The Sexualized and Gendered Tortures of Virgin Martyrs in Medieval English Literature

by

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This work examines the literary English traditions of four Virgin Martyrs: Agatha of Catania, Agnes of Rome, Juliana of Nicomedia, and Katherine of Alexandria. The primary focus surrounds the narratological developments and alterations of these women's sex-specific or -emphasized tortures. In addition to torments, other details, which may not initially appear sex-specific in nature, are also considered.

As recent scholarship has shown, Virgin Martyrs' lives tend to conform to a relatively standardized core narrative by the later Middle Ages. This study considers to what extent the lives of these four saints actually conform and to what extent they retain individualism despite this homogenizing trend. An analysis of each narrative's progression from early Latin sources, when available, through fifteenth-century English texts, which supplements the current scholarly trend of examining Virgin Martyrs as a collective group, is also provided.

The tracing of these legends' sex-specific characteristics allows for clear identification of similarities and deviations within various sources. Five appendices, each including an analytical table, are included to aid in the visualization of this progression.

The tables, which allow for quick and easy identification of variations through chronologically listed sources, demonstrate this process in a concise and user-friendly manner and should be utilized alongside examinations of these legends as presented in each of the central chapters.

The first chapter, on Agatha, addresses her breast amputation and its symbolic implications for femininity and motherhood, as well as the argument that Virgin Martyrs 'Become Male' during their *passiones*. The second chapter, on Agnes, explores her traditionally eroticized relationship with Christ, the motif of concealment, and Virgin Martyrs' conventional brothel experience. The third chapter, on Juliana, focuses upon the Warrior Virgin Martyr tradition, her physical and spiritual struggle with the devil, and the tradition of familial rejection. The final chapter, on Katherine, considers her position as supreme Bride, her limited physical trials, and her relationship with the Blessed Virgin. The final appendix contains a comparative chart of Virgin Martyr legends within the *Legenda aurea*, which indicates the frequency of motifs and plot devices in these lives.

To
Jeanne

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Abbreviations

AASS	*Acta Sanctorum*, 68 v. ed. J. Bollandus et al.
Agatha	*De Sancta Agatha* in the *South English Legendary*, v. 1. eds. D'Evelyn and Mill. 54–58.
Agneta	*De Sancta Agneta* in the *South English Legendary*, v. 1. eds. D'Evelyn and Mill. 19–25.
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
Basilissa	*De SS. Juliano, Basilissa, Celso et sociis* in *AASS*.
BHL	*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquæ et Mediæ Ætatis* 3 v.
Bokenham	Osbern Bokenham. *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*. ed. Serjeantson.
CCCC	Cambridge, MS Corpus Christi College 303
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CDV	Aldhelm. *Carmen de uirginitate* in *Aldhelmi Opera*. ed. Ehwald. 325–471.
Ceciliæ	*Passio Sanctæ Ceciliæ uirgines et martyris* in Mombritius. v. 1. 332–341.
Christinæ	*Passio S. Christinæ uirginis et martyris* in *AASS*.
Cristina	*De Sancta Cristina* in the *South English Legendary*, v. 1. eds. D'Evelyn and Mill. 315–327.
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CT	London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii
Cynewulf	Cynewulf. *Juliana*. ed. Woolf.
Dariæ	*Passio SS. Chrysanthi et Dariæ martyrum Romæ* in *AASS*.
DCD	Augustine. *De ciuitate Dei, Libri I–X. Aurelii Augustini Opera* v. 1. eds. Dombart and Kalb.
De Sancta Lucia	Ælfric. *De Sancta Lucia, uirgine* in *Lives of the Saints*, v. 1. ed. and trans. Skeat. 210–219.
Dorotheæ	*Acta S. Dorotheæ et Socior MM* in *AASS*.
DV	Aldhelm. *De uirginitate* in *Aldhelmi Opera*. ed. Ehwald. 209–323.
EETS ES	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
EETS SS	Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series
EHS	Ecclesiastical History Society
Iuliana	*Passio de Iuliana* in Bodley 285 in *Þe Liflade Ant Te Passiun of Seinte Iuliene*. ed. d'Ardenne. 2–70.
Iuliana uirgine	*De Sancta Iuliana uirgine* in the *South English Legendary*, v. 1. eds. D'Evelyn and Mill. 62–71.
Iuliene	*Seinte Iuliene* is the emended text for Bodley 34 in *Þe Liflade Ant Te Passiun of Seinte Iuliene*. ed. d'Ardenne. 3–71.
Katerine	*Katerine* is the edited text of Bodley 34 in *Seinte Katerine: Re-Edited from MS Bodley 34 and the other Manuscripts*. eds. d'Ardenne and Dobson. 2–130.
KV	*Katherine Vulgate* in *Seinte Katerine: Re-Edited from MS Bodley 34 and the other*

	Manuscripts. Eds. d'Ardenne and Dobson. 144–203.
LA	*Legenda aurea*, 2 v. ed. Maggioni.
Loeb	Loeb Classical Library
Lucie	*Seinte Lucie þe holi maide* in the *South English Legendary*, v. 2. eds. D'Evelyn and Mill. 566–571.
Margaretæ	*Passio S. Margaretæ* in *AASS*.
Margareta	*De Sancta Margareta* in the *South English Legendary*, v. 1. eds. D'Evelyn and Mill. 291–302.
Marherete	*Seinte Marherete* in *Seinte Marherete: Þe Meiden ant Martyr Re-Edited from MS. Bodley 34, Oxford and MS. Royal 17A xxvii, British Museum*. ed. Mack.
MGH AA	Monumenta Germaniæ Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi
Natale Sancte Agathe	Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Agathe, uirginis* in *Lives of the Saints,* v. 1. ed. and trans. Skeat. 194–209.
Natale Sancte Agnetis	Ælfric, *Natale Sancta Agnetis, uirginis* in *Lives of the Saints,* v. 1. ed. and trans. Skeat. 170–195.
Natale Sancte Eufrasiæ	Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Eufrasiæ uirginis* in *Lives of the Saints,* v. 2. ed. and trans. Skeat. 334–355.
Natale Sancte Eugenie	Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Eugenie uirginis* in *Lives of the Saints,* v. 2. ed. and trans. Skeat. 925–929.
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NRSV	*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version*. eds. Metzger and Murphy.
Perpetuæ	*Passio sanctarum Perpetuæ et Felicitatis* in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. ed. and trans. Musurillo. 106–131.
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, 221 v. ed. J. P. Migne.
RRMS	Routledge Research in Medieval Studies
RSMRC	Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture
Seinte Katerine	*Seinte Katerine of noble cunne* in the *South English Legendary*, v. 2. eds. D'Evelyn and Mill. 533–543.
SASLC	*Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture, Volume One*. eds. Biggs, Hill, Szarmach, and Whatley.
SEL	*South English Legendary*, 3 v. eds. D'Evelyn and Mill.
TEAMS	Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages
Thecla	*Acts of Paul and Thecla* in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*. ed. and trans. Elliott and trans. James. 364–372.

Chapter 1
Introduction

The cultural importance of saints from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages is demonstrated in part by the great number of iconographic and literary depictions of these holy men and women. From confessors to martyrs, from virgins to pious married men and women, from repentant sinners to hermits, saints were, like the medieval Church itself, present in both mundane and sacred aspects of everyday life. An individual's devotion to particular saints could depend on many factors, including a person's geographic location, gender, social status, education, and profession. Hagiography, the study of saints, encompasses an overwhelming amount of material because it encompasses the entire array of saints. This study focuses, within this immense amount of material, upon a selective, yet still intimidating extensive subsection. This subsection is the grouping of female saints commonly known as the Virgin Martyrs. Four of these saints have been selected for this work: Agatha of Catania (BHL 133–140), Agnes of Rome (BHL 156–167), Juliana of Nicomedia (BHL 4522–4523), and Katherine of Alexandria (BHL 1656–1700).[1]

Virgin Martyrs

The term Virgin Martyr suggests the two specific attributes that the many women who share the term have in common. Even within this seemingly narrow category, however, there are certain 'types' of Virgin Martyrs. Some of these women battle demons,

[1] *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquæ et Mediæ Ætatis* 3 v. Brussels: 1898–1899, 1900–1901, 1986.

some are objects of incestuous affections, some have body parts removed, some enter into chaste marriages, some are skilled in verbal battle, and some are self-proclaimed brides of Christ. Notwithstanding differences within these legends, the majority of these lives, as Karen A. Winstead has shown, follow a basic outline.[2]

The virgin is presented as an exceptionally attractive young woman of noble status.[3] At some point early in the legend, a powerful pagan man sees the virgin and desires her for his consort. Once the virgin is propositioned with an intimate, often marital, relationship, her religious commitment becomes an insurmountable obstacle to the suitor's designs. The young woman either refuses to marry a non-Christian or has already devoted herself to a life of virginity for her love of Christ and, further, adamantly refuses to offer sacrifice to pagan gods. Although the heathen attempts a variety of tactics to win her, ranging from

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[2] Karen A. Winstead details the standard narrative outline of Virgin Martyrs' legends in *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997, 5–10. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne also includes a somewhat detailed outline of later Virgin Martyrs' legends ("The Virgin's Tale" in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All her Sect*. eds. Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson. London and New York: Routledge, 1994, 165–194 at 173–174). Michael Lapidge describes the distinction between the *passiones* and *vitæ* of saints ("The Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England" in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature.* eds. Malcom Godden and Michael Lapidge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 243–263 at 252–253). Hippolyte Delehaye presents the typifying of saints' identities and the loss of the individual for the appeal of the "ideal" or "abstraction" (*Legends of the Saints*. trans. Donald Attwater. Dublin: Four Courts Press, reprinted 1998, 19–21). For the trend of standardizing saints' legends, see also Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, 5–13; and Lapidge, "The Saintly Life" 254–255.

[3] This is increasingly evident in later legends. The most notable example evidencing the importance of beauty in these legends is Saint Apollonia's transformation from elderly virgin to beautiful young maiden in her later tradition. See Leslie Abend Callahan, "The Torture of Saint Apollonia: Deconstructing Fouquet's Martyrdom Stage" *Studies in Iconography* 16 (1994): 119–138, especially 119–122. See also Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 9–10. For Apollonia's legend, see Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 6.41.7 (*The Ecclesiastical History* v. 1, 1–325 in *The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine*, 2 v. trans. with introduction and notes by Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1927. See also v. 1, 444–445 in Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*. 2 v. ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni. Tavarnuzze-Firenze: Sismel, 1998. *Legenda aurea* is abbreviated *LA.* Samantha J. E. Riches has argued for the existence of male Virgin Martyrs ("St. George as a Male Virgin Martyr" in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in late medieval Europe*. eds. Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih. RSMRC 1. London: Routledge, 2002, 65–85.

cajoling to threatening, his efforts are invariably futile. The virgin's dedication to her faith, coupled with repeated refusals of the pagan's requests, infuriates the man and leads to her torture. The method of torture varies from virgin to virgin, as does the extent of miraculous preservation from pain. However, the martyrs never waver in their commitment to Christ. The enraged heathen, his resolve to torment the virgin exhausted, ultimately orders her death. That end usually takes the form of beheading. The virgin makes a final prayer to Christ and her soul is immediately borne to Him. The pagan eventually dies in a symbolically fitting and horrible manner.[4]

Despite the obviously shared and often repetitive details within these lives, their exciting plots, together with the medieval period's enduring interest in virginity, resulted in the lives of Virgin Martyrs being favorites of hagiographers across Europe.[5] The works of the early English authors Aldhelm (late seventh century) and Ælfric (late tenth to early eleventh century) evidence the popularity these legends found in England as early as the seventh century. The appeal of these legends, although waning at times, did not substantially diminish in the following centuries as is evidenced by later Middle English texts explored in this work.[6] Devotion to and interest in Virgin Martyrs flourished in the

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[4] Compare this with Chris Jones' narrative outline of third- and fourth-century martyrdom accounts ("Women, Death and the Law During the Christian Persecutions" in *Martyrs and Martyrologies*. ed. Diana Wood, EHS. Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993, 23–34 at 28–30).
[5] Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 1–2.
[6] Dyan Elliott traces the rise of focus on and preference for virginal male saints and subsequent devotion to married saints in the later Middle Ages (*Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 94–131 and 266–296, respectively). Eamon Duffy examines the later popularity of Virgin Martyrs in England ("Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes: The Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England", *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990): 175–196 at 180–191). See especially Duffy's two tables, which present "the most commonly-found saints on the screens of East Anglia and, for comparison, Devon" (178–180, quoted 178).

later medieval period, particularly with the appearance in England of the subject of this work's fifth chapter, Katherine of Alexandria.[7]

This work examines four saints within this large group whose legends adhere closely to the established template and therefore follow similar narrative structures. Focus on such legends allows for a deeper analysis of the individual aspects of the saints' traditions and a clearer identification of deviations and alterations. For this reason, other saints with early cults and strong English traditions, such as Cecilia and Daria, who are among the married Virgin Martyrs, only appear in a supporting capacity.[8] Saints whose legends follow the Virgin Martyr template, but who were not chosen as subjects for this study, such as Euphemia, Dorothy, Margaret, and Lucy, will similarly be used as supportive examples throughout the chapters. The saints to whom the four chapters are devoted in order of presentation are Agatha of Catania, Agnes of Rome, Juliana of Nicomedia, and Katherine of Alexandria.

Three major criteria were considered when selecting of these four saints: the length of their traditions; the extent of the saints' popularity in England; and the level and nature of sexualization present in their legends. The specifics of these factors differ for each saint. For instance, the length of these saints' traditions varies greatly. The legends represent three stages of development in the English tradition. The first two saints, Agatha and Agnes, were chosen to show the transformation of Virgin Martyr legends from fourth-

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[7] See Katherine Chapter, 205–206.

[8] For Cecilia's *passio*, see *Passio Sanctæ Ceciliæ uirgines et martyris* in Boninus Mombritius, *Sanctuarium*. Novam hanc Editionem curaverunt duo Monachi Solesmenses. Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1978, v. 1, 332–341. For Daria's *passio*, see *Passio SS. Chrysanthi et Dariæ martyrum Romæ*, *AASS* Oct. XI 469–484. These are abbreviated *Ceciliæ* and *Dariæ*, respectively.

century Latin sources through fifteenth-century English interpretations. Agatha, best known for the amputation of her breast, offers an opportunity to explore the symbolic ramifications of such an overtly sexualized torture. Agnes, the young bride of Christ, allows for an exploration into the conventional depictions of her sexualized relationship with Christ as well as portrayals of Virgin Martyrs' reaction to physical rape. The popularity and endurance of Juliana's legend in England are evidenced by her legend's strong presence in Old English and Middle English texts. Juliana's aggressive behavior toward a devil presents a physical manifestation of these saints' battles with temptation and sin. It permits, accordingly, a study of the sexually symbolic meanings found in such a struggle. Katherine's tradition, the latest of the four, allows for an examination of a legend that arises largely from the developed Virgin Martyr template. Katherine, as the supreme Bride of Christ in the later Middle Ages, offers a legend that strives to meet the essential notes of the Virgin Martyr template in a narrative that spares its saint the level of violence and sexualization used in earlier Virgin Martyr accounts.

Women as Martyrs

The saints' later legends addressed herein are well-structured and symbolically rich narratives. They arise from martyrs', even some Virgin Martyrs', accounts found in the early centuries of Christianity. Eusebius (c. 260–c. 341), for example, includes reports of

torments similar to those visited upon these women in his *Martyrs of Palestine*.[9] Although the lives of Virgin Martyrs become progressively more elaborate and even fanciful, one should observe that these legends arose out of a society in which such martyrdoms were accepted as actual occurrences. The Christian Persecutions provide accounts describing a plethora of brutal acts committed against contemporary Christians. Eusebius relates several scenes in which men and women endured penalties similar to those described in traditional legends of Virgin Martyrs.[10] One of the closest examples is the story of two women seeking martyrdom to preserve their chastity. The first, Ennatha, having spoken out against the persecutors, is beaten and then raised on a rack where her sides are torn until her tormenters become exhausted. The second, Valentina, chastising the judge for his cruel orders and refusing to sacrifice to idols, also has her sides viciously attacked. Eventually these women are bound together and burned.[11] The parallels between this brief account and the Virgin Martyr template described above are obvious. The template, which is a summary of later, much developed legends, results from the traditions of early Virgin

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[9] Eusebius, *The Martyrs of Palestine* v. 1, 327–400 in *The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine*, 2. v. Delehaye asserts that this work of Eusebius is a "hagiographical" as well as "historical document" (*Legends of the Saints*, 1).

[10] Eusebius' *Martyrs of Palestine* describes a martyr, Apphianus, who is hung and while his feet are burned (4.12). Juliana is hung while being simultaneously whipped and Margaret is held up on the rack and likewise beaten as well as later stripped and her sides burned with torches (42, ll. 10–17 in *Seinte Marherete: Þe Meiden ant Martyr Re-Edited from MS. Bodley 34, Oxford and MS. Royal 17A xxvii, British Museum*. ed. Frances M. Mack, EETS OS 193, London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, reprinted 1958). *Seinte Marherete* is abbreviated *Marherete*. See Juliana Chapter, 151, n. 13; and Appendix C.

[11] *Martyrs of Palestine* 8.5–10. Additional details of this account present further similarities to Virgin Martyrs' legends. These women are compared in strength, intelligence, and courage to men. This common theme appears in many of the texts considered here. The virgins are often referred to as acting 'manfully'. See Agatha Chapter, 55–71. See also Eusebius' martyrdom account of Blandina, a slave woman whose endurance for torment surpassed all her companions and astounded her persecutors (*The Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.17–19, 36–42, and 53–56). For the entire account of Blandina and her companions' sufferings, see 5.1.

Martyrs being expanded and altered over centuries. Earlier accounts providing only a few significant characteristics, similar to Eusebius' aforementioned work, are usually brief in comparison to later legends.

Although these early *passiones* are often sparse in detail, many of the elements already present, particularly the martyrs' torments, reappear in later legends. The methods of torture established in these early texts become ingrained in Virgin Martyr traditions. The torments, such as breast mutilation and rape, assigned to or attempted upon these women have overt sexual implications. Seemingly less sexualized punishments, such as burning and whipping, are also inflicted upon the women's bodies. The majority of these accounts, however, focus largely on the women's sexual or socially perceived feminine attributes. The virgins' femaleness is usually highlighted either by repeated acclamations of her beauty or praise for her fierce protection of her virginity. It is precisely the emphasis on these saints as women that affords the torments inflicted upon these female bodies with symbolism rarely found in male saints' accounts.[12] The symbolic natures of these torments develop throughout these women's hagiographical traditions and, as the narratives become more elaborate, additional plot devices and details complement the legends' core elements.

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[12] Some male martyrs, experience similarly extensive tortures and mutilations as Virgin Martyrs. An extreme example of this is James the Dismembered, who is, as his name suggests, extensively tortured (*LA* v. 2, 1219–1223). The beauty of male martyrs is usually less focused upon than that of Virgin Martyrs. The legend of Silvester, who is not a martyr, presents him as possessing great beauty (*LA* v. 1, 109). Martha Easton explores presentations of largely un-sexualized male versus sexualized female martyrs ("Pain, Torture, and Death in the Huntington Library *Legenda aurea*" in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in late medieval Europe*. ed. Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih. RSMRC 1. London: Routledge, 2002, 49–62, at 54, 57–61. See also Barbara Abou-El-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of Saints: Formations and Transformations.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 27. Sebastian is an exception to this as his image is regularly eroticized in artistic depictions (Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure, and Punishment in Medieval Culture*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2005, 166; and Agnes Chapter, 126 n. 148). For Sebastian's legend, see also Juliana Chapter, 181 n. 95.

This study, therefore, traces the development of these particular women's sex-specific or emphasized tortures and narrative components. Close examination of the tortures occurs concurrent with discussion of narrative elements that are not overtly violent or sexual and, therefore, which may not initially appear gender-specific in nature.

Since the legends of earlier female saints, particularly Perpetua, Felicitas, and Thecla, lend much by way of structure and theme to Virgin Martyr legends, comparisons are often drawn with these earlier women's accounts.[13] Male and female Biblical models and directives for women's actions, such as those found in the Pauline letters, will also be addressed.[14] The most important Biblical figures in the lives of these women are, of course, the Blessed Virgin and Christ Himself. It is important that each of these martyrs follow

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[13] For Perpetua and Felicitas' legend, see *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuæ et Felicitatis* in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. ed. and trans. Herbert Musurillo. Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1972, 106–131. This is abbreviated *Perpetuæ*. For Thecla's legend, see *Acts of Paul and Thecla* in *New Testament Apocrypha, vol. 2, Writings Related to the Apostles, Apocalypses, and Other Subjects*. ed. E. McL. Wilson and Wilhelm Schneemelcher. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965, 353–364. This text is abbreviated *Thecla*. These saints are generally accepted as predecessors to Virgin Martyrs. See, for example, Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 7–8; Heffernan, 185–230; and Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001, 49. Brent D. Shaw provides a brief record of the literary tradition of female martyrs before Perpetua's account ("The Passion of Perpetua" *Past and Present* 139 (May 1993): 3–45 at 15–19).

[14] All Biblical Latin passages are from the *Vulgate* (*Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam, Nova Editio*, Quarta Editio. eds. Alberto Colunga, O.P and Laurentio Turrado. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1965. All Biblical translations are from the Douay-Rheims edition unless otherwise noted (*The Holy Bible: the Catholic Bible, Douay-Rheims Version, Translated from the Latin Vulgate and Dilligently Compared with the Hebrew, Greek, and Other Editions*, 2 v. in 1. ed. Richard Challoner and preface, William H. McClellan. New York: Benziger, 1941). The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is also occasionally consulted (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version*. eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Select apocryphal works are also considered: *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Mary*, *The Protevangelium of James*, and the aforementioned *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. See *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation: With a Commentary and New English Translation of the Complete Gospel*. ed. April D. De Conick. London: T&T Clark, 2006); *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*. ed. Karen L. King. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003; and *The Protevangelium of James* in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*. ed. and trans. J. K. Elliott and trans. Montague Rhodes James. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 48–67. For *The Gospel of Thomas* and *The Gospel of Mary*, see Agatha Chapter, 56–58. For *The Protevangelium of James*, see Katherine Chapter, 248–249.

Christ's suffering as *imitatio Christi*.[15] They likewise desire to mirror Mary's purity and devotion because she is the ultimate female representative of virginity and motherhood.[16] Biblical references, interpretations of early Christian writers and late medieval conceptions of these relationships are addressed to illustrate the roles of Christ and the Blessed Virgin in these lives.

Supporting Texts

These women's legends conventionally report their martyrdoms as occurring in the third or fourth century. Several Virgin Martyrs, including Agatha and Agnes, have cults attesting to and supporting such early traditions.[17] The literary roots of Virgin Martyr narratives are contemporary with and, to a large extent, formulated by the Church Fathers' writings regarding women. Authors such as Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225), Jerome (c. 342–c. 420), Ambrose (c. 338–397), and Augustine (354–430), provide relevant discussions on women's spirituality, virginity, and, at times, the saints themselves.[18] This study does not explore the Early Church's emphases on and preoccupation with female virginity but, rather, accepts them as prevalent biases. The Church's perspectives on the implications of

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[15] For Virgin Martyrs as *imiationes Christi*, see, for example, Agatha Chapter, 40–41; and Juliana Chapter, 189–190.
[16] For Mary's influence, see especially Katherine Chapter, 243–259. For concepts of motherhood, see Agatha Chapter, 48–55; and Juliana Chapter, 192–194.
[17] See Agatha Chapter, 25–26; and Agnes Chapter, 84–85.
[18] For Tertullian, the text primarily utilized herein is *De uirginibus uelandis*, *PL* 2, Col. 887–914A. See especially Agnes Chapter, 98–100. For Jerome, the text is *Epistle 22*, *Ad Eustochium*. See especially Agnes Chapter, 100; and Katherine Chapter, 245–249. For Ambrose, the text is *De virginibus. PL* 16, Col. 187–232B. See especially Agnes Chapter, 100–107 and 127–139. For Augustine, the text is *De civitate Dei, Libri I–X. Aurelii Augustini Opera* v. 1 of 14. eds. Bernardus Dombart and Alphonsus Kalb. CCSL 48. Turnholt: Brepols, 1955. Hereafter *De civitate Dei* is abbreviated *DCD*. See especially Agnes Chapter, 126 and 133.

physical and visual assaults upon the female body are, however, referenced.[19] Writings on women's proper dress and decorum are also considered.[20] Instructional themes appear again in chapter sections involving Aldhelm's late-seventh-century works on virginity which praise both male and female virgins for their steadfast purity. Later English texts including the early-thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad* urge anchoresses toward a chaste existence by, among other exhortations, stressing the harmful and painful consequences of the sexual act.[21] An emphasis on the high esteem in which virginity was held appears from early Latin writings through fifteenth century works.

Ambrose, Pope Damasus I (c. 304–384), and Prudentius (348–c. 405), for example, supply early accounts of several martyrs, including Virgin Martyrs. The emphasis on the preservation of virginity and on the women's near ecstatic desire to die in defense of their purity is already evident in these works. These authors offer some of the earliest extant accounts of Agatha and Agnes, considered herein, whose legends have the best historically founded traditions.[22]

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[19] For the stress on virginal intactness in saints' traditions, see especially Katherine Chapter, 243–250. For the fortifying aspects of virginity, see especially Juliana Chapter, 158–162. For visual and physical assaults upon virgins, see especially Agnes Chapter, 98–116 and 130–141.
[20] See above n. 18.
[21] *Ancrene Wisse*. ed. Robert Hasenfratz. TEAMS. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000. *Hali Meiðhad*. ed. Bella Millett. EETS OS 284. London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982.
[22] Unlike the other two saints focused upon in this work, Juliana and Katherine, Agatha and Agnes have very early cults. The early status of these two women earned them positions in the Canon of the Mass, an honor they both still maintain. See Vincent Lorne Kennedy, *Saints of the Canon*. Vatican City: Pontifical Institute of Christian Archeology, 1963.

Selected Sources

Discussions on Agatha and Agnes' traditions take advantage of these fourth-century Latin sources when possible and their information is considered alongside Old English and Middle English texts. Important traits of these martyrs appear in these earlier sources. Agatha's breast amputation and Agnes' youth, for example, both standard elements throughout their traditions, are already celebrated in Damasus' *Carmina*. Since this is primarily a study of Virgin Martyrs in the English tradition, most of the sources referenced are either Old or Middle English works. Earlier Latin accounts are used to follow the development of particular details and for comparative purposes.

The most utilized text for Agatha's early legend in this study is Damasus' hymn, *Carmen 30*.[23] Agnes' more abundant texts include another of Damasus' hymns, Ambrose's *De uirginibus*, and Prudentius' *Peristephanon*. These are discussed extensively.[24] Both these women's Latin *passiones* are also thoroughly referenced and provide a link between these early works and later English sources.[25]

Most of the selected English sources for this study contain legends of more than one of the four saints. Versions of Agatha and Agnes' *passiones* appear in several of the same English sources.[26] The two earliest main texts considered herein are Aldhelm's

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[23] Damasus, *Carmen 30*, *De S. Agatha martyre*, *PL* 13, Col. 403A–405A; and *AASS* Feb. I, 600. For additional early sources for Agatha, see Agatha Chapter, 25–26.
[24] Damasus, *Carmen 29*, *PL* 13, Col. 402A–403A; Ambrose, *De uirginibus* 1.2, *PL* 16, Col. 189C–191B; and Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 14 in *Prudentius* v. 2. ed. and trans. H. J. Thomson. Loeb. London: Heinemann, 1949–1953.
[25] *Acta S. Agathæ*. *AASS* Feb. I, 621–624. *Vita S. Agnetis*. *AASS* Jan. II, 715–718.
[26] For Agatha and Agnes' traditions in Anglo-Saxon England, see Frederick M. Biggs, Thomas D. Hill, Paul E. Szarmach, and E. Gordon Whatley, eds, *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture Volume One: Abbo of Fleury, Abbo of Saint-Germain-des Prés, and Acta Sanctorum*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute

Anglo-Latin prose *De uirginitate* and poetic *Carmen de uirginitate*.[27] Aldhelm, composing these works for nuns at the Monastery of Barking, enthusiastically praises the spiritual victories of chaste men and women, often invoking battle-imagery to do so.[28] The prose account entries are generally concise. They mention a few important details related to each saint. The slightly later poetic work, although similar in structure and content to the prose, tends to elaborate more on the saints' legends and trials. The account of Agatha's martyrdom in *De uirginitate*, for example, surprisingly omits her breast amputation. The entry for Agatha in *Carmen de uirginitate*, however, does include this torment.[29]

Ælfric also includes Agatha and Agnes' legends among his Homilies for saints' feast days.[30] These Old English accounts, based on versions of these saints' Latin *passiones*, relate involved narratives with multiple characters and developed plots.[31] Additionally, Ælfric includes lengthy speeches and exchanges, primarily between the virgins and their persecutors. The martyrs' torments receive noticeably more description in these homiletic texts than in Aldhelm's accounts or the aforementioned fourth-century Latin works.

Publications, Western Michigan University, 2001, 54–57 and 57–59, respectively. This is abbreviated *SASLC*.

[27] See Aldhelm, *De virginitate* and *Carmen de virginitate* in *Aldhelmi Opera*. MGH AA 15. ed. R. Ehwald. Berlin, 1919, 209–323 and 325–471. For a translation of *De virginitate*, see *Aldhelm, The Prose Works*. trans. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren. Cambridge and Totowa, NJ: D. S. Brewer Ltd and Rowman & Littlefield, 1979, 49–132. For a translation of *Carmen de uirginitate*, see *Aldhelm, The Poetic Works*. trans. Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier. Cambridge and Dover, NH: D.S. Brewer, 1985, 95–167. *De uirginitate* is abbreviated *DV* and *Carmen de uirginitate* is *CDV*.

[28] For Aldhelm's possible sources, see Aldhelm, *The Prose Works*, 56–57; Aldhelm, *The Poetic Works*, 97–98, and 100; and Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*. CSASE 8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 204–205. See also below Conclusion, 270 n. 16.

[29] See Agatha Chapter, 33–48.

[30] Ælfric, *Lives of the Saints,* 4 v., reprinted in 2 v., EETS OS 76 and 82, and 94 and 114. ed. and trans. Walter W. Skeat. London: Oxford University Press, 1966. For Agatha's account, see *Natale Sancte Agathe, Virginis*, v. 1, 194–209. For Agnes' account, see *Natale Sancte Agnetis, Virginis*, v. 1, 170–195. Hereafter these accounts will be referred to as *Natale Sancte Agathe* and *Natale Sancte Agnetis*, respectively.

[31] Patrick H. Zettel argues that the Cotton-Corpus Legendary is Ælfric's primary source ("Saints' Lives in Old English: Latin manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: Ælfric" *Peritia*, 1 (1982): 17-37, especially 17–22).

Juliana of Nicomedia does not appear in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* or *Carmen de uirginitate* or in Ælfric's Homilies, despite the presence of her legend in England as attested by Bede's *Martyrologium* (c. 725–731 AD).[32] For Juliana's early tradition in England one must consult Cynewulf's poem *Juliana*[33] and his Latin source, which, as Michael Lapidge has suggested, is similar to the early ninth-century *Passio S. Iulianæ* in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 10861.[34] Both these texts share much content and structure with the Middle English *Seinte Iuliene* (late twelfth century) of the Katherine Group.[35] The slightly later Latin account of Juliana's *passio*, *Iuliana* in MS Bodley 285 (early to mid-

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[32] See Juliana Chapter, 149–150. Bede's *Martyrologium* includes an entry for Juliana (*PL* 94, Col. 843C–844B). For a translation of Bede's *Martyrologium*, see "Bede Martyrology" trans. Felice Lifshitz in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology.* ed. Thomas Head. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000, 169–198. This work also includes the approximate date of the *Martyrologium* (172).

[33] All citations are from *Cynewulf's Juliana*. ed. Rosemary Woolf. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1977. The date for Juliana is a continuing problem. See for example Woolf's introduction (Cynewulf, *Juliana*, 5) and Michael Lapidge's article ("Cynewulf and the *Passio S. Iulianæ*" in *Unlocking the Wordhord*. eds. Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 147–171, at 147). For Juliana's tradition in Anglo-Saxon England, see *SASLC*, 276–278.

[34] For Lapidge's argument that this *Passio S. Iuliene* is likely akin to Cynewulf's source, see "Cynewulf" 147–155, especially 152–155. This account, dating from the early ninth century, is also the oldest manuscript of Juliana's legend of English provenance (*SASLC*, 277). Lapidge asserts this *passio* is within the tradition of her late sixth- to seventh-century legend ("Cynewulf" 149). S. R. T. O. d'Ardenne discusses the unlikelihood of Juliana's *Acta* in the *AASS* being a distant source for Cynewulf (*Þe Liflade Ant Te Passiun of Seinte Iuliene*. EETS OS 248. ed. S. R. T. O. d'Ardenne. London: Oxford University Press, 1961, xxii–xxiii).

[35] All excerpts from *Seinte Iuliene* (hereafter *Iuliene*) are from the *emended text* in *Þe Liflade Ant Te Passiun of Seinte Iuliene* and will list page numbers. For translations of *Iuliene*, see *Anchroritic Spirtuality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*. eds. and trans. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson. New York: Paulist Press, 1991, 306–321; and *Saint Juliana* in *Chaste Passions: Medieval English Virgin Martyr Legends*. ed. and trans. Karen A. Winstead. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2000, 12–26.

thirteenth century),[36] is also considered in comparison to the near contemporary *Iuliene* and ninth-century Latin *passio*.[37]

Katherine's legend, the latest of the four considered herein, does not appear in Old English sources. It is, accordingly, unlike in that respect the legends of the other Katherine Group saints, Juliana and Margaret of Antioch. The first account of Katherine's legend considered in this study is the Latin *passio*, which serves as a source for the Middle English legend of the Group.[38] This Latin version, which is considered the 'Vulgate' version of *Passio S. Katerine*,[39] is utilized in a similar manner to the *passiones* of Agatha, Agnes, and Juliana, and aids in illuminating developments within the Middle English thirteenth-century *Seinte Katerine*.[40] The popularity of these Virgin Martyrs, particularly that of Katherine, remained strong into the fifteenth century.[41] The great interest in Katherine is evidenced by the two traditions of her legend: her *passio*, which describes her trials and martyrdom, and her *vita*, which relates important life events up until the beginning of her

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[36] All excerpts from *Iuliana* will be from the edition in *Þe Liflade Ant Te Passiun of Seinte Iuliene.* d'Ardenne notes that the MS Bodley 285 account could not be the Middle English accounts' source as it was composed about the same time as MS Bodley 34 (xvii). The decision to include the MS Bodley 285 later Latin source instead of the *AASS* version is based upon d'Ardenne's argument for a shared tradition of *Iuliana* and *Iuliene* (xxiv) as well as the assertion in *SASLC* that specific *vitæ* "are to be preferred to the contaminated text in" *AASS* (278). d'Ardenne makes a similar point (xix).

[37] For a description of these sources' connections and a trace of Juliana's legend including non-English sources, see d'Ardenne's introduction to *Þe Liflade Ant Te Passiun Of Seinte Iuliene* (especially xviii–xxiv). Lapidge also provides a brief history of her legend prior to Cynewulf's work ("Cynewulf" 147–150).

[38] *Seinte Katerine: Re-Edited from MS Bodley 34 and the other Manuscripts*. eds. S. R. T. O. d'Ardenne and E. J. Dobson. EETS SS 7. London: Oxford University Press, 1981, xxvi–xxxiv.

[39] The 'Vulgate' version is referred to as the *Katherine Vulgate* (*KV*). The edition of *KV* used is from d'Ardenne and Dobson's edition (*Seinte Katerine: Re-Edited from MS Bodley 34 and the other Manuscripts*, 144–203).

[40] *Seinte Katerine*, hereafter *Katerine*, is also from d'Ardenne and Dobson's edition (*Seinte Katerine: Re-Edited from MS Bodley 34 and the other Manuscripts*, 1–131). As with *Iuliene*, *Katerine* is an edition of the MS Bodley 34 account.

[41] Lydgate, another of Katherine's fifteenth-century hagiographers, is not considered in this work. See John Lydgate, "Prayer to Ten Saints" and "To St. Katherine, St. Margaret, and St. Mary Magdalene" in *The Minor Poems I*. EETS ES 107. ed. Henry Noble MacCracken. London: Oxford University Press and New York: Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd, 1911, 120–124 and 134–135, respectively.

passio.[42] The two fifteenth-century accounts explored here containing both traditions are the anonymous prose account, *St. Katherine of Alexandria*, and the *Life of Saint Katherine* by the Augustinian John Capgrave (1393–1464 AD).[43] Both these works devote much attention to developing important details of Katherine's *vita*. Capgrave especially focuses upon this portion of Katherine's legend and dedicates four of his five books to early elements of Katherine's life.

Another fifteenth-century Augustinian hagiographer, Osbern Bokenham (c. 1393–c. 1467), relates Katherine's legend in his *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*.[44] This text only relates Katherine's *passio*, but Bokenham was obviously familiar with her *vita* since he directs the reader to Capgrave's work for the saint's prior endeavors.[45] Bokenham relies heavily on Jacobus de Voragine's immensely important collection the *Legenda aurea* in his telling of the lives of thirteen female saints. Ten of the saints he depicts are Virgin Martyrs. Agatha, Agnes, and Katherine are among those saints but Juliana is not.[46] Juliana's absence is made all the more noticeable by Bokenham's inclusion of Margaret, the third saint of the Katherine Group. Bokenham's *Legendys* is the latest in date of the

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[42] *Seinte Katerine: Re-Edited from MS Bodley 34 and the other Manuscripts*, xv.

[43] *St. Katherine of Alexandria: The Late Middle English Prose Legend in Southwell Minster MS 7*. eds. Saara Nevanlinna and Irma Taavitsainen. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993. John Capgrave, *Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria*. ed. Karen A. Winstead. TEAMS. Kalamzaoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999.

[44] Osbern Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*. EETS OS 206. ed. Mary S. Serjeantson. London: Oxford University Press. 1938. Serjeantson places Bokenham's dates as c. 1392–c. 1447 (Bokenham, xv). Sheila Delany asserts a revised late date of Bokenham's death, after 1467 (*Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-century England: The Work of Osbern Bokenham.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 5). Delany places the composition of the *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* as 1443–1447 (Bokenham, *A Legend of Holy Women*. ed. and trans. Sheila Delany. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, ix).

[45] Bokenham, ll. 6347–6360.

[46] In addition to these Virgin Martyrs, Bokenham includes lives of Margaret, Christina, Ursula and the 11,000 virgins, Faith, Dorothy, Cecilia, and Lucy. The remaining women are Anne, Mary Magdalene, and Elizabeth of Hungary.

sources utilized in this study and is the final text examined for the legends of Agatha, Agnes, and Katherine.

The two remaining sources for these saints' lives are the *Legenda aurea* and the *South English Legendary*. Both works contain accounts of all four saints and, therefore, are utilized throughout the four chapters. The *Legenda aurea* is Jacobus de Voragine's extremely popular and influential mid-thirteenth-century work.[47] The work is primarily a collection of saints' lives of which at least fourteen accounts are of Virgin Martyrs. Agatha, Agnes, Juliana, and Katherine are all represented with concise yet detailed accounts.[48] Although there are English works derived from the *Legenda aurea*, such as the *Gilte Legende* and William Caxton's translation, de Voragine's work is considered herein because it is the standard text for medieval saints' lives.[49]

The *South English Legendary*, a popular thirteenth-century Middle English work, bridges the gap between Ælfric's Homilies and Bokenham's work for Agatha and Agnes' English traditions.[50] The *South English Legendary* also provides alternative Middle English

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[47] De Voragine, a Dominican and ultimately archbishop of Genoa, appears to have composed his immediate work for a clerical audience although subsequent translations and revised editions were frequently directed toward the laity (Ryan's introduction to *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, 2 v. trans. William Granger Ryan. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, xiii, xvii–xviii).

[48] See the *LA* for Agatha (v. 1, 257–262), for Agnes (v. 1, 169–173), for Juliana (v. 1, 267–269), and for Katherine (v. 2, 1205–1215).

[49] *Gilte Legende*, 3 v. EETS OS 315, 327, and 328. ed. R. F. S. Hamer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, 7 v. ed. F. S. Ellis. Temple Classics. Great Britian: T. and A. Constable LTD, 1900, reprinted 1922 and 1931; New York: AMS Press, reprinted 1973. *Gilte Legende* is not a direct translation of the *LA*, but of Jean de Vignay's *Legende Doree* (c. 1333–1340 AD), which is a French translation of the *LA* (*Gilte Legende*, xi). Although the *Gilte Legende* and Caxton's work contain accounts of these four women, the entries do not provide material that would sufficiently alter the arguments of this study.

[50] *The South English Legendary: edited from Corpus Christi College Cambridge ms. 145 and British Museum ms. Harley 2277: with variants from Bodley ms. Ashmole 43 and British Museum ms. Cotton Julius D. IX*. 3 v. EETS OS 235, 236, and 244. eds. Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill. London: Oxford University Press, 1956. This is abbreviated *SEL*. For Agatha's account, see the *SEL*, *De Sancta Agatha*, v. 1, 54–58.

versions to the Katherine Group's texts of Juliana and Katherine's *passiones*.[51] This collection offers a valuable opportunity to examine Middle English portrayals of the early Agatha and Agnes alongside the later Juliana and Katherine.

The Approach

Virgin Martyrs have received considerable attention, particularly from feminist writers, within recent hagiographical scholarship. Studies concerning Virgin Martyrs range greatly in readership. They explore constructions of virginity, the role of speech as a narrative device, the literary treatments and artistic depictions of virginal bodies.[52] Although this study does not adhere to a feminist approach, it does draw on this scholarship as it identifies fundamental themes present in Virgin Martyr accounts, looks to their development, and establishes the significance of their ongoing inclusion in an evolving literature. The work most notably considers Shari Horner's examinations of female saints in Anglo-Saxon texts and Karen A. Winstead's study of Middle English Virgin Martyr

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For Agnes' account, see the *SEL*, *De Sancta Agneta*, v. 1, 19–25. These are abbreviated *Agatha* and *Agneta*, respectively. For a translation of Agatha's account see *Chaste Passions*, 28–31.

[51] For Juliana's account, see the *SEL*, *De Sancta Iuliana uirgine*, v. 1, 62–71. For Katherine's account, see the *SEL*, *Seinte Katerine of noble cunne*, v. 2, 533–543. These are abbreviated *Iuliana uirgine* and *Seinte Katerine*, respectively.

[52] For readership and audience in these texts, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150–1300: Virginity and its Authorizations*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, especially 1–18 and 32–40. See also Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, especially 34–40 and 147–166. For constructions of virginity, see Wogan-Browne, "The Virgin's Tale" 165–170. For constructions of virginity in early Christianity, see Virginia Burrus "Word Made Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10.1 (1994): 27–51; and Elizabeth Castelli "Virginity and Its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2 (1986): 61–88. For the relevance of women's speech in these lives, see Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 108–110. See also Katherine J. Lewis, *The Cult of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval England*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2000, 220–223.

legends.[53] Scholars including Sarah Salih, Martha Easton, Catherine Innes-Parker, and Kathryn Gravdal, for example, have referenced Virgin Martyrs' exposed and tormented bodies. They address the degrees of symbolic sexual assault present in the lives of Virgin Martyrs.[54] Discussions of torture and pain often utilize works on modern pain theory such as Elaine Scarry's groundbreaking *The Body in Pain* and on feminist film theory such as that of Carol Clover.[55] Studies of medieval sexuality within religious writing, most notably those by Caroline Walker Bynum, are considered in the course of each chapter's comparative textual analyses.[56]

The main focus of this work is on the narrative structure of the various legends. It is concerned primarily with the ways in which the legends are narrated, and the structural alterations that occur in the legends over time. This study does not aspire to provide an exhaustive exploration of all the texts and versions of these particular saints' lives. The legends of Virgin Martyrs are so extensive and their popularity so wide that such an ambitious project would prove difficult even if considering the legends of only one saint.

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[53] Shari Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*.

[54] Salih, especially 74–98. Martha Easton, "Saint Agatha and the Sanctification of Sexual Violence" *Studies in Iconography* 16 (1994): 119–138. Catherine Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence and the Female Reader: Symbolic "Rape" in the Saints' Lives of the Katherine Group" *Women's Studies* 24 (1995): 205–217. Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991, 21–41. Wogan-Browne, "Virgin's Tale" 176–177.

[55] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Carol J. Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987): 187–228. See also Mills' recent work on torture and pain in late medieval Europe (*Suspended Animation*) and Maureen A. Tilley's work on pain and ascetic practices ("The Ascetic Body and the (Un)Making of the World of the Martyr" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59.3 (1991): 467–479).

[56] See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987; *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982; and *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*. New York: Zone Books, 1991.

This work is principally a preliminary study. As such, it does not set out to answer a specific research question; rather, it attempts to illuminate features of these legends through an approach that is not frequently utilized in current hagiographical scholarship on Virgin Martyrs.

Works on saints generally and understandably tend to focus on legends of a particular time period.[57] Hagiographical studies on female saints are also often organized according to theme or topic as opposed to saint.[58] This study follows a different approach, however. It explores the development of individual saints' traditions, primarily within English sources, across the medieval period. This in-depth approach allows for close examination of the central traits of each saint's legend. Focus upon sex-specific aspects highlights the great similarities clearly present within these lives while examination of the signature trait or traits of each tradition accentuates the distinctiveness of these four Virgin Martyrs.

Aimed at conducting a 'ground-clearing', so to speak, of the traditions of these women, each saint's life is considered independently through her one or more narrative's progressive stages. The development that these life narratives experience in the traditions of early period saints, Late Antiquity to fifteenth-century England, are examined in depth. In order to illustrate these processes, analytical tables mapping these progressions, are

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[57] The Katherine Group has especially received much attention. See, for example, Wogan-Browne, "Virgin's Tale"; Innes-Parker "Sexual Violence" and "Fragmentation and Reconstruction: Images of the Female Body in *Ancrene Wisse* and the Katherine Group" *Comitatus* 26 (1995): 27–52; and Salih "Performing Virginity". Horner, for example, has examined similar themes in her work on Virgin Martyrs in Old English texts (101–172).

[58] See, for example, Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*. In contrast, Virginia Burrus' *Sex Lives of Saints* is organized into subsections of saints and then by the saints themselves *Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Rudolph M. Bell devotes several of his chapters to individual holy women (*Holy Anorexia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

included in the Appendices.[59] These tables, which should be used in conjunction with the chapters, allow for reference to key occurrences within the lives and characteristics of the saints themselves as well as certain texts' deviations from the legends' more traditional aspects.

Narrative points, such as whether and how supporting characters are named, appear within the tables alongside major plot occurrences, such as the saints' torments and methods of martyrdom. The tables of individual saints contain instantly decipherable data indicating which sources contain particular events and how the various versions differ among themselves. The tables afford a "complete" narrative of each saint's legend, whether or not particular episodes are analyzed in detail in the relevant chapter. Thus, the developing and changing narratives of the early saints (Agatha and Agnes) are presented alongside the fairly standard narrative of later saints (Juliana and, particularly, Katherine). The evolution of early saints' lives into a more conforming structure emerges all the clearer when one compares an actively progressing legend, such as Agatha's (Appendix A), to a later established and little-deviating narrative, such as Katherine's (Appendix D). Furthermore, the popularity and recurrence of motifs and torments present in Agatha, Agnes, Juliana, and Katherine's legends are plainly charted alongside other Virgin Martyr accounts appearing within the *Legenda aurea* in Appendix E. This final Appendix allows for ready comparison among Virgin Martyrs within the premier hagiographical text. It also presents the diverse combinations of these motifs existent in the legends of other saints.

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[59] See Appendices A–E. The order of the Appendices coincides with that of the chapters (Appendix A is on Agatha; B is on Agnes; C is on Juliana; and D is on Katherine). Appendix E maps the characteristics and occurrences in Virgin Martyrs' accounts in the *LA*.

The Format

Two potential structures are possible for such a study. The first is a concept-based structure in which each relevant motif and plot device would be allowed its own section or chapter. The benefits of this arrangement are the focus and discussion on independent themes, which allow for comparisons and contrasts between the attributes of several saints and their legends. The second structure considers the saints individually and devotes a chapter to each. This design, which was ultimately selected for this work, permits a more focused look at an individual saint's life as each legend develops. The separate focus on the legend's narrative details allows for a fuller examination of singular aspects stressed in these women's legends. Given that saints' lives share and borrow a multitude of motifs from each other, this identification of individual quality has proven constructive when one seeks the distinctive persona of each of the four saints.

The saints' ordering within the work is primarily a result of natural chronological order with Agatha and Agnes supplying the first two chapters, Juliana the third, and Katherine the fourth. The early traditions of both Agatha and Agnes allow for the possibility of either to begin the study. Since this is an exploration of the sexualized aspects of and tortures in the lives of Virgin Martyrs, Agatha is selected as the saint with the more compelling and overt example of sex-specific torture. Agatha's amputated breast as a symbol of female sexuality and motherhood, accordingly, secures her position as the subject of the first chapter. The chapters do not follow a strict structure allowing details and themes relevant to the sexuality of Virgin Martyrs to be addressed as required in each virgin's legend.

The first chapter on Agatha begins with the saint's unconventional experience in a brothel. This portrayal differs from the usual Virgin Martyr brothel experience as outlined in the following chapter on Agnes. The chapter then turns to Agatha's signature torment, her breast amputation, and follows the scene's development throughout the various texts. Implications surrounding this mutilation are then explored with particular attention to Agatha's breast's symbolic representation of both femininity and motherhood. The next two sections consider the argument that these virgins 'Become Male' as their bodies endure mutilation and torments in their *passiones*. The final segment of this chapter considers visitation and healing motifs, which often occur in lives of saints who are imprisoned, and Agatha's relationship with another Sicilian Virgin Martyr, Lucy.

Agnes' chapter first explores her traditionally eroticized relationship with Christ and His presentation as the passionate young bridegroom. The following four sections consider the motif of hiding the virgin body from view and, therefore, from lustful gazes. This directive's tradition is surveyed before Agnes' legend is shown to employ various uses of this motif, such as her shielding by hair and by white and gold clothing. Literary depictions of Agnes' iconographic association with the lamb as a symbol of purity and meekness and as the Lamb of God are traced throughout these works. The chapter then focuses upon the conventional reactions of Virgin Martyrs to their naked bodies and to the threat of rape. The final segment addresses the miraculous resurrection performed by Agnes in the brothel.

Since Juliana is primarily associated with her battle with the devil, the first section of her chapter concerns the development and tradition of the Warrior Virgin Martyr

legend. This segment primarily utilizes the lives of earlier non-Virgin Martyr female saints. Explorations of Juliana's status as a *Miles Christi* and of virginity as a weapon are then undertaken. The following two sections deal directly with the saint's struggle with the devil. These consider Juliana's brutality in her treatment of the demon and the symbolic spiritual struggle that takes place concurrent with the physical battle. The hagiographical tradition of familial rejection, both paternal and maternal, is explored, followed by a discussion of familial rejection in the lives of Virgin Martyrs. The chapter concludes with an examination of the important and disquieting relationship between Juliana and her father. This segment addresses his love for Juliana as well as his potentially incestuous inclinations towards her.

The chapter on Katherine opens with a description of Katherine's scholarly abilities and intelligence. It then considers the saint's marriage to Christ and her position as His supreme Bride. The next two sections explore the implications of Katherine's conspicuously limited physical trials and her suffering by proxy. The symbolism of the miraculously produced milk from Katherine's neck upon her beheading is considered and the relationship between milk and breast in the later Middle Ages is also addressed. Relevant themes addressed in Agatha's chapter are revisited. The penultimate segment examines the emphasis on Katherine's virginity as indicated by the garden symbolism present in fifteenth-century *vita* accounts. The final section, primarily through Capgrave's work, develops the relationship between Katherine and the Blessed Virgin.

The Conclusion considers the conventionally grisly and damned fate of these women's persecutors as well as the virgins' anticipated joyful afterlife. Treatments of

various sex-specific themes, violent and otherwise, are reviewed by utilizing the analysis of Agatha's legend as an exemplar. This final chapter also suggests future investigations in this field.

As noted above, charts on each of these saints are included as Appendices.[60] Each chart details important occurrences in these saints' traditions and denotes which take place in which accounts discussed in this study. The Appendices, in addition to the charts described above, also provide a comparative chart of the Virgin Martyr legends included in the *Legenda aurea*. This is to illustrate the place of Agatha, Agnes, Juliana, and Katherine in the greater collective of Virgin Martyrs.[61]

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[60] For Appendix A: Narrative Devices in Saint Agatha of Catania's Legend, see 272–273. For Appendix B: Narrative Devices in Saint Agnes of Rome's Legend, see 274–275. For Appendix C: Narrative Devices in Saint Juliana of Nicomedia's Legend, see 276–277. For Appendix D: Narrative Devices in Saint Katherine of Alexandria's Legend, see 278–279.
[61] For Appendix E: Narrative Devices in Virgin Martyrs' Legends of the *Legenda aurea*, see 280–282.

Chapter 2
Saint Agatha of Catania
Breast Amputation and 'Becoming Male'

According to Saint Agatha's legend, the saint received her crown of martyrdom in Sicily around 250 AD.[1] As Agatha's later legend attests, Quintianus, the local official and a pagan, desires to corrupt the virtuous young noblewoman.[2] He first has her sent to a brothel in hopes it will stir her sexual desires and cause her to abandon her religious devotion. When Agatha remains firmly committed to her chastity and to her Christian faith, Quintianus inflicts a series of tortures on the young virgin of which the most famous was the amputation of Agatha's breast. While the saint is imprisoned following her mutilation, Saint Peter visits her, heals her wounds, and restores her breast. Agatha's torments continue and she finally chooses to die after being rolled naked over hot coals and potsherds.[3] The location of her martyrdom is agreed to be Catania, where she is associated with a local miracle: the calming of a volcanic eruption. Upon Mount Etna's eruption some time after Agatha's death, the veil from the saint's tomb is transferred into the course

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[1] *Acta S. Agathæ* (*Acta* throughout the chapter) (621), the *LA* (v. 1, 260), and Bokenham (l. 8829) attest she was martyred during Emperor Decius' reign (249–251 AD). However, the *LA* (v. 1, 260) and Bokenham (l. 8828) state 253 AD, which is too late for Decius. Aldhelm (*DV*, 293) and Bede (*Martyrologium*, *PL* 94, Col. 835A) place her under Diocletian's reign (284–305 AD). For a list of Roman Emperors, see Chris Scarre, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Rome*. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1995, 136–137. Both Palermo and Catania claim to be Agatha's birthplace (Alban Butler and Paul Burns, *Butler's Lives of the Saints: New Full Edition: February*. Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates and Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998, 52). See also Thomas Carson and Joann Cerrito, eds. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second Edition, 15 v. Thomson Gale in association with the Catholic University of America, 2003 at v. 1, 173; and David Hugh Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Fifth Edition. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press Inc., reissued 2004, 7.

[2] The spelling of 'Quintianus' found in the *Acta* is used, unless directly quoting from another source. For sources naming Quintianus, see Appendix A.

[3] This is a brief summary of Bokenham's fifteenth-century account.

of the lava flowing toward Catania.[4] Once the veil is placed between the volcano and the town, the devastating fire ceases and the village is spared.[5]

Although the historical and physical evidence indicating Agatha's martyrdom is minimal, early evidence of her cult and of devotion to her is quite substantial.[6] Pope Damasus I (c. 304–384 AD) composes a hymn to her, Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530–c. 609 AD) includes her in a register of virgins and martyrs in his *De uirginitate*, and Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636 AD) also writes a *duplex hymnus* to Agatha.[7] Her tradition and early veneration secure her position in the Roman Calendar[8] and in the Canon of the Mass.[9]

Agatha's legend was circulating in England by the seventh century and was well established into the later Middle Ages. Aldhelm includes Agatha's sufferings in both his *De uirginitate* and his *Carmen de uirginitate* (late seventh century). Bede mentions her in his hymn to Æthelthryth in his *Historia ecclesiastica* (731 AD)[10] and in his *Martyrologium* (c.

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[4] Bokenham asserts it erupted the day after her passion (ll. 8903–8904), while the *Acta* (624), Isidore of Seville (*AASS* Feb. 5, 602C), Ælfric (*Natale Sancte Agathe*, ll. 221–222), the *SEL* (*Agatha*, ll. 122–123), and the *LA* (v. 1, 261) claim a year after her death. Aldhelm does not specify the amount of time passed.
[5] See Appendix A. Most sources claim that the tomb's veil halted the lava. Aldhelm, however, asserts the tomb itself stopped the fire (*DV*, 293 and *CDV*, ll. 1768–1778). The *SEL* attests the fire burned six days before reaching her tomb where it ceased (*Agatha*, l. 131).
[6] Delehaye, for example, attests to an inscribed stone in Catania, which is most likely dedicated to Agatha and another Catanian martyr of the Decian persecutions, Euplus: *C'est sans doute du sanctuaire où reposaient Agathe et Euplus* ('It is without a doubt the shrine where Agatha and Euplus rest' *Les Origins du culte des martyrs*. Bruxelles: Société des bollandistes, 1933, 311). Kennedy mentions Delehaye's notation (176). Kennedy further cites evidence of devotion by Pope Symmachus (498–514 AD) and Pope Gregory I (c. 540–604 AD) (177–178). Aldhelm claims Gregory paired Agatha and Lucy in the daily canon (*DV*, 293).
[7] Damasus, *Carmen 30*; Venantius Fortunatus, *De uirginitate* 3.33, MGH AA 4:1, 182; and Isidore, 601–602.
[8] This is as opposed to numerous saints who were removed from the Calendar during the Second Vatican Council. Kennedy has comprised a timeline of her veneration in religious works (175–176).
[9] The other female saints in the Canon are Felicitas, Perpetua, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, and Anastasia (Kennedy, 168–191).
[10] Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. eds. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, reprinted 1991, 4.20. Bede lists Agatha in his hymn to Æthelthryth alongside other Virgin Martyrs with early traditions such as Agnes, Cecilia, Thecla, Eulalia, and

725–731 AD).[11] Over two hundred years later, Ælfric composes a homily for Agatha's feast day, February 5th. In comparison to these earlier examples, Ælfric's account, which has a narrative structure close to that of the early sixth-century *Acta*,[12] is extensive and detailed, including elaborate speeches and exchanges. Ælfric's work focuses much attention on Agatha's sufferings, particularly her breast torment, her signature torture. Later medieval authors such as the anonymous author of the *South English Legendary*, de Voragine, and Bokenham also relate similarly detailed accounts of Agatha's *passio*.

As Agatha's legend progresses, features are expanded and traditional scenes are embellished. Later accounts preserve the torments from earlier versions, such as the burning and slicing of her body, most notably her breasts, while increasing the dramatic nature of the *passio*. Attempts at domination over Agatha's sexuality appear repeatedly within the legend, particularly in the brothel and breast torment scenes. The following section argues that this brothel scene is not used as a torment in the same manner as in the lives of other Virgin Martyrs. Instead, the scene, which heightens the dramatic and sexual nature of the legend, alludes to and foreshadows Agatha's breast torment.

Euphemia. For a modern translation, see R.E. Latham's revised printing of Leo Sherley-Price's edition, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990.

[11] Bede, *Martyrologium*, Cols. 834A–835A.

[12] Butler, *February*, 52.

A Different Kind of Brothel

The antagonist in Agatha's legend, Quintianus, is assigned the position of a slighted suitor.[13] Once Agatha rejects Quintianus in the *Acta*, Quintianus commands that she be committed to the keeping of the appropriately named Aphrodisia and her nine daughters, who are all referred to as *turpissimas* ('very indecent' 621).[14] Conventionally, that sources which include these women make similarly damning statements of their sexually promiscuous conduct.[15] The simultaneous association and disassociation of Agatha with these sinful women draws deliberate attention to Agatha's sexuality and implicit desirability.

When Agatha is ordered to the brothel and into Aphrodisia's care, the focus is already on the bodies of sinful women who, on account of their profession, not only encourage, but also presumably commit lustful acts. Quintianus hopes the environment will drive Agatha to renounce her chastity in favor of a life of sexual pleasure and to perform these same acts willingly with him.[16] The licentious intention of Quintianus is

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[13] Bede's *Martyrologium* names Quintianus, but does not include the brothel scene (Col. 835A).
[14] The spelling of 'Aphrodisia' found in the *Acta* is used, unless directly quoting from another source. See Appendix A for sources naming Aphrodisia.
[15] Ælfric's Aphrodisia is *se fracedosta wimman* ('that most vile woman' *Natale Sancte Agathe*, l. 14), *sceandlic on þeawum* ('shameful in customs' l. 10), and her nine daughters are *nahtlice and fracode* ('naughty and vile' l. 11). In the *SEL* she is a *strong hore and baudestrote* ('virulent whore and harlot' *Agatha*, l. 7) and her daughters are *strange horen* ('virulent whores' l. 8). Bokenham's *lyuyd in synful wyse, / Hyr body offryng to þe vnclennesse / of ych þat cam* ('lived in a sinful manner, / offering her body to the lust of each that came' ll. 8398–8400) and her daughters conduct themselves similarly (ll. 8400–8401). Isidore and the *LA* do not name Aphrodisia, but report that Agatha is handed over, respectively, to *(d)ecem malignis foeminis obscoenis* ('ten malicious and (sexually) obscene women' Hymn 2, 602) and a *meretrix* ('prostitute' v. 1, 257) and her nine daughters *eiusdem turpitudinis* ('of similar indecency').
[16] Bokenham, attempting to sanitize this scene, describes Aphrodisia's purpose as: *To remeue Agas from goddys grace / And enlynyn hyr herte to ydolatrye* ('To remove Agatha from God's grace / And to incline her heart to idolatry' ll. 8406–8407). The *LA*, Bokenham's attested source for Agatha's legend, however, acknowledges Quintianus' licentious intent claiming: *quia libidinosus, eius pulchritudine frueretur* ('because he was lustful, he would enjoy her beauty' v. 1, 256).

clearly stated in the *Acta*: *ut libidinosus autem, ad aspectum Virginis pulcherrimæ oculorum suorum concupiscentiam commovebat* ('and he was so lustful, he aroused his eyes' desire at the sight of the very beautiful Virgin' 621D).[17] Ælfric likewise presents Quintianus' objective as overtly sexual, as he wishes Agatha *hire þeawas leornode / and hire mod awende þurh þæra myltestrena forspennincgæ* ('might learn her (Aphrodisia's) practices and her (Agatha's) mind might be turned through the seductions of prostitutes' *Natale Sancte Agathe*, ll. 12–13).[18] This opening scene directs attention to these women's licentious acts, which are presented as debasing the female form. The immoral actions performed by and on naked female bodies within the brothel may be envisioned as Aphrodisia and her daughters strive to tempt Agatha from her virtue. Although at this point, the exposed female form is not yet Agatha's, Quintianus' desire for her indicates her physical appeal and anticipates her alluring nakedness. Agatha's visit to the brothel differs fundamentally from the conventional brothel punishment in Virgin Martyr lives.[19]

Agatha's time in the brothel is intended to be an erotic education, not a torment.[20] It is not suggested that she will be raped while with Aphrodisia's women. Quintianus'

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[17] Although Isidore does not explicitly present Agatha as the object of Quintianus' sexual desire, as in the *Acta*, Quintianus *sees* her before ordering her to the brothel (602A). For the connection between sight and lust, see Agnes Chapter, 98–116.

[18] Quintianus similarly hopes for Agatha's sexual corruption in the *SEL*, although initially the text is unclear as to whether Quintianus wishes to benefit from this corruption personally (*Agatha*, ll. 4–11).

[19] For the conventional brothel motif, see Agnes Chapter, 130–141.

[20] The education anticipated here is reflected in the much later libertine concept of erotic education. For a recent study of literature concerning such erotic education, see James Grantham Turner, *Schooling Sex: Libertine Literature and Erotic Education in Italy, France, and England 1534–1685*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, especially Chapters 1 and 3. The Marquis de Sade's heroine, Juliette, undergoes a transformation similar to that which Quintianus wishes for Agatha. Juliette ventures from convent to brothel "eager to learn" the ways of the brothel's inhabitants (Angela Carter, *The Sadian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History*. London: Virago Limited, 1979, 83–84). For Juliette's story, see Marquis de Sade, "Justine, or Good Conduct Well Chastised" in *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, & Other Writings*.

objective, rather, is that the dissolute surroundings will turn Agatha's mind toward desire and provoke lust.[21]

Conventionally, when Virgin Martyrs are confined to brothels, their persecutors have already declared the horrors they will experience therein, namely continual rape by numerous men.[22] It is also unusual to have a brothel scene so early in a *passio*.[23] These women are traditionally cajoled, pleaded with, or tortured in various other ways before persecutors arrive at this particular torment. A typically high-tension scene such as this at the opening of an account is unexpected, which is possibly why Agatha is not threatened with rape, since such vicious punishment belongs at the story's height. Quintianus' trust in Agatha's determination of her own fate in this particular matter makes her confinement even more exceptional. Most Virgin Martyrs who face rape in a brothel are not given such a choice.[24] Agatha's stalwart reaction to the brothel highlights her capability at overcoming fleshly temptations to which, as a woman, she should be very susceptible.[25] Her behavior,

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Compiled and trans. Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse with introductions by Jean Paulhan and Maurice Blanchot. New York: Grove Press, 1968, reprinted 1990, 459–464.

[21] Cynthia J. Hahn, considering a particular manuscript (Paris, Bilbiothèque Nationale, MS lat. 5594 France, late tenth/early eleventh century), interestingly suggests that what Agatha refuses is not "sexual encounters with men. Rather, what Agatha emphatically rejects is friendship—absorption into an intimate, close-knit, and animated community of women" (*Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, 120). Although this is an unusual view of the brothel scene, the stress on Agatha's independence from all worldly relationships nevertheless fits with the Virgin Martyr pattern. For this independence, see Juliana Chapter, 168–169.

[22] For the sentence of 'gang rape,' see Agnes Chapter, 131–132; and Juliana Chapter, 200 n. 155.

[23] Aldhelm's Dorothy is also sent for corruption by two women, whom had recently been turned from Christianity. Dorothy, unlike Agatha, reconverts them (*DV*, 301–302; and Bokenham, ll. 4848–5854).

[24] For the conventional brothel scene, see Agnes Chapter, 130–141.

[25] For spiritual temptation, see Juliana Chapter, 158–162.

here as elsewhere in her legend, however, is not necessarily intended to be interpreted as defeat or suppression of her 'femaleness' or as masculinization of her character.[26]

At the end of Agatha's month-long stay at the brothel, Aphrodisia describes the saint's defiance and steadfast will to Quintianus. Aphrodisia declares (*Acta*, 621E–F):

> Facilius possunt saxa molliri, et ferrum in plumbi mollitiem converti, quam ab intentione Christiana mens istius puellæ revocari.
>
> [Stones can more easily be softened, and iron be transformed into softness of lead, than the mind of that girl be recalled from her Christian objective.]

The *Acta* presents imagery of Agatha's stamina and strength of mind in the face of intended temptation that is echoed in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*.

Aldhelm does not express the tormentors' inability to soften Agatha's resolve, but rather focuses upon the virgin's reinforcement of her defenses against her assailants. Aldhelm describes Agatha's hardening as she preserves *(c)uius integritatis castimoniam* ('the purity of her chastity' *De uirginitate*, 293) and reports that Agatha *ut adamantinus scopulus contra illata carnificum tormenta ferro fortior induruit* ('like adamantine rock, she hardened stronger than iron against torments inflicted by the executioners' 293). Similar comparisons are used several times by Aldhelm in his description of both female and male virgins' strength in the face of adversaries.[27] Justina is *adamante durior diversis tormentorum cruciatibus macerata* ('harder than adamant, having been assaulted with diverse tools of torment' *De uirginitate*, 296). In *Carmen de uirginitate*, heavenly grace fortifies Thecla's *mentem / (s)æcula quam penitus numquam mollire valebant* ('mind / which worldly concerns were completely unable to soften' ll. 1981–1982). Furthermore, she is *(d)urior ut ferro foret*

[26] See below 55–71.
[27] Horner notes Aldhelm's fortifying language for female saints (107).

ad tormenta cruenta ('harder than iron when she is (about to be) headed for bloody torments' l. 1983). Among the male saints in *De uirginitate*, Athanasius' *mens* ('mind') is described as *Deo dedita cote durior, ferro fortior, adamante rigidior* ('devoted to God, harder than whetstone, stronger than iron, more rigid than adamant' 274). Chrysanthus' father sends girls to the saint *ut in talibus blandimentis ferrea iuvenis præcordia mollescerent* ('so that they might cause the young man's iron heart to grow soft with such charms' 278). Julian's parents similarly coax him with girls so that *ferreos iuvenculi affectus immo adamante duriores inclinarent* ('so that they might turn the young man's temperament, which was not of iron, but rather harder than adamant' 281). Such portrayals of increased robustness imply external or physical 'hardness' while highlighting the virgins' internal resolve. Ælfric further applies this symbolism of dual durability to his relation of Agatha's legend.

The proclamation in the *Acta* that Agatha's strength resides in her *mens* is deliberately altered by Ælfric in his corresponding speech. When Ælfric's Aphrodisia explains the disappointing situation to Quintianus, she directs attention to Agatha's breast, emphasized through alliteration, as the portion of her body housing her determination (*Natale Sancte Agathe,* ll. 29–31).

> Stanas magon hnexian and þæt starce isen
> on leades gelicnysse ærðan þe se geleafa mæge
> of agathes breoste beon æfre adwæsced
>
> [Stones may soften, and that hard iron
> may become the likeness of lead before the faith
> in Agatha's breast may ever be destroyed.]

These early lines indicate that Agatha's faith, which is now symbolized by her breast, is indestructible and incorruptible. Quintianus, informed of Agatha's stout refusal, has been

given a challenge and direction for his anger. He subsequently attempts to withdraw her faith physically by tearing open the breast that shelters it.

Later texts revert to the interpretation in the *Acta* and attribute Agatha's strength to her mind. Aphrodisia refers to Agatha's *þoȝt* ('thought' *Agatha* l. 30) in the *South English Legendary* and the *Legenda aurea* mentions the saint's *mens* ('mind' v. 1, 257). Bokenham's Aphrodisia, closer to Ælfric's, names her *herte* ('heart' l. 8435) as the part of Agatha unable to be affected.[28] However, Ælfric's account is the only one to assign Agatha's breast as the shelter of her fortitude. These other works lack the rich symbolism and foreshadowing effects of Ælfric's passage.[29] Despite the saint's resolute faith and determination, Aphrodisia's words fail to convince Quintianus to abandon his plans for the virgin. Consequently, his lust and pride drive him to impose serious torments and mutilations upon her body.[30]

Agatha's Breast Amputation

As early as Damasus' fourth-century account, Agatha's breast torment is included in her *passio*.[31] When Aldhelm first relates Agatha's martyrdom three centuries later, he

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[28] Agatha also makes this statement about herself. The saint in the *Acta* proclaims during her reprimand of Aphrodisia: *Mens mea solidata est, et in Christo fundata* ('My mind is strengthened and founded in Christ' 621E). See Appendix A for other works' speeches.
[29] Bokenham's Quintianus, however, orders Agatha's breast tormented because it is near her *herte* (ll. 8587–8589).
[30] Innes-Parker and Yael Even describe persecutors' violence upon female bodies for 'love' or 'desire' as highly erotic in literary and hagiographical depictions. Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" 213–214. Yael Even, "Daphne (Without Apollo) Reconsidered: Some Disregarded Images of Sexual Pursuit in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Art" *Studies in Iconography* 18 (1997): 143–159 at 143–145, 149, and 151.
[31] Damasus, *Carmen 30*, ll. 11–12. See 48–49 below for these lines.

describes her sufferings and general account similarly to those of many other Virgin Martyrs (*De uirginitate*, 293):

> Cuius integritatis castimoniam nec membrorum crudelis dilaceratio compescere nec lictorum atrox vexatio præpedire nec acria testularum fragmina infringere vel torrida carbonum incendia ullatenus vincere valuerunt.
>
> [Neither could the cruel tearing of her limbs quell, nor could the atrocious affliction of the lictors hinder, nor could potsherds' sharp fragments break, nor could coals' burning heat conquer in any respect whatever the purity of her chastity.]

The entry is almost generic in its telling of the virgin's trials. Aldhelm does not mention her breast amputation in this account. The omission is surprising given the early presence of breast amputation in Agatha's legend. Aldhelm, instead, focuses on her endurance through torments and the miracle at Mount Etna, which is highlighted at least as much as her suffering.

Carmen de uirginitate, however, mentions her breast torment amongst her other tortures, and discusses the full range of her sufferings quite graphically (ll. 1748–1760).[32]

> Horrida vulnifici patitur discrimina ferri,
> Quod castum lacerat corpus mucrone cruento:
> Pectora virgineis fraudantur pulchra papillis (1750)
> Purpureusque cruor stillans de carne fluebat.
> Sic quoque carnifices torrebant igne puellam
> Virgineos artus assantes torribus atris;
> Sed dicto citius perdebat flamma vigorem
> Ignibus innocuis exurens membra puellæ. (1755)
> Nec fuit in poena simplex vexatio carnis,
> Sed triplex potius torquet strictura lacertos,
> Dum rogus ardescens et rubræ fragmina testæ
> Necnon et rigidi crudelis sectio ferri
> Membra cruentabant spurco sine crimine culpæ. (1760)
>
> [She suffers horrible perils of wound-inflicting iron,
> Which tears her chaste body with its bloodthirsty sharp edge:
> Beautiful breasts are robbed of virgin nipples
> And crimson blood was flowing, dripping from her flesh.

[32] Aldhelm claims torture on *both* breasts. For this discrepancy, see Appendix A.

> Thus executioners were also burning the girl with fire
> Roasting virgin limbs with dark firebrands;
> But quicker than speech the flame was losing its vigor
> Consuming the girl's limbs with harmless fire.
> There was not in punishment a single affliction of her flesh,
> But rather a triple tightness twists muscles,
> While flaming pyre and fragments of red tile
> And certainly the cruel cutting of rigid iron
> Was bloodying her limbs (which were) without the tainted
> fault of sin.].

This account distinguishes Agatha as the only Virgin Martyr in either of Aldhelm's collections to be identified as having her breasts mutilated.[33] Although Agatha's breast amputation is only one noted, she is by no means the only saint traditionally reported to have suffered this sex-specific cruelty.

Saints or holy women who experience breast torment are often Virgin Martyrs or women acting as extensions of Virgin Martyrs in their legends. The *Legenda aurea* contains at least four Virgin Martyr accounts that include breast amputation scenes. In addition to Agatha, the Queen in Katherine of Alexandria's life, Faith, and Christina also experience this disfigurement.[34] The Queen's breast mutilation permits Katherine, who endures

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[33] Traditionally, Christina's breast is amputated (*Passio S. Christinæ uirginis et martyris*, *AASS* Jul. V, 524–528 at 528A). Bokenham's Dorothy's breasts are burned; although her *passio* states her sides are burned (*Acta S. Dorotheæ et socior mm, AASS* Feb I, 781–784 at 782F). Aldhelm, does not include Christina's torment nor indicate where Dorothy is burned. Hereafter these works are abbreviated *Christinæ* and *Dorotheæ*, respectively.

[34] See the *LA* for Faith (v. 1, 308), the Queen (v. 2, 1210–1211), and Christina (v. 1, 648). For the Queen's torment, see Katherine Chapter, 233–237. Bell mentions breast mutilation among typical self-inflicted punishments of holy anorexics (19). Virginia Burrus notes that various classical accounts of the death of Polyxena, Trojan princess and sacrificial victim, act as exemplars for Agnes' death speech in Prudentius' account in which she desires the sword-stroke in her breast ("Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius" *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3:1 (1995): 25–46 at 39–41). For this scene in Agnes' legend, see Agnes Chapter, 92–93. Euripides' Polyxena, although offering the soldier the choice between her chest and throat as the location of death stroke, has her throat slit (*Hecuba*, ll. 553–582 in *Children of Heracles; Hippolytus; Andromache; Hecuba*. Loeb. ed. and trans. David Kovacs. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, 392–519). Ovid's Polyxena, who alternatively is pierced in her chest, is especially relevant (*Metamorphoses*, v. 2, 13.450–480 in *Metamorphoses*, 2 v. trans. Frank Justus Miller. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1916, reprinted 1976). Nicole Loraux interprets Polyxena's pierced breast as the death of a "warrior" as opposed

minimal physical suffering, to endure this particular torment vicariously through the trials of her convert. The Queen, whose husband persecutes Katherine, is greatly inspired by the saint's steadfast faith and converts to Christianity. Maxentius, her husband, as punishment *iussit eam extractis prius mamillis decollari* ('commanded that she, with her breasts extracted first, be beheaded' v. 2, 1210).[35] Katherine's reassurance allows the Queen to die a martyr.

When Sophia's daughters (Faith, Hope, and Charity) are ordered to sacrifice to pagan gods, all, unsurprisingly, refuse. As punishment, Faith, the eldest of the three at eleven years old, is punished with several acts of brutality including having her young breasts torn off. Her wounds miraculously flow with milk and her removed breasts with blood. Christina's wounds likewise flow with milk when her breasts are amputated.[36] Her legend, which includes extensive torments, also relates that arrows pierce her heart and side.[37] She is, at times therefore, depicted with a sword through her breast and pierced with arrows.[38]

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to "sacrificial victim" (*Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*. trans. Anthony Forster. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987, 60). For Loraux's discussion on Polyxena's death, see 56–61. Lucretia's iconography presents another classical woman with a similar tradition. A sword often enters her body directly below her breasts (Ron M. Brown, *The Art of Suicide*. London: Reaktion Books, 2001, 81–83). Ron M. Brown also includes several plates depicting Lucretia's suicide (49–87). Lucretia's rape and subsequent suicide appears in Livy's *Ab urbe condita* 1.58 (*Livy: Books 1 and 2*, v. 1. Loeb. trans. B. O. Foster. London: William Heinemann and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919). See Chaucer's later rendition of Lucretia's account (*Legend of Lucrece* in *The Legend of Good Women* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, Third Edition. ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987, 618–620). See also Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* (*Riverside Shakespeare*, Second Edition. ed. G. Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997, 1814–1838). Verginia, another of Livy's chaste women, is stabbed in the chest by her father (*Ab urbe condita* 3.48.5 in *Livy: Books 3 and 4*, v. 2. Loeb. trans. B. O. Foster. London: William Heinemann and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919). Chaucer changes mode of death in *The Physician's Tale* to beheading (ll. 251–255). For *The Physician's Tale*, see *The Riverside Chaucer*, 190–193. Livy's spelling of Verginia and Verginius is used throughout unless quoting from another source.

[35] For this relationship, see Katherine Chapter, 233–237.

[36] For these saints' young ages, see Agnes Chapter, 86 n. 14; and for these miracles, see Katherine Chapter, 237–238. Capgrave's Queen also experiences this miracle (Katherine Chapter, 235–237).

[37] *Christinæ*, 528B and *LA* v. 1, 648.

[38] Maurice and Wilfred Drake, *Saints and their Emblems*. London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 1916 and republished Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1971, 26.

Dorothy's later tradition relates that her breasts were burned.[39] Juliana has been depicted in art as suffering the same indignity.[40] Eulalia's legend reports that her breasts were savagely torn.[41] Ursula, one of the most renowned saints of the later Middle Ages, also possesses a tradition of visually depicted breast injuries. The *Legenda aurea* reports that once Ursula rejects her Hun suitor, the man *contemptum se uidens directa sagitta eam transfixit* ('seeing her contempt for him transfixed her with a directed arrow' v. 2, 1076).[42] Ursula has been depicted, not only pierced with an arrow, but with it embedded in her breast.[43]

As Agatha's story grew in popularity in the Middle Ages, suggested by its increased iconographic portrayals in the later periods, so did the focus on her breasts.[44] There are differing descriptions among works as to whether one or both her breasts were severed.[45] Nevertheless, she is often shown having both prodded and/or removed.[46] Easton notes that the artistic depictions of Agatha are even more sexually gratuitous and focused upon her

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[39] Bokenham, ll. 4838–4839.
[40] Drake, 71.
[41] Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 3.131–132.
[42] Bokenham likewise does not mention the arrow penetrating her breast (ll. 3433–3439).
[43] Saint Teresa of Ávila, although not a martyr, is depicted with a "fiery arrow" embedded in her heart (Fernando and Gioia Lanzi, *Saints and their Symbols*. trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004, 193–195). This arises from her vision of an angel: "In his hands I saw a great golden spear, and at the iron tip there appeared to be a point of fire. This he plunged into my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails" (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by Herself*. trans. and introduction by J. M. Cohen. London, England: Penguin Books, 1957, Chapter 29). Margery Kempe claims Christ instills a burning flame within her lasting sixteen years (*The Book of Margery Kempe.* ed. Lynn Staley. TEAMS. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996, 1.2059–2070).
[44] Easton, "Saint Agatha" 85 and 88. Magdalena Elizabeth Carrasco notes that aside from one late tenth- to early eleventh-century manuscript (Paris, Bibliothéque Nationale, lat. 5594), no manuscripts depicting Agatha's breast amputation appear in the West before the twelfth century ("An Early Illustrated Manuscript of the Passion of St. Agatha" *Gesta* 24 (1985): 19–32 at 24).
[45] See Appendix A. Saint Peter in the *Acta* and the *LA*, however, at one point refers to her tormented *ubera* ('breasts' 622F and v. 1, 259, respectively). Isidore's second hymn switches between one and both breasts (602A–B).
[46] Easton, "Saint Agatha" 88–90.

body than her various *passiones*. Easton asserts that the depictions' "emphasis on physical suffering and sacrifice may intentionally heighten the response of the viewer."[47] Margaret Miles labels such pictorial examples of sexual indulgence as "religious pornography."[48]

Agatha's portrayals throughout the Middle Ages in manuscripts and other artistic works illustrating her mutilation show tools of torture similar to those described by the various authors. Easton discusses the highly suggestive and arguably pornographic use of such tools in the various medieval representations of Agatha's breast amputation.

> These depictions have a combination of similar elements: Agatha stands, naked to the waist, nimbed, with her hands bound behind her or over her head, tied to some sort of structure. Two men usually flank her and grasp her breasts with a variety of pincer-like instruments. This type of composition is found in many different areas and in different time periods. A twelfth-century German passionary includes only one torturer, to the left of Agatha. The saint is suspended by her arms from a structure that looks like an elongated stockade. The male torturer, elaborately dressed in contrast to Agatha's half-naked figure, grasps her breast with a long, phallic instrument; a phallic sword dangles from his side.[49]

These images are decidedly provocative and encourage the viewer, likely more so than the literature, to indulge in the violation of the exposed female form.[50]

Easton also describes a French Book of Hours in which Agatha is sensationally eroticized. In this Book of Hours, she is portrayed "thrusting" her hip forward to an

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[47] Easton, "Saint Agatha" 88.
[48] Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, 156.
[49] Easton, "Saint Agatha" 88.
[50] Fanny Burney's presentation of her own nineteenth-century breast amputation surgery echoes the violence depicted in Agatha's literary and visual portrayals. Concerning the group of male doctors involved in Fanny Burney's mastectomy, Julia L. Epstein notes the "dynamic of male-female power relations, a play of professional authority against female autonomy as symbolized by the sacrosanct female body here to be defiled" ("Writing the Unspeakable: Fanny Burney's Mastectomy and the Fictive Body." *Representations* 16 (Fall 1986): 131–166 at 146). For Burney's account, see Frances Burney, *Journals and Letters: Selected with an introduction by Peter Sabor and Lars E. Troide with the assistance of Stewart Cooke and Victoria Kortes-Papp*. London: Penguin Books, 2001, 440–443. Anthony R. Moore includes an excerpt from the doctors' account of the surgery and usefully follows it with an excerpt from Fanny Burney's account ("Preanesthetic Mastectomy: A Patient's Experience" *Surgery* 83.2 (1978): 200–205 at 203–4).

aggressor "who appears to jam his knee into her crotch to brace himself as he grabs her apple-like breast between his pincers."[51] This description of hand-like pincers surrounding the saint's breast echoes the imagery evoked in the literary works. Carol J. Clover explores the prevalence of techniques in modern cinema, particularly in the "slasher film" genre, which gratuitously expose, sexualize, and manipulate the female form with phallic weapons.

> The preferred weapons of the killer are knives, hammers, axes, icepicks, hypodermic needles, red hot pokers, pitchforks, and the like […] Knives and needles, like teeth, beaks, fangs, and claws, are personal, extensions of the body that bring attacker and attacked into primitive, animalistic embrace.[52]

Presented with such explicit depictions of women's bodies under attack from phallic weapons, it is difficult to ignore the erotic nature of the scenes since the women in question are usually introduced as beautiful objects of desire.[53] Although Virgin Martyrs are chaste, they are also sexually appealing, a trait emphasized by the lengths tormentors go in efforts to secure the women as consorts.[54] Regarding the torments of these young women, Heffernan asserts:

> If the congregation did receive some degree of titillation from the depiction of the sufferings of Christina or one of the other lives of the female virgins

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[51] Easton, "Saint Agatha" 98.
[52] Clover, "Her Body, Himself" 198. Easton uses this article, in part, to a similar end ("Saint Agatha" 97–104).
[53] For artists' depictions of women enjoying sexual assault in non-Christian works, see Margaret D. Carroll, "The Erotics of Absolutism: Rubens and the Mystification of Sexual Violence" *Representations* 25 (1989): 3–30 at 9–11 and 16–7; and Even, 145, 147–8, and 150–2. For symbolic rape in the legends of Virgin Martyrs, see Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" esp. 207–211. Fanny Burney's first-person description of her surgery's commencement lacks such eroticism despite the gender-struggle occurring in the room and the use of sharp instruments on her breasts. Having had a handkerchief placed over her face, Burney asserts: "It was transparent, however, and I saw, through it, that the bed stead was instantly surrounded by the seven men and my nurse. I refused to be held; but when bright through the cambric, I saw the glitter of polished steel—I closed my eyes. I would not trust to convulsive fear the sight of the terrible incision" (441).
[54] Kim M. Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England*, 1270–1540. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003, 46.

> then this pleasure could only have been derived from a narrative which maltreated the desired but forbidden object, the naked maiden.[55]

Due to this intense concentration, even to an audience viewing such scenes in a religious context, the sexuality of the young Virgin Martyrs is crucial and the manner in which their symbols of femininity are handled is, at least somewhat, erotically highlighted.[56]

While perhaps not as sexually suggestive as her iconographic descriptions, later literary accounts increase focus on Agatha's naked form as well, particularly within the evolving breast amputation scene. Prior to Agatha's actual breast amputation in the narrative, her body must be (at least partially) revealed. When the Agatha challenges Quintianus in the *Acta*, demanding renouncements of his gods and threatening him with the torments of Hell, the outraged Quintianus *jussit eam equuleo ingenti suspendi et torqueri* ('ordered her to be suspended and twisted on the vast rack' 622E). Ælfric's Quintianus makes a similar demand: *het hi on hencgene astreccan and ðrawan swa swa wiððan wælhreowlice* ('commanded to stretch her on the rack and to twist her cruelly as if (she were) a cord' *Natale Sancte Agathe*, ll. 112–113). Placement on the *hencgene* implies that Agatha is stretched and positioned in a crucifixion-like pose.[57] The scene, by necessity, also suggests minimal clothing, thereby mirroring Christ's single garment while on the Cross. In this position, Agatha is, as Jerome encourages, *nudum Christum, nudus sequere* ('naked

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[55] Heffernan, 282. See also Gail Ashton, *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint*. RRMS. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, 145–146 and 151–152.
[56] For sexual vocabulary used in these lives, see Agnes Chapter, 131 n. 163.
[57] Agatha's wound in her breast does, of course, recall Christ's wound in His side. This connection becomes even more poignant as the association of Christ's wound as breast becomes more popular in the later Middle Ages (see Katherine Chapter, 240–242). There is another dimension to the breast torment, however. While both male and female saints are able to be tortured on their sides and even on their chest areas or 'breasts', only female saints are able to have their breasts mutilated as Agatha does. The symbolism of the mutilated female breast is sexually charged in a way that the tortured side is not.

follow the naked Christ' *Ad Rusticum*, 20).[58] Although Agatha's stripping prior to the *equuleo* or *hencgene* is not explicitly stated, her revealed body is essential for the next torture.

Recalling Aphrodisia's earlier statement, the subsequent assault Quintianus performs upon the virgin appears cruelly logical, especially in Ælfric and Bokenham's works. If Agatha's strength resides in her breast, her defeat, in Quintianus' literal mind, lies in the destruction of that which houses her soul and strength. Ironically, Quintianus' plans to extort Agatha's submission will be the means by which she achieves ultimate victory.[59]

Ælfric's Agatha welcomes Quintianus' cruelties, announcing (*Natale Sancte Agathe*, ll. 119–121):[60]

> Ne mæg min sawl beon ge broht mid blysse to heofonum
> butan min lichama beo on þinum bendum genyrwod
> and fram ðinum cwellerum on þinum copsum agrapod
>
> [My soul may not be brought with happiness to Heaven
> unless my body is confined in your bonds
> and grasped tightly in your shackles by your executioners.]

Quintianus' next action displays his inability to comprehend her words' true meaning. In a vicious, vindictive, and yet logical act, he *het hi gewriðan / on ðam breoste mid þære hencgene*

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[58] Jerome, *Epistle 125*, *Ad Rusticum* 20, *PL* 22, Col. 1085. Jerome also uses *nudam crucem nudus sequar* (*Epistle 52*, *Ad Nepotianum* 5, *PL* 22, Col. 531) and *nudam crucem nudus sequens* (*Epistle 58*, *Ad Paulinum* 2, *PL* 22, Col. 580). This shift in focus from *Christum* to *crucem* "thus emphasized the austerity of the cross rather than the personal nakedness of Christ" (Giles Constable, "*Nudus Nudum Christum Sequi* and Parallel Formulas in the Twelfth Century: A Supplementary Dossier" in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History: Essays presented to George Huntston Williams on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*. ed. F. Forrester Church and Timothy George, 1979, 86). See Constable's chapter for a study on this theme (83–91). Miles uses this reference (*nudus sequi nudum Christum*) throughout discussions on female (and male) nakedness.

[59] For martyrs' perspective of torture's benefits, see Christopher Fee, "Productive Destruction: Torture, Text, and the Body in the Old English *Andreas*" *Essays in Medieval Studies* 11 (1994): 51–62 at 58. See also the parable of the weeds and threshing imagery in Matthew 3:12, 13:24–30, and 13:36–43. Aldhelm makes use of this parable in his account of Julian and Basilissa (*DV*, 282). Marquis de Sade also presents 'virtuous' women as (deserving) victims of torture and sexual assault. Unlike female saints, 'good' Sadeian women's sufferings result in no redeeming aspects. See Carter, 38–77. See also Justine's fate in de Sade's "Justine, or Good Conduct Well Chastised."

[60] For the frequency of this speech, see Appendix A.

and het siddan ofaceorfan ('commanded to twist her / on the breast while on the rack and commanded after to cut it off' *Natale Sancte Agathe*, ll. 122b–123).[61] This attack, however reasonable from an unenlightened viewpoint, displays his great spiritual ignorance.[62]

Quintianus' aggressive and brutal reaction to his failure to persuade Agatha to his will is representative of Shirley Panken's description of the sadistic drive behind such urges to dominate and humiliate a "needed" person.

> The most drastic form of sadistic control is torture and the infliction of physical pain. Less dramatic, though more pervasive, is the desire to humiliate, dominate, or make another individual part of oneself. Sadism is prompted by a sense of emotional impotency: The desire for power over another compensates for the incapacity to create or to love. The sadistic person needs to feel omnipotent so that another person becomes his 'thing'.[63]

This yearning to be all-powerful appears repeatedly in persecutors' behavior in Virgin Martyr legends. As tormenting men are thwarted continually in attempts to overcome respective virgins' will, the assaults become more numerous and extreme and the authoritative male figures' mental states become increasingly infuriated and bestial.[64] Concerning the shared objective of lover and tormentor, Sheila Delany notes:

> Paradoxically the separation and fetishization of body parts are the practices shared by persecutor and lover—one in action and the other in

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[61] The *Acta* makes a similar statement: *jussit eam in mamilla torqueri, et tortam diutius eam abscindi* ('ordered that she be tortured on the breast and that it be torn off, after having been twisted for a rather long time' 622E). The symbolism here is less than in Ælfric's account, however.

[62] Quintianus' flesh-focused mind is his ultimate undoing. See Conclusion, 261–262. Horner discusses the flawed understand of Quintianus (148–149), Lucy's persecutor (151–152), and Juliana's father and suitor (112–116). See also Ashton, 145–155.

[63] Shirley Panken, *The Joy of Suffering: Psychoanalytic Theory and Therapy of Masochism*. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1975, 117. In her assessment of the instability of torturers and the states they represent, Scarry asserts that torturers interpret the reality of the physical pain they inflict upon victims as their own power. She states concerning the state's 'need' for torture: "It is, of course, precisely because the reality of that power is so highly contestable, the regime so unstable, that torture is being used" (27). Horner also makes use of this passage (142).

[64] For descent into bestial behavior, see Juliana Chapter, 182–189.

> representation only. Penetration of the female body provides a metaphorical association between erotic and persecutory action.[65]

When the rejected suitors of Virgin Martyrs exchange lustful desires for murderous ones, they nevertheless still crave power and control over the virginal body in question. Clover acknowledges this transference of possession and dominance from rape to slaughter in horror films. "Actual rape is paradoxically nonexistent in the slasher film, evidently on the premise […] that violence and sex are not concomitants but alternatives."[66] When Quintianus cannot obtain Agatha's body, symbolized by her breast, for his sexual pleasure, he attempts to satisfy his other, less immediate, desire by dismembering it. Either way he believes he has attained possession of Agatha's body.

As mentioned above, Quintianus orders Agatha *torqueri* ('be twisted' *Acta* 622E) on the rack.[67] He then declares that Agatha's *mamilla* ('breast' 622E) will suffer the same fate. This 'twisting' torment's intended subject transfers from her whole body to only her breast. This technique is the one most consistently applied to Agatha's breast in these lives.

Ælfric's Quintianus directs his minions *ðrawan swa swa wiððan wælhreowlice* ('to twist her cruelly as if (she were) a cord' *Natale Sancte Agathe*, l. 113) while she is

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[65] Delany, 110. This statement is followed by an exploration of Prudentius' eroticized account of Agnes' martyrdom. For the martyrdom passage, see Agnes Chapter 92–93.

[66] Clover, 195–196. Linda Lomperis discusses Chaucer's depiction of Verginia's decapitation by her father Verginius, which, although technically preserving her virginity, actually transfers the lustful act anticipated by the suitor figure, Apius, to Verginius: "for in taking off the *maiden's head*, Virginius quite literally accomplishes Apius's own explicitly sexual desire, his desire, that is, to take the daughter's *maidenhead*" ("Unruly Bodies and Ruling Practices: Chaucer's *Physician's Tale* as Socially Symbolic Act" in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*. eds. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, 21–37 at 30).

[67] The verb *torquere* appears throughout these works to describe her breast torment. Although *torta* can also mean 'tortured,' in most cases herein it will be translated as 'twisted' since Ælfric and the *SEL* interpret the action as 'twisting.' Although Aldhelm does not describe the breast amputation with this term, he uses *torquet* for the action performed on her muscles in general (*CDV*, l. 1757 and see above 33–34).

outstretched on the rack. Damasus' hymn describes her breast as *torta* ('twisted' l. 12) and Isidore's second hymn notes that Agatha's breast *torquetur* ('is twisted' 602 A) and later refers to her breasts as *torta* ('twisted' 602B). Quintianus in Isidore's hymn, like in the *Acta* (622E), further orders her breasts *abscindi* ('to be torn off' 602B).[68] Agatha's breast is also 'twisted' and ultimately 'wound' off in the *South English Legendary* (*Agatha*, ll. 59–61):

> Hokes and wiþþin he let nime & to hure breste binde
> And let þerwiþ is tormentors hure bresten of wynde
> Vnwreste bouk
>
> [He ordered to seize hooks and cords and to apply them to her breast
> And ordered his tormentors therewith to twist off her breasts
> From her poor body]

The *Legenda aurea* repeats these actions as Quintianus *(i)ussit eius mamillam torqueri et tortam diutissime iussit abscidi* ('commanded her breast to be twisted and, after it had been twisted for a very long time, to be cut off' v. 1, 258). This 'twisting' technique does more than intensify Agatha's pain. If Easton's aforementioned assessment of Agatha's iconographic depictions is applied to these accounts, the 'twisting' allows for longer activity on and attention paid to the breast since it prolongs the torture process more than the immediate act of slicing or tearing would. Easton notes that depictions of Agatha's amputation scene often have this same effect visually.

> Significantly, very few of the images actually show the slicing of Agatha's breasts; the torturers simply hold them with their long instruments. The scene is not yet horrific; in anticipation of the act the view can gaze on Agatha's unblemished, usually sensuously depicted, body.[69]

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[68] Bede does not refer to 'twisting', but mentions *mammillarum abscissionem* ('tearing off of her breasts' *Martyrologium*, Col. 835A).
[69] Easton, "Saint Agatha" 98.

This permits the reader as well as the viewer to indulge in a vision of extended fondling of the naked, still intact, breast.[70]

Like pictorial tormentors Easton describes, literary persecutors also wield instruments in this attack. Ælfric's Agatha refers to the tools that severed her breast as *slitendan clawa* ('slitting claws' l. 189), which most likely indicate predecessors of breast-rippers.[71] The *South English Legendary* also lists tools, *hokes and wiþþin* ('hooks and cords' l. 59). Bokenham's version, however, which, unlike Ælfric's work and the *South English Legendary*, does not refer to 'twisting,' has the most grotesque and detailed description of the amputation (ll. 8590–8599).[72]

And þei anoon hyre gunne to streyn; (8590)
Sum wyth pynsouns blunt & dulle
Hyr tendyr brestys begunne to pulle
Ful boystously; summe in here hondys
Browhtyyn brennyng hoot fyr-brondys,
And therwyth hyr pappys al to-brent; (8595)
Sum wyth yirnene forkys out rent
The flesh þer-of, that grete pyte
How þe blood owt ran yt was to se
On euery side ful plenteuously.

[And they immediately began to injure her;
Some began to pull her tender breasts
Very boisterously with blunt and
Dull pincers. Some brought burning
Hot firebrands in their hands
And completely burned her breasts
With them. Some rent out the flesh

[70] For Virgin Martyrs' reactions to their nakedness, see Agnes Chapter 124–130.
[71] Breast-rippers, as their name indicates, were used to torture or remove breasts (Michael Kerrigan, *The Instruments of Torture*. Staplehurst: Spellmount Limited, 2001, 139). The *Acta* does not mention these tools, but rather lists *vincula* ('chains' 623F) where Ælfric lists *slitendan clawa*. This is likely the result of either a misinterpretation of or scribal error mistaking *vincula* for *ungula* ('claw'), which appears frequently in many other martyrs' accounts. Prudentius, for example, uses *ungula* for the instrument applied to Eulalia during the torture of her breasts and sides (*Peristephanon* 3.133). Prudentius includes this device in the lives of other martyrs as well. See his account of Emeterius and Chelidonius (*Peristephanon* 1.44), the Eighteen Holy Martyrs (4.138), Vincent (5.61, 120, 338, and 551), Romanus (10.73, 484, 557, and 695), and Hippolytus (11.57).
[72] Bokenham's attested source, the *LA*, does not mention these instruments.

> Of her breasts with iron forks.
> It was a great pity to see how the blood
> Ran out very plenteously on every side.]

Despite Bokenham's inclusion of phallic *pynsouns blunt & dulle* ('pincers blunt and dull' l. 8591), *brennyng hoot fyr-brondys* ('burning hot firebrands' l. 8594) and *yirnene forkys* ('iron forks' l. 8596), the sexual nature of the scene appears less than in previous sources due, at least in part, to its sense of immediacy. Damasus, Aldhelm, and Bede also lack such sexualization in their texts for the same reason, however, the length of Bokenham's work makes this approach appear more deliberate and less a result of textual conciseness.[73]

In the *Acta*, Isidore's second hymn, Ælfric's work, the *Legenda aurea*, and the *South English Legendary* there is either a stated or implied time lapse between the handling of the breast and its destruction and/or removal. Ælfric's Quintianus commands that her breast be cut off *siððan* ('after' l. 123) her breast has been twisted. The *South English Legendary* prolongs the action with the division of the statement. The first line mentions the application of *hokes and wiþþin* ('hooks and cords' l. 59); the second orders the amputation. If the contents of the lines were reversed, a more immediate action would be implied. The *Acta*, Isidore's second hymn, and the *Legenda aurea* indicate such a delay by stating that her breasts are twisted *diutius* ('for a rather long time' 622E), *diu* ('for a long time' 602B), and *diutissime* ('for a very long time' v.1, 258), respectively. Although Bokenham includes tools, which in other works extend the focus upon the tormented intact breast, his instant (and graphic) description of the breast's destruction and his use of terms such as *anoon*

[73] Brief poetic accounts may, of course, include eroticism if desired. See, for example, Prudentius' version of Agnes' legend (*Peristephanon* 14 and Agnes Chapter, 92–93).

('immediately' l. 8590) and *ful boystously* ('very aggressively' l. 8594) impart an immediacy and urgency to the persecutors' actions not found in Agatha's other accounts.

Bokenham also mentions some of these tools and torments in the other three breast amputation scenes in his work, yet none of the accounts include 'twisting' during the torture nor linger on the breasts while whole. The descriptions, which do not near the extensive torture scene in Agatha's account, also proceed quickly to the torment. Christina's legend simply asserts that her tormentor: *Commaundyd hir brystis of to kyt be, / And anoon it was doon ful cruelly* ('Commanded her breasts to be cut off, / And immediately it was done very cruelly' ll. 3012–3013). Dorothy's account provides more detail as (ll.4837–4839):

> wyth hokys of yren hyr flesh cruelly
> They al to-rent, & hyr pappys vnpetously
> Wyth feerbrondys brent.
>
> [They cruelly and completely rent her flesh
> With iron hooks, and unpiteously burned
> Her breasts with firebrands.]

In Katherine's account, the Queen's punishers (ll. 7196–7198):

> sparyd nowht
> But wyth forkys of yryn ful cruelly
> Hyr brestys þei rent from hyr body.
>
> [spared not
> But with iron forks very cruelly
> They rent her breasts from her body.]

Although Bokenham does not deliberately eroticize Agatha's or these other saints' mutilations, having beautiful Virgin Martyrs with sexually preoccupied persecutors as subjects does not permit complete removal of sexual aspects from the work.[74]

Although Agatha's breast torment's sexual implications are present in both literary and iconographic depictions, the symbolism attached to Agatha's breast extends beyond this one dimension. Focus on her breast (and lack of breast) allows Agatha to represent multiple female roles at once. Agatha's breast's function changes rapidly throughout the narrative as Agatha herself acknowledges and, at times, even embraces these various roles.

ic habbe mine breost on minre sawle ansunde:[75] Spiritual Motherhood

The multifaceted nature of the breast is of great importance in Agatha's legend as her own breast is injured and amputated. Agatha is initially approached as an object of sexual desire despite her own desire for virginity. She then becomes the source of spiritual nourishment even with the deprivation of a physical maternal attribute. The removal of Agatha's breast, which while intact both inspires lust and possesses the potential to provide nourishment, may be read as an attack on womanhood itself.

The early-depicted Agatha, in typical martyr fashion, shows great strength and faith when facing the realistic threat of breast amputation in the third century. Damasus' hymn states (*Carmen 30*, ll. 9–12):

Fortior haec trucibusque viris

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[74] Delany, however, argues Bokenham's legend "succeeds in demystifying the female breast as a focus of sexual attraction" (110).
[75] "I have my breast sound in my soul" (Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Agathe,* l. 126).

> Exposuit sua membra flagris,
> Pectore quam fuerit valido
> Torta mamilla docet patulo.
>
> [(Agatha) braver than savage men
> Exposed her limbs to whips,
> How she was (then) with an exposed intact breast,
> Instructs (now) with a twisted breast.]

The later literary Agatha, likewise a strong figure, courageously assails her tormentor with reprimands while exposed on the rack. When the assault upon her breast is announced, Agatha reprimands Quintianus (*Acta*, 622E–F).[76]

> Impie, crudelis, dire tyranne, non es confusus amputare in foemina, quod ipse in matre suxisti? Sed ego habeo mamillas integras intus in anima mea, ex quibus nutrio omnes sensus meos, quas ab infantia Christo Domino consecravi.
>
> [Impious, cruel, and harsh tyrant, are you not troubled to cut off on a woman that which you yourself sucked on your mother? But I have whole breasts in my soul, from which I nourish all my senses, and those I consecrated to the Lord from infancy.]

Ælfric's Agatha defiantly proclaims to Quintianus a portion of this speech, maintaining focus on her breast (*Natale Sancte Agathe*, ll. 124–127):[77]

> Eala ðu arleasosta
> ne sceamode þe to ceorfanne þæt þæt ðu sylf suce
> ac ic habbe mine breost on minre sawle ansunde
> mid þam ðe ic min andgit eallunga afede
>
> ["Oh you most dishonorable (man),
> are you not ashamed to cut off that which you yourself sucked?
> but I have my breast sound in my soul
> with which I indeed feed my knowledge."]

Bokenham's Agatha, in a longer and more involved rebuke, questions not only Quintianus' cruel audacity, but also that of any man who is able to perform this violent act on a woman (ll. 8606–8625).

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[76] Agatha makes an almost identical speech in the *LA* (v. 1, 258). See Appendix A.
[77] The similar speech in the *SEL* does not mention her spiritual breasts (*Agatha*, ll. 61–64).

Agas þus seyd: 'o wrecchyd & cruel
And cursyd tyraunth, hast þou no shame
A-wey to kuttyn that on thy dame
Thou dedyst soukyn for þi fostryng
Ere þou koudyst etyn, whyl þou were ying (8610)
And ere þou wyt haddyst or dyscresyoun?
Where-fore me semyth greth confusyoun
It awt to be to euery man
Thus to dysfyguryn a wumman
As þou hast me in þi fersnesse. (8615)
But not-wythstondyng al þi cruelnesse,
Maugre al þi furyous vyolence,
Thorgh help of heuenely influence
In my soule al hool wyth-ynne
Pappys I haue wych fro me tuynne (8620)
Thou neuere shalt moun wyth no peyne,
Where-wytht I fostre & susteyne
Al my wyttys ful dylygently,
Wych to my lord god halwyd haue y
From þe begynnyng of my tendyr age.' (8625)

[Agatha thus said: 'O wretched and cruel
And cursed tyrant, have you no shame
To cut away that which on your mother
You sucked for your nourishment
While you were young before you could eat,
And before you had wit or discretion?
Therefore, it seems to me a great confusion
That any man ought
Thus to disfigure a woman
As you have me in this fierceness.
But notwithstanding all your cruelness,
In spite of all your furious violence,
Through help of heavenly influence
In my soul completely whole within
I have breasts, which you shall never
With any pain be able to take from me,
With which I foster and sustain
All my wits very diligently,
Which to my Lord God I have hallowed
From the beginning of my tender age.']

As these speeches indicate, this carefully selected torture has a deeper purpose beyond the pain and death of its victim. One must remember that Quintianus wants this woman as his sexual partner and, presumably, bearer of his children.[78] By inflicting such a gender specific and sexually devastating torture upon his love interest, he attempts to annihilate not only

[78] For Bokenham's exception, see above 27 n. 16.

her beauty but also her ability to fulfill traditional role of maternal nourisher. Dorothy Ann Bray notes a similar symbolic act with a related objective, occurring in Irish tradition.

> Women are seen going into battle with their children, and the trophies of war could be either a woman's head or her two breasts. Lerner suggests these are equivalent for the taking of a woman's breasts would, like beheading, cause death from wounds or 'because most women who could not mother (i.e. nurse) a child had no viable options for a life and a place in society'.[79]

Here, as in Agatha's accounts, breast amputation is aimed at eradicating the location of (potential) life-giving sustenance and thereby destroying injured women's traditional female-related options for the future.

Heffernan explores the implications of this gender-specific amputation and its impact on mutilated virgins' ability to achieve spiritual motherhood.

> [T]he virgin becomes the bride of the God, and finally the mother of the God, while retaining her virginity. Her breasts as the symbol of her maternity are mutilated and finally severed, to underscore the miraculous metamorphosis of the virgin into a nurturing mother, virtually a deity in her own right. The physical mutilation is also the sign of her election, as the stigmata are the authenticating sign of Christ's crucifixion.[80]

Virgin Martyrs intentionally turn from biological motherhood and all physical acts involved therein; nevertheless, they still manage to become spiritual mothers and nourishers to their followers.[81] While Agatha verbalizes her ability to nourish, Christina visibly demonstrates

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[79] Dorothy Ann Bray, "Suckling at the Breast of Christ: A Spiritual Lesson in an Irish Hagiographical Motif" *Peritia* 14 (2000): 282–296, at 293.
[80] Heffernan, 283.
[81] Virgins are also seen as spiritually giving birth to "virtues." See, for example, Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" 212; Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meaning" 78; and Wogan-Browne, "Virgin's Tale" 171). See Isaiah 28:9 and 66:10–11, which connects receiving knowledge and consolation, respectively, with spiritual breastfeeding. For encouragement to virginity through unflattering depictions of marriage for women, see Juliana Chapter, 198–199.

this. Christina, in addition to experiencing a bodily flow of milk, has snakes hang from her breasts as if suckling when she is thrown into an oven with them.[82]

Spiritual motherhood is a position that cannot be obliterated through breasts' physical mutilation, as Agatha's speeches adamantly declare. Agatha's spiritual breasts are expected to perform the corresponding function for her spiritual children that physical breasts do for infants. Unlike the Blessed Virgin, Agatha cannot feed a child with virgin breasts. Nevertheless, she is able to mirror this action with her spiritual breasts.[83] Cynthia J. Hahn discusses the ways in which some Virgin Martyrs offer nourishment in their legends: "Lucy gives away her inheritance in the form of food, while in a more symbolic gesture, Agatha gives her breasts as a sacrifice; in her *vita*, they become symbolic of spiritual food—the host."[84] This interpretation of Agatha's breast has even greater impact when considering iconographic depictions of Agatha holding out or offering up her breasts on a plate with the mutilated flesh appearing whole.[85] Bynum notes that Katherine makes a statement, which is "almost blasphemous in its eucharistic overtones."[86] In the *Legenda*

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[82] *Christinæ*, 527F and *LA* v. 1, 648. For Christina's transformation into spiritual mother, see Heffernan, 286–288. Wogan-Browne makes a similar observation about Katherine's flow of milk from her neck ("Virgin's Tale" 180). Of course, other female saints who are not mutilated specifically on the breast and who are not Virgin Martyrs also have the ability to become spiritual mothers. See, for example, Eusebius' description of Blandina after she has outlasted all her companions in torments: "But the blessed Blandina last of all, having, like a high-born mother, exhorted her children and sent them forth victorious to the King" (5.1.55).

[83] Bynum cites some instances of virgin breasts producing milk (*Holy Feast*, 122–123 and 211). Horner notes that Agatha's spiritual breasts will feed children as Christ's breast (His wound) feeds her (148–149).

[84] Hahn, 109–111. See Bynum on eating God's flesh through the Eucharist (*Holy Feast,* 30, 54, 60–68).

[85] For example, see Francisco Zurbarán's *Seinte Agatha* (1633) (Santiago Alcolea, *Zurbarán*. Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 1989, Plate 60). Tiepolo's *Martyrdom of St. Agatha* (c. 1755) depicts Agatha's bleeding breasts on a plate; however, Agatha does not hold the plate (Keith Christiansen, ed., *Giambattista Tiepolo: 1696–1770*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996, 234–239).

[86] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 316.

aurea, Katherine professes: *carnem et sanguinem meum Christo offerre desidero, sicut ipse pro me se ipsum obtulit* ('I desire to offer my flesh and my blood to Christ, just as He offered Himself for me' v. 2, 1210).[87] Agatha, however, has the tradition of breasts as food, which mitigates the possibility of blasphemous interpretations. The breast Agatha loses has potential to feed the few children she could bear physically; however, her soul's breasts have potential to nourish hundreds of spiritual children.[88]

These women imitate Christ through their sufferings, and the Blessed Virgin through their simultaneous motherhood and virginity. The flow of milk from wounds, which some Virgin Martyrs emit, is not a gender specific miracle and is often proclaimed to be a symbol of the martyr's purity. For Virgin Martyrs, however, emission of milk for blood is particularly poignant when the milk flows from amputated breasts such as Faith's and Christina's or even from other wounds such as Katherine's.[89] These women do not need to rely on physical manifestations of motherhood such as the flow of milk and the amputation of a breast. Virgin Martyrs know themselves to be mothers without such external signs and verbally promote their newfound status as bride and mother with pride.

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[87] For nourishment from Christ's side and the Blessed Virgin's breasts, see Katherine Chapter, 239–242.
[88] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 122–123, 126, 211, 273–275. Delany notes that Margaret's Christian nurse becomes her spiritual mother as her breast milk nourishes Margaret's faith (81–82). See Bokenham, ll. 379–399.
[89] For milk's significance, see Katherine Chapter, 237–243. Bynum notes women received stigmata more than men because stigmata, like the wound in Christ's side, are breasts as well as wounds (*Holy Feast*, 273).

The plea Lucy makes to her mother in Ælfric's work alludes to the spiritual offspring resulting from her union with Christ (*De Sancta Lucia, uirgine*, ll. 36–40).[90]

> nu bidde ic þe þurh þa yclan þe þe mid ge-bedum gehælde
> þæt þu nanne bryd-guman næfre me ne namige
> ne of minum lichaman deadlicne wæstm ne sece
> ac þa ðing þe þu woldest to gewemmednysse me syllan
> forgif me ða [to] clænnysse to criste farendre
>
> [Now I bid you, through the same one who healed you with prayers
> that you never name any bridegroom for me
> nor desire deadly fruit[91] from my body
> but that wealth[92] that you would bestow upon me for my defilement
> give me then for [my] chastity, [since] I am going to Christ]

Lucy describes to her mother the inverse of what she will have in her relationship with Christ. If with an earthly bridegroom she will have 'deadly fruit', with her heavenly bridegroom she will have 'eternal fruit'. If she is defiled with an earthly bridegroom, she is preserved in chastity with Christ.

The most extensive example of this spiritual procreation with Christ appears in Agnes' tradition. Agnes erotically details to her earthly suitor the qualities of her heavenly spouse and the fruits of their union.[93] Like Lucy, Agnes seeks freedom from Eve's legacy, especially the pain of childbirth.[94] The wish for freedom from sexual desire for an earthly husband does not eradicate passionate desire for the heavenly bridegroom.[95] Although Agatha does not usually label herself a bride as such, the implication is that her chastity is

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[90] Ælfric, *De Sancta Lucia, uirgine* in *Lives of the Saints*, v. 1. EETS OS 76. ed. and trans. Walter W. Skeat. London: Oxford University Press, 1966, 210–219. Hereafter this work will be referred to as *De Sancta Lucia.*

[91] Lucy's comment also alludes to the 'deadly fruit' of Eve and Lucy's desire to free herself from the Fall's consequences (Genesis 3). Aldhelm's Lucy account includes a similar speech describing her desire to avoid *fructum mortalitatis* ('fruit of mortality' *DV*, 294).

[92] For Lucy's wealth, see below 81, especially n. 200.

[93] For this speech, see Agnes Chapter, 94–96. Within Ælfric's version of this speech, see especially *Natale Sancte Agnetis,* ll. 58–62.

[94] Genesis 3:16.

[95] For Christ as Bridegroom, see Agnes Chapter, 87–97.

governed by her faith. Her relationship with Christ is not depicted as one of romance or eroticism in these texts; however, her body is understood to be preserved for His benefit.[96]

The motherhood to which these women aspire has little to do with the outer appearance or condition of their bodies. Inner breasts and conception without loss of virginity are what Virgin Martyrs regard as desirable and worthy of protection. These virgins focus upon the spiritually maternal and, at times, upon the spiritually erotic, but their desires remain those of women with union with the male Christ as their objective. The steadfast and courageous behavior of these women coupled with the marring of their feminine attributes (including the general attribute of beauty) is used to support the argument, however, that these women 'become male' in their struggles.

'Becoming Male'

A hagiographical concept at times appearing in discussions on Virgin Martyrs and female saints in general is that of 'becoming male'.[97] The premise of this concept asserts that female saints are spiritually or physically masculinized as they progress on their

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[96] Damasus, however, describes Agatha as: *Jam renidens quasi sponsa polo* ('Now beaming, so to speak, as bride to heaven' *Carmen 30*, l. 21). Isidore's first hymn claims she is *amans* ('loving' 601D) Christ, but not necessarily in a romantic sense. The *SEL* also proves exception to this (*Agatha*, ll. 20–24). Bokenham's Agatha refers to Christ as *my loue* ('my love' l. 8735). For lack of romantic intent in loving and marital imagery in Old English texts, see Stephan Morrison, "The Figure of Christus Sponsus in Old English Prose" in *Liebe, Ehe, Ehebruch in der Literatur des Mittelalters*. edited by Xenja von Ertzdorff and Marianne Wynn. Giessen: W. Schmitz, 1984, 5–15 at 11–12.

[97] For this concept in early Christian writings, see Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meaning" 75–78, and 88; and Joyce E. Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*. London: Verso, 1991, 26–28. For Anglo-Saxon female saints lives, see Horner, 103–124.

religious journeys and undergo trials for their faith.[98] The traditions of many female saints have been used in attempts to validate and support this argument.

The notion of the 'becoming male' is also sometimes presented as a spiritual and mental shift, an internal development, which does not always coincide with the more obvious outer transformation most evident in transvestite saints. Concerning the process and ramifications of masculinizing female saints, Miles claims:

> "Becoming male" removed the female body from the realm of secular social and sexual arrangements and made it the ally of the religious self, no longer to be defined by, or associated with, the biological or social functions of women's bodies.[99]

'Becoming male' implies that through internal or external masculinization a woman combats foes or overcomes situations, which she is unable to in her feminine state. Only in male form or in modeling male behavior is the woman able to succeed and achieve victory. The objective of such victory is, of course, salvation.[100] The perceived necessity for women to change in this manner and, therefore, to be worthy of salvation is evident in the early apocryphal text, the Gospel of Thomas (late first to mid-second century AD).[101]

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[98] Peter Brown makes an argument for holy men being de-gendered. He asserts "(f)or maybe holy men were not 'men'" if they were "living a life that mirrored the angels" and thereby "had transcended the categories of gender as normally defined" ("The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 353–376 at 371).
[99] Miles, 62.
[100] See, for example, Elizabeth Castelli, "'I Will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity" in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity.* eds., Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub. New York: Routledge, 1991, 29–49 at 29–33.
[101] De Conick argues that Thomas is unable to be categorized as an early or late Christian text since it is a combination of early and late material (7–8). Castelli begins her discussion on 'becoming male' with this text ("I Will Make Mary Male" 30–33).

Thomas concludes with a discussion between Peter and Jesus concerning the appropriateness of Mary Magdalene's presence amongst the disciples (114).[102]

> Simon Peter said to them, 'Mary should leave us because women do not deserve life.'
> Jesus said, 'Look, in order to make her male, I myself will <<guide>> her, so that she too may become a living spirit—male, resembling you. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Some scholars have also cited the Gospel of Mary (c. 120–c. 180 AD) as asserting a similar sentiment regarding women 'becoming male'.[103] In this Gospel, Mary Magdalene speaks to the disciples present at Christ's departure claiming:[104]

> "Do not weep and be distressed nor let our hearts be irresolute. For his grace will be with you all and will shelter you. Rather we should praise his greatness, for he has prepared for us and made us true Human beings."

Karen L. King presents an alternative view of 'becoming male' in these texts, however.[105]

> Scholars have sometimes inaccurately equated Mary's statement that the Savior made the disciples truly Human with Jesus' statement in the *Gospel of Thomas* that he will make Mary male […] In the *Gospel of Mary*, the Savior uses the generic term, "human being" […] and he makes both Mary and the male disciples into Human Beings. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus uses the non-generic term "male" […] The difference in gender imagery is striking […] [*The Gospel of Thomas*] clearly understands the male condition to be superior to that of women. Not so for the *Gospel of Mary*. It is straining to articulate a vision that the natural state of humanity is ungendered, while constrained by language that was suffused with the androcentric values of its days. But the vision is clear: for the *Gospel of Mary*, the divine, transcendent Image to which the soul is to conform is non-gendered; sex and gender belong only to the lower sphere of temporary bodily existence.

As King indicates, Jesus' words in the Gospel of Thomas and Mary's in the Gospel of Mary each suggest a spiritual transformation.[106] The message in the Gospel of Thomas, however, has obviously been predominant in interpretations of the female state.[107]

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[102] De Conick, 42.
[103] Miles, 56.
[104] King, 14–15.
[105] King, 61.

Virgins are a special case since they are outside the norm and do not follow strict gender-defined rules. They are much closer to achieving Mary's vision of an ungendered "natural state" than Thomas' vision of a higher male state.[108] Virgin Martyrs do not so much 'become male' as refuse to participate in traditionally assigned roles for women. Language used to classify these women's actions and qualities is one in which those same actions and qualities are only able to belong to only one of two predefined genders. The options for accurate description are therefore limited in the hands of male hagiographers, who, as Bynum has argued, tend to use terms such as "manfully" to describe women's spiritual undertakings, while women's "self-images" are generally female or androgynous.[109] Virgin Martyrs, who opt for an unconventional and more religiously respected path than that expected of young women, are unable to be defined by 'female' terms, which tend to have negative connotations, and, therefore, are labeled with 'male' terms, which tend to have positive connotations, as the only alternative.[110]

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[106] These passages should be compared to Acts 2:17–18 and Galatians 3:28. See also Stuart G. Hall, "Women Among the Early Martyrs" in *Martyrs and Martyrologies: Papers Read at the 1992 Summer Meeting and the 1993 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society.* ed. Diana Wood. EHS. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993, 1–21 at 1.

[107] See, for example, Gopa Roy's examination of Eugenia's Latin lives in which male superiority is a main theme ("A Virgin Acts Manfully: Ælfric's *Life of St. Eugenia* and the Latin Versions" *Leeds Studies in English* 23 (1992): 2–27 at 7–12). See also Paul E. Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia" in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*. eds. Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, 146–157.

[108] Salisbury claims that Pelagia achieves such transcendence as she becomes "asexual" (103, see also 109–110). For her exploration of transvestite women reaching asexual status, see 97–110.

[109] Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 151–179, especially 165–171; and *Holy Feast,* 28, 287–290, 292–293. See also Innes-Parker, "Fragmentation and Reconstruction" 33–35.

[110] See Roy, 4–7; Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meanings" 76–78; and Bynum, 175–179. See Eusebius' accounts of Valentina and Ennatha (*Martyrs of Palestine* 8.5–8) and Blandina (*The Ecclesiastical History* 5.1). Eusebius describes Valentina as "one who, though in body a woman, was yet in the strength of mind which she possessed a man" (8.5). Once Blandina finally succumbs to torments, the last of all her companions, the Eusebius states: "even the heathens themselves acknowledged that never in their experience had a woman endured so many and terrible sufferings" (5.1.56). See also Introduction, 5–6.

Perpetua frequently appears as an example of this masculine transformation.[111] According to her own account, while imprisoned Perpetua dreams that she enters the arena to fight as a gladiator. As she is stripped before battle, however, the body revealed is not hers, but a young man's. She then proceeds to combat the devil in human form and achieves victory.[112] When she relates the vision to her companions, it is interpreted as signaling their imminent crowns of martyrdom and triumph over their oppressors.[113]

Perpetua's experience is an obvious example of a female body 'becoming male' and yet, throughout the scene, the language still designates her as decidedly female. After her transformation, the Lord Himself uses the female pronouns *hanc* and *haec* (*Perpetuæ* 10.9) for Perpetua and later calls her *Filia* (10.13). Perpetua's female identity is never abandoned, even as she experiences a complete external transformation into a male body.[114]

The physical masculinization and subsequent fight scene present in Perpetua's legend are problematic as exemplars for Virgin Martyrs.[115] Unlike Perpetua, Virgin Martyrs who engage foes in combat, such as Juliana and Margaret, tend to do so physically and in real time, not in dreams. Furthermore, these women do not transform into men in

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[111] See, for example, Castelli, "I Will Make Mary Male" 42–43.
[112] For further examination of this dream sequence, see Juliana Chapter, 155.
[113] *Perpetuæ* 10.1–15.
[114] The *LA* utilizes the same technique in lives of Pelagia (v. 2, 1035) and Theodora (v. 1, 612–613) after they have taken on male appearances. Ælfric likewise often uses female terms for Eugenia despite her male dress. See specifically the attempted seduction of the saint by Melantia (ll. 144–177). See also Horner (159–161) and Szarmach (147–151) for the gender switching in this account.
[115] Although Perpetua is often regarded as an exemplar for Virgin Martyrs, her ordeal is not a sound comparison for these women in this respect (Introduction, 8 n. 13). Her conduct does not consistently reflect Virgin Martyrs': she is not a virgin; she is not singled-out by an authority figure for her renown or beauty; she and her companion, Felicitas, are martyred in a group of men and women; she and her companions are targeted for their Christian faith (Introduction, 1–3). Although Perpetua and Felicitas receive special acknowledgment and sympathy from the crowd when their bodies are exposed (which is common in Virgin Martyr lives), Perpetua shows concern for her modesty in a very un-Virgin Martyr-like manner (Agnes Chapter, 124–130).

order to defeat their adversaries.[116] On the contrary, it is important for these women to use the female form to overcome foes, particularly when such battles double for struggles with temptation and lust.[117]

While Virgin Martyrs retain their female forms during their trials, the language surrounding these women's actions often contain 'male' words. Even the virgins themselves at times are made to utilize such terms. Agatha in the *Acta*, for example, uses the term *uiriliter* to describe herself in her final speech. She begins her prayer to the Lord: *Domine, qui me creasti, et custodisti me ab infantia mea, et fecisti me in juventute uiriliter agere* ('Lord, who created me, and guarded me from my infancy, and made me to act manfully in (my) youth' 623F).[118] In the *Katherine Vulgate*, Katherine encourages the Queen as she faces her breast mutilation: *(n)e timeas* […] *sed uiriliter age* ('fear not […] but act manfully' ll. 1013–1014). Ælfric's Euphrosyne, who is categorized as a transvestite saint, claims she desires to end her life *werlice* ('manfully' *Natale Sancte Eufrasiæ*, l. 287).[119] These terms associate strong behavior and fortitude with qualities the writers envisioned as distinctly male. The presence of masculine-labeled tendencies does not remove or necessarily undermine the woman in question's femaleness as a whole, however. This is especially the case in Virgin Martyr accounts. Despite 'male' language, even by those authors intending

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[116] For the importance of Juliana and Margaret's sex, see Juliana Chapter, 162–169.
[117] For overcoming lust and temptation, see Juliana Chapter, 170–177.
[118] Regarding this statement, Roy asserts: "Apart from the usual metaphorical meaning of acting courageously, the contrast implied here seems to be between (spiritual) youth and adulthood rather than between female and male" (4). This statement is omitted in later versions of this speech. See Ælfric (*Natale Sancte Agathe*, ll. 183–194), the *LA* (v. 1, 260), the *SEL* (*Agatha* ll. 102–106), and Bokenham (ll. 8813–8824).
[119] Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Eufrasiæ uirginis*, v. 2, 334–355. This is hereafter referred to as *Natale Sancte Eufrasiæ*.

masculinization, legends of Virgin Martyrs do not permit the interpretation of a gender shift simply by nature of the virgins' objectives and the narrative highlights of the legends themselves.[120]

The use of male language and imagery has found particular interest in transvestite saints. Cross-dressing saints through the shedding or hiding of their external feminine attributes are often incorrectly assumed to have abandoned their internal feminine qualities as well.[121] Concerning the life of Pelagia, a transvestite saint, Burrus remarks "the Life is not successful in suppressing the femaleness of its subject, but it is also not entirely successful in promoting a sheerly female model of holiness."[122] As Bynum has noted, women tended to use such outward tactics as a means to an end, not as an indication of an internal gender-alteration.[123] Legends of women such as Thecla, Pelagia, Theodora, Eugenia, and Euphrosyne, who disguise themselves as men, often monks, to preserve their virginity or to live a life of holiness, often appear in these discussions.[124] The later legend of Christina of Markyate (c. 1098–c. 1155 AD) reports the heroine as behaving in a similar manner when she dresses as a man to escape marriage before fleeing to a religious

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[120] See Patricia Cox Miller's argument that transvestite saints' femaleness is also highlighted ("Is There a Harlot in This Text? Hagiography and the Grotesque" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (Fall 2003): 419–435 at 428–430).
[121] Jane Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, ca. 500–1100*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 155–156.
[122] Burrus, *Sex Lives of Saints*, 146.
[123] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 291–292. Salisbury asserts, however, that Pelagia's transvestism did not have a masculinizing effect, but rather eradicated gender as a consideration. "She did not dress as a man to become a man, with a man's frailties and desires. By dressing as a man she not only transcended her own gender, she transcended both genders. She was an asexual eunuch for Christ" (103). See also Miller, "Is There a Harlot in This Text?" 423–425 and 427.
[124] For Thecla, see *Thecla* 25 and 40. See the *LA* for Pelagia (v. 2, 1033–1035), Theodora (v. 1, 611–615), and Eugenia (v. 2, 925–929). For Eugenia, see also Aldhelm (*DV*, 296–298 and *CDV*, ll. 1883–1924) and Ælfric (*Natale Sancte Eugenie uirginis*, v. 1, 24–51), which is hereafter referred to as *Natale Sancte Eugenie*. For Euphrosyne, see above 60 n. 122.

sanctuary.[125] Some of these women even assert desires to become brides of Christ, retaining female language and imagery to voice their spiritual objectives.[126]

Although these women's *vitæ* and *passiones* present their decisions to dress as men in a positive light, Jane Schulenburg addresses the negative depiction of transvestite women in male saints' lives.

> In these instances they adopted a male appearance in order to defy gender-based discriminatory policies and to participate in space and activities traditionally off limits to women. However, in these cases this virile behavior was not viewed favorably; rather, these women were seen as 'deviant' and won swift punishment for their 'deceptive' and transgressive acts.[127]

To exemplify this, Shulenburg uses the legend of Saint Calais in which a woman who enters a monastery dressed as a man is punished with blindness and a flow of blood from her breast.[128] Just as milk flowing from virgin breasts and holy bodies is a sign of sanctity, an unexpected flow of blood and instant blindness is a sign of sinfulness.[129]

Belief in the necessity of 'becoming male' has been applied to female saints who suffer not only spiritual struggles, but also severe physical afflictions, particularly those upon feminine attributes. Allen Frantzen asserts that when Agatha's breast is removed, "she has transcended the female body and become, however briefly, like a man."[130] The

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[125] *The life of Christina of Markyate: A T*welfth *Century Recluse*, ed. and trans. Charles H. Talbot. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, 88.32–92.33. All references are to page numbers and chapters. Her life further mirrors that of a Virgin Martyr as she escapes rape on her wedding night (50.10–54.12).
[126] Ælfric's Euphrosyne legend includes such imagery (*Natale Sancte Eufrasiæ*, ll. 76–83 and 313).
[127] Schulenburg, 161. See also Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meaning" 75–76.
[128] Schulenburg, 161–162. For Calais' *uita*, see *De S. Carilefo*, *AASS* Jul. 1, 80–88. This scene appears at 87C–E.
[129] For sudden blindness in saints' lives, see Agnes Chapter, 103–104 and 112–113; and Katherine Chapter, 255–258. For milk's implications, see Katherine Chapter, 237–243.
[130] Allen J. Frantzen, "When Women Aren't Enough" *Speculum* 68.2 (Apr. 1993): 445–471 at 462. Horner uses this passage from Frantzen to a similar end (148). Frantzen also likens Agatha's removed and later restored breast to Eugenia's hidden and later revealed breast (463). See also Miles, 53–77; Winstead,

female saint who is supposedly masculinized through disfigurement flourishes in her newfound higher male state.[131] Phillips argues against 'becoming male' in Virgin Martyr lives while examining the appearance of these saints:

> The conventional beauty of the virgin martyrs is significant as it demonstrates that these saints were not meant to be conceived of in sexually neutral terms, nor through their virginity they had 'become men'. Not only are they represented in uncompromisingly female form, they fit the image of the desirable ideal, and although their physical perfection was probably intended to mirror their spiritual eminence it is significant that they were made to resemble young courtly beauties, rather than stately older women.[132]

In addition to the traditional beauty of Virgin Martyrs, the basic narrative structure of these women's legends rejects the possibility of masculinization. From the outset of the sexualized plot, the legends focus upon these women's femaleness.

While, as Frantzen asserts, female saints who lose their breasts are sometimes interpreted as physically shedding their feminine attributes to achieve a higher maleness, for Virgin Martyrs who suffer this amputation, this is not the case. Agatha's tradition, in particular, combats the notion of 'becoming male' even when the saint is breast-less. Through Agatha's own focus on her breasts, physical and spiritual, her legend continually maintains concentration on its subject's femaleness.

Virgin Martyrs, 12; and Easton, "Saint Agatha" 102–104. For the healing of saints' marred bodies, see below 71–84.

[131] Frantzen, 464–465 and 466–467.

[132] Phillips, 47–49. See also Ashton, 151–153.

Agatha's Breast and 'Becoming Male'

Ælfric's account especially concerns itself with symbolic references to Agatha's breast.[133] This version uses the female form and, more specifically, Agatha's breast as plot devices around which to structure the narrative. In the opening brothel scene, the female body engaging in sexual acts is immediately presented as the least worthy of emulation and most worthy of scorn. The point is made even clearer by the presence of Aphrodisia's *nahtlice* daughters, who represent sinful offspring begotten from sinful acts. Later, once Quintianus has ordered Agatha's breast amputation, the saint acknowledges the physical importance of breasts as sources of nourishment. Her statement concerning the conventional maternal role does not appear as one of contempt, but rather as one of affection and esteem.[134] She quickly, however, changes focus from her praise of physical motherhood to the more important spiritual motherhood. With this swift transition, Ælfric undermines the traditional life-giving function of breasts as he earlier undermined the possible benefits of sexual relations. During the imprisonment following her amputation, attention is again drawn to the female form as her breast wounds are treated. Once her body is healed, it is understood, however, that restoration takes place, not to

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[133] Several observations of Ælfric's treatment of Agatha's breast in this section are also mentioned by Marianne Alicia Malo Chenard, *Narratives of the Saintly Body in Anglo-Saxon England*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2003, 197–221. See http://etd.nd.edu/ETD-db/theses/available/etd-12022003-012945/. Despite the differences in Ælfric's telling of Agatha's legend, Lapidge notes that "it would have been no compliment to tell (Ælfric) that his hagiography imparted individual characteristics to individual saints. On the contrary, Ælfric would wish his saints to be seen merely as vessels of God's divine design on earth, indistinguishable as such one from the other" ("The Saintly Life" 261).

[134] Compare this with thirteenth-century painful and unappealing depiction of motherhood in *Hali Meiðhad* (17, l.23–19, l. 25). For rejection of mothers, see Juliana Chapter, 192–195.

return her beauty for the benefit of male lust or even for the earlier, albeit brief, praise of physical motherhood, but to evidence God's power.

When a saint's breasts are attacked, the aggressor assaults not only the site of maternal and spiritual nourishment, but also that of female sexuality. Although Agatha shows no embarrassment while she is publicly stripped and assaulted, her reactions in the privacy of her prison cell reveal her awareness of the sexual impact of the torture.[135] As Agatha is visited by a heavenly figure while in her cell, she is very conscious of her marred female form. Once the old man, Saint Peter, moves to heal her and instructs her not to be ashamed, Agatha replies (*Acta*, 622F–623A):[136]

> Et quæ potest verecundia mea circa te esse, cum tu sis senior et major natu? Ego vero licet puella sim, ita totum corpus meum laceratum est, ut vulnera ipsa non permittant aliquid stimulari in mente mea, unde possit verecundia excitari.
>
> [And why should I have embarrassment around you, when you are rather aged and older? Although certainly I am a girl, my entire body is so lacerated, that my wounds do not permit that something be stimulated in my mind, from which my embarrassment should be aroused.]

Agatha makes a similar pronouncement in the *Legenda aurea* (v. 1, 259):

> "Et unde uerecundari possum, cum tu sis senex et grandeuus, ego uero ita crudeliter lacerata quod nemo de me posset concipere uoluptatem?"
>
> [And why should I be ashamed, since you are aged and very old, (and) moreover I am cruelly lacerated thus, so that no one could conceive of pleasure from me?]

Bokenham also includes this acknowledgement by Agatha (ll. 8673–8680).

> 'Nay, nay, syre,' quod Agas, 'certeynly
> No thhyng a-shamyd of you am y,
> Ner aferd, for syth fer stopyn in age (8675)
> Ye been, as semyth by your vysage,
> And, on þat oþir syde, wyth greth torment

[135] For Virgin Martyrs' reactions to their exposed bodies, see Agnes Chapter, 124–130.
[136] Malo Chenard interprets Agatha's behavior in this scene as fear of rape (210–211).

So woundyd I am & so al to-rent,
That on no wyse, as yt semyth be me,
No man of lust myht tempyd be; (8680)

['No, no, sir,' Agatha said, 'certainly
I am not ashamed of anything before you,
Nor afraid, for truth you are very old in age
As seems by your face, and, on the other hand
I am so wounded and completely rent
With great torment that, as it seems,
No one in any way, no man might be tempted
Toward lust by me.]

These statements support her previous unaffected demeanor while adding another plainly feminine earthly dimension as well. On the one hand, Agatha perceives no logical reason to be ashamed of her condition. On the other hand, she is highly aware of her diminished sexual appeal. Agatha's speech to Peter affirms her lack of awkwardness concerning her bare and mutilated body. It also betrays a possible regret over her lost breast. The sorrow over her mutilated breast is most evident in Ælfric's account, which does not contain this detailed exchange with Peter.[137]

There is a sense of attachment and loss in Agatha's accounts that is rarely present in most torture scenes, even breast amputation scenes. Agatha does not scorn her female anatomy, instead she herself proclaims its admirable potential even as her breast is being attacked. The joy Ælfric's Agatha in particular exhibits when her breast is returned appears as more than the traditional rejoicing at the power of God.[138] Agatha seems thankful not only to be healed as a sign of God's preference and love, but also to be given back a part of

[137] The *SEL* includes this scene, but the exchange is brief and does not reference the loss of sexual appeal (*Agatha*, ll. 70–80).
[138] Roy notes Ælfric's Eugenia account is "written in a tradition more sympathetic towards women" (2, see also 14–20), which also appears to hold true for Agatha's account.

herself that has played such a crucial role throughout the narrative.[139] There is a sense of wholeness resulting from and of appreciation for this restoration in Agatha's reaction that is atypical in these lives.

When saints are healed after a series of torments, they generally give thanks and praise to God and then present their rejuvenated bodies to their tormentors. The saints do not, usually, inspect and focus intently on any specific restored attribute. Although the healing of Agatha's breast is always mentioned, the saint's reaction to the reparation of that particular body part is not related. In the *Acta*, Agatha *respiciens* ('looking at' 623A) her body as a whole finds all of her wounds healed. At the end of this scene is the statement: *nam et restaurata erat mamilla ejus* ('yes, and even her breast was restored' 623A).[140] This highlights the miraculousness of the healing scene, but not Agatha's actions regarding the restoration. The *Legenda aurea* also presents the healing of her breast as second to the healing of her body overall. Agatha *inuenit se undique sanatam et mamillam suo pectori restitutam* ('found herself healed in every respect and the breast resorted to her chest' v. 1, 259). Bokenham makes a similar statement to this as well.[141] There is no moment of direct focus on her restored breast in the *South English Legendary*, however. Even in

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[139] Agatha's differs drastically from Bokenham's Christina, who rejoices at her breasts' *removal* (ll. 3020–3023). Delany remarks on the reasons for Christina's rejoicing: "The martyr is grateful also because the breast is a source of pleasure, both aesthetic and erotic, for me, and so it inserts that bearer into the whole social complex of erotic and reproductive relations as subject of gaze, action, and appropriation" (113).
[140] Agatha also calls attention to her breast in her post-healing speech to Quintianus in the *Acta* (623F). Ælfric's Agatha does this as well (*Natale Sancte Agathe*, l. 161). Other sources simply mention her general healing, not her breast specifically (*LA* v. 1, 259 and Bokenham, ll. 8758–8759). Agatha does not mention her healing to Quintianus in the *SEL*.
[141] Bokenham, ll. 8705–8711.

accounts in which Agatha inspects or realizes her cured body, the saint does not gaze down deliberately at her breast.

Ælfric's Agatha, however, does. Ælfric reverses the order of realization as the saint considers her restored body. Agatha *beseah to hyre breost / and wæs þæt corfene breost þurh crist ge-edstaðelod* ('looked at her breast / and the breast that was cut off, was restored through Christ' *Natale Sancte Agathe*, ll. 144b–145). Only after her breast's cure is assured does she note *and ealle hire wunda wurdon gehælede* ('and all her wounds were healed' l. 146). The bond Agatha has with her breast as presented in Ælfric's work is separate from that seen in the other texts. Furthermore, Ælfric does not include a speech regarding her diminished sexual appeal, so there is no risk of being misled by her appreciation for her restored wholeness. Although it is unusual in these accounts to have such emotion hinge on the presence or lack of a body part, in Ælfric's work, this one body part has been given too much symbolic importance to become one-dimensional at the end of Agatha's *passio*.

In analyzing Ælfric's *Natale Sancte Agathe*, Shari Horner expresses the inseparable connection of Agatha and her breast as well as the gendering nature of this connection.

> [R]ather than enabling her to "transcend" her gender, the text insists upon Agatha's female body, does not permit us to forget that body as the object of physical violence. Agatha's breast, even as lack, draws attention to itself, and thus although she may be "breastless," Agatha can never be fully masculinized. She is always associated with the female breast (this is likewise true in the iconography) even when—especially when—hers is missing.[142]

[142] Horner, 148.

This appropriately recognized and enduring association of Agatha with her breast emphasizes her female body.[143] At no time is Agatha separated from her breast, mutilated or not. Although her physical breast is restored, her spiritual breasts, albeit virginal, are understood to continue as sources of nourishment.[144]

Agatha, as a Virgin Martyr, performs the maternal role with her virginal spiritual breasts and simultaneously achieves her martyrdom objective. Physical mothers, however, often abandon maternal acts in order to achieve martyrdom. Perpetua, as a young mother with lactating breasts, however, is not able to be at once both nourishing mother and martyr.[145] In this sense, Perpetua's breasts, which cease inflammation and lactation upon her death sentence, appear less maternal than Agatha's amputated and unsuckled breast.[146] Both Perpetua and Felicitas turn away their infants while still in the breast-feeding stages for the opportunity of martyrdom.[147] This joyous and symbolic loss of a functioning breast

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[143] Ælfric also emphasizes Eugenia's femaleness through her breast. Roy's article shows that the Latin work closest to Ælfric's source for Eugenia's legend, the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, does not mention her breast when she finally exposes herself as a woman (2 and 8–9). The Latin asserts that once Eugenia tears her tunic *apparuit femina* ('a woman appeared' Roy, 8). Ælfric's corresponding statement, however, specifically mentions Eugenia *æt-æwde hyre breost* ('displayed her breast' *Natale Sancte Eugenie*, l. 234). Roy's article also shows that Mombritius' version, which is similar to the Cotton-Corpus Legendary's, mentions Eugenia's breast in this context (11). For Mombritius' Eugenia account, see *Passio Sanctorum Prothi et Hiacynthi Martyrum* in v. 2, 391–397. Eugenia exposes her breast at 395, ll. 23–24.
[144] See above 48–55.
[145] Perpetua's breasts play an important and recurring roll in her *passio*, see Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 28–32.
[146] Castelli interprets this as progression toward Perpetua's transformation into a man ("I Will Make Mary Male" 35).
[147] *Perpetuæ* 6.8. This is not to imply that these women did not care for their infants. Perpetua expresses great love for her son and anguish over his fate. She even keeps the child with her in prison for a time in order to breastfeed him and rejoices at his presence (3.6–9 and 5.1–6.8). Perpetua's later legend in the *LA*, however, relates her forcibly casting her son aside and rejecting her family (v. 2, 1217). The account in the *LA* of Saints Quircus (also known as Saint Cyr) and Julitta, his mother, arguably present Christian maternal instinct as inverted infanticide. When three-year-old Quircus plummets to his death, having been thrown by their persecutor, Julitta rejoices in his preceding her arrival in heaven (v. 1, 533).

has a much more masculinizing tone than that of Agatha's actual loss of a virginal breast.[148] Agatha uses her spiritual breasts to imitate for her spiritual children what I Peter promises Christ will provide the faithful (2:2–3):[149]

> sicut modo geniti infantes rationale sine dolo lac concupiscite ut in eo
> crescatis in salutem
> si gustastis quoniam dulcis Dominus
>
> [As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby
> you may grow unto salvation:
> If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet.]

Whereas Perpetua and Felicitas rejoice at freedom from physical confines of motherhood and their sucklings, Agatha looks forward to rearing children on her spiritual breasts.

Agatha, like most Virgin Martyrs, not only has attention drawn to her body and sexuality by her persecutors' actions, but also by her own actions and speeches. Virgin Martyrs, tortured on account of their femininity, suffer and ultimately rejoice in their female form. Like their tormentors, they too deliberately keep attention on their femininity.[150] In doing so, they maintain control of the situation and their bodies. They choose to suffer for the same reason they choose to remain virgins: devotion to Christ. Whether these women are simply chaste for His sake or aim to become His lovers and brides, as a result the saints take on symbolically female roles. If forced to abandon their sexuality and female forms and 'become male' in order to prevail, their battles are

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[148] For rejection by mothers in the legends of Virgin Martyrs, see Juliana Chapter, 192–195. For milk's significance, see Katherine Chapter, 237–243.
[149] Ælfric's Agatha, whose spiritual breasts 'feed her knowledge' as well as her spiritual children's also reflects Paul's assertion in Romans: *nam prudentia carnis mors prudentia autem Spiritus vita et pax* ('For the wisdom of the flesh is death: but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace' 8:6). See Agatha's speech above 49. For further use of Romans 8, see Conclusion 261–262.
[150] For example, see Agnes' speech in Agnes Chapter, 94–96.

effectively lost.[151] These battles are waged over the contours of the chaste Christian female body, at any time to surrender that body would be to submit and concede to the sinful pagan male authority. It is crucial that their resistance be a female one, since only in that form, the coveted, mangled, and defiant form, will their true victory be achieved.

Although these women do not gain complete victory over their assailants until they receive their crown of martyrdom, some of these saints have wounded bodies completely healed prior to their final struggle. As with any miracle, the healing of injured holy bodies bears witness to the power of God. There is a tendency in Virgin Martyr legends, however, to mend the women's bodies entirely, thereby returning them to their original or, at times, greater beauty. These whole and healed bodies are then revealed to assailants before the women suffer the last penalties for love of their heavenly bridegroom.

Heavenly Healing

Celestial figures often make appearances in Biblical accounts and saints' lives. These figures bring news and warnings, and send both spiritual and physical guidance.[152] The visitation presented in Agatha's legend, however, is one of aid. When saints suffer imprisonment, as Agatha does following her breast amputation, heavenly figures often appear providing help usually in the form of healing or nourishment.

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[151] See Bynum *Holy Feast* (279 and 284–290) for women's understanding of salvation and the importance of being female.
[152] The Annunciation is the obvious example (Luke 1:26–38). The hermit Adrian's visitation to Katherine is compared to Gabriel's appearance to Mary (Katherine Chapter, 259).

Agatha's legend usually identifies the visitor as Saint Peter.[153] Bede, who does not mention Peter, claims her healing occurs *a Domino* ('by the Lord').[154] This statement is in accordance with Agatha's reply to Quintianus when he asks who healed her as she consistently attributes her curing to the Lord.[155] Peter is appropriate for the position of Christ's representative as he himself was visited and received aid in prison. The Acts of the Apostles reports that when the apostles (including Peter) are arrested and imprisoned, an *angelus* […] *Domini* ('angel of the Lord' 5:19) comes to them by night and frees them.[156] Peter is later arrested on his own and again is freed and led out of prison by an angel (12:7).[157] Peter's actions within Agatha's cell are also fitting as he performs numerous healings throughout Acts. Peter heals a lame man (3:1–10) and his shadow restores those upon whom it falls (5:12–16). He also cures a paralyzed man (9:32–35) and raises the widow Tabitha from the dead (9:36–42).[158]

Peter's later tradition continues to associate him with healing powers. According to the *Legenda aurea*, Peter appears to a crippled woman in a vision and directs her to obtaining her cure.[159] He also visits a devout woman in a monastery who has *cancri ulcere in mammilla* ('cancerous ulcer in the breast' v. 1, 574). He does not cure her, but brings her comfort promising that all her sins are forgiven and that her wish of dying with another one

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[153] Aldhelm does not mention her healing in either *DV* or *CDV*.
[154] Bede, *Martryologium*, Col. 8035A.
[155] The *SEL* names God (*Agatha*, ll. 86). The *Acta* (623E–D), Ælfric (*Natale Sancte Agathe*, l. 163), the *LA* (v. 1, 259), and Bokenham (ll. 8762–8765) all name Christ.
[156] For the entire scene, see Acts 5:17–23.
[157] See Acts 12:4–10.
[158] For the motif of raising the dead, see Agnes Chapter, 141–149.
[159] *LA* v. 1, 573.

of the sisters at the monastery will be granted.[160] A young girl, Balbina, with a goiter is healed instantly when she kisses the chains that once held Peter.[161] Peter's legacy of giving and receiving miraculous aid indicates his credential as a heavenly healer.

Peter's visitation appears as early as Damasus' fourth-century hymn, written during a period in which, as Peter Brown has shown, patron saints began to have preference over angels in the role of intercessor.[162] Damasus reports that *Pastor* […] *Petrus* appears to the mutilated and imprisoned Agatha and *ovem* […] *hanc recreat* ('restores this sheep' l. 14).[163] Ælfric, following the narrative structure of the *Acta*, depicts this healing during Agatha's second imprisonment. Quintianus demands that she be deprived of food, drink, and care for her wounds; however, a *læce* ('leech' l. 134) in the form of a *harwencge mann* ('hoar-haired man' l. 131) comes to heal her in the middle of the night. When he first appears to Agatha, she refuses his healing power, claiming that if Christ wished to heal her, He would.[164] Once convinced that Christ sent him for that reason, she permits him to restore her breast, her body, and, presumably, her former beauty.[165]

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[160] *LA* v. 1, 574.
[161] *LA* v. 2, 704. This healing also appears in *De Sancta Theodora, Martyre Romæ* (*AASS* Apr. I, 5–6 at 5) and in *De S. Alexandro Papa Martyre* (*AASS* Mai. I, 375–380 at 378C).
[162] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 60–62.
[163] Damasus, *Carmen 30* (*Pastor ovem Petrus hanc recreat*). Isidore's first hymn attributes her healing to Christ (601E), but the second hymn claims a *cœlis Angelica cura* ('Angelic cure from heaven' 602B) restores her. See Appendix A for her visitor's identity.
[164] *Ancrene Wisse* includes this scene within instructions to avoid being concerned with and distracted by minor bodily ailments (6.265–268).
[165] See Appendix A for works including the imprisonment and healing scene.

Similar visitation scenes appear in the legends of Eugenia, Anastasia, Euphemia, and Katherine.[166] Ælfric reports that after Eugenia survives a burning oven, which immediately and miraculously cools upon her entrance, the emperor commands that she be sent to a dark prison for twenty days without any sustenance or exposure to light. During this punishment *se hælend* ('the Savior' l. 403) appears bringing nourishing bread and heavenly light with Him. *Se hælend* also informs her that she will be with Him in heaven on the day of His birth. As promised, in a swift progression of events over the next two lines, the Nativity arrives and the executioner *acwealde* ('killed' l. 413) her. The imprisonment and swift death scenes appear far less dramatic and anticlimactic than Agatha's healing. Since Eugenia is killed while still imprisoned, her restored form is not displayed to her tormentors. The saint, however, returns to her mother *on gastlicre gesihðe* ('in a ghostly appearance' l. 417) and describes her new position in heaven. This visitation allows her mother to bear witness to Eugenia's sanctity.[167]

In the *Legenda aurea*, Anastasia endures several hardships before being imprisoned with the intention of death by starvation. While in prison, she receives heavenly visitations from Saint Theodora who feeds her for two months.[168] This is a fitting miracle since prior

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[166] Eugenia (Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Eugenie*, ll. 400–411; and *LA* v. 2, 928). See the *LA*, for Anastasia (v. 1, 77), Euphemia (v. 2, 953), and Katherine (v. 2, 1209).
[167] The *LA* relates all these happenings (v. 2, 928). Aldhelm's Eugenia accounts do not include these scenes, however. A similar visitation to parents appears in Agnes' tradition, see Agnes Chapter 117–118. For other examples of supportive parents in Virgin Martyrs' lives, see Juliana Chapter 190–193.
[168] It is unlikely that this Theodora is the transvestite Theodora mentioned above, but rather possibly Saint Theodora of Rome, sister of Saint Hermes whose legend includes the curing of Balbina (above 73). Once Hermes is martyred, Theodora buries his remains (*AASS* Apr. 1, 5–6). This compassionate act may designate her as an appropriate saint to perform acts of mercy for the imprisoned.

to her incarceration Anastasia provided similar treatment to imprisoned Christians.[169] Euphemia is likewise imprisoned and denied food for seven days, but is fed by an angel for the duration.[170] Katherine also receives heavenly aid during her confinement. Throughout the twelve-day imprisonment intended for her starvation, in a manner similar to Peter's healing of Agatha, angels appear to Katherine and treat her wounds. A dove sent from Christ also comes to Katherine bearing heavenly nourishment.[171]

Bokenham's rendition of Dorothy's martyrdom relates that the saint receives several miraculous healings. She is first fed by angels for nine days while imprisoned.[172] Following her incarceration, Bokenham states: *And hir beute was dyscrecyd ryht nouht / But rather encrecyd more & more* ('And her beauty was not decreased at all / But rather increased more and more' ll. 4801–4802). Dorothy next suffers a terrible series of punishments, the language of which echoes that in Agatha's breast amputation scene (ll. 4834–4840).

> But on a iebet and vpward hyr feet,
> Dorothye þei heng ful horrybylly,
> And wyth yerdys & skourgys hir body beet,
> And wyth hokys of yren hyr flesh cruelly
> They al to-rent, & hyr pappys vnpetously
> Wyth feerbrondys brent, & aftyr hyr dounn
> Half-deed takyn þei shettyn in presounn.
>
> [But they hung Dorothy very horribly
> On a gibbet with her feet upwards,
> And beat her body with rods and scourges,

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[169] Anastasia's husband confines her as a punishment for her compassionate behavior (*LA* v. 1, 75). Aldhelm's prose and poetic entries on Chionia, Yrene, and Agape presents these women as imprisoned Christians to whom Anastasia brings nourishment (*DV*, 305 and *CDV*, ll. 2210–2217). The *LA* names the women as Anastasia's serving maids, not those to whom she gives aid (v. 1, 75). The spellings of these women's names that are found in the *LA* are used. The Greek legend of Chionia, Yrene, and Agape, *The Martyrdom of Saints Agapê, Irenê, and Chionê at Saloniki*, which does not include Anastasia and is quite different from the later legends of these women, appears in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 280–293.
[170] *LA* v. 2, 953.
[171] *LA* v. 2, 1209. Bokenham also includes this scene in his Katherine legend (Katherine Chapter, 228). See Appendix D.
[172] Bokenham, ll. 4794–4798.

> And cruelly and completely rent her flesh
> With iron hooks, and unpiteously burned
> Her breasts with firebrands, and after they had
> Taken her down half-dead, they shut her in prison.]

Dorothy's complete and miraculous healing after this battery also recalls Agatha's account. When Dorothy emerges the following day, *(n)eythir spote ne hurt in hyr ded appere* ('neither spot nor injury appeared on her' l. 4843). Dorothy's third and final healing occurs after her *face beuteuous* ('beautiful face' l. 4878) is beaten beyond recognition with wooden staffs and large bats. Again the virgin is imprisoned and again she comes out unharmed: *As hool she was as she had ryht nouht / Syffryd beforn of peynys sothly* ('She was as whole as though she had not / Suffered before from great pains' ll. 4885–4886). Although Dorothy's account gives more attention to the result of the visitation than to the visitations themselves, she experiences extensive healing at the hands of her celestial visitors.

These women, like Agatha, are preparing for their ultimate act of love for Christ, their martyrdoms. Readiness for this event requires spiritual and physical purification. When Virgin Martyrs endure their purifying processes, their bodies are rent and punished in various ways, yet their souls are understood to be fixed on Christ and His will throughout the ordeals.[173] Although Agatha may desire the restoration of her breast, she will not seek it because the suffering was done for Christ's sake. It is not her place to choose what

[173] See Aphrodisia's speeches above 31–32. See also 32 n. 29 for Agatha's speech to Aphrodisia.

happens to her body since it is completely at His mercy and service.[174] Christ, however, wishes for Agatha's body to be made whole again, prior to her final series of torments.[175]

These healing and nourishment scenes occur frequently in martyrdom accounts. Even more frequent in Virgin Martyr legends are preservations from pain or torment. Although some saints like Agatha and Dorothy endure their penalties and consequent sufferings, other saints such as Christina, Katherine, and Euphemia are repeatedly either rescued from dangers or their methods or torment are rendered harmless.[176] In these situations, as with those women who are healed after their bodies are beaten or torn, the initial female body, which, in the case of Virgin Martyrs, is lovely and desirable, is the body that enters the final stage of martyrdom.[177] That preserved or restored form is what is ultimately sacrificed in most of these legends. It is renewed to perfection so it will be the perfect unblemished sacrifice. Christ takes His spiritually unblemished brides to Himself in this physically unblemished form.

As is seen in Peter's tradition, receiving celestial visitation is not a gender-specific miracle. The Old Testament Daniel is spared from mauling and death in the lions' den when an angel *conclusit ora leonum* ('shut up the mouths of the lions' Daniel 6:22). Saint Quentin, like Peter, is freed from prison by an angel.[178] The *Legenda aurea* reports that the bonds placed on the child saint, Vitus, and his tutor, Modestus, *subito ferri moles que eius*

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[174] Agatha even refuses to leave prison when the guards flee, terrified of the light from her cell when Peter visits her. She insists on awaiting her final torments and martyrdom. See Appendix A.
[175] Bynum notes de Voragine's preference for his saints to culminate their accounts 'intact' or 'whole' (*Resurrection*, 310–317; and *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 290–294).
[176] Christina (*Christinæ*, 524–528; and *LA* v. 1, 646–649). Katherine (*LA* v. 2, 1205–1215) and Euphemia (*LA* v. 2, 951–954).
[177] For depictions of these women's beauty, see Katherine Chapter, 221–224.
[178] *LA* v. 2, 1088.

erat imposita cecidit et carcer immenso lumine coruscauit ('suddenly the mass of iron which was placed on him fell off, and the prison flashed with radiant light' v. 1, 531). Saint Apollonius was freed from prison in the middle of the night by an angel.[179] Saint Remigius' legend in the *Legenda aurea* includes an angel who attempts to free a bishop from his cell where he had been repenting his sins. The angel informs the bishop that he has received forgiveness; however, the bishop refuses to leave his cell until Remigius, who had placed him there seven years prior, gives his approval. Remigius, reprimanded by the angel, obliges.[180] Saint Secundus' tradition relates several trips in and out of prison with an angelic guide. An angel leads two Christians from prison to meet and baptize the saint. Then Secundus is led into prison by an angel to bring *corpus et sanguinem domini* ('the body and blood of the Lord' v. 1, 371) to a Christian. However, when Secundus himself is imprisoned, an angel escorts him from one prison to another. In the second prison he shares a cell with another Christian who had the *Saluator* ('Savior') with him.[181]

Healing by these visitors is also not gender-specific. Men's cures do not seem to occur in prison as frequently as women's, however. The Old Testament reports an angel feeds the prophet Elijah twice while he is in the wilderness.[182] While Saint Anthony resides in a tomb, demons rent his body so badly that those who saw him thought him dead. Christ then appears and heals him completely.[183] Secundus receives a miraculous healing

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[179] Aldhelm, *DV*, 288.
[180] *LA* v. 1, 144–145.
[181] *LA* v. 1, 371–372. For saints miraculously being freed from prison, see Hahn, 73–78.
[182] 3 Kings 19:4–8. In NRSV, 3 Kings is 1 Kings.
[183] *LA* v. 1, 155–156.

immediately after his extensive torment on the rack and then is sent directly to prison.[184] An unusually grisly healing appears in the *Legenda aurea*'s account of Saints Cosmas and Damian. When cancer devours a devout Christian man's leg, the two come to him while he is sleeping. Bringing with them *unguenta ac ferramenta* ('ointments and instruments' v. 2, 980), they cut off the man's cancer-ridden leg and replace it with the leg of a recently buried *Ethiops*. The ill man awakes to a perfectly intact and healthy leg.[185] Miraculously healed male bodies do not, however, have the same dramatic effect as similarly treated female bodies, which, after being tormented and enclosed, emerge whole and beautiful once more.[186]

As these accounts illustrate, saints often rely on each other and celestial beings for instruction, guidance, and aid. Miraculous or visionary interaction with a deceased saint usually indicates the holiness of the man or woman receiving the visitation.[187] Agatha is not only the recipient of such an honor, but she also bestows it upon another saint, thereby taking part in this spiritual mentoring process. As Peter appears to Agatha and heals her, so Agatha appears to her sister-saint, Lucy, and performs a healing miracle. Agatha's brief, but important presence in Lucy's *passio* lends support and validation to the later saint's holiness just as Peter's appearance does for Agatha's.

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[184] *LA* v. 1, 372.
[185] *LA* v. 2, 980–981. Aldhelm mentions their history of healing in life (*DV*, 275–276 and *CDV*, ll. 1079–1094).
[186] The man with cancer is an exception to this since sleep acts as a kind of enclosure in his case. However, he does not suffer martyrdom, but is rather a witness to the saints' holiness.
[187] See above 72–73.

Agatha's early status and strength as a Virgin Martyr is demonstrated by the dependence of Lucy's tradition on the earlier saint's reputation. The inclusion of Agatha in Lucy's legend promotes the newer saint's status as well as presents an example of the intimate and dependent relationship believed to be possible between Christians and deceased saints. Peter Brown discusses the increased appeal of saints as 'invisible companions' during the late fourth century and the rise of such connections.[188] Brown highlights Augustine's presentation of this relationship while elucidating the attraction of bonds with saints over the more traditional ones with angels:

> The cult of the martyrs, therefore, presented a paradox that enabled Augustine to invert the traditional hierarchy of the universe. Men who had shown themselves, as martyrs, to be true servants of God, could bind their fellow men even closer to God than could the angels. For belief in ministrations of angels, even of those most obedient to God's will, had tended to place a cliff face of beings of a different order from themselves between the human race and God. This ancient sense of difference was the corollary, in the chain of mediation between God and man, of the fault that ran through the universe, separating the stars from the earth. Only the martyrs, heavy with the humility of human death, could bridge that fault.[189]

Lucy's encounters with Agatha, unlike those of saints who interact with their guardian angels, are depicted as particularly personal, even familial.[190] Martyred in 304 AD, Lucy, like Agatha, has an early and substantiated enough cult to earn her inclusion in the Canon

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[188] Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 55–60. Brown, using Paulinus of Nola's self-described relationship with Saint Felix as an example, explores the close ties able to be fostered with a deceased saint, portraying such ties as those of patronage and support.
[189] Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 60–61.
[190] For interactions with guardian angels, see Agnes Chapter, 112–114 and 139–141; and Katherine Chapter 212–213. Exchanges between saints and angels in these lives tend to be minimal in comparison to those between saints, such as Agatha and Lucy.

of the Mass.[191] Lucy, nevertheless, relies on Agatha's fame and reputability to support and promote her status.

Lucy's legend traditionally begins with a journey to Agatha's tomb at which Lucy and her mother pray for a cure.[192] The illness, in this case, is not Lucy's, but her mother's.[193] Agatha quickly answers Lucy's prayers, often in a vision, and assures the restored health of her mother.[194] Through this act, Agatha evidences her power not only as a healing saint, but also as somewhat of a salvatrix since she frees Lucy from worldly constraints. Lucy has, as it were, been granted a new beginning, a new life. Brown claims Paulinus' relationship with Felix provides a similar reward: "In a way, Paulinus was born with Felix; and by baptism and ascetic withdrawal, he has been 'reborn' with Felix."[195] As evidence of this new life, Lucy's mother, now cured, releases the saint from her planned marriage and allows her to give away her dowry to the poor.[196] Lucy informs her betrothed

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[191] Farmer, 328.

[192] A similar legend appears within Agnes' tradition. Constantia, Constantine's daughter, plagued by sores, prays for healing at Agnes' tomb and falls asleep. Agnes appears in a vision to Constantia and tells her that she will be healed if she believes in Christ. Constantia awakens completely healed and devotes herself to God. See Appendix B for Agnes' accounts containing this scene.

[193] Delany notes Bokenham's increased detail and length employed in describing Lucy's mother's illness. She claims "(i)t is truly a purple passage that invokes the top medical authorities" (115). Immediately preceding this statement is a segment on the fetishization of dismembered bodies, which discusses later medieval interest in anatomy and dismemberment (110–115). For the rise in appeal of fragmented bodies, in both the religious and medical sense, see Bynum, *Fragmentation*, 270–272.

[194] Later versions tend to report Lucy's having a vision while sleeping at Agatha's tomb. See Ælfric (*De Sancta Lucia,* ll. 22–24), the *SEL* (*Seinte Lucie þe holi maide*, ll. 37–38), the *LA* (v. 1, 49–50), and Bokenham (ll. 9058–9060). Hereafter *Seinte Lucie þe holi maide* is abbreviated as *Lucie*.

[195] Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 57.

[196] This act would have likely proved problematic, as evidenced by her suitor's reaction. Castelli claims: "For affluent women, a life of asceticism and virginity also meant not total renunciation of their wealth, but paradoxically, control over it […] The women of the Roman aristocracy pursued the genteel form of home asceticism without renouncing their wealth, though diverting it from the standard route of inheritance and thereby so disrupting the system of capital exchange within their class that eventually legislation was passed which prohibited such drainage of aristocratic holdings ("Virginity and Its Meaning" 83). See also Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 101–103.

that she will remain a virgin devoted to Christ; this avowal instigates a series of torments through which Paschasius strives to punish her.[197] Although Lucy becomes a popular saint in her own right, her connection with Agatha remains an essential element in her legend. Although Agatha's healing powers tend to be transferred to Lucy in later texts, Lucy is only able to heal her mother once she receives support and encouragement from the earlier saint.[198] Agatha's acknowledgements of Lucy's abilities in later texts provide a great endorsement for the newer saint and indicate celestial approval.

Versions of Lucy's legend promote the relationship of the two virgins as a solid bond by utilizing their common homeland, Sicily. Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* acknowledges this national connection; he declares that Lucy's status as patroness of Syracuse is comparable to Agatha's as patroness of Catania.[199] While Aldhelm mentions the association of Syracuse and Catania in the introduction to Lucy's prose account, Ælfric includes it in Agatha's words to Lucy and again in Lucy's death speech.[200] Ælfric's Agatha also heightens their relationship to familial status.[201] Agatha, in Lucy's vision, refers to her

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[197] As Lapidge asserts, this was not necessarily the name of the suitor, but her persecutor (*Aldhelm, The Prose Works*, 196 n. 22). Lapidge also notes "it seems probable that Aldhelm understood the consul to have been the suitor" (*Aldhelm, The Poetic Works*, 259 n. 33). However, Ælfric (*De Sancta Lucia,* ll. 57–9) claims Paschasius is both tormentor and betrothed. The *SEL*, the *LA*, and Bokenham's work all accept Paschasius as the Roman official and not her suitor.

[198] Although Aldhelm's *DV* attributes the healing to Agatha, *CDV* mentions the tomb more than Agatha herself seeming to confer power to the tomb. This is, however, consistent with Aldhelm's promotion of her tomb's power in the Mt. Etna passage (above 25 n. 5). Ælfric (*De Sancta Lucia*, ll. 26–29), the *LA* (v. 1, 50), the *SEL* (*Lucie*, l. 41–44), and Bokenham (ll. 9067–9072) attribute the healing to Lucy.

[199] Aldhelm, *DV*, 293–294.

[200] Ælfric, *De Sancta Lucia*, ll. 30–33a and 134–138. The *SEL* only incorporates this association into Agatha's speech (*Lucie*, l. 41–46), whereas the *LA* only does so into Lucy's death speech (v. 1, 52). Bokenham, however, relates the association in both scenes (ll. 9067–9078 and 9415–9418).

[201] The *LA* (v. 1, 50 and 52), the *SEL* (*Lucie*, l. 41), and Bokenham (l. 9067) also mention this familial relationship.

as *(m)in swustor Lucia* ('my sister Lucy' *De Sancta Lucia*, l. 26).[202] Lucy also declares this connection. Once stabbed to the point of disembowelment, she refers to Agatha as *minre swyster Agathen* ('my sister Agatha' l. 135) during her death speech.[203] Such declarations secure the two's spiritual familial relationship.[204]

Agatha's swift attendance to Lucy's prayers, therefore, is not surprising in the context of their well-established and intimate relationship. Agatha's position within the network of healing saints as well as her conferral of curative power to Lucy, hagiographically prepares the later saint for her own tradition of healing. Lucy's much later legend, which relates the removal of her eyes, results in her being called upon to help those with eye maladies.[205]

While Lucy's legend continues to include Agatha's presence, Lucy's torments themselves do not mirror Agatha's but rather those of other Virgin Martyrs. One of the

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[202] Barbara Abou-El-Haj notes such a scene is typical of pictorial representations of saints' *visiones* in which "The saint or the one receiving the vision reclines, usually asleep, while a full or half figure, usually an angel (occasionally Christ of the saint), appears beside the bed or sweeps down from the sky" (*The Medieval Cult of Saints: Formations and Transformations.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 43). She further claims this imagery echoes the dreams of the Magi (Matthew 2:12) as well as Joseph (Matthew 1:20–24 and 2:13). See also Perpetua's vision (above 59 and Juliana Chapter, 155) and Cosmas and Damian's healing of the man's leg (above 79).
[203] Aldhelm appears to support this mode of death (*DV*, 294 and *CDV*, l. 1833). The *LA* (v. 1, 52), the *SEL* (*Lucie*, ll. 149–152), and Bokenham (ll. 9406–9410) claim Lucy is pierced through the throat, which highlights her miraculous capacity of speech. This motif is fairly common in saints' lives (Appendix E). Ceclilia is unable to be completely beheaded even after three strokes and retains her power of speech despite her severe wound (Ælfric, *Passio Sanctæ Cecilie*, ll. 353–360; *LA* v. 2, 1187; Chaucer, *The Second Nun's Tale*, ll. 526–546; and Bokenham, ll. 8221–8258). For Chaucer's treatment of this scene, see Maud Burnett McInerney, "Rhetoric, Power, and Integrity in the Passion of the Virgin Martyr" in *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.* eds. Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie. Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1999, 50–70 at 67–70. Christina is similarly able to speak once her tongue is removed (*Christinæ*, 528B; *LA* v. 1, 648; *SEL*, *Cristina*, ll. 329–348; and Bokenham, ll. 3051–3082). Prudentius' Romanus is also able to continue speaking once his tongue is removed (*Peristephanon* 10.891–960). See also Katherine Chapter 237 n. 109.
[204] See above 82 n. 203.
[205] Alban Butler and Kathleen Jones. *Butler's Lives of the Saints: New Full Edition: December*. Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates and Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999, 113.

most important aspects of Lucy's developed tradition is her threatened rape in a brothel. Although Agatha's legend confines her in a brothel, as has been noted, her visit is unconventional and seemingly less sinister than those of other Virgin Martyrs. Lucy's reaction to her own danger is considered extensively in the next chapter, which focuses upon Agnes, who is threatened with this torment in a traditional manner. These women's responses to threats of bodily harm and to exposure will be considered, as will their enduring faith in their relationships with Christ, despite their sexual peril. The chapter will also continue to explore the miracles surrounding these women, particularly those that occur within the impure settings of brothels.

Chapter 2
Saint Agnes of Rome
Concealing Christ's Passionate Bride

Agnes' legend attests that she was martyred in Rome in the late third or early fourth century.[1] Her early cult and position within the Canon of the Mass, as with Agatha, indicate the historical validity of Agnes' martyrdom.[2] Several accounts of her martyrdom appear in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Damasus (c. 304–384 AD) composes a hymn for Agnes, Ambrose (c. 338–397 AD) includes an account of her *passio* in his *De uirginibus*, and Prudentius (348–c. 405) devotes the final book of his *Peristephanon* to her.[3] The hymn, *De S. Agnete*, and the full account of her traditional legend, *Vita S. Agnetis*, which serves as the narrative model for several later sources, are also attributed to Ambrose.[4] Jerome (c. 342–c. 420 AD) briefly mentions Agnes' fortitude and virginity in his letter to Demetrias and Augustine (354–430 AD) refers to her faith and martyrdom in

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[1] Her exact death year is not provided, but tradition places her martyrdom around this time (Alban Butler and Paul Burns, *Butler's Lives of the Saints: New Full Edition: January*. Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates and Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995, 146). The *LA* places her martyrdom during the reign of Constantine, which it asserts began in 309 AD (v. 1, 171). Scarre reports Constantine's reign as 307–337 AD (137). Via Nomentana's third mile claims Agnes' burial site (148). Her parents' vision and Constantia's conversion occur here. *Vita S. Agnetis* (717) (*Vita* throughout the chapter) and Bokenham (l. 4608) mention Nomentana.

[2] Kennedy, 179–183. For the Canon's other female saints, see Agatha Chapter 26, n. 9.

[3] Damasus, *Carmen 29*; Ambrose, *De uirginibus* 1.2; and Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 14. An image of Damasus' epigram to Agnes and a German translation by Antonio Ferrua, S.J. appear in *Damasus und die Römischen Martyrer*. Città del Vaticano: Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, 1986, 39–42.

[4] The authorship for the *Vita* and *De S. Agnete* (*PL* 17, Col. 1211) (*Hymn* throughout the chapter) is uncertain. *AASS* attributes the *Vita* to Ambrose, however. Butler and Burns, however, claim the *Hymn* is "almost certainly attributable to St Ambrose" (*January*, 147) and it is included among the fourteen hymns traditionally considered as written by Ambrose. See Guido Maria Dreves and Clemens Blume, *Ein Jahrtausend Lateinischer Hymnendichtung: Eine Blütenlese aus den Analecta Hymnica mit literarhistorischen Erläuterungen*. Leipzig: O. R. Risland, 1909, v. 1, 12. See also Jacques Fontaine, *Ambroise de Milan: Hymnes*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992, 361–403.

his *Sermo 273*.[5] Agnes already attains such great popularity in the fourth century that Sulpicius Severus (c. 360–c. 420 AD) lists her along with Thecla and the Blessed Virgin as saints who appear in a vision and converse with Martin of Tours (c. 316–c. 397 AD).[6] Agnes' renown persists throughout the Middle Ages and is present in England by the seventh century. Like Agatha, Agnes appears in both Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* and *Carmen de uirginitate* (late seventh century), as well as Bede's hymn to Ætheldryth (731 AD) and *Martyrologium* (c. 725–731 AD).[7] Ælfric (late tenth–early eleventh century) devotes a homily to Agnes on January 21st, as he does for Agatha's feast day.[8] Later sources such as the *Legenda aurea* (mid-thirteenth century), the *South English Legendary* (late thirteenth century), and Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* (1443–1447 AD)[9] provide similarly structured accounts of Agnes' martyrdom.

Agnes' legend reports that after rejecting the advances of the son of the local prefect, Symphronius,[10] the saint makes a passionate profession of love for her bridegroom, Christ. Symphronius, realizing his inability to sway her on behalf of his son, charges her as

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[5] Jerome, *Epistle 130*, *Ad Demetriadem*, 5, in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulæ, Pars I: Epistulæ CXXI–CLIV*. ed. Isidore Hilberg. CSEL 56.1. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996, 175–201; and Augustine, *Sermo 273*, 6, *PL* 38, Col. 1250–1251.
[6] Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues* 2.13 in *Sulpicii Severi libri qui supersunt*. ed. Karl Halm. CSEL 1, Vindobonæ: Apud C. Geroli Filium Bibliopolam Academiæ, 1866, 198–216. For a translation, see NPNF, ser. 2, *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, vol. 11. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, 37–46, for this scene 45. This scene remains in Martin's legend and both Ælfric and the *LA* mention this vision of Agnes, Thecla, and the Blessed Virgin (Ælfric, *Vita Sancti Martini, episcopi et confessoris*, ll. 701–705; and *LA* v. 2, 1143–1144). The *SEL* includes this scene, but does not mention Thecla (*Seint Martin was ibore*, ll. 173–180). For Ælfric's Martin account, see v. 2, 218–313; and for the account in the *SEL*, see v. 2, 483–492.
[7] For Aldhelm's works, see Introduction, 12 n. 27. For Bede's hymn, see Agatha Chapter, 26 n. 10. Agnes' entry in Bede's *Martyrologium* is for January 21st, *PL* 94, Col. 818A–818B.
[8] For Ælfric's Agnes and Agatha accounts, see Introduction, 12 n. 30.
[9] See Introduction, 15 n. 44.
[10] For consistency, spelling of 'Symphronius' found in the *Vita* is used, unless directly quoting from another source.

a Christian. He orders that she be stripped publicly, but as soon as her clothes are removed, her hair grows to cover her entire body. She is next confined in a brothel with the expectation that she will be raped repeatedly. An angel protects her, however, and hinders anyone from harming the young virgin. Agnes performs a miracle within the brothel when she restores to life her suitor, who had been struck down while attempting to approach the saint. Once removed untouched from the brothel, Agnes is thrown into a fire. The fire, too, fails to harm the virgin, and she finally achieves martyrdom by the sword. After her death, Agnes appears to her parents at her tomb and reassures them of her position in heaven.[11] The miraculous curing of Constantia,[12] the daughter of Constantine, also occurs at her tomb.[13]

Agnes is conventionally presented as a young girl with faith and fortitude far exceeding her years. Her age is traditionally reported as thirteen[14] and her youth inspires a tradition, which emphasizes her purity, innocence, and stalwart preservation of virginity.[15]

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[11] Agnes' foster-sister Emerentiana's subsequent martyrdom appears in some accounts as well (*Vita*, 717; Bede's *Martyrologium*, February 23rd, Col. 820B–821A; and *LA* v. 1, 172). See Appendix B.
[12] For consistency, the spelling of 'Constantia' found in the *Vita* is used, unless directly quoting from another source. For sources naming Constantia, see Appendix B.
[13] This is a brief summary of Bokenham's fifteenth-century account. Constantia's healing is reminiscent of Lucy's mother's healing at Agatha's tomb (Appendix B). See also Agatha Chapter 80–82.
[14] The *Vita* (715), Augustine (*Sermo* 273, 6), Aldhelm (*CDV*, l. 1928), Bede (*Martyrologium*, Jan. 21), Ælfric (*Natale Sancte Agnetis*, l. 11), the *SEL* (*Agneta*, l. 3), the *LA* (v. 1, 169), and Bokenham (l. 4110) all relate her age as thirteen. Ambrose claims twelve (*De uirginibus* 1.2.7). Damasus places her even younger, depicting her leaping from her nurse's lap in a rush to martyrdom (Damasus, *Carmen 29*, l. 3), while Jerome mentions her youth (*Epistle* 130, *Ad Demetriadem*, 5) and Prudentius states she is hardly old enough for marriage (14.10–11). Although Agnes is most frequently associated with young age, Christina, Eulalia, and Sophia' daughters are also depicted as quite young. Christina's age is reported as about eleven (*Christinæ*, 524F) and twelve (Bokenham, l. 2123). Prudentius' Eulalia is twelve (3.11–12). In the *LA*, Faith's age is eleven, Hope's ten, and Charity's eight (v. 1, 308).
[15] For Agnes' connection with the lamb, see below 121–124. Marriage at twelve or thirteen was not exceptional for a Roman bride. Aline Rousselle asserts that in ancient Rome "girls might be married at twelve, sometimes even younger, and were immediately deflowered" (*Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*. trans. Felicia Pheasant, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, 27). For the early Church, Peter Brown claims "(t)he median age of Roman girls at marriage may have been as low as fourteen" (*The Body*

Her later tradition tends to focus upon an elaborate brothel scene, the descriptive death and resurrection of her slighted suitor, miracles performed after her martyrdom, and, most of all, her romantic relationship with Christ. This especially intimate relationship between Agnes and Christ is highlighted throughout her tradition and establishes Agnes as the exemplary young and impassioned bride of the similarly impassioned bridegroom, Christ.[16]

Christ as Bridegroom

Agnes' legend contains the most descriptive account of Christ as bridegroom among the Virgin Martyrs'. Expressions of women's, particularly female martyrs', marital or otherwise intimate association with Christ appear early in the Christian tradition.[17] Perpetua in the early third century is described as *matrona Christi* ('wife of Christ') and *Dei delicata* ('the beloved of God' *Perpetuæ* 18.2),[18] Damasus declares Agatha to be like the *sponsa polo* ('bride to heaven' *Carmen 30*, l. 21), and Prudentius in the late fourth or early fifth century refers to Agnes as *nupta Christo* ('bride to Christ' *Peristephanon* 14.79). This theme of Christ as bridegroom and/or lover is employed extensively throughout the Middle Ages.

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and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, 6). Brent D. Shaw places brides' average age at most likely around seventeen or eighteen, but acknowledges twelve as still the youngest legal age ("The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage: Some Reconsiderations" *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 77 (1987): 30–46 at 41–42).

[16] For Katherine as the supreme Bride of Christ, see Katherine Chapter, 211–219.

[17] See, for example, Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meanings" 71–74. See also Heffernan, 189–192.

[18] Perpetua is already a *matrona* to an earthly husband. Heffernan cites Perpetua's account as containing the "earliest explicit example of Christ the bridegroom" (190).

Several of Aldhelm's entries utilize romantic imagery.[19] In *Carmen de uirginitate*, Eustochium conveys a preference for Christ's affections over men's (ll. 2137–2138):

> Aspidis ut morsum spernebat basia buccis,
> Dulcia sed Christi compressit labra labellis,
> Oscula dum supero defixit limpida sponso.
>
> [She spurned kisses on her cheeks as bite of an asp,
> Rather she pressed Christ's sweet lips to her lips,
> While she set sincere kisses upon her high spouse.]

This imagery continues in the following account as the wealthy virgin Demetrias exhibits contempt for her earthly suitors (ll. 2184–2186).

> Innuba seb voluit dotales linquere pompas
> Et superi potius sponsi lentescere labris
> Suavia compressis impendens oscula buccis.
>
> [But the unmarried woman wished to leave her inherited splendor
> And rather to softly unite with her high spouse's lips
> Offering sweet kisses with cheek pressed against cheek.]

A twist on this motif appears in accounts of spiritually married Virgin Martyrs.[20] Both Aldhelm and Ælfric provide accounts for three such married couples, Cecilia and Valerian, Chrysanthus and Daria, and Julian and Basilissa.[21] The entry for Cecilia in *Carmen de*

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[19] Aldhelm also employs this imagery in his poetic account of Chrysanthus, Daria's virginal husband. The saint would not succumb to kisses from girls sent to tempt him by his father, but would to Christ's kisses: *(d)ulcia sed Christi lentescunt labra labellis* ('but sweet lips of Christ softly unite with his lips' *CDV*, l. 1160). See also Robert Mills, "Ecce Homo" in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in late medieval Europe*. eds. Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih. RSMRC 1. London: Routledge, 2002, 152–173, especially 152–158.

[20] Dyan Elliott's term 'spiritual marriage' is employed here (*Spiritual Marriage*, 3–4). For her discussion on spiritually married Virgin Martyrs, see 64–70.

[21] These couples are listed with converting Christian partner first. Aldhelm includes these couples in both his works: Cecilia (*DV*, 292 and *CDV*, ll. 1710–1735), Chrysanthus and Daria (276–280 and ll. 1123–1250), and Julian and Basilissa (280–284 and ll. 1251–1449). Valerian is not named in either account. For Ælfric's accounts, see *Passio Sanctæ Cecilie Virginis*, v. 2, 356–377; *Passio Chrisanti et Dariæ sponse eius*, v. 2, 378–399; and *Passio Sancti Iuliani et sponse eius Basilisse*, v. 1, 90–115. Ælfric composes a homily for Æthelthryth (*Natale Sancte Æðelðryð uirgines*, v. 1, 432–441), another virginal wife and the subject of Bede's hymn (Agatha Chapter, 26). She is not a martyr, however, and is not considered in this study. For *passiones* of Cecilia and Valerian, and Chrysanthus and Daria, see Introduction, 4 n. 8. For Julian and Basilissa's *passio*, see *De SS. Juliano, Basilissa, Celso et sociis*, *AASS* Jan. I 570–575, hereafter abbreviated as *Basilissa*.

uirginitate states that instead of her mortal husband's embraces, the virginal wife (ll. 1714–1715):[22]

> Basia dum potius dilexit dulcia Christi
> Candida præpulchris complectens colla lacertis.
>
> [Yet rather delighted in the sweet kisses of Christ
> Embracing His white neck with her very beautiful arms.]

Ælfric's Basilissa explicitly declares her wish to have *ðone hælend to bryd-guman* ('the Savior for a bridegroom' *Passio Sancti Iuliani et Sponse eius Basilisse*, l. 48b); however, his Cecilia and Daria do not make similar proclamations.

The early- to mid-thirteenth-century text for anchoresses, *Þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd*, echoes the loving sentiments of Aldhelm's virgins while describing a romantic relationship with Christ. The author refers to Jesus as (ll. 32–40):[23]

> Nu mi
> derewurðe druð mi luue mi
> lif mi leof mi luueleuest
> mi heorte haliwej mi sawle (35)
> swetnesse Þu art lufsum on
> leor þu art al schene all en-
> gles lif is ti neb to bihalden
> for þi leor is swa unimete lufsum
> 7 lusti on to loken. (40)
>
> [Now my
> precious beloved my love my
> life my sweetheart my loveliest
> my heart's balm my soul's
> sweetness. You are beautiful in
> countenance you are completely glorious
> all angels' life purpose is to behold your face
> for your countenance is so exceedingly beautiful

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[22] Despite this Cecilia's romantic desires for Christ, other accounts depict an angel expressing the affection expected from Christ. See Ælfric (*Passio Sanctæ Cecilie*, l. 32); and Chaucer (*The Second Nun's Tale*, l. 7500 in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 264–269). *Ceciliæ* (333) and the *LA* (v. 2, 1181) further increase the angel's status naming it as her *amator* ('lover'). Bokenham's angel is also her *louere* ('lover' l. 7501). For Agnes' relationship with an angel, see below 112–114 and 139–140.

[23] *Þe Wohunge of ure Laured*. ed. W. Meredith Thompson. EETS OS 241. London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1958, 20–38. Savage and Watson place date of composition between about 1220 and 1240–1250 AD (*Anchoritic Spirituality*, 245).

and delightful to look upon.]

The depiction of Christ as lover is not only a motif found in reference to virgins. Concerning wives desiring chaste marriage in the late Middle Ages, Dyan Elliott asserts:

> Frequently a romantic triangle is enacted to dramatize the conflict between the husband's will and God's. Christ is often presented as the ardent wooer of the married women in question, which sets up an interesting quasi-adulterous situation.[24]

The long-married and fourteen-time mother Margery Kempe (c. 1373–c. 1439) offers a particularly intimate portrait of her relationship with Christ. Among her recorded interactions with Christ, Margery relates a clearly erotic vision in which He assures her of His commitment to her (1.2102–2111):

> Therfore most I nedys be homly wyth the and lyn in thi bed wyth the. Dowtyr, thow desyrest gretly to se me, and thu mayst boldly, whan thu art in thi bed, take me to the as for thi weddyd husbond, as thy derworthy derlyng, and as for thy swete sone, for I wyl be lovyd as a sone schuld be lovyd wyth the modyr and wil that thu love me, (2105) dowtyr, as a good wife owyth to love hir husbonde. And therfor thu mayst boldly take me in the armys of thi sowle and kyssen my mowth, myn hed, and my fete as swetly as thow wylt. And, as oftyntymes as thu thynkyst on me er woldyst don any good dede to me, thu schalt have the same mede in hevyn as yyf thu dedist it to myn owyn precyows body whech is in hevyn, for I aske no mor of the but thin hert for to lovyn that lovyth (2110) the, for my lofe is evyr redy to the."
>
> [Therefore, I truly need to be familiar with you and lie in your bed with you. Daughter, you greatly desire to see me, and you may assuredly, when you are in your bed, take me to you as your wedded husband, as your precious darling, and as your sweet son, for I will be loved as a son should be loved by the mother and will that you love me, daughter, as a good wife ought to love her husband. And therefore you may confidently take me in the arms of your soul and kiss my mouth, my head, and my feet as sweetly as you will. And, as often as you think on me before you would perform any good deed for me, you shall have the same reward in heaven as if you did it to my own precious body which is in heaven, for I ask no more of you but your heart to love that which loves you, for my love is ever ready for you.]

The language of intimacy invoked in these descriptions present Christ as the only desired lover. Such reactions exhibit the women's overt preference for His love over any mortal

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[24] Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 232. Margery is among the women used to demonstrate this situation (231–232). Margery's simultaneous marriage and intimate relationship with Christ present her as a type of married (and sexually active) Virgin Martyr 'courted' by both pagan suitor and Christ. For Christ as ultimate husband, see Katherine Chapter, 211–219.

man's, even that of seemingly ideal mortal suitors or their own husbands.[25] Even before Agnes' extensive speech describing Christ as ardent bridegroom appears in her legend, sexually charged language and amorous imagery are evident in the young virgin's early tradition.

Ambrose and Prudentius both depict Agnes' approach to her martyrdom with erotic imagery.[26] Ambrose compares Agnes' rush to her death for Christ to a bride's hurry to her nuptial bed (*De uirginibus* 1.2.8).[27]

> Non sic ad thalamum nupta properaret, ut ad supplicii locum laeta successu, gradu festina virgo processit, non intorto crine[28] caput compta, sed Christo: non flosculis redimita, sed moribus.
>
> [She would not speed so a bride to the marriage bed, as (she would speed) happy with victory to the place of execution. The virgin proceeded with hasty step, she had not arranged her head with twisted hair, but with Christ: crowned not with little flowers, but with decorum.]

The *Hymn* likewise invokes this imagery: *Prodire quis nuptum putet / Sic laeta vultu ducitur*, ('Anyone would think that marriage comes / she is led in such a manner with a happy face' ll. 13–14). Prudentius' Agnes relates her own vision of martyrdom even more sexually as she directs the executioner where to pierce her body (14.67–78).[29]

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[25] This motif appears in Juliana and Katherine's lives, see Juliana Chapter, 150 n. 11; and Katherine Chapter, 214–216.

[26] Ambrose additionally asserts that she was *nunc furentis mucroni militis totum offerre corpus* (now to offer all her body to the furious soldier's sword' *De uirginibus* 1.2.7). See Prudentius' passage, 92–93. See Loraux's discussion of virgins' deaths as marriages in Greek tragedy (37–42).

[27] Burrus notes Ambrose's sexualized presentation of Agnes' martyrdom passage ("Reading Agnes" 30).

[28] In addition to general caution against adornment and reference to 1 Peter (3:3) and 1 Timothy (2:9), Ambrose may be alluding to the Old Testament Judith's preparation for meeting Holofernes. Ambrose, while making multiple references to Judith's legend, never mentions her hair. Judith's ornamentation, which traditionally includes *discriminavit crinem capitis sui* ('plaited the hair of her head' Judith 10:3) is referenced in *De uirginibus*' Virgin of Antioch's chapter. Ambrose may be implying 'appropriate' occasion for this attire when acknowledging Judith's adornment's purpose: *ut adultero placeret* ('so that she might please the adulterer' 2.4.24). See also Ambrose, *De officiis*. ed. Maurice Testard. CCSL 15. Turnhout: Brepols, 2000, at 3.13; and *De uiduis* 7, *PL* 16, Col. 245C–247B.

[29] Prudentius' Agnes is not pierced in the breast, but in the neck when decapitated (14.85–90). Her pierced throat is her most frequent mode of death (Appendix B). Burrus interprets the problematic location of

ut vidit Agnes stare trucem virum
mucrone nudo, lætior hæc ait:
"exulto tallis quod potius venit
vesanus, atrox, turbidus armiger, (70)
quam si veniret languidus ac tener
mollisque ephebus tinctus aromate,[30]
qui me pudoris funere perderet.
hic, hic amator iam, fateor, placet:
ibo inruentis gressibus obviam, (75)
nec demorabor vota calentia:
ferrum in papillas omne recepero
pectusque ad imum vim gladii traham

[When Agnes saw that the savage man stands
with a naked sword, this quite happy girl said:
"I rejoice that such a raging, savage, and
wild armed man comes rather than
if a languid and tender and soft
young man soaked with spice,
who would destroy me with the death of my modesty.
This one, this lover now, I confess, pleases (me):
I will go to meet with rushing steps,
and I will not delay burning desires:
I shall have received all (his) iron into (my) breasts
and I shall draw the sword's force into the depth of (my) chest]

The imagery invoked here is overtly sexual and the scene is full of innuendo. Every detail from the description of the soldier with his naked sword, a blatant phallic symbol, as her lover to her invitation of his passionate desires and her longing to draw the sword into her breast are intentionally erotic.[31] Jill Ross' discussion on the bodies of Prudentius' martyrs as

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Agnes' death stroke as a deliberate effort "to restrain the heroism of women" ("Reading Agnes" 42, see 37–43 for this theme). For a summary of the development of Prudentius' version of Agnes legend, see Anne-Marie Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, 250–253.

[30] This claim would add to his demasculinization. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron attest: "Spice is a traditional metaphor for an admired woman, probably as reminiscence of Song of Songs 4:12–16" (*The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Fourth Edition. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002, reprinted 2003, l. 235n.). Jane Beal cites this passage while discussing *Pearl*'s narrator's reference to the Pearl Maiden as *that special spyce* ('that special spice' l. 235) in "The Pearl-Maiden's Two Lovers" *Studies in Philology* 100.1 (Winter 2003): 1–21 at 6. Sarah Stanbury offers a different reading of *spyce*, interpreting it as 'creature;' however, she acknowledges 'spice's symbolic significance throughout the poem (*Pearl*. TEAMS. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001, l. 235n.). For a discussion on garden imagery in this Song of Songs passage, see Katherine Chapter, 244–251.

[31] Jill Ross, "Dynamic Bodies and Martyrs' Bodies in Prudentius' *Peristephanon*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3:3 (1995): 325–355 at 342. Delany contrasts the eroticism in Prudentius' account of Agnes' legend with Bokenham's lack (110). Martha Malamud, as does Delany, notes Prudentius'

text reveals a somewhat unsettling predicament within the accounts of Eulalia and Agnes in the *Peristephanon*.[32] Concerning Eulalia, who declares the Lord has written on her body, Ross asserts:[33]

> The echoes of rape and violence embodied in this metaphor of Eulalia's body as a white garment sexually violated by the sword, pen and needle of her tormentor are disturbing since it is Christ himself who is inscribing and possessing her. However, in order for Eulalia to become a martyr, she must suffer a violent death. Thus, her "rape" by Christ via the sword of her persecutor is a necessary element in the economy of Christian salvation. Just as Christ had to die in order to defeat death, in the same way, Eulalia must die a sexually violent death so as to transcend both her carnality and her mortality.[34]

This compelling, albeit disquieting, presentation of Christ's position in Prudentius' accounts, does not apply to later hagiographical trends, which present Christ and suitor/persecutor in battle over a particular virgin.[35] Unlike Prudentius' work in which Eulalia and Agnes seek out Christ via torments, the romantic triangle structure of later sources presents a pre-existing relationship between Virgin Martyrs and Christ.[36] These accounts present the women's sufferings and martyrdoms as opportunities to show faith in and love for God, but the torments are hardly necessary for the relationship. The women

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reservation in explicitly identifying Agnes' genitalia (*A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1989, 162–163).

[32] Malamud notes "Eulalia and Agnes are almost interchangeable figures" ("Making a Virtue of Perversity: the Poetry of Prudentius" *Ramus: Critical Studies in Greek and Roman Literature* 19.1 (1990), 72) and Michael Roberts suggests the books "are meant to be read as a pair" (*Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The* Liber Peristephanon *of Prudentius*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993, 100–101). See below 103 n. 64 for their legends' connections in *Peristephanon*.

[33] Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 3.146–140. For Virgin Martyrs' bodies as text, see, for example, Ross' article and Horner, 101–124 and 131–164. For Eustochium's body as text in Jerome's letter, see Patricia Cox Miller, "The Blazing Body: Ascetic Desire in Jerome's Letter to Eustochium" *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1 (1993), 21–45 at 26–31.

[34] Ross, 344.

[35] Prudentius' version of Agnes' legend contains suitor figures corresponding to the later narrative's characters; however, these men are, as Ross has shown, devices through which Christ acts, not His 'rivals' as it were. Malamud discusses the judge's sexualized depiction in this account ("Making a Virtue of Perversity" 80).

[36] Katherine is one exception as she seeks out and confronts Maxentius. See Katherine Chapter, 209 and Appendix D. Euphemia also approaches her persecutor (*LA* v. 2, 951–952).

in these more romantic texts are assumed to have an established bond and understanding with Christ that is not dependent on painful physical sacrifice. The suitors/persecutors in these accounts usually seek out the virgins and provide the option of martyrdom, which, of course, provides a welcome means to the virgins' desired end: union with Christ. There is no room in the later romantic narrative for any lover other than Christ, even if the 'lover' takes the form of a man or instrument performing Christ's will.[37]

Ambrose implies such an exclusive romantic relationship with Christ as the young saint declares toward the end of the account (*De uirginibus* 1.2.9):

> Et hæc Sponsi injuria est exspectare placiturum. Qui me sibi prior elegit, accipiet.
>
> [And this is an injury to my Spouse to expect (one who) would please (me). He who first selected me for Himself, will receive (me).]

The *Vita* expands on this theme and provides her with detailed and impassioned descriptions of Christ as definitive suitor and lover. The traditional and particularly detailed speech, which she makes to her hopeful suitor, is both ardent and defiant. The *Vita* relates a picture of a lover with whom no mortal man may compete (715):[38]

> Discede a me fomes peccati, nutrimentum facinoris, pabulum mortis: Discede a me, quia ab alio jam amatore præventa sum qui mihi satis meliora te obtulit ornamenta, et annulo, fidei suæ subarrhavit me, longe te nobilior et genere et dignitate. Ornavit inæstimabili dextrochirio[39]

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[37] Delany notes Christ is the singular object of Bokenham's Agnes' affection (110). Wogan-Browne interprets later Virgin Martyrs' lives, particularly the Katherine Group texts, as critiques of courtly romance narratives and asserts that the hero of romance is divided into the pagan suitor and Christ in the lives of Virgin Martyrs ("Virgin's Tale" 181).

[38] Winstead interprets this passage as doing "little to advance the plot" and views its "principal function" as "to stir readers' devotion by dwelling on the delights of heaven and the splendor of God" (*Virgin Martyrs*, 27). On the contrary, this passage, as is discussed throughout the chapter, is strongly symbolic. It establishes several of her legend's main themes, which are revisited within the traditionally structured narratives. See below, especially 117–121.

[39] The note for this term states: *monile est, quo dextrum brachium, aut manus brachiique juctura ornabatur* ('(this) is a necklace, where the right arm, or rather the joining of the hand and the arm, was being decorated' *Vita*, 715, note c).

dexteram meam et collum meum cinxit lapidibus pretiosis: tradidit auribus meis inæstimabiles margaritas, et circumdedit me vernantibus atque coruscantibus gemmis. Posuit signum suum super faciem meam, ut nullum præter ipsum amatorem admittam. Induit me cyclade auro texta, et immensis monilibus ornavit me. Ostendit mihi thesauros incomparabiles, quos mihi se donaturum repromisit si ei perseveravero. Non ergo potero ad contumeliam prioris amatoris vel adspicere alium, et illum derelinquere, cum quo sum caritate devincta: cujus est generositas celsior, possibilitas fortior, adspectus pulchrior, amor suavior, et omni gratia elegantior: a quo mihi jam thalamus collocatus est, cujus mihi organa modulatis vocibus resonant, cujus mihi virgines justissimis vocibus cantant. Jam mel et lac ex ore ejus suscepi: Jam amplexibus ejus castis adstricta sum: Jam corpus ejus corpori meo sociatum est, et sanguis ejus ornavit genas meas. Cujus mater virgo est, cujus pater feminam nescit. Cui Angeli serviunt, cujus pulchritudinem sol et luna mirantur: cujus divitiæ non decrescunt. Ipsi soli servo fidem. Ipsi me tota devtione committo. Quem cum amavero, casta sum; cum tetigero, munda sum; cum accepero, virgo sum. Nec deerunt post nuptias filii, ubi partus sine dolore succedit,[40] et fœcunditas quotidiana cumulatur.

[Leave me kindling of sin, nourishment of vice, fodder of death: Leave me, because I already have been anticipated by another lover who fittingly offered to me better ornaments than you, and has pledged me with a ring, of His faith, He is far nobler than you both in lineage and in authority. He decorated my right hand with inestimable bracelets and surrounded my neck with precious stones: He bequeathed upon my ears inestimable pearls, and encircled me with blooming and gleaming gems. He placed His sign upon my face, so that I may allow none besides Himself as (my) lover. He clothed me with a gown woven from gold, and decorated me with immense necklaces. He shows to me incomparable treasures, which He promised He will give to me Himself in return if I have persevered for Him. Therefore, I shall not to the insult of the first lover either look at another or abandon Him, with whom I am bound with much affection: whose generosity is loftier, whose power stronger, whose form more beautiful, whose love sweeter, and whose charm more elegant than all: by whom the bedroom is already arranged for me, whose musical instruments resounds with rhythmic voices, whose virgins sing to me with very just voices. Already I received honey and milk from His mouth: Already I am held tight by his chaste embraces: Already His body is united to my body, and He decorates my eyelids with His blood. His mother is a virgin, whose father does not know woman. To whom Angels are servants, whose beauty the sun and moon marvel at: whose riches do not decrease. I preserve (my) faith for Him alone. I commit myself to Him with total devotion. Whom when I love, I am chaste; whom when I touch, I am clean; whom when I accept, I am a virgin. Nor are children absent after marriage, where birth occurs without pain and fruitfulness is increased daily.]

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[40] See Agatha Chapter for spiritual motherhood (48–55). See also Castelli "Virginity and Its Meaning" 71–73.

Aldhelm's accounts mention this special relationship, incorporating several statements directly from the *Vita*, while Ælfric's Agnes virtually repeats the lengthy speech of the *Vita*.[41] Later sources also retain this significant speech. In the *South English Legendary*, Agnes declares a modified announcement, which abandons the promised riches and instead focuses on Christ's attributes.[42] The *Legenda aurea* and Bokenham's account likewise contain extended speeches mirroring the involved descriptions of the *Vita*, maintaining, unlike the *South English Legendary*, focus on both Christ and His bride's treasures.[43]

The eroticism of these texts, although less overt than that of Prudentius' account, is undeniable, particularly in longer works that mirror the narrative structure of the *Vita*. The traditional impassioned speech is even more shocking when the innocence and purity continually associated with Agnes' young age is recalled. The Christ presented in these texts is a young lover, reminiscent of the bridegroom in the Song of Songs, who lavishes riches and affections upon His beloved.[44] He is not the stable husband and optimal ruler seen in Katherine's later legend.[45] Christ's relationship with Agnes, rather, is described in terms of intimacy between romantic partners, not between king and selected noble consort. The romantic overtones of this speech overshadow other important details regarding

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[41] Aldhelm, *DV*, 298 and *CDV* ll. 1942–1945. Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Agnetis,* ll. 25–62.
[42] *SEL*, *Agneta*, ll. 23–32.
[43] *LA* v. 1, 169–170 and Bokenham, ll. 4141–4189.
[44] Horner associates Ælfric's Christ in Agnes' legend with the bridegroom in the Song of Songs (153–154). Innes-Parker similarly does so with Christ in *Ancrene Wisse* ("Fragmentation and Reconstruction" 29). Elizabeth Robertson, considering medical perceptions of the female body, offers an analysis of the erotic relationship between Christ and the anchoress presented in *Ancrene Wisse* ("Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse* and Julian of Norwich's *Showings*" in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*. eds. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, 142–167 at 150–153.
[45] Capgrave's Christ, for example, is a generous king and protector (3.1002–1350), meeting Katherine's requirements for ideal husband and lord (2.1373–1456). See Katherine Chapter 214–216.

Christ's superiority such as His parentage and divine abilities. From a narrative perspective, this sexualized relationship with Christ suits Agnes' situation, as well as that of many other Virgin Martyrs, in which He is pitted against a mortal suitor for the virgin's affections.[46]

As Christ's selected bride, Agnes guards her chastity for her husband above all other physical aspects. She is not concerned with the result of standard trials, regardless of how they might injure her body. Her heavenly husband and hagiographers likewise seem unconcerned with most of her more conventional torments. What these men do appear interested in are elements of her *passio* with potentially sexual dimensions.[47] In these scenes Christ defends His claim over Agnes' body with a persistence that supports her assertions of His favor and desire. Christ repeatedly protects His young bride's body, and particularly her chastity, from injury. When Agnes' first ordeal, being stripped, occurs, Christ shields the saint from lustful attacks by not only male bodies, but also male eyes.

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[46] Many Virgin Martyrs are not self-declared brides of Christ despite engaging in slighted suitor plots. Juliana, for instance, insists on a Christian husband in the *LA* (v. 1, 267). Even Katherine, the supreme Bride, is not fundamentally against marriage but requires a man surpassing all others' (Capgrave, 2.1387–1456 and Katherine Chapter, 214–216). In the *LA*, Agatha, Lucy, Justina, and Christina do not qualify their relationships with Christ but maintain virginity for Him, focusing on Christ the Savior, not Christ the spouse. Although the status of Virgin Martyrs assumes positions as brides, their presented language and motivations do not convey this as their main objective. See the *LA* for Agatha (v. 1, 256–261), for Lucy (v. 1, 49–52), for Justina (v. 2, 971–976), and for Christina (v. 1, 646–649). See also Appendix E. Hugh Magennis similarly observes Margaret's relationship with Christ in her earlier tradition is primarily that of a *miles Christi* not *sponsa Christi* ("'Listen Now All and Understand': Adaptation of Hagiographical Material for Vernacular Audiences in the Old English Lives of St. Margaret" *Speculum* 71.1 (Jan. 1996): 27–42 at 31–32).

[47] Most later accounts gloss over Agnes' brief desexualized death scene and 'typical torment' of burning favoring more sexually suggestive scenes, such as her public nudity and confinement in a brothel. See Appendix B. See also Appendix E for Virgin Martyrs' torments in the *LA*.

Concealing the Virgin Body: Tradition

Agnes' legend has included her body's exposure as one of her torments since the fourth century. Although she is quickly spared this indignity, she bears this torment in the traditional resolute manner of a Virgin Martyr. These women do not cringe at the lustful gazes of their persecutors nor beseech mercy from their tormenters as their virgin bodies are revealed and besieged.[48] They instead give as little heed to the uncovering of their flesh as they do to its rending. While the virgins do not attempt to elude the cruelties inflicted upon them, divine interventions often occur, protecting the virgins and exhibiting God's glory and power.[49] These interventions assume a variety of appearances, which include healings, as with Agatha, and preservation from torments, as with Katherine.[50] Agnes' legend contains the heavenly devised defense of concealment.

The Lord exercises His will to spare some virgins from this viewing, which is at times intended to be a torment unto itself.[51] This miracle seems to be a particular honor in these lives. The two saints in this study who receive this protection, Agnes and Katherine, are the two saints most often associated with their spousal relationships with Christ: Agnes as His innocent young bride of the early Middle Ages and Katherine as His supreme Bride of the later Middle Ages.[52] The Assumption account in the *Legenda aurea* describes this shielding being bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin, who also has a similar heavenly

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[48] See below 124–132. For Virgin Martyrs' bodies as 'battlefields,' see Katherine Chapter, 219–221.
[49] The elusion referred to here is the attempt to avoid tortures and pains through actions of avoidance and/or pleas to persecutors. Saints often pray to be delivered from torments, not to avoid pain, but to display God's greatness and His favor. Juliana and Margaret, for instance, both exhibit this motivation when praying that God deliver them from torments (*Iuliene*, 61 and *Marherete*, 44, ll. 1–22).
[50] See Agatha Chapter, 71–84; and Katherine Chapter, 228–238.
[51] Capgrave's Katherine is unable to be seen by male eyes when stripped for her baptism (3.1104–1105). She is, however, viewed naked while being flogged (5.607–622).
[52] Agnes' later legend, like Katherine's, spares her almost all physical pain.

association.[53] In protecting these women from licentious male eyes, the Lord guards them from a form of sexual assault as well.

The concept of lechery arising from seeing and being seen was secured very early in the Christian tradition.[54] Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225) urges the concealment of virgins in his *De uirginibus uelandis*, proclaiming the danger that awaits the virgin without her veil (14).[55]

> Quantum velis bona mente conetur, necesse est publicatione sui periclitetur, dum percutitur oculis incertis et multis, dum digitis demonstrantium titillatur, dum nimium amatur, dum inter amplexus et oscula assidua concalescit. Sic frons duratur, sic pudor teritur, sic solvitur, sic discitur aliter iam placere desiderare.
>
> [As much as a woman (covered) in veils would try with a good mind, it is inevitable she be endangered by her exposure, while she is struck with glancing and numerous eyes, while she is tickled by fingers of those pointing (at her), while she is loved too much, while she grows warm among embraces and persistent kisses. Thus her forehead is hardened, thus her modesty is worn down, thus it is loosened, (and) thus it is learned now how to desire to give pleasure otherwise.]

Tertullian continues with an explanation of the veil as a protective measure against and hindrance to temptation and asserts that the veil, indicating virginity, instills fear in those who look upon it.[56] Jerome, in his letter to Eustochium warns against sight inducing lust

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[53] See Katherine Chapter, 256–257. A variation on this theme, the inability to remove clothing, appears in the legend of Chionia, Agape and Irene (*LA* v. 1, 76; and Katherine Chapter, 258-259). Virgin Martyrs' concealment recalls Edenic imagery, however, their bodies are not hidden for their sins, but for their onlookers'. See Genesis 3:7–21 for Adam and Eve's sin and consequent concealments. For further Edenic imagery, see below 129 n. 160.

[54] This association between concealment and chastity does not arise with Christian authors. Livy's chaste women, for example, are also enclosed women (S. R. Joshel, "The Body Female and the Body Politic: Livy's Lucretia and Verginia" in *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World: Readings and Sources*. ed. Laura K. McClure. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002, 162–190 at 176).

[55] Tertullian, *De uirginibus uelandis*, ed. E. Dekkers. CCSL 2. Turnhout: Brepols, 1954, 1207–1226. Biblical letters address the veiling of women and the appropriate dressing of their hair (I Corinthians 11:5–15, I Timothy 2:9, and I Peter 3:3–4). For a brief survey of the "Biblical and Patristic Background" of the focus on women's concealment, see Dyan Elliott, "Dress as a Mediator between Inner and Outer Self: the Pious Matron of the High and Later Middle Ages" *Mediæval Studies* 53 (1991): 279–308 at 280–284. See also Lynda L. Coon's discussion of the early Church's position on women's concealment and dress (*Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, 36–41).

[56] Tertullian, *De uirginibus uelandis*, 15.

and threatening virginity.[57] Jerome recalls the warning in Gospel of Matthew that adultery may be committed with a lustful glance.[58] This passage, which emphasizes the impact of a gaze upon the virgin body, is followed by Jerome's further caution to Eustochium: *Perit ergo, et mente virginitas* (Therefore, virginity perished even with a thought' 5). Jerome again urges virgins to protect themselves from licentious eyes: *Zelotypus est Jesus, non vult ab aliis videri faciem tuam* ('Jesus is jealous, He does not wish that your face be seen by others' 25). Ambrose's account of the Virgin of Antioch, however, begins by noting the dangers associated with this concealment (*De uirginibus* 2.4.22).[59]

> Antiochiae nuper virgo quaedam fuit fugitans publici visus: sed quo magis virorum evitabat oculos, eo amplius incendebat. Pulchritudo enim audita nec visa plus desideratur, duobus stimulis cupiditatum, amoris et cognitionis: dum et nihil occurrit quod minus placeat, et plus putatur esse quod placeat, quod non judex oculus explorat, sed animus amator exoptat.
>
> [Recently a certain virgin of Antioch was fleeing public view: but the more she was avoiding the eyes of men, the more she was enflaming (them). For beauty heard about but not seen is more desired, with two stimuli for longing, for love and for knowledge: and as long as nothing met that which pleases less, and is more considered to be that which pleases, that which the eye as judge does not explore, but for which the mind as lover longs.]

Ambrose defends the Virgin of Antioch's enclosure by claiming she thwarted men's lust with professions of chaste intentions. Regardless of these potential perils, the tradition promoting the dangerous lustful gaze continues into the later Middle Ages.

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[57] Jerome, *Epistle 22*, *Ad Eustochium*, in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulæ, Pars I: Epistulæ I–LXX*. ed. Isidore Hilberg. CSEL 54. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996, 143–211. Miller discusses this assertion by Jerome in her examination of this letter ("The Blazing Body" 25–26).

[58] Matthew 5:28.

[59] Eleusius only *sees* Juliana and falls in love in *Iuliene* (5). The same occurs in *Marherete* when Olibrius *sees* Margaret (6, ll. 9–12). Salih discusses the romantic presentation of these scenes (57, 59–61). Winstead notes the dangers of a glance (*Virgin Martyrs*, 48–50). For the connection between sight and lovesickness, see Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and its Commentaries*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990, 132–135.

The author of *Ancrene Wisse* (early thirteenth century) writes extensively on the perils associated with both the anchoress gazing out at others and others gazing in at her. In regard to risks associated with sight, the anchoress is warned to protect herself against *lecherie* ('lechery' 2.131), who wages war *with schute of eche* ('with arrows from the eyes' 2.130), and is encouraged to keep herself tightly enclosed.[60] When in the presence of a man she is instructed to *draheth ow wel in-ward ant te veil adun toward ower breoste, ant sone doth the clath ayein ant festnith hete-veste* ('draw yourself well inward and your veil down toward your breast, and immediately replace the cloth again and fasten it securely' 2.182–183). To allow oneself and one's beauty to be seen is an invitation to the lustful desires of others, and to allow oneself to see others is an invitation to awaken one's own lecherous appetite.

Just as others actively strip Agnes' body, so another conceals it. The saint does not make a protest against her disrobement nor a prayer for her concealment, however.[61] Although Agnes' body is covered more than once by celestial intervention, the first concealment, in particular, has special practical and symbolic meaning for women. I Corinthians attests that women should have long hair and *gloria est illi quoniam capilli pro*

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[60] This edition inserts a segment conveying the urge for enclosure from the French *Vitellius* text, which supplies the missing segment of CCCC MS (*Ancrene Wisse*, 2.161–199). For longer passages on the perils of sight, see 2.1–199 and 2.495–649. See Elizabeth Robertson's discussion on the tendency in *Ancrene Wisse* to place the onus of sin upon the anchoress who lets herself be seen (*Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990, 48–54). *Hali Meiðhad* also notes this danger claiming lechery's *forme fulst is sihðe* ('first help is sight' 8, l. 8). The devil in *Marherete* drives young men and women to sin by shooting at and wounding them *wið luuefule lates, wið steape bihaldunge* ('with loving looks, with passionate gazing' 32, l. 17). For the utilization of battle-imagery in *Ancrene Wisse*, see Juliana Chapter, 172–175.

[61] For Agnes' behavior regarding her body, see below 124–130.

velamine ei dati sunt ('it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering' 11:15). Agnes' legend exercises the literal extreme of this statement.

Concealing the Virgin Body: Hair

Agnes' legend is arguably the best known of those that employ this hiding motif.[62] Damasus' fourth-century account already relates Agnes' public despoilment and subsequent concealment by hair. Damasus claims (*Carmen* 29, ll. 5–8):

> Urere cum flammis voluisset nobile corpus,
> Viribus immensum parvis superasse timorem,
> Nudaque perfusos crines, et membra dedisse,
> Ne Domini templum facies peritura videret.
>
> [She had wished that her noble body burn with flames,
> She has survived great fear with little effort,
> And naked has applied overspread hair to limbs,
> So a face about to perish would not see the temple of the Lord.]

This scene does not always appear in Agnes' accounts, despite its popularity and early inclusion. Some authors, early and late, omit her concealment.[63] Ambrose and Prudentius, for instance, make no mention of this miraculous shielding. This is somewhat surprising since Prudentius does include a similarly motivated hair-concealment in his Eulalia

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[62] Secundus' torment scene is reminiscent of a Virgin Martyr's in the *LA*. The prefect *iussit eum expoliari. Statimque angelus domini ibi affuit et uestem sibi parauit* ('ordered him to be stripped. And immediately an angel of the Lord appeared there and prepared a garment for him' v. 1, 372). Torture on the rack and subsequent angelic healing follow (v. 1, 372–373).

[63] For the motif a naked woman being clothed in her own hair, see Thompson, F555.3.1 and H1054.2. For similar hair motifs, see F848.1, T327.7, B81.9.1, and V462.5.1.

account.[64] When the twelve years old Eulalia suffers her final torment, being burned alive, the young virgin's hair becomes a focal point (3.151–160).[65]

crinis odorus ut in iugulos
fluxerat involitans umeris,
quo pudibunda pudicitia
virgineusque lateret honos,
tegmine verticis opposito (155)
flamma crepans volat in faciem
perque comas vegetata caput
occupat exsuperatque apicem;
virgo citum cupiens obitum
appetit et bibet ore rogum. (160)

[Her sweet-smelling hair, which trailing
over her shoulders had flowed onto her throat[66]
where it concealed her modest chastity
and a virgin's honor,
with the exposed covering of her head
crackling fire flies onto her face
and (the fire) invigorated by her hair grasps
her head and surmounts its peak;
the virgin desiring a quick death
strives (for death) and drinks in the fire through her mouth.][67]

Eulalia, who is most likely disrobed during this torment, receives at least partial covering by her hair; however, a complete covering is also expected in Prudentius' version of Agnes' legend.[68] Although Prudentius does not relate a similar covering in Agnes' account, he does allude to the naked display of her body. He includes a scene in which she is stripped and publicly exhibited. Most onlookers, however, turn their eyes away from the virgin in

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[64] Burrus notes Prudentius' Eulalia is a combination of Agnes in Ambrose's *De uirginibus*, the *Hymn*, and Damasus' *Carmen 29* ("Reading Agnes," 33). Palmer also provides a summary of the development of Prudentius' version of Eulalia's legend (239–241).
[65] Burning is traditionally Agnes' final torment as well, see Appendix B. Ælfric's Agnes claims she experiences baptism while within fire. Untouched by the fire itself, she is baptized by the extinguishing water (*Natale Sancte Agnetis*, ll. 216–242). Apollonia unexpectedly leaps into the flames seeking her martyrdom (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 6.41.7).
[66] For the throat's symbolism, see Katherine Chapter, 222 n. 67.
[67] Miles discusses the necessity of women's unbound hair in baptism as "a reiteration of the literal nakedness of the female candidate for baptism" (48). Eulalia's unbound hair is thus appropriate as she receives baptism of fire. When the philosophers in Katherine's legend are burned, their baptism of fire is explicitly stated (Capgrave, 5.190–329, see also n. 209–80).
[68] Eulalia's breasts and sides are tortured prior to her burning (Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 3.131–135). For disrobement preceding breast torment, see Agatha Chapter, 40–41.

respect for her modesty.[69] The one who dares to look upon her is struck blind.[70] Ambrose also neglects to mention her hair-concealment, but his Agnes professes aversion to desiring gazes immediately prior to her death: *Pereat corpus quod amari potest oculis quibus nolo* ('Let this body perish, which can be loved by those eyes; I do not wish (that to happen)' *De uirginibus* 1.2.9). Aldhelm and Bede similarly fail to include this concealment in their writings.

When God bestows the hair covering upon Agnes, it is considered more modest and protective than her former garments. The *Vita* depicts an immediate response from God when the order to strip the saint is given (716):

> Statim autem ut expoliata est, crine resoluto, tantam densitatem capillis ejus divina gratia concessit, ut melius videretur eorum fimbriis quam vestibus tecta.
>
> [Immediately, however, as soon as she was stripped, with her hair having been unbound, divine grace granted such density to her hair, that she, having been covered with her hairs, was seen (to be) better (clothed) than with garments.]

Ælfric also includes this miracle, declaring Agnes' hair *befeng hi eall abutan* ('surrounded her all about' *Natale Sancte Agnetis*, l. 145b) and *behelede on ælce healfe gelice* ('covered likewise on every side' l. 147) as soon as her garments are removed. The *Legenda aurea*, unlike the *Vita*, does not explicitly state that Agnes is despoiled before her hair covers her body (v. 1, 171):

> Tantam autem densitatem capillis eius dominus contulit ut melius capillis quam uestibus tegeretur.
>
> [However, the Lord bestowed such a great density to her hair that she would be covered better by her hair than by garments.]

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[69] The crowd viewing Perpetua and Felicitas' martyrdom was similarly affected (*Perpetuæ* 20.2–3).
[70] Prudentius, 14.38–49. For blindness as a motif, see Katherine Chapter, 257–259. Wogan-Browne mentions the ineffective and self-destructive male gaze in the lives of Virgin Martyrs ("Virgin's Tale" 178–179).

It is reasonable to assume, simply due to narrative necessity, that she is stripped here. The *South English Legendary*, however, relates her hair grows *ar hure smok were of inome* ('before her shift was taken off' *Agneta*, l. 47). Bokenham adheres to the structure of the *Vita*, but does not expressly reference her *nakydnesse* until she is, once again, covered (ll. 4358–4364).[71]

> But as sone as þis mayde dyspoylyd was,
> The bendys from hir here a-wey dede slyde,
> And swych thyknesse þere-to god yaf by grace (4360)
> Þat hire it enuyround on euery syde,
> And alle hir nakydnesse fully dede hyde,
> So þat bettyr curyde, as in sum degre,
> Wyth hir heer þan wyth clothys she semt to be.
>
> [But as soon as this maid was despoiled,
> The bonds from her hair did slide away,
> And such thickness God gave thereto by grace
> So that it surrounded her on every side,
> And all her nakedness fully did hide,
> So that better cured, as in some degree,
> With her hair than with clothes she seemed to be.]

Bokenham additionally strives to divert attention away from the sexual nature of the scene by referring to Agnes as *arayid ful deuouthly* ('very devoutly arrayed' l. 4365).

The long flowing hair, which surrounds Agnes, suggests a number of symbolic meanings, particularly in the later Middle Ages. The sexual connotations, marital status, and regal position indicated by this style of hair are particularly relevant to Agnes' legend.[72] Kim M. Phillips discusses the paradoxical significance of maidens' hair in late-medieval English culture.

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[71] Delany, 164. Delany also notes Agatha is Bokenham's only other 'naked' saint. Agatha is *al naked* ('completely naked' l. 8783) before being rolled over coals.
[72] Miles claims loose hair denotes sexual status and implies sexual availability (48–51).

> Loose unbound hair signified an apparently contradictory state – at once sexually attractive and available, and virginal. It is therefore the sign *par excellence* of maidenhood, an age in which sexual desirability and virginity are intermingled.[73]

Phillips examines the extensive use of this imagery in Virgin Martyr lives as well as other literature depicting young medieval women, such as the Pearl Maiden.[74] The Pearl Maiden's physical description includes (*Pearl*, ll. 213–214):

> As schorne golde schyr her fax thenne schon
> On schylderes that leghe unlapped lyghte.
>
> [Bright as shorn gold her hair then shone
> That lay lightly loosened on (her) shoulders.]

Peter J. Lucas cites the varied significance of the Pearl Maiden's hairstyle in the mid- to late-fourteenth century, stating: "Only three kinds of females wore their hair free-flowing: unmarried girls, brides, and queens."[75] Agnes, as Lucas notes for the Pearl Maiden, is understood to obtain these three titles within her legend.[76] The traditional presentation of brides and queens entails women's hair being "loose and uncovered."[77] This practice also appears in nuns' veiling ceremony. During the symbolic marriage, a nun's "clothing and her long hair mark(s) her social and sexual status, in particular her availability for marriage and her feminine submissiveness."[78] While long flowing hair is appropriate for a bride awaiting an earthly bridegroom, such copious amounts of unbound hair are proportionally fitting for

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[73] Phillips, 46.
[74] Lomperis discusses the similar sexual status of Verginia in Chaucer's *Physician's Tale* (22–23). For a description of the maiden's hair, see *The Physician's Tale*, ll. 37–38. Winstead shows Katherine of Alexandria's iconography often presents her as having shoulder-length hair, making her an exception to the depictions of long–haired Virgin Martyrs ("St. Katherine's Hair" in *St. Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*. ed. Jenkins, Jacqueline. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003, 171–199).
[75] Peter J. Lucas, " The Pearl-Maiden's Free-Flowing Hair," *English Language Notes* 15 (1977–78): 94–5. Miles also notes that loosened hair signifies unmarried status (49).
[76] Lucas, 95.
[77] Phillips, 46.
[78] Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, 130.

the saint awaiting her heavenly bridegroom. Agnes' concurrent positions of resolutely unmarried woman and Christ's bride are evident at the outset of her legend. The third position of queen, although not as clearly illustrated as the other two, is also promised.

Like many saints, Agnes is assured a 'crown' as a reward for her sacrifice.[79] From the earliest accounts she is praised for winning double martyrdom, preserving her religion and her virginity. While Augustine describes Agnes as *merito coronabatur* ('was being crowned with merit' 4.6), Ambrose gives the more poetic interpretation of virginal martyrdom: *Habetis igitur in una hostia duplex martyrium, pudoris et religionis. Et virgo permansit, et martyrium obtinuit* ("You have, therefore, in one victim a double martyrdom, of modesty and religion. She not only remained a virgin, but also obtained martyrdom" *De uirginibus* 1.2.9).[80] Prudentius similarly claims (14.7–9):

> Duplex corona est præstita martyri,
> Intactum ab omni crimine virginal,
> Mortis deinde gloria liberæ.
>
> [A double crown of martyrdom was offered to her,
> Her maidenhead untouched from all sin,
> then the glory of freeing death.]

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[79] Crowns are a common reward for both male and female martyrs. Damasus relates Christ *diadema duplex decorat* ('decorates (Agatha) with a double diadem' *Carmen 30*, l. 4). Ambrose's Virgin of Antioch speculates: *Hodie aut martyr, aut virgo: altera in nobis invidetur corona* ('Today either martyr or virgin: one crown is begrudged me' *De uirginibus* 2.4.24). Aldhelm's Anatolia receives a double crown (*CDV*, ll. 2444–2445). Lucy is promised twofold purity in Ælfric's work and doubled chastity in the *LA* (below 133–135).

[80] The best known crowning among Virgin Martyrs is Cecilia's. An angel gives Cecilia and Valerian two crowns of lilies, symbolizing purity, and of roses, symbolizing martyrdom. For this scene, see *Ceciliæ* (333–334), Aldhelm (*DV*, 292), Ælfric (*Passio Sanctæ Cecilie*, ll. 72–116), the *LA* (v. 2, 1182–1183), Chaucer (*The Second Nun's Tale*, ll. 218–259), and Bokenham (ll. 7642–7731). Similarly, Chrysanthus and Daria receive crowns together in martyrdom (*Dariæ*, 483F; and Aldhelm, *CDV* l. 1244). Julian and Basilissa smell a lily and a rose, which indicate their reward (*Basilissa*, 577 and Ælfric, *Passio Sancti Iuliani et sponse eius Basilisse*, ll. 32–48).

Prudentius mentions her double crown twice more in the account.[81] Whether stated explicitly, or implied by her status as a Virgin Martyr, the promise of such a crown is certain. The expected crown promises not only the twofold rewards of virginal martyrdom, but also expresses her position as the bride of Christ, King of Heaven.[82] Through this union, Agnes will thus become a queen of Heaven.[83] Her exposed lengthened hair prefigures this coronation, thereby increasing the significance of the anticipated crown.

Due to the complex significance associated with women's hair, the deprivation of long hair by forced cutting is depicted as a punishment. In fifteenth-century London, women "convicted of bawdry had their hair cut or head shaved" and "(a) common whore" earned "the cutting of hair" upon a third offence.[84] Such 'defacement' of a feminine attribute also appears in holy women's lives. Christina's legend depicts the expected effect of this deprivation on women when she endures shaving among her many tortures.[85]

Traditionally, Christina's second persecutor orders her head to be shaved as part of his efforts to shame the saint publicly. *Christinæ* relates this torment: *Tunc judex jussit eam ablatis crinibus decalvari et nudam per publica trahi* ('Then the judge ordered that she be shorn with her hair removed and that she be dragged naked through the public places'

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[81] Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 14.119–123 and 127.
[82] Phillips explores crowns' symbolism for martyrs and other women (46, 49–51).
[83] Agnes is, like all brides of Christ, a queen, not the Queen, of Heaven. Not even Katherine as the supreme Bride challenges the Blessed Virgin for the title.
[84] Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 15. Karras explores prostitutes' punishments stated in the *Liber albus,* "a fifteenth-century compilation of London's customary law" (15). Phillips also cites this law (46).
[85] The early fourth-century martyr Crispina is also sentenced to this torment. Her persecutor specifically orders that her hair be shorn in order to deform her and mar her beauty (*Passio Sanctæ Crispinæ* 3.1 in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 302–309). See I Corinthians in which Paul suggests shearing a woman's head as punishment for not properly covering it (11:4–6). See also Coon for Biblical treatment of appropriate hair and dress (32–34).

527C). Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* conveys the aesthetic sense of damage performed upon the virgin stating that *venusti capitis deformatio* ('the deformation of her attractive head') does not affect the virgin *quamvis flava cæsaries raderetur et per publicum decalvata traheretur* ('although her golden flowing hair is shaved and she, having been shorn, is dragged through the public space' *De uirginitate*, 301). This penalty is listed alongside her various other torments including whipping and drowning and is understood to be similarly traumatic.

The *Legenda aurea* adheres to the structure of her *passio*, while the *South English Legendary* increases this scene's painful nature with the naked Christina being publicly presented before having burning coals applied to her shorn head.[86] Bokenham includes the shaving, burning coals, and journey to the temple, but typically fails to mention her nakedness.[87] An important detail in *Christinæ*, the *South English Legendary*, and Bokenham's version is the noted reaction of the women witnessing this particular trial. The onlooking women are deeply affected by this spectacle in these three works. *Christinæ* states (527C):

> Hæc videntes mulieres clamabant, dicentes: Injuste judicas et confundis genus mulierum.
>
> [The women seeing this were crying out, saying: You sentence unjustly and defeat womankind.]

The women in the *South English Legendary* rebuke the judge for this sex-specific punishment more extensively (*Cristina*, ll. 243–246):

> Iustice hi seide þou art an vnwreste man
> Þat þou so ssenfolliche defoulest a womman
> In ssennesse of alle oþere boþe nou and er

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[86] *LA* v. 1, 649. *SEL*, *De Sancta Cristina*, ll. 238–246, hereafter *Cristina*. For the entire account, see the *SEL* v. 1, 315–327.
[87] Bokenham, ll. 2747–2754.

Alas þat eny womman so luþer mon ber

['Justice,' they said, 'you are a wicked man
That you so sinfully defile a woman
To the injury of all others both now and before
Alas that any woman should bear so evil a man.']

The women in Bokenham's *Legendys* voice a similar admonishment (ll. 2750–2754):

And when wommen þis seyn of þis cyte,
Thei cryid, & seyd, 'o juge, þi decre
Is wroung & wrocht ful vnrychtfully,
For in [þis] mayde als mych as in þe
All wommen þou confoundyst utirly.'

[And when the women of this city saw this
They cried and said, 'O judge, your decree
Is wrong and is wrought very unjustly,
For in [this] maid, as much as in yourself,
You utterly defeat all women.']

The expressed sentiment of these speeches is reminiscent of Agatha's chastisement of Quintianus regarding her breast removal.[88] The laments of these women convey the sense of shame that such injury is expected to have for women. Their collective outrage also suggests that Christina's hair is as symbolically relevant to her female body as Agatha's breast is to hers.[89]

The removal of hair is not, of course, always a torment in saints' lives; transvestite saints such as Theodora, Eugenia, and Margaret/Pelagius assume male hairstyles along with male garments.[90] Rudolph M. Bell asserts that a conventional act for a holy anorexic is the

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[88] See Agatha Chapter, 49–51. For a similar speech in Agnes' legend, see below 129.
[89] For Christina's reaction to the removal of her breast, see Agatha Chapter, 67 n. 139. It is interesting to note the exchange of characteristic feminine attribute from breast to hair in Christina's legend. Winstead also notes this connection between Agatha, Agnes, and Christina's speeches in the *SEL* (*Virgin Martyrs*, 76).
[90] For Theodora, see the *LA* v. 1, 611–615. For Eugenia, see Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Eugenie* ll. 48–51. For Margaret/Pelagius, see the *LA* v. 2, 1036–1037. For admonition against women wearing male dress and vice versa, see Deuteronomy 22:5. Schulenburg provides several accounts of women who also assume a tonsure and male dress (155–164). She notes "that in a fifth-century version of the *Acts of St. Paul*" Thecla

cutting of her own hair in hopes "that she may become more beautiful in God's eyes."[91] As an example, he mentions Catherine of Siena's self-shearing, which was intended to convince her family of her commitment to virginity and desire for a religious life.[92] The varied reasons for these self-chosen deprivations, nonetheless, have the shared intention of diminishing sexual appeal. Agnes' exceptional growth of hair may conversely be read to signify increased sexual appeal.

Agnes' exceedingly long, unsecured hair arguably symbolically heightens her virginal sensuality and, although providing a shield against lecherous eyes, augments desire. The virgin's attractiveness, apparent from the opening of the *Vita*, is assumed to be, at least in part, the ongoing fuel for this lust.[93] Thomas J. Heffernan states the tormenter's expectations regarding her physical beauty: "From the point of view of the antagonist, such beauty should submit to the dictates of nature and should be for sexual gratification."[94] Heathen onlookers expect to be rewarded with exposure of the lovely young girl's body, but the sudden and miraculous growth of her hair curtails their licentious hopes. Although she cannot be violated visually, Agnes is still led to the brothel. The virgin, for the moment, safe from penetration of male eyes, next must brave penetration of rape. Agnes, the bride of Christ, however, is shielded through a second heavenly intervention from not only lustful eyes, but also lustful bodies.

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believes "the removal of her 'beguiling' hair would permit her to avoid the looks of the over curious, while the male disguise would preserve her from torture" (156).

[91] Bell, 19.

[92] Bell, 39–42. Bell also relates this action by Smiralda, a beautiful fourteen year-old girl, who wished to become a nun and cut off her hair as an indication of this desire (143).

[93] The *Vita* asserts: *pulchra facie, sed pulchrior fide* ('her form was beautiful, but her faith was more beautiful' 715). The *LA* repeats this (v. 1, 169). Ælfric (*Natale Sancte Agnetis,* l. 13) and Bokenham (ll. 4117–4119) make similar statements.

[94] Heffernan, 280.

Concealing the Virgin Body: White Clothing

The *Vita* asserts that once covered by her hair, the saint directly enters the brothel, where an angel meets her (716).[95]

> Ingressa autem turpitudinis locum, Angelum Domini illic præparatum invenit, ut circumdaret eam immense lumine, ita ut nullus posset eam præ splendore nec contingere nec videre. Fulgebat enim tota cella illa, quasi radians sol in virtute sua: et quanto quis curiosior oculis esse voluisset, tanto sibi visus acies obtundebatur. Cumque se in orationem Domino prostravisset, apparuit ante oculos ejus stola candissima. Et apprehendens eam induit se, et dixit: Gratias tibi ago Domine Jesu Christe, qui me in numero ancillarum tuarum computans, vestem hanc mihi largiri præcepisti. Ita namque ad mensuram corpusculi ejus aptum erat indumentum, et ita nimio candore conspicuum, ut nullus dubitaret hoc non nisi Angelicis manibus præparatum.
>
> [However, (Agnes) having entered the place of indecency, found there prepared (for her) an Angel of the Lord, that surrounded her with a great light, so that none were able either to touch or to see her because of the splendor. For that entire room was shining, as if the sun (were) shining in her virtue: and the more curious one would have wished to be with his eyes, so much his sharpness of vision would be stunned from it. And when she had prostrated herself in prayer to the Lord, a very white gown appeared before her eyes. And seizing it she clothed herself, and said: "I give thanks to you, Lord Jesus Christ, who, counting me in the ranks of your handmaidens, ordered this garment to be lavished upon me." So for surely the garment was made for the measurement of her little body, and thus visible with so much brightness, that no one would doubt that it was prepared by Angelic hands.]

This scene with the angel, blinding light, and heavenly vestment appears in later accounts as well. Aldhelm relates that despite the new sinful surroundings, Agnes, deprived of her clothing, *tamen corusco immensi luminis splendore vallata angelicis fruitur conspectibus et peplis donatur dominicis* ('nevertheless, having been surrounded by the gleaming splendor of a great light, delights in angelic appearances and is given the regal robes of her Lord' *De*

[95] Prudentius includes the blinding light but does not provide covering.

uirginitate, 299).[96] When Ælfric's Agnes enters, she also discovers a *scinende godes encgel* ('shining angel of God' *Natale Sancte Agnetis*, l. 149) illuminating the brothel with light that blinds all who would dare to look upon or touch Agnes.[97] The angel then gives her a *scinende tunecan* ('shining tunic' l. 155), the substance and sight of which proclaim its divine creation. The *Legenda aurea*, directly quoting sections from the *Vita* asserts (v. 1, 171):

> Ingressa autem turpitudinis locum angelum domini preparatum inuenit, qui locum claritate nimia circumfulsit sibique stolam candissimam preparauit.
>
> [However, (Agnes) having entered the place of indecency, found prepared (for her) an angel of the Lord, who shone around the place with a very great brightness and prepared for her a very white gown.]

The *South English Legendary*, however, delays the angel's appearance fourteen lines from Agnes' entrance.

The time lapse between Agnes' arrival and her receiving the robe is especially stressed in this account. While other versions have a similar narrative delay, the interval present in the *South English Legendary* calls attention to the nakedness of Agnes as she resides in the brothel.[98] When Agnes first arrives *so uol was þe stude of liȝte* ('so full of light was the place' *Agneta*, l. 55) that the light shields her completely. Only after multiple conversions and a prayer by Agnes, does an angel appear to the naked girl, *(a) rochet inis hond* ('(a) robe in his hand' l. 70).

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[96] In *CDV*, the light appears when Agnes is imprisoned prior to the brothel (ll. 1949–1951). There is, however, no vestment. Prudentius' blinding light by means of thunderbolt also appears before the brothel (14.43–49). Malamud argues that Agnes herself throws this lighting bolt and likens the saint to the mythical Medusa (*A Poetics of Transformation*, 163–164). Elisabeth G. Gitter also makes a connection between Agnes and Medusa. Gitter, however, discusses their supernatural hair's testifying aspects ("The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination" *PMLA*, 99.5 (Oct. 1984): 939).
[97] For Ælfric's entire brothel scene, see *Natale Sancte Agnetis,* ll. 148–206.
[98] See the prolonged treatment of Agatha's breast torment in the *SEL*, Agatha Chapter, 43–47.

Bokenham's account, which also contains a similar delay, has the angel greet Agnes *wyth lycht hir to curyn* ('with light to cover her' l. 4369) and ensures she is *fully enuyround* ('fully encircled' l. 4370). Bokenham's Agnes is not exposed even for a moment once she enters the brothel. She exchanges her garment of light soon after for the *whyht stole* ('white stole' l. 4383). This version, like Ælfric's (ll. 156–159), also echoes the description of the garment's perfect fit that is found in the *Vita*.[99] Bokenham stresses the stole's whiteness, mentioning it four times, further emphasizing her purity.[100] This heavenly vestment also foreshadows her martyrdom and fulfillment of her status as Christ's bride.

The imagery provided by the white garment and loose hair is not only bridal, but also baptismal.[101] In early-Christian baptismal ceremonies, catechumens would receive white garments after their naked immersion. The white garment here signifies that the catechumen "has truly received a new life of which the baptism is a prefiguration."[102] Agnes dressed in white simultaneously prepares for her baptism and wedding in the single act of

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[99] Bokenham, ll. 4395–4399. Angels in Christina of Markyate's legend present her a white crown of celestial craftsmanship (128.52).

[100] Bokenham also mentions a *newe & whyht uestyment* ('new and white vestment' l. 4392), a cloth *(w)ych as whyht was as snow or lyly* ('which was as white as snow or a lily' l. 4394), and a *whyht garnement* ('white garment' l. 4473). Phillips discusses the symbolism of white clothing (46–47). She claims Virgin Martyrs do not wear white and references the Pearl Maiden's attire (47). For other occurrences of white clothing, see Thompson, F821.6 and E425.1.1; and for white symbolism Z142. For Agnes' white imagery, see also below 121–124.

[101] Miles, 36–40, and 48. See also Thecla's self-performed baptism and miraculous shielding by a "cloud of fire" during her torments as well as her subsequent donning of new garments (*Thecla* 33–38).

[102] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Garments of Shame" *History of Religions* 5 (1966): 217–238 at 227, see also 224–228. The ceremony additionally includes a candidate's 'stripping' prior to immersion. Laurie Guy discusses the extent of nakedness, particularly female nakedness, in baptism ("'Naked' Baptism in the Early Church: The Rhetoric and the Reality" *Journal of Religious History* 27.2 (June 2003): 133–142).

martyrdom. Her one death stroke results in a double crown recalling the inverted imagery of the Book of Revelation 7:14:[103]

> hii sunt qui veniunt de tribulatione magna et laverunt stolas suas et dealbaverunt eas in sanguine agni
>
> [These are they who are come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.]

The red crown of martyrdom, symbolizing the blood of martyrdom as well as the blood of Christ, washes Agnes clean while the white crown, symbolizing purity, consummates her union with Christ the bridegroom.

The motif of holy persons and/or celestial beings identified by white or shining clothing is a common motif found in a variety of sources. Christ appears in garments that are *alba sicut nix* ('white as snow' Gospel of Matthew 17:2) during the Transfiguration,[104] and the women who approach Christ's tomb after the Resurrection meet an angel *erat autem aspectus eius sicut fulgur et vestimentum eius sicut nix* ('And his countenance was as lightning and his raiment as snow' 28:3).[105] The virginal purity of the Pearl Maiden is evidenced by her adornment of pearls and white garment.[106] The married Margery Kempe attests that Christ directed her to wear white; however, her white clothing, deemed

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[103] See also Psalm 50:9 (Psalm 51:9 in NRSV): *asparges me hysopo et mundabor lavabis me et super nivem dealbabor* ('Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow').

[104] The Gospel of Luke 9:29 claims His vestment *albus refulgens* ('became white and glittering') and the Gospel of Mark 9:2 asserts: *estimenta eius facta sunt splendentia candida nimis velut nix qualia fullo super terram non potest candida facere* ('his garments became shining and exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller upon earth can make white').

[105] The women in the Gospel of Luke 24:4 encounter two men *in veste fulgenti* ('in shining apparel') and those in the Gospel of Mark 16:5 meet one young man *coopertum stola candida* ('clothed with a white robe'). Mary Magdalene sees *duos angelos in albis* ('two angels in white') in the Gospel of John 20:12.

[106] *Pearl*, ll. 219–220. The Pearl Maiden's white skin is also stressed. For typical beauty attributes in Virgin Martyrs' lives, see Katherine Chapter, 221–224.

inappropriate for a matron, earns her poor public opinion and the anger of Church authority figures.[107]

Hagiographical texts conventionally describe angels, saints, and other holy figures, whose sanctity needs to be understood within the narrative structure as wearing 'shining' or 'white' garb.[108] Virgin Martyrs do not appear in white as often as other saints; however, Agnes is not alone in exhibiting this external sign of her purity; Bokenham's Faith is also arrayed *in a gowne / And a mantel snow-wyht* ('in a snow-white gown and mantel' ll. 3811–3812) and Bokenham's Cecilia also wears *a smok abouyn both whyt & feyre* ('a smok about her, both white and fair' l. 7468).[109] Although Agnes rejoices in her protective and symbolically rich white garment, her earlier speech portrays her anticipation of another, perhaps more symbolically complicated vestment.

Concealing the Virgin Body: Gold Clothing

As Agnes lists the riches that Christ has bestowed upon her as His betrothed, in the *Vita* she declares among the treasures: *Induit me cyclade auro texta* ('He clothed me with a

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[107] An Archbishop enquires of Margery during her trial: *"Why gost thu in white? Art thu a mayden?"* ('Why do you dress in white? Are you a maiden?' 1.2923). For Christ's order to Margery to wear white, see 1.1758–1761. For an example of general scorn see, 1.1960–1965. See also Mary C. Erler, "Margery Kempe's White Clothes" *Medium Ævum* 62, 1993, 78–83; and Dyan Elliott, "Dress as a Mediator" 294–296.
[108] Urban in Cecilia's legend, for example, is described as *senex quidam niueis uestibus indutus* ('a certain old man clothed in snow-white vestments' *LA* v. 2, 1182). Sulpicius Severus describes a vision of Martin in which the saint is *prætextum toga candida, uultu igneo, stellantibus oculis, crine purpeo* ('cloaked in a white toga, with his face blazing, his eyes like stars, and purple hair' *Epistula* 2.3). *The Life of Christina of Markyate* includes several appearances of white-garbed angels (74.23, 80.28, and 156.169).
[109] Cecilia traditionally wears a hairshirt covered by a gold garment. Bokenham deviates from this including a white smock between these two garments. For gold clothing, see below 171–121.

gown woven from gold' 715).[110] In Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*, Agnes repeats this line, as she does in the corresponding speech in the *Legenda aurea*. Agnes in Ælfric and Bokenham's works also mentions this garment.[111] The golden imagery presented early in the narrative appears again at the end of several of these texts.[112]

Some time after Agnes wins her martyrdom in the *Vita*, her parents hold vigil by her tomb and *vident in medio noctis silentio exercitum Virginum, quæ omnes auro textis cycladibus indutæ cum ingenti lumine præteribant* ('in the middle silence of the night see a multitude of Virgins, who, all clothed in gowns woven from gold, were passing by with a great light' 717).[113] The parents in Ælfric's account also encounter this celestial company dressed *mid gyldenum gyrlum* ('with golden garments' l. 252b).[114] The onlookers in the *South English Legendary*, which does not mention Agnes' golden robe in her speech, the *Legenda aurea*, and Bokenham's account also experience this visitation.[115]

As these virgins approach Agnes' family amidst the heavenly light, which recalls the protective light in the brothel, the saint emerges from their ranks.[116] The *Vita* states: *inter*

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[110] For this speech, see above 95–96. For a seventh-century mosaic from the Church of St. Agnes in Rome, which depicts Agnes dressed in a ornate robe with gold adornment and surrounded by golden hues, see Lanzi, 91. For the motif of wearing gold clothing, see Thompson, F821.1.5 and F821.3.
[111] For these speeches, see above 95–97.
[112] Ironically, Prudentius' account, which does not include the golden garment, claims Agnes *ridet* ('laughs' 14.96) at *inlusa pictæ vestis inania* ('scorned worthlessness of embroidered dress' 14.105).
[113] *DV* includes the golden robe imagery, but neither *DV* nor *CDV* relates her parents' vision.
[114] Eugenia, for example, also appears to her mother after her death (*LA* v. 2, 928). For visitation of saints, see Agatha Chapter, 71–84.
[115] *SEL*, *Agneta*, ll. 136–138. *LA* v. 1, 172. Bokenham, ll. 4614–4616. See also Appendix B.
[116] The light does not blind Agnes' parents. Although it is heavenly light, like that which blinded the would-be rapists, Agnes' parents, as believers, are able to see through the splendor. They are not, as the men in the brothel, spiritually blind. The parents, rejoicing in their daughter's glorious death, are rewarded for their faith with the indicative ability to possess ocular vision of this celestial vision. This clarity of vision also appears in Cecilia's legend. Valerian is unable to see Cecilia's guardian angel until he becomes a Christian and is baptized (*LA* v. 2, 1181–1183). Abou-El-Haj makes a similar point regarding the popular motif of the "blind beggar" in saints' lives (43–44).

quas vident beatissimam Agnetem simili veste fulgentem ('they see among those the most blessed Agnes shining in a similar garment' 717).[117] Ælfric's version, the *South English Legendary*, the *Legenda aurea*, and Bokenham's account all describe Agnes as being clothed in the same golden garb.[118] Agnes' white tunic has been traded for the golden robe promised in the opening scene. Her asserted honorable position as Christ's bride has now been achieved through her martyrdom and is symbolically recognized by yet another covering.

As noted above, Agnes' relinquishing of white garments for gold is potentially problematic. Unlike the white garment, which conveys a variety of 'appropriate' symbolic meanings for female martyrs (baptismal, bridal, virginal, pure, innocent), gold clothing often has contradicting and greatly 'inappropriate' symbolic meanings.[119] The use of gold to depict both earthly and celestial value does not permit golden imagery the same simplicity of symbolism as white imagery in saints' lives. The meaning of gold often is interpreted as: subjects with celestial gold are 'good', while those with earthly gold are 'bad'. This is not always the case in Virgin Martyr accounts, however.

References to gold clothing and adornment found in these accounts, however, are often connected with people exhibiting or representing solely earthly values. Aphrodisia, for example, informs Quintianus that she offered Agatha *vestimenta auro texta* ('garments

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[117] Ælfric's Eugenia also dons gold and is surrounded by a heavenly company when she returns to her mother in a vision (*Natale Sancte Eugenie*, ll. 417–418).
[118] Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Agnetis*, ll. 251–253. *SEL*, *Agneta*, ll. 136–140. *LA* v. 1, 172. Bokenham (ll. 4613–4619).
[119] Coon discusses the treatment of women's ornate dress in the Biblical tradition (31–32). See also the golden imagery in Psalm 44 (Psalm 45 in the NRSV) in which a golden robed bride and a retinue of virgins are described.

woven from gold' *Acta S. Agathæ*, 621F) while attempting to corrupt the saint.[120] The family of Agnes' suitor strives to entice the virgin with a variety of riches. A gold garment is not specifically mentioned, however.[121] Agatha and Agnes, fittingly, staunchly refuse temptation. Such finery is not only worn or offered by antagonists in these texts, however. Some Virgin Martyrs don such array as a result of their worldly stations and high social status.[122] The pre-converted Daria, who is consistently depicted as a virtuous and learned Vestal Virgin, first appears before Chrysanthus in great splendor (*Dariæ*, 473E).[123]

> Tunc virgo nominee Daria, gemmis et aura radians, repente ad Chrysanthum quasi sol radians, constanter ingreditur, et quasi sub specie consolationis, tanta eum elegantia sermonis alloquitur, tantaque ingenii sui arte interserit, ut nisi esset saxo durior, pluma mollior redderetur.
>
> [Then the virgin named Daria, shining with gems and gold, suddenly (it seemed) to Chrysanthus as if the shining sun, steadily enters, and as if under an appearance of consolation, addresses him with such elegance of speech, and interposes with such art of her intellect, that unless he were harder than stone, he would be rendered softer than lead.]

The sumptuous scene depicts an alluring Daria, whose purpose is to sway Chrysanthus toward marriage.[124] Despite her intentions and regalia, she is not portrayed in a pejorative light. The future Christian displays the best the pagan world has to offer, and its best is

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[120] See Agatha Chapter, 28–31.
[121] *Vita*, 715.
[122] Eugenia's parents celebrate her return by dressing her in gold (Mombritius v. 2, 395; Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Eugenie*, ll. 253–254; *LA* v. 2, 928). Mombritius and Ælfric's accounts deliberately state this occurs against her will. This gold recalls the golden idol of Eugenia that her father erects earlier in the account when her family believes she is lost to them (Mombritius v. 2, 393; and Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Eugenie*, ll. 104–116). Margery Kempe uses an example from Exodus 3:21–22, which presents God's circumstantial approval of women's ornamentation of silver and gold, to defend her desire to wear white clothing along with the mantle and ring that accompanied a public vow of chastity (Erler, 79–81).
[123] For study on Vestal Virgins ambiguous and symbolic status, see Mary Beard, "Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins" *Journal of Roman Studies* 70 (1980): 12–27. Beard notes that, like Virgin Martyrs, Vestal Virgins "are seen as on the brink between virginal and marital status, but perpetually on the brink, perpetually fixed at the moment of transition from one category to another" (21).
[124] See above 89–90 for Chrysanthus and Daria's marriage.

impressive as will be seen even more so in Katherine's legend.[125] Her exquisite dress at the time of introduction is appropriate and forgivable for the future saint.[126] Daria does not undergo a reversal of Agnes' imagery and receive a white garment, however. Abandoning finery upon her conversion, Daria 'clothes herself in Christ.'[127] She no longer needs to be (or should be) concerned with worldly extravagance, nor should the reader, as is made clear by the drastic shift away from decadence in the narrative.

Cecilia as a noble Roman girl also dons a golden garment for her wedding to Valerian. Her hagiographers, aware of the potential contradiction, mitigate the impact of the golden apparel by asserting the saint wears a hairshirt beneath her fine attire.[128] Agnes, however, does not desire to abandon her clothing like Daria, nor does she seek to mollify the effect of her promised golden clothing with signs of penitence. Unlike these two brides, Agnes rejoices in the assurance of her golden wedding garment.[129] The promised vestment is woven from celestial gold, 'good' gold, to properly array her for marriage to her heavenly bridegroom. The earthly gold of Daria and Cecilia's garments is appropriate for

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[125] The learned, beautiful, and virtuous, yet pagan Daria is somewhat of a precursor of Katherine of Alexandria. For Katherine's qualities, particularly her intellectual abilities, see Katherine Chapter, 208–211. For Daria's attributes, see *Dariæ*, 473E.

[126] Daria's wardrobe, as with Judith's, provides hagiographers opportunities to indulge in extravagant descriptions without apology. The adornment of Judith, which is intended to attract a sinner in order to eradicate sin, lingers in the background of female saints' lives that include such ornamentation. For Judith's adornment, see Book of Judith 10:1–4.

[127] See Galatians 3:27. *quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induistis* ('For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ'). *Dariæ* claims she dons the veil after her wedding and baptism (476B). Aldhelm relates that she takes on a new garment from baptismal waters (*CDV* l. 1181). Agnes' 'clothing in Christ' is instead literally represented by the white vestment.

[128] For Cecilia's golden wedding attire, see *Ceciliæ*, 332–333; the *LA* v. 2, 1181; and Chaucer, *The Second Nun's Tale* ll. 132–133. See also Bokenham's *Legendys* in which Cecilia dons three layers: a hairshirt, a white stole, and a golden robe (ll. 7466–7471; see also above 116 n. 109).

[129] The significance of Agnes receiving *three* celestial coverings should also be recognized. Dyan Elliott addresses the association between women's finery and sexual activity in the High and later Middle Ages as wives were expected to dress attractively for their husbands' pleasure ("Dress as a Mediator" 298–302).

their worldly standing and marriage to mortal men. However, these women ultimately wish for union with the heavenly bridegroom and therefore must reject their rich attire.

Despite the positive image of gold and riches presented in Agnes' legend, the diversity of gold's interpretations, positive and negative, linger around depictions of such finery.[130] Virgin Martyrs are expected to scorn earthly riches since they yearn for Christ's presence. Agnes, accordingly, scorns transient riches, yet yearns for heavenly ones resulting from her union with her savior and bridegroom. Her legend strives to dissipate further these potential concerns and conflicts through continued association with Christ, not only as bridegroom, but also as the Lamb of God.

A Lamb as White as Snow

Agnes is traditionally associated with the lamb and one often accompanies or represents her in iconography.[131] The similarity between her name and the Latin name for lamb, *agnus/agna*, is highlighted by Augustine and is taken up by later authors as a favorite motif. Augustine relates this relationship in his *Sermo* 273: *Agnes latine agnam significant; græce, castam* ('Agnes means *lamb* in Latin; *chaste* in Greek,' 4.6). The *Legenda aurea* states:

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[130] Gold clothing and adornment are common in lives of reformed female saints, who are described as laden with gold and fine clothing prior to their conversions. The Anonymous Spanish Poet's *Life of Saint Mary the Egyptian* gives a detail description of Mary's earlier adornments (Ronald Pepin and Hugh Feiss, trans., *Saint Mary of Egypt: Three Medieval Lives in Verse*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2005, 123–124). See also the description of the pre-converted Pelagia (*LA* v. 2, 1033–1034).

[131] Lanzi, 90–92; and Émile Mâle, *Religious Art: From the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century*. USA: Noonday Press, 1964, 85. This association is still embraced today. "On her feast at Rome lambs are blessed which produce the wool from which pallia for archbishops are woven by the nuns at St. Agnes's convent" (Farmer, 8). See also Butler and Burns, *January*, 147–148. Other Virgin Martyrs' lives also contain lamb imagery. Juliana is referred to as *agna Christi* ('lamb of Christ' *Passio S. Iuliene* 14). Margaret states *Ich am mi lauerdes lomb, & he is min hirde* ('I am my Lord's lamb, and He is my shepherd' *Marherete* 28, ll. 25–26).

Agnes dicta est ab agna, quia mitis et humilis tamquam agna fuit ('She is called *Agnes* from *agna*, because she was as gentle and humble as a lamb' v. 1, 169). Bokenham mentions de Voragine's analysis and later exclaims to Agnes: *O holy lamb of god, o blyssyd agnete* ('O holy lamb of God, O blessed Agnes' l. 4091).[132] This imagery continues to promote Agnes' status and innocence as it again associates her with *the* Lamb, her beloved, Christ.

Some sources incorporate the purity associated with white imagery alongside the regality associated with gold imagery through the inclusion of a lamb in the post-martyrdom vision. As Agnes' parents gaze upon their daughter among the golden-robed virgins, they observe: *et ad dextram ejus agnum stantem nive candidiorem* ('and standing at her right hand, a lamb whiter than snow' *Vita*, 717). This scene also appears in the *South English Legendary* and in the *Legenda aurea*, which echoes the scene in the *Vita*.[133] The parents in Bokenham's account similarly observe (ll. 4620–4622):

> And on hir ryht hand a lamb ful swete
> Wyth hir walkyng besydyn hir fete,
> Wych þan snow was more whyhte,
>
> [And on her right hand a very sweet lamb,
> Which was whiter than snow,
> (Was) walking with her beside her feet]

The *South English Legendary* and Bokenham's work also unite Agnes and the lamb through reference to celestial whiteness. The *South English Legendary* describes Agnes' robe from the angel as *wittor[e] nemiȝte be[o] non* ('which could not be whiter' l. 70) and the lamb at the end of the work as *wittore þanne eny þing* ('whiter than anything' l. 141). Bokenham

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[132] For Bokenham's etymological association between Agnes and lamb, see ll. 4067–4070.
[133] The *SEL* relates: (*a*) *lomb wittore þanne eny þing ȝeode by hure riȝt side* ('a lamb whiter than anything walked by her right side' *Agneta* l. 141) and the *LA* reports: *a dextris eius agnum candidiorem niue stantem* ('standing by her right hand a lamb whiter than snow' v. 1, 172).

uses this same linking tactic when he portrays Agnes' divinely crafted garment from the angel (*w*)*ych as whyht was as snow or lyly* ('which was as white as snow or lily' l. 4394) and the lamb (*w*)*ych þan snow was more whyhte* ('which was whiter than snow' l. 4622).[134] The lamb in Agnes' accounts is not the Lamb of God, but the imagery recalls the Lamb of Revelation as well as Christ during the Transfiguration.[135] The Lamb of God appears to lend His iconography and traditional imagery to the saint's iconographic companion as similar portrayals are used to describe both Agnes' lamb and Christ. The shared language uniting lamb and Lamb, thus vouches for Agnes' virtue, even as she, if taken out of context, is adorned in symbolically questionable attire. These references connecting the previously white- but now gold-clad Agnes to an incomparably white lamb convey the virgin's lasting purity and innocence, and direct the proper interpretation of her new regalia.

The only garment Agnes anticipates throughout her various coverings is that promised by Christ. She is concerned with the garment designating her position as bride to her heavenly beloved. It is this bridegroom who is concerned with her worldly attire and physical safety in general. Agnes' usually dispassionate reaction to her stripped body reflects the disregard for physical perils and public exposures traditionally expressed by Virgin Martyrs.

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[134] Comparison to snow is not always positive in Biblical citations. It is also used to describe lepers whose skin is 'white as snow'. See, for example, Exodus 4:6 and 4 Kings 5:27 (2 Kings 5:27 in NRSV).
[135] See the Lamb of God in Revelation 5 onwards and the Lamb's marriage at Revelation 19:6–9. For the Transfiguration, see above 115. The Lamb of God, while not in Agnes' account, appears in *Pearl*. The wounded Lamb occupies Christ's position in a Virgin Martyr legend juxtaposed with an earthly suitor, in this case the narrator (Beal, 18–19). For this love triangle motif, see above 90–95. See also Sarah Stanbury's analysis of the bleeding Lamb's symbolism and importance in *Pearl* ("Feminist Masterplots: The Gaze on the Body of *Pearl*'s Dead Girl" in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*. eds. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, 97–115, at 100–102).

Shameless Virgins

Like other tortures executed upon these virgin bodies, public disrobement does not usually instill fear in Virgin Martyrs. Stripping by tormentors, however, is intended not only to humilate these women, but also to destroy their fundamental public image. The assumption of the malevolent impact of despoiling upon women stems from the same notion that drives early Christian authors to urge the veiling of women: women's perceived honor and value are directly related to their sexual behavior and status.[136]

> A woman's reputation rested on her sexuality, on a public demonstration that she was sexually exclusive. Shame, the defining quality of womanhood, meant that a woman understood her sexual vulnerability and was careful to avoid all appearances of sexual indiscretion.[137]

Despite Virgin Martyrs' stalwart preservation of their virginity and, presumably impeccable reputations, their exposed forms do not conventionally embarrass these women. Although some Virgin Martyrs urge their persecutors to enact punishments such as being devoured by beasts or burning by fire, the virgins do not encourage the displaying of their naked bodies.[138] Exposure of these young women's bodies usually takes place in conjunction with

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[136] See above 98–102. Certain hagiographers' awareness of this association is especially evident. Bokenham is reluctant to depict his saints naked (above 93 n. 31 and 105 n. 71). Jonathan Wilcox notes Ælfric's tendency to "downplay the emphasis on sex and bodily exposure, even when retelling lives where the exposed body is essential to the story" ("Naked in Old English: The Embarrassed and the Shamed" in *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*. eds. Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathan Wilcox. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003, 275–309 at 307).

[137] Karen Jo Torjesen, "Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History" in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction*. ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993, 302. See also Shaw, "The Passion of Perpetua" 7–9.

[138] The brothel/rape scenario is usually not used to provoke tormenters. Lucy urges this penalty, but only after her persecutors announce her intended violation (*LA* v. 1, 51–52). Juliana encourages Africanus to fulfill his threat and hand her over to Eleusius, a fate anticipating forced sexual acts (*Iuliene*, 17). See also Agatha (*LA* v. 1, 258), and Eulalia (Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 3.91–95) for examples of taunting persecutors with less sexualized tortures. Shaw notes the similar behavior of "pre-Christian" literary female figures ("The Passion of Perpetua" 9).

torments. Juliana, for example, is stripped prior to her first beating and again directly before her second. Even when Juliana's naked body is held aloft, the punishments in the scene are primarily understood to be 'hanging by the hair' and concurrent whippings.[139] Also exemplifying this standard are Margaret, who is stripped before being burned with torches; Thecla, who is thrown naked to the beasts; and Agatha, who is disrobed before being rolled over burning coals.[140] Agatha's legend demonstrates this during her breast torture as well.[141] The display of Agnes' body, however, is a torment unto itself.[142] Damasus' account, for instance, only includes her stripping and hair covering with no mention of her subsequent torment in the brothel.[143]

As Virgin Martyrs are assaulted and exposed during their trials, attention is drawn to the attractiveness and appeal of their bodies as the primary objective of the torments is recalled. The virgins, although made aware of their physical appeal through these trials (if they were not already aware), do not interpret their own value as their male persecutors do. The women do not fear physical destruction, but spiritual. Christina literally enacts this lack of concern by repeatedly throwing pieces of her mangled body at her persecutors.[144]

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[139] For the frequency of this scene in Juliana's legend, see Appendix C.
[140] For Margaret, see the *LA* v. 1, 617. For Thecla, see Ambrose, *De uirginibus*, 2.3.19 and *Thecla* 33. For Agatha, see the *LA* v. 1, 260; and Bokenham, ll. 8779–8784.
[141] See Agatha Chapter, 40–41. For Eulalia's presumed nakedness, see above 104. Christina is publicly stripped (above 109–111) separately from her breast amputation (*Christinæ*, 528A). Her upper-body is also likely exposed when two snakes suckle at her breasts (527F).
[142] See above 103–105.
[143] Damasus, *Carmen 29*, ll. 5–8. See above 103.
[144] Christina flings her shredded flesh at her father and her removed tongue at the judge (*Christinæ*, 526B and 528B; *LA* v. 1, 647 and 648; *SEL*, *Cristina*, ll. 153–162 and 329–348; and Bokenham, ll. 2467–2474 and 3051–3082). Delany interprets the father scene as parental rejection (87–88). For this motif, see Juliana Chapter, 189–196.

Virgin Martyrs' bodies are offered as sacrifice for preservation of that which is higher and more precious.

Shari Horner, using Juliana as an example, discusses conventional Virgin Martyr disregard for nakedness in an Augustinian context. Augustine states: *Ita quod in aliis personis plerumque flagitium est, in diuina uel prophetica persona magnae cuiusdam rei signum est* ('In this way what is frequently shameful in other persons is in a divine or prophetic person the sign of some great truth' *De doctrina Christiana*, 3.12.18)[145] Horner claims "readers must understand that there is no shame in [Juliana's] nakedness, because of the multiple ways in which her body figures Christ and the church."[146] These women present and offer their bodies in sacrifice, even unclad sacrifice. In this respect, as in others, the virgin is practicing *imitatio Christi*. While all martyrs are called to this role, Virgin Martyrs in particular are, like Christ, publicly stripped, displayed, and tormented.[147] As Christ's persecutors attempt to humiliate Him, so do the virgins' persecutors hope to disgrace them.

When examining the representation of male and female saints, the difference in depictions of women and men's exposed bodies in general is obvious. Rarely, in comparison to their female counterparts, are male martyrs' naked bodies focused upon so acutely and

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[145] Quoted from Horner, 116. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, in Opera IV.i. ed. Joseph Martin. CCSL 32. Turnhout: Brepols, 1962, 36. For translation, Horner uses *On Christian Doctrine*. trans. D. W. Robertson. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958.
[146] Horner, 116.
[147] See Agatha Chapter, 40–41. Penitential female saints exhibit the opposite extreme of bodily awareness. Wilcox asserts that Mary of Egypt's desire to cover her naked body, in the Old English account, is a reversal of her youthful desires for which she suppressed urges to conceal her nakedness in order to perform sexual acts (305–307).

extensively in either literary or artistic illustrations.[148] As Easton has noted in her examination of the thirteenth-century Pamplona Bible, even when it would be justifiable for men to be portrayed naked, such as in depictions of Saint Bartholomew who was flayed alive, the saint's body is positioned to hide and draw attention away from his genitalia. Easton further cites the work's depiction of Agnes, who is portrayed naked with her long hair cast behind her shoulders, blatantly disregarding the purpose of her hair.[149]

An apparent exception to this lack of concern over bodily exposure is the Virgin of Antioch. This virgin's behavior does not reflect the conventional stalwart bearing generally exhibited by these women. Ambrose relates that she displays *metum pudoris* ('fear for her modesty' *De uirginibus* 2.4.23) and *erubescentem ad aspectus* ('blushing at gazes' 2.4.23).[150] Once in the bordello a man approaches her and Ambrose reports *Quemadmodum eum virgo tremuit* ('How the virgin trembled before him' 2.4.28).[151] The Virgin of Antioch shows great courage in other instances, however. This is evident particularly in her death scene when she demands to be martyred alongside the converted soldier who exchanged places with her in the brothel. Ambrose uses battle imagery, likening her to a soldier.[152] Although her legend concludes with this act of bravery, she does not consistently convey

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[148] Miles, 59 and 156. Easton, " Pain, Torture, and Death" 57–61. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 107. Some male saints are depicted naked, of course, and some are even presented in a seemingly erotic manner. Sebastian, for example, is traditionally presented as beautiful youth stripped to the waist and pierced with arrows (Lanzi, 82; and Mills, *Suspended Animation*, 156–158 and 166).
[149] Easton, "Saint Agatha" 98–99, 106, and 115.
[150] For the impact of the gaze, see above 98–102. A possible explanation for Ambrose's emphasis her modesty is fourth-century Antioch's relaxed approach to nudity. The social practices concerning nudity would have been at odds with the Church's perceptions of shame and modesty (Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, 313–317). The pre-converted Pelagia, who is described as wearing luxurious clothing and having a lustful disposition, is from Antioch as well (*LA* v. 2, 1033).
[151] See also *LA* v. 1, 415–417. 'Trembling' before a potential sexual encounter could be read as anticipation or even joy, as in *Perpetuæ* (18.1). However, it appears in this case to be fear and not eagerness.
[152] Ambrose, *De uirginibus*, 4.32–4.33.

the resoluteness traditionally associated with Virgin Martyrs when presented with potential ogling and sexual assault.

Perpetua, who is often associated with Virgin Martyrs, also displays an external self-consciousness and understanding of her death that is generally not found in these lives. In the midst of being attacked by a heifer, Perpetua attempts modesty and proper presentation (*Perpetuæ* 20.4–5):[153]

> et ubi sedit, tunicam a latere discissam ad uelamentum femoris reduxit pudoris potius memor quam doloris. Dehinc acu requisita et dispersos capillos infibulauit; non enim decebat martyram sparsis capillis pati, ne in sua gloria plangere uideretur.[154]
>
> [And where she sat, she drew back her tunic, which had been torn on the side, for her thigh's covering, mindful of her modesty more than her pain. After this, having asked for a pin, she even clasped her tousled hair; for it was not proper for the martyr to suffer with scattered hair, lest she seem[155] to lament in her glory.]

Agnes performs a similar action in the *Hymn* when she reassembles her torn garment to cover her exposed body after she has been stabbed.[156] When Thecla is stripped and thrown to the beasts, she deliberately arranges her body to show her genitalia only to the approaching lion and not the observing crowd.[157] Virgin Martyrs, alternatively, are

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[153] Shaw explores the symbolic significance of the heifer being selected for these women's death. He asserts that the usual selection of a bull indicates that the woman is accused of adultery: "Full exposure of the female to the bull by entirely stripping her of all clothing was merely part of the process of shaming […] By analogy with a bull, it was implied that they were sexually shameful; but since a cow was employed, the inference was that they were not "real women" enough to be guilty of adultery" ("The Passion of Perpetua" 7–8).

[154] For the implications of sight, see above 98–102. Perpetua's arrangement of her hair in effort to not appear in mourning, as indicated by loose hair, is understandable. For this implication, see Miles, 49. Shaw notes the important distinction that this scene is recounted by the male editor and not by Perpetua ("The Passion of Perpetua" 32–33).

[155] Although the passive of *uidere* is translated as 'to seem,' in the context of the dangers of the gaze, this may also be taken as 'to be seen.'

[156] *Hymn*, ll. 25–28. These actions reflect classical heroine's death scenes. Both Polyxena and Lucretia modestly cover their bodies as they prepare for death (Ovid, 13.477–480 and Livy, 1.58, respectively).

[157] Ambrose describes this scene (*De uirginibus* 2.3.19–20). He implies Thecla's nakedness and describes her protection by a lion after she exposes her *vitalia* ('genitalia,' literally 'vital parts,' 2.3.19) to the beast.

conventionally stripped and prominently displayed without indication of shame.[158] Each woman may be outraged at her persecutor's audacity, as Agnes is in the *South English Legendary*, but her reaction is not one of humiliation. When Agnes is publicly stripped, the saint rebukes the prefect: *Ertou noȝt assamed in þi poȝt bi eny womman þus do / Wanne þou of womman ert icome* ('Are you not ashamed in your mind to do thus to any woman / When you have come from woman?' *Agneta*, ll. 45–46).[159] Agnes' speech, rather than conveying embarrassment at her forcibly displayed naked form, calls attention to the true source of shame: Symphronius' dishonorable actions.

Sarah Salih, in her examination of the Katherine Group, describes the Virgin Martyr reaction to such revealing torments.

> The virgins take control of the sights of their naked bodies, subverting the meanings intended by their persecutors. Olibrius, Eleusius and Maxentius think to shame the martyrs, as women, by displaying them naked; they fail to understand that virgins, who have rejected sexual activity, have therefore no reason to be ashamed of their nakedness. Their pursuit of virginity reverses the effects of the Fall: like the prelapsarian Adam and Eve, they are naked and not ashamed.[160]

For Ambrose's revision of Thecla's legend, see Léonie Hayne, "Thecla and the Church Fathers" *Vigiliæ Christianæ* 48.3 (Sep. 1994): 209–218, at 210–211. For *vitalia* as a euphemism for female genitalia, see J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1982, 95.

[158] Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" 206.

[159] This speech is, of course, reminiscent of Agatha's speech to Quintianus (above n. 88). See also Christina's speech above 110–111.

[160] Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, 85. Many Virgin Martyrs experience Edenic occurrences. A common such motif is animals acknowledging saints' holiness. For this theme in the lives of Virgin Martyrs, see the *LA* for Christina (v. 1, 648–649), Daria (v. 2, 1072), and Euphemia (v. 2, 952–953). For additional examples of this motif, see Mary of Egypt's devoted lioness (*De transitu Mariæ Ægyptiace*, ll. 761–802), the lioness in Ælfric's account of Eustace's legend (*Passio S. Eustachii, martyris*, ll. 411–422 in v. 2, 190–219), and the lion/ess in Thecla's accounts (Ambrose, *De uirginibus*, 2.3.19–20 and *Thecla*, 33). For this theme in early saints' accounts, see Alison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints*. Hanover, NH and London: Published for Brown University Press by University Press of New England, 1987, 144–167 and 193–204. Dorothy Ann Bray notes the popular motif in Irish saints' lives of saints taming wild animals ("Miracles and Wonders in the Lives of the Early Irish Saints" in *Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Cults*. ed. Jane Cartwright. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002, 136–147 at 145). Virgin Martyrs are also often spared pains while proceeding to martyrdom and, therefore, while bearing spiritual children, just as the Blessed Virgin bears Christ without pain (*LA* v. 1, 66). Virgin Martyrs therefore experience a reversal of Genesis 3:16, which indicates that birth in Eden would have been painless. For

They acknowledge their nakedness, but are not embarrassed by it and in the rare instances when their naked bodies are hidden, it is generally not by their own volition but by God's. Protections of these women are especially exercised when their chastity is at risk. Although Virgin Martyrs are not universally shielded from malicious and licentious gazes, they are universally protected from rape. Most Virgin Martyrs facing rape are prepared to endure this suffering with the same courage and faith as when confronting other trials. The risk and danger in these scenes are heightened, however, not only by the possible physical injury but also potential symbolic destruction. The women's reactions to this ordeal and the occurrences surrounding brothel scenes distinguish virgins who are directly threatened with rape and confinement in a brothel from other Virgin Martyrs who are confined in prison or for whom the sexual threat is implied rather than explicitly stated.

The Virgin Martyr Brothel

Agnes is only one of several Virgin Martyrs sent to brothels and/or threatened with rape. As mentioned previously, Virgin Martyrs are usually threatened with this particular torment at the height of their *passiones*, making the threat of sexual assault the supreme test of the virgins' sanctity and endurance.[161] Rape during the Christian Persecutions was a terribly real and widespread threat for women.[162] Despite the anticipated preservation of

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Edenic imagery in early saints' lives, see Alison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, 151, 165–167, 207, and 213.

[161] See Agatha Chapter, 29–31.

[162] Jones, 32. Jones also notes that Eusebius' *Martyrs of Palestine* reports this as a frequent torment for women.

the bodies of Virgin Martyrs, the horrors of rape are disturbingly conveyed in some of their traditions.

Pricus, Euphemia's judge, orders *omnes petulantes iuuenes* ('all lascivious youths' *Legenda aurea* v. 2, 952) to be brought so that they *tamdiu eam illuderent donec fatigata deficeret* ('could have sex with her for a long while, until she, having been worn out, expired' v. 2, 952).[163] A similar command appears in Lucy's legend.[164] The judge persecuting Lucy declares: *Inuitate ad eam omnem populum et tamdiu illudatur donec mortua nuntietur* ('Invite to her all the public and let them have sex with her for a long while, until she is pronounced dead' *Legenda aurea* v. 1, 51). The judge in Bokenham's version announces to *Ruffyens* ('Ruffians' l. 9286) he has recently had rounded-up (ll. 9295–9307):[165]

'syrs, I you charge, (9295)
When ye þis damysel han forth at large,
Whom I iuge comoun wumman to be,
Makyth proclamacyoun þorgh þe cyte,
That to þe bordelhous come who-so wyl
Wyth hyr þe lust for to fulfyl (9300)
Of hys flessh at hys owe lykyng;
And doth hem to wet þat she ys ying,
Lusty & feyr, & a maydyn also,
And men þe gladlyer shal precyn hyr to.
And so long hyr letyth ben excercysyd (9305)
Lych to you as I haue deuysyd

[163] For the sexual meaning of *ludo*, see Adams, 162. Adams recognizes the potentially combative and aggressive nature of *ludo* including it with "those of a military kind" (223). Jerome uses *ludat* for what the Bridegroom will perform with Eustochium's body (Katherine Chapter, 247). See also Miller, "The Blazing Body" 39. The man sent to Euphemia sees her praying while surrounded by *multas uirgines splendidissimas* ('many greatly shining virgins' *LA* v. 2, 952). She then converts him. Euphemia's account is not clear as to whether she is approached in a prison cell or in a brothel. The conversion scene does, however, suggest a bordello.

[164] Ælfric's Paschasius threatens Lucy with rape, but not until death (*De Sancta Lucia,* ll. 80–83).

[165] Delany notes the great detail Bokenham uses to describe Lucy's would-be brothel arguing Bokenham stresses unpleasant bodily functions in this account to link the disease of Lucy's mother to occurrences in the brothel (116). In addition to this speech, see Bokenham, ll. 9284–9295. Lucy is physically unable to be moved and brought to the brothel (Ælfric, *De Sancta Lucia*, ll. 103–107; *SEL*, *Lucie,* ll. 109–132; *LA* v. 1, 51–52; and Bokenham, ll. 9320–9351). *DV* (294) implies her persecutors' attempts were unsuccessful; however, *CDV* (ll. 1819–1821) claims she reaches the brothel. For examples of immovable saints, see Thompson, D1654.0.1. For immovable objects, see D1654ff; and for immovable animals, D2072.0.2ff.

> Tyl she be deed for werynesse.'
>
> ['Sirs, I you charge,
> When you take forth this damysel without restriction
> Whom I judge to be a common woman,
> Make a proclamation through the city,
> That to the bordello should come whosoever desires
> To fulfill with her the lust
> Of his flesh, as he likes;
> And let them know that she is young,
> Spirited and fair, and a maiden also,
> And men the more willingly shall value her.
> And let her to be exercised so long,
> Just as I have described to you,
> Until she is dead from weariness.']

Virgin Martyrs must face this torment with the same courage and disregard for physical harm as all others punishments.[166] Rape, however, is especially problematic since it threatens to damage the virgins' physical manifestation of purity and devotion to God. Agnes' romantic relationship with Christ anticipates His protection of her virginity as well as promises her erotically toned celestial pleasures and gains, which are inverses of the pains and consequences of rape.[167] Despite expectation of eventual safety, Agnes is still presented with this threat and must combat the potential stigma and fear associated with sexual assault.

Winstead discusses the Church Fathers' position regarding virgins who face rape.

> But even while acknowledging that physical virginity is not sufficient, most patristic writers imply that it is necessary to attain the highest degree of holiness. Thus Augustine, even as he insists that chastity is a state of mind rather than a bodily condition, insinuates that the chastity of the most virtuous woman might not survive rape, given that the act "perhaps could not have taken place without some physical pleasure."[168]

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[166] Gravdal claims that rape narratives present women as *miles Christi* and that the "threat of rape thus opens a space for female heroism" (23).
[167] For interpretation of male ownership, besides Christ's, in these texts, see Juliana Chapter, 183–186. For these promises and sexual expectations, see the speech from the *Vita* above 95–96.
[168] Winstead, *John Capgrave's Fifteenth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, 92. Winstead uses Henry Bettenson's translation of Augustine's *City of God*. New York: Penguin, 1972, 26. For the full passage, see Augustine, *DCD* 1.16. For a translation, see *St. Augustin's City of God and*

The chapters in Augustine's *De civitate Dei* following this statement assert a more positive view of women's power to overcome spiritually such an assault.[169] When explaining why women should not take their own lives either before or after rape, Augustine states (1.18):

> Quocirca proposito animi permanente, per quod etiam corpus sanctificari meruit, nec ipsi corpori aufert sanctitatem uiolentia libidinis alienae, quam seruat perseuerantia continentiae suae […] hinc potius admoneamur ita non amitti corporis sanctitatem manente animi sanctitate etiam corpore oppresso, sicut amittitur et corporis sanctitas uiolata animi sanctitate etiam corpore intacto.
>
> [Therefore, with the persisting intention of the soul, through which the body also deserved to be sanctified, the violence of another's lust does not remove this body's sanctity, as perseverance of her own continence preserves (it) […] For this reason let us be reminded rather that just as the sanctity of the body, even a violated body, is not lost on account of the enduring sanctity of the spirit, so also the sanctity of the body, even an intact body, is lost on account of the sanctity of the spirit having been violated.]

Augustine further discusses the fate of Christian women who survive rape and do not commit suicide.[170] These women should find sufficient solace in the knowledge that God alone recognizes their innocence.[171] Although Augustine appears convinced as to the indestructible nature of spiritual virginity in these later chapters, the passage quoted above by Winstead undermines these virgins. The statement indicates that even if rape is suffered and survived, others will always question the women's inner purity.

Agnes, like all virgins devoted to Christ, is aware of the peril and implications of such an assault. It is Lucy, however, who expresses the anticipated mindset of Virgin

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Christian Doctrine. trans. Rev. Marcus Dods. NPNF. New York: The Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890.

[169] Aldhelm cites this passage in *DV* (319). Augustine's position is regularly considered in arguments on rape. See, for example, Wogan-Browne (*Saints Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 104–105), Burrus (*Saving Shame*, 127–129), Horner (169 n. 33), and Schulenburg (131–133).

[170] Augustine uses the Roman matron Lucretia's post-rape suicide to elucidate his point. He asserts there is no reason to commit suicide and condemns Lucretia's actions. He proffers either she was truly raped and subsequently murdered an innocent woman (herself) or she enjoyed her violation to some extent and was guilty of adultery (*DCD* 1.19). See also Burrus, *Saving Shame*, 125–129. For pictorial depictions of Lucretia's suicide, see Agatha Chapter, 35–36 n. 34.

[171] Augustine, *DCD* 1.19.

Martyrs confronting possible defilement.[172] In Ælfric's version of Lucy's legend, Paschasius taunts the saint, claiming that loss of her virginity and violation will cause the *halga gast* ('Holy Ghost' *De Sancta Lucia,* l. 83) to depart from her.[173] In response to this, Lucy exhibits the position these virgins conventionally appear to have when facing this torment (ll. 84b–93).

ne bið ænig gewemmed
lichama to plihte gif hit ne licað þam mode (85)
Þeah þu mine hand ahebbe to ðinum hæþenglide
and swa þurh me geoffrige mines unwilles
ic beo þeah unscyldig ætforan ðam soðan gode
seþe demð be þam willan and wat ealle þincg
gif þu me unwilles gewemman nu dest (90)
me bið twifeald clænnysse geteald to wuldre
Ne miht þu gebigan mine willan to þe
swa hwæt swa þu minum lichaman dest ne mæg þæt belimpan to me.

[No one's body is dangerously
defiled if it does not please (that person's) mind.
Although you may raise my hand to your idol
and, so through me, make an offering against my will,
I, nevertheless, will be guiltless before the true God,
who judges according to His will and knows all things.
If you now defile me against my will,
a twofold purity will be honorably assigned to me.
You may not bend my will to you
whatever you do to my body, that may not befall me.]

The later texts considered here also contain this speech. However, the scene surrounding it is increasingly sexualized. In this new setting, Lucy becomes more antagonistic to the threatening persecutor.

Lucy makes an explicit and direct assessment of the impact of this violence on her (*Legenda aurea* v. 1, 51).

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[172] Virgin Martyrs tend to be quite vocal regarding the impact of rape and other assaults, which is a drastic contrast to Rome's legendary chaste women. Lucretia is silent as she is raped and Verginia is also as she is killed by her father (Livy, 1.58 and 3.48, respectively). See also Joshel, 180–183.
[173] For this speech, see Ælfric, *De Sancta Lucia*, ll. 80–83.

> "Non inquinatur corpus nisi de consensu mentis. Nam si me inuitam uiolari feceris, castitas mihi duplicabitur ad coronam; nunquam autem uoluntatem meam ad consensum poteris prouocare. Ecce, corpus meum ad omne supplicium est paratum. Quid moraris? Incipe fili dyaboli desideria tuarum penarum exercere!"
>
> ["The body is not stained unless in agreement with the mind. For if you should cause me to be violated against my will, my chastity will be doubled concerning the crown for me; Never, however, will you be able to stir my will to agreement. Behold, my body is ready for all torture. Why do you delay? Begin, son of the devil, to exercise the desires of your punishments!"]

The judge in the *South English Legendary*, depicting the spiritual ignorance of pagan men in these accounts, misinterprets Lucy's declaration of devotion to Christ.[174] Paschasius, believing this relationship licentious, declares she speaks *as an hore strong* ('as a virulent whore' *Lucie*, l. 85). Lucy retorts that he is trying to bring her *to hordom* ('to whoredom' l. 89) by urging her to betray her true husband, Christ, and engage in sexual acts with another.[175] The exchange ends with Lucy proclaiming (ll. 95–100):

> Nemai no womman quaþ þis maide of hire maidenhod beo ido
> For no dede þat me do þat bodi bote hire hurte beo þerto
> For þe more aȝe mi wille mi bodi defouled is
> Þe clennere is mi maidenhod & þe more mi mede iwis
>
> ["No woman" says this maid "may be robbed of her maidenhood
> For no deed may be done to that body unless her heart wills it.
> For the more against my will my body is defouled
> The cleaner is my maidenhood and the more certain my reward."]

Bokenham's Lucy, similar to the Lucy of the *South English Legendary*, is accused of speaking *as a strumpet* (l. 9205). This Lucy, however, does not attract further sexual attention to herself by retorting that Paschasius is trying to make her a whore.[176] Interestingly enough, Bokenham also fails to include the claim that her virginity or purity

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[174] For Lucy's description of her deeds and intentions, see the *SEL*, *Lucie*, ll. 75–80.
[175] For the importance of fidelity to Christ, see Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meaning" 71–72.
[176] Wogan-Browne connects Lucy's assignment to a brothel with her previous almsgiving and distribution of her property. Lucy herself would become public property if sent to the bordello (*Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 101–105).

will be increased if she endures sexual assault as in Ælfric's account, the *South English Legendary*, and the *Legenda aurea*. Despite these omissions, Bokenham still includes the significant speech regarding the preservation of her virginity.[177] Throughout these accounts, Lucy aggressively declares her innocence and enduring purity as she affirms her faith in God's view of true virginity. A female virgin exhibiting such strength and self-assurance while about to endure the horror of rape presents a heroic and powerful image. Lucy speaks with a confidence exceeding that with which early Christian writers would be comfortable.

Lucy's assertions in these texts confront and contest Augustine's less promising perception of the spiritual implications of rape. She appears particularly confident when declaring that through sexual assault she will win *twifeald clænnysse* (Ælfric, *De Sancta Lucia*, l. 91). Not only will she not be defiled by men's lust and abuse, but rape, like other torments, will also increase her spiritual status and, by extension, God's favor. These saints, of course, are understood to be women who would not 'enjoy' the sexual act and, therefore, would not be spiritually tainted by the assault as Augustine fears. However, these saints never have to encounter the scrutiny and doubt associated with Augustine's view since they are all preserved from the one torment that could give rise to such ambiguity.[178]

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[177] Bokenham, ll. 9266–9283.
[178] Winstead notes the potentially contradictory narrative elements in the lives of Virgin Martyrs (*Virgin Martyrs*, 12–13).

Ambrose's Virgin of Antioch describes the decision facing women who are given the option of either despising their faith or sacrificing their bodies to sexual assault (*De uirginibus* 2.4.24).[179]

> Tolerabilius est mentem virginem quam carnem habere. Utrumque bonum, si liceat: si non liceat, saltem non homini castae, sed Deo simus.
>
> [It is better to have a virgin mind than virgin flesh. Both are good, if possible: if it is not possible, at least let us be chaste, not to man but to God.]

Furthermore, the saint recalls Christ's promise: *qui invenit animam suam perdet illam et qui perdiderit animam suam propter me inveniet eam* ('He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it' Matthew 10:39) and applies this approach to the potential loss of her virginity. The Biblical Susanna is faced with a similar dilemma as the Virgin of Antioch and makes a comparable statement when she refuses advances of the elders who wish to appease their lust for her. Susanna must choose between either committing adultery with the two men and thereby gaining their silence or being falsely accused of adultery by the same men and risking the consequences of such an accusation (Daniel 13.22–23).[180]

> ingemuit Susanna et ait Angustiae sunt mihi undique si enim hoc egero
> mors mihi est si autem non egero non effugiam manus vestras
> sed melius est mihi absque opere incidere in manus vestras quam
> peccare in conspectu Domini

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[179] The *LA* contains corresponding passages for this and following quotations (v. 1, 416–417).

[180] Susanna's story is in many ways a predecessor to Virgin Martyrs. In an alternate account to the Vulgate's, during her trial she is not just unveiled, but "stripped naked, in accordance with ritual Jewish law (Ezek 16:37–39; Hos 2:3–10)" (Carol Meyers, editor, *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 157). For a study on artistic depictions of Susanna and her increasingly eroticized portrayal, see Babette Bohn, "Rape and the Gendered Gaze: *Susanna and the Elders* in Early Modern Bologna" *Biblical Interpretation* 9.3 (2001): 259–286. Susanna's accusers, once proven false, receive the punishment of death previously reserved for Susanna (Daniel 13:41 and 13:62). Such ends are common in the legends of Virgin Martyrs (Conclusion, 261–263; and Appendices A–E).

> [Susanna sighed, and said: I am straitened on every side: for if I do this thing,
> it is death to me: and if I do it not, I shall not escape your hands.
> But it is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in
> the sight of the Lord.]

Ambrose declares a sentiment concerning the Virgin of Antioch that is also applicable to Susanna in a Christian context: *nec pudoris elegit injuriam, sed Christi recusavit* ('and she did not choose injury to her modesty; but refused injury to Christ' *De uirginibus* 2.4.25). Ambrose further assures the reader: *Christi virgo prostitui potest, adulterari non potest* ('The virgin of Christ may be prostituted; but she is not able to be defiled' 2.4.26).

In his treatment of the Virgin of Antioch's legend, Ambrose does not suggest a true virgin of God could be ravished. Ambrose has the virgin attest in her prayer to God: *Benedicatur et nunc nomen tuum; ut quae ad adulterium veni, virgo discedam* ('And let Your Name be praised; that I who came for defilement, will depart a virgin' 2.4.27). Unlike Lucy, the Virgin of Antioch openly fears rape. Ambrose includes a litany of Biblical miracles highlighting God's desire to preserve His faithful. One of the more extensive segments is devoted to Judith, who, having evidenced proper priorities by choosing religion over chastity, is safeguarded against rape.[181] The message clearly states if a woman is virtuous enough, she will be spared this particular atrocity.

The Virgin of Antioch's conviction of safety resounds in Prudentius' account of Agnes' legend.[182] Agnes, when threatened with rape in a brothel, announces (14.31–35):

> "haud" inquit Agnes, "inmemor est ita
> Christus suorum,[183] perdat ut aureum

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[181] For Judith's attack against Holofernes and her preservation of her chastity, see Book of Judith 12–13:12. Also see this scene in the Old English *Judith*, ll. 34b–120.
[182] For Ambrose's influence on Prudentius' version of Agnes' legend, see above 103 n. 64.
[183] It is interesting to note Prudentius' use of the masculine pronoun here in reference to a brothel. Malamud examines Prudentius' masculine language for Eulalia "who no longer fits any appropriate female

> nobis pudorem, nos quoque deserat.
> præsto est pudicis nec patitur sacræ
> integritatis munera pollui."
>
> ["No," Agnes says, "Christ is not so forgetful
> of His own, that He would lose our golden
> modesty as well as desert us.
> He is on hand for the chaste and does not suffer
> the gifts of holy chastity to be polluted."]

This speech reaffirms Ambrose's position on the ability of the truly saintly to be spared defilement. Echoes of Lucy's strong proclamations appear in the *Vita* in which Agnes proclaims: *neque polluar sordibus alienis* ('and nor may I be polluted by others' filth' 716) and in Ælfric's Agnes account: *ne þurh ælfremede horwan / æfre beon gefyled mid þam fulum myltestrum* ('nor through external uncleanliness / (may I) ever be defiled among those foul prostitutes' *Natale Sancte Agnetis,* ll. 129–130). Agnes in these accounts, like the saint in Prudentius' work, additionally declares that she will be spared rape in the bordello. The *Vita* and Ælfric both attribute her preservation to more than her chastity. An *Angelum Domini* ('Angel of the Lord' 716) protects Agnes as a sign of Christ's favor in the *Vita* as does *godes encgel haligne* ('God's holy angel' l. 131) in Ælfric's account. The angel's presence removes from Agnes the burden of proving the strength of her inner chastity and provides later authors with an ideal motif to save this virgin from violation. The *Legenda aurea* and Bokenham also employ this narrative device.[184] Agnes states (*Legenda aurea* v. 1, 170–171):

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roles, has been momentarily reclassified as masculine as she takes on the attributes of a warrior and prepares for battle" ("Making a Virtue of Perversity" 75). Malamud also cites Agnes' masculinization in Prudentius' account (82). In this context, Prudentius' language appears a deliberate gender switch, attempting to bestow the warrior spirit, which he strives to instill in Agnes and Eulalia, upon all Christian virgins in this predicament. For masculine language applied to female saints, see Agatha Chapter, 58–62.

[184] Although an angel does appear in the *SEL*, Agnes does not make a corresponding speech. Irene is similarly saved through God's power in the *Martyrdom of Saints Agapê, Irenê, and Chionê at Saloniki* (6). When she is sent to a brothel "no man dared to approach her, or so much as tried to insult her in speech" (Musurillo's translation in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*).

> "Nec sacrificabo diis tuis nec sordibus polluar alienis. Mecum enim habeo custodem corporis mei, angelum domini."
>
> ["I will neither sacrifice to your gods, nor be polluted by others' filth. For I have with me a guardian of my body, an angel of the Lord."]

Bokenham's Agnes promotes her own strength in a similar speech (ll. 4316–4322):

> For þis also wythoutyn doute
> I wyl þou knowe, & not þou oonly
> But alle þo eek wych stondyn aboute,
> Þat a keper I haue of my body,
> An aungel of god, wyche dylygently (4320)
> Me kepyth & helpyth in euery nede,
> And þat me bold makyth þe not to drede.
>
> [For this I will have you know also
> Without a doubt, and not only you
> But also all those who stand about,
> That I have a keeper of my body,
> An angel of God, which diligently
> Keeps and helps me in every need
> And that makes me bold and without dread.]

These various accounts consistently promote a confident virgin whose sanctity is evidenced by heavenly presence and protection.

The angel appears several times throughout the storyline of later sources, repeatedly offering the virgin aid and protection.[185] The angel's presence in the brothel proves Agnes' declaration to Symphronius and exhibits her sacred position as Christ's favored and beloved. Angelic aid, support, and protection, although not appearing in all the texts, make numerous appearances in the developed narrative.[186] During Agnes' final torment, being burned alive, angels shield her from the flames that surround her. Prior to this torture, however, an angel reappears in order to lend assistance to the young virgin when she prays for a miracle to evidence God's power.

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[185] It is not clear as to whether the angel in each of these scenes is always the same.
[186] For the number of appearances of the angel in these texts, see Appendix B.

From early in its tradition, Agnes' legend has included instances of healing through prayer.[187] As seen in the previous chapter, healing scenes appear in both male and female saints' lives.[188] Agnes' legend grants her this power in a scene that recalls Agatha's appearance in Lucy's legend. Agnes appears in a vision to Constantia, the daughter of Constantine, and cures her of sores, much like Agatha contributes to the healing of Lucy's mother.[189] Although Agatha takes part in this process only after death, Agnes, like Agatha's healer, Peter, has a history of healing in life as well as in death. Agnes is among the saints granted the power and favor to raise the dead.

Resurrection Motif: *Mortuos Suscitate*[190]

After receiving her shining mantel from the angel, Agnes remains in the brothel. The lure of the beautiful chaste virgin, seemingly powerless to withhold her body, overwhelms her former suitor and he hurries to the brothel with his companions to fulfill his physical desires with her. Before he is able to achieve his lecherous objective, however, he is struck dead.[191]

Within Aldhelm's works, death to a man intending to defile a Virgin Martyr appears in more than one saint's account. When Daria and Chrysanthus are persecuted for

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[187] See Prudentius, 14.57–60.
[188] See Agatha Chapter, 71–84.
[189] For sources including this scene, see Appendix B.
[190] 'Raise the dead' (Matthew 10:8). See further below 146.
[191] For accounts including this scene, see Appendix B. Prudentius' account is unclear whether the lightning bolt that kills and blinds Agnes' suitor comes from God or from the saint (14.43–49; above 113 n. 96). The *Vita* (716), Ælfric (*Natale Sancte Agnetis* l. 172), the *LA* (v. 1, 171), and Bokenham (ll. 4426–4427) all claim he is killed by the Devil. Both of Aldhelm's accounts attest he is killed by celestial anger (*DV*, 299 and *CDV* ll. 1960–1961). The *SEL* is inconclusive (*Agneta*, l. 76). Agnes later relates in some of these sources that the angel killed the suitor (*Vita*, 716; Ælfric, ll. 189–190; and Bokenham, ll. 4482–4483).

their faith, they are, for a time, punished separately. Chrysanthus is tortured in various ways and sent to prison while Daria is sent to a brothel for rape and confinement. Aldhelm describes Daria's perilous situation in both *De uirginitate* and *Carmen de uirginitate*. The more concise *De uirginitate* reports (279–280):[192]

> Ista ad prostibula scortorum et meretricum contubernia truditur, quo leo de clatris amfitheatri ad tutelam sacratæ virginis Dei nutu dirigitur, ut, siquis petulcus incestator et lascivus scortator vagabundis gressibus lupanar ingredi maluisset, ferinis rictibus suggillaretur.
>
> [She is thrust into a bordello of harlots and companionship of prostitutes, where a lion from the cages of the amphitheatre is directed by the command of God to the care of the holy virgin, so that, if any shameless lecher or lascivious fornicator should be inclined by roaming steps to enter the brothel, he would be attacked by ferocious jaws.]

Aldhelm has little forgiveness for the lustful men who approach these virgins. In his accounts of Agnes and Daria, presumptuous men are struck down through instruments of God. Aldhelm borrows a motif from Jerome's letter to Eustochium and compares the punished men in these lives to Oza, the man who is instantly killed when he touches the Ark of the Covenant.[193] As the sinful men in these accounts are connected with Oza, these two virgins are associated with the Ark of the Covenant. Their bodies are temples and like the Ark, they too house holiness that God will not suffer to be profaned.[194]

The lion's attack is mitigated in other accounts. *Dariæ*, for example, states (482B):

> Qui ut ingressus est insilivit in eum leo, et prosternens eum sub pedibus suis, cœpit ad faciem virginis Christi Dariæ respicere quasi

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[192] *CDV* contains an equally unforgiving lion (ll. 1233–1242).

[193] Jerome likens a virgin's body to a temple, which must be concealed from the licentious and profane, and compares offense to her body to Oza's touching of the Ark (*Epistle* 22, *Ad Eustochium*, 23). Agnes and Daria are the only two virgins in *DV* and *CDV* whose legends contain this comparison. For Agnes see *DV* (299). For Daria see *CDV* (l. 1239). The story of Oza and the Ark appears in 2 Samuel 6.6–7.

[194] Ælfric's Lucy is also referred to as a dwelling-place (ll. 30–33 and 76–80) and Bokenham's as a temple (ll. 9374–9376 and 9241–9244).

> interrogans quid de eo juberet. Quod intelligens beata Daria, leoni dixit: adjuro te per filium Dei, pro quo martyrii passionem libenter amplector, ut non eum in aliquo lædas; sed permittere eum sermonem meum absque terrore suscipere.
>
> [Whoever entered (the brothel), the lion jumped on him, and throwing him at her feet, began to look at the face of Christ's virgin, Daria, as if asking what she would command from him. Blessed Daria understanding that, said to the lion: I swear to you by the Son of God, for Whom I freely embrace the passion of martyrdom, that you may not harm him in any way; but permit him to receive my sermon without fear.]

The lion here acknowledges the virgin's authority and presents the captives before her for judgment.[195] Ælfric's Daria is also protected from *sceandlican hæðenan* ('shameful heathens' *Passio Chrisanti et Dariæ*, l. 250) by a restrained lioness.[196] The *Legenda aurea* depicts an equally patient lion.[197] The lion/ess' behavior in these accounts permits Daria's preservation of these men's lives to reflect Agnes' actions as a mediatrix. This particular role becomes ever more apparent in Agnes' extended narratives.

The action and drama surrounding the young man's death scene increase in length and emotional depth as sources employ involved character interaction when the resurrection miracle is performed. Prudentius' account gives little space to the corresponding scene in which the man is blinded when compared to the elaborate martyrdom sequence that follows. Aldhelm's accounts also relate Agnes' praiseworthy actions straightforwardly.[198] The dramatic aspects of the scene and Agnes' participation are developed extensively in other texts, particularly with the inclusion of the mourning of the prefect for his dead son.

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[195] Devotion of non-human animals appears in a number of saints' lives (above 129 n. 160).
[196] This entire scene appears in Ælfric, *Passio Chrisanti et Dariæ*, ll. 253–292.
[197] *LA* v. 2, 1072. The lioness changes again to a lion in the *LA*. Animals' gender is not always strictly adhered to in saints' lives. See Thecla's lion/ess (Ambrose, *De uirginibus* 2.3.19–20 and *Thecla*, 33).
[198] Aldhelm, *DV*, 299 and *CDV*, ll. 1965–1967.

Accounts sharing the full narrative structure of the *Vita* describe the exchange between the bereaved father, Symphronius, and the saint. Ælfric describes the horror of the dead man's companions and the grief of his father.[199] The prefect approaches Agnes and challenges her to pray to the angel who slew his son to resurrect the youth. Symphronius claims that Agnes' professions regarding the protective behavior of the angel will be validated by such a miracle. The saint retorts (*Natale Sancte Agnetis,* ll. 196–197):[200]

> Ne synd ge wyrðe þæt wundor to geseonne
> ac swa þeah is tima þæt drihtnes miht beo geswutelod.
>
> [You are not worthy to see that wonder
> but, nevertheless, it is time that the might of the Lord be revealed.]

Agnes is left alone to pray and *cristes encgel* ('Christ's angel' l. 201) raises the young man.[201] The *Legenda aurea* tersely reports this scene, excluding the companions' reaction, but heightening the anguish of the prefect when he reacts *cum ingenti ploratu* ('with great wailing' v. 1, 171). The succinct resurrection displays an emotionally affected Agnes (v. 1, 171):

> Orante igitur Agnete, apparuit ei angelus domini et ipsam flentem et orantem a terra eleuauit et sic iuuenis resuscitatur et Christus ab eo publice predicatur.
>
> [Therefore, with Agnes praying, an angel of the Lord appeared to her and raised the crying and praying girl from the ground and thus the youth is resuscitated and Christ is publicly praised by him.]

In the *South English Legendary*, Agnes prays for the resurrection of her suitor not in response to the prefect's request, but as reaction to his rousing an angry mob demanding

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[199] Prudentius' account also describes the distraught reaction of the dead man's companions (14.50–51).
[200] Aldhelm also asserts that the youth's resurrection occurs for the greater glory of God (*DV*, 299 and *CDV* ll. 1968–1969).
[201] Ælfric, unlike the *Vita* or Aldhelm's accounts or the later *SEL* or *LA*, references Christ's raising the dead in Agnes' opening speech (*Natale Sancte Agnetis,* ll. 53–54). This deliberate inclusion connects Agnes to her bridegroom in a more intimate manner than other texts. Bokenham also borrows this motif, as he did for Agatha's breast (ll. 4181–4182). See Agatha Chapter, 64–71.

her death.[202] Bokenham reinstates the shock and response of the son's followers and increases the portrayal of Symphronius' sorrow. Bokenham's prefect becomes *as a madman* (l. 4451) as he runs despairingly to challenge Agnes. Bokenham's saint makes a similar reply to the prefect as Ælfric's, proclaiming to Symphronius that although he is unworthy to have his desire fulfilled, the might of the Lord will be displayed. Bokenham employs the angel as the method of resurrection for the youth; however, this scene further heightens Agnes' reaction while incorporating a new dimension to the saint's prayer.

Bokenham's Agnes prays for revelation of not only God's power, but also His mercy, and displays benevolent compassion undetected in previous sources (ll. 4498–4504).

> And whan alle þe peple was goon oute,
> Anneys fel plat doun on hyr face,
> And wepyng ful soor wyth hert deuoute (4500)
> She preyid god of hys synguler grace
> That he wold shewyn in þat place
> A tokne of hys mercy & of hys pyte,
> That reuycuryd myht þis yung man be.
>
> [And when all the people had gone out,
> Agnes fell flat down on her face,
> And weeping very sincerely with a devout heart
> She prayed that God through His singular grace
> Would show in that place
> A token of His mercy and His pity,
> So that this young man might be revived.]

Bokenham's Agnes calls upon God's infinite might as well as His infinite mercy. This Agnes shows herself to be deeply invested in the results of the miracle and concerned for the man's fate. The saint exhibits an intimate emotional involvement in the miracle, which recalls the reactions of her Biblical exempla.

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[202] *SEL*, *Agneta*, ll. 80–94. The angel also appears here to raise the dead suitor and informs Agnes of the miracle and the young man's immediate conversion (ll. 95–106).

This scene in Agnes' legend is foremost reminiscent of Christ's raising Lazarus from the dead. Bokenham's account of the tenderly weeping Agnes particularly evokes this passage's simple line of *et lacrimatus est Iesus* ('And Jesus wept' Gospel of John 11:35).[203] When Jesus prays for the resurrection of Lazarus, He states (John 11:41–42):

> Pater gratias ago tibi quoniam audisti me
> ego autem sciebam quia semper me audis sed propter populum qui circumstat
> dixi ut credant quia tu me misisti
>
> Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me.
> And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people who stand
> about have I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Bokenham's Agnes echoes this scene in her exchange with Symphronius when she asserts that God's power will be revealed *beforn þis cumpany / Of peple* ('before this company of people' ll. 4493–4494) and in her private prayer to the Lord for a sign of His mercy.

Raising from the dead and making prayers such as Agnes' to indicate sanctity or to display God's power are popular motifs in saints' lives, particularly male saints' lives.[204] This power stems from Jesus' direction to His disciples to *infirmos curate mortuos suscitate leprosos mundate daemones eicite* ('Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils' Matthew 10:8). Although the Lazarus story is best known of resurrection accounts, the Gospels also report other instances of Jesus performing this miracle. The Gospel of

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[203] The entire Lazarus scene is related in John 11.

[204] Bray lists the "resuscitation of the dead" along with "provision of food, conversing with angels and prophecy" within the "canon of miracles" that appear in Irish saints' lives ("Miracles and Wonders" 142). For heavenly aid and contact with heavenly figures, see above 112–114 and 139–140; Agatha Chapter, 71–84; and Katherine Chapter, 212–213. See also the perversion of the visitation motif in Juliana's legend (Juliana Chapter, 170–172). For Martin's healing and resurrection miracles, see below 148–149. Apollinaris raises from the dead as well (Ælfric, *Natale Sancti Apollinaris, Martyris*, ll. 98–122 in v. 1, 472–487). Aldhelm also cites John the Evangelist (*CDV* ll. 470–471) and Benedict (ll. 858–859) raising the dead. Among Virgin Martyrs, Christina also raises a former persecutor, the snake charmer, from the dead; however, the miracle is given little attention in most versions of her legend (*Christinæ*, 528A; *LA* v. 1, 648; and *SEL*, *Cristina*, ll. 313–315). Bokenham is the exception as he presents an extensive scene reminiscent of that in Agnes' legend (ll. 2963–2994).

Luke contains the story of Jesus raising the only son of a widow (7:11–15). The Synoptic Gospels all relate the resurrection of Jairus' daughter.[205] In addition to evoking the miracles of Jesus, revitalizations by saints recall additional New Testament scenes in which Jesus' disciples follow His example and direction. Peter raises Tabitha, a charitable woman and disciple who became ill and died, and Paul raises Eutychus, a young man who fell from a third-storey window as Paul was speaking.[206] The Old Testament includes scenes of both Elijah and Elisha raising children from the dead as well. Elijah resurrects the child of a widow who offers him hospitality (3 Kings 17:17–24).[207] Elisha raises the only child of a couple who welcome him whenever he travels through their town. This child is expected to be especially dear since Elisha had announced his conception to the mother when she was believed to be past childbearing years (4 Kings 4:8–37).[208] In reviving the young man, Agnes is not only imitating the actions and instructions of Christ, but she is also following the example of Peter and Paul, two of the earliest and most prominent saints.

Agnes' actions in the resurrection scene, particularly in Bokenham's rendering, echo behaviors established by the Biblical characters. There is a preference for solitude when possible during the holy men's prayers to God. Elijah takes the child's body upstairs to his own room to revive him. Elisha finds the child on his bed and shuts the door to pray. Jesus removes the crowd from the presence of the body of Jairus' daughter. Peter sends out all who are with Tabitha and prays alone (Acts 9:40). Agnes' legend fits both of these

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[205] Matthew 9:18–19, 23–25, Mark 5:22–24, 35–43, and Luke 8:41–42, 49–56.
[206] Peter's account appears in Acts 9:36–42 and Paul's in Acts 20:7–12. Both of their later legends assign them additional resurrections. For Peter, see the *LA* v. 1, 559–575, for Paul v. 1, 577–579.
[207] 1 Kings 17:17–24 in NRSV.
[208] 2 Kings 4:8–37 in NRSV. For this late conception motif, see Katherine Chapter, 259.

conditions. There is, however, another motif, which is not employed: covering the deceased body with her own. This appears to be a gender specific aspect of the process. Elijah, Elisha, and Paul all stretch themselves over the body of the deceased.[209] When Peter heals Tabitha, however, he does not stretch himself on her body as Paul does Eutychus. Martin of Tours also performs several of these revitalizations, mostly upon men, however. When he heals a young girl near death, he lies beside her on the ground, not on her as he had with the men.[210] This, of course, is most likely a matter of practicality within the storyline. Martin's emended healing process for the young girl, as Agnes' for the young man, are most likely based on notions of propriety. Since Agnes' suitor was killed in an attempt to violate the virgin, it would hardly be appropriate for her to revive him by lying on top of him. She, like Martin, prostrates herself on the floor instead of on the youth's body.

Agnes' ability to raise the dead, another of her many gifts from her heavenly beloved, demonstrates the great esteem Christ has for her as both Savior and bridegroom. The young virgin bride becomes an *imitatio Christi* not only through sufferings, but also through mirroring His healing miracles. Some Virgin Martyrs, such as Juliana, follow Christ and show devotion to Him in seemingly more aggressive and outwardly destructive ways. Juliana, like Agnes and Agatha, becomes an *imitatio Christi* through trials at the

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[209] For Elijah, see 3 Kings 17:21; for Elisha, see 4 Kings 4:34; and for Paul, see Acts 20:10.
[210] Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Martini*, 16. Martin of Tours performs several other resurrections and healings of people close to death. For example, see Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Martini*, 7 and 12. See also Aldhelm (*DV*, 261 and *CDV*, ll. 698–699); and Ælfric (*Vita Sancti Martini*, ll. 207–225, 239–253, 487–547, and 562–591). Burrus notes Sulpicius recalls imagery from Elisha's account and asserts that Sulpicius "has dressed, down to its last detail, in the threads of the Biblical account 2 Kings 4.32–37" (*Sex Lives of Saints*, 99). Burrus also claims that this first resurrection miracle "is the immediate source of Martin's fame" (99). Bray notes the importance of Sulpicius Severus' *Vita S. Martini* for Irish hagiographers ("Miracles and Wonders" 136). For Ælfric's sources for Martin's legend, see Zettel, 24–27.

hands of pagan persecutors. The strength of her faith is further evidenced, however, by her rejection of earthly familial bonds and physical battles with demons. Juliana exhibits her passion for Christ in a manner quite different from Agnes, not as an eager bride, but as a *miles Christi*.

Chapter 3
Saint Juliana of Nicomedia
The Warrior Virgin Martyr and Family Matters

Juliana of Nicomedia, a popular Virgin Martyr of the later Middle Ages, is reported to have been martyred in Nicomedia, modern day Ismit, Turkey, during the reign of Maximianus (286–305 AD).[1] Juliana was known in England as early as the late sixth century and Bede mentions Juliana on February 16th in his *Martyrologium*.[2] Bede's account, as well as Cynewulf's poem *Juliana*[3] are based on her full martyrdom legend, *Passio S. Iulianæ* (late sixth to seventh century), which was most likely circulating in England from the early eighth century.[4] These works evidence her position within the English tradition despite her absence from certain important hagiographical Anglo-Saxon texts such as Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* and *Carmen de uirginitate*.[5] The Middle English *Seinte Iuliene* (late twelfth century) of the Katherine Group[6] and the slightly later Latin account, *Iuliana* (early to mid-thirteenth century), belong to the same narrative tradition as Cynewulf's work.[7]

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[1] Scarre, 137. Lapidge asserts that Juliana most likely was martyred during the Great Persecution in 303 AD, which "was particularly severe in Nicomedia" ("Cynewulf" 147). *Passio S. Iuliene*, Bede's *Martyrologium*, Cynewulf, the *SEL*, *Iuliene*, and *Iuliana* do not give dates, but place her under Maximianus' reign. The *LA* gives no context. *Passio S. Iuliene* will be referred to as *Passio* throughout the chapter. See Agatha Chapter, 25 n. 1, for the years of Diocletian and Decius' reigns.
[2] Bede, *Martyrologium*. *PL* 94, Col. 843C–844B.
[3] *SASLC*, 278.
[4] Lapidge, "Cynewulf" 149. The reasons for using this account are noted in Introduction, 13 n. 34.
[5] Bokenham also fails to include Juliana in his fifteenth-century *Legendys*.
[6] For the Katherine Group's relevance, see Katherine Chapter, 205.
[7] For references to the development of Juliana's legend, see Introduction, 14 n. 37. *Acta S. Julianæ*, hereafter *Acta*, is in *AASS* Feb. II, 875–879.

Juliana's legend also appears in the hagiographical collections, the *South English Legendary* and the *Legenda aurea*.[8]

Juliana's legend, as with that of most Virgin Martyrs, attests to her youth, beauty, and desirability and typically begins with the slighted suitor motif. Juliana delays marriage with Eleusius,[9] the local prefect, by setting him two tasks: first, to become more powerful in the empire[10] and second, upon his achievement of the first, to become a Christian.[11] Eleusius accomplishes the first demand and refuses the second. He then turns to her father, Africanus, for help.[12] Africanus encourages his daughter initially with promises of wealth and status, then with threats, and finally with assault: he has her stripped and beaten. Unable to convince the stubborn Juliana, he hands her over to Eleusius, who again

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[8] See Introduction, 16–17.

[9] The spelling of 'Eleusius' found in the *Acta* account as well as *Iuliene* and *Iuliana* will be used throughout unless directly quoting from another source. Lapidge notes the scribe's inconsistency in spelling of the prefect's name in the *Passio* ("Cynewulf" 156). For other spellings, see Appendix C.

[10] Lapidge argues that Cynewulf excludes this demand as it "might imply that in the first stage of negotiations, Juliana had secular ambitions" ("Cynewulf" 169, n. 48). Hermann interprets this omission, as well as the omission of Sophie's part in the legend, as an effort to intensify the opposition between "otherworldly Church and thisworldly State" (J. P. Hermann, *Allegories of War: Language and Violence in Old English Poetry*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989, 166–169, quoted 167).

[11] Cynewulf's *Juliana* contradicts itself regarding her willingness to marry. Cynewulf initially claims she refuses to marry because she wishes to remain a virgin. Shortly after her refusal to marry a pagan is asserted. Cynewulf first writes: *Hio in gæste bær / halge treowe, hogde georne / þæt hire mægðhad mana gehwylces / fore Cristes lufan clène geheolde* ('She bore in spirit a holy faith, earnestly determined that she would hold her maidenhood clean from every evil for the love of Christ' ll. 28b–31). A few lines later Juliana asserts: *"Ic þe mæg gesecgan þæt þu þec sylfne ne þearft / swiþor swencan; Gif þu soðne God / lufast 7 gelyfest, 7 his lof rærest, / ongietest gæsta Hleo, ic beo gearo sona / unwaclice willan þines* ('I may say that you need not trouble yourself farther; If you love and believe in the true God, and acclaim his praise, recognize the protector of spirits, I am immediately and resolutely ready to do your desire' ll. 46–50). Refusal of any marriage stresses preference for and power of virginity as seen in later texts. See below 158–162. Alexandra Hennessey Olsen argues that perhaps the reason Cynewulf omits Juliana's demand is the saint's obvious intention of not fulfilling the promise should he succeed. Olsen asserts that an Anglo-Saxon audience would find such dishonesty in a heroine unacceptable ("Cynewulf's Autonomous Women" in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, 222–232 at 228–229). Woolf also mentions this inconsistency (Cynewulf, 13–15).

[12] The spelling of 'Africanus' found in the *Passio* and the *Acta* will be used throughout unless directly quoting from another source. For other spellings, see Appendix C.

repeats the process of flattering words descending into torture. She is stripped and beaten again prior to being hung by her hair and whipped.[13] A cauldron of molten brass is poured over her before she is bound in chains and sent to prison where a demon, Belial, disguised as an angel, approaches her.[14] As the 'angel' urges her to submit to Eleusius, she doubts his nature and prays for the truth to be revealed. A celestial voice directs Juliana to seize and interrogate the demon. She does so and the devil reveals his litany of sins. She aggressively assaults and binds him prior to her final audience with Eleusius. Still refusing to yield, she is placed upon a wheel, which severely rends her body. She is miraculously restored, however. Eleusius commands her to be burned alive and, when she is miraculously spared, to be boiled in a cauldron of lead. This attempt fails as well and he orders her beheading. The demon reappears and, upon one glance from the saint, flees terrified to Hell.[15] Juliana addresses the onlookers, exhorting them to good Christian lives, and is beheaded. A Christian woman, Sophie, rescues her body and transfers it to Campagna.[16]

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[13] Euphemia is similarly hung by hair (*LA* v. 2, 953 and Appendix E). Margaret is also strung up and tortured. She is not, however, hung by her hair. The Old English CCCC account reports she is hung up by her feet and tortured (17). *Marherete* describes the saint being strung up naked and burned with torches (42, ll. 10–17). Mills cites the uncommon motif of conventional hanging in saints lives, attributing it largely to the shameful suicidal death of Judas (38). Mills also explores the punishment of hanging upside down (38–52).

[14] The devil's name is Belial in all accounts herein except for Bede's *Martyrologium*, Cynewulf, and the *LA*.

[15] Horner interprets Juliana's gaze as the final step in her masculinization process (*Discourse of Enclosure*, 121–122. For the power of the female gaze, see Stanbury (especially 102–110) and Shaw ("The Passion of Perpetua" 4).

[16] This is a summary of *Iuliene*. See Appendix C for these narrative elements in the selected texts. For translation and importance of saint's bodies and body parts in the early Church, see Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 78–94. Delehaye describes such stories surrounding saints' bodies or relics as "hackneyed" (*Legends of the Saints*, 23–24). Delany notes Bokenham's preoccupation with translation and relics citing the inclusion of these portions in his Margaret, Faith, and Mary Magdalene accounts (81 and 126).

Some traditional Virgin Martyr motifs in Juliana's legend, such as the rejected suitor are very popular, but some are less so, such as the Warrior Saint.[17] These combined themes result in a legend full of reversals. Martyrs, especially Virgin Martyrs, are traditionally represented as already deviating from norms and anticipated behavioral patterns. From the earliest accounts, martyrs sing, smile, and banter with persecutors as they are led to their deaths.[18] They approach places of torment as if proceeding to feasts or bridal beds.[19] They willingly surrender their lives despite the natural instinct to preserve one's life.[20] Both women and men refuse spouses and conjugal relationships for the glory promised to virgins in heaven.[21] Parents choose death over rearing children and children turn away from parental advice and protection.[22]

Juliana's legend embraces contrary nature associated with martyrs and incorporates multiple inversions involving both holy and sinful characters. The accounts, especially later renditions, are sated with inversions and distortions of the expected; ultimately, every facet

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[17] For the rejected suitor motif, see Agatha Chapter, 25–26; and Agnes Chapter, 86–87.
[18] See, for example, *Perpetuæ* 18.1; and Blandina's account (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.55–56). Virgin Martyrs, like many other saints, generally argue and debate with their tormentors despite inflicted pains. Tilley explores the abilities of martyrs to maintain mental function and power of speech under severe torment. She argues "(w)hen the martyrs could not escape pain, asceticism taught them to reconfigure its meaning" (473). See also Scarry's argument that torture destroys the victim's ability speak, reducing her or his verbal capacity to involuntary screams of agony (28–35). Brent D. Shaw examines the amount of control and endurance exhibited by martyrs during their torments ("Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4.3 (1996): 269–312 at 275–284). He further asserts: "Having that sort of control over one's body enables the tortured to be silent, to speak through their bodies, and thus not to speak the required words. It is, rather, the spectators who will be forced to confess: to admit their defeat and to confess the superior power of the tortured body" (278).
[19] See Agnes Chapter, 91–93.
[20] Scarry, 29–30. Marie Nelson considers Scarry's argument in her analysis of *Juliana*. Nelson discusses the extent to which Scarry's paradigm for torture may be applied to Cynewulf's account (*Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Three Fighting Saints*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 1991, 100–110).
[21] Perpetua is identified as *matronaliter nupta* ('matronly bride' *Perpetuæ* 2.1) before she begins her martyrdom account. See also *Thecla* 26–27. See also Agnes Chapter, 91–93.
[22] See below 190.

from parent-child relationships, to torments, to notions of strength involves a twist on the anticipated. Juliana's legend is arguably most noted for its physical aspect; however, her tradition is not alone in having a heroine associated with corporal force and even combat. Within the realm of hagiography exists a subsection of Warrior Saints, some of whom are martyrs and most of whom are men.[23] There is also an established Virgin Martyr subset, which includes, along with Juliana, Margaret, who battles with both a dragon and a demon, and Victoria, who banishes a dragon.[24] Aggressive female saints have an obvious foundation in the Biblical Judith.[25] Saints with later developed legends, such as Juliana, also have earlier female saints' lives as exempla. The most famous and applicable for Juliana's tradition is that of Perpetua.

The Warrior Virgin Martyr Tradition

Perpetua, while not a Virgin Martyr, shares many traditional qualities and actions with this subsection of saints. Her tradition appears to have influenced many later female

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[23] Many of these men battle dragons. For Hilarion, see Aldhelm (*DV*, 266 and *CDV*, ll. 797–826) and the *LA* (v. 1, 146–147). For Daniel, see Prophecy of Daniel (14:22–26), Aldhelm (*CDV*, ll. 355–358). For Silvester, see Aldhelm (*CDV*, ll. 545–556) and the *LA* (v. 1, 119). For George, see the *LA* (v. 1, 392–394). See also Christine Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon: Parallels and Analogues*. Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000, Chapter 3.

[24] For Margaret's two encounters with otherworldly creatures, see *Marherete* (20, l. 20–40, l. 24), the *LA* (v. 1, 618–619), and *Passio S. Margaretæ* (*AASS* Jul. V, 34–39), hereafter *Margaretæ*. The *LA* undermines Margaret's physical battle against the dragon claiming it is apocryphal (v. 1, 618). *Margaretæ* presents a condensed account of the dragon scene, but a full account of the devil scene. See also Margaret's Old English lives (MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii) and *Passio beate Margarete uirginis et martyris* (Cambridge, MS Corpus Christi College 303) (12–16). For these lives, see *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*. eds. Mary Clayton and Hugh Magennis. CSASE 9. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 112–139 and 152–169, respectively. These MSS are abbreviated as CT and CCCC, respectively. For Victoria, see Aldhelm (*DV*, 308–309 and *CDV*, ll. 2401–2408). Rauer uses Victoria's legend in her study on the relationship between dragon-fighting scenes in hagiographical texts and *Beowulf* (52–74). Margaret's interaction with the dragon is not included in Rauer's study.

[25] For Judith's beheading of Holofernes, see Book of Judith 13:1–12. See also Agnes Chapter, 138.

saints, thereby ensuring common characteristics between her legend and the Virgin Martyr template.[26] Perpetua does not combat demons in the same manner as Juliana. Instead, Perpetua's battles occur in dream sequences. Although these encounters are not corporeal, they provide a strong foundation for physical confrontation scenes in the legends of Warrior Virgin Martyrs.

The imprisoned Perpetua experiences visions in which two significant battle images appear. In the first self-proclaimed *visio*, the saint sees a ladder (*Perpetuæ* 4.3):

> scalam æream mirae magnitudinis pertingentem usque ad caelum et angusta, per quam nonnisi singuli ascendere possent, et in lateribus scalae omne genus ferramentorum infixum. errant ibi gladii, lanceae, hami, machaerae, ueruta, ut si quis neglegenter aut non sursum adtendens ascenderet, laniaretur et carnes eius inhaererent ferramentis.
>
> [a bronze ladder of wondrous size extending all the way to heaven, but it was extremely narrow so that they were only able to ascend one by one, and all kinds of iron instruments were fixed on the sides of the ladder. There were swords, lances, hooks, blades, and spears, so that if anyone were ascending carelessly or without looking upwards, one would be torn to pieces and his or her flesh would cling to the iron instruments.]

At the base of this potentially torturous ladder is a *draco* […] *mirae magnitudinis* ('dragon […] of wondrous size' 4.4), attacking those ascending the structure.[27] Perpetua is not the first Christian to attempt this climb and brave the dangerous dragon. Once her turn arrives, warned of the danger of the serpent, she proclaims with complete faith: *Non me nocebit, in nomine Iesu Christi* ('It will not harm me, in the name of Jesus Christ' 4.6). In answer, the dragon *quasi timens* ('as if afraid') *lente eiecit caput* ('slowly stretched out its

[26] See Introduction, 8 n. 13.
[27] See descriptions of Juliana and Katherine's wheels (Katherine Chapter, 229–232).

head' 4.7).[28] Perpetua asserts: *et quasi primum gradum calcarem, calcaui illi caput et ascendi* ('And as if I were treading on the first step, I trod on its head and ascended' 4.7). The dragon, obviously aware of the saint's holiness, must submit. Perpetua, as a true believer, is able to tame and tread upon the servant of evil.

Perpetua's later *visio* occurs the day before her entrance into the amphitheatre. She sees herself being led to her death. Although Perpetua and her companions are scheduled to be killed by beasts, she envisages hand-to-hand combat. Perpetua is disrobed in preparation for battle and suddenly realizes that she has become a man.[29] In this new form she engages in a struggle with her opponent. He continually grasps for her feet, but Perpetua states: *ego autem illi calcibus faciem caedebam* ('I, however, was striking his face with my heels' 10.10).[30] She relates the remainder of the encounter (10.11):

> et sublata sum in aere et coepi eum sic caedere quasi terram non calcans. at ubi uidi moram fieri, iunxi manus ut digitos in digitos mitterem et apprehendi illi caput; et cecidit in faciem et calcaui illi caput.
>
> [I was lifted into the air and began to strike him in such a way (it was) as if I not treading on the ground. But when I realized a pause occurred, I joined hands so that I would be throwing fingers linked with fingers and I seized his head; and he fell on his face and I trod on his head.]

The last words *calcaui illi caput* are the same used to describe Perpetua's stepping on the dragon's head before her ascent up the ladder. This phrase along with the repeated references to stepping and feet in this second vision, emphasize the imagery of trampling on the head or neck of one's opponent. Perpetua realizes the nature of the contest and of her enemy after her battle is won and vision ended (10.13–14):

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[28] Rauer shows that such obedient and submissive body language is common behavior of dragons defeated by Warrior Saints (71).
[29] For Perpetua's transformation, see Agatha Chapter, 59.
[30] See *Ancrene Wisse* passages below 172–176.

> et experrecta sum. et intellexi me non ad bestias, sed contra diabolum esse pugnaturam; sed sciebam mihi esse uictoriam.
>
> [I was awoken. And I understood that I was not about to fight with beasts, but against the devil; but I realized that victory would be mine.]

Juliana, like Perpetua, also dominates a disguised hellish figure with the understanding of guaranteed victory. The revelation of the later saint's demon, however, occurs before their altercation and she combats her opponent in his true form. When Juliana seizes and tramples on Belial, she is very aware of his hellish identity and of the spiritual significance of her imminent physical supremacy.

The specific action of trampling one's foe is fairly popular in saints' lives and iconography.[31] Juliana's iconography depicting this contest with Belial often portrays her stepping on him.[32] Margaret is similarly depicted treading on a dragon and Katherine with her foot on Maxentius' neck.[33] This trampling act is rooted in the demon-fighting subset of Virgin Martyrs legends.[34] The image of subduing an enemy with one's foot is reminiscent of the punishment in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15):[35]

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[31] Christopher Walter cites this as a common depiction of male warrior saints in triumph over their adversaries (*The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition.* Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003, 218–282).

[32] Juliana is also presented subduing the devil with chains (Drake, 71; and Christopher Woodforde, *The Norwich School of Glass-Painting in the Fifteenth Century*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1950, 178).

[33] For Margaret, see Drake, 81. For Katherine, see Woodforde, 182; and Drake, 24. Although Katherine's legend does not mention such an action, her iconography merges with those of Juliana and Margaret. An exchange of imagery is not unusual among these particular saints as their legends are very much intertwined. Juliana, for instance, whose legend precedes Katherine's, is traditionally placed on a wheel (Katherine Chapter, 229–232). Juliana and Margaret's demon fighting scenes are similarly structured. Juliana is also threatened by Africanus that *tu [wani þet tu] were wummon of wummone bosum to wrаðer heale eauer iboren i þe world* ('you will lament that you ever had the evil fortune to be born into the world a woman with a woman's breasts' *Iuliene*, 15). This later addition to Juliana's legend is likely meant to echo the Queen's torture in Katherine's tradition (Katherine Chapter, 233–238).

[34] Prudentius' Agnes also employs this stepping motif (*Peristephanon* 14.112–118). See Michael Roberts, 101–102.

[35] Castelli notes this passage's relevance for Perpetua's *visio* ("I Will Make Mary Male" 36).

> inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem et semen tuum et semen illius ipsa
> conteret caput tuum et tu insidiaberis calcaneo eius
>
> [I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed:
> she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.]

When female saints enact this particular crushing of their enemies, they perform a reversal of Eve's temptation in the Garden.[36] These saints, symbolically following in the legacy of the Blessed Virgin, the new Eve, use the ramifications of the Fall against the instigator of sin himself, thereby vanquishing him with the consequences of his actions. These women not only spoil the hellish figures' hopes of again tempting a woman into sin, but also literally execute the serpent's punishment by treading upon the heads of their attackers.[37]

Perpetua's repeated treading upon representatives of sin as well as her comprehension of her true adversary, resound clearly in the legends of Juliana and Margaret.[38] Juliana's domination of Belial and Margaret's similarly performed subjugation of her demon, like Perpetua's suppression of the dragon and defeat of the man in her *visiones*, is most importantly a spiritual victory. Throughout Juliana's tradition, the presentation of this victory is not one of simple dominance of Christian saint over hellish demon, but of two warriors physically engaging in a timeless spiritual war. Juliana as a

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[36] Although Susanna does not 'tread' on the elders, Bohn discusses her association with Eve and the Blessed Virgin due to her refusal of the elders' ultimatum (270–275).

[37] See below 173–177 for treading upon Lust. Augustine directly states the redemptive symbolism of a woman trampling on a snake in his first sermon on Perpetua and Felicitas (*Sermo 280*, 1, *PL* 38, Col. 1281). See also Shaw's discussion on Augustine's sermons on these women ("The Passion on Perpetua" 36–41). Shaw further mentions Quodvultdeus' similar claims regarding these women's actions (43–45).

[38] Margaret's second demon, like Juliana's Belial, attempts to convince the virgin to submit to her persecutor's requests. Margaret then seizes him, forces him to the ground, and, in a scene reminiscent of Perpetua's vision, steps on his head, keeping him in that position until she finishes questioning him. Unsurprisingly, battle scenes in Margaret and Juliana's legends echo one another quite frequently. Both women in the Katherine Group texts seize, restrain, and interrogate their demons while imprisoned (*Marherete* 24, l. 20–40, l. 25; and *Iuliene*, 33–45).

Warrior Virgin Martyr is a *miles Christi*, who fiercely combats her foes with her most potent weapon, the bodily representation of her faith, her virginity.

Spiritual Warfare and the Weapon of Virginity

The struggle between good and evil is conveyed as warfare during the lengthy exchanges between Juliana and Belial. The devil's speeches, primarily addressing his multitude of actions against Christians, conventionally present his deeds as attacks. Cynewulf especially utilizes strong battle imagery during the contest with the devil to promote this sense of spiritual combat and repeatedly refers to individuals, both holy and hellish, as *cempa* ('champion' l. 18a).[39] Other sources, while still presenting a framework of good versus evil, do not utilize the same intensity or extent of battle language as Cynewulf' work does in the prison scene.[40]

Cynewulf's devil recounts his attempts to ensnare men's souls in language that clearly depicts his efforts and men's defenses as an intense spiritual contest (ll. 382–409a).[41]

gif ic ænigne ellenrofne
gemete modigne Metodes cempan

[39] This may also be translated as 'warrior' or 'soldier.' See also lines 383b, and 395b. The *Passio* does not include 'champion' terms in the corresponding passages. For the *miles Christi* motif in Old English female saints' lives, see Morrison, 10–11. Eusebius claims Blandina acts "like a noble champion" (*The Ecclesiastical History*, 5.1.19). Delany discusses Bokenham's use of similar language in his Christina legend, noting that in this much later account the language becomes that of chivalry (*Impolitic Bodies*, 86). Christina is herself *clepyd to heauenly cheualrye* ('called to heavenly chivalry' l. 2428).

[40] *Iuliene*, for example, refers to Belial as *a kempe of helle*, ('a champion of Hell' 31), and Christ as *kempene king* ('king of champions' 49). This Belial also claims *weorrede eauer aȝein* ('ever made war against' 35) Peter and Paul. For Cynewulf's use of allegorical battle language, see Hermann 43–45 and 151–171.

[41] The *Passio* (9), the *SEL* (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 100–101), *Iuliene* (39), and *Iuliana* (ll. 157–164) include this speech; however, their imagery is not as strong or vivid as Cynewulf's. The *LA* does not include this speech. Robert E. Bjork asserts that Cynewulf's devil is Juliana's "linguistic equal" whose "worthiness as a spiritual opponent arises from his skilful manipulation of more general structural aspects of discourse" (*The Old English Verse Saints' Lives: A Study in Direct Discourse and the Iconography of Style.* Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1985, 55 and 56).

wið flanþræce, nele feor þonan
bugan from beaduwe, ac he bord ongean (385)
hefeð hygesnottor, haligne scyld,
gæstlic guðreaf, nele Gode swican,
ac he, beald in gebede, bidsteal gifeð
fæste on feðan, ic sceal feor þonan,
heanmod hweorfan, hroþra bidæled, (390)
in gleda gripe, gehðu mænan,
þæt ic ne meahte, mægnes cræfte,
guðe wiðgongan; ac ic geomor sceal
secan oþerne, ellenleasran
under cumbolhagan. cempan sænran, (395)
þe ic onbryrdan mæge beorman mine,
agælan æt guþe. Þeah he godes hwæt
onginne gæstlice, ic beo gearo sona,
þæt ic ingehygd eal geondwlite,
hu gefæstnad sy ferð innanweard, (400)
wiþersteall geworht; ic þæs wealles geat
ontyne þurh teonan; bið se torr þyrel,
ingong geopenad, þonne ic ærest him
þurh eargfare in onsende
in breostsefan bitre geþoncas (405)
þurh mislice modes willan,
þæt him sylfum selle þynceð
leahtras to fremman ofer lof Godes,
lices lustas.[42]

[If I meet with an attack of darts
any bold and brave champion
of the Lord, who is unwilling
to flee far from there, from the fight,
and he, wise in mind, raises a defense,
a holy shield and spiritual battle-armor,
against me, and who is unwilling
to betray God, but he bold in prayer,
makes a stand fast within the army,
I humiliated, deprived of comfort,
shall depart far from there into the
grip of fire and shall lament the misery
that I might not overcome his craft of power in battle.
But I, mournful, shall seek another less
brave within the war hedge, a less active champion
over whom I may exercise my powerful influence,
may hinder in battle. Although he spiritually begins
something of good, I am immediately ready to see
through his entire inner mind, to see how
his inward mind may be fastened,
how his defenses work. Through wickedness, I
open the gate of this wall; the tower is
pierced, the entrance opened. Then by a
flight of arrows I first send forth bitter

[42] Horner notes these are rape metaphors (*Discourse of Enclosure*, 118–120).

> intentions into his mind through various
> desires of his heart, so that to himself he
> thinks it better to commit vices, lusts
> of the body, than praise of God.]

The language used here is reminiscent of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians in which the Christian is fortified by *arma Dei* (6.11) and *armaturam Dei* ('armour of God' 6.13) in order *stare adversus insidias diaboli* ('to stand against the deceits of the devil' 6.11).[43] The letter continues (6.12–6.17):

> quia non est nobis conluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem sed
> adversus principes et potestates adversus mundi rectores
> tenebrarum harum contra spiritalia nequitiae in caelestibus
> propterea accipite armaturam Dei ut possitis resistere in die malo et
> omnibus perfectis stare
> state ergo succincti lumbos vestros in veritate et induti loricam iustitiae
> et calciati pedes in praeparatione evangelii pacis
> in omnibus sumentes scutum fidei in quo possitis omnia tela
> nequissimi ignea extinguere
> et galeam salutis adsumite et gladium Spiritus quod est verbum Dei
>
> [For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against
> principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this
> darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.
> Therefore, take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to
> resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect.
> Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on
> the breastplate of justice:
> And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.
> In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to
> extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one.
> And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit
> (which is the word of God).]

Aldhelm also employs this motif in the opening of his *De uirginitate*, in which *virginitatis lorica* ('the breastplate of virginity') *pudicitiæque parma* ('and the shield of modesty') protect

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[43] Douay-Rheims translates both *arma Dei* and *armaturam Dei* as 'armour of God'. Isaiah 59:15–18 includes similar battle imagery. See also Hermann, 37–39 and Flora Lewis, "The Wound in Christ's Side and the Instruments of the Passion: Gendered Experience and Response" in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*. ed. Lesley Smith. London: British Library, 1997, 204–229, at 217–223. Magennis notes the extensive use of battle imagery and language recalling Ephesians 6 in Margaret's Latin *passio* (31). Traditionally this is the case for Margaret as her Katherine Group text also includes comparatively more of this language than Juliana's. See, for example, *Marherete* (32, l. 4–36, l. 23).

'good' virgins who are armed *spiritalis armaturæ spiculis et ferratis virutum venabulis* ('with darts of spiritual armor and iron-tipped spears of virtues' 240).[44] This imagery is continued in the accounts of subsequent saints.[45] Eugenia, for example, is defended by a *ferrato* […] *clipeo* ('iron-plated shield' 297) and *retundens strofosæ accusationis catapultas de falsitatis faretra prolatas in ipsos, a quibus diriguntur* ('pounding back catapults of malicious accusation having been advanced from the quiver of falsehood against those, by whom they were directed' 298). *Carmen de uirginitate* also touches on this theme when Agnes' suitor attempts to assault her *(g)arrula verbosis contorquens spicula labris* ('casting garrulous arrows from verbose lips' l. 1958). God, of course, grants her victory and strikes the man dead.[46] Chionia, Irene and Agape are similarly protected from wicked arrows by their virtuous shield (ll. 2229–2230):

> Sed famulas Christi protexit parma pudoris
> Spicula luxuriæ spernentes corde profana.
>
> [But the shield of modesty protected Christ's servants
> (Who were) spurning at heart the profane arrows of lechery.]

The *parma pudoris* (l. 2327) also protects Rufina and Secunda throughout their trials. Eulalia's account describes the motivation of all devoted virgins to do battle and defend themselves for God (ll. 2020–2024):

> Qui solet assiduis castos armare triumphis
> Militibusque suis portam reserare per æthram,
> Dum vincunt sancti fallentis proelia mundi

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[44] The passage continues the battle imagery, including direct reference to Ephesians 6:17.
[45] This imagery applies to both male and female virgins. In Aldhelm's *CDV*, Chrysanthus, Daria's husband, *armatus Christi testudine* ('armed with Christ's protective covering' l. 1154): *Nec penetrare sinit stuprorum spicula pectus / Sed procul excussit iaculatas fraude sagittas* ('Does not allow darts of stupor (due to decadence) penetrate his breast / But shook off arrows for deception thrown from afar' ll. 1156–1157).
[46] See Agnes Chapter, 141–143.

> Atque coronatis gestant vexilla maniplis.[47]
>
> [Who customarily arms the chaste with persistent triumphs
> And opens the gate through Heaven for His soldiers,
> While saints win battles of the deceptive world
> And bear standards with crowned companies.]

Although Aldhelm does not include Juliana in his accounts, the imagery of these texts supports the thematic indication that Juliana's faith and virginity readily arm her for combat with such a foe.[48] Juliana's physical endurance, as with Aldhelm's virgins, evidences inherent strength and stamina of virginity, which in turn represents her steadfast and devout faith. Juliana's virginity, however, unlike most of Aldhelm's virgins', manifests itself in physical as well as spiritual prowess.

Throughout these texts, especially Cynewulf's work, Juliana is more than a martyr aspiring to become an *imitatio Christi*; she is a *miles Christi*, who literally combats the forces of Hell. The fortifying capabilities of her virginity play a crucial role here since "(o)nly the *miles Dei*, or *metodes cempa*, can resist" the deception of the devil.[49] Belial is, of course, accustomed to battling and tempting 'average' *milites Christi*. It is the manifestation of her great faith, however, that makes her unconquerable and her sex that makes him uncomfortable.

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[47] For appearances of crowns and companies of virgins in these lives, see Agnes Chapter, 107–108.
[48] Jane Chance discusses the connection of these two works with Cynewulf's text (*Woman as Hero in Old English Literature*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986, 34–35).
[49] Chance, 43.

Good Female and Evil Male: Gender Symbolism

Belial, a self-described seasoned warrior, expresses great surprise at Juliana's abilities. Although his defeat obviously troubles him, it is his defeat by a woman that especially disturbs him.[50] Cynewulf's devil admits that he anticipated this fight to be an 'easy win' (ll. 451–453).

> "þeah ic þec gedyrstig 7 þus dolwillen
> siþe gesohte, þær ic swiþe me
> þyslicre ær þrage ne wende."
>
> ["Although I daring and thus foolish sought
> you on this journey, when before especially
> I did not expect such a distressing time."]

Throughout these texts, Belial marvels at Juliana's ability to defeat him; however, he also appears very aware of the reasons for this defeat. Belial traditionally notes not only the inherent power of her intactness, but also cites the foundation of her fortitude, her great faith. When Juliana demands Belial's explanation for his audacity in targeting Christians, he retorts (*Passio*, 10):[51]

> Dic mihi et tu quomodo ausa es me tenere nisi quia confides in Christum? Sic et ego confido in patrem meum, quia malorum artium[52] est, et quod uult hoc facio.
>
> [But tell me how you are daring to hold me, unless (it is) because you believe in Christ? Just so I believe in my father, because he is of evil arts, and (it is) because he desires, (that) I do this.]

Cynewulf's demon similarly returns the same question, as does Belial in *Iuliene* (41):[53]

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[50] Margaret's second demon also conveys shock and embarrassment at defeat by a female adversary. See below 166–168.

[51] Belial makes a very similar speech in *Iuliana* (ll. 168–170). Margaret's demon puts a similar question to the saint. He does not, however, appear as knowledgeable as Belial as to the source of virgins' strength. See Old English CT and CCCC (16); and *Marherete* (38, ll. 4–10).

[52] d'Ardenne cites other texts showing this as *auctor* (40). In the *Acta*, Belial claims his father *malarum actionum est auctor* ('is the author of evil actions' 877A).

> 'Me sei me, seli meiden' quoð he, 'hu derst tu halde me ant hondlin se heterliche bute þurh þet tu art trusti o þi lauerd; ant ich do as þu dest, truste o mi lauerd þet is meister of all mixschipes, ant wurche his wil ouer al ase forð as i mei, ant ȝef ich mahte forðre ich walde beo þe feinre.']
>
> ["But tell me, blessed maiden" he said, "how you dare hold and handle me so fiercely except for that you have trust in your Lord; and I do as you do, trust in my lord who is master of all villainies, and I work his will over all as far as I may, and if could (work) farther, I would be the happier."]

Belial in the *Passio*, again lamenting her victory, compares Juliana to her male counterparts indicating his surprise at her ability, despite his recent recognition of her steadfast faith in Christ (11).[54]

> Et cum omnia mala feci, nemo tamen ausus fuit me torquere quantum tu, nemo apostolorum manum meam tenuit. Tu autem et legasti[55] me! Nemo martyrum me cecidit. Nemo prophetarum mihi iniuriam fecit. Nemo patriarcharum mihi manum misit. Nam ipsius filii Dei experimentum cœpi in deserto facere illum ascendere in montem excelsum, et non fuit ausus contra me aliquid dicere: et tu me sic tormentis consumis! O uirginitas, qui contra nos armaris?[56]
>
> [And although I made all evils, no one, however, had dared to torment me as much as you, no one of the apostles restrained my force. You, however, even bound me! No one of the martyrs struck me. No one of the prophets caused injury to me. No one of the patriarchs sent force against me. For I began the test of the Son of God Himself in the desert that made Him ascend onto the high mountain, and He had not dared to speak anything against me: however, you thus consume me with torments! O virginity, how are you armed against us?]

The deliberate and obvious concentration on masculine figures in this series highlights Juliana's femaleness against this wholly male backdrop. The demon's shock at her victory is

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[53] Cynewulf, ll. 429–437.

[54] *Iuliana* includes an amended version of the speech in the *Passio*: *Et / cum omnia talia fecissem peccata. nemo tamen ausus fuit me tan / gere. Quantum tua virginitas. que contra nos armatur* ('And although I had made all such sins, no one, however, had dared to restrain me. How great is your virginity, which is being armed against us' ll. 189–191).

[55] This is most likely supposed to be *ligasti* or *ligavisti* ('bound'). The *Acta* has *ligasti* (877B).

[56] Lapidge notes that *qui* in this line is an error and should possibly be *cur* ("Cynewulf" 170 n. 63). The *Acta* has *quid* here (877B). The devil in Cynewulf's *Juliana* and the *LA* does not make this statement regarding virginity.

further specified in Cynewulf's account. Cynewulf's demon presents a similar structure, setting Juliana against her Christian brothers in terms of spiritual worth (ll. 510b–522a).

"Næs ænig þara (510)
þæt me þus þriste, swa þu nu þa,
halig, mid hondum hrinan dorste;
næs ænig þæs modig mon ofer earþan
þurh halge meaht, heahfædra nan,
ne witgena; þeah þe him weoruda God (515)
onwrige, wuldres Cynig, wisdomes gæst,
giefe unmæte, hwæþre ic gong to þam
agan moste. Næs ænig þara
þæt mec þus bealdlice bendum bilegde,
þream forþrycte, ær þu nu þa (520)
þa miclan meaht mine oferswiðdest,
fæste forfenge."

["There was not one
among those that thus audaciously dared to
touch me with their hands as you now do,
holy woman; there was not one man on
earth through holy might this brave, none of the
patriarchs, nor prophets; although God of hosts
King of splendor, revealed to them the spirit of
wisdom, a great gift, nevertheless, I might have
access to them. There was not one
among those that thus boldly laid bonds
upon me, tormented with punishments,
before you now overcame my great might,
seized me fast."]

This Juliana accomplishes an aggressive task and instills a terror in the demon that numbers of men with their masculine prowess were unable. Cynewulf's devil further bemoans his state. This time comparing Juliana to other *women* (ll. 546–553):

"Hwæt, þu mec þreades
þurh sarslege; ic to soþe wat
þæt ic ær ne sið ænig ne mette
in woruldrice wif þe gelic,
þristran geþohtes ne þweorhtimbran (550)
mægþa cynnes. Is on me sweotul
þæt þu unscamge æghwæs wurde
on ferþe frod."

["Behold, you punished me
with a painful blow. I know truly
that I never before met any woman like you

> in the worldly kingdom, more audacious of
> purpose nor more resolutely made among
> womankind. It is clear to me that you are
> completely unashamed and wise in mind."]

Cynewulf places Juliana in a structure that allows both male and female success, yet places the saint above all regardless of gender.

In the *South English Legendary*, Belial, while not including these comparisons, also openly laments this unexpected outcome. The *South English Legendary* combines the statements on virginity found in the other works with the demon's alarm at her strength (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 118–120):

> Wy ertou so strang maidenot þat þou nemiȝt ouercome be[o]
> Alas maidenot alas wi woltou wiþ us fiȝte
> Maidens ichelle euere eft drede inabbe aȝen hom no miȝte
>
> [Why are you so strong maiden that you might not be overcome?
> Alas maiden! Alas, why do you wish to fight with us?
> Maidens shall ever after have no dread, against them (there is) no might.]

In *Iuliene*, Belial displays even less surprise at being conquered by a maiden. In the corresponding passage, Belial contentiously states (45):[57]

> Of al þet uuel i þe world, hwet wult tu wurse? Ich am of þe sprunges
> þe an þet hit meast of springeð; ne neauer aðet tis dei nes ich þus
> ihondlet. O þe mihte of meiðhad, as þu art iwepnet to weorrin aȝein
> us! ȝet tu wurchest us wurst of al þet us wa deð, as þu dudest eaure.
> Ah we schule sechen efter wrake on alle þeo þet te biwiteð, ne ne
> schulen ha neauer beo sker of ure weorre. We wulleð meidenes áá mare
> heanen ant heatien, and þah monie esterten us summe schulen stutten.
>
> [Of all the evil in the world, what worse do you desire? I am, of the
> springs, the one from which most (evil) springs; (yet) never until this
> day was I thus handled. O the power of maidenhood, how you are
> armed to make war against us! Yet, you work us worst of all (those)
> that cause us woe, as you always do. But we shall ever seek revenge on
> all those who protect you, they shall never be free from our war. We
> will always oppress and persecute maidens, and although many escape
> us, some shall remain.]

[57] The declaration of war is not found in the *Passio*, Cynewulf, the *SEL*, *Iuliana*, or the *LA*.

The devil in *Iuliene* echoes the statement made by Belial in the *Passio* acknowledging her virginity as a source of great strength. He does not, however, list a series of powerful male champions thereby emphasizing defeat specifically by a woman and bemoaning that fact as a particular insult. On the contrary, this Belial accentuates maidens' inherent strength, seeming to already be familiar with their dangerous fortitude. His declaration of war highlights his belief in maidens' threat to his plan, and to him personally, as well as stresses maidens' great power to resist and conquer him.

Margaret's demon also traditionally expresses shame at his defeat by a woman.[58] This demon, however, conveys far greater embarrassment and Belial's traditional reaction to Juliana pales in comparison. Mortified demon in *Marherete* states (36, ll. 25–27):[59]

> Margarete, meiden, to hwon schal ich iwurden?
> mine wepnen, wumme, allunge aren awarpen.
> ȝet were hit þurh a mon—ah is þurh a meiden.
>
> [Margaret, maiden, why shall I go on?
> My weapons, misery, are entirely defeated.
> Yet, were it through a man—but it is through a maiden.]

Even the *Legenda aurea*, which tempers Belial's speeches and reactions so much that he appears almost passive, retains this demon's virulent reaction to his vanquisher's sex.[60] The demon in Margaret's account laments (v. 1, 618):

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[58] Jones notes that persecutors were ashamed by their inability to defeat or break female martyrs during the Christian Persecutions (33). Maxentius berates the philosophers for their failure to surpass a girl (Katherine) in their debate (*Katerine*, ll. 461–474).

[59] The demon in Margaret's Old English CT account explicitly laments his defeat by a *gingre fæmnan* ('young (female) virgin' 15). The demon in CCCC does not include a similar speech, however. The demon in the *SEL* is also ashamed that a *tendre maide* ('tender maid' l. 186) overcame him (*De Sancta Margareta*, v. 1, 291–302). This is abbreviated as *Margareta*.

[60] See Juliana's exchange with her demon (*LA* v. 1, 267–268). Winstead discusses the preferred focus on saints' strength and engaging power struggles over devout speeches and less 'action-packed' scenes in the *LA* (*Virgin Martyrs*, 66–69).

> "O beata Margarita, superatus sum. Si iuuenis me uinceret, non curassem. Ecce, a tenera puella superatus sum."
>
> "O blessed Margaret, I am overcome. If a young man conquered me, I would not worry about it. (But) look, I am overcome by a tender girl."

Margaret also engages in this sex-specified battle and shaming. She announces to the demon: *"Sternere, superbe demon, sub pedibus femine"* ("Lie down, proud demon, under a woman's feet" (v. 1, 618).[61] Bokenham's *Legendys*, which does not include an account of Juliana's legend, modifies both Margaret's forceful behavior and the demon's antagonistic statements.[62] Delany notes Bokenham's revision of this legend in which he removes the devil's reaction to and embarrassment of his defeat by a woman. Regarding this facet of Margaret's tradition, Delany states:

> The sexism here lies in the premise that women are morally weaker than men; hence they are unworthy opponents of the devil. But because this sentiment is expressed by a demon, perhaps it is meant to be rejected by the reader. An equally possible interpretation is that the demon, an expert in sin, knows who is most likely to fall. In any case, Bokenham cuts through this interpretive ambiguity by omitting the sexist lament altogether. His Margaret is not to be seen as exceptional to her sex in strength and virtue but, rather, as representative. Therefore the misogynistic comment, though traditional to the story, would undercut his purpose.[63]

This omission of this sex-specific hostile material in Bokenham's work is not surprising, considering his intended readers were women. The argued reasoning behind Bokenham's treatment may be applied to Belial's even further diminished reaction in *Iuliene*.[64] This work, like Bokenham's, is directed toward women who were waging their own spiritual

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[61] Margaret also mentions her femaleness in order to shame the demon in the *SEL* (*Margareta*, ll. 179–182). Margaret makes a modified statement in *Marherete* as well (28, ll. 14–18).
[62] For Bokenham's Margaret account, see below 168.
[63] Delany, 163.
[64] Delany notes that the demon's reaction in *Marherete* is much stronger than the demon's in *Iuliene* (163).

battles against the Devil. It would be counter-productive in such texts to portray women's victory in spiritual warfare as substantially more difficult than men's.

Virgin Martyrs are always the main focus of their lives; however, there are often notable supporting female characters. Agatha's legend, for example, includes Aphrodisia and her daughters; Agnes' her mother, her foster-sister, and Constantia; Katherine's her mother, the Blessed Virgin, and the Queen; Lucy's her mother and Agatha; Christina's her mother and female servants; and Margaret's her foster-mother.[65] Juliana's legend, however, makes only rare mention of any other female characters virtuous or wicked.[66] As the lone prominent woman in the texts, Juliana faces male figures, human and demonic, who are presented as uncompromisingly evil. Juliana, as Christ's single representative in the narrative, evidences the dominance of the Lord in a female body. Juliana as the only female and Christian character embodies the Christian faith itself.

Even as the Lord's agent, Juliana's bodily strength, although an outward manifestation of inner sanctity, is still generally unexpected in a Virgin Martyr. Most Virgin Martyrs use their tongues as weapons of aggression and bodies as weapons of defense.[67] Juliana, however, uses both her tongue and body as weapons of aggression. Saints such as Katherine, Agnes, Agatha, Lucy, Christina, and Cecilia chastise and, in

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[65] See Agatha Chapter, 80–84; Agnes Chapter, 86 nn. 11 and 13; and Katherine Chapter, 251–261. See the *LA* for Lucy (v. 1, 49–52) and for Christina (v. 1, 646–649). For Margaret, see *Marherete* (4–6).
[66] Cynewulf deliberately omits Juliana's mother from his version. Her mother does, however, appear in the *Passio* (1), *Iuliana* (ll. 8–10), and the *Acta* (875B). Hermann suggests that Cynewulf's omission is due to the mother's lack of religious conviction for either the pagan or Christian faiths (161–162). Hermann asserts: "Her tactic of psychic and social withdrawal suggests that Cynewulf prefers exaggerating the binary oppositions essential to his schematic technique rather than presenting characters who cannot occupy places on either side of the slash" (162).
[67] See Katherine Chapter, 219–221.

some cases, taunt their persecutors when the men attempt to coerce the virgins into betraying their faith. Juliana, although still verbally rebuking her tormentors, when given the opportunity to exercise her own strength against an opponent, also does so physically. Her actions bring a primarily spiritual battle into the physical plane.

Juliana's Demon: The Physical and Spiritual Struggle

Throughout a legend of reversals, Belial's true nature provides the clearest and most obvious perversion as an 'angel of the Lord' is revealed to be a demon of Hell. The motif of a demon in the guise of a benevolent figure is an inversion of the heavenly aid motif often appearing in saints' lives.[68] Justina, another Virgin Martyr with a lustful slighted suitor, is repeatedly visited by several demons in various disguises employed by her suitor to persuade her to forsake her virginity. She, like Juliana, refuses marriage. Justina's suitor, Cyprian, does not torture the virgin in the conventional manner, however. Instead, the demons sent by Cyprian continually torment and sexually attack her.[69] Ultimately, the devils fail and Cyprian converts to Christianity.[70]

The desires of Eleusius in the *Passio*, although obviously amorous, are not as sexually explicit or persistent as Cyprian's. Belial encourages Juliana to sacrifice and avoid physical pain. He does not traditionally urge her to sexually yield to Eleusius, however. In the *Passio*, the demon insists: *accede et sacrifica, et fuge tormenta* ('accede and sacrifice, and

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[68] See Agatha Chapter, 71–84.
[69] These demons attempt to sway her to lust and one even attempts to rape her (*LA* v. 2, 971–976). For rape in the legends of Virgin Martyrs, see Agnes Chapter, 130–141.
[70] *LA* v. 2, 975. In a twist on this motif, Theodora is tricked by the arguments of evil women, 'witches', into cheating on her husband (*LA* v. 1, 611–615).

escape from torments' 6). Again he encourages the saint: *Angelus Domini sum, qui missus sum ad te ut sacrifices et non moriaris* ('I am an Angel of the Lord, who was sent to you so that you sacrifice and do not die' 6). The demon in Cynewulf's account similarly strives to convince the virgin to sacrifice and spare herself torments. However, he does so at greater length (ll. 253–257 and 261–266):

> "Þes þu on ofeste, swa he þec ut heonan
> lædan hate, þæt þu lac hraþe
> onsecge sigortifre, ær þec swylt nime,
> deað fore duguðe: þy þu þæs deman scealt,
> eadhreðig mæg, yrre gedygan."
>
> ["You, (do) this in haste: when he orders you
> to be led out from here, quickly
> present a sacrifice, an offering for victory,
> before the end takes you, death before the
> multitude: By these means you, blessed maiden,
> shall escape the judge's anger."]
>
> ***
>
> "Ic eom engel Godes ufan siþende,
> þegn geþungen, 7 to þe sended,
> halig of heahþu. Þe sind heardlicu,
> wundrum welgrim, witu geteohhad
> to gringwræce. Het þe God beodan,
> Bearn Waldendes, þæt þe burge þa."
>
> ["I am God's angel, a noble thane, a holy one
> from on high, journeying from above and
> sent to you. There are decreed as deadly
> punishment severe and wondrously cruel torments.
> God, the Son of the Lord, ordered me to command
> that you guard yourself from these."]

The disguised Belial in *Iuliana*, like that in the *Passio*, briefly instructs Juliana: *accede & sacrifica ut / euadas tormenta* ('accede and sacrifice so that you may evade torments' ll. 105–106) and also assures her: *Angelus / domini sum qui te saluare ueni; & missus sum ad te ut sa / crifices & non moriaris* ('I am an Angel of the Lord, who has come to save you; and I was

sent to you so that you sacrifice and do not die' ll. 107–109). The demon in the *Legenda aurea* similarly advises her to sacrifice and evade torments.[71]

The devil in *Iuliene*, when attempting to persuade Juliana to submit to her mad suitor, pushes the virgin to give in entirely: *Wurch Eleusius wil, for ich þe ȝeoue leaue* ('Do Eleusius' will, for I give you leave' 31). *Iuliene* focuses much more on Eleusius' amorous desires than the *Passio*, Cynewulf' account, or *Iuliana*. In *Iuliene*, Eleusius' *wil* clearly entails a sexual relationship. Belial's urgings in the *South English Legendary*, however, are the most explicit (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 63–68):

> Þo þis maide in prison was þe deuel to hure wende
> In forme of an angel & sede hure þat oure Louerd him þuder sende
> Forto saui hure fram þe deþ & wissi hure wel to done (65)
> Þat he[o] tormens forto fle[o] dude þe Iustices bone
> For oure Louerd hadde of hure reuþe & wilnede hure lif
> And leuer hadde þanne hure deþ þat he[o] were wedded wife
>
> [When this maid was in prison, the devil came to her
> In angelic form and said to her that our Lord sent him there
> In order to save her from death and to advise her well
> That she should flee torments and grant the Justice's request
> For our Lord had pity for her and desired her life
> And He had rather than her death, that she were a wedded wife]

Juliana is encouraged in these Middle English texts to perform more than the customary sacrifice to pagan idols. Belial advises her to sacrifice her most precious commodity of all, the very source of her power and expression of her faith: her virginity.

Belial's encouragements indicate that Juliana's fight with the devil, particularly in later sources, is a combat against temptation. This temptation is not only one of physical safety but also of lust. There is repeated association between the Devil and the vice of Lechery throughout the Katherine Group and related texts. *Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali*

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[71] *LA* v. 1, 267.

Meiðhad, like Cynewulf and Aldhelm, use battle imagery recalling Ephesians while warning virgins to fight against the forces of lust. *Hali Meiðhad*, for instance, claims (7, ll. 25–27):[72]

> Euch fleschlich wil ant lust of leccherie þe ariseð i þe heorte is þes feondes fla; ah hit ne wundeð þe nawt bute hit festni in þe, ant leaue se longe þet tu waldest þet ti wil were ibroht to werke.
>
> [Each fleshly desire and lust for lechery, which arises in your heart is the arrow of the enemy; but it does not wound you unless it holds fast in you, and remains so long that you desire that your will were fulfilled.]

Ancrene Wisse also uses this theme (4.1411–1415):

> Yef thu thurh thi yemeles werest te earst wacliche, ant yevest to the feond in-yong to forth i the frumthe, swa thet tu ne mahe nawt reculin him ayein-ward, for thi muchele unstrengthe, ah art i-broht se over-forth thet tu ne maht this scheld halden o thin heorte, ne wrenchen hire ther-under frommard te deofles earowen, nim the aleast forth Sein Beneites salve,[73]
>
> [If you, through your carelessness, first resist poorly, and give admittance to the fiend too far in the beginning, so that you may not push him backward, for your great weakness, but you are brought so very far that you might not hold this shield over your heart, nor wrest it down diverting the devil's arrows from you, at last bring forth St. Benedict's salve.]

In *Iuliene*, this is precisely how Eleusius' desire for the saint begins (5).

> As he hefde en-chere bihalden swiðe ȝeorne hire utnume feire ant freoliche ȝuheðe, felde him iwundet inwið in his heorte wið þe flan þe of luue fleoð, swa þet him þuhte þet ne mahte he nanes-weis wiðute þe lechnunge of hire luue libben.
>
> [So once he had very earnestly beheld her exceptionally fair and beautiful youth, he felt wounded within his heart with the flying arrows of love, so that he thought he might in no way live without the remedy of her love.][74]

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[72] The passage asserts further down: *Leccherie o meiðhad, wið help of fleschlich wil, weorreð o þis / wise* ('lechery, with the help of the fleshly will, wages war on maidenhood in this manner' 8, ll. 7–8). For Belial's war upon maidens, see above 165–166.

[73] Savage and Watson describe St. Benedict's salve as "(t)he scourge, used in all medieval monasteries, and by many secular priests and devout laypeople. When prayer, meditation and fantasy couched in the most forceful and physical language fails to work, the physical remedy is all that is left" (*Anchoritic Spirituality*, 386 n. 130).

[74] Eleusius' desired remedy is, of course, sexual access to the virgin. For intercourse as a remedy for lovesickness, see Wack, 41 and 66–70.

Once Juliana has been handed over to Eleusius, he also *weorp a sic as a wiht þet sare were iwundet* ('made a sigh as a creature that was grievously wounded' 19). The *Ancrene Wisse* asserts that lechery, *the stinkinde hore* ('the stinking whore' 2.131), *scheot the arewen of the licht echen, the fleoth lichtliche forth ase / flaa thet is i-vithered ant stiketh in there heorte* ('shoots the arrows of burning eyes, which fly lightly forth just as a shaft that is feathered and sticks in the heart' 2.132–133). Eleusius, unlike the object of his affections, proves himself an 'easy target' for Lechery in this spiritual war.[75]

Portrayal of spiritual warfare between Virtues and Vices themselves or characters representing the Virtues and Vices is popular medieval subject matter.[76] While arguably representing multiple Vices, Belial is a clear embodiment of Lust. This association is heightened by the symbolic relevance of 'feet' in these texts. Innes-Parker has noted using Old Testament examples that "the feet are often found as a euphemism for sexual organs or for lechery."[77] There is recurring association of the foot with lust in *Ancrene Wisse* and the text repeatedly refers to lust and bodily temptation as foot-wounds. The depiction of

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[75] See Agnes Chapter, 100 n. 59. Lucy's suitor in *CDV* is also wounded by her rejection (ll. 1808–1813). Gravdal argues that in Arthurian romance a woman's beauty is presented as if not an excuse, certainly an instigator for *raptus*, and asserts: "ravishment and irresistible female beauty are inextricably entwined" (55). See also Salih's discussion on characteristics of medieval romance in Katherine Group (57–66, especially 60–64). Even discusses the classical portrayal of Apollo in pain when the object of his affection, Daphne, escapes his sexual advances by transforming into a laurel tree (146–147). See also Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.452–567.

[76] The most notable and influential work involving this theme is Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (*Prudentius*, v. 1. ed. and trans. H. J. Thomson. Loeb. London: Heinemann, 1949–1953). See Orchard, 170–175 and Hermann, Chapter 1.

[77] Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" 216, n. 12. She lists examples from the Old Testament (Ruth, 2 Samuel, Exodus). She also discusses the association of the belly with sexual organs and lust in *Ancrene Wisse* and relates it to the dragon scene in Margaret's legend. Gravdal argues that Margaret's encounter with the dragon is an attempted rape (37–41). See also Salih's critique of this interpretation (87–89). Robertson presents Margaret's legend as victory over sexual temptation (*Early English Devotional Prose*, 106–116).

the Devil piercing a Christian with the vice of lechery is again presented as a battle scene (4.1178–1187).

> Lo, hu ye mahe cnawen thet he is earh ant unwreast hwen he smit thider-ward: Nis he earh champiun the skirmeth toward te vet, the secheth se lahe on his kempe-ifere? Flesches lust is fotes wunde - as wes feor i-seid th'ruppe - ant this is the reisun: As ure fet beoreth us, alswa ure lustes beoreth us ofte to thing thet us luste efter. Nu thenne thah thi va hurte the o the vet - thet is to seggen, fondeth with flesches lustes - for se lah wunde ne dred tu nawt to sare, bute hit to swithe swelle thurh skiles yettunge with to muchel delit up toward te heorte, ah drinc thenne atter-lathe ant drif thet swealm ayein-ward frommard te heorte - thet is to seggen, thench o the attri pine thet Godd dronc o the rode, ant te swealm schal setten.
>
> [Behold, how you may know that he is craven and feeble when he attacks in that direction: Is he not a craven champion who thrusts toward the feet, who seeks so low on his fellow-warrior? Flesh's lust is a foot-wound-as was said far above-and this is the reason: As our feet bear us, also our lusts bear us often to things that we lust after. Now then though your foe hurts you on the feet-that is to say, tempts you with flesh's lust-for so low a wound do not fear too greatly, unless it swells too much, through the consent of reason, with too much delight up toward the heart, but drink then the antidote and drive the inflammation backward away from the heart-that is to say, think of the bitter pain that God drank on the Cross, and the inflammation shall diminish.]

Ancrene Wisse also reveals the spiritual actions of one who has become too comfortable and has given in to bodily temptations as a reversal of this scene. This person's flesh *regibeth anan ase feat meare ant idel* ('kicks continuously as a fat and idle horse' 3. 217) and will strike the Lord with its heel.[78] The sinful and misguided individual inverts the position of Christ and perversely places Him in the inferior position of the devil. The anchoress is specifically directed to take such action against the devil: *For-thi, leove suster, as ure Laverd leareth, totred te neddre heaved - / thet is, the biginnung of his fondunge* ('Therefore, beloved sister, as our Lord teaches, trample upon the serpent's head-that is, the beginning of his tempting' 4.1425–1426). Again it directs her (4.1439–1441):

[78] See also Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" 216, n. 12.

> Alswa, leove suster, sone se thu eaver felest thet tin heorte with luve falle to eani thing eawt over mete, anan-rihtes beo war of the neddre atter, ant totred his heaved.
>
> [Also, beloved sister, as soon as you ever feel that your heart descends with love toward anything whatever more than appropriately, immediately be aware of the serpent's poison, and trample upon his head.]

Belial's shock at Juliana's ability to restrain, specifically to bind and trample upon, him is framed within the medieval notion of men's physical and spiritual superiority over women. His surprise, in this context, is compounded by the depiction of women as more prone to lecherous acts and thoughts than men.[79] This framework supposes that Juliana, as a woman, should be far easier to overcome than male Christians. The reversal of strength in this scene is not simply of male-female physical capability, but primarily of virginal power over that of sexual desire as Juliana conquers Lust itself.[80] The female virgin's power becomes equated with the control of virginal genitalia against the personification of lust.

Juliana and Margaret prove the might of their virginities when they display uncompromised force as they seize devils that appear in their cells. Margaret's legend, however, initially makes her seem the more aggressive of the two in her treatment of her demon. This demon, having been revealed to Margaret and already weakened by her devout prayer, beseeches the saint to let him leave her without further injury (*Marherete*, 28, ll. 9–13):[81]

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[79] See, for example, Delany's discussion on reasons for the devil's surprise at the saint's victory in Margaret's legend (above 167–168). The demon in *Marherete* gives an alternate reason for devils' assaults on virgins. He claims it is because a Virgin redeemed humanity (38, ll. 28–33). His shock and dismay at being defeated by a woman, however, seem to undermine this position.
[80] Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" 208–209.
[81] Margaret in the Old English CT is even more violent when she grabs him as she blinds him in one eye and crushes all his bones (14).

> Þet milde meiden Margarte grap þet grisliche þing þet hire ne agras nawiht, & heteueste toc him bi þet eateliche top & hef him up & duste him dunriht to þer eorðe, ant sette hir riht-fot on his ruhe swire & feng on þus to speokene:—
>
> [That mild maiden Margaret grabbed that grisly thing that she was not frightened of at all, and took him incredibly tight by his hideous hair and heaved him up and cast him down right to the ground, and set her right foot on his rough neck and began to speak in this manner:—]

Margaret, unlike Juliana, forcibly seizes her demon without celestial prompting or direction. She also repeatedly stomps upon him as emphasis during her following speech.[82] Her actions become progressively less forceful as their interaction continues, however. When the demon asks Margaret to remove her foot from his neck in order to respond to her interrogation, *milde meiden* ('mild maiden' *Marherete*, 30, ll. 10–11) somewhat obliges as she *lowsede & leoðede a lutel hire hele* ('loosened and released her heel a little' 30, l. 11). Finally, at the end of the prison scene, Margaret, as if tired of their exchange, simply allows the demon to slink away back to Hell.[83] While Margaret begins in a fury and decreases in wrath through the scene, Juliana steadily increases in her rough treatment of Belial as he reveals his list of evil deeds. Juliana, who only lays hold of the demon at a heavenly command, eventually exhibits a ruthlessness surprising in a Virgin Martyr.

Juliana's Brutality

When Bede's Juliana encounters the devil in prison, the entry reports she *palam cum diabolo conflixit* ('openly engaged in conflict with a devil' *PL* 94, Col. 843B). Juliana's

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[82] *Marherete*, 28, ll. 20–21.
[83] *Marherete*, 40, ll. 20–25. Bokenham's Margaret is quite mild from the beginning of the exchange, immediately removing her foot entirely from the demon's neck (ll. 750–752).

traditional interactions with the devil, however, portray a far more involved and violent affair. The heavenly instruction Juliana receives in the *Passio* is brief and direct: *adprehende istum qui tecum loquitur, ut scias quis est iste* ('apprehend that one who speaks to you, so that you may know who he is' 6). In response to this celestial order, the obedient Juliana of the *Passio*: *exsurgens de pauimento, facto Christi signaculo, tenuit Belial* ('rising from the pavement, with the sign of Christ having been made, held Belial tightly' 7).[84] Most other sources repeat this concise command and reaction.[85] The order in *Iuliene*, however, is more explicit: *Ga nu neor ant nim him, ant wið þe bondes þet ter beoð bind him heteueste* ('Go now near and seize him, and with the bonds that are there bind him very tightly' 33). It is important to note that when Juliana binds Belial she does so with the same bonds that were placed on her by Satan's devotees.[86] This Juliana also simply seizes Belial.[87] At this point in each of the other narratives there is no mention of Juliana's binding the devil.

Juliana's binding of Belial is symbolically important to the narrative since it physically conveys the saint's true power: she transfers the chains of her worldly tormenters onto her hellish tormenter. Since a leaf is missing in the manuscript, Cynewulf's account only contains two lines of her initial contact with the exposed devil. The second line

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[84] *Iuliana* (*tenuit demonem* l. 117) and the *LA* (v. 1, 267) are similarly concise in their descriptions of Juliana's initial actions.

[85] For the command, see Cynewulf (ll. 284–286); the *SEL* (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 74–76); *Iuliana* (ll. 114–115); and the *LA* (v. 1, 268). For Juliana's reaction, see Cynewulf (l. 288); the *SEL* (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 77–78); *Iuliana* (l. 116–117); and the *LA* (v. 1, 268).

[86] See Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" 214. Through this reversal, Juliana uses tools intended to drive her to forsake her chastity to overcome Lust personified. For another example of chains as miraculous devices, see Agatha, 72–73. Rauer cites instances of dragon-fighting saints binding conquered serpents with "liturgical vestments" and "ordinary belts" (70). The Warrior Saints in Rauer's study, unlike Juliana and Margaret, tend not to physically attack dragons, but rather overcome the beasts verbally (68–71).

[87] Juliana is somewhat more assertive in *Iuliene* as she *leop to ant ilahte him* ('leapt toward and seized him' 33).

announces that Juliana *þæt deofol genom* ('seized the devil' l. 228). Once the poem resumes, the terms used throughout the exchange between Juliana and the subdued demon, however, indicate that she bound and stepped on him. The fiend is referred to as *fæste fetrum gebunde* ('bound fast with fetters' l. 433), *bendum bilegde* ('fastened with bonds' l. 519b), and *bendum fæstne* ('secure with bonds' l. 537b). The demon also complains that the virgin *þream forþrycte* ('tormented [him] with punishments' l. 520a) and *fæste forgenge* ('seized [him] fast' l. 522a).[88] He further laments how Juliana tormented him *þurh sarslege* ('through painful blows' 1. 547a).

Juliana does not traditionally bind Belial until nearly the end of the scene in her cell. The demon in the *Passio*, exhausted from her interrogation, begs to be released. While he attempts to persuade her, he also threatens her in an attempt to secure his freedom: *Nam accusabo te patri meo, et non expedit tibi* ('For I will accuse you to my father, and (that) is not beneficial for you' 10).[89] In response, Juliana finally binds him (10):[90]

> Tunc sancta Iuliana ligauit eum postergum manibus et posuit super terram et adpræhendens unum de uinculis de quibus ipsa fuerat ligata, cedebat ipsum dæmonem.
>
> [Then holy Juliana bound him with hands behind his back and set him on the ground and seizing one of the chains from those with which she herself was bound, began to beat that demon.]

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[88] For translation of this segment, see above 164–165. See Hermann's discussion on Cynewulf's extensive use of 'firm' and 'fast' words in *Juliana* (154–159)

[89] Cynewulf and the *LA* do not include this threat. Belial makes a similar threat in *Iuliana* (ll. 175–176). In the *SEL*, Belial asks for release but does not threaten Juliana (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 107–109).

[90] Cynewulf does not include this passage. *Iuliana* (ll. 176–178), the *SEL* (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 111–113), and the *LA* contain similar actions (v. 1, 268).

The saint of *Iuliene* attacks and injures Belial even more severely. This demon also claims he will *forwreie* ('denounce'), her to his *meinfule feader* ('powerful father' 41) and Juliana's forceful response to this warning exceeds those found in earlier accounts (41–43):

> 'O' quoð ha, Iuliene, ihesu cristes leofmon, 'þreatest tu me, wrecche? Þe shal iwurðen, godd hit wat, godes þe wurse.' Ant grap a great raketehe þet ha wes wið ibunden, ant bond bihinden his rug ba twa his honden, þet him wrong each neil and blakede of þe blode; ant duste him ruglunge adun riht to þer eorðe, ant stondinde o þe steorue, nom hire ahne bondes, ant bigon to beaten þen belial of helle. Ant he bigon to rarin reowliche, to ȝeien, ant heo leide on se luðerliche þet wa wes him o lieu.
>
> ['Oh' said she, Juliana, Jesus Christ's beloved, 'you threaten me, wretch? It shall be much worse for you, God knows.' And she grabbed a great chain with which she was bound, and bound both his hands behind his back, so that each nail caused him pain and blackened with blood; and flung him backwards right down to the ground, and standing over the filthy creature, seized her own bonds, and began to beat Belial of Hell. And he began to howl grievously, to cry, and she laid on him so viciously that it was woe for him to be alive.]

This Juliana exhibits ruthlessness and aggression exceeding earlier accounts. She even goes so far as to berate the devil as he begs for mercy once he is bound.[91] She rebukes him:

> 'Stew þe, steorue of helle!' quoð þet eadie meiden. 'Merci nan nis wið þe; for þi ne ahest tu nan milce to ifinden.'
>
> ["Cease you, filth of Hell!" said that blessed maiden. "Mercy, (there) is none for you; and so you ought not to find any compassion.']

The other sources do not include Juliana's harsh retort to the demon.

Juliana's traditionally most unforgiving scene appears toward the end of her imprisonment. When the saint is recalled from prison by Eleusius, she drags the bound Belial with her *per forum* ('through the forum' *Passio*, 12). The demon pleads once more for mercy and freedom and then Juliana, *proiecit eum in loco stercore plenum* ('threw him

[91] The *Passio* (10), Cynewulf (ll. 446–453), *Iuliana* (ll. 179–182) and the *LA* (v. 1, 268) include Belial's plea for mercy. The *SEL* includes a modified speech without his plea (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 114–120).

into a place full of dung' 12).[92] Cynewulf provides a less harsh reaction from the saint by omitting the sewer dimension.[93] This Juliana, when brought from prison to see Eleusius a second time, also drags the begging demon behind her, but then simply sets him loose: *Ða hine seo fæmne forlet / æfter þræchwile þystra neosan / in sweartne grund* ('Then the virgin allowed him to seek darkness in the black ground after his time of suffering' ll. 553b–555a.). The virgin in *Iuliene*, however, drags the demon through the populace, subjecting him to its mockery and abuse (47).

> Ant heo leac him eauer endelong þe cheping chapmen to hutung; ant leiden to him, sum wið stan, sum wið ban, and sleatten on him hundes, and leiden wið honden. As he wes imaket tus earmest alre þinge, ant berde as þe ful wiht, þet ter fluhe monie, se þet eadi wummon wergede sumhwet ant reat him wið þe raketehe unrudeliche swiðe, ant weorp him forð from hir awei into a put of fulðe.
>
> [And she dragged him ever along to the derision of the market merchants. And some laid on him with stone, some with bone, and they sent dogs after him and laid on him with their hands. When he was made thus the most miserable of all things, and cried aloud as the foul devil, so that many people flew there, that blessed woman grew somewhat weary and flung him with the chain very roughly, and threw him forth from her away into pit of filth.]

The torments enacted upon the demon, especially in *Iuliene*, are similar to those performed upon Christians. As a result, this derisive treatment appears as a reversal of

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[92] The *SEL* (*Iuliana uirgine*, ll. 131–136), *Iuliana* (ll. 194–201), and the *LA* (v. 1, 268) include Juliana casting Belial into a sewer as does the *Acta* (877C). The *Passio* and the *Acta* heighten the connection between Belial and Eleusius by referring to the Eleusius' fear of a mortal emperor *stercore sedentem* ('sitting in filth' 3 and 875E, respectively). *Iuliana* also does this asserting the emperor is *stercora edentem* ('emitting filth' l. 61). The use of *stercus* for both for the emperor to whom Eleusius is loyal and the location of Belial's final humiliation illuminate the true nature and deserved fate of both prefect and devil. Other sources here do not make use of this symbolism.

[93] Cynewulf, however, does not report this scene. Olsen claims a possible reason for this omission is to keep Juliana a verbal saint rather than an active saint (223–226). Another possibility for this omission is Cynewulf's deliberate juxtaposition of good and evil characters' behavior in his texts. He may not have considered such an action appropriate for an *ides* ('lady').

martyrdom.[94] The devil in this scene becomes a perverted Christ figure. When his blessed dominatrix is through with her interrogation, she inflicts humiliation and further torments that, if the positions of the lowly and sinful were reversed, would be an acceptable and conventional torment scene for a saint.[95] The description of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions in the *Legenda aurea* includes a similar public attempt of shaming (v. 2, 1218):

> Extracti igitur de carcere, ligatis post tergum minibus et nudatis natibus per plateas ducuntur.
>
> [Then they, having been dragged from prison, are led through the streets with hands bound behind their backs and with naked buttocks.]

The inversion of Belial's torment leaves no ambiguity in Juliana's actions, however. Although the violence and lack of mercy is somewhat startling, Juliana as Christ's representative fittingly confronts an unredeemable figure with an uncompromised spiritual strength and purpose.

The identification of not only Belial, but also of her father and suitor as servants of Satan in Juliana's legend permits such treatment to be extended to the men in her narratives.[96] Juliana's status as Christ's servant places her in direct opposition to Africanus and Eleusius as well as their worldly positions. Throughout their struggles, both the natural familial relationship and established social order are affected. Reversals of expected 'good' relationships such as the parent-child relationship and the prospective wealthy suitor-unwed

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[94] Nelson notes that the prison scene is an "inverted world" in which Juliana as "captive" in turn "becomes interrogator" (108).
[95] Christina's head is shaved and she is led naked and shorn through the public (Agnes Chapter, 108–110). Sebastian, after recovering from being pierced with arrows, is beaten to death and thrown in a sewer (*LA* v. 1, 167). Felicula, one of Petronilla's companions, refuses to marry a pagan or sacrifice to idols and is tortured in various ways, killed, and her body is thrown in a sewer (v. 1, 517–518).
[96] See above 162–169.

daughter motif are present in these texts. As these twists are revealed, the demise of the characters and, often, their descents into madness and sin may be traced.

The Bestial Nature of Adversaries

Juliana repeatedly and in varying ways combats male representations of authority, first her father, then her suitor, and finally a representative of Hell. The saint battles a different hierarchical faction in each of these conflicts. She first confronts Africanus' position as the head of the household, then Eleusius' as representative of the empire. Finally, she contests Satan's dominion over pagan populations when she engages in warfare against one of his self-described powerful and well-qualified warriors.

In Virgin Martyr lives, insult to a parent, particularly a father, and a suitor are, however, of different levels and significance. The suitor represents the state through his conventionally high social and political status; he also signifies lust and temptation through his intense sexual interest. The father as the head of society's foundation, the family, represents the social structure. Virgin Martyr legends recall the social structure surrounding the early Church as well as the contemporary saints' motivations and behaviors. Regarding the religious activities of early Christian women, Castelli asserts:

> These women's refusal to participate in the conventional sexual roles ascribed to them by late antique culture (not as an attempt to undercut the patriarchal social order, but in order to achieve spiritual perfection) was perceived ambivalently. On the one hand, their holiness was marked by the abandonment of socially sanctioned gender roles; on the other hand that same abandonment was seen as dangerous to the natural and hierarchical order of social relations.[97]

[97] Castelli, "I Will Make Mary Male" 46. For Virgin Martyrs as property of their fathers, see Heffernan, 274.

The author depicting Virgin Martyrs in this context treads a potentially problematic path, which challenges the established hierarchy and male-dominated society.[98] The distance and difference of the contemporary gender situation from that faced by the virgin must be emphasized in these accounts, or at least the similarities be sufficiently veiled or justified in order to protect the status quo.[99] Distance in physical space and time are often highlighted, as are the period's more fantastical happenings and savage qualities, particularly those embodied by the men involved. This described savagery helps ease the concurrent critique of a male-dominated hierarchy and praise of young defiant women. The presentation of the persecutors in these legends as less human than contemporary Christian men makes the downfalls of the pagan authority figures easier for the audience or readership to accept.

Africanus, as father and head of the household, is understood and expected to be responsible for the conduct of his family members. His relationship with Eleusius indicates his position as an upstanding and respected citizen in their society. His beloved daughter's flaunting of her Christian faith and refusal of marriage to the influential prefect therefore reflects very badly on him.[100] Cynthia Herrup, in her exploration of the seventeenth-

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[98] Winstead suggests this conflict may have been partially handled by Middle English presentations of contentious Virgin Martyrs "as embodiments of *clerical* rather than *feminine* authority" (*Virgin Martyrs*, 101). Jocelyn Wogan-Browne discusses how scenes from the lives of Virgin Martyrs act as exempla for Christina of Markyate's unconventional behavior ("Saints' Lives and the Female Reader" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 27:4 (Oct. 1991): 314–332 at 316–322). Salih also makes this association (*Versions of Virginity*, 43–44). Duffy makes a similar assertion about the lives of Virgin Martyrs and the actions of Margery Kempe (187–188).

[99] Winstead argues that Africanus' behavior in *Iuliene* would likely find support and imitation in its thirteenth-century lay audience (*Virgin Martyrs*, 58–61). She also cites Juliana's conduct as "especially subversive" (61). Wogan-Browne asserts that although audience members may be tempted to sympathize with Africanus' position, his status as a pagan and consequent affiliation with the devil should dissuade them ("Saints' Lives" 319).

[100] For social norms, see Peter Brown, *Body and Society*, 12.

century Earl of Castlehaven's atrocious conduct with his household, claims the Earl's behavior presented a threat to contemporary English patriarchal structure: "The Earl's alleged profligacy and lewdness made him the enemy rather than the protector of his house and so by implication the enemy of every head of household."[101] Africanus' violent and even sexually questionable behavior against his daughter, even in an effort to uphold societal standards, denotes a lack of control over his personal domain.[102]

Africanus, like the Earl, presents a problematic and potentially dangerous figure to society as a whole. The social structure in saints' lives presents powerful or well-born Christians as the ideal and similarly ranked pagans as their antithesis. In each instance, nobility is expected to present exemplary behavior to its religiously corresponding public.

> Indeed, the nobility had a particular obligation to exemplify proper harmony; what was true for common households was truer still for aristocratic establishments [...] a nobleman who in the very organization of his household abused his powers as a patriarch exposed how thin a line separated not only order from corruption, but also good stewardship from tyranny. Moral standards for aristocrats and commoners were not the same within precept of practice, but if a nobleman threatened traditional notions of the benefits of obedience, hierarchy, and patriarchalism, he endangered not only his family, but also his social group and therefore (in contemporary terms) all of society.[103]

Africanus' inability to maintain order within his private sphere quickly becomes a public concern as his Christian daughter openly disobeys her father and rejects the state's power

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[101] Cynthia Herrup, "The Patriarch at Home: The Trial of the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven for Rape and Sodomy" *History Workshop Journal* 41 (1996): 1–18 at 8.
[102] For Africanus' possibly incestuous actions toward his daughter, see below 198–202. Jo Ann McNamara mentions the destructive, at times incestuous, tendencies of the French aristocracy in the twelfth century ("*The Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050–1150" in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*. edited by Clare A. Lees. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, 9). Such behavior would coincide with the rise of Juliana's Anglo-Norman and Middle English traditions (*Iuliene*, xx–xxi).
[103] Herrup, 9.

and desire in her refusal of Eleusius.[104] The moral hierarchy of Juliana's legend would already be evident to Christian auditors or readers. However, the obvious disarray of Africanus' household and his subsequent descent into destructive and aberrant behavior would further distance him from contemporary Christian social-ranking equivalents. Contemporary Christians may interpret Juliana's behavior, although narratively that of a disobedient daughter, as acceptable due to Africanus' clear representation not of an upstanding father and representative of the male hierarchy, but of a disruptive social force.

Africanus, having heard of Juliana's rejection of Eleusius, returns to his daughter *cum magno furore* ('with great rage' *Passio*, 2).[105] Once Juliana is handed over to Eleusius and again rejects him, the prefect is *commotus iracundia* ('impassioned with wrath' 4) and again *commotus* ('impassioned' 4).[106] Toward the conclusion of the *Passio*, Eleusius, his attempts to injure Juliana having been thwarted, *fremebat contra ipsam sicut fera maligna* ('began roaring against her like a dangerous wild beast' 18)[107] and *iratus scidit uestimenta sua* ('enraged tore his clothing' 18).[108] These characterizations of Africanus and Eleusius remain a standard in Juliana's legend, and their dehumanizing aspects are often increased.

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[104] Joshel shows that similar problem dealings with women appear in Livy's works. Women are a threat to the state because beautiful women incite lust, which causes men to behave in ways detrimental to the state (172–174). Therefore, women "must die in order to deaden the male body" (173). See also Agnes Chapter 98–102 for the ramifications of 'seeing' and 'being seen' in the legends of Virgin Martyrs.
[105] This may also be interpreted as 'with great excitement' as he first approaches Juliana with flatteries, not threats. Cynewulf's corresponding passage, however, describes Africanus as: *anræd 7 yfelþweorg, yrre gebolgen* ('resolute and evilly intentioned, engorged with anger' l. 90). *Iuliana* repeats the statement in the *Passio* (l. 28). *Iuliana*, the *SEL*, and the *LA* do not contain corresponding statements.
[106] *Iuliana* repeats these terms (ll. 65 and 75, respectively).
[107] *Iuliana* repeats this statement (ll. 278–279). It is interesting to note the feminine use of *fera* as opposed to the masculine *ferus*. For the corresponding passage in *Iuliene*, see below 187–188.
[108] *Iuliana* repeats this passage (l. 284). Eleusius also performs this action in *Iuliene* (63).

Cynewulf's *Juliana* also portrays the persecuting male characters with language reflecting bestial and demonic natures.[109] Her father is continually referred to as 'furious' or 'in a fury' and is even said to have *ondsware* […] *feondlice* ('fiendishly answered' ll. 117b–118a) his daughter.[110] Cynewulf describes Africanus with a variety of 'enraged' words directly before he hands Juliana over to Eleusius (ll. 140–143a):

> Ða þæs ellenwod, yrre 7 reþe,
> frecne 7 ferðgrim, fæder wið dehter.
> Het hi þa swingan, susle þreagan,
> witum wægan.
>
> [Then the father was furious, angry and cruel,
> terrible and fierce in mind with his daughter.
> He ordered her then to be scourged, to be punished
> with torture, to be afflicted with torments.]

The savage nature first presented in Africanus is emphasized even further in her suitor. Eleusius is regularly described as infuriated to the point of insanity through expressions such as *wearð yrre gebolgen* ('became engorged with anger' l. 58),[111] and *hreoh 7 hygeblind* ('wild and blind in mind' l. 61a).[112] It is in the last scene prior to her martyrdom, however, that Cynewulf completes Eleusius' bestial transformation (ll. 594b–600a).

> Þa se dema wearð
> hreoh 7 hygegrim, ongon his hrægl teran,
> swylce he grennade 7 gristbitade,
> wedde on gewitte swa wilde deor,
> grymetade gealgmod, 7 his godu tælde,
> þæs þe hy ne meahtun mægne wiþstondan
> wifes willan.
>
> [Then the judge became

[109] Woolf discusses Cynewulf's association of Eleusius as a servant of Hell and notes that his characteristics and behavior are much more severe than those in the *Acta* (Cynewulf, 15–16). Horner interprets these men's actions as feminizing (*Discourse of Enclosure*, 113–114).
[110] For a variety of lines that use 'fury' words see ll. 78, 90, 117, and 158.
[111] A similar phrase is used to describe Africanus, see above 185 n. 105.
[112] He is also *frecne mode* ('terrible in mind' l. 184). See Chance's list of words describing Eleusius' madness (41).

> fierce and savage in mind and began to tear his robe,
> he also bared and gnashed his teeth.
> He raged in his mind like a wild beast and
> angry in mind roared and blasphemed his gods
> because they with their power could not withstand the
> desire of a woman.]

This furious descent from initial stability to madness appears to a lesser extent in the *South English Legendary*. This work only briefly alludes to Africanus, but refers to Eleusius as *wroþ* ('furious' *Iuliene uirgine*, l. 61) and claims *witles he was ney* ('he was near to losing his wits' l. 180). Such animalistic and demonic descriptions of suitors are particularly prevalent in Katherine Group texts.[113]

The sinful men in the lives of Katherine, Juliana, and Margaret in this grouping are typically described as vicious and lustful creatures. Juliana refers to Eleusius as a *heaðene hund* ('heathen hound' 47), as a *colt* (49) sired by Satan. Eleusius is also described as a *balefule beast* ('baleful beast' 61) and *as eauer ei iburst bar þet grunde his tuskes* ('as any bristly boar that would grind his tusks' 61). The Middle English versions of Katherine's legend consistently use canine imagery to portray Maxentius. In *Katerine*, the tyrant is called *þe wedde wulf, þe heaðene hunt* ('the enraged wolf, the heathen hound' ll. 678–679), and an *awariede wulf* ('accursed wolf' l. 741).[114] Capgrave's Maxentius is repeatedly referred to as a *dog* (5.649 and 5.1129).[115] Olibrius in *Marherete* is similarly depicted as inhuman. He is a

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[113] Joshel asserts that when Livy's Verginius kills his daughter, he desires to protect her from decent into "animality and the disorder it signals" (178). Paschius shows similar behavior before Lucy is stabbed in the throat (*LA* v. 1, 51). Robertson discusses Juliana's revelation of Eleusius' true bestial nature as well as her revelation of Belial's true nature (*Early English Devotional Prose*, 120–122). Wogan-Browne asserts: "the beasts of the arena met by early Christians re-emerges in the bestializing desire felt by pagan suitors for virgin heroines" (180). Wogan-Browne further discusses the bestiality of tormentors (180–181).
[114] Maxentius is repeatedly referred to as enraged in *Katerine*. For example, he is described as *wod* ('furious' 496 and 564) and reacts *wodeliche* ('furiously' l. 462).
[115] The non-Christian populace is also referred to as *heaðene hundes* (*Katerine*, l. 733).

heaðene hund ('heathen hound' 14, ll. 28–29), *luðere liun* ('wicked lion' 14, ll. 32–33), *heateliche hund* ('fierce hound' 18, l. 5) and he and his minions are declared *helle-hundes* ('hell-hounds' 16, l. 7). These bestial personas are heightened by repeated animalistic actions. Eleusius, for example, *gristbetede* ('ground his teeth' *Iuliene*, 59) and *feng on to feamin ant gristbeatien grisliche* ('began to foam and savagely grind his teeth' 61).[116]

Compared to the virgin's stalwart faith, repeated attestations, unyielding confidence in her position, and often calm demeanor, the men appear foolish and absurd in their uncontrolled wrath and passion. Although the suitor is the character typically transformed into a bestial state, in Juliana's legend, Africanus joins his would-be son-in-law in his descent into fury and his estrangement from the saint.

Africanus' rapid mental and moral deterioration following his daughter's disobedience creates an obviously irreparable divide between the two. His madness is not necessary to produce this breach in their relationship, since Juliana's Christian faith had already distanced the saint from her pagan father. Regardless of her earthly familial duties, Juliana knowingly and willingly exchanges obedience to her mortal father for that to her Heavenly Father.

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[116] See Cynewulf (l. 596) above 187. Canine imagery is used to indicate lust in *Ancrene Wisse* (for example, 4.1358–1376). For Biblical references to "weeping and gnashing of teeth", see Matthew 8:11–12, 13:41–42, 13:49–50, 22:12–13, 24:50–51, and 25:29–30. See also Luke 13:27–28.

Familial Rejection in the Virgin Martyr Tradition

The election of love for God over love for parents is a commonly appearing theme in the *vitae* and *passiones* of male and female saints alike.[117] This is especially frequent in martyrdom accounts, particularly in those of female martyrs. The trend in these lives to turn away from parents stems at least partially from Jesus' professed expectations of His followers (Matthew 10:34–38).[118]

> nolite arbitrari quia venerim mittere pacem in terram non veni pacem mittere
> sed gladium
> veni enim separare hominem adversus patrem suum et filiam adversus matrem
> suam et nurum adversus socrum suam
> et inimici hominis domestici eius
> qui amat patrem aut matrem plus quam me non est me dignus et qui amat
> filium aut filiam super me non est me dignus
> et qui non accipit crucem suam et sequitur me non est me dignus
>
> [Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace,
> but the sword.
> For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against
> her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.
> And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household.
> He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he
> that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.
> And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me.]

Jesus' public refusal to recognize His mother and brothers also promotes this rejection (Matthew 12:46–50).[119]

> adhuc eo loquente ad turbas ecce mater eius et fratres stabant foris
> quaerentes loqui ei
> dixit autem ei quidam ecce mater tua et fratres tui foris stant quaerentes te
> at ipse respondens dicenti sibi ait quae est mater mea et qui sunt fratres mei
> et extendens manum in discipulos suos dixit ecce mater mea et fratres mei
> quicumque enim fecerit voluntatem Patris mei qui in caelis est ipse
>
> [As he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold his mother and his
> brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him.

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[117] For a male example see Francis of Assisi (*LA* v. 2, 1016–1032). See also Agnes Chapter, 88 n. 19.
[118] See also Luke 14:26–27.
[119] See also Mark 3:31–35.

> And one said unto him: Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee.
> But he answering him that told him, said: Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?
> And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren.
> For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.]

In this respect, for many of the martyrs, imitation of Christ extends beyond the realm of physical torment. The rejection of earthly familial bonds, even those with the most loving parents, becomes a standard, although not universal, motif in female martyr accounts. The early account of Perpetua and Felicity's martyrdom includes this struggle as an ongoing theme throughout the narrative.

Perpetua, while imprisoned, repeatedly denies her family's, especially her father's, wishes that she renounce her religion.[120] Despite her father's pleas to recant her statements, Perpetua continues to proclaim herself as a Christian. Even his beseeching on behalf of her child is unable move Perpetua from her fierce dedication. Her father appears multiple times, attempting to persuade her to sacrifice and thereby spare her physical life and ensure her return to her earthly family. The great love of Perpetua's father for his daughter is evident in each of these scenes. Perpetua claims he attempted to persuade her *pro sua affectione*, on account of his affection (3.1) and in the second meeting, she relates (5.5–6):[121]

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[120] Perpetua is not the only Christian in her family. The introduction of her *passio* also names one of her brothers as a catechumen (*Perpetuæ* 2.2). Halls asserts Perpetua "comes from a largely Christian home, despite her father's pleas to her to yield" (17).

[121] Castelli argues for a connection between Perpetua's father and the dragon in her *visio*. "Perpetua's trampling on the head of the dragon may be read as one of her first gestures against paternal authority, the dragon signifying his power, the head signifying his personage" ("I Will Make Mary Male" 37, see 37–38,

> hæc dicebat quasi pater pro sua pietate basians mihi manus et se ad pedes meos iactans et lacrimans me iam non filiam nominabat sed dominam. et ego dolebam casum patris mei quod solus de passione mea gauisurus non esset de tot genere meo.
>
> [My father was speaking in this way on account of his devotion to me, kissing my hands and prostrating himself at my feet. Shedding tears he was calling to me not as his daughter but as his mistress.[122] And I was being pained by my father's plight because he alone of all my family would not be glad for my suffering.[123]]

At her final meeting with her father, Perpetua again refuses to deny her faith. The authorities beat her father as he attempts to hinder her (6.5).

> et cum staret pater ad me deiciendam, iussus est ab Hilariano proici et uirga percussus est. et doluit mihi casus patris mei quasi ego fuissem percussa; sic dolui pro senecta eius misera.
>
> [And when my father was continuing to discourage me, it was ordered by Hilarianus that my father be thrown down and he was beaten with a rod. My father's plight pained me as if I had been beaten; thus I was pained for his miserable old age.]

This persistent and continued parental love for a Christian son or daughter is an uncommon feature in martyrdom accounts although the continual denial of parental requests occurs frequently. In most accounts, parents beseech children to bend to the will of pagan authorities and only after kind words do the physical torments begin. Perpetua's torment, however, was the continual reminder of the mutual love and dedication shared with her family, as well as her love for her young child and his need for her. Another early source, *Thecla*, relates the opposite child-parent dynamic with the parent rejecting the child.

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42). She also reads Perpetua's father as increasingly feminized throughout the text (38–40). For Perpetua's relationship with her father, see also Heffernan (194–196).

[122] Perpetua's father now regards her as his superior.

[123] See Shaw's interpretation of this statement, which considers the possibility of the family referred to here as being that of her father's line ("The Passion of Perpetua" 24–25).

Thecla's account reveals the more common parental reaction to daughters who wish to devote themselves to Christ. Upon hearing of her daughter's conversion and desire to become a disciple of Paul, Thecla's mother urges her daughter's captors to violently abuse her daughter until death.[124] The surges of love visible within Perpetua's account are not present here. Parental affection is replaced by loathing for a rebellious child, instead. This reaction appears in many later Virgin Martyr accounts. Christina's father orders her various tortures and wants to kill her.[125] Margaret's father openly despises her for her Christian status.[126] Even Perpetua's loving father at one point wants to tear at his daughter's eyes.[127]

Although most Virgin Martyr accounts do not have this plot twist, since parental presence is not universal, the lives including parents who play a substantial role more often than not recount troubling relationships between parents and daughters. There are, of course, exceptions to this. Lucy's mother neither encourages nor deters her daughter from her Christian path, and Agnes' parents are pleased by and proud of their daughter's faith and subsequent martyrdom.[128] Eugenia's parents are devastated when they believe her dead and rejoice when she returns to them.[129] Christina's pagan mother tears her clothes and prostrates herself before her daughter, begging the saint to abandon her faith in a scene

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[124] *Thecla* 20.
[125] Christina (*LA* v. 1, 646–647). Bokenham, ll. 2339–2634.
[126] Margaret (*LA* v. 1, 616). Bokenham, ll. 386–399.
[127] *Perpetuæ* 3.3.
[128] For Lucy, see the *LA* v. 1, 49–50; and Agatha Chapter, 81. For Agnes, see Agnes Chapter, 117. Agnes' parents are not always presented as happy, see the *SEL* (*Agneta*).
[129] *LA* v. 2, 925–928. The sorrow and joy of Eugenia's parents occur even before their conversion to Christianity. Eugenia, like Agnes, also appears to her mother after death. See Agnes Chapter, 117 n. 114.

reminiscent of the actions of Perpetua's father.[130] Sophia watches as each of her Christian daughters is tortured and killed in turn and gives up her spirit as she lies on their grave.[131] These instances are rare, however, and most parents appearing in these lives are unsupportive of the choices of their Christian children.

Conflicts with mothers are less prevalent in these lives than conflicts with fathers. This motif, which sets mothers and daughters against each other, is an important and symbolically rich one. To reject or be rejected by one's mother is to disown or be disowned by the biological life cycle. To take oneself out of the cycle of intercourse and birth implies one's disregard for the female reproductive process.[132] When these virgins refuse men, they also refuse submission to male authority and sexual satisfaction, and it is this that drives male characters into emotional turmoil. The virgins' rejection of traditional female roles of obedience and reproduction infuriates certain female characters, typically mothers. When these saints challenge maternal relationships, mothers have their status and achievements as 'appropriately' behaving women challenged. Daughters consider their mothers' paths inferior to their own spiritual path. Perpetua's behavior as she chooses martyrdom over worldly motherhood and possibly the health of her child indicates this mindset. The miraculous end of her son's desire for her breast and the cessation of the flow of milk from her breasts signify heavenly approval of her decision.[133] Favoring celestial over worldly

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[130] For Christina, see the *LA* v. 1, 646–647. Delany discusses parents' losing children in the context of Christina's legend (87–88).
[131] For Sophia and her three daughters (Faith, Hope, and Charity), see the *LA* v. 1, 308.
[132] Salih considers Virgin Martyrs' "rejection of the female positions of daughter and wife" as a rebellion against heterosexuality and masculine authority figures (50).
[133] *Perpetuæ* 6.8. This is the exact opposite occurrence of what defines heavenly election for saints such as Katherine and others whose bodies emit milk after death as a sign of sanctity.

responsibility is inconceivable for those not valuing or believing in Christian spiritual supremacy. Thecla's mother, for example, interprets Thecla's refusal of the suitor as a disvaluing of women's maternal and marital role. To the non-Christian women in these texts, the saints appear ungrateful, confused, and threatening to the established order.[134] To non-believers, these young virgins seem to demonstrate disrespect and contempt for the wombs that gave them life. This is not necessarily the case, however. Ælfric's version of Agatha's legend, for example, presents physical motherhood as a worthy and meritorious vocation. Spiritual motherhood, however, simply has greater merit.[135] There are, of course, conflicting presentations on this point. Both *Hali Meiðhad* and *Ancrene Wisse* promote the ramifications of physical motherhood as dreadful, painful, and base when compared to the glorious benefits of virginity.[136]

The hostile mothers in these accounts fail to comprehend that these virgins strive for spiritual motherhood, which, for the virgin daughters, outshines physical motherhood.[137] These physical mothers are unable to understand the spiritual motherhood of Virgin Martyrs, much in the same way the suitors are unable to comprehend a spiritual bridegroom, and the earthly fathers are unable to appreciate the obedience shown to a

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[134] *Thecla* 20. Ashton discusses the role of mothers in the lives of Virgin Martyrs as instruments of the patriarchy (94–97).
[135] See Agatha Chapter, 48–55.
[136] See below 199. *Hali Meiðhad*, although avidly discouraging motherhood, does urge virgins not to despise physical mothers (18, ll. 12–16). This is not a late medieval concept, but one present in early Christianity (Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meanings" 68–71).
[137] For further exploration into spiritual motherhood see Agatha Chapter, 69–70.

spiritual father.[138] The saint in *Iuliene* explicitly addresses this rejection as she prays to God while imprisoned (27):

> Riht me ant read me, for al mi trust is on þe. Steor me and streng me, for al mi strengðe is of þe. Mi feader ant mi moder, for þi þet ich nule þe forsaken, habbeð forsake me, ant al mi nestfalde cun þet schulde beo me best freond, beoð me meast feondes; ant mine inhinen, alre meast heamen.
>
> [Direct me and counsel me, for all my trust is in You. Steer me and strengthen me, for all my strength is from You. My father and my mother, because I will not forsake You, have forsaken me, and all my most closely related kin that should be my best friends, are my worst enemies; and members of my household, complete strangers.]

Juliana's rejection of her once loving father and Africanus' cruel abuse and denial of his once beloved daughter present a clear and, at times, chilling example of the extremes to which such different foci and priorities may drive a scorned parent.

Africanus: A Father's Love and Perversion

At the outset of Juliana's legend, Africanus is not the bestial creature who furiously offers his daughter to a lustful and vengeful man. He is depicted, instead, as an affectionate albeit pagan and therefore misguided, father. The traditional storyline presents a clear shift in the relationship between the saint and her father from a loving to a despising one. At the beginning of the *Passio*, Juliana is the much-loved daughter of a doting father. Yet, upon confrontation with Eleusius regarding Juliana's refusal, Africanus asserts that he

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[138] When natural mothers are incapable of supporting their Christian daughters, substitute maternal figures appear for some saints. Thecla is placed into the custody of a woman prior her torments in the amphitheatre who becomes a surrogate mother (*Thecla* 27–42). Margaret's Christian foster-mother literally nourishes the suckling Margaret with her faith and later feeds the imprisoned saint (*Marherete* 4, ll. 17–28 and 20, ll. 16–18; and Bokenham, ll. 372–392). The Blessed Virgin replaces Katherine's biological mother (Katherine Chapter, 256). Dorothy Ann Bray cites examples of Irish male saints who perform this role both spiritually and physically ("Suckling at the Breast of Christ" 282–284 and 289–292).

will hand Juliana over to the prefect if she continues her obstinate behavior.[139] Cynewulf's Africanus makes an even more overt promise to Eleusius indicating his complete rejection of his daughter if she does not submit to the prefect's advances and commands to sacrifice (ll. 83b–88):[140]

> "gif þas word sind soþ,
> monna leofast, þe þu me sagast,
> þæt ic hy ne sparige, ac on spild giefe
> þeoden mæra, þe to gewealde.
> Dem þu hi deaþe, gif þe gedafen þince,
> swa to life læt, swa þe leofre sy."
>
> ["If these words are true,
> which you, most honored of men, say to me
> then I will not spare her but will give her to
> ruin, famous lord, to your power.
> Condemn her to death, if you think it suitable
> or let her live as may be pleasing to you."]

Africanus professes a similarly infuriated pledge in *Iuliene* (9).

> 'Bi þe ilke godes þet me is lað to gremien, beo hit soð þet tu seist, to wraðer heale ha seið hit, ant ich wulle o great grome al biteachen hire þe, ant tu du hire al þet tu wult.'[141]
>
> [By the very gods that I am loath to anger, if what you say is true, she has said it to her grievous fortune, and I will in great anger hand over her to you completely, and you may do to her all that you desire.]

In the *Passio*, Africanus' exchange with Juliana that immediately follows his declaration reveals a softer, more loving side as he addresses her as *(f)ilia mea dulcissima Iuliana, lux meorum oculorum* ('my sweetest daughter, Juliana, light of my eyes' 2).[142] Cynewulf embellishes this greeting (ll. 94–97a).

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[139] *Passio*, 2. See also *Iuliana*, ll. 25–27. The *SEL* and the *LA* do not contain dialogue between the two men.
[140] Bjork notes that Cynewulf's treatment of Africanus' speeches conveys the character's fluctuating and unstable nature (49–52).
[141] Eleusius' will or desire entails sexual privilege to Juliana. See above 169–173 and below 198–199.
[142] *Iuliana* repeats this statement (ll. 28–29).

> "Ðu eart dohtor min seo dyreste
> 7 seo sweteste in sefan minum,
> ange for eorþan, minra eagna leoht,
> Iuliana!"
>
> ["You are my daughter, the dearest
> and sweetest in my mind, the only
> one on earth, light of my eyes,
> Juliana!"]

Africanus in *Iuliene* attempts to sway Juliana with love and dreams of a high societal position as well. He refers to Juliana as his *deorewurðe dohter* ('precious daughter' 9), and tries to inspire worldly ambition by telling her that she could even be the *burhene leafdi* ('lady of the city' 11), that is Rome. His affection for his daughter and his concern for her welfare are clear. However, the reader is keenly aware that this love is dependent on worldly priorities and commitments, which are inherently corrupt and transient. Africanus soon turns on his daughter and her welfare again when she firmly and finally rejects Eleusius as a worthy suitor and refuses the demands of his religion. Her father, infuriated, threatens her with death by *wilde deor* ('wild beasts' 11) before demanding that she be tortured for her insolence.[143]

Africanus, enraged at his daughter's impudence and her rejection of Eleusius, carries out his initial promise and hands her over to the power and judgment of the prefect himself. Africanus physically torments Juliana first, however, by having her stripped and beaten before being transferred into Eleusius' control.[144] The frustration evidenced by

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[143] This threat also appears in the *Passio* (2), Cynewulf (l. 125), and *Iuliana* (ll. 34–35). Africanus in *Iuliene* also makes the threat on her breasts (above 156 n. 33). He further tells Juliana that he will have her body exposed for birds to devour, which, most likely uncoincidentally, is the same punishment the Queen in Katherine's life was supposed to suffer (*Iuliene*, 11).

[144] See Appendix C. Here as elsewhere, Africanus appears as an inversion of Verginius, who also seeks to control his daughter's sexuality with a physically aggressive act (Livy 3.48; and Chaucer, *The Physician's*

Africanus' behavior, particularly in *Iuliene*, reflects that of a shunned suitor in the Virgin Martyr template.[145]

Iuliene, along with other Katherine Group works as well as related texts such as *Ancrene Wisse* and *Hail Meiðhad*, is intended to instruct women in a virtuous existence and dissuade them from fleshly pleasures.[146] Sexual attraction is presented in these works as hollow at best and bestial at worst.[147] Even the parental relationship is presented as flawed and tainted by the sexual act. *Hali Meiðhad* asserts (4, ll. 24–28):[148]

> Forȝet ec þi feader hus, as Dauið read þrefter. 'Þi feader' he cleopeð þet unþeaw þet streonede þe of þi moder—þet ilke unhende flesches brune, þet bearninde ȝeohðe of þet licomliche lust biuore þet wleatewile werc, bestelich gederunge, þet scheomelese sompnunge, þet ful of fulðe, stinkinde ant untohe dede.
>
> [Forget also your father's house, as David afterwards recommends. 'Your father' he called that immoral conduct that begat you on your mother—that same improper fire of flesh, that burning itch of the bodily lust before that disgusting work, beastly union, that shameless intercourse, that stinking and indecent deed, (which is) full of filth.]

Lust and improper licentious urges are recurring themes in these works and the sexual drive often is revealed as depraved. In this context, while still disturbing, it is not shocking that Juliana's father, who becomes somewhat bestial in action, should look upon his daughter with corrupt and lustful thoughts as well.[149]

Tale). Wogan-Browne notes Chaucer's political commentary and critique of the patriarchy within *The Physician's Tale* ("Virgin's Tale" 182–184).

[145] Castlehaven was killed for engaging in and orchestrating such dangerous reversals (Herrup, 13).

[146] See Katherine Chapter, 205.

[147] Salih asserts that the legends of Katherine Group "write all male desire, even in its most respectable and idealized forms, as violence" (63).

[148] Wogan-Browne discusses literature aimed at encouraging women from marriage and toward virginity with hostile descriptions of the marital state ("Virgin's Tale" 170–172).

[149] Heffernan addresses the incestuous inclinations of fathers in the lives of Virgin Martyrs (274).

At the opening of *Iuliene*, Juliana is described as the typical highly desirable and appealing virgin. She is *utnume feire ant freoliche* ('exceedingly fair and beautiful' 5) and her sexual appeal is mentioned twice in reference to Eleusius.[150] When Juliana is stripped and beaten before her father, her beauty and physical allure are already well established in the reader's mind. Africanus *het swiðe heatterliche strupen hire steortnaket ant leggen se luðerliche on hire leofliche lich þet hit liðeri o blode* ('ordered very fiercely to strip her stark naked and lay into her lovely body so wickedly that it foamed with blood' 15).[151] The uncompromisingly sinful, licentious, and bestial presentations of these men in this text creates the possibility that Africanus perversely enjoys this display of his attractive young daughter's naked flesh.[152] Africanus is not alone in indulging in the viewing and beating of his daughter's naked body. Unnatural parental behavior occurs in the traditions of select other Virgin Martyrs.[153]

Christina's father, Urbanus, behaves similarly to Africanus when he learns of his daughter's conversion.[154] He has Christina stripped and beaten by men until they are exhausted from the exertion.[155] All of this occurs in her father's presence, after her great

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[150] See also *Iuliene*, 5 and 7.
[151] Wogan-Browne notes that Juliana, Margaret, and Katherine are all stripped *steortnaket* in their Katherine Group texts and describes the similarities in these women's torments ("Virgin's Tale" 176–178).
[152] Peter Dendle discusses the extent of Juliana's exposure in Cynewulf's work ("How Naked is Juliana?" *Philological Quarterly* 83.4 (Fall 2004): 355–370, especially 361–363). See also Lomperis' incestuous interpretation of Verginius' decapitation of his daughter as presented in Chaucer's *Physician's Tale* (Agatha Chapter, 43 n. 66).
[153] Castelli cites an argument for a possible incestuous relationship also occurring in Perpetua's account ("I Will Make Mary Male" 38). Callahan cites Apollonia's later tradition, which includes her father as her main tormentor who orders her whipping and the extraction of all her teeth (120–122).
[154] Heffernan explores Christina's relationship with her father in his segment on familial rejection (288–292).
[155] This exhaustion of soldiers beating a saint who is incapable of being permanently affected becomes an inversion of the command to rape Virgin Martyrs until their deaths (Agnes Chapter, 130–132). See also

beauty has been described.[156] The most notable and clear incestuous example, however, occurs in the legend of Saint Dymphna. Dymphna's father takes on the role of both punishing father and slighted suitor. Her father, grieving over his beautiful dead wife, turns his attention and lust upon Dymphna who has inherited her mother's beauty. Ultimately, her father beheads her when she refuses to give in to his desires.[157]

Following Juliana's beating in Africanus presence, the frustrated father hands his daughter over to Eleusius. In Cynewulf's account and the *South English Legendary* Africanus informs Eleusius that Juliana is entirely in the young man's power.[158] Africanus makes an even more explicit offer to Eleusius in *Iuliene*. Prior to the conversation between the two men regarding Juliana's fate, Eleusius' intention and desire is acknowledged as his wish primarily to possess her beauty and to have sexual rights to her. *Eleusius þet luuede hire þuhte swiðe longe þet ha neren to brudlac ant to bed ibrohte* ('Eleusius, who loved her, thought it very long that they were not brought to marriage and to bed' *Iuliene*, 7). When Juliana rejects him for the first time, Eleusius is dismayed because he *wende for te habben al þet he wilnede*, ('anticipated to have all that he desired' 9). Since it has been established that 'all that (Eleusius) desired' is Juliana in a physical manner, Africanus' instruction to the

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Blandina's account in which she "was filled with such power that those who by turns kept torturing her in every way from dawn till evening were worn out and exhausted, and themselves confessed defeat from lack of aught else to do to her" (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.18).

[156] See above 198–199. Bokenham, ll. 2379–2386. Bokenham, however, does not mention her being stripped. Christina's father wishes for her to maintain her virginity and be devoted to the gods despite her great beauty and many suitors. Verginius likewise attempts to preserve his daughter's virginity by force (Livy 3.48.5).

[157] Dymphna's *Vita* appears in *AASS* May III, 478–484.

[158] See above 196 n. 141. *SEL* (*Iuliene uirgine*, l. 40).

young nobleman is all the more troubling and sexually charged.[159] *(I)ch wulle o great grome al biteachen hire þe, ant tu do hire al þet tu wult* ('I will in great anger hand over her to you completely, and you may do to her all that you desire' 9).[160]

As discussed, sexually focused threats are not uncommon in Virgin Martyr lives. Many virgins are threatened with rape such as Agnes, Daria, and Euphemia.[161] The threat of sexual assault is usually asserted by a distanced party as the relationship between the one threatening and the one threatened is rarely that of the hopeful lover and desired virgin. The command is usually from a third party such as a higher pagan authority figure. In Agnes' life, for instance, the father of the young man enamored with Agnes orders her stripped and sent to a brothel.[162] Daria's legend reports she is sent to a brothel by a pagan authority, who is not presented as a hopeful love-interest. Euphemia is also sentenced to a brothel by a pagan judge, who again is not a would-be suitor. A notable exception to this is Agatha's tradition in which Quintianus sends her to a brothel, not in an attempt to have her raped, but rather to be morally corrupted.[163] Generally, suitors, of course, would like the virgins for themselves and either offer the maidens positions as concubines, as in Katherine and Margaret's legends, or attempt to rape the virgins themselves, as in the instance of Euphemia's judge.[164] The father-daughter relationship in Juliana's legend surrounding this particular threat makes the situation unusual and increasingly perverse. Africanus'

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[159] See above 171–172.
[160] For this passage, see above 196.
[161] See the *LA* for Agnes v. 1 102–103; for Chrysanthus and Daria v. 2, 255; and for Euphemia v. 2, 182.
[162] See Agnes Chapter, 86.
[163] See Agatha Chapter, 28–31.
[164] See Katherine Chapter, 207. *Marherete* 6, ll. 9–17. Priscus first desires Euphemia and attempts to rape her himself. Only after he fails and subsequent torments are likewise unable to harm her does he direct her body to be used by a number of men in the brothel scenario (*LA* v. 2, 952–953).

disturbing statement both acknowledges his approval of Eleusius' sexual intention, which will result in rape since Juliana will not consent, and diminishes his daughter's value to that of a sexual object, literally. Her disobedience coupled with his spiritual blindness eradicates all prior affection.[165] His heart is hardened and his daughter is now solely a commodity to be used and transferred between men. Africanus' interpretation of Juliana's worth is in accordance with traditional treatment of women's value. As Castelli notes:

> Women's sexuality, historically, has been appropriated as a tool of men's power, a sign in the masculinist system of communication, a commodity in the system of exchange. The institution of marriage arose as part of that system of exchange, and in the Roman world a girl's body was the token which sealed agreements between families, her virginity being the measure of her value […] In the realm of religious virginity, women's sexuality functioned in a similar way as a token offered to God as a sign of renunciation; the virgin's body belonged to the celestial Bridegroom, conceptually, in the same way that it would have to his earthly counterpart.[166]

Juliana, from her father's perspective, is only as valuable as her ability to provide sexual pleasure to the next man. Africanus does not grieve at her bloody flesh; she is no longer his daughter as she is no longer of use to him. He will exploit her for what he still understands as her value. Her body, like her beauty, wins him no satisfaction in the end, and he passes her on for the next man to 'try his luck' with her. Eleusius, without this history with Juliana, still marvels at and desires her beauty. He too sees her body as a commodity to possess. The only true possessor of Juliana's body in the end, however, will be God.[167] He

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[165] See Agnes Chapter, 117 n. 116.
[166] Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meaning" 86. For the argument that rape in the Roman tradition was conventionally depicted as allying men, see also Carroll, 3–6 and 11–18.
[167] Magennis notes that CCCC Margaret also chooses a heavenly father and suitor over earthly counterparts (39–40).

has made her surpassingly beautiful and He will keep her ultimately in that state for Himself.

The preservation of the desirable virginal body is, as discussed, a conventional motif in Virgin Martyr legends. Later accounts, while including various torments as a narrative necessity, tend to stress the final wholeness of these women's bodies.[168] Even the most gruesome torments performed upon these devout virgins, such as Juliana's experience on the wheel, are swiftly remedied by celestial intervention. While traditionally Virgin Martyrs are expected to suffer repeated physical torment as a basic plot structure to their narratives, the supreme Bride of Christ's account provides a surprising lack of such punishments. Katherine, as Christ's definitive consort, is spared nearly all physical injury, allowing her to keep her virginity as well as her physical form safely intact.

[168] See Agatha Chapter, 52–53.

Chapter 4
Saint Katherine of Alexandria
Christ's Learned and Supreme Bride

The Katherine Group, a thirteenth-century cycle of Middle English works, was one of the best-known and most popular directives on contemporary women's spirituality.[1] This collection and its related texts include educational pieces such as *Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*, which discuss at length the benefits and rewards of virginity.[2] More relevant for the purpose of this study, the Group contains the *passiones* of Juliana of Nicomedia, Margaret of Antioch, and Katherine of Alexandria. The writings within the Group notably contain extensive references and discussions of the figure of Christ as the beloved of both anchoresses and the aforementioned saints. The motif of devout women, especially saints (and more particularly Virgin Martyrs), becoming Christ's brides has, as noted, a long-standing tradition.[3] Only one saint, Katherine of Alexandria, however, is able to claim the status of the *supreme* Bride of Christ as well as a legend that endows her with a physical marriage to the Savior and a wedding ring as a token of this bond.[4]

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[1] For the intended readership of these texts, see Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose* 1–12 and 44–48; Savage and Watson's introduction to *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 11–15; and Hasenfratz's introduction to *Ancrene Wisse*.
[2] Independent works of the Katherine Group are often found in manuscripts containing *Ancrene Wisse* or *Ancrene Riwle*, both of which promote the proper devotional practices of enclosed women. See, for example, the chart in the Introduction of *Ancrene Wisse* for an outline of which manuscripts contain which texts. The versions of *Katerine*, *Iuliene*, *Marherete*, and *Hali Meiðhad* utilized herein are primarily from editions of MS Bodley 34. See Introduction, 6 n. 10, 10 n. 21, 13 n. 35, and 14 n. 40.
[3] Traditionally Agnes is presented as His young bride (Agnes Chapter, 87–98).
[4] See Appendix D for sources with this scene. See also below 211-219.

Katherine, although declared a martyr of the early fourth century,[5] seems to have first appeared in England in the mid-eleventh century.[6] From the late thirteenth century onwards, however, few saints match her prominence and widespread appeal. The *Legenda aurea* describes Katherine's eminence among even popular saints (v. 2, 1214–1215):

> quedam enim priuilegia specialia fuerunt in aliquibus sanctis, dum decederent, ut Christi uisitatio, quod fuit in Iohanne euangelista, olei emanatio, quod fuit in beato Nicholao, lactis effusio, quod fuit in beato Paulo, sepulcri preparatio, quod fuit in beato Clemente, petitionum exauditio, quod fuit in beata Margarita quando oravit pro agentibus sui memoriam. Hec autem omnia fuerunt simul in beata Katherina, sicut patet in legenda.
>
> [for certain special privileges were (granted) to some saints, while they were dying, such as the visitation of Christ, as happened to John the Evangelist; the emanation of oil, as happened to Blessed Nicholas; the effusion of milk, as happened to Blessed Paul; the preparation of a tomb, as happened to Blessed Clement; the granting of petitions as happened to Blessed Margaret when she prayed for those attending to her memory. However, all these were at once in Blessed Katherine, just as is revealed in (her) legend.]

As a Virgin Martyr, Katherine is almost guaranteed a loyal following, but she ultimately outshines most other Virgin Martyrs despite their longer and better-established traditions.[7] When her legend reaches its height in the later Middle Ages, Katherine attains her singular status and honor as Christ's supreme Bride.

As has been discussed, the torment of the virginal body is a significant occurrence in Virgin Martyrs' accounts.[8] The expected destruction of the saint's body is noticeably restrained in Katherine's legend, however. Certain details of her legend, such as this

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[5] Farmer, 95. The *LA* (v. 2, 1212) and the Prose (ll. 933–934) claim that Katherine was martyred during Maxentius' reign, which they state began in 310 AD. The *SEL* asserts she was martyred in 320 AD (*Seinte Katerine*, l. 307).
[6] Katherine J. Lewis, 51–53.
[7] Katherine J. Lewis, 49. For an examination of Katherine's cult and popularity in England, see Chapter 1 of Lewis' work.
[8] See, for example, Introduction, 2–3.

diminished enacted violence, cause Katherine to deviate from the Virgin Martyr template; nevertheless, the tradition of her *passio* adheres to the conventional outline.[9] Katherine is a young, beautiful, and noble woman. A powerful pagan man, Maxentius, initially intrigued by her intellect and rhetorical abilities, propositions her, eventually sexually as well as intellectually.[10] Katherine combats his fifty most educated and skilled scholars in a religious debate. Once she defeats and converts them all, they are martyred. The saint then endures her direct torture as she experiences her one public beating. She is then sent to prison where her beauty is restored and angels tend to her. While imprisoned, she converts Maxentius' wife, the Queen, and faithful comrade, Porphirius.[11] Katherine then faces the terrible wheels. She is spared through divine intervention, however. Following Katherine's miraculous rescue, the Queen confronts her husband as a Christian and is consequently tortured and martyred. Soon after Porphirius and a number of soldiers also receive martyrdom.[12] Throughout all interactions with Maxentius, Katherine continues to defend her faith, argue on its behalf, and refuse to sacrifice her body to his lust or offer animals to his idols. Ultimately, she is beheaded and milk flows from her neck. Her body, which also miraculously produces oil, is taken by angels to Mount Sinai.[13]

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[9] See Introduction, 2–3. Of course, the extent to which Katherine displays aspects of the Virgin Martyr template is dependent upon the version of her legend that is being considered. See Appendix D for a comparison of these legends' plot structures.

[10] For consistency, the spelling of 'Maxentius' found in *KV* will be utilized throughout unless quoting from another source.

[11] Although Maxentius is usually called the emperor, for consistency sake and based on the preference of most of the texts, this character will be referred to as 'the Queen' throughout this work unless using a direct quotation. The spelling of 'Porphirius' found in *KV* is used throughout unless quoting from another source.

[12] *Katerine* reports that over 200 knights convert with Porphirius (ll. 659-660). Presumably all of these men were martyred with him although no number is given. See also *KV*, ll. 818-820.

[13] This is based on *Katerine*. See Appendix D.

The accounts of Katherine's legend, while containing the basic Virgin Martyr plot structure, shift the focus and weight usually given to each of these details. These modifications are most evident in her celebrated and exceptional intelligence, her singular relationship with Christ, and her diminished physical sufferings. Although many Virgin Martyrs are declared to be brides of Christ and a number of these women's later traditions present them as educated or very intelligent, none of the other Virgin Martyrs are able to compete with Katherine regarding these achievements in the later Middle Ages.[14]

The Learned Virgin Martyr

Katherine's education exceeds those of most other saints[15] and her legend consistently remarks upon and stresses her intelligence and learning, making her an obvious favorite of scholars. Capgrave articulates this particular devotion in his work: *Because thou were so lerned and swech a clerk, / Clerkes must love thee* ('Because you were so learned and such a scholar, scholars must love you' 3.38–39). Katherine's various accounts mention her being well versed in all seven liberal arts and able to surpass all scholars who attempt to test her knowledge.[16]

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[14] For other brides of Christ, see Agnes Chapter, 97 n. 46. Daria is also exceptionally educated and articulate (Agnes Chapter, 119–120). Eugenia is highly educated in the liberal arts (Aldhelm, *DV*, 296; Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Eugenie* ll. 19-34; and *LA* v. 2, 925–926). Agnes is reported as heading home from school (*Vita S. Agnetis*, 715; Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Agnetis*, l. 14; *LA* v. 1, 169; *SEL*, *Agneta*, l. 7; and Bokenham, l. 4121).

[15] Katherine J. Lewis, 97–98. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, Chapter 4. Katherine is often depicted holding a book (Drake, 24; and Lanzi, 98).

[16] For sources mentioning Katherine's education and intellectual abilities, see Appendix D. Winstead argues that the iconographic tendency to depict Katherine with shorter hair may, in some instances, reflect a desire to present her as a scholar with whom males could relate, since the hairstyle donned by Katherine often mirrors that of young men ("St. Katherine's Hair" 188–189).

Katherine, like many other Virgin Martyrs, engages in a number of verbal battles with her persecutors. The audacious speeches seen in many Virgin Martyr legends are not what one would expect from noble, well-behaved maidens. Agnes' passionate speech concerning her young bridegroom, Christ is a prime example.[17] Agatha and Lucy publicly berate and insult their persecutors when threatened with torments.[18] Juliana and Margaret battle demons both physically and verbally.[19] Christina, while rebuking her tormentors, aggressively throws pieces of her torn flesh at them.[20] It is no surprise that Katherine, in this company of outspoken and assertive women, poses a powerful verbal challenge to her oppressor. The distinction of Katherine, however, is her extremely emphasized and developed intelligence and rhetorical ability. Katherine's wit as one of her defining attributes makes her pronouncements more than simply a part of the Virgin Martyr pattern, her verbal ability establishes a basis of her identity. Katherine not only confronts the emperor on his beliefs and practices, but also disputes with and intellectually dominates his fifty most learned representatives.[21] Although Katherine is not the only Virgin Martyr to dispute theology with a tormentor, she is the one most associated with that effort and her exchanges are traditionally the most extensive.[22]

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[17] See Agnes Chapter, 95–96.
[18] See, for example, Agatha Chapter, 49–50. For Lucy, see Ælfric (*De Sancta Lucia*, ll. 84–93), the *LA* (v. 1, 50), the *SEL* (*Lucie*, ll. 75–98), and Bokenham (ll. 9255–9283). McInerney notes that in the *LA* "(v)irgins are also the most argumentative of all martyrs" (56). McInerney also cites early depictions of Thecla and Eulalia, who are depicted as very, even dangerously, vocal (61–63).
[19] For these saints' battles, see Juliana Chapter, 177–183.
[20] For Christina's actions, see Agnes Chapter, 125 n. 144.
[21] For sources including Katherine's debate with the philosophers, see Appendix D.
[22] Agatha's theological debate with Quintianus, for example, is shorter and less in-depth than Katherine's with Maxentius. See especially *Acta S. Agathæ* (621F–622F); Ælfric, *Natale Sancte Agathe* (ll. 39–169); and Bokenham (ll. 8438–8779a). Silvester, who is not a martyr, engages in a debate and causes a group

Katherine's legend traditionally focuses far more on the saint's debate with the philosophers than her physical torments.[23] The fourth book in Capgrave's work, which is devoted to her debates with Maxentius and the philosophers, exemplifies this: it even exceeds the length of the fifth and final book, the expected climactic segment, which deals with the martyrdoms of Katherine, the philosophers, and several other converts. Katherine's actual death and torments, however, only account for a few lines. While many Virgin Martyr accounts contain extensive speeches and preaching segments, the great amount of such material in Capgrave's work is notable because of the comparatively minimal attention given to the saint's torture and death.[24]

This excessive speechifying is not unique to Capgrave's Katherine. Katherine is traditionally a hyper-vocal saint as testified by the Latin *Katherine Vulgate*, which contains a large number of speeches.[25] *Katerine* of the Katherine Group, which d'Ardenne and Dobson argue is a translation of the *Katherine Vulgate*, deletes sizeable portions of the speeches to maintain the narrative flow and avoid repetition while still retaining important content in the remaining (and still substantial) speeches.[26] The *South English Legendary*, which tends to decrease speeches drastically, retains a number of speeches comprising well over half of the account's lines.[27] The *Legenda aurea* spends two to four times the amount

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conversion similar to Katherine's. Twelve Jews systematically question Silvester and are ultimately converted along with the queen and the rest of those present (*LA* v. 1, 108–119).

[23] Katherine J. Lewis, 89.

[24] The length of the work itself, while impressive, is not singular. Winstead notes that several of Lydgate's works are also "several thousand rhyme-royal lines and are divided into multiple books" (Capgrave, 6).

[25] d'Ardenne and Dobson's introduction to *Katerine*, xvi–xvii.

[26] *Katerine*, xxvi–xxxiii, especially xxxv–xxxvi. See also Savage and Watson's introduction to *Katerine* in *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 261.

[27] Of the 310 lines, approximately 176 are devoted to speeches.

of space on Katherine as on other Virgin Martyrs and praises her eloquence at the end of her entry.[28]

Although Katherine is well skilled in rhetoric and the liberal arts, upon her conversion, she focuses her learning, abilities, and attention not on vain and spiritually vacuous material but, rather, upon *hali writ* ('Scripture' *Katerine*, l. 40).[29] She adapts her skills and knowledge from secular teachings to the study of her newfound Christian faith. The establishment of her intelligence as superior to all others' permits her decision to put away worldly concerns and studies without conflict. Katherine, as the best scholar, chooses the worthiest path and sets an example for other scholars to follow in preferring study of Scripture to secular texts. Katherine uses her foundation in the liberal arts to combat the opponents of Christianity and completely turns her devotion to Christ in mind and body as well as deed.

Christ as Husband

As noted above, Katherine takes on the role of not only bride to Christ, but the role of reliable wife and of a lady to her lord. Capgrave in particular explores and develops this relationship. While in earlier sources, Katherine declares Christ her lover, her beloved, and her spouse, Capgrave and the Prose account provide additional material promoting this relationship, including the physical marriage scene between Katherine and Christ.

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[28] *LA* v. 2, 1214. See also Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, 192–193.
[29] See also *KV*, l. 84. Robertson argues that versions of *Katerine* are especially focused upon the saint's intellect and that this stress is fitting considering the enclosed audience of the Katherine Group (*Early English Devotional Prose*, 99–104).

Katherine in *Katerine* initially mentions her union with Christ during her first meeting with Maxentius. She briefly details her conversion and then states *ant toc me him to lauerd ant / makede him mi leofmon* ('and (I) took him for my lord and made him my beloved' ll. 175–176). This follows the corresponding scene in the *Katherine Vulgate*, in which she claims she had devoted herself as *sponsam* ('spouse' l. 236) to Jesus Christ. Although the terms *sponsus* and *sponsa* are used throughout the *Katherine Vulgate*, *Katerine* increases the amount of references to Christ as Katherine's beloved and heightens the sense of affection by inserting terms such as *deore* ('dear') and *deorewurðe* ('precious') to describe Christ.[30] Christ also professes this connection in both works as He sends Michael the Archangel to the imprisoned Katherine and He Himself appears to her prior to her martyrdom.[31] In the *Katherine Vulgate*, Michael assures Katherine: *inter choros uirgineos suscepta, / immortali sponso perenniter adherebis* ('having been received among the virginal chorus, you will forever be close to your immortal spouse' ll. 318–319). Michael makes a similar promise in *Katerine* (ll. 261–263):

> ant beo þenne underuon in þe feire uerredene
> ant i þe muri [mot] of meidnes, ant libben, liues [buten] ende,
> wið Iesu Crist þi lauerd, þi leofmon, in heouene

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[30] For example, both *deore luue* and *deorewurðe lauerd* (l. 234) appear in *Katerine*, whereas the corresponding *KV* passage does not contain similar terms. See also Robertson's discussion of passages added to *Katerine* that are not found in *KV* (*Early English Devotional Prose*, 105–106).

[31] The scene with Michael appears in *KV* (ll. 308–322) and *Katerine* (ll. 248–265). The *SEL*, the *LA*, and Bokenham's account, which speed over this first encounter, include no dialogue or promise of her marriage to Christ and fail to name the angel as Michael (*SEL*, *Seinte Katerine*, ll. 85–87; *LA* v. 2, 1208; and Bokenham, ll. 6730–6738). The Prose version, which also does not name Michael nor note her relationship with Christ, does include Katherine thanking *hur souereyn / lord and trew spowse* ('her sovereign lord and true spouse' ll. 690–691). Capgrave's scene (4.1191–1253), however, names Michael and provides him with a long speech in which he names Christ as her *spouse* (4.1205 and 1243) and assures Katherine of her position in heaven as second only to Mary (4.1244–1245). Christ appears to Katherine in each of these accounts (Appendix D).

> [and (you) will then be received into the fair company
> and into the merry assembly of maidens, and live, life without end,
> in heaven with Jesus Christ your Lord, your beloved]

When Christ arrives in Katherine's cell, He assures her (ll. 671–674):[32]

> 'Ne
> þearf þu drede na de[a]ð, for lo! wið hwucche [duheðe] ich habbe
> idiht to do þe i mi kinedom, þet is þin, wið me imeane as mi
> leofmon.'
>
> [You
> need not fear death, for behold with what noble company[33] I have
> ordained to place you in my kingdom, which is yours, shared with me,
> as my beloved.]

This relationship and Katherine's promised position, although both secure in these accounts, are not strikingly dissimilar from the presentation of earlier saints claiming similar status. Agnes' description of Christ's gifts and her erotic relationship with Him are more distinctive than these portrayals of Katherine's union.[34] For the depictions of Katherine as supreme Bride, later sources must be considered.

Katherine's status is undeniable in the fifteenth-century Prose account and Capgrave's work. The most obvious distinction between this saint and other brides of Christ becomes the physical ceremony and ring placed on her finger.[35] These authors outline at length her admirable qualities and strength of mind and virtue so that once she

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[32] Christ in *KV* (ll. 821–832) does not make this promise in the corresponding scene. Christ does not assure Katherine of her position as His beloved when He visits her in prison in the *LA* or Bokenham's work. Christ assures Katherine in the *SEL* that she has a position in heaven and that she will live with Him, however, there is no term of endearment (*Seinte Katerine*, ll. 193–196). Christ in the Prose work acknowledges Katherine as His *der douȝtre and trew spowse* ('dear daughter and true spouse' l. 849) and promises to *neuer depart from* ('never depart from' ll. 861–862) her during her *batell* ('battle' l. 861). Capgrave's Christ names Katherine as *dowtir* ('daughter' 5.924) but not spouse and, as in the Prose, promises to *nevyr forsake* ('never forsake' 5.930) her. For the entire scene, see Capgrave 5.918–945.
[33] Christ arrives in her cell surrounded by angels and virgins.
[34] For this relationship, see Agnes Chapter, 87–98.
[35] This becomes a favorite scene of artists and Katherine is often shown receiving a wedding ring from the Christ child as he sits on the Virgin's lap. See Drake, 24; and Lanzi, 98. Katherine J. Lewis notes the reliance of Margery Kempe (as well as other women) on Katherine's marriage ceremony for the depiction of her own marriage to Christ (201–204). For Margery's marriage ceremony, see 1.2000–2039.

physically weds Christ, the reader is well aware of her uncontestable merit. Mary in the Prose work acknowledges Katherine's eminence claiming that Christ wished her to bring Katherine to Him.[36] Christ subsequently admits that He has desired Katherine to be His wife *befor all virginis / þat levyn now in erþe* ('before all virgins who live now on earth' ll. 511–512). Capgrave emphasizes the Blessed Virgin's approval of her son's bride.[37] Capgrave's Mary brings Katherine before Christ and presents the saint to Him as the *spouse whech Thu lovyst* ('spouse whom You love' 3.1025). Mary further asks Him to place a *ryng* ('ring' 3.1027) on Katherine's finger as a symbol of their union. Christ in the Prose account does this without His mother's bidding and recites His wedding vows (ll. 520–527):

> Than seyde (520)
> þat blessid kyng, "Kateryn, geve me your hand." And scho, wyth souereyne
> ioye, offeryd hym hur hand. And þen this gloriose kyng seyde, "I
> take yow her to my weddyd wyfe, promysyng truly neuer to for-
> sake yowe whilis your life lastyth. And aftre your present lyfe
> ȝe schall dwell wyth me in blis wythout ende. And in tokyn wherof (525)
> I sett this ryng vppon yowr fyngur, whiche ȝe schall kepe in
> rememberaunce of me as yowr wedding ryng."
>
> [Then
> that blessed King said, "Katherine, give Me your hand." And she, with supreme
> joy, offered Him her hand. And then this glorious King said, "I
> take you here as My wedded wife, truly promising never to forsake
> you while your life lasts. And after your present life
> you shall dwell with Me in bliss without end. And as a token of this
> I set this ring upon your finger, which you shall keep in
> remembrance of Me as your wedding ring."]

[36] For Mary's statement, see Prose, ll. 501–503.
[37] See below 252. Katherine J. Lewis cites Mary's involved role in the marriage and notes that she "frequently takes part in mystical marriages, presenting the visionary to Christ" (203).

Capgrave also relates this scene, despite Christ's earlier exchange with Mary during which He implies that the *ryng* is unnecessary since the only requirement for joy is His presence (3.1277–1281).[38]

> "This is a tokne," He seyd, "of that bonde
> Whech ye yourselfe, as on of Myne,
> Lyst now youre wyll to my wyl enclyne.
> This tokne eke beryth wytnesse full ryffe (1280)
> That here I tak yow for My weddyd wyffe."
>
> ["This is a token," He said, "of that bond
> Which you yourself, as one of Mine,
> Allow now your will to incline to mine
> This token also bears very visible witness
> That I take you here for My wedded wife."]

The exchanges between Katherine and Christ throughout these scenes in the Prose account and Capgrave's text are romantic, even reminiscent of traditional fairytale themes. Katherine as the noble, beautiful, intelligent, and virtuous, yet pagan, young woman becomes a Cinderella-type figure, and Christ as the literally perfect man becomes her Prince Charming. When Christ speaks to Katherine, the saint falls in a swoon overwhelmed by His gloriousness and, one may assume, her own sense of unworthiness.[39] Katherine marries the man of her dreams, the one she describes to persistent men in the marriage parliament.[40] In the parliament scene in the Prose work, Katherine describes this ideal man (ll. 197–211):[41]

> For he þat schall be lord of
> my hert and myne husbond, schall haue the fowr notable
> þyngis in hymselfe ouer all mesur, so forforth þat all crea-

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[38] For Christ's speech to His mother, see Capgrave 3.1033–1035. Christ of the Prose does not make a similar speech regarding the essentiality of the ring.
[39] Prose, ll. 512–514. Capgrave 3.1214–1215.
[40] The marriage parliament appears in the Prose account (ll. 110–249) and in Capgrave's work (2.72–1498).
[41] Katherine of the Prose account finds the parliament especially troubling because *all hur ioye was euer to kepe hur body and / hur sowle from all corrupcion of synne* ('all her joy was ever to keep her body and soul from all corruption of sin' ll. 141–142).

turis schall haue neede of hym, and he nede of non odyr. For (200)
he þat schall be my lord must be of so notable blod þat
all kyngis must worschip hym. And þerwyth so greate a lord
þat I schall neuer dar þynke þat I made hym a kyng. And so ryche
þat he passyth all odyr in ryches. And so full of beaute þat angelys
haue ioye to behold hym. And so pur of his modre beyng a virgyn. (205)
And so meke and benyngne þat he can gladly forȝeue all offencis
don to hym. Now haue I discryvyd hym þat I desyr to my lord
and husbond. Goth seche hym and yf ȝe may fynd suche oon, þen
we wyll be his wyfe wyth all our hert, yf he wyll vouche-safe.
And fynally, but yf ȝe gete vs suche oon, we schall neuer take (210)
non.

[For he that shall be lord of
my heart and my husband, shall have the four worthy
things[42] in himself beyond all measure, so much so that all creatures
shall need him, but he will need nothing else. For
he that shall be my lord must be of such worthy blood that
all kings must worship him. And accordingly, (he must be) so great a
lord that I shall never dare think that I made him a king; and so rich
that he surpasses all others in riches; and so full of beauty that angels
have joy beholding him; and so pure because his mother is a virgin;
and so meek and kind that he can gladly forgive all offenses
done to him. Now I have described him whom I desire for my lord
and husband. Go seek him and if you may find such a one, then
we will be his wife with all our heart, if he will consent.
And finally, unless you get us such a one, we shall never take
anyone.]

Capgrave's Katherine makes similar comments but also adds a fifth requirement: her lord must be eternal so as to never give her reason to mourn.[43] The Prose work states that once Katherine lists the qualities and virtues of her ideal husband, she is unable to focus on anything else but him and *scho / stodyed and mvsyd contynuelly how scho myȝt fynd hym* ('she studied and mused continually as to how she might find him' ll. 243–244). Once she does find Him, or, more specifically, once the hermit Adryan and the Blessed Virgin bring her to Him, He embodies everything she related previously.[44]

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[42] The four are noble blood, great inheritance, surpassing wisdom, and singular beauty.
[43] Capgrave 2.1435–1456. The whole speech takes place in 2.1387–1456. For the symbolism of 'five' in Katherine's life, especially Capgrave's account, see below 258 n. 173 and 259 n. 174. Agnes also lists five qualities of her bridegroom in the *LA* (v. 1, 169–170).
[44] For consistency, the Prose's spelling of 'Adryan' will be utilized throughout unless quoting from another source.

Although Christ is beyond all other men in every way including beauty, there is no eroticism here as there is in Agnes' legend.[45] Capgrave's Katherine does proclaim knowledge of the sexual act, but she does not, however, imply a sexual relationship with Christ.[46] Katherine is not the chosen object of affection for the passionate bridegroom presented in Agnes' legend. The supreme Bride is not simply elected or only chosen *by* Him and *for* Him by His mother, but the saint also chooses her spouse for herself.[47] As Katherine selects Christ as her husband, she intellectually and spiritually accepts Him as both her savior and her religion. Once Katherine's exceptional intellect is established, it is not only her heart (and presumably her desire) that concedes to the marriage, but her vast wisdom as well.

Since Katherine's trials only begin after her conversion and marriage, she must return and continue her earthly reign. Christ presumably considers Katherine's ability to rule among His reasons for selecting her as His Bride, second only to Mary in the heavenly kingdom. Katherine's legend presents the saint as not only performing as an ideal ruler but also exemplifying proper reconciliation between seemingly conflicting roles of devout

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[45] For Agnes' romantic relationship with Christ, see Agnes Chapter, 87–98.

[46] See enclosure section below 243–249. It is interesting to note that Mary is the one who makes a potentially risqué comment about Katherine's sexual inclinations. Mary states that once Katherine has faith *sche schall love bettyr the hayre / Than any* ('She shall love the hair shirt better than any' 3.208–209) *reynes*. Winstead, citing the *Middle English Dictionary*, notes that *reynes* here may be a pun. While it refers to quality linen from Rennes, Brittany, it also can refer to "the male generative organ" (Capgrave, n. 3.208–209). See the entry for *raines (n.)* and *reine (n. (2))* in the *Middle English Dictionary* (http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/).

[47] Winstead also notes that this aspect of the story supports the Church's twelfth-century onwards stance that children, not only parents, should agree to a marriage (Capgrave, n. 3.1226–1231).

Christian and wealthy ruler. Early in *Katerine* her exemplary behavior is described in detail (ll. 28–36):[48]

> ah þah ha ȝung were, ha heold hir ealdrene hird
> wisliche ant warliche i þe eritage ant i þe eard þet com hire of
> burde: nawt forþi þet hir þuhte god in hire heorte to habbe (30)
> monie under hire ant beon icleopet leafdi, þet feole telleð wel to,
> ah ba ha wes offearet of scheome ant of sunne ȝef þeo weren
> todreauet oðer misferden þet hire forðfeadres hefden iuostret;
> for hire seolf ne kepte ha nawt of þe worlde. Þus, lo! for hare sake
> ane [a] dale ha etheold of hire ealdrene god, ant spende al þet (35)
> oðer i neodfule ant i nakede.
>
> [But though she was young, she held her parents' household
> wisely and vigilantly in the heritage and on the earth that came to her by
> birth: not because she thought it good in her heart to have
> many under her and to be called 'lady', which many consider important,
> but because she was afraid both of shame and of sin, if those who
> her forefathers had cared for were driven away or came to harm.
> For herself she kept nothing of the world. Thus, behold for their sake
> alone, she held back a part of the goods, and spent all the
> remaining on the needful and the naked.]

Katherine's later accounts also portray a saint demonstrating the proper behavior for a noble wife with an absentee husband.[49] While she misses her spouse and lord immensely, she still manages effectively and graciously to rule over her subjects during His absence.[50]

Upon Katherine and Christ's marriage in the Prose account, Christ relates His expectations and instructions for His Bride (ll. 527–531).[51]

> "And now, my
> der wyfe, be glad and strong in feyþe, for ȝe must do grete
> thyngis in my name, and receyve grete tormentis and peyne, and
> a grete stroke in the necke. But drede yow not, der wyfe, for I schall (530)
> neuer depart from yow, but comfort yow and strengh yow."

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[48] A corresponding statement also appears in *KV* (ll. 74–82). See also Bokenham, ll. 6398–6414.
[49] Katherine J. Lewis, 194–197.
[50] See Prose, ll. 580–590. For appropriate behavior of young noble women, see Katherine J. Lewis, Chapter 5. For the proper approach to a 'mixed life' see Katherine J. Lewis, 63–80 and 175–226; and Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 156–167.
[51] Capgrave minimizes this speech and states simply: *And a new conflycte in schort tyme schul ye / Begyne for My sake, but drede yow noght* ('And in a short time you shall begin a new conflict / for My sake, but fear not' 3.1265–1266).

> ["And now, My dear wife, be glad and strong in faith, for you must do great things in My name, and receive great torments and pain, and a great stroke in the neck. But do not fear, dear wife, for I shall never depart from you, but (rather I shall) comfort and strengthen you."]

Unlike a fairytale princess, who endures sufferings before her marriage to the prince and is rewarded with the immediate 'Happily Ever After', Katherine receives her happy ending, which comes with her martyrdom, only after she undergoes the trials taking place after her wedding.[52] She must prove her continual love to her heavenly spouse through adherence to His requests, and thereby demonstrate her spiritual and physical fortitude.

Katherine's Body: Mind over Matter

In the majority of Katherine's texts, the attention is drawn away from the torture scenes, and therefore the saint's body, and placed upon the debates, and therefore her intellect.[53] In Virgin Martyr accounts, it is typically the virgin in question's beauty, lineage, reputation, or a combination thereof to which the pagan persecutor is attracted.[54] For Katherine, however, it is traditionally her intelligence that catches Maxentius' attention upon their first meeting. The accounts of Katherine's legend generally begin with the establishment of her mind as her most intriguing characteristic and the target of her tormentor's attacks. The speeches of Virgin Martyrs such as Agatha and Agnes are

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[52] For this conventional fairytale motif, see Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. trans. E. V. Lucas, Lucy Crane, and Marian Edwards. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1945, reprinted 1973 and 1995. The stories of Sleeping Beauty (100–105), Cinderella (153–161), and Snow White (162–173) are especially relevant.

[53] Katherine J. Lewis notes that *The Red Book* focuses an unusual amount of attention on Katherine's body and contains an exceptionally graphic and gruesome description of her tortures (90).

[54] For Agnes, see the *LA* v. 1, 168; for Margaret, see v. 1, 617; and for Justina, see v. 2, 971–972. See Introduction, 2.

responded to with pleas soon followed by threats and actions of physical harm.[55] Katherine's assertions, however, are initially met with demands for further mental battles.[56] Only as a secondary measure, when the 'reason' route is exhausted, is her body attacked.[57]

Persecutors initially assume that both the bodies and the faith of Virgin Martyrs are vulnerable. This is evidenced by the men's confidence that the women will be easily swayed. In Katherine's case, however, her intellect is clearly focused upon as the supposedly vulnerable and more important attribute.[58] The aggressive and sexualized assault on the bodies of Virgin Martyrs has been argued to be a form of attempted symbolic rape.[59] The virgins' bodies are presented as the battlefield upon which the struggle for domination over the saints' physical and spiritual identities is waged.[60]

Katherine's primary battlefield, alternatively, is her mind, which she repeatedly defends against the aggressive emperor and philosophers. The debates in which Katherine engages, aside from her first challenge to Maxentius, are all instigated by pagan men and are also a form of symbolic rape.[61] The men assault her intelligence and faith, and attempt to rip apart her arguments in a manner similar to how men in other Virgin Martyr accounts rip apart the virgins' bodies. The attempted or intended physical gang rape scenes that appear in several Virgin Martyr legends (Agnes, Daria, Euphemia, and the Virgin of

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[55] See Introduction, 2–3.
[56] See above 208–211.
[57] She is punished somewhat physically by her initial imprisonment prior to the debate. See, for instance, Bokenham, ll. 6662–6663; and Capgrave 4.932–938.
[58] Innes-Parker, "Sexual Violence" 211.
[59] Agatha Chapter, 39 n. 53. For 'conventional' rape, see Agnes Chapter, 130–141.
[60] For physical and spiritual battles, see Juliana Chapter, 158–170. See also Tilley, 467 and 472–473.
[61] Salih reads these episodes as "chivalric combat" and Katherine as a knight (64–66).

Antioch) are echoed in the attack on Katherine's mind.[62] This group assault on Katherine yields the same results as several of the physical gang rape scenarios. Katherine is able to convert her mental aggressors in a way comparable to how Agnes, Daria, Euphemia, and the Virgin of Antioch are able to convert their physical ones.[63]

Capgrave's Katherine is subjected to two of these verbal encounters during which male congregations attempt to overcome her intellect and will.[64] In neither of these scenes, however, is Katherine's body violated. While there is a clear and often exaggerated focus in most Virgin Martyr accounts on women's tormented and rent bodies, Katherine's struggle, with its diminished emphasis on her physical sufferings, places the saint on a line between the untouchable Bride of Christ and sexual object. Virgin Martyr legends traditionally establish the particular virgin's exceptional beauty early in the account and usually present it as the cause of the pagan's affections. In Katherine's case, however, Maxentius' interest is only partially dependent on her beauty. His primary focus is, and remains throughout much of her *passio*, Katherine's intelligence.

Even though it is not Katherine's defining characteristic, the texts primarily considered here all highlight her beauty to varying degrees. The *Katherine Vulgate* states that she is *speciosa ualde* ('exceptionally beautiful' l. 72) and *Katerine* mentions that the saint

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[62] Innes–Parker argues that the collective (and primarily male) gaze in these legends becomes a kind of gang rape ("Sexual Violence" 207–208). See Agnes Chapter, 98–102 for the consequences of the gaze. See Agnes Chapter, 130–141 for rape in the legends of Virgin Martyrs, including those of Agnes, Daria, Euphemia, and the Virgin of Antioch.
[63] For Euphemia's conversion scene, see Agnes Chapter 131 n. 163.
[64] For the marriage parliament, see above 215–216 and below 224-225. For the debate with the philosophers, see above Appendix D.

is *feier ant freolich o wlite ant o westum* ('fair and beautiful in face and in form' l. 24).[65] The *South English Legendary* notes *hire fairhede* ('her physical beauty' *Seinte Katerine*, l. 34) and Bokenham establishes Katherine's beauty at the outset of the account and assumes it to be understood throughout the remainder of the text.[66] The authors actually give little detail about Katherine's physical attributes despite the acknowledgment of her attractiveness. The *Katherine Vulgate*, *Katerine*, and the works of Bokenham and Capgrave mention her fair and white neck, however.[67] This is consistent with the courtly literature that surrounds these works, which considers white skin and fair coloring a sign of attractiveness and nobility.[68] Kim Phillips notes that most Virgin Martyrs receive such descriptions in Middle English accounts.[69]

> Conventions concerning feminine beauty were remarkably consistent in later medieval England. The beautiful woman almost always, in both literary and visual media, has long blonde hair, very fair skin, fine features, sparkling eyes, curved dark eyebrows, red lips and a long and slender body with small breasts but a protruding belly. She often has grey eyes, though at other times they are blue, a cleft chin and delicately rosy cheeks.

Bokenham's Margaret, for example, is described as having a *forheed lely-whyht* ('lily-white forehead' l. 449) and a *chyn, which as pleyne / Pulshyd marbyl shoon* ('chin, which shone as

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[65] Juliana in the Katherine Group is also referred to as *feire ant freoliche* (*Iuliene* 5).
[66] Bokenham refers to her as *A maydyn yinge, ful feyr of faas* (l. 6379) and later recalls her *greth beute* (6543) and *greth beauteuousnesse* (l. 6864). See also the *LA* v. 2, 1206; and Prose, ll. 82–88, 185–188, and 316–317.
[67] Katherine's neck is especially important since it is where she receives her death stroke. Nicole Loraux notes the importance of women's throats in Greek tragedy (50–53), since, "for a woman, it is above all the point of greatest vulnerability" (50). Loraux also asserts that, regardless of the motivation for death, it "requires women to die by the throat, and only by the throat" (52). This is also a convention in the legends of Virgin Martyrs since beheading or piercing in the throat are preferred modes of death for virgins in the *LA* (Appendix E). See also Easton's discussion of beheading as capital punishment ("Pain, Torture, and Death" 54–56).
[68] *KV* describes her *lacteam ceruicem* ('milky white neck' l. 1132), *Katherine* her *sna[w]hwite swire* ('snow white neck' ll. 895–896), Bokenham her *nekke feyr & whyht* ('neck fair and white' l. 7335), and Capgrave her *necke fayre and qwyte* ('neck fair and white' 5.1884).
[69] Phillips, 45–49.

brightly as polished marble' ll. 452–453). The litany of her physical characteristics seem to deliberately recall not only the feminine ideal of the time, but also the red and white imagery associated with martyrdom most often displayed by lilies and roses.[70] This white imagery is therefore paired with red in the portrayal of her features as she also has *chyry chekys* ('cherry cheeks' l. 451) and *lyppys rody* ('ruddy lips' l. 452).[71] Agnes' account in the *South English Legendary* includes this white and red imagery in her death scene. Her white skin is focused upon as her *rede blod orn adoun ope hure limes so wite* ('red blood ran down upon her limbs so white' *Agneta*, l. 124).[72] As Phillips notes, this idealized description applies to women other than saints. The Pearl Maiden, for instance, also follows this tradition as the text highlights her white skin along with her white garments.[73] This imagery is not singular to late medieval England, as similar depictions appear in contemporary continental and Irish works. The physical traits of the Irish Derdriu, for example, echo Phillips' description of the typical Virgin Martyr. A prophecy of her fate and her beauty is given before Derdriu's birth:[74]

> In the cradle of your womb there cried out
> a woman with twisted yellow hair
> and beautiful grey green eyes.
> Foxglove her purple pink cheeks,
> the colour of snow her flawless teeth,

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[70] For this motif, see Agnes Chapter, 107 n. 80.
[71] Delany asserts the detailed description of Bokenham's Margaret is unusual in the life of a Virgin Martyr (79–80).
[72] This imagery continues for the next two lines (*SEL*, *Agneta*, ll. 125–126).
[73] See Agnes Chapter, 115–116. The Anonymous Spanish Poet also describes Mary of Egypt in this manner (*Saint Mary of Egypt*, 123–124). The most familiar example of this combination to modern readers is probably found in the story of Snow White (*Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 163). For the frequency of red and white imagery appearance, see Thompson Z65.1. For the motif of wishing for a wife with red, white, and black coloring, see T11.6.
[74] "The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu" in *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*. trans. Jeffrey Gantz. Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981, 256–267 at 258–259. Chaucer's Verginia is also described as having been 'painted' white as a lily and red as a rose (*The Physician's Tale*, ll. 31–36).

brilliant her Parthian-red lips.

***

There screams in your roaring womb
a tall, beautiful, long-haired woman
whom champions will contest,
whom high kings will woo;

***

Parthian-red lips will frame
those flawless teeth;
high queens will envy her
her matchless, faultless form.

Hartman von Aue's first description of the Lady Enite likewise highlights the maiden's white skin, which he proclaims: "shone through" her tattered garb "white as the plumage of a swan" (*Erec*, 61).[75] He further promotes this white, even saintly imagery, using hagiographical symbolism (62):

> Her body shone through her dingy garb just as does the lily that rises up white from amidst black thorns. God had taken great pains, I fancy to endow her with beauty and grace.

Katherine's beauty, like the Lady Enite's superior form, is highlighted in Capgrave's poem. The efforts responsible for creating that beauty are attributed to God and, in certain passages, to Nature.[76]

Capgrave's extensive work logically contains the most description of Katherine's beauty. Early in his work when the saint is engaged in the marriage parliament with the lords of her land, Katherine's physical appearance and gender are at the forefront of the discussion.[77] As the men attempt to persuade the young woman to take a husband, her

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[75] Hartman von Aue, *Erec*. trans. Michael Resler. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987.
[76] Lomperis discusses the role of Nature in Chaucer's *Physician's Tale* and the attempt (and failure) by Verginius to control and manipulate Nature's designs for his own purposes (22–24).
[77] The motif of virgins being urged toward marriage by men other than their specific suitors appears in several accounts of Virgin Martyrs in a far less extravagant manner. See, for instance, Eulalia's legend

comely form becomes a point of reference for the nobles.[78] This book's most descriptive and detailed passage concerning her beauty appears towards its conclusion (2.1310–1313 and 2.1324–1327).

> of your bryth beuté,
> Thus dare I say and I dare stand therby:
> There is no man that evyr with eye yet see
> Swech anothyr as ye be hardyly.
>
> [concerning your bright beauty,
> Thus dare I say and I dare stand by it that
> There is no man that ever with his eye has yet seen
> Such another as can be compared to you.]
>
> ***
>
> (Nature) hath gove, lady, ryght onto your persone
> Youre bright colour and fayre schap eke withalle
> To this entent: ye schuld not leve alone
> But with charyté departe this gyfte ye schall;[79]
>
> [(Nature) has given, lady, right onto your person
> your bright color and far shape also besides
> With the intention that you should not live alone
> But that with charity you shall offer forth this gift;]

Katherine is the most beautiful woman with no earthly comparison, a distinction she later uses to her advantage when she turns the parliament members' flatteries against them and describes the one magnificent man worthy of her.[80]

Opportunities to envision Katherine's revealed body are minimal and guarded in these accounts. She is always described as of incomparable loveliness, but the reader rarely receives any details of torments that involve her body being displayed in a provocative manner. In most other Virgin Martyr accounts, the audience is reminded of the particular

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(Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 3.104–113) and Agape, Chionia, and Yrene's legend (Aldhelm, *DV*, 305 and *CDV*, ll. 2201–2209).

[78] Capgrave 2.141–147 and 2.344–346.

[79] See also Bokenham's description of Nature's care with Katherine's physical and intellectual traits (ll. 6375–6397). Delany notes that Nature in Middle English can mean 'sexuality, nature, and genitals' (82). See also 223 n. 76 above concerning the use of Nature in Chaucer's *Physician's Tale*.

[80] See Christ as Husband section above 210–218.

virgin's physical magnificence during her various tortures, especially if there is a stripping or hanging involved such as in the cases of Thecla, Juliana, Christina, and Margaret.[81] Katherine, however, barely meets this norm and does so in understated terms. In her whipping, the only overt violent attack consistently appearing in her accounts, Katherine is stripped. However, the amount of description given to this pales in comparison to that of her intellectual battles and usually only amounts to a few lines in any given text. The *Katherine Vulgate* relates this scene, which, although somewhat long due to inset speeches, contains few graphic torments (ll. 648–666):

> Hic tyrannus, ira et furore inebriatu, beatam uirginem iussit
> a ministris comprehendi et expoliatam scorpionibus cedi, dehinc
> obscuro carceris ergastulo claudi […] Tunc
> iussa tyrannica ministri explentes, ferreis uirgis corpus tenerum
> lacerabant, et dum uerberando alii deficiebant, alii succedebant.
>
> [This tyrant, drunk with anger and fury, ordered that the blessed virgin
> be seized by his servants and her lustrous body be beaten with scorpions,
> and after this be shut up in the dark enclosure of prison […] Then the
> servants having fulfilled the tyrannical orders, were tearing her tender body
> with iron rods, and while some would become exhausted from whipping
> her, others would take their place.]

The description in *Katerine* focuses more on the virgin's body, yet the account is still brief (ll. 564–567).[82]

> Het o wod[e] wise[83] strupen hir steort-naket ant beaten hire beare
> flesch ant hir freoliche bodi wið cnottede schurgen, and [swa me] dude
> sone, þet hire leofliche lich liðerede al [o] blode;

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[81] *Thecla* 33–35. Juliana is strung up by her hair (Appendix C) and Christina is stripped before her beating by twelve men (Juliana Chapter, 200). Margaret is stripped, strung up, and burned with torches (Introduction, 6 n. 10; and Juliana Chapter, 151 n. 13). See also Appendix E.

[82] The *SEL* recounts this torment in only two lines (*Seinte Katerine*, ll. 167–168). Bokenham's account is likewise concise (ll. 6890–6894). The *LA* does not include this stripping or beating, however.

[83] Eleusius is referred to as *o wodi wise* when he directs the building of the wheel for Juliana's torture (*Iuliene*, 51). Olibrius is referred to as *swiðe wod* ('very furious' *Marherete* 42, l. 31) before he calls for the vat of water in which he wishes to drown Margaret.

> [(Maxentius) in a furious manner ordered to strip her stark naked and to beat her bare flesh and her beautiful body with knotted scourges, and so one did immediately, so that her lovely body was lathered all in blood.]

The Prose likewise commits only a few lines to this punishment (ll. 828–830):

> And then he was fulfyllyd wyth cruell woodnesse, commaundyd þat scho schuld be dispoylyd and betyn wyth scharpe scourgis.
>
> [And then he was filled with cruel madness, and commanded that she should be despoiled (of her clothes) and beaten with sharp scourges.]

Capgrave's extensive work, adhering to convention, gives a restrained description of this event. Maxentius cries to his men to *(t)ake this mayden and strippe hir moder-nakyd* ('(t)ake this maiden and strip her mother-naked (as naked as when she was born)' 5.608), to *(b)ete hir wele* ('(b)eat her well' 5.610) *thou that she falle in trauns!* ('even if she falls into a trance (swoons)!' 5.616). The beating itself is briefly recounted (5.617–622):[84]

> The tormentoures have taken hir on side,
> Made hir naked backe and armes thertoo.
> With eyrend wandes, as fast as thei may glyde,
> Thei beten hir body; the blode cam fast hir froo.
> Whan their were wery, than don fresh men moo:
> Thus is she betyn for hir spouses love.
>
> [The tormentors have taken her on either side,
> And made her back naked and her arms also.
> With iron wands, as fast as they may glide,
> They beat her body. The blood came fast from her.
> When they were weary, then fresh men came to do more:
> Thus she is beaten for her spouse's love.]

When Capgrave's Katherine is stripped in this scene, it is for the second time in the account. At this point in the text, the reader has been warned that to imagine her lustfully has ramifications.[85] Throughout Katherine's tradition, even at the anticipated pinnacle of

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[84] The whole scene extends from 5.603–672; however, most is given to speeches and the rewards of suffering and very little to description of the current torment or its subject.
[85] See the baptism section below 256–257.

torment involving her placement on the wheel, during which her body is expected to be shredded publicly, the saint is assumed to be fully clothed.[86]

Although Katherine's great loveliness has been securely established, the reader never has reason to envision the virgin's fully exposed form as is traditional in Virgin Martyr accounts. Furthermore, this saint is only subjected to limited physical contact from her persecutors. There is, however, still an expectation of violence against a Virgin Martyr who follows this storyline. If Katherine is not going to suffer herself, she needs accordingly a proxy to fulfill her Virgin Martyr designation and endures physical assaults.

Be of good herte, and drede no peynys:[87] Katherine's Sufferings

While Katherine's tortures are minimized compared to the other particulars of her legend, as part of the Virgin Martyr template she must, of course, suffer some form of torment. As Lewis has noted, Katherine rarely receives much more than one or two beatings or whippings at Maxentius' command.[88] Even her signature torture device of the four wheels is never actually used to rend the saint's body. It is, instead, miraculously destroyed.[89] Katherine endures, however, the quite common punishment of starvation in prison. The saint is tended to by angels during this period of intended deprivation, and fed

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[86] Since Katherine exits prison directly prior to her exposure on the wheel, the audience is led to believe that she is fully clothed.
[87] Bokenham, 'Be of good heart, and fear no pains' ll. 6955b–6956a.
[88] For Katherine's torments, see Appendix D. Katherine J. Lewis, 89.
[89] Depending on the source, Katherine experiences different levels of closeness to and danger of the wheels hurting her. In some sources she is placed on them, some she only sees them. See Appendix D.

for days by a dove.[90] This motif of visitation from heavenly figures occurs many times in the lives of the Virgin Martyrs. It is a gender-neutral motif, however, as several male saints also receive such celestial support while imprisoned.[91]

Once these heavenly visitors heal Katherine, the saint is recalled from prison to meet her fate upon the wheel machine. This device, as mentioned above, is designed specifically for Katherine's punishment and the method in which it intends to shred the saint's body is described in gory detail. The *Katherine Vulgate* presents the device as follows (ll. 945–950):

> Rotarum penalis machina hac arte expolita erat, ut due uno ordine uoluerentur, due autem contrario impetu agerentur, ut ille deorsum lacerando contraherent, iste repugnantes sursum deuorando impingerent. Has inter media Christi famula, exposita inter serras et tarincas ferreas, ex motu rotarum membratim discerperetur misero mortis genere
>
> [This pain-inflicting machine of wheels was refined with skill so that when two wheels would be revolving in one sequence, the other two, however, would be moving in an opposite assault. They would draw together downwards in a tearing motion, the other two would press upwards in a devouring motion. Christ's handmaid, placed in the middle of these wheels among saws and iron spikes, would be mangled limb by limb from the wheels' movement for a miserable kind of death.]

The early-thirteenth century *Katerine* echoes this description (ll. 713–718):

> Þis pinfule gin wes o swu[ch] wise iginet, þet te twa tur[n]den ei[ð]er wiðward oðer ant anes weis baðe, þe oðer twa tur[n]den anes weis alswa ah to(g)ein þe oðre (swa þet, hwenne þe twa walden keasten uppart þing þet ha [c]ahten, þe o[ð]re walden drahen hit ant dusten dunewardes)—se grisliche igreiðet þet grure grap euch mon hwen he lokede þron.
>
> [This pain-inflicting machine was devised in such a manner that each of the first two wheels turned alongside the other, both in one direction. The other two turned likewise in one direction but contrary to the first two, so that when the first two would cast upwards anything

[90] For angelic or heavenly visitation, see Agatha Chapter, 71–84; and Agnes Chapter, 112–114 and 139–140. Visitors arrive not only at times of torment, but also at times of joy and with celestial announcements. See below 260.
[91] For examples of heavenly aid, see Agatha Chapter, 71–84.

> that they caught, the other two would draw it and fling it downwards. So grisly fashioned (was the machine) that terror gripped each person when he or she looked upon it.]

Juliana's Katherine Group text includes a similar wheel to that in *Katerine*.[92] Juliana, unlike Katherine, however, is not spared its destructive powers (*Iuliene*, 51–53).[93]

> Ant lette o wodi wise a swiðe wunderlich hweol meten ant makien ant þurhspitien hit al wið spaken ant feline þicke ant þreofalt, wið irnene gaden kene to keoruen al þet ha rinen to ase neil-cniuse. Ant stod þe axtreo istraht o twa half into two stanene postles, þet hit, as hit turned, nohwer ne toke nowðer, ne bineoðen to þer eorðe. Grisen him mahte þet sehe hu hit gront into hwet se hit ofrahte.
> Me brohte hire uorð, as Beliales budel bet, ant bunden hire þer-to hearde ant heteueste. He dude on eiðer half hire fowre of hise cnihtes forte turnen þet hweol, wið hondlen imaket þron, o þet eadi meiden, se swiðe as ha mahten; ant he het o lif ant o leomen swingen hit swiftliche, ant turnen hit abuten. Ant heo, as þe deouel spurede ham to donne, duden hit unsperliche; þet ha bigon to breoken al as þet istelede irn strac hire in oueral, from þe top to þe tan, áá as hit turned, tolimede hire ant leac lið ba ant lire; bursten hire banes ant þet meari bearst ut, imenget wið blode. Þer me mahte iseon alre sorhene meast, þe i þet stude stode.
>
> [And in a furious manner had a very frightful wheel fashioned and made and spitted it all through with spokes and fellies, thick and threefold, with iron goads keen as sharp knives to carve all that they touch. And the axe-tree stood stretched on both sides into two stone pillars, so that, as it turned, it touched neither one anywhere, nor the earth beneath. Those who saw how it ground into whatever it reached might feel horror.
> One brought her forth, as Belial's officer commanded, and bound her thereto hard and relentlessly fast. He placed on either side of her four of his knights to turn the wheel, with the handles made on it, on that blessed maiden, as much as they might; and he ordered as they valued life and limbs to swing it swiftly and turn it about. And they, as the devil spurred them to do, did it unsparingly; so that she began to break all over as that hardened iron struck her everywhere from head to toe, ever as it turned. It dismembered her and pulled both limb and flesh; burst her bones and the marrow burst out, mingled with blood. Whoever stood in that place, there might see the most of all pain.]

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[92] This is a standard inclusion in Juliana's legend (Appendix C). See d'Ardenne and Dobson's discussion on the connection between these two Middle English scenes (*Katerine*, xxxix–xxxx). The suggestion is that *Iuliene* uses *KV* for its increased description of the wheels and that *Katerine*, in turn, was influenced by the description in *Iuliene*.

[93] See Appendix C. Also see Perpetua's ladder (Juliana Chapter, 154). Winstead notes that as the women become more assertive in the thirteenth-century texts, their torments become more explicit and gruesome (*Virgin Martyrs*, 107).

This description is even more horrific than that in *Katerine*, since Juliana actually experiences the device that is best associated with Katherine. Although Juliana is brutally damaged, an angel ultimately destroys the wheel and she emerges from the ordeal *as þah ha nefde nohwer hurtes ifelet* ('as though she had not felt wounds anywhere' 53).[94]

The description of Katherine's wheel increases in Bokenham's mid-fifteenth century text as Crusates, the wheels' creator, persuades Maxentius to order the construction of the device (ll. 7107–7111).[95]

> Comaundyth þat wyth-yn dayis thre
> Foure greth whelys ordeynyd be,
> Of wych þe sercyls goyng rounde aboute
> Shul wyth hookys of yirn, weel stondyng oute,
> Be thyk set, & yche spook þer-to
> Ful of yirnene sawys shul be set also,
> As sharp as euere þei mowe be grounde.
> So þat whan þe whelys turn ronde
> Iche of hem shal sum of hyr flessh cache,
> And þat oon leuyth anoþir shal feche
> Among hem alle whan she is sett.
>
> [Command that within three days
> Four great wheels be ordered
> Whose circles going round about
> Shall be thickly set with protruding
> Hooks of iron and each spoke
> Shall also be set full of iron saws,
> As sharp as they might ever be ground,
> So that when the wheels turn round
> Each of them shall catch some of her flesh
> And what one leaves another shall fetch
> When she is set among them all.]

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[94] For saints' bodies being restored after torments, see Agatha Chapter, 71–84. Despite the extensive torments described in the literary depictions, both Winstead and Bynum note martyrs lack of distress and even serenity often conveyed in artistic portrayals (Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 87–98; and Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 231–233). For martyrs withstanding pain or not suffering pain at all in early martyrdom accounts, see Tilley's article. For the lack of suffering in later medieval literature, especially in the *LA*, see Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 266–267 and 285–294.

[95] The *LA* (v. 2, 1210) also includes a description of the machine with four deadly wheels, which is constructed in three days. Crusates, the machine's maker, is not named, however. See Appendix D.

Capgrave gives an even more elaborate description of the wheels lasting almost forty lines.[96]

As noted, Katherine does not experience the pains of the wheel despite these various and elaborate depictions of how her body will be butchered. The motif of a devised punishment failing to injure a saint is evident in many saints' lives. For example, Justina and Cecilia remain unharmed when boiled by their persecutors; Lucy cannot be physically moved and transported to a brothel; Christina is rescued from drowning in the sea by angels; Euphemia, like Katherine, is rescued from a wheel by an angel; and Christina, Thecla, and Euphemia are doted upon by the various animals sent to devour and injure them.[97] The difference here is that the primary focus of the *passio* segment of her legend is on the particular machine that does Katherine no harm whatsoever. She, furthermore, retains the machine as her primary symbol in literature and art.[98] Virgin Martyrs are often depicted with symbols of their tortures: Agatha and Apollonia are portrayed with pincers (Agatha's for her breasts and Apollonia's for her teeth).[99] Agatha and Lucy are often shown presenting their removed body parts on plates (Agatha with her breasts and Lucy with her eyes).[100] In order for Katherine, who has comparatively little torture and mutilation, to be

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[96] Capgrave 5.1256–1295. The Prose work is very concise, however. *Then was ther a cruell master tauȝt themperour he schuld make .iiij. whelis of yryn evyn round wyth scharpe naylis, and too of the whelis to renne aȝeynst the odyr too, so þat þey schuld all to rent all þyng betwye them* ('Then a cruel master was there who advised the emperor to make four iron wheels inserted evenly with sharp nails, and two of the wheels to slide against the other two so that they should completely rend everything between them' ll. 880–884).
[97] In the *LA*, see Justina (v. 2, 976), Cecilia (v. 2, 1187), Lucy (v. 1, 51–52), Christina (v. 1, 647), and Euphemia (v. 2, 953). For Thecla, see Agnes Chapter, 128–129, especially n. 160. See also Appendix E.
[98] Drake, 24; and Lanzi, 98.
[99] See Agatha Chapter, 52.
[100] For Lucy, see Drake, 77; and Lanzi, 89–90. Virgin Martyrs are also often depicted with attributes that define them such as Agnes and a lamb (as a play on her name); or with objects that play a role in their

represented by the most gruesome torment in her legend, one must turn to the ineffective wheel.[101]

With the exception of the restrained reports of her stripping, Katherine's torments are conspicuously de-sexualized throughout her various lives. Virgin Martyrs, however, generally experience some sort of sexualized torment, which more often than not supplies the height of action in the accounts. During these dramatic scenes, these women are usually targeted alone and, as a result, suffer alone.[102] This is an important plot device in these lives as the virgin is anticipated to be the central focus at the time of her death.[103] Although several saints have followers who endure more horrific tortures than the saints themselves, this is not a common occurrence in the Virgin Martyr accounts. There are many conversions and consequent deaths of new Christians in these legends, but the anticipation is that the torment of the virgin will overshadow her new followers' punishments just as her holiness and celestial privilege outshines theirs. Katherine's legend, however, contains a deviation from this Virgin Martyr pattern.

Prior to her exposure to the wheel, the Queen and Maxentius' designate, Porphirius, visit Katherine in prison.[104] Although at first both are speechless and amazed at the sight of angels tending to the saint, the two speak with Katherine and convert. Soon after

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legends such as Barbara and the tower within which she is held captive. For Agnes, see Agnes Chapter, 121–124; and for Barbara, see Drake, 16.

[101] See Katherine J. Lewis' description of various visual depictions of Katherine's legend (34–38). Consistently appearing scenes "revolve around the debate episodes and the wheels" (37). See also Drake, 24; and Lanzi, 98.

[102] The obvious exception to this is Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins (*LA* v. 2, 1073–1078). Perpetua and Felicity, neither of whom are Virgin Martyrs but are often compared to them, are martyred together. Justina is also martyred with her former suitor, Cyprian (*LA* v. 2, 976) as is the Virgin of Antioch with the soldier (*LA* v. 1, 420), and Daria with her husband Chrysanthus (*LA* v. 2, 1072).

[103] See Juliana Chapter , 168–169.

[104] See Appendix D for the frequency of this scene.

Katherine is released from prison. The Queen watches from her tower as Katherine is placed on and subsequently saved from the murderous wheels, the destruction of which kills a number of heathens and the miracle causes many onlookers to convert. The Queen then descends to challenge her husband.[105] Once she has declared herself a Christian and denounced his treatment of Katherine, Maxentius is furious and commands horrific punishment for his wife: extensive mutilation to her breasts and then death by beheading.[106] The *Katherine Vulgate* vividly relates this scene (ll. 1004–1006 and 1019–1022):

> Iubet igitur crudelis tyrannus ministris contemptibiliter regiam apprehendere matronam et transfixas clauis ferreis mamillas ab imo pectore extorqueri […] Tunc ministri, extra ciuitatem eam ducentes, ferries hastilibus regias mamillas traiciunt et, sic suspensas, ab imo crudeliter pectore mammas euellent.
>
> [Therefore, the cruel tyrant contemptuously orders to his servants that they seize the royal woman and that her nipples, pierced through with iron nails, be wrenched from the bottom of her breast(s) […] Then the servants, leading her outside of the city, shove through the royal nipples with iron shafts and, thus suspended, they cruelly extract her nipples from the bottom of her breast(s).]

Katerine likewise describes the brutal sentence and torment (ll. 773–776 and 794–796):

> Sone se he understot wel þet he ne sturede hire nawt, het on hat heorte unhendeliche neomen hire ant bute dom ananriht þurhdriuen hire tittes wið irnene neiles ant rende ham up hetterliche wið þe breost[e] rotten […] Ant heo duden: drohen hire wiðute þe burhȝeten, ant tuhen hire

---

[105] The Queen in Katherine's legend takes part in the romantic triangle with Christ (as discussed in the Agnes Chapter, 90–91) since she turns from her earthly husband to her heavenly husband. In this sense, she also resembles the character of the 'adulterous queen' of medieval romance. Like the 'adulterous queen', the Queen is childless despite her involvement with two men and is regarded as a threat to the state (Peggy McCracken, "The Body Politic and the Queen's Adulterous Body in French Romance" in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*. eds. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, 38–64). McCracken asserts that in comparison to the "intact" virginal body, "the adulterous queen's dismembered and doubled body always escapes containment, and it is defined by that very transgression" (52). The Queen in Katherine's legend, however, is not divided for long and instead becomes whole and "intact" again as she gains a heavenly spouse.

[106] The length of this episode appropriately ranges in proportion to the length and detail of each work. See Appendix D. For Maxentius' command in the *LA*, see Agatha Chapter, 35.

> tittes up of hire breosten bi þe beare bane wið eawles of irne, ant swipten of þerefter wið sweort hire heaued;
>
> [As soon as he understood well that he did not stir her, he with a hot heart ordered to seize her and directly, without judgment, to drive her nipples through with iron nails and to rend them up fiercely from the breast-roots […] And they did: they drew her outside the city gates and pulled up the nipples of her breasts from the bare bone with iron awls, and thereafter swiped off her head with a sword;]

Bokenham, whose account of Agatha's breast mutilation is exceptionally gory, includes a surprisingly terse report of the Queen's death sentence.[107] Bokenham's Maxentius proclaims to his wife (ll. 7172–7176 and 7196–7202):

> Fyrst shal I do þi pappys be rent
> From þi brest wyt greth vyolence.
> And þine heed of be smete I shal sentence,
> And þi body to be throwyn in swych place
> Wher bestys & foulys it shul moun race.
>
> [First I shall have your nipples rent
> From your breast with great violence.
> And I shall sentence that your head be smote off,
> And that your body be thrown in such a place
> Where it shall be attacked by beasts and birds.]
>
> ***
>
> þei sparyd nowht
> But wyth forkys of yryn ful cruelly
> Hyr brestys þei rent from hyr body,
> And aftyr þat smet of hir heed.
> And leftyn hyr body whan she was deed
> In þe felde lying, aftyr þe decree,
> Of bestys & foulys deuouryd to be.
>
> [They spared not
> But with iron forks very cruelly
> They rent her breasts from her body,
> And after that smote off her head.
> And left her body lying in the field
> when she was dead, according to the decree,
> To be devoured by beasts and birds.]

[107] For Bokenham's particularly violent description of Agatha's breast torment, see Agatha Chapter 45–46. See also the *SEL* (*Seinte Katerine*, ll. 242–253) and the *LA* (v. 2, 1210).

Capgrave's detailed adaptation alters the structure of the scene somewhat because he has the Queen pray to Katherine after her torture and not before as in the other versions. The image of the bloody and torn Queen is perhaps intended to present a more moving vision than the proud and unharmed Queen, who proceeds to her martyrdom. This action also speaks to the Queen's strength of faith as she endures the torments before praying to Katherine, thereby indicating publicly that her belief is in Katherine's God and not those of her husband. When Maxentius first threatens his wife, he proclaims: *Dame, ye shall have as foule endyng / As evyr had woman, eythire eld or ying, / In youre dayes* (5.1460–1462a). He then pronounces her penalty for this betrayal (5.1473–1475, 5.1478–1488, and 5.1531–1535):[108]

> With sotil launces made of yrne wyre
> Thei schul rend hir tetys ryth anon bedene.
> In his presens thei shall do it, for he will it sene—
>
> [With slim lances made of iron wire
> They shall rend her nipples directly together.
> They shall do it in his presence, for he desires to see it—]
>
> ***
>
> Aftir this done he will thei hir take,
> Lede hir to the felde there traytouris alle
> Have as thei deserve, teye hir to a stake,
> Smyte of hir heede and let it down falle,
> Let it lye there—hungry doggys it schalle
> Ete and devoure in despyte of Jhesu.
> As the tyraunt badd, his men ded pursew:
>
> Thei pulled hir tetys in ful horrible wyse
> Ryght from hir breste—pyté it was to se
> The blode in the veynes with the mylke ryse.
> All rent and ragged, all blody was sche

[108] The Prose account, however, does not dwell on the brutal nature of this scene. *And þen he jugyd hur [brestis] to be rent of and after to be / behedyd […] And þen þey led hur out of the cite and wyth / tongis of yryn rent of hur brestis, and þen smote of hur hedde* ('And then he ordered her [breasts] to be rent off and afterwards to be beheaded […] And then they led her out of the city and with iron tongs rent off her breasts, and then struck off her head' ll. 892–893 and 898–899).

[After this was done he desired that they take her,
Lead her to the field where all traitors
Get what they deserve, tie her to a stake,
Smote off her head and let it fall down,
Let it lie there—hungry dogs shall eat and
Devour it in disdain of Jesus.
As the tyrant bade, his men did pursue;

They pulled her nipples right from her breast
In a very horrible manner—a pity it was to see
The blood with the milk rise in the veins.
She was all rent and ragged, all bloody.]

***

And evyr the emperour onto his men seyth
Ful bostous wordes, strokes eke he leyth
Upon her backes that thei shuld make a ende
Of this woman, for hir tetys now thei rend,

As I seyd ere, and aftir that grete peyne
With sharpe swerd hir hede of thei smyth.

[And ever the emperor says very boastful words
To his men, again he lays strokes
Upon their backs that they should make an end
Of this woman, for her nipples now they rend,

As I said before, and after that great pain
They smote off her head with a sharp sword.]

Since Katherine's tradition establishes her stature as the pure and untainted supreme Bride of Christ and preserves her from most physical harm, she needs the Queen's body to bear what her body cannot.[109] Katherine's relationship with the Queen, although presented less extensively than her other more emphasized relationship with the Blessed Virgin, is established through the visit of the Queen and Porphirius to Katherine's cell, as well as through the Queen's prayer to the saint before her beheading. Capgrave includes a detail of

[109] Innes-Parker, "Symbolic Violence" 211. The philosophers may also be interpreted as dying by proxy. Whereas the Queen's body represents Katherine's female form and sexuality, the philosophers represent her intellect and powers of speech. Delany notes the implication in Bokenham's text that the philosophers act as substitutes for the saint and reads their martyrdom as a symbolic castration of Katherine (97–98). Riches argues Saint George's legend contains such an exchange with a female body as proxy for a male body (76–77). For spiritual motherhood, see Agatha Chapter, 48–55.

the Queen's martyrdom, however, which reveals a definitive and new link between the saint and her convert. The Queen's torn breasts give forth *blode* and *mylke* (5.1487).

In tokyne of virginall clennesse:[110] The Holy Significance of Milk

The discharge of milk along with blood from the Queen's rent breasts is a fitting occurrence for Katherine's legend. Katherine herself has long been associated with the secretion of fluids of holy significance, milk and oil. It is not surprising that the Queen, as Katherine's proxy and spiritual child, emits one of these substances as evidence of her true and complete conversion. The milk, which flows from Katherine's neck upon the saint's beheading, is a consistent feature in her legend and is traditionally recognized as indicating her spiritual and physical cleanliness (Capgrave 5.1899–1900).

> In stede of blood, mylke ran at hir necke,
> Whech of hir purité that tyme bare wytnesse.
>
> [Instead of blood, milk ran from her neck,
> Which at that time bore witness to her purity.]

The emission of milk from the body of a holy person is taken as a sign of purity, as a *tokyne of virginall clennesse* ('token of virginal cleanliness' 5.1898). Milk streaming from wounds is not singular to Katherine's legend. Other female saints also produce milk from their wounds. When Christina's breasts are torn off, the lacerations secrete milk, and when thirty-six soldiers beat Sophia's daughter Faith, her wounds emit milk.[111] Saint Blaise's legend also reports of seven devout women experiencing this miracle (*Legenda aurea* v. 1, 254).

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[110] Capgrave ('token of virginal cleanliness' 5.1898).
[111] For Christina and Faith, see the *LA* v. 1, 648 and 308, respectively. See also Agatha Chapter, 51–53.

> Tunc preses iussit eas suspendi et carnes earum pectinibus ferries laniari. Quarum carnes ut nix albissime erant et pro sanguine lac fluebat.
>
> [Then the prefect ordered (the women) to be suspended and their flesh to be mangled with iron combs. Their flesh was as the whitest snow and milk was flowing (from their wounds) instead of blood.]

Legends record this exchange of milk for blood occurring in men's bodies as well; Saint Paul is the best-known example. When Paul is beheaded milk flows from his neck and when saint Victor is beheaded similarly a flow of both milk and blood appears from his neck wound.[112] The miraculous flow implies great holiness in both male and female saints, but for the women of the late Middle Ages the milk for blood event has an additional implication.

The concept of women's bodies as sustenance was very present in this later period. This has been shown in important works such as Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* and Bell's *Holy Anorexia*. Katherine's popularity reached its height in this climate of women's spirituality. This virgin becomes a martyr who in her body exhibits the ability to feed physically and nourish followers with her sacrificed body. Katherine's body actually proves itself to be food. Although this motif of milk flowing from wounds is an established hagiographical topos, in this period the miracle would have implications for female saints, reflecting the interest in and understanding of women's bodies. Food's relevance to women and significance in the later Middle Ages, particularly in terms of the Virgin Martyrs' bodies, is better understood when the relationship of the Virgin Mary's body with that of her son is considered.

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[112] Paul's legend reports: *De eius autem uulnere unda lactis usque in uestimenta militis exiliunt et postea sanguis effluxit* ('Indeed, a stream of milk sprung forth from his wound onto the clothing of the soldiers and afterwards (a stream) of blood flowed' *LA* v. 1, 581). For Victor, see Caxton's *Golden Legend* v. 4, 4.

According to medieval medical and philosophical beliefs, breast milk and blood were of the same substance. A child's physical matter, including its blood, is composed of material from its mother. The unborn child is nourished by her menstrual blood, which is transformed into breast milk through a process of purification after the child's birth.[113] This altered blood nourishes the newborn outside the mother's body, much as it did inside her body. By applying this concept to the Virgin Mary and Christ, Mary's breast milk, and by extension her breasts, holds mystical and holy significance. Bynum discusses later women's interpretation of this relationship between the bodies of Christ as child and Mary as mother.[114] Concerning the interpretation of Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179), for example, Bynum asserts:

> Christ (who had no human father) had to be seen as taking his flesh from Mary. This sense that Christ as body is formed from Mary's body led Hildegard to argue that it is exactly female flesh—the very weakness of woman—that restores the world. Thus flesh is to her, in her visions and in the theological exegesis they stimulate, symbolized by woman.[115]

This results in Christ's human physical matter being derived solely from Mary's body. Since Christ's body is formed entirely from Mary's, His blood is also Mary's blood and therefore the same substance as her breast milk.[116] Since Christ receives His physical matter entirely from Mary's female body, her substance becomes His substance. When Christ is crucified, by extension it is Mary's flesh that bleeds and suffers. Furthermore, the

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[113] Beth Williamson. "The Virgin *Lactans* as Second Eve: Image of the Salvatrix" *Studies in Iconography* 19 (1998): 105–138 at 109–111. Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 270–271; and *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 205–222.
[114] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, Chapter 9; and *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 98–102.
[115] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 265.
[116] Williamson, 109–111, 120–121, and 128–132. The child was believed to acquire its substance from the mother and spirit from the father. See also Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 262; and *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 98–102; and Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997, 43.

blood that flows from His wounds, the salvific blood, is of the same physical material as the milk that nourished Him as a child.

Following this transitive theology, later mystics perceived Christ's body, accepted as food in the Eucharist, as food in another way. This later period saw a rise in focus on the nourishment found in the wounds of Christ.[117] The imagery surrounding the sustenance from the wound in Christ's side mirrors that which the Christ Child had at the breast of the Virgin.[118] This later period features numerous references to men and women suckling at the wound (or breast) of Christ.[119]

This milk-blood relationship extends to include the maternal nature of Christ's wound. Mystics of the later Middle Ages often understood nourishment to be provided in a similar manner from the breast of the Virgin and from the side of Christ.[120] Women in particular envisioned themselves seeking such nourishment from the Savior.[121] Julian of Norwich is one of the most famous mystics who perceives Christ's wound as a breast (60:2501–2504 and 2508–2511).[122]

> The Moder may geven hir child soken her mylke, but our pretious Moder Jesus,
> He may fedyn us with Himselfe, and doith full curtesly and full tenderly with
> the blissid sacrament that is pretious fode of very lif.
> And with al the swete sacraments He susteynith us ful mercifully and graciously.
> ***

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[117] Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 102–114; *Jesus as Mother*, 132–135; and *Holy Feast*, 270–271.
[118] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 269–275. Yalom, 37–39 and 43. Bynum describes the strong tradition of this relationship between Christ and His mother at length.
[119] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 270–273; *Jesus as Mother*, 191–192; and *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 157–165 and 205–206. See also Marina Warner, *Alone of All her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary.* New York: Vintage Books, 1976, reprinted 1983, 193–205.
[120] See Flora Lewis, 212–217.
[121] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 125–135, especially 132–133; *Holy Feast*, 271–272; and *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 157–165.
[122] Julian of Norwich, *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*. ed. Georgia Ronan Crampton. TEAMS. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994. For Julian's usage of female-associated imagery when describing Christ, see Robertson, "Medieval Medical Views" 153–157.

> The moder may leyn the child tenderly to her brest, but our tender Moder Jesus, He may homely leden us into His blissid brest be His swete open syde and shewyn therin party of the Godhede and the joyes of Hevyn with gostly sekirnes of endless bliss.
>
> [The Mother may give her child her milk to suck, but our precious Mother Jesus, He may feed us with Himself, and do it very courteously and very tenderly with the Blessed Sacrament that is (the) precious food of very life.
> And with all the sweet Sacraments He sustains us very mercifully and graciously.
> ***
> The mother may lean the child tenderly to her breast, but our tender Mother Jesus, He may gently lead us into His blessed breast by His sweet open side and show (us) therein part of the Godhead and the joys of Heaven with spiritual security of endless bliss.]

This wound as breast concept is well implied within Agatha's martyrdom account. Her wound resulting from breast amputation coupled with her crucifixion-like position on the rack, conjures up images of the Savior, scantily clad and pierced in the side while hanging on the Cross.[123] Bynum calls attention to Quirizio da Murano's painting *The Savior* (1460–1478) that depicts Christ offering His wound to a nun in the same manner as the Virgin often offers her breast to the baby Jesus. In this particular work, Christ's wound is in the location normally reserved for the nipple, overtly connecting His salvific blood with the breast milk of the Virgin.[124]

Through the position of Virgin Martyrs as *imitationes Christi*, these women's bodies are perceived as nourishing bodies, and those who exude milk visibly and physically present this idea. A medieval understanding of women's physical liquids acknowledged blood and milk as from the same source. These occurrences are considered especially miraculous in virgin bodies because virgins have not engaged in the sexual activity that would lead a

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[123] See Agatha Chapter, 40.
[124] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 271–272 and Plate 25; and *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 93–97. For the concept of the Double Intercession, see also Williamson, 111–112.

woman to breed and thereby produce milk.[125] If these women who bled milk had been mothers, their wondrous secretions would have been easier to explain physiologically. However, the exchange of fluids within virgin bodies was inexplicable barring a miracle.[126]

This marvelous occurrence within virgin bodies recalls the connection that these women have with the Blessed Virgin. Through these secretions, the various wounds of Virgin Martyrs become breasts in their own right and emulate the salvific power of Christ's wounds as well as the breasts of the Virgin Mary. This perception allows Katherine and the other Virgin Martyrs honorable positions as holy vessels of spiritual nourishment and as reflections of both the Blessed Virgin and Christ.[127]

In this emission of milk, Katherine shows herself to be a sustaining body while still physically and spiritually pure and intact. After death, Katherine, through this flow of milk, physically demonstrates her role as spiritual mother, which she established throughout her *passio*.[128] Her virgin body's ability to produce food is one of the many ways in which Katherine is connected to the Blessed Virgin.

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[125] James S. Olson, *Bathsheba's Breast*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, 22. This is based on the theory that menstrual blood changed directions in the woman's body and turned to milk upon conception (Aristotle, *History of Animals, Books VII–X*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, 7.3). See also Warner, 39–42. For an overview of the various medical beliefs concerning women's, particularly young women's, reproductive functions and customs in Antiquity, see Rousselle, 32–46. The relationship between a lack of children and breast diseases, although recognized in the Middle Ages, was not researched sufficiently until the eighteenth century. Today, it is believed that women who do not bear children have a higher rate of breast cancer (Olson, 20–21).

[126] For male saints this change in fluids is even more puzzling. See above examples of Paul and Victor (238). Dorothy Ann Bray provides examples of lactating male saints in the Irish tradition ("Suckling at the Breast of Christ" 282–286).

[127] For Virgin Martyrs giving birth to the "virtues" as well as to spiritual children, see Agatha Chapter, 51 n. 84.

[128] For spiritual motherhood, see Agatha Chapter, 48–55.

A Garden Enclosed: Katherine's Intactness

Later Middle English versions of Katherine's legend, the Prose work and Capgrave's somewhat later telling, expand upon details concerning her conversion to Christianity and, of course, her wedding to Christ. This is a period of Katherine's life that is not found in such earlier accounts as the *Katherine Vulgate*, *Katerine*, the *South English Legendary*, and the *Legenda aurea*. The reader is also introduced to Katherine's early educational practices in these later accounts.[129]

In both the Prose work and Capgrave's account, Costis, Katherine's father and king of Alexandria, fosters his daughter's intelligence and skill by providing her with the best scholars to educate her in the liberal arts. He also supplies her with a tower in which she is able to pursue her studies (Prose, ll. 99–106).

> Then þis Kyng Costis hur fadre, havyng so grete mer-
> veyle and grete ioye of the grete wisdam of his dou3tre, (100)
> he leet do make a feyr tower in his paleys with dyuverse
> chamberis and stodyes, that scho might be at hur owne
> liberte in hur stodye, and no creatur to let hur, but when
> hur lyst. And þerto he ordeynyd to attend to hur sevyn of the
> best and connyngyst maysterys that my3t be founde in all (105)
> londys theraboute.
>
> [Then this King Costis, her father, having such great
> marvel and joy at the great wisdom of his daughter,
> made a fair tower in his palace with a number of
> chambers and studies, so that she might be at her own
> liberty in her studying, and no creature to be permitted
> near her except when she allowed. And thereto he sent seven
> of the best and most cunning masters that could be found in all
> the surrounding lands to attend to her.]

[129] For Katherine's intellectual training, see above 207–210.

Capgrave's Costis also builds Katherine an enclosure as a haven in which she could concentrate. Capgrave's account exchanges the tower for a garden and stresses her solitude more than the Prose (1.337–364).

> The kyng dyd make there for hir alone
> A paleyse wallyd ryght on the sowth side,
> Open to the sune there was hir trone —
> There is no swych now in this worde wyde.
> It was made for Kateryne there to abyde
> Whan sche wold stody be hirsele sole.
> In the grete garden was most hir scole […]
>
> Sche bare the key of this gardeyn — there had it no
> moo.
> Whan sche went in, sche schett it full fast.
> It was speryde ful treuly went sche to or froo,
> For of many thynges was sche sore agast
> But most of inquietude. Stody may not last
> With werdly besynesse, ne with his cure:
> The olde wyse sey thus, I yow ensure.
>
> The walles and the toures were made nye so hye,
> Ful covertly with arches and sotelly i-cast;
> There might not cume in but foule that doth flye.
> The gatis, as I seyd, were schett full fast
> And evyr more hirselve wold be the last.
> The key eke sche bare, for sche wolde soo.
> Thus lyved this lady in hir stody thoo.
>
> [For her alone the king made there
> A walled area right on the south side,
> Open to the sun. There was her throne —
> There is nothing like it now in this wide world.
> It was made for Katherine to abide there
> When she desired to study by herself alone.
> Most of her schooling was in the great garden […]
>
> She bore this garden's key — no other there had it.
> When she went in, she shut it very fast (tight).
> It was locked very truly when she went to or fro.
> For she was made sorely aghast by many things
> But most of all by inquietude. Study may not last
> With worldly concerns, nor with worldly care.
> The old wise ones say thus, I assure you.
>
> The walls and the towers were made nearly so high,
> Very concealed and skillfully crafted with arches;
> There none might come in except a flying bird.
> The gates, as I said, were shut very fast (tight)

> And ever more she desired to be the only one
> admitted there.
> The key, moreover, she bore, for she desired it so.
> Thus then lived this lady in her study.]

This enclosed and emphatically private garden has a twofold importance. Physically it provides Katherine with a distraction-free environment in which she is able to study to her heart's content. Capgrave states the preference scholars have for such settings: *Solitary lyf to stodyers is comfort* ('The solitary life is a comfort to those who study' 1. 350). While the garden is ideal for Katherine to use in her scholarly activities, the enclosure is also strongly symbolic. The emphasis placed on the impenetrable nature of the garden, the repeated reminder that only Katherine has the power over admittance, and the assurances that Katherine is always *be hirsele sole* give an ethereal air to the gated setting. Her association with the garden echoes the Song of Songs: *hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa hortus conclusus fons signatus* ('My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up' 4:12).[130] The sealed gate, opened only at Katherine's discretion, reflects Katherine's sealed virginity as the saint's own intactness is mirrored in her surroundings.[131] Early Christian authors such as Ambrose and Jerome utilize this Biblical passage to promote this interpretation of the virgin body, particularly the female virgin body.[132] While

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[130] Warner, 121–133. Aldhelm uses this imagery of a garden enclosed for the Blessed Virgin (*DV*, 292 and *CDV*, ll. 1696–1700). Delany notes that Mary is the most associated with this imagery (76–77). Bohn cites artistic depictions of Susanna in an enclosed garden "that, by association with Marian iconography, was a symbol of Susanna's chastity" (262). Miller discusses the transformation of the transvestite saint Pelagia from an immoral woman to a 'virginal' garden enclosed (Miller, "Is There a Harlot in the Text?" 427). Coon also makes this claim for Pelagia (82).

[131] See Ashton, 87–88. For women's bodies as enclosures, see, for example, Horner (115–123), Innes-Parker ("Fragmentation and Reconstruction" 35–41 and 46–48) and Wogan-Browne ("Virgin's Tale" 166–169).

[132] For a presentation of this enclosed motif's development in the works of Athanasius, Ambrose, and Jerome, see Burrus "Word and Flesh" (especially 34–36 and 39–44).

Ambrose emphasizes the spiritual and physical importance and benefits of remaining 'enclosed,' Jerome presents an erotic interpretation of this motif (*Ad Eustochium* 22.25).[133]

> Semper te cubiculi tui secreta custodiant, semper tecum sponsus ludat intrinsecus. Oras, loqueris ad Sponsum: legis, ille tibi loquitur: et cum te somnus oppresserit, veniet post parietem, et mittet manum suam per foramen, et tanget ventrem tuum: et expergefacta consurges, et dices: «Vulnerata caritate ego sum»: et rursus ab eo audies, «Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa: hortus conclusus, fons signatus»
>
> [Always let the seclusion of your bedroom guard you, always let the Bridegroom act within you. You pray, you speak to the Bridegroom: you read, He speaks to you. And when sleep assails you, He will come behind the wall, and send His hand through the hole, and touch your womb. And you, having been awoken, will arise and say: "I am wounded with love." And again you will hear from Him: "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed."]

Virginia Burrus, calling attention to Jerome's "near-obsession" with "protecting female virginity," asserts:[134]

> Accompanying Jerome's preoccupation with the sexual vulnerability of the virgin is an extraordinary textual eroticism whose focus is not so much the disturbingly open bodies of most women (the "fallen") as the tantalizingly closed body of the virgin.[135]

Jerome's blatant sexualization of the unpenetrated female form is not singular. Prudentius' depiction of Agnes' legend is, as noted, especially erotic.[136] The erotic and romantic imagery found within these early texts resounds in the works of the Katherine Group and its surrounding texts.

Capgrave, in his fifteenth-century work, also calls upon this earlier imagery in his garden enclosure scene, portraying a symbolically virginal, yet sexually aware, Katherine.

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[133] See Miller's discussion of this passage in Jerome's letter to Eustochium ("The Blazing Body" 27–30).
[134] Burrus, "Word and Flesh" 41. Shaw also mentions the sexual focus of Jerome's works. Concerning a story in Jerome's first Epistle, Shaw notes: "It is cast in that rhetorical mixture of eroticism and outright pornography of which Jerome, a saint, was particularly capable" ("Body/Power/Identity" 272). Miller notes that the letter to Eustochium allows Jerome to explore his own body through his writing as well as Eustochium's ("The Blazing Body" 31–42).
[135] Burrus, "Word and Flesh" 42.
[136] Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 14. See Agnes Chapter, 92–93.

Winstead notes that Katherine, although a virgin, is still informed about sexual matters, an important and practical matter for a knowledgeable virgin.[137] When Adryan educates Katherine on Mary's perpetual virginity, Katherine asserts the impossibility of his teachings based on her understanding of the procreative process (3.632–644):

> "Ye seyd me ryght now whan ye told your talle
> That this grete Lady, if I wolde lere,
> Bare a noble chyld withouten any bale,
> And yet sche is a mayden at asay and sale —
> This same matere is ageyn kynde.
> What, wene ye sere, that I were so blynde
>
> "That I cowde not undyrstand of generacyoun
> The prevy weyes? Thow I non exersye
> Hafe had in my lyffe of swech occupacioun —
> Ne nevyr wyll have, be that hye justyse
> Whech ye to me now newly gan devyse —
> Yet know I wele, and ilk man it knowyth,
> Who wyll have a chylde, seed sumetyme he sowyth!"
>
> [You told me just now when you told me your tale
> That this great Lady, if I will learn,
> Bore a noble child without any pain,
> And yet she is a maiden upon test and inspection —
> This same matter is against nature.
> What, did you think sir, that I was so blind
>
> That I could not understand about reproduction?
> About the private ways? Though I have not had
> Practice of such occupation in my life—
> Nor ever will have, if that high justice
> Which you have recently began to tell me about —
> Yet I know well, and every man knows it,
> Each man who will have a child, at some time sowed
> his seed (had sex with a woman).]

[137] To be ignorant of the sexual act is to place oneself in danger of performing it unwittingly. See, for example, Giovanni Boccaccio's tale of the naive Alibech, who is deceived by a hermit into repeatedly having sex under the guise of religious instruction in "putting the Devil back in Hell" (*The Decameron*. Second Edition. trans. G. H. McWilliam. London: Penguin Books, 1995, 3.10). The Blessed Virgin also demonstrates her knowledge of sexual matters (above 216 n. 46). Winstead also notes Katherine's sexual knowledge here (Capgrave, n. 3.208–209).

Katherine's speech indicates that Virgin Martyrs fully understand the sexual process.[138] Through such comprehension the women are made aware not only of what they are renouncing but also with what they are potentially threatened. For Katherine specifically, this particular bit of wisdom portrays her as more knowledgeable in worldly and spiritual matters than her male inquisitors and suitors. She, like they, knows about sex; she, like they, knows what she is 'giving up'; she, unlike they, sees a higher and more preferable fate for herself. Of course, during this exchange with Adryan, Katherine has yet to be convinced of the teachings that ultimately lead her to choose this fate. Katherine's objections in this scene are those that early and medieval Christian authors strove to answer regarding the physical status of the Blessed Virgin.

Although Christian authors maintain that a virgin whose body is penetrated by force is still able to maintain her true virginity, an enduring preoccupation with physical intactness indicates a lack of confidence in this assertion.[139] As seen above, Virgin Martyrs are not made to face the uncertain spiritual status of a raped virgin. These women, like the ultimate virgin they aspire to imitate, the Blessed Virgin, remain spiritually and physically intact.[140] Mary's virginity and, specifically, the physical representation of this virginity, her hymen, are also point of concern for writers throughout the Middle Ages.[141] While Jerome concerns himself with the importance of Mary's perpetual virginity, Ambrose asserts the

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[138] Agnes' speeches give the same impression (Agnes Chapter, 95–96).
[139] For spiritual implications of rape in the lives of Virgin Martyrs, see Agnes Chapter, 132–141.
[140] Warner, 68–69.
[141] Although the hymen, particularly Mary's hymen, is an ongoing point of discussion, as Burrus states when noting the "relative lateness of the phenomenon": "it took the Christians almost three centuries to become fascinated with the hymen" ("Word and Flesh" 32–33). For an overview of medieval through modern perceptions of the hymen see Wogan-Browne, "Virginity Now and Then: A Response to *Medieval Virginities*" in *Medieval Virginities*. eds. Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 234–253 at 240–248.

presence of Mary's hymen even after giving birth. This miracle, which appears in the mid to late second-century *Protevangelium of James*[142] also appears in the later fifteenth-century N-Town and sixteenth-century Chester mystery cycles.[143] The characters in these works who attempt to prove either Mary's enduring virginity or lack thereof are inevitably punished for such doubt. Salomé, Mary's midwife, for example, attempts to discover the reason why Mary's body does not bleed as other women's during birth. As a result of her skepticism and audacity, N-Town's Salomé's hand becomes *ded and drye as claye* ('dead and shriveled as clay', *The Nativity* l. 256) once it touches the Virgin's body.[144] While reminding the audience of Mary's purity, the scene also advises that taking advantage of a holy person has severe ramifications.[145] As the Virgin Martyrs imitate the Virgin Mary, so

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[142] *The Protevangelium of James* in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 48–67. For the dating of this text, see *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 49. For Mary's virginity *in partu*, see also Warner, 42–45 and 73–74.
[143] *The Nativity* in *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D. 8*, v. 1. ed. Stephen Spector. EETS SS 11. Oxford, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991, 152–162. *The Nativity* in *The Chester Plays*, v. 1. ed. Hermann Deimling. EETS ES 62. London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1892, reprinted 1959, 104–132.
[144] Salomé is subsequently cured when she touches the infant Jesus' clothes (*The Nativity*, ll. 294–297). For this scene also appears in the Chester Plays (*The Nativity*, ll. 545–576). This also appears in the Nativity account of the *LA* (v. 1, 66). See also Ruth Evans, "Virginities" in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*. ed. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 21–39, at 29–31). Jane Cartwright discusses the testing of Mary's virginity in apocryphal Gospels and the motif's presence in Welsh tradition ("Virginity and Chastity Tests in Medieval Welsh Prose" in *Medieval Virginities*. eds. Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 56–79, at 57–58). See also Theresa Coletti's discussion on the ambiguous status of Mary's body in the mystery plays ("Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary's Body and the En-gendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles" in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*. eds. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, 65–95).
[145] Those who attempt to touch the Blessed Virgin's litter are punished with withered hands (*LA* v. 2, 784–785). See also below 258–259. These men, like Salomé and the men attempting to rape Daria and Agnes, are severely disciplined for their impudence.

do the punishments of the virgins' would-be violators mimic the consequences met by non-believers who dare to lay hands on the Blessed Virgin herself.[146]

Save Mari alone:[147] Second Only to the Queen of Heaven

Devotion to the Virgin Mary flourished throughout the Middle Ages. Her multifaceted role as maiden, mother, and queen permitted a variety of foci for medieval people, as did her position as mediatrix in each of these roles.[148] Due to Mary's singular relationship with Christ, her powers of intercession were regarded as the most effective. This idea was rooted in the belief that Christ would not deny His mother any request.[149] Therefore, even the most severe sinners could still rely on Mary's successful supplication to her son on their behalf. The later Middle Ages saw many depictions of Mary performing such intercessions.[150] The artistic concept of the *Double Intercession*, which portrays Mary and Christ presenting breast and side wound respectively in supplication to God the Father, appears in the late medieval period. There are also portrayals of Mary performing this same act of mediation to Christ Himself.[151]

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[146] See specifically Agnes Chapter, 141–143. The persecutors of Virgin Martyrs tend to 'get what they have coming to them' in the end (Conclusion, 261–263).
[147] Capgrave ('Except for Mary Alone' 3.1251).
[148] The interpretation of the Blessed Virgin's roles was not limited to these three titles; however, these are the most common representations of Mary in Middle English lyrics (Karen Saupe, ed. *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999, 4). See also Warner, xxiii–xxiv.
[149] Capgrave's Christ states this blatantly: *Whatsoevyr ye wyll, modyr, it must be doo* ('Whatever you desire, mother, it must be done' 3.1171). See also Williamson, 109–111. For Mary's intercessory powers, see Warner, 315–329; and Williamson, 111–118.
[150] Mary calls attention to her role as mediatrix in Capgrave's work (3.167–168). Later, Adryan refers to the Blessed Virgin as *My Lordes moder, myn advocate, my Mary* – ('My Lord's mother, my advocate, my Mary' 3.252).
[151] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 272 and Plates 29 and 30. Eugenia bares her breast to her father to prove her female identity (*LA* v 2, 928; and Agatha Chapter, 62 n. 130 and 69 n. 143). Helen of Troy bares her breasts to Menaleus in supplication (Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* in *Four Plays by Aristophanes: The Clouds, The Birds,*

This concept of Christ's unwillingness to refuse His mother is adopted into accounts by and about medieval women. Bell has noted that some holy anorexics such as Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) and Veronica Giuliani (1660–1727) believe that Christ could not deny their requests. These women express reciprocal relationships with Christ, and expect that if they obey His will, He will submit to their will.[152] Bell asserts: "for the holy anorexic possession *by* God and *of* God is crucial in solving the earthly dilemma of achieving total autonomy."[153] Christ is bound to them through their extreme devotion and prominence in His eyes.[154] Margery Kempe also conveys a codependent relationship with Christ.[155] She attests that Christ tells her (1.4988–4990):

> For in no thyng, dowtyr, that thu myghtyst
> do in erth thu myghtyst no bettyr plesyn me than suffyrn me speke to the in thi sowle,
> for that tyme thu undirstondyst my wyl and I undirstond thi wyl.
>
> [For nothing, daughter, that you might
> do on earth could please me better than your allowing me to speak to you in your soul.
> For at that time you understand my will and I understand your will.]

Some Virgin Martyrs also possess similar influential powers. In prayers to Christ before their martyrdoms, the virgins beseech Christ to grant them a kind of blanket intercession for those in certain circumstances. Through this process, these virgins establish themselves as patronesses for their chosen groups. One of Margaret's requests, for example, is that any woman in labor who calls upon her should have a quick and safe delivery and bear a child

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Lysistrata, The Frogs. eds and trans. William Arrowsmith, Richmond Lattimore, and Douglass Parker. New York: Penguin Books, Meridian. first published together 1994, 334–468, at 362–363).

[152] For such intimacy with Christ, see also Agnes Chapter, 87–92.

[153] Bell, *Holy Anorexia*, 66. Among the several holy anorexics in the study, Bell explores the especially romanticized and intimate depiction of Angela of Foligno's relationship with Christ (103–112).

[154] Bell, 40–41 and 66.

[155] For this portrayed codependence of Christ and Margery, see Kathleen Inman, "Virginity Redux: Dueling Social Voices in Margery Kempe's Book" *Critical Sense* 1996: 79–80, available online <criticalsense.berkeley.edu/archive/fall1996/inman.pdf>.

with no maladies or disfigurements.[156] Katherine also appeals to Christ in a similar manner (*Katerine*, ll. 874–880).

> Ich bidde þe þeos bone: þet alle þeo þe munneð mi pine ant mi passiun, þe to l[o]ue, lauerd, ant cleopieð to me hwen ha schulen þe derf of deað drehen oðer hwense ha hit eauer doð i neode ant i nowcin, hihentliche iher ham, heouenliche healent; aflei from ham [al] uuel—weorre ant w[o]ne bače, ant untidi wederes, hunger ant euch hete þe heaneð ham ant hearm[e]ð.
>
> [I ask you this boon: that all those who remember my pain and my passion, for your love, Lord, and call to me when they shall endure the suffering of death or whenever they do it, in need and in distress, you, heavenly Savior, will hastily hear them. Drive away from them all evil—both war and want, and untimely weathers, hunger and each hatred that afflicts and harms them.]

Christ's response calls to mind His anticipated reaction to Mary's requests (*Katerine*, ll. 891–894).

> (A)lle þeo þe munneð þe ant ti passiun, hu þu deað drohe, wið inwarde heorte, in eauer euch time þet heo to þe cleopien wið luue ant riht bileaue, ich bihate ham hihentliche help of heoueriche.
>
> [(A)ll those who remember you and your passion deep in their hearts, how you endured death, in every single time that they call you with love and true belief, I promise them help hastily from the kingdom of heaven.]

The theme of Christ's compliance with His mother's desires is especially prominent in Capgrave's work. The third book makes clear that although Christ has chosen Katherine as His bride, the marriage between the Savior and Katherine is Mary's orchestration and meets with her approval.

Capgrave's Mary herself selects Katherine as the bride for her son. "*For I myselve have ordeynd hir a lorde*" ('For I myself have selected her a husband' 3.195). Mary asserts Katherine's suitability through descriptions and statements that depict the saint as being second only to the Blessed Virgin herself (3.232–236).

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[156] *Marherete*, 46, l. 34–48, l. 4; and Bokenham, ll. 841–844.

> For aftyr me, I tell thee sykyrlye,
> There was nevyr swech another lady lyvande
> That withowte ensaumple cowed leve parfytely,
> As sche hath now newly take on hande,
> So holy a lyffe.
>
> [For after me, I tell you truly,
> There was never such another lady living
> Who without example could live perfectly,
> So holy a life, as she has now recently
> Undertaken.]

Adryan, the hermit sent as Mary's servant to fetch Katherine, continues the comparison with observations of the young queen's beauty (3.389–392).

> But swych beuté sey this man nevyr none
> As now he seethe in theis same persone —
> Save oure Lady, blessed mot sche be —
> So bryght and scynyng was thoo hir fayre ble.
>
> [But this man never saw such beauty in one
> As now he sees in this same person—
> Save our Lady, blessed is she—
> So bright and shining was then her fair countenance.]

The hermit continues to proclaim Katherine's loveliness: *For aftyr oure Lady sche passeth withoute mesure / Alle othir women* ('For after our Lady she surpasses without measure / all other women' 3.399–400). It is worth noting that in late medieval England, Mary is generally depicted as a beautiful young maiden, often younger than her son.[157] As Phillips has discussed, maidenhood was seen as the ideal time of life for women. The Virgin Mary, as the paradigm of womanhood as well as exemplar for young and beautiful Virgin Martyrs, is portrayed in this state when she appears in the texts and artistic depictions of this period. Mary is traditionally represented as a young woman despite her older age upon the Assumption.[158] When Katherine first sees Mary in the Prose account, the Blessed

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[157] Phillips, 49–51.
[158] Phillips, 49.

Virgin's beauty is beyond imagining: *The beaute of this queen myt no hert / þynke nor penne wryte, for hit excedyd eny mannys mynd* ('No heart is able to think nor pen write about the beauty of this queen, for it exceeded all the mind of man could imagine' ll. 439–440). Adryan is especially astonished by Mary's beauty when she appears before him.

As the plot progresses, Capgrave devotes twenty lines of the third book to describing how Mary surpasses Katherine in every way.[159] Christ further asserts this hierarchy during the marriage ceremony: *Above all othir I wyll that ye clyme — / Save only My modyr* ('I desire that you climb above all others— / Save only My mother' 3.1250–1251). He also affirms Katherine's position in regards to all other virgins who are His brides (3.1254–1259):[160]

> For thow all thoo mydenes that kepe hem clene
> For My sake and for My plesaunce
> Be wyves unto Me all bedene,[161]
> Yet is there to yow schape a hyere chaunce.
> Before hem all schal ye go in the daunce,
> Next My modyr,
>
> [For although all those maidens that keep themselves
> clean for My sake and for My pleasure
> Are all together My wives,
> Yet is there made for you a higher fate.
> Before them all shall you go in the dance,
> Next to My mother.]

Although Katherine enjoys a position that exceeds that of all maidens devoted to Christ and all other Virgin Martyrs, her status remains second to Mary's. Despite her excellence, Katherine always shadows the Blessed Virgin, never meeting her supremely set standard.

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[159] Capgrave 3.442–462

[160] Christ claims in the Prose: *And I haue desy- / red hur to be knyt vnto me in parfite mariage befor all virginis / þat levyn now in erþe* ('And I have desired her to be bound to me in perfect marriage above all virgins that live now on earth' ll. 510–512).

[161] The expectation that only virgins are able to become brides of Christ greatly impacted Margery Kempe. She attests that Christ reassures her that this is not the case (1.21.1113–1123). Perpetua's account declares that she is Christ's wife (Agnes Chapter, 87).

This continual association with Mary accomplishes two distinct and important objectives: it secures Katherine's position in the hierarchy of female saints and attaches to Katherine some of the respect and honor associated with Mary. All Virgin Martyrs are assumed to emulate Mary's purity; nonetheless, their bodies are still manipulated sexually. It would be exceedingly offensive to look upon the Blessed Virgin with licentious eyes, however. The *Legenda aurea* clearly conveys this expectation in its account of the Blessed Virgin's purification (v. 1, 247):

> sed etiam uirtus eius sanctitatis et castitatis usque ad alios extendebatur et transfundebatur ita quod in aliis omnes motus carnalis concupiscentie extinguebat. Vnde dicunt Iudei quod cum Maria pulcherrima fuerit a nullo tamen unquam potuit concupisci et ratio est quia uirtus sue castitatis cunctos aspicientes penetrabat et omnem in eis concupiscentiam expellebat.
>
> [but also, the virtue of her sanctity and chastity was extended out to and poured into others, so that every impulse of carnal desire was extinguished in them. Whereof the Jews say that although Mary was very beautiful, nevertheless, no one was ever able to desire her. The reason is because the virtue of her chastity penetrated all those who looked (at her) and expelled all desire from them.]

If this is the expectation for viewing the Blessed Virgin's body, how could it be appropriate to gaze lustfully upon the woman whom she chose for her son's spouse and to whom she promised to be a surrogate mother?[162] Capgrave uses Katherine's relationship with Mary to direct the reader's attention away from Katherine's body and therefore away from the expected display of a typical Virgin Martyr's body. This closely plotted relationship between Capgrave's Katherine and the Blessed Virgin helps protect the saint

[162] Katherine's mother dies during the period of Katherine's baptism and marriage to Christ (Capgrave 3.1473–1477).

from the same physical trials of other Virgin Martyrs and creates a situation in which to treat Katherine the same as the others would be profane.[163]

In a further effort to distract the audience from considering Katherine sensually, Capgrave uses the opportunity of the saint's baptism.[164] Christ insists that Katherine must be baptized before their wedding and, in order to proceed with the ceremony, Mary escorts Katherine back to the hermit, Adryan, who first brought her to the Virgin. Although Adryan performs the actual ceremony, Mary organizes the event and takes on the role of Katherine's Godmother.[165] The connection with Mary again restrains the audience in the first scene that the saint is stripped (3.1090–1094).

> This mayde schal be bathyd for hir loves sake
> In this cold watyr, and Crysten schall sche be.
> My Lord, my Son, thus comaundyth He.
>
> I myselfe schal of hir clothes strepe
> And make hir all naked, redy to this thing.
>
> [This maid shall be bathed in this cold water
> For her love's sake, and Christian shall she be.
> My Lord, my Son, thus commanded.
>
> I myself shall strip her of her clothes
> And make her completely naked, ready for this thing.]

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[163] The Prose version details a much briefer presentation of Katherine's life, baptism, and marriage to Christ. This account contains corresponding scenes with Mary and Katherine and the two women together with Christ; however, the Prose author does not emphasize the comparison or unite the two women with the same intensity and frequency.

[164] For baptismal imagery, see also Agnes Chapter, 114–115.

[165] Capgrave 3.1079–1148, especially 3.1109–1111. Mary also states the requirement of baptism in the Prose (ll. 473–485) and appoints herself Katherine's Godmother (l. 484). Katherine's stripping is not mentioned, however, except for the statement appearing following her baptism, which asserts that she must be *cloped aȝeyn* ('clothed again' l. 485) before meeting Christ. There is no blinding of Adryan, but simply the report that he *baptizyd hur* ('baptized her' l. 484).

In case the reader fails to comprehend the inappropriateness of lecherous thoughts during this sacred ritual, Capgrave makes this obvious in his treatment of the hermit (3.1104–1105 and 3.1130–1136).

> Tho was Kateryn spoyled, but blynd was the frere,
> Bothe in hir spoylyng and in hir bapteme.
>
> [Then was Katherine despoiled (of her clothes), but the friar was blind,
> Both during her despoiling and during her baptism.]
>
> ***
>
> Oure Lady hirselfe servaunte was here;
> Sche dede of the clothes of this swete dame.
> All this ilk tyme there was a hame
> Of blyndenes before this ermytes yye,
> For of all this werk nothing he syye.
>
> But sone aftyr this sacrament is doo
> His light receyvyd he newly ageyn.
>
> [Our Lady herself was the servant here;
> She did take off the clothes of this sweet dame.
> During all this time there was a covering
> Of blindness before the hermit's eyes,
> For he saw nothing of all this work.
>
> But soon after this sacrament was done
> He newly received his sight again.]

Although Adryan is a devout servant of Christ and His mother, he is not allowed the privilege and trust necessary to lay eyes on the naked body of the ultimate Bride of Christ. Being simply a mortal man, the hermit's brief exclusion protects him from the temptation that would possibly result from beholding such exposed beauty.

Katherine is not the only female saint who receives this protection from predatory gazes. When Agnes is stripped in public, for example, God causes her hair to grow so that it covers her entire body as a defense mechanism.[166] Anastasia's three servant girls (Agape,

[166] For this miracle, see Agnes Chapter, 102–111.

Chionia, and Yrene) are protected from the humiliation and torment of being stripped.[167] The tale continues with the prefect who tries to rape Anastasia being struck blind.[168] Even the Virgin Mary's naked body is protected from human eyes. One of the legends of the Assumption relates that Mary's body shines with a blinding light when three virgins prepare to bathe it before burial. The light is so powerful that none, even the virgins, are able to look upon the Blessed Virgin's exposed flesh.[169]

The comparison between Katherine and the Virgin Mary does not end with the overt textual associations. Early in Capgrave's first book, Katherine's extraordinary conception is described. She is the child of a couple thought to be beyond childbearing age, a motif used to establish her holiness and favor with God.[170] Her parents are likened to Biblical couples who experienced this particular grace: Abraham and Sarah, and Zechariah and Elizabeth.[171] Katherine's parents are also compared to Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Virgin Mary.[172] Katherine is immediately associated with Mary through this early evidence of God's love and preference. Capgrave shows that even from this point Katherine, like Mary, is chosen and marked for a special relationship with Christ.

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[167] *LA* v. 1, 76. Earlier, the pagan is driven mad, which manifests itself in a kind of blindness, when he attempts to molest the women (v. 1, 75–76). He then falls into a deep sleep after the attempted stripping (v. 1, 76). For the motif of clothes magically clinging to the body, see Thompson, D2171.6.
[168] *LA* v. 1, 76. For spiritual blindness, see also Agnes Chapter, 117 n. 116.
[169] *LA* v. 2, 783. See also above 250 n. 155 and 251 n. 156.
[170] This motif appears in a variety of saints' lives. Saint Remigius, for example, also has a similar conception story (*LA* v. 1, 143). As Winstead has pointed out, the Biblical tradition attests to the saints' holiness (Capgrave, n. 1.182–189).
[171] For Abraham and Sarah, see Genesis 18:9–15. For Zechariah and Elizabeth, see Luke 1.5–58. For the later legend of the birth of John the Baptist, see the *LA* (v. 1, 540–542). See also Agnes Chapter, 147 for additional late-life births.
[172] Capgrave 1.177–186. For Joachim and Anne, see also the *LA* (v. 2, 903–905) and Bokenham (ll. 1658–2000).

It is also no surprise that Capgrave's work is arranged in five books, which can be taken as a symbol of the Five Wounds of Christ or the Five Joys or Sorrows of Mary.[173] These Five Joys are reflected in Capgrave's plot of Katherine's life events, particularly the Annunciation and Assumption.[174] Capgrave specifically designs Adryan's arrival to Katherine to mirror Gabriel's visitation to Mary.[175] *Ryght as Gabriell whan he fro hevene was sent / Onto oure Lady to do that hye message* ('Just as Gabriel when he was sent from heaven / to our Lady to deliver that high message' 3.470–471). The hermit's alarming appearance creates a scene clearly reminiscent of the archangel's before Mary. As Gabriel brings tidings of joy to Mary concerning her election as mother of the Son of God, Adryan brings revelatory news of Christ and His mother as well as Katherine's potential status as His Bride if she chooses to convert.[176] Furthermore, the Assumption is mirrored in the events following Katherine's martyrdom during which angels appear and transfer her body, not to heaven as with Mary, but to a holy location on earth, Mount Sinai.

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[173] One of the most famous and memorable examples of this symbolism appears in *Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght*. The knight's shield is decorated with a pentangle, which represents a variety of ideas worthy of contemplation, not the least of which are the joys of the Virgin (ll. 619–665). His faith in the Blessed Virgin, the *heven–quene*, is also evidenced by her image illustrated on the inner portion of his shield (ll. 650–651). Winstead also notes the symbolism here and additionally notes Lydgate's *Lyfe of our Lady*, which has five books, and Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale*, which has five stanzas (Capgrave, n. 5.6).

[174] Capgrave's five books loosely match up to Mary's five joys. The Nativity pairs with the first book; the Annunciation with the third; the Resurrection with Katherine's baptism in the third; the Ascension with Katherine's encounter with and comfort in Christ and Mary, which extends into the fourth book; and the Assumption with Katherine's martyrdom when angels take her body and Christ calls her home in the fifth book. See also Capgrave, n. 5.6.

[175] Winstead has also noted that Adryan's greeting to Katherine echoes Gabriel's to the Blessed Virgin in: *All heyll, madame*! ('All hail, madam' 3.413). See also Capgrave, n. 3.413.

[176] This initial interaction between Katherine and Adryan lasts from lines 3.389–777. Burrus notes that Athanasius' presentation of the Annunciation claims that Mary is startled not by Gabriel's message, but by his voice, which is a man's voice. Regarding Athanasius' account, Burrus asserts: "Even within her home, she avoided men to such an extent that she never heard a man speak—indeed, Athanasius explains, it was the startling sound of Gabriel's masculine voice that so troubled Mary when she received the angelic visitation" ("Word and Flesh" 35). Although the same distance from men is not seen in the Katherine legend, the idea of the male voice causing an even greater alarm fits well in the Capgrave account in which Katherine's 'enclosed garden' is protected from male intrusion. See enclosed section above 243–249.

Finally, as Capgrave finishes his work, he mentions the Mary connection in the last segment. Once Katherine is beheaded and the milk flows from her neck wound as a symbol of her purity, Capgrave associates Katherine with Mary one last time. *Save Mari alone, of maydenhode she hath the belle*— ('Save Mary alone, she has the highest status of maidenhood—' 5.1909).

Upon her martyrdom, Katherine's supreme (albeit secondary) status as Christ's Bride has been assured. Although Katherine outshines other Virgin Martyrs in this respect, all of these women are guaranteed a similar, if not equal, heavenly position. The fate of these women is never in question, however; nor, for the most part, is that of their persecutors. Katherine's legend is somewhat unusual in its treatment of Maxentius at the end of her *passio*. There is no mention of his demise or even social downfall.[177] The persecutors of Agatha, Agnes, and Juliana, however, receive swift and just ends, as appropriate for their cruel and wicked actions as the Virgin Martyrs are for their virtuous and devout actions.

[177] See Appendix D. Maxentius end is recorded in the account of the Finding of the Holy Cross in the *LA* (v. 1, 463). This account reports that, upon attacking Constantine, Maxentius drown having fallen victim to his own ruse intended to deceive his opponent.

Chapter 6
Conclusion
Just Deserts and Individualized Virgin Martyrs

The martyrdom accounts considered in the foregoing chapters, notwithstanding the violence and suffering present in the works, conclude with twofold positive endings. We witness the women's mortal lives ending with conventionally dignified and simple events and their desired immortal lives beginning with signs of glorious salvation and love. Agatha, in death, has her holiness confirmed by her tomb's protective powers and evidences of her healing capabilities as seen in Lucy's legend. Beheaded and buried, Agnes returns with a heavenly retinue to assure her parents of her sublime new status. Juliana's beheading is followed by an adventurous translation of her body, culminating in the safety of the body and those conveying it. Katherine's neck flows with milk instead of blood. Angels then carry her body to Mount Sinai where it continues to exude milk as well as oil.[1]

Persecutors in these lives meet equally deserved fates. Just as the Virgin Martyrs, who are steadfastly fixed in the spirit, receive heavenly rewards, these men, who are firmly set in the flesh, receive hellish ones. As Paul asserts in Romans (8:5–8 and 8:13):

> qui enim secundum carnem sunt quae carnis sunt sapiunt qui vero secundum
> Spiritum quae sunt Spiritus sentiunt
> nam prudentia carnis mors prudentia autem Spiritus vita et pax
> quoniam sapientia carnis inimicitia est in Deum legi enim Dei non subicitur nec
> enim potest
> qui autem in carne sunt Deo placere non possunt

***

[1] For these occurrences, see Appendices A–D, respectively.

> si enim secundum carnem vixeritis moriemini si autem Spiritu facta carnis
> mortificatis vivetis
>
> [For they that are according to the flesh mind the things that are of the flesh: but
> they that are according to the spirit mind the things that are of the spirit.
> For the wisdom of the flesh is death: but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace.
> Because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God. For it is not subject to the law
> of God: neither can it be.
> And they who are in the flesh cannot please God.
>
> ***
>
> For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you mortify
> the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.]

Living in the flesh earns most persecutors violent ends.[2] Quintianus is bitten and thrown by his horses into water where he drowns. Agnes' suitor is initially struck dead when he attempts to rape her.[3] Eleusius and his companions are shipwrecked, drown, and eaten by beast and birds.[4] Although these horrific ends bring a sense of closure as the pagan tormentors receive their hellish 'just deserts', the focus remains on the virgins' being taken into heaven and the men's deaths rarely warrant more than brief mention.

The men, who strive to achieve so much destruction, are expendable in the end while the virgins remain unmarred by torments. Agatha's breast is restored, Agnes is protected from rape, Juliana is healed multiple times, and Katherine is preserved from most tortures. All punishments and sufferings are ultimately rendered inconsequential, not only in the moments when the women are repeatedly safeguarded or healed, but also overall as

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[2] See Appendix E for the ends of the Virgin Martyrs' tormentors in the *LA*. See also Appendices A–C for the fates of Agatha's, Agnes', and Juliana's persecutors.
[3] See Agnes Chapter, 141–142.
[4] Eleusius in *Iuliene* especially deserves this fate as he had threatened Juliana with the same end. The death of Eleusius in this work is very violent (69–71). This symbolically fitting end is reminiscent of Virgil's account of the death of Locrian Ajax following his rape of Cassandra as she grasped the statue of Athena. Ajax is thrown from his ship toward a phallic-shaped jut of rock upon which he, appropriately, is impaled (*Æneid* in *Virgil: Eclogues, Georgics, Æneid I–IV, Revised Edition*, v. 1. Loeb. ed. H. Rushton Fairclough. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1916, reprinted 1974, 1.34–45). See also Apollodorus, *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: The Library of Apollodorus*. trans. with notes by Michael Simpson. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1976, 247. See also the fate of the elders in Susanna's tradition (Agnes Chapter, 137–138 n. 180).

worldly cares and pains fade in the glory of the Lord's presence and heavenly existence. This definitive eradication of worldly concerns provides a fundamental lesson in faith as well as a source of inspiration to the Christian populace. The legends portray not only God's favor and love for these women but they also depict the women's strength and faith thereby providing spiritual models.

Although hagiographers of Agatha, Agnes, Juliana, and Katherine depict their traditional legends with varying voices and agendas, the authors are restricted to relatively set narrative motifs and structures. Within these established boundaries, the saints repeatedly enact minor triumphs over their persecutors as they progress toward and culminate in victory. In each conquering, the virgins are depicted as overcoming or encountering attacks not only against their faith, which is the fundamental issue for them (and arguably for the Christian populace), but also against their female bodies and sex-specific attributes. Although the women's faith is, ultimately, their most important identifier, the subplots surrounding the martyrs' 'mini' battles comprise the majority of the legends' content. The subplots provide the distinguishing characteristics by which the Christian community identifies the saints. God Himself indicates the importance of these struggles by preserving the virgins' beautiful form and effecting symbolically fitting retribution upon their assailants.

The four Virgin Martyr legends, studied here evidence that multiple struggles occur in each saint's life. The sex-specific conflicts in these lives reoccur in other saints' legends in different combinations and arrangements. Christina's tradition, for example, contains a breast amputation, as does Agatha's; her young age is like that of Agnes; her father's wrath

has its counterpart in Juliana's legend; and her wounds' flow of milk has a likeness in Katherine. Christina also experiences public stripping as do each of these saints.[5] The Virgin Martyr template, intriguing in itself, becomes all the more so when these virgins' legends emphasize individual traits or practices. Agatha's breast, Agnes' hair, Juliana's demon, and Katherine's wheel are among the more memorable qualities of these legends. The end objectives of heavenly joy and union with the Savior are universal in martyrdom accounts but it is the distinctive combination of occurrences, sufferings, and attributes that makes each of these lives appealing and that explains their lasting quality.

This study, as stated at the opening of this work, does not, given the limits of its purpose and the extensive nature of legend material, present a complete survey of these Virgin Martyrs' literary traditions. The ground-clearing process undertaken herein does seek to illustrate developments and variations from the legends' earliest forms through fifteenth-century English sources. By the later Middle Ages these Virgin Martyrs' lives eventually tend, as Winstead acknowledges, to conform to a relatively standardized core narrative, noted as the Virgin Martyr template in the Introduction.[6] The extent to which the lives of these four saints actually conform and the extent to which they retain individualism despite this clustering are considered throughout this work. This analysis of the narratives' progressions contributes a supplement to the current scholarly trend of examining most Virgin Martyrs collectively.

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[5] See *Christinæ* (527C, 527F, and 528B) for Christina's various exposures. See Appendices A–D.
[6] See Introduction, 2–3.

The highlighted characteristics and motifs within each of these lives supply the source for inspiration by and devotion to individual saints. This study's tracing of sex-specific characteristics produces a path through these traditions that allows for clear identification of similarities and deviations within various sources. The main narrative components of these women's legends, both those considered within this study and those falling outside its scope, are presented in the Appendices' Tables. These tables, as established in the Introduction, draw attention to these details and present alterations and developments in a clear manner. The tables, intended to be used concurrently with the review of these saints' legends in each of the analytical chapters, are designed for the identification of variations within the chronologically listed sources. There follows a brief assessment of the treatment of key traits of Agatha's legend as accessed through the table in Appendix A to illustrate the comprehensiveness and usefulness of this study.

Sources that contain Agatha's persecutor, Quintianus, or the madam at the brothel, Aphrodisia, are readily determinable as are the sources' variant spellings when one consults the Table on Agatha. Aldhelm's omission of these names in both works is notable within the English tradition, especially considering their inclusion in Agatha's *Vita* and in Isidore's second hymn. Important scenes such as Agatha's time in the brothel, her breast amputation, the visitation and healing by Saint Peter, and the volcanic eruption of Mount Etna, are similarly presented in a format that clearly identifies deviations in the traditional pattern of inclusions.

The table indicates the first appearance of the brothel scene in Agatha's *Vita* as opposed to the earliest source of her legend, Damasus' third-century hymn. The table also

shows that the brothel, which appears inconsistently in earlier Latin sources, becomes a standard inclusion within English sources as of Ælfric's late tenth–early eleventh-century homily. Within the chapter on Agatha, various hagiographers' treatments of this scene are considered at length with special attention paid to differences between Agatha's experience in the bordello and that of most Virgin Martyrs who are similarly confined.[7]

The regularity with which Agatha's signature torment, her breast mutilation, appears in her legend is clearly evident. The table distinguishes not only whether sources cite the removal of one or both breasts, but also draws attention to the one source considered herein that does not mention Agatha's breast mutilation, Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*. The varying treatments of this torment and the range of symbolism associated with the breast, most notably femininity and motherhood, are considered extensively within Agatha's chapter.[8] The table further aids in presenting Ælfric's deliberate alteration of the location of Agatha's faith (as stated by Aphrodisia), transferring it from her *mens* to her *breost*, a change which signifies Ælfric's particular focus upon Agatha's breast and singles out his especially symbolically rich and sympathetic treatment of her legend.[9] Further supporting the varying concentration on Agatha's physical breast is the inclusion of the saint's speech to Quintianus regarding her safeguarded spiritual breasts.[10] These exchanges in their varying forms and with their varying implications, particularly in regard to spiritual motherhood, are examined in depth in the sections dealing with Agatha's breast.

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[7] For the brothel scene in Agatha's legend, see Agatha Chapter, 28–33.
[8] For the symbolism associated with Agatha's amputated breast, see Agatha Chapter, 48–55.
[9] For Ælfric's treatment of Agatha's breast, see Agatha Chapter, 64–71.
[10] For Agatha's speeches concerning her spiritual breasts, see Agatha Chapter, 49–51.

A similar supportive structure appears in the entries surrounding Saint Peter's visitation. Peter's appearance, the various names given to identify him, the blazing light accompanying his arrival, and his healing of Agatha are all mapped out within the table. While most sources contain this visitation and the subsequent healing, the extent to which the surrounding details are included vary from text to text. Even within the later English sources, which more often than not follow the same general structure, divergences appear, such as the omission of the light in the *South English Legendary*. The tradition of Agatha's visitor being Peter appears as early as Damasus' hymn; however, as seen in Appendix A, Peter's name is not a consistent occurrence, even in later sources such as Ælfric's homily and the *South English Legendary*. As the chapter considers the hagiographical importance of Peter's visitation as well as the tradition of healing within saints' lives and Agatha's role within that tradition, the table presents a comprehensive outline of these happenings and individual source's treatment.[11]

The tables also cover those significant narrative details that are not specifically considered within this work. Within Agatha's legend, the saint's final torment of being rolled naked over coals and the eruption of Mount Etna are important examples. These main components of her traditional narrative are plotted accordingly, despite not being addressed extensively within the chapter on Agatha.

While further comparative analysis and research is required, a preliminary examination of Appendices A–D allows for speculation on the relationship among the utilized texts. By only addressing the Agatha table, later writers' knowledge of either a

[11] For Peter's visitation and healing of Agatha's mutilated body, see Agatha Chapter, 71–84.

work very similar to the *Acta S. Agathæ* or of works based on the *Acta* or a related text is evident. Ælfric's *Natale Sancte Agathe*, the *Legenda aurea*, the *South English Legendary*, and Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummon* all follow, with few diversions, the basic structure of the *Acta*. Upon closer inspection of Agatha legends in these later works, it appears that Bokenham likely had knowledge either of Ælfric's homilies or of sources that stem from the same tradition as Ælfric's works. Bokenham's repeated assertion that Agatha's strength resides in her *heort* echoes Ælfric's use of *breost* in the same manner.[12] This is further supported by the corresponding use of *mens* not only in the *Acta*, but also in the *Legenda aurea*, which Bokenham admits is one of his main sources. If Bokenham were only following the *Legenda aurea* or a version of the *Acta*, he would likely have interpreted *mens* in manner similar to the *South English Legendary*, which translates it as *þoht*.

Agnes' four later legends appear, as with Agatha's later versions, to follow the general outline of *Vita S. Agnetis*.[13] It does appear when examining the charts for Agatha and Agnes' legends that Aldhelm's source includes variant legends for these two saints. Again turning to Appendix A, main components of Agatha's traditional legend are omitted in Aldhelm's account. For example, the brothel scene is not mentioned in either the *De uirginitate* or the *Carmen de uirginitate*. This component, already present in Agatha's tradition in the *Acta* and in Isidore's second hymn, is, as supported by later authors' inclusions, important attributes of the saint's legend. Aldhelm is not opposed to relating

[12] For the transference in location of Agatha's strength in these texts, see Agatha Chapter, 32–33.
[13] The four legends referred to here are Ælfric's *Natale Sancte Agnetis*, the *LA*, the *SEL*, and Bokenham's account.

brothel scenes, since he does so in both Lucy and Agnes' accounts.[14] Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* reports Agatha's limbs being torn or sliced, a torment that is not found in other works considered here. Furthermore, Aldhelm does not mention the visitation of and healing by Saint Peter in either of his accounts. The focus on the tomb in both the *De uirginitate* and *Carmen de uirginitate* also is a striking difference from other works' reports of the Mt. Etna miracle.[15]

Agnes' table in Appendix B also supports the possibility of Aldhelm's having an alternate source for Agnes' legend. Although Agnes' accounts in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* and *Carmen de uirginitate* follow the outline of Agnes' legend closer than Agatha's, Agnes' mode of death in the *De uirginitate* is more vague and is more violently described than in other works. The later texts tend to recount her mode of death as being pierced in the throat. Although the *Carmen de uirginitate* does not mention her mode of death, the *De uirginitate* ambiguously asserts that Agnes is soaked with blood. Aldhelm also surprisingly omits Agnes' concealment by her hair despite its inclusion in her tradition as early as Damasus' hymn. This is especially curious for the *De uirginitate*, which includes her being stripped and later covered by a robe in the brothel. Aldhelm's *Carmen de uirginitate* also adds the torment of imprisonment to her legend and moves the light of the brothel to her

[14] For Lucy, see Aldhelm, *DV*, 294 and *CDV*, ll. 1819–1821. For Agnes, see Appendix D.
[15] In this respect, at least, it appears that the author of the *SEL* may have had knowledge of Aldhelm's description of the legend as the *SEL* also focuses upon Agatha's tomb as opposed to the veil from the tomb as in the other sources (Appendix A and Agatha Chapter, 26 n. 5).

cell and omits the angel's appearance in the brothel. Based on these two saints' accounts, it appears that Aldhelm uses an alternate source, which does not appear in this study.[16]

There is more difficulty in tracing sources for the legends of Juliana and Katherine in Appendices C and D since these saints' traditions are later and tend to be more standardized than the legends of Agatha and Agnes.[17] The tables considered as a group, therefore, highlight the increasing conformity of later authors. This is especially notable when contrasting the table for Katherine's legend (Appendix D) with that for Agatha or Agnes' legends (Appendices A and B). Even the version of Katherine's legend in the *South English Legendary* is almost entirely consistent in its narrative details and structure.

As seen in the Appendices A–C, the *South English Legendary* often deviates from the traditional structure of the saints' legends, usually omitting extra torments, speeches, and proper names from its versions. For Agatha's legend, the *South English Legendary* relates the saint's breast torment and her final burning, but not her placement on the rack or other tortures. Agatha's speeches regarding her joy in experiencing torments and her spiritual breasts are also missing, as are both her chance to escape from prison and Quintianus' death. Agnes' legend in the *South English Legendary* condenses the scene in which her concealment by hair occurs and has the saint relate the miracle in a speech. The prefect's speech, in which he asks Agnes to resurrect his son, is omitted, as is specific mention of her parents and foster-sister. Juliana's legend, which greatly condenses the

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[16] Andy Orchard has suggested that Aldhelm may have used the no longer extant treatise on virginity by Damasus as a model. This work, like Aldhelm's *DV* and *CDV*, was composed in both prose and verse (204–205).

[17] Tracing Juliana's legend in Appendix C is also somewhat difficult due to the missing portions of Cynewulf's poem. For sources outlining of the histories of Juliana and Katherine's legends in England, see Introduction, 14–15 nn.. 37–40.

beginning portion of her *passio*, does not name her father or include his stripping and beating of the saint. Her being burned alive is likewise excluded, as is her final speech to the onlookers. Katherine's account, however, contains almost all the conventional details associated with her *passio*, except for the naming of Michael the Archangel and Chursathes. The *South English Legendary* also fails to mention Katherine's benevolent rule; however, the *Legenda aurea* and Capgrave's work also leave out this detail. Despite the condensed accounts presented in the *South English Legendary*, Katherine's version, as a later established legend, does not allow for much deviation within its set structure.

This assessment is based upon the information plotted in the Appendices and sets a foundation for further research within these or other hagiographical texts. The narrative method used in this work to illuminate the literary traditions of these four saints could well be extended to include similar studies of other Virgin Martyrs popular in medieval England. This approach also lends itself to supplementation by studies within works of individual authors. As extended exploration of the Virgin Martyrs within the *Legenda aurea*, for example, could be compared with the similarly extensively explored specific treatment of Virgin Martyrs by earlier authors such as Aldhelm and Ælfric, as well as by later authors such as that of the *South English Legendary* and Bokenham. In addition to comparative treatment within contained works, this study's approach could additionally consider contemporary non-English sources such as French and German hagiographical works. This approach would further illustrate how these lives were interpreted throughout the medieval period as well as how and which specific aspects of these lives the different cultures promoted.

Appendix A: Narrative Details in Saint Agatha of Catania's Legend

	Damasus, *Carmen 30*	*Acta S. Agathæ*	Isidore, First Hymn	Isidore, Second Hymn	*DV*	*CDV*	Bede, *Martyrologium*	*Natale Ssancte Agathe*	*LA*	*SEL, Agatha*	Bokenham
Quintianus Named		X		X			X	X	X	X (Quyncian)	X (Quyncyan)
Brothel with Aphrodisia named		X		X (not named)				X	X	X	X
Agatha's Speech to Aphrodisia		X (*mens*)						X	X (*mens*)	X (*þoȝt*)	X (*herte*)
Aphrodisia's Speech to Quintianus		X (*mens*)		(no speech) (*spem*)				X (*breost*)	X (*mens*)	X (*þoȝt*)	X (*herte*)
Refuses to Sacrifice to Idols		X (3xs)	X	X	X (implied)			X (3xs)	X (3xs)	X (3xs)	X (3xs)
Imprisonment	X	X (3xs)	X (2xs)	X (2xs)			X	X (3xs)	X (3xs)	X (3xs)	X (3xs)
Placed on the Rack		X		X			X	X	X		X
Additional Torments	(whipped)	(twisted)		(whipped)	(limbs torn)	(burned and sliced by sword)	(struck in the face)	(struck in the face)	(twisted)		(whipped)
Agatha's Joy in Torments Speech	(no speech)	X						X	X		X
Breast amputation	X	X	X	X (inconsistent)		X (breasts)	X (breasts)	X	X	X (breasts)	X (breasts)
Spiritual Breast Speech		X						X	X		X

Appendix A: Continued

	Damasus, *Carmen 30*	*Acta S. Agathæ*	Isidore, First Hymn	Isidore, Second Hymn	*DV*	*CDV*	Bede, *Martyrologium*	*Natale Ssancte Agathe*	*LA*	*SEL, Agatha*	Bokenham
Visitation by St. Peter	X	X (*Apostolus*)	(*Magnus Senior Christi*)	(*cœlis Angelica cura*)				X (*Apostol*)	X	X (*Apostel*)	X
Healing and Breast Restoration	X	X	X	X			X (*a Domino*)	X	X	X	X
Light in Prison and Refuses Escape		X	X (no light)	X				X	X		X
Rolled Naked over Potsherds and Coals		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X (*gret fur*)	X
Earthquake During Potsherds Torment	(unclear)	X		X				X	X	X	X
Gives up Spirit in Prison		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Angel at Grave		X	X	X				X	X	X	X
Epitaph at Grave		X	X	X				X	X	X	X
Quintianus' Death		X		X				X	X		X
Veil Calms Volcanic Eruption		X	X	X	X (*tumbam*)	X (*tumbam*)		X	X	X (*tombe*)	X

Appendix B: Narrative Details in Saint Agnes of Rome's Legend

	Damasus, *Carmen 29*	Ambrose *De uirginibus*	Prudentius *Peristephanon*	*Vita S. Agnetis*	*DV*	*CDV*	Bede, *Martyrologium*	*Natale Sancte Agnetis*	*LA*	*SEL, Agneta*	Bokenham
Agnes' Age as Thirteen		X (twelve)	X (young girl)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Agnes' Speech about Christ		X		X	X	(X) (speech summary)		X	X	X	X
Refuses to become Vestal Virgin		(X) (refuses to sacrifice)	X (refuses to worship Minerva)	X				X (refuses to worship Vesta)	X	(X) (refuses to accept gods)	X
Stripped	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Hair Grows to Cover her Body	X			X				X	X	X (Agnes' speech)	X (bonds slip away)
Brothel			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Light and/or Angel in Brothel			X (light before brothel)	X (light and angel)	X (light and angel)	X (light in prison)		X (light and angel)	X (light and angel)	X (light and angel)	X (light and angel)
Agnes Given Robe in Brothel				X	X			X	X	X	X
Suitor Struck Down			X (before brothel)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X

Appendix B: Continued

	Damasus, *Carmen 29*	Ambrose *De uirginibus*	Prudentius *Peristephanon*	*Vita S. Agnetis*	*DV*	*CDV*	Bede, *Martyrologium*	*Natale Sancte Agnetis*	*LA*	*SEL, Agneta*	Bokenham
Prefect Beseeches Agnes for Son				X				X	X		X
Agnes Prays for Resurrection			X	X		X		X (angel appears)	X	X (angel appears)	X (angel appears)
Suitor Resurrected			X (regains sight)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Additional Torments		(iron sword, chains, and iron bonds)				(imprisoned)	*(multa tormenta)*				
Placed in Fire	X			X				X	X	X	X
Pierced in Throat by Sword		X	X (beheaded)	X	(drenched with blood)		X	X (killed by the sword)	X	X	X
Emerentiana's Martyrdom				X			X (Feb. 23rd)		X		
Parents See Agnes at Grave				X				X	X	X (kinsmen)	X
Virgins with Agnes				X				X	X	X	X
Lamb with Agnes				X					X (imagery)	X	X
Constantina's Healing				X	X	X		X	X	X (Constance)	X (Constance)

Appendix C: Narrative Details in Saint Juliana of Nicomedia's Legend

	Passio S. Iulianæ	Bede, *Martyrologium*	Cynewulf	*LA*	*SEL*, *Iuliana uirgine*	*Iuliene*	*Iuliana*
Africanus Named	X	X	X (Affricanus)			X (Affrican)	X (Affricanus)
Eleusius Named	X (Eleseus)	X	X (Heliseus)	X (Eulogius)	X (Elyse)	X	X
Urges Eleusius to More Power	X		(wants to be virgin)		X	X (wants to be virgin)	X
Refuses Marriage to Pagan	X		X	X	X	X	X
Stripped and Beaten by Africanus	X	X (beaten only)	X (beaten only)	X		X	X
Stripped and Beaten by Eleusius	X	X	X	X (not stripped)	X	X	X
Interrogates Demon	X		X	X	X	X	X
Binds Demon	X		X	X	X	X	X
Drags Demon through Public	X		X	X	X	X	X
Throws Demon in Sewer	X		X	X	X	X	X
Placed on Wheel	X	X		X	X	X	X
Burned Alive	X	X	X	X		X	X
Placed in Cauldron of Lead	X	X	X	X	X	X	X (unspecified substance)

Appendix C: Continued

	Passio S. Iulianæ	Bede, *Martyrologium*	Cynewulf	*LA*	*SEL*, *Iuliana uirgine*	*Iuliene*	*Iuliana*
Hung by Hair	X	X	X (and beaten)	X	X (and beaten)	X (and beaten)	
Cauldron of Lead Poured over Her	X	X		X	X (brass)	X (brass)	X (unspecified substance)
Bound with Chains	X		(unclear)	X	X	X	X
Imprisoned	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Disguised Demon	X		X	X	X	X	X
Belial Named	X				X	X	X
Attacks Demon	X	X (does not bind)	X	X	X	X	X
Looks at and Scares Demon	X		X	X	X	X	X
Addresses Crowd before Death	X (Christians)		X			X	X
Beheaded	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sophia Moves Body to Campagna	X (Sufragorio senetorio)	X (woman not named)			X (Sophie)	X (Sophie)	X (no Campagna)
Eleusius Drowns and Birds and Beasts Eat Body	X		X (no birds or beasts)	X	X	X	X

Appendix D: Narrative Details in Saint Katherine of Alexandria's Legend

	KV	*Katerine*	*LA*	*SEL, Seinte Katerine*	Prose	Capgrave	Bokenham
Intellect and Education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Costis Named	X	X (Cost)	X (Costus)	X (Cost)	X (Costys)	X (Costus)	X (Constaunce)
Private Study		X (*bur*)			X (tower)	X (garden)	
Marriage Parliament					X	X	
Approached by Adryan in Study					X	X	
Baptized					X (by Adryan)	X (by Mary)	
Weds Christ with Ring					X	X	
Her Benevolent Rule	X	X			X		X (gives alms)
Maxentius Named	X	X	X	X (Maxent)	X (Maxencyus)	X (Maxence)	X (Maxence)
Confronts Maxentius	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Visited in Prison by Michael the Archangel	X	X	X (angel, prison not specified)	X (angel)	X (angel, prison not specified)	X	X (angel)
Debates and Converts 50 Philosophers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Philosophers Martyred	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Appendix D: Continued

	KV	*Katerine*	*LA*	*SEL, Seinte Katerine*	Prose	Capgrave	Bokenham
Stripped and Beaten	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Starved in Prison 12 Days	X	X	X	X	X	X (40 days)	X
Queen and Porphirius Visit	X (Augusta)	X (Auguste and Porphire)	X	X (Porphirie)	X (Porfury)	X (Porphery)	X (Porfyrye)
Tended to by Angels	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fed by Dove, Visited by Christ	X	X	X	X	X (fed by angel)	X	X
Chursathes Builds Wheels	X	X (Cursates)	X (*quidam prefectus)*	X (no Chursathes)	X (*cruell master)*	X (Cursates)	X (Cursates)
Set on Wheels	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Angel Destroys Wheels	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Queen's Torment and Martyrdom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Porphirius' Martyrdom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Beheaded and Milk from Neck	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Angels Carry Body to Mt. Sinai	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Healing Oil from Tomb	X (and bones)	X (and bones)	X (from bones)	X (and bones)	X (from bones)	X	X

Appendix E: Narrative Details in Virgin Martyrs' Legends of the *Legenda aurea*

	Agatha	Agnes	Anastasia's serving girls (Irene, Agape, Chionia)	Apollonia	Cecilia	Christina	Daria	Euphemia	Juliana	Justina	Katherine	Lucy	Margaret	Sophia's Daughters (Faith, Hope, and Charity)	Ursula	Virgin of Antioch
High Status	X	X			X	X	(Vestal Virgin)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Beautiful	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Educated		X			X	X	X			X	X		X		X	
Pagan Suitor	X	X	X		(husband)	X	(Christian husband)	X	X	(converts suitor)	X	X	X	(pagan wants to adopt)	(1 Christian, 1 pagan)	X
Pagan Parents		(Christian)				X			X	X	X	(Christian)	X	(Christian)	(Christian)	
Defends Faith	X	X			X	X	(defends paganism)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Refuses to Sacrifice	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Brothel	X	X					X	X				X (threat)				X
Attempted Rape			X					X		(by demon)						
Stripped	(implied)	X	(attempted)			X		2xs			X		X	(Faith: implied)		
Beaten						X		2xs			X		X	(Faith 1x, Charity 2xs)		
Amputation	(breast)			(teeth beaten out)		(flesh, tongue, breast)					(Queen's breasts)			(Faith: breasts)		

Appendix E: Continued

	Agatha	Agnes	Anastasia's serving girls (Irene, Agape, Chionia)	Apollonia	Cecilia	Christina	Daria	Euphemia	Juliana	Justina	Katherine	Lucy	Margaret	Sophia's Daughters (Faith, Hope, and Charity)	Ursula	Virgin of Antioch
Fire	(hot coals)	X		X		(furnace)	(outside brothel)						(torches)	(Faith: gridiron; Charity: furnace, hot nails)		
Boiling Cauldron					X	X			2xs	X		X	X	(Faith: pan, Hope: cauldron)		
Prison	3xs				1x (home)	4xs (1 in tower)		3xs	1x		2xs (1 in home)		2xs			
Torture Device	(rack)					(wheel)		(wheel)	(wheel)		(wheel)		(rack)	(Charity: rack)		
Animals						(snakes)		(beasts)								
Hung								(by hair)	(by hair)							
Starvation in Prison								X			X					
Additional Torments						(drown, head shaved)		(pressed between 4 stones)		(fever of lust, plague)		(urine poured over her)				
Accused of Witchcraft		X				2xs		X				X				
Healed	X								X		X					

Appendix E: Continued

	Agatha	Agnes	Anastasia's serving girls (Irene, Agape, Chionia)	Apollonia	Cecilia	Christina	Daria	Euphemia	Juliana	Justina	Katherine	Lucy	Margaret	Sophia's Daughters (Faith, Hope, and Charity)	Ursula	Virgin of Antioch
Protected		(hair)				5xs	(lion)	3xs	X		X	(immoveable)		(Charity in furnace)		(soldier's clothes)
Celestial Visitation	X	X			X	2xs		X	(devil and heavenly voice)		X		(dragon and demon)			
People Convert	X	X			X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Perform Miracle		(resurrects suitor)				2xs		X		2xs	X	(heals mother)				
Manner of Death	(gives up spirit)	(stabbed in throat)		(fire)	(attempted beheading 3 strokes)	(3 arrows)	(buried alive with husband)	(sword in side)	(beheaded)	(beheaded with suitor, bodies exposed)	(beheaded, milk from neck)	(sword in throat)	(beheaded)	(Faith: beheaded, Hope and Charity: by sword)	(pierced with arrow)	(beheaded implied)
Miracle at Tomb	X	X									(oil)			(mother dies)		
Angelic Appearance after Death	X	X									X					
Persecutors' Demise	X	X	(insane and blind)			(2 die, 1 blind)		(2 die, 3 injured)	X	X		X		X		

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