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Performing gender in lay saints' Lives*

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Taking as its point of departure Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, this article shows how femininity and masculinity are performed in three lay saints' Lives from the middle Byzantine period: the Life of Philaretos the Merciful *(820), the* Life of Thomaïs of Lesbos *(mid-tenth century) and the* Life of Mary the Younger *(eleventh century). The approach of these texts through gender performativity shows in the most graphic way the difference between male and female constructions of sanctity on the one hand, and the important role that gender plays in the construction of lay sanctity, on the other.*

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.
(William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2.7.139–43)

According to the most influential contemporary gender theorist, Judith Butler, gender identity is performative.[1] An individual becomes a woman or a man through social performance. As Butler herself formulates it,

> Gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing. [...] The presumption here is that the 'being' of gender is *an effect*. [...] Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of thing (emphasis in the original).[2]

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1 Butler formulates her theory of gender performativity in her famous book *Gender Trouble* (1990). See also J. Butler, 'Performative acts and gender constitution: an essay in phenomenology and feminist theory', in S.-E Case (ed.), *Performing feminisms: feminist critical theory and theatre* (Baltimore 1990) 270–82.

2 J. Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York and London 1999) 33, 43–4.

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In other words, human beings learn from an early age to dress and adorn their bodies in gender-specific ways as well as to perform gendered voice inflections, facial expressions, gestures, movements, attitudes and behaviours. It is obvious that Butler applies the *theatrum mundi* metaphor which goes back to Graeco-Roman antiquity,[3] and it is also used in Byzantium,[4] the Middle Ages,[5] and later.[6] However, in none of these previous periods is there ever made an attempt to understand and explore the personal and social implications of this way of viewing human life. It is not until the second half of the twentieth century that the concept of role playing is applied to analyse and understand human behaviour in everyday life. Obviously, Butler's work is part of this new use of the 'all the world's a stage' metaphor. Her own contribution, as already stated, is the treatment of gender as a social role.

Butler's notion of gender performativity is employed here to examine how gender is constructed through daily performances in Byzantine Greek saints' Lives the protagonists of which are lay saints. Lay saints are individuals who achieve sanctity through their worldly lives. The approach of lay saints' Lives through gender perspective shows in the most graphic way the difference between male and female constructions of sanctity.[7] Male lay saints express their piety mainly in acts of charity, while their female counterparts show their godly devotion by so much more: not only in charitable activities but

3 According to Minos Kokolakis the 'dramatic simile of life' has its origins in Solon (638–558 BC): M. Kokolakis, *The dramatic simile of life* (Athens 1960) 12–15. Nevertheless, the earliest use of the metaphor can be detected in some works of Plato (see, for example, *Laws* VII 817 B-D and *Phileb.* 50 B). Later, it becomes a commonplace in the works of Cynic and Stoic philosophers, such as Bion of Borysthenes, Chrysippus, Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. It is also used by authors, such as Plutarch, Lucian and Plotinus. For a presentation of the relevant passages from the works of these philosophers and other writers of the Graeco-Roman antiquity, see Kokolakis, *The dramatic simile of life*, 22–5, 37–9, 40–8, 52–8, 65–7 and M. Kokolakis, 'Το "δράμα του βίου" εις τον Επίκτητον', in M. Kokolakis, (ed.) *Φιλολογικά μελετήματα εις την αρχαίαν ελληνικήν γραμματείαν* (Athens 1976) 177–85. For a discussion of the use of the stage metaphor in pagan and early Christian writings, see also E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an age of anxiety: some aspects of religious experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge 1965) 8–12.

4 See, for example, patriarch Photios' letter 234 in B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink (eds.), *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, II (Leipzig 1984) 151, and Theophanes Continuatus, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1838) 200.3. For a discussion of the metaphor in *Theophanes Continuatus*, see J. N. Ljubarskij, 'Der Kaiser als Mime: zum Problem der Gestalt des byzantinischen Kaisers Michael III', *JÖB* 37 (1987) 39–50, esp. 41–2.

5 An example is John of Salisbury's work *Policraticus* (bk 3).

6 See, for example, Ludovicus Vives' (1492–1540) allegorical fable, the *Fabula de homine*, William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (2.7.136–166), *The Merchant of Venice* (1.1.77–79), *Macbeth* (5.5.24–28) and Miguel de Cervantes', *Don Quixote* (Part II, bk V, 12). For the use of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor in the Shakespearean age, see W. R. Elton, 'Shakespeare and the thought of his Age', in S. Wells, (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (Cambridge 1986) 17–34.

7 For the construction of male and female sanctity in Byzantine hagiography, see S. Constantinou, *Female corporeal performances: reading the body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of holy women* [Acta Byzantina Upsaliensia, 9] (Uppsala 2005). As for the Western tradition, see C. Walker Bynum (ed.), *Fragmentation and redemption: essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion* (New York 1992).

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also through repeated visits to churches, in their vigils, prayers and fastings. A sexual discrimination can be discerned here: in order to ascend to holiness lay women have to perform more deeds than their male counterparts. In contrast to other saints who renounce the world, lay saints undertake social roles such as those of husband/wife and father/mother, which are inextricably linked to and defined by their gender. As the following analysis will demonstrate, the gender-based performances in the texts in question, which are realized by both the saints themselves and their spouses, are central to the construction of lay sanctity.

The Byzantine Greek Lives which are devoted to lay saints are rather few and most of them venerate women. This is the only case in which a role of sanctity shared by both men and women is depicted in more female than male Lives.[8] The fact that lay women saints are more than their male counterparts is rather surprising because hagiographical texts, like the vast majority of Byzantine literature, are androcentric as they have mostly male protagonists or subjects. The lay holy women are Mary of Antioch, the empresses Theodora and Theophano, Thomaïs of Lesbos, Martha, the mother of Symeon Stylites the Younger, and Mary the Younger. As for the lay holy men, these are Philaretos the Merciful and the emperor John III Vatatzes the Merciful whose hagiography has rather the form of an encomium than that of a Life.[9] The limited number of lay saints' Lives should be ascribed to the nature of this unorthodox type of sanctity. According to the norm, sanctity is achieved through martyrdom or a religious life led outside society either in solitude or in monastic communities. As some monks who question the sanctity of Mary the Younger formulate it in her Life,

> Οὐ δύναταί τις ἐν κόσμῳ διάγων, κρεωφαγῶν τε καὶ ταῖς τῆς συζυγίας ἡδοναῖς ἐνηδόμενος, θαυμάτουργίας παρὰ Θεοῦ χάρισμα δέξασθαι, τῶν μοναχῶν στερουμένων πάντων ἡδέων καὶ κακουμένων καὶ θλιβομένων ἐν ἅπασι, πρὸς δὲ καὶ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ὕμνοις προσκαρτερούντων καὶ μὴ ἀξιουμένων τινὸς τοιούτου χαρίσματος. (*Life of Mary the Younger*, §19)[10]
>
> It is not possible for someone who lives a secular life, eats meat, and enjoys the pleasures of marriage to receive from God the grace of working miracles, while monks, who deprive themselves of every pleasure, who are mortified and distressed in everything, who, on top of that, devote themselves to singing hymns day and night, are not deemed worthy of such grace.[11]

8 For the subgenres of male and female Life, see S. Constantinou, 'Subgenre and gender in Saints' Lives', in P. Odorico and P. Agapitos (eds.), *Les Vies des Saints à Byzance. Genre littéraire ou biographie historique? Actes du IIe colloque international sur la littérature byzantine. Paris, 6-8 juin 2002* [Dossiers byzantins, 4] (Paris 2004) 411–23 and Constantinou, *Female corporeal performances*, 11–17.

9 To a lay holy man (Philotheos of Opsikion) is devoted also another encomium written by Eustathios of Thessalonike.

10 The text is edited in *Acta Sanctorum* Nov. IV. 1925: 692–705.

11 English translation by A. Laiou, 'Life of St. Mary the Younger', in A.-M. Talbot (ed.), *Holy women of Byzantium: ten saints' Lives in English translation* [Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation, 1] (Washington, DC 1996) 254–89, here 273.

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The texts that are used for the purposes of the present article are the *Life of Philaretos the Merciful* [*BHG* 1511z],[12] the *Life of Thomaïs* [*BHG* 2454],[13] and the *Life of Mary the Younger* [*BHG* 1164].[14] All three Lives, despite their separation in time, share a certain number of characteristics which bring them together: their protagonists are married individuals with almost the same social status who, due to their daily performances, come into conflict with their spouses, an issue that plays a central role in the texts, as the following analysis will show.

The *Life of Philaretos*,[15] written by his grandson Niketas in 820,[16] tells the story of a wealthy and excessively generous man, Philaretos, who, despite his wife's complaints, leads his family to a state of complete poverty by giving away the family's entire property. Eventually God rewards Philaretos' limitless generosity, as his granddaughter Mary wins the bride-show for the emperor Constantine VI and becomes an empress. Other important and rich men marry Philaretos' other granddaughters. Thus, Philaretos' family becomes richer than ever. Not forgetting his previous charitable actions, Philaretos goes on distributing to the poor the money that he receives from the emperor. He dies happily in old age surrounded by his family. On his deathbed, the holy man predicts that his beloved grandson and spiritual child Niketas will write his Life so that his memory might be kept alive for future generations.

According to her anonymous Life written in the mid-tenth century,[17] Thomaïs is the only child of a pious couple who gives birth to the heroine after a long period of sterility. Against her will, Thomaïs is married off at the age of twenty-four to a man called Stephen who proves a violent husband that oppresses the heroine. Opposing Thomaïs' pious life, her works of charity and her frequent absence from home, Stephen beats her violently. Thomaïs' bodily sufferings lead to her premature death that takes place after thirteen years of a brutal marriage.

The Life of Mary the Younger is also anonymous and it is dated in the eleventh century. Mary is another holy woman who dies through her husband's violence. According to her Life, Mary is a pious woman who spends all her time at church, prayer and philanthropic activities. At some point, Mary's brother and sister-in-law falsely inform

12 For a literary discussion of Philaretos' Life, see A. Kazhdan and L. F. Sherry, 'The tale of a happy Fool: The *Vita* of St. Philaretos the Merciful (*BHG*, 1511z–1512B)', *Byz* 66 (1996) 351–62; C. Ludwig, *Sonderformen byzantinischer Hagiographie und ihr literarisches Vorbild: Untersuchungen zu den Viten des Äsop, des Philaretos, des Symeon Salos und des Andreas Salos* [Berliner Byzantinische Studien, 3] (Frankfurt/Main and Berlin 1997) 104–45; L. Rydén, *The Life of St Philaretos the Merciful written by his grandson Niketas. A critical edition with introduction, translation, notes, and indices* [Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 8] (Uppsala 2002) 16–50.

13 For a literary analysis of Thomaïs' Life, see Constantinou, *Female corporeal performances*, 162–92.

14 For a literary approach to the Life of Mary, see Constantinou, *Female corporeal performances*, 162–92 and S. Constantinou, 'A Byzantine hagiographical parody: *Life of Mary the Younger*', *BMGS* 34.2 (2010) 160–81.

15 Here it is used Lennart Rydén's edition of the text: Rydén, *The Life of St Philaretos*, 60–119.

16 For Niketas, see Rydén, *The Life of St Philaretos*, 45–50.

17 Thomaïs' Life is edited in *Acta Sanctorum* Nov. IV. 1925: 234–42.

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her husband that she is giving away all the family's possessions and that she is having an affair with a slave. Deceived by his relatives' words, Mary's husband, Nikephoros, punishes her with confinement in her own room. One day, Nikephoros beats Mary violently after having been told that she calls him a Satan. In her attempt to escape from him, she hurts her head so seriously that she dies a few days later.

In their Lives, all three saints in question are presented performing repeated charitable activities which take the form of rituals. In fact, charitable activities constitute an inseparable part of the saints' daily routines who set themselves on a daily basis the task of helping everyone in need. Everyday Thomaïs gives clothing to the naked, food to the orphans and money to the poor. In order to make her daily charity possible, she even walks around the marketplace searching for poor people who may become the recipients of her gifts (*Life of Thomaïs*, §15). Mary, on the other hand, does not have to leave her house in order to perform her charities. Poor people exist in her own house; these are the family servants whom 'she does not consider as slaves, but rather takes care of them as if they are part of her own body'. [...] She does not like to beat them, but is eager to feed and comfort them' ('Καὶ θεράποντας δὲ καὶ θεραπαινίδας τὰς ἑαυτῆς οὐχ ὡς δούλους ἐώρα, καὶ ὡς οἰκείων μελῶν ἐφείδετο. [...] διὰ ταῦτα καὶ μαστίζειν οὐκ ἤθελεν, καὶ τρέφειν καὶ θάλπειν ἔσπευδε.' *Life of Mary the Younger*, §5).[18] As for the other poor people of Mary's society, she sends them money and provisions. For many years Philaretos offers to the poor his countless and precious possessions until he himself acquires the status of the poor, when he in turn needs the help of others in order for him and his family to survive.

By performing charitable activities on a daily basis, the three saints are assigned by the members of their societies the role of the giver. Their acts of generosity are expected by the others, who, whenever in need, go to the saints and ask for alms. Even when Philaretos becomes poor himself, other poor men, used to his generosity, do not hesitate to visit him and ask for his very last animals which he happily gives away. Philaretos and the two women might serve God by undertaking the same role, that of the giver, but due to their gender, they do not enact it in the same ways. Each gender distributes to the needy what it most effectively controls, and it performs its charitable activities according to the social codes attributed to it.

Philaretos shows his generosity by giving away the property of his family which consists of servants, lands, animals and money. As a man living in a patriarchal society, Philaretos exercises complete control over the family property which he uses according to his will. The cries and complaints of his wife and children do not prevent him from giving away all the family possessions. The recipients of Philaretos' charity are men since according to the rules of his society economic resources are under male use and control.

Thomaïs and Mary, on the other hand, cannot give away real property, since it is under their husbands' control. What they themselves as wives have access to, and partially control, is the household and their own labour. They thus can give the money

18 Laiou, 'Life of St Mary the Younger', 260.

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they earn from their labour (Thomaïs) and the resources of their households: food, water, clothes and sometimes money. Their charity, unlike that of Philaretos, is directed to everyone in need: children, men and women of all ages.

In contrast to Philaretos, the two women do not only give goods but also offer services related to female activities such as food preparation, nursing and weaving. Thomaïs weaves the clothes with which the bodies of the naked are covered. She looks after the homeless, the hungry and those in need of medical care. In fact, Thomaïs takes care not only of other people's bodies, but also of their souls. In her night-long prayers she entreats the Virgin with tears to intercede with her Son for the salvation of all people. Mary looks after widows, orphans, monks and her servants. She helps orphan girls to marry by providing dowries and assists young men who have no families. She also concerns herself with the adornment of churches.

The excessive charitable activities of the three saints provoke the strong reaction of their spouses; this reaction is also gender specific and reveals the power men have over their wives. Theosebo, Philaretos' wife, reacts against her husband's charity by employing language. She attacks Philaretos with words, since voice is the only weapon she possesses as woman. Stephen and Nikephoros, on the other hand, having bodily strength and being legitimized as husbands to punish their wives, use violence as their weapon. Through violence, the two men manifest their authority and power over their wives. That a wife should be subordinated to her husband who decides her fate is acknowledged by Mary herself who says to Nikephoros: 'But I know that I am not mistress of my body, but that you are my head' ('νῦν δὲ οἶδα ὅτι οὐκ ἐξουσιάζω τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ σύ μου εἶ κεφαλή.' *Life of Mary*, §7).[19] Mary goes on to say to her husband that he should punish her if he has proof that she has committed adultery and that she has plundered the household (*Life of Mary*, §7).

In the case of Philaretos and Thomaïs the reactions of their spouses, like the charitable acts of the saints, constitute repeated performances which are both welcomed and expected. Each time the two saints return home after having performed their God-pleasing behaviour, they are confronted with their spouses. Theosebo interrogates her husband about their missing animals and Philaretos' replies are full of lies which are easily detected. Once Philaretos donates one of the family's last two oxen with which he had tilled the field and as *paterfamilias* he had supported the family. When Theosebo asks him about the ox, he says that he lost it while he was resting in the shade. As soon as Theosebo finds out the truth, she performs a common female gesture of sorrow: she strips her kerchief from her head and begins to tear out her hair. Then, full of rage, she goes to her husband and starts insulting him. She calls him cruel and lazy. She accuses him of giving the ox away out of laziness and not out of charity. According to Theosebo, Philaretos gets rid of the ox because he does not want to work the field any longer and prefers to lie in the shade (*Life of Philaretos*, 131–55). To Theosebo's great disappointment, her

19 Laiou, 'Life of St Mary the Younger', 263.

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husband has not behaved in accordance with her expectations of positive masculinity and fatherhood, since, as she thinks, he does not work and neglects his family's needs.

Philaretos listens meekly to his wife's reproaches and humiliating language with a smile. Unlike the other men examined here, Philaretos does not abuse his wife for questioning his authority. By not doing so, he appears to challenge a man's identity as constructed by violent behaviour towards his wife. Philaretos' inaction is a sign of his holiness. In fact, Theosebo's abusive language functions as a test of Philaretos' piety. Through her attacks against Philaretos, Theosebo gives him the opportunity to show that he is a better person since he can control human passions, such as anger, and avoids performing behaviour considered male by his society. As Theosebo goes on insulting her husband, he breaks off his silence and tells her about God's rewards to the merciful by paraphrasing Christ's words as reported in the New Testament (*Life of Philaretos*, 161–176). Philaretos' authoritative words exercise a form of power over Theosebo, who falls immediately silent.

Philaretos manages through his religious language and his authority as a husband to reduce his wife's resistance to his charities. Eventually Theosebo, resigned to her husband's right to use the family's possessions according to his will, becomes passive and silent. Her transformation is gradual. At the beginning, she directs at her husband angry insults and accusations which are later replaced by ironic statements. As Philaretos gives away almost all family animals and is about to give away some of the grain he has borrowed, leaving his children hungry, Theosebo becomes sarcastic. In her anger she suggests to Philaretos that he should offer all the grain and also their donkey, so that the recipient of the grain can take it away. Upon hearing this and ignoring his wife's irony, Philaretos, full of joy blesses her and follows her advice (*Life of Philaretos*, 298–318). After this incident, Theosebo never attacks her husband again. Her resistance to his charities disappears. She is happy when Philaretos gives her some grain to feed herself and their children.

As for Thomaïs, when she arrives at home, she finds her husband Stephen waiting for her. He appears as a 'violent tyrant with beetled brows, grimly regarding the blessed <Thomaïs>, and [...] displaying a wild-looking glance and the coarse nature of his face' ('βιαστικὸς τύραννος ἐπισυνάγων τὸ μεσόφρυον, δηλονότι τὸ ἐπισκύνιον, ὑπόδρα τε βλέπων τὴν μακαρίαν [...] ἀγριωπὸν ἐνεδείκνυε βλέμμα καὶ βλοσυρὰν τὴν τοῦ προσώπου κατάστασιν.' *Life of Thomaïs*, §15).[20] Stephen's face and general appearance reveal his cruel intentions. Without a word, he resorts to violence. As his blows prove ineffective, since Thomaïs does not give up her God-pleasing activities, Stephen becomes more and more brutal. His beatings cause Thomaïs such great pain that no language can describe it, as the hagiographer comments (*Life of Thomaïs*, §9). Unlike Theosebo, who after realizing that she cannot convince her husband to give up charity, stops attacking him, Stephen never ceases to torture his wife until he causes

20 English translation by P. Halsall, 'Life of St. Thomaïs of Lesbos', in A.-M. Talbot (ed.), *Holy women of Byzantium*, 291–322, here 313.

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her death. Stephen sees Thomaïs' punishment as one of the duties he has as a husband. The wife who does not behave according to her husband's will and questions his authority should be punished.

Thomaïs happily receives her husband's unbearable and humiliating blows which she both desires and enjoys: 'she exulted and she rejoiced, "*My soul* rejoicing *shall exult in the Lord*, for He hath clothed me in the garment of salvation and the tunic of gladness"' (ἤγαλλεν, ἔχαιρεν· Ἀγαλλιάσεται ἡ ψυχή μου χαίρουσα ἐπὶ τῷ <Κυρίῳ>, ἐνέδυσε γάρ με ἱμάτιον σωτηρίου καὶ χιτῶνα εὐφροσύνης. *Life of Thomaïs*, §8).[21] Thomaïs does not fail to provoke Stephen's further violence by openly calling him Satan and by engaging in more pious activities. The more painful Stephen's violence becomes, the more enjoyable it is. Thomaïs sees herself as a martyr who suffers at the hands of a tyrant for Christ's love. Thus, by performing the husband's role, Stephen leads his wife to sanctity. It is through Stephen's violence rather than through Thomaïs' pious performances, that her sanctity is constructed. This is also valid for Mary, the second holy woman discussed here.

Like Thomaïs, Mary is abused and led to death by her husband because of her love for God. Nikephoros punishes Mary for her God-pleasing activities with imprisonment. He puts guards outside her room and asks the servants to control her behaviour and movements, and to 'cause every sort of distress to the blessed woman, not allowing her to take anything if she so desired, nor giving her anything if she asked' ('πάντα τρόπον λυπεῖν τὴν μακαρίαν ἐκέλευσε, κἂν λαβεῖν τι βούλοιτο, μὴ ἐφιέναι, κἂν αἰτήσοιτο, μὴ διδόναι.' *Life of Mary the Younger*, §8).[22] Mary loses thus both her freedom of movement and her position as the respected lady of the house, since she is not permitted to ask for the service of her slaves, and worse, she is under the authority of individuals who are socially inferior to her. Under these conditions Mary suffers both psychologically and physically. Her distress causes her a stomach illness, from which she suffers greatly. Mary's situation becomes even worse when Nikephoros enters her room unexpectedly and beats her mercilessly after being falsely informed that she calls him a Satan. In this case, Nikephoros punishes his wife because he believes that she has insulted him and his faith. Unlike the saintly Philaretos, Nikephoros cannot and does not have to control his anger against his wife who appears to question his authority. The serious wounds caused to Mary by Nikephoros combined with her stomach illness and her distress result in her sudden death.

As the Lives of both Thomaïs and Mary manifest, female lay sanctity is grounded in bodily pain and its endurance. The other lay female saints not examined here might not suffer from domestic violence, but they also have to undergo bodily suffering in order to achieve holiness. They suppress their bodies through practices such as virginity (Mary of

21 Halsall, 'Life of St. Thomaïs of Lesbos', 307.

22 Laiou, 'Life of St Mary the Younger', 264.

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Antioch),[23] widowhood (Martha) and ascesis. The only exception is the empress Theodora whose sanctification is the result of her iconophile policy.[24]

In fact, bodily pain is vital in the enactment of all roles of female sanctity. The emphasis on the holy woman's body might be associated with woman's identification with flesh in patristic literature. In contrast to man, whom the Church Fathers equated with spirit, woman was expected to transcend the body in ways man did not.[25]Thus Philaretos appears to acquire sanctity mainly through his immense generosity, while both Thomaïs and Mary are primarily sanctified due to their sufferings at their husbands' hands who punish them for their charitable activities. As the cases of the two heroines indicate, it is also psychologically harder or more complex to be a lay female saint. In addition, as women, both Thomaïs and Mary reach holiness through their impious husbands. Philaretos on the contrary achieves sanctity on his own. Theosebo's role in her husband's sanctification is extremely minor. In fact, the sanctity of the large majority of women commemorated in Byzantine hagiography is associated with a man who makes female holiness possible either as a torturer or as a spiritual father. In other words, men play a central role in the construction of female holiness whereas holy men rarely reach their holy status through a woman.

There is also another important difference between male and female sanctity as depicted in the texts examined above. Thomaïs and Mary acquire the status of holiness by performing the woman's role: they accept their husbands' superiority, following thus the conventions of their societies, and they treat everyone in need as mothers. Philaretos, on the other hand, does not always perform his masculinity according to the gender norms of his society. He does not punish his wife for questioning his authority, and he does not fulfil successfully his role as father. While Thomaïs and Mary are sanctified through performing their gender 'correctly', Philaretos' holiness is related to the challenge of his identity as a man. Of course, Philaretos' masculinity is not entirely questioned. What is challenged are some of his male roles, such as those of husband and father. His role as the head of the family who uses the family's property according to his will is not put into question at all. On the contrary, his sanctity, as already stated, is based to a large degree on Philaretos' exploitation of this very male role through which he can perform his charitable activities. Paradoxically, Philaretos' holiness, unlike the female character of both Thomaïs' and Mary's sanctity, is a mixture of a performance that is both male and emasculate.

23 For an analysis of the *Life of Mary of Antioch* through the perspective of virginity, see S. Constantinou, 'Virginity in danger: holiness and sexuality in the *Life of Mary of Antioch*', in D. Searby, E. Balicka Witakowska and J. Heldt, *ΔΩΡΟΝ ΡΟΔΟΠΟΙΚΙΛΟΝ: studies in honor of Jan Olof Rosenqvist* [Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia, 12] (Uppsala 2012) 123–32.

24 For the atypical character of Theodora's Life, see M. P. Vinson, 'Life of St. Theodora the empress', in A.-M. Talbot (ed.), *Byzantine defenders of images: eight saints' Lives in English translation.* [Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation, 2] (Washington, D.C. 1998) 353–82, here 353–60.

25 See Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances.*

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