

**PAULI PRINCIPIUM ET FINIS.
NARRATIVE DISCONTINUITY IN JEROME'S *VITA PAULI
PRIMI EREMITAE***

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Three Jerome's *Lives* of holy hermits (*Vita Pauli primi eremitae*, *Vita Malchi monachi captivi* and *Vita Hilarionis*) celebrating heroes of the Eastern monastic movements represent quite a new genre in Latin literature, "lives of the saints". When writing them the author was inspired by the famous *Life of Saint Antony* by Athanasius, soon translated into Latin, but he created an original version of this literary genre without precedent in the previous literary tradition. Unlike the Greek model the Latin Church Father puts much more emphasis on miraculous and entertaining elements and his *Lives* of hermits remind more "hagiographic novels" than biographies of the saints.¹ The liking for bizarre moments, romantic descriptions of settings, sentimental scenes and, within the hagiographic context, unexpected eroticism link Jerome's legends with the pagan novel literature. Such a symbiosis of entertaining and educational elements,² literary methods taken from the trivial literature and exalted religious aims provide these biographies of saint hermits with a special appeal and reading attractiveness. Not even modern interpreters criticizing Jerome for "historical incredibility" and labeling him a "lousy" historian cannot deny that he is a highly entertaining and catching narrator.³ The reading attractiveness of these texts is also increased by Jerome's experimenting with various narrative methods and genre conventions which sometimes is even at the expense of narrative continuity.⁴ It can be seen quite well in Jerome's first work *Vita Pauli primi eremitae* where narrative abruptness and loss of clear links between individual scenes become one of the basic features of the narrator's poetics.

Jerome's *Vita Pauli primi eremitae* (*Life of Paul the First Hermit*) is a peculiar text that consists of two heterogeneous parts. The first briefer one depicts the solitary beginnings of the legendary Egyptian hermit Paul of Thebes, the alleged founder of the eremitic movement. The second part, substantially longer, describes the journey of Antony of Egypt, the main character of the famous Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, to the inland of the

¹ B. Kytzler (1997: 486) uses the term "erbaulicher Heiligenroman" when characterizing the Jerome's *Lives*. On the novelistic elements in the Jerome's *Lives*, see Coleiro 1957, Bauer 1961, Burrus 2000 and 2004, on the Jerome's conception of hagiography in general, see Rousseau 1978, Vogüé 1991, Bastiaensen 1994 and Weingarten 2005.

² On the symbiosis of entertainment and edification in the Jerome's *Lives*, see Kech 1977.

³ Cf. Coleiro (1957: 177–178).

⁴ On the generic ambiguity and innovative character of Hieronymian hagiography, see Fuhrmann (1977), Kech (1977), and Burrus (2000: 448–449).

Egyptian desert to find an unknown anchorite he had a dream of. It turns out that the sought-after desert father is Saint Paul, the main character of the first part of the legend, and Antony's task is to help with his burial. Despite the title *vita* it is not the life of a saint in the proper sense of the word as it intentionally omits the main part of the character's life focusing only on the beginnings of his eremitic career and on the circumstances of his death. In addition the real main character is not the titular hero but rather Saint Antony who is given most space in the text. The overall impression of disparity is also emphasized by a different atmosphere in both parts of the legend: while the first part is dominated by a restrained and biographical tone where there is no space for supernatural phenomena, in the second part the reader unexpectedly finds himself in an almost fairy-tale world inhabited by various fantastic creatures and miraculous helpers such as centaur and satyrs showing the wandering traveler the way, a raven supplying the hermits with bread, or lions that dig up a grave for the body of the dead saint. The disparity of Jerome's legend has been causing debates among scholars till the present day.⁵

What may be the cause of the strange disparity of Jerome's first work has been hinted by the American scholar A. G. Elliott who compares *Vita Pauli* with other Christian legends dealing with a similar story. In all of them the main character is an anchorite (an anchoress in the legend about Mary of Egypt) living deep in the Egyptian desert in an idyllic cave with a nearby miraculous palm tree and a spring of clean water providing him with the basic life necessities. The principal recognition sign of this hermit is long hair reaching his heels substituting his clothes.⁶ The ascetic lives the major part of his life totally isolated from the human society without anyone knowing about his existence and only not long before his death he is discovered by a traveler who comes across his cave after a long journey through the desert. The comer becomes a witness of the hermit's death and must bury his body being assisted by miraculous helpers in some cases. After his return to the civilization the traveler tells people about the unknown desert father making this remarkable saint known in the general public. As A. G. Elliott showed, despite differences in individual versions and characters having different names, the basic matrix of the story remains the same with certain standard motifs repeating in it.⁷

⁵ H. Kech (1977: 35) uses the terms "Strukturprinzip der Isolierung" or "Hang zur Vereinzelung" when writing about the narrative technique of Jerome's legends. E. Coleiro (1957: 166) characterizes it poetically as "the disconnected glimpses of a hidden sky that one would get if a cloud covering the whole length and breadth of it were to break up in parts and let one see a few patches of what is beyond" and the American scholar V. Burrus writes about "Jerome's disturbingly labile hagiographic composition" (Burrus 2001: 444).

⁶ Jerome explicitly dissociates himself from this motif in the introduction to *Vita Pauli* putting it in the area of fairy tales: *Nonnulli haec ut alia, prout voluntas tulit, iactitant subterraneo specu crinitum calcaneo hominem fuisse et multa, quae persequi otiosum est, incredibilia fingentes* (*Vita Pauli* 1 [PL 23, 18A]). Nevertheless, by this he confirms that in the sources he draws on this motif plays an important part.

⁷ Cf. Elliott (1987: 51–64); the American scholar focuses especially on the legend about Onuphrius (the Coptic saint Abunâfer) which is a part of the so-called *Peregrinatio Paphnutii*. This legend describes the journey of the hermit Paphnutius deep into the Egyptian desert where he gradually finds some hermits dwelling in cave and leading an ascetic life full of miracles. One of them is Onuphrius whose story later circulated in a separate version as *Vita Onuphrii* (PL 73, 214–219). Even if *Peregrinatio Paphnutii* tries to suggest that it deals with several episodes about various hermits the American scholar alleges that in fact it is a multiple re-narration of the same story where only names and some details are changed

In her view this indicates that all the hagiographic narrations draw on a common source.⁸

According to some scholars this basic model is Jerome's *Vita Pauli primi eremita*⁹ which is the earliest extant version of the matter at issue.¹⁰ But as A. G. Elliott notes Jerome's version differs from all the others in one essential aspect, i.e. the way of narration.¹¹ In the other versions of the story about the hairy hermit all is described from the point of view of the traveler who reports in the first person upon his journey into the inland of the desert and his encounter with the mysterious saint. This is the primary frame narration into which a secondary one is put and the hermit telling the visitor about his ascetic beginnings. Jerome is the only one who modifies this narrative pattern presenting both stories as two subsequent episodes narrated in the chronological order by one omniscient narrator in the third person.¹² This change of the narrative strategy has its reasons: Jerome's point is not primarily a celebration of the ascetic saint but a correction of Athanasius's assertion that the first Christian hermit was Saint Antony.¹³ He is rather a historian attempting to prove the real existence of the legendary figure of the first hermit than a hagiographer celebrating the saint's miraculous activities, and he also adapts his narrative strategy to that aim. Regarding the fact that the above mentioned anomaly in the way of narration only appears in *Vita Pauli* and not in any other version, A. G. Elliott considers it highly improbable that Jerome's legend was a model for the other authors.¹⁴ She thinks it more probable that all versions, including Jerome's one, draw on an earlier, probably Coptic, source that has not been preserved. However, regarding different literary goals the Latin father substantially modified this hypothetical source and changed its narrative arrangement.¹⁵

If the American scholar's hypothesis is correct then some peculiarities of Jerome's legend, such as the division into two unevenly long parts with different atmosphere, or unclearness about the main character, could be explained by the author's manipulation with the narrative structure of the original model. The transformation of the two-level narrative arrangement in the form of tale-within-a-tale into an one-level bipartite chronological structure and the substitution of two homodiegetic¹⁶ narrators (one extra- and one intradiegetic) by one heterodiegetic narrator is a substantial move that must have left certain traces in the narrative. These relics of the original structure that the author did not

(cf. Elliott 1987: 58). The same narrative pattern and motifs as in *Peregrinatio Paphnutii* are repeated in other legends about hermits such as *Vita Sancti Macarii Romani* (PL 73, 415–426), *Vita Sanctae Mariae Aegyptiacae meretricis* (PL 73, 673–690) and *Vita Marci Atheniensis* (cf. AA.SS, March III, 9, 775–778).

⁸ Cf. Elliott (1987: 72–73).

⁹ See Oldfather (1943: 15); Pereira (1906: 204).

¹⁰ Regarding the time of origin of Jerome's *Vita Pauli* see Coleiro (1957: 161).

¹¹ Cf. Elliott (1987: 66).

¹² Cf. Elliott (1987: 72).

¹³ This aim is expressly proclaimed by the author in the prologue, see *Vita Pauli* 1 (PL 23, 17A).

¹⁴ According to the American scholar "the other lives have much more in common with each other than they do with their putative model". Cf. Elliott (1987: 72).

¹⁵ According to A. G. Elliott the hypothetical model could have been the Coptic legend about Onuphrius, the first hermit, the origin of which is put by some scholars to the mid-4th century (Elliott 1987: 58).

¹⁶ In this article we stick to G. Genette's terminology who divides narrators according to narrative level (cf. Genette 1972: 238–239) and according to whether the narrator himself is a character of his narration (cf. Genette 1972: 252–253).

manage to mask completely could be one of the causes of disparity of the whole legend. Therefore this paper aims to analyze some peculiarities of Jerome's text that contribute to the overall impression of inconsistency and to explain them as a residuum of the original narrative structure. Retrospectively, it could be then possible to confirm A. G. Elliot's hypothesis of presupposition of the existence of one common, unpreserved model which all later legends, including Jerome's one, draw upon.

One of the most remarkable peculiarities of Jerome's *Vita Pauli* is an unexpected time leap occurring approximately after the first third of the text. In that place the authorial narrator interrupts his depiction of Paul's eremitic beginnings by a short comment on Syrian hermits he met in Syria who managed to live on bread and water in an empty cistern for long years.¹⁷ This digression finishes with a standard rhetorical phrase *sed ut ad id redeam, unde digressus sum*¹⁸ that is supposed to make an impression that the narration fluently follows the point where it was interrupted by the narrator's digression. In fact, this is not the case. When the narrator left his character he was only at the beginning of his ascetic career but he returns to him at the moment when he is already a one-hundred-and-thirteen-year-old man with only a few days of life ahead of him.¹⁹ In the course of the short aside concerning the fast practice of Syrian hermits on the inner diegetic clock ninety years passed and the young hermit has become an old man. Leaving out a certain time period in a story (*ellipsis*) is a commonplace literary means and it stands to reason that no story may be presented in its entirety being more or less disconnected.²⁰ A considerable time gap in Jerome's *Vita Pauli* is somewhat confusing, though, not because of its range but rather due to its content. The omitted period of life (*media aetas*) is a constituting part of the genre of saints' lives as it is precisely this period where the main character's miraculous skills and ascetic renunciation are manifested. In Athanasius's *Life of Saint Antony* the period between the main character's departure for the desert and his death is the main part of the narration whereas his ascetic beginnings and circumstances of his death are mentioned only marginally. In Jerome's *Vita Pauli* it is vice versa: the narration is only restricted to the first period of Paul's anchorite life (*Pauli principium*) and the last moments before his death (*Pauli finis*). All that happened between these two points of Paul's life is commented on by one sentence:

*Igitur adamato habitaculo (quasi quod a Deo sibi offerretur) omnem ibidem in orationibus et solitudine duxit aetatem.*²¹

The reader then does not learn anything about Paul's living in the desert or his facing Satan's temptations, doing miracles and healing the sick. The only information he gets is that the main character spent the whole time alone praying. *Vita Pauli* is then a considerably unusual or "not-fulfilled" life of saint that does not correspond to the standard genre

¹⁷ Cf. *Vita Pauli* 6 (PL 23, 21B–22A).

¹⁸ *Vita Pauli* 7 (PL 23, 22A).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ G. Genette classifies *ellipsis* and summary among the so-called *anisochronia* or discrepancies between the time of the narration and the time of the story established by the changing pace of the narration or its duration (*durée*). See Genette (1972: 122–144).

²¹ *Vita Pauli* 6 (PL 23, 21B).

expectations defined by Athanasius's *Life of Saint Antony*. The author himself is aware of that and in the prologue to the legend he explains this digression from the standard by not having enough credible information about the given period of the hermit's life and not wanting to fulfill the gap by unfounded fabrications as other authors do.²² He is rather determined to break conventions of the genre passing in silence the most important part of the saint's life.

A sudden leap in time is not the only surprise for the reader, though, after the author's note about Syrian hermits. Until that moment the clear main character of the narration was Paul of Thebes whom the legend is devoted but after the above mentioned insertion he is unexpectedly substituted by another hermit, Antony of Egypt, who has not been mentioned yet except for the prologue. It seems like the narrator has forgotten his original main character starting to talk about the twenty-three-year-younger Antony who lives in another part of the Egyptian desert and is about to set out for a journey to an unknown, more perfect, hermit. After several adventurous episodes, where Antony faces various bizarre inhabitants of the desert, he finally comes to the hidden entrance of the cave that will turn out to be the dwelling of the sought saint. Only now the two lines of the narration intersect and the reader's uncertain suspicion that Antony's surprising extempore is nothing but an overture to the final episode of Paul's story is now confirmed. The overarching wording *sed ut ad id redeam, unde digressus sum* that is supposed to invoke an impression of continuity of the text thus rather masks its discontinuity. The narrator, instead of continuing to do what has begun, suddenly starts to tell a completely different story with a different main character without explaining the connection between the new and the original story.

The question why Jerome chooses such a breakneck and confusing literary method could be answered by the theory of the author's manipulation with the narrative structure of the original model. A. G. Elliott presupposes that in the unpreserved original version both stories were logically interconnected by an embedded narrative as it is the case in all later treatments except Jerome's one. Into the primary story of a hermit presented in the first person a secondary story of another hermit was inserted, again presented in the first person, so both stories naturally fitted together and the relationship between both main characters was clearly established. As the original narrative structure was broken and both stories were put at the same narrative level, the logical connection between them as well as the nature of the relationship between both main characters was made unclear. The story of the hermit and the story of the traveler are interrupted by a time gap that the narrator cannot fulfill with anything (even if he were willing to invent some improbable fabrications) and for a while the reader is uncertain why Paul has been suddenly substituted by Antony. In order to mask this inconsistency the author uses transparent rhetoric tricks (taking away the reader's attention through narrative digression, using a bridging phrase making an impression of narrative continuity, creating an artificial connection through a reference to the age of both main characters) that are supposed to make an illusion of one story naturally following the other one. The problem is, though, that the conversion of the original two-level narrative structure into a one-level structure was not made consistently and some relics of the original narrative arrangement has remained

²² Cf. *Vita Pauli* 1 (PL 23, 18A).

visible which is confusing for the reader but on the other hand it brings about a certain tension and a moment of surprise into the narration.

One of the relics of the original narrative structure may also be the separation of the centre of narration from the centre of focalization that is visible in the second part of the legend. The narrated events are not seen any more only from the perspective of the extra-heterodiegetic narrator but also from the viewpoint of the main character. The most remarkable manifestation of this change is a partial loss of the narrator's "omniscience": the narrator begins to hold back certain facts that he must have known telling only what corresponds with the restricted knowledge horizon of his character.²³ When Antony sets out on a journey to find an unknown hermit that he had a dream of he has no idea of who he is and where to go.²⁴ The knowledge restriction is taken over by the narrator who holds back the information about who the mysterious solitary saint is. During the whole time of Antony's travel there is no explicit mention of the sought saint being Paul from the first part of the legend, not even at the moment when Antony is standing in front of the hermit's dwelling. On the contrary, the narrator hides the identity of the cavern dweller till the last moment and together with Antony he "stealthily and with breath held" (*suspensio gradu et anhelitu temperato*)²⁵ goes on a reconnaissance mission into the dark tunnel as if he did not suppose who is hiding there. This "blackout" stands out even more as the whole action of discovering the cavern appears for the second time and the reader guesses on the basis of the detailed description in the first part of the narrative that it must be Paul's hermitage. The narrator's silence may then be hardly explained as an effort to provoke a moment of surprise; rather, it may be considered a consequence of giving up the "omniscience" perspective and subordinating the distribution of information to the limited possibilities of the perception of the character. It is evidenced, among others, by the ample use of expressions with visual connotations and verbs of perception as if the narrator "saw" through the eyes of his main character reproducing his visual perceptions.²⁶

Besides the regulation of information, the consistent respecting of time-space coordinators of the diegetic world and the corresponding greater emphasis on the chronology of the narrated events is also seen as a characteristic feature of the internal narrative perspective.²⁷ The extra-heterodiegetic narrator assumes the right to move freely among

²³ G. Genette defines focalization first of all as a measure of "restriction" of the knowledge of the narrator about the world at issue (cf. Genette 1972: 209). This reductionist concept of focalization became the main target of criticism by later narratologists who blame the author for a too limited understanding of this narrative category. The contemporary theory of narration sees the phenomenon of focalization much more complexly involving also other factors, not only the knowledge perspective of the narrator (e.g. time-space, ideological or language aspects). For an illustrative overview of reprehensions of Genette's conception and a useful synopsis of the development of opinions about focalization, see Schmid (2005: 113–125).

²⁴ Cf. *Vita Pauli* 7 (PL 23, 22A).

²⁵ *Vita Pauli* 9 (PL 23, 24B).

²⁶ *Vita Pauli* 7 (PL 23, 22A–23A): *conspicit hominem; quo viso; ex oculis mirantis evanuit; Vita Pauli* 8 (PL 23, 23B–24A): *quod viderat; homunculum videt; Vita Pauli* 9 (PL 23, 24B–25C): *ferarum tantum vestigia intuens; intuetur lupam; quam secutus oculis; intro coepit aspicere; nihil... tenebris arcentibus visum; procul lumen intuitus; Vita Pauli* 14 (PL 23, 27A–27B): *vidit... Paulum fulgentem, vidit... corpus exanime.*

²⁷ Schmid (2005: 145–146) mentions tendency to "prolonging" (Dehnung) in connection with the internal narrative perspective; on the other hand, in the external perspective there is a characteristic tendency to "summarizing" (Raffung).

scenes of action and time levels and to talk about events occurring in various places at the same time or in different times. When he does not do it he makes it obvious that he accepts the time-space limitation established by the position of the characters he is talking about. Even in this respect one may see certain differences between the two parts of Jerome's legend. In the first part the narrator changes quite quickly places and times of the action while being laconic about time details. The only anchor is an allusion to the persecution of Christians under the emperors Decius (249–251) and Valerian (253–260)²⁸ taking place between 250–260, and another time coordinate is then a mention of Paul's one-hundred-and-thirteen-year birthday.²⁹ The chronology of events between these two moments of Paul's life remains vague, though, and it is not clear how much time actually elapsed between Paul's becoming an orphan and his discovering an idyllic eremitic shelter. Moreover, the whole period involving ninety seven years is described in mere three chapters of the text. This results in a considerable condensation of diegetic time that reaches its maximum at the end of this narrative section when the time period of a few dozens of years is condensed in a single sentence.

However, from the moment when the narrator's attention is focused on Antony the diegetic time begins to flow considerably more slowly and steadily. This effect is reached by the fact that considerably more space is given in the text to a much shorter time period of the story comprising only several days than to the preceding ninety seven years of Paul's life.³⁰ Moreover, the narrator is particular about the chronological succession of events and the time determination being quite clear, which is in a sharp contrast with the time vagueness of the preceding part. With the help of various indicators he meticulously marks the changing of individual days,³¹ sometimes even with the time of the day when the given event occurred, or he mentions the duration of the described events (e.g. the reader is informed retrospectively that the journey from Paul's cave to Antony's hermitage and back takes four days³²). Therefore it is actually possible to see the flow of time day by day and one may easily work out that no more than ten days elapsed from the dawn of the first day when Antony had set out for his trip to find the unknown hermit until he returned to his own cell.

The fact that the narrator's view of the diegetic world is influenced by the view of his character is also reflected in value norms presented in the narration.³³ In the second part

²⁸ Cf. *Vita Pauli* 2 (PL 23, 19A).

²⁹ Cf. *Vita Pauli* 7 (PL 23, 22A); the data does not correspond with another time information mentioned by the narrator, which is Antony's ninetieth birthday. According to Jerome's chronicle Antony died in 359 at the age of one hundred and five (cf. *chron. an. dom.* 359 [PL 27, 687]), therefore he must have been ninety in 344, and not between 347–357 when Paul should have been hypothetically one hundred and thirteen.

³⁰ The oddity that out of fifteen chapters of *Vita Pauli* ten of them is devoted to the last few days of the saint's life has already been noted by H. Kech (1977: 21).

³¹ *Vita Pauli* 7 (PL 23, 22A–23A): *illico erumpente luce; et iam media dies coquente desuper sole servebat; Vita Pauli* 9 (PL 23, 24B): *iam altera effluxerat dies; dubia adhuc luce; Vita Pauli* 11 (PL 23, 26A–25C): *cum iam esset terris redditus dies; Vita Pauli* 15 (PL 23, 26A–25C): *cum iam dies alia illuxisset et trium horarum spatio iter remaneret.*

³² *Vita Pauli* 16 (PL 23, 28A): *si ad monasterium revertar, qua tridui iter est...*

³³ In the narratologic terminology this aspect of focalization is labeled "ideological" and includes systems of values under which the narrated events are seen and evaluated. See Uspensky (1973: 8), Rimmon-Kenan (2005: 83) and Schmid (2005: 142).

of the legend rules of extreme asceticism become the key value criterion. It is a peculiar and quite an unfamiliar world for the potential reader and even the narrator himself is not quite in his element. In the epilogue the narrating agent shows off his unrestrained admiration for the ascetic way of life of the hermits and puts Paul's simplicity on pedestal putting it in a sharp contrast with prodigality of his contemporaries but at the same time it is clear that it is not his world and that he himself is not able to fulfill Paul's strict demands.³⁴ In spite of that in the part depicting Antony's journey he takes over values of his characters, which is manifested, among other things, by including in his vocabulary expressions connected with the specific label of monachism and eremitism that would be more suitable in the mouths of his characters. Phrases such as *perfectus monachus*, *servus Dei*, *scutum fidei et lorica spei*, *miles Christi*, *bonus proelior*, *sanctum osculum* etc. referring to the value system of ascetic hermits do not go much together with the narrator's outwardly proclaimed impartiality and show his deep identification with the world of his characters. For example, the phrase *bonus proelior* ("the good warrior") used by the narrator at the moment when Antony appears before Satyr³⁵ does not fit in the narrator's "objectivizing" discourse but it corresponds with the ideological context of the world of hermits who called themselves *milites Christi*. The fact that this expression falls rather into the vocabulary of one of Jerome's characters is confirmed by a similar phrase *bellator tuus* which Antony himself uses for his own characterization in another place. Taking over the language of characters by the narrator, which is another characteristic feature of the internal narrative perspective,³⁶ is apparent one more time the second part of the legend.

Despite the fact that the reader is accompanied through the text by the same heterodiegetic narrator standing above the narrated world and commenting the events (e.g. by a curious insertion about Satyr brought to the emperor to Constantinople³⁷), the prism through which the narrated world is seen changes in the second part of the legend. The narrator loses part of his "omniscience" making a selection of information according to how it corresponds with the perceptive horizon of the main character of the narration. He tells the reader what his character sees, what his feelings and apprehensions are, and he cites his words, in both direct and indirect speech. He lacks this ability in the first part of the legend where he only summarizes accessible facts about Paul's eremitic beginnings describing the cave³⁸ he had discovered and then leaves his hero to come back to him by an indirect route through another character. By this narrative method he achieves a special effect of splitting the view of the legendary hermit that can be seen from two different angles. The first view is a narrator-biographer's view while the second one is the subjective view of a character-witness who will bring the reader to the lost hermit in the last moments of his life enabling him to see the saint as if from the interior of the narrated world. This second trip to Paul made by the narrator together with Antony is

³⁴ Cf. *Vita Pauli* 17 (PL 23, 28B–C).

³⁵ Cf. *Vita Pauli* 8 (PL 23, 23A).

³⁶ Some theoreticians refer to a special language aspect of focalization (cf. Schmid 2005: 143).

³⁷ Cf. *Vita Pauli* 8 (PL 23, 24B).

³⁸ The description of the cavern discovered by Paul could bring one to the conclusion that also in this case the narrator tells only what Paul himself sees. In fact, he gives more information than his character may have, mentioning that the cavern was a forgers' workshop under Cleopatra and Antonius (cf. *Vita Pauli* 5 [PL 23, 21B]).

depicted in much greater detail and also some new facts come to the surface seemingly in contradiction with what has been told in the first part. For example, in the first biographic part Paul lives quite simply off a palm growing by his dwelling while in the second one he gets his livelihood in a more miraculous way being supplied by bread brought by a crow coming to him regularly every day.

The question is, though, to what extent this effect is a result of the author's premeditated literary strategy and to what extent it is an unintended consequence of manipulation with the original narrative structure. The distractive time gap between the two parts of the legend which the author did not manage to retouch despite all his efforts is obviously the second case as well as the confusing substitution of the main characters which happens after the interruption of the continuous flow of narration. Putting the stories originally inserted into one another at the same narrative level is also accompanied by a change of narrative priorities. While the original model was primarily "tale of a quest, in which the seeker may also have been the primary hero originally ..."³⁹ in Jerome's adaptation the emphasis is shifted to the character of the hermit who is supposed to illustrate the beginnings of the whole movement. This change has not been reflected, though, in the length of both parts of the legend so the secondary story has remained twice as long as the primary one. This makes it unclear who is actually the main character of the legend, whether Paul, the nominal hero, or Antony who is given the most space and from whose perspective the substantial part of narration is told.

The different way of focalization in the second part of the legend which underlines the overall impression of disparity of Jerome's text may also be explained by the inconsistently made transformation of the original narrative structure. The internal perspective which prevails in the narration about Antony's journey to Paul may also be understood more as a relic of the original narration in the first person than the author's literary intention. The limitation of omniscience of the extra-diegetic narrator does not quite fit into his aim to inform "objectively" about the first hermit as it is proclaimed in the prologue. Despite the author's proclaimed aim the historical-biographical narration about the founder of the eremitic movement gradually changes into a hagiographic legend full of miracles, fantastic creatures and animal helpers. The admired charm of *Vita Pauli* described enthusiastically by many scholars may be to a certain degree due to not a fully mastered transformation of the narrative structure of the original model. Traces of the original narrative arrangement evident in Jerome's text thus confirm plausibility of A. G. Elliott's theory that the starting point of *Vita Pauli* was really an unpreserved popular tale about the first hermit which the church father adapted and used for his own aims.⁴⁰

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³⁹ Elliott (1987: 72).

⁴⁰ Elliott (1987: 72–73).

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**PAULI PRINCIPIUM ET FINIS. NARRATIVE DISCONTINUITY
IN JEROME'S VITA PAULI PRIMI EREMITAE**

Summary

Jerome's *Vita Pauli primi eremitae* (*Life of Paul the First Hermit*) distinguishes itself by special disparity still provoking debates among scholars. The legend has two parts, one longer and one shorter, in which different heroes dominate and which are told in a different manner. This article aims to explain these peculiarities as a consequence of the change of the narrative arrangement of a hypothetical model the author drew upon. Jerome transformed the original two-level narrative structure with two homodiegetic narrators into a one-level chronological narrative told by a single heterodiegetic narrator. This transformation, however, had not been carried out consistently, which led to the above mentioned disparity and unclarity about the real protagonist of the legend.

**PAULI PRINCIPIUM ET FINIS. NARATIVNÍ DISKONTINUITA
V JERONÝMOVĚ VITA PAULI PRIMI EREMITAE**

Shrnutí

Jeronýmův *Vita Pauli primi eremitae* (*Život Pavla, prvního poustevníka*) se vyznačuje zvláštní disparitostí, která dodnes máte badatele. Legenda se rozpadá na dvě nestejně dlouhé části, v nichž dominují různí hrdinové a jež jsou vyprávěny odlišným způsobem. Cílem tohoto článku je pokusit se vysvětlit tyto zvláštnosti jako důsledek změny narativního uspořádání hypotetické předlohy, z níž autor vycházel. Autor transformoval původní dvouúrovňovou narativní strukturu se dvěma homodiegetickými vypravěči na jednostupňové chronologické vyprávění podávané jediným heterodiegetickým vypravěčem. Tato úprava však nebyla provedena důsledně, což vede ke zmíněné disparitnosti a nejasnostem ohledně skutečného protagonisty legendy.