the villagers were always in danger of being despoiled by their own soldiery or being stripped bare by foreign troops.”[175] Along with the fact that the peasantry at times was overburdened with high taxation collected for the military expenditures, Byzantine soldiers are often reported to be directly engaged in violence in rural areas. Haldon, too, underlines that “the presence of soldiers was rarely, if ever, welcome, except perhaps when a community or the local population at large was suffering directly from enemy attacks, (…) whole communities or individuals might still suffer at the hands of unruly or poorly disciplined soldiers.”[176] The following passage from the *Life* illuminates the detrimental effects of Byzantine military units on the rural communities and underlines the harmful effects of recruitment. At the same time, it indirectly sheds light on inter-communal hostility and social dissolution.

[173] *The Life of Lazaros* 15.
[174] *The Life of Lazaros* 15.
[175] Tamara Talbot Rice, *Everyday Life in Byzantium* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1967), 185.
[176] John Haldon, *Byzantium at War, AD 600-1453* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 80.

According to the author, a certain monk from Anatolikon *theme*, was captured in an unspecified war when he was still a layman and the father of at least three children. Gregory further remarks the death of the soldier's wife and the severe deprivation of the children, which was caused by the villagers—in the words of the soldier's daughter: "as we were small and unable to look after our affairs properly, the people from the village took all our <possession> and drove us out of our own home. So, I left there and came here, and I live, as you see, in this tiny little room, and earn my living by my own hands."[177] Greenfield notes that the passage is primarily Gregory's effort to legitimize the notion of *instabilitas*.[178] Moreover, it addresses the post-war trauma prevailing in the countryside. The detrimental effects of wars, directly or indirectly, on the rural communities are obvious both from the social and economic aspects. However, the text is also critical from the communal perspective by providing a glimpse into the social hostility between neighbors in the form of confiscation of property.[179]

Hostility among villagers in the Byzantine countryside can be a fruitful way of examining rural social relations. Throughout Gregory's narrative, the main source for this sort of evidence is Lazaros's mediatory role in serious disagreements that occurred among the villagers, if not in the side narratives as the one above.[180] In the examples of hostile behaviour,

[177] *The Life of Lazaros* 63.

[178] *The Life of Lazaros* 29. See also Donald M. Nicol, "Instabilitas Loci: The Wanderlust of Late Byzantine Monks," *Studies in Church History* 22 (ed 1985): 193–202.

[179] The Byzantine peasant community in Asia minor, as shown in the *Life*, represents typical characteristics of the free village community, which contrasts with the features of the later rural community of dependent peasantry tied to lay, ecclesiastical, or monastic large estates. For example, the case of demonic possession of a certain Laurentios the monk when he was a layman provides insight into the properties of the lay community. According to the story, he lived with his mother and they had at least one horse in their possession. *The Life of Lazaros* 73. Though, as Oikonomidès stresses, having a private property does not necessarily means that peasants are not independent, as dependent peasantry might have their own possessions as well. Nicolas A. Oikonomidès, "Byzantium between East and West (XIII-XV Cent.)," in *Byzantium and the West c. 850 - c. 1200*, ed. J. D. Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1988), 319–32. See also, Peter Charanis, "On the Social Structure and Economic Organisation of the Byzantine Empire in the Thirteenth Century and Later," *Byzantinoslavica* 7 (1951): 94–153. For the characteristics of the rural Byzantine community in the later Byzantine period, see Laiou, *Peasant Society*; Laiou, "The Palaiologoi and the World Around Them (1261–1400)," in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c.500–1492*, ed. Jonathan Shepard, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 803–33. For a regional example from the perspective of the *paroikoi*, see Kostis Smyrlis, "'Our Lord and Father': Peasants and Monks in Mid-Fourteenth-Century Macedonia," in *Travaux et Mémoires 16: Mélanges Cécile Morrison*, ed. Cécile Morrison (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2010), 779–92.

[180] Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function," 89.

property appears to be one of the whys and wherefores of conflict. Gregory critically notes that "a lot of people would <thus> go up to him, especially during the festivals, with disputes among themselves about real estate and various other matters."[181] Even though he does not elaborate the other reasons for disputes, he particularly mentions *περὶ χωρίων*.[182] Property-related disputes are among the main reasons why the people visited holy men since antiquity, and Lazaros too as a holy man functioned in the rural Byzantine society with this role.

Social tensions in the Byzantine rural community can also be traced at the level of the family unit, the practices of marriage, and especially of divorce.[183] Even though the villagers are tied to each other by strong economic, social, and familial ties, which are strengthened with further solidarities such as baptismal relations, the rural community both exerts and is exposed to internal conflict and hostility.[184] An account such as Gregory's text, which to some extent mirrors the Byzantine countryside, demonstrates how inaccurate it would be to consider the rural communities as a static and coherent social unit. In fact, it is almost impossible not to notice social dynamism, adaptability, and craft. This is clear in the example of divorce: even though divorce does not seem to be a common practice at the first glance, especially in the rural communities, as Laiou argues, "the dissolution of a marriage by means of divorce was not as rare as one might imagine in the Byzantine Empire."[185] The *Life* illustrates marital tensions and thus sheds light on the relationship of married couples, divorce practices, and rural community networks.

Gregory reports that there is a certain woman living near their village who is married to a local priest. This woman is reported suffering from her husband's constant violence and



[181] *The Life of Lazaros* 122.
[182] Chapter 122 in "Vitae Lazari in monte Galesio," 544, l. 36.
[183] For marriage see, Ruth Macrides, "Families and Kinship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 652–60.
[184] See M. E. Mullett, "Byzantium: A Friendly Society?," *Past & Present* 118, no. 1 (1988): 3–24. Fotini Kondyli, "Meeting the Locals: Peasant Families in 13th-Century Lemnos," in *Liquid & Multiple: Individuals & Identities in the Thirteenth-Century Aegean*, ed. G. Saint-Guillain and D. Stathakopoulos (Paris: Centre de recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2012), 75–90.
[185] Laiou, "The Byzantine Village (5th-14th Century)," 31–54.

abuse.[186] Thus, she comes to hate her husband and sets her mind to divorce him. As Laiou underlines people did not immediately turn to the law using legal grounds for the divorce. The aforementioned woman, too, first consults another woman on this issue and receives the following advice: "you <should> mix polluted blood with wine and give it to your husband to drink, for, when he has drunk it, he will at once go mad, and then you will have a legitimate cause for getting divorced from him, because he will be out of his wits."[187] This story supports Laiou's conclusion that people did not only go to law and use legal grounds for divorce.[188] They instead used several different ways including sorcery against the marital violence and the breakdown of the marriage.

Even though the divorce does not take place in the end, this passage is notable in several respects. It reveals some insights into the rural community and its misogynistic characteristics. As Galatriotou states, "misogyny was a fundamental tenet of Byzantine thinking."[189] More specifically, it demonstrates the dynamics of the marital discord, the practice of magic as a solution, and collaboration between the fellow peasant women.[190] Even though the author reproaches the woman and her advice by calling her as a "wicked counsellor," he seems to unintentionally reveal the rural women using strategies to undermine the marital and communal

[186] For the domestic violence against women in Byzantium, the lives of female saints would be a good source as we have this subgenre of the *pious wife* saints whose religious trial is almost entirely shaped by her husband's violence and abuse. See Stavroula Constantinou, "Virginity in Danger: Holiness and Sexuality in the Life of Mary of Antioch," in *ΔΩΡΟΝ ΡΟΔΟΠΟΙΚΙΛΟΝ: Studies in Honor of Jan Olof Rosenqvist*, ed. Denis Searby, Ewa Balicka Witakowska, and Johan Heldt, vol. 12, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2012), 126. Stavroula Constantinou, "Performing Gender in Lay Saints' Lives," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 38, no. 1 (2014): 24–32. See also Judith Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton University Press, 2013), 261–80. Anthony Kaldellis, "The Study of Women and Children," 64.

[187] *The Life of Lazaros* 125.

[188] Laiou, "The Byzantine Village," 50-51. For the legal ground of the divorce see also Ecloga 2.9.2, 2.9.3, 2.9.4. It can be justified with leprosy, fornication, impotence (2.9.2, and 2.9.3) It says "being possessed by demons" (ὑπὸ δαίμονος κυριευθῆναι) is not a cause for divorce. (2.9.4). Humphreys, *The Laws of the Isaurian Era*.

[189] Galatariotou, "Holy Women and Witches," 66.

[190] Along with this example of solidarity what other solutions did they seek for social problems such as marital issues? The role of the holy father is evident. Gregory reveals the role of Lazaros in the trouble of the aforementioned woman who is said to have regretted her actions. Moreover, in the following chapter, we also learn that married couples might consult the same spiritual father for their problems. Referring to one of his acquaintances, Gregory says that "I inquire if both husband and wife made use of a single spiritual father. He answered, "A <single> one." *The Life of Lazaros* 127.

pressure. Gregory also critically notes "she judged that <her being of> the same gender <rendered this woman> more trustworthy than anyone else whatsoever."[191] His intention to emphasize this woman's wickedness also reveals the friendship and cooperation between rural women.[192]

It goes without saying that rural women encountered many hardships in everyday life. Through the portrait of Irene, Gregory allows a brief insight into the social hostility women suffered from in the countryside as she was slandered and persecuted by the head of the village. Irene is a seemingly well-off widow living in Ephesus who "provided him [Lazaros] with anything he might need out of her own resources."[193] This points out the ambivalence of the consequences of widowhood for women in Byzantium. For many, widowhood meant severe economic hardship, and being forced to take recourse to begging or monastic garment, while for others, especially those who are from the upper-classes, drastic impoverishment does not seem to be the case, probably thanks to their dowry.[194]

Yet, regardless of the economic background, as seen in the case of Irene, the threat of physical assault and slander were by no means unusual.[195] As Catia Galatariotou notes, "sexuality is the most common and serious accusation hurled against her," in the Byzantine society.[196] We see that hostility of the head of the village towards Irene manifests itself in this way. He spreads malicious gossip about her, saying "she isn't going up to him for spiritual benefit but for sinful and shameful love-making," and then he sends young local men to



[191] *The Life of Lazaros* 127.
[192] Mullett, "Byzantium: A Friendly Society?," 19.
[193] *The Life of Lazaros* 56. The trope of the helping widow is a common in hagiographical literature as seen in the example of Danielis. See Kaldellis, "The Study of Women and Children," 63.
[194] Catia S. Galatariotou, "Byzantine Women's Monastic Communities: The Evidence of the Τυπικά," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 38 (1988): 263–90. See also Laiou, "The Role of Women in Byzantine Society," *Jahrbuch Der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 31, no. 1 (1981): 233–60. Gregory's account presents a similar picture of a well-off Constantinopolitan widow lady living in a good quarter of the city in a house large enough to accommodate two monks coming from Galesion in the "spare room." *The Life of Lazaros* 233.
[195] See also Talbot Rice, *Everyday Life in Byzantium*, 185; Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 96-100.
[196] Galatariotou, "Holy Women and Witches," 71.

sexually harass her.[197] Since the centre of Gregory's narrative is Lazaros, according to Gregory, through the holy man's sanctity, neither the gossip makes a significant impact among the villagers nor the henchmen achieve his goal.

## 3.3 Between the lay and the monastic

Gregory's account contains several passages on the relationship between the villagers and the monastics which, to a certain extent, exposes the anxieties of both sides and survival strategies in social and economic predicaments. For obvious textual reasons, Gregory has the tendency to depict the holy man located in the centre of the world, as a divine figure guiding the rural community around him. Gregory's villagers consult and respect the holy figure without hesitation, at first sight. Nevertheless, when cautiously examined, the same text also reveals the direct and indirect signs of mutual apathy, suspicion, and hostility.[198]

We can begin with monastic perspective. How is the village perceived from the perspective of those who are associated with the monastery? The mental division between monastic life and the outside world in the eyes of monks seems clear-cut, and that, in their view, the latter is laden with dangers. This can best be captured in Lazaros' words about a certain disordered monk. When the fellow monks grumble about this monk's ill-behaviour, Lazaros underlines the threats he could possibly encounter in the outside of the monastery:

> What if I did force him to leave, as you suggest, and he went off into the world and lost his soul? Tell <me>, who would then have to answer for it? Don't you admire <the act> that <young men> like this actually persevere and remain on this mountain, and are delivered from the constant problems of the <outside> world? What do you think? If these people were in the <outside> world right now, what would they be doing?



[197] *The Life of Lazaros* 56.
[198] From the perspective of lay hostility see, Peter Sarris, "Restless Peasants and Scornful Lords," 1–10; Anthony Kaldellis, "The Hagiography of Doubt and Scepticism," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 2, *Genres and Contexts*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 453–78.

We can perhaps draw some more conclusions from the passage beside the division of the two worlds.[199] Lazaros' perception of the outside is far from being hostile and rather colored by pity. The excerpt suggests that the outside world for the monk is trivial and hard to endure on the one hand and threatening and dangerous on the other hand due to the risk of losing one's soul.[200]

So how do monastics perceive of the outside world and its inhabitants?[201] Gregory's depiction of a fellow monk demonstrates how the peasantry is seen from the monastic perspective. When introducing a monk, he writes that "<this man>, who came from Lydia and was called Nikon, was a <real> peasant <in terms of> his background," and explains in detail what he means, saying that "he was a simple man and was also illiterate, he was set to work in the most menial jobs, but he proved to be as naturally clever and skilful in his inner and more important <behaviour>, as he was simple and rather unsophisticated in his outward behaviour."[202] Gregory's depiction of the peasantry as simple, illiterate, and unsophisticated has many similarities with the intellectual urban elite's perspective towards the countryside in Byzantium. Kazhdan underlines that from the urban perspective "the agroikos was conceived of as poorly clad, dirty, and illiterate."[203] Magdalino aptly recapitulates the perception of Constantinopolitans towards the rest of the Byzantium in these following words, "all Byzantines were Romaioi, but Constantinopolitans were more Byzantine than the rest."[204] Gregory's pejorative view possibly stems from the fact that he himself is originally a



199 Which can also be seen in this passage where Lazaros depicts the outside world as laden with tumults: "[…] people who live in the <outside> world and <are affected> by the tumult and cares of everyday life, lest you should be shipwrecked unawares in the harbor while pursuing things far from your calling." *The Life of Lazaros* 149.

200 Even though the intra-communal dispute and hostility among the monks is not treated in this chapter, its manifestations are not obscure. For the hostility Lazaros experienced from the ascetic brothers and the antagonism towards the visiting itinerary monks respectively, see *The Life of Lazaros* 150.

201 While underlying the division between the two worlds, I must underline two important points. The first is that the boundary was fuzzy and permeable. The second is that the interaction between them was obviously intensive.

202 *The Life of Lazaros* 171.

203 Alexander Kazhdan, "The Peasantry," 43-73, especially 70.

204 Paul Magdalino, "Constantinople and the Outside World," in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed. Dion C. Symthe (London: Routledge, 2000), 149–62, especially 151.

Constantinopolitan but it may also be an indication of monastic snobbery towards ordinary people.[205]

The aversion towards the outside world can also be traced more indirectly between the lines of Gregory's text, in the passage where Lazaros warns those monks who are enthusiastic about "a harsher <regimen> than the cenobitic style of life," underlining that one "has to pay more attention to spiritual simplicity and innocence than to physical asceticism." He advises them not to have a close relationship with the members of the village.[206] Nevertheless, Greenfield underlines, Lazaros's speech particularly targets one section of the outside community: the rural women.[207] Probably, hostility towards the outside world expressed by

[205] I use the term in reference to Magdalino's Byzantine snobbery. For that concept see, Paul Magdalino, "Byzantine Snobbery," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy, Ix to Xiii Centuries*, ed. Michael Angold (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984), 58–78. One should be cautious about generalizations about the boorishness of the peasantry. The scarcity of evidence does not necessarily prove the lack of sophistication. In fact, Kazhdan states that a peasant from the village of Kallikrateia wrote a vita, the *Life of St. Paraskeve* but the Patriarch Nicholas Mouzalon ordered it to be burned due to its "low standards." See, Kazhdan, "The Peasantry," 70-71. Gregory's vita might also provide some valuable information inviting us to rethink this issue. He notes, "On one occasion, some men from Attaleia, who had come to Lazaros for a blessing, were proposing some sayings from the Gospels to each other, and each of them was <then> giving his own interpretation of these. But, since they did not agree about the words, they were standing there for a long time, arguing over them." *The Life of Lazaros* 120. The author does not call them ordinary people or peasants but simply uses the pronoun τις, thus their identity remains ambivalent in the account: Καὶ γάρ ποτέ τινες, ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀτταλείας ὁρμώμενοι. Chapter 120 in "Vitae Lazari in monte Galesio," 544, l. 41-42. Still, it is significant that they are not specifically identified as monks. Moreover, the passage belongs to the part of the narrative where the author talks about the ordinary people visiting Lazaros.

[206] He notes that "He has to avoid the conversation and company of ordinary people, especially of the young, even if he's young himself, because the Enemy has entrapped many <monks> in that way and has then handed them over to destruction. Once he's got them to start out with a supposedly spiritual friendship, he's then contrived to ruin them in fleshly corruption… For this reason someone should not only not form relationships with such people but, if possible, he should shut his eyes so as not to gaze openly at their faces lest the Sower of Evil may thus sow some wicked thoughts in his heart." *The Life of Lazaros* 196.

[207] Comparing the hagiographical evidence with the testament of Lazaros implicitly suggests that it is nevertheless not unusual for the monks to have carnal relations with rural women. Chapter 129 of the testament states that "A brother asked the father about monks who fall into the sin of fornication. "<There are> those who fall again and again <indiscriminately>, regularly trying to repent [and reform], but because of the grip of habit, falling back into their old ways. Then there are those who fall once for all, sticking to one same person in their error. Which was the best?" he asked. The father replied: "Neither is right, neither is blameless, and if they fail to repent and right their ways, they are certainly [both] guilty and liable to punishment. However, as I see it, he who falls indiscriminately is more likely to turn and repent than a man who has settled <his affection> on one person and wants the situation to continue. A man who has attached himself in this way to one [p. 547] person, particularly if, furthermore, he has children by her, will hardly repent, unless an exceptional mercy of God—he who makes a way where no way is—through some special dispensation, set his affairs right. But the indiscriminate sinner, pricked by his own conscience, jeered at each time and insulted by men, may yet repent and change his ways." Such the question, such the answer given by the father." John Philip Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero, and Giles Constable, eds., "Galesios: Testament of Lazarus of Mounth Galesion," in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, trans. Patricia Karlin-Hayter, vol. 1, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 37 (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 155.

Lazaros here functions to prevent fellow monks to be tempted and have a carnal relation with peasant women.

In general terms, social hostility in the *Life* happens to be mutual. Thus, the reverse side of the picture, that is the laity's ill will, complements the aspect of the monks.[208] This can be illustrated by the example of the honey collector discussed in the previous chapter. Although the visit of the villagers and their aim to receive Lazaros's blessing for the dangerous task of gathering honeycombs suggest the social recognition of his sanctity among the villagers, they clearly have reservations, and dare to disclaim the holy man's religious authority. When they get unfavorable advice from Lazaros, one of them replies with apathy: "I've collected many such <honeycombs> and nothing bad has <ever> happened to me, so I'm not worried about going onto the <cliff> now."[209]

Laypeople's suspicion towards the holy man could easily turn into animosity, especially in an unfamiliar environment. Gregory, for example, vividly depicts how Lazaros experienced such inhospitality when he was a young and itinerant ascetic while passing through Caesarea. Despite the fact that he openly asks for it, at least twice, the local villagers refuse to accommodate him and to give him a crumb of bread.[210] Suspicion and inhospitality towards an ascetic stranger do not seem to be uncommon. On another occasion, for example, a group of villagers in Attaleia expels Lazaros when practising hesychia on a mountain. The author notes that they "drive Lazaros from the mountain by means of them. These <people> would thus



[208] The monastic life and the attitudes of monks are known to have been harshly criticised by the ecclesiastical elite. This is manifest also in the *Life*, particularly through the descriptions of hostility between Lazaros and the local ecclesiastical authorities. For further information on the elite's displeasure, see Paul Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twefth Century," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. Sergei Hackel (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 51–66. Yet, as the present chapter aims to demonstrate, critique did not always come from the elite, there was a great deal of suspicion and hostility among the rural community toward the monastics and monastic establishments.

[209] *The Life of Lazaros* 13. As Robert Browning underlines the revenge of the holy man can be detrimental for the suspicious see, Robert Browning, "The 'Low Level' Saint's Life in the Early Byzantine World," 123.

[210] *The Life of Lazaros* 27.

come up and attack him with insults and jests, and they even threatened to hit him if he did not quickly leave the mountain."[211]

In Gregory's account, the hostile attitude toward the holy man is explained within a religious context, with the influence of evil. Therefore, the unfriendly environment is part of Lazaros's trials so that he can prove his strength and endurance. In this sense, there is a little difference between natural and social hardship, between the hostility of community and wilderness. Nonetheless, from another angle, there is a little point in assuming the social hostility to be a solely religious trial, as the rural suspicion towards an outsider was not uncommon.

The hostility of the villagers is not limited to individual monks but can extend to the monastic establishment as a whole. Indeed, the anxiety of the monastic community about this issue is clearly revealed in a passage in which a certain monk called Matthew criticizes the construction of the monastery of the Resurrection. Gregory relates how he addressed the holy man: "'Don't you know' he continued, 'that after your death the people who live in the village of Galesion are going to chase us out and make this a barn for their animals?'"[212] The ambivalence between the social relationship of laypeople and monks can clearly emerge only when these kinds of rare references of hostility are compared and contrasted with the friendly general atmosphere depicted by Gregory throughout the account. The monastery here reveals as a possible economic threat to the villagers.[213]

The pragmatism of the villagers toward the holy man alluded to in the passage above can also be traced in the ways in which local laymen abused Lazaros's charity and hospitality. In part, the villagers skilfully manipulate the holy man's benevolence and charity for their own purposes. For instance, Gregory notes that after a layman from the village of Kepion is admitted

211 *The Life of Lazaros* 10.
212 *The Life of Lazaros* 109.
213 The peasantry's economic enmity towards the monastery can be seen more clearly in the case of the dependent peasants who have monastic landlords. See Kostis Smyrlis, "'Our Lord and Father,'" 779–92.

to the monastery, he "stole whatever he could find without the cellarer noticing and sent this to his mother by way of a lay acquaintance of his."[214] Similarly, Gregory's suspicion about the intention of the laypeople, especially the poor, can be traced in the ways in which he introduces them, saying "some of the poor who discovered the father's generous disposition would visit him ask him to become the sponsor of their children, either <telling him> the truth or else fabricating their story."[215] The robbery or swindle in which the villager seemingly engages, from another perspective, demonstrates the shrewdness villager's survival skill in an economically oppressive environment.

## 3.4 Conclusion

Even if the tightly-knit social communities existed in the Byzantine Empire, it would be a mistake to consider social life completely harmonious without social tensions. One of the most important aspects of the notion of threat and animosity for the community is its fluidity: the rural community is found both as the subject and object of social tension. They both cause and are exposed to social dangers. Further, animosity seems not to be innate but to materialize under certain conditions as a reaction to the predicaments and potential danger, or opinions based on stereotypes. In this chapter, I have identified the ambiguity of social relations in rural Byzantium by exploring social tensions present in the countryside. Although Gregory narrates social interactions of any sort within the general moralizing framework of his text, the *Life* provides us with a social picture of the Byzantine village as an oppressive environment, laden with dangers. Not unlike natural dangers, the author employs descriptions of social hostility in

[214] *The Life of Lazaros* 241.
[215] *The Life of Lazaros* 146.

order to highlight the sanctity of Lazaros from various angles: social threats appear either as trials of faith or as a challenge expected to be overcome by the holy man.

# Conclusion

What glimpses does the *Life* offer of the rural community? One of the most noticeable features of the countryside in the *Life* is its diversity: we see both the locals and the outsiders, beggars and those who are well-off, the pious and the immoral. The roles they had were ambivalent: they were not only exposed to problems but also caused problems, as is most visible in the last chapter, where the social hostility is explored. In the *Life*, Gregory provides a general picture of everyday problems of minor figures, even though it was not at the core of his authorial intentions. Furthermore, the reader should be aware of the framework of this picture: the thin line between hagiographic *topoi* and *realia* as well as of the role of the personal lens and cultural filter of the hagiographer. Therefore, the picture drawn in the text is not fully representative but interpretive.

This study has analyzed Gregory the Cellarer's account of the *Life of Lazaros* for what it tells us about the everyday problems common people were exposed to in rural Byzantium, while also exploring their textual function within the account. These problems are divided into three main categories: nature-related dangers, corporeal afflictions, and societal hostility. This study argues that the rural community, as presented in the *Life*, lived in a threatening environment with noticeable insecurity, and sought solutions and remedies in response to the risks that surrounded them. Moreover, the core purpose of the genre and Gregory's ultimate authorial motivation is the sanctification of the holy man. Hence, the experience of common people, in the account is of an auxiliary character and frequently functions as a literary device to shape the figure of the holy man by locating him within a familiar social context.

*The Life of Lazaros* shows that common people lived in fear and insecurity and were vulnerable to the wilderness: they fell off cliffs and were attacked by animals; they got robbed and were struck by hunger in the wild landscape; they were wounded when traveling.

Corporeal, mental, and spiritual problems were common. People frequently reported being attacked, threatened, harmed by evil, or lost self-control and consciousness. The Byzantine peasants suffered various illnesses in their short lives and died unexpectedly—only foreseen by the holy man. They were weakened by poor sanitary conditions and limited, if not ineffective treatment of medical conditions, along with malnourishment due to recurring famines. They became crippled with gout and injured in accidents. Social relations involved tension and hostility. They fell victim to armies and their own community. They lived under the threat of abduction and losing their social statues by being reduced to slavery. Economic instability was widespread, and beggars are a sizable group in the *Life*. The community was divided: they confiscated each other's property; disputes frequently occurred, especially on economic issues such as real estate. Rural women in particular suffered from intimidation, harassment, and abuse.

People actively sought solutions in response to these sorts of threats, although this aspect of their lives is less visible in the account and more coloured by the edifying framework of the genre. They prayed, visited churches and monasteries, and asked the holy man for help. Some even travelled to him from other cities to find cures for their problems. They also took precautions in advance by carrying preventive amulets. Magic was also part of the solution. Common people used their social and familial relations to overcome the problems they faced. Moreover, stereotypes seem to serve as a mechanism of self-protection: people tended not to trust unknown foreigners and strangers. They also used craftiness, for instance by feigning to be possessed by evil in order to deceive people for economic gain. They begged to the holy man—as a temporary solution in crisis—and thronged the monasteries asking for food and sheltering, and abused, deceived, and robbed them.

This general image retrieved from the *Life* reflects some degree of historical experience, however without intending to provide such information for its own sake. Rather, it likely served

to support the persuasiveness of the narrative by placing the extraordinary events surrounding Lazaros in an immediate recognizable world. Gregory aimed to sanctify Lazaros and to depict him as a guide, rescuer, and caregiver. Overall, for Gregory, there was no essential difference between natural, physical, and social problems within the framework of his text: they all served this ultimate purpose of portraying the saint from different angles. The notion of danger and its solutions were embedded in the account to show the audience that they should recognize the power of the holy man, take the words of the holy man seriously, and live a pious life. If they did not, there was a real possibility that they would not survive such problems, that they would be lured by evil, and even lose their lives.

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