
Jan Hus in Medieval Czech Hagiography

Thomas A. Fudge (Armidale, Australia)

The *Relatio* of Petr of Mladoňovice quickly became the *textus receptus* of accounts of Jan Hus's life, and especially his death, among Hus's followers in the Czech lands.¹ Petr's narrative has been subjected to considerable scholarly investigation and has played an enormous role in the construction of the memory of Hus. The importance of the *Relatio* noted, there are several other fifteenth-century "lives" which merit careful consideration for the way in which they present Hus, the role they play in the formation of his memory, and their value in terms of understanding the religious world of late medieval Bohemia. This essay examines two of these "lives" in an effort to learn more about Hus's evolution into a saint and also to rescue these sources from continued obscurity.²

Two Hagiographies

The term "lives" in this context refers not to biographies in the modern sense, but to narratives which explore, assess, and create memory. With reference to Jan Hus, this memory was of an ideal Christian man and a popular saint. Of course, there was no single form of sanctity or sainthood in the Latin Middle Ages. One might come to the status of a saint in many different ways. Jan Hus represents one of those pathways. Because hagiography has proven to be an important source for social history and, by extension, the history of medieval popular religion and mentalities,³ an examination of how saints were created reveals much about the communities that came to venerate them and the

¹ Petr of Mladoňovice, *Relatio de Mag. Joannis Hus causa*, in FRB 8, 25–120.

² This second objective has been achieved for humanist hagiography in: Alison Knowles Frazier, *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 2005).

³ Some scholars have attempted to relate hagiography to social values via quantitative analysis. Their results have been controversial, but have also considerably expanded the scholarly study of hagiography. See André Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du moyen âge* (Rome, 1981); and Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago, 1982).

values they held most dear.⁴ At the core of Hus's "lives" is a narrative which focuses on his *passio* and transforms oral tradition into written text. The results constitute part of the earliest historiography of Jan Hus and should be regarded as a specific literary genre in Bohemia at the end of the Middle Ages. These fifteenth-century "lives" of Hus are not the works of neutral observers; they constitute selective accounts that are observation driven and informed by specific motives. What follows is an assessment of these "lives" in an effort to evaluate the construction and meaning of the memory of Jan Hus and the religious values he came to embody.

The first text under consideration here is an anonymous "Account of the death of Hus," which was a narrative of Hus's *passio* written in Czech and purporting to be a firsthand report.⁵ The writer opened his narrative with the complaint that certain unnamed writers and witnesses had omitted important aspects of Hus's life while spuriousness had been attached to the memory and reputation of Hus. In distinction to these tactics, Anonymous claimed that he was about to set down what he had been witness to in 1415.⁶ This is almost certainly false. The document may have been written as early as the 1430s, but was perhaps composed as late as the 1450s. A certain dependence on Petr of Mladoňovice is evident throughout. Perhaps helpful in dating is a reference to Jan Železný, the former bishop of Litomyšl and archbishop of Esztergom, in the past tense.⁷ That Bohemian prelate died in 1430. Another clue for dating the text might lie in the text's inclusion of a prediction by Hus that Emperor Sigismund would not inherit the crown of Bohemia, which did happen in 1436. As such, composition after that date would make Hus a false prophet.

Beyond the issue of Anonymous's temporal distance from 1415, other details in the text suggest that its author was less concerned with accuracy than the lionisation of Hus. The author curiously did not seem to have any significant knowledge of Jakoubek Stříbro, for instance, and consequently over-emphasised Hus's role in the history of Utraquism. Concerning this, we learn that Jan Kardinal of Rejnštejn, one of the Prague masters, had a conversation with Hus on the subject, but Anonymous made more of this than

⁴ A classic stimulus along these lines can be found in František Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger: Studien zur Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit* (Prague, 1965). See also the more recent studies by: Aviad Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1992); and M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis (IX) of France: Kingship, Sanctity and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2008).

⁵ The original text can be found in: Roudnice, Lobkovic Library, MS VI F g 60. A modern edition has been published as: Anonymous, *Vypravování o smrti Husové* [A narrative of the death of Hus], in FRB 8:222–227. For convenience, the unnamed author of this text will be referred to in this essay as "Anonymous."

⁶ *Vypravování*, 222.

⁷ *Vypravování*, 226.

is warranted.⁸ Hus encouraged Utraquism in a letter to an unnamed priest written shortly after he arrived in Constance, and he composed a brief essay on the subject around the same time.⁹ However, it cannot be maintained that Hus contributed much to the practice which soon came to symbolise reformed religion in Bohemia.

Anonymous also emphasised the cruelty of Hus's judges in Constance, which represents a consistent trope in Christian hagiography. Anonymous alluded to the judgment of the judges' deeds in one hundred years, paid close attention to the alleged details of Hus's death, and generally conflated history and hagiography. Throughout the narrative, Hus was shown to see his afflictions as gifts of God. Hus summoned his persecutors to judgment before God within one hundred years. This is a reference to the legend which gained considerable currency in early modern Europe.¹⁰ There was also a curious comment that Hus might recant through a little child, which ostensibly suggested that Hus might allow a child to speak the recantation on his behalf. This notion is unreliable and rather bizarre, and can only be understood as a distortion or misunderstanding of some legend no longer extant.¹¹ When the ashes of the martyr were thrown into the river, his enemies mocked Hus suggesting he swim to his God.¹² The text ended with a warning issued at Constance by the anti-Hus faction and directed at those who might have been inclined to sympathy with heretics. Though its historical accuracy can be questioned, it seems likely that this text reflected a point of view valid among Hus's followers in the generation after Constance. It is possible to regard this source in the genre of an historical novel.¹³ Anonymous shows no interest in Hus prior to the events of Constance.

The second text bears the cumbersome title *Život, to jest šlechetné obcování ctného svatého kněze, Mistra Jana Husi, kazatele českého, od kněze Jiříka Heremity, věrného kazatele českého, sepsaný a nyní v nově vytištěný* [The life and holy conduct of the honourable and holy priest Master Jan Hus, Czech preacher, by the priest George the Hermit, faithful Czech preacher,

⁸ In a later resolution drawn up by the Council of Constance, we learn that this man was considered one of the main "heresiarchs and founders" of the Hussite movement. Thomas A. Fudge, *The Crusade Against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418–1437* (Aldershot, 2002) 19.

⁹ The letter is dated at the beginning of November 1414. See Novotný, 216. Hus's essay was entitled *Utrum expediat laicis fidelibus sumere sanguinem Christi sub specie vini?*, and was published in the sixteenth century in: Matthias Flacius Illyricus, ed., *Ioannis Hus, et Hieronymi Pragensis Confessorum Christi Historia et monumenta*, vol. 1 (Nuremberg, 1558) 52–54.

¹⁰ This legend is dealt with at length in: Adolf Hauffen, "Husz eine Gans – Luther ein Schwan," *Prager Deutschen Studien* 9 (1908) 1–28; and discussed with reference to iconography in Thomas A. Fudge, *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia* (London, 2010) 195–197.

¹¹ *Vypravování*, 227.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ This proposal is put forth by Novotný in his introduction to the text. See FRB 8, lxviii.

written and now printed again].¹⁴ Though precise dating is impossible, this Czech narrative was probably written in the 1470s. The author may have been Jiří Heremita [George the Hermit], a priest in the west Bohemian town of Stříbro, though this attribution is not certain. For the purposes of dating, an internal reference to Zdeněk Konopiště of Šternberk, who appeared in the 1450s, suggests the *terminus a quo* for the text's composition. Additionally, a comment about a meeting in the house of Jan Rokycana (d. 1471) is surely a reference to the vicarage of the Týn Church in Prague, and implies that the memory of Rokycana was still strong. Novotný's argument that the text's silence on the death of the priest Michael Polák in 1480 dictates an earlier date of composition is not persuasive in itself, but, taken together, these clues suggest a date of origin in the 1470s.

Sources of Hagiography

This text, like that of Anonymous, shows some dependence on the Czech *passio* of Petr of Mladoňovice and perhaps also on the Old Czech annalists and the "Very Fine Chronicle of Jan Žižka."¹⁵ Unlike Anonymous, George the Hermit displayed an interest in the life of Hus prior to his legal ordeal at Constance and, in that light, seemed to have attempted a true biography, although it is tendentious to the extreme.¹⁶ It presented Hus as a saint whose life can be understood mainly as fulfilling a divinely-initiated agenda and drove this point home with repeated allusions to biblical figures as "types" of Hus. Indeed, George the Hermit began his narrative by noting that Hus was committed to the service of God by his mother, which suggests a comparison with the Hebrew Bible story of Hannah presenting Samuel to God (I Sam 1). Further, the revolt of the Prague priests against Hus was likened to the Hebrew Bible conflict between Joseph and his brothers, and Hus's trial at Constance was compared with the treatment of Jesus.

Beyond this biblical parallelism, George portrayed Hus as a reformer who tried to correct the abuses of the late medieval church and who resolutely withstood Antichrist. Hus was presented as a faithful man whom God exalted

¹⁴ This text survives as part of a manuscript collated in 1533 and now bound as MS Prague KNM 25 E 17. A modern edition is available in: FRB 8:377–383. The text will hereafter be referred to as: George the Hermit, *Život*.

¹⁵ The chronicle has been edited in František M. Bartoš, ed., *Listy Bratra Jana a Kronika velmi pěkná o Janu Žižkovi* [The Letters of Brother Jan and the "Very Fine" Chronicle about Jan Žižka] (Prague, 1949) 35–44. There is newer and more accessible edition by Marie Krémová in: Ivan Hlaváček et al., eds., *Ze zpráv a kronik doby husitské* [From the reports and chronicles of the Hussite times] (Prague, 1981), 221–229. On the Old Czech Annalists, see Joel Seltzer, "Framing Faith, Forging a Nation: Czech Vernacular Historiography and the Bohemian Reformation, 1430–1530" (unpublished PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2004).

¹⁶ Novotný argues that it is, in fact, the earliest biography of Hus. See his introductory essay to the text in: FRB 8: civ.

as a “burning candle in a golden chandelier” to shine light in the darkness, and the text employed apocalyptic imagery to draw a contrast between the innocence and holiness of Hus and the wickedness and culpability of his persecutors. Throughout the text, Hus was depicted as an example of a godly life worthy of emulation. There was an overwhelming hagiographical element in this presentation, which contained the earliest attribution of legendary elements in Hus’s early life. By contrast, the earlier *passio* by Johannes Barbatus mentioned no details from these years, remarking only that Hus had been utterly committed to God from his earliest childhood.¹⁷ Overall, then, this text was dedicated to constructing a more comprehensive “life” of Hus than had previously existed, a sacred biography that cohered to the models of the biblical narrative.

These Czech sources developed the hagiographical Hus in a tradition not unlike the lives of medieval saints, thus revealing the distinctive “shared cultural and behavioural patterns” of late medieval Bohemia.¹⁸ Once he was murdered, Peter of Verona (d. 1252) evolved rather quickly into a new and unique saint who functioned as a type of substitute Christ for the Dominican Order.¹⁹ By comparison, Hus was presented as a holy, virtuous, and moral man who was devoted to God and to holy occupations from his youth.²⁰ His life was remembered for its “noble conduct” and the sanctity it consistently displayed. Not a word was spoken about fault, flaw, or foible. Instead, Hus was said to have lived piously and apart from sinners, with a marked preference for the rewards of the eternal kingdom rather than temporal honours.²¹ These traits were the basis for the ideal man motif which was ubiquitous in the “lives” of Jan Hus, and which had parallels in the wider corpus of medieval hagiography.²² The implication was that Hus was practically sinless and that this conviction had been adjudicated by those who had known him best.

Other historical sources from the period (i.e. the *Relatio*) served to varying degrees as a foundation for this discourse. The last part of the *Relatio* was translated into Czech in the years between 1417 and 1420, possibly by Petr of Mladoňovice himself. Commonly referred to as the “*Passio* of Master Jan Hus,” this version was important to the extent that there were additions to the text which did not appear in the original Latin.²³ Moreover, this Czech

¹⁷ George the Hermit, *Život*, 378. Cf. Johannes Barbatus, *Passio etc secundum Johannem Barbatum, rusticum quadratum*, in FRB 8:14–24, 20. There is a translation with commentary for the latter text in: Thomas A. Fudge, “Jan Hus at Calvary: The Text of an early Fifteenth-Century *Passio*,” *Journal of Moravian History* 11 (2011) 45–81.

¹⁸ Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own Country*, 17.

¹⁹ Donald Prudlo, *The Martyred Inquisitor: The Life and Cult of Peter of Verona († 1252)* (Aldershot, 2008) 97–134.

²⁰ George the Hermit, *Život*, 377–378.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Prudlo, *The Martyred Inquisitor*, 83.

²³ Petr of Mladoňovice, *Pašije Mistra Jana Husi* [The Passion of Master Jan Hus], in FRB 8:121–149.

passio was used on 6 July during the annual commemoration of Hus. It is evident that Petr of Mladoňovice intentionally constructed his account of the trial and death of Hus as a passion narrative in which Hus was a Christ figure, Sigismund was Herod, Michael de Causis and his accomplices were the scribes and Pharisees, and Petr himself was cast in the role of eyewitness or apostle.²⁴ Petr's physical proximity is important here, as first hand points of view authenticated the medieval "lives" of Jan Hus and functioned as proof of his holiness, which served as the foundation for the invention of a "new" Hus.

Creation of the New Hus

This new Hus was the creation of hagiography rather than a strictly historical character. In the hands of the writers of these "lives," Hus was considerably less a critically adjudicated figure of history than an ideal man. For example, the accolades of these "lives" contained no reproach save for the quoted viciousness of Hus's unjust judges. The martyr was praised, his memory lauded, and his conduct considered exemplary. Having judged his life worthy of imitation, these writers granted Hus memory and preserved it in their "lives." George the Hermit says that Hus was made a prince of God, which made him a proficient practitioner of the law of God and, as a consequence, a preacher of righteousness and the punisher of sin.²⁵ This idealised presentation, coupled with the tragedy of Constance and the drama of the Hussite wars, created a context for the elevation of Hus to the stature of a popular saint.

An analysis of Hus's "lives" demonstrates the role that history played in the creation of an ideal Hus. Each of the sources used history to reinforce its specific point of view, and the texts both built upon a developing tradition and added to it. That emerging tradition began the moment the pyre was set ablaze in 1415, and the Hus which emerged was sometimes based loosely in history and firmly in hagiography. This is particularly true of the texts of George the Hermit and Anonymous. The heretical Hus was succeeded by the holy Hus; the man of Prague was eclipsed by a new Christian saint. These medieval "lives" constructed an image wherein the Holy Spirit spoke through Hus, and our texts combined to present a powerful argument for regarding Hus as a saint. If Jacobus de Voragine compiled the stories comprising his *Golden Legend* out of pious motivations,²⁶ the writers of the Hus narratives created theirs from a desire to codify Hussite (and later, Utraquist)

²⁴ This point is convincingly argued in: Hubert Herkommer, "Die Geschichte vom Leiden und Sterben des Jan Hus als Ereignis und Erzählung," in *Literatur und Laienbildung im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit*, ed. Ludger Grenzmann and Karl Stackmann (Stuttgart, 1981) 114–146.

²⁵ George the Hermit, *Život*, 377–378.

²⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, ed. and trans. William Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1993).

doctrine and to disseminate the moral and spiritual significance of the martyr of Constance. This is especially evident in Petr of Mladoňovice's *Relatio*;²⁷ the narratives developed by George the Hermit and Anonymous also, however, provided a glimpse into the Jan Hus who played a central role in the historiography, hagiography, literature, art, and dramaturgy of the later Middle Ages and early modern period.²⁸ It may, indeed, be said that his memory becomes a pillar for those traditions.

Significance of Miracles

It seems clear that Christian ideas of martyrdom and miracles played an important role in constructing portraits of a post-historical Hus. Elements of the Hus stories which appeared in some of these narratives were clearly apocryphal. George the Hermit, for example, described how Hus was once praying during the night. Coming to the fireplace, he took a glowing ember and held it until he was burned. He then prayed aloud that God might assist him in overcoming the weakness of the flesh in order to fulfil the will of God. A witness to this act of asceticism described an angel standing in the fire.²⁹ This story also turned up in Hussite song, and it indicates how the depiction of Hus as an ideal man developed over time.³⁰ The ideology of the nascent Hussite movement in 1416 was not identical to the Hussite faith of the 1430s, which in turn should not be thought of as synonymous with the Utraquist tradition as it appeared in the 1470s. The remarkable, late addition of a miraculous Hus did not capture the imagination of the various movements bearing his name, which prompts a key question: what factors made it possible for a miraculous St. Jan Hus to appear at this particular point in the developmental arc of Hussite hagiography?

²⁷ Herkommer, "Die Geschichte," especially 129–130.

²⁸ The best works on Hus in art are Jan Royt, "Ikonografie Mistra Jana Husa v 15. až 18. století" [The Iconography of Master Jan Hus from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century] HT, *Supplementum* 1 (2001), 405–451; Milena Bartlová, "Původ Husitského Kalicha z ikonografického Hlediska," [The origin of the Hussite chalice from the iconographic point of view] *Umění* 44 (1996), 167–183; idem, "The Utraquist Church and the Visual Arts before Luther," *BRRP* 4 (2002) 215–223; and Milena Bílková, "Ikonografie v utrakvistické teologii" [Iconography in Utraquist Theology] (unpublished PhD dissertation, Charles University, 2007) especially 72–94. See also: Fudge, *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia*, 189–208.

²⁹ George the Hermit, *Život*, 378.

³⁰ The texts for the songs "Pamatujmež radostně tento den" [Let us joyfully remember this day] and "Utěšená milost boží" [The reassuring grace of God] are in FRB 8:455–456 and 391–394, respectively. On the role of songs in the Hussite revolution, see Thomas A. Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride: The First Reformation in Hussite Bohemia* (Aldershot, 1998) 186–216; and Marcela Perett, "Vernacular Songs as 'Oral Pamphlets': The Hussites and their Propaganda Campaign," *Viator* 42 (2011), 371–391. See also: Thomas A. Fudge, *The Memory and Motivation of Jan Hus, Medieval Priest and Martyr* (Turnhout, 2013) 135–183.

The main difference between Hus's "lives" and the narratives of medieval saints has to do with miracles. In fact, Hus performed no miracles in most of his "lives," and they contained no tales of divine intervention in his life, both of which were characteristic features of the *Golden Legend*. The absence of miracles, however, did not necessarily invalidate claims about the sanctity of Jan Hus. The saintliness of Louis IX of France (d. 1270) was reflected by his social function and in his work. If Louis did not require the subsequent miracles to establish his sanctity, neither did Hus.³¹ Still, though, both George the Hermit and Anonymous added narrative flair that was lacking, most notably, in the *Relatio* of Petr of Mladoňovice. Certainly Petr set a precedent for historical writing in late medieval Bohemia, and he clearly influenced these later "lives," as well as other fifteenth-century texts.³² But his accurate, if tendentious, account of Hus's final months was somewhat confused in its organisation, and the assembled documents were not deployed to their fullest extent, leaving the end product appreciably tedious. Petr's actual account of Hus's *passio* is an exception to that general observation, but the *Relatio* as a whole was complemented by George the Hermit, Anonymous, and Barbatus's briefer, more lively narratives. Taken together, these texts represented a strongly pro-Hus perspective which manipulated historical sources in order to sketch the hagiographical outlines of the "life" of the Czech martyr.³³

Calvary and Constance

The use of the vernacular in the narratives written by George the Hermit and Anonymous, along with the Czech *passio* of Petr of Mladoňovice, might imply that their intended audience was wider than clerics and scholars. Even so, the challenges of literacy in fifteenth-century Bohemia would not suggest that these tracts had wide readership. Indeed, there is little to no evidence to support an assumption that they were widely circulated. Hagiography may well be a reflection of local history and culture, but if a text's audience cannot be identified, as is true here, then this observation is of limited value.³⁴ We do know that the annual commemoration of St. Jan Hus on 6 July included readings from the last part of Petr of Mladoňovice's *Relatio* and from other historical documents. The public reading of these

³¹ Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis (IX) of France*, 19.

³² See especially the aforementioned "Very Fine Chronicle of Jan Žižka" and the "Murder of Jan Želivský" by Priest Vilém, published as: "O Smrti kněze Jana z Želíwa," [On the death of Jan Želivský] in SRB 3:480–485.

³³ Comparative hagiographical research suggests that this manipulation was typical. See David Collins, *Reforming Saints: Saints' Lives and their Authors in Germany 1470–1530* (Oxford, 2008).

³⁴ Collins in particular focuses his attention on local history.

materials helped form and preserve the memory of Hus. They collectively presented Hus as a hero of the faith and as a compellingly ideal man. The posthumous Hus became a figure of epic, biblical proportions. Hus was a messiah. He delivered Bohemia from the heresies of Antichrist. He turned the faithful aside from the seducing tendencies of wayward clerics. Through all adversity he remained the ultimate faithful man, the aforementioned “burning candle in a gold chandelier” whose glow sheds light on all in the household of faith who wish to know the truth.³⁵

The “lives” consistently linked Hus to the biblical heroes of the Christian faith. Hus was Samuel, brought by his own mother to God for service. He was Joseph, betrayed once again by his brethren, who are represented by the envious and malicious Prague clergy. Hus was another Elijah who was carried off to heaven in a flaming chariot.³⁶ He was also seen as part of the great army of the apostles and martyrs and, coupled with St. Laurence was considered exceptional even among this distinguished company. In a similar vein, Hus’s trial was linked to the judicial ordeal of Jesus in the “lives”. In both venues, there were false witnesses, a general willingness to rely on the testimony of absentee witnesses, a lack of opportunity for cross-examination, the admission of unsupported or uncorroborated evidence, and a pervasive mean-spiritedness, all of which resulted in the abuse of an innocent man. One of the “lives” also introduced the parallel example of Susanna from the deuterocanonical “Daniel and Susanna,” further bolstering the soteriological ramifications of Hus’s trial.³⁷

The deliberate parallels in these “lives” between Calvary and Constance were unmistakable, and the emerging portrait of the martyred Hus rather intentional. False witnesses, for example, played an important role in the Hus case. George the Hermit referred to false witnesses against Hus who were not even present at the trial.³⁸ While this is not entirely true, inasmuch as we know that vitriolic enemies of Hus, namely Michael de Causis, Štěpán Pálec, and Petr of Uničov were present at Constance, some Hussite authors claimed that the fabrications concocted by these men were the critical evidence in Hus’s condemnation.³⁹ The “lives” were either silent or vague on the identity of Hus’s main accusers; George the Hermit identified them only as “Czech priests, monks, canons, masters, and others,” while Anonymous designated two canons of Vyšehrad, two university masters, two members of the city council of the Old Town of Prague, and two canons at St Vitus Cathedral.⁴⁰ Neither, however, advanced any names.

³⁵ George the Hermit, *Život*, 377.

³⁶ George the Hermit, *Život*, 377, 378–379, and 383.

³⁷ George the Hermit, *Život*, 380.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 379–380.

³⁹ See, for instance: Vavřinec of Březová, *Historia Hussitica*, in FRB 5:327–534, 332, and 338.

⁴⁰ George the Hermit, *Život*, 379; and *Vypravování*, 225.

The Battle for Hus's Memory

These strategies of characterisation in the "lives" of Jan Hus take us deeper into the religious world of the later Middle Ages. Juxtaposing the Hus of history with the hagiographical Hus might suggest that the latter is an opprobrious category, but this conclusion obscures what the "lives" have to tell us. Considered against a wider canvas, the point of saints' lives in the Middle Ages was to present their subjects without any blemish in character, and to do so without qualification or reservation.⁴¹ As such, it is impossible to read hagiography simply as a recording of historical fact, which produces flawed and problematic conclusions.⁴² Rather, saints' lives, including those of Hus, should be read as a register of their respective principles of sanctity.⁴³ Hus, then, was consistently the perfect personification of the suffering servant, a conclusion that would not have appeared so strange to certain (i.e., non-Catholic) fifteenth- and sixteenth-century readers.

In considering Hus's "lives," it appears that there was a battle for the memory of Hus in the fifteenth century. The Council of Constance had certainly tried to eradicate it, and even during his lifetime Hus had been a polarising personality in and beyond Prague. Power struggles between various Hussite groups and the Roman Church continued throughout the fifteenth century, and contemporary records from fifteenth-century Bohemia provide unimpeachable witness to those conflicts. Given this context, did producing a "life" of Hus imply some type of authority or assert a doctrinal prerogative, or religious superiority? The possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand. George the Hermit described a specific dispute which took place in the house of Jan Rokycana. The discussion centred on Hus. Some present claimed he had been a heretic; others argued he was holy. This was the moment when an unnamed speaker described the aforementioned incident of Hus, the burning ember, and the angel, thus adding an ostensibly divine seal of approval to the martyr.⁴⁴ These "lives" therefore played an important role in the late medieval battle for Hus's memory. With eyewitnesses passing from the scene and the inherent instability of oral traditions, these texts solidified and preserved a certain memory of Jan Hus among subsequent generations of faithful Czechs. This is an essential element in the cult of remembrance. It is also plausible to argue that a purely Hussite saint enhanced the moral authority of the Czech reform. The Dominicans certainly used the cult of the martyred Peter of Verona to advance their claims in competition with the Franciscans, and a miraculous St. Jan Hus may have played a similar role in the advancement of the Bohemian reform movement.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Prudlo, *The Martyred Inquisitor*, 170.

⁴² As in the case of Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own Country*, 52–54.

⁴³ This interpretation becomes more compelling when the popularity of hagiographic texts in the Middle Ages is taken into consideration. See Collins, *Reforming Saints*, 126.

⁴⁴ George the Hermit, *Život*, 378.

⁴⁵ This is convincingly shown in: Prudlo, *The Martyred Inquisitor*.

Role of Martyrdom

Arguably, Jan Hus was a saint only because he was a martyr. Few familiar with the sources of the early Bohemian reform movements would dispute that Jakoubek of Stříbro was a more important theologian, but since he had the misfortune to live into old age no one thought to make him a saint. The emphasis on Hus's death as the basis for his sanctity is evident in the "lives," which pay more attention to an intentional portrayal of Jan Hus as an imitator of Christ than to constructing a strictly biographical record of his life and deeds. It is regrettable that no one seems to have considered the value of a fulsome biography of Hus in the fifteenth century, although George the Hermit was something of an exception in this regard. Mainly, though, it must be said that a second motive was at work in the writing of these narratives, insofar as they – along with the majority of medieval hagiographic texts – strove at "blurring the individual's traits and transforming his or her lifetime into a fragment of eternity."⁴⁶ In this sense, hagiography was not about inventing a fictitious past, but was concerned with appropriating a vision of that past for the present.⁴⁷ Granted, hagiographic authors could initiate a process wherein their historical subject was forgotten and a saint created in his or her place, reflecting an image of the present not entirely applicable to the past.⁴⁸ Specific hagiographical intention therefore affected narrative reliability, so that there is little doubt that many extant traditions were frequently altered, expanded or developed to achieve determined aims.

Relics and Liturgy

Beyond hagiography, there were two principle means of venerating holy people in medieval Europe: liturgy and relics. For Hus, the former took place on 6 July. The latter, however, was impossible, inasmuch as the Council of Constance had made a deliberate effort to ensure that no potential relics of Hus remained after his death. Petr of Mladoňovice specifically refers to the complete destruction and disposal of Hus's remains, which was corroborated in the narratives of both George the Hermit and Anonymous. The lack of relics, though, did not limit the liturgical celebration of Hus. Instead, the "lives" of Hus became literary monuments to the miraculous Hus. To wit, years before Constance, while praying to God before the fireplace as an angel stood in the flames, Hus prayed: "O Lord God. You know my weakness and you can see how fainthearted I am when suffering because I am a body. Unless you

⁴⁶ André Vauchez, "The Saint," in *Medieval Callings*, ed. Jacques Le Goff (Chicago, 1990) 313–346, 313.

⁴⁷ Frazier develops this point of view throughout her *Possible Lives*.

⁴⁸ Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own Country*, 148.

help me I will be unable to overcome and do your holy work.”⁴⁹ These words were identical with a stanza from a later fifteenth-century song about Hus, thus connecting narrative sources with complementary forms of communal, oral discourse.⁵⁰

There is good reason to categorise Petr of Mladoňovice’s *Relatio* and the work of George the Hermit and Anonymous as literary *martyria* in place of the shrines sometimes built by Christians over the graves of the martyrs in the era of the early church. A physical shrine at Constance would have been quite impossible. There were no actual relics to entomb, and the political and religious climate in the south German lands would not have tolerated a memorial in any event. It has been claimed that the soil around the stake was shovelled up and taken to Prague, but the remains of Hus could not be brought back into the community of the faithful in Bohemia. Instead, the liturgical celebration of Hus and the textual remembrance of his life and death had to suffice, both centred on the places where the saint had been and his continued presence remained on earth.⁵¹ The “lives” were written expressly to perpetuate the memory of Hus and his piety. That was their essential point. In the Middle Ages, the word “memory” had a legal connotation indicating testimony given by witnesses. George the Hermit and Anonymous were thus witnesses to Jan Hus, just as Petr of Mladoňovice had been, and their testimonies must be considered part of the evolving memory of Hus.

Attempts to Obliterate the Memory of Hus

While the Hussite and Utraquist “lives” clearly intended to preserve the memory of Hus, other actors aimed at achieving the converse. Petr of Mladoňovice pointed out that the Council of Constance greatly desired to wipe out every trace of Jan Hus from the memory of faithful Christians.⁵² Other fifteenth-century “lives” noted the same effort, but their existence attested to the spectacular failure of the conciliar authorities in this matter. According to our Bohemian authors, the effort to eradicate Hus’s memory failed because the grace of God intervened to spread his renown all the more and to embed the memory of Hus even deeper in the hearts of the faithful forever. In short, the “lives” of Hus argued that God had rescued him from oblivion and

⁴⁹ George the Hermit, *Život*, 383.

⁵⁰ “Utěšená milost boží,” [Comforted by the Grace of God] in FRB 8:391–394, at 392.

⁵¹ The leading authority on the liturgical veneration of Hus is David R. Holeton. Among numerous studies, see his: “The Office of Jan Hus: An Unrecorded Antiphony in the Metropolitan Library of Estergom,” in *Time and Community: In Honor of Thomas Julian Talley*, ed. J. Alexander (Washington, DC, 1990) 137–152; “O Felix Bohemia – O Felix Constantia: The Liturgical Commemoration of Saint Jan Hus,” in HENC, 385–401; and “The Celebration of Jan Hus in the Life of the Churches,” *Studia Liturgica* 35 (2005) 32–59.

⁵² Petr of Mladoňovice, *Pašije*, 147.

undertaken to preserve his memory among the faithful everywhere. Those in charge of Hus's remains had feared that any piece of his body or clothing in the hands of the Czechs might lead to idolatry.⁵³ There is little doubt that any fragment of his physical life would have been seized upon by his disciples and proclaimed a relic. Consistent with this assumption, a seventeenth-century author described how a chair that had reportedly belonged to Hus in Bethlehem Chapel was now kissed by those thinking it could cure the misery of a toothache!⁵⁴ It would seem that in Bohemia at least, St. Jan Hus had replaced St. Apollonia as the intercessory saint for those with dental problems.

In response to the Council's efforts to root out Hus's memory, the "lives" which we have been examining were unanimous in their opposition to the Council and their consequent representation of its members. The Council believed that in sending Hus to the stake they were delivering the soul of a heretic to hell. Bohemian Christians loyal to Hus, however considered that an illegitimate use of ecclesiastical power. Introducing an eschatological symbol, one of the "lives" equated the Council with the great whore of the Apocalypse and therefore referred to the council fathers as the "sons of Lucifer," ruthless "attorneys of hell," and the "sons of death." Possessed by madness, intolerance, dementia, and senselessness, the Council sat in opposition to heaven and oppressed the innocent. Consistent with the record of Petr of Mladoňovice, the later "lives" noted that Hus was regarded by his enemies as the "traitor Judas," or even as one who was worse than Judas. The biblical figure had betrayed Jesus, to be sure, but Hus had betrayed the entire church (i.e. the body of Christ) by contaminating it with false teaching and heresy. The Council therefore judged that Hus should "die like a dog."⁵⁵

According to the "lives," the Council warned the faithful not to be hoodwinked by the fact that Hus went cheerfully to the stake. After all, heretics always smiled in the face of damnation! All of the "lives" mention the mitre decorated with demons that Hus had to wear, which was to indicate that he had been separated from the body of the faithful. Anonymous also recorded a warning issued by the Church in the aftermath of Hus's execution, in case this iconographic message had not been sufficient: "Whoever grieves on account of this heretic, or follows him or adheres to him, shall be treated in like fashion or even worse."⁵⁶ Neither George the Hermit nor Anonymous took note of such threats, and their "lives" illustrated the reality that the church ultimately did not possess complete power over regulating the veneration of saints or even definitively shaping a universal model of sanctity.⁵⁷

⁵³ George the Hermit, *Život*, 382–383.

⁵⁴ Bohuslav Balbín, *Epitome historica rerum bohemicarum* (Prague, 1677) 414. On Balbín's influence on the sacred history of the Czech lands, see Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia: Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation* (New York, 2011) especially 130–144.

⁵⁵ George the Hermit, *Život*, 380–382; and *Vypravování*, 226–227.

⁵⁶ *Vypravování*, 227.

⁵⁷ Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own Country*, 21 and 39.

Rescuing Hus from Oblivion

Rescued from the threat of annihilation, Hus became a radical spiritual leader and, in some sense, a protagonist for social change in several of his “lives.” These texts, unlike many examples of medieval hagiographic literature, were written soon after the events they described, during the time when those who had been intimately acquainted with Hus were still alive. As such, these narratives served a function beyond merely recording the well-known facts of Hus’s life. One of their principle intentions appears to have been offering an invitation to discipleship and the direct imitation of Hus and Christ. This theme appeared consistently in the work of both Anonymous and George the Hermit, where all of the faithful who remained on pilgrimage are called to witness to Hus’s fidelity to Christ’s model. Hus therefore continually exemplified the critical elements common to medieval saints including piety, personal charisma, and polished oratorical skills.⁵⁸

Although autobiography as a genre was rare in the Middle Ages, biography, by contrast, was quite common.⁵⁹ The “lives” of the medieval saints constituted a significant subset of this genre, but even these hagiographic texts were scarcely monolithic.⁶⁰ They may be regarded in one sense as pious fictions, in other cases as panegyric, and in still other ways as examples of sacred biography. All three of these genres are present to greater and lesser degrees in the “lives” of Hus, and they combine to form a textual representation of the ideal Christian man as this figure was understood in late medieval Bohemia. The appropriation of particular saints by particular communities was, of course, commonplace in the Middle Ages. The Dominicans, Cistercians, the Benedictines at the abbey of St. Denis, and Franciscans all utilised St. Louis of France in ways that bolstered their particular claims vis-à-vis each other.⁶¹ The texts written by George the Hermit and Anonymous assumed uniformly that Hus was holy and his life worthy of emulation, but what community were these authors attempting to teach through this assertion? What elements of their narratives were set forth as paradigms for that community?

⁵⁸ By way of comparison, Prudlo finds these characteristics in Peter of Verona. See *The Martyred Inquisitor, passim*.

⁵⁹ There are a few exceptions, notably St. Augustine’s *Confessions*; Peter Abelard’s *Historia Calamitatum*, Guibert of Nogent’s writings, and Margery Kempe’s *Book*. Otherwise, though, autobiographical writings exist only as elements in other works.

⁶⁰ *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiqua et Mediae Aetatis*, ed. Henryk Fros et al., 3 vv. (Bruxelles, 1898–1908, 1986) lists 8,989 “lives” in the second edition (1949). For a useful interpretation and sampling from this corpus, see the valuable collection by: Thomas Head, ed., *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (New York, 1999).

⁶¹ Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis (IX) of France*, 125–180.

Paradigms for the Community

These are difficult queries because we cannot identify the communities which used these “lives” with any certainty, although it is clear that lay communities could and did effectively create and shape perceptions of sainthood.⁶² It seems quite certain that our authors wrote not only to confirm knowledge and codify the memory of Hus, but also to expand it. They wrote to edify, inform, and teach. But teach what? Principally that Hus was the ideal Christian man. This much seems certain. A careful analysis of the texts reveal the broad outlines of the authors’ intention and pedagogical aims. All of this underscores the need to instruct a “reading” community which was linked by common knowledge and a commonly accepted understanding of that knowledge.⁶³ This reading community implied the existence of a “hearing” community, and with respect to other medieval literature we encounter frequent references to the hearers of books, which may suggest intentional reading aloud.⁶⁴

Committing a narrative or tradition to print seemed to guarantee some level of control over the history and memory it promulgated. There is the strong possibility that oral traditions about Hus led to the narratives of George the Hermit and Anonymous, and that these texts employed elements of existing oral and written traditions in order to formulate a new construct. We must attempt, then, to come to some conclusion about the extent to which the creation of written texts altered the oral stories upon which they were based. The challenge is to interrogate the texts as to how and why they were created.⁶⁵ In antiquity, Socrates told a story to Phaedrus about Thamus, an Egyptian king who appeared to argue that writing damages memory and creates false wisdom, thereby making something which is at best partial into something absolute.⁶⁶ Certainly the oral histories and oral traditions about Hus were codified in the written “lives,” but what were the differences? We do not know.

Reliability of Hagiography

The fifteenth century remained principally an oral culture. In oral traditions, the past was understood through present circumstances, essentially meaning that the past was constructed and reconstructed in service to the

⁶² This is shown in: Prudlo, *The Martyred Inquisitor*; and Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own Country*, 99 and 125.

⁶³ On this concept, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* (Princeton, 1983); and Pierre Chastang, “L’archéologie du texte médiéval, autour de travaux récents sur l’écrit au Moyen Âge,” *Annales* 63 (2008) 245–270, especially 265–269.

⁶⁴ Ian Wei, *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University, c. 1100–1330* (Cambridge, 2012) 376.

⁶⁵ Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own Country*, 69.

⁶⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII*, trans. Walter Hamilton (New York, 1973) 96.

present. There is no reason to suppose that the history of Jan Hus was any different. The transfer of authority from the living voice to the printed text signified in some way a handing on of authority, a process that neither happened immediately nor occurred without incorporating extraneous elements or consolidating various ideas or interpretations within the text. The modern scholar must therefore look for evidential support from the sources in order to see how the enshrinement of the oral in the textual might falsely create a set of “facts” about Hus’s life. For example, can Petr of Mladoňovice or our later sources be relied upon for what Hus said at Constance in terms of *ipsissima verba*? It seems unlikely, even though Petr of Mladoňovice’s account obtained a semblance of official sanction within Bohemia because it was: the earliest of the accounts; the product of definite, verifiable, first-hand knowledge, built around the texts of written, often official, documents; read at Bethlehem Chapel early on; unfailingly sympathetic to Hus; and unambiguously in support of the early Hussite reform agenda. Petr (and perhaps the others) also reflected in their respective narratives a profound identification with their subject. In modern terms, we might say that the concerns and views of the authors were embedded deeply in their texts, creating what Gadamer called *Horizontverschmelzung*: a fusion of horizons.⁶⁷ In fifteenth-century Bohemia, that meant that Petr painted a portrait of St. Jan Hus, faithful martyr of Christ and the ideal man.

Many scholars have preferred Petr of Mladoňovice’s “life” as the most reliable account of Hus’s death.⁶⁸ The narratives of George the Hermit and Anonymous, conversely, have been adjudicated as flawed, speculative, and ultimately of little value. It is possible, however, that these narratives are truthful, but not factual. This brings us back to authorial intention, and how the authors’ historical contexts played a role in determining the meaning of their texts. We must therefore ask what the competing traditions in fifteenth-century Bohemia believed about Hus and how the extant sources reflect those particular points of view or mentalities. The main concern of George the Hermit and Anonymous does not appear to have been the creation of an intentional, chronological biography in the Rankean *wie es eigentlich gewesen* sense of what actually happened. Rather, both intentionally explained and presented Jan Hus as a holy man and a martyr who was used by God to reform the late medieval Czech church, and that portrait facilitates the general spirit of Hussite religion.

The manipulation of hagiographical texts to support and suit other intellectual agendas is too often a study in failure.⁶⁹ These “lives” make clear that their specific goals were moral, devotional, educational, and theological.

⁶⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd ed. (New York, 2004) 299–306.

⁶⁸ There are dissenting opinions. See especially: Herkommer, “Die Geschichte.”

⁶⁹ Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 211, 265, and 312.

We might wonder, then, if their authors believed what they wrote or were consciously engaged in creating pious fiction. This distinction seems more modern than medieval, though, and it seems more likely that they sought to distil meaning and sacred significance from the life, and especially the death, of Hus. But this observation raises an essential question: has the figure of Hus been suffocated by the literary creations of our writers, or have their efforts served to liberate the memory of Hus from fossilised convention and its legal and chronological shackles? As medieval writers, George the Hermit and Anonymous probably did not distinguish what we might consider fact from what we might think of as fantasy. It is likely that they regarded both as signs of truth and divine revelation, so that they accepted and even promoted the coexistence of multiple contexts for the memory of Jan Hus: his actual life, his posthumous life, his remembered life, his theological life, his literary life, and his specific life as a saint.

The Style of Hagiography

There is wide consensus that the conventions and literary tropes of hagiographical literature were considered, in their time, rather ordinary and hardly startling.⁷⁰ Perhaps, then, George the Hermit and Anonymous were concerned with the religious ideals of history and used Hus as a vehicle to express those ideals. Considered in this fashion, it must be said that Burkhardt's contention that the Renaissance produced the concept of the individual was wrong.⁷¹ Our texts show instead that their image of Hus conformed to particular models already developed in history, and that the religious ideals of history were more salient than Hus's specific acts or utterances. The most important ideal was that of the *imitatio Christi*, to be sure, but both authors also sought to assimilate Hus into the noble army of martyrs and present him as representative of the *vita apostolica*. Granted, the verdict of Constance meant that Hus and his "lives" had this meaning only within Bohemian culture, and to some extent in the world of late medieval reformers and heretics, until the time of the European Reformations. Then he was transformed into something else and made to be a herald of ideas he had never conceived. But those sixteenth-century "lives" are a separate subject.⁷² Just as the historical

⁷⁰ Collins, *Reforming Saints*, 127.

⁷¹ Jacob Burkhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (London, 1990) 98–119.

⁷² Of particular note are the martyrologies produced by: Ludwig Rabus, *Der Heyligen ausserwoehlten Gottes Zeugen, Bekennern vnd Martyrern [...] Historien [...]*, 8 vv. (Strasbourg, 1552); Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Catologus testium veritatis* (Basel, 1556); and Jean Crespin, *Le livre des martyrs [...] depuis Jean Hus* (Geneva, 1554). See also the online, critical edition of John Foxe's work: *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* or TAMO (HRI Online Publication, Sheffield, 2011), available at: www.johnfoxe.org

Louis IX of France could be transformed into multiple Saints Louis, as it were, so too could Hus.⁷³

The “lives” of Jan Hus were all concerned with situating his embodiment of religious ideals within a specific moment in salvation history. Indeed, once Jan Hus’s legal ordeal began in earnest and after he travelled to Constance, his death was not unexpected. After the initial shock wore off in its wake, his followers regarded the event as a momentous occurrence that began a new epoch. Petr of Mladoňovice concluded his narrative with the affirmation that he had provided witness to Hus in order that the memory of the martyr might persist into the future.⁷⁴ In terms of Christian salvation history, that future had *kairos* significance. While Greek and Roman thought saw time as circular and repetitive, in Jewish and Christian theology it is linear. History is therefore a steady progression towards the *parousia*, the Last Judgment, and the culmination of all things. In the “lives” of Hus, there was a similar linear progression. He was the faithful pilgrim, he endured suffering for the cause of Christ, underwent martyrdom, and his *passio* served as his entrance to eternal life. In short, Hus’s life was a microcosm of the course of Christian history, and it functioned as a source of motivation for others. These “lives” of Hus therefore stressed the greatness of his life and passion in a heroic sense, so that the *Relatio* functioned as an *apologia* intentionally constructed to preserve the memory of Hus as the champion of divine truth.⁷⁵

The Function of Hagiography

As noted earlier, the principle function of the “lives” of saints was to turn the hearts and minds of men and women to God. The “lives” of Hus consistently followed that pattern. Anonymous portrayed Hus coming from prison to face his accusers so frail from maltreatment that his bones were visible through the skin, a vision of the suffering servant who did not hesitate to condemn wickedness and point the way to righteousness.⁷⁶ According to Anonymous, Hus confronted the council fathers at Constance with the accusation that their character was revealed by the hundreds of prostitutes which accompanied it. Hus also pointed out their hypocrisy concerning the ex-pope John XXIII, who had convened the council but had subsequently been deposed and imprisoned for crimes ranging from simony and perjury to sexual offenses and murder.⁷⁷ Here, the holy man Hus was more than human.

⁷³ The case of Louis has been developed in: Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis (IX) of France, passim*.

⁷⁴ Petr of Mladoňovice, *Relatio*, 120.

⁷⁵ Herkommer, “Die Geschichte,” *passim*. Cf. the concluding lines in: Petr of Mladoňovice, *Relatio*, 120.

⁷⁶ *Vypravování*, 224.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 224–225.

He became a stranger who stood outside traditional social structures, who owed and owned nothing, who eschewed women and power, or, more importantly, drew his power from sources outside of himself and the world.⁷⁸ In this sense, Hus's life, and especially his death, reflected a *contemptus mundi* commitment.⁷⁹ We see this in his writings, and especially in his resolute commitment to avoid perjury. Despite pressure to save his life by recantation, Hus refused to prevaricate or perjure himself before God.⁸⁰ Hus's saintliness could thus be attributed principally to his unflinching commitment to truth, which validated his suffering and marked his humility, charity, purity, piety and patience as overt signs of his sanctity.

The authors of Hus's "lives" used his saintly virtue as a vehicle for putting evildoers to shame. Anonymous, for instance, had Sigismund hang his head with shame in Hus's presence, and elsewhere the Emperor flushed and averted his gaze from Hus when the condemned man exposed Sigismund's duplicity.⁸¹ In contrast to these moral failures, Hus was presented as capturing the essence of the medieval *imitatio Christi*. This ideal can, of course, be traced as far back as Origen, and the belief that persecution and martyrdom led directly to union with Christ was a constant of Christian culture.⁸² In the later Middle Ages, though, opportunities for martyrdom (the highest form of the *imitatio*) were relatively remote. Because Hus succeeded in attaining this, though, he became a figure to be praised and his life became a didactic model among his followers. The figure of Hus in the "lives" therefore exemplified a fusion of tradition and imagination in which the memory of Hus enabled both writers and readers to know the past, present and future simultaneously. The experiences of the writer of Petr of Mladoňovice, for example, were overlaid on those of the martyr Jan Hus, which created the history of a particular message which in turn created history.⁸³

Over time, that history assumed political overtones. In the later "lives," for example, the Council's and Roman Church's various efforts to erase the memory of Hus resulted in war, death on a large scale, and the destruction of towns, castles and monasteries.⁸⁴ That Bohemia and its reformed religion survived was seen as a sign of divine intervention on behalf of God's newly chosen people. It cannot be said, however, that these "lives" cultivated the strident political or nationalist agenda which is evident in the satirical attacks

⁷⁸ See Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971) 80–101.

⁷⁹ This point of view is particularly evident in Hus's writings from exile. See, e.g., his: *Dcerka*, in MIHO 4, 163–186.

⁸⁰ George the Hermit, *Život*, 379.

⁸¹ *Vypravování*, 225; and the Czech version of Petr of Mladoňovice's *passio* in FRB 8:121–149, 135.

⁸² Origen, *Exhortatio ad Martyrium*, PG 11: cols. 563–636.

⁸³ Herkommer, "Die Geschichte," 120.

⁸⁴ George the Hermit, *Život*, 383.

on Sigismund and the Church written in 1420 by Vavřinec of Březová.⁸⁵ As opposed to the figure of St. Louis of France, whose cult necessarily highlighted political themes, St. Jan Hus was a patron of pious practice and penitential attention to the cure of souls. His central occupation was pastoral, not political, which circumscribed the realms of his effective sainthood.⁸⁶

Ideal Pastoral Image

The emphasis on ideal pastoral conduct was ubiquitous in the “lives” of Hus, and was often expressed in terms of human emotion. Particularly in the narratives of Hus’s trial, depictions of emotion served a larger moral purpose. The sessions of the Council were typically described as unruly; the *Barbatus passio* described them as featuring a mob of witnesses who testified wildly, judges who allowed proceedings to rage out of control, and an audience whose shouts drowned out Hus’s voice.⁸⁷ Petr of Mladoňovice was even more specific, describing, for example, how the “Cardinal of Florence,” Francesco Zabarella, shouted at Hus during his last public hearing.⁸⁸ Other “lives” referred often to crying out and tears. When accused of expressing errors concerning the Virgin Mary and the eucharist, Anonymous noted that Hus burst into tears.⁸⁹ In response to the Council’s other allegations, Hus alternately cried out to God and wept.⁹⁰ George the Hermit claimed that Hus addressed the audience in the galleries during his trial with tears.⁹¹ The contrast between Hus’s holy tears and the Council’s raucous behaviour is stark in itself, but the various “lives” were even more explicit, noting that Hus explicitly (and loudly) protested his innocence or decried the injustice of the formal proceedings.⁹²

We have already noted Sigismund’s infamous blush of shame. This must be set against the other major expression of emotion which was apparent in these “lives:” that of joy. Hence we find language, perhaps unexpectedly, describing laughter, smiles, rejoicing, and also singing. When the conciliar fathers resorted to a dispute over the proper way to disfigure his tonsure, Hus

⁸⁵ Modern editions of these satirical texts appear in: Jiří Daňhelka, ed., *Husitské skladby budyšínského rukopisu* [The Hussite Songs in the Bautzen Manuscript] (Prague, 1952). See also: John Klassen, “Images of Anti-Majesty in Hussite Literature,” *Bohemia* 33 (1992) 267–281.

⁸⁶ Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis (IX) of France*, 123; and Herkommer, “Die Geschichte,” 119.

⁸⁷ *Barbatus, Passio*, 15–16.

⁸⁸ Petr of Mladoňovice, *Relatio*, 114.

⁸⁹ *Vypravování*, 225.

⁹⁰ George the Hermit, *Život*, 381; and Petr of Mladoňovice, *Relatio*, 111 and 116.

⁹¹ George the Hermit, *Život*, 380.

⁹² George the Hermit, *Život*, 380. Compare: Petr Mladoňovice, *Relatio*, 113–117.

was recorded as smiling, perhaps ruefully, over the argument.⁹³ On his way from the cathedral to the stake, Hus observed a bonfire of his books. Petr of Mladoňovice noted that Hus smiled at the sight.⁹⁴ Arriving at the stake, Hus smiled at the chains which were wrapped about his body, and when Hus's mitre featuring demons and the title "heresiarch" fell from his head to the ground, Hus again smiled.⁹⁵ Fastened to the instrument of his death, Hus spoke loudly and merrily.⁹⁶ As the fire roared, all of the "lives" note that Hus passed from this life singing.⁹⁷

Fortitude of Martyrs

This final image, which is rather surreal, highlights a theme which can easily be traced throughout the history of martyrdom, from earliest Christianity through the stories collected in the *Golden Legend* and right down through the martyrologies of the sixteenth century. Even in acute suffering, the heroes of the faith, the ideal men and women, endured the tortures of the enemies of God with amazing fortitude. Writers hostile to Hus claimed that he had died screaming, tortured both by physical pain and the psychological terror of eternal damnation.⁹⁸ That image was altogether unpalatable to those presenting the passion of an idealised spiritual hero and popular saint. Hence, our "lives" are unanimous in recording Hus's death at the stake as a study in courage, fortitude, and endurance. If Jan Hus had served the medieval Czech church while he was alive, he also served the Hussite-Utraquist tradition after his death. Ultimately, hagiography might be elaborated as so-called "end ends" for Rankean history, but history also teaches other lessons.⁹⁹ When all is said and done, it seems that these medieval "lives" of Jan Hus are best regarded as textual *martyria*: literary monuments to the memory of the ideal Christian man whose followers deemed him worthy of sainthood and who embraced, cultivated and celebrated him openly in their religious practices for more than two centuries.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ *Vypravování*, 226.

⁹⁴ Petr of Mladoňovice, *Relatio*, 117.

⁹⁵ Petr of Mladoňovice, *Relatio*, 118–119; and *Vypravování*, 227.

⁹⁶ George the Hermit, *Život*, 382.

⁹⁷ *Vypravování*, (1932) 227; George the Hermit, *Život*, 382; and Petr of Mladoňovice, *Relatio*, 119.

⁹⁸ The most influential of these accounts was that of the Constance burgher Ulrich Richental, whose chronicle of the Council was published many times in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This particular citation comes from the critical edition by: Thomas Martin Buck, ed., *Chronik des Konstanzer Konzils 1414–1418 von Ulrich Richental* (Ostfildern, 2010) 66.

⁹⁹ Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 319.

¹⁰⁰ This essay is expanded and more broadly contextualised in my: *The Memory and Motivation of Jan Hus, Medieval Priest and Martyr*, 185–209. I have omitted the discussion of these "lives" found in the works of Bartoš and Noemi Rejchrtová here not because they are unimportant, but on account of space limitations. I am grateful for the technical and professional assistance of Trish Wright in the preparation of this text.