Holy Women and Witches: Aspects of Byzantine Conceptions of Gender*

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I

Byzantine women's history, Byzantine attitudes towards women and men, Byzantine conceptions of gender: that these are all areas still awaiting their reseacher is a fact both obvious and well known. It is not my intention to reiterate here the problems connected with the enormous task of undertaking research in women's history in general and Byzantine women's history in particular. Such problems are well known to those interested in the subject and have already been partly pointed out in terms of suggested 'avenues of approach' and possible areas of research.[1] It is my intention, however, to take up one of these suggestions, develop and apply it to Byzantine source material. The suggestion comes

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1. See J. Herrin, 'In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach', in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (London and Canberra 1983) 167-90; J. Grosdidier de Matons, 'La Femme dans l'Empire Byzantin', in *Histoire Mondiale de la Femme*, ed. P. Grimal, III (Paris 1967) 11-43, esp. 12; E. Patlagean, 'L'histoire de la femme déguisée en moine et l'évolution de la sainteté féminine à Byzance', *Studi Medievali* 3ᵉser., 17 (Spoleto 1976) 597-623, esp. 623 (reprinted in E. Patlagean, *Structure Sociale, Famille, Chrétienté à Byzance* (Variorum Reprints, London 1981) XI).

from Patlagean. At the end of her study of female transvestite saints, she calls for 'un dernier niveau d'analyse, celui de l'inconscient signifié en catégories culturelles'. She hopes 'qu'une telle étude attire des explorateurs, qui devront être des pionniers' and she concludes: 'Nous savons bien que l'ordonnance des sexes, élaborée sur la base limitée et monotone de quelques données naturelles, est une des constructions les plus sophistiquées et les plus significatives à la fois de toute culture'. It is aspects of such a construction that the pages that follow attempt to deconstruct, analyse, understand.

Persons are born of the male or female sex, but the cultural context into which they are born defines their sex in particular ways, denoting attributes, attitudes, characteristics, as 'naturally' appertaining to each sex — all of which amounts to what is socially recognised as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Sex is a biological fact; gender, a cultural phenomenon. I shall be using the term 'gender' to denote such a cultural definition of sex, reserving 'sex' as a term of biological connotation.[2] I believe the gender system to be a fundamental category of social-historical analysis, because it is only through taking account of the role of gender that we begin to understand the full elaborations and mechanisms of power, the complexity of human motivation, the interdependence of social groupings (family, class, community, society), the economic, political, ideological forces at work in any given community. I do not believe that within this context the role of gender can replace that of class, but I consider it to be crucially important in our understanding that social systems are historically and not biologically determined, that they are man-made and not God-sent.

In the course of this paper I shall be using the term 'patriarchy' to describe a system of social order in which power and the means of acquiring and perpetuating it (economic, political, ideological) have been assumed by the male sex.[3] It is, however, pointless to

2. See A. Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society* (London 1972) esp. 158-72.

3. There have been many attempts to provide a comprehensive definition of patriarchy, from seeing it as a purely economic system of subordination, to describing it as a fundamentally ideological structure. See respectively F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York 1972); J. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (Harmondsworth 1975) esp. 412. Between these two extreme positions other writers have sought more comprehensive definitions. See

lump together under a general rubric of 'patriarchy' all forms of male dominance, for it is as varied and elaborate as the forces at play within each historic moment. As Fox-Genovese put it: 'It is fruitless to look for a uniform oppression of women, or a universal form of male dominance. But it is necessary to search out and analyse the allocation of roles and identities between the genders in order to understand the dynamics of any social system'.[4] Trying to avoid fruitless generalisations, then, I will focus my enquiry on one specific Byzantine source, a seemingly unlikely subject for gender analysis: the twelfth century Cypriot holy man, Noephytos the Recluse (1134- after 1214).

Neophytos, founder of the monastery of the Enkleistra near Paphos in Cyprus, filled many of his long hours of seclusion by writing.[5] Based on his surviving works, the following pages aim to describe and analyse his conception of gender. More specifically, and because of the limitation of space, I shall be examining only one area of Neophytos' conception, namely the forms which the female sex assumes in his writings.[6]

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especially H. Hartmann, 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union', in *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism,* ed. L. Sargent (London 1981) 1-41, esp. 14-19; S. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (London 1979); M. Janssen-Jurreit, *Sexism. The Male Monopoly on History and Thought* (London 1982) esp. 329 ff; K. Millet, *Sexual Politics* (London 1977) esp. 23-58. Perhaps the definition which best succeeds in being both comprehensive and precise is the one formulated by C. Kaplan and expanded by D. Spender. Kaplan defines patriarchy as an order characterised by male dominance and the means — both actual and symbolic — of perpetuating that dominance. Spender adds to this her definition of 'sexism' as a term denoting particular manifestations of the order defined by Kaplan, so that examples of bias in favour of males — in language, for instance — is sexism. See D. Spender, *Man Made Language* (London, Boston and Henley 1980) 15.

4. E. Fox-Genovese, 'Placing Women's History in History', *New Left Revue* 133 (June-July 1982) 5-29, esp. 15, 14-20.

5. On the life and writings of Neophytos see L. Petit, 'Vie et Ouvrages de Néophyte le Reclus', *EO* 2 (1898-9) 257-68, 372; I.P. Tsiknopoullos, Τό Συγγραφικόν ἔργον τοῦ Ἁγίου Νεοφύτου, Κυπριακαί Σπουδαί 22 (1958) 67-214; C. Mango and E.J. Hawkins, 'The Hermitage of Saint Neophytos and its Wall Paintings', *DOP* 20 (1966) 121-206, esp. 122-9; D. Stiernon, 'Néophyte le Reclus', in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité,* fasc. LXXII-LXXIII (Paris 1981) 99-110.

6. I will be dealing at greater length with the ways in which language and imagery are used in Neophytos to convey 'male' and 'female' characteristics, and with the social significance of the relative status of the sexes, in my Ph.D. thesis, 'Neophytos the Recluse: A Cultural Study of a Byzantine Holy Man', esp. in the sections 'Woman made Female' and '"Ανδρας and all his Attributes', and the chapters on Family and Sexuality.

Through these many and varied forms I hope it will be seen that Neophytos' conception of the female sex remained always structured according to patriarchal prescription. That this should be so is not surprising. The small peasant community into which Neophytos was born and raised, the wider Byzantine world and social ideology permeating human relations, the particular christian monastic ideology to which Neophytos chose to adhere, all had deep, complex, well established roots in, and were expressions and reproductions of, a patriarchal social system. As such, Neophytos is both a product of the social reality of the culture of which he was a part and, through his own writings and actions, an agent of the culture which produced this reality.[7]

It must be noted in addition that power is always exercised in relation to a series of objectives. But as Foucault has pointed out, particular individuals who exercise power in a given situation may not necessarily be aware of the direction of their power, nor that their actions, whether deliberate or spontaneous, constitute a step further in the realisation of the general objectives of power.[8] This is so partly because of the way ideology, as both beliefs and as practice, functions by means of association and evocation. These not only affect but indeed produce related patterns of behaviour on the part of the individual. Yet man, 'an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun'[9] is most

7. This is not the place to enter into a debate as to the possible permutations of terms such as 'culture', 'ideology', 'reality', 'symbolism'. However, a brief definition of some of these terms for the purpose of this essay will be useful. I understand 'culture' in the way best expressed by C. Geertz, 'not as complexes of concrete behaviour patterns — customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters (. . .) — but as a set of control mechanisms — plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call "programs") for this governing of behavior': C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London 1975) esp. 44, 3-54. 'Ideology' I use in the sense of a set of beliefs and practises, generated through contradictions within the specific culture of which the ideology is part. Ideological consciousness functions by presenting these contradictions as non-contradictory, as 'natural'. See generally J. Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (London 1979); *idem, Marxism and Ideology* (London 1983); but especially T. Lovell, *Pictures of Reality. Aesthetics, Politics, Pleasure.* (London 1980) esp. 22 ff., 47-63; J.F. Haldon, 'Ideology and Social Change in the Seventh Century: Military Discontent as a Barometer', *Klio* (1985, forthcoming) (I am grateful to the latter for showing me this article in advance of publication). I understand 'reality' as being essentially a product of culture. See P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth 1967).

8. M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* I (London 1979) 81-102, esp. 94-95.

9. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures.* 5

often unaware of these 'webs', which constitute his culture and form the basis of the power of the ruling class and the gender interests in it.

This must be born in mind throughout the reading of the following pages, lest the reader assume that I 'charge' Neophytos with conscious and deliberate expressions of a desire to maintain women in the role of the 'second sex'; or that I imply that he fully realised the workings and functions of patriarchy and was a willing and conscious participant in its game. Far from it. The whole system of gender classification and power, as evidenced in Neophytos' writings, functioned in extremely complex and covert ways. It referred to a strikingly resilient form of social organisation, which, partly because of its longevity, had developed symbols and signs which by Neophytos' time were already, as Patlagean points out, embedded in the unconscious. What were cultural constructions, types, categories, devices, had become sufficiently absorbed to be considered natural, biological characteristics. The occasions, therefore, in which Neophytos appears to be deliberately and openly hostile to women are rare. The rest — and by far the greater part — of my material comes from careful sifting of his narratives: from observing images, words used, repetitions, allocation of roles, treatment of characters, creation of stereotypes. It is to the non-deliberate, to the aside, to the 'trivial' statement[10] that I look in order to reconstruct Neophytos' conception of the female gender. Because this is how it appears in his writings; because this is how he experienced it; because this is how power functions.

II

Let us begin with some brief observations on what Neophytos would have recognised as 'the beginning': the story of Creation and its heroine, Eve. The bias towards the male ('sexism') which permeates the story of the Creation and Fall has already been pointed out by a number of scholars. They have drawn attention to the way in which, through the story of Genesis, the prototypes of the genders are given in the personas of Adam and

10. Isolating from their context statements which appear to be 'trivial' in themselves, helps reveal the assumptions of wider significance which such statements may carry. This is a practise employed by social anthropologists and adopted by feminists as a 'consciousness raising' technique.

Eve; and that in this archetypal story the male plays a superior role, the female an inferior one.[11] The archetypal image of Eve represents unregenerated womanhood, in fallen condition, characterised by inherent weakness, susceptibility to temptation and a propensity to sensuality. The story provides both a justification and the highest moral authority for establishing woman's inferior position — for it was God himself who, in the form of just punishment, subjected Eve to the male.[12]

Neophytos reproduces all these ideas in his writings. Referring to Eve far more frequently than he does to Adam, he repeatedly presents her as Eve the transgressor, the erring woman whose one sinful act brought misery to the rest of mankind.[13] In bitter terms, Neophytos describes in a poem the misery that befell man as a result of the Fall. Significantly, the cause of this is expressed at the beginning of the poem as follows:

> Τοῦ Παραδείσου τὸ φυτόν, καὶ τοῦ διαβόλου ὁ φθόνος
> τοῦ ὄφεως δὲ τὰ ρήματα, καὶ τῆς γυνῆς ἡ ἀπάτη
> εἰς λήθην μὲ προσήγαγον τῆς ἐντολῆς κυρίου.[14]

11. Scholars also point out that other, more popular Creation stories were available at the time of the editing of the Bible. These other stories were suppressed because they did not uphold the image of male supremacy. The same goes for the story of the Fall and the Flood. See M. Daly, *Beyond God the Father. Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston 1974) 44-68; E. Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay* (Chicago 1938) 118-34, esp. 119-25, 130-1; E. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (Harmondsworth 1982) esp. 71-88; E. Figes, *Patriarchal Attitudes* (London 1978) 35-65; M. Stone, *The Paradise Papers. The Suppression of Women's Rites* (London 1976) esp. 4-25, 119-43, 215-57; Spender, *Man Made Language*, 165-71. See also E.R. Leach, 'Genesis as Myth', *Discovery* 23 (May 1962) 30-35, esp. 32-33.

12. Church Fathers could thus refer to the story and conclude that equality between the sexes can only be a bad thing: ἐκ τῆς ἰσοτιμίας μάχη τις γένηται καὶ φιλονεικία: John Chrysostom, Ἐγκώμιον εἰς Μάξιμον, *MPG* 51, 225-42, esp. 231. Similar statements in Gregory Theologos, Παραινετικὸν πρὸς Ὀλυμπιάδα, *MPG* 37, 1542-50, esp. 1543. The story of Eve continues to provide moral justification for the subjection of female to male, to this day. See J.K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage* (Oxford 1964) 276-8, 150-4; J. du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (Oxford 1974) 101 ff.; Ἄσμα τοῦ Ἀδὰμ καὶ τῆς Εὔας, Th. Papadopoullos, Δημώδη Κυπριακὰ Ἄσματα (Nicosia 1975) 8-11, esp. 10.96-105.

13. So in Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fols. 30b-31a, fol. 51b; Cod. Athen. 522, fol. 42b; Cod. Lesb. Leim. 2, fol. 261b; Cod. Coisl. Gr. 287, fol. 39b; Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 121a; Λόγος ἐπίτομος περὶ Μαρίας τῆς Θεοπαΐδος, ed. M. Jugie ('Homélies Mariales Byzantines', *PO* 15, [109]-[114]) [112] .39-.40 (implied); Λόγος εἰς τὰ Ἅγια Φῶτα, ed. M.-H. Congourdeau ('Επετηρὶς Κέντρου Ἐπιστημονικῶν Ἐρευνῶν VIII (Nicosia 1975-77) 139-56) 140.36-.46; thereafter abbreviated to Holy Lights.

14. Περὶ τοῦ παραδείσου τὸ φυτόν, ed. I.P. Tsiknopoullos (Τρία ἀνώνυμα

Two points are worth observing here: first, that Eve is not named. She has been generalised as 'the woman'. This is important, for all of Eve's characteristics (temptation, gullibility — with its inescapable insinuation of a somewhat inferior intelligence — sensuality, destruction, guilt for the Fall) and therefore her just Godly punishment of subjection to the male, are projected onto the entire female sex. Second, Eve is not presented as the principal culprit. Her guilt is shared by the snake and, above all, by the devil. The objective of this is simple: to make Eve responsible for the Fall of all mankind, would be to bestow her with tremendous evil power. To avoid this, her guilt is shared. Within this context, this amounts to no less than a divestment of power from Eve. Thus, on the one hand Eve — and hence all women — bears the stamp of deceit (ἀπάτη) particularly in her relation to the male sex;[15] but on the other hand she is also given another characteristic, that of being gullible, easily deceived herself (εὐξαπάτητος).[16] Thus, it is the devil who is the main culprit: Eve is merely an easily persuaded organ of his.

Βυζαντινά ποιήματα ἐπανευρίσκουν τόν ποιητήν των ἅγιον Νεόφυτον, Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί 27 (1963) 75-117) 88-89.

15. Ibid., 88.2-.3. Neophytos was not alone in stressing that Eve's deceit was directed against a male. To give only one example, Romanos the Melodist depicts Adam as saying that he is not pleased to hear Eve's announcement of Christ's birth: her voice is a woman's voice and she might, as of old, deceive him. Later in the poem, Eve complains to Mary that Adam keeps blaming her for the Fall: *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica. Cantica Genuina,* ed. P. Maas and C.A. Trypanis (Oxford 1963): On the Nativity II, 9-16, esp. 11.δ'-13.θ'; thereafter abbreviated to Romani Cantica Genuina. Eve also appears as a deceiver in Cypriot folk songs. See Ἄσμα τοῦ Ἀδὰμ καὶ τῆς Εὰς (cited note 12).

16. E.G.: ξύλον καὶ ἀνὴρ καὶ παρακοὴ καὶ εὐξαπάτητος γυνὴ τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν τοῦ παραδείσου ἐξέωσαν: Λόγος εἰς τὴν παγκόσμιον Ὕψωσιν τοῦ Τιμίου καὶ Ζωοποιοῦ Σταυροῦ, ed. I.P. Tsiknopoullos (Ἀπόστολος Βαρνάβας (1954) 258-62) 258. Similarly: Χαῖρε ξύλον πάντιμον, ὅτι ξύλον καί ἀνὴρ καὶ παρακοὴ καὶ εὐεξαπάτητον γύναιον τὴν ἡμετέραν φῦσιν τοῦ παραδείσου ἐξεώσαντες, πάλιν διὰ ξύλου σου, καὶ τοῦ Θεανθρώπου Χριστοῦ, καὶ θαυμαστῆς ὑπακοῆς, καὶ πανάγνου γυναίου, αὐτὸν ἀπελάβομεν: Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fol. 51b. Or in the Catecheseis: 'Ο ὄφις' φησὶν 'ἠπάτησέ με καὶ ἔφαγον'. Εἰς τί σε ἠπάτησεν, ὦ προμήτωρ πάντων βροτῶν καί ἔλαβες ἀπό τοῦ ξύλου καί ἔφαγες; 'Ισοθεΐας ἐλπίδι', φησίν, 'ἠπάτησέ με καί ἔφαγον': Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 121a. Similarly see Ἑρμηνεία τῆς Ἑξαημέρου, in Τυπικὴ σὺν Θεῷ Διάταξις καὶ λόγοι εἰς τὴν Ἑξαήμερον τοῦ ὁσίου πατρός ἡμῶν Νεοφύτου τοῦ ἐγκλείστου, ed. Archimandrite Kyprianos (Venice 1779) 56-115, reprinted by I.H. Hadjiioannou ('Ιστορία καί ἔργα Νεοφύτου πρεσβυτέρου, μοναχοῦ καί ἐγκλείστου (Alexandria 1914) 157-231) 183.35-184.4; thereafter abbreviated to Hexaemeros. See also the Cypriot folk song Ἄσμα τοῦ Ἀδὰμ καὶ τῆς Εὔας, above, 9.60; 10.100-.103. Note that in reproducing passages from manuscripts I have retained the original orthography.

Eve's imputed gullibility rules out the possibility of her assuming power. Her punishment by God confirms her fate as inferior. Partly because it would be impossible for Christian ideology to depict God creating evil, and partly because of patriarchal order, Eve is created gullible, tempting, destructive — but not outright evil. What stops Eve from being an evil figure is precisely her lack of power.

Evil women do appear in Neophytos' writings. Significantly, these are the only women who are depicted as holding and exercising power, and who stand alone in the narrative, acting independently from any relation to a powerful male. Whether Neophytos was reacting to the concrete reality of an upsurge in women's presence in the social power structures,[17] or whether he was referring to purely ideological patterns of belief and a fear of powerful females, the fact is that for him powerful females equal evil females.

Neophytos' evil woman par excellence is the empress Eudoxia, who figures in Neophytos' panegyric of John Chrysostom.[18] The devil himself, Neophytos tells us, gathered an evil conference of persons marked by their ungodly unlawfulness, their ἀνομία. From the imperial family Satan chose Eudoxia, accompanied by three other degenerate women (ἀκολάστους) and even bishops. This conference, headed by Eudoxia, conspires against Chrysostom. Eudoxia herself masterminds the conspiracy leading up to John's exile, and seeks ways of killing him. At one stage

17. It has been recently suggested that women in early thirteenth century Byzantine provincial society acted with considerable freedom of social movement; and that there was a high participation of powerful and independently-minded aristocratic women in politics. See A. Laiou, 'The Role of Women in Byzantine Society', XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten I/1, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 31.1 (Vienna 1982) 233-60, esp. 233-53; *idem*, 'Addendum to the Report on the Role of Women in Byzantine Society', *ibid.* II/1, 32.1, 198-204; H.N. Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, 'Women in the Despotate of Epirus', *ibid.* II/2, 32.2, 473-80. The evidence, however, is too fragmentary to allow such conclusions to be drawn, and the above observations remain, therefore, as dubiously valid as any generalisation always is. For the opposite — and prevalent — view see J. Beaucamp, 'La Situation Juridique de la Femme à Byzance', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 20 (1977) 145-76, esp. 149-53, 175-6; G. Buckler, 'Women in Byzantine Law About 1100 A.D.' *B* 11 (1936) 391-416, esp. 405-8, 411-2; Grosdidier de Matons, 'La Femme dans l'Empire Byzantin' (cited note 1) 13-18.

18. Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν μέγαν ἱεράρχην καὶ πατέραν ἡμῶν Χρυσόστομον, ed. K.I. Dyovouniotis (Athens 1926) esp. 11.35-15.20; 16.7-.20; thereafter abbreviated to Chrysostom.

she tries, unsuccessfully, to lure Epiphanios of Cyprus to her side against John.

Reading between the lines of the narrative, three accusations are launched against Eudoxia: conspiracy, sexuality and witchcraft. The word used to describe Eudoxia's approach to Epiphanios is that she tried to 'bewitch' him (σαγηνεῦσαι): while the three women with whom she consorted in her machinations against John are described as sexually promiscuous, degenerate, scheming — and more precisely as old, 'unruly and having many men' (πολύανδροι καὶ ἄτακτοι)[19]: a classic picture of witches, moulded by a long tradition from classical times and which would have been instantly recognised by any Byzantine reading the text.[20] Witchcraft appears to have been taken very seriously in Byzantium: severe punishments were prescribed for it by the State and the Church.[21] The picture of Eudoxia as a witch is further supported by her paramedical activities connected with sexuality:

19. Chrysostom, 13.10; 11.35-.38, respectively.

20. Expressions of the witch figure are Circe the seductress, Medea the murderess, Ovid's Dipsias, Aepulios' Oenothea, Horace's Canidia and Sagna. The literary tradition of the evil sorceress readily supported the later christian image of the witch. See J.B. Russel, *A History of Witchcraft. Sorcerers, Heretics and Pagans* (London 1980) 29-32; J. Caro Baroja, 'Magic and Religion in the Classical world', in *Witchcraft and Sorcery,* ed. M. Marwick (Harmondsworth 1982) 73-80. On the survival of pre-christian images of witchcraft in Byzantium, see e.g. the references to Lamias in children's fairy tales, and to old women's magic stories: Michael Psellos, 'Εγκώμιον εἰς τὴν μητέραν αὐτοῦ, ed. K.N. Sathas (Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη, V (Venice 1876) 3-61) 17; *idem,* Τῷ αὐτῷ [i.e. Τῷ πατριάρχῃ κῦρ Μιχαήλ], ed. Sathas, *ibid.* 289.

21. Basil's Canon seventy-two, e.g., imposes on a magus the same *epitimion* as for a murderer: Basil, Κανόνες, ed. G. Ralles and M. Potles (Σύνταγμα τῶν Θείων καὶ Ἱερῶν Κανόνων, IV (Athens 1854) 232-3); see also 221-2; thereafter abbreviated to Syntagma. See also the Canons in Syntagma, IV, 250-2, 215. The *epitimion* is one of twenty years, while one of six years is imposed on one who resorts to magicians or keeps magic drugs at home. The latter is punishable by withdrawal of holy communion for five years according to the twenty-fourth Canon of the Synod of Ankara: Syntagma, III (Athens 1853) 66-68. Gregory of Nyssa's third Canon places those who resort to magic on a par with the παραβάτας as having no christian faith: Syntagma, IV, 306-7: Gregory of Nyssa, Ἐπιστολὴ Κανονική, *MPG* 45, 221-36, esp. 225-8. John Nysteutes specifically included — as did Basil — women amongst those who practised magic. He prescribes withdrawal of holy communion for three years, coupled with fasting and 250 daily *metanoiai:* Syntagma, IV, 434-5. Theodore Studios prescribed for those practising or resorting to magic withdrawal of holy communion for three years and 200 daily *metaniai:* Theodore Studios, Kano?new, *MPG* 99, 1721-9, esp. 1729, Canons twenty-six and twenty-seven. State punishments varied, from the death penalty to confiscation of property and exile, according to the precise nature of the offence. See Ph. Koukoules, Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός, I/2 (Athens 1948) 126-36, 226-37; VI (Athens 1955) 319-25; thereafter abbreviated to Koukoules.

Neophytos tells us that she brings upon herself a disease whereby her entire body is filled with worms and rots away emitting a horrifying smell. Her disease (a clear parallel of her physical with her moral state) is caused by her having made an injection in her genitals.[22] For what purpose we are not told, but the sexual implications are too obvious for any reader to miss. Again, sexuality, clearly if implicitly included in Eudoxia's description and explicitly stated in that of her three old female conspirators, was another well-known characteristic of witches.[23] After her shameful death, Eudoxia's tomb shook and trembled, until the relics of John were brought back to Constantinople and given a proper burial.[24]

The battle in the story of Chrysostom is clearly a classic conflict between good and evil. As one writer on witchcraft put it: 'The witch myth (. . .) recognises an opposition of moral values; an opposition of good and bad, right and wrong, proper and improper, sinful and righteous. The witch is always on the wrong side of the moral line, he is a figure of sin incarnate'. But further: 'The witch is the figure of a person who has turned traitor to his own group. He has secretly taken the wrong side in the basic social opposition between 'us' and 'them'. This is what makes him a criminal and not only a sinner'. In the christian world, 'the witch would be conceived as one who had secretly left Christ and gone over to the devil'.[25] This is precisely how Eudoxia is conceived. In the narrative, John stands as the power

22. Chrysostom, 16.10-.18.

23. Circe is an archetypal bewitching seductress. Before her the Sumerian Lilitu, the Hebrew Lilith and the Greek Lamias had sexual intercourse with sleeping men or seduced those who were awake. Christianity turned Eve into the prototype sensual seductress. Witches, from the classical tradition (Circe, Medea) onwards, were experts in the manufacture of poisons, but also of love filters. Witchcraft and female sexuality continued to be closely related in medieval Western Europe, too — hence Kramer and Sprenger's 'All witchcraft comes from lust which is in women insatiable'. See Russel, *op. cit.*, 31-32, 113-8; Caro Baroja, *op. cit.*, 78-79; H. Kramer and J. Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum,* transl. Rev. Summers (New York 1971) (first appeared 1486); Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (cited note 11) 62-65. On the relation of female sexuality to witchcraft see M. Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic* (London and Boston 1972) 28-29, 38; Figes, *Patriarchal Attitudes* (cited note 11) 43-44, 58-65; B. Ehrenreich and D. English, *Witches, Midwives and Nurses. A History of Women's Healers* (London 1973) 13-14, 26-28.

24. Chrysostom, 16.18-.19.

25. P. Meyer, 'Witches', in *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (cited note 20) 54-70, esp. 67, 69.

of good, siding with God; Eudoxia, a traitor to Christianity, stands clearly and explicitly associated with the devil. Thus she also becomes a convenient way of expressing misogyny under the guise of christian piety. As Leach said, 'The power of the witch is seen as a threat to the established order'. The witch is illegitimate because her power is incompatible 'with the interests of those who exercise authority in the social system'.[26] Since this system is patriarchal, it follows that any female who dares to hold — and exercise — power outside the influence of a male is, by definition, anti-social. If she further exercises this power against a male, then she would be deemed to have reached the ultimate in anti-social behaviour: witchcraft.

Eudoxia does not stand alone as the personification of evil in female form. In another story of Neophytos' where evil in female form is depicted fighting goodness, the charge of witchcraft is openly made: in the panegyric of Nikolaos, Artemis is described as a μιαρά woman. She prepares a highly inflammable magic oil and, pretending to be christian, she persuades some sailors to take it to the metropolis of Lycia and light the saint's lamp for her. Her intention is to burn the church and the whole city, and this is avoided only through the saint's intervention.[27] Later in the narrative, Neophytos describes Nikolaos' cleansing of the city of paganism. He destroys the temple of Artemis: a place where fantastic sayings were given deceiving the people, and the home of many devils, who left it, cursing.[28]

Both the story of Chrysostom and that of Nikolaos depict the symbolic battle between good and evil, good triumphing in the end (Nikolaos overrules Artemis' power by his symbolic destruction of the temple; Eudoxia's tomb only ceases to tremble when Chrysostom's relics are returned to Constantinople). What is relevant to us is that in all of Neophytos' writings where this battle takes place[29] evil is always personified in female form.

26. E.R. Leach, *Social Anthropology* (Glasgow 1982) 221; idem, *Political Systems of Highland Burma. A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London 1954) esp. 89-90, 179-82.

27. Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν μέγαν καὶ θαυματουργὸν ἱεράρχην καὶ πατέρα ἡμῶν Νικόλαον, ed. G. Anrich (*Hagios Nikolaos. Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche,* I: Die Texte (Leipzig-Berlin 1913) 392-417) 399.17-400.5; thereafter abbreviated to Nikolaos.

28. Nikolaos, 403.3-.22.

29. Except in his story of the Angels: Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fols. 141a-152b.

This is neither accidental nor surprising. Misogyny was a fundamental tenet of Byzantine thinking.[30] Already from its very creation christian ideology was fundamentally misogynistic.[31] Amongst the leading figures of the Orthodox Church, John Chrysostom was perhaps the most vehement and vitriolic, ever ready to portray woman as cruel, uncaring, vain, disloyal, an altogether contemptible creature;[32] and in the twelfth century Eustathios of Thessalonike accused women of much the same attributes (though in the tone of a mere rebuke or disapproval) when he lamented that they abandon their children to wet nurses.[33] Theognostos, the author of a 'Thesaurus' written in the first half of the thirteenth century, posed the question 'what is a woman?' and answered it in a long and extremely misogynistic litany of abusive terms: woman is described, amongst other things, as the friend and organ of the devil, the source of all evil, a shameless and wild beast, a poisonous snake, a thesaurus of dirt, a sexual trap which is insatiable . . .[34] Theognostos reminds his reader that Secundus had called her a 'necessary evil': 'necessary' because she is needed for procreation; 'evil', because she is.[35]

Official misogyny was not monopolised by the Church. The literary sources mention little of females, but when they do it is in order to denigrate them, by allusions to female feebleness, vanity, even perversion. It is sufficient to recall the depictions of Theodora and Antonia in Procopios' Secret History (both, like Neophytos' Eudoxia, accused of witchcraft, sensuality and a conspiratorial nature)[36]; the charges (again, of conspiracy and

30. See Grosdidier de Matons, 'La Femme dans l'Empire Byzantin' (cited note 1) 18-20; C. Mango, *Byzantium. The Empire of New Rome* (London 1980) 225-6.

31. See note 11 and esp. Daly, *Beyond God the Father.*

32. See e.g. John Chrysostom, Πρὸς τοὺς ἔχοντας παρθένους συνεισάκτους, *MPG* 47, 495-514, esp. 502 ff.; idem; Ἐγκώμιον εἰς Μάξιμον, *MPG* 51, 225-42.

33. *Eustathii Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam,* ed. G. Stallbaum, I (Leipzig 1825) 88.

34. *Theognosti Thesaurus,* ed. J.A. Munitiz (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca, V (Brepols-Turnhout 1979) 11-12, § 11; thereafter abbreviated to Theogn. Thes. See also *idem,* 'A "Wicked Woman" in the 13th Century', XVI Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress (cited note 17) II/2, 32.2, 529-37. Munitiz places the passage within the context of the scandalous affair of emperor John III Vatatzes with a woman known as the Marchessina. Even if this hypothesis is correct, it does not remove the misogynistic character of the passage, but merely disguises it under a pretext.

35. Theogn. Thes., 11, § 10.

36. Procopius, Ἀνέκδοτα, ed. Bonn. For charges of witchcraft see I, 13.9-.10; I,

sexuality) launched against Theophano by Theognostos and by popular poetry;[37] the well known advice to Kekaumenos to his son never to trust or befriend women but to avoid them altogether;[38] or Ptochoprodromos' depiction of the shrew who reduces her husband to the state of pretending to be a beggar so that, unrecognised by her, he would receive a plate of food.[39] The despising and mistrust of women expressed in the fourtheenth century poem 'Mirror of Women' (a kind of encyclopaedia of misogyny, whose author establishes female perversion, claiming contributions from sources such as the Bible, profane literature and popular proverbs), or that expressed in much Cretan fifteenth and sixteenth century poetry,[40] does not in fact move into a different mental plane from Chrysostom's exclamations or Theognostos' depiction of what a woman is.

And if misogyny was not a monopoly of the Church neither was it a monopoly of men. Texts written by women writers are marked by an avoidance of discussion of women. When they do,

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16.1-.3; III, 25.8-.9 (for Antonina); XXII, 126.16-127.18 (for Theodora). For charges of sexuality, conspiracy, cruelty: I, II, III, IV, V (for Antonina); III, IV, IX, X, XV, XVI, XVII, XXII, XXVII, XXX; and see ed. Loeb, IX.15-.26 (Theodora). Note that Antonina is also accused of incest: I, II, III, IV, V. The reader should not be misled by Justinian's description as a demon. By presenting him thus, Procopius achieves two things, in gender terms: firstly, he is exonerating Justinian, for the fact that he was born a demon is evidently one which does not involve the taking of any decisions and steps on his part — by contrast to the witches (Theodora, Antonina) who do precisely act consciously and deliberately in order to enter into relations with the forces of evil. Secondly, he is restating the superior male position: a demon is obviously superior to a witch; and, in an inverted reproduction of the Adam-Eve relationship, the witch is an aid and servant of the demon. For Justinian's depictions as a demon, see XII, 79.12-82.21; XVIII, 106.6-.10; XVIII, 111.2-.10.

37. Thogn. Thes., 201-3, § 12.1-.5; Γιὰ τὴ βασίλισσα Θεοφανώ, in Ποιητικὴ Ἀνθολογία, ed. L. Politis, I (Athens 1975) 174.

38. *Cecaumeni Strategicon*, ed. B. Wassiliewski and V. Jernstedt (Amsterdam 1965) 54.21-.26; cf. 61.20-.21; 42.26-44.8; 51.8-.11; 55.30-56.30.

39. Τοῦ Προδρόμου κυροῦ Θεοδώρου πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα τὸν Μαυροϊωάννην, ed. D.-C. Hesseling and H. Pernot, *Poèmes Prodromiques en Grec Vulgaire* (Amsterdam 1968) 30-37.

40. See e.g. the fifteenth century female portraits painted by Bergadis, Ἀπόκοπος, of women as frivolous, pretentious, treacherous; by Sachlikes of women as dirty, cruel, envious, using their sexuality in order to enslave, abuse and destroy men; or the sixteenth century misogynist poem ironically entitled 'In Praise of Women': Bergadis, Ἀπόκοπος, ed. S. Alexiou (Athens 1971) esp. 22.143-25.226; S. Alexiou, Κρητικὴ Ἀνθολογία (Herakleion 1969) 44-45, 48-54, 62-64; G. Morgan, *Cretan Poetry: Sources and Inspiration* (Herakleion 1960) 69-86.

it is usually in derogatory terms that they speak of their own sex. Kassia's opinion is that woman is a κακόν even if she is beautiful; if she is ugly, she is even worse.[41] Anna Comnena spares only her mother and her grandmother from her general commentary on women — such as that women are given to easily-shed tears, to fear and panic; that they are of low intelligence and incapable of dealing with serious matters; or that they are frivolous, morally unstable and unreliable.[42] Foundresses of female monasteries are no less severe on members of their own sex. In Typika such as those of Irene Comnena or Theodora Palaiologina, the nuns are repeatedly required to 'emasculate' themselves,[43] to overcome their 'female, soft and weak nature'. All female Typika speak of weakness as inherent in female nature,[44] of natural female gullibility and propensity to sin, of Eve's original transgression and the guilt burdening the female sex ever since.[45]

Thus, Neophytos can without embarassment create women in his narratives who express despising of their own sex: Μὴ βδελύξῃ, δοῦλε τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὴν ἀσθένειαν ἡμῶν, μή ἀπώσῃ ἡμᾶς ἑλομένας σωθῆναι, the women beg Alypios, he high on his column, they low on the ground.[46] Within the context of the theory of the 'dominant' and 'muted' groups, the passage constitutes a double irony: not only is a male writing up what purports to be 'female' narrative, not only is he 'giving expression' to a group from which this very power has been denied; but he can also feel no less honest about it since this is most probably how women themselves, immersed in the patriarchal ideology of their culture, perceived themselves.

41. See Buckler, 'Women in Byzantine Law' (cited note 17) 415; K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der Byzantinischen Literatur,* II (New York 1970) 715-6.

42. Anna Comnena, *Alexias,* ed. Bonn, III, 3, 144.9-146.13; III, 6, 7, 8; III, 7, 160.16-161.3; III, 8, 163.12-.18; IV, 4, 198.1-10; XV, 2, 312.10-314.5.

43. Τυπικὸν τῆς Σεβασμίας Μονῆς τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου τῆς Κεχαριτωμένης, *MPG* 127, 991-1128, esp. 1000; *Le Typikon du monastère de Notre Dame τῆς Βεβαίας Ἐλπίδος,* ed. H. Delehaye (Deux typika Byzantins de l'Époque des Paléologues (Bruxelles 1921) 18-105) 34.21-.26; 51.10.

44. *Typikon du monastiere de Lips,* ed. Delehaye (*ibid.* 106-140) 108.5-.6; 115.1-.2; *Typikon Βεβαίας Ἐλπίδος, op. cit.* 29.30-.32; 49.27-.28; 85.6-.7.

45. E.g. *Typikon Βεβαίας Ἐλπίδος, op. cit.* 26.5-.14; 41.30-.31; 89.20-.31.

46. Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν βίον τοῦ ὁσίου καὶ Θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀλυπίου τοῦ κιονίτου, ed. H. Delehaye (*Les Saints Stylites* (Bruxelles 1923) 188-94) 192.6-.8; thereafter abbreviated to Alypios.

The reason for the misogyny of these men and women is the fact that they are simply expressing the 'reality' produced by the patriarchal structure of their culture. Permeating every aspect of the social formation — including institutions essential to its reproduction such as the Church, the administrative establishment, the family, monasticism — patriarchal assumptions were a fundamental component of the 'common sense' of the Byzantine world. Gramsci's notion of 'civil society', in which a combination of social coercion and consensus determined by the taken-for-granteds of everyday life secures social-structural and ideological continuity, provides useful insights. As Gramsci stated: 'One of the commonest totems is the belief about everything that exists that it is 'natural', that it should exist, that it could not do otherwise than exist'.[47] The belief that the established order and ideas are 'natural' is translated by patriarchy into the concept of 'natural' differences between the sexes. Thus, to quote only one Byzantine example, Leo VI found that free access of women to Law Courts created 'a paradox, as well as a confusion and subversion of the natural barriers between the sexes'; and that such laws as allowed this 'betray the natural modesty and decency which are characteristic of women'.[48] Byzantine women took the 'natural barriers' and their 'characteristic' traits not as cultural constructions, but as truly natural. It is therefore not surprising to find the misogyny that permeates male Byzantine texts to be equally present in women's texts. Thus, too, it is not surprising to find that evil, when it appears in human form in Neophytos' writings, is contained in female bodies.

Apart from Eudoxia and Artemis, two other evil female figures appear in Neophytos, in his Interpretation of the Apocalypse.

47. A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* ed. and transl. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (London 1971) 157, 206-76, 348-51. See also C. Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism* (London 1976) 39-40. Gramsci was referring to industrial societies, but I believe the gist of his argument as referred to above to be equally applicable to pre-industrial societies. For the continued idea that female submission to the male is 'natural' in modern rural Greece, see Campbell, *Honour, Family, Patronage* (cited note 12) 56-57, 150-4, 269-72, 276-8; du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (cited note 12) 101-14, esp. 106.

48. P. Noailles and A. Dain, *Les Novelles de Léon VI le Sage* (Paris 1944) N.48, 189-91, esp. 189. This translation in English by J. O'Foalain and L. Martines, *Not In God's Image* (London 1979) 91. Similarly, Anna Comnena talks of the σύμφυτον αἰδῶ τῆς γυναικός: *Alexiad,* ed. Bonn, XII, 3, 143.20-.21; and Chrysostom says in reference to women, τῆς φύσεως ἦν ἡ ἀσθένεια: *MPG* 50, 633.

On the first occasion, Neophytos more or less repeats rather than interprets the passage concerning Jezabel. She falls neatly into the pattern of the witch: deceitful, unchristian, collaborating with Satan, deadly dangerous, emphatically sensual — and beyond her husband's power.[49]

On the second occasion, evil is personified in the woman who appears in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, pregnant, surrounded by the sun, the moon at her feet, twelve stars around her head.[50] In violent contradiction to the traditional interpretations of this figure,[51] and commiting 'a grave error' according to a modern theologian,[52] Neophytos invests this woman with the power of evil. Greatly distorting the text, he assumes that Satan pursued her and tried to devour the child simply because he did not recognise, dressed as she was in her glorious attire, that she was 'deflowered Anti-Theotokos and mother of the Anti-Christ' and the devil's own collaborator. Again, whereas in John's Apocalypse the devil simply pursues the woman into the desert but is unable to destroy her, Neophytos adds arbitrarily:

> Ὁ δὲ διάβολος λυττήσας καὶ κατὰ τῆς γυναικός,
> οὐδέ κατ' αὐτῆς ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἰσχύς, ἀλλ' ἵνα ζήσῃ ἐν
> τῷ τέως· Θνήξεται δὲ εὐκαίρως τόν ἄξιον αυτῆς Θάνατον.[53]

Neophytos' vehement rejection of the woman, his distortion of the text by misinterpreting and adding elements which give it new and different dimensions, and which turn Neophytos into an unorthodox interpreter, are not simply due to his limited theological knowledge. Neophytos' interpretation of most of the other passages of the text tend to be closely related to the text itself. Whenever he greatly distorts it by additions and overdrawn interpretations he does so in order to express personal beliefs and

49. Περὶ τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου, ed. B. Egglezakes ('Ανέκδοτον Ὑπόμνημα τοῦ Ὁσίου Νεοφύτου τοῦ Ἐγκλείστου εἰς τὴν Ἀποκάλυψιν, in Ἐπετηρίς Κέντρου Ἐπιστημονικῶν Ἐρευνῶν, VIII (1975-77) 73-185, ed. in 87-112) 89.70-90.86; thereafter abbreviated to N.'s Apocalypse.

50. Apocalypse, 12.1-.17; N.'s Apocalypse, 99.36-101.76.

51. See Egglezakes, *op. cit.* esp. 82-83. See also M. Graef, *Mary. A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (London and New York 1963) 27-31.

52. Egglezakes, *op. cit.* 82. An ancient reader of the Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189 containing Neophytos' Interpretation, also considered it ἀνάρμοστον to Orthodox beliefs and recorded his disapproval on fol. 68a. See Egglezakes, *op. cit.* 82-83.

53. N.'s Apocalypse, 101.60-.62.

attitudes which on occasions such as this one do not even agree with the text which he is supposedly interpreting. Neophytos is expressing here extreme misogyny, whereby the woman is seen as totally evil and is condemned to death. His excuse for doing so is based on the information that the woman gave birth in pain and that she was not a virgin — the latter being an arbitrary addition of Neophytos'.[54] In other words, that she was not the Virgin Mary. The conclusion emerges clearly: in Neophytos' mind, any woman other than the Virgin Mary, any woman who gives birth in pain and unvirginal, is evil. As such, she deserves to die.

III

Despite the above descriptions, woman as a real force of evil is an extreme which Neophytos generally avoids. Far more commonly he depicts woman not as totally evil, but connected with sin, wrong-doing, spiritual and moral decline.

Sexuality is the most common and serious accusation hurled against her. The notion that a woman's power resides in her sexuality is an apparent paradox when compared with ideas regarding the relative status of the sexes, whereby women are classified as the weaker sex;[55] but it can be understood with reference to a combination of men's fear of women's power[56] (a fear which any ruling group — whether defined in economic, racial or gender

54. *Ibid.* 10.40-.43.

55. It is a paradox which persists in various expressions of the patriarchal system. For an example taken from modern Greek society, see R. Hirschon, 'Open Body/ Closed Space: The Transformation of Female Sexuality', in *Defining Females,* ed. S. Ardener (London 1978) 66-88, esp. 74; and see note 56 below.

56. Expressions of fear of female sexuality, manifested through the conception of female sexuality as essentially polluting, are found in cultures as diverse as the Lele of the Congo, the New Guinea Mae Enga, the Yoruk Indians of California. See M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London, Boston and Henley 1969) 146-54. For conceptions of female impurity in Chinese religion, see P. Steven Sangren, 'Female Gender in Chinese Religious Symbols: Kuan Yin, Ma Tsu, and the "Eternal Mother" ', *Signs* 9/1 (Autumn 1983) 4-25. With specific reference to fear of female sexuality and ideas of female pollution (e.g. through menstruation or childbirth) in modern rural Greece and Cyprus, see Campbell, *Honour, Family, Patronage* (cited note 12) 31-32, 154, 269-72, 276-8, 290-1; du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (cited note 12) 102-3, 105-7; R. Blum and E. Blum, *The Dangerous Hour* (London 1970) 12, 14-15, 19-21, 22, 42, 46 (9), (10), (11), (12), 47 (14), 48 (18), (21), 49 (23), 47-48 (17), 298-300; E. Friedl, *Vasilika: A Village in Modern Greece* (New York 1962) 77; G.H. Papacharalambous, Κυπριακά Ἤθη καί Ἔθμα (Nicosia 1965) 30-43, esp. 37-38, 43.

terms — naturally has about those over whom it exercises its power) and the fact that women are necessary in terms of sexual desire and the need for procreation. Hence the characterisation of woman as a 'necessary evil'. Once classified as such, woman can also then be used as a scapegoat, the most convenient way of unburdening male guilt by projecting it onto women. Thus Neophytos does not forget to mention, for example, that the Lost Son had dissipated the paternal fortune with whores, fornicating.[57]

Uncontrollable sexuality, deceit and conspiracy all again combine in females to lead yet another man to sin, in Neophytos' narration of the aftermath of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: the daughters of Lot, seeing that no male was left to have children with, intoxicate Lot and cause him to have sexual intercourse with them. Neophytos fully absolves Lot and burdens the daughters with all the responsibility:

> Ὦ ἀθλίαι, τί πεποιήκατε τῷ γέροντι; Λὼτ δὲ φησὶν οὐκ εἴδη, ὃ ἐποίησε, τοὐτέστιν οὐδεμίαν αἴσθησιν ἔσχεν ὅτι ἥμαρτεν· (. . .) αἱ δὲ οὐκ ἀπέτυχον τοῦ σκοποῦ.[58]

It is not simply that women are accused here of sexual immorality. They are charged with something far more serious, namely with breaking the taboo of incest.[59]

Lévi-Strauss has shown that it is not the biological family or mother, father and child that is the distinguishing feature of human kinship structures: the primordial and, he believes,

57. . . . κακῶς δαπανήσαντα καὶ καταφαγόντα μετὰ πορνῶν καὶ ἀσελγῶν τὸν βίον τὸν πατρικόν: Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 32b; and similarly in fol. 25a: τὸν υἱὸν τὸν καταφαγόντα τὸν βίον μετὰ πορνῶν.

58. Hexaemeros (cited note 16) 225.37-226.4.

59. By 'taboo' I mean a categorical prohibition whose breach would bring extreme shame and fear of supernatural punishment. With specific reference to women, see C. Humphreys, 'Women, Taboo and the Suppression of Attention', in *Defining Females* (cited note 55) 89-108. On what becomes taboo in a society, see Douglas, *Purity and Danger;* S.H. Tambiah, 'Animals are Good to Think and Good to Prohibit', *Ethnology* 8 (1969) 423-59. For an illustration of the way taboos delineate human relationships, see E.R. Leach, 'Concerning Trobriand Clans and the Kinship Category Tabu', in *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups,* ed. J. Goody (Cambridge 1958) 120-45. On Biblical cases of incest, see Leach, 'Genesis as Myth' (cited note 11) esp. 33-35.

universal[60] law is that which regulates marriage relationships, and its pivotal expression is the taboo of incest. Through the prohibition of incest, each family is forced to give up one of its members to another family; and it is on this act of exchange that the kinship structure which holds a society together is built.[61] As Radcliffe-Brown pointed out, the basic characteristic of incest is disloyalty, disobedience to the very laws which dictate the formation and continued existence of the kinship structure.[62]

Viewed from this angle, it is logical that incest would be considered to be an 'unnatural' offence, far worse than simple divergence from existing cultural modes of sexual behaviour, for it does not simply threaten particular relationships, but the entire kinship structure. Since this kinship structure is also patriarchal, incest becomes also a direct threat to patriarchy, since it poses the possibility of a system where no exchange of females need take place. Both Leach and Radcliffe-Brown point out that in pre-industrial societies incest and witchcraft are often thought of as connected: both are classified as 'unnatural' offences since, by denying the social nature of man, both the witch and the incestuous person appear, socially, to deny human nature. It is therefore not surprising that witchcraft and incest are often attributed to the same individuals.[63] Neophytos chooses indeed 'the same individuals' for both offences, namely women. Neophytos may in fact have been quite topical in his references to incest;[64] but as on the first so also on the second occasion in

60. C. Lévi-Strauss, 'Structural Analysis in Linguistics and in Anthropology', in *Structural Anthropology,* I (Harmondsworth 1972) 31-54, esp. 51. The 'universality' of the incest taboo has been conclusively refuted: K. Hopkins, 'Brother-Sister Marriage in Roman Egypt', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980) 303-54; R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Harmondsworth 1967) 54-76; J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge 1983) esp. 39-45; Leach, *Social Anthropology* (cited note 26) 51.

61. Lévi-Strauss, 'Structural Analysis in Linguistics and in Anthropology', *op. cit.* 46, 31-54; *idem,* 'Language and the Analysis of Social Laws', *ibid.* 55-66, esp. 59-60; *idem,* 'Linguistics and Anthropology', *ibid.* 67-80, esp. 72-73; *idem,* 'Social Structure', *ibid.* 277-323, esp. 309.

62. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, 'Introduction', in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (Oxford 1950) ed. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde, 1-85, esp. 70-72.

63. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (cited note 26) 136-40, esp. 139; see also 89; idem, *Social Anthropology* (cited note 26) 221-2; Radcliffe-Brown, 'Introduction' (cited note 62) 70; see also Meyer, 'Witches' (cited note 25) 68.

64. Throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries both Church and State were particularly interested in establishing and enforcing the legislation concerning con-

which he refers to it, it is a woman who is blamed for it. In his catechesis on the Beheading of John the Baptist, it is Herodias who is repeatedly blamed for the incestuous relationship between her and Herod (her husband's brother) and for John's beheading — while Herod is absolved in silence.[65]

As with Herodias and Salome in the catechesis on the Beheading of John the Baptist, and Eudoxia in the panegyric of Chrysostom, so on another occasion Neophytos again promotes the image of woman leading holy man to death. This time (in the panegyric of Gennadios) the woman does so through being inhospitable, cruel and lacking compassion. Gennadios, caught up in a storm in the night, knocks at the door of a widow. Despite his repeated knocks and shouts, she refuses to open the door. The old and exhausted holy man dies in the freezing night on the woman's doorstep. Neophytos uses the story to launch a general attack on such inhospitable persons as this woman, who, in his own time, cause much suffering to travelling monks . . .[66]

Loyalty withdrawn is the characteristic of another female portrait referred to by Neophytos. In describing how Job's wife tried to induce him to blasphemy, she appears as gullible and easily subjected to Satanic influence, even without being conscious of this.[67] This is an idea which Neophytos utilised also in his

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sanguinity and affinity as impediments to marriage. See Laiou, 'The Role of Women in Byzantine Society' (cited note 17) 235. On the prohibition of the marriage called ἴγκεστος, ἄθεσμος or ἀθέμιτος, between blood or spiritual relatives, see Balsamon's commentary on the twenty-seventh canon of Basil and the fifty-third Canon of the Sixth Oecumenical Synod, in Syntagma (cited note 21) IV, 161-4; II (Athens 1852) 428-32; K. Harmenopoulos, Πρόχειρον Νόμων ἢ Ἑξάβιβλος, ed. K.G. Pitsakes (Athens 1971) IV, § 7, 231-8; § 8, 238-41; thereafter abbreviated to Hexavivlos; Koukoules (cited note 21) IV (Athens 1951) 95.

65. Cod. paris. Gr. 1317, fols. 104b-106a. Note that this is an incest based on the kinship structure rather than on the biological family — as was the case with Lot and his daughters — precisely illustrating Lévi-Strauss' point.

66. Ἐγκώμιον κεφαλαιῶδες εἰς τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις πατέραν ἡμῶν Γεννάδιον, ed. H. Delehaye ('Saints de Chypre', *AB* 26 (1907) 221-8) 224.31-225.8.

67. Cod. Athen. 522, fols. 18b-19b. E.g.: ὁ μισοδίκαιος δαίμων (. . .) ἐπειρᾶτο κινῆσαι διὰ τῆς συζύγου καὶ ἐπὶ κοπρίας πρὸς βλασθημίαν τὸν δίκαιον. Ἥτις καὶ προσελθοῦσα μετά χρόνον πολήν τῆς τοῦ δικαίου πληγῆς καὶ τὰ τοῦ διαβόλου ρήματα ἐπὶ στόματος φέρουσα, ἐλεεινῶς δῆθεν πρὸς αὐτὸν διελεγέτο . . .: Fol. 18b. Also: Καί δρα μοι πάλιν, τὰ τῆς γυναικός ὀλίγωρα ῥήματα καὶ τὰ τοῦ διαβόλου τεχνάσματα: Fol. 19a. Or: πρὸς αὐτὴν ἀτενίσας καὶ κατανοήσας τὸν διὰ τοῦ στόματος αὐτῆς λαλοῦντα δολίως . . .: Fol. 19b. For an example of a saint's life

description of Eve: woman as an instrument of the devil (Eve, Job's wife), rather than the powerful, fully conscious collaborator (the witch).

The logical extension of this is the development of an idea whereby women cause destruction without having acted at all, merely through being female. This is thrice repeated in Neophytos' case of the daughters of Cain.[68] It is the actions of 'the sons of God', who entered into kinship relations with 'the daughters of Cain', that caused God's wrath and the Flood. Nowhere in the passages does Neophytos bring any charge against these women, other than that Cain was their forefather, a fact over which they had no control. Yet, even though Neophytos' narrative expressly depicts the male characters as the ones who acted to bring about the offensive marriages, it is nevertheless repeatedly stressed that it is because of the women that destruction was brought upon mankind. The belief behind the narrative is, evidently, that women cause sin, destruction and death simply by being female. It was a belief certainly current in Neophytos' times: in an open letter, written to defend his conduct in relation to the mistress of John III Vatatzes — a woman known as the Marchesina — Nikephoros Blemmydes accuses her in a torrent of abusive phrases of being not only wicked, but also, purely and simply, a woman.[69]

It follows that Neophytos would advise his reader to avoid women altogether for, as he put it, καρποῦ μὴ παρόντος οὐ συχνῶς ὀρεγόμεθα.[70] Thus, too, Neophytos provides in his Typikon not only that entrance to his monastery is forbidden to women (a common feature in male monastic Typika) but also that if any woman, intending to cause harm, trespasses into the monastery, she is to be subjected to forty days of ξηροφαγία and an equal number of genuflexions daily.[71] It is the most severe ἐπιτίμιον imposed in the entire Typikon, and a unique example

modelled on Job's, see Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρος ἡμῶν Φιλαρέτου, ed. M.-H. Fourmy and M. Leroy ('La Vie de S. Philarète', *B* 9 (1934) 85-170, esp. 113-67) 115.3-137.22.

68. Hexaemeros, 192.3-203.7; 208.21-.23; Cod. Coisl. Gr. 287, fols. 46a-46b.

69. Nicephoros Blemmydes, Ἐπιστολὴ καθολικωτέρα καὶ πρὸς πολλοὺς, *MPG* 142, 605-9. See also Munitiz, 'A "Wicked Woman" in the 13th Century' (cited note 34).

70. Cod. Coisl. Gr. 287, fol. 39b.

71. Τυπικὴ σὺν Θεῷ Διαθήκη, ed. I.P. Tsiknopoullos (Κυπριακά Τυπικά (Nicosia 1969) 69-104) 89.1-14; thereafter abbreviated to Typikon.

in itself amongst male Typika of an ἐπιτίμιον imposed on a woman.[72]

The idea of destruction emanating from females appears in Neophytos' writings in ways other than through named women. The 'natural' characteristics supposedly pertaining to each sex figure prominently in this respect. It is within this context that we find that angels, who, according to Orthodox ideology are bodiless and sexless beings,[73] are nevertheless designated as male. Since they are important creatures in the christian pantheon, patriarchal ideology would allow them to be nothing else. Their names, their characteristics of a military nature, their assumed gender, all are symbols of the male sex.[74]

By contrast, sins are consistently presented by Neophytos as 'female'. The associations and vast range of evocations which are triggered off by the use of the female gender to describe sins, suggest that this use was not a coincidental fact. Neophytos' conception of the sins as female is illustrated by his description of sins as 'mothers' giving birth to 'daughters'. Sins are related to each other in a mother-daughter relationship. For example:

> Πορνεία μήτηρ ἀναισθησίας καὶ κλεψίας καὶ ψεύδους καί ἐπιορκίας. Φιλαργυρίας δέ καὶ ἀκηδίας καὶ ὀργῆς καὶ λύπης καὶ ἑτέρων πλείστων κακῶν, προμήτωρ καὶ πρόγονος.[75]

Sometimes two sins are depicted as getting together and, out of an unnatural — and, surely, incestuous — union, giving birth to a third one:

> Πόθεν γὰρ ἡ ἐπάρατος δυὰς δηλαδὴ γαστριμαργία καὶ κενοδοξία εἶχον ὑπηρετεῖσθαι, εἰμὴ ἀξίαν αὐτῶν τὴν φιλαργυρίαν συνέλαβον καί ἀπέτεκον θυγατέραν.[76]

72. I have made a comparative study of Byzantine monastic Typika in my forthcoming Ph.D. thesis (see note 6).

73. See e.g. Theogn. Thes. (cited note 34) 206-7.

74. For examples of angels' male names, characteristics etc., see Neophytos' panegyrics for Archangel Michael and for the Gathering of the Angels: Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fols. 7b-12b; fols. 141a-152b; also, Hexaemeros (cited note 16) 171.33-.35.

75. Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 125a. Similarly: Περὶ πορνείας, ἥτις καὶ ἐστὶ γαστριμαργίας μεν θυγάτηρ, ἀναισθησίας δὲ μήτηρ: Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 124a. Similarly: γαστριμαργίαν, δῆλον ὅτι ἅμα κενοδοξία, σὺν τῇ ἁπλήστῳ αὐτῶν θυγατρί, ἤγουν φιλαργυρία: Cod. Coisl. Gr. 287, fol. 55a.

76. Cod. Coisl. Gr. 287, fol. 55a. Similarly, fornication is described as ἡ τεκοῦσα

Sins are depicted as constantly waging war against the forces of goodness. Such paradigms of goodness as appear in Neophytos' writings are, significantly, of the male gender. In numerous passages Neophytos depicts this war of evil against goodness and hails the victors. In all these passages he is, in fact, depicting rather a war between the sexes, the male hailed as victorious. To give only one of many examples,[77] Neophytos writes that of all the passions three are the worst, from which ὡς ἐκ τριῶν πολυγόνων κακῶν καὶ πολυάνδρων μητέρων, τὰ πάθη τὰ ὀλέθρια ὁλικῶς ἀποτίκτονται, (gluttony, vainglory and avarice). Neophytos continues: οἱ θεοφόροι πατέρες ἡμῶν κατὰ τῶν τριῶν παθῶν διὰ τῶν τριῶν ἀρετῶν ἀνδρικῶς ἐπανέστησαν · καί νικηταὶ τροπαιοῦχοι τῶν ὀλεθρίων παθῶν, θεοστεφεῖς ἀνεδείχθησαν. Armed by these three Godsent weapons (fasting, humility, poverty) the Fathers destroyed the power of the three — female — passions. Note the emphatic and hardly covered gender conflict in Neophytos' concluding passage, below, as much as in the ones above:

> Τούτων δὲ τὸ κράτος, ὡς πονηρῶν δεσποινῶν και πολυγόνων μητέρων ἀνδρικῶς καταλύσαντες, συγκαταλύουσι ταύταις καὶ τὰ νοθευμένα τούτων γεννήματα · ἤτοι πορνείαν, ἥτις ἐστὶν γαστριμαργίας θυγάτηρ · ὑπερηφανείαν, κενοδοξίας πρωτότοκον νόθευμα · ἀκηδίαν, φιλαργυρίας δεινότατον κύημα · καὶ τὰ τούτων ἁπαξαπλῶς πολυειδῆ ἀποκυήματα · (. . .) Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα σὺν ταῖς μητρᾶσιν αὐτῶν ἀνδρείως οἱ πύκται ἐκεῖνοι κατέβαλλον. Ἀγνείαν δὲ καὶ διόρασιν καὶ ἀνδρείαν, οἱ ὄντως ἀνδρεῖοι, θεοσδότως κατώρθωσαν.[78]

κακὴ μήτηρ, who teaches her daughters evil: Εἰ ἐμαὶ', φησὶ, 'θυγατέρες ἐν ἀληθεία πεφύκατε, ἐμέ μιμεῖσθε καὶ τῇ μητρί τῇ (. . .). Πᾶν γὰρ εἶδος κακίας ἐκ τῆς μητρός μου γαστριμαργίας καὶ ἐξ ἐμοῦ τῆς πορνείας γεννᾶται καὶ φαίνεται διὸ καὶ διδάσκω ἡμᾶς τὰς πρωτοτόκους μου θυγατέρας: τὴν κλοπὴν, τὸ ψεῦδος ἅμα καὶ τῇ ἐπιορκία: Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 131b. See similarly Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 128a; and Ἐγκώμιον κεφαλαιῶδες εἰς τόν ὅσιον καὶ θαυματουργὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν Διομήδην τὸν νεόν, ed. H. Delehaye ('Saints de Chypre' (cited note 66) 212-20) 220.10-.20; thereafter abbreviated to Diomedes.

77. Gluttony tries to lure Adam and later Christ in the desert. Vanity also tries to lure Christ and the Angels. Both are defeated. Neophytos even defends Adam, writing that at least gluttony did not find him εὐξαπάτητον — in an obvious comparison to Eve who is often called thus (see note 16): Cod. Coisl. Gr. 287, fols. 55b-56a. Likewise: . . . ἡ μὲν ἀπάτη θανάτου γέγονε κολοφὼν, ἡ δὲ γαστριμαργία μολυσμῶν καὶ φθορᾶς γεγόνε κορωνίς, ἃς οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἀμφω πατήσαντες ἀθάνατοι τῷ ὄντι γεγόνασιν: Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317 fol. 121b. In Diomedes the saint is hailed as having defeated ἀνδρείως the eight evils: Diomedes (cited note 76) 220.10-.23.

78. Holy Lights (cited note 13) 153.478-.481; 155.526-.539.

IV

Reflecting the general Byzantine literary tradition, where texts eulogising women (other than the Virgin and female saints) remained rare,[79] Neophytos' writings contain few images of good women. When good women do appear in Neophytos' texts, they fall into clearly distinguishable patterns. In sharp contrast to evil women, good women are placed firmly within the context of the family, and since the family is patriarchal, it follows that they hold no power. Otherwise, they are composed of such elements as to ensure a secondary, subservient position to a male representing authority. Further, such women are as divorced of their female sexuality as possible. Let us see in more detail how these patterns of good women are expressed in Neophytos.

Throughout his texts, the good woman is always defined and given an identity in relation and dependance to a male[80] (a dependance which John Chrysostom described in terms of slavery, in his declaration that the woman is not the mistress of her body but the slave of her husband,[81] while in the tenth century Leo VI was content with the much milder statement that the husband is the 'most essential part and head' of the family).[82] Thus, Neophytos mentions Roufina, the mother of Mamas, as pious

79. Byzantine eulogies of women tend to be confined to mother figures — such as Michael Psellos' and Theodore Studios' eulogies for their mothers; Anna Comnena's affection for her mother, Irene Doukas; that of Alexios I for his mother, Anna Dalassena. John Moschos' Spiritual Meadow remains an exceptional and extraordinary text — especially in view of the fact that it was written by an ascete — in that it gives a good role to women, who appear in the narrative as exemplifying christian piety, often leading men away from sin: the reverse of Eve. Michael Psellos, 'Εγκώμιον εἰς τὴν μητέραν αὐτοῦ (cited note 20); Theodore Studios, Κατήχησις ἐπιτάφιος εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ μητέραν, *MPG* 99, 884-901; Anna Comnena, *Alexiad,* esp. III, 3, 144.19-146.13; III, 6, 7, 8; XV, 2, 312.10-314.5; John Moschos, Λειμών, *MPG* 87.3, 2852-3112, esp. 2865, 2877-81, 2889-92, 2904, 2912-3, 2933-6, 2940, 2988-92, 3049, 3057-64, 3068-9, 3089, 3093-100. See also Grosdidier de Matons, 'La Femme dans l'Empire Byzantin' (cited note 1) 18-20.

80. An old and resilient patriarchal expression. See, e.g., K. Mentzu-Meimare, 'Η παρουσία τῆς γυναίκας στίς 'Ελληνικές ἐπιγραφές ἀπό τόν Δ΄μέχρι τόν Ι΄μ.χ. αἰῶνα', XVI Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress (cited note 17) II/2, 32.2, 433-43. Where in most cases the woman is described in dependent relation to a man (wife, daughter, mother, sister, of a male).

81. Ἡ γυνὴ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει, ἀλλὰ καὶ δούλη καὶ δέσποινά ἐστι τοῦ πανδρὸς: John Chrysostom, 'Ομιλία ΙΘ', *MPG* 61, 151-160, esp. 152.

82. Noailles and Dain, *Les Novelles de Léon VI Le Sage* (cited note 48) N. 112, 367-73, esp. 371.

and noble, but only in so far as she is a useful and necessary ingredient in the story of Mamas. Characteristically, she dies as soon as she gives birth: her role fulfilled, she is dismissed from the narrative.[83]

Likewise, Alypios' mother and Matrona, his maternal aunt, are chiefly characterised by their kin relationship to the male saint.[84] Similarly, respect for another woman, Elisabeth, mother of John the Baptist, evolves from her maternal relationship to another male saint.[85] Even in the case of Mariam, whose authority as a prophetess Neophytos expressly acknowledges, he still finds it necessary to define her in relation to a man — so that she is 'the sister of Aaron and Moses'.[86] Other female figures are similarly defined: Anna is 'the widow of Phanouel'; Susannah 'the daughter of Helkion and wife of Joachim'.[87] In the absence of a father or husband, Christ becomes the most convenient way of providing the parallel male presence necessary to mark the woman's identity. Thus, through the idea of 'daughter and bride of Christ', Marina acquires such a husband and father. She is described as a 'fair martyr and fair virgin daughter and bride of Christ the King'.[88] Following a well established pattern in hagiography, other good women are mentioned by Neophytos exclusively because of a circumstantial relationship to the central male figure of authority in the narrative. Such is the case, for example, of Mary Magdalen and the Myrrh-bearing women.[89]

83. Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τόν Ἅγιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγαλομάρτυρα Μάμαντα, ed. I.P. Tskinopoullos ('Αγιοι τῆς Κύπρου in Κυπριακαί Σπουδαί 30 (1966) 133-7) 133.18-134.10; thereafter abbreviated to Mamas.

84. Alypios (cited note 46) 189.3-.30; 192.3-.29.

85. Λόγος εἰς τὸν Εὐαγγελισμὸν τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτόκου καὶ Ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας, ed. E.M. Toniolo ('Omilie e Catechesi Mariane Inedite de Neofito il Recluso (1134-1220 c.)', *Marianum* 36 (1974) 238-62) 252.252-.262; thereafter abbreviated to Annunciation.

86. Εἰς τὰς Ὠδάς, ed. I.H. Hadjiioannou (Νεοφύτου πρεσβυτέρου μοναχοῦ καὶ ἐγκλείστου Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τοὺς Ψαλμοὺς (Athens 1935) 129-39) 129.33-.34; thereafter abbreviated to Odes.

87. Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 175b.

88. Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν Ἁγίαν καί ἔνδοξον Μεγαλομάρτυρα Μαρῖναν, ed. I.P. Tsiknopoullos Ἅγιοι τῆς Κύπρου, Κυρπιακαί Επουδαί 30 (1966) 160-1) 160.2-.3; thereafter abbreviated to Marina.

89. Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fol. 148b, fol. 149b; Εἰς τοὺς Ψαλμοὺς, ed. I.H. Hadjiioannou (cited note 86) 9-128, 51, Ψ.ΜΔ'; Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1137, fols. 67a-67b. For incidental good women in saints' lives, see S. Stephani Junioris, *MPG*

The structure of the narrative ensures that woman is firmly kept in a secondary position, even on the rare occasions in which a woman claims an equal position vis-à-vis a man in the narrative. An example of this is provided in Neophytos' panegyric of Andronikos and Athanasia. Both are described by Neophytos as saints and equally venerated miracle workers.[90] Yet Athanasia's name invariably follows that of Andronikos', in accordance with the patriarchal order of address. Moreover, at times she completely vanishes from the narrative, Andronikos remaining the only saint in it. When Neophytos states that he had occasion to witness the miraculous power of the myrrh emanating from their (common) grave, the myrrh is described as that 'which springs from the relic of this divine Andronikos'.[91] In spite of earlier references to miracles performed by 'their relics',[92] on this occasion involving a witnessed miracle, Athanasia is not mentioned: power to perform miracles is quietly monopolised by the male saint.[93] Already in the very title of the homily this bias towards Andronikos is apparent. He is described as 'our father and miracle performing Andronikos' while Athanasia, fitting into the role of woman as man's aid, is called συμπράκτορα[94] — even though the miralces are accredited to both of them. On other occasions she is simply called 'Andronikos' wife'.[95]

Such bias towards the husband, even when both spouses are acknowledged as being equally spiritual, is also noticed in

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100, 1069-1185, esp. 1088, 1104-8, 1125-32, 1160-64, 1168-9; Laudatio in Miracula Sancti Hieromartyris Therapontis, ed. L. Deubner (*De Incubatione Capita Quattuor* (Lipsiae 1900) 120-34) 129.7-.15; Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Φιλαρέτου (cited note 67) 139.10-143.25, 159.10-.22; Διήγησις θαυμάτων τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἐνδόξου μεγαλομάρτυρος καὶ θαυματουργοῦ Ἀρτεμίου, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (*Varia Graeca Sacra,* VI (Leipzig 1975) 1-79) 11.12-13.9, 33.17-35.11, 40.22-41.28, 44.22-45.18, 51.22-55.11, 57.26-59.8, 71.8-72.23, 74.19-75.18.

90. Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν ἅγιον πατέρα ἡμῶν καὶ θαυματουργὸν Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ συμπράκτορα ὁσίαν Ἀθανασίαν, extracts ed. H. Delehaye ('Saints de Chypre' (cited note 66) 178-80) 179.3-.10, 179.26, 180.14; thereafter abbreviateed to Andronikos and Athanasia.

91. Andronikos and Athanasia, 180.14-.25.

92. Andronikos and Athanasia, 179.3-.10; 179.26; 180.14.

93. We find Andronikos monopolising the myrrh in Theognostos, too: Theogn. Thes., 66.156-67.1.

94. Andronikos and Athanasia, 178.22-.25.

95. E.g.: . . . πράξει καὶ λόγῳ Θεὸς ἐδόξασεν Ἀνδρόνικον σὺν τῇ ὁμοζύγῳ: Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fol. 83a; παρῆκεν ἅμα τῇ ὁμοζύγῳ πάντα τὰ του βίου τερπνὰ: fol. 83b.

Neophytos' depictions of the parents of Mamas. Both are denounced to the eparch of Gaggra as being christian. But even though they both stand accused, Neophytos evidently treats the husband, Theodotos, as the responsible party: it is he who is summoned to the authorities and pressed to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods; he who is then sent to the civil authorities of Caesarea (Roufina, his wife, pathetically 'followed him, burdened with the pregnancy of Mamas'); he who is imprisoned 'together with the woman'. When he finally dies in prison, she stays alive only as long as it is necessary to give birth to Mamas. Then, predictably, she 'lay next to the father's corpse, and having prayed to God in her mind about her husband, she, too, fled to the Lord'.[96] Thus, even though Roufina was accused of the same offence, suffered the same punishment of imprisonment and died in the same way as her husband (in prison), she is nevertheless consistently given a secondary position, her fate inextricably following her husband's to the death.

I referred earlier to the patriarchal order of address, whereby the male is addressed first, the female following. The convention is seen at times to override even Neophytos' personal preferences. Thus, even though Neophytos' affection appears to had been directed more towards his mother than his father,[97] and even though he does, on one occasion, overrule the order of address by referring to her in precedence of his father, the patriarchal order of address is quickly restored in his next reference to his parents: the woman is placed second.[98]

She thus remains a figure of circumstantial importance, a secondary character, dependent on a man, defined in relation to a man. 'Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself

96. Mamas (cited note 83) 133.18-134.10.

97. He chooses, for example, the day of her death as the date on which commemorative services for both his parents should be held; and he refers to her as a nun: Alypios (cited note 46) 193.26-194.2. The phenomenon of holy man's attachment to mother, expressed through a close and loving relationship between the two, is not uncommon in saints' stories. Neophytos' own story of Alypios provides such an example; and see, e.g., Vita S. Stephani Junioris (cited note 89) esp. 1073-81, 1088-9, 1093, 1105-8, 1138, 1156. Modern Greek ballads also contain allusions to intense mother-son relationships, even though there they often explode in violence. See M. Alexiou, 'Sons, Wives and Mothers: Reality and Fantasy in Some Modern Greek Ballads', *JMGS* I/1 (1983) 73-111, esp. 83-93.

98. Alypios, 193.26-29, 194.1.

but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. (. . .) She is defined and differentiated with reference to a man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other'.[99] It is a proof of the resilience of patriarchy that Simone de Beauvoir's comments are exactly applicable as a description of Neophytos' attitude.

The good woman is denied power; power becomes a characteristic of the evil female. We have already seen in Neophytos' depictions of female evil that an element of this evil power was female sexuality. It follows that Neophytos' good women would have to be divested of it if they are to remain good.

One of the most effective ways of doing so is by utilising the taboo of incest. Neophytos' good women are all presented within the context of a family and in particular in relation to a male: they are mothers, maternal aunts, sisters or daughters of a man.[100] The reader's mind would spontaneously register these women as 'mothers', 'daughters' and so on — and not simply as 'women'. Once classified as such, because of the power of the incest taboo they would equally automatically be classified by the reader as 'asexual'.

Another way in which Neophytos divests good women of sexuality is by stressing their status as virgins; their long years in widowhood; or their very advanced age. Hastrup, drawing from extensive work in the field of social anthropology, views the woman's social identification as tied up with her sexual status. She describes the existence of a conceptual pattern marking women's life cycle, and moving from a state of ambiguous sexual potentiality ('unspecified yet creative virgin'), to another of unambiguous sexual fertility ('sexually specified, child bearing woman'), and then to one of complete lack of sexuality and devoid of creativity ('return to unspecificity of widowhood or

99. S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Harmondsworth 1972) 16.

100. Mamas' mother; Alypios' mother and maternal aunt; Hilarion's follower Konstantia, mother of a married daughter; Elisabeth, mother of John the Baptist; Mariam, sister of Aaron and Moses; Susannah, daughter of Helkion. Mamas (cited note 83) 133.18-134.10; Alypios, 189.3-.30, 192.3-.29; Εἰς τόν Ὅσιον καὶ Θεοφόρον πατέρα ἡμῶν καὶ θαυματουργὸν Ἰλαρίωνα ἐγκώμιον διὰ βραχέων, ed. I.P. Tsiknopoullos (Ἅγιοι τῆς Κύπρου (cited note 88) 138-47) 145.20-.24, 145.36-.38; Annunciation (cited note 85) 252.252-.262; Odes (cited note 86) 129; Cod. Paris. Gr. 1317, fol. 175b.

old woman').[101] Women who are not in the second stage are sexually unspecified and are not viewed as true, complete, fully sexual females.

It is well known that virginity was highly praised and safeguarded in Byzantium,[102] the object of the praise being usually understood as being that of sexual purity. But virginal status is also important for the precise reason that in it the woman remains sexually unspecified. If I may use an example from a different society and culture, perhaps the objectives of the Byzantine praise of virginity can be clarified. Ortiz, in his study of the Tewa Indians, found that they have a third sex category, that of virgins, who are not specified as women. The female is not specified as such until she has been sexually associated with a male. In the Tewa's mythological cosmogony, the distinction between the specified woman and the unspecified virgin is so emphatic, that the latter has aspects of both sexes and is the founder of the male half of society, while 'woman' is the founder of the female half.[103] The Tewa example is not an isolated one. Close parallels are provided from cultures as diverse as those of ancient Rome and twentieth century Albanian tribes.[104]

101. By contrast to men's life cycle, whose identification is not tied up to their sexual status, since they are the generalised sex. See K. Hastrup, 'The Semantics of Biology: Virginity', in *Defining Females* (cited note 55) 49-65, esp. 59-60.

102. See e.g. Leo's mention of τὸ σεμνὸν τῆς παρθενίας: Noailles and Dain, *Les Novelles de Léon VI Le Sage* (cited note 48) N. 27, 105-11, esp. 109. Church and State laws provided punishments not only for the rape of virgins, but also — for woman and man — for the cases of virgins willingly losing their virginity. See Hexavivlos (cited note 64) VI, 349-50, § 3.5-.10. See also Syntagma (cited note 21) III, 410-1 and 590-3; IV, 159-61. On praise of and advice on virginity, see John Chrysostom, Εἰς τὰς ἁγίας Μάρτυρας Βερνίκην καὶ Προσδόκην παρθένους, *MPG* 50, 629-49; idem, Ἐγκώμιον εἰς Μάξιμον, *MPG* 51, 225-42, esp. 235-6; Clemens I, Διαταγαὶ τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων, *MPG* 1, 556-1156, esp. ch. ΙΔ', 825. On the high esteem placed on virginity in Byzantine times see Mango, *Byzantium* (cited note 30) 227; Koukoules (cited note 21) II/2 (Athens 1948) 10-1; and for a discussion of virginity with specific reference to its importance in early Christianity, see Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (cited note 56) 157-8.

103. A. Ortiz, *The Ṭewa World. Space, Time, Being and Becoming in a Pueblo Society* (Chicago 1969) esp. 89-90, 13-59.

104. Referring to the acquired male characteristics of the Roman Vestal Virgins, Dumézil notes that in many pre-industrial societies virginity is conceived 'comme un état intermédiaire entre la féminité et la masculinité' G. Dumézil, *La Religion Romaine Archaique* (Paris 1966) 560. Amongst Albanian tribes, a girl could evade marriage by taking a vow of virginity, after which she took over male characteristics: she could dress as a man, associate with men on equal terms, carry guns. Again, a man who

In a parallel way, Neophytos' stress of virginity amounts to more than simple praise of sexual purity. It involves a removal of sexuality from the woman and indeed the assumption that she is not fully female. Her dreaded power residing in her sexuality, woman has been rendered powerless — therefore good. In a way not found in Neophytic stories of male saints, and in contrast to the post-ninth-century pattern of hagiography,[105] virginity in female saints becomes in Neophytos' narratives the most emphatic element of their sanctity — such as in the case of Marina[106] and Thekla.[107] Further , their examples are generalised to cover almost all female saints:

> καί δρα τῆν παρεῦφημον Θέκλαν, τὴν πρωτομάρτυρα, καὶ τὰς μετόχους αὐτῆς παρθένους καὶ μάρτυρας, καὶ πάλιν τάς ὁσίας παρθένους καί ἀσκητρίας, πῶς μετά πόνων μαρτυρικῶν καὶ παλαισμάτων τὸ κάλλος τῆς παρθενίας ἐφαίδρυναν.[108]

Even though other means of achieving sanctity are acknowledged (Νεάνιδες γάρ παρθένοι καί ἄλλαι πλεῖσται γυναῖκες διά καθαρᾶς πολιτείας),[109] virginity is by far their most often praised qualification, placed higher than even the female saint's faith or martrydom.

The 'καθαρά πολιτεία' to which Neophytos refers is meant to be a term descriptive of women who are not virgins, but who have become otherwise sexually unspecified: Hastrup's third state in woman's life cycle, woman devoid of sexuality, returning to

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had no son, could direct one of his daughters to take the vow of virginity. She then became a 'son', the father bequeathing his house and land to her: M.E. Durham, *Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans* (London 1928) 194-5.

105. Post-ninth-century hagiography of female saints tends not to stress virginity (as was usual in earlier hagiographical models) but to emphasize other virtues — charity, love, humility, obedience — which to some extent replace it. See Laiou, 'Addendum to the Report on the Role of Women in Byzantine Society' (cited note 17) esp. 198-9.

106. Marina (cited note 88) 160-1

107. Λόγος εἰς τὴν Παναγίαν Κόρην καὶ Θεομήτορα ὀπηνίκα ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῆς γονέων ἐπεδόθη εἰς τά "Αγια τῶν 'Αγίων τριετίζουσα, ed. E.M. Toniolo ('Omilie e Catechesi Mariane' (cited note 85) 210-36) 228.331-230.343; thereafter abbreviated to Mary at the Temple; Marina, 160.39-.40.

108. Mary at the Temple, 228.331-.333.

109. Mary at the Temple, 230.335-.336.

sexual unspecificity. This is achieved through old age, long widowhood, or long abstention from sexual activity. Thus it is important for Neophytos to mention that Anna was a widow for eighty-four years and that Susannah, Joachim's wife, εἵλετο μᾶλλον ἀποθανεῖν, ἢ διαφθεῖραι τό τῆς σοφροσύνης καλόν.[110] Both Anna and Susannah are described as 'σώφρων', an epithet which Neophytos usually reserves for men and which these women earned because of their unspecified sexual status — because, being no longer female, they aquire male characteristics. Similarly, Elisabeth's very advanced age and her miraculous (asexual) conception of John is repeatedly mentioned.[111] In the case of a female saint who has been married, great pains are taken to divorce her from her husband, and thus from sexual activity, by placing both of them in monasteries. Athanasia and Andronikos follow this path. They meet again twelve years later and live together until the end of their lives; but Athanasia has in the meantime overstepped her gender and become 'male': she dresses up in male clothes and changes her name to Athanasios. It is clear in the narrative that it is only after her transvestism that Athanasia acquires sanctity — not simply as an unspecified female, but rather as an assumed male, ἀρρενώσασα ὑπερφυῶς τὸ τοῦ θήλεος χαῦνον.[112]

Saintly women require not only a denial of sexuality (as is the case with male saints), but a denial of their very sex. In the light of which it is justified to conclude that Neophytos' 'good women' are 'good' precisely because they have ceased to be 'women'.

110. Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 175b.

111. Annunciation (cited note 85) 252.252-.262.

112. The relevant passage, from Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fols. 81b-83a, is too large to publish here, but characteristic extracts are the following: on meeting again after twelve years of separation: Καὶ ὁ μεν 'Ανδρόνικος ἑαυτὸν ἐφανέρον, ἡ δὲ, 'Αθανάσιον ἑαυτὴν ἀπεκάλει. 'Ανδρείαν γὰρ στολὴν ἡν ἠμφιεσμένη, τὴν θηλείαν φῦσιν παρακρύπτειν μηχανομένη, ἡ ἀρρενῶσασα ὑπερφυῶς τὸ τοῦ θήλεος χαῦνον: fol. 82b. Nephytos himself repeatedly calls Athanasia by her assumed male name, e.g.: Καὶ ἕτερα δύο καὶ δέκα συμβιοτεύσαντες ἔτη, ὀνομαστὸν καὶ πανεύφημον τὸ ὄνομα ἡν 'Ανδρονίκου καὶ Αθανασίου (. . .) Μέγα ἡν τὸ κλέος 'Ανδρονίκου καί 'Αθανασίου, οὐχ ἁπλῶς διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν, καὶ τὴν ἐπονυμίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν θαυμάτων πηγὴν: fol. 83a. On female transvestite saints, see Patlagean, 'L'Histoire de la Femme Déguisée en Moine' (cited note 1). For expressions of the female saint acquiring male characteristics, see John Chrysostom, Εἰς τὰς ἁγίας μάρτυρας Βερνίκην καὶ Προσδόκην παρθένους, *MPG* 50, 629-49, esp. 635.

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Amongst Neophytos' good women an outstanding place is reserved for the Virgin Mary. It would be superfluous to describe here the pre-eminence of Mary, not just among female saints but amongst the entire pantheon of the Byzantines, who had, by the end of the sixth century, assigned to her the particularly important role of patron and protectress of Constantinople.[113]

The persona of Mary is composed of three elements: she is a virgin, a bride and a mother. In Neophytos it is her virginity which is most often praised. An apparently endless list of epithets referring to it crowd the folios of panegyrics or passages devoted to her.[114] Mary's virginal status would be a prerequisite for her sanctity, not only because of the connotations of sexual purity — which are repeatedly emphasised by Neophytos[115] — but also because of the way in which it de-sexualises her as a female.

However, the difference between Mary and other virgin female saints, is that not only is she a virgin, but has kept her virginity intact before, during and after giving birth. She is, as Neophytos reminds us in a great number of passages, not simply a

113. See N.H. Baynes, 'The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople', *AB* 67 (1949) 165-77; A. Cameron, 'The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople. A City Finds its Symbol', *The Journal of Theological Studies* 29/1 (1978) 79-108.

114. To take only one panegyric as an example, Mary's virginal status is asserted by her descriptions as ἀειπάρθενος, πανάχραντος, πανάμωμος, ἀγνή, πάναγνος, ὑπερκάθαρος, παρθένος, ἁγνὴ παρθένος, τὸ κλείθρον τῆς παρθενίας, τῆς παρθενίας τὸ κλέος παραμώμητος κόρη: Λόγος εἰς τὸ πάνσεπτον καί θεῖον γενέθλιον τῆς παναχράντου Δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτόκου καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας, ed. M. Jugie ('Homélies Mariales Byzantines', *PO* 16, fasc. 3 (Paris 1922) [104]-[108]) [104] .9-.10; [106] .20, .25; [107] .9, .12, .17, .26, .40, .41, .44; [108] .2-.5, .9, .12, .15, .20, .22, .27; thereafter abbreviated to Birth of Mary. Neophytos is of course not alone in his emphasis of Mary's perpetual virginity. See e.g. Romanos' poems On the Nativity I and II and his Stichera on the Nativity, and the Akathistos: *Romani Cantica Genuina* (cited note 15) 1-16; *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica. Cantica Dubia,* ed. P. Maas and C.A. Trypanis (Berlin 1970) 164-71; thereafter abbreviated to *Romani Cantica Dubia.* For the Akathistos see *MPG* 92, 1335-48.

115. E.G.: Χριστὸς ἐκ παρθένου τεχθεὶς, ἐννομώτατον τόκον συν παρθενία φρονίμῳ ἄμφω τετίμηκεν. Ἐπεί γὰρ καὶ τόκος παράνομος γίνεται, καὶ μωρὰ παρθενία ἔν τισιν, ὡς φησὶ τὸ ἱερὸν εὐαγγέλιον πέφυκε. Χριστὸς ἐκ παρθένου ἀχράντου ὑπὲρ λόγον καί ἔννοιαν ἀποτίκτεται, ἵνα τὴν ἀχρηστίαν τοῦ τόκου τοῦ ἀσεβοῦς καὶ τῆς μωρᾶς παρθενίας καταργήση τό ἄτοπον: Cod. Lesb. Leim. 2, fol. 260a. Similarly: Σήμερον τῆς παρθενίας τὸ μέγεθος ἐκ παρθένου τεχθεὶς, Χριστὸς ἐφανέρωσε, καὶ διετράνωσε καὶ ἐγκωμίασε τόδε τὸ χάρισμα τὸ πρὶν δυσκατόρθωτον. Ἦν γὰρ τὸ ἀγγελικὸν τοῦτο ἀξίωμα, ἄγνωστον ἀνθρώποις καὶ πρὸς κτῆσιν ἀμήχανον. Ἀφ' οὗ δὲ Χριστὸς ἐκ παρθένου, γνωστόν ἅμα καὶ ζηλευτὸν τῆς παρθενίας τὸ κάλ // λος ἐγένετο: Cod. Lesb. Leim. 2, fols. 261a-261b.

Θεοτόκος[116] but a Θεοτόκος Παρθενομήτωρ. That Mary conceived and gave birth and remained a virgin, is a cause of wonder for Neophytos. It is also clearly a crucial element in the myth of Mary[117] and Neophytos refers to it often, even in places where it is irrelevant to the context of the passage.[118] The fact that Mary, παρθένος οὖσα συνέλαβε καὶ τεκοῦσα πάλιν παρθένος ὡς πρό τοῦ τόκου μεμένηκε[119] is repeatedly mentioned by Neophytos and it is something which he admits as being inexplicable, ἀνερμήνευτον.[120] Symeon becomes Neophytos' mouthpiece when the latter describes Symeon's reaction on seeing Mary and the child Christ: now, Symeon says, he can die content, for εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου καὶ παρθένον, μητέρα. To him this had appeared something impossible:

> καὶ με ταύτην παρθένον ὁμοῦ καὶ μητέρα φανῆναι ἀδύνατον· εἰ μὲν παρθένος, οὐκ ἂν μήτηρ · εἰ δὲ μήτηρ, οὐκ ἂν παρθένος. Αὕτη δὲ καὶ παρθένος καὶ μήτηρ. Ὦ μυστηρίου καινοῦ! Ὦ θαύματος ξένου καὶ φρικτοῦ ἀληθῶς![121]

Work in the field of social anthropology suggests that virgin birth is a cultural dogma found in many diverse cultures. Malinowski reported that the Trobriand islanders were wholly

116. The 'title' under which Mary's divine motherhood was officially promoted at the 431 Council of Ephesos; but which had already been present at the Council of Nicaea (325) and is attributed to Origen. See Graef, *Mary* (cited note 51) 46, 51-52; G. Miegge, *The Virgin Mary. The Roman Catholic Marian Doctrine* (London 1955) 53-67. Also Cameron, 'The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople' (cited note 113) 80, 87-88.

117. On the idea of Mary's perpetual virginity, which appears in the mid-second century Protoevangelion of James, and which had become established by the fourth century, see Graef, *Mary* (cited note 51) 12-19, 34 ff; Miegge, *The Virgin Mary* (cited note 116) 36-52; R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk. Towards a Feminist Theology* (London 1983) 150-2.

118. While e.g., interpreting a passage referring to Christ, Neophytos unexpectedly refers to Mary's motherhood and virginity, and to how ἡ τεκοῦσα ἀλοχεύτως παρθένος, παρθένος πάλιν καὶ μετά τόκον μεμένηκεν: Cod. Athen. 522, fol. 410b.

119. Περὶ τοῦ θείου Γαβριήλ καὶ τῶν Εὐαγγελίων τῆς Θεομήτορος, ed. E.M. Toniolo ('Omilie e Catechesi Mariane' (cited note 85) 284-90) 286.61-.62.

120. Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν βίον καὶ τὰ θαύματα τοῦ ὁσίου καὶ θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Θεοσεβίου τοῦ Ἀρσινοΐτου, ed. H. Delehaye ('Saints de Chypre' (cited note 66) 181-97) 185.31. Also in Cod. Paris. Suppl. Gr. 1317, fol. 13b. Again, a theme not exclusive to Neophytos. In Romanos' On the Nativity I and II, Mary herself wonders at the miracle of her preserved virginity: *Romani Cantica Genuina,* 2.β', 9α'-10β'; also: *Romani Cantica Dubia* 164-71, esp. 166ι'.1 (cited note 15 and 114 respectively).

121. Cod. Lesb. Leim. 2, fol. 289a. Similarly in fol. 289b.

'ignorant of the physiological process of impregnation' and specifically of the need for male insemination of the female.[122] Leach believed that the Trobrianders were not expressing ignorance of physiological fact, but a cultural dogma in their assertion that every woman is impregnated by the holy spirit.[123] Irrespective of whether the Trobrianders were expressing ignorance or dogma, their belief of impregnation by the spirit is, as Leach points out,[124] comparable to the christian dogma of Mary's impregnation by word of God, without the male intervening, ἄνευ πατρός, to quote Neophytos.[125]

Godly children that are conceived by virgins without the intervention of mortal fathers, are found throughout the world's cultures, the common characteristic underlining all cases being that both child and mother may become immortalised.[126] It is the very anomaly of the virgin mother, the defiance of classification in any one of the sexual categories employed to characterise woman's life-cycle which makes Mary such a strong bridge between the natural and the supernatural world, such a potent symbol of mediation.

The concept of mediation in this sense was clearly treated — if not equally clearly defined — by Lévi-Strauss. Based on Lévi-Strauss, Leach writes: 'in every myth-system we will find a persistent sequence of binary discriminations as between human/superhuman, mortal/immortal, male/female, legitimate/illegitimate, good/bad . . . followed by a 'mediation' of the paired categories thus distinguished. "Mediation" (in this

122. Though they were aware of the physiological causes of pregnancy in animals; and they accepted that the woman must first have sexual intercourse before she can be impregnated by the holy spirit (baloma): B. Malinowski, *The Family Among the Australian Aborigines* (London 1913); *idem, The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia* (London 1932) 145-66; *idem, Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (New York 1954) 215-37. Roth reported similarly that Australian aborigine tribes of North Central Queensland ignored the causal connection between copulation and pregnancy: W.E. Roth, 'Superstition, Magic and Medicine', *North Queensland Ethnographic Bulletin* 5 (Brisbane 1903) 22.

123. E.R. Leach, 'Virgin Birth', *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (1966) 39-49.

124. *Ibid.*, esp. 41-43. See also Hastrup, 'The Semantics of Biology: Virginity' (cited note 101) 61-62.

125. Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fol. 203b.

126. See Leach, 'Virgin Birth' (cited note 123) esp. 41-42; Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', in *Structural Anthropology* (cited note 60) 206-31.

sense) is always achieved by introducing a third category which is "abnormal" or "anomalous" in terms of ordinary "rational" categories. Thus myths are full of fabulous monsters, incarnate gods, virgin mothers. This middle ground is abnormal, non-natural, holy. It is typically the focus of all taboo and ritual observance'.[127]

What precise context this symbol will have been created to occupy,[128] and what different forms and variations it will subsequently assume, will depend on the particular social conditions surrounding it at a specific point in time. The myth of the Virgin Mary has assumed numerous forms and aspects,[129] but the power of the sexual anomaly of the Virgin-Mother as a symbol of mediation between humans and their God remained intact, at least in the Orthodox tradition. It probably helps to explain Mary's success as a cult figure, with specific reference to her mediating prowess. Cameron, who explains the rise of the cult of the Virgin in the sixth century as a means of restoring unity in a badly shaken society, recognises mediation as the most emphatic aspect of Mary.[130] Cameron explains why the cult of

127. Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', above; Leach, 'Genesis as Myth' (cited note 11) esp. 32. See also Leach, 'Virgin Birth', above, esp. 41-42. M. Douglas, 'Animals in Lele Religious Symbolism', in *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London and Boston 1975) 27-46 (reprinted from *Africa* 27 (January 1957) esp. 35-38) shows how a 'mediator' (in this case an 'abnormal' animal mediating between animals and humans) may become the focus of religious cult practise. For an application of the principle ideas discussed above within a social-historical context, see M. Beard, 'The Sexual Status of the Vestal Virgins', *JRS* 70 (1980) 12-27.

128. M. Douglas developed the concept of ambiguity or interstitiality, whereby interstitial beings (i.e. which partake of more than one cultural category or state) are declared to be dangerous, powerful, holy. She thought that ambiguity or interstitiality is based on a system of binary opposites created between the natural and the man-made. Subsequent anthropological work, however, points out that all types of ambiguity are cultural constructions, man-made opposites creating an abnormality in order that it fulfills a certain function. See Tambiah, 'Animals Are Good to Think and Good to Prohibit' (cited note 59); R. Bulmer, 'Why the Cassowary is not a Bird', in *Rules and Meanings: The Anthropology of Everyday Knowledge,* ed. M. Douglas (Harmondsworth 1973) 167-93 (reprinted from *Man* 2/1 (1967) 5-25). For an application of interstitiality in a historical context see Beard, above.

129. See Graef, *Mary* (cited note 51); M. Jugie, *La Mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge,* Studi e Testi, 114 (Rome 1944) esp. 506-82 (a more restricted but also more thorough study); Miegge, *The Virgin Mary* (cited note 116); M. Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex. The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London 1976) (useful but flawed by errors).

130. Cameron, 'The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople' (cited note 113) 103-8.

a mediator rose when it did; but she does not explain why this cult centred on a woman and not on one of the already powerful male intercessors of the — after all, patriarchal — christian pantheon. Cameron's assertion that the Virgin Mary's role had 'little specifically to do with her sex but much more to do with her position as a mediator',[131] overlooks the possibility that it was precisely Mary's sex — and the ambiguities with which it had been endowed — that was the most decisively important ingredient in her make up as The Great Mediator.

The ambiguity of the Virgin-Mother is further emphasised by Mary's role as a bride. In this role, she is the bride of her son, as she is also the bride of God the Father. References to her in this capacity are too numerous to leave any doubt as to the cultural significance of this characteristic of Mary. While other good women are also 'brides of Christ' or God, Mary is the only one who is the bride of her son[132] and of the father, too.[133] In this capacity, Mary is not only sexually ambiguous in a personal sense, as in the mother-virgin situation. She is now ambiguous in an overtly social sense. She in fact moves over and above that pivotal expression of the kinship structure, the taboo of incest. Mary is the bride (that is to say, the lover) of both the Father (through whose word she conceived) and of the Son. The ambiguity, further elaborated by the christian conception of the Father and the Son as two distinct and yet identical entities, is complete.

Mary partakes of more than one of the categories with which the christian mind had structured its universe: on a sexual level, she is both a virgin (a sexually unspecified creature, a less than female woman) and a mother (a sexually unambiguous, fertile woman); on the level of social kinship, she is both the mother of a son and the bride of that same son: both, further, a bride

131. *Ibid.* 106.

132. Mary at the Temple (cited note 107) 218.145-.155; 220.181-.182; 234.420-.423; Cod. Lesb. Leim. 2, fol. 290a; Annunciation (cited notes 85) 262.405-.406; Εἰς τὸ πάνσεπτον καὶ θεῖον γενέθλιον τῆς παραμώμου Κόρης καὶ Θεομήτορος, ed. E.M. Toniolo ('Omilie e Catechesi Mariane' (cited note 85) 296-8) 296.21-298.37; Εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τὴν ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς Θεομήτορος, ed. E.M. Toniolo (ibid., 300-2) 300.20-.22; Psalms (cited note 86) 51, Ψ.ΜΔ'.

133. See e.g. Birth of Mary (cited note 114) [106].40-[107].7; [107].44-[108].2; Λόγος εἰς τὴν πάνσεπτον Κοίμησιν τῆς πανάγνου Δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτόκου καί ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας, ed. E.M. Toniolo ('Omelie e Catechesi Mariane' (cited note 85) 264-82) 264.21; 270.124.

of the son and of the father. The creation of not only one ambiguity but of an entire structure of such; the tension caused by any attempt to understand Mary's persona according to any accepted social categories; the impossibility of placing Mary in the sexual or social context with which Neophytos was familiar: all combine to make Mary an extremely powerful symbol. As such, she could either have been understood by Neophytos as a mythical, man made, cultural creation; or accepted fully and unquestionably as holy, whose attributes cannot be found in ordinary men. Power acting through culture, Church and State control and ideology, ruled out the first possibility and forced the second: Mary was declared the Παναγία, the All Holy.

There can be no overestimation of the power exercised by Mary over Neophytos. Of his surviving works, three panegyrics and nine homilies are exclusively written for her, while in a great number of his other writings substantial passages are devoted to her. Apart from this very large presence, Mary's impact on Neophytos becomes apparent in the way in which she figures in passages which are not directly related to her and even appears unexpectedly in passages where the subject matter is quite irrelevant to her; while on other occasions she is given an importance quite disproportionate to the general context of the narrative.

It is as a mediator that Neophytos addresses her most often. In one passage, Neophytos advises his monks to learn by heart a prayer and to say it if the devil appears before them. The prayer is an invocation to God to save the monk from the devil, 'through the intercession of your ever-virginal and immaculate mother'.[134] Later in the same narrative, Neophytos urges the monks to venerate the icon of the Virgin, in order to be safeguarded from Satan.[135] Another example of Neophytos' extreme veneration of Mary comes from his instructions that the Typikon should be read by the monks three times a year, on important days when all the monks would be present at the monastery. Two out of these three most important days of the year mark feast days of Mary (her birth and the Annunciation) and only one of

134. Λόγος περὶ τινος μοναχοῦ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ, ed. H. Delehaye ('Saints de Chypre' (cited note 66) 162-75) 163.24-.30.
135. *Ibid.* 164.2-.4.

Christ (Christmas).[136] Mary is again invoked to mediate between the monks and God.[137]

But it is in a tract called Θεοσημία, in many ways the most 'personal' of Neophytos' writings, that the veneration of Mary, over and above that of Christ or God, becomes strikingly apparent. In this work, Neophytos describes his spontaneous reaction in times of what he conceived to be mortal danger (when a rock fell on him). This was to call out first for Mary's help, and only later for Christ's. Neophytos himself was struck by this breach of the patriarchal order of address: 'and I immediately cried out and said, "Our Lady, help me! Christ, help me!"; for the great urgency of my need did not leave even a trace of the correct order, so as to call the Lord first — but I called the Lady first . . .'[138] It is to Mary that he believes he owes his escape from death. It is worth pointing out that his description of her as πανταχοῦ παροῦσα καὶ τὰ πάντα πληροῦσα is one customarily reserved for God: 'Then the ever-present and all-doing and non-delaying grace came to me quicker than a flash and delivered my soul from death'.[139] In the doxology which he composed to celebrate his saving, Mary appears very prominently, with a whole *kontakion* devoted to her, Neophytos again recording that it was her name which his 'tongue and heart' uttered first in time of danger.[140] Her attributes as efficient and instant saviour of the faithful are emphasised here, as they are also present in the songs (στιχηρὰ ἰδιόμελα) which Neophytos composed prescribing that they should be sung outside the recluse's cell during the liturgy commemorating his saving.[141]

Does Mary achieve the status of goddess, then? Not quite. Mary's role as a mediator expresses the power of her position; but it also hints at her limitations: she is not human, but neither is she God. She is somewhere between the two. Orthodox theology very clearly marks the distinction between the Trinity and Mary.

136. Typikon (cited note 71) 81.13-.19.

137. Ibid., 103.29-.31.

138. Τῆς Θεοσημίας ἡ μνήμη, ed. Archimandrite Kyprianos (cited note 16) 34-53, reprinted by I.H. Hadjiioannou (cited note 16) 137-50 and 150-6) 142.27-.31; thereafter abbreviated to Theosemia. See also Mango and Hawkins, 'The Hermitage of Saint Neophytos' (cited note 5) 124-6.

139. Theosemia, 142.31-.33.

140. *Ibid.* 147.7-.12.

141. *Ibid.* 154.27-.28; 155.6-.10; 155.16-.18; 155.23-.28.

A special word, λατρεία, is reserved for the veneration of God, while for that of Mary words (such as δουλεία, προσκύνησις, ὑπερδουλεία) of lesser status are prescribed. Mary is officially venerated not in isolation but within the context of her maternal relationship to Christ. She is venerated, officially, precisely on account of her son.[142]

So embedded is christian dogma in Neophytos, that despite his obvious personal preference for Mary over any other female or male of the christian pantheon, he submits to the dogma, patriarchal and intense, and repeatedly reminds his reader (and perhaps himself) that Mary occupies a lesser place than Christ. In the panegyric of Theosevios, he stresses that it was Christ who kept Mary a virgin after she had given birth, thus attributing one of Mary's most powerful characteristics to Christ.[143] The clearest statement of Mary's subservience to Christ, Neophytos places in the lips of Anna, who says on seeing Mary and her infant son at the Temple:

> Αὐτὸς ἐποίησε τὴν παροῦσαν παρθένον, οὐχ' ἡ παρθένος αὐτόν. Ἔστη γὰρ τούτου καὶ μήτηρ καί δούλη, δι οὗ καὶ παρθένος καὶ μήτηρ τῶν πάντων καινότατον. Οὗτος δὲ ταύτης καί υἱός καὶ δεσπότης διὰ πολλὴν συγκατάβασιν. Αὐτὸς ἐποίησε τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηράν.[144]

The idea is thus projected whereby it is Christ who, so to speak, gave birth to Mary, not she to him.[145] It is an idea more strongly expressed in another passage of Neophytos, whereby Mary's achievement of virgin birth and conception without the intervention of a male, is cancelled out by tne idea of Christ having been born directly from the Father, without a mother:

> παιδίον ἐγεννήθη ἡμῖν ἐκ παρθένου ἁγίας ἄνευ πατρός, τό ἐκ γαστρὸς πρὸ Ἑωσφόρου ἐκ τοῦ πατρός γεννηθὲν ἄνευ μητρός.[146]

142. This is Church dogma, and it is also frequently expressed in the very doxologies that glorify Mary. See T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth 1980) 262; Graef, *Mary* (cited note 51) 181-201, 322 ff.

143. Theosevios (cited note 120) 185.30-.32. For another expression of this dogma see *Romani Cantica Genuina* (cited note 15) 9-16, esp. 9-10a'.

144. Cod. Lesb. Leim. 2, fol. 291b. Similarly, Romanos depicts Mary addressing Christ as 'my son, my maker, my saviour': *Romani Cantica Genuina,* 9κδ'.9.

145. An example of 'false naming' similar to that which has Eve being 'born' of Adam. See Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (cited note 11) 47; Spender, *Man Made Language* (cited note 11) 166.

146. Cod. Paris. Gr. 1189, fol. 203b. A tradition going back to the fourth century.

Tactfully, almost quietly, in the passages above Neophytos divests Mary of the extremes of power which would have turned her into a goddess, by showing that her power, such as it is, is due solely to God. Gently but firmly, Mary joins the ranks which patriarchy had prescribed for her sex, secondary to a male God.

This is, of course, not surprising. For, as I hope I have shown, Neophytos' conception of the female sex was both varied and constant. Varied, in that it assumed many different forms: the powerful (hence evil) female; the good (hence asexual) woman; the archetypal sinful Eve; Mary the Virgin Mother. Constant, in that these apparently contradictory forms were all constructed according to patriarchal prescription. Sometimes consciously, but mostly unconsciously, Neophytos both reproduced and helped perpetuate the social-cultural reality of his times. In this essay, I have tried to illustrate one of the ways in which he experienced and expressed the social conception of female gender, and hence the ways in which the 'common sense' of his culture operated.

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See Graef, *Mary* (cited note 51) 50; and compare the powerful Mary of the second century apocryphal 'Odes of Solomon': she gives birth 'As if she were a man, Of her own will, And she brought Him forth openly, And acquired Him in great power . . .': Graef, *Mary*, 35.