Female Authority and Holiness in Early and Medieval Christianity

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Edited by
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Maria Dell'Isola

Introduction

This volume originates from the international conference *Female Authority and Holiness in Early Christianity and* which was held online, due to Covid-19 pandemic, on 11–12 May 2021. It includes some of the conference papers along with additional essays that complement the overarching themes discussed during the conference. The conference, which saw the participation of internationally renowned scholars, aimed at investigating the representation of women's authority and holiness from a diachronic perspective. By underlining the connection between early and medieval Christianity, it brought together texts from different periods and genres, which have traditionally been studied in isolation (e.g. apocrypha, visions, hagiography). The aim was to show that these sources describe a consistent trajectory in the context of a *longue durée* perspective. The conference centered around the notion of time, in both the literal sense of temporal passing and also time as embodied and experienced by people. By looking at time as intertwined with the construction and the experience of social and gendered roles the conference tried to explore motifs and narratives related to the different and often varying articulation of female authority, considered against the wider background of Christian ideals of holiness. Speakers explored a variety of themes like the interplay between time and traditional gender roles, male control over female authority and identity, the transmission and reception of female sainthood between early Christianity and later Christian hagiographical texts, and the emergence of new temporalities in medieval hagiography.

The volume seeks to delve into the intricate relationship between time and the construction of femininity in hagiographical discourses. The imperative for adopting a diachronic perspective arises from the stark realization that medieval women saints consistently constituted a minority in both the East and the West. Notably, in Byzantium, the presence of new female saints diminishes entirely during the late Byzantine period.[1] The divergence between early Christian and later portrayals of female authority and holiness can be elucidated by viewing time not merely as a chronological entity, but as embodied temporality, here conceived as time in its experiential and phenomenological dimensions.[2] On the

1 For an overview, see Alice-Mary Talbot, *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001).

2 On this, see Christina Schües, "Introduction," in *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*, eds. Christina Schües, Dorothea E. Olkowski and Helen A. Fielding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011): 1–17, 7.

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other hand, as Sarit Kattan Gribetz and Lynn Kaye state, "the term 'temporality'" is "an alternative to 'time'. [...] it denotes concepts, perspectives, orientations or ideas related to time that do not necessarily operate with an explicitly defined idea of what 'time' actually is. [...] Contrary to the term 'time', which describes a more circumscribed idea, the term 'temporality' presumes blurred boundaries and conveys greater conceptual instability and volatility than 'time'."[3] The diverse temporal concepts shaping the entire trajectory of Christianity from the early centuries to the Middle Ages inevitably influenced gender roles within ancient and medieval societies, ushering in pivotal changes in the transmission and reception of earlier paradigms of religious authority. This interpretation hinges on the notion of "time" as a cultural construct, exhibiting variations not only across historical periods but also, at times, within the same society, often in conflicting ways.[4]

By placing a thematic focus on the diachronic transmission and re-contextualization of female authority and holiness, this volume contends that understanding the historical trajectory of women saints requires consideration of the eschatological expectations that informed early Christian narratives about female holiness. In the second and third centuries, the imminent end of times eclipsed all other temporal considerations whether social or biological. Christian minorities strategically leveraged this eschatological horizon to challenge the prevailing order of pagan Roman elites. Even after the Christianization of the Empire, this eschatological perspective in Byzantium gained reinforcement through the widespread circulation of apocalyptic motifs, strategically adopted by the imperial power for political and moral purposes. Narrative patterns infused with eschatological motivation regarding women saints became deeply ingrained, posing a challenge when novel experiences of holiness emerged alongside alternative models of lay temporality during the Middle Byzantine era. Chronologically, this volume commences with second- and third-century Christianity, addressing its subject from a broad, long-term perspective that spans from early Christianity to medieval hagiography. This expansive chronological approach is vital to underscore that the literary patterns perpetuated in later texts are rooted in earlier models. While recent observations have highlighted the utilization of apocryphal Acts as models for later Pas-

3 Sarit Kattan Gribetz and Lynn Kaye, "The Temporal Turn in Ancient Judaism and Jewish Studies," *Currents in Biblical Research* 17/3 (2019): 332–95, 339.

4 See in this regard Peter Burke, "Reflections on the Cultural History of Time," *Viator* 35 (2004): 617–26.

sions, this connection remains underexplored.[5] The present volume diverges by treating literary texts as reflective of narrative and social structures that may not necessarily align with their contemporary production, adopting a less rigid periodization and integrating it with a long-term perspective.

Based on the diachronic perspective here assumed, the analysis of the case studies in the volume proceeds by pursuing both chronological lines of investigation (early Christianity and Middle Ages) in parallel, in order to detect potential variations. On the one hand, a focus on the first centuries of Christian era proves to be the key to frame the relationship between gender and authority within a "new" religious system. The leading role of women in this period is uncontested,[6] and a major influence on their active participation in the spreading of the "new" religious beliefs and practices was represented by the eschatological expectation shaping second- and third-century Christianity.[7] The impending end of times—also reinforced by the incumbent threat of persecutions and martyrdom—imposed the dissolution of the traditional social order, with the family ties gradually losing importance. Starting from the Pauline teaching on eschatology and continence in 1 Corinthians, many other Christian literary traditions exhorted Christians to renounce earthly pleasures in order to gain future salvation. This allowed women to reject their traditional familial roles, thus acquiring more active role in terms

5 Marina Detoraki, "Greek Passions of the Martyrs in Byzantium," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* II, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014): 61–101, 66.

6 See in this regard Ulla Tervahauta, Ivan Miroshnikov, Outi Lehtipuu and Ismo Dunderberg, eds., *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017).

7 The most representative case in this regard is Montanism, an eschatologically-oriented prophetic movement led by one man, Montanus, and two women, Prisca and Maximilla. On Montanism, see the following monographs: Pierre De Labriolle, *La crise montaniste* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1913); Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); William Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reactions to Montanism* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007); Heidrun Elisabeth Mader, *Montanistische Orakel und kirchliche Opposition: Der frühe Streit zwischen den phrygischen "neuen Propheten" und dem Autor der vorepiphanischen Quelle als biblische Wirkungsgeschichte des 2. Jh. n. Chr.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012); Maria Dell'Isola, *L'ultima profezia: La crisi montanista nel cristianesimo antico* (Trapani: Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2020). On Montanist women see William Tabbernee, "Women Office Holders in Montanism," in *Patterns of Women's Leadership in Early Christianity*, eds. Ilaria L.E. Ramelli and Joan E. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021): 151–79; Antti Marjanen, "Female Prophets among Montanists," in *Prophets Male and Female: Gender and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East*, eds. Jonathan Stökl and Corrine L. Carvalho (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013): 127–43; Anne Jensen, "Prisca-Maximilla-Montanus: Who was the founder of 'Montanism'?," *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993): 147–50.

of both social and religious agency. This tendency is clearly attested by the apocryphal tradition of the Acts of the apostles, the martyr stories, and the authority of prophetesses and women teachers and spiritual guides.[8]

On the other hand, early Christian female authority can be contrasted with further expansions and reception of earlier female models of authority and holiness. The literary images of women saints in later hagiography show traces of a different form of female holiness which is no longer achieved through a rejection of social roles and norms but rather within a restored traditional social structure.[9] The comprehensive analysis of the sources explored in this volume successfully lays the groundwork for a novel approach to investigating gender issues within late antique and medieval contexts. By centering on time as a theoretical framework, a fresh and distinctive interpretation of women's social and religious agency emerges through a comparison with earlier evidence of female authority. This approach reveals several key insights. The first relevant aspect is related to the integration of texts: traditionally examined in isolation due to differences in chronology and genres, different texts can be meaningfully brought together. This integration contributes to a coherent narrative within the cultural history of late antiquity and the medieval period. Furthermore, by employing the dual lenses of gender and time, previously debated texts take on new meanings, thus offering a richer understanding of the roles and agency of women in these historical periods. In essence, this volume not only contributes to a more interconnected understanding of historical texts but also bridges the gap between the past and the present, offering insights that remain relevant in our contemporary understanding of gender dynamics and the influence exerted on women's agency by specific temporal structures.

Taking a cue from the abovementioned theoretical framework, the contributions in this volume address topics and case studies related to the following lines of investigation:

– *The interplay between female authority, traditional gender roles, and social norms in early Christianity:*

  The awareness of the impending end of times and the exaltation of martyr-

8 I have already attempted to describe this overarching tendency in two contributions: Maria Dell'Isola, "Waiting for the End: Two Case Studies on the Relationship between Time and Gender in Early Christianity," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 26/3 (2022): 446 – 72, and Maria Dell'Isola, "How Temporality Shapes Social Structure in the *Acts of Thomas*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 77 (2023): 155 – 75.

9 For such a contrast in terms of temporality, see Maria Dell'Isola, "Shaping Women's Agency through Temporality in *The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica*," *Studia Philologica Valentina* 22 (2020): 13 – 31.

dom had a remarkable impact on the pre-existent configuration of Roman society over the course of the first centuries of the Christian era. As a result, for instance, women could take advantage of the situation and refuse to comply with traditional gender constraints. The emphasis on chastity, the rejection of marriage and motherhood, the breaking of family ties, are all new social phenomena determined by the pressing of an urgent "contracted" eschatological time. Consequently, female authority gradually acquired importance, in terms of both social and religious agency. This tendency is clearly observable in early Christian texts such as the apocryphal Acts, Passions, martyr stories, as well as in the accounts of female prophecy and teaching activity. In this regard, it is highly interesting to examine how the Christian description of female characters in the abovementioned texts overturns the tropes of a traditional woman's life within the Graeco-Roman society, and to analyze what the sources tell us about the social impact exercised by the eschatologically motivated exaltation of virginity, rejection of marriage and motherhood, and promotion of female teaching and prophetic leading roles.

– *Different temporal frameworks in the transmission and reception of female authority and holiness between early Christianity and later hagiographical literature:*

  Against the wider diachronic process of textual transmission, characters of early Christian narratives undergo a series of remarkable changes. Reception history thus represents a privileged access point to the analysis of modifications, changes, and reconfigurations of character description within the chronological *longue durée* of textual transmission. Could the cumulative difference of a single female character reveal different temporal frameworks in all the different available sources?[10] Could we be able to discern any sensible trace of the chronological development of a narratological trend within the wider trajectory of transmission and reception of female authority and sainthood in the passage from early Christian texts to later hagiography?

– *Portraits of women saints in Christian hagiography*

  Hagiography in general is characterized by certain adaptations to the previously established motif of sainthood. The cause of such a difference is easily identifiable in the effect of a series of cultural transformations with regards to the early stage of persecutions and martyrdom. After the end of the era of per-

10 A highly significant and very representative case study in this regard is the transformation of the character of Thecla between the second-century apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and later hagiographical narratives, like the fifth-century *Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla.* On this, see Susan E. Hylen, "The 'domestication' of Saint Thecla. Characterization of Thecla in the *Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla*," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 30/2 (2014): 5–21.

secutions, sainthood could no longer be obtained through martyrdom. Sainthood was now to be gained through asceticism.[11] Asceticism was no longer framed within radical forms of eschatologically-informed behaviors, as it was now institutionalized, regulated, and included within the well-defined boundaries of monasticism.[12] The narratological structure of the Lives of female saints thus explicitly attest to a new sense of time that diverged significantly from that which characterized the impending end of times of the previous centuries. The hagiographical texts are permeated with temporal references to the various stages of a woman's life, which is thus narrated according to its natural chronological linearity and progression. In that same period, the bodies of the female saints are meticulously described as commonly subjected to a series of ascetic exercises. Such performances aim to reintegrate the body itself into the flow of time. In this sense, there is a striking contrast between the temporality experienced by the body through asceticism—i. e., acts that are allegedly able to remove the body itself from worldly, everyday life—and the flux of linear temporality where the female body still preserves its agency intact. Apparently, the focus by then was no longer on life after death, but on life on earth here and now. Consequently, sainthood had to be achieved not through a premature and violent death (i. e., martyrdom), but via the acceptance of the incessantly consuming effect of the ordinary passing of time on human bodies. How is this change of perspective reflected in hagiographical texts? And what is the role of male perspective in re-writing earlier models of sanctity? What effects did this have on the hagiographical narrative?

– *Different temporal frameworks in the relationships between early Christian female characters and women saints:*

  The biographers of the Lives of women saints sometimes refer to the importance of earlier Christian female characters as models for the portrait of their protagonists.[13] Such a comparison between two female saints

11 On this, see Évelyne Patlagean, "À Byzance: ancienne hagiographie et histoire sociale," *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 23 (1968): 106–26, 107–8; Nathalie Delierneux, "The Literary Portrait of Byzantine Female Saints," in Efthymiadis, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion* II, 363–86, 381. For the analysis of the development of sainthood from the age of martyrdom to the Lives of saints, see Ángel Narro, *El culto a las santas y los santos en la antigüedad tardía y la época bizantina* (Madrid: Editorial Sintesis, 2019).

12 See in this regard Samuel Rubenson, "Christian Asceticism and the Emergence of the Monastic Tradition," in *Asceticism,* eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 49–57, 49.

13 One very explicit example in this regard is the comparison between Thecla and Syncletica in *The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica.* On the contrast between the two

> establishes a strict and literary mutual dependance between early Christian narratives of female saints and the hagiographical portraits of the following centuries. How different is the temporal framework in two different literary portraits so strictly related to each other? What is the impact of different chronological frameworks on literary characters mutually dependent on each other?

Considering all these theoretical premises, the authors of the volume address a series of representative case studies which stress the relevance of gender in its relationship with religious authority, social and familial roles, embodied temporality, construction of sainthood, transmission and reception of literary motives and models of religious and social agency. The contributions, therefore, have been organized into three main sections which describe a consistent trajectory in the context of a *longue durée* perspective, while maintaining at the same time a comparative approach between examples from different historical periods.

The first section addresses the relevance of female authority, gender roles and religious experience and practices in early Christianity. Laura Carnevale, in her contribution entitled "A Portrayal of 'Gendered' Authority: Mary of Cassobola Across Time and Space in Two Ps.Ignatian Epistles," focuses on two letters belonging to the *corpus* attributed to Ignatius of Antioch: the first letter is (allegedly) authored by a woman, Mary of Cassobola, and the second one is the response attributed to Ignatius. These letters, along with four others, are connected to the so-called Long Recension of the *corpus Ignatianum*, probably crafted by a fourth-century Arian forger. What emerges from the text is the intention of portraying Mary as a woman with authority, inasmuch she strongly advices Ignatius to acknowledge two young men, respectively as a bishop and a presbyter of two cities near Antioch. The time/space setting of these letters is second-century Asia Minor. However, Ignatius' response involves the description of an event preceding the narrated action and set in Rome: Mary's visit to Pope Anacletus. Applying a historical and narratological perspective to such an anachronistic account, it becomes clear how this temporal/spatial shift, along with other narrative devices detectable in both letters, supports the crafting of an extraordinary "gendered" authoritative model, set in the second century, for women and men living two centuries later.

The male control over female authority in early Christian religious experiences and practices is the focus of Luca Arcari's article, "A Male Colonization of a Female Visionary Body: The 'Montanist' Prophetess in Tertullian's *On the Soul*

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female characters, see Fabrizio Petorella, "'The True Disciple of the Blessed Thecla': Saint Syncletica and the Construction of Female Asceticism," *Adamantius* 25 (2019): 418–26.

9,4." Religious practices from the Roman Imperial world offer examples of the employment of psychotropic practices as means of modification of the body. A clear example of the connections between psychotropic (i. e. ritual) "inputs" and visionary "outputs" (i. e. first-person descriptions of the otherworld) is described in the account concerning a Montanist "sister" as it is reported in Tertullian's *On the Soul* 9,4. According to this text, a woman – the Montanist "sister" – claims to have lived a psychotropic experience which is however put into writing by the male members of her group. By doing so, these members aim at offering to their audience a further psychotropic written platform for other processes of inner chemical mutations. This process thereby explains the re-appropriation by male members of the group of psychotropic elements in order to colonize a specific female experience. Is it then possible to separate the female psychotropic experience of the Montanist sister from the male textualized version, Arcari asks? Is it possible to describe different gendered models of psychotropic experiences, even though they often emerge as colonizing male discourses? Is it possible, to reconstruct specific gendered models of visionary experiences starting from texts where male actions and perceptions are dominant?

Further insights into female authority in early Christianity are offered by my contribution entitled "Women Facing Martyrdom: The Interplay Between Temporality and Social and Gender Roles in Early Christianity." With this article I attempt to discuss the image of women in the Acts of the Christian martyrs. More specifically, I focus on how the temporality of martyrdom is intertwined with the construction and the experience of social and gendered roles. The nexus between time and the construction of the feminine in these texts emerges as being particularly interesting because it sheds light on many relevant questions in early Christianity, such as the reconfiguration of family ties, social norms, and roles. The Acts of the Christian martyrs represent a significative case in this regard. The emphasis on a rejection and, in some cases, rupture of family ties caused by women who decided to face martyrdom is a constant feature of martyr stories. Furthermore, this social subversion appears to be influenced by the contraction of time determined by the experience of martyrdom. By looking at time as a key factor in martyr stories, I aim to identify a set of key features that may define embodied and experiential time in its relationship with the construction of women's agency as it is represented in the *Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonice* and the *Martyrdom of Agape, Irene, Chione and Companions.*

The second section of the volume is more specifically focused on the attempts to rewrite women's authority within the process of transmission and reception of female sainthood. The first article of this second section has been written by Ángel Narro, and it is entitled "Emulating Thecla: Mygdonia, Xanthippe, and Polyxena. Different Conceptions of Conversion and Religious Life." As a character symboliz-

ing the most appreciated virtues among early Christian writers, Narro says, Thecla becomes an example to be imitated by Christian women in general and, from a narrative point of view, by those women portrayed as living an ascetic life far from earthly goods in hagiography. Thecla will be a recurrent model, since she was not only an example of conversion, or the first martyr, but also the first ascetic woman and a sort of charismatic leader. For this reason, she will be imitated by other female characters playing important roles in other later apocryphal Acts. Therefore, Thecla represents an important antecedent for the future development of women saints. The article by Narro focuses on the first reception of this ideal of female sainthood inside this literary tradition. The influence of Thecla's model can be observed in two later apocryphal Acts sharing a common narrative scenario and chronology, such as those of Thomas and those of Xanthippe and Polyxena. In the former, a binary opposition between earthly and heavenly life is constantly evoked and conversion implies eschatological rewards, whereas in the latter a different conception of temporality and religious life emerges, and conversion means protection against diabolic attacks or evil in this life. The main reason for this relevant change of mindset must be found in the different historical moments in which each work is composed, since the *Acts of Thomas* are normally dated to the third century and the *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* to the sixth century. Both feature, as the story of Thecla did, an overturning of the traditional roles attributed to women in non-Christian societies (Indian and Graeco-Roman, respectively), but conceptions on temporality and eschatology diverge. In addition, each one treats Thecla's influence in a particular way and is focused on some precise aspects of her profile.

The literary transmission of the motif of family discord is addressed by Marijana Vuković in her contribution entitled "Husband as a 'Religious Other': Family Discord from Early Christian Apology to Medieval Hagiography." In his *Second Apology for the Christians*, the second-century Christian writer Justin Martyr reported the story of a Christian woman who refused to comply with the non-Christian sinful habits of her husband and yearned to be divorced. The motif of a husband as the "religious other" also emerged in Latin hagiographical texts, such as the late antique *Martyrdom of Anastasia* (BHL 1795). Anastasia, a wealthy aristocrat who led a humble Christian life, married a pagan Publius, but she kept her virginity, feigning illness. Publius held her captive and seized her wealth while she prayed for his conversion to Christianity or death. In the sixth-century *Life of the Fathers*, Gregory of Tours wrote about Monegundis, a female recluse separated from her husband after her daughters' death. She lived in her house like a hermit and later moved to the basilica of Saint Martin in Tours. Her devotion to God and the saint was a justification for her independence from her husband's authority. During the late antiquity, the motif of a husband as a "religious other" fur-

ther appeared in the Georgian *Martyrdom of Shushanik.* A Zoroastrian husband of Shushanik, a Christian Armenian woman, tortured her to death. Finally, the *Martyrdom of Panteleimon*, appearing in Greek and Church Slavonic manuscripts from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries, described the saint's parents as holding different beliefs. The traveling theme of a husband as a "religious other" transformed its contexts in different texts and periods to keep its significance in a given time. In this way, the motif stayed both intertextual and contextualized. While being part of the core idea of family discord, it allowed room for different contexts to convey messages of a given time rather than staying cemented during the transmission.

The article written by Christian Høgel, "The Metaphrastic Female Saint: Time and Temporality in Rewritten Lives of Women Saints," concludes the second section of the volume. Høgel focuses on the collection of rewritten hagiography, known as the Metaphrastic *menologion* and produced by Symeon Metaphrastes towards the end of the tenth century, where female saints appear quite visibly. Eighteen out of the 148 Lives focus exclusively on female saints, whether individually or in groups, with an additional six Lives featuring a woman as a co-protagonist alongside a man. Notably, six out of the eighteen Lives centered on women are placed in September perhaps to emphasize the importance of female sanctity from the outset in a world dominated by male saints and protagonists. Symeon had limited discretion in these matters, as he adhered to established notions of sanctity and the church calendar. And yet, even his rewritten accounts demonstrate that he paid special attention to female sanctity, and that he wished to underline specific notions of time, offered by the old versions of the stories of the female saints, as well as taking new steps in promoting the temporality that adhered to female saints. Among his prime concerns were the non-evolution in the Lives of hidden saints, the grounded opposition of women saints to secular powers due to the pervert interests from these, as well as a repeated cross-reference between Lives of female saints, as if underlining their temporal correspondence.

The third and final group of contributions investigates more closely the relationship between gender, holiness and temporality in some Lives of holy women. Roberto Alciati investigates the relationship between two female ascetic characters in his article entitled "Unlike Their Mothers: The Struggle Against Time of the Two Melanias." By focusing on the stories of Melania the Elder and Melania the Younger, and by adopting a comparative approach, Alciati observes that different perceptions of temporal shifts are embodied and embedded in the language and narratives that form the imaginary of these two famous "holy women." While it is difficult to state with certainty whether both Melanias were aware of the time shift that their behavior caused, at the same time there are sufficient elements to suppose that the authors of the two hagiographical accounts were aware of

the abovementioned temporal embodiment. While not explicitly talking about "ascetic time," Alciati writes, the biographers/hagiographers of both stories emphasize that the decision of the two Melanias to abandon the lifestyle of the world was influenced by a "time factor."

Stavroula Constantinou contributed an article entitled "Mothers' Time: The Temporality of Motherhood in the *Life of Martha* and the *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger.*" Drawing on Julia Kristeva's work on motherhood and its understanding in temporal terms, Constantinou explores maternal temporality and female holiness in two complementary early Byzantine saints' Lives: the anonymous *Life of Martha*, the only Byzantine hagiographical text whose protagonist is sanctified through motherhood, and the anonymous Life of her son, Symeon Stylite the Younger. As will be shown, both texts bring forth important aspects of maternal temporality as examined by Kristeva in an attempt to articulate the holiness of a mother who has brought up a saintly son. Like the holiness of God's mother, that of Martha is both material and spiritual, spatial and temporal, generative and eschatological.

Aglae Pizzone, with her essay "Girls, Interrupted: Synchronicity and Genealogy in Tzetzes' *Hypomnema* for Saint Lucy," concludes the third and final section of the volume. In her analysis, Pizzone explores notions of time in John Tzetzes' only surviving hagiographical piece, the *hypomnema* for Saint Lucy of Syracuse. By comparing it with the fifth-century Passion (BHG 995) and the ninth-century pre-Metaphrastic Passion (BHG 995d) of the saint, Pizzone shows that Tzetzes' narrative modules bring to the fore aspects of liminality already present in the late antique narrative, glossing over discourses of genealogy more developed in the middle-Byzantine version. The introduction of the myth of Persephone right at the beginning of the piece further emphasizes an idea of circular time in which past and present collapse. Equally, Lucy's story testifies to the redefinition of gender boundaries and to the creation of a queer temporality in which linear genealogy does not exist anymore.

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Section 1 Female Authority, Gender Roles, and Religious Experience and Practices in Early Christianity

Laura Carnevale

A Portrayal of "Gendered" Authority: Mary of Cassobola Across Time and Space in Two Ps.Ignatian Epistles

1 Introduction

"The Ignatian Epistles are an exceptionally good training ground for the student of early Christian literature and history. They present in typical and instructive forms the most varied problems, textual, exegetical, doctrinal, and historical."[1] This statement by Joseph Barber Lightfoot, although dating back to the end of the nineteenth century, conveys the still undiminished (rather, increased) research potential concealed in the *corpus Ignatianum*. Acknowledged as the second bishop of Antioch and martyrized in Rome—according to Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (III, 36)—during the reign of Trajan (89–117),[2] Ignatius is considered one of the most important characters in the period of Christian origins. This happens because the writings attributed to him allow the reader to take a closer look into issues such as the formation of Christian hierarchy, Christological doctrines, and the distinction between Christianity and Judaism. Not surprisingly, an intense scholarly discussion has spread out on Ignatius and his work and has become more and more vibrant every year, lately fostered by Markus Vinzent who, while engaging in debate with other scholars, has been publishing and editing important contributions on this subject.[3]

1 Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers. Part II. S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp. Revised Texts, with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations and Translations*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1889), xv.

2 Manlio Simonetti, "Le lettere di Ignazio. Introduzione," in *Seguendo Gesù: Testi cristiani delle origini. 1*, eds. Manlio Simonetti and Emanuela Prinzivalli (Roma-Milano: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla-Mondadori, 2010): 279–82. Interesting attempts to date the arrest and execution of Ignatius in the years 115–117 have been made by Étienne Decrept and Marco Rizzi: Étienne Decrept, "La persecution oubliée des chrétiens d'Antioche sous Trajan et le martyre d'Ignace d'Antioche," *Revue d'Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 52 (2006): 1–29; Marco Rizzi, "Jews and Christians under Trajan and the Date of Ignatius' Martyrdom," in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70–132 CE*, eds. Joshua J. Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson (Leiden-New York: Brill, 2017): 119–26.

3 Markus Vinzent, *Writing the History of Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 266–464. Further contributions by Vinzent are listed below, footnote 11. See also Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy* (London-New York:

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As regards this essay, I will try to push the boundaries of the research potential of the *Ignatians*, by addressing some aspects related to time, space, and gender specifically emerging from two short letters of the collection.[4] The first one is ascribed to a woman, Mary of Cassobola, who (supposedly) writes to Ignatius, while the second one is attributed to the bishop, who replies to her.

Despite the fact that these two texts followed distinct paths in the manuscript tradition of the *corpus Ignatianum*, they have been considered part of the group of thirteen letters known as Long Recension.[5] Following a scholarly consensus resulting from the nineteenth-century studies of Zahn, Funk, and Lightfoot,[6] the Long Recension is regarded as a creation by a fourth-century forger, conventionally

T&T Clark International, 2007); Allen Brent, "Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Century," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 42/2 (2021): 287–329; Emanuela Prinzivalli, "Fingersi Ignazio. Le ragioni di un falsario del IV secolo," in Non uno itinere. *Ebraismi, cristianesimi, modernità. Studi in onore di Mauro Pesce in occasione del suo ottantesimo compleanno*, eds. Mara Rescio, Cristiana Facchini, Claudio Gianotto, Edmondo Lupieri, Franco Motta and Enrico Norelli (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2021): 411–19; Emanuele Castelli, "La nascita del termine ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΣΜΟΣ. Una indagine," *Revue d'Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 68/2 (2022): 238–58.

4 Some references for my analysis are: Robert David Sack, *Homo Geographicus: A Framework for Actions, Awareness and Moral Concern* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 39–41; *Religion and the Body: Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Religion and The Body Held at Åbo, Finland, on 16–18 June 2010*, eds. Tore Ahlbäck and Björn Dahla (Åbo: Donner Institute for research in religious and cultural history, 2011); Harry O. Maier, "Paul, Ignatius and Thirdspace: A Socio-Geographic Exploration," in *The Apostolic Fathers and Paul*, eds. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2016): 162–80; Esther Eidinow and Lisa Maurizio, "Introduction," in *Narratives of Time and Gender in Antiquity*, eds. Esther Eidinow and Lisa Maurizio (London, New York: Routdledge 2020): 1–12.

5 There are actually several difficulties in ascribing both these epistles to the Long Recension, given the fact that Mary's letter is missing in almost all the Greek manuscripts of this collection, except for two of them: the *Hierosolymitanus*, Patriarchike Bibliotheke, Παναγίου Τάφου 54, written in 1056, and the *Monacensis Gr.* 394 (tenth century). It is also missing in all the Latin manuscripts of the same collection, many of which nevertheless contain Ignatius' answer to Mary. It is the Middle Recension, instead, which includes both the letters in a few Greek manuscripts (one being the famous *Laurentianus Mediceus gr. pluteus* 57.7, tenth century), and in two Latin medieval manuscripts, the *Caiensis* 395 (fifteenth century) and the *Montacutianus* (currently lost, but possibly written by Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln in the twelfth century). These two Latin manuscripts were discovered by James Ussher in the seventeenth century, who connected them to the circle of Grosseteste, and suggested that they have been originated from a Greek *Vorlage* older than the one known to us: James Ussher, *Polycarpi et Ignatii epistolae* (Oxford: Hall, 1644).

6 Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873); Theodor Zahn, *Patrum apostolicorum opera. 2. Ignatii et Polycarpi epistulae martyria fragmenta* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1876); Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*; Franz X. Funk, *Opera Patrum Apostolicorum* (Tubingae: in Libraria Henrici Laupp, 1881).

named Ps.Ignatius and considered an Arian.[7] Yet, it is to be admitted that the doctrinal opinions emerging from the Long Recension are ambiguous and not unequivocal; for this reason, a growing number of scholars are currently questioning the Arianism of Ps.Ignatius. Apart from this disputable issue, it has become common knowledge that the forger interpolated all the seven Ignatian epistles addressed to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Philadelphians, the Romans, the Smyrnaeans, and to Polycarp, which represent the so-called Middle Recension, and of which Eusebius of Caesarea was aware (*Ecclesiastical History*, III, 36,5–10).[8] The interpolation would have implied not only the insertion of additional parts within the seven letters but also the composition of six more: the letters of Mary of Cassobola to Ignatius, and the letters of Ignatius to Mary, to Heron, to the Tarsians, to the Antiochians, to the Philippians. A Syriac version, witnessed by three manuscripts, and including only the three letters to the Ephesians, to the Romans, and to Polycarp (all of them in a short version), was discovered in the mid-nineteenth century by William Cureton,[9] who considered this collection, called Short Recension, as the genuine one. Four supplementary letters, probably crafted in the eleventh century, circulated in Latin under the name of Ignatius during the Middle Ages: two are written to John the apostle, and one to Mary the Virgin; the fourth is the Virgin's reply to Ignatius, which led to a frequent confusion with Mary of Cassobola.

Before beginning the analysis, it is important to recall that a number of scholars during the past decades have re-mapped the *Ignatians* and their history in a different way, rejecting the primacy of the seven-letter collection.[10] Currently, Mar-

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7 For the various identifications of Ps.Ignatius with Arian writers (one of them being Julian the Arian, author of a *Commentary on Job* and possibly also related to the *Apostolical Constitutions*), see Vinzent, *Writing the History*, 379–80.

8 As Bart Ehrman puts it, "[a]rguably, the most historically influential set of forgeries of the late fourth century are the Pseudo-Ignatian letters": Bart D. Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 460.

9 William Cureton, *The Ancient Syriac Version of the Epistles of Saint Ignatius to Saint Polycarp, the Ephesians, and the Romans, Edited with an English Translation and Notes; Also the Greek Text of these Three Epistles, Corrected According to the Authority of the Syriac Version* (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1845); see also William Cureton, *Corpus Ignatianum: A Complete Collection of the Ignatian Epistles, Genuine, Interpolated, and Spurious* (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1849).

10 For instance, Reinoud Weijenborg, *Les lettres d'Ignace d'Antioche: Étude de critique littéraire et de theologie* (Leiden: Brill, 1969) supported the priority of the Long Recension; Robert Joly, *Le dossier d'Ignace d'Antioche* (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1979) questioned the existence of Ignatius as a writer, and placed the composition of the seven letters in the third quarter of the second century. An advocate of the priority of four letters (adding the *Trallians* to the three letters of the Short Recension) has been Josep Rius-Camps, *Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius the Martyr: A Critical Study on the Anomalies Contained in the Textus Receptus* (Roma: Pontificium In-

kus Vinzent is providing remarkable evidence for the hypothesis of a different reconstruction of the *corpus*, specifically arguing for the priority of the Short Recension by means of textual, theological, semantical and scriptural arguments.[11] In fact, it is undisputable that the entire *corpus* needs to be re-investigated. Such re-investigation should imply a new analysis of the manuscript tradition in all its witnesses (manuscripts in different languages, quotations by later authors, etc.) and should not be biased by the stiff idea of the three recensions, as noted by both Ehrman[12] and Vinzent.[13]

In the present contribution I will share the idea that the two letters of Mary and Ignatius are a spurious product, written in the fourth century by an Arian Ps.Ignatius: I consider this a working hypothesis, upon which further research is surely needed.[14]

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stitutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1980); see also Christine Trevett, "Anomaly and Consistency: Josep Rius-Camps on Ignatius and Matthew," *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984): 166–71. Attempts of reading the seven letter collection as an epistolary novel, rather than as a genuine correspondence, have been made: e.g. Timo Glaser, "The Letters of Ignatius of Antioch: An Epistolary Novel on a Martyr Bishop and the Quest for Christian Identity," in *Die Datierung neutestamentlicher Pseudepigraphen: Herausforderungen und neuere Lösungsansätze*, eds. Wolfgang Grünstäudl and Karl Matthias Schmidt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021): 385–433.

11 Vinzent, *Writing the History*, 291–336; Markus Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch through the Centuries," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 42/2 (2021): 331–54; Markus Vinzent, "Ignatian Recensions: What are These and How Many?," in *Studia Patristica 126: Papers Presented at the Eighteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2019, Vol. 23. Apocrypha et Gnostica; Ignatius of Antioch-the Mysterious Bishop; The Second and Third Centuries*, eds. Markus Vinzent and Kevin Künzl (Leuven: Peeters, 2021): 121–34.

12 "A full critical commentary of the *Pseudo-Ignatians* (including the interpolations) is a major desideratum in the field" (Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery*, 469).

13 "Instead of focusing on the 6/7 letters alone—as has been done in the scholarship of the past 150 years—we should move to look at all the various letter collections and the multiple recensions that these highly important witnesses of Early and Medieval Christianity provide" (Vinzent, "Ignatian Recensions," 134).

14 I also endorse the idea that this forger is the same person who worked on the other epistles of the Long Recension. Current scholarship considers the possibility of ascribing to him the authorship of Polycarp's *Letter to Philippians*, too (as I learned in an oral colloquium by David Lincicum at Loyola University, Chicago). Please note that in present article I refer to the forger with the pronoun he/him conventionally without any specific implication about the gender and the number of the author/authors.

2 The Content of the Epistles

The topic addressed by these short texts, within the collection of the *Ignatians*, is very specific. The content of Mary's letter focuses on an explicit request she makes to Ignatius: she aims at recommending a solution for a problem faced by two groups of newly converted Christians, dwelling respectively in two small towns not far from Antioch, Neapolis near Zarbos, and Cassobola.[15] Both Christian groups lacked someone taking responsibility for a supervision of them. Therefore, Mary asks Ignatius to appoint two men whom she is clearly acquainted with, Maris and Eulogius, respectively as a bishop in Neapolis[16] and a presbyter in Cassobola. She is, however, well aware that their young age would be considered an obstacle to these responsibilities; therefore, she supports her request with moral arguments and biblical references, and spends a large section of the letter (II–V) in praising the youth, by quoting a substantial number of Old Testament exemplary cases, which support this view.

15 Assuming an identification of Zarbos with Anazarbos and of Cassobola with Castabala, both places were located in Cilicia on the border with Syria. Maybe Anazarbos was the name of the reconstructed town of Zarbos after an earthquake during Nerva's reign, as suggested by Franz X. Funk, *Opera Patrum Apostolicorum*, vol. 2 (Tubingae: in Libraria Henrici Laupp, 1881), 48. See Siméon Vailhé, "Anazarbe," in *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques* 2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1914), cols. 1506–1507; Raymond Janin, "Castabala," in *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques* 11 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1949), col. 1410. It is not negligible that the toponyms Catabala and Anazarbos are mentioned in the famous "itinerarium pictum" known as *Tabula Peutingeriana* (*Segmentum* X.4), a medieval copy of a road map probably dating back to the fourth or fifth century C.E., named after the humanist Konrad Peutinger from Augsburg, to whom it was donated, and currently preserved in a degraded parchment stripe (cm 700 x 34) at the National Library in Vienna: see Francesco Prontera, ed., *Tabula Peutingeriana: Le antiche vie del mondo* (Firenze: Leo Olschki, 2003), 1–6.

16 A critical edition, supplemented by a commentary and an Italian translation, of the Long Recension of the *Ignatians* (Greek version) was published by Annamaria Vaccaro as a revised version of her doctoral thesis (University of Basilicata, 2016). Vaccaro's text is based on three manuscripts: the *Monacensis Gr.* 394, the *Hierosolymitanus* Παναγίου Τάφου 54, and the *Vaticanus Gr.* 859 (twelfth century). In particular, she suggests that Maris' bishropic would have been a "new town"—otherwise unknown—called Emelape (not Neapolis), because she keeps the *lectio* of the *Vaticanus* (Ἡμελάπης Νέας πόλεως: 1,1), also endorsed by the Latin translation of the *Caiensis* (*Emelapes Neapoleos*) *vs.* the *lectio* transmitted by both the *Monacensis* and the *Hiersolymitanus* (ἡμεδαπῆς = "our"): see Annamaria Vaccaro, *Il corpus epistolare dello pseudo-Ignazio di Antiochia* (Potenza: Circolo culturale "Silvio Spaventa Filippi," 2021), 223–29. I thank both Emanuele Castelli for having recommended the book, and the author for having provided me with a copy of it.

In his reply, Ignatius greets Mary,[17] mentioning his own condition as a prisoner and a future martyr, and proving to be both willing and happy to fulfill Mary's request. The very beginning of the text (1,1–3) seems to recall conventions and style developed in the late Greek literature (Hellenistic novels and fictional epistolary collections) regarding the letters exchanged between separated lovers.[18] Ignatius, in fact, is portrayed to be longing for her and to deeply care about her suggestions and declares that he did already follow her instructions, having trusted her judgement about the two young men, notwithstanding their age. He labels himself "Mary's ἀντίψυχος,"[19] thus conveying his persuasion of being a surrogate victim, ready to sacrifice his own life for her. By this concept he expresses the idea that his death will have an atoning value, like the death of Christ and like the death of Christian martyrs. The importance attributed to Mary in Ignatius' epistle is supported by the greetings forwarded to her by a number of "presbyters and deacons," and especially by Heron, meant to be the successor of Ignatius in the bishopric of Antioch. Thus, it is not surprising that the epistle ascribed to Ignatius and addressed to Heron himself, also included in the Long Recension, provides further insights about Mary. In its closing lines (*Her* 9,3), Neapolis near Zarbos is considered Mary's residence, and Maris is mentioned as its bishop. Also, the final greeting to Mary is extended to the "church that is in her house," with a conscious allusion to Paul's greeting to Nympha in Col 4:15, and probably also to the figure of Lydia, who, according to Acts 16:15, hosts Paul and his fellows in her own house in Thyatira.

3 Doctrine Across Time

The main doctrinal aspect emerging from the two epistles is the tendency to emphasize the human nature of Jesus the Christ. This is conspicuous, for instance, at the beginning of Mary's letter when she explains that, in both communities she is

17 I have already expanded on some aspects of the relationship between Mary and Ignatius, as emerging from this letter: see Laura Carnevale, "Consolarsi da lontano: Autorità femminile e gerarchia nelle lettere di Maria di Cassobola e Ignazio di Antiochia," in Rescio, Facchini, Gianotto, Lupieri, Motta and Norelli, eds., Non uno itinere. *Ebraismi, cristianesimi, modernità,* 308–15. See also Vinzent, *Writing the* History, 379–93.

18 See Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Greek Literary Letters* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 5–6.

19 *IgnMarC* 3,3. This seems to be a typical word used by Ignatius, but we can find it also in 4Mac 6:29; 17:2 (dated to the beginning of the second century). See Paolo Serra Zanetti, "Una nota ignaziana: ΑΝΤΙΨΥΧΟΝ," in *Forma Futuri: Studi in onore del card. M. Pellegrino* (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1975): 963–79, 978, footnote 51.

making intercession for, "was Christ recognized to be the son of the living God, and to have become human in recent times through the virgin Mary from the seed of David and Abraham, according to the announcements that were foretold about him and from him by the choir of prophets."[20] A corresponding perspective is detectable in Mary's labeling of David as the "root of the Savior according to the flesh."[21] Only at a first glance can the former remark be interpreted as merely informative about the (alleged) status of the Christianization of Neapolis and Cassobola at the beginning of the second century; actually, it implies more than that, being in fact a doctrinal statement, as the second one clearly is. These two assertions endorse the Christological connection between the "first" and the "second" Covenant, that is the authority of Hebrew Scripture and its influence on the new life and doctrines of the groups of Jesus' followers. Moreover, such declarations aim at criticizing any kind of docetic opinion. It has been often observed that the entire *corpus Ignatianum*, with reference to both the "genuine" and the "pseudoepigraphical" epistles, is marked by anti-docetic and anti-ascetic doctrinal options,[22] meaning that the forger deliberately tried to reproduce the ideas and the concepts expressed by Ignatius. What is interesting to me here is that these doctrinal statements, precisely because they are expressed in a general way, prove to be "one-size-fits-all" assertions. In fact, they ultimately fit the context of both the second century (the shaping of the first Christian reflections with a focus on the human nature of Jesus, especially stressed in the Antiochean area) and the second half of the fourth century (the spreading of the Christological controversies across the Mediterranean after the Council of Nicea), making the chronology of the letters more difficult to detect.

This is even more true if we consider a further assertion that emerges in the response attributed to Ignatius. Here the bishop invites Mary to "get away from those who deny the passion of Christ and his birth according to the flesh. Many

20 *MarCIgn* 1,1: ὁ Χριστὸς ἐγνωρίσθη υἱὸς εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος καὶ ἐν ὑστεροις καιροῖς ἐνηνθρωπηκέναι διὰ παρθένου Μαρίας ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ καὶ Ἀβραὰμ κατὰ τὰς περὶ αὐτοῦ ὑπ'αὐτοῦ προρρηθείσας φωνὰς παρὰ τοῦ τῶν προφητῶν χοροῦ. I quote the text of the Greek version of the epistle, as printed in Funk, *Opera Patrum Apostolicorum*, vol. 2, 46–52. Apparently, here the forger wants to stress that the prophets were directly inspired by the preexisting Christ.

21 *MarCIgn* 4,2: […] ἡ τοῦ σωτηρίου κατὰ σάρκα ῥίζα.

22 The flavor of the first sentence, in fact, recalls both Paul and "genuine" epistles such as *Eph.* 19:1; *Trall.* 9:1. See also Norbert Brox, "Pseudo-Paulus und Pseudo-Ignatius: Einige Topoi Altchristlicher Pseudepigraphie," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976): 181–88; Enrico Norelli, "L'"Ascensione di Isaia' dipende dalle lettere di Paolo?," *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 40 (2019): 487–543, 495–96 recently re-discussed the complexity of the phenomena classified as docetism, arguing in favor of a revision of the concept of "docetism" itself.

are those who, at this moment, are suffering from this disease."[23] Such a sharp statement, in fact, is once again an ambiguous one: being broadly anti-docetic, it may well be contextualized in the second century; however, the specification that "many are those [...] suffering from this disease" can also be related to the fourth-century Arian and Apollinarist controversies. Antioch was indeed deeply involved in the Arian controversy: specifically, the Christological views in Antioch focused on the humanity of Jesus the Christ, as a key factor of his union with divinity.[24] As many scholars have already noted, if a forger did some kind of work here, he did it skillfully, expanding upon the doctrine he already found in the previously written Ignatian letters, and focusing on the humanity of Christ in a such balanced way, that does not allow us to label him unambiguously as an Arian.[25]

4 Gender Across Bible, Time, and Space

A considerable section of Mary's epistle (*MarCIgn* 5,1) is intended to re-tell six exemplary biblical stories, where prophetic, priestly, and royal authority is attributed to young people. Although the examples seem to be conventional, they show the willingness of Ps.Ignatius to establish bonds within the situation of the Christian groups of Neapolis and Cassobola and the Hebrew Scriptures, linking the present(ed) Christianity to the Biblical past. Moreover, the reported cases support the idea that, even if Maris and Eulogius are young, the two men are yet perfectly capable of exerting priestly authority. Specifically, the quotations come from the stories of Samuel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Solomon, Josiah, David.[26] The former, as a child prophet, dared to reproach the elderly Eli about his choice of defending his wicked sons rather than caring for God (1Sam 2:12, 22; 3:12–18); Daniel pronounced a judgment against the elders who threatened Susannah (Dan 13-LXX); to Jeremiah God himself entrusted the task of prophecy despite his youth (Jer

23 *IgnMarC.* 5,1: Φεῦγε τοὺς ἀρνουμένους τὸ πάθος Χριστοῦ καὶ τὴν κατὰ σάρκα γέννησιν. Πολλοὶ δὲ εἰσὶν ἄρτι οἱ ταύτην νοσοῦντες τῆν ἀρρωστίαν.

24 Manlio Simonetti, "Eresia e ortodossia ad Antiochia nei primi tre secoli," *Salesianum* 58 (1996): 645–52.

25 See Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery*, 469 and 475–77; Hans Christof Brennecke, "Die *recensio longior* des Corpus Ignatianum," in *Die Briefe des Ignatios von Antiochia: Motive, Strategien, Kontexte*, eds. Thomas Johann Bauer and Peter von Möllendorff (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018): 249–69; Prinzivalli, "Fingersi Ignazio," 412.

26 The same biblical examples support similar arguments in the expanded version of the *Letter to Magnesians* (Long Recension: *IgnMag* 3), while the exemplary models of Solomon and Jonah are mentioned also in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 2,1,3–4, with reference to the exceptional ordination of a young bishop: see Vinzent, *Writing the History*, 384–88; Prinzivalli, "Fingersi Ignazio," 411–19.

1:7–8); Solomon not only judged the dispute between the two prostitute-mothers about their newborns (one living and one dead), but also resolved the riddles of the Queen of Sheba (1Kings 3:16–28; 10:1–13); Josiah, being still a child, cleared the Temple from idols (2Kings 23:4–27); the young David, "root of the Savior according to the flesh" (as discussed earlier), was elected as king and anointed by Samuel (1Sam 16:13).

Regarding gender, it seems significant to me that two of the male characters recalled here, namely Daniel and Solomon, address their agency to four female figures. Actually, the episode of Daniel and Susannah tells a story of chastity (only present in the LXX version of the Hebrew Bible); Solomon deals in one case with two women who are at the same time mothers and prostitutes and, in the other case, with the Queen of Sheba, a character embodying feminine wisdom and independence. In my perspective, the choice of these cases, even if they were typical and topical, is not to be deemed as a mere coincidence: Mary seems to mirror herself, not only Maris and Eulogius, in the biblical examples she quotes. On one hand the feminine models emerging here apparently stick to the social roles traditionally ascribed to the women (virginity/chastity; motherhood; whoredom; wisdom); on the other hand, however, these episodes portray independent women indeed, whose (unrestricted) agency is applied to most different circumstances, not being affected by conjugal bonds of any sort.

5 Bodies Across Time and Hierarchy

Even if we regard these texts as the product of a forgery, this should not automatically imply the hypothesis that the two young men and Mary herself are literary characters. Nonetheless, we must admit that there are not many possibilities of assessing the historical existence of Maris and Eulogius, apart from some prosopographical studies confirming the plausibility of a fourth-century chronology.[27] The presentation of these two individuals in Mary's epistle proves to be especially powerful concerning bodily issues related to time, temporality, and hierarchy. In fact, starting from the consideration that the most tangible expression of the notion of time and temporality is the physical process of growth and aging which affects every human body, a specific aspect of Mary's discourse can be probably interpreted in a different light: "[a]s for the two aforementioned being young, have no fear, thou blessed: for I want you to know that they despise the flesh and disregard its passions, shining themselves through (their) fresh youth through in the

27 Highly interesting observations in Vinzent, "Ignatian Recensions," 131–33.

greyness of priesthood."[28] What the text is conveying here, in fact, is not simply a rhetorical description of Maris' and Eulogius' youth as symbolically clashing with the spiritual maturity they would obtain by means of their ordination. The two men are presented in concrete terms as shining in their priesthood precisely through their youth, which implies that they are capable of converting their physical youth into its opposite, the ripeness of seniority achieved in priesthood. In other words, the priestly ordination seems to enable them to overcome within their own bodies the boundaries of time and age. For many understandable reasons, in Christian groups there rapidly arose a propensity to ordain mature men rather than young ones. The discourse attributed to Mary, thus, is obviously triggered by moral issues, especially the fear that young bodies run major risks of losing their chastity, in comparison to old ones. However, what I see here is something more: there could be an implication that the new religious life of Maris and Eulogius provides them with the possibility of controlling their personal bodily needs, by means of their inclusion in a safer collective "body," the Christian hierarchy. Thus, the subjective physical agency of these two young men is transferred to the religious order and neutralized by the religious ordination.

Historically, we need to recognize that, even if the problem of ordaining young people was an important topic emerging in conciliary discussions during the fourth century,[29] the debate about the right age for the priestly ordination was an ongoing one since the early stages of the formation of Christianity. Indeed, such a discussion was often solved with arguments not so different from those proposed in Mary's epistle.[30] The person who wrote this was surely aware of the problem and wanted to express an opinion about it in a vibrant way: therefore, he placed the discussion against a backdrop both familiar to a fourth-century audience and totally consistent with the second-century milieu.

6 Bodies Across Space and Hierarchy

In both epistles Mary is portrayed as a woman capable of traveling and free to do this. Indeed, she seems experienced in reorienting and relocating herself in different places and roles.

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28 *MarCIgn* 2,1: Ὑπὲρ δὲ τοῦ νέους εἶναι τοὺς προγεγραμμένους δείσεις μηδέν, ὦ μακάριε· γινώσκειν γάρ σε θέλω, ὡς ὑπερφρονοῦσιν σαρκὸς καὶ τῶν ταύτης παρθῶν ἀλογοῦσιν, αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς προσφάτῳ νεότητι ἱερωσύνης ἀστράπτοντες πολιᾷ.

29 See *Apos. Con.* 2,1,1–7; Council of Serdica, year 343, canon 13.

30 1Tim 4:12: "Let no one look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in your speech, conduct, love, faithfulness, and purity."

The *superscriptio* of her letter, in its Greek version and in both the Latin translations printed in Funk's edition,[31] mentions Cassobola or their inhabitants with reference to Mary, meaning that she comes from that town, which may be her birthplace, but is not her place of residence. In fact, the *superscriptio* of Ignatius' letter, both in the Greek and in one of the two Latin translations (the one transmitted by the *Montacutianus* codex), informs us that Mary's dwelling place is the town of Neapolis near Zarbos. Such a twofold geographical belonging explains, at least in the perspective of the narrative fiction, the reason why Mary engages in solving problems that have arisen in the Christian hierarchy of these two specific places.

Not only does she come from Cassobola and live in Neapolis, but the letter attributed to Ignatius adds further critical information: in a previous stage of her life, she spent some time in Rome with "the blessed Pope" Anacletus[32] and was there highly praised. Ps.Ignatius needs yet to specify that, at the moment when the letter is (allegedly) written, the Roman Pope is Clement: the author seems therefore to stick to the list of Roman bishops presented by Irenaeus and his followers,[33] according to which Clement was the fourth bishop of Rome after Peter, Linus, and Anacletus.

It has been noted that the mention of Mary's dwelling in Rome with Anacletus highlights the connection between Antioch and Rome (respectively, the bishopric of Ignatius and the place of his execution), which frequently emerges in the *Ignatians*, and has been also confirmed by an onomastic analysis.[34] The allusion to Mary being appreciated during her stay in Rome is nonetheless essential from a con-

31 See Vaccaro, *Il* corpus *epistolare*, 37–38.

32 *IgnMarC* 4,1: Ἐπέρχεται δέ μοι λέγειν, ὅτι ἀληθινὸς ὁ λόγος, ὃν ἤκουον περὶ σοῦ, ἔτι οὔσης σου ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ παρὰ τῷ μακαρίῳ πάπᾳ Ἀνεγκλήτῳ, ὃν διεδέξατο τὰ νῦν ὁ ἀξιομακάριστος Κλήμης, ὁ Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου ἀκουστής. Καὶ νῦν προσέθηκας ἐπ'αὐτῷ ἑκατονταπλασίως, καὶ πρόσθες γε ἔτι, ὦ αὕτη. See Jack W. Hannah, "The Setting of the Ignatian Long Recension," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79/3 (1960): 221–38; Vinzent, *Writing the History*, 392. Here Vaccaro reads Λίνῳ, following the *Vaticanus* manuscript (Λήνῳ): Vaccaro, *Il* corpus *epistolare*, 234 and 239.

33 Iren. *haer.* 3,3,3: "The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric." Epiphanius (*Pan.* 27,6,2) considers Cletus (diminutive of Anacletus) the second bishop of Rome, followed by Clement; Augustine, instead, mentions Anacletus as subsequent to Clement (*Epist.* 53, 1.2).

34 Some scholars argued that author(s?) of the *Ignatians* came from a Roman context. Jan Bremmer, in an essay dedicated to the onomastic analysis of the Short and Middle Recension, sensibly affirms: "There certainly is a Roman aspect to the Letters, but lack of further evidence prevents us to know its precise nature" (Jan Bremmer, "The Place, Date and Author of the Ignatian Letters: An Onomastic Approach," in Grünstäudl and Schmidt, eds., *Die Datierung neutestamentlicher Pseudepigraphen*, 405–33, 416).

tent-related perspective and relevant to better understand the facts recounted in the letter. It proves in fact to be a brilliant explanation, if not a justification, of her authority towards Ignatius. The forger is very well aware of the importance of such a retrospective glimpse in the past: therefore, I would dare to apply to this allusion the "metahistorical" concept of "plupast," developed in 2012 by Jonas Grethlein and Christopher B. Krebs to define the method of the ancient historians who often mention, within their narrative, some events placed in a past prior to the narrative itself.[35] Despite its relevance, however, this shift in time and space has not been flawlessly handled by the author, since the designation "Pope" for the bishop of Rome, perfectly fitting the fourth century, feels anachronistic if related to the first century. Moreover, if the author of the letter had the additional intention of presenting a feminine influential model in contrast to a "heretic" one, and assuming that he was aware of Irenaeus' work (as we have implied from his list of the Roman episcopal succession), he could well have had in mind the example of the Carpocratian Marcellina. This woman, according to Irenaeus, "came to Rome" (probably from Egypt) in the time of Anicetus (154–165), and "deceived many."[36] From a historical perspective, Marcellina's case confirms the plausibility and feasibility of a journey of a (wealthy) woman across the Mediterranean to Rome in the second century. By portraying Mary—a female figure possibly in contrast with Marcellina—as dwelling with Anacletus, the fourth-century forger proves to be fully aware of that. Thus, Mary's travels across the Mediterranean and the influence she is able to exert on male authoritative figures on both the western and the eastern shores of the Sea, are not to be viewed as an anachronism influenced by the well-known female mobility in the fourth century (e. g. Egeria or Paula), but as a plausible setting for the narrative placed in the latest years of the first century and in the beginning of the second century.

35 "Historians deal with the past. But the past is not only 'a foreign country'; it is also a huge territory, stretching from the archaic to the most recent, and one of the historian's first decisions is where his past is to begin. Like Polybius or Dionysius, however, he might quickly come to realize that an account or at least mention of the past prior to his narrative's proper past is necessary for an adequate understanding of later (past) events; or, like all ancient historians studied in this volume, he might feel the need to embed in his account a past evoked from within the narrative (by, for example, a historical character). Since this past denotes a past completed prior to the past that the narrator focuses on, we suggest dubbing it the 'historian's plupast'" (Jonas Grethlein, Christopher B. Krebs, "The Historian's Plupast: Introductory Remarks on its Forms and Functions," in *Time and Narrative in Ancient Historiography: The 'Plupast' from Herodotus to Appian*, eds. Jonas Grethlein and Christopher B. Krebs [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012]: 1–16, 1).
36 Iren. *haer.* 1,25,6.

7 Concluding Remarks

A first concluding remark in this essay involves the recognition that, in both epistles, the narrative seems to be deliberately crafted in order to fit two different chronological contexts related to the second and the fourth centuries. Strong evidence of this comes from the reflection upon the doctrinal statements, which have, at least in these two texts of the *Ignatians*, a clear anti-docetic shade, with a stress on Jesus' humanity. This has led the majority of scholars to argue that the fourth-century forger was so ingenious and well acquainted with the genuine Ignatian *corpus* to reproduce those arguments very well; in addition, he was sending a clear message to his contemporaries regarding his own doctrinal (Arian) positions. However, as we have seen, this position has been also nuanced in various ways, up to the point that an increasing scholarly consensus is developing around the hypothesis that Ps.Ignatius was no Arian at all.

We have observed, furthermore, that doctrinal themes are not the only significant ones in these texts. As a second concluding remark, therefore, I wish to emphasize that, in both the epistles of Mary and Ignatius, the narrative becomes more significant when it deals with issues related to time and space, especially when the representation of individuals involved in hierarchical relationships (i. e. Maris, Eulogius, and Mary herself) is at stake.

A third tentative conclusion tackles the topic of the possible recognition of a historicity of Mary of Cassobola. We do not know much about her. What seems clear from the letters is that she has no husband, seems proud of that, and, moreover, is not subjected to any male authoritative figure. She is portrayed as an intelligent, wise, educated, assertive and wealthy woman, who plays an active role in her social and religious context in different times and places, while also being well-connected with different men, either influential to or influenced by her.

Mary's role seems to be that of a woman capable of teaching and making suggestions, actively co-operating with the construction of a Christian hierarchy. The reason why such a "gendered" agency can be accepted by a representative of masculine authority, like Ignatius, may lay precisely in the fact that Mary is not depicted as a wife, daughter or sister of anyone. She is fully independent in the society, she is in power of her will, her body and, presumably, her own funds: namely, she is in command of herself and thus qualified to "command" others.

Are these pieces of evidence sufficient to figure out whether she was a historical figure living in the second century or a fictional narrative character "invented" by the forger?

The answer is sadly negative, given the sources we have.[37] We can only imagine that Ps.Ignatius needed to shape an exemplary character to embody an ideal of feminine authority capable of entertaining mutual relationships and discursive practices with the ordained male hierarchy. He would not have aimed at modeling a woman capable of subverting social roles and/or the dominant order; conversely, he probably intended to provide an alternative response to the unrestricted female charismatic and "unorthodox" movements which kept spreading out in Asia Minor from the second to fourth centuries, and of which Montanism can be considered the most iconic example.[38] In fact, Ps.Ignatius clearly supported female authority, although he probably also wanted it to remain subordinated to men's power, especially when it came to clerical hierarchy (mirroring, so to say, the subordinate relationship between Jesus and the Father in the Arian view).

With these two letters, therefore, the forger shapes the figure of a woman, who, although fitting the second-century milieu, can be also acknowledged as a "prototype" across time and space, becoming a point of reference for the men and women living in fourth-century Christian Syria.

37 Paul greets a certain "Mary" in Rom 16:6, but she has not many chances to be historically related to our Mary of Cassobola (if not for other reasons, at least for chronological ones). It is worth mentioning that the production of fictional epistolary collections with fictitious characters was typical of the Second Sophistics—possibly an evolution of the rhetorical exercises carried out in schools. Often the anonymous writers, while aiming for accuracy and realism, provided too many details, which led them to various anachronisms and mistakes: see Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Greek Literary Letters*, 97–98.

38 I wish to close this contribution referring to a substantial book written on this topic by Maria Dell'Isola, *L'ultima profezia: La crisi montanista nel cristianesimo antico* (Trapani: Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2020). This article owes much to a series of stimuli received in different circumstances: the supervision of a MD thesis on Ignatius and Mary, written by Francesca Rutigliano at the University of Bari in 2020; an ongoing dialogue with Edmondo Lupieri on "Women with Authority"; some suggestions that emerged during a Doctoral Colloquium at Loyola University, Chicago, in 2022, especially from Olivia Stewart Lester and Joshua King. I am truly grateful to all the people mentioned above.

Luca Arcari

A Male Colonization of a Female Visionary Body: The "Montanist" Prophetess in Tertullian's *On the Soul* 9,4

1 Introduction

In *On the Soul* 9,4[1] Tertullian introduces a detailed account of a prophetic ecstasy experienced by an anonymous female member of his *ecclesia.* The woman declares to have received the gifts of revelation experienced "in the spirit" during church services on Sunday. In this regard, she extensively describes how she is able to converse with angels and sometimes even with the Lord. Moreover, she unequivocally asserts that she is able to see and hear "secrets." She can also discern the hearts and receive instructions to heal those who expressed the will to be healed.

Tertullian then reports that the visions described by the woman are influenced by the reading of Scriptures performed in the church assembly, by the songs that were sung, and eventually also by both the sermons and the prayers recited by the church members. The proof of the strict connection between the religious experience of ecstasy and the influence exerted on it by all the abovementioned liturgical rituals is the occurrence of the following episode reported by Tertullian himself: the woman—addressed in the entire account as *soror*—falls into ecstasy while the members of the *ecclesia* are addressing a sermon on the soul. At the end of the ritual, and only after the people taking part in the religious assembly are dismissed, the prophetess is able to report what she saw in her visions. Tertullian also specifies that her visions are transcribed very carefully in order that their content may be probed (*nam et diligentissime digeruntur, ut etiam probentur*).

The foundational works on Montanism, starting from De Labriolle's monograph[2] to the massive investigation of the "New Prophecy" by William Tabbernee[3] (only to mention some of the most important ones), affirm with enough cer-

1 For the Latin text, here I follow Claudio Moreschini and Pietro Podolak, eds., *Q.S.F. Tertulliani Opera Dogmatica. De Anima – De Carnis Resurrectione – Adversus Praxean. Tertulliano, Opere dottrinali. L'anima – La resurrezione della carne – Contro Prassea* (Roma: Città nuova, 2010), esp. 76–77. For the English translation, see Ronald E. Heine, *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989), esp. 71.

2 See Pierre De Labriolle, *La crise montaniste* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1913).

3 See William Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reactions to Montanism* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007).

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tainty that the anonymous prophetess was a member of Tertullian's Montanist group within the Carthaginian *ecclesia.* Tabbernee's assessment is explicit in this regard:

> From Tertullian's statement, a number of things are clear. (1) There were second- (or later-) generation Montanist prophetesses in Carthage whose prophecies Tertullian and, presumably, the other adherents of the New Prophecy at Carthage considered to be genuine, though contemporary, mouth-pieces of the Paraclete. (2) The reality of contemporary prophecy was guaranteed by "God's witness" and by apostolic testimony to the continuation of *charismata* in the church into the post-apostolic future. (3) The context of (at least) this particular prophetess' prophesying was during the regular "catholic" Sunday worship service [...]. (4) The manner of prophesying, while described as "by ecstasy in the Spirit" [...] seems remarkably passive. (5) The content of the type of prophesying familiar to Tertullian (at least in this instance) was stimulated by the liturgy: the readings from scriptures, the singing of psalms, the homilies or "sermons." (6) The genuineness of the early third-century expression of the New Prophecy in Carthage was "tested" by those authorized to do so.[4]

Maria Dell'Isola, in her recent monograph on Montanism,[5] seems to lean toward an analogous thesis. In fact, she underlines that the doctrine of the soul, as it is described in Tertullian's *On the Soul*, shows a remarkable resemblance to other overtly Montanist teachings.[6] However, Dell'Isola states, Montanism emerges in the heresiological sources as a rhetorical construction aiming at discrediting religious opponents or competitors. This conceptual premise, therefore, makes it difficult to shed light on the historical identity of the Montanist movement.

I would like to avoid a discussion of the "real" identity of the prophetess in *On the Soul* 9,4 based on typical categories ("heresy" vs. "orthodoxy") that are taken over from ancient Christian apologetics. In fact, any attempt to determine the identity of the woman – in terms of belonging or not to a group – relies entirely upon specific classifications which are based on the apologetic intent of some ancient Christian authors whose major goal was to discredit religious opponents. These categories, in many cases, cannot fully represent the socio-historical complexity characterizing both events and actors in the ancient world(s).

In order to attempt to recover the abovementioned socio-historical complexity, I will try to focus on the use of psychotropic practices within the religious experience of ecstasy. I contend that the episode of the ecstatic prophetess in *On the Soul* 9,4 is a highly representative case study in this regard. Religious practices attested in the Roman Imperial world offer unequivocal examples of the use

4 Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy,* 136.

5 Maria Dell'Isola, *L'ultima profezia: La crisi montanista nel cristianesimo antico* (Trapani: Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2020).

6 See especially Dell'Isola, *L'ultima profezia*, 94 – 96.

of psychotropic practices as means to alter the physiological mechanisms of the body.[7] Clear evidence of the connections between psychotropic (i. e. ritual) "inputs" and visionary "outputs" (i. e. first-person narrative of the otherworld) is indeed the episode of the "Montanist" *soror* as it is reported in Tertullian's *On the Soul* 9,4. In this specific passage of Tertullian's treatise on the soul, an unnamed but well-described woman—labelled *soror*—claims to have direct access to a different, "higher" reality. After undergoing a psychotropic experience (that becomes a claim of direct access to the "other world"), the woman then triggers a writing process which is however exclusively managed by the male members of the group gathered for the service in the *ecclesia.* Thus, a group of men aim at providing the audience with a written "platform" recording a psychotropic experience. The record then serves as a basis for further interpretation and activation of other processes of inner chemical mutations. This is unequivocal evidence of a re-appropriation of psychotropic factors by male members of the group to colonize a specifically female religious experience by adapting it to a new horizon of meaning/action.

Within the boundaries of the abovementioned twofold dynamics, are we able to separate the specifically female psychotropic experience from its male written record as reported by Tertullian in his *On the Soul?* Is it possible to describe different models of psychotropic experiences despite the gendered discourses which they are subject to? Is it possible to reconstruct a specifically female model of vi-

7 On psychotropy and ancient "religious" practices, see Daniel L. Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Daniel L. Smail, "Psychotropy and the Patterns of Power in Human History," in *Environment, Culture, and the Brain: New Explorations in Neurohistory,* ed. Edmund Russell (Munich: RCC Perspectives, 2012): 43 – 48; see also Andrew Shryock, Daniel L. Smail and Timothy Earle, eds., *Deep History: The Architecture of Past and Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) and Luther H. Martin, *Deep History, Secular Theory: Historical and Scientific Studies of Religion* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 240 – 71. According to Smail, the human cultural practices that alter or affect brain-body chemistry emerge as psychotropic practices. Whereas "moods, emotions, and predispositions inherited from the ancestral past [...] form a [panhuman] structural backdrop for many things we do and have done," (Smail, *On Deep History*, 176) human emotional effects are never universals but rather contextual to a given culture and/or society, as well as to single individuals. For instance, if fear is a human universal, on the other hand, the stimuli that elicit fear can be local instead: "Such contingent stimuli are interesting to the historian for how they violate, manipulate, or modulate panhuman proclivities. Such practices as sports, education, novel reading, pornography, recreational sex, gossip, military training, or religious rituals all reinforce or inhibit synapses and receptors and stimulate, beyond baseline levels, the production or reuptake of various neurochemicals" (Smail, *On Deep History*, 163). For the study of Second Temple Jewish and proto-Christian apocalyptic and/or visionary texts in light of Smail's approach to psychotropy, see Luca Arcari, *Vedere Dio: Le apocalissi giudaiche e protocristiane (IV sec. a.C.-II sec. d.C.)* (Roma: Carocci, 2020), esp. 42 – 59.

sionary experience by referring to written records and texts dominated by exclusively male perceptions and intents? I will try to offer a plausible answer to these questions below.

2 Tertullian and the Anonymous *Soror* as "Freelance Religious Experts"

In the passage from Tabbernee's monograph on Montanism quoted above, it is clear that some of the features listed by Tabbernee himself reveal the influence of a traditional heresiological approach. In fact, by saying that the "context of (at least) this particular [i. e. Montanist] prophetess' prophesying was during the regular 'catholic' Sunday worship service," Tabbernee assumes that the woman here prophesying belongs to a separate group within the Carthaginian *ecclesia.* By referring to her as a "Montanist prophetess," he underlines that she represents the "heretical otherness." Moreover, by stating that "The manner of prophesying, while described as 'by ecstasy in the Spirit' [...] seems remarkably passive,"[8] Tabbernee seems to mirror the same distinction between true and false ecstasy so frequently addressed by the heresiological sources including accounts refuting the Montanist prophecy.

In the present investigation I will try to avoid relying on the heresiological patterns that traditionally define Montanist religious experience. On the contrary, I will refer to the analytical category of the "freelance expertise in the Roman Empire" which has been introduced and brilliantly investigated by Heidi Wendt.[9] Wendt describes freelance experts as: a) entrepreneurial, in that they competed in offering innovative and specialized religious services; b) independent, since their authority did not typically depend on inherited status or formal affiliation with civic cults; c) self-interested, since they sought personal benefit through their activities. Paul, Josephus, Marcion, Alexander of Abonoteichus, astrologers, dream interpreters, Syrian exorcists, Egyptian magi: despite their diverse backgrounds, all these actors may be grouped together within the same etic category of the "freelance religious experts" introduced by Heidi Wendt. Wendt also ties the expert's growing clout to the social changes that Rome underwent during

8 Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy,* 136.

9 See Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). On religious "experts" and "providers" in the Roman Empire, see also Jörg Rüpke, *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), esp. 296 – 326.

the transition from the republic era to the imperial times. These changes included the erosion of the aristocrats' religious authority, the emperors' reliance on religious experts, the manumission of slaves who then, as freedmen, sought prestige through religious activity, and eventually also the spread of a more cosmopolitan and mobile populace that started showing a growing interest and preference for foreign religions. Within this theoretical framework, Wendt further explores the notion of "ethnic coding" among freelancers. Thus, for instance, she demonstrates that the ethnonyms Egyptian and Judean (i. e. Jewish) were associated with two different manifestations of religious expertise respectively. Against this broader background, Wendt describes the rivalries among Christian groups in the second century CE as a competition among different religious experts seeking to distinguish themselves from others within the competitive religious panorama of the Roman Imperial period.

Among these religious freelancers there were also some "writer-intellectuals," a small but influential subset of experts who proffered novel readings of authoritative texts and composed texts of their own. Plutarch was one of these "writer-intellectuals," as were also both Paul and Tertullian. Despite their respective specificities, the texts composed by the religious freelancers provide the fullest first-hand evidence of the comprehensive religious "program" developed and supported by this new category of "writer-intellectuals." In addition, despite the individuality of the different personalities, the working activity of all these freelancers was characterized by a series of shared features, including *inter alia:* a) a self-presentation in the text as the authoritative *persona loquens*; b) the use of creative and technical exegesis of previous traditions and of certain philosophical tropes; c) the promotion of life-changing rituals; d) the resistance to hardships; and e) the punishment of rivals. This implies a normalization of apparent exceptionalities conducted through a process of standardization and contextualization of these intellectuals within the shared elements defining the contemporary religious landscape.

Ancient texts also attest the participation of women in the abovementioned activities carried out by the freelance experts. However, the sources tend more toward revealing the intellectual and religious agenda of the authors than providing actual and detailed information on the religious activities performed by women. This dichotomy turns into specific agencies lived and experienced by women but perceived and portrayed by men, thus leading to both a textual/literary construction of gender and a consequent gendered colonization of women's freelance expertise. In the Roman Imperial period, such a contrast clearly emerges especially in the traditionalist reactions against the role of women in the freelance expertise which was favored by the new social classes and activities emerged from a more dynamic, creative, and enterprising knowledge-based society. In fact, a female re-

ligious freelance expertise spread very quickly in the Roman Imperial period and began to diversify along with the imperial geographical and cultural expansion.[10]

According to Tertullian's report on the anonymous *soror*, women's participation in the liturgical rites as freelance experts seems to have played an important role. However, this evidence appears inconsistent with the sentences reported by the author of a fourth-century text, *The Dialogue of a Montanist with an Orthodox.*[11] Here the alleged orthodox writer states that they "do not repudiate prophecies of women" but, at the same time, "do not permit them to speak in churches nor to have authority over men."[12] These unequivocal statements attest that the status of women in Tertullian's time and circles was very different from that experienced by women themselves within the cultural milieu reflected by *The Dialogue.* Tertullian's account shows that female freelance expertise was positively received by his *ecclesia.* This attests that women were held in high regard in terms of religious agency, differently from what was generally attested in other historical, cultural, and religious contexts. In this regard, suffice it to know that Paul the apostle was highly critical of women in 1Cor 14:34–35 and 1Tim 2:12. To the same extent, Aelius Aristides accused the Pythia of not being able to remember what she prophesied in ecstasy (see *Defence of Oratory*, 34–35).

The anonymous *soror* in Tertullian's treatise on the soul had a prophetic "gift," and for this reason, she was able to speak for the interests of the religious community of which she was part. This was a widespread phenomenon quite familiar to early Christ followers rooted in the Jewish tradition and well-integrated in the Graeco-Roman cultural environment. Moreover, the freelance expertise of the anonymous *soror* is connected to the notion of an alleged divine-human communication, a religious process in which the woman acts as the mouthpiece of God. Her speaking authority was founded on the prophetic gift: this allowed her (and the audience) to perceive that she received divine messages directly from the oth-

10 On this, see also Luca Arcari, *"Una donna avvolta nel sole" (Apoc 12,1): Le raffigurazioni femminili nell'Apocalisse di Giovanni alla luce della letteratura apocalittica giudaica* (Padova: EMP, 2008), 262–76.

11 See Anna Maria Berruto Martone, ed., *Dialogo tra un montanista e un ortodosso* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1999). On this *Dialogue*, see also Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy*, 294–95 and 389–93. On the anti-montanist reactions, see also Enrico Norelli, "Parole di profeti, parole sui profeti: La costruzione del montanismo nei frammenti dell'Anonimo antimontanista (Eusebio di Cesarea, *Storia ecclesiastica* 5,16–17)," in *Carisma profetico: Fattore di innovazione religiosa*, ed. Giovanni Filoramo (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2003): 107–32.

12 English translation by Heine, *The Montanist Oracles*, 124–26.

erworld during the rite.[13] Therefore, she acted in a non-ordinary state of consciousness, thus having and showing on her body the marks of such an extraordinary contact with the otherworld (*per ecstasin in spiritu patitur*). In conclusion, she was able to display her prophetic expertise through her own body.

3 The "Holy" Scriptures and the *Soror*'s Visionary Account (According to Tertullian's Report)

Another relevant detail which emerges from Tertullian's description of the female ecstasy deals with what we might call the actual "trigger point" of the religious experience lived by the anonymous *soror*. As already mentioned here, the Scriptures read in the assembly, or the songs which were sung, as well as both the sermons and the prayers recited during the liturgical rite appear as the essential starting points for the elicitation of the woman's religious experience of contact with the otherworld. As I have argued in my recently published monograph,[14] religious experiences like the one described by Tertullian in his *On the Soul* are activated by specific psychotropic inputs, namely mechanisms aiming at altering perceptions, emotions, moods, and behaviour experienced by the individual. By focusing specifically on the case reported by Tertullian, a series of relevant details emerge in this regard. In fact, listening to Scriptures and Psalms which are recited or sung can produce oxytocin and serotonin. To the same extent, the experience of such practices seems to increase the levels of pain-killing endorphins and enkephalins to the point of perceiving a mild state of euphoria, which in turn is perceived (and/or culturally constructed) as a physical and mental state quite similar to a first-person experience of contact with the otherworld. Moreover, the anonymous *soror*, at least at a first level (*quas in ecclesia inter dominica sollemnia per ecstasin in spiritu patitur*), seems to be able to share with the other members of the group the report of the visions she had during her extraordinary religious experience.

Maria Dell'Isola has countered the hypothesis that the frequent references to Scriptures in the transmitted list of Montanist oracles might be interpreted as the marks of an intentional charismatic exegesis practiced by the Montanist prophets

13 Tertullian clearly emphasizes this issue in *An.* 9,4: *Est hodie soror apud nos revelationum charismata sortita, quas in ecclesia inter dominica sollemnia per ecstasin in spiritu patitur* (text in Moreschini and Podolak, eds., *Q.S.F. Tertulliani*, 76).

14 See Arcari, *Vedere Dio.*

and prophetesses.[15] She states that the Montanist oracles, in the form in which they have come down to us, were probably uttered during an ecstatic experience and practice. Therefore, both the contents of the oracles and the scriptural allusions shaping their transmitted message then recorded in writing texts must be attributed to and interpreted according to the specific religious experience in which the oracles themselves seem to occur. This is a persuasive argument, especially when considering, at least in some cases, the oracular form of the Montanist texts which have come down to us. The scene of the female visionary experience portrayed by Tertullian seems to reflect exactly these dynamics. In fact, Tertullian writes that at the end of the Sunday celebration, and only after the assembly has retired, as usual (*quo usu*) the prophetess can report the visions that she saw, and which were elicited by the Scriptures and prayers and songs which were read and recited and sung in the *ecclesia.* At this point, Tertullian adds, the *soror*'s visions are transcribed (*digeruntur*) very carefully so that they may also be tested (*probentur*).[16]

The Latin *digero* is a very intriguing technical term. It refers not only to the act of describing (as we read in Ronald Heine's translation of this passage[17]), but also and especially to the practice of dividing, organizing, or even regulating. It also alludes to "writing down" and "explaining in detail," as attested in Vergil's *Aeneid.*[18] In light of this, I contend that by using this specific verb, Tertullian refers not only to the act of transcribing – together with other members of the group (presumably all males!) – the visions that the *soror* claims to have seen, but also to the act of reframing the contents of her report. In conclusion, men here seem to practice an actual intentional exegesis of the woman's account. This is eventually confirmed by the other verb employed by Tertullian in the narrative: *probo.* The Latin verb *probo*, which means "to test," represents here a kind of *sphragis* within the overarching framework of the interpretative and/or "testing" process. The fact that the

15 See especially Dell'Isola, *L'ultima profezia*, 79–114. On the Montanist oracles and Scriptures, see also Enrico Norelli, "Le statut des textes chrétiens de l'oralité à l'écriture et leur rapport avec l'institution au II^{e} siècle," in *Recueils normatifs et canons dans l'Antiquité: Perspectives nouvelles sur la formation des canons juif et chrétien dans leur context culturel. Actes du colloque organisé dans le cadre du programme plurifacultaire "La Bible à la croisée des savoirs" de l'Université de Genève, 11–12 avril 2002*, ed. Enrico Norelli (Lausanne: Zèbre, 2004): 147–94, esp. 147–48. On "charismatic exegesis" see David E. Aune, "Charismatic Exegesis in Early Judaism and Early Christianity," in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, eds. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993): 126–50.

16 See Moreschini and Podolak, eds., *Q.S.F. Tertulliani*, 76.

17 Heine, *The Montanist Oracles*, 72.

18 For example, see *Aen.* 2:182, with reference to the omens of Calchas the seer.

active protagonists of this process are only men is not of secondary importance in terms of religious agency and gender identity.

4 How Does Tertullian "Colonize" the Prophetess' Experience?

Tertullian's description of the anonymous *soror* stands as a kind of authoritative *sphragis* enclosed between two philosophical digressions on the nature and body of the soul. By referring to the soul, Tertullian states that it has a body, and as such it possesses also the qualities commonly defining a body like, for instance, form and limitation. Moreover, similarly to the body and according to the ancient traditional philosophical ideas, also the soul is defined by the three dimensions of length, width, and height. Here Tertullian is obviously referring to (and refuting) Plato, who said—Tertullian specifies—that the notion of the corporeality of the soul is nonsense. Plato says, by assuming that the soul has a body we tend to run the risk of denying the soul's immortality.[19] For all that has a figure, according to the Greek philosopher, is compound and composed of various parts. On the contrary, the soul is immortal, and being immortal, it is therefore indissoluble. Consequently, being indissoluble, the soul is also figureless. On the other hand, if the soul had a figure, it would have a composite structure. Tertullian, like also the other members of his group—Tertullian himself states—has a completely different opinion on the corporeality of the soul. According to him, the marks of corporeality are imprinted on the soul. Tertullian then adds that both he and all the other members of the group acknowledge spiritual charismata (or gifts), which are still valid and effective even after the ministry of John the Baptist. After such a polemical-philosophical digression, Tertullian starts describing the visionary experience of the anonymous *soror* to confirm his assessments about the corporeality of the soul.

19 Here the main reference is probably to *Phaed.* 84 c-107 b. On Platonic arguments on the immortality of the soul, see Giovanni Casertano, "Dal logo al mito al logo: la struttura del Fedone," in *La struttura del dialogo platonico*, ed. Giovanni Casertano (Napoli: Loffredo, 2000): 86–107; Dorothea Frede, "The Final Proof of the Immortality of the Soul in Plato's *Phaedo* 102a-107a," *Phronesis* 23 (1978): 27–41; Hans B. Gottschalk, "Soul as Harmonia," *Phronesis* 16 (1971): 179–98; Nicolas Lindner, *The Evidence of Immortality in Plato's "Phaidon"* (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2008); Lidia Palumbo, "Pensare l'anima nello spazio iconico dei dialoghi di Platone," *Chôra* 9–10 (2011–2012): 13–31; Gregory Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*," in Gregory Vlastos, *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays, Vol. I: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971): 132–66; David Wiggins, "Teleology and the Good in Plato's *Phaedo*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1986): 1–8.

Another relevant aspect emerging from Tertullian's introductory polemical-philosophical digression is the potential connection between the notion of the corporeality of the soul and the Stoic doctrine of the πνεῦμα.[20] Tertullian describes the soul as having a kind of *sui generis* body. This interpretation appears to be influenced by (or it simply reflects) the Stoic theory which conceives the spirit as an actual body. It is not by chance then that Tertullian uses a very similar image in *Against Praxeas* 7,8: *spiritus enim corpus sui generis in sua effigie.*[21] Such an intellectual game is further combined with a syllogism attributed to Plato (*sed animam immortalem, igitur indissolubilem, qua immortalem, et ineffigiatam, qua indissolubilem, ceterum compositiciam et structilem, si effigiatam, tamquam alio eam modo effigians intellectualibus formis, pulchram iustitia et disciplinis philosophiae, deformem uero contrariis artibus*)[22] resulting from the combination of two Platonic passages: *Phaed.* 78 c 1–2 and *Phaedr.* 247 c. Tertullian had probably found this in an early source. To the same extent, also the notion of the weight of the soul, mentioned in *On the Soul* 8,3 and here previously discussed, was most likely taken from the work of the Greek physician Soranus of Ephesus.[23]

After describing the anonymous *soror*'s religious experience, Tertullian concludes that the prophetic gift received by the woman is clear evidence of the fact that the soul is equipped with an actual corporeal shape. In Tertullian's account, the prophetess explicitly declares that she saw in a vision a soul with a bodily shape. More importantly, she also boldly stresses that the vision of the soul was not a void and empty illusion. On the contrary, the soul in the vision was so vivid and concrete that it was even possible to grasp it with both hands. Moreover, it was a soft and transparent image, of an ethereal colour and defined by a shape unequivocally resembling that of a human being in every respect.[24] Such a vivid description echoes a typical visionary account where the psychotropic experience

20 See Anthony A. Long, "Soul and Body in Stoicism," *Phronesis* 27/1 (1982): 34–57. See also Aiste Celkyte, "The Soul and Personal Identity in Early Stoicism: Two Theories?," *Apeiron* 53/4 (2020): 463–86. On πνεῦμα in Stocism, see Jackie Pigeaud, *La maladie de l'ame: Étude sur la relation de l'âme et du corps dans la tradition médico-philosophique antique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981), esp. 267; Ian Hensley, "The Physics of Pneuma in Early Stoicism," in *The Concept of Pneuma after Aristotle*, eds. Sean Coughlin, David Leith and Orly Lewis (Berlin: Topoi, 2020): 171–202.
21 Moreschini and Podolak, eds., *Q.S.F. Tertulliani*, 472.
22 Moreschini and Podolak, eds., *Q.S.F. Tertulliani*, 74–76.
23 See Moreschini and Podolak, eds., *Q.S.F. Tertulliani*, 73–74.
24 See *An.* 9,4: *'inter cetera', inquit, 'ostensa est mihi anima corporaliter, et spiritus uidebatur, sed non inanis et uacuae qualitatis, immo quae etiam teneri repromitteret, tenera et lucida et aerii coloris, et forma per omnia humana. Hoc uisio'. Et deus testis et apostolus charismatum in ecclesia futurorum idoneus sponsor; tunc et si res ipsa de singulis persuaserit, credas.* See Moreschini and Podolak, eds., *Q.S.F. Tertulliani*, 76.

lying and acting behind the text is made accessible to the audience. A clear example of this process, for instance, is described in 1 Enoch 14:1, where the image of the "tongue of flesh" unequivocally reflects a direct experience of contact with the otherworld characterized by vivid and almost tangible perceptions of the objects seen in a vision. Further evidence of this is offered by the Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic texts, where the souls of the dead are always represented as material images. This evidence seems to justify then the literary tendency to make the idea of the immortality of the soul subject to a descriptive process of "materialization" and/or "revisualization."[25]

Considering all this, it is easy to conclude that Tertullian colonizes the anonymous *soror*'s visionary account. In fact, he includes and contextualizes the account of an "actual" visionary experience—in which the description of a first-person contact with the otherworld reflects previous authoritative visionary reports—within the boundaries of a philosophical debate on the immortality of the soul. Within these religious dynamics two different freelance activities and individuals emerge. On the one hand, there is the anonymous *soror*, a visionary resembling other well-known examples of prophetic agents, like those introduced and described by Dio Cassius in his *Roman History* (e. g., see *Hist. Rom.* 55,31,2 – 3; 59,9,3; 79,4,1 – 5; 79,31,1 – 2), Hermas[26] and others.[27] On the other hand there is Tertullian, a teacher and urban intellectual who is engaged in a continuous process of demarcation of boundaries between competing groups.[28]

5 Concluding Remarks

Many scholars have already noted that most of the seers in the ancient and late antique Mediterranean world were mainly men. More importantly, these seers were introduced and described in the sources as well-trained prophetic agents equipped with technical skills and knowledge. On the contrary, a prophetic ecstasy characterized by altered states of consciousness, including dreams and frenzy—

25 In the sense of visual culture. See in this regard William J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). On the descriptive processes of materialization in Jewish apocalyptic texts, see Jan N. Bremmer, "Descents to Hell and Ascents to Heaven in Apocalyptic Literature," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 340 – 57.

26 On the prophetic agents in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, see Jannes Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy. A Study of the Eleventh Mandate* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

27 See Rüpke, *Pantheon*, 310 – 13.

28 Rüpke, *Pantheon*, 365 – 69.

and as such not subject to a specific and professional training—was generally embodied by women.[29] However, I contend that such a polarization is not so effective in reference to a complex, multifaceted and "cluttered" world like the third century Roman Empire. In any case, as Craig Keener has rightly pointed out, in both Graeco-Roman and Jewish environments women were normally less educated than men, especially in terms of public activities like writing.[30] Within this overarching tendency, even the women who were privileged enough to receive an advanced education, like the aristocrats, received nonetheless a lower level of technical training. This was probably the main reason behind the perception of the anonymous *soror* in Tertullian's *On the Soul* as a visionary agent not so well-trained, so much that her visions had to be interpreted by other participants in the liturgical rite.

In describing the visionary experience of the anonymous *soror*, Tertullian draws a line of continuity between the prophetess' speaking activity and the male members' writing skills. This line of continuity, however, inevitably also hides a deep separation between two different forms of discourse. The woman prophesies by practicing a highly ritualized, bodily, and performative speech. In this regard, Tertullian clearly states: *Forte nescio quid de anima disserueramus, cum ea soror in spiritu esset.*[31] Such a female ecstatic experience emerges as a visible/audible extra-ordinary status, so much so that it needs further assistance to be recorded and interpreted. By practicing this interpretive activity, the male members of the group aim at disconnecting the female visible religious experience from both the prophetic ritual and her expertise, in order to make the record of her visions accessible in a written form to anyone with sufficient education. This dynamic clearly attests that a female prophetic activity and revelation needs a male exegesis in order to be recovered and correctly interpreted. This can be clearly defined as a process of male "colonization" of a female body and speech.

Moreover, such a one directional performative movement which leads the female religious experience toward a male interpretation reflects the dichotomy between presence/existence and representation. The interpretive technique practiced by the male members of the group shows that visions—experienced by the woman but deemed as not culturally decipherable—can only be made manifest by a pro-

29 For instance, see Martti Nissinen, "What is Prophecy? An Ancient Near Eastern Perspective," in *Inspired Speech: Prophecy in the Ancient Near East. Essays in Honor of Herbert B. Huffmon*, eds. John Kaltner and Louis Stulman (London: T & T Clark, 2004): 17–37.

30 See Craig S. Keener, "Women's Education and Public Speech in Antiquity," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50/4 (2007): 747–59.

31 Moreschini and Podolak, eds., *Q.S.F. Tertulliani*, 76.

cess of *mise en discours* (i. e. by being written down). This is perceived and conceived as a "normalizing" process aimed at providing sense, coherence, and order to the ritual female activity. Within this context, the authorized male interpreters and writers are power-holders, as was the case with the Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic writers of both ancient and Second Temple Period. They made visible divine realms and modelled both temporal and spatial divine dimensions on specific human realities. However, such writers were not always in a position of power. In some cases, they even represented a counterweight to the religious power-holders.[32]

To conclude, Tertullian's account in *On the Soul* 9,4 shows a clear case of "colonization" of a female experience of contact with the otherworld. By collecting, ordering, and interpreting the visions recounted by the prophetess, the male members of the Carthaginian *ecclesia* conclude a process of communicative reframing. This allows well-trained freelance experts equipped with technical writing skills to include the female revelatory account within the interpretive boundaries of a theological and philosophical discourse. A similar dynamic is reflected in another third century Christian text, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. Here Perpetua, the protagonist of the story, claims to have received and experienced a series of visions of the otherworld. Even if a specific version of the *Martyrdom* is considered as one of the oldest texts written by an early Christian woman,[33] there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this literary work, as a "living text," was presumably re-narrated and re-written several times. It was also re-framed in and for various contexts. In such a process of re-invention and re-proposition, the influence and activity of male freelance writing experts certainly played a pivotal role.[34]

32 On such a cultural dynamic, see the book by Anthony Keddie, *Revelations of Ideology: Apocalyptic Class Politics in Early Roman Palestine* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). See also Arcari, *Vedere Dio*, esp. 324–70.

33 See further discussion in Vincent Hunink, "Did Perpetua Write Her Prison Account?," *Listy filologické/Folia philologica* 133/1–2 (2010): 147–55.

34 See Heidi Vierow, "Feminine and Masculine Voices in the 'Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas'," *Latomus* 58/3 (1999): 600–19.

Maria Dell'Isola

Women Facing Martyrdom: The Interplay Between Temporality and Social and Gender Roles in Early Christianity

1 Martyrdom, Temporality, and Society: A Brief Introduction

By discussing what they called a "temporal turn," the editors of the collective volume *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies* state that "the turn to temporality in queer theory is related to the turn to antinormativity," and that the turn itself "entails an extension of the interrogation of normativity to reimagining of normal or straight time: time marked by such life experiences as marriage, reproduction, and child rearing."[1] After introducing this preliminary definition, the editors then strengthen the issue by referring to the connection between queer subcultures and alternative temporalities established by Judith Halberstam: "Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience – namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death."[2] Halberstam then describes this temporal pattern as a "reproductive time," therefore a time related to and measured by "a biological clock for women"[3] and "strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples."[4] Given the well-established traditional structure of family as the backbone of society, the editors of the volume clearly state that the two issues of reproductive time and queer temporality delineated by Halberstam can be applied even to the ancient Mediterranean world, and particularly to Jesus'

1 Stephen D. Moore, Kent L. Brintnall and Joseph A. Marchal, "Introduction. Queer Disorientations: Four Turns and a Twist," in *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies,* eds. Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal and Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 1–44, 13.

2 Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 2.

3 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 5.

4 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 5.

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movement and more broadly to early Christianity.[5] On the other hand, by stressing the strict connection between the radical ascetic tendency in early Christianity and the subversion of traditional societal values and norms, David Hunter states that:

> Early Christian enthusiasm for celibacy placed a profound question mark over what might be called traditional 'family values.' It had been axiomatic in Graeco-Roman culture that the marital union of the couple was the foundation of the household, the city, and the state. […] If, as Cheng has suggested, 'queer' refers to 'a self-conscious embrace of all that is transgressive of societal norms, particularly in the context of sexuality and gender identity,' then the early Christian doctrine of celibacy could be said to have 'queered' the traditional commitment to marriage and procreation that was the foundation of both Jewish and Graeco-Roman cultures.[6]

The intersection so far introduced between a queer/non-reproductive time and a societal antinormativity appears more evident in specific religious practices defined in their own nature by a temporal contraction orienting the distinctive traits of the action. Early Christian martyrdom is an unequivocal example of this tendency, and the well-known and widely investigated cases of Perpetua and Felicitas—to mention here only the most famous example in early Christianity—clearly attest that the perception of an imminent death and resurrection had a strong impact on both the traditional family structure and the firmly rooted familial roles. On the other hand, the subversive action of temporal contraction mainly impacted women, who more than men were strictly associated and confined to domestic space and time. Evidence of this can be seen in the story of Perpetua. After hearing of her imminent condemnation, Perpetua decides not only to firmly reject her father—who insistently tries to convince her to renounce her faith and willingness to die as a martyr—but she also abandons her son; even more, she is grateful that a divine intervention interrupts her breastfeeding, so that she can eventually devote herself to martyrdom by using her body as the main instrument of condemnation and redemption at the same time. Similarly, while in prison Felicitas is pregnant; she therefore prays to give birth prematurely to die as a martyr without any impediment. We will return to these two highly representative examples later. Here I briefly mention their religious and historical relevance in terms of social

5 Moore, Brintnall and Marchal, "Introduction," 14: "The Synoptic Jesuses, and even the Johannine Jesus, might be said to inhabit queer time in Halberstam's sense of the term, their lives apparently unscripted by the ancient Mediterranean institutions of marriage, biological progeny, conventional labor, or material inheritance."

6 David G. Hunter, "Celibacy Was Queer: Rethinking Early Christianity," in *Queer Christianities: Lived Religion in Transgressive Forms*, eds. Kathleen T. Talvacchia, Michael F. Pettinger and Mark Larrimore (New York: New York University Press, 2015): 13–24, here 21.

subversion to introduce what Gillian Cloke, in discussing martyrdom, has described as:

> [...] a violently anti-normal effect on Roman family models. And it seems clear that it did ultimately succeed in subverting the family and the state—encouraging men and women alike to throw off traditional bonds and responsibilities. For men, this counter-impulse was experienced more in evading temporal authority and service to it, but it also impinged on their familial relationships. For women, it was primarily concerned with undermining their ties to home and kin.[7]

Based on these theoretical premises, the present article investigates the nexus between time and the construction of the feminine in the Acts of the Christian martyrs. I have investigated elsewhere the relation between eschatological/martyrial time and women's agency in the apocryphal Acts, early Christian heresies, and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas.*[8] Starting from the assumption that in the ancient Mediterranean world women were strictly related to a domestic space and, by extension, to the traditional social roles of wives and mothers,[9] I attempted to demonstrate that the rupture entailed by eschatological and martyrial time allowed women to subvert their traditional social functions and roles within the patriarchal structures of ancient society. Given the dominant temporal perspective of the end of times during the second and third century of Christianity—together with the urgency of martyrdom—women's traditional life-rhythms were replaced by a new subversive course.[10] Since earthly life was about to end, marriage,

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7 Gillian Cloke, "Mater or Martyr: Christianity and the Alienation of Women within the Family in the Later Roman Empire," *Theology and Sexuality* 5 (1996): 37–57, here 56.

8 See Maria Dell'Isola, "Martiri e profetesse: Il sovvertimento escatologico della vita terrena nel cristianesimo antico," in *Tempo di Dio, tempo dell'uomo: XLVI Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana (Roma, 10–12 maggio 2018)* (Lugano: Nerbini International, 2019): 53–60; Maria Dell'Isola, "Waiting for the End: Two Case Studies on the Relationship Between Time and Gender in Early Christianity," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 26/3 (2022): 446–72; Maria Dell'Isola, "How Temporality Shapes Social Structure in the *Acts of Thomas*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 77/2 (2023): 155–75. In the present paper I refer to the theoretical premises already described in these articles.

9 For a detailed overview of the domestic role of women in the ancient Mediterranean world and early Christianity, see Elif Hilal Karaman, *Ephesian Women in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018); by referring to a wider spectrum of sources—literary, archaeological, epigraphical—Karaman is able to conclude that childbearing and motherhood were the most predictable familial and social conditions for women.

10 Concerning eschatology, I refer here to the definition provided by Outi Lehtipuu, "Eschatology and the Fate of the Dead in Early Christian Apocrypha," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha*, eds. Andrew Gregory, Tobias Nicklas, Christopher M. Tuckett and Joseph Verheyden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 343–60, 343, where Lehtipuu states that eschatology alludes to "the 'last day' and implies a time when a profound, cosmic change will take place, the present

and consequently procreation, were no longer necessary nor preferable;[11] women were given the chance to reject family ties and traditional familial roles.[12]

order will end, and an entirely new one will begin." For a general overview of eschatological time, see Claudine Gauthier, "Temps et eschatologie," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 162/2 (2013): 123–41.

11 See in this regard the exemplary case of the macarisms in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, where the connection between continence and eschatology is structured with reference to 1 Cor 7 (*A. Paul. et Thecl.* 5–6). Within the same literary genre, see also the rejection of procreation vividly described in the *Acts of Thomas*, where the experience of having children is conceived as a source of afflictions and destruction (see, for example, *A. Thom.* 12). A further example in this regard is provided also by Tertullian in his treatise *To His Wife*, where the rejection of *concupiscentia* – and consequently the necessity of *continentia* – derives from the eschatological expectations shaping early Christianity, and it is so urgent that marriage and procreation suddenly lost importance and relevance (see Tert. *uxor.* 1,5,1–4). The same description is mentioned once again in Tertullian's treatise on the *Exhortation to Chastity* (see Tert. *castit.* 12,3).

12 See in this regard the well-known and widely investigated case of Thecla in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*: in this apocryphal work, the young woman rejects her fiancé, Thamyris, after listening to Paul's preaching on continence and resurrection (see *A. Paul. et Thecl.* 10). On this, see Gina L. Christ, *The Thecla Narrative: Gender, Eschatology, and Divine Patronage in Second Century Social-Sexual Identity* (Retrieved from Sophia, the St. Catherine University repository website: https://sophia.stkate.edu/ma_theology/3). On Thecla and her transgression of gender and societal norms, see Ross S. Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses: Religion, Gender, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 118–53. On the relevance of Thecla within the tradition of feminist historiography, see Shelly Matthews, "Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17/2 (2001): 39–55. See also other similar but less known cases in other apocryphal Acts, like for example Drusiana in the *Acts of John*, who decided to leave her husband after listening to the Christian preaching on continence, so as to live in complete chastity (see *A. Jo.* 63), or Mygdonia in the *Acts of Thomas*, who similarly decided to abstain from sexual intercourses with her husband after listening to Thomas' preaching on corruption and salvation (see *A. Thom.* 124). On chastity and gender in the *Acts of Thomas*, see Paul Germond, "A Rhetoric of Gender in Early Christianity: Sex and Salvation in the *Acts of Thomas*," in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996): 350–68. On women in the *Acts of John*, see Jan Bremmer, "Women in the Apocryphal Acts of John," in *The Apocryphal Acts of John*, ed. Jan Bremmer (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995): 37–56. More generally on women in the apocryphal Acts, see Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston – Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), and the more recent Amy Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins, eds., *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006). On the relationship between early Christian asceticism and the subversion of the traditional female roles see Ross S. Kraemer, "The Conversion of Women to Ascetic Forms of Christianity," *Signs* 6/2 (1980): 298–307, and Antoinette Clark Wire, "The Social Functions of Women's Asceticism in the Roman East," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1988): 308–23.

Feminist approaches to early Christian female holiness have already emphasized chastity as a revolutionary means of autonomy for women.[13] In addition, a rejection of the attributes traditionally considered feminine or maternal allowed women to avoid conventional modes of gendered temporality such as "waiting," here conceived as "a passive, constrained embodied style that suppresses women's agency in a fundamental way."[14] Within the framework of a traditional society, the physiology of women's bodies—naturally regulated by the cyclical recurrence of menstruation and childbearing[15]—renders it difficult for women to look to the future: the societal roles, like motherhood, directly activated by the female physiological disposition to childbearing, thus privilege a present time defined by a cyclical repetition of the same events.[16] On the contrary, when the impending end of times subsumed any other temporality, the subversion of traditionally construed women's time took place.

Given the centrality of the temporal dimension in this analysis, I must provide definitions of what is meant by time and temporality. I consider time as a cultural construct, often varying in conflicting ways, within one and the same society.[17] I consider temporality as time in its experiential and phenomenological dimension:[18] time does not indicate only temporal passing and its articulation (e. g. chronologies, narrative time frames) but also embodied, experiential time (e. g. biological cycles) and its construction. Therefore, by conceiving temporality as time in its experiential and phenomenological dimension, I will look at its impact as inter-

13 Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*.

14 Susan Pickard, "Waiting Like a Girl? The Temporal Constitution of Femininity as a Factor in Gender Inequality," *The British Journal of Sociology* 71 (2020): 314–27, 315.

15 Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "Women's Bodies as Metaphors for Time in Biblical, Second Temple, and Rabbinic Literature," in *The Construction of Time in Antiquity: Ritual, Art and Identity*, eds. Jonathan Ben-Dov and Lutz Doering (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 173–204.

16 For a detailed description of the causes and effects of waiting on women's agency see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. Howard M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), 415–66. Simone de Beauvoir pointed out that women were traditionally relegated to domestic roles and limited spaces, and the daily care of the house and family inevitably forced them to be inserted in an eternal present, with a cyclical repetition of everyday acts performed within a restricted domain. On the contrary, men have always been asked to provide means of support and improve human life with their social agency which, therefore, was intended to enable both progress and a construction of the future. In this sense, men were inserted into a linear and progressive time, whereas women's time was an eternally cyclical one.

17 Peter Burke, "Reflections on the Cultural History of Time," *Viator* 35 (2004): 617–26.

18 Christina Schües, "Introduction," in *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*, eds. Christina Schües, Dorothea E. Olkowski and Helen A. Fielding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011): 1–17, 7. See also Sarit Kattan Gribetz and Lynn Kaye, "The Temporal Turn in Ancient Judaism and Jewish Studies," *Currents in Biblical Research* 17/3 (2019): 332–95.

twined with the construction and the experience of social and gendered roles. In this sense, a specific focus on women martyrs is justified by the pronounced temporal contraction defining the religious practice concerned. More specifically, I aim to identify a set of key features that may define embodied and experiential time in its relationship with the construction of women's agency as it is represented in two well-known but still under-investigated martyr stories: the *Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonice*[19] and the *Martyrdom of Agape, Irene, Chione and Companions.*[20] I will try to detect in both texts a series of relevant details defining the impact of the imminent martyrdom on women's familial and social roles.

2 The *Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonice*

Known in two versions, a Greek and a Latin one (with the Latin version probably translated from the original Greek), the *Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonice* describe the interrogation and martyrdom in Pergamum of two men and a woman. Musurillo points out that Eusebius in *Ecclesiatical History* IV, 15,48 refers to Carpus, Papylus and Agathonice immediately after Polycarp and Pionius, who are both dated to the period of Marcus Aurelius.[21] Here I refer to the Latin version because it describes the episode of Agathonice in a slightly more detailed manner by offering a brief addition which helps to better contextualize the agency of the woman protagonist of the story. Concerning the whole structure of the Latin version, the record created by Efthymios Rizos in the database edited within the framework of the project *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity*, states that:

> The story has a similar structure, but diverges in several details from the extant Greek version of the martyrdom account. [...] The text reflects the structure known from the Greek version, but it does not contain the long apologetic speeches of Carpus/Karpos. Instead, here the interrogations of both Carpus and Pamfilus have a more or less similar length and the same succinct dialogical form. The Latin version probably translates from a text closer to the original martyrdom account, with less secondary modifications than the extant Greek version. Another difference is that the main protagonist in the martyrdom scene is Pamfilus/Papylos rather than Carpus/Karpos. The execution episode is divided into a longer section on the death of Pamfilus/Papylos who has a vision and addresses the crowd, whereas the death of Carpus/Karpos is given in short paragraph mentioning his crucifixion and death after a pray-

19 For both the original text (in both versions, Greek and Latin) and the English translation I refer here to *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. and trans. Herbert Musurillo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 22–37.

20 Also in this case, for the original text and the English translation I refer here to Musurillo, ed. and trans., *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 280–93.

21 Musurillo, ed. and trans., *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xv.

> er. Unlike the Greek version, the story of Agathonice/Agathonike is integrated into the account smoothly. She is presented as a follower of Carpus/Karpos and Pamfilus/Papylos, arrested with them and interrogated after them. The text contains the full dialogue between her and the proconsul, which was probably unavailable to the author of the extant Greek version. According to some scholars, the author of the Latin version of the martyrdom account edited out what was a genuine narrative of voluntary martyrdom.[22]

In addition to the abovementioned details, it is also important to emphasize that in the Latin text Agathonice is introduced in the very first lines of the account, together with her companions Carpus and Pamfilus (i. e. Papylus), while in the Greek version she appears for the first time only later in the story, in the final section of the report. However, like in the Greek text, the description of her interrogation and condemnation follows that of Carpus and Pamfilus. Here the entire account follows:

> Next the proconsul ordered Agathonice to be brought before him, and he said to her: 'What say you? Offer sacrifice. Or would you follow the decision of your teachers?' But she replied: 'I am a Christian, and I have never sacrificed to demons, but to God alone. If I am worthy, I shall eagerly desire to follow the footsteps of my teachers.' While the crowd cried out to her: 'Have pity on yourself and on your children,' the proconsul said: 'Look to yourself; have pity on yourself and on your children, as the crowd cries.' Agathonice answered: 'My children have God, who watches over them. But I will not obey your commands, nor will I sacrifice to demons.'
>
> The proconsul said: 'Sacrifice, lest I sentence you to a similar death.' Agathonice replied: 'Do what you will. But this is what I have come for, and this is what I am prepared for, to die for Christ's name.' The proconsul then delivered his sentence against her: 'I command that Agathonice undergo the same death as Carpus and Pamfilus.' And when she was led to the spot, she removed her clothing and gave it to the servants. But when the crowd saw how beautiful she was, they grieved in mourning for her. The servants then carried her and hung her upon a stake. And when the fire was lit beneath her the servant of God cried out three times, 'Lord Jesus Christ, assist me, for I endure this for your sake.' And when she had said this, she gave up her spirit.[23]

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22 Efthymios Rizos, *Cult of Saints*, E00353 – http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E00353. The bibliographical reference to the issue of voluntary martyrdom in the *Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonice* is Philip L. Tite, "Voluntary Martyrdom and Gnosticism," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23/1 (2015): 27–54, 36.

23 *Act. Carp.* 6: *Post hunc uero iussit proconsul adduci Agathonicem, dixitque ad eam: Quid dicis? sacrifica. Aut sequeris doctorum tuorum sententiam? at illa respondit: Ego Christiana sum et numquam sacrificaui daemoniis, nisi soli deo. libenter autem, si mereor, sanctorum doctorumque meorum desidero sequi uestigia. turba uero clamante et dicente ad eam: Miserere tibi et filiis tuis, proconsul dixit: Respice in te, et miserere tibi et filiis tuis, secundum quod clamat turba. Agathonice respondit: Filii mei deum habent qui eos custodit. ego autem praeceptis tuis non obtempero nec sacrifice daemoniis. proconsul dixit: Sacrifica ne te simili morte impendam. Agathonice respondit: Fac quod uis. ego autem ad hoc ueni et in hoc sum parata ut pro nomine Christi patiar. tunc proconsul*

Agathonice is here interrogated by the proconsul, and the most significant detail of the dialogue is the explicit allusion to the woman's children. The proconsul tries to convince her to sacrifice by asking her to have pity on herself and her children; however, she refuses, and so he condemns her to undergo the same death as Carpus and Pamfilus.

The Greek version offers an episode framed by a similar pattern. The only substantial difference—with no relevant implications in terms of plot development—is that the Greek version mentions only one son,[24] while the Latin alludes to "children." The reference to children—and consequently to both parenthood and the institution of family—is repeatedly stressed in the narrative, as attested a few lines earlier in the dialogue between Pamfilus and the proconsul: "'Do you have children?', asked the proconsul. 'Many, indeed,' replied Pamfilus. But when he said this, someone in the crowd shouted out: 'He means he has children in virtue of the faith of the Christians.' And indeed Pamfilus admitted that he had spiritual children in every province and every city."[25] Two traditional motifs emerge here: on the one hand, the rejection of children in order to face martyrdom; on the other hand, the substitution of real family ties with new family ties re-created within the different framework of a religious field (as expressed by the reference to the "spiritual children"). More specifically, this is a substitution of the birth family with a new family whose ties have been established on the basis of a new religious system. It is a transition from the family field to the religious field through the act of conversion, as argued by Emiliano Urciuoli in his analysis of Perpetua's martyrdom.[26] And it is precisely in the account of Perpetua's martyrdom that we find a narratological pattern perfectly similar to the episode of Agathonice's interroga-

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dedit aduersus eam sententiam: Agathonicem similem mortem Carpi et Pamfili subire praecipio. Cumque fuisset perducta ad locum, expoliauit uestimenta sua et tradidit ministris. uidens autem turba pulchritudinem eius, dolentes lamentauerunt eam. suscipientes autem eam ministri suspenderunt in ligno. et supposito igne exclamauit trina uoce famula dei dicens: Domine Iesu Christe, tu me adiuua, quoniam propter te ista sustineo. et cum haec dixisset, tradidit spiritum.

24 *M. Carp.* 43: Ἐλέησόν σου τὸν υἱόν.

25 *Act. Carp.* 3,2–3: *Filios habes? Pamfilus respondit: Et multos. haec autem cum diceret, de turba quidam exclamauit dicens: Secundum fidem Christianorum dicit quia habet filios. et ita confessus est Pamfilus in omni prouincia et in omni ciuitate se filios habere spirituales.*

26 Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli, "Che non abbia a vergognarmi di fronte alla gente": Campo religioso e campo familiare nella *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," in *Pierre Bourdieu. Il campo religioso: Con due esercizi*, eds. Roberto Alciati and Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli (Torino: Accademia University Press, 2012): 133–82. On this, see also Candida R. Moss, "Blood Ties: Martyrdom, Motherhood and Family in the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, Paul A. Holloway and James A. Kelhoffer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010): 189–207, and Mary R. Lefkowitz, "The Motivations for St. Perpetua's Martyrdom," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44/3 (1976): 417–21.

tion and condemnation: the scene where— as already pointed out above—the crowd and the proconsul cry out to Agathonice to have pity on both herself and her children recalls the scene in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* where Perpetua's father asks her to have pity on her father and her son. Not only the narratological pattern is almost identical, but this similarity is also reinforced by the same lexical structure:[27] the *miserere tibi et filiis tuis* screamed by the crowd and the proconsul to Agathonice seems to recall the *miserere patri* and the *aspice filium tuum* screamed by Perpetua's father. Agathonice, like Perpetua, rejects her entire family. More specifically, like Perpetua who abandons her infant son when she is called to decide about martyrdom,[28] Agathonice does not want to be a mother. And this rejection has an unequivocal reason: the necessity of martyrdom. In this sense, the embodied experience of a temporal contraction originated by the religious practice of martyrdom itself contributes to shaping and overturning a traditional familial and social structure. Martyrs understand that there is no time left and that no action can be postponed; therefore, due to a temporal pressure, a predefined societal pattern must be necessarily rejected because the existing social order is coming to an end.

A meaningful comparison in this regard is provided once again by the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, but this time with Felicitas as the main protagonist of the story. Felicitas is pregnant when she is imprisoned with all the other Christian companions. However, she fears that her execution has to be postponed due to her pregnancy, and that she has to be executed only later:

> She had been pregnant when she was arrested, and was now in her eighth month. As the day of the spectacle drew near she was very distressed that her martyrdom would be postponed because of her pregnancy; for it is against the law for women with child to be executed. Thus she might have to shed her holy, innocent blood afterwards along with others who were common criminals.[29]

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27 See *Perp.* 5,2–5 (for both the original text and the English translation I refer here to Musurillo, ed. and trans., *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 106–31): *Miserere, filia, canis meis; miserere patri* […] *aspice filium tuum* […].

28 See *Perp.* 6,8. However, it must be mentioned also that earlier in the narrative Perpetua still shows a willingness to take care of her son while in prison (see *Perp.* 3,8–9), so that she is glad and relieved that she has his son with her in prison. This detail has been emphasized by Anna R. Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation: Gender and Class in Early Christian Childbearing Discourse* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 217.

29 Perp. 15,2: *cum octo iam mensium uentrem haberet (nam praegnans fuerat adprehensa), instante spectaculi die in magno erat luctu ne propter uentrem differretur (quia non licet praegnantes poenae repraesentari) et ne inter alios postea sceleratos sanctum et innocentem sanguinem funderet.*

Therefore, due to the fear of the postponement itself, Felicitas and her companions ask God for a premature childbirth, so that eventually the woman's body can be freed from what prevents her from facing execution: "And so, two days before the contest, they poured forth a prayer to the lord in one torrent of common grief. And immediately after their prayer the birth pains came upon her [...]. And she gave birth to a girl; and one of the sisters brought her up as her own daughter."[30] Once her body is freed, she is no longer a mother—the newborn is entrusted to the care of others—but only a Christian among the others. This is an important episode that illustrates how women's social conditioning was heavily shaped by the practice of waiting—a passive stance that restricted their ability to envision the future. More specifically, this tendency to wait appears strictly associated to physiological events which privilege a dilated present time. This is clearly attested, as we have already pointed out, by the urgent need to interrupt breastfeeding in the case of Perpetua, and pregnancy in the case of Felicitas, in order to allow a female body to freely run towards martyrdom without any sort of physical impediment. More specifically, the influence of time on women's agency is here unequivocally represented by the impending imminence of martyrdom and death, therefore a threatening interruption of earthly life which imposes a dissolution of societal roles and norms: in this sense, the role of mothers for both Perpetua and Felicitas is abruptly interrupted and symbolically nullified through the termination of the physiological dispositions of pregnancy and breastfeeding which impose to wait, rather than project into the future. In a very similar manner, Agathonice also rejects motherhood by choosing to immediately die as a martyr: in this sense, she renounces both dilation and postponement of events traditionally imposed by the care for the children. Here, time pressure acts and transforms female bodies and agencies, thus structuring societal norms and roles against the wider shaping force of religious practices.

3 The *Martyrdom of Agape, Irene, Chione and Companions*

The disruption imposed by eschatological and martyrial temporality is constantly obstructed by a normative social order which traditionally structures men and women's life stages within society. This is attested—as previously shown in the

30 *Perp.* 15,4–7: *coniuncto itaque unito gemitu ad Dominum orationem fuderunt ante tertium diem muneris. statim post orationem dolores inuaserunt* [...]. *ita enixa est puellam, quam sibi quaedam soror in filiam educaui.*

case of Felicitas—by the judicial restriction imposed against the execution of those women who are still pregnant when condemned. A similar situation is also attested in the *Martyrdom of Agape, Irene, Chione and Companions.* Written in Greek, this account recounts the trial and martyrdom of three young women in Thessalonike in 304. These women fled to a high mountain after Diocletian's first edict, and there they lived in prayer. However, they were arrested, and after the interrogation, they were condemned to death by fire. The narrative opens with a meaningful description of a traditional narratological pattern: "When the persecution was raging under Emperor Maximian, these women, who had adorned themselves with virtue, following the precepts of the Gospel, abandoned their native city, their family, property, and possessions because of their love of God and their expectation of heavenly things".[31] The traditional Christian *topos* of rejection of family ties and property is followed by a further clarification aiming at placing the episode in a specific space and time: "They fled the persecutors, according to the commandment, and took refuge on a high mountain. There they gave themselves to prayer: though their bodies resided on a mountain top, their souls lived in heaven."[32]

The preliminary rejection of society—symbolized by the abandonment of the native city and a renunciation of family, property, and possessions—is combined with a predictable flight and a consequent search for an isolated refuge here described as the meeting point of earth and heaven and, in a related and predictable way, between mundane and bodily life on the one hand, and eternal life after death on the other hand. In this sense, the mountain appears as a liminal space in terms of both space and time, and the flight to this specific place thus confers women's condition a symbolic dimension of detachment, suspension, and indeterminacy.

After this brief introduction, the narrative focuses on the interrogation by the prefect. In the beginning, the questions are very concise, but after a few initial lines they become more detailed but also, at the same time, specific and focused:

> 'Eutychia,' said the prefect, 'what do you say?' 'I say the same,' said Eutychia; 'I would rather die.' The prefect said: 'Do you have a husband?' 'He is dead,' said Eutychia. 'When did he die?' asked the prefect. 'About seven months ago,' said Eutychia. The prefect said, 'How is it then

31 *M. Agap.* 1,2: […] διωγμοῦ καταλαβόντος τοῦ κατὰ Μαξιμιανόν, καὶ αὗται ἑαυτὰς ταῖς ἀρεταῖς κοσμήσασαι καὶ τοῖς εὐαγγελικοῖς νόμοις πειθόμεναι, καταλείπουσι μὲν τὴν πατρίδα καὶ γένος καὶ περιουσίαν καὶ κτῆσιν διὰ τὴν περὶ τὸν θεὸν ἀγάπην καὶ προσδοκίαν τῶν ἐπουρανίων ἀγαθῶν […].

32 *M. Agap.* 1,2–3: καὶ φεύγουσι μὲν τοὺς διώκοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν, καὶ καταλαμβάνουσιν ὄρος τι ὑψηλόν. κἀκεῖ ταῖς προσευχαῖς ἐσχόλαζον, καὶ τὸ μὲν σῶμα τῷ ὕψει τοῦ ὄρους προσῆπτον, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἶχον πολιτευομένην.

> that you are pregnant?' Eutychia said: 'By the man whom God gave me.' The prefect said: 'But how can you be pregnant when you say your husband is dead?' Eutychia said: 'No one can know the will of almighty God. So God willed it.' The prefect said: 'I urge Eutychia to cease this madness and to return to sound reason. What do you say? Will you obey the imperial command?' 'No, I will not,' said Eutychia. 'I am a Christian, a servant of almighty God.' The prefect said: 'Since Eutychia is pregnant, she shall be kept meanwhile in goal.'[33]

The focus of the brief interrogation is mainly on Eutychia's body and, by extension, on her role of wife. Furthermore, the specifically female physical condition of Eutychia—she is pregnant—prevents her from facing martyrdom. In this sense—exactly like in the case of Perpetua and Felicitas, as we have already highlighted earlier in the text—women's social agency is strictly related to the physiological cycles of their bodies. A female body was traditionally linked to cyclical time—as it is biologically defined by menstruation and childbearing—and the recurring nature of such events has been used to shape the organization of patriarchal societies, by urging women to live in an eternal present. Women wait, while men act, as attested a few lines later in the narrative when the prefect, after the interrogation, so speaks:

> 'Whereas Agape and Chione have with malicious intent acted against the divine decree of our lords the Augusti and Caesars, and whereas they adhere to the worthless and obsolete worship of the Christians which is hateful to all religious men, I sentence them to be burned.' Then he added: 'Agatho, Irene, Cassia, Philippa, and Eutychia, because of their youth are to be put in prison in the meanwhile.'[34]

Here, the young age prevents the abovementioned women from instantly facing martyrdom. Furthermore, Irene is also condemned to be placed naked in the brothel as a form of punishment aiming at convincing her to deny her faith. How-

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33 *M. Agap.* 3,5–7: ὁ ἡγεμὼν εἶπεν· Σὺ τί λέγεις, Εὐτυχία; Εὐτυχία εἶπεν· Τὸ αὐτὸ λέγω, ἀποθανεῖν μᾶλλον θέλω. ὁ ἡγεμὼν εἶπεν· Ἄνδρα ἔχεις; Εὐτυχία εἶπεν· Ἐτελεύτησεν. ὁ ἡγεμὼν εἶπεν· Πότε ἐτελεύτησεν; Εὐτυχία εἶπεν· Πρὸ μηνῶν τάχα ἑπτά. ὁ ἡγεμὼν εἶπεν· Πόθεν οὖν ἐγκύμων εἶ; Εὐτυχία εἶπεν· Ἐξ οὗ ἔδωκέν μοι ὁ θεὸς ἀνδρός. ὁ ἡγεμὼν εἶπεν· Πῶς οὖν ἐγκύμων τυγχάνεις, ὁπότε λέγεις τὸν ἄνδρα σου τετελευτηκέναι; Εὐτυχία εἶπεν· Τὴν βούλησιν τοῦ παντοκράτορος θεοῦ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰδέναι. οὕτως ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεός. ὁ ἡγεμὼν εἶπεν· Παύσασθαι τὴν Εὐτυχίαν τῆς μανίας προτρέπομαι μετελθεῖν τε ἐπὶ τὸν ἀνθρώπινον λογισμόν. τί λέγεις; πείθῃ τῇ βασιλικῇ κελεύσει; Εὐτυχία εἶπεν· Οὐ πείθομαι, Χριστιανή εἰμι, θεοῦ δούλη παντοκράτορος. ὁ ἡγεμὼν εἶπεν· Εὐτυχία, διὰ τὸ ἐγκύμονα αὐτὴν εἶναι, τέως ἀναληφθήσεται εἰς τὸ δεσμωτήριον.

34 *M. Agap.* 4,4: Ἀγάπην καὶ Χιόνην, ἐπειδὴ ἀκαθοσιώτῳ διανοίᾳ ἐναντία ἐφρόνησαν τῷ θείῳ θεσπίσματι τῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν Αὐγούστων καὶ Καισάρων, ἔτι εἰκαίαν καὶ ἕωλον καὶ στυγητὴν πᾶσι τοῖς καθωσιωμένοις σέβουσαι τὴν τῶν Χριστιανῶν θρησκείαν, πυρὶ ἐκέλευσα παραδοθῆναι. καὶ προσέθηκεν· Ἀγάθων καὶ Εἰρήνη καὶ Κασσία καὶ Φιλίππα καὶ Εὐτυχία διὰ τὸ νέον τῆς ἡλικίας τέως ἐμβληθήσονται εἰς τὸ δεσμωτήριον.

ever, despite the violation of her body and the related postponement of martyrdom, Irene persists and is eventually condemned to be burned alive.[35] She then threw herself upon the pyre and dies, exactly like Agathonice, who threw herself upon the stake. And they both die not as wives or mothers, but only after rejecting the previous family ties. In this sense, a specifically female embodied temporality —based on a cyclical repetition of female physiological events—failed when a temporal contraction imposed a devaluation of marriage, family, and procreation.

4 Conclusion

While gender is a topic presently at center stage in scholarship on early Christianity, the nexus between time and the construction of the feminine in the first three centuries of Christian era seems to have not received much attention. In recent times, the relevance of time and temporality— particularly in New Testament studies—has been attested by two very detailed studies published by Moss Bahr.[36] At the same time, a focus on gendered temporality has been explored in the collective volume edited by Esther Eidinow and Lisa Maurizio concerning the general narrative of time and gender in antiquity.[37] Therefore, in line with this recent tendency, the present article aimed at investigating the *Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonice* and the *Martyrdom of Agape, Irene, Chione and Companions* as two very similar representative case studies of the radical impact that the

35 *M. Agap.* 5,8 – 6.

36 Lynne Moss Bahr, "The 'Temporal Turn' in New Testament Studies," *Currents in Biblical Research* 18/3 (2020): 268 – 79; Lynne Moss Bahr, *"The Time Is Fulfilled": Jesus's Apocalypticism in the Context of Continental Philosophy* (London: T&T Clark, 2019). For recent and more general contributions on time and temporality in antiquity see Ben-Dov and Doering, eds., *The Construction of Time in Antiquity*, where there is only one article which investigates the relation between time and gender: Gribetz, "Women's Bodies"; Duncan F. Kennedy, *Antiquity and the Meanings of Time: A Philosophy of Ancient and Modern Literature* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013); Ralph M. Rosen, ed., *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

37 Esther Eidinow and Lisa Maurizio, eds., *Narratives of Time and Gender in Antiquity* (London, New York: Routledge 2020). Please note that in this volume there are two essays devoted to the analysis of the nexus between time and gender in early Christianity: Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Telling Time with Epiphanius: Periodization and Metaphors of Genealogy and Gender in the Panarion," in Eidinow – Maurizio, eds., *Narratives of Time*, 150 – 65, and Nicola Denzey Lewis, "(En)Gendering Christian Time: Female Saints and Roman Martyrological Calendars," in Eidinow and Maurizio, eds., *Narratives of Time*, 166 – 80.

temporally defined religious experience of martyrdom had on women's social roles and norms in early Christian society.[38]

By looking at social and gendered constructions of time, this article attempted to open up a completely new avenue of research to analyze how time and the feminine are intertwined in late antique representations of female authority. To this end, my inquiry was informed by one main question: how did the new notion of the end of time – strengthened by the urgency of martyrdom – affect early ideas of gendered temporality in second- and third-century Christianity? I combine eschatology with martyrdom because they both impose a contraction to time, here conceived as a linear sequence of moments linking the past to the future, and also due to their synchronous relevance within the overall religious experience shaping the first three centuries of Christianity. The suspension produced by both eschatological tendency and martyrdom imposed a consequent interruption of the social process of production and reproduction which is directly linked to the progressive flow of events within society. In this sense, and going back to the theoretical notion of queer temporality with which I opened this contribution, a temporal disruption coincides with the disruption of reproduction. And since women are traditionally the main instruments of the reproductive process of society, gender appears as highly relevant within this interaction of societal factors, as convincingly stressed by Caroline Dinshaw, although referring to medieval literature:

> A strong thematic cluster emerges in these narratives: marriage, gestation, and procreation. Dedicated to continuing a "line," in the first of my medieval examples patriarchal reproduction is revealed as resolutely linear in not only the genealogical but also, and therefore, the temporal domain; if, as I have suggested in my introduction, queerness is experienced, at least in part, in and as time, patriarchal reproduction is, too. Narratives in this chapter that explicitly problematize time also explicitly engage sexual and social reproduction: beyond that first example, as I shall show, queer potentials threaten to destroy ordinary reproduction or to transform our understanding of it utterly. When time is at issue, sexual and social reproduction are on the line – or turn out to be not on a line.[39]

Against the abovementioned coincidence between time and reproduction by means of women, a renunciation of female traditional roles was the key factor within the process of both temporal and societal disruption. The nullification of

38 For a comprehensive overview on women's social roles in early Christianity see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983). See also the more recent Ulla Tervahauta, Ivan Miroshnikov, Outi Lehtipuu and Ismo Dunderberg, eds., *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017).

39 Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 44.

feminine distinctive traits enacted by women who desired to reject family ties in order to embrace a new religious system—and also die for it—takes on the shape of an actual female autonomy from traditional social constraints. This tendency, which is not only confined to the ancient world,[40] is well represented by the stories of women martyrs in early Christianity. While early Christian martyrdom has received much scholarly attention especially in recent times,[41] texts like the *Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonice* and the *Martyrdom of Agape, Irene, Chione and Companions* appear still under-investigated.[42] They are obviously mentioned in larger monographs on martyrdom, but a detailed analysis of their specific relevance has not been properly underlined so far.

I have looked at these two stories from the perspective of time and gender. In both texts, the female characters reject family ties and traditional female social roles by renouncing motherhood. In this sense, their religious and social agency is part of a well-established literary tradition of female characters—like Thecla, Drusiana, Mygdonia, Perpetua, Felicitas, to cite just a few examples—who subvert societal normativity by embracing Christian asceticism and/or opting for martyrdom. We have seen that the proconsul tries to convince Agathonice to sacrifice by asking her to pity herself and her children, but she refuses and so she is condemned to undergo the same death as Carpus and Papylus, her companions. We have also seen that the specifically female physical condition of Eutychia, who is pregnant, prevents her from facing martyrdom: she is thus forced to wait. However, well-known similar cases, like that of Felicitas, show that women have also the ability to request for a divine intervention to be physically freed—in this case, pregnancy—from what prevents them from facing execution and consequently death. All this is undoubtedly caused by the temporal pressure exerted by eschatological tendencies and the urgency of martyrdom, within an inextricable socio-religious interaction between gender identity and temporality. That this pressure had a more radical impact on women's lives is determined by the fact that time construction and perception vary differently based on gender identity. As we have already and extensively pointed out, within ancient Mediterranean society

40 In this regard, see Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs* 7/1 (1981): 13–35, 18, who refers to the first generation of feminists that rejected the distinctive traits of female bodies in order to be compatible with insertion in history.

41 See in this regard Éric Rebillard, *The Early Martyr Narratives: Neither Authentic Accounts nor Forgeries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021). On the same topic of authenticity, see also Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (New York: Harper One, 2013).

42 On Agathonice see: Jan M. Kozlowski, "'And she took off her clothes …': Agathonice's Nudity in *Acta Carpi* 44," *Vigiliae Christianae* 74 (2020): 121–28.

women were strictly connected to a domestic space and social role: they were essentially wives and mothers. Therefore, since women were traditionally perceived as the main instruments of the reproductive process of society, the temporal rupture generally imposed by eschatology and martyrdom mainly affected a female condition within society, thus subverting a social role most heavily associated with a traditional normativity.

Section 2 **Re-writing Women's Authority: Tradition, Transmission, and Reception of Female Sainthood Across Time and Space**

Ángel Narro

Emulating Thecla: Mygdonia, Xanthippe, and Polyxena

Different Conceptions of Conversion and Religious Life

1 Introduction

As a figure symbolizing the most appreciated virtues among early Christian writers, Thecla represented an example to be imitated by Christian women in general and, from a narrative point of view, by those female characters in hagiography who were portrayed as leading an ascetic life far from earthly goods.[1] From early Christianity onwards, Thecla would become a recurrent saintly model,[2] as she was not only an example of conversion and the first female martyr, but was also cast as a pioneer among ascetic women and a charismatic leader, and sometimes even as an apostle.[3] The eschatological purpose of Thecla's way of life in the second-century *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (= *APTh*) is reproduced by other female characters playing important roles in later apocryphal Acts. This literary genre, along with the Acts of martyrs, can be seen as a first attempt at creating a hagiographical discourse focused on a particular model of sainthood for both men and women. For the latter, there is a special emphasis on chastity and self-control, regarding which Thecla provided an extraordinary precedent for further development.

This paper examines the initial reception of this ideal of female sainthood already in the literary tradition of the apocryphal Acts. For this reason, I am going to analyze the cases of Mygdonia, the wife of Charisios, a general of the Indian king Misdeos in the third-century *Acts of Thomas* (= *AThom*), and Xanthippe and Polyxena, the two sisters featuring in the Acts that bear their names and are dated by

1 Ángel Narro, *Tecla de Iconio: La santa ideal, un ideal de santa* (Reus: Rhemata, 2021), 237–320.
2 Léonie Hayne, "Thecla and the Church Fathers," *Vigiliae Christianae* 48 (1994): 209–18; Monika Pesthy, "Thecla among the Fathers of the Church," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996): 164–78.
3 Peter Ben-Smit, "St. Thecla: Remembering Paul and Being Remembered Through Paul," *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014): 555–60; Susan E. Hylen, *A Modest Apostle: Thecla and the History of Women in the Early Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 73–87; Ángel Narro, "The Cloud of Thecla and the Construction of Her Character as a Virgin (παρθένος), Martyr (μάρτυς) and Apostle (ἀπόστολος)," *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 16 (2019): 99–129.

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most of scholars to the sixth century (*Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* = *AXP*). The chronological aspect of these works is important, as it shows different perceptions of chastity, baptism, temporality, and eschatology, the four axes around which this study revolves, according to the religious trends that were current at the time of the composition of these texts.[4] This diachronic approach can provide a glimpse into the large literary production on women saints of the early Christian and late antique periods in which Thecla served as a model for shaping new female portraits.[5] The comparison of the three texts is justified, since Thecla represents the most widespread example of a virtuous woman in early Christianity. More specifically, both the section devoted to Mygdonia in the *AThom* and the entire *AXP* in its two main sections imitate the plotline and scenes of the *APTh.* In the *AThom* much attention is given to the marital tensions between Mygdonia and her husband Charisios compared to the *APTh*, but the narrative sequence remains roughly the same. As for the *AXP*, the division of the narrative into two parts, one devoted to Xanthippe and her conversion, the other to her younger sister Polyxena, consciously imitates that of the *APTh.* Indeed, the circumstances around the conversion of Xanthippe have a clear parallel in Thecla, even if some important changes are introduced, such as the conversion of Xanthippe's husband. Likewise, the young Polyxena embodies the bravery of the young Christian martyr among the lions in Antioch in her part of the story.

These choices also have implications for the Christian novelistic genre with which these stories have traditionally been associated. The influence of the Greek novel on the apocryphal Acts seems to be one of the few points of agreement among scholars.[6] The overview of the three works might therefore throw light not

4 For the need of treating each text belonging to the so-called apocryphal Acts of the apostles, see Kaestli's opinion in response to the books by Davies, MacDonald and Burrus published in the early 80s: Jean-Daniel Kaestli, "Fiction littéraire et réalité sociale: Que peut-on savoir de la place des femmes dans le milieu de production des Actes apocryphes des apôtres?" *Apocrypha* 1 (1990): 279–302, 283–84.

5 The influence of Thecla's portrait on Macrina's description or on Syncletica's ascetic way of life are two well-known examples. See, respectively: Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge – London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 70–72; Fabrizio Petorella, "'The True Disciple of the Blessed Thecla': Saint Syncletica and the Construction of Female Asceticism," *Adamantius* 25 (2019): 418–26.

6 I am only citing here some of the most complete studies on this matter: Tomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Richard Pervo, "Early Christian Fiction," in *Greek Fiction: The Greek Novel in Context*, eds. John R. Morgan and Richard Stoneman (London: Routledge, 1994): 239–54; Melissa Aubin, "Reversing Romance? The Acts of Thecla and the Ancient Novel," in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, eds. Ronald F. Hock, J. Bradley Chance, and Judith Perkins (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998): 257–72; Richard Pervo, "The Ancient

only to the development of certain motifs and episodes related to the concepts of chastity, baptism, temporality, and eschatology, but also to the use of repetitive motifs due to their relation to the novel. It is noteworthy that the apocryphal Acts were probably conceived for a heterogeneous audience,[7] both for those initiated in the Christian faith and for non-Christian readers and listeners. The former might have possessed the keys for interpreting and decoding properly the message behind the texts, the latter probably found bizarre some plot developments, but were able to discover and learn more about the Christian principles thanks to the use of a format akin to the Greek novel of the time. Thus, one can see how concrete models of women were praised through the examples of Thecla, Mygdonia, Xanthippe, and Polyxena and how certain motifs were repeated within a narrative context such as that of the Christian fiction novel, having different connotations and meanings in each text.

2 Thecla: Virginity, Resurrection, and the Place of the Righteous

The academic discussion about the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* is extensive. The text has been analyzed from many different points of view focusing primarily on theological and literary aspects. Most scholars agree that this second-century apocryphal text suggests a close connection between virginity and resurrection,[8] which is repeated in various points of the narrative, such as in the blessings pronounced by Paul in the house of Onesiphorus in *APTh* 5–6 or in the story of Falconilla, which ends happily in chapter 39. In the former, the apostle insists on the link between chastity and eternal life, which is especially explicit in the last of his blessings, addressed directly to the virgins: "Blessed are the bodies of the virgins, for they shall be well pleasing to God and they will not lose the rewards of their purity,

Novel Becomes Christian," in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling (Leiden: Brill, 2003): 685–712.

7 Jan N. Bremmer, "The Apocryphal Acts: Authors, Place, Time and Readership," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2001): 160–70.

8 Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, Enkrateia *e antropologia: Le motivazioni protologiche della continenza e della verginità nel cristianesimo dei primi secoli e nello gnosticismo* (Roma: Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, 1984), 87–96; Pieter J. Lalleman, "The Resurrection in the Acts of Paul," in Bremmer, ed, *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, 126–41, 130–33; Esther Yue L. Ng, "Acts of Paul and Thecla: Women's stories and precedent?," *Journal of Theological Studies* 55 (2004): 1–29, 10–11; Jane D. McLarty, *Thecla's Devotion: Narrative, Emotion and Identity in the Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Cambridge: James & Clark, 2018), 200.

because the word of the father shall be for them a work of salvation in the day of his son, and they shall have rest forever."[9]

This last blessing has a symbolic place and structure among the blessings pronounced by Paul at Onseiphorus' place, since it is the one closing the discourse and the only one not addressed to a specific group of people, but to something material such as the bodies of the virgins (τὰ σώματα τῶν παρθένων), by modifying the repeated structure μακάριοι οἱ of the rest of the blessings. Here there is a clear intention to underline the superiority of virginity and the rewards of opting for such a way of life. In short, the text stresses the abovementioned relationship between virginity and resurrection. The latter should be interpreted as an inclination towards understanding afterlife as an eternal life organized in, at least, two sections: the so-called place of the righteous and a traditional Hades, as was commonplace among early Christians.[10] Thus, the *APTh* do not deal with the resurrection of the flesh, but of the soul in the place of the righteous (ὁ τῶν δικαίων τόπος) evoked in *APTh* 28, when Falconilla, Tryphaena's dead daughter, uses the verb μετατίθημι during an oneiric vision to ask her mother to host Thecla and pleads for the young woman to pray for her soul.

Falconilla's story is of great significance for understanding the conception of death, conversion, and afterlife in the context of the conflict between Graeco-Roman and Christian religious beliefs underlying the creation of the *APTh*. The entire episode of Falconilla takes place during the second martyrdom of Thecla in Antioch, where she had previously arrived accompanying Paul in his evangelizing mission. Both Tryphaena and her daughter Falconilla are non-Christians, and so are Alexander and the governor, to mention the other two main characters in the second part of the text. The patronage relationship between Thecla and Tryphaena starts in *APTh* 28, when the latter sees her dead daughter in a dream. Here Falconilla must be considered as a non-Christian, as she needs Thecla to pray for her translation to paradise. This fact has important implications for the conversion of Tryphaena, which is conditioned by the oneiric vision of her own daughter, who is a firsthand witness of the organization, at least bipartite, of the

9 *APTh* 6: μακάρια τὰ σώματα τῶν παρθένων, ὅτι αὐτὰ εὐαρεστήσουσιν τῷ θεῷ καὶ οὐκ ἀπολέσουσιν τὸν μισθὸν τῆς ἁγνείας αὐτῶν· ὅτι ὁ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ἔργον αὐτοῖς γενήσεται σωτηρίας εἰς ἡμέραν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν ἕξουσιν εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος. I reproduce Barrier's translation of the last of these blessings: Jeremy W. Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 82.

10 The best example of bipartite cosmogony can be found in the *Gospel of Nicodem* and the *Gospel of Bartholomew*. The former narrates how Jesus descended to Hades to redeem the souls of all those who inhabited there starting from Adam, whereas the latter describes the opposition between hell and paradise and the equilibrium of souls that must be preserved between both places.

afterlife. The relationship between Thecla and Tryphaena has traditionally been interpreted within the social context of patronage as a sort of particular *do ut des*, in which Thecla receives physical protection and material goods in exchange for spiritual benefits for Tryphaena and her daughter Falconilla.[11]

The reader has little information about the life of Falconilla. The text does not mention whether she was a virgin or a married woman, but one can notice the implicit resemblance between Falconilla and Thecla, who is considered by Tryphaena as equal to her own child in *APTh* 30, when she affirms that "a second mourning of Falconilla has come upon my house" (Φαλκονίλλης μου δεύτερον πένθος ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν γίνεται). The vertical relationship between both women and the identification of Thecla with Falconilla perhaps suggests that both were young virgins. This might make sense if one takes into account the relationship between chastity and eternal life praised by the text. The exposition of the theoretical framework in which the text is inserted has been already shown in the blessings pronounced by Paul at Onesiphorus' house.

As Falconilla is perfectly aware of the existence of the only God, even if dead, asks for prayers for her soul. Though she uses the verb μετατίθημι, which may suggest, as I have pointed out, a transfer from one place (Hades) to another (paradise / place of the righteous), Tryphaena asks Thecla to pray on behalf of her child, "in order that she may live" (ἵνα ζήσεται). It is interesting to note that some manuscripts of the *APTh* add the phrase εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, which matches Thecla's prayer in the same chapter (*APTh* 29).[12] The first reading put in Tryphaena's mouth (ἵνα ζήσεται) implies that she was asking for a resurrection of the flesh, whereas the second (ἵνα ζήσεται εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας) suggests a resurrection of the soul, a transfer from hell to paradise, as Falconilla requested in her oneiric apparition. The former would be a more truthful statement for a non-initiated Christian and corresponds to Tryphaena's words in *APTh* 39, when she confirms her faith and conversion and declares: "Now I believe that the dead are raised. Now I believe that my child lives" (νῦν πιστεύω ὅτι νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται· νῦν πιστεύω ὅτι τὸ τέκνον μου ζῇ). Thecla's triumph in the trials with the beasts makes Tryphaena believe in her God and prayers, which suggests how the second martyrdom of Thecla is seen as an ordeal

11 Magda Misset-Van de Weg, "A Wealthy Woman Named Tryphaena: Patroness of Thecla of Iconium," in Bremmer, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, 16–35; Magda Misset-Van de Weg, "Answers to the Plights of an Ascetic Woman Named Thecla," in *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha*, eds. Amy Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006): 146–62, 157–61.

12 On the discussion and details of the manuscripts including this reading, see: Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 150, footnote 5.

in Tryphaena's mind.[13] As she has survived, she must be right about preaching the real God. From this point of view, Falconilla's double dream vision and the supernatural assistance of Thecla granted by God in the episodes of the lions, the marine beasts, or the bulls depict a superstitious interpretation of all these signs by Tryphaena, which is in line with her condition as a non-Christian and the remarks of the author of the *APTh* on how Thecla spent eight days in her house teaching her and her household the word of God, "so that she believed in God" (*APTh* 39: ὥστε πιστεῦσαι τῷ θεῷ). Thus, Tryphaena's previous words about the dead who are raised and her daughter who was still living, reflect her belief that her child will live forever in heaven.[14]

The entire narrative of the *APTh* must be inserted into this general framework in order to achieve an enhanced understanding of its several parts which are connected like a puzzle. I have started from the end, from the Christian conception of an eschatological purpose which impels Thecla to renounce marriage and embrace an ascetic behavior in this life. Indeed, in the interplay between chastity and eschatology, the text suggests a bipartite Christian cosmological and temporal model (terrestrial life [temporary], heavenly life [eternal]), as, for example, in the *AThom* discussed later in this essay. In both texts, the opposition between the finite temporality of this life and the infinite life in heaven is stressed, and it is claimed that the actions in this life have consequences in the afterlife, in the eternal life evoked regarding Falconilla a few lines above. To explore the implications of this change of habits and the function of baptism in this puzzle in which chastity, temporality and eschatology represent the other important pieces, it is important to recall some of the main features of Thecla, bearing always in mind these four elements.

Firstly, one must consider that Thecla represents a model of conversion. She is introduced as a non-Christian virgin betrothed to an Iconian nobleman, suffers martyrdom twice, and becomes an important spiritual leader, a kind of apostle at a time when the main topic of Christian literature was doctrine. Virginity, linked to her conversion to Christianity, is Thecla's main virtue since it is preserved throughout the narrative and plays a central role in the development of the plot. Thecla is an archetype, the model of a potential convert, a common Graeco-Roman noblewoman whose future expectations are marriage and procreation, but her social role remains unaccomplished when she embraces the new ascetic

13 Jan N. Bremmer, "Magic, Martyrdom and Women's Liberation in the Acts of Paul and Thecla," in Bremmer, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, 36–59, 55; McLarty, *Thecla's Devotion*, 84–85.
14 Lalleman, "The Resurrection in the Acts of Paul," 133.

way of life preached by the apostle.[15] Even if the social implications of Thecla's renunciation of marriage are significant,[16] I am more interested in describing the spiritual and religious consequences. The rejection of marriage is only one of the many made by Thecla, who adopts an ascetic lifestyle after hearing the words of Paul on chastity and eternal life. She leaves her family, her betrothed, her female adornments and manifests her intention to cut her hair off. All these attitudes denote a firm renunciation of earthly life, which is considered as a passage, a way to reach eternal life by means of strict ascetic practice based primarily on the preservation of virginity.

Nonetheless, the apparent lack of concern for materiality in general has its exception precisely in the body of Thecla, which highlights the importance of the last of the blessings pronounced by Paul at the beginning of the *APTh.* Thecla becomes, in fact, a no-martyr, as she is martyred but does not die, which represents a rare case in early Christian literature. Thecla's conversion, which is accompanied by the adoption of an ascetic way of life, provides her with a corporeal protection on earth. The cloud full of hail and the earthquake appearing during her first trial in Iconium or the diverse divine interventions on her behalf in Antioch protect her body from the fire or the beasts, but also from the unrestrained gaze of the spectators.[17] This divine protection must be seen as a reward for her virginal way of life and her refusal to marry, as if it were a sign of the holy status achieved by Thecla. In these passages, baptism plays a symbolic role, but it is not regarded as strictly necessary for obtaining this providential aid.

The episode of her self-baptism is unique in early Christian sources, although it employs the usual vocabulary and imitates the procedure of the baptismal prac-

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15 Ross S. Kraemer, "The Conversion of Women to Ascetic Forms of Christianity," *Signs* 6/2 (1980): 298–307.

16 Here mention should be made of the most representative contributions to this topic: Stevan L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980); Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston - Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987); Andrew S. Jacobs, "A Family Affair: Marriage, Class, and Ethics in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999): 105–38, 105–7; Gonzalo del Cerro, *Las mujeres en los Hechos apócrifos de los Apóstoles* (Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas, 2003), 23–26; Cornelia B. Horn, "Suffering Children, Parental Authority and the Quest for Liberation? A Tale of Three Girls in the *Acts of Paul* (*and Thecla*), the *Act*(*s*) *of Peter*, the *Acts of Nereus and Achilleus* and the *Epistle of Pseudo-Titus*," in Levine and Robbins, eds., *A Feminist Companion*, 118–45, 121–30; Andrew S. Jacobs, "'Her Own Proper Kinship': Marriage, Class and Women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," in Levine and Robbins, eds, *A Feminist Companion*, 19–46.

17 See the analysis by Constantinou regarding this scene in the fifth-century *Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla*, where the hagiographer insists further on this aspect: Stavroula Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances: Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2005), 37.

tice of this period.[18] From a narrative point of view, this moment is the most dramatic in the entire narration, since Thecla confesses that she baptizes herself on her very last day (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑστέρᾳ ἡμέρᾳ βαπτίζομαι). She had previously asked Paul to baptize her by appealing to the power of the seal of God (τὴν σφραγίδα ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ), but he had refused. This seems a narrative strategy to justify the symbolic baptism of Thecla, where she seems to be reborn from the water of the pool of beasts as a new woman. Dunn has interpreted the verb βαπτίζομαι as a passive form instead of middle, so Thecla would be baptized by God,[19] but his arguments do not seem very convincing to me. Much more plausible is Lincicum's hypothesis on the relationship between Thecla and Falconilla in this episode,[20] but in my opinion this part of the narration is exclusively focused on Thecla, whereas Falconilla will only be mentioned by her own mother, convinced precisely by the effectiveness of the example of Thecla to convert people through the wonders performed by God to protect her.

Many significant elements appear in this scene. The most important is the cloud of light blinding and killing the marine beasts and hiding the naked body of the martyr from the sight of the spectators.[21] As I already argue elsewhere, the cloud is a symbol of God's protection, appearing in the most representative moments of Thecla's life in the *APTh*,[22] since it is present in different shapes in the martyrdoms of both Iconium and Antioch. In addition, it also appears guiding Thecla to Seleukeia in the alternative ending of codex G and has an interesting parallel in the episode with Salome in the *Protogospel of James* (19), where a luminous cloud (νεφέλη φωτεινή) covers the entrance of the cave in which Mary is giving birth to Jesus. The expression indicates the occurrence of a theophany in the Old and New Testaments (Exod 16:10; Dan 7:13; Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Acts 1:9), but in the passages with Mary and Thecla there is a clear link with virginity, as if

18 Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 229–30.

19 Peter W. Dunn, "The Acts of Paul and the Pauline Legacy in the Second Century" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1996), 64–67.

20 David Lincicum, "Thecla's Auto-Immersion (*APTh* 4.2–14 [3.27–39]): A Baptism for the Dead?," *Apocrypha* 21 (2010): 203–13, 209–12.

21 On the problematic identification of these marine beasts as seals one can find extensive literature: Bruno Lavagnini, "S. Tecla nella vasca delle foche e gli spettacoli in acqua," *Byzantion* 33 (1963): 185–90; Horst Schneider, "Thekla und die Robben," *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001): 45–57; Ingvild S. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman, and Early Christian Ideas* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 191–95; Janet E. Spittler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 181–83.

22 Narro, "The Cloud of Thecla," 119–21. Ferguson points out that it symbolizes the illumination of the baptism: Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 252.

the cloud were hiding and protecting the integrity of both women. From this perspective, baptism is less important compared to the preservation of Thecla's virginal status, which has traditionally been interpreted as a sign of the encratite philosophy of the *APTh.* Here baptism has more of a narrative fiction. Regarding the question of temporality, it is interesting to note that it represents an inflection point in Thecla's life. Her words before her self-baptism denote that for Thecla being baptized meant her *de facto* entrance into the Christian community, since from this moment onwards she was going to live a new life as a true Christian woman.

Tissot pointed out that the only apocryphal Acts featuring extreme encratism were those of Thomas, whereas in the Thecla story we see a less radical encratite position,[23] close to that of most of the fathers of the Church. Tissot's opinion is based on the attitude of the apostle Paul towards Onesiphorus and his family, since he was married and had two children, but his arguments seem weak in light of the *AThom*, where the apostle displays a similar stance towards the general Siphor, his wife and daughter. The moral, social and even religious superiority of virginity is commonplace in early Christian literature, but here the text focuses on how the choice of a virginal life is rewarded with two specific benefits: corporeal protection in this life and a place in heaven after death. In the *APTh* virginity is also highly recommended for young women within the context of early Christianity, since, as the feminist school pointed out back in the 1980s, Thecla's conversion to the Christian doctrine represented an alternative to traditional Graeco-Roman conceptions of female social functions. In conclusion, the message is radical, the interplay between virginity and the corporeal and spiritual rewards is also very clear, but in this narrative context everything seems symbolic and idealized. It is difficult to determine the level of encratism in these texts, especially if one compares their ideas with other testimonies unsuspected of belonging to encratite trends in which a similar preference for virginity or, at least sexual abstinence,[24] can be found, especially in relation to young women. More interesting to me seems the comparison with the *AThom* and the possible influence of the *APTh* on them, which allows us to track the adaptation and evolution of the ideas about virginity, eschatology, baptism, and temporality.

23 Yves Tissot, "Encratisme et Actes Apocryphes," in *Les Actes apocryphes des Apôtres: Christianisme et monde païen*, eds. François Bovon, Éric Junod, and Jean-Daniel Kaestli (Genève: Labor et fides, 1981): 109–19, 115–16.

24 Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3–4.

3 Mygdonia in the *Acts of Thomas*

The influence of Thecla on the configuration of certain female ideals related to holiness and ascetic lifestyle is remarkable. Her model is the basis for the narration of Mygdonia inserted towards the end of the *AThom*,[25] the third-century apocryphon describing the preaching activity of the apostle in India. The text of Thomas shows a clear dichotomy between earthly and heavenly life, which is explicitly expressed through the story of the heavenly palace built by Thomas for the Indian king Goundaphor at the beginning of the Acts.[26] Thomas is sold by Jesus as a slave to Abban the merchant,[27] sent by Goundaphor to Jerusalem to hire an architect for the new palace. Once Thomas arrived at his kingdom, he and the king met and discuss the construction of the palace (the location, the distribution, the main characteristics of the building). Thomas did not build the palace, but he divided all the money and goods provided by the king for its construction among the needy of the region. When Goundaphor realized that Thomas was not working in his palace but was wasting his fortune, he was infuriated and imprisoned the apostle until he decided an appropriate punishment. Suddenly, Goundaphor's brother, Gad, died. He went to heaven and discovered a great palace built for his brother by the intercession of Thomas before God. As he wanted to live in it, he asked the angels to resurrect him to change his brother's mind and buy the palace. When Gad related everything that he saw in heaven, the king understood the cryptic words of Thomas who assured him that he had indeed built a palace, but it could not be seen in this world.

This story was the most popular part of the *AThom*, as can be observed from the Greek manuscript tradition of the text, in which the first two Acts (in their original form or paraphrased) appear individually in almost half of the manuscripts.[28]

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25 Narro, *Tecla de Iconio*, 242–52.

26 On this episode, considered as a pious fraud, see Anton Hilhorst, "The Heavenly Palace in the *Acts of Thomas*", in Bremmer, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 53–64, esp. 57–58.

27 Thomas becomes both a metaphorical and a real slave of Jesus, which has been traditionally interpreted as *mise en scène* of the concept of the "slave of God" (δοῦλος τοῦ Θεοῦ), quite popular in early Christian writings. For a deeper discussion, see Monika Pesthy, "Thomas, the Slave of Lord," in Bremmer, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 65–73; Jennifer A. Glancy, "Slavery in the *Acts of Thomas*," *Journal of Early Christian History* 2 (2012): 3–21; Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *The Slave Metaphor and Gendered Enslavement in Early Christian Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2018), 125–44.

28 Israel Muñoz Gallarte and Ángel Narro, "The Abridged Version(s) of the So-Called Family Γ of the Apocryphal Acts of Thomas," in *The Apostles Peter, Paul, John, Thomas and Philip with their Companions in Late Antiquity*, eds. Tobias Nicklas, Janet E. Spittler, and Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2021): 254–69.

The story of the heavenly palace shows in a didactic and descriptive manner the contrast between the material earthly life and the eternal heavenly one, and how the actions accomplished in this life have consequences in the other, so that Christians should abandon perishable goods for charitable deeds and ascetic behavior to receive their reward in the afterlife. This is the key to understanding the general framework in which the *Acts of Thomas* were composed, which matches Mygdonia's attitude and the function of her story in the context of the narrative.

The story of Mygdonia begins in chapter 82, where she is described escorted by a group of slaves going to see the multitude gathering around the apostle. Thomas delivers a discourse resembling that of Paul in *APTh* 5–6. Here, in *AThom* 84–86, the apostle establishes a dichotomy between vices and virtues. He encourages Christians to refrain from adultery, robbery, greed, vainglory and from every shameful action, especially corporeal, as he considers this kind of actions the "metropolis of all evil" (ἔστιν γὰρ αὕτη ἡ μητρόπολις τῶν κακῶν ἁπάντων).

On the other hand, he insists on some virtues such as mildness (πραότης), spiritual tranquility (ἡσυχία), equity (ἐπιείκεια) and, above all, holiness (ἁγιωσύνη). In this discourse Thomas is clearly proclaiming an ascetic way of life based on the encratite ideal of the attainment of heavenly goods according to one's behavior in this life, where all the aforementioned virtues, but especially holiness, must be displayed. It is interesting to note that the text does not use the term ἐγκράτεια or any of its derived forms, as might be expected. By contrast, the word appears twice in the *APTh*, for example, in the blessings pronounced by Paul in the house of Onesiphorus. In my opinion, the concept of ἁγιωσύνη, which can be translated as "holiness" or "sanctity" should be understood as a synonym for ἐγκράτεια, since being "holy" (ἅγιος) must be interpreted as following the main premises highlighted by the apostle throughout the texts in his discourses and actions.

The reaction of Mygdonia follows closely the steps of Thecla's conversion. She falls on the ground before the feet of Thomas and asks him to receive the seal of the Lord and become a holy temple (ναὸς ἅγιος), as Thecla did before Paul in the prison. This shows the connection with the previous discourse by Thomas and the concept of ἁγιωσύνη, and how Mygdonia had perfectly understood the meaning of this term despite being unfamiliar with Christian doctrine. To become a holy temple, Mygdonia has to renounce marriage and perishable goods and adopt an ascetic way of life. Thomas insists in his private conversation with Mygdonia in chapter 88 on the opposition between material and eternal goods, as in the story of the heavenly palace of King Goundaphor.

Mygdonia's sudden conversion directly affects her relationship with Charisios. Thecla refuses to marry. Mygdonia refuses to be a wife. What one can see in this section is a clear *imitatio Theclae*, an adaptation of the Thecla-model to the story of Mygdonia, in which the main difference is that the latter was already married. The

Indian woman abruptly changes her attitude towards her husband. She tries to keep her distance from Charisios. In chapters 89–90, she avoids dining with him, as she does not feel well, which is interpreted by Charisios as a clear sign of the evil effect of the apostle's magical power over his wife.[29] The narration progresses by describing the constant arguments between Mygdonia and Charisios, the former avoiding every physical contact, the latter insisting on having sexual intercourse with her. The plot of the *APTh* is evoked again in *AThom* 94, where Thomas delivers a speech in which one may find eleven blessings, which shows how closely the author of the text was following the narrative sequence of the first part of the *APTh* to shape his own story. Thomas' discourse focuses on the importance of sanctity (ἁγιωσύνη), which is used in one way or another in four sentences, mildness (πραότης), which is used three times, and spiritual tranquility (ἡσυχία), used once. There is a direct connection between this part of the text and the passage where Mygdonia asks to become a holy temple, as Thomas literally blesses "the bodies of the holy ones, because they are worthy to become temples of God, in which Christ shall dwell" (μακάρια τὰ σώματα τῶν ἁγίων, ὅτι κατηξιώθησαν ναοὶ θεοῦ γενέσθαι, ἵνα Χριστὸς ἐνοικήσῃ ἐν αὐτοῖς). The reminiscence of Paul's last blessing in *APTh* 6, in which the bodies of the virgins (μακάρια τὰ σώματα τῶν παρθένων) are praised, is evident and stresses the interpretation of the term ἁγιωσύνη (and its derived forms) in the *AThom* as a synonym for chastity or self-control. It is interesting to note the implications of the choice of the term ἅγιος here in comparison with the more specific παρθένος of the *APTh* and the target of the blessing in one case and in another. Firstly, the moral content of the blessings pronounced by Thomas should be interpreted as a general message addressed to all Christian believers or potential converts, as suggested by the presence of the multitude hearing the words of the apostle. The narrative sequence, however, focuses on Mygdonia, who is married to Charisios and, consequently, is not a virgin. This is probably the reason why the author of the *AThom* consciously employs a term such as ἅγιος, which could evoke an ascetic behavior with no reference to a specific audience, even if the reader is clearly observing the materialization of Thomas' message in Mygdonia's actions. Secondly, the second part of the blessing in this interplay between the *APTh* and the *AThom* has significant implications within the general framework and goals of both texts. I have already ar-

29 Accusations of this sort are proverbial in the apocryphal Acts of the apostles, where the sudden conversions and miracles performed by the apostles are interpreted as magical actions. As Poupon pointed out, in most ancient texts, as that of Thomas, the accusation of being a magician is normally related to the preaching of the benefits of a chaste way of life: Gérard Poupon, "L'accusation de magie dans les actes apocryphes," in Bovon, Junod, and Kaestli, eds., *Les Actes apocryphes*, 71–93, 73.

gued that the last blessing of Paul in *APTh* 6 explicitly mentions the eschatological rewards of keeping virginity forever and emphasizes the connection between one's behavior in this life and the consequences after death. In this second blessing of Thomas, however, the apostle insists only on the ascetic behavior in this life, where the holy ones become temples of God and host Christ. The author uses the verb ἐνοικέω to express this intimate relation of Christ with the Christian believer. This is particularly relevant when the text deals with the concept of marriage and describes the spiritual union between the human being and Christ as a metaphorical bridal chamber in which both dwell, which has traditionally been interpreted as a gnostic allegory for the union of a human being with the divinity represented by Christ.[30]

Thus, the renunciation of sex and material life transcends the binary temporal opposition between life and the afterlife in the *APTh* and provokes an eternal spiritual union from the moment an individual is converted, decides to keep their purity, becomes a temple of God (ναὸς ἅγιος) and renounces sexual pleasures and material goods. This idea, however, is not incompatible with the belief in an eschatological reward but adds a spiritual tie between the individual and Christ during this life. This metaphorical and atemporal relationship has no gender implications *a priori*, since the union with Christ remains the same in the case of Thomas or Mygdonia, but seems to develop the idea of the bride of Christ already present in early Christian writings.[31]

In *AThom* 95 Charisios is enraged when he wakes up in the morning and cannot find his wife, an evident parallel to *APTh* 19. The text describes a rising tension between the spouses. This tension reaches its climax in *AThom* 98, where Chari-

30 The theology of the bridal chamber, associated with the gnostic nature of the *Acts of Thomas* can be observed in the first act of the apostle, during the episode of the wedding celebration in Andrapolis. Here Thomas and Jesus, who appears in the scene as well, convert the newlywed couple to the Christian doctrine inside the bridal chamber prepared to consummate marriage. As they embrace an ascetic way of life and refuse to have sex here, they consummate, as Thomas did, a union with the eternal bridegroom Christ there. For further discussion, see Charles M. Stang, *Our Divine Double* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 129–34. For further discussion, see Richard Valantasis, "The Nuptial Chamber Revisited: The Acts of Thomas and Cultural Intertextuality," *Semeia* 80 (1997): 261–76. The relationship with the Mygdonia-episode and the first act of the apostle has been stressed by Susan E. Myers, *Spirit Epicleses in the Acts of Thomas* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 77–80.

31 On the features and development of this concept in early Christian texts, see Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides: Metaphor and the Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis," *Church History* 77 (2008): 1–25, 3–8; Norbert Schnell, *The Bride of Christ – A Metaphor for the Church: Systematical Exegetical Analysis* (Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2021), 45–151.

sios' sexual assault on his wife is narrated. Mygdonia has kept an ascetic way of life and has avoided any private encounter with her husband, including sexual intercourse. This seems to be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Charisios approaches his wife after dinner, but she shouts: "From now there is no place for you beside me, because my Lord Jesus, with whom I am and rests in me, is better than you."[32] Mygdonia's words make her husband so much angrier that he tries to rape her. The text describes a clear sexual assault and represents a valuable narrative witness of the violence against women in Graeco-Roman society. By embracing a new life of chastity, Mygdonia acts against the traditional social roles assigned to women and breaks the horizontal relationship with her husband in which he is the dominant figure and she the dominated. Mygdonia finally manages to escape from the hands of her lustful husband by wrapping herself in the curtain which covered the door of the chamber before going to her nurse to sleep beside her. The comparison between Charisios and Jesus, which causes the jealousy of the former, is particularly indicative of the framework in which the episode with Mygdonia should be read. Mygdonia clearly states that Jesus is better than her husband. Obviously, Jesus is eternal, Charisios is only a man. Jesus wins. Furthermore, she repeats the idea that Jesus is somehow inside her (ὁ σὺν ἐμοὶ ὢν καὶ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἀναπαυόμενος), which matches the use of the verb ἐνοικέω in the blessing of Thomas.

After this scene, the narrative pace of the *Acts of Thomas* slows and attention turns to doctrinal aspects, as can be clearly seen from the so-called *Hymn of Pearl* (chapters 108–113).[33] The last section focused on the conversion of Mygdonia appears in chapters 114–121. Here one may find the true significance of the conversion of the Indian noblewoman with respect to the axes of chastity, temporality, and eschatology. In my opinion, there is a clear connection in the text between chastity and eschatology, as in the *APTh*, which is observed in Mygdonia's attitude towards her husband and even her past life. The dichotomy between perishable and eternal goods is embodied in the comparison between Charisios and Jesus

32 *AThom* 98: οὐκ ἔχεις λοιπὸν χώραν πρὸς ἐμέ· ὁ γὰρ κύριός μου Ἰησοῦς κρείττων σού ἐστιν ὁ σὺν ἐμοὶ ὢν καὶ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἀναπαυόμενος.

33 This hymn has been interpreted as an allegorical summary of the entire *Acts of Thomas* and as a gnostic narrative in relation with some of the aspects mentioned above. For further discussion, see: Albertus F.J. Klijn, "The So-Called Hymn of the Pearl (Acts of Thomas ch. 108–113)," *Vigiliae Christianae* 14 (1960): 154–64; Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, "The Hymn of Jude Thomas, the Apostle, in the Country of the Indians (*ATh* 108–113)," in Bremmer, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 101–14; Israel Muñoz Gallarte, "El 'Himno de la Perla' en el contexto de la literatura cristiano primitiva: Análisis y primeras conclusiones de HT 108–111.62," *'Ilu. Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 22 (2017): 245–65.

that Mygdonia repeats again in chapter 117, when she claims that "he whom I love is better than you and your possessions, for your goods are of the earth and remain on the earth, but he whom I love is heavenly, and he will take me to heaven."[34] With this affirmation and the following ones, she states the difference between earthly and heavenly marriage, although shame is still present in Mygdonia's mind, as can be inferred from her own words about her earlier life. She affirms: "Jesus abides alone forever with those souls which believe in him. He will save me from the shameful actions which I used to do with you."[35] This last statement reflects her will to erase her previous life before the conversion. Here we can see a more radical encratite position, since marriage and sexual relations are vividly rejected and, similarly, the notion of the divine forgiveness of the actions accomplished before baptism, as was also the case with the story of Falconilla inserted into the *APTh.* There are important differences between the two stories, since, as pointed out, Falconilla's virginity is implied, whereas Mygdonia is a married woman and used to have sexual intercourse with her husband, as can be inferred from the scene of the sexual assault of her husband. Her conversion, finally performed in chapter 121, grants her forgiveness for her mistakes in this world so that she may obtain her heavenly reward, as is clearly expressed by Thomas after baptizing the noblewoman, when he says: "You have received the seal and gained for yourself the eternal life" (ἐδέξω σου τὴν σφραγῖδα, κτίσαι σεαυτῇ ζωὴν αἰώνιον). There was no room for doubt: baptism had an eschatological goal, a heavenly reward, as in the case of the palace of the Indian king. Thus, Mygdonia's ascetic discipline and renouncement of marriage seem a training for the real conversion, produced *de facto* at the moment of her baptism. As was stated a few lines above, the spiritual marriage with Christ transcends the temporal order of the things. It belongs rather to the eternal life awaiting her after her corporeal death, although, once she embraced a chaste life and renounced her husband and sexual relations, her spiritual relationship was already materialized in this world and would persist forever, as it broke the dichotomy between here and there and focused only on the eternal life to come.

The relation to the model of Thecla's conversion is obvious, despite the differences, such as the condition of both Mygdonia and Thecla or the development of some gnostic ideas in the story of the former. However, these differences do not imply a significant change in the perception of both texts regarding the dichotomy between perishable and eternal goods or the primacy of chastity over the other

34 *AThom* 117: ἐκεῖνον ὃν φιλῶ βελτίων σού ἐστιν καὶ τῶν σῶν ὑπαρχόντων· ἡ γὰρ ὕπαρξίς σου ἐκ γῆς οὖσα εἰς γῆν ὑποστρέφει· ὃν δὲ ἐγὼ φιλῶ οὐράνιός ἐστιν, κἀμὲ σὺν αὐτῷ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἄξει. **35** *AThom* 117: Ἰησοῦς δὲ μόνος μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ αἱ ψυχαὶ αἱ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐλπίζουσαι. αὐτὸς Ἰησοῦς ἀπαλλάξει με τῶν αἰσχρῶν σου πράξεων ἃς ἔπραττον μετὰ σοῦ.

virtues in the pursuit of heavenly rewards. It is true that, if one goes back to the initial episode of the heavenly palace built for King Goundaphor in the *AThom*, renunciation of material riches and charity are the actions performed by Thomas on behalf of the king. Nonetheless, one should remember that the episode of the wedding of Andrapolis, in which the theology of the bridal chamber and the renunciation of sex and marriage are connected with the consummation of a spiritual union with Christ, comes first within the narrative sequence of the *AThom* and has its real application in the case of a married woman in this section with Mygdonia. This fact stresses the importance of chastity throughout the entire narrative.

The story of Mygdonia has often been interpreted as evidence of the radical encratite position of the *AThom.*[36] It is obvious that there is a clear objection to sexual intercourse, and, inasmuch sexual relations were normally conceived within the context of marriage, it has been argued that there was a radical opposition to marriage as well. This last idea is not very clear to me. The conceptual framework seems much more complex than this. There is a clear preference for virginity, but a common married life in chastity is also possible. Marriage was a very important social institution in both the Graeco-Roman and Jewish societies, so it should be expected to play some role in the new Christian context. The example is the brief episode of Vazan before the martyrdom of the apostle. In *AThom* 150 Vazan declares that he was married to a woman, but they never had sexual intercourse. The young man asks the apostle to heal his wife, which he accepts if she believes in Christ. Is the author of the text here opening the door for a chaste Christian marriage? The question seems reasonable and may find its answer in the following section of this essay.

4 Xanthippe and Polyxena

The so-called *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena,* in which the two women convert to Christianity during Paul's evangelizing mission in Hispania, borrow a great number of elements from the *APTh.*[37] The text has been dated to the fifth or sixth cen-

36 Besides the general article on the relationship between encrastism and the apocryphal Acts, Tissot exposes his reasons for considering the *Acts of Thomas* as encratite in another article focused exclusively on this text: Yves Tissot, "L'encratisme des Actes de Thomas," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt 2* 25/6 (Berlin - New York: De Gruyter, 1988): 4415–30.

37 Erik Peterson, "Die 'Acta Xanthippae et Polyxenae' und die Paulus-Akten," *Analecta Bollandiana* 65 (1947): 57–61; Richard Pervo, "Dare and Back: The Stories of Xanthippe and Polyxena," in *Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms,* eds. Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015): 161–204, 171–74.

turies and possesses all the ingredients of a pious hagiographical novel.[38] It is clearly divided into two sections, each one devoted to one of the two Hispanic sisters mentioned in the title.[39] Both sisters follow the steps of Thecla in her path to sanctity, but each one emphasizes different elements of the story of the young woman from Iconium.[40] Xanthippe is the main character of the first half of the text. She is a non-Christian woman from Hispania married to a nobleman called Probos. After hearing from a slave about the Christian doctrine, she experiences a corporeal reaction resembling that of Thecla in *APTh* 8, sometimes interpreted as a sort of *signa amoris.* Here the connection with the ancient novel becomes particularly obvious, as scenes of this kind appear largely exaggerated.[41] A clear example is precisely the corporeal disease caused by the hearing of the Christian message regarding asceticism. Whereas in the *APTh* the text is clearly subverting some of the main symptoms of the manifestation of romantic love, as in the novel, in *AXP* a real disease is described. In fact, the slave who triggers the conversion of her mistress dies, as she could not bear the thought of being far from the apostle Paul and his preaching (*AXP* 2).

In the same passage, the ritual of the full conversion to the Christian doctrine is mentioned. Xanthippe asks to be healed from the disease from which she was

38 The text was traditionally dated to the third or fourth centuries: Montague R. James, *A Collection of Thirteen Apocryphal Books and Fragments* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1893), 43–48. Many authors, however, have dated the texts in the fifth or sixth century during the last decades: Éric Junod, "Vie et conduite des saintes femmes Xanthippe, Polyxène et Rébecca (BHG 1877)," in *Oecumenica et Patristica: Festschrift für Wilhelm Schneemelcher zum 75. Geburtstag*, eds. Damaskinos Papandreou, Wolfgang A. Bienert, and Knut Schäferdiek (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1989): 83–106, 90–92; Tibor Szepessy, "Narrative Model of the Acta Xanthippe et Polyxenae," *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 44 (2004): 317–40; David L. Eastman, "Life and Conduct of the Holy Women Xanthippe, Polyxena, and Rebecca," in *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Vol I, eds. Tony Burke and Brent Landau (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016): 416–52, 422; Carlos J. Martínez Arias, *Hechos de Jantipa y Polixena* (Reus: Rhemata, 2020), IV–V. On its relationship with the ancient novel, see David Konstan and Ilaria Ramelli, "The Novel and Christian Narrative," in *A Companion to the Ancient Novel*, eds. Edmund P. Cueva and Shannon N. Byrne (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014): 180–97, 187.

39 Junod, "Vie et conduite des saintes femmes," 93–98.

40 Narro, *Tecla de Iconio*, 252–63.

41 The relationship between the *AXP* and the Greek novel has been stressed by Gorman in a polemic article in which a hypothetic romantic link between Xanthippe and Polyxena is suggested, which is very difficult to accept: Jill C. Gorman, "Producing and Policing Female Sexuality: Thinking With and About 'Same-Sex Desire' in the *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena*," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 416–41. This hypothesis was supported by Burrus in a later essay on the basis of similar arguments: Virginia Burrus, "Desiring Women: Xanthippe, Polyxena, Rebecca," in *Reading and Teaching Ancient Fiction: Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman Narratives*, eds. Sara R. Johnson, Rubén R. Dupertuis, and Christine Shea (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Studies, 2018): 9–27.

suffering. The answer of the slave is clear: "The invocation of a new name, the unction with oil and the bathing of water" (*AXP* 2: ἐπίκλησις ὀνόματος καινοῦ, καὶ χρίσις ἐλαίου, καὶ λοῦτρον ὕδατος). Baptism is the remedy to Xanthippe's disease. However, the idea of a disease caused by hearing the apostle's preaching still seems out of context. What follows explains that both Xanthippe and her slave are afflicted by it because they are not baptized and do not belong to the Christian community. One must consider that this is primarily a tale of conversion placed in a similar context to that of the *APTh*, but here the hagiographer puts additional emphasis on the erroneous beliefs of non-Christians. Both the slave and Xanthippe become conscious of their error from the moment they are aware of the existence of the Christian doctrine, and this is what causes the disease affecting their bodies. Clear proof of this is found in the description of the images of the idols shaking and falling down while the slave and Xanthippe are conversing.

From this moment on, Xanthippe closely follows the steps of Thecla until the arrival of Paul in town and imitates Mygdonia to a certain degree in her ascetic behavior. She constantly looks out her window in search of the apostle, she does not sleep nor eat,[42] and asks her husband to sleep separately. As in the case of Mygdonia, the Thecla-model must be adapted to match Xanthippe's condition as a married woman. When the apostle Paul enters the scene, she falls at his feet like Thecla, bribes the gatekeeper guarding the door of her chamber to let her see the apostle, who was hosted in a neighbor's house, and asks for the seal (σφραγίς) of Christ. The narrative plot is quite similar to that of the story of Mygdonia, which demonstrates the great significance of the ideal of Thecla in early Christian narrations focused on pious women. The main difference with regard to both Thecla and Mygdonia is the conception of baptism and conversion. Ascetic behavior and baptism are described in the text as a protection from demonic attacks, physical desires and other evils in this life and, even if there is a clear defense of the Christian ascetic way of life, the eschatological reward of a behavior of this sort is not stressed as it was in the texts discussed previously. In fact, baptism is considered literally as an "unconquerable chest plate" (ἀκαταμάχητος θώραξ), a protection against diseases or demonic attacks in this world, which suggests that the hagiographer focuses on material benefits and establishes a connection between ascetic life and physical protection.

As for marriage, the text adopts a more tolerant position. Probos, Xanthippe's husband, also converts to Christianity and it is said that "the great Paul taught that

42 On the importance of fasting in the section devoted to Xanthippe, see Jill C. Gorman, "Sexual Defence by Proxy: Interpreting Women's Fasting in the *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena*," in Levine and Robbins, eds., *A Feminist Companion*, 206–15, 210–12.

those who are burned by the flesh, shall keep a legal marriage and reject fornication, especially with the stranger woman, and those who were married shall keep mutual fidelity."[43] From this moment onwards, both display an ascetic behavior and the same virtues as the celibate marriages portrayed in late antique hagiography as in the stories of Sts. Julian and Basilissa, Andronikos and Athanasia or Galaktion and Episteme.[44] As for the depiction of Paul as a defender of legal marriage, the text has an interesting parallel in the so-called *Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla*, the fifth-century literary paraphrase of the *APTh*, in which the hagiographer modifies Paul's discourse before the governor of Iconium to defend the benefits and social value of marriage, even as a guarantee for the perpetuation of the human race, which necessarily implies the existence of sexual relations between the spouses (*VTh* 7).[45]

The conversion to Christianity brings about physical protection against the attacks of the demon, as observed in chapter 21, where Xanthippe faces the devil transformed into a mime actor. Here she exhibits incredible physical strength, granted by God along with the baptism to defeat the devil and his aggressions. The same view of baptism persists in the section of the story focused on Polyxena. It begins with a warning by Xanthippe to her sister to be baptized "to be freed from the ties of the dragon,"[46] a common allusion to the devil in early Christian literature.[47]

As Polyxena was not under the protection of baptism, she was kidnapped by an enemy of her anonymous fiancé, sold as a slave, and taken to Babylon by pi-

43 *AXP* 20: ὁ δὲ μέγας Παῦλος ἐδίδασκεν ὅτι οἱ πυρούμενοι τῇ σαρκὶ τὸν ἔννομον γάμον τηρείτωσαν παραιτούμενοι τὰς πορνείας, ἐξαιρέτως τὸ πρὸς ἀλλοτρίαν γυναῖκα, καὶ οἱ ζευχθέντες ἀλλήλους φυλασσέτωσαν.

44 For the edition of the Greek texts with an English translation and commentary, see Anne P. Alwis, *Celibate Marriages in Late Antique and Byzantine Hagiography: The Lives of Saints Julian and Basilissa, Andronikos and Athanasia, and Galaktion and Episteme* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

45 The Greek text can be observed in Gilbert Dagron, *Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1978), 194–99. For further discussion, see also my Spanish translation and notes on the text in Ángel Narro, *Vida y milagros de Santa Tecla* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2017), 34–41. Paul's apology for marriage in the *Life of Thecla* was echoed by Choricius of Gaza in his *Epithalamium for Procopios, John and Elijah* (Op. VI, 7), which suggest a certain popularity of this section in late antiquity: Ángel Narro, "La Vie et Miracles de Saint Thècle et l'École de Gaza," in *L'École de Gaza: Espace littéraire et identité culturelle dans l'Antiquité Tardive. Actes du Colloque international de Paris, Collège de France, 23-25 mai 2013*, eds. Eugenio Amato, Aldo Corcella and Delphine Lauritzen (Leuven: Peeters, 2016): 313–24.

46 *AXP* 22: λαβὲ τὸ ἅγιον βάπτισμα, καὶ αἴτησαι ἐν τῷ βαπτίσματι ῥυσθῆναι σε τῶν τοῦ δρακόντος παγίδων.

47 Antonio Quacquarelli, *Il leone e il drago nella simbolica dell'età patristica* (Bari: Università di Bari, 1975), 19–48.

rates. From this point on, the narration enters a phase in which many novelistic motifs are introduced starting with the elements of kidnapping, slavery and travel, very popular in the Greek romantic novel. The final part of the story of Polyxena deserves more attention for its relevance to the main aim of this paper. Here Polyxena enjoys God's protection even before receiving the seal of Christ, in part thanks to the intervention of her sister and Paul on her behalf. What is significant with regard to the portrait of Thecla is Polyxena's imitation of her during her martyrdom in an unknown location in Greece. She shows a determination and a physical strength (ἀνδρεία) akin to that of Thecla, and she even manages to provoke attitudes of reverence and submission in the wild beasts which she meets in the arena as Thecla did during her second martyrdom in Antioch.

The eschatological value of baptism is only evoked in a scene in which one can see the respect of a wild animal for the sacred body of the virgin. This occurs in *AXP* 26–28, when she finds an isolated hilly area and an empty cave to rest, in which a she-lion used to dwell that was away at the moment of the young woman's arrival. When the she-lion returned and found Polyxena, she asks the animal not to shred her until she had received baptism,[48] as if it were a requirement for heaven or eternal life. After this scene, she is baptized by the apostle, who was in the surroundings.

The episode of the she-lion is completed with the martyrdom of Polyxena in chapters 36–37, where she is condemned to death together with the son of the prefect of the city, who had also converted to Christianity through Paul's preaching. As it also happened in Antioch in the *APTh*, the she-lion that should have killed her, forgot her violent nature and licked Polyxena's feet. As a result of the supernatural reaction of the wild beasts both Polyxena and the son of the prefect were set free. Polyxena then returned to Hispania accompanied by the son of the prefect who wanted to see Paul again. The happy ending takes place.

5 Final Remarks

The examples of Mygdonia, Xanthippe and Polyxena stress the significance of Thecla as a model for portraying women converts in early Christianity and late antiquity. These three examples are only a few among many others, but they represent the first attempt of creating a sort of *imitatio Theclae* in the creation of specific portraits of holy women. In the case of Mygdonia, similarities appear not only

48 *AXP* 27: κατὰ τὸν θεὸν Παύλου, συμπάθησόν μοι τὸ θηρίον καὶ μή με σκορπίσῃς ἕως οὗ λάβω τὸ βάπτισμα.

in the narrative elements, but also in important ideas regarding chastity, temporality, and eschatology. In both the *APTh* and the *AThom* an encratite vision of material life and its connection with the eternal one is present. Renunciation of marriage, chastity and ascetic behavior during this life represent a way to obtaining the reward of the eternal life after death, a place among the righteous.

The *AXP*, on the other hand, show a very different theological profile, though similar narrative patterns are repeated. As it is rather a hagiographical novel or edifying tale, it borrows many elements from the story of Thecla and uses them to create two portraits of pious women: a converted married woman, who finally will conduct an ascetic life together with her husband, and a young virgin showing a brave attitude towards martyrdom as Thecla does in her Acts. Here the connection with Thecla is more superficial, built only on narrative elements focused on the defiant behavior of both women facing the attacks of the demon or the trials in the arena. Conversion and baptism do not have a clear eschatological goal, but rather a material one, since they only serve as a protection from the evils of this life. From this perspective, it is closer to the protection provided to Thecla by God in the martyrdom scenes of the *APTh*, although there Thecla's ascetic lifestyle aimed at obtaining eternal life and the miracles on her behalf are secondary. In any case, the similarities between Xanthippe and Polyxena and Thecla denote how much the latter was appreciated as a model at the time, especially for portraying pious women, even if in a different context and ideological framework.

Marijana Vuković

Husband as a "Religious Other": Family Discord from Early Christian Apology to Medieval Hagiography

1 Introduction

This essay concentrates on an episode appearing in Christian writings from the earliest days until the late Middle Ages.[1] By episode, I mean a shorter narrative unit within a larger narrative, which describes an event or a few events and is part of a more extensive sequence. The episode, which describes the family discord over religion, where husband and wife do not share the same religious beliefs, materializes in many Christian writings, but not without transformations. The shared episode never stays entirely cemented when moving forward from one context to another. The episode's transformed elements are analyzed with the help of the theoretical perspectives expressed in Alexandra Georgakopoulou's and David Herman's writings, which both contribute to narratology.

To use the words of Alexandra Georgakopoulou, who wrote about "Small Stories, Interaction, and Identities," the episode in the case is present "in a larger history of interactions. It is intertextually linked and available for recontextualization in various local settings."[2] However, it is, first and foremost, "embedded in its immediate discourse surroundings."[3] The primary concern of this essay is the "embeddedness of stories in the immediate discourse surroundings," else named as "discourse contexts or occasions for telling." Such occasions concern the current prompting and motivation for telling a story whose core is otherwise rooted and already familiar in a tradition where the story seeks to belong. Recognizable stories within a specific culture are repeatedly retold for the reasons generated by current matters.

1 This article belongs to the broader research within the frame of the research programme "Retracing Connections: Byzantine Storyworlds in Greek, Arabic, Georgian, and Old Slavonic (c. 950–c. 1100)" (M19 – 0430:1, https://retracingconnections.org), where I have studied the transmission of the Metaphrastic *menologion* into Old Slavonic. I am grateful to the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for the opportunity to conduct this research.

2 Alexandra Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories, Interaction and Identities* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2007), 40.

3 Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories*, 40; David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 5.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110781120-006

Georgakopoulou explains organizing a discourse into a text.[4] She argues that this process enables speakers to lift a text from one context to another, which conditions the iterability of texts. Texts are thus both constructed anew in new contexts (recontextualized) and relationally orientated to their previous contexts of occurrence.[5] In her view, "recontextualization of a narrative through repeated tellings over time leads to mini-tellings and ultimately to condensed quotable forms that can be reworked and stylized."[6]

David Herman, who refers to the work of Georgakopoulou, defines the narrative as a "mode of representation situated in a specific discourse context or occasion for telling."[7] When discussing what he calls "situatedness" – emphasizing that stories are the result of complex transactions involving producers of texts, texts themselves, and interpreters – Herman also asserts that interpreters and readers who seek to use textual hints to reconstruct a storyworld must also deduce about the communicative goals that structured the specific occasions of the telling.[8] The narrative occasions or occasions for telling are, in his definition, communicative environments that shape the interpretation of the acts of narration. Alternatively, they could be contexts shaped by storytelling practices.[9] The contexts give any story its point or reason for telling.[10]

From this theoretical standpoint, I approach the episode of family discord over religion in several Christian writings of diverse periods to analyze its "communicative environments" or "occasions for telling." In the episode, the wife is a Christian, while the husband belongs either to another religious group or does not have religious beliefs. Alternatively, his beliefs are not explicitly stated. In the various writings, the religious discord ranges from milder forms of dispute to conflicts with detrimental consequences, including domestic violence and homicide.

The core of the episode stays unchanged. It is embedded in an already familiar textual situation formulated earlier. Borrowing from already devised textual forms, established genres, and specific subjects was not only not foreign to Christianity. Such intertextuality was desirable. The Christians sought to use generic forms, borrow from authoritative scripts, and reuse quotes from the Bible and other appreciated writings to convey messages. The reuse likely reflects an admi-

4 Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories*, 11.
5 Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories*, 11.
6 Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories*, 11–12.
7 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 9.
8 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 17.
9 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 37.
10 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 74.

ration for previous forms and subjects. It presents a way of looking back at and up to the past.

Reuse, however, usually involves transformation. The episode amplified and elaborated certain content features, reflecting the assumptions about the readers' cultural background and knowledge. While the episode's core was transferred intact, its segments related to "communicative environments" or "occasions for telling" allowed some space to communicate messages of a given time rather than staying cemented. The transformed elements spoke directly to the contemporary audience. These sections were turned towards the present moment and responded to the current preoccupations of their readers. In this way, the episode was both intertextual and contextualized. The transformed worlds in the episode triggered Christian readers to receive various messages in different periods. Moreover, such transformations allowed readers to move from one storyworld to another.[11]

Besides re-emerging in diverse Christian texts of various periods through intertextual borrowing, the episode expectedly re-appeared in rewritings and translations. When translated to another language or rewritten within the same language, the episode obtains novel features in new contexts, surrounded by new communicative environments. The episode's appearance in a novel context of another version of the same narrative, another language, or a different narrative inevitably seeks the transformed elaboration of the "occasions for telling." It is even more so as in the intersectional studies of narratology and translation studies, there exists not only a "narrator's voice" and a "translator's voice," but also, according to some scholars, "the voice of the narrator of the translation."[12]

2 Justin Martyr, *Second Apology for the Christians*

The episode of religious discord appears in Justin Martyr, a second-century apologist and philosopher, or, more precisely, in his *Second Apology for the Christians*, written around 155–160 CE in Rome during the reign of Antoninus Pius.[13] Chapter 2

11 Catherine Slater, "Location, Location, Translation: Mapping Voice in Translated Storyworlds," *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3 (2011): 93–115, 111–12.

12 See, for example, Theo Hermans, "The Translator's Voice in Translated Narrative," *Target* 8/1 (1996): 23–48; Emer O'Sullivan, "Narratology Meets Translation Studies, Or, The Voice of the Translator in Children's Literature," *Meta: journal des traducteurs* (*Meta: Translators' Journal*) 48/1–2 (2003): 197–207, 202.

13 Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 6, 441–470; *The Fathers of the Church* (Saint Justin Martyr: The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks,

unveils an account of three Christians persecuted during Urbicus, an urban prefect between 150–163 in Rome. The episode's opening presents a lengthy side-story about a "woman who lived with an unchaste husband."[14]

Justin stresses that "she too had once been unchaste."[15] However, after learning the doctrines of Christ, "she became a self-controlled person," trying in this way to influence her husband.[16] She explained the Christian teachings to him. She warned him of the eternal punishment by fire reserved for those who live without chastity or right reason.[17] He, however, clung to the same shameful conduct, searching in every way for the means of sensual pleasure contrary to the law of nature. Thus, he lost his wife's affection; she desired a divorce.

Initially, she gave up on the idea of divorce when her friends persuaded her that things might change in the future. Nevertheless, when he went to Alexandria and behaved worse than ever, indulging in all kinds of bodily pleasures, sinful and impious acts, she gave him "a bill of divorce and left him."[18] The woman admitted that she used to behave the same way, engaging with servants and employees and taking pleasure in drunkenness and every wicked action. She, however, discontinued these activities once she learned about the Christian teachings. She wanted her husband to do the same.

Instead of being content that his wife changed her earlier lifestyle and wished him to do the same, the husband decided to bring a charge against her to the emperor, accusing her of being a Christian. He, moreover, brought claims against a man who instructed her in the Christian doctrine.[19] Her Christian instructor and two other men are further condemned to death because they confessed their Christian faith.

In the opening of the *Second Apology*, Justin stated that he aimed to write about "some recent events under Urbicus" and the Christian persecution in general.[20] He specifically targeted people with anti-Christian prejudices, trying to encourage them to change their minds.[21] His work thus has a protreptic purpose—

Discourse to the Greeks, The Monarchy or the Rule of God), trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 115.

14 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 443; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120–22.

15 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120.

16 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120.

17 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120.

18 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 120.

19 *Patrologia Graeca* 6, 444–446; Falls, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, 121.

20 Paul Keresztes, "The 'So-Called' Second Apology of Justin," *Latomus* 24/4 (1965): 858–69, 859; Robert M. Grant, "A Woman of Rome: The Matron in Justin, *2 Apology* 2.1–9," *Church History* 54/4 (1985): 461–72, 461.

21 Keresztes, "The 'So-Called' Second Apology," 859.

to persuade and instruct.[22] However, little attention in the episode is given to the trial, condemnation, and persecution of the three men, surprisingly, considering that Justin announced focusing on these aspects in his narrative.

Robert Grant argued that the martyrdoms of the three men in the story have no direct connection to the episode about the "matron of Rome," which we discuss here.[23] Grant believes she is the narrative protagonist; much focus is on her. On the contrary, Lorraine Buck sees the matron's pagan husband as Justin's main character because he has "a psychological profile of a second-century pagan denouncer."[24] Buck discussed this phenomenon and concluded that the purpose of the text was to address Roman authorities regarding the unjust system of private denouncing, which pagans often used against Christians.

When the text appeared, the pagan and Christian worlds coexisted. The Roman matron's views may have resembled the Stoic morality admired at the time. Some Pythagorean treatises revised and used by Christians recalled similar ideas. However, her fear of eternal fire is fortified by the teachings of Christ assembled in Rome at the time.[25] She is a Christian; if not converted yet, she empathizes with Christians.[26] Her marriage stands in the way of her new lifestyle and Christian convictions. She wishes to reconcile the two: the marriage and her beliefs. Reconciliation may be the best way to comply with both worlds she lives in—the world of the Christian faith and the Roman world, directed by Roman laws, including marriage laws. It may be why she tries to negotiate marriage with her husband. The words of the Apostle Paul from 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 7:13–15) that Christians should remain married to pagan partners, provided some compatibility was left, must have resonated in her mind. The Roman Christian Hermas recommended that Christians stay married to pagans unless adultery or pagan practices ensue.[27] Christianity, at least in its early days, apparently did not insist on radical decisions and actions regarding marriage with the "religious others."

Besides the marriage situation, other narrative aspects reveal further "occasions for telling" of this text. Justin may have been prompted to compose this episode, bearing in mind the issues of morality, chastity, and conversion. Grant like-

22 Keresztes, "The 'So-Called' Second Apology," 860.

23 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 462.

24 Lorraine Buck, "The Pagan Husband in Justin, *2 Apology* 2:1–20," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 53/2 (2002): 541–46, 541–42.

25 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 464–65.

26 Grant is suspicious about whether the woman had been baptized in the story. See Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 462.

27 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 465.

wise considers that Justin is here concerned with the moral situation.[28] Justin and the other prominent authors, such as Musonius and Clement, take a critical stance towards illicit love, slavery of desires, and pleasures. They promote marital self-control and restraint. These were the primary aspects of the "Christian formation" by the mid-second century.[29] Even if Buck is correct that the text's central idea was to talk about pagans denouncing Christians, this idea does not exclude the possibility that the author tackled the issues of morality and chastity. The points of view of both scholars seem relevant for the period, even if we are in closer agreement with Grant that the "matron of Rome" takes the focus of the text due to the moral concerns of the time. The narrative's audience may have focused on some or all these ideas and searched for signals that convey information about the underlined norms and values the Christian community mandated at the time.[30]

3 The *Martyrdom of Anastasia*

Moving further to another example: the *Martyrdom of Anastasia*, a late antique anonymous hagiographical text dating approximately to the fifth century, has a comparable episode of the family religious discord.[31] This martyrdom belongs to the "epic passions," commonly written within a certain timely distance from the Christian persecutions.[32] The term, coined by the Bollandists, implied an amount of freedom in narrating, particularly when it comes to the faithful adherence to the historical record. Various new details were added to these martyrdoms, including miracles. For these reasons, they were often discarded as historical sources, and they remain little studied.

28 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 463.

29 Grant, "A Woman of Rome," 464.

30 Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 69–70.

31 The precise date of the composition of the *Martyrdom of Anastasia* remains uncertain. The discussion of the various hypotheses regarding the dating is summarized by Paola Francesca Moretti. Moretti suggests a composition in the mid-fifth century, while Cécile Lanéry argues for an earlier dating, in the first half of the fifth century. Michael Lapidge suggests the text's dating around 425. See Cécile Lanéry, "Hagiographie d'Italie (300–550) I: Les Passions latines composées en Italie," in *Hagiographies. Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550* V, ed. Guy Philippart (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010): 15–369, 45–60; Michael Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs: Introduction, Translations, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 54–63; Paola Francesca Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae: *Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione* (Roma: Herder, 2006), 1–99, 24–39.

32 Matthieu Pignot, *Cult of Saints*, E02482 – http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E02482.

The text has the Latin and Greek versions preserved. Without examining the complex and unsettled issue of hyper- and hypo-texts (later texts and their earlier versions), we accept Xavier Lequeux's statement that the text initially had its Latin version before it was translated to Greek.[33] It makes the Latin version earlier than the Greek. Both versions pertain to their novel contexts and reach out for further "occasions for telling."

The textual versions in different languages further add to the complicated textual history of the *Martyrdom of Anastasia.* The text was written within a hagiographical cycle merged with several other martyrdoms in Latin. Besides Anastasia's martyrdom (BHL 401), which comes in at the end, the martyrdoms of Chrysogonus (BHL 1795), Agape, Chione, and Eirene (BHL 118), and Theodota and her children (BHL 8093) are also placed in the cyclic narrative.[34] In Lapidge's view, "it is clear that the author of the *passio* stitched together four separate *passiones.*"[35] The text fragmented in the Middle Ages into numerous abbreviated versions and variant recensions.[36] The individual sections of the more extended narrative all have their Greek translations. The Greek *Martyrdom of Anastasia* is preserved together with Agape, Chione, and Eirene (BHG 81–83).[37]

In the Latin episode of our concern, which appears within BHL 1795, Anastasia is described as a daughter of an illustrious senator (*vir illustris*) Praetextatus from Rome, and a wife of a pagan, Publius.[38] Despite being a wealthy aristocrat, she leads a humble life, taking care of the prisoners. She was to be taught by a Christian teacher, Chrysogonus. She is married but enters a conflict with her husband due to their different worldviews:

> Meanwhile, while she was doing all this attentively, and had withdrawn from congress with her husband through feigned illness, it came to the notice of this jealous man that she was

33 Xavier Lequeux, "Latin Hagiographical Literature Translated into Greek," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* 1, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011): 385–400, 386.

34 Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 57.

35 Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 57.

36 Pignot, *Cult of Saints*, E02482.

37 Socii Bolandiani, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1909), 12.

38 Lapidge testifies that this text is preserved in many manuscripts. Two editions of the Latin text are available, one by Delehaye in 1936 and another by Moretti in 2006. Delehaye used two manuscripts to edit the text, while Moretti collated a much higher number of manuscripts, particularly those that were early dated. Lapidge published the translation of the Latin text based on the edition of Moretti. The analysis is here based on the translation of the Latin text by Lapidge. See Hippolyte Delehaye, *Étude sur le légendier romain: Les saints de novembre et de décembre* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1936), 221–49; Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae, 102–87; Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs,* 63–87.

> circulating among the prisons in plebeian attire and was visiting the confessors of God with great diligence. Then, in great indignation, Publius, her husband, appointed such guards over his own household that they would not allow Anastasia access to look out of even one tiny window.[39]

Although Diocletian imprisons him, Chrysogonus keeps secretly exchanging letters with Anastasia. In the correspondence, Anastasia explains that she had been a Christian since childhood. She is married to the pagan Publius but keeps her virginity, pretending to be ill.[40] Desperate because Publius holds her captive and has access to her wealth, but also because she notices that her body gradually betrays her, she asks Chrysogonus to pray for her husband to convert to Christianity or die:

> When this man squandered my patrimony—from which he is made illustrious—through unworthy and foul idolatries, he also committed me, as if I were a wicked sorceress, to such burdensome custody, that I suspect that I am losing my earthly existence. Nothing remains for me except, having given up the ghost, to succumb to death. In such a death, although I would rejoice in the confession of my Lord Jesus Christ, my mind is nevertheless greatly disturbed, because my wealth, all of which I have dedicated to God, down to the last penny, is being used to serve foul purposes alien to God; and therefore I beg you, man of God, that you pray insistently to the Lord, that He either see to it that He allow Publius to live so that he may come to His faith, or if He sees that he is to remain in the perversity of his unbelief, that He bid him to make way for His worshippers. For it is better for him to breathe out his spirit than to deny the Son of God and to hinder those who confess Him.[41]

When Publius takes up a military campaign, he leaves Anastasia imprisoned at home with guards, ordering that she be left to die without food and hoping to seize her wealth upon his return. However, Publius himself dies in the campaign, after which Anastasia is finally free. She sells all her goods and continues to take care of prisoners.

Kate Cooper, Cécile Lanéry, and Michael Lapidge all agreed that much of the narrative cycle containing the *Martyrdom of Anastasia* concentrated on women saints, matrons, and virgins.[42] Lapidge asserted that "this passion was arguably

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39 Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae, 106–8; Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 65.

40 In her letter to Chrysogonus, Anastasia reveals the details of her marriage: "After (my mother's) death, I undertook marriage to a profane husband, whose marriage-bed, through God's mercy, I was able to avoid through a feigned illness" (Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae, 110; Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 66).

41 Moretti, *La* Passio Anastasiae, 110; Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs*, 66.

42 Lapidge, *Roman Martyrs*, 61. See also Kate Cooper, "Of Romance and Mediocritas: Re-reading the Martyr exemplum in the Passio Anastasiae," in *Modelli di santità e modelli di comportamento: Contrasti, intersezioni, complementarità*, eds. Giulia Barone , Marina Caffiero and Francesco Scorza Barcellona (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1994): 107–23, 108–11; Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the*

composed for a circle of Roman matrons interested in ascetic practice which perhaps, like Anastasia, detested their husbands."[43] Anastasia's martyrdom was in a line of martyrdoms with similar subjects, discussing the delicate balance between Christian devotion and marriage. A clash of ideologies existed between the ascetic movement and those who argued for the goodness of marriage: "Marriage required alternative strategies of interpretation since woman bound in marriage had far less opportunity than virgins to accommodate a chosen religious identity."[44] Marriage becomes a spiritual battleground different from those of an ascetic or a martyr. The wife, spiritually superior, is expected to convert her husband. She becomes the instrument of his salvation and the preserver of the ancient Roman notion of *concordia* within the marriage, in charge of preserving conjugal unity.[45]

However, in this narrative, Anastasia does not manage to convert her husband. Two options are in front of her: that he converts to Christianity through her intercession or that he dies. The latter happens to her joy. Thus, even if a conjugal unity, the marriage is less sustainable outside Christianity. The "religious others" are expected to be converted. Between religion and marriage, the matron chooses the former. Elsewhere, Cooper admittedly argued that "a wife's role in a man's religious state was more rhetorical artifice than an accurate reflection of real life."[46] Michele Salzman's study points out that only a few aristocratic women were married to spouses of another religion during late antiquity. In practice, Christians tended to marry within their own community.[47]

Another aspect appears striking from the point of view of the "occasions for telling." Anastasia's wealth and, to an extent, Anastasia's virginity and widowhood are of concern in the text. Her virginity and later widowhood are, naturally, connected to the issue of marriage, elaborated above. The wealth, however, could be singled out as the most prominent feature of the text. Peter Brown argued that

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Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity (Cambridge, Mass. – London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 116–43; Lanéry, "Hagiographie," 58.

43 Lapidge, *Roman Martyrs*, 61.

44 Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 95–97. See also Constance E. McLeese, "Review of *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5/3 (1997): 465–66.

45 McLeese, "Review of *The Virgin and the Bride*," 466.

46 Kate Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): 150–64, 150; see also Geoffrey Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity: The Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 87.

47 Michele R. Salzman, "Aristocratic Women: Conductors of Christianity in the Fourth Century?" *Helios* 16/2 (1989): 207–20.

by the fall of Rome, the church became wealthy beyond measure.[48] His book *Through the Eye of a Needle* presents the vexing problem of wealth in Christianity in the late Roman Empire. Likely, besides the ascetic practices, the "communicative goals" in the text related to the issue of wealth. Even while weakening in prison, Anastasia thought about what would happen with her patrimony. She did not want it to be spent improperly. The text likely instructed the audience—wealthy Christians, or, mainly, wealthy Christian women—what to do with their properties once they decide to retreat from the world.

In the Greek version of the *Martyrdom of Anastasia*, which is dated to the ninth century, the "occasions for telling," at least those related to marriage, transform.[49] Anastasia turns into being forcefully married to her husband by the will of her father. This notion makes her – a would-be martyr – free from responsibility for the marriage that she did not choose by her own will. It transforms her at the same time into a less erring character and more of a martyr character, as she is forced into something she did not want: "And now, she does not openly profess (her) beliefs, given in marriage involuntarily from the side of her father to the Greek (pagan) man by the name of Publius, attempting, as it is said, to mix those things which cannot be mixed."[50]

Unlike in the Latin version, where she weakens in prison and slowly withers, Anastasia becomes more confident standing up to her husband. She informs Chrysogonus that she will leave her husband.[51] She begs Chrysogonus to pray for her so that she can escape from the husband and start taking care of the would-be martyrs in prisons. Anastasia comes closer to the idea of a divorce or a separation than dying in the Greek version. Moreover, the Greek text does not insist on the husband's conversion as much as on the wife's liberation from the marital bonds. Her attitude towards her martyrdom, marriage, her husband's conversion, and the limits of her body is transformed in the Greek version. She approaches the idea of entering into open confrontation with "religious others," specifically her husband. The translated text introduces fresh features that corroborate novel "oc-

48 Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

49 Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 116, 573–609. For the dating, see Basil Lourié, "The Legend of Anastasia the Widow Translated into Georgian from Arabic and Its Byzantine Vorlage," in *Петербургская эфиопистика. Памяти Севира Борисовича Чернецова. К 75-летию со дня рождения*, eds. A. Yu. Zheltov and S. A. Frantsouzoff (St. Petersburg: МАЭ РАН, 2019): 214–34, 214.

50 *Patrologia graeca* 116, 576: Καὶ νῦν μὲν οὐ παῤῥησιάζεται τὴν εὐσέβειαν, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἄκουσα πρὸς γάμον ἀνδρὶ Ἕλληνι ἐκδοθεῖσα, Ποπλίῳ τοὔνομα, πειρωμένου μιγνύειν, τὸ τοῦ λόγου, τὰ ἄμικτα. The Greek translated excerpts of this text are mine.

51 *Patrologia graeca* 116, 576: Ταῦτα τῷ Χρυσογόνῳ σημήνασα τελευταῖον καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀποδημίαν γνωρίζει.

casions for telling," which are related and relevant to the ninth-century Byzantine contexts.

4 The *Life of Monegundis*

Further, in the sixth-century Latin Gaul, Gregory of Tours, the prominent bishop and author of hagiography, wrote the *Life of Monegundis* in Book 19 of his *Life of the Fathers*.[52] It is a collection of twenty Lives of the sixth-century Gallic saints, mainly Gregory's contemporaries, with a focus on their exemplary behavior. These saints have earned their sainthood by the merits of their earthly activities and whereabouts. Gregory's work at first appears to be mainly didactic in purpose. It aims to teach the proper way to lead a fulfilling Christian life and "to encourage the minds of listeners to follow saints' examples."[53]

Gregory also intended to show that sainthood and saintly actions were not a matter of the past but very much of the moment in which they lived. Thus, the focus in these texts is on contemporary saints. Most of the saints acted within the two dioceses with which Gregory was most familiar: his native Clermont and Tours, the city of his episcopate. Through this work, Gregory promoted his two dioceses and possibly attracted visitors to the holy places within them.[54]

The *Life of Monegundis* is a single Life of a female saint in the collection. Monegundis was a woman from Chartres who was married and had two daughters. They both died when they were very young. Mourning them, she enclosed herself in a room of her house. Withdrawing from the world, she devoted herself to God, becoming a rigorous ascetic, often staying without food and water. She also withdrew from her husband: "There (in her room), despising the vanities of the world and having nothing more to do with her husband, she devoted herself entirely to God."[55] Her servant left her because of her strict asceticism.

To "avoid the trap of vainglory," she left her husband and went to the Basilica of St. Martin in Tours.[56] Her husband, hearing of her growing reputation for sanc-

52 Bruno Krusch, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum. Gregorii Turonensis Opera* I.2: Miracula et opera minora (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1885), 736–41. For the translations, see *Gregory of Tours: Life of the Fathers*, trans. Edward James (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), 118–25; *Gregory of Tours: Lives and Miracles*, ed. and trans. Giselle de Nie (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

53 James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, xiv.

54 James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, xiv.

55 Krusch, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 736; James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, 119.

56 Krusch, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 737–38; James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, 120.

tity, took her back home to live in her old cell. However, she returned to Tours and, thanks to St. Martin, stayed there untroubled by her husband.

Her husband's religious beliefs are not revealed. He appears to be against her rigorous asceticism and devotion, as well as her newly acquired reputation. On the other hand, her devotion to God appears to be a justification for her independence from her husband's authority. Besides her unquestionable asceticism and exemplary Christian behavior, the text does not refrain from suggesting the betrayal of marital bonds and the transition from the husband's authority to the authority of a male saint if necessary.

Gregory elaborates on Monegundis' rigorous asceticism and the ways of survival without food and sometimes water. At home, as well as in the convent, Monegundis does all that she should do as an exemplary saint: she spends the days and nights in prayers, fasts, and vigils.[57] Gregory extensively promoted her healing miracles. This aspect is particularly prominent in the last section of the text, in which she healed many people during her stay in the convent. The "occasions for telling" of Gregory of Tours are here prompted by the idea of promoting the area, particularly the place where Monegundis stayed, as the holy site, a place of medicinal tourism, which supplies aid for those in need. The successful stories of Monegundis' healing attracted many who were needy to seek their cure in this area.

5 The *Martyrdom of Shushanik*

Another example of family discord, the *Martyrdom of Shushanik*, an original Georgian fifth-century hagiography, describes an Armenian noblewoman, Shushanik, who dies by the hand of her spouse, Varsken.[58] The husband, previously Christian, renounced Christianity and embraced Zoroastrianism.[59] The text exists in several versions in Georgian and Armenian. Its original is attributed to Jacob of Tsurtav, a fifth-century religious writer and a priest, apparently a witness of the event.

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57 Krusch, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 738; James, trans., *Gregory of Tours*, 121.

58 For the dating of the text, see Stephen H. Rapp Jr, *The Sasanian World Through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 37. Rapp here elaborates on the idea that the *Martyrdom of Shushanik* was, over time, adjusted by scribes to be in accord with the theological views of the time.

59 For the text, see Iakob C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," in *Dzveli hagiograpiuli literaturis dzeglebi* I [Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature I], ed. Ilia Abuladze (Tbilisi: Mecniereba, 1963): 11–29; as for translation, see David Marshall Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints* (London: Mowbrays, 1976), 44–56. See also Margit Bíró, "Shushanik's Georgian Vita," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38/1–2 (1984): 187–200; Rapp Jr, *The Sasanian World*, 33–105.

The "episode" here stretches almost to the entire narrative in a sequence of events where Shushanik and her husband encounter each other to her demise. Varsken had renounced Christianity after visiting the royal court of Persia, where he submitted himself willingly to Zoroastrianism. Moreover, he promised the Iranian Shah that he would convert his wife and children to the same religion upon his return.[60] When he returned home, he learned that Shushanik had left their house for fear of him. On the other side, she hides, spending her days and nights without food or rest, crying, and praying. She hopes to convert her husband back to Christianity, but on the outside, she does not act in any way other than praying.[61] She admits: "I had imagined that I could convert him to my faith so that he would acknowledge the True God."[62] She knows that when they meet for the first time, she should be "resolved in her heart to meet her death."[63]

When they finally meet, he is severely violent towards her. He first utters insults and kicks her.[64] Then he crashes an iron stick on her head and injures her eyes. He strikes her face with his fists, drags her by the hair, and beats her severely. No part of her body remains untouched by the beating. He leaves her wounded to lie in the prison of his palace, thinking that she may be dead. Shushanik takes a long time to recover due to the wounds and severe swelling. She nevertheless recovered and was liberated from the prison of her husband.

He, however, did not leave her alone. When he meets her on a second occasion, in a church, he grabs her by the hair and drags her outside. He takes her to his house through thorns and stumbling blocks, stones, and bushes.[65] Her entire body is torn to pieces, as the terrain is rough. Her blood forms a path, not just by leaving traces on the ground but by saturating it entirely. Varsken keeps her in prison in iron fetters and chains, surrounded by guards. He performs these acts of torture in an attempt to convert her. Nevertheless, he does not persuade Shushanik to convert to Zoroastrianism either by violence or by treathening and convincing. She spent six years in prison with affliction, starvation, thirst, and distress, dying in the seventh year.

The husband's violence towards the wife must affect the readers in this narrative. Beyond the considerations of the possibility that such violence could have

60 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 11–12; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 45.
61 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 15; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 45.
62 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 15; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 48.
63 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 16; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 49.
64 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 17; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 49.
65 C'urtaveli, "C'amebai C'midisa Šušanikisi Dedoplisai," 19–20; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 52.

been performed between spouses,[66] as well as beyond the possibility of the story's historicity,[67] readers must be considering the messages that the narrative sends about Zoroastrianism, "otherness," and inter-religious marriage, specifically within late antique Georgia, and with the "religious others" who are of the Zoroastrian religion. Georgia has been converted to Christianity since the fourth century. It is known that the appearance of Zoroastrian Sasanians became a source of problems for the Christians. The text identifies the local agents of the Sasanians as the immediate threat to early medieval Caucasia.[68] The ultimate acts of violence in the text, as the "communicative environments" that veil the episode of the family discord, make a strong point about these life-threatening consequences of a marriage or any involvement with the followers of the Zoroastrian religion. The text's atrocities are directly proportionate to the horror of engaging with "religious others" in the eyes of the Christians of Georgia at the time.

6 The *Martyrdom of Panteleimon*

For the rest of the article, I wish to reflect on another example, the *Martyrdom of Panteleimon* (BHG 1414), a metaphrastic Greek hagiography about a physician and healer who suffered in 305 CE. The metaphrastic Greek version is rewritten based on an earlier, pre-metaphrastic version, which was probably written during late antiquity (fourth–ninth century).[69] The metaphrastic version, included in the well-known Metaphrastic *menologion*, reworked by Symeon Metaphrastes, appeared first in the eleventh-century manuscripts. Thus, the story, written approximately at the beginning of the fourth century, transformed from the pre-metaphrastic to the metaphrastic version. Further, when the metaphrastic text was translated into Old Slavonic and found its way into the late medieval South Slavic manuscripts (the earliest dated to the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries), the new contexts again imposed reformulated "occasions for telling."

66 This idea has led some Georgian scholars to inquire into the legal basis of such conduct in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. According to Georgian law, most of them agree that such an act would be considered a crime. See Medea Matiashvili, "Homicide of Wife-Husband in the Old Georgian Law," *Journal of Law* 1 (2016): 5–21; Zurab Targamadze, "Social and Legal Status of Women in Medieval Georgia," *International Journal of Culture and History* 3/1 (2017): 72–79.

67 This issue is referred to in Rapp Jr, *The Sasanian World*, 43.

68 Rapp Jr, *The Sasanian World*, 38.

69 Pinakes, Textes et manuscrits grecs, "Panteleemon m. Nicomediae, Passio," 28/01/2022 https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/oeuvre/17424/

In the episode, mentioned only in passing, Panteleimon's parents are of a different religion: his mother is a Christian, and his father is a pagan. In the pre-metaphrastic version, the text's opening mainly focuses on the father, Eustorgios, a senator in Nicomedia, and it hardly refers to the mother. She had previously died, and his father took care of the saint's medical education, sending him to the official physician of the court to study medicine:

> There was a senator named Eustorgios in the city of Nicomedia. He had an only-begotten son named Panteleimon, whom he handed over to study the finest letters to an official physician of the court, certain Euphrosynos, who healed those at the court from complicated and different diseases. Accepting Panteleimon, this one taught him medicinal lessons, and he constantly returned with him to the palace. Those at the palace and the influential men of the king, watching Panteleimon, said to Euphrosynos: "Whose son is this young man?" Panteleimon was exceedingly pretty by appearance and in good shape, and you could not find anybody at the court similar to him. Euphrosynos said: "He is the son of Eustorgios the senator, who, when his mother Euboule died, handed him over to me to teach him medicine.[70]

The metaphrastic version turns the attention from the father to the mother. Panteleimon's father is, from the outset, depicted as impious due to his pagan beliefs. On the contrary, his mother is described as faithful and very different from her husband in terms of her faith. The father is referred to as "her husband." The mother takes all the credit for the son's upbringing in this section of the text:

> He is called Panteleimon, the son of Eustorgios, illustrious for his life and even more prominent for his impiety. He respected the Greek (pagan) faith and had a burning zeal for it. His mother was faithful and positioned diametrically opposite to her husband in matters of faith. Her name was Euboule, and she had the manners of a Christian. The fine boy, bred by such a mother and a teacher, was deprived at once of her bodily and spiritual nourishment by the law of death and and the common nature at his immature and imperfect age.[71]

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70 Vladimir V. Latyšev, "ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΔΟΞΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΠΑΝΤΕΛΕΗΜΟΝΟΣ," in *HAGIOGRAPHICA GRAECA INEDITA* XII, ed. Vladimir V. Latyšev (St Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1914): 40–75, 40: Ἦν δέ τις ἐν τῇ πόλει Νικομηδείᾳ συγκλητικὸς ὀνόματι Εὐστόργιος. Οὗτος εἶχεν υἱὸν μονογενῆ ὀνόματι Παντολέοντα, ὃν καὶ παιδεύσας τὰ κάλλιστα γράμματα παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ἀρχιατρῷ τινι ὀνόματι Εὐφροσύνῳ, ὃς τοὺς ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ποικίλαις καὶ διαφόροις νόσοις ἐξεταζομένους ἐθεράπευεν. Οὗτος παραλαβὼν τὸν Παντολέοντα ἐδίδασκε τὰ τῆς ἰατρικῆς μαθήματα καὶ συνεχῶς ἀπῄει σὺν αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ. Οἱ δὲ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ὄντες καὶ οἱ μεγιστᾶνες τοῦ βασιλέως θεωροῦντες τὸν Παντολέοντα ἔλεγον τῷ Εὐφροσύνῳ. "Τίνος υἱός ἐστιν ὁ νεανίας οὗτος;" Ἦν γὰρ ὁ Παντολέων σφόδρα ὡραῖος τῇ ὄψει καὶ καλὸς τῷ εἴδει, ὡς μηδένα εὑρίσκεσθαι ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ὅμοιον αὐτοῦ. Ὁ δὲ Εὐφρόσυνος ἔφη. "Εὐστοργίου υἱός ἐστι τοῦ συγκλητικοῦ, οὗ ἡ μήτηρ Εὐβούλη τετελεύτηκεν, παρέδωκεν δὲ αὐτὸν ἐμοὶ μανθάνειν τὰ τῆς ἰατρικῆς. The translations of this text are mine.

71 Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 115, 448–477, 448: Παντολέων μὲν καλούμενος, υἱὸς δὲ ὢν Εὐστοργίου, ἐπιφανοῦς τὸν βίον, ἐπιφανεστέρου πολλῷ τὴν ἀσέβειαν. Τὰ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων

Further in the story, Panteleimon again mentions the parents. In the pre-metaphrastic version, Panteleimon describes the parents in a neutral tone:

> "I am the son of Eustorgios senator and the mother, Euboule, whose time has come to an end." The priest said: "Of which religion were they?" Panteleimon answered: "The mother, Christian, died, and the father, Greek, lives until now." The priest said: "And whose side did you belong to, that of the mother or the father?" Panteleimon said: "When she was still alive, my mother wished me to be among hers. My father disagreed. He wished me to be a soldier for the court. I wished more to be with my mother. When she died, my father took me with him."[72]

When asked who his parents were in the metaphrastic version, Panteleimon says that his mother died as a Christian, while "the father is dead, while living," because of his pagan beliefs:

> And Panteleimon immediately said everything according to the truth, and how his mother died when she was already Christian, and father is dead while living, by partaking the Greek religion. And then the priest asked: And you, nice boy, he said, whose side do you prefer, and you respect more? And Panteleimon said: My mother, he said, when she was still alive, advised me to join hers, which I wished myself. And the father, who even now has a greater strength forces me to devote myself to his religion.[73]

The specific detail, characterizing those of a different religion as "living dead," is fascinating regarding the "occasions for telling." When this episode was translated

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σεβόμενος ἦν καὶ θερμὸν ἔχων περὶ ταῦτα τὸν ζῆλον. Μήτηρ δὲ ἐκείνῳ πιστὴ, καὶ ὅσα περὶ τὸ σὲβας, ἐκ διαμέτρου πρὸς τὸν αὐτῆς ἄνδρα διακειμένη εὐβούλως τε ἡ Εὐβούλη (τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτῇ ὄνομα) πρὸς τὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἔχουσα. Ὑπὸ τοιαύτῃ τοίνυν μητρὶ καὶ διδασκάλῳ ὁ ἀγαθὸς τρεφόμενος παῖς τὴν σωματικὴν ἅμα τροφήν τε καὶ τὴν πνευματικὴν ἀποστερεῖται ταύτης νόμῳ θανάτου καὶ τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως, ἀτελῆ ἔτι καὶ ἄωρον ἄγων τὴν ἡλικίαν.

72 Latyšev, "MAPTYPION," 41: "Υἱὸς μέν εἰμι Εὐστοργίου τοῦ συγκλητικοῦ, μητρὸς δὲ Εὐβούλης, ἥτις χρόνον ἔχει τελευτήσασα." ὁ δὲ πρεσβύτερος ἔφη. "Ποίας θρησκείας ἦσαν;" Καὶ ὁ Παντολέων εἶπεν. "Ἡ μὲν μήτηρ μου χριστιανὴ ἐτελεύτησεν, ὁ δὲ πατὴρ Ἕλλην ὑπάρχει ἄχρι τῆς δεῦρο." καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἔφη. "Αὐτὸς δὲ ποίου μέρους τυγχάνεις, κατὰ τὸν πατέρα ἢ κατὰ τὴν μητέρα"; Παντολέων εἶπεν. "Ἔτι ζῶσα ἡ μήτηρ μου ἐβούλετό με ἔχειν μεθ' ἑαυτῆς. Ὁ δὲ πατήρ μου οὐ συνεχώρει, βουλόμενός με ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ στρατεῦσαι. Ἐγὼ δὲ μᾶλλον σὺν τῇ μητρί μου ἐβουλόμην εἶναι. Τελευτησάσης δὲ αὐτῆς ὁ πατήρ μου πρὸς ἑαυτόν με προσελάβετο."

73 *Patrologia graeca* 115, 449: Καὶ ὁ Παντολέων εὐθὺς ἅπαντα πρὸς ἀλήθειαν καταλέγει, καὶ ὡς ἡ μὲν μήτηρ ἀποθάνοι ἤδη τὰ Χριστιανῶν σεβουμένη, ὁ πατὴρ δὲ ζῶν τέθνηκε τὴν Ἑλλήνων μετιὼν θρησκείαν. Εἶτα ὁ πρεσβύτης προσθείς. Αὐτὸς δὲ, παῖ καλὲ, ἔφη, τίνος μέρους εἶναι βούλει καὶ ποτέρου σεβάσματος: Καὶ ὁ Παντολέων. Ἡ μὲν μήτηρ, εἶπεν, ἔτι περιοῦσα τοῖς αὐτοῖς με συνθέσθαι παρήνει, ὅπερ δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς ἠβουλόμην. Ὁ δὲ πατὴρ ἅτε καὶ μείζονα τὴν ἰσχὺν ἔχων, τῇ αὐτοῦ προσέχειν ἀναγκάζει θρησκείᾳ.

into Old Slavonic,[74] appearing in a fourteenth–fifteenth-century manuscript, the line about the father, says: "And my father dies alive by conducting the Hellenic service."[75] Although the nuance in meaning from "dead while living" to "dies alive" is possibly minor, it nevertheless underlines that his father is still alive in the Old Slavonic version, while he is dead in the metaphrastic Greek text. The different shades of meaning in Greek may be influenced by the Greek perfect, τέθνηκε, which reflects on the present condition of the past action. The Old Slavonic verb form of the present tense does not have the same power (although it could have been intended to imitate), and the action stays in the present.

Thus, the "occasions for telling" transformed when the text transitioned from the late antique pre-metaphrastic to the metaphrastic, late tenth-century version, and from the latter version to its translation in Old Slavonic, recorded in a fourteenth–fifteenth-century manuscript. The transition brought in the emphasized role of the Christian mother as a likeness to the growing importance of the Virgin Mary in Byzantium. More importantly for the subject of this essay, the pagan beliefs of Panteleimon's father are, in the metaphrastic and Old Slavonic versions, equalized to death.

7 Concluding Remarks

Naturally, the pagan beliefs are observed through the lens of a specific timely distance. These are the contemporary views towards the things past, towards the issues long overcome. The medieval versions, rewritings, and translations could not handle the issue of inter-religious marriage in the same way as early Christian or late antique texts. The episode did not change its core; nevertheless, the "communicative environments" could not be expressed in the same way as in the previous periods. The medieval versions had no tolerance for such religious compromise between spouses; this issue was no longer considered. When it comes to "religious others," be they husbands or parents, they are considered "the living dead."

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74 This text first appears in the Old Slavonic manuscript PAH152, dated to the fourteenth-fifteenth century, and kept in the monastery Neamț, located in north-eastern Romania, built in the fifteenth century. The manuscript is, according to Ivanova, copied in Athos or eastern Bulgaria and brought to the monastery Neamț later: Klimentina Ivanova, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica* (Sofia: Profesor Marin Drinov Publishing House, 2008), 113–15.

75 Old Slavonic manuscript PAH152 (Romanian Academy of Sciences, Bucharest), fol. 255v–256r: "Ѡц҃ь же мо́и жи́вь оумр҃ѣтъ, ѥ҆ллиньскоую бо прохо́дитъ слоу́жбоу." I wish to express my gratitude to the Romanian Academy of Sciences, Bucharest, especially to Dr. Andrei Timotin and Dr. Mihail Mitrea, for their support in obtaining this manuscript.

In Christian literary history, these and similar examples were not rare. As I argued, the motivation for their emergence and reiteration was rooted in the generic expression of their beliefs. Christians were fond of reprised forms and core episodes, such as the episode of religious discord, which circulated abundantly among many Christian communities without linguistic or territorial barriers. However, the examples teach us that, besides the intertextual component that Christian texts bore, the room was also provided for the various "occasions for telling." The latter textual segments were more important because, besides the respect for things past, there were always burning issues within the Christian communities that the texts needed to address. Their task was to speak directly to their contemporary audience.

Christian Høgel

The Metaphrastic Female Saint: Time and Temporality in Rewritten Lives of Women Saints

1 Introduction

In the collection of rewritten hagiography, known as the Metaphrastic *menologion* and produced by Symeon Metaphrastes towards the end of the tenth century, female saints appear quite visibly. Eighteen out of the total of 148 Lives found in the collection deal with only female saints (either alone or in groups; to which may be added six Lives in which a woman appears as protagonist in pair with a man).[1] And of the eighteen Lives of women, six appear already in the month of September, the beginning of the church year, as if to stress the theme and existence of female sanctity right from the start, in a world otherwise dominated by male sanctity and male protagonists (and by men in all narratives). The redactor of the Metaphrastic *menologion*, Symeon Metaphrastes (active around 980 in Constantinople), did of course not have a free choice in these things since he was following established ideas of sanctity and more or less canonized lists of saints in calendars and earlier *menologia.*[2] In general, he followed these in terms of female sanctity but, as we shall see, his manner of rewriting took a different course, often leading to even more male dominance and lesser free agency for female saints. Female saints were in all (Greek) hagiography quite strongly set apart from male counterparts, with gender issues coming up in most prologues to Lives of female saints.[3] And perhaps most clearly do we see these gender issues turning up in

1 The Metaphrastic Lives with female protagonist(s) are: Menodora, Metrodora, Nymphodora, Sept 10; Theodora, Sept 11; Euphemia, Sept 16; Sophia, Pistis, Elpis & Agape, Sept 17; Thekla, Sept 24; Euphrosyne, Sept 25; Charitine, Oct 4; Anastasia of Rome, Oct 28; Matrona, Nov 9; Theoktiste, Nov 10; Aeikaterine, Nov 24; Barbara, Dec 4; Juliane, Dec 21; Anastasia pharmakolytria, Dec 22; Eugenia, Dec 24; Melane of Rome, Dec 31; Eusebia/Xenia, Jan 24; Maria of Egypt, Apr 1; Koimesis, Aug 15. Metaphrastic Lives with protagonist female saints in pair with male: Kyprianos & Iustina, Oct 2; Eulampios & Eulampia, Oct 10; Abramios & Maria, Oct 29; Zenobios & Zenobia, Oct 30; Galaktion & Episteme, Nov 5; Indes & Domna, Dec 28. M19-0430:1.

2 On Symeon Metaphrastes and canonicity in Greek hagiography, see Christian Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2002), 20–60.

3 See e.g. Alice-Mary Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996).

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the Lives of cross-dressers (a modern term), i. e. female saints that for some reason (often to escape a possessive or violent husband) dressed up as men and—in most cases—went to live as men or eunuchs in a male monastery. Cross-dressers have attracted much interest in recent scholarship.[4] It is some of these Lives that will be studied here, primarily comparing old and Metaphrastic versions.

Of the eighteen female saints appearing as protagonists in Metaphrastic Lives, no less than five were cross-dressers: Theodora (September 11), Euphemia (September 16), Euphrosyne (September 25), Matrona (November 9), and Eugenia (December 24). As we see from their feast days (and thus their place of appearance in the Metaphrastic *menologion*, with full texts appearing in chronological order, beginning with September 1, the beginning of the Byzantine church year), three of these five cross-dressers come already in the month of September, i. e. in the first volume of the *menologion.* We cannot know for sure that Symeon had special intentions with this first volume, but since this first volume is by far best represented by extant manuscripts, it seems to have been the one most copied and presumably read. Symeon could have counted on this, and his preference for cross-dressers may, therefore, have been a conscious, or at least an uncomplicated, choice.

In terms of types of sainthood, Symeon Metaphrastes seems to have been a quite conservative hagiographer. His intent was hardly to change the protagonists and themes of Greek hagiography, the narrative flow or the theological outlook. His main aim in rewriting old Lives and inserting them into his *menologion* was stylistic. The texts that were to appear in his collection should in vocabulary and grammar resemble the high-style Greek employed in any serious writing in the Byzantine world. Only the inclusion of scenes from other (historical) sources would make Metaphrastic Lives take in additional scenes or passages when compared with the old narratives, just as occasional details from these could be skipped on the way, whenever Symeon Metaphrastes found the information unnecessary

4 John Anson, "The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism: The Origin and Development of a Motif," *Viator* 5 (1974): 1–32; Stephen J. Davis, "Crossed Texts, Crossed Sex: Intertextuality and Gender in Early Christian Legends of Holy Women Disguised as Men," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10/1 (2002): 1–36; Stavroula Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances: Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2005); Julie van Pelt, "Thecla, the First Cross-Dresser? The Acts of Paul and Thecla and the Lives of Byzantine Transvestite Saints," in *Thecla and Medieval Sainthood: The* Acts of Paul and Thecla *in Eastern and Western Hagiography*, eds. Ghazzal Dabiri and Flavia Ruani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022): 197–232.

or unwanted.[5] Therefore, the main course of the stories would, in a new linguistic style, run their well-known paths, perhaps also in compliance with expectations from readers and listeners who knew the old versions well enough to find fault with new turns that dramatically deviated from the known. But with style came also other modifications. The stylistic elevation also implied unification of expression or narratorial voice of the Lives. The Metaphrastic narrator acquired a specific tone, controlling more of the narration through elaborated prologues and, especially through rhetorical questions and exclamations.[6] Also, his frequent conversion of direct speech into indirect speech would in many cases have the same effect of confirming the narrator's control of the story. As we shall see, this control would in the case of Lives of female saints specifically underline the male character of his narration.

In the following analysis, three Lives of cross-dressers will be analysed: the *Life of Matrona,* the *Life of Theodora*, and the *Life Euphrosyne,* holding the old version up against the rewritten Metaphrastic version.[7] It will be noted what Symeon Metaphrastes added, subtracted, or changed that makes real impact on the story and on gender issues.

2 From the Earlobes of Matrona to the Issue of Female Agency

A scene from the *Life of Matrona*, in both the old and the Metaphrastic versions, will show us something about Symeon Metaphrastes's rewriting technique and his preferences for leaving out certain details. The scene comes early in the Life, when

5 Wolfgang Lackner, "Zu Editionsgeschichte, Textgestalt und Quellen der Passio S. Polyeucti des Symeon Metaphrastes," in *Byzantios. Festschrift für Herbert Hunger zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. Wolfram Hörandner, Johannes Koder, Otto Kresten, and Erich Trapp (Wien: Ernst Becvar, 1984): 221–31.
6 Henrik Zilliacus, "Zur stilistischen Umarbeitungstechnik des Symeon Metaphrastes," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938): 333–50; Elisabeth Peyr, "Zur Umarbeitung rhetorischer Texte durch Symeon Metaphrastes," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 42 (1992): 143–55.
7 Matrona: *VMatr* (BHG 1221, old Life): *Acta Sanctorum Novembris III* (Bruxelles, 1910), 790–813; *VMatrMet* (BHG 1222, Metaphrastic Life): Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 116, 920–953. Theodora: *VTheod* (BHG 1727, old Life): Karl Wessely, ed., "Die Vita S. Theodorae," in *Fünfzehnter Jahresbericht des K. K. Staatsgymnasiums in Hernals*, ed. Georg Kotek (Vienna: Verlag des K.K. Staatsgymnasiums in Hernals, 1889): 24–48 (version on top of pages); *VTheodMet* (BHG 1730, Metaphrastic Life): Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 115, 665–689. Euphrosyne: *VEuphr* (BHG 625, old Life): Anatole Boucherie, ed., "Vita Sanctae Euphrosynae," *Analecta Bollandiana* 2 (1883): 196–205; *VEuphrMet* (BHG 626, Metaphrastic Life): Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca* 114, 305–321.

Matrona has dressed up as a eunuch and now lives in a male monastery under the male name of Babylas to avoid her violent husband. Her constant fear of having her identity revealed is wonderfully depicted (in both the old and Metaphrastic versions) in a scene where she is working in the kitchen garden of the monastery. A monk, Barnabas, is standing next to her, and the narrator tells us that this Barnabas will later become abbot of the monastery, but at this point he is just an ordinary monk, who has recently entered the monastery after having worked on the stage, it seems.[8] Both texts describe how this Barnabas loses focus on the work he is supposed to do, and noticing that Matrona (or to him Babylas) has both her (his) earlobes pierced, he asks why. Matrona is caught a bit off guard, but soon replies that in her former life a woman who fancied her/him had done this in order to give her/him golden earrings to wear. The old Life here adds that this even made her look like a girl. The scene then makes Matrona recall the words by her spiritual guide Eugenia on the difficulties of hiding as a woman in a male monastery:

VMatr 4 – 5	**VMatrMet 7**
Ἔστι δὲ τὸ **συμβὰν** τοιούτον. **Κήπος** ὑπάρχει ἄχρι καὶ σήμερον τοῖς τοῦ μακαρίου καὶ ὁσίου Βασιανοῦ μαθηταῖς. Ἐν τούτῳ περὶ τὴν **ἐργασίαν** τῆς γῆς καταγονιμένη ἡ μακαρία Ματρῶνα, ὡς ἔθος ἐστὶ **μοναχοῖς**, καὶ τῷ σὺν αὐτῇ **ἐργαζομένῳ προθυμότερον** φερομένη – ἦν δὲ **Βαρνάβας** ἐκεῖνος ὁ θαυμάσιος, ὁ τῆς αὐτῆς μονῆς μετὰ χρόνον **ἡγησάμενος**, τὸν βίον μέν ποτε τὸν ἐπὶ **σκηνῆς** ἐσχηκώς, τότε δὲ τὸν ὅμοιον αὐτῆς τρόπον ἐλόμενος καὶ περὶ τὴν εὐσέβειαν προθυμούμενος, – ἔπαθεν τι **ἀνθρώπινον**, ἅτε δὴ τοῦ ματαίου προσφάτως καὶ περιέργου βίου ἀποστάς. Καί φησι πρὸς αὐτὴν χαριέντως· “**Πόθεν, ὦ ἀδελφέ,** τετρύπηνται **ἀμφοτέρων τῶν ὤτων** σου **οἱ λοβοί**;” **Ἡ** δὲ **μακαρία** Ματρῶνα **συντόμως** ἀποκριθεῖσα εἶπεν· “**Πέπονθας, ὦ ἀδελφέ, περίεργόν** τι καὶ τοῦ **ἐπαγγέλματος ἡμῶν ἀλλότριον**, **δέον** σε **τῇ γῇ προσέχειν** ἢ ἐμοί· **πλὴν** ἐπειδὴ περὶ τοῦτο ἐπῆλθέν σοι μαθεῖν, ἄκουε. Ἡ πάλαι με **κτησαμένη φιλοστόργως** περὶ ἐμὲ διακειμένη διὰ πάσης ἦγεν εὐθυμίας καὶ τρυφῆς, ὡς καὶ	Κατά τινα γὰρ χρόνον οὕτω **συμβὰν** περὶ τὴν ἐκείσε τυγχάνουσαν **κηπεύσιμον ἐργασίαν** συμπονούσῃ καὶ τοῖς **μοναχοῖς** τοῦ ἔργου τε **προθυμότερον** ἐχομένῃ καὶ σὺν ἐκείνῃ λαχὼν **ἐργάζεσθαι** μοναχός, **Βαρνάβας** αὐτῷ ὄνομα, ***περιεργότερον*** ἐπιβαλὼν τὴν ὄψιν αὐτῇ, ἅτε πρὸ μικροῦ τῷ τῶν μοναχῶν βίῳ ἀπὸ τῆς **σκηνῆς** προσελθών, κἂν εἰς ὕστερον προκόψας εἰς ἀρετὴν καὶ τὸ **καθηγεῖσθαι** τῶν μοναχῶν ἐπιστεύθη, ἡρώτα εἰπεῖν, **πόθεν ἀμφοτέρων τῶν ὤτων** ταύτῃ τέτρηνται **οἱ λοβοί.** **Ἡ μακαρία** δὲ **σύντομον** ὁμοῦ καὶ λελογισμένην τὴν ἀπόκρισιν ἀπεδίδου· “**Πέπονθας, ἀδελφέ**, λέγουσα, ***ἀνθρώπινον*** μὲν, τοῦ καθ᾽ **ἡμᾶς** δὲ **ἀλλότριον ἐπαγγέλματος· τῇ γῇ** γὰρ **δέον προσέχειν** ἢ ὅψεις ἀνθρωπίνας ***περιεργάζεσθαι***. **Πλὴν** ἀλλὰ καὶ οὕτω τὴν λύσιν μάνθανε τοῦ ζητήματος· ἡ γὰρ ἐμὲ πρότερον σχοῦσα καὶ θρεψαμένη **φιλόστοργόν** τινα πρός με ***κεκτημένη*** διάθεσιν ἐφιλοτιμήσατό μου και **χρυσᾶ** κόσμια τοῖς **ὠσὶν** ἐμβαλεῖν.” **Οὕτως** ἡ μακαρία τὸν μοναχὸν σοφῇ περινοίᾳ **τῆς ὑπονοίας ἀπήγαγεν.** Αὐτὴν δὲ

8 Though σκήνη means “hut” or “scene,” the latter is here to be preferred, I believe, since there seems to be no use of the word as denoting a monastic hut or such. Furthermore, ἐπὶ/ἀπὸ σκηνῆς according to the LSJ expresses things on or from the stage.

Continued

VMatr 4–5	VMatrMet 7
χρυσίον οὐκ ὀκνῆσαι περιθεῖναί μοι κατὰ τῶν **ὤτων**, ὥστε πολλοὺς τῶν ὁρώντων με λέγειν ὅτι κοράσιόν εστιν." Καὶ **οὕτως** μὲν ἡ ὁσία Ματρῶνα τὸν μακάριον καὶ ὅσιον Βαρνάβαν **τῆς ὑπονοίας ἀπήγαγεν**, εἰς ἀγῶνα δὲ καὶ τάραχον οὐ τὸν τυχόντα ἐκ τούτου καθίστατο, εἰς πολλὰς καὶ διαφόρους ἐννοίας τὴν διάνοιαν ἀπάγουσα εἰς μνήμην τε τῶν λόγων τῆς διδασκάλου Εὐγενίας ἐρχομένη· "Δυσχερὲς ...	πολύς τις εἰσήει λογισμῶν ὄχλος καὶ εἰς μνήμην τῶν τῆς Εὐγενίας καθίστατο παραινέσεων· "Δυσχερές ..."

Several things may be noted here. First of all, it is quite closely the same story that is being told in the old and the Metaphrastic versions, but the reuse of words is surprisingly small (words in bold, indicating words that recur, regardless of inflection). Most words reused are, in fact, words that are hard to avoid when retelling this story: "garden," "work," "to lead (a monastery)," "stage," "why," "earlobes pierced," "you experienced (some distraction)," "not fitting our job," "pay attention to the soil," "beloved," "golden," "removed suspicion." A few words have been reused but in new positions (words in bold and italics). In the old version, the narrator tells us that something "human" (ἀνθρώπινον) happened to Barnabas, indicating his inappropriate behavior in addressing his question to Matrona. In the Metaphrastic version, this word is moved to Matrona's direct speech, making it something she observes. In the old version, Matrona actually called Barnabas' question περίεργον "meddlesome," and that word the Metaphrastic redactor chose to include in the initial description, having Barnabas cast a "meddlesome" glance at Matrona. We see that Symeon Metaphrastes must have read the whole passage first, made some decisions about his narrative, and then insisted on finding his own words for almost everything, except those hard to avoid, and engaged in reshuffling words, he probably liked some and found they could be used better in other locations.

There are, however, instances of changes that alter features of the narrative more profoundly. When Matrona tells her false story of why she has pierced earlobes (the reason for which we probably have to infer as being normal for a woman), the old version describes the person who instigated this as follows: "The woman who formerly acquired me and was tenderly loving me treated me

with all sorts of cheerfulness and luxuries, not shying away from putting gold in my ears."[9]

The impression one gets from this version is that Matrona is pretending to have been owned (presumably as a slave) by a woman who may have been as fond of her as to suggest a connection of a sexual character. This comes out differently in the Metaphrastic version: "The woman who formerly had and nourished me had acquired a tenderly loving disposition towards me and was eager to place golden jewels in my ears."[10]

We do not get the same idea about ownership in the Metaphrastic version, in fact the verb implying such ownership (forms of the Greek κτάομαι) is now transferred indicating how this woman "acquired" feelings, and the verb supplanting this is the less precise ἔχω, which may just imply that Matrona worked for this lady. The Metaphrastic redactor is playing a metonymic game, where almost all words have been converted to synonyms or to phrases implying more or less the same meaning, but in certain cases the new phrasing gives slightly a different touch. This is also the case with the only phrase from the old version that has no parallel in the Metaphrastic. For in the old narration, Matrona rounds off her candid tale by saying that the golden jewels in her ears had the effect "that many who saw me would say that I was a girl."[11] This Symeon Metaphrastes leaves out, and the scene thereby loses much of its gender play and possible erotic implications.

The same goes for the rest of the *Life of Matrona* in its Metaphrastic rewritten version. Female agency and presence are toned down or left out. Some of this may be explained through the general tendency in this particular rewriting to abridge. The Metaphrastic version shortens the story of Matrona, which ends up only taking up only around two-thirds of the old story in length (unlike other cases where the Metaphrastic version may end up becoming longer). Still, it is hard not to see a pattern in the Metaphrastic reduction of female agency. Most reduced in the Metaphrastic version are the prologue and the account of Matrona's founding of a monastery in Constantinople. The old prologue stressed, as did many other passages, the importance of Matrona as guide and role model for other women, singling out her flock (chapter 1). In the short Metaphrastic prologue there is no mention of Matrona's flock, and in pointing out Matrona as role model, she is so for both men and women but now concerning ascetic praxis. The prologue now stresses that she is a model for men in such a way that they "being men should not be

9 *VMatr* 5: ἡ πάλαι με κτησαμένη φιλοστόργως περὶ ἐμὲ διακειμένη διὰ πάσης ἦγεν εὐθυμίας καὶ τρυφῆς, ὡς καὶ χρυσίον οὐκ ὀκνῆσαι περιθεῖναί μοι κατὰ τῶν ὤτων [...].

10 *VMatrMet* 7: ἡ γὰρ ἐμὲ πρότερον σχοῦσα καὶ θρεψαμένη φιλόστοργόν τινα πρός με κεκτημένη διάθεσιν ἐφιλοτιμήσατό μου και χρυσᾶ κόσμια τοῖς ὠσὶν ἐμβαλεῖν.

11 [...] ὥστε πολλοὺς τῶν ὁρώντων με λέγειν ὅτι κοράσιόν ἐστιν.

seen as second to women and less noble in (ascetic) suffering."[12] Matrona is no longer a guide but a general yardstick for asceticism.

Similarly, scenes where women play important roles in Matrona's life disappear in the Metaphrastic account: no longer do we hear of Eugenia's role in the scene where Matrona dresses up as a eunuch (chapter 6); when, after her expulsion from the male monastery, Matrona comes to live with Susanna, the sentence in the old version telling of Matrona's role model for Susanna and many other women is left out (chapter 11); equally left out are the exchanges between nuns in the monastery in Emesa, where Matrona later resides and becomes abbess (chapter 14); the foundation of the Constantinopolitan monastery is in the old version accompanied by the voices of many people involved, and especially noteworthy is a long speech by some free-born women, who say they would not have anywhere else to go for comfort or education (old version, chapter 26), but this is completely gone in the Metaphrastic version, which summarizes the foundation of the Constantinopolitan monastery in only one short chapter (chapter 28). These serious interventions take place in the transition from the old to the Metaphrastic version, and the elimination of the free-born women's speech even implies leaving out their explanation of Matrona's sainthood. They say: because she fled from a violent husband, was forced to take on a male (eunuch) identity, succeeded in becoming a monastic leader (twice) and thereby converted her own actions into a help and consolation for others, she will become a saint. There is no doubt in the text that we hear the voice of sanctification, pronounced by women. In the Metaphrastic version only the narratorial voice has this sanctifying power.

But in terms of Metaphrastic removal of female agency the perhaps most obvious, but also more explicable, instance is the complete removal of the original female author of the old *Life of Matrona.* Towards the end of the old version, a certain Eulogia is mentioned (in the third person) as the one who collected the detailed information about Matrona's travels and doings and committed them to writing. Symeon Metaphrastes in general had difficulties with authors and narrators who appeared in the old Lives.[13] Was he to completely discard them or to rewrite their words? He chooses different solutions in different rewritings. Famous Lives by famous authors entered the Metaphrastic collection almost unchanged (this is especially the case of the *Life of Anthony*, including the authorial voice of

12 *VMatrMet* 1: [...] ἵνα μὴ ἄνδρες ὄντες δεύτεροι γυναικῶν ὀφθεῖεν καὶ πρὸς τὸ πονεῖν ἀγεννέστεροι.

13 See Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, 146–49, and Christian Høgel, "The Actual Words of Theodore Graptos: A Byzantine Saint's Letter as Inserted Document," in *Medieval Letters: Between Fiction and Document*, eds. Christian Høgel and Elisabetta Bartoli (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015): 307–16.

Athanasios of Alexandria), other Lives (such as those by Kyrillos of Skythopolis) were rewritten with the retention of a narrator "I" now speaking with Metaphrastic wording.[14] But in many other cases, narrators disappeared making the Metaphrastic narrator now present the story. This is also the case in the *Life of Matrona.* So here we do not need to conclude that Symeon disliked female narrators. But given the disappearance of other female agency, there is a clear pattern: female agency disappears in the Metaphrastic rewritings.

3 The Lover and the Husband of Theodora: Implicit and Explicit Emotions

In the *Life of Theodora*, as in the *Life of Matrona*, the cross-dressing protagonist is escaping a violent husband. In the old version of her Life, this husband is called φιλόπονος, which could praise him for being laborious, but could also imply some sort of excessive behaviour on his part. The latter interpretation becomes plausible once we see his recurring attempts to force Theodora back to her former life. His endeavours are at times aligned with those of the devil, and his demands are throughout the Life, as was the case in the *Life of Matrona*, possessive. He seems to think himself right to demand her back, which he also was according to Roman law. Nevertheless, this story as in all Lives involving female saints with unwanted oppression from a husband, takes a clear stance in favour of the woman. The rights of the husbands, completely in accordance with legal procedures in the Roman or Byzantine world, are however not put in direct dialogue with the wishes of the female protagonists. In this way, we readers are to draw our conclusions on these matters on our own, taking our cues from who is presented as likeable, trustworthy and virtuous. And sympathy all through the narrative obviously goes to the women. One could call this psychological storytelling, though many modern readers would probably reject such an interpretation, given the secured virtual status of saints. But as we shall see, virtue—even regarding the saint—was often questioned and discussed in saints' Lives.

In the old version of the story of Theodora, the narrator shifts directly from stating that Theodora's husband was φιλόπονος, to telling of how "the devil made a rich man fall in love with her [Theodora] and try to turn her away from her own husband, and he [the rich man] sent all sorts of messages through

14 Martin Hinterberger, "Die Aneignung des Anderen: Die Viten des Kyrillos von Skythopolis bearbeitet von Symeon Metaphrastes. Beobachtungen zur Umarbeitungstechnik," *Travaux et Mémoires* 23/1 (2019): 333–51.

neighbours and bribed locals in order to have her."[15] Theodora puts up resistance to all this, pondering on her own that a relationship with this rich suitor would cost her on the day of judgment. But a female μάγος—magician or the like—tells her that after sunset the Lord will not be able to see her sin (ἁμαρτία). Theodora doubts this, but the magician confirms it. And in the next sentence Theodora goes to the house of the rich man, nodding through the window and saying she will come in the evening. Theodora then meets the man and performs the sin, the sexual nature of which is obvious but not explicitly stated. This makes Theodora blame herself, and at home the husband finds her crying and asks her the reason for this, saying he cannot bear to see her cry. Theodora then "dared not turn [her face] to her husband"[16] but only utters sounds and words of sorrow and regret. Next morning Theodora, as we are explicitly told, takes on her own clothes and goes to a nunnery, addresses the abbess, but asked about the reason for her sorrow, she only asks for a copy of the Bible and reads a sentence: "what I have written, I have written." On these desperate words, implying the finality of divine law, follows Theodora's confession of having "stained the conjugal bed of her husband." This is the last we hear of the conversation with the abbess, for in the next sentence, Theodora, already on her way home, asks "How can I any longer watch the heaven, having defiled the air?" So "entering her house she took off the clothes that she was wearing and the golden jewelry that she bore and cut her hair. And she dressed in the clothes of her husband."[17] Then she goes to a male monastery, where she is accepted as a man with the name of Theodore, though only after spending a night of trial exposed to wild animals.

The surprising and unexplained solution of Theodora to her problem of infidelity will necessarily make us question the personality and motives of her husband. Here we get details pointing in different directions: he is φιλόπονος, but he also asks her why she cries and tells he cannot bear seeing her cry. The latter is of course not an unambiguous sign of empathy, and in the end, we do not know how he would react to being told the truth. In any case, this uncertainty spills into

15 *VTheod* 25: καὶ ἐν μίᾳ τῶν ἡμέρων ἐνέβαλεν ὁ ἀρχέκακος διάβολός τινι ἀνδρὶ πλουσίῳ φιλῆσαι αὐτὴν καὶ καταστρέψαι ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου ἀνδρὸς καὶ ἧν διαπεμπόμενος αὐτῇ διὰ γειτόνων καὶ ἐντοπίων δωροδοκῶν πάντας τοῦ ἔχειν αὐτήν.

16 *VTheod* 26: ἡ δὲ οὐδὲ ἐτόλμησεν προσσχεῖν τῷ ἰδίῳ ἀνδρὶ.

17 *VTheod* 27: καὶ ἀναπτύξασα εὗρεν ἐν τῇ προγραφῇ· ὃ γέγραφα, γέγραφα· καὶ κρούσασα εἰς τὴν ὄψιν ἑαυτῆς ταῖς χερσὶν καὶ μεγάλα κράξασα οὐαί μοι τῇ παναθλίᾳ, ὅτι τὴν κοίτην τοῦ ἀνδρός μου ἐμίανα· ἀπίει εἰς τὸν οἶκον ἑαυτῆς ὀλολύζουσα καὶ λέγουσα· πῶς ἀτενίσω εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἢ καὶ τὸν ἀέρα μολύνασα. εἰσελθοῦσα δὲ εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς ἀπεθύσατο τὰ ἱμάτια ἃ ἦν ἐνδεδυμένη καὶ τὸν κόσμον τοῦ χρυσοῦ ὃν ἐφόρει καὶ ἐκείρατο τὴν κόμην τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς· καὶ ἀνεδύσατο τὰ ἱμάτια τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς. For a close analysis of these scenes of dressing up as a man/eunuch, see Constantinou, *Female Corporeal*, 90–126.

the fact that we are told that Theodora, in the second scene of dressing, takes on "his" clothes—not just any male clothing. That Theodora is a sinner is clear from her act of infidelity, but also thematized in the question from the abbot, who asks her reasons for coming, actually suggesting she might have killed someone. The uncertainty of how we are to understand things continues, since after Theodora/Theodore has performed her first good deed as member of the monastic community, running errands and in this case procuring olive oil, we hear how her husband prays for help in finding his wife, and an angel tells him where to go. Husband and wife then have a "chance" meeting, near a μαρτύριον, but the husband fails to recognize his wife, now in male clothing. After this, he complains of not having found her, but again an angel comes, telling him this time that he did meet her but failed to recognize her. This leaves the matter between the couple unsettled, but also further distances us from a solution to the original doubts: why does Theodora adopt a male identity (including the clothes of her husband)? But the male identity is taken one step further, as we shall see.

After a longer sequence of miracles and onslaughts from the devil, all to prove that Theodora/Theodore is a loyal monk, comes a scene where our protagonist is again on an errand for the monastery, this time spending the night at another monastery. The daughter of the abbot (in itself a surprising fact, which we shall return to) tries to seduce Theodora/Theodore, and not succeeding, she turns to another male visitor and has sex with him. Later, Theodora/Theodore is singled out as the father of the child that is born, she accepts it, is expelled from the monastery and takes care of the child, so accepting the role of father of a child she is obviously not the biological parent of. During this period of ten years of isolation from the monastery, the devil takes on the resemblance of her husband, finds her, and speaks softly to her. As always in these scenes of devilish disguise, we are, no matter how we interpret the scene, left to wonder what this implies for our notion of the husband. Is the devil just performing his will, or can they be seen as separate figures of action? This uncertainty, however, does not affect the thematization of possible attractions in returning to the marriage and of Theodora/Theodore's stubbornness not to return. Minor points in the following narrative reflect on the gender issue, but the key passage comes at the end, at the time of revelation. After her death, the abbot proves to another abbot that Theodora is a woman by first lifting the part of the cloth covering her head and then some clothing covering her body. And the husband, arriving in sorrow, is shown her dead body and ends up living the rest of his life in her cell. Gender roles come to a full circle, just as the φιλοπονία of the husband ends in observance of monastic regulations.

In the end, Theodora's wish not to return to her husband is not taken as the result of his moral depravity but rather of her own sin of infidelity, as also implied by the angel. In the Metaphrastic narration this course of the story is retained. We

easily recognize all scenes and major actions and interactions, despite the almost complete rewording of the text. But the Metaphrastic narrator has his priorities. First, young and beautiful Theodora is now the pride of her hometown of Alexandria. This added interest in viewing the saints from a perspective of local pride is a common Metaphrastic turn.[18] Furthermore, the Metaphrastic narrator already in the first chapter adds a common rule of which Theodora will be an example: "since even those who love to live blamelessly cannot avoid being the recipients of attacks from the evil, dire temptation will also awaken in her."[19]

The plight of Theodora is generalized, but focus is taken away from her husband, and her sinfulness made central to the morale of the story. And the whole perspective of the drama concerning Theodora is twisted, when the Metaphrastic narrator instead of telling of how Theodora goes to visit her lover, just proclaims to us that women are prone to being fooled or seduced, and stating that "so was the bad wish put into action."[20] When reflecting on Theodora's sin, the Metaphrastic version adds details to the idea that God sees all our trespasses, now quoting the Psalms on God's ability to hear and sense the slightest thing (chapter 3). And Theodora's pain is also enhanced, her tears now wet the ground below her. But most importantly, Theodora's transformation into a male person is only stated, no real details are offered (no cutting of her hair, no words accompanying the act), only a new emphasis on saying goodbye to the world characterizes the Metaphrastic version (end of chapter 3). This is in complete parallel with other such transformative scenes in other Lives;[21] the Metaphrastic version will avoid giving us the details and instead state the fact that to others in the story our female saint is now regarded as a man (chapter 4). It is clear that any detail that describes specifically female and male body action is avoided. Most clear is the scene, described above, where the abbot of Theodora's (Theodore's) monastery reveals her body to the other abbot. Unlike in the old version, where first head—to identify her/him—and then body—to reveal her sex—were shown, the Metaphrastic version in a circumlocution collectedly talks of "certain parts of the body."[22]

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18 Christian Høgel, "Stylites in the Metaphrastic Menologion," in *Syrian Stylites: Rereadings and Recastings of Late Ancient Superheroes*, eds. Barbara Crostini and Christian Høgel (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2024): 139–59.

19 *VTheodMet* 1: ἐπείδη ἀνεπιλήπτως ἀγαπῶντας βιοῦν οὐκ ἔτι μὴ καὶ τὰς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προσβολὰς δέχεσθαι, πειρασμὸς ἐγείρεται καὶ ταύτῃ δεινός.

20 *VTheodMet* 2: Καὶ οὕτως εἰς ἔργον ἐξέβη τὸ πονηρὸν βούλημα.

21 See examples below and the list of changes in the *Life of Eugenia* in Stephanie Apserou, *The Hagiographical Dossier of Saint Eugenia (BHG 607w-607z)* (Ioannina: University of Ioannina, 2017), 139–41 (online https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/10442/44908?locale=en; last access 9 February 2025).

22 *VTheodMet* 19: ἕνια μέρη τοῦ ἱεροῦ σώματος παραδείξας.

The Metaphrastic narrative avoids gender issues and in general turns the *Life of Theodora* into that of yet another sinner, whose sins may be related to her gender, but her solution—monastic asceticism—is the focus point, leaving the issue of sexual relations and intolerably violent marriage in the background. Despite the enhanced signs of emotion—tears wetting the ground etc.—the outcome is less feeling in, and on account of, the protagonists.

4 Father Figures of Euphrosyne: Earthly and Divine Economy

Euphrosyne was the child long wished for by rich parents, and their wish is only met after several visits to a monastery. During her childhood the girl spends much time in learning to read and write.[23] At the age of eighteen and ready for marriage, her father takes her to the (male) monastery, which he is also a generous donor to, to be blessed, and hearing the singing of psalms, young Euphrosyne observes the fitting organisation of monastic life.[24] Knowing that her father will not accept her joining this and that he will find her if she hides in a nunnery, she goes to live in the male monastery (chapter 9). To do this, Euphrosyne has several (male) helpers, who gives her advice or act as messengers. In view of these male helpers and her wish to avoid marriage altogether, which her father wishes, Euphrosyne's father takes up the position of the violent husband of the other tales, only he is a much more likeable character, in the end only moaning her death when he is unable to find her, calling upon her with a sequence of endearing names (chapter 12). With a strike of dramatic genius, the old Life also dramatizes the reason why the father does not discover Euphrosyne when she is about to leave the house for the male monastery, with shorn hair and in male garments. For the reason he misses this is his decision to visit a church on his return from the monastery. The time spent at the church gives Euphrosyne just enough time to carry through her plan. This tight, Hitchcock-like timing adds to the general impression of a pious father, busy in his frequent visits to religious institutions, and a daughter who wants to escape secular marriage and enter the cyclical time of monastic life. These wishes actually find their combination in the regular visits of the father to the very institution that is now the home of his (beloved and lost) daughter, who lives there

23 It is the father who provides this education, after the death of Euphrosyne's mother (*VEuphr* 2: ἔμεινε δὲ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτῆς παιδεύων αὐτὴν γράμμασι καὶ ἀναγνώσμασι καὶ τῇ λοιπῇ σοφίᾳ).
24 *VEuphr* 4: καὶ θεωροῦσα τὴν ἑκάστου σπυδαίαν διάθεσιν καὶ πρέπουσαν τῷ μοναχικῷ ἐπαγγέλματι ἐθαύμαζεν αὐτῷ τὸν βίον [...].

under the male name of Smaragdos (chapters 14–15). They even have a most fruitful conversation, in which he does not recognize her – and she does not reveal her identity.

On top of these dramatic features, a thematic reference to economy, both human and divine, cuts through the narration. The riches of the parents, originating from the mother, are stressed from the start and so are the continuous donations of the father to the monastery.[25] But this οἰκονομία is matched by that of God, for it is actually "through God's economy"[26] that Euphrosyne's father visits the church and enables Euphrosyne's escape. Economy, or "household," is closely tied to timing in this story. And God's use of timing is even more important in the following, for it is through His influence that Euphrosyne's whereabouts (and hidden identity) is not revealed early. As donor of the monastery, the father persuades the abbot to have the monks pray for Euphrosyne's return: "And fasting for a week the monks prayed for this, and God did not make it known to any of them. For her [Euphrosyne's] prayers won over their collected prayers."[27]

God cuts through the pious prayer with a plan of his own, and when the father gets even more desperate, the abbot confirms this divine timing, comforting the father:

> Do not belittle this, nor loose heart, but thank God, and when he wishes so, you will get to know what happened to her. For you know that she did not give herself on account of something bad, but something good, and therefore God has not informed any of us. For had she given herself to something bad, God would not have ignored your trials, which you have shown in his name to all the holy people and especially to us, but he would have disclosed the matter to us.[28]

Timing is central in many parts of the narration but most obviously when Euphrosyne just before her own death reveals her identity to her father (chapter 17). The somewhat distressed repetitiveness of the father is finally put to rest, with the father finally, after his demise, being buried together with his daughter.

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25 *VEuphr* 1: Καὶ δὴ ἀπέρχεται ἔν τινι κοινιβίῳ ἐν ᾧ ἐλέγετο τὸν ἡγούμενον μέγαν ἄνθρωπον παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ τυγχάνειν; also visits in ch. 4 and 14 (when having given up finding his daughter).

26 *VEuphr* 9: κατ᾽ οἰκονομίαν Θεοῦ.

27 *VEuphr* 13: Καὶ νηστεύσαντες οἱ πατέρες τὴν ἑβδομάδα ηὔχοντο περὶ τούτου, καὶ οὐδενὶ κατάδηλον ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεός· αἱ γὰρ εὐχαὶ ἐκείνης ἐνίκων τὰς πάντων εὐχάς.

28 *VEuphr* 13: Μὴ ὀλιγώρει, μηδὲ ἀθύμει, ἀλλ᾽εὐχαρίστει τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ ὅταν βούλεται γινώσκεις τὰ κατ᾽ αὐτήν. Ἵνα γὰρ οἶδας ὅτι οὐκ ἐπὶ κακῷ ἑαυτὴν ἐξέδωκεν ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ ἀγαθῷ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὁ Θεὸς οὐκ ἐπληροφόρησέν τινα ἐξ ἡμῶν. Εἰ γὰρ ἐπὶ κακῷ ἦν ἐκδοῦσα ἑαυτὴν, οὐκ ἂν ὁ Θεὸς παρεῖδεν τοὺς κόπους σου οὓς ἐπεδείξω διὰ τοῦ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους, ἐξαιρέτως δὲ εἰς ἡμᾶς, ἀλλ᾽ πάντως ἐφανέρου τὸ πρᾶγμα.

The Metaphrastic version again tells much the same story, but with important deviations. Weight is added to the role of the father right from the beginning: it is now he, not the mother as in the old version, who brings wealth into the family, and the prologue also stresses that marriage serves the wishes of fathers to have children, whereas the old version only described the pain of both mother and father.[29] But also Euphrosyne's character undergoes changes: the education of the daughter is now undertaken by the father in such a way that he "nourished her with virtue rather than what fattens the body, and taught her to attend to the standing and lasting things rather than to those that wither, and to take care of the soul as an immortal belonging rather than of the rapidly wasting body."[30] It is no longer reading and writing, but asceticism that Euphrosyne learns.

But the most important Metaphrastic twist comes with the reduction of God's timing in favour of Euphrosyne: the father no longer misses her departure due to his visit to a church but simply arrives too late for no stated reason (chapter 9), and though God still favours Euphrosyne's prayer in not having her identity revealed, it is now to keep her on the track of virtue:

> And God preferred to let him suffer a bit longer than to liberate him from the suffering and add more suffering to a [her] soul, which due to the longing for Him was not paying attention to its needs and paternal love. And first of all, not to cause pause and impediment to virtue, than which nothing at all is more excellent.[31]

Through all this gentle rephrasing, the Metaphrastic narrative turns focus from the support of Euphrosyne's wish to avoid marriage despite her father's wishes and instead draws the attention towards a general strive for virtue, meaning ascetic practice. In fact, when an old monk wants to help Euphrosyne in the old version, he quotes a biblical passage on the need to leave father, mother and siblings (Matt 19:29), thus supporting her wish; in the Metaphrastic text, he now quotes Matt 10:37 on loving one's father and mother more than oneself.[32] Even if the Metaphrastic text is still portraying a woman who leaves her family to live the life she wants, focused on the cyclical liturgical rhythm, it is now just as one among

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29 *VEuphrMet* 1.

30 *VEuphrMet* 3: Παφνούτιος [...] ἀρετῇ μάλλον ἢ τὴν σάρκα πιαίνουσιν ἔτρεφε, καὶ τοῖς ἔστωσι καὶ μένουσιν, ἢ τοῖς ἀπανθοῦσι προσανέχειν ἀνέπειθε, καὶ ψθχῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι πράγματος ἀθανάτου, ἢ τοῦ ταχὺ μαραινομένου ἐδίδασκε σώματος.

31 *VEuphrMet* 11: ἔκρινε δὲ καὶ Θεὸς ἐπὶ μικρὸν ἐκείνον ἐᾶσαι πενθεῖν, ἢ αὐτὸν ἀπαλάττων λύπης λυπῆσαι μάλλον ψυχὴν, ἢ καὶ φύσεως αὐτῆς καὶ στοργῆς πατρικῆς διὰ τὸν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἠλόγησε πόθον· ἄλλως τε δὲ καὶ τοῦ μὴ περικοπὴν δοῦναι τῇ ἀρετῇ καὶ ἐμπόδιον, ἧς τῶν πάντων οὐδέν ἐστι τιμιώτερον.

32 *VEuphrMet* 6.

many – female and male – prosperous saints who seek an ascetic life, not as a woman escaping forced measures from her father. And the father has become a much more prominent person, much more in control of matters.

5 Conclusion

Even though Symeon Metaphrastes took a conservative stance in choosing eighteen Lives with female protagonists for his *menologion*, he seems to have favoured Lives of cross-dressers (no less than five out of eighteen Lives). Therefore, it may surprise us that he reduced the actual cross-dressing scenes and the female agency in these Lives. It could be that these Lives were simply too famous and cherished to be left out but, according to him, needed modification. The old versions must have found great interest, not least with female readers and listeners caught in predicaments similar to those of the saints. For this audience, and in general for all, Symeon Metaphrastes gave a new polished version, with firm emphasis on the virtues of asceticism, but with reduced abilities to follow the brave women's successful plans of avoiding possessive and violent husbands or demanding fathers.

Section 3 **Women, Saints, and Time: The Construction of Gendered Temporality in the Lives of Holy Women**

Roberto Alciati

Unlike Their Mothers: The Struggle Against Time of the Two Melanias

1 Introduction: The Temporalities of Christian Asceticism

There are many books about the construction and perception of time in Mediterranean societies of past centuries.[1] Recently, two have been published, both dedicated to the Christian invention of time. Principal aim of these publications is to describe and understand how notions and practices of time changed in late antiquity, basically due to Christianity.

The first book that deserves our attention is *Chronos* by François Hartog published in 2021.[2] Here Hartog collected many reflections on time that he inaugurated with *Regimes of Historicity* and organized them around a main issue: what is it, and where are we in relation to time? The book, however, does not address time in general, but "the order of times and the eras of time in that was becoming the Western world."[3] This moment is Christian late antiquity. Hartog insists on the novelty of Christian time and in particular on the novelty of eschatological time, which is time accelerated towards the end. But at a certain point this acceleration is slowed down. For Hartog, this event is memorably represented by the κατέχον mentioned in Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians. In his sketch of the end, Paul is saying that the κατέχον is the force that holds or holds back and may refer, at the same time, to a human power (the Roman Empire but also the ecclesiastical organization) and to an agent belonging to the theological realm (the Antichrist or the Evil). In both cases what is in place is a postponement of the second coming of Christ and the end of times. Referring back to Reinhart Koselleck, Hartog affirms that the novelty imposed by Christianity is the constant back and forth between the already past and the not yet fully realized. Only modernity will overcome this oscillation.[4]

1 For a framing of the problem, see the Introduction and the contribution by Dell'Isola in this volume.

2 François Hartog, *Chronos: The West Confronts Time*, trans. S.R. Gilbert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

3 Hartog, *Chronos*, xxi.

4 Hartog, *Chronos*, 158.

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The second recent publication to be mentioned is *The Christian Invention of Time* by Simon Goldhill published in 2022. According to the author, "it is striking that the history of the invention of Christian time has not been analyzed from the multiple perspectives that such a large-scale cultural transformation needs."[5] The only possible explanation for this silence is disciplinary specialization, which causes a very cautious (if not dismissive) look at each other among theologians and classicists. Goldhill's volume is an attempt thus to fill the gap and outline the development of Christian temporality. There are always different times for different actions (the time of waiting, of life, of death) and different ways of understanding time (the simultaneity of events, time that runs or is suspended). This diversity, according to Goldhill, is most noticeable in the complex phenomenon that goes by the name of the Christianization of the Roman Empire and changes the writing in late antiquity. This is a crucial and effective part of his argument, as it is primarily the literary documentation that provides us with the diverse Christian perspectives on time and temporality.

At first, looking anew at such categories like time seems to be trivial. But the results that Goldhill and Hartog achieve prove that doing such exercises is far from useless. They encourage us to continue on this path. In fact, what the two scholars highlight could, however, be further enriched if we look at the ascetic-monastic movement that, from the post-Constantine era onwards, takes shape within Christianity. Ascetics and monks do not have a significant space in the two books briefly described above, but the conception of time developed in these circles was considered by many to be equally foundational to European culture. Since Lewis Mumford and Max Weber, historians and sociologists have recognized the importance of monasticism—especially Benedictine monasticism—in the development of time-keeping, scheduling, and Western notions of time in general. Among them, Eviatar Zerubavel deserves special mention. In a 1980 book, he referred to the Benedictines as the people who established a schedule (*horarium*) not only on the basis of the calendar—that is, in terms of years, months and weeks—but by going down to the level of hours and minutes. This implies that time regularity is not only something of general value, but that it conforms to the needs of small communities and, as far as possible, to those of the individual.[6]

To all this, however, we could add an even more general consideration that goes beyond the monastic sphere alone, concerning the wider and more varied world of asceticism. If the eschatological acceleration, as pointed out by Hartog,

5 Simon Goldhill, *The Christian Invention of Time: Temporality and the Literature of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 7.

6 Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

for various reasons, loses strength the further one moves away from the preaching of Jesus, a clear attempt at recovery—or a persistence that is increasingly marginal and frowned upon—occurs with the spread of ascetic ideals in late antique society already largely deeply influenced by Christian theology. The "ascetic turn" gave new life to the eschatological temporality that seemed to be in decline. But ascetic temporality, although different and opposed to that "of the world," was not uniform. There was, for example, the predominant male ascetic time and the less documented female ascetic time. Both faced challenges in establishing themselves, as there was always something or someone hindering the acceleration they sought to impose. However, in the case of women, the "braking action" that was opposed seemed decidedly stronger. There is a rich bibliography on the relationship between eschatology and Christian asceticism, but the gender divide that characterized it still seems to be little explored.[7]

In this respect, the stories of Melania the Elder and Melania the Younger are significant. All the issues briefly outlined in these introductory remarks are embodied and embedded in the language and narratives that form the imaginary of these two famous "holy women." We will never know whether the two protagonists were aware of the time shift that their behavior caused, but it seems difficult to believe that the authors who mention the two Melanias in some of their writings were unaware of that. While not explicitly talking about "ascetic time," the biographers/hagiographers of the two women choose—or were compelled—to emphasize how much the decision of the two Melanias to abandon the lifestyle of the world is made on the basis of a "time factor."

2 Melania the Elder

The first Melania, a Spaniard known as the Elder, bursts onto the scene in 370. Paulinus of Nola is one of the few witnesses about her. In one of his letters

7 The literature on the relationship between Christianity and women's emancipation in late antique society is extensive. However, it may be useful to refer to at least two titles, which focus on the case of Rome: Gabriele Disselkamp, *"Christiani Senatus Lumina": Zum Anteil römischer Frauen der Oberschicht im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert an der Christianisierung der römischen Senatsaristokratie* (Bodenheim: Philo, 1997) and Michele R. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.-London: Harvard University Press, 2002). Disselkamp's research, based on literary and epigraphic evidence from the fourth and fifth centuries, attributes a preponderant role to women in the conversion of the Roman aristocracy. Salzman, on the other hand, came to the opposite conclusion, denying that women had a higher percentage of adherence to Christianity than men and that women had a decisive role in the process of promoting the new religion.

sent to his Gallic friend Sulpicius Severus, dated around 400,[8] we find the most relevant information on Melania's ascetic commitment. In the first five paragraphs Paulinus thanks Severus for the camel's hair *pallia* he received as a gift. Then follows a more theological reflection on the theme of the *pallia*, rich in quotations from Scripture and biblical exegesis. The rough garments of figures such as Elijah, David and John the Baptist allowed Paulinus a digression on the symbolic value of the ascetic's garment. But at this point, Paulinus stops abruptly to announce to Severus that he is sending a tunic made of lamb's wool. This is where Melania comes in, as she is the one responsible for the gift Paulinus is about to give Severus. The gift, in fact, is a tunic that Paulinus had received from Melania, famous among the holy women of God, and which Paulinus himself wore for a while before sending it on.[9] The decision to forward this special garment to Severus seems to have been taken suddenly and at the same time as the arrival in Nola of both Melania, who was returning to Italy after twenty-five years in Jerusalem, and Severus's courier, Victor.[10]

The present, however, serves here almost as a pretext. What interests Paulinus is Melania, the great soul who cannot be mentioned too fleetingly.[11] The second part of the letter is a true *laudatio* of Melania the Elder's exemplary life. Paulinus, in fact, considers Melania's case to be exceptional, but not so much because of the ascetic rigor she applies. In Paulinus' eyes Melania appears as an uncommon figure because her behavior is that of a male.[12] He notes:

> I must alter the course of my words to tell you [Severus] about her for a moment. In this way I may be seen to make some return for that book of yours [*The Life of St. Martin*], so splendid in its matter and style, if I describe the woman who is a soldier for Christ with the virtues of

8 Pierre Fabre, *Essai sur la chronologie de l'œuvre de Saint Paulin de Nole* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1948), 32–33.

9 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.5: *Addo autem adhuc pretio eius et gratiae, quod, quo dignor probetur usu tuo, de sanctae et inlustris in sanctis dei feminae Melani benedictione mihi pignus est.* For the critical edition, see: Wilhelm von Hartel, ed., *S. Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani Opera, Pars 1, Epistulae* (Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1894). Hereafter: CSEL 29. So here: CSEL 29, 251.

10 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.6 (CSEL 29, 251): *Addidit autem dominus hanc gratiam de muneribus et litteris tuis, ut ad eos potissimum dies nobis frater Victor occureret, quibus sanctam ipsam ex Hierusalem post quinque lustra remeantem excepimus.*

11 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.6 (CSEL 29, 251): *Sed personae dignitas, immo dei gratia postulare uidetur, ut commemorationem tantae animae praegressus non raptim omittam et paulisper ad eam tibi narrandam.*

12 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.6 (CSEL 29, 251): *At quam tandem feminam, si feminam dici licet, tam uiriliter Christianam!*

> Martin, though she is of the weaker sex. She is a noblewoman who has made herself nobler than her consular grandfathers by the contempt for mere bodily nobility.[13]

Melania lives the Christian religion as a male (*uiriliter*) and in this overcoming of socially sanctioned gender inferiority also beats the nobility of her grandfathers. Of the two ancestors mentioned here, the only known seems to be Antonius Marcellinus, a grandfather who held several offices at the beginning of the fourth century.[14]

After this cursory allusion to the present time, Paulinus quickly returns to the higher level and makes another, more theologically substantial comparison. Once again, however, it is genealogy that is the focus of the analysis:

> I think that I should begin to proclaim her [of Melania] praiseworthy holiness by praising her ancestry, for this, too, has a bearing on the grace which God has heaped on her. The most learned Luke attests that this order of topics is adopted not from the practice of rhetoricians but from the example of the Gospels. Luke began his description of the merits of blessed John the Baptist with his illustrious ancestry. He would not have you think that he mentioned the noble father of the Lord's forerunner as a mere historical detail. He links up the revered distinction of John's ancient nobility and gives the genealogy of both parents.[15]

In his reading of Luke's Gospel, Paulinus says that both of the Baptist's parents had an illustrious genealogy, since Zechariah is a priest of the order of Abijah, and Elizabeth is a descendent of Aaron (Luke 1:5). Both Zechariah and Elizabeth are portrayed by the author of the Gospel of Luke as righteous and blameless before the Lord. Zechariah's priestly pedigree would certainly ascribe to him a high status,

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13 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.6 (CSEL 29, 252): *Ita sermonis mei cursum detorqueam, quo etiam inlustri illi materia et eloquentia libro tuo uicem aliquam uidear reddere, si feminam inferiorem sexu uirtutibus Martini Christo militantem prosequar, quae consulibus auis nobilis nobiliorem se contempt corporae nobilitatis dedit.* English translation: *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola*, vol. 2, trans. P.G. Walsh (New York: Newman Press, 1967), 106.

14 His name appears a few paragraphs later (Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.8 [CSEL 29, 253]: *Igitur Marcellino consule auo*). See on this Kevin W. Wilkinson, "The Elder Melania's Missing Decade," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 5 (2012): 166–84, 177–78. It has also been suggested that Melania the Elder is a cousin of Paulinus because of his wife Terasia. It should not be forgotten that all three relate to Spain. See Sigrid Mratschek, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola: Kommunikation und soziale Kontakte zwischen christlichen Intellektuellen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 73–77.

15 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.7 (CSEL 29, 252): *Opinor autem et hoc ad cumulum diuinae gratiae pertinere, quod sanctitatem laudandam de laudibus generis praedicare ordior. Sed hunc ordinem non a rhetoricis institutis magis quam de euangelicis exemplis usurpari doctissimus Lucas mihi testis est, qui baptistae beati meritum ab originis claritate detexuit et, ne tantum historiae gratia eum commemorasse existimes nobilem dominici praecursoris parentem, ueneranda priscae nobilitatis insignia et suum cuique conectit.*

but what is now of most interest here is the figure of Elizabeth. After quoting the Gospel passage that assigns to Elizabeth descent from the priestly family of Aaron, Paulinus, manipulating the words of the text, welds Elizabeth's genealogy of blood to that of her husband's, which was based on the priestly office: "Zechariah recalled the name of Aaron, outstanding amongst priests' names, because by his office he succeeded to Aaron's distinction and through his wife he continued his race."[16] Accordingly, it is because of her marriage to Zechariah that Elizabeth became the perfect mother of the Baptist: "because not only of her righteous life but also her privileged family."[17]

It is at this point that the digression on the genealogy of John the Baptist is interrupted and Melania returns to the foreground. The logical link deserves attention: if the Gospels mention the earthly genealogy of the Baptist's parents, why would it not be legitimate to do the same for Melania, the *Dei famula* of the present time? Here, writes Paulinus, we are once again faced with "a woman of higher rank who for love of Christ had sublimely lowered herself to practice humility, so that as a strong member of the weak sex she might arraign idle men" and "confound the haughty of both sexes."[18] Precise information about the husband of Melania the Elder is not there, however this unnamed man has been identified with Valerius Maximus, who was urban prefect in 361–362. As Kevin W. Wilkinson has noted, this identification is merely a hypothesis, but although nothing is known of Maximus' life prior to that date, he can plausible be considered of senatorial rank.[19]

The second reason for Melania's exemplary life is her unfortunate relationship with motherhood. After a series of premature births, her suffering grew to such an extent that she lost two children and her own husband in a year, leaving her with only one child, Publicola.[20] In this short space of time, Melania's life is turned upside down, to the point that, after accompanying her three dead in a sor-

16 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.7 (CSEL 29, 252): *qui illud principale in sacerdotibus nomen Aaron et honoris in munere et generis in uxore successor referret*.

17 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.7 (CSEL 29, 253): *non solum uita iustitiae sed et familiae praerogatiua.*

18 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.7 (CSEL 29, 253): *mulier celsiore gradu ad humilitatis cultum ob amorem Christi deiecta sublimiter, ut uiros desides in infirmo sexu fortis argueret, adrogantes in sexu utroque personas pauperata diues et nobilis humiliata confunderet.*

19 Wilkinson, "The Elder Melania's Missing Decade," 178. As already said, the only known ancestor is the grandfather Antonius Marcellinus, who cannot be said to have belonged to the senatorial aristocracy.

20 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.8 (CSEL 29, 254): *Nam praeter alias orbitates, quas inrito in fetibus abortiuis labore adhuc marito participe defleuit, ita creuit aerumnis, ut duos filios et maritum intra anni tempus amitteret.*

rowful procession, she goes to Rome.[21] According to Wilkinson, "the evidence demands that she was coming to live in Rome for the first time."[22] Although the timeline of Melania's life is provisional, there seems to be a sudden acceleration after the death of her husband. Wilkinson has reconstructed these moments in detail and argued that Melania was widowed about eight years after her marriage, probably in 362, and that by the following year she had already moved to Rome, where she remained for about ten years, until 372–373.[23] What is the reason for this long stay?

The reason is to ensure a future for her only child. Wilkinson said that Melania "delayed her departure for the east until her son was in his teens and already launched on his senatorial career."[24] This is certainly a plausible interpretation and consistent with Melania's biographical events, but Paulinus insists above all on the woman's desire not to fail in her duties as a mother. Asceticism does not therefore seem to be Melania's first concern. Paulinus, at least, seems to think so, since he introduces at this point a second comparison that he himself considers at first sight to be unnatural.[25] Now the *comparandum* is Samuel and his mother Hannah. The destiny of Samuel, son of Hannah, is different from that of Publicola, son of Melania the Elder, but similar is the intention of the two mothers, who both simply want to be good mothers according to the judgment and the expectation of the society in which they live. Paulinus adds, in her situation Melania "imitated so far as she could the faithful vow of the barren Hannah," because "disastrous fertility had made her very like a barren woman."[26] Moreover: "Whereas Hannah wished to conceive a child, Melania was troubled about the dear one she had borne. Hannah wished to begin being a mother; Melania, not to cease to being

21 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.8 (CSEL 29, 254): *Itaque luctuoso ambitu trium funerum comes, uidua pariter et orbata, Romam uenit cum unico suo incentore.*

22 Wilkinson also argues that Melania's move to Rome can only be understood as the final abandonment of her native Spain (Wilkinson, "The Elder Melania's Missing Decade," 178). Paulinus is not so explicit, limiting himself to saying that the widow reaches Rome, omitting the place of departure. It is not possible to state with certainty whether Melania the Elder, at the time of her husband's death, was resident in Spain or, as many believe, only a native of that region. Generally, it has been assumed that she was merely returning to Rome. This interpretation can be found in the detailed reconstruction of Melania's timeline in Nicole Moine, "Melaniana," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 15 (1980): 3–79. Although the issue is not decisive for the purposes of my analysis, Wilkinson's reconstruction seems plausible.

23 Moine, "Melaniana," 19; Wilkinson, "The Elder Melania's Missing Decade," 177.

24 Wilkinson, "The Elder Melania's Missing Decade," 180.

25 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.9 (CSEL 29, 255): *quod si ideo dissimile iudicatur.*

26 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.9 (CSEL 29, 255): *Imitata est conditione qua potuit Annae sterilis fidele uotum; nam et istam damnosa fecunditas sterili proximam fecerat.*

one."[27] The stories of Hannah and Melania the Elder seem to be incomparable, since Hannah is desperate to have a child and Melania has had three children, but both make a vow and strive to honor it in every way.[28] Indeed, Hannah is considered luckier than Melania, since by consigning her son to a position in the temple,[29] she knows she is guaranteeing him a bright future. Melania, on the other hand, is not sure from the start that she can do the same.

Now a widow, Melania utilizes motherhood capital to bargain for better outcomes through individual negotiation, and implements practices in which she tries to extend her care work beyond the home space. The death of her husband, a recognized figure in Rome, prompts her to leave her domestic comfort zone and move to the *Urbs*, the only place where she can perhaps ensure Publicola a future worthy of his lineage. As already said, Melania the Elder's move to Rome was undertaken so that Publicola could be launched on his senatorial career.[30] But to carry out such a plan takes time, which is why a ten-years stop in Rome (c. 362–372) seems reasonable. Melania, for example, needed time to "raise funds and make preparations for the praetor's public games,"[31] a necessary operation to have Publicola's name put forward in the Senate. If one wants to give credence to the fact that, once she moved to Palestine, her philanthropic activity was made possible also by money coming from Publicola, it could be assumed that, during her stay in Rome, Melania was also putting aside wealth,[32] already "envisioning a future in which she would need to draw on the family fortune to fund her endeavors in the Holy Land."[33]

The fact that this was not an easy task is also indirectly reflected in Paulinus' letter. Melania had to endure many struggles against the "envious dragon," who did not allow her to leave Rome in an easy and quiet manner. But who is the dragon?

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27 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.9 (CSEL 29, 255): *Ista de parto pignore, illa de concipiendo sollicita; illa ut mater esse inciperet, haec ne esse desineret.*

28 The story of Hannah in 1 Sam 1–2 revolves around the vow made by the mother-to-be. As has recently been written, the biblical passage seems to show that rather than depending on the prayer of her husband or on priestly mediation, Hannah initiates her own bargain with Yahweh. See on this Ruth Fidler, "A Wife's Vow – The Husband's Woe? The Case of Hannah and Elkanah (I Samuel 1,21.23)," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 118 (2006): 374–88.

29 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.9 (CSEL 29, 255): *mandato primogenito in statione templi.*

30 Wilkinson, "The Elder Melania's Missing Decade," 180.

31 Wilkinson, "The Elder Melania's Missing Decade," 181.

32 Or, as Peter Brown argued, Melania the Elder never sold up her estates. Instead, she managed them carefully "in such a way as to provide a steady flow of funds to the Holy Land for decades on end" (Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012], 277).

33 Wilkinson, "The Elder Melania's Missing Decade," 181.

Paulinus, albeit unwillingly, let us know: "though she had crowds of very influential and affectionate relatives at Rome, she thought it right to entrust her child to none of them for the proverbial rearing, tutoring, and protecting."[34] Then he adds:

> Melania had many struggles, too, with the hate-filled dragon during her training for this service, because the envy of the spiteful enemy did not allow her to depart without difficult in peace. The devil attempted, through the utmost pressure of her noble relatives, whom he equipped to detain her, to block her design and prevent her from going. But she was lent strength superior to the power of the tempters. She gladly threw off the bonds of human love with the ropes of the ship, as all wept.[35]

Despite it all, Melania eventually managed to reach Jerusalem, without necessarily having to forget Publicola.

We do not know which guardian Melania entrusts her son to, but he seems not to be a member of her family. Melania is of noble lineage, like Elizabeth, but it is not to that bond that she can cling. Her widowhood forces her to act differently, if she really wants to secure her son's future and at the same time not give up her ascetic choice. In this respect, Melania did not follow the socially recognized line—and indeed the relatives do not seem to like it. Melania's action, as described by Paulinus, is not presented as particularly unusual: clashes within the family are commonplace even in late antique literature. What is striking in Melania's case, however, is the strategy employed. Her intended break-up is not immediate or violent; on the contrary, it takes time, a long time, certainly longer than it would have taken Melania if she had decided to rely on her family. Melania the Elder does not reject the family *per se* but makes a distinction within the legitimate family. In Melania's ordinary life the conflict arises from the contradiction between the theoretical definition and the actual definition of the potential ally. Theoretically, for a widowed woman, however high-ranking, the main ally is the family; in this case, the best ally turns out to be another one. In other words, there is a given kinship and a useful kinship, all to be built up.[36] Both have their benefits, but building

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34 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.9 (CSEL 29, 256): *quod in magna licet potentissimorum et carorum propinquorum Romae copia nemimi paruulum suum uerbo, ut dici solet, alendum erudiendum tuendum mandare dignata est.*

35 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 29.10 (CSEL 29, 257): *Multa illi et in ipsius huius militiae rudimentis aduersus draconem inuidum fuere certamina; non enim passa est liuidi hostis inuidia facili illam et pacato abire digressu; sed tota nobilium propinquorum potentia ad retinendum armata propositum inpedire et eunti obstare conatus est. Sed illa ultra uirtutem temptationum iam confortata et corporeae pietatis uincula et nauem cunctis flentibus laeta soluit.*

36 On the social implication of this contrast see, e.g. Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociologie Générale*, vol. 2: *Cours au Collège de France, 1983–1986* (Paris: Raisons d'agir/Seuil, 2016), 647.

the new network takes time, especially to a widowed woman who faces obstructionism from other male family members.

And indeed the blood family was able to reunite when Paulinus received Melania at Nola in 400 on her return to Italy from the Holy Land. Those of Melania's family who are likely to have assembled with her at Nola in the spring of that year include her son Publicola with his wife Albina, their daughter, and Melania the Younger—and perhaps the latter's husband Pinianus.[37]

3 Melania the Younger

Around 405, shortly after that family reunion in Nola, Publicola died.[38] It is at this very point that the second Melania, the granddaughter of Melania the Elder and the daughter of Valerius Publicola, comes out of anonymity, proposing a radical change of life. The intentions of Melania the Younger were manifested for the first time while her father was still alive. And despite his mother's example—or perhaps because of it—Publicola had at first opposed his daughter's desire for ascetic way of life. In this he was certainly supported by the younger Melania's husband, Pinianus, who insisted that they have two children to inherit their wealth and property. The marriage of Melania the Younger is a significant event in the history of Roman senatorial aristocracy because, as Elizabeth Clark recently stated, "the marriage of Melania and Pinian[us] in about 399 thus brought about a reunion of two sides of a noble family, the Valerii."[39] The bride and the groom, in fact, belonged to two different branches of the Valerii. Melania the Elder came from the *gens* Antonia, Melania the Younger's mother, Albina, was of the Ceionii Rufii, a family that held the position of prefect of Rome for generations. Valerius Pinianus, Melania the Younger's husband (and cousin), was a member of the *gens* Valerii Severii.[40]

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37 See Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 207.

38 The date of Publicola's death, as well as the whole chronology of events in his life is still debated. Paulinus records his death in *Ep.* 45 (dated to 408 by Fabre, *Essai sur la chronologie*, 69), while Publicola's name does not appear among the family members of Melania the Elder listed in *Carm.* 21, which is dated to 407. The editor of the Latin version of the *Life of Melania* (the Younger) thus proposes 405: see Patrick Laurence, ed., *Gerontius: La Vie latine de sainte Melanie* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2002), 34.

39 Elizabeth A. Clark, *Melania the Younger: From Rome to Jerusalem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 50.

40 See Clark, *Melania the Younger*, 50.

The marriage took place when Melania was thirteen or fourteen years old, while her betrothed, the *consularis* Pinianus, was seventeen years old. If we are to believe the author of the *Life of Saint Melania the Younger*, it would have been Melania's parents who "forced her into an early marriage."[41] Nevertheless, Melania the Younger seemed attracted to something else. As Palladius reports in his *Lausiac History*, "she was continually *stung* by the stories about her grandmother and she was chagrined that she could not cooperate with him in marriage."[42] The Greek "stung" is νυττομένη, "a term that in more literal contexts can also mean 'pierce',"[43] which implies that a strong tie is established by the biographer between the two Melanias. It is the strength of this relationship of continuity that leads Melania the Younger to propose to her husband to live chastely the marriage they have just contracted.

Up to this point, Palladius' account agrees with that of the Greek Life. But faced with Melania's stance, in the Life the "character" Pinianus reacts. While "in the beginning, [he] neither approved her proposal nor did he turn her down completely," a short time later, as if reconsidering himself a bit or having realized the impossibility of dissuading his wife from her intentions, he said: "*After* (if the Lord so desires) we have had two children who will inherit our possessions *then* we both together shall renounce the world."[44] The two adverbs in italics represent the time frame desired by the husband, who is willing to embrace the ascetic life, but only after having fulfilled the social duties of his rank. But this is not Melania's time, or at least not the time Melania seems willing to accept completely.

And indeed, Melania gave birth to a daughter—thus, she complied with her husband's demands—but the newborn baby was immediately dedicated to a life

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41 *V. Mel. Graec.* 1: μετὰ πολλῆς βίας συνάπτουσιν αὐτὴν πρὸς γάμον. For the critical edition, see: Denys Gorce, ed., *Vie de sainte Mélanie* (Paris: Cerf, 1962). Hereafter: SC 90. So here: SC 90, 130. For the English translation, see Clark, *Melania the Younger*, 199–240, here 199.

42 Pall. *H. Laus.* 61.1: ἥτις ἀεὶ τοῖς διηγήμασι τῆς ἑαυτῆς μάμμης νυττομένη, ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἐκεντρώθη ὡς μὴ δυνηθῆναι ἐξυπηρετήσασθαι τῷ γάμῳ. For the critical edition, see: Gerhardus J.M. Bartelink, ed., Palladio, *La storia Lausiaca*, (Milano: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1974). So here: ed. Bartelink, 264. For the English translation, see Cuthbert Butler, ed., *The Lausiac History of Palladius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1904), 155, emphasis added.

43 Christine Luckritz Marquis, "Namesake and Inheritance," in *Melania: Early Christianity through the Life of One Family*, eds. Catherina Michael Chin and Caroline T. Schroeder (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 34–49, here 38.

44 *V. Mel. Graec.* 1 (SC 90, 132): Ὅταν, τοῦ Κυρίου κελεύσαντος, τοὺς διαδόχους τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ἡμῖν δύο παῖδας κτησόμεθα, τότε κοινῶς ἀμφότεροι τῷ κόσμῳ ἀποτασσόμεθα. For the English translation see Clark, *Melania the Younger*, 200. Emphasis is mine. The Latin version is less precise in this respect: *V. Mel. Lat.* 1.3 (ed. Laurence, 158): *Sustine ut habeamus duos natos propter substantiarum nostrarum hereditatem et cum Dei uoluntate pariter abrenuntiemus.* On the two versions of the Life see *infra*, note 49.

of virginity:[45] "The young husband was still attracted by the splendors of the world, however, even though he was asked many times by his wife to observe chastity. But he would not consent, saying that he still wanted another child."[46]

Melania was therefore thinking of breaking off the marriage and giving up trying to reach an agreement with Pinianus, but before acting, she decided to discuss the matter with the saints.[47] Whoever these interlocutors were, the answer they gave to the young bride is unequivocal: "Wife, how do you know if you will save your husband?" (1 Cor 7:16).[48] From this point onwards, Melania's relationship with the conjugal duties of procreation—and more generally with the family—becomes frayed. The two versions of the Life give a full account of this.[49]

When she was about to give birth to her second child, the feast of Saint Lawrence arrived and, without taking any rest, she spent a whole night kneeling in her prayer room, keeping vigils. Early the next day she went with her mother to the martyr's shrine, and tearfully prayed to God that she might be freed from this world and spend the rest of her life in solitude, this being what she had longed for from the very beginning. When she returned from the shrine she went into hard labor and gave birth to a child prematurely. The child was a boy, and having been baptized, he departed for the Lord.[50] The feeling of relief that accompanies the loss of the second son is as if preceded by an ill-concealed desire to hasten his premature death. The prayer to the martyr, instead of asking for protection, seems to be aimed at obtaining liberation from social constraints through a premature birth.[51] In the Latin Life, it is above all her family that supervises her behavior

45 *V. Mel. Graec.* 1 (SC 90, 132): Καὶ δὴ τῇ βουλήσει τοῦ κρείττονος τίκτεται αὐτοῖς θυγάτηρ, ἣν εὐθέως εἰς παρθενείαν τῷ Θεῷ ἀφιέρωσαν.

46 *V. Mel. Graec.* 1 (SC 90, 132): Ὁ δὲ νεώτερος, ἔτι πρὸς τὴν κοσμικὴν δόξαν ἐπτοημένος παρεκαλεῖτο πλειστάκις ὑπ'αὐτῆς ἀγνεύειν τῷ σώματι· ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἐπένευεν λέγων ἔτι τοῦ ἑνὸς τέκνου ἐπιθυμεῖν.

47 *V. Mel. Graec.* 4 (SC 90, 132–134): καὶ ἀνακοινοῦται ἁγίοις τὸ πρᾶγμα. According to Clark, this can be a brief and oblique reference to some bishops (including the bishop of Rome?), who were told of Melania's intent by "her parents or other relatives who were eager for her to reproduce and continue the family line" (Clark, *Melania the Younger*, 28). However, the Greek text is quite clear: it is Melania herself who addresses unspecified saints (or men saints).

48 *V. Mel. Graec.* 4 (SC 90, 134): Τί γὰρ οἶδας, γύναι, εἰ τὸν ἄνδρα σώσεις;

49 According to the most accepted hypothesis—but not unequivocally proved—the oldest version of the *Life of Saint Melania the Younger* should be the Greek version and to be attributed to a certain Gerontius, a friend of the biographer known in Jerusalem. The Latin version would instead be a translation, with changes and additions to the Greek original. For a reconstruction of the dispute, which is still open, see Laurence, ed., *Gerontius*, 109–50.

50 *V. Mel. Graec.* 5 (SC 90, 134–136).

51 Pregnancy and motherhood as obstacles on the road to "female emancipation" reappear in the final part of the *Life of Saint Melania the Younger.* One of the miracles Melania was able to perform

and the observance of the "times" appropriate to a woman of her rank. Her father kept her under surveillance, often sending eunuchs to check on her, both when she went to the baths and when she stayed in her room. When they arrived, once they find her praying hard. Thus Melania, fearing that the eunuchs would rush to inform her father of behavior that was evidently not appropriate for a woman in labor, bought their silence. Shortly afterwards she gave birth to her second son, who died almost immediately.[52]

The before-and-after claimed by Pinianus in his first request finds confirmation both in the authoritative (and authoritarian) intervention of the unnamed holy men and the eunuchs, who essentially tell Melania that her socially perceived sexual identity does not allow her to refuse uncritical acceptance of the social "game rules." The solicitous intervention of the saints, authentic interpreters of the habitus of the worldly Christian, obviously plays into the hands of Pinianus, who can claim his socially recognized right to paternity. Melania has no alternative but to wait and, so to say, she is forced to *reculer pour mieux sauter.* But what at first glance seems like a great way out is, in fact, one of the privileged ways (if not the way) of being subjected to power. Waiting always implies submission, that is the recognition of an authority that can suspend the will to act of others. The time of Melania's waiting can also be quantified: it runs from her marriage to Pinianus (398) to the death of her father Publicola (405).[53] Living constantly under her father's and husband's eye, Melania has to go along with their wishes—or not contradict them too much—at least as long as they can demand their rights.

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once settled in Jerusalem has to do with childhood. Thanks to the miraculous power of a belt received in up by a "great man" (Μεγάλου ἀνδρὸς) during her stay in Egypt, Melania was able to act as if she were a midwife who is primarily concerned with alleviating the suffering of a mother. The woman in fact suffered hard labor and the fetus died in her womb: "When they arrived at the house where the dangerously ill woman was, Melania said a prayer. […] Then she removed her belt from around herself and placed it upon the woman, saying, 'I have this blessing of a great man and I believe that his prayers will cure her quickly.' At once the dead infant was delivered" (*V. Mel. Graec.* 61 [SC 90, 248]: Ὡς δὲ κατέλαβον τὸν οἶκον, ἔνθα ἡ γυνὴ ἐκινδύνευεν, ἐποίησεν εὐχήν […] καὶ λύσασα τὸ λουρίον ὃ ἦν διεζωσμένη, ἐπέθηκεν αὐτῇ λέγουσα· "Μεγάλου ἀνδρὸς ἔχω τὴν εὐλογίαν ταύτην καὶ πιστεύω ὅτι αἱ εὐχαὶ αὐτοῦ ἰῶνται αὐτὴν ἐν τάχει." Καὶ παραχρῆμα ἐξῆλθεν νεκρὸν τὸ βρέφος).

52 *V. Mel. Lat.* 5.2 (ed. Laurence, 162). A similar situation involves a paternal aunt who, having seen her wearing a rough dress for the purpose of humiliation, scolds her. Melania begs her aunt not to spread the news. See *V. Mel. Lat.* 4.2 (ed. Laurence, 162): *Quod itaque post multo tempore cognoscens amita eius, adprehensam eam coepit culpare et increpare, ei dicens non passim huiusmodi uestimentum indui oportere, ne quando cognoscerent parentes eius et obiurgarent eam et periculum pateretur.* There is no trace of this in the Greek version.

53 Publicola's death is dated by Laurence, ed., *Gerontius*, 36.

For different reasons, however, the intensity of these two controls quickly faded. The first to falter was Pinianus. As already said, Melania gave birth to the first child, but withdrew her from worldly life; the second child died prematurely. This is followed by the death of the infant daughter as well.[54] At this point, Pinianus began to resign himself to his wife's timing. Everything suddenly accelerated with the death of Publicola: "After the man died, they immediately felt free of fear and left the great city of Rome and went to her suburban villa. There they spent their time training themselves in the exercise of virtue."[55] In other words, it is only when her father died—and with her husband's consent—that Melania could bring about her symbolic revolution, which allowed her to be seen with different eyes. It was at this moment that Pinianus said: "From the time we gave our word to God and began our chaste life, I have considered you as I consider your holy mother Albina."[56] Melania's transformation was finally complete, to the point that when they embarked together on their slow journey to Jerusalem,[57] passing through a visit to the monks of Egypt, "the most holy fathers received the blessed woman like a man."[58]

If it is true that "motherhood capital" provides a conceptual language to describe "how mothers do so as an individualized coping strategy" in order to "transform domestic care work into a cultural resource to facilitate institutional negotiations outside the home space,"[59] in Melania the Younger's case this takes shape in the control of female (and mother) time. Maternal care thus takes on a political significance. Melania the Younger's mobilization is intended to subvert the rules of the game, but once again—as in the case of her grandmother Melania—this gesture must be oblique and act on something as intangible as the control of time.

54 *V. Mel. Graec.* 6 (SC 90, 136).

55 *V. Mel. Graec.* 7 (SC 90, 138–140): Ταῦτα δὲ μετὰ πολλῆς εὐφροσύνης ἀκούσαντες, λοιπὸν μετὰ τὴν ἐν Κυρίῳ κοίμησιν αὐτοῦ εὐθέως ἄδειαν λαβόντες ἐξῆλθον τῆς μεγάλης πόλεως Ῥώμης, καὶ ἐν τοῖς προαστείοις αὐτῆς σχολάζοντες ἐκεῖ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐργάζεσθαι ἐπαιδεύοντο. The translation by Clark is here a bit loose (the word "villa," for example, does not appear), but the sense is not altered.

56 *V. Mel. Graec.* 8 (SC 90, 142): Ἐξ ὅτε λόγον δεδώκαμεν τῷ Θεῷ καὶ τῆς ἁγνείας ἐνηρξάμεθα, ὡς τὴν ἁγίαν Ἀλβίναν τὴν μητέρα σου, οὕτως σε θεωρῶ.

57 See on this Roberto Alciati and Mariachiara Giorda, "Possessions and Asceticism: Melania the Younger and her Slow Way to Jerusalem," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 14 (2010): 425–44.

58 *V. Mel. Graec.* 39 (SC 90, 200): τὴν μακαρίαν ὡς ἄνδρα δέχονται οἱ τῶν ἐκεῖσε ἁγιώτατοι πατέρες.

59 Ming-Cheng M. Lo, "Cultural Capital, Motherhood Capital, and Low-income Immigrant Mothers' Institutional Negotiations," *Sociological Perspectives* 59 (2016): 694–713, here 709. This article obviously deals with a period far away from Melania's Rome, but the theoretical question raised in these pages is not at all alien to what is described in the *Life of Saint Melania the Younger.*

4 Conclusions

The ascetic option of the two Melanias has often been analyzed in theological and economic terms. Selling everything, as Peter Brown so aptly summarized when talking about Melania the Elder, often means selling slowly.[60] This slowness, however, is not only due to the fact that the first Melania has a child to look after while the second does not.[61] Melania the Younger's children die prematurely, but their sudden disappearance does not allow her to accelerate her planned symbolic revolution within the family of senatorial rank. There are other obstacles in her way, and they do not look like children, but like the dominant male. Male conception of time seems unbreakable, especially when it concerns the lives of the women. These men, although secondary protagonists in the hagiographies of the two Melanias, act however as the ones who hold back. Only men have the power that holds back the triumph of female ascetic way of life. Therefore, the male power slows down the female asceticism. In the case of Melania the Elder, it is the surviving family man, her son, who stands in the way; the mother Melania, wanting neither to abandon nor forget him, is forced to postpone her plans for emancipation. For Melania the Younger, on the other hand, there are two men – her father and her husband – whom she does not want to support but feels compelled to do so. Both women therefore adopt a wait-and-see strategy, prolonging their stay in Rome, accepting the rules of the social game and preparing themselves as best they can to be able to self-determine in the future. Once the Elder has achieved her goals and overcame family obstacles the Younger (with the death of her father and the surrender of her husband) begins a new life. This new condition is marked by two evident features: an increased mobility—both women in fact go to the East, to Egypt and Palestine—and being seen as similar to men.

However, there is one element that differentiates the two women. If the reconstructions of those who see the move to Rome as a way of guaranteeing a future for her son (but also for herself, through him) worthy of the family rank are reliable, Melania the Elder never opposes social conventions head-on. Melania the Younger, on the contrary, seems to know that her mother (and also her grandmother) was not free. She sees the small, constrained, female lives and she does not want to be her mother and grandmother. Melania the Younger resented her mother and tried not to become very much like her. To inherit is to incur a debt to tradition. But to inherit takes time, the time of the world conforming to this same tradition. Melania the Elder decides to take on this debt, waiting for and not opposing

60 Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 169.

61 So we read, for example, in Clark, *Melania the Younger*, 87.

the time that she no longer feels is hers. She keeps to the feminine time that tradition imposes. Melania the Younger, on the other hand, is not as willing as her grandmother to wait so long. She speeds up and tries to shorten time.

Finally, a more general consideration. As mentioned at the beginning, the only data we know about the existence of the two Melanias come from literary texts. This is certainly a problem. The traditional reading of the *Life of Melania the Younger*, for example, sees the action of the heroine against the world around her and in which she is immersed. Although this can be demonstrated through the more or less extensive biographical accounts in the Lives of Melania the Younger, Paulinus of Nola, and Palladius, we should be cautious not to draw hasty conclusions. In this respect, we do not know what the two Melanias did, but at the same time we cannot go so far as to deny entirely the possibility of attaining "objective truth." Instead, we can say that what we read in these pages is the result of a "normalization" of the clash made by the authors of these texts.[62] Yet the reconstruction offered in all of these biographic trajectories allows us to see that among the many obstacles they encountered there is also the course of the social χρόνος in late antique society.

62 I have dealt with these aspects in Roberto Alciati, "La genesi del campo ascetico-monastico nella *Vita Melaniae*," in *Pierre Bourdieu. Il campo religioso: con due esercizi*, eds. Roberto Alciati and Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli (Torino: Accademia University Press, 2012): 183–218.

Stavroula Constantinou

Mothers' Time: The Temporality of Motherhood in the *Life of Martha* and the *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*

1 Introduction

Mothers and motherhood, either physical or spiritual, are central in Byzantine Greek hagiography.[1] There is an extremely large number of texts belonging to different narrative hagiographical genres: Passions, saints' Lives, Collections of Beneficial Tales, and Miracle Collections in which mothers are central figures acting as narrative agents, namely as authorial characters whose mothering and actions determine the development of both their children and the plot. The mothers appearing most commonly in hagiographical narratives are those who give birth, nurture, and bring up the (saintly) protagonist who is mainly a man.[2] In fact, male hagiography, the texts commemorating holy men, pay special attention to the heroes' mothers whose role to their sons' sanctification is presented as instru-

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1 For spiritual motherhood in female monastic contexts, see Stavroula Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances: Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2005), 151–57, and Stavroula Constantinou, "Monastic 'Gynealogy': The Maternal-Feminine Structure of Byzantine Women's Asceticism," in *Rethinking Gender in Orthodox Christianity*, eds. Ashley Purpura, Thomas Arentzen and Susan Ashbrook Harvey (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2023): 88–103. For Syriac hagiography, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Sacred Bonding: Mothers and Daughters in Early Syriac Hagiography," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4/1 (1996): 27–56.

2 Concerning saints' Lives in particular, see the discussion of mothering practices in texts dating from the sixth to the eleventh centuries in Despoina Ariantzi, *Kindheit in Byzanz: Emotionale, geistige und materielle Entwicklung im familiären Umfeld vom 6. biz zum 11. Jahrhundert* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 51–168. See also Peter Hatlie, "Images of Motherhood and Self in Byzantine Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 63 (2009): 41–57, 50–51.

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mental. Mothers of women saints, on the other hand, are less frequently present in female hagiography, the texts devoted to holy women,[3] in which fathers often take the lead.[4]

Mothers other than those of saints that are depicted in hagiography undertake various roles: they take care of martyrs' wounds (e. g. Theodote in the *Passion of Anastasia the Widow,* chapter 19); they are the (former) wives of holy men (e. g. Athanasia in Daniel of Sketis' *Narration* "Andronikos and His Wife Athanasia");[5] they promote the saintly protagonists' veneration (e. g. the abbess Bryene in the *Passion and Life of Febronia*);[6] and they are beneficiaries of miracles (e. g. mothers in the *Miracle Collection of Artemios*, miracles 11, 24, 28, 31, 36). Since virginity is the ideal for female holiness, there are only a few women who before entering holy orders marry and give birth to children. I would call the holy women whose sanctity is constructed through the repression of physical motherhood "saintly mothers." Two cases in point are saints Matrona and Theodora of Thessalonike. The first abandons her daughter Theodote to enter holy orders as a man called Babylas. The latter suppresses her feelings towards her daughter Theopiste while the two women lead the nun's life within the same monastery.

As for the women who are sanctified through motherhood and whom I would label "maternal saints," these are even fewer. There is just a couple of women who achieve the status of holiness because they give birth, breastfeed, and bring up future saints. These are: Sophia, the mother of the virgin martyrs Agape, Pistis, and Elpida and Martha, the mother of Symeon Stylite the Younger. Sophia is not even commemorated in a separate hagiographical text, but within the context of her daughters' Passion narrative. As for Martha, she is the only maternal saint who

3 The division of hagiography into two subgenres, male and female, has been introduced by me in Stavroula Constantinou, "Subgenre and Gender in Saints' Lives," in *Les Vies des Saints à Byzance: Genre littéraire ou biographie historique? Actes du II^e^ colloque international sur la littérature byzantine. Paris, 6–8 juin 2002*, eds. Paolo Odorico and Panagiotis A. Agapitos (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2004): 411–23; see also Constantinou, *Female Corporeal*, 11–18.

4 For the role of fathers in early Byzantine hagiography, see Fotis Vasileiou, *Ποιμένας ή Τύραννος: Ο Πατέρας στη Χριστιανική Λογοτεχνία της Ύστερης Αρχαιότητας* (Athens: Αρμός, 2013).

5 Athanasia's motherly feelings are examined in Andria Andreou, "'Emotioning' Gender: Plotting the Male and the Female in Byzantine Greek Passions and Lives of Holy Couples," in *Emotions and Gender in Byzantine Culture*, eds. Stavroula Constantinou and Mati Meyer (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 35–64, 37–44.

6 For a discussion of Bryene's (motherly) treatment of Febronia, see Stavroula Constantinou, "Rewriting Beauty and Youth in Female Martyr Legends," in *"Pour une poétique de Byzance": Hommage à Vassilis Katsaros,* eds. Stéphanos Efthymiadis, Charis Messis, Paolo Odorico and Ioannis Polémis (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2015): 99–112.

is the protagonist of a free-standing Life, a rather long anonymous Life that is dated to the seventh century. She features prominently also in the first part of her son's Life, which covers the first six years of his life that is the time before he starts his monastic career on the "Wonderful Mountain." The anonymous *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger* was probably composed earlier than that of Martha, at some point between the sixth and seventh century.[7]

As an important role that operates under various guises and that carries different characteristics, hagiographical motherhood deserves a thorough study that promises the most valuable results.[8] For the purposes of this rather short contribution, my discussion shall be based on the figure of Martha as depicted in the two aforesaid Lives: the *Life of Martha* (hereafter *LM*) and the *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger* (hereafter *LSSY*).[9] These texts are supplementary in many respects, yet what concerns me here is their complementarity in the construction of Martha's maternal holiness. Space allows me to only touch upon the issue of mother's time that, as I will show, is integral to the construction of maternal holiness which is inextricably related to both linear and circular time, as well as to the ἔσχατον, the end of time. My approach to mother's time is informed by the work of the famous contemporary thinker, Julia Kristeva,[10] especially two of her essays: "Women's Time"—that is where my own title ("Mothers' Time") comes from—and "Stabat Mother."[11] Following Kristeva, I will also bring to the fore the inseparability of the maternal saint's time from space: the space she inhabits and the locus she becomes from which time unfolds.

In her 1979 essay "Women's Time," Kristeva argues that female subjectivity is traditionally divided between cyclical, natural time (repetition, gestation, the biological clock) and monumental time (eternity, myths of resurrection, the cult of maternity). These modalities are set off against the time of linear history that has been treated as man's domain. Kristeva turns to the maternal body to "free"

7 The two texts' chronology is discussed in Paul van den Ven, ed., *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592)* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1962 and 1970), 1: 124*–30*.

8 I intend to investigate this topic systematically within the framework of a future research project.

9 Both texts are edited by van den Ven, ed., *La vie ancienne.*

10 For an introduction to Kristeva's work, see Stacey K. Keltner, *Kristeva* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

11 First published as "Le Temps des femmes," *Cahiers de recherche de sciences des textes et documents* 5 (1979): 5–19, the first essay was translated by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake as Kristeva, "Women's Time." The second essay was first published as Julia Kristeva, "Héréthique de l'amour," *Tel Quel* 74 (1977): 30–49. In 1983, it was reprinted as "Stabat Mater" in Julia Kristeva, *Histoires d'amour* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), 234–63. The English translation used here is from Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *Poetics Today* 6/1–2 (1985): 133–52.

woman from her patriarchal reduction to the mother's role which prevents her from acting outside home and from assuming power and authority. By bringing the mother to the fore, Kristeva provides women with a past (a genealogy of their own, a community of women, a history hitherto repressed) and, simultaneously, with a future (in the sense of liberating them from predefined roles and positions). In fact, the maternal body to which Kristeva turns is a feminized version of the Platonic χώρα where time and space merge.[12]

In "Stabat Mother," published in 1977, two years before "Womens' Time," Kristeva is preoccupied with the figure of the mother as both human and divine, as Eve and Virgin Mary, to rethink the relationship between corporeality and temporality. The two parallel columns in the pages of the "Stabat Mater" essay—one depicting the lived and embodied (three-dimensional) experience of motherhood as voiced by Kristeva herself, the other unraveling and deconstructing an idealized (two-dimensional) image of Maternity—represent the two versions of time: the rhythmic volume and the evolutive line, which coexist in women through maternity. As the following discussion will hopefully manifest, Kristeva's matrilineal conception of time finds its full application in the figure of Martha, as depicted in the first part of Symeon's Life and in the Life exclusively dedicated to her.

2 The *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*

Let's start from our older Byzantine text, which presents an earlier stage of Martha's life absent from her Life and which concerns her impregnation, birth-giving, breastfeeding, and upbringing of Symeon until he enters holy orders. The narrative begins with a reference to time. This is a linear time that is initially a man's time. The opening sentence of the Life's first chapter reads as follows: "*In the previous years and not long before this time*, a man called John from the city of Edessa, and while being still of young age, moved with his most honoured parents to the great city of Antiochos."[13]

This John, who is the future father of Symeon, soon loses his central role and agency to Martha. In fact, at the very time John performs a fathering role, he disappears from the narrative. The Life's second chapter opens too with a time reference which introduces Martha as the new protagonist of the narrative by establishing her own spatio-temporality:

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12 Kristeva, "Women's Time," 16.

13 *LSSY* 1,1–4: *Ἐν τοῖς μικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν χρόνοις* ἀνήρ τις τοὔνομα Ἰωάννης ὁρμώμενος ἐκ τῆς Ἐδεσηνῶν μητροπόλεως ἔτι νέαν ἄγων τὴν ἡλικίαν τὴν Ἀντιόχου μεγαλόπολιν σὺν τοῖς αὐτοῦ τιμιωτάτοις γονεῦσιν (emphasis added). Translations are my own.

> *As time passes thus*, […] being aware of the destruction of her virginity's beauty, Martha goes to […] the church of John the saintly prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist pleading him to intercede to God so that she might receive the gift of parenthood. […] And she awaits *long* enough in this holy church asking with tears for this gift, staying without food […] and sitting on the ground where she takes her sleep.[14]

In the time that follows her unwanted wedding, Martha's bodily situation changes: she loses her virginity and acquires a sexualized body. The first sentences of *LSSY*'s second chapter narrate a decisive moment in Martha's life. This is the point at which she becomes a subject by realizing her current situation, an awareness that becomes possible through looking both to her past and future. She thinks of her past purity and imagines a future as a mother that would allow her to make up for her lost bodily integrity. In an attempt to control her present and future, she undertakes immediate action. She enters and inhabits the sacred space of John the Baptist's church where she engages in ascetic practices, thus orienting her life towards reconstituting a past she was unable to control by seeking a future in motherhood, a state that could be her own. In her repeated asceticism, human time is associated with a cosmic time pointing back to a virginal origin and forward to an end of times. By suppressing her bodily needs and wholly devoting herself to prayer and the tears of repentance, Martha is in fact trying to reverse time: she looks forward to the τέλος of redemption, to the last cosmic days, and backwards to the incarnation and to the time before material creation.

After spending enough time in the church, Martha is deemed worthy of saint John's visitation who orders her to take the incense he offers her and burn it in her house until no incense is left. Martha follows the saint's orders and in so doing transforms her house into a sacred space emitting an otherworldly smell. At the end of the day, when there is almost no incense left, Martha returns to the church where she receives another amount of incense which she burns the next day. She goes back to the church and the whole procedure is repeated again and again, giving the impression that it could be prolonged to eternity. Martha's continuous movement between the same spaces – from her house to the church and from the church to the house, and back again – is interrupted in the next chapter, which opens thus: "After some time […] passed…"[15] By now Mar-

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14 *LSSY* 2,1–11: *Χρόνου τοίνυν διαδραμόντος*, […] θεασαμένη τὸ καλλώπισμα τῆς παρθενίας αὐτῆς διαλυθὲν […] τῷ […] οἴκῳ τοῦ ἁγίου προφήτου προδρόμου καὶ βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου δυσωποῦσα γονὴν αὐτῇ διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ πρεσβείας ὑπὸ Θεοῦ δωρηθῆναι […]. καὶ προσκαρτερεῖ *ἐπὶ χρόνον* ἱκανὸν τῷ αὐτῷ πανσέπτῳ οἴκῳ σὺν δάκρυσιν ἱκετεύουσα περὶ τούτου, οὐδενὸς τὸ παράπαν ἀπογευομένη […] ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τε τοῦ ἐδάφους καθεζομένη καὶ τὸν φυσικὸν διανύουσα ὕπνον (emphasis added).
15 *LSSY* 3,1: Χρόνου δέ τινος […] διαδραμόντος.

tha is back in the church to collect another portion of incense. But she receives saint John's second visitation instead. This time the saint orders her to return home, yet not in order to perform another liturgical ritual, but to have intercourse with her husband. He also foretells the birth of a son ordering her to call him Symeon, to breastfeed him only from the right breast, and to arrange his christening when he turns two years old.

Without losing any time, Martha returns home, has intercourse with her husband whom she had previously convinced to keep a more chaste marriage, and conceives thereafter. From that moment on, Martha follows the timing of her pregnant body, being extremely careful not to harm the fetus. According to the omniscient narrator, when her due date arrives she gives a painless birth.[16] Towards the end of the first part of Symeon's Life, Martha receives a divine dream foretelling both her own future holiness and that of Symeon. In this very dream, she sees herself flying in the air holding her child and saying: "It is my desire to see your divine ascend, my child, and then God will release me in peace, since I have been rewarded among women for offering the pains of my labour to the Highest God."[17]

The fact that Martha's birth, like that of the Virgin Mary, is viewed as painless by the hagiographer-narrator reflects our civilization's paradox concerning "maternality" as identified by Kristeva in "Stabat Mater." On the one hand, there is the most idealized and fantasmatic mother that is epitomized by the Virgin Mary to whom our author often likens Martha. On the other hand, there is what Kristeva herself refers to as "the real experience that fantasy overshadows,"[18] namely Martha's own bodily and emotional experience of birth-giving, breastfeeding, and mothering. In Kristeva's words, the hagiographer-narrator's approach represents a "masculine appropriation of the Maternal" integral to "masculine sublimation."[19] In other words, Symeon's Life constitutes a sixth-century illustration of what Kristeva tries to do through "Stabat Mater," that is to incorporate the two diametrical articulations of motherhood which have dominated Western discourse: the fantasmatic idealization of motherhood and its bodily experience.

16 *LSSY* 3: Τοῦ δὲ χρόνου περαιωθέντος, τίκτει ἡ τιμιωτάτη γυνή, οὐ πάνυ τῶν ἀλγηδόνων αὐτῇ ἐπιτιθεμένων.

17 *LSSY* 8,6 – 9: Ἐπεθύμουν ἰδεῖν σου τὴν θείαν ἀνάβασιν, ὦ τέκνον, ὅπως ὁ Κύριος ἀπολύσῃ με τὴν δούλην αὐτοῦ ἐν εἰρήνῃ, ὅτι εὗρον χάριν ἐν γυναιξὶν ἀποδοῦναι πόνους ὠδίνων μου τῷ ὑψίστῳ.

18 Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," 133.

19 Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," 135.

3 The *Life of Martha*

The *LM* starts by introducing Martha herself and not her parents as is the case with *LSSY* and most saints' Lives.[20] Unlike most hagiographical narratives, that of Martha begins *in medias res*:[21] from the point in which the heroine receives the prophetic dream mentioned before that is repeated almost *verbatim* in her own Life, an indication that her hagiographer used Symeon's Life. Evidently, *LM* is an account of the life she leads as soon as her son departs for the "Wonderful Mountain." This third phase of her life is structured around the cyclical time of liturgy: "Throughout the year, she did not refrain from evening and morning prayers, seeking eagerly the night vigils that were performed in commemoration of the martyrs."[22]

As was the case with Martha's pre-maternal asceticism in Symeon's Life, in her continuous participation in church rituals human time is interlinked with cosmic time, pointing back to a beginning and forward to an end. By commemorating the martyrs, she continues a tradition that recalls the origins of the Church and looks to the Second Coming.

Apart from participation in liturgy, Martha's human time in her Life is devoted to teachings and philanthropy. Her teachings are mostly addressed to Symeon and his fellow-monks. As for her philanthropic works, she provides clothing for poor children at baptism, tends to the sick and supplies food and clothing for the poor, arranges the funerals of dying strangers, tends to demoniacs, and takes care of the pilgrims and monks at her son's monastery. Martha's philanthropic work, apart from reflecting a mother's role, is strongly associated with church rituals, such as baptisms and funerals, allowing thus an experience of both the linear time of human life and the cyclical time of ritual. Yet, the account of Martha's works is not combined with any indications of time. In fact, they are frozen in time. Linear time is reconstituted when Martha's life reaches its earthly end, that is, a year before she dies. From *LM's* eleventh chapter, when the time that is left until Martha's death is revealed to the heroine, and up to the point of her actual death in chapter 27, there are precise references to time in the form they

20 Thomas Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2005), 56–80.
21 The uniqueness of Martha's Life is discussed in Lucy Parker, "Paradigmatic Piety: Liturgy in the *Life of Martha*, Mother of Symeon Stylites the Younger," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 24/1 (2016): 99–125.
22 *LM* 3,7–10: Ἐν ὅλοις δὲ τοῖς χρόνοις αὐτῆς λυχνικῶν καὶ ἑωθινῶν οὐκ ἀπελιμπάνετο, σπεύδουσα μάλιστα εἰς τὰς νυκτερινὰς διαγρηγορήσεις τὰς γινομένας ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων μνήμαις.

are given in the first part of Symeon's Life discussed earlier. If we zoom in time references from chapter 11 to chapter 27, we come up with the following list:

1. "One day just a year before her death…" (*LM* 11,1–2: Ἐν μιᾷ οὖν τῶν ἡμερῶν πρὸ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐνὸς τῆς πρὸς Θεὸν ἐκδημίας αὐτῆς …).
2. "The blessed Martha said […] 'Three months are left to me in this life'" (*LM* 13,2–6: ἡ μακαρία Μάρθα, εἶπε […] Τρεῖς γάρ μοι μῆνες μόνοι ὑπολελειμμένοι εἰσὶ τοῦ βίου τούτου).
3. "The next day…" (*LM* 15,1: Τῇ δὲ ἑξῆς ἡμέρᾳ…).
4. "And on the same night…" (*LM* 16,1: Καὶ ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἐκείνῃ…).
5. "From now and until the end of time…" (*LM* 17,21: ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα…).
6. "These she explained on a Sunday when she stayed praying […] on Monday she invited the brothers" (*LM* 19,1–2; 3–4: Ταῦτα ἐξηγησαμένη ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κυριακῆς, ἔμεινε προσευχομένη […] τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ δευτέρᾳ προσκαλεσαμένη τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς).
7. "Having prayed thus, she turned to the saint (Symeon) […] and told him: 'Behold, the day of my death has arrived'" (*LM* 24,1–4: Ταῦτα προσευξαμένη, ἐστράφη πρὸς τὸν ἅγιον· […] καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Ἰδοὺ ἡ ἡμέρα παρέστηκεν τῆς πρὸς Κύριον ἐκδημίας μου).
8. "She stayed there on that day, which was a Monday" (*LM* 26,16–17: ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην οὖσαν δευτέραν).
9. "On Tuesday […]. After two days […] they transferred her to Daphne. […] After some time passed, […] she gave her soul to the angels' hands" (*LM* 27,1; 11–12; 13–14: Τῇ δὲ τρίτῃ […]. μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας […] ἀπήγαγον ἐν Δάφνῃ. […] Βραχείας δὲ ὥρας διαδραμούσης, […] τὴν ψυχὴν παρέδωκεν ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἀγγέλων χερσίν).

In narrative terms, there are different temporal variations within the time span of Martha's last year. Firstly, narrative time slows down with detailed descriptions and accounts of Martha's activities; then, narrative speeds up through summaries. Finally, narrative time decelerates once again to allow a more detailed presentation of the heroine's last days and moments. As the narrative accelerates, we realise that Martha's final twelve months are shortened into just three months, a period during which she intensifies her movements in space from the monastery of Symeon on the "Wonderful Mountain" to the church of saint John the Forerunner in Daphne. The time she spends with her son is prolonged having thus an effect on narrative time that slows down.

It is during the teachings of the heroine's last three months that she is once again reminded of her birth-giving and maternal spatio-temporality. She says to Symeon: "*Just three months* have been left to me in this life and I will depart to

the Lord, my God Who created you and chose you from the unworthiness of my birth labour."[23]

Her words highlight the function of her maternal body as a Kristevan χώρα, namely as spatial and temporal at once. She has been selected to become the space where a new life could be generated, but not without bodily pain. The painless birth in *LSSY* is here transformed into a painful labour, highlighting the materiality of the maternal body. Time allowed the development of the fetus in her womb. When the baby was born, a full human being, her maternal time gave another birth, this time to a pious boy with a future in sanctity that has no time. At the same time, the two births of Symeon as a baby and as saint marked also Martha's own birth as a maternal saint.

Two chapters later, narrative time is accelerated once more. Martha's final three months are condensed into some days in which the heroine continues her teachings to her son: "My child, as a sinner and humble person, I am telling you what I owe to tell you. You deserve to be honoured by the most honoured whom you have always honoured by co-crucifying yourself from infancy."[24]

Despite her articulate humbleness, or rather because of it, Martha's spiritual superiority to her son is clearly manifested. She knows her own and Symeon's future before him. What renders Martha superior to her son, whose ascetic life begins from his early years, is her experience of motherhood which proves more valuable than her former virginity. Motherhood enables her to create two saints —she and her son; virginity would only allow for one saint.

Two days before Martha's death, references to time become even concreter: it is a Sunday, then a Monday, and she dies on a Tuesday. Yet, Martha's death marks the beginning of new rituals and a new life. Martha is initially buried in Daphne and subsequently reburied on the "Wonderful Mountain," the places she inhabits during her earthly life. Her burials and the commemoration rituals that follow take place in a precise timeframe. Martha's new life is that of a miracle-worker and an intercessor between earth and heaven through dreams and visions. *LM* ends by pointing to a future beyond the narrative in which more miracles and visions of Martha are performed. Just as was the case during her earthly life, Martha is omnipresent in Symeon's monastery also in her afterlife. Posthumously, her previously earthly maternal body is transformed into an exalted corpus of divine revelation.

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23 *LM* 13,5–8: *Τρεῖς γάρ μοι μῆνες* μόνοι ὑπολελειμμένοι εἰσὶ τοῦ βίου τούτου, καὶ πορεύσομαι πρὸς Κύριον τὸν Θεόν μου τὸν ποιήσαντά σε καὶ ἐκλεξάμενόν σε ἐκ τῆς ἀναξιότητος τῶν ὠδίνων μου (emphasis added).

24 *LM* 14,13–16: ἐγὼ μὲν γάρ, τέκνον, ὡς ἁμαρτωλὴ καὶ ταπεινὴ λέγω τὸ κεχρεωστημένον μοι· σοὶ δὲ ἡ τιμὴ πρέπει ἐκ τοῦ τετιμημένου, ὃν ἐτίμησας ἀεὶ συσταυρωθεὶς αὐτῷ νηπιόθεν.

4 Concluding Remarks

Kristeva believes that the representations of woman and motherhood can be changed through the power of texts, such as her "Stabat Mater" which expresses in one of the most eloquent and graphic ways the mother's spatio-temporality, her contributions to culture within the framework of both linear and cyclical time. As I have attempted to show in my analysis of the *LSSY* and its twin text, the *LM* from the perspective of mother's time, both texts have the power to create the new ethics, "herethics" that Kristeva envisions in which mothers' relation to children are taken into account. Martha's figure and her sanctification as a mother create what Kristeva aims at producing: a discourse on maternity that provides women, but also culture, with a true past and future.

Aglae Pizzone

Girls, Interrupted: Synchronicity and Genealogy in Tzetzes' *Hypomnema* for Saint Lucy

1 Introduction

Although hagiographical production in the twelfth century has been described as "disappointing,"[1] a number of prominent Constantinopolitan literati tried their hand at the genre, producing rhetorically sophisticated texts.[2] The *hypomnema*[3] for St. Lucy of Syracuse by John Tzetzes belongs in this group. While prose is not the medium of choice for Tzetzes, who felt most comfortable in writing dodecasyllables and political verses, the text he delivers offers a very personal and innovative take on the narrative of the saint patroness of Syracuse. The text was probably composed in the 1150s, in a period of less tense relationship between the Byzantine and the Norman power ruling over Sicily. As shown recently by Hannah Ewing, Tzetzes strives to find a common cultural ground bridging different traditions.[4] Time and gender play a central role in Tzetzes' retelling. In this contribution I will first focus on St. Lucy's hagiographical corpus and the narrative structure of the earlier Passions, to show how Tzetzes builds on earlier narrative patterns and

1 Symeon A. Paschalidis, "The Hagiography of the Eleventh and Twelfth Century," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* 1, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011): 143–71, 141.

2 Paschalidis, "The Hagiography," 157–60.

3 The text is edited with Latin translation in Giuseppe Sola, "Ioannis Tzetzis Hypomnema et S. Methodii patriarchae Canon in S. Luciam," *Roma e L'Oriente* 14 (1917): 42–50; 15 (1918): 48–53; 16 (1918): 106–15; 17 (1919): 90–105. A previous edition complete with scholia, possibly by Tzetzes himself, is to be found in Alexander Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia Graeca Sacra* (repr. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1975): 80–101. On this piece see Alexander Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 135 and recently Valeria F. Lovato, "Hellenizing Cato? A Short Survey of the Concepts of Greekness, Romanity and Barbarity in John Tzetzes' Work and Thought," in *Cross Cultural Exchange in the Byzantine World, c. 300–1500 A.D.*, eds. Kirsty Stewart and James M. Wakeley (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019): 143–57, footnote 24; Hannah Ewing, "Finding Byzantine-Norman Common Ground: Classics and Christianity in Tzetzes' Encomium to Loukia," in *Authorship, Worldview, and Identity in Medieval Europe*, ed. Christian Raffensperger (London: Routledge, 2022): 112–38, with a complete review of previous literature.

4 Ewing, "Finding Byzantine-Norman Common Ground."

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motives to reduce, or even cancel altogether, the distance between past and present creating what ultimately is a queer time.[5]

2 Tzetzes' *Hypomnema* Within the Hagiographical Dossier of Saint Lucy

The Greek[6] hagiographical dossier of St. Lucy has been thoroughly explored by Rossi Taibbi in 1959.[7] The most ancient version of Lucy's Passion (perhaps fifth century) is to be found in the *Passion* I BHG 995. The text is currently preserved in sixteen manuscripts, dating from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries.[8] Another version of the Passion, written according to the generic rules of the panegyric, was composed, probably in Syracuse and is dated by Rossi Taibbi around the ninth century on stylistic grounds (BHG 995d).[9] It is a more sophisticated text, featuring a range of classical quotations as well as a stronger emphasis on emotional content. Two epitomized versions of the Passion are to be found in the Constantinopolitan Synaxarium and in Basil's *Menologion*, while a third epitome was produced in Constantinople, probably at the Stoudios monastery in the ninth–tenth centuries and included in the pre-metaphrastic December *menologion.*[10] Finally we have a canon by the patriarch Methodius, preserved in the ms. Grottaferrata Δ α XIV (eleventh century), f. 100r-v and first published by Sola at the beginning of the twentieth century.[11] Methodius, a native of Sicily, contributed to reinforce the cult of Lucy in Constantinople. According to some sources, the body of the martyr, enshrined in Syracuse, was later taken to the capital, after the Byzantine temporarily regained control of the Sicilian city in 1038.[12] By the time Tzetzes wrote his piece most of the saint's remains were in any case in Constantinople.

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5 I borrow the concept from Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

6 See Mario Re, "Italo-Greek Hagiography," in Efthymiadis, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion* 1, 227–59.

7 Giuseppe Rossi Taibbi, *Martirio di Santa Lucia; Vita di Santa Marina* (Palermo: Mori e Figli, 1959).

8 Rossi Taibbi, *Martirio di Santa Lucia*, 33–42.

9 Rossi Taibbi, *Martirio di Santa Lucia*, 27–30. The text is edited in Salvatore Costanza, "Un *martyrion* inedito di Santa Lucia," *Archivio Storico Siracusano* 3 (1957): 6–53.

10 See Vincenza Milazzo and Francesca Rizzo Nervo, "Lucia tra Sicilia, Roma e Bisanzio: Itinerario di un culto (IV-IX secolo)," in *Storia della Sicilia e tradizione agiografica nella tarda antichità*, ed. Salvatore Pricoco (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 1988): 128–31.

11 Sola, "Ioannis Tzetzis."

12 See Ewing, "Finding Byzantine-Norman Common Ground," 121 and 131, footnote 68.

As mentioned above, Tzetzes' *hypomnema* is one of the author's rare prose compositions. As highlighted by Mitrea, the descriptor preserved by manuscripts, i. e. *hypomnema*, is mostly to be found for the lives of the Apostles in the metaphrastic *menologion* and points to a panegyrical narrative, a memorial of the saint.[13] In building his narrative, Tzetzes particularly relies on the oldest Passion, disregarding most of the innovations introduced by BHG 995d.

Before looking more closely at Tzetzes' *hypomnema*, I will explore the narrative organization of the two Passions.

3 Liminality and Paradox in *Passion* I and II

The story of Lucy revolves around four main narrative moments, which can be summarized as follows:

A. Lucy and her mother Eutychia travel from Syracuse to Catania, to heal the older woman from her hemorrhage. Agatha prophesizes the future martyrdom to Lucy, now Christ's bride.[14]
B. Upon returning to Syracuse, Lucy convinces his mother to sell all their estate to support the poor. Deception of Lucy's betrothed.[15]
C. The man denounces Lucy to Paschasios, a process ensues with attempts to drag Lucy to a brothel. Lucy is given immobility by God.[16]
D. The last torture is by fire, but Lucy keeps talking until she is beheaded. A temple is built around her remains.[17]

Lucy is an urban provincial saint,[18] and this has an impact also on how the narrative of the Passion is structured. On the one hand, we see an emphasis on the

13 Mihail Mitrea, "A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer: Philotheos Kokkinos and His Vitae of Contemporary Saints" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2017), 134–36.

14 *Passio* I: 50,1–54,42 ed. Rossi Taibbi; *Passio* II: 15,66–21,171 ed. Costanza. The *Passio* II (11,113,58) has a lengthy introduction on Syracuse and Lucy's family background, complete with classical references, a trait that will be further expanded by Tzetzes in his rendition of the narrative. Moreover, while *Passio* I's beginning emphasizes the continuity with the cult of Agatha, *Passio* II focuses at the beginning on traditional motif of the marriage contest to win over Lucy's hand.

15 *Passio* I: 54,43–56,68 ed. Rossi Taibbi; *Passio* II: 21,172–29,327 ed. Costanza.

16 *Passio* I: 56,69–66,161 ed. Rossi Taibbi; *Passio* II: 29,328–47,604 ed. Costanza.

17 *Passio* I: 66,162–70,197 ed. Rossi Taibbi; *Passio* II: 47,605–51,665 ed. Costanza.

18 See Mariarita Sgarlata, "La topografia martiriale di Siracusa in età bizantina," *Nea Rhome. Rivista di studi bizantinistici* 6 (2009): 171–89. See also Stephanos Efthymiadis and Nikos Kalogeras, "Audience, Language, Patronage in Byzantine Hagiography," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* 2, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014): 247–84, 253.

cultic and economic links between Syracuse and Catania: it is implied that Lucy and her mother follow a well-traveled commercial and devotional route to visit the temple of Agatha in Catania.[19] *Passion* II also stresses the refinements—to which the two women are not attracted—offered by Catania's urban context. Catania's delights, so *Passion* II, would have been enticing for any φιλοθεάμων, a term closely related to the pleasures provided by theatrical spectacles.[20] On the other hand, in the narrative time in which the martyrdom takes place, it appears that in the area of Syracuse Christian cult is confined to the countryside. *Passion* II depicts Lucy and her mother as attending mass in a temple outside the city.[21] It is only with Lucy's martyrdom that Christian cult takes hold and occupies, quite literally, the space of the city.

Papavarnavas has recently called attention to the concept of spatial liminality in early and middle Byzantine *martyrologia*, with a focus on the transitional space of the prison in hagiographical narratives.[22] The story of Lucy too is marked by liminality, but in a distinctive paradoxical way, one that affects both the spatial and the temporal dimension. The notion of threshold plays an important role in the narrative, as we shall see. Such a liminality is exploited in different ways and to different degrees in the texts of the Greek hagiographical dossier.

The fifth-century Passion capitalizes more starkly on the notion of spatial liminality, in tune with the need of circumscribing and celebrating the local dimension of the patron saint. In this respect the miracle characterizing Lucy's martyrdom, namely her immobility and the consequent metaphor related to being like a mountain[23] paves the way to the construction of her cultic space.[24] There is no room for the transitional space of the prison, as Lucy cannot be moved from where she stands. She turns herself into a threshold that anticipates the definitive space of

19 See *Passio* II: 21,166–171 ed. Costanza.

20 *Passio* II: 17,109–110 ed. Costanza, and see the use of the term in Plato, *Resp.* 475d1ff. The term was also used to denote educated pilgrims at pagan sanctuaries: see Marco Galli, "Pilgrimage as Elite *Habitus:* Educated Pilgrims in Sacred Landscape During the Second Sophistic," in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, eds. Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 253–89, 265. In this respect Lucy and her mother stand out as truly Christians also as regards the psychological disposition with which they undertake their voyage to Catania.

21 *Passio* II: 21,181–190 ed. Costanza.

22 Christodoulos Papavarnavas, *Gefängnis als Schwellenraum in der byzantinischen Hagiographie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021), esp. 24–30.

23 *Passio* I: 64,142 ed. Rossi Taibbi: ὥσπερ βουνὸς.

24 *Passio* I: 64,132–66,161 ed. Rossi Taibbi.

her shrine.[25] The body of the young martyr morphs into the cultic space that will be built on the site of the martyrdom. It is not coincidence that the last part of *Passion* I resonates heavily with 1 Cor 6:15–19:

> Do you not know that your bodies are limbs of Christ? Shall I then take the limbs of Christ and make them limbs of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.[26]

In his speech announcing Lucy's punishment and the intention of dragging her to the brothel to be publicly violated, Paschasios explicitly and paradoxically connects the saints' behavior to prostitution[27]—a point on which I will come back later on. What is paradoxical in Lucy's martyrdom is that she does not flee from sexual immorality, she does not move away from it. She becomes unmovable, providing a bodily instantiation to her contention that the inner disposition is above the suffering of the flesh:

> The body is not corrupted if the mind does not give its consent; you may put incense in my hands and make me do sacrifices with my hands, god knows everyone's intentions; for he judges conscience and turns away from whoever corrupts virtue as if from a thief and a barbarian. And even if you ordered that I be subject to violence against my will, my virtue would make the crown twice worthy.[28]

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25 *Passio* I: 66,167 ed. Rossi Taibbi: ναὸν εἶναί με Θεοῦ. A little later, at the end of the narrative we read that her temple was built in the same exact place where she was standing and there Lucy still provides grace and healing to the pilgrims (*Passio* I: 70,191–197 ed. Rossi Taibbi).

26 οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν μέλη Χριστοῦ ἐστιν; ἆρας οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνης μέλη; μὴ γένοιτο. ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνῃ ἓν σῶμά ἐστιν; Ἔσονται γάρ, φησίν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἓν πνεῦμά ἐστιν. Φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν· πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν, ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει. ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματός ἐστιν, οὗ ἔχετε ἀπὸ θεοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἑαυτῶν; Lucy alludes to the text in *Passio* I: 62,114–116 ed. Rossi Taibbi. See also Rossi Taibbi, *Martirio di Santa Lucia*, 22–23.

27 *Passio* I: 60,95–96 ed. Rossi Taibbi.

28 *Passio* I: 62,118–125 ed. Rossi Taibbi: οὐ βλάπτεται τὸ σῶμα εἰ μὴ ἀπὸ συγχαταθέσεως τοῦ νοός· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ ταῖς χερσί μου λίβανον ἐδράσῃς καὶ διὰ τῶν χειρῶν μου θυσία προσεβεχθῇ, ὁ Θεὸς οἶδεν ἑκάστου τὴν προαίρεσιν· τὴν γὰρ συνείδησιν αὐτὸς κρίνει· αὐτὸς γὰρ καὶ τὸν φθορέα τῆς σωφροσύνης ἀποστρέφεται, ὥσπερ τινὰ λῃστὴν ἢ βάρβαρον. Καὶ ἐάν με βίαν ὑπομεῖναι κελεύῃς παρὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν, ἡ σωφροσύνη διπλῶς αὐξήσει τὸν στέφανον.

Accordingly, as mentioned already, the site marked by Lucy's immobility becomes a physical instantiation of the temple evoked by Paul: "In that place, where he gave away life, a temple was founded for her, in which, through her intercession, the faithful, coming close to her corpse, obtain benefits and healing from their ailments, glorifying our Lord Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power in the ages of ages. Amen."[29]

The explicit mention of the saint's intercession further emphasizes the idea of liminality. As I mentioned above, Lucy is said to resist the attempts of moving her, ὥσπερ βουνός, like a hill or a mountain. The term suggests both stasis and a projection upwards, in contrast with the overall presentation of Lucy's journey toward sainthood as a sort of κατάβασις. Such a dimension emerges for the first time after the dream encounter with Agatha and the healing of Eutychia, when Lucy decides to devote herself to her heavenly groom and asks her mother to donate her dowry to the poor: "But what you plan to give me when I will be joined in wedlock to a mortal husband, give me that when I will depart to my immortal spouse, Jesus Christ, our Lord."[30]

The sentence has a chiastic structure – both conceptually and rhetorically. The chiasm captures the paradoxes of Lucy's narrative. The key to understanding the message conveyed by the martyr's statement is the verb ἀπέρχομαι, which broadly means to "move away" and more specifically to "leave life." In the first half of the sentence, we have a verb evoking constraint and immobility (ζεύγνυμι) and an explicit reference to human mortality, while in the second half we have a verb evoking movement and an explicit mention of divine immortality. And yet, Lucy will be able to reach her immortal state only by "departing," by going through the liminal experience of death. On the other hand, though, such a rite of passage will be accomplished by not moving, but by remaining bound to the place of the martyrdom. Interestingly, the verb ἀπέρχομαι is used another time later on in *Passion* I, when Paschasios describes the moral *descensus ad inferos* he is preparing for Lucy: "Paschasios said: I will have you depart into a life of prostitution, so that you may start a life in depravity and the holy spirit will flee away from you."[31]

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29 *Passio* I: 70,192–197 ed. Rossi Taibbi: Ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ τόπῳ, ἐν ᾧ τὸ πνεῦμα ἀπέδοτο, ᾠκοδομήθη αὐτῇ ναός· ἐν ᾧ, αὐτῆς πρεσβευούσης, εὐεργεσίαν καὶ παθῶν ἴασιν λαμβάνουσιν οἱ πίστει προσερχόμενοι τῷ λειψάνῳ αὐτῆς, δοξάζοντες τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, ᾧ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.

30 *Passio* I: 54,38–40 ed. Rossi Taibbi: Ἀλλ' ὅσαπερ ἔχεις πρόθεσιν δοῦναί μοι εἰς προῖκα ζευγνυμένῃ φθαρτῷ ἀνδρὶ, δός μοι ἀπερχομένης μου πρὸς τὸν ἀθάνατον νυμφίον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν.

31 *Passio* I: 62,116–118 ed. Rossi Taibbi: Πασχάσιος εἶπεν· ἐγώ σε ποιήσω ἀπελθεῖν ἐν τῷ κοινῷ βίῳ, ἵνα ἄρξῃ τότε μιαρῶς ζῆν, καὶ φύγῃ ἐκ σοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.

Paschasios' words adopt the point of view of the Christian martyr and echo once again Paul's warning to the Corinthians quoted above (ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἓν πνεῦμά ἐστιν. Φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν) capsizing it. The Holy Spirit will move away from Lucy, reversing the movement described in Paul's epistle.

Such an emphasis on movement and spatiality further leads to conceptual areas that have more to do with time. In this respect, time enters the story in a twofold form, namely as personal and collective temporality. The connection of the latter with space in Lucy's narrative has been spelled out by the comparatist and classical anthropologist Marxiano Melotti:

> Mobility and immobility have a special function in the mythic biography of Lucia and in the construction of her cult, as well as in the construction of her relationship with the local community. The spatial dimension implies a temporal one, which defines a diachronic relationship that builds history in that space. In other words, Lucia turned out to be unmovable since she was enrooted in the territory: a metaphor indicating the strong identity role of the saint, who takes possession of the civic space and constructs it with her special presence.[32]

What Melotti describes is a normal process when it comes to patron saints chosen by the relevant communities to shape their own civic, religious and more broadly cultural identity. Lucy, throughout the Middle Ages, served the function of emphasizing the Greek roots of the Syracusan community, something that comes up also in Tzetzes' version of her life.[33]

Emphasis on community ties also brings about a focus on discourses of genealogy. Interestingly, the latter are much more developed in the ninth-century Passion than in *Passion* I. In *Passion* II the narrative brings to the fore time and again the importance of matrilinear genealogical ties. This aspect first emerges when the narrative introduces the audience to Lucy's socio-economic background:

> So Lucy, the glorious sprout of the Syracusans, as shown previously by the speech, with her father having left life a short while before, had been left in the burning condition of an orphan together with her mother Eutychia—so her parent was called—but with the advantages

32 Marxiano Melotti, "The Goddess and the Town: Memory, Feast, and Identity between Demeter and Saint Lucia," in *Gender, Memory, and Identity in the Roman World*, ed. Jussi Rantala (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019): 239–81, 256.

33 See Ewing, "Finding Byzantine-Norman Common Ground." Her tomb was also functional to the Christian re-organization of Syracuse's cultic spaces carried out by the bishop Zosimos in the seventh century: see Sgarlata, "*La topografia martiriale,*" 175.

> of her lineage, her riches and the perfection of her morals, as well as of the modesty of her ways and all the other perks, like a good land of abundant harvest.[34]

The issue of lineage has also an affective dimension: few lines later, the Passion highlights Eutychia delight at the prospect of having grandchildren, presenting it as the supreme fulfillment of motherhood within a female genealogy: "Therefore her mother really wanted to marry off her daughter, because she wanted to see her children—which is the most desirable thing for any mother and in particular when there is an only daughter."[35]

Consequently, Eutychia appears to be distraught when she hears about Lucy's resolve:

> The mother uttered high laments at the speech of the daughter, with a human behavior, incongruous as compared to the wisdom of his daughter and utterly unworthy of it. "I," she said, "my daughter and my heart, I put all the hopes of my life on you alone and I used to believe that you would continue the lineage, so, not only did I kept intact the estate that your father left to me, but I also added to it as much as possible."[36]

Later on, Lucy exploits the strong maternal feeling of Eutychia, her "genealogic" urge to reach her own goals. The love experienced by Lucy's mother is described as a "magic potion" and a "bait." The martyr takes advantage of it and manipulates her mother into following her plans by playing on the ambiguous reference to his "fiancé."[37]

The strong mother-daughter bond is further stressed when Eutychia reminds her daughter that she personally breastfed her. As shown by Stamata Dova wet-nurses were rather the norm for wealthy women in the Roman Empire and therefore the motif here is charged with a symbolic value: "She spoke so and she re-

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34 *Passio* II: 13,48 – 53 ed. Costanza: Λουκία τοιγαροῦν, ἡ ἀοίδιμος τῆς Συρακουσίων βλαστήσασα, ὡς ὁ λόγος φθάσας ἐδήλωσεν, τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῆς ἄρτι τὸν βίον ἀπολιπόντος, μετὰ τῆς μητρὸς Εὐτυχίας – τοῦτο γὰρ ὄνομα τῇ γενησαμένῃ – ἐν τῷ τῆς ὀρφανίας κατελείφθη πυρί, γένει τε ἅμα καὶ πλούτῳ καὶ ἠθῶν εὐκοσμίᾳ κομῶσα καὶ τρόπων σεμνότητι καὶ τὰ μὲν τῶν καλῶν, ὥσπερ τις ἀγαθὴ γὴ καὶ σταχυφόρος.

35 *Passio* II: 15,68 – 71 ed. Costanza: κάντεῦθεν σπουδὴ ἦν τῇ μητρί, ὡς ἂν τῆς θυγατρὸς ἐκτελέσῃ τοὺς γάμους, τοῦτο μὲν διὰ τὸ τέκνα ταύτης ἰδεῖν – ὅ ταῖς μετράσιν ἐστὶν εὐκταιότατον καὶ μάλιστα ἐπὶ μονογενεῖ θυγατρί.

36 *Passio* II: 23,199 – 205 ed. Costanza: Ἡ δὲ μήτηρ οἰμόξασά πως τῷ λόγῳ τῆς θυγατρός, ἀνθρώπινόν τι ποιοῦσα καὶ τοῦ τῆς θυγατρὸς φρονήματος ἀπᾷδον καὶ πάντῃ ἀνάξιον, Ἐγώ, θυγάτερ, ἔφη, καὶ σπλάγχνον ἐμόν, ἐπὶ σοὶ μόνῃ τὰς ἐλπίδας τοῦ βίου σαλεύσα καὶ σὲ τοῦ γένους νομίζουσα ἔχειν διάδοχον, οὐ μόνον τὰ ἐκ τοῦ πατρώου κλήρου σου καταλειφθέντα μοι πράγματα ἀμείωτα διετήρησα, ἀλλὰ καὶ προσθήκην τούτοις ἐποιησάμην ὅτι πολλήν.

37 *Passio* II: 23,220 – 226 ed. Costanza.

minded her naked breast and the feeding and she used as a pretext for her prayer her gray hair."[38]

Significantly the affection between a single daughter and her mother is used by Lucy also to "persuade" Agatha to perform her miracle on Eutychia. This emotional area seems to represent a universal value shared by women. Socio-anthropological studies have in fact shown that in several cultures mothers are more prone to identify with daughters and to experience them as themselves. Psychoanalytical approaches inspired by the work of Helene Deutsch have argued that "a woman identifies with her own mother and, through identification with her child, she (re)experiences herself as a cared-for child. The particular nature of this double identification for the individual mother is closely bound up with her relationship to her own mother."[39] Surely enough, such a strong identification can be rhetorically exploited to pursue one's own objectives, as Lucy does: "Remember that you too were generated by a mother and you know how much love there is between an only daughter and her mother."[40]

Genealogy and marriage really take center stage in *Passion* II. In *Passion* I Lucy's fiancé exposes the girl with Paschasios because of her Christian faith after she sells out all her patrimony.[41] Such a narrative passage is slightly changed in *Passion* II, where the novelistic motif of unrequited love and Lucy's refusal to marry are the triggers to the fiancé's official complaints.[42] The man's enraged outbursts, moreover, described in detail, do not find any sympathetic ear and he turns to Paschasios only as a last resort and out of revenge. The notion of liminality is equally toned down in *Passion* II, which does not show the structuring intertextual references to Corinthians or the allusions to κατάβασις we find in *Passion* I. Moreover, although Lucy is referred to as a "bronze wall,"[43] before the final beheading she is actually moved to another execution place.[44] Her immobility is therefore less definitive and dramatic. Consequently, at the end of the hagiographical tale of *Passion* II there is no mention of the temple later built on the place of her martyrdom.

38 *Passio* II: 23,211–212 ed. Costanza: ἔλεγε, καὶ μασθοῦς ὑπεργύμνου καὶ ἀνατροφῆς ὑπεμίμνησκε καὶ τὴν πολιὰν εἰς ἱκετηρίαν προβάλλετο. See Stamata Dova, "Lactation Cessation and the Realities of Martyrdom in *The Passion of Saint Perpetua*," *Illinois Classical Studies* 42/1 (2017): 245–65.
39 Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974): 43–66, here 47.
40 *Passio* II: 19,126–127 ed. Costanza: Μνήσθητι ὅτι καὶ σὲ μήτηρ ἐγέννησε – καὶ οἶδας ὅσον ἐστὶ φίλτρον πρὸς μητέρα μονογενοῦς θυγατρός.
41 *Passio* I: 56,69–58,82 ed. Rossi Taibbi.
42 *Passio* II: 29,318–327 ed. Costanza.
43 *Passio* II: 43,535 ed. Costanza. It is a quotation from Jer 15:20.
44 *Passio* II: 49,647–648 ed. Costanza.

4 Queer Temporality and Collapsing Genders in Tzetzes' *Hypomnema*

In this section I will show how Tzetzes in his *hypomnema* takes advantage of the motifs present in the oldest versions of Lucy's Passions to build a personal narrative. The tale of Lucy's sacrifice becomes the site to experiment with notions of historical time, genealogy and gender.

The *hypomnema* diverges from both older Passions in terms of structure. The first two paragraphs[45] are devoted to a lengthy and learned *ekphrasis* of Sicily, complete with details on the mythical history of island and references to ancient authors that can provide information about its geography. Paragraph 3 zooms in onto a description of Catania and Syracuse to introduce the characters of Agatha and Lucy.[46] Paragraph 4 provides information on the background and the personality of Lucy,[47] while paragraphs 5–6, after a gruesome description of the persecution of Diocletian and Maximian, narrate the pilgrimage to Catania and the resolve of distributing their patrimony to the poor.[48] Paragraph 7 offers an account of the scam against Lucy's fiancé who alerts Paschasios.[49] A long debate between the young girl and the Roman officer ensues,[50] followed by the description of the torments inflicted to Lucy.[51] The description of the actual martyrdom is much more complex and detailed than in the two older Passions, with horrid details and technical specifications about the strategies deployed to drag away the unmovable saint. At 11–12[52] we read about another exchange between Lucy and Paschasios, where the saint compares her own fate to that of her ancestor Archimedes, labeling Paschasios as a new Marcellus. Finally, at 13 we have the account of the beheading and of the construction of the saint's shrine: after a temporary tomb a proper temple is built around an ornate coffin.[53]

As mentioned, the *hypomnema* opens with a long description of Sicily. In such *ekphrasis* Sicily is strikingly described as a quintessentially liminal island. Tzetzes focuses on the myth of Persephone, which represents the prototypical mother-

45 *Hypomn.* 1–2, 49–53 ed. Sola.
46 *Hypomn.* 3, 107–109 ed. Sola.
47 *Hypomn.* 4, 109–111 ed. Sola.
48 *Hypomn.* 5–6, 111–115 ed. Sola.
49 *Hypomn.* 7, 91–93 ed. Sola.
50 *Hypomn.* 8–9, 93–97 ed. Sola
51 *Hypomn.* 10, 97–99 ed. Sola.
52 *Hypomn.* 11–12, 99–105 ed. Sola.
53 *Hypomn.* 13, 105 ed. Sola.

daughter plot, to borrow the definition of Marianne Hirsch,[54] and as such is particularly apt to foreshadow Lucy's tale—even if, as we shall see, Tzetzes does not depict a strong bond between the two women as *Passion* II does. The myth of Kore-Persephone is summarized by Tzetzes as follows:

> Now the old tales babble like children about Zeus giving the whole of you as dowry to Persephone and about the abduction of Persephone by Pluton happening there and about the quest of Demeter [...] and her arrival to Eleusis thanks to the advice of Celeus; and from there Kore emerged again with the white horses and the rites of the Athenians, and the mysteries and the night turned into day through the torches [...] but some just say that Sicily was the dowry given by Zeus and that Kore was taken away from there and hence the quest of Demeter and whatever was said before more obscurely through the veil of myth.[55]

In his rendition of Persephone's rape and Demeter's quest, Tzetzes emphasizes the falling apart of normal temporality epitomized here by the exchange between night and day in the mysteries of Eleusis. Such an emphasis anticipates a motif recurring throughout the *hypomnema*, whose narrative highlights the collapse of linear, genealogical time, with past and future losing their meaning. More broadly, the story of Persephone is particularly suitable to convey symbolic meanings shared also by Lucy's narrative from spatial and socio-anthropological points of view. In terms of space, the myth of Persephone is a narrative of periodical descent and ascent, one that, as we have seen, is to be detected also in *Passion* I. Notions of change of places are also implied by the myth of Persephone. As unpacked by Helene P. Foley, Zeus handing over Persephone to Hades tries to impose "patriarchal and virilocal exogamy (a marriage between members of two different social groups arranged by the father of the bride in which the bride resides with her husband)."[56] On the contrary, "neither divine marriages nor rapes required the same kind of change of residence to which the mortal bride was often subject; nor did they require loss of independence on the part of the female Olympian, who con-

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54 Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomingdale: Indiana University Press, 1989).

55 *Hypomn.* 1,26–39, 50 ed. Sola: Αὐτίκα γὰρ ὅλην σε τῇ Περσεφόνῃ δοθῆναι παρὰ Διὸς ἀνακαλυπτήρια οἱ μῦθοι νεανιεύονται, καὶ ἁρπαγὴν ἐντεῦθεν τῆς Περσεφόνης παρὰ τοῦ Πλούτωνος καὶ Δήμητρος τῆς παιδὸς ἀναζήτησιν [...] καὶ πρὸς Ἐλευσῖνα προέλευσιν Δήμητρος ταῖς ὑποθήκαις τοῦ Κελεοῦ˙ κἀκεῖθεν λευκόπωλος ἐξ ᾅδου τῆς Κόρης ἀναγωγή, καὶ τελεταὶ Ἀθηναίων καὶ τὰ μυστήρια καὶ νὺξ εἰς ἡμέραν μετασκευαζομένη τοῖς δᾳδουχήμασιν [...] οἱ δὲ ἄλλως δῶρά τε ἀνακαλυπτήρια τὴν Σικελίαν παρὰ Διὸς ἔφασαν και γ'ἁρπαγὰς ἐντεῦθεν τῆς Κόρης καὶ Δήμητρος ζήτησιν, καὶ ὅσα φθάσας ὁ λόγος σκοτεινότερον διηγήσατο τῷ τοῦ μύθου καλύμματι.

56 Helene P. Foley, ed., *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 179.

tinued to exercise her own prerogatives in the sphere allotted to her."[57] Such symbolic elements, implied by Persephone's myth, seem to be transformed and incorporated in Lucy's story. By choosing Christ as her groom, she does not move into a mortal marriage and does not lose control of her wealth. Lucy literally stands her ground during the martyrdom and thus defines her own prerogatives as a saint in her future shrine.

From a socio-anthropological point of view, both Persephone-Demeter and Lucy-Eutychia embody the special bond of affection and identification between mothers and daughters, as we have seen above. And yet, despite the centrality of the Persephone story in the initial *ekphrasis*, this is where Tzetzes departs from the narrative pattern of both Passions.

Since the beginning of the *hypomnema*, Lucy seems to be more linked to the male lineage of her family. At 4,8–14, 108 ed. Sola, we read that Lucy comes from "ancestors and fathers from both sides flowing with riches, men who proved glorious in war and not without fame in peace, breathing strongholds."[58] Tzetzes provides a list of male civic virtues, which are also projected onto Lucy. The girl since a young age seems to be alien to feminine delights.[59] Such a description contrasts starkly with the way Eutychia is characterized: "and she was just a womanish female and fickle and resistant to faith and pray of everyday preoccupations."[60] Lucy seems to find an alternative deep and meaningful mother-daughter bond in her relationship with Agatha, who addresses her as follows: "My child, Lucy, and my sister."[61]

Agatha's address, however, unsettles traditional genealogical and family bonds, by turning the saint from Catania into Lucy's mother and sister at the same time. I argue that Lucy is slowly moving away from human, linear genealogies and also from traditional gender roles. Once again, a comparison with the way Eutychia addresses issues of temporality is enlightening. When Lucy urges her mother to imitate the bleeding woman of the Testament, healed after touching Jesus' tunic, Eutychia answers in disbelief. She reminds her daughter of the historical distance between them and the facts narrated in the New Testament: "'My

57 Foley, ed., *The Homeric Hymn*, 174.

58 πρόγονοι καὶ πατέρες τῆς ἑκατέρας γονῆς [...] ῥυηφενεῖς ἄνθρωποι πολέμοις καθεστηκότες ἀρίδηλοι καὶ εἰρηναίοις καιροῖς οὐκ ἀδόκιμοι πρόβολοι ἔμψυχοι.

59 *Hypomn.* 4,15–110,23, 108 ed. Sola.

60 *Hypomn.* 6,24–26, 112 ed. Sola: καὶ τί γὰρ ἄλλο ἢ γύναιον θῆλυ καὶ χαῦνον καὶ τὴν πίστιν ἀντίρροπον καὶ βιωτικαῖς κατεχόμενον τύρβεσι.

61 *Hypomn.* 6,12, 112 ed. Sola: Τέκνον ἐμὸν, Λουκία, καὶ ἀδελφὴ.

sweetest child,' she says, '330 years have gone by until me, from when Jesus is said to have ascended to heaven'."[62]

Significantly, Paschasios later uses almost the same words when Lucy declares her love for Jesus: he counts the centuries and decades passed since Christ walked the earth judging the girl's passion nonsensical.[63] For Lucy, however, linear, historical time with its distinction between past and present is meaningless. In paragraph 9 she explains to Paschasios that Christ's generation did not follow normal temporal rules and was not dependent on sperm, monthly cycles or blood. Equally, when she answers her mother's objections early on, she reminds her that the body of the saints is to be regarded as equal with Jesus' tunic, since he, through incarnation and his sacrifice, clothed Adam's nudity.[64] Different temporal plans converge synchronically thanks to the paradox of Christ's incarnation, which nullifies traditional chronologies.

In Lucy's final speech such a queer, non-genealogical temporality seems to affect also gender representations. When Lucy sings the praise of her own homeland, she stresses that Syracuse has been known for the greatness of its men (unlike for instance Sparta). She takes as an example her ancestor Archimedes so much so that she morphs into him, with a dramatic change of gender:

> I was born of Syracusan lineage, and I do not put to shame my homeland and I do not put to shame the oracle regarding those who drink the water of Arethousa, whose sense is the following:
>
> Of the whole world the Pelasgian Argos is the best,
> the horses from Tessaly, the women from Sparta,
> and the men who drink the waters of the beautiful Arethousa.
>
> I honour my ancestor, the famous Archimedes [...] I will become myself Archimedes: I will carry out my will, which brings me to the first and supreme power; he countered Marcellus in the sensible realm, I will counter the spiritual Marcellus, attacking Syracuse by land and by sea.[65]

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62 *Hypomn.* 5,28–30, 110 ed. Sola: Γλυκύτατον τέκνον, φησί, τριακόσιά που καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη παρῳχήκεισαν εἰς ἐμὲ, ἀφ᾽οὗ πρὸς οὐρανοὺς λέγεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνελθεῖν.

63 *Hypomn.* 8,28–94,35, 92 ed. Sola.

64 *Hypomn.* 5,35–43, 112 ed. Sola. On the healing power of Jesus' tunic and his representations, see Barbara Baert, "'Who touched my clothes?': The Healing of the Woman with the Haemorrhage (Mark 5: 24–34; Luke 8: 42–48 and Matthew 9: 19–22) in Early Medieval Visual Culture," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 79 (2010): 65–90.

65 *Hypomn.* 11,9–31, 100 ed. Sola: Συρακουσία τὸ γένος καθέστηκα, οὐκ αἰσχυνῶ τὴν πατρίδα, οὐκ αἰσχυνῶ τὸν χρησιμὸν τῶν πινόντων ὕδωρ τὸ Ἀρεθούσιον, οὗ τοιοῦτος τις νοῦς·
Γαίης μὲν πάσης τὸ πελασγικὸν Ἄργος ἄμεινον,
ἵπποι Θετταλικαί, Λακεδαιμόνιαι δὲ γυναῖκες,
ἄνδρες δ' οἳ πίνουσιν ὕδωρ καλῆς Ἀρεθούσης.

The whole passage is utterly remarkable and characterized by a crisscross of voices, genders and temporalities. Past and present conflate: the historical *exemplum* of Archimedes is embodied and re-enacted by Lucy in her lived experience. Lucy, like her male ancestors, becomes a "breathing stronghold" (*Hypomn.* 11,39, 100 ed. Sola). Unlike them, however, she does not defend the city, she defends her own body, resisting the assaults and the siege of Paschasios' people and, eventually, defining the threshold of her own future temple. Such temple in turn, *will* in fact become part of Syracuses' civic, cultural and political identity. Tzetzes pushes the paradox even further. He lets Lucy speak in his own voice, having them pronounce three pentadecasyllables that are later to be found identical in his self-commentary, the *Historiae*.[66] Not coincidentally, Archimedes is one of his many proxies, a historical figure through which he explores issues of authorship and identity.[67]

5 Concluding Remarks

To conclude, while the Lucy of *Passion* I is a distinctively liminal figure and the Lucy of *Passion* II is characterized by a particularly strong matrilinear bond, Tzetzes' Lucy blurs gender and temporal boundaries. While inscribing herself into a male lineage, Lucy refuses at the same time any kind of historical chronology. Her story is marked by queer temporality and synchronicity. Past and present coexist in one and the same moment, just like the body of the martyr is inhabited by different gendered voices and roles.

Προπάτορα τὸν ἐμὸν Ἀρχιμήδην ἐκεῖνον αἰδοῦμαι [...] Γενήσομαι καὶ αὐτὴ Ἀρχιμήδης· βουλεύσομαι βούλευμα, ὅ πρὸς τὴν πρώτην καὶ ἄνω ἀρχὴν ἀναγάγῃ με· ἐκεῖνος ἀντετάξατο Μαρκέλλῳ τῷ αἰσθετῷ, ἐγὼ νῦν ἀντιτάξομαι τῷ νοητῷ τῇ Συρακούσῃ προσβάλλοντι κατὰ τε γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν. Lucy reiterates her intention to become Archimedes at *Hypomn.* 40–41. On Archimedes and Syracuse in Tzetzes with an analysis of the relevant sources see now: Philip Rance, "Archimedes at Syracuse: Two New Witnesses to Cassius Dio's *Roman History* 15 (Tzetzes' *Carmina Iliaca* and *Hypomnema in S. Luciam*)," *The Classical Quarterly* 73/1 (2023): 436–56.

66 Tzetzes, *Hist.* 9,273, 482–484. For the critical edition see: Pietro Luigi Leone, ed., *Ioannis Tzetzae Historiae* (Bari: Congedo, 2007). So, here: 357–358 ed. Leone.

67 See for instance *Hist.* 12,457, 500 ed. Leone. On Tzetzes' "proxies" see Valeria F. Lovato, "From Cato to Plato and Back Again: Friendship and Patronage in John Tzetzes' *Letters* and *Chiliades*," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 70 (2022): 59–96.

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